CHAPTER – 3

VAISHNAVA CENTRES IN MADHYA PRADESH AND CHHATTISGARH (c. A.D. 1000-1300)

The term “Vaishnava centres” usually connotes one or more Vaishnava temples dedicated to some form of Visnu or his incarnations and the associated priests. This centre can be an isolated one or a complex of temples with elaborate rituals. However, a deep study of these centres presents the multiple facets of its evolution and expansion before the researcher. These ‘centres’ are the product of a historical process of evolution from a simple to a complex form. And in the process of its evolution, it affected the socio-economic and political conditions of the region and in turn was affected by them. This process brings into the limelight the various elements associated with and benefited by its evolution.

The task of identifying Vaishnava centres gets more complicated and confused in the period c.A.D.1000-1300. This period in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh was an era of intense political struggle among the various dynasties for the occupation of the region and the manifestation of their political power. By now the kingdoms were established by conquests, the annexation of the neighbouring territories and initiation of the process of integration of intermediary zones. Prof. Herman Kulke¹ calls this stage as the stage of imperial kingdom, the third and the final stage in the development of Hindu statehood before the founding of the Islamic states.

In this era of intense political struggle or imperial kingdoms, the religious centres multiplied. However, the number of Vaishnava centres in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh dwindled. Most of the prominent dynasties adopted Saivism. Loss of patronage was a big blow to these centres. But other reasons were also at work.

¹ Kulke, Herman, “The Early and The Imperial Kingdom: A Procedural Model of Integrative State Foundation in Early Medieval India”, in Kulke (ed) State in India, 1000-1700 A.D., Delhi, 1995.
The religious centres are often connected with the process of legitimization of the kings and the dynasties. The development of religious centres (in general, Vaišṇava centres in particular) was so closely interwoven with the rise of the dynasties that sometimes it becomes difficult to separate them. The development and distribution of Vaiśṇava centres in this period (c. A.D. 1000-1300) was not an isolated event. Some old centres continued their dominance, while the new ones emerged in other regions.

While the local landed class and other richer sections of the society did take part in the expansion and the creation of new centres, the role of the State was no doubt, more conspicuous. With vast resources at their disposal and the greater stake involved in the legitimization process (through religion), the State was bound to construct and protect the religious centres.

The kings often made donations and renovations to the existing religious centres, this phenomena is observed at several places in Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh, all the kings and the conquerors in the Vidisha region made religious donations to the Varāha form of Viṣṇu. The Kalacuri king Pṛthvīdeva II renovated the existing Rājivalocana temple and pridely announced it in his inscription fixed into the wall of the temple.2

Similarly all the important dynasties of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh donated land to the brāhmaṇa or a number of brāhmaṇas. Initially the land grant was limited to one or two brāhmaṇas, slowly the number of brāhmaṇas increased. These brāhmaṇas were well versed in different branches of Vedic studies. The settlement of these brāhmaṇas in and around the nucleus was to give moral strength to the king. These brāhmaṇas in return prepared the lengthy genealogies of the king linking him to some mythical hero or even god (here Arjuna, Bhima, Yudhiṣṭhira or some form of Viṣṇu). This clearly strengthened the legitimization process of the king and his dynasty.

The third and the final stage was the construction of new monumental temples of a hitherto unknown height. Through the construction of these temples the Rājās tried to

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create a new and centralized ritual structure focused on the new temple and its cult. The king already gave patronage to the local tribal cults. These cults found a lower place in this cults patronised by the king too. Almost all the temples in Gwalior, Jhansi, Devgarh, Chanderi region has the sculptures of Nāgas and Nāga kanyās in the lower niches. Nāgas were the local tribal chiefs of this region.

So far the early religious policies aimed at the vertical legitimization of the political hierarchy of the Hindu kingship in a more egalitarian tribal society. The construction of large temples and the association of the kings with it decided the position of the kings as head of the divine institutional Hindu kingship. The establishment of the power of the king over the divine institutions settled the horizontal recognition by rivals and potential rioters among the feudatories.

The process of legitimization often led the king to adopt the name of the gods; the case of Bhoja having the title of Ādivarāha is an important example of it, as shown in the last chapter. This trend continued in this period (c.A.D. 1000-1300), too.

I

The Kalacuris of Tripūrī, who established their hegemony in the Cēdimandala or Dāhalamaṇḍala in 8th century A.D., continued till 13th century A.D. Tripūrī is a city of high antiquity. It is mentioned in various later Vedic texts, Jaina and Buddhist texts as well as in various Purāṇas. It was one of the sixteen mahājanapadas. In later Vedic literature it is mentioned as three important cities of Asuras, while in the Purānic literature it is said that the city was destroyed by converting them to Buddhism and Jainism. The Mahābhārata mentions it as Traipura and attributes its destruction by Viśṇu in the form of a cow-bull. The situation of Tripūrī is placed in southeastern division in the Brhatsāmhitā, whereas Hemacandra calls it Cēdinagara or the capital of Cēdi country.

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4 Ali, Rahaman, Art and Architecture of the Kalachuris, Delhi, 1980, p. 3.
6 Dikshit, M.G., Tripuri, 1952,
Map IV: Vaiṣṇava Centres (Temple Sites) in Madhya Pradesh
[1000 A.D.-1300 A.D.]
Saivism was the dominant religion in the country of Dahala.\(^7\) It was actively patronised by almost all the kings of the Kalacuri dynasty, till the downfall of their reign. Next to Śiva, Viṣṇu seems to be the popular god as it appears in from the Bandhavagarh stone inscription of Yuvarājadeva\(^8\) and Karitalai stone inscription of Lakṣmaṇarāja II\(^9\) in the previous chapter. The present period (c.A.D. 1000-1300) too have some inscriptions and Vaiṣṇava sculptures in the northeastern and eastern parts of Madhya Pradesh.

Bargaon stone inscription of Śabara\(^10\) describes the gift of a cess on a threshing floor together with the granary to some ascetics residing at temple for the settlement of brāhmaṇaś. Bargaon is a village, situated at a distance of 27 miles north by west of Murawara in the Katni district of Madhya Pradesh. The inscription is found incised on a broken slab lying amidst the ruins of a temple to the north of Bargaon. The temple may be of the god Śaṅkara for whose benefit the gift has been given as is mentioned in the inscription-

Śrīśāṅkara nārāyaṇarthe brahmastamvabā- sthanatapodhanasan.....\(^11\)

The inscription opens with the obeisance “om namah”. The name of the god Śaṅkara seems to suggest that the temple was dedicated to Nārāyaṇa installed by Śaṅkara, who is probably identical with the Kalacuri prince of that name mentioned in the Karitalai stone inscription of Lakṣmaṇarāja II.\(^12\) He is called ‘Paraṇa Vaiṣṇava’ in that record. Śabara was the commander of the army.

We have a few sculptures of Viṣṇu found in different places. However the majority of them are detached from the original monuments. They are either preserved in museums or in personal collections. Among the avatāras of Viṣṇu, the Vāmana images so far have not been found intact with the original monuments of the Kalacuris.\(^13\) Similar is the case with the Varāha avatāra. Generally the majority of Nṛ-varāha images are represented with the other major images of Viṣṇu and hence they

\(^11\) Ibid, p. 197, line 3.
\(^12\) Mirashi, V.V., ‘Karitalai Stone Inscription of Prithviraja II’, *CII*, vol. IV, pt. I, pp.
are shown as a subsidiary figure to indicate only incarnation of Viṣṇu. No temple dedicated to Nṛṣimha *avatāra* (in the Kalacuri territory) has been discovered.

Karitalai in Jabalpur may have remained as a Vaiṣṇava centre even in the late Kalacuri period. We have a number of sculptures preserved in Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum in Raipur. An image of Nṛṣimha⁴ shows the four handed god tearing the belly of the demon. The God is wearing sacred thread. The sculpture belongs to 11th century A.D.

Another ferocious image of the God has been kept outside the museum roughly belonging to the same period and place.¹⁵

A 12th century Trivikrama image¹⁶ shows the broken half of the God. The left upper hand is carrying *cakra*, while the right lower is carrying lotus. Other hands and legs are missing.

An 11th century *Caturbhujā Viṣṇu*¹⁷ is shown in *tribhanga mudrā* carrying *cakra* in left upper hand. The right lower hand is in *abhaya mudrā*. Other hands are missing.

A somewhat crude image of Trivikrama¹⁸ is also preserved in this museum carrying *śāṅkha, cakra, gadā* and *varada mudrā*. No date and place are mentioned. It may belong to Karitalai as most of the sculptures are found from this region.

Yoganārāyaṇa image of Viṣṇu¹⁹ shows the God in tranquil posture. The two lower hands are in *yoga mudrā*. Other hands are missing. The image belongs to 11th century A.D.

Among other images preserved in this museum are images of *Vaisnavi*²⁰, *Guruṇārāyaṇa*²¹ and *Caturbhujā Viṣṇu*²². This museum does not mention the find spot and the chronology of these sculptures. They may belong to Karitalai.

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¹⁴ Sculptures of Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Acc. No. 2564.
¹⁵ Ibid, Acc. No. not mentioned.
¹⁶ Ibid, Acc. No. 98.
¹⁹ Ibid, Acc. No. 2558.
²⁰ Ibid, Acc. No. 2560.
²¹ Sculptures of Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Acc. No. 2585.
²² Ibid, Acc. No. 2561.
Besides the images of Viṣṇu and his various incarnations23 along with other sculptures of Lakṣmī, Śiva and Bhairava have been found from Karitalai.

Bilhari in the Katni district has a Viṣṇu Varāha temple of the Kalacuri period.24 A fine image of the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu25 is lying in the compound of the temple. The body of this Boar is entirely carved with figures gods. There are rows Ganeśas and twelve Ādityas on the body of the God.

An excellent image of Lakṣmī- Nārāyaṇa26 is seen in the compound of the temple. Viṣṇu is shown in lalitāsana posture and Lakṣmī is shown sitting on his left lap in ālingana posture. The God is carrying cakra and śaṅkha. Garuḍa is shown as a vāhana in human form and is well decorated with the ornaments.

