

Viśvarūpa

T.S. MAXWELL

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Contents

- Foreword
- Preface
- Abbreviations

THE EXPERIMENTAL PHASE

Unitary Multiple Icons of the Kuṣāṇa
Period and Related Works of the Early Gupta
Period

This work is dedicated to
my twin sons.

eṣo uṣā apūruyā vy ucchati priyā divaḥ

stuṣe vām aśvinā bṛhat

yā dasrā śindhumātarā monotarā rayīṇām

dhiyā devā vasuvidā

THE 'CLASSICAL' PHASE

Developments in the Gupta Period

vacyante vāṃ kakuhāso jūrṇāyām adhi

viṣṭapi

THE ŚAMALĀJĪ Viśvarūpa

A Major Contribution to the Development
of Multiple Iconography in Western India

yad vāṃ ratho vibhis patāt

THE PAREL HEPTAD

A Complex Śaiva Experiment in Western India

THE DEOGARH Viśvarūpa

KANNAUJ

The Decline of Creativity in the Design
of Multiple Brahmanical Sculpture in North India

- Select Bibliography

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Foreword

To enable him to behold and bear the sight of his boundless divinity, Kṛṣṇa his charioteer gave divine vision to the hero Arjuna who saw the god's boundless form: Viśvarūpa the universe with all its shapes. The image of Viśvarūpa, 'God as the Universe' given form in Indian sculpture, is the theme of T.S. Maxwell's book.

Knowledge of Indian sacred art was only slowly resuscitated in this century after the decline of its practice in India. Its otherness from Western standards, at first badly tolerated, gradually won acceptance. It demanded a new insight, for its anthropomorphic images could not be seen as rendering nature. They neither copied nor interpreted nature as Indian art did not take its stand outside nature, but conformed with nature, with the powers and rhythms that give shape to its forms and creatures. Once the hegemony of and comparisons with Western art had fallen to the ground and the autonomy of Indian art was recognized, in its plasticity visualizing a continuum as of breath and pulsation, a fulness with the stream of life, another factor of Indian sacred art was recognized, different from and complementary to its plasticity; it was acknowledged together with the awareness in the West of the practice of yoga underlying the ritual of worship. The yantra, a geometrical device used as a tool to conjure the presence of deity within the symmetry of its limits, was contemplated as coinciding with the anthropomorphic image- though as a reflex only of the unearthly perfection of the transcendent reality of the envisioned deity.

Going beyond both these approaches, the vitalistic and the tantric, the text of *Viśvarūpa* constructs and comprises the being and becoming as well of early Brahmanical sculpture.

A deeper understanding, unachieved hitherto, of Indian sacred imagery, and

transcending in its scope all previous modes of approaching the Indian sacred image as work of art and at the same time as thought construct, is substantiated in the pages of *Viśvarūpa*.

The book treats of the beginning of Brahmanical figures in Northern India. They are seen as visual images of cosmogonic theory. Their anthropomorphic figures are emanatory, they issue from a central figure and represent, not a group of figures, but a process of cosmic becoming in its continuity. They form 'multiple icons' as phases of the process of creation. It is shown as an ongoing, uninterrupted whole, the phases together with the source whence they proceed.

Sculpture rendering a process, creating in its static three-dimensional form an ongoing progression, conveys this continuum by an assemblage of emerging anthropomorphic figures emanating from one central body. Such a multiple shape, iconogonic and 'icontological' at the same time, presents the virtual correspondence to a theological thought-structure created in the Pāñcarātra system to celebrate Viṣṇu as the universe. The system had its support in the mythical transfiguration of four heroes, members of one family. Their presence was envisaged branching out and forming a family tree. This arboreal image sustained the unified presence of the hero-gods issuing from the towering figure of the principal image. In the conception of this theophany anthropomorphism was combined with the arboreal concept. The branching tree coalesced with the vision of the emanations, the correlated hero gods emerging from the image from which they stemmed.

A theological system was given sculptural form. The concept of emanation was translated into the composite figure of an anthropomorph, having a sustaining middle and main figure from whom sprang forth, laterally and on top, the emanating figures like branches of a tree. The anthropomorphic corporeality of these figures carved in the front view of the total three-dimensional image is-when seen in back view- 'supplemented' by the likeness of a tree, carved in low- relief, its curving branches and leaves aquiver with

vital linear motion.

The multiple image of deity incorporates a theological framework within its conceptual structure. Its three dimensional sculptural equivalent 'embodies' in fulsome anthropomorphic shapes a metaphysical reality. Boldly the shape of the human body is made part of a coherence that belongs to thought and not to corporeal possibility. It ramifies from the region of the shoulders of the main image. The emanating figures, visible from the hips, form an aureole around and above the head of the central figure whence they emanate. The unitary multiple icon seems to have been created in about the first to second century. It visualized theological thought and was capable of creating works of art attaining, in terms of form, the depth of thought of Upaniṣadic God-realization.

The unitary multiple image stands at the beginning of Brahmanical sacred sculpture. Gradually it lost its inherent emanatory, cosmogonic power. The full-bodied figures, issuing laterally and apically from their source, became reduced to their heads only, inaugurating the subsequent multi-headed image of the gods of Hinduism. Cosmogonic sacredness henceforward had as its support the icon of one or the other god manifesting in this world. The whole of manifestation was seen embodied in one icon in particular, that of Viśvarūpa, 'the form of the Universe', the ancient Ṛg Vedic 'Urgod' whose unfolding is the cosmos.

The icon Viśvarūpa, as the many headed, many armed pivotal figure of a stele, is surrounded by a carved tapestry of figures of the many gods and powers that have issued from and are the ambiance of Viśvarūpa manifestation. The contiguity of their figures suggests the overwhelming vision of boundless form of boundless deity described in the *Bhagavad Gītā* (11.16). Discipline, following complex planning, saturated with iconographical knowledge, matured in a total mythical/metaphysical recall of Viśvarūpa, as manifested in the *Bhagavad Gītā* and even more ancient

tradition.

The planning of the lay-out of the Viśvarūpa vision in each one of the few extant relief sculptures follows a definite scheme whose essentials allow variations from sculpture to sculpture according to the particular vision incorporated in each single work of art. The planning of the sculpture obeyed a geometry that focused on the centres of meaning and linked them in a web supporting the entire composition and carrying the total weight of its meaning.

The method of planning devised by T. S. Maxwell applies not only to Vaiṣṇava themes. Śaiva sculptures as well were based on 'form thoughts' like the tree and the egg; they are augmented by that of the Linga. This seminal Śaiva theme penetrates the extent of the created cosmos of Śaiva God-realization. It structures the image under the aspect of time that subsumes all existence as it leads from now to eternity in cycles within the fathom of mortal man and those beyond it. Supported by the Liṅga construct, one of India's greatest sculptures, hitherto unidentified, the Śaiva image at Parel, yields its meaning in the pages of *Viśvarūpa*.

Consciously and subconsciously the entire world of traditional sacred knowledge was at the command of the sculptor, he activated the ancient cosmogonic symbols, such as the branching tree or the cosmic egg, subjacent to the ordering of the figures, and even more elementary and imperative elements of visualization, the vertical that traverses and connects the planes of the cosmos, the horizontal that divides above from below.

T. S. Maxwell has resuscitated the cooperation of priestly knowledge and the sculptor's competence. By his insight he has located the centres of meaning and planning in each composition. The reconstructing of the planning of the sculptures considered in *Viśvarūpa* is tantamount to discovering in their form the significance, the thought construct, that hitherto has awaited clarification. With the work of T. S. Maxwell

Viśvarūpa

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the knowledge and understanding of Indian sacred sculpture has been given focal orientation. The very essence of each sculpture has been revealed, the cosmogonic aspect of the image of deity has come alive in the form of the image. Its form carries a depth and range of meaning that hitherto has lain unsolved. *Viśvarūpa* has created the frame and foundation of a new understanding of Indian sculpture in its most creative centuries.

Stella Kramrisch

Philadelphia

March 1987

Preface

Physical multiplicity is not only a feature but a characteristic of brahmanical religious art in India. It represents the several identities or functions of a particular deity or demon. When seen in man it is considered monstrous. Supernatural beings may be protean and perform in the roles of many of their transformations simultaneously. At the human level, this would run counter to one's personal *dharma*-witness the agony of Arjuna when called upon to fight in accordance with his *kṣatriya-dharma*, thereby going against his *jñāti-kārya*: there can be no two ways about it, as a man he must choose one or the other loyalty. In religious sculpture, which in many ways is the visual counterpart of myth or doctrine, such moral dilemmas need not apply: an image may integrate *kṣatriya* and *brahmaṇa* elements, or the divine and the demonic; it may represent separate cults in a single figure or be seen to project a number of different manifestations in human shape from one figure. Such images, as sculptures, were developed during Kuṣāṇa times in north India, and to this fundamental experimental phase a considerable amount of this book is devoted. The number and types of multiple images which later became more or less standardized increased thereafter, and I cannot mention and deal with them all here for reasons of space without reducing the book to a mere catalogue. I have therefore limited the text to an examination of what I consider to be the most prototypical, and often experimental, images in order to attempt to understand the purpose behind the making of these extraordinary, but widespread, icon-types. This often involves speculation for which I can show no historical evidence; for I think that this evidence has either perished, was so esoteric as not to have been committed to writing or consisted of diagrammatic plans of the *maṇḍala* type which were obliterated when the sculpture was executed on the stone.

The areas of India in which this experimentation appears to have mostly taken place are those today covered by Gujarat and parts of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, northern Madhya Pradesh and western Uttar Pradesh. Developments in certain adjacent areas

are also discussed where relevant. In the north-west, particularly Swat and Kashmir, several multiple image-types were developed, but there is no space within the confines of this book to deal with them, to my regret; I shall deal with them later. A chronological limitation has also been imposed for the same reason: the study ranges from the first to the eighth centuries A. D., with one necessary excursus into the ninth century.

The type of multiplicity discussed and interpreted here is mostly limited to the heads or faces of sculptures, as multiple arms became standard very early. Emanatory deities are also discussed because they are so often connected with multiheaded images. Any number of faces may be shown affixed to an object, such as a pillar, with little or no aesthetic difficulties arising. It is the multiheadedness of figures in human shape which seems to require explanation, violating as it does anatomical naturalism. My study is therefore confined to such anthropomorphic images, with reference to other cult objects (such as the multi-faced Linga) being made where necessary.

It is my purpose throughout to understand these images: description and illustration are necessary, but only as the basis for an interpretation. I wish to contribute to our understanding of what the designers and sculptors of these images were trying to express, and why they chose particular visual constructs as their vehicles of expression. Sometimes it has been possible to find scriptural bases for the creation of this type of statuary, sometimes not. In either case, there is a lot to be supplied by the iconologist in order to arrive at a coherent interpretation, for the iconographical texts (śilpa-sāstras) are frequently at variance with the sculptures as they appear in reality. It is at these points that informed speculation, or the educated guess, is the only bridge between what can be demonstrated by historical documentation and archaeological fact. In order to clarify the purpose of the sculptures discussed here, I have supplied such bridges through what I trust is reasonable argument and the elimination of theories which are manifestly inaccurate. These are matters in which there will probably never be certainty; but after studying such sculptures for many years, I believe that the formulations and

interpretations presented here are as accurate as it is possible to be., It has been my belief throughout my investigations of these complexities that the solution to any given problem would be a logical one, and in nearly every case this faith has been justified. Where logic has seemed to fail, I have carried my explanation and interpretation as far as appeared reasonable, and admitted that beyond this point, in the absence of new evidence, we cannot know.

The work contained here (based on research conducted mostly in the 1970s) is only a beginning, an attempt to lay some foundations particularly in the matter of our perception of these remarkable religious images. Much remains to be done.

Since this book was written, several of the ideas expressed in it have been discussed at conferences held at the University of Pennsylvania (1981; *Discourses on Śiva*, ed. M.W. Meister, Philadelphia and Bombay 1984), the Royal Commonwealth Society, London (1982), the University of Heidelberg (1986) and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi (1986). I am grateful to all my colleagues who have debated these matters with me, particularly Professor Stella Kramrisch, Secretary of State Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, Dr. Joan Erdman, Professor Michael Meister and Dr. John Mosteller. Their views and my subsequent researches are not incorporated in this volume, which is intended to convey the original state of the research as it stood in 1981. I have up-dated the Bibliography, however, but only as far as substantive works are concerned; certain debates have been continued in the Notes, and for a recent consideration of the influence of Indian Viśvarūpa symbolism on Central Asian and Chinese iconographic constructs, the reader is referred to Angela Falco Howard's *The Imagery of the Cosmological Buddha* (Leiden 1986). Professor Kramrisch's interest in the progress of my work, which dates from 1982, has been especially sustaining and I wish to thank her in particular both for reading the original dissertation and for writing the Foreword to this book. Special thanks for exceptional editorial skill and patience are due to my editor at the Oxford University Press.

The text which follows is little altered from my D. Phil. thesis completed at Oxford in 1981. At that time I was guided chiefly by Dr. James C. Harle, Keeper of the Department of Eastern Art in the Ashmolean Museum, to whom I wish to express my gratitude. Richard F. Gombrich, Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, contributed several helpful suggestions. For financial assistance I am grateful to the Wolfson College Research Fund and the Senior Tutor's Fund, the Boden Fund, the Committee for Graduate Studies and the Inter-Faculty Committee for South Asian Studies, University of Oxford. I have not forgotten the kindness of the late Professor J. Le Roy Davidson, Dr. Alice Boner, and Professor Johanna van Lohuizen-de Leeuw. My examiners at Oxford were Dr. Sanjukta Gupta, now Gupta-Gombrich, of Utrecht and Dr. F. Raymond Allchin of Cambridge, both of whom made valuable critical observations. Dr. George Michell encouraged me to publish a first essay on Viśvarūpa in 1973. I am also personally indebted to Mme Odette Viennot, Dr. Debala Mitra, Dr. Umakant P. Shah and Dr. Ramesh Chandra Sharma.

For the sake of completeness, I should add a word on the transliteration conventions used in this book. Place names are not marked if they are well known (e.g. Mathura, Amaravati), but others are accented in accordance with local pronunciation as I encountered it (e.g. Nānd, Śamalājī). Familiar terms such as Linga, or art-historical terms such as chaitya-arch are not italicised. For the sake of brevity, museums are referred to merely by their location (e.g., Bikaner Museum, rather than Gaṅgā Golden Jubilee Museum).

Abbreviations

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| <i>AInd</i> | <i>Ancient India</i> |
| <i>AAA</i> | <i>Archives of Asian Art</i> |
| <i>AARP</i> | <i>Art and Archaeology Research Papers</i> |
| <i>AA</i> | <i>Artibus Asiae</i> |
| <i>AI</i> | <i>Art International</i> |
| <i>AA</i> | <i>Arts Asiatiques</i> |
| BVALB | Brahma Vidyā, Adyar Library Bulletin |
| <i>BBSM</i> | <i>Bulletin of the Baroda State Museum</i> |
| <i>BMAUP</i> | <i>Bulletin of Museum and Archaeology in Uttar Pradesh</i> |
| <i>BMPGB</i> | <i>Bulletin of the Museum and Picture Gallery, Baroda</i> |
| <i>EW</i> | <i>East and West</i> |
| <i>IAL</i> | <i>Indian Art and Letters</i> |
| <i>JBHS</i> | <i>Journal of the Bombay Historical Society</i> |
| JRAS | Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society |
| <i>JIH</i> | <i>Journal of Indian History</i> |
| <i>JISOA</i> | <i>Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art</i> |
| <i>JOIB</i> | <i>Journal of the Oriental Institute, M.S. University of Baroda</i> |
| JUPHS | Journal of the U.P. Historical Society |
| <i>LK</i> | <i>Lalit Kalā</i> |
| <i>PT</i> | <i>Puratattva</i> |
| <i>RL</i> | <i>Roopalekha</i> |
| <i>VIJ</i> | <i>Viśvesvaranand Indological Journal-</i> |

THE EXPERIMENTAL PHASE

Unitary Multiple Icons of the Kuṣāṇa Period and Related Works of the Early Gupta Period

There are several north Indian sculptures of the Kuṣāṇa period and other related products of the early Gupta period which represent an experimental phase in early iconographical composition. It was during this phase that the unitary multiple icon as a free-standing sculpture was invented. These works are termed experimental for the following reasons. They do not continue any earlier iconographical tradition. Each sculpture is unique; none constitutes a fixed iconographic precedent which is later repeatedly copied. Each sculpture appears to be an original attempt to express in visual terms a complex abstract concept.

The sculptures to be discussed in this chapter which do not bear any definite brahmanical symbols are nevertheless considered to be brahmanical icons on the following grounds. The metaphysical concept of which each sculpture appears to be a visual expression cannot be traced in either Buddhist or Jaina theology; a reasonable explanation of each icon is, on the other hand, to be found in the brahmanical tradition. The images described and analysed in this chapter can be shown to be the prototypes from which iron types of the brahmanical cults were derived.

Of the few extant works which represent this experimental Phase in brahmanical iconography, I shall examine the following:

| | |
|----|--|
| 1. | Mathura Museum, no. 611.9 (stone fragment). |
| 2. | Nānd Rajasthan (stone sculpture, <i>in situ</i>). |
| 3. | Mathura Museum, no. 14.392-395 (part of a stone sculpture; assembled fragments). |

| | |
|-----|--|
| 4. | Mathura Museum, no. 00.F2 (part of a stone sculpture). |
| 5. | Muktā Devī temple museum, Musānagar, Uttar Pradesh (relief panel on a stone railing pillar). |
| 6. | Mathura Museum, no. 15.516 (damaged stone sculpture). |
| 7. | Lucknow Museum, no. H4 (damaged stone sculpture). |
| 8. | Mathura Museum, no. 14.382 (part of a stone sculpture). |
| 9. | Mathura Museum, no. G-64.312 (part of a stone sculptor?). |
| 10. | Mathura Museum, no.00.E12 (damaged stone sculpture). |
| 11. | Bikaner Museum, no. 228 (terracotta plaque). |
| 12. | [Private collection] (part of a stone sculpture). |

While each of these sculptures is unique, as noted above, they may be classified for the purposes of analysis according to the type of iconographical structure employed in integrating the multiple elements of their composition to form a unitary icon. These structures are the following:

Type A. A vertical arrangement of elements in which each figure is so positioned as to appear behind and partly above the figure below it, as if all were seated upon each other's shoulders, or standing upon the successive steps of a stairway.

Type B. A ramifying composition in which several partly represented figures are conjoined obliquely and vertically, somewhat like the spines of a fan, to a central upright figure.

Type C. An apparent compromise between these two types, consisting of one partly represented figure above and toward the back of the main figure (a modification of the method used in Type A) while the obliquely disposed figures of Type B seem to have been abbreviated in such a way that only their heads are represented on either side of the face of the central figure.

Type D. Multi-headed unitary icons of different types.

Of the selected works which remain from this experimental phase in brahmanical iconography, listed above, Sculptures numbered 1 and 2 belong to Type A; Sculptures 3 to 5 are of Type B; Sculptures 6 and 7 are related types; sculptures 8 to 10 belong to Type C; and 11 and 12 are transitional images classed as Type D. The descriptive analysis and interpretation of each work within the four types which follows will provide the iconographical background to mature, established multiple icon types of the Gupta and post periods.

The first, and probably the earlier example of Type A, is a red stone fragment found in the course of fieldwork, in one of the storerooms of the Mathura Museum (Plate 1-2). It is an upright rectangular slab, 59.7 centimetres in height. Upon one of the wider sides is one anthropomorphic figure in low relief, another headless figure above it and a head only below it. There are no signs of joints (for example, mortice sockets) on the narrow sides, which would have suggested that it was a railing pillar. On the contrary, there are faint traces of carving, now badly eroded and not recognizable as representing any particular figure or objects, on the sides where such joints would normally be found if it were part of a stone railing. It may have been a cult object in its own right; this conjecture receives some support from the description of the Nānd column, which follows, as the only other known example of Type A.

The head at the base of the fragment (Plate 2) were the turban-with-rosette headdress which is common to Kuṣāṇa sculpture and is to be seen on the face of the Ekamukhalinga from Aghapur[1], on other Kuṣāṇa Mukhalingas, and eleven times on the Nānd column. The now headless topmost figure, evidently male, retains no clear evidence of clothing or body adornment, and the right arm is broken, its remains suggesting that it was doubled back in the *abhayamudrā*. The left hand holds an object resembling a stick with a swelling outward curve at the top, which appears to have been a *cāmara*. The middle figure has a hairstyle pulled to the left of the head, which is surmounted by what appears to have been a peaked headdress, and wears pendant

ear-ornaments and a necklace. The bosom is unmistakably female. The right hand is held up, as if in *abhayamudrā*, and some elongated object is held in the left hand, leaning across the body.

The second, and only other known example of Type A, is a sculpture which presents the appearance of a populated Śivaliṅga (Plate 3-9). It stands in the open, implanted upright in the surface of a square mound faced with stone blocks among the low hills outside Pushkar not far from Ajmer in Rajasthan, near the village of Nānd.

The column stands approximately 152.5 cm high above the surface of the mound. It is carved with anthropomorphic figures on four sides and has an elongated hemispherical top. The main shaft of the column is demarcated by a rebate cut horizontally into the stone three-quarters of the distance from the base; the remaining portion constitutes the curved top of the column, having a smaller diameter than that of the shaft.

Four badly damaged figures are carved upon the top portion, each facing one of the four cardinal directions. At first glance, these seem to be grotesque, pot-bellied dwarf-like creatures of the type associated with Śiva. They appear in a squatting posture upon the narrow shelf formed by the rebate. Their hands and arms are mostly broken, but it seems from the remains that the right arm hung downward and that the left elbow rested on the left knee, with the forearm extended horizontally across the chest (Plate 6). They seem to have been depicted as completely naked, and at least two of them are ithyphallic, a feature which would suggest strongly that they are Śaiva. Their formal posture and positioning in the four directions, however, suggests that they were intended to be more than mere *Śiva-gaṇas*.

Below each of these four is a vertical series of three figures. The two upper figure of each series are depicted standing behind and partly above the one below it, in such a way as to be fully visible only from the waist upward. The lowest figure can also be seen

only above the waist; unless the mound is excavated, it cannot be ascertained whether or not there are further figures on the shaft. It is possible that there is a tenon or other plain projection beneath the lowest visible figures and that what is at present visible constitutes the whole sculpture.

Eleven of these twelve figures appears to wear the same headdress, consisting of a turban with a large 'rosette' on the crown, of the type frequently seen in Kuṣāṇa sculpture. The most immediately relevant comparative example is the headdress of the Ekamukhaliṅga from Aghapur already mentioned. On one side of the shaft, two of these figure - the third is severely damaged - have a circular halo behind the headdress, a feature not shared with any of the remaining nine figures. All the figures are represented with natural human anatomy and all are two-armed, although the forearms and hand-held symbols are in nearly every instance broken off, and none has more than one face.

My description of this complicated sculpture might suggest a Śaiva cult affiliation. But his assumption must be questioned at the outset. The following points may be set against a straight-forward Śaiva identification, Frequently, Liṅga sculptures of early date which incorporate an anthropomorphic element are unequivocally phallic in shape. The Aghapur Liṅga and the Liṅga at Guḍimallam, Andhra Pradesh, are perhaps the most striking examples, in which the base of the top section of the Liṅga has a greater diameter than the shaft. In no type Liṅga which exhibits this primitive attempt at realism has the opposite of such a relative scale of proportions been used. That is, the 'realistic' phallic symbol does not have a top portion of smaller diameter than the rest of the shaft, which is exactly what the Nānd column does have, as may be observed in Plate 9 especially Even in the less realistic Liṅga types of the Gupta period and later, the *brahmasūtra* lines which demarcate the top section do not mark an abrupt reduction in the diameter. As the Nānd pillar is not a 'realistic' phallic symbol, it may not be a Śivaliṅga.

The second point is equally negative. If the figures which quart upon the top of the shaft are Śaiva-*gaṇas*, they are ritually displaced. For such minor grotesque figures are rarely, if ever accorded such high ritual status as to warrant a place against the very apex of the most sacred of Śaiva symbols, the Liṅga. The deformed creature upon which Śaiva stands in the Guḍimallam Liṅga sculpture is clearly a defeated personification of anti-Śaiva forces; it is debased, not elevated, and Śaiva does not emanate from it as the figures upon the shaft of the Nānd column emanate from each other.

The third point which allows one to query the phallic nature of this column is the fact that there were in existence, in the third century A. D. at the latest, non-phallic cult objects of comparable shape and content. These constructs are the Buddhist pillar carvings of the kind found at Sanchi on the uprights of the gateways and at Amaravati.[2] The best illustration is that type of pillar, to be seen in relief panels from Amaravati, which has populated panels upon the shaft. A good example is a pillar, 128 cm in height[3], which depicts three successive stages in the life of the Buddha, in ascending sequences, which is followed by a frieze of squatting *gaṇas* who support the top of the pillar which has the domed apex of a miniature *stūpa*. Thus far it is a direct parallel, although in a different idiom, of the Nānd column; above the *stūpa*-apex there follow the familiar Buddhist appurtenances of *harmikā* and *dharmacakra*.

For our analysis, it is convenient to refer to the side of the Nānd column which bears the nimbate figures-and which may thus be regarded as the 'front' or most important aspect of the composition-as side 'A'. The remainder may then be termed sides 'B', 'C' and 'D' respectively, in clockwise order. Similarly, individual figures from bottom to top are numbered 1 to 3, and the apical figures are referred to as number 4. Thus the base figure on side 'A' will be called A 1

Only one scholar, R. C. Agrawala, has published this sculpture;[4] shall discuss his observations and interpretations first as providing a useful point of departure from which

to enter into my own interpretation and conclusion. Agrawala assumes from the outset of his study of the column that it is a Śivaliṅga, also referring *to* it, inaccurately, *as a; Chaturmukha Liṅga*;⁵ Liṅga having four faces. The Śaiva character of the sculpture is taken for granted, apparently, because of the shape of the column and because of the four ithyphallic figures squatting upon the rim of the shaft. As these pot-bellied, naked figures are separated by the ledge formed by the rebate from the super-imposed, standing crowned figures below them, I find it an inaccurate statement that the column 'is divided into four horizontal tiers'⁶ Agrawala is in no doubt as to the identity of these four apical figures, stating of the column that 'It depicts Lakulīśa *as ūrdhvaretas* at the top and on all the four sides; the deity is shown squattish like the Kuṣāṅga Sūrya from Mathura; all his four heads and hands are completely broken and that is why it is not possible to form any idea of the head-gears and so also of the weapons held by Lakulīśa.⁷ This seems to be a remarkable statement, simultaneously acknowledging that identificatory details are lost and asserting a positive identification. Agrawala bases his identification of all four figures as Lakulīśa upon their undeniable ithyphallic (*ūrdhvaretas*) appearance and, contradicting his description of the extent of the damage in the previous statement quoted immediately, above upon what he claims represents a 'manuscript'... (*Pustaka*)' held in the hand of one of the four figures and 'touching his chest to the left'.⁸ In view of the severely damaged condition of (these figures, this can only be guesswork; Lakulīśa, Agrawala states holds the manuscript in certain later sculptures.⁹ By reverse reasoning he claims that these squatting figures represent what 'appears to be the earliest extant representation of squattish and independent Lakulīśa.¹⁰

In 1965 Agrawala published an article¹¹ which challenged a statement made by K. V. Soundararajan to the effect that no Icons of Lakulīśa survive which antedate the sixth century A.D.,¹² the evidence adduced by Agrawala in contradicting Soundararajan consists of the squatting 'Lakulīśa' figures near the top of the Nānd column and an image upon a pillar¹³ bearing an inscription with the Gupta date 61, equivalent to A.D.

380, which is also said to represent Lakulīśa. Subsequently, in an article¹⁴ published in 1970, Agrawala attempted to prove that the figure upon the same Gupta pillar is not 'Lakulīśa' but 'Śiva as Bhairava'; one of the grounds for this change of mind-which is not acknowledged-is that no icons of Lakulīśa are found in Kuṣāṇa sculpture, including the Nānd column, with a flabby belly (*lambodara*)¹⁵ which is a prominent feature of the Gupta pillar figure. This is not only an unacknowledged reversal of a previously advanced identification, but also inaccurate description. For the four highest figures on the Nānd column are distinctly pot-bellied, as will be evident from the photographs, in marked contrast to the three superimposed figures beneath each of them; this contrast is most clearly to be seen by looking at the profiles of these figures, especially in the detail of the top of side C (Plate 6). On the grounds of insufficient identificatory details due to damage and the lack of comparative iconographical evidence from the Kuṣāṇa period, I do not accept the identification of these four figures as Lakulīśa.

Agrawala¹⁶ makes no Śaiva identifications on the remainder of the shaft; this fact in itself might lead one to suspect that the sculpture is not a Śivaliṅga. Most of the figures on the main shaft, it is stated here, 'have raised up their right hands in *abhaya* pose.' This is inaccurate. The *abhayamudrā* can, in fact, be positively identified only in the case of one figure, namely B.2. The right hands of seven of the eleven remaining figures, moreover, definitely held an object, now damaged; they could not have been posed in the empty-handed *abhaya* gesture.

Of the figures of level 1, Agrawala writes: 'The lowest (i.e. fourth from the top) portion of course depicts *Vaiṣṇava* divinities very clearly on all the four sides; the main figure is that of Vāsudeva with a halo behind his head, the lower right hand is raised up in *abhaya pose*, the upper left seems to have carried a colossal mace with bulky portion on the top as also in the Kuṣāṇa sculptures from Mathura.' There is no evidence to suggest that the latter figure (my A.1) was originally four-armed; like the other two haloed figures on this side, and indeed all the other figures on the sculpture, it appears to have had two arms. The *abhayamudrā* cannot clearly be distinguished in the broken

remains of the right arm. None of the known Kuṣāṇa sculptures from Mathura which represent Vāsudeva or Viṣṇu as independent images support a mace on the left, which is the side upon which the *cakra* (disc) is held. The club appears conventionally at this time to have been depicted in the right hand. Moreover, the object to the left of figure A.1 (Plate 3, bottom right) is not iconographically connected with it. It is a continuation downward of the damaged object held on the end of a stick or stalk in the right hand of figure D. 1 (Plate 7, bottom left), as may readily be seen by, comparing Plates 3 and 7, probably as part of the block left in place as a strengthening bracket. Figure C.1 (Plate 5) is considered by Agrawala to be female, and he notes the large pot or drinking bowl held in the left hand; it is difficult to agree that it is a lotus which is held in the right hand of this figure. Agrawala suggests that 'she may even represent Lakshmī or Ekānāṃśa [*sīc*]'. Of the other figures at level 1, he considers B. 1 (Plate 4) to be an image of Baladeva, the object resting against its left shoulder being seen as a plough (Balarāma, Baladeva or Saṅkarṣaṇa being also known as Halāyudha. 'He who is armed with a plough'). Since the 'plough' is severely damaged, this identification is uncertain; the '*abhayamudrā*' that Agrawala sees the right hand of this figure displaying is a mistake, for there was some object, now unrecognizable, held in this hand, which is supported by a thickening of the shaft of the kind mistaken for the mace of Vāsudeva in the case of figures A. 1 and D. 1 Only in figure D. 1 (plates 7 and 8) is there one unmistakable iconographic symbol. Both arms of this figure are intact, the hands being raised to shoulder level and holding, on the proper right, the slightly curved stem of what appears to have been either a large flower or else a yak-tail (*cāmara*), and on the left a fully preserved, densely-spoked disc, the diameter of which is greater than the width of the crowned face. The figure thus represents, beyond question, an aspect of Viṣṇu, holding one of the standard emblems of that god, the *cakra*. Despite the erosion of The sculpture, the manner of holding the disc is clearly archaic in terms of brahmanical art, and may be compared with the upper left-hand of the earliest Kuṣāṇa Vāsudeva icons of Mathura,¹⁷ in which the disc is similarly held with the palm facing outward and the fingers hooked around the rim between the spokes. Tempting though it is to see, in the

broken object at the end of the stick held in the right hand, the lotus blossom, another attribute of Viṣṇu it must be remarked that none of the Kuṣāṇa Vāsudeva icons in the Mathura style holds this symbolic flower. The only commonly represented object of this period which would conform to the shape of the broken cross-section remaining at the end of the stick would be the yak-tail fly-whisk. As this is held only by attendants of figures of divine Status in brahmanical sculpture, it must be presumed that the cakrabearer represents either a minor Vaiṣṇava figure of unique iconography, or else an iconographically incomplete aspect or partial manifestation of Viṣṇu.

Regarding the figures of level 1 as a group, one sees (1) a crowned and nimbate figure whom Agrawala regards as Vāsudeva; for convenience, it may be presumed that this most important side of the column originally was oriented to face the east; (2) to the right of this Vāsudeva, figure B.1, which may represent Saṅkarṣaṇa, on the south face; (3) to the left or north side of Vāsudeva another Vaiṣṇava figure, D.1, wielding the disc; and (4) at the back, or on the west face of the column at this level, figure C. 1, which appears to portray an uncrowned female bearing a pot. If this latter figure is indeed female, as part of the first of three tetrads surrounding the axis, the fact will be seen to be of significance for my argument associating the Nānd column and two of the Mathura sculptures (*infra*, Sculptures 3 and 4) as manifestations of a theological system akin to that of the Pāñcarātra.

Of level 2, it is stated only that it 'may be *Brahmabhāga(?)*', evidently in accordance with his assumption that the column as a whole is a Śivaliṅga, the three portions of which are said to be associated with Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra respectively from the base upward.¹⁸ This wholly unacceptable proposition has apparently been arrived at by Agrawala because of the irrefutably Vaiṣṇava character of at least one figure at level 1; only by ignoring this fact and then counting the three divisions above it (levels 2 and 3, plus the four squatting figures) as the standard vertical series of divisions or *bhāgas* of a Śivaliṅga could level 2 be taken as the base-portion, dedicated to Brahmā, of a vertical axis.

On examination, the four figures at level 2 are seen all to be crowned with the crested turban and all definitely male. Figure A.2 (Plate 3) is, like A. 1, distinguished by a halo encircling the crown; but whereas the halo of figure A. 1 is decorated with concentric designs, that of A.2 above it is incised with curved lines, perhaps suggestive of lotus petals. The iconographical significance of this is not clear; but the fact that there is a difference is in itself noteworthy. The left hand rests against the chest, while the right is raised to shoulder level; that this raised hand held an object is apparent from a supporting mass of the block, sloping downward to blend with the main shaft, its top upon which the hand-held emblem was represented being smashed. The figure to the proper right, B.2 (Plate 4) appears to have held its left hand in a similar position to that of the previous deity, while the right is raised in a clear *abhayamudrā*, the edge of the hand turned forward as is common in Kuṣāṅga representations of this gesture. At the back at this level, figure C.2 (Plate 5) has its left hand lowered to waist level and holding an indistinct small object, rendered in low relief across the body, resembling a small flower. The right hand is raised to the level of the chest and holds a large object, damaged beyond recognition, by the handle, which rests aslope the shoulder; there is a marked contrast between the massiveness of this emblem and that held in the corresponding hand by the (probably) female figure below, which is broad hut supported by a very slender and curving handle or stalk. The last figure at this level, D.2 (Plates 7 and 8), holds two prominent emblems, one in each hand, of which that on the right is similar to that held in the same hand of the preceding figure. In the left hand, which is held at waist level, is a long staff which rises from behind the turban-crest of the figure below (D.1), across the shoulder, and on at an upward angle until cut off by a break in the stone. At the end of this staff there appears a large leaf-shaped object which may, perhaps, be intended to represent a spearhead; there is an oblong projection from the staff or haft, just below the leaf or spearhead, connecting with the inner shoulder or neck of the figure by whom it is held.

Turning now to the figures of level 3, it will be seen that on the front (Plate 3), A.3 is

severely damaged; the broken remains of what may have been a halo are evident above the obliterated face, level with the rebate. One may assume that this figure was nimbate, since the two below it have very prominent-and clearly differentiated--*śiraścakras*. The left hand is again held across the body at chest level, and the broken right hand was evidently raised, with a broken surface beside it suggesting that it held some object. To its right, figure B.3 (Plate 4) appears to be in the same posture, but here again the hands are broken. On the rear or western side (Plate 5), C.3 has the left hand in the same position as the two preceding figures, and originally held some large object over the right shoulder which is also destroyed. Exactly the same may be said of the last figure in this series at level 3 (Plates 7 and 9), except that the left hand gesture against the chest is here seen clearly for the first time, the hand being undamaged. This strange gesture-which is repeated by so many of the figures upon the shaft that it attains almost to the conventionalized status of a *mudrā*--can here be seen to take the form of what might be termed simply *muṣṭi-karaṇa-mudr*,¹⁹ 'a fist-making gesture', for that is exactly how it appears. The knuckles are directed downward at an angle, the thumb invisible behind them; it might seem to be a pugilistic gesture, suggesting some heroic posture, or the formal stance of a man of power, somewhat like the Victorian holding of the lapel while posing for a photograph. It may derive from the practice, as seen in Gandhāra sculpture especially, but also at Mathura, of holding up the end of one's robe over the left wrist, which, to judge from the frequency of its occurrence in sculpture, was considered stylish. These very Indian figures, bare to the waist, may be imitating such fashionable gestures to convey the impression of prosperity and self-confidence, in the absence of any emblem for the hand to hold. Its appearance upon this early sculpture, in the case of as many as seven of the twelve figures on the main shaft, is noteworthy for it is a transient convention in India, possibly of Mediterranean origin, which is not perpetuated in later brahmanical iconography.

The four squatting figures upon the rebate which marks the top of the main shaft, their backs to the domed apex of the column, seem to be nearly identical in posture and

in that they are all pot-bellied, ithyphallic and naked but for a cord around the waist. That on side B (Plate 4) suggests that they probably also wore armlets, at least on the left arm. These shared characteristics, which identify them as a distinct group, also serve to differentiate them utterly from the well-proportioned standing figures on the main shaft, each one of which appears to be different. This differentiation and their support, the ledge formed by the rebate, cuts off the four topmost figures from the ascending sequence of emanations below them.

Speculation upon their precise identity, as 'Lakulīśa' or any other established figure of the pantheon is, it may be suggested, a time-wasting exercise, in view both of their severely damaged condition and the formative phase through which brahmanical iconography was passing during the Kuṣāṇa period. It is rather, I propose, the ideology behind the complex composition of such early religious sculptures which is a useful subject for investigation with regard to the origins of the later, more numerous, standardized multiple iconographic types. The purpose of the four squatting figures at the top of the shaft of the present sculpture may be inferred from the details which remain visible and from their very difference from the twelve emanatory forms below them.

It may be said with some confidence that they represent *ṛṣi*-figure: their apparent yogic posture (somewhat similar to the *utkuṭikāsana*²⁰), the *ūrdhvaretas* condition symbolized by the erect phallus²¹ and their nakedness (*dig-ambara*)²² would all indicate that they are *yogins* enjoying the spiritual benefits of their exercises. Their paunchy appearance does not contradict this proposition: the Buddhist teaching of avoidance of extreme asceticism had long been known, and the Hindu tradition itself does not preclude sensual enjoyments on the part of enlightened seers. Indeed, Brahmā, the embodiment of wisdom and the seer, although not represented as ithyphallic, is traditionally portrayed with a pot-belly.²³ As *ṛṣis*, they are not divine figures—unless they represent apotheosised *yogins* such as the Lakulīśa figure whom these images represent in the opinion of Agrawala—but rather types or symbols of the

enlightened state to which the devotee may aspire. To such a man the gods and their associated mythology become to a degree irrelevant, for the *yogin* who has achieved his aim (known as a *sidha*²⁴) is in a beatific state and immortal as are the gods; he becomes a *maharṣi*, inhabiting one of the highest worlds, or even attending the court of Indra.²⁵ On earth, their worship was in epic times especially associated with groves of sacred trees which stood between earth and heaven.²⁶ Similar notions were encountered in modern India during the field research for this work: in several villages, and especially on the banks of rivers, was found a holy tree locally termed the *mokṣ-pipplā* (Sanskrit *mokṣa-pippala*, tree of salvation'). In Kuṣāṇa times, the idea of the saviour finding enlightenment under a particular tree was already well established in the Buddhist and Jaina traditions.

The ascending sequence of divinities below each of these *maharṣis* on the shaft of the column at Nānd may symbolize the progressive meditative states through which the devotee will pass, each one proceeding from the last, on his way to the liberation of the spirit. The column may, in short, be a visual model of the mental processes leading to *mokṣa*; simultaneously- this process in the individual being a microcosmic reflex of the macrocosm-the sculpture would also be a symbol of the cosmological process. Such a concept would appear to be more closely related to the function of the Vedic *yūpa*, the wooden stake or pole within the sacrificial enclosure, than to the phallic symbolism of the Śivaliṅga. These views will be supported by the argument which follows, in my interpretation of the column.

Vertical series of similar superimposed dispositions appear not to have been continued as independent cult objects in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. They were, however, perpetuated as integral elements of more complicated multi-headed icons which were first formulated in the Gupta period, especially the Vaiṣṇava iron type of Viśvarūpa. For this reason, their original religious significance must be investigated here in order to establish what exactly made them relevant to the later iconography of complex multiple images.

As the two sculptures of Type A just described are the only known examples of an

independent cult object conceived as a vertical series of figures within the Kuṣāṇa period, it may be proposed that they are two versions of the same iconographical conception. The fragment in the Mathura Museum would then represent an earlier attempt to translate into sculptural form the concept which finds its fullest expression, as far as is known, in the Nānd column. The back of the Mathura Museum fragment is not carved at all, the relief is shallow, and the squatting posture of the figures on the front is more typical of archaic deities than of the later, fully developed icons which mostly-though not exclusively²⁷ -represent the deity standing erect. The Nānd column, on the other hand, is sculpted nearly from top to bottom on all four sides in very high relief, and the principal figures on the main shaft are standing in contrast to those above them who adopt the squatting posture. The two sculptures may thus be regarded as representing the possible beginning and the zenith of a short-lived brahmanical iron type, the intermediate developmental phases of which have yet to be discovered.

If my opinion that such a sculpture does not represent a type of Śivaliṅga accepted, then an entirely different columnar concept has to be sought which would explain the form of these cult objects. The Mauryan pillars and *yūpa-yaśṭi* or central pole of the Buddhist *stūpa* can have no direct bearing on this problem being plain columns with the only significant elements placed at the top; the shaft itself is not adorned with figures in either case. The reverse is true of the Nānd column.

The archaic concept of '*yūpa*', the sacrificial stake of Vedic religion, however, can be presumed to be the archetype of any non-phallic, columnar construct serving a ritual purpose: there is no more ancient, man-made pillar-concept known in Indian religion. The most coherent and explicit development of this concept is that traceable to the central element in the cosmogonic theory of the oldest surviving Vaiṣṇava sect in India, the Pāñcarātra. An examination of the oldest extant Sanskrit scriptures²⁸ of this sect leads to the conclusion that some of its original literary imagery appears to have been translated into iconographic format Mathura and Nānd, in the Kuṣāṇa sculptures which are here categorized as Types A and B.

There exist numerous iconographical portions embedded in the large corpus of Pāñcarātra literature²⁹ which clearly relate to extant icon types, but the Kuṣāṇa images under discussion are not described in them. This fact reinforces the argument that the sculptures are only to be explained in terms of the metaphors employed to describe the cosmogonic process in the earlier strata of sectarian scripture, before the iconographical treatise (*śilpa-śātra*) became a distinct literary category within the wider context of the *Purāṇas*, *Tantras* and *Agamas*.

The central metaphor, in the Pāñcarātra texts, is the *Viśākha-yūpa*. It represents the original unitary source and the secondary self-dividing source, in the form of a continuum, of the entire universe. It progresses but always at every stage overlaps, accounting for everything, without hiatus. The divisions of the source are *vyūhas*, 'pushings-apart', from the dividing secondary source, and they are personified as the kinsmen Vāsudeva, (Kṛṣṇa), his elder brother Sañkarṣaṇa (Baladeva, Balarāma, Halāyudha), his son Pradyumna and grandson Aniruddha: members of the Sāttvata clan³⁰ whose kinship and overlapping life spans symbolize the integrity and continuity of the cosmic process. In one of the earliest known³¹ Pāñcarātra texts, the *Sāttvata-saṃhitā*³², the *Viśākha-yūpa* is described in detail as 'a great brilliant column divided into four sections. Each section is allocated to one of the *Vyūhas* deities, but also contains all four of them respectively occupying the four points of the compass. This symbolizes the uninterrupted continuity of *Vyūhas* through all the four states of consciousness³³ ... These four deities Vāsudeva etc. being identical with God, each incorporates all four *Vyūha* deities and hence in each state all four are present the entire column thus represents the one and single deity³⁴ This deity is 'the holy god, *Viśākha-yūpa*'.³⁵ The *yūpa*-concept has thus been transformed into a personal god, symbol of the continuum but made up of four quadruple stages, each constituent being a member of the related tetrad, repeated four times with one predominant at every stage.

If this imagery is visualized, it is clear that a horizontal series of anthropomorphic images could convey neither the overlapping sequence nor the presence of a group of four at each step

in the progression. A free-standing vertical construct is essential. Perhaps the best modern object of comparison would be a telescope standing on end and gradually being extended section by section. And the nearest ancient Indian illustration of the metaphor is unquestionably the Nānd column. The four vertical stages are clearly represented, the fourth being distinctly separated from the other three. All the other elements are distinctly present: the four figures facing the four cardinal directions at every level; the overlapping of one figure by the next to represent the continuity of evolution; and a dominant figure at each stage distinguished by a halo. It is difficult to conceive of a more precise representation of the cosmogonic imagery of the *Sāttvata-saṃhitā*. It is proposed that the Nānd column, far from being a Śivaliṅga, is an icon of the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra god, Viśākhayūpa.

That the Viśākhayūpa was conceived primarily as a meditational image rather than as an icon is apparent from the earliest known Pāñcarātra text to describe it fully, the *Sāttvata-saṃhitā* ³⁶

It becomes apparent from this text that the notion was developed in order to provide the *yogin* with a representation of the indivisible and changeless creator God pervading the Vyūha-s as Antaryāmin so that he would be able to visualize that symbol for purposes of meditation... Counting all the manifestations of the Vyūha-s in all four sections of the Viśākha-yūpa we arrive at sixteen sub-divisions of the Viśākha yūpa. It may be claimed that these sub-divisions reflect the stage the adept has reached in his spiritual elevation from gross to subtle, while the Viśākha-yūpa encompasses all these stages. Practicing meditation the initiate gradually loses consciousness of the material world and rises higher and higher as it were into the region of pure creation till he reaches the summit, i.e. the transcendental state. The Viśākha-yūpa concept was necessary because the Pāñcarātra strove to make its tenets explicit.³⁷

It appears far more reasonable to regard the Nānd column as one such attempt by a Pāñcarātra cult to express its salvation technique-which is virtually a reversal of its cosmogonic

imagery-than as Śaiva cult-object.³⁸

The three Kuṣāṇa sculptures of type B-those of a ramifying composition - (Plates 10-17) and two related pieces will now be dismissed. Three are fragments and consequently no definitive identifications can be made. Original interpretations will be suggested, however, where identifications offered by other writers appear inadequate. The most important point of discussion for the purposes of this study is the reason for the invention of the ramifying composition, since this same composition in more complex form, is to occur in the iconography of later brahmanical multiple images. The points of contact between this experimental disposition of plural forms and its perpetuation in certain images of fixed iconography in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods require examination if the logic of progression in iconography is to be understood.

The first work to be examined here, assembled fragments of a stone sculpture, is an incomplete reconstruction of a multiple deity (Plates 10-13) which is housed in the Mathura Museum. It comprises four assembled fragments³⁹ recovered from the Saptasamudri well at Mathura. They are assembled in the manner shown in Figure I. I. This was evidently intended to be a free-standing icon, being carved on all sides. The total height of the remains is 43.2 centimeters. The original composition appears, from the front, to have taken the form of a central male figure with a smaller figure rising in a curve from behind each shoulder and a third figure emerging vertically from the crown of the central deity. This is inferred from the actual remains which from the front present the following appearance (Plate 10).

A male figure, broken off below the abdomen, wears a short garland of leaves and flowers, armlets and quadruple bracelets which are incised with a vine pattern, and a plain necklace. Upon the head, a tall flat-topped crown of cylindrical shape, decorated with a repeated 'rosette enclosing an unopened bud'⁴⁰ pattern edged with a narrow fringe-like margin⁴¹ and with a thin upper rim, is held in place⁴² by a thick head-band to which a flower is attached in front of the ears. Pendant ear-ornaments are broken away and the lobes of the ears are, unusually,

pierced; the broken stonework on either side of the face which overlaps the garland extends down behind the ears from the head-band, suggesting that it originally represented long locks of hair⁴³ falling upon the shoulders. This crowned figure appears on cursory inspection to be two-armed, the right raised in the abhaya mudrā with the edge of the hand turned forward and backed by a floral pad⁴⁴ while the left is lowered, the hand being turned palm-upward to support a now-broken object; but the addition of fragment 14.395 to the proper right (the junction is seen in Plate 12) clearly shows that there was a second hand on this side, the fingers of which can be seen curling over the top of a mace (Plates 10 and 12). A thickening of the left upper arm and a broken stump beneath the armband indicate that there was also a second arm on the other side (Plate 11). The lower part of the face has been somewhat damaged, but the round eyes, heavily lidded and pouched, still direct their fixed gaze. Freehand sketch. Not to scale downward (Plate 10), while above the centre of the unbroken, sinuous line of the brows the circular ūṛṇā⁴⁵ is clearly represented.

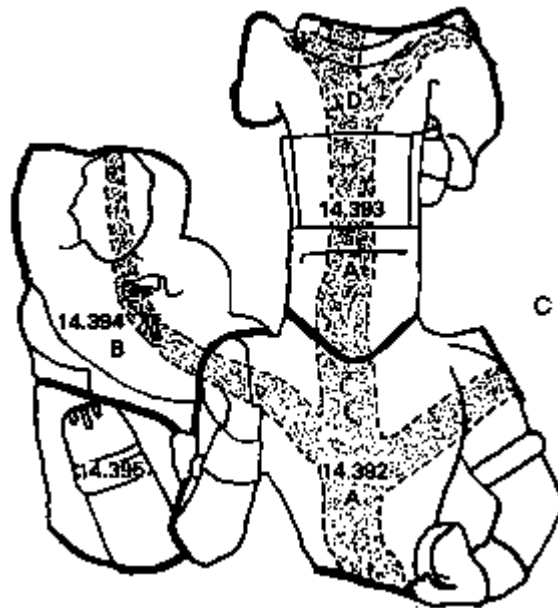


Fig 1.1 Diagram of Mathura Museum fragments 14-392-5, showing how the fragments are assembled, and the disposition of the tree on the back

Even in the absence of any sculptural signs of an original halo, the formal posture, the crown, ūrṇā and above all the multiplication of arms, provide ample evidence for the divine nature of this figure. The identity of the god is to be inferred from the presence of the large club or mace (*gadā*) which-along with the disc (*cakra*) which was almost certainly held in the missing second left hand of this icon-was the weapon typical of Viṣṇu in the Kuṣāṇa and all succeeding periods.

As it is relevant to the next stage in the description of this image, a particular observation may be made here concerning the manner of representation of the mace which appears immediately below the figure emerging from behind the right shoulder of the main god. The mace may therefore be symbolically related to the emergent figure. Its shaft is incised with overlapping 'scales' pointing upward, suggestive of a natural palm-tree trunk rather than an ornamented artifact, although the separate head of the weapon is shown firmly bound in place with thick cord (Plates 10 and 12). This 'natural' club seems to be unique in Kuṣāṇa Vaiṣṇava iconography. Similar 'scales', though much larger in proportion to the trunk, are to be seen in the skillfully rendered sculpture of a fan-palm (*tāla*) from Pawāya, dating from the fourth or fifth century A.D.⁴⁶ The fan-palm is one of the symbols of Balarāma or Baladeva (alias Saṅkarṣaṇa) in epic mythology: he is known by the epithet *tāla-dhvaja*, 'Having the Fan-Palm as his Banner' in the *Mahābhārata*.⁴⁷ That sculpture and another from Besnagar are considered to be the capitals of pillars-*tala-dhvaja* in the nominal sense--representing Saṅkarṣaṇa.⁴⁸ The tree is tapped for its intoxicating juice, which is drunk by the characteristically inebriate Saṅkarṣaṇa,⁴⁹ anthropomorphic images of whom conventionally portray him holding a goblet among other symbols. Balarāma or Saṅkarṣaṇa, described in the next paragraph, is the brother of Kṛṣṇa⁵⁰ who holds the club.

Emerging from-or merging with-the proper right shoulder of the central four-armed god in the sculpture under discussion, appears a two-armed male figure (Plates 10 and 12). This figure is sculpted to a scale almost half that of the main deity, but the body is elongated, being stretched

outward and upward away from the point of junction. Despite a certain exaggeration of some features - such as the disproportionately deep chest-this elongation of the torso is evidently an attempt at anatomical realism, given the posture which the figure is made to adopt, namely leaning sideways to its right with its right arm raised. The movement-and its direction-implied by this posture, which is as difficult to adopt physically as it is to portray artistically, will be important to the interpretation of the icon as a whole, which follows the present description of it. Behind this small figure, visible on either side, the stone is carved in a rounded and undulating shape; this background widens to enfold the head of the figure, above which level it is broken off. But the inside of this concavity is incised with slightly divergent vertical lines linked by curved horizontal lines, rather like crooked ladders. This had become the conventional method of representing the underside of a Nāga below its multiple heads; the height of its development, in the Gupta period, is perhaps best seen in the magnificent multiple serpent-head canopy curving over the head of Viṣṇu Śeṣaśāyīn in the southern wall panel of the Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh.⁵¹ The technique had been known from the time of the reliefs around the Bharhut *stūpa*, where the serpentine bodies and hoods of the Nāgarājas Erāpata and Muchulinda were similarly treated⁵² in the second century B.C. From the remains of the serpent-head canopy behind the side-figure of the icon under discussion, the number of serpent-heads appears to have been live. This serpent-backed figure wears a typical Kuṣāṇa turban-with-rosette of a type similar to that seen on the standing figures of the Nānd pillar and the head at the base of the Mathura Museum fragment (*supra* page 3); a triple headed necklace with pendant leaves, evidently from the same tree as those worn by the central god in his garland, in clusters of three; and a four-strand girdle about the waist. The right arm, although broken near the shoulder, was evidently raised above the head; and the left holds a thin-stemmed goblet, into which the eyes seem to direct their glance, in a natural manner under the chin, as if pausing between draughts. The multi-headed serpent and the cup of wine are among the traditional emblems of Saṅkarṣaṇa, whom this figure beyond question represents, as noted first by N.P. Joshi.⁵³ Standing figures of Saṅkarṣaṇa of identical iconography and posture-except for the curve of this outward leaning figure-are known to have become standardized

iconographic forms within about a century of the creation of the present image in the Mathura area.⁵⁴ From the broken projection of circular cross-section (Plate 11) above and toward the back of the left shoulder of the main four-armed god at the centre of this composition, it is only reasonable to suppose that another complementary figure was conjoined on that side.

A fourth figure, represented only from the chest upward and to a scale only slightly smaller than that of the main deity, is sculpted upon the flat top surface of the crown. It is set back from the front edge of the crown, leaving a narrow curved 'shelf' before it. The head of this figure is lost; his right arm, though severely damaged, appears to have been raised from the elbow, probably with the hand in the *abhayamudrā*. The left hand is lowered to the imaginary level of the hip, in fact the side of the crown within which one is thus made to conceive of the lower part of the body being concealed. Being familiar with standing icons of Bodhisattvas with their hands in exactly these positions, it is difficult for the modern archaeologist and must have been impossible for the contemporary observer not to gain the impression through this extremely clever overlapping device, that the apical figure stands within, or rises from the interior of the principal god below it. This figure wears a solid jewelled necklace and the upper part of a robe over the left shoulder and arm, the end being draped, in what appears to have been the stylish fashion of the time, over the wrist. R. C. Agrawala⁵⁵ sees in the object held in the lowered left hand of this figure 'a double-pronged *vajra*-like object'. I feel sure it is simply the water flask which is held by the Kuṣāṇa Bodhisattva figures which this partial image so closely resembles.

The trunk, branches and fruits of a tree are sculpted in fairly high relief on the back surface of the icon (Plate 13), its foliage being rendered by incised lines which are extended around the side of the image in places. It is clear that the leaves are of the same kind of those worn in the garland of the main deity and which hang from the necklace of the Balarāma or Saṅkarṣaṇa figure. The tree has been identified as the red-flowering *aśoka*,⁵⁶ but this cannot be taken as definitive.⁵⁷ A parrot or similar bird is shown seated upon one of the branches. So many Indian sculptures, in the Kuṣāṇa and earlier periods, are backed by trees, that the presence of a tree

behind this icon need not have any particularly symbolic value. The correspondence between the form of the tree and the structure of the icon, however, may be noted here. The trunk rises directly behind the main four-armed god. One branch adorns the Balarāma figure and there is another ramification at the same level to the left, most probably to appear behind the missing figure which projected from the left shoulder of the god. There is a further bifurcation near the top, behind the headless figure at the probable apex of the composition. It is possible, given the likeness of posture between that of the headless apical figure and many Kuṣāṇa standing Bodhisattva sculptures, that like them it wore a turban with rosette as does the Balarāma figure.

I shall refer to the main, central figure as (A), the Saṅkarṣaṇa figure as (B), its missing counterpart on the left as (C), and the top figure as (D), as shown in Figure 1.1 on page 18.

Viewed from the front, the icon appears from the remains originally to have looked like a central four-armed god within whose body-at the shoulders and head-were implanted the lower anatomy of three smaller two-armed figures. What cannot be inferred from the remains alone are the posture-standing or seated-of the central figure (A), the iconography of the missing figure originally conjoined with the left shoulder (hypothetical (C)), and the facial features of the apical (D), if indeed this was the final figure in the vertical axis of the whole icon.

From the comparative evidence of four-armed icons identified as Viṣṇu or the integrated [Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa + Viṣṇu + Nārāyaṇa] cult figure⁵⁸ also dating from the Kuṣāṇa period and found in the Mathura area,⁵⁹ it is clear that the principal figure (A) represents the same god. The mace is held, or rather supported at the top, in a similar manner in the simple icons and in this more complex sculpture, but lower, in order to permit figure (B) to appear unobstructed. As all the Kuṣāṇa Vaiṣṇava remains which are available for comparison, including the Nānd column, depict the god standing, it is most probable that in this icon the main figure (A) was also originally represented in the straight *soma-bhāṅga* posture. It will be proposed that there are specific reasons pertaining to cult history for the depiction of the main figure in the Musānagar relief panel (Plate 17), which is also of a ramifying composition, as a seated god. Comparison

between the latter relief and the present sculpture would indicate, on the basis of their virtually identical composition, that the hypothetical (C) must indeed have emerged from the left shoulder of (A) in the same manner as (B).

The probable apical (D), although its head is broken off, has clear iconographic parallels in the standing Bodhisattva figures of the Kuṣāṇa period: the robe over the left shoulder and arm, the water flask held at waist level and the raised right hand are all features derived from contemporary Buddhist iconography. The necklace worn by this figure is unlike those of (A) and (B); also unlike them, no leaves or flowers are worn around the neck.

This direct borrowing of stock figures, with a minimum of detail altered, from Buddhist statuary—as evidenced in the icon under discussion by (B) and (D)—emphasizes the early formative character of this phase in brahmanical art. Originality appears to have lain at least as much in novel combinations of already existent figures as in innovatory details (such as the mace and disc of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, for example, which are added to a figure which might otherwise appear in a contemporary Buddhist frieze). It was compensation for an initial paucity of exclusive (non-Buddhist, non-Jaina) symbols that was one of the causes which contributed to the creation of multiple images in early brahmanical art.

The contemporary single brahmanical icons support this proposition as strongly as the multiple images under discussion. The early four-armed images of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa in the Mathura region provide clear examples of the same tendency. These icons retain the original arms and hand-positions of Buddhist cult figures but superimpose an extra pair of hands to display the new cult symbols of mace and disc.⁶⁰ The basic form remains that of a much older, non-brahmanical tradition. Similar, and the more striking in its bizarre appearance, is an early attempt to represent the lion as a brahmanical cult figure by adding a pair of human arms, the hands of which again wield the mace and disc, to an otherwise crude but naturalistic representation of a seated lion.⁶¹ It is apparent from these examples that multiplicity of limbs was not, in origin, a wholly new brahmanical conception introduced with a specific and fully

formulated symbolical significance, but the result of the addition of limbs to already established, naturalistic art forms. The central figure (A) of the icon under discussion is one product of the same multiplicity-through-addition process: the originality of this image by itself lies almost entirely in its superadded pair of arms and hand-held symbols.

Multiplicity of whole figures in a single conjoint icon appears to be another expression of the same early 'conservatism'- as one might more positively characterize the result of a lack of a wide, systematized and flexible range of symbols through the manipulation of which the complicated concepts expressed by early multiple icons might have been expressed more succinctly. Here, as in the single icons, the original forms remain. Little changed, in spite of the radically different ideology which led to their conjunction in a unitary multiple icon. Experimentation in early brahmanical iconography consisted largely, at this Kuṣāṇa stage, of the ingenious manipulation-into horizontally juxtaposed and vertically and laterally conjoined groupings-of existing non-brahmanical images.

What we may see in the icon under discussion, from the art-historical point of view, is a new combination of Buddhist Indra, a Buddhist Nāga and a Bodhisattva, all clearly recognizable despite the brahmanical alterations to details of the appearance of (A) and (B). That brahmanical iconography of this kind was created out of the extant Buddhist iconography, and not *vice-versa*, is evident from the long anterior Buddhist art tradition as compared with the sudden brahmanical experimentation in modification and conjunction of the figures from that tradition. Bhattacharji⁶² suggests that 'during the early centuries A.D. there was brisk interchange of ideas which became operative both in Hindu and Buddhist mythology' and 'Vaiṣṇavism and Buddhism influenced each other in framing the Jātaka stories and moulding the avatāra-myths'. This may be true;⁶³ what is certain is that the same guilds of sculptors who carried out Buddhist commissions also sculpted the experimental brahmanical icons which are under discussion here. And iconographical formulae dictating the form of scenes from Buddhist legend were freely disseminated among the artisan communities along the Gandhara-Mathura

axis of the Kuṣāṇa empire, as comparisons between the iconography in the two different styles clearly shows.⁶⁴ The resultant Buddhist motifs and artistic techniques acquire, under brahmanical direction, a totally new significance; and the manner in which such an abrupt shift in symbolical content was achieved by a rearrangement of the elements in the original Buddhist artistic formula is astonishing. The best comparative Buddhist work illustrative of this re-deployment of established motifs is a Gandhara panel,⁶⁵ which contains, in four contiguous figures, the whole artistic basis upon which the quadruple brahmanical icon under discussion was created.

The panel, which is almost perfectly preserved, depicts the nativity of the Buddha. It is described by Lippe⁶⁶ who dates it to the late second or early third century A.D.; the main group of figures in the centre of the panel may be here briefly described and the elements of the composition compared with the Mathura brahmanical icon under discussion. A tree (in both sculptures) backs the main figure (Queen Mahāmāyā: (A)) from the side of whom emerges, at an upward angle, a smaller figure (the infant Buddha: (B)) and hypothetical (C) which is received upon a cloth by a figure wearing a cylindrical crown (Indra: (A)) above which is the bust of another figure (aerial deity resembling Brahma also standing behind Indra: (D)). This group in the Gandhara Buddhist tableau thus contains the motifs of the tree and of the lateral emergence of one figure from another in addition to the partial superimposition of one figure by another in vertical series to represent perspective and, as here, vertical spatial separation—the gods descending to witness the miraculous birth. It also contains the sculptural conjunction of the crown of Indra with the figure intended to be seen as above and behind it, which is a remarkable artistic parallel to the top of the brahmanical icon in which the crown of Buddhist Indra is transferred to brahmanical Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa. It may also be noted that in both sculptures, the upper figure is positioned toward the back of the crown with which it is merged.

This partial superimposition of one figure on another in vertical series, as seen in (A)

and (D) of the Mathura quadruple icon, had brahmanical parallels in the Kuṣāṇa period in the first two sculptures discussed above; and it has been argued that the unifying construct at the core of one of these, the Nānd column, was the *yūpa*. The obliquely projecting figures (B) and hypothetical (C), on the other hand represent a new initiative in brahmanical iconography; it must therefore be asked what construct was employed to unify the lateral with the vertical figures of this quadruple icon.

The answer appears to be the tree which is carved on the back of the image described above, where it was pointed out that the trunk and branches adorne the conjoined anthropomorphic figures. The result is the imposition of a natural, organic unity upon the frankly unnatural anthropomorphic combination which constitutes the icon as seen from the front. The Buddhist and Jaina tradition of placing human and divine figures against the background of a tree was thus adapted to the more complex structural forms of the new brahmanical iconography. I do not propose that the pattern of the tree dictated the form of the icon, but rather that it was employed as the unifying construct of a complicated icon. It is probable, however, that in this particular work the tree was more symbolically integral to the icon as a whole than may have been the case in other multiple tree-backed images. This point will be taken up in my interpretation of this sculpture.

In support of the argument advanced here. I may cite one of the earliest Buddhist examples of the same technique—that of a vegetal motif unifying multiple aspects of a single figure—in which the theme is less complex than the doctrine expressed in the brahmanical sculpture under discussion, although the composition is more complicated. The Buddhist example is a relief from Sarnath (now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta) in the Gupta style, representing the subject generally known as 'The Great Miracle of Śrāvastī'.⁶⁷ This refers to an incident in the Buddha's life in which, in order to refute and confound disputing factions within the *śaṅgha* when they came to the city of Śrāvastī, he projected multiple images of himself in the air. This theme was expressed elsewhere in Buddhist art by the depiction of smaller figures emanating directly from the body of the

Buddha in a fan-shaped pattern of the type being examined here: but in the Sarnath example, which can scarcely be more than two and a half-centuries later than the Kuṣāṇa image under discussion here, the ramifying: vegetal construct which is seen on the reverse of the latter sculpture is brought forward to appear upon the front of the Gupta image as part of the visual composition.

A description of this relief is necessarily long. The Buddha appears seated upon a lotus at the centre of the base of the relief; this figure is the largest in the panel. From the stalk supporting his lotus-throne there are five ramifications. Two tendrils emerge sideways and upward to support upon a small lotus on either side of the Buddha an attendant holding a *cāmara*, emphasising the superiority of this central figure. Two parallel tendrils terminate in larger lotuses, each supporting a standing image of the Buddha. The first pair of tendrils bifurcate at this level to support, above the standing figures, a pair of seated images of the Buddha at the mid-point of the left and right margins of the stele. Two more tendrils emerge from behind the nimbus of the Buddha seated at the base, ramifying obliquely outward and upward to support two standing Buddha images upon lotuses, beneath which the tendrils ramify again to end in another two lotuses on either side, supporting two more standing images of the Buddha. A lotus rests upon the top of the principal Buddha's nimbus, upon which is seated another image; above it, a further two seated images appear one above the other, growing successively smaller as they ascend. There is a further bifurcation of the main central stalk from behind the nimbus of the second vertical Buddha, the tendrils supporting upon a lotus further two seated images of the Buddha flanking the apical figure. Discounting the attendants, there are thus fourteen images of the central figure, all connected to the principal Buddha by the tendrils of a single plant.

The technique of making visible the connection between a single figure and multiple aspects of itself could scarcely be more explicit. In brahmanical iconography, from the time of the Kuṣāṇa icon under discussion, the connecting plant-motif or construct was generally not explicitly depicted. The reason for this, as will be seen in the discussion of

later brahmanical icons (but including the next to be examined, Sculpture 4) is that there was a clear tendency in brahmanical iconography to identify the icon with the construct-the tree-rather than use it merely as a convenient framework: which is the way in which the proliferating-lotus motif is employed in this Sarnath Buddhist composition.

If the ramifications of the tree, in this and in the next sculpture to be examined, are not random decorative patterns but cohesive constructs, it is possible that the icon under discussion originally consisted not of four but of six conjoined figures, two, now lost, having been merged with (D). For the tree ramifies upward behind the shoulders of this figure as it does behind (A). The broken top portion of the serpent-head canopy above the head of figure (R) could have been sculpturally connected, as a support, to the base of a parallel figure above it. In the absence of further fragments which might have belonged to this sculpture, there can be no certainty as to the original overall structure of the icon. There are two hypothetical reconstructions of the upper portion of the image which are possible, on the basis of the comparison. The two objects of comparison are those shown in Plate 14 consisting of five emanations radiating from a central figure, and in Plate 24 in which the central figure is flanked by two side-faces while another figure rises upward behind its head. In the first, the ramifications of the tree carved on the back adorse not only two shoulder-level minor figures, but also, at a higher level, two more figures flanking the central apical figure. In the second example, there is a single damaged apical figure very similar in appearance to the remains of (D) in the icon under discussion, and it is surrounded by a large plain nimbus; the figures attached to the shoulders of the icon, (B) and hypothetical (C), seem in this example to have been abbreviated in such a way that only their heads appear-and the tree on the reverse merely forks at the level of the shoulders of the main figure, extending no further either laterally or vertically. These comparisons might suggest that the icon was, like the first comparative example, a composition of six figures in its original, complete form. An examination of the fracture lines on the apical (D), however, leads to the opposite conclusion. The fracture is an extensive break running the whole length of the

upper arm of (D), rather than a clearly defined broken portion attached to the shoulder as seen in figure (A) below it, suggesting that, as in the second example, a large halo originally surrounded the whole bust. Whether one might with more justification decide upon the first or the second reconstruction, based upon inference from comparison and inspection of the remains will depend upon the most probably accurate interpretation of the icon.

It has been demonstrated that the central, four-armed crowned (A) of the icon must, on iconographical grounds, represent a Vaiṣṇava deity. It has also been shown that the Nāga-like figure conjoined with its right shoulder is Balarāma, alias Saṅkarṣaṇa.

In Bhāgavata theology,⁶⁸ the principal cult-figures were the kinsmen Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Sāmba, these the lords (*bhagavat*) or heroes (*vīra*) of the Vṛṣṇi clan.⁶⁹ Only one probable representation of this cult group is known to archaeology; this is a stone relief from Kondamotu, Andhra Pradesh⁷⁰ which shows the five ranged in linear series on either side of a seated lion wielding the mace and disc in two super-headed human hands. For the present purpose, this plaque along with a Mathura inscription⁷¹ is sufficient evidence to show that the five heroes were indeed worshipped as group-icons in different parts of India within the Kuṣāṇa-Gupta period and earlier. The Pāñcarātra system, as I have shown in relation to the Nānd column, transformed four of the heroes of this cult (the excluded figure being Samba) into symbols of the stages in a new- formulation of the cosmogonic process. The historical connections between the Bhāgavata and Pāñcarātra systems have been much discussed.⁷²

As noted by Gonda,⁷³ however, although 'Scholars are ... agreed that the Vyūha doctrine is one of the foremost tenets of the earlier Pāñcarātra school of thought,' they are 'at a loss to explain its origin and the exact historical relations between the Kṛṣṇaism or Bhāgavatism of the Bhagavadgītā and the fully developed Pāñcarātra religion.' As represented by the development iconography. I regard the historical sequence of the

three phases noted by Gonda to be represented by (1) the Nānd Viś and the Mathura sculpture under discussion, both of Kuṣāṇa date; (2) the first known Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu icon at Mathura of early Gupta date; and (3) the slightly later icon at Śamalājī, Gujarat (both to be examined later (pp.131, 144)).¹ I am at present concerned with laying the groundwork for the demonstration of this evolution of religious concepts which will become apparent only as one progresses through the stages of iconographical development. Nevertheless, it appears to me that the most articulate iconographic expression of essential Pāñcarātra theology in Indian sculpture is found in these early experimental works of Kuṣāṇa date which are currently being discussed: subsequent statuary integrates this Pāñcarātra imagery into more complex designs where their force, if not their essential meaning, is dissipated.⁷⁴

In proposing an identification of the Kuṣāṇa sculpture under consideration here, the following factors are taken into consideration. The surrounding figures are so sculpted as to appear completely merged-downward from the loins in the case of (B) (Saṅkarṣaṇa) and, by inference, of the hypothetical (C) opposite, and downward from below the chest in the case of the apical (D)-with the central (A). If, as I have suggested, the tree carved on the reverse of the icon serves more than a purely decorative function, being a unifying construct, then on the basis of the nature of this construct--a growing, ramifying plant-(B) and (C) may be regarded as growing outward from the substance of the god Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa (A) as branches spring from the trunk of a tree. The outward and upward-curving posture of Saṅkarṣaṇa (B), which I have noted, is highly suggestive of this emerging movement. The headless (B), by contrast, is straight, being as it were an extension upward of the trunk, and larger in scale than the ramifying figures, as if conforming to the larger girth of the trunk as compared to the branches.

If Saṅkarṣaṇa is the brother of the central Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, it is consistent with the clearly displayed unified nature of the four figures to suppose that the remaining two emerging figures (C) and (D), are also related in kinship terms to the central god. That is, they were intended to represent the, son, Pradyumna, and the grandson, Aniruddha,

of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa (and the entire icon then takes the form of a 'family tree' of four of the live Bhāgavata Vṛṣṇi-*vīras* who were taken up by Pāñcarātra theology as personifications of the *vyūha*-stages of the Viśākhayūpa. The mythological generations of the *vyūha* lineage symbolically correspond to the generation of one *vyūha* from that preceding it, the generative source being Vāsudeva, represented in our quadruple icon by the four-armed (A).

The *Vyūhas* are named after the elder brother, the son, and the grandson, respectively, of Kṛṣṇa. namely Saṃkarṣaṇa (or Balarāma, Baladeva), Pradyumna, and Aniruddha; and the pairs of *Guṇas* connected with these are respectively: *jñāna* and *bala*; *aiśvarya* and *vīrya*; *śakti* and *tejas*.⁷⁵

All six *guṇas* (the elemental 'qualities' defined during the process of creation), before pairing, constitute in aggregate the body, of the personal god Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva (*śāḍguṇya-viragaṃ devam*: 'the god whose body consists of the six *guṇas*'-*Ahīrbudhnya-saṃhitā* 6.25). It should be made clear that these are the '*aprākṛta*, ('not belonging to Nature') *guṇas*', conceived as the 'attributes' of the Creator which appear at the first phase of movement in His potential state -- in the 'pure creation' (*śuddha-sṛṣṭi*), before, or underlying, the manifestation of the *triguṇa* the triad of gross *guṇas* consisting of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, whose evolution immediately anticipates the material creation.⁷⁶ This distinction between the two types of *guṇa* is fundamental to Pāñcarātra cosmogonic theory; images representing Vāsudeva and his kinsmen conjoined with or emanating from him are visible manifestations of developments in the (*śuddha-sṛṣṭi* phase of evolution, upon which depends the existence of all other gods starting with Balarāma Viṣṇu and Śiva) if my theory concerning this image is correct.

Schrader,⁷⁷ in explaining the concept of projected pairs of these six primary *guṇas*', makes an observation which is as important iconographically as it is theologically:

The apparition of pairs denotes the beginning of that process of emanation which has

been well defined as 'a process which, while bringing the product into existence, leaves the source of the product unchanged.'⁷⁸

If the main figure (A) in this icon can be justifiably equated with a visual image Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa and the figure emanating from his right shoulder as a portrayal of Saṅkarṣaṇa, then an identification of the original whole icon as a plastic representation of the Pāñcarātra *catur-vyūha* cosmogonic metaphor seems conclusive. The hypothetical reconstruction of the original form of the sculpture as a combination of six figures is, in terms of the above summary of Pāñcarātra theory, untenable: although Vāsudeva is *ṣāḍguṇya-vigraha*, the six *guṇas* emanate from him in twos, each pair being symbolically represented by a single member of his family. A quadruple image is the only construct which accurately mirrors the textual theory as presented by Schrader.

But One crucial question remains. How many *vyūhas* there: three or four? Is this a *catur-vyūhas* or a *tri-vyūha* image? For can Vāsudeva, who is the source of all the six *guṇas* embodied by his three *-vyūha*-emanations, himself be considered a *vyūha*? Schrader's Numerical Index⁷⁹ refers the reader to the same page of his *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra* for both 'Three-' and 'Four- Vyūhas', and he leaves me in some doubt there with his ambivalent statement: 'The first three (or, including Vāsudeva, four) beings thus coming into existence are called - Vyūhas'.⁸⁰ The problem is more nearly pinpointed by Gupta⁸¹ when she defines the six-*guṇa* Vāsudeva source as the 'manifestation of the divine presence on the verge of embarking upon His creative function It is included in the Vyūha complex as the starting point from which polarization occurs but has not yet taken place. The subsequent Vyūha-s'... are the Creator's polarized states ...' But, as Gupta's exposition makes clear, the question can finally be settled only by deeper enquiry into Pāñcarātra theology, at which level it manifests a tantric basis, by which is meant that the creative principle is a male-female duality which is dependent upon the female aspect for its activity. This element of Pāñcarātra cosmogony will be of importance to my interpretation of the next sculpture to be discussed. Vāsudeva is the male aspect of the creative principle quickened into his

state of potentiality as the container of the *guṇas* prior to their projection as pairs in the -*vyūha* stages. Before he is stirred to activity by the waking presence of the female principle (*śakti*), the source is sleeping potential only, known as Nārāyaṇa; his awoken, actively potential state is the god Vāsudeva.⁸² Thus, by comparison with his inert, sleeping phase, the Vāsudeva mode of the creative principle is to be defined as his 'Vyūha state'.⁸³ Schrader observes the same problem within the texts, but notes that Vāsudeva is 'said to form a tetrad together with the Vyūhas'.⁸⁴ Being so defined Vāsudeva may be considered the primal *vyūha* form, and it is thus that the term *caturvyūha*, encompassing the active creator and his three emanations, is explained. As noted above from Schrader, the source is not depleted by its projection of *vyūhas*; Vāsudeva exists simultaneously with the extrusion of his substance in the form of the *vyūhas*. The icon representing the complete Vāsudeva figure along with his emanations is thus justifiably termed a *Caturvyūha-mūrti*. In view of this evidence, the assumption voiced by Gonda⁸⁵ in 1969 that 'there are no Vyūha images before the Gupta period', must be revised.

Having established the most probable identify of this image, it is necessary here to follow this with some discussion of the form which it takes. For whereas the Nānd column is a virtually unique iconographical construct and cult object, the *Caturvyūha* image has structural parallels both in contemporary sculpture and in the religious art of later periods.

The first question which must be asked with regard to the form of this *vyūha* icon is; why does it not conform to the linear metaphors in which Pāñcarātra scripture abounds? It is abundantly clear from the texts and their translators and commentators that each *vyūha* emerges from the preceding one:

The Pāñcarātra teaches a chain, as it were, of emanations; and thus the favourite image of the process has, with the Pāñcarātras, become that of one flame proceeding from another flame. Any production, up to the formation of the Egg,⁸⁶ is

imagined as taking place in this way.

