The phenomenon and the growth of Vaishnavism or for that matter any social event cannot grow in isolation. Vaishnavism no doubt represented a vital and living dimension in the field of social and cultural life. But the impact of it was experienced beyond the sphere of cultural and religious realm. The political, economic and spiritual life could not remain untouched by the hands of this social phenomenon.

Indian society is an admixture of different religions, sects, language, culture and ethnic groups. All of them follow a different pattern of life and religious beliefs, practices and the mode of worship. While Vaishnavism was gaining ground in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, it was inevitable that it would interact with all the other religious sects. It affected them and in turn got affected by them. The interaction of Vaishnavism with other sects ranges from cooperation to conflict and subordination. The attitude of Vaishnavism varies depending upon the kind of patronage and favourable environment present at the moment. It cooperated with other sects, when its own existence was not challenged by them. It tried to assimilate and subordinate whenever it found an opportunity to do so. The image of Vaishnavas ascendancy was but a reflection of it. The presence of different forms of Viṣṇu and his incarnations was no doubt the result of this assimilation and subordination of the same.

Not all the incarnations were worshipped in India since ancient times. Time and place always has a bearing upon the prevalence of particular forms. As I have already noticed in my chapters, in the early Gupta period some of the incarnations like Varāha, Vāmana, Śeṣaśayi Viṣṇu, Nṛsimha, Hayagrīva were particularly in vogue. But towards the close of first millennium B.C. the Caturbhujya Viṣṇu replaced the other forms as the main deity of the sanctum. The avatāras like Matsya, Buddha, Kūrma, etc. appeared quite late. These never had temples dedicated to them. Contact with new areas and new people necessitated this kind of assimilation. Ancient Indian
society remained always in transition encountering new set of ideas. It was necessary to accommodate them for the smooth flow of social, economic and political life.

The association of different communities and cultures, which exist at different levels of development, demands similar assimilation and incorporation at the spiritual level. The movement or the change in the socio economic pattern of the society brought about corresponding changes in religion. Religion of a region is basically a response to the socio economic and political reality of the time and place. There is process and direction of these changes. There is need to understand it. As B.D. Chattopadhyaya puts it-

"...since even within a framework of integration, cultural elements and symbols exist in states of dynamic interrelationship, there is also need to understand the relationship of domination and subordination or marginalization within the frame. In other words, 'integration' does not mean complete dissolution of disparateness among various elements; as a historical notion 'integration' therefore requires a probe into how and in what historical contexts certain elements become dominant in relation to others, and, how dominance becomes evident not only in the relative order of the elements but also in the ways in which the essential meanings and symbols associated with different elements undergo change."

This kind of assimilation was not one sided. It was a two way process both sides responding in a positive mode. And this phenomenon was in no way peculiar to Vaiśnāvism only. All the religions of the period pass through the same set of changes. Vaiśnāvism was only following the trend. By and large this phenomenon was peaceful. Some times conflicts and commotion did emerge at the surface but it all settled for the greater good of peaceful coexistence.

The ancient texts are a testimony to this conflict and settlement at the spiritual level. The happenings at the material level cannot be separated from the development at the spiritual level. No direct conclusion can be drawn from these references. But a

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1 Chattopadhyaya, B.D., "Reappearance of the Goddess or the Brāhmaṇical Mode of Appropriation: Some Early Epigraphic Evidence Bearing on Goddess Cults", in the book Studying Early India; Archaeology, Texts and Historical Issues, Delhi, 2003, pp.172-73.
parallel development can be traced to the daily life. The ancient texts and inscriptions are extensively used in this chapter to trace the kind of relationship that existed between Vaiśnavism and different sects. It is dealt chronologically in the following pages.

Madhya Pradesh has a long history of Vaiśnavism starting from the Heliodorous Pillar Inscription. Here we have an evidence of an outsider accepting the Vaiśnavas religion. The system must have provided an outlet for these people otherwise it was not possible to accommodate them in the society. Even before this period (Mauryan period) we have an evidence of the donation made by a person (probably following the Vaiśnavas faith) to the Buddhist Stūpa at Sanchi. There is an inscription of the Śirigupta found from Sanchi. This inscription records the gift by a merchant Śirigupta to the Kākānada Stūpa. The inscription is written in Mauryan Brāhmī and belongs to the Mauryan period. The name Śirigupta or Śrīgupta may indicate that the donor was not a Bauddha but a Vaiśnavas.

However at such an earlier period, it is difficult to ascertain the inclusion of Śrī or Laksmī into Vaiśnavism. But it is certain that the person-making donation was not the Buddhist but the follower of other sect. That he did not hesitate to make gift to an alien faith shows the catholicity of the outlook of the period. And with such a background it is not difficult to determine the attitude of the different sects at later period.

I

The mighty Gupta rulers were the patrons of the Vaiśnavas sect. They call themselves Paramabhinavata in their inscriptions. The caves of Udaigiri hill are fine examples of Gupta period sculptures and royal power. The Udaigiri cave inscription of Chandragupta refers to the construction of cave 7 and its dedication to god Śambhu by Śaba Vīrasena, the minister of war and peace. The Vaiśnava king did not hesitate to

3 Kumar, Pushpendra, 'Sanchi Stupa Inscription of Sirigupta', in Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Inscriptions (from 300 B.C. to 19th Century A.D.), Delhi, 1998, p. 186.

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appoint a Śaiva as his minister. The Śaiva minister also made a donation of a cave in the presence of the emperor. There are lots of rock-cut sculptures of other sects present at this site. Cave 2 contains a standing deity with danda in his hand. In all probability this is the image of Skanda Kārttikeya.⁶ Figures of Mahiṣāsura-mardini, Ganeśa, Saptamātrikas, etc represent other images of the caves. Probably Mahiṣāsura-mardini was still to be connected with the Śaiva pantheon. It is frequently mentioned with the Vaiṣṇavas sculptures. Among other sculptures four Jaina sculptures of Cave 20 are significant.⁷ In this cave four sculptures are shown seated on the pedestal below which is carved the symbol of wheel. An inscription ascribed to the reign of Kumāragupta (c.A.D.425-26) indicates towards the dedication of the cave to a Jaina Tīrthankara. It records the construction of the image of Pārśvanātha by a devoted ascetic Śaṅkara.

There may have been conscious attempt by the Gupta rulers to connect the different sects with Vaiṣṇavism. Mandasor Inscription of Kumāragupta and Bandhuvarman⁸ try to associate the fame of Sun Temple to that of the lotus garland of the god.

Another inscription from Mandasor of Malwa Samvat 524 (467-68A.D.)⁹ starts with obeisance to Sugata (Buddha). At the same time it calls Candragupta as famous as Govinda (Govindavat=khyātaguptah).

Mandasor Inscription of Yaśodharman and Viṣṇu vardhana (533-34A.D.)¹⁰ records the construction of a large well by a person named Dakṣa, the younger brother of Dharmadāsa, who was a minister of Viṣṇu vardhana. It opens with obeisance to god Pīnākī (Śiva). The king Viṣṇu vardhana is described as Parameśvara. One of the ministers of the dynasty was Varāhadāsa. He was clearly a follower of Vaiṣṇavism. The engraver of the inscription is also a Vaiṣṇavas, named Govinda.

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⁷ Ibid, p. 41.
A Saptamātr̥ka image has been found from the flight of steps leading down to the river Betwa and Sindh.11 Deogarh as we know is the site of another earliest Gupta period Vaiṣṇava temple – Daśāvatāra.

Other areas that were not directly under the rule of the Guptas also followed the path of the Gupta rulers. The discovery of 27 copper plates12 belonging to the five different kings can be sited in this connection. These are discovered in a field adjacent to a tribal settlement known as Riśavala, located on the outskirts of the township of Bagh and in the vicinity of the temple of Bāgheśvarī. The kings were referred as meditating on the feet of Paramabhattāraka. They were in all probability the feudatory chiefs during the Gupta rule. Among the rulers Bhulūnda was a Vaiṣṇava as is evident from his inscription of year 4713, where he extols the different images of Viṣṇu. At the same time the same ruler granted lands to Nandapāla and Nandi in Ambilikāpadra14 and also a plot of land to god Nārāyaṇa simultaneously. The ruler made donation not only for the Śaiva followers but in still another grant he converted into a conventional devagrāhāra bhukti, half of the village Vibhiṭṭakagartā which had earlier been brought under the enjoyment of the god Bappapiśācādeva.15 The god was installed by Bhojikā-bhaṭṭa Bandhulā.