Apart from this image of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa, we have two other images from Tēwar in Jabalpur district. One is lying in front of a modern shrine in Tēwar.27 Another is preserved in the Jabalpur Museum. The sculptural motif is the same but the figures look heavy because the outlines are not sharp and crisp. The image of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa is surmounted by three miniature śikharas. On either side of the central śikhara, the figures of Nrvarāha and Sthānu Nṛsimha are shown. At the recessed corners other incarnations of Viṣṇu are shown, but they are quite deteriorated. The entire image is in fragmentary state and seems to be later creation of the Kalacuri artists.

There is a Keśavanārāyaṇa temple at Amarkantak in Shajdol district in Madhya Pradesh.28 It has an image of Govinda.29 The God has four arms holding a gadā and a padma with two upper hands and a cakra and śaṅkha with two lower hands. He sat on a padmapīṭha under which his vāhana Garuḍa is shown. A male and a female devotee are shown at two sides of the God. The Vāmana and Buddha are shown behind the

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25 Banerji, R.D., Haihayas of Tripuri and Their Monuments, MASI, No. 23.
27 Ibid, p. 123.
29 Ibid. the texts viz. the Rupamandana and Agnipurāṇa prescribe the arrangement of ēyudhas of Govinda, ft. nt. 4, p. 123.
two devotees. On the left of Garuḍa other incarnations of Viṣṇu i.e. Paraśurāma and Kalki are represented; Balarāma is represented behind Kalkin, with a hala and a drinking cup, whereas behind the figure of Buddha, the sculptural figure of Rāmacandra with dhanuṣa and śara in his hands are shown. Upon the kudya-stambhikas, the figures of Nṛvarāha on the left and Nṛsimha on the right are sculptured. The Matsya and Kürmavatāra are visible on the top. Banerji has placed this image in 12th century A.D.30

II

Several Vaiṣṇava sculptures of the Kalacuri period are found scattered or they have been kept in museums including private collections. Therefore I am dealing with them separately in this section.

The palace of the Thākur of Sohagpur31 has a collection of Kalacuri sculptures- both Jaina and Vaiṣṇava. They claim descent from the Kalacuri Mahārāja of Rewa.

A yogāsanamūrti of Viṣṇu32 is preserved in this palace. The God is shown in padmāsana on a padmapīṭha. The two hands are in yogamudrā, while the two hands are holding the conch and wheel. On each of the upper end of the back slabs are the Boar and the Man lion incarnation of Viṣṇu. On the sides of the head of the main figure are shown the images of Rāma and Vāmana on the left and that of Paraśurāma and Buddha on the right. The Earth goddess is shown seated on a Kūrma in añjali-hastamudrā. This image according to Rahaman Ali33 bears a unique position, and exhibits the advanced workmanship of the Kalacuri artists.

A Śeṣāsayī image of Viṣṇu34 shows the God sleeping on the coils of Ananta.

The palace of Sohagpur contains large slabs of stones bearing reliefs. The first of these represent the well known story of Kṛṣṇa35- Kṛṣṇa with gopīs, Ariṣṭāsuravadha.
uprooting the Yamalārjuna tree, Vāsudeva taking the child Kṛṣṇa from Mathura to Gokula, Putanāvadha, Śakaṭavadha, Kṛṣṇa levying contributions of milk and butter from the milkmaids of Gokula, birth of Kṛṣṇa, Kāliyanāga of Gokula, Govardhanadhārana, etc.

About the Kṛṣṇāvatara, one thing is to be mentioned that no stray icon of the God has so far been discovered from the Kalacuri territory.36

We find many sculptural śilāpatṭas and the fragmentary stambhas, which narrate the various Purānic stories and other incidents connected with the life of Kṛṣṇa. The God is mostly depicted on the bas-relief in action (showing various wonderful exploits).

Out of them one specimen is found from Shahdol district.37 This is unique because the figure of Lakṣmī is also shown serving Devakī by holding her right leg. Devakī is seated on an embroidered māsuraka and baby Kṛṣṇa is sleeping on Ananta. Both are shadowed by Nāga hoods. The śankha, cakra and other weapons of Viṣṇu are shown supporting the maṅca. A row of seven standing mail figures is represented just behind the figure of Devakī. They were induced to stupor by Yogamāyā, and the figure of Yogamāyā may be seen standing very close to Lakṣmī. She holds a powerful asanīdana (thunderbolt), which is clearly visible in the hand of female figure. This belongs to the first quarter of 11th century A.D. This image is now in Dhubela Museum in Chhatarpur district.

An interesting image of Śesāsayī Viṣṇu38 is discovered at Shahdol. The God is holding śankha and cakra. His right leg is supported by Lakṣmī who is seated on a māsuraka and massaging it. Brahmā is represented on the padmanābha issued from the navel of Viṣṇu. The figures of Matsya, Kurma, Nṛvarāha, Sthānu Nṛsimha and Kalki are displayed on the pītha.

An image of Sthānu Nṛsimha was found from the village Antara in Shahdol district. This specimen is noteworthy because of its excellent depiction of legend and its artistic features. The body of Hiranyakaśipu is thrown on the right by Nṛsimha who is shown busy in pulling out the entrails of demon with his two hands. It belongs to somewhat early period, to 9th century A.D.

The State museum at Dhubela in Chhatarpur district contains two images of Vāmana avatāra Viṣṇu. In both the images, the God is shown holding gadā, cakra, padma and varadānudrā. The main figure is surrounded by the incarnations of Viṣṇu-Kūrma, Matsya, Nṛvarāha, Nṛsimha, Paraśurāma, Rāma, Kalkin, etc.

The museum also has an image of Nṛvarāha.

III

North Eastern Madhya Pradesh seems to have become an important Kalacuri centre in this period. We have a number of Vaiṣṇava sculptures and two inscriptions from this region. Makundpur stone inscription of Gāngeyadeva records that the śreṣṭhin Dāmodara, the ornament of the family of Grhapatī caused a temple of Jalaśāyī to be constructed. Makundpur is a village about 9 miles south by west of Rewa on Madhya Pradesh. The record is incised on a slab lying on the ruins of a small temple situated to northwest of Rupasāgara, a large tank at Makundpur. The inscription refers to the reign of Gāngeyadeva. It belongs to A.D. 1019.

Rewa plates of the time of Trailokyaamalladeva belonging to 1212 A.D. starts with an invocatory verse in praise of Kṛṣṇa-

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\begin{align*}
\text{j}ay\text{\-}j\text{\-}\text{ayatu}\text{-}\text{devo deva} & \text{-}\text{nanda} \text{-}\text{yam} \\
\text{j}ay\text{\-}\text{ayatu } k\text{\-}\text{r} \text{\-} \text{n} \text{\-} \text{vr} \text{\-} \text{ni} \text{-} \text{vans} \text{-} \text{a} \text{-} \text{pradi} \text{\-} \text{pah} \\
\text{j}ay\text{\-}\text{ayatu } \text{megha } \text{s} \text{\-} \text{y} \text{\-} \text{mala} \text{\-} \text{h} \text{-} \text{komal} \text{-} \text{ango} \\
\text{j}ay\text{\-}\text{ayatu } \text{prthvi} \text{-} (\text{b} \text{\-} \text{ha} \text{-} \text{n} \text{\-} \text{si} \text{-} \text{muk} \text{\-} \text{ndo} \text{\-} \text{h}) \\
\end{align*}
\]

40 Ibid, p. 125.
The inscription is basically a Śaiva inscription containing the seal of Trailokyamalladeva. It is not a usual land grant but is a viṭṭa-bandha or deed of mortgage for the village Alira, situated in the Dhavahaṭṭa pattana (Dhureti). Dhureti is a village about 7 miles from the Rewa town from where the inscription is found.

Apart from these two inscriptions, there are several places in the Rewa district, which yield the image of Viṣṇu.

Gurh is one such place. An image of Nṛvarāha is discovered from here. The God is shown in ālīdha posture. The earth goddess is shown on the left shoulder of the God.

We have an outstanding image of Sthānu Nṛṣimha at Gurh. The eight-handed God is shown in vaikhānsāgama mudrā. Two of his hands are holding śankha and cakra and other two hands are tearing the belly of the demon. Other hands of the God are broken. Many mutilated human figures are visible on either side of Nṛṣimha. They might be Śrīdevī, Bhūdevī and Prahlāda. The image is fixed on the fencing wall of a temple known as Kaśṭaharana temple in the village.

One stambha found from Gurh in the Rewa district contains the scenes from the life of Kṛṣṇa like Pūtanāvadha, Balarāma-Kṛṣṇa going to Mathura, Kubjāvadha, Cānuravadha, Keśīvadha, Trnāvatadha, Kāliyadamana, Govardhanadārana, etc. Another stambha from Marai in Rewa district shows the Kṛṣṇavatāra scenes.

On the slabs of the tank at Marai, there is a beautiful image of Śeṣaśayi. The God is recumbent on a bed with the hood of the snake Ananta spread as a canopy over his head. Navagrahās are also depicted in the image. Under the bed is a horse and an elephant with the conch shell in centre is depicted. Two mutilated figures are visible near his left leg in the act of supplication. Most probably they are demons- Madhu and Kaiṭabha. Near the right leg of Viṣṇu a defaced female figure is visible and very close

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48 Ibid, pp. 133-34.
49 Banerji, R.D., MASI, No, 23, p. 94.
to her another standing female with an indistinct object in her right is shown. They may be Lakṣmī and Bhūdevī respectively.

In the pillar found on the bank of the stepped tank of Marai, the second band has four images of Viṣṇu, each having lotus, wheel, mace, conch, etc. in respective hands.⁵⁰ The second face of the pillar shows different incarnations in different bands like Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Buddha, Kalkin, Rāma / Paraśurāma, Nṛsimha, Viṣṇu on Garuda, etc. The third and four faces contain Vaiṣṇava images and symbols.

Gurgi in Rewa district has one šilapatta depicting the legend of the birth of Kṛṣṇa.⁵¹ Devakī is shown fondling the baby Kṛṣṇa asleep. This specimen is a superb production of a master hand of 11th century A.D.

From the findings of such šilapattas showing the birth of Kṛṣṇa it appears that the legends of Kṛṣṇa birth were popular in society.

The Śeṣaśayī image of lord Viṣṇu has been discovered from Rewa.⁵² The God is holding cakra and śankha. The figures of Kūrma, Matsya, Kalkin and Buddha are shown behind the serpent canopy.