The first three (or, including Vāsudeva, four) beings thus coming into existence are called *vyūhas*.⁸⁷

It is on this basis, in conjunction with the iconographical details, that I have identified the Nānd column as the *Viśākhayūpa*. In the icon, however, the three pairs of *guṇas* symbolized by the three kinsmen of Vāsudeva for his inactive reflex, Nārāyaṇa, expresses the original, single surge of creation (*sr̥ṣṭi*). *In the opinion of Gupta⁸⁸ it is the Viśākhayūpa* which 'symbolises God's first projection into diversity of creation.' From it the *vyūha* forms-*Vāsudeva included-arise, as branches, viz. Vāsudeva etc., which are generally recognised as belonging to the all-pervasive God, have been extended by Lord Viśākhayūpa*!⁸⁹

The simile of a tree is not, as far as is known,⁹⁰ explicitly employed in the Pāñcarātra texts to express the relationship of the *vyūhas* are said to be extended as branches by the *Viśākhayūpa*, and in the term *viśākha-yūpa* itself.⁹¹

Vāsudeva, embodiment of the *guṇas*, constitutes in Pāñcarātra terms the first phase of diversification in the cosmogonic process; as such, he is the first 'sheath' (*kośa*) of the necessary female aspect (*śakti*) of creation. This sheath, first of the many transformations of the (*śakti*, is termed the (*śakti-kośa*.⁹² As pairs of *guṇas* are present in Vāsudeva, So they and their personifications as the kin of Vāsudeva are the constituents of this first sheath.⁹³ 'Śaktikośa consists of Vāsudeva in whom Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha lie dormant.⁹⁴ The sexual connotation of the word *kośa*, especially as employed here as an aspect of the female principle of creation and in conjunction with the word *śakti*, cannot be overlooked, although this connotation is scarcely dwelt upon by the Pāñcarātra texts or by their foremost modern commentators.⁹⁵

We may in fact have already seen the *śakti-kośa*; the Nānd column with its rounded

top and wider populated shaft may well correspond to the concept of the *Viśākhayūpa* emerging at the apex from the four-sided sheath of its emanatory forms. In this respect the *Viśākhayūpa* was, in the Kuṣāṇa a period. Perhaps the Vaiṣṇava counterpart of the Śivaliṅga with which the Nānd column has, in my view, been confused.⁹⁶

This further excursion into Pāñcarātra theology will be useful *for three reasons: the śakti-kośa* concept adds to one's understanding of the Nānd column; it is directly relevant to my interpretation of the next sculpture in relation to the present Caturvyūha-*mūrti*, and it helps to explain the form of this icon.

The concept of the *śakti-kośa*, the first of six sheaths in the evolutionary process, being identified with Vāsudeva and the *vyūha* forms progressively emanating from him, provides a unitary basis in theology-and, I suggest, in early experimental iconography-for the *vyūha* aspects. In the Nānd column, the main shaft composed of figures emanating upward from each other on its four sides, appears to correspond to the 'sheath' concept in Pāñcarātra theology,⁹⁷ with its appearance of being wrapped around the central pole which corresponds to the Vedic *yūpa* in its transformed Pāñcarātra sense as the axial continuum of the cosmogonic process. (The four figures squatting upon the rebate ledge, that is, at the top of the *kośa* and identified with the axial *yūpa* may well, in these terms, represent *yogins* who have progressed through the sheaths to the truth, which is the axis). The main shaft of this column may thus be the *śakti-kośa*, representing the *guṇas* embodied in successive figures each manifested four times is, in aggregate, Vāsudeva. If the main shaft is indeed the *śakti-kośa*, which is Vāsudeva, then Vāsudeva as a distinct figure need not appear in a sculpture which attempts to depict simultaneously the *Viśākhayūpa* and *śakti-kośa*.

In the case of the Caturvyūha-*murti*, on the other hand, the presence of the source of the polarized *guṇas*, Vāsudeva, along with his emanations, obviates the need to depict the *Viśākhayūpa*. *That is, if the Viśākhayūpa is removed from the religious imagery, so too is the female sheath of male vyūhas* which it penetrates; what remains is an all-male

image of the cosmogonic process which, bereft of the female element (*śakti*), is a one-sided construct in Pāñcarātra terms. It is incomplete. If this reasoning is correct, I should expect to find complementary images of similar form, representing the female aspect of creation, within the same iconographical system which produced the male Caturvyūha image. This expectation would appear to be fulfilled in the next icon to be discussed.

Plates 14-16 show a sandstone fragment measuring ninety centimetres in height⁹⁸ which is represented in simplified form in Figure 1.2. The sculpture represents a two-armed female figure (A), in Figure, 1.2, broken off below the bust; it is also completely faceless due, apparently, to deliberate cutting of the stone. A female figure emerges obliquely upward from behind each shoulder figures (B) and (C), the head of that to the proper right, (B), being lost. Above the head of (A) appear the evidently female hips of a vertically-positioned (D); a skirt pleated in the middle and depending from a thin girdle, with a small portion of the anatomy above it, is all that remains. This stump of the apical figure is flanked by two similar emergent fragments (E) and (F), also severed above the hips, leaning outward at an angle from the vertical approximately parallel to (B) and (C) below them.

From these remains it may be inferred that all six figures were originally represented wearing only a skirt pleated in the front, the pleats being gathered below the navel but curving outward below the hips, the rest of the body being nude. They were adorned with short necklaces of pearls or gems, heavy multiple bracelets [(C) wears seven on each forearm] and ornate armlets; they also appear to have worn heavy pendant ear-ornaments. The similarities end here, however, for it appears, on closer examination of the remains, that each figure—at least (A), (B) and (C)—was clearly differentiated from the rest.

The first distinctions to be remarked upon are those of the large central figure (A). She wore a twisted, beaded band over the head and passing behind the ears. a detail

evidently too difficult for the iconoclast to remove without some application. Above this, and surrounding the head from shoulder to shoulder, is a wider band, the details of its front surface also cut off. There are ten dentations on the inner side of this band, above the head; beside the face they are discontinued, the inner side of the band being instead cross-hatched with incised grooves.

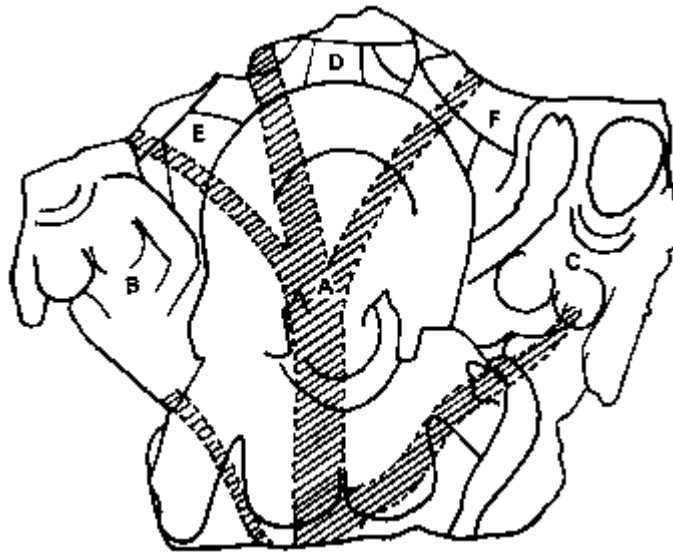


Fig. 1.2 Diagram of Mathura Museum fragment 00.F2, showing the disposition of the tree on the back

This aureole may have represented a halo, but it is unlikely for it ends so clearly upon the shoulders, suggesting an arched, affixed headdress rather than a nimbus behind the head. Similar head-dresses are to be seen in sculptures of various goddesses of the Kuṣāṇa period at Mathura: it encircles the head of squatting Lakṣmī,⁹⁹ Hārītī,¹⁰⁰ and of a standing-goddess¹⁰¹ identified as 'Ṣaṣṭhī.¹⁰² The images of the latter goddess are especially relevant as comparative sculptures for two reasons. Firstly, They have five heads disposed in a curve above the periphery of the headdress, suggesting that such figures represent iconographically abbreviated forms of the present icon, the five emergent figures being reduced to mere faces surrounding the top of the main figure. Secondly, the headdress of one of these sculptures¹⁰³ is undamaged, although

somewhat eroded; it shows that the arch was incised with radial lines bounded by a margin on the inner and outer edges, effectively dividing the headdress into narrow, oblong compartments. The dentations on the inner rim of the headdress of the goddess under discussion may be the remains of the bases of such divisions.

As to what such a headdress might signify, it may be suggested that it represented the winnowing fan (*śūrpa*) which was pre-served in later brahmanical iconography only as the identificatory headdress of the goddess Sītālā, whose *mantra*¹⁰⁴ includes the epithet *śūrpaṅkaṅkṛta-mastakā*, 'whose head is adorned with the winnowing fan'. This object is clearly associated with the harvest and thus connects the goddess wearing it with fertility of the soil. It may have been regarded as a general fertility symbol and so conjoined with more than one goddess in early brahmanical iconography, perhaps transferred from perishable images in mud or clay of folk goddesses. To carry this conjecture one stage further, the beaded band twisted around the head of (A) of the present sculpture, below the 'winnowing fan', may have been intended to represent stylized ears and stalks of wheat or another cereal woven into the hair. Such emblems need not identify the goddess specifically with the harvest, since the headdress was generalized among goddesses as pointed out above; but they clearly assert the notion of fertility. Since the only other figure in the composition which retains its head (C) does not wear a headdress of any kind, it may be assumed that all five emergent figures were similarly uncrowned, thus establishing the predominant divine status of the main figure (A) and the subsidiary character of the remainder.

Apart from her dominant size and the fact that she is obviously the source of the five surrounding figures, the other feature which clearly distinguishes (A) from the rest is part of a robe draped over her left upper arm and hanging down toward the wrist: the same feature of dress as was noticed in the apical figure of the Caturvyūha image. This is remarkable, although not unique, in a female sculpture of Mathura at this period; the three images of 'Ṣaṣṭhī' mentioned above in connection with the headdress wear a similarly draped shawl, or extension of the lower garment, the end of which hangs over

the left wrist. Despite the length of this cloth, the breasts are not covered in these examples; in fact there could be a very close similarity between male and female dress and the manner of wearing it at this time, as comparison between sculptures of gods and goddesses of the period indicates.¹⁰⁵

The right forearm of (A) although badly damaged, appears to have been raised, doubled back upon the upper arm, suggesting that the hand was held up at shoulder level in the *abhayamudrā*. Between the arm and the body and beneath the elbow, foliage is rendered in low relief. The left elbow is bent outward, the hand, now lost, evidently having been lowered to about waist level. This disposition of the hands accords with that of the 'Ṣaṣṭhī' images; it is also, of course, typical of many brahmanical divinities of the Kuṣāṇa period-transferred, almost certainly, from Buddhist sculpture-including the front hands of Vāsudeva in the Caturvyūha image. There is no evidence now remaining of foliage having been carved between the left arm and the body.

Figure (C) emerging from the left of (A) is backed by foliage (Plate 15). However, she is not depicted in the posture typical of a *yakṣī* or of a *śālābharjikā*¹⁰⁶ i.e. with one arm raised to grasp a branch, a traditional motif established in hieratic Indian art in the figure of Queen Māyā giving birth to the Buddha-hut leans outward from the central (A) in counterpoise to (B) opposite, and holds an object in each hand at shoulder level. Her hair is drawn down close to the skull, apparently parted in the middle, and hack to flare behind her head to the right in a large bouffant tail. It is interesting to note that over her head, passing behind the ears, is a decorative band in the same position as that noticed above the obliterated face of figure (A), but of a simpler design. None of the clothing of this figure is represented as she is conjoined with the main figure at the level of her hips (Plate 15), where the girdle would otherwise appear. Both her hands are bent backward, palms up, at shoulder level, supporting an object upon a flat base. The object upon the left palm is too badly damaged to be identified. That upon the right is a twisted form somewhat like a snake balanced upon one of its coils, but it is broken at the top.

Figure (B), opposite (C), is turned slightly away from the central figure, and is conjoined with it at a lower point, a considerable length of her skirt being represented beside the right shoulder of (A). The remains of the right arm, broken off above the elbow, point downward. The left arm is intact, bent inward across the belly, the remains of the broken hand giving the impression of its having been held in a *mudrā*; it is possible, however, that it originally held an object. The surface of the slab behind the missing head and beside the torso is plain. The armband on the left upper arm is of intricate design, taking the form of a fan-shaped spray of foliage or elongated loops, held in place by a cord.

Thus far, the form of this image corresponds strikingly to that of the Caturvyūha icon. The principal difference between the two compositions lies in the fact that in the present sculpture there is a figure interposed between each of the figures emerging at shoulder level from the central deity and the vertically conjoined apical figure. The possibility of the Caturvyūha image originally having been a composition of six figures has been discussed and rejected on the grounds of the nature of the fracture lines and of the most probable identity of the image. In that sculpture, however, the question was with regard to a possible conjunction of two figures with the upper half of the apical figure; the state of the remains definitely rules out any possibility of such hypothetical extra figures having been inter-posed in the positions occupied by (E) and (F) in the present multiple goddess image. This sculpture represents exactly the same construct as that of the Caturvyūha image, but with triplication of the apical figure; the implication of such a clear sculptural derivation of one icon from another is vital to the identification of this particular sixfold goddess and her relationship to the contemporary Caturvyūha icon in Mathura.

The main iconographical differences between the three goddesses emerging at the top cannot be known due to the almost complete loss of the upper part of the sculpture; but it is noteworthy that the central upright figure wore a plain skirt while those flanking

her to the left and right wore skirts decorated with small discs, perhaps representing sequins (Plate 14). It has been noted above that the apical figure of the Caturvyūha image is set back from the front of the crown of Vāsudeva, and in the present icon the three top figures are similarly set back from the rim of the headdress of the principal goddess, while the shoulder-level figures in both sculptures are projected slightly forward to come into alignment with the main deity.

On the flat back of this icon is sculpted a tree (Plate 16) of the same type as that represented on the reverse of the Caturvyūha image. Instead of the bird perched on a branch depicted in the previous sculpture, a squirrel or similar creature is here represented running up one side of the trunk. As before, this tree appears to unify the elements composing the icon on the front. The trunk adorns the principal goddess and the central apical (D); it ramifies at the base of the fragment, the two branches backing (B) and (C), and again behind the head of the goddess behind (E) and (F). There can be little doubt that the corresponding positions of trunk and branches and goddess and emanatory forms were intentional in both cases. As in the Caturvyūha image, the foliage is continued on the sides of the sculpture and appears even upon the front, between the goddess and figure (C) and below the right arm of the goddess; none of the figures comprising the icon, however, wears leaves from this tree, as is the case in the Caturvyūha image.

This appearance of the leaves around the icon itself reinforces the idea, mentioned previously, that these two tree-backed images were artistically conceived and executed in conformity with an arboreal construct. With some-not all-of the interstices between the figures of the six-fold goddess image filled with foliage, this icon in its original complete form must have conveyed the impression of a tree composed of female figures, the probably standing main figure in place of the trunk with five smaller figures spreading like branches at the top. The worship of sacred trees and of sacred symbols or figures beneath a tree were traditions already long established in Kuṣāṇa times. Just as the *Viśākhayūpa* still standing at Nānd was probably the first attempt to

anthropomorphise another sacred object, the Vedic sacrificial stake, as an object of worship and an expression of theological doctrine, so the Caturvyūha and six-goddess images at Mathura appear to represent the earliest-and perhaps the only brahmanical experiments in the anthropomorphization of the sacred tree which, like the *yūpa*, assumes a new religious significance in its transformation. Employing the metaphors of Pāñcarātra theology, I have interpreted the transformed *yūpa* as the unbroken continuity of the cosmogonic process, and the tree in its association with the Caturvyūha image as a unifying symbol of the relationship between Vāsudeva and the *vyūhas*. How does the tree construct help to interpret the present multiple icon of a goddess?

The Caturvyūha sculpture and the sixfold goddess image are of unique composition among the sculptures discovered at Mathura; the correspondence between the tree on the back of each and the iconographical composition of the figures on the front is also unique to them, as far as I could discover.¹⁰⁷ As Pāñcarātra theory can be demonstrated to relate almost directly to the Caturvyūha, the possibility of such a relationship existing between Pāñcarātra theory and this goddess image should also be explored. If such a correspondence can be shown to exist, then the two sculptures must be presumed to stand in a ritual relationship one to the other, on the basis of their shared theological background.

How can an icon consisting of six elements relate to another consisting of four? The answer, I believe, lies in the female half of the dualistic account of creation of the Pāñcarātra system.

The roles played by the various aspects of Śakti, the female principle, in the cosmogonic process, from its commencement to the point of entry into material reality, are discussed by Schrader and by Gupta.¹⁰⁸ In paraphrasing their treatment of these accounts, taken mainly from the *Lakṣmī-tantra*, one enters further into Pāñcarātra cosmogony than has been necessary in previous discussion, passing beyond the *śakti-*

kośa through the *māyā-kośa* to the *prasūti-kośa* in the system of 'sheaths', to arrive at a point immediately preceding the manifestations of the conventional 'Hindu Trinity' of Brahmā, Śiva and Viṣṇu. Therefore, if my reasoning is correct in relating such Pāñcarātra theory to these early multiple icons, their iconography was conveyed as the visible representation of an abstract philosophical complex which took precedence over the manifestations of the major gods of later Hinduism. Inasmuch as these sculptures are early attempts to formulate visual images of cosmogonic theory, they precede most later icon-types in philosophical time-being images of phases within the process of the universal 'pure creation'-as well as in historical time.

According to the Pāñcarātra texts, Śānti is spawned first from the mind of Vāsudeva (primary *vyūha* and source of the six *aprākṛta-guṇas*) with Sañkarṣaṇa; from Sañkarṣaṇa's left side Śrī is born; Pradyumna is her son, from whom emanates Sarasvati with Aniruddha, whose *śakti* is Rati. Thus there are four aspects of Śakti, each related to a member of the Caturvyūha image. But with Rati the process has already entered the phase known as the *māyā-kośa*, second of the 'sheaths' of Śakti:

Aniruddha's I-hood [*ahaṃ-tā*] is named Rati who is identified with the goddess Mahālakṣmī, and he is called the *māyākośa*.

The two, Mahākālī and Mahāvidyā, are said to be the active state of Mahālakṣmī which is known as the *guṇa* of *māyā*.

My third great *kośa* is known as *prasūti* and consists of Mahālakṣmī, Mahāmāyā [or Mahākālī¹⁰⁹] and Mahāvidyā.¹¹⁰

Here in the words of the *Lakṣmī-tantra* is the reason for the triplication of the apical figure in the Mathura sculpture under discussion. The consort of the last of the *vyūhas* is also, in order to preserve that continuity of the creative process with which the Pāñcarātra system is so concerned, the great goddess Mahālakṣmī, who represents the introduction into the process of the three material qualities or *guṇas*, *rajas*,

sattva and *tamas*. This goddess then proceeds, with her active counterparts, Mahākālī and Mahāvidyā into the *prasūti-kośa* phase in which, as the term suggests, they all give birth (to the 'Trinity').

On the basis of this extract from Pāñcarātra theology, the following identifications of the figures comprising the multiple goddess icon may be suggested, in relation to those of the masculine Caturvyūha image.

The central figure (A) in Figure 1.2 is the *śakti* form of Vāsudeva, who is represented by figure (A) in the Caturvyūha image. She is known as Śānti.

The headless (B), emerging from the right shoulder of Śānti, corresponds to Saṃkarṣaṇa in the same position in the Caturvyūha sculpture. She is thus most probably to be identified as the *śakti* form of Saṃkarṣaṇa, who is called Śrī.

Her counterpart (C) on the left of Śānti is to be seen as the *śakti* associated with Pradyumna, since the triple-*śakti* at the apex of the composition can only be connected with the last of the four *vyūhas*, Aniruddha, as demonstrated above. She is therefore most reasonably to be regarded as the *śakti* associated with Pradyumna, namely Sarasvatī.

The apical (D) should then represent the *śakti* of Aniruddha, called Rati, who is identical with Mahālakṣmī; and the active state of this great *śakti* is represented by the two *śaktis* Mahākālī and Mahāvidyā, who in the sculpture are represented by the two broken figures flanking Mahālakṣmī, (E) and (F), the two of them wearing identical dress as far as can be seen.

As indicated by the above identifications, it is to be inferred that the missing (C) in the Caturvyūha sculpture represented Pradyumna, while the apical figure was Aniruddha.

By looking back in time at these two images from the view-point of Pāñcarātra

philosophy as recorded in the scriptures of that sect, it is thus possible to identify the two sculptures and, equally important, to establish an intimate connection between them. They are reflexes of each other, representing the male and female aspects of the cosmogonic process. This is schematically summarised in Figure 1.3, in three stages.

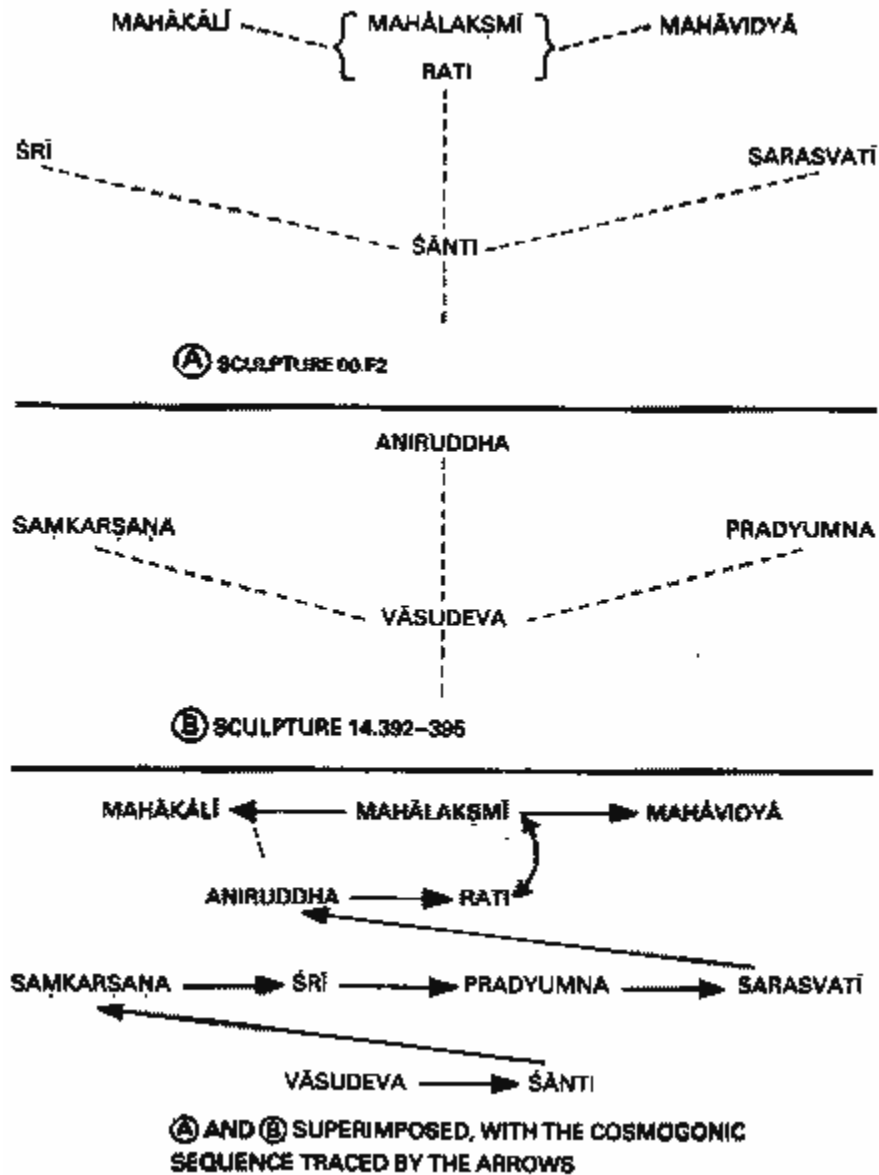


Fig. 1.3 Schematic diagrams of Mathura Museum sculptures 00.F2 and 14.392-5 with hypothetical identities of figures in accordance with Pāñcarātra theory

From the scriptures, there is a clearly established name for the male image; it is the Caturvyūha. But by what name can the female image be called? There appears to be no single identification, for the simple reason that from the tantric standpoint of the Pāñcarātra *tantras*, especially the *Lakṣmī-tantra* which I have mostly relied upon for Pāñcarātra doctrine, the śakti aspect is at all phases of creation and existence active, and changes her name accordingly. Thus in various contexts within that scripture, she identifies herself as: 'with a form consisting of all the six attributes¹¹¹... myself, Nārāyaṇī, the Śakti of Viṣṇu, pure Śrī;¹¹² or again, Nārāyaṇa, is the one and eternal God Vāsudeva, the absolute Brahman, the flawless fourfold (God) ...I am His absolute and unique Śakti, the eternal goddess... Brahman is tranquil ... absolute and constant... and entirely quiescent. I am Its Śakti Brāhmī.'¹¹³ In the account of the creation, as has been shown, the basic female generative force is Śānti, counter-part of Vāsudeva, and 'the substratum of Saṃkarṣṇa pradyumna and Aniruddha'.¹¹⁴ Of her it is said:

He who appeared first out of the eternally blissful ocean of all six inert guṇas is called Vāsudeva, in whom all six guṇas simultaneously became active.

His I-hood is called Śānti (who is) myself, (and) is known as Śakti, who is considered to contain the three divinities existing in the śaktikośa¹¹⁵ [i.e. Saṃkarṣṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha].

Since the term *śakti* used as an appellation occurs so frequently in such passages, I suggest that the most fitting name for the sculpture as the counterpart of the 'Caturvyūha image is simply 'Caturvyūha-Śakti', a term which as far as I am aware does not occur in the texts but which is in accordance with my interpretation of these two icons both philosophically and iconographically.

It is necessary here to make a few qualifying remarks. The relationship which I have proposed between the 'Caturvyūha image and the six-fold goddess fragment, on the grounds of similarity of composition and scriptural metaphor, can only be hypothetical.

The few iconographical details which are distinguishable on the latter fragment would, upon first-hand examination, tend to confirm the identification of it which was first suggested by Vogel¹¹⁶ namely that it represents some kind of Nāga-goddess. The indentations on the arched headdress can be seen, on close inspection, to be incised with cross-hatching on their undersides, suggesting that these might be the stumps of emergent serpent bodies marked with a diamond pattern; although, as I have noted with regard to the Nāga fragment behind (B) of the 'Caturvyūha sculpture multiple cobra heads were more usually marked with the 'crooked ladder' design. The object rising from the palm of the right hand of (C) emerging from this goddess appears to have been a miniature multi-headed snake rearing up upon its coiled body.¹¹⁷

However, my arguments on the basis of compositional parallelism remain. In the 'Caturvyūha-Śakti image, the similarity of dress of (E) and (F) especially, suggesting that they are twin offshoots of (D) which rises as if in extension of the main (A) conforms exactly to the plant-growth analogy which is present visually on the reverse of the sculpture and metaphorically in the Pāñcarātra texts. Hypothetical as this line of reasoning must be, due to the severely damaged state of the sculpture, it would appear to be more suggestive and indicative of the symbolic conceptions of early brahmanical iconography than the extremely unlikely 'Ṣaṣṭhī' identification. To suggest that such a complex six-fold icon, integrating visibly different aspects or emanations of a main goddess, is merely some protoform of a six-headed consort for six-headed Skand¹¹⁸ is to miss altogether the highly intelligent and expressive mentality which lies behind these remarkable early images.

Considerable sophistication of thought must have lain behind the invention of such complicated sculptures and I have, accordingly, treated them as the intelligent expressions of complex and coherent religious philosophy, rather than as clumsy first attempts leading up to 'classical' Gupta sculpture. They are the religious art forms of their own age and culture. To be treated with respect and, as far as possible, on their

own terms.

The third sculpture with a ramifying composition (Plate 17) was first brought to the attention of scholars by N. P. Joshi¹¹⁹ who saw it in 1968. The figure concerned is rendered in low relief within a square panel at the top of one side of a four-sided red sandstone pillar, about 150 centimeters high,¹²⁰ at Musānagar, U.P. One side of the pillar is pierced with three mortice sockets; it is evidently a railing upright and not a cult object in itself like the Nānd column.

The panel is flanked by representations of pillars with octagonal cross-sections, the shaft planted in a pot-shaped base and terminating in what appears to be a crudely rendered pot draped with foliage, surmounted by salient winged animals. The lower margin of the panel is demarcated by the simple representation of a square (evidently architectural) railing, probably of the type into which the pillar itself was integrated; a chaitya-arch is carved in the centre at the top. The figure within this frame is depicted seated upon a large throne which is half encircled by an open-work backrest and supported upon legs which thicken at the base and top. Beneath it crouches an animal apparently a lion.

Thus far the description might be of a Buddhist tableau, with perhaps a tree behind the empty throne or a figure of a prince seated upon it¹²¹ carved upon an upright from a railing surrounding a *stūpa*. The posture of the figure occupying the throne—the left leg resting on the seat right hand raised in the *abhayamudrā*, the left lowered to hold a pot—is also in keeping with a Buddhist context.¹²² The remaining features, however, immediately indicate the brahmanical identity of the figure.

The image here represented in relief is of the same compositional structure as are the Caturvyūha and Caturvyāha-Śakti free-standing sculptures, comprising like the former, a main central figure with three minor figures emerging from behind it, at the shoulders and the top of the head. It is fortunate that this figure has remained almost

intact, but less fortunate that the image is small, being inhibited by its frame, and in relief so that one cannot know by direct observation upon what unifying construct—which in the case of the two previously described icons was a tree—the composition was based.

The icon is represented schematically in Figure 1.4, and letters are assigned to the four figures, as in the drawing of the Caturvyūha image, for the sake of convenience and comparison in this discussion.

The main figure (A) is seated upon a commodious throne with his left knee bent outward and the foot resting upon the seat with the sole upturned beneath the genitals; the right leg hangs over the edge of the seat, only the toes touching the ground. Compared with similar, but leisurely, postures adopted by royal figures in Buddhist reliefs, it appears here somewhat formal, as if the right leg had just been released from a yogic *padmāsana* or similar posture. The figure is made obviously ithyphallic, the phallus being naked despite the lower garment and of a strangely curved shape. The rather squat body is two-armed. The right hand is in the *abhayamudrā* with the edge of the hand angled forward, as is the corresponding hand of four-armed Vāsudeva in the Caturvyūha image (Plate 10) while the left hand holds a pot by the neck at a level with the hip, but resting upon the left leg near the ankle because of the sitting posture. Upon the head is a bound turban-with-rosette of Kṣātrapa type.



Fig 1.4 Diagram of relief from Muktā Devī temple museum, Musānagar, U.P. showing the disposition of the four figures.

The posture of this figure, the throne upon which it sits and the erect phallus constitute a combination of elements which are to be seen in a Gupta image of Śīva as leader of the Sapta-Mātrkās¹²³ which dates from the first half of the fifth century A.D. Perhaps four hundred years and about four hundred Kilometres separate the two sculptures, but the similarities are striking. The Gupta sculpture, ithyphallic, is seated in exactly the same semi-yogic posture, but with the position of the legs reversed: it is the left foot which is lowered almost to ground level. Harle¹²⁴ identifies this image of Śīva as Vīrabhadra because it is caned in a gallery along with the Mātrkās; but it is evident

from the comparison that I am making here between it and the early pillar panel at Musānagar, in which the figure appears alone within a railed shrine in this posture, that the conception of the god which lies behind the Gupta image is old and independent of the Mātrkās.

The two emergent figures (B) and (C) are visible from the hips upward, rising at an angle from the junctions of the head and shoulders of (A) to a level with the winged animals on top of the flanking pillars. They are both eroded and it is difficult to distinguish any details; objects which they may have held in their hands are unidentifiable. They appear to have worn a headdress of some kind and to have held their arms up. Figure (B) wears a heavy necklace or garland.

Rising from behind the crown of figure (A) and visible only from the shoulders upward, the apical figure (D) is the best preserved of the three minor figures. Apparently male like the others, this figure stares outward over the pinnacle of the crown of the main figure. His hair is apparently worn in the style of a *yogin*, being pulled loosely back or piled on top of the head and falling to the Shoulders on either side. His arms are raised and the hands cupped to support, on the right a disc and on the left a bowl or crescent-shaped object having its horns upward. The disc is clearly not the Vaiṣṇava *cakra*, being solid and not spoked, and is not held in the manner typical of early Viṣṇu images (of which there is an example in figure D.1 on the Nānd column. Neither the main figure nor this emanation holds a weapon, which is the intrinsic nature of the *cakra*. Joshi¹²⁵ suggests that the two objects held up by this figure are solar and lunar symbols. They are the highest objects in the composition, being raised to touch the upper margin of the frame beneath the two ends of the chaitya-arch.

The similarity in composition between this image (Plate 17) and the two previously described sculptures, particularly the Caturvyūha, is obvious; and I have identified those two icons as products of the Pāñcarātra Vaiṣṇava tradition. That the present image is also brahmanical but not Vaiṣṇava is evident from two features. Firstly, there is no

evidence of contemporary Buddhist or Jaina unitary icons consisting of the same ramifying composition; and secondly, no Jaina, Buddha, Bodhisattva or Viṣṇu is represented as ithyphallic. Joshi observes that 'early Indian iconography does not know of any deity in ithyphallic form (ūrdhua liṅga) excluding Śiva',¹²⁶ but gives among his examples¹²⁷ the Nānd 'liṅga' published by R. C. Agrawala, failing to note that Agrawala positively identifies the ithyphallic apical figures as Lakulīśa, as distinct from Śiva.¹²⁸ Disregarding his example of the squatting figures on that column, which I do not regard as images of gods or as four images of a single god, the available archaeological evidence otherwise supports Joshi's statement that Śiva is the only god, as far as is known, to appear as an ithyphallic figure in early brahmanical sculpture. The ithyphallic figure in the present relief, which is proto-Kuṣāṇa both in style and as demonstrated by the Caturvyūha and Caturvyūha-Śakti images-in composition therefore, appears to represent a form of Śiva, as proposed by Joshi. The iconographical and architectural contexts in which this relief appears also point to this conclusion.

The subdued lion beneath the throne seems to be another example of a brahmanical transformation of a motif mainly found in Jaina and Buddhist sculpture. In the latter, the lion or lions are to be seen sitting erect beneath a Bodhisattva¹²⁹ or supporting the royal lion throne (*siṃhāsana*) upon which a Bodhisattva or Tirthaṅkara is seated.¹³⁰ In the, Musānagar panel, the couchant lion seems to indicate, as Joshi notes, that the god portrayed above it is master of the animal; this may suggest the Paśupati (Lord of Beasts) aspect of Śiva.¹³¹ Moreover, the adjacent panel on the pillar contains a relief depicting a standing ithyphallic figure¹³² with his hands in the same positions as those of figure (A) in the panel under discussion and similarly holding the pot and making the abhayamudrā; this figure is accompanied by a pot-bellied dwarf and a lion which stands looking up like a faithful dog at its master. Without noting the implied Paśupati role of the god, Joshi suggests that the subdued lion symbolizes the 'pacified wrath of Śiva'¹³³ and observes that these panels furnish the earliest iconographical evidence for

an association between Śiva and the lion. Later sculptures of the Gupta period frequently portray the god wearing the skin of a lion, which carries more aggressive implications with regard to the character of Śiva as huntsman, as slayer of beasts.¹³⁴ In such sculptures¹³⁵ the bull Nandin is positioned behind the god in a stance of familiarity very similar to that of the lion in the second panel of this pillar. The replacement of one animal by another appears to indicate an historical shift of symbolic significance, from Śiva as tamer of the king of beasts to Śiva as slayer of the king of beasts and tamer of the animal embodiment of masculine sexual potency. The god in the Musānagar pillar panels- and they are so iconographically similar that there can be little doubt that they represent the same deity- is thus presented as a figure of strength sitting and standing at ease, with no suggestion of violence present: the almost yogic sitting posture of (A) in the multiple image and the absence of weapons from both images has already been noted.

The architectural context of the panels- a stone railing pillar-can also be connected with one of the contemporaneous modes of Śivaliṅga worship. There are Kuṣāṇa reliefs which depict a Śivaliṅga erected under a tree, in one late Kṣatrapa case within a small enclosure bounded by a railing¹³⁶ of the same kind as that carved on the Musānagar pillar to separate the panels. It is possible that this pillar is from the railing surrounding one such open-air liṅga-shrine in the Kuṣāṇa period.¹³⁷ On the other hand, the presence of the octagonal, decorated pillars on either side of the image and of the arch above it may suggest that this panel represents in miniature an actual architectural shrine in which a large, probably free-standing, multiple Śaiva image of the kind depicted in the relief was enclosed for worship. It will be seen below that a later multiple Vaiṣṇava icon was represented receiving worship within a temple, also carved in relief upon an architectural member, in the Gupta period. In that relief¹³⁸, as in this earlier example, the icon is depicted as almost completely filling the shrine room. I suggest that, at the time when the Caturvyūha and Caturvyūha-Śakti images and the Musānagar panel were made, such ramifying icons may have been set up in shrines of

the Buddhist chaitya type, before the evolution of the Gupta-style temple.

The form, and possibly the iconography, of the Musānagar image may be interpreted in terms of epic mythology concerning Śiva. O'Flaherty has examined the 'paradox of the erotic ascetic',¹³⁹ and is of the opinion that the 'interrelation of asceticism and desire ... cannot be explained by any historical synthesis, but must be accepted as a unified concept which has been central to Indian thought from prehistoric times. Ithyphallic images are as early as any Śiva images...'¹⁴⁰ Applying these remarks to the Musānagar panel, one is led to suppose that the ithyphallic feature combined with the semi-yogic posture of figure (A) represents no innovatory concept; that it simply manifests the 'iconic resolution' of the apparent paradox of what is, in reality, a very ancient Indian concept, in the form of the 'ithyphallic yogi',¹⁴¹ namely Śiva. The fact remains that, among the early brahmanical images of the pre-Kuṣāṇa and Kuṣāṇa periods, this is the only known example of a crowned and ithyphallic figure seated in a formal pose.

The oldest literary source which satisfactorily explains the form, but perhaps not the full iconography, of this icon, is the Mahābhārata¹⁴² in which it is said:

This is the Lord God, the imperishable beginning of all the elements, who knows the dispositions of the elements, Lord of the Supreme Spirit (Pradhāna-puruṣa-Īśvara), the Lord who created (literally, 'emitted': *asṛjat*) from the right part of his body Brahmā, source of the world, and similarly from his left side Viṣṇu, for the protection of the world, and the Lord who created from his body, at the end of the ages, Rudra-he, Rudra, destroying the entire quick and inanimate world.¹⁴³

The explicit structure of this visionary image, seen in meditation (*dr̥ṣṭo... samādhinā*¹⁴⁴, of the 'God of gods' (*devadeva*)¹⁴⁵, Mahādeva,¹⁴⁶ ever invisible to other deities,¹⁴⁷ has evidently been seized upon by the sculptor of the Musānagar panel as his religious model. However, the artistic form of the composition - which could

have been otherwise rendered¹⁴⁸ -is clearly based, like the Vaiṣṇava Caturvyūha-*mūrti*, upon the ramifying, pattern of a tree.

As the Śaiva Musānagar icon is of the same form as that of the Vaiṣṇava Caturvyūha and composed of the same number of elements, one might expect to find in the iconography of this period a fivefold Śaiva construct corresponding to the *Viśākha-yūpa*: that is, the fourfold image united by a vertical axis. Such an equivalent form is apparently to be found in the Catur-mukhalinga, which is far better known as an iconographic type than the *Viśākhayūpa*. The central phallic axis of such cult-objects is the compositional counterpart of the central *yūpa*, of the Nānd column, and the four faces carved upon the side of the Liṅga at the cardinal points correspond to the four vertical series of emanating figures which surround the Vaiṣṇava *yūpa* -axis.

The identities of the four Śaiva figures in the Musānagar relief, if derived from the *Mahābhārata* passage translated above, would be the following. The main figure (A) is Śiva Mahādeva, Īśvara as the Pradhāna-puruṣa;¹⁴⁹ that rising from his right shoulder (B) is Brahmā; the corresponding figure opposite (C) represents Viṣṇu; and the apical figure (D) is Rudra. In the epic, as Hopkins observes,¹⁵⁰ Rudra born from Śiva in the role of universal destroyer is Kāla, Time; for he makes each cosmic process finite, annihilating all in fire at the end of the fourth (Kali-)yuga. The sun-disc and moon-crescent held in the upraised hands of (D) in the icon appear to identify him thus as Rudra/Kāla, controlling the celestial bodies, by which time is measured. in their courses through the sky. The relief is too much eroded to permit identification of the obliquely ramifying (B) and (C), however, and so it is impossible to know whether or not the icon conforms fully to the epic vision.

If the figures represented in this self-integrated tetrad were to be considered the same as those whose faces emanate from contemporary Liṅga sculptures, on the other hand, this would provide an iconographic basis upon which to identify the figures of the Musānagar image. R. C. Agrawala has published¹⁵¹ excellent photographs of the faces

on a particular Caturmukha-liṅga of the Kuṣāṇa period. If it is assumed that the face which wears a turban-with-rosette-this being the only face to appear upon some Ekamukhaliṅgas of the period, notably the one from Aghapur in the Bharatpur Museum-indicates the 'front' or most important aspect of the Liṅga, this might be termed the eastern face, on the basis of the later orientation of Liṅgas within temples. In these terms the southern face either has close-cropped hair or wears a tightly fitting skull-cap, that facing westward has the *jaṭā* hairstyle with braids piled up in a topknot and hanging down on either side of the face, and the northern face has rather short hair which is apparently arranged in curls. All four faces appear to have moustaches.

It is immediately apparent that the head wearing the turban, the eastern face, has as its rear counterpart the long-haired western face. These correspond iconographically to the face of the main figure (A) and that of the apical (D) respectively in the Musānagar icon, which are the Mahādeva-Īśvara and Rudra of the *Mahābhārata* passage. But on iconographical grounds one can neither identify nor establish a correspondence between the southern and northern faces of this Liṅga and figures Band C of the Musānagar image. There is thus a partial but definite iconographical connection between the pentadic (Liṅga-axis with four surrounding faces) and the independent tetradic (without an axis) constructs exemplified by the Caturmukha-liṅga and the fourfold Śiva icon.

From the above description and discussion, and with the addition of certain main themes in Śaiva mythology from O'Flaherty's researches,¹⁵² the following interpretation of the Musānagar icon may be suggested.

Śiva Mahādeva sits upon a throne, as does a king (*kṣatriya*), perhaps on the Himālaya.¹⁵³ He wears a 'crown' as does a king (a *kṣatriya* headdress: this type of crested turban is also worn not only by princes and princely Budhisattvas of the period¹⁵⁴ but, in some early sculptures, by Viṣṇu¹⁵⁵ as well). The lion beneath his throne is couchant, signifying its submission to Śiva (as the tamed king of beasts, as

symbol of subdued erotic and other passions¹⁵⁶ which interfere with spiritual progress, probably *also as vāhana*¹⁵⁷ and further as a symbol of royalty).¹⁵⁸ His posture is a highly formal version of the nonchalant attitudes often adopted by seated royal figures in Buddhist sculpture;¹⁵⁹ the left foot in particular turned sole-upward placed directly under the genitals, suggests a yogic posture. The prominent phallus confirms his identity as a *tapasvin*;¹⁶⁰ while the lowered right foot, not yet firmly on the ground, suggests that his absorption in the generation of tapas has been disturbed,¹⁶¹ the yogic posture (right foot placed over the left) ¹⁶²being broken by the lowering of the right leg from the platform of the throne. As *tapasvin* with his 'seed drawn up' (*ūrdhvaretas*), he was non-creative;¹⁶³ emerging from his *yoga*, this celibacy is at an end and he becomes creative. This stage of transition might account for the strange curve of the phallus noted in the description: the yogic trance is no longer firm.¹⁶⁴ In his left hand he holds a pot which is possibly symbolic of the 'spilled seed',¹⁶⁵ the sexual outcome of his release from yogic practice which itself is indicated by erection of the sexual organ.

Almost exactly the same combination of the pot and the leaning or curved phallus is to be seen in a stone relief from Kausambi, Uttar Pradesh.¹⁶⁶ The relief is dated by Harle¹⁶⁷ to A.D. 237 taking the Year 139 mentioned in its inscription to refer to the Śaka era; the image thus has 'every right to be considered one of the rare pre-Gupta or transitional sculptures',¹⁶⁸ representing the style and iconography of a period between the Kuṣāṇa and the Gupta. It is iconographically indisputable that the relief represents Śiva standing with Pārvatī on his left. As in the Musānagar panel, the god's right hand is raised in the *abhayamudrā*, while his left holds a pot in such a way as to tilt the neck of it toward his phallus. Which is itself inclined toward the pot. This is surely a continuation into the beginnings of 'classical' iconography of the same juxtaposition of the ejaculating phallus and golden pot or symbolic womb which is explicitly represented, for the first time in brahmanical iconography as far as is, in the Kuṣāṇa relief at Musānagar.

It is at this transitional stage that he is seen giving birth to the Creation in the forms of three figures representing the maker, sustainer and destroyer of the universe, which is produced from the transformation of his self-contained, unpolarized austerity into its objective and polarized erotic aspect. As in the case of the Caturvyūha, the personified female complement is absent from the icon. Expressed in terms of the two sides of the celibate/erotic paradox, the transformation symbolized in the image is essentially the shift from cosmic equilibrium to disequilibrium which is the necessary first step in the cosmogonic process in classical Hindu philosophy.¹⁶⁹ Behind the metaphor of the two sides of the Śaiva paradox just mentioned, this necessary imbalance is also conveyed in non-sectarian psychological terms. It is the shift of divine consciousness from yoga-nindrā, the yogic transcendental trance, a totally motionless and timeless state indicated by the tapasvin aspect of the central deity (A)¹⁷⁰ through suṣṭi or deep sleep to svapna, the dream state, on the way to jāgrat, the self-aware or wide-awake state, in which the internalized consciousness of God becomes objectified, all-pervading and time-conditioned, indicated in the icon by the breaking of the yogic posture, as if the god has just been roused from the trance and is in the act of stepping down from one stage to the next. Unless the timeless trance is broken, the god remains unmanifest (avyakta), he who is 'never seen by all the [other, lesser] deities';¹⁷¹ being disturbed, in waking he becomes manifest (vyakta) and-as Śiva-'spills the seed' and creation commences. Again like the Caturvyūha image. This icon represents the unifying theocratization of a pluralistic philosophical system. (basically, the Sāṅkhya)¹⁷² which accounts for its unnatural use of multiple anthropomorphism.

Finally in this interpretation. I must turn to another paradox inherent in the iconography of the image, as it foreshadows the syncretism of certain later multiple icons. This concerns the incorporated symbols of royalty. Śiva, as (ascetic) Īśvara, becomes the (creative) pradhāna-puruṣa (as pradhāna-puruṣeśvara of the. Mahābhārata passage translated above) and in this lordly role he commands the reverence of his devotees as does a king the obedience of his subjects. The (royal) lion is the subdued beast (paśu) of its Master (Paśu-pati). The gesture of 'fear not' (abhaya) made by the right hand is a sign of approachability, the condescension of a

king, the grace (prasāda) of a bhakti deity. In this icon, therefore, we see not only the 'apparent paradox' of the 'ithyphallic yogi', but also that of the royal ascetic seer. The apotheosis of the archaic rājarṣi concept.¹⁷³

In brief: the Musānagar ramifying icon is a highly sophisticated symbolical image of the cosmogonic process as seen from a Śaiva sectarian viewpoint. Employing the terminology of a relevant Mahābhārata passage, the god whose image one sees may be termed (Śiva) Mahādeva as Pradhānapuruṣeśvara.

The liṅga pentad of the Kuṣāṇa period (Plate 23) provide further evidence of the existence of the pentad and of the anthropomorphised axis in early cult imagery. As I have shown above, aniconic cult-objects with attached faces, of which the two sculptures, are important to my interpretation of multiple images of the god in human form.

The composition of the first of these Kuṣāṇa cult-objects¹⁷⁴ consists of four Ekamukhaliṅga grouped at equal intervals around a central vertical axis which is broken off at the level of the tops of the surrounding Liṅgas. The fracture reveals that the central element is of circular cross-section, and the stump which remains suggests that originally it rose above the attached Liṅga. The remains are 53.3 cm in height.

The face on each Liṅga (one is missing) was carved in such a way as to project outward in high relief from the upper section, which has a diameter considerably greater than that of the shaft. Each face is thus dramatically thrust forward in one of the cardinal directions, facing away from the axis. Although one face has been lost, it is clear that the remaining three appear in the same order as those upon the Caturmukhaliṅga, also of late Kuṣāṇa date, which I have already described in connection with the Musānagar pillar panel. This suggests that the face which has been broken off was the main one, facing east and wearing a crested turban.

On the rear surface of the stump of the axial element, viewed from behind the tops of the

Liṅgas which bear the skull-capped face and the long-haired Rudra face, from what would have been the south-western side of the sculpture in its original ritual setting, appear narrow vertical striations carefully carved on the stone (Plate 22.) Due to the extent of breakage, one cannot be sure that these markings extended around the whole surface of the cylindrical centrepiece. They may have represented leaves hanging from a garland around a central Liṅga or the hair of an elevated central head.

The original form of this cult-object appears to have been a pentad of Liṅgas, so arranged that the elevated central symbol was seen as physically emanating multiforms of itself, each multiform having a specific identity & presented by an attached face and manifesting itself at a level lower than that of the shared axial source. Whereas in the Caturmukhaliṅga type of sculpture the four faces are all attached to a single phallic axis, in this Mathura piece the axis unifies four distinct Liṅgas, each bearing one of the aspects of Śīva. The theme of emanation of similar, but not identical multiforms from a common source in the shape of a pentad is here made most explicit. The relation-ship between such a pentad and quadruple anthropomorphic images such as the Śaiva Musānagar relief, which I have briefly touched upon above, should be examined in more detail, in the same way as we have considered the Vaiṣṇava quadruple anthropomorphic icon, the Caturvyūha, in relation to the Viśākhayūpa which, in plan, is also of course a pentadic construct.

The text passage which most concisely sets out the symbolism and disposition of the five aspects of Śīva is Viṣṇudhamottara, 175 part 3, Chapter 48, stanzas 1 to 8. A translation and transliteration of the text follow, with a summary chart of the information contained in it.

| | |
|----|--|
| 1. | Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva and Aghora, my prince, And Tatpuruṣa too, should be known; and Īśāna is the fifth face. |
|----|--|

| | |
|----|--|
| 2. | Sadyojāta is said to be Earth, and Vāmadeva. Water; Aghora is said to be Light, and Tatpuruṣa, The Great [First Evolute from, prakṛti], Air; |
| 3. | And then Īśāna, the highest fifth face, Space. I shall now speak of this pentad of faces belonging to Śambhu, according to their distribution. |
| 4. | The Mahādeva face of Śambhu The Great Spirit is said to be the Eastern. (They say he has three eyes: the moon, the sun and the sacrificial fire.) |
| 5. | It is said that the Rudra Bhairava face is the Southern, And the face that is the Western is called the Nandin-face, |
| 6. | And the Umā face of the god is to be known as the Northern; His fifth is to be known by the name Sadāśiva, the pure. |
| 7. | (All are three-eyed except Vāmadeva, who is two-eyed.) The Mahādeva face is Earth, the Bhairava face should be Light; |
| 8. | The Nandin face, now, is Air, and that of Umā is said to be Water. That called Sadāśiva is to be known as Space, O Pride of the Yadus. |
| 1. | ¹ sadyojāṃ ² vāmadevam ³ aghoram ca mahābhujā/ am jñeyam ⁵ īśānam pañcamam mukham// |
| 2. | ¹ sadyojāṃ mahī proktā ² vāmadevam tathā jalam/ |

| | |
|----|---|
| | ³ tejas tv aghoraṃ vikhyātaṃ ⁴ vāyus tatpuruṣaṃ mahat// |
| 3. | ⁵ śānaṃ mahī proktā vāmadevaṃ pañcamaṃ mukham/ (vibhāgenāthe vaksyāmi śambhor vadanapañcakam//) |
| 4. | ¹ mahaādeva-mukhaṃ jñeyaṃ śambhor mahātmanaḥ/ (netrāṇi trīṇi tasyāhuḥ samasūryahutāśanaḥ//) |
| 5. | ² dakṣiṇaṃ tu mukhaṃ raudraṃ tatprakīrtitam/ ³ paścimaṃ yan mukhaṃ tasya nandi-vaktraṃ tad ucyate// |
| 6. | ⁴ umā-vaktaṃ ca vijñeyaṃ tasya devasya cottaram/ ⁵ sadāśivākhyam vijñeyaṃ pāvanaṃ tasya pañcamam// |
| 7. | (trilocanāni sarvāṇi vāmadevaṃ dvilocanam/) ¹ mahādeva-mukhaṃ bhūmis ² tejaḥ syād bhairavaṃ mukham// |
| 8. | ³ nandi-vaktraṃ tathā vāyur ⁴ aumeyaṃ cāpa ucyate/ ⁵ sadāśivākhyam ākāśaṃ yadunandana// |

Note

Lines not directly concerning the names of the five faces, their associated elements and distribution, are within brackets.

Marginal numbers refer to the stanzas of the next.

Numerals within the text indicate passage concerning one of the five faces; these numbers correspond to those used in Table 1.1. Where possible, sandhis have been resolved in the transliteration, for the sake of clarity.

Table 1.1

The five Names and Faces of Śiva with their Associated Elements and Relative Disposition
according to Viṣṇudharmottara 3.48.1-8

| | | | |
|----|---|----------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. | 1 | Sadyojāta | |
| | 2 | Vāmadeva | |
| | 3 | Aghora | |
| | 4 | Tatpuruṣa | |
| | 5 | Īśāna | |
| 2. | 1 | Sadyojāta | mahī (earth) |
| | 2 | Vāmadeva | jala (water) |
| | 3 | Aghora | tejas (fire) |
| | 4 | Tatpuruṣa | vāyu (air) |
| 3. | 5 | Īśāna | ākāśa (space; ūrdhvastha, aloft) |
| 4. | 1 | Mahādeva | pūrva (east) |
| 5. | 2 | Rudra Bhairava | dakṣiṇa (South) |
| | 3 | Nandin | paścima (west) |
| 6. | 4 | Umā | uttara (north) |
| | 5 | Sadāśiva | pāvana (pure, the fifth (Axis)) |
| 7. | 1 | Mahādeva | bhūmi (earth) |
| | 2 | Bhairava | tejas (fire) |
| 8. | 3 | Nandin | vāyu (air) |
| | 4 | Umā | āpas (water) |

| | | | |
|--|---|----------|---------------|
| | 5 | Sadāśiva | ākāśa (space) |
|--|---|----------|---------------|

| | |
|------------|--|
| Inference | |
| (Sadyojāta | - mahī) = (bhūmi- Mahādeva) - east |
| (vāmadeva | - jala) = (āpas- Umā) - north |
| (Aghora | - tejas) = (tejas- Rudra Bhairava) - south |
| (Tatpuruṣa | - vāyu) = vāyu- Nandin) - west |
| (Iśāna | - ākāśa = ākāśa Sadāśiva) - fifth (Axis) |

The five faces of Śiva are said first (at Viṣṇudharmottara 3.48.1-3) to be Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora, Tatpuruṣa and Iśāna. Mārkaṇḍeya is then made to say in the text: 'I shall now speak of the pentad of faces (vadana-pañcakam) of Śambhu [Śiva] according to their distribution (vibhāgena).'

They are, in the order given: Mahādeva in the east, Rudra-Bhairava in the south, Nandin in the west, Umā in the north, and 'the pure fifth [face] called Sadāśiva.' Of the first set of names, Sadyojāta, etc. Gonda¹⁷⁶ writes:

It is true that their origin is wrapped in darkness, that they do not occur in the Mahābhārata and that their oldest occurrence in the tenth book of the Taittiriya-Āraṇyaka, that is the Mahā-Nārāyaṇa-Upaniṣad, is of uncertain date (IIIrd century B.C.). Yet it is sufficiently clear that this oldest occurrence constitutes a series of formulas addressed, in a fixed order, to Śiva.

They appear in the same order in the Viṣṇudharmottara as in the Āraṇyaka. Gonda does not remark upon the reason for this ritually 'fixed order' of the five aspects which 'are to be pronounced in a low voice in order to promote a devotee's meditation and to produce (higher) knowledge.'¹⁷⁷ But it is clear that these are elemental names, at least as far as the iconographical text, Viṣṇudharmottara 3, is concerned, for they are there said

(Viṣṇudharmottara 3.48.2-3ab) to be the names for, in order, the faces of Śiva representing earth (mahī), water (jala), fire/heat/light (tejas), air/wind (vāyu), and 'ether'/space (ākāśa). This is self-evidently a progression of increasing subtlety in the material five elements; meditation on them, in this order, would raise the mind of the devotee by stages through increasingly refined or rarefied levels, away from physical concerns. It is, however, a linear progression, similar to the vertical stages of the Pāñcarātra Viśākhayūpa¹⁷⁸ leading 'up' or 'back' to a transcendent source. Thus far in the text, multi-directional symbolism appears not to be involved in the series of elemental names; mention is made nonetheless, of 'the fifth face, Īśāna' (stanza 1d) and of 'the fifth, elevated face [as] Īśāna' [which represents] ether/space' (stanza 3ab), implying that the preceding four are also to be conceived in meditation as faces (mukha) of Śiva, and these four are in KuṣāṇaCaturmukhalinga sculptures multi-directional, facing the four quarters. Mārkaṇḍeya's pronouncement (stanza 3cd) interposed between this statement of the ancient Śaiva face-names as names of the elements and the account of the disposition (vibhāga) of the Śiva-faces, is clearly intended to correlate the two series of five, integrating (linear) meditation with (multi-directional) ritual. The text makes it plain how it is re-arranging the elements. Thus (stanzas 7cd-8cd):

first, Mahādeva face = bhūmi (earth; previously named, as mahī, Sadyojāta, the first element);

second, Bhairava face = tejas (fire; previously named Aghora, the third element);

third, Nandin = vāyu (air; previously named Tatpuruṣa, the fourth element);

fourth, Umā = āpac (water; previously named, as jala Vāmadeva, the second element);

and fifth, Sadāśiva = ākāśa ('ether'; previously named Īśāna' the fifth element).¹⁷⁹ In a five-faced Śiva image, therefore, the original series of elements should be meditated upon in the following order according to the text: earth is its front (east) face, water its proper left face, fire

that on its proper right, air that at the back, and 'ether', or space, the apex.

As in the Musānagar pradhānapuruṣeśvara and the Mathura Caturvyūha icons, the sequence of the emanatory figures-or, in the case of the sculpture under discussion here, emanatory faces is to be regarded as beginning with the front, branching laterally right and left, and then proceeding to the back. (In the Kuṣāṇa tetrad-images, the fourth, rear figure emerges from the back of the head of the first figure; it does not represent a fifth axial element.) The linear elemental sequence being thus broken up, pradakṣiṇā worship has no meaning (in attempting to perform it, the devotee would have to pass the elemental stages in the order Earth/East, Water/North, Fire/South, Air/West); the icon has to be regarded from the front, and the fourth element or face is then necessarily unseen. So on the basis of the second part of the text-passage (stanzas 4-8), a live-faced Śiva image in the round would be ritually superfluous: a relief, with the fourth face omitted altogether, would be entirely adequate for ritual purposes. The most obvious example of such a relief would be the much discussed¹⁸⁰ 'Maheśa-mūrti' of the sixth-seventh century A.D., which dominates the rock-cut Śaiva temple on Elephanta Island, Sadyojāta/Mahādeva facing east, Vāma-deva/Umā north, and Aghora/Rudra-Bhairava south. Five-faced sculptures of Śiva in human shape do exist, but they are of late date.¹⁸¹

In the Kuṣāṇa period, however, the Caturmukhaliṅga was an established cult-object, and the sculpture under discussion here, in which the live aspects of Śiva are separated, also appeared. At that time, the Viṣṇudharmottara had not yet been composed:¹⁸² but the Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka, dated by Gonda to perhaps the third century B.C.,¹⁸³ certainly existed. And it is in the latter text that we find the sequence of names which accords with the Kuṣāṇa sculptures of the phallic axis surrounded by four aspects. This sequence is that set out in the first part of the Viṣṇudharmottara passage (3.48. 1-3ab), before Mārkaṇḍeya is made to state his intention, in stanza 3cd, of rearranging it.

Using the Aghora/Rudra-Bhairava face as a landmark in this rearrangement-since it is the most easily recognized, with its unkempt locks and ferocious expression-it is evident that the

Caturmukhaliṅga of the Kuṣāṅga period followed the earlier, more traditional sequence of names, with Aghora as third in order. Thus, if one commences in the east with Sadyojāta and proceeds around a Kuṣāṅga Caturmukhaliṅga in the pradakṣiṇā (clockwise) direction, Aghora appears as the western or rear face, diametrically opposed to the crowned first face. (In later Images, influenced by the rearrangement mentioned by Mārkaṇḍeya in the text, Aghora/Rudra-Bhairava occurs second in the sequence of names and so, as the Elephanta 'Maheśa-mūrti' example most clearly demonstrates, the Rudra-Bhairava face appears on the south side, that is, to the immediate proper right of the eastward-facing Sadyojāta-Mahādeva.)

In creating cult-objects with the form of an elevated vertical axis With horizontally projected faces, or multi-forms bearing these aspects, namely the Caturmukhaliṅga and the pañcāyatana type of multiple Liṅga which is the subject of this discussion, the Saiva cult in the Mathura region during the Kuṣāṅga period was experimenting with three-dimensional representations of an ancient meditational sequence of the five symbolic names of Śiva. These names, originally intended for verbal repetition and meditation, were thus made into objects of outward ritual which most probably took the form of circumambulation and sequential worship of the four faces. In this, the cult objects so created were similar in origin, I suggest, to the Nānd column which also represented in stone an essentially meditational image or support (dhyānālamba), the Viśākhayūpa of the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra cult, which was also made in the form of a central vertical axis with projected multiple forms upon four sides.

From the first part of the Viṣṇudharmottara text passage, the now missing first (east) face of the composite pañcāyatana Liṅga sculpture under discussion can be identified as Sadyojāta, representing the element earth (mahī: stanza 2a), the third (west) face as Aghora, representing fire-and-light (tejas: stanza 2c), and the central axis, which from the remains appears originally to have been taller than the surrounding attached Liṅgas, as the Īśāna (called Sadāśiva in the second part of the text, at stanza 6a) aspect of Śiva which is said to be the 'elevated' (ākāśa-stha: stanza 3b) fifth element representing space (ūrdhva-stha: stanza 3a). These three

components correspond to the main face, wearing a crested turban, the long-haired head opposite it, and the apex of the Liṅga above the garland respectively, in the Kuṣāṅga Caturmukhaliṅga described above. The first two of these aspects, moreover, correspond iconographically to the main figure (A), wearing a crested turban, and the long-haired figure (D) emerging above it, in the multiple god which I have termed Pradhānapuruṣeśvara on the Musānagar pillar panel. That they also correspond to the latter image in terms of symbolic meaning (i.e., iconologically) is suggested by the fact that the third Śaiva aspect in the list of names given in the text, Aghora, being the western face of the two Liṅga types discussed here, has as its element fire-and-light (tejas: stanza 2c), which appears in the form of the sun and moon held in the upraised hands of the long-haired raudra figure (D) in the Musānagar relief. The Musānagar image thus seems, as I have partly suggested already, to be the anthropomorphic counterpart of contemporary pentadic Liṅga constructs of the Caturmukha and Pañcāyatana types, in both iconographical and iconological terms.

A second unusual and somewhat controversial sculpture from Bhīṭā¹⁸⁴ (Plate 23) is briefly brought into the discussion at this point, not only because of its relevance to sculptures of Type B, but also because it incorporates, in an atypical manner, several features which will be seen to be typical of the early multiple images of Type C. Unlike all other sculptures discussed so far, it bears an inscription; on paleographical grounds, the sculpture was dated by R. D. Banerji¹⁸⁵ to the first century B.C. The most important word in this inscription¹⁸⁶ from the point of view of identification is a subject of controversy.

The sculpture, damaged at the top, is carved in a style which is crude compared to that of the later images previously discussed. From a four-sided base rises a roughly cylindrical shaft which curves inward near the top, this curve forming the shoulders on either side of a severely broken head which surmounts the shaft. The remaining left ear of this head is elongated by an ornament suspended from the lobe. From the inward curve of the shaft to the left of the head, forming its shoulder, an incised double line runs in a deep loop across the front of the shaft,

apparently representing the top of the garment swathing the trunk below the apical head. Beneath this line, a left hand emerges from the pillar, palm outward, the fingers curled upward around the neck of a bulbous water-pot. A right hand, with a plain bracelet around the wrist, rises up to the shoulder, apparently making the abhaya gesture. But it is not the abhayamrudā of Kuṣāṇa iconography, in which the palm of the hand is turned toward the body, with the thumb against the chest; here, the hand is held with the palm facing forward. At the base of the column the male sexual organs, ithyphallic, are crudely but unmistakably outlined, the testes upon the square base and the phallus upon the rounded column. This carving, which could have been added at any time after the sculpture was made, is aligned with the vertical centreline of this side of the pillar, directly below the apical head.

Four faces project from the pillar around the middle zone, above which the shaft narrows to represent the torso of the main figure. The sculptor has evidently taken care to represent the throat beneath each of these faces: they are clearly intended to be seen as growing out of the shaft, rather than simply as masks or severed heads strung around the middle of the column. They are, in fact, anatomically connected to the central pillar, as indeed are the hands above them and the apical head. Seen from the front or back of the sculpture, these heads on the shaft face obliquely outward at an angle of about forty-five degrees. R. C. Agrawala¹⁸⁷ inaccurately describes the sculpture as 'depicting an additional face above the central head'; since there is no head in the centre. On the contrary, unlike all images of Type B so far described, the top of the apical figure in this sculpture does not emanate from another figure beneath it, but rises from the midst of the four faces.

The relative crudity of the sculptural work and the palaeographical evidence must indicate an early date for this image. R. D. Banerji,¹⁸⁸ on the basis of the inscription, places it in the first century B. C., a date supported by its style. (On the other hand, D. R. Bhandarkar seems to have suggested¹⁸⁹ a date at least two centuries later, in the first century A.D.) The sculpture presents its strange appearance, I suggest, for definable iconographical reasons; it is, as J. N.

Banerjea remarks,¹⁹⁰ anomalous, but it has an internal logic which accounts for its odd appearance more satisfactorily than does the interpretation of it as one of "the descendants of the rude stone monuments called menhirs or standing stones which "have been found distributed all over parts of Europe and western Asia and occur also in India."¹⁹¹

The basic structure of this column is suggestive of a fivefold Liṅga personified. If the heads and hands are disregarded, it consists essentially of a cylindrical shaft with a domed top and squared-off base.¹⁹² A head has been added atop the apex of the shaft, the inward curving top of which has been transformed, by the neckline of a garment looping down from it, into shoulders on either side of the apical head. The hands emerge from the shaft without disturbing its basic cylindrical shape; hence the arms are not extended, but kept close to the surface of the shaft. The whole columnar sculpture cannot, however, be a Liṅga in the strict sense for the same reasons as those which make it impossible to identify the Nānd column as such: it does not have the 'naturalism' shared by all early Śiva- Liṅgas, namely the thick portion at the top of the shaft. The iconography of the individual faces does, on the other hand, confirm that this is a Śaiva cult-object: the broken head of the dominant central figure has long locks of hair hanging down its back, and the face beneath the left hand of this figure has the glaring eyes, fangs and moustache of the ferocious raudra aspect of Śiva. The phallic engraving at the base of the pillar may well have been added at a later date by devotees who wished to confirm, when the old and uncertain iconography had largely been forgotten, that the sculpture was Śaiva-even, perhaps, to attempt to identify it as a Liṅga.

This sculpture is a Saiva cult column. One of its purposes may well have been, as Banerjea¹⁹³ suggests, to stand as an ancestral memorial, but if so, it was a memorial also intended to serve a religious function; for the formal grouping strongly suggests that, as in the case of the Caturvyūha sculpture, a group of kinsmen was represented in the guise of aspects of a god to convey a philosophico-religious concept¹⁹⁴ of considerable antiquity.¹⁹⁵ Although not a Liṅga, or cluster of five Liṅgas, the composition of the image is almost certainly based

upon such a concept, with the five elements personified.

The sculpture thus provides evidence which supports two of my main inferences concerning the multiple Kuṣāṇa icons of the two main god-cults associated with Viṣṇu and Śiva. They are, firstly, that both cults had evolved the iconographical concept of four aspects of a deity emanating from a central axis. The second, and very- important inference, is that both cults had attempted to anthropomorphise the axis itself. For the Bhītā sculpture represents a Liṅga-concept transformed-however awkwardly-into a man, or a god, from whom grow four scions, or aspects, of himself.

We can tentatively come to the following conclusions regarding the seven sculptures studied thus far: The Viśākhayūpa at Nānd provides the first evidence of a Vaiṣṇava parallel to the Śaiva four-faced Liṅga: and the Musānagar fourfold Śiva similarly furnishes the only evidence hitherto published of Śaiva iconographic parallel to the Vaiṣṇava Caturvyūha construct. The Nānd and Musānagar discoveries demonstrate that both cults had evolved, by the Kuṣāṇa period, two iconographical concepts: (a) four principal aspects emanating from a central axis, and (b) the four aspects manifested independently of the fifth unifying element, in the form of a self-unifying tetrad.

The similarity, both doctrinal and iconographical, of the caturvyūha ideology of the Vaiṣṇava and the proliferating pradhānapuruṣa conception of Īśvara Śiva, is striking. The philosophical differences between the two cults, however, were much wider than the identity of composition in their fourfold icons might suggest. Both systems, each by means of an axial construct and its related tetradic form, are clearly expressing the cosmic evolutionary process. The self-unifying tetradic icons, from which the fifth, axial element is apparently absent, are nevertheless extensive symbolical statements of cosmogonic theories; they are not mere 'portraits' of the gods who figure in current mythology. Of the two, the Musānagar Śaiva image appears to symbolize a wider conception than the unpolarized source (personified as Īśvara who potentially contains both the leading emanatory female principle, prakṛti or pradhāna,

symbolized by the golden pot held in the left hand; and its male counterpart, puruṣa, symbolized by the subsiding phallus) to the emanation of Brahmā for material creation, Viṣṇu for preservation, and finally Rudra for the purification-through-destruction of all that has evolved. The crowned ithyphallic figure and the long-haired raudra figure are seen as the alpha and omega of the universal scheme. The two Vaiṣṇava image of the vyūha system, on the other hand, reflect rather a concern with the evolutionary process, without manifesting the full cosmic cycle. Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Rudra as controllers of the material creation are born from (D), (E) and (F) (Figure 1.2), namely the three apical emanations, Rati/Mahālakṣmī, Mahāvidyā and Mahākālī, in the Caturvyūha-Śakti image; the 'Trinity' of gods representing the material triguṇa is not represented.

Although the vertical axis does appear to be absent from the independent tetradic icons such as the Mathura Caturvyūha image and the Musānagar Pradhanapuruṣeśvara icon, the element which constitutes the axis in pentad groupings-the (Viśākha) yūpa and the (Caturmukha-) liṅga respectively-may in fact be present in the tetrads although not axially centred between the four components.

Thus in the Śaiva pradhānapuruṣa icon, the phallus of the main figure (A) may represent an incorporation of the Liṅga (although beginning to subside) as an anatomical feature rather than as a distinct fifth axial element, while at the same time symbolizing the male principle of the Creation, puruṣa. Further, it is the crowned face of (A) which appears as the only anthropomorphic emanation of some Kuṣāṇa Ekamukhaliṅgas, again suggesting that the crowned ithyphallic figure in the tetrad has been substituted for the central phallic axis.

Further, the mace in the Caturvyūha image at Mathura, of which the upper section is visible beneath the lower right hand of Vāsudeva (Plates 10 and 12) may similarly be taken to represent an incorporation of a symbol of the absent central axis, the yūpa. Liebert¹⁹⁶ notes that the gadā of Viṣṇu is generally to be taken as a symbol of strength and power', and that 'it

is also, though probably incorrectly, said to be a (phallic) symbol of fertility.'

The chief weapons of Viṣṇu being the mace and disc, it is perhaps not surprising that some should have seen in their apposition in a single icon some sexual symbolism, but there appears to be no scriptural authority for such an interpretation. Indeed, the gender of the Sanskrit words denoting these weapons has been taken up in their personifications, there being many later images¹⁹⁷ in which the mace (gadā, f.) is symbolized by a tutelary goddess, Gadā-devī, and the disc (cakra, n., and in early texts sometimes m.) by a tutelary male figure, Cakra-puruṣa, the very reverse of the apparent symbolism of visual analogy.

Nevertheless, the possibility of the mace, in certain images, having been regarded as an axial-not phallic-symbol need not be entirely ruled out. It has already been remarked that the mace of Vāsudeva in the fragmentary Caturvyūha image at Mathura is clearly to be seen as a tree trunk with a weight, probably in the form of the nut of the tree, attached to the top, and that the overlapping 'scale' on its side are similar to those of the fan-palm (tala). Another tree, the jambu or rose-apple is said in Hindu mythology to have surmounted Meru, the mountain-axis of Jambudvīpa (India) and the surrounding continents.¹⁹⁸ Again, standing between heaven and earth, 'the Aśvattha is the chief of trees fit represents the life-tree) and Typifies that tree of life which is rooted in God above ... To reverse this tree is to worship God. Viṣṇu is identified with the Nyagrodha and Udumbara and Aśvattha'.¹⁹⁹

To return to the archaeological evidence, the trunk of an aśoka tree carved on the reverse of the Caturvyūha image marks the centreline of the quadruple composition of the icon which it adorns. Moreover, the term viśākha-yūpa, the Pāñcarātra term for the central axis surrounded by the multiple tetrads vyūhas, implies an arboreal construct.²⁰⁰ Indeed, the Lakṣmī-tantra states explicitly that the branches, viz. Vāsudeva etc., [i.e. the vyūhas] Which are generally recognized as belonging to the all-pervasive God have been extended by Lord Viśākha-yūpa.²⁰¹ That the identification of Vāsudeva with a tree was taken for granted in the

early fifth century is demonstrated with striking clarity in a poetic metaphor contained in an inscription²⁰² of AD. 404-5. The Viśākhayūpa concept, and Vāsudeva himself, appear to have been metaphorically regarded in the form of a growing and proliferating tree from epic times. On the sides of the Viśākhayūpa at Nānd, the figures of the vyūhas overlap as they ascend, resembling the 'scales' of a fan-palm, the trunk of which forms Vāsudeva's mace in the Caturvyūha image. The mace so represented may as proposed, stand for the axis, the fifth element of the essential pentad which has been displaced from its central position to allow a fully anthropomorphic image to be made, visible in its entirety from the front. I further suggest that, as in the case of Pradhānapuruṣeśvara with erect, but subsiding, phallus, the anthropomorphic main figure in the Caturvyūha tetrad is himself, though vyūha, also conceived of as the (proliferating tree/yūpa axis this proposition is supported both by the archaeological evidence of the two sides of the Caturvyūha image and that of the inscription mentioned.

I can now propose that the fourfold images at Mathura and Mūsanagar are abbreviated form of 'primary' pentad constructs in which the four images were centred upon a vertical axis. In the 'primary' forms, the axis consisted of a simple vertical shaft. In the case of the Vaiṣṇavas, this was called yūpa, being derived from Vedic terminology in which it meant the stake upon the sacrificial arena that rose through the triple world to heaven, transformed into its cult manifestation, the Viśākhayūpa. For the Śaivas the axis took the form of the Liṅga, a similarly upward-growing, cosmic axial symbol with three vertical divisions (known as bhāgas or kāṇḍas and associated, from the base upward, with Brahmās, Viṣṇu and Rudra respectively²⁰³) but with non-Vedic phallic associations, as distinct from the Vaiṣṇava axis which is essentially an arboreal construct.

In the 'secondary' abbreviated fourfold images, the significance of the 'original' axis is not forgotten, but simply transferred from the centre to a subsidiary position as an attribute of the main figure of the tetrad: in the fourfold Pradhānapuruṣeśvara, as the anatomically integrated Liṅga (as phallus) of Śiva; and in the fourfold Viṣṇu, as the hand-held mace (as tree) of

Vāsudeva. As noted in the previous conclusion, however, there are grounds for supposing that the main figure of the tetrad is in both cases also identified with the 'original' aniconic axis.

In strict art-historical terms, on the other hand, it is not realistic to speak of 'primary' and 'secondary' forms, for there is no certain archaeological or stylistic basis upon which it can be asserted that the pentadic sculptures are earlier than the tetradic ones. Moreover, the philosophical and theological ideas of which the sculptures are visual formulations necessarily preceded the sculpting of the images; and there is therefore no reason why both the pentadic and the tetradic iconographical forms should not have been coeval, in a period when brahmanical iconography was clearly in a highly inventive phase. Yet it seems logical to assume that, from the religious viewpoint, the axis was regarded as the sine qua non of universal existence, the fixed point and support of all, and that three-dimensional pentadic images, in which it occupies the centre of a tetrad, were theologically more fundamental and explanatory than fourfold reliefs designed to enable the devotee to see his multiplex deity at a single glance.

On the basis of the iconography of the Caturvyūha image in relation to Pāñcarātra cosmogony, and of the Pradhānapuruṣeśvara in relation to the Mahābhārata passage quoted, it appears that the emanatory figures are to be regarded as becoming manifest, not simultaneously, but in a specific sequence. The sequence is that of the letters of the alphabet assigned in Figures 1.1 to 1.3: that is, the first emanation (B) is from the right side (Saṅkarṣaṇa in the Caturvyūha image and Pāñcarātra texts. Brahmā in the Mahābhārata Śaiva passage), the second (C) from the left side (Pradyumna in Pāñcarātra theory, Viṣṇu in the epic text) and the last (D) from the apex (Aniruddha, last of the initial four vyūhas of the Pāñcarātra, Rudra in the Pradhānapuruṣeśvara image and the related text passage).

This sequence assumes the form of a two-dimensional pattern ramifying outward from a centreline, first to the two sides and then from the apex. Basing an icon upon such a pattern

has clear implications with regard to ritual. If the long-established practice of pradakṣiṇā circumambulatory worship (in Buddhist ritual practice with regard to the stūpa, for example) had been envisaged as the ritual system for which these icons were created, the sequence would have had to be differently arranged. For in worshipping the four figures in such a tetrad by concentrating upon each figure successively in a clockwise sequence, the last Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava emanation (Rudra or Aniruddha) would in fact be approached as the penultimate form in the cycle.

The same remarks must apply equally to the Kuṣāṇa pentadic Liṅga discussed above and the Caturmukhaliṅga, for the Rudra face appears diametrically opposite that of Mahādeva, despite the fact that these free-standing, three-dimensional sculptures, consisting of a vertical axis surrounded by four emanations, might appear to have been specifically designed for a circumambulatory ritual. Only if one assumes that it was the relationship between the Caturmukhaliṅga or the pentadic Liṅga and its natural environment, rather than that between the sculpture and the worshipper which dictated its form, does the reason for this particular disposition of the faces become clear. The crowned first face of Śiva on the Liṅga, symbolizing the beginning of creation, would have looked eastward to the rising sun, while the destructive western face of Rudra would have looked into the sunset at nightfall. It may be surmised from this that the other two faces were intended to relate to the most northerly and southerly paths of the sun, while the phallic axis connected the earth to the solar orbit. Such a symbolical scheme would (as a fertility symbol) connect the earth and seasons to heaven and divine providence, and (as a cosmic symbol) would relate the successive changes in the environment, both daily and seasonal, to the universal process, as microcosm to macrocosm.