Still another inscription of the same ruler granted two villages of Devagrāhāraka and Gavayapāṇīyaka for the god Bappapiśācādeva in year 54.16 However this grant is to be administered by the good (devotees) of the Bhagavata (Nārāyaṇa). The presence of the deity Bappapiśācādeva points to the worship of the devils or evil spirits in that tribal region. Bappapiśācādeva may represent the soul of the father of lady Bandhula who had installed the image. This example is a unique one with the prevalence of the Vaiṣṇavas faith and worship of spirits at the same place in the same period. That they two can coexist is an important aspect of this part of Madhya Pradesh in the history of Vaiṣṇavism.

This catholic attitude can be traced in the grant of Parivrājaka Mahārāja Hastin.17 The inscription opens with the invocation of Śiva but the grant was made to a person named Gopāsvāmin, indicating his Vaiṣṇava affiliation. Still another ruler of the dynasty Sarvanātha granted half part of a village Dhavaśandikā to the goddess Piṣṭapurikā Devī.18 Earlier this village was granted to Nārāyaṇa.19 Another king of the line, Mahārāja Samkṣobha issued an inscription dated A.D. 528-29.20 It records the grant at the request of Choqugomin of the village of Opani to a temple of Piṣṭapurikā Devī, the inscription starts with the adoration to Vāsudeva (Om namo bhagavate Vāsudevāya).

Thus the religion of the conquerors (Vaiṣṇavism) was ready to accept the assimilation and subordination of the religion of the subjects. For the part of the vanquished there was little choice than to accept it. But of course no coercion or force seems to be used. Fleet calls goddess Piṣṭapurikā as Lakṣmī.21 However there is little evidence in support of this hypothesis. Quite often divine beings were attached to a particular place or locality. Piṣṭapura identified with modern Pithapuram in Godavari district was far outside the realm of the petty feudatory chiefs Samkṣobha and Sarvanātha. Probably a body of inhabitants of Piṣṭapura might have migrated from south to the territory in the central India ruled over by these feudatories and some of them might have started the worship of the local goddess of their native place.22 And the religion of the rulers was receptive of the new ideas.

This kind of assimilative attitude is reflected in other texts also. Pravarasena II of the Vākāṭaka family is known for his work Setubandha. The Setubandha throws further light on the religious tendencies of the king.23 He represents himself as Rāma in this text. Accordingly, he devotes the first four-benedictory verses of Setubandha to Viṣṇu (1.1-4), but reserves the remaining four for the glorification of Ardhanārīśvara and Naṭarāja. This reflects the attitude of the Gupta period Vaiṣṇavisim.

20 Fleet, J.F., 'Khoh Copper Plate Inscription of Maharaja Samksobha, year 209', CII, vol. III, pp.112-16.
21 Ibid.
22 Biswas, Dilip Kumar, 'Goddess Pistapuri or Pistapurika Devi- A Note', Indian Historical Quarterly (hereafter IHQ), vol. 21, p. 140.
The text *Mrčchakatika* of Śudraka mentions Śiva, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, the Sun and the Moon simultaneously.\(^{24}\) The story of *Mrčchakatika* revolves round Ujjayinī. Another text *Gaudavaho* is written by Vākpatirāja. Vākpatirāja was the court poet of Yaśovarman of Maukharī dynasty. He describes the victory of his patron over Gauda king in it. The text starts with paying obeisance to Brahmā, Viṣṇu (verses 6-28), Śiva (verses 29-42), Durgā (verses 43-46), Sarasvatī, Moon, Varāha, Sūrya, Ganeśa, Lakṣmī and Ganga.\(^{25}\) King Yaśovarman is described as Viṣṇu himself.\(^{26}\) At another place the king is shown worshipping goddess Vindhyavāsini.\(^{27}\)

So far is the story of the assimilation and the cooperation. However, there are incidences of conflict also. Mandasor Inscription of Naravarman\(^{28}\) is dated on the day when the festival of Indra approved by Kṛṣṇa was going on. According to *Harivamśa* (chap. 72-76, especially v. 4019-20), *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (vol.10 and 12, chap. 12) and *Padma Purāṇa* (*khaṇḍa* VI, chap. 272, v.182-188), it was the custom of the people of Brndāvana to offer worship to Indra on the 14\(^{th}\) day of dark half of Kṛṣṇa, but Kṛṣṇa induced them to transfer their worship to the cows and mount Govardhana which were the source of their sustenance. This made Indra angry who poured down such a deluge as to cause destruction amongst them and their kin. This led to a struggle for supremacy between Indra and Kṛṣṇa, which ended in the victory of latter. Kṛṣṇa pulled out Govardhana and held it as an umbrella over the cowherds and their kin. Thereupon Indra came to terms with Kṛṣṇa. Accordingly Indra agreed that although there were four months of the rainy season, the first two (Śrāvaṇa and Bhādrapada) should be considered as his and last two (Āśvina and Kṛṣṇa) which constitute the Sarada season would henceforth be assigned to Kṛṣṇa. This story relates to an event of the past when both Kṛṣṇa and Indra were vying for supremacy. Ultimately the cult of Kṛṣṇa overpowered the cult of *Vedic* deity Indra. This event was transformed into the realm of myths, which remained live in the minds of the people through the texts while actual event get lost in between.

\(^{24}\) The *Mrčchhakaṭika* of Śudraka, ed. by, M.R. Kale, Delhi, 1972, p. 241.
\(^{25}\) *Gaudavaho* of Vākpatirāja, tr. by, Mithilesh Kumari Mishra, Patna, pp. 1-15.
\(^{26}\) Ibid, p. 219.
\(^{27}\) Ibid, pp. 64-75.
\(^{28}\) Bhandarkar, D.R., 'Mandasor Inscription of Naravarman, Kṛta Year 461', *CII*, vol. III, pp. 262-
Coming to a later period (600 A.D. onwards) when the time span of this research period starts, there is a shift of the kings and dynasties following or patronizing Vaiśṇavism. The region of Chhattisgarh was under the rule of Śarabhapuriyas, who were the followers of Bhāgavatism. They call themselves as Paramabhāgavata in their inscriptions. 29

The next dynasty of the region Pāṇḍuvainśins too patronized the Vaiśṇavas religion. However they do not practice the taboo over the religion. Sirpur Stone Inscription 30 is a landmark in the development of Vaiśṇavism in this region. Here the queen mother Vāsata of the king Mahāśīvagupta Bālārjuna constructed the Laksmana Temple at Raipur. In this inscription Harsagupta, the father of Mahāśīvagupta Bālārjuna was described as a great devotee of Nārāyaṇa. Similarly his mother was also devoted. But an ancestor of the king named Candragupta is described as devoted to the lord of Goblins (Śiva).

Besides giving a share in the inscriptions to the kings following different religions, there is no taboo over the conversion of the king from the original faith to a different one. Mahāśīvagupta Bālārjuna changed the trend of the dynasty by adopting Śaivism as the state religion. He reverted back to Śaivism and is styled as Parama- Māheśvera in his inscriptions. 31 Most of records of his reign record activities connected with his newly adopted faith. This change finds reflection in the royal seal, which now bears the figure of a humped bull and a Trisūla, the mount and a characteristic emblem respectively of Śiva. Though there is no sign of the conflict between the followers of the two sects – Vaiśṇavism and Śaivism, a sense of superiority does prevail. Senkapat Inscription of Śivagupta Bālārjuna records the donation of a temple in favour of a Śaiva ascetic. The second name of the king ‘Bālārjuna’ shows that the Śaiva notion of Viṣṇu’s subservience to Śiva is cleverly put forward here.

