

A PROJECT ON BHARATIYA-SAMSKRITI-SARVASVA-KOSHA

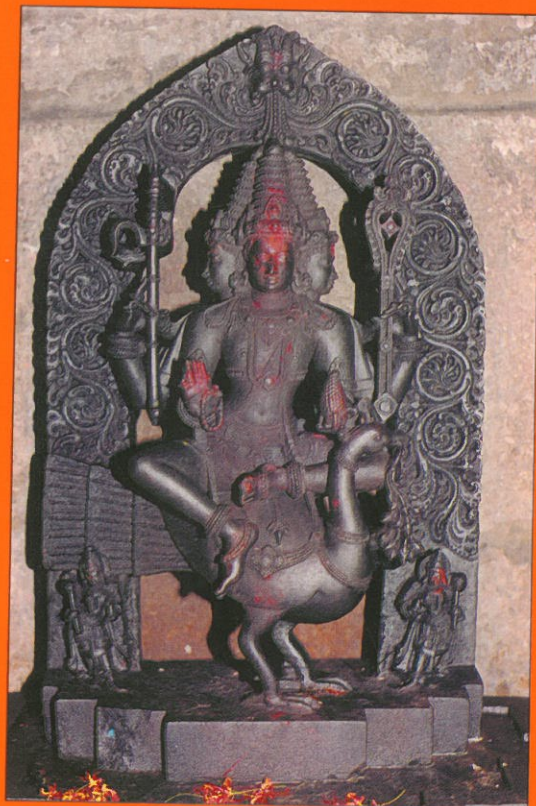


Kalpatharu Research Academy Publication

Chief Editor : DAIVAJNA K.N. SOMAYAJI

VĀSTU-ŚILPA-KOSHA

(PART TWO)



By

S.K. RAMACHANDRA RAO

KALPATHARU RESEARCH ACADEMY

(A DIVISION OF SRI SRINGERI SHARADA PEETHAM)

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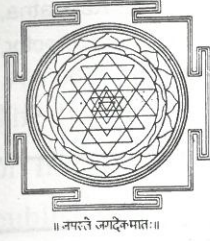
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VĀSTU-ŚILPA-KOŚHA: Part two, by Vidyānkara, Sastra Chudamāni, Sangita Kalaratna, Prof. S.K. Ramachandra Rao, and Published by Daivajna K.N. Somayaji, Chief Editor and Director, Kalpatharu Research Academy, No. 1, Shankarmutt, Shankarapuram, Bangalore - 560 004, Phone: 6507464, Fax : 6514078, e-mail : kalpatharu@vsnl.com

Published with the generous Financial Assistance from the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Department of Education, Govt. of India, New Delhi, and Dept. of Education, Govt. of Karnataka, Bangalore.

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Price: Rupees Two Hundred Only (Subsidized)

The Publications of Kalpatharu Research Academy are meant to reach all sections of the society, and hence are sold at highly subsidized prices. An appeal is hereby made to Booksellers to adhere to the price indicated in each volume by the Publishers and not to enhance them on any account.

Printed by : **P.S.Venkatesh Babu**

Omkar Offset Printers, N.T. Pet, Bangalore - 560 002,
Telefax : 6709026, 6708186, e-mail: omkar@blr.vsnl.net.in



PREFACE

The first part of Vastu-Silpa-Kosha, presenting the fundamental principles of Indian architectural treasure authoritatively and comprehensively, was published earlier this year. The second part is now being brought out; together, the two parts mark an important milestone in the growing literature on Vastu and Silpa. The Academy is grateful to Vidyalkara Sastra-Chudamani Prof. S.K. Ramachandra Rao for having authored these valuable volumes, which are also profusely illustrated, largely by his own drawings, sketches and diagrams. The volume also contains rare and excellent photographs.

The Academy is happy to record the blessings received from his Holiness the Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Bharathi Teertha Mahaswamigal of Sri Sringeri Sharada Peetham. It expresses its gratitude to the Chairman Shri V.R. Gowrishankar, the Administrator of Shri Sringeri Sharada Peetham for his interest in our activities.

We also thank the authorities of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Govt. of India, New Delhi and the Authorities of Ministry of Education, Govt. of Karnataka.

The Printers who have done an excellent job promptly and neatly in producing this work, deserve our sincere thanks.

Bangalore
Sri Vishu Nama Samvatsara,
Makara Samkranti, 14th January 2002.

DAIVAJNA K.N. SOMAYAJI
CHIEF EDITOR AND DIRECTOR
KALPATHARU RESEARCH ACADEMY



KALPATHARU RESEARCH ACADEMY

INSTITUTION FOR :

- * Promotion of Research Oriented Studies in Veda, Vedanga, Agama, Jyoutisha, Vedanta, Yoga and Ayurveda
- * Study of Sanskrit language in particular and other related languages
- * Propagation of Vedic Phonetics
- * Establishment of Veda Patashalas in Guru Kula System
- * Running of Oriental Libraries (Prachya Granthalaya)
- * Collection, Preservation and Publication of Old Manuscripts.



INTRODUCTION

This is the second part of Vāstu-Śilpa-Kosha, the first part of which was brought out some time ago. While the earlier part dealt mainly with preliminaries of Vāstu (Architectural principles and their applications), the present volume continues with a more detailed treatment of Vāstu illustrations and symbolic involvements. It also deals with Śilpa (Sculptural principles). Together, they constitute one discipline and each part complements the other. They have been illustrated by my own drawings and with appropriate engravings and photographs.

I am grateful to Daivajna Shri K.N. Somayaji, the Chief Editor and Director of Kalpatharu Research Academy, Bangalore for the opportunity he has provided for me to prepare these volumes, and I also acknowledge the unfailing courtesy and co-operation extended by my friends, Shri Venkatesh Babu and Shri Nagendra, who have produced this volume in such a splendid manner.

I am also grateful to the Chief Patron of the Academy, Sri Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Swamiji of Sri Sringeri Sarada Peetham, and to the Chairman of the Academy Shri. V.R. Gowrishankar, the administrator of Sri Sringeri Sharada Peetham.

S.K. RAMACHANDRA RAO



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नमस्ते जगदेक मातः

चतुर्भुजे चन्द्रकलावतंसे
कुचोन्नते कुङ्कुमरागशोणे ।
पुंरक्षुपाशाङ्कुशपुष्पबाण-
हस्ते नमस्ते जगदेकमातः ॥



H.H. Sri Sri BHARATI THEERTA MAHASWAMIJI
HUMBLE DEDICATION TO OUR CHIEF PATRON

भारतीकरुणापात्रं
भारतीपदभूषणम् ।
भारतीपदमारूढं
भारतीतीर्थमाश्रये ॥



॥ श्री शृङ्गेरी श्रीजगद्गुरुमहासंस्थानम् ॥

श्रीमत्परमहंसपरिव्राजकाचार्यवर्य पदवाक्यप्रमाणपारावारपारीण
यमनियमासनप्रणायामप्रत्याहारधारणाध्यानसमाध्यष्टाङ्गयोगानुष्ठाननिष्ठ
तपश्चक्रवर्त्यनाद्यविच्छिन्न श्रीशङ्कराचार्यगुरुपरम्पराप्राप्त षड्दर्शनस्थापनाचार्य
व्याख्यानसिंहासनाधीश्वर सकलनिगमागमसारहृदय सांख्यत्रयप्रतिपादक वैदिकमार्गप्रवर्तक
सर्वतन्त्रस्वतन्त्रादिराजधानी विद्यानगरमहाराजधानी कर्णाटकसिंहासनप्रतिष्ठापनाचार्य
श्रीमद्राजाधिराजगुरुभूमण्डलाचार्य ऋष्यशृङ्गपुरवराधीश्वर तुङ्गभद्रातीरवासि
श्रीमद्विद्याशङ्करपादपद्वाराधक श्रीजगद्गुरु श्रीमदभिनवविद्यातीर्थस्वामिगुरुकरकमलसञ्जात

॥ श्री जगद्गुरु शृङ्गेरी श्रीमद्भारतीतीर्थमहास्वामिभिः ॥

अस्मदत्यन्तप्रियशिष्य श्री नरसिंह सोमयाजि विषये नारायणस्मरणपूर्वकं विरचिता
आशिषस्समुल्लसन्तु ।

वैदिकान्ववाये लब्धजनिर्भवान् ज्योतिर्विद्यामभ्यस्य तद्द्वारा बहून् जनान् उपकुर्वन्नास्ते । वेदागमशास्त्रेषु
भूयसीं श्रद्धामावहन् तत्प्रचाराय कल्पतरु संशोधनप्रतिष्ठान नाम्नीं संस्थां प्रत्यस्थापयत् । सा च संस्था
विशिष्टान् ग्रन्थान् प्रकाशयन्ती वरीवर्ति ।

शृंगगिरि जगद्गुरु महासंस्थाने पारम्परिकीं भक्तिमास्थितवतो भवतो मनसि संस्थामेनां शृंगगिरि मठीयां
विधातुं सङ्कल्पः उदभूदिति विज्ञाय मोदामहे । अत एव अदसीयानि प्रकाशनानि इतः परं मठीयत्वेनैव
प्रकाशयिष्यन्त इत्यपि भवान् निरचिनोत् । दुर्लभाः भारतीयसंस्कृतिप्रबोधकाः विशिष्टाः ग्रन्थाः
संस्थायानया प्रकाशयन्तां तेन च भवदीयो मनोरथः फलेग्रहिर्भूयात् श्रीशारदाचन्द्रमौलीश्वरयोरनुकम्पया
भवान् इतोधिक श्रेयः परम्पराभिः समभिवर्धतामिति चाशास्महे ।

शृङ्गगिरिः

ईश्वर भाद्रपदशुद्धदशमी भार्गववासरः

12.9.1997

इति नारायणस्मरणम्

CHAPTER ONE

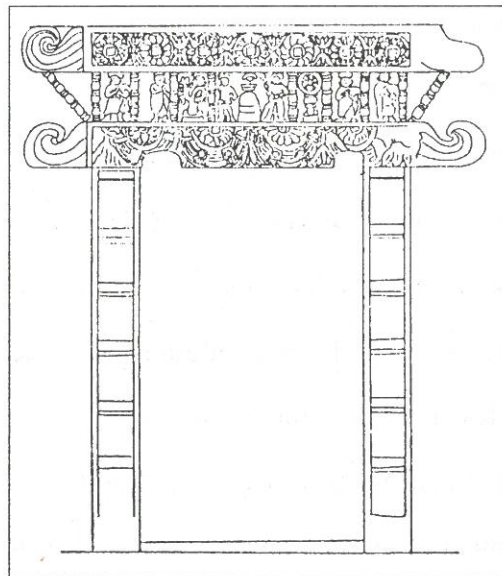
THE TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVE

THE ARCHĀ TRADITION

The word 'archā' means both worship (archanā) and the image meant for worship (archā-mūrti). Worship is a ritual, brief or elaborate, private or public. We deal here with worship in a temple, which is elaborate and public.

The Indian temple is an art-form that has a human as well as a divine character. It exists in its structure as something that endures in space and time, and as something that was a response to a situational need. It is a building, accomplished by architects and masons who follow the laws of the physical world, and employ their technical skill. The Indian temple has almost a

mathematical basis. The man-orientation was often in the nature of an obsession with the old temple-builders in India. But the inspiration to the building activity was in every case derived from religious mysticism. The temple has also a psychological and spiritual existence.



Door of Gautamiputra cave, Nasik



It is in the nature of 'sacred art' to bring man into contact with the divine. It enables him to feel the spiritual presence, and to find it ultimately in his own heart.

It is not so much to pray that a devotee visits a temple as to feel this presence. He could pray anywhere, and, as every devotee knows, the well-known and popular temples of the present-day are the last places in the world where one can really get into a prayerful mood! If one does not have an incination for this presence, he does not go beyond what is physical and visible in the temple. It is not enough for the devotee to believe in God, or to believe in the efficacy of prayer. He must have an intuitive apprehension of the presence that makes the temple

a sacred enclosure and he must be eager to partake of that presence. Without such equipment, the temple would lack meaning and value.

Sensitivity to spiritual presence is not guided by considerations of utility. The Indian temple has been many things : art-gallery, economic institution, political power, social organization, crafts-guild, fortress, and refectory. All this, however, has only contributed to the decay of the temple as a spiritual institution. The temple now inclines to be in a less austere setting. The civilization of machine and technology has made an inroad into it. It is no longer "static and peaceful", as it used to be when the twin demons of speed and utility had not as yet possessed it or us. The human perspective has



altered, and the temple has become a mere building, and, worse, an office.

The sanctity of the Indian temple depends not on its art or its utility, but on its esoteric significance. The texts of Indian architecture are no doubt prolix and full of technical details; but they do not lose sight of the truth that the temple is chiefly meant to be an instrument of spiritual realization. The devotee goes to the temple with faith in his heart, and expects to find grace in the shrine. It is only when man has faith that he can lay claim to grace. And faith does not need gnosis or understanding of the symbolism involved in the temple. What it needs is the appropriate mood. In order to create an atmosphere or a mood of

holiness and sanctity, which would enable a devotee's faith to become more receptive to this spiritual presence, certain traditional prescriptions like physical cleanliness, postural reverence, and ritual offering have been introduced.

The devotee would have intuitively apprehended the symbolism. Ability to vocalize, or communicate it, is a different thing, and may be altogether irrelevant. He would not be seduced by the illusion of anthropomorphism; he would not mistake the human looking icon for a mere human being, nor a temple for a mere building. Art in the temple will not distract him, as it would an art-enthusiast, and technical skill will not hold his attention, as it would a tourist. He floats over these obstacles,



and directly reaches the shrine to receive grace.



Garbhagriha with Superstructure

But when the traditional hold has been loosened, intellectual apprehension of symbolism becomes necessary. Understanding must augment faith. But nothing can be more harmful than attempting to

understand ancient images by contemporary attitudes. We often slip into the error of wanting to understand things without really involving ourselves in them.

No door can be opened with merely collecting an odd assortment of keys. The proper key must be selected, and involved in the lock. The attitude for understanding needs to be relevant, legitimate and receptive. The pretensions and prejudices of the modern mind can easily lead one astray. Unless sincerity and humility are allowed to inspire the urge to understand, the understanding is bound to be defective and superficial.

The Indian temple has its own symbolism, at once profound, mysterious and relevant for all time.



The 'manifestation' of this symbol-complex is in terms of elaborate and intricate spatial projections, material masses of constructions, passionate patterns of forms, and schematic representations of technical skill.

Such manifestations, possessing an objective character, are sought to be described and classified according to prevalent styles in well-defined periods of time and within certain territorial confines.



Temple as Ratha



But the 'content' of the temple is an abstract understanding hidden within (or revealed through) these 'objective' appearances, and quite unattached to styles or periods. It has an inner dimension which is real for the earnest devotee but elusive for a casual visitor to the temple. The latter is interested in what is out

there, while the former is concerned with what 'may be' in relation to himself. This veiling of the content for a lay person (that is to say, one devoid of faith) is one of the functions of art, for art does not reveal so much as conceal.

The content cannot be concrete.

But it is real, provided the perspective



The Kalleswara temple at Kukanur



is proper. One of the errors the casual man is prone to is the thought that whatever is not manifest either does not exist or is not relevant. He does not suspect that the things that do not appear before the senses may appear to the mind, that what is not apprehended by the intellect may be understood by intuition. Manifestation is in reality an incarnation of the content, which is available only to intuition.

It is natural that the aspect of manifestation comes to be formalized. The temple is a public institution; its appeal is collective. The priest performs the worship-ritual, not for his own sake but for the sake of all (parārtha); unlike in the worship at home. For the devotee, worship in the temple cannot be a substitute for worship at

home. In fact, worship at home is obligatory, while the visit to a temple is optional. There is an interesting account of the origin of temples in the celebrated text.

Vishṇudharmottara: Time is divided in ancient Indian thought into four immense periods, Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali. Kali is the dark age we now live in, and temples appeared only during this period. In the first of these divisions, there was no need for temples because gods lived and moved amongst humans. In the next division, the presence of gods became scarce and they descended on earth only when men invoked them in sacrifices; but then they came as gods.

In the third great division of time, men had only to make images of these gods and worship them; and



the gods came down among human beings in disguised forms, showering their grace on the devotees. The worship at that time was only domestic; the shrines were within the precincts of homes.

During the last phase of time, temples (as public shrines) began to be built, and icons were installed in them. But the gods stopped coming down in their own or disguised forms. However, their presence was



Goddess Durga worshipped during Navaratri by Vijayanagara Kings.



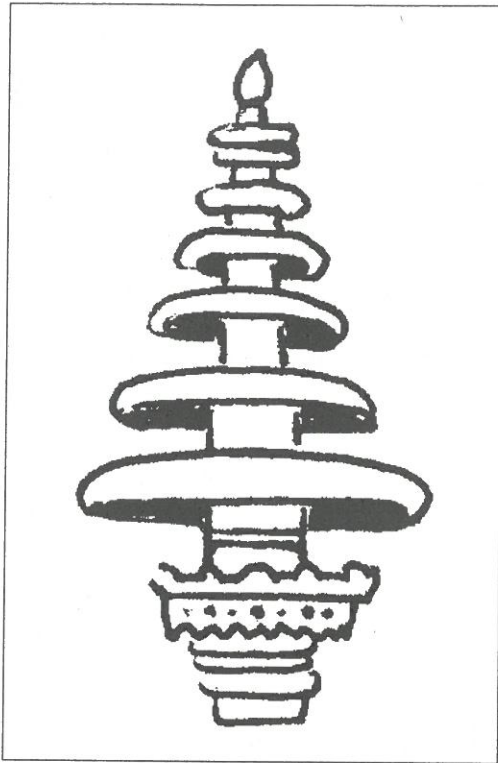
felt when the icons were properly installed, and temples correctly built. The priests, who were professional performers of worship, were the only ones who were competent to facilitate this presence; others could only be participants and beneficiaries.

In the early phases of this period, the sages merely installed the icons, and the divine presence introduced into them and was with them ever after. But in the later and decadent phases, the presence could be secured only by continuous worship and periodical festivals.

This is an interesting account, where historical facts are combined with symbolic interpretations. Temples were later than domestic shrines. In the remains of the Indus Valley civilizations, we find evidences

of domestic shrines; but there is no trace of a public temple. And domestic shrines were later than the magical procedures (sacrifices and rituals), which came into vogue only at a stage when man felt separated from the supranormal forces. Magical rites, domestic shrines and temple-complexes may, in a sense, be considered as distinct phases of religious evolution; but it would be an error to look upon that evolution as a succession of disappearing and appearing phases. Magical rites, domestic shrines and temple-complexes co-exist in Indian religious life, and they have always done so. This co-existence has been possible because all three are essentially symbols; and as symbols they do not deny history, but transcend it.





Chhatrāvali

Thus it becomes important to recognize that Indian temples have sprung from a traditional symbol that is at once ancient and enduring. The temple would remain an enigma for one who fails to appreciate the content as well as the manifestation of this symbol. For one who stops at the manifestations of this symbol the

temple would present itself as 'luminous obscurity' (the expression of Frithjof Schuon, in another context); and one who would be content with considering only the content would see it as 'obscured light'. The symbol is revealed not only but its material manifestation but also by a vision of its content. The vision in this case is both aesthetic and spiritual.

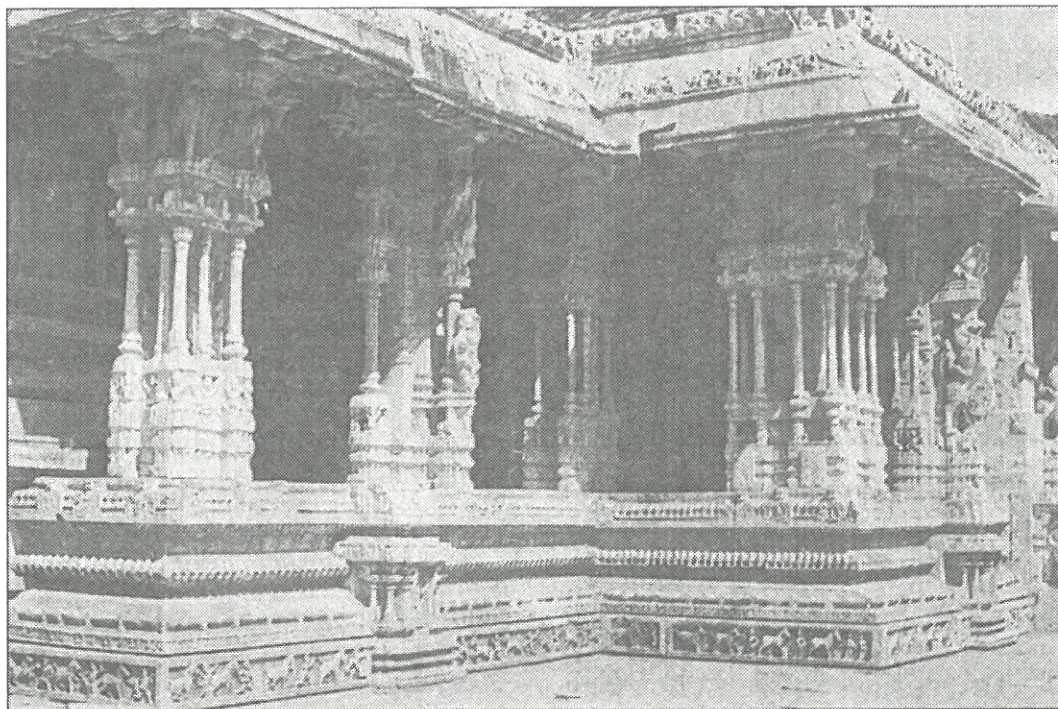
In order to enable our understanding, the aesthetic as well as the spiritual aspects of the temple-symbol, the Indian tradition has crystallized a doctrinal approach which comprehends the idea, the method, and the purpose behind the temple-building activity. The approach is referred to as 'Āgama', which indeed is a generic expression



meaning “that which has come from a hoary past”: it is the ever-active presence of a useful framework for our thoughts and actions, for our growth and fulfilment. ‘Āgama’ with reference to temple, as has been elaborately dealt with in an earlier part of this volume, deals with the temple-building activities as well as the procedures of worship in temples.

The former appears to emphasize aesthetics, while the latter the spiritual aspect. But the distinction between them is arbitrary and unreal, for Beauty and Serenity cannot in fact be separated.

There are doctrinal formulations in Āgama regarding the selection of proper land for the temple, the



purificatory ceremonies prior to the construction, the plan 'lay-out', direction, size, relative proportions of the plinth and other structural parts, permissible decorations and embellishments, installation of icons and deities in the sanctum as well as in the niches and pavilions, rituals of daily worship and periodical festivals, purifications and sacramental activities, and so on. These formulations take manifestation and content of the symbol as two complementary elements.

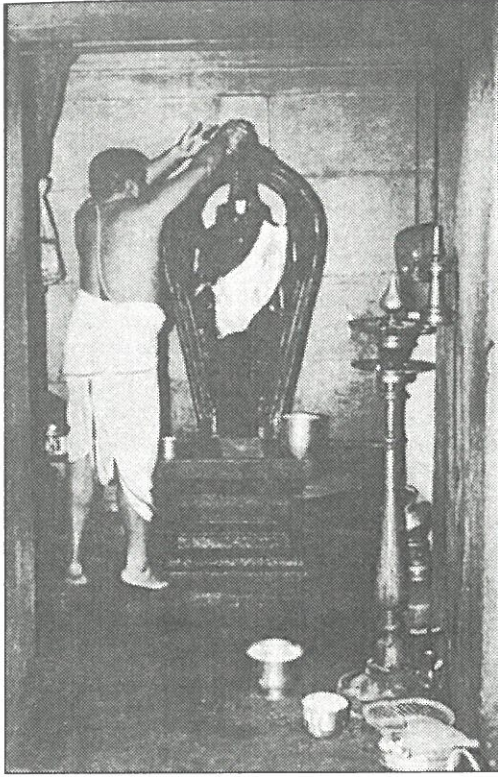
The temple as an incarnation of the symbol is the medium of rituals. Ritual is active thought. Rituals are actions that lead to contemplation, and contemplation strives to achieve the serenity of consciousness that lifts one from the stress of common life. The Āgama focusses attention

on the temple as a pattern of rituals. It provides us with a perspective to understand the symbol and act effectively with regard to it. It seeks to construct for us a half-way house between the limitations that we have and the perfection we aim at.

Limitations are inherent in human life; we live amidst what pass for the commonplace and the ugly. Perfection is a divine quality; it is also beautiful. The purpose of rituals is to facilitate the passage from the commonplace to the unique, from ugliness to beauty, from what is human to what may be divine.

The Āgama had an earlier oral tradition, communicated through generations of craftsmen and priests. It became in due course written tradition, consisting of hundreds of texts and manuals meant for





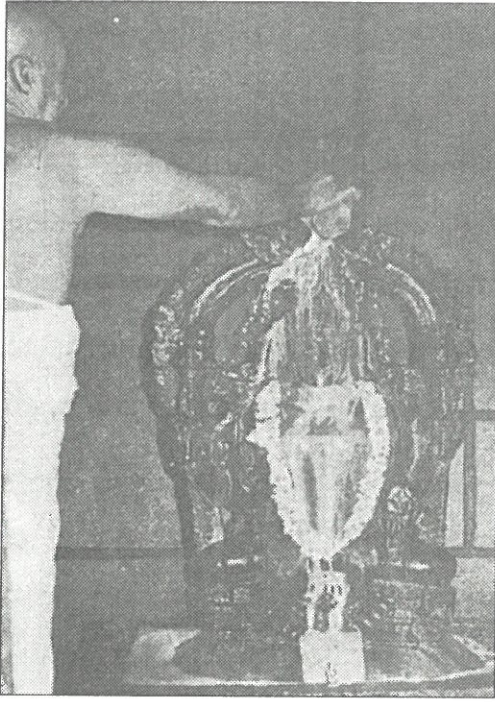
craftsmen and priests. The oral tradition has now almost disappeared, for craftsmen as well as priests have fallen on decadent days. The texts and manuals have, for the same reason, gone into oblivion, neglected by those for whom they were meant and ignored by others in the community.

Fortunately, however, many of these literary works are available, mostly in manuscripts and some of them in print. The literary tradition to repeat what has already been mentioned, comprises of works that are usually classified into three classes: revelations (divya), composition of sages (muni-prokta) and writings of ordinary men (paurusha). The revealed texts claim a hoary antiquity and have been relied upon by the other two classes of works.

The compositions of sages are original works, based on inspiration, intuition and contemplation. They now exist only in citations and fragments.

The third group of works is largely in the nature of compilations





of relevant passages from the compositions of sages. They employ intelligence and reason, and are also liable to err. They are chronologically recent, and some of them are what the priests and craftsmen have mostly relied upon for several generations now.

The fundamental assumption in this mixed tradition is that Divinity

has two aspects; the hidden and pervasive aspect (nishkala), and the manifest and specific aspect (sakala). The former is abstract and is likened to oil in the seasasum seeds, fire in fuel, butter in milk, and scent in flower. It is all-pervasive and is settled in the human heart as the 'inner-guide' (antaryāmin). It has no form, and is not apprehended by sense-organs or by the ordinary mind.

The latter, however, is concrete, like fire that has come out of the fuel, or oil that has been pressed out of the seeds, or butter that floats on the surface when milk is churned. It has numerous forms, but man can realize Divinity through these forms: but an act of worship is necessary. The tradition enumerates and describes not only the forms the



Divinity may assume to facilitate man's approach, but prescribes rituals that are involved in such an approach.

We find in these texts descriptions of icons as visible symbols of Divinity and details of worship with regard to them (archā). This in fact is the burden of most of these books. Incidentally, they also discuss associated problems of

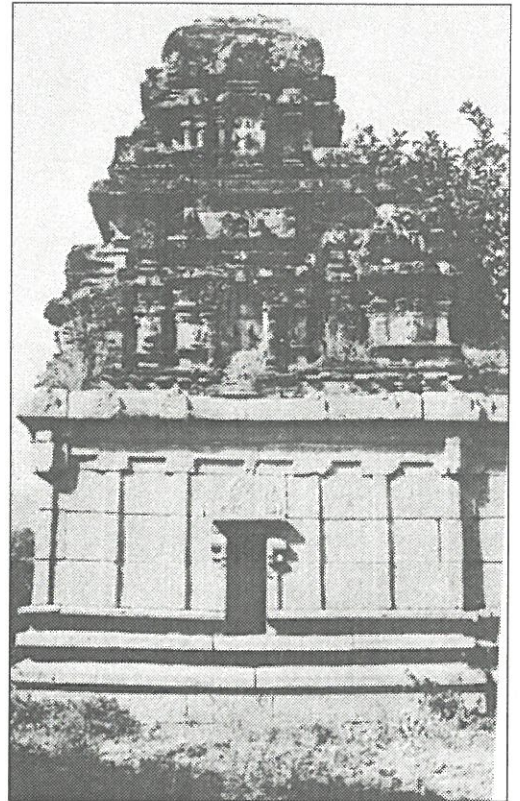
practical import such as the methods and materials employed in the fashioning of icons, installation of these icons and consecration of temples. Sometimes they expatiate on alternate or accessory approaches such as fire-rituals (homa), meditational exercises (dhyāna or youga), recitations (japa), and intellectual appreciation of spiritual involvement (jñāna).



When iconic forms and worship rituals became the principal contents of these texts (especially those texts of accreditedly human origin), there was naturally an introduction of sectarian differences. The three main sects flourishing in India for two thousand years now, Śaiva, Śākta and Vaishṇava, developed their own distinctive lineages, their own metaphysical positions, their own deities, and their own rituals of worship. But the essential framework remains common for all of them.

And there is a tradition of each sect borrowing freely from the texts belonging to other sects whenever necessary. For instance, some of the manuals of the Pāñcharātra sect of Vaishṇava persuasion are chronologically early and numerically

large. We find that the sectarians of the Vaikhānasa division of the Vaishṇava as well as the Śaiva rely on many prescriptions and explanations found in Pāñcharātra books. Prejudices and differences become wholly irrelevant in the higher reaches of approach to the Divine.

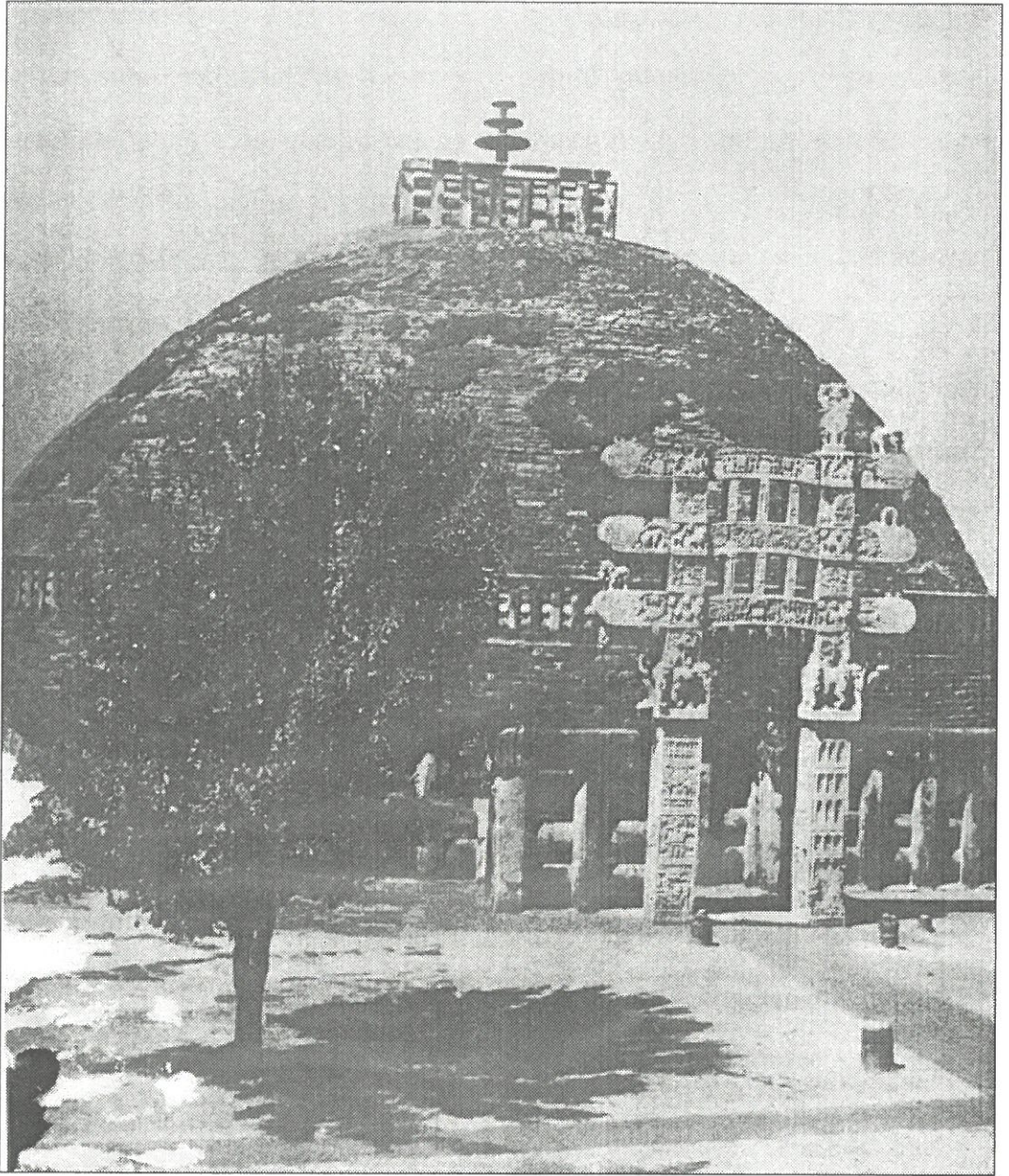


The caves were naturally the earliest shrines. And caves were also places where the primitive burial relics or the funerary urns were preserved. The memory of the cave-shrines lingered on in the Upanishadic 'heart-cave'. Where natural caves were not readily available, people constructed cave-like shrines. But these would obviously have been filmsy, being little more than thatched huts or bamboo-and-mud houses. Among the tribes in which this practice still survives, as among the Toḍas, the resemblance of these shrines to natural caves is striking. We have no clues regarding their nature or appearance, for the ravages of time have wiped them out. But the tiled, sloping and conical roofs of the temples in the West Coast may be regarded as survivals.

The stūpas are the earliest shrines on record as well as in actual evidence. The expression stūpa means a heap of grain or a mound of earth. As a heap of grain it was precious: and as a mound of earth it was a monument. The word is found in *Yajurveda* in the sense of a precious monument (Viśṇoh stūpah). We have reference to agnidriya, which was the Vedic stūpa.

The building of stūpas must, therefore, have been a very ancient practice. But it loomed into enormous importance during the days of Aśoka. The large number of stūpas that emperor Aśoka is said to have built have all disappeared. But the architectural form of the stūpa that was finalized during his days survived in many later stūpas, like those at





SĀNCHI-STŪPA



Bārhut, Bodhgayā, Sārnāth and Sāñchi, which were all structures built during the first and the third

centuries B.C., although they have been repaired and enlarged periodically.

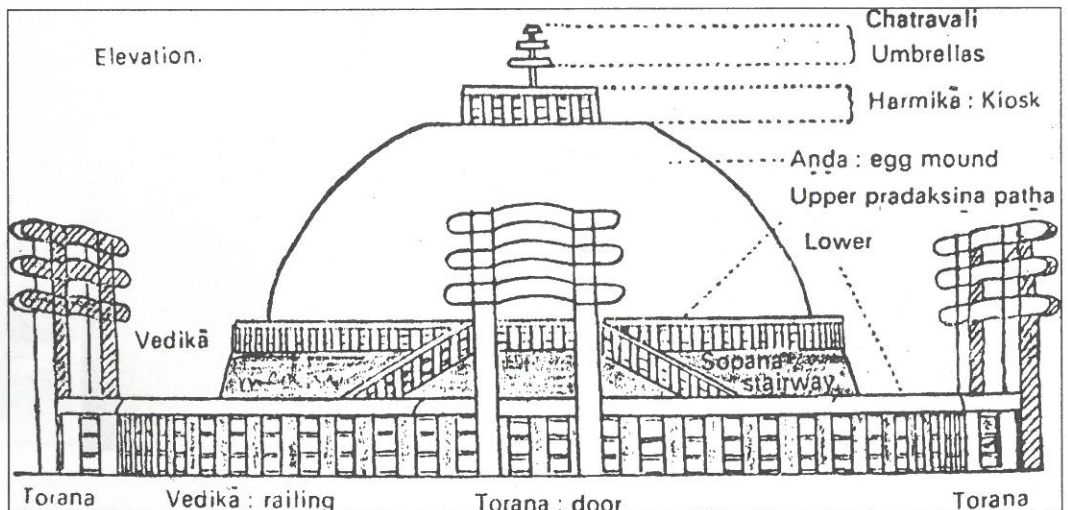


SĀRANĀTH STŪPA

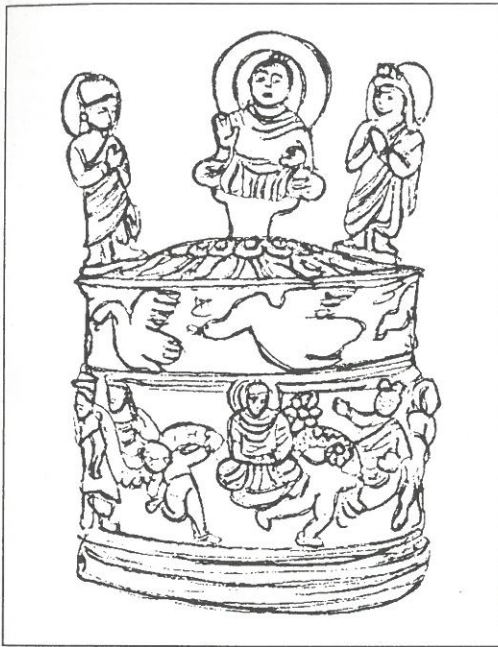


This Buddhist adaptation was a massive hemispherical structure, filled with earth, pebbles and stone, mantled by bricks, and covered by stone slabs. It was erected on a broad circular platform (medhi), providing a passage for ceremonial circumambulation, and fenced by a running railing (vedikā). On top of this plain tumulus was a quadrangular terrace (harmikā), over which was placed a parasol (chhatra) signifying spiritual sovereignty.

The area of the stūpa was enclosed by gateways (toraṇa) on the four sides; this enclosure derives from a tāntrik background. The real significance of the stūpa lies in the *mana*-articles that it contains. The technical expression for the stūpa is dhātu-garbha (the original for the Sinhalese 'dāgoba'), which means 'the womb of the relic'. The relic may be the physical remains of a great man of spiritual strength, such as his bones, tufts of hair, or nail



pairings (śārīrika), or articles that he had used such as his robes, begging bowl, or a piece of his staff (pāribhogika), or symbols of high attainment like the wheel, the triple-gem or a miniature stūpa itself (uddeśika).



Kanishka's relic box

The introduction of such relics into the body of the stūpa is

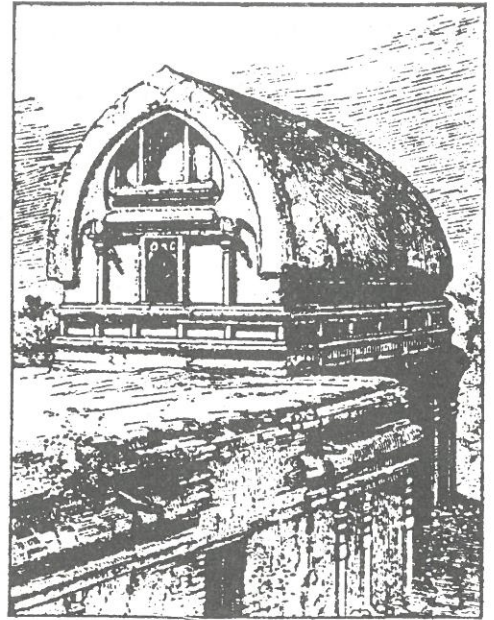
accompanied by magical rituals. The square enclosure facing the four quarters is meant to contain and intensify the power of this relic; it guards the relic from the intrusion of distracting and inimical forces. The maṇḍala form of a circle contained within a square with openings on four sides is concretized in the stūpa.

The relic is thus the essence of the stūpa. The stūpa is also called the 'egg' (aṇḍa) as it contained the 'relic-seed' within. The funeral tumulus is in a very real sense a magical monument. The wealth of sculptural representations involved in the gateways and pilasters are to be regarded as essentially mystical in character and purpose. While there are narrative sculptures in the toraṇas depicting the main events in the Buddha's life, most of the carvings

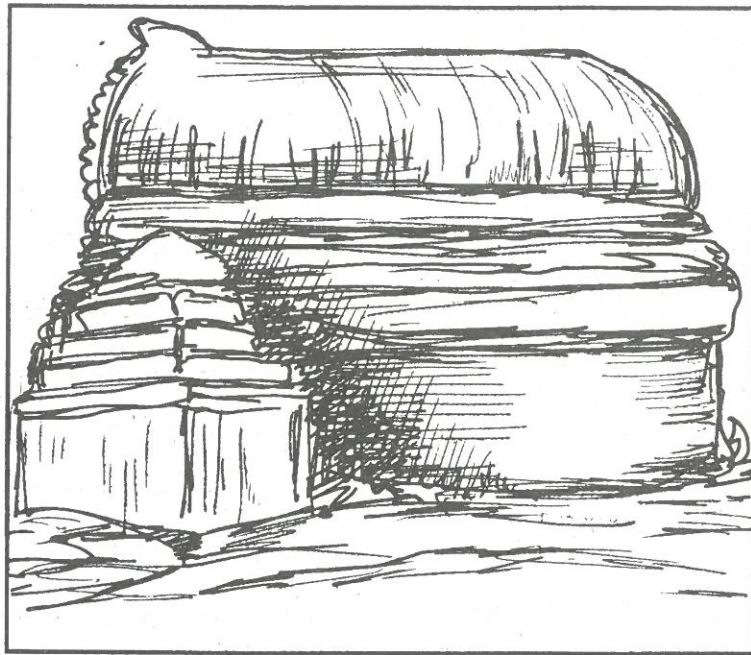


have a magical purpose. Sometimes, folk sprites and goblins (yakshas and yakshiṇis) are also represented, for the same purpose.

There is a measure of truth in the saying that a Hindu temple is a successor to the Buddhist stūpa. But it is not readily recognised that the Buddhist stūpa itself is a successor



TER CHAITYA



Chejerla Temple

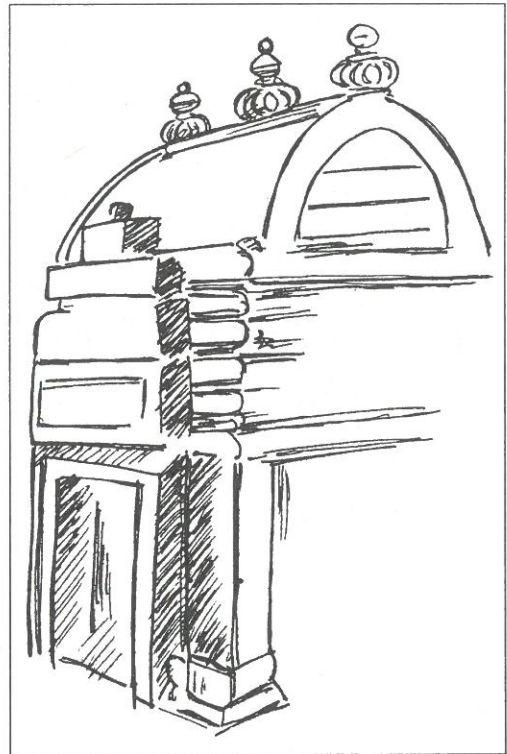


to the Vedic stūpa, which can be traced back to the cave-shrines. The Buddhist stūpa is as magical in its intent as the Vedic stūpa was, and it involved rituals even as the latter did, although of a different kind.

Another innovation that was chronologically parallel to the Buddhist stūpas was the excavated caves like those of Junnār (one hundred and fifty caves, near Poona, about 100 A.D.), Krishṇagiri or Kanheri (eight caves, near Bombay, about 150-189 A.D.), Ajaṇṭā (about twenty seven caves, the first few centuries after Christ) and Ellorā (about thirty three caves, about 550-750 A.D.).

These caves were excavated from hard, living rocks on the faces of

hills. They were elaborately carved and richly ornamented by pillars, arches and pierced windows. These excavated caves, however, were more in the nature of retreats and settlements for monks and hermits than shrines in the strict sense of the term. They were far removed from



Mukhalingam Temple



the austere and simple cave-shrines, both in design and purpose.

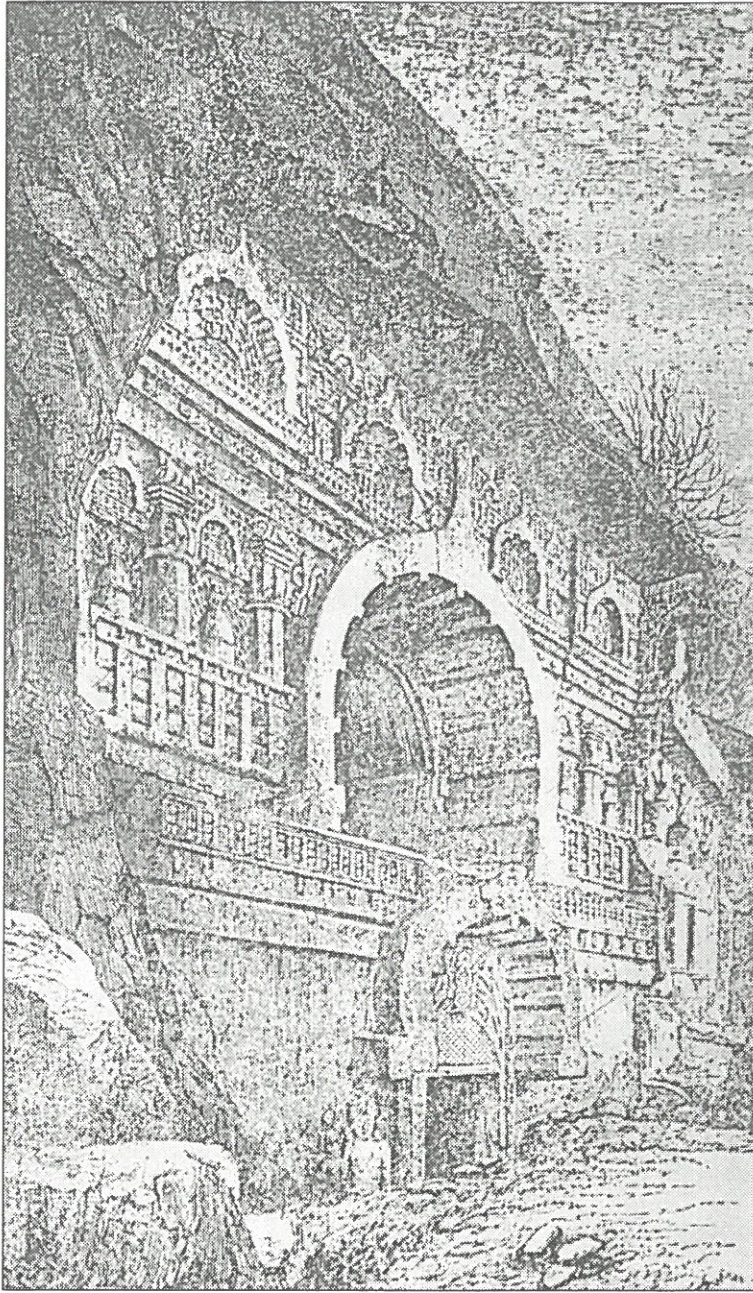
Even though they had a shrine area containing either a stūpa image or a Buddha icon, the major portion of the excavated cave was utilized

for the assembly hall, habitation cells, porch, and the verandah. These caves were meant to be ornate and architectural monuments. There was more of the art in them than of the shrine. Here is an instance of the image dominating the icon.



Facade of the Lomas-Rishi cave, Barabar Hills.





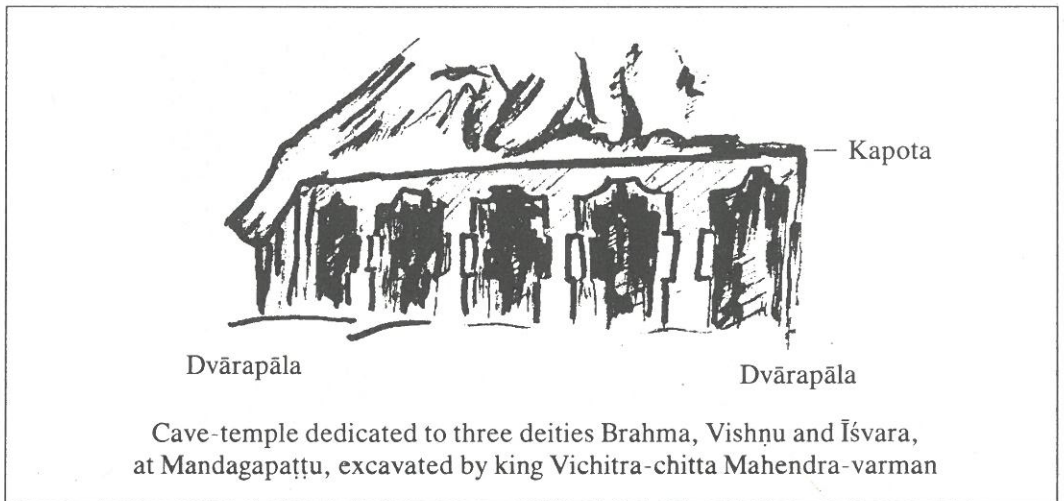
Pāṇḍu-leṇa chaitya, Nasik, facade.

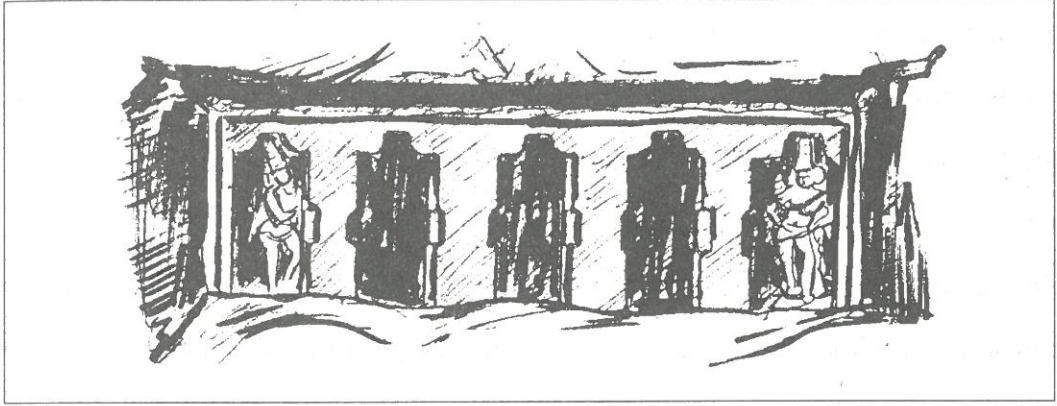
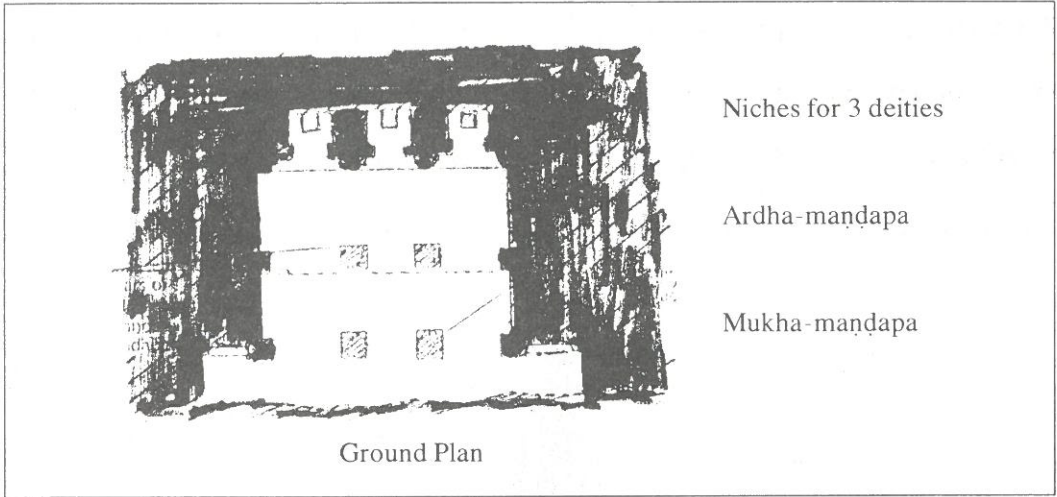


The significance of these cave-sanctuaries is that the simple shrine was fast becoming a public institution, where people gathered not only to offer worship but to meet monks and listen to their discourses. The sacred calling of the residents of these cave-monasteries had now secular involvements. Sects developed, affiliations began, and the shrine element was minimized.

It is not to be imagined that the cave-shrines were the only kind of

shrines that prevailed during those days. There must have been numerous shrines constructed of perishable material like wood, clay and bricks. For, an inscription of the Pallava King Mahendra-varman I (600-630 A.D.) refers to them and suggests that this king was the innovator of the rock-cut shrines. This inscription, found at Mandagapattu in South Arcot, claims that this king, who was celebrated as 'Vichitra-chitta' ('one whose mind was variegated and ingenious'), got





constructed a shrine for Brahmā,
Śiva and Viṣṇu without the
employment of bricks, timber, metals
or mortar:

एतदनिष्टकमद्रुमलो-

हमसुधं विचित्रचित्तेन।

निर्मापितनृपेण ब्रम्हे।

श्वरविष्णुलक्षितायतनम्॥

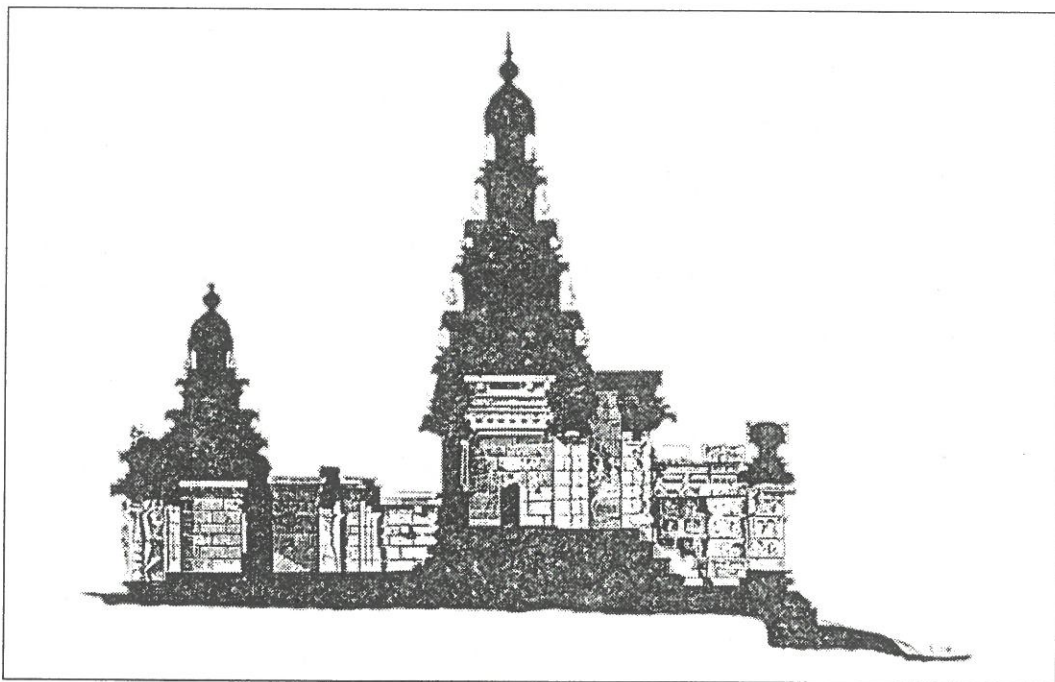
We are not sure if he was the
first person to conceive the idea of
stone temples, for the stone-temples
of Banavāsi and Tālaguṇḍa in



Karnataka were several centuries earlier. But true to his title, this king Mahendra-varman was versatile. He was not only a patron of the great Sanskrit poet Bhāravi, but was himself an author. His Sanskrit farce *Mattavilāsa-prahasana* has come down to us. He appears to have come under the influence of the celebrated Śaiva saint Appar, and

built many shrines to Śiva. In fact, he bore another title Cheṭṭakāri ('builder of temples').

Numerous temples in and around Kāñchipuram, Pallāvaram, Vallam, Māmaṇḍūr and Tirukkalukkuṇram have been ascribed to him. The original structure of the famous Ekāmrānātha temple in Kāñchipuram



SHORE-TEMPLE, MĀMALLAPURAM

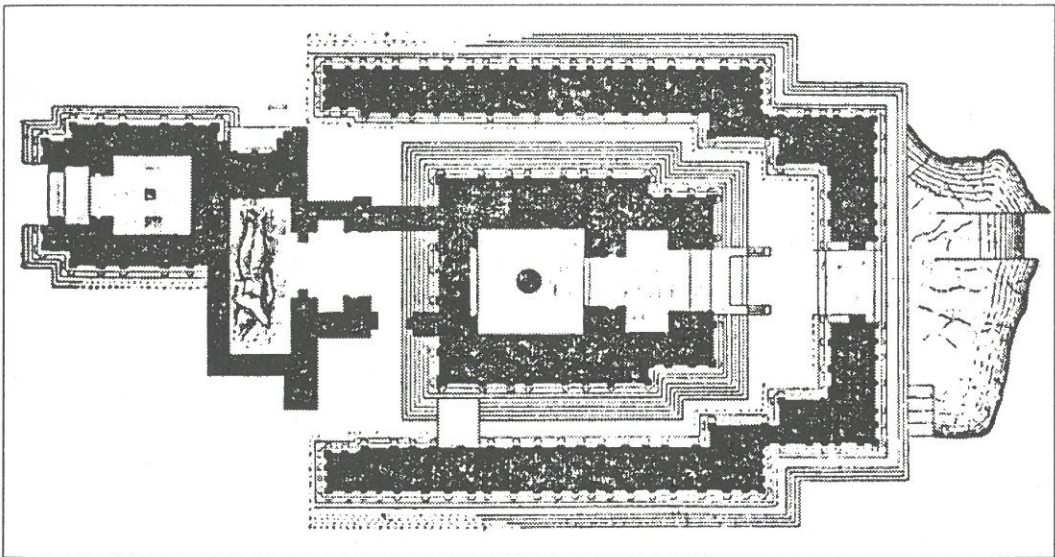


appears to have been commissioned by him.

But it was his successor, Narasimha-varman I (630-668 A.D.) who built the world-famous monolithic shrines on the sea-shore in Māmallapuram, near Madras. He bore the title 'Māmalla' ('the great-fighter'), after which the township was named. Each of these shrines

has been cut out of a granite boulder and shaped into a free-standing temple. This answers to the description of the 'Ratha' style of temples in the classical texts.

Ratha ordinarily means a vehicle, but its etymological import is to 'play and enjoy' (ramu krīḍāyām). In classical texts, four kinds of 'rathas' are distinguished; 'metrical'



SHORE-TEMPLE-PLAN



(chhando-maya), where a hymn becomes a vehicle of expression: 'divine' (deva-maya), where a structure becomes a habitation of gods, a pleasure-resort for them; 'corporeal' (deha-maya), where the body of ours becomes a means for the conveyance of karma - dispositions through several lives; and 'transport' (vāha-maya),

signifying the chariots used by kings and warriors in the battle-field.

R̥gveda used the word ratha in all these four senses. The old Indian texts of architecture take the expression to mean any solid construction for the habitation of gods, fashioned by the celestial mason Tvashṭr; they rely on the



Kailasanātha temple, Kanchipuram

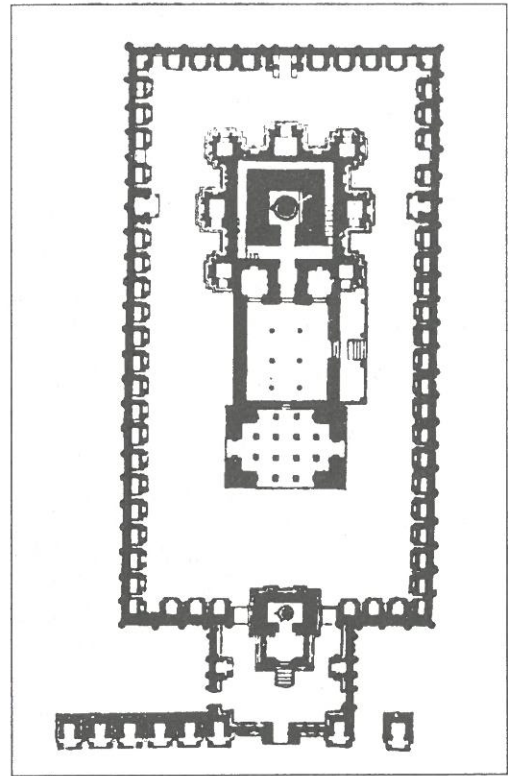


Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa statement “Adamantine is ratha” (‘vajro vai rathah’).

The ancient caste nomenclature ‘rathakāra’ signifies not the “makers of chariots” but “the builders of temples”; it was a ‘mixed caste’ inasmuch as the work they did involved a variety of skills and a co-ordination of different professions. The five monolithic shrines in Māmallapuram were called ‘rathas’ in the sense of ‘divine habitations’ sculpted by men.