Towards the end of Kalacuri rule in the northeastern Madhya Pradesh there is an inscription found from Karanbel, a village now in ruins near Bhera Ghat, which records the construction of the temple of Viṣṇu.⁵³ The object of the inscription is to record the construction of a lofty temple of Viṣṇu apparently at Karanbel by Harigaṇa. He caused this temple to be constructed out of his love for his chaste wife.

The inscription gives the genealogy of the Kalacuri rulers of Tripuri from Karna to Vijayasimha. The prevalence of the Caturbhujā form of Viṣṇu is discernible with the invoking of four arms of Viṣṇu as representing dharma, artha, kāma and nirvāṇa. Next is the invocation of the man lion form of Viṣṇu tearing the heart of the demon Hiranyākṣa. The roarings of Viṣṇu has been praised and he is described as the lion of

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⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 95-97.
⁵² Ibid.
Vaikuṇṭha. There seems to be constant reference of Vaikuṇṭha, the abode of Viṣṇu in this period. The Cakrapāṇi form of Viṣṇu is also invoked. After that there is reference of the story of the drinking of nectar by Rāhu in the guise of a god. At the beginning of the inscription it mentions the cutting of head of Rāhu by Viṣṇu. Among the various attributes of Viṣṇu, his Kaustubha jewel and vanamālā are also mentioned in the inscription.

With these sculptures discovered from Rewa and nearby places it appears that it might have one or two temples of Viṣṇu, which did not survive the onslaught of the time. However there must have flourished some Vaiśṇava temples in this region in the Kalacuri period, though this region is particularly noted for the Śaiva ascetics.

IV

Chhattisgarh division of erstwhile Madhya Pradesh was under the rule of Ratanpur branch of the Kalacuri rulers. As per the general trend prevailing in the Kalacuri region, Śaivism was the dominant religion in this period. However, there are some pockets of Vaiśṇava worship in this region- some of them were already there, while others were new creations.

Of the Vaiśṇava temples of the Chhattisgarh region, Rājivalocana temple is the most famous and the revered temple. Even now it occupies an important place among the pilgrim centres of Chhattisgarh. The temple was built by Nala king Vilāsatūnga. It was frequently visited by the devotees even in the late Kalacuri period. This is clearly attested by the Rajim stone inscription of Prthvīdeva II. The inscription is incised on a stone slab let into the left wall of the mandapa of the temple of Rājivalocana at Rajim. Rajim is a village 29 miles south east of Raipur in the Mahasamund tehsil of Raipur district. The object in the inscription is to record the construction of the temple of Rāma and the grant of village Sālmaliya for the purpose of the naivedya or offerings of food to the deity by Jagapāla.

Idr(śah) ca bhavtpunso jagapālopi sundaram(rah)

Map V: Vaiśṇava Centres (Temple Sites) in Chhattisgarh [1000 A.D.-1300 A.D.]

Not according to scale
i.e. such is Jagapāla. He has caused this beautiful temple to be constructed for the manifesting the splendour of Rāma.

After the customary obeisance to Nārāyaṇa, the inscription traces the genealogy of the donor Jagapāla from the Thakkura Sāhilla. He had emigrated from the country of Vaḍahara. Sāhilla seems to have come as a military adventurer to Chhattisgarh where his descendants settled down as feudatories or the generals of the Kalacuri princes of Ratanpur whom they helped to extend their territories. Hiralal identifies Vaḍahara with the Badahara in the Mirjapur district under the rule of the Bhañjas.56

However Prof. Mirashi identifies the place from somewhere on eastern coast. Vaḍahara may have been identical with district Vodā mentioned in the Antirigam plates of Yaśabhañjadeva.57 The Vivarabhûmi which has been mentioned as the land conquered by Sāhilla appears to be another name of Pātāla or the nether world. Prof. Mirashi mentions Navasāhasāṅkacarita of Padmagupta58 that Chhattisgarh was so designated by the Sankrit poets of 11th century A.D.

The younger brother of Sāhilla was named Vāsudeva. Jagapāla was the third generation of this family. He was appointed in the service of Jājalladeva I. During the reign of Prthvīdeva II, he acquired the name of Jagatsimha (lion of the world). Next his various exploits have been mentioned. He helped his master in the battle against Anantavarman Coḍagangā, in Talahārī mandala (usually identified with southern part of Bilaspur district). He had three brothers with the help of them he is said to have conquered the whole world.

Thus Sāhilla who came to Chhattisgarh as a military adventurer had his descendants settled here as feudatories or generals of the Kalacuri princes of Ratanpur whom they helped to extend their dominions. Settlement at a new place would naturally have required some sort of legitimacy and familiarity of the region. He extended his support to the already existing temple of Rājivalocana and renovated it. The temple

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55 Ibid, p. 455, verse 22.
56 Ibid, p. 452, ft. nt. 3.
57 Ibid, p.452, ft nt. 3.
was already there; this we know from the inscription of the Nala ruler Vilāsatūṅga. And this inscription also mentions a person named Muktātman, the owner of the temple in verse 24, line 15. This shows that temple was already there and owned and looked after by the above-mentioned person. He is described as ‘bhagavān kāḥ’. He could be the priest of the temple. He is also engaged in practicing self-control, vows, the study of sacred texts and meditation.

Sālmaiya granted for the naivedya of the deity is said to be now deserted and in lieu of it the village Rohana situated not far from the ancient site of Salmali was subsequently granted. It lies 10 miles south east of Rajim in the Mahasamund tehsil and is still appropriated to the worship of Rājivalocana. The inscription is dated in the Kalacuri era 896 i.e. Wednesday 3rd January 1145 AC.

Besides the above facts what is noticeable is that the inscription specially refers to the worship of Rāma in this part of the region. The feudatory lord at many places tried to compare himself with the Kṣatriya Rāma, of course to draw legitimacy from the legendary Kṣatriya. It is said in the inscription that as Rāma destroyed the family of the demons Jagapāla killed the forces of his enemies with multitude of arrows (v.10). At another place he is described as bearing the splendour of Rāma (Rāmasobhopi, V.18) and compared with valour of Rāma (vikramena yathā rāmo, v.19).

The composer of this inscription, who hailed from Ayodhyā, is named Jasnānanda. He is said to have been the devout worshipper of both Maheśvara and Viṣṇu.

\[Iti \text{ Ayodhyāpurīyānvaye mahāmāhesva (śva) raparamavaisṇavya mahāpanditaṭhakkura śrījasodhareṇa}^{59}\]

The inscription was issued on an auspicious day Budha-dīna or Wednesday, the eighth tithi, called rathāśṭami, on the bright fortnight of the month of Māgha.

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The temple was originally constructed by the Nala king Vilāsatuṅga as we have already observed in the previous chapter. Jagapāla may have been involved in the repairing of the temple. The present deity established in the sanctum may belong to the Kalacuri period. However the structure of the temple belongs to the Nala period. Since the renovation of the temple is concerned with the establishment of the deity, Jagapāla took the credit of the construction of the temple. It seems that Rāma is the dominant deity of this region.

Apart from this inscription, there is a temple called Deur temple at Gandai in Rajnandgaon district not very far from Raipur. The temple is dedicated to Śiva. However it contains the images of Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa seated on Garuḍa, Rāma, Balarāma, Varāha, Kṛṣṇa, Nṛṣimha, Hanumān, Mahiśāsuramardini, Viṣṇu and Rāmalīlā and Kṛṣnalīlā scenes. The temple belongs to the 13th century A.D.

The presence of Vaiśṇavas in the area in and around Raipur can be deduced from the Paragaon plates of Ratnadeva II. The village Paragaon is about 7 miles north of Baloda Bazar in the Raipur district of Chhattisgarh. It records the grant by Ratnadeva II of the village Vodalā, situated in Kośala, on the occasion of the solar eclipse, which occurred in the month of Kārttika. The donee was Padmanābha, the son of Hariśarman and grandson of Sahadeva who had emigrated from village Gori. The inscription is dated Wednesday, the first tīthi of the bright fortnight of Āśvina in the Kalacuri year 885, corresponding to 19th September 1134 A.D. The name of the donee and his father points to the Vaiśṇava affiliation of the same. Padmanābha has been compared with the God Padmanābha (Viṣṇu) in righteous conduct in the inscription. There is a reference to the devouring of sun by Rāhu I the month of Kārttika. The Rāhu episode is closely related with Viṣṇu. That might be the reason to grant land to a Vaiśṇava.

The last inscription from this period referring to the construction of one or the other forms of Viṣṇu is found from Sihwa. The inscription is on a slab built on the wall of the temple of the Karnesvara temple at Sihwa in Dhamtari tehsil of the Raipur district.

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in Chhattisgarh. The object of the inscription is to record the construction of five temples, two in his parents' name, two in his own name, and one in his issueless brother's name, by king Karnarāja of Kaikara, and of one by his wife Bhopalladevi. All the temples were built in the sacred place Devahṛada. The main temple was that of Śiva. The other, which he built for himself, was dedicated to Keśava, who apparently occupied a secondary place. The inscription is dated in Śaka era 1114, which corresponds to year 1191-92 A.D. A large portion of the Sihwa tract is regarded as a piece of holy land. Local tradition considers it as the hermitage of rṣi Śringin, who is still worshipped here. Five miles from this place is the village Ratawa where Angara (Angīrāsa rṣi) used to live and Mucukunda had his āśrama in the village Mechaka, 22 miles from Sihwa. About 10 miles west of Sihwa there is Devakūta (the hillock of the gods), which also contains ruins of old temples. One of these temples must have been dedicated to Keśava, which has been mentioned in the inscription. Bhopala devī was a Vaiśṇavī. It might be in deference to her that Kamarāja dedicated one of his temples to Keśava.

One stone inscription supplying the name Āditya Varāha is found from Murumura in Dhamtari tahsil of Raipur district.63

A sculpture in the Mahant Ghasidas Museum in Raipur district shows the Śeṣāsayī form of Viṣṇu found from Dhamtari tehsil in Raipur district.64 The God is carrying śankha, cakra, gadā and lotus. This thirteenth century image has the incarnations of Viṣṇu depicted above the sculpture. Among them Kalki, Balarāma, Nṛṣimha etc. can be identified.