Despite all this, the king evinced tremendous religious catholicity extending his patronage to the followers of other faiths. He himself donated a village in favour of a Buddhist settlement and a private benefactor was provided for a free feeding house for the Buddhist monks.\textsuperscript{32} There has been definite evidence to prove that Buddhism was in vogue in South Kośala not just up to the close of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. but for a century after that as well. Still there are the remains of two Buddhist monasteries near the Lakṣmaṇa temple belonging to the same period. Another temple, locally called as Rāma temple, may have been the twin temple of the Śaiva faith.

Not only in Sirpur but in Rajim too we have the temples dedicated to Śiva – Rājesvara and Dāneśvara near the Rājivalocana temple of the same period.

Thus the rulers of South Kośala adopted the attitude of assimilation rather than conflict and the religion they follow (Vaiśṇavism) exhibited the same.

III

The Gurjara Pratihāras were the prominent rulers of the 9\textsuperscript{th}-10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. They were probably followers of Vaiśṇavism. They trace their genealogy from Lakṣmaṇa. As Lakṣmaṇa was the doorkeeper of Rāma so they were the doorkeepers of the world.\textsuperscript{33} The Pratihāra period has a number of inscriptions assigned to it. The early temples of the Pratihāra rulers are mostly dedicated to the Śaiva faith. For example, Naresar group of temples\textsuperscript{34}, Bhuteśvara Mahadeva temple,\textsuperscript{35} both in Morena district of Madhya Pradesh, are the temples dedicated to Śiva. But they contain the figure of Viṣṇu and his incarnations. There was reciprocity on the part of other sects also that is reflected in the attitude of Vaiśṇavism too. The Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin Inscription of the Gurjara Pratihāra period made the grants of the land for the deities – Navadurga, Rudra, Rudrāṇi and Purnāsa along with the Vaillabhaṭṭasvāmin Temple.\textsuperscript{36} There was no enmity on the part of the sects.

\textsuperscript{32} Shastri, A.M., \emph{Inscriptions of the Sarabhapuriyas}, pt. II, No. III:XII.
\textsuperscript{33} Majumdar, R.C., ‘Gwalior Prasasti of Bhoja’, \emph{EI}, Vol. 18, pp. 99-114, v. 3-4.
\textsuperscript{34} Trivedi, R.D., \emph{Temples of the Pratihara Period}, New Delhi, 1990, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, pp. 79-81.
The Siyādōnī stone inscription³⁷ mentions many deities apart from the Vaiṣṇavas deities like Umā Maheśvara, Bhaisvāmīdeva and others. The second part of inscription starts with the invocation of Gaṇapati, Gaṇanātha (Śiva) and Trivikrama (Viṣṇu), although the inscription was predominantly Vaiṣṇavas. Siyādōnī inscription is totally dedicated by the traders. They might have come from different towns and the different interests of them are to be harmonized. This can be the acceptable mode of living of that age. The realities of life might have provoked this kind of catholicism and liberal attitude. No doubt the society benefited from it and by implications Vaiṣṇavism too was enriched.

A fragmentary inscription from Kadwaha fort, district Guna, mentions the name of king Kirttirāja.³⁸ It has four benedictory verses dedicated to Nṛṣimha, Śiva, Bhāskara and others.

The Pratihāra period Vaiṣṇavism was by and large free from the biasness towards the other sects. There are remains of sculptures of this period that too show this kind of catholicism. To the southwest of village, a religious complex locally known as Bajra Math consists of the three shrines. These shrines were originally dedicated to Śiva, Viṣṇu and Śūrya.³⁹ There are sculptures of brāhmanical gods on the doorframe and the niches. These shrines belong to the 9th century A.D. Now a day they enshrine the Jaina images. Similarly, another group of temples in Motasir, in district Raisin, contains the images of Viṣṇu in lalitāsana, standing Harihara, ten armed dancing Cāmundā, etc.⁴⁰

Padhavali in Morena district has a Vaiṣṇavas temple and an image of Trimurti in Bateshwar valley.⁴¹

The image of Harihara is the best example for the syncretic form of worship that prevailed in the region. The interests of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism are harmonized in the rise of the form of Harihara. In this form Viṣṇu was given the left side while Śiva

³⁸ ARADG, 1939-40, pp. 45-46.
³⁹ Descriptive and Classified List of Ancient monuments in Madhya Bharat, No. 623.
⁴⁰ JAR, 1986-87, P. 119.
⁴¹ Descriptive and Classified List of Ancient monuments in Madhya Bharat, No. 1243.
the right side (showing male part). Probably Śiva has a dominant role to play in this form. Nevertheless, the concept of equality and peaceful coexistence is more or less maintained in this form of Harihara. There is another evidence of Harihara in Varāhakhedi in district Raisin. A black stone image of Harihara is found from Jhabua district. In all probability there was a conscious attempt to reconcile the different groups in this part of Madhya Pradesh through this syncretic form.

IV

The Kalacuri rule was in the Dāhala maṇḍala, whose capital was Tripuri. Kalacuris were the supporters of Śaiva faith. Early Kalacuri rulers were ardent Śaivas. They took titles like Paramaśaivas. However, the Karitalai inscription of Lakṣmanarāja invoked the trinity- Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Similarly, Lakṣmanarāja II made the famous Viṣṇu temple at Karitalai as I have described earlier. His queen Rāhadā and Śankaragana III made donations to the temple. The prince Śankaragana is said to be Paramavaiṣṇavas in the inscription. He built a temple of Śaṅkarnārāyaṇa at Bargaon.

Not only this, another king of the dynasty Yuvarājadeva had two ministers – Bhākamiśra and Gollaka. The latter belongs to the Kāyastha stock and was a Vaiṣṇavas who caused to be carved the colossal images of Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Balarāma incarnations of Viṣṇu along with the Śayananamurti at Bandhogarh. Bhākamiśra’s son Someśvara constructed another Vaiṣṇavas temple at Karitalai as described earlier. Despite having Śaiva leanings, the Kalacuris maintained the image of Gajalakṣmī on their seals. The Rewa Plate Inscription of Trailokyamalladeva, though basically a Śaiva inscription, has the first invocatory verse in praise of Kṛṣṇa.

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42 JAR, 1984-85, PP. 148-49.
43 Ali, Rahaman, Art and Architecture of the Kalacuris, p. 16.
48 Ibid, p.5, v. 1,
The inscription has the figure of Gajalakṣmī in relief. The inscription starts with paying obeisance to Śiva. In line 5-7, it describes Trailokyamalla as Paramamāheśvara. It is dated in Kalacuri-Cedī era year 963 (A.D. 1212). This attitude is reflected in the sculptures of a Kalacuri temple at Bina in Sagar district. It contains the sculptures of Lākṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Navagraha, Śiva-Pārvatī, etc. Sihwa stone inscription of Kāṅṇarāja records the construction of five temples, two in his parents name, two in his own name and one in the name of his issueless brother. The inscription is put up in one of the king’s own temples in which Śiva is enshrined. The other one is dedicated to Keśava, who apparently occupied a secondary place. There is always an attempt to subordinate the other sects. However this attempt is on the part of Śaivism to accommodate Vaiṣṇavism. This was not unique with Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism too followed similar pattern.

As has been described in previous chapters several Śaiva rulers donated lands to persons bearing Vaiṣṇavas names and some times out rightly asserting Vaiṣṇavas affiliation. Kalacuri inscriptions found from Koni, Ratanpur, Seorinarayan and other inscriptions testify to this fact. However the behaviour of the Śaiva rulers towards other sects especially Vaiṣṇavism can be gauged from the presentation of mythical origin of the Kalacuri rulers. Kalacuri rulers drew their mythical origin from the Kṣatriya Kārttavīrya. Amoda plates of Prthvideva II mention it very explicitly.

Yadetagresaramamva (mba) rasya jyo
Tih sa pūṣā puruṣaḥ puraṇaḥ
Athāṣya putro manu
rādirājastanvaye bhūdbhuvi Kārttavīryah. (v.2)
i.e. the foremost luminary of the firmament is the sun, the Primeval Being. Then was born from him his son Manu, the first of kings. In his family there was born Kārttavīrya on the earth.