It may be proposed that the Musānagar tetrad is compositionally derived from such a three-dimensional pentad involving directional symbolism. Only in these terms can the positioning of the final figure, Rudra, at the apex of the two-dimensional tetrad be reasonably explained, for he is seen here rising from his original position on the axis-at the back of Mahādeva-and turned

to face the front. A similar devolution of form most probably occurred in the case of the Viśākhayūpa and the independent vyūha tetrad. Yet it cannot be maintained that the reason for such alterations to the axial pentad sculptures was dictated by purely technical considerations such as the need to produce reliefs on architectural members. For the Caturvyūha image, though essentially a relief, is free-standing and caned upon both sides; the compositional equivalent of Rudra in the Śaiva Musānagar panel, that of Aniruddha, could therefore have been represented at the back, in imitation of the axial populated yūpa, yet it is turned to face the front above the head of Vāsudeva.

If the representation of the axis connecting the multiple aspects of complex ideologies was important at this time²⁰⁴ one naturally asks why a self-unified tetradic form without an axis should have been developed. The answer would appear to lie in the distinction between, on the one hand, icons which are cosmic symbols relating directly to the natural environment, such as the Caturmukhalinga and, on the other, those which were designed to relate directly to the worshipper. The reason, in short, was a ritual one.

If, in the field of religion, the bhakti approach to worship of a personal god was developing at this time, it is understandable that alongside the experimentation with visual representations of cosmological metaphor (Viśākhayūpa Caturmukhalinga) in which the aniconic axis was the unifying element, there should have been modifications made to those constructs of such a kind that the focus of the cult-object was transformed into an anthropomorphic god. This god was, however, understood to be the primary emanation from the axis, of which a reminder was integrated with the fully anthropomorphic, 'abbreviated' icon (see above).

By 'flattening' the multi-directional pentad sculptures-reducing them to flat, two-dimensional images in relief-the devotee was enabled to stand before his deity in its entirety, face to face, with no aspect hidden. This frontal approach to pūjā appears nearly always to have characterized Hindu religious practice; it became finally established with the housing of the icon

within a garbhagrha having a single entry.

That the Śaivas perpetuated the aniconic axis (the Śaivaliṅga) as their central cult-object in later times is well known. That the Vaiṣṇava similarly perpetuated their conception of the cosmic yūpa has not been fully recognized; I shall demonstrate this perpetuation in later chapters.

Although the iconographical details of 'classical' and post-Gupta multiple images were to undergo much change and elaboration, the basic structures found here in the Kuṣāṇa sculptures of Types A and B were perpetuated as the integrating schemes which connected the elements of the later complex icons. Each such scheme and motif is here accorded a 'source number' in order that its reappearance may be indicated in my account of the subsequent development of multiple iconographic types and so traced back to its origin in this experimental phase. These are presented in tabular form, each being given a brief definition, a statement of its symbolic function (in the Kuṣāṇa imagery), and a list of examples from the early archaeological material. The data are set out in Table 1.2.

A Mathura fragment 30.5 centimetres in height²⁰⁵ is the first of Type C to be examined (Plates 24-6). These multiple Kuṣāṇa images at Mathura are visually very impressive. They suggest a massive form despite their small size, and the vastness of conception is evident in spite of their damaged state. Perhaps much of their force also derives from the fact that they are 'primitives' inasmuch as the symbolism is experimental, and yet they are the creations of skilled craftsmen with centuries of sculptural tradition behind them.

Table 1.2. Structural Designs and Motifs in Kuṣāṇa Multiple Icons of Types A and B

| Source No. | Definition | Symbolical Function | Archaeological Examples |
|------------|---|--|--|
| 1 | Central Axis with four emanatory aspects | Space-time and earth-heaven unification. A multi-directional symbol of the cosmic cycle | Ekamukhalinga pentad Sculpture 6 and Caturmukhalinga |
| 2A | Overlapping vertical series of figures attached to, or forming, one side of an axis | Linear evolution from one state to another along an unbroken axial continuum | Mathura populated pillar Sculpture 1 |
| 2B | or four sides of an axis | | Nand Viśākhayupa Sculpture 2 |
| 3A | Central figure with ramifying emanatory forms | Sequential evolution of a plural system from a single source, on the proliferation analogy of plant-growth | Mathura Caturvyūha- Śakti Musānagar Pradhānapuruṣeśvara Sculpture 3,4,5 |
| 3B | in particular, a figure emanating vertically from the crown or head of the central figure | End of the sequence in a tetradic composition | Figure D Sculpture 3,4,5 |

| | | | |
|----|--|---|---|
| 3C | also, figures emanating laterally from the shoulders or side of the central figure | Secondary and tertiary phases of the sequence in a tetradic or hexadic composition | Figure B and C Sculpture 3,4,5 |
| 4A | Anthropomorphic axis | <i>Universal source as a personal deity involved in the creation</i> | Figure A (Sculpture 3) |
| 4B | Partly anthropomorphised axis | | Bhita image (Sculpture 7) |
| 5 | <i>Displaced axis and dual significance of a single object</i> | <i>Symbol of the fifth central element of an axial pentad, in an independent tetrad from which the axis is absent</i> | <i>The hand-held mace of Sculpture 3, figure A, and the anatomical liṅga of Sculpture 5, figure A</i> |
| 6 | Sun-disk and moon-crescent at the top of an image | Symbols of time | Attributes of Rudra as figure D, Sculpture 5 |
| 7 | Paradoxical figure of the procreative celibate | Creation out of tapas transformed into kāma | Sculpture 5 |
| 8A | Paradoxical figure of the regal ascetic | Apotheosis or transcendent state of the tapasvin or yogin | Sculpture 5, figure A |
| 8B | or of the ascetic elevated above the gods | | Sculpture 2, the four squatting figures around the apex |

This sculpture seems to be the inevitable next development following the evolution from the populated aniconic axis (Viśākhayūpa, Mukhaliṅga) to the anthropomorphized axis Caturvyūha, Pradhānapuruṣeśvara), namely the integration of the ramifying (B) and (C) in Figures 1.1, 1.2

and 1.4, with the anthropomorphic axis. The sculptor has depicted a main figure with two extra heads, one located on each side of the central, natural face; each has individual features and they seem to represent abbreviated versions of the laterally emerging (B) and (C) of our sculptures numbered 3, 4 and 5. Although these side-heads do not appear to be anatomically connected, in that they are not conjoined to the main figure on their own separate necks, the divinity represented must be regarded as in some sense three-headed. In the following description therefore, as in Figure 1.5, I shall refer to the lower figure as (A), its central head as (A^a), that to its right as (A^b) and its counterpart on the left as (A^c). It is significant that in this developed composition, the apical figure (D) in Figures 1,1, 1.2 and 1.4) of the three ramifying icon of Type B has been retained, rising from behind face (A^a), suggesting that it was important at this stage in iconographical development to maintain the concept of an upward-growing axis although the ramifications might be cur-tailed. In the absence of emergent lateral figures, this upper figure will be referred to as (B).

One extremely important piece of evidence with regard to the interpretation of this severely damaged and eroded image has, fortunately, survived. This is the large circular aureole against which (B) appears. Its pronounced circularity is more clearly to be seen from the back (Plate 26), which is relatively undamaged, than from the front. Its perimeter is cut deeply into the side of the sculpture above the head (A^b) (Plate 25), emphasizing the circular effect and clearly differentiating (B) from (A): the nimbus is not shared, and (A) is not nimbate. This aureole encircles (B) from the waistband of its lower garment, passing above its head at the top, to become merged with the left upper arm. It appears from the fracture lines on the sides of (D) in the Caturvyūha image that the apical figure in that icon also bore a large nimbus; the fractures indicate, however, that it was in that case less extensive, not encircling the figure below the upper arms. In the present sculpture, the nimbus of (B) clearly ends, at its base, as close to one of the heads of (A)- (A^b)- as the sculptor could bring it and still leave a clear distance between it and the lower three-headed figure.

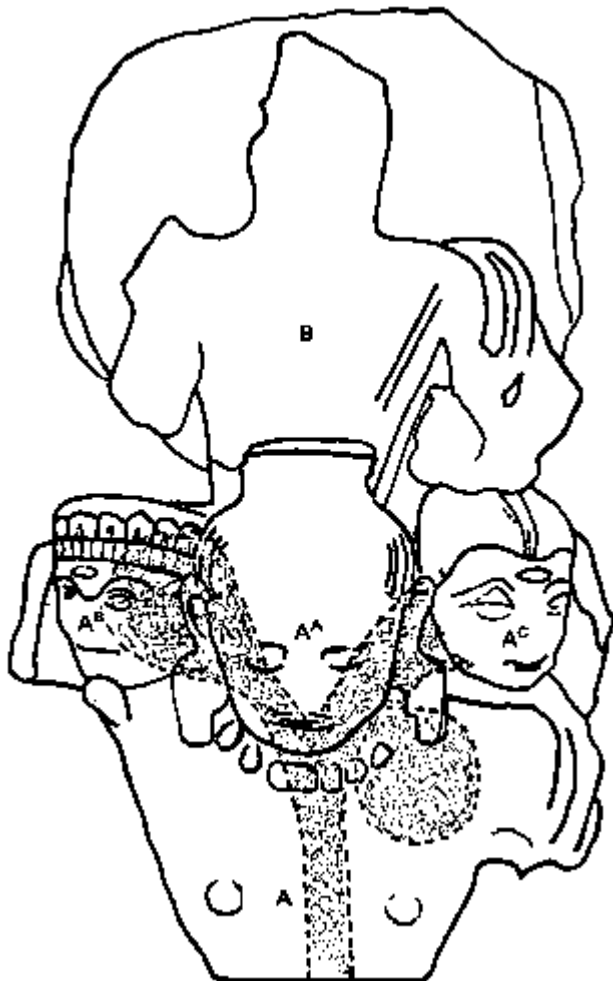


Fig. 1.5 Diagram of Mathura Museum fragment 14.382, showing bifurcation of tree on the back

(B) is itself severely damaged. It is visible from the waist upward, rising from behind the topknot of head (A^a) in the same way as the emergent (D) is set well back from the front of the crown in the Caturvyūha image, which it also resembles, with the robe draped over the left shoulder, and the right arm, apparently, raised from the elbow in the abhayamudrā. There are also incised lines running from the left shoulder down the left side of the torso, suggesting that more of the robe was in this case represented. The left hand of (B) rests upon the head of (A^c) and is cupped with the palm upward

(Plate 25), to hold an unidentifiable object, like the left front hand of Vāsudeva in the Caturvyūha icon. It is unlike the same hand of the apical image (D) in the latter, which is clenched in a fist to hold what appears to have been a water vessel. The head of (B) is completely obliterated.

(A) is lost from below the chest; the beginning of the left arm remains but the whole of the right is lost. It is not possible to judge from the remains whether the figure was originally two- or four-armed. Part of a robe is draped over the stump of the left upper arm, emerging from the block beneath face (A^c). A short necklace of head- or the- may be small flowers upon a thread-encircles the throat beneath the central face (A^a). The wearing of the robe by the lower figure and the small unostentatious necklace are both points of difference between this image and the Caturvyūha image. The fact that both (A) and (B) wear the robe may be of iconographical significance.

The natural head (A^a), which is quite clearly conjoined anatomically to the body, is damaged both on the face and the front of the piled hair. It is, however, clear that the lobes of the ears are pierced and elongated by the weight of large circular ear-ornaments. The ears of Vāsudeva in the Caturvyūha icon were represented without elongation, but the lobes had been pierced after sculpting. In the Nānd Viśākhayūpa, it is possible to see both methods of treating the ears: compare, for example, D 1 (the disc-holder, with large ear-ornaments) and D2 (the branch or spear-bearer, with natural pierced ears) in Plate 8. (It is not possible, on the basis of this evidence, to assert that any very definite iconographical meanings can be attributed to these differences; the piercing of the ears was probably done for ritual reasons, allowing the image to be decorated by priest or devotee with flowers or artificial ornaments.)

The facial features are severely damaged, but the face as a whole gives the impression of being fuller and heavier than that of Vāsudeva in the Caturvyūha sculpture. The hair, as can be seen on the relatively undamaged sides of the head (Plate 25), was braided or combed upward to form a topknot on top of the skull.

Face (A^b), to the proper right of (A^a), is smaller than the central face and looks outward at an angle over the right shoulder of A without any apparent anatomical connection; these remarks apply equally to face (A^c). The facial features of (A^b), although eroded, appear to be expressive of malignant emotion: the mouth slightly agape, the widely-spaced eyes glaring and the continuous curve of the brows (noticed in the face of Vāsudeva of the Caturvyūha sculpture) is exaggerated. It has been suggested²⁰⁶ that a horizontal third eye is carved upon the forehead of this face (and upon that of face A^c). This feature is more clearly evident in the Mathura Museum photo-graph (Plate 24) of the sculpture than it is during a first-hand inspection, which leaves one dissatisfied with the sculptural evidence due to the erosion of the face; but there is something carved on the brow of each side-head. The head (A^b) wears a narrow crown or coronet composed, apparently, of rosettes or upward-pointing leaves seemingly held in place by a band decorated with vertically incised lines. The top of this headdress now appears quite flat, possibly as the result of breakage. The left ear of this face is represented, of natural size and unpierced, beside the large elongated right ear of the central head; the right ear is not shown, as the face is turned outward and its right side merges with a plain, broken projection.

Face (A^c) is more severely eroded than its counterpart. It does nevertheless convey a definite impression of femininity, especially when contrasted with (A^b). The hair appears to have been represented with a central parting, which suggests a female coiffure, as in (C) of the Caturvyūha-Śakti image: The third eye upon the forehead, if such it is, in this case is more prominent than on face (A^b). It appears that the hair was drawn up in a manner similar to the jaṭā of face (A^a). But the head, like the facial features, is damaged severely; more light may be thrown upon the probable character of these three faces by comparison with the remaining sculptures to be examined in this chapter, but the evidence of this fragment alone makes definite identification difficult. Since I have ordered these early sculptures in what I see as a developmental sequence in the history of ideas, however, it is important to attempt an interpretation of

the icon in terms of the Kuṣāṇa context to which it belongs, rather than to explain it in terms of later, better preserved images.

The back of this sculpture (Plate 26), besides indicating clearly the circular shape of the aureole surrounding (B), provides other valuable evidence. The same tree, whether an aśoka or a kuravaka (see Note 57), as that which is, carved upon the back of the Caturvyūha and Caturvyūha-Śakti images, appears also on the reverse of this sculpture. Unlike the carvings upon the other two, however, the tree in this case bifurcates at a point directly behind the throat of (A), beneath face (A^a), and ramifies obliquely upward to right and left, behind the side faces (A^b) and (A^c). The trunk does not continue upward behind the emerging (B). This suggests that when this image was sculpted, it was no longer considered necessary to dispose the tree so as to unify the emerging figures, but was now required to provide a link between the central figure and the new concept of extra heads on either side of the natural face. The necks of faces (A^b) and (A^c) are not represented on the front of the image, possibly because, whereas the multiplication of heads was symbolically necessary, the unnatural anatomical appearance which resulted was not aesthetically acceptable. The unifying construct of the tree, however, was adapted to provide the symbolical connection on the back of the figure.

The forking branches run right and left to end behind the side heads upon projections, the broken ends of which can be seen on the front beside faces (A^b) and (A^c). These projections are not the remains of an aureole; this is clear from the absence of any fracture lines running down the outside edge of the left-arm stump or the sides of the torso, and they are too high to have been supports for an extra pair of arms belonging to (A). They probably continued outward and downward to support carvings of the weapons or other symbols held in the hands of (A). Such a sculptural method is to be seen in the remains of the right-hand side of the Caturvyūha image (Plate 12). This structure would provide the necessary lowering of the centre of gravity of the whole

image, which would otherwise be top-heavy due to the size and weight of the very large aureole surrounding (B).

An important detail on the reverse of this image is the cluster of long leaves descending from the right fork of the tree. It appears to form the back of the robe of (A), looping under the projection behind face (A^b), curving across the back to the left and hanging straight downward near the base of the fragment. The long sweeping curves of this foliage are so carved as to appear to pass between the trunk of the tree and the back of (A), heightening the robe-like effect. The principal three-headed figure is, in other words, still intimately associated with the tree, not only as a symbolically unifying construct, but as a sacred plant, as were the Caturvyūha and Caturvyūha-Śakti images of Type B.

This multi-headed image is very probably one of the earliest such brahmanical sculptures ever to have been made in India, being a product of the workshops of Mathura, the most advanced and prolific centre of sculptural activity during the Kuṣāṇa period outside Gandhara. Its structure therefore deserves special attention. As I have shown, it preserves the archaic brahmanical iconographic feature of vertically emanating figures (Source numbers 2A and 3B), while for the first time introducing a disembodied head on either side of the central face of the lower figure.

It is important to note these side-heads. (A^b) and (A^c), are smaller than the natural head (A^a) of the figure above whose shoulders they appear. In view of the formation of Type B sculptures, it seems reasonable to assume that these side-heads represent the heads of figures equivalent to the obliquely ramifying figures of the Caturvyūha, Caturvyūha-Śakti and Pradhānapuruṣeśvara images: that is, the heads above the shoulders of figure (A) are smaller than the natural head because they were regarded as belonging to smaller emanatory forms Projected by (A). They also face outward, away from head (A^a), at an angle of about forty-five degrees (Plates 24, 25).²⁰⁷ The side-heads are angled outward probably for the same reason that the emergent side-

figures of the three images of Type B are angled Upward and outward, away from the main figure: they are partial emanatory aspects of the main deity, and each is possessed of its own characteristics, very like the branches of a tree or the scions of a lineage. The relative size and angle of the heads in this important early fragment have not been taken into account by those scholars who have recognized its importance.²⁰⁸

There are other details of iconographical significance unique to this sculpture. It appears possible that (A) and the vertically emanating (B) were originally identical: unlike (A) and (D) of the Caturvyūha icon, both wear the robe over the left shoulder. Unlike the other two Kuṣāṇa sculptures from Mathura described under Type B (the Caturvyūha and Caturvyūha-Śakti), the tree on the back is not employed to connect the lower figure to its vertical emanation. The aureole encircles almost the whole of the latter emergent (B); it is a massive circle and is clearly not to be associated (directly) with figure (A). The side-heads (Ab) and (Ac), are not physically connected to (A) as the emanatory forms are firmly conjoined with the central figure in Type B sculptures. And finally, this is the only multiple icon of Kuṣāṇa type at Mathura which bears a trace of the third eye.

The aesthetic power and iconographical importance of this image require a close examination. In searching for a textual basis for such an image, the closest parallels to be found are perhaps surprisingly-in the literary imagery of a late Upaniṣad, the Maitrī Maitrāyaṇīya.²⁰⁹ This text, although bringing in the names of several other deities²¹⁰ and referring to teachers of various doctrines,²¹¹ claims to be based upon orthodox Vedic theology²¹² and teaches that the true doctrine is that which, in keeping with Vedic orthodoxy, leads the individual to union with Brahman (neuter) through the practice of psycho-physiological yoga techniques.

The text begins with an assertion that the archaic Vedic rite is a sacrifice to Brahman (brahma-yajña); and that the sacrificer, having heaped up the fires which receive the oblations, should meditate upon the self ātmānam abhidhyāyet). The object of this

meditation, it is explained, is called prāṇa, the life-breath. This self, with its action, aim and identity is set forth at 2.2: it is

he who, without causing the breath to stop, rises aloft (ūrdhvam utkrāntas), changing yet changeless (vyayamāno 'vyayamānas), [he who] dispels the darkness (tamaḥ praṇudati),... He who, serenity itself, rises aloft from this body (asmāc charīrāt samutthāya), reaches the highest light (paraṃ jyotis), and appears in his own form (svena rūpeṇa)... This is the immortal, [this] the free from fear (amṛtam, abhayam): this is Brahman!²¹³

Although the Brahman is said to be indescribable in this text, as it is in other Upaniṣads, the concept of a great light like the sun is often expressed, at times approaching a visionary description, as in the passage (6.24) which speaks of the aim of yoga techniques in the following terms.

Pierce the darkness, and thou wilt come to That which is not shrouded in darkness. Pierce That [again], and thou wilt see as it were a wheel of sparks, throbbing, of the colour of the sun, mighty in power and vigour (alāta-cakram iva sphurantam āditya-varṇam ūrjasvantam),-Brahman beyond the darkness, shining in the sun up there (amuṣminn āditye), [shining] in the moon and lightning. And seeing Him, thou wilt draw nigh to immortality.

Or again, at 6.16:

So it is that Brahman has the sun as its self (ādityātmā brahma: or Brahman is the self of the sun)²¹⁴ Some say 'Brahman is the sun' (ādityo brahmeti). For thus too did [Maitri] say:

'Offerer, recipient, oblation, sacred formula,

Sacrifice, Vishnu, Prajāpati,

The Lord is every-one who exists, the Witness

Who shines in the circle [of the sun] up there'

(sākṣī yo 'muṣmin bhāti maṇḍale).

The connection between Brahman symbolized by the blazing disc of the sun 'up there' (yonder: asau) and what passes on earth is made clear at 6. 1:

[The All-Highest Self] sustains [him]self in two modes dvidhā ... ātmānam bibharti),-as this breath of life (ayaṃ yaḥ prāno) (in the microcosm) and as that sun up there yaś cāsāv ādityo) (in the macrocosm). Likewise, he has these two paths,--an inner one and an outer one (antar bahiś ca)... The sun up there is [his] external self (asau vā ādityo bahir ātmā), the breath of life [down here] is [his] internal (innermost) self (antar-ātmā prāṇas). Hence the way of the internal self is analogous to the way of the external self.

This is the logic behind-or the basis of-the yoga expounded further at 6.1 by the Upaniṣad:

Every man who has the [right] knowledge, who has rid himself of evil who keeps an eye upon his eye [and the other senses], who has purified his mind, whose goal and ground is That (Brahman), and whose eyes are turned inward,-[that man is] He (the Self).

The yoga-technique is said (6.18) to be sixfold, and the first 01 the yogic methods listed is control of the life-breath (prāṇāyāma). It is the breath, exhaled while making the sound Om, and with the mind concentrated on Brahman, which leads upward to unity of the individual self and the universal self:

There is a channel called Sushumnā, leading upward (ūrdhvaḡā nāḡī conveying the breath

of life (prāṇa) and piercing through into the palate. By means of this [channel] being integrated with the breath (prāṇa), [the syllable] Orb and the mind [the individual self] ascends aloft (ūrdhvam utkramet). (6.21)

Thus far, there are clear parallels between the imagery of the text and the Kuṣāṇa sculpture under examination. Figure (B) rises from figure (A) ('He who rises aloft from this body') and may have been the same in appearance as figure (A) ('[The All-Highest Self] sustains [him]self in two modes'...'he who ... rises aloft, changing yet changeless'); this emanating figure is encircled by a massive aureole ('He who reaches the highest light and appears in his own form'...'a wheel of sparks, throbbing, of the dour of the sun Brahman beyond the darkness, shining in the sun up there' ... 'Brahman is the self of the sun... some say, "Brahman is the sun" ... the Witness who shines in the circle up there').

But what is the basic function of the sixfold yoga technique described? It is a means by which to objectify, within oneself, those complementary; pairs of opposites the polarization of which gives rise to the physical self and the material world, thus isolating the true, essential self (ātman) from that physical self (bhūtātman) and from the world of māyā. This is implied in the Upaniṣad at several places. The human condition is itself twofold: the inner, still, objective self, and the outer, turbulent, subjective self, This inherent duality is expressed in these terms:

This self, so the seen inform us, wanders around on earth in body after body, apparently unaffected by the fruits of [its] works, be they white or black He is indeed the pure, the stable, the unmoved, the unaffected, unflurried, free from desire, standing still like a spectator, self-subsistent. (2.7)

There is indeed another, different [self]: it is known as the 'elemental' [or individual] self (bhūtātman) which [really] is affected by the fruits of [his own] works, be they white or black, and I who must [ever again] enter into the wombs of good or evil [women], thus ascending or descending [in the order of existence], wandering around at the mercy of [all manner of]

dualities (dvandva) Swept away by the currents of Nature's constituents (prākṛtair guṇair) ... it becomes conscious of itself as a separate individual.

(3.2)

The duality within the self-conscious, subjective self (bhūtātman) is expressed (3.3-5) by two of the three gross guṇas ('constituents of Nature'), tamas ('darkness') and rajas ('passion') and their negative manifestations in human nature: 'The individual self is replete with these and subject to them.' It is, among other comparisons, 'like the [victim of] a juggler's tricks, subject to deception (māyā)' (4.2). Involvement in this māyā is the result of a duality in the subjective self's perceptions, between itself as self-conscious subject and the objects of its five senses:

Where knowledge is of a dual nature (dvaitībhūtaṃ vijñānam) (as between subject and object), then the self hears, sees, smells, tastes I and feels: it knows everything.

(6.7)

As I have said, yogic techniques objectify these dualities in the bhūtātman:

By the practice of Yoga a man obtains contentment, ability to bear with [all] dualities, and tranquillity.

(6.29)

This entails the affiliation of the subjective self to the third and highest of the gross guṇas, sattva:

By ascetic practice (tapas), goodness (sattva),

By goodness mind is won,

By mind the Self (ātman), which gotten,

No more return [to earth].

(4.3)

Through this, means, then, man is no longer the victim of dualities, but 'comes to himself', so to speak-that is, he awakes to a central and neutral position between opposites, unaffected by the categories of seeming existence, which is his real self identified with the neutral Brahman:

He who is in the fire here, He who is in the heart [within], and He who is in the sun up there, He is One. And he who knows this comes to the oneness of the One.

(6.17)

This unity of the ātman with the Brahman, this central position, is an isolated state of the real self, as I have mentioned:

Then he moves towards selflessness; and because of this selflessness he experiences neither pleasure nor pain: he attains to absolute isolation (kevalatva).

(6.21)

On the basis of this teaching, we may hypothesise that in the sculpture under discussion the two side-faces represent, in upaniṣadic terms, the two aspects of man that he has to objectify and see separately from his true self (ātman); these dual aspects being male and female, can be regarded as the puruṣa and prakṛti (they are positioned conventionally, the male on the right and the female on the left side) of transient existence. Thus the seer, the brahma-vid, would be represented by the central figure (A), projecting or objectifying-and so freeing himself from subjection to the duality of mundane existence symbolized by the two side-heads. The central, real self is then revealed as figure (A), which is in the rev likeness of the Brahman, represented

by the top figure (B) enveloped in a blazing disc of light, to which the embodied ātman ascends, or with which it stands identified.

There is evidence in the Upaniṣad of the personification of the Brahman:

Hence [our] blessed Lord (bhagavat), the sun up, there, is the cause of emanation, of heaven and of final emancipation.

(6.30)

But which bhagavat is it, who personifies the Brahman? The Upaniṣad offers several options; when the Vāikhilyas pose the question:

Fire, wind, the sun, time, the breath of life, food-Brahma, Rudra, Vishnu: some meditate on one, some on another. Which is the, best? Tell us that.

(4.5)

The sage Maitri replies:

These are indeed the most exalted forms (tanu) of Brahman, all-highest, immortal, and incorporeal. To whichever [of these forms] one is attached in this world, in the world of that [particular form of Brahman] will he take his pleasure for Brahman is; surely, the whole universe.

On these most exalted forms of His one should meditate and one should praise them; then discard them! In their company one moves higher and higher in [different] states of being (loka). Then at the universal dissolution he comes to the Unity of the Person,-yes of the Person.

(4.6)

So a man may approach the Brahman through any of the devas, who are mere tanu-forms (bodies) of it; moreover, they are to be discarded. For man makes use of the gods, but ultimately he transcends them-a teaching which, as I have already suggested, is illustrated in the squatting yogin-figures atop the Nānd Viśākhayūpa and in the figure of the apotheosised regal yogin as Lord of both prakṛti and puruṣa in the Musānagar Pradhāna- puruṣeśvara figure.

In the words of Maitrī in the Upaniṣad:

Hence, by wisdom-by mortification of the self-and by meditation--Brahman can be conceived of. Whose knows this and reverts Brahman in this threefold way, he, surpassing Brahman [= the Veda, as Zaehner suggests], will go [yet further], he [will surpass] the gods in the realm of divinity (adhidaivatva) and attain to a bliss unchanging and unlimited, beyond [all] ill.

(4.4)

To take up a different line of upaniṣadic thought, an early cosmogonic myth might also find expression in this sculpture. It is contained in Praśnopaniṣad 1.4, where Prajāpati is said to have generated (from himself) a separate male and female couple:

'Prajāpati (the Lord of Creatures and Demiurge), wishing [to reproduce] offspring, mortified himself (tapo 'topyata). When he had done this, he produced a couple (mithuna),-matter (rayi) and the breath of life (prāṇa breath, spirit). 'These two will make all manner off spring for me,' he thought. Now the breath of life (prāṇa) is the sun, and matter (rayi) is the moon. Matter is every-thing here, whether formed or unformed ... Now when the sun rises it enters the eastern quarter. In so doing it envelops the living creatures in the east within its rays. When it [enters] the southern, the western, the northern, the lower, the upper and the intermediate quarters, when it illumines everything, it thereby envelops all living beings in its rays. So arises this universal (vaiśvānara) life-breath (prāṇa) which has every [possible] form

(Viśvarūpa),-[I mean] fire.'

In the Kuṣāṇa sculpture, this literary imagery appears to be reflected. The central head (A^a) has the jaṭā hairstyle typical of a tapasvin (Prajāpati is said in the text to have performed tapes, as a result of which the couple were produced) and the heads emerging from him have every appearance of being, on the proper right (A^b), male and, on the proper left (A^c), female. The text makes it quite clear that the original, lone Prajāpati gave rise to a separate couple-sa mithunam utpādayate which notion is explicitly, and symmetrically, reflected in the arrangement of the heads of (A). (I note again that the female aspect is placed on the proper left, as was to become conventional in the representations of a god and his consort in brahmanical iconography.) That the side-heads, (A^a) and, (A^c), do not represent simply a multiplication of the principal head (A^a) but separate projections of (-1) is plainly symbolized by the tree carved on the reverse of the image, the trunk of which adorns (A) (which may be equated with Prajāpati in the myth), then to bifurcate below the level of his own head, to support or adorn the male and female brads of the couple (which would be the prāṇa and rayi of the myth) whom he projects to right and left. If a myth of this kind provided the basis of the sculpture, then the icon cannot be regarded as literally polycephalous, although it may present a multi-headed appearance. The apical figure (B), superimposed as it is upon the massive (solar?) disc, would seem in this upaniṣadic context to represent the Brahman.

If the imagery of the Praśna is applied to the icon, then the symbolic composition and the sequence of its elements would accord with those of the Type B sculptures, namely the Caturvyūha. Caturvyūha-Śakti and Pradhānapuruṣeśvara images. For what would then be seen in this icon would be two aspects of the Brahman, first (A) appearing as Prajāpati, emanating a subsidiary figure, represented here only by their heads (A^b) and (A^c), to left and right, before ascending as the sun to sustain this creation (B). The sequence of the compositional elements would thus in the previously-mentioned three Mathura

sculptures, follow the plant-growth analogy, first growing vertically, then ramifying, and then growing again higher.

It has not been my intention to assert that this icon is a direct translation of upaniṣadic imagery into the form of a god for worship; that would be a chronological absurdity, ignoring religious developments which took place after the composition of the principal Upaniṣads. But I am concerned to trace the origins of multiplex iconography- in India, and I believe that here I have found two of its ancient sources. I have attempted to indicate and underline the relevance to Kuṣāṇa iconography of the historical background of metaphors, unsystematized and unfit for iconographical representation though they were, contained in the Upaniṣads. In their literary imagery, those early texts were as inventive and original as were the complex experimental icons of the Kuṣāṇa period in their use of visual symbolism; and the debt of the designers of these A sculptures to the old forest treatises and discourses in their choice of symbols, and their arrangement, was considerably greater than is accepted by historians of Hindu iconography.²¹⁵

The sculpture has interpreted as Brahmā by V. S. Agrawala²¹⁶ and K.D. Bajpai;²¹⁷ Banerjea accepts their views²¹⁸ R. C. Agrawala has reinterpreted it as Śiva.²¹⁹ All these scholars regard the icon as four-headed, and this is the main basis for their respective identifications of it. Thus Bajpai states that the image 'shows Brahmā's three faces in one line and the fourth one superimposed over the middle head in the form of a bust with two hands';²²⁰ and R. C. Agrawala describes it as 'a three-headed male figure with a haloed bust superimposed at the back of the central head, thus making up four heads'.²²¹

The probable Śaiva element in this iron, namely vestiges of a horizontal eye upon the brow of each side-head, cannot be denied. But there is no other remaining part of the composition which can be said to belong exclusively to Śiva, either in con-temporary Kuṣāṇa sculpture or in the iconography of later periods. Although the side-heads have replaced emanating figures in this sculpture, the apical figure remains the same large, archaic-looking torso which I have termed (D) in the Type B images, and it IS not like the distinctive Rudra figures observed at the

apex of the Śaiva Pradhānapuruṣeśvara icon at Musānagar. The fact, noted above, that the apical figure in the present sculpture imitates the main figure from which it emanates in wearing a robe draped over its left shoulder, has also to be taken into account.

If the image is regarded as an early formulation of a Brahmā icon, then clearly its origin lies not in the Brahmā of epic mythology, whose only clearly-described feature, as Hopkins notes,²²² is his four-headedness; this Brahmā carved in stone, if indeed this is the god represented, shows evidence of much greater thought having been put into its design than would be required simply for the depiction of a four-headed sage. What the sculpture seems to represent is a double creator-god, his lower manifestation emanating male and female archetypes, a concept based upon both meditational and cosmogonic ideas expressed in the Upaniṣads, such as I have illustrated above from the Maitri and the Praśna.

It is not possible, in my view, to identify this image positively either with Brahmā or Śiva. The jaṭā hair-arrangement is, in later iconography, common to images of both gods, as is the possession of extra faces or heads; only the probable presence of the third eye is as I have mentioned a specifically Śaiva feature in Kuṣāṇa iconography. I prefer to regard this sculpture as a prototype of both Brahmā and Śiva images of later periods. As subsequent iconographical developments will show, many later Brahmā images and most multi-headed Śiva icons have three faces arranged in a line, the central one having the jaṭā and the side-faces often smaller than it and different in character, as in the case of this Kuṣāṇa sculpture insofar as (A) is concerned. The loss of the apical bust in most later icons is perhaps foreshadowed here in the absence, at the rear of the image, of the trunk of the tree above the level of the lower figures: the concept of a creator existing simultaneously in two modes, if that is indeed represented by figures (A) and (B) of this early image was perhaps too subtle and indefinite an idea to find acceptance in the later, more standardized brahmanical pantheon and its iconography.

The main feature which appears to link this image with later multi-headed Śiva icons is the fact that the left side-head is female while the right is male and apparently of violent character. If this image is Śaiva, then it is an attempt to define the god as a Creator (A) who projects the

puruṣa and prakṛti principles (A^b) and (A^c) respectively, in his creative phase, descending from his pre-creative, pure state symbolized by the upper figure (B) effulgent in the blaze of his tapas.

Plate 27 shows a fragment²²³ of a Mathura sandstone sculpture in the Kuṣāṇa style which is more advanced than the preceding sculpture. I shall again refer to the main, lower figure as (A), its side-heads to right and left as (A^b) and (A^c) respectively, the central head as (A^a), and the apical figure as (B).

Slightly more of (A) is preserved in this piece than in the fragment discussed before. The left arm and its hand-held object, although severely eroded, remain intact. The robe folded over the left shoulder is here more fully represented, completely covering the left shoulder and arm, in addition to the left side of the torso, which it crosses diagonally from beneath (A^c) to the right breast. The object held at chest level in the left hand is too severely eroded to be identified; it appears to be the same as the equally badly damaged object held upon the palm of the left hand by (B) in our Sculpture 8.

The central head of (A) has the hair drawn up from the forehead and above the ears, to be coiled in a flat chignon on top of the head, forming a circle of the same diameter as that of the skull. This arrangement of the jaṭās differs from that of the corresponding head in the preceding image, in which the drawn-up locks were seen to be gathered into a topknot; but this is a mere difference in fashion or style. The essential feature, namely the divided locks pulled up from the brow and piled atop the head, in the complete absence of any turban or crown, remains the same. The ears are represented as pierced and elongated, but without any ornament, as are those of the side-heads; the fact that the ears of heads (A^b) and (A^c) are visible, and not concealed by those of the central face, suggests that the extra heads are in this image accorded more individual importance than they are in our Sculpture 8. The central face is bearded, a rather narrow goatee hanging upon the upper chest, rendered most distinctly in high relief.

Of the side-heads (A^b) to the proper right is severely damaged, the facial features being entirely lost, but the remains of its hair, and that of head (A^c), indicate that it was in both cases treated in the same or a very similar manner to that of the main central head. It is apparent, despite the erosion, that these side-heads were originally bearded²²⁴ and that they are attached to the central figure in the same way as in the previous sculpture: the back of each head is merged with the central head (A^a) and the line of beard and jaw in each case rests upon the shoulder of (A). There is no attempt to make explicit any anatomical connection by representing separate necks. The side-heads are turned away from the central face, looking along the line of the shoulder of (A) on either side, almost at right angles to the direction faced by the central head; in our Sculpture 8, they faced outward at an angle of about forty-five degrees. It is as a result of this further turning away from the centre that the left ear of the right side-head and the right ear of the left-side counterpart is made visible, appearing adjacent to the ears of the central face. The disparity in size between the side-heads and the central head, which was evident in the sculpture discussed previously, is less apparent here; allowing for a certain amount of compression of the side-faces-the result of depicting sideways-facing heads against a backslab and resting upon the shoulders of a central figure-all three heads of (A) seem to have been represented very nearly to the same scale.

(B), above the three heads of (A), is barely distinguishable as anthropomorphic, so severely battered are the top two-fifths of the fragment. Upon the front surface of this curved upper section, however, can be seen part of the torso and the transverse folds of a robe belonging to an apical figure emanating from (A). Without the comparative evidence of such contemporary sculptures as the Caturvyūha image and our Sculpture 8, this apical figure might have passed unnoticed, although its presence is tacitly acknowledged by Bajpai.²²⁵ The wearing of the robe by both the lower and the upper figures suggests that in this image, as in the other fragment, the deity was represented twice, in conformity perhaps with the upaniṣadic conception of the Brahman existing as creator in two modes simultaneously.

There can be little doubt that this sculpture is an early Image of the personified Brahman, that is, Brahmā. The beard which, as Bajpai notes,²²⁶ was to become particularly associated with Brahmā—though by no means in every representation of the Sod—appears here for the first time as a feature of a multiheaded image, as far as is known. All three heads appear originally to have been virtually identical, the side-heads being mere repetitions of the central head, an innovatory example of simple multiplication; such was definitely not the case with our Sculpture 8 (Plate 24). I have already remarked upon the fact that the treatment of the hair and the ears is the same in all three heads; neither are the side-heads differentiated from the central face by the presence of a third eye, or by a marked difference in their relative sizes. The turning of the side-heads away from the central face as far as possible, in order very nearly to face the cardinal directions, may be seen as a further iconographical change within the Kuṣāṇa experimental phase, which foreshadowed later developments in which the side-heads are made to appear in full profile when the Brahmā icon is viewed from the front.

The retention of the apical bust (B) can be explained away in terms of a multiple iconography convention in the Kuṣāṇa period,²²⁷ but more specifically it probably stands for the original unified Brahman out of which evolves the multiplex, creative Brahmā: here the upaniṣadic ideology behind the form of our Sculpture 8 appears to find expression as a definite cult icon. The concept of Brahmā having developed as a personal Creator-god, of pronounced masculinity, out of the impersonal and neutral Brahman, would seem to be confirmed by the iconography of this image.

With regard to Sculpture 8, it is in my view most usefully regarded as the prototype of both Brahmā and multi-headed Śiva icons as they were later to become standardized. The present image represents the first known step in the development of that prototype toward the standardization of the Brahmā icon. The earliest known evidence of a definite Śaiva development of the same prototype is of a later date, and appears in a different place, far from Mathura, in Rajasthan; that image will be

discussed below as Sculpture 11.

As far as I know, the next example is the only Indian anthropomorphic image having multiple heads which survives as an almost full-length sculpture from the Kuṣāṇa period (Plate 28). A product of the Mathura school,²²⁸ it was originally a large statue representing a standing male figure 127 centimetres or more in height; in its present damaged condition, the sculpture stands 117 centimetres high. Both feet are lost, but the left leg is preserved down to the ankle. The icon is carved in the round. It is the earliest known example of an image consisting of two adorsed figures, one of which has an anatomically conjoined extra head.

Much of the surface of the stone has flaked off or is otherwise eroded, resulting in the destruction of all fine detail. The following major details are, however, clear. The main figure wears upon its central or natural head the typical Kuṣāṇa crested turban. The ears are elongated with pierced lobes, and the remains of some ear-ornament trailing upon the shoulders are evident. The facial features are not clear, but the forehead is high, there is no evidence of hair having been represented beneath the turban on the front or the sides of the head, and there appears to have been a slight smile upon the lips. The eyes are wide open beneath arched brows; no evidence remains of an *ūrṇā*. Any decoration upon the torso, such as necklaces, garlands, transverse cords or the folds of a robe, have been lost, the remains of a thin double line on a portion of the original stone surface on the right side of the abdomen just below the rib cage indicates the presence of a cord around the body at that level, and above the navel are the remains of a belt with, unusually, a central buckle. Below this, a ridge around the lower abdomen appears to be the remains of a rolled waistband of an *adhomaśuka* or *dhotī*, which has a central fold between the legs and is caught up at the right hip: a rolled lower edge of the outer layer of cloth loops transversely from the direction of the left hip, hangs below the right knee, and is tucked up at waist level against the right hip, with a slight flaring of the cloth against the outer side of the right thigh. The inner layer of this garment reaches below the left knee, where the line of the

hem is plainly visible. The legs are clearly visible beneath the fine cloth which the garment is evidently intended to represent.

Crowned, decorated with ear-ornaments, a cord, a belt with a prominent buckle (which is clearly a symbol of status as it does not, of course, hold up the dhotī and the figure is not wearing a Kuṣāṇa coat, as the traces of a keyūra on the upper right arm indicate) and a well draped lower garment in thin cloth-this is clearly an image modelled upon the personages of power within the Kuṣāṇa aristocracy, but almost fully adapted to Indian conventions of dress in the northern plain. The transition is interesting: not only in the strange combination of belt and dhotī, but also, as it appears from the remains of the lower legs, of dhotī, and knee-length boots. With all these personal-not to say idiosyncratic-touches, however, this is not a royal portrait; there are other features which indicate beyond doubt, despite the absence of a nimbus, that this sculpture represented a brahmanical cult icon of considerable complexity.

A head, very slightly smaller than the natural head and without a crown, grows from the left shoulder of the main figure. The back of this side-head is conjoined with the side of the crowned head behind the ear, but it is clearly represented upon its own neck which grows out of the left shoulder, so thrusting the face sideways at ninety degrees like the side-profiles of Brahmā in Sculpture 9. There can be little doubt that another similarly conjoined head originally appeared in the same position on the other side, as the fracture marks behind the right ear and upon the right shoulder indicate. The extra head on the left has elongated ears, but the ear-ornaments, if any, have been damaged. Its hair is broadly combed straight back from the forehead, as if in separated clusters: one can count ten of them. The facial features are indistinct due to erosion. This head was carved almost in the round, only the back of the head and neck being merged with the main figure.

The stone at the back of the crowned head has broken off completely; there may or may not have been a fourth head, facing backward, belonging to the main figure. On the left and right sides of the top of the sculpture, and continuing around the back for a

few inches above the broken portion, some traces of carving remain. These represent vertical striations, somewhat like the hair-arrangement of the side-head, but narrower. Despite its present smoothness, the top surface of the sculpture is uneven, suggesting that some apical carving, rising from behind the turban of the main figure, has been broken off.²²⁹ The vertical striations may have represented the long hair of a now missing superimposed head. Similar markings remain upon the broken central element of the multiple Liṅga (Plate 22). This icon may thus represent in my hypothetical sequence of the iconographical development of multiple images during the Kuṣāṇa period, the anatomical conjunction of the three heads 01 the ramifying figures (B), (C) and apical (D) of Type B images, in addition, perhaps, to possessing a fifth rear face.

Finally, I come to the strangest and most innovatory feature of this icon. 'There is a second figure, of the same proportional scale as the main figure, carved upon the back. This has long been known in other Mathura sculptures of the same period.²³⁰ But this sculpture presents the only known instance of addorsement in a multiheaded image—and the only example in which the war figure appears lower than the main figure. The brad 01 this image on the back is lost: but it was represented on a level with the upper chest of the front figure, beneath the hypothetical rear brad of the latter. The right shoulder of this rear figure is at the level of the elbow of the left arm of the main image, its own elbow being almost level with the hip of the principal figure, and the lower abdomen level with its knee. The broken right knee of the figure on [he hack is directly behind the broken left ankle of the front figure.

The right hand of this headless rear image holds an object upon a shaft or stalk, considered by Disalkar²³¹ to be 'a bunch of flowers'; it is in fact too severely damaged to be sure of the object represented. The lower section of the left arm appears to rest against the left side, in much the same position as that of the front figure. The remains of the *adhomaśuka* are also very similar to the lower garment of the main figure. The length of torso of this image as compared with that of the rolled loop of the *dhofī* suggests physical deformity, and it is pot-bellied, as Disalkar observed.²³² That it

represented a 'dwarf, however, as the same scholar suggested, with an elongated trunk and very short legs, the feet appearing back-to-back with those of the main figure, I consider open to question. The feet of both the front and back figures are missing, and I shall suggest a different reconstruction of the base of this image later.

Incorporating perhaps six aspects of a god-it ma)- have had, as I have suggested, a cluster of four heads surmounted by a fifth, in addition to a second figure at the back- this sculpture is the most iconographically advanced of all known multiple images. Certainly it is the most ambitious in sculptural terms.

The primary observation to be made is that, of all the free standing images discussed in this chapter, this is the only fully anthropomorphic icon. All the others take the form of anthropomorphs either attached to a central aniconic shaft or adorsed by a tree. This icon, by contrast, presents an anthropomorphic aspect from every side. It relies entirely upon anatomical conjunction for the integration of its various parts, without the aid of shaft. Liṅga or tree, devices which have been employed to unify all previously discussed multiple images in the round.

The reason for this anatomical conjunction, in particular of the side-head(s), was for the sculptor merely a structural one. In the absence of a śiraścakra or backslab upon which the extra head(s) might have been carved, and the icon not being a relief hut a free-standing sculpture in the round, a direct physical connection was plainly unavoidable. To make this connection anatomical, despite the unnaturalism thereby necessarily introduced, would then be the only artistic recourse for the sculptor.

The śilpin was commissioned, as it appears from the remains of the sculpture, to produce an image of a standing god facing the four directions simultaneously; moreover, a central apical head was to be cawed rising from the midst of the four heads. Conventional sculptural design at the time, however, demanded that multiple, or multi-headed, images should be backed by a tree. The trunk and branches of which should unite the god and his several aspects or projections. Here was a dilemma: a fully anthropomorphic figure with a face on all four sides, hut no axis other than the

upright body of the god himself. The resolution could only lie in the employment of a device to which I have referred earlier in connection with Type B images: the displaced axis (Source no. 5).

The usual axis being a tree, and the commission being for a fully anthropomorphic sculpture, the tree had to be anthropomorphised in the form of yakṣa, yakṣas not only inhabited, but were identified with particular trees²³³ (as uṛkṣadevatās). Because of the fourth, rear head of the god, this anthropomorphic symbol of the tree could not properly adorse the main figure, hut would have to be placed lower, directly beneath the rear head. A yakṣa might assume any number of grotesque forms, and so the shortening of its legs would present no problem. But the legs could also be made to extend lower than the feet of the four-headed god, so providing a ten on which could be seated directly in the earth, or into a mortice socket in a paving block, just as an image of Śiva might be addorsed by a Liṅga, the lower extension of which was similarly interred, with the god's feet resting on the surface of the floor, to hold the image upright (Plate 29).²³⁴ This, I suggest, accounts for the presence of the strange figure-perhaps holding leaves and foliage from the tree it symbolises-on the back of this image, and its peculiar positioning and proportions. In circumambulating the god, in order to see all his four aspects, the devotee would also be paying homage to the yakṣa's tree, which was honoured in the same way; thus the deity and its tree-axis received simultaneous worship.

The question remains as to which thought was uppermost in the minds of the designers of this image: that the tree should be personified, with the result that the god would appear polycephalous, or that the deity should be presented to its worshippers as physically multi-headed, rendering the unifying tree construct redundant? The most probable explanation that I can offer is in terms of developing religious ideology and ritual; I have remarked before that this image represents a true iconographical advance over the multiple images of Types B and C-the elements of the composition but not the style, having undergone a transformation and this must presuppose a change in the

priestly conception of certain gods.

In Sculpture 8, the tree was abbreviated to a trunk ending in a single bifurcation behind the main deity, although there is another figure emerging at the apex. This is suggestive of a move away from symbolic unification of multiple figures and toward direct anatomical conjunction, of a desire to create an image of a god which, though multiple, should be fully anthropomorphic, independent of arboreal symbols, these being regarded as archaic in origin and in brahmanical terms derivative—as indeed they were—from popular animistic cults such as tree-worship. The manifestation, in human form, of the indwelling deity of a tree is frequently found in Buddhist reliefs: he is pot-bellied, as is the yakṣa at the back of this Kuṣāṇa image, and his legs are buried in the stone offering-slab in front of the tree,²³⁵ as I suggest the legs of the conjoined yakṣa in the brahmanical icon may have been intended for implanting in the ground. Of course, the anthropomorphisation of the tree by its yakṣa representative in the brahmanical icon remains derivative; but an anthropomorph can be 'brahmanicised' by means of dress and hand-held symbols, whereas a tree cannot: I therefore suggest that the multiheadedness of this icon was a contrived result of the personification of the tree at the back, and that this anthropomorphisation was a deliberate iconographic modification introduced for the purpose of differentiating clearly a brahmanical image from its artistic sources, which were largely Buddhist. (Trees were to continue to be represented in association with various gods in later Hindu art, but rarely, if at all, as the integrated, symbolic 'skeleton' of multiple icons, as they had been during the experimental Kuṣāṇa phase.)

Omni-directional symbolism seems to have been the primary motive in the minds of the designers of this Kuṣāṇa icon: being freed from the convention of purely symbolic conjunction of multiple heads to a single figure, they turned the faces of the now polycephalous god to survey simultaneously the four quarters, in imitation, perhaps, of the partly anthropomorphic Caturmukhalinga, an iconographical type which was fully formulated in the Kuṣāṇa period. The result is the first known polycephalous icon which

is wholly and consciously brahmanical, the principal god being divorced from any resemblance to yakṣa figures, not only by his resplendent if somewhat heterogeneous clothing, but also by the anthropomorphisation and relative lowering of status of the tree. At the same time, it meets the requirement of a personal god for bhakti worship in its total anthropomorphism, while retaining the universal symbolism of previously discussed multiple icons.

In view of the broken apical stump with long vertical lines, perhaps indicative of a head with long hair rising from the centre of four other aspects, it may have represented fivefold Śiva in regal attire, crowned as in the Musānagar panel, but standing: an anthropomorphisation of the fivefold Liṅga (Sculpture 6). In the absence of any hand-held symbols, however, this is far from certain; the most important fact to be learned from the remains of this image is that a polycephalous god in human shape (Type C) with probably four or five aspects, was evolved during the experimental Kuṣāṇa phase at Mathura.

The last two images to be discussed in this chapter display features which mark them as transitional, between the Kuṣāṇa experimental phase and more evolved images of multiple Śiva and Brahmā; no such transitional Vaiṣṇava image is known. The first of these is a complete icon in the form of a terracotta plaque (Plate 30, 38 centimetres in height).²³⁶ It is of particular interest, being 'perhaps the earliest surviving image to show Śiva, accompanied by a consort, seated on a bull'.²³⁷ In addition, it is the first iconographically complete tableau known—the main deity—being depicted in the company of his uāhana, his śakti and two or possibly three bhaktas or devotees—in which the principal god is multi-treaded. This terracotta, which is possibly as early as the third century A.D.,²³⁸ preserves archaic features from Buddhist iconography, while the figure of the god derives from the Kuṣāṇa sculptural Types A, B and C which have already been examined, and the whole image anticipates classical compositions of the Gupta period. It comes from Rang Mahal, Suratgarh, which lies some 400 kilometres roughly north-west of Mathura.

The śakti of the main deity appears upon his left, in a posture which is partly sitting, partly leaning against the plain back-ground, her back straight and her legs stretched out with the feet planted firmly on the ground. Her right hand, now broken, was originally raised to shoulder level, either in the abhaya mudrā or holding some emblem, perhaps a lotus. The left hand, at waist level, holds what is evidently a looking-glass, although the circular mirror appears very small upon its heavy handle. Harle²³⁹ comments upon the style of her dress and coiffure, which 'are related to a number of figures from North-West India.' There is no physical contact between this śakti and her consort.

Below her, at the left extremity of the triple moulding which forms the plinth of the icon, is a diminutive figure on both knees, the hands joined in the namaskāramudrā. This figure, although damaged, was apparently female, to judge by the similarity between her hair style and pleated skirt and those of the goddess above her. At the opposite end of the plinth, beneath the principal deity, a similarly proportioned male figure is shown, also kneeling, but with only his right knee upon the ground. He wears a short lower garment with a double waistband and central pleat, and has a solid necklace and bracelets like those of the god to whom he pays homage. His headdress, however, is apparently intended to be a form of the Kuṣāṇa crested turban. Each of these kneeling figures faces inward. It is evident from their postures and hand-gestures that they are intended to represent human-most probably aristocratic-devotees; the suggestion may be that the divine couple above them represent the religious ideal of marriage to which the devotees aspire and which, as royalty, they exemplify on earth to their subjects.

Above the main deity appears a horizontal figure, its right arm raised to its head; the body is entirely broken. Such a figure appears in Buddhist reliefs of earlier date. On the gateway pillars at Sanchi, a figure-part human, part bird (Sanskrit, kinnara)-appears several times in the upper corners of panels representing various manifestations of the Buddha (such as the stūpa and bodhi-druma), hearing dishes and garlands of

flowers.²⁴⁰ The anthropomorphism of these figures became gradually more pronounced in Buddhist sculpture, assuming the form of winged men at Amaravati²⁴¹ and of male figures (with trailing robes in place of wings) swooping in from the margins of the composition, scattering flowers with their right hands from containers held in their left hands upon the scene below them,²⁴² at Bharhut. In these compositions, whether as kinnaras or gandharvas, their auspicious presence accentuates the miraculous significance of the event or divinity depicted below them. The terracotta panel from Rang Mahal is the first brahmanical icon so far noted in which such a flying figure appears. It is unquestionably a motif borrowed from Buddhist iconography, but in this case one feels that it is deliberately introduced, rather than being spontaneously incorporated as part of an inherited artistic tradition.

The main deity does not touch the ground. He is seated with legs tucked back, right ankle over left, upon his vāhana, the humped bull called Nandin. The animal itself appears to be seated, one leg in the foreground being bent double; the bull's head projects forward and is tilted to its right, facing the male devotee, between the god and his consort.

The god wears a short lower garment with a double waistband. He is ithyphallic, the phallus rising inside the garment to a level just below the navel. He is two-armed. (This is the first image so far examined in which all the hands of the god are fully preserved.) The left hand rests upon his left thigh, supporting a bulbous pot. The right hand is raised to the right breast the palm turned completely toward the body in what is probably²⁴³ a version of the abhaya mudrā, the half-turned hand of the Kuṣāṇa gesture in Mathura art being here brought in against the chest rather than, as was to become the classical hand-pose turned further outward to present the flat of the palm to the observer. Some attempt at presenting musculature appears in the modelling of the heavy arms and shoulders; and there is a certain power conveyed by the largeness of the face, hands and lower legs, but the artistry on the whole is fairly crude. As an experimental icon in a medium more plastic than Stone, however, the composition is

well balanced and highly expressive.

The god wears solid, plain bracelets and a short necklace to which are attached small pendant loops. The ears are pierced and elongated, the lobes touching the shoulders. The eyes are shown bulging between the somewhat pouch-like upper and lower lids, below the steeply arched, incised brows. A vertical third eye extends from the top of the nose to the hairline. It should be pointed out here that even at this stage the extra eye-whether vertical or horizontal, as in our Sculpture 8 (plate 24)-is not represented in the same manner as the natural eyes: it is shown as a symbolic attribute rather than as a displaced facial feature. Neither this, nor the multiplicity of heads, can be seen as disfigurement, for these features are assembled in when such iconographic groupings are lent a semblance of realism, such as an extra head growing upon its own neck see Plates 23, 28), that they can in fact appear unnatural. The hair is arranged in a neatly combed jaṭābhāra, the tresses sweeping round the sides of the head and over the tops of the ears with a bouffant topknot held in place by a thin band. There is no śiraścakra.

Almost touching the shoulders on either side, a smaller face appears, looking outward at an angle of about forty-five degrees from the direction faced by the principal head (A^a), as in my coding of previously discussed multi-headed images, from behind which it emerges. These faces are so deeply ensconced behind the central head that their ears are not presented being 'concealed' behind those of the natural face. Their features; and hair-styles differ from each other and from those of the face of the main figure. That to the proper right (A^b) is either smiling or grimacing-the modelling is, as I have noted, crude-has no third eye, and is surmounted by a shock of wide, stiff tresses of hair combed vertically. The proper left face (A^c) has been damaged, but seems to have been modelled originally rather more delicately than (A^b); the hair is parted in the middle, where it is combed forward, before curving horizontally around the head. The arrangement and character of the heads is thus derived from Kuṣāṇa sculptures of Type C, in particular from our Sculpture 8 (Plate 24).

The head, shoulders and two arms of a diminutive figure (B) rise from behind the top of

head (A^a). The chin of This figure appears to rest upon the topknot of (A^a), slightly off-centre, while the arms are stretched out with the elbows resting upon the side-heads (A^b) and (A^c), forearms raised. The right hand holds up a circular object which has incised radial lines around the edge; a similar object is held in the left hand, in this case with a sliver of the disc marked around the lower arc of the circle. (B)'s face is curiously square, flanked by rectangular ear-pendants, while the hair is long, combed back from the brow hut spreading out on either side to reach the raised upper arms. This long-haired head overlaps the right arm of the horizontal flying figure which marks the upper margin of the composition.

On the basis of its place among the group of terracotta from Rang Mahal, which 'may be called pre-Gupta or transition', Harle considers this plaque to date, probably, from 'the third or fourth century A.D.'²⁴⁴ With such a date, and the Kuṣāṇa - Gupta style in which it is moulded, the image occupies a unique and pivotal position in the development of multi-headedness in brahmanical iconography.

I have already remarked upon the well balanced and complete composition of this icon (compared, for example, to the Musānagar pillar panel, Sculpture 5. Plate 17) and the elements of it are important with regard to my interpretation; but in accordance with the essential purpose of this study. I shall concentrate first upon the details of the principal deity. Of the iconography of this multiple god, Harle ²⁴⁵observes: 'He thus belongs to a class of images with heads or figures emanating from them, the earliest of which is the Indra(?) of the Kuṣāṇa period from Mathura (Mathura Museum, No. 14.392-5). This 'Indra(?)' is the image which I have discussed (our Sculpture 3) as a Caturvyūha icon. Harle's observation had been made previously, and set out in more detail, by R. C. Agrawala,²⁴⁶ who first noticed the iconographical connection between the structure of the Rang Mahal image and that of several Kuṣāṇa sculptures which have been examined in detail above (nos. 3,4,5 and 8).

I shall now examine these connections more closely, in an attempt to determine the precise features which characterize the iconographical transition from multiple images of Types A, B and C to multi-headed icons in the classical Gupta style. The most similar earlier sculpture is

the stone pillar panel at Musānagar containing a relief of Śiva as Pradhānapuruṣeśvara (Sculpture 5). In both compositions the god is ithyphallic, but the naked, curved phallus of the Musānagar image is in the Rang Mahal icon enveloped in the lower garment and straight. Both figures are also seated above an animal; but while the earlier image appears in an ardhaparyāṅka posture—one foot being lowered—above a lion, the later deity has both feet raised and ankles crossed in a rather relaxed version of a yogic position, above a bull. The pot held by the left hand and the right raised in a type of abhayamudrā is common to both icons, as is the fact that both are two-armed. In the Musānagar panel, the seated god appears to be projecting a smaller figure from each shoulder, while in the later terracotta only heads emerge from behind the central face. This face of the main figure is crowned with a crested turban in the earlier panel, but has no headdress in the later one, the hair being shown carefully combed and tied in a jaṭābhāra. By far the most striking similarity between the two icons is the apical figure (referred to as D) in my discussion of the Musānagar panel, and as (B) in the present discussion) which is almost identical in both icons, as R. C. Agrawala has noted.²⁴⁷ The long, spreading hair, the positions of the arms, the hand-held objects and even the square fare appearing immediately) above the crown or jaṭā of figure (A)—all these features are shared by the emergent apical aspect of the main deity in both compositions, with remarkably little variation between them.

So parallel in conception are these two icons that it may be more instructive to summarise their differences than their similarities. There are only three major points of difference which are apparent with regard to the idea of the god which lies behind the two representations: (i) the vāhana-lion versus bull: (ii) the crown versus the jaṭābhāra; and (iii) emergent side-figures (B) and (C) versus side-heads (Ab) and (Ac). All three differences in the Rang Mahal terracotta may be regarded as iconographical advances, as Śiva in later iconography always has the bull. Nandin, as his vāhana when it is shown; he also appears usually with the jaṭābhāra, although it may be encircled by a crown or tiara; and the multiple rather of Śiva is later most often symbolized by multiple heads rather than by multiple conjoined figures.

There are two main areas in which an advance is not evident: retention of the apical emergent figure, and the continued restriction of the number of arms with the consequent limitation to two hand-held symbols. Of these two archaisms, the former cannot be considered a substitute for the latter: that is, a conjoined figure bearing two symbols is not, in a third-to-fourth century icon, the conventional method by which an image of a god would be enabled to hold four, symbols. The four-armed god had already been invented. This is evident in the Kuṣāṇa sculptures of Viṣṇu from Mathura; moreover, in the Caturvyūha icon (Plate 10), the Vāsudeva image which has both apical and obliquely emanating figures who themselves hold additional symbols. is four-armed. One may assume, therefore, that figure (B) in the Rang Mahal terracotta image is a distinct aspect of the main god, wielding its own identificatory emblems—an aspect having now autonomy and perhaps greater ritual status in its own right than those represented as mere brads flanking that of the main deity, which are thus deprived of personal symbols of power. Only their identificatory hair-styles remain. In this respect, the apical figure is perhaps akin to the vyūha figures conjoined with Vāsudeva in the Caturvyūha image: there is evidence that these kinsmen of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva were worshipped separately before their integration as symbols of evolutionary phases in the Pāñcarātra version of the cosmogony.²⁴⁸

The only icon examined thus far in which the heads, as well as the emergent apical figure, are treated in a manner similar to that of the Rang Mahal terracotta image is the unidentified Kuṣāṇa sculpture at Mathura (Plate 24). In both cases the side-heads are smaller than the central face and arc directed outward at an angle of about forty-five degrees from it. In neither image is any attempt at anatomical connection between the side-heads and the body of the main deity apparent.

A small, but perhaps significant difference, however, is to be noted in the treatment of the ear of each side-head. In the Mathura sculpture, each of the flanking heads has this ear represented clearly; in the Rang Mahal terracotta, the ear is omitted, being regarded as hidden behind those of the central face. This was a problem in the representation of multiple heads

which was never fully resolved by Indian sculptors: the same two methods are continued throughout the later periods, though with a general tendency to conceal the ears of the side-heads in the manner adopted by the maker of the Rang Mahal terracotta. The concealment technique in the latter icon may thus be seen as something of a stylistic advance, but by no means as a final, fixed formula for solving this irksome little problem of representation.

There is one iconographical similarity between the two images which deserves particular attention. Each of the side-heads of the Mathura sculpture seems to have had a third eye upon the forehead, as those of the Rang Mahal terracotta have not, but the principal identificatory features of these heads-their hair styles-are remarkably close in the two icons. I have described the proper right side-head of the Mathura image as wearing 'a narrow crown or coronet composed, apparently, of rosettes or upward-pointing leaves seemingly held in place by a band with vertically incised lines'; whether this feature was originally intended to represent a headdress or a hair style, it is to a certain extent paralleled in the Rang Mahal image by what I have described as 'a shock of wide, stiff tresses of hair combed vertically' surmounting the proper right head. When the proper left side-heads of the two images are compared, the parallelism becomes more apparent: that of the Mathura sculpture, although damaged, gives a distinct impression of having its hair parted in the middle, and the central parting is clearly shown in the hair of the corresponding head of the Rang Mahal deity. Although stylistically quite different, these iconographical similarities between the side-heads of the two images suggest that the extra faces are subsidiary aspects of a particular god-concept which had in this respect remained unchanged from the Kuṣāṇa phase at Mathura to the transitional phase at Rang Mahal: namely that the god is to be regarded as a potential Creator, projecting the basic male-female duality of existence. In this later image, Pārvatī appears to his left as the śakti which stimulates this projection: the all-male creation is seen here as an outmoded concept. The apical figure now resembles that of the Musānagar relief (as Kāla-Rudra), not the pore tapasvin aspect of the Creator encircled by a blazing disc; the god, seated and ithyphallic, now assumes that aspect himself, though without a nimbus. The Rang Mahal god thus appears

largely to represent a coalescence of the concepts embodied in Sculptures 5 and 8.

A fragment of a pink sandstone sculpture in the round (Plates 31 and 32), which has only recently come to light,²⁴⁹ provides a remarkable insight into the origin of the Brahmā image as it became standardized very soon after its making. The fragment is dated to the fourth century A.D.,²⁵⁰ it appears to be of early Gupta style, but its iconography seems to me transitional, between that of the fragmentary Kuṣāṇa Brahmā (Plate 27) and more conventional representations of the god, and hence more explanatory of how the Brahmā icon was developed. Pal thinks that 'it may be from northern Rajasthan or even from Haryana.'²⁵¹ the same area as that in which the Rang Mahal terracotta was made probably less than a century earlier. From the front, the image appears as a two-armed bust, devoid of any ornament, with three identical heads, all the same size; they have exactly the same jaṭā arrangement of the hair, which is combed upward against the skull before curving over in a roll above a twisted band, possibly also of strands of hair. A long pointed beard, also carefully combed, hangs smoothly upon the chest of the main figure, and there is no evidence to suggest that the beards of the side-faces were different. The cars of each head are plainly visible (compare the Kuṣāṇa Brahmā), elongated and pierced but not ornamented. The eyes are slightly closed between pouched lids and the lips form a delicate smile, the corners of the mouth drawn outward into rounded cheeks. As the faces are clean-shaven, the beard hangs from the jawline, so hiding the necks of all three heads: an artistically effective method of avoiding any suggestion of monstrosity. The side-heads present perfect profiles when seen from the front, suggesting that they face sideways at right-angles to the central head; from the rear, however, they are seen to be turned at a forty-five degree angle toward the front, so disassociating themselves from the sculpture on the back (Plate 32). This is iconographically most effective, leaving the rear tact isolated, though, it necessitates compression of the side-faces.

The face at the back is similar, though squarer in outline, and the beard is shorter and curved, as if the wearer had just given it a slight anti-clockwise twist with the right hand. Although the jaṭābhāra is more elaborate, consisting of a series of intertwined loops, the

hairline is more crudely cut than that of the three front faces; there is a suggestion of less care having been taken in the carving of this face as a whole, which may I think have been deliberate. The truly remarkable feature of the rear of this sculpture is that this head surmounts a torso, also two-armed, which presents its back to the observer; the head is thus to be seen as turned through one hundred and eighty degrees upon its (invisible) neck. Not only is there a vertical depression bisecting this torso, suggesting the place of the spine, but *yajñopavīta* (absent from the front torso) curves over the left shoulder and across to the right; clearly demonstrating that the body of this war single-headed image is turned towards the front.

There can be little doubt that the front view of this sculpture presents the 'ideal image' of the god: while the rear, with its slightly downcast, rough-cut face, shorter and more twisted head and convoluted hairstyle, is far from god-like, especially growing upon a torso which has its back turned. Pal regards this sculpture as representing 'two adorsed bodies.'²⁵² Adorsement is clearly not possible. Nor do I agree that two bodies are intended to be seen: the front and back of the image represent: in my view, two aspects of the same body, the front that of the god *Brahmā* the back that of his priest, the *brāhmaṇa*. As there are no fracture marks on front or back, the arms were presumably extended, and so all four would have been visible from the front, one pair belonging to the god, the other to the man whose face is on the rear, thus presenting a conventional four-armed appearance: it seems likely that the rear pair of arms would have been held toward the front.

There is no doubt that this 'extraordinary four-headed bust must represent *Brahmā*',²⁵³ but Pal fails to see the implications of the head on the reverse, which is placed on the back of a (human) body. This head is more roughly delineated than the front three because, in my view, it represents the law of an historical-or legendary - personage of less than divine status. No definite identification is possible, but turning again to the *Upaniṣads* (as perhaps the designers of this image were forced to do. there being no extant evidence of precise *śilpaśāstra* material in the fourth century concerning *Brahma* images) and in particular to the *Muṇḍaka*, which opens with the words:

First of the Gods did Brahmā come to be,

Maker of all, protector of the world:

To his eldest son, Atharvan, he made known

The science of Brahman, of all sciences the base.

This science of Brahman, which Brahmā to Atharvan had proclaimed,

Atharvan to Angir passed on;

[And] he to Bhāradvāja Satyavāha made it known,

who [passed it on] to Angiras in its higher and lower form.

(1.1.1-2)²⁵⁴

It is subsequently made clear that through brahnavidyā, the 'Imperishable Real, the Person'

(akṣaram puruṣam ... satyam, I .2.13) may be known, and that, among other things, the ṛcaḥ,

sāmāni and yajūṃṣi come from that puruṣa (2.1.6).

Moreover, the Brahman is threefold, as set out in the Maitrī:

[The syllable] Om̐ (i.e. A + U + M) is the sound-form of this [self]

Female, male and neuter: this is his sex[form].

Fire, wind and sun: this is his highest light[-form].

Brahmā, Rudra and Vishnu: this is his [form of] sovereignty.

The householder's fire, the fire for the ancestors and the fire for the gods: this is his mouth[-form].

Rig-Veda, Yajur-Veda and Sāma-Veda: this is his knowledge [-form]

(6.5)

Apart from the embarrassing appearance of Brahmā himself as one of the triads in the latter text, it seems clear that the ṛṣi Aṅgiras was the inheritor of brahmavidyā from Brahmā himself, and that the Ṛk, Sāman and Yajus hymns were a part of that science or teaching, among other groups of three. This suggests that the face at the back of the three-headed Brahmā image may very well represent Aṅgiras, or the sage as a brāhman-priest, teaching the ātharvaṇa or knowledge of the Atharvaveda as the fourth Veda, the three front faces representing the original three Vedas which the atharvan priest perpetuates. In the epics, Brahmā is simply described as four-headed or four-faced; in this sculpture an attempted explanation for this form is given namely that the god is the embodiment of the trayī-vidyā and the brāhman-priest with his sacred thread is the human inheritor and perpetuator of it.

**TABLE 1.2. Structural Designs and Motifs in
 Kuṣāṇa/Gupta Multiple Icons of Types C and (continued)**

| Source No. | Definition | Symbolical Function | Archaeological Examples |
|------------|--|--|---|
| 9A | In an image preserve Source no.3B: <i>A disembodies head on either side of the 'natural' head</i> | Projection from a demiurge of basic male-female polarity | <i>Mathura proto-(?)Śiva (Sculpture8)</i> |
| 9B | both of which are smaller than the 'natural, head, | | |
| 9C | and face away from it at an angle of about 45, | | |

| | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|
| 9D | each side-head having its own individual characteristics. | | |
| 10A | In an image which preserve Source no,3B: A disembodied head on either side of, and the same size as, the 'natural' head, | Omniscience and omnipercipience of a demiurge | Mathura Brahmā(Sculpture9) |
| 10B | both facing away from it at a 90 angle, | | |
| 10C | and identical to it in appearance. | | |
| 11A | In an image which preserves Sources No.3B: Two or three anatomically conjoined extra heads facing the cardinal directions, | (Possibly a combination of 9 and 10) | Mathura (Sculpture10) |
| 11B | and an addorsed figure, | <i>Anthropomorphisation</i> of vegetal unifying construct | |
| 11C | (resulting in) a wholly anthropomorphic multi-headed image. | Single omnidirectional deity in human shape | |
| 12A | An image having all the features listed under Source nos.9A-D,but devoid of Source no.3B, | Projection from the Creator-as-demiurge of basic male-femalepolarity(in the presence of his śakti) | Rang Mahal Umā-Maheśvara (Sculpture 11) |
| 12B | seated with ankles crossed, and ithyphallic, | Creator as self-contained tapasvin | |

| | | | |
|-----|---|---|-----------------------|
| 13A | An image having all the features listed under <i>Source nos. 10A-C, but devoid of Source no.3B,</i> | Omniscience and omniperception of the <i>Creator</i> | Brahmā (Sculpture 12) |
| 13B | With a similar, but distinctive, fourth head at the back, | Priest as earthly receptacle and transmitter of the Creator's omniscience, integrated with him(cp. Source nos.8A-B) | |

Early (Kuṣāṇa) multiple sculptures of the types described seem to have been created in order to express, in visual symbolism, cosmogonic systems of considerably intricacy and subtlety. Whether these systems were also formulated in contemporary scriptures or memorised verses one cannot know; but it seems unlikely that they reflect philosophies which were not first framed in words-or, indeed, that they could have been made and developed in the absence of some kind of śilpaśāstra tradition. The epics in their present form do not contain such detailed knowledge. Yet, so encyclopaedic is their range that specialized offshoots from such a great Store of knowledge must surely have existed, appearing only later as specific treatises in more developed form, and leaving their earlier expressions in stone to survive from that creative phase. But even these broken Sculptures do not mark the beginnings of such systems: the nature of the imagery in some cases is so akin to upaniṣadic metaphor that one must assume a long historical development of ideas lending shape and impetus to the desire to create graphic, religious images in the early centuries of the Christian era.

Visual symbolism was employed at three main levels. Iconographic symbols (where they survive to be interpreted) identified individual deities as personifications of evolutionary moments or states in the Creation. A polarization of, or intimate connection between, anatomy and symbolic object or between one figure and another, was established (as between the phallus and the golden pot, or Vāsudeva and his kin). But above all, there was the multiform image itself and the construct with which it was integrated, conveying the impression of

physical and spiritual growth and expansion: the yūpa, tree and Liṅga. The images us produced necessarily represented 'events or 'phases' on a cosmic plane beyond the heavens of individual gods, who were themselves used as symbols of dynamic transition in the first movements from the unpolarised, primeval, plenum to the instigation of cosmic creation.

Being expressions of cosmogonic theory rather than objects of emotional worship (although they no doubt had their bhaktas), they presented no 'mystery' as virtually inaccessible, supernatural cult-divinities. On the contrary, by virtue of their, presentation of the cosmogony, they also offered the possibility of tracing the stages of universal evolution back to its Source through a process which, although in its working could be termed mystical-consisting of yogic meditation techniques-was yet entirely apprehensible by the intellect. Such systems offered a salvation (in the sense of release, mokṣa) route which used the gods as stepping-stones or rungs on a ladder to Self transcendence, appealing to man directly as, a method of becoming himself superior to the gods. In these Images there is a remarkable clarity of purpose, an acknowledgement of the inherent dignity determination and intelligence of man, in addition to an assumption of his spiritual potential and ability to achieve it.

[1] Bharatpur Museum, Rajasthan, no. 52.60.

[2] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, Harvard 1935, Plate I.1, 2, 3.

[3] W. and B. Forman and M.-M. Deneck, *Indian Sculptures, Masterpieces of Indian, Khmer and Cham Art*, London 1962, revised edition 1970, Plate 50: British Museum, no. 84.

[4] R. C. Agrawala

(a) 'Some Unpublished Sculptures from Rājasthān', *JIH* 42 (1964), fig. 1.

- (b) 'Two Standing Lakulīśa Sculptures from Rājasthān', JOIB 14,3-4 (1965), figs. A, B, C, D.
- (c) 'Some Kuṣāṇa Sculptures in the National Museum, Delhi, and Allied Problems', Bmaup3 (1968), pp. 15-17.
- (d) 'A Unique Śiva-Liṅga Near Bharatpur', BMAUP 7 (1970-I), p. 23.
- (e) 'Carved Pillar of Gupta Year 61', JOIB 19 (1969-70), p. 355.
- (f) 'Four-faced Śiva-Liṅgas in National Museum, New Delhi, JOIB 22 (1972-73), pp. 367-8.
- (g) The 'Chaturmukha' Śiva-Liṅga from Nānd, near Pushkar, Rajasthan', *Purātattva* 2, Varanasi 1968-69, pp. 53-4 and Plate X.
- 5 'The *Chaturmukha Liṅga* recently discovered by me at Nānda, near Pushkar, Ajmer', JOIB 14.3-4, (1965), p.388; and similar remarks in all articles mentioned in note 4, identifying the column as a Liṅga.
- 6 BMAUP3 (1968), P. 15.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 'Manuscript is associated with Lakulīśa, in later sculptures as well': ibed. Agarwala refers here to his article 'Some Interesting Sculpture of Lakulīśa from Rājasthān', AA 21 (1958), pp.43-4, where he notes three sculptures identified as Lakulīśa which hold an object claimed to be a manuscript in one hand. The latter object is not clear in the illustrations (figs. 1,2,4). One of these sculptures is dated to the 'early mediaeval' period and the other two are also stylistically very much later than the Nānd column. If these sculptures may be dated to the 8th or 9th centuries A.D., there is a period of some 500-600 years between them and the approximately third-century Nānd column. Agrawala himself places the latter sculpture in the '2nd-3rd century A.D.'(BMAUP3, p.15) and fails to account for the survival of the manuscript as an attribute identifying

Lakulīśa through the intervening half-millennium.

10 BMAUP 3 (1968), p.15.

11 JOIB 14.3-4 (1965), p.388.

12 K.V. Soundara Rajan (also Soundarajan, Sounder Rajan), 'Lakulīśa and Liṅga Polymorphism', VIJ 2.1(1964), pp.117-18.

13 Mathura Museum no.29.1931.

14 JOIB 19 (1969-70), pp.355-6.

15 Ibid., p.355.

16 BMAUP 3 (1968), pp.15-17; all subsequent quotations and discussion of R.C. Agrawala's opinions in this section refer to this article.

17 For example, Mathura Museum no.15.956: K. S. Desai, *Iconography of Viṣṇu*, New Delhi 1973, figs. 1 and 3.

18 J. N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography* (second edition), Calcutta 1956, p.458.

19 The term is invented; muṣṭi-karaṇa, however, is an old Sanskrit word formation (M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, new edition, Oxford 1899, p. 458).

20 Described and illustrated by Banerjea, *Hindu Iconography*, pp. 271-2 and line drawing, Plate IV.5.

21 'In many texts Śiva is said to be ithyphallic (with an erect phallus), an image which would certainly seem to be unambiguous sexually but for its particularly Hindu connotations, which tie it to the word of asceticism as strongly as it is naturally related

to the realm of eroticism... the ambiguity of ithyphallicism is possible because, although the erect phallus is of course a sign of priapism, in Indian culture it is a symbol of chastity as well... The basic Sanskrit expression for the practice of chastity is the drawing up of the seed (*ūrdhvaretas*), but by synecdoche, the seed is often confused with the *liṅga* itself, which is 'raised' in chastity.' W. D. O'Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva*, London 1973, pp.8-10.