The area in and around Raipur remained the affiliated to Vaiṣṇava faith as is evident from the Khalari stone inscription of Haribrahmadeva65, dated 1415 A.D. The object of the inscription is to record the foundation of a temple of Nārāyaṇa by a moci (shoemaker) Devapāla at Khalavāṭikā, modern day Khalari, 28 miles from Raipur. The inscription begins with an obeisance to Gaṇapati, Bhāratī and Nārāyaṇa. The inscription stands unique as it provides the only reference to a shoemaker sponsoring

63 ASIAR, 1916-17, p. 21.
64 Mahant Ghasidas Memorial Museum, Acc. No.
the construction of a Viṣṇava temple. This is a rather unusual example, as the making of a temple is associated with both high social status and sound economic wealth which a shoe maker was not expected to possess. A shoe maker is not even a Śūdra; he is of a lower status, an untouchable. The inscription refers to the residence of brāhmins nearby. And the composer and engraver of the inscription is a brāhmiṇ. The socio-economic reality of the period might have helped this shoemaker to improve his situation both financially and socially. Even earlier, Suvarnakāras have been found associated with the royal dynasty as engravers during Pânduvamśin rule.

Bilaspur, another district of Chhattisgarh has some Viṣṇava temples of the Kalacuri period. The local people of this district greatly respect the memory of the Kalacuri king Jājalladeva II, generally called as Jājalladevaji Mahārāja. All the main temples of this region are connected with the name of this king in the popular memory. Among them one is in Janjgir village situated 2 miles from the Naila station. This is an incomplete temple containing Viṣṇava figures on the walls such as Varāha, Nṛṣimha. The corners of the temple contain the devī figures, dancing girls, ascetics and griffins. On the back wall, Sūrya has the place of honour in the principal niche. Above the doorway of the shrine are carved the Hindu trinity, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, Viṣṇu being in the centre. In between them are nine planets. The shrine is empty. As it was left unfinished, it may never have had an image. But it is certainly a Viṣṇava building. It is said that the builders of this temple and the highly ornate temple at Pali held a competition as to which should be finished first. When the Pali building was completed, the Janjgir temple was stopped. However when I visited the site the local people connected it with the Seorinarayan temple. According to another person there were five temples on the site of which only two survived— the Viṣṇu and the nearby Śiva temple. This can be true as the Kalacuri rulers often refer to five deities — Viṣṇu, Śiva, Bhāratī, Ganaṭati and Durgā- in their inscriptions.

Janjgir though it was under the Śaiva rulers of the Kalacuris, there were some persons related to Viṣṇava sect at this place. If the name of the person has anything to do with the religious affiliation of the person concerned, there was a sizeable number of

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influential Vaiśṇavas in this area. Amoda plates of Prthvīdeva I refer to the donation of the village Vasāhā in the Apara Mandala on the occasion of the construction of a catuṣṭikā, or a hall resting on four pillars, of the temple of Vānkeśvara in Tummāna. The donee was the brāhmaṇa Keśava. The grant was made on seventh titi of the dark fortnight of Phālguna of year 831, corresponding to 27th January 1079 A.D. The great grandson of the donee is Yaśodeva. The śresthin also made a gift of land to the same brāhmaṇa. Vasāhā the donated village is identified with Basaha, about 12 miles north by east from Bilaspur. Tummāna, which has been the first capital of the Kalacuris of the Ratanpur, has been identified with Tumain, 45 miles north of Ratanpur.

An earlier inscription also talks of brāhmaṇa Keśava as the chief priest.

Similarly Daikoni plates of Prthvīdeva II records the grant of village Budukuni situated in the Madhyadeśa to the brāhmaṇa Viṣṇu. Daikoni is a village 7 miles due north of Janjgir in Bilaspur district. The grant of the village has been made on the occasion of the lunar eclipse on the fifteenth titi of bright fortnight of Kārttika. The plates were issued on 11th titi of dark fortnight of Mārgaśirsa in year 890, corresponding to 30th October 1138 A.D. the name of the brāhinī indicates his Vaiśṇava affiliation while the name of his father is Śivadeva indicating Śaiva affiliation. The village Budukoni is identical with Daikoni. Once again there is a donation of land to a Vaiśṇava brāhmaṇa on the occasion of an eclipse.

Seorinarayan plates of Ratnadeva II of a slightly earlier period (1127 A.D.) than the above mentioned inscription records the donation of the village Tineri, situated in the viṣaya of Anarghavalli, on the occasion of a lunar eclipse. The donee was Nārāyaṇaśarman, the son of Tribhuvanapāla and grandson of Śilāditya. The name of the donee indicates Vaiśṇava affiliation. More important than this is the occasion of lunar eclipse being used to give a grant to a Vaiśṇava brāhinī despite the ruler being Śaiva. Anarghavallī is probably the modern Janjgir tahsil. The village Tineri could not be identified.

Another temple is in Seorinarayan, a village in Janjgir tehsil, 39 miles southeast of Bilaspur on the old Sambhalpur road. The temple is dedicated to Nārāyaṇa from which the place derives its name. The name of the deity is found in the inscription on one of its tablets. The temple is said to have been built in the Kalacuri year 898 or 1146 A.D. A small fair is held here on the last day of Māgh (Jan-Feb) continuing for five days. Nearby is a Śiva temple to which an inscription is attached. The inscription is of Jājjaldeva II of Kalacuri dynasty, dated 1167-68 A.D.

Mention here can be made of the Śabarī temple at Kharod. Kharod is about 2 miles to the north of Seorinarayan in the Janjgir tehsil of the Bilaspur district. According to the Archaeological Survey of India list of temples, it is a Vaiṣṇava temple. When I visited the site, I found a modern Durgā sculpture kept inside the sanctum. The image on the lalātabimba is not clear. It resembles the figure of Ganeśa. Narayan Rao, the senior Archaeologist calls it the figure of Garuḍa. Among other sculptures are Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Śiva, Lakṣmī, Nāgakanyās, Ardhanārīśvara and other goddesses. Judging by the predominance of the Śaiva sculptures, it can be the temple of a goddess.

In this connection I would like to mention the Kharod inscription of Ratnadeva III. The object of the inscription is to record the benefactions of Ratnadeva’s minister Gangādhara at Kharod and other places. He reconstructed the mandapa of the temple, to which the stone bearing the inscription is fixed. He also built evidently at Kharod, a spacious and beautiful mandapa of Saurī. He built another mandapa in honour of Purarati (Śiva) and temples of Hara and Herāmbā at Vadada in the forest tract. This is a typical example of a Kalacuri king making temples or mandapas for the five deities. It is dated in the Cedi year 933 corresponding to 1181-82 A.D. Nārāyanpura, which lies 20 miles to south west of Kharod, in the Baloda Bazar tahsil of Raipur district has a medieval temple of Viṣṇu. The genealogy of the minister Gangādhara is mentioned in the inscription. His grand father, Devadhara has been compared with Hari. As Hari was foremost in the act of lifting up the earth, even so he was in succouring men sunk in adversity.

Yathā dharoddhāravidhau dhurino haristathā sopi vipad gatānām.\textsuperscript{74}

At another place the tank constructed by him is said to have resembled Hari who shines with the discus and the lotus (v.38, .542). The king is adored by the world and frees it from oppression like the way Viṣṇu did.

Koni stone inscription of Prthvīdeva II\textsuperscript{75} can be counted among those which testify to the presence of Vaiṣṇava following in the midst of otherwise dominant Śaiva region. Koni is a small village on the left bank of Arpa river, 10 miles south by east of Bilaspur. The object of the inscription is to record the construction of five-shrined temple of Śiva by Puruṣottma. Puruṣottma is a minister plenipotentiary (sarvādhistāra) of Prthvīdeva’s father and predecessor Ratnadeva II. The inscription also records grant of some land in honour of the god installed in the temple. On the occasion of a solar eclipse Prthvīdeva II granted village Saloni to Puruṣottma. Puruṣottma was probably an old man at the time of present inscription. He had four sons all bearing the Vaiṣṇava names- Madhusūdana, Lakṣmīdhara, Yaśodhara and Gangādhara. All his sons were able statesman according to the inscription. Of them Madhusūdana is said to have attained great prowess. The inscription also mentions various benevolent works of the minister. He raised several groves, erected many mathas and mandapas (temples) and excavated a deep tank at Ratnapura. These descriptions point towards the Śaiva orientation of Puruṣottma. However the name of his sons and his own name clearly shows Vaiṣṇava affiliation. The chief priest of the temple is Vāsudeva again showing Vaiṣṇava inclination. The king Prthvīdeva II has been compared with both Vaiṣṇava (Pradyumna and Hari) and Śaiva deities (Śaiva). At another place Purusottama is compared with Karna and Rāma (v.20, p.468). Not only this, even the pañcāyatana temple of Śiva is compared with Dvārakā on earth (v.32, p.469). This site has also yielded the figures of Viṣṇu and Sūrya apart from the Śiva temple. Saloni the village granted to the temple of Śiva is identified with Saraoni, which lies about a mile and a half south by west of Koni where the present record is discovered. The date of the inscription is 20\textsuperscript{th} April 1148 A.D.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, v. 20, p.538.
\textsuperscript{75} Mirashi, V.V., ‘Koni stone inscription of Prthvīdeva II’, CII, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 463-83

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Turning towards another part of Chhattisgarh for the presence of Vaiṣṇava footprints, we come across Kanker, the capital of a former feudatory state. Tahankapar plate of Pamparājadeva\(^76\) is a good example. Tahankapar is 18 miles from Kanker. This is a business document, executed at the (royal) residence in Kākairā, in favour of one Lakṣmīdhara. The object of it is to fix the revenue of the village Jaiparā. Pamparāja was the feudatory of the Kalacuri rulers. The inscription is dated on Monday the 10\(^{th}\) titī of the dark fortnight of Bhādrapada in year 965, corresponding to 12\(^{th}\) August 1213 A.D. the charter was written by Pandita Viṣṇuṣarman and incised by sethi Keśava. Both the persons were having Vaiṣṇava names. It also mentions many royal officials as witnesses. Most of them bear Vaiṣṇava names- Bhatta Rānaka Govinda, Gaintā Lakṣmīdhara and Nāyaka Dāmodara. Jaiparā the village has been identified with Jaipra, 15 miles north of Kanker.

Another inscription found from the same place refers to the grant of village by Pamparājadeva and his son.\(^77\) The present plate is granted, while they were residing at Pāḍi. The object of the present record is to register two grants- one of the village Kongara made before the god Prānkeśvara by Pamparājadeva and the other of village Āṇdali, situated in the same district, by his son Bopadeva on the occasion of a solar eclipse. This eclipse occurred on Sunday, in the month of Kārttika in the cyclic year Īśvara the nakṣatra being Citrā. It corresponds to 5\(^{th}\) October 1214 A.D. The donee of the present grant is once again Gaintā Lakṣmīdhara, who appeared as witness in the last inscription.

The writer and the engraver of this inscription are again Pandita Viṣṇuṣarman and sethi Keśava respectively. Besides the royal officials mentioned in this inscription include some Vaiṣṇava names- Lakṣmīdevī, the queen, Nārāyaṇa, Govinda, Dāmodara and Viṣṇuṣarman. The donee of the grant is the son of Gaintā Gadādhara and grandson of Gaintā Mādhavaśarman. The name of the ancestors of the donee clearly shows him to be a Vaiṣṇava by faith. Moreover the donation on a solar eclipse is more or less confined to a Vaiṣṇava brahmīn seeing the previous tradition. This also indicates Vaiṣṇava leanings of the donee. That he was present at this place for a


long period and had important influence on the economic arena of the state is clearly visible. Pādi has been identified with Pade, 18 miles west by south of Kanker. Kongarā the village granted by Pamparājadeva can be one of the three villages lying close to Kanker namely, Deo Kongera and Kongera Biyas, 4 miles to south east and Hat Kongera 5 miles to north of Kanker. Āndali, the village granted by Bopadeva is Andani, 6 miles east of Kanker.

The forested tract of Chhattisgarh has some inscriptions referring to Vaiṣṇava temples and inscriptions. This region remained by far outside the domain of the Kalacuri rulers. Bastar region in south Chhatisgarh extends over an area of 13,000 square miles, all covered with dense forest and populated by tribes. The region was under the Nāgavamśi rulers. Barsur, a place 55 miles west of Jagdalpur (capital of ancient Bastar), contains ruins of many ancient temples and sculptures. Among the numerous images, that of Viṣṇu is noticeable. Though the region was not so under the brāhmanic influence, the tutelary goddess of the Nāgavamśi rulers was Dānteśvarī Devī. Dantewara (20 miles south of Barsur) contains the shrine of Dānteśvarī. The temple is built at the junction of two rivers called Šankhini and Dānkini and is notorious as a place where human sacrifices were formerly annually offered. The names of these two rivers themselves depict the presence of both Brāhmanic and tribal elements at this place. The temple of Dānteśvarī contains various images like Viṣṇu, Kārttikeya, Ganeśa, etc. Indian archaeology in general also gives reference to the Vaiṣṇava sculptures attached to the temple. Among the sculptures that are Vaiṣṇava, but attached to the Devī temples are Dānteśvarī Devī temple at Dantewada in Bastar district and Mahāmāyā temple at Dhamdaha in Durg district.

The only Vaiṣṇava inscription from this region is Narayanpal Stone inscription of Gunda Mahādevī. Narayanpal is a village 23 miles northwest of Jagdalpur, situated on the right bank of Indravati. Hiralal considers Indravati as the boundary between the

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78 Hiralal, 'Inscriptions from the Bastar State', EI, vol. 9, p. 160.
81 Hiralal, 'Narayanpal Stone inscription of Gunda Mahadevi', EI, vol. 9, pp. 311-316.
North Indian and the South Indian peoples. All the inscriptions to the north of Indrāvatī are written in Nāgari characters, while all to the south are written in Telugu. It appears that the Nāgavamśī kings, though ruling on both the sides of the river, had fixed it as the ethnic or at least the linguistic boundary for the convenience of the Northern and Southern peoples under their sway. This inscription found on the north bank of the river is in Nāgari characters.

The Narayanpal inscription contains the usual symbol of the cow and the calf, the sun and moon and the Śivalinga. According to Hiralal, sun and moon represent that the grant is to last as long as these luminaries endure. Śiva is the protector against violation of the grant on the spiritual side and dagger and shield of the king on temporal side. The cow and calf depict the grave sin the transgressor would commit, exactly equal to taking away the cow from the calf.\(^2\) It also shows the half-brāhmanized portion of the Nāgavamśīs containing both cow and calf on one side and dagger and sword on other side. Whatever may be the meaning, the use of symbols, in a way, points to the tribal affiliation of the dynasty.

The inscription records the grant of the village Nārāyaṇapura to the God Nārāyaṇa and some land near the Kharjuri tank to the God Lokeśvara. It is dated in the Śaka era 1033 on Wednesday, the full moon day of the Kārttika month in the Khara samvatsara, corresponding to 18\(^{th}\) October 1111 A.D. The donor was Gunda Mahādevī the chief queen of Mahārāja Dhārāvala, the mother of Someśvaradeva and the grand mother of Kanhareva. The last of the rulers is mentioned as ruling. The dynasty claims Bhogavatī as the best of the cities. The Nārāyaṇapura of the inscription is Narayanpal. The temple of Narayanpal is still standing there. The image of Viṣṇu is canopied by a hooded snake, showing tribal influence. The region seems to be partially urbanised as it has Bhogavatī, best among other cities. And the region is partially under Vaiṣṇava influence because a part of grant is donated to the God Lokeśvara, a form of Śiva.

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\(^2\) Hiralal, ‘Inscriptions from the Bastar State’, *EI*, vol. 9, p. 164.
While writing about the geographical spread of Vaiṣṇavism, one cannot forget the contribution of the Candellas. Candella Yaśovarman made the Lakṣmana temple at Khajuraho and similar other temples in the region. However towards the beginning of the 11th century A.D., the region came under the attack of Mahmūd Ghazanî. It probably accounted for less construction of the temples in this period. The state was naturally directed towards the security of the region than the construction of the temples. The only Candella inscription referring to the construction of a Vaiṣṇava temple comes from Jhansi. Mau stone inscription of Madanavarma 83 records the construction of a temple of Viṣṇu, building of a tank near the village of Deddu and the execution of some other works of piety by one of the king’s minister whose name appears to have been Gadadhara. Mau is a town in Jhansi district. The inscription starts with the obeisance to someone who though possessed of a divine body, which is marked by the Śrīvatsa, is yet wholly unperceived:

Śrīvatsāṅga dadhadapi vapurddivyamavyakta eva. 84

At another place, it mentions Viṣṇu as Śrīdhara. Madanavarma was a later Candella ruler while the minister Gadādhara was the hereditary ruling class of this region under the Candellas. The inscription is not dated; it may belong to the middle of the 12th century A.D.

Not very far from the Jhansi town, there is a place Lalitpur, 56 miles to the south of Jhansi. The region in and around it has numerous temples. Some of them are dedicated to Viṣṇu:

Bhadana in Lalitpur district has a group of three temples 85, two of which are dedicated to Viṣṇu, while the third was dedicated to Śiva.

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84 Ibid, p. 197, verse 1.
85 Mukherjee, P.C., Report on the Antiquities in the District Lalitpur, North West Provinces of India,
The temple of Jhammar\textsuperscript{86} in Chandpur is dedicated to Viṣṇu. Similarly in Chandpur itself, there is a group of ruined Hindu temples mostly dedicated to Viṣṇu.\textsuperscript{87} One of them has an undated inscription the characters of which appear to belong to the 12\textsuperscript{th} century. Another group of badly ruined temples is dedicated to Varāha.\textsuperscript{88} Among the ruins still stands the stone lingam of a crudely fashioned Boar, which is covered, with representations of the deities of Hindu pantheon. An inscription in the front of the pedestal (on which the Boar stands) is dated to 1150 A.D.

Dudhai is small village 18 miles south of Lalitpur. It has a small shrine with the Varāha incarnation under a four-pillar canopy.\textsuperscript{89} Similarly the rock cut sculpture of a four-armed image of Nṛsimha\textsuperscript{90} is found to the north of Ramsagar Lake in Dudhai. The God is shown in the act of slaying Hiranyakaśipu. About half a mile south west of the lake, there was an image of Varāha, which has been shifted to State Museum at Lucknow.\textsuperscript{91}

Apart from these, the chief archaeological remains near the lake comprise the ruins of some old temples of Candella times, which occupy the ridge to the west of the lake.\textsuperscript{92} The principal group consists of groups of Jaina and Hindu temples. Among the Hindu temples, there are some dedicated to lingam shrines, some to Brahmā and two Varāha shrines:

Gurh is a small village on the left bank of the Dhasan about 55 miles east of Jhansi. A small Viṣṇu temple has been found in this area comprising many a shrine and a porch.\textsuperscript{93}

Judging by the findings of the Viṣṇu temples it is probable that this area might have been a flourishing centre containing many Vaiṣṇava shrines.

\textsuperscript{86} Uttar Pradesh district Gazetteer – Jhansi, p. 334.  
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid, p. 334.  
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid, pp. 333-34.  
\textsuperscript{89} Cunningham, A., ASI Reports, \textit{Tour in Bundelkhand and Malwa}, vol. X, Varanasi, 1996.  
\textsuperscript{90} Jhansi District Gazetteer, p. 339.  
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid, p.338.  
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid, p. 339.  
While on my fieldwork I visited Rani Mahal Museum at Jhansi. The museum is more like a reserve or store of the sculptures. It contains numerous sculptures of different religious sects. Of them, many are Vaiṣṇava sculptures. The museum does not give the exact find spots of these sculptures. However, all of them have been collected from the areas like Chandpur, Manpur, Banpur, Dudhai, Lalitpur, etc. A table on the next page gives the important Vaiṣṇava forms found in this museum.

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</table>

Courtesy: Rani Mahal Museum, Jhansi

This table clearly shows that the Caturbhujā form of Viṣṇu became quite prevalent in this region towards the end of my period. All the sculptures of this museum roughly belong to the 12th-13th century A.D. The avatāras like Varāha, Vāmana and Nrṣimha started losing ground to the Caturbhujā Viṣṇu. However the influence of the Varāha
avatāra still lingers on. The Ramvan Museum copper Plate Inscription of Trailokyavarman⁹⁴ records the donation made by the ruler, of the village Varāhī. The village lies in the viśaya Patisā, which has been identified as Patiha, 16 kms west of Nagod. The village Varāhī has been identified with the modern village of the same name, lying about 8 kms south by west of Nagod. The king made the donation during his stay at the fort of Jayapura, which is Ajaygadh. Some of the names of the donees show Vaiṣṇava affiliation, like Vāsudeva, Dharanidhara, Purusottama, Govinda, Nārāyaṇa, etc. The inscription is dated 11th March, 1226 A.C. Thus Varāha incarnation has left its legacy.