These shrines have been popularly, but fancifully, named after the Pāṇḍava heroes and their consort Draupadī. The most interesting shrine in this group is the one named after Draupadī. It is actually a shrine

dedicated to the Mother Goddess. It is architecturally simple and artistically elegant. It is a one-celled shrine containing the icon of standing Durgā carved in relief. The cell on raised a platform is approached by a flight of three steps. The opening is flanked by stylized ‘door-

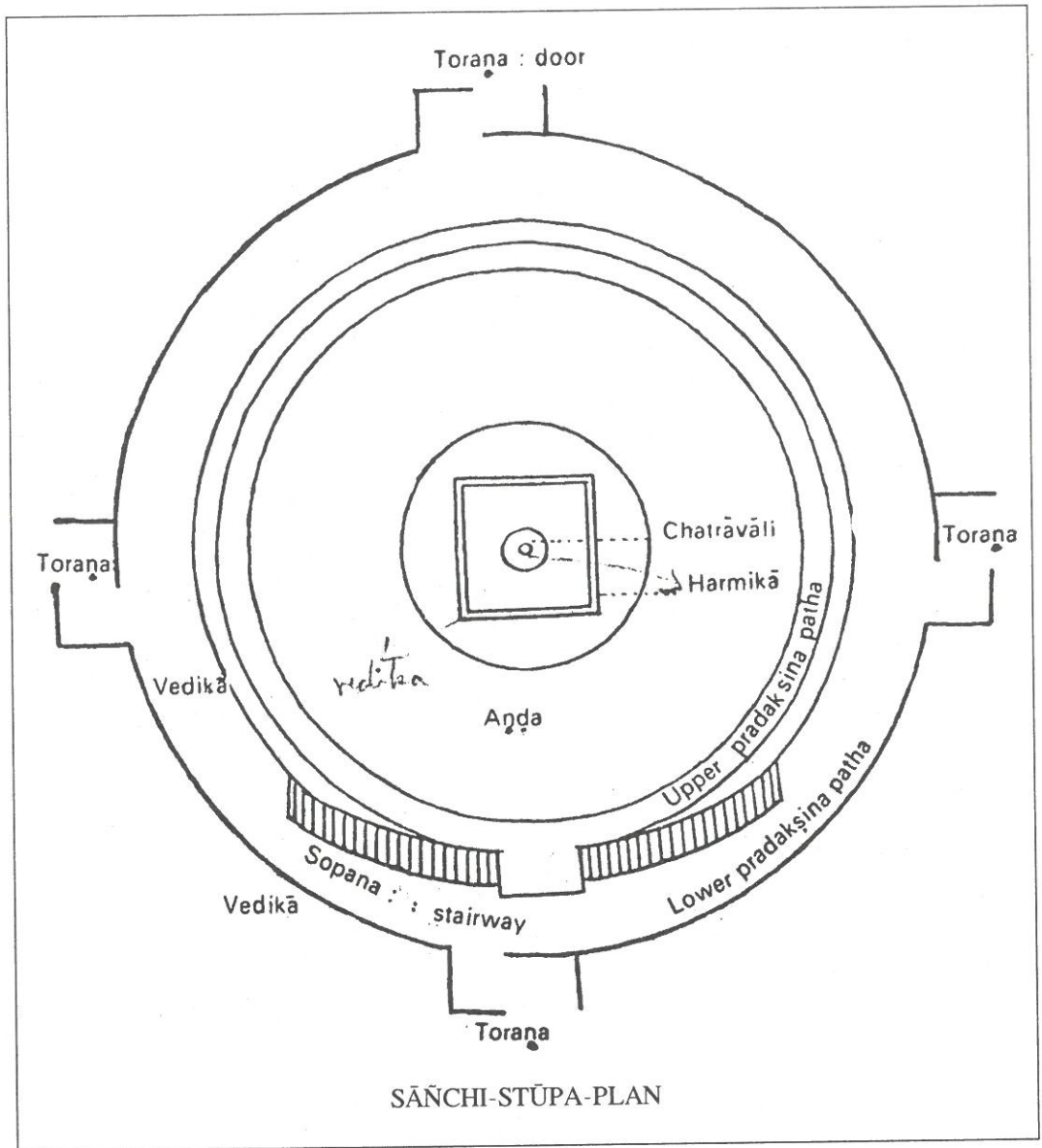


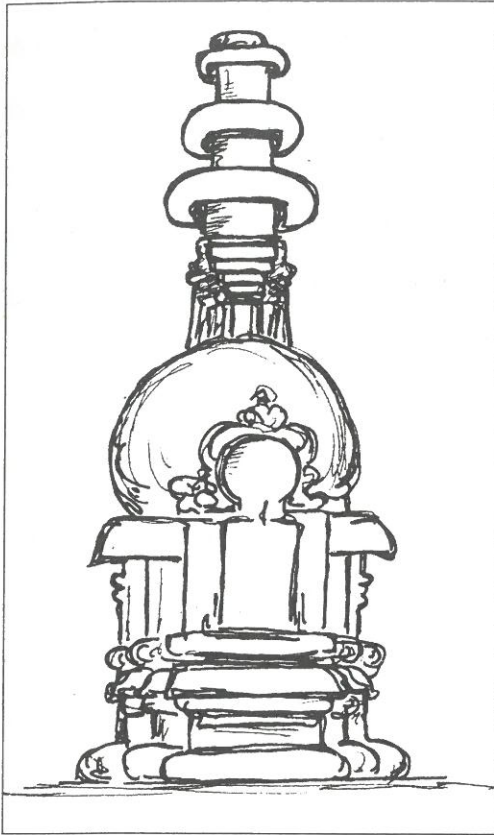
Plan of Kailasanātha Temple



guardians'; the other sides have niches containing replicas of the icon within the cell.

This represents a major shift in the conception of a shrine. It is not any relic that is contained within the

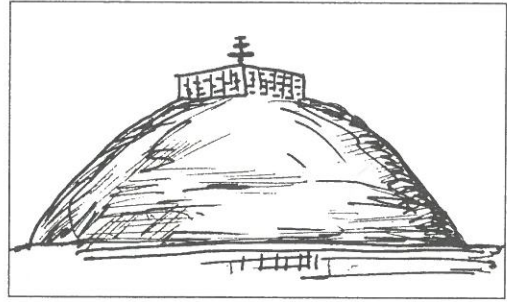




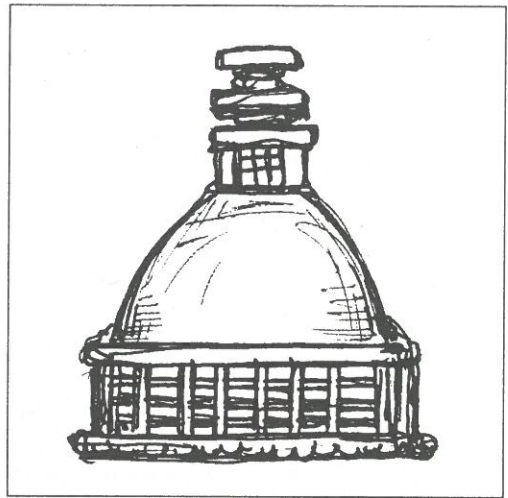
STŪPA

cells, as it was in the stūpa, but an icon carved by a sculptor. And the icon-containing chamber was not closed but was open to the worshipper.

The square plan and the pyramidal roof (although four-



STŪPA-SĀNCHI



Early bronze model of Stūpa

cornered) are in a way continuations of the stūpa theme; but the suggestion of a hut is unmistakable. The four toraṇas of the stūpa occur here as four doors, three of which are blind, and the one facing the icon within



the cella being open. The blind doors have also the representations of the same divinity as the sanctum contains. Thus the divinity is made to face all the four quarters.



DRAUPADĪ-RATHA

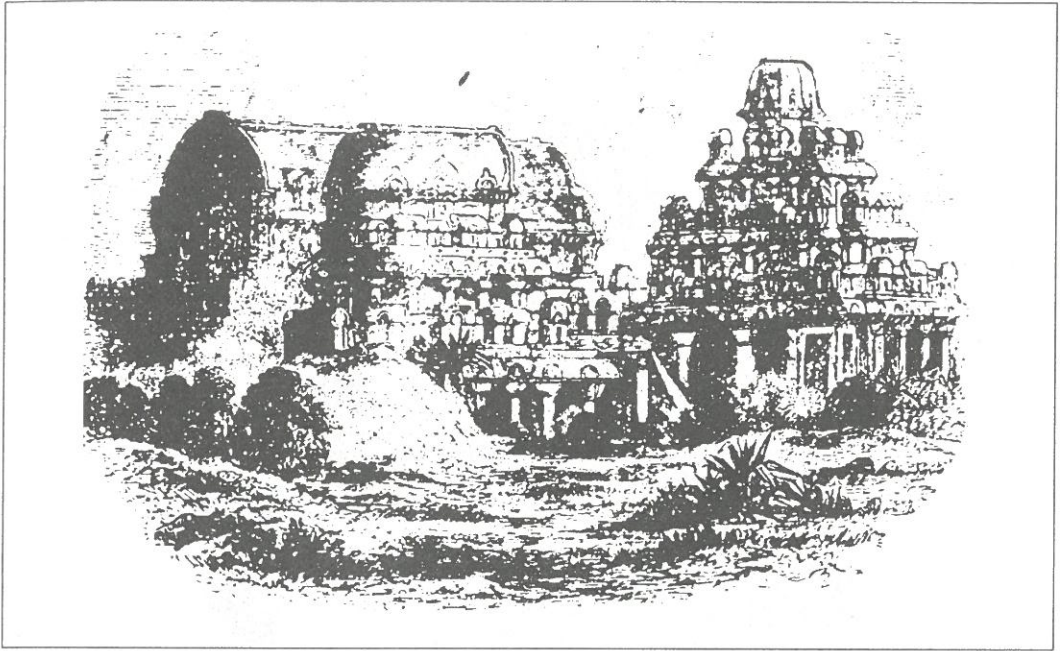
The intent of the four gateways to the stūpa is not lost here. Further, the sanctum which is an innovation is a small one, admitting but one

worshipper at a time. The shrine was no doubt public, but the idea did not accommodate the community assembly as yet. This may be seen as the beginning of a monumental temple.

In the canonical description, it is the sanctum alone that constitutes the real temple. Here is therefore the basic shrine. The shrine named after Dharmarāja, which is located at the other end of the series, is actually dedicated to Śiva; it has a liṅga installed in the sanctum. But the cella is surmounted by a pyramidal and turrated vimāna which provided the model for all vimānas in the temple of the Dravidian style. The portico is open and pillared.

If these shrines are rather sparse in sculptural details and mythological





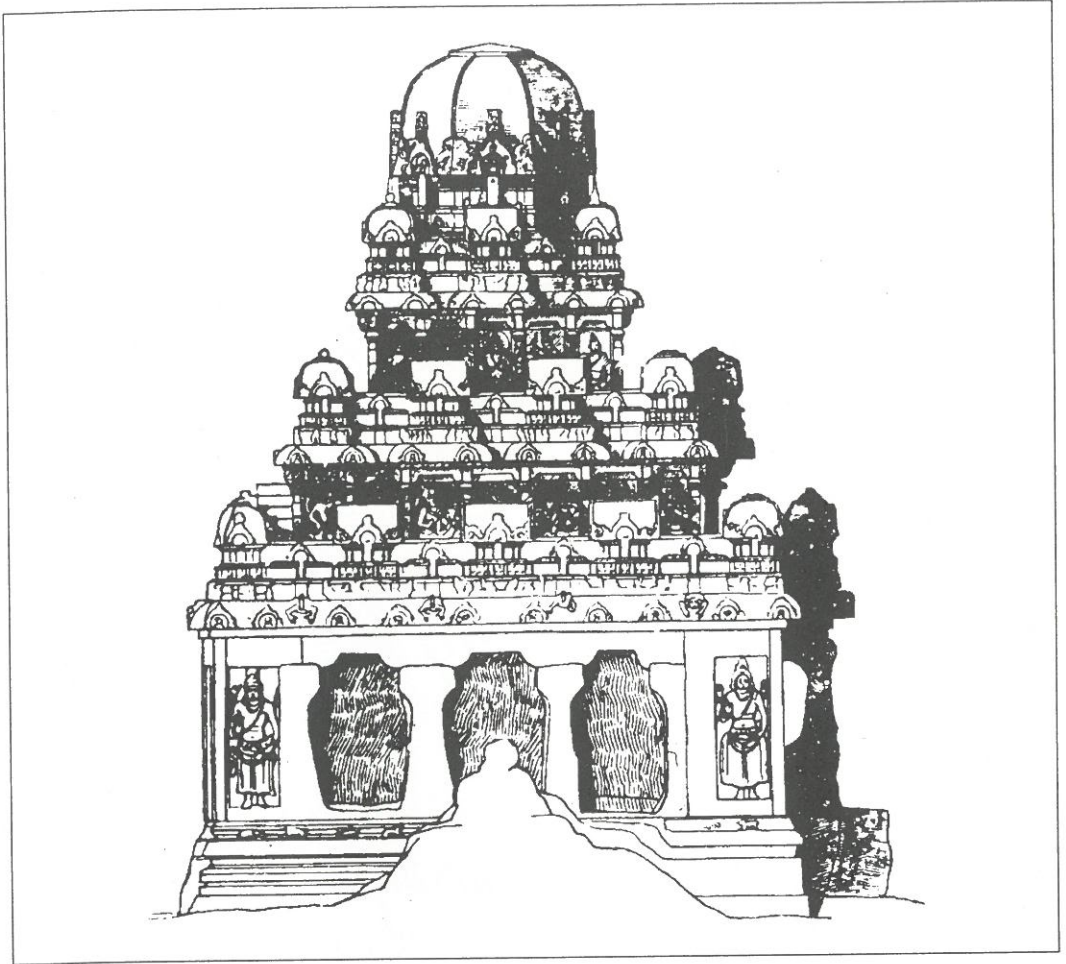
Rathas Māmmallapuram

representations, there are about ten excavated rock-cut halls nearby which are in the nature of pillared assembly halls (maṇḍapas) where excellent sculptural panels are carved in rock-reliefs; the themes are mythological such as Varāha rescuing the earth, Durgā slaying the Buffalo-demon, and Kṛiṣṇa lifting the Govardhana hill. The patron king is

also portrayed with his two consorts. Sculptures include secular themes and animal portraiture. These maṇḍapas are not in the nature of shrines; art is of predominant interest here, and they may be regarded as sculpture galleries.

Ascribable almost to the same period are the two excavated cave-



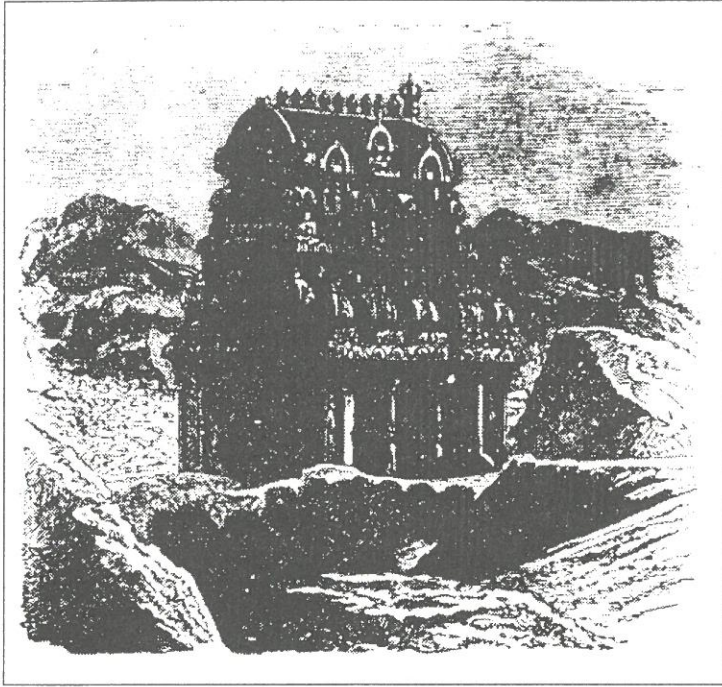


DHARMARĀJA-RATHA

temples at Nāmakkal in Salem district in Tamil Nāḍu bearing some resemblance to the maṇḍapas in Māmallapuram in the matter of sculptured panels. These, however, are cave-shrines and are dedicated

to Viṣṇu. One of the caves is tyled in the inscription there as 'Atiyanātha-viṣṇu-gr̥ha' ('House of Viṣṇu dedicated by the Atiya King'). The king of Atiya (or Aḍiyanman) dynasty mentioned here was





GANESH-RATHA

Guṇaśīla, who ruled from Tagaḍūr (present-day Dharmapuri) in Tamiḻ Nāḍu, around 750 A.D. Three of the ten avatāras of Viṣṇu (Vāmana, Narasiṃha and Varāha) provide themes for some very fine sculptures; and the narrative style has been employed. The representations are vigorous, if also somewhat stylized.

An interesting group of four cave-temples are to be found at Bādāmi, a charming valley in the Karnaṭaka region. The caves were excavated during the regins of the Chāḷukya kinds, Kīrtivarman I and Maṅgaḷīśa, in the sixth century. These kings were in cultural contact with the North as well as the South, and we find in these cave-temples and also



in the structural shrines due to them in the region, a fusion of several stylistic details and the emergence of fresh styles. Of the four cave-temples, one is Jaina.

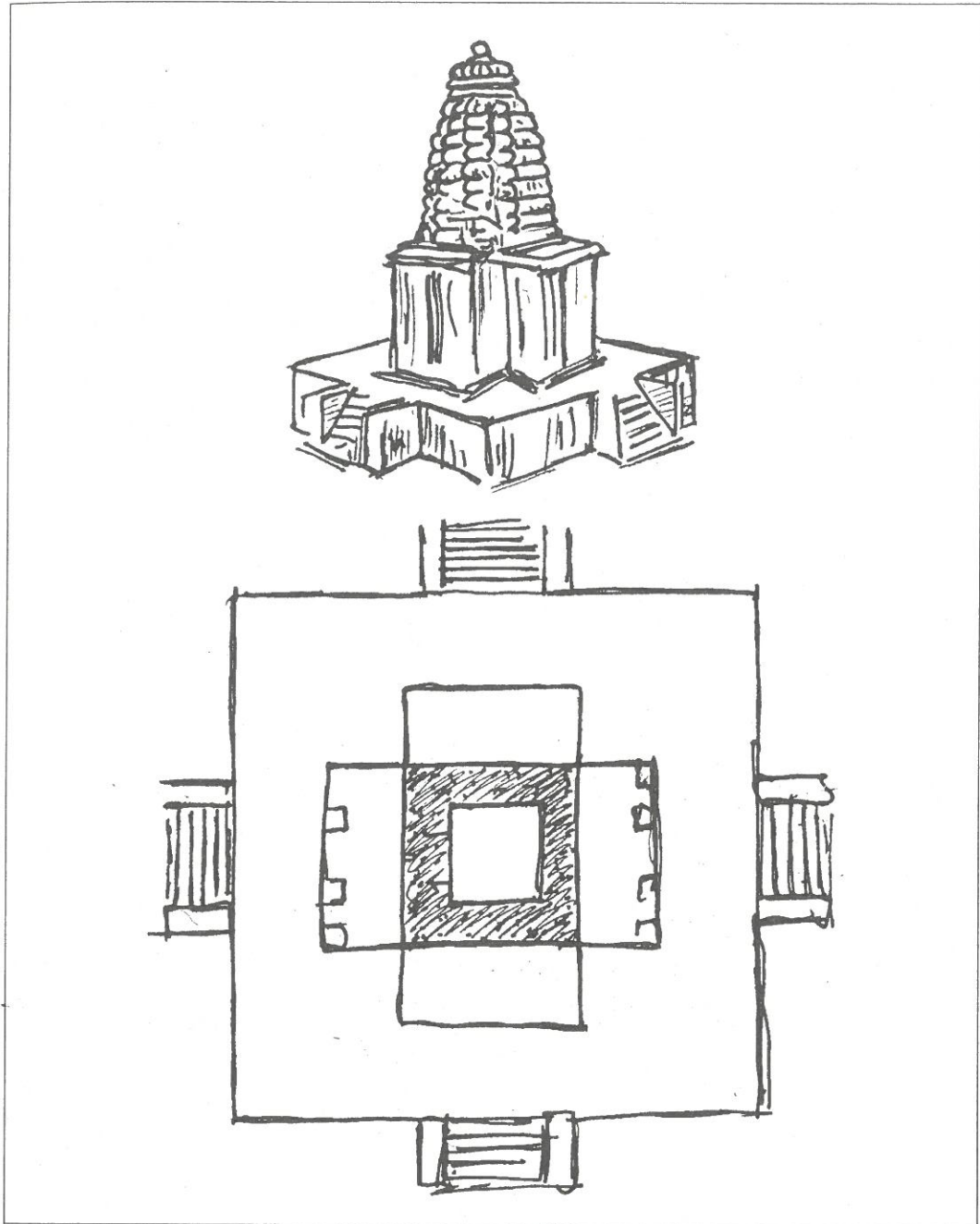
The largest among them, known as cave No.III, is also the earliest (about 578 A.D.), and was carved at the instance of Kīrtivarman I (566-597). It is dedicated to Viṣṇu, and we have here a majestic and splendid sculpture in relief of Trivikrama, and another imposing relief statue of Viṣṇu seated on the hooded serpent facing the corridor. Caves I and II, dedicated to Śiva, bear an obvious impact of the last cave in the Ajaṇṭā group. These cave-temples illustrate the combination of sanctuary and shrine.

The structural stone-temples in the Karṇāṭaka region are of great

antiquity. Some of such temples in Aihole (in Bijāpur district) like the Kontagudi and Lāḍ-Khān temple (before 500 A.D.), are earlier than the cave-temples. The impressive 'Durgā' temple on a raised platform 2.44 meters high in this small temple-town (containing no less than 70 temples) was begun around 450 A.D., although it was completed almost a century later. These temples appear to have been clever adaptations of the Buddhist chaitya details, but they have incorporated the Gupta element of śikhara.

The Guptas (330-530 A.D.) were great temple-builders: and the earliest of the extant and independent structural temples in the North date back to their times. The śikhara as a monumental spire on top of the sanctum evolved in the fifth century,





Dasāvatāra temple, Deogarh (Jhānsi Dist) 5th cent



probably under the patronage of the Gupta kings. As a massive dome surmounted by an ornamental pinnacle (stūpi), it became the characteristic feature of the Indian temple, permitting some stylistic and regional variations. The relation of the expression stūpi for the pinnacle of the formalized and pyramidal Spire with Stūpa as the monumental tumulus is not accidental; nor is it merely a linguistic coincidence. The involvement of the stūpa idea is fundamental to the śikhara notion.

Besides the early temples at Banavāsi and Tālaguṇḍa, which we have had occasion to mention and which were well-known shrines even during the days of the Śātavāhana rulers (the first two centuries after Christ), the Kadamba inscriptions

refer to many such temples in Halmiḍi, Puligere, Halasi and Malavalli. The Praṇaveśvara temple at Tālaguṇḍa was earlier than 450 A.D. and the Jina temple at Halasi goes back to the days of the Kadamba ruler Mṛgeśa-varman (about 455 A.D.). With the exception of the temples at Guḍimallam and Chejerla in Āndhra Pradesh, these temples are the oldest monumental experiments in South India.

The Paraśurāmeśvara temple at Guḍimallam (near Reṇiḡuṇṭa in North Ārcot district) is said to be a work of the second century A.D. The chief interest of this temple lies in the unusual and probably earliest iconic representation of Śiva found in its cella. We will have occasion to consider this interesting icon in some



detail later on. Of greater significance, however, is the Kapotīśvara shrine at Chejerla in Āndhra Pradesh. This structural temple was built probably in the fourth century at the instance of the kings of the Ānanda gotra lineage who ruled over parts of the present-day Guṇṭūr district in Āndhra Pradesh during the first few centuries of the Christian era. Although it is now a Śiva shrine, it was undoubtedly meant to be a Buddhist sanctuary. It was probably the king Dāmodara-varman, whom an inscription describes as “devoted to the feet of the perfectly enlightened Buddha” (samyak-sambuddha-pādānudhyāta) that built this shrine, which is modelled after the oblong Buddhist chaitya-hall in the ‘back-of-the-elephant’ (gajapṛshṭha) shape. There is an

interesting suggestion that the Pallava ruler Mahendra-varman, who was a great enthusiast of the stone-shrines was a kinsman of the royal family of Ānanda-gotra lineage (as also of the Viṣṇukunḍi kings), was inspired by the Chejeral temple. It may be noticed that rock-cut shrines (the so-called Pāṇḍava rathas), especially the ones named after Bhīma and Sahadeva, bear a definite resemblance to the Chejeral temple.

Within the kingdom of the Chālukyas of Bādāmi was Paṭṭadakallu (called Kisovolal in old texts), now in the Bādāmim taluk of Bijāpur district in Karṇāṭaka. It was an important township, especially favoured by the Lakulīśa-Pāśupata sect of the Śaivas. Even the Greek traveller Ptolemy (around 150 A.D.)



mentions this town along with Bādāmi. There are about ten ancient temples in this place, most of them built during the seventh and eighth centuries. The most famous among them, the Virūpāksha temple (built around 740 A.D.) appears to have been modelled after the Rājasimha temple at Kāñchīpuram (about 700 A.D.); and it is likely that it inspired the Kailāsa temple at Ellora (built by the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Kṛṣṇa I, 757 A.D., around an old cave-shrine dedicated to Śiva). The earlier name for the temple was after Lokeśvara, the Māhāyāna Buddhist divinity who had close association with the Lakuliśa-Śaiva cult; there is also a suggestion that it was named so after Loka-mahādevī, the queen of the Chālukya king Vikramāditya II. A remarkable, and altogether

unprecedented, feature about the Pattadakallu temple is that we have an inscriptional mention of the architect who actually built this structure: 'sūtradhāri' Anivārita-guṇḍa. For the first time in the history of temple-building, the craftsman is given his due recognition. The original shrine was probably austere and one-celled, with an imposing although modest śikhara; but it came to have in due course numerous pavilions, it became a complex structure, but not forsaking the dominant element of harmony. We should turn to the Vijayeśvara (now known as Saṅgameśvara) temple, if we want to have an idea of how the original temple would have looked like without a porch. This latter temple was an earlier one, having been built by Vijayāditya (696-733 A.D.).



A still earlier temple is the one dedicated to Śiva (or Viṣṇu, according to Percy Brown), Pāpanātha, with a short tower of the North Indian type. An obvious and bold disregard of the canonical proportions characterizes this temple, which was constructed before 690 A.D. A narrow circumambulatory passage, a disproportionately large vestibule, greatly spread out pillars, and the hesitantly low vimāna make the temple closer to the rock-cut shrines than to the structural ones. In the half-pavilion (ardha-mandapa), structurally removed from the main shrine, is sculptured a fine Natarāja group. The sculptor's name (Baladevamanyya) is inscribed on the panel near the left shoulder of the main figure.

The temple complex of the Chālukyas of Bādāmi, scattered in Bādāmi, Aihole, Pattadakallu, Kopana, Puligere and Vakkunda, marks an important phase in the evolution of temple architecture in India. It not only marks a definite transition from the rock-cut shrines to structural temples, but it reveals numerous experiments in stylistic variation. Here, perhaps, was the origin of the classical trichotomous classification of Indian temples into Nāgara, Drāvida and Vesara.

While this classification is neither neat nor absolute, it points to certain trends of stylistic variation, especially with regard to the sikhara treatment. Texts like *Viṣṇu-tilaka*, *Mānasāra*, *Mukutāgama*, *Silpa-ratna*, *Mayamata* and *Isāna-siva-guru-paddhati*,



which deal with this classification, give broad hints about their differing features. There are texts (like *Vishnu-tantra*, and *Mārkaṇḍeya-saṃhitā*) which group temples into nine types: in addition to the above three, they mention Sārvadesika, Kalinga, Varāta (the three regional styles recognized in *Kāṃikāgama*), Mandira, Bhavana and Yoga. But the variations detailed here are too minute and minor to be of much practical significance. The trichotomous classification alone was regarded as valid and inclusive.

Both *Silpa-ratna* and *Īsāna-siva-guru-paddhati* insist that this classification refers only to the sikhara. It is said that the word Nāgara actually means squarish, Vesara circular, and Drāvida polygonal (six or eight sided). But

this refers, according to these texts, to plinth of the temple (adhishtāna) rather than to the shape of the towering spire. Whatever the stylistically differentiating features, the territorial grouping is also done in the texts. The classical description is that the Nāgara type prevails in the land between the Himālayas and Vindhya ranges, the Vesara between the Vindhya ranges and the river and Kanyākumārī. There is also a variant description, denoting the Southern style (between Krishnā and Kanyākumārī) as Vesara and the Central style (between Vindhya and Krishnā) as Drāvida. The significance of Vesara is that it is a mixed style. The Nāgara temple is square or cruciform in plan and its sikhara has a vertical emphasis. The Drāvida, on the other hand, emphasizes the





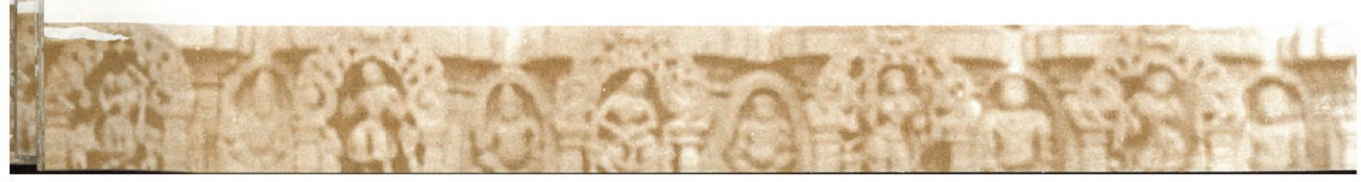


Nāgara Vimāna (Temple at Jagannatha Puri)

horizontal aspect; its śikhara is octogonal or domical, or in the shape of a valuted roof. Another distinguishing feature of this type is the tall and streyed towers on gateways (gopuras); but this is a later innovation. The Vesara is circular in plan or apsidal and combines the

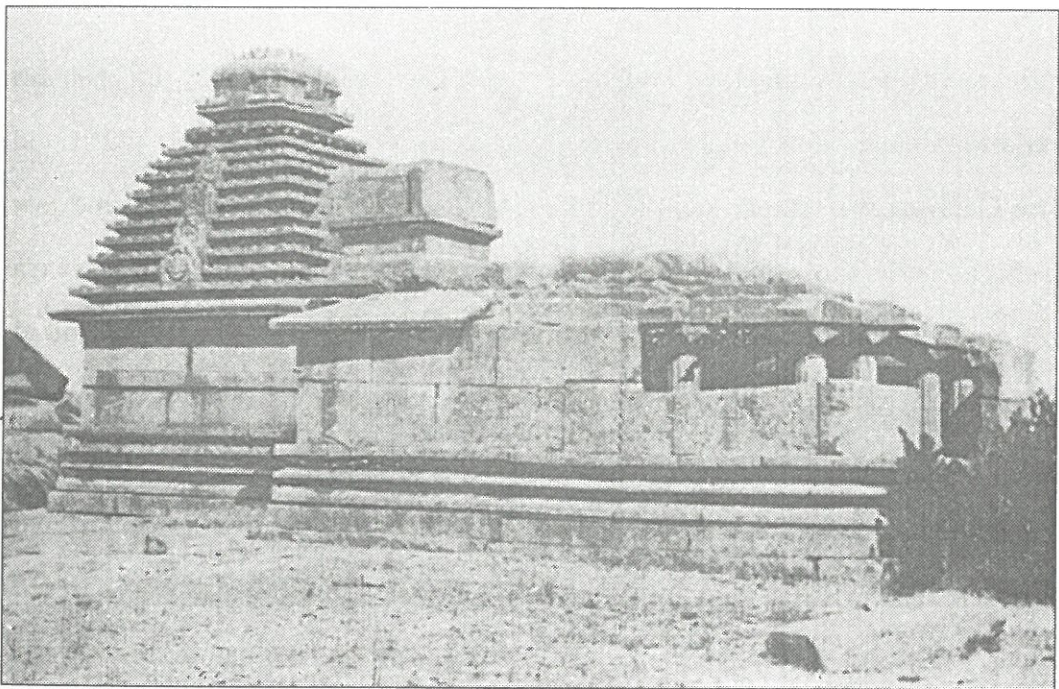
śikhara-features of the other two types.

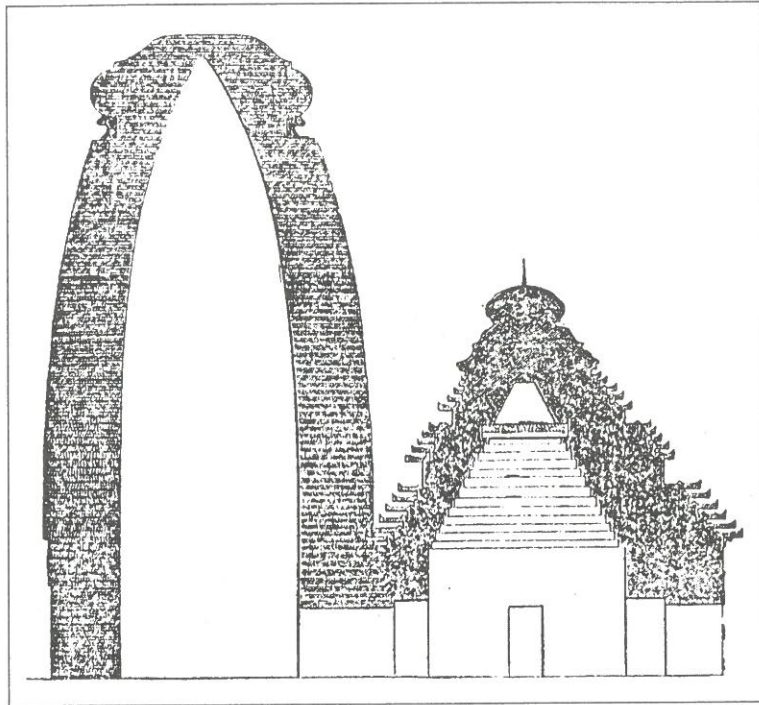
The temples built by the Chālukyas of Bādāmi are said to conform more or less to the Vesara typology, but we find examples of the other two types also. In fact, the



textual incorporation of these types must have followed the actual construction of these temples. The tendency to emphasize the element of tower over the sanctum is monumental and structural temples which we see initiated in the Paṭṭadakallu complex found their fulfilment in both North Indian and South Indian temples. Two fine and

early examples of the typical and stylized South Indian Drāviḍa treatment of the tower are the Shore-temple at Māmallapuram and Kaliāsanātha temple at Kāñchipuram, both built by the Pallava - ruler Narasiṃhavarman II (also called Rājasimha, about 680-720 A.D.). It is probable that the Virūpāksha temple at Paṭṭadakallu was directly

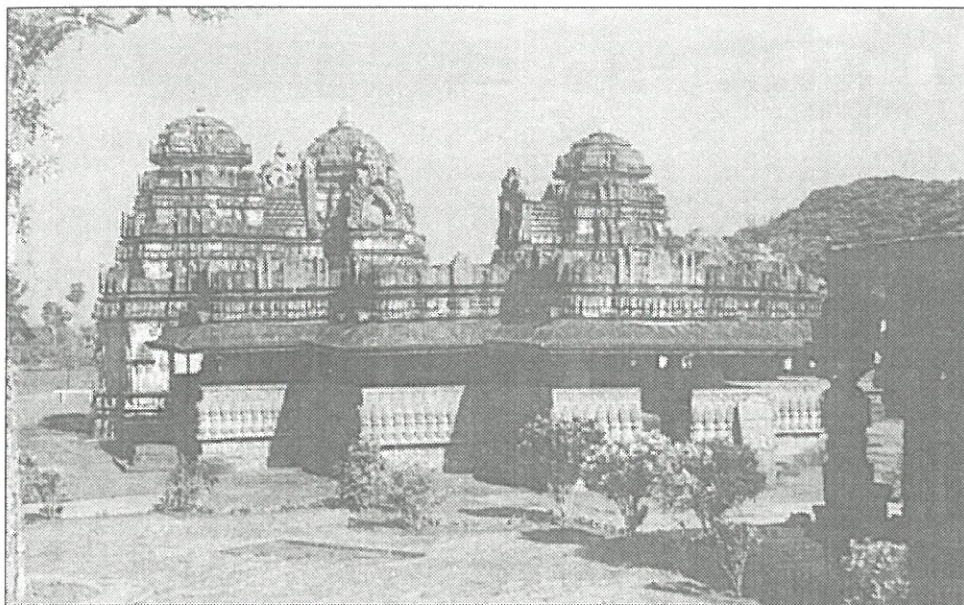




influenced by them. But stylistic variations have been tried out here. The Galaganātha temple has the tall śikhara with the āmalaka motif, which undoubtedly was the forerunner of the typical spiral Nāgara type. Likewise, the Viśveśvara temple provided the model for the characteristic Kalyāṇa-Chālukya tower.

The transition of the Nāgara idiom to the North is best illustrated by the early, broad, squatty and low vimāna of the Paraśurāmeśvara temple of Bhuvaneśvar (built around 750 A.D.), which strongly reminds one of the Durgā temple at Aihole. Its development into a typical Orissan style with a tall tower and the tiered front pavilion roof can be seen in the



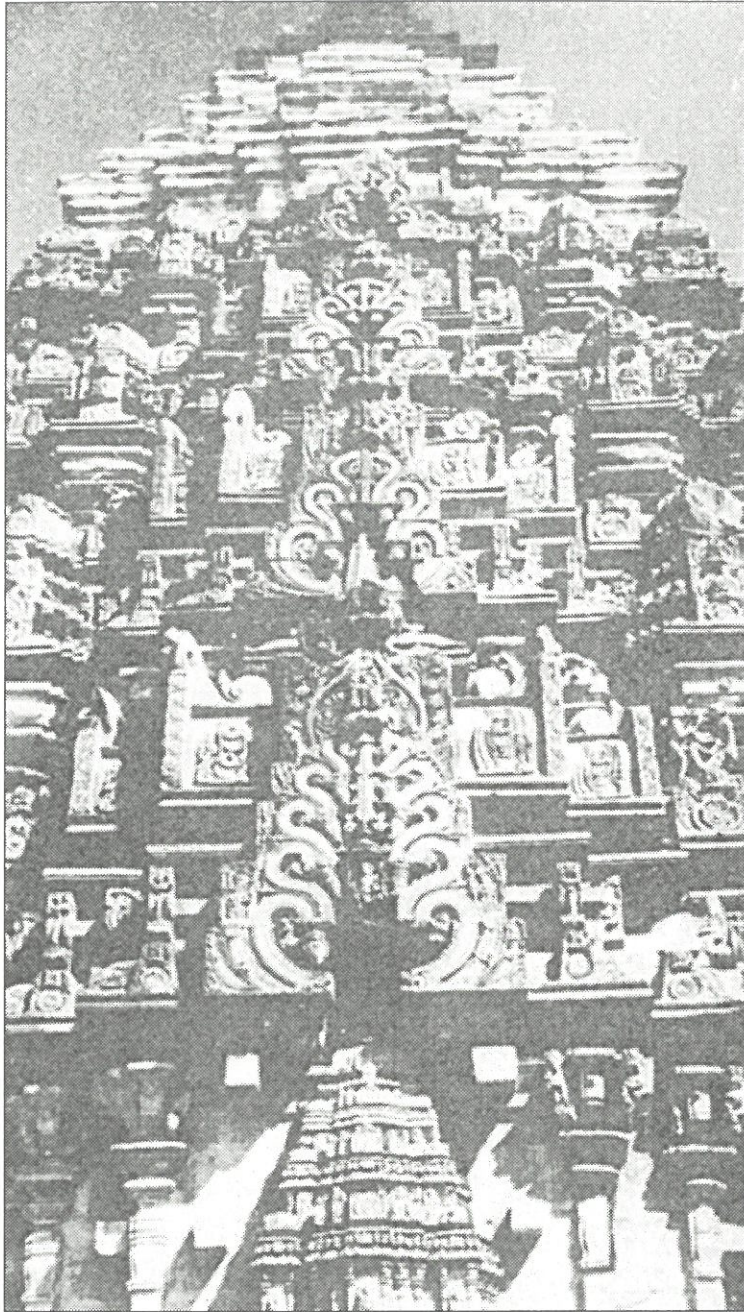


Kedāreśwara temple at Belgami in Shimoga District.



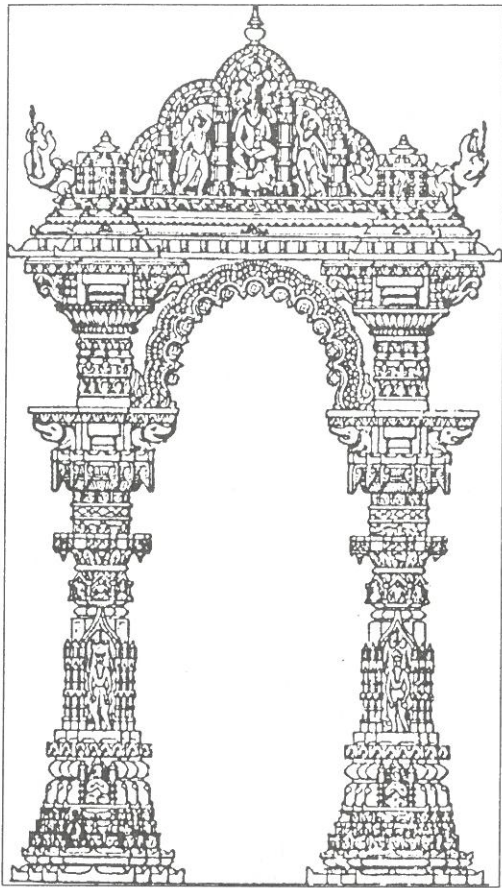
Gopuram of Tirupathi Temple





Gopuram of Itagi Mahādeva temple





Triumphal Arch, Gujarāt

Muktesvaram temple, built about two centuries later and the great Lingarāja Temple around 1000 A.D. in the same town. A variant idiom was evolved in Central India, with preference for pyramidal śikhara rising on an elevated masonry terrace,

as illustrated by about twenty temples that are extant in Khajurāho (in Bundelkhaṇḍ, Madhya Pradesh) built between 950 and 1050 A.D. These temples also reveal a tendency to integrate the several structural details into a neatly packed mass. However, sculptural enthusiasm dominates the architectural skill here.

THE TEMPLE STRUCTURE

The Indian temple is not a building: it is an image, a conception of divinity. While it is both natural and necessary for the image to be projected into a spatial arrangement and concretized by a structural monument, the image does not depend upon such activities for its continuance. It is true that the urge for the expression of the image has

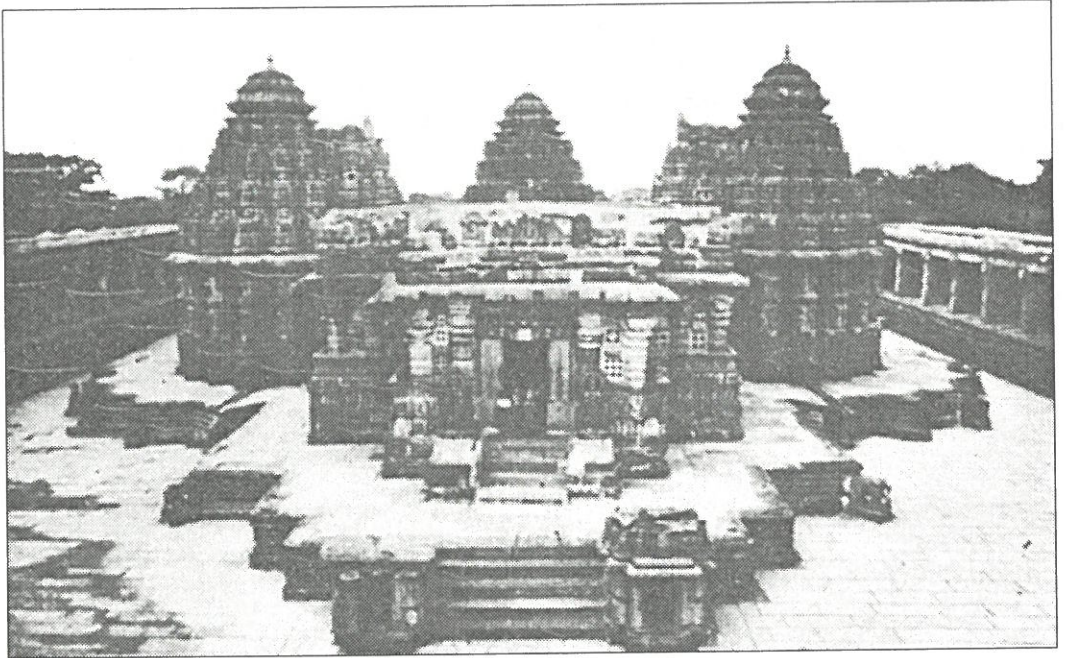


grown from a simple ring of stones to a vast complex of shrines, chapels, pavilions, corridors, yards, and tanks.

It is also true that sometimes townships have grown inside the temple enclosures; and the administrative machinery in many cases is elaborate and involved. But the basic truth about the temple is the image that people have, and this centres round the icon. The icon is

the source of the image; and the image may reach far out.

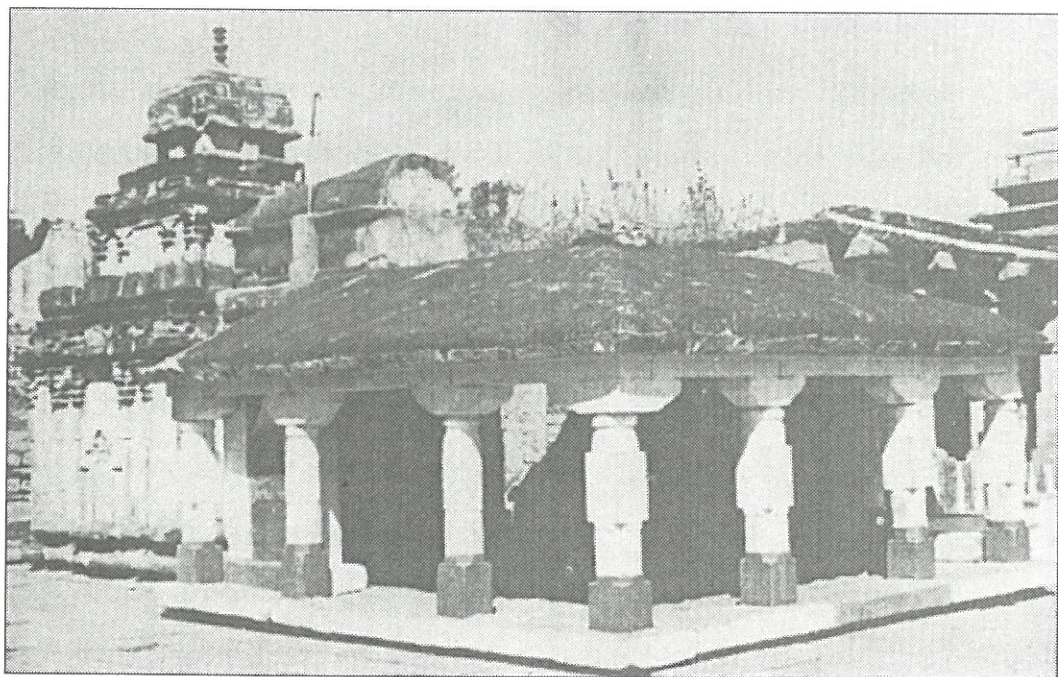
It is not impossible to conceive of an icon devoid of the temple paraphernalia. In fact, it is not till a late period in the history of Indian religion that the temple as a distinct socio-religious institution began. Early shrines were probably confined to the icons. The custom of building

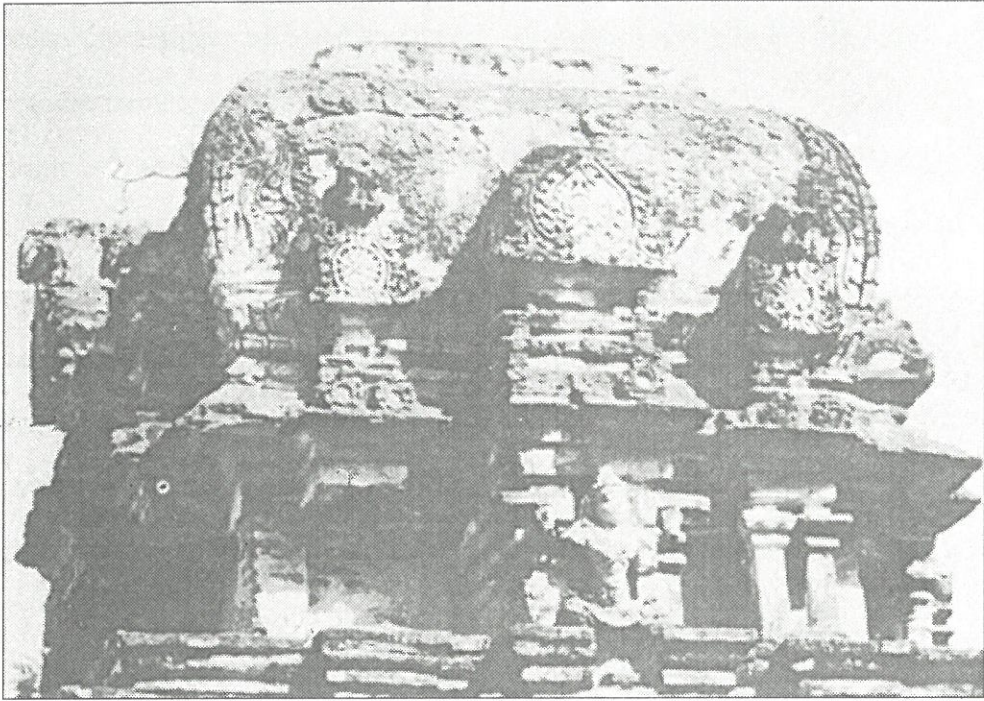


the temple first and then preparing an icon to be installed in it is a later one. According to strict canonical considerations, a temple must be built for the icon, and not an icon got ready efor the templel, for a temple is really only an outgrowth of the icon, an image of the icon.

It is impossible to indicate when exactly the custom of building

stylized temples began in our country. There is hardly a structural shrine that can reach back to the third or even the fourth century A.D. But temples must have been there much earlier. The village shrines of thatch and mud, bamboo and wood would not have been meant to survive till our days. The builders of such shrines had no eye for abiding frame. They did not aspire that their buildings





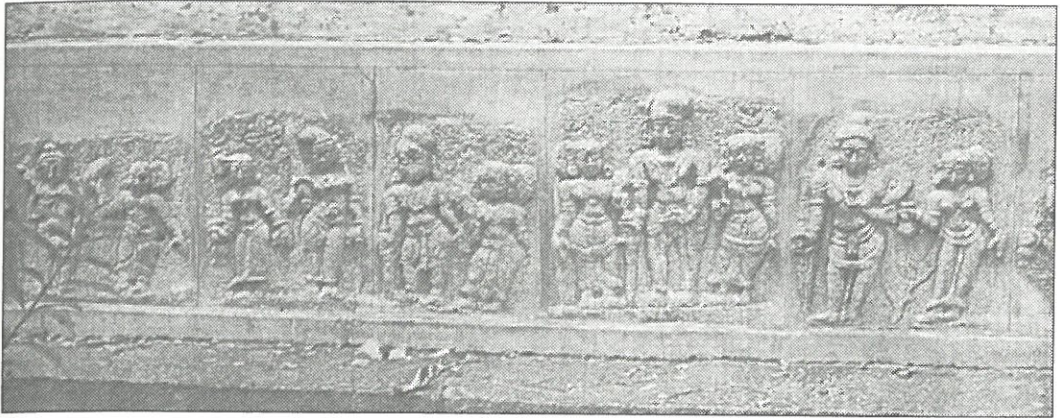
Details of Śikhara

should last “till the sun and the moon and stars cease shining”, as the later kings and chieftains vaingloriously wanted. Early constructions were not instruments of vanity or even acts of piety, but necessary means of worship.

There is evidence to suppose that the early shrines were temporary

structures, erected when the occasion of community-worship demanded, and were pulled down later. The canonical concept of ‘pavilion’ (maṇḍapa) supports this supposition. The old text *Viśvakarma-prakāśa* suggests that the purpose of the pavilion is to accommodate the people that gather to participate in the worship ritual. People gather to



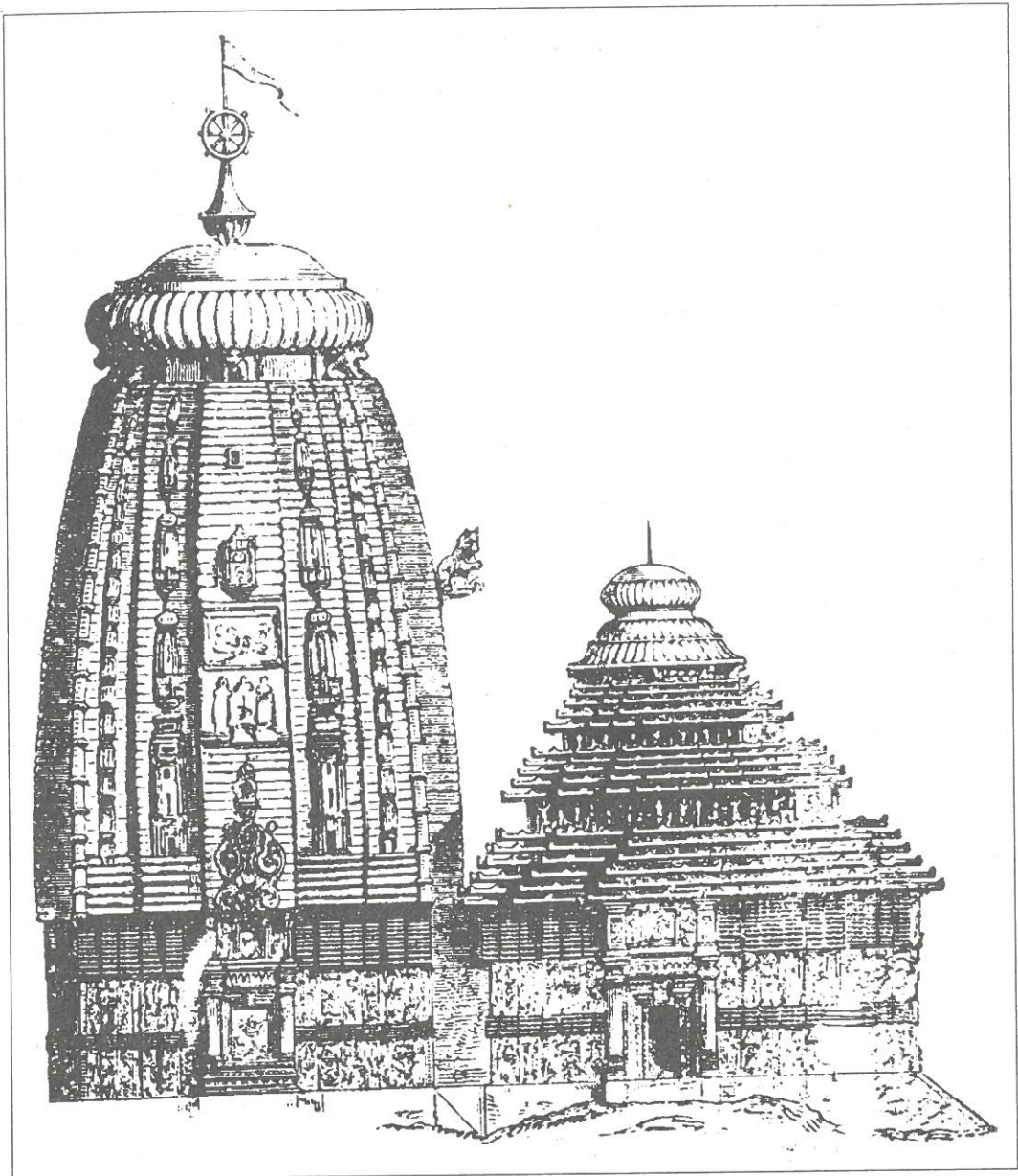


worship at the temple only occasionally. Every house had its own shrine, and daily worship would be conducted there. Two kinds of shrines are recognized; 'private' shrines, meant for the individual devotee and for his family (ātmārtha); and 'public', meant for all the people in the community (parārtha). In the former case the performers and the participants are not different, whereas in the latter the priests are the performers and people are the participants. The sanctum of the public shrine would be for the

performance of the worship ritual, and the pavilions for the participants to assemble and partake of the proceedings. Temporary structures would be put up when large groups of participants are expected to gather.

It is only later that such structures tended to become more permanent, and the early stimulus came probably from the Indo-Greeks who became converts to Indian religions. We have inscriptions that reveal their influence. Heliodorus (son of Dion), the Indo-Greek ambassador who





Nāgara type of Vimana (Konarka temple)



resided in the city of Taksha-śilā around the second century B.C., was a devotee of Vishṇu, a 'bhāgavata', and got erected a stone column in honour of "Vāsudeva, the god of gods (deva-deva)". An inscription in Brāhmī characters on this garuḍa-dhvaja, found in Besnagar (the old Vidiśā) near the present-day Bhilsā near Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, suggests the existence of some sort of a temple. An inscription belonging to the same period speaks of "an excellent temple (prāsāda) dedicated to Bhagavān". The Śaka satrap, Rājūvala, son of Shodāśa, who styled himself 'the great satrap' (mahā-kshatrapa), tells us in an inscription found in Mora near Mathurā (uttar Pradesh) that he got built a stone temple for the icons representing five great heroes of the

'Vṛshṇi clan' (bhagavatām vṛshṇinām pañca-virāṇām pratimāh śaila-deva-gri.....).

The five great ones constitute the family of Vāsudeva, the form of Vishṇu extolled in the Bhāgavata cult: Vāsudeva, Saṁkarshaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, and Sāmba. The first two of these heroes, identified with Kṛishṇa-vishṇu and his brother Bala-rāma (who was later merged in the concept of Kārtikeya-subrahmaṇya) appear to have been popular divinities during the days prior to the Christian era. There is another second century B.C. inscription found at Ghosunḍi (Nagarī near Chittor in Rājāsthān), which speaks of a "stone temple-enclosure with a garden dedicated to Nārāyaṇa" (pūjā-śilā-prakāra-nārāyaṇa-vāṭikā)



meant for the worship of “the unconquered heroes and lords of all, Vāsudeva and Saṁkarshaṇa” (anihatābhyām sarveśvarābhyām Vāsudeva-Saṁkarshaṇābhyām).

What these temples were like is hard to conjecture. It is not even certain that they were temples in the present-day sense; they may have been mere enclosures around an icon. Icons were older than temples. We know, for instance, that the celebrated temple on the top of the Tirumala hills (in Andhra Pradesh) was not there during the days of the early Ālvaṛs, the Vaishṇava saints of the South, viz., the third and fourth centuries A.D. Their Tamiḷ songs describe the majestic Veṅgaḍam icon as free-standing and exposed to sunshine and rain; there was only a dwarf rampart enclosing the icon.

The famous five-foot icon of Śiva (?) found at Guḍimallam (near Reṇiḡuṇṭa, in North Arcot district) has been assigned by Ānanda Coomaraswamy to the first century B.C. It is likely that this icon also was free-standing. We have from the village Burhikhār (in Bilāspur district, Madhya Pradesh) an inscribed sculpture of the same period (first century B.C.), worshipped as ‘Chatur-bhuji Bhagavān’ (four-armed Viṣṇu), and gifted by some lady Prajāvāti. There is, however, no mention of a temple having been there to house it.

The Purāṇas, which are medieval works, contain not only praises of temples but promise great glory to the builders of temples. *Agni-purāṇa*, for instance, says that if a person merely desires to build a temple for





Vishṇu, all the sins that he had accumulated during all his previous lives would disappear. *Hayaśīrsha* proclaims that if one should put a brick in place for building a temple and die soon after that act, he would have acquired the benefits of performing a sacrifice. *Vishṇu-rahasya* promises heaven even for a child that playfully builds a temple in the sands.

Such praises and promises suggest that temples had already been looked upon as acts of great merit, and that temples were being built in large numbers by the rich and pious folk. This activity was encouraged by affirmations that a single temple built would confer merits that one would acquire by performing two sacrifices together, 'Rājasūya' and

'Aśvamedha' (*Vishṇudharmottara*). It was the new substitute for the vanishing tradition of performance of sacrifices.

The early Purāṇas had focussed the religious attention of the country on a few places which were regarded as especially favourite of the gods; the divine presence was supposed to be spontaneous and abundant there. Their celebrity has continued till our own day. Instances are Badarī-vana, Kedāra-nātha, Indra-dyumna (Jagannātha-puri), Kāśī (Banaras), Prayāga, Somanātha, Simhādri, Venkaṭāchala (Tirumalai), Setu (Rameśvaram), Kāñchīpuram. Here the icons were reputed to be 'self-manifest' (svayaṁ-vyakta), not made by man; and therefore what remained for man to do was to build temples



over them. And the places themselves were considered holy, and visits to them were held especially meritorious.

Pilgrimage, which still remains one of the essential features of Indian religions, was largely the contribution of the Purāṇas. The essence of the holy place was concretized in a shrine, often containing the icon that was reputed to be 'self-manifest'. Structural additions to such shrines, like buildings to accommodate the pilgrims, tanks to provide water to them, free refectories to cater to their needs, and other acts of charity were deemed meritorious.

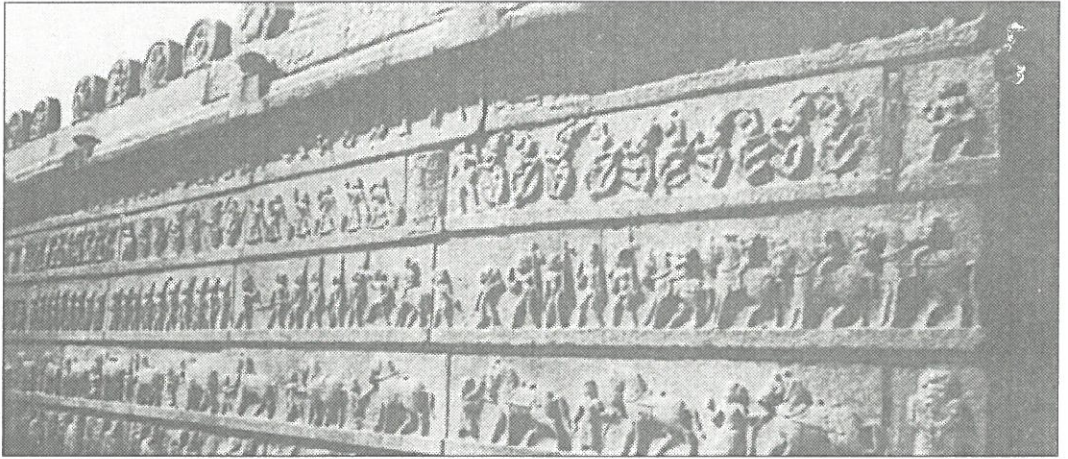
There are instances where whole townships have grown out of shrines. These are in scriptures called 'independent' (svatantra) shrines, in

contradistinction to the temples built for the sake of a village or township ('dependent' or paratantra shrines).

This is how vast temple-complexes evolved in hundreds of 'sacred sites' (kshetras), strewn all over the country. But when places which did not command such Purāṇic prestige emerged into importance owing to political or commercial reasons, they also got sanctified by kings or chieftains or influential residents through the installation of icons brought over from the ancient, sacred sites which had been deserted, or which were not easily accessible to people.

The conquering kings sometimes carried away prestigious icons as booty and got them set up in their own capitals. Or, more frequently,





replicas of icons from the accreditedly sacred sites were got made and installed. There are, for instance, hundreds of Kāśi-Viśvanātha temples in the country today, and hundreds of Kedāreśvara shrines; Veṅkaṭeśvara shrines have sprung up in large numbers after the original shrine at Tirumalai.

CRAFTSMEN

Thus, not only architects but sculptors got busy during the middle

ages. And to fulfil the new need, several texts prescribing the norms, styles, methods and measurements of the temples and icons came to be written. Craft-guilds were organized, and kings and chieftains undertook to be patrons of artists and craftsmen connected with temple building.

Craftsmen's organization was in terms of four classes of skilled workers: the designing architect (sthapati), the surveyor (sūtragrahin), the sculptor



(takshaka), and the builder (vardhaki). The architect directed and co-ordinated the activities of others; he was in general required to have an expert acquaintance with the canonical norms. The suveyor was hierarchically next to the architect: his special area of work concerned with proportions, vertical and horizontal (māna and unmāna).

The sculptor worked with stones, cut them into large and small pieces according to plan and design; he also sculpted images and attended to decorations. He was free to work as his fancy dictated, within the general framework provided by the architect. He was acquainted with canonical prescriptions and descriptions concerning icons and sculptural ornamentation; and his creativity

was not only acknowledged but praised.

The builder put the peieces, cut and worked with the sculptor, and attended to the temple coming up (the term vardhakī means 'an increaser'). His professional affiliation was with the carpenter's craft. It may be remembered that early temples were constructions in wood, and carpenters were the main craftsmen who attended to them.

The work of all these four classes of artisans was often supervised by the (director or manager) sthāpaka and sthānika) who was not only learned in temple-craft but a priest as well; he was the administrative chief of the temple who had control over the other priests who were directly responsible for the details of worship in the temple.





Worship in the temple was more formalized than domestic worship, and it involved many more details than the latter. It therefore necessitated many priests and assistants. And numerous festivals

were incorporated into the normal working of the temple. The devotees who assembled had to be given token food blessed by the offering-rituals (naivedya, prasāda or bhoga); and in olden days pilgrims were also fed as



a routine in the temple. The temple had also to provide place for assemblies of devotees and their socio-religious performances.

All this meant not only an increase in the staff of the temple and a more elaborate administrative procedure, but a growth in the spatial arrangement. The temple had to have several halls, not strictly connected with the routine worship: audience pavilion (raṅga-maṇḍapa), treasury and store-house (Śrī-bhaṇḍāra), the chamber for the performance of daily and occasional sacrifices (yāga-śālā), dining hall (Śiva-kūṭa in Śaivite temples and Rāmānuja-kūṭa in Vaishṇavite temples in the South, bhoga-maṇḍapa in the North), marriage-hall (kalyāṇa-maṇḍapa), the rooms where the

festival-vehicles were kept (vāhana-maṇḍapa), and the temple-tank (kalyāṇi or teppa-koḷam in the South).

And in addition to the main icon in the sanctum, several other icons in the nature of consorts (Amman or Devī), attendants (parivāra), and companions (pārśva) had to be provided with separate chambers, cells or at least niches in canonically fixed positions. The temple thus became increasingly complex both architecturally and administratively. Especially the temples that came to be favoured by royal patronages got unnecessary and superfluous halls as votive gifts and pavilions added periodically as a ritual. The structure thus tended to grow out of all proportion to the function.



But the added structure does not add to the shrine value. The real temple consists of the sanctum in which the icon is housed, and the immediate structural involvements that are essential for the main worship ritual. In fact, the canonical texts describe the sanctum alone as the real temple. *Śrī-praśna* declares that the sanctum is the divinity's body and the icon is its soul (jīva).

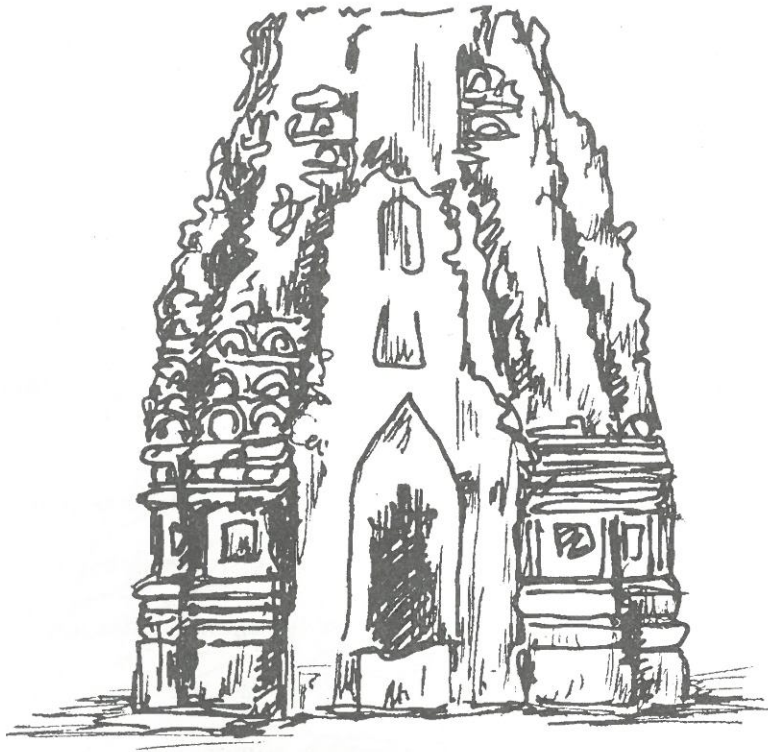
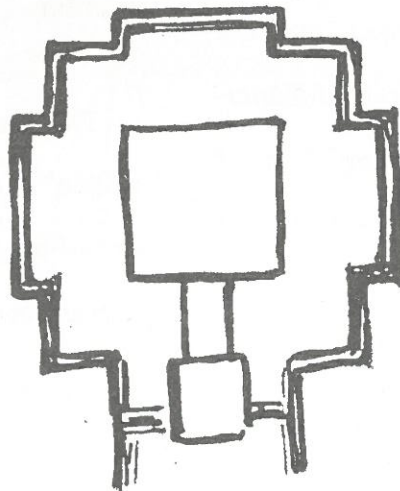
Usually the sanctum is a stone structure, square in shape and severely plain, although there could be niches for other icons on the outer walls. There will be no pillars, and the sanctum will be altogether devoid of windows. The shutting off of air and light was meant to preserve the icon which, in olden days, was made of wood, stucco, or even clay.

Besides preventing the ill-effects of weathering, the dark interior added to the mystery of the divine presence in the sanctum represented by an empty low platform (vedī, probably with a mystic diagram called maṇḍala), a copper vessel placed on a seat (kumbha), a sacrificial fireplace (kuṇḍa) or a sculpted icon (bimba).

Although it is usual to find the sanctum built in stone, constructions in brick are not rare. *Vishṇu-tilaka* mentions that while the stone sanctum is the best, the brick one is the next best; the wooden sanctum however is inferior, and the mud one is said to be the worst.

The sanctum is technically known as the 'garbha-gr̥ha' ('the womb-house') and 'Deul' (in the North). It





Bhitargaon Brick Temple (Gupta period, 5th cent)



is insisted that this part of the temple must be constructed first, and before the construction a significant ceremony known as 'impregnating' (garbhādhāna or garbha-nyāsa) should be performed. This ritual involves letting into the earth a ceremonial copper pot, containing nine precious stones, several metals and minerals, herbs and soils, symbolising creating and prosperity.

The building which contains this 'womb' is said to prosper, and not the one which lacks it (*Siddhānta-śekhara*). After the completion of this ritual, a stone slab (ādhāra-śilā) is placed over the spot where the copper pot has been buried. This stone slab will be the foundation for the installation of the icon. The copper-pot symbolises the womb,

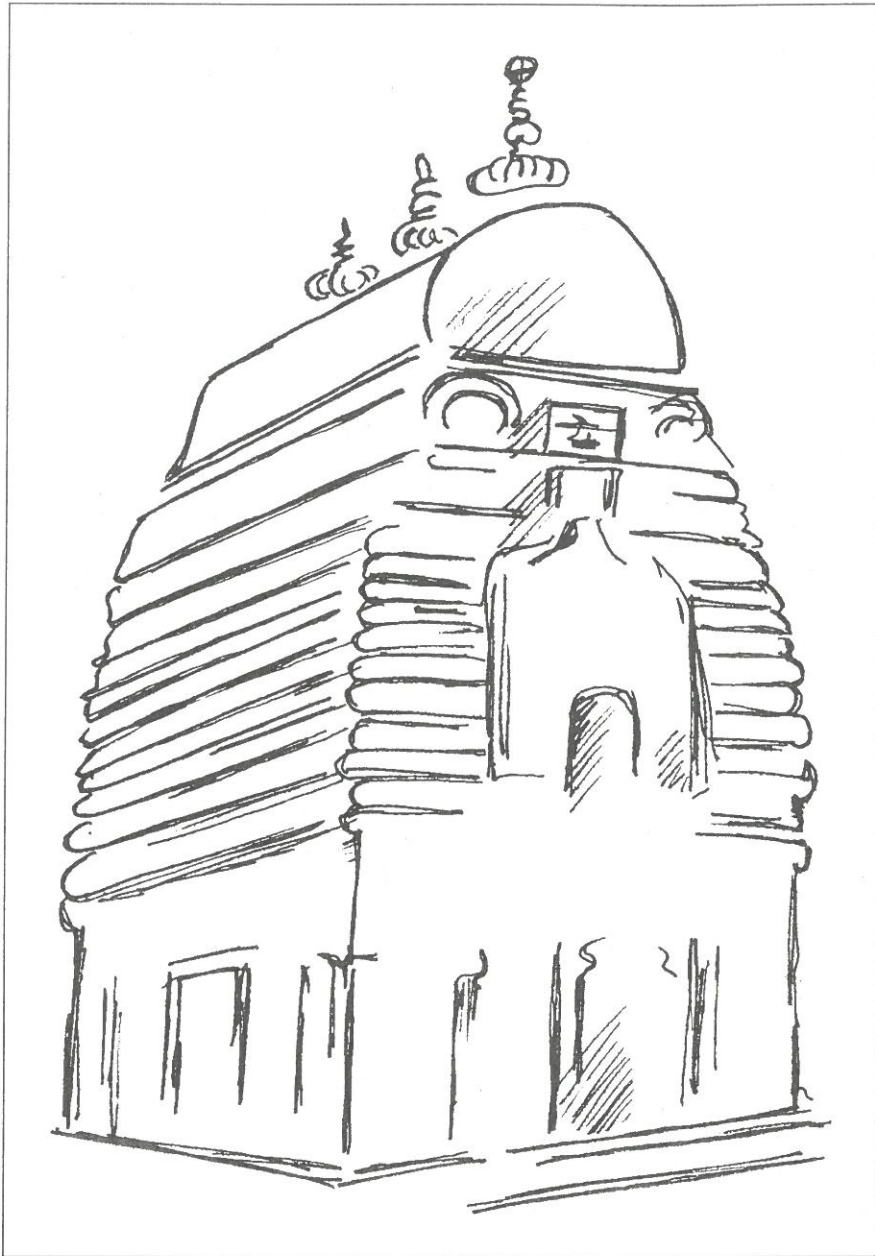
and the icon the soul. The sanctum that is built round it is the body. This is the significance of the sanctum being called 'the womb-house'. Texts like *Śilpa-ratna*, *Tantra-samucchaya* and *Īśāna-śiva-guru-paddhati* give an elaborate account of this ritual.

The sanctum is covered by a flat roof of stone slabs, and sometimes by wooden beams and planks. This serves as the base (adhishtāna) for the tower that rises above the sanctum.

This super-structure known as 'vināna' or 'śikhara' is an important part of the temple, especially of the temples built in villages and towns.

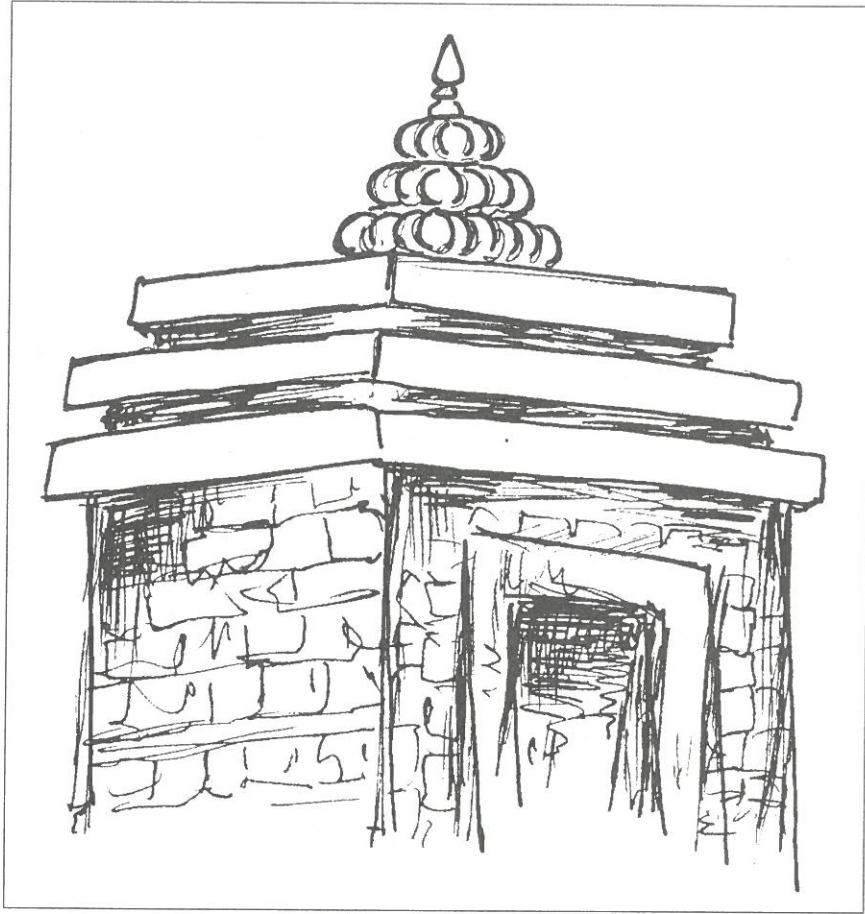
It is interesting to note in this context that holy places are classified into five kinds in an old text named





Khakara or wagon-roof type of Temple





Archanā-navanīta. The first variety is where the divinity is self-manifest (svayaṁ-vyakta), the second is where the icons are installed by gods (daivika), the third by sages (ārsha), the fourth glorified in the Purāṇas (paurāṇika), and the last is where the

shrine is man-made (mānusha). While the first four kinds of places are holy by themselves, the last variety needs to be sanctified by special effort. The background belief was that the entire area which the vimāna overlooked was rendered





holy. Thus the vimāna construction was a means of sanctifying the otherwise ordinary place.

The early temples were understandably flat-roofed. The Gupta temples in the North belonging



to the fifth century were flat-roofed. We have in Aihole an early specimen of such temples in the Lāḍ-Khān (about 500 A.D.), on the roof of which is another sanctum whose roof consists of stone slabs grooved at the points and pieced together. Sometimes, the temple-roof resembled the roof of the huts, as illustrated by the so-called Draupadī shrine in Māmallapuram.

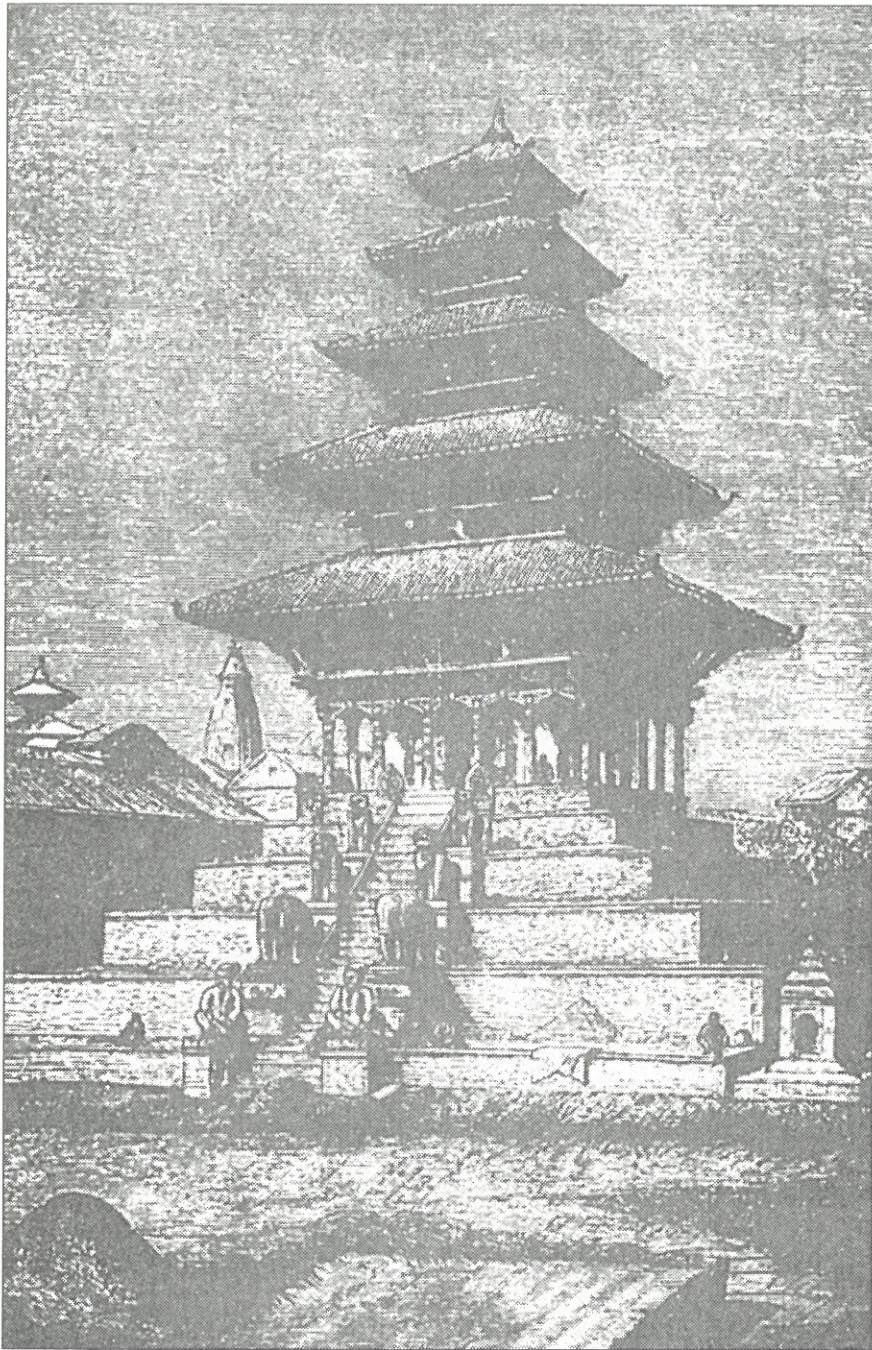
But there was a tendency for the roof to be vaulted or dome-shaped, probably in order to reproduce the shape of the cave-shrines or in imitation of the stūpa-form. The mean mud-shrines in the villages even today are surmounted by a mound of earth, as in the primitive funerary monument. In course of time, the tendency resulted in the

pyramidal or curvilinear form. This was regarded as the part of the temple that gave the structure a monumental dignity.

The North Indian temples, especially in Orissa, emphasized this aspect. Perhaps the upper storey of the temple (as in the Lāḍ-Khān temple of Aihole) was stylized into this part; and several storeys were amalgamated into a decorative spire. By about the eighth century, the towers became parabolic in character.

Legends about the mythical mountain Sumeru (or Meru) were employed to highlight the value of the tall towers that rose to impressive heights. Indeed some of the temple-complexes in Orissa and Khajurāho





DEVĪ SHRINE at Bhātgaon (Nepal)



appear like mountain ranges. The vimāna of the Liṅgarāja temple in Bhuvaneśvar is 125 feet tall; that of the Jagannāth temple at Puri is 200 feet tall, and can be seen from a distance of six miles.

In the temples of North India, the main sanctuary comprehending the sanctum (garbha-grha or deul) as well as the tower above it is called the vimāna (or śikhara). Although the same connotation obtained in the South, it has become more usual to confine the expression to the superstructure above the sanctum.

The North Indian vimāna is crowned by a large circular (wheel-shaped) capstone block known as āmalaka, after the common fruit emblic myrobelan; while its South

Indian counterpart ends in a cupola (śṛṅga) or wagon-roof (khakhara). The South Indian vimāna is broader and shorter than the North Indian one, and we find the usual tendency is towards the form of a polygon, on a square or rectangular plan.

The North Indian temples rise from a pedestal (pīṭha) through the wall (bara) and main body (gaṇḍi) to the 'head' (mastaka), which consists of a ribbed āmalaka surmounted by a 'skull' (khapuri), on which is installed the kalaśa (the finial). And on top of the finial will be seen the 'weapon' (āyudha) of the deity, a trident Itriśūla) or a discus (chakra).

In South India, there was emphasis on the vimāna in the earlier phase of temple architecture. For



instance, the vimāna of the Rājarājiśvara (or the so called Bṛihadiśvara) temple at Tānjāvūr in Tamiḻ Nāḍu (built by the Choḷa King Rājarāja I, and consecrated in 1009 A.D.) rises to a height of 58 metres, “an architectural texture of great beauty”. But the tendency was in favour of shorter vimānas. For example, the vimāna of the temple at Gaṅgaikoṇḍa-choḷa-puram (built by Rajendra-Choḷa in 1025 A.D.) was already only 46 metres high.

Subsequent vimānas are less emphasized in their height, in comparison with the tower over the the gateway (dvāra-gopura). But the sanctity of the vimāna was not affected by the diminished height. While sculpture on the gateway-tower could contain secular and

erotic themes, the vimāna had to be austere and could accommodate only the prescribed divinities, associated with the icon in the sanctum. The practice of bowing to the vimāna, as if that were verily the outer form of the icon continues even today among the devout folk. The gateway-tower, on the other hand, does not command this reverence. It is more a creature of the donor’s pomp and the sculptor’s skill than an expression of religious sentiment.

The plan of the vimāna could be round or square; it could also be six-sided or eight sided. It could either retain one form uniformly from its base to the top, or combine two or more plans at different levels. It consisted originally of several distinct storeys, sometimes as many as



sixteen, but the prevailing style is devoid of such differentiation into storeys.

It rises directly above the sanctum, with the flat roof of the sanctum (bhūmikā or kapota) as its base (adhishṭhāna). Sometimes, however, it encompasses the area covered by the circumambulatory path round the sanctum as well as the rectangular porch immediately in front of the sanctum. Its mass rests on a square base, called 'support' (adhishṭhāna or pīṭha), and rises through stylized treatment of dormer-windows in several tiers to a dome-shaped tower (śikhara) surmounted by a cupola (śṛṅga or stūpī).

Around the sanctum will be a passage, often narrow, permitting the

devotees to pass round the sanctum in the customary act of devotion. This circumambulatory path (pradakṣiṇā-patha or bhrama) became a structural involvement as the temple grew in size; it is more naturally open, as it was in the early phase. The rectangular porch in front of the sanctum (mukha-maṇḍapa or mukha śālā) is a pillared hall, allowing the devotees to stand and watch the worship rituals as they are conducted inside the sanctum.

When the temple became popular and the participants increased in number, there was need for an additional hall of considerable dimensions (nava-raṅga or mahā-maṇḍapa) to accommodate large assemblies. In such an event, the porch became merely a 'vestibule'



(antarāla), structurally connecting the sanctum with the assembly-hall. This intermediary space was open in the early temples, as for instance it was in the Veṅkaṭeśvara temple on the Tirumalai hills. But it tended to become a closed hall resting on pillars, as the fortunes of the temple prospered.

The area of the temple comprising of the sanctum and the halls as well as the tanks and garden came to be enclosed by a wall (prākāra), like the ramparts of a fort. But this was a later innovation, and became an especial feature of South Indian temples.

Later canonical texts provide for as many as thirty-two such concentric and enclosing walls, but recommend

not more than five or seven, although the need to have more than one was rarely felt. The Raṅganātha temple at Śrīraṅgam in Tamiḻ Nāḍu has seven enclosing walls, encompassing almost the entire township.

Where there are multiple walls, the one nearest to the sanctum is styled as 'the inner enclosure' (antarmaṇḍapa) and the outermost as 'the limiting lines' (maryādāhāra). In the South Indian temples the prākāras are not merely boundary walls; they accommodate a series of pillared halls or pavilions, rooms for storage, resting places for pilgrims, and shrines for minor deities. Although their chief purpose is protection of temple property, the walls are also rendered elegant and artistic.



Although the texts describe that each enclosure must have doorways on all four sides, with a tower over each one of them, and although we do find large temples (such as the one in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai in Tamiḻ Nāḍu) answering to this prescription, it is commonly the wall facing the sanctum alone that has the opening.

This doorway is called mahā-dvāra, and usually it is an immense one, allowing the temple elephant or small chariot to pass through. Since the tenth century it has become customary to have a tower above the doorway. The ancient texts such as *Vaikhānasāgama*, *Maya-mata* and *Īśāna-śiva-guru-paddhati* mention the gateway-tower, but do not consider it as important. One of the earliest towers that can be regarded as

impressive is on the gateway to the Avani-Kandarpeśvara temple in Kīlaiyūr (near Tirucchi in Tamiḻ Nāḍu).

The gopuras built by the later Chola and Pāṇḍyan rulers between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries are majestic and massive, as in Madhurai, Tirunelveli, Chidambaram, Kumbhakoṇam and Tiruvanaikkāval (near Śrīraṅgam). They are multi-storeyed pyramids, oblong in plan, rising tier upon tier, tapering till the wagon-roof (sikhara) with fans (nāsi) on either end representing mythical heads (kīrtimukha) calls a halt. The really tall gopura may reach to the height of about 200 feet. The entire mass, built of brick and mortar, is filled with stucco figures and decorations.





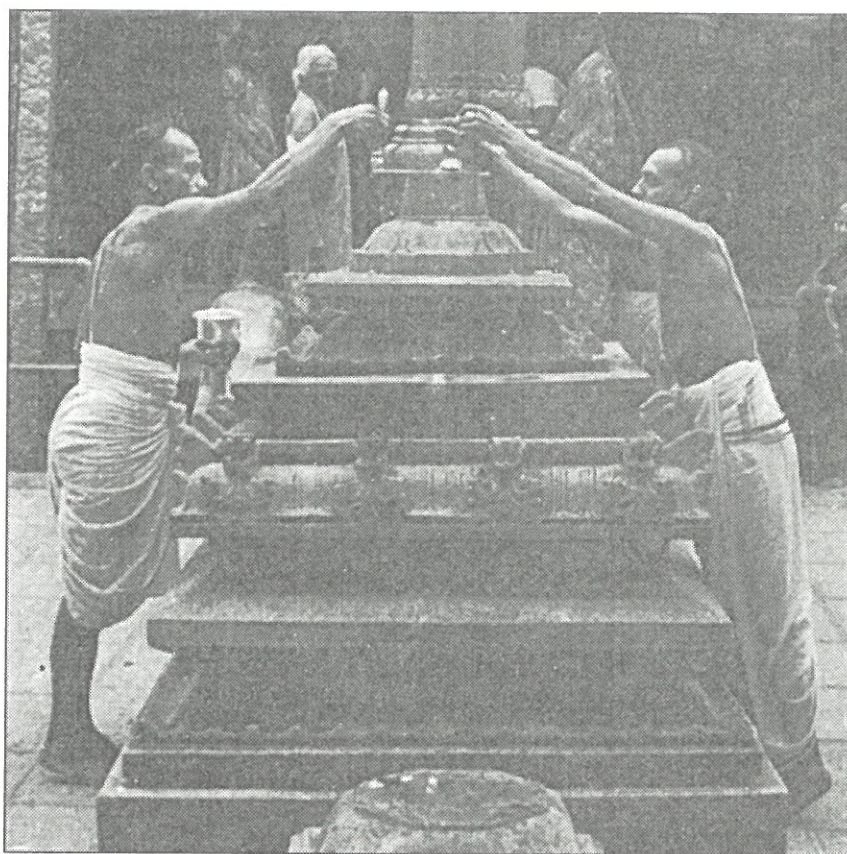
Gopura (Kumbhakonam)



Despite its immensity and artistic profusion, the gopura is not regarded as an essential feature of the temple. And it is unique to the South Indian temples. Neither the enclosing wall (prākāra) nor the gateway-tower (dvāra-gopura) figures prominently in the North Indian temples. And

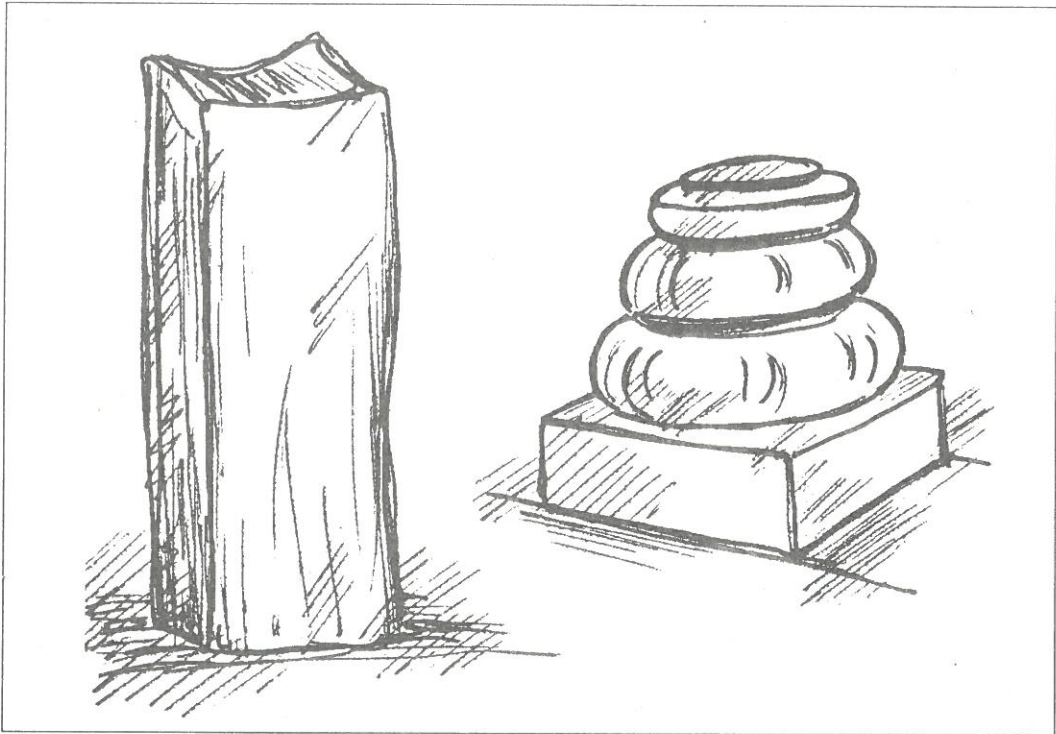
many temple-complexes, as for instance at Khajurāho, are devoid even of the enclosing walls.

The sanctum, which is the most important structural detail, is closely associated with 'the dispensing seat' (bali-pīṭha) which is installed in front



of the sanctum directly facing the icon. It is a low stone altar, frequently modelled in the form of a flat lotus in bloom. In the early shrines it is a mere block of stone, but later, it assumed a relatively elaborate form with base, cornices, wall-surface and the top-lotus.

Actually there will be several 'seats' of this nature, installed in various ritualistically determined positions inside the enclosure and outside the sanctum. However; the one in front of the sanctum is the 'chief seat' (pradhāna-pīṭha), and it is on this that the sculptor spends his



BALI-PĪTHA



skill. The purpose of these seats is to offer food to the attendant and secondary deities, after the main offering has been made in the sanctum.

The canons specify that the real temple comprises of the sanctum, the tower on top of it, the icon inside it and 'the dispensing seat' in front of it. These are the essential parts of a shrine. Some texts even proclaim that the extent of the shrine reaches only as far as 'the dispensing seat' and no further.

SYMBOLISM

The Upanishads speak of the "inverted tree", *aśvattha*, with roots hidden above and branches spreading below (*Kaṭha*, 2, 3,1). The tree is an ancient analogue of life here and

beyond. We find references to it in the *Rgveda* itself, and we find it illustrated in the Indus Valley seals. The folk cults are filled with reverential involvements of trees. Trees have been claimed as totems, trees have been worshipped as divinities, and trees have played an important role in our economy.

The two trends in the growth of the tree, the transactional upward and the spiritual downward, emphasize the principle of complementareity in human life. The Indian temple has not only been associated with trees, but it is in fact a representation of the life-tree. It pictures the principle of complementareity. The sanctum is a model of the normal tree with roots below and branches above; and the



spiral tower of the sanctum symbolizes the inverted tree, with roots above and the spreading branches below.

We have seen that before the sanctum (the 'womb-chamber', garbha-gr̥ha) is constructed, the ritual of 'impregnation' (or 'depositing womb', garbha-nyāsa) is gone through. The 'womb' that is deposited in an underground chamber is a consecrated copper-pot containing the essential ingredients of growth and prosperity. It represents the roots of the temple-tree.

The sanctum rises above it in distinct tiers : the most fundamental tier is nature itself or the earth (prakṛti, in Tamiḻ aḍippaḍai), and

over it is laid the primary plinth or 'seat' (pīṭha). The three levels of growth are securely bound by a ritual as well as an engineering device known as 'packing' (bandha). Above this packed surface is laid the 'bed' of the sanctum (adhishṭhāna, 'base' or 'support') which is seen as the floor.

Walls rise from the 'bed' on all the four sides. It may be noted that the early sanctums were circular or apsidal in shape. A circle signifies the entire universe, and the sanctum is indeed a model of the universe. The primitive huts were also circular and they were nearer the model of the universe than modern buildings are. When the āgama texts began to look upon the world as being bound by the four directions, they insisted



that the shape of the sanctum must be a square, with its opening normally facing the East.

The spot where the 'womb' is hidden would be the seat of the icon. The icon represents the sap of the temple-tree, the four walls would indicate the spreading branches alround. The roof resting over the walls is technically called the 'row of doves' (kapota-pāli or simply kapota), after the birds that perch on tree-tops. The sanctum is thus a neat model of the growing tree.

The early sanctum had a flat-roof, but there was an urge towards a superstructure above it, a spiral or pyramidal tower which may be circular or polygonal in shape. The name for this architectural limb is 'vimāna', which expression has two

connotations: "that which is without (vi) comparison (māna, upamā)", and "that which brings about (vimāyate) fruits". The latter connotation, according to the Vedic commentator Sāyaṇa, refers to the Firegod, Agni, who bestows benefits on the performers of sacrifices. The tower over the sanctum is thus a physical representation of Fire.

It is interesting that the foundation of the temple is made to represent Earth (pṛthvī), the walls of the sanctum Water (āp) and the tower over it Fire (tejas): the finial of the tower stands for Air (vāyu) and above it is the formless Ether (ākāśa). The sanctum is thus a constellation of the five elements that are basic to the entire universe. And Fire being the active element that fuses the others,



the tower becomes an important limb in the structure of a temple.

(garuḍa) and if Subramanya peacocks.

The flat-roof (kapota) of the sanctum on which the tower rests and rises is overlaid by a single square stone slab known in the texts as 'the stone denoting the upper passage of life' (brahma-randhra-śilā). The sanctum is viewed as the head. Right on top of the head is the passage through which the currents of life ascend to the higher realms.

The vehicles are normally on a level lower than their owners. What then is the significance of the deities of vehicles above the sanctum? They act as door-guardians for the icon in the sanctum. But where are the doors there? Here is an interesting aspect of the tower. The guarding deities stand between the sanctum and the tower, admitting the forces that descend through the tower into the sanctum. The tower is the inverted tree. The main mass of the tower represents the spreading branches, and the finial above it the roots.

The life of the sanctum ascends to the tower through this stone slab. Around the four corners of this slab are placed the images of the vehicles or emblems that characterize the icon inside the sanctum. If the icon is Śiva, bulls are shown; if Śakti lions; if Viṣṇu the sacred eagles

Over the stone slab mentioned above, the 'neck' (griva) is introduced. And on the 'neck' rests



the dome of the tower. The term vimāna refers to the structure between the top-slab (upāna) and the finial (stūpī). Early vimānas were circular and conical, in keeping with the circular shape of the early sanctums. It rose in tiers (from one to twelve talas) of diminishing circumference until it ended in the point of the finial. Later the body of the vimāna tended to be polygonal.

Four-sided vimānas have become popular; six-sided and eight-sided ones are not rare. There are a few temples with the vimāna having as many as sixteen sides. The Kaḷḷalaṅgar temple at Madhurai is reputed to have as many as 65 sides! The prevailing shape in all such towers is pyramidal.

But the early conical towers were close imitations of the conical thatched roof of the circular hut, built around a central bamboo pole which projected beyond the roof. Whatever the later form the tower took, the basic image of the cone or spire or pyramid persisted. The branches of the inverted tree spreading around is the vision in the background.

Above the vimāna rests the 'vase' (kalaśa), representing the roots of the inverted tree. Texts mention that the original kalaśa was born as one of the fourteen precious gems that came out of the milky ocean when it was churned; and they suggest that it symbolizes blessing (*Prāsāda-maṇḍana*). The old name for this unit was "kāma-kumbha" or "the pitcher of desire".



In the architectural development of the Indian temples this feature arrived late, and its arrival appears to be subsequent to the canonical tests. And the early *kalaśas* were probably only stone blocks, round or ribbed. They were in the nature of cap-stones that held structurally as well as stylistically the *vimāna*, especially when it was tall and tapering, as in the North Indian temples. The copper vases were later innovations. Sometimes brass was used; opulence and vanity prompted gilded ones. But the *āgama* books favour copper.

The *kalaśa* is actually a vessel, like the vessel that is deposited under the sanctum. And, like the latter, this also is made to contain tokens of growth and prosperity, viz., cereals

with subtle seeds (such as millet) and nine precious stones.

This feature has several members, such as 'the foot-hold' (*pādagrāhi*) which is structurally imbedded in the masonry of the tower, 'the egg' (*aṇḍa*) or the belly, 'the neck' (*grīva*), 'the lotus-band' (*padma-paṭṭikā*), 'the rim' (*karṇikā*), and the 'bud' (*bījapūra*). The shape of this unit could resemble the bell, the flower-bud, the lamp, coconut, altar or pot. The significance of all these shapes is that it symbolizes the potentialities of life.

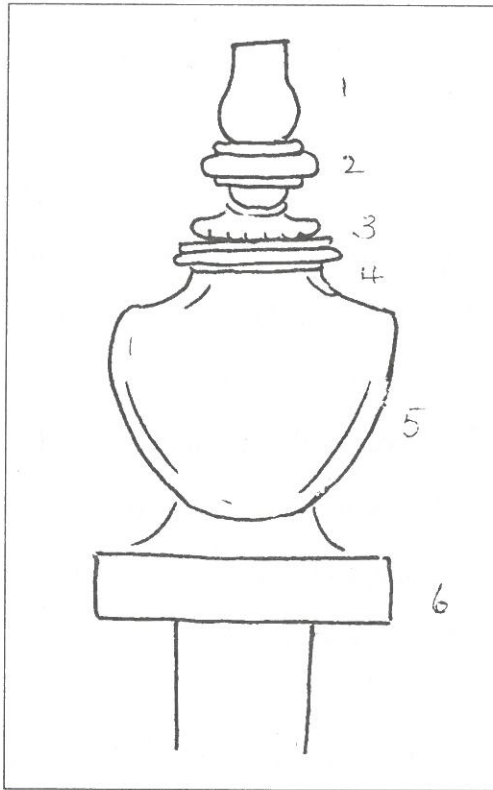
The ritual of installing the metal vase over the brick and mortar body of the tower is an interesting one. The vase is not bound to the tower by any packing material like mortar



or cement. It is only fixed by a hollow rod that juts out of the center of the tower and runs through the vase. It is through this tube that the 'tokens' (cereals and precious stones)

are introduced. It is sealed above the body of the *kalaśa* before the 'bud' rises.

The body has five limbs: the 'seat' (*pīṭha*) in the form of a lotus flower whose petals open out completely: the 'neck' on which the bulging out 'pot' (*kumbha*), which is the next limb, rests: the 'brim' or lid for the 'pot': the 'flower' which opens upward: and finally the 'flower' bud which tapers off to a point. The 'bud' is actually the central part of the flower whose peripheral petals are separated. It signifies new life and growth.



KĀMA-KUMBHA
(*Kalaśa over the Vimāna*)

1. Bijapūra (bud) 2. Karṇika (rim)
3. Padma-paṭṭika (lotus-band)
4. Grīva (neck) 5. Aṇḍaka (belly)
6. Pāda-grāhi (foot-hold)

The *kalaśa* has an important hidden component, viz. 'the golden person; (*suvarṇa-puruṣa*), who is regarded as the very soul of the temple. The belly of the *kalaśa* is





made to contain a tiny cot made in silver, copper or sandal-wood, over which is laid on a soft-feather mattress the golden icon of this 'person', with one hand holding a lotus flower over the heart and the other carrying a triple-flag. Four little pots made in gold, silver or copper, and containing consecrated water are placed on the four sides of the cot. Near the recumbent 'person' is kept a golden or silver pot filled with ghee. The procedure of introducing

this 'golden person' into the body of the kalaśa is known as 'hṛdaya-varṇaka-vidhi'. It is described in detail in such texts as *Aparājita-paripricchā* and *Dīpārṇava*.

The entire structure of the kalaśa thus represents the roots of the inverted tree. It bears a correspondence with the 'womb' under the sanctum. Both are roots, the latter having upward growth of the ordinary tree, and the former the downward growth of the inverted tree. The 'womb', the icon and the finial are structurally collinear and run along the same axis of divine consciousness.

This consciousness in its ascent transforms itself into the icon, and materializes into the sanctum. In its



descent, it runs through the finial and is concretized as the mass of the tower. Under the ground it is in a dormant, nebulous condition, and in the sanctum it gets transformed into a world of materiality and activity. In the tower it rises above this world, before it is absorbed in the universal consciousness at the summit of the finial.

Man's approach is one of ascent of matter towards the spirit. But it becomes meaningful only if there is a complementary process of descent; the divine spirit must flow down into the material. The finial of the tower symbolizes the dual act of gathering the divine essence from the formless cosmos and communicating it to the main mass of the tower. The essence here acquires a concrete form and

then descends into the sanctum, to be focussed in the icon.

The sanctum is man's head, as will be evident in the analogue we will shortly consider. The stone slab over the roof (brahma-randhra-śilā) is the top the head, representing the esoteric passage known as brahma-randhra. The hollow tube in the vase is the external projection of the main channel in the human constitution, the sushumṇā-nāḍī. The axis on which the 'womb', 'the icon', and the finial are positioned is also the path along which the ascent and descent of vital forces may be achieved.

The shrine thus demonstrates the constellation of the human and the divine currents; matter moves up and the spirit flows down. The



devotee that stands in front of the icon is expected to partake of this transaction. The emanations that proceed from the icon must be picked up by the faith in his heart. Devotion is the transformer. The rituals conducted within the shrine involve these idea, and attempt to facilitate transoformation along the horizontal axis of icon-devotee. The devotee represents active matter and the icon passive spirit. The two are brought together in the creative act of worship.

When the Upanishads speak of the 'inverted tree', they mean the phenomenal world of matter and spirit having its roots in the 'unmanifest' emanation of the Absolute. The reference is to man that is involved in the world of

ignorance, passion, desire and activity. Man's roots are hidden in the abstract, 'thousand petalled lotus' (sahasrāra), a center just above the head, outside the physical frame. He spreads out into the world and moves away from his roots. He is therefore distressed.

The task before him is to discover the roots, and make them the real base for his being and becoming. This means an upward thrust on his part, and a concurrent descent from the source of his being, the 'thousand-petalled lotus'. The Yoga texts speak of different psychic centres in the body, pictured as so many lotuses with their petals bent downward, in the normal condition of existence; the adept will be able to reorganize and correct the vital



currents inside him so as to give the petals the upward slant.

It may be recalled that the level below the 'pot' in the finial (above the vimāna) is pictured as a lotus with petals that droop and spread out, and the level above the 'brim' has a flower the petals of which turn up and close in. The sculptured motifs of lotus flowers with petals positioned thus are commonly to be seen in several aspects of temple structure.

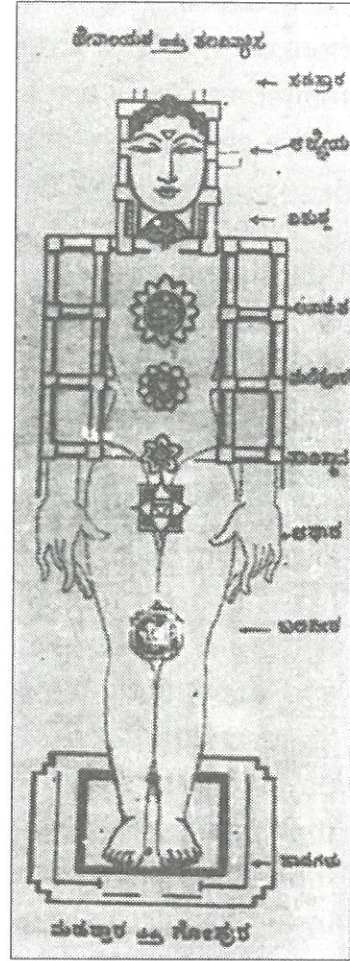
The row of flowers with petals turned upward is known to sculptors as 'padma-vari', and the row where the petals are bent down 'kumbha-vari'. The petals of the lotus turn up when the sun shines. The 'kumuda' is the blue water-lily that blooms when the moon is up. The divine

grace is the sun, and man's effort is the moon. Their conjoint operation is what is pictured in such sculptured pieces.

The analogy of man's constitution with the temple architecture is a favourite theme of many canonical texts like *Śrī-praśna*, *Vishṇu-tantra*, *Śilpa-ratna*, *Vātulāgama* and *Aparājita-śilpa*. The texts insist that the devotee must approach the temple as if it were the body of the Divine. They further highlight significant correspondences. The sanctum is the head, the tower the top-knot of hair (śikhā), the pavilion middle parts of the body, the enclosure hands, and the entrance-tower feet. The icon within the sanctum is the personification of the mantras.



The temple thus becomes a tool for the devotee and a technique of worship. We may recall what the Talmud suggests: “If you desire to perceive the invisible, then perceive the visible”. This is precisely what the canonical texts drive at. Some texts (e.g. *Pārameśvara-saṁhitā*) point out that the base of the temple represents the earth, the sanctum the intermediate space, and the tower the heavens. In the scheme of ‘seven worlds’, the tower comprises three worlds; the seat thereof ‘jana-loka’, the pot portion ‘tapo-loka’ and the spike (stūpī) ‘satya-loka’.



MANUSHYA DEVĀLAYA

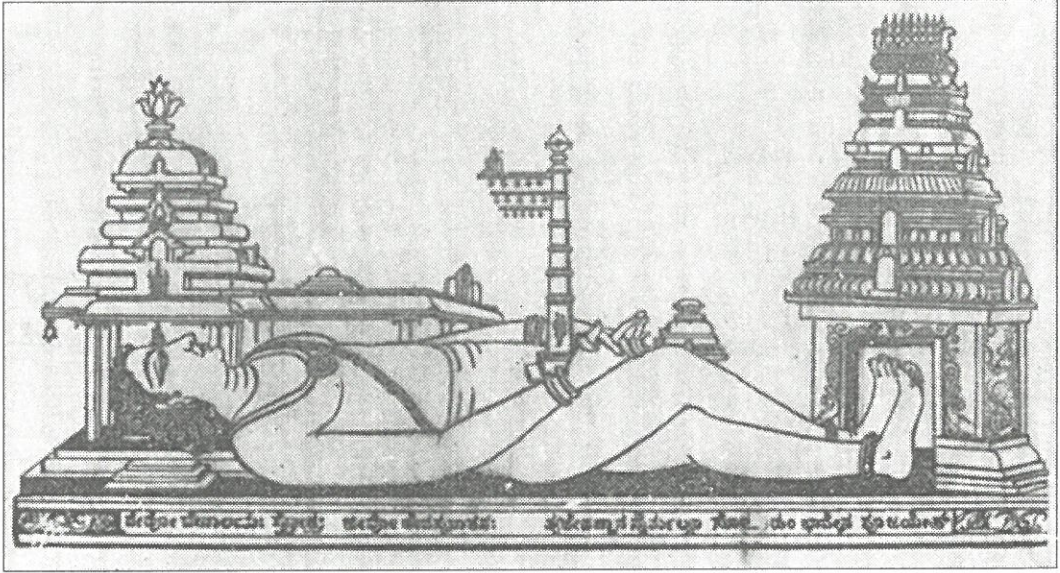
BODY-TEMPLE

A more interesting thought is the projection of the temple architecture in terms of human constitution. The saying that “the human body is said

to be the temple and soul the icon”

देहो देवालयः प्रोक्तः जीवो देवः सनातनः ॥ is found in many texts. The architectural terms used in all the texts are the names of parts of the human body:





DEHA DEVĀLAYA

‘feet’ (pāda), ‘knee’ (jānu), ‘thighs’ (jaṅghā), ‘belly’ (kukshi), ‘neck’ (grīva), ‘shoulders’ (kandhara), ‘nose’ (nāsikā), ‘face’ (mukha), ‘head’ (śīrsha) and so on.

As a temple is laid out, it is said to picture a man lying down. His feet connote the entrance-tower, his genital organ the flag-staff (dhvaja-stambha), his belly the assembly-hall (raṅga-maṇḍapa), his heart ‘the porch’

(antarāla or śukanāsi), his head the sanctum, and the brow-meet the seat of icon. There is another account which reckons the neck as the sanctum and the head as the tower; the heart, according to this account, is the porch where the devotee stands and looks at the icon.

The forehead of man is said to represent the sanctum, and top of head, the tower. The space between



the eyebrows is the seat of the icon. The icon is located in the ājñā center; the finial of the tower is unseen above the head, in the sahasrāra region; and the 'womb' of the sanctum at the tip of the nose.

Further mention must be made here of the structural detail known as the altar or 'the dispensing seat' (bali-pīṭha), which is an indispensable associate of the sanctum. As already described, it is a small but stylized stone seat that is installed directly in front of the icon and very near the sanctum. Some texts prescribe that it must be outside the gopura or the first enclosure (*Vishṇu-tilaka*, *Mānasāra*).

It is on this seat that the food-offerings to the attendant divinities

and the guardian goblins are placed, after the main food offering to the icon in the sanctum has been completed. There will be, as already mentioned, several such seats around the sanctum in positions determined by the canonical texts. Usually altars are provided in the eight directions, but the one in front of the sanctum is regarded as the chief (pradhāna), and it will be the most ornate, and stylistically majestic, with several limbs such as the base, cornices, wall-surface with door-lets or niches.

It is usually made of hard granite, but it is also built in bricks and mortar. There is a provision also for metal ones and when the altar is wooden it is recommend to be covered by metal sheets (*Kāraṇāgama*). Texts like *Śilpa-ratna*



indicate that mud altars were also common at one time. Most texts suggest that the size of the altar should be $1/8$, $1/7$ or $1/5$ of the dimension of the sanctum. Depending on their sizes and shapes, altars are classified into several types such as Śrī-bandha, Padma-bandha, Śrī-bhadra, Sarvato-bhadra and so on.

Its development and incorporation into the Indian temple architecture are hard to delineate. Perhaps, it is a remnant of the Vedic yūpa, and in many temples we do find bali-pīthas which are merely crude stone blocks or wooden posts. In the well-known temples, it is not unusual to find two 'dispensing seats' placed together, one crudely simple and the other stylistically sculptured. The former can be presumed to be

the original, and the latter a later addition.

It is also likely that the stone seat in early days was meant to offer animal food, and some canonical texts do contain details of offerings which include flesh mixed with turmeric powder. Whatever the origin, this seat is ritualistically very significant. In fact, the area of the real temple reached only to those seats; whatever structure is beyond them is deemed to be secondary, answering more to the donor's fancy than to the prescriptions of the texts.

A text clearly lays down that a shrine consists only of four limbs: the sanctum, the icon, the tower above the sanctum, and the 'dispensing seat'. And another text speaks of the 'dispensing seat' as a



replica of the tower above the sanctum.

A text claims that the dispensing seat and the tower above the sanctum (*vimāna*) are indeed the same, for it is there that the gods assemble (*Nārayaṇa-saṁhitā*). Indeed the shapes of the two closely resemble each other, with the difference that the altar is crowned by a flat lotus motif while the tower ends in a round *kalaśa* surmounted by a spike (*stūpī*). And like the tower, the altar may be square, circular or polygonal.

The symbolism of this seat is not very different either. But its position is along the horizontal axis of consciousness; it represents the meeting place of the active consciousness of the devotee and the passive consciousness of the divinity.

In the projection of the temple-image on the human body, the 'seat' is located in the navel, which esoterically is considered the center or hub of man's physical existence. Before the devotee enters the porch in front of the sanctum, he has ceremonially to go round the 'dispensing seat', which act symbolizes centering himself adequately. It should prepare him to receive the emanations from the icon.

The flag-staff (*dhvaja-stambha*) is often seen close to the 'dispensing seat' in South Indian temples. It is usual for the two to be together. Some texts prescribe that the 'dispensing seat' must be located between the sanctum and the flag-staff, although in practice the flag-staff frequently takes the middle

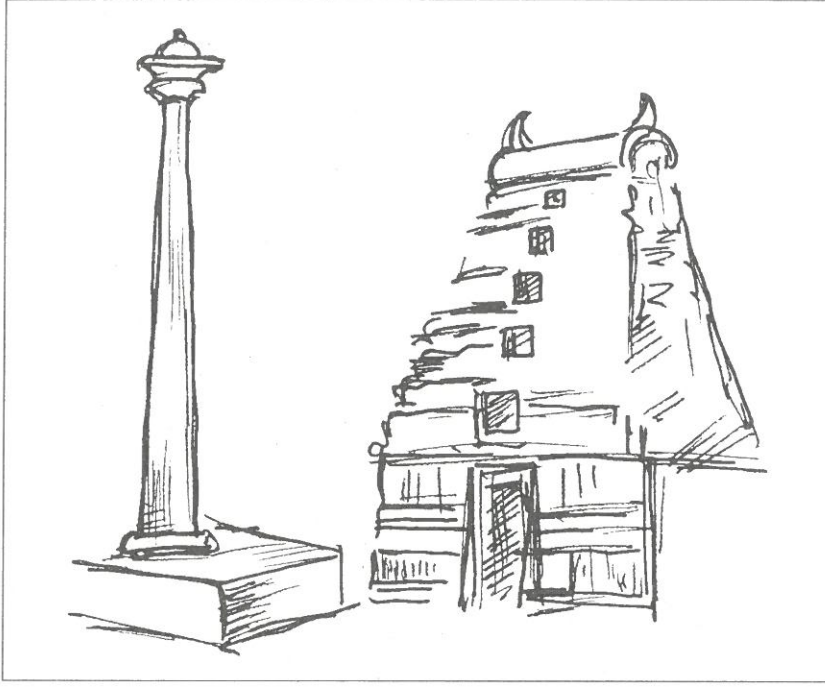


position. The custom of erecting this tall thin column, whose height varies from fifty to eighty feet, appears to be a late one. The early purpose was only to indicate the position of the sanctum. Even today, the mean shrines in villages and on highways when they are otherwise indistinguishable have flags on them, to show that they are places of worship. In North Indian temples, it is a practice to fly long and flowing banners from the tower itself.

The canonical texts favour wooden or bamboo poles, with an uneven number of joints, upto twenty-five. Covering them with metal plates was optional. And the flag-staff was not necessarily intended as a permanent structure. Putting it up marked the commencement of occasional festivals in the temple.

However, in course of time the permanently fixed flag-staff became a common feature in temple architecture. The wooden pole, covered with copper, brass, or even silver plates gilded, is installed on a raised stone platform, often square in shape, in front of the sanctum. The top portion of this tall mast will have three horizontal perches (symbolising righteousness, reputation and propriety, or the three divinities Brahmā the Creator, Viṣṇu the Preserver and Śiva the Destroyer), pointing towards the sanctum. The 'seat' of the flag-staff as well as the mast with perches came to be highly stylized in South India during the days of the Chōla and Pāṇḍya rulers, for the flag-staff was uniquely a royal insignia.





When the flag-staff became a permanent detail in the temple, the commencement of festivals began to be signalized by ceremonially hoisting a flag on it (masūraka). Normally, however, the flag-staff will only be a column without the banner (nishpatāka). It would only indicate the limit of the consecrated area of the shrine. When occasion demands, a banner would be flown from its top (sapatāka).

Hayaśīrsha-saṁhitā, a Pāñcharātra text, which insists that a building (prāsāda) without a flag would be in vain, gives some interesting details about the position and height of the mast, the type of bamboo that is to be chosen, the colour of the cloth for the banner, and so on. The benefit of the flag-mast is here said to be “obtainment of all that is desired”. Another text, *Śiva-sarvsva*, describes the purpose





of the flag as indication of the insignia of the deity, or of the characteristic vehicle of the icon that is within the sanctum.

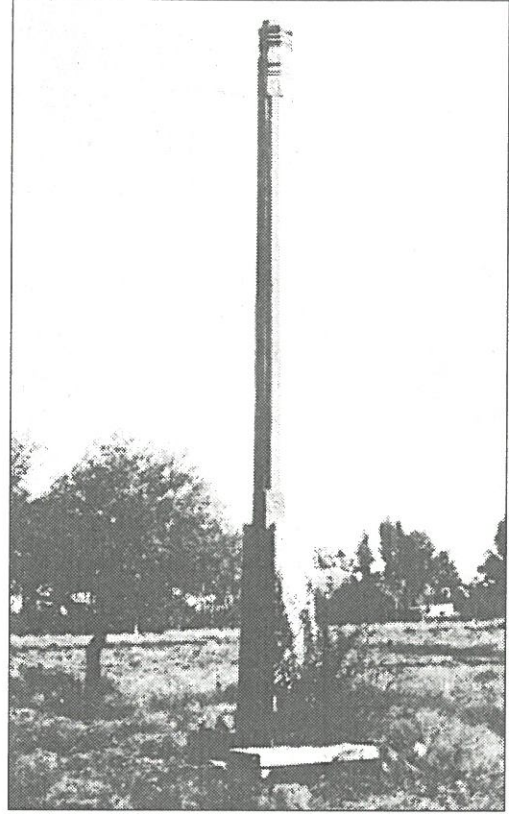
The symbolism of the flag-staff is not clear in the textual accounts, probably because it was a late innovation and not a necessary

involvement of the shrine. It was an introduction from royal association, and therefore the usual symbolism is that of victory and prosperity. A tall flag-post, richly decorated and elaborately installed, would mean a rich and prosperous temple commanding royal patronage; it is a



sign of pomp and pride. God is the greatest of kings and the temple is His palace.

A text mentions that when the flag is hoisted in front of the temple, gods as well as manes will be delighted. Otherwise, according to the text, demons and goblins would sneak in and make the temple their abode (*Prāsāda-maṇḍana*). The association of flag-posts with tall lamp-posts in the temples is well-known. One may recall that there is a custom of erecting tall Yama-dīpas on occasions to provide satisfaction for the departed ancestors and to illumine their path towards our realm. The flag-post is also magical in its significance. The texts assign Śiva to the bottom of the post, Brahmā to the middle portion, and Viṣṇu to the top.



While in the South, the flag-cloth (*patāka*) is occasionally tied to the flag-post, it is ever present in the temples of the North. The length of the cloth in the latter case will be equal to the length of the flag-post, which will be fixed to the top member of the tower over the sanctum. South Indian *vimānas*, however, are not



meant to accommodate the flag-post, which is a distinct member, outside the inner enclosure.