22 The nakedness of the ascetic has a long tradition in India. O'Flaherty (*Asceticism and Eroticism*, p.7) p.7) translates from *Mahābhārata*¹³ ('c.300B.C.'): 'Who else [but Śiva as ascetic] can be said to be a naked *brahmacārin* with his vital seed drawn up?' A common term for such nakedness, *dig-ambara*, 'clothed in space', is also used as a noun meaning a mendicant ascetic. Its use as a term for the naked sect of Jainas is well known, dating probably, from the 1st century A.D. (B.C. Bhattacharya, *The Jaina Iconography*, Lahore 1939, p.9 ff; and minor-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p.480).

23 Early images of Brahmā are discussed *infra*.

24 Minor-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p.1215.

25 E. Washburn Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, Strassburg, Berlin 1915, pp.60, 140, 175 and *passim* (index, p.264).

26 *Ibid.*, p.8.

27 The squatting position, with knees wide apart, was retained for such goddesses as Hārītī, who were associated with children, the posture being probably connected with pregnancy or childbirth; a similar position of the legs, while the body was seated upon a throne or *vāhana*, was adopted by Kuṣāṅga sculpture of kings and the god Viṣṇu astride Garuḍa.

- 28 F. Otto Schrader, *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra Ahirbudhnya saṃhitā* Adyar 1916,p.20, lists the twelve earlier and most authoritative Pāñcarātra texts; the *terminus ad quem* of their composition is considered by Schrader to be the 8th century A.D.
- 29 The iconographical portions of a large number of extant Pāñcarātra texts are collated by H. Daniel Smith, A *Source-book* of Vaiṣṇava Iconography according to Pāñcarātrāgama Texts, Triplicane. Madras 1969.
- 30 Sāttvata or Vṛṣṇi heroes: the evidence concerning them and their role in early Vaiṣṇava theology is summarized by J. Gonda, in his 1969 Jordan Lecture series, published as *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism, A Comparison*, London 1970,pp.51-2 and pp. 48-61, *passim*.
- 31 Schrader, Pāñcarātra, pp.19-21.
- 32 *Sāttvata-saṃhitā*, edited by P.B. Anathachariar, Conjeevaram 1902.
- 33 The states of *turīya* ('the fourth', transcendence), *suṣupti* ('deep sleep', utter unconsciousness), *svapna* ('dreaming'), and *jāgrat* ('waking'), symbolizing the gradual definition of reality in the process of creation, represented by Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha respectively.
- 34 S. Gupta, *Lakṣmī Tantra, A Pāñcarātra'*, Text, Translation and Notes, Leiden 1972,p.59, note 1.
- 35 *Ibid.*, Chapter II, verse 15.
- 36 *Ibid.*, notes 28 and 32.
- 37 S. Gupta, 'The Caturvyūha and the Viśākha-yūpa in the Pāñcarātra', BV (ALB) 35.3-4 (1971), pp.198-9 and 203.

38 A distinct similarity is noted between this system and that still practised by the Balinese Śaiva priests in their Liṅgodbhava meditation technique whereby they elevate themselves mentally through a number of 'lotuses' containing *mantras* to self-identification with Śiva (C. Hooykaas, *Sūrya Sevana, The Way to God of a Balinese Śiva Priest*, Amsterdam 1966). This I regard as corroborative evidence, indicating the persistence into the present day of a technique parallel to that of the Pāñcarātra Vaiṣṇavas which I believe to be illustrated in the Nānd column; it does not, in my view, contradict my interpretation of the latter Kuṣāṇa sculpture but demonstrates, rather, the trans-sectarian employment *yoga* methods of considerable complexity from an early phase in Indian history. A similarity to the *yogic* conception of the human body as an axis punctuated by *cakras*, which is ascended by mental effort in the form of Kuṇḍalinī, is also noted as the microcosmic counterpart of Pāñcarātra cosmology (P. H. Pott, *Yoga en Yantra*, Leiden 1946, translated R. Needham as *Yoga and Yantra*, The Hague 1966, Plate I and super-imposed diagram, text pp. 7-9 and *passim*). It is my argument that iconographical constructs based upon such concepts need not be regarded, as in the Nānd column by R. C. Agrawala, as Śiva images; the axial nature of such a system necessitates a vertical iconographical structure, whether as the Vaiṣṇavas *yūpa* expressed or the Śaiva *liṅga*, if it is to be made visible.

39 Mathura Museum nos. 14.392-5.

40 So described by V.S. Agrawala, *Indian Art (A History of Indian Art from the Earliest Times up to the Third Century A.D.)* Varanasi 1965, p.251.

41 Such crowns are discussed by U.P. Shah in *BMPGB* 12 (1955-56), pp.53ff.

42 Crowns of this type, as becomes apparent in Gupta sculpture, consisted of a curved facade, rather than a complete cylinder, fixed to the head by a band tied at the back. This is clearly demonstrated by J. C. Hark in *Gupta Sculpture, Indian Sculpture of the Fourth to the Sixth Centuries A.D.*, Oxford 1974, *Plates 18, 19 and relevant Notes*, p. 36

- 43 Compare Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, Plate 19.
- 44 The 'pad' may be considered a technical device, connecting the hand held away from the body to the whole sculpture and so strengthening it, rather than as a symbolical object.
- 45 ūrṇā: 'a circle of hair between the eyebrows', Minor-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p.221; a traditional sign of a man destined for greatness, inherited by this image from Buddhist and Jaina tradition, the whole group of such signs being known as the Mahā-puruṣa-lakṣṇas (G.Liebert, *Iconographic Dictionary of the Indian Religions, Hinduism-Buddhism-Jainism*, Leiden 1976, p.312).
- 46 Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, Plate 35 and Note, pp.40-1.
- 47 Minor-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p.445.
- 48 Banerjea, *Hindu Iconography*, p.424 and footnote 2.
- 49 *Ibid.*, pp.306,423,581 and 587:
- 50 Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism*, pp. 51-61. Banerjea, *Hindu Iconography*, p.386. Evidence in the *Mahābhārata* is noted by Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, pp. 206-7 and 212.
- 51 One of the clearest Plates illustrating this detail is probably the Frontispiece to A. Danielou, *Hindu Polytheism*, London 1964.
- 52 V.S. Agrawala, *Indian Art*, p.135. A clear illustration of the Erāpatra relief from Bhrhut is published as Plate 19 in Jeannine Auboyer, *Daily Life in Ancient India*, London 1965.
- 53 N.P. Joshi, *Mathura Sculptures*, Mathura 1966, Plate 38; first suggested by R. C. Agrawala, *VJ* (1965), p.109.

- 54 An excellent, though damaged example, dated to the 4th-5th century 62-3, H. Hartel, *Indische Skulpturen I*, Berlin, 1960; a Mathura example is published in K. Desai, *Iconography of Viṣṇu (in Northern India, up to the Mediaeval Period)*, New Delhi 1973, fig.99.
- 55 Following the description of A. K. Coomaraswamy and V.S. Agrawala: R.C. Agarawala, 'Four-faced Śiva and Four faced Viṣṇu at Mathura', *VIJ* 3(1965), p.108.
- 56 *Ibid.*, p.109.
- 57 An apparently identical tree, embraced by a lady or *yakṣī*, is represented in a pillar-relief from Bharhut of the 2nd century B.C.; this tree is identified by C. Sivaramamurti (*Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India No.73: Sanskrit Literature and Art-Mirrors of Indian Culture*, Calcutta 1954, reprinted New Delhi 1970) as the *Kuravaka* (Plate XIV.43 and caption, and text p.39) as distinct from the *aśoka*. The *Kuravaka* is defined as red amaranth under *Kurabaka* (Minor-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p.293).
- 58 Banerjea, *Hindu Mythology*, p.386.
- 59 e.g., figs. 1,2,3,13, published by Desai in *Iconography of Viṣṇu*.
- 60 Banerjea, *Hindu Mythology*, p.400, describes one such image and notes the remark of V.S. Agrawala (*JISOA* 5,p.124 and Plate XIV.2) that it 'shows the transition from a Buddhist to a Brahmanical image.'
- 61 A.W. Khan, *An Early Sculpture of Narasimha*, Andhra Pradesh Government Archaeological Series No.16, Hyderabad 1964.
- 62 S. Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theogony, A Comparative Study of Indian Mythology from the Vedas to the Purāṇas*, Cambridge 1970, p. 307.

63 *Jātaka* scenes appear upon Buddhist monuments such as the Bharhut *stūpa*-railings (largely reconstructed in the Indian Museum, Calcutta) and the railing gateways at Sanchi, which date from the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.; the earliest depictions of figures which definitely represent Vaiṣṇava *avatāras*, however, do not appear until the Gupta period-figure (B) in the present sculpture, for example, I believe to illustrate the *vyūha*-doctrine of the cosmogonic process rather than the incarnation-doctrine which relates to the stages in the progress of the created world, not to the creation itself.

64 One of the most telling and relevant examples follows.

65 Freer Gallery of Art, no.49.9

66 A Lippe, *The Freer Indian Sculptures*, Washington 1970, pp.17-18 and Plate 8; the panel is the first of four in a Gandhara relief dated by Lippe, *ibid.*, p.22, to the late 2nd or early 3rd century A.D.

67 D. Mitra, *Buddhist Monuments*, Calcutta 1971, Plate 14; also K. Kumar, 'Some Gupta Caurī-bearers', *JISOA VI (N.S.)*, 1974-75. pp.11-13 and Plate III.3.

68 R.G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śivaism and Minor Religious Systems*, Strassburg, Berlin 1913, pp.1-41 (Part I, Section I-X).

69 Gonda, *Vaiṣṇavism and Śivaism*, pp.51-2; Banerjea, *Hindu Iconography*, p.386.

70 Khan, *Early Sculpture of Narasiṃha*.

71 I refer to the inscription, which appears to be of pre-Kuṣāṇa date, recovered from the well at Mora near Mathura, which mentions pratimās (copies, images, statues: Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 669) of the *bhagavatVṛṣṇi*, the five heroes (*pañcavīras*) in association with, apparently, a god-(?)house (*devagri*; *deva-gr̥ha*, conventional expression for a temple from the time of the *Rāmāyāṇa*: Monier-

Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p, 493) made of stone (*śaila*). Information concerning this important inscription is given in Banerjea, *Hindu Iconography*, p. 93 and not I; also Gonda, *Vaiṣṇavism and Śivaism*. p. 51 and note 241.

72 In relation to iconography, notably by Banerjea, *Hindu iconography*, pp. 386-7; more recent summaries or the evidence are presented by Desai, *Iconography of Viṣṇu* pp. 2-4, 47, and by W. E. Begley, *Viṣṇu's Flaming Wheel: The Iconography of the Sudarśana-Cakra*, New York 1973, pp. 17-18. 37-40.

73 Gonda, *Vaiṣṇavism and Śivaism*. p. 49 and note 208.

74 It is an historical irony that the only known later images which, according to Sanskrit texts, were true Pāñcarātra cult-images of fixed iconography, are Kashmiri bronzes and sculptures dating from the 7th-8th century A.D. onward, but based upon relatively simple Mathura sculptures of the Gupta period: T. S. Maxwell, 'Transformational Aspects of Hindu Myth and Iconology: Viśvarūpa', *AARP* 4. London 1973, p. 67 and Diagram 2 on p.79.

75. Schrader, *Pāñcarātra*, p. 35.

76 This definition of the six *guṇas* is based upon *ibid.*, pp. 31-2, from which the italicized words and those between quotation marks are taken.

77 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

78 *Ibid.*, incorporating a quotation from J. C. Chatterji, *Kashmir Shaivism*, 1914 (reprinted Patna 1978), p. 59.

79 Schrader, *Pāñcarātra*, p. 170.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

81 Gupta, 'Caturvyūha', p. 191

83. Ibid. 'When the urge to sleep prevails Śakti lies dormant in Nārāyaṇa and the God reposes in deep slumber. The first awakening of the urge to create signifies the imminence of God's *Vyūha state* when His Śakti is poised on the brink of initiating creation as an extension of herself.' (My italics.)
- 84 Schrader, *Pāñcarātra*, p. 66 and note 4.
85. Gonda, *Vaiṣṇavism and Śivaism*, note 336, p. 169.
- 86 Schrader refers to the great Cosmic Egg within which other 'Brāhmic Eggs' evolve and exist: pp. 27-9.
- 87 Schrader. *Pāñcarātra*, p. 35.
88. Gupta, 'Caturvyūha'. p. 204.
89. Gupta, *Lakṣmī Tantra* II1.29, p. 60
90. Personal communication from Dr Sanjukta Gupta
91. Gupta, 'Caturvyūha', p. 204, draws attention to the possible vegetal association of the word: 'A possible explanation is afforded by a hymn in the *Atharva-veda* where plants are praised. Here the word *Viśakha* is made to denote the lint branching of a tree.' The text reference and translation of W. D. Whitney are given by Gupta in her footnote 2. Ibid. 'The full term, *vi-śākha-yūpa*, as a particular kind of vedic sacrificial stake (forking at the top) is noted by J. Gonda, *The Dual Deities in the Religion of the Veda*, Amsterdam, London 1974. p. 275 in sacrificing to dual deities, such as Mitrā-Varuṇau (Taittirīya-saṃhitā 2.1.9.3; also in Āpastambha-śrautasūtra 19.16.15) such yūpa is to be employed. A possible perpetuation of the concept in Vaiṣṇava iconography is explored in my 'The Deogarh Viśvarūpa: A Structural Analysis', *A.ARP8* (1975), pp. 16-17 and Diagrams, p.23.
92. The cosmogonic process as a succession of kośas is described briefly by Gupta, *Lakṣmī Tantra*, pp. xxviii-xxx.

93. Ibid., 6.26.p. 37.

94. Ibid., p. 37,'footnote 2.

95. Gupta describes the nature of the relationship between Śakti and the masculine aspects of the creation in the Introduction to her *Lakṣmī Tantra*, especially pp. xxiv-xxvi: 'The Nature of Śakti; compare Schrader, *Pāñcarātra* pp. 29-30. There is no overt sexual activity or symbolism of the tantric kind present.

96 Notes 4 and 5, *supra*

97 Gupta, *Lakṣmī Tantra*, pp. 35-8, especially p. 37: 'Having destroyed the effects of their deeds... through intense righteousness, living beings gain abundant knowledge and yoga redeems their sins, whereafter they start ascending the kōsas step by step and never fall downwards. Once having attained the level of satyaloka, from there onwards they do not return' (*Lakṣmī Tantra* 6.29-32). Compare *supra*, note 38.

98 Mathura Museum, no. 00.F2.

99 Mathura Museum, no. 17.1301.

100 Mathura Museum, no. C.30; this is a triad consisting of kubera, Lakṣmī and Hārītī. They are in a row, squatting in the position described in note 27 *supra*, as is the Lakṣmī mentioned in note 99.

101 Mathura Museum, nos. 00.F3, 00.F32 and 16.1244.

102 R. C. Agrawala, 'Maṭṛkā Reliefs in Early Indian Art', *EW21* (1971), p. 8 3.

103 Mathura Museum, no. 16.1244.

104 Banerjea, *Hindu Iconography*, p. 25. An 11th century image of Sītālā with a winnowing fan as her headdress was noted in the course of fieldwork at Modhera, in one of the small shrines

on the side of the tank facing the main temple entrance.

105 Ibid., p. 293.

106 Sivaramamurti, *Sanskrit Literature and Art*, PP. 1-2.

107 This is not to neglect the evidence of similar Kuṣāṅga goddess images in the Mathura and Lucknow, Museums. The evidence is succinctly presented by N. P. Joshi, *Catalogue of the Brahmanical Sculpture in the State Museum, Lucknow (Part I)*, Lucknow 1972, pp. 67-70, line drawings 59-61, Plate 9 and Fig. 64. The closest similarities are with two fragments in the Mathura Museum (no. 54.3763) and the Lucknow museum (no. J.84), but in these the radiating figures are much abbreviated as small reliefs, quite unlike the large, articulate emanations of the sculpture under discussion. Other examples show a goddess with an arch of five disembodied faces above the head, standing between two spear-bearers. These are all generally identified as 'Ṣaṣṭhī. I am here developing an argument in favour of a different identification in the case of at least one of these sculptures, all of which deserve further investigation. For the Ṣaṣṭhī, argument, see R. C. Agrawala, 'Goddess Ṣaṣṭhī in Mathura Sculptures', B.WAL'P4, December 1969, pp.1-6 (cited by Joshi. p. 70. n. 2).

108 Schrader, *Pāñcarātra* esp. pp. 29-31; Gupta, *Lakṣmī Tantra*, pp. XXIV-XXX.

109 Gupta, *Lakṣmī Tantra* p. XXIX.

110. Ibid., *Lakṣmī Tantra* 6.18-20, p. 36.

111 It is important to note the meaning of this passage as explained by the *Lakṣmī Tantra* itself, for it has a direct bearing upon my interpretation of this icon. The 'six attributes' with regard to Śakti is explained clearly in an earlier chapter of the text (6.1-5):'Śrī- I am the primordial I-hood of Hari who possesses, though in unmanifest form, the aggregate of the six divine attributes...sometimes I project myself. Then I... evolve into the states of the six kośas: śakti, māyā, prakṛti consisting

of the three guṇas, brahmāṇḍa (the cosmic egg) and the jīvadeha (individual living being). These six are called the six kośas-Kośa is a synonym for kulāya (nest), which is another name for body' (Gupta, *Lakṣmī Tantra*, p. 35). It is here plainly stated that the six 'sheaths' (*kośas*) of Śakti are her six' bodies, a concept easily translatable into visual, iconographic form.

112 Gupta, 16.20-21, p. 84.

113 Ibid., 6.15-17, p. 36.

114 ibid., p. 36, footnote 4.

115 Ibid., 6.15-17.

116 J.-Ph. Vogel, *La Sculpture de Mathurā*, Paris and Bruxelles 1930, p.47, Plate XL.

117 It has been helpfully suggested to me by Professor R. Gombrich that this could be a *pāśa* (noose) conceived as a snake, on the basis of *Lakṣmī Tantra* 34.38a; stanzas 37-9 are translated by Gupta, p.191, thus: "Turning the right hand upward, one should join the thumb and the little finger together in front (of the palm) like a bridge, while the three (remaining) fingers are kept will-pressed (against each other) and are bent like the hood (of a snake). This *mudrā* belongs to (the mantra of) the noose (*pāśa*).¹ It is quite possible that what later became a symbolic *mudrā* was originally conceived, as in the sculpture, in objective terms as a real snake-noose; certainly the object is carried upon the right hand of figure (C), and the *mudrā* is described in the text as right-handed gesture.

118 R.C. Argawala, EW21 (1971), pp.82-4. N.P. Joshi (Catalogue of the *Brahmanical Sculptures in the State Museum, Lucknow*, 1972, p.70) suggests that images of a goddess with five heads mounted upon and arched head-dress or with emanatory figures and flanked by two male spearbearers 'represent some ancient form of vīrāṣṭaka, six Mothers in one form

together with Skanda and Viśākha.' This theory at least takes into account the differences in appearances between the six female figures, for the 'six Mothers' referred to are to be considered as the six faithless wives of the seven ṛṣis (the exception being the constant Arundhatī) who consorted with Agni and fostered the infant Skanda (ṣaṇmukha); but it does not explain why the six should be iconographically conjoined. The 'Śaṣṭhī' identification was begun by V.S. Agrawala with regard to a six-headed female depicted on the reverse of certain Yaudheya coins bearing six-headed Skanda on the obverse (*Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, vol.V.2, pp. 1-4), perpetuated by P.K. Agrawala (*Skanda-Kārttikeya*, Varanasi 1967, pp.40-1 and Figs. 9 and 10) and R.C. Agrawala (supra), set of line-drawings. The latter scholar links the numismatic and sculpture evidence, naming all these sixfold goddesses-whether six-headed, provided with a band of five all using separate the same heads, or projecting miniature female forms-as 'Śaṣṭhī, consort of Skanda) also and more usually called Devasenā). The name Śaṣṭhī as applied to the six-headed female on the Yaudheya coins may be misleading, for it means 'the sixth [day]'; it does not mean or imply 'six-headed' or 'sixfold'. Moreover, in the field of Kuṣāṇa sculpture, there is no known example of a six-headed or sixfold Skanda-image. In short, the identification 'Śaṣṭhī' is derived entirely from V. S. Agrawala's suggestion made in the 1960s with regard to numismatic evidence, and the name itself is that of a goddess called The Sixth (not The Sixfold or The Six-Headed to correspond to the masculine Ṣaṇmukha). The closest visual parallel to our Kuṣāṇa sculpture is another from Mathura, now in the Lucknow State Museum (No. J.84); a goddess with left hand on her hip, the right arm broken off, stands with a halo behind her head across the broken surface of which rise two very small female figures, which appear to be identical to her with the right hand raised in *abhaya*; the top half of the higher emanating female is broken off as is the rest of the halo. This goddess stands beside a much taller male figure (now headless) which holds a rod, presumably the haft of a spear, in its left hand. The two figures are carved in relief on a single panel, and another spear-bearer is assumed originally to have stood on her other side. The small goddess is presumed to have

had five emanations as has the Mathura Museum sculpture under discussion; but the emanation theme itself is artistically very understated and iconographically appears to show no distinctions between the source-goddess and her emanations. I have recently seen another, relatively well preserved version of this 'Śaśṭhī' from the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin (No. I 5924. 67.8 centimeters high). Also from Mathura, this large and rather beautiful Kuṣāṇa statue has no accompanying figures, and a tree is not carved on the back (a diagrammatic lotus is engraved there and, apparently, an inscriptions). There is again no visible differentiation between the small emanatory figures, which are rendered in low relief upon a curved backslab. Their hands are all raised to shoulder level, but what they might have held is destroyed. The source-goddess, by contrast, has her right hand raised in *abhaya* and the left lowered, resting on her girdle. This image is an iconographical variant of our free-standing sculpture in Mathura: the absence of the tree, the diminution in the relative size of the emanations and their execution in relief (as in the Lucknow fragment) suggest repetitive sculpting of the same figure, which seems to have become quite a popular cult deity. Probably the most significant iconographic feature still preserved in this piece is the grouping of the five emanatory figures: they are more or less equally distributed around the arched head-dress of the main standing goddess. They are therefore less susceptible to the interpretation suggested here for the Mathura Museum sculpture in the round, which has the central three large *śaktis* clustered together at the apex. It seems reasonably clear that a multiple image of experimental Kuṣāṇa type could develop iconographically in more than one direction: one artistic combination of four masculine figures, for example, underlies the development of multiformed Vāsudeva (Plate 1o), Śiva (Plate 17) and Brahmā (Plate 27). The hexad of goddesses was similarly a Kuṣāṇa protoform which could be iconographically developed to express various goddess-cult beliefs, of which the Caturvyūha-Śakti is one distinct possibility, since its masculine counterpart can be shown by theological argument to exist in the archaeological material. The mythological arguments concerning the association of another development of the sixfold goddess standing between Skanda Kārttikeya and

Viśākha born from himself, would seem to identify her most reasonably as the unified group of Kṛttikā-Mothers (perhaps popularised as Skandamātrī, mother of heroes), rather than as the 'Śaśthī' consort, who is not, in the epic literature at least, sixfold or six-headed being the deification of Skanda's sacred new moon, day, the goddess 'Sixth' of the crescent month.

119 N. P. Joshi, 'A Unique Figure of Śiva from Musānagar', *BMAUP 3* (1968), pp. 25-30, and fig. 1.

120 Housed in a small museum attached to the Muktā Devi temple at Musānagar' Bhoginipur tehsil, near Ghatampur, Kanpur District, Uttar Pradesh.

121 Several such examples of approximately contemporary date from Amaravati, now in the British Museum, are to be seen in the excellent photographs of Forman and Forman, *Indian Sculpture*, Plates 8, 10, 41 and 43, for example.

122 The sitting posture is typical of royal figures in Buddhist reliefs, while the position of the hands is typical of Buddhist cult figures of the period.

123 Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, Plates 27 and 28; the sculpture is near Badoh-Paṭhārī. Vidisha District, Madhya Pradesh.

124 Ibid., p. 39

125 Joshi, 'A Śiva from Musānagar'. *BMAUP3* (1968), p. 29

127 Ibid., p. 29, footnote 3.

128 With the sole exception of *BMAUP 7 (1970-1)*, p. 23, where Agrawala unaccountably changes his identification of these four figures upon the Nānd column from Lakulīśa to Śiva.

129 For example, the Sarnath Bodhisattva dedicated by Friar Bala, published A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*. 1927, reprinted New York 1965, Plate XXII.83.

130 For example, the equally famous Katra (Mathura) seated Bodhisattva in the Mathura Museum, published by B. Rowland in *The Art and Architecture of India, Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*, Harmondsworth 1953, reprinted 1959, Plate 46. Couchant lions appear as supporters of the platform upon which Tirthankaras are seated in Gupta Jaina sculpture: Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, Plates 20.45.46.

131 Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śivaism*, pp. 102-7. The lion is not, by definition (*paśu essentially* referring to domesticated animals, as distinct from hunted wild beasts, *mrga*), one of the beasts protected by Pāśupati; see *ibid.*, p. 104. Of the Pāśupata cult, Gonda, in: *Vaiṣṇavism and Śivaism*, p. 93, observes: 'The Viṣṇuite Pāñcarātras, of whom the Pāśupatas for a certain period probably their most formidable rivals-are assumed to be the Śvaite counterpart'. Gonda here cites Bhandarkar's statement that we may place the rise of the Pāśupata school mentioned in the Nārāyaṇīya about a century after that of the Pāñcarātra system, i.e. about the second century B.C. The roughly contemporaneous rise of these two cults in the Kuṣāṇa period and the compositional similarity between the Kuṣāṇa Caturvyūha image and the present Śaiva relief should be noted.

132 Joshi, 'A Śiva from Musānagar', pp. 26-7, and Line-drawing 3.

133 *Ibid.*, p.28.

134 The skin worn by Śiva is said by Banerjea (*Hindu Iconography*, p.487) to be that of a tiger (or elephant, in a different icon type) rather than that of a lion; the epithet applied to the god when so dressed is *kṛtti-vāsas*, 'covered with a skin', which is used to designate Rudra-Śiva from the *Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā* and *Mahābhārata* (Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p.304) onward, with no particular animal skin

being implied. Tiger do not appear to figure in the hieratic sculpture of Hinduism during the Kuṣāṇa period; whereas the lion *avatāra* of Viṣṇu was highly popular from the Gupta age.

135 For example, sculpture no.2.544 in the Baroda Museum (U.P. Shah, *Sculpture from Śāmalāji and Roda*, BMPGB 13, Special Issue 1960), in which the head of the animal whose hide is worn by Śiva hangs upon his left thigh; this sculpture is dated to c.400 A.D. by Harle in *Gupta Sculpture*, p.48, Note to Plate 88. See also a Śiva icon some three centuries later at the so-called Durga temple, Aihole (full page illustration in Kramrisch, *The Art of India, Traditions of Indian Sculpture, Painting and Architecture*, London 1954, 3rd edition 1965, Plate 61).

136 Joshi, *Mathurā Sculptures*; also an Ekamukhaliṅga upon a platform under a tree, without a railing, in another Kuṣāṇa relief published by him (*Catalogue of the Brahmanical Sculptures in the State Museum*, Lucknow, Part I, 1972, p.102, figs. 28 and 29.)

137 Gods of originally Vedic significance, such as Indra and Brahmā, were taken into Buddhist legend and so depicted in Buddhist art, particularly at the birth of the Buddha, where they appear receiving the infant (e.g., Lippe, *Freer Indian Sculptures* Plates 8,9, 10 and p.16). Sūrya also appears, in a remarkably well developed representation, upon a railing pillar from the *stūpa* at Bodh Gaya of the Śuṅga or Kāṇva period, probably in the first century B.C. (published Rowland, *Art and Architecture of India*, Plate 19(A)). An icon of the present type, however, bear no relationship to Buddhist legend or belief.

138 A relief from Gaḍhwā in the Lucknow Museum: Plate 48.

139 O'Flaherty, *Ascetism and Eroticism*, p.4.

140 Ibid., p.9.

141 Ibid., pp. 8-11.

142 Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p.221.

143 My translation of *Mahābhārata* (Critical Edition, Poona 1933-69), 13 (*Anuśāsana-parvan*), 14, 182-4.

sa eṣa bhagavān devaḥ sarvatattvādir avyayaḥ/

sarvatattva vidhānājñaḥ pradhānapurṣeśvaraḥ//182

yo 'srjad dakṣiṇād aṅgād brahmāṇaṃ lokasambhavam/

vāmapārsvāt tatkā viṣṇuṃ lokarakṣārtham īśvaraḥ//

yugānte caiva samprāpte rudra aṅgāt srjat probhuḥ///183

sa rudraḥ saṃharan kṛtsnaṃ jagat sthāvarajaṅgaman/184ab

144 *Mahābhārata* 13.14.197.

145 Ibid.

146 Ibid., verse 185.

147 Ibid., verse 186 (*nityam adṛśyaḥ sarvadevataih*).

148 For example, in the manner in which the three-in-one icon of 'Ekapāda Trimūrti' is rendered in mediaeval South Indian Sculpture, depicting Viṣṇu and Brahmā emanating from Śiva at hip-level (B.N. Sharma, 'Iconographic Parallels in India and Nepal', *Studies in the Foreign Relations of India* (Prof. H.K. Sherwani Felicitation Volume) Hyderabad, Government of Andhra Pradesh, p.557 and Plate 5.)

149 I have translated *Pradhāna-puruṣeśvara* above as 'Lord of the Supreme Sprit'; however, *Pradhāna* can also mean *prakṛti*, the active female force in the creation, counterpart of the passive *puruṣa*, the male principle. The term could therefore signify 'The Lord of the female and male principles of creation'; the Musānagar image might then represent this Lord (Īśvara) who transcends sexual differentiation-while retaining a masculine title - as the Creator who effectively embodies the male and female components of creation, though this is not anatomically evident as it is in the Ardhanārīśvara image. There would thus be no need of a female image to counterbalance this one, as there was to counterbalance the Caturvyūha image in Pāñcarātra terms.

150 Hopkins, *Epic. Mythology*, p. 221.

151 R.C. Agrawala, 'Four-faced Śiva-liṅgas', figs. 1-6.

152 O'Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism*.

153 The association of the lion with the mountains is implied in the *Devīmāhāmya* (2.29) in which the Goddess Maḥiṣāsuramardinī, created of the combined wrath of the gods, is given her lion mount by Himavat (*himavān vāhanaṃ siṃhaṃ [adada]*). The mountains are sometimes spoken of as the couch of Śiva, for example in the *Mahābhārata* (12.274.2-58, the story of the destruction by Śiva of Dakṣa's sacrifice), where it is said: 'There on the mountain slope adorned with god and minerals the god Śiva sat as if on couch.' (W. O'Flaherty, *Hindu Myths, A Sourcebook Translated from the Sanskrit*, Harmondsworth 1975,p.119); the mountain in this passage is Meru.

154 M.-T.de Mallmann, 'Head-dresses with Figurines in Buddhist Art', IAL 21.2(1947).

155 A good illustration of an early Mathura example in the Mathura Museum is published in Begley, *Viṣṇu's Flaming Wheel*, Plates, fig.1.

156 Especially anger, as suggested by Joshi, 'A Unique Figure of Śiva, pp.27-8. As a personification of wrath, the lion is of course a particularly fitting gift as *vāhana* for the avenging Goddess (Note 153, *supra*); the same animal, as the Man-lion, Nṛsiṃha, is the avenging *avatāra* of Viṣṇu sent against Hiraṇyakaśipu, the persecutor of the God's devotee Prahlāda (already in the late epic: Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, pp.210-11). The subjugation of such passions as wrath and vengeance is clearly necessary for the *yogin*; the lion (symbolic of violent emotions) tamed, is perhaps to be seen as the counterpart of the erect phallus (symbolic of erotic emotions) without a sexual object, so re-emphasizing the ascetic character of the god portrayed.

157 Śiva is *siṃhavāhana*' whose mount is a lion') already in the *Mahābhārata* (Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p.1213).

158 *Supra*, Note 130.

159 *Supra*, Note 121. The relaxed posture of royalty upon the throne in Buddhist relief is most pronounced, particularly by the position of the hands and arms - the elbow sometimes resting upon the backrest of the throne, the hand hanging idly from the wrist - and emphasized by the proximity of his queen sharing the seat with him, the footrest supporting the lowered foot and sometimes a leisurely leaning of the body slightly to one side. The figure in the present relief is bolt upright, there is no support for the lowered foot, there is no consort, and the hands are held in formal gestures.

160 O'Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism*, pp.8-10 (quotation *supra*, Note 21).

161 The disturbance of *tapas*, especially by erotic thoughts, is considered in Hindu myth to be highly dangerous, as when Kāma (the personification of erotic desire) interrupts the *tapas* of Śiva and is burnt by the (*tapas*-transformed-into), fire from the third eye of Śiva (e.g. O'Flaherty, *Hindu Myths*, pp.157-8). Eroticism can, however, transform the ithyphallic celibate *yogin* into a sexually-active progenitor, the phallic symbol of *tapas* reverting to its more obvious function. 'The raised seed is a natural image of

chastity; only Pārvaī can transform Śiva from one whose seed is drawn up into one whose seed has fallen ...Śiva's raised *liṅga* is symbolic of the power to spill the seed as well as to retain it.' (O'Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism*, p.10). The disturbance of *tapas* may result in either destruction or creation; or it may weaken the supernatural powers acquired through *tapas* by directing the concentration of the *tapasvin* away from his aim, and dissipating it in sexual activity, or in the emotion of lust, inspired by a seductive nymph.

162 This arrangement of the legs and feet is to be seen in virtually all known Buddha Tirthānkara statues; it was clearly a conventional meditation posture. In releasing the legs from this position, the upper right foot would naturally be lowered first as in the present relief sculpture; in Buddhist reliefs of royal figures seated in a relaxed similar posture, either foot may be lowered, providing another indication that their attitudes are simply comfortable and not fixed by yogic conventions.

163 *Supra*, Note 21. When *ūrdhvaretas*, the *yogin* is wholly absorbed in the generation of *tapas* and necessarily undistracted by sexual, procreative concerns.

164 O'Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism*, p. 9, translates a *Mahābhārata* passage which states: 'He is called *ūrdhvaliṅga* because the lowered *liṅga* sheds its seed, but not the raised *liṅga*. The reference is to Śiva. O'Flaherty (*ibid.*, p.143) indicates that the universal creation is said to have resulted from such a transition: 'It is almost impossible to find a myth in which Śiva remains chaste throughout, though many myths are based upon the initial premiss of his chastity. Even in the *Mahābhārata passage* which describes Śiva as the chaste *brahmacārin*, Śiva is raised as the god who 'sports with the daughters and wives of the sages... the universe was created from the seed that poured out of the *liṅga* of Śiva during the sexual act.' The same scholar publishes (*ibid.*, fig.9, facing p.224) a remarkable mediaeval relief from Bhuvaneśvara, which depicts Śiva seated in a somewhat similar posture to that of the Kuṣāṅga relief under discussion upon a throne, his phallus leaning to the left and

ejaculating semen into the mouth of Agni; the two-armed Bhuvaneśvara Śiva figure seems almost to represent the continuation of the creative act of Śiva as *tapasvī* symbolized in the Kuṣāṇa Musānagar panel.

165 The golden pot appears frequently in Hindu Myth, replacing the archaic Hiranyagarbha (O'Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism*, p.107); in one of the oldest myths in which the pot contains the seed of the creator, it is Rudra who is born from it (ibid., p.117).

166 Indian Museum, Calcutta, no. KM40.

167 Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, pp.19 and 44 and Plate 53.

168 Ibid., p.19.

169 That is, in the Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems: S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Volume I, Cambridge 1922, reprinted 1957, pp.247-8 and footnote: also pp.258-9.

170 In Vaiṣṇava iconography, the same transitional state at the beginning of the creative process is symbolized by the half-awake Viṣṇu lying upon the serpent Śeṣa of Ananta (the Śeṣasāyyin icon-type); the god is here seen separated from the personified Yoga-nindrā (see *Devīmāhātmya'* temple at Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh, published by Kramrisch, *Art of India*, Plates 51 and 52, and Danielou, *Hindu Polytheism*, Frontispiece), The method of depicting the transition itself is similar in both this icon-type and in the much earlier Musānagar Śaiva panel, namely by emanation, in the former case of Brahmā upon the lotus, in the latter of three figures, including Rudra, from the shoulders and head of the Pradhānapuruṣa. The Vaiṣṇava Caturvyūha image, which is approximately contemporaneous with the Śaiva Pradhānapuruṣa relief, is a less complete depiction of the Creation; for Pāñcarātra

terms, the Vāsudeva figure is the first of the *vyūha* forms - the masculine part of the evolutionary process only - to emanate from Nārāyaṇa and his Śakti.

171 *Mahābhārata* - (Critical Edition) 13.14.186: *nityam adṛśyah sarvadevataiḥ*. On the philosophical conception in Sāṅkhya of the avyakta principal as puruṣa in relation to *prakṛti* and the creation, see Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, pp.214 and 216. On the puruṣa of Sāṅkhya as the Īśvara of yoga, see *ibid.*, pp. 258-9. The invisible, all pervading creator, Īśvara/Mahādeva of the *Mahābhārata* may be compared with the *adṛṣṭa* of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika (pp.317 and 324-5) in relation to the Creation. The aim of the *yogin* is *puruṣa* freed from *prakṛti* (IBID., PP.271-3) or the transcendent Īśvara which is a reversal of the creative process on the part of the created individual.

172 *Ibid.*, 245-8 and 258-9.

173 Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p.874 and the example of Viśvāmitra, *ibid.*, pp.994-5.

174 Mathura Museum no.15.516.

175 Shah, *Viṣṇudhamottara-Purāṇa, Third Khaṇḍ*, critically edited with Introduction, Notes, etc., Oriental Institute, Baroda 1958 (Gaekwad's Oriental Series No. CXXX), Vol. I: Text, Critical Notes.

176 Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism*, p.42.

177 *Ibid.*

178 Nānd column as Viśākhayūpa (sculpture 2).

179 This rearrangement is displayed in tabular form in the discussion of sculpture 6.

- 180 Notably by Kramrisch, 'The Image of Mahādeva in the Cave-Temple on Elephanta Island', *Ancient India* 2 (July 1946); and J.N. Banerjea, 'A "Viṣṇudharmottara" Passage and the "So-Called Trimūrti" of Elephanta', *Arts Asiatiques* 3.2, (1956), pp. 131ff.
- 181 T.S. Maxwell, 'Observation on the Five Aspects of Śiva (in Theory, Iconography and Architecture)', *Art International* XXIV.9-10 (September 1981), Plates 1-10. P. Pal considers a 6th-Century Kashmiri sculpture having four faces and two seated figures in the hair to be Śaiva: 'An Addorsed Śaiva Image from Kashmiri and Its Cultural Significance', *Art International* XXIV.5-6 (January-February 1981).
- 182 The text was composed about the 7th century A.D. according to Pal, 'Śaiva Image From Kashmiri', p.14 and note 9.
- 183 Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism*, p.29 and note 110.
- 184 Lucknow Museum no. H4, from Bhīṭā, near Allahabad.
- 185 R. D. Banerji, *A.S.I., A.R.* 1909-10, pp. 146-9.
- 186 *logo*; considered by Banerji, *ibid.*, to mean *liṅga*, but otherwise interpreted by J.N. Banerji, 'The Phallic Emblem in Ancient and Mediaeval India', *JISOA* III, 1935, p.42, as *laguḍa*, 'club'.
- 187 R.C. Agrawala, 'Four-faced Śiva and Four-faced Viṣṇu at Mathura', *VIB*, 1965, p.107.
- 188 Banerji, *A.S.I., A.R.* 1909-10, pp. 146-9.
- 189 See J.N. Banerjea, *JISOA* III, 1935, p.41, note 1 (no reference).

- 190 Ibid., p.42: 'The Bhīṭā sculpture does not fall in the same line with any of the Mukhaliṅgas described above, or for the matter of that, with any other well-known variety of such sculpture.
- 191 Ibid., p.43 and note 3.
- 192 Early *liṅgas* appear not to have been divided into the three standard divisions of square, octagon, cylinder; thus Banerjea, *Hindu Iconography*, p.457, describes a late-Kuṣāṇa liṅga in the following terms. 'Another huge stone Śivaliṅga in the Mathura Museum collection (measuring as much as 200 cm) is divided into three sections: (1) a roughly square undressed lower portion, (2) the round middle section with its girth shortening upwards, and (3) the tapering round nut broader than the top portion of middle section'.
- 193 *JISOA*, III1935, pp.42-3.
- 194 Banerjea, *ibid.*, p.40, quotes the translation of the inscription: 'The liṅga of the sons of Khajahuti was dedicated by Nāgaśiri, the son of Vāseṭhi. May the deity be pleased.' The exact meaning of this is far from clear; but one notes the obvious concern with kinship and lineage in the wording.
- 195 The inscription is in the Brāhmī script.
- 196 G. Liebert, *Iconographic Dictionary of the Indian Religions, Hinduism- Buddhism - Jainism*, Leiden 1976, p.86.
- 197 Beginning in the Gupta period: for example, an early 5th-century Viṣṇu. sculpture outside Cave 6 at Udaygiri, Madhya Pradesh, published by Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, Plate 8 and note, p.34.
- 198 Liebert, *Iconographic Dictionary*. 'Jambudvīpa' entry, p.111.

199 Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p.7.

200 *Supra*, Note 91.

201 Gupta, *Lakṣmī-tantra* 11.29, p.60.

202 Haraprasad Shastri, 'Mandasor Inscription of the Time of Naravarman; The Mālava Year 461', *Epigraphia Indica* 12 (1913-14), Inscription No. 35, text and translation pp.320-1. The Mālava year 461 is equated with A.D. 404/405. The Inscription records in part the turning of a man named Satya to Vāsudeva 'for refuge'; the initial invocation of 'Puruṣa of a thousand heads' clearly connects Vāsudeva with the archaic creation myth recorded at *R̥gveda* 10.90, the so-called *Puruṣa-sūkta* (*sahāśraśīṣā pūruṣaḥ...*), while the lines praising Vāsudeva clearly employ the metaphor of a tree:

(1) *sahasraśīrase tasmai pūruṣāyāmitātmane*

catuḥsamudraparyāṅkatoyanidrālaye namaḥ

(10) *jīvalokam imaṃ jñātvā śaraṇyam śaraṇagataḥ[satyō, line 9],*

tridaśodāraphaladam; svargastrīcārupallavam;

(11) *vimānānekaviṭapaṃ toyadāmbumdhusravam*

vāsudevam jagadvāsam aprameyam ajaṃ vibhum.

This translate here, varying from the translation of Shastri in places: 'Homage to the Puruṣa of a thousand heads, whose self is boundless, whose watery sleeping place is the couch of the four oceans...[Satya], having known this mortal world [to be unstable... (preceding line)], has taken refuge in the sheltering Vāsudeva, the all-pervading, the unborn, the immeasurable, whose clothing [or foliage:-*vāsa*] is the

living world, who gives as fruit the heaven of the thirty [three gods], whose sweet tendrils are the nymphs of heaven, whose several boughs are the palaces [of the gods: *vimāna*], from whom stream, as rainwater, honey/nectar (*madhu*).'

203 Banerjea, Hindu Iconography, p.458.

204 Gonda, Viṣṇuism and Śivaism, notes the importance in Vedic religion of the axis, particularly with regard to Viṣṇu (pp.6-7, 10 and 28) but also to Śiva (p.14 and note 114, and 47-8).

205 Mathura Museum no.14.382.

206 R.C. Agrawala, 'Four-faced Śiva and Four-faced Viṣṇu', p.107

207 K.D. Bajpai, 'A Note on the Iconography of Brahmā', Bulletin of the Baroda State Museum, 5, 1945-49,p.18, states that 'the two side-heads are also facing the front.' This is inaccurate.

208 For example, Bajpai and R.C. Agrawala in the papers cited in Notes 206 and 207.

209 The title of this *Upaniṣad* is discussed by F. Max Muller, *Sacred Books of the East*, Oxford 1884, Vol.XV, pp. xliii-lii, and briefly by S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, London 1953, 3rd impression 1969,p.793.

210 Brahmā, Rudra, Viṣṇu (4.5); Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Agni, Varuna, Vāyu, Indra, Yama (5.1); and others.

211 Maitrī *Upaniṣad* 7.8.

212 Ibid., 7.9-10.

213 The English translation of *Upaniṣads* referred to in this chapter is by R.C. Zaehner, *Hindu Scriptures*, London 1966; the English words, mostly in square

brackets, are Zaehner's while Sanskrit extracts in round brackets are added by myself. The extracts from the Sanskrit text are from Radhakrishnan, *Principal Upaniṣads*; *sandhis* are resolved where possible, and in places I have slightly amended the reading if it appeared faulty.

214 Zaehner, *Hindu Scriptures*, p.231, note 3, after Radhakrishnan, *Principal Upaniṣads*, p.829.

215 Banerjea, *Hindu Iconography*, pp.66-75.

216 V.S. Agrawala, *Indian Art*, p.254 and Plate L, fig.186(Line-drawing)

217 K.D. Bajpai, 'A Note on the Iconography of Brahmā', *BBSM5*, 1945-9, p.18

218 Banerjea, *Hindu Iconography*, p.517.

219 R.C. Agrawala, 'Four-faced Śiva and four-faced Viṣṇu', p.107-8

220 Bajpai, 'Iconography of Brahmā', p.18.

221 R. C. Agrawala, 'Four-faced Śiva and four-faced Viṣṇu', p.107.

222 Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p.197:'Brahman is caturmukha (passim), caturānana (R5, 54, 37), caturvaktra... Except for an allusion to his "Veda-knowing hand" (R7, 36, 3) this is almost the only descriptive epithet of his form.'

223 Mathura Museum, no. 32.2134.

224 As recorded also by Bajpai, 'Iconography of Brahmā', p.18

225 Ibid.

226 Ibid.

227 R.C. Agrawala, 'Some Kuṣāṇa Sculpture in the National Museum, New Delhi and Allied Problems', BMAUP3, June 1969, p.10, sums up the view: 'We must remember that in early Kuṣāṇa art, there existed a tradition of presenting the fourth head, both in Viṣṇu and Śiva images of Mathura, on top of the main head,' (These remarks omit mention of Brahmā images; and there are no known three-headed Viṣṇu images with an apical bust in Kuṣāṇa sculpture.)

228 Mathura Museum no.00.E12; discovered in Bhadār village, twelve kilometers to the north-west of modern Mathura.

229 The smoothness of an uneven line does not necessarily mean that the sculpture was originally made in that form; I have seen at least one example (a late Viśvarūpa icon Viṣṇu housed in the High School at Kathlāl, (Gujrat) in which part of the *Prabhāmaṇḍala* has obviously been damaged at some time, and the breakage simply smoothed down, presumably to restore the icon to a fit state for continued worship, despite the imperfection.

230 See, for example, D.B. Disalkar, 'Some Brahmanical Sculptures in the Mathura Museum', *JUPHS* 5.1, January 1931, pp. 39-42 and Plates 16 and 17

231 Ibid., p. 57.

232 Ibid.

233 Auboyer, *Daily Life in Ancient India*, pp.152-3.

234 Philadelphia University Museum no.29.64.4, red sandstone, from Mathura

235 Forman, W. and B., and Deneck, *Indian Sculpture*, Plates 31 and 37.

236 Gaṅgā Golden Jubilee Museum, Bikaner, Rajasthan, no. 228; from Rang Mahal, Suratgarh.

237 Harle, Gupta Sculpture, p. 54.

238 Ibid., p. 30.

239 Ibid., p. 54.0

240 For example, H. Zimmer, *The art of Indian Asia, Its Mythology and Transformations*, edited by J. Campbell, 2nd revised edition, New York 1968, vol. 2, Plates 10, 116 and 117.

241 Ibid., Plates 87.

242 Ibid., Plate 32b, upper and lower.

243 R. C. Agrawala, *BMAUP*, 3 June 1969, p.10, suggests that it is the *Jiānamudrā*.

244 Harle, Gupta Sculpture, p.30.

245 Ibid., p.54.

246 R.C. Agrawala, 'Kuṣāṇa Sculpture'.

247 Ibid.

248 For a summary of the epigraphical evidence, see Banerjea, *Hindu Iconography*, pp.10,90-5; also pp. 104 and 386.

249 It appeared at Spink, London, provenance unknown; first published by P. Pal, *Art International* XXIV.5-6, January-February 1981, pp. 49-52 and figs.27 and 28.

250 Ibid., p. 50.

251 Ibid., p.p. 52

252 Ibid.,p.49.

253 Ibid.,p.50

254 Translation of Zaehner, as before, and in following extracts.

THE 'CLASSICAL' PHASE

Development in the Gupta Period

The existence of a classical period in Indian art and culture is generally held to have coincided with, or to have been created by, the Gupta dynasty, whose rule lasted from A.D. 320 to about the mid-sixth century. Romila Thapar is cautious in her use of the word 'classical', on account of its being a term coined by non-Indian historians. She therefore finds it necessary at several points to advance definitions of classicism in relation to Indian history.¹ From her political, social and artistic observations, it is evident that in speaking of Gupta classicism, one is considering North India, its ruling aristocracy and imitative upper classes both in the immediate vicinity of the king and in the provinces which enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy, and the art forms sponsored by the social elite.

I am here concerned only with religious art and, within this category, with the particular multiple icon types which are the subject of this work. The following types of icon belonging to this class are known from archaeological evidence to have been prevalent in the Gupta period, being executed in a recognizably Gupta sculptural style:²

1 . Brahmā

2. A form of Viṣṇu having the added side-heads of his Man-Lion (Nṛsiṃha or Narasiṃha)

and the Boar (Varāha) avatāras, the multiple icon so formed being commonly termed

'Vaikuṅṭha' by historians of Hindu iconography.³

3. The same or a similar form of Viṣṇu, that is, the 'Vaikuṅṭha' type, with an enlarged and populated halo (*śiraśkara*) or mass of radiance (*prabhāmaṇḍala*) around the head, resulting in a

yet more complex icon which I shall term Viśvarūpa for reasons to be given in due course.

The list is brief and the only two innovatory forms are Vaiṣṇava, the Brahms icon having already been developed in the Kuṣāṇa period. The Caturmukhaliṅga was perpetuated in Gupta sculpture, but multiheaded anthropomorphic images of Śiva, an iconographic formula for which had been arrived at in the Kuṣāṇa-Gupta transitional phase, as the Rang Mahal terracotta plaque (Plate 30) demonstrates were evidently discontinued. The one innovatory example of a multiheaded Śaiva divinity in the Gupta style represents Kārttikeya or Skanda, the six-headed son of Śiva.

There was in Gupta art a distinct reluctance to conjoin subsidiary figures intimately with the anthropomorphic figure of a deity. What might be termed 'split images', such as the androgynous form of Śiva, Ardhanārīśvara, The Lord Who Is Half Woman, constitute a different category entirely. For the two polarities of the same divinity are wholly subsumed in a single figure. The densely populated Varāha images, such as the Eran sculpture, indicate the ability of Gupta-period artists to create highly complex sculptures, but very little of the theologically dictated experimentation with ramifying and multiheaded iconographic form of the preceding Kuṣāṇa period was taken up and developed in Gupta religious art.

Of all the multiple and multiheaded anthropomorphic icon types that were created in the Kuṣāṇa period, only that of Brahmā continued into the Gupta period. There is otherwise a

noticeable hiatus in the development of the ramifying and multiheaded imagery of the experimental Kuṣāṇa phase, a hiatus which lasted until the late-Gupta and post-Gupta periods, when the types invented in that earlier phase reappeared in more accomplished artistic styles, their multiple compositions imbued with a new confidence and vigour. It seems, in fact, that during the Gupta phase there was an aversion to the depiction of the gods with conjoined multiple forms or aspects, to which the images to be discussed in this chapter were exceptions.

Images of Brahmā

One of the earliest surviving Brahmā images made at Mathura in the Gupta style is a small, probably domestic image of red sandstone (Plates 33 and 34). 15.25 centimetres high.⁴ It is broken off at the knees, but its original height is unlikely to have exceeded 22.5 centimetres. The icon is not carved in the round, having clearly been intended to be seen from the front while it stood against a wall or within a shallow niche, as the back consists of a slightly curved, plain surface. The heavy, somewhat pendulous appearance of the chest and abdomen was to remain a consistent feature of icons of the god throughout most of the period covered by this study. Other fairly standard iconographical details of subsequent Brahmā images—a *yogapaṭṭa*, *yajñopavīta* or a black antelope (*kṛṣṇājīna*) skin slung transversely across his torso, however, absent. This figure wears only a loose garment, its rolled upper part passing around the left shoulder and hanging in loose curving folds under the belly, emphasizing its rotundity: there are no body ornaments (as there were none visible on the front of our sculpture 12, Plates 31 and 32) an indication, perhaps, of the ascetic nature of the god despite his bulk. His right hand is

raised nearly to shoulder *level* in the *abhayamudrā*; the fracture lines of the missing lower left arm indicate that it was lowered to hip level, where the hand probably held the symbol of an ascetic or sage, the waterpot (*kamaṇḍalu*).

Three heads of the god are represented, each upon its own neck: the neck of the central head is visible despite its pointed beard, and the side-heads are clean-shaven. The face of the central head, which is carved in proportion to the rest of the figure, is missing; the outline of a piled *jaṭābhāra*, the ears, throat and beard extending like a long goatee as far as the centre of the chest are, however, still plainly distinguishable. The two side-heads, with only the throats of their brief supporting necks visible as they emerge from the shoulders of the central figure, are smaller than the central face, and are directed outward at an angle of about forty-five degrees (Source nos. 9B and C) on either side. The *jaṭās*, combed upward and bound atop each head by a hand, are well preserved; each face is represented with its own pair of ears—there is no overlapping of the ears adjacent to the central face by the larger ears of the latter (compare our sculptures 9 and 12, Plates 27 and 31-2), and those on the outer edges of the composition are not merged with the back slab, but are shown in full.

Despite this scrupulous individual treatment of each of the heads shown, there is no evidence (with the crucial exception of our sculpture 12 which is iconographically a transitional piece between Kuṣāṇa and Gupta methods) of sculptures in the round depicting Brahmā with all four faces. Even individual icons, such as this Mathura example, were treated as reliefs, however deeply cut, with the result that the fourth face was not represented. It is important to note that this iconographical 'abbreviation' is introduced at the very beginning of the standardization of the brahmanical pantheon in sculptural form under Gupta rule; the full 360 degrees around the image is no longer visually important, as it had been in the Kuṣāṇa art of Mathura—especially with regard to the symbolic tree on the reverse of multiple images—but only the 180 degrees which would normally be seen in frontal worship of an icon, as in a small temple, domestic shrine, or on a temple wall. This change suggests a transition from the

worship of images in the round, in open-air hallows, to worship within an enclosed sacred environment. It further suggests, in the case of Brahmā, that the fourth face of the god is taken for granted; given the frontal approach to images which now becomes conventional, there is no need to represent the fourth head, for example atop the three which are aligned upon the shoulders (Source no. 3B). The conception of this deity as four-faced (*caturmukha*) was, through the literature-in particular, no doubt, the epics-so axiomatic that the three heads were entirely sufficient to suggest four-headedness. Iconographically, the treatment of the heads in this sculpture may be regarded as a further transitional stage following the Kuṣāṇa/Gupta Brahmā (Plate 31) in which the four heads are bearded; here, at Mathura, only one has a beard, and later Gupta examples have no beards at all. The absence of the beard accords with the absence of any mention of it in most, if not all, iconographical texts.⁵

For examples of Brahmā's images in the fully mature Gupta style one can do no better than examine the two well-preserved versions sculpted in relief on the outside wall surfaces of the so-called 'Daśāvatāra' Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh, some two hundred miles to the south of Mathura. These appear as minor, though symbolically important figures within two large panels, one on the south wall in a Vaiṣṇava depiction of the creation, and the other in a Nara-Nārāyaṇa scene on the east side. In the creation scene, Brahmā appears as active demiurge seated upon a lotus (Plate 35) which grows from the waters symbolized by the serpent Ananta or Śeṣa upon which Viṣṇu as the source of creation lies (as Śeṣasāyyin) absorbed in his own being; while in the representation of Nara and Nārāyaṇa, the deity (Plate 36) occupies the centre of the frieze along the upper margin of the panel, presiding over and lending an air of orthodox sanctity to the hermitage of the two ṛṣi manifestations of Viṣṇu.

Brahmā in both roles appears in the same posture and similar iconographic forms. The god is seated cross-legged, contemplative, upon a lotus, his hands being in the same positions, displaying the same *mudrā* and holding the same waterpot as in the earlier standing icon. The number of arms has not increased, nor has the number of heads, which are treated in a manner

similar to the earlier Mathura technique (though none is bearded), hut face more directly outward, appearing from the front as full profiles, turned at right-angles to the central head which they equal in size (Source no. 13A). In the Śeṣaśāyyin panel version of the god, he wears the black antelope skin most prominently across his body, in place of the cloth garment of the earlier version. The image of the god which appears in the Nara-Nārāyaṇa, panel, however, wears a wide sash with plain borders and incised cross-hatching which seems to represent the *yoga-paṭṭa* of a *yogin*, that is, a band of cloth or other material used in yogic exercises, for example in holding the knees up when sitting cross-legged. (Parts of this sculpture appear to have been subjected to later recutting by an inferior artist, but the sash or *yoga-paṭṭa* seems to be the work of the original sculptor.) The reasons for this difference between the two representations of the god on a single temple may have to do with the differing symbolical roles to which I have referred, that Brahmā plays in each tableau. As demiurge in the Śeṣaśāyyin panel, his wearing of the black antelope skin may have been intended to emphasize his omniscient *ṛṣi* character, since he is in the process of creating the world; whereas, in the other panel, his wearing a piece of the *yogin*'s standard equipment is most suitable in a scene depicting a place of austerity, namely the *āśrama* of Nara and Nārāyaṇa.

As Banerjea⁶ suggests, Brahmā, in the brahmanical religion of this and later periods, had become a subsidiary figure in the cults of the two major gods, Śiva and Viṣṇu; his presence was necessary, but adaptable to the symbolical necessities of cults other than his own, which was almost eclipsed by the rise of other deities. But there is a contemporary image which seems to contradict this state of affairs, at least in one area. It is a bronze (Plate 37), beautifully made, from Mirpur Khas, Sindh,⁷ some 800 kilometres west of Mathura and 500 kilometres south-west of Rang Mahal. Like the Kuṣāṇa/Gupta Brahmā from northern Rajasthan or Haryana, it is an image in the round, with all four faces of the god represented; and as in the Rang Mahal terracotta Śiva (Plate 30), the right hand is raised *as if in abhyamudrā*, but with the palm facing the body. The thin, snaking *yajñopavīta* crosses the front of the corpulent torso from the left shoulder to the right hip; whether it traversed the back in continuation is not certain, due to

erosion. A robe is draped over the left shoulder, leaving the left hand free, the position of which suggests that originally it held a *kamaṇḍalu*, which was probably the intention in the earlier Mathura sculpture (Plate 33).

Unlike the side-heads of the bust from Rajasthan/Haryana-or those of an)- other multiheaded image so far examined-in this bronze image they are made to face backward, away from the central face, at an approximate forty-five degree angle. From the rear, (Plate 38), they present a full profile. These heads, and that at the back, are smaller than the 'natural' one. Both front and rear heads have their own ears, elongated and pierced but not ornamented, which entirely conceal those of the narrow, compressed side-faces. On the back of the image, above the rear face and between the shoulder blades, is a projecting tenon (as there are also on the soles of the feet), either to support a large, open-work nimbus, or else to fit the image into a framework with other deities. In either event, it is apparent that this figure of Brahmā was designed to be seen primarily from the front; the inclusion of the fourth head at the back being regarded as an iconographical necessity rather than as a feature to be honoured during ritual circumambulation. The angle of the side-heads supports this surmise, for they would have appeared turned away from the observer but flush with a flat background. As to why they should face toward the rear rather than being angled toward the worshipper, I can only suggest that the idea of multiheadedness was being deliberately under-stated, the side-faces appearing as retreating aspects of the main face, rather than as bold and independent heads in their own right, each having its own symbolic identity. Such an explanation accords with the general Gupta aesthetic principle of avoiding monstrosity of appearance wherever possible, while remaining faithful to iconographical dictates. It was this principle which no doubt led to the virtual suppression of Kuṣāṇa multiplicity and the invention of so few new multiheaded images in the Gupta period.

An image of Skanda Kārttikeya as Kumāra

Probably the earliest six-headed representations of this god-and, apparently, of his consort-

occur upon coins minted by the Yaudheyas, a traditionally warlike people settled in modern Rajasthan who 'lived by their weapons' (*āyudhajīvinah*) and had Skanda as their principal god.⁸ Although the Yaudheyas persisted as a social group during the rule of the Guptas, to whose suzerainty they submitted, and even later, it is possible that these particular coins antedate Gupta rule. This numismatic evidence shows the six heads of the god, and of a goddess on the reverse of one specimen, arranged in two rows of three set one above the other. In sculpture, such an arrangement of multiple heads does not appear until after the Gupta period.

The one multiheaded sculpture of Skanda which as far as I know survives from the Gupta period⁹ is a deep relief upon the upper part of the pilaster of a fragmentary gateway lintel from Pawāya (Padmāvati) in Madhya Pradesh.¹⁰ Both sides of the lintel have been published by the Archaeological Survey of India,¹¹ but the photographs show little detail. The image is carved upon the pilaster directly behind the panel depicting the Vedic ritual in which the demon king Bali promises to the Vāmanāvatāra of Viṣṇu as much space as he can cover in three steps. The adjacent large scene, upon the curved lintel itself, shows part of the giant form of Viṣṇu; on the reverse, next to the Skanda image, appears the scene of the churning of the milk ocean by the gods and demons. The reason for Skanda's appearance in what is evidently a Vaiṣṇava sculpture is not clear (Plate 39).

The image, approximately 46 centimetres in height, represents the god standing, with three smaller main attendant figures upon his right. Skanda Kārttikeya appears with five visible heads, the central one facing forward, the next two on either side angled at about sixty degrees outward, and the last pair as profiles at about 120 degrees to the central face (i.e. facing backward into the stone block). Above them is the damaged remainder of a mushroom-shaped parasol, its vertical shaft rising from behind the central head. That a sixth face was intended to be imagined at the back is implied by the six right arms which survive; a total of twelve arms would provide the god with one pair for each of six heads. The live out of six heads are all

represented on one level, disposed at roughly 60-degree intervals around an imaginary common axis (the single neck of Skanda continued upward by the shaft of the parasol), unlike the two-tier arrangement on the Yaudheya coins, in which all the heads face directly forward.

Each of the heads has the hair arranged in a bound topknot (*śikhaṇḍa śikhaṇḍaka*), a necklace hangs around the single neck, and in the narrow space between each head ear-ornaments are visible. In such a tight cluster of heads, representation of the ears themselves was clearly impossible. The raised six right hands do not appear to have held any symbols. Apart from the number of heads and arms and the hair-style, there are no other standard attributes of Skanda in the image, such as the spear, cockerel bell or peacock *vāhana*. This absence of the standard symbols by which the god was, in the Gupta period, characterized in his single-headed form, ¹² suggests that this is either an experimental iconographic prototype or a particular aspect of the deity. (Alternatively, the Skanda figure alone, devoid of Śaiva cult emblems but with its flurry of arms and circle of beads, may have been placed next to the churning scene to strengthen the impression of violent rotation; the borrowing by Vaiṣṇavism of symbols from the Śaiva iconographic repertory was not uncommon, as will become apparent in discussing other images.)

The iconographical section of the *Viṣṇudharmottara* (third Khāṇḍa) which is devoted to this god differentiates between four aspects, namely Kumāra, Skanda, Viśākha and Guha (3.71). Of these, only the form designated Kumāra is said to have six facts:

caturmūrteḥ kumārasya rūpaṃ te vacmi yādava/

kumāras-ca tathā skando viśākhas-ca guhas-tathā//3

kumāraḥ ṣaṇmukhaḥ kāryaḥ śikhaṇḍakavibhūṣaṇaḥ/ 4ab

.....

skando viśākhaś-ca guhaḥ kartavyāś-ca kumāravat/

ṣaṇmukhā te na kartavyā.....

I shall tell you, Yādava, of the appearance of the four-formed kumāra;

[The four forms are:]Kumāra and Skanda and Viśākha and Guha.

Kumāra is to be made six-faced, adorned with topknots.

.....

Skanda, Viśākha and Guha are to be made like Kumāra;

[But] they are not to be made six-faced.....

The text makes no mention, however, of a form having twelve arms. Kumāra is said (Ibid., 3.71.4d-5) to have the peacock as his *vāhana* and to have four arms, holding in his hands the cockerel and the bell on the right, the Vaijayantī banner (*patākā*) and the spear (*śakti*) on the left. The peacock *vāhana*, absent from the Pawāya lintel image although attributed to six-faced Kumāra in the text, is denied to the other three forms of the god (na *mayūragatāstathā*: 3.71.6d); this is just the reverse of the iconography which is found in sculptures of the Gupta period, where single-headed sculptures are accompanied by the peacock,¹³ but not the unique six-headed version. The only correspondence between the *Viṣṇudharmottara* description quoted and the Pawāya sculpture lies in the six faces and the topknots mentioned in stanza 4ab. However, there is no possibility of this image representing any god other than Skanda Kārttikeya alias Kumāra: it has no Śaiva features, the five heads being clearly intended to represent six, no Vaiṣṇava iconographic traits, and has too many

heads to be an icon of Brahmā.

A passage from the *Mahābhārata* concerning the birth of Skanda Kārttikeya, translated by O'Flaherty¹⁴ contains, what might be an early mythological basis for the four forms of the god mentioned in the iconographical extract from the *Viṣṇudharmottara* quoted above. The names appear to be connected with the first four days of his life.

The seed shed there, full of energy, engendered a son who was honoured by the sages as Skanda because he had been shed [*skannam*]. The Youth had six heads, twice that many ears, and twelve eyes, hands and feet; he had one neck and one body. On the second day he assumed a distinct form, on the third he became a child, and on the fourth he became Guha, with all his limbs developed.

There is no direct correspondence between the stages of the god's development described here, and the iconographical forms prescribed in the *Viṣṇudharmottara*, but the word translated as 'The Youth' in the Sanskrit is Kumāra, and it is under this name in both the epic and iconographical texts that the god is described as endowed with six heads. The epic description of The Youth, Kumāra, is indeed an accurate anatomical description of the figure on the Pawāya lintel, even in a detail such as the single neck; the *Viṣṇudharmottara* adds to this picture of his physical appearance the topknot of hair (*śikhaṇḍaka*), apart from the hand-held symbolical objects and the *vāhana*, which are not shown in the sculpture. It may be correct, therefore, to identify the Pawāya lintel sculpture as a Gupta conception of the Kumāra aspect of the god.

A further piece of evidence which supports this identification is the presence to the surviving proper right of the deity of three smaller, two-armed figures in human form. Despite the erosion, it is possible quite clearly to distinguish their postures. One is kneeling beside the god, the face level with his hip and the head directly beneath his lowest right forearm; the hands of this figure are held in front of the body, apparently extending an offering. Behind the latter figure is another, standing, whose hands are raised before the bowed head, apparently in an attitude of

homage directed toward the god. The same posture is adopted by the third subsidiary figure who stands, as it seems, in the air, the feet almost resting upon the standing figure below, the head higher than those of the god, but inclined toward him. To judge by their postures these figures seem to be feminine.

If it is assumed-as I have assumed for the god's arm-that the two sides of this damaged icon were symmetrically balanced, another trio of female figures, similarly arranged, may originally have been present on the opposite, broken side of the sculpture. Such a composition, consisting of Kumāra surrounded by six females, suggests that the latter group represents the Kṛttikās, the star-goddess personifications of the supposed six members of the constellation Kārttika (Pleiades), who in mythology; are the foster-mothers of Kumāra, from whom he derives the matronymic Kārttikeya. It was in order to suckle all six mothers simultaneously that Skanda, or Kumāra, became six-headed.

Viṣṇu 'Vaikuṅṭha' images

One of the two innovatory multiheaded image-types established in the Gupta period as part of the brahmanical pantheon was a form of Viṣṇu. Examination of the archaeological remains shows that the main figure of such an image was the four-armed standing Viṣṇu icon which had been virtually standardized in the Kuṣāṅga period. This figure was evidently perpetuated in the Gupta style with one major iconographical change: the primary weapons of the god, the mace (*gadā*) and disc (*cakra*), were each assigned a tutelary deity, namely Gadā-devī and Cakra-puruṣa (as seen in Plates 43 and 45).

The multiheaded type of this icon, which appears to have been invented during the Gupta period at Mathura, since the earliest remains of the type have been found there, had the additional face of a lion carved in relief at the junction of the neck with the proper right shoulder, and that of a boar in the corresponding position on the proper left. The sides on which these animal heads appeared were sometimes reversed (Plate 43),

but only during the Gupta period and only at Mathura; elsewhere and in subsequent periods, the lion face is always found on the right and the boar face on the left.

In these sculptures, the side-heads are invariably found to be represented in relief upon the background or the *śiraścakra* never in the round. Had these icons been free-standing, some physical connection between the main Viṣṇu icon and the extra heads would have been necessary; in fact, close examination of the Mathura Museum sculptures reveals no anatomical connection (Plates 41 and 44). (The exception appears to be the boar's head in a terracotta plaque representing this form of the deity in a squatting posture: Plate 45). In the case of the boar's head, its angle of projection from (as it would seem) behind the main figure, gives only the impression of physical conjunction (Plate 44)) which I believe to be disproved by the complete absence of a neck joining the lion's head to Viṣṇu's body. The side-heads are, moreover, smaller than the human face which appears between them (Plates 40,42, and 43), a feature which was also characteristic of earlier Kuṣāṇa images, but they are presented in a totally different manner: the face of the lion is angled outward at about forty-five degrees from the plane of the backslab while that of the boar is invariably presented in profile and angled upward at an approximately forty-five degree angle from the horizontal (Plates 42 and 44). The reason for this difference, and indeed the sculptural origin of the icon type itself, is to be found in independent images of the Man-Lion (Nṛsimha) and Boar (Varāha) *avatāras* of Viṣṇu belonging to the Gupta period. These incarnations are most usually represented in the form of two-armed human bodies having the head either of the lion or of the boar (the fully theriomorphic Varāha being an exception). If three such sculptures of Nṛsimha, Viṣṇu, and Varāha¹⁵ were to be superimposed, the result would be an icon having the heads in virtually the same attitudes as those in which they appear in the three-headed type of image under discussion.

Some thirty-five years ago, much the same theory of coalescence was propounded by P. H. Pott¹⁶ with regard to the origin of complex Buddhist images.

If we meet with the figure of a male deity with nine heads and eighteen hands, surrounded by eight subsidiary female figures, then there is no reason at all to doubt the origin of such a figure: it has been composed by joining nine separate figures into one with as many heads and arms as the separate figures had together.

In the case of the Vaiṣṇava figures, the ratio of heads to arms is not as neatly precise as in this formulation, there being only two pairs of arms to three heads. But the basic validity of the theory concerning 'multiplex figures', as Pott described such icons, is not undermined by this fact, for the separate figures of Nṛsimha and Varāha do not hold emblems different from those of the standard Viṣṇu image of the age, when they hold emblems at all. Indeed, the ratio is rarely as balanced as Pott suggests either in brahmanical or in Buddhist iconography: the remarkable and unique sixth-century rock-cut Avalokiteśvara relief in Cave 41 at Kanheri has the eleven heads with which one form of this Buddhist figure is canonically endowed, but only four arms.¹⁷

This Kanheri image (Plates 46 and 47), the earliest known formulation of the eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara image-type in a sculptured shrine in India, has iconographical relevance to these brahmanical icons. All eleven heads can be seen from the front; the three levels of three faces between the natural and the topmost heads do not stand for a triple set of four heads. The basic method of representing the heads of this Avalokiteśvara type did not change in subsequent images; even in free-standing icons, the divinity was to retain the stack of forward-facing heads,

though in differing arrangements, as they appear in this early relief; which is thus not an abbreviated form of a divinity having more 'concealed' heads. It may be noted, further, that the side-heads of these triple sets, like the lion's head of the Mathura Vaiṣṇava sculptures, are angled outward at about forty-five degrees from the rock surface and are simply clustered together, showing no evidence at all of being anatomically connected to the main figure or to each other. The multiple heads, both of Avalokiteśvara and of the Vaiṣṇava images, are ranged in a purely formal grouping in order to express symbolically-not anatomically the manifold identity of the main divinity. To describe these figures as 'eleven-headed' or 'three-headed' is thus, strictly speaking, inaccurate. The Viṣṇu icon-type with the heads of the Alan-Lion and Boar *avatāras* in the nimbus is not a depiction of a tricephalous mythological *dramatis persona* in the way that Brahmā and Skanda-Kārttikeya are respectively four-headed and six-headed figures drawn straight from epic myth.

How are the Mathura sculptures to be interpreted? The question has apparently been settled, but I intend to challenge the accepted view.

Following clues left by B. C. Bhattacharya¹⁸ in 1921, it was J. N. Banerjea¹⁹ who first brought forward an interpretation of multiheaded Viṣṇu images from Kashmir as visual expressions of Pāñcarātra theology. These images, consisting of a Viṣṇu icon, with the Nṛsimha and Varāha faces disposed on the proper right and left of the central head respectively, as in certain of the Gupta-period Mathura sculptures, plus a demon-like face, at the back, were shown to be related directly to certain śilpaśāstric passages in the *Viṣṇudharmottara* which describe, or prescribe, the four-faced images in Pāñcarātra terms. It must be stressed here that at no point does this text speak of a three-headed form of Viṣṇu.

In the following year, 1941, which saw the publication of his masterwork, Banerjea by implication subjected the Mathura sculptures to the same interpretation: 'Eight-armed images of this type are found in the Mārttaṇḍa temple, Kashmir, and a few four-armed ones were also recovered from Mathura and Banares.'²⁰ As there are no remains of Viṣṇu sculptures having

the two animal side-heads at Mathura in a style later than the Gupta, it is the images I am discussing here that Banerjea must have referred to. Subsequent writers have persistently and uncritically referred to the Mathura sculptures as Vaikuṅṭha, the name by which, as Banerjea pointed out in 1940, the *Viṣṇudharmottara* calls the four-faced type of Viṣṇu.

Pāñcarātra cosmogonic theory, as discussed in Chapter 1 with regard to Sculpture 3 and 4, is expressed in terms of a fairly complicated system of feminine *kośas* and four masculine *vyūhas*, the latter being personified by Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva and his three kinsmen. In the *Viṣṇudharmottara* each of these personifications is said to be represented, in the four-faced Viṣṇu icon-type, by one of the four countenances of this Vaikuṅṭha icon. (The text is cast in the form of a conversation between the enquiring *kṣatriya*, Vajra, and the expositor *brāhmaṇa*, Mārkaṇḍeya.)

mukhās ca kāryās catvāro bāhavo dviguṇāa tathā/

saumyaṃ tu vadaṇaṃ pūrvam nārasimhaṃ tu dakṣiṇam//

kāpilaṃ paścimaṃ vaktraṃ tathā vārāham uttaram/

(3.44.11ab-12ab)

And four faces should be made, and arms twice as many.

The eastern (front) face [should be] gentle, the southern (right) that of Narasiṃha;

the western(rear) face, that of Kapila, and the northern (left),that of Varāha.

Continuing to the next chapter which contains Vaiṣṇava material, on reads:

balam²¹ jñānaṃ tathaiśvaryaṃ śaktiś ca yadunandana/

vijñeyaṃ devadevasya tasya vaktracatuṣṭayam//

vāsudevaś ca bhagavāṃs tathā saṅkarṣaṇaḥ prabhuḥ/

pradyumnaś cāniruddaś ca balādyāḥ parikīryitāḥ// (3.47.9-10)

Strength, knowledge, sovereignty and female-power, O Pride of the Yadus (i.e. Vajra)
- [so] is the tetrad of faces of that god of gods to be understood;

and Lord Vāsudeva, Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa,

and Pradyumna and Anirudha are respectively known as strength etc.

Reinforcing this apportionment of positions, names and qualities to the four-faced image, one
reads in a later chapter.

etate te rūpanirmāṇaṃ caturmūrter mayeritam//

ekamūrtidharaṃ kāryo vaikuṇṭhety abhiśabditaḥ/

caturmukhaḥ sa kartavyaḥ prāguktavadanaḥ prabhuḥ//

caturmūrtiḥ sa bhavati kṛte mukhacatuṣṭaye/

pūrvam saumyavadanaṃ kāryam yat tu mukhyatamaṃ viduḥ//

kartavyaṃ siṃhavaḥkrābhāṃ jñānavaktraṃ tu dakṣiṇam/

paścimaṃ vadaṇaṃ raudraṃ yat tad aiśvaryaṃ ucyate//

(3.85.42cd-45)

This is the way to make the image of the four-bodied [god] declared by me to you:

he is to be made with one body [and] is addressed as 'Vaikuṅṭha';

The Lord with the aforesaid face is to be made four-faced-he becomes four-bodied when the tetrad of faces is made.

The eastern (front) is to be made a gentle face, which is known as the main one;

the southern (right) face of knowledge should be made in the likeness of a lion:

the western (rear) ferocious face is said to be that of sovereignty.

(Mention is not made in this passage of the boar's head on the north. or left, side.)

Taking these three extracts together, one is presented with a most incongruous set of equivalences which are best summarised thus (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1

| <i>Southern face</i> | <i>Western face</i> | <i>Northern face</i> |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Narasimha 3.44 | Kapila 3.44 | Varāha 3.44 |
| Saṅkarṣaṇa | Pradyumna | Aniruddha 3.47 |
| knowledge 3.47 | sovereignty 3.47 | female-power |
| lion 3.85 | ferocious | |
| | sovereignty 3.85 | |

| | | |
|-----------|--------------|------|
| knowledge | Eastern face | |
| | gentle | 3.44 |
| | Vāsudeva | 3.47 |
| | strength | |
| | gentle | 3.85 |
| | main | |

Characterizing the face of the principal Viṣṇu figure as that of Vāsudeva, which is gentle, the main one and representative of strength, is understandable; but identification of the Nṛsiṃha side-face with the already iconographically defined Saṅkarṣaṇa (renowned for his drunkenness) representing knowledge, and of the Varāha side-head with Aniruddha and female-power (śakti) is difficult to grasp. (I leave unmentioned, for the moment, the rear face, of which, as I have remarked, there is no sign in the 'multi-headed' Viṣṇu images of the Gupta period.) Banerjea himself was thoroughly confused by this bizarre superimposition of identities and attribution of qualities to the avatāras.

It is curious that Saṅkarṣaṇa in whom *jñāna* is particularly manifest ...should have a lion-face, and Pradyumna in whom *aiśvarya* is the prominent *guṇa*, a boar-face. Aniruddha's association with [the] frightful demoniacal face on the back of Viṣṇu Caturmūrti...²²

The scholar's perplexity over the transmogrified physiognomy of Vāsudeva's kinsmen IS only compounded by the fact that he had misread his text, incorrectly correlating Pradyumna, instead of Aniruddha, with the Varāha and, in the subsequent sentence, Aniruddha, instead of Pradyumna, with the rear face. This mistake, trivial though it may be, appears to have, passed unchallenged by other scholars.

Of far greater importance is the erroneous identification of the three-faced Viṣṇu images under examination here with the Vaikuṅṭha described in the *Viṣṇudharmottara*. This identification has been accepted by most scholars since 1940, when Banerjea published his

Lahore Congress paper, and has never to my knowledge been directly challenged. I accept the Vaikuṅṭha identification with regard to later derivative images made in Kashmir-although this has been challenged by one eminent scholar²³ but not with regard to the original Gupta images of Mathura, for the following reasons.