Devah śrīkārttavīryah ksitipatirabhavad bhūṣanam bhūtadhātryāhe
Lo (tksi) ptādrivi (bi) bhyaṭṭuhinagirisutaḥ (śle) ṣasantoṣiteśam.

49 IAR, 1959-60, P. 71.
Dorddanđaka (kā) ndesupratī gamitam
Hāvāirevāpravāhavyādhūta (ṭrāya)
kṣapūjāgurujanitarusāin rāvanam yo vavandha. (v.3)
i.e. there was the king, the divine and illustrious Kārttavīrya, an ornament of the earth, who threw into bondage Rāvana, who had propitiated Śiva with the embrace of the daughter of the Himalayas (Pārvatī) who was terrified as he lifted up the mountain (Kailāśa) with ease and who was greatly enraged when his offerings to the three-eyed (Śiva) were washed away by the stream of the gently flooded Revā which was turned back by the suddenly placed dam of his mighty arms.

Tadvamsaprabhavā bhūpa va (ba) bhūvubhurvi haihayāh
Teśām vaṁśe sa caidyādiksi (ti) saḥ (śaḥ) kokkalobhavat. (v.4)
i.e. the kings born in this family became (known as) Haihayas on the earth. In their family was born that (famous) Kokkala, the first king of the Caidyas.

These verses explicitly show the connection of the Kalacuris of Tripuri with legendry Kārttavīrya. Kārttavīrya was a known Śiva devotee. Hence the Kalacuri rulers were the devotees of Śiva. There is another side of the story. Rāvana too was the devotee of the same deity as has been shown in their inscriptions. Though the inscriptions put Rāvana in an uncomfortable position by showing him being defeated and disgraced by Kārttavīrya, there was a rapprochement between the two. This stands in contrast with the Rāma and Rāvana fight where latter was defeated and killed by the former. This basic difference was maintained with the devotees of Viṣṇu and his incarnations in the attitude of the rulers.

The Ratanpur inscription of Prthvīdeva II\(^{51}\) can be cited for a similar expression. The object of the inscription is to record the erection of the temple of Śiva at the village Sāmbā by Devagana. Here the king Jājalladeva is said to have destroyed, like Rāhu devouring the full moon, the brave warriors of the proud Coḍaganga. It refers to the defeat of the Ganga king Anantavarman at the hands of the Kalacuri ruler.

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This event was proudly boasted in many of the Kalacuri inscriptions. But the interesting part is the comparison of the Kalacuri king with Rāhu. There is a well-known myth of Viṣṇu cutting the head of Rāhu for his cheating. While Viṣṇu was distributing nectar to the gods, Rāhu took the form of a god and drank it. This whole episode was watched by moon who informed Viṣṇu. As a result Viṣṇu cut the body of this demon into two parts Rāhu and Ketu. This myth is alluded to in the Gopalpur inscription of Vijayasimha. This shows that this story was familiar in this region. It also shows the enmity between Viṣṇu and Rāhu. Given this kind of relationship it is quite possible that the ruler bearing this epithet maintained similar uneasy feeling for the enemy of Rāhu. Next Devagana the builder of the temple who is described as a bee on the beautiful lotus like feet of Śiva is praised in glowing terms. Seeing all the worlds on his side and whitened by his fame Kṛṣṇa is shown standing confused and losing interest in destroying Kālānemi (Snake Kāliyā) from the waters of Yamuna. Thus the fame of Kṛṣṇa remained unnoticed.

The attitude of the Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism varied vis-à-vis the economy and the people at large. The Śaiva followers were in the form of a body of disciples guided by the Śaiva Ācāryas. The Śaiva Ācāryas had a great impact on the royal policy of the Kalacuris. They were appointed as Rājagurus of the Kalacuri rulers. The Jabalpur inscription dated 1174 A.D.53 mentions some Ācāryas appointed as Rājagurus Purusaśiva (Rājaguru of Yaśakama), Śaktīśiva (Rājaguru of Gayākama), Kṛitiśiva (Rājaguru of Nṛśimha and Vimalaśiva (Rājaguru of Jayasimha). These Ācāryas must have had tremendous following among the rulers. They have large disposal of land at their hand. Most of the Kalacuri rulers donated lands to these Ācāryas for the construction of the temple and monasteries and for their maintenance.

The Bilhari stone inscription of the Cedi rulers (of the time of king Yuvarājadeva and queen Nohala) records the erection of the temple of Śiva by the queen Nohalā.54 She endowed this temple with the revenues of the villages Dhangatapātaka, Pondī, Nāgabala, Khailapātaka, Vidā, Sajjāhalī and Goṣṭhapālī. Besides she also gave the villages of Nipaniya and Ambipātaka to the sage Īśvaraśiva, a disciple of Śabdaśiva,
who again was the disciple of Pavanaśiva. Bilhari is a town in the Jabalpur district. Of the villages granted to the temple and the sage two have been identified namely Pondi and Khailapātaka with Pondi (4 miles north-west of Bilhari) and Khailawara (6 miles east northeast of Bilhari) respectively. This inscription belongs to end of 10th century A.D. or beginning of 11th century A.D.

Another inscription, found from Gurgi (about 12 miles due east of Rewa) of slightly later period than the previous one, records the grant of villages to the god Somanātha installed in the temple built by Prabodhaśiva and for the maintenance of the ascetics. The inscription shows that Śaiva Ācāryas had large sum of money at their disposal. Prabodhaśiva was placed in the charge of the monastery built at the cost of large sum of money by Mugdhatunga.

The vast resources at their disposal were used for the benefit of the people apart from other uses. The Ācāryas utilised the wealth of the mathas and the income of the agrahāra villages for the welfare of the people. Kalacuri inscriptions mention Vyākhyaṇaśālās (lecture halls), sattras (charitable feeding houses) and gardens with which the mathas has been provided. Malkapuram inscription gives a detailed description of the measures adopted by Viśveśvaraśāmbhu for the maintenance of the institutions he founded in his agrahāra village for example a temple, monastery, college, free feeding house for the distribution of the food, a maternity home and a hospital.

A stone inscription from Ranod records the construction of the tank by Vyomaśiva. Ranod has been described as an old decayed town about half way between Jhansi and Guna and 45 miles due south of Narwar. This inscription is found in front of an old Hindu palace identified as the monastery of the Śaiva Ācāryas. Outside the courtyard of this building is a deep square tank with steps leading to the water's edge. This is the same tank mentioned in this inscription. The description of the monastery as an old Hindu palace and the subsequent description of tank testify to the wealth of the Śaiva monasteries and its use for public purpose. The inscription is not dated but on

57 Ibid, p.clix.
paleographic grounds it can be assigned to the end of 10th century A.D. or beginning of 11th century A.D.

These charitable measures stand in contrast to the measures adopted by the Vaiṣṇavas followers. Though the Vaiṣṇavas inscriptions mention the provision of the free feeding houses but they do not go beyond that. The land granted for the maintenance of the Vaiṣṇavas temple remained essentially for the same. No works of public utility were executed by the Vaiṣṇavas beneficiaries.

The Śaiva Ācāryas were involved in the day-to-day economy of the region. Dhureti copper plate of the time of Trailokyamalla59 proves the involvement of the Śaiva Ācāryas in the economic system of the state. It records the mortgage (vīṭṭa-bandha) of a village by a Śaiva ascetic Śāntaśiva in favour of one Rānaka Dhareka on 7th day of bright fortnight of Jyeṣṭha in year 963 (corresponding to 9th May 1212). Dhureti is a village about 10 kms south east of Rewa, the head quarters of the same district. Śāntaśiva is the disciple of the holy Vimalaśiva who became religious preceptor of Kalacuri king Jayasimha. It was during the reign of Vijayasimha, his successor that Candella Trailokyavarman made great advances and probably captured this part of Madhya Pradesh. The powerful Śaiva Ācāryas remained undisturbed of the change of the dynastic rule in the region. Śāntaśiva who inherited the lordship of the Śaiva ascetics, placed by way of mortgage, the village Alaura with all its dues i.e. all rights of collecting taxes to the Rānaka, the illustrious Dhareka. Though we have nothing on record in this respect it is not unlikely that the sage may have received the village as donation from the king who was a devout Śaiva. The village Alaura has been identified with the Laur village in the Mauganj tahsil of Rewa district, about 48 kms north by east of this city. Dhānavāhi, the head quarter of a pattalā in which the village was then included, may be identical with village of same name lying about 35 kms southwest of Dhobat. The name of the tahsil 'Dhānavāhi' can be equated with a fertile land producing plenty of grain. The Śaiva Ācāryas were supposed to be in possession of the fertile land of the state and directly taking part in the economic transactions.