But the 'flag' in the traditional context also means a resolve to exert and a will to succeed. Hoisting the flag suggests setting out to conquer. The devotee coming into the temple would have to resolve to conquer his own baser nature, to set out on a war with his own mean disposition; a look at the flag-mast would be a reminder for him in this regard.

The Sanskrit word for the flag or banner, dhvaja, strictly means whatever is raised. It therefore has the connotations of hope, desire (especially erotic desire which is physically expressed as erection, and the Sanskrit expression is frequently

employed in this context), pride, arrogance and will. Whatever raises man to a higher level of understanding and activity is dhvaja. It is a call that god is high and above (*Mahābhārata*, 1,33,17). The characteristic animal and the insignia of the icon on the banner gives a direction to the devotee's desire and will. When the devotee sights the banner and bows to it, he resolves to rise higher.

The Indian temple is thus a constellation of symbolism. It is an image that is at once relevant to human aspirations and persistent in human thought and actions. The texts of Indian architecture which provided us with all the details of measurements and parts of the temple, and prescribe the rites of



installation and rituals of worship, also indicate the real value of a shrine:

“The ritualists have their God in the fire; but the wise folk find Him in their own heart. It is the dull-witted one that seeks God in an icon.

Those who have higher understanding see God in everything.”

अग्नौ क्रियावतां देवो

हृदि देवो मनीषिणाम् ।

प्रतिमा स्वल्पबुद्धीनाम्

ज्ञानिनां सर्वतो हरिः ॥

(अग्निपुराणे)



CHAPTER TWO

THE ARCHĀ TRADITION

Archanā ('pūjā', 'saparyā', 'seva' or 'ārāadhanā') means worship of an icon (more specifically 'pratimārchana' or 'bimba-pūjā'). It is of two major varieties: worship done at home (grhārchana), and worship done in a temple (ālayārchana). The scriptural prescriptions for the two differ considerably, the former being described as 'worship for ones own benefit or for the benefit of ones own immediate family' (ātmārchana) while the latter is 'worship for the sake of others' (parārchana). The latter is naturally more institutionalized than the former, and the procedure in the latter case is more or less standardized.

The most evident difference between the two varieties of worship is in the size of the icons worshipped at home and in the temples. There is a prohibition for worshipping at home of icons which are bigger than ten (or fifteen) aṅgulas ('mātrāṅgula'), according to *Kāpila-pāñchārātra* and *Hayagrīva-pāñcharātra*

मात्राङ्गुलप्रमाणेन दश पञ्च दशाङ्गुलम्।

गृहे तु प्रतिमा पूज्या नाधिका तु प्रशस्यते ॥

This restriction is not applicable to icons in the temple. Worship at home is also simpler and shorter than worship in a temple; it has fewer details, and does not require periodic festive observances





Śaṁkha

(naimittika-utsavas) or the daily procession in connection with food-offering (bali-yātrā).

Worship in a temple (devāyatana), which is public in

character, is again distinguished from worship in a monastic establishment (gurvāyatana), which is both public and private. The latter is an extension of the household worship, but it is meant for a larger audience. The





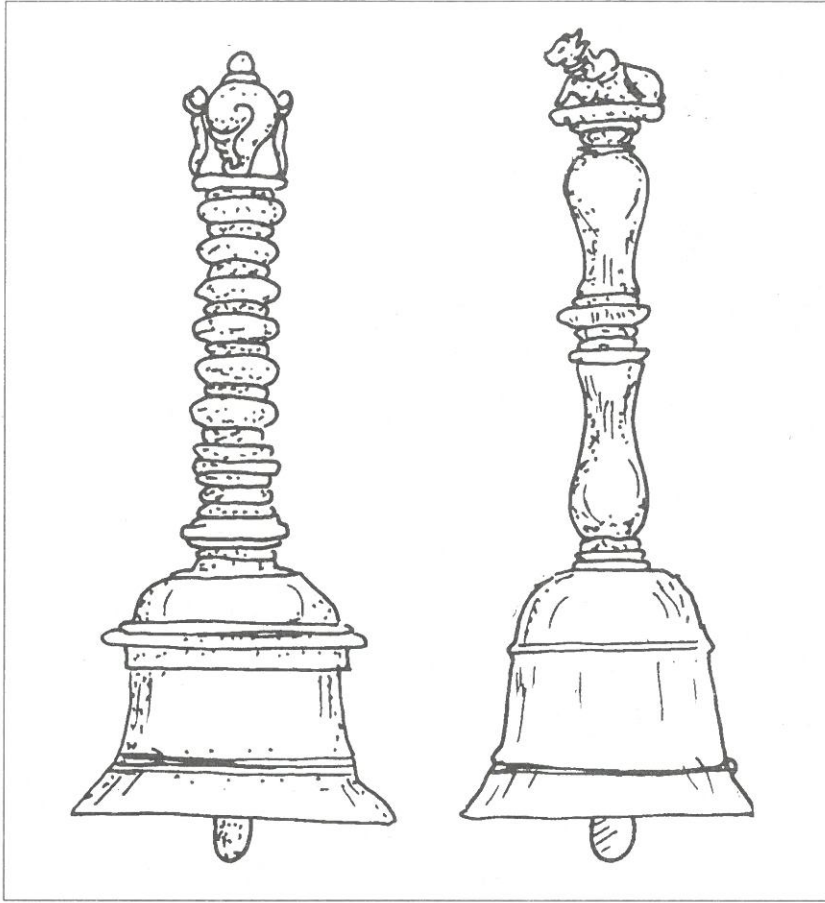
Ghaṇṭā

temple, being a public institution, is open to all classes of people, regardless of sect, creed or caste. But in a monastic institution, admittance is restricted to people who owe allegiance to a particular sect or caste.

Worship in a temple involves an elaborate ritual, and it is repeated several times during the course of the day. It is usual for most temples for arranging worship three times a day (called 'trikāla-pūjā'): morning (prātaḥ), noon (mādhyandina) and eventide (sāyam). There are temples where the worship is conducted six times a day ('shaṭkāla-pūjā'), viz. in addition to the above, early dawn (pratyūṣham, about 5 a.m.), pre-noon (upa-sandhi, about 9 a.m.), and late in the night (ardha-yāma, about 10 p.m.). The texts of the Pāñcharātra school prescribe worship as many as twelve times.

The worship sequence involves numerous details (called upachāras). Some texts (like *Tantra-sāra*, *Siddha-yāmala*) gives as many as



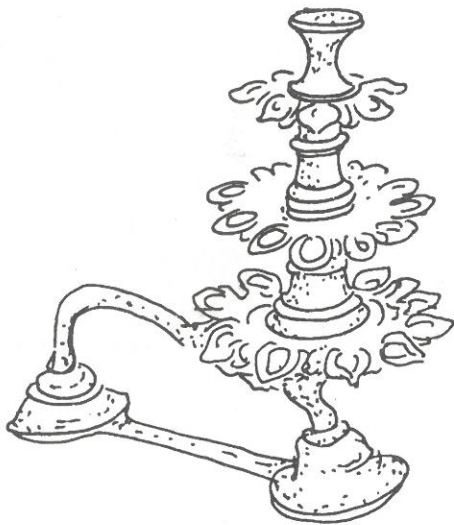


Ghaṇṭā

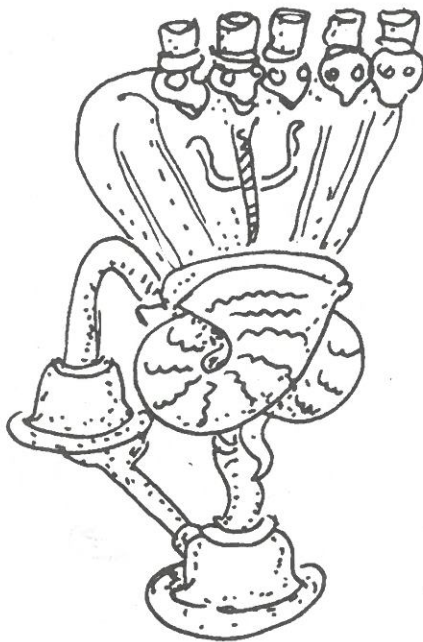
sixty-four of them; some others content themselves with eighteen or sixteen. The sixteen-detailed worship (shoḍaśopachāra) is more frequently resorted to: water for the feet (pādyā), water of offering (arghya),

water for sipping (āchamana), bath (snāna), offering of garments and ornaments (vasana-bhūshaṇe), presenting fragrant unguents (gandha), offering flowers (pushpa), burning incense (dhūpa), waving





Gopura-ārati



Nāga-pañchārati

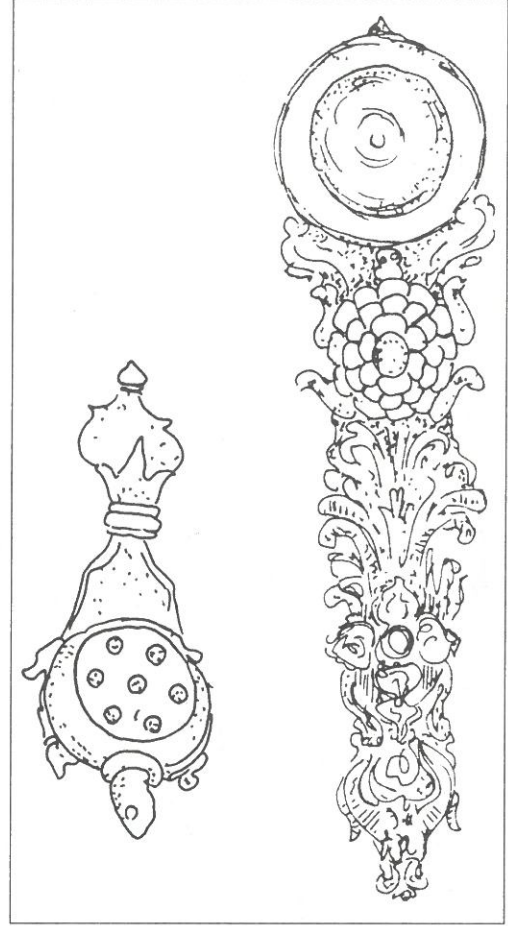


Matsya-ārati



light in front of the icon (dīpa), presenting food (naivedya), water for cleaning the mouth and sipping (punar-āchamana), presenting post-prandial delicacy (tāmbūla), worship by invoking names (archanā), singing hymns and laudatory verses (stotra), oblations (tarpaṇa) and prostrations (namaskriyā). *Tantra-sāra* insists that worship must involve at least five details (pāñchopachāra); unguents (gandha), flowers (pushpa), incense (dhūpa), light (dīpa) and food-offering (naivedya).

In household worship, the sequence of five details would take the form of inviting the deity (āvāhana), seating (sthāpanā), materializing the presence (sannidhi-karaṇa), worship (with the above five details) and dismissal of the deity after worship (visarjana).



Kūrmārati

In *Rauravāgama* (3,p.133) four varieties of worship are mentioned:

दीपान्तं वा हविष्यन्तमुत्सवान्तं नटान्तकम्।

दीपान्तं मुक्तिदं प्रोक्तं नैवेद्यान्तं तु भुक्तिदम्।

श्रीप्रदं चोत्सवान्तं तु नटनान्तं तु सौख्यदम्॥





Nāgārati

(1) The sequences from beginning till the offering of lights (dipānta); this will help obtaining release from worldly bondage; (2) till the offering of fire-oblations (havishyanta), for worldly enjoyment;



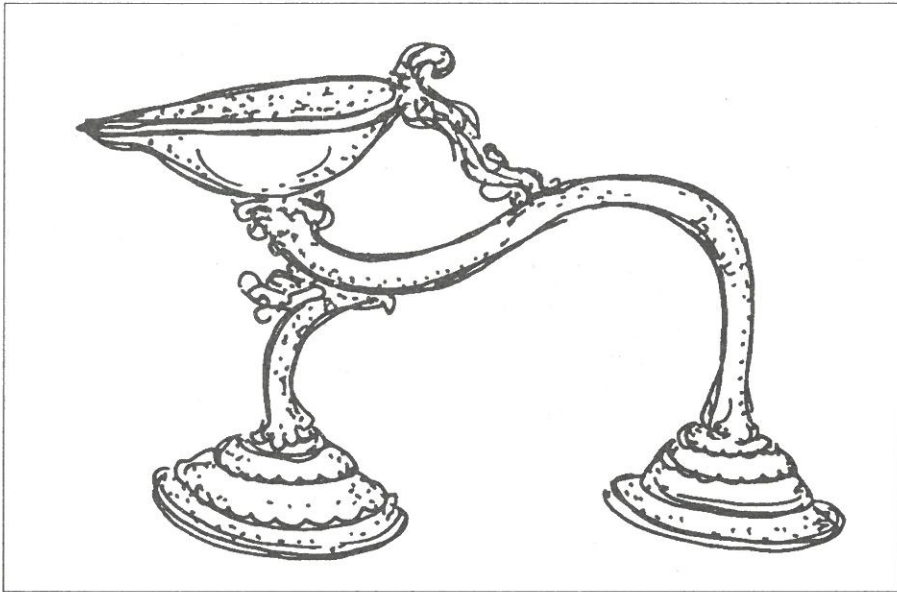
Pañchārati



(3) till the utsava sequence (utsavānta), for acquiring wealth; and (4) till the sequence where dance is presented (naṭanānta), for happiness. Kāraṇāgama (pūrva, 30,408) speaks of three kinds of worship, (1) till the lights (dīpānta), called 'archanā'; (2) till the offering of food (naivedyānta), called 'pūjana'; and (3) till the food-distribution for the attendant-divinities (balyanta), called 'śāntika'.

The same text gives another triad of worship: (1) homānta called 'vijaya', (2) utsavānta called 'śāntika', and (3) stotrānta called 'pausṭika' which is of midling merit (madhyama-traya) compared with the previously mentioned triad (kanyāsa-traya).

The deity as the icon in a temple is permanently 'alive' and 'present', and therefore the details of inviting,



Dīpārati

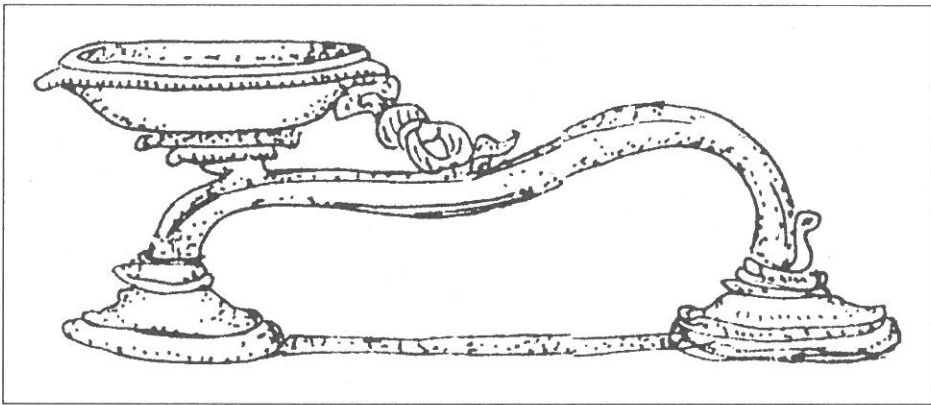


seating, materialising the presence and dismissal become irrelevant and unnecessary.

Among the details of worship, offering water for honouring is intended to delight the god (deva), unguents like sandal-paste to delight the creator (brahmā), flowers to secure growth (vṛddhi-prada), burning incense to delight the cosmic fire (vaiśvānara), placing light in front of the deity to delight the divinity presiding over ritualistic action

(karma), waving light (ārati) to secure victory (jaya), offering food to secure abundance (saṃṛddhi), and presentation of tāmbūla to secure prosperity (śrī).

Daily worship rituals are collectively known as 'karma', as distinguished from processions (utsava), food-offering (bali), or ceremonial bath in a tank (tīrtha). It is a custom in many temples to use different icons for different purposes. The icon employed in daily worship



Dhūpārati





Dhūpārati

is the permanent and immovable one (mūla-kautuka) and the smaller replica of it in metal is known as 'karmārchā'.

WORSHIP IN TEMPLE

Three are said to be the factors that contribute to the presence of divinity in a shrine;

अर्चकस्य तपोयोगात् अर्चनस्यातिशायनात् ।
आभिरूप्याच्च बिम्बानां देवः सान्निध्यमृच्छति ॥

The first refers to the personality and character of the priest who is entrusted with the responsibility of worship. The priest mediates between Godhead and the devotees who visit the shrines. His austerity and superior conduct make



him an effective medium through which divine grace may flow. The second factor is the manner in which worship is conducted. If worship is in perfect accord with the Āgamic prescriptions, with all the details meticulously attended to, it facilitates the presence of Godhead in the deity worshipped. And the third factor pertains to the beauty of the icon in which divinity is an important consideration for attracting the devotee's attention and for facilitating his absorption. *Mānasāra* (51,70) tells us that the beauty of the icon is determined by the fidelity with which the Śilpa-śāstra canons of proportions are followed by the sculptor.

शास्त्रमानेन यो रम्यः स रम्यो नाऽन्य एव हि।

The āgama texts deal with all three factors that facilitate the

expression of divinity in a shrine, especially with the second factor, viz. the correct, and therefore the effective, worship that must be accorded to the deity. The expression, 'vigraha' for the deity signifies that the icon is being especially treated (*viśeṣheṇa grhyate iti*). The icon is not mistaken for the Godhead; the texts make it clear that it is only a device which enables one to approach Godhead properly (*'ālambanasya prādhānyena dhyānam pratīkopāstih'*), and hence it is also called 'pratimā', a symbol. The worship rituals explicate the symbolism for the discerning devotee. Worship itself is symbolic.

Godhead is formless and subtle, beyond our apprehension. But out of its will, it will manifest with a form



before the devotee, when properly worshipped. The simile of clarified butter in milk, oil in the sesamum seeds, scent in flowers or fire in wood is given; by churning, butter is got: by pressing, oil comes out: by squeezing, scent is got: and by friction, fire comes out. We read in *Marīchi-saṁhitā*:

काष्ठे अग्निर्मथनादुज्ज्वलन्निव निष्कलात्मको
विष्णुर्ध्यानमथनेन भक्त्या स्वसंकल्पनात्
सकलो भवति ॥

Daily worship (nityārchanā) in Āgama is tantamount to the rituals known as nitya-karmas in Mimāṃsaka circles, rituals which are obligatory and invariant. It is eulogized in *Ajitāgama* (kriyā, 20,1) as superior to the nitya-rituals in the shape of yajñas enjoined

on the householders ('sarva-yajñottamottamam'); as capable of warding off all sins, even as the yajñas are believed to do ('sarva-papa-haram'); and accomplish all purposes ('sarvasiddhi-pradam nṛṇām'); and accomplish all purposes ('sarva-siddhi-pradam nṛṇām'). *Kāraṇāgama* (1,30, 1-2) point out that daily worship in a temple would be competent to procure all the rewards that are said to follow the performance of yajñas ('sarva-yajña-phala-pradam').

Suprabhedāgama (1,8, 1-2) adds that daily worship would also contribute to the happiness of all people, to their prosperity and to the overcoming of all obstructions: it will make for the glory of the king and of the country;



अथातःसंप्रवक्ष्यामि शिवार्चनविधिक्रमम् ।

सर्वपापहरं दिव्यं सर्वलोकसुखावहम् ।

श्रीप्रदं सर्वविघ्नघ्नं राज्ञो राष्ट्रविवर्धनम् ॥

Worship takes two forms:
worship in the household for ones
own sake (ātmārtha, svārtha), and
worship in the temple for the sake
of others, viz., the public (parārtha)



आत्मार्थं च परार्थं च यजनं द्विविधं स्मृतम् ।

(*Ajitāgama, kriyā, 20,2*)

आत्मार्थं च परार्थं च पूजा द्विविधमुच्यते

(*Kāraṇāgama, 1,30,2*)

The distinction between the two forms made in the āgama texts relates to the persons who are eligible to perform them. In the former case, the householder worships the moveable icon (or līṅga) given to him by his guru (who accords him the necessary initiation) in his own house, keeping it on a platform: or he worships the image belonging to the temporary variety (kṣaṇika, made for the purpose each day by butter, flour-dough, jaggery, clay or cowdung), or worships the deity in the yantra or in the kalaśa filled with water; or he contemplates upon the deity in his own heart; or he may



worship the deity in painting or on screen:

दत्ते च गुरुणा लिङ्गे स्थण्डिले स्वयमात्मनि ।

क्षणिके मण्डले तोयेऽप्यात्मार्ययजनं स्मृतम् ॥

(*Kāraṇāgama*, 1,30,3)

दीक्षितो गुरुणा तेन दत्तं लिङ्गं चलात्मकम् ।

गृहीत्वा तत्र वान्यत्र क्षणिके स्थाण्डिलेऽथ वा ॥

जले वा प्रतिमायां वा मण्डले चित्रकेऽपि वा ।

पटे वा हृदये वाऽथ भवेदात्मार्यमर्चनम् ॥

(*Ajitāgama*, kriyā, 20, 3-4)

Worship of the other type (viz. parārtha) is required to be performed always by the professional priest in a public place (such as temple). The Śaivāgamas refer to



such priests whose profession is to worship as Śiva-brāhmanas or ādi-śaivas: they descend from ancestors who were created by God himself for this purpose. Vaikhānasāgamas make a similar claim for the Vaikhānasa priests in Viṣṇu temples. The Pāñcharātrins too are professional priests who claim special eligibility to worship in a temple. We read for instance in *Kāmikāgama* (1,4, 6-7), that worship by those other than these chosen priests would spell ruin to the land and the people:

परार्थयजनं कार्यं शिवविप्रैस्तु नित्यशः ।

धार्मिकः कथ्यते नित्यमादिशैवो द्विजोत्तमः ॥

अन्ये तु स्वार्थकादन्यत्कुर्युश्चेत्कर्तृनाशनम् ।

शिवसृष्टिं विना ये तु जायन्ते ब्रह्मणो मुखात् ॥

ते सामान्या न तेषां तु परार्थेज्याधिकारिता ।

यदि मोहेन कुर्वीरन् राज्ञो राष्ट्रस्य नाशनम् ॥



Begur Nāgēśvarasvāmī temple.



The professional priests are entitled to undertake both forms of worship (svārtha or ātmārtha and parārtha), while others can only worship in the household:

शिवविप्रेण कर्तव्यमात्मार्थं च परार्थकम् ।
विप्रक्षत्रियवैश्याश्च शूद्राश्चैव च दीक्षिताः ।
आत्मार्थमर्चनं कुर्यान्न कुर्यात्तु परार्थकम् ॥

(*Amśumadāgama*, 3-4)

Worship for the public is conducted in temples erected by sages, kings, chieftains or the people, especially in temples for which provision has been made to defray the expenses of worship as well as the expenditure on maintenance; The professional priests enjoy the financial and other benefits in return for the services rendered:

प्रासादादिषु सर्वत्र स्थापितेषु बहुष्वपि ।
राज्ञा वा राजकल्पैर्वा जनैर्जनिपदैस्तु वा ॥

अनुभूय कृतां वृत्तिं क्रियते यद्यदर्चनम् ।
तत्परार्थमिति प्रोक्तमन्येषां फलदानतः ॥

(*Ajitāgama*, kriyā, 20, 6-7)

Marīchi's *Ānanda-saṃhitā* (1,35) mentions that worship is three-fold; bodily, verbal and mental. Bodily worship is again two-fold: without an icon and with an icon.

तस्य विश्वात्मनो विष्णोरर्चनं त्रिविधं तथा ।
मानसं वाचिकं वाथ कायिकं वापि तत् त्रयम् ।
कायिकं द्विविधं प्रोक्तममूर्तं च समूर्तकम् ॥

(1,34-35)

Mental worship is contemplating in seclusion upon Godhead either in ones own heart or in the solar orb, or upon the form of Vishṇu (archā). Verbal worship is articulation of Vedic hymns which eulogize Godhead. Bodily worship is performance of sacrifices or offering



several services to an icon. In the Kṛta-age, mental worship was regarded as best, while in the Tretā-age performance of sacrifices. In the Dvāpara-age, iconic worship was meritorious, but in the Kali-age (viz. the present age) thinking of Godhead is the best:

कृते तु मानसं श्रेष्ठं त्रेतायां यजनं परम् ।
द्वापरे प्रतिमार्चा च कलौ चिन्तनमुत्तमम् ॥

(१,४८)

The commentary on the text explains that all that is mentioned till now pertains to the household worship or svārtha (or ātmārtha) mode of worship ('svārtham gr̥hārchanam proktam'). The text continues that what is indicated in all the ages is worship with five factors (recitation of mantras, ritualistic acts,

materials for the various services, meditation and emotional involvement or devotion), and thirty-two services closing with the obligatory fire-oblations and explanations. This is known as worship in a shrine (or parārtha) and is meant to contribute prosperity for all people.

चतुर्ष्वपि युगेष्वेवं विशेषस्तु युगे युगे ।
मन्त्रोच्चारक्रियाद्रव्यध्यानभावाङ्गपञ्चकम् ॥

द्वात्रिंशदुपचारेण परिवारगणान्वितम् ।
नित्यहोमोत्सवान्तं च प्रायश्चित्तक्रियाक्रमम् ।
तत्परार्थार्चनं प्रोक्तं सर्वलोकाभिवृद्धिदम् ॥

(1, 49-50)

Kāśyapīya-jñāna-kāṇḍa (TTD, Tirupati, 1960) specifies that worship in a temple is called 'vimānārchanā', and that it is meritorious, public, long-standing and conducive of results of all sacrifices:



सा विमानार्चना पुण्या सर्वक्रतुफलप्रदा

सार्वजनीना चिरस्थापिनी

(page 37)



Jalasangi (Bidar)

Although Āgama concerns itself principally with the worship done in the temple, it lays emphasis on household worship, for even the professional priest must finish his customary worship at home before he arrives at the temple. Worship in the temple cannot be a substitute for household worship either for the priest or for the lay devotee. One may choose to go or not to go to the temple, and there are conditions which preclude the priest from entering the sanctum and worship the deity. But household worship is obligatory; it must not under any circumstance be given up.

Kāśyapiya-jñāna-kāṇḍa,
(Tirumala Tirupati Devasthānams,
Tirupati, 1960) which extols worship
in a temple as tantamount to Vedic
sacrifices ('tasmād ālaye vidhinā



vishṇor nityārchanam anāhitagnīnām
 agnihotra-samam yasmād etach
 chāgnihotra-phalam dadāti', 2, p.s.),
 nevertheless insists that every home
 must have a place for worship, and
 worshipping the gods there thrice,
 two times or at least once a day will
 make for all prosperity:

... त्रिकाल द्विकालमेककालं वाऽऽर्चयेत्।

एते च पूजिता यस्य लभत्यत्रैव सर्वकाणसम्पत्।

If one does not carry out this
 household worship, it would for him
 be suicidal; and his house, where no
 worship is conducted, is like a
 crematorium, and respectable folk
 must not enter such a house:

अन्यथा आत्मघाती भवति। विष्णुपूजाविहीनं

यद्वेश्म तत्पितृवनैः समम्।

तद्विप्रमुख्यैर्न प्रवेश्यम्॥



Rāshtrakūṭa panel



The temple is distinguished from a household shrine not only in its structure and organization but also in rituals and forms of worship. The 'Āgamas' lay down procedural details for worship in a temple, while worship in the household shrine is largely ruled by family traditions and customs.

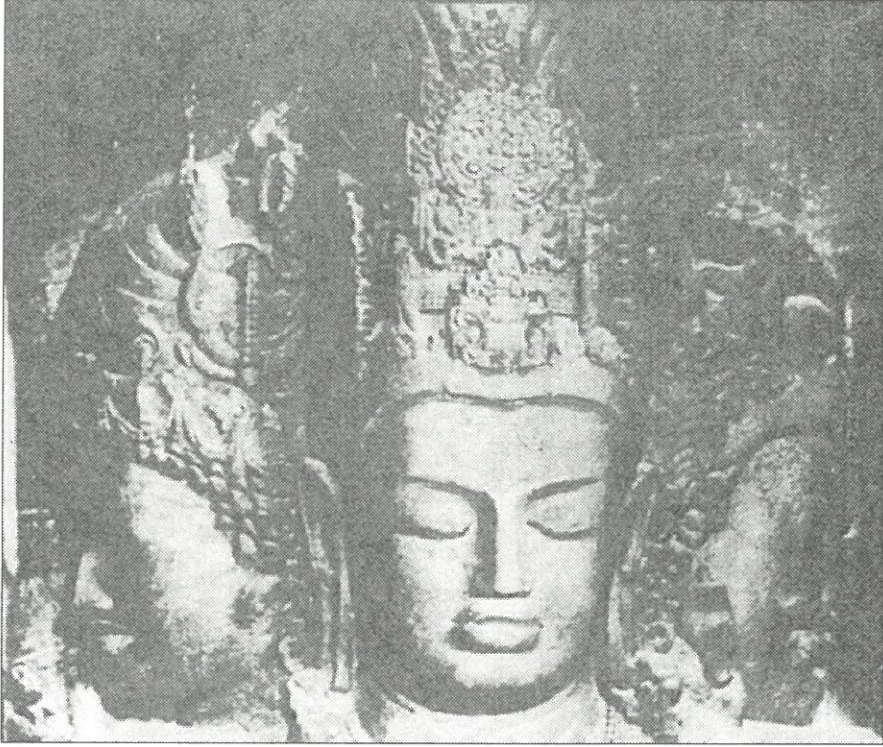
Worship in the household shrine is by necessity a simple ritual, of comparatively short duration, conducted mostly but once a day (in the morning at no fixed time). Generally, the head of the family or some older member of the household would attend to it: and he does it not only for himself but on behalf of all the members of the household. Actual participation in the worship, however, is not obligatory for the other members. Even when the ritual

tends to be elaborate, there would be little of ostentation and less of formality. This worship is done according to one's convenience and ability. *Suprabheda* (kriyā, 8.10) says

आत्मार्थं पूजयेद्विद्वान् यथाशक्त्यनुरोधतः ॥

Worship in a temple is characteristically elaborate, and is conducted three, five or six times during twenty-four hours. In many of the more famous temples, worship rituals are almost continuous during the day and stretch far into the night. And the ritual sequences are meant to attract and impress crowds of devotees. The priests who officiate in temples carry out the worship not for their own sake but for the sake of the public, the state and for the welfare of all humanity (so at least the scriptures say).





Trimurti (Elephanta)

This worship when it concludes with havis (fire-oblations) is called 'śuddha'; when it goes as far as nityotsava, it is 'miśra' and when it extends to śuddha-nṛtta (dance) it is 'saṅkīrṇa'. *Ajitāgama* (20, 19-2) lays down:

प्रातर्मध्याह्नसायेषु या पूजा क्रियते जनैः ।
तां मिश्रां तु प्रकुर्वीत संकीर्णा विशेषतः ॥

Worship in the household shrine is largely guided by family traditions and customs rather than by set rules, although there tends to be some uniformity in the rituals owing to belongingness to religious groups.

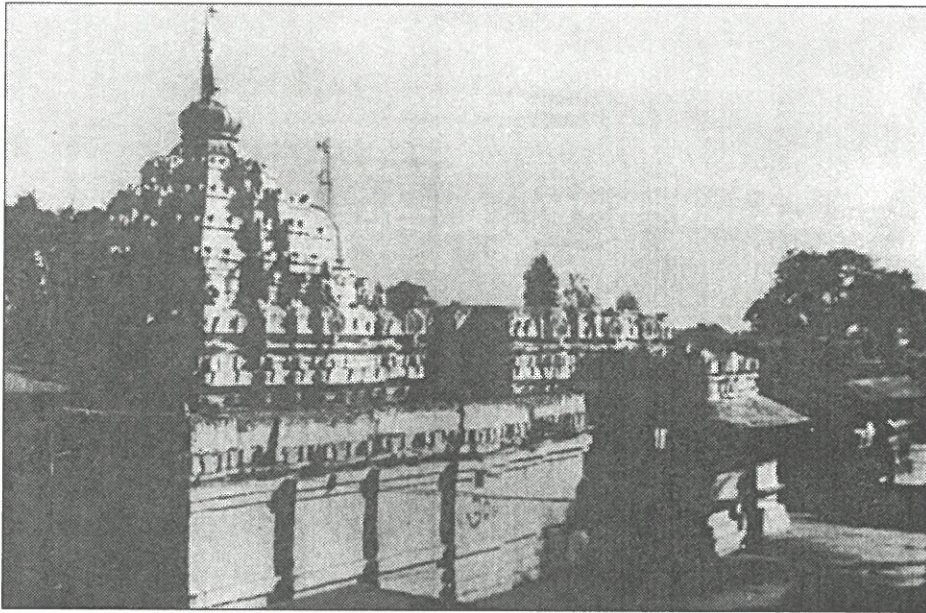
But the worship-manuals known as 'āgamas' describe



procedural details for worship in a temple both elaborately and with precision. They have done so consistently and for so long that worship in the temples has acquired considerable uniformity despite sectarian affiliations (like Śaiva, Vaishṇava, and Śākta).

While it is true that temples in the South differ from the temples in

the North both with regard to their structures and to their ritual details, closer inquiry would reveal that these differences are more apparent than real, more superficial than deep. It may appear at first glance that the hold of the 'āgamas' is stronger in South Indian temples than in their North Indian counterparts, but among the more celebrated temples in the North (like Vāraṇasi, Dvārakā, Puri-



Trikuteswara Temple, Gadag (Rashtrakuta)



Jagannāth, Kāmākhyā, Badari, etc.), 'āgamas' do play a very significant role in the worship procedures.

But the 'āgamas' of the North Indian temples have not been either as numerous or as widely familiar as the 'āgamas' in the South. When, however, the two classes of the 'āgamas' are compared, they will be found to contain prescriptions which are very similar, and symbolism derived from a common source.

The most significant aspect of the worship in a temple is its collective character. Worship in a household shrine is termed as mentioned earlier, 'ātmārtha' or 'svārtha' (viz. for the sake of one who worships, or for his immediate family), while worship in a temple is carried out by the priest for the sake

of others, and hence called 'parārtha' (viz. for the sake of other devotees who gather there). The temple is a public place, and belongs to the community.

सर्वेषामात्मरक्षार्थं इष्टलिङ्गार्चनं गृहे ।

आत्मार्थमिति विज्ञातम् ॥

(Kāraṇāgama, 1,30,12)

सर्वेषां रक्षणार्थाय ग्रामादिषु विशेषतः ।

तत्परार्थं समाख्यातम्.... ॥

(op.cit, 1,30,10)

The priest who worships there expects to be compensated in some way (such as wages, donations by the devotees, provisions by the management, share in the proceeds etc). The privilege to conduct the actual worship in a temple was earlier acquired solely by heredity, or by inclination or even by proficiency in





Mārikāmba (Sirsi)



the 'āgamas'; it has now to be conferred by the management of the temple, the trustees or administrators who are believed to act on behalf of the entire community, by a contractual arrangement.

The priest in the temple therefore worships only in return to the benefits that are available for him. The worship that he conducts is in fact symbolic of the worship conducted by the community.

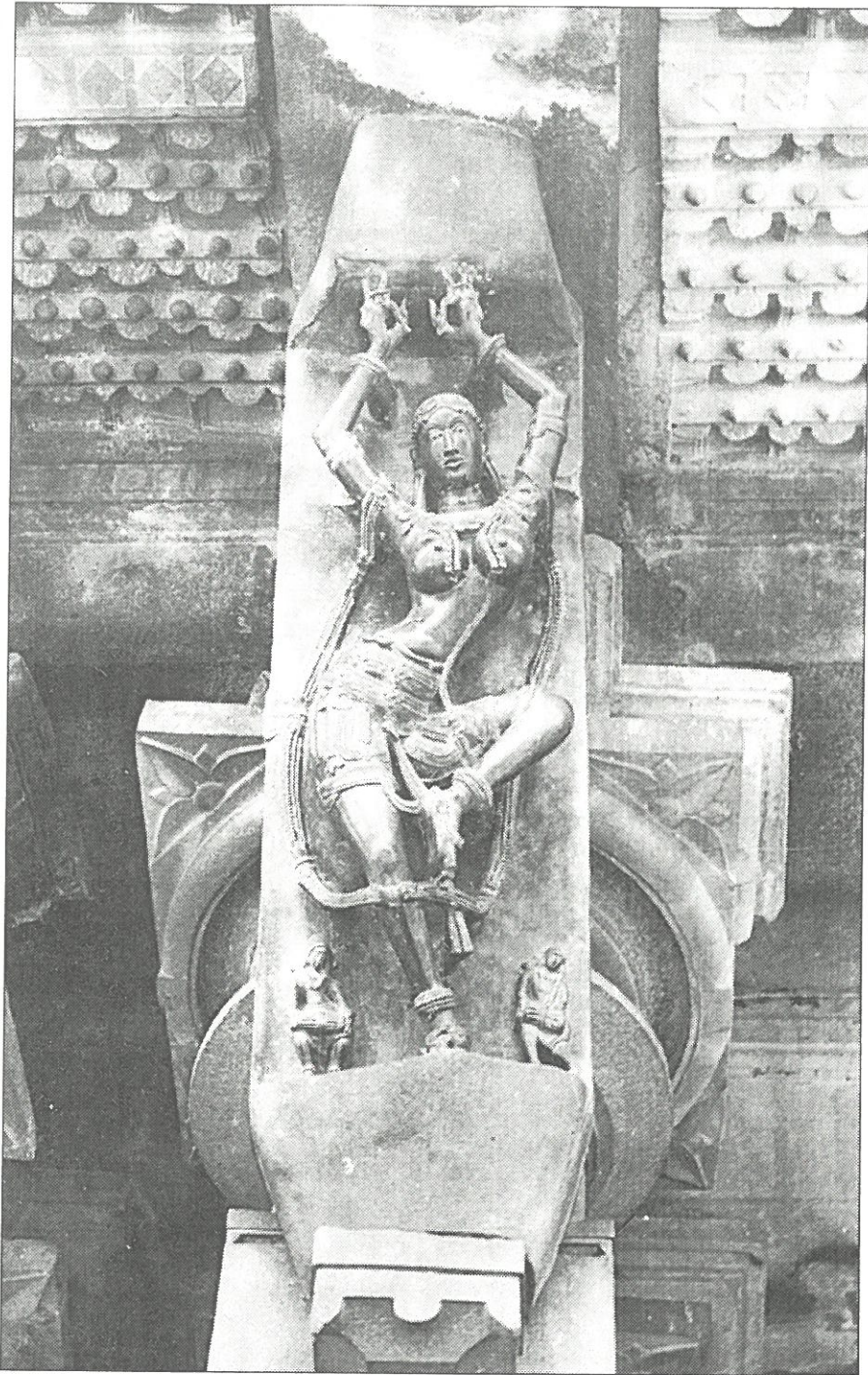
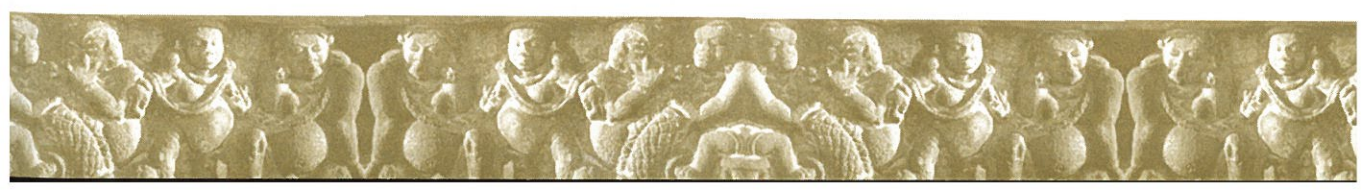
Because the community is actually or symbolically involved in the worship conducted in the temple, the rituals acquire a public character. Worship is mostly carried out in full view of the devotees that have gathered there. In the temple architecture, a provision is always made for a viewers' hall in front of

the sanctum called nava-raṅga, raṅga-maṇḍapa, or mukha-maṇḍapa. This is usually a highly elegant and elaborately ornate structure.

The devotees prefer to be viewers rather than priests owing to several practical considerations such as lack of the knowledge of the worship rituals, lack of inclination, lack of time, difficulties of accommodation and so on. But in the temple, they are the true worshippers, and the priest only officiates on their behalf.

The public character of worship in the temple is emphasized by the numerous processions and festivals involving the participation directly of the whole community. The 'Āgamas' prescribe a large number of festivals which are to be conducted in the





temple for the benefit of the people residing in that locality, for the welfare of the state in which the temple is situated, and for the good of the entire mankind.

At the end of each festival, a formal blessing is invariably invoked on the community, the administration and humanity. The most important among these festivals is the 'rathotsava' or the 'car festival', when the deity, normally worshipped within the temple, is taken out and made to go round the town, so that all the people (even those who are otherwise disabled) have an opportunity of viewing and worshipping.

Such festivals are, for obvious reasons, excluded from household worship. The images worshipped are

never taken out of the shrine-room, nor displayed to visitors. And the occasions for festivals in a household are much fewer than in a temple. Free and sumptuous feeding of all the participating devotees is a necessary feature of a temple festival, and to facilitate this, the more important temples will have adequate financial resources. Such practices are obviously impossible in a household. Thus, the family members are the only participants in household worship, even when a festival is being celebrated.

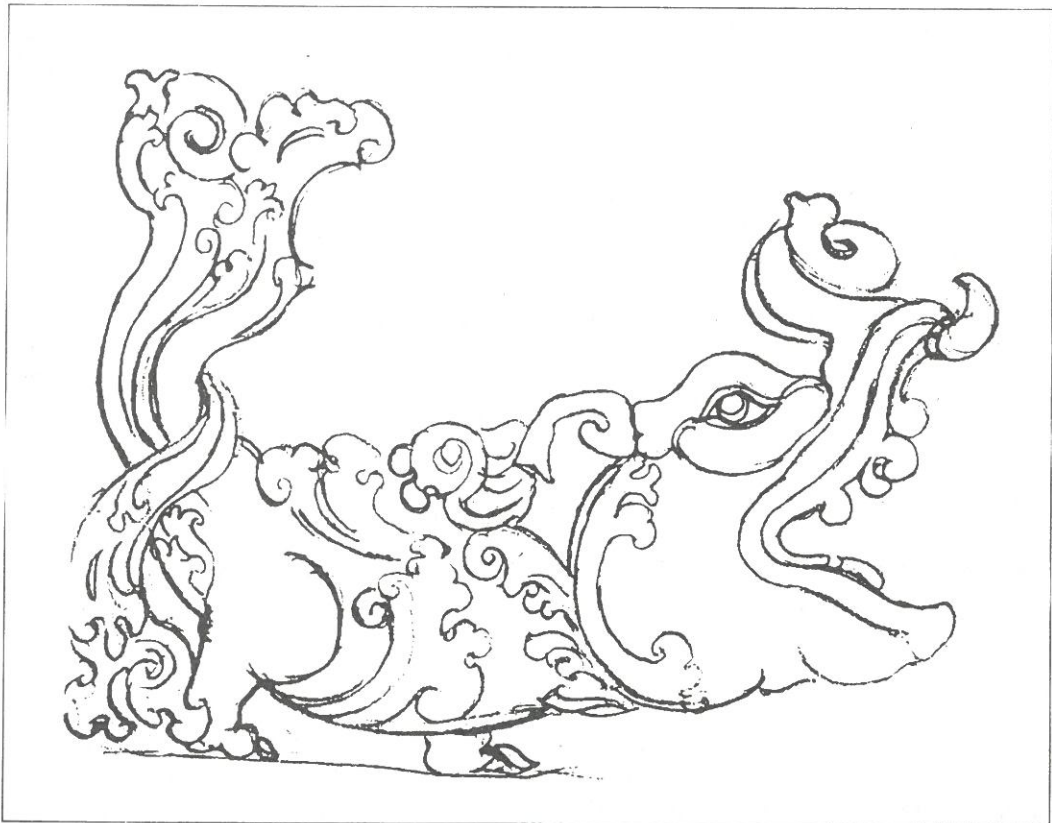
The temple, even the modest one, is basically an organization. It is structurally designed to accommodate large or small gatherings of devotees on occasions, and also to house the images, vessels, vehicles, clothes, adornments and



other material required for festivals and processions. Functionally it involves the services of several people.

Besides the priest or priests, a temple of some means would have assistants for the priest, staff to clean

the premises, personnel for looking after several details of a festival, guards and watchmen. Occasional, voluntary and free service of devotees is also availed of. Thus a temple is a social and economic organization, apart from being a religious institution.



The worship in a temple is, therefore, multi-dimensional. It is not so much spiritual as religious, and religious phenomena are a complex of social, economic, recreational and educational processes. A temple in its intent comprehends all these aspects. Activities in the temple, especially during festivals, represent a mosaic of the individual's life within the community.

The history of the celebrated temples (like the one at Tirumalai, or the one in Chidambaram, or the one in Puri-Jagannāth) illustrates how important the temple is in the evolution of the ethos of populations through dynastic successions. The interest shown by kings, chieftains, officers and the wealthy folk in the culture of temples has always been remarkable, and records suggest that

the interest was not always religious, much less spiritual.

Another detail also merits mention in this context. The priests officiating in the temple tend to form a class of their own, quite distinct from others belonging to the priestly profession such as the *purohitas* (or those who officiate in special religious events like the marriage, investiture, funerary rites, obsequies, sacramental rituals and so on), *vaidikas* (or those who visit households and assist in the worship rituals daily or occasionally), and *paṇḍits* (or learned brahmins who teach scriptural texts, or give public discourses on religious subjects).

The temple-priests usually belong to the priestly families who have served in the temple for



generations. They have their own especial initiations (dikshā), and their training involves an acquaintance with the 'āgamas' of particular sectarian persuasions. It is these that qualify them to conduct worship in temples, for the other priestly brahmins do not undergo the special initiation, nor acquire a knowledge of the 'Āgamas'.

In fact, the more learned and conservative among brahmins consider worship in a temple not suitable for a truly religious person who is evolved. For one thing, idolatry itself is the lowest form of worship, prescribed in the texts only for a person of ordinary equipment and inclination.

For another, carrying on worship in public smacks of pomp

and show: the display of religious fervour in public is denounced in the scriptures as vulgar.

For still another, worship which involves remuneration or recompense is in reality a business transaction, and fails to bring about spiritual benefits.

For yet another, all acts of worship can only be personal: scriptures do not commend collective worship.

Thus there is a prejudice among the orthodox against temple-priests, in fact against all professional priests. Manu denounces even a learned brahmin who teaches sacred texts and gets payed for it as a 'hireling' (bhṛtakādhyāpaka). This prejudice



has resulted in relatively well-defined, closed, endogamous, and distinct classes of temple-priests of Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Śākta persuasions.

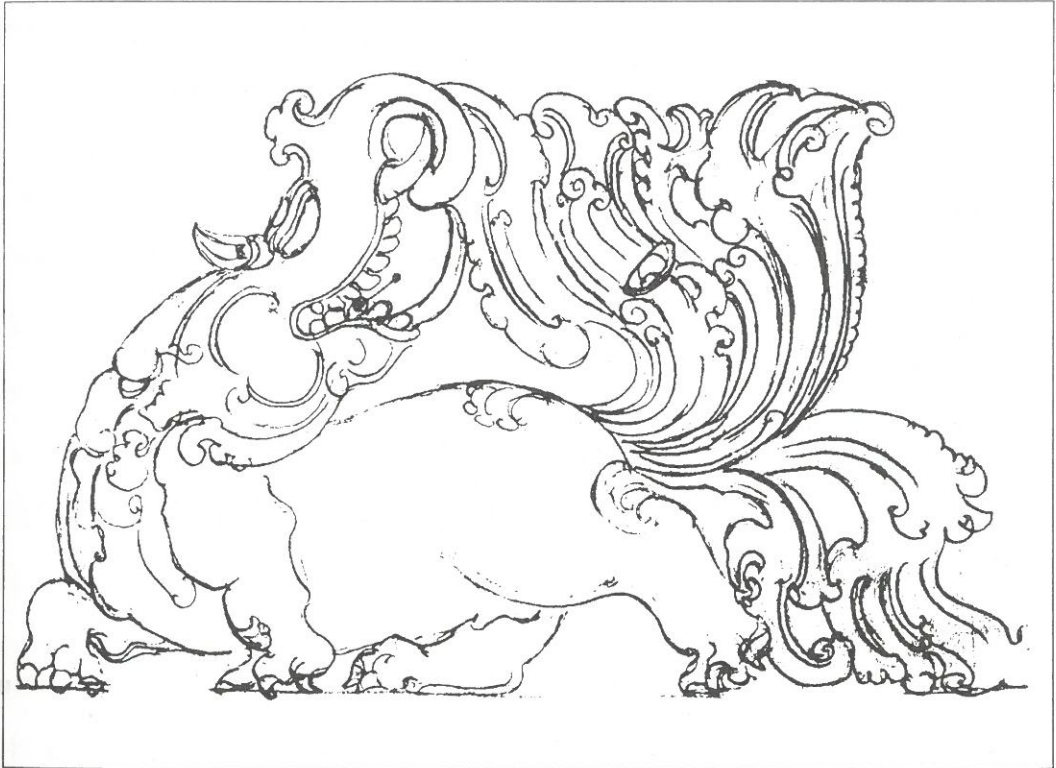
They have been for generations custodians of the scriptural lore concerning worship in temples. And they have been responsible for the temple-culture that has prevailed in



the country since the early centuries of the Christian era.

The arguments of the orthodox against temples and worship of images in them are not unknown to the authors or compilers of the worship-manuals, viz., Āgamas. They concede that the best form of worship

is contemplation on the invisible God as the inner-controller (antaryāmin), abiding in ones own heart ('munīnam hṛdi daivatam'); and they are aware that it is only people with little intelligence that see God in an icon ('pratimāsvalpa-buddhīnām'). This opinion is quoted in the Smṛti ascribed to the great Aparārka.



While this is so, the Āgama texts point out that it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for one to contemplate on the divinity without conceptualizing a form ('na cha rūpam vinā devo dhyātum kenāpi śakyate', *Vishṇu-saṁhitā*, 29,51). It is in the very nature of mind to conjure up images. If the mind is forbidden to do this, it may lapse into drowsiness or wander about without direction.

Mind has necessarily to be employed in worship, and therefore one finds an image of God a great advantage. Another text (*Parama-saṁhitā*, 3,5-10) suggests that a human form for God is very helpful for the devotee to meditate on the divine attributes, to offer prayers, to approach with love and devotion.

Kāśyapa's *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* which distinguishes worship of an icon (sa-mūrta) from worship with fire (amūrta) recommends the former as superior. It pleases the eye and delights the heart: it promotes devotion and faith, which are indispensable for all accomplishments. This mode of worship in temple becomes complete and effective with all the services rendered meticulously.

द्विविधं तदर्चनमाख्यातं अमूर्तं समूर्तं चेति ।
तदित्थमग्नौ हुतममूर्तं समूर्तं तद्विम्बेऽर्चनम् ।
समूर्ते चक्षुर्मनसोः प्रीतिः सदा संस्मृतिश्च ।
ताभ्यां भक्तिश्चद्वे स्याताम् ।
श्रद्धाभक्तियुतस्यैव सर्वसंसिद्धिः ।
आलये समूर्तार्चनं बल्युत्सवाद्युपचारयोगात्
सम्पूर्णम् ॥

There is an interesting argument in *Archanā-tīlaka* (of





Bhāradvāja-nṛsimha): Bhṛgu tells us that worship is of two kinds (i) 'with external props' (sālam̐ba), and (ii) without them (nirālam̐ba); and that in ancient times the sages and wise folk decided that the former was superior to the latter, as far as the common

people involved in the transactional world are concerned. Only the vānaprasthas, the renunciants, the ascetics and the extremely indigent will benefit from worship of God without a form; for all others, especially, householders, such worship is difficult.



संसारे चलचित्तविभ्रमधियां साकारमेवोत्तमम् ।
 वानप्रस्थयतेर्निराशन पतत्पर्णाशिनां निष्कलम् ।
 दारिद्र्योपहतात्मनां च विहिता पूजा निरालम्बना
 अन्येषां गृहवासिनां च सततं कष्टं निरालम्बनम् ॥
 (1,20)

Further, for those who seek for worldly rewards like children, wives, wealth and heavenly pleasures before salvation, worship of God with form is indicated. Born in this present decadent age, filled with ego and selfishness, looking for worldly comforts and security, and troubled by desire, anger, greed, jealousy, confusion and arrogance, how can we contemplate upon Godhead devoid of form? Worship of icons is therefore most meritorious and easily accomplished:

योषित्पुत्रधनार्थिनां च भवनस्वर्गादि भोगैषिणाम्
 पश्चान्मोक्षमुपेयुषां च सुलभं साकारमेवार्चनम् ।

ममताहंकारयुक्तात्मनां क्षीणानां कलिजन्मनां
 मूलस्योपहतात्मनां व्यसनिनां स्त्रीपुत्रवित्तैषिणां ॥
 षड्वर्गापहतात्मनां च सुदृढध्यानं कथं वा भवे-
 तस्मान्मूर्तिषु पूजनं शुभकरं कष्टं निरालम्बनम् ।
 चेतोनेत्रमनःप्रसादजननं सन्दर्शनाद्भक्तिदं
 तस्मादत्र कलौ मार्गं च सुलभं सौन्दर्यमूर्त्यर्चनम् ॥
 (21,22).



Pārthasārathi
 (from Vishṇumūrti temple, Koḍipāḍi)



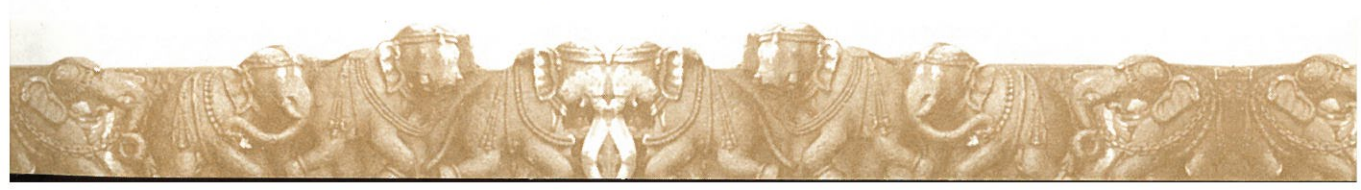
“It is therefore that the temples contain images of God in human form, excepting the Śiva shrines where the image in the sanctum is a liṅgam (but the processional images even there will be in human form). It was usual in the medieval times for pious kings and chieftains to build temples, and the underlying idea was that God was the overlord even of the kings. If the king rules over a religion or territory, God rules over the entire world, nay over all the worlds that be. The God in the temple reminded the devotee of the king in his palace. The old Sanskrit expression for the temple, ‘prāsāda’, means also a palace.

Thus all honour that was due to an earthly king was considered due on a more magnificent scale to the God, who is the king of kings and

before whom even the kings bow their heads. All earthly kings derive their glory from Kubera-Vaiśravaṇa who is addressed as the ‘overlord of the lords (mahārājādhirāja) and who bestows wealth and power on mortals: and this Kubera attends on God. Thus, worship in a temple tends to incorporate customs and formalities of a typical royal court.

ICON FOR WORSHIP

An image of any deity that is meant to be ceremonially worshipped at home or in a temple is known as pūjā-bimba or bera. Some texts (like *Nāradya-saṃhitā*, 28, 113) specify that the pūjā-bimba is a ‘karmārchā’, different from the main image, ‘mūla-bera’ or the stone image that is duly installed (and immovable) in a temple. The karmārchā (karma-





(from Minakshi temple Museum, Madurai)



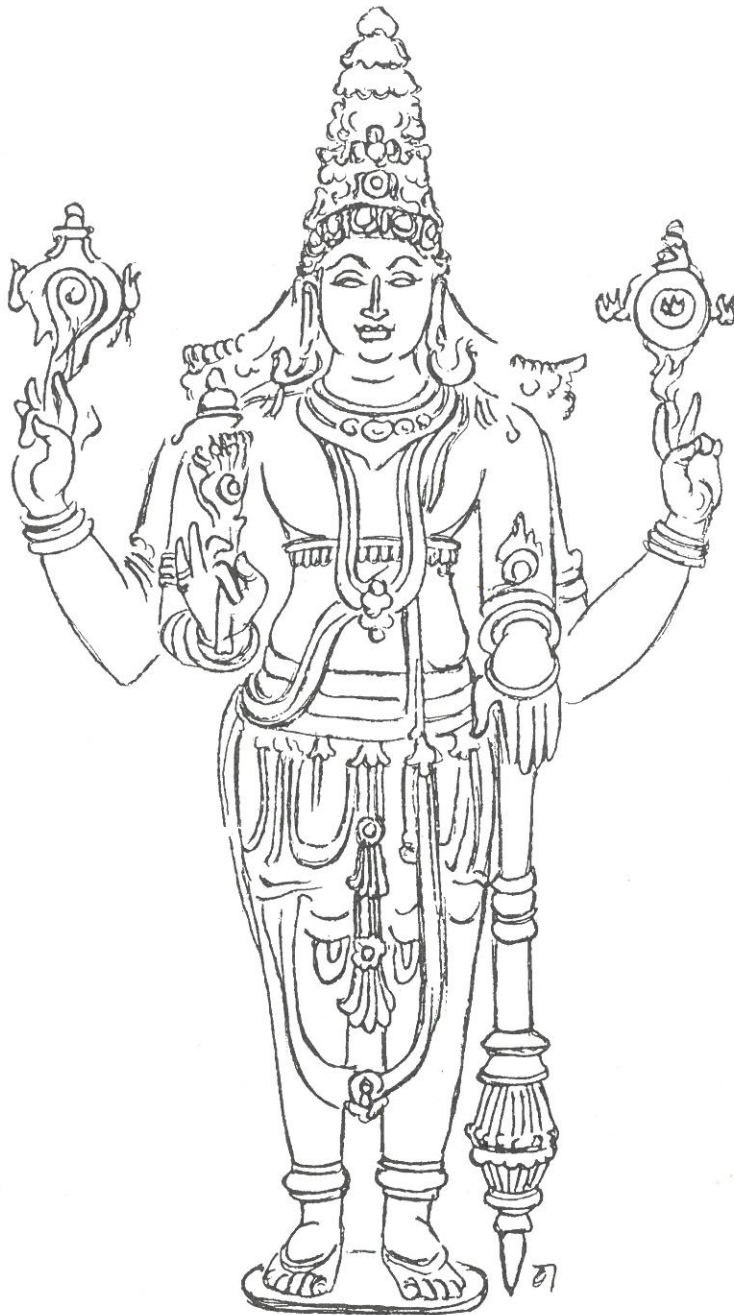
bimba) is a smaller and metallic replica of the main image (bṛhadbimba). It is prescribed that this icon must not be smaller than six aṅgulas in height nor taller than twelve aṅgulas (śaḍ-aṅgulān na cha nyūnam nādhikam dvādaśaṅgulāt; pūjā-bimbam tu kartavyam', *Nārādīya-saṁhitā*, 28, 114). *Vaikhānasa-gr̥hya-sūtra* also prescribes that the image for worship at home must not be less than six aṅgulas in height ('śaḍaṅgulād ahīnam tad rūpam kalpayitvā....')

In contrast, the main image in the sanctum is required to be made to measure up to the height of the donor (yajamāna-pramāṇam) or to the height of the sanctum's door ('dvāra-māna-samam vā'). Some texts feel that the best image should

be equal in height to the door (beram dvāra-samam śreshṭham'), while there are some texts which suggest that the image should be a quarter of the door's height more (dvārāt pādādhikam), and some others which recommend a quarter of the door's height less (pāda-hīnā, cf. *Samūrtārchanādhikāra* 18, 10-11).

The pūjā-bimbās are generally classified into five types: chitra (sculpture, seen alround, 'sarvāṅgam sandṛśyam'), mṛt (clay-image), kāshṭha (carved in wood), śilā (stone image) and loha (metallic icons) (cf. *Sāttvata-saṁhitā*, 25,3); or into three types: *chitra* (sculpture in the round), which is regarded as of superior merit; *ardha-chitraka* (relief in stone or wood where the front portion of the image only is seen), which is of





‘midling’ merit; and *chitrābhāsa* (paintings and drawings on cloth or wall), which is of inferior merit (cf. *Samūrtārchanādhikāra* 18, 11-12).

Among the *chitra*, it is insisted that stone images are the best चित्रं

चेच्छैलजं बिम्बमुत्तमोत्तमम् ॥ for the devotee who desires only salvation (*mokshārthi*). The images cast in metal (especially copper) is suitable for those who desire power over others (*rājya-kāmi*); the clay-images are recommended for those who





CHITRĀRDHA



desire wealth (dhanārthi); and the images in wood for those who are desirous of progeny (putra-kāmi) (*cf. op.cit.* 18, 18-19).

The pūjā-bimbās are again classified into two groups: 'general' (sāmānya) and 'specific' (asāmānya). The former images are to be worshipped by those who need only general welfare here and hereafter (bhukti-muktyartham), while the latter must be worshipped by those who have specific desires to be fulfilled (phalepsūnām). Hence the two groups are also described as 'nishkāma' (unmotivated) and 'sakāma' (motivated).

And it is also suggested that the former images must be in clay or stone (aśma-mṛṇmaya) whereas the latter images may be in metal or

precious stones (*cf. Sāttvata-samhitā*, 25, 9-11).

Another division of worshipful images is into those that are self-manifest (svayam-vyakta) and those which are installed by adept sages (siddha-pratishṭhita), or by ordinary human beings (manushya-pratishṭhita).

The texts commend the images for worship that are in strict accordance with the canonical injunctions (śilpa-śāstra-vidhi), and which are also charming in aspect.

मानतो नाधिकं हीनं तद् बिम्बं रम्यमुच्यते ।
तद्विज्ञानै प्रस्तुता ये ये मूर्तेरवयवाः सदा ॥
सर्वांगैः सर्वरम्यो हि कश्चिल्लक्ष्ये प्रजायते ।
शास्त्रमानेन यो रम्यः स रम्यो नान्य एव हि ॥





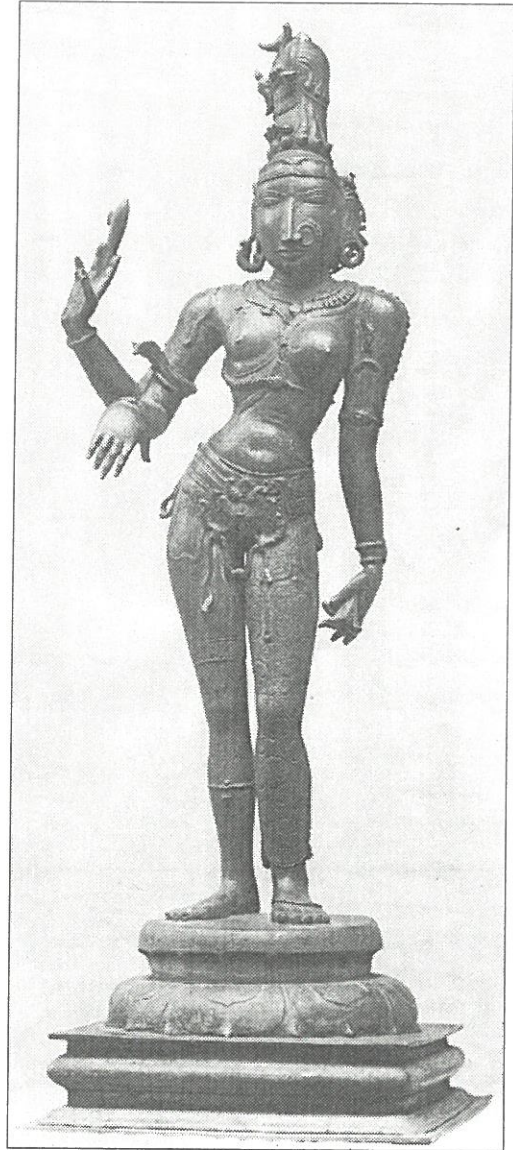
Tripurāntaka (Puṭṭadakallu)



Sāttvata-saṁhitā (25, 160-167), for instance, gives an elaborate account of the need for conforming to measurement to beauty. They go together. The iconometric details that the text prescribes are of course to be strictly followed, for they contribute to the welfare of the worshipper. But beauty and charm in an image meant for worship are equally important; and indeed they often occur in unison. What is iconometrically correct is also aesthetically satisfying.

However, there are cases where the measurement overrides beauty, and cases where beauty pushes the measurement to the background. In the world, there are handsome people who are poor; and their appearance will strike the onlooker despite their poverty. Likewise, there are ugly

people who are wealthy. And there are people who are both handsome



Ardha-nārī



and wealthy. If the image lacks correctness of measurement as well as beauty, it is not worthy of worship. The image that possesses one at least of the two qualities may be considered as suitable for worship. But the image that has both qualities has the divine presence in it, for it is perfect.

सुनिश्चितं हितं चैतन्मानमव्यभिचारि यत्।
मनोहारित्वमेकत्र रूपलावण्यभूषितम् ॥

सर्वदा चानयोर्विद्धि अन्योन्यत्वेन संस्थितम्।
सुसौन्दर्यं तु मानस्य कचिदाक्रम्य वर्तते ॥

लावण्यस्य कचिन्मानं समाच्छाद्यावतिष्ठते।
यथातिरूपवान् लोके दरिद्रोऽप्येति मान्यताम्
विरूपोऽप्यतिवित्तादयो नारूपी नैव निर्धनः ॥

एवं द्वयाविरहितं बिम्बमनादेयत्वमेति च।
आदेयमेकयुक्तं च नित्यं यस्मान्सहामते।



Durga-Mahishamardini

It is prescribed that while an image may sometimes be made juvenile in aspect, it should always



be youthful: never represented as old and worn out (*Śukra-nīti-sāra*, 414,216):

कचिद् बालसदृशं सदैव तरुणं वपुः ।
मूर्तीनां कल्पयेच्छिल्पी न वृद्धसदृशं कचित् ॥

The deity must look like a sixteen-year old person, without moustaches or beard, clothed in fine garments and well bedecked with ornaments:

हीनश्मश्रुनिमेषां च सदा षोडशवार्षिकीम् ।
दिव्याभरणवस्त्राढ्यां दिव्यवर्णाक्रियां सदा ॥

The icon meant to be worshipped, also called 'archā', 'bera', 'bimba' or 'pratimā', is distinguished from images and figures of gods and goddesses, which are only of decorative significance, or which constitute only the retinue

(parivāra) of the deity to be worshipped.

The custom of making icons in metal for purposes of worship appears to be very ancient in India. Even *Rgvedic* hymns contain references to images of Rudra (2,33,9), Indra (4,24,10), Varuṇa (1,25,13), Agni (1,21,2;4,58,3) and to temples (7,56,14) in which icons were housed.

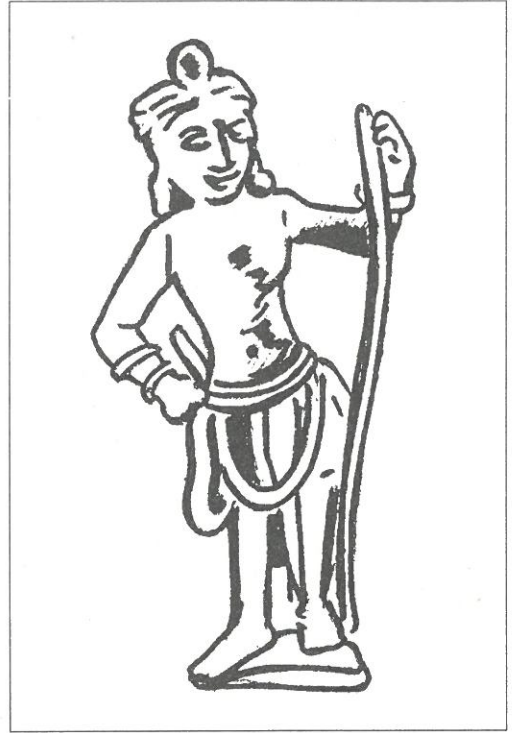
We find references to this practice even in Pāṇini (5,3,96 and 5,3,99 'jīvikārthe chāpaṇye') dating 5th century B.C. Patañjali, who commented on Pāṇini, uses the expression 'archā' in the sense of icon, or object of worship, and informs us that such objects were fashioned by the 'mauryas' who made money by exhibiting them before the



pious folk मौर्यैर्हरिण्यार्थिभिरर्चा प्रकल्पिता ॥ (5,3,99). Such images could not be bought and sold ('apanya').

The Besnagar inscription (2nd century B.C.) suggests the presence of an image of Vishṇu on a pillar (garuḍa-dhvaja); the Mora-Well inscription (about the same time) mentions the icons (pratimā) of the five heroes of the Vṛshṇi clan; the Ghosundi inscription (1st century B.C.) refers to the icons of Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva in a temple; the inscription on the Pawaya sculpture (Gwalior) (about the same time) mentions the icon of the spirit (yaksha) named Maṇi-bhadra. Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* (about the 8th century A.D.) also mentions cells for placing the images of divinities like Aparājītā, Apratihata, Jayanta,

Vaijayanta, Śiva, Vaiśravaṇa and the Aśvins. Manu's *Smṛti* (4,39) (about the 2nd century A.D.) prescribes circumambulation of icons (pratimā).



Rāma (bronze)
from Nāgārjuna-koṇḍa (3rd century)

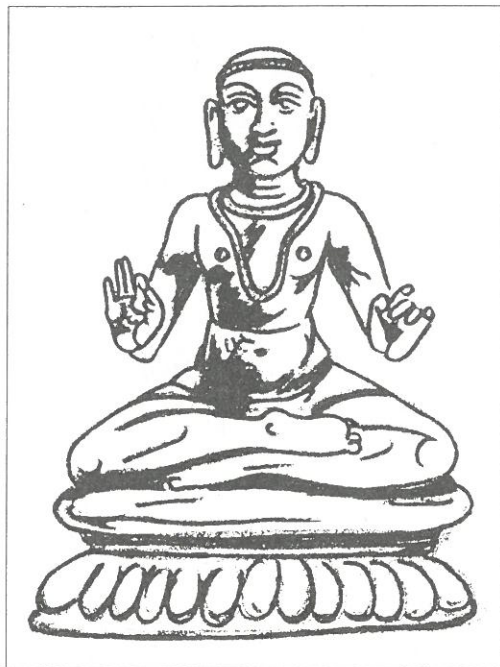
Early icons were small and portable (chala-bera); they were usually made in metal. They were



meant for worship in households. Temples apparently were a later institution. Each time worship was conducted, it was preceded by a ceremonial invitation accorded for the divinity (āvāhana) and a ritual to bestow animation to the icon (prāṇa-pratishṭhā); without these two preliminaries, worship was regarded as useless. In a temple, however, the icon is permanently installed (achala-bera) in an elaborate ritual and duly consecrated (pratishṭhā).

The divine presence in a temple-icon is said to disappear in rare and unusual circumstances, such as accidental or deliberate mutilation of the icon, defilement of the sanctum, discontinuance of daily worship over a period, earthquake, and so on. The temple-icons were more usually in stone or in wood,

and were of relatively larger size, as they were meant for worship in public.



SAMKARACHARYA
(from Kānchipuram)

The custom of having metal replicas of these icons in the sanctum for purposes of occasional processions and other ceremonial details (like bathing) was a later one, and was necessitated when the





Buddha (bronze) 5th century

temple-worship became a complicated ritual. The metal images were smaller in size and were portable in character, and hence were called 'chala-beras', in contradistinction to the permanently fixed stone icon in the sanctum, which was called 'achala-bera' or 'dhruva-bera'.

Most of the temples following Pāñcha-rātra school have a group of five icons (pañcha-bera), viz. the immobile or main icon and four secondary and movable ones, each of them being employed in a specific worship detail like procession (utsava), bathing, (snapana), food-offering (bali) and assembly (koluvu). The four latter icons derive their power and authority only from the



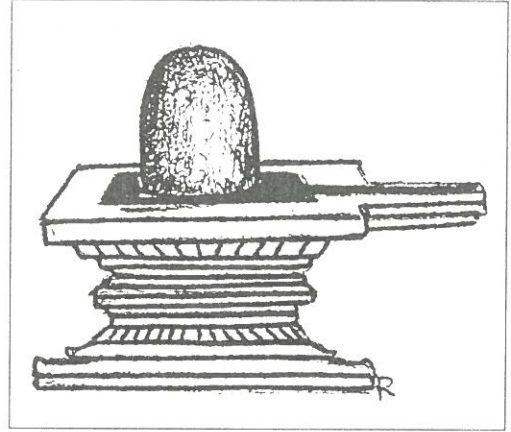
Nṛtya-Gaṇapati (bronze)



immovable icon in the sanctum, hence called *mūla-bera*.

Texts do not fix a limit to the number of icons that a temple may employ (*bahu-bera*), in addition to the main one in the sanctum (called *mūla-kautuka*). *Śrī-praśna* (14,2) suggests five icons: one to receive routine daily worship (*karmārchā*), the second to be carried round in processions (*utsavārchā*), the third to be taken out during food-offering (*balyarchā*), the fourth to receive the ceremonial bath (*tīrtha-snāna*), and the fifth to be put to bed in the night (*śayanārchā*). *Īśvara-saṁhitā* (17, 238-248) calls them 'anga-bimbās'.

In the temples to Śiva, the sanctum invariably houses an aniconic *līṅga*, and worship is offered only to this. But there will be a



metallic icon, representing Śiva in human form, for purposes of procession and so on. There are instances of temples to Viṣṇu or Śakti, where the main image (*mūla-mūrti*) in the sanctum is aniconic, somewhat in the form of a *līṅga*, but the processional image (*utsava-bera*) will be in human form.

The icon for worship in a temple may be fashioned by a sculptor and installed by priests in comparatively recent times (in which case it is called 'mānusha' or human).





Yoga-narasimha (bronze)



It may, alternatively, have been set up in very early times by a sage (in which case it is called 'ārsha'). Or it may be related in a legend to have been set up by the gods to honour the overlord of all of them (in which case it is called 'daiva' or divine). Finally, the icon may have appeared on its own (svayambhū).

The last variety is of course the most potent and sacred, and the divine presence in it is never lost. The icons set up by human beings is the least potent; and to be effective they require not only proper installation, but regular worship by a competent priest. There are also prescriptions and prohibitions in the conduct of priests and devotees. The icon may lose the divine presence with the omission of a ritual or the

commission of a prohibited act. The temples containing this variety of icons also need periodical purifications (śuddhi), and renewal of consecration.

The power in an icon (especially the one belonging to the 'human' variety) is said to be derived from the austere devotion of the priest ('archakasya tapo-balāt'), from the performance of correct worship rituals ('pūjanasyātiśāyitvāt'), and from the clarity and beauty of the icon ('ābhirūpyāc cha bimbānām', 'bimbasya saushṭhavāt'). The sculptor who fashions it is required to contemplate on the appropriate 'dhyāna-śloka' to visualize the form of the deity, before he sets out to carve or sculpt. 'Dhyāna-ślokas' are verses in Sanskrit (contained in the



āgama texts), which describe the iconographic details relevant to the 'avatāras' of Vishnu, 'lilā-mūrtis' of Śiva, forms of Śakti, Ganeśa and other major deities in worship. The work of a sculptor who is ignorant of the canonical prescriptions must be discarded as unfit for worship.

MEDIUM FOR MAKING ICONS

Icons for worship are of five varieties, according to *Sanatkumāra-saṁhitā* (7,1-2): carved in stone (śaili or śilā-mayī), cast in metal (loha-mayī), fashioned in precious stone (ratna-mayī), carved in wood (kāshṭha-mayī or dārvī), and made in clay (mṛṇmayī).

Bhārgava-tantra (4,7) adds a sixth variety, viz. drawn or painted on cloth or wall (chitra-ja or rekhā).

Hayaśirsha-tantra (15, 1-2) adds the icons made from sandal-paste (gandha-ja) or from flowers (kausumī); but these are strictly temporary in character (for tat-kāla-pūjā). *Viśvāmitra-Saṁhitā* (22, 1-2), however, says that the icons carved in stone (śaila), fashioned in precious stone (mañija) or cast in metal (lohaja) are the best.

DĀRU-PARĪKSHĀ

The texts contain detailed accounts of wood or stone that is suitable for icon-making and also procedures for their collection (dravya-saṁgraha). Wood that has become dry of its own, is torn, has lost its bark, struck with an instrument, or has many crevices must be avoided. Trees that grow on



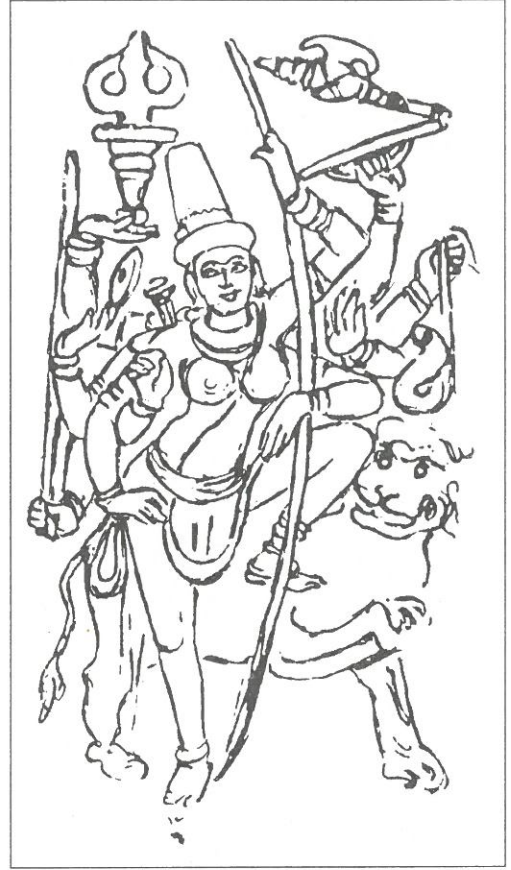


Yoganarasimha (wood) (Kerala)



cemeteries or where four roads meet, or in a temple are also unsuitable to collect wood for carving icons. Likewise, trees on which birds have built nests or in the shade of which animals rest, or which grow on the roadside giving shelter to travellers, or on tank-beds or near a well, must not be cut down for wood. Trees which support creepers and climbers must likewise not be cut down. Trees which are struck by lightning or have caught fire are also unsuitable.

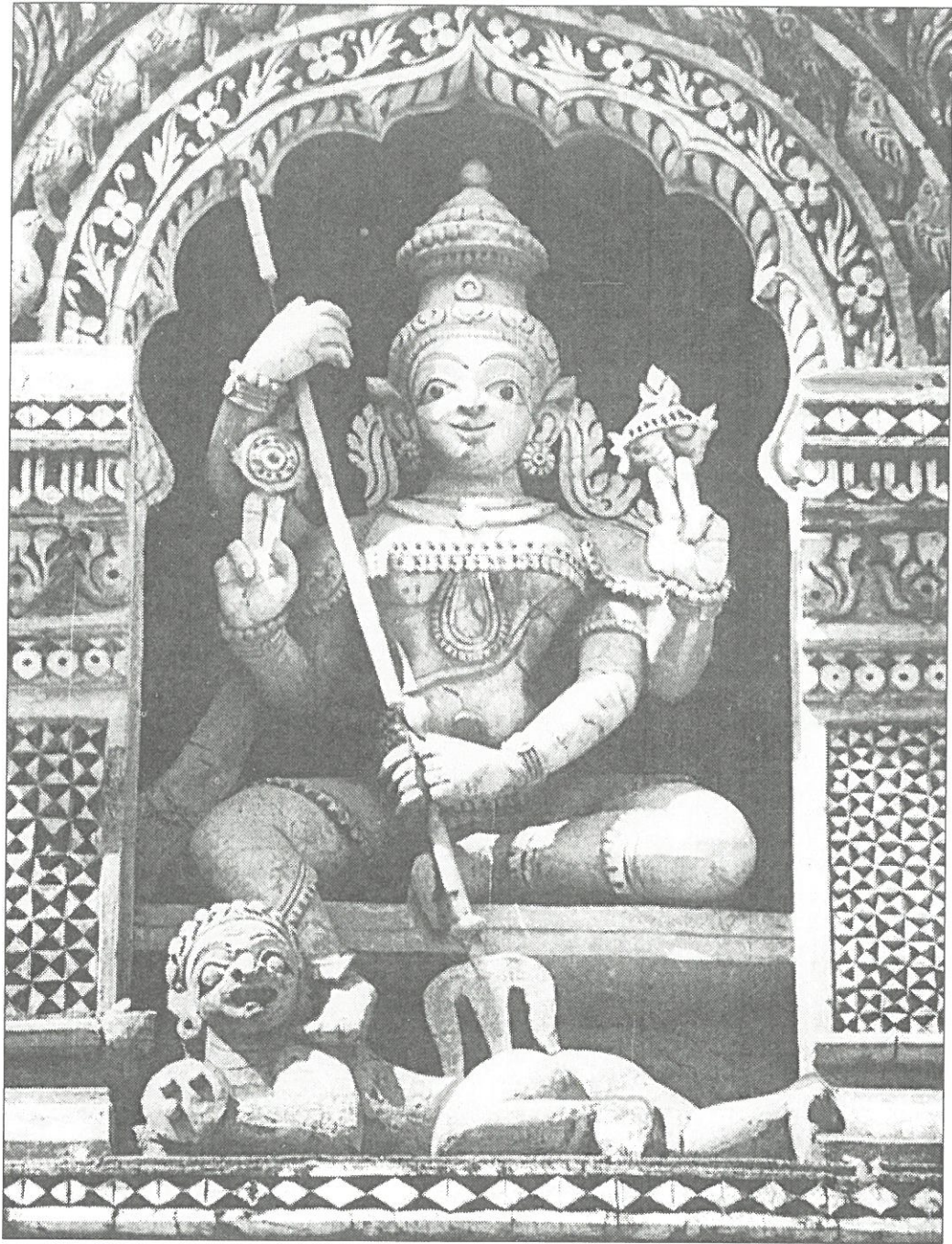
The trees, the wood of which is suitable for icon-making are in order of preference, khadira (Catechu Acacia), Devadāru (Cedrus deodara), Badarī (zyphus jujuba), the two varieties of Chandana (sanatalum), Śimśipa (Dalbergia sissoo, Rose-wood tree), Bilva (Aegle maxmelos), Madhūka (Bassia latifolia), Syandana-lohita, Chāmpaka (Michelia



Durga (Stucco-mortar) (Pallava)

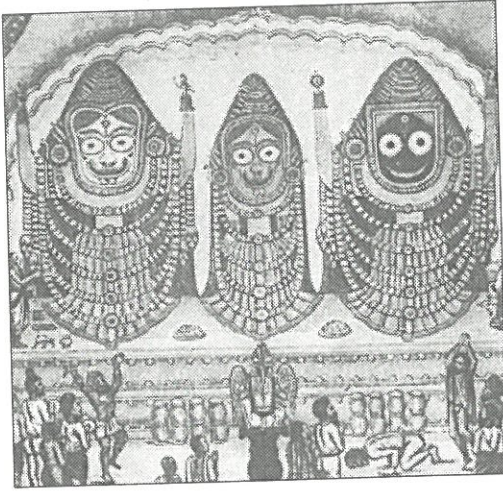
chāmpaka), Śālmali (Bombax Malabaricum, red silk cotton tree), Sāla (Shorea robusta), Bakula (Mimuscopa elengi), Śirīsha (Mimosa sirissa) and Āmalaka (Embic myrobalan) (cf. *Vishvakseña-samhitā*, 3, 7-12).





Durgā (mortar)





ICONS IN PURI (Wood)

The wood has to be cut and brought to the site of consecration in an elaborate ritual, and there are procedures for the sculptor to prepare the wood prior to carving (for details see *Purushottama-tantra*, 6; *Kapiñjala-tantra*, 11, 18-19 *Sakalādhikāra*, 22).

ŚILĀ-PARĪKSHĀ

Likewise, stone for making icons is also to be carefully selected,

treated, and consecrated before the sculptor sets to work.

Stones to be avoided are those which contain cavities (*garbha*), which are on the banks of a river, or in the centre of a village, or in cemeteries, or in a place devoid of water and grass, or full of thorny thickets; stones which are in a desert, near a temple, or where four roads meet are also unsuitable. Stones from mountains are the best; and only if they are not available, stones from level ground have to be selected, but satisfying the above conditions. Stones which are at the bottom of a tank are also suitable.

Examination of stone that is suitable of carving icons is an important sequence. Stones which are free from defects (*'dushta-*



lakṣhaṇa-varjitāh') will help the invocation of divinity in the icons. Texts (like *Vāsishṭha-saṁhitā*, 4,58-68, and *Sanatkumārā-saṁhitā*, 7,51-59) enumerate several possible defects.

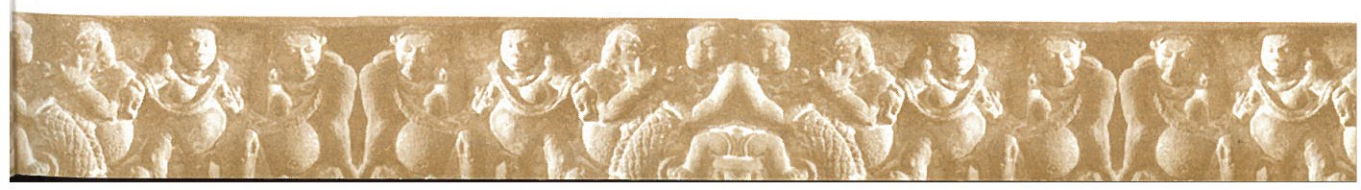
Stones got from the banks of rivers and lakes, burning grounds, middle of the village, crematoria, the vicinity of a temple, places where grass does not grow and water is scarce, or where anthills abound, deserts and where four roads meet are not suitable (varjya), as icons made out of such stones spell ruin ('sarva-sāmpad-vināśinah').

Stones from mountains are the best ('parvate tu śilā grāhyā') and the stone from under the earth are to be chosen, if the former are not available ('tad-alābhe tu bhūtale',

Sanatkumārā-saṁhitā, 7,4 and *Vishvaksena-saṁhitā*, 4,1).

Examination of 'garbha' is regarded as significant (garbham parīksheta) (see for details *Purushottama-saṁhitā*- 5,63-64 and *Hayaśīrsha-saṁhitā*, 15, 39-48). 'Garbha' refers to the hollow portions hidden in the rock, where frogs, lizards, cobras, scorpions or rats may be found.

Stones are said to be of three types: masculine (pum-śilā), feminine (strī-śilā), and neuter (napuṁsaka-śilā or shaṇḍa-śilā). Masculine stones emit sound similar to bell-metal or bell, when struck ('kāṁsya-ghaṇṭā-nināda-vat') or send out sparks like fire when cut (utpāṭyamāṇe drśyante sphuliṅgā yatra chāgni-vat') (*Īśvara-saṁhitā*, 18, 77); they are also free





Durgā (stone)



from crevices, holes and knots, and they are compact ('vivarāvarta-rahitāh yās snigdhāh granthivarjitā'), (*Vāsishtā-samhitā*, 4,25).

Stones are classified into three types: (1) masculine (pum-śilā), suitable for making līṅga and images of male divinities, (2) feminine (strī-śilā), suitable for making images of female divinities, or the pedestal (pīṭhikā) above the ground for the images of the first variety; (3) and neutral (napuṁsaka-śilā), suitable for making the base (pāda-pīṭha) or foundation-stone below the ground-level ('ratnanyāsād adhah'). It is only the immovable images (achala-bera) that are carved in stone, and have fixed abodes inside the sanctum (cf. *Vāsishtā-tantra*, 4, 30; *Purushottama-samhitā*, 5, 63).

Stones are said to be feminine when they are beautifully coloured (vara-varṇa), and fine-grained (laghu-snigdhah), when they are cold to touch, (śīta-mṛjāvātī), and when they emit soft sound when struck (mṛdu-svanāh). Some texts describe the sound as feeble (nujūnah dhvanah) *Purushottama-samhitā* (op.cit) and *Īśvara-samhitā*, 18,29), or as similar to the sound from a broken bell or bell-metal vessel ('bhinna-kāṁsya-dhvanih', *Haya-śīrsha-samhitā*, 15,36).

The stones which are neuter do not produce any sound when struck (śabda-hīna), but have veins, patches and grains (sirā-maṇḍala-samyukta) (*Vāsishtā-samhitā*, 4,30); they are also hard to touch (karkaśa).



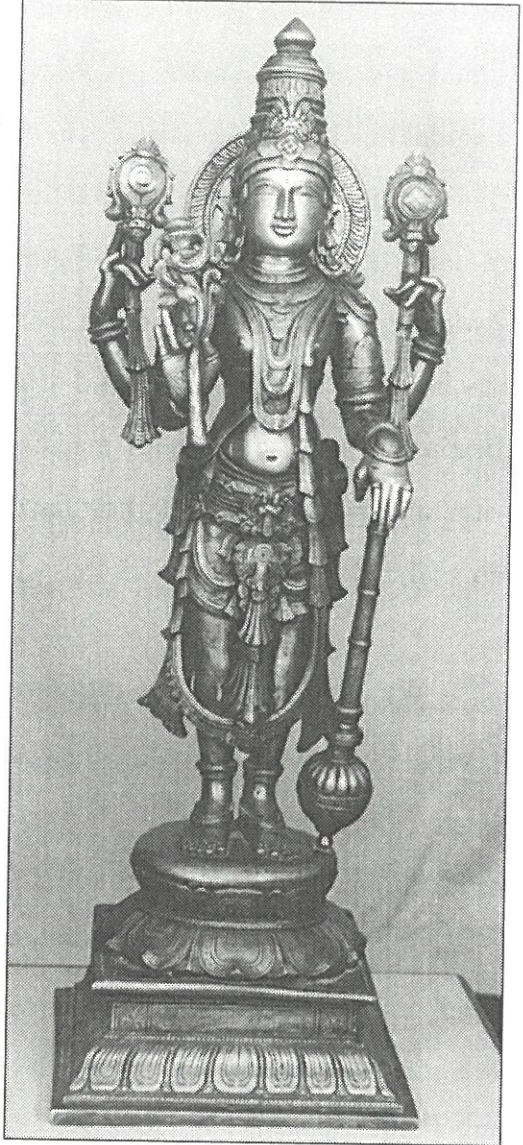


It is prescribed that the icon of a male deity must be carved in masculine stone, but its pedestal must be made in feminine stone ('pumliṅgene tathā beram strī-śilā pīṭhikā bhavet', *Kāpīñjala-saṁhitā*, 11,37): the foundation stones below the ground must be neuter ('ratna-nyāsād adhastāt tu napuṁsaka-śilā', *Vishṇu-saṁhitā*, 13, 79 and *Haya-śirsha-saṁhitā*, 5,61).

According to *Purushottama-tantra* (5,63), if the icon to be made is that of a goddess, feminine stone must be selected; and for its pedestal masculine stone (devinām nirmāṇe strī-śilā varār, puṁ-śilā pādapīṭham). The stone used for foundation under the ground must be neuter (ratna-nyāso pari napuṁsakam).

IMAGES IN METAL

Mobile images (chala-bera) are cast in metal or carved in precious

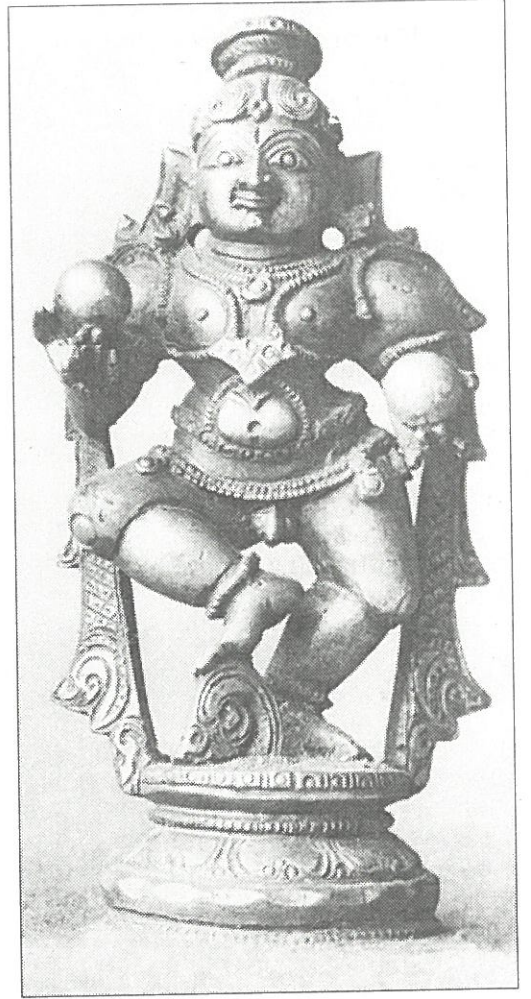


stones. Of the metals, gold (suvarṇa), especially the 'jātarūpa' variety, is best for making images. Next in order is silver (rajata); and next to it is copper (tāmra). But more commonly found are images made in brass (paittala) or bronze (kāṁsya). These five are regarded as auspicious metals (cf. *Īśāna-śiva-guru-deva-paddhati*, 36). Images made of iron (āyasa), lead (saisaka) and tin (trapusha) are used only in magical rites and witchcraft, and they have an evil influence.

We read in *Śukra-nīti-sāra* (4,4,210)

लेख्या लेप्या सैकती च मृण्मयी पैष्टिकी तथा ।
एतेषां लक्षणाभावे न कैश्चिदोष ईरितः ॥

Even if such images are not in accordance with the scriptural



An ancient bronze icon of Krishna
(in author's possession)

prescriptions, it does not at all matter.

For temporary purposes, images for worship may be made in



sand (saikata), cow-dung (gomaya), rice-flour (paishṭa), butter (navanīta), sandal-paste (gandha) and so on. But no pedestal (piṇḍikā) is to be made for such images, nor any standard measurements to be adopted. Worship must be conducted soon after the images are made, and must immediately thereafter be abandoned.

There is another classification of icons for worship into four kinds, given in Gopāla's *Haribhakti-vilāsa*: line-drawings, or colour paintings (chitraja) done on a wall (bhitti), canvas (paṭa) or earthen pot (pātra); clay frescoes (lepaja); cast in molten metal (pākaja); and carved by sharp implements (śastrotkīrṇa) (cf. also *Vishṇu-dharmottara-purāṇa*, 3, 2, 27 etc.). Bhoja's *Samarāṅgaṇa-sūtra*-

dhāra (GOS, II, 1.1) enumerates icons made in gold (suvarṇa), silver (rūpya), copper (tāmra), stone (aśma), wood (dāru), clay (lepya), and drawings (chitra).

'Vāstu-tantra' in *Rudra-yāmala* mentions that even mercury is used for making icons:

मृदा काष्ठेन लोहेन पाषाणैः पारदेन वा ।
रचयन्ति विचित्राणि रूपाणि विविधानि ये ॥

दिन्यान्भौमानन्तरिक्षान् भावाः सन्दर्शयन्ति ये ।
पाञ्चालास्ते सदा पूज्याः प्रतिमा विश्वकर्मणः ॥

Stone icons for worship are either sculpted in the round (called 'chitra') or in bas or middle relief ('ardha-chitra' or 'chitrārdha'). The former can be seen alround ('chitram sarvāṅga-dṛshṭam'), but the back portion of the latter is left plain and not to be seen ('ardham ardhāṅga-



darśanam'). The third variety of icons is painting ('chitrābhāsa') on cloth or wall. The sculpture in the round is considered best, and the painting the least meritorious in worship (cf. *Sakalādhikāra*, 1, 4-5).

For making icons meant for worship, knowledge of iconographic prescriptions is indispensable (*Vishṇudharmottara-purāṇa*, 3,2, 1-9). The sculptor must be well-versed in the art of sculpture in the round, bas-relief, and drawing, must be skilled in delineating the gestures (*mudrā*), postures (*bhaṅgi*), ornaments (*ābharaṇa*), weapons (*āyudha*) and other details appropriate to different deities.

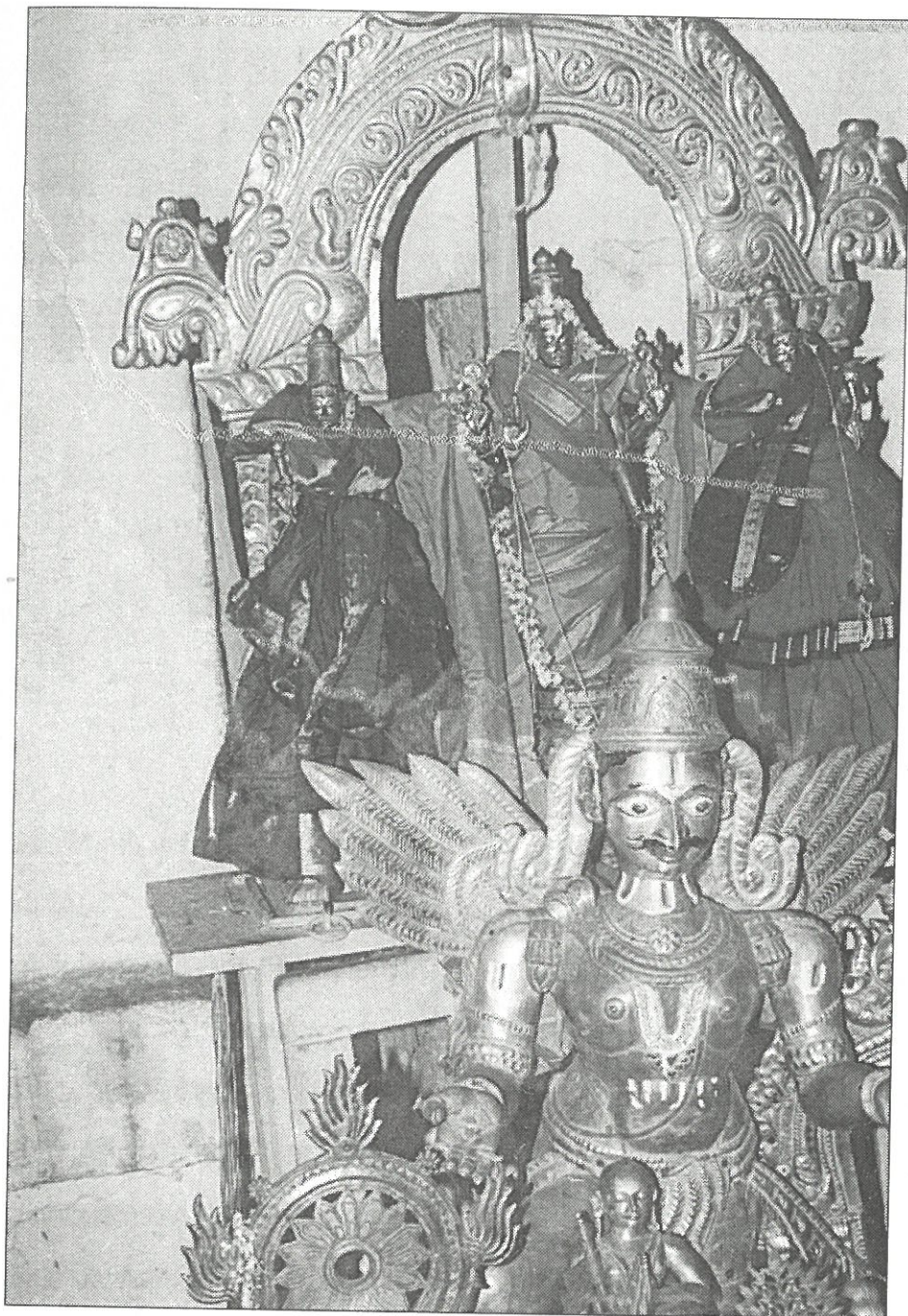
BERA, BIMBA

Bera is a word of uncertain origin, and probably not originally

Sanskrit. Its employment is confined to the Āgama and the Śilpa-śāstra texts. The bera is distinguished by its being an object of worship (hence the expressions like 'dhruvārchā-bera'), and by its being properly made by the sculptors for worship only ('beram śilpibhir nirapeksham eva kārayitvā', *Vimānārchanā-kalpa*, paṭala 16).

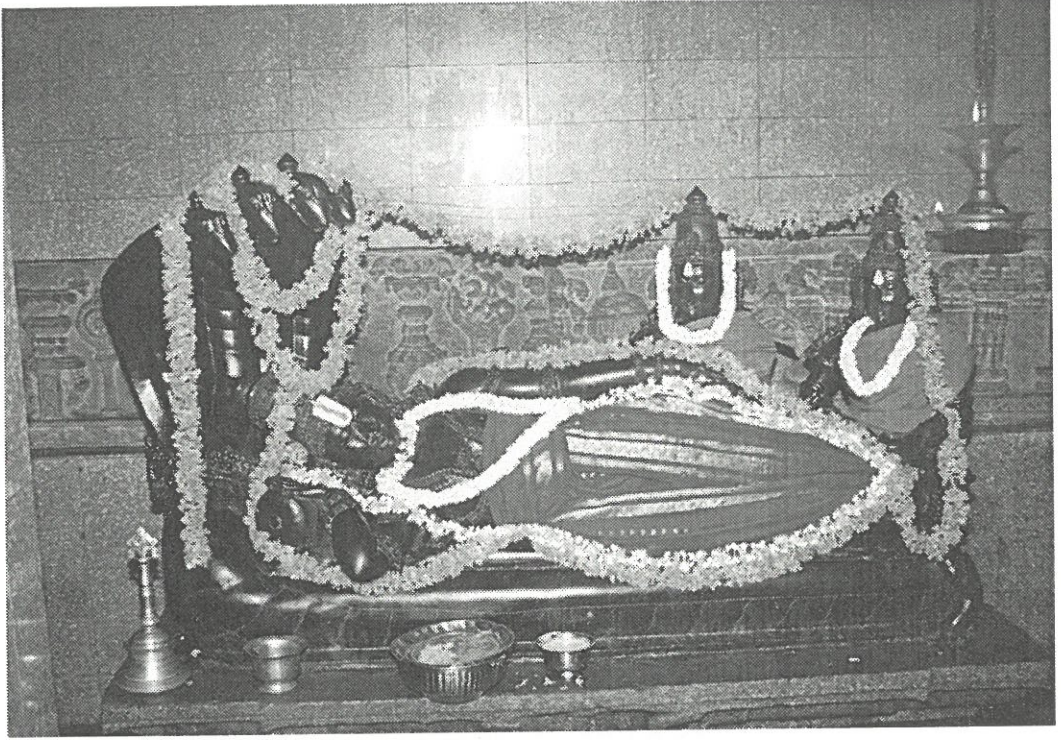
While the words 'mūrti', 'bimba' and 'bera' are often used in the texts as synonyms, the word 'bera' appears to refer specifically to the icons that fully answer to the iconometric prescriptions, as suggested by 'beram mānonmānādyair lakṣaṇopetam' (ibid., paṭala 15). And frequently the word is used for the image that is got ready for consecration (cf. expressions like 'berārtham dāru-





Rangasthala utsava-bera





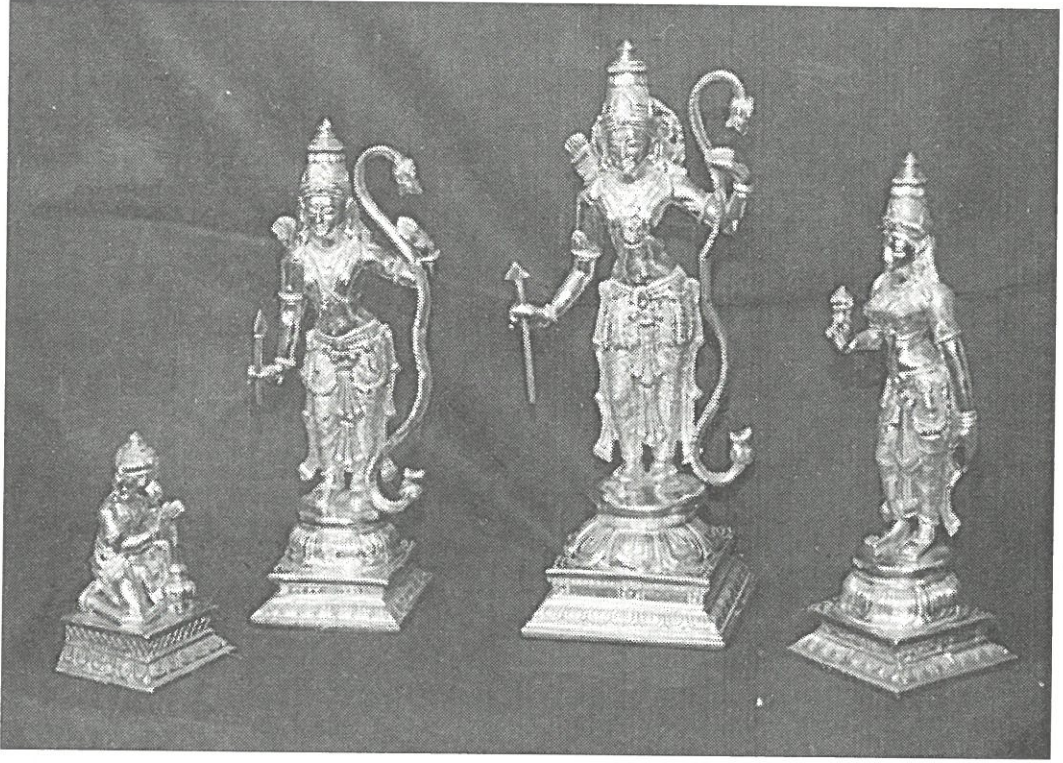
Rangasthala Dhruva-bera

saṅgrahaṇam', 'beram śilpibhih kārayitvā', 'beram samānitya', 'beram samsthāpya', 'beram snāpya', and 'berasya pādam saṁsprśet'). It is used interchangeably with 'deva' (deity).

Further, significantly the 'beras' can only be 'chitra' (sculpture in the

round) or 'chitrārdha' (relief sculpture), and not 'chitrābhāsa' (painting); all the major and minor limbs must be well-carved, according to iconometric canons, and must be beautiful to look at ('sāṅgopāṅgāvayavam adhyardhāvayavam vā sarvatrāhīnam sundaram chitram chitrārdham vā kārayet').



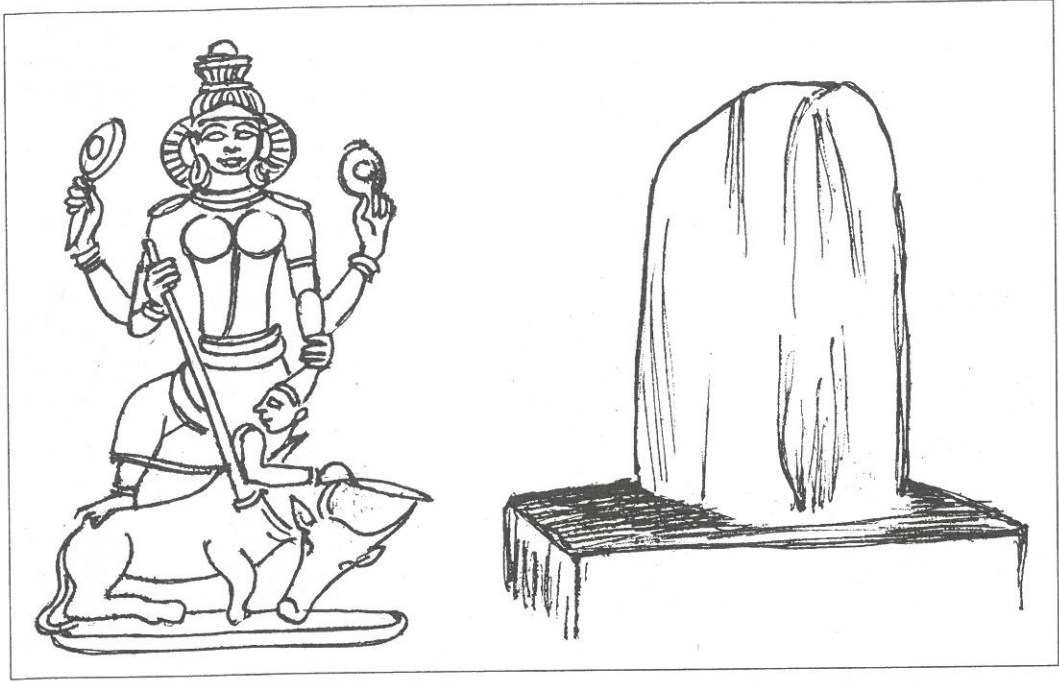


Rāma-parivāra (silver)

The bera's height (berodaya or berotsedha, cf. *Ajitāgama*, 36, 17) and width (berāyāma) are taken as standards for determining other measurements like those of the icon's pedestal (bera-pīṭhottuṅga), the sanctum and the superstructure over the sanctum (vimāna). It is therefore that the sculptor is required to make

the bera iconometrically perfect. The texts mention that it is only when the bera is got ready, the tāla-measurements are fixed (*Ajitāgama*, *kriyā*, 36, 19, 'labdhe bereshu yan-mānam tāla-gaṇyam tad bhavet'); the aṅgula in the bera-body is said to be 'deha-labdhāṅgula' (cf. also *Kāraṇāgama*, 1,11,47 'berāyāmam





Durgā (iconic and aniconic) Kemmanṇu temple (near Kārkaḷa), Karnataka

parigrhya tālam saṁkhyā-kramād bhavet’).

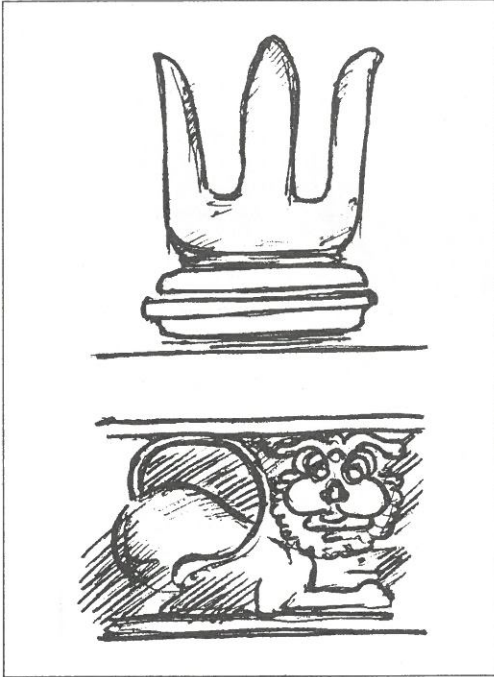
It seems likely that the expression ‘bera’ was initially employed to distinguish iconic representations from the aniconic liṅga, and especially with regard to the installation of Viṣṇu icons in Śiva shrines. We find, for instance, in *Ajitāgama* (kriyā, 36,

17-18) the word is used for the images in the seated or standing posture (āsīna, saṁsthita), in contrast to the liṅga; and *Rauravāgama* (kriyā, 36,) uses the word (mahāberodaya) in connection with the installation of the Viṣṇu icon.

Meaning an image, the word is used to signify an icon made in



stone, metal or clay. The 'bimba' is of seven kinds ('bimbam sapta-vidham smṛtam') considering the material employed: stone (śilā-maya), precious tones (maṇi-maya), metal (lauha), wood (dāru-maya), clay (mr̥ṇmaya), composite (miśraka) and drawing (lekhya) (cf. *Śilpa-ratna*).



Durgā Trisūlinī (Baḷa shrine, Puttūr)

There is another division of 'bimbās' into three types ('bimbam tu trividham'): formless (nishkala), with form (sakala), and mixed (miśra). The first type does not really answer to the description of a man-made bimba; it includes yantras, bāṇa-līṅgas and śālagrāmas. The second type is iconic, and made according to the āgamic prescriptions and in order to fulfil the various needs of devotees and worshippers. The third type is illustrated by the 'līṅga', which is not iconic although it cannot be called formless.

All the three types are symbolic in nature: the object of worship has significance beyond what is seen and handled.

Still another classification of 'bimbās' is into non-mobile (achala),





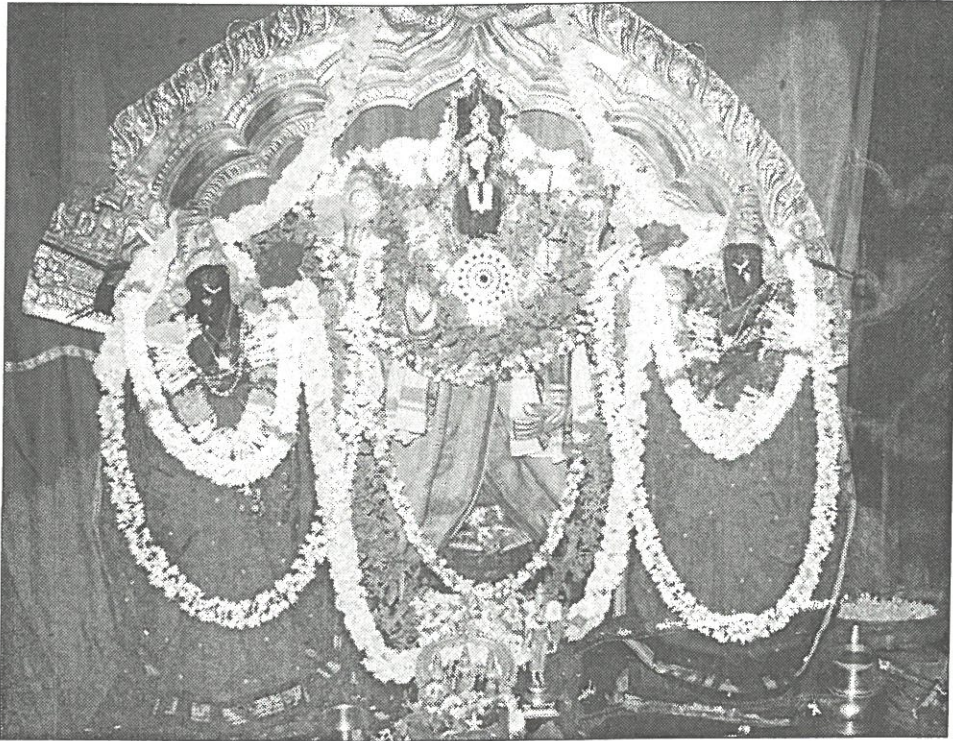
Rāngasthala Vināyaka



mobile (chala) and partially mobile and partially not (chalāchala). To the first group belong stone or stucco-mortar images installed in the sanctum to remain there for all time; they are fixed to the pedestal and are not meant to be moved out of the consecrated spot containing precious stones and herbs hidden underneath

(‘ratna-nyāsoṇari’). Any movement of such icons is considered inauspicious, and invoke rituals of pacification and purification.

The second group includes metallic images (small in (size) which are used in households and in several sequences of the worship ritual in a



(Utsava-mūrthi)



temple; these are carried about either on the head of the priest, in a palanquin (śibikā), on the vehicle (vāhana) or in a chariot (ratha).

The third group of bimbās are not normally meant to be moved about, but are nevertheless moved on special occasions, as for instance the main wooden images of Jagannātha, Bala-bhadra and Subhadrā in the temple at Jagannāthapūri, which are taken out in procession during the 'navakāṣṭhā' ceremony.

Bimbās are also classified, as already mentioned, into sculptures in the round (chitra), relief sculptures (ardha-chitra or ardhāṅga-darśana) and paintings (chitrābhāsa). In temples, it is normal to employ the

first two varieties. But on special occasions, paintings are also used, as for instance the painting of Garuḍa during the commencement of the annual chariot festival (rathotsava) in a temple.

There are texts which consider chitra as the best and most unsuitable for worship in a temple ('uttamam tu balam chitram'); and the chitrābhāsa most suitable ('ālekhyam adhamam proktam').

Vāśishṭha-saṁhitā (4, 59-50)

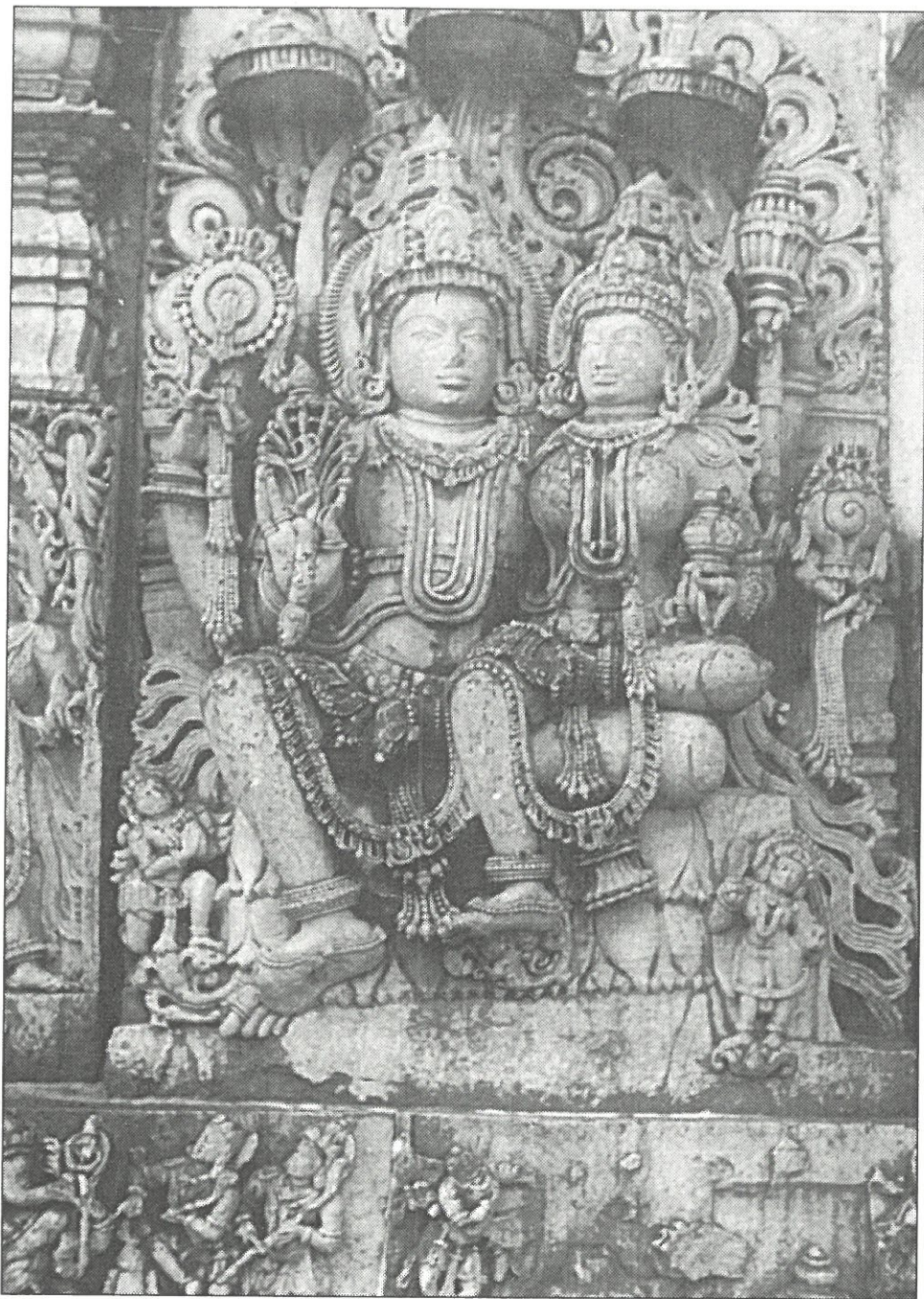
speaks of two-fold division of bimbās: 'saumya' or those which are pacific in nature and pleasant of aspect ('saumyāyām tu bhavet prītiḥ'), and 'āgneyi' which are violent in nature and evocative of emotions ('āgneyāyām tu bhaved uṣṇam'). The





Pāśupata, Pallava Stone Relief





Lakshmī-nārāyaṇa (Hoysala)



latter are not recommended for worship, for they engender poverty and misery ('sā dāridrya-var dhinī').

The 'bimbas' that are made of clay (mr̥ṇmayī) need to be renewed every month; if the bimba is a painting (rekhā), it must be redone every year. If it is a wooden icon, then it must be renewed once in twelve years. The images in stone and so on (dhātu-mayī) are the best for they last a thousand years. But icons made in precious stones or metal (maṇi-loha-maya) are even better, for their life would be ten thousand years!

IMAGE FOR WORSHIP

The image of a god or goddess for worship is to be made in tāla-measures from eight to twelve; the

images of human beings (boy, yaksha, king, sage) between five and ten tāla-measures. The images may be made with reference to form (rūpa), action (kriyā) and emotion (bhāva). The form may be lone (kevala) and in company (samyukta) of a consort, devotee or an attendant. Action may be love-making (mithuna), vanquishing the enemy (samhāra), bestowing grace (anugraha), dancing (nartana) or being engaged in a fight (raṇa).

Standing (sthānaka), being seated (āsīna), moving about (yānaka) and lying down (śayāna) are also actions. Among emotions tranquillity (śānta), love (śṛṅgāra), wonderment (adbhuta), valour (vīra), pleasure (mudita) and terror-striking (bhayānaka) are represented with





appropriate postures and facial expressions.

The expression 'pratimā' popularly used for an icon signifies an image meant for contemplation. The suffix 'pra' has the sense of an especial prop or support: प्र आलम्बनस्य प्राधान्येन ध्यानं प्रतीकोपास्तिः ॥ The icon represents the deity, suggesting the aspects of the deity that are suitable or amenable to contemplation.

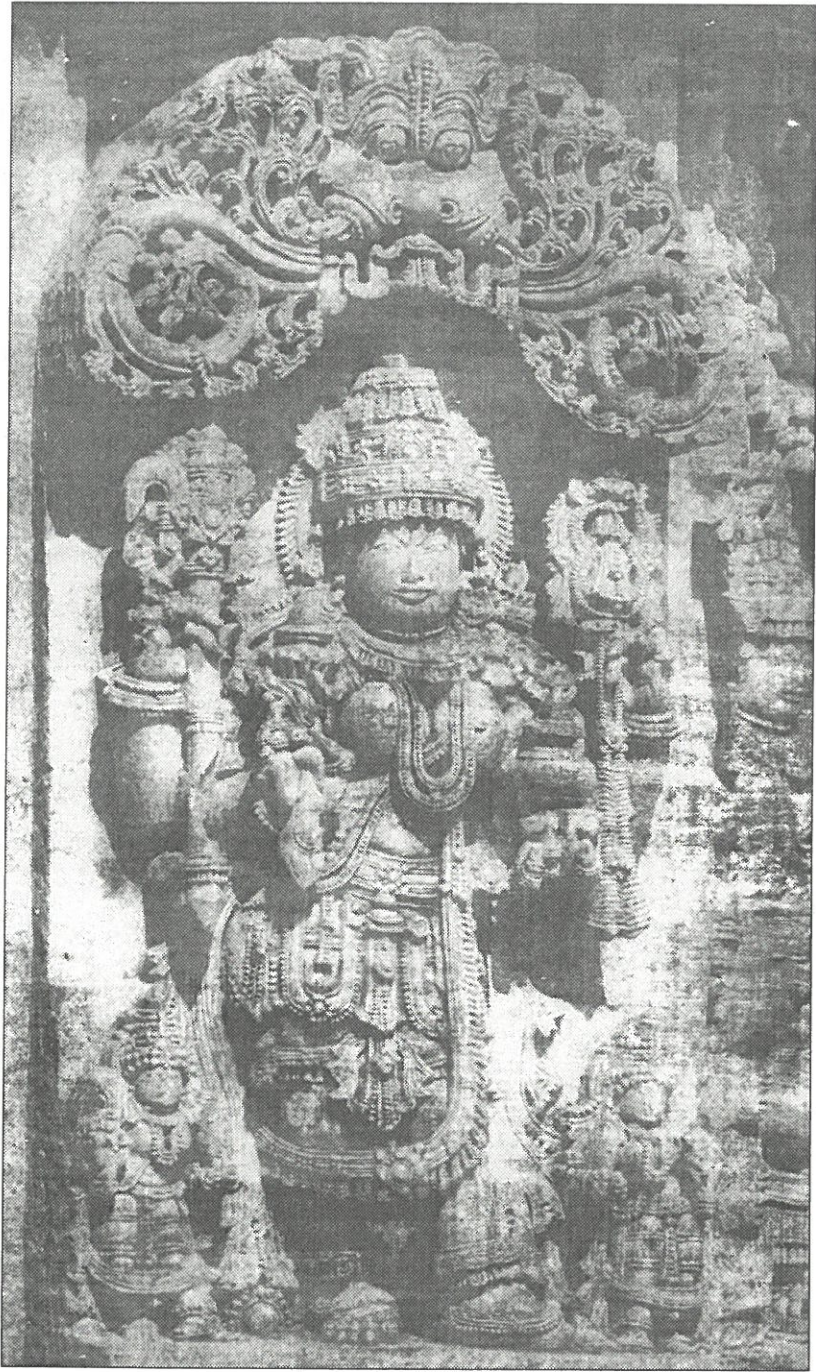
The icon becomes 'worship-worthy' (hence called archā), only when divinity is projected in it; otherwise, it is just a doll or a piece of sculpture. Thus, the important role played by the icon is to a large extent due to the attitude which the devotee brings to bear. It is when the devotee attaches an especial (viz. divine) significance to it, it acquires

merit. The other word for pratimā is 'vigraha' which is explained as whatever is taken in a special manner (viśeṣheṇa gr̥hyate iti).