First, the text upon the basis of which the Vaikuṅṭha identification is made is consistent to the point of dogmatism in assigning the Narasiṃha face to the proper right and the Varāha face to the proper left (or south and north respectively) of the main face of the Viṣṇu image. If there were any inconsistency in the sculpture, the sequence of identities and qualities attributed to the icon would be disturbed and the carefully devised symbolical scheme would be meaningless. For Pāñcarātra theology expresses the stages of the cosmogony in precise evolutionary phases using the personified *vyūhas* as symbols of the development of the multiplicity of existence in its initial fourfold diversification. Yet at Mathura there are at least two Gupta examples (e.g. Plates 43 and 45) of the position of the side-heads being reversed, an iconographical blunder which would never have been allowed to stand as an expression of Pāñcarātra theology if the dictates of the *Viṣṇudharmottara* were being followed in order to create a Vaikuṅṭha icon. Only in the post-Gupta period, and not at Mathura, did the position of the heads conform without exception to textual prescription.

Secondly, there is a fundamental objection to equating the *vyūhas* of Pāñcarātra theory with the animal side-faces of the images: the four *vyūhas*, personified, by Vāsudeva and his kinsmen, are representations of cosmogonic phases belonging to the realm of theology, while the Narasiṃha and Varāha *avatāras* are post-creation figures belonging to the realm of mythology. To dictate, as the text undeniably does, that this equation be accepted, requires considerable sophistication of thought and imaginative powers. The relative positions of the *avatāra* side-heads were not iconographically fixed in the Gupta period, which is consistent with the fact, already mentioned, that the icon-Type was Gupta innovation. I suggest that a substantial period of time would be required for the images to become established and of fixed

iconography before such definitive iconological interpretations as those of the *Viṣṇudharmottara* could be imposed upon them with any confidence. I have moreover already shown that the *vyūhas* cosmogonic theory was translatable into visual form in the preceding Kuṣāṇa period (sculpture 3, Plate 10), using, more appropriately, anthropomorphic figures of the deities representing the *caturvyūhas* in accordance with cosmogonical concepts of the Pāñcarātra type. That in the Gupta period this tradition should have been ignored in the same sculptural school of Mathura and the animal-headed *avatāras* associated with the Viṣṇu image in order to represent the *vyūhas*, seems a most unlikely proposition.

Thirdly, if, for the sake of argument, one accepts this unreasonable proposition, one has to accept the fact that the Gupta iconologists were so sophisticated in their thinking that they were able to grasp the *vyūha* theory, translate it into visual terms using-for some unknown reason-*avatāra* imagery, and only by implication create, all at once and without precedent, a four-headed icon to symbolize the *vyūha-tetrad*, depicting only three of the aspects of an essentially quadruple concept. This, surely, is to presuppose too much. At least at the beginning of such an enterprise some explicitly four-sided or four-faced sculpture would have been invented,²⁴ perhaps only later, as in the case of Brahmā, to be abbreviated to a three-faced relief when the fourth aspect could be taken for granted. The archaeological evidence shows that historically precisely the reverse was the case: four-faced Viṣṇu icons and four-sided Vaiṣṇava stelae occur in the post-Gupta period.²⁵ In other words, the fourth aspect was a later (eighth-century Kashmiri) addition to a three-faced Gupta prototype invented at Mathura.

These images are in my view simply expressions of the *avatāra* doctrine, coalescing Viṣṇu and two of his most popular mythological incarnations, the Nṛsimha and the Varāha, which were worshipped individually, as is known from separate cult icons representing them²⁶ Quite conceivably it was in an attempt to assert the predominance of Viṣṇu as the source of these figures, which were in origin the foci of strong, independent cults, that the 'three-headed' icon was introduced as a symbol of syncretism. It is even possible that the priesthood of the Viṣṇu-

Kṛṣṇa cult crated this type of icon in the face of threats to the supremacy of Viṣṇu consisting of growing support for the Nṛsiṃha and Varāha cults.

This appears to be a far more reasonable interpretation of these images than the cumbersome and untenable Pāñcarātra theory. This is not, after all, a complicated icon. It seems to have been hastily conceived and was certainly, in Mathura, a short-lived image-type. The *avatāra* side-beads could be changed from one side to the other of the central Viṣṇu face, demonstrating an absence of a fixed iconography and thus also of a firm theological basis. The name of Viṣṇu in this form is not recorded; it might possibly have been Vaikuṅṭha, but not in the strict Pāñcarātra sense. What is iconographically significant about this innovation is that it was to be developed, in the post-Gupta period, after serving its transient sectarian purpose in Mathura, into the powerful four-faced Vaikuṅṭha icon of the Pāñcarātra sect in Kashmir; and that it formed the sculptural basis for the most complex of all brahmanical images, namely that of Viśvarūpa, the Gupta origins of which I shall examine next.

Vaiṣṇava sculpture of the Viśvarūpa type

The mythology concerning a figure known as Viśvarūpa is as old as the *Ṛgveda* and reached its climax in the *Bhagavadgītā*, in which this is one of the names of the vision of Kṛṣṇa as the omniform and omnipotent god which is beheld, with horror, by the demoralised Arjuna between the two armies on the battle-field of Kurukṣetra. The name is used in certain of the *Purāṇas* as an epithet of Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu, but among the Sanskrit texts which contain mythologies of the gods, the only full description of this revelatory manifestation of the Vaiṣṇava godhead is that given in the *Gītā*²⁷. As far as is known, all 'prescriptions' of the śilpaśāstric type-amounting in most cases to inconsistent and inaccurate descriptions with the verbs inflected in the optative-are later in date than the earliest attempts to represent Viṣṇu as Viśvarūpa in sculpture.²⁸ The design of such an ambitious type of icon will be shown to be the combination of several iconographical techniques already devised by sculptors of other multiplex images, particularly in the Mathura region during the Kuṣāṇa period. But like the Vaikuṅṭha icon-type, the Viśvarūpa, a

image as a sculptured object of worship was, to judge by the archaeological evidence, an invention of the Gupta period. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to an examination of two such Viśvarūpa image types.

A unique and somewhat enigmatic figure is carved in relief at the centre of a long lintel from Gaḍhwā in the Allahabad region of Uttar Pradesh²⁹ (Plate 48). Certain individual features of this broad composition were to be perpetuated in other, more complex multiple Vaiṣṇava images but the icon here, as depicted within the framework of the whole frieze, is the only one of its kind extant.

It is interesting to note the artistic context in which this icon appears.³⁰ The lintel depicts a procession, or two processions, converging upon a central shrine, complete with adjoining *dharmasālā* or hostel, in which the image is seen being worshipped. In other words, the image forms an integral part--as well as the compositional focus--of a narrative frieze, which apparently represents an actual pilgrimage made to a temple dedicated to a multiplex form of Viṣṇu, who is identifiable by the long *vanamālā* and the remains of flanking *āyudhapuruṣas*. (As far as is known, no such real temple survives in the geo-graphical area covered by this work; field research revealed that such cults are virtually extinct.) The only two figures which appear to be independent of the action in this long relief---although they are undoubtedly integral to the frieze in symbolic terms---are those of the sun and moon gods, the latter appearing seated with his *śakti*, at the extremities. Their association with the Viśvarūpa figure, both in the *Gītā* and in the sculpture, will become apparent as my examination of this type of image progresses. It should also be remarked that, although the two processions converging on the central figure are clearly peaceful--there is an obvious air of festivity about them--the enshrined image is depicted standing between two groups. They proceed from different sources and in opposed directions, one group from the sun, the other from the moon. Viśvarūpa standing between two opposed factions is a persistent theme of both the mythology and the iconography. Since, however, this theme does not become apparent in sculpture until the post--Gupta phases in the development

of the Viśvarūpa icon, discussion of this important feature will be deferred to Chapters 3 and 4.

The image, standing within its own square shrine, is nearly as tall as the height of the lintel, overlapping the border at the top and probably at the feet where it is damaged, so that it stands about 25 centimetres high. It is the smallest complete multiplex Viṣṇu sculpture known, and is the only one which figures in a narrative context. A man, presumably the leader of the proper left procession associated with the moon god, kneels just within the shrine facing the image, his hands joined in the *namaskāra-mudrā*, in a clear worshipping posture. Behind him, in the *antarāla* or antechamber of the temple, stands a servant who holds the pole of a parasol aslant through the shrine door so that the head of the parasol is directly above the worshipper who is thus to be regarded as a member of royalty. Such aristocratic homage implicitly magnifies the status of the god and makes explicit its ritualistic association with the ruling *kṣatriya* class; to this latter point I shall return in Chapter 4.

An iconographic analysis of this image is complicated by two factors: firstly the inevitable weathering of the stone and consequent blurring of detail; and secondly, the apparent lack of formal structuring of the very feature which characterizes Viśvarūpa icons, namely the multiplicity of figures or heads around the upper part of the image. It is precisely this latter feature, the unorganized arrangement of the multiple aspects of the god, which makes it unique among the remaining images of its type.

The icon has been described in some detail by Joshi.³¹ and by Harle.³² A *vanamālā* curves over the massive shoulders, passes between the front arms and the body at waist level, and forms a loop above the ankles. There appear to have been six arms. Of the front pair of hands, the proper left is lowered to hip level and probably held the conch, while the right seems to have been raised in the *abhayamudrā*. The middle pair of hands each rest upon the head of a flanking figure; these presumably represented the *āyudhapureṣas* Gadādevī on the right and

Cakrapuruṣa on the left, weapon-personifications respectively of the mace and disc of Viṣṇu (A further pair of diminutive figures flank the god, closer to him than the latter two, probably representing the consorts of Viṣṇu, Puṣṭi and Srī-Lakṣmī.) These three hand-held objects and the abhnyamudrā would conform to the normal iconographical pattern of a standard Viṣṇu image. The super-added pair of hands, however, which usually wield the sword and shield, are raised to shoulder level with no recognizable objects held in them. It may be suggested, in the absence of any similar image as an object of comparison, that these hands were raised figuratively to 'support', and demonstratively to connect, the multiple aspects around the upper half of the Viṣṇu figure to the god: as I have mentioned, there appears to be no organized pattern in the arrangement of these aspects to make such a connection visually implicit, as will be shown to be the case in other Gupta-period versions. Alternatively, and in keeping with the symbolism of the frieze as a whole, these hands may have held up the solar and lunar discs as did the apical Kālarudra in Sculptures 5 and 1 I discussed in Chapter I (Plates 17 and 30)-an instance of Vaiṣṇava borrowing of Śaiva symbols.

The head of the Viṣṇu figure is completely effaced. Harle³³ finds it unaccountable that the face 'seems to be that of a horse, or possibly a lion.' In view of its completely damaged condition, this supposition can only be based upon the elongated contours of the smashed facial area. There can be no certainty in this matter, but it must be equally possible that the face was originally carved in the usual human form, surmounted by the typically tall crown (*kirīṭta*) of Viṣṇu. However, on the assumption that the face was equine, then this is not the Viśvarūpa of the Gītā but the Hayagrīva or Hayaśiras form of Viṣṇu described else-where in the epic. Relying upon Hopkins' study of epic mythology,³⁴ I find reference to the god identified with the solar horse in the *Mahābhārata*, which could be related to the Gaḍhwā image. Hopkins states:

As sun too he [Viṣṇu] is Aśvaśirā Hariḥ ... for which reason, as the sun-horse rising from the sea, he identifies himself with Uccaiḥśravas, the loud-noised sea (6, 34, 27, as it is said: 'Here (out of the sea) rises the sun with the head of a horse, filling the world made beautiful (by him), and causing it to be filled with voices' (5, 99, 5)... So the Mare's head is at once a demoniac and divine form of fire, identified as such with the sun...

It may be observed in this connection that, whether or not the conjoined 'natural' head of the Viṣṇu figure in the relief is equine, the face of a horse certainly appears to rise above it, as Harle³⁵ has noted. It may even be the bust of a horse-headed figure which is represented above the remains of the *kirīṭa*: such equine images were carved above the crown of multiplex Viṣṇu icons having a human central face, in the late- and post-Gupta periods (Chapters 3, 5 and 6). Surrounding this apical figure and the conglomeration of disembodied heads which envelops the upper half of the main figure in a more or less circular formation, is a mass of flame. Such an explosion of fire, in association with the horse's head at the top of the composition and the many heads, could represent the dawn-horse filling the world with voices, in accordance with the epic passages cited by Hopkins. There is, however, no proof in any of this imagery that the main figure originally had the head of a horse, especially as the horse-head appears separately at the apex of the composition.

The description of the Viśvarūpa of Viṣṇu seen by Arjuna towering above the battlefield as given in the eleventh canto of the *Gītā* makes no mention of this form having an equine countenance. Here the emphasis is upon the multiplicity of fares and the dazzling, fiery radiance of the vision. Thus one reads the following, in Zaehner's translation.³⁶

'[A form] with many a mouth and eye and countless marvellous aspects ...'(I 11.10.ab). '[Behold this] God whose every [mark] spells wonder, the Infinite, facing every way!' (11. 11 .cd). 'If in [bright] heaven together should rise the shining brilliance of a thousand suns, then would that perhaps resemble the brilliance of that [God] so great of Self,' (1 I. 12). '... a mass of glory shining on all sides-so do I see You,-yet how hard are You to see,-for on every side

there is a brilliant light of fire and sun. Oh, who should comprehend it?' (11.17bcb). '... So do I see You,-your mouth a flaming fire, burning up this whole universe with your blazing glory.' (11. 19,cd). 'Ablaze with many-coloured [flames] You touch the sky, your mouths wide open, [gaping], your eyes distended, blazing: so do I see You and my inmost self is shaken: I cannot bear it, I find no peace, O Vishnu!' (11 .24). 'On every side You lick, lick up,-devouring,-words, universes, everything, with burning mouths. Vishnu your dreadful scorching rays of light fill the whole universe with flames-of-glory, scorching [[everywhere]. (11.30).

Here, surely, is the scriptural source of the central panel of the Gaḍhwā relief; and the *kṣatriya* figure kneeling to pay homage to the image is following the example of Arjuna in worshipping this ferocious cosmic vision of Viṣṇu: '[Arjuna], wearer of the crown, hands joined in veneration, trembling-, bowed down to Krishna and spake again with stammering voice, as terrified he did obeisance' (11.35bcd).

The main connection between the Hayaśiras form of Viṣṇu and the Viśvarūpa vision is the fire associated with both. This relief could, on this basis, represent either: but as there is little or no other sculptural evidence of a Hayaśiras or Hayagrīva aspect of Viṣṇu being enveloped in flames-or, indeed, in a mass of heads-whereas Viśvarūpa sculptures are invariably surrounded by multiple heads and smaller figures, the latter interpretation of this image seems to be the more probably correct. It is not impossible, of course, that the Gaḍhwā figure represents a combination of the two, the horse-headed form of Viṣṇu being here uniquely employed as the central figure of the Viśvarūpa, although I find no scriptural basis for such a form.

My own interpretation of the lintel as a whole is that it represents the *trisandhya*, the three divisions of the day, at the junctions of which ritual is performed to 'join' the stages of time

(symbolically including the *trikāla*-past, present and future) together: sunrise, noon, and nightfall. Thus the sun as Sūrya rises on the left of the frieze (presumably the lintel was to be seen from the north) and moonrise occurs at the opposite end as Candra, the course of the day being upheld at the centre by noon, when the sun is in the zenith, at which point Viṣṇu as the blazing *axis mundi* is manifest. But my other remarks concerning the elements in this composition relevant to later images of the Viśvarūpa type remain, in my view, valid.

Mathura, 400 kilometres upriver from Gadhwa, is the most prolific Gupta centre of sculptural innovation. It is here that two pieces of archaeological evidence are found, both fragmentary, of the prototypical north Indian Viśvarūpa image (Plates 49 and 55).

The larger of these fragments is from Bhankari near Mathura.³⁷ It consists of a torso of a typical Viṣṇu image of classical Gupta style (compare Plates 49 and 42) carved from red sandstone. The arms are broken but examination of the stumps indicates that they were originally four; over them hangs the remains of what must have been a long *vanamālā*. At the junction of the right shoulder and the neck appears the face of a lion; in the corresponding position on the left, the profile head of a boar lunges upward. There is no anatomical connection between these animal heads and the body of Viṣṇu: indeed, the space between the shoulders of the god and the base of the side-heads is occupied by the *vanamālā* where it passes behind his neck (Plate 51). Thus far, I have described an icon of the so-called 'Vaikuṅṭha' type, from which this far more complicated image was clearly developed. The 'exploded' photograph of this image (Plate 50) makes it evident that the central figure is that of the contemporary Viṣṇu icon-type with the lion and boar side-heads, illustrated in Plates 40,42, and 43.

The nimbus (*śiraścakra prambhāmaṇḍala*) of this fragmentary sculpture from Bhankari, is however, greatly enlarged. This expansion of the halo was necessary to provide a surface upon which to represent yet more figures-in addition to the two side-heads-in close association with Viṣṇu.

On the proper right side of Viṣṇu, upon the very narrow remaining portion of this half of the nimbus, only a single figure is to be seen. It appears immediately above the Nṛsiṃha face and could only have been represented from the chest upward; the objects held in the hands can no longer be distinguished. The crown, perhaps the most important feature of this figure from the point of view of the later development of north Indian Viṣṇu iconography is, however, preserved. It is a three-panelled head-dress not unlike that worn by Viṣṇu himself, although less richly adorned. In the proper left quadrant of the nimbus, none of the small figures is crowned. As will become apparent in subsequent chapters, this single remaining crowned figure in the right-hand half of the prabhāmaṇḍala of this sculpture is prototypical of a division between crowned and uncrowned figures flanking Viṣṇu as Viśvarūpa in later icons, which I take to be indicative of a *kṣatriya/brāhmaṇa* or *āśura/daiva* division in the developed iconography of these images. As in the *Gītā*, where the vision of Viśvarūpa arises between two related but opposed armies, the notion of conflict between-or the reconciliation of-two mutually antagonistic moieties is frequently to be found in sculptures of this paramount Vaiṣṇava deity. I have already remarked, in this connection, upon the opposition between sun and moon and the two converging processions between which a Viśvarūpa form stands enshrined, in the Gaḍhwā frieze.

The figure and disembodied heads on the left side of the damaged nimbus may be divided into three groups according to their positioning. The clearest distinction made by the designers of this image is that between the figures in relief on the extensive surface area of the *maṇḍala* (Plate 54) and those around the periphery (Plates 52,53).

Of the latter there are four, three of which are merely heads, while the second from the top is a bust with both arms preserved, all of which face outward, away from the main Viṣṇu figure and the populated surface of the nimbus. Seen head-on, they appear as a single chain, each emanating from behind the one below it. I shall refer to them, in ascending order, by the numbers P.1, P.2, P.3 and P.4.

Both the first two heads are severely eroded, but certain details can be distinguished. P.1, seemingly emerging from the left upper arm of Viṣṇu where it is overlapped by the *vanamālā*, is very similar in appearance to the central head of Kuṣāṅga sculpture 8 in Chapter 1 (Plate 25), with a short necklace, pendant ear-ornaments and the hair combed back to form a topknot. Certainly it bears a closer resemblance to the central head of that Kuṣāṅga image than to the faces of the Gupta Brahmā, illustrated in Plate 35, at Deogarh, The neck supporting head P.2 emerges from behind the topknot of P. 1. This second face has elongated ears and a mass of hair, combed broadly across the whole top of the head, to hang in a heavy loop upon the left side; this loop, although seriously eroded, can be seen extending to the very edge of the periphery-the coiffure was thus very similar to that of the well-preserved head at the top of the series, P.4 (Plate 53, top).

Third from the base of this ascending series, P.3 (Plate 52), rises from behind the preceding head and is visible from the waist upward. The hair is broadly combed back to form a wide, flat pile atop the head in a manner very like the treatment of the hair of the three faces of Brahmā at Deogarh. The long, pendant ear-lobes reach down to the shoulders and the figure wears a short, solid necklace. Although the surface upon which the rib cage would have been represented has broken off, the body appears to be somewhat emaciated; certainly the face-like that of P. 1-is smaller and narrower than that of P.2 and P.4, which are round and full. The right hand is held against the stomach, where it probably held an object, perhaps a pot, which is now lost. The left hand holds the pole of an object which forks at the top and resembles rather the *tridaṇḍa* of an ascetic than a *trisūla*, aslope the left shoulder. The Brahmā like hairstyle, the relative slighthness of body and especially the *tridaṇḍa* are all features which point to this figure representing an ascetic, very probably an ambulant holy man who originally may have been intended to portray a particular ṛṣi or sage. As a type, he represents most clearly the difference in character between this left-hand side of the *maṇḍala* and the remaining portion of the right-hand side which, as I have already remarked, is characterized by a crowned figure representative of the aristocracy.

At the top of this peripheral series around what must originally have been a very extensive *śiraścakra*, P.4 is, like the lower two elements in the chain, merely a head emanating from behind the head of the figure below it (Plate 53). This head has the horizontally combed hairstyle of the type worn by P.2, large circular ear-ornaments and most significantly, a vertical mark upon the centre of the forehead which can only be the third eye associated with Śiva. The face is round and fleshy, with wide bulging natural eyes beneath arched brows, and the mouth seems to be slightly open. This is the best preserved of the four peripheral heads and its features, although not unprepossessing, are those of *araudra* or ferocious countenance. This characteristic of the periphery in such icons was to become more emphatically represented, as will be seen in the other fragment at Mathura.

The periphery of the *prabhāmaṇḍala* regarded as a curved vertical series of figures, each emanating from that which precedes it as they ascend. This construct is inherited from Kuṣāṇa sculpture, a variation of Source no. 2.A. The ascetic figure bearing attributes (P.3) emanating vertically from the head of a lower figure similarly has Kuṣāṇa antecedents (Source no. 3B). The iconographers of the Gupta Viśvarūpa type of image clearly adapted such techniques to their own purposes, namely the provision of an extensive *maṇḍala* containing many small figures with a ritually protective boundary or *raṅṅāvali* of outward-facing *ṛṣi* like figure-endowed, no doubt, with the magical powers of such ascetics-in an unbroken defensive chain. The concern here that there should be no hiatus in the series apparently derives from the need for continuous, all-round protection of the contents of the *maṇḍala*; whereas in such earlier constructs as the Nānd *Viśākhayūpa*, the basis of continuous emanation was theological, being derived from cosmogonic concepts akin to those of the Pāñcarātra, in which the evolutionary process must not be interrupted lest the creation fail. The *raṅṅāvali* of this Viśvarūpa sculpture shows no evidence of being an evolutionary series; the earliest evidence of images of the Viśvarūpa type incorporating such a vertically evolving chain of figures occurs in a sculpture in western India, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The second set of figures which may be regarded as a distinct group on the enlarged nimbus consists of two rows of miniature figures angled slightly upward from the horizontal (see Plates 49 and 52, 53, left), the upper series being a damaged row of five male figures, overlapped up to waist level by the heads of the lower series consisting of six male figures. The heads of all but that on the extreme outer edge of the *maṇḍala* in the upper row are lost, and no evidence remains of their hairstyles. The first four figures of the lower row commencing from the crown of Viṣṇu, however, all have slightly differing hairstyles of the type associated with *ṛṣi* or holy men, the hair being braided or broadly combed back, sideways or to left and right of a central parting which ends in an upward-combed topknot. The damaged upper figures have their hands disposed in the same manner as the first four in the lower series and may thus be assumed to have been portrayed with similar coiffures. These nine little *ṛṣi* all raise their right hands in the *abhayamudrā* and hold a waterpot in the lowered left; this is most clearly to be seen in Plate 53, upper left, where the hands of the fourth figure in the upper row are quite distinctly discernible. The fifth figure in the lower row is carved to a scale somewhat larger than his companions, appearing only as a head, with the hair arranged horizontally, and shoulders; like some of the smaller *ṛṣi*, he wears a short necklace. The figure next to him, sixth in the lower row and last of the whole group of eleven (Plates 52,53), has his hair combed up into a broad topknot, elongated ears and a necklace; in his right hand he carries a long sacrificial ladle (*śruc*) aslope his right shoulder. The number of figures in this group, eleven, suggests that they may represent the *ekādaśa-Rudrāḥ*; but there were almost certainly more, similar figures higher up, on the now lost upper section of this side of the *maṇḍala*. The Gītā mentions both the *ṛṣi* and the Rudras, among other groups, as incorporated in the vision of Viśvarūpa.

paśyāmi devāṃs tava deva dehe

.....

ṛṣīmś ca sarvān.....(11.15a and d)

svastīty uktvā maharṣisidhasaṅghāḥ

stuvanti tvām.....(11.21cd)

rudrādityā vasavo ye ca sādhyā

.....

vīkṣante tvām.....(11.22a and d)

'O God, the gods in your body I behold and all the [ancient] seers ...:

'... great seers and men perfected in serried ranks cry out 'All hail', and praise You...!'

'Rudras, Ādityas, Vasus, Sādhyas...gaze upon You...'³⁸

I cannot identify the members of this group in the sculpture in iconographical terms, but these passages provide a scriptural authority for their massed, appearance in an image of Viśvarūpa.

The last group within the *maṅḍala* consists of only three figures: the larger (Plate 54- the photographs was taken so as to make the figure appear standing vertically in order to facilitate its study) is angled at about forty-five degrees from the horizontal, partly beneath and parallel to the jaw of the Varāha-head of Viṣṇu, while directly under its jaw appear two disembodied heads, side by side, tilted at the same angle (Plate 54). The larger, single figure has its left arm lowered, but the hand is lost; the right hand is raised in the *abhayamudrā*. He wears a necklace and has elongated ear lobes; the hair is combed back into a rather flat topknot. Behind the head is a large *prabhāmaṅḍala* upon the surface of which appear tongues of fire or, less probably, in view of their somewhat irregular shapes and number (at least ten can be counted and a large portion of the halo is concealed by the *rakṣāvali* figures), lotus petals. It might be suggested that this represents the earliest appearance of the Buddha as an avatāra of Viṣṇu; but this seems unlikely in view of the necklace-it is not the hem of a robe which encircles the throat-and the

fiery nimbus. More probably, this deity is Agni, the personification of the sacrificial fire, whose iconography does not appear to have been fixed in Gupta sculpture; the circle of fire surrounding his head is almost directly below the sixth figure in the lower row of the previously described group of eleven, who holds the sacrificial ladle with which oblations are offered into the fire in Vedic ritual. The proximity of fire and ladle is plain in Plate 50. The association of the Viśvarūpa manifestation of Viṣṇu with fire is abundantly clear in the Gaḍhwā relief and in the relevant *Gītā* passages; the same text also identifies the Viśvarūpa with, among other gods, Agni (11.39). As for the two heads below this figure, they are so badly eroded that, apart from observing that they each have a similar coiffure with the flattened topknot and that they are evidently intended to be seen as a pair in view of their juxtaposition, it would be a worthless exercise to speculate upon their identities or possible dual identity.

Lines drawn transversely through these two heads and the large Agni figure, in conjunction with those drawn through the two rows of ṛṣi-like figures, indicate that a roughly radial pattern, approximately centred on the crown of Viṣṇu, probably formed the plan on which the iconographers organized the arrangement of these multiple figures. But on the evidence of only a broken, quadrant of the nimbus, it is not possible to reconstruct the whole pattern.

The other piece of evidence of the development of Viśvarūpa iron-types in the same vicinity is a red sandstone fragment³⁹ from the Kātra-Keśavadeva site at Mathura, popularly believed to be the very birthplace of Kṛṣṇa, the famous pilgrim centre called the Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Janmāsthāna. It appears to be part of the *raṅṣāvāli* and populated *maṅḍala* surface from the proper right edge of a Viśvarūpa sculpture. The style is clearly Gupta, but considerably later than the previously discussed large fragment, as advances have been made both in iconographical definition and in the confidence and precision with which the figures have been sculpted. It is an accomplished piece of work, deeply cut into the stone, and it is a pity that so much of what originally must have been a very fine example of late-Gupta sculpture should have been lost. It is illustrated in Plates 55 and 56.

The upper of the two peripheral heads (Plate 55) has bulging eyes, a large fleshy nose, gaping mouth and a tightly curled short beard with wide, upward curving moustaches similar in appearance to the face on the north side of the Liṅga-pentad at Mathura (Chapter I, Plate 21). A short bead necklace hangs beneath the *trirekha* marks upon the throat and the ears are elongated by heavy circular ornaments. The hair is arranged in long coiled *jaṭās* somewhat resembling sausage curls on either side of a central parting and is bound about at the top by a band with a large circular ornament. In the middle of the forehead, the vertical third eye is most pronounced. It has no iris or pupil. The lower head (Plate 56), from which the upper emanates, is similar in appearance with the exception of the eyes, which have a slight but definite upward slant and the coiffure, which appears to consist of coiled *jaṭās* arranged in a circular topknot above shorter pendant ringlets in which is worn a grinning skull or severed head. There can be no doubt that these two peripheral heads are taken from the Śaiva iconography of the time and were probably intended to represent individual aspects of Śiva with specific names and identities. There is a slight angle between the centrelines of the two faces, a vertical disalignment which clearly indicates that the outer edge of the fragment was curved.

The remainder of the fragment, to the proper left of the Śaiva faces and inside the curve which they form, consists of six damaged *ṛṣi*-like figures. They are arranged in two vertical, curved rows, each figure rising from behind the one beneath it. There are four remaining in the row adjacent to the peripheral faces and two on their left. The hair-styles of five of these figures are more or less intact, and all five are variant arrangements of the, *jaṭās* characteristic of *ṛṣis*. All hold the empty right hand to the shoulder or chest in the abhaya or a teaching *mudrā*, and four of the figures have a *kanmaṇḍalu*, the ascetic's waterpot, in the left at waist level. As in the fragmentary sculpture from Bhankari, the peripheral heads are much larger than the figures within the preserved portion of the *maṇḍala*.

There can be little doubt that this is a fragment of a similar Viśvarūpa image, being a portion of the outer edge of the lower proper right side of the enlarged and populated nimbus. In this

case, the *ṛṣi* figures appear upon the side opposite that upon which they are preserved in the earlier Viśvarūpa fragment. The inference could be made, therefore, that Viśvarūpa images at Mathura in the Gupta period consisted of Viṣṇu, with the lion and boar side-heads, surrounded by a multitude of *ṛṣis* into the midst of which were inserted various figures such as Agni and *kṣatriya* heroes of Vaiṣṇava legend. But the two images of which only these two fragments remain need not have been identical; as in the case of the animal faces of the so-called 'Vaikuṅṭha' images, the iconography may never have been fixed at Mathura. Elsewhere, however, very precise plans were being made to integrate a large number of individual figures with the Viṣṇu image.

- 1 R. Thapar, *A History of India*, Volume One, Harmondsworth 1966, pp.136-66, esp.136 and 157-8.
- 2 J.C. Harle, *Gupta Sculpture, Indian Sculpture of the Fourth to the Sixth Centuries A.D.*, Oxford 1974, pp.7-8, gives a resume of the elements comprising the Gupta style.
- 3 So, for example, K. Desai, *Iconography of Viṣṇu (In Northern India, Up to the Mediaeval Period)*, New Delhi 1973, pp. 37-47.
- 4 Mathura Museum reserve, no. 34.2481.
- 5 J.N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta 1956, p. 516. Yet later still, in many post-Gupta styles, the beard is represented in North Indian images.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 512-14.

- 7 Now in the Karachi Museum.
- 8 P. K. Agrawala, *Skanda Kārttikeya-A Study in the Origin and Development of Iconography*, Banaras Hindu University 1967, pp. 40-1 and figs.7-10.
- 9 R. C. Agrawala, in 'Skanda from National Museum, New Delhi and U.P. Hills', EW 18, 1968, p. 319, notes and illustrates a possible exception (fig.1), a small bronze: 'His central main head is surrounded by five miniature heads shown on the circular halo.' Agrawala thinks it was probably made in the Chambā Hills and dates from the 6th-7th century A.D.
- 10 State Museum, Gwalior, no. 543, open gallery 7.
- 11 *ASI, AR* 1924-25, plate XLIII (d). R.C. Agrawala, 'Skanda from National Museum', p.321, notes that the Skanda panel on the Pawāya lintel had not (in 1968) been published. Part of the relief appears in J. Williams, *Gupta India, Empire and Province*, Princeton, 1982, Plate 52.
- 12 Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, plates 10,65 and 90 and notes, pp. 34, 46 and 49.
- 13 *Ibid.*, Plate 65.
- 14 W. D. O'Flaherty, *Hindu Myths, A Sourcebook Translated from the Sanskrit*, Harmondsworth 1975, p.110.
- 15 See, for example, Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, Plates 49,25 and 26.
- 16 P.H. Pott, *India Antiqua*, Leiden 1947, p.288.
- 17 Recorded by Burgess in J. Fergusson and J. Burgess, *The cave Temple of India*, 1880, p.357 and plate LV, drawing 2; see also D. Mitra, *Buddhist Monuments*, Calcutta 1971, p.166.

- 18 B. C. Bhattacharya, *Indian Images*, Part I, 1921, pp.8-9 and plate IV.
- 19 Then spelling his name Jitendar Nath Banerjee, 'Mediaeval Visnu Images from Kashmir and Some Visnudharmottara Passages', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress (Lahore)*, 1940, pp.61 ff.
- 20 Banerjea, *Hindu Iconography*, p.409.
- 21 In the text, (critically edited by P. Shah, *Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa, Third Khaṇḍa*, Gaekwad's Oriental Series No.CXXX, Baroda 1958), the reading as *bālaṃ*.
- 22 Banerjea, *Hindu Iconography*, p. 409.
- 23 P. Pal, 'A Brāmanical Triad from Kashmir and Some Related Icons', *AAA* XXVII, 1973-74, p. 36. denies that the four-faced Viṣṇu image is referred to as Vaikuṅṭha in the *Viṣṇudharmottara*; *tint* this is not so can he *seen at 3.85.43b - vaikuṅṭhety abhiśabditaḥ*. Pal holds that the name Vaikuṅṭha *occurs* only in the *Jayākhyasamhitā* among the 'early' texts (ibid.). But the most prolific perpetrator of the false reasoning with regard to the Gupta Viṣṇu images with *avatāraside-heads* at Mathura is R. C. Agrawala, for example in his *Nṛsiṃha-Varāha-Viṣṇu Images and Some Allied Problems*, *Lalit Kalā* 16,1974, pp.11 ff: Agrawala knows of a reference to Viṣṇu Vaikuṅṭha in the *Jayākhyasamhitā*, 'a fifth century text', and so infers that 'the popularity of this particular sect of the Pañcharātra cult was confined to Mathura and its vicinity during the Gupta period. On the other hand the centre of the cult appears to have shifted to Kashmir and Punjab Hills in the early emdiaeval period') p.13). The usually accepted date of the *Jayākhyā* has been seriously challenged by K.V. Soundararajan, 'Kaustubha Prāsāda- New Light on Jayākhyā Tantra' in *Journal of the Oriental Institute* XVII, 1 September 1961,p.79; Soundararajan would date the text to AD. 600-850, which would bring its description of four-faced Vaikuṅṭha (Agrawala, *Nṛsiṃha-Varāha- Viṣṇu Images*', note I) within the same religious ambit as that of the *Viṣṇudharmottara* To think, with Agrawala, that 'None of

the extant Gupta images of Vaikuṅṭha represent the Kapila or Raudra face since all of them are carved in relief,' is to stand history on its head; the Pāncarātra Vaikuṅṭha was not known in Gupta times at Mathura and so its western (rear) aspect was of course not represented, never having been conceived.

24 D. Srinivasan, 'Early Vaiṣṇava Imagery Caturvyūha and Variant Forms', *AAA* XXXII, 1979, p. 41, illustrates a four-sided sculpture from Bhīṭā dated to the 2nd century B.C., comprising two addorsed figures with a disembodied head on either side between them, above a lion and a very small (?) boar standing on a pillar (Lucknow Museum no. 56.394). This is termed a 'Vaishnava Caturvyuha' on the basis of the *Viṣṇudharmottara* equivalences that I have translated. Interesting though the sculpture is, these *vyūha/avtāra* equivalences cannot seriously be considered to have existed between 800 and one thousand years before the date of the *Viṣṇudharmottara* which first formulated them. Nor is there any archaeological evidence to link the sculpture iconographically to those of Gupta Mathura.

25 Many four-faced *Viṣṇu* images appear in Kashmir from the 8th-12th centuries, expressing the *vyūha* iconographical symbolism of *Viṣṇudharmottara*³; some four-sided Vaiṣṇava stelae dating from the 7th century, with *Viṣṇu* and three *avtāras* on the sides, are known from Mathura (a fine example is in the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin) and elsewhere (another is in the State Museum, Gwalior).

26 See Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, Plate 12, the colossal *Varāha* shrine at Udayagiri; plate 24, the life-size *Varāha* with the body of a man; plate 25, the (originally) life-size *Nṛsiṃha* at Eran; plate 112, the large cult-image of *Nṛsiṃha*, possibly from Mathura

27 The mythology is summarized by me in 'Transformational Aspects of Hindu Myth and Iconology: Viśvarūpa', *AARP* 4, December 1973, pp. 59-63 and p.73, Appendix 1.A.II.

28 I *bid.*, p.69, Appendix 1.A.II.

- 29 State Museum, Lucknow, nos. B223a-c. The entire lintel is published by Harle, Gupta sculpture, plates 71-78 and notes, p.47.
- 30 See Harle, Gupta Sculpture, plates 71 and 72: the icon is at the extreme left of plate 72.
- 31 N. P. Joshi, Catalogue of Brahmanical Sculpture, pp.87-8 and fig.8.
- 32 Harle Gupta Sculpture, pp.22-3 and 47.
- 33 Ibid., p.47.
- 34 E. W. Hopkins, Epic Mythology, Strassburg, Berlin1915, pp.203-204.
- 35 Harle, Gupta Sculpture, p.47.
- 36 R.C. Zaehner, *The Bhagvad-Gītā with a Commentary based on the Original Sources*, Oxford 1969,pp.305-10.
- 37 Mathura Museum no.42-3.2989.
- 38 Zaehner, Bhagvad-Gātā, pp. 306 and 308.
- 39 Mathura Museum no. 54.3837.

THE ŚAMALĀJĪ Viśvarūpa

A Major Contribution to the Development of Multiple Iconography in Western India

Another Viśvarūpa type of sculpture was invented in western India at a date which is still disputed but which must, to judge by the iconography, be very close to that of the Mathura fragments. There remain four pieces of sculptural evidence, all in the same style, of this type.¹ They are said by the institutions and individuals who own them to come from ŚamalāJī² and adjacent Devni Mori, in Gujarat. For reasons of space, I shall here deal only with the most nearly complete sculpture (Plate 57), which has recently been reconsecrated, with a new identity, in a modern shrine at ŚamalāJī.³

The main figure has three human heads, the *trirekha* on the single throat, eight arms, and is seated in a near-squatting position, with knees apart and feet turned outward, upon a simple low bench. This seated posture (Plate 58) is derived partly from kuṣāṇa royal portrait statuary⁴ and partly from images of Viṣṇu riding Garuḍa of the same period.⁵ Gupta sculpture at Mathura also copied this position: there are at least two squatting Viṣṇu images in the Mathura Museum, one single-headed⁶ and another which has one remaining side-head on the left representing the Varāha. As I have shown above (pp. 123-24), the latter is the only Gupta image of Viṣṇu with an animal side-head growing from the god upon its own neck. Both these examples of the posture in Gupta art are rendered in relief upon nearly square plaques, complete images in themselves; they are not fragments of larger, multiform compositions of the ŚamalāJī type. Whether the Mathura and ŚamalāJī sculptors each derived this posture independently from kuṣāṇa iconography, or the latter copied it from the former, remains an open question; but the imitation at ŚamalāJī of Gupta iconography and anatomical form in the image under discussion in this chapter suggests that Mathura was the source. Referring to the plinth figure holding a blossom to his chest (Vijaya?), in this sculpture (Plate 59), U. P. Shah remarks: 'in the ŚamalāJī Mahā-

Vishṇu, a number of smaller figures show beautiful modelling known to Gupta art, especially the standing male figure at the left end of the sculpture is a beautiful specimen of the Gupta idea of male form' ⁷

The god is naked but for a lower garment, the central folds of which fall to a point between his feet. A very narrow fold of the top of this garment is turned down over the waistband below the navel. This minor detail is perhaps significant in dating the image, for as Harle notes:

The only element which can be said to be common to these figures [i.e. a number of sculptures representing Śiva, the Māṭṛkās and Skanda in addition to the torso to be mentioned below, a Viṣṇu image and a head from Kutch] and those of the Madhyadeśa is the little *roll down of the dhoti* below the navel, seen in the Unchdih and Jhusi figures.⁸

The latter are two Viṣṇu images from Allahabad District dated by Harle to the mid-fifth and early or mid-fifth centuries respectively.⁹

The girdle is intricately rolled and a loop of it hangs between the god's thighs. His body ornaments consist only of a single-strand necklace and a triple-wound *keyūras*. An almost identical Śamalājī torso, standing with the same *trirekha*, necklace: waistband and lower garment, is dated by Harle to the 'fourth or early fifth century', but this appears to be qualified by the following statement:

The three folds around the neck, however, the way the pleats of the *dhoti* are shown, and particularly the way in which a central loop falls down from the rolled girdle are all identical none the less, except that the girdle is thicker, to the Śamalājī sculpture of a later date.¹⁰

This 'later date', Harle suggests, is the sixth century at the earliest.¹¹

Shah, on the other hand, believes that the Śamalājī Viśvarūpa sculptures in the village itself

and at the Baroda Museum 'should date from an age not later than the sixth century A.D.'¹². The three Viśvarūpa -type sculptures and one associated fragment from the Śamalājī area¹³ belong, in my opinion, to different periods. The image we are discussing I believe to be the earliest and so similar in style to the standing torso mentioned above that I accept a late fifth-century date for it, thus almost reconciling the views of the two scholars cited.

Beneath the god's feet are the intertwined serpentine bodies of two *nāgas* which have human torsos with heads barked by a triple cobra-hood. They rise beside the legs of the god with their faces turned upward in adoration (Plate 59). Their hands, now lost, were probably joined in the *namaskāramudrā*. These human torsos rise in an elegant continuation of the sinuous curves of their snake-bodies; and there is a line double line marking the junction of human and serpentine forms, like a lip, giving the impression that the personifications are emerging from a sloughed snakeskin.

A pair of human figures stands at each end of the plinth, behind the *nāgas*. One detail is of particular interest because of its originality, which is often a mark of true inventiveness: I believe this sculpture to be the earliest of the three remaining and that the other two are copies of later date. The detail concerned is the stance of the inner figure of the pair on the proper right—the tip of the snake-body of the *nāga* on the left side whips across his left foot, which he is evidently attempting to free by straining away from the serpent with his bent right leg. The resulting posture is that termed *pratyālādha*¹⁴ which is repeated in the depiction of certain figures higher on the stele who similarly, but with less obvious effort, disengage them-selves from the central vertical axis of the main composition. This figure, although it has no wings, may well be a personification of Garuḍa, archenemy of snakes and conventionally the *vāhana* of seated Viṣṇu, here held in captive attendance only by the great tail of the serpent. The reason for this small but deliberately sculpted detail is, in my view, to emphasize the significance of the *nāgas'* support of Viṣṇu in his Viśvarūpa role and the consequent displacement of Garuḍa. This minor drama being enacted beneath the god's feet, though concerned with explaining a minor

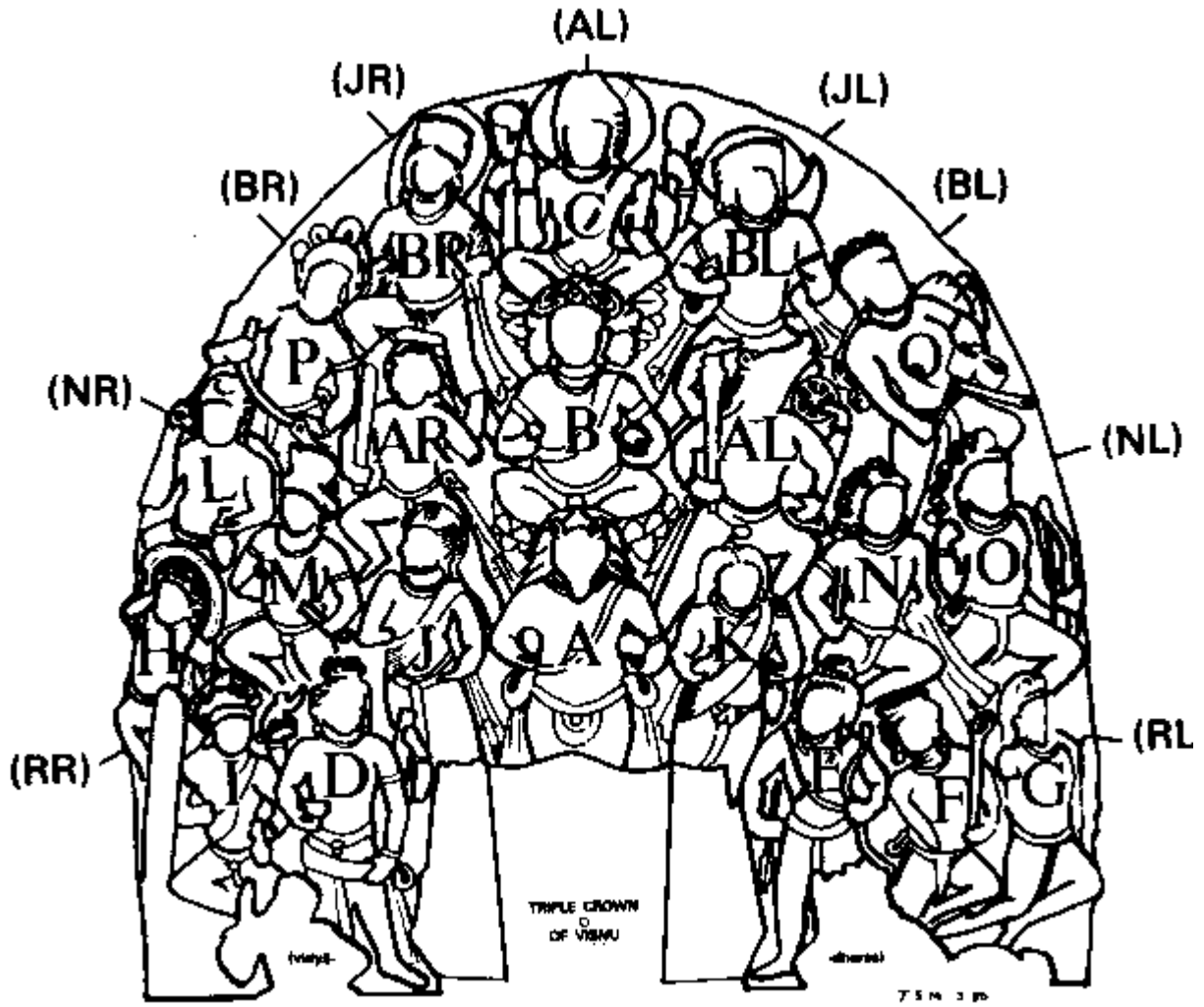
reorganization of conventional symbolism, assumes the form of an iconographical witticism.

On the opposite side of the plinth, the female figure in the corresponding position-untouched by the other serpent's tail-is presumably the consort of Viṣṇu, Śrī Lakṣmī. Unlike the trapped Garuḍa, she stands casually with her weight on her left leg, right foot pointing forward, her figure turned slightly toward the god. She wears a lower garment and a long shawl is draped carelessly behind her shoulders. Like those of Viṣṇu, her ornaments are simple: a girdle, *nūpurās*, *keyūras* and a single-strand necklace. In her left hand she holds an object that seems to be a blossom with no stalk. Her face is smashed but the elongation of the broken area suggests that her hair was piled high on top of her head. The god is thus flanked by his consort on his left and his usual *vāhana* (rather unwillingly) on his right.

The figures at the two extremities of the curved plinth, both male and turned away from the god, are well preserved. Both are dressed in a fashion similar to Viṣṇu (including the turned-down fold of the lower garment below the navel) but have no crowns, wearing instead the curly 'Gupta wig'.¹⁵ The figure on the proper left of the god holds a quatrefoil to his heart, the other hand resting on the low-slung horizontal folds of his lower garment; that on the right holds in his right hand a large fruit. There is a broken piece of sculpture above both their heads which may have been a *śiraścakra*. Viṣṇu is known to have had two *dvārapālas* named Jaya and Vijaya.¹⁶ Flanking his throne and facing outward, these figures might represent them, although they have not the alert attitude of guards, nor are they armed.

The body of the god has four pairs of arms, which might suggest that a fourth head is to be imagined at the back. All the arms are broken off at or near the elbow except the uppermost left, the hand of which holds the disc of Viṣṇu, the *cakra*. Although the face of the disc and most of the hand supporting it are smashed, the index finger survives, curled around the rim. Above the stump of the corresponding right arm, the remains of an almost vertical sword-blade can be seen. The mace (*gadā*) might be thought more appropriate here in normal iconographical terms, but three of the chief Vaiṣṇava attributes-*śaṅkha*, *cakra* and *gadā* are held by the almost

undamaged figure of the Varāha avatāra in the nimbus above (see figure AL in Figure 3.1). The shape of the mace as depicted by the Śamalājī sculpture is clearly seen there to thicken towards the top, which is square and has projections, whereas the sword in the right hand of Viṣṇu narrows slightly to a rounded end. It might be suggested, conversely, that the round object in the left hand is a shield, to balance the sword. But this circular object was, to judge from the position of the remaining index finger, held in the same grip as that in which the Varāha figure mentioned (AL) holds the spoked disc, namely balanced upright on the upturned palm with the index curved around the rim and the other fingers curled across the front of the weapon, the thumb being presumably at the back. Only the *cakra*—certainly not a shield—would be held in this fashion: it is a grip from which the weapon can be hurled, spinning, either upright with an overarm or underarm motion, or else horizontally with a forehanded or backhanded movement. The nature of the correspondence between these two objects held in the uppermost hands seems, therefore, to be that they are both cutting weapons.



KEY

| | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| A - Hayagrīva | D - Balarāma/Saṅkarṣaṇa | K - brāhmaṇa |
| B - Brahmā | E -Kṛṣṇa | L - Bhīma |
| C - Śiva | F - Pradyumna | M - Arjuna |

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| AR - Nṛsiṃha | G -Aniruddha | N - Lakṣmaṇa |
| AL -Varāha | H -Sāmba | 0 - Rāma |
| BR - Sūrya | I - ṛṣi | P - Varuṇa |
| BL - Candra | J - brāhmaṇa | Q -Agni |

Fig. 3.1 Śamalājī nimbus. Free-hand sketch. Not to scale

The substitution of the sword for the mace, which was more conventionally held in the upper right hand of four-armed north Indian Viṣṇu images (from times onward at Mathura), might be seen as a mistake in copying northern prototypes at Śamalājī, but this seems most unlikely in view of the accuracy of iconographic detail evident in the smaller figures in the nimbus. The Śamalājī sculptors appear to have been fully versed in the iconographical formulae of the northern sculpture centre-so much so that they felt free to experiment with them. The three (standing for four) human heads of Viṣṇu, for example, is innovatory, while the entire composition is a further development and coalescence of Kuṣāṇa multiple iconography, representing sculptures of Types A and B, which was almost certainly conceived and most fluently realized at Mathura. The sword-for-mace substitution must therefore be considered to have been deliberate: a reason for it is suggested in my stage-by-stage analysis, below, of the whole image.

The upright, forehanded grip on the *cakra* is to be seen at its best, perhaps, in certain relief sculptures of Viṣṇu -seated upon the serpent above the doorway and mounted on Garuḍa in the Gajendramokṣa panel-on the Deogarh temple of about A.D. 600. It can there be seen to be very much an 'in action' grip, differing completely from the static display of the disc as an emblem rather than as a weapon which dominated north Indian individual cult-icons of Viṣṇu to such an

extent that the object became personified by another standing figure (the rotund Cakrapuruṣa), as did the mace (in the graceful form of Gadādevī). The Śamalājī image, although an individual cult-icon, is far from being a still-life. It is a portrayal of Viṣṇu in action: not as a warrior-he has abandoned his aerial equivalent of a battle chariot, Garuḍa. for a bench with a footstool of writhing *nāgas*-but as the growing and expanding universe. The action is conveyed in such anatomical details as the tension of the bent legs, the mass of extended arms and the multiplicity of faces. The life-like wielding of the sword and brandishing of the disc add to the impression of a god seething with life and suppressed energy seeking an outlet, which indeed it finds in the emission (*śṛṣṭi*, which does not, properly speaking, mean 'creation'¹⁷) of manifold life-forms into the upper half of the stele above him.

The central face of the god is completely destroyed but from the staring profiles of the heads to left and right of it, facing away at right angles over the quadruple shoulders on each side, I infer that its eyes were wide open. The deity, though seated, was intended to appear awake and alert, regarding the four quarters of the horizon simultaneously like *caturmukha* Brahmā. The pierced and elongated ears of the main face conceal those of the (Source no. 9A) smaller side-heads which emerge without necks of their own. A tall cylindrical crown, slightly wider at the top than at the rim and densely ornamented, is worn by each of the heads.

From the mouth of each of the god's side-heads emerges a *vidyādhara* carrying what appears to be a sword in the right hand while the left holds on to his streaming robe. These figures are represented in the full flying position, the toes of the backward-pointing foot of the trailing leg in each case being just clear of the god's gently smiling lips. *Vidyādharas* being airborne creatures, I assume that part of their significance here is to convey the idea that air (as *prāṇa*, the breath-of-life) is the breath of God. They might also be seen as heralds of the particular Vaiṣṇava doctrine (*vāda*) declared by the god-his *vidyā* or wisdom-which is symbolized by the multiplicity of figures above them. Artistically, they mark the upper limit of *antarīkṣa*, which is vertically connected to the aquatic nether-world of the *nāgas* by the body

of the god and horizontally pervaded by his eight arms. Above them, the heaven-world teems with divine figures, covering the greater part of the relief.

I should point out here what seems to me to be a clear parallel between the organization of the main composition of the image and the form of a tree, which first appeared on the reverse of Kuṣāṇa multiple sculptures of Type B. Rooted underground in water where the god's feet rest upon the *nāgas* (a tree is *pāda-pa*, 'drinking through its feet'), the 'trunk' rises in the form of the body of the god, his arms branching in the eight horizontal directions of space.¹⁸ to proliferate in a mass of 'foliage' consisting of the divinities spreading around and above the heads of the god.¹⁹

This celestial area is depicted upon a semi-oval, a shape technically derived from the enlarged and populated *prabhā-maṇḍala* of the type otherwise exemplified only once in surviving Gupta statuary, at Mathura (Plate 49). In the Śamalājī images, the massive nimbus was vertically elongated and not closed at its base above the shoulders of Viṣṇu, as at Mathura, but simply cut off by the horizontal flight of the *vidyādhara*s, below which the edges of the backslab were cut straight down to the plinth. The entire work is thus a round-topped stele cut in deep relief, whereas the Mathura example seems to have been a free-standing image.

There are twenty-one figures in the oval *maṇḍala*.²⁰ The organization is impressive. It was clearly part of the intention of the designer that there should be three vertical rows of three overlapping figures, fanning slightly outward from a central vertical row of three. There is another pattern within this design, revealed by the physical interconnections between the central row and the upper two figures of the flanking rows. These connections are made by the trailing leg of the *pratyālīḍha* posture in which most of the figures appear: this leg emerges from behind a particular figure near it. There is almost certainly a deliberately implied relationship between images conjoined in this way. I have pointed out the probable relationship between Garuḍa and the *nāga* on the plinth of this sculpture, where the trailing leg is the connection. It is certainly the link between multiple forms of Śiva in the slightly later, almost certainly derivative sculpture at

Parel (Chapter 4).

In extension, as it were, of the 'trunk' of the tree-like form of the image, three overlapping figures rise (Source no. 2A) above the central crown of Viṣṇu. The first, his legs up to the thighs still concealed within or behind the crown (Source no. 3B), is Hayagrīva. The outline of the long equine face-its features are worn away-with pricked ears and a flaring mane, is set upon a powerful human body dressed in the same kind of lower garment as that worn by Viṣṇu. The hands rest upon the ample hips.

Above and partly behind Hayagrīva rises Brahmā, seated upon a double lotus in a way that suggests that his ankles (hidden by the horse-head) are crossed; he is not depicted locked in the lull meditation posture (*padmāsana*). A wide band, almost eroded, crosses his ample figure from left shoulder to right hip; this may have been a *yogapaṭṭa*, such as can be seen worn by Brahms in the Nara-Nārāyana panel on the Gupta-period temple at Deogarh (Plate 36). Only the rolled waistband of his lower garment can be seen, curving under his rotund belly; he wears *keyūras* and a simple necklace like those of Viṣṇu. His three heads, by convention standing for his traditional four, are represented in the same way as those of Viṣṇu the two side-heads are slightly smaller than the central face and are turned away from it at right angles. As in the Viṣṇu figure, too, the neck of the central head supports all three and its pendulous ears overlap those of the two profiles. The *jaṭās* of the central head hang sideways to left and right, falling upon the side-heads so that the latter appear to have upward sweeping locks, thus uniting the hair-styles. The central crown of Viṣṇu is shared, by multiplication, with the profiles on either side, creating a similar impression of identity between the several heads. These similarities suggest that the heads of the Viṣṇu figure were carved according to the Brahms sculptural tradition and were similarly intended to represent four. From this I infer that the multiheaded image of Viṣṇu in the Śamalājī region was derived, sculpturally and probably ideologically, from that of Brahms the creator, whereas the Mathura type, as I have shown in Chapter 2, was a syncretistic coalescence of the god with two of his animal *avatāras*, developed

from earlier *vyūha* iconography invented in the Kuṣāṇa period.

Seated on a lotus in the same position above and behind Brahmā is Śiva, third in this vertical register, and apex of the whole sculpture. This image is badly damaged, but the following identificatory details can be seen. The remains of long, coiled braids of hair hang down the side of the obliterated face, suggesting *jaṭābhāra*. A trident with damaged prongs is held upright in the rear right hand and an object which may have been a *khaṭvāṅga* in the rear left. The front right hand makes the *abhayamudrā*, while the front left hand, resting upon the raised left knee, holds an object which is either an *aṅkuśa* or an *axe*. This figure was intended to appear ithyphallic: there is a projection above the waistband below the navel, whereas the other images in this series have a knot tied in the lower garment under the waistband, covering the groin.

The sequence of figures in the central axis of the whole sculpture is thus, from the horizontal basis of intertwined *nāgas* upward:

4. Śiva
|
3. Brahmā
|
2. Hayagrīva
|
1. Viṣṇu
|

|

————— (nāgas)

The branching pattern of figures mentioned previously, its interconnections made by the trailing leg of the '*pratyañīdha*' position, joins four figures to the second and third (Hayagrīva and Brahmā) of this sequence.

Soaring away from the axis, the trailing leg rising at a forty-degree angle from behind the left shoulder of Hayagrīva, is the Varāha *avatāra*. The upward thrusting, elongated boar's head is unmistakable, set upon a vigorous human frame. The boar has four arms. The front right hand holds a mace, the rear right is raised above the head and turned palm upward in an elevated *tripatākā-mudrā*. The front left hand holds a conch upon the raised left thigh, and the rear left wields an eight-spoked disc. Apart from the overhead gesture, this incarnation holds the standard attributes of Viṣṇu. Its counterpart on the right, emanating from Hayagrīva at the same angle and in the same determined attitude (Source no. 3A) is the Nṛsimha *avatāra*. The right hands hold a sword and make the *tripatākā-mudrā*, but the two left hands are broken off. These two *avatāras* are depicted rising- from Hayagrīva to flank Brahmā (Source no. 3A-C) for two reasons. Firstly, they are of course incarnations of Viṣṇu (not of Brahmā) and Hayagrīva is shown emanating directly from that god. Secondly, they are evidently cast in the role of warriors, armed with the weapons of Viṣṇu, protecting- the unarmed Brahmā who creates the material and living universe (a parallel to the vulnerability of Viṣṇu asleep prior to creation when his personified weapons defend him from disruptive forces in the shape of demons²¹). As mythological saviours of the creation from the *Veda*-based *Viṣṇudharma* on the other, interpreted in the sculpture as guardians of Brahmā, they cannot emanate from the demiurge as part of his creation, but are sent from the source, that is from Viṣṇu (in this case *via* Hayagrīva) to save the world of man. They are therefore seen rising fully armed from Logos, the Word of God incarnate, represented by Hayagrīva, Knower and keeper of the Veda which is the orthodox core of *Dharma*, to occupy forward defensive positions flanking the main central thrust

of the next evolutionary phase personified by Brahmā.

Above these two incarnations, rising at parallel angles from behind the shoulders of Brahmā, are Candra, the Moon, on the left, and Sūrya, the Sun, on the right. Both figures have two arms and with their hands hold up their flowing robes in a gesture similar to that of the left hands of the *vidyādhara*s at the base of the nimbus. The lunar god has a crescent, horns upward, enclosing the base of his halo. The sun-god has a plain *prabhāmaṇḍala* with an incised inner rim. Haloes seem to have been included in this sculpture only were they serve a definite symbolic function: a disc with a crescent identifies the moon, a plain disc, the sun. None of the other figures is nimbate, with the notable exception of Śīva, seated between Candra and Sūrya. Sun and moon thus stand to the right and left of Śīva respectively, appearing at a slightly lower level and springing from Brahmā.

Although different in execution and in the identity of the figures (excepting the apical Śīva) this connected pattern of seven figures above the central head of Viṣṇu is exactly the same in conception as that of the seven-fold Śaiva image at Parel (Plate 61) and the Pradhānapuruṣeśvara relief at Musānagar, the closest Śaiva parallel (Plate 17). If, in the latter relief, the sun disc and lunar crescent held in the right and left hands of the apical figure were personified, an iconographical relationship between the upper part of the Kuṣāṇa image and the three figures at the apex of this Śamalājī sculpture would be apparent. In the Śamalājī image, the juxtaposition of Śīva and Sūrya and Candra, all three nimbate, evidently derives from the same type of Śaiva cult iconography in which Śīva as Kālarudra controls the passage of time represented by sun and moon, and, as Kālāntaka, may put an end to it. In this potentially destructive role, however, at the end of the vertical sequence of figures which forms the evolutionary time-axis of a Vaiṣṇava composition, Śīva cannot also be regarded as creator of the two luminaries. They therefore spring from Brahmā, creator of the phenomenal universe, and thence, as both products and symbols of the temporal creation, rise into Śīva's sphere of influence.

The multiplication of Kuṣāṇa type B images may have been invented here at Śamalājī in this early attempt to organize the many forms emanating from Viṣṇu. Figure 3.2 illustrates the kind of development in composition which seems to have taken place.

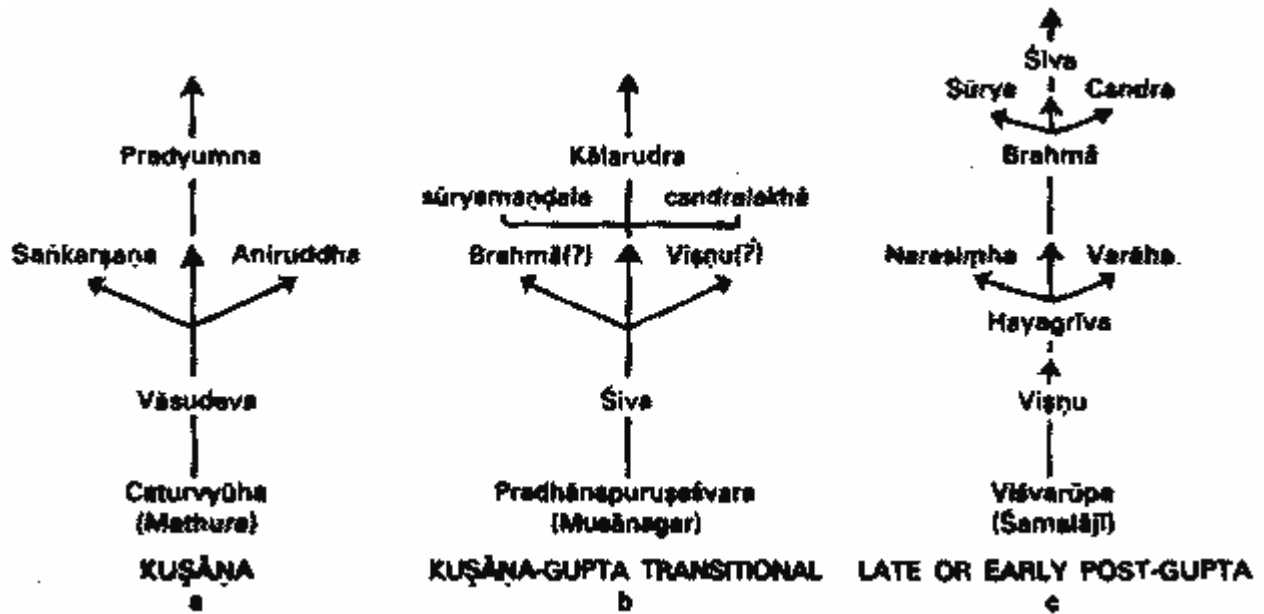


Fig.3.2 Stages in the development of multiple imagery

Note: The two Kuṣāṇa stages were probably coeval; they were experimental developments

within the same cultural matrix, not necessarily chronological progressions

The further expansion of this third development within the same sculpture is highly accomplished in its extension of the ramifying pattern as a template by means of which to organize numerous figures into an aesthetically acceptable - and symbolically significant - whole. Because the Śamalājī image marks the perpetuation and development of Kuṣāṇa multiform sculpture in western India - at a time when the Gupta school at Mathura was all but ignoring it - the iconography of this Viśvarūpa type is more complicated than that of any known later version. Following the Kuṣāṇa technique of personifying the trunk and branches of a tree-like construct (Source nos. 2A + 3A to C), there was little tendency towards the abbreviation or

coalescence of separate forms (the sole exception being the already established triple-headed abbreviation of four-faced Brahmā). Each figure in the *Maṇḍala* is thus a distinct individual. Most subsequent developments of the Viśvarūpa type elsewhere prototype (Plate 49), in displaying groups of virtually identical figure, plus a mere handful of individuals about the heads of the main god. In the nimbus of Śāmalājī image, there are - and this is worth repeating - twenty one figures, each with its own individuality, not counting the *vidyādhara*s.

In the absence of a *śilpaśāstra* of the same region and date as the image which might explain this dense pattern of divinities, the identities of all the figures and their interrelationships has until now remained obscure. I therefore intend to attempt a comprehensive analysis and explanation of the image, in the form of a reconstruction of the way in which the composition was probably planned and the reasons for the method followed. This reconstruction, cast in the form of a hypothetical '*śilpaśāstra*', is accompanied by Figures 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, and the indexed Key-Diagram (Figure 3.1) of the figures in the nimbus. It is written in thirty-three stages. References and comments are within square brackets; translation is by me unless otherwise indicated.

1. Draw a vertical line down the centre of the back (A1 - A2). This is the vertical axis of our composition. Divide this line into four equal parts by describing two contiguous circles with their centres (B1, B2) on this axis; the radius is one quarter of the axis and the point of contact between the two circles is its centre (C). This line with its four divisions we draw first, for it imitates the archetypal Skambha, pillar of the universe, which contains the four cardinal directions of space, the four Vedas, and all the gods. This knowledge is from the *Atharvaveda*.

yasya catasraḥ pradiśo nāḍayas tiṣṭhanti prathamāḥ/

[AV.10.7.16ab]

Whose main arteries stand as the four directions.

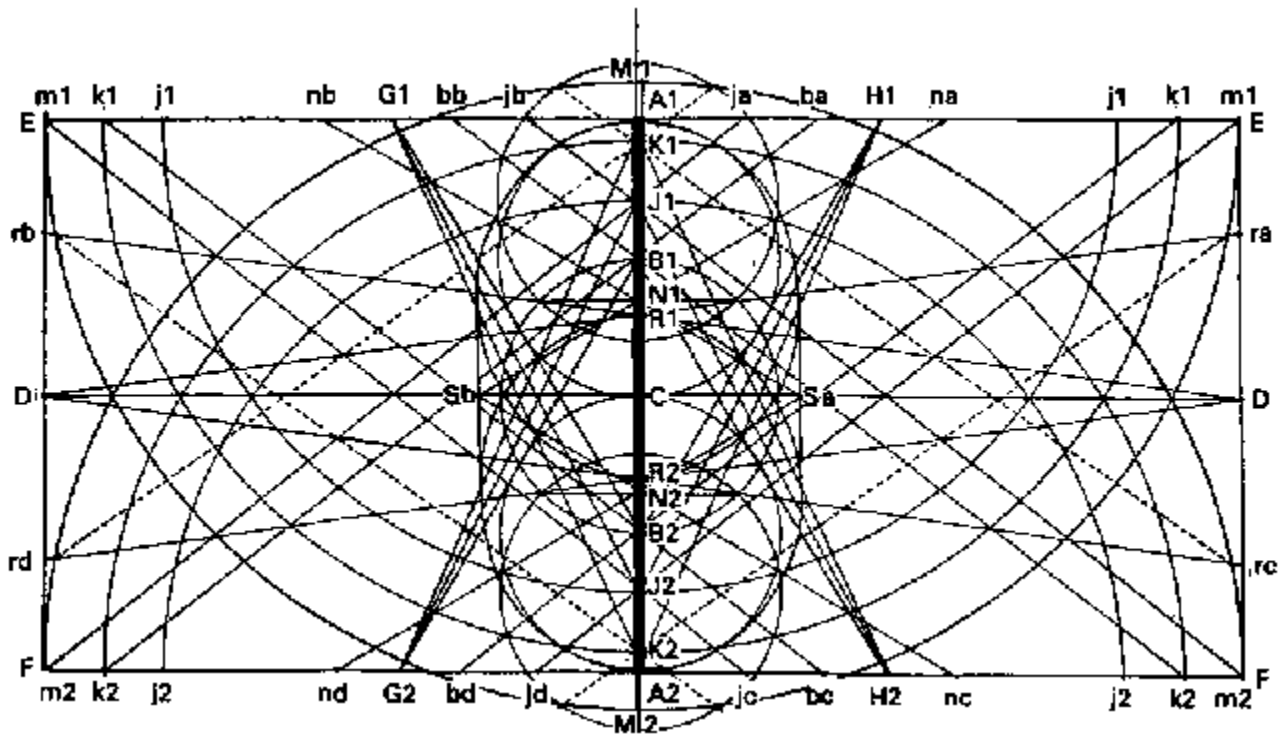


Fig. 3.3 Śamalajī nimbus. Complete planning diagram

yasmād ṛco apātakṣan yajur yasmād apākaṣan/

sāmāni yasya lomāny atharvāṅgirasō mukham/

[AV.10.7.20]

From whom they cut out the *ṛk*-verses,

from whom they planed off the *yajus*,

Whose fibres are the *sāman*-chants.

whose mouth is the *atharvan*-hymns.

mahad yokṣaṃ bhuvanasya madhye

*tapasi krāntaṃ salilasya pṛṣṭhe/
tasmin chrayante ya u ke ca devā
vrkṣasya skandhaḥ parita iva śākhāḥ//*

[AK 10.7.38]

The great spirit is extended [upward] in religious will,
at the centre of the world, upon the water,
And whatsoever gods [exist] attach themselves to him,
like branches around the trunk of a tree.

*skambho dodhāra dyāvāpṛthivī ubhe ime
skombho dadhāroru-antarikṣam/
skambho dodhāra pradīśaḥ ṣaḍ urvīḥ
skambha idaṃ viśvam bhuvanam ā viveśa//*

[AV 10.7.3.5]

The Tree-Axis supports both heaven and earth,
the Tree-Axis supports the broad atmosphere between,
The Tree-Axis supports the six extensive directions:
the Tree-Axis pervades this entire world.

This first line is therefore sacred, being the axis in which all potential expansion is held, and around which the sculpture will be planned.

2. Draw the horizontal centre line [D-D]-at right angles to the perpendicular through the centre point [C]. Now this second line is also sacred. It is more ancient than the Tree-Axis which rose through it, for it imitates the original cosmic horizon-the Transverse Cord-which was extended across primitive self-awareness born in primeval chaos: it polarized that awareness into upper and lower, so that there was direction, and the driving force toward creation arose. This was revealed to the poet-seers of the *Rgveda*.

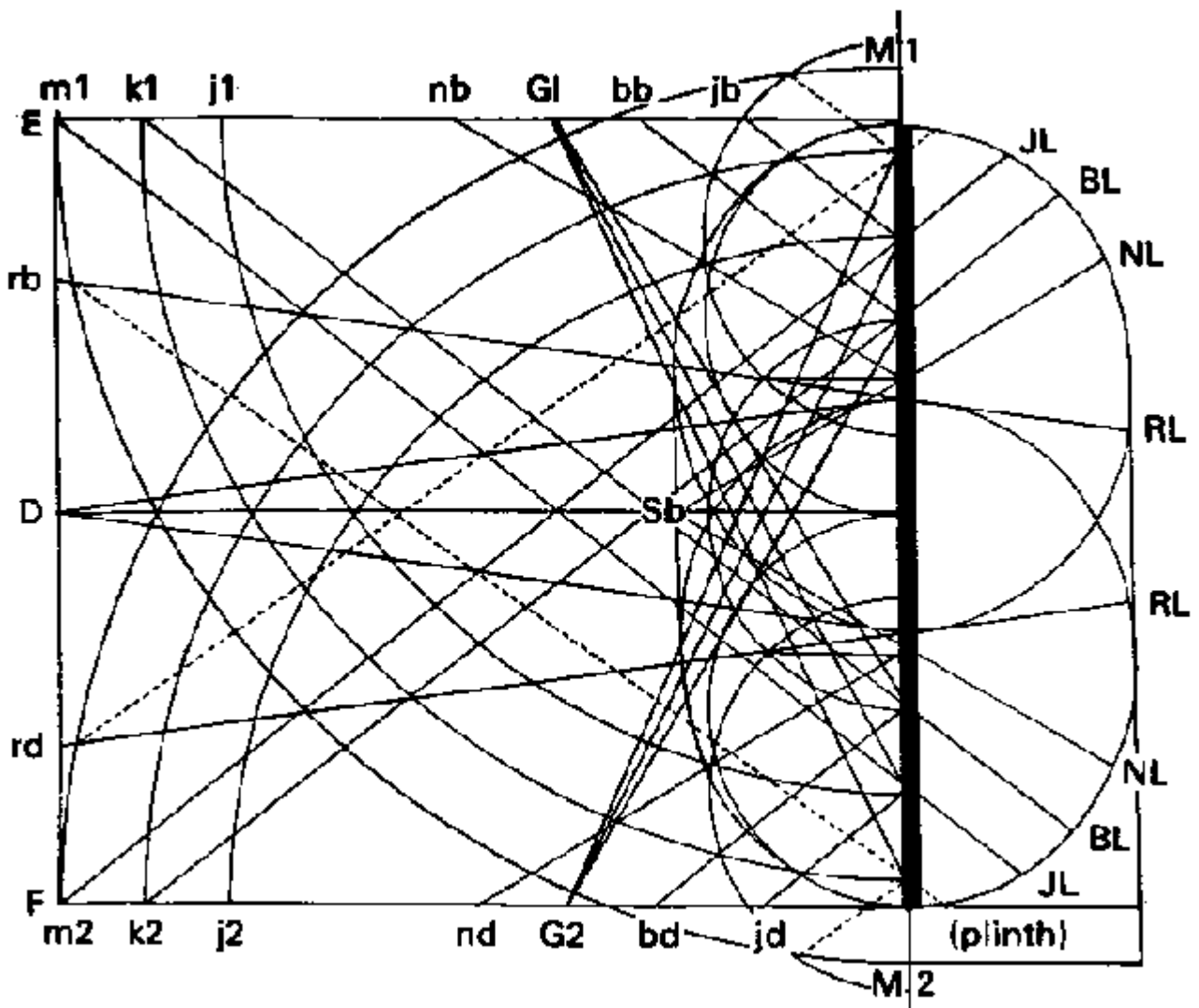


Fig. 3.4 Drawing of the tree within the egg

tāma āsīt tāmasā gūṭhām āgre
'praketāṃ salilāṃ sārvam ā idām/
tucchyēnābhvāpihitam yād āsīt
tāpasas tāan mahinājāyatāikam//
kāmas tād āgre sāmavartatādhi
mānaso rētaḥ prathamām yād āsīt/
satō bāndhum āsati nīravindan
hrdī pratīsyā kavāyo manīṣā//
tiraścīno vītato raśmir eṣām
adhāḥ svid āsīd upāri svid āsīd upāri svid āsīt/
retodhā āsan mahimāna āsan
svadhā avāstāt prāyatīḥ parāstāt//

[RV.10.129.3-5]

'Darkness there was at first in darkness hidden;
This universe was undistinguished water.
That which in void and emptiness lay hidden
Alone by power of fervour [*topas*] was developed.
Then for the first time there arose desire,
Which was the primal germ of mind, within it.

And sages, searching in their heart, discovered

In Nothing the connecting hand of Being.

And straight across their cord was then extended:

What then was there above? or what beneath it?

Life giving principles and powers existed;

Below the origin,-the striving upward.'²²

So the two major axes are drawn at the beginning of the plan as at the origin of the universe. For our image is to represent the universe. After this, draw the parallel top line [E-E] through the intersection of the lower circle and the vertical axis [at A1] and similarly the base line [F-F] through the intersection of the lower circle and the vertical [at-A2]. As it was said, the Tree-Axis [A1-A2] supports the heaven and the earth. The length of these horizontal lines will be determined as our plan progress.

We shall next draw three triangles, in order to fix important points, by means of tangents, arcs and circles, on the vertical axis, in the following stages; each geometric phase proceeds from the last in logical sequence, interdependent, and upon this sequence we shall construct our image.

3. Draw two lines from the centre of the upper circle [B1]: tangential to the lower circle, down to the base line [BI-G2 and BI-H2], thus creating an equilateral triangle [B1-G2-H2]. Repeat this procedure from the centre of the lower circle [B2], so making an inverted equilateral triangle of equal dimensions [B2-G 1-H1]. The inclined sides of these two triangles intersect on the horizontal centre line [D-D].

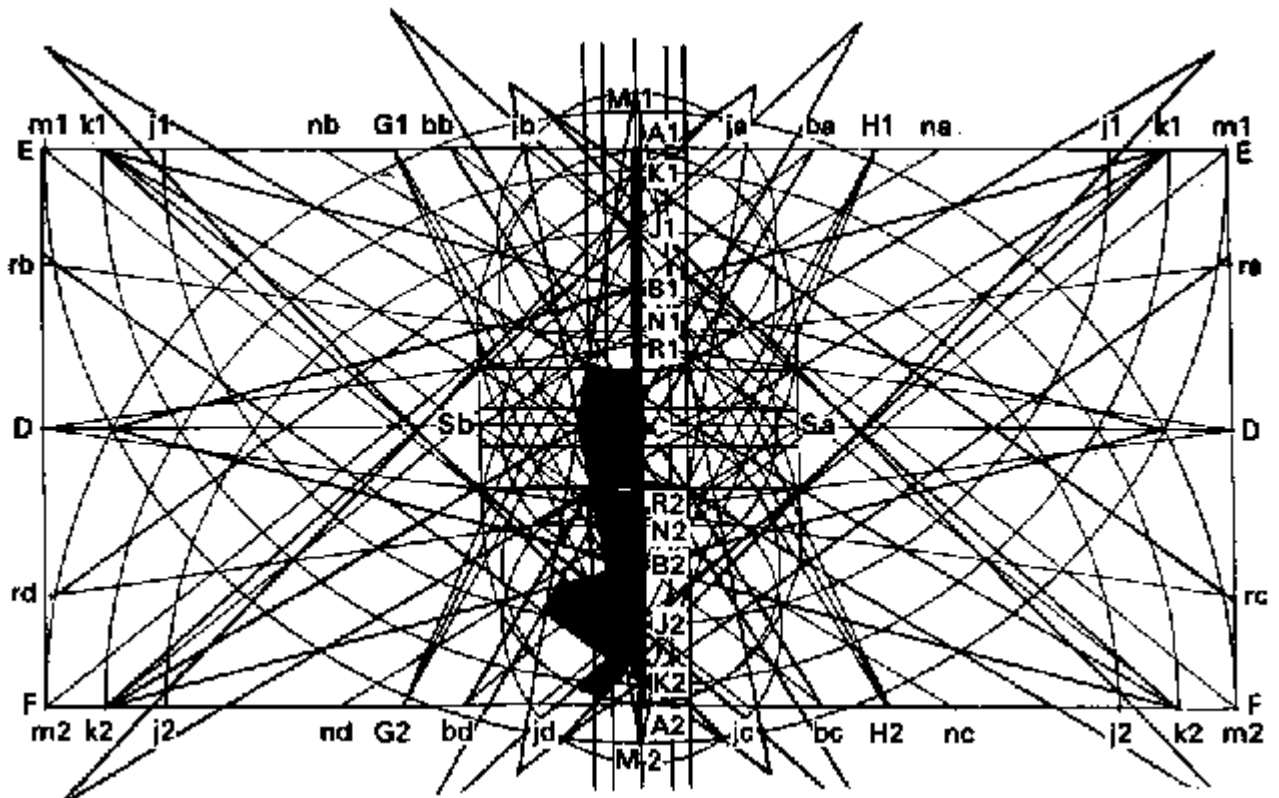


Fig. 3.5 Augmented diagram for drawing the outline of the god

4. The sides of these two triangles are 12 units long. Using this measurement as radius, mark off two points [J1 and J2] on the vertical axis by describing two arcs, centred respectively on the base and apex of the axis [A2 and A1], from one side of the base and top lines to the other [arcs j 1 and j2].

5. From the point on the vertical axis where the lower arc [J2] intersects it [J1], draw two lines down to the base line at the points which mark the base of the equilateral triangle [points G2 and H2 of triangle B1-G2-H2], thus making an isosceles triangle [J1-G2-H2] the perpendicular height of which is equal to the length of side of the equilateral triangle. Similarly, draw an inverted isosceles triangle from the point on the axis where it is intersected by the upper [arc J1, point J2, triangle J2-G1- H1]. The inclined sides of the triangles intersect on the horizontal centre line.

6. The longer sides of these two triangles measure 13.5 units. Taking this measurement as radius, mark off two further points [K1 and K2] on the vertical axis by describing two more arcs, centred respectively on the base and apex of the axis [A2 and A1], from one side of the base and top lines to the other [arcs K1 and K2].

7. From the points on the vertical axis where these two arcs intersect it [K1 and K2], draw two more isosceles triangles on the same base [triangles K1-G2-H2 and K2-G1-H1]. Again, the perpendicular height of each is equal to the longer sides of the preceding two triangles, and their inclined sides intersect on the horizontal centre line.

8. The longer side of these two triangles measure 11 units. With this measurement as radius, describe two more arcs, centred respectively on the base and apex of the vertical axis [A2 and A1], from one side of the base and top lines to the other [arcs m1 and m2]. These arcs intersect the vertical axis at points which are 1 unit above the upper circle and 1 unit below the lower circle [M1 and M2]. (The intersections of the arcs with top line [m1] and with the base line [m2] should now be joined with vertical lines [m1/E-m2/F] as these points mark the furthest lateral extent of this geometric preparation for the design of the sculpture.)

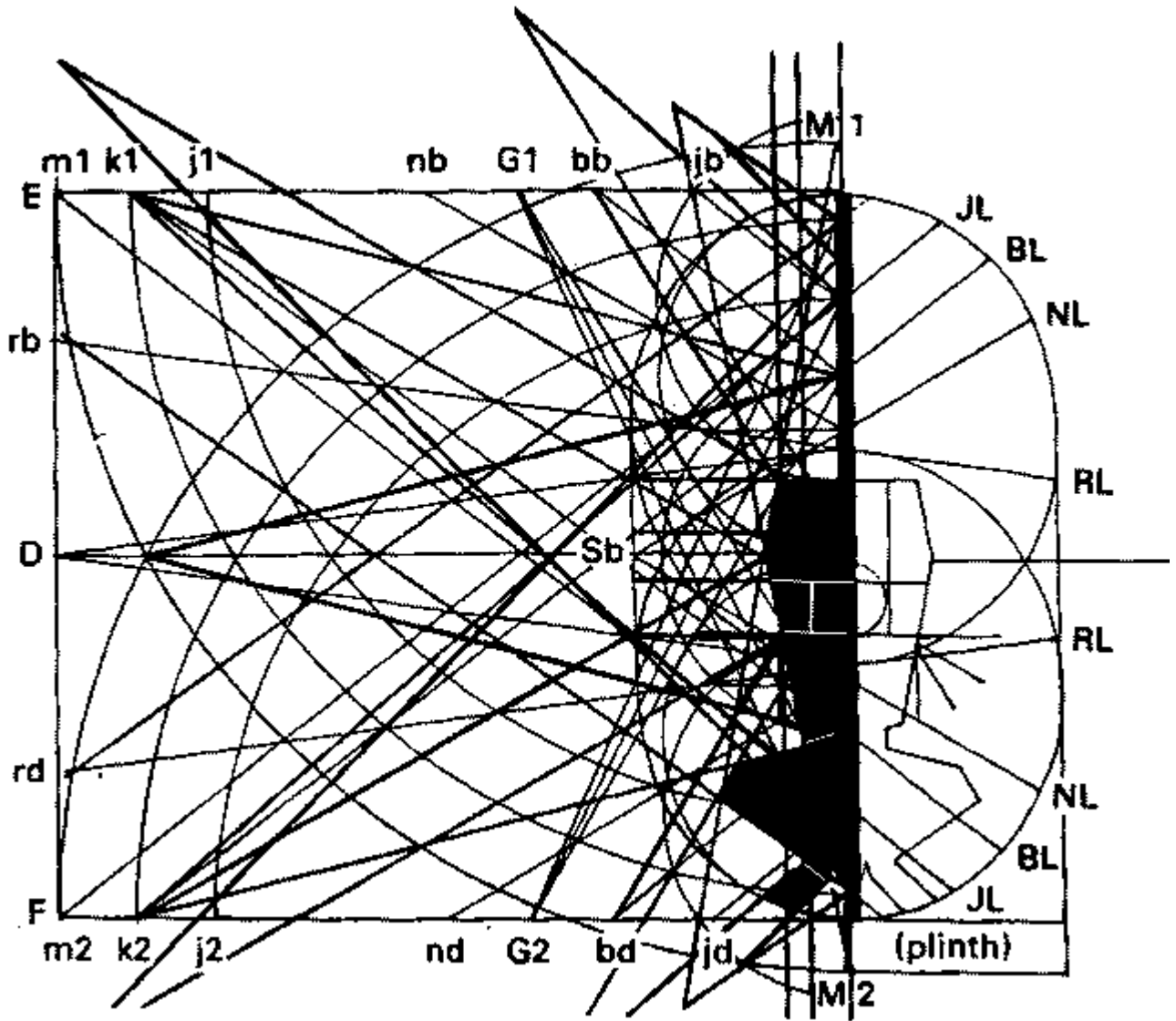


Fig. 3.6 Drawing of the god within the tree within the egg

9. Now draw three overlapping circles centred on the vertical axis at its centre [C] and at the apices of the first two isosceles triangles [J1 and J2], where the axis is intersected by the first two arcs [arcs j1 and j2]. The radius of these circles should be the same as that of the first two by which the axis was initially divided into four equal parts, namely 3.5 units.

10. The central circle intersects the vertical axis at the apices of the first two equilateral triangles [i.e. at the centres of the first two circles, at B1 and B2]. The upper and lower circles intersect it 2 units below the apex of the upright equilateral triangle and 2 units above the apex of the inverted one. These two distances should be bisected by drawing a horizontal line through the intersections of the perimeters of the upper and lower overlapping circles with that of the central circle, thus marking a point on the vertical axis 1 unit below the apex of the upright equilateral triangle [N1] and 1 unit above that of the inverted triangle [N2].

11. In both the upper and lower halves of the diagram, two oblique lines should now be drawn. Starting from the extremities of the central horizontal axis [D-D], each line should pass through the intersection of the central circle and the upper or lower of the first two circles before crossing the vertical axis, and continue through the intersection of the central circle with the upper or lower secondary circle on the other side of this axis. These lines intersect on the axis at two points [R1 in the upper half, R2 in the lower] which are a half-unit closer to its centre than the two preceding points [N1 and N2]. [The lines are D-rc and D-rd in the upper half, D-rc and D-rd in the lower.] Five points [R1 and R2, N1 and N2, B1 and B2, J1 and J2, and K1 and K2] have thus been marked within the first 5 units from the apex and the base of the vertical axis. These will mark the following points on the sculpture:

K1 - centre of Śiva's face.

J 1 - centre of Brahmā's middle face.

B1 - centre of Hayagrīva's forehead.

N1 - centre of Hayagrīva's chest.

R1 - centre of Hayagrīva's waistband.

(C- *sahasrāra-cakra* on the top of the head of Viṣṇu (behind the central crown).

R2 - *viśuddha-cakra* on the body of Viṣṇu (throat).

N2 - *anāhata-cakra* on the body of Viṣṇu (heart).

B2 - *maṇipūraka-cakra* on the body of Viṣṇu (solar plexus).

J2 - *mūlādhāra-cakra* on the body of Viṣṇu (base of the trunk).

K2 - junction of the pint of Viṣṇu 's robe and the centre of the *nāgas'* intertwined bodies.

[For the yogic, *cakra* see Plate 60.]

12. The first lines important to the sculptor for the organization of the elements of the image have now been drawn [D-ra and D-rb, D-rc and D-rd, in section 11] after the first ten preparatory stages of the geometric framework. Now the second set of significant lines should be drawn. These should, in each quarter of the basic plan, pass through the triple intersection of the primary circle, the secondary upper or lower circle and the first arc marking on the vertical axis the length of side of the equilateral triangle raised to the perpendicular [arcsj1 and j2]; each line should pass through this point and the point on the axis marked in Stage 10 [N1 and N2]. These lines commence at the top or base line and intersect on the horizontal centreline [lines na-Sb and nb-Sa in the upper half, nb-Sb and na-Sa in the lower]. The angle of these lines from the vertical is 30°.

13. The third set of lines emanate from the intersections of the second arcs with the top and base lines [k1 and k2, left and right] and pass through the intersections of those arcs with the secondary upper and lower circles on the opposite side of the axis. These lines intersect on the axis at the points [B1 and B2] where the apices of the two equilateral triangles and the circumference of the central secondary circle also join it. The angle of the lines from the perpendicular is in this case 40° [lines k2-ba and k2-bb, k1-bc and k1-bd].

14. The fourth set of lines are drawn from the intersections of the third arcs with the top and base lines [m1 and m2, left and right] through the intersections of the second arcs [k1 and k2] with the circumferences of the upper and lower primary circles on the opposite side of the axis.

These lines intersect on the axis at the points W1 and J2] where the apices of the first two isosceles triangles and the first arcs [j1 and j2] also join it. The angle of the lines from the perpendicular is equal to that of the preceding set, namely 40° [lines m2-ja and m2-jb, m1-jc and m1-jd].

15. A fifth set of lines, at 35° from the perpendicular, could be drawn through the apices of the second two isosceles triangles [at K1 and k2] by connecting the intersections of the third arcs with the lines through the first points on the axis [R1 and R2] and, diagonally opposite, the intersections of the opposed third arcs with the circumferences of the two secondary circles outside the frame of the plan. [These potential vectors are shown as broken lines in figures 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 and 36.1 There is no immediate purpose which such lines could serve, for we are establishing these points [K1 and K2] as those of the source of creation in the primeval waters at the base, and of the face of destruction in the face of diva at the top. There is no development below the former and none above the latter; beyond them there is nothing, and these two points correspond because the one leads back to the other in the continuous cycle of generation and dissolution and preparation of the universe. Therefore these lines are not drawn in preparation for marking the Tree (for this has been our purpose to this stage: the interwoven warp and weft--*otam protam*-on which our image of the universe is to be made is now complete).

16. Now the form of the universe, the Viśvarūpa, took its shape from the two halves of the universal egg. Hiraṇyagarbha, the Brahmāṇḍa which rested on the waters. Therefore all this becoming, this evolutionary process and proliferation of forms that fill the universe, are contained within the egg, or between its separated halves. Thus the form of our image of this universe should be that of the egg in its two parts, for the image should be a true microcosm. This is because we worship Viṣṇu as the universe, as Viśvarūpa. Therefore our image must accurately reflect the universe and so bring it within effective reach of our ritual. So this Brahmāṇḍa, the universal egg, is made to contain our image in the following manner. The apex of the first inverted isosceles triangle [J2] marks the *mūlādhāra-cakra* on the body of Viṣṇu

which is to be carved in the lower half of the diagram; the *mūlādhāra* is the *root* of yogic power. Whence it rises, and so it is the source of the god's *māyā-śakti*, his power to weave the fabric of the manifest, multiple universe. The apex of the first upright isosceles triangle [J1] is our mark for the centre of Brahmā's middle fare; and it is Brahmā who makes the universe of *māyā* in its multiplicity, which is to be carved on the upper half of the block. Therefore these two points, one below and one above, correspond in their equidistance from the centre. As they are the points of the active generation of the two universes—the absolute below in Viṣṇu and the dependent above in Brahmā they are the loci of the two halves of the egg, with the centre as their shared second locus. Thus the axis of each egg shape is that section of the main axis extending from the centre downward 5 units [C-J2] and from the centre upward 5 units [C-J1]. The radius about these axes. in order to fill the height of our planned sculpture, namely 14 units, must be 7 units or half the total height.³⁹ Two ellipses should be drawn, one in the lower half and the other in the upper half of the diagram. These ellipses have a maximum width of 8 units as measured across their latitudinal axes which are marked by the horizontal lines bisecting the overlap between the secondary central and upper and lower circles [the lines through points N2 and N1]; this is the width, therefore, of our planned sculpture. In the space between the long curves of the ellipses, we find that the oblique lines [na-Sb and nb-Sa, nc-Sb and nd-Sa] drawn in stage 12 through the intersection of the main vertical axis and (as we have, just discovered) the latitudinal axes of the ellipses [N2 and N1] intersect on the main horizontal axis [at points Sa and Sb] halfway between the outermost points of curvature and that they are exactly 8 units apart. The two ellipses can thus be joined vertically through these points, so creating the entire egg shape which is to be the contour of our image of the universe. This shape is similar to the profile of those naturally occurring stones [*bāṇa-lingas*] from the river Narmadā to the south, which are worshipped as self-willed manifestations of a god.²³

17. Now the height of each ellipse is 9 units, so that there is a vertical overlap between them of 4 units which is bisected by the main horizontal axis. The base of the upper ellipse and the top of the lower ellipse intersect the vertical axis at those points [R2 and R1] at which it is also

intersected by the oblique lines drawn from the extremities of the horizontal axis in stage 11 [lines D-ra and D-rb, and D-rc and D-rd], and the lines are tangential to the ellipses at these points. It is that portion of each of these lines which slopes from the base or top of an ellipse toward one end of the horizontal centreline, from the vertical axis to the boundary of the egg, which is significant for the sculptor (lines R1-RL and R1-RR, R2-RL and R2-RR); they should accordingly be deeply scored (Figure 3.3). Now these lines in the lower half emanate from the throat of Viṣṇu, from the *viśuddha-cakra*, whence emanates the first *Veda*, the *Ṛk*, and this point corresponds in the upper half to the loins of Hayagrīva (who incorporates the triple *Veda* at three points on his body (loins, heart and head: points R1, N1 and B1) whence descend along these lines the heroes dear to Viṣṇu proceeding outward from his crown. Our plan is based upon the cosmic (*aśvattha*) tree rooted in Brahman, within the cosmic egg (*brahmāṇḍa*); the four lines we have drawn are its first two roots and branches, springing from the trunk which is the axis. Thus we construct our image as a microcosm.

18. Next, the lines which were drawn in stage 12, intersecting at two points on the axis one half unit below and above the previous two [at N2 and N1], should be deeply scored outward from the axis to the boundary of the egg [as lines N2-NL and N2-NR, N1-NL and N1-NR]. These in the lower half emanate from the heart of Viṣṇu, from the *anāhata-cakra*; and in the upper half they emanate from the same point on the body of Hayagrīva. Now the first *Veda* gave rise, for the purposes of ritual to a second, the *sāman*, its priest is the *udgātṛ* who should appear with another *brāhmaṇa*, the two of them flanking Hayagrīva as practitioners of the Vedic knowledge that he holds within himself as primary emanation of Viṣṇu who is the true *Vedagarbha*.²⁴ These priests proceed on either side from Hayagrīva in alignment with the second pairs of roots and branches of the tree. But they should also be shown emerging from the crowns of the side-faces of Viṣṇu, for he is to be based upon the Brahman of the upaniṣadic teachings and the great Prajāpati, the four-faced (*calurānana*, *caturvaktra*), the four-formed (*caturmūrti*) and the single source of the four *Vedas* (*caturveda*); like the demiurge. Brahmā, he

should appear with the four faces, for he is to be seen as the protoform of Brahmā, as Prajāpati. ²⁵ Sow the faces are the Vedas; therefor the priesthood, like Hayagrīva, arises from them.

19. The third set of lines, drawn in stage 1, cross the axis at two points [B2 and B1] which are one unit further from the centre. As in stage 18, those lines in the upper half which slope upward and those in the lower which slope downward should be deeply scored from the axis to the perimeter of the egg [B2-BL and B2-BR, B1-BL and B1-BR]. These radiate from the solar plexus, within the yogic circle of the navel, the *nābhicakra* or *maṇipūraka-cakra* of Viṣṇu, in the lower half; in the upper half, they fork outward from the forehead of Hayagrīva, from his horse's head. For it was by a horse (*vājīn*), the horse of the sun, that the sage Yājñavalkya Vājasaneyā was taught the purified *yajūṃṣi*, the new sacrificial *mantras* of the *Śukla Yajurveda* known as the *Yājaneyi-saṃhitā*, which is the third *Veda*. These two points [B2 and B1] are the central (*madhyama*) of the lower and upper live points marked on the axis, and also the centres (*nābhi*) of the lower and the upper primary circles of the plan. Therefore they mark the waist (*madhyama*) and navel region (*nābhi*) of the anatomy of Viṣṇu. It is his body which geometrically generates the order and disposition of all his emanations in the upper half. Now the lines in this upper half which radiate from the centre of Hayagrīva's horse-head should be used as the guide-lines upon which to depict the two other animal-headed emanations of the god, namely the boar-headed Varāha and the lion-headed Nṛsiṃha. These two emanations are *avatāras*, sent to earth to defend *dharma*, and that is why they should emanate from *dharma* itself as founded on the triple *Veda*, which is embodied in Hayagrīva as a direct projection from the body of Viṣṇu, who is the true Dharmayoni, Womb of Dharma. ²⁶ But there is another reason for our making these two points [B2 and B1] correspond. Behind the forehead of Hayagrīva are the calyx and sepals (*viśākha*²⁷) of the lotus upon which Brahmā sits; its stalk, according to mythology, rises from the navel of Viṣṇu upon the waters. We make these two points correspond in accordance with this connection. The head of Hayagrīva overlaps the calyx of Brahmā's lotus because we must show that there is no break in the continuity of the eternal

evolutionary axis. Thus the trunk of the tree grows while branching out to fill the egg-shaped universe.

20. Two other points [J1 and J2], at a further distance of 1.5 units from the centre of the axis, are marked by the set of lines drawn in stage 14. As in stages 18 and 19, those lines between the axis and the boundary of the egg should be deeply scored upward in the upper half and downward in the lower. They are parallel to the preceding set of lines, at forty degrees from the axis. The lower point should mark the *mūlādhārara-cakra* of Viṣṇu; the upper marks the centre of Brahmā's middle face. The reason for this correspondence has been explained in stage 16, when we drew the two halves of the Brahmāṇḍa: it is the seat of the *māyā-śakti* in the anatomy of the god and the centre point of the omnidirectional faces of Brahmā, maker of the *māyā* which we perceive. This relative world of our perceptions is governed and limited by time, and so the lines emanating from the heads of Brahmā [J1-JR and J1-JL] should support the gods of the luminaries by which WC know and measure time, namely Sūrya the sun and Candra the moon. And since all that is controlled by time is perishable, as we mortals are, they should be seen ascending from the maker of the temporal universe into the region of influence of Śiva, who is sometimes called Mahākāla or Kāla, Time itself, for it is he who reduces this universe to its original state.

21. The fifth points on the axis [K2 and K1] are marked by the apices of the second isosceles triangles a further 1.5 units from the centre, one half unit from the base and top of the egg. The potential lines through these points, and their significance, we have discussed in stage 15: they mark the moment of the beginning- of the creative process between the feet of Viṣṇu at the lower end, and the moment of universal destruction in the face or mouth of Śiva at the upper. Śiva as Kāla should appear as the *kālayogin*²⁸ seated with erect phallus and with an aureole of fire about his head, for he is the very personification of *kālāgni*,²⁹ the universal conflagration. This circle of fire marks the upper end of the dual universe: just as the horizontal waters form its basis. The Great Fire of Śiva Mahākāla is reflected in the haloes of the sun and moon, the

luminaries that in their motions and phases count the passing of relative time, controlling the temporal universe of Brahmā from whom they spring.

22. The tree within the egg is now geometrically complete. The egg or Brahmāṇḍa has been constructed in two parts, by joining two ellipses, all in accordance with our inherited understanding of the form of the universe (stag-r 16). It is to be represented floating upright upon the fertile waters which are in the shape of two *nāgas* intertwined in copulation. Within the egg stands the tree. Now this tree, which we have incised deeply on the block as our guide in making the image, is the *aśvattha* as known to the sages of the *Upaniṣads*:

vṛkṣa iva stabdho divi tiṣṭhaty ekas

tenēdam pūrṇam puruṣeṇa sarvam/[Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 3.9cd]

'Like a lone tree planted in heaven he stands;

By him, the Spirit, all this (universe) is tilled.'

Therefore we have inscribed the form of a tree on the block: it is a likeness of the universal Spirit (*puruṣa*) which tills all, as the tree with its roots and branches tills the egg-shaped universe.

ūrdhvamūlo 'vāksākha eṣa 'śvatthaḥ sanātanaḥ

tad eva śukraṃ tad brahma tad evāmṛtam ucyate

tasmin lokāḥ śritāḥ sarve tad u nātyeti kaścana/

[Kāṭha Upaniṣad 6. 1]

'Roots raised, branches below, this is the everlasting fig tree.

That is spoken of as The Pure, as *Brahman*, as the Undying.

On that all worlds depend-none goes beyond that.'

In the same way our tree, inscribed on the block, has ramifications above and below the transverse centreline, which are its roots and branches. As it is said in the *Upaṅśad* that all existence depends upon this tree, our image carved on the form of the tree (filling the egg) will truly represent the entire universe, for beyond it there is nothing else.

...ūrdvamūlaṃ tripād brahma śākhā kāśavāyavagnyudakabhūmyādaya eko

śvatthanāmaitad brahmaitasyaitat tejp yad asā ādityaḥ...

[Maitrāyaṇi Upaniṣad 6.4]

...Brahman, three-footed, its roots raised, its branches (being) space, air, fire, water, earth and so forth, is called the lone fig tree: this is *Brahman*. Yonder sun is this brilliance it has...

The sage has here identified the tree, root and branch, with *Brahman*. The roots are said to be above. And the three feet of *Brahman*, referring to the last two ramifications of the roots and the central end of the trunk, are the three parts into which the sun is said, in the preceding section of the teaching (6.3), to have divided itself: *sa tredhātmānaṃ vyākuruta*. The sun, is the brilliance of *Brahman* (*... tad brahma taj jyotiḥ yaj jyotiḥ sa ādityaḥ*) to which man aspires. The threefold division of the sun is to accord with the three phonemes of the syllable AUM, which in meditation is to be superimposed upon the sun in order to achieve unity with Brahman. Thus it was taught that the distant (*asau*) sun is this (*etad*) brilliance we see from this world, that is, the effulgence of Brahman, emanating from the roots high above. Our new doctrine, centred upon Viṣṇu, derived from Vedic orthodoxy, and so we preserve this elevated, threefold source of brilliance in our image, but as the three fires of Śiva Mahākāla, Sūrya and Candra, at its apex. Again, in the old teaching, the branches of the tree, which are below, are likened to the gross elements perceptible by man, in a series of decreasing subtlety, from space to earth in five stages. Man was to ascend these branches, in meditation, from gross to subtle and onward, up the trunk, back to the root source in the splendour of Brahman. In our plan of the image of the universe, such an ascent would lead to the conflagration of all we know and the return to

pralaya (explained in stages 15 and 21): the tree we use as our plan is to be conceived as the right way up, not inverted, with Viṣṇu in the place of Brahman among the roots in the lower half and his emanatory forms as the branches above. We retain the ancient metaphor but adapt it to our sculptural and ritual requirements; our authority for this is the Mahābhārata, in which Viṣṇu is identified by name with several mighty forest trees (vanaspati), with such epithets as Nyagrodha or Uḍumbara, in addition to Aśvattha.³⁰

23. The upper half of the egg, then, contains the universe we know in its multiplicity. What elements, symbols or figures shall we place there, among the branches, to represent this universe dependent on the one god below? We have already located the three gods of the central axis, which is the trunk of the tree, in an ascending series (stages 11-21). They are, in order, Hayagrīva Vāgīśvara, Brahmā Lokakṛt, and Śiva Mahākāla Lokakṣayakṛt [Figure 3.1, figures A, B and C respectively]. Branching directly from this trunk of major divinities are four emanations, as we have already observed: The Nṛsiṃha and Varāha avatāras from Hayagrīva [Figure 3.1 (AR) and (AL)], and Sūrya the sun and Candra moon from Brahmā [(BR) and (BL)]. These we have planned and explained in stages 19 and 20: they flank and strengthen the axis at the two potentially weak points of transition, between Hayagrīva and Brahmā, and Brahmā and Śiva. We shall connect them physically, like branches, to the axis or trunk, forming a small tree at the heart of the branches of the entire tree, for this dependent multiplex universe must have its own internal support when projected from the unity of its source in Viṣṇu, even though the great unity pervades all. These seven figures, then, are the first which we place in the upper half of the egg.

24. Now, in populating the remainder let us commence with the lowest branches [in Figures 3.3-3.6 (R-RR) and (R-RL)] which spread outward from the loins of Hayagrīva (stage 17). Here, along the boughs hanging low about the crowns of Viṣṇu we shall represent the *pañcavīras*, the Five Heroes of the Vṛṣṇi clan, the family of Kṛṣṇa, most renowned incarnation of the god. Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa himself stands close to the left crown of the god, dressed as a princely warrior wearing the *channavīra* and carrying his bow and arrows [Figure 3.1, (E)]. As is fitting;

Saṅkarṣaṇa or Balarāma, his elder brother, stands opposite, facing; the right crown of the god (D), holding his well-known emblems, the plough (for he is Halāyudha), the pestle, and his drinking cup. Behind Kṛṣṇa should be his first-born son. Pradyumna, and behind him his own son, Aniruddha, grandson of Kṛṣṇa [both of uncertain iconography: (F) and (G)]. The other son of Kṛṣṇa, the fifth member of the clan, disgraced himself; he is Sāmba, who dressed as a woman and taunted the Lois who cursed him to give birth to an iron club from which came the swords which destroyed Kṛṣṇa's clan in Dvāraka. He, the heretic and cause of the downfall of his own royal house, we shall depict holding a scarf over his head like a woman (H), displaced by the righteous sword of Viṣṇu and separated from his kinsmen by a ṛṣi (I) whose justified curse destroyed him and the four true warriors of the clan. He must be depicted as excommunicated from his honourable kin, the only displaced figure in our image. Thus the lowest branches of the tree are populated.

25. The next two higher branches [(N-NR) and (N-NL) rise from the head of Hayagrīva. Adjacent to him (J) and (K) are two *brahmanas*, practitioners of the ritual of the *Veda* which Hayagrīva and Vāgīśvara incorporates (stage 18). Beyond them on these branches we shall portray the heroes of the epic histories, *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*. Thus on the right should appear the mighty Bhīma (L) with his great battle-mace resting on his shoulder and a pot of nectar in his hand, and beside him the blessed arjuna, his younger brother, who saw God in his terrible multiform aspect on the battle field at Kurukṣetra (M). These two Pāṇḍava princes should wear the crowns of royalty. Bareheaded like hunters, searching for Sītā in the great forest, however, should the half-brothers Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa (O) and (N) respectively, appear opposite them, Rāma carrying his bow and reaching up for an arrow from his quiver. In this way are the priests and heroes arrayed in the first two levels of the branches of the tree.

26. Now the figures (AR) and (AL) nearest the trunk in the third pair of branches [(B-BL) and (B-BR) in Figures 3.3-3.6] should be, as previously explained (stage 19) the Nṛsiṃha and Varāha *avatāras* they rise from the horse-head of Hayagrīva to protect the second stage of the

axis which is the creation of the dependent universe by Brahmā. At the extremities of these branches should be located the gods of the opposed elements, water and fire, for Aśvaśiras Hayagrīva is the fire within the waters, the sun rising from the sea.³¹ In accordance with this, the last figure on the right-hand branch emanating from the head of Hayagrīva (P) is to be Varuṇa, Vedic god of waters, with a canopy of cobra-hoods above his head and his serpent-noose (*nāgapāśa*) strung between his hands. In the same position opposite should appear, Agni, Vedic god of fire, carrying the two sacrificial ladles, *sruva* and the double-ended *sruva*, and cloaked in flames (Q).

27. On the highest branches should be represented Sūrya and Candra (BR) and (BL), as explained in stages 20. 21 and 22, with Śiva at the apex of the trunk between them. In this way we should foliate the tree with heroes, priests and gods to represent in archetypes the perishable, multiplex universe we inhabit, growing from the one imperishable god below in whom all this is united.

28. Within the overlap of four units between the two ellipses (section 17) the lower and the upper universes should merge. This is the area in which the absolute and relative modes of existence connect. The centre of this region, at the intersection of the vertical and horizontal axes, which is also the centre of the whole Brahmāṇḍa [point C in Figures 3.3-3.6], should mark the top of the head of Viṣṇu concealed within his middle crown. This is the highest *cakra* of the god's anatomy, corresponding to the *sahasrāra* where, in a *yogin*, the rising female force, merged with the waiting male principle, brings about the consummation which represents the union of the relative individual and the transcendent absolute, symbolized by the thousand-petalled lotus. In the case of the god the reverse is so, for he is the absolute from which all relative existences emerge. Therefore any creature (whose archetypes emanate from the god) may find its way back to its source in the god by yogic practices. The human *yogin* transcends the *māyā* which the god as divine *yogin* generates. Thus there is intercommunion between the two universes. Now within the crown of Viṣṇu, the feet of Hayagrīva rest upon the *sahasrāra* lotus; its petals are inscribed with the entire Sanskrit syllabary and therefore with

every sound contained in the *Vedas, mantras* and all sacred knowledge. Hayagrīva Vāgīśvara stands upon this lotus for he, as primary emanation from the god, gives voice to all this knowledge as the basis of *dharma* in accordance with which all that further proceeds and proliferates, as the apparently autonomous universe, evolves correctly from its unified source.

29. It is that unity we would worship, in the form of the personal god Viṣṇu Nārāyana. For this reason we represent his image in the lower half of our sculpture, where he can be approached on the temple floor in the course of ritual, and not in the upper half like the *Brahman* of the Upaniṣads which is above, beyond the sun. But, like the *Brahman*, our god is in the roots of the tree which we conceive as the right way up, rooted in the primeval waters, not upside-down as in the *aśvattha* metaphor of the Upaniṣads. But we preserve the basic concept of the tree as far as possible; the modifications are due to the fact that, whereas the teachings of the Upaniṣads relate to meditational techniques, our image is intended for physical worship. Now the unified image of the god is the source and protoform of the multiform universe. We shall depict him seated in such a way that the top of his head, inside his crown, reaches up as far as the horizontal axis dividing the lower from the upper half of the egg; thus the worshipper may imagine that, were the god to stand, the entire manifest universe represented above him would be subsumed in his single body as he rose to this full height. With this concept in mind we have, in planning the sculpture, mathematically related his anatomy to the universe above him: each significant point, all but one [(K2) in Figures 3.3-3.6, the point of contact between the tip of Viṣṇu's robe and the centre of the fertile waters] marking a vital centre (*cakra*) in the body of the god, corresponds, in its distance from the centre of the plan, to a point of bifurcation (*viśākha*) on the axial trunk of the tree above. For this reason we have been careful to reproduce in the upper half the lines of the lower half; if the upper half were to be inverted over the lower, the two halves would be exactly superimposed, branch upon root. Again, if one conceives the lower ellipse as the original egg upon the waters, splitting in half, the upper half when raised reveals the manifold nature of the god residing in the lower half. All this is in accordance with the teaching of Manu who has demonstrated by the art of etymology that the five senses with their

objects and the creative spirit, which together generate life in all its multiplicity, themselves give shape to the creator as a Body out of which those six components of life arise; in contemplating the entire universe, one might say that here is an internally interdependent whole-the one generates the many and the many, in aggregate, give form to their progenitor:

yan mūrtyavayavāḥ sūkṣmās tasyēmāny āśrayanti ṣaṭ/

tasmāc charīram ity āhus tasya mūrtiṃ manīṣiṇaḥ//

Manusmṛti 1.17

In that the six subtle [elements] which are members of his form (*mūrti*) permeate *āśri*) these [several creations]-Therefore the wise call his form the Body (*śarīra*).

This, indeed, is the nature of the body of our god, the source and yardstick of all creation, while yet a unity in himself. So we make the unity as a *mūrti* (image) having a corporeal shape (*śarīra*). That shape we derive from the lines already drawn in our planning of the tree within the egg, by connecting many Intersections in a new network superimposed upon the previous plan (for the creator is more than his creation, while inextricably linked to it) out of which condenses the outline of the Body, the man-like shape of the god Viṣṇu Nārāyana (See Figures 3.5 and 3.6) fixed within the roots of the tree.

30. Now the anatomy of the god thus outlined is explained as follows. His feet are splayed upon the intertwined serpentine, bodies of two *nāgas*, who represent the fertile waters, into which the tip of his garment also hangs at the centre of their convolutions. The *nāgas* should have human torsos, curving around and supporting the base of the lower egg (stage I6), so that they, an be shown worshipping at his feet like children; for they are, indeed, his offspring-it cannot be suggested that the primeval waters pre-existed the god and are therefore greater than he. Manu has explained this: in the darkness before the beginning was the Being-in-Itself, the Self-Existent (Svayambhū) and he, though in being, was as yet unborn and thus unable to give birth Therefore:

so 'bhidyāya śarīrāt svāt sisṛkṣur vividhāḥ prajāḥ/

apa eva sasajādau tāsū bījam avāsrjat//

tad aṇḍam abhavad-d-haimaṃ sahasrāṃśusamaprabham/

tasmiṃ jājñe svayaṃ brahmā sarvalokapitāmahaḥ//

āpo nārā iti proktā āpo vai narasūnavah/

tā yad asyāyanaṃ pūrvaṃ tena nārāyanaḥ smṛtaḥ//

Manusmṛti 1.8-10

He, wishing to produce various offspring from his own body,

In the beginning produced the waters by desiring, then loosed his semen upon them;

That became a golden egg as brilliant as the sun.

And in it hr himself as grandfather of all the world. Brahmā, was born.

It is said 'The waters are Nāra-s', the waters being the sons of Nara [i.e. Svayambhū];

In that they were the first place he went (*ayana*), he is called Nārāyana.

Thus, we show the central pleats of his robe pointing straight downward into the midst of the waters [point K2 in Figures 3.3-3.6] to indicate that he has 'loosed his semen upon them'; this point of insemination corresponds. in the upper half of the plan [point K1] to the face of death, of Śiva as Mahākāla, who by contrast is *urdhvaretas*, for he does not shed his seed (sections 15 and 21). But at the same time that Nārāyana Viṣṇu rests his fret upon the inside of the egg produced by his impregnation of the waters, he also draws upon them in order to grow and expand in the personified universe. The waters are fertile but they have no polarity or direction in themselves. This is why they are to be represented by *nāgas*. The tortuous

couplings of serpents result only in the perpetuation of their species (*uraga*) which imitates a perpetuation of the undulating oceanic state of *pralaya*. Viṣṇu, upright upon these horizontal waters, is the male (Nara, Puruṣa) whose right and left feet symbolically impose definite sexual identities upon them before they are drawn upward to the base of his trunk, the *mūlādhāra*. The process of forming the raw material of existence into a cosmos in his own archetypal image is thus begun. As a tree is *pāda-pa*, drinking through its feet, so the god himself rises in the likeness of a tree. Breaking free of the nether waters into *antarikṣa*, the atmosphere, his trunk branches out to pervade it with his eight arms. These signify the cardinal and intermediate directions of horizontal space. The centrelines of his four upper arms are to be equally distributed through the horizontal to the vertical (90° , at 30° intervals: see Figures 3.5 and 3.6) on either side. His front arms should start from his natural shoulders, the remaining three pairs from successively receding shoulders up to the level of the chin of the profiles of the side-faces, from which points the centre lines of all four upper arms on both sides should emanate (as in Figures 3.5 and 3.6). From the elbow, each forearm should be carved at the angle appropriate for display of the object held in that hand. The hand of the rearmost left arm, extended horizontally and bent upward at the elbow, should support the disc, the *cakra* Sudarśana, which will thus appear below Aniruddha [Figure 3.1(G)], the Unimpeded, by which name the *cakra* itself is also known. Moreover, we know that the *cakra* is the sun, beyond which a man's spirit may by stages be unified with Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, beginning with the encounter with his grandson Aniruddha.³² This *cakra* is also a symbol of universal dominion (the rim is the horizon, *cakravāla*, the six or eight spokes the directions) which is among the regalia of a great monarch, a *cakravartin*, and our god, although four-headed like Brahmā, is not an ascetic with matted locks but a king-wearing a crown and bearing weapons. For the ideal ruler is a mighty warrior, and for this reason his opposite hand, the uppermost right, should wield his great sword, Nandaka, holding it upright as if to strike. In this position its blade will fall among the Vṛṣṇis on the lowest branches of the tree above him, and it should be contrived that it sever the heretic Sāmba [Figure 3.1, (H)], from his kin and displace him (section 24), for the archetypal Sword is Asi, the sword of Dharma. And this shall surely be the lot of an)- man who brings

dishonour on his kin, as depicted here among the deified *kṣatriya* clan of Kṛṣṇa. By means of such graphic symbolism connecting two of the weapons of the god and the universe we know. a worshipper of our image may know his place within the universal scheme and his relationship to his god.

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▪

[remaining hand-held symbols lost]

Like Brahmā, the god should be four-headed, each head facing one of the cardinal directions. As our image is to be a relief work, the same convention as that employed in representing *caturmukha* Brahmā should be used: that is, the central face should look to the front while those on the left and right should present their profiles and the rear face is not represented, its presence being assumed. The central face should be represented in proportion to the rest of his body, but the side-faces should be smaller, commensurate with the distance at which they should seem to be set back from the front face. It is also important that, during the course of the ritual, the worshipper be not confused or distracted: one main, salient face of the god should be presented as the focus of his devotion. From the mouths of the side faces *should issue a vidyādhara* bearing, a word: they represent the breath of the god which is the life-sustaining air (*prāṇa*) filling *antarikṣa*, the uppermost limit of which is marked by their horizontal line of flight. They also herald the doctrine embodied in the god and made explicit in the multiplicity of figures above them: thus they are within the zone of transition between the

absolute and relative universe (section 28). At1 three faces of the god should hr crowned, for he is associated roost closely with the kṣatriya of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, who stand upon the lowest branches adjacent to his crown of kingship (section 241. And the crest jewel of his crown should be a wheel or a flower (for behind the *cūḍāmaṇi* is the *shasrāra-cakra*) in the form of a wheel elevated upon its axle or stalk; for Viṣṇu is the god of the sacrificial stake, within which all the gods are potentially contained, and Viṣṇu is the sacrifice and co-extensive with it.³³ The crown should be decorated with vegetation of the forest from which the stake is cut.

31. Such is the form of the god crouched within the Egg among the roots of the tree. The entire universe is compressed within him, in the lower ellipse; he projects its parts upward, like a branching tree, into the upper ellipse; and the two ellipses are the two halves of the one cosmic Egg. Manu has said of Nārāyaṇa, who is also Puruṣa and that ancient Brahmā who was Svayambhū before the beginning:

tasmin-n-aṅḍe sa bhagavān uṣitvā parivatsaram/

svayam evātmano dhyānāt tad aṅḍam akaarod dvidhā//

tābhyāṃ sa śakalābhyāṃ bhūmiṃ ca nirmame/

madhye vyoma diśaś cāṣṭāv apāṃ ca śāśvataam//

Manusmṛti 1.12-13

That divinity, having rested in that Egg the year round,

He himself by his own thought broke in two the Egg.

And with those two halves he made heaven and earth,

Between them the sky and the eight directions,

and the eternal abode of the waters.

That egg, being in its overlapping halves and as a whole the universe itself that we inhabit, we have recreated in miniature, in the form of our god.

32. Now this image stands upon a plinth so that it may be installed for worship. The height of it is one unit; it should be marked on the plan by drawing a line below the baseline and parallel to it, tangential to the nadir of the arc having as radius the length of the inclined sides of the second isosceles triangle [arc m1; see Figure 3.6].

33. Upon the plinth, outside the Egg, four separate figures should be shown standing. Behind the *nāga* on the left side of the god stands his consort. Śrī Lakṣmī; her long upper garment should be draped casually around her shoulders like a shawl, leaving her breasts bare. [It is this garment which Sāmba, the dissolute Vṛṣṇi, should be shown exhibiting above his head and shoulders in a travesty of womanhood.] Her counterpart on the right of the god should be his bird vehicle, Garuḍa, in human form; the god, though seated, is not seated upon him, and he might be shown peevishly deserting his master, but restrained by a *nāga's* mighty tail. (For serpents and eagles are age-old enemies, and in this manifestation the god has returned to the *nāgas* as his *vāhana* or *ayana*.) Behind these two figures, on the outer edges of the cowed plinth, should stand the god's two *dvārapālas*, Jaya and Vijaya, their faces contemplative, and each holding an offering of the kind acceptable to the god—a fruit and a flower (*Puṣpaphala*)-as examples to his worshippers, for Viṣṇu does not accept blood sacrifices. So the theory and design of our image are explained: the rest is the sculptor's art.

In many points of detail, this reconstruction is inevitably inaccurate and probably laconic. However, it has covered most major aspects of design and iconography in a way which is, I believe, consistent with the theological and mythological horizon and the original intention of the priests and sculptors who designed this remarkable image. The evidently close interrelation between its internal logic and the artistic execution of that logic makes it a superbly realized work of religious art. The care taken over iconographic portrayal and innovatory details—from the invention of the minor incident of a *nāga* trapping Garuḍa to the decision to represent Viṣṇu with

multiple human heads-distinguish it as an original work. Although small in size-it stands a mere 91 centimetres high-as were the multiple Kuṣāṇa images from which it was undoubtedly developed-it contains a total of thirty figures, including only two identical pairs (the *nāgas* and *vidyādhara*s), of which twenty-four are connected to each other within the Brahmāṇḍa, one has eight arms, two are four-armed and another two are three-headed. It is thus the most complex of all known Hindu cult-images, and the best organized. The unification of so many distinct figures in a single image which is aesthetically pleasing and symmetrically proportioned, is the work of a master. Knowingly or not, he based his design upon constructs deriving from inherited cosmic metaphors of great force: the vertical axis (*shambha* or *yūpa*), the branching tree of creation (*nyag-rodha*, or *aśvattha*), the horizon line dividing chaos into a fertile duality (*tiraścīno... raśmir ...uītato*), the egg-form of the universe (Brahmāṇḍa) and its two halves.

In addition to the artistry which so successfully conjoined so many differentiated figures into a single sculpture, there is a three-dimensional aspect to the work which I was unable to rove in the reconstructed '*śilpaśāstra*'. The overall shape of the sculpture is ovoid not only in elevation but also in plan and profile. Viewed from above, the sculpture bulges in a curve from the flat back surface so that the main axial figures-the body of Viṣṇu and the three gods above him-are salient, while the limbs of the god and lesser emanations recede gradually towards the sides; this is most clearly to be seen in the curvature of the plinth and the relative positions of the four figures standing upon it (Plates 57 and 59). In profile, the sculpture has a side-elevation which resembles a segment of an ellipse, rising vertically to the crown of Viṣṇu and then receding in a curve toward the top. These geometrical complexities were apparently presented to the sculptor because of the concern on the part of the designer with the egg-like shape of the universe. The overall resulting form is very like a vertical section of a *bāṇa-liṅga* set in its *pīṭha*, a combination of a naturally occurring (or *svayambhū*) pebble from the Narmadā set upright in a man-made curved pedestal which is probably a very ancient cult object and which would have been familiar to priest and layman alike in southern Gujarat around A.D. 600. The same egg shape, upright

upon the waters, has been represented in Indian painting until modern times as the Hiranyagarbha or Brahmāṇḍa, the 'Cosmic Egg'.

Artistically, the representation of a man seated beneath a tree, or of a vacant throne set beneath a tree; had long been prefigured in Buddhist sculpture. Kuṣāṇa brahmanical art used the form of a tree as an organic model upon which to base the growing and expanding concept of multiple divinities emerging together from a single image. Not until the making of this Śamalājī image, however, was the tree in its entirety-trunk, branches and roots-employed as a template upon which to base representations of the whole content of the universe conceived as an egg. At the intellectual, planning level, the Śamalājī image represents an enormous advance, far beyond the Kuṣāṇa Caturvyūha and related sculptures of Mathura; the potential for development in the Kuṣāṇa designs was clearly grasped and brought to its peak of achievement by the western school while Mathura was chiefly concerned with the evolution of a new aesthetic in sculpture under Gupta patronage. Thus the artistic style of the Śamalājī image is derived from Gupta Mathura and is well illustrated by such features as anatomical form, the iconography of individual figures and the semi-squatting posture of Viṣṇu. The total conception of the image and the thinking behind its design, as outlined in the *śilpaśāstra* above, however, is original, Mathura having nothing to compare with it in either organization or sheer inventiveness of detail. The Gupta attempts at representing Omniform Viṣṇu, such as the crowd of disembodied heads in a mass of flame around the god in the Gaḍhwā relief (Plate 48) or the straggling rows of nearly identical *ṛṣis* with other heads of disproportionate size inserted at different angles within the *prabhāmaṇḍala* of the Bhankari image (Plate 49)) appear clumsy and unsystematically planned beside the precision-so exact that a single (deliberately) displaced figure (H) is immediately apparent-of the Śamalājī sculpture. The fundamental difference between the versions created by the northern Gupta schools and the Western school lies in the degree of intimacy between theology and visual design. At Mathura, there was a wide gap between concept and practice; given the *Gītā* doctrine of Viṣṇu as Viśveśvara Viśvarūpa, Omniform Universal Lord, the Gupta sculptors enlarged an already existing image-type (Viṣṇu with lion

and boar side-heads), expanded the *prabhāmaṇḍala* and crammed it with repetitive groups of similar figures, holding the loose agglomeration together by means of a superbly executed *rakṣāvalī* of busts borrowed from the Śaiva repertory. At Śamalājī, on the other hand, the same doctrine was expressed in an image which drew upon Kuṣāṇa a sculptural tradition hut was completely re-designed. In addition, it appears that the Mathura sculptors were given the eleventh chapter of the *Gītā* as their working text, a visionary description of great literary power hut of little use to the sculptor. At Śamalājī, the *Gītā* appears not to have been used at all, the designers relying rather upon more ancient concepts of universality contained in texts of greater antiquity which spoke of archetypal forms such as the egg and the tree, which the designers were able to adapt freely in planning an image of Viṣṇu as the universal god. Deeply Indebted as they were to Kuṣāṇa design and Gupta style, the Śamalājī artists nevertheless exercised their originality in allowing their theology - a doctrine which appears to have been virtually formalized at the same time as the designing of the image - to govern the planning of the sculpture.

As Shah³⁴ intimates, this is rather an image which might be termed Mahā-Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa than a depiction of the Viśvarūpa or Omniform vision of God granted to Arjuna on the battlefield at Kurukṣetra in the *Gītā*. Inasmuch as it is useful to classify the types of multiple image which are examined in this thesis, the Śamalājī sculpture should be placed under the heading 'Viśvarūpa' as it represents Viṣṇu with multiple heads and emanatory forms. But this is a label of convenience; since the sculpture does not illustrate the vision described in the *Gītā*, another purpose behind its making has to be sought. That purpose was, as I have shown in the reconstruction of a *śilpaśāstra* for the image, to create a miniature cosmos- a microcosm- in terms of the Vaiṣṇava cosmogonic and cosmological doctrines which prevailed in the Śamalājī - Devni Mori region in the sixth century A.D. It is an expository, didactic image, presenting the workings of the universe and its origin alongside mythology and anecdote. In visual terms, it appears to be the sculptural equivalent of a theological treatise intended to bring together all the various strands of belief which contributed to the religious identity of the local Vaiṣṇava

community of the time. In other words, It seems to be a graphic formulation of dogma which, as an image, would serve as a unifying symbol or rallying point, for those who regarded Viṣṇu as their particular god, yet lacked a coherent and systematically codified belief system. The image is thus the precise iconographical equivalent of *purāṇa* text. For the *Purāṇas* were compiled for the very same purpose as that which, as I propose, was behind the making of this image. *purāṇa* is formally required to deal with five topics, called the *pañcalakṣaṇas* or 'five characteristics', all of which are present in the sculpture. They are:

1. *sarga*, the generation (or 'creation') of the universe (the ellipse or egg, its two component ellipses or halves of the egg and the tree within it. in the planning of the image; and the emanation of archetypal life forms as divinities in the sculpture);

2. *pratisarga*, the dissolution and regeneration of the universe Śiva Mahākāla at the apex of the image corresponding to the point of fertilization or polarization of the waters at its base);

3. *vaṃśa*, genealogy of the gods and patriarchs (the strict sequence of emanation of gods from Nārāyaṇa, namely Hayagrīva, Brahmā, Śiva, from whom spring lesser divinities, seers or priests among them);

4. *manvantaras*, the fourteen periods of each Manu making up the *kalpa* (I have made the planning diagram (Figure 3.2) fourteen units high as measured along the vertical axis of the universe; there are seven significant points in each half of this axis, counting the centre and the two extremities: the height of the image may thus represent the *kalpa* or, more likely, the current *manvantara*, seven more of which will end the *kalpa*);

5. *vaṃśānucarita*, the history of the solar and lunar dynasties, the *sūrya*- and *candra*-*vaṃśas* (*Sūrya* and *Candra* are represented- and (BR)- and (BL) - as are Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa of the *sūryavaṃśa* and the Yādavas Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma (Saṅkarṣaṇa) et al., and the Pāṇḍavas Arjuna and Bhīma of the *candravaṃśa*).

From this triumphant local development of iconographical form created in the Kuṣāṇa experimental matrix, I shall now move on to another which, though-less complex in its design and number of combined elements, is iconologically the very Śaiva counterpart of the Śamalājī Mahā-Viṣṇu.

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- 1 There is evidence of three later copies of the Śamalājī sculpture which is to be discussed here: two are in the Baroda Museum (no.2.550 and a fragment, no.2.372) and the third, probably of the early 8th century A.D., has been moved from a private collection in Ahmedabad to the National Museum, Delhi. A pillar relief at Mandasor clearly imitates the Śamalājī images, representing the easternmost direct influence of this Western Indian sculpture. The Mandasor pillar is dated to the late 6th or early 7th century by J. Williams, 'The Sculpture of Mandasor', AAA26, 1972-73, pp.61ff. I have dealt with this material separately: see T.S. Maxwell, 'The Evidence for a Viśvarūpa Iconographic Tradition in Western India, 6th-9th Centuries A.D.', *Artibus Asiae* XLIV.2/3, 1983, pp.213-34 and Plates 1-20. For a more recent appraisal, see S.L. Schastock, *The Śamalājī Sculptures and 6th Century Art in Western India*, Leiden 1985; I have not yet read this work thoroughly, but Dr. Schastok's view of the developmental sequence of Viśvarūpa sculptures from Śamalājī clearly differs from mine, and readers might care to compare the two studies for further debate in the future.
 - 2 This place-name is here transliterated in accordance with the way in which it is pronounced locally.
 - 3 It is now installed in a small shrine - not its original temple - above Viśrāmaghāt, on the east bank of the river Mesvo below a new dam; this shrine is dedicated to Śiva in

the form of a Liṅga named Nīlakṣṭha Mahādeva, behind which the sculpture has been placed as its female counterpart. The image is now known as Kalasī Chokrā ni Mā, 'Mother of Sixteen Children'. My photographs of it decked with flowers for *pūjā* being useless for iconographical analysis, I have relied upon those kindly supplied by Dr. U.P. Shah and the late Mrs Madhuri Desai, supplemented by my own notes made on the spot. Excellent photographs in Schastok, *The Śamalājī Sculptures*, Figs.34, 35-37.

- 4 Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India*, Plates 43.
- 5 H. Hartel, *Indische Skulpturen I*, Berlin 1960, Plate 15. A similar posture was adopted by other Kuṣāṇa deities, mainly female, such as Hārītī and Lakṣmī(e.g. Mathura Museum nos. 17.1301 and C.30), but a suatting goddess is unlikely to have been the model for an image of Viṣṇu.
- 6 D.B. Disalkar, 'Some Brahmanical Sculptures in the Mathura Museum', JUPHS V., 1 January 1931, Plate 3 and pp. 23-4; Disalkar also notes an image of Viṣṇu (Plate 4) seated in a posture very similar to that of the Musānagar Śaiva relief.
- 7 U.P. Shah, 'Some Early Sculptures from Abu and Bhinmal', BMPGB 12, 1955-56, p. 55.
- 8 Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, p. 25.
- 9 *Ibid.*, Plates 61 and 62 and notes, p. 46.
- 10 *Ibid.*, Plates 86 and notes, p. 48.
- 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.
- 12 U.P. Shah, *Sculpture from Śamalājī and Roda*, BMPGB 13(Special Issue, 1960), p. 70.

- 13 *Supra*, Note 1.
- 14 The position may be *ālīḍha*; this is a vexed question. See J.C. Harle, 'Remarks on *Ālīḍha*', *Mahāyānist Art after A.D.900*, Colloquies on Art and Archaeology in Asia No.2, Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, University of London 1971.
- 15 This may not have been a wig in reality, but it resembles one. See Harle, *Gupta Sculpture*, Plate 28 and note, p. 39.
- 16 T.S. Maxwell, 'Lākhamaṇḍal and Triloknāth: The Transformed Functions of Hindu Architecture in two Cross-Cultural Zones of the Western Himalaya', *Art International* XXIV.1-2 (September-October 1980), pp. 15-18 and note 5, Plates 4-7A.
- 17 See M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, New Edition, Oxford 1989, p. 1245, the root *śrij* and noun *śriṣṭi*. Also A. Bharti, *The Tantric Tradition*, London 1965, p. 212: 'For 'creating' does not exist in Indian thought in any sense of '*creatio*'; i.e. '*ex nihilo*': 'manifestation', 'emanation' or a similar term should be agreed upon instead of 'creation' whenever Indian thought is under discussion'.
- 18 E.W. Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, Strassburg, Berlin 1915, p.205, notes a *Mahābhārata* reference to Viṣṇu in this connection: 'It is as the embodiment of space with four or ten directions that he is called four and eight and even ten-armed.'
- 19 This comparison is not fanciful on any part. See again Note 202 to Chapter 1.
- 20 A. Mookerjee, *Tantra Āsana, A way to self-realization*, Basel, Paris, New Delhi 1971, notes in a caption (p.47) that the 'golden cosmic egg... divides itself into two parts forming the twenty-one regions of the cosmos.'
- 21 As illustrated in the Śeṣaśāyīn in panel on the Gupta 'Daśāvatāra' temple at Deogarh, to take a roughly contemporary example.

22 Translation of A. Kaegi, of which I am very fond, in *The Rigveda: The Oldest Literature of the Indans* (Zürich 1880) translated into English by R. Arrowsmith, 1886, p. 90.

23 The sculpture is curved in plan, as well as in elevation, like an egg... I cannot take this into account here; but it is evident that the designing of the image was even more complicated than my diagrams suggest.

24 *Vedagarbha*, full of the Veda'; 'N. of Brahmā (also transferred to Viṣṇu)' - Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p.1015. An ideal term for Viṣṇu in this image.

25 Epithets from Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p.197; being epic, they would have been well known in the late 5th century, when this image was made.

26 Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* p. 511.

27 This term is discussed by S. Gupta 'The Caturvyūha and the Viśākha-yūpa in the Pāñcarātra', *BV(ALB)* 35.3-4 (December 1971), p. 204 and notes.

28 Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p.278.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 279.

30 Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 208.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 203-4.

32 *Ibid.*, P. 206.

33 *Taittirīya-saṃhitā*:

6.3.3.1 ...vaiṣṇavo vai devatayā yūpaḥ ...

'The pots has Viṣṇu for its deity.'

6.1.4.4 ... yajño vai viṣṇur yajñenaiva yajñaṃ saṃ tanoti ...

Viṣṇu is the sacrifice; verily he unites the sacrifice with the sacrificer.'

(Translation of A. B. Keith, The Veda of the Black Yajus School, Harvard Oriental Series 19, Harvard 1914, pp. 516 and 490.)

34 BMPGB (Special Issue, 1960).

THE PAREL HEPTAD

A Complex Śaiva Experiment in Western India

At about the time the Śamalājī image was being formulated, or slightly later, a Śaiva iconographical development of equal originality though of less complexity was commenced some 550 kilometres to the south. It is a colossal sculpture (Plate 61) which was not quite completed. Today it is housed in an annex to the Caṇḍikā Devī temple in the suburb of Parel in Bombay, not far from where it was found. It is regarded as a goddess, the Twelfefold Mother (Barah Mātā). Its composition is clearly derived from Types A and B of Kuṣāṅga invention.

A vertical series of three standing figures forms the axis (Source no. 2A); from behind the lowest emerges a second standing figure and the topmost similarly rises from behind him, in an arrangement very like that sculpted on the sides of the N5nd column. Its more immediate antecedent, however, is the Śamalājī sculpture; as noted in analysing that image, there is an 'independent' pattern within the total pattern of over-lapping deities in the, *prabhamaṇḍala*, consisting of the central vertical register of three figures [see Śamalājī Nimbus Key Diagram (Figure 3.1) (A), (B), (C)], with a pair of emanatory figures emerging from both A and B [(AR) and (AL), (BR) and (BL)] in a *pratyāliḍha pasture*. This central pattern in the nimbus of the Śamalājī image is imitated in the Parel sculpture, but on a colossal scale, the whole composition standing about 348 centimetres high.

From behind the shoulders of each of the two lower figures (which I shall term (A) and (B) in

the Parel image also) emerge two more figures, curving outward and upward; the way in which their torsos and faces are turned to look back toward the figure from which they emanate recalls the Kuṣāṇa figure of Saṅkarṣaṇa/Balarāma in the Caturvyūha sculpture at Mathura (Plate 12). What is visible of the legs of these side figures suggests that the lower two (referred to here as AR and AL) are intended to be seen in the full flying posture, while the upper two (BR) and (BL) appear to be in a very relaxed position, perhaps simply *a tribhāṅga* posture, represented at an angle from the perpendicular. Thus the former pair seem to be bursting out energetically from behind figure (A), whereas the latter two give an impression of floating effortlessly above them, while still connected to figure (B) and slightly overlapping the apical figure (C).

None of these seven male figures is crowned; all have long hair arranged in various styles. All carry the ascetic's waterpot (*kamaṇḍalu*) in the left hand and make a formal gesture (*mudrā*) with the right. Although the figure at the top (C) has ten arms, its lowest pair of hands displays the same characteristics as those of the six two-armed figures beneath it: the right hand is posed in a *mudrā* while the left holds a *kamaṇḍalu*. Leaving aside, for the moment, the additional eight hands of this apical figure, I shall begin with a description of all seven figures, starting from base, as if all were two-armed.

The central figure at the bottom is the only one to be represented full length. It stands upright, naked but for a long lower garment reaching almost to the ankles with a rolled waistband (which has no fold below the navel as in the Śamalājī image) a loop of which hangs across the lower thighs. A central fold falls straight from the waistband to a point between the ankles. It is a garment which, if the figure were seated, would closely resemble that of the Śamalājī image. The throat bears the conventional *trirekha* mark of beauty. As ornaments, the figure wears only simple bracelets, armlets, a thin necklace and ear pendants. Its most impressive decorative feature is a massive coiffure: a tall *jaṭā-mukuta* with an intricate central diadem and a curved band above it, from the top of which rope-like *jaṭās* fall on either side, ending in stylized curls before they reach the shoulders. The anatomy looks robust, but not

heavy, and the overall appearance of the figure is very neat. The face is contemplative, the eyes closed, the features possessed of a sensual quality to which no expression is given; the impression received is that the figure man or deity-is self-contained, withdrawn, yet full of active potential. If the bust of this figure is considered in isolation above the line of the doubled legs of the figures to its left and right (AL) and (AR), a similarity of feature and-so to speak-mood' between it and the colossal bust of Śiva (with three heads) in the main cave on Elephanta Island can be seen, although the latter is more ponderous and more richly ornamented (Plate 62).

All seven figures have similar faces-also bearing comparison with the central (Sadyojāta) face of the Elephanta colossus-and body ornaments, but differ in dress, where this can be seen, and coiffure. No hairstyle other than that of (A), however, resembles that of Sadyojāta at Elephanta. This full-length figure at the base of the composition holds a *kamaṇḍalu* balanced on the curled fingers of the lowered left hand, palm outward, the neck of the pot leaning sideways against the wrist between the base of the thumb, which is folded across the bulb of the pot, and the bracelet. The right hand is held up to shoulder level, its thumb and damaged index linger forming a circle in the *vitarka or vyākhyāna* (teaching) *mudrā* with an *akṣmālā or rosary* looped around the edge of the hand and across the palm to be held, originally, between the tips of the index finger and thumb. The figure thus appears to be that of an ṛṣi or important sage, standing in a hieratic posture, who is a teacher of some religious doctrine.

Figure (B) is visible above the head of (A) only from the level of the navel upward: the outer edges of its thighs, however, can be seen on either side of the head of (A), indicating that this second figure is to be regarded as standing. There is a loop of rolled or pleated material to the immediate right of the edge of the right thigh, but this belongs to figure (AR), being a loop of its waistband streaming out to emphasize the vigour of its horizontal flight. Nothing can be surmised concerning the dress of figure B except to say that an unfinished bulge around the

hips indicates that a lower garment of some kind was to have been suggested. The bracelets, armllets and ear ornaments are the same as those of (A), but the necklace is a wider solid circlet. The hair is arranged in a manner very similar to the style of (A), but lacks the intricate diadem, which is replaced by a jewelled or beaded band which holds together the mass of piled-up hair and draws it back from the brow. The left hand, palm outward like that of (A), holds a *kamaṇḍalu*, but here raised to waist level, and dangles the pot almost casually by its neck between the curled index and middle fingers. The right hand is lower than that of (A), being raised to the right breast, where it forms precisely the same *vitarka* or *vyākhyāna-mudrā*, with an *akṣmālā* between the tips of the thumb and index finger, but turned inward against the body.

Figure (C), at the apex of the composition (Plate 61), is similar to the two below it, with variations, as in their case, in coiffure and *mudrā* and manner of holding the *kamaṇḍalu*; the main difference lies in its multiplicity of arms, which I shall describe later. The posture, with the edges of the thighs visible on either side of the *jaṭās* of (B) the bulge of a waistband just visible, the bracelets, ear pendants and *trirekha* are all the same. The necklace appears to be less like a torque than that of (B), but heavier than that of (A). The hairstyle is similar in being piled up, but is clearly intended to be rather less carefully groomed: above the bulging hairline, it consists entirely of snake-like tresses spreading hark from the face. A broad crescent, horns upward, is set upon the front as a diadem. Both forearms are symmetrically raised to shoulder level (concealing any *keyūras*, which may be imagined upon the upper arms). The front left hand holds a *akṣmālā* in the same casual grip as does that of (B) but, as the arm is raised, the hand is shown palm upward. The front right hand, presented edge-on, is broken: the little finger is clearly visible, tilted backward, and the next two fingers appear in the photographs as a single projection above it. An *akṣamālā* is looped around the outer edge of the hand, running under the base of the little finger and up across the palm to where, in my opinion, it was originally gripped between the tips of the now broken thumb and index finger. This *mudrā* would thus have resembled most closely that of (A), but with the palm turned up toward the face.

A progression can be observed in the three modes of holding the *kamaṇḍalu* and in the three variants of the *mudrā*. In three stages, starting with (A), the *kamaṇḍalu* is seen to be raised from mid-thigh level to waist level and then to the shoulder. The *vyākhyāna-mudrā* begins at shoulder level facing the worshipper, is next turned inward against the hod), and finally is tilted back, with its profile presented to the observer, like a mirror directed up at the face of (C). Possibly this sequential raising of the hands should be 'read' in the reverse order, from top to bottom, rather than from the base upward, the series of three figures representing rather a descent (in the manner of the three stages of the descent of the Buddha from the Trayastriṃśa heaven¹) than an ascent. That question must remain open till I come to the interpretation of this image. I have indexed the three figures with the letters A, B, C upward from the base simply to conform to the indexing system applied to similar images discussed previously, so that this sculpture may be compared with them.

The two lower side-figures (AR) and (AL), spring from behind (A) in vigorous flight, the trailing leg as far as the upper thigh in each case hidden by one of the shoulders of the standing figure, while the leading leg is horizontal and bent double, the knee projecting forward and the foot bent back below the crotch. The torso and head of each is turned slightly back toward figure (A), their source. Their hairstyles are nearly identical, the hair being drawn tightly back from the brow and the sides of the head before rising in a profusion of snail-like curls and falling then behind the ears in long braids or ringlets. Each wears a single-strand necklace like that worn by (A), and each has a rolled waistband, which suggests a similar, if not identical lower garment. Both have their right hands raised to shoulder level, as does (A), but forming an *abhaya* or similar *mudrā*, which is seen in three-quarter profile from the front. A roughly cut rosary lies across the palm of each *abhaya* hand near the base of the fingers. Figure (AR) holds a *kamaṇḍalu* at waist level in a manner similar to the grip employed by (B), but holds the neck between thumb and index finger. His counterpart, figure (AL), has a much firmer grasp on the waterpot, holding its neck in his left fist on a level with his chest. It seems that these two figures

were intended to be regarded as identical, except for the obvious difference in the manner of holding the *kamaṇḍalu* and a subtle flexion of the fingers of the right hand of (AL).

Rising gracefully from behind the shoulders of (B) appear two more side-figures which I have designated (BR) and (BL). They appear to be leaning outward from the centre in a pronounced but casual *tribhaṅga* posture: their ascent is effortless, unlike the dynamic flight of the two figures below them. Of the straight leg which, had they been standing instead of floating, would have borne the weight of the body, only the upper thigh is visible above the shoulders of (B); the bent leg, which tilts the hips and gives the impression of dehanchement, is concealed from mid-calf level behind the forearms of the figure from which they emanate. The head and shoulders of each IS turned gently toward the centre, the eyelids seeming to bend the gaze back down upon the head of (B). Again, the coiffures are very similar: the hair is in each case parted in the middle and drawn around the sides of the head, above which it seems to be coiled once more around the head and fastened in the centre either with a small diadem or a swept-up lock of hair, from which projects a topknot, whence long braids or tresses hang down to the shoulders. They each wear a solid circlet around the neck in imitation of that worn by their source, (B), plain *keyūras* with an upward point above the bicep, bracelets and ear ornaments. Their dress consists of what appears to be a short kilt, but a second hem stretched at an angle below the top of the garment suggests that it is in fact a long *adhomśuka* folded up and tucked into the waistband, as if they had, as Indians still do, 'girt up their loins' before some exertion or prior to fording a stream. One end of this garment, or perhaps a separate shawl, appears draped around the upper arm of (BL) below the *keyūra* and coiled around his forearm. Thus far, they are virtually identical. The differences between them lie both in the manner of holding the waterpot and the way in which the right-hand *mudrā* is displayed. (BR) holds the *kamaṇḍalu* in almost the same grip as does (C), the neck of the pot held casually between the curled index and middle fingers of the upward-turned left hand at shoulder height; opposite, (BL) cradles the bulb of the waterpot in his palm, a grip similar to that employed by (A), but raised to waist level. And whereas *figure* (BR) makes the *vyākhyāna-mudrā* with his hand turned palm-upward (the

only example in the whole sculpture) at waist level, his counterpart displays the same *mudrā* raised to shoulder height, as does (C), but turned slightly outward toward the observer than inward, toward himself.

As these descriptions indicate, the seven inter-connected figures which make up the image are stylized, precisely conceived and idealized depictions of *ṛṣis*, well nourished, perfectly poised and neatly if modestly dressed, ornamented and accoutred. The four side figures appear almost as two pairs of twins, differing mainly in the position of their hands. If they are not twins, then it is clear that the two pairs are intended to be seen (in a spiritual sense at least) as brothers, springing as they do from the same two sources or father figures (A) and (B), who, in turn, are very similar to each other. The lone figure at the top of the composition (C) appears to be the progenitor of these latter two and hence the source of all six figures beneath him.

Now this apical figure, in addition to sharing the attributes of the other six, has the distinction of eight extra arms, as already noted. Apart from the crescent in his hair and his dominant position, these arms and the objects held in the additional hands constitute his only superior distinction. Disregarding now the *mudrā* and *kamaṇḍalu* in his front two hands, which he has in common with the figures below him, the distinctive eight attributes are the following. In the second pair of hands he holds two discs, each supported on its rim by a curved index figure and held upright between the remaining curled fingers in front and the thumb (which is invisible) at the back; this is the manner in which the Śamalājī Viṣṇu holds the *cakra*. That these are solar and lunar symbols can scarcely be doubted. The apical figure of both the Kuṣāṇa multiple Śiva relief at Musānagar and the three-headed Rang Mahal Śiva hold the sun and moon, and I have identified that figure accordingly as Kālarudra; and in the Śamalājī image, the personifications of the same two luminaries, the gods Sūrya and Candra, rise on either side of the apical Śiva.

The third right hand of (C) wields a very long sword (Asi, Sword of Dharma, created by Brahmā who gave-it to Rudra.²) On the left, the corresponding hand holds a small, round shield, its inner side facing the observer and showing the fingers curled around

the horizontal handle.

Above these, the fourth pair of hands hold, on the right, an arrow, delicately poised between extended index and middle fingers, head downward, and on the left a long, double-curved bow; Śiva is Pinākin, owner of the mighty bow Pinākin by means of which he pierced with his single arrow the triple citadel of the demons and so gained the epithet Tripurāntakara.

Of the fifth pair of hands, held above the head, the right holds a second *kamaṇḍalu* upright by the neck between index finger and thumb, the remaining fingers curled downward, as if during a pause in pouring out draughts of its contents, while the corresponding left hand reaches horizontally over his head, the fingers bent downward in what might be described as an *abhiṣeka* or consecration-by-lustration *mudrā*:³ the god anoints himself as Lord (a possible reference to his receiving the celestial Mandākinī upon his head before it flowed on to the earth as Gaṅgā).

Taken in conjunction with the snake-like tresses and the crescent-moon diadem, these symbols leave no doubt that this highest figure is (Kāla-) Rudra-Śiva Maheśvara Tripurāntakara, self-anointed ruler, possessor of *dharma*, slayer of demons, controller of time and, most immediately and relevantly in this case, archetypal *ṛṣi*, which is why it is his front hands that display a teaching *mudrā* and hold an ascetic's waterpot.

Beneath the tree-like configuration of *ṛṣis* (if such they are) below him, seated under the 'branches' formed by the (AR) and (AL), are three *gaṇas*: that on the far right of (A) sings while plucking a stringed instrument which may be a kind of *sāraṅgī*, next to him another plays upon a flute (*veṇu*) with grim concentration, and the third, on the left of (A), plays an ancient form of the *viṇā* (which survives today in Burma and is usually termed the Burmese harp). Behind them on either side stand two other figures who hold either staves or the long necks of other musical instruments. I do not think that these are musical instruments for the simple reason that the

shaft is on the right of the figure in one case and on the left of the other: one of the standing figures is thus left-handed. While it is somewhat unlikely that a lefthanded musician would be represented for the sake of visual harmony (despite their unnaturally lumpish forms, the three Fated *gaṇa* musicians all hold their instruments in a naturalistic manner and all appear to be right-handed), a pair of *dvārapālas* or similar matching figures might well be so depicted, with no loss of naturalism, to achieve symmetry. I suggest that these two standing figures, who are unfinished, were intended to be guards leaning on their staves or maces.

The Parel multiple image is a fairly recent discovery (it was found by workmen in 1931, when it created a minor sensation); it is conceived on a grand scale, standing 348 centimetres in height, measuring 195.6 centimetres in width and being about 61 centimetres thick at the base, tapering to 30.5 centimetres at the top;⁴ and it is enigmatic, being both a unique image and an unfinished one. The account of public reactions to its discovery⁵ reads like an instructive parable on perception. After being manhandled to a nearby Hanuman temple,⁶ in the course of which some breakage occurred,⁷ the sculpture was left on display while the authorities decided what to do with it. Pious Hindus came in crowds to worship it, as described by the English principal of a Bombay art school:

It has been fenced off with a light barrier to enable the devotees to take their turns in thronging before it—a colourful and interesting scene. The sculptures [*sic*] would soon be buried under the fragrant offerings lavished on them, were it not that the guardians remove the excess of floral tributes from time to time to enable the great slab of stone to be presented to the gaze of the crowd that surges around it.⁸

This gentleman, whose artistic eye recorded the social scene more accurately than the image

itself, expressed the hope that it would be installed in the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay. Scholars, meanwhile, were also on the scene almost immediately, and rushed articles into print: Heras,⁹Aiyangar,¹⁰ Acharya¹¹ and Zieseniss¹² added their descriptions to that of Captain Gladstone Solomon of the art school in newspapers and journals, Father Heras leading the field with an article in the *Times of India* live days after the discovery. No two eyewitness descriptions agreed, and no one could agree upon an identification of the image, which was erected (but not worshipped, since it had been damaged)¹³ as a Mother Goddess in an annexe to the nearby shrine of Caṇḍikā Devī, the Prince of Wales Museum having to content itself with a plaster cast. Whereas those who installed the image have, evidently, been mistaken as to its sender, they have correctly counted the total number of figures in the composition, which is twelve: Heras, Gladstone Solomon and Zieseniss- at least two of whom had personally inspected the sculpture- counted the number of *gaṇas* on the base incorrectly.

This minor but significant error of observation is enlarged when the interpretations are examined. Heras, the first to be published, simply states: 'The image represents a *Mahesamurti*, viz, the full manifestation of Shiva, as the cause of creation, protection and destruction of the world' (respectively personified by (A), (B) and (C)). The side-figures are dismissed as 'heavenly beings'. No substantial evidence is adduced.

To a curator of the Prince of Wales Museum, G. V. Acharya, who went to see the sculpture during and after excavation, is owed the explanation of the small amount of damage done to the unfinished image (it occurred when the sculpture was man-handled by labourers, in heavy rain on a muddy slope, from their work site to the Hanumān temple). In addition, it was Acharya who provided the first accurate measurements and a fair description (he counted the *gaṇas* correctly- and saw that (C) has ten arms, not eight as Heras asserted). He was also honest enough to point out that 'During this short interval'-his article in *The Indian Daily Mail* appeared only a few days after Heras' piece-'it is not possible to dive deep into the texts of Hindu Iconography and, therefore, I have put before the public my first impressions

about the panel so that other scholars and experts may find it easy to cooperate in the attempt at positive identification.' His only personal suggestion as to the identity of the image is equally modest: 'Tentatively I am inclined to take this to be one of the various forms of Mahesha described by T. Gopinathrao in his "Elements of Hindu Iconography".' Such a multiple Śaiva composition is not, however, described in Gopinatha Rao's opus.

Kramrisch¹⁴ included this recent discovery in her book *Indian Sculpture*, published in 1933. She referred to it merely as a 'Śivaitic image'¹⁵ and offered no definite identification, summing it up in the following terms:

The image from Parel is based on the meaning of the liṅgam, or Yakṣa and yoga power. It visualizes Śiva not with the cosmical suggestiveness of the Naṭarāja image. This shows Śiva in his everlasting activity beheld from without. The image from Parel shows Śiva realized from within his state of power.¹⁶

Clearly such a grandiose and well-organized sculpture was not formulated and undertaken purely on the basis of such an abstraction, although it may be fair enough as general comment.

In the *Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology* for 1931, Alexander Zieseniss reviewed the opinions put forward by the first few scholars to write about the image and advanced his own interpretation. This is presented in scholarly tone, but some slips in Zieseniss' own description of the sculpture indicate that it should be treated with caution. For example, in describing the side-figure (BR), he states of its right arm that it 'is broken at or immediately above the wrist, so that the *mudrā* cannot now be determined.'¹⁷ This is not true. The image is slightly damaged in several places, especially the hands and fingers, as I have indicated in my description (no doubt as the result of man-handling, as recorded by Acharya), and no restoration has been carried out, nor does the right hand of figure BR-for it is definitely there-show any sign of being a recent

addition or a recutting of the original stone. Zieseniss was clearly misled by the unique manner in which this hand displays the *vyākhyāna-mudrā*, namely upside-down, which necessitates a sudden downward turn of the palm that can look like a break. Moreover, the photograph used to illustrate his article was taken in strong light directed from the right side of the base of the image, which leaves that *mudrā* in deep shadow. This suggests that the writer relied more upon a single piece of photographic evidence than upon his own direct observations.

Zieseniss' interpretation is that the image represents Śiva as the three *guṇas* (A), (B) and (C) upon which are superimposed the five elemental or cosmic forms of the god, (A) plus the side figures (AR), (AL), (BR) and (BL). But his interpretation has to be quoted *in extenso*:

In the Śaiva Purāṇas [here reference is made to Passages in the *Liṅga and Śiva Saura Purāṇas* of the three the *Liṅga* is reckoned by O'Flaherty¹⁸ to be the oldest, dating from A.D. 600, which makes its earlier portions old enough to have become accepted wisdom at the time the Parel sculpture was begun] Śiva is said to be Viṣṇu in his *sāttvika aspect*, Brahmā in his *rājasa*, and Kālarudra in his *tāmasa* aspect, while in his aspect beyond *guṇas* he is Maheśvara. This definition agrees well enough with the characteristics of the three figures of the main group, [by which is meant figures A, B and C] with this difference that stress has been laid on the Maheśvara aspect of Śiva by means of the general resemblance of the figures to each other. The Kālarudra aspect of Śiva is easily recognized in the many-armed figure, while the waterjar identifies the, second member of the triad [figure B] as the Brahmā aspect of Śiva. The similarity of the *mudrās* shown in the right hands of the first and second figures [*viz.*, A and B] has already been pointed out by Professor Heras.