The direct role of the Śaiva Ācāryas is in contrast to the role of the Vaiṣṇavas preceptors. This brought the Ācāryas in direct contact with the people in comparison to Vaiṣṇavas brāhmaṇas.

Among other sects Buddhism and Jainism find reference in the inscriptions and the texts of the period. As far as Buddhism was concerned it was a period of decline in Daksina Kośala as in other parts of the country. Apart from the Rewa inscription of Malayasimha⁶⁰, there is not a single reference to any Buddhist vihāra and Bhikṣu in the inscriptions of the Kalacuri rulers of the Daksina Kośala. The inscription is dated in the Kalacuri year 944 corresponding to 1179 A.D. It records the excavation of a tank (verses 34-40). The tank was completed at the cost of 1500 tankakas stamped with the effigy of Bhagavān (Buddha). The inscription is apparently devoted to lord Buddha for it starts with an invocation to Mañjughaśa, the Buddhist deity of learning. The genealogy of the officers in charge of the tank is given. Vidyādhara was the superintendent of the excavation of this tank. He was son of Laksmidhara, grandson of Śrīdhara. Puruṣottama is the composer of this praśasti. He was son of Divākara and grandson of Rāmacandra. The mason was Ananta. All these names of the officers point to the Vaiṣṇavas affiliation of the same. It seems the followers of two sects were comfortable with each other.

The Buddhist canonical and philosophical works were studied by some people. Rudraśīva, the spiritual leader of the Jājalladeva is described as conversant with the works of Dinnaga and others.⁶¹ Kāśāla, who composed the Koni stone inscription, tells us that he had knowledge of three ratnas (i.e. probably Buddha, Dharma and Samgha) and that he had mastered the Āgamas of the Buddha and others.⁶²

Some learned brāhmaṇas, who were required to take part in philosophical debates, must have been acquainted with the Buddhist systems.

However there is not very friendly relation between the Śaivas and the Buddhists and Jainas on the other hand. Ranod inscription\textsuperscript{63} praises Vyomaśiva whose holiness and learning surpassed all manner of devotees and learned men (the Śākyas or Buddhists, who are compared to elephants, the jackal like Jainas and others).

The sects often go to the extent of denigrating other sects to extol their own faith. This could be an expression of that.

There are also no references to the Jainas in the Kalacuri inscriptions of Dakṣina Kośala, but there is no doubt that Jainism had some followers there. Images of Jaina Tīrthankaras have been discovered at Arang, Sirpur, Mallar, Dhanpur, Ratanpur and Padampur. The one at Mallar is colossal.\textsuperscript{64} We have no reference of the attitude of the Vaiṣṇavas towards Jainism. The attitude of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism with that of Śāktism will be dealt separately.

\textbf{V}

Candellas of Jejakabhukti were patrons of Vaiṣṇavas religion. The famous Lakṣmaṇa Temple Inscription bears testimony to that. It records the erection of a temple of Viṣṇu under the name of Vaikunṭha.\textsuperscript{65} As discussed earlier there is a reference to Śiva bearing on his head the holy water, which fell on Hari’s lotus feet. Thus, here is a clear reference of subordination of Śiva to Hari. Not only is that, the Kāpālikas and the Kālāmukhas depicted in the lower niches of the temple.\textsuperscript{66} There seems to be a conscious attempt on the part of the rulers to depict Śiva as the subordinate god, while the Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas seems to be poorly reckoned people. This Lakṣmaṇa temple is directly related to the Candellas. Devangana Desai opines that most of the temples of Khajuraho including Lakṣmaṇa temple show the patronage enjoyed by them.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{64} Mirashi, V.V., \textit{Inscriptions of the Kalachuri Chedi Era, CII}, vol. I, pt. I, p.cxiv.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
And thus, according to her, it heralds a new age in the religious life of Khajuraho with the assertion of the Brāhmanic-vedic elements. A parallel of this attitude of Candella rulers can be seen in the play ‘Prabodhacandrodaya’. The author of this play was a poet in the court of Candella rulers. This book plays a pun upon the Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas. A lady monk of the Kāpālika sect was some times used to divert the attention of the monks of other sects. The dharma of Kāpālikas is defined as drinking sura in the human head and worshipping Mahābhairava. The religion of the Buddhist monks is also represented as having all lavish and good things - good food, soft bed, palaces, women attendants, etc.

The Buddhist monk was represented as having deviated from his path following the offer of the Kāpālika. Even Śiva is shown as busy in material pleasures-

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\text{Pārvatayāḥ pratirupayā dayitayā sānandamālingito} \\
\text{Muktah kṛdāti candraśa-va-purityūce bhṛđānī patih} \]

The text emphasizes the importance of Viṣṇu bhakti, which helps in dispelling the effect of Kali and avidyā. The poets tried to emphasize the religion of his patrons over other sects.

Nevertheless, attempts to maintain a balance of co-existence between different sects remained. This fact is evident in the Ajayagarh Rock Inscription of the time of Viravarman. It records that Kalyānadevi, the wife of Candella king Viṣvlvan built a well, furnished it with water pot and also built a Śaiva temple. At the same time it compares Trailokyavarman, father of Viṣvlvan with Viṣṇu who lifted the earth merged in the ocean formed by the streams of the Turuskas. Found from the fort Ajayagarh in Panna district, the inscription is dated A.D. 1261. Thus the cordial atmosphere in the two sects remained towards the end of this research work.

69 Ibid, p. 119.
70 Ibid, p. 112.
71 Ibid, p. 104.
72 Ibid, pp. 119-21.
73 Ibid, p. 117.
In the region in and around Gwalior, the Kacchapaghātas were ruling. They were under the influence of the Candellas. There were different branches of the Kacchapaghātas, ruling at Narwar and Dubkund. The Narwar group of Kacchapaghātas were the worshippers of Viṣṇu, as is evident from their inscription found from Narwar, Shivapuri district. It is a grant issued by Virasimhadeva in V.S. 1177 or 1120 A.C. It pays obeisance to Nārāyaṇa and calls him as Paramavaiṣṇavas. There is no inscription to find out the leanings of the house of Dubkund.

There are many sculptures of the time of Kacchapaghāta rule. A group of sculptures from Hinglajgarh shows the sculptures of Vāmana, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa along with other images. It belongs to 11th century A.D. Besides there are many Harihara sculptures found from Hinglajgarh kept in the Bhopal Museum (refer to table II). Harihara form is one of the syncretic forms of Hinduism.

Another group of sculptures from Jiran, district Mandasor includes Viṣṇu, Laksman-Nārāyaṇa, Nṛsimha, four faced Śiva and some episodes from the life of Kṛṣṇa. Another group of sculptures includes Jaina temple along with Jaina sculptures and the images of Viṣṇu, Vaiṣṇavī, Śiva, Umā-Maheśvara and others. The sculptures of different sects found together points to the fact that they were brought from nearby places. That they flourish side by side at the same place at the same period speaks of the volumes of the liberal attitude of the period, Vaiṣṇavism was of course a part of it.

The rule of the Paramāras over Ujjain and a large part of Madhya Pradesh too had its bearings on the relation of Vaiṣṇavism with other sects. Most of the rulers of the Paramāras were devoted to Śiva, but they did not confine their allegiance to this god alone and extended support to other deities as well. The official representation of the Paramāras was Garuda. The inscriptions of the Paramāras start with paying obeisance to the beauties of the manly throat of Śrīkantha Śiva and Murariṇi. Vidisha stone

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76 IAR, 1985-86, P. 110.
77 Field trip to Bhopal.
78 IAR, 1958-59, P. 81.
inscription of Trailokyavarman constructed the temple of Murārī. In the same inscription the king expresses his will that the temple lasts as well as the Kaustabha jewel adorns the chest of Kṛṣṇa and Śiva’s forehead bears the moon.