A large number of toranas in this table shows that all of them belong to the lalāṭabimba of a Vaiṣṇava temple. In all these toranas, either Viṣṇu or some of his incarnations is placed in the middle. Thus it is clearly visible that at least 24 temples might have existed during the Candella period, which either decayed or were destroyed. The fragment numbering 15 shows that at least there were Viṣṇu or his incarnations were present in these sculptures, which does not exist now. All these fragments have a large base with Vaiṣṇava incarnations, particularly Kalki and Lakṣmī showing at the base. They might have contained large Vaiṣṇava sculptures. The size of the sculptures points towards the fact that they may have been the presiding deity of a sanctum. At least fifteen large temples existed in this region, which could not bear the onslaught of the time. No such large Vaiṣṇava sculpture existed in this museum. One reason may be that they were destroyed due to faulty construction of the temples. When I went to Devgarh, I found one Viṣṇu temple complex is destroyed due to unleveling of the plinth area of the structure. One another reason may be that they were destroyed by the Muslim army. There are references in the writings contemporary authors about the plunder and destruction of this region after the defeat of the Candellas.

Apart from the Caturbhujā Viṣṇu, Garuḍāśīna Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu – Lakṣmī were other major deities of the Vaiṣṇava pantheon. There are some other Vaiṣṇava deities like-Lakṣmī, Vaiṣṇāvī, Hayagrīva, etc.

The region in and around Gwalior was under the rule of the Kacchapaghātas. The Kacchapaghātas arose out of the ruins of the Pratihāra dynasty. The origin of this dynasty is shrouded in mystery. They are generally taken to be predecessors of the Rajput clan of the Kachavāhas. Though the words are philologically connected, there is no epigraphical evidence in support of this view.

The royal house of the Kacchapaghātas was divided into three distinct families- Gwalior House, Dubkund House and Narwar House. Of them Gwalior House was most dominant.

The only inscription of this dynasty is found from Gwalior Fort- the Sāsbahu inscription of Mahipāla. The Sāsbahu temple is on the Gwalior fort. The object of the inscription is to describe the construction of the temple dedicated to Viṣṇu and the charitable institutions to furnish the needs of the temple. The income of village Pāsāna pallī was divided into 30 shares of which a few were allotted to the god and the greater number to the brāhmaṇas.

The introductory verses (1 to 4) invoke the blessings of Hari and Aniruddha. The temple is described as “bhavanam hareḥ” and “hari sadanam”. The name Padmanātha, in the ‘om namah padmanāthāya’ with which the inscription open must be taken to be a local name of Viṣṇu (suggested by the ordinary names of the deity as Padmanābha, Padmargāraha, Padmā).

Mahipāla completed the task of the temple construction, which was started by his father Padmapāla. It may be that the name of God derived from the name of the ruler. This was not a new phenomenon. Earlier also, as we have been seen this in the last chapter in the name Vaillabhaṭṭasvamin temple.

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Mahipāla established a charitable hall and made donations for the cooking of the naivedya. The brahmottara (sanctuary or garbhagrha) was divided into two porticos—one for glorious Padmanātha and other for the lord of the gods Vaikuṇṭha.

Regarding the temple and the rulers, one thing is clear that whenever a ruler gets more strength he constructs a temple to legitimize his rule and also to create awe in the heart of dissidents by the sheer size and magnificence of the temple. Kacchapaghātās were ruling as the chiefs of the Candellas. When the Candellas grew weak Padmapāla was the first Kacchapaghāta ruler to declare independence. The temple may have been the manifestation of the same.

Gwalior has another inscription showing Vaiṣṇava affiliation. It records the construction of a temple of Balarāma at Gopaśaila (Gwalior). After the opening verses in praise of Kṛṣṇa and Saṁkarṣana, the inscription gives a description of the rulers of the Kacchapaghāta families of Gwalior. It is a badly damaged inscription. If the inscription was found in situ by Cunningham this must has been the site of the original temple of Saṁkarṣana, which later converted into a Jaina temple. The temple was constructed by Kulhana who was the lord of the entire army (nikhila-balapati) and the chief minister of the king (mantra mukhya).

In this connection I would like to mention an image of Balarāma kept in the Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort. It is found from the Mitavali, district Morena. It belongs to 1st century B.C. The life size image of the God depicts the power and prowess of the God. From such an old image of Balarāma, could it be conjectured that this region has the tradition of Balarāma worship? However it will be a far-fetched conclusion as no other object in support of this evidence has been found from this area.

Among the Gwalior Fort sculptures of Viṣṇu, three are kept in Gujari Mahal Museum. The first image is of Śeṣaśāyi Viṣṇu shown reclining on the Śeṣa, holding the club, disc in two hands and one hand in varada mudrā. It belongs to 11th-12th century A.D.

96 ASIAR, 1936-37, p. 94.
97 Sculptures of Archaeological Museum, Gwalior Fort, Acc. No. 1.
98 Sculptures of Gujari Mahal Museum, Acc. No. 146.
Another image is of Viṣṇu standing on a lotus pedestal carrying conch and disc in left hands. Right hands are missing. It too belongs to 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Another image is also of Viṣṇu standing on a lotus and surrounded by his ten incarnations belonging to 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Among the various places Suhaniya district appears to have been an important centre of Viṣṇu worship. There are many sculptures found from this region. Some of them are Nṛśimha, Caturbhujya Viṣṇu, Varāha, etc. These three forms of Viṣṇu seem to be popular in this region. However, Suhaniya has yielded many more sculptures, which led Mr. Lal, the Archaeologist of Gujari Mahal Museum, to conclude that Suhaniya might be a centre of production of sculptures.

Gwalior Fort has another beautiful temple named as Telīn mandir. It consists of a large chamber and oblong shrine room with a barrel shaped śikhara in south Indian style. This is the only temple is north India showing a south Indian śikhara. The temple is richly carved and contains the image of Ganga and Yamuna on doorjambs. The image of lalāṭabimba proves it to be the Vaiṣṇava temple. However it contains many Śaiva images too. The Assistant Archaeologist of Gwalior fort, Mrs. Seema Tiwari, thinks that it can be a Saptamātraka temple because of the oblong garbhagṛha, which is quite unlike the usual Vaiṣṇava temples.

The Narwar group of the ruling house of Kacchapaghātas were also involved in making temples. Some of them were Vaiṣṇava. Narwar Copper Plate Inscription of the Vīrasīmha-deva records the donation of the village Babādo to certain brāhmaṇas, by the king. The inscription is dated 24<sup>th</sup> October 1120 A.C. After a small sentence dedicated to Nārāyaṇa, the inscription introduces the genealogy of the kings. Vīrasīmha-deva, son of Saradasiṃha and grandson of Gaganasīmha-deva, is stated to be the zealous devotee of Viṣṇu. The inscription speaks of the qualities of the ruler.

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100 Ibid, Acc. No. 151.
resembling that of epic heroes like Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Karna and even Duryodhana-

\[Yudhiṣṭhiravat satyavādī Bhīmasena eva atyādbhuta-vīryorjuna eva dhanurdharāgresarah karna eva tyāgārjitatākārtiḥ duryodhana eva mahāmāṇī\]^{103}

Most of the donees bear Vaiṣṇava names like Govinda, Padmanābha, Keśava, Rāma, Nṛṣimha, Lakṣmana, etc. This shows that this region has some Vaiṣṇava leanings. It can be called as a Vaiṣṇava centre. The geographical places mentioned here are Nalapura, which is Narwar itself, and Babādo, which can be identified with modern Barod village (28 kms south of Narwar).

Vaiṣṇava affiliation of Narwar can be proved from still another inscription of a different dynasty, called Yajvapāla.\(^{104}\) The inscription begins with the customary obeisance of Ganaṇati. After that, it invokes the blessings of Murāri (Krṣna) and Vāṇi (Sarasvatī) respectively. The purpose of the inscription is not clearly known because it is incomplete. It might be mentioning some meritorious work like excavation of step well as found in other inscriptions of the Yajvapāla kings. It also describes the family of the Mathura Kāyasthas hailing from Gopagiri (Gwalior). Four generations of the family are mentioned, namely Śyāma, Bhuvanapāla, Vāsudeva and Dāmodara. All the names reflect Vaiṣṇava affiliation. Dāmodara was the treasury officer of the king Chahada, the Yajvapāla ruler, during whose reign inscription was engraved. This inscription is undated. Yajvapāla rulers might have succeeded the Narwar group of Kacchapaghāta dynasty. And they might have accepted the suzerainty of Paramāras as is evident from the reference to Vāṇi and Bhuvanapāla as being associated with Bhoja.

\[^{103}\text{Ibid, verses 2-7, p.554.}\]
\[^{104}\text{Trivedi, H.V.,' A Yajvapala Stone Inscription of Shivpuri District',CLII vol.VII, pt.III, pp.568-572.}\]
The Paramāras of Malwa were an important ruling power in this period. They were ruling in the western part of Madhya Pradesh. The origin of the Paramāras is difficult to find out. They mention the famous Agnikula theory for their origin in their inscriptions. However this Agnikula theory is mentioned only from the reign of Sindhuṅja. It may be that this theory was the creation of Padmagupta, who in his Navasāḥasāṅkacarita greatly popularised this theory.¹⁰⁵

Paramāras were Śiva worshippers. However they do not discriminate against the Vaiṣṇava religion. All of their inscriptions start with siddham symbol and two mangala ślokas. The first eulogises the beauties of the manly throat of Śrīkaṁha Śiva desiring him to increase happiness. And the second describes the body of Muraripu with a request to him to protect the world-

\[ \text{yah Lakṣmi vadānendunā na sukhitam yannā dritaṁva riḥhervārā} \\
\text{yanna nijena nābhisaraśi padmyena śāntingatam tām.} \\
\text{Yaccheśāhikanām sahaśra madhuraśvāsaśirnā cā śvāsitam} \\
\text{Tadrādhaśvāraḥāturam Murariporvveḷlavapush pātu vah.} \]

The earliest inscription, which shows the construction of a Viṣṇu temple, comes from the Vidisha district. The Udaipur stone inscription of the Paramāras rulers of Malwa¹⁰⁷ is found from Udaipur. Udaipur is a big village in the Basoda tehsil. This undated inscription starts with the introductory verse ‘Om Namah Śivāya’ and invoking the blessings of Śiva, Pārvaṭi and Ganeśa. The inscription contains the Agnikula theory of the Paramāra origin.

The last verse of the inscription glorifies Udayāditya, stating, “for him who restored the earth (from the enemies) it was easy to restore the Primeval Boar”. The statement

¹⁰⁵ Seth, Dr. K.N., History of the Paramaras, Bhopal, p. 11.
appears to be a hint to the restoration of a Boar temple by Udayāditya in the
inscription part B.

\[ \text{Yenadharanivarāhāḥ paramārena (adhrto)nirāyāsāt} \\
\text{Tasyai tasyā bhū (meruddhāro) va(ba)ta kīyanmātrāḥ.} \]^{108}

The object of the inscription appears to be that Udaipur was placed in charge of a king
who belonged to Nemaka dynasty and to record that he during his reign constructed a
temple.

Another Paramāra inscription of somewhat later period also refers to Udayāditya as
the primeval Boar.\(^{109}\) It refers to the reign of Naravarman. The purpose of the
inscriptions is to record the assignment of the village Mokhalapātaka (Mokalavadi, 56
kms east of Hoshangabad), which existed in the Vyāpura manḍala (Byavara, 6 kms
south of Hoshangabad). The inscription seeks the blessings of Devī (Durgā), Śrīpati
(Viśṇu), Śiva, Brahmā, Harihara and Viṣṇu. Verse 34 of the inscription is important
for both political history and the history of Vaiṣṇavism. It states that when after the
death of Bhoja the kingdom was troubled by the enemies, Udayāditya played the part
of the Primeval Boar in delivering the earth, which had submerged in the mighty
ocean in the form of Karnāṭas, Karnas and other kings. The inscription is dated in
Vikrama era corresponding to 24th November 1218 A.D.

Amera stone inscription of the time of Naravarman\(^{110}\) records the construction of a
tank. Amera is a small village on the slope of a hill about 3 kms south of Udaipur in
the Basoda tahsil of Vidisha district. The inscription is dated 1094 AC. The town was
constructed by a brāhmaṇa during the reign of Naravarman. The inscription opens
with the two symbols followed by two stanzas, which invoke the blessings of
Pāṇcajanya, the conch of Murāri and Nārāyaṇa.

Kadmbapadraka grant of Naravarman\(^{111}\) (3rd February 1110A.C.) mentions some of
the Brahmin donees bearing Vaiṣṇava names like Nārāyaṇa and Devaśarman. The
present charter was issued from Dhāra and the land lay in the possession of

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\(^{108}\) Ibid, p. 81, verse 22.
Mahāmanḍalika Rājyadeva. It is situated in the Pratijāgaranaka (pargana) Maṇḍārikā in Upendramanḍala. This can be somewhere in southeast of Shivpuri district. The person mentioned as donee continued to get grants by the king, Mahāmanḍalika Rājyadeva and his wife till 1159 A.D.

One interesting inscription from Bhilsa eulogises the Sun God.\(^{112}\) It is devoted neither to a distinguished personage, nor to a king. The inscribed stone belongs to the temple of Bhaillasvāmin. The composition is by the Mahākavi-Cakravartin Chittapa who is otherwise not known. This inscription calls Viṣṇu as the younger brother of Sun (verse 6). Viṣṇu is also known as one of the Ādityas who only beheaded Rāhu when the latter bore malice to him (the Sun) for his brilliance. Chittapa was probably a contemporary and court poet of Paramāra King Bhojadeva.

Another inscription attesting to Vaiṣṇava affiliation is Vidisha stone inscription of Trailokyavarman.\(^{113}\) The inscription is incised on a rectangular stone, which is now set up above the door of a house in front of a Jaina temple at Vidisha. The object of the inscription appears to be to record the construction of a temple of Murārī, probably by king Trailokyavarman himself or by one of his subordinates. He made many donations to it.

The king constructed the temple of Murārī in Boar incarnation. It was a very high temple and as illustrious as the moon (kumudabandhu). He also installed in it the images of some other deities with their respective weapons.

\[ \text{Soci karata kumuda va(ba)-ndhu sava(ba)ndhu} \]
\[ \text{Kāntikān(tamiva) rāḥ va puṣāh sadanam murārēḥ}. \]

He endowed it with a garden and expressed the wish that the temple might last as long as the Kaustubha gem adorns Hari’s breast and Śiva’s forehead bears the moon.

\(^{114}\) Ibid, p. 143, verse 4.
Dandapur in Vidisha district has yielded a stone image of Viṣṇu of the Paramāra period.\textsuperscript{115}

Vaisnavism enjoyed the patronage of the rulers and the local people in Vidisha region right from the Gupta period. Such a long span of time must have generated a section of society dedicated to this sect. It is for this reason that we find many donees of Bhopal Copper Plate inscription of Mahākumāra Hariścandra bearing Vaiṣṇava names.\textsuperscript{116} It records the donation of village Dādarapadra, connected with or belonging to Vikhilapadra-twelve in the mahādvādaśaka mandala, with its suburbs on the east and the south. The village was divided into sixteen shares and was given to 19 Brāhmaṇas. The Mahādvādaśaka mandala includes the region of Vidisha and Bhopal. Vikhilapadra may all probability be the modern village Bilquisganj, 22 kms southeast of Sehore and Dādarapadra may have been the modern village of Davri, about 25 kms southwest of Bilquisganj. The name of the donees most of whom belong to Vidisha-Bhopal region include Śrīdhara, Madhusūdana, Viṣṇu Kṣirasvāmin, Nārāyaṇa, etc. The inscription is dated in Vikrama era corresponding to 19\textsuperscript{th} October 1157 A.D.

As regards the influence of a donee, three inscriptions in and around Sehore record the donation of land to the same Brahmin Govindaśarman. First of them Piplianagar Copper Plate Inscription of Arjunavarmān is found from Shujalpur Pargana of the Shajapur district.\textsuperscript{117} It records the donation of the entire village known as Pidiividāri situated in the Śakapura Pratijōgaranaśaka by the king Arjunavarmān. The king made the donation from his stay at Manḍapapa-durga (Mandu). Śakapura is situated 16 kms north of Mandu. Pidiividāri has been identified as Parlia, 7 kms southwest of Mandu. The inscription is dated as 24\textsuperscript{th} Feb. 1211 A.D. the first four stanzas of the inscription invoke Moon, Paraśurāma, Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhīra. The donee was as mentioned Panḍita Govindaśarman.

The Sehore copper plate inscription of Arjunavarmān\textsuperscript{118} records the donation of a plot of land for the residence of Daṇḍādhīpati to the family priest Govindaśarman. Here

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{IAR}, 1984-85, pp. 148-49.
\textsuperscript{116} Trivedi, H. V., 'Bhopal Copper Plate inscription of Mahakumara Harishchandra', \textit{CII} vol. VII, pt.II, pp.146-52.
\textsuperscript{117} Trivedi, H. V., 'Piplianagar Copper Plate Inscription of Arjunavarman', \textit{CII} vol. VII, pt.II, pp.162-66.
\textsuperscript{118} Trivedi, H. V., 'Sehore Copper Plate Inscription of Arjunavarman', \textit{CII} vol. VII, pt.II, pp.166-68.
the position of the *brahmin* seems to have been exalted by giving him the status of ‘*Supurodha*’ (family priest). The king granted the land after taking bath in *Somavati Tirtha* (on Kṣiprā). The dominant position of the family priest can be gauged by the fact that he was granted land right in Mahākālapura (Ujjain), extending as far as the boundary of the occupied houses. The land was granted on the occasion of solar eclipse on 22\textsuperscript{nd} April, 1213 A.D.

The same Brahmin got a plot of land in the village of Hathināvara (modern village Hatnawar, 3 km west of Dharmapuri in Dhar district) about two years later from the previous grant. Another copper plate inscription from Sehore\textsuperscript{119} says about the grant by the king Arjunavarman from his stay at Amareśvara (Omkar Mandhata in East Nimar district) after taking bath in the confluence of Rewa (Narmada) and Kapila (Kolar). The land was granted on the occasion of moon eclipse on 9\textsuperscript{th} September 1215. King revered Bhavānīpati (Śiva) and Lakṣmīpati Cakrasvāmin (Viṣṇu) before giving the grant. This may be because of the presence of a Viṣṇu temple near Omkar Mandhata.

The Paramāra rulers, being Śaiva, paid obeisance to Śiva in most of their inscriptions. However, the presence of a Vaiṣṇava temple near Omkar Mandhata is proved by the Mandhata copper plate inscription of Devapāla.\textsuperscript{120} These copper plates are found near the temple of Siddheśvara. It records the donation of the village Satajuna in the Mahuada *pratijāgaranaka* by Devapāla from his stay at Mahiśmati on the occasion of moon eclipse on 19\textsuperscript{th} August 1225. The village was donated by the king after taking bath in Rewa (Narmada) near Daityasūdana-

\begin{center}
*Revāyāṃ snātvā śrīdaityaśūdanasantidhau*....\textsuperscript{121}
\end{center}

Daityasūdana may be referring to the temple of Viṣṇu or his incarnation at this place. Names of some of the donees bear Vaiṣṇava affiliation like Nārāyaṇa, Viśveśvara, Rāma, Puruṣottama, Ananta, Madhusūdana, Nṛṣimha, etc. These donees came from Madhyadeśa, Mathura, Dīndaṅvānā (Rajsthan) and Takarī (Gaya). Mahiśmati is

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid, v.23,p.182.
modern Mahishawar in West Nimar district. The village Satajunā is 20 kms southwest of Mandhata and Mahuada pratijāgaranaka may be identified with the village Mohod about 40 kms south of Satajunā.

The presence of a large number of Brahmins affiliated to Vaiṣṇava names can be further proved from Mandhata copper plate inscription of Jayavarman. The plates are found in the village Godarpur opposite the island of Mandhata on the southern bank of Narmada it records the perpetual grant of village Vadauda, situated in the Mahuada pathaka to the three brāhmaṇas hailing from different localities. Of them two bear Vaiṣṇava names – Mādhavaśarman and Janārdana. Mādhavaśarman is the son of Hariśarman. He hailed from Navagāmva (Nawegaon in Chanda district). Vādauda is the modern village Baroda, 15 kms southwest of Mandhata. Mahuada pratijāgaranaka has been identified earlier. The inscription is dated as 7th November 1260 A.D. The elder brother of Mahārāja Jayavarman has been called as Bālanārāyaṇa.

Similarly, another copper plate inscription of the same ruler from Mandhata speaks of the endowments of land in favour of a number of brāhmaṇas residing at a brāhmaṇa settlement at Mandhata. The gift was made by Sādhanika Anayasimha from his residence at Maṇḍapa-durga (Mandu), for creating a rent free holding with the prior approval of the king Jayasimhadeva. All the donees of the grant bear Vaiṣṇava names like Padmanābha, Mādhava, Śrīkanṭha, Govardhana, Vāmana, etc. It shows that the Brāhmin settlement was inhabited by the people following Vaiṣṇava sect. Most of these donees come from Takārī (probably Gaya). At other places too this inscription refers to Viṣṇu and his incarnations. The second stanza of the inscription invokes Paraśurāma, Rāma, Puradruha (Śiva), etc. verse 10 again invokes Viṣṇu in his boar incarnation. While introducing Paramāra ruler Arjunavarman, he is stated to have been solely devoted to Kṛṣṇa. However Anayasimha made the donation of the shares of the villages Kumhaḍauda and Valauda in pratijāgaranaka of Vardhamānapura, Vaghāḍi in Saptasati and Nāṭiyā in Nāgadaha. Nāgadaha is a railway station near Ratlam. There is a village named Baloda, which corresponds to the Valauda. It is about 10 kms southwest of Kadod (corresponding to Kumhaḍāuda).

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122 Trivedi, H.V., 'Mandhata Copper Plate Inscription of Jayavarman', CII vol.VII, pt.II, pp.200-06.
Vaghādi is the modern village of Bagdi, 6 km east of Dhar. Nātiyā is the modern village of the same name near Birwania station of Ujjain district. The inscriptions are dated in Vikrama era corresponding to 10th August 1274 A.D.

The description of these inscriptions no way means that all these were Vaiṣṇava centres. As I already stated that most of them refer to donation to Śaiva temples. But there are Vaiṣṇava temples as is evident from the passing references to these temples in the inscriptions. And the Brahmin community bearing Vaiṣṇava names might have been worshipping in those temples.

A Paramāra period Vaiṣṇava temple is found at Mandhata in East Nimar district.124 It is called as Caubis Avatāra temple dedicated to the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu. It has now fallen in ruins. The image of Viṣṇu carved on a black stone is kept inside the temple.

Some other Paramāra sculptures too are found from the East Nimar district. There are two beautiful representations of Viṣṇu from Harsaud. One of them is in Nārāyaṇa form while the other one is in Śrīdhara form.125

The first icon of lord Viṣṇu is standing in samabhanga posture accompanied by the Śankha Puruṣa and Cakra Puruṣa and holding śāṅkha, padma, gadā and cakra. Another image of Viṣṇu, standing in samabhanga pose wears the karanda mukuta. The four-armed deity bears a mālā, cakra, gadā, and śāṅkha. This is the Śrīdhara form of Viṣṇu.

A fragmentary inscription from Mandu126 can throw some light on the worship of Viṣṇu in this region. The inscription refers to the reign of the king Vindhyavarman. The object of the inscription is to record the donation of two gardens by the Paramāra king Subhaṭavarman to Bilhana, who was his Sandhivigrahika i.e. minister for peace and war. The record is composed by Bilhana himself. The earlier portion of the inscription gives a poetic description of God Viṣṇu. Verse 10 eulogises the same deity

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in his Kṛṣṇa incarnation. The concluding portion of the inscription informs that Bilhana composed this poem to describe the eternal glory of the God (Viṣṇu). Subhaṭavarman’s son Vindhyavarman highly respected the poet and donated two gardens (vāṭikās), presumably for the maintenance of the deity installed there. It is not known if the construction of the temple and installation of the deity therein were mentioned in the portion that is lost now. Bilhana seems to be highly devoted to Viṣṇu and especially to Kṛṣṇa who has been mentioned separately in the inscription.

Thus the Paramāras, though not an ardent supporter of Vaiṣṇavism, constructed Vaiṣṇava temples or at least supported the cause of Vaiṣṇavism. They call themselves Śaivas in their inscriptions. But that did not prevent them from making Vaiṣṇava temples. One important fact that needs attention is that whatever Vaiṣṇava temples or grants they made, are found in the Vidisha region. And this was dedicated to the Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu. Varāha worship has a great antiquity in this region, starting from the Gupta period to the Paramāra period. As per the trends in other parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, this region too was slowly moving towards the worship of Caturbhuja form of Viṣṇu. However it still retains the most popular Varāha form of ancient times. Paramāra rulers might have led the construction or renovation of Varāha image to connect them with the local tradition of the region. Otherwise they do not resort to large scale Varāha temple construction in other parts of Madhya Pradesh. This may have provided a kind of legitimacy to the Paramāra rule in the region. This respect for the local tradition was a ‘give and take’ relationship and of course it worked both ways.

IX

The period c.A.D. 1000-1300 saw the rise and decline of many dynasties and of the Vaiṣṇava centres. However, the Vaiṣṇava centres are not linked with the decline of the dynasties. While the royal centre declined, the Vaiṣṇava centres kept flourishing in some parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh and get the support of new dynasties as well.
Some of the important Vaiṣṇava centres like Sirpur, Mandasor, etc. declined, while Vidisha, Rajim continued to flourish maintaining their distinct identities.

The period 1000 A.D. to 1300 A.D. saw the prevalence of Vaiṣṇava centres in northeastern Madhya Pradesh primarily (see maps IV and V). There were some new sites like Bargaon, Bilhari and Shahdol. The area around Lalitpur district continued to show the presence of Vaiṣṇava centres like the previous period. There are some new centres like Chandpur, Chanderi and Dudhai. Gwalior continued to be the Vaiṣṇava centres under the rule of Kacchapaghātās.

Chhattisgarh region was under the rule of the later Kalacuri dynasty. The Ratanpur branch of Kalacuri dynasty constructed some Vaiṣṇava temples in Janjgir, Seorinarayan and Kharod. Rajim continued to be the Vaiṣṇava centre even in this period with a renewed temple of Rāma. Barsur and Nārāyanpāl were the new sites of Vaiṣṇava centres, which came up under the rule of Nāgavam Śi rulers.

The Vaisnavism of this period too could not touch the other parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh owing to the rise of strong Śaiva sect of Mattamayūras. The Vaiṣṇava centres remained confined to Lalitpur region, northeastern Madhya Pradesh and some parts of Chhattisgarh.

It would be inappropriate to assume that the Vaiṣṇava sects acted hostility towards other sects. Often Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Buddhist and Jaina centres flourished side by side in the same region and the same period.

This period was also noted for the large-scale construction of Vaiṣṇava temples. There are many examples like Sās-bahu temple and Telín temple at Gwalior Fort, Seorinarayan temple at Bilaspur and many temples in the Jhansi region. However, many of them were destroyed during Ghaznī attack.

Among the forms of Viṣṇu, Caturbhujā form of Viṣṇu occupies the dominant place. All the other incarnations were slowly restricted to the different niches of the temple. The worship of Murāri and Krṣṇa got great impetus in this period. Rise in the number of sculptures of Krṣṇa is an important development of the period. The birth and the
lilās of Kṛṣṇa found great favour among the devotees. The modern day Kṛṣṇa-centred worship can be said to have a beginning in this period. Even the form of Murāri is either associated with Varāha or Kṛṣṇa. The image of Viṣṇu as the killer of the demon became favourite among the devotees. Murāri refers to the killer of Asura Mura, while Daityasūdana has the similar meaning. Vāmana, Nyūsimha seldom got the attention of the worshippers. The Varāha incarnation continued to portray the protector image of the God and hence it was used by the rulers. The popularity of the protector image or as the killer of Asuras can be linked to the politico-economic turmoil of the period. These regions were ravaged not only by the attacks of the Muslim rulers but by the neighbouring Hindu kings also. In case of failure of the ruler to protect his subjects, Daityanihanta God seemed to be the only recluse of the armless people. And the ruler who ensured safety to the people at large from these attacks was likely to have a greater legitimacy to rule. This would have induced both the ruler and the ruled towards the worship of this form of God (here Viṣṇu). The popular epithet of Viṣṇu appears to be Nārāyaṇa in this period.

There is uniqueness in the sculptures of Garuḍāsīna Viṣṇu in Lalitpur region. In the sculpture Garuḍa is often shown carrying snake in his hand. Later on Paramāra rulers adopted Garuḍa holding snake as their state emblem. It may be to show the sovereign power of the rulers or the people worshipping Viṣṇu over those worshipping Nāga deities. Madhya Pradesh is known for the presence of Nāga rulers. The victory over Nāgas might have found allegory in the art of the period.

Vaiṣṇava centres show a declining trend in this period. There is no evidence of destruction of the centres, but the loss of royal patronage might have been associated with it. At the same time this was the period of the rise of theMattamayūra clan of the Śaivas. The fervent preaching and the organisational set up of this sect were behind the spread of this sect. Of course royal patronage has a lot to do with it. Vaiṣṇava centres lacked both the organisation and royal patronage, which might have accounted for its decline.

However, there are some Vaiṣṇava centres, which showed the character of pan Indian ramifications. One important development was the rise of Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage centres. Now the devotees were asked to move from one centre to another centre to
earn the merit of the site. This gave rise to the expansion of pilgrimage centres and their network. This was an all-Indian phenomenon. Almost all the major sects saw the rise of pilgrimage centres in this period. Vaisnavism was not alone. An in-depth study of the pilgrimage centres will be carried out in the next chapter. The pilgrimage centres have different mythologies attached to them. This has been described in the Purāṇas, which will be extensively used in the next chapter.