The four secondary figures still remain to be discussed. On account of their marked resemblance to the central figure [by which Zieseniss means figure A] especially in the *mudrā*, they can hardly be described simply as heavenly beings [a reference to Heras' article cited above]. It is much more likely that they must be taken together with the centre figure

and that they are the four secondary manifestations of Śiva Pañchamurti: Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Tatpurusha and Aghora. The centre figure [A] would then be īśāna (also called Viśvarūpa), the primary constituent of the Pañchamurti form who at the same time appears in the guise of the Vishnu aspect of Śiva. The absence of the usual attributes which characterize the four manifestations can easily be explained by the strongly marked tendency towards unification which has already been referred to as an outstanding trait of the sculpture. Its subject would thus be a combination of the Pañchamurti and Maheśvara aspects of Śiva that is somewhat reminiscent of the later conception of Sadāśiva (-*tattva*) and Maheśvara (-*tattva*) as successive stages in the Descent of the Divine, found already in the *Kailāśasaṃhitā* of the *Śivapurāṇa* and well-known to the Śaiva-siddhānta and the Kashmirian Trika.¹⁹

This is also the interpretation placed upon the image by Zimmer in his lectures at Columbia University in 1942. It has thence been popularized, after his death, in a book constructed from his lecture notes by Campbell,²⁰ who failed to trace Zimmer's source back to Zieseniss and hence could not give the latter's text-references. For reasons best known to himself, Campbell also published Heras' post-excavation photograph of the sculpture, in the same book, as a negative print.²¹ Zimmer's name has thus, sadly, been associated with nothing more original than a rewriting of one of the first hasty interpretations made in 1931 or shortly thereafter.

Zieseniss' explanation of the image has to be criticized on the following, grounds. To take the three axial figures (A), (B) and, (C), first, it is scarcely credible that a full-length image of 'Viṣṇu' (A) and a bust of 'Brahmā' (B) should appear quite devoid of their most characteristic iconographic features. There is nothing remotely Vaiṣṇava in the iconography of (A). (I have mentioned the similarity of its garment to that of the seated Śamalāji image, but this is merely a likeness of dress: not of iconographic symbolism.) As for (B), it is true that images of Brahmā conventionally hold a *kamaṇḍalu*, but the torso is normally crossed by an antelope skin, *yogapaṭṭa* or at least a *yajñopavīta* (for example, see Plates 35 and 37) while three or four heads have characterized representations of this god from the beginning of his iconographical

development. As this figure in the Pare1 sculpture is fully visible from the waist upward, there can have been no technical reason for their omission had the intention been to depict Brahmā. Nor, in an image of the complexity proposed by Zieseniss, would there have been any ideological reason for suppressing these iconographic features: if, as he points out, it was known that the god Śiva is composed of the three *guṇas* in the guises of Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Kālarudra, then there could have been no cause for hesitation in representing the first two of these deities in all their usual regalia, especially as they are vertically conjoined (in what Kramrisch²² terms a 'compositional liṅgam of the three superimposed figures') with a dominant, ten-armed image of unquestionable Śaiva iconography.

Much the same argument can be applied to Zieseniss' identification of the four side figures as Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Tatpuruṣa and Aghora-Bhairava. Each of the peripheral aspects of the fivefold elemental form of Śiva had been plainly differentiated in iconography since Kuṣāṇa times, as the development of the Caturmukhaliṅga clearly demonstrates (Plates 18-22). In a Śaiva image, there could be no justification for rendering these four faces in a virtually identical manner.

The last part of the counter-argument is the most telling. To superimpose Śiva as the three *guṇas* with Śiva as the live gross elements in an image consisting of only seven figures must mean that one of these figures has to bear a double identity, as Zieseniss fearlessly points out: figure (A) has to be imagined simultaneously as Śiva in the guise of Viṣṇu representing the *sattva-guṇas* and as the fifth and highest aspect of the Śaiva elemental pentad, *tīśāna*, representing *ākāśa* (with his feet planted firmly on the ground). Such a complicated and ambiguous burden of symbolism cannot, surely, be attributed to the simple two-armed sage at the base of the sculpture. Moreover, if such a coalescence of three figures with five figures had in fact been the object, it would clearly have been more in keeping with Śaiva numerology to make a multiple image with all eight figures separately represented, so conforming, at least in numbers, to the *aṣṭamūrti* (Eight-Bodied) conception of the god.

It might have been suggested-although this has not been proposed by any of the authorities cited-that the apical figure (C) could represent both the *tamogūṇa* as Kālarudra and the īśāna of the pentad associated with *ākāśa*. The other identifications put forward by Zieseniss might then be acceptable, if one were to view the entire image as a personified Caturmukhalinga, the central Liṅga consisting of three gods one above the other with the four elemental aspects, normally appearing as faes, springing out of it. Such a theory, showing the image as a dynamic expression of the normally rather undramatic and columnar four-faced Liṅga, has its attractions and, as I shall indicate below, I think there is a complementary ritual connection between this image and the Liṅga. But the absence of clear iconographical distinctions in such a multiple image remains inexplicable in terms of this theory; for even if represented with all their characteristic attributes and anatomical peculiarities, Viṣṇu and Brahmā (A) and (B), would still have been surrounded and dominated by five more figures of obvious Śaiva iconography, leaving no doubt as to the cult affiliation of the image. I must therefore reject both this theory and the interpretation of Zieseniss.

Despite all the words printed by various scholars extolling its aesthetic qualities, only one straightforward interpretation of it has been published, namely that the sculpture depicts Śiva *saptasvaramaya*, who is Composed of the Seven (Musical) Notes.²³ This theory might appear to derive some support from the fact that at least three of the small *gūṇas* on the base are depicted playing musical instruments. The arguments against this interpretation, which is advanced by C. Sivaramamurti, are these:

1. Not one 'embodiment of the seven principal musical notes'²⁴ - not even the ten-armed figure at the top-holds anything resembling a musical instrument.

2. None of the seven major figures is depicted in a dancing posture, which might have lent some weight to the concept of an image of Śiva as embodiment of the musical scale.

3. The very idea of a musical note being personified as an *ṛṣi* or a divinity is unknown in Hindu iconography unless this is the sole, colossal, exception.

4. If the number of literary references to a deity in a particular form is an index of its popularity, the Saptasvaramaya epithet of Śiva shows it to be a very rare form indeed, unlikely to find expression in sculpture as an object of worship.

5. Finally, diminutive figures of musicians are often represented accompanying images of Śiva dancing and, as a dancer, he may well be said to embody sacred music and ritual chant; but, as I have remarked, none of the seven figures above the *guṇa* musicians in this image is dancing—the little 'orchestra' seems to be singing the praises of the main multiple figure (or perhaps only those of (A) to whom two of the musicians raise their eyes), not generating the notes which the seven figures embody.

It is, surely, impossible to regard the trio of players seated on the base of the sculpture, with their grotesque faces set upon baby-like bodies, as the serious exponents of a musical system which requires personification by such a solemn heptad of conjoined figures rising from their midst; there is a comical contrast between the figures on the plinth and those constituting the main image, rather than a serious musicological connection.

The most recent interpretation of the Pare1 sculpture is that advanced by D. C. Bhattacharyya,²⁵ who bases his explanation upon *Brahmāṇḍa purāṇa* 22, 23 and 33, and upon Banerjea's formulation of Śuddha-Śaivism or Agamanta-Śaivism,²⁶ which Bhattacharyya terms Śivasiddhānta,²⁷ although Banerjea does not in fact use this word in his famous work at the place cited by Bhattacharyya. To avert confusion, I might point out that the system meant by the two scholars is that treated by Bhandarkar²⁸ under the simple heading of 'The Śaiva System', a concise three-page definition which goes unacknowledged by both writers.

The conclusion reached by Bhattacharyya is that (A), (B) and (C) represent the Āgamantin/Śivasiddhāntin principles of *pāśa*, *paśu* and *pati* respectively, while the side-figures (AR), (AL), (BR) and (BL), 'represent the four offsprings that Śiva begets in each of the *kalpas*. These four are the doubtless personifications of the four *padas* of the *Śivasiddhānto* system: *vidyā*, *kriyā*, *yoga*, and *caryā*.²⁹

Although similar in approach to my own method of interpretation, which follows, the implications of Bhattacharyya's theory make it difficult to accept. In the first place, it is hard to conceive of the principle '*pāśa*' (the 'fetter' which binds the soul of man to material existence) being personified as a *yogin*-like (A), well proportioned, meditative, with *jaṭakalāpa* and *kamaṇḍalu*. '*Pati*', the lord as Śiva, and '*paśu*', the individual soul held back from union with the god by '*pāśa*', might be represented in the forms of a god and a man respectively, But to suggest that an anthropomorphic figure such as (A) in the Parel sculpture is the embodiment of '*pāśa*' is to go too far. *Pāśa* consists of the stain (*mala*) which blinds the soul, of the continuously growing conditioning consequent upon action (*karman*), of the cause of material existence and dissolution and recreation (*māyā*), and of the *rodhaśakti* or blocking force of Śiva himself which, by controlling the preceding three, necessarily and in a sense paradoxically blocks or hinders the unification of the soul with Śiva. These factors, which in aggregate constitute *pāśa*, do not lend themselves to personification in the form of a religious sculpture intended for a ritual setting within a temple.

Secondly, the four emergent side-figures cannot logically be conceived of as 'the four offsprings that Śiva begets in each of the *kalpas*' and simultaneously as the 'personification of the four *padas* of the *Śivasiddhānta* system'. For Śiva's offspring are, according to Bhattacharyya's *Brahāṇḍa Purāṇa* text, named Jaṭin, Muṇḍin, Śikhaṇḍin and Ardhamuṇḍa; these are, clearly, descriptive names which refer only to the heads of the four Sony and mean 'He Having a *jaṭā* Hairstyle', 'He Having a Shaven Head', 'He Having a Tuft of Hair', and 'He Who Is

Half Shaven-Headed', respectively. As all four side-figures in the Parel sculpture have luxuriant heads of hair, three of these identities can hardly be applied to them.

They do seem to be applicable, however, to Caturmukhaliṅgas of Kuṣāṇa type³⁰ (bearing in mind that the four sons are differentiated by the appearance of their heads alone). For example, the cluster of four Kuṣāṇa Caturmukhaliṅgas illustrated in Plates 18-22 show such distinctions: the face on side B (Plate 19) might well be termed Muṇḍin, as it has 'snail shell' curls around the front of the scalp while the pate is bald, and the name Jaṭin would apply to the face on side C (Plate 20) while the bristling hair of the moustached face on side D (Plate 21) might be described as Ardhamuṇḍa (half-cropped). The relationship between the sons of Śiva born in successive *kalpas* and the faces of a Caturmukhaliṅga is a point I shall explore further in my own interpretation. If, as I propose, these, *kalpa*-offspring of Śiva are indeed represented by the four faces of a Caturmukhaliṅga, then it is not only by their hairstyles that they can be differentiated: the expressions on the four faces also differ markedly so in post-Kuṣāṇa sculpture-but the faces of the side figures in the Parel relief are very much alike, having none of the distinguishing characteristics of the separate faces of contemporary Caturmukhaliṅgas, or of the side-faces of reliefs based upon them, such as the colossal example in the cave temple on Elephanta Island, just off the Bombay coast.

On these grounds alone Bhattacharyya's identification of the Parel side-figures as the four different sons of Śiva listed in *Brahāṇḍa Purāṇa* 22.53-5 might be rejected. But to equate them with the four *padas* of Śivasiddhānta compounds the confusion. For these are the four steps or stages through which a Śuddha-Śaiva approaches union with Śiva: from knowing the basic tenets of the system and its *mantras* to initiation and the practice of worship, followed by meditation techniques and then purification and preparation for death and the merging of the soul with Śiva. They might well be personified as four individuals on the various levels of an ascent to union with the divine; but the side figures of the Parel image are paired off on only two levels and do not seem to show a four-stage ascent. Certainly it must be illogical to equate

such human aspirants with the divine all-formed youths (*divyāḥ sarvarūpāḥ kumārakāḥ*)³¹ born from the sides of Śiva in the *Brahāṇḍa Purāṇa* passage quoted by Bhattacharyya.

On these grounds, it is impossible to accept this scholar's interpretation without suspending a belief in the internal logic which governs the iconography of all multiple images which have so far been examined.

No scholar, to my knowledge, has attempted an explanation of this image from the point of view of its probable ritual function and intended position in a shrine. Regarded in this light, a new interpretation of its iconography and a theory of its very *raison d'être* become possible. What follows is necessarily a hypothetical reconstruction; it is bound to be theoretical, as there is no known iconographical text which describes such a sculpture and the Parel image itself was, moreover, never completed or installed in a ritual setting. The following theory seeks to explain the unique form of this image more fully and logically than any of the foregoing interpretations which are also, of course, speculative.

As my text upon which to base an iconological interpretation, I take the *Liṅga Purāṇa*. This text has passages which are similar in content to those quoted or cited by Bhattacharyya, but which, to judge by their terminology, constitute a later version of the same doctrine as that contained in the *Brahāṇḍa Purāṇa*. Thus *Liṅga Purāṇa*³² 1, Chapter 23, speaks of separate manifestations of Śiva in four consecutive *kalpas*, followed by his universal form in a fifth *kalpa*. The names by which he is variously known in these periods are those of the fivefold Śiva whose aspects are related to five elements which proceed from the gross (earth) to the subtle (ether, or space) in *Viṣṇudharmottara* 3.48.1-8 (see above, pp. 58-60), but with the fifth aspect termed Viśvarūpa instead of Īśāna. These names are given in the order Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Tatpuruṣa, Aghora; the preeminent fifth, the source of these four (the *Liṅga* itself in visual terms) is then named Viśvarūpa. It is said that this fifth and universal form is the father of the preceding four and that as they are the sons of Śiva- Viśvarūpa, all creation is fourfold. I

present the text here in diagrammatic form (Figure 4.1), to demonstrate its relationship to the Caturmukhalinga.

Clearly the distribution of the emanatory aspects in the sequence given in the text, when set out in accordance with the conventional plan of a four-faced Liṅga, shows that the *Purāṇa* passage has listed them in an order which runs counter to the usual ritual sequence: instead of proceeding *pradakṣiṇa* or clock-wise, the names run anti-clockwise round the Liṅga (here termed Viśvarūpa). This can scarcely be considered accidental; I shall come to the significance of this reversal presently.

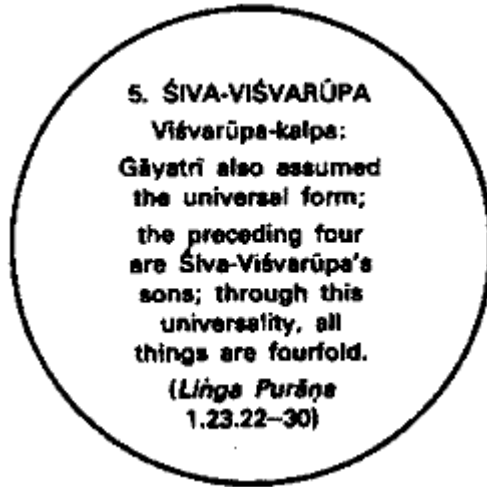
3. TATAPURUṢA

Pīta-kalpa: Gāyatrī, born of Śiva, was yellow (Pīta); Śiva was yellow and assumed the minds of yogins through tapas.

(*Liṅga Purāṇa 1.23.13-17*)

4. AGHORA

Kṛṣṇa-kalpa: Śiva was black (Kṛṣṇa) and was called Kāla and Ghora; to those who know him, he is Śānta and Aghora; Gāyatrī, born of Śiva, was also black and called Brahmāṇī.



2. VĀMADEVA

Lohita-kalpa: Gāyatrī was red (lohita) like a cow and named Brahmāṇī; consequently, Śiva was also red and was called Vāmadeva
(*Liṅga Purāṇa 1.23.7-12*)

(Liṅga *Purāṇa* 1.23.18-
21)

1.SADYOJĀTA

Śveta(-Varāha) kalpa: Śiva was white (*śveta*) and assumed the Sadyojāta form through his own penance. Gāyatrī, born of Śiva, was also white and was called Brahmāṇī. (Liṅga *Purāṇa* 1.23.2-6)

Fig.4.1 Liṅga purāṇa 1.23.. 1-30 set out upon a caturmukhaliṅga plan

The first *kalpa*-emanation mentioned, the Śveta (whose personal name is Sadyojāta), is known in full as Śveta-Varāha-*kalpa*. This is the time period we inhabit. In the next chapter of the *Purāṇa*(24), it is simply referred to as the Varāha-*kalpa*. Now in this present *kalpa*, it is stated, in each of twenty-eight elapsed time-cycles of four yugas (i.e. *mahāyugas*), an incarnation of Śiva has been born (in the Dvāpara or at the transition from the Dvāpara to the Kali), each of whom has had four disciple sons. (This teaching is presented in Table 4.1.) I suggest that the *yuga*-system is here being presented as a reflection of the *kalpa*-system: this is, each four-*yuga* cycle is a scaled-down parallel to the birth of four elemental aspects (sons) of Śiva Viśvarūpa on the cosmic time-scale of *kalpas* explained in Chapter 23 of the *Purāṇa*. In other words, each whole *mahāyuga* (containing four *yugas*) is personified by each incarnation (the smaller equivalent of the great *kalpa* personified by Śiva Viśvarūpa), while the individual constituent four *yugas* are personified by the four disciple-sons of the incarnation (a miniature parallel to the four *kalpas*, born of Śiva Viśvarūpa). Thus time is, in its greater and smaller divisions, fourfold.

This parallelism between *kalpa* and *yuga* and their personifications serves the purpose of bringing the enormity of cosmic time and its ruler, Śiva as Kālarudra, down to a scale which involves man: the most recent incarnation was Lakuli or Lakulīśa, still widely venerated in north India, during the 28th cycle of four *yugas* within the current *kalpa*. The relevance to mankind of this periodic incarnation doctrine (fully expounded in *Liṅga Purāṇa* 1.24)) is brought home by naming the place on earth of most of the incarnations, their *janmasthanas*. The birthplace of Lakulīśa, is well known-it is Kāyāvātāra, also called Kāyāvarohaṇa, modern Karvan in Gujarat. Other famous *janmasthanas* mentioned include Prabhāsa and Vārāṇasī.

Turning back now to Chapter 23 in the *Purāṇa*, it becomes clear why the sequence of the elemental aspects of Śiva, appearing in the cosmic time-scale of *kalpas* within which the *yuga*-based periodicity of incarnation is contained, is not presented there in the usual *pradakṣiṇā* order, but anti-clockwise, as noted above. This is not a ritual circumambulatory progression around the Liṅga but a chronological retrogression from the 'last-born' (*sadyojāta*) son to the first-born (Aghora), and thus back to the source (Śiva-Viśvarūpa) in the Liṅga. By reading the text in this way, the most recent incarnation and the *mahāyuga* which he personifies can be traced back through 27 preceding *mahāyugas* to the beginning of the current *kalpa* in Sadyojāta and thence back further still, *kalpa* by *kalpa*, to the Origin, the Viśvarūpa or Omniform Beginning, which is the eternal axis of every time-cycle. As it stands, the text portion consisting of *Liṅga Purāṇa* 1.23-4 is a whole. It traces, in theological as opposed to ritual order, the Śaiva conception of perpetual divine incarnation. This perpetuation assumes the form of time-periods emanating from one central or axial source, as a father might generate four sons at regular intervals; each of these in turn generates a total of 250 grandsons (the number of *mahāyugas* in a *kalpa*) until his span is ended, whereupon the next generates a further 250, and so forth until the youngest of the four sons (Sadyojāta) is reached. He has so far generated twenty-eight grandsons; and each of these has in turn generated four great-grandsons in the form of the *yugas*, which make up the lifespan of each of the twenty-eight *mahāyuga*-incarnations out of the 250 which will constitute the total progeny of Sadyojāta.

Table 4.1 The Periodic Incarnation Doctrine of Pāśupata Śaivism according to Liṅga Purāṇa 1.24

| In the Varāha- Kalpa: Yuga within each cycle of your yugas | Vyāsa of the yuga | Janmsthāna (place on earth of incarnation*) | Name of incarnation** | | Names of Disciples (referred to as ascetics or sons**) | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---|--------------------|----------------------|
| | | | | | | | |
| 1st cycle, Dvāpara | The Great Lord himself | Chāgala, Himālaya | Śveta ¹ | Śveta | Śvetaśikha | Śvetāśya | Śvetalohita |
| 2nd cycle, Kali | Prajāpati | - | Sutāra | Dundhubhi | Śatarūpa | Ṛcika ¹ | Ketuman ¹ |
| 3rd cycle Dvāpara | Bhārgava | - | Damana | Vikeśa | Vikośa | Vipāśa | Śāpanāśana |
| 4th cycle Dvāpara | Aṅgiras | - | Suhotra | Sumukha | Durmukha | Dardura | Dhṛtikrama |
| 5th cycle Dvāpara | Saviṭṛ | - | Kaṅka | Sanaka | Sanandana | Sanātana | Sanat |
| 6th cycle | Mṛtyu | - | Laugākṣi | Sudhāman ¹ | Virajas ¹ | Śaṅkhapāda | Rajas |
| 7th cycle Dvāpara/Kali | Śatakratu | - | Jaigīśavya | Sārasvata | Megha | Meghavāhana | Bāṣkala |
| 8th cycle | Vasiṣṭha | - | Dadhivāhana | Kapila | Āsuri | Pañcaśikha | Bāṣkala |
| 9th cycle | Sārasvata | - | Ṛṣabha | Parāśara | Garga ¹ | Bhārgava | Aṅgiras |
| 10th cycle Dvāpara | Tripāda | Bhṛgutuṅga, Himālaya | 'Brahmin Sage' | Balabandhu | Nirāmitra | Ketubhṛṅga | Tapodhana |
| 11th cycle Dvāpara/Kali | Trivrata | Gaṅgādvāra | Ugra | Lambodara | Lambākṣa | Lambakeśa | Pralambaka |
| 12th cycle Dvāpara/Kali | Śatatejas | Haituku(-vana) | Atri | Sarvajña | Samabuddhi | Sādhyā | Sarva |
| 13th cycle | Nārāyaṇa | Vālahilya (- tapovana), on Gandhamadana (-parvata) | Vāli | Sudhāman ² | Kāśyapa ¹ | Vasiṣṭha | Virajas ² |
| 14th cycle, Kali | Tarakṣu | Gautama(- vana) | Gautama | Atri | Devasada | Śravana | Śraviṣṭhaka |

Viśvarūpa

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| | | | | | | | |
|------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| 15th cycle | Trayyāruṇi | Vedaśiras on R Sarasvatī, Himālaya | Vedaśiras | Kuṇi | Kuṇībāhu | Kuśārīra | Kunetra |
| 16th cycle | Deva | Gokaṛṇa(-vana) | Gokaṛṇa | Kāśvapa ² | Uśanas | Cyavana | Bṛhaspati |
| 17th cycle | Kṛtañjaya | Mahālaya(- parvata), Himālaya | Guhavāsā/-in | Utathya | Vāmadeva | Mahāyoga | Mahābala |
| 18th cycle | R̥tañjaya | Śikhaṇḍin(parvata), Himālaya | Śikhaṇḍin | Vācaśravas | Ṛcika ² | Syāvāśva | Yatīśvara |
| 19th cycle | Bhardvāja | Jaṭāyu(-parvata), Himālaya | Jaṭāmālin | Hiranyanābha | Kauśalya | Laugākṣi | Kuthumi |
| 20th cycle | Gautama | Aṭṭahā(parvata), Himālaya | Aṭṭahāsa | Sumantu | Barbari | Kabandha | Kuśikandhara |
| 21st cycle | Vācaśravas | Devadāru(-vana) | Dāruka | Plakṣa | Dārbhāyaṇi | Ketuman ² | Gautama |
| 22nd cycle | Śuśmāyaṇa | Vārāṇasī | Lāṅgalin | Bhalavin | Madhupiṅga | Śvetaketu | Kuśa |
| 23rd cycle | Tṛṇabindu | Kālañjara(-parvata) | Śveta ² | Uśika | Bṛhadaśva | Devala | Kavi |
| 24th cycle | Rkṣa | Naimiṣa(-vana) | Śūlin | Śālihotra | Agniveśa | Yuvanāśva | Śaradvasu |
| 25th cycle | Śakti | -- | Daṇḍin Muṇḍeśvara | Chāgala | Kuṇḍakarṇa | Kumbhāṇḍa | Pravāhaka |
| 26th cycle | Parāśara | Bhadravaṭa | Sahiṣṇu | Ulūka ¹ | Vidyuta | Śambūka | Āśvalāyana |
| 27th cycle | Jātūkarnyā | Prabhāsa(-tīrtha) | Somaśarman | Akṣapāda | Kumāra | Ulūka ² | Vatsa |
| 28th cycle | (Kṛṣṇa) Dvaipāyana | Kāyāvatāra | Lakuli | Kuśika | Garga ² | Mitra | Kauruṣya |

*Omission of place of incarnation in the text is indicated by two dashes--.

**Names repeated under the same headings are numbered.

N.B. In addition, Gautama is the name of an incarnation, a *yuga-vyāsa* and a disciple;

Bhārgava, Aṅgiras, Sārasvata and Vācaśravas appear as both *yuga-vyāsa* and disciple names; while Laugākṣi, Atri and Śveta are disciple and incarnation names.

There is no question as to the primary nature of God in this system: the equation God = Time is inescapable. And in this, sense the Śaiva doctrine taught here is made superior to any Vaiṣṇava system, including the Pāñcarātra, for they are chiefly concerned with either the *avatāravāda* in which an incarnation appears *whenever*-righteousness is at its weakest ('*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati ...*': *Bhāgavadgīta 4.7*), or else *vyūhavāda* in which the main preoccupation is to fill time-without hiatus-with the Vaiṣṇava doctrine of the phases of the unfolding, ever-present universe as conjoined aspects of God. The teaching of the *Liṅga Purāṇa*, in the text

portion under consideration, is that Śiva *is* that very time (Kālā) to which other doctrines are relative, or upon which they depend.

If the Caturmukhaliṅga represents the cosmic time-scale, as it seems to do according to Chapter 23 of the text, then the Parel cycles is its perfect complementary piece of symbolic ritual equipment. For it depicts, in my view the diminishing time-cycles within the four great *kalpas*-and these diminishing time-cycles arc the incarnations of Śiva Kālarudra, a reflex of the Liṅga which is Śiva- Viśvarūpa. The meaning of the Parel sculpture now seems to emerge. At the apex stands Kālarudra, Controller of Time, the explicit iconographic form of the Liṅga which as Viśvarūpa is the source and axis of All-Time, holding among his other emblems the symbols of the *kalpa* and *Yoga* time-cycles in the recognizable forms of the sun and moon. His first descendant (B), is one of his four *kalpa*-sons-Aghora, Tatpuruṣa, Vāmadeva or Sadyojāta, for I do not think that the image is intended to be so specific, but rather a visual representation of the incarnation doctrine as a whole. And below him, with feet planted firmly on earth, is one of his sons (e.g. Lakulīśa), a *mahāyuga*-incarnation, grandson of Kālarudra/Viśvarūpa. From the latter two descending measures of time are born the four side-figures, which may be seen as the disciple sons who perpetuate the doctrine in four branches (or schools) and by implication personify the four *yugas*, born from and constituting the *mahāyuga*-incarnation. Alternatively, each pair of side-figures may be interpreted as representing two levels of spiritual progress in the form of *sādhakas* who, by self-identification with the two successive modes of time, *yuga* and *kalpa*, ascend the time-ladder toward union with its source, Śiva as Kālarudra / Viśvarūpa, at the summit.

The Parel stele would thus have stood behind a Caturmukhaliṅga, had it been finished, to complete the cosmic symbolism inherent in the four-faced Liṅga and bring its meaning town to earth in the person (A), standing directly behind the Liṅga, of the incarnation on earth of the God of Time. The tree-like structure of the image lends some artistic support to this theory: from Kuṣāṇa times, the Liṅga has been depicted standing

beneath a tree which is here transformed into a symbol of time, born from the eternal Liṅga, which man inhabits.

To sum up, my own understanding of this image and the philosophy which it expresses is the following.

There is an absence of iconographical distinction between six of the figures because, in my opinion, the image represents the general doctrine of periodic incarnation; not the descent of one particular incarnation. (If, for instance, it were the incarnation of Lakulīśa which the image sought specifically to depict, then (B), representing the current *kalpa*, would be iconographically identifiable as Sadyojāta-Mahadeva, holding the same attributes as does the representation of him as the central figure of the Elephanta Maheśa image; and figure (A), representing Lakulīśa, would be even more precisely defined by his iconography, in particular by the staff or club-*lakula* or *laguḍa*-which this incarnation bears as testimony to his name.) It is because the image demonstrates, in visual form, the workings of the periodic incarnation salvation system as a whole, which incorporates the Liṅga as God of Time with his four *kalpa*-sons or aspects (*mukhāni*), their total of 1,000 *mahāyuga*-sons and 4,000 *yuga* grandsons, that strictly iconographical distinctions were impossible in making the sculpture; while the near-uniformity of the figures in general appearance might, of course, incidentally suggest their ultimate spiritual unity.

With the exception of (C), which is the iconographic symbol of that unity, each figure is a representative of many: (B) represents the four *kalpa*-sons of Kālarudra-Viśvarūpa (i.e., the four faces of the Caturmukhaliṅga); (A) represents the (4 X 250 =) 1,000 *mahāyuga* -sons (i.e., the periodic incarnations of Śiva as Kālarudra) of those elemental four; while the side-figures (AR),-(AL), (BR), and (BL) depict the followers of this doctrine in their progressive states of spiritual advancement, probably epitomised as the four disciple-sons generated by each incarnation- the (4 x 1,000 =) 4,000 great-grandsons of Kālarudra - Viśvarūpa. Like them, mankind is so far removed from the

remote Great-Grandfather-in which relationship man might be said to stand to the spiritual Time-Lord-that reassurance, in the form of his earthly incarnation with four sons of his own who teach the salvation doctrine in each of the four *yugas* and thus to all conditions of men, is required, to show that mankind is related to the divine (as the temporal creature to the eternal creator) and that God acknowledges this, sending among men these teachers to instruct them in the ways and means of achieving reunion with Him.

Isolated-as it seems, for time is of course ever immanent-by vast epochs from a remote God, man returns to him by way of the ever-widening cycles into which Time itself is divided: from the *yuga* in which he exists (especially when *dharma* is at its lowest, in the Kali, the onset of which is the point where the incarnation enters the cycles) and in which there is a preceptor in the person of a great-grandson of God, namely one of the four sons of the current divine incarnation (e.g. Kuruṣya in the present Kali age); to the *mahāyuga* which embraces all four *yugas* and in which is his next guide, the divine incarnation himself (e.g. Lakulīśa); to the *kalpa* containing- all 250 *mahāyugas* of the current epoch where the ruler is one of the four elemental sons of Time (e.g. Sadyojāta-Mahādeva); to his other three elemental brothers (Vāmadeva, Tatpuruṣa, Aghora), thus embracing all the *kalpas*: and so finally to the whole of Time (Kāla-) which is God (-Rudra, called Viśvarūpa) as Eternity (Sadāśiva).

Although this may appear to be a spiritual journey backward in time, it is not so: time is not linear but cyclical, and the individual moves from the confines of the period into which he is physically born into ever-widening cycles until he is identified with the entirety of time, which is eternity, and this is the great axial continuum within which all other aspects of time lie interlinked. This continuum not only passes like an axis through the centre of all other time-factors-just as the Liṅga passes through the four aspects of the Caturmukhaliṅga (the *kalpas*) or as the incarnation is seen descending between opposed pairs of human aspirants identifying themselves with *kalpa* (BR) and (BL), and *mahāyuga* (AR) and (AL), in the Pare1 sculpture which was to have stood behind

the Caturmukhalinga-but also transcends them, being self-existent, just as the unadorned Liṅga always emerges above whatever forms may be projected from it. Man's salvation consists of merging into the ocean of time itself, not in returning to a point in the past as if to rejoin some apotheosised ancestor there; nor does escape from the mortal condition (*mokṣa*) take the Buddhist form of departing from the wheel of time (*kālacakra*) into a state of being dead to the conditioned world (*nirvāṇa*), but consists of self-unification (*aikya*) with the highest factor of time, Sadaśiva which is the freedom of eternity symbolized by the highest part-domed, cylindrical, unadorned-of the Liṅga.

This same concept is expressed in its design. To demonstrate this, I shall reconstruct the stages in which the Parel image may, have been planned. (Again, in the absence of any pertinent *śilpaśāstric* texts, this reconstruction is *necessarily* hypothetical.) This Will be presented in the form of eleven diagrams (Figures 4.2-4.12) illustrating a step-by-step description of the planning operation, which I suggest proceeded as described here or in a very similar manner.

1, Figure 4.2. The first line incised upon the dressed stone block was the central vertical axis (A-A), which divided the surface into approximately equal left- and right-hand areas. This axis was then divided in half by drawing two contiguous circles, centred upon the axis, of a diameter equal to the intended width of the image which was thus designed to have a height-to-width ratio of 2:1. Probably the drawing of the first line, the upright central axis, was accompanied by a certain amount of ceremonial as it corresponds symbolically to the Liṅga as axis of the universe.

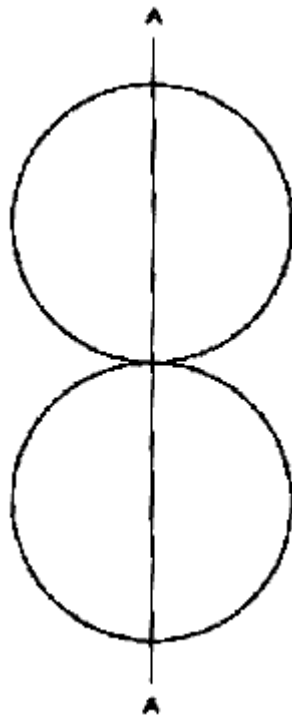


Fig. 4.2 Planning
diagram. Parel A

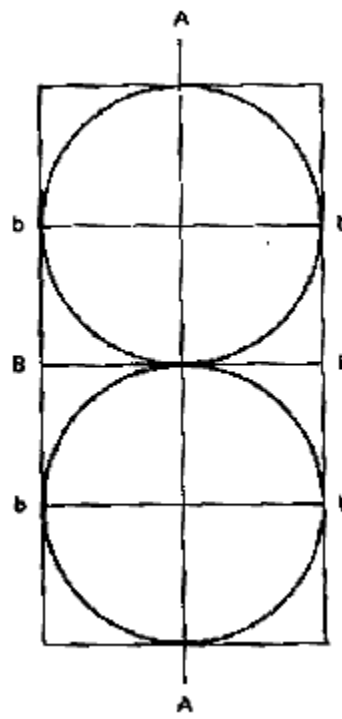


Fig. 4.3 Planning
diagram. Parel B

2. Figure 4.3. The surface area of the stone to be worked was then demarcated by incising parallel vertical lines tangential to the two circles at the points on their circumferences intersected by their horizontal diameters (b-b upper and lower). Lines at right angles to the vertical axis and tangential to the circumferences of both circles were then incised, giving the horizontal centre line (B-B) and the base and top lines of the rectangular area upon which the sculpture was to be executed. This area was thus effectively divided into eight equal squares overlying two equal circles. The upper half of the perimeter of the top circle (i.e., the rising arc based upon the line bb in the upper major square) was deeply incised now, this being the intended shape of the top of the stele.

3. Figure 4.4. Four concentric circles were next described about the centres of the two original circles, each circle having a radius one unit greater than that of the

preceding one. Symbolically these represented in their relative proportions the four divisions of a *mahāyuga* time-cycle into Kali (one unit), Dvāpara (two units), Tretā (three units) and Kṛta (four units). The original two circles (each with a radius of five units) remained as guidelines.

4. Figures 4.5 and 4.6, A network of diagonal lines at 45° from the perpendicular was now incised on both major squares in two stages; certain of these lines extended across the horizontal centre line (B-B) and so imposed the network upon the whole rectangle. The first stage consisted simply of drawing diagonals from corner to corner of each of the eight squares. Both major squares were then made to contain an octagon with sides measuring four units by incising a line at 45° across each corner, tangential to the two major upper and lower circles. The points where these lines intersected the rectangular frame were then joined by parallel lines which, being four units apart, ran tangential to the second circle from the centre of each major square, as these circles had a diameter of four units.

The symbolism inherent in the planning diagram (Figure.4.5) of the sculpture now emerges: it is based upon the plan of two contiguous Śivaliṅgas. Working inward from the frame of either major square, following the sequence in which a Liṅga would have been made and the stages in which it is seen from the base upward, the plan shows first the square base, followed by the octagonal middle section, upon which is the shaft of a cylindrical cross-section tapering in four stages to the centre (i.e. the apex, as seen from the side). Thus far, the symbolism of both the upper and the lower major squares is identical. However, I further suggest that the plan was designed to represent two Caturmukhaliṅgas, the four faces projecting from the shaft above alternate facets of the octagonal middle portion, and that they were differently orientated.

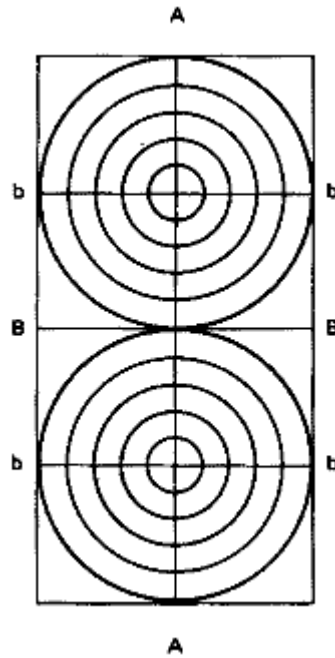


Fig. 4.4 Planning
diagram. Parel C

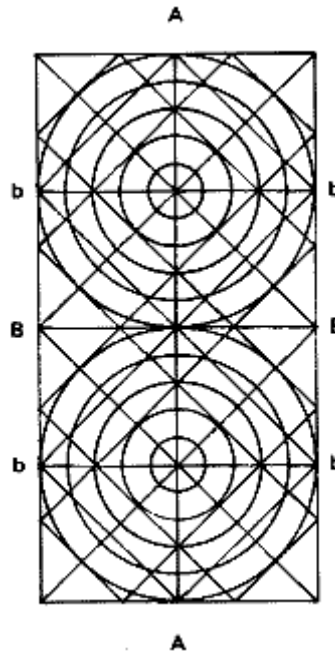


Fig. 4.5 Planning
diagram Parel D

The upper Caturmukhalinga was conceived as having faces projecting in the cardinal directions, the lower having them facing the intermediate points (see Figure 4.6). My reasons for suggesting this are the following. The upper Caturmukhalinga represented the four sons of Śiva as consecutive *kalpa-emanations* as taught in the *Linga Purāṇa* 1.23, the fourth circle from the centre of the upper major square being the perimeter of the Liṅga shaft (Śiva as Viśvarūpa, consisting of four concentric circles which symbolize his four as yet unborn sons or unmanifested *kalpas*). The upper major square in Figure 4.6 may be compared with the diagrammatic presentation of *Linga Purāṇa* I .23. 1-30 in the earlier part of my interpretation (p. 204): each of the thickly-outlined projections from the fourth circle represents one of the kalpa-sons of Śiva Viśvarūpa as described in the *Purāṇa*, that projecting downward at the base of the square being the current Śveta-*kalpa* governed by the Sadyojāta manifestation (or son) of Śiva.

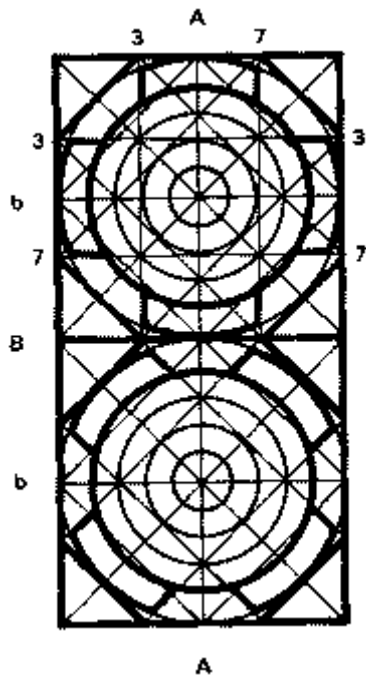


Fig 4.6 Planning diagram.
Parel E

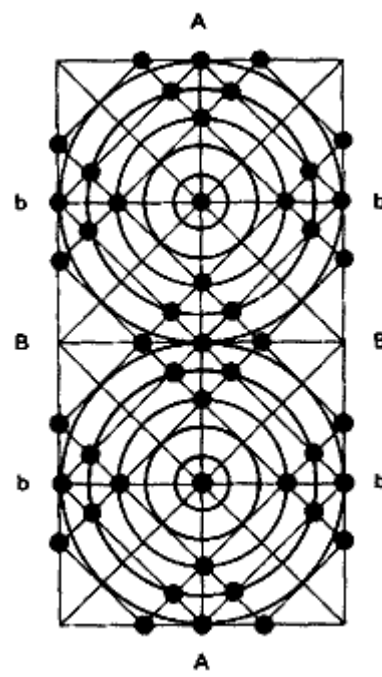


Fig. 4.7 Planning diagram,
Parel F

I suggest that an identical four-faced Liṅga was to be seen in plan in the lower major square, but turned through 45° , the projections facing the intermediate directions, such that if the two squares were superimposed, the projections would form a complete circle, a symbol of universality. The upper and lower halves of Figure 4.6 thus complement each other geometrically, and this complementary connection between the two parts of the symbolic diagram (which must also be seen as a meditational *yantra*) represents the theological relationship between the figures to be carved within these areas. The lower Liṅga plan would have symbolized one of the *mahāyuga*-incarnations (represented by the lower four-part circle) of Śiva-Viśvarūpa (the upper four-part circle) during the latter's manifest phase as Sadyojāta, the Śveta-*kalpa* (represented by the downward projecting face of the upper Caturmukhaliṅga plan). The four oblique projections from the *mahāyuga* circle in the lower half represented the four separate but consecutive *yugas* of which it is composed. This use of the Caturmukhaliṅga construct

to symbolize an incarnation and his four disciple sons in this world is clearly a deliberate analogy: terrestrial religious events are reflexes of divine prototypes (or, to state the same thing in reverse, the doctrine taught on earth derives its validity from divine authority which it faithfully reflects). The derivation of the symbolism of the lower square from that of the upper square is a direct parallel, in the visual terms of sacred diagrams, to the literary structure of *Līṅga Purāṇa* 1.23.24, in which the two stages of the Śaiva incarnation doctrine are taught, speaking first of the great *kalpa* time-scale of God and then of the incarnation process through the *yuga*, relating the two by making the earthly time-scale a reflection of the divine time-cycles.

5. Figures 4.7 and 4.8. By drawing vertical and horizontal lines tangential to all ten circles, the points on the peripheries all being marked by intersections with lines already drawn (see Figure 4.7), a grid of two hundred squares, each measuring one unit to a side, was then imposed upon the entire plan (Figure 4.8), to aid the *śilpīn* in drawing the figurative outlines of the image, A reference system for locating specific parts of the sculpture was probably created by numbering the lines or squares. The two unwanted segments at the top left and right corners (cross-hatched in Figure 4.8) would have been erased or scored through at this technical stage, the first ritual part of the planning operation having now been completed.

6. Figures 4.9 and 4.10. The use of these squares in demarcating the basic outline of the main heptad is shown in Figure 4.9 and this may be compared with the entire planning diagram superimposed upon the sculpture itself in Figure 4.10. In an ideal plan of 10 X 20 equal squares, the rectangular frame does not fit exactly over the sculpture as it was executed by the *śilpīns*, who evidently took the baseline to represent the level upon which the feet of figure (A) should appear to stand, rather than the tips of his toes which were made to extend downward by a further half-unit. The knees of side-figures (AR) and (AL) were also made to extend slightly beyond the sides of the frame, as was the raised right hand of (AR). Some license and a degree of asymmetry is only to be expected when an artist fleshes out, so to speak, a sacred diagram with

anthropomorphic figures; the ideals of the representational artist cannot harmonize precisely, in visual terms, with those of the abstract symbolist. Nevertheless, the degree of harmony achieved in this complex sculpture is remarkable, as I shall show.

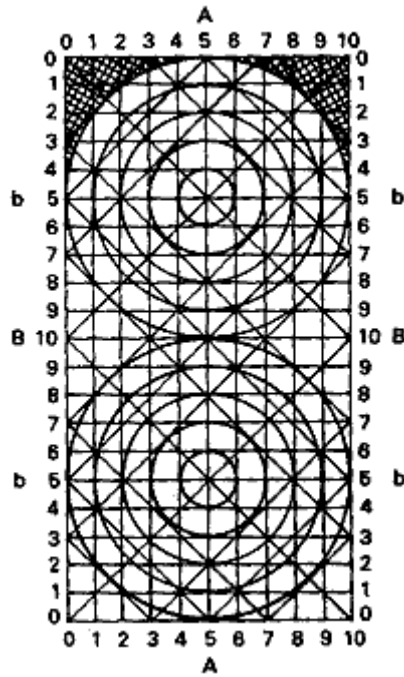


Fig. 4.8 Planning diagram.
Parel G

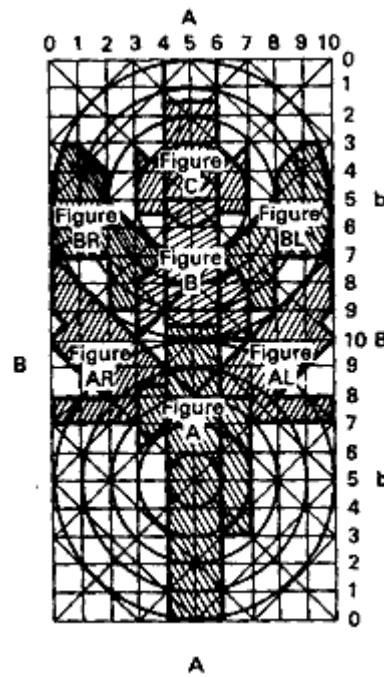


Fig. 4.9 Planning diagram.
Parel H

(*Kṛṣṇakalpa*), the eldest and hence symbolically the innermost circle-the most inaccessible, the last to be reached when 'entering' the diagram from without through meditation-which is centred on the navel of (C). The centring of the four lower circles upon the genitals of figure (A) is symbolically proper, as he is an incarnation who begets four disciple sons on earth; as I have shown above in stage 4 (Figure 4.6), this is symbolized by centring a four-faced Liṅga on this point, as if the Liṅga plan with his reproductive organs at the centre generated the whole of the lower half of the diagram. The four upper circles are centred on the navel of figure (C) because he is the divine potentiality and intelligent controller of time who makes time manifest in divisions which are called his sons; he does not beget progeny in the same way as mortals, but generates them miraculously from his sides or, like Viṣṇu Śeṣaśāyyin who gives birth to four-headed Brahmā upon a lotus growing from his navel, he may be thought of as a divine counterpart of the earthly omphalos. Hence the upper four-faced Liṅga plan (Figure 4.6) has its centre in his navel and not, as in the case of (A) who is incarnate, on his genital area, which is concealed behind (B). The horizontal tangent of the lowest point on the perimeter of the lower circle (level 4 in Figure 4.10) was used to indicate the tops of the heads of the three seated *gaṇa*-musicians; the tangent of the highest point (level 6) indicates the upper limit of the two standing *gaṇas* and the navel and elbows of (A). As the latter incarnation must enter the world of man through a *mahāyuga*, which contains the four diminishing time-cycles of mortal degeneracy and with which he is commensurate (the all-encompassing fifth circle, representing the *mahāyuga*, demarcates the top of his head beneath the piled-up hair and the instep of his feet) as a saviour, his body descends through this smallest circle, symbolically the Kaliyuga, the time of greatest spiritual need and universal imbalance. The diagonals of the lower major square, which intersect at the centre of this circle, were used to indicate the angle of the torsos and the height of shoulder of (AR) and (AL) between levels 8 and 10. The intersection of the lowest point of the upper circle (level 6) with the perpendicular centre line (A5) marks the centre of the hairline of (B); the intersections of the upper horizontal tangent (level 4) with vertical lines A1 and A9 indicate the same

point on the foreheads of (BR) and (BL) as well as the wrists of the front arms of (C) while the diagonals of the upper major square were used as guidelines for the angle of the hands above the wrists, and of the raised upper arms of the fifth pair of hands.

The diameter of the next circles from the centre of the two major squares, four units, allows an extra unit of width for the arms of (A), (B) and (C), excluding the eight additional arms of (C); the perpendicular lines tangential to these circles (A3 and A7) are thus the margins of the vertical axis, the significance of which I shall show in stage 7. The lower circle symbolizes the second division of the *mahāyuga*, the copper-red Dvāparayuga; the corresponding circle in the upper half of the diagram represents the second emanation or son of Śiva Viśvarūpa, namely Tatpuruṣa of the Yellow Age (*Pītakaḷpa*). The horizontal tangent to the base of the lower circle (level 3) was used as the centre line for the faces of the seated *guṇas*, the inclination of the heads being shown by the section of the fourth circle which intersects level 3 at the centre of their faces. The horizontal tangent to the top of this circle passes through the heart of (A) and is the line upon which rest the projecting legs, bent back in the flying position, of (AR) and (AL); this line, level 7 in the lower square, was clearly a significant dividing line between the *guṇas* who stand or sit upon the base and the first pair of aerial figures springing from the axis. The ritual significance of this line will be demonstrated in section 7. In the upper square, the horizontal tangent of the base of the corresponding circle was used as a guideline to show the level of the lowered hip of (BR) and (BL), who rise from the axis at an angle of 45° in a dehanche posture, and also the level of their right and left hands respectively, which are raised to a position beside the hip. On the vertical centre line, this tangent marks the chin of (B). Tangential to the highest point of the circle, the line (level 3) demarcates the upper limit of the heads of (BR) and (BL) and, in the centre, passes through the middle of the face of (C). It also appears to have been used to locate the now damaged solar and lunar symbols held in the second pair of hands of this apical figure where it is intersected by the perpendicular tangents to the third circle (A2 and A8).

The third circles represent, in the lower square, the silver-white Tretāyuga and, in the upper square, the third potential emanation of Śiva Viśvarūpa, Vāmadeva of the Red Age (*Lohitakalpa*). Tangential to the base of this circle in the lower square, level 2 was used as the base line for the knees of (A), level 3 being their upper limit; level 2 also indicates the shoulder height of the seated *guṇas*. Level 8 in the same square, tangential to the top of the circle, was used to mark the top of the thigh of the doubled-back legs of (AR) and (AL) and, at the centre, to indicate the base of the throat of (A). The vertical lines tangential to the left and right extremities of this circle (A2) and (A8) pass through the navels of all four side figures; they also mark the ankle or heel of the feet of (AR) and (AL). In addition, they provide convenient centre lines for the bases of the two seated *guṇas* who play upon stringed instruments, and mark the inner limits of their faces and those of the two standing *guṇas* behind them. In the upper square, the vertical tangents to the corresponding circle serve as guidelines for the inner shoulders of all four side figures and for the outer edges of the thighs of (BR) and (BL) and, as I have already noted, help to fix the positions of the solar and lunar symbols held by (C). The upper horizontal tangent to this circle indicates the top of the head of (C), passing through the crescent moon which is worn as a *cūḍamāṇi*, and separates the head from the chignon of the *jaṭābhāra*; it also passes through the shield and the pommel of the sword held in the third left and right hands respectively of (C). At the base of this circle, the horizontal tangent divides the top of the head from the piled up hair of (AR) and (AL)-the same purpose as that served by its counterpart in the case of (C)-and passes through the upper chest of (B).

The fourth circle in the lower half of the diagram symbolizes the golden Kṛtayuga, while the corresponding circle in the upper half represents the fourth and most recent son of Śiva Viśvarūpa who is Sadyojāta of the current White Age (*Śveta* [-Varāha-] *kalpa*). These fourth circles encompass the unmanifest potential of the *various* time-cycles-the potential *yugas* of the *mahāyuga* in the lower square, the potential *kalpa* within Śiva in the upper-while within the fifth circles, each of these

measures of time is made manifest and revealed in personalized aspects projecting from the whole potential, or the analogy of the Caturmukhaliṅga. In the lower major square, the vertical tangents to the fourth circle indicate the outer limit of the faces of the two *guṇas* who play the *sāraṅgī* and the *vīṇā* and of the two who stand behind them. The outer arm of each of these figures and their hair is depicted outside these two lines. Higher, the same lines are used to mark the backs of the knees of the flying figures (AR) and (AL). The horizontal tangent at the base of this circle serves as a guideline for the forearms of the two main seated *guṇa* -musicians. The line tangential to the top of this circle indicates the eyebrow line of (A) and the level of the navels of (AR) and (AL). In the upper square, the vertical tangents to the left and right extremities of the corresponding circle act as centre lines for the faces of all four side figures and indicate the locations of the lowered hands of (BR) and (BL) which are also in approximate alignment with the fourth pair of hands of (C), at level 2, holding the bow and arrow. The horizontal tangent to the base of this circle (level 9) passes through the solar plexus of (B) and indicates the level of his wrists, one hand being held up above this line and the other turned down below it; the same line was also used to fix the centre of the faces of (AR) and (AL). At the top of this circle, the tangent indicates the level of the wrists of the fifth pair of arms of (C), above his head.

The horizontal tangents to the fifth circles at the base of the lower circle and at the top of the upper circle define the upper and lower limits of the whole diagram, just as the vertical tangents to their left and right extremities demarcate the sides of it. The horizontal tangent through their point of contiguity is, of course, the horizontal centre line, dividing the rectangular diagram into two equal squares. This line marks the top of the head of (A), above which the *jaṭābhāra* rises a further half unit, and also, at the edges of the frame, indicates the height of the lowered outer shoulders of (AR) and (AL).

A comment should be inserted here concerning the use made by the *śilpīns* of the diagonal lines drawn in stage 4 (Figure 4.5) to make possible the two Liṅga plans upon which the whole diagram is based (stage 4 and Figure 4.6).

Beginning with the diagonals of the two major squares, it is clear that these not only reinforced the focus upon the two central points—used to locate the penis of (A) and the navel of (C)—and the centre of the long sides of the rectangular frame—used to locate the lower shoulders of (AR) and (AL)—but also indicated the angle of inclination of the latter two figures away from the vertical axis in the lower major square, and in the upper square passed through the centre of their faces, the genitals of (BR) and (BL), the top of the head of (B), the front pair of hands of (C), and the centre of the shield and the pommel of the sword wielded by the same figure. The diagonals drawn across the upper corners of the lower major square in planning the octagon and their upward extensions (lower level 7 to upper level 3) pass through the navels of (AR) and (AL), enclose the lower part of the face of (B), trace the angle of emanation of (BR) and (BL) from him, and pass through the centre of the forehead of each of these emanatory figures. Similarly, the diagonals across the lower corners of the upper major square and their downward extensions (upper level 7 to lower level 3) pass down the side of the faces of (AR) and (AL) trace the angle of the lowered upper arm of (AR) and the raised forearm of (AL) pass through the elbows of (A) and between the chin of the two standing *gaṇas* and the top of the head of the *gaṇa*-musicians seated in front of them. Apart from the diagonals in the corners of the whole rectangle, which in themselves appear to be of little use to the *Spin*, there remain two sets of useful diagonal lines, namely those crossing from level 7 to A3 and A7 in the two major squares. Those in the lower square are axial to the faces of the two standing *gaṇas*, traverse the two one-unit squares demarcating the knees of (A), and one crosses his lowered left hand. In the upper major square, the corresponding diagonals start from the elbows of (BR) and (BL), traverse the centre of their chests and the wrists of their raised hands, intersect at the centre of the crescent-moon *cūḍāmaṇi* of (C) and pass through his raised fifth pair

of hands. There appears to be no symbolic value in the anatomical connections made by these lines; they are ritual lines, drawn for the construction of the two *maṇḍalas* which constitute the whole diagram, put to practical use by the sculptors in transforming the abstract plan into an anthropomorphic image.

In this way, the abstract symbolic diagram, a *yantra* consisting of two *maṇḍalas* based on the plan of two adjacent Caturmukhalingas, was used as the underlying pattern in accordance with which the relative proportions and dispositions of the anthropomorphic figures in the sculpture were arranged in 3 superbly balanced multiple unity.

7. It will have been noticed in stages 4 and 6 that the plan upon which the sculpture was based consists of two *maṇḍalas* which are related to each other in terms of both form and colour. I shall now attempt to reconstruct the dynamics of this symbolism as it pertains to the Śaiva doctrine of incarnation.

As shown in stage 4 (Figure 4.6) the upper half of the diagram is derived from a Caturmukhalinga when viewed from above with the faces projecting in the four cardinal directions and the shaft divided into four concentric rings, each one unit greater than the preceding one in radius. The lower half is identically constructed, but with the projecting faces pointing toward the intermediate directions. Superimposing one half of the diagram upon the other would thus result in the completion of the outermost fifth ring.

The colour system of the rings (Figure 4.11) may be summarized as follows, listed as they appear from the centre outward:

| | |
|--|--|
| In the upper square BLACK (<i>Kṛṣṇa-kalpa</i> ; the colour of Śiva's first emanation, Aghora) YELLOWS (<i>Pīta-kalpa</i> ; the colour of | In the lower square BLACK (<i>Kali-yuga</i> , compared to iron which is regarded as black: <i>kṛṣṇāyas</i>) RED (<i>Dvāpara-yuga</i> , compared to |
|--|--|

| | |
|--|--|
| Śiva's second emanation, Tatpuruṣa) | copper |
| RED (<i>Lohita-kalpā</i> , the colour of Śiva's | which is red: <i>tāmra, lohita</i>) |
| third emanation, Vāmadeva) | WHITE (<i>Tretā-yuga</i> , compared to silver |
| WHITE (<i>Śveta-kalpā</i> , the colour of | which is whitish on colour: <i>rajata</i>) |
| Śiva's | GOLD (<i>Kṛta-yuga</i> , compared to gold, |
| fourth and current emanation | the |
| Sadyojāta) | most precious metal of beautiful colour: |
| | <i>suvarṇa, hiraṇya</i>) |

Bounded by the fourth circle from the centre, these two time-cycle systems are held together in a potential state, like the powers of Śiva (time being one of them) contained within the featureless Liṅga. They become manifest individually, one at a time, from this core of potential, like the partial manifestations of Śiva as individual aspects projecting from the Caturmukhaliṅga. The distribution of the individual colour projections from the circle of potential in the upper square of the diagram follows the order of generation of Śiva's aspects or sons (starting with Aghora) each of whom has a particular colour. In the lower square, I have suggested that the Caturmukhaliṅga construct is to be seen as turned through 45°, in a *pradakṣiṇā* or clockwise direction, so that the first of the *yugas* (the golden or yellow Kṛta) appears facing 45° higher than the black Aghora projection in the upper diagram, or in ritual terms facing the south-west. The silver-white second *yuga*, the Tretā, then faces the north-west, the red Dvāpara appears in the north-east, and the black Kali, finally, in the south-east.

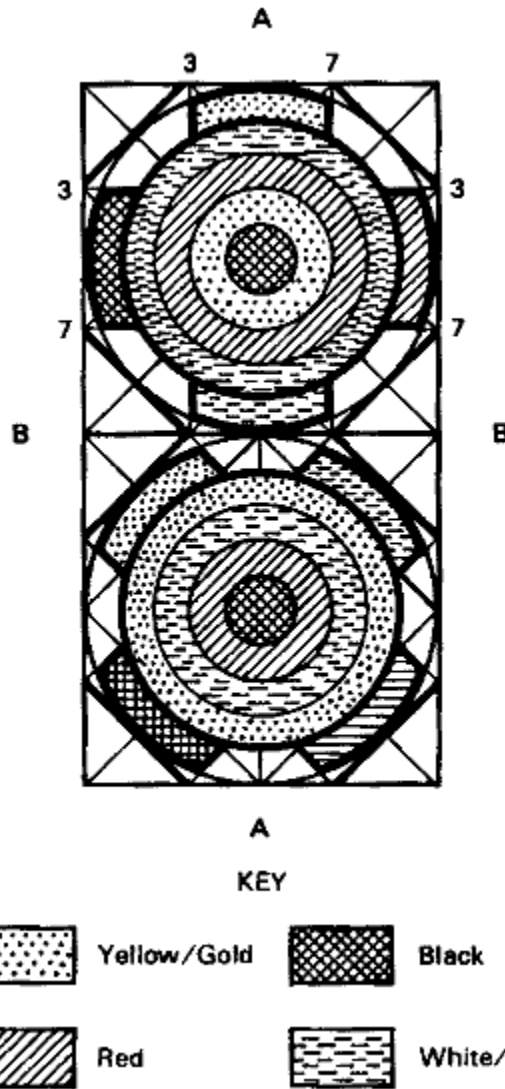


Fig. 4.11 Meditational maṇḍala diagram underlying the sculpture

When the two *maṇḍalas* are superimposed, therefore, the fifth ring, in which these individual colour projections appear, will consist of a white segment in the east (at the base of the composite ring), two adjacent black segments in the south-east and south, two adjacent segments of gold or yellow in the south-west and west, one white segment in the north-west, and two adjacent red segments in the north and north-east.

In order to understand the relationship between these two *maṇḍalas*, however, it is necessary first to examine their individual symbolic possibilities. The upper diagram can be used in two ways. By relating the colour of each projection to its inner ring of the same colour, a meditational circumambulation in the ritually correct clockwise direction starting from the black Aghora projection leads from the first *kalpa* in the centre outward to the white *kalpa* of Sadyojāta which is the current age, of which we inhabit the twenty-eighth *mahāyuga* in the Kali, when Lakulīśa is the incarnation who teaches the Śaiva salvation doctrine through his four disciple sons. Alternatively, an anti-clockwise circumambulation starting from the present age of Sadyojāta will lead back through those of Vāmadeva, Tatpuruṣa and Aghora to the source in Śiva Viśvarūpa; this is the sequence in which the *kalpas* are described in *LīṅgaPurāṇa* 1.23, as demonstrated in the diagrammatic presentation of that text portion on page 204).

Similarly, the lower diagram can be followed in either direction. Starting with the golden projection of the Kṛta, one can proceed clockwise around the four projections to end in the black centre which is the present Kaliyuga of which Lakulīśa and his four disciples are the saviours on earth. An anticlockwise circumambulation, on the other hand, leads back from the present *yuga* to the golden Kṛta age.

I suggest that whichever direction is followed in one *maṇḍala* should also be taken in the other. It is clear that clockwise circumambulation leads from the past to the present, anticlockwise from the present to the past, in both diagrams. Thus one can start from the present Kaliyuga in the lower diagram and proceed anticlockwise back through the yugas to the Kṛta, and so back further still into the current white *kalpa* of Sadyojāta in the upper diagram and thence continue anticlockwise back to the Dark Age of Aghora who: as eldest son of Śiva Viśvarūpa, stands next to the god himself. In view of the anticlockwise sequence of *kalpas* given in *Līṅga Purāṇa* 1.23, this might be taken as the correct way to interpret this dual *maṇḍala*; and certainly this meditational route leads the human aspirant from his present wretched circumstances in the Kaliyuga back through the *mahāyuga* of the current incarnation to the

great *kalpas* and finally to union with the God of Time. But the system must also work in reverse in order to send down an incarnation to teach mankind the way back to God. For this descent, the two clock-wise routes are followed, from Aghora to Sadyojāta at the divine level to the Kṛta and successive *yugas* of the human time-cycle down to the present Kali.

The *maṇḍala* theory and diagrams, then, were sound; the problem of giving expression to this doctrine in the form of an image remained. The problem was solved by means of an intermediate planning stage which I feel sure the designers of this sculpture must have had in mind from the beginning. Given that the two halves of the diagram were based upon two Liṅga plans, the consistent means of providing a vertical ladder of descent for the incarnation, and of ascent for mortal devotees between the celestial upper and the terrestrial lower halves, was a third Liṅga. Clearly, it could not be based upon the Liṅga plans constituting the two parts of the diagram: such a Liṅga would far exceed in height the image itself. It was based upon two plans within the four-unit-wide central axis, to be seen enclosed by the square formed by lines 3 and 7, horizontal and vertical, at the centre of the upper and lower major squares (see projection 01 this plan in Figure 4.12). The base of this Liṅga, of square cross-section, rose seven units from the baseline to the top of its plan in the lower major square, on a level with the heart of the incarnation and the horizontally bent legs of the figures flying outward from him (figures A, AR and AL). Above this for six units, three below and three above the horizontal centre line, rose the transitional octagonal section. The points to be joined vertically to indicate the receding side-facets of the octagon are the intersections of the upper and lower limits of this portion of the shaft (level 7, upper and lower) with the diagonals in the corners of the two identical plans of this Liṅga (3 upper to 7 lower), these lines being sections of the diagonals projected from the corner diagonals of the major squares which formed the octagonal plan of the two major Liṅga -plans. The octagonal section ends at the base of the head of (B) Above this, the cylindrical shaft was continued upward on the margins of the central axis until they reached the periphery of the fifth circle in the upper major square, the curve of which was taken to indicate the top of the Liṅga.

For the sake of clarity in Figure 4.12, showing this side-view of a Liᅅga equal in height to the sculpture, I have isolated the Liᅅga by erasing the guidelines around it to a distance of one unit.

The base, middle and top sections of the Liᅅga profile constructed on the axis of the diagram are thus seven, six and seven units high respectively, with a constant width, or 'diameter' in the case of the top section, of four units. Its width to total height ratio is 1:5, the same as that between the smallest and largest circles in the two major squares. Looking now from this diagram to that showing the whole plan superimposed on the sculpture (Figure 4.10) and comparing them with (Figure 4.1 I), the manner in which the descent of the incarnation was symbolically conceived becomes apparent. Śiva Viśvarūpa as Kālarudra (C) within the vertical Liᅅga shaft emanated downward, from his navel at the centre of the upper *maᅅᅅala* (B), a figure who is seen descending as far as the baseline of that *maᅅᅅala* (B), through the white projection in the fifth ring which represents the current Śveta-kalpa in the person of Sadyojāta whom (B) thus represents. It is he who makes the descent from the upper square, realm of the *kalpas*, to the lower one where the *yuga* time-cycles operate, as intermediary between the God and the incarnation. This transition occurs mainly between the middle section of the vertical Liᅅga which has eight sides, a fact which is taken as symbolic of the junction between the upper and lower four-faced Liᅅga plans. The incarnation then descends between the gold and silver projections of the lower *maᅅᅅala*, coming to rest with the top of his head-the yogic *sahasrārapadma* point-at the very point of transition (the centre of the entire diagram), the *ājñā-cakra* (point between his eye brows) on the outer rim of the golden circle of the Kᅅᅅa-yuga, the *viśuddhi-cakra* (in the throat) on its inner rim, and the *anāhata-cakra* (in the heart) on the inner rim of the silver Tretā-yuga circle. This is the base of the octagonal section of the central Liᅅga profile. The head of the incarnation is between the gold and silver projections of the first two *yugas* while his body from the heart upward is immersed in their concentric rings. From the level of his heart downward, he is contained within the square base section of the central Liᅅga profile, his navel (the *maᅅᅅipura-cakra*) on the inner rim of the red Dvāpara-yuga circle, at the transition between it and the black Kali, in the centre of which is located the *mālādhāra-cakra* (the level of the base of the spine

and the genital organs). Below this level, his legs and feet descend and come to rest between the red projection of the Dvāpara-yuga and the black Kali-yuga projection. It is at this critical point in time that an incarnation of Śiva is repeatedly said, in *Liṅga Purāṇa* 1.24, to appear on earth (*Kalau tasmin yugāntike*, that is, 'in the Kali, at the end of that [Dvāpara-] yuga³³). The three figures constituting the axis of the sculpture are thus superimposed upon a (meditational) Liṅga (Kuṣāṇa source no. 2.4). The planning diagram is thus charged with symbolism expressive of the Liṅga both as the two major time-cycle systems and as the axial continuum which joins them. It generates and informs with meaning the entire sculpture.

8. I have already mentioned that in my opinion the Parel relief was designed to stand behind a Caturmukhaliṅga to complement its *kalpa* symbolism and elaborate upon it by depicting the descent into this world, which is governed by the *yuga* system, of a periodic saviour who is an incarnation of Śiva Kālarudra. In view of the validity of the planning diagram of the sculpture, in practical as well as symbolic terms, it is quite possible that the vertical Liṅga profile, isolated in stage 7 as the validating symbolism behind the design of the vertical axis composed of (A), (B) and (C), was the actual measure of the Caturmukhaliṅga behind which the stele was to have stood in its own temple. As it appears in Figure 4.12, this Liṅga is, of course, the same height as the stele. But in practice the square base portion would have been buried in the floor of the shrine in accordance with normal installation procedures. This would lower the apex of the Liṅga by seven units, leaving the six units of the octagonal section within the *pīṭha* and the seven units of the cylindrical shaft standing above floor level. This colossal object would have risen to a height level with the base of the head of (B). (It may be noted that his curved shoulders—those of (A) and (C) being square-form an arc which would have coincided with the profile of the Liṅga dome.) His head—the head of Sadyojāta as I have identified him through the diagrams— would then appear to rise directly from the apex of the Liṅga, the shaft of which would appear to be his body (Kuṣāṇa Source no. 4B) from which seem to spring (AR) and (AL) on a level with the profiles of Aghora-Bhairava and Vāmadeva-Urns; the face on the front of a Caturmukhaliṅga confronting the devotee on entering the shrine, is that of Sadyojāta, so that an immediate

correspondence would have been visually established between the Liṅga and the stele. Rising above this face on the Liṅga itself would be the plain top section of the shaft; corresponding to this on the stele behind it above the face of figure (B), would rise (C), the god Śiva in human form, and identifying himself through his hand-held symbols (apart from the more or less obligatory bow and arrow, sword and shield) as the self-appointed controller of time who carries the same waterpot and displays the same teaching *mudrā* as do his human devotees and incarnations. The initial visual impact would have been most impressive and symbolically instructive. Only in the course of ritual circumambulation, however, would (A), the incarnation himself with his feet resting upon the sanctum floor, have been revealed behind the Liṅga: an idealized figure of a holy man, the same height as the average worshipper (about 175 centimetres), descended from the god and appearing where, from the eastern doorway of the sanctum, only the Liṅga had been seen.

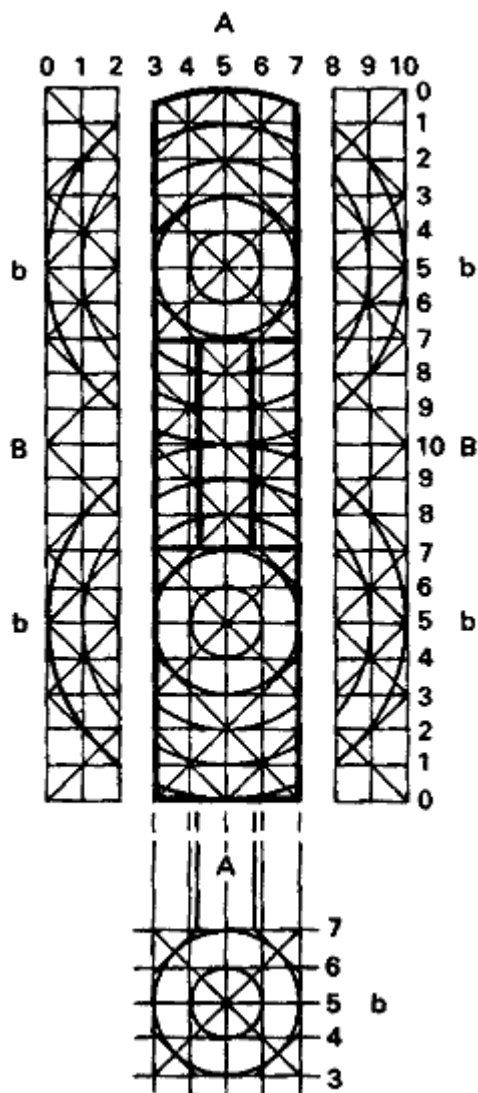


Fig. 4.12 Planning diagram. Parel J

A concluding comment on the unfinished state of the Parel sculpture might be made here. The installation of this relief behind a Caturmukhalinga of conventional post- Kuṣāṇa iconography would have imposed a specific doctrinal interpretation (that of the time and periodic incarnation teaching of *LiṅgaPurāṇa* 1.23 and 24) upon the Liṅga, and I suggest that it was indeed for this purpose that the stele was designed. This might also explain the incomplete condition of the sculpture; it may well have been abandoned as too controversial an image to install in a Śaiva shrine, particularly in view of its imposing size. The large scale on which were

conceived the stele, probably the Liṅga which was to have stood before it, and certainly the dimensions of the shrine required to house it, are equally likely causes of its abandonment. A minority cult image together with the architectural requirements of its temple, conceived on a grandiose scale, is almost inevitably doomed to fail as an economic proposition. It could be argued that the colossal Maheśamūrti relief in the great Śiva cave temple on Elephanta Island just off the coast succeeded where the Parel experiment did not, for this same reason. The Elephanta relief, clearly an exposition of the symbolism implicit in the plain Liṅga in the shrine (although they stand at the end of the north south and east--west axes of the temple respectively, rather than in immediate juxtaposition), expresses it in conventional terms. That is, the three-faced bust with its tall central *jaṭābhāra* is an anthropomorphic elaboration of the plain Liṅga which is the main ritual focus of the shrine, implying that the four faces of Śiva's primary emanations are to be conceived as originating from the Liṅga, which thus becomes in imagination a *caturmukha* construct expressive of the god's ability to extend beyond the confines of the featureless symbol which is his chief and most sacred manifestation. The Parel relief was an attempt to take this exposition one stage further by extending and specifying the interpretation to be placed upon a sculptured Liṅga with the four faces already represented. This was, apparently, one stage too far, and the project was abandoned as being heretical in the sense of narrow (foisting a particular doctrine upon the Liṅga which should, more conventionally, be regarded as a symbol of universality) and, perhaps, as being symbolically too complex-despite the clarity of its sculptural form-for general worship.

¹ See, for example, the central register of a Gandhara panel in the Victoria and Albert, Museum.no.I.S.11-1947.

² E.W. Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, Strassburg, Berlin, 1915, p.176.

- 3 In the absence of a pot, the *abhiṣeka (na)mudrā* is known in Buddhism, though it is a two-handed gesture: G. Liebert (quoting E.D. Saunders, *Mudrā*, New York 1960), *Iconographic Dictionary of the Indian Religions, Hinduism-Buddism-Jainism*, Lieden 1976,p.2,cf. *kṣepaṇa (hasta) mudrā*,p.142.
- 4 G.V. Acharya, *The Indian Daily Mail*, 16th October 1931:the dimensions are recorded as 11'5"x6'5"" and the side-elevation as 'about 2 feet' thick at the base and 'a foot' at the top.
- 5 Recorded in *JBHS* 1932, 'Notes and News', pp.287-95.
- 6 Capt. W. E. Gladstone Solomon, *Times of India*, 16th October 1931.
- 7 Acharya, *The Indian Daily Mail*.
- 8 Solomon, *Times of India*.
- 9 H. Heras, *Times of India*,14 October 1931.
- 10 S.K. Aiyangar, *The Hindu*, date not recorded.
- 11 Acharya, *The Indian Daily Mail*.
- 12 A. Ziesensies, 'The Sculpture of Parel', *Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology*, 1931, pp.5-10.
- 13 According to S. Kramrisch, *The Presence of Śiva*, Princeton University Press 1981,p.461, the image 'is still in worship'. However, a report commissioned by me states categorically: 'It is not offered pūjā because it was damaged while being excavated-and, on principle, no pūjā can be offered to a damaged mūrti, Tilaks are placed on all heads except the upper three-the pūjāri [from the adjacent Caṇḍikā-Devī temple] cannot reach them.' (Latter dated Poona, 3April 1978,from Dr Patrick

Olivelle.) The honouring of an image by finger-painting on the brow does not necessarily mean that it is worshipped, a fact which Kramrisch has overlooked.

14 S. Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture* (Heritage of India Series), YMCA Calcutta and OUP London 1933.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 176.

17 Zieseniss, 'The Sculpture of Parel', p. 8.

18 W. D. O'Flaherty, *Hindu Myths, A Sourcebook Translated from the Sanskrit*, Harmondsworth 1975, pp.17-18.

19 Nieseniss, 'The Sculpture of Parel', p. 9.

20 H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, ed. J. Campbell (Bollingen Series 6), Princeton University Press 1946, reprinted 1962, pp.134-5.

21 *Ibid.*, Plate 32.

22 Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p.175.

23 C. Sivaramamurti, *Indian Sculpture*, New Delhi 1961, p.58; the same scholar repeats this theory in *The Art of India* (Paris 1974), New York 1977, p.176, Kramrisch, *Presence of Śiva*, p.461, note 31, states of the Parel sculpture: 'This aspect of Śiva has as yet not been accounted for iconographically'; in the however, she seems by her terminology to have accepted Sivaramamurti's interpretation.

24 Kramrisch, *Presence of Śiva*, p.461.

25 D. C. Bhattacharyya, *Iconology of composite Images*, New Delhi 1980, pp.53-55.

- 26 J.N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta 1956, pp.452-3.
- 27 Bhattacharya, *Iconology of Composite Images*, p. 54.
- 28 R.G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, Strassburg, Berlin 1913, pp. 124-7.
- 29 Bhattacharya, *Iconology of Composite Images*, p. 55.
- 30 See P. Pal, 'An Adorsed Śaiva Image from Kashmir and Its Cultural Significance', *Art International* XXIV.5-6, January-February 1981, pp.40-3.
- 31 As quoted by Bhattacharyya, *Iconology of Composite Images*, p.54.
- 32 In addition to the Sanskrit text, I have consulted a translation of this *Purāṇa: The Liṅga- Purāṇa*, Translated by a Board of Scholars, ed. J. L. Shastri (Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology Series, vols. 5 and 6), Delhi 1973.
- 33 At verses 12, 55, 81, 111 and 118, for example; also *dvāpare... yugāntike* (vs 20), *kalau tasmin* (vs 17), etc.

THE DEOGARH Viśvarūpa

Turning from Śamalājī and Parel in western India to the seventh eighth century period in central north India, one sculpture in particular stands out as the most original, and possibly prototypical multiple image of the generic type termed 'Viśvarūpa' in this book. This is the icon of Viṣṇu Viśvarūpa at Deogarh in Uttar Pradesh (Plates 63 and 64). Its design and iconography appear to derive mainly from Śamalājī and Mathura, while its past-Gupta style is executed in the distinctive idiom of Deogarh itself. There are also unmistakable signs of a north-western influence. From this coalescence of form and iconography from different regions expressed in a conservation local style, there emerges an image which gives every appearance of being, if not the immediate prototype, at least a representative sculpture displaying all the experimental features to be found-modified in greater or lesser degree-in all other known Viśvarūpa icon-types of north India that can be dated in the eighth century or later. Because of its complexity, I include here a key diagram of the image (Figure 51), with letters and numbers identifying the various component figures.

This sculpture shows even sign of having been a true sculptural and iconographical experiment in the sense that it seems unlikely ever to have been intended for worship in a temple. It was, or in my opinion turned into, a mere exercise. As no successor images of the type have been found at Deogarh, it seems likely that the project-if there really was one-to develop an icon suitable for ritual worship at Deogarh was discontinued after this initial failure. The Śamalājī image, some 250 years earlier, may well have been the result of a similar series of trial sculptures which have not been found; or perhaps the failures were broken up when an acceptable formula had been worked out which successfully combined an iconographical conception initiated at Mathura with the local Vaiṣṇava cult view of a Viśvarūpa image of their god in terms of their own sculptural techniques. Certainly the Śamalājī image appears too fluent to have sprung straight from the drawing-board, so to speak, into an image which was to be

imitated for generations afterward;1 there must have been a considerable amount of experimentation. The Śaiva heptad at Pare1 was also an experiment, but so well executed that it seems to have been abandoned for different- religious-reasons, as I have suggested.



| | | |
|---------------|-------------|------------|
| A - Brahmā | K - Garuḍa | W - Matsya |
| B - Hayagrīva | L - Lakṣmī | K- Kūrma |
| C - Śiva | M - Bhūdevī | Y -Varāha |

| | | |
|-----------|------------------------|------------------------|
| D - Agni | NN - Nāgas | Z - Nṛsiṃha |
| E - Indra | O - Cakrapuruṣa | 1-6(R.) Vṛṣṇivīras (?) |
| F - Yama | P - Independent | 1-7(L.). Saptarṣis |
| GG-Aśvins | Cakrapuruṣa | |

Fig. 5.1 The Deogarh Viśvarūpa. Key diagram

Here at Deogarh, I think that the reason for failing-though the sculpture remains, in my view, a magnificent failure--was simple: two minds, differently trained, were brought to bear upon a single problem. One of these minds was Kashmiri, or at least came from the north-west, while the other was indigenous. The problem was to devise a Viśvarūpa icon of Viṣṇu using both of their inherited skills in addition to what was known of the successful formulations of Mathura and Śāmalājī. The end result was catastrophic in that their differences of opinion, so clearly evidenced in this sculpture, led to the idea being given up completely, so that there never was a fully developed Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu icon of the Deogarh school. However, the attempt was considered worth finishing, and the lessons learned in the process appear to have borne fruit elsewhere, principally at Kannauj to the north. This sculpture thus represents all the evidence we have to connect the Vaiṣṇava Viśvarūpa iconographic tradition of northern and western India during the Gupta period with that of the north in the Gurjara-Pratihāra period, which saw the final formulation established at Kannauj and thence transmitted throughout the north. The Deogarh experiment took place between the decline of the Guptas and the rise of the Gurjara-Pratihāras at some point during the eighth century: it is difficult to be more precise because the sculpture is executed in the local style of the sixth century, some parts of it being copied directly from the panels of the famous 'Daśāvatāra' Viṣṇu temple at the foot of the hill on which the sculpture was discovered.² This archaising tendency tempts one at times to place an earlier date on the piece³ but the conception of the image and certain iconographic features are definitely not Gupta.

That this was an experimental sculpture and not a final version intended for a temple is demonstrated by several factors. The plinth or base is far too narrow to have lowered the centre of gravity sufficiently to allow the image to be free standing-when excavated and set on stone blocks⁴ it had to be leant against a wall; nor is it pierced at any points which would have facilitated its fixture against an interior wall. It is also the wrong shape for an external wall panel, being cut in the shape of an oval except at the base, instead of being rendered in high relief upon a rectangular slab. (The Śamalājī mage, and that at Parel, have fairly massive bases which could be seated in or on a temple floor.) Nor was any sign of a tenon projecting downward under the plinth discovered. Secondly, the placing of the many figures in and around the large prabhāmaṇḍala is quite haphazard, leaving some areas crowded while other surfaces have had to be left plain. This indicates the absence of a properly drawn up plan by which to locate the figures in a significant pattern: a complete contrast to the careful planning behind the Śamalājī image and the Parel heptad. At the same time, a definite conception which the image was intended to express can be detected, as I shall explain below. The essential intermediate stage between the conception and realization of the image namely precise diagrammatic planning--was evidently only half formulated when sculpting commenced. Thirdly, and by far the most salient evidence, is the badly cut front right hand of the main figure, raised in what is intended to be an abhayamudrā against the right shoulder (Plate 64). The forearm is raised awkwardly, doubling over the upper arm, and is too thin; the hand itself is almost round, the fingers stubby when compared to the large, long-fingered and capable looking hands of the other five arms. In my opinion, this is definitely the result of recutting, and the cause, I suggest, is this. The north-western śilpin who participated in this sculpture carved this front right hand holding, as was normal in Kashmir at the time,⁵ a large and fully opened lotus. The local sculptor, unable to reconcile this with the iconographic norms of central north India, sought to rectify matters by shaping this combination of hand and lotus into an abhayamudrā, using the lotus blossom as the surface to rework into the shape of a hand, which explains its curious circularity. In recutting this arm, he lost the vanamālā which was draped around the shoulder

and through the crook of the elbow; hence, while cutting deeper to the surface of the background-which is otherwise plain beneath this arm-he left a vertical section for shaping into the lost section of the garland, which on this side therefore hangs down behind the shoulder without crossing the arm at all, although some lines were scored across the recut arm (and: for some reason. across the wrist) apparently to give the impression that the vanamālā remained in its proper place. In an experimental sculpture, this gesture to conformity after recutting would have served as a reminder when it came to sculpting the final version.

How and why the hypothetical Kashmiri śilpin came to be working at Deogarh remains a mystery. But the presence of a north-western iconographical approach is the only factor which satisfactorily explains the two most irregular features of this image which were not altered, possibly because they were considered trivial: the small figure rising between the feet of the main Viṣṇu image (M in Figure 5.1), and the dagger thrust into the waistband of the latter's adhoṃśuka. Both of these were widespread in the north-western iconography- of multi-headed Viṣṇu from the eighth-ninth century onwards.⁶ the diminutive supporting figure at the base being present even in a bronze of the sixth-seventh century.⁷ But they were totally alien to the Vaiṣṇava iconography of the central north in this or any other period. And that the image was made at Deogarh can hardly be denied in view of its style, which has smothered any trace of a Kashmiri style-except in the shape of the dagger which, with its wide curved horns in place of a pommel, is an exact copy of Kashmiri prototypes.⁸

In order to make sense of this exercise in experimental iconography, it is necessary first to examine what-if any-planning preceded its making; The essential form of the image⁹ consists, as does that of the Śamalājī sculpture, of an egg containing a 'tree', or in this case a forked yūpa,¹⁰ floating upright upon the waters which are represented by nāgas. Defining the oval around the greater part of its periphery is a series of heads, eleven on each side, descending from the apex one above the other; below them, the curve is continued, though not entirely

fluently, by the bodies of Gadādevī, the personified mace, and Cakrapuruṣa the personified disc (Figure 5.1, figures L and O respectively), the base of the oval being rounded off by the multiple hoods and serpentine bodies of the nāgas (Figure 5.1, the two (N).)

The peripheral heads are clearly derived from the Mathura tradition (Chapter 2, pp. 137-9 and Plates 49, 52 and 53), the Śamalājī images having no such margin to their prabhāmaṇḍalas. They are disembodied, forming a series merely by repetition—a rakṣāvaḷī or ritually protective boundary—with no overlapping suggestive of an emanatory progression. It is possible that on the proper right side it was intended that there should be twelve, the last in the series being placed adjacent to the lowest, under the sword-hand of Viṣṇu (6 in Figure 5. 1), for the sake of symmetry. As I have indicated elsewhere,¹¹ the heads on the proper right are crowned, those on the left bare-headed with their hair worn in rather flat jaṭābhāras, suggesting that the former represent kṣatriya types, the latter brāhmaṇa types. Alternatively the distinction may have been between Adityas and Rudras, in which case the numbering was inaccurate in the sculpture, as there should be twelve of the former and eleven of the latter.¹² However, this distinction between the two sides of the rakṣāvaḷī is worth noting, for it is an entirely original idea which was never to be emulated despite its symbolic potential. It might well have been developed to relate worshippers belonging to the two highest varṇas, the priesthood and ruling military aristocracy, to the image and so to each other's complementary- social duties according to their dharma as sanctioned by divine authority. At Deogarh, it may have been intended to inculcate such a doctrine by dividing the rakṣāvaḷī, but it was apparently not developed because of the abandonment there of the icon-type.

The personified weapons are inherited from the Gupta tradition at Mathura: although the Bhandari fragment (Plate 49) is lost below the hips, the āyadhapuruṣas became a standard in Viṣṇu images there (Plates 43, 45)—and also, of course, in Kashmir and other regions of the north-west¹³ whet-c, as in the Deogarh sculpture. Gadādevī holds a camāra in her right hand. By contrast, the Śamalājī image has anthropomorphic Garuḍa and Śrī-Lakṣmī in these locations

beside Viṣṇu. Only at Deogarh: however, do they form part of the oval shape of the main composition. The inference in the case of these two figures clearly is that their iconographical identities as understood at Deogarh were borrowed from Mathura and the north-west, whereas their positioning in the sculpture was an original idea on the part of the sculptors at Deogarh. Certainly the nāgas-both as representatives of the pre-creation pralaya state and as the figures forming the base of the oval-could only have been borrowed from Śamalājī; until the creation of the kannauj Viśvarūpa type of Viṣṇu, snakes and serpents were associated only with supine or seated Viṣṇu in images of the type termed Śeṣa/Ananta-śayyin and Anantāsana-both of which are represented on the Daśāvātāra temple at Deogarh- and also, of course, in the Śamalājī image itself. In the Deogarh Viśvarūpa, Viṣṇu for the first time appears erect upon the nāgas, in the iconographic tradition of Kṛṣṇa Kālīyadamana, although the religious significance in the two cases is quite different. The religious construct with which V Viṣṇu is identified within the cosmic egg is, in the Śamalājī image, the tree; at Deogarh, standing Viṣṇu as the universal axis is conceptually allied to the Vedic yūpa of the forked type used in sacrificing to dual divinities such as Indrāgnī, as I have demonstrated elsewhere.¹⁴ Indra and Agni being the dominant gods at the top of the two halves of the oval (E) and (D) in Figure 5.1. The god as single axis thus divides his hegemony between both sides of the oval and the figures within them.

The essential diagrammatic planning upon which this main construct was based appears to have been relatively simple when compared to the theoretical diagrams behind the Śamalājī image and the Parel heptad. It was derived, the general shape of the Deogarh sculpture would suggest, from the 'śilpaśāstra' which dictated the compositional structure of the Śamalājī image and its successors,¹⁵ but only in outline: the śilpīns at Deogarh were attempting to create their own Viśvarūpa image and drew upon Śamalājī theory only as far as it coincided with their basic conception of a new icon of Viṣṇu at the centre of his creation. The prabhāvalī of heads, inherited from Mathura, had to be accommodated within this scheme, along with a scale of proportions suitable for a standing figure of Viṣṇu. The working diagram appears to have been built up in the following stages (Figures 5.2-5.4).

1. The first line incised upon the slab was the vertical centre line.

2. Three contiguous circles were described with their centres upon this line, each having a radius one-sixth the desired height of the icon from the base of Viṣṇu's feet to the apex of the entire composition. The centres of these circles and the points where their circumferences intersected the centreline were then marked (Aa, Ba, H, F, J, Ab and Bb). (As the image was designed to show Viṣṇu as the universal axis, these three circles may ritually have signified the three worlds or triloka which the god pervades.)

3. Two overlapping ellipses were inscribed next, with a common locus at the centre (F); the upper ellipse had its second locus at the point of contact between the middle and upper circles (H), and the lower had its second locus at the point of contiguity between the middle and lower circles (J). The radius of each ellipse was half the total height of the three circles F-Aa and F-Bb). These ellipses intersected (at points C, left and right) on a level with the mid-point of the vertical axis (F). The horizontal centre line (C-F-C) could thus be incised. (The two ellipses were probably conceived in cosmogonic terms as the two halves of the Brahmāṇḍa, as in the Śamalājī image.)

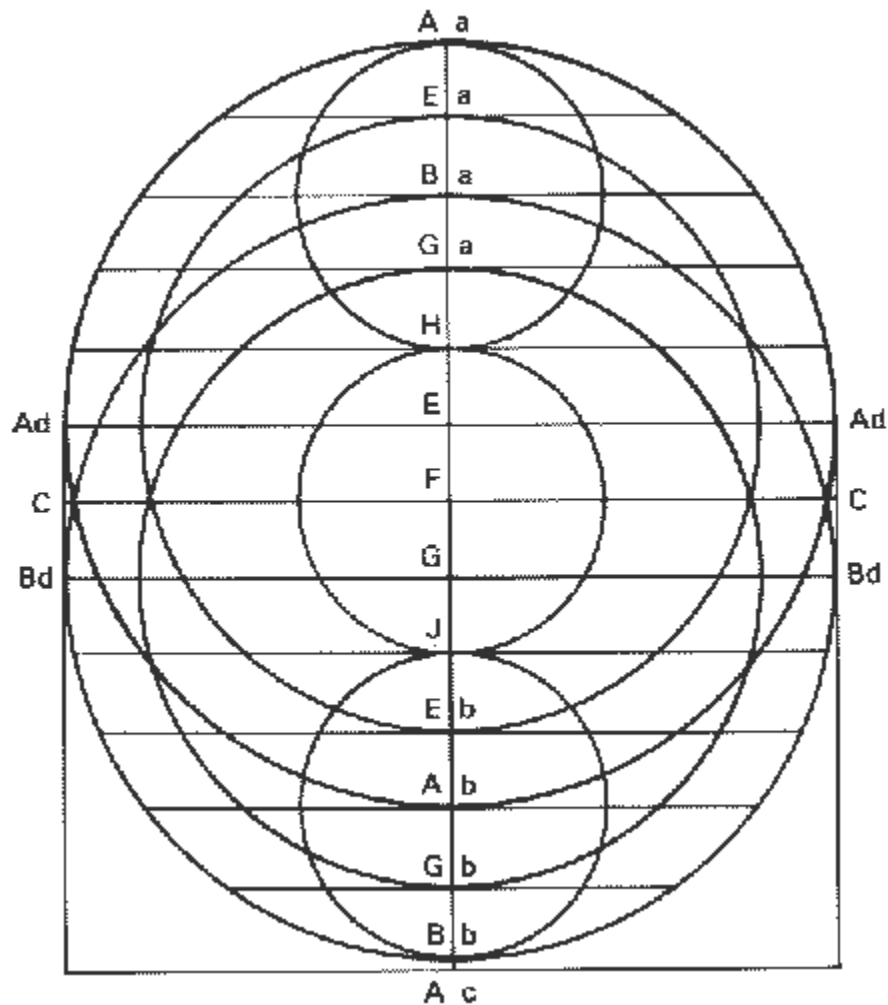


Fig. 5.2 Planning diagram. Deogarh A

4. The horizontal axes of the two ellipses (Ad-Ad and Bd-Bd) were next incised, intersecting the vertical axis at right angles (at E and G), and these two points of intersection were used as the centres about which to describe the two circles of a radius equal to the diameter of the first three circles. These two circles intersected on the median line (C-C) and the points at which their circumferences intersected the vertical axis were marked (Ea and Eb, Ga and Gb).

5. The vertical axis was now divided into twelve equal parts between Aa and Bb.

Horizontal lines at right angles to the vertical axis were incised through these points, dividing the double ellipse into twelve equal levels.

6. Two steps were now required to position the eleven heads on either side of the upper ellipse (see Figure 5.3):

a. First, two lines were incised through the intersections of the periphery of the middle circle with Bd on one side and Ad on the other, crossing at the centre of the circle (F) which is also the centre of the whole double ellipse. These lines marked the base of the periphery of heads on either side (and, in their upward extensions, the bottom of the sixth heads from this base). Parallel lines were then drawn from the intersections of the lower large circle with Bd on one side and the horizontal line through H on the other, crossing at point E. This procedure was repeated upward, the lines crossing at points Ga, Ba and Ea on the vertical axis at an angle of 30° from the horizontal.

b. Next, an inner upper ellipse was drawn to define the width of the brabhāvalī, using the same two loci (F and H) with a radius reduced by the distance between the 30° lines, so creating on the periphery a series of twenty-two 'squares' with two curved sides within which the faces were located.

7. The module of proportionate measurement of images is generally agreed to be the length of the face (from the hairline to the chin) which is subdivided into twelve units called aṅgulas.¹⁶ This module is termed the Ma: thus, for example, a daśatāla image would consist of (10 x 12 =) 120 units of height, variously distributed to accommodate different parts of the anatomy. Now the face of the image of Viṣṇu in the Deogarh Viśvarūpa is exactly as high as one of the twelve levels (E-F); each of the horizontal divisions of the composition is therefore a tāla, and the Viṣṇu image itself stands eight tālas high (aṣṭatālamūrti) from Bb to H, within a twelve-tāla composition. Level H marks the top of the god's crown. E the rim of the crown and

the top of the face, F the chin, G the heart or chest, J the belly, midway between J and Eb the genitals, Ab the knees, Gb the base of the shin and Bb the base of the toes (Figure 5.4).

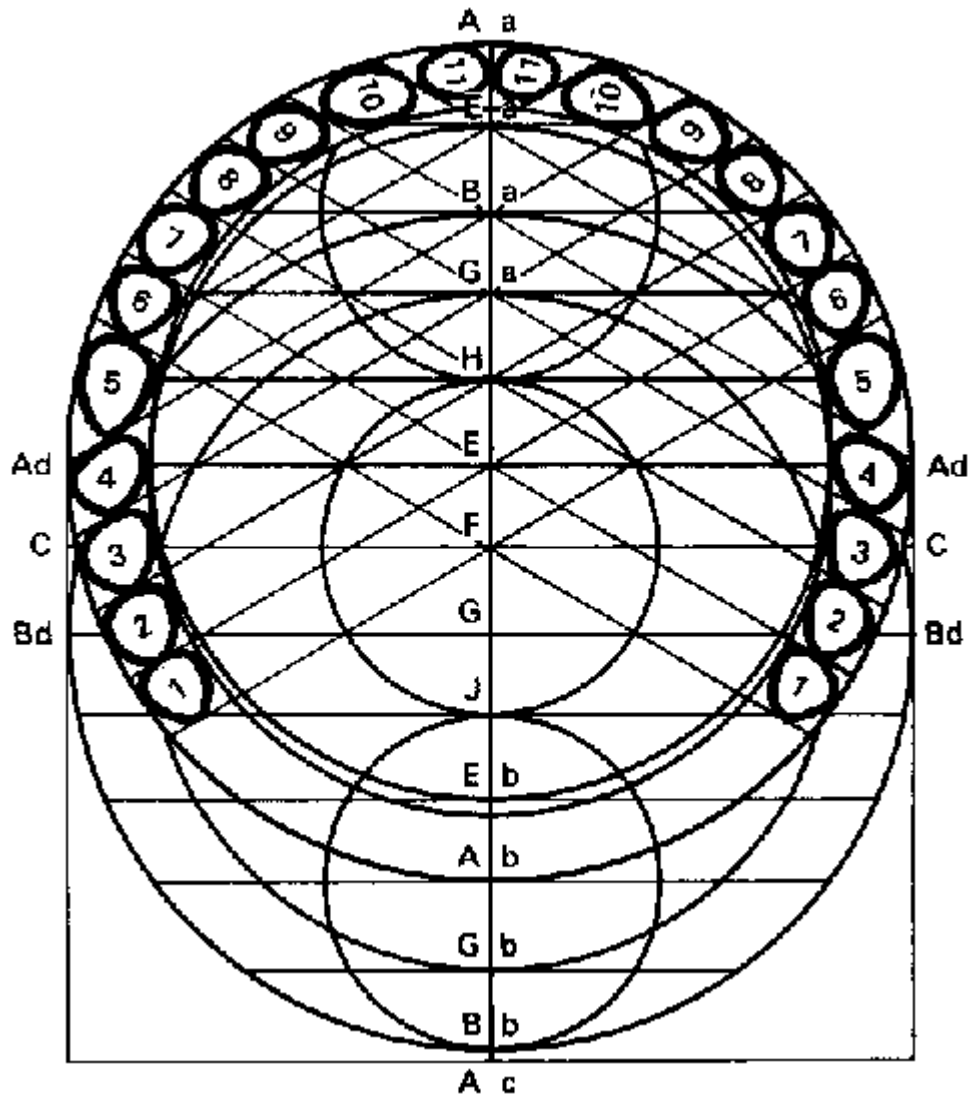


Fig. 5.3 Planning diagram. Deograh B

In this way, the oval outline of Śamalājī, the prabhāvalī of heads from Mathura, and the classical scale of proportions were integrated in planning this experimental image.

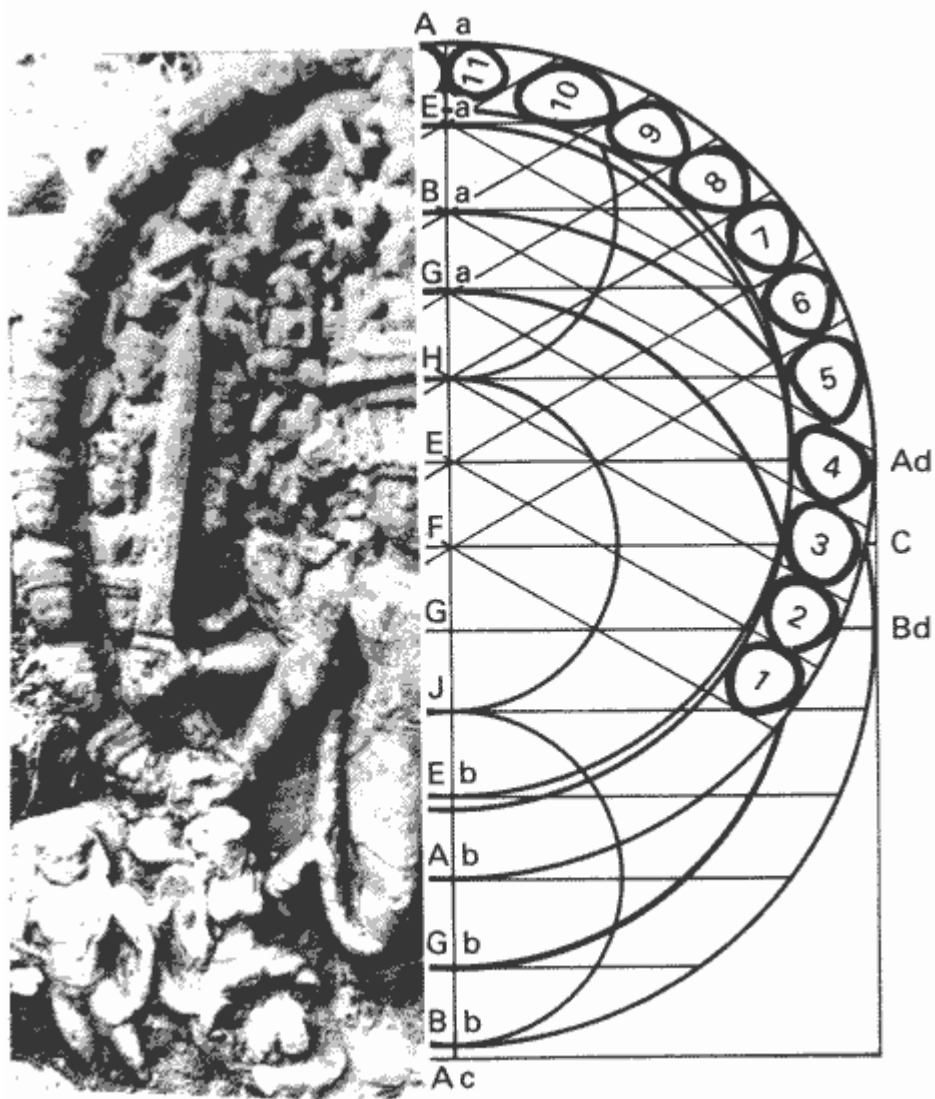


Fig. 5.4 Planning diagram. Deogarh C

It appears that the horizontal lines through Ga, Ba and Ea may have been used to indicate the chest-level of the figures representing Brahmā, Hayagrīva and Śiva as they rise above Viṣṇu: counterparts of line Bd-Bd passing through G, which indicates the level of Viṣṇu's chest. But the figures on either side have been sculpted without regard to any systematic scale of proportions or spatial layout relative either to each other or to the main figure in geometric terms. However, their grouping does have its own kind of

logic, even if its presentation is somewhat phantasmagorical. In this, the population of the prabhāmaṇḍala seems to have been carried out on much the same principle as was that of the enlarged śiraścakra of the Mathura fragment from Bhankari. The artistic aim there and at Deogarh seems to have been to reveal a spontaneous manifestation of gods, heroes and seers within the compass of Viṣṇu's effulgence, as if appearing in the manner of visions in a dream, emerging from and taking shape against the background of the nimbus (rather than, as at Śamalājī, constituting the nimbus).

Organization is evident in the intentional division of these figures into two distinct moieties, the right half dominated by Indra being kṣatriya and the left, dominated by Agni, being brāhmaṇa in character. Moreover, the four side-heads of Viṣṇu also lend specific qualities to each half. The man-lion, Nṛsiṃha, and the turtle, Kūrma (X and Z in Figure 5.1) are associated with heroism, the one in his battle with the heretic Hiranyakaśipu and the other in his supporting Mandara at the churning of the ocean between the divine and demonic factions. They overlap the kṣatriya side headed by Indra (E) in Figure 5.1. On the other hand, the boar, Varāha, and the fish Matsya (Y) and (W) have associations with the rescue of holy men, the fish having saved Manu from the flood and the boar the submerged Earth with the priestly guardians of religion caught among his bristles. They overlap the brāhmaṇa half governed by Agni (D). Viṣṇu wields his sword amid the warrior half and displays his shield in association with the magico-religious group. These symbolic connections are so clearly to be seen, but again one senses that this is only an artistic first sketch. Surely the live Vṛṣṇi heroes (the five Pāṇḍava brothers?) grouped around the sword, for example, could be better rendered if they were more uniform in size and displayed more individual characteristics. They seem merely to be 'roughed out', awaiting further thought and discussion before a final version of the sculpture is planned and executed. If they were intended to represent the Vṛṣṇis, then the one feature distinguishing them as such—the severance from his kin of the heretical member of the clan, Sāmba, by the sword-arm of Viṣṇu, as he was by the blade in the Śamalājī image (the disembodied head numbered 6 in Figure 5.1, (H) in Figure 3.1) -wrongly numbers them as an original group of six

instead of five. Whatever its identity, this group, and the severance by the sword of one of its members, again suggests an acquaintance at Deogarh with some śāstric text or remembered verses from Śamalājī. Above them, the better known figures of the twin horsemen, the Aśvins, and of Yama, god of the dead, with his goad or noose and riding the black buffalo, are more confidently rendered, while Indra on his elephant might almost have been copied from the frieze at the top of the Śeṣaśāyīn panel on the Daśāvatāra temple about one kilometre away.

The seven sages (there is also a tiny head beside Brahmā and another above the boar's snout which one scarcely knows whether or not to include) in the left half of the prabhāmaṇḍala, like the five or perhaps six heroes around the sword in the opposite half, cannot be identified. Those shown with the upper parts of their bodies all hold up their right hand in the abhaya mudrā and are swathed in robes which hang across their left shoulder. Little more can be said of them. The first of these saptarṣis, the Bhārgava seer Vasiṣṭha, whose name usually heads the lists of sages, is the probable identity of figure 1 in Figure 3.1. In the sculpture he is shown near Agni, appearing to block the fire-god's progress on his ram: of all the seers' wives, it was his, the faithful Arundhatī, whom Svāhā could not impersonate in her returning of Agni's passion, according to the mythology. Vasiṣṭha, therefore, would be represented as preeminent among the group of seers and closest in rank to the god Agni. The rest are probably Atri, Viśvāmitra, Gautama, Bharadvāja, Jamadagni and Kaśyapa, but there is nothing in the sculpture to distinguish them. The identification of these figures, therefore, depends upon their general appearance—long hair piled up on their heads with, in one case (the head numbered 4), a beard, and the absence of any vāhanas or weaponry—and upon their number as a distinct and separate group within the āgneya half of the nimbus. Such a group-identity on one side of the Viṣṇu figure is an invention of Deogarh and is to be transmitted to Kannauj where the culmination of the experimentation seen in this sculpture is to take place.

In contrast to this strict division of the aureole into two halves of different character, there is one feature common to both. That is the presence of cows or bulls. Two are carved in profile

beside the Nṛsiṃha and Kūrma heads in Indra's half, while on Agni's side there are three, two in profile above the shield of Viṣṇu and another head-on beside the lotus throne of Brahmā. Those in the right half are placed next to the Vṛṣṇi group (if such they are), perhaps to indicate the cowherd community of Vṛndāvana in which Kṛṣṇa in particular rose to prominence. On the other side, one of them might represent the wish-granting cow of Vasiṣṭha, Nandinī, but again it is impossible to be precise. A pleasing characteristic of these animals is a certain light-hearted realism which is introduced in their portrayal. Apart from their irregular positioning-suggestive of their freedom to wander where they will-two of them are shown clambering on to parts of the Viṣṇu image itself, a liberty which would never be allowed the more solemn human figures. On the left side, for example, one has placed its forehooves upon the top of Viṣṇu's shield as if it were mounting a hillock in its path, while the lower of the two on the right places its forelegs somewhat precariously on the truncated fingers of the god's abhaya hand-originally, that is, upon the lotus before it was recut, as if the creature were venturing uncertainly into the water, mistaking lotuses floating on the surface for firm ground (a common enough sight where cattle graze near a lotus-filled pond). This intimate and charming association of the cows with the comparatively gigantic figure of Viṣṇu suggests both that the god's identity is being shown as merged with that of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, known from his days at Vṛndāvana as the Cowherd (Gopa, Gopati and especially Govinda) or the Chief Cowherd (Gopendra), and that the populated nimbus is, at least in part, to be regarded as his special heaven, the Goloka.

The densely populated, egg-shaped effulgence of Viṣṇu, when conceived as a world, leads one to speculate upon the role in which the designers of this image had cast Viṣṇu in elevating him to Viśvarūpa status. There is no evidence here of the vision of Arjuna as recounted in Bhagavadgītā 11. As in the Śamalājī image, and unlike the Mathura fragments, the figures within the nimbus face outward, away from Viṣṇu and the three figures above his crown; the seers in the āgneya half do not proceed toward the central axis, but manifest themselves like ripples on a lake drifting away from the place where the cast pebble fell. They, and all the creatures whose prototypes appear in this image, are generated by Viṣṇu through Brahmā as

demiurge. Although Brahmā appears seated upon his lotus, that lotus does not grow from Viṣṇu or from the waters (nāgas) as it does in the Śeśasāyyin panel on the nearby Daśāvatāra temple. Here Viṣṇu is erect, not supine; he separates Brahmā from the fertile waters rather than reclining upon their surface. Above Viṣṇu's crown, Brahmā appears independent of the greater god: his lotus is made to hover above the crown, with no evident connection. Independent Brahmā, as recorded in the twelfth book of the Mahābhārata, is dangerous as a creator:

At the time of the creation, the Grandfather, full of fiery energy, created living beings. These creatures increased in age and number to excess, but they did not die again. Then there was no space anywhere between creatures; there was no space to breathe, so congested was the triple universe. He began to worry about how he could destroy them. He became angry, and from all the apertures of his body a fire shot forth. All creatures, moving and still, were burnt by that great blast of anger when the Grandfather became angry.

Then Rudra the Pillar, the lord of Vedic sacrifices,... the god with tawny matted locks, spoke to Brahmā about succour and refuge. The Pillar said, 'Know that I am concerned about the creation of living beings. You have created these creatures; do not be angry with them, Grandfather...'

'I am not angry,' said Prajāpati, 'nor is it my wish that living creatures should cease to exist. But in order to lighten the earth I have sought this destruction. This goddess Earth, oppressed by the burden, has kept urging me to destroy them, for she is sinking into the waves under the burden, great god...!' The Pillar said 'Have mercy; forbear this final destruction-I beg that all creatures may be subject to repetitions of birth and death.'...

But as the noble Brahmā suppressed the fire born of his anger, from all the apertures of his body a dark woman appeared... Then the god, the first, the lord of people, summoned her and said. 'Death, kill these creatures ...'... Thus Death was created by the god, and when the appointed time has come she destroys creatures as is proper ...'¹⁷

The description of the world in this extract fits the crowded oval of the Deogarh sculpture. And the tiny figure at the base, upon whose shoulders Viṣṇu seems to stand, although in fact his feet are set upon the nāgas on either side, does not support the god's feet with her hands as do her Kashmiri prototypes,¹⁸ but has her hands joined in a gesture of supplication. This could be the Earth demonstrating her burden-which is the entire oval above her and its teeming population-sinking into the waters between the two nāgas. Periodic death and destruction in the form of Rudra - Śiva then appears at the apex of the oval, diametrically opposite her, to help lighten her load, while between him and the endlessly creative Brahmā sits Hayagrīva-Vāgīśvara, knower of the Veda and preserver of ṛta, universal harmony and balance. This vertically overlapping sequence of three figures above Viṣṇu perpetuates the Kuṣāṇa populated pillar construct (Source no. 2A). From Śiva are seen falling away the dead on either side; but they are to be reborn, in accordance with his request in the Mahābhārata passage, for their descent will carry them through the waters of dissolution only to reemerge as does the goddess Earth. It is as preserver of this recurrent cycle, the support of both birth (Brahmā (A)) and death (Rudra- Śiva (C)) and the balance between them (Hayagrīva (B)), that Viṣṇu stands interposed between the world of Earth and her burden, which he himself supports.

This interpretation of the main part of the image (I have dealt with the figures standing on the plinth elsewhere)¹⁹ seems to explain the concept of Viṣṇu which the śilpīns at Deogarh sought

to express in this experimental sculpture, incorporating forms and figures from Śamalājī, Mathura, the north-west and Deogarh itself to produce a unique exercise in iconographic fusion. With all its shortcomings, the Deogarh Viśvarūpa remains a brilliant synthesis and marks the critical turning point in the post-Gupta multiple Vaiṣṇava iconography of north India.

- 1 This image was being copied as late as the 8th century A.D. (see Chapter 3 note 1); there was a period of some 250 years during which imitations were being made.
- 2 As far as I know, it was Mme O. Viennot who discovered this sculpture in 1966, and who kindly gave me directions as to how to find it myself in 1975.
- 3 I first estimated a 'late sixth or at most an early seventh century date for this icon': T.S. Maxwell, 'The Deogarh Viśvarūpa: A Structural Analysis', AARP8, December 1975, p.19.
- 4 Ibid., p. 8 and fig. 5.
- 5 See P. Pal, *Bronzes of Kashmir*, Graz 1975, plates 2,8 and 84b.
- 6 The dagger and the Earth-goddess were present in single-headed Kashmiri images of Viṣṇu: *ibid.*, plate 10.
- 7 The famous bronze in the Museum fur Indische Kunst, Berlin, also illustrated by Pal, *ibid.*, plate 8.
- 8 The shape of the dagger may be compared with that worn by a 9th century Kashmiri Viṣṇu: Pal, *ibid.*, plate 10.
- 9 A brief and inaccurate description of this little-known image appeared, rather mysteriously, in Sheo Bahadur Singh, *Brahmanical Icons in Northern India*, New Delhi

1977,p.101, with no illustration. I had already published it in 1975, the year in which I examined it and reported it to the then Director of the Archaeological Survey of India, M. N. Deshpande. No record of its existence could be found at A.S.I. headquarters, New Delhi. Singh dated the image to the 5th-6th century and gives no reference as to the source of his description. I have found no other published account of it.

10 Maxwell, 'Deogarh Viśvarūpa', pp.12-17 and Diagrams, p. 23.

11 Ibid., pp.11-13 and figs. 9 and 10.

12 For the origins of these groups, see M. Stutley and J. Stutley, *A. Dictionary of Hindum, Its Mythology, Folklore and Development 1500 B.C.-A.D. 1500*, London 1977, under Aditya(s), p.3, and Rudra(s), p.254. Also G. Liebert, *Iconographic Dictionary of the Indian Religions, Hindum - Buddhism - Jainism*, Leiden 1976,pp.. 4-5 and 242.

13 Pal, *Bronzes of Kashmir*, plates 8, 9 and 10.

14 Maxwell, 'Deograh Vośvarūpa', pp.15-17.

15 See Note 1, supra; as he iconography formula was transmitted through generations of śilpins for about 250 years, some kind of memorised or written śāstra must have existed.

16 S. Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, Calcutta 1946, reprinted Delhi 1980, Vol. II, pp. 309 ff; also J. N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta 1956, pp. 315-29.

17 Translation by W. D. O'Flaherty, *Hindu Myths, A Sourcebook Translated from the Sanskrit*, Harmondsworth 1975, pp. 38-43.

18 See Pal, *Bronzes of Kashmir*, plates 8, 9 and 10.

Viśvarūpa
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19 Maxwell, 'Deogarh Viśvarūpa', pp. 11-12.

KANNAUJ

The Decline of Creativity in the Design of Multiple Brahmanical Sculpture in North India

When the plan of this roughly formulated but symbolically sophisticated synthesis reached Kannauj¹ in the ninth century (while Gurjara-Pratihāra domains were at their most wide-spread) it was evidently taken up with zeal and iconographically perfected, though in an idiom quite different from that of its source, Deogarh, and expressing a greatly simplified religious concept.

Until recently, the transitional stage in the development of Viśvarūpa imagery between Deogarh in the eighth century and the mature Kannauj style in the ninth was an iconographical blank. With the brief appearance in Europe in early 1982 of a grey sandstone fragment (Plate 65), however, some evidence of this transition came to light. The fragment, 27.9 centimetres high, represents the upper right section of the populated prabhāmaṇḍala of a Viśvarūpa sculpture which appears to have been the immediate predecessor of the better known Kannauj images to be discussed below; in view of the very close iconographical similarities, there can be no serious doubt that this fragment also comes from Kannauj or its vicinity. Stylistically, the sculpture is still heavily dependent on post-Gupta influence. The boundary of Bhairava-type heads also harks back to the fifth century Bhankari fragment at Mathura (Plate 49); the heads seem to grow from each other on clearly defined necks, a continuity which echoes Gupta prototypes (Plates 53 and 55). It should be noted that there was evidently a fifth head on this side of the broken nimbus, as the remains of jaṭābhāra below the fourth face show: this was no aṣṭabhairava group of the kind which was to appear in the later over-

developed image (Kannauj-4). The alternation of the hairstyles in this transitional fragment- a piled up and bound chignon followed by a centrally parted unbound style with inward-curving wings of hair-was perpetuated in later developments at Kannauj (see Plates 67b and 69).

The strict organization of group-gods into serried ranks on the face of the nimbus may also derive from the rows of ṛṣi figures in the Mathura fragments, for this type of straight formal alignment is found neither at Gaḍhwā (Plate 48) nor at Śamalājī (Plate 57). Here, on the remains of the right-hand half of the nimbus, the eleven Rudras are precisely depicted in a row of five above another of six, each figure holding a trident in its left hand and making an outward-leaning abhaya mudrā with the right. This group provides the earliest definite evidence implying a division of the Viśvarūpa nimbus into radically differentiated and opposed halves; a less formally defined complementarity, however, was noted in the Deogarh Viśvarūpa in the last chapter.

Directly transmitted from the Deogarh experiment-there is no other known source-is the presence of Vedic gods on the highest level of the fragment below the containing chain of Bhairava heads. Only two of these figures remain, but they are large and vigorous in contrast to the small and cursorily executed deities on the top of later Kannauj versions. They represent, near the original centre, Indra, followed inward from the margin by Yama, Indra is mounted on his elephant, Airāvata, seated astride upon a 'saddle cloth'. He wears a tapering flat-topped crown. In his enlarged right hand he wields the double-ended, three-pronged vajra; his left hand and forearm rest upon the elephant's head. Yama rides bareback on the black water-buffalo, apparently reining in strongly with his left hand on a thong passing through the animal's nostrils, abruptly pulling up its head. In his right hand he holds the yama daṇḍa, at the top of which is a large knot) which may have represented a skull, aslope his right shoulder. He is bareheaded with long hair hanging loose. These same two gods appear in the Deogarh Viśvarūpa in exactly the same order and location on the nimbus, presented head-on [(Plate 63 and Figure 5.1, (E)

and (F)]. Some of the Gupta-style influence in this Kannauj fragment may therefore be supposed to derive also from the archaising tendency of the image at Deogarh, parts of which were drawn directly from late Gupta sculpture there.

This fragment thus represents the earliest of the surviving Kannauj revisions of the Viśvarūpa image. From its iconographical evidence we now know that the reformulation of that ancient theme took place basically within the inherited classical tradition of Mathura, but that it followed more immediately in the wake of the Deogarh experiment which combined in some degree elements from the older traditions of northern, western and north-western India. The theme itself, however, continued to defy the best attempts of sculptors to achieve an interpretation which would successfully integrate the complicated symbolism of the Viśvarūpa concept (a complexity generated by placing many different cult-figures together) into an adequate aesthetic framework.

In Kannauj itself, there survive three sculptures of this type, more or less intact, and a fragment: two images, turned up by the plough, have been privately installed in a new brick temple in the suburb of Makarandnagar, the fragment is in a nearby private museum, and the third image is in local police custody due to its disputed ownership. The two which have recently been enshrined are, in my view, the oldest of this group; and one of those, which I shall term Kannauj-1, is the forerunner of the other. Śamalājī-2. The fragment, an important piece, belongs to this earlier group, and I shall refer to it as Kannauj-3. The more celebrated sculpture Kannauj-4 which has been published as representative of the Kannauj school² is, in fact, the latest of this group. Sivaramamurti³ considered it in 1974 to be 'a supreme example of early medieval handling- of an age-old theme' which indicates that his view of it in 1961 ('a magnificent example of early medieval work')⁴ did not change despite the discoveries of the two earlier pieces.

The earliest surviving connection with Deogarh is the sculpture that I have designated

Kannauj-I (Plate 66). It is housed in the shrine of a small modern brick temple, called the Rām Lakṣmaṇ Mandir, in the Kutlupur area of Makarandnagar suburb, Kannauj. The dates of its discovery and instalment cannot now be determined as the local community leader claims to have kept no written records. The image is cemented into the central of three niches in the back wall of the garbhagr̥ha, where it is regarded as an icon of Rāma. It is carved from red sandstone and has a total visible height of 169 centimetres, the main figure being 128 centimetres tall, while the maximum visible width is 75.6 centimetres. The main image of Viṣṇu is a nine-tāla figure (the dimensions held by the śāstras to be ideal for the image of a god)⁵, within what was probably a twelve-tāla composition: the vertical distance above Viṣṇu's crown is two and a half tālas, and one might assume that the base portion buried in the cement of the niche measured a half-tāla. Because the sides and plinth are hidden by this cavity, it is unfortunately impossible now to reconstruct the plan according to which it was designed; I cannot determine whether or not it is based upon overlapping ellipses as are the Śamalājī and Deogarh sculptures.

The main figure in the composition, its anatomy well pro-portioned and confidently executed, is Viṣṇu standing in a dahanche tribhaṅga posture. The god has six arms as at Deogarh, the attributes being disposed in the following manner, numbered from front to back.

| (Right hands) | | (Left hands) | |
|---------------|---|--------------|--|
| 1. | Raised as if in abhyamudrā, but the hand is broken off; | 1. | Śaṅkha, inverted (point downwards); |
| 2. | gadā. | 2. | cakra, with tassel streaming backward and upward at 45°; |
| 3. | broken, rests above head of an attendant. | 3. | kheṭka, inside turned outward. |

The mace (gadā) is inverted--as is the conch (Śaṅkha)-and was evidently held, or supported, in a curious manner, the second right hand being turned inward toward the body and the fingers

curled over the top of the handle. It is apparently the stump of this broken right arm which is to be seen on the elbow of the raised front right arm. The broken third right hand seems to have been clenched and turned outward away from the body, suggesting that it held a sword upright (which would balance the shield in the third left hand) the blade of which is presumably concealed by the side of the niche.

The Viṣṇu figure wears a long vanamālā which loops over the shoulders, through the crook of the elbows, and hangs down below the knees. This is the way in which it was intended that the garland should hang in the Deogarh image, before the recutting of the front right arm. The adhoṃśuka is rolled diagonally from the right hip to the left knee, with a long central fold between the legs and a chain with tassel hanging on the right thigh from a girdle below the top of the garment. There is no dagger. The yajñopavīta is long, curving inward to disappear under the diagonal folds of the lower garment and re-emerge over it below the right hip. Body adornment consists of bracelets, triple-wound armlets of a kind similar to those worn by the Deogarh figure, a three-strand necklace with a central ornament and makara-kuṇḍalas pendant from very elongated, slit ear lobes. The crown is an elaborately decorated kirīṭa-mukuṭa, a circular band with peaks on the front and the two sides surrounding a tapering kirīṭa which is square and plain on the top.

The deity is long-haired, with sausage curls spreading along his shoulders as at Deogarh, while the hair is represented by incised vertical lines below the rim of the crown. The original eyes were over-laid with shells painted with black irises when the image was re-installed; the true facial expression is therefore masked. The four side-heads, represented in profile and emerging from behind the central human head, are of the same animal avatāras as those appearing in the Deogarh image, but appearing in this disposition:

(Right)

(Left)

Kūrma

Varāha

Matsya

Nṛsiṃha

The original location of the heads of the Man-Lion and Boar to right and left of the central fact, invented at Mathura and perpetuated at Deogarh despite the addition of the two extra side-heads, has thus been re-arranged. This disposition of the heads of Viṣṇu 's animal incarnations around the god's face seems, in fact, to be unique to Kannauj. It is not easily explicable since all other north Indian schools, and north-western iconography, preserved the original placement of Nṛsiṃha on the right and Varāha on the left. It appears to be the case that the sculptors at Kannauj, conceiving the animal incarnations as manifest within the śiraścakra of Viṣṇu, as indeed they were in the Gupta sculpture of Mathura, should, when their number was increased to the full four, be represented pradakṣiṇā order around the (omitted) halo. Thus in the 'standard'⁶ list of ten, the daśāvatāras, the first four are, in sequence, Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Nṛsiṃha. This is the order in which they appear, clockwise, around the head of Kannauj-1.

It might be noted here that, in the list of the 'twenty-four images' (caturviṃśatimūrtayaḥ) of Viṣṇu, distinguished by the pradakṣiṇā order in which the four principal Vaiṣṇava emblems are held, the main Viṣṇu image in Kannauj-1 is termed Nārāyaṇa, Whose Origin is The Waters (the latter being represented by the nāgas). This identity would be applied to the main figure according to Padmapurāṇa 4.79,⁷ assuming that the front right hand either held a lotus or-which is more likely-was posed in the abhayamudrā but still regarded as the lotus hand of the god. However, since this distribution of attributes is by far the most customary in north India, it may very well be that the Kannauj sculptors were following tradition rather than deliberately making 'Nārāyaṇa 'the central figure of their Viśvarūpa image.

A tiny female figure, presumably Bhūdevī, rises between the feet of Viṣṇu, her hands in añjalimudrā, as at Deogarh. On either side, visible only from the waist upward above the modern concrete base in which the sculpture is seated, are two nāgas with triple cobra-hoods

behind their heads, each supporting one of the god's feet with both hands. This is the same concept, expressed through a greater degree of anthropomorphization, as that seen at Deogarh where the feet of Viṣṇu stand directly upon the serpentine bodies of the nāgas, unsupported by the Earth-goddess. The nāga on the left of the god has, in the left ear, a large vṛtta-kuṇḍalas in the form of a stylized blossom, while the ornament in the right ear, and in both ears of the other nāga, are simple, smaller kuṇḍalas. Despite these distinctions, the human torso of both nāgas is masculine. On either side of Viṣṇu, behind the nāgas, stands a female figure of exaggeratedly voluptuous shape. The one on the proper right is unlikely to be Gadādevī, as the elevation and angle of the mace in Viṣṇu's second right hand make contact between them impossible; probably she represents Puṣṭi or Sarasvatī, second consort of the god, holding the stern of a now broken cāmara in her right hand. Her counterpart on the left would then be Śrī Lakṣmī, holding a large lotus in her raised right hand, while her left rests casually in her girdle.

There is some carving in low relief on the back slab above these females on either side, behind the arms of Viṣṇu but not between his arms and body. The relief work to his right cannot be identified, but that on the left represents, beneath the second left elbow of the god, a standing Gaṇeśa holding in his right hand a bowl into which his trunk dips. Represented on so large a scale; this elephant-headed son of Pārvaṭī is definitely out of place in this image and, as the sculpting appears to be original and not in a later style. I can only suggest that he is brought in here either as a curious jest on the part of the sculptor, or else, mistakenly, to give an identity to (one of) the lustrating elephants in images of Gaja Lakṣmī, for he appears immediately above the senior consort of Viṣṇu.

At each extremity of the plinth is a completely obliterated figure. Behind each of them stands another, that on the right severely damaged; the corresponding figure on the left, however, is clearly male, with a jaṭā hairstyle and closed eyes, holding some small object, perhaps a lotus, to his chest with his right hand, reminiscent of a similar figure in the same position on the plinth of the Śamalājī image discussed in Chapter 3.

In continuation of Bhūdevī at the base and the main figure of Viṣṇu, there rises a vertical series of three small, overlapping figures (Source no. 2.A) such as appear in the Śamalājī and Deogarh sculptures. The first and lowest figure emerges from the very back of the square top surface of the kirīṭa of Viṣṇu (Source no. 3B, eg., Plate 10). It has coiled hair, a small uṣṇīṣa, elongated ears, wears a robe over the shoulders and a necklace, raises the right hand in abhayamudrā the palm crossed by an akṣamālā and lowers the left in varadamudrā with some minute object upon the palm. Despite its strangely Buddhist appearance, this may represent the Dwarf, Vāmanāvatāra, who is the counterpart of the gigantic form (Virāṭarūpa) which the central image of Viṣṇu quite literally assumes in contrast to all the surrounding figures. Vāmana is also the fifth incarnation, after Nṛsimha, in the 'standard' list of ten. The second figure, rising above and behind him, represents an unusually slim Brahmā standing, three-headed with three jaṭākalāpas merging above the central face. His right hand is in abhayamudrā with a rosary crossing the palm; the lowered left holds a kamaṇḍalu. The third, apical figure is Hayagrīva with a very distinct equine head. The right hand is broken off, and an object which is too eroded to be identifiable rests upon the palm of the left hand. If this figure is taken to represent the incarnation Kalkin in horse-headed form, then it replaces, in terms of Vaiṣṇava avatāravāda, the figure of Śiva at the apex of the Śamalājī and Deogarh images: either may assume the role of bringer of the apocalypse.

A standing male figure flanking the second and third figures of the central register on the proper right holds in his right hand the haft of an axe, the blade of which-distinguishable although damaged-rests upon his right shoulder: this is clearly Paraśurāma. His counterpart of the left holds an arrow, point down-ward, in both hands, and clearly represents Rāma Dāśarathi. A male figure standing below Paraśurāma, with a triple cobra-hood over his head and holding a goblet in his right hand, is Balarāma. Opposite him stands a figure having coiled hair and an uṣṇīṣa, with his right hand in abhayamudrā and his left lowered to hold the edge of his long robe which reaches below the knees, appears to be transparent, and leaves the right shoulder bare. This can only represent Buddh2vatCa. All ten avatāras thus appear together in the upper part of

the sculpture: the four animal incarnations around the head of the god and the remaining six centred on Brahmā above. Two of these avatāras perpetuate, in a more daring manner, the amusing touch of realism noticed in the Deogarh sculpture, where a cow was seen with its forehooves raised on to the shield and recut abhaya hand of Viṣṇu. Here in Kannauj-I, Balarāma and Buddha stand quite clearly with their feet placed upon the Kūrma and Varāha side-heads of the god. This feature may, of course, be purely whimsical: a minor inspiration such as carving an elephant above Śrī Lakṣmī, and giving it the identity of Gaṇeśa. On the other hand, a definite distinction may have been insisted upon to divide the animal from the human incarnations-or, indeed, to connect them: the Kūrma supported Mount Mandara at the churning of the ocean and it here supports Balarāma whose other attribute (apart from the plough) is the musala the pestle or churning-stick, while the Varāha conveyed from the depths of the ocean not only the earth but also the ṛṣis of whom the Buddha, however heretical in Vaiṣṇava terms, may he said to be a representative.

There are three wry small figures, remarkably crudely rendered, to the right and left of Paraśurāma and Rāmacandra, around the upper curved margin of the stele. On the left appears first Indra seated above, in a sort of mid-air lalitāsana, rather than upon his sketchily depicted elephant, Airāvata. Next to him stands a taller figure who seems to be Agni, with piled-up hair, a brad, the right hand in abhayamudrā and a pot (the ghr̥ta-pātra) in the lowered left; to his right, below Indra's elephant, is the head of his vāhana (the body being broken off) which is that of a ram, the ears and horns quite clearly depicted, facing the observer. Lastly on this side, there appears a standing figure holding up a rod or goad in his right hand and a pot-like object in the left, which may represent Yama, god of the dead, holding the yamadaṇḍa. On the right, next to Paraśurāma, right hand in abhayamudrā with a bird as high as his knees in front of him, stands a figure who might be identified as Skanda with his peacock vāhana. To his right is an ithyphallic figure also with his right hand in the abhaya gesture and a kamaṇḍalu in his left, who is evidently Śiva as Bhikṣāṭana, the wandering mendicant, although the usual khaṭvāṅga is absent. Finally there appears a mounted figure, riding toward the centre. This is unlikely to be

another depiction of Kalkin, especially in the company of two Śaiva figures, nor would the appearance of Revanta here seem to be of much significance. As there are at least two Vedic gods on the opposite side, this rider may stand for the Aśvins; more probably, however, he is Vāyu the wind-god, mounted on the deer (mṛga). The presence of Śiva, Skanda and Vedic deities at the top of this composition suggests a connection with the Deogarh image and, ultimately, with the Śeṣasāyyin (Nārāyaṇa) panel of the 'Daśāvatāra' temple there, in which such gods form an upper frieze.

There are eleven identical figures in the lower, right-hand portion of the stele beneath Skanda and Bhikṣāṭana, clearly representing the ekādaśa-rudrāḥ. Each is two-armed, the right hand raised in the abhayamudrā and the left holding a trisūla, and all have jaṭā hairstyle. They are arranged in two upper rows of four and one lower row of three. The corresponding figures filling the left side of the stele, dominated by Indra and Agni, are the twelve Ādityas, in three rows of four, like miniature Sūryas. Here the concept, originated in the Deogarh image, of a Pabhāmaṇḍala divided into opposed hut complementary moieties, is perpetuated, albeit in simplified terms: where at Deogarh a kṣatriya half was set against a brāhmaṇa half, presided over by Indra and Agni respectively, each side containing figures which were differentiated even if only by their relative sizes, at Kannauj a regimented division into black and white, āsura and saura, is dominated by a motley association of godlings, some Vedic and some epic in origin. The Deogarh sculpture and Kannauj-1 are the earliest examples known which illustrate, in a single image designed to be a cult-icon, this balance of fundamental powers. In the former image, the balance is essentially between social group; in the latter, between supernatural forces which most closely correspond to them. This association of a single figure with opposed groups, whether social or supernatural, derives at its most basic level from the mythology concerning Viśvarūpa, which can be traced from the Ṛgveda to the Bhagavadgītā and the Purāṇas, where the central figure gradually changes from a demon to the most colossal Vaiṣṇava vision of the godhead known in brahmanical scripture.⁸

Whether or not Kannauj-1 originally had a series of heads around the margin of the stele, as at Deogarh, cannot be ascertained because the image has been set deep into the wall of the modern temple. But the evidence of the fragment (Kannauj-3) in the nearby 'Purātatva Saṃgrahālaya' (Pls. 67a, b) suggests that there may well have been a number of Bhairava faces on the left edge of the sculpture at least, visible from the front only in low profile.

It thus appears that Kannauj-1 represents similar concepts to those expressed in the Deogarh image, but deliberately simplified both artistically and in import, and retains a sense of both humour though this be to a certain extent coloured by sectarian prejudice. The iconography of this image does not warrant a key-diagram, but it may be presented in summary form for comparative purposes (Table 6.1).

Kannauj-2 (Plate 68), known locally as Lakṣmaṇa, is housed in the same Rām Lakṣmaṇ Mandir as the Kannauj-1 version, in the niche to its right. It is carved from a pinkish buff sandstone and has a visible height of 162.5 centimetres, is 78.75 centimetres wide, the main figure standing 129.6 centimetres tall. It is clearly a product of the same workshop as Kannauj-1, being executed in the same style and almost certainly from an identical block of stone having the same dimensions, following the same basic design. But it is far from being a copy. It is rare to find two such complex sculptures, apparently made within a few years of each other, quite possibly by the same sculptor, manifesting so many iconographical changes.

Kannauj: The Decline of Creativity

Table 6.1

Kannouj-1: Summary Diagram

Paraśurāma

Hayagrīva

Rāma

| | | | | | |
|------|-------------------|---------|------------|------|------|
| Vāyu | Bhikṣāṭana Skanda | Brahmā | Indra | Agni | Yama |
| | Balarāma | Vāmana | Buddha | | |
| | Kūrma- | V | -Varāha | | |
| | Matsya- | I | -Nṛsiṃha | | |
| | 11 Rudras | Ṣ | 12 Ādityas | | |
| | | Ṅ | | | |
| | | U | | | |
| | Puṣṭi-Sarasvatī | | Śri-Lakṣmi | | |
| | -?- | | Devotee | | |
| -?- | Nāga | Bhūdevi | Nāga | | -?- |

The same tāla-system was employed, but the figure of Viṣṇu is more attenuated, the curves of the body straightened in conformity with the geometry of the tribhaṅga line on which it is based, resulting in a stiffer and less natural posture. One receives the impression that the sculptor had been instructed to 'tighten up' the whole composition in this version and to correct certain errors committed in Kannauj-1. One such correction evidently consisted of giving the god his full complement of eight arms, instead of the six supplied to Kannauj-1 as to the Deogarh image. The attributes were also changed to the following dispositions, as far as it is possible to judge after a considerable amount of breakage. Again, they are numbered from front to back.

| | Right hands | | Left hands |
|----|---|----|---|
| 1. | Raised as if in abhayamudrā, but the hand is broken off | 1. | The fingers rest casually on the rolled adhoṃśuka, and the thumb is extended across the thigh. |
| 2. | Broken off | 2. | Cakra, with tassel streaming back horizontally. |
| 3. | Broken off | 3. | Broken, extended forward holding a smashed object which was probably the śaṅkha. |
| 4. | Broken off | 4. | Extends diagonally behind arms 1 and 3 to grasp bow, thumb holding the string against it, on the margin of the stele. |

Probably the third and fourth right hands held the mace, a section of which remains, and an arrow or sheaf of arrows. That the second right hand held a sword appears unlikely in the absence of a shield on the left, and there is no evidence of the blade on the side of the stele which is visible, but it may have been depicted on the very edge and so be hidden within the niche.

Viṣṇu is again portrayed wearing the long vanamālā, but it has had to be most unconvincingly pulled around the inside of the elbow of the front left arm, which is straight. The adhoṃśuka is represented in a similar fashion, but with straight lines relieved only by the extravagant loops of the yajñopavīta. There is no extra decoration such as the chain hanging

upon the right thigh. The dagger is again absent. The keyūras are of the same design, but wound around the arm only once to end in exaggerated upward and downward curves, and the makara-kuṇḍalas are less ostentatious, as is the double-strand necklace. Although of the same design, the crown is thinner and taller, and the flat top of the kirīṭa is decorated with an eight-petalled lotus in low relief.

Long curls again spread upon the god's shoulders, but they are perfunctorily, executed. The face has been damaged, like that of Kannauj-1, and the shells over the eyes cover any expression that they may have conveyed. The profiles of the four animal avatāras project in the same clockwise order; some attempt has been made to render their outlines more uniform—the body of the Kūrma is flattened and the Varāha head projects less, while the cakra is held well away from the Nṛsiṃha head (instead of partly concealing it as in Kannauj-1) to allow its full profile to balance that of the Matsya.

The figures on the plinth give the initial impression of being the same as those in Kannauj-1; in fact, the iconography has been fundamentally altered. Thus the figure of Bhūdevī, emerging between the god's feet, extends her arms to support a foot with each hand. This supportive role is borrowed directly from the north-western iconography of multiheaded Viṣṇu.⁹ The nāgas flanking her (their lower halves again buried in the modern concrete base) have seven-headed snake canopies and are represented in abbreviated form. Their hands do not touch Viṣṇu, being held together in añjalimudrā. The functions of the Earth-goddess and the serpents in Kannauj-1 are thus reversed in Kannauj-2. At the extremities of the plinth are the obliterated remains of two figures, now quite unidentifiable. Above the figure on the left stands a male figure with an elaborate jaṭā hairstyle, large vṛtta-kuṇḍalas and a necklace, his hands joined in the namaskāramudrā; this is evidently the counterpart of the devotee in the same position in Kannauj-1 and the Śamalājī image. The corresponding figure on the right carries a bow in his left hand, possibly representing Arjuna, awed by the vision of Viśveśvara Viśvarūpa as described in Bhagavadgītā 11. Two female figures flank the god behind the nāgas. That on the

right carries no attributes, her right hand resting upon her thigh and her left hanging loosely at her side. The other carries a short-handled cāmara over her right shoulder and with her left imitates the casual hand-position of Viṣṇu. Unlike her counterpart in Kannauj-1, she does not gaze up at the god but glances down-ward, as does the female opposite. These two figures compared with those on the plinth of Kannauj-1, appear more demure, though they are relatively taller and less of their anatomy is hidden by the nāgas, who are smaller; neither carries a lotus, and the cāmara has been passed from the figure on the right to the one on the left. These changes may be of little or no true iconographical significance—they presumably still represent the two consorts of Viṣṇu— but they are symptomatic of the extent of the alterations made to a single image-type, at the same workshop and within the space of a few years. Certainly they indicate the fact that there was no fixed iconographic formula by which the Viśvarūpa image of Viṣṇu was to be made. No rigid, ritualistic canon governed image-making; there was no norm, deviation from which would bring down calamities of various kinds upon the heads of the worshippers, at least for these images. Artists developed, trimmed and altered their techniques with great freedom and apparently with impunity, since Kannauj-1 and -2 would have been installed in contemporary shrines in the same city, the differences between them plain for all to see. Nevertheless, habits evidently died hard: the figure of Gaṇeśa noticed in Kannauj-1 above the figure-of Śrī-Lakṣmī, where his presence could be accounted for in humorous, if somewhat devious terms, reappears in this sculpture, now hopelessly displaced between the cakra and the top of Viṣṇu's bow, where any connection between him and Lakṣmī would never be understood.

The first figure to rise from the lotus engraved upon the top surface of Viṣṇu's crown is similar to the corresponding figure in the Kannauj-1 version, though the hair is straight, not curled, and drawn up into a chignon, while more of the body is visible, apparently standing in a dehanche posture. In this version of the icon, I think that this figure does not represent Vāmana—who seems to appear elsewhere—but Buddha as an avatāra; possibly the lotus from which he emerges is intended to identify him as such. The second figure rising above him is again three-headed Brahmā, here represented as somewhat more corpulent, the stomach musculature

being roughly indicated by a cross incised over the navel as in Kashmiri images. The third and apical figure is now headless and its right arm is lost; the left hand supports a pot. Most probably this was, as in Kannauj-1, Hayagriva or Kalkin - although in view of other iconographical changes in this sculpture, this cannot be taken for granted.

Paraśurāma and Rāmacandra stand in the same positions on either side of this vertical register as they do in Kannauj-1, but here they are supported by lotuses stemming from the blossom carved on the crown of Viṣṇu.¹⁰ The figures of Balarāma and Buddha which appear beneath them in Kannauj-1 are omitted. However, there is a curious figure beside the crown of Viṣṇu on the right. It depicts a small, bowed figure upon another lotus pedestal holding a staff in its left hand and raising its right with index finger extended, exactly as if it were lecturing the top of Viṣṇu's head. This is the figure which I suspect represents Vāmana, the Dwarf incarnation, though why he should appear to be delivering a one-sided discourse to the gigantic form of Viṣṇu into which he was transformed is difficult to say. It recalls, in its absurdity, an image from the Rāmāyaṇa where the wily Hanuman, in order to converse with the giant Rāvaṇa, rises upon his seemingly endless tail which he coils beneath him until he is on a level with the demon's head.¹¹ Possibly we are meant to see in this touch of humour the Dwarf reminding the gigantic form of Viṣṇu that it was only through manifesting himself as one so small that the god was able to attain his enormous stature. There is no corresponding figure on the other side of Viṣṇu's crown. Counting the four side-heads of the god and taking Hayagrīva at the apex-if it was he who appeared there-as Kaklin, only nine avatāras are represented.

Around the upper margin of the stele there are six figures, as in Kannauj-1, but they are here larger, better organized and more clearly executed. To the left of Rāma, Indra again appears first, this time seated upon his elephant, with a mass of unkempt hair and holding the vajra in his right hand. Beside him is Yama astride the buffalo, riding toward the centre with the yamaḍaṇḍa in his left hand. Behind him is an unmounted figure, facing the other way, with a sword or staff held aslope his right shoulder. It is possible that this is some hero of Vaiṣṇava legend, such as

Bhīma, but there is nothing in the iconography which definitely identifies him as such. On the other side, next to Paraśurāma, appears Agni with a jaṭā hairstyle and a beard, riding the ram toward the centre. Another rider, his vāhana either eroded or not represented for want of space, follows Agni, left hand on hip, the right hand lost; as in Kannauj-1, this single mounted figure may stand for the Aśvins, but more probably represents Vāyu riding the mṛga. Behind him, in the position corresponding to that of 'Bhīma' opposite, stands another unmounted figure, also facing away from the centre. He has a bhairava appearance, with a large head, bulging eyes, what appears to be a circlet of skulls in his hair, and carries a thick-ended pole which may be the khaṭvāṅga. This appears to represent Śiva as Bhikṣāṭana. This 'frieze' along the top has thus been organized into a pattern: two mounted Vedic gods on either side of the centre, with a hero at one extremity and an 'anti-hero' (Bhikṣāṭana) at the other.

There are only eight Rudras, each carrying a trident in his left hand and holding up the right in abhayamudnā as in Kannauj-1, in the right-hand side of the stele, arranged in two rows of three and one row of two, the latter pair standing upon a lotus. In the opposite half there are nine Ādityas, in three rows of three, each wearing a pointed crown (unlike the flat-topped crowns of these figures in Kannauj-1), a kavaca (omitted from the Ādityas in Kannauj-1) and holding up a lotus blossom in each hand. The Āditya who appears above the snout of the Varāha side-face is provided with a lotus to stand upon, thus separating him from the avatāra, just as the Vāmanāvatāra opposite is provided with one to raise him above the Kūrma. Clearly, one of the required revisions in this version of the image was avoidance of the kind of informality found in Kannauj-1 and the Deogarh sculpture, in which certain figures might stand upon each other or upon the hand-held emblems of the god. (Nevertheless, a tiny figure has been inserted between the Ādityas beneath Indra., another between two Rudras beneath Agni, and yet another between the legs of the first and second Rudras in the top row. It is impossible to identify them, but their haphazard appearance is almost reassuring.) Greater symmetry was apparently also called for, resulting in reduced numbers of both Rudras and Ādityas; the presence of Vāmana in the right half made up the number of figures on that side to nine, thus

balancing the two halves. Further, the symbolically opposed yet complementary relationship between Indra and Agni, plainly depicted in the Deogarh sculpture, was here recognized anew and re-affirmed by placing them at the head of the two halves of the composition, instead of representing them both on the same side as in Kannauj-1. It is apparent, however, that the overall grasp of this symbolism was already lost. Thus Indra and Yama would be better placed above the Rudras, in company with Śiva Bhikṣāṭana, and Agni and Vāyu would have more relevance to the Āditya side of the image.

From what little can be seen of the curved top margin of the stele, it appears that it was enclosed on the edge by a succession of faces (as in the fragment Kannauj-3), but the concrete into which the sculpture is set and the liberal painting of it with lime has almost completely covered the profiles.

The iconography of Kannauj-2 and Kannauj-1 may be compared using Table 6.1 (p. 259), and Table 6.2.

Table 6.2

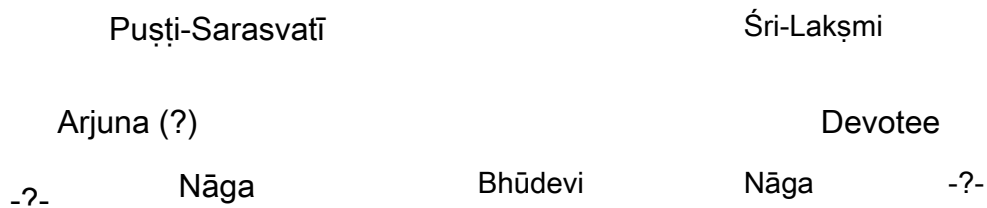
Kannauj-2: Summary Diagram

| Paraśurāma | | | Hayagrīva | Rāma | | |
|------------|------|----------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Bhikṣāṭana | Vāyu | Agni | Brahmā | Indra | Yama | Bhima |
| | | | Buddha | | | |
| | | Kūrma- | ∨ | | -Varāha | |
| | | Matsya- | | | -Nṛsimha | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | 8 Rudras | | | 9 Ādityas | |

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Stylistically, Kannauj-4 (Plate 69) is typical of late Pratihāra workmanship: crisp, deeply cut, ornate and seemingly intelligent, executed to an oversimplified plan in a fluent idiom. One might say that the acid test of any sculptural school's ability to organize and express its concepts clearly is the making of a Viśvarūpa image of Viṣṇu. Kannauj-4 manifests a quick, decisive approach to the problem of so much multiplicity, with no ponderous hesitations over matters of geometrical symbolism or iconographic symmetry. That the result is not as fine a sculpture as has generally been supposed¹² will become apparent in this discussion of it.

As at Deogarh, and unlike Kannauj-1 and -2, the main Viṣṇu figure is an eight-tāla image, but the height of the whole composition within which it stands is ten tālas (one and a half tālas above the god's crown plus a half tāla beneath his feet) of which the median line passes through the band around Viṣṇu's waist, A semicircle of three tālas' radius, centred on the vertical axis one third of the distance down from the top of Viṣṇu's face—that is, on the point between his eyebrows—provided the curve for the top of the stele, the sides of which were then cut straight down to the base. No ellipses em; nor were they to be employed again in planning subsequent sculptures of this type in north India, which reverted to the circular populated nimbus invented in the Gupta period at Mathura.

Above the crown of Viṣṇu's, the emergence motif, first noticed in these Viśvarūpa images in

the figure of Hayagrīva emanating from the central crown of the Śamalājī image, is seen again in exaggerated form. An uncrowned head and a right hand held in the abhayamudrā are all that first arise, probably representing Vāmana, as in Kannauj- 1. From Vāmana arises Hayagrīva as the central of the three figures above Viṣṇu, the same position as he occupies in Deogarh sculpture, the left hand lowered with an indistinct object upon the palm and the right hand raised in the abhayamudrā with a rosary across the palm. The top figure may be Brahmā, or this identity may have been changed to that of Śiva in his four-faced manifestation (the four standing for five - pañcānana, pañcavaktra) generating from each of his side-faces the heads of four of his Aṣṭabhairava forms which in this version are seen clearly to encircle the top part of the stele. This feature clearly derives directly from the Gupta versions of the Vaiṣṇava Viśvarūpa at Mathura (Plates 49 and 55), the meaning of the differentiated series of heads on either side of the Deogarh image being either not understood or considered too original and idiosyncratic to be worth perpetuating.

Beside this vertical series of three figures and the god's crown stand six figures, one on its right and five to its left. The single figure on the right, axe in hand, is the Bhārgava priest-turned-warrior, Paraśurāma, the sixth incarnation who destroyed the kṣatriyas when they took over priestly activity from the brāhmaṇas. Opposite him stand Rāma Dāśarathi, bow slung over his left shoulder and holding an arrow point downward, next to his brother, Lakṣmaṇa, who is similarly armed. Below them is a trio of gods who represent the three major gods after Viṣṇu. They are led by Brahmā with a single head and carrying a kamaṇḍalu who is followed by Indra with his vajra, as in Buddhist sculpture. Śiva in his wandering mendicant shape, Bhikṣāṭana, the khaṭvāṅga over his shoulder symbolizing his severing of Brahma's fifth head and so marking him as a despised brahmahan or 'brahminicide', brings up the rear: a nice sectarian counter-part to Rāma Jāmadagni opposite, the brāhmaṇa who slew kṣatriyas in a righteous cause.

Below the latter, in neatly serried ranks, stand the eleven Rudras, all with jaṭas and holding a trīśūla; opposite, below Rāma and his brother and the three inferior gods, the twelve Ādityas,

each a miniature Sūrya with a tall, tapering crown and holding up a lotus blossom in each hand, are positioned where there is space for them above and around the extended left arms of Viṣṇu. The distinction of caste (in its sense of varṇa) which is represented in the Deogarh image is echoed here in the opposition of Paraśurāma and Rāmacandra (the ambivalent priest-warrior versus the true kṣatriya) or in the pointed difference between Paraśurāma and Śiva Bhikṣāṭana (the virtuous priest who exterminates the warrior caste versus the degraded god who slays the archetypal priest), but in a confused fashion which is neither straightforward humour nor a direct opposition of symbolism, being rather distorted by sectarian attitudes and by a certain cleverness at visual punning. There was a certain amount of lively amusement in Kannauj-1 and even Kannauj-2, but this image seems to me stilted and humourless.

The main Viṣṇu figure is iconographically complete. The front hands hold the conch and display the abhayamudrā. The bow and arrows, omitted from the Deogarh trial sculpture and from Kannauj-1, are held in lowered hands-not a convincing solution to a positioning problem which the designer of Kannauj-2 had already shown to be awkward, resulting in a clumsy tangle of arms-where Gupta images (and the Deogarh sculpture) had held the personified mace and disc, which are elevated in the Kannauj sculptures. And finally, the sword and its counterpart, the circular shield, the latter dispensed with altogether in Kannauj-2, no doubt as an impossible complication, which is a puny object with no realism in its depiction. (In Kannauj- 1, the shield served at least a symbolic function, partly 'shielding' or eclipsing the cakra which seems to slide out from behind it like the sun against a background of Ādityas.)

The distribution of these seven objects among the eight hands is hopelessly confused. The rearmost hands hold the mace and shield (instead of the disc), while the third pair touch the arrows in their quiver (where the mace formerly stood) and hold the disc, so that the second pair hold, on the left the bow with the string facing front (as in Kannauj-2) and, in the broken right, the raised sword. This was the artistic solution to the problem of symmetrically arranging too many attributes in a confined area, and one sympathises with the designers. However, any

semblance of reality in pairs of hands holding complementary attributes has clearly been abandoned and with it, surely, the symbolic equilibrium at the centre of which the god in anthropomorphic form stands. The re-arrangement of the sequence of the animal-avatāra side-heads appears also to have been carried out for artistic reasons: the large head of the Matsya, now second in the clockwise sequence, balances in shape that of the Varāha opposite; the head of the Kūrma is stretched up to fill more space opposite the Nṛsiṃha head and the sword blade adjacent to it distracts the attention from its basically unalterable small size. Again, artistic exigencies have destroyed a symbolic balance.

It will have been noticed that only eight of the avatāras have so far appeared: Turtle, Fish, Boar and man-Lion projecting from the central head of the god; Vāmana and Hayagrīva emerging from his crown, with Rāma and Paraśurāma on either side of them. The sculptors were clearly concerned to fit in the remaining two, but had no plan as to where to place them in relation to the others, who are all grouped closely together. Their solution was simply to use an otherwise blank area below the four Bhairava heads on the right margin of the stele, Vacant because the space taken up by Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and the three devas at the top of the opposite half is occupied on the right only by Paraśurāma. Had the three gods below Rāma and his brother been omitted or evenly distributed across the top of the stele—a design for which there were precedents in both Kannauj-1 and -2—then all ten avatāras could have been symmetrically placed at the top of the composition, as in Kannauj-1. However, the price of inserting the devas, whose diminutive presence is scarcely more than sectarian propaganda, on the side of the Ādityas is that the last two avatāras, out of sequence, are represented one above the other on the right-hand edge behind the mace: Kalkin above Balarāma.

Two nāgas flank the feet of the god as at Deogarh and in Kannauj- 1 and -2, but their bodies, far from forming a basis for the composition as at Śamalājī and Deogarh, curve away from him. The central figure on the plinth, introduced to north India from the north-west at Deogarh, has here either been misunderstood or radically reinterpreted. It is transformed into a third nāga with

a triple cobra-hood like the other two, and the feet of Viṣṇu stand upon its coils. That the presence of three nāgas has any meaning consistent with the rest of the image seems most unlikely. This total reorganization of the base strongly suggests that when this image was made, the significance of the triple base—consisting of the Earth-goddess between two nāgas symbolizing the waters—which was a coalescence of Śāmalājī and north-western iconography, could no longer be understood and was for this reason altered.

The curious disorganization of the weapons in the hands of Viṣṇu, the breakdown in the sequence of the avatāras, and the meaningless triplication, and separation, of the nāgas: these three major factors demonstrate that this image marks the point at which Viśvarūpa imagery, in becoming standardized, lost its coherence and, along with it, the vision of Viṣṇu as the centre and axis of a stable universe.

It was, however, this last Kannauj sculpture which became the standard model upon which were based subsequent Viśvarūpa icons. An example of the perpetuation of it, complete with mistakes, abbreviations and misunderstandings, is the image found at Bhuili, near Varanasi, and now in the grounds of Banaras Hindu University (Plate 70). The prabhāmaṇḍala has reverted to a circular nimbus enclosed by twelve Bhairava heads and populated by a few representations of the avatāras, Rudras and Ādityas; the side-heads of the animal incarnations are still further confused in their sequence; and below the base, on the front of the plinth, squat three very small, identical nāgas. This image marks the end of inventiveness and creative thought in the iconographical planning of multiple brahmanical sculptures in north India.

- 1 This spelling is the most widely used today in the city itself and throughout north India, for example, on the local museum label in Plate 67a.
- 2 C. Sivaramamurti, *Indian Sculpture*, New Delhi, plate 33.
- 3 C. Sivaramamurti, *The Art of India*, Paris 1974/New York 1977, p. 231.

- 4 Sivaramamurti, *Indian Sculpture*, p.88.
- 5 S. Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, Calcutta 1946, reprinted Delhi 1980, Vol.II, pp. 309-10.
- 6 J. Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History and Literature*, 1888, pp.33-8 and most subsequent writers, But see Gail, *AAXLIV*, 4(1983), p. 300, n.14.
- 7 A Danielou, *Hindu Polytheism*, London 1964, p.54 and text, pp.424-5: R.S. Gupta, *Iconography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains*, Bombay 1972, p.96, apparently reads the text differently, giving the same sequence of attributes but held in different hands.
- 8 T.S. Maxwell, 'Transformational Aspects of Hindu Myth and Iconology', *AARP4*, December 1973, pp. 59-63 and Appendix II, p.73.
- 9 P. Pal *Bronzes of Kashmir*, Graz 1975, plates 8,9 and 84b (the latter is in the Hari-Rai temple of Chambā, and not in the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, as Pal implies).
- 10 The explicit connection of multiple figures by the ramifications as a plant did survive, as evidenced by Kannauj-2.
- 11 I have seen only one depiction of this incident in India art; it is one of the wood-carving above the architrave of the *garbhagr̥ha* in the Markulā Devī temple at Markulā/Udaipur, Himachal Pradesh.
- 12 Its excellence has been proclaimed especially by Sivaramamurti (*supra*, Notes 2 and 3) and also by A. Ghosh, 'Some Sculptures from Kannauj', *Roopalekhā XXIV*, 1-2, pp. 1-3.

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