Kaustubhastava(ba)kitam hareruh śānkarasya vidhuvami(bam) dhuram śirah.(v.12)

According to Mandhata copper plate inscription, Devapāladeva81 donated land after worshipping Bhavānīpati near the temple of Daityasūdana. The same king constructed the images of Hanumān, Kṣetrapāla, Ganeśa, Kṛṣṇa, Nakuliśa and others along with the construction of the temple of Śambhu. This inscription was found from Harsaud in East Nimar district.

Another king of the dynasty named Jayavarman made the gift of land at Mandhata with invoking Paraśurāma, Rāma, Puradruh (Śiva) and Aṣṭamurti Śiva.83 The blessings of the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu too were sought. Thus the Paramāra rulers followed the liberal attitude towards other sects. The Vaiṣṇavas sect too responded the way it was treated. The ruins of a Viṣṇu temple at Jharada district, Ujjain contain the images of Viṣṇu, Śiva-Pārvatī and Pārvatī. It roughly belongs to the Paramāra period. Thus the attitude of Vaiṣṇavism towards the other sects remained the same throughout the period.

The ruins of Kajali-Kanoja in Betul district have remains of the Brāhmaṇa and Jaina sculptures.84 The architecture appears to be of the 10th century A.D. The western and southern sides of the town seem to have been occupied by the Śaivas, as in this part the ruins belong to Śaiva temples. The centre of Kanoja town was occupied by the Jainas. Towards east lies the village of Kajali. Here there is a big hip of ruins with beautifully carved stones and reliefs. This seems to have been a shrine dedicated to Viṣṇu, whose broken statue has been removed to Betul. Some of the bas-reliefs of the

81 Mittal, A.C., 'Mandhata Copper Plate Inscription of Devapaladeva', The Inscriptions of the Imperial Paramaras, Ahmedabad, 1979 (first ed.), pp. 252-267.
ruins are the sculptures of the four handed Viṣṇu carrying conch, mace, lotus and discus. Kajali was apparently the site of a Vaiṣṇavas temple.

This is the example of the catholic attitude shown by different sects of the period, Vaiṣṇavism being one of them.

VI

The inscriptions, archaeological materials and the seals and sealings are no doubt provide proof for the interaction between the sects. But the texts written about the same period do provide a glimpse of relation among the different streams. The texts are often biased. They are written by a particular set of people for a particular set of audience. The importance of a particular deity or a place is blown up, while other sects were shown either in a subordinate form or were discarded as doing unhealthy practices. Even then these sects provide useful information about a sect they discard generally. There are many texts that were written in the court of a particular king. These provide information about the faith of the king and the attitude of king and his sect towards other sects. Apart from them the individual texts written by anonymous persons and the foreigners may also provide sufficient evidence for the belief prevalent in the public.

The Purāṇas among the texts are excellent sources for the māhātmya related to a place. In general the Purāṇas are written to describe the exploits of a particular deity. Other deities were given a secondary position. They often expound a particular tīrtha in complete ignorance of other tīrthas. They ignore other major or minor deities or subordinate them to the dominant deity or deity of their faith. The task of finding out a Vaiṣṇavas centre in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh is difficult. Most of the ancient texts consider Mahākāla as the only prominent deity in the region. And Chhattisgarh, as I explained earlier in my chapter, is by and large outside the pale of the Aryan influence and so its sacred places did not get the places they are entitled to. Even then I am trying to recover history of Vaiṣṇavism from the Purāṇas. The interaction of Vaiṣṇavism with other religions is here my attempt. It is easy to find out
attitude of Śaivism towards other sects rather than that of Vaiṣṇavism from these texts.

Among the Purāṇas the Skanda Purāṇa has a number of tīrthas mentioned in them. Among them some are Vaiṣṇavas tīrthas. There is a tīrtha named Rāmeśvara tīrtha on the bank of Śiprā according to Skanda Purāṇa. The Purāṇa attaches a story of the installation of a linga here by Rāma. Rāma, Maithili and Lakṣmaṇa went there. They were advised by the ascetic Nārada. Rāma took holy bath in the Śiprā. Then he was asked to install a linga there. Rāma asked Lakṣmaṇa to install the linga named Rāmeśvara. Thus Rāma (an incarnation of Viṣṇu) was shown as subservient to Śiva. Rāma was not shown doing this work on his own, but he asked Lakṣmaṇa to do it. Probably that way the sanctity of Vaiṣṇavism was maintained.

At another place in the text, it is mentioned that there was a king named Andhaka in Ujjayini. While the fight between Andhaka and Śiva was going on, the devas were enveloped in darkness. In the meanwhile, Narāditya rose up by means of his own self and indulgence in the form of a man dispelling the darkness. The devas eulogized the Divākara (Sun). When the darkness was dispelled, Andhaka was killed by Maheśa with the trident. At that time, with a desire for the welfare of the Suras, Viṣṇu blew the conch. Then the tīrtha Śankhodhāra emerged. Here the three prominent deities of the Hindu pantheon—Śiva, Viṣṇu and Sūrya were mentioned in perfect combination with each other for killing a demon.

There is a site on the bank of the Narmada where Nara and Nārāyaṇa established the Badarikāśrama. For the purpose of blessing the worlds, the triad established a linga. It opens the path to heaven and then to salvation.

However not all evidence points to harmony between the two sects. There is a story regarding the description of Śiprā as the remover of jvara. It is written to glorify the river Śiprā. An imaginary fight between Śiva and Viṣṇu is described. The leader of

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86 Skanda Purāṇa, pt.XII, Book V, Sec. I, pp. 147-52.
87 Skanda Purāṇa, pt.XII, Book XIV, p. 306.
89 Ibid, pp. 192-95.
the daityas named Bāna insulted Aniruddha and fought with Kṛṣṇa. Vāsudeva cut off his thousand hands leaving the two. Bāna sought the refuge of Śiva. There insured a battle between Kṛṣṇa and Śiva. Mahādeva created Maheśvara jvara. In his response, Kṛṣṇa created Vaiṣṇavas tapa. The jvaras pertaining to Maheśvara were hit and split. And their final missiles “jvaras” clashed with each other and get drowned in the Śiprā. Hence it became jvarāgni. Even the birth of jvara is mentioned along with a conflict between Śiva and Kṛṣṇa.90 Once Mahādeva went to Vaikuṇṭha along with his skull. Viṣṇu put his finger in the skull. Śiva struck the finger with the trident. Blood flowed out of the finger. With that the vessel held by Śakara became full. It overflowed. At that spot Śiprā manifested her arising from the flow of flood. It appears that the place near Śiprā was a place for the conflict of the two sects- Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. Ultimately it got settled.

The Revā Khaṇḍa in the Skanda Purāṇa at numerous places refer to the relation between the two sects. There is the reference to the benefits of bath in Narmada.91 It says that people worshipped Śankara and Keśava by means of austerities on the bank of Narmada. Those who worship Nārāyaṇa along with meditations, adorations, japas and mahāvratas cross to other shore of the ocean of worldly existence. The devotees who perform the worship of Śiva and direct their mental feelings towards Keśava and get their bodies purified by the waters of Revā do attain their goals. Those who resort to the banks of Narmada and adore Śiva of immediate splendour or Nārāyaṇa with mental purity, do not waste the breast milk of their mothers i.e. are not born.

There is another reference to linga being installed by Rāma and Lakṣmana at the bank of Revā.92 Hara came to the tīrtha along with meritorious sages. After releasing his own kāla into the tīrtha he granted a boon. It became a linga known as Kālakumbha. The lord became known as Kumbheśvara. Rāma too worshipped that linga. Thus Rāma was shown in a subservient attitude.