For purposes of contemplation, a deity is visualized as having specific characteristics (lakṣhaṇa): postures (bhaṅgī), weapons (āyudha), moods (bhāva) and vehicle (vāhana). These are in accordance with the attitude with which the worship is conducted or the deity is contemplated upon. The details which should be accommodated in an icon are given in the 'dhyāna-śloka', pertaining to that deity.

The idea is that the icon should serve as a support (ālambana) for adequate contemplation (dhyāna). The mind should be enabled to go beyond the visible icon and conjure





Keshava in Somanāthapura (Hoysala)



up the vision of the deity, which is but faintly reflected in the icon. The icon has an instrumental value, and the devotee does not mistake the icon itself for the deity; an icon only represents the deity.

However, it would be improper for the devotee to regard the icon as a mere artefact in stone or metal ('pratimāyām tu śilā-buddhih'), and treat it as such. The deity in its own abstract level cannot be worshipped, and without worship the mind of the devotee cannot be prepared and primed for communion with the deity.

Further spiritual stages become precluded when the object of worship is not looked upon as a proper representative of the deity, at any rate during the worship ritual. The icon is called a mūrti because the deity is supposed to assume a

concrete form for the sake of the devotee, either on its own (svayamvyakta), or fabricated by an image-maker (śilpi-nirmita).



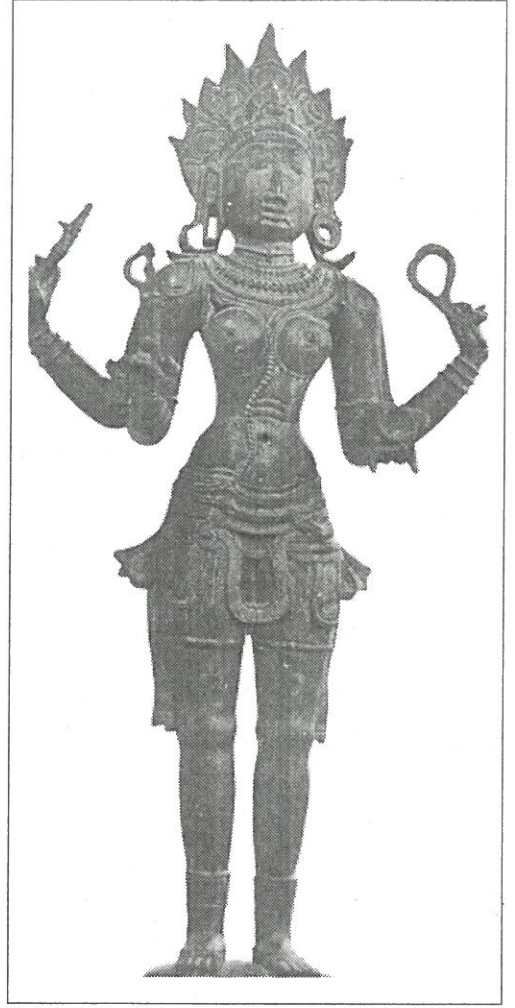
Vishnu (bronze)



When the image-maker proceeds to make an image of the deity, he is required to contemplate preliminarily upon the divine qualities that must find place in the image. *Śukra-niti-sāra* (4,4, 147) lays down:

ध्यानयोगस्य संसिद्ध्यै प्रतिमालक्षणं स्मृतम् ।
प्रतिमाकारको मर्त्यो यथा ध्यानपरो भवेत् ॥

An icon for worship can never be properly made without the image-maker getting into a state of meditative absorption. For the important aspect of worship is facility for meditation on the part of the devotee. It is not the physical beauty of the icon that endows value upon it, but the depth of meditative absorption which has gone into the making of it.



Mahakāli (bronze)

The icon is small when worshipped in households; some texts prescribe that the height of such an icon should not exceed the length of the worshipper's palm (from



the bottom of the palm above the wrist to the tip of the middle finger); and some other texts insist that the height of the icon for worship should not exceed the breadth of the worshipper's palm, so that it can be

contained in the fist without any part of the icon showing itself. And in the household, icons made of metals (usually copper, bronze or silver) are recommended.



Vishṇu (Pāla)

According to *Bṛhat-saṁhitā* (57, 49), however, the icons which are one cubit in height are auspicious; the icons which are two cubits bestow wealth upon the worshipper; the icons which are three cubits will contribute to welfare, and those which extend to four cubits will make for prosperity.

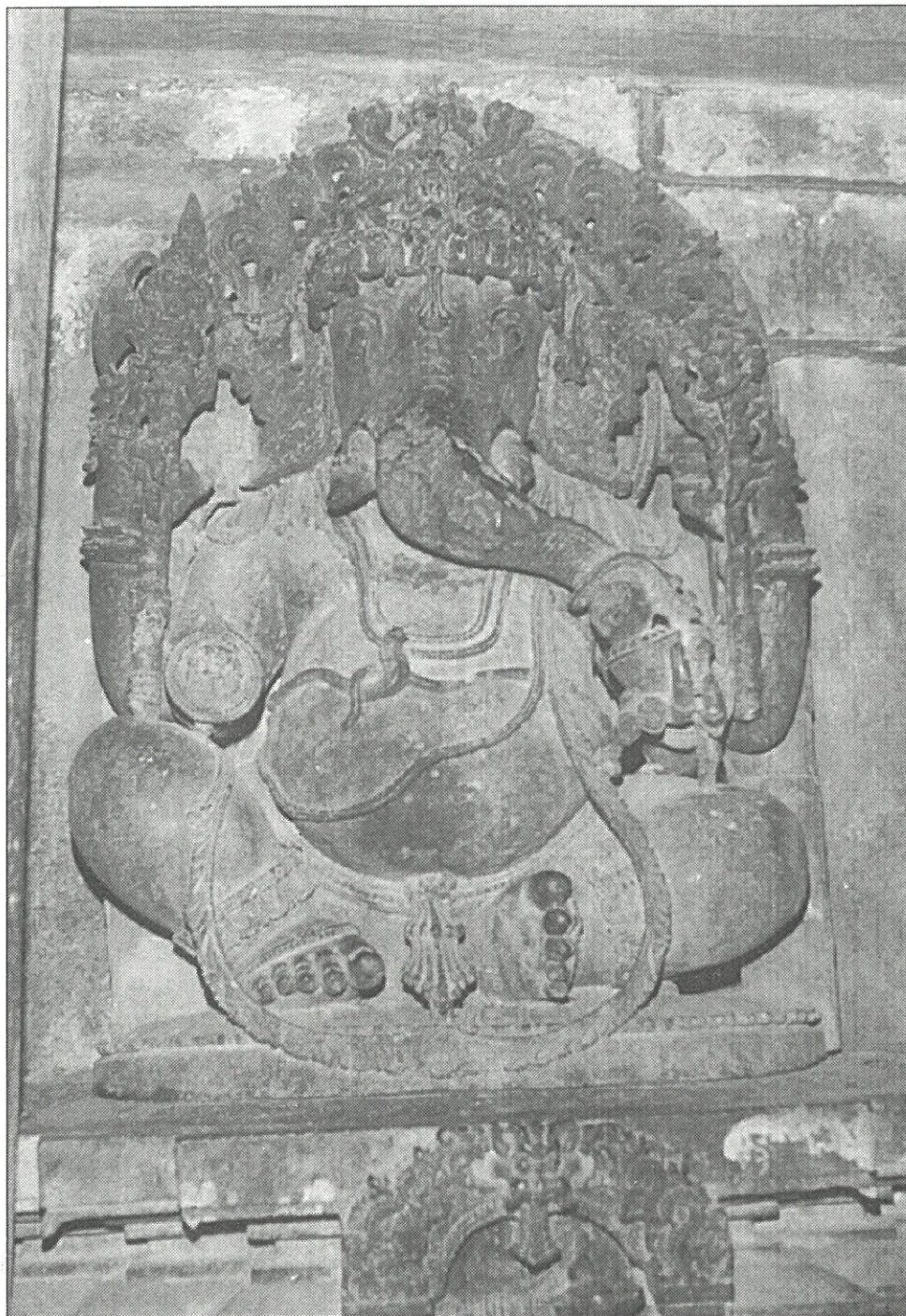
सौम्या तु हस्तमात्रा वसुदा

हस्तद्वयोच्छ्रिता प्रतिमा ।

क्षेमसुभिक्षाय भवेत् त्रिचतुर्हस्तप्रमाणा या ॥

The icon in a temple may be larger in size. *Bṛhat-saṁhitā* (57,3) prescribes that the pedestal of the





icon (piṇḍikā) must be three parts of the height of the door of the sanctum less (when the height of the door is divided into eight parts), and that the icon itself must be twice the height of the pedestal.

देवागारद्वारस्य अष्टांशेनास्य यस्तृतीयोऽंशः।
तत्पिण्डिकाप्रमाणं प्रतिमा तद् द्विगुणपरिमाणा॥

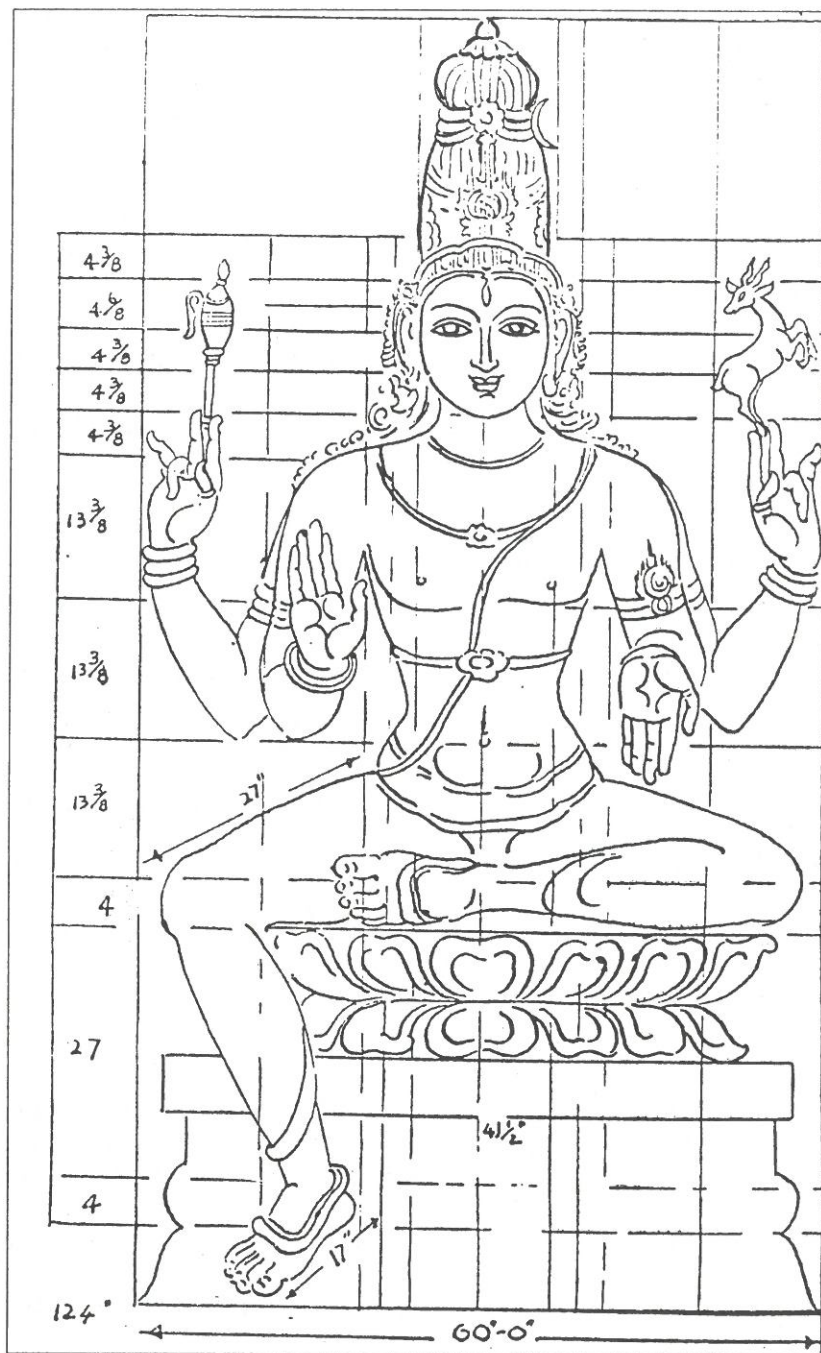
According to another authority (*Matsya-purāṇa*, 232), the height of the sanctum's door ('dvārocchrāyasya yan-mānam') must be divided into eight equal parts (asṭadhā), and two parts thereof must be the height of the icon within the sanctum; one part must again be divided into three equal parts, and one part must be the height of the pedestal ('bhāga-dvayena-pratimām; tri-bhāgi-kṛtya

tat punah, piṇḍikā bhāgatah kāryā'). This would ensure that the pedestal is neither too tall nor too short ('nātinīchā na chochhritā')

The actual making of the icon, whether for worship in a household or for worship in a temple, must follow the canons laid down in the texts, taking as the basic measure the length of the intended icon's face and calculating the measurement of the other parts of the icon's body on this measure ('mukha-mānena kartavyā sarvāvayava-kalpanā').

The iconic worship in the country has followed sectarian divisions and differences; the major divisions are Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Śākta. While Śiva is principally worshipped in households as well as





Uttama-daśa-tāla



in temples in aniconic līngas (for which also there are tāla-māna prescriptions), the temples would usually have the processional images in iconic form; and bigger temples would have stone and metal representations of the sportive forms of Śiva.

More frequently Nāṭarāja, Dakṣiṇā-mūrti and Ardha-nārīśvara icons may be seen in temples. Although the sportive forms of Śiva are not for regular or daily worship, they are also made in the 'tāla-māna' that the texts prescribe. One constantly worships it, attends to it and thinks of it all the time.

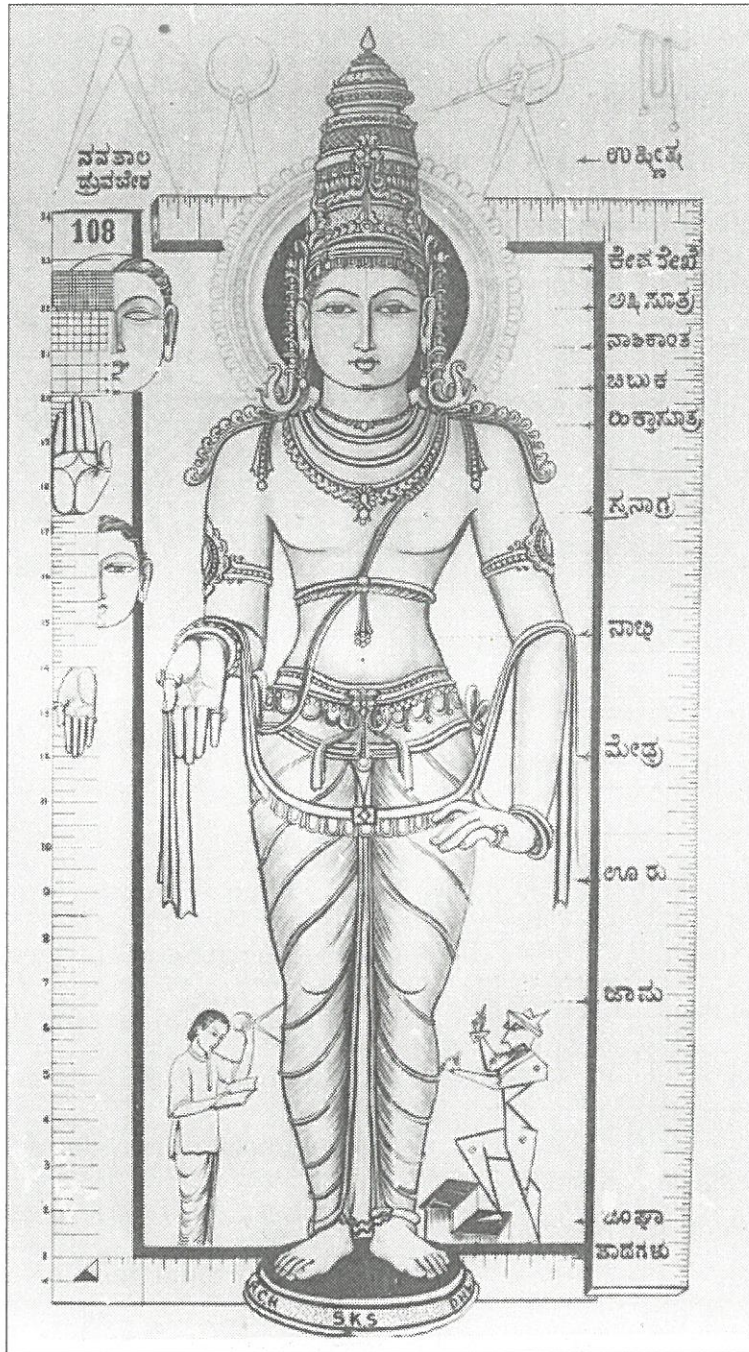
सरूपां प्रतिमा विष्णोः प्रसन्नवदनेक्षणाम्।
कृत्वाऽऽत्मनः प्रीतिकरी सुवर्णरजतादिभिः ॥

तामर्चयेत्तां प्रणमेत्तां भजेत्तां विचिन्तयेत्।
विशत्यपास्तदोषस्तु तामेव बह्वरूपिणीम् ॥



The need for iconic representation of the deity has been emphasized in several texts. It is impossible for any one to contemplate upon the deity without any form. If all forms are withdrawn, how can mind function at all, and where can it abide? Even if mind were to think of a deity devoid of





Aṅga-vinyāsa



form, the mind would easily tire or fall asleep.

Therefore, an intelligent person should worship only a deity as having some form. But he must also bear in mind that there is something beyond the form. Whether for ultimate liberation or for obtaining benefits that he desires, he should stick to the form of the deity that he has chosen at all times (*Vishṇu-saṁhitā*, 29, 55-58).

न च रूपं विना देवो ध्यातुं केनापि शक्यते ।
सर्वरूपनिवृत्ता हि बुद्धिः कुत्रास्य तिष्ठति ।
निवृत्ता ग्लायते बुद्धिः निद्रया वा परीयते ॥

तस्माद्विद्वानुपासीत बुध्द्या साकारमेव तम् ।
अस्ति तस्य परोक्षं तदिति किञ्चिदनुस्मरेत् ॥

सर्वथाकारमुद्दिष्टं न परोक्षं तदिति किञ्चिदनुस्मरेत् ।
सर्वथाकारमुद्दिष्टं न परित्यज्य पण्डितः ।

परं देवमुपासीत मुक्तये वा फलाय वा ॥

And when thus the need for a form for the deity is conceded, it is recognized and projected on the deity for a purpose ('kāryārtham mūrtayas tasya'), and that is to facilitate attention and contemplation. Therefore, the best form in this context is a human form, with which we are familiar; and we have regard and reverence for some human beings whom we adore, extol and even worship. There is a notion of 'mahāpurushas' (superior human beings), who are equipped with all auspicious marks and so stand out prominently. The deity must be visualized as a 'mahā-purusha' and worshipped with great devotion. It is then that the spiritual perfection is accomplished.

अतः पुरुषरूपेण कल्पयित्वा तमच्युतां
अभ्यर्च्य परया भक्त्या सिद्धिं
गच्छन्ति मानवाः ॥

(op.cit. 3,6)





Avalokita (Padma-pāṇi)





Govardhana (Hoysala)



When human forms are prescribed for deities, the details such as decorations, garments and so on must be in accordance with the country and the region in which the images are made.

देशानुरूपभूषणवेशालंकारमूर्तिभिः कार्या प्रतिमा ।

The idea is that there should be nothing unusual or outlandish in the deity which may render the mind curious or averse. The details must at once please the mind and delight the heart. So that the mind will naturally incline towards the icon and the heart rests there.

The prescription that the icon must be proper and delightful (lakshṇa-vatī pratimā) is further elaborated in the texts. What pleases one person may not please another;

and beauty in one organ may not be found in other organs; and it is extremely difficult to make an icon that is perfectly proper and delightful for all people. Therefore, the texts provide standard measurements, and what is consistent with them alone is considered proper and beautiful ('śāstra-mānena yo ramyah sa ramyo nānya eva hi'). Thus pratimā-lakṣhaṇa is a matter of textual fidelity.

The texts provide details such as māna), unmāna (measure of thickness, measurement taken at right angles to the place in which māna and pramāna measures have been taken), parimāṇa (measurement of interspaces) and lamba-māna (measurement taken along plumb-lines) (etaiah śaṇmānair yutam beram kuryāt). There are also





Kubera (Yaksha)





Nṛtya-Sarasvati



prescriptions about the tāla-māna that is relevant and proper. There is an insistence that the icon should neither lean nor fat (*Śukra-nīti-sāra* 14,4,2 'na-hinā nādhikā mānāt te te jñeyās suśobhanāh, na stulā na kṛśā vā pi sarve sarva-manoramāh').

It is necessary, therefore, that the image-maker is well acquainted with the canons of measurement. Correct measurements, however, are not alone important. The icon must have a beauty overriding the technical perfection, and this is not a matter of measurement. It is said in *Hayaśirsha-pāñcharātra* that the icon will have the divine presence only when it is beautiful to look at ('ābhirūpyāccha bimbānām devas sānnidhyam ṛcchati').

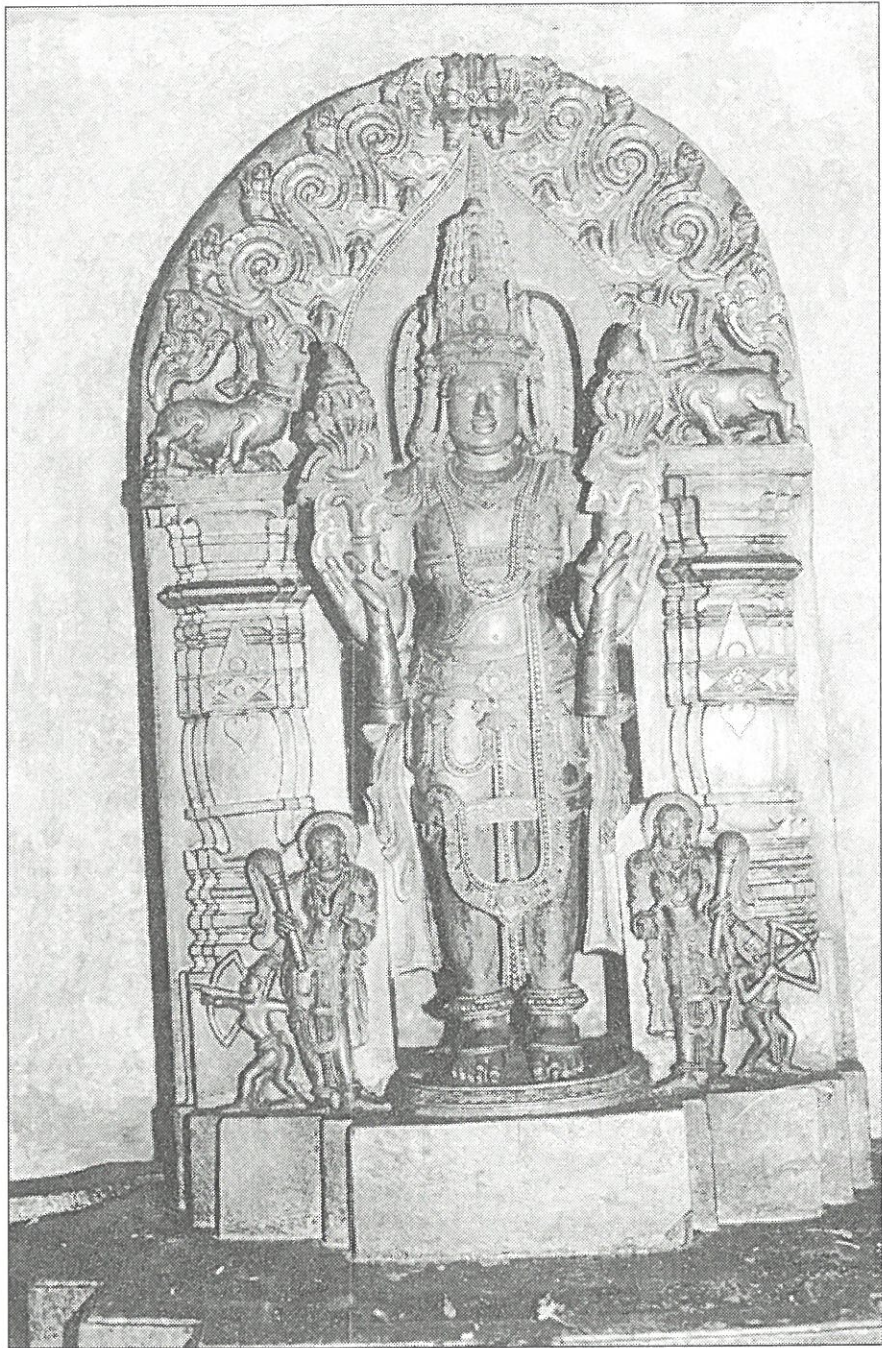
Śukra-nīti-sāra (4,4,15) is even more expressive: 'it is only when the icon is perfectly shaped in all its parts and charming in aspect, that it makes for merit: otherwise it will be a waste of life and money, and will bring sorrow'.

यथोक्तावयवैः पूर्णा पुण्यदा सुमनोहरा ।

अन्यथायुर्धनहरा नित्यं दुःखविवर्धिनी ।

According to the same text (4,4,72), an icon may be made of sand (saikatī), rice-powder mixed with water (paishṭī), stucco with paint (lepyā), clay (mṛṇmayī), wood (vārkshī), stone (pāshāṇa) or metal (dhātūttha). The order in which the mention of substances is made indicates that each substance is more durable than the one preceding it ('sthira jñeyā yathottarā').





Sūrya (with attendants)





Vārāhī

The text also includes pictorial representation (lekhyā) in the list. The substances here are known as 'pratimā-dravya' or 'arcchā-sthāna'. *Samarāṅgaṇa-sūtra-dhāra* (GOS, vol II, 1,1) gives a list of seven such substances which are suitable for image-making: gold, silver, copper, stone, wood, clay painted over and drawing.

There are details which contribute to the beauty of the icon:

posture, gesture, decorations and so on. The texts elaborate on each of these details. Regarding the general bearing of the deity as represented in the icon, there are four postures usually met with: standing (sthānaka), seated (āsīna), recumbent (śayana) and mobile (yānaka).



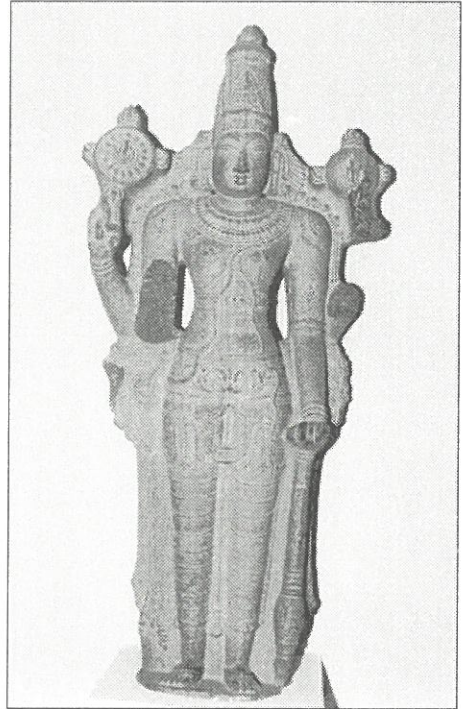
Śyāmālā

The icons that sit in a lotus posture or stand in equipoise, with a pleasant countenance are reared





Bhikshātana (stone)



Varada-rāja (stone)



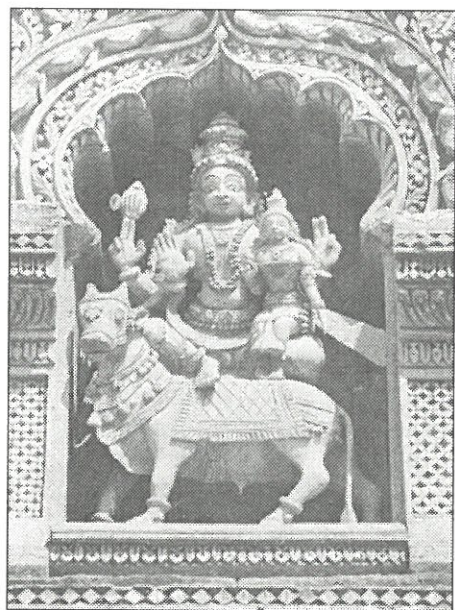
Vishṇu-Śiva (stone)

as sātत्वika in character. Those that stand in a disturbed stance or sit in an āliḍha posture, or shown in the act of moving about, with various weapons in hands which are four or six in number are rājasa, while a violent deity with terrific countenance and holding frightening weapons in its hands which are eight or more answers to the description of a tāmasa icon.

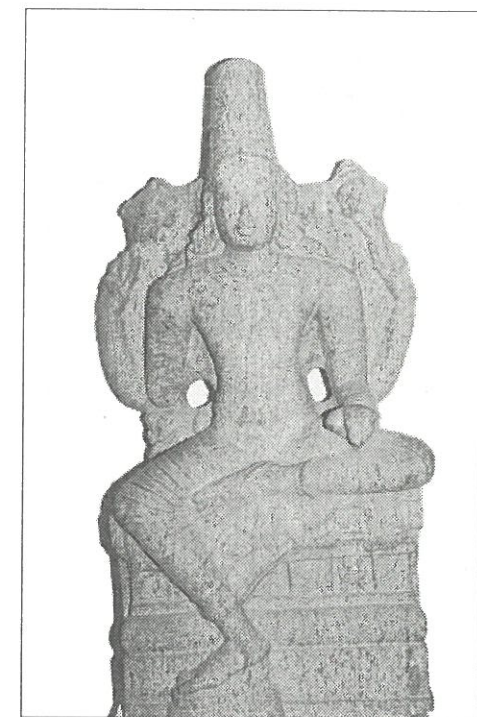




Chandra-Śekhara (bronze)



Vṛshārūḍha (stuccs)



Vishṇu (āsīna) (stone)

Weapons are also classified into these types: rosary (aksha-sūtra), book (pustaka), lotus (padma), conch (śaṁkha), ladle (sruk) and pot (kumbha) are illustrations of sāttvika type; hand drum (damaru) flute, (venu), bid drum (bherī), lute (vīṇā), bell (ghaṇṭā) and cudgel (daṇḍa) illustrate the rājasa type; and



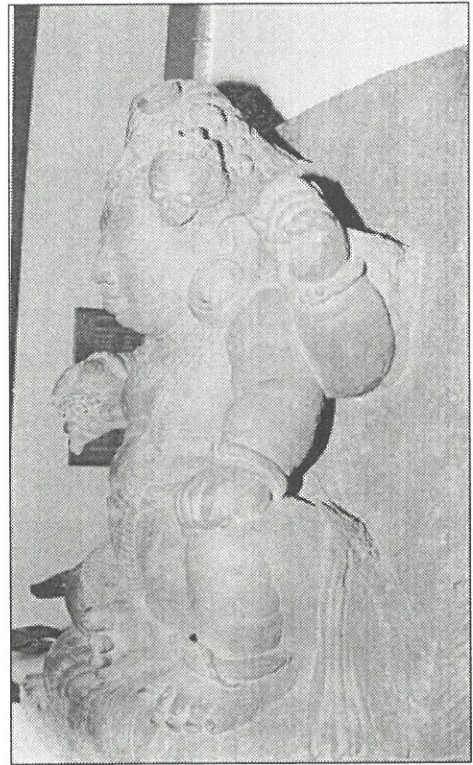


Ganeśa (stone)

weapons like handspear (paṭṭiśa), sword (khaḍga), khaṭvāṅga, and hammer (ṭaṅka), fire, animals like serpent, cock, mongoose and deer illustrate the tāmasa type.

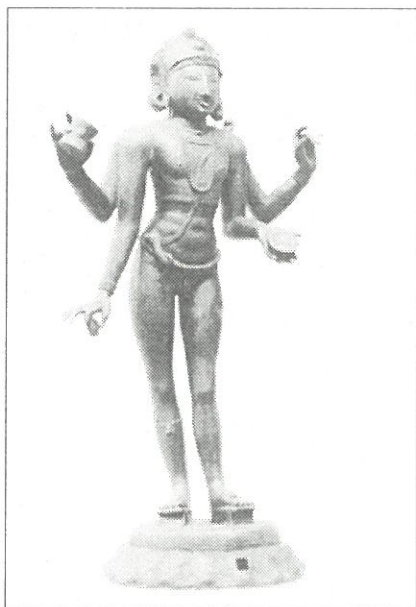
Gestures (mudrā) are hand-poses and suggest the attitude of the deity: protection (abhaya), boon-bestowal (varada), exposition

(vyākhyāna), warning (tarjani) threat (sūchi), book (pustaka), spiritual union (chinmudrā), transcendental wisdom (jñāna), meditative absorption (dhyāna or yoga), arm thrown across suggesting obscuration (daṇḍa), hip-holding (kaṭyavalambita), wonderment (vismaya), dharma-



Gaṇa (stone)

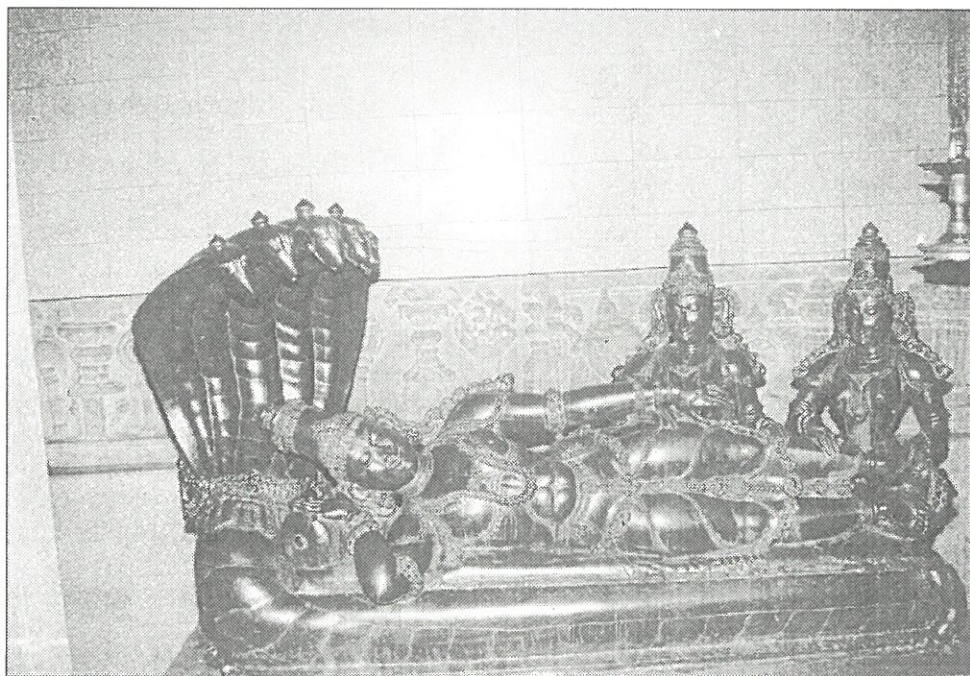




Bhikshāṭana (bronze)



Kaṅkāla (stone)

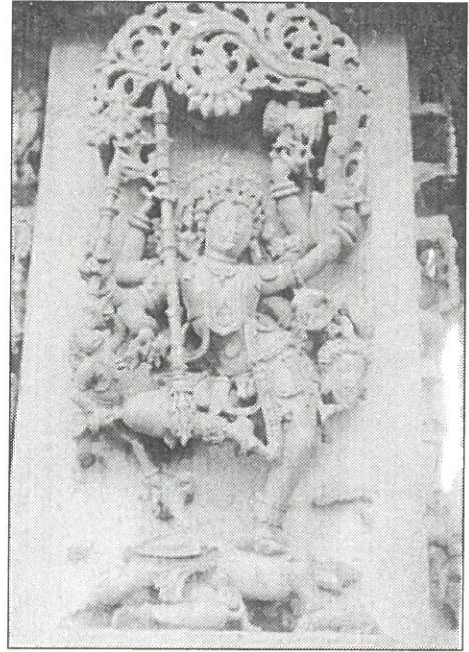


Śayāna (Rangasthala) (stone)





Umā-Maheśvara (bronze)



Nṛtta-mūrti (stone)



Sarasvati (stone)

wheel-turning (dharma-chakra) and so on.

Decorations (bhūshā) like crown (kirīṭa), ear-pieces (kaṇa-bhūshaṇa), hair-styles (keśa-bandha), garlands and necklaces (hāra), breast-bands (kucha-bandha), belly-bands (udara-bandha), girdles (mekhalā), bracelets (kaṅkaṇa), armlets (keyūra), anklets (nūpura), shoulder-



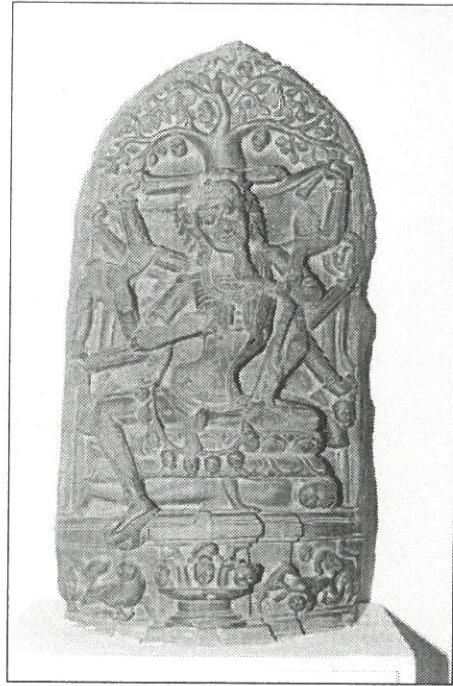


Bhairava (stone)

tassels (skandha-mālā), waist-band (kaṭi-bandha), cross-belt (chhanna-vira), sacrificial chords (yajñopavita), rings (aṅgulīyaka) and so on.

Besides these details, there are conventional prescriptions of ideal beauty like the face which should be like full-moon (pūrṇendu-vaktram), large and elongated eyes (dirgha-

vipula-nayana), conch-like ears (śaṁkhābha-karṇa), nose like tila-flower (tila-pushpa-nāsā), arms like the cow's tail (paśu-pucchha-bāhu), thighs like the plantain trunk (raṁbhoru-kāṇḍa), lotus-like hands and feet (padmāṅghri-pāṇi) and so on which the icon should incorporate (*Pratishthā-vidhi-darpaṇa*, ch.2)



Chāmūṇḍā (stone)





Nṛtya-sarasvatī

Some texts distinguish between yoga (tranquil and contemplative), bhoga (pleasant and sensuous), vīra (dynamic and valiant) and ābhichārika (with occult significance, used in magic and witchcraft) icons, and describe the characteristic features of each variety. They have different benefits to bestow upon the devotees.

Several purāṇas (like Agni, Matsya, Viṣṇu-dharmottara and Pādma) contain sections which deal with the topic of pratimā-lakṣhaṇa. Among independent treatises which are relevant for the study include *Mānasāra*, *Bṛhatsamhitā*, *Sakalādhikāra*, *Amśumadbhedāgama*, *Samarāṅgaṇa-sūtra-dhāra*, *Mānasollāsa*,



Gajāsura-samhāra (Hoysaḷa)





Bhairava

Aparājita-paripṛchchā, Maya-mata, Pāñcharatra and Vaikhānasa texts, Śaivāgama works, Sārasvatiya-śilpa-śāstra, Śukra-nīti-sāra, Śilpa-ratna, Chaturvarga-chintāmani, Rūpa-maṇḍana, Pratimā-lakṣhaṇa, Tantra-sāra, Devatā-mūrti-prakaraṇa, Hari-bhakti-vilāsa and Chitra-lakṣhaṇa.

Vishṇu icons are frequently represented in one of the ten incarnatory forms although the independent forms like Nārāyaṇa, Keśava, Śrinivāsa, Padmanābha and Vāsudeva are also commonly found.

The icons of Brahmā are rare; and even when they are found they are only as attendant-divinities (parivāra-devatā). The sportive forms of Śiva, the forms of Vishṇu and the form of Brahmā are required to be made in the highest tāla-māna, viz. *uttama-daśa-tāla* (measuring 124 aṅgulas).

The forms of Devī are numerous, and they are all to be made in the immediately next tāla-māna, viz. *madhyama-daśa-tāla* (measuring 120 aṅgulas). The texts contain not only dhyāna-ślokas for



all the major deities (Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Devī) but details of measurement suitable for them.

In temples, there may be other classes of minor deities such as the eight dikpālas, the twelve ādityas, the eleven rudras, the eight vasus, the seven sages, sun and moon, Garuḍa and Śeṣha, all of whom are to be made in the tāla-māna next to the above (*viz.* adhama-daśa-tāla, 116 aṅgulas).

The icons of non-deities (like the grahas, the yakshas, the nāgas, the gandharvas, the asuras and superior human beings are made in nava-tāla; they are not worshipped, and their role is only as attendants (*parivāra*). Often, the tāla-māna prescriptions are not strictly followed in their case.

There is a saying that the godhead is present in the sacred fire for the ritualists, in their own hearts for the contemplatives, in icons for those with little spiritual equipment, and everywhere for the wise.

अग्नौ क्रियावतां देवो हृदि देवो मनीषिणाम्।
प्रतिमास्वल्पबुद्धीनां ज्ञानिनां सर्वतो हरिः॥

Sāttvata-samhitā (10, 44-47) speaks of four 'places' where worship may be effectively performed (*chatus-sthānārchanā*): (1) in water (2) in ones own heart, (3) in an icon, and (4) in fire on a consecrated platform (or *maṇḍala*)

तीर्थमध्ये स्वहृत्पद्मे बिम्बे वेद्यां स्थले तु वा।
वह्निर्गर्भे तु निर्धूमे नित्यमस्मिंश्चतुष्टये॥

यन्त्राणामर्चनं कुर्यात् सिद्धार्थमपि मुक्तये।
सजलाञ्जलिपूरैस्तु तीर्थेऽथ हृदयाम्बुजे॥



भावनामृतजैर्भोगैः मूर्तैरध्यादिकैर्बहिः ।
समित्सप्तकपूर्वैस्तु साज्यैर्वह्निगतं तिलैः ॥

Water may be a sacred stream, or in a sacred pot (kumbha). Worship in ones own heart is known as 'internal worship' (antaryāga) and is wholly mental or ideational in nature (mānasī); it does not require any external material or action. An icon is an external object, requiring formal worship with material objects (bahir-mūrti). It may be in ones own home (sva-gr̥he) or in a temple (prāsāde). Worship of God in the fire assumes the form of customary sacrifices and fire-rituals on the altar (vedi or maṇḍala).

Whatever the object of worship, divinity is actually present in ones own heart. One must therefore formally draw-out the divine form

from himself and place it on the external object of worship. We read in *Yoga-dīpikā* of Nārāyaṇa-panḍita(10,3):

हृत्स्थं देवं समावाह्य बहिर्बिम्बे नियोजयेत् ।

Even as the sacred fire has sacramental and ritualistic prescriptions about how it must be lit and tended, and even as the contemplatives have to follow specific techniques of visualization of the divine form in their own hearts, the icons also must be properly made for worship, albeit by common and unenlightened people. Thus *Agni-purāṇa* which quotes the above verse with a slight modification, adds immediately that the icons must be made with all the required features ('pratimām lakṣhaṇa-vatīm kuryāt').



Among the several alternative forms of worship available for the devout (like fire-rituals, recitation of the divine names, contemplation, iconic worship (pratimārādhana, bera-pūjā) is regarded as the best (cf. *Khilādhikāra*, ch. 1). Because the icon is available for constant perception, and provides a support for continued contemplation, it is capable of generating devotion; and whatever is done without devotion is in vain. Therefore the icon is of superior value (*Kāśyapīya-jñāna-kāṇḍa*, ch.55). There is also a statement to the effect that contemplation was the suitable technique in the Kṛta-age, sacrificial rituals in the Tretā-age, recitation of

sacred names in the Dvāpara-age, and iconic worship in the present Kali-age.

This also underlines the importance of making the icon with proper details and in suitable measurements to be effective ('tasmād bhakti-hetutvād sa-lakṣhaṇām parama-purusha-rupām kṛtvā', *Kāśyapīya* op.cit). The icon for worship must be such that it pleases the eyes and appeals to the mind and delights the heart ('chakshushah priti-karaṇān manaso hṛdayasya cha'); for it is only out of pleasure of this sort that devotion develops ('prityā sañjāyate bhaktih', *Kriyādhikāra* 1,13).



CHAPTER THREE

PRINCIPLES OF ICONOMETRY

TĀLAMĀNA

In Indian iconometry, the unit of measurement in sculpture is based on the 'hand-measurement' (hasta-māna) or the span of the artist's right hand or the patron's:

हस्तमानं च तालं यजमानोदयेन च ॥

It is the distance between the tip of the thumb and the top of the middle finger of the right hand, fully stretched out (*cf. Brahmāṇḍa-purāṇa*, 7,97; *Suprabedāgama*, 3,22), 'vitasti' and 'mukha' (the length of the face from the top of the forehead to the bottom of the chin) are synonyms of 'tāla'.

According to *Bṛhat-saṃhita* (58,4) the length and breadth of the

face are each twelve angulas in ones own measure:

स्वैरङ्गुलप्रमाणैर्द्वादशविस्तीर्णमायतं च मुखम् ॥

The basic measurement is always of the width or breadth (hence māna). The height (utsedha) is deduced from width. In gaṇya-māna, the architectural measure, if the intended construction is oblong, the basic measurement is length (āyāma or dīrgha), and the length is deduced relative to its width.

Any measurement (māna) is an expression of the relation between a known unit and the size of what is to be measured. Angula is the unit of such measurement, especially in sculpture.



Its employment has been very ancient. We find references to the expression even in *Rgveda* (e.g. 'Purusha-sūkta', in the 10th maṇḍala), and other early religious literature (e.g. *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*, 10, 2, 1, 2). Altars for sacrifice were constructed, and implements were fashioned in terms of this unit. Strictly, the expression means "finger" or "finger's breadth". Probably, this was the smallest unit of measurement in early times.

In iconography, it is closely associated with 'tāla', (meaning 'short span'), twelve aṅgulas constituting a 'tāla'. An early description of an aṅgula is that it is the one-fourth part of one's own fist (sva-sva-muṣṭeś caturthāṁśo hy

aṅgulaṁ' *Śukra-nīti-sāra*, 4, 4, 82). A similar account elsewhere (*Pratimā-māna-lakṣhaṇam*) defines the measure in terms of the palm of one's hand (pallava), the palm and the fist being interchangeable in terms of width ('pallavānām chaturbhāgo māpanāṅgulikā smṛtā'). It also specifies that the finger-breadth is the lowest measure of man ('tasyaishāvamā mātṛā yad aṅgulaṁ').

Indian artists and sculptors (especially icon-makers) conceive of two broad varieties of aṅgula: 'mānāṅgula', which is the absolute measure, and the 'mātrāṅgula', which is a relative measure.

'Mānāṅgula' is the standard unit of measurement. According to *Bṛhat-samhitā* (57, 1), when the sun's rays



pass through a close net-work (jāla, lattice), the breadth of a single beam of light, which is extremely minute (aṇutara) is identified as a 'paramāṇu'. This, of course, is not discernible by the human eye, although it is conceded that adepts (yogins) can develop the power to perceive it. If eight of such 'paramāṇu' measures are lined up, the area covered would be a 'rajas' (lit. 'a speck of dirt') or 'trasa-reṇu'. Eight of these would constitute the measure of the tip of the single strand of hair (vālāgra or romāgra), and eight of these latter would make the measure known as a 'likshā' (lit. 'the egg of a louse'). Eight 'likshās' would constitute a 'yūka' (lit. 'the louse'), and eight 'yūkas' together would be the measure of a standard grain of barley ('yava'). And eight

'yavas' placed side by side would be the measure of a standard 'aṅgula'.

But there are three alternative measures in an 'aṅgula': eight 'yavas' constituting the 'superior' measure of aṅgula (uttama-mānāṅgula), seven 'yavas' constituting the 'middling' measure (madhyama-mānāṅgula), and six 'yavas' constituting the 'inferior' measure (adhama-mānāṅgula). If, instead of the barely-corn, a grain of the kind of paddy known 'śāli' is used, then the three varieties would have 4, $3\frac{1}{4}$ and 3 grains respectively. However, whenever the expression 'aṅgula' is used, it usually refers to the 'superior' measure.

Twelve of these 'aṅgulas' constitute one 'span' (vitasti), which, according to the Brāhmaṇa and Smṛti



texts, is the measure between the thumb and the little finger when the plam is extended. There are references to the 'hasta' being an equivalent of two vitastis (e.g. *Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇa*, 49, 39 'dve vitastī tathā haste'), and measuring twenty-four 'aṅgulas' (*Bhārata* and *Kālikā-purāṇa* quoted in *Tithyādi-tattva*, "adīrgha-yojitair hastaiś chaturviṃśatibhir aṅgulaiḥ"). There are other derivatives of 'aṅgulas', like kishku ('fore-arm'), cubit, (24 aṅgulas), 'prājāpatya (25 aṅgulas), 'dhanurgraha' (26 aṅgulas), and 'dhanur-musṭī' (27 aṅgulas). Four 'dhanur-musṭis' constitute a 'daṇḍa' ('rod', 108 aṅgulas).

These derivatives of the 'aṅgula' measure, however, are not employed in iconography or sculpture. Their use is more frequent

in architecture (kishku) and town-planning (daṇḍa).

'Mātrāṅgula' or the relative aṅgula measure is more widely employed, especially in iconography. There is a textual prescription that the icons for use in household worship should be made only in this measure (e.g. *Sakalādhikāra*, 1, 24 "mātrāṅgulair grhārchānām pratimānām tu nānyathā"). This measure is defined as the length (dīrgha) or breadth (tata) of the middle digit (parvan) of the middle finger of the right hand of the man for whom the icon is made. There are two alternatives in this measure according to the 'length' or 'breadth' of the digit.

There is another measure known as 'deha-labdhāṅgula'. It is



derived from the length of the icon's body (in the vertical plane). For instance, in the 'nava-tāla' image the proposed height of the image ('abhipreta-pramāṇa) is divided into nine parts, each part in turn being further divided into twelve parts (totalling 108 parts). Each one of these latter twelve parts is regarded as the icon's 'own aṅgula' (svāṅgula, 'pratimāyāḥ svam ātmīyam aṅgula-pramāṇam'). This 'aṅgula' is entirely relative to the body of the icon ('deha-labdha') (*Kāraṇāgama*).

The 'aṅgula' measure, is closely associated with 'tāla', for the aṅgula here is defined as one part of the entire height of the icon according to its 'tāla'. If the image is in 'asṭa-tāla', the aṅgula is one of 96 parts; if in 'nava-tāla', one of 108 parts; or if in 'daśatāla', one of 120 parts (*Vaikhānasāgama*, 22).

There is also measure known as 'golaka' or 'kalā', which is equal to two aṅgulas, which is employed in figuring out the relative sizes of the major and minor 'limbs' of an icon (*Nāradya-saṃhitā*, 13, 128, 'anenaiva tu mānena aṅga-pratyāṅga-kalpanā').

There is also a reference to the view of Nagnajit, an ancient authority, that the length of the face is fourteen aṅgulas while the breadth is only twelve aṅgulas, ('vistīrṇam dvādaśa mukham, dairghena cha chaturdaśa').

The measure of the face (or span) is subdivided into twelve equal parts, and each part is designated as an aṅgula ('dvādaśāṅgulitālām cha vitastir mukham eva cha'). Tāla is generally defined as the equivalent measure



of twelve aṅgulas ('tālam vai dvādaśaṅgulam', *Nāradya-saṁhitā*, 13, 128).

The measure (called mūla-berāṅgula) obtained by calculating the total height of the icon (pratimā-prāmaṇa). Texts like *Bṛhat-saṁhitā* (57) indicate that the finger's length (or breadth) of the icon itself is to be taken into consideration for ascertaining the dimensions of the face, and then for fixing the total height of the icon ('pratimāyāh svair ātmiyair aṅgula pramāṇair mukham vadanam dvādaśaṅgulāni vistirṇam vipulam āyatam', Comm).

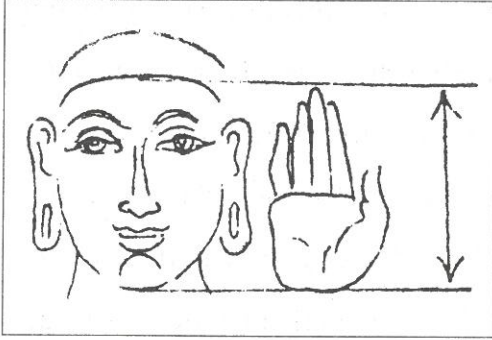
It must however, be noted that the length of the face is not a fixed measure, nor is it a standard; it varies according to the particular tāla-scale that is adopted. In the ten-

span (daśa-tāla) of the 'normal' variety the aṅgula would be the ($1/120$)th the part of the icon's total height, and the length of the face would be twelve of such aṅgulas. If, however, the variety is 'superior' (uttama), the aṅgula would measure ($1/124$)th the part of the icon's total height; and if 'inferior', it would be only be ($1/116$)th the part. The length of the face would accordingly vary.

Analogous to gaṇya-māna used in architecture (height of the building from the ground-level to the pinnacle, 'janmādi-stūpi- paryantam gaṇya-manam ihochyate', *Mānasāra*), tāla-māna is used in sculpture. It is a system of measurement based on tāla or 'span', providing a scale of proportions between the several limbs of the icon, and also between the several limbs and the total height



of the icon. This system is designed to facilitate differentiation (in form as well as status) between icons representing several deities, major and minor, principal and subsidiary.



The system is said to be based on the measure of the face (mukha-māna) (viz. height from the top of the forehead to the bottom of the chin) which provides the scale of all the other limbs of the icon's body (*Matsya-purāṇa*, 258, 19, 'mukhamānena kartavyā sarvāvayava-kalpanā').

More usually, however, the handspan (hastamāna) is taken as the basis.

Bṛhat-saṁhitā (68,7) classifies the human beings in terms of their height (and other relative proportions) into five types. They are also related to the planets:

ताराग्रहैर्बलयुतैः स्वक्षेत्रस्वोच्चगतैश्चतुष्टयैः ।

पञ्चपुरुषाः प्रशस्ता जायन्ते तानहं वक्ष्ये ॥

जीवेन भवति हंसः सौरेण शशः कुजेन रुचकश्च ।

भद्रो बुधेन बलिना मालव्यो दैत्यपूज्येन ॥

(*बृहत्संहितायां* 68, 1-2)

1. haṁsa...96 āṅgulas in height (Jupiter)
2. śaśa...99 āṅgulas in height (Saturn)
3. ruchaka...102 āṅgulas in height (Mars)
4. bhadrā... 105 āṅgulas in height (Mercury)
5. malāvya... 108 āṅgulas in height (Venus)

The same text gives this detail which characterizes the five types



with increasing height by three angulas (68,7).

षण्णवतिरङ्गुलमानं व्यायामो दीर्घता च हंसस्य ।

शशरुचक भद्रमालव्य सांज्ञितास्त्रयङ्गुलविवृद्धता ॥

The expression vyāyāmo in this verse has reference to what is known as 'nyagrodha-parimaṇḍala', which is the measure from the tip of the middle finger of one hand to the tip of the same finger of the other hand when both arms are fully extended each way in the same line with the chest. The word is explained by, the commentator Utpala as 'prasārita-bhiya-dvayasya pramāṇam'. He quotes Parāśara:

उच्छ्रायः परिणाहस्तु यस्य तुल्यं शरीरिणः ।

स नरः पार्थिवो ज्ञेयो न्यग्रोधपरिमण्डलः ।

Matsya-purāṇa elaborates on this concept:

न्यग्रोधौ तु स्मृतौ बाहू व्यामो न्यग्रोध उच्यते ।

व्यामो न तच्छ्रायो यस्य अत ऊर्ध्वं तु देहिनः ।

समोच्छ्रायः परीणाहो न्यग्रोधपरिमण्डलः ॥

It is a perfect circle where the vertical line (madhya-sūtra) passing through the centre (bindu), denoting height (utsedha) equal to the horizontal line bisecting it at the centre (madhya-prastha) denoting width (vyāma, pr̥thutā, vistāra). These lines provide the fundamental space-directions: right and left, above and below. The central point (madhya-bindhu) represents ākāśa, while the horizontal line symbolizes air (vāyu), rajas or movement. The vertical axis which supports the entire composition holds sattva (top, representing fire) apart from tamas (bottom, representing earth and water). It also distinguishes right (Śiva, piṅgala, agni) from left (śakti,



idā, soma), and marks the three planes of existence: physical (bottom of the line, bhūh), mental (the central point, bhuvah) and spiritual (top of the line, svah). The vertical axis symbolizes ascent, while the horizontal axis is expansion.

Vishṇu-dharmottara, however, gives the five types of human forms in different measures (3,35,8-9):

हंसो भद्रोऽथ मालव्यो रुचकः शशकस्तथा ।
विज्ञेयाः पुरुषाः पञ्च तेषां वक्ष्यामि लक्षणम् ॥
उच्छ्रायायामतुल्यास्ते सर्वे ज्ञेया प्रमाणतः ।
स्वेनैवाङ्गुलिमानेन शतमष्टाधिकं भवेत् ॥

According to this text, the hamsa-type measures 108 angulas in height, bhadra 106 angulas, mālavya 104, ruchaka 100 and śaśaka 96. The assumption here is that the hamsa-type (with 108 angulas, nava-tāla) is the best (pravara).

आपादमस्तको नवनाले भवेत्तु यः ।

संहताजानुबाहुश्च देवतैरभिपूज्यते ॥

(*Matsya-purāṇa*, 145, 10)

The śaśaka (with 96 angulas) measures upto ashta-tāla.

To revert now to the *Bṛhatsamhitā* account, the first type, corresponding to the 'eight span' with twelve angulas in each (ashta-tāla measure to be explained later), is said to be represented by the average man, the man below average being about 84 angulas. 'The last type (*viz.* mālavya) is said to be the 'best' (pravara) (*cf. ibid.*, 57,30) and it corresponds to the 'nine-span' (nava-tāla) measure (*cf. also Matsya-purāṇa*, 145, 10:

नागनासः समभुजयुगलः जानुसंप्राप्तहस्तः ।

मांसैः पूर्णाङ्गसन्धिः समरुचिरतनुः ॥

मध्यभागे कृशः पश्चाष्टौ चोर्ध्वमास्यम् ।



श्रुतिविवरं द्व्यगुलोनं तिर्यग् दीप्ताक्ष -
सत्कपोल समसितदशनः नातिमांसाधरोष्ठः ॥

Iconographic representation, although based on this five-fold division of human beings (pañcha-manushya-vibhāga), stylizes the measure to suit the deities. For the icons meant for worship or adoration must not only be well-proportioned, but must be impressive in aspect (ramya). It must, however, be noted that the iconometric prescriptions are applicable only to icons meant for worship or adoration, and not to other images. In other cases, the artist is “free to follow his own art instinct” (Abanindranath Tagore, *Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy*, p.3).

Mastyā-purāṇa (258, 26-29) contains an account of the

iconometric proportions of the ‘mālavya’ type mentioned above, and this may be taken as an illustration. “The entire icon must be viewed as consisting of nine parts, in terms of the icon’s face-length (being equal to one part) (‘pratimā-mukha mānena navabhāgān prakalpayet’): the neck then will be four aṅgulas in height (‘chatur-aṅgulā bhaved-grivā), and the chest (bottom of the neck to the bottom of the breast) one part (viz. measure equal to the face length, or a tāla) (‘bhāgena hṛdayam punah’). The navel must be located below this part, and the space between the bottom of the chest and the navel must be equal to one part (‘nābhis tasmād adhah kāryā, bhāgenaikena śobhanā’). From navel to the top of the phallus must be one part (‘nābher adhas tathā meḍhram bhāgenaikena



kalpayet). The thighs must be equal to two parts ('dvibhāgenāyatāvūrū'), and the height of each knee-patella must be four aṅgulas ('jānuni chaturāṅgulā'). The height of each leg below the knee and above the foot must be two parts ('jaṅhe dvibhāge'), and the foot must be two parts ('pādaṁ tu chatur-aṅgulaṁ').

The total height of the icon in the above account would be 108 equal parts of aṅgulas (viz. the total height being nine times the length of the face, which is called a tāla, equal to twelve aṅgulas); and this is regarded as the superior variety of 'nava-tāla'.

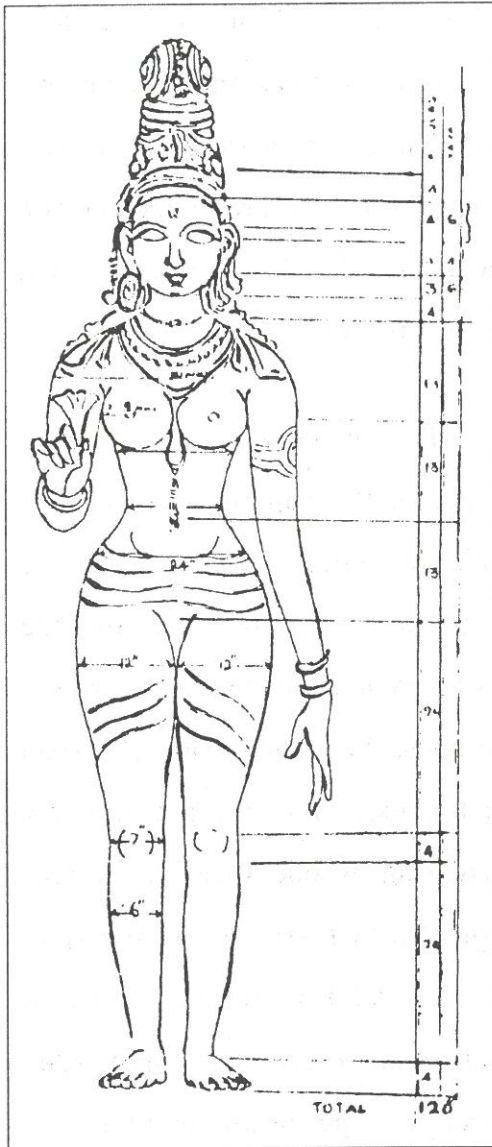
The significance of the number 108 is the distribution of the pādas of the nakshatras among the rāśis (zodiac). There are twenty-seven

stars (nakshatras, Aśvinī etc.), each of which has four quarters (pādas); and there are twelve zodiacs (rāśi, Mesha etc.), each of which has nine pādas (each pāda representing two stars, and one quarter of the next star). Thus there are altogether 108 pādas for the 27 stars distributed among the twelve rāśis.

By a variation of this standard height of the superior man (of the mālavya type), several scales of proportions are obtained. And the texts enumerate ten (or twelve) varieties, beginning with one-span (called eka-tāla) and progressively increasing by one span till the ten-span (daśa-tāla) or twelve-span (dvādaśa-tāla) is reached. And in each tāla, there are three sub-varieties: 'superior' or big (uttama or pravara), 'normal' or midling



(madhyama or sama), and 'inferior' or small (adhama or nyūna).



Madhyama-daśa-tāla

In the ten-span scale of proportions, for instance, the total height of the icon would be 120 āṅgulas (each tāla representing 12 āṅgulas, and there being ten spans in this scale or the height of the icon being ten times the length of the face). This would be the 'normal' or 'midling height'. When four āṅgulas are added to it, the 'superior' variety is got, and the height in this case would be 124 āṅgulas. When, however, four āṅgulas are deducted from the 'normal' height we get the 'inferior' variety, the height of which would be 116 āṅgulas. Thus, there are altogether thirty tāla measures, when ten varieties of tāla in their three sub-divisions are recognized.

Different tālas are prescribed for representation of different deities and their entourage. The following list is illustrative:



1. eka-tāla (12 aṅgulas in height): for leogriff heads (grāsa or siṃha-lalāṭa), headless trunks (kabandhas) and tortoise-incarnation of Viṣṇu.

2. dvi-tāla (24 aṅgulas in height): for birds like swan, dwarf-fish spirits like Kūshmāṇḍa, and for fish incarnation of Viṣṇu.

3. tri-tāla (36 aṅgulas in height): for attendant spirits like bhūtas and celestial musicians like Kinnaras; elephants and horses.

4. chatus-tāla (48 aṅgulas in height): for dwarfs among human beings and goblins.

5. pañcha-tāla (60 aṅgulas in height): for boys, hunchbacks and gaṇa-spirits; also for Gaṇapati, bull (vṛṣhabha), pig (sūkara), buffalo (mahisha), and Vāmana.

6. ṣaṭ-tāla (72 aṅgulas in height): for disembodied spirits (pretas) and tigers; Gaṇeśa, Varāha and Kumāra.

7. sapta-tāla (84 aṅgulas in height): for vampires and evil spirits that drink blood and haunt (vetālas).

8. aṣṭa-tāla (96 aṅgulas in height): for sages and other human beings, male or female.

9. nava-tāla (108 aṅgulas in height): for gods like Indra, and demons (asuras and rākshasas).

[The superior human beings like the Buddha who are godlike are prescribed to be made in sattryaṅgula-nava-tāla, viz. 111 aṅgulas; the daityas, yakshas, nāgas, siddhas and gandharvas in uttama-nava-tāla, viz. 112 aṅgulas; and grahas like Sūrya and Chandra and



demigods like Kubera in navārdha-tāla, viz. 114 aṅgulas]

10. daśa-tāla:

(i) the inferior variety (116 aṅgulas in height): for the eight guardians of directions (dik-pālakas), the twelve solar spirits (ādityas), the eleven Rudras, the eight Vasus, the seven sages, and Kārtikeya;

(ii) the midling variety (120 aṅgulas in height): for goddesses like Lakshmī, Bhū, Pārvatī and Sarasvatī

(iii) the superior variety (124 aṅgulas in height): for gods like Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.

There is a variant list which says that all human beings must be represented in sapta-tāla, all goddesses in aṣṭa-tāla, all gods in

nava-tāla, and major gods like Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Rudra, Rāma, Siddha and Jina in daśa-tāla. Some additional tāla measures are also recommended:

11. ekādaśa-tāla: for Skanda, Hanumān and Chaṇḍi

12. dvādaśa-tāla: for Narasiṃha, Bhairava and Vetāla

13. trayodaśa-tāla: for wicked giants (rākshasas)

14. chaturdaśa-tāla: for daityas and dānavas

15. pañchadaśa-tāla: for Rāhu, Chāmuṇḍā and Bhṛgu

16. shoḍaśa-tāla: for fierce goddess (ugra-devatā), and great dānavas like Mahishāsurā, Hiraṇyakaśipu and Rāvaṇa.



Texts like *Aparājita-prcchā* prescribe as many as 21 tāla measures for increasingly fierce icons like Svachchanda-bhairava, (21-tāla)

Suprabheda (34, 30-34) has a slightly different prescription:

1— tāla: for Kūshmāṇḍas and piśāchas

2 — tāla: for fish (matsya)

3 — tāla: for kinnaras

4 — tāla: for bhūtas

5 — tāla: for Gaṇeśa and Vāmana

6 — tāla: for gandharvas

7 — tāla: for rākshasas and asuras

8 — tālas: for sages and superior humans (divyam ārsha-manushyāṇām)

9. tāla: for Śakti and gods other than those indicated for the 10-tāla

10. tāla: for the four major gods ('īśvarādi chaturmūrti', viz., Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Kārtikeya)

The height of the icon in any of these tāla-measures is to be decided upon in one of the eleven ways (viz. taking as basis any one of the following factors):

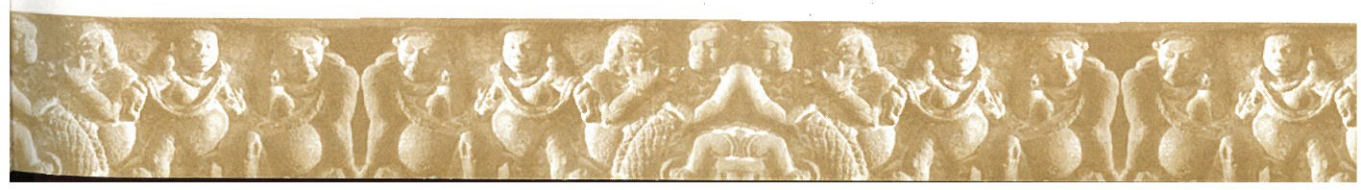
(1) līṅga: the dimension of the main image to be installed in the sanctum; if it is a līṅga, the part of it that is exposed for worship (pūjāmśa);

(2) the height of the sanctum (garbha-grha);

(3) the height of the entrance-door (dvāra);

(4) the height of the basic altar or platform (adhiṣṭhāna);

(5) the height of the column supporting the sanctum (pāda)



(6) the measure of cubit (kishku), viz., the distance between the elbow-joint and the top of the middle finger when stretched out;

(7) the measure of span (tāla), any one of the varieties mentioned above;

(8) the height of the major priest, sculptor or patron (yajamānodaya);

(9) the standard measure of aṅgula (mānāṅgula);

(10) the relative measure of aṅgula in terms of the main icon (mūla-berāṅgula).

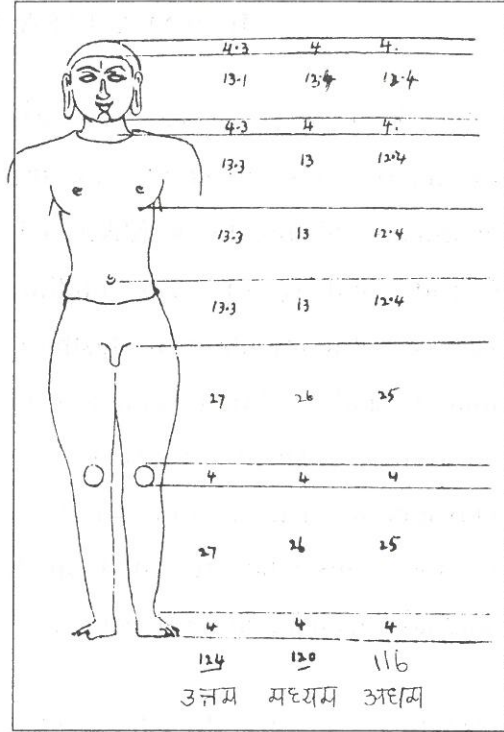
For details cf. *Śukra-nīti-sāra*, ch.4; *Bṛhat-saṁhitā*, ch.58; *Sakalādhikāra*, “tāla-prakaraṇa”, ch.22; *Matsya-purāṇa*, ch.258; *Nārādīya-saṁhitā*, ch.13; *Hayaśirsha-pāñcharātra*, *Suprabedha*, ch.31; and *Kāraṇāgama*.

The relative proportions of the various limbs of the icon are illustrated in the three varieties of each tāla measure in the following tables:



I. DAŚA-TĀLĀ

The *uttama* (superior) variety is suitable for major deities like Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Dattātreyā, Buddha, Jina and Vāsudeva. The *madhyama* (normal) variety is for the feminine counterparts of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, the *devīs* like Jyeshthā, Bhū and the seven *mātrkas*. The *adhama* (inferior) variety is for gods like Kārtikeya, Sūrya, Chandra, Yama, Indra, Chaṇḍeśa, Kshetrapāla, Śāstā, Vīrabhadra, Agni and the great sages like Bhṛgu and Mārkaṇḍeya, according to *Kāśyapiya-śilpa*.



Limbs	Uttama : Tot.ht. (124 aṅgulas)		Madhyama : Tot.ht. (120 aṅgulas)		Adhama : Tot.ht. (116 aṅgulas)	
	Angula	Yava	Angula	Yava	Angula	Yava
Height of crown of head till the hair-line	4	3	4	2	4	0
Hair-line to bottom of chin (length of face)	13	1	12	6	12	4
Height of neck	3	7	3	6	4	0
From neck to heart	13	3	12	6	12	4
From heart to navel	13	3	13	0	12	4
From navel to top of phallus	13	3	13	0	12	4
Length of thigh (from pubis to knee)	27	0	25	6	25	0
Length of knee-joint	4	0	4	0	4	0
Length of lower leg (from knee to angle)	27	0	25	0	5	
Height of foot (from ankle to ground)	0	4	2	4	0	
Total	124	0	120	0	116	0

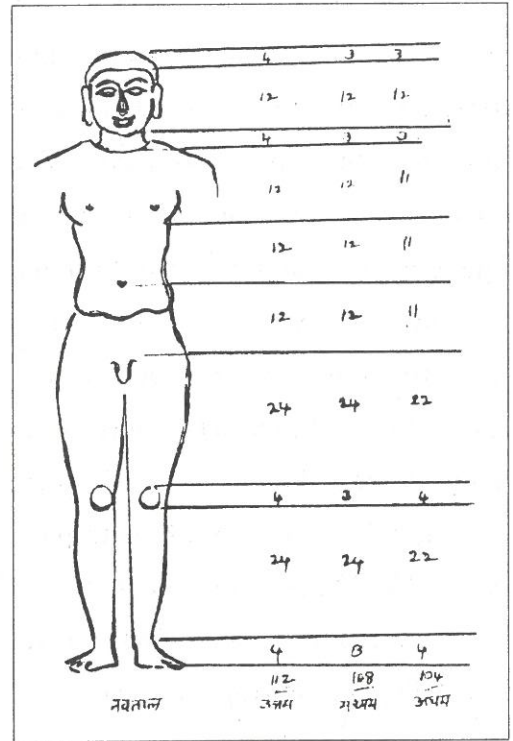
(cf. *Sakalādhikāra*, Chaps. 2,4,5)



II. NAVA-TĀLA (Nine-span measure)

The *uttama* variety is suitable for minor gods, all goddesses, the guardians of directions (*dikpālas*), *Garuḍa* and so on. The *midling* variety is for mobile icons (*asthira-mūrti*), and for representation of *yakshas*, *apsaras*, *maruts* and *vidyādharas*. The *inferior* variety is for the saints who are worshipped, *siddhas*, *gandharvas* and *asuras*.

(the first number refers to *angula*, and the number after the point to *yava*)

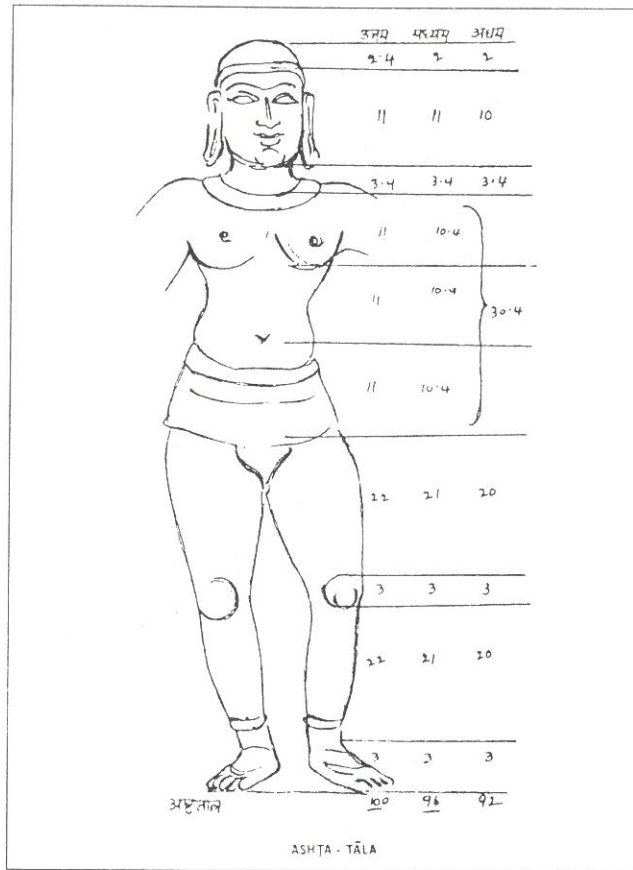


	uttama	madhyama	adhama
Crown of the head	4.0	3.0	3.0
Hair-line to bottom of chin (length of face)	12.0	12.0	12.0
Neck	4.0	3.0	4.0
Neck to breast(chest)	12.0	12.0	11.0
Breast to navel (belly)	12.0	12.0	11.0
Navel to pubis (loins)	12.0	12.0	11.0
Thigh	24.0	24.0	22.0
Knee-joint	4.0	3.0	4.0
Lower leg (shank)	24.0	24.0	22.0
Foot	4.0	3.0	4.0
Total height	112.0	108.0	104.0



III. ASHṬA-TĀLA (Eight-span measure)

This measure is suitable for human heroes and saints.

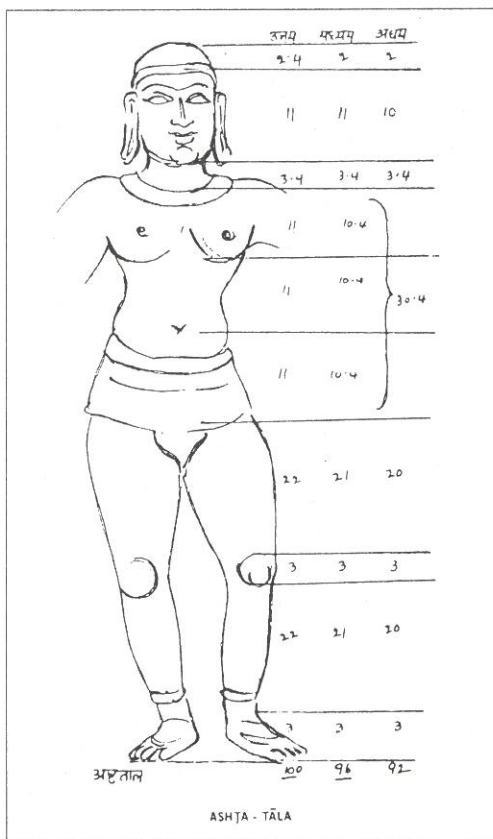


	uttama	madhyama	adhama
Crown of the head	2.4	2.0	2.0
Face length	110.0	110.0	10.0
Neck	3.0	3.0	3.4
Neck to Breast	11.0	70.0	
Breast to navel	11.0	10.0	30.0
Navel to pubis	11.0	10.0	
Thigh	22.0	21.0	20.0
Knee-joint	3.0	3.0	3.0
Lower leg	22.0	21.0	20.0
Foot 3.0	3.0	3.0	
Total height	100.0	96.0	92.0



IV. SAPTA-TĀLA (Seven-span measure)

This measure is suitable for bhetālas, vampires etc.

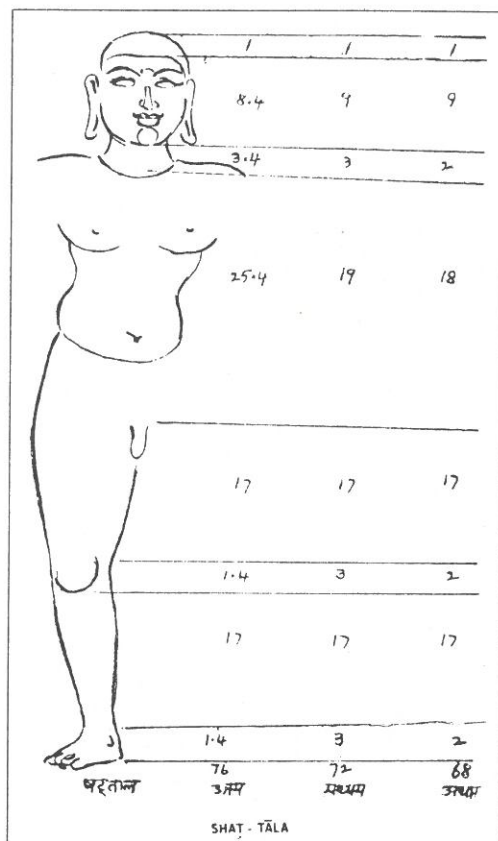


	uttama	madhyama
Crown of the head	1.0	3.0
Face-length	8.4	
Neck	4.0	3.0
Neck to breast	7.0	10.0
Breast to navel	11.0	10.0
Navel to pubis	11.0	5.0
Thigh	22.0	18.4
Knee-joint	2.0	3.0
Lower leg	22.0	18.4
Foot	2.0	3.0
Total height	88.0	84.0



V. SHAT-TĀLA (Six-span meausre)

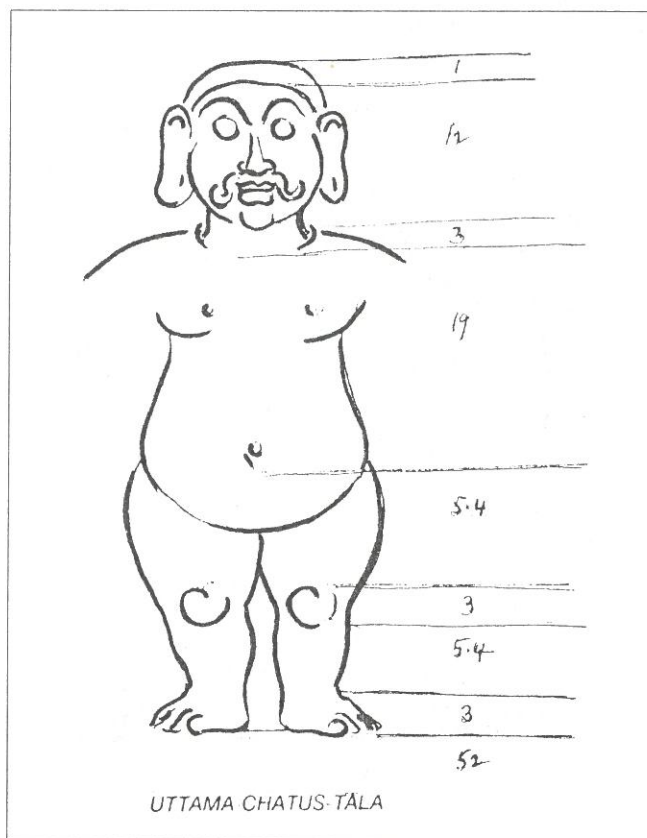
This measure is suitable for pretas, Gaṇeśa, Varāha and Kumāra.



	uttama	madhyama	adhama
Crown of the head	1.4	1.0	1.0
Face-length	8.4	9.0	9.0
Neck to breast	8.4	9.0	9.0
Breast to navel	8.4	19.0	18.0
Navel to pubis	8.4	19.0	18.0
Thigh	17.0	17.0	17.0
Knee-joint	1.4	3.0	2.0
Lower leg	17.0	17.0	17.0
Foot	1.4	3.0	2.0
Total height	76.0	72.0	68.0

VI. PAÑCHA-TĀLA (five-span measure)

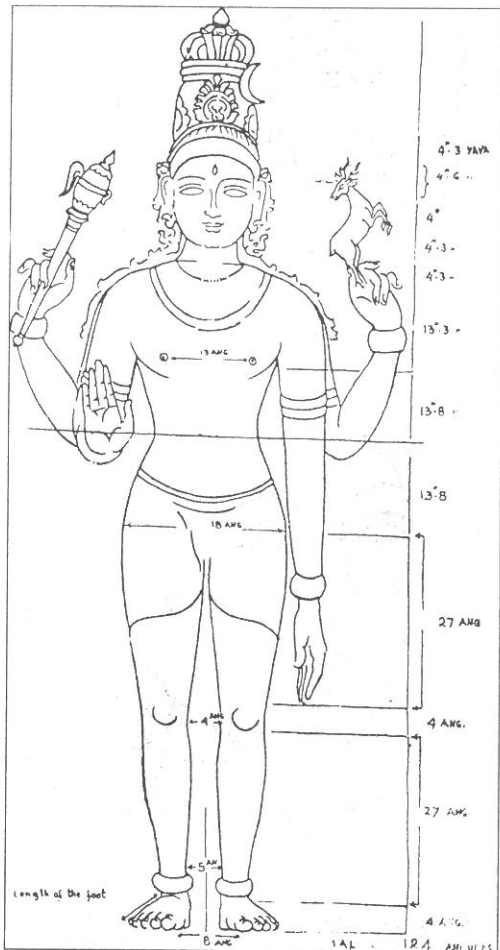
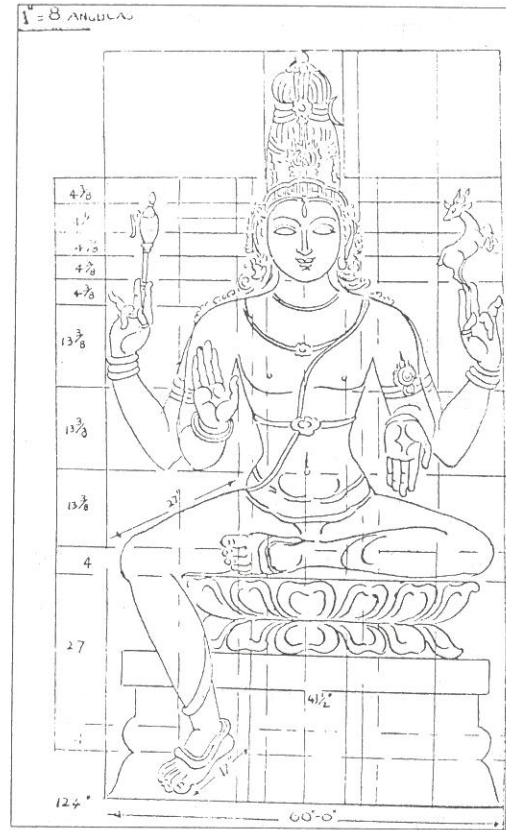
This is suitable for boys, hunchbacks and gaṇas, also for Gaṇeśa, bull and Vāmana. Only the proportions of the superior variety is given.



	Uttama
Crown of the head	2.0
Face-length	8.0
Neck	3.0
Neck to breast	6.0
Breast to navel	
Navel to pubis	16.0
Thigh	14.4
Knee-joint	3.0
Lower leg	3.0
Foot	3.0
Total height	64.0



Uttama-dasātala is commended for making icons of principal divinities like Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva. The total height of the icon (including the headgear or uṣṇīṣha and excluding the pedestal or pīṭha)



is divided into one hundred and twenty-four parts (called amśa or digit in terms of aṅgulas) as follows:

PARTS

From the fillet of the crown (uṣṇīṣhāt) till the hairline (keśa-paryantam)... 4



From the hairline till the jawline
(hanu) 13

The height of the throat (gala-
mānam)... $\frac{1}{2}$

The length of the neck (gala-
tuṅgakam) 4

From the bottom of the neck
(galānta) till the lower limit of the
heart - region (hṛdayānta)... $13\frac{1}{2}$

The belly (udaram) till the navel
(nābhi-simakam)... $13\frac{1}{2}$

From the navel till the penis
(medhra)... $13\frac{1}{2}$

From the bottom of the penis
till the knee (medhrāntam ūru-
dairghyam)... 27

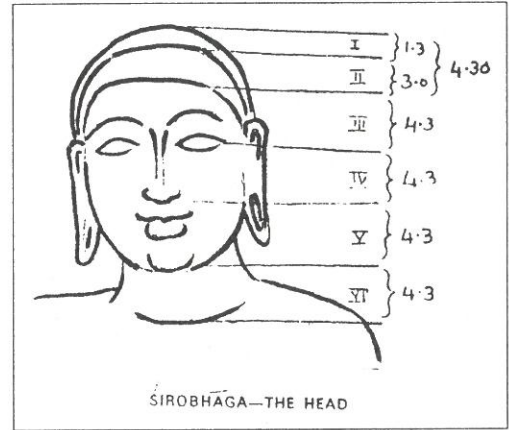
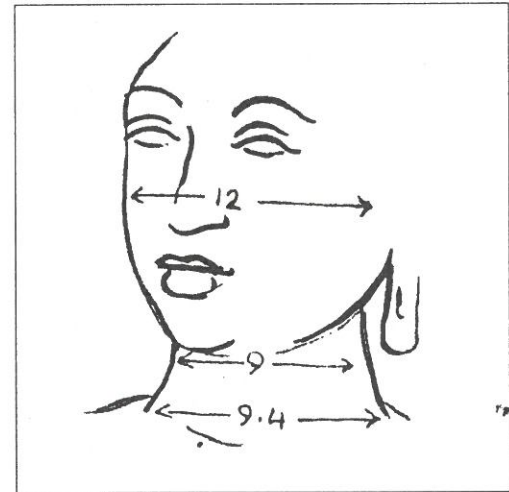
The height of the knee (jānu-
tuṅgam)... 4

The shank (jaṅghā), from the
knee to the ankle (same height as
thigh)... 27

The height of the foot (pāda),
same as that of the knee (jānu-
samottuṅgam)... 4

Total height 124

ŚIROBHĀGA - THE HEAD



Width measurements (in aṅgulas and yavas)

(Vertical Measurements according to Dasa-tala of the Uttama order)

1. From ushnīsha to mūrdhānta
1 angula 3 yava
2. From mūrdhānta to keśānta
3 angulas
3. From keśānta to netrānta 4
angulas 3 yava
4. From netrānta to nāsānta 4
angulas 3 yava
5. From nāsānta to chibukānta
4 angulas 3 yava

6. gala (till hikkā)

4 angulas 3 yava

(ushnīsha- crown of head

mūrdhānta - upper limit of head

keśānta - hair-line

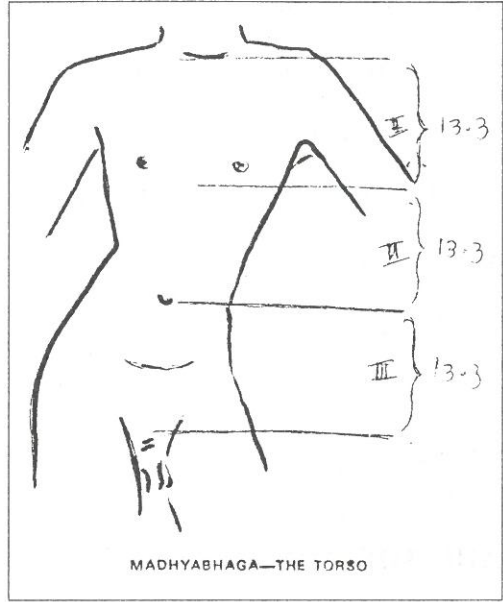
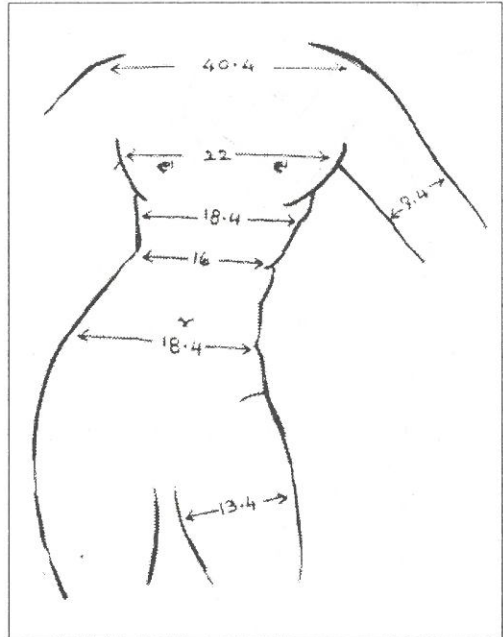
netrānta - corner of eye

nāsānta - tip, of nose

chibuka - chin

gala - larynx depression)

MADHYABHĀGA-THE TORSO



1. From gala (viz. hikka) to
hṛdaya 13 aṅgulas 3 yava

2. From hṛdaya to nābhi 13
aṅgulas 3 yava

3. From nābhi to meḍhrāgra 13
aṅgulas 3 yava

(hṛdaya - heart region

nābhi - navel

meḍhrānta - top of penis)

3. prakoshṭha (forearm) 27
aṅgulas

4. kara (from wrist to middle-
finger) 13 aṅgulas 4 yava

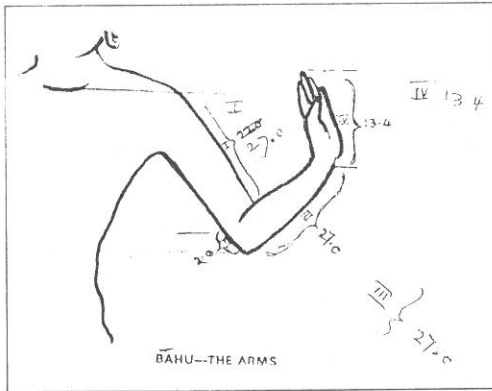
(kūrpara- elbow

prakoshṭha- forearm

kara- hand)

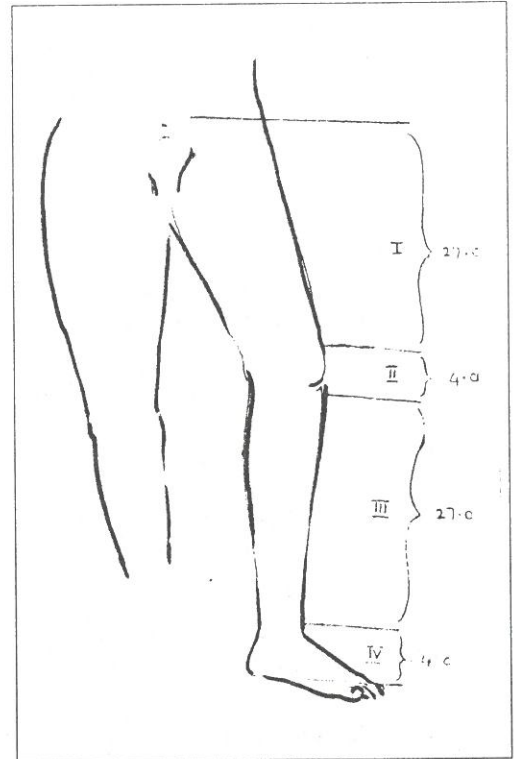
Adhobhāga - the legs

BĀHU-THE ARMS



1. From hikkā-sūtra to kūrpara
27 aṅgulas

2. kūrpara-deśa (elbow) 4
aṅgulas



1. From mūrdhānta to janu 27
angulas

2. The height of jānu 4 angulas

3. From jānu to gulpha 27
aṅgulas

4. The height of pāda (from
gulpha to pādātala) 4 aṅgulas

(jānu - knee,

gulpha - ankle,

pāda-tala - sole of foot)

UPĀṆGA

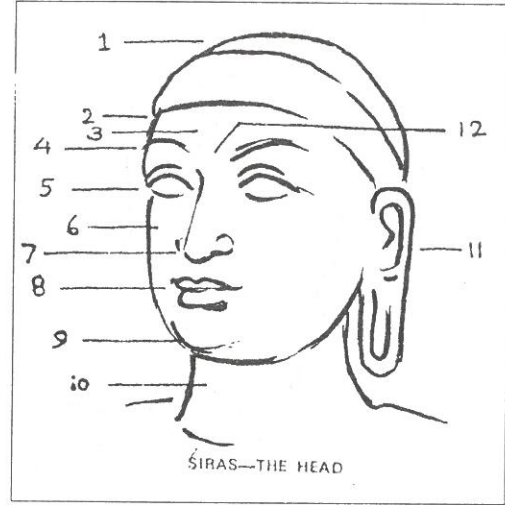
A minor limb or part of the
body, like the chest (vakshah-sthala),
finger (aṅguli), thighs (jānu).

I. ŚĪRAS - THE HEAD

1. mūrdhānta (upper limit of
head)

2. keśānta (hair-line)

3. lalāṭa (forehead)



4. bhrū (eye-brow)

5. akshi or netra

6. kapola (cheek)

7. nāsā (nose)

8. āśya or mukha (mouth)

9. chibuka (chin)

10. kaṇṭha or gala (neck)

11. karṇa (ear)

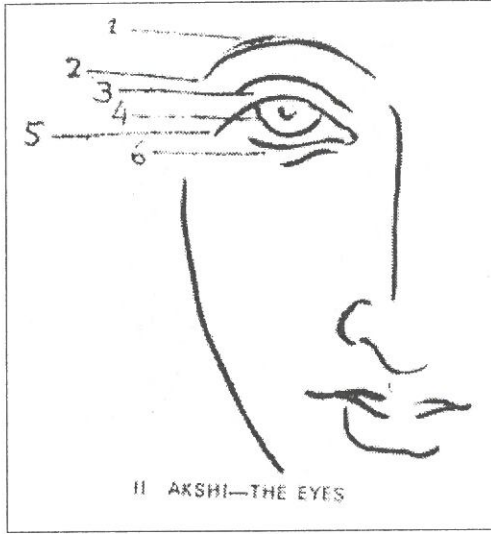
12. bhrū-madhyā (space
between eye-brows)

II. AKSHI-THE EYES

1. bhrū (eye-brow)

2. bhrū-puchcha (end of brow)





3. ūrdhva-varma (upper eye-lid)

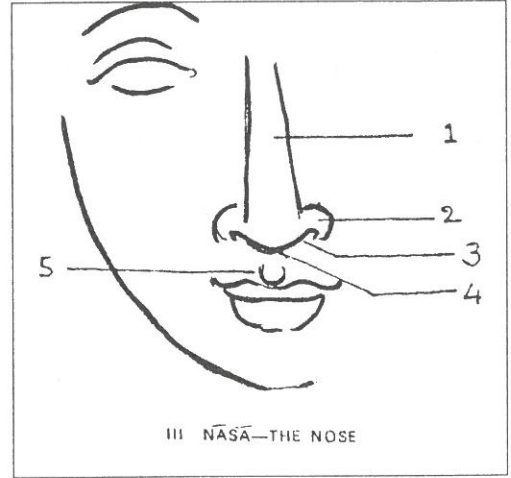
4. kanīnikā (pupil of eye)

5. netrānta (corner of eye)

6. adho-varma (lower eye-lid)

In the Śaiva manuals of worship, upāṅga relates to the embellishment of the icon (as deity) with garlands, unguents, garments and ornaments, and providing for it seat (āsana) and enclosure (āvaraṇa).

III. NĀSĀ - THE NOSE



1. ghoṇa or nāsikā (nose)

2. nāsā-puta (nose wing)

3. nāsā-dvāra (nostril)

4. nāsāgra (nose-tip)

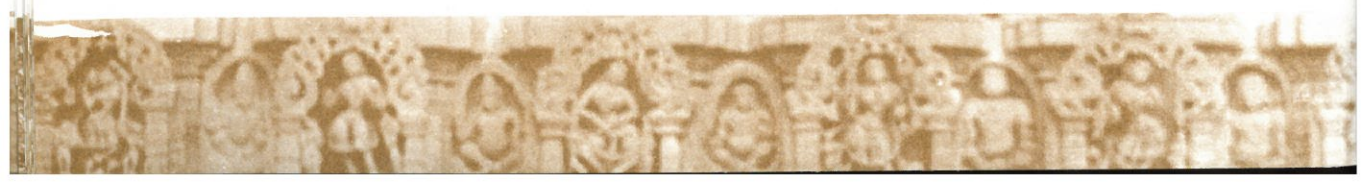
5. goji (depression below the nose-bridge and above the chin)

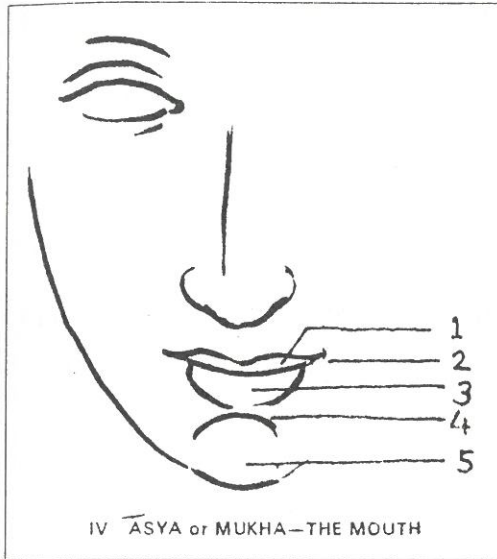
IV. ĀSYA OR MUKHA - MOUTH

1. uttaroshṭha (upper lip)

2. sṛkkva (corner of mouth)

3. adharoshṭha (lower lip)





4. chibuka (depression above the chin)

5. hanu-sandhi (chin)

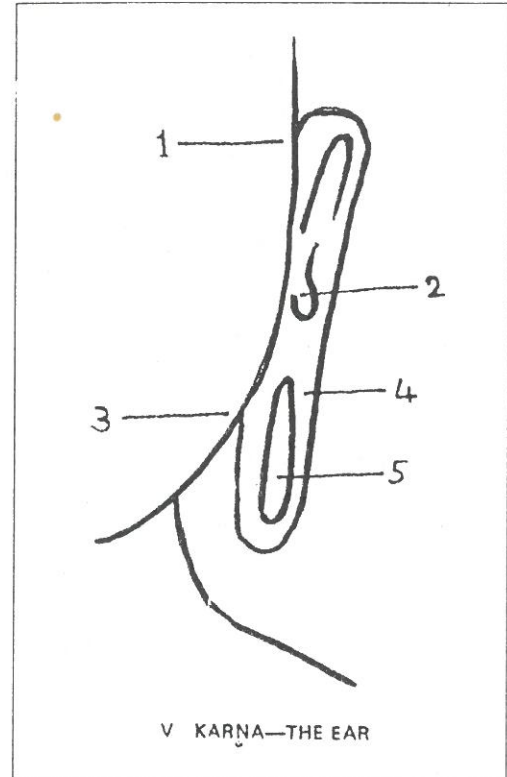
V. KARṆA - THE EAR

1. karṇa-mūla (the upper attachment of ear to head)

2. karṇa-srotas (ear-hole)

3. karṇa-veśana (lower attachment of ear to head)

4. karṇa-nāla (pendent lobe of ear)



5. karṇa-maṇḍala (hole bored in ear)

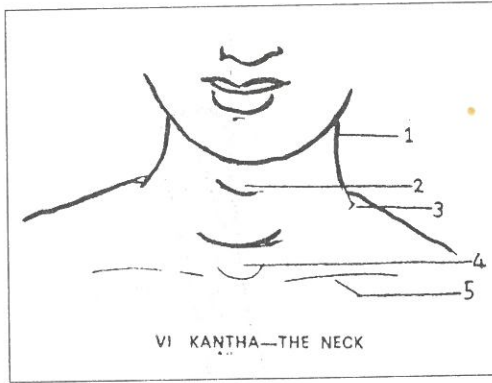
VI. KAṆṬHA - THE NECK

1. kaṇṭhāgra or grīvāgra (top of neck)

2. gala (throat)

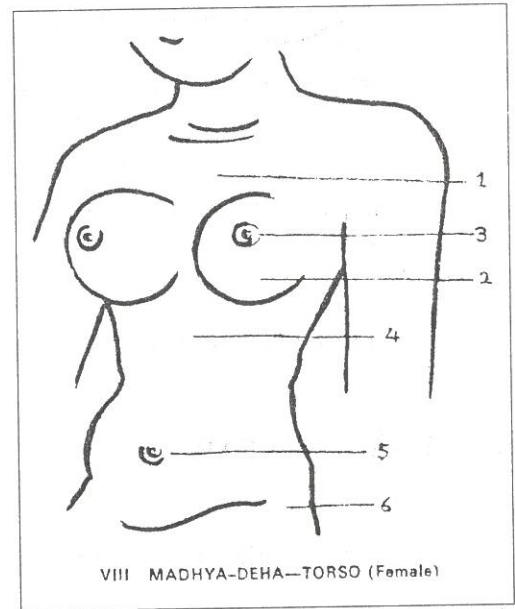
3. kaṇṭha-mūla (bottom of neck)



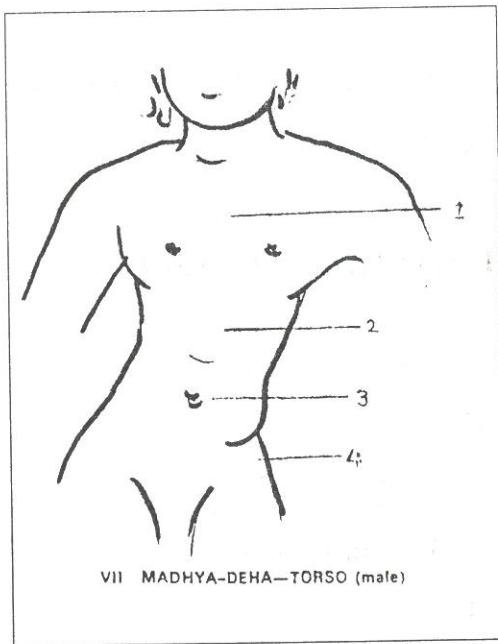


1. uras (chest)
2. madhya (kukshi) (belly)
3. nābhi
4. kaṭi (hip)

VIII. MADHYA - DEHA - TOSRO (FEMALE)



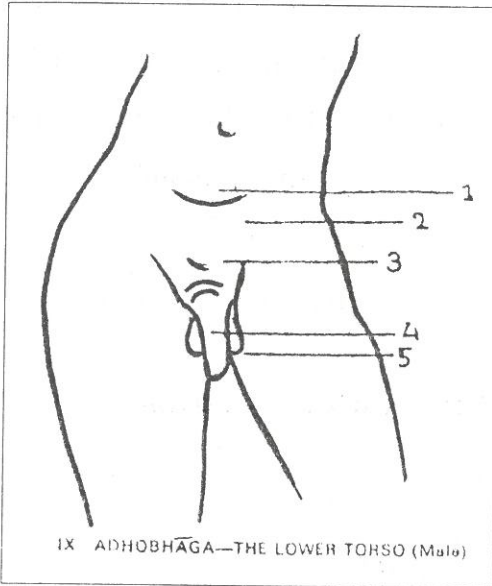
VII. MADHYA - DEHA - TORSO (MALE)



1. uras (chest)
2. stana (breast)
3. chūchuka (nipple of breast)
4. madhya (middle region)
5. nābhi (navel)
6. śroṇi (waist, loins)



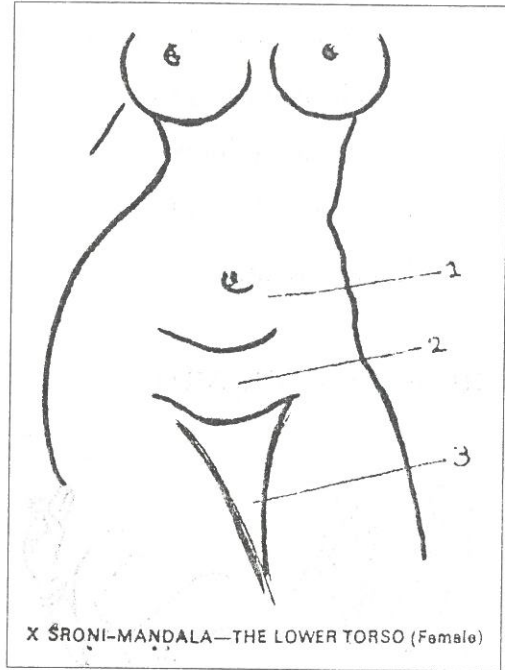
IX. ADHOBHĀGA - THE LOWER TORSO (MALE)



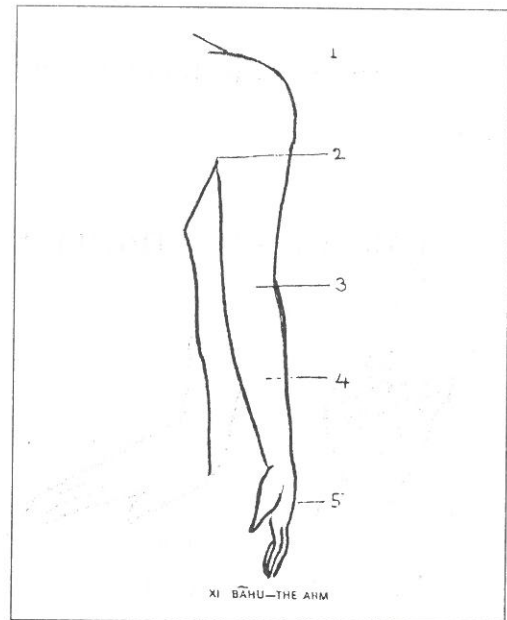
1. kaṭi (hip)
2. kaṭi-bandha (hip formation)
3. gūhya (the public region)
4. meḍhra (penis)
5. muthkas (testes)

X. ŚRONI-MANḌALA - THE LOWER TORSO (FEMALE)

1. kaṭi (hip)
2. guhya (pubic region)
3. yoni (vulva)

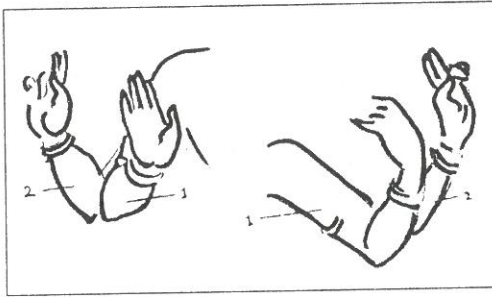


XI. BĀHU - THE ARM



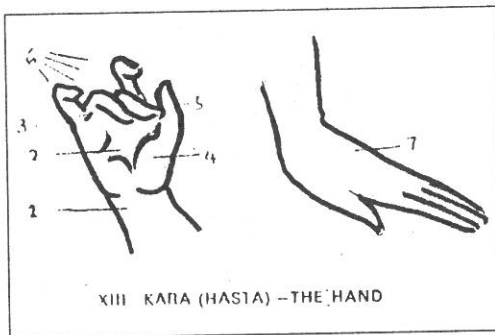
1. amśa or skandha (shoulder)
2. kaksha (arm-pit)
3. kūrpara (elbow)
4. prakoshṭha (fore-arm)
5. kara (hand)

XII. BĀHU - THE ARM



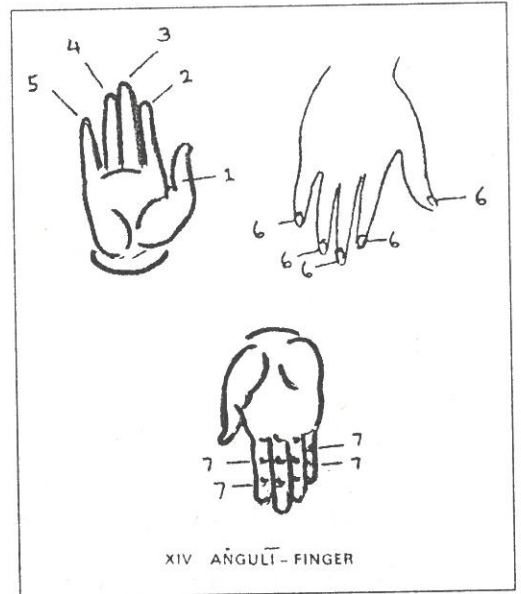
1. nija-bāhu (normal arm)
2. para-bāhu (extra arm at the back)

XIII. KARA (HASTA) - THE HAND



1. maṇi-bandha (wrist)
2. kara-tala (palm)
3. tālāgra (outer edge of palm)
4. śukodara (fleshy mound between root of thumb and wrist)
5. angushṭha (thumb)
6. angulī (finger)
7. pārshṇi-hasta (back of palm)

XIV. ĀṄGULĪ - FINGER

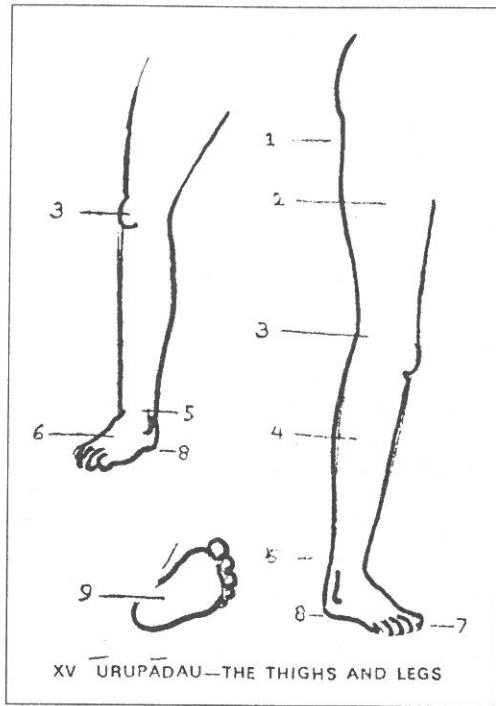


1. angushṭha (thumb)
2. tarjanī (fore-finger)
3. madhyama (middle-finger)

4. anāmikā (ring-finger)
5. kanishṭha (little-finger)
6. nakha (nail)
7. parva (finger-digit)

5. gulpha (ankle)
6. pāda (foot)
7. pādāṅguli (toes)
8. pārshṇi (heel)
9. pāda-tala (sole of foot)

XV. ŪRUPĀDAU - THE THIGHS AND LEGS



1. ūrū (thigh)
2. ūru-madhya (middle of thigh)
3. jānu (knee)
4. jaṅghā (shank)

PRALAMBA

An iconometric device for determining the exact horizontal and vertical measurements of the entire body and of the several parts of the body of the icon that is intended to be made, by drawing plumb-lines (pralamba), which is done by dropping perpendicularly threads to which weight is attached at the end (plummet).

Texts like *Mānasāra* speak of five or seven such plumb-lines which are helpful. The central line starts from the crest-jewel of the crown (śikhā-maṇi) and goes down the body



through the middle of the forehead, centre of the eyebrows, the nose, the chin, the middle of the neck, the centre of the chest, navel, and the tip of the penis, and then descends in a straight line to the midmost point of the pedestal between the two feet. The other four (or six) lines pass through the sides of the body, touching the sides of the face and the sides of the shoulders (and running through the knees).

The plumb-lines are also drawn through the arm-pits and through the sides of the back of the head, to make the number eleven.

The measurements are in this manner determined for the various stances (standing in equipoise or with bends, sitting and lying down).

Pralamba-phalaka is the instrument (plank) for making the pralamba measurements. "There" is a square plank of four, three, two or one angula in thickness with the sides equal to three-fourths or half of the length of the image. Another plank of the same size is made and used as a stool on which the image is placed. The other plank (pralamba-phalaka) is fixed to the crown of the head of the image. The planks are kept level to each other; some holes are made in the upper plank of the pralamba-phalaka wherefrom are suspended some strings at the other end of which are attached small balls made of iron or stone. The number of holes and strings suspended through the planks. While the plumb-lines are determined, varies from five to eleven, according to the different postures and poses of the image"



(from *Mānasāra*, ch LXII, lines 6-16, Translated in P.K. Acharya, *An Encyclopaedia of Hindu Architecture*, J.K. Publishing House, Bhopal, 1978, p.325).

This has reference to the concept of 'Sūtrā' which is an invaluable device in iconometry to ascertain and determine the vertical position and bilateral symmetry of the image as well as the horizontal level of the limbs. The sūtra (imaginary lines or strings) is of two types, (1) Aṅga-sūtra and (2) Lām̐ba-sūtra. The former deals with the horizontal level of the limbs, the location of the limbs and the relative measurement of the limbs. It has nine subsidiary sūtras: (1) akshi-sūtra (the line across the centre of the two eyes); (ii) bhrū-sūtra (the line across

the crests of the eyebrows); (iv) hikkā-sūtra (the line through the depressed part in the middle of lower end of neck across the shoulders); (v) stana-sūtra (also called hr̥daya-sūtra, line through the two nipples of the breasts); (vi) nābhi-sūtra (the line through the navel); (vii) meḍhra-sūtra (the line through the root of the generative organ); (viii) jānū-mūrdha-sūtra (the line through the knees); and (ix) jānvadhas-sūtra (the line through the calves of the legs).

The Kaṁba-sutras are plumb-line strings which are attached to the pralām̐ba-phalaka, and which help in ascertaining the correct vertical levels and position of the limbs, in maintaining the elevations and depressions of the limbs properly with reference to the vertical plance,



and to in preserving the three-dimensional symmetry of the icon as a whole. There are five lamba-sūtras which are indispensable: (i) puras-sūtra or pūrva-sūtra (the string in front); (ii) para-sūtra or pṛsthā-sūtra or para-sūtra (the string at the back); (iii) and (iv) pārśva-sūtras (two strings, each on either side of the body), and (v) madhya-sūtra (the string running through the centre of the icon's body, standing or seated).

तत्सूत्रात् तत्प्रमाणेन प्रतिमां कारयेद् बुधः ।

पूवापरौ च पार्श्वौ च कायमध्येन संयुतम् ॥

These five strings are also called brahma-sūtras, when four other strings are added to make the vertical measurements more precise strings through the two arm-pits (kakshāntara) and strings on either side of the face (mukhantara)

पंचभिः ब्रह्मसूत्रैश्च कक्षान्तर मुखान्तरैः ।

नवसूत्रसमायुक्तं स्थानकं चासनं तथा ॥

(1) The puras-sūtra is suspended so as to pass in front of the middle of the crown (ushṇīṣhe), forehead (lalāṭe), tip of the nose (nāsāgre), middle of the chin (hanu-madhyame), bottom of the neck (hikkāyām), chest (hṛdaya), navel (nābhau), the generative organ (yonau), front of the space between the thighs (ūrrvantare tathā), and between the feet (pādayor madhyame pūrvam);

(2) The para-sūtra passes behind the middle of the crown (param ushṇīṣha-madhyame), nape of the neck (kṛkātīkā), hump (kakun madhye) back-bone (vaṁśa-madhye), the middle of the space between the two glutials (sphigantare)



and between the two heels (pārshṇayoś cha madhyame);

(3) and (4) The two pārśva-sūtras touch the outer edges of the ear-lobes (pārśve karṇapālyanta-deśake), sides of the neck at the bottom, grīvāyā), through the middle of the ankle (gulpha-madhye syāt pārśva-sūtra-dvayam viduh);

(5) The last of the five principal sūtras passes right through the centre of the body dividing the body into two equal halves (kāya-madhyagatenaiva pañcha-sūtram pradhānakam);

(6and7) The kakshābhyantara-sūtras are suspended along the inner edge of the ear on each side, (karṇābhyantar-gatam), and pass through the middle of the nipples of

the breast (stana- chūchuka-madhyame), the middle of the thighs and of the legs (padoru-madhyadeśe) and through the middle of the sides at the waist (madhyame lambayet punah);

(8 and 9) The mukhāntara-sūtras pass through the arm-pits (kakhāntare), along the sides of the hip (kaṭi-pārśve) and through the middle of the outer lobe of the ankle (bony projection, akshi-gulpha) (lambayed akshi-madhyame).

The five principal sūtras are also called rjusūtra, ardharju sūtra, sāchiturya-sūtra and sthānaka-sūtra respectively; the kakshāntara sūtras are called bhittika, and the mukhāntara sūtra is known as pārśva-gata-sūtra (cf. *Abhilashitārthachintāmaṇi*, 1, 189-190 and 3, 407-410).



According to *Sakalādhikāra*, the measurements of pralamba-phalaka are: length of the board (āyāma): 40 1/2 aṅgulas, the distance between the upper-arm extremities; width: 18 aṅgulas, thickness (ghana): 2 aṅgulas or 2 1/2 aṅgulas.

प्रलंबफलकमानं प्रोक्तं शिल्पविचक्षणैः ।
बिम्बस्य बाहुपर्यन्तमायामं द्विर्नवांगुलम् ।
तारं घनं तु द्वय गुलं अध्यर्धगुलमेव वा ॥

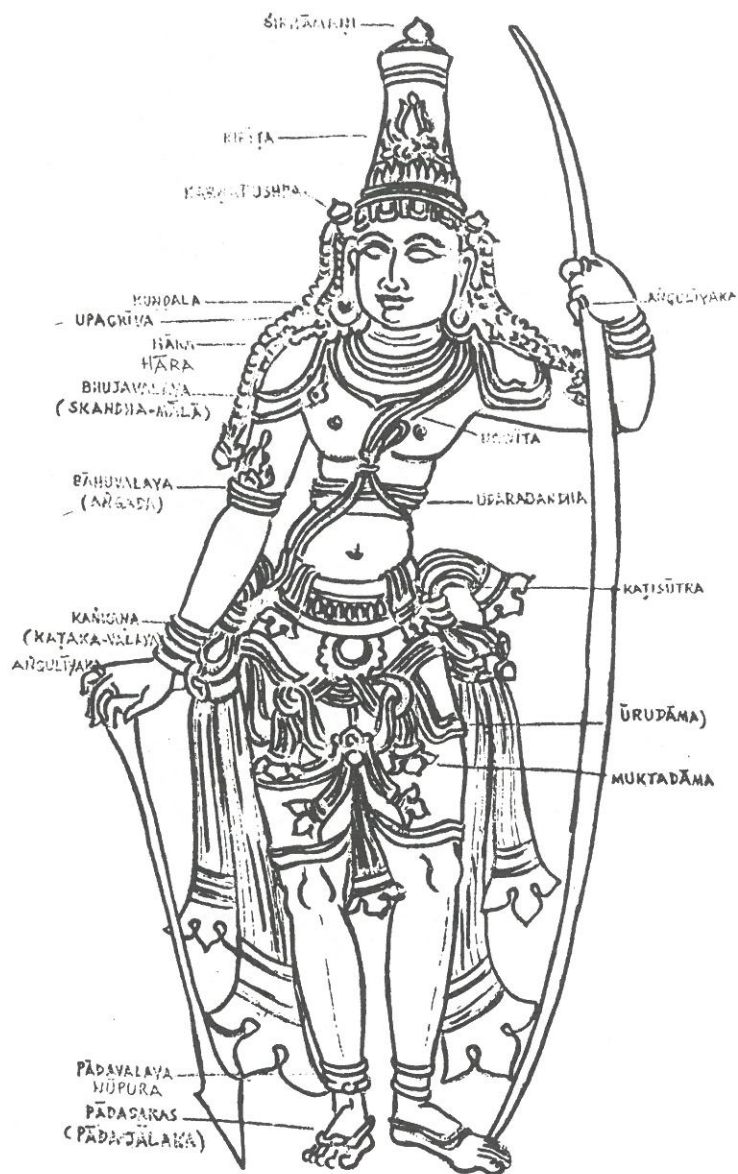
ĀBHARAṆA

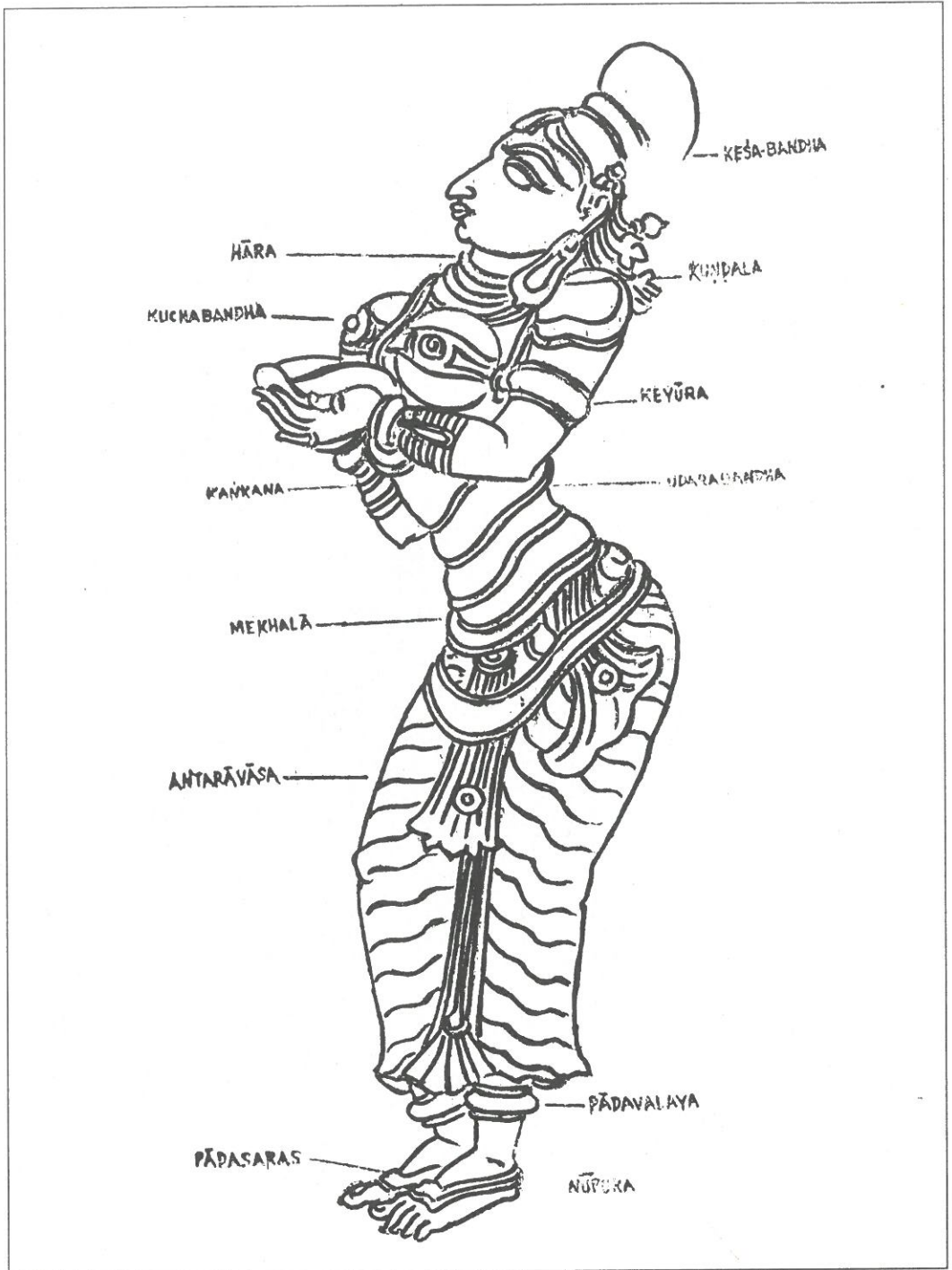
Literally meaning 'ornament' the expression refers to the stylized decorations on the icons in human form. Indian art (painting and sculpture) regards beauty as inseparable from ornamentation, and employs this detail invariably in icons for display as well as for worship. The exceptions are the icons of the

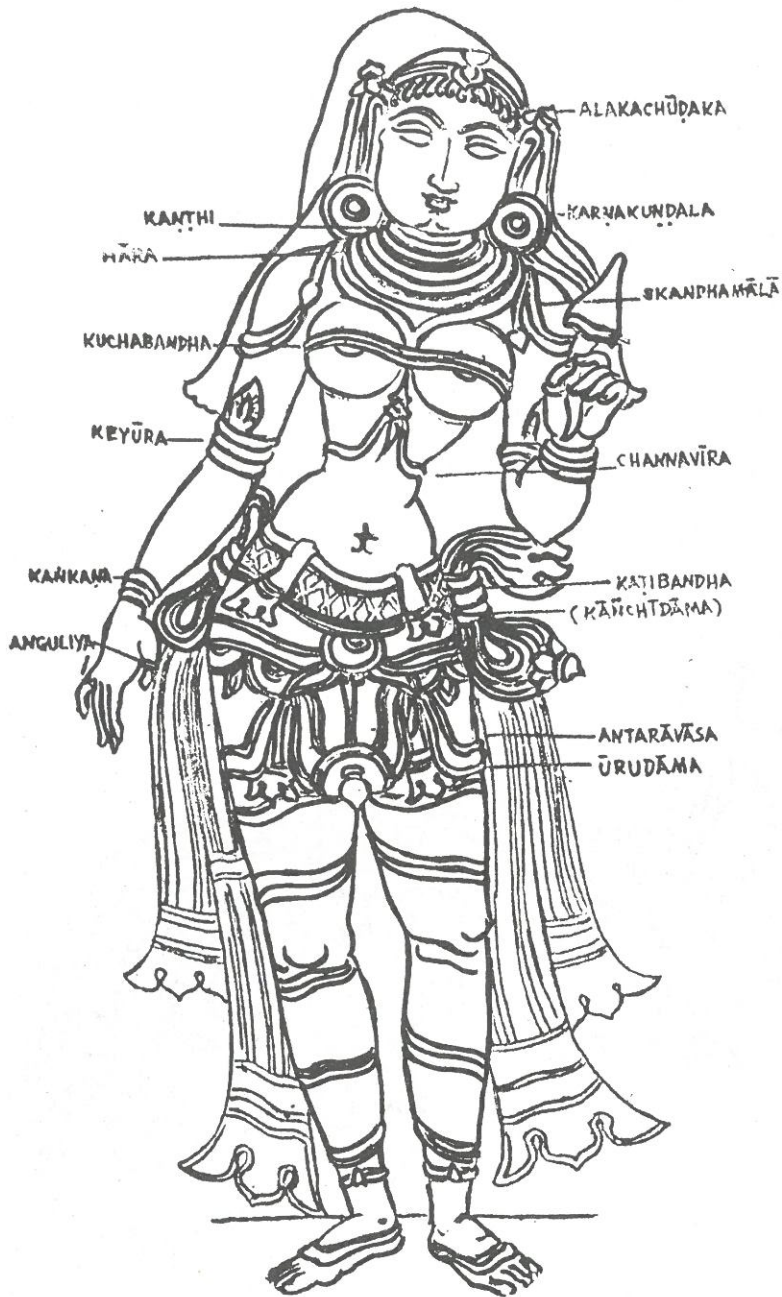
Jaina tīrthaṅkaras and the Buddha. Even yogis and hermits have their characteristic and light ornaments. Most of the forms and styles of ornaments in the icons are adopted from the actual ornaments used by well-to-do Indian masses, especially on festive occasions, and members of the royal household; but some of them are of course derived from the artist's imagination and inventiveness; and a few are meant only for gods, goddesses, heavenly damsels, and not to be found among humans.

Classical texts (like *Manu-Smṛti*, 7,22) classify ornaments into four varieties: (1) āvedhya (worn after piercing the part of the body) like ear-pieces of various kinds; (2) bandhaniya (tied round the part of the body), like the strings of pearls





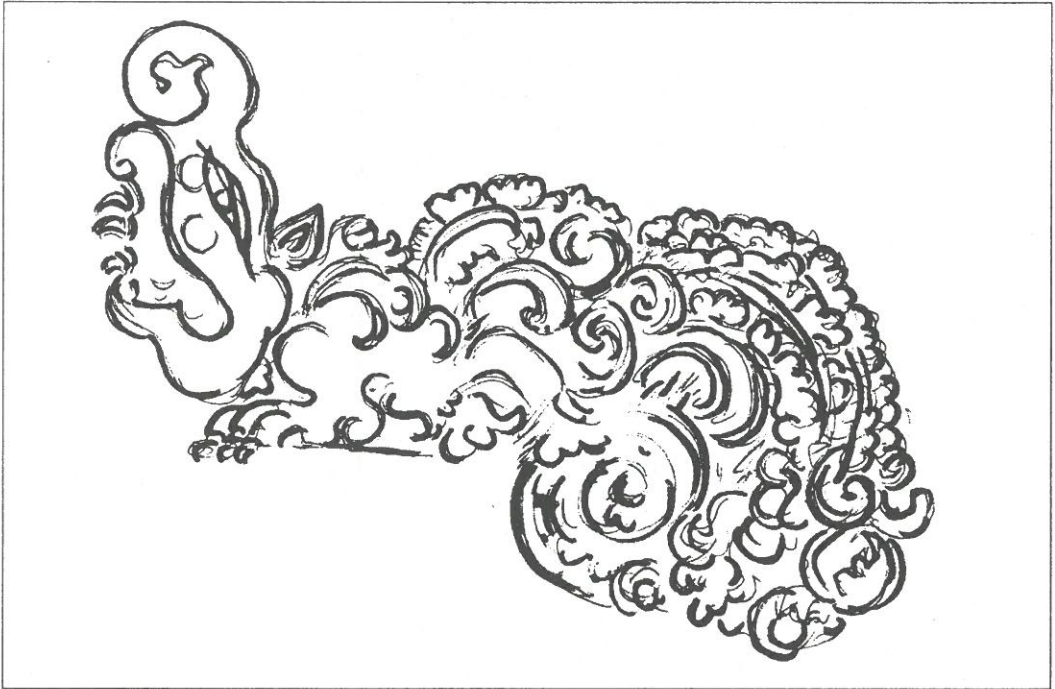




or flowers tied round the hair, or arms; (3) kshepya (slipped on to the part of the body) like rings on the fingers; and (4) āropya (hung round the neck or down the shoulders) like necklaces and garlands.

While all visible parts of the body are considered suitable for decoration with appropriate

ornaments, the head (śiras), neck (kaṇṭha), chest (ura), arms (bāhu), legs (pāda), loins or hip (kaṭi) and the fingers (aṅguli) of the icon are more often and especially covered with ornaments. The ornaments are usually in aesthetically elegant designs, and contain sometimes mythical motifs (like makara, sarpa, śiṃha-lalāṭa and vyāla).



MAKARA



Makara is a mythical creature, resembling in form a crocodile, but with a trunk like that of an elephant. Its ears like cow's, eyes like those of the fish, the middle-body that of a boar, having a tail like the peacock's; its legs are those of a lion.

वक्त्रं क्रकचाकारं शुण्डं गजसन्निभम् ।
 कर्णौ गोकर्णरूपौ नेत्रे मत्स्यसदृशे ।
 मध्यकायं तु वाराहं मायूरपुच्छसंयुतम् ।
 पादाः सिंहपादका ज्ञेया मकररूपं
 तमुज्ज्वलम् ॥

Sometimes the head alone is represented: its tail is spread out upwards (puchcham ūrdhva-vistṛtam), or alround (sarvato-gatam), or hanging down on the earth (bhū-prānta-vikshiptam). It may carry a rider on its back (vāhaka-yutam), or not (svatantram). It may be in a posture of attacking (yuddha-

sannaddham) or it may just seem to be playing about (krīḍābhirāmakam).

Simha-lalāṭa is the familiar leogrief motive, that of a mythical lion. In sculpture, they resemble the actual ornaments made in gold and set with precious stones (pearls, diamonds, moonstone, sapphire etc.) As said earlier, there is an unmistakable stylization in the ornaments appropriate to each organ; and the texts contain distinct and suggestive names for each one of them.

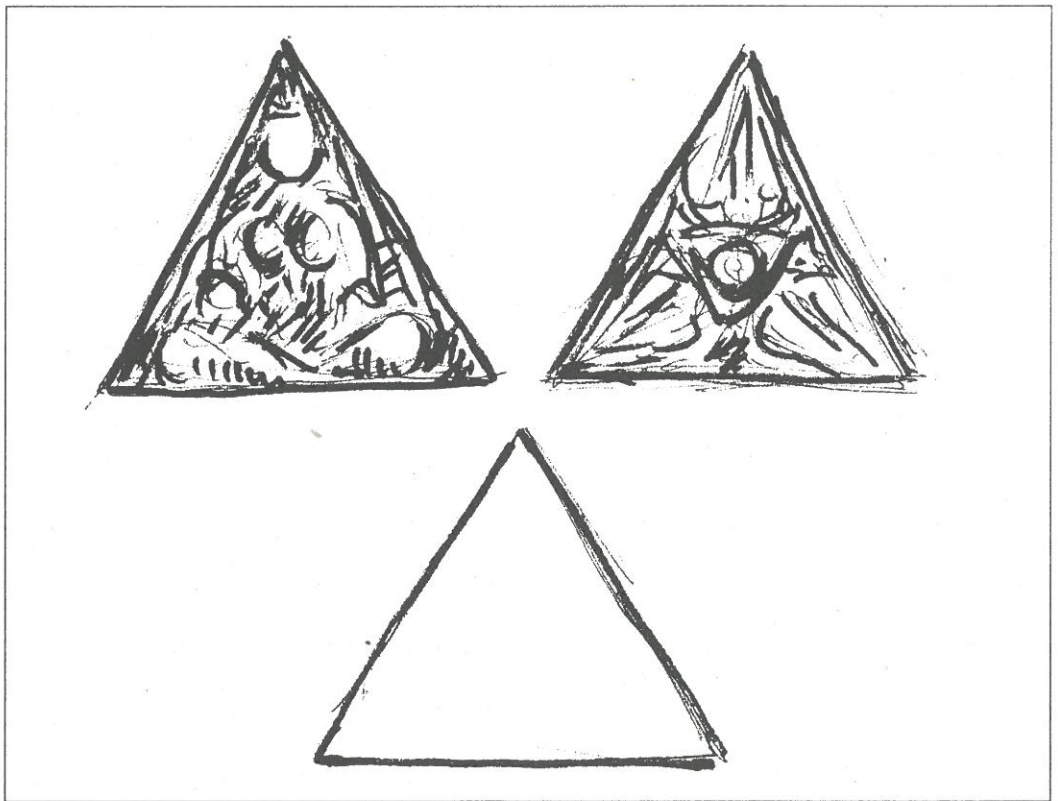
Most of the ornaments are common to all classes of gods and goddesses (including those of Jaina and Buddhist tradition). But some ornaments have conventionally got associated with some divinities and serve to distinguish them from others,



like Śrīvatsa and kaustubha on the chest and Vaijayanti garland over the body with Viṣṇu, and garland of severed heads with Bhairava as ugra-śakti.

Generally, ornaments are decorative devices and are meant to

enhance the loveliness of the physical appearance of the icon. But ornaments may also be used to suggest ferocity and violence, as for instance the garland of severed heads on Bhairava, the garland of severed hands on Kālī, the wreath of intestinal passages on Narasiṃha, creeping



ŚRĪVATSA



serpents on the body of Śiva, or the crown of writhing snakes on Chaṇḍī.

Ornaments on the head are crowns (kiriṭa, mukuṭa or mauli) of various kinds braids of hair coiffured into a crown-like or rolled-up shape and turbans (śirastrāṇa). Ears are decorated with ear-pieces of several types. The neck-ornaments include clasps (kaṇṭhi), necklaces (hāra) made of nishka coins, torque, pearls with jewel pendants. The torso is adorned with ornamental upavita, cross-bands, breast-band (kuchabandha), stomach belt (udara-bandha) and waist-bands (kaṭi-sūtras) of several kinds. The shoulders have tassel-like ornaments called skandha-mālā. The arms are adorned by armlets (keyūra, aṅgada) in the upper arms and bracelets (valaya, kaṅkaṇa) on the wrists.

The thighs are adorned by bound tassels hanging from the girdle (ūru-dāma). The feet are decorated by the tight-fitting anklets (pāda-valaya) and flowing jālaka. (pāda-jālaka or pāda-saras).

A thick golden ornament worn on the upper arm (bāhy-bhūshaṇa), an armlet. It is also called 'keyūra'.

The usual ābharāṇa (or bhūshaṇa) for gods are prescribed to be appropriate, multivarious, (faultless) marvellous, sumptuous, extraordinary and splendid:-

स्वोचितविविधविचित्रानन्ताश्चर्यनित्यनिरवद्यापरिमित
दिव्यभूषणः ॥

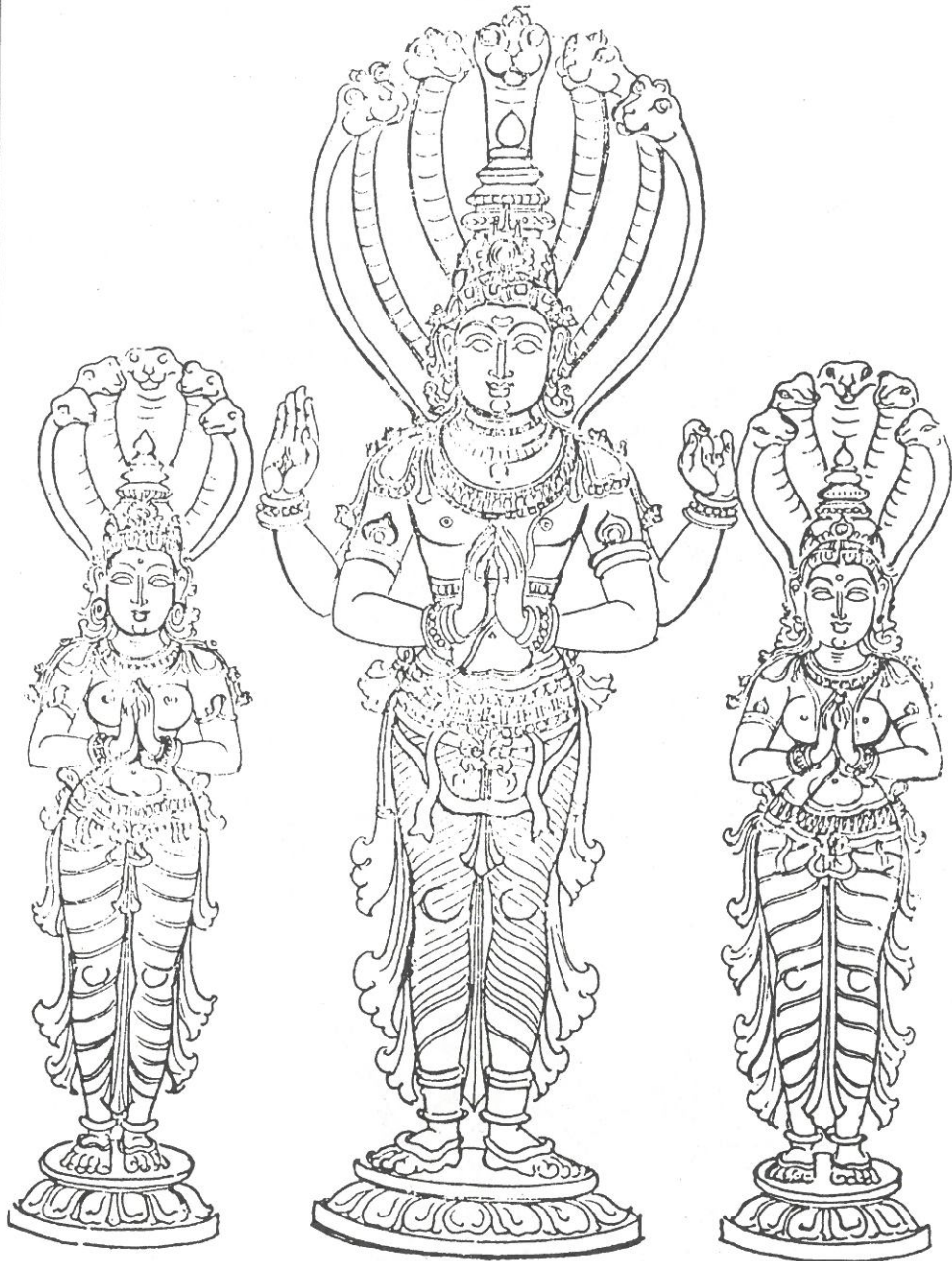
(1) Head-Makuṭa (mauli)

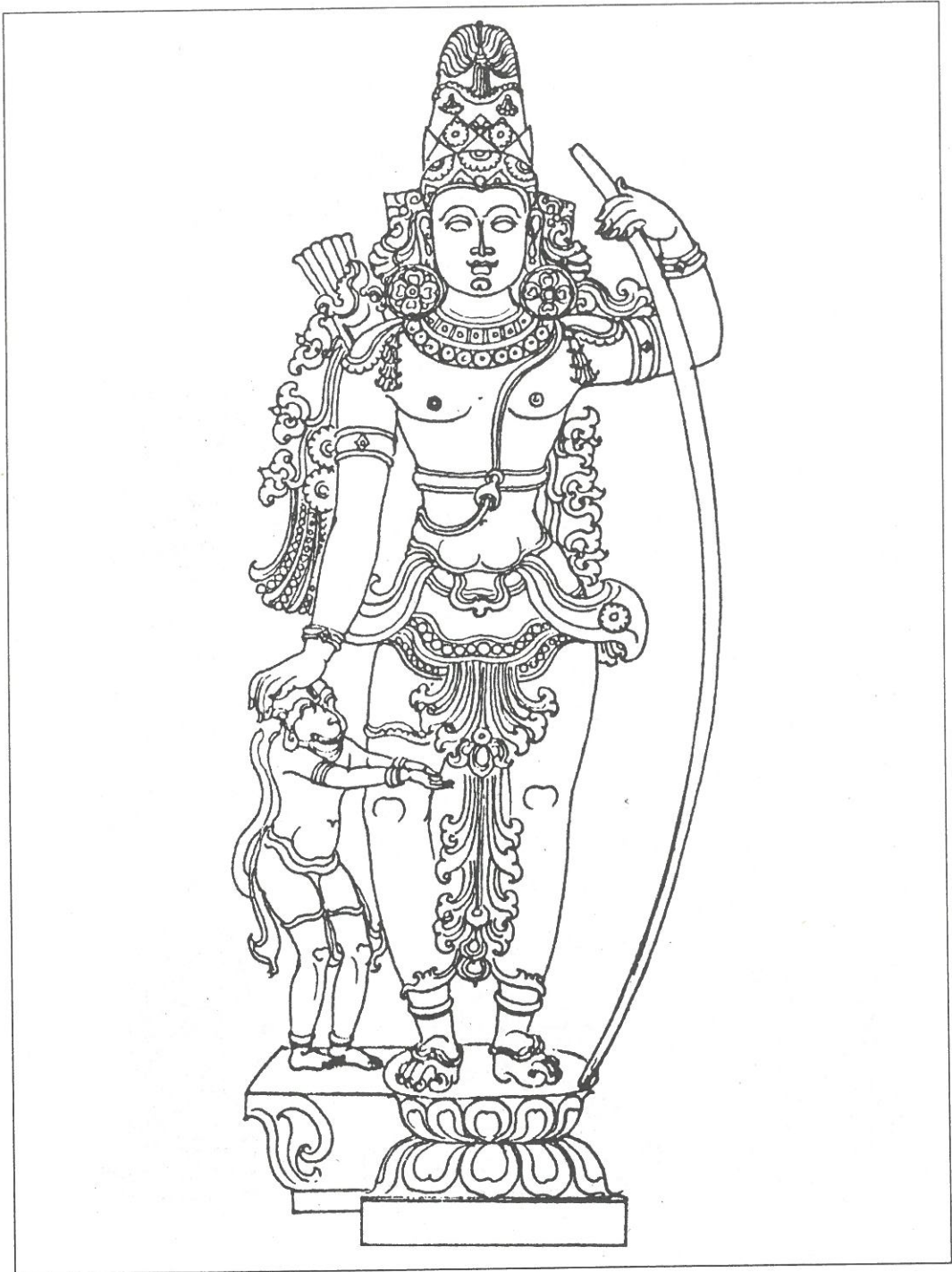
(a) jaṭā - (Brahma, Rudra, Manonmani etc.)

(b) Kirīṭa - (Vishṇu, Kubera, etc.) (Veṇu-karṇābha) कुर्यात्किरीटं
शिखरैरूपेतं । अण्डोपमं वा कमलोपमं वा ॥









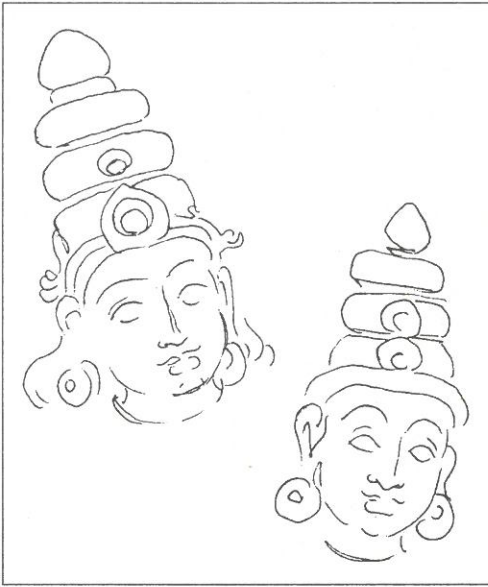








KIRĪṬA-MUKUṬA



KARAṆḌA-MUKUṬA

(c) Karaṇḍa (Devī, Gaṇeśa)
(śikhi-chūḍa-vat)

(d) śirastraka (turban, nāga,
yaksha, vidyādhara) (budbudākāram)

(e) kuntala (Lakshmī)

(d) kesa-baṇḍha (Sarasvatī)

(d) dhammilla (Sītā, Sāvitrī)
(vallikākṛtiḥ)

(f) alaka-chūḍaka (bhramarka,
short curls)

2. Ears: kuṇḍala

(a) tāḍaṅga

(b) patra-kuṇḍala

(c) makara-kuṇḍala (nakra)

(d) śamkha-patra

(e) ratna-kuṇḍala

(f) sarpa-kuṇḍala

(g) śiśu-kuṇḍala ; preta-kuṇḍala

3. Neck:

(a) nishka (necklace of coins)

(b) hāra (hanging) hāra

(c) graiveyaka (broad)



4. Shoulders -
skandha-mālā
5. Breast -
chhanna-vīra upavīta (a) vastra
(b) kṛshṇa-sāra (c) maṇi (d) sūtra
Kucha-bandha
(a) suvarṇa-kañchuka
(b) nāga-kuchabandha
6. Belly -
udarabandha
7. Loins -
Kaṭi-sūtra
kaṭi-bandha, mekhalā (girdle)
8. Thighs -
ūrudāma, kāñchidāma
9. upper arm -
keyūra (aṅgada)
10. lower arm -
kankaṇa (valaya, kaṭaka)
11. Fore-arm -
maṇi-bandha-kalāpa
12. Fingers-
aṅgulīyaka (for all fingers
except middle-finger)
13. Anklet -
nūpura

14. Feet -
pāda-jālaka (pada-saras)
15. Leg -
bhṛṅga-pāda (a small bell
usually on the right leg of Śiva in
Choḷa and Vijayanagar sculptures).

ĀYUDHAS

‘Āyudha’ literally means that with which a combat is conducted, a weapon (āyudhyate anena). It is usually grouped into three types.

- (1) praharaṇa, with which one strikes, like sword (khaḍga), trident (triśūla), knife (chhurikā), club (paṭṭīśa) and axe (paraśu).
- (2) pāṇi-mukta, discharged or thrown from the hand like discus (chakra), spear (śūla) and tomara, and



(3) yantra-mukta, released
mechanically like arrow from
bow (dhanur-bāṇa)

The iconic representation of gods and goddesses of all religions of Indian origin, usually involves the carrying of weapons in the hands. The symbolism is that the primary role of a divinity is to fight with evil and ignorance, and to defend the good and the wise.

There are some āyudhas which are always shown in pair (dvandva), like noose (pāśa) and goad (aṅkuśa), bow (dhanus) and arrow (bāṇa), sword (khadga) and shield (kheṭa), discus (chakra) and conch (śaṁkha). More important is the symbolism of the āyudhas (sanketa-pramukhānyāyudhāni) like:

conch (śaṁkha): creation, destruction of ignorance (ajñāna-nāśa)

discus (chakra): preservation, time, destruction of evil

mace (gadā): destruction or dissolution; destruction of adharma

lotus(padma): grace (anugraha), wealth, bounty

trident (trśūla): combination of three guṇas (satva, rajas and tamas) the central one being taller than the other two, symbolizing ascendance of sattva-guṇa (sattvotkarshakhyāpikā)

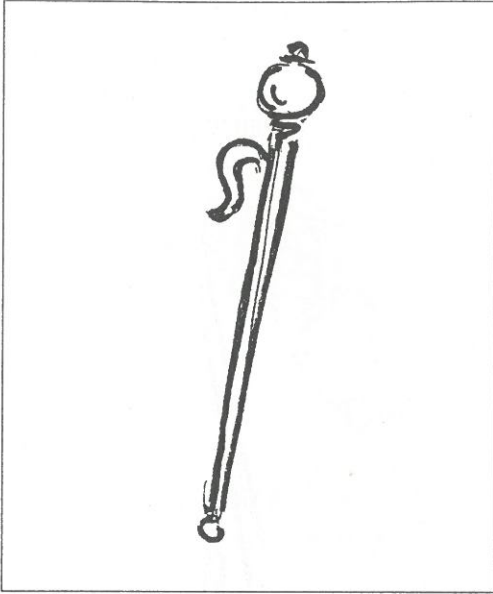
battle-axe (paraśu): invincible power (amogha-śakti); divine energy.

noose (pāśa); bondage by the three guṇas; māyā-śakti.



arrow (bāṇa): sense-organs
(five in the hands of Kāma)

fire (agni): destruction
(samhāra)



Aṅkuśa

sword (khaḍga): valour (śaurya)

goad (aṅkuśa): regulation
(niyamana); power to mask the self
(āvaraṇa-śakti.)

sugar-cane-stalk (ikshu-daṇḍa):
enjoyment of sense-pleasure
(vishaya-bhoga-rasa-khyāpikā)

अस्त्रभूषणसंस्थानस्वरूपं रूपवर्जितः ।

बिभर्ति मायारूपोऽसौ प्राणिनां श्रेयसे हरिः ॥

(*Vishṇu-purāṇa*, 1, 22, 76)

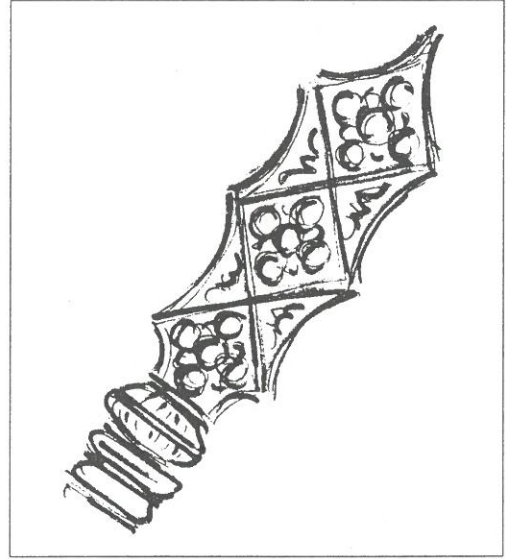
Goddesses killing the asuras and rākshasas who were tormentors of the worlds of gods and human beings. In fact, the hardship to the good folk caused by the wicked giants and demons is the reason for the appearance of gods and goddesses in various forms. The 'sportive forms' (līlā-mūrti) of Śiva, the 'descents' (avatāra) of Viṣṇu, and the incarnations of Śakti are all to punish the wicked and protect the devout.

The supernumerary arms often seen in the icons of gods and



goddesses are primarily designed to accommodate various weapons. The deities represented as violent (ugra-mūrti) and as engaged in the destruction of wicked demons (saṁhāra-mūrti) usually have eight, sixteen or thirty-two arms, most of them carrying different weapons of destruction. The pacific deities have usually two or four hands; and even if the hands are made to carry weapons, they are more often meant to distinguish and help identify the deity, like conch (śaṁkha) and discus (chakra) in the icons of Viṣṇu, trident (triśūla), and hand-drum (ḍamaru) in those of Śiva, battle-axe (paraśu) or goad (aṅkuśa) and lasso (pāśa) in those of Gaṇeśa, spear known as Śakti (vela) in that of Subrahmaṇya, the thunderbolt (vajra) in that of Indra, lasso (pāśa) in that

of Varuṇa, bow and arrow (dhanur-bāṇa) in the hands of Rāma, and sword (khaḍga) in the hands of Kalki.



ŚAKTI

The hands of multi-armed deities are made to carry, besides the weapons of warfare, objects like lotus (kamala), blue lily (utpala), sugar-cane stalk (ikshu-daṇḍa), rosary (akṣhamālā), book (pustaka), drinking bowl (pāna-pātra), plough

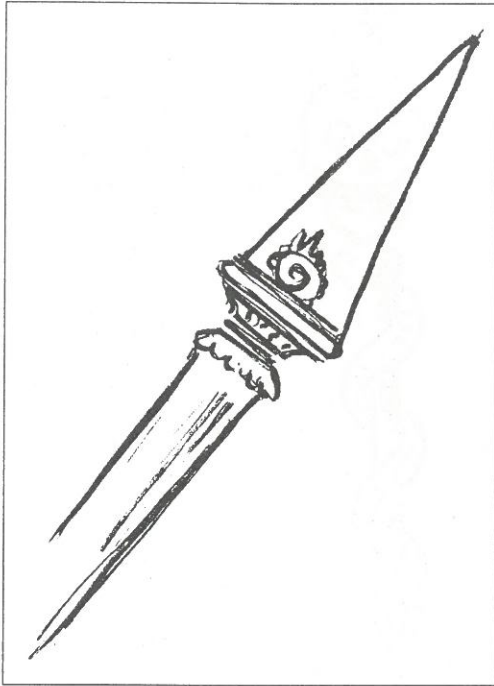


share (hala), deer (mṛga), a severed head (śiras) and human skull (kapāla). These are also sometimes referred to (albeit arronesouly) as āyudhas. The hands may also assume gestures of protection (abhaya) boon-bestowal (varada), or warning (tarjanī). The āyudhas may sometimes be accommodated within the gestures,

as, for instance, lotus or rosary in the gesture of protection (padmābhaya), or drinking bowl in the gesture of boon-bestowal.

Apart from the legendary associations with regard to the weapons (e.g. the bow called Pināka in the hand of Śiva as the destroyer of the Tripura, the bow called Kodaṇḍa in the hand of Rāma as the killer of Rāvaṇa, the spear in the hand of Durgā as the killer of Mahishāsurā, the butchering broad blade in the hand of Vīrabhadra who slaughtered Daksha, and the magical spear called Śakti used by Kārtikeya in killing Tārakāsura), weapons are symbolic of divine attributes.

Trident (triśula) represents the conjoint functioning of the three guṇas (sattva, rajas and tamas). The



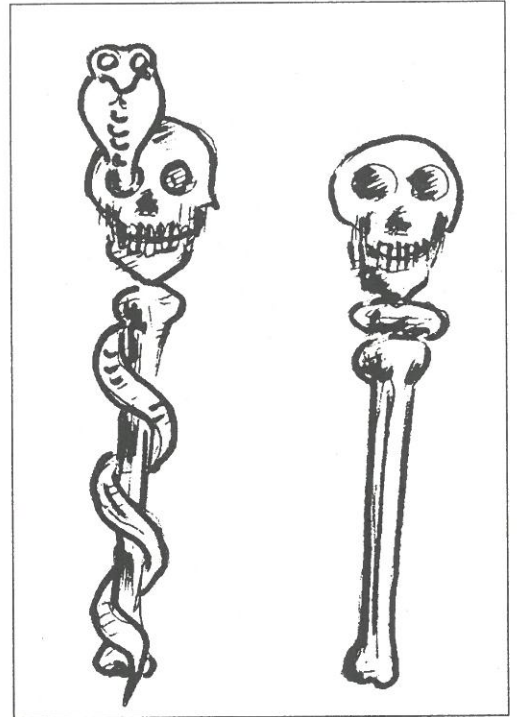
ŚŪLA-MUKHA



battle-axe (paraśu) is symbolic of the invincible power (śākti) of Godhead. The lasso (pāśa) is the divine will to project the phenomenal world and delude souls into it (māyā).

The conch (śaṁkha) is the creative urge (śṛṣṭi), and discus (chakra) or fire (agni) or sword (khaḍga) represents dissolution of the world (saṁhāra). The sugar-cane-stalk (ikshu-daṇḍa) is the relish (rasa) which the individual soul experiences in the phenomenal world. Lotus (padma) represents bounty and plenitude (aiśvarya). Elephant-goad (aṅkuśa) is the principle of restraint and regulation (niyamana). The symbolism is explained in the Āgama texts, especially those belonging to the Śaiva pursuation, like *Vātulāgama*.

Some weapons appear on the icons frequently in pairs, like bow (dhanus) in the left hand and arrow (śara) in the right; sword (khaḍga) in the right hand and shield (charma) in the left; elephant-goad (aṅkuśa) in the right hand and lasso (pāśa) in the left; conch-shell (śaṁkha) in the left hand and discus (chakra) in the right.



KHATVAṆGA



Weapons appear in different shapes and kinds. An ordinary cudgel (daṇḍa), the mace or Indian club (gadā), the wooden pestle (musala), the iron club or javeline (tomara), and the magical weird weapon known as khaṭvāṅga (the long bone of the human forearm crowned by a skull attached through its foremen) are variations of the same staff. The last mentioned weapon is seen in the fierce forms of Śiva, Chāmuṇḍā and Bhairava. The legend is that Śiva was required to carry this weapon as well as human skull (kapāla) and wander about for fourteen years as a vagrant in expiation for his sin of having severed a head of Brahmā (cf. Sāyaṇa's comments on *RgVeda* 10, 9, 1).

The pestle is held by Saṃkarshaṇa or Balarāma.

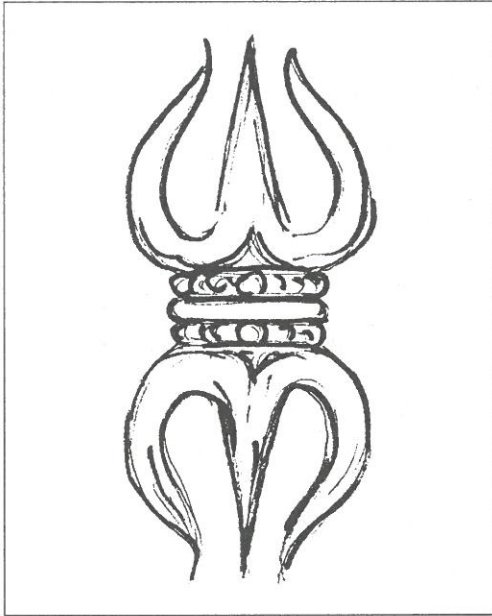
Ploughshare (hala) is also used by Bala-rāma as a weapon. There are different kinds of spear (śūla), like trident (triśūla), śakti, thunderbolt (vajra), and three-edged spear (paṭṭīśa). The lasso (pāśa) to bind the opponent may occur with a variation, viz. the magical serpent-lasso (nāga-pāśa). The shield (charma) could be round in shape, or oblong; it may be made of wood, metal or skin.

The discus (chakra) may be stationary in aspect (when it is called sthiti-chakra), or ready to be despatched (prayoga-chakra). The battle-axe (paraśu) may occur in a smaller version in the hand of Śiva as 'khaṇḍa-paraśu'. The fire (agni) as a weapon of destruction in the hand of Śiva may appear in a bowl held in the left upper hand, or directly as flames on the outstretched palm,



as seen especially in the Nāṭarāja icons. Another weapon peculiar to Śiva icons is the stone-mason's chisel (ṭaṅka).

Aparājita-sūtra (235, 10-13), ascribed to Viśvakarma, gives a list of thirty-six 'āyudhas': triśūla (trident), chhurikā (knife), khaḍga (sword), kheṭa (shield), khaṭvāṅga (skull mounted on the long bone of



VAJRA

the fore-arm), dhanus (bow), arrow (bāṇa), noose (pāśa), goad (aṅkuśa), war-bell (ghaṇṭā), riṣṭa (a tearing weapon), darpaṇa (mirror), daṇḍa (cudgel), śaṁkha (conch), chakra (discus), gadā (mace), vajra (a powerful weapon with tridents on both ends), śakti (a magical spear), mudgara (mallet), bushuṇḍi (a weapon of uncertain description), muśala (wooden pestle or club), paraśu (battle-axe), kartrikā (cutting instrument), kapāla (human skull), śiras (severed head), sarpa (serpent), horn (śṛṅga), hala (ploughshare), kunta (lance), pustaka (book), aksha (rosary), kamaṇḍalu (water-pot), sūchi (sharp-pointed instrument or gesture of warning), padma (lotus), patraka (pātra, liquor-bowl), yoga-mudrā (yogic gesture).





KUṆḌIKA

Besides the above, there are other weapons like paṭṭīśa (sharp-edged spear with three faces), ṭaṅka (stone-mason's chisel), and agni (fire for burning), which have been mentioned above. The animals and birds held in the hand, symbolic of various details, are also counted among āyudhas; like antelope (mrga) in the hand of Śiva' cock (kukkuṭa) in the hand of Subrahmanya and some devī-forms, mangoose (nakuli) in some forms of Kubera and yakshas, and snake (sarpa) in the

hand of Bhairava and some Devī-forms.

Musical instruments also figure among āyudhas: small hand-drum (ḍamaru), flute (veṇu), lute (viṇā), drum (bheri) another percussion instrument called ḍholak, and pair of metal cymbals (karatāla). Pot of water (kumbha), small pitcher (kuṇḍikā), some fruit (like citron, mātuluṅga), sweet-cake (modaka), pen (lekhanī), scissors (kartarī) and banner (patāka, dhvaja) are also seen in the hands of some icons.

The āyudhas are grouped under three heads, (1) sāttvika (like water-vessel, rosary, lotus, book and sacrificial ladle); (2) rājasika (all musical instruments, including conch and bell); and (3) tāmasika (all weapons of destruction, stone-

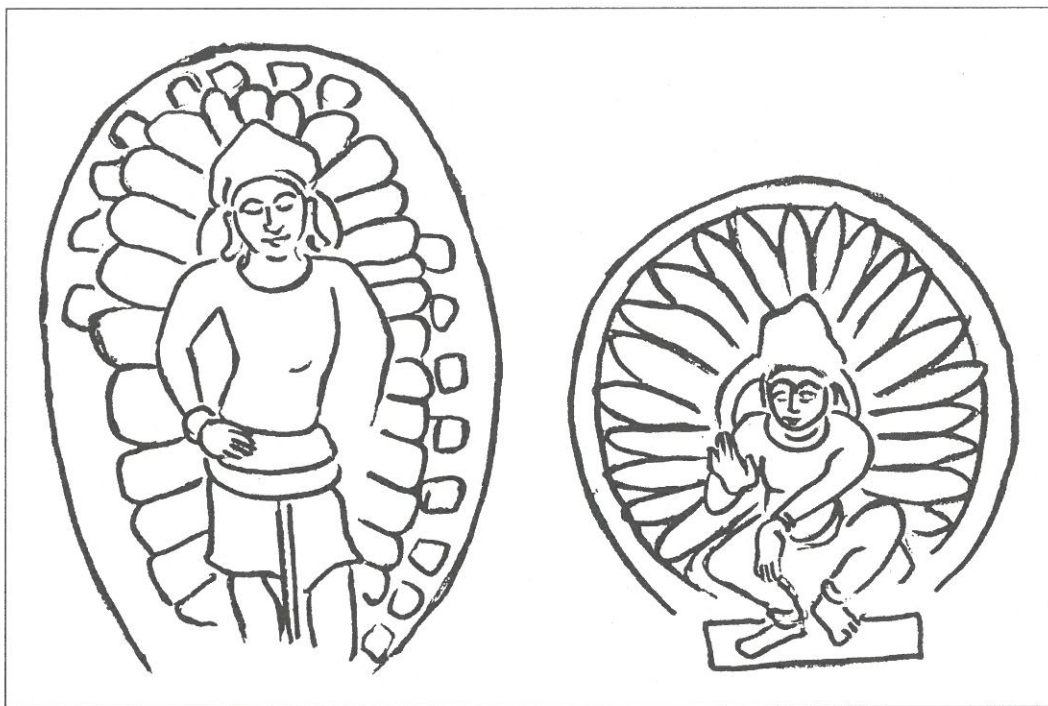


mason's chisel, scissors, fire, snake and animals or birds held in the hand).

ĀYUDHA-PURUSHA

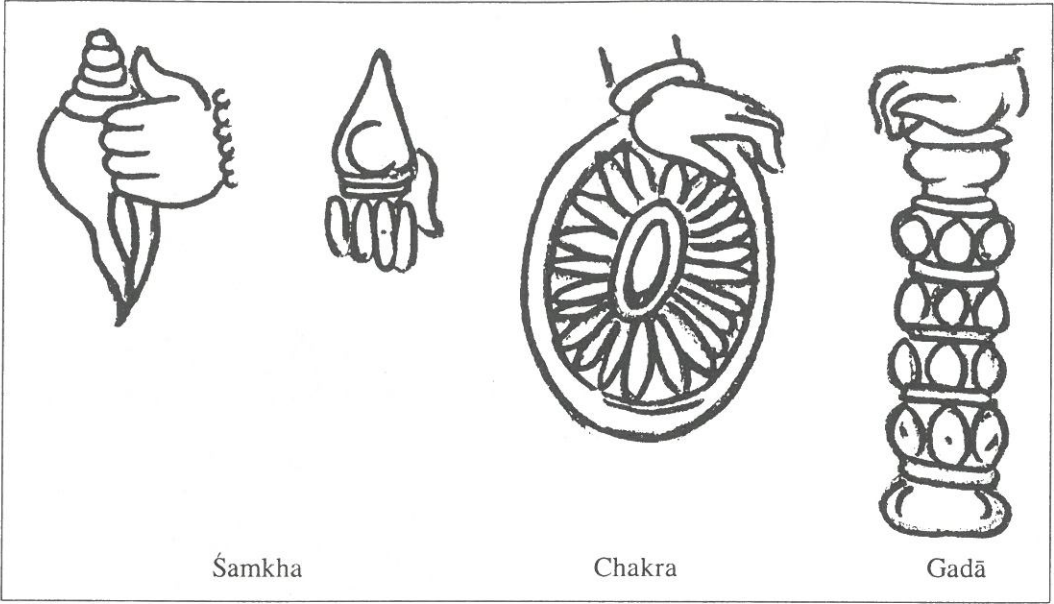
Meaning 'Indian iconography also includes the delineation of āyudha-purushas personified weapon', (also called 'astra-mūrti')

it is the human representation of the weapons of warfare as aiding the deity in his fight against evil. It suggests that the weapons in the hands of a god or goddess are in of divine powers. The Śaiva āgama thinks of an aspect of divinity known as 'sāṅga', which is constituted of the divine qualities manifesting



CHAKRA-PURUSHA (Stone, Calcutta Museum)





themselves as weapons. The Pāñcharātra system also has a similar notion and prescribes the worship of weapons in the hands of Viṣṇu as distinct, although subordinate, divinities.

There is an enumeration of ten āyudhas in *Uttara-kāmikāgama* and *Pūrva-kāmikāgama* (14th paṭala), each of which is prescribed to be visualized as a person with one face,

two eyes, two arms held in the gesture of añjali, wearing the headgear known as karaṇḍa-makuṭa and decorated with various ornaments. These personified weapons are required to be made in eight-tāla-mana measure. The ten weapons to be personified thus are thunderbolt (vajra), spear known as Śakti, staff (daṇḍa), sword (khaḍga), lasso (pāśa), elephant-goad (aṅkuśa), mace (gadā), trident (triśūla), lotus



(padma), and discus (chakra). Of them, two are feminine (Śakti and mace), two are neuter (lasso and lotus), and the rest are masculine. The persons must be represented as carrying their respective weapons on their heads ('teshām mūrdhni'), or as attached to their crowns ('mukutopari'), or as clutched by both their hands ('hastayor antare'), or held in the right hand ('vāmetarakare').



Gadā-devī, Gadā-devī, Chakra-purusha



CHAKRA-PURUSHA

(in Vishṇu's hand) (stone of Kāshmīri origin, now in Berlin Museum)

Vishṇu-dharmottara has a more elaborate description of the personified weapons. According to this text, the weapon called Śakti is



feminine, red-complexioned, and riding on a wolf ('vṛkāśrita').

The staff (daṇḍa) is masculine, black-complexioned (kṛshṇa), with red eyes and terrible appearance (ghora).

The sword (khadga) is masculine, blue-black in complexion and śyāma) and with angry eyes (kruddha-lochana).

The lasso (pāśa) has a serpent's body with seven hoods (sapta-phāṇa), and with a tail (puccha).

The mace (gadā) is a damsel, yellow in body-colour and with well-formed breasts and thighs. The trident (triśūla) is masculine, with blue-black body and divine and resplendent lustre.

The bow (dhanus) is feminine, with a body of the colour of red lotus, and carrying on her head the strung bow (mūrdhni pūrta chāpa-bhṛt). The arrow (śara) is masculine, red-complexioned and with lustrous eyes.

The missile (heti), however, is feminine.

The conch-shell (śaṁkha), which is blown for battle-cry, is a man, with lustrous white as body-colour and with beautiful eyes.

The war-flag (dhvaja) is a strong man, yellow-complexioned and with wide open mouth. According to this text, the weapons must be represented as resting on the shoulders of the weapon-person ('skandha-lagnam'), held by the two hands.



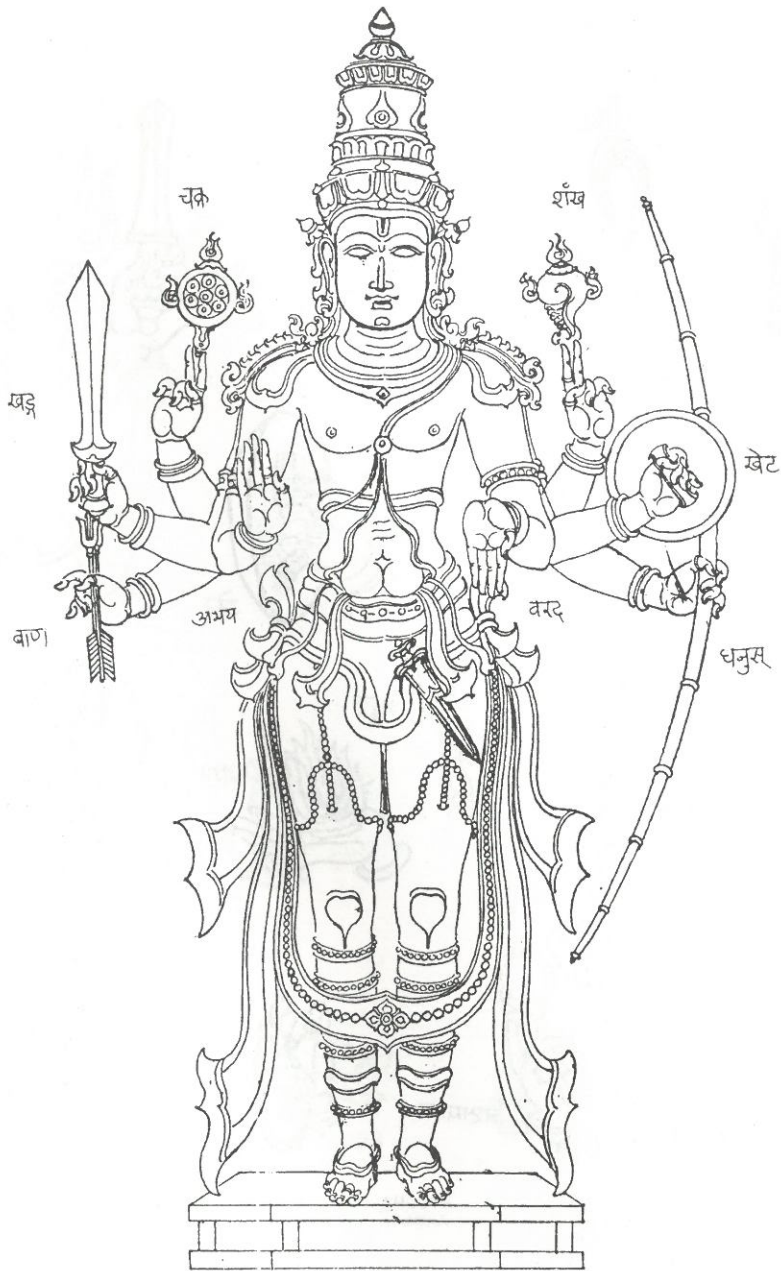
The most important and picturesque among the weapon-persons in the Śaiva iconography is the 'Pāśupatāstra' (which was presented by Śiva to Arjuna. This is pictured as having four faces, and three eyes on each face. It has four arms, carrying the weapon known as Śakti, conch-shell (śaṁkha), sword (khaḍga) and mallet (mudgara). It is seated in the lotus posture (padmāsana). The faces must be terrible looking, with fangs in the mouth, hair standing on end and mustacheoed.

However, the iconic representation of personified weapons is most often illustrated by the two weapons of Viṣṇu the masculine discus (Chakra-purusha or Sudarśana) and the feminine mace (Gadā-devi or Kaumodaki). Both of

them are stylized, and occur frequently in the Gupta sculptures in North India. Viṣṇu is seen in these sculptures as placing his hands upon these two attendant-divinities, who are represented as two-armed and in various postures. Gadādevi is usually standing, while the Chakra-purusha is sometimes

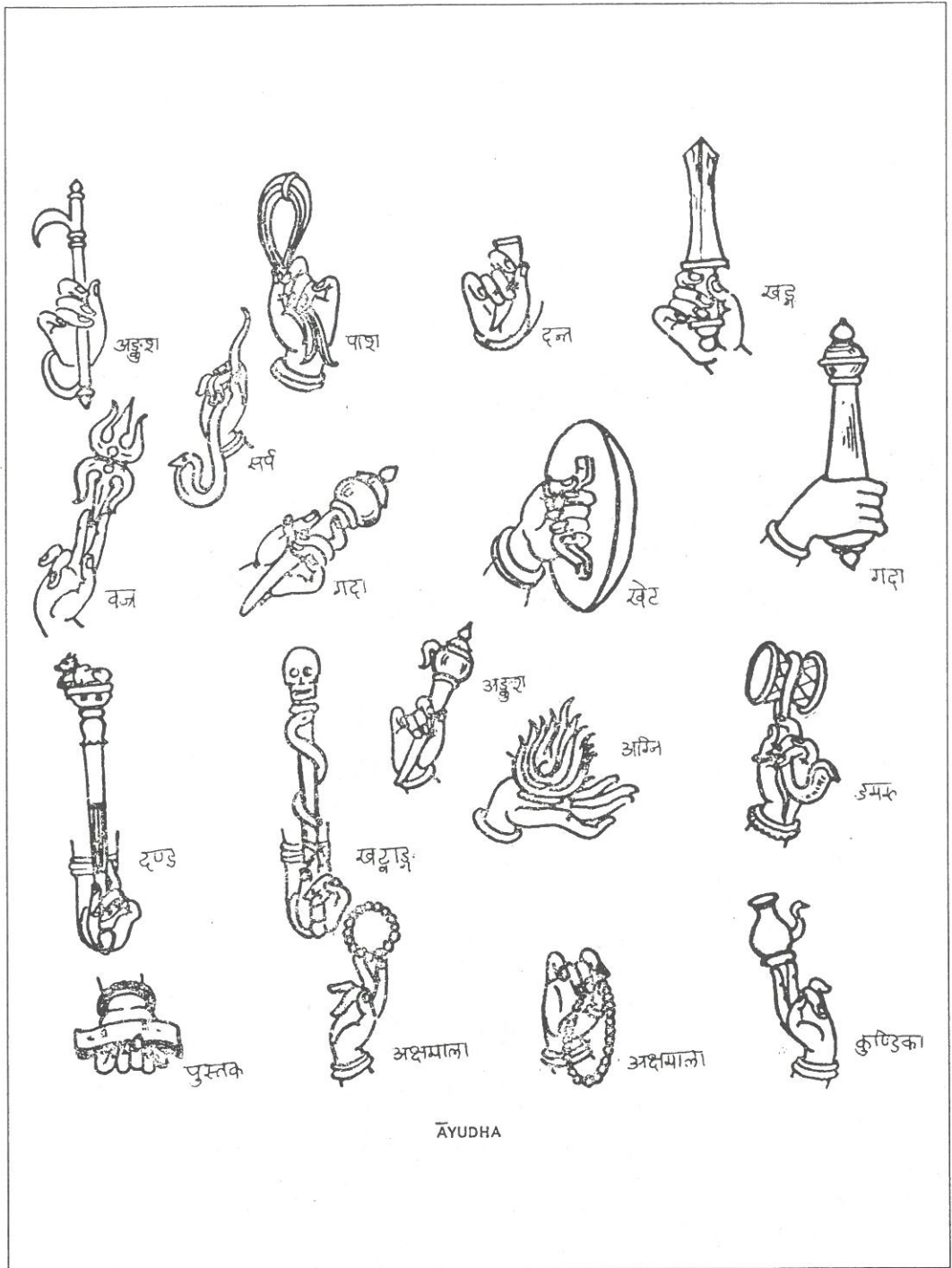
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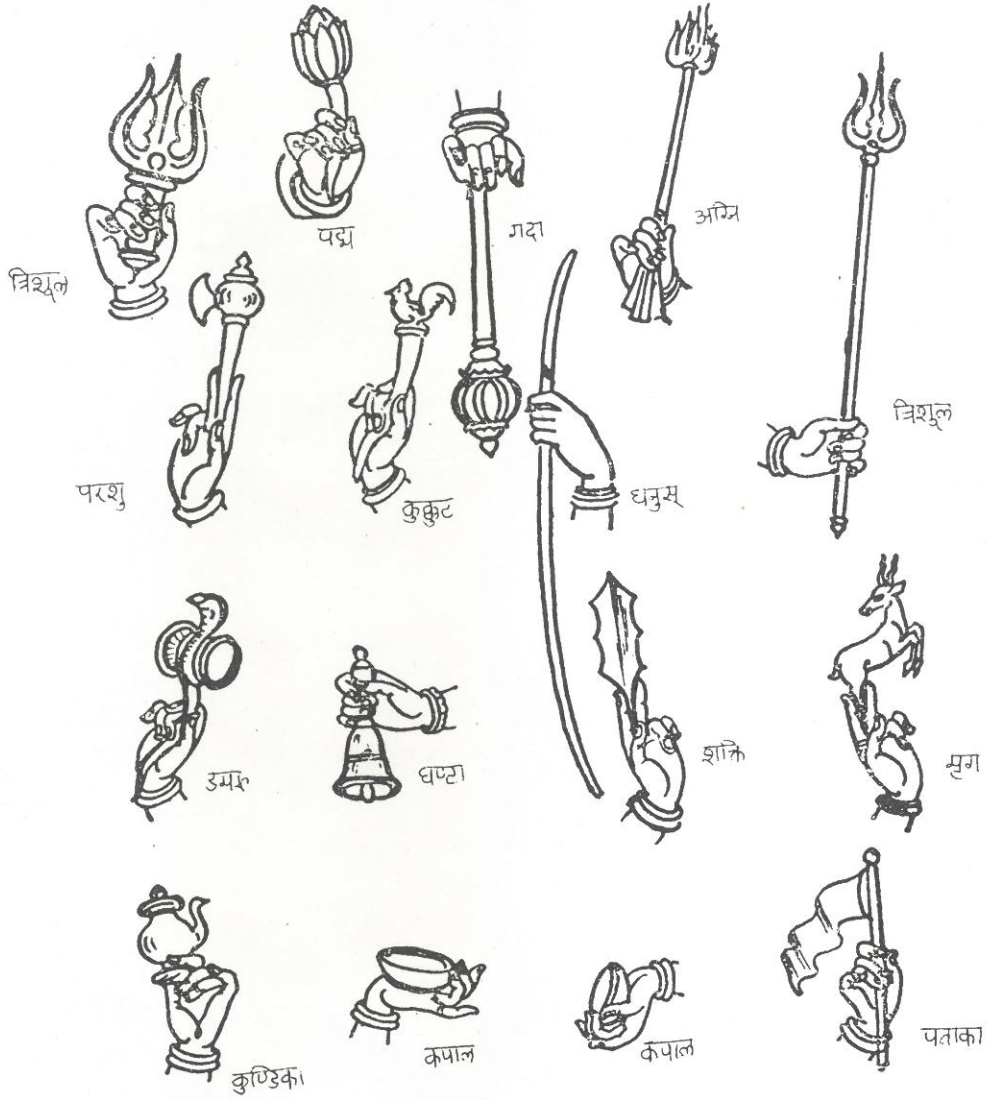




ASHTA-BHUJA VISHṆU (Stone, Devaṛājaswāmī temple, Kanchipuram)







ĀYUDHA

