

CHAPTER IV

SCULPTURE

The subjects of Indian Sculpture are gods and goddesses, their emblems and accessories. The images (Pratimā) of these gods are mainly associated with the cults of different divinities. The special branch which deals with these images is known as iconography. Dr. J.N.Banerjea says, "In its broader sense, the term iconography really signifies the interpretative aspect of the religious art of a country which becomes manifest in diverse ways".

The divine images and their worship had become a patent factor in the lives of the Hindus. Therefore the primary purpose of these icons was to serve as an important aid to the religious efforts (Sādhanā) of the devotees. Thus an intimate connection exists between art and religion.

The all-embracing sectarianism which was prevalent in India since very ancient times, contributed to the development of icono-plastic art. The concrete forms of Hindu mythological gods and goddesses - the cosmic beings and embodiment of an abstract idea - were presented for the diffusion of the doctrines of the particular cult. Besides the Buddhists and the Jainas and their various sub-sects, there were the five Brahmanical cults such as the worshippers of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Śakti, Sūrya and Gaṇapati. The innumerable icons, such as the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu (Caturviṃśatimūrtayah) and Pancabrahmā forms of Śiva, were illustrated which gave a great impetus to the sculptors of India.

We get evidence, both literary and archaeological, for the construction of images and other objects associated with their worship. Dr. J.N.Banerjea in his monumental work 'The Development of Hindu Iconography', has very elaborately described the materials for the study of iconography, literary : of a general and technical character and also the archaeological data of inscriptions, coins and seals in relation to the development of iconic cults and iconography.²

It may be observed that in India, prior to the advent of Aryans, image-worship might have been practised by the original settlers. Several of the terracotta human figurines were discovered at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa of the pre-historic times (C 2500 - 1500 B.C.). Bronze and copper statuettes have also been found. Among such figurines is found a squatting male figure with folded hands. Another seated with hands folded in devotional attitude is discovered at Harappa excavations. In India of the pre-historic times, a few of the expressive poses were used to characterise the representation of the divinities on seals, amulets and figures. The Mohenjo-daro seals contain figures of a god seated in a Yogic posture, on either side of whom kneels a half human and a half animal form of a Naga with hands uplifted in prayer.

Whether the Vedic Aryans (Vedic civilization - 2000 - 1500 B.C.) made images of their gods is a controversial point with the scholars. But it is evident that the descriptions of Indra, Visnu and Sūrya given in the Rgveda are full of

iconographical features. The basic similarity of the later iconographic conceptions of many Hindu deities is found in their vedic counterparts.

The different periods of ancient Indian history like Śuṅga, Kuṣāṇa and Gupta are the major sources for the study of iconography. The reputed art centres of ancient India such as Mathurā, Gandhāra, Sārnātha, Amarāvati etc. were the homelands of master artists. The symbols on the earliest Indian coins are religious in character. The innumerable varieties of seals and similar objects found in various parts of Northern India dating from the 3rd or 4th millenium B.C. to the late Gupta period throw a flood of light on this subject. The deities appearing on the coins of Śuṅga, Kuṣāṇa and Imperial Gupta rulers illustrate in a very characteristic manner the peculiar features of their style of sculpture. Some metal and terracotta seals of the Kuṣāṇa and the Gupta periods supply us with characteristic representations of such Hindu gods as Viṣṇu and Śiva as well as a few of their emblems. The earliest figure of a deity seated on a lotus seat in a Dhyāna yoga or Samādhi mudrā appearing on certain copper coins of Ujjayini can be dated in the 2nd - 3rd Century B.C. In Gandhāra some of the Buddha figures are shown with their hands in this pose. Many images, Brāhmanical, Buddhist and Jain of the Gupta age (C.319 A.D. - 600 A.D.) as well as of the early and late medieval periods show this pose. Two Yogāsana Viṣṇu figures in the Mathurā museum characteristically portray it.

Reliefs carved on sections of religious architecture of figures are also important. During the Śuāga (C. 184 B.C. - 72 B.C.) and early Andhra or Sātavāhana periods (C. 200 B.C. upto 200 A.D.), Buddhism was flourishing in all its vigour. Therefore most of the sculptures of the period were Buddhist. The finest examples are carved stone Veditās and Toranas of Bharhut, Bodha-Gaya and Sanci and some reliefs in the rock-cut Gaitya halls. Some Yakṣa and Yakṣi statues have been found which belong to the Maurya period (C. 325 B.C. - 184 B.C.). The Yakṣa statue can be taken as the prototype of the later representations of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva images during the Kuṣāna and the Gupta age. Several free-standing Yakṣa statues or relievo-figures principally associated with early Buddhist funerary monuments have been discovered in the period 2nd - 3rd century B.C. Thus many Buddhist and several Jain and Brahmanical images and sculptures have been found in stray groups in distant parts of India like Gandhāra, Mathurā and Amarāvati.

Besides ample archaeological evidence, the ancient iconographic and iconometric texts are important enough to prove that a very systematic and elaborate science of iconography was developed in India since very ancient times. These canons are the result of the accumulated experience of generations of artists.

TEXTS ON THE ART OF SCULPTURE.

The 'silpa-sāstras like Mānasāra, Mayamata, Śrīkumāra's

Śilparatna of the South and the Visvakarmā-prakāśa, Samarāṅgaṇa Sūtradhāra, Aparājita Prācchā of the North, the Āgamas and Tantras associated with the one or the other of the principal Brahmanical texts, contain ample material for the study of this subject. Many of the Pañcarātra and Śaiva Saṁhitās and Āgamas contain important sections dealing with elaborate rules about the construction of temples and images. T.A.G.Rao mainly drew from the Kriyapāda of the Pañcarātra Vaikhānasāgama in order to explain the various characteristic features of the Vaiṣṇava images, and the Śaiva Āgamas like Suprabheda, Kirāna Kāmika etc. for the Śaiva icons.³ Hayasīrṣa pañcarātra contains very elaborate details of this nature. Varāhamihira's Brhatsaṁhitā of the 6th century is also a very important text from the point of view of architecture and sculpture. Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇa Sūtradhāra (11th Cen. A.D.) as well as Somesvara's Abhilasitārtha Cintāmaṇi (12th Cen. A.D.) and Hemādri's Caturvargacintāmaṇi (13th Cen. A.D.) are of a much later date.

It is not my purpose to go into details of the contents of these iconographical texts. I am concerned here only with the iconographical sections of the Purānas. The study of the purānic literature is essential for proficiency in Brahmanical Iconography. Besides the mythological lore contained in them, the important iconographic and iconometric canons are found in the purānas and the upa-purānas such as Matsya, Agni, Padma, Viṣṇudharmottara etc. They indicate a very close similarity with the Pañcarātra Saṁhitās. The Prāsādalakṣaṇa and the Pratimalakṣaṇa of the Agni Purāna are identical with the

chapters in the *Hayasīrsapañcarātra*. Dr. J.N. Banerjēa observes that Hemādri, the author of *Caturvargacintāmañi* quotes from the purānas like *Matsya*, *Agni*, *Viṣṇudharmottara* and the South Indian works like *Mayamata* and *Śilparatna* borrowed from the Purānas as *Brahma*, *Matsya*, *Padma*, *Skanda* and *Viṣṇudharmottara*.⁴

Among the Purānas the *Agnipurāna*, the *Matsya Purāna* and the *Viṣṇudharmottara* are considered to be the representative Purānas on this subject. The *Bhaviṣya Purāna*, *Skanda Purāna*, *Nārada Purāna* and the *Upa-purānas* like *Kālikā*, *Devi Bhāgvata*, and the *Sāmba* also contain some iconographic material. Details about the making of images, their shapes, dimensions and other constructive details and ceremonious installations are described in the Purānas.

The treatment of sculpture in the *Agni Purāna* is unique and most extensive. Out of sixteen chapters devoted to the *Śilpasāstra*, thirteen chapters contain iconographic account (Ch. 43 - 46, 49 - 55 and 60 - 62). The *Agni Purāna* deals with almost all classes of religious images, both of male and female deities. Among the *Vaiṣṇava* deities, apart from the *Daśāvatāra mūrtis*, *Vāsudeva Pratimās* are also described. The Sun-god and his attendants are discussed. The description of *Phallus* (*Liṅga*) and the pedestal (*Pīṇḍikā*) is also found in the Purāna. The details on *Śālagrāma* are most elaborate and not to be found else where. Two dozen varieties of *Śālagrāma* are described.

Iconographic details are described in the *Matsya Purāna*

in seven Chapters (Ch^s 252, 258-263). The images of different gods are that of Visnu, the varieties of Siva images, the Sun-god, and other various deities. Chapters 262 and 263 are devoted to the Pīthikā lakṣaṇa and the Liṅga lakṣaṇa. Iconometry ('Pramāṇa Kathanam') is the special feature of this Purāna.

The Viṣṇudharmottara contains fullest details among the Purānic literature on iconography and iconometry, introduces them by way of questions and answers between the sage Mārkaṇḍeya and the King Vajra.

SCULPTURE AND OTHER FINE ARTS.

According to the Viṣṇudharmottara (III. 2. 1 - 9) the knowledge of iconography depends on the correct understanding of the rules of Citra (Sculpture in the round, relieve and pictorial representation), a true mastery again is unattainable without a knowledge of the art of dancing, which again is dependent on the full acquaintance with the science of music. Thus all these are interdependent arts. As in Nāṭya and Nr̥tya, so also in painting and sculpture the representation of Bhāvas, and that of Abhinaya, revealed by the various Aṅgas and Upāṅgas, present a supreme picture. Both Indian sculpture and Indian dancing use similar language of Abhinaya and Bhāva, poses such as different types of Sthāna, Āsana and Śayana, the aṅgas, the Upāṅgas, and the hastas. The multifarious poses are given by the Viṣṇudharmottara in which pictures of gods and men are to be shown on canvas and wall and were actually used by the image makers of ancient and medieval India.

The Citrasūtra of the Viṣṇudharmottara gives instructions about the technique of painting which is said to be applied with some modifications to image - making. In Adhyāya 43, we are told that making images by chiselling stone or by hollowing metal, wood etc. is like Citra.⁵

In the Viṣṇudharmottara, there is at first a list of nine major sthānas in book III, Ch. 39, VV. 1 - 32. These are Rjvāgata, Anrju, Sācīkrtasarīra, Ardhavilocana, Pārsvāgata, Parāvṛtta and Samānata. (These sthānas are described by me in detail in the chapter on painting). In the same chapter thirteen sthānas are described on the basis of the law of Kṣaya and Vrddhi (law of foreshortening). These are Rjvāgata, Anrju, Madhyārdha, Ardha, Ardhārdha, Sācīkrtamukha, Nata, Ḡanda-parāvṛtta, Prsthāgata, Pārsvāgata, Ullepa, Calita, Uttāna, and Valita. These Sthānas are varied by a series of motions like Vaisākha, Ālīdha and Pratyālīdha. The purāna also describes the attitude in which the female figures should be shown - "one of the legs should be in the Samasthāna (straightly planted), the other in the Vidgala (which is suggested by Dr. Banerjea, as a leg crossing the other firmly planted leg), The body should be shown in a graceful manner, some times held by supports, charming with its grace and dalliance, with the front part of the loins being broad and spacious, with one leg firm and well-adjusted - thus should an artist draw a female figure."⁶

In Hindu dancing also there is a large number of

positions in the Sthānas, in the Cārīs, and in the Karanas. (I will discuss these in the chapter on Dancing). The different types of postures (sthāna, āsana and sayana) are mentioned in both the Nāṭyasāstra and the Śilpasāstras. According to Bharata the Ālīdha, Pratyālīdha and the Vaisākha Sthānas are recommended for men, and the Āyata Sthāna is prescribed for women.⁷

While discussing the close relationship between these two arts, namely sculpture and dancing, Dr. Kspila Vatsyayana says, "..... The Indian sculptor whether he was creating sculpture in the round or relief, high or low, or casting in bronze or sculpturing in wood, he was conscious of the human body as a most powerful instrument for the communication of moods, Bhāva and Rasa. Like the creative poet and dramatist he was also knowledgeable. His imagination was harnessed to the canons of not only sculpture but also dance texts. Through these examples of Indian sculpture one can reconstruct to some extent a history of movement of Indian dance".⁸

It is true that the Indian sculptor has created innumerable dancing figures from the Mohenjo-daro figurine of a dancing girl. The great Natarāja temple at Cidambaram contains well arranged illustrations of some interesting dance poses. These sculptures are mainly carved on the walls. The Natarāja image itself depicts him, dancing his cosmic dance, the right foot trampling down Mūyalaka, the left raised in the Kuncitapada with one right hand sounding the cosmic drum, the

other in the abhaya-hasta with one left hand holding the fire and the other in danda-hasta pose. But this sculpture is not earlier than the 13th Century A.D. The much earlier figures of a dancing Śiva have been found in the Brahmanical cave shrines at Ellora. According to T.A. G. Rao, the 'Kāṭisama' and 'Lalita' dance poses described by Bharata are found in these figures. Dr. Kapila Vatsyayana in her valuable work - 'Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts' has discussed the various sculptural dance poses with the illustration of number of sculptures.⁹

MUDRĀS OR THE HAND-POSES OF THE IMAGES.

The various poses in which the hands of the images are shown are quite interesting. They are called hasta mudrās. Some Mudrās like the Vyākhyāna mudrā, the Jnāna mudrā or the Yoga mudrā and the hastas like the Varada, the Abhaya, the Kataka, the Sūcī, the Danda are most common in Indian Iconography. The emblem or weapon in the hand of the deity is also described by the term 'hasta' such as Padma-hasta, Pustaka-hasta or gadā-hasta etc.

Twentythree Asaṃyuta hastas and thirteen Saṃyuta hastas are mentioned by the Viṣṇudharmottara.

The Abhaya-hasta is one of the commonest mudrās in which one or the other hand of the Brāhmanical, Buddhist and Jain images is shown and it stands for the assurance of protection given by the deity to his worshipper. Varada-Mudrā is also a typically common mudrā, and it shows the bestowal of

boon by the god. In Dhyāna-yoga or Samadhi mudrā, the palm of the right hand is placed in that of the left hand and both together are laid on the crossed legs of the seated image. The earliest figure in this pose is found on certain copper coins of Ujjayinī that can be dated in the 2nd - 3rd Century B.C.

The two other mudrās which are found in the iconographic art of ancient and medieval India are Jnāna and Vyākhyāna mudrā. The Jnāna-mudrā is described as 'the tips of the middle finger and of the thumb are joined together and held near the heart with the palm of the hand turned towards the heart'. In the Cinmudrā or Vyākhyāna Mudrā 'the tips of the thumb and the fore finger are made to touch each other so as to form a circle, the other fingers being kept open'. The Kataka-Mudrā is common in the images of goddesses. In this mudrā, 'the tips of the fingers are loosely applied to the thumb so as to form a ring.'

Another peculiarity of Indian images is that they are decorated with many types of ornaments. The various types of head-gear viz. jātā-mukuta, kirita-mukuta, karanda-mukuta, kuntala are also common. Various objects can be recognised in the hands of divinities such as kamandalu, akṣamālā, darpaṇa, kapāla, pustaka, śaṅkha, padma etc. and weapons such as danda, cakṛa, gadā, musala, trisula etc.

THE MATERIALS FOR ICON-MAKING.

Certain details of making images from various materials

are also given in the Purānas. The Agni purāna mentions seven different substances, such as clay, wood, iron, gem, stone, sandal and flowers.¹⁰ But the purāna chiefly expatiates on

the use of stone. In Chapter 44, the Agni Purāna has given instructions about making the stone image of Vāsudeva.¹¹

It is said that the stone is to be divided by lines each a finger apart, and such a division is to be called a Svāṅgula, according to the Sūrpa measurement. A part or division of the stone enclosing a space measuring two such fingers is known by the name of Golaka or Kalanatra. The block of stone is to be divided into nine parts.

While giving the characteristic signs of the pedestals (Pīthikā) the Matsya Purāna remarks that stone, earthen, wooden and mixed pedestals are to be assigned to images which are made of stone, earthen, wooden and mixed materials respectively.¹² In the next chapter on Liṅgalakṣaṇa, the author says in the last verse that Liṅgas should be made of such materials as precious metals, crystals, earth and wood.

The chapter in Bhaviṣya Purāna (Ch. 131) on pratimēvidhi in the Prathama Brāhma Parva, gives details about this subject. Nārada, while explaining to Sāmba gives rules for the construction of images of gods in general and Sūrya in particular and says that seven kinds of images tending to the welfare of the devotees are known, viz. those made of gold, silver, copper, earth or clay, stone, wood and those that are drawn on canvas and other objects. Of these, Nārada selects those made of wood

as deserving special notice.

The Viṣṇudharmottara has devoted a whole chapter namely Dārūparīkṣanam (Ch. 89) to the selection of wood and the next chapter, Śilāparīkṣā to the selection of stone. It gives details for procuring wood for temple building and image-making and rules for marking off different sections of the images and building posts on the trunk of the tree are incorporated. The Viṣṇudharmottara also gives the merits and demerits of the stone, because it is said that the 'Sthapati' should select a particular kind of stone for image.

In Vedic times wood was the principal material that was used. The ancient practice of making images was from perishable materials like wood and clay. Early texts like Bhaviṣya Purāna and the Brhat-Saṁhitā (Ch. 58), lay special stress on wood as the material for image-making. Some of the later texts like Agnipurāna give importance to the use of stone.

The Viṣṇudharmottara (III. 43 . 31 - 32) refers to materials for making images such as gold, silver, copper, stone, wood and iron.

PROPORTIONATE MEASUREMENT.

Indian Sculptors used to follow certain rules of proportions in the making of images. The Tāla-māna is a sculptural measure. References to these measurements are found in the Śilpasastras like Mānasāra, Śilparatna and also in non-architectural treatises like the Matsya Purāna (Ch. 258) or the

Suprabhedāgama.

The Dasatāla system is considered as the best one among tālamānas. Then there are systems like Navatāla, Astatāla, Saptatāla etc. In the Tāla-māna the length of face is taken as the unit of measurement through which the whole image is measured out. The Matsya Purāna also says that the measurement of the height of the other limbs should be in terms of the measure of its face.¹³ In the Dasatāla system the whole image should be ten times the face. This Dasatāla system is again divided into three categories according to its height such as Uttama, Madhyama and Adhama Dasatālas. The Uttama-Dasa-tāla which divided the whole length into 124 dehāṅgulas is prescribed for the images of principal deities like Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. The Madhyama-dasa-tāla of 120 dehāṅgulas is prescribed for the Devī-pratimās and the Adhama-dasa-tāla of 116 dehāṅgulas is for Indra and other Lokapālas and for Candra, Sūrya etc. The details about the tāla-measures are given by Mr. T.A.G.Rao.¹⁴

The six different ways in which an image can be measured are māna, Pramāna, unmāna, parimāna, upamāna, and Lambamāna. Māna is the measurement of the height of the body, Pramāna is that of its breadth. Unmāna is the measure of thickness or diameter. Parimāna is the measurement of width or circumference. Upamāna is the measurement of interspace. Lambamāna is taken along plump-lines or the lines drawn perpendicularly through different parts of the body and the māna is taken by the surface of the body.

The height of the Indian images was measured in units like tāla and aṅgula. Aṅgula is taken to be the length of the middle digit of the middle finger. Again this standard measure is divided into three kinds - mānāṅgula, mātrāṅgula and dehaṅgula. But the defect in this measure is that the fingers of two persons are hardly of equal breadth. Therefore it is ascertained by the measures of certain other objects such as atom, car-dust, hair end, nit, louse, and barley corn.

8 Paramānu	=	1 rathareṇu
8 rathareṇus	=	1 bālāgra
8 bālāgras	=	1 liksā
8 liksās	=	1 Yūka
8 Yūkas	=	1 Yava
8 Yavas	=	1 Uttama-mānāṅgula
7 Yavas	=	1 Madhyama-mānāṅgula
6 Yavas	=	1 Adhama-mānāṅgula.

The unit of 12 aṅgulas is taken as a tāla, vitasti or mukha. The Matsya Purāna uses the word Mukha - the mukha or the face of the image (equivalent to a tāla, should be 12 aṅgulas of its own). The Purāna then divides the whole height of the image into nine parts (Navatālalaksana) in terms of the face and length. The neck should be four aṅgulas, the chest one bhāga (i.e. mukha or tāla), from the chest to the navel 1 bhāga, from the navel to the organ 1 bhāga, the thighs are two bhāgas and the patella of the knee 4 aṅgulas, the legs measure two bhāgas in height, and the feet four aṅgulas high.¹⁵

In the Matsya Purāna only a brief reference is made to the dasatāla images of Rāma (Dāsarathī) and Bali the son of Virocana and the Saptatāla images of Varāha, Narasiṅha and Vāmana.¹⁶

The Matsya Purāna says that those images which are meant for worship in private chapels of the householders should never measure more than a digit while those that are to be enshrined in temples should measure not more than 1/16th part of the whole height of the temple.¹⁷

Ancient Hindus referred to the five different types of men viz. Haṁsa, Śaśa, Rucaka, Bhadra and Mālavya. The height of the Haṁsa type of men is 96 aṅgulas, of a Śaśa 99 aṅgulas, of a Rucaka 102 aṅgulas, of a Bhadra 105 aṅgulas and the height of a Mālvya is 108 aṅgulas. The division into 108 parts (9x12) refers to Navatāla images only. Dr. Banerjea says that the Matsya Purāna refers to the Mālavya type, when it says that the man who measures nine tālas from the top of the head to the bottom of the feet and whose arms reach the knees, are greatly respected by gods.¹⁸

THE IMAGES OF VARIOUS DEITIES

The Purānas give details about the construction of the images of various deities, which commanded popular respect.

BRAHMĀ.

Brahmā is not the principal cult deity. He is supposed to be the creator of the universe in Hindu Mythology. He is described in the vedas as Viśvakarman, Brahmanaspati, Hiranyagarbha, Prajāpati and Brahmā etc.

Among the Purānas, the iconographical description of Brahmā is found in the Matsya Purāna, Agni Purāna, Viṣṇu and the Viṣṇudharmottara. The Matsya Purāna in chapter 260 gives the prescription for the image of Brahmā. Brahmā rides on a swan, has four hands with the additional attributes of Sruk and Sruvā (sacrificial implements besides the usual staff and Kamandalu). The Agni Purāna in chapter 49, says that Brahmā is to be represented as possessing four hands and four faces and riding on the celestial swan, his long beard and clotted hair (Jatā) reaching his belly. The Agni Purāna also lays down that the images of Sarasvati and Sāvitrī should be at the left and right sides respectively, of the Brahmā's image.¹⁹ Like the Agni Purāna the Matsya Purāna also gives the same description.²⁰ In the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna Ad. 46, Brahmā is represented as having four faces, four arms and matted hair (Jatā) on his head and wearing the skin of a black antelope as garment. He should be depicted as sitting on a lotus seat (as Dr. Kramrisch translates). Dr. Priyabala Shah describes him

as sitting in the Padmāsana pose in a chariot drawn by seven swans. In one of his hands there is a rosary and in another hand is a Kamandalu. He wears all kinds of ornaments and possesses all auspicious marks and has a tranquil appearance. He looks Sauṃya (tranquil) and toṣya (happy). His eyes are closed in meditation. In Adhyāya 63 he is described as Sāvitrī sitting in his left lap. She has the colour of the sun and carries a rosary in her hand.

The iconographical implication of the image of Brahmā is given in Adhyāya 46, 6 - 19. Brahmā is the rājasī murti of Viṣṇu. Hence his colour is reddish and is described as having the aura of the tip of a lotus petal (Padmāgrasambhāh). His four faces represent the four vedas and his four arms represent four directions. The Kamandalu in his hand which carries water suggests the great importance of water from which sprung the whole universe. His antelope skin is the symbol of a Yajna which is performed by two types of ceremonies - Sukla and Kṛṣṇa. The seven swans of his chariot are the symbols of seven lokas (regions) viz. bhūh, bhuvah, svar, mahah, janah, tapas and satya. The medicinal plants are symbolized in his matted hair and his ornaments represent the different Vidyāsthānas. He sits in meditation with his eyes closed for visualising his creation.

In the Mathura Museum, Brahmā (of the Gupta period i.e. 3rd, 4th Century A.D.) is depicted with four or three bearded faces, holding his right hand in Abhaya mudrā. He is a

four-armed, potbellied figure, having a beard and also matted hair. Images of Brahmā were also worshipped in the Gupta period and several good specimens have been preserved.²¹ In the medieval period his images with Sarasvatī became popular and have been found at many centres. But during the Muslim period the worship of Brahmā gradually went out of vogue.

The first images of Brahmā were formed in the Kusāna period with several characteristics such as four faces, R̥ṣī (ascetic) with the knowledge of the Vedas, kumbhodara (pot-belly), Yajna with its ladders (Sruk & Sruvā), Lotus, Haṁsa, Kamandalu, with Sarasvatī and Sāvitrī. He was given the form of a Brahmanic ascetic from which were derived his matted locks, antelope skin and cross-legged seat (padmāsana).

Brahmā is shown in the Buddhist reliefs of Gandhāra as having profuse hair, beard and moustache, dressed in the garments of a Brāhmaṇa and one of his two hands holding a water vessel.²²

VISNU.

Viṣṇu is one of the most important Brāhmaṇical cult deities. He is one of the gods of the Hindu Trinity, and is considered to be responsible for the universal protection. Brahmā and Śiva, the two other gods of the Trinity are held responsible for the creation and destruction of the universe. Viṣṇu is mentioned in the Vedas many times, but not as a supreme deity. The Vedic Viṣṇu is identified with the Sun. He

is given epithets like Urukrama, Urugāya, Trivikrama etc. i.e. he of the great strides or three strides. Vedic Viṣṇu is said to have stridden over the seven regions and to have covered the universe with three steps. This must have developed into the myth relating to the Vāmanāvatāra of the Purānic Viṣṇu.

The Purānas have clearly established the supremacy of Viṣṇu. The special characteristic of the Purānic god is that he is the preserver and the benevolent deliverer. The vaiṣṇava Purānas like the Viṣṇu Purāna or the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna worships Viṣṇu as the only supreme divinity. In the Agni Purāna also, Viṣṇu as the only supreme divinity. In the Agni Purāna also, Viṣṇu seems to be the most important god. In the cosmogonical account, he is described as the sole cause of the universe and all the creative processes are assigned to him. In the Purānic period Viṣṇu had attained such an eminent position that other deities were more or less subordinated to him. The Avstāra theory of this supreme deity established his superiority. He is also mentioned in the Agni Purāna in the list of the twelve Ādityās, the sons of Kāsyapa and Aditi. Though Saguna, he is described in the same Purāna as Aguna, entering into Prakṛti and Puruṣa to agitate them. But greater stress is laid on the Saguna aspect of the god.

The Viṣṇu cult which acquired both devotional and ritualistic aspect of religion was clearly reflected in the Agni Purāna.²³

The iconographical details of the god Viṣṇu in general are found in the Agni Purāna, Adhyāya 51. God Viṣṇu is represented as possessing eight hands, riding Garuḍa and holding in his right hand a sword, Gadā, bow and arrow, and Khetaka in the left, while the remaining two hands are represented as giving blessings. He is described with his paraphernalia and the attendants in Adhyāya 23, 15 - 17. Lakṣmī is his consort and Garuḍa is his attendant conveyance (Vāhana). He has discus, club, conch-shell, bow and arrows, the Vaijayanti-mālā, the mystic mark Śrīvatsa, the Kaustubha gem and the Dikpālas. And it is said that such an image of Viṣṇu should be worshipped.²⁴

The Viṣṇudharmottara describes Lord Viṣṇu in the Adhyāya 44 and 47 as seated on Garuḍa, wearing celestial yellow garment with Kaustubha on his bosom and with all sorts of ornaments. He has four faces and eight arms. The eastern face is called Saumya, the southern Nārasimha, western Kapila and northern Vārāha. He wears vanamālā. He carries in his right hand an arrow, a rosary, a club etc. and in his left hands hide, cloth and rainbow.

The eight hands symbolise the Aṣṭadisāh (eight directions) and his four faces represent strength (Bala), Knowledge (Jñāna), sovereignty (Aiśvarya) and energy (Śakti). The Kaustubha suggests pure knowledge. The world is bound together by the long Vanamālā. Garuḍa represents a mind pervading the bodies of all creatures.

Adhyāya 60 of the Viṣṇudharmottara describes Viṣṇu as having one face and two arms carrying Gadā and Cakra.

In the Epic and Purāṇic age Viṣṇu is regarded as the most influential deity of the Brahmanical triad - Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Naturally he possesses a thousand names by which he is praised and round him a very important Brahmanical cult grew up. Among the several names of Viṣṇu twenty four are regarded as most important (Caturviṃśatimūrtayah). Among the 24 forms of Viṣṇu, those of Vāsudeva, Saṅkarsana, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha are considered to be of great importance. Viṣṇu as Vāsudeva was regarded as the highest aspect of god in whom all things in the universe live, move and have their being.²⁵ According to the Viṣṇudharmottara, Lord Viṣṇu's four faces one represents strength (Bala), and is called Vāsudeva, another represents knowledge (Jnāna) and is called Saṅkarsana. The third represents sovereignty (Aisvarya) and is called Pradyumna; and the fourth represents potency or energy (Śakti) and is called Aniruddha. These are the Caturvyūhas or Caturmūrtis.

According to Agni Purāṇa (Chapter 44 Vs 46 - 49) Para-Vāsudeva may also be sculptured as a standing image. In this case there should be on either side the goddess Śrī and Puṣṭi, carrying respectively a Padma and a Vīṇā. The figures of these goddesses should not reach a higher level than the hip of Vāsudeva. In the Prabhāmandala, ornamented with the figures of elephants and other animals, two flying figures of two Vidyādharas, carrying each a garland of flowers should be

sculptured. The Pītha on which Vāsudeva and the Devis stand should be made to have brilliance of gold.

The Matsya Purāna (Ch. 257, 13) lays down that Śrī and Puṣṭi holding lotuses should be made by the side of Viṣṇu. The Kālikā Purāna lays down that Śrī should be made to appear on his right and Sarasvatī on his left. Dr. J.N.Banerjea observes that this description corresponds with the description of the actual images while the Agni Purāna text closely fits in with the actual images. In the South Indian images of Viṣṇu, his two invariable attendant consorts are Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī, holding besides a fly-whisk, a lotus and a blue lotus respectively. North Indian varieties of Viṣṇu images have almost invariably Śrī and Puṣṭi or Sarasvatī holding a lotus and a lute in their hands.²⁶

The Viṣṇudharmottara describes the image of Para - Vāsudeva in Chapter 85, as having one face and four arms; it should have great beauty; it should be of the dark blue colour of the cloud and should be adorned with various ornaments. The neck should resemble the Śaṅkha or Conch. The vanamālā should reach the knees. Vāsudeva has Kaustubha on his bosom and Kirīṭa on his head.

Archaeological proof in the form of Viṣṇu image is forthcoming from the late Śunga period in the first century B.C. In the Kuṣāna period, however, regular images of Viṣṇu began to be made. Several such images are found wearing a mukuta on the head and other ornaments on the body and dressed

in dhoti and a scarf. The position of the four hands is rather remarkable. The right hand is held in Abhayamudrā, the corresponding left hand is placed nearly on the hip (i.e. akimbo) and holds an Amṛta-ghaṭa and the two extra hands hold a mace (gadā) and Cakra respectively. In the Mathurā Museum is found an image of Viṣṇu with four hands. This image belongs to the Kusāna period. There are also other images of Viṣṇu with eight hands holding different attributes. The image of Nṛsiṃha-Varāha-Viṣṇu of the Gupta period is in the Mathurā Museum. This is similar to the description of four faced Viṣṇu, one of the four faces is of Narasiṃha and the other of Varāha which we find in the Viṣṇudharmottara. There are some statues at Mathurā showing four armed Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī by the side and a small figure of Garuda between them.²⁷ The Dvibhuja (two armed Viṣṇu as described by the Viṣṇudharmottara in Adhyāya 60) is found at Rupavas (near Fatepur Sikri, U.P.). The Badāmi stone figure is of an eight armed sthānaka Viṣṇu. The image of four-armed Viṣṇu which are found at Taxila and also at Nālandā exhibit most of the characteristics mentioned by the Purānas such as showing its back right and left hands placed on the top of a Gadā and a Cakra, the front right and left hands holding a Padma and a Śaṅkha; the jewelled kirīṭa, the Vanamālā, Yajnopavīta the Nāra and the Śīrṣacakra (halo) with a decorated rim behind the head.²⁸

The Viṣṇudharmottara in Chapter 81 describes the image of god Padmanābha (i.e. Viṣṇu), 'who is shown sleeping on 'śeṣa,

and the 'sesa lying on waters. His head dazzles the sight on account of the great jewels on his hoods. Padmanābha - the god of gods has four hands. One of his legs is placed on the lap of Lakṣmī and the other on the extended hood of 'Sesa. One of his hands is placed over the knee, another on the navel, the third under his head, and the remaining one holding a cluster of the Santāna flowers. Brahmā is shown on the lotus, which sprung from Viṣṇu's navel. Madhu and Kaiṭabha - two demons are shown clinging to the lotus-stalk. This is the 'Sayana-mūrti of Viṣṇu. The āsanamūrtis of Viṣṇu (Viṣṇu seated on Garuda) are rare and his 'Sayanamūrtis are rarer. Still one of such 'Sayanamūrtis, is the terracotta plaque, originally at Bhitargaon (Kānpur, U.P.) of the 5th Cen. A.D. and now in the Indian Museum depicts the motif which corresponds to the description of the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna. In the Deogarh stone relief of 6th Century A.D. is shown an image of 'Sesa-'Sāyī-Viṣṇu which agrees with the description given in the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna.²⁹

The other minor forms of Viṣṇu namely Hayagrīva, Nārāyaṇa, Dattātreya, Nara-Nārāyaṇa etc. are also described by the Purānas such as the Agni Purāna (Ch. 49), the Bhaviṣya Purāna (Ch. 12) and the Viṣṇudharmottara (Ch. 76, 80 etc.). Dr. Banerjea is of the opinion that the two ascetic figures delineated side by side on the relief at Deogarh are of Nara and Nārāyaṇa, and they correspond very closely with the description in the Viṣṇudharmottara.³⁰

The Viśvarūpa or the cosmic form of Viṣṇu is depicted by the Viṣṇudharmottara in Chapter 33, and by the Agni Purāna Chapter 49. In the Gupta sculpture of the Mathurā School several images of this type(i.e. of Cosmic form) have been found. A number of other divine figures are depicted there.³¹

The Agni Purāna has devoted Chapter 48 to the 24 images of Viṣṇu. All possible permutations of the four emblems are found there. Among the various forms of Viṣṇu, Saṅkarṣana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha are important and are described by the Agni Purāna in Adhyāya 49 and by the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna in Adhyāya 85. The Agni Purāna says that Pradyumna should be represented as wielding a thunderbolt with the divine conch in his right hands, a bow and an arrow in the left two hands and carrying Gadās in all the four hands. According to the Viṣṇudharmottara Pradyumna and Saṅkarṣana should be depicted like Vāsudeva but instead of Gadā and Cakra, Pradyumna should hold Cāpa and arrow while Saṅkarṣana should hold Musala and Laṅgūla which should have beautiful human forms. Aniruddha is like Pradyumna and should carry a shield and a sword. Agni Purāna says that Aniruddha as well as Nārāyaṇa should be represented as having four hands.

THE TEN INCARNATIONS (DASĀVATĀRA) OF VIṢṆU.

The doctrine of the ten incarnations of the Lord Viṣṇu was an integral part of the Pañcarātra or the Bhāgavata creed. The Dasāvataras are very popular and commonly recognised. On ten different occasions god assumed the form of a man or an animal on the earth to destroy certain Asuras and to set right

the wrongs done to the world by them. Bhagavadgītā explains the ideology underlying the Avatāravāda.³²

The 47th Chapter of Matsya Purāna is devoted to the enumeration of Viṣṇu's incarnations. When unrighteousness (Adharma) prevails, Viṣṇu appeared for the good of the world.³³ All the Avatāras show the universal character of god as all-pervading and all-sustaining. The origin and the divine mission of these Avatāras are fully described in the Purānas and are well-known in popular accounts of Hindu Mythology.

The decorative reliefs of the Vaiṣṇava shrines represent these ten Avatāras. Varāha, Narasiṃha and Vāmana as separate figures are more common than the others.

Chapter 49 of the Agni Purāna describes all the ten Avatāras viz. Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasiṃha, Vāmana, Parasurāma, Rāma, Balarāma, Buddha and Kalki.

Matsya Purāna, Chapter 260, enumerates Narasiṃha and Vāmana. Skanda Purāna Chapters 19 and 63 describes Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. Bhaviṣya Purāna Chapter 12, gives description of Narasiṃha. Viṣṇudharmottara, Chapters 76, 78 and 85 give details about Varāha, Narasiṃha and Vāmana.

MATSYA, KŪRMA AND VARĀHA.

According to Agni Purāna, the Matsya incarnation should be made to resemble a fish in shape while that of the Kūrma should be so made as to look like the prototype of the tortoise. The incarnation of varāha (Boar) should be endowed with a human

body and should be depicted as carrying a Gadā (club) and other weapons in his right hands, and the divine conch shell, the goddess Lakṣmī or a lotus flower in the left. It is said in the Viṣṇudharmottara that Varāha is the Aniruddha form of Viṣṇu, the embodiment of might, and with his power he lifts up the earth on the tip of his tusk. He may be represented either as a human boar (Nrvarāha) or as a simple boar. Nrvarāha should be represented on the back of the Śeṣa in the ālīdha pose or his left hand which holds Śaṅkha^{and} Vasundharā (the earth) should be shown in the form of a woman. His other hands should carry Padma, Cakra and Gadā. In the second type Varāha in human form should be represented like Kapila in meditation. Or he may be represented with two hands in the act of carrying the globe of the earth. Holding the earth seems to be one of the common characteristics of the human boar.

Udayagiri cave near Bhilsa, Madhya Bhārat illustrates a striking Varāhavatara image. Here the two-armed Varāha is shown with his left foot on the coils of Ādisesa. He has just lifted Pṛthvī from beneath the waters with his right tusk. At the Mahābalipuram composition, the god lovingly holds up Pṛthvī with his front two hands and looks at her with his boar face.³⁴

NARASIṂHA.

According to Agni Purāna, the image of Narasiṁha is to be furnished with four hands, two holding the celestial ring

weapon and the conch shell and the other two engaged in tearing open the entrails of the great demon, Hiraṇyakaśipu. The Gharva Paikore (Bengal) and many other north and south sculptures in stone and Bronze represent such type of Narasiṃha image. The Matsya Purāna describes the image of Narasiṃha in the following words : 'The god and demon should be shown fighting with their legs interlocked; the former should appear as being repeatedly attacked by the tired demon who should be shown as holding a sword and a shield'. The Ellora sculpture of Narasiṃha seems to agree with this type of image. In this sculpture, the interlocking of the leg of Narasiṃha with that of Hiraṇyakaśipu is beautifully carried out.³⁵

The Viṣṇudharmottara says that Hiraṇyakaśipu is a personification of evil and ignorance and Narasiṃha, the form of Saṅkaraṣana is the destroyer of ignorance. According to this authority, the image of Narasiṃha should be represented in the ālīḍhasana pose; it should be clothed in a blue garment, adorned with ornaments, and its face and mane should be surrounded with flames. Narasiṃha should be represented as tearing the bosom of Hiraṇyakaśipu with his sharp nails.

VĀMANA.

The fifth Avatāra of Viṣṇu has two aspects in sculpture, one the dwarf incarnation of Vāmanāvatara and the other the huge colossus (Virāṭarūpa or Trivikrama). Matsya Purāna mentions that the image of Vāmana should be executed according to the Saptatāla measure. The Matsya Purāna (260, 36, 37)

describes the figures of Trivikrama and Vāmana. The image of Trivikrama should be sculptured to represent his striding over the earth and that of Vāmana as holding Kamandalu in his one hand and an umbrella in the other. His face should be shown humble (dīna). Agni Purāna says that the Vāmana incarnation of Viṣṇu should be represented as a dwarf, carrying a stick or an umbrella, or should be made as possessed of four arms. The Viṣṇudharmottara mentions that god Vāmana should have crooked limbs and fat body, should carry staff and be prepared for study. His colour is dark like dūrvā grass and he wears black antelope skin. The same authority mentions that the image of Trivikrama should hold the Danda, Pāsa, Śakha, Cakra, Gadā and Padma in their natural forms and not in the human forms (āyudha puruṣas). It is added that Trivikrama should be sculptured with up lifted face and with large eyes (Viṣphāriteksanah). T.A.G. Rao observes that in a number of cases, the face of Trivikrama is slightly uplifted in conformity with this description. The Mahābalipuram relief and the Badami relief depict the figure of Vāmana with Daitya King and his attendant and also of Trivikrama with eight hands.³⁶ Separate figures of Vāmana are very rare and such figures are always four armed as suggested by the Agni Purāna.

PARASURĀMA.

The next three incarnations of Viṣṇu are Parāsurāma, Rāghava Rāma and Balarāma. The Agni Purāna describes Parāsurāma as carrying a bow and an arrow, together with a sword and a

battle - axe in his four hands and the Visṇudharmottara adds that he should be so represented as to make him difficult to look at on account of his matted locks of hair, and he should be shown as wearing an antelope skin.

In the Daśavatāra slabs, Paraśurāma is shown as two - armed and a battle - axe in his hand. The four-armed image of Paraśurāma from Ranihati (Dacca) agrees with the description of the Agni Purāna but the weapons shown in his hands are battle - axe, Śaṅkha, Cakra and Gadā.³⁷

SRĪRĀMA.

Images of Rāghava Rāma (Dāsarathī) are usually of the same description. The Agni Purāna says that Rāma should be represented as carrying a bow and an arrow in his two hands, and equipped with a sword and a conch shell as well. The Visṇudharmottara says that the figures of Bharata and Śatrughna should also be associated with that of Rāma, but that these figures as well as the figure of Lakṣmana should not have the Maulī (Kirita - Mukuta) on the head. Separate cult images of Srī Rāma with Sīta, Lakṣmana, Bharata, Śatrughna and also Hanumāna are of a comparatively later period. In the daśavatāra reliefs, Srī Rāma is usually depicted as two-armed, his hands holding a bow and an arrow.

BALARĀMA

According to the Agni Purāna, Balarama is required to carry the Gadā and the Hala, if he is shown as possessing two

arms. If he is represented with four arms, the plough and the conch shell should be placed in the two upper and lower left hands and the Musala (Pestle) and the Cakra in the two right hands. The Visnudharmottara says that Bala should be white, wearing a deep blue garment, with eye dialeted through wine, wearing kundalas and carrying the plough share and the club.

In the early Bhāgavata religion, Balarāma was worshipped along with Vāsudeva (Kṛṣṇa). A very early image (of 2nd Century B.C.) of Balarāma is at Lucknow Museum. It is a standing figure with a canopy of serpent hoods. He holds a Musala (club) in his right hand and Bala (plough) in the left hand. His dress is similar to that of the Yakṣa images consisting of a heavy turban, ear-rings and a dhoti. The images of Balarāma in the Kusāna or the Gupta period are distinguishable by the serpent hood as well as a wine cup in his left hand. In the Gupta image he is shown with four hands.³⁸

KṚṢṆA.

Many stories connected with the life of Kṛṣṇa, are told again and again by the Harivaṁśa, the Bhāgavata and the other Purānas.

The Visnudharmottara (III. 76 - 3) says that Kṛṣṇa should have in one of his hands the Cakra and that Rukminī should have in her right hand a nīlotpala. Separate sculptures of Kṛṣṇa with his two consorts Rukminī and Satyabhāmā are found.

BUDDHA.

The Agni Purāna and the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāna describe the image of Buddha. According to the Agni Purāna, Buddha should be sculptured as a man of fair complexion, wearing a cloth and sitting on a lotus flower with its petals turned upwards. His ears should be made comparatively longer. The image should appear calm (śāntātmā). His hands should be in Varada and Abhaya poses. The Viṣṇudharmottara adds that Buddha should be covered with the Kāśāya (the yellow garb of the ascetic) and on the shoulder there should be Cīvara. The Purāna calls him Dhyānī.