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92 Skanda Purāṇa, pt.XII, Book XIV, pp. 274-78.
In the *Caturasitilingamāhātmya*, Narmada is described as place where ten *sthānas* are dedicated to Viṣṇu, while eighty-four *sthānas* are assigned to Śiva.\(^93\)

There is an interesting event showing the tension between Śiva and Kṛṣṇa. There is a story related to Lunkeśvara *Tīrtha*.\(^94\) This *tīrtha* is situated in the middle of water beyond Mātṛtīrtha. It is revered by both asuras and suras. There was a demon known as Kālaprṣṭha. He was a grandson of Brahma. He performed severe penance on the bank of Ganga. Pārvatī melted and induced Śiva to grant him a boon. The demon asked for the boon that if he touched the head of a *deva*, *dānava* or *gandharva*, that person would be reduced to ashes. The demon tried to test the boon by keeping his hand on the god’s head. Śiva could not fight with the demon. Nārada who met midway got delighted to see the discomfiture of Śiva. When approached by Śiva and Nārada, Hari went to receive them. Hari assured Śiva of help. He advised Śiva and all *devas* to reside on the bank of Revā. The *tīrtha* where all of them resided is known as Lunkeśvara *Tīrtha*.

Kṛṣṇa or Hari took the form of a beautiful girl. The demon fell into the trap. He put his hand on his head and was reduced to ashes. Thereafter Hari went to the Ocean of Milk. Then the text goes on to expound the glory of the *tīrtha*. Whosoever takes a holy dip here goes to the Śivaloka. The story thus glorifies Śiva. However, Śiva was rescued by the prowess of Viṣṇu. This way Śiva seems to be a subordinate god in comparison to Viṣṇu. The other deities are associated with Śiva while Viṣṇu remained in an exalted but secluded place. This may reflect the attitude of Vaiṣṇavism towards other sects and vice versa. This kind of conflict among the sects or among the followers of the sects is reflected in the writings of the period. As for instance the *tīrtha* known as Ankapāda *kṣetra* is associated with Viṣṇu\(^95\) as I showed it elsewhere. *Nārada Purāṇa* says at one place that by worshipping Ankapāda, a man shall become the attendant of Śiva.\(^96\) The author of this text may have the notion of Viṣṇu’s subservience to Śiva.

\(^{93}\) *Skanda Purāṇa*, pt.XIII, Book V, p. 3.  
\(^{95}\) *Skanda Purāṇa*, part XII, pp. 90-99.  
However, the syncretic and assimilative attitudes of the Purānas are more evident. The Kūrma Purāṇa mentions a tīrtha, known as Śūlabheda. On bathing and drinking water there, one shall derive the benefit of gifting a thousand cows. Then he goes to Viṣṇu’s loka. Thereafter, he should go to Rṣitūrtha. The man who took a holy bath here is honoured in Śivaloka. Thus here the two tīrthas belonging to separate sects are mentioned simultaneously.

Vāyu Purāṇa mentions the triad of the gods. According to it, in the accounts of creation, Brahmā is called both Nārāyaṇa and Maheśvara. Lord Nārāyaṇa divides himself into three and performed the functions of creation, preservation and destruction. Brahmad, Viṣṇu and Maheśa present three different qualities—rājas, sattva and tamasa. In the prayer to Śiva, the god is also addressed as Viṣṇu and Brahmad.

VII

The different levels of assimilation, interaction and confrontation extended to the assimilation of the Great Mother Goddess into the Hindu Brāhmanical tradition. Mother Goddess has always been a part of the ancient religions of India. The communities of Indus Valley Civilization worshiped the mother goddess. The mother goddess figurines of Indus Valley Civilization have been mentioned as the ‘effigies of the great mother goddess or of one or other of her local manifestations’ by John Marshal in his report. The importance of the mother goddess cult is recognized by almost all historians of the ancient India.

Shubhangana Atre goes to the extent of suggesting mother goddess as the main deity of the Indus valley civilization as ‘a great goddess of animals and vegetations’. Whatever may be the status of the mother goddess in the Harappan civilization, the presence and influence of it was accepted by historians by and large.

98 Patil Devandra Kumar, Cultural History from the Vayu Purāṇa, Delhi, 1993 (reprint), p. 66.
The role of mother goddess in the Vedic literature is insignificant. Most of the goddesses play a subservient role. Very few hymns were dedicated to the goddesses in the Vedic literature. David Kinsley finds none of the goddesses of the Vedic period rivaling the male gods of the texts. Many of the Vedic goddesses disappeared in the later Hindu tradition. Similarly great mother goddesses or the Śakti of the later Hindu tradition like Pārvatī, Durgā, Kālī, Rādhā and Lakṣmī, did not find a place in the Vedic literature. Kinsley thus says that the great goddess her various manifestations and the elaborate mythological ritual structures around them are late phenomena. But as Ingalls emphasizes in his ‘Forward’ to introduce ‘Feminine Theology of India’-

“What is strange about the Indian record is...that in India the goddess reappears...I suspect that within India’s diversifed culture the worship of the Goddess never ceased”.102

The author does not stop here but goes on to suggest the reasons behind the two thousand years of silence in the record. The texts of this period are written in Sanskrit or related languages, which were oriented towards the male gods.

Those who worshiped Śakti or goddesses in Rgvedic period did not write anything or not at least in Sanskrit. Thus Sanskrit, which became the vehicle of the worship of Vedic male gods essentially, remained out of the domain of goddesses in that period. The goddesses who according to Ingalls are the continuation of an old religion do not find favour with the early Sanskrit writers of ancient India.

However they reappear in third-fourth century A.D. This period was the conjunction of two historical processes, as identified by Ingalls. On the one hand Sanskrit became the nearly universal language of the letters in India, and on the other, the pre Aryan worship of the Indians had spread very widely among the Aryans. As a result, from the third—fourth centuries, the religion of the goddess became as much a part of the Hindu written record as the religion of God.

Here one point to be noted is that goddesses have always been considered as outside the domain of Aryan religion. The ferocious and destructive attitude of the divine feminine was completely alien to the religion of the Aryans. The goddesses of the *Rgveda* show the sublime attitude. They were almost presented as the wives or the mothers of the different male gods, for example Indrāṇī or Saci as the wife of male god Indra and Aditi as the mother of gods. Goddess like Uṣā was raped by the superior male god Indra. The pitiable condition of the goddesses does not match with the dominant and assertive nature of Śakti as described in various later scriptures.

According to N.N. Bhattachrya, among the agricultural tribes, the cult of mother earth, conceived as the female deity, is more prominent. Ritual based upon fertility must have played a very significant part in the agricultural societies. The worship of mother earth, which later developed into that of an all-pervading mother goddess, was thus a feature of agricultural societies. When the pastoral-patriarchal warriors invaded the dominions of the mother worshipping people, they introduced their strongly individualistic gods, but could not altogether eliminate the cult of the mother goddess.

This assimilation of or confrontation with the goddess worshipping societies led to the worship of the goddesses in the Hindu tradition and inclusion of the rituals related to them. Thus the concept of ‘reappearance’ emerges in the context of the mother goddess. The period of this ‘reappearance’ i.e. 3rd-4th century A.D. coincided with the classical phase of Hinduism. This was the period when Vaiṣṇavism was emerging under the patronage of the imperial Guptas. It was perhaps inevitable that the Gupta period Vaiṣṇavism will interact with it and in the process develop its own synthesis with the mother goddess cult.

Before moving towards the Gupta period Vaiṣṇavism vis-à-vis mother goddess cult, let us have a look at the scriptures. Gupta period is also known as the period of conceptualization of *Purāṇic* Hinduism. *Purāṇic* Hinduism represents the essential structure of Hinduism as it is perceived and practiced today. Also it represents a definitive evolutionary stage in the history of Hinduism, as emphasized by Prof. B.D.

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Chattopadhyaya, because of its taking the focus of religious practice away from sacrificial rituals as also from exclusive Bhakti.

Though the earliest attempts to recognize the mother goddess cult can be traced to the Śāṅkhyā philosophy, which filtered down to the Purānic texts, the concept of Prakṛti is presented as the female principle, more visible, immanent, and active than her constant companion, the pure and spiritual but inert Puruṣa, the male. Similarly in Purānic mythology, the goddess often comes to affect her consort as Prakṛti affects Puruṣa - animating him and implementing his latent powers.

The concept of mother goddess got its full-fledged exposition in the Devī Māhātmya section of the Mārkandeya Purāṇa. It was probably composed north of the Narmada valley and sometime in the 5th or 6th century A.D. Of the various features of the Devī Māhātmya, one is the ultimate reality of the universe being feminine. Thomas B. Coburn gives a close look to the three myths associated with the Devī’s salvific activities. The first that of Madhu and Kaitabha, is a delineation of the cosmic status of the Devī. The second, a more extensive account of her origin on the earth and her influential martial activity, culminates in the victory over the dread buffalo-demon Mahiśāsura. The third and the longest myth continues to exemplify Devī’s mundane activity. It is a celebration of her various forms and their role in her victory over the minions of Śumbha and Niśumbha.

In one of these myths we come across the relation of Viṣṇu with Śakti and the incorporation of the later into the broader framework of Vaiṣṇavism. It also sheds light on different attitudes of different gods towards the Śakti. Turning towards the story of Madhu and Kaitabha we find interesting development. Throughout the Mahābhārata the myth of Madhu and Kaitabha is associated with the figure of Viṣṇu. The myth is recounted in full on several occasions, and Viṣṇu’s epithet

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108 The Mahābhārata (2:611-12)(3.194.8-30).
Madhusudana, “slayer of Madhu” is used in the epic on several occasions. For a closer look on the two sides of the myth I will narrate the classical version of the myth first.

At the end of the cosmic cycle there was a pralaya, the state of universal dissolution. At that time Viṣṇu was sleeping on his serpent Śesā. While he was sleeping two asuras named Madhu and Kaitabha arose from the wax in Viṣṇu’s ear and being overconfident and proud attacked Brahmā, who was sitting on the lotus sprouting from the navel of Viṣṇu. Brahmā aroused Viṣṇu by shaking the lotus. Viṣṇu engages the two demons in battle, sometimes physically, sometimes in battle of wits. Madhu and Kaitabha think that they had outwitted Viṣṇu by asking to be slain in a dry place. But Viṣṇu raises his thigh and kills the demon on them. From the fat of the two asuras, which permeated in the water, the earth was created.

When the Devī Māhātmya tells this thoroughly Vaiṣṇavas myth, there are several crucial modifications in this version when the demons begin their assault on Brahmā, he endeavours to awaken Viṣṇu. He does so however not by shaking the lotus but by invoking Devī, who is addressed as yoganidrā that is as the personification of the state of sleep into which Viṣṇu has entered. Devī then accedes to Brahmā’s requests by withdrawing Viṣṇu’s various limbs. Viṣṇu awakens and the asuras are dispatched as in the earlier version.

Coburn derives several conclusions from the narration of this myth. First of these conclusions is that it is solely through the grace or the graceful withdrawal of Devī that Viṣṇu can fulfill his familiar role of slaying the asuras. If this is true of lord Viṣṇu, the implication is that every human being is similarly indebted to her. Secondly, Devī is affirmed as the primary ontological reality. From her the gods derive their bodily form. From her, also, all material existence proceeds.

There are other references that can be drawn from the above episode. Though the importance of the goddess is established beyond doubt, Viṣṇu did not relegate to Devī his famous act of killing the demons. Devī is invariably associated with the act of

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109 Coburn, Thomas, B., Consort of None, Śakti of All: The Vision of the Devi-Mahatmya, p.158.
killing the *asuras* and relieving the earth from their suppression, as we will see later. But Viṣṇu remains firm in his act. The help of *Devi* was sought indicating the presence of a strong *Devi* cult, but the cult of Viṣṇu refused to dilute his responsibility and thereby giving an equality of status to her, while Śiva who is associated with far numerous forms of Śakti showed a more conciliatory attitude towards her. This will be discussed further.

The next episode relating to *Devi* throws a light on her career on the earth. *Devi Māhātmya* (2.1-2) further states that once upon a time, a battle started between the gods and the *asuras*. Mahisāsura was the chief of the demons. The gods’ army was conquered by the mighty *asuras*. Faced with this catastrophe, the gods seek out Śiva and Viṣṇu for help. Having listened the accounts of gods Viṣṇu and Śiva got angry. Then from the bodies of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Indra and other gods came out a luminous brilliance (*tejas*). That peerless, unified brilliance, born of the bodies of the gods took the form of women, pervading the three worlds with splendor (2.8-12). *Devi* received her various limbs and weapons from various gods and finally killed the demon.

Coburn\textsuperscript{110} finds here that *Devi* is conceptualized as subordinate to various gods, because she is a derivative form and indebted to each of them. However, he immediately points out that reverse can also be true. It is she who succeeds in restoring the mundane equilibrium, a fear that the gods individually and collectively were unable to accomplish.

Next conclusion of Coburn puts *Devi* as the supreme ruler of the earthly creatures. *Devi māhātmya* thus affirms that the effective agent on earth, as in the cosmos, is not masculine but feminine, not king but queen.

Now referring to the third episode related to the miraculous acts of the divine feminine, Coburn\textsuperscript{111} mentions the use of the term of ‘Śakti’ or power. He considers Śakti as the singular and the particular phenomena. This latter conceptualization emerges in the course of *Devi*’s martial engagement with the *asuras*, Śumbha and Niśumbha. In the fight with the *Devi* Śumbha got enraged at the destruction of two of

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid, p.159.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid, p.160.
his generals and sent forth his legions against Devī. Immediately the seven Śaktis emerged from seven gods, each possessing the distinctive weapons. These Śaktis-named Brhmaṇi, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Nārasimhī and Aindrī- are considered collectively in the ensuing combat as “the Mothers”.

The notion here is the fundamental existence of goddess in each of the gods who is not only wife but also the Śakti i.e. power of them.

This shows the attitude of the doctrine of mother goddess towards the other male divinities. Not discriminating among the various gods, but putting all of them on a subservient level. Though the later Śākta doctrines show preference to Śiva and Śakti, the Devī Māhātmya section shows no preference towards Śiva when it is discussing Devī as Śakti. In this connection reference to one inscription from Chhattisgarh is necessary.

The inscription is found from Pujaripali, a village 22 miles from northeast of Sarangarh. The inscription is one of a king named Gopāladeva. The object of the inscription is to record the charitable deeds of Gopāladeva, especially the construction of the temples where it was put up. The record is not dated but on the basis of available other epigraphic evidences, it may belong to 12th century A.D.

This inscription is dedicated to the various goddesses. And as envisaged earlier, it shows no partisan attitude to any male gods but it starts with the invocation of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa.

...tā vra(bra)hma [vi]snu [maheśvarāh].....

In most of the following verses up to verse 37, the first half is dedicated to the description of a goddess, while the second states how Gopāla showed his devotion to her. The goddess is named as Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Nārasimhī, Aindrī, Cāmunḍa and so forth. Her form, weapons and vehicle are described in consonance with her various epithets.

113 Ibid, p.590, v. i.
The inscription shows similar attitude while mentioning the tīrthas. The major tīrthas mentioned in the inscription are Kedāra, Prayāga, Puṣkara, Puruṣottama, and Bhimeśvara, on the Narmada, at Gopālapura, Vārānasī, Prabhāsa, the junction of the Ganga with the sea, Vairāgyamatha, Śauripura, and the Pedrā village. In all these places the kīrti of Gopāla shone like the autumnal moon. The geographical names mentioned in the inscription refer to famous places associated with various gods. Kedāra is the well-known tīrtha in the Himalaya associated with Śiva. Prayāga is modern Allahabad. Puṣkara is in Rajasthan and is associated with Brahmā worship. Bhimeśvara is a well known tīrtha also known as Draksarāma in Godavari district in Madras. Puruṣottama is in Puri associated with Jagannātha worship. Similarly Śauripura may be Dwara. Thus the tīrthas are associated with various gods not showing any particular favour to anyone.

The goddess Vaiṣṇavī is shown as holding a conch and a discus. Vārāhi is in the act of lifting earth with her tusk. Nārasimhī is shown as all-powerful with curly manes. