CHAPTER – 2

VAIŚṆAVA CENTRES IN MADHYA PRADESH AND CHHATTISGARH [c.A.D. 600-1000]

Events in history are basically dealt as phenomena. Every important development starts in the fertile ground of socio-economic background of the period occasionally coupled with the process of rise and development of state system. Vaiśnavism or Vaiśnava religion has a long history in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. It dates back to the 2nd century B.C. as has been described in the previous chapter. The process of rise and development often works simultaneously in different parts. However, two segments of a society or two regions of a state need not also be at the same level of development. Thus, Vaiśnavism did have different forms and channels of development in different parts of erstwhile Madhya Pradesh.

The immediate background for the study of Vaiśnavism in the region is represented by the period of Gupta rulers. The Gupta rulers adopted the title of ‘Parama-Bhāgavata’ in their inscriptions\(^1\). Among the Gupta period temples, Daśāvatara temple at Deogarh is one of the earliest Vaiśnava temples in India. However, the term ‘Vaiśnava’ was for the first time used in the inscriptions of Pāṇḍuvamsī rulers. The ‘Vaiśnavism’ of this period was different from the ‘Bhāgavatism’ of the Guptas. This will be more evident as I explain the different forms and the centres of Vaiśnavism in the succeeding pages.

In the first half of this period (c.A.D.600-1000), Chhattisgarh region of erstwhile Madhya Pradesh saw the advent of Vaiśnavism. Strikingly enough I do not find any inscription or new monuments relating to Viṣṇu and his incarnations in northern Madhya Pradesh.

This period is noticeable for the rise of local dynasties in Chhattisgarh region. The

mighty Gupta Empire had vanished and the rule of the Imperial Pratihāras was still to come. The minor powers were trying to establish independent state system in the Chhattisgarh region. Keeping in view the small territory and limited resources of these dynasties, it is quite possible that they would not resort to large scale making of big temples or monuments. This seems to have been the case initially, for big temple complexes came to be built only towards the end of 7th century A.D. or beginning of 8th century A.D.

The history of any event cannot be traced in the domains of the political development alone. But the main sources for the history of ancient period are inscriptions and archaeological materials. The texts being subject to several interpolations cannot be relied upon solely. The inscriptions are mostly written by the orders of the kings and their officials. Quite a few inscriptions are written by the local people. Even they refer to the reign of one or the other king. As regards the archaeological material, for this research temples and sculptures are the main source for construction of history of Vaiṣṇavism. Mostly those archaeological materials survive the onslaught of time, which were preserved by the kings or the richer section of the societies. This does not mean that history of Vaiṣṇavism is only linked to the affluent section of the society, but we do not have ample evidence for the other parts. Seeing the scanty evidence I have chosen to start with the inscriptions and archaeological materials related to different dynasties. With the help of these I have tried to locate the social links of Vaiṣṇavism and their implications.

I

The political history of the Chhattisgarh region is in darkness before the rise of the Śarabhapuriyas about the close of the 5th century A.D. or early 6th century A.D. The Śarabhapuriya rulers were Vaiṣṇavas. They took the epithet of ‘Parama Bhāgavata’ in their inscriptions\(^2\). The Śarabhapuriyas were the feudatory of the Guptas. The first ruler of the dynasty is described as meditating on the foot of the Paramabhaṭṭāraka (Gupta ruler). Samudragupta defeated the Kośala ruler Mahendra during his campaign. After some time Śarabhapuriya rulers rose on the horizon. They put

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\(^2\) Shastri, A.M., 'Kurud Plates of Narendra, Year 21', Inscriptions of the Śarabhapuriyas, Pāṇḍuvaimśins Somavahṃśins, pt. II., Delhi 1995, pp. 8-11
Map II: Vaisnava Centres (Temple Sites) in Chhattisgarh [600 A.D.-1000A.D.]
Gajalakṣmī symbol on their inscriptions. The seal of the inscriptions shows Lakṣmī standing on a lotus, with two elephants pouring water over her from pitchers held in their upraised trunks.

The very first inscription of Sarabhapurīya dynasty discovered from Chhattisgarh (Pipradula, in Raipur district) refers to the reign of Narendra dated in the regnal year 3, Mārgaśīrṣa 10. It refers to the first half of 6th century A.D. The king is not taking any Bhāgavata epithet. The village Śarkarāpadraka in the Nandapura bhoga was donated by Rāhudeva to the brāhmaṇ Svāmīpa. The name of bhoga depicts some kind of Vaiṣṇava affiliation. This name might have been in vogue during the reign of the Guptas, which was retained. The names of the viṣayas are retained in spite of the change of the dynasties in the region. The grant was issued from Śarabhapura, which was evidently the capital of the region at that time.

The next inscription found from Kurud in Raipur district calls the king as Paramabhāgavata showing the Vaiṣṇava affiliation of the dynasty. The village Keśavaka was donated to the brāhmaṇ Śaṅkhasvāmin, the son of Bhāśratasvāmin. It was already donated by Paramabhattārarakapāda (refering to Gupta ruler to whom the Sarabhapuriyas owed allegiance initially). The palm leaf charter was burnt in a conflagration in the donee's house. King Narendra after ascertaining by the official investigation that the village was in continuous possession of the donee, confirmed the grant by means of a copper plate charter. Here the name of the donee and the village points towards Vaiṣṇava affiliation. The village Keśavaka has been identified with modern village of Keshwa on the bank of nullah known as Keshawnala, some 5.5 miles to south east of Mahasamund, the headquarter of the tehsil of the same name in Raipur district. This village falls into Cullādasīma bhoga, which has been identified with modern village Charoda, about 7 miles east of Keshaw.

The same village was donated by king Sudevarāja to karāṇika brāhmaṇ Kansippasvāmin. According to Sirpur Plates of Mahāsudevarāja the purpose of the

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3 Ibid, 'Pipardula Plates of Narendra, Year 3', pp. 5-7.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid, 'Kurud Plates of Narendra, Yr.24', pp. 8-11.
inscription is to record the grant of the village mentioned above formerly made by one Nanna in favour of Kansippasvāmin. The inscription belongs to later half of 6th century A.D. Sudevarāja is the grandson of Narendra.

Here I would like to throw some light on the form of Vaiṣṇavism prevalent in the region. As I have shown elsewhere the region has some sort of acquaintance with Vaiṣṇavism during Gupta rule. There was already a temple of Śrīdharasvāmin at Vaṭapadra in the Raipur district. Rawan Plates of Narendra refer to the donation of village Torāmaka in the Mantarāja Bhukti to the temple of the said god for meeting the expenditure of the bali-caru offerings and the free feeding house, which was evidently attached to the temple. Since the ruler Narendra is the first known ruler of the Śarabhapuriya dynasty, this temple might have been created by Gupta rulers or their feudatories. As a free feeding house was attached to it, it may have had some sphere of influence, which encouraged the ruler to donate land for it. This is the only known Vaiṣṇava temple of the Śarabhapuriya period. The prefix ‘Śrī’ shows that some form of Lakṣmī or Śrī dominated Vaiṣṇava religion was prevalent in the region. Even the engraver of the Pipardula plates of Narendra is named as Śrīdatta. The name of the village donated is Nandapura, again showing the influence of Vaiṣṇava religion, till that time called as Bhāgavatism.

Dhamtari plates of Sudevarāja record the donation of the village Khalapadraka in the Ḍakarī bhoga to one Mādhavasvāmin. Dhamtari is a village in Raipur district in Chhattsisgarh. Khalapadraka has been identified as modern Khalari in Raipur district. The name Mādhavasvāmin denotes the presence of Vaiṣṇavas in this place as early as later half of 6th century A.D.

The presence of Vaiṣṇava brāhmīns and donation of land grants to them is evident in Raigadh district of Chhattisgarh too. Kauvatal plates of Sudevarāja records the donation of village Sunikā situated in Hakiri bhoga in favour of Bhaṭṭa Purandarasvāmin. The place names have yet to be identified but they do fall in

Raigadh district, the provenance of the copper plates.

The same Brähmin was granted village Āśādhaka in Tūndaráṣṭra in Thakurdiya plates of Pravararāja, son and successor of Sudevarāja. This indicates the importance of this Vaišnava Brähmin in Raigadh district of Chhattisgarh. Thakurdiya also falls in the same district. Tūndaráṣṭra has been identified with modern village Tunda near Sheorinarayan, 25-30 miles from Thakurdiya, the find spot of the inscription.

Sarangarh plates of Sudevarāja record the confirmation by the king to the grant of village Cullanḍarakara included in the Tūndarakara bhukti by the chief queen and other members of the royal family. It was granted to a number of brāhmanas namely Bhāskarasvāmin, Prabhakarasvāmin, Babbarisvāmin, Botasvāmin, Dattasvāmin, Viṣṇusvāmin, Phalgusvāmin, Kirttisvāmin and Śaṅkarasvāmin. Of all the brāhmanas mentioned here, the name of Viṣṇusvāmin figures in early two grants given by Jayarāja and Sudevarāja in Kalahandi district of Orissa. This brähmin may have risen into prominence over a period of time and acquired land in Sarangarh in Raigadh district along with lands in Kalahandi district of Orissa. However the presence of Śaiva brähmin was also noted in the name of Śankarasvāmin.

Bilaspur district has the inscription referring to the presence of Vaišnavaism in this region: Mallar plates of Pravararāja records the grant of village Mitragrāmaka in Śankhacakra bhoga to one brähmin named as Śubhacandrasvāmin, the son of Dāmodaragana. It was given in the same year as that of Thakurdiya grant. The name of the bhoga and that of the father of the donee points towards the Vaišnava affiliation of the same. The two places village and the district could not be identified satisfactorily, but they in all likelihood fall into the Bilaspur district.

Lastly the presence of Vaišnava brāhmins in Chhattisgarh can also be deduced from a stray Śarabhapuriya grant found from Rajim in Raipur district. It is a fragmentary grant recording the donation of village Dandacakra to Dikṣita Anantasvāmin. Date

and name of the king is lost. But it is certainly later than Mallar plates of Jayarāja. So
it can be placed in later half of 6th century A.D. The name of the brāhmiṇḍ points to his
Vaiṣṇava affiliation.

Thus the Śarabhapuriya rulers used Vaiṣṇava symbols and donated lands to Vaiṣṇava
brāhmiṇḍs though there was no dearth of donation of lands to Śaiva brāhmiṇḍs by any
means. Sometimes the place/village is named after the name of the Viṣṇu like ‘Keśavaka’16
in Kurud plates of Narendra and ‘Śaṅkhasakrabhoga’17 in Mallar Plates of Pravararāja. Apart from these symbols of Vaiṣṇava affiliation, Śarabhapuriya rulers
refrain from large-scale construction of temples. It was left for the coming dynasties.

This period in Chhattisgarh region may be called as period of symbolic Vaiṣṇavism.
In place of making large-scale temples the adherence to Vaiṣṇavism was restricted to
adoption of Vaiṣṇava symbols on inscriptions and Vaiṣṇava names of villages,
viṣayās and people.

The engravers of the inscriptions were invariably Suvarnakāras or the Akṣāśālikas.
Mallar Plates of Mahājayarāja18 provide the first reference, in the Chhattisgarh region,
which depicts Acalasimha as the engraver. In a previous plate he has been mentioned
as suvarnakāra. And this inscription onwards a special line was added, which
continued till the Pāṇḍuvamśin rule.

"Agnera patyam prathamam suvarnam bhūrvvaiṣṇavī sūryasutāsca gāvah.

Lokāstraya stena bhavantri dattāḥ.

Ya kāñcanaṁ gāńca mahińca dadyā ditt"19

Fleet20 gives the translation of this text as: "Gold is the first offspring of fire; the earth
belongs to (the god) Viṣṇu; and cows are the daughters of the sun; therefore the three
worlds are given by him who gives gold, a cow and land".

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16 Ibid, 'Kurud Plates of Narendra, Yr.24', p. 10.
17 Ibid, 'Mallar Plates of Pravararaja, Yr. 3', pp. 56-58.
19 Ibid, v.4.
20 Fleet, J.F.,'Arang Copper Plate Inscription of the Raja Maha Jayaraja', CII, Vol. III, p.195,lines
17-18.
This line became the guiding formulae for the future inscriptions. This might have been the liberty the engravers initially took to explain the merit of protecting donation.

The purpose of emphasizing this aspect is to make it clear that goldsmiths were influential social groups during this period. However it is quite erroneous to suggest that *suvarnakāras* or the goldsmiths were *bhāgavatas* as nowhere do they show their religious affinity not even in their names. When the Pāṇḍuvamśins took over the reigns from the Šarabhapuriyas, the practice of keeping goldsmiths as engravers was continued. However towards the reign of Šivagupta Bālādityya, when the ruler declared himself in unequivocal terms as *Paramamāheśvara*, this practice was dropped. Not only the engravers came from a different occupational category but they took Śaiva names as well. This will be depicted further in the chapter.

After a brief interval of the Amarārya-*kula* in Chhattisgarh region, the Pāṇḍuvamśins occupied the territory. They too had goldsmiths as their engravers. However these rulers called themselves as ‘*Paramamāheśvara*’ in their inscriptions. The period of symbolic Vaiṣṇavism was still not over but the presence of Śaivism was being felt in Chhattisgarh. The Bilaspur district appears to be more acquainted with Śaivism as most of their Śaiva inscriptions are found from this region.

II

The Pāṇḍuvamśins of South Kosala belongs to the śaśi-*kula* or lunar race according to the Lakhneswar Temple (Kharod) inscription of Indrabala. And within the lunar race the dynasty traced its origin from the Pāṇḍavas. The Arang Stone Inscription of the time of Nannarāja I, for instance, states that Udayana was born of the Pāṇḍuvamśa.

The Arang stone inscription though refers to the worship of Sugata (Buddha), it compares son of Udayana (whose name is lost) with Kṛṣṇa in verses 17 and 18.

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It is said that 'by associating himself with the gentle (Akrūra), possessing an army that frightened enemies, raising himself after dispelling the terrible fear of hell, and frequently causing the annihilation of the adversaries while attending upon his elder brother Bala (Indrabala according to Keilhorn) he looked like Kṛṣṇa who was associated with Akrūra, carried a wheel (cakra) inspiring fear in the minds of the adversaries, raised himself up after putting an end to the fear from the demon Naraka and attended upon his elder brother Balarāma'.

With the arrival of Pāṇḍuvamśin rulers Vaiṣṇavism entered the phase of assertive Vaiṣṇavism from the phase of symbolic Vaiṣṇavism of the Śarabhapurīya rulers. The big Vaiṣṇava temples were constructed in Chhattisgarh. However towards the end of this though this period Vaiṣṇavism started losing ground to Śaivism in Chhattisgarh. Later on it was patronized by Pratihāras and Candellas under whom it reached its high water mark in some parts of Madhya Pradesh.

Udayana, the first member of the family of Pāṇḍuvamśin rulers ruled over a principality including Kālañjara and the adjoining areas. He had two sons – Indrabala and one whose name is lost. Indrabala succeeded his father Udayana. He is generally identified with Mahāsāmanta Indrabalaraja, who according to Dhamatari and Kauvatal plates occupied the office of Sarvādhikrdhikṛta under the Śarabhapuriya ruler Sudevarāja. Nanna I succeeded Indrabala. Mahāśiva Tīvara, whose inscription is the first to be found from this area, was the son of Nanna.

The Pāṇḍuvamśin rulers continued the practice of putting Vaiṣṇavite symbols on their
seals like their predecessors. Their seals have the images of Garuda, cakra and Śankha inscribed on them. The first inscription of this dynasty invoking Viśnu came from Bonda issued by Mahāśiva Tīvara. Bonda is a village in Sarangarh tahsil of Raigarh district in Chhattisgarh lying on the left bank of river Mahanadi. A circular bronze seal is affixed to the inscription, which contains a figure of seated Garuda with outstretched wings and holding nāgas, Śankha and cakra. The king Tīvara is stated to have been a ParamaVaiṣṇava instead of the Gupta period fame Paramabhāgavata.

Dated in the fifth regnal year of the king, the inscription probably belongs to the last quarter of the 7th century A.D. The charter was issued from Śripura for the religious merit of the king himself and his parents. The gift land was granted in favour of 25 brāhmanas. Among the brāhmanas Avanti-Vikrama-Opādhyāya and Lāṭaphalihāsvāmin may belong to Avanti (near Ujjain) and Lāṭa (Nausari-Broach area of Gujarat) respectively. Apart from them, some of the brāhmanas may have had Vaiṣṇava affiliation as it appears from their names – Madhusūdana Opādhyāya, Viṣṇughosa Opādhyāya, Śridhara-bhutasvāmin, Yorāṅa-Viṣṇubhavasvāmin, Gopendrasvāmin, etc. Indrabala, the grandfather of Tīvaradeva is said to have obtained the lordship of the entire Kośala country – “prāpta sakalako(ṣa)ladhipatyaḥ”.

It may be possible that along with Kośala country the Pāṇḍuvarāṣṇin rulers inherited the tradition of Vaiṣṇava worship. A more clear reference to the king claiming superiority on the basis of Vaiṣṇava affiliation comes from the Adbhar Plates of Mahānannarāja. Adbhar is about 40 miles from Bilaspur in Sakti tahsil of Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh. In this inscription there is a reference to Mahāśiva Tīvararāja as being exalted and graced by the God Nārāyana.

“anekajanamāntarādhitā bhagavannārāyaṇabhāṭṭārakāpāda prasādāsādita”.

The inscription records the grant of a village Koṭinīka (Kathakoni or Kotami about 12 miles from Adbhar) situated in Aśṭadvāra viṣaya to a, bhāgavata brāhmaṇa Nārāyana Opādhyāya.

30 Sircar, D.C., 'Bonda Plates of Mahāśiva Tivara, Yr.5', EI, Vol. 34, pp. 111-116.
31 Shastri, A.M., 'Bonda Plates of Tivaradeva, Yr.5', Inscriptions of the Śarabhapurīyas, pt. II, line 16-17, p. 103.
One major landmark in the development and spread of Vaisnnavism in this part of Chhatisgarh is the site of Sirpur, which has yielded the Sirpur Stone Inscription of the time of Mahāśiva Gupta34. The area from where the inscription has been found is a complex of temple sites of which the only standing temple is the Lakṣmaṇa temple according to Rai Bahadur Hiralal. The ruins in and around the village indicate that it was one major center. There are many temples the identification of which is now rendered impossible due to the removal of the idols they contained. These idols are carried to a place near the brick temple.

Sirpur is a small village on the right bank of Mahanadi in the Mahsamund tahsil of Raipur district. Sirpur Stone Inscription (undated; probably 8th or 9th century A.D.) records the construction of the temple of Hari by Vāṣaṭa, mother of Mahāśivagupta. It was constructed as the abode of Viṣṇu, where the deceased husband of Vāṣaṭa lived worshipping the deity who was imperishable (Acyuta).

Tayā-nijah pretya patiryathāvidhe vasatyasau nityamupāsitācyutaḥ prakāśitaṁ
ṭādrśam=eva-kāritam vibhoridam dhāma hareḥ sanātanam35.

For the maintenance of the temple, five villages were granted – Karapadraka (Kulapadar, 15 miles southeast of Sirpur), Varagullaka (Gullu, 10 miles southwest of Sirpur), Madhuvedha (Madhuban, 4 miles from Turenga), Vanapadra (near Sirpur) and Nalipadra. An alms house (sattra) was also attached to the temple. The villages were divided into four shares, three of which were to be reserved for the maintenance of the alms house and for the support of the servants attached to the sanctuary. The fourth share was divided into fifteen parts, of which twelve were to be enjoyed by a corresponding number of brāhmaṇas fully conversant with the Vedas. The remaining three parts were to be enjoyed by a sacrificial priest (viprah punyah vācakah) and two bhāgavata brāhmaṇas- Vāmana and Śrīdhara.

The inscription begins with an invocation of Puruṣottama (Viṣṇu). The first three verses are devoted to the praise of Trivikrama and Nṛsimha incarnation. There is also

a reference to *Kamsanisūdana* (killer of *Karna* i.e. *Krṣṇa*. For the first time there is a reference to the Kalki *Avatāra* of *Viśṇu*. There appears to be a pun on the name of *Krṣṇa* being played here. *Krṣṇa* is described as the one who took deceptive forms for destroying enemies, who was born black (*Krṣṇa*) on this (earth) and who again becomes sinful in future (Kalki). That Hari could not stand comparison with him (king) who kills his enemies without practicing any deception–

\[
yah pradvesavatām vadhāya vikṛtirāstāḥya mā(y)āmayoh krṣṇo
\]
\[
(yova)tarannaṁbhūdih sa khalvāvyaṁjālaṁnadvīṣaḥ.
\]
\[
Nāśodeva samo harirdhavalatāmātyantikāṁ bibhrato
\]
\[
yasyākalkamaterna cāpi bhavitā Kalkā bhavisyanpunaḥ.\]

**Candragupta**, the grand father of the king Śivagupta has been compared with Krṣṇa and his elder brother with *Balarāma* in this inscription. However it shows Candragupta worshipping lord of goblins i.e. Śiva.

Senkapat Inscription of Mahāśivagupta\(^3^7\) describes him as a Śaiva, although his mother Vāsāṭa was a Vaiśṇava devotee and so was his father, who was described as *upāsita cyutaḥ* (by whom Viśṇu was worshipped).

The *Lakśmanā* temple\(^3^8\) found at Sirpur is the most well preserved temple. It is a brick temple standing on a large wall built of stone platform. Carved on the lintel is a large figure of Viśṇu reclining on folds of serpent Śesa, the whole scene representing the birth of Brahmā. The Vaiśṇava dedication of the temple is proved by the carvings on the sanctum doorway of the Vaiśṇava incarnations as well as the representation of Śeṣaśāyī Viśṇu on the *lalāṭabimba* and is corroborated by epigraphical evidence (Sirpur Stone Inscription), coupled by its traditional name of Lakṣmanā temple. In 1872 Mr. James Bagler first time called it Lakṣmanā temple\(^3^9\). In 1903, the inscription was discovered. The *maṇḍapa* of the temple is broken. The remains of brick pillars are found. The

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\(^3^9\) Courtesy ASI, Raipur, Chhattisgarh.
doorframe is made of stone. The sanctum is empty. Three images brought from somewhere are kept inside. One image has the snake canopy over it. This may allude to Lakṣmaṇa being the incarnation of Śesa, which gave this temple the name 'Lakṣmaṇa temple'. There is a headless figure of Viṣṇu kept in the nearby store. The figure is made up of granite. It has four hands, all of which are broken. The sculpture bears svastika mark and sacred thread. Probably this was the main deity of this temple. There is an image of Nṛsimha in the store made up of black stone belonging to 8th-9th century A.D.

The doorway of the sanctum represents Vaiṣṇava incarnations, Kṛṣṇa līlā scenes and other mythological scenes in the panels. Matsya avatāra, Bhū-Varāha, Nṛsimha and Rāma avatāra and Hayagrīva are represented among the Vaiṣṇava incarnations, while scenes of Kāliya-damana, defeat of Kaṁsa wrestlers, Kaṁsavadha, Keśivadha etc. are depicted among the episodes from Kṛṣṇa's life. The doorway introduces a large composition in relief depicting incarnations and other scenes, which exhibit developed iconography but lack simple vigour and charm of the Gupta sculptural art. The absence of Ganga and Yamuna figures from the Kṛṣṇalīlā scenes further assigns a later Gupta date to this temple.

The Varāha panel on doorway resembles the classic Varāha of Udayagiri caves in pose and general treatment and in depicting Varuṇa on one side paying homage to him. However some differences are there. Here the Varāha is eight armed instead of two armed as in Udayagiri. Bhūdevī is seated in the air with her right foot on a lotus stalk held in the hand of a nāgī on the proper left. The right hand of the devī is against the left arm of the god. Instead of Ganga and Yamuna, a nāgī on each side is paying homage to Varāha. Śesanāga is represented in full human form. The Lakṣmaṇa temple is architecturally important in representing a transition from the Gupta temples to the early medieval temples of North India.

Sirpur has a Rāmacandra temple also. It is a brick temple situated at two furlong from the Lakṣmaṇa temple. It has lost its superstructure, door frame and most of the

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41 Meister, Dhaky and Krishna Deva, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture, Foundation of the North Indian Style*, p. 236.
north and east walls. Ornamentation of the temple bears clear resemblance to the Lakṣmanā temple (architecturally belonging to the same period – 8th-9th century A.D.). This is one of the earliest star-shaped temples\(^{42}\). A nearby mound after excavation has revealed a residential complex. Three chambers have been found here. They may have been used for restoration or meditation purpose. The middle chamber is plastered which may have had some specific purpose (not clear as yet). One of the other two chambers is more than 20ft deep. This site has yielded iron antiquity and Ganeśā plank too. One Raikhera pond is beside the site, which according to Archaeological Survey of India, Raipur, is as old as the site. Bones of animals have been found from the place, which show cut mark on them. Could this have been a Śaiva or Śākta temple?

Mahāyāna Buddhism also flourished in Sirpur almost at the same time. Excavations at Sirpur have brought to light two brick temples, both dedicated to Buddha\(^{43}\)(roughly belonging to the period of Mahāśīvagupta, 7th century A.D.). The doorframe of these monasteries yielded sculptures akin to the Vaiṣṇava or Śaiva temples. Perhaps sculptors of these monasteries were so much acquainted with the Hindu temple architecture that they followed the same pattern in the Buddhist monasteries also. There is a monastery for the lady monks on this site. One of the monasteries depicts the Pañcatantra story of the clever fox and the dumb crow. However these Buddhist establishments soon disappeared. Not long after the Pāṇḍuvarṇa dynasty, a people of Śaiva faith, according to M.G. Dikshit, occupied the Buddhist monasteries of Sirpur\(^{44}\). By that time many Buddhist images were beheaded. No satisfactory explanation has come forward for this act.

The Śaiva sites soon outnumbered the places so far attached to the Vaiṣṇava religion. Śīvagupta Bāḷārjuna was the first important ruler to show the inclination towards Śaivism. He donated lands for the maintenance of a Śaiva monastery. In the Lodhia Plates of Śīvagupta Bāḷārjuna\(^{45}\), he granted village to the god Isānesvara Śiva. The god was enshrined in the temple at Pattana Khadira tāla. The land was donated for the

\(^{42}\)Courtesy ASI, Raipur, Chhattisgarh.

\(^{43}\)Dikshit, M.G. and Barret, Douglas, Temples at Mukhalingam; Sirpur and Rajim, Bombay, 1960.

\(^{44}\)Ibid.

offerings of bali, caru, and naivedya, maintenance of feeding house (sattra), dance and instrumental music as well as repairs and maintenance of the temple at the request of the holy illustrious Sulapāñi, the disciple of holy illustrious Prathamācārya. The later ācārya hailed from the celebrated penance, Pānicajanya groove situated in the Dvaiatavana. The inscription belongs to later half of 8th century A.D. The place name, Khadira tāla has been identified with Khirapali in Raigarh district.

This place might have had Śaiva temple in existence to which the king made donations. And a group of Śaiva Ācāryas was already in existence at this place under whose influence this grant was made. As shown above these Ācāryas migrated from far off places. Soon the Śaiva Ācāryas grew in number and in influence. Whether it hastened the decline of Vaiṣṇavism will be a question of further investigation. I will try to throw some light on it later on.

III

The next dynasty, which falls in the first half of the period c. A.D. 600-1000, is the Nala dynasty. Nala kings seem to have established themselves in Raipur district sometime after Mahāśivagupta. Bhavadattavarman was the first ruler46. They seem to have had their base in the Bastar – Koraput region during the 6th and early 7th century A.D. They probably filled the vacuum after the decline of the Pāṇḍuvamśins towards the close of the 7th century A.D.

The only known inscription of this dynasty is found from Rajim and is of the king Vilāsatuṅga attached to the temple of Rājīvalocana47. Rajim is a well-known Vaiṣṇava centre, which flourished in the Chhattisgarh region. It is a holy place situated 28miles south by east of Raipur. The undated inscription is considered to be of the middle of 8th century A.D. Nalas who hailed from the eastern border of Bastar with their capital at Pushkar extended their power to Vidarbha. This inscription mentions three members of the ruling Nala family – Prthvirāja, Virupākṣa and Vilāsatuṅga.

46 Meister, Dhaky and Krishna Deva, Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture, Foundation of the North Indian Style, pp. 224-225.
47 Mirashi, V.V., 'Rajim Stone Inscription of the Nala King Vilasatunga', EI, Vol. 26, pp. 49-58.
The object of the inscription is to record the construction of the Viśṇu temple by the king. It is incised on a slab of stone, which is built into the left wall of the temple of Rājīvalocana. The inscription may have opened with the invocation of Viśṇu (upper portion is broken). Another verse invokes Varāha avatāra, while the fourth verse is in the form of a dialogue between Hari and Lakṣmī. The next verse invokes the Vāmana avatāra as Bali-śrī-nihanta. As already mentioned Rajim is a pilgrim centre. Consisting of a group of several temples, it still attracts thousands of pilgrims every year and is held in great veneration by the local people.

Rājīvalocana temple is of Pañcāyatana type. The main temple is surrounded by four subsidiary shrines namely Badrīnātha (Viśṇu), Vāmana, Varāha and Nṛsimha⁴⁸. The main temple of Rājīvalocana contains a black stone image of Viśṇu with usual symbols of mace (gada), discus (cakra), conch shell (Śankha) and the lotus (kamala). The temple has undergone three to four successive changes. The first one is roughly corresponding to the Śarabhāpurīya period. Large number of records in shell character is found here. It may have been possible that during Śarabhāpurīya period some structure was there, which was enlarged, renovated and dedicated to Viśṇu id Pāñduvamśin period. In the Pāñduvamśin period, the top of the lintel of the doorway was devoted to a sculpture of Garuda, the vehicle of Viśṇu with attendant ganas and musicians. The third time it was renovated by a Kalacuri king Jayasimha⁴⁹. During the Pāñduvamśin period, the Anantaśayana image of Viśṇu with Garuḍa at the base was added to the shrine.

Of the subsidiary shrines, the image of Nṛsimha is first from left. Here the ferocious God is shown tearing the belly of the demon. The image of the Badrīnātha (mentioned as such by M.G. Dikshit and also locally called as) is a black stone image of Yoganārāyaṇa. The two upper hands are carrying Śaṅkha and cakra and the lower hands are in yoga - mudrā. The Vāmana image is pot bellied, and is a carrying kamanḍala. The sculptures of Bali and Śukrācārya are also found beside the God. The Varāha image is carrying Prthvī on his left shoulder and holding cakra. The right lower hand of the God is resting on his thigh. The image of Trivikrama is found between the Nṛsimha and the Badrīnātha shrines. This is an unusual treatment of a

⁴⁸ Dikshit, M.G., Sirpur and Rajim Temples, pp. 27-32.
⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 32.
familiar subject. In this figure, Ādiśeṣa is in the act of paying obeisance to the standing figure of Viṣṇu. Trivikrama whose right leg is lifted high, shown crushing the ugly face of Brahmāṇḍa. A mutilated image of Varāha is found on the outer wall of the temple. Inside the temple a life size image of Varāha is shown carrying the earth goddess and gadā in his two left hands. An image of Nṛśimha is also there. Other figures include Jaya – Vijaya, the Vaiṣṇava dvārapālas, Garuḍa with folded hands, etc. The lalātabimba carries the image of Garuḍāsīna Viṣṇu.

The Rāmacandra temple³⁰ is situated near the Rājivalocana temple. Like the latter it has undergone several structural changes. The first one was constructed during the Pāṇḍuvamśin period, and then repaired by Jayasimha of the Kalacuris of Ratanpur. The sculptures inside the temple include Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, Nṛvarāha and the Garuḍa on the door. However the doorframe points towards Śaiva affiliation. The lalātabimba shows the figure of Ganeśa.

The Chhattisgarh region continued to show some places of Vaiṣṇava affiliation even towards the end of my research period (c. A.D.600-1300) as will be shown in my next chapter.

IV

In the later half of this sub-period (c.A.D.600-1000), Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh region witnessed the emergence of a number of kings contesting for power. The multiple kingdoms with different nuclei of authority grew quite close to each other. In such a scenario, it was not unusual for them to seek support of religion to have a greater claim to supremacy. In this connection, it is to be kept in mind that by this time all the parts of Madhya Pradesh had experienced the statehood and perhaps the resource bases of the kingdoms had considerably expanded. It seems probable that vying for superior claims of legitimacy was the guiding factor behind the construction of temples in this period by the rulers and other groups.

It was also the period of high water mark in construction of Vaiṣṇava temples in

³⁰ Dikshit, M.G., Sirpur and Rajim Temples, pp. 27-32.
Map III: Vaiṣṇava Centres (Temple Sites) in Madhya Pradesh [600 A.D.-1000 A.D.]

Not according to scale
Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Several beautiful and high temples were constructed by the rulers of this region. Vaiṣṇavism saw the reign of prosperity and expansion for some time.

The time span of the later half of this sub-period (c A.D. 600-1000) coincides with the mature and late phase of the rule of the Imperial Pratihāras and their adherence (or non-adherence, as the case may be) to the Vaiṣṇava religion.

The Imperial Pratihāras were gaining strength in the early years of 8th century A.D.51. Nāgabhatta was the founder of the royal line. Avanti was the home territory of the dynasty. The Pratihāras traced their genealogy from the mythical Lakṣmana. Just as Lakṣmana was the doorkeeper of Rāma, the Pratihāras, too were the doorkeeper of the world.

\[\text{Saumitrivistāva daṇḍah pratiharana-vidheryah pratihiśra āsīt}\\ Tad vamśe pratihiśra ketana-bhṛti ttrailokya-raks-āspade devo\\ Nāgabhaṭṭaḥ purātana-muner mūttir-vva(ddha)bhiiv ādbhutam}^{52}\]

i.e. ‘all praise unto his (Rāma) younger brother, Lakṣmana (Saumittri)- a stern rod of chastisement- who served as the door keeper (of Rāma), owing to his commandment not to allow others to enter. In that family, which bore the insignia of Pratihāra (doorkeeper), and was a shelter of the three worlds, the king Nāgabhaṭṭa I appeared as the image of the old sage (Nārāyaṇa) in a strange manner----------, he shone with four arms brilliant on account of the glittering terrible weapons’.

Also Nāgabhaṭṭa is described as the destroyer of the army of the Arabs (mlecchādhīpih aksauhinih)\(^{53}\). Pratihāra period is marked by the construction of a number of temples. A large group of temples in and around Gwalior has been assigned to the Pratihāra period. R. D. Trivedi\(^{54}\) divides these temples chronologically into three sub-periods – (i) c.A.D. 725-800, (ii) c.A.D. 800-850 and (iii) c.A.D. 850-950.

In the first sub group, the temples constructed were dedicated to Śiva. However, some

of them contain the figures of Viṣṇu and his incarnations. As for example, a standing figure of Viṣṇu in the Naresar group of temples\textsuperscript{55} and the \textit{Lalitāsana} Viṣṇu on Garuḍa in Bhūteśvara Mahādeva temple\textsuperscript{56}, both found in Morena district of Madhya Pradesh. A temple to the north-east of Bhūteśvara temple has one shrine whose doorway has the figure of Garuḍa holding two nāgas\textsuperscript{57}. It serves the dual purpose, as the controller of the nāgas as well as the mount of Viṣṇu to whom the shrine is dedicated. The \textit{lalātabimba} Garuḍa is flanked by ten incarnations of Viṣṇu – Matsya, Kurma, Varāha, Nṛṣimha, Vāmana, Buddha, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa(?), Balarāma and Kalki. Buddha and Kalki are found in one of their early appearances as incarnations of Viṣṇu in this shrine. The temple is dated to the last quarter of 8\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. or the end of 9\textsuperscript{th}.

The second sub-period of the Imperial Pratihāras does not have many temples assigned to Viṣṇu or individual Vaisnavite sculptures. The only known example is of Sun temple at Umari\textsuperscript{58} (40kms south-east-south of Tikamgarh), with three incarnations of Viṣṇu in its niches namely Varāha, Kṛṣṇa and Nṛṣimha. On the basis of architectural features, the temple is assigned a date of early 9\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.

The third sub period of Pratihāra group of temples (c.A.D. 850-950) saw many temples constructed in the northern and central Madhya Pradesh. The Cāmunda temple at Mahua\textsuperscript{59} situated at about 12km southeast of Ranod in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh contains a standing four-armed image of Nṛṣimha.

Some of the temples of the Pratihāra period, which are now dedicated to Śaiva or Śākta pantheon may, have been devoted to Viṣṇu or his incarnations in ancient times. The Śiva temple at Terahi\textsuperscript{60} (10km south-east of Ranod) is dedicated to Śiva, which is evident from the Śaiva or the Śākta images, but the \textit{lalātabimba} of the doorway has the Garudāśina Viṣṇu carved on it. It represents a four armed image of Viṣṇu seated on Garuḍa holding Śaṅkha, cakra, padma and gadā. No inscription referring to the dedication of temple to any god has been found.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, pp. 79-81.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, p.115.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, pp. 121-125.
\textsuperscript{60} Trivedi, R.D., \textit{Temples of the Pratihara Period}, pp. 129-132.
Jarai Math temple at Barwasagar\textsuperscript{61} is situated 22km east of Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. The temple is dedicated to a god or a group of goddesses. Just above the *lalātabimba* Viṣṇu is represented seated on Garuḍa flanked by four armed Brhamā seated on his mount Hamśa and Śiva seated on Nandi bull. Other images include Nṛṣimha incarnation and Viṣṇu with his consort Lakṣmī. The date assigned to the temple is middle of 9\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.

Similar is the case with the Śiva temple at Pathari\textsuperscript{62} in Vidisha district. The *lalātabimba* of the doorway represents a four-armed image of Viṣṇu seated on Garuḍa, wearing *kirīṭa-mukūṭa* and holding his usual attributes. Against the back wall there are remains of a pedestal, which originally appears to have supported, an image of Viṣṇu, but at present is occupied by a number of *śivalīngas* in various sizes under worship. Trivedi emphasizes that in case of a Śiva temple, the *śivalīṅga* occupies central position and not the backside against the wall. So the temple might have been dedicated to Viṣṇu.

In this connection, the inscription engraved on the pillar known as bhīmagaja located in front of this temple needs reference. This is the Pathari pillar inscription of Prabala\textsuperscript{63}, the only one hitherto discovered of a Rāṣṭrakūta king named Prabala, dated 861 A.D. This inscription records that king Prabala founded temple of Śaurī (Hari, Viṣṇu – *acikarañ devakulam sa Saurer idam*) before which he carved a pillar on which the inscription is engraved. It opens with an invocation to Lakṣmī – Nārāyaṇa. The first four verses applaud the protection of earth by him and glorify the god Viṣṇu under the name of Murāri, Kṛṣṇa and Hari. It consists of two parts. The second part appears to be a separate inscription added by way of postscript, which may record the installation of an image of Viṣṇu, but the exact purpose of it is not legible. Reference to Viṣṇu’s foot (*viśnoḥ kim caraṇas trivikramas*) and Śeṣa are found in this inscription. At another place the kings are compared to the *Mahābhārata* heroes – Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīmasena, etc. This inscription also yields a proof for the Vaiṣṇava affiliation of the temple. The pillar inscription clearly shows that the temple in whose compound it is standing is dedicated to Viṣṇu.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid, p. 168.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid, pp. 129-132.
At Badoh (near Pathari), Gadarmal temple\textsuperscript{64}, though a Śaiva temple, contains the figures of some incarnations of Viṣṇu – Vāmana, Nṛsimha, four armed Viṣṇu seated on Garuḍa, etc.

Badoh has a group of temples, locally called as Dashavatara mandi\textsuperscript{65}. Each of it seems to be originally dedicated to an incarnation of Viṣṇu. This group of temples belongs to 9\textsuperscript{th}-10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. Most of the shrines of this place are in ruins. One image of Varāha is shown standing. The shrines are empty. But the representation of Viṣṇu or some of his form in the door lintel further proves that all these temples were dedicated to Viṣṇu and his incarnations.

Badoh may have been a Vaiṣṇava centre since 6\textsuperscript{th}-7\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. Gujari Mahal Museum has an image of Kūrma avatāra of Viṣṇu\textsuperscript{66} dated to 6\textsuperscript{th}-7\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. The sculpture is found from Badoh, Vidisha district. It shows the scene of the churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons.

From Badoh itself, there are other sculptures in the Museum, which may point towards one or two Vaiṣṇava centres at the place. One Varāha avatāra\textsuperscript{67} sand stone image of Viṣṇu dated to 8\textsuperscript{th}-9\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. shows the boar faced god trampling the sea under left foot. The upper hand holds club and the lower rests on the thigh. Bhūdevi is seated on the left arm.

The image of Kalki incarnation\textsuperscript{68} in the Museum shows the god sitting on a horse belonging to the same period (8\textsuperscript{th}-9\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.).

One Viṣṇu Caumukha image\textsuperscript{69} has been found from Vidisha, dated to 9\textsuperscript{th}-10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. It shows the four incarnations of Viṣṇu – Varāha, Nṛsimha, Trivikrama and Garudāsina Viṣṇu. The lotus representation of the Sun god is shown above the image.

\textsuperscript{64} Trivedi, R.D., \textit{Temples of the Pratihara Period}, pp. 154-155.
\textsuperscript{65} The Descriptive and Classified List of Archaeological Monuments in Madhya Bharat, The Department of Archaeology, Gwalior, 1952, no. 92.
\textsuperscript{66} Gujari Mahal Museum Sculptures, Accession no. 75.
\textsuperscript{67} Gujari Mahal Museum Sculptures, Acc. No. 76.
\textsuperscript{68} Gujari Mahal Museum Sculptures, Acc. No. 77.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid, Acc. No. 88.
Vāmana\textsuperscript{70} and Rāma\textsuperscript{71} in the Museum.

All these sculptures indicate towards a flourishing Vaiśṇava centre in Badoh, district Vidisha at least from 6\textsuperscript{th}-7\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. to the 9\textsuperscript{th}-10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. This may have continued for one or more centuries after it.

The sun temple of the Gurjara Pratihāra Period often has remains of the incarnations of Viṣṇu. The village Sesai, situated 12km south of Shivpuri in the same district of Madhya Pradesh, has remains of ancient temples of which Sun temple\textsuperscript{72} is a major monument. It contains the Daśāvatāra of Viṣṇu. One of the lintels contains in the centre Viṣṇu seated in *padmāsana*. On the left and right of Viṣṇu are carved Śiva and Brahmā. All the three gods are with their wives representing the trinity.

The village Markhera situated about 18kms north of Tikamgarh in the same district has a Sun temple\textsuperscript{73}. The temple assigned to the late 9\textsuperscript{th} century A.D., has the figures of incarnations of Viṣṇu – Varāha, Kṛṣṇa, Nṛsimha, Vāmana, Balarāma, Paraśurāma, etc.

The most outstanding temple of the Pratihāra period assigned to Viṣṇu is the Caturbhuja temple at Gwalior\textsuperscript{74}. It contains two subjoined inscriptions of Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple, situated at Gwalior\textsuperscript{75}. These two inscriptions have been found from a small monolithic temple situated on a turn of road leading to the Gwalior fort. It records that the Viṣṇu temple containing the inscription is built by a certain Alla, the son of Vaillabhaṭṭa and the grandson of Nāgarabhaṭṭa. Vaillabhaṭṭa belonged to Varjāra family and migrated from Ānandapura in Lāṭamanḍala (Gujarat). The wife of Vaillabhaṭṭa was the daughter of Kāsarakīya-Viṣṇu. The inscription refers to the three strides of Viṣṇu (v.1). The purpose is to increase the spiritual merit of Vavvā (wife of Alla) and of himself. Vaillabhatta has been the *maryādadhurya* (chief of the boundaries) in the service of the king Rāmadeva. Alla succeeded his father and was appointed to the guardianship of Gopādri (*gopādripālane*) i.e. of Gwalior fort by the king Śrīmāda Ādīvarāha. The king Bhoja Ādi Varāha is shown as willing to

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid, Acc. No. 91.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid, Acc. No. 94.
\textsuperscript{72} Trivedi, R.D., *Temples of the Pratihara Period*, pp. 161-168.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, pp. 143-148.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, pp. 135-143.
conquer the three worlds. There is a curious reference to Vaillabhaṭṭa, who does not seem to look towards the friendship of lower people favourably. He is compared with Yudhiṣṭhira for being constant in battle, but he does not like the company of low people (though Yudhiṣṭhira was a true friend of Nakula). Probably he was conscious of the dilution of his high image while interacting with low people. Conversely his son Alla is described as the 'robber of poverty of the beggars' in the same inscription (dārīdrām hritārthino, v.20).

The first inscription starts with adoration to Viśṇu in the form of killer of Madhu (madhujihantu). At several places, there are references to Lakṣmī, Murārī, Madhuripu, Śaṁbhu, Śaci, etc.

The second inscription starts with invocation of Viśṇu as 'Om Namo Viṣṇave'. It mentions four donations made to the temples – Navadurga of Rudra, Rudrāṇī and Pūrṇāśā and the Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple. The first grant was made for the Navadurga temple situated beyond the Vṛṣcikālā River (Suvarnarekha). The remaining three donations were given combinedly to Navadurga and Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple. A flower garden, two-grain fields, perpetual endowment of one pālikā of oil per mill (by 3 mills) and a daily endowment of 50 garlands by the chief of guild of gardeners (dwelling on the top of the Gwalior fort) were given to the temples. The two inscriptions are dated A.D. 875 and A.D. 876 respectively. The land given to the temples for the performance of the worship include field cultivated by Dallaka in the chief grain land (mūlavāpa) of the common called Vyāghhrakheṇḍikā, in the village of Jayapurāka which was town property. Towards the north of the same field, the field cultivated by Memmāka, the son of Kṣatriya Devavarman. Besides the oil millers who donated oil for the worship of the deity lived in Śrīvatsasvāmīpura, Cacchikāhaṭṭikā, Nimbādityahaṭṭikā, etc. The suffix of 'haṭṭikā' to these names may point to small market places surrounding the temple who were asked to donate the oil. Besides the group of the gardeners resided on the Gopagiri itself.

All the grants to the temple were made by the inhabitants of the place (samasta sthānena). The town of Gopagiri was administered by the group of merchants called as Pañcakula. They invariably donated for the Vaiṣṇava temple and Rudra – Rudrāṇī temple.
The Caturbhuja temple\textsuperscript{76}, containing this inscription is a wholly rock cut temple. To begin with, the niches contain the images of Viṣṇu along with the figure of Ganeśa, two armed standing Kārttikeya holding \textit{danda} and four armed standing Pārvatī. An image of the four armed Nṛvarāha with his lower right hand resting on the thigh and the upper left raising up the goddess Pṛthvī is on a separate niche. The god is forcefully exerting in the act of saving earth from the deluge. Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple inscription (mentioned earlier) is engraved on the lintel over the doorway of this temple. It mentions king Bhoja as Śrimad Ādivarāha. The forceful image of Varāha is intended to remind one of the king’s roles as the saviour of his vast empire. Another image is that of a four armed standing Viṣṇu with Śaṅkha and \textit{cakra} and his two attributes in human form near his feet as Padmapuruṣa and Gadādevī.

It also contains the image of Trivikrama, showing his right leg firmly placed on the ground touching the grinning face of Rāhu below which the donor Bali and his guru Śukrācārya are represented. Other incarnations include Nṛśimha, Rāma, Kalki and Budhha. The lintel presents Kṛṣṇa-\textit{līlā} scenes. This theme has wider appeal in the Pratihāra period irrespective of any sectarian consideration, according to R.D. Trivedi.

The temple was an extremely important building during that time. The Pratihāra king valued the fortress of Gwalior because it guarded the territory between Kalinjar and Chittor and was integral to their campaigns against the Rāstrakūta\textsuperscript{77}. The warden of the Gwalior fort was therefore a key officer and a temple built by such a person was the product of a respected and powerful individual. Subsequently members of Alla’s family apparently continued in the imperial service at Gwalior for one of them died facing a Rāstrakūta raid. This is evidently a hero stone from Terahi (Shivapuri district), which records the death of one Allajiyappa, son of Allabhaṭṭa\textsuperscript{78}.

Apart from the importance of the temple and the inscription another thing to be noted is that we have an example of the god being named after the father Vaillabhaṭṭa of donor Alla (Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple). Another important feature of the inscription

\textsuperscript{76} Trivedi, R.D., \textit{Temples of the Pratihara Period}, pp. 135-143.
is the donations given by oil millers and gardeners to the temple. Perhaps, the professional groups associated with trade and commerce were coming forward to extend their patronage and services to the temple.

The Gwalior *Prasasti* of Bhoja\(^79\) is another inscription, which attests to their adherence to Vaiṣṇava religion. The stone which bears this inscription is found about half a mile west of Gwalior town, at Sagar Tal in Gird-Gwalior district. It is the same inscription in which Bhoja traced his genealogy from Lakṣmana, the later being the doorkeeper or Pratihāra of Rāma. The object of this inscription is to record the erection of a house within the seraglio (*antaḥ pura-puram*) of his compound. It begins with an invocation to Viṣṇu and repeatedly refers to Rāma-Rāvana fight. Bhoja is described as more glorious than Agastya and as being embraced by Lakṣmī (sovereign power). It refers to Viṣṇu as Narakadvisaḥ (enemy of Naraka). Nāgasbhaṭṭa the founder of the dynasty is compared with Nārāyaṇa in this inscription. The inscription is undated but Bhoja seems to have engraved this inscription around 933 A.D. (according to his R.C. Majumdar).

An inscription is found from Gyaraspur\(^80\) in Vidisha district of about 10\(^{th}\) century A.D. Apparently it records construction of a temple which is now in ruins. It begins with a salutation to Jag(nātha) or the lord of the universe, specifically referring to Viṣṇu. It contains the genealogy and eulogy of a dynasty of kings of whom only three names occur in the surviving portion of the record. The three names are – Śivagaṇa, Cāmuṇḍarāja and Mahendrapāladeva. It was by a scion of this dynasty or someone of his or her dependants that the temple seems to have been built. The inscription is assigned a date of 10\(^{th}\) century A.D., on paleographic grounds, which is also probably the date of the temple, as suggested on the basis of the style of the carvings. This is a huge temple. It consists of three shrines. The five pieces of sculptures and carvings found here comprised among others a bust of Trimurti – Viṣṇu flanked by Brahmā and Śiva. Now the Jaina images are enshrined in the sanctum\(^81\). In the eastern half of the village a very richly carved *torana* gateway exits. The gateway known as Hindolā *torana*, consists of a cross beam of two pillars carved into panels inset with ten

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\(^81\) *Descriptive and Classified List of Archaeological Monuments in Madhya Bharat*, no. 623.
incarnations of Viṣṇu. The fragment of a figure of Viṣṇu may perhaps have been the idol of worship in the temple. All these sculptures belong to 9th-10th century A.D.

In the village Kagpur in Bhilsa district, there is a Mahāvira platform now in total ruins, with carved fragments and sculptures lying about. Notable among sculptures is a lintel of doorframe with fine carvings and details showing incarnations of Viṣṇu and other sculptures. The temple may belong to the 8th century A.D.

Apart from these sculptures, a lot of sculptures have been found from Morena, Gwalior and Bhind districts. Gujari Mahal Museum in Gwalior has a sculpture of Viṣṇu from Pawaya (Gwalior district). The image has disc and conch in left hands. The right upper hand holds a club and the lower is in abhaya mudrā. The sculptures belong to 6th century A.D. to the pre Pratihāra period.

Suhaniya in Morena district has yielded a Vāmana avatāra of Viṣṇu standing under a canopy. The face of the God is mutilated and the hands are missing. The sculpture is associated by two kneeling devotees parallel to the Vāmana’s head, while on the Dexter side is a small male figure of gana in standing posture. The sculpture belongs to 9th century A.D.

Padhavali in Morena district has yielded a number of sculptures. The Archaeological Museum at Gwalior Fort has a Gajendramokṣa sculpture. The four handed image of Viṣṇu is shown rescuing the elephant from the clutches of the crocodile. It appears that the sculpture has eight hands. One of the hands is shown resting on some unidentified object. The sculpture belongs to the 10th century A.D. Another sculpture from the same museum is the four-armed figure of Viṣṇu holding Śāṅkha, cakra, gadā and one hand in varada mudrā. The sculpture belongs to 10th century A.D. Gujari Mahal Museum has a sculpture of Balarāma found from Padhavali, Morena district. The God is shown standing holding a cup in his right hand pressing against

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82 Ibid, no.661.
83 Ibid, no. 758.
84 Gujari Mahal Museum Sculptures, Gwalior, Acc. No. 46.
85 Archaeological Museum, Gwalior, Fort, Acc. No.6.
86 Archaeological Museum, Gwalior, Fort, Acc. No.11.
87 Ibid, Acc.No. 32.
his belly, with snake canopy. The sculpture belongs to 9th-10th century A.D.

The Archaeological Museum at Gwalior Fort has a 2m high sculpture of Viṣṇu surrounded by ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. The deity stands on a padmapītha showing in front Laksmī flanked by two nāgi worshippers. Two cauri bearers standing in tribhaṅga mudrā flank the main deity. Next to the cauri bearers, are two ganas, one of them holding a padma. The miniature temples show Vinādhārini and the Cakradhārini in the bhadra rathikā. The incarnations shown are Matsya, Kūrma Varāha, Vāmana, Rāma, Balarāma, Parāśurāma, Nṛsimha, Buddha and Kalki. The sculpture is found from Khaira in Bhind district. It belongs to 9th century A.D. Judging by the size of the sculpture it might be the main deity of a Vaiṣṇava temple, which is no longer in existence.

Barakalan, another place in Bhind district has a Vaiṣṇava temple. The temple was originally brick built. Now it is totally in ruins only doorframes and stone images are left on the site.

Since all these sculptures are lying in museums and at most of the places no inscription is found, it is not possible to trace out the person responsible behind these constructions. The kings, his officials and the queens are not necessarily the builders of the temples. Other classes may have been involved in the construction of the temple or the propagation of the religion (here Vaiṣṇavism).

Siyādonī Stone Inscription is a landmark in describing the involvement of traders and guild owners in development of a particular religion (here Vaiṣṇavism). In Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh, there was found a large inscription in Siron-Khurd (Siyādonī) about ten miles west-northwest of the town of Lalitpur. It covers a long period from 903 A.D. to 968 A.D. The inscription consists of two parts. The first part records a large number of donations made at different times to various brāhmanical deities. Most of the donations recorded here were made in favour of God Viṣṇu under the names of Viṣṇu-bhāṭṭāraka, Nārāyana-bhāṭṭāraka, Tribhuvanasvāmīdeva,

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90 Descriptive and Classified List of Ancient Monuments in Madhya Bharā, No. 158.
Vāmanasvāmīdeva, etc. Umā Maheśvara (Śiva) and Bhailasvāmīdeva (Sun) are also mentioned. The Siyādonī town was under the nobles. The affairs of the town seem to have been managed by an assembly of five called Pañcakulas and by a committee of two appointed by town from time to time. Thus, we find a totally independent merchant community looking after the town and patronizing Vaiśṇavism in its various forms. This inscription mentions Bhojadeva and Mahendrapāladeva, the Pratihāra rulers. Probably this town was under the administration of some governor of the Gurjara Pratiharas.

As all the donations of the temples of this inscription were made by the local people of this region, there is plenty of regional words in it. According to Prof Kielhorn, the first part of the inscription contains a considerable number of words which either do not occur in Sanskrit literature at all, or for which the dictionary furnishes no appropriate meaning; and some of which were undoubtedly taken from vernacular. Avāsanikā, kanduka, ghānaka, jagati, nemaka, etc. are some of these words. The donors were all merchants. Their references include vanik, nemaka vanik (salt merchant), silākūta (stone cutter), kanduka (sugar boiler), ghānaka (oil miller) and others.

A merchant Chanduka set up most of the temples in this inscription. Names of other merchants correspond to their Vaiśṇava affiliation like Keśava, Govinda, Mādhava, etc. Cakrasvāmīdeva also appears to be a popular epithet in this area. The second part of this inscription starts with an adoration to Ganaṃatha and Trivikrama (Viṣṇu) respectively. Then it refers to a certain prince of Mahodaya. The town is compared with Indra’s town Amarāvatī. The prince of Mahodaya gave this town to Rāyakas. One of their descendants named Vaśiṣṭha happened to come on matters of business to Siyādonī, where he dwelt near the raja of the place, Harirāja. Vaśiṣṭha’s son, Dāmodara founded here a temple of Murārī (Viṣṇu). He then furnished it with an image of the god, provided it with a garden and probably endowed it with the funds for the worship of the deity. This temple of Viṣṇu has been identified with a large ruined shrine of the neighbouring village of Satgatto to the northeast of Siron. Near the ruined temple is a large bāoli or

92 Ibid. p.165.
well still in good condition. The village has a number of shrines of Viṣṇu.

This independent involvement of traders and brāhmaṇas in the construction and donation of the temple is called by Michael Willis⁹³ as the third stage of patronage enjoyed by the temple, the first two being donation by the king and the feudatories respectively.

Siron-Khurd has yielded a number of Vaiṣṇava sculptures, which are kept in Government Museum Jhansi. This ancient town might have been a hub of Vaiṣṇava temples, all of which are now deserted and ruined. A four handed image of Vāmana⁹⁴, found from Siron-Khurd is kept in the museum. The god is standing in samapāda mudrā, holding kamandala, flanked by Śankhapurusa and Cakrapurusa to its right and left respectively. The image is encircled by the incarnations of Viṣṇu – Paraśurāma, Varāha, Nṛṣimha, Kalki, Matsya, Kūrma, etc. the image may be the presiding deity of a temple, possibly corresponding to the Vāmanasvāmīdeva of Siyādonī Inscription. The image belongs to 10ᵗʰ century A.D.

Another image found from Siron-Khurd is of Padmāsana Viṣṇu⁹⁵. The God is in dhyānamudrā with two lower hands kept in Yogic posture and the other two carrying gadā and cakra. It also belongs to 10ᵗʰ century A.D.

The museum has the four handed sculpture of Trivikrama⁹⁶ from the same place. The left leg of the God is shown touching the mouth of the rākṣasa.

Banpur village in Lalitpur has yielded an image of Śeṣaśayi Viṣṇu⁹⁷ belonging to 10ᵗʰ century A.D. The God is sleeping on the coils of seven-hooded serpent. The size of the sculpture (188cm x 74cm) shows that it may be the main deity of a temple. Several other stray sculptures or small temple sites are found in Madhya Pradesh belonging to the Pratihāra period. Tumain in district Guna has yielded a Viśvarupa

⁹³ Willis, Michael D., Temples of Gopaksetra, pp. 82-87.
⁹⁴ Sculptures of Government Museum Jhansi, Acc. No. 81.16.
⁹⁵ Ibid, Acc. No. 81.188.
⁹⁷ Ibid, Acc. No. 83.64.
form of Viṣṇu. Indore in Guna district has a shrine with sculptures of Viṣṇu-Lakṣmī and carved pillars lying about. It belongs to 9th-10th century A.D.

Lotkhedi in Mandasor has yielded stone sculptures of Mahiṣāsuramardini, Nṛsimha, Agni, Hanumān, and Ganeśa belonging to 8th-9th century A.D. The same place has the remains of a 9th century Viṣṇu temple.

The Maurya feudatories of the Gurjara Pratihāras were ruling in Mālavā. The Dharmanatha temple in Dhamnar (Mandasor district) of their period contains the figures of Viṣṇu-Nārāyana, Lakṣmī-Nārāyana, Anantaśayi Viṣṇu and Daśavatāras. The village Behta and Lahukhedu on the bank of Bhopal lake has a group of sculptures belonging to the Pratihāra period – Umā-Maheśvara, Brahmā, Lakṣmī-Nārāyana, Bhairava, etc.

Ranod in Shivpuri district has yielded a four-armed figure of Viṣṇu holding Śaṅkha, cakra, gadā and one hand in varada mudrā. The deity is flanked by vidyādharas and devotees. It belongs to the 9th century A.D.

With all the temples and sculptures assigned to the Gurjara Pratihāra period, it seems probable that they were involved in commissioning temples or images. They sought to avoid the localization of power and particularization of identity. Willis also seems to find it significant that no account of temple destruction is found in Rāṣṭrakūṭa records when such records deal with the defeat of the Pratihāras.

All these arguments may be true but the Pratihāras did involve themselves in the construction of temples, one example being the construction of the seraglio for the god Narakadviṣa (Viṣṇu). Also there is evidence of refurbishing of the Gupta

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99 Descriptive and Classified List of Ancient Monuments in Madhya Bharat, no. 701.
100 IAR, 1988-89, p. 105.
103 Archaeological Museum Gwalior Fort, Acc. No. 33.
104 Willis, Michael D., Temples of Gopaksetra, p. 290.
temple at Eran during late 8th century A.D. with a new doorway and mukhalingam\textsuperscript{106}. They may have been involved in the protection and maintenance of the Caturbhuj temple at Gwalior. Importance of rituals may have declined, but that of religion may have not. And Pratihāras used religion to give strength to their call for legitimacy (being the door-keeper of the world like Lakṣmaṇa)\textsuperscript{107}.

V

In the early years of 8th century A.D., the Kalacuris were emerging in and around Jabalpur as new local rulers. Its founder Vāmaraja\textsuperscript{108} overran Bundelkhand and established himself at Kālaṇjara, the impregnable fort in Banda. He transferred his capital from Mahismati to Tripuri. He assumed imperial titles like Paramabhaṭṭāraka, Mahārājadhīraja and Parameśvara.

Lakṣmaṇarāja I was fourth in succession as the Kalacuri ruler, whose inscription at Karitalai\textsuperscript{109} is the first to invoke Viṣṇu in its various forms. Karitalai is a small village, 27 miles north by east from Murawara tehsil in Jabalpur district. The inscription is affixed to the temple of devī Mādhīā (a local deity). It starts with an obeisance to Druhina (Brahmā), Upendra (Viṣṇu), and Rudra (Śiva). It is dated in Kalacuri – Cedi era (840 A.D.). There is reference of Amoghavarsa, who bowed to the feet of some saintly person. Amoghavarṣa is the famous Rāṣṭrākūṭa ruler. He might have gone to Cedi country to pay his respect to the holy person, who put this inscription.

Next Kalacuri inscription invoking Viṣṇu is the inscription of Yuvarājadeva I\textsuperscript{110} from Bandhogarh. He was one of the powerful rulers of later Kalacuri dynasty. These three inscriptions of his reign are incised on the western wall of Fish temple\textsuperscript{111} in Bandhogarh. Bandhogarh is 6 miles south by west of Rewa in the same district of

\textsuperscript{106} Meister & Dhaky, Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture, North India: Period of Early Maturity, pp. 27-60.
\textsuperscript{109} Mirashi, V.V., 'Karitalai Stone Inscription of Lakshmanaraja I', \textit{CII}, Vol. IV, pt. I, p. 182.
\textsuperscript{110} Mirashi, V.V., 'Bandhogarh Rock Inscription (No.1) of Yuvarajadeva I', \textit{CII}, Vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 182-185.
\textsuperscript{111} This may have been an image of Matsya, whom Mirashi is referring as Fish temple.
Madhya pradesh. The object of the inscription is to record that illustrious Gollaka caused the construction of the images of the Fish, the Tortoise, the Boar and others also known as Gauda. Gollaka was the son of illustrious Bhaku who was the minister of Yuvarājadeva I.

Another inscription\textsuperscript{112} is incised on a pillar with a figure of Garuḍa to the west of the colossal rock figure of Ādivarāha. Ādivarāha is placing the left foot on a nāga figure. The object of the inscription is to record that the Fish, the Tortoise, the Ādivarāha and Paraśurāma were caused to be built by the illustrious Gollaka.

The third inscription is incised on a rock facing southwest near the rock cut image of the Tortoise at Bandhogarh. The object of the inscription is to dedicate the image of the Tortoise.

Not very far from Bandhogarh, there is another inscription of Yuvarājadeva I in Gopalpur\textsuperscript{113}. Gopalpur is a village one mile to the north of Bandhogarh. The object of the inscription is to record that an image of Haladhara (Balarāma) is caused to be carved by the same Gollaka. This inscription is incised on a rock at the back of the Ṣeṣaśāyi image. It seems that the early Kalacuri rulers worshipped trinity, while the flood incarnation (Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha) were particularly worshipped in Bandhogarh region. Paraśurāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu is for the first time mentioned in this inscription. Kūrma avatāra also made its first appearance.

The Varāha incarnation figures in the Karitalai inscription of Lakṣmanarāja II\textsuperscript{114}, too. Karitalai has the distinction of being a place of antiquity. This inscription opens with the benedictory line assigned to the Vāmana incarnation of the Viṣṇu. It gives the description of a high temple (prāśādayam) erected by Someśvara. The image-installed there in is probably the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu, which is referred to in the verse 27 and verse 35 of the inscription. The God is referred to as enemy of demons at two places – daiṭyadruhah\textsuperscript{115} and dānavāreresopyaya\textsuperscript{116} (enemy of dānavas). Different donations were given to the God under the name of Varāha – varāhanāya

\textsuperscript{112} Mirashi, V. V., 'Bandhogarh Rock Inscription (No.II) of Yuvarajadeva I', CII, Vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 183-84.
\textsuperscript{113} Mirashi, V. V., 'Gopalpur Inscription of Yuvarājadeva I', CII, Vol. IV, pt. I, pp. 185-186.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, p. 190, v. 18.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, p. 190, v. 20.
The god is named as Somasvāmi after the name of Someśvara, the person who constructed this temple of Viṣṇu. Since the donations to the god were made under the above mentioned two names it is likely that the deity installed is Varāha.

Various donations were made to the temple by the king, queen and the prince in the town (pura) near the temple and eight brāhmaṇas were caused to settle. To them the king Lakṣmaṇarāja II donated village Dirghaśākhika (Dighi, 6 miles southwest of Karitalai). He also gave another village to the God on the occasion of solar eclipse. His queen Rāhadā gave with his consent village Cakrakhaḍi (7 miles south of Karitalai). His son Śankaragaṇa is called as ParamaViśṇava. Two other villages Challipāṭaka and Antarapāṭa (Amaturra, 7 miles east of Karitalai) were donated to the God at solar eclipse. Further donation of two fields was made to the God. A potentate named Valli gave the village Vatagartika (Barhati, 10 miles west by south of Karitalai) in his own territory. A visitor to the place donated a field of feed corn. Besides these, income from several taxes and tolls were ascribed to the temple. The various donations given to the temple show the extent of influence enjoyed by the God enshrined here. The inscription also refers to Bali giving three footsteps to Trivikrama.

The inscription refers to various sacrifices and the priests associated to these sacrifices like Agnidh (priest who kindles fire in a sacrifice), Adhavaryu (priest who officiates the sacrifices mentioned in the Yajurveda), Hotr (overall incharge of the sacrifices), Udgātri (priest who sings the metres of Sāmaveda) and others. At one place the king is shown as smearing his body with the butter (v.11). In the initiatory rite of Agnistoma sacrifice, the sacrificer is required to anoint himself with butter. There seems to be an extra emphasis on the Vedic sacrifices. It can be said that it was performed in emulation of the Vedic tradition. The worship of Viṣṇu was balanced with the Vedic tradition.
Another inscription of Someśvara\textsuperscript{121} found from Karitalai refers to the construction of a \textit{kūpa} (well) in the heart of the city Somasvāmipura (Karitalai) by him. The first verse of the inscription praises Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī (\ldots kṣmalakṣmībhīyām). The name of the god Somasvāmin was given to the city to, Somasvāmipura. This is second example\textsuperscript{122} in Madhya Pradesh that Vaiṣṇava incarnation is called after the name of the builder of the temple. The name Somasvāmin sometimes gives an impression that the temple is of Śiva. But the previous inscription refers to the temple of Viṣṇu which was constructed by Someśvara, is called as Somasvāmin. Also there is reference to various incarnations of Viṣṇu in both the inscriptions mentioned above. Thus Somasāmin here is a Vaiṣṇava deity.

Karitalai or Somasvāmipura as it was called in ancient times may have been a Vaiṣṇava centre. We have a number of sculptures from this place kept in the Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Raipur. One sculpture shows Garuḍanārāyana\textsuperscript{123} belonging to 10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. The god is wearing all usual ornaments and sitting on the back of Garuḍa.

Another sculpture is of the four handed image of Viṣṇu\textsuperscript{124} carrying Śāṅkha in left lower hand. Other hands are missing. This image belongs to 10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. In one figure Viṣṇu is sitting in \textit{dvibhaṅga} pose\textsuperscript{125}. The sculpture is found from Karitalai. The two left hands of the God are carrying cakra and Śāṅkha. Two devotees are on the two sides of the God. It belongs to the 10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.

Still another sculpture shows pot bellied God Vāmana\textsuperscript{126}. All the hands of the God are missing. The God is flanked by two devotees and two garland bearers on two sides. It belongs to 10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.

VI

Towards the close of this period (c.A.D. 600-1000), the Candellas emerged as a dominant power in the area known as Jejakabhukti. It was a part of the former state of

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{122} Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin temple is the first example earlier described in this chapter.
\textsuperscript{123} Sculptures of Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Raipur, Acc. No. 2542.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid, Acc. No. 2538.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid, Acc. No. 31.
\textsuperscript{126} Sculptures of Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Raipur, Acc. No. 253E.
Chhatarpur and is now included in the Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh. Khajuraho was one of the capitals of the Candellas, which they adorned with beautiful temples.

The earliest temple of a Vaishnavite deity built in Khajuraho appears to have been the Varāha temple\(^\text{127}\). The colossal Varāha is a powerfully modeled sculpture decorated all over with rows of gods and goddesses including Sarasvatī, Navagrahas, Ganga, Yamuna, Brahmā, Śiva, *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, etc. On the upper half of this figure occurs two ornamental feet probably of Bhūdevī, which it should have supported.

Lakṣmāna standing on the site is the first fully developed and organized temple. An inscription dated A.D. 953-54 in the reign of king Dhaṅga was originally found in the debris accumulated at the base of this temple and is now fixed in its *mandapa* passage. This is the famous stone inscription of Candella ruler Yaśovarman\(^\text{128}\). It records the erection of a temple of Viṣṇu under the name of Vaikuṇṭha by the prince Yaśovarman, also called as Lakṣavaran of the Candrātreya family. According to it, Yaśovarman has received the image of Vaikuṇṭha from Devapāla, which he set up in the temple founded by him. Devapāla is mentioned as a son of Herāmbapāla who had obtained the image from the Sāhī king of Kīra (Kashmir), who in turn had got it from Bhota (probably Tibet). The inscription starts and ends with obeisance to Vāsudeva. It describes Vaikuṇṭha as the one who frightens the whole world with his roaring, the same way as the Boar and Manlion slew the three chief Asuras, Kapila and the rest—

\[
\text{Dadhānānekām yah kiripurulasim (hobbaya) jusam taddākārocchedyām}
\text{tanumsuramu-khyānajavarāī jaghāna trīṇugrāṇī (nc) agati kapilādīnāvatu vah sa}
\text{vaikuṇṭhah}^{\text{129}}.
\]

Also there is a reference to the three strides of Hari.

Lakṣmāna temple is the first organized and well-planned temple of Khajuraho\(^\text{130}\). The temple is a major *pañcāyatana* temple of Vaikuṇṭha with four subsidiary shrines at

the four corners of its platform terrace. The small shrine facing the temple possibly housed Garuḍa, the mount of God. But now it contains an image of Brahmānī, locally called as Devī. The temple enshrines a majestic three-faced Vaikuntha image\textsuperscript{131}. Its central saumya (placid) face is flanked by Nṛsimha (Lion) and the Varāha (Boar) faces. However, the inscription mentioned above, refers to a four-faced Vaikunṭha image. This image does not have Himalayan or Chamba features in its face, physiognomy, dress, mukuta and jewellery. It is a heavy figure of stone, difficult to be easily transported without damage. It wears a double loop mekhala and pāṭāṅgala ornament. Stylistically, the present Vaikunṭha image belongs to A.D. 1075-1100 and must have been installed when the original image brought by Yaśovarman was missing (according to Devangana Desai).

Besides the Vaikunṭha image, the sanctum contains the figures of Śiva, Ganeśa, Pārvatī, different incarnations of Viṣṇu and various Kṛṣṇa lilā scenes. Lakṣmī illustrated by the elephants occupies the lalāṭabimba of the sanctum door flanked by Brahmā and Śiva on left and right respectively\textsuperscript{132}. Below in the centre of the threshold is a figure of four armed pot bellied Kubera. Matsya avatāra is shown as the rescuer of the four Vedas. Main cardinal niche contains the incarnations of Viṣṇu – Varāha, Nṛsimha, Hayagrīva, Kūrma and Matsya avatāra. The western cardinal niche represents the Yogesvara Viṣṇu. This extra ordinary image of Viṣṇu is with the raised index finger near mouth suggesting one or ekāntin, the single-minded devotion. Devangana Desai says that Viṣṇu is asking his devotees by his hand gesture to observe silence and guard the secrets of the doctrine he is expounding\textsuperscript{133}.

Among the sculptures, various Kṛṣṇa lilā scenes include Tṛṇāvatavadha, slaying of sūta Lomaharṣana by Balarāma, fight with the wrestlers of the Karṣa, Ariṣṭāsuravadha, Pītanāvadha, Yamalārjuna episode, etc. Thematically, except one scene –Kubjānugraha, the panel depicts the heroic deeds of demon killing. It accords well with the spirit of the inscription, which invokes Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu as ‘daityārī’ (enemy of the demons), and calls the patron king Yaśovarman as ‘kunthitārī’ (subduer of the enemies). The king’s mother is linked to Devakī, the mother of Kṛṣṇa. In

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid, p. 101.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid, p. 109.
\textsuperscript{133} Desai, Devangana, \textit{The Religious Imagery of Khajuraho}, p. 120.
sculptural depictions, Kṛṣṇa is represented as 'daityārī' like Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu and the patron king Yaśovarman, according to Devangana Desai.\textsuperscript{134}

The mahāmaṇḍapa of this sanctum has the Viśvarupa form of Viṣṇu.\textsuperscript{135} This is twelve handed and twelve armed form of Viṣṇu standing in tribhanga pose and holding cakra, gadā and arrow in the surviving hands. The principal head, which was human, was broken, but the lion’s head on proper right and boar’s head on proper left is preserved. The God wears kūndalas, keyūras, wristlets, kaustubhamani, hāra, upavita, torque, vanamālā and anklets. Headless Garuḍa depicted by the side of the attendants of Viṣṇu is in praising attitude. The halo of the Viṣvarupa Viṣṇu is flanked by seated figures of three headed and four-armed Brahmā on right and four armed Śiva on left. The main figure partly resembles Ananta form of Viṣṇu.

Other images of the mahāmaṇḍapa include four armed Śiva and Pārvatī. Northeastern shrine contains images of Agni, Varuna and Yama. The southeastern shrine contains the figure of four-armed Varāha and eight armed Sūrya.\textsuperscript{136} The image of Sūrya is carrying rosary, triśūla, lotus flower, Śaṅkha and kamanḍalā. This image represents Hari-Hara-Hiranyagarbha combining the characteristics of Hari, Hara, Sūrya and Balarāma. Northwestern shrine contains one Ardhanārisvara form among other images.

Devangana Desai opines that most of the temples of Khajuraho including Laksmana temple show the patronage enjoyed by them.\textsuperscript{137} It also heralds a new image in the religious life of Khajuraho with the assertion of Brāhmanic-Vedic elements. The temple symbolizes the augmented power of the Candellas marching from chieftainship to kingship.\textsuperscript{138} The effort of the Candella kings to glorify the origin of their dynasty (born from mythical Candrātreyya) is due to their possible tribal origin. The temples constructed before the Laksmana temple are brick temples. This is the first edifice whose rich splendor indicates the wealth of its patron Yaśovarman.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid, p. 125.
\textsuperscript{135} Krishna Deva, Temples of Khajuraho, p. 295.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Desai, Devangana, The Religious Imagery of Khajuraho, p. 99.
The importance of acquiring the much sought after Vaikuntha image can be seen in the context of power politics of North Indian States of 10th century A.D. One of the cardinal niches of the sanctum bears an image of Viṣṇu as Hayagriva (Devapāla is called as Hayapati in the inscription engraved in the temple).

VII

This period witnessed a number of Vaiṣṇava centres emerging and flourishing in various parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, like Sirpur, Rajim, Badoh, Karitalai, Gwalior, Lalitpur, etc. (for geographical distribution pattern see map numbers II and III). The kind of patronage enjoyed by the temples also varied from the kings/queens and feudatories to the merchants.

The period of 600 A.D. to 1000 A.D. witnessed the rise and flourishing of many dynasties in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The rise of new Vaiṣṇava sites could be connected to these dynasties. The Vaiṣṇava sites in Chhattisgarh were essentially the product of the influence of the Gupta rulers. The Šarabhauriya rulers were the feudatories of the Guptas and like them they took the epithet of 'Parama Bhāgavata' in their inscriptions. However the first temples of the period came in Pāṇḍuvamśin period, though there was a temple called Śridharaśvāmin in Raipur in the Śarabhauriya Period.

Madhya Pradesh has the Vaiṣṇava sites related to Pratihāra rulers and Kalacuri rulers in central and northern, and northeastern Madhya Pradesh respectively. Other parts of Madhya Pradesh remained aloof from the Vaiṣṇava influence. There were some new sites in Satna district like Bandhogarh and Gopalpur. Like wise the region in and around Vidisha has Vaiṣṇava sites and temples dedicated to Vaiṣṇava deities under the auspices of Pratihāra rulers.

The region has different patterns of Vaiṣṇavism prevalent in different parts. The early Vaiṣṇavism or the Bhāgavatism of the Šarabhauriya rulers was restricted to the Vaiṣṇava names of the brāhmīns and the villages, sometimes viṣaya (district) too. The Šarabhauriya rulers show the affinity towards the feminine side of the Vaiṣṇava sect.
They adopted Gajalakṣmī symbol on their seals. The only known temple from their period is called as Śrīdharasvāmin temple. However, the best-known Vaiṣṇava temple of this period in chhattisgarh was Lakṣmaṇa temple of Sirpur. It was constructed during Pāṇḍuvamsin rule. Rājīvalocana temple is another famous Vaiṣṇava temple. Unlike the Malwa region, Varāha was not an important deity of this region. Rather they worship Viṣṇu in the form of Rājīvalocana or Rāma.

Malwa region continued to show the worship of Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu. However towards the end of this period (c.A.D.600-1000), there is a growing tendency towards the worship of Caturbhuja form of Viṣṇu. All the incarnations were assigned a lower place.

This is the tradition, which is still followed in various parts of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and other states. As such this period (c.A.D. 600-1000) witnessed the beginning of modern day Vaiṣṇavism. The worship of Kṛṣṇa and his various deeds as a child also became a popular mode of worship.

As I have indicated earlier some of the Vaiṣṇava centres showed a declining trend. This trend became much more obvious in the next period (c.A.D.1000-1300). The various reasons behind this development will be studied in my later chapters.

The period saw the development of Vaiṣṇavism from symbolic worship to the assertive Vaiṣṇavism and finally the culmination of Viṣṇu worship in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The large temples were constructed and patronized by the rulers of this region. The period also saw the rise of Śaiva ascetics in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, which soon eclipsed the upward movement of Vaiṣṇavism. But by and large it remained the period of the rise of Vaiṣṇavism.