The image of Buddha as described by the Purānas occurs in Hindu sculpture. T.G.Rao observed that throughout the Cālukya and Hoysala countries, Buddha is seen to have been invariably included among the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu and his image is found wherever those avatāras are portrayed. The stone image of the Dhyānī Buddha from Borobudur is very famous displays the above characteristics described by the Purānas.³⁹

KALKI.

The Kalki-avatāra of Viṣṇu has not yet taken place and is predicted to come off about the end of the present Kali Yuga. According to the Agni Purāna the image of Kalki should carry the Dhamus and the Bāna and should ride on a horse. The image may also be made to carry the Khadga, the Bāna, the Cakra and the Śaṅkha. The Viṣṇudharmottara prescribes only two arms to

Kalki. The Purāna describes him as 'a powerful man angry in mood, riding on horse back with a sword in his raised hands which can be recognised in the last figure of the Dasavatāra slabs.

The Matsya Purāna Ch. 47, V. 106 includes Mādhātā in the list of the Avatāras of Viṣṇu.

ŚIVA

Śiva is the supreme god, one of the three members of the Hindu Trinity. The Vedic counterpart of Śiva was Rudra. With the evidence of archaeological data, the scholars have opined that the worship of Śiva-Pasupati was in vogue among the early Indus Valley people of the Pre-historic period.

The great importance of this deity is suggested by his various names such as Pasupati, Bhūtapati, Mahādeva, Mahesvara etc. He is the lord of all created beings, he is the greatest of the gods. A number of Śaivāgamas and Tantras are devoted to this supreme deity. Śaivism is a very ancient religion. The sculptures of Śiva and Śivaliṅgas are innumerable and have been found all over India.

From a fairly early period the Śaivas used to place the emblem of Śiva as the principal object of their worship. The liṅga form has been universally adopted by the devotees. The Agni Purāna, Chapter 53 and the Matsya Purāna, Chapter 263, describe the essential points of the Phallic emblem. The Vismudharmottara Chapter 74 also gives some details about liṅga.

The liṅga proper is divided into 'acala' and 'cala'. The 'cala' variety is of six types in accordance with the substances. They are made of Ratnas, metals etc. The Agni Purāna, Chapter 54, V. 13 says about this 'cala' type. The fallic emblems made of the precious stones known as the Mahāratna, shall measure six fingers each; those made of the other gems shall have a length or height of nine fingers each; those of gold shall measure twelve fingers and the rest fifteen fingers. The fallic emblem of the 'cala' class, those usually worshipped in a household, shall measure upto fifteen fingers.

The Mānusa or man-made liṅgas form the largest group of the Sthira-liṅgas and are made up of three parts known as Brahma-bhāga, Viṣṇu-bhāga and Rudra-bhāga (or pūjabhāga). According to the Agni Purāna (Chapter 53, 1 - 4), a rectangular block of stone is to be marked as divided length-wise into two equal divisions, the lower half of which is to be divided in its turn into eight equal parts. Three such parts are to be left out and the remaining five should be divided breadthwise into three parts, the first of which is to be called Brahma-bhāga, the second Viṣṇu-bhāga and the last or the lowest part being known as the Śiva-bhāga, which shall be larger than the other two parts and over whose four angles of division at the upper extremity, a square is to be drawn, thus dividing the part known as Viṣṇubhāga into an octagonal block. The Purāna says, "Divide the same again into a block containing thirty two sides, and then the same again into one of sixty four and then turn it

into a round shaped block and then cut out the head of the fallic emblem in the shape of an umbrella, with a breadth equal to the half of the liṅga divided into eight equal parts. The purāṇa further adds that a Liṅga which has a breadth equal to three fourth of its length is to be deemed as the grantor of all desires. The pillar or prop part of such a fallic emblem shall be quarter of the entire length of the latter."

The Matsya Purāṇa (263 . 12 - 21) mentions that the size of the phallus should be according to the size of the temple or vice-versa. On an even square pit the Brahma-sutra (sacred thread) should be placed and to the left of it should be located the phallus of Śiva. Eight divisions should be made below the naval; three should be discarded and the rest should be made into a square. The centre of the Liṅga should be made octagonal and the head should be made round. The naval of the phallus is to be made into a circular knot. Thus the upper portion of the phallus of Śiva is round, the lower portion of Brahmā should be made square and the central one Vaiṣṇava portion should be octagonal. It is further said that the square portion should be buried in the ground and the central one should be kept in water. One may make a phallus of ruby, diamond, crystal, clay, wood according to one's choice and means.

The Liṅga pīthas (pedestals) are also described by the Purāṇas. Pītha is the 'ādhāra' of the Liṅga. The pīthas or pindikās can have various shapes. According to the Agni Purāṇa, the different dimensions of the pedestal should be made according

to its elevation. The pītha or the part actually occupied by the emblem should be of two such parts in height with a length commensurate with that of the liṅga. The internal space or cavity of the pītha (stool proper) should be divided into three parts, its breadth being equal to one sixth parts of its length. The belt or the girth round it should measure one third of its breadth and the depth of its cavity will be equal to or shall be 1/16 part of its belt with a gradual slope, the height of the stool being decorated with ornamental works.⁴⁰

The pīthas are of different varieties according to the number and form of the different kinds of mouldings. The Matsya purāna (262 . 6 - 7) mentions ten different kinds of seats with their characteristics. They are Sthandila, Vāpi, Yaksi, Vedi, Mandala, Pūrnacandrā, Vajra, Padmā, Ardhasasī and Trikoṇa. These are found in the texts on Śilpasāstras.

While describing the general characteristics of the pedestal, the Matsya Purāna mentions that the five parts upto Jagatī are imbedded within the earth; the other parts upto pattikā are above the ground and on the upper most part of pattikā, a passage is to be made for the outlet of water.⁴¹ In the extant specimens of the Liṅgas also, the projecting portion of the pītha of the liṅga really served the very useful purpose of draining off the water profusely poured on its top to some distance from its base.

The Visnudharmottara (Ch. 74) says, "the upper portion

of the Liṅga should be round and the portion below it eight sided and further below four-sided. The round portion of it should be made visible, the octagonal portion should be inserted in the Pindikā and the square portion in the Brahmaṭītha. The line on the top of the Liṅga should be well rounded and curved upwards. It should be double in length and perpendicular as in Brahmaśūtra."

Śiva is also represented in his human form in various types in a large number of sculptures. The Śiva images are very popular and universally adored. The Matsya Purāna, Chapters 258 and 259 describe the varieties of Śiva images such as Śiva, Natarāja Śiva, Yogesvara Śiva and Bhairava. First as a youth of sixteen as if witnessing a dance; second as a dancer with ten arms wearing the hide of an elephant; third a figure with sixteen hands representing the burning of the three cities; fourth of eight or four hands in the Yogesvara form and fifth of the Bhairava form. We have also prescriptions of the making of Ardhanārīśvara image. As the name indicates this form should be half man and half woman - the right Śiva and ^{left} Pārvatī. Emblems like Jaṭamukuta, crescent moon, sarpa-kundala, trisula and other weapons should be shown on the right half and on the left counterpart are karaṇḍa - mukuta, tilaka mark, kapāla, darpaṇa etc. This is the Saumya and Śānta mūrti of Śiva. Many Indian sculptures depict this form.

T.A.G. Rao has given eight illustrations of the Ardha - nārīśvara sculptures found at Badami, Kumbhakonam, Canjivaram,

Madura etc. Ardhanārīśvara is shown in a composite image, right half shows as male and the left half as female at Mathura of Kuṣāṇa period.⁴² The ten-armed figure of Natarāja in the Dacca Museum agrees to some extent with the description of ten armed 'Vaisākha-sthanaka' Natarāja given in the Matsya Purāṇa. A sixteen-armed figure of the god is also found at Badami, cave No.1. The four-armed Yogamūrti of Śiva is sculptured at many places. The Bhairava form of Śiva is of the ūgra variety with its terrific face, pointed nose and teeth. (Tīkṣṇanāsā-gradāsanaḥ Karālavadano mahān). The finest figure of Bhairava hails from Khiching, belonging to the early medieval period.⁴³ Chapter 59 of the Viṣṇudharmottara describes the Bhairava form of Śiva. Bhairava should be made having round and tawny eyes, with a hanging belly, a terrible face with tusks and wide nostrils, and a garland of skulls and frightfully adorned on all sides with the snakes. He wears elephant skin. He has many arms, huge and long like Śāla trees, bearing all sorts of weapons and possessed of sharp and beautiful nails.

The five-faced figure of Mahādeva is described in Chapter 44. Among the five faces of Pinākin - the bow carrier-seated on a bull, the southern one is fierce while other faces are placid looking. All the faces except the Northern-one have three eyes. The fifth face should be on the top of his matted locks of hair. He should be represented with ten arms. In his right hands should be a rosary, trident, an arrow, a staff and a lotus and in the left hands there should be a citron, a

bow, a mirror, a waterpot and a skin. A Sadāsiva mūrti in the Rajshahi Museum depicts a ten-armed and five-faced figure, seated in Padmāsana.⁴⁴ The five faces primarily represent the five aspects of Śiva; which are, according to the Visṇudharmottara known as Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora, Tatpuruṣa and Īsāna. Chapter 55 of the Visṇudharmottara describes the Gaurīśvara form of Śiva.

GANAPATI

Ganapati is the principal object of worship of the Hindus. It is the principal cult deity but not of early origin. Scholars have opined that this elephant-headed and pot bellied god came to be regularly worshipped after the Gupta age. Ganapati means the 'leader of the Gaṇas (of Śiva)'. He is the son of Lord Śiva and Devi Pārvatī. He is the Vighnanahartā (destroyer of obstacles) and Siddhidātā (bestower of success).

According to Agni Purāna, Chapter 50, Vināyaka should be made as having the body of a man and the head of an elephant, and possessing a huge trunk and belly. He should be represented as having made an axe from one of his own tusks and holding the same in his right hand, while a sweet ball and a lotus flower should be placed in his two left hands. The Matsya Purāna (Ch. 260) also describes the image of Gaṇeśa with the trunk of an elephant. The Visṇudharmottara, Chapter 71, depicts him as having the face of an elephant and four arms, a trident and a rosary in his right hands and in the left an axe and a vessel full of sweets (Modakas). He has a dropping belly and

stiff and big ears. He wears a tiger skin for his garments and a serpent as his sacred thread. His one foot should be on the foot stool and the other should be on the seat.

Such seated images of Ganespati of the early and late medieval periods have been found all over India. In the earliest stage, the Ganesa figure was of a Yaksa type; and an elephant headed Yaksa is to be found in an Ameravati coping and also in the early art of Mathura. In the Gupta period he was represented both as a squalling human figure with elephant's head and also in a dancing pose.⁴⁵

KĀRTIKEYA

Kumāra, Skanda, Visākha, Guha are the synonyms of this god. There are many mythological legends underlying the form of Kārtikeya. He is regarded as six headed, son of six mothers, son of Gaṅgā, son of Agni etc. He is the hero, leader of the divine army. God Kārtikeya or Subramanya attained great popularity among the southerners of medieval times.

According to Agni Purāna, Chapter 50, the image of skanda, the commander-in-chief of the celestial forces and who is known as Śākha and Visākha should be represented as a boy possessing two arms and riding on a peacock, with the images of Sumukṣi and Vidālākṣi installed on his two sides. The god may be represented as having one or six faces or possessing six or twelve hands. The Purāna further adds that in a wood or in a village, his image should be made to appear with two hands.

carrying the celestial weapon 'sakti in his right and a Kukkuta in his left hand. In the case of his having twelve arms, the six on the right should be equipped with the divine weapons respectively known as 'sakti, arrow, pāsa (noose), sword, totrada, tarjani and the 'sakti. The left six hands being armed with the 'saktis only.

Matsya Purāna, Chapter 260 depicts god Kārtikeya as having twelve hands and with peacock for his vehicle. He is described as delicate (Sukumāra), with danda and kaiscīraka. Matsya Purāna also mentions that in a wood and in a village he should be made with two hands, 'sakti in his right and a kukkuta by his left hand, and in a Kharvata he should be depicted with four hands, holding 'sakti and Pāsa in his left and right hands and the other two hands should be in a Varada and Abhaya poses. If he is depicted with 12 hands, the emblems should be 'sakti, Pāsa, sword, arrow, 'sūla in his right hands and bow, patākā, musti, tarjanī in his left hands. His two hands should be in a Varada and Abhaya pose.

The Visnudharmottara, Chapter 71, describes his four forms viz. Kumāra, Skanda, Visākha and Guha. Kumāra is six-faced (Ṣaṇmukha), adorned with a tuft of hair (Sikhaṇḍaka), dressed in a red garment and riding on a noble peacock. In his right hands are a Kukkuta (cock) and a bell. His left hand should hold a vaijayantī Patākā and a javalin ('sakti). The three other forms should be like Kumāra in all the details except in the matter of six faces and the peacock mount.

Several good sculptures of Kārtikeya have been found at Mathurā. His other forms like Kumāra, Viśākha and Skanda also seem to have been quite popular during the Kusāna period. The number of images increased in the Gupta period. The image of Kārtikeya is shown as a two-armed figure, holding the right hand in Abhayamudrā and Śakti in the left hand. Sometimes a cock and sometimes a peacock are depicted as his vāhanas.⁴⁶ His characteristic emblem Śakti, Kukkuṭa and sikhī seem to have been associated from a very early period on the coins also. A four-armed figure is found in Ellora relief and one of the left hands holds a cock. T.A.G. Rao has reproduced various bronze and stone images of Subramanya.

SARASVATĪ

Sarasvatī is the goddess of learning and music. She is referred to in the Ṛgveda as a river, on the banks of which Vedic learning developed. She is also identified with speech ('Vāg vai Sarasvatī'). In the popular Hindu mythology she is known as Vāgdevī (the goddess of speech). The Purānas gave her an iconographical form. In the later mythology, she is sometimes connected with Brahmā (both as his daughter and as his wife) and at other times with Viṣṇu as Puṣṭi.

As is stated above in the description of the image of Brahmā, both the Agni and the Matsya Purāna mention that the image of Sarasvatī and Śāvitri should be respectively at the left and right sides of the Brahmā's image. According to Matsya Purāna Chapter 261 . 24, Brahmānī should be made like Brahmā

(Brahmāni Brahmasadrśī). Therefore like Brahmā, she should have four faces. Agni Purāna (49 . 16 - 17) says that the image of goddess Sarasvatī should carry in her hands a book, a rosary, a lute and a water vessel. In the Skanda Purāna (VI, 46 . 16 - 19) it is said that King Ambuvīci, with great regard for the great powers of Sarasvatī, took the clay out of the river Sarasvatī and made an earthen image of her. That image is shown to have four hands with a lotus, rosary, water-vessel and a book in the respective hands. The Viṣṇudharmottara Puarāna (III Khanda) depicts only Sāvitrī in the left lap of Brahmā. In Chapter 44 she is described as four-armed holding a pustaka (book), and an aksamālā (rosary) in her right hands and Vīṇā (Musical instrument) and Kamandalu (water vessel) in her left hands. She is decked with many ornaments and has a face like that of the Moon.

The Musical instrument was one of the oldest emblems associated with Sarasvatī. It represents a kind of achievement or proficiency (Siddhi). Her four hands represent the four vedas and book represents all Śāstras. The water is fundamentally necessary for the creation of the universe. Hence she holds a water vessel. It also suggests her watery form i.e. Sarasvatī as a river.

The dual image of Brahmā and Sarasvatī is found in the Mathurā sculpture. In the Dacca Museum, Sarasvatī is shown as four-armed seated on a double petalled lotus, playing on a Vīṇā with her two front hands and holding a rosary and a book in her rear right and left hands respectively.⁴⁸ Her four-armed image

with these emblems is in the provincial Museum, Lucknow, but she is shown as seated on a peacock as her vehicle.⁴⁹

LAKSMĪ

Laksmī is described by Viṣṇudharmottara Chapter 82 as the mother of the whole world and the wife of Lord Viṣṇu.⁵⁰ Laksmī is a popular symbol of beauty and prosperity. She is the daughter of the ocean, depicted every where as a beautiful woman standing in a lotus pond and bathed with heavenly waters by two or four elephants, holding inverted jars in their trunks. The worship of Laksmī as the goddess of prosperity became invariably popular. She, the goddess 'par excellence' is depicted on the reverse of the gold coins of the Guptas.

According to the Viṣṇudharmottara, she is matchless in beauty (Kūpeṇāpratimā bhuvī). When depicted with Hari (Viṣṇu) she has two hands, carries lotus in her hand and is adorned with all sorts of ornaments.

"If depicted separately she should have four hands and seated on a beautiful Siṃhāsana, on which a lotus with beautiful pericarp and eight petals should be made. On this she sits like Vināyaka. Her right hand should hold a lotus with a big stalk and her left hand, a charming nectar pot. The other two hands should carry a Bilva and a conch. Behind her back there should be a pair of elephants bending down the pots as if in the act of pouring."

Such a figure of Cāja-Laksmī is known in the art of

Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodhagaya and Udayagiri. At Mathura this ancient typical figure of Laksmī is depicted as standing or seated on lotus. The worship of such an image was spread far and wide. It is still very popular among the Hindus. In many medieval temples this motif was often described over the doorway of the main structure. Kailāsa temple at Ellora depicts one such elaborate figure. Another beautiful figure of the medieval period is to be found at Kitching in which the goddess is shown seated gracefully on a Viśvapadma; there are usual elephants bathing her with upturned jars; her right hand is in the Varada pose and the left hand holding a full blossomed lotus.⁵¹

The Agni Purāna in Chapter 49 depicts Laksmī in the left arm of the divine Boar, the third incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu and she is represented as resting on his elbow. In verse 18 of the same Chapter goddess Laksmī is represented as sitting at his feet. She is also represented as standing on the left side with her own emblem of a lotus flower. In the Śankaraka Manifestation of Hari, goddess Laksmī is shown pressing a leg of the god. The Viṣṇudharmottara also depicts her with the god Padmanābha sleeping on sea with one of the legs of the god placed on the lap of Laksmī.

The Agni Purāna mentions in Chapter 45 that the images of Laksmī and other goddesses shall measure eight tālas in length.

ŚAKTI

Devi-pūjā or the worship of the female principle was prevalent in India since very ancient times. The Śakti pūjā was developed in the epic and Purānic periods. Ambikā, Umā, Durgā, Kālī, Mahiśāsurasardinī are the different names and aspects of the central figure of the Śakti cult. The Sapta-Matrīkās or the Divine Mothers as the Śaktis of Śiva regularly appear from Kusāna art. The two Durgā stotras occur in the Mahābhārata (IV . 6 and VI.23) and the Āryastava in the Harivaṃsa (III 3).⁵² The description of the exploits and power of the goddess appears in the Devī - Māhātmya of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna. Her one aspect i.e. Māhiśāsurasardinī in the form of killing the demon had become highly popular throughout the country.

The Agni Purāna describes Candī, Navacandīkā and Candīkā in Chapter 50. Goddess Candīkā is to be represented as having twenty hands, ten on the right side and ten on the left side, holding various things such as celestial trident, sword, spear, Cakra, pāsa, kheta, Ayodha, Abhaya, Damaru and Śakti in the right hands and in the left hands should be placed Nāgapāsa, Khataka, axe, Ankusa, bow, bell, banner, Gadā, mirror and the Mudgara. The buffalo should be represented below with its head entirely severed and the Asura (demon) should be sculptured as rushing out of that severed neck foaming with rage and brandishing his sword in the air. The goddess is to be represented in a standing posture with her right foot resting

on the back of the lion and her left on the shoulders of the demon, round whose neck is twisted the serpent noose of the goddess and who is pounced upon by her celestial lion. This image of Candikā is to be made as possessing three eyes, fully armed and crushing the enemy of the gods.

The images of nine different manifestations of Durgā should be made as standing in that particular pose namely *Alīdha* (the position in shooting in which the right knee is advanced and the left leg is retraced).

Cāmunda should be sculptured as having made a foot stool of the dead body of a man and as possessed of three eyes, sunk in and who has lost all flesh and wearing a tiger's skin. Her left arms hold a spear, a human skull, and her right hands a trident and a small sword.

The feminine manifestation of the divine energy, revealed as Rudra-Candikā should have eight hands, wielding in them a bow, a kheta, a banner, a human skull, a small sword, a trident and a noose etc., one hand should be in the attitude of Abhaya pose. She should be represented as wearing the skin of an elephant, and her legs should be made to appear as raised up in the attitude of dancing. If she is sculptured in a sitting posture she is known as Mahālakṣmī.

According to Matsya Purāna Ch. 259, Mahisāsūramardīnī should be represented in Tribhaṅga sthāna, with three eyes, eight hands and a huge bosom; her right hand should be on a lion and her left foot slightly raised, should be on a demon. She is

adorned with all sorts of ornaments and holds the usual emblems in her hands.

The Bhavishya Purāna (Ch. 12) describes Kāli as having two hands one of which bears a skull and the other a branch of a palm tree (Karnikā). According to the Viṣṇudharmottara (Ch. 71) Bhadrakāli has 18 hands and a beautiful appearance. She stands in the posture of Ālīdha in her chariot drawn by four lions. Her one hand is shown bestowing peace and the other carrying a vessel of jewels. Her remaining 16 hands hold characteristic weapons as usual. Kālikā Purāna, Chapter 62 and Devi Bhāgavata, Chapter 50 give somewhat similar descriptions of Mahākāli, Bhadrakāli and Mahisāsūramardīnī.

There are images of Durgā having four arms and seated on a lion of the Kusāna period. The images of Mahisāsūramardīnī with two, four and six hands are found in considerable number in Kusāna and Gupta art.⁵³ Eight and ten-armed images of Mahisāsūramardīnī have been discovered in Eastern India. The ten-armed variety is worshipped in Bengal in the famous Durgā Pūjā. The Aihole relief (6th or 7th Cen. A.D.) and the Haripur sculpture in Orissa (later than the Aihole one) depict the eight-armed goddess piercing the upturned neck of the buffalo demon. The lion mount is on her left side. The Ellora relief depicts her with eight arms riding on her lion-mount vigorously attacking Mahisāsura. A miniature stone relief of the Gupta period is found at Bhitā in which Devi is shown with two arms engaged in combat with buffalo demon.⁵⁴

The seven mother goddesses (Sapta Matrīkās) viz. Brahmānī, Mahesvarī, Kaumārī, Vaisnavī, Vārāhī, Yogesvarī and Lakṣmī are described in Matsya Purāna Chapter 261. Saptamātrīkās in a group with Kārtikeya on left, of the Kusāna period is found at Mathurā.⁵⁵ The sapta Matrīkās are often carved in relief in a rectangular stone slab with the figures of Vīrabhadra and Gaṇesa. The Matsya Purāna says that Brahmānī is like Brahmā, with four faces and four arms, riding on a swan and holding a water vessel. Mahesvarī is like Mahesvara, having four hands with the emblems Kapāla, Śūla, Khatvāṅga, having a Jata-mukutā and a bull as her mount. Kaumārī is like Kumāra, riding on a peacock, Vaisnavī is like Viṣṇu with Garuḍa as her mount; having four hands and holding in them Śaṅkha, Cakra, Gadā and one hand in a Varada pose. Vārāhī is like varāhā, sitting on a buffalo. Indrānī is like Indra, decked with dazzling ornaments and holding Vajra, Śūla, Gadā in her hands. Yogesvarī is fierce, wearing the garland of skulls. Cāmundā is sitting on the ass. Vināyaka should be depicted among these Matrīkās. The Agni Purāna, Ch. 52 gives 64 yoginīs which should be represented as having eight or four hands and wielding arms according to their own choice.

Gaurī is depicted by the Agni Purāna as possessing two arms and three eyes and carrying a mace and a mirror. The three eyed but four-armed Pārvatī stands in the Samapādasthānaka pose at Nalanda.

The images of Brahmānī, Kaumārī, Mahesvarī, Vārāhī and

Indrānī at Puri, the image of Vaiṣṇavī at Kiething, and the image of Cāmundī at Jaipur agree in many respects with the description given by the Matsyapurāna.⁵⁶

SŪRYA

Sūrya (the Sun) is the principal deity honoured from the Vedic times upto this date. This Solar deity was worshipped in India as a principal cult deity from very early times. Savitr, Pusāna, Mitra, Aryamā, Vivasvata are his various aspects which we find in the Vedas. From such ancient times Sūrya has been regarded as the soul of all movable and immovable things. In the Epic period the Sun-worship was highly developed.

From the early centuries of Christian era the Sun-cult appears to have developed in Northern India along with a foreign influence. The Irānīan cult of Sun-worship affected the North Indian Sun-worship. The two forms of Sun-images are clearly visible in the extant artistic remains. The the North Indian form was much reoriented by the east Iranian mode of Sun-worship can be proved by literary and archaeological data. Many Sun-temples have been erected from time to time.

Besides the Brhat-Saṁhitā, the Visṇudharmottara (Ch. 67) and the Bhavisya Purāna (Ch. 12) show the Iranian influence on the description of the sun-image. The Visṇudharmottara clearly says that the Sun is dressed in Northern style and wears armours. The Indo-Scythian dress is mentioned as the Udīchya-

Vesa. This typical form was imported from Irana by the Scythians. His waist-girdle is known as Yāvīyāṅga (which is referred to in the Bhaviṣya Purāna as Avyaṅga, which is same as the girdle worn by Maga Priests and which clearly proves foreign influence).⁵⁷ The staff carrying Dandī is to be shown on his left and the pen and a leaf bearing Pingala on his right. On the left side of Sun-god should be placed a banner having an emblem of lion. Both should wear dress of Northern style. His four sons, Revanta, Yama and two Manus should stand by him. His four wives Rājanī, Riksubhā, Chāyā and Suvarcasā should also be placed on his two sides. He should be represented as seated in a chariot. His chariot has one wheel, six spokes and is drawn by seven horses. It should be driven by Aruna. The Sun-god has a bright moustache. A similar description is found in the Bhaviṣya Purāna.

Such type of images hail from the Gandhāra region, especially from Mathura of Kusāna and the Gupta periods. The early image of Sūrya is depicted on a railing pillar at Bodhagayā (1st Cen. B.C.) Sūrya is seated in a chariot drawn by four horses and he is dressed in dhotī, scarf and turban. As against this in the Kusāna and Gupta arts another form of Sūrya is shown wearing a coat fastened with a belt trousers and boots and he has a moustache. Sūrya clad in the Northern dress is at Mathura of Kusāna period.⁵⁸ Another special feature of Sūrya images during the Gupta period was the representation of his two attendants viz. Dandā and Pingala. Then the figures of goddesses

were added.

According to the Agni Purāna (Ch. 51) the Sun rides in a chariot provided with a single wheel and drawn by seven horses carrying in his two hands the two celestial lotus flowers, the emblems of light and animation. The two attendants Kundi and pingala stand by his sides. In the alternative the Sun-god Bhāskara should be represented as alone and riding on horse-back.

The Matsya Purāna (Ch. 261) also depicts him as sitting in a chariot of seven horses, holding a lotus flower. His two attendants are by his sides and he wears a pair of clothes ('Vastrayugmasamopetam').

The sun-god was depicted as seated in a chariot drawn by two horses in the earliest images, the number of horses being increased later to four and ultimately to seven. His image with seven horses chariot, the Northern dress and the attributes viz. lotuses became the standard type from the Gupta period onwards for all the Sūrya images that were made.

The pair of Sūrya and Candra is also depicted in Gupta art. The worship of the Navagrahas was in vogue in India. It is still popular in different parts of India. The Viṣṇudharmottara and the Agni Purāna describe their forms. According to the Agni Purāna (Ch. 51) the moon god is to be depicted as carrying a sacrificial pitcher and a rosary in his hands. The Mars (Maṅgala) is to be endowed with a spear and a rosary, the Mercury (Budha) being imaged as wielding a bow in

one hand and the seed of Rudrākṣa in the other and the Jupiter (Brhaspati) as holding a sacrificial pitcher and a rosary. The Venus (Śukra) should be made to resemble the Jupiter in appearance, while the Saturn (Śanī) is to be represented as encircled with a row of girdle like bells. The Rāhu should be imaged as having the mark of a half lunar disc on his forehead, while the Ketu should be personified as a man carrying a lamp and a sword. The Viṣṇudharmottara (Ch. 68) gives a detailed description. The moon has a white body and white garments. He has four hands and wears all sorts of ornaments. His chariot has two wheels, drawn by ten horses. The images of Kānti and Śobhā should be on his sides. According to the Viṣṇudharmottara the moon is the father of this world. He is the abode of joy. The Mars should be made like Agni sitting in golden chariot drawn by eight horses. The chariot of Mercury is like that of Mars but he should be represented like Viṣṇu. Jupiter should be of the colour of heated gold, having two hands. In one he holds a book and in the other a rosary. He wears a yellow garment and is adorned by many ornaments. Venus should have a white body and a white garment. He has two hands one holding treasure and the other a book. He sits in a silver chariot of ten horses. On the other hand Śanī (Saturn) should be dark, wearing dark garments. His body is covered with veins. He has two hands, one bearing a staff and the other a rosary. He sits on an iron chariot drawn by eight serpents. Rāhu's head should be shown as joined to one arm. His hair should be raised and eyes turned up. The right hand should be shown empty.

Ketu should be represented just like Mars.

In medieval temples, stone slabs of the figures of these Grahas are shown usually standing. They are not represented as sitting in their chariots. A sand-stone relief from Sarnatha, now in the Indian Museum, contains the figures of four planets - Brhaspati, Śukra, Śanī and Rāhu. All are two-armed, the first three standing in graceful poses while the fierce looking Rāhu is shown only upto breast with a grinning face, round protruding eyes and hair rising upwards. A fine sculpture showing the nine Grahas is now in the Asutosa museum, Calcutta. The Grahas standing in graceful post on lotus pedestals. Brhaspati alone is shown with a beard. Brhaspati, Śukra and Śanī in the Indian Museum have rosaries in their right hands and the left hands, of the first two hold a water pot.⁵⁹

DIKPĀLAS

Dikpālas or Lokpālas are eight in number. Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirṛti, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Kubera and Īśāna. They are the guardians of the quarters of the worlds. All these deities held prominent positions in the Vedic period.

The Agni purāna describes the images of seven Dikpālas viz. Indra, Agni, Yama, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Kubera and Īśāna in Chapter 51. The Matsya Purāna, in Chapters 260 and 261 describes Agni, Yama, Kubera, Indra, Varuṇa, and Nirṛti. The Viṣṇu - dharmottara gives elaborate description of Agni (Ch. 56), Varuṇa (Ch. 52), Kubera (Ch. 53), Yama (Ch. 51) Vāyu (Ch. 58) and Śakra or Indra (Ch. 50).

INDRA

The Agni Purāna depicts Indra as riding on an elephant and wielding a thunderbolt. According to the Matsya Purāna Indra is Surarāja or the King of Gods. He should be represented with thousand eyes and seated on a wild elephant. He should hold Vajra (thunderbolt) and a lotus (Utpala) and decked with all sorts of ornaments. Indrānī holding a lotus should be on his left side. The Viṣṇudharmottara gives an elaborate description of the four-armed Śakra or Indra. He is mentioned as three-eyed and having a four-tusked elephant mount. His two armed consort Śacī is seated on his lap. The symbolism underlying all his other iconographical traits is also elaborated there. He holds in his hands the Aṅkusa (elephant goad), the lotus, the thunderbolt and one of his left hand is on the back of Śacī.

In the early Buddhist reliefs of Mathura and Gandhara, Śakra is represented as an attendant of Buddha, with basket like head dress. The four-armed figure of Indra, from the Cidambaram temple seated on his elephant, has his front hands in the Varada and Abhaya poses, the back ones carrying the Aṅkusa and the Vajra.⁶⁰

AGNI

The Agni Purāna describes Agni as seated on a goat, and holding a spear in his hand. The Matsya Purāna depicts him as very bright with flames and Yajnopavīta, holding Kamandalu in his left hand and Akṣamālā in his right hand. In the Viṣṇu -

dharmottara he is described as bearded, four-armed, four-tusked, three eyed, riding a chariot with smoke, driven by wind, having his consort Svāhā in his left lap, holding flames, trident and rosary in his hands.

There are several Gupta sculptures showing Agni as a Brahmanical deity with a halo of flames round the body and also with Jatajūta, a beard and yajnopavīta, pot-bellied and holding Amṛta-ghaṭa in the right hand. The two images of Agni at the Mathura Museum and Indian Museum agree with the description given in Agni Purāna and Matsya Purāna.

YAMA

According to the Agni Purāna, Yama is to be depicted as riding a buffalo and carrying a club. The Matsya Purāna depicts him as seated on a buffalo holding a staff and a noose. The Viṣṇudharmottara describes him as a four-armed god seated on a buffalo with his consort Dhumarornā in his left lap, his right hands holding a staff and a sword and the left ones a trident with flames and a rosary.

The Cidambaram figure of Yama illustrated by F.A.G. Rao shows the two-armed god standing in front of his mount, his right hand holding a noose, and the left one resting on a club.⁶²

VARUNA

The Agni Purāna describes Varuna as riding on a sea-monster (Makar) and carrying a trident in his hand. According to the Matsya Purāna, his vehicle is Jhasa. He is characterised

by his famous noose (Pāsa). He is bright like a crystal and wears a white garment. He is decked with Kiritaṃukuta and aṅgada. The Viṣṇudharmottara includes the figures of Gangā and Yamunā on their respective mounts viz. a makara and a tortoise on his two sides. He is four-armed holding a lotus, a noose, a conch-shell and a jewel-box. He is riding a chariot drawn by seven swans representing the seven seas because Varuna is the lord of waters.

In the Rājagrha temple at Bhuvanesvara there is a beautiful figure of Varuna. The god stands in a graceful pose, holding a looped noose, the left hand being in the varadamudrā with the jewelled headgear and all kinds of ornaments.⁶³

VĀYU

The Agni Purāna says that Vāyu is to be depicted as driving an antelope with a full furled streamer gaily flying by his side. According to the Matsya purāna the form of Vāyu is a quiet youth wearing a variegated garment and with a twisted eyebrow. He is on his mount, a deer and endowed with a banner and a flag. The Viṣṇudharmottara states that the colour of the body and garment of Vāyu should be sky-blue and that he should carry in his hands the Cakra and the Dhvaja (flag).

In sculptures Vāyu is invariably shown as seated on a deer. Dr. Banerjea observes "in early medieval temples of prominent cult gods, Vāyu is shown as riding on a stag and holding a flag in his hand and occupying his allotted corner on the outer side of the structure."⁶⁴

KUBERA

According to the Agni Purāna, Kubera should be pictured as carrying a mace and riding a sheep. The Matsya Purāna says that Kubera should be shown with a big belly and huge body. He is adorned with ornaments and Mukuta and riding in a vimāna with men. He is accompanied by Asta-nidhis and Guhyakas on all sides. He wears a white garment and a mace (gadā). The Visnudharmottara describes him as 'tundila' (pot bellied). He has four arms carrying a shield, a mace, a jewel and a pot. His other traits are the two fangs in his mouth, a beard and Rddhi (the goddess of prosperity) seated in his left lap. His dress is that of a northerner (udīcyaveśa), wearing a Kavaca and fully decorated with ornaments. He rides on a man (or a chariot drawn by men?).

The Pancika and Hariti reliefs partly agree with this description. The image of Kubera of Mathura Museum more or less agrees with the description given in the Visnudharmottara.⁶⁵ The four Lokapāla gods are represented frequently on the torana gateways of the stūpas. Among them one is Kubera.

NIRRTI

Nirrti is depicted in the Matsya Purāna as riding on a man, accompanied by many demons. He is black like a lamp black. He holds a sword in his hand. His illustrations are very rare. A relief depicting Nirrti is in the collection of the Rajasahi Museum. The god is shown here on the back of a man (Naravāhana) and holds in his two hands a sword and a shield.⁶⁶

ĪSĀNA

Īsāna is represented by the Agni Purāna as having clotted hair and sitting on a bullock. He is a particular aspect of Śiva. Viṣṇudharmottara calls Īsāna as Gaurīśvara.

ŚĀLAGRĀMA

The objects worshipped by Hindus besides the images of gods and goddesses are Śālagrāmas, Bēna lingas, Yantras etc. which are associated with the Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva and Śākta cults respectively. "A Śālagrāma is generally a flintified ammonite shell, which is river worn and thus rounded and beautifully polished. Each of these has a hole through which are visible several interior spiral grooves resembling the Cakra of Viṣṇu. Hence the Śālagrāma is considered as a representative of Viṣṇu".⁶⁷

The Śālagrāmas are divided into various classes according to the circular impressions inside the Śālagrāma. Agni Purāna Chapter 46 describes in detail these classes of Śālagrāma. They are Vāsudeva, Saṅkarsana, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Nārāyana, Paramēsti, Nṛsiṅha, Varāha, Kṛṣṇa, Hayagrīva, Vaikuntha, Matsya, Vāmana, Trivikrama, Ananta, Naikava, Dēmodara, Sudarsana and Janārdana. These Śālagrāmas are of different colours : brownish black, red, blue, white, blue, dark brown, jet black, yellow or multicoloured. The Agni Purāna describes elaborately all the characteristics of these Śālagrāmas. T.A.G.Rao has given a photograph of a group of Śālagrāmas and an image of Rāma made of a piece of a Śālagrāma.⁶⁸

NOTES

- 1 J.N.Banergea, 'The Development of Hindu Iconography', p. 2.
- 2 J. N.Banergea, op. cit., ch. I, pp. 7 - 23, chs. IV and V, pp. 108 - 202.
- 3 T. A.G. Rao, 'Elements of Hindu Iconography', Vol. I and II.
- 4 J.N.Banergea, op. cit., pp. 22 - 23.
- 5 VDP. III . 43 . 31 - 32.

मया चित्रं तथैवोक्तं सातपूर्वं नराधिप ।
सुवर्णरत्नप्यस्ताम्रादि तन्त्र लोकेषु दर्शयेत् ॥
शिलादारुषु लोहेषु प्रतिमाकरणं भवेत् ।
अनेनैव विद्वानेन मया चित्रमुदाहृतम् ॥

- 6 VDP . III . 39 . 49 - 50.

अन्पादसमस्थानं द्वितीयेन तु विदग्धम् ।
शरीरं च सलीलं स्यात्सावष्टमैः क्वचिद्भूतम् ॥
लीलाकिलासविज्ञान्तं विशाल जघनस्थलम् ।
स्थिरेकपादविन्यासं स्त्रीरूपं विलिखेद्भुघः ॥

- 7 MS. XII . 163 - 164.
- 8 Kapila Vatsyayana, ' Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts', p. 373.
- 9 Kapila Vatsyayana, op. cit., pp. 302 - 379.
- 10 A.P., 43 . 9a - 10b.

मृण्मयी दासुघटिता लोन्हा रत्नना तथा ।
शैलना मन्धना चैव कोसुमी सपत्न्या स्मृता ॥

- 11 A.P., 44 . 1 - 3.
- 12 M.P., 261 . 18 - 19.
- 13 M.P., 257 . 19.

स्कीयांगुलिनानेन मुक्तं स्याद्द्विदशांगुलम् ।
मुसमानेन कर्तव्या सर्वाकयकल्पना ॥

- 14 T.A.G.Rao, op. cit., appendix B, pp. 9 - 28.
- 15 M.P., 257 . 26 - 29.
- 16 M.P., 258 . 1 - 2.
- 17 Ibid, ch. 257, vv. 22 - 23. M.P., 257 . 22 - 23.
- अंगुष्ठमर्षादारभ्यः क्तिरित्सीवदेव तु ।
पुद्गेषु प्रतिमा कार्या नाधिका ऋक्तो द्युधः ॥
जापोडना तु प्रासादे क्तव्या नाधिका ततः ।
- 18 J.N.Banergea, op. cit., p. 312.
- 19 A.P., 49 . 15.
- आन्यस्थाली सरस्वती सावित्री वामदक्षिणे ।
- 20 M.P., 260 . 44.
- आन्यस्थाली न्यसेत्पार्श्वे वेदांश्च क्षुरः पुनः ।
वामपार्श्वे स्य सावित्री दक्षिणे च सरस्वतीम् ॥
- 21 V.S.Agrawala, 'Indian Art', p. 254, Figs. 168 - 9.
- 22 V.S.Agrawala, op. cit., p. 333.
- 23 S.D. Gyāni, 'Agni Purāna - A Study', pp. 208 - 209.
- 24 A.P., 23 . 15 - 17.
- स्वमन्त्रैः पूजयेत् सर्वान् विष्णुः अधीः शान्तः ॥
- 26 T.A.G. Rao, op. cit., I, 1, p. 227.
- 26 J.N.Banergea, op. cit., p. 30.
- 27 V.S.Agrawal, op. cit., p. 255.
- 28 J. N. Banergea, op. cit., pp. 401 - 402.
- 29 J.N.Banergea, op. cit., p. 407.
- 30 Ibid, p. 254.
- 31 V.S.Agrawal, op. cit., p. 255.
- 32 Bhagavadgītā, IV . 7 - 8.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानकर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संवतामि युगे युगे ॥

33 M. P., 47 . 104.

तसस्तेनामित्रापेन नष्टे धर्मे पुनः पुनः ।

लोकस्यच हितार्थाय जायते मानुषेऽप्यहम् ॥

34 J.N.Banergea, op. cit., pp. 415 - 416.

35 T.A.G.Rao, op. cit., vol. I, pl. XLIV.

36 T.A.G.Rao, op. cit., vol. I, pl. XLIX.

37 J.N.Banergea, op. cit., p. 420.

38 V.S.Agrawala, op. cit., p. 256.

39 T.A.G.Rao, op. cit., vol. I, pl. LXVIII.

40 A.R, 53 . 15 - 16.

41 M.P., 262, 4.

42 V.S.Agrawala, op. cit., p. 257, fig. 177.

43 J.N.Banergea, op. cit., p. 475.

44 J.N.Banergea, op. cit., pl. XL, fig. 3, p. 478.

45 V.S.Agrawala, op. cit., p. 259

46 V.S.Agrawal, 'Indian Art', p. 259.

47 T.A.G.Rao, op.cit., vol. II, pls. CXXI-CXXIX.

48 J.N.Banergea, op. cit., p. 379.

49 Priyabala Shah, 'The Visṇudharmottara, III,' vol. II, p.179.

50 VDP. III . 82 . 1.

या माता सर्वलोकस्य पत्नी विषोर्महात्मनः ।

51 J.N.Banergea, op. cit., pl. XVIII, fig. 2, p. 376.

- 52 Ibid, p. 491.
- 53 V.S.Agrawala, op. cit., fig. 183, p. 260.
- 54 J.N.Banerjee, 'The Development of Hindu Iconography', pls. XLII, fig. 3; XLII, fig. 2; XLI, fig. 2; pl. XXXI, figs. 13 and 14.
- 55 V.S.Agrawal, op. cit., fig. 184, p. 260.
- 56 The illustrations given by J.N.Banerjee, op. cit.
Pl. XLIII, fig. 2.
Pl. XLIII, figs. 1,3,5.
Pl. XLIV, figs. 3,4.
Pl. DLIV, figs. 1,5.
- 57 Priyabala Shah, op. cit., p. 150.
- 58 V.S.Agrawal, op. cit., fig. 178, p. 258.
- 59 J.N.Banerjee, op. cit., pl. XXXI, figs., 1 and 2.
- 60 T.A.G.Rao, op. cit., vol. II, p. 520, pl. CL.
- 61 Priyabala Shah, op. cit., p. 180.
- 62 T.A.G.Rao, op. cit., pl. CLII, fig. 1.
- 63 J.N.Banerjee, op. cit., pl. XLVI, fig. 1, p. 527.
- 64 Ibid, p. 528.
- 65 Priyabala Shah, op. cit., p. 180.
- 66 J.N.Banerjee, op. cit., p. 526.
- 67 T.A.G.Rao, op. cit., vol. I, part I, Intr. p. 8.
- 68 Ibid, Intr. p. 11, Plate A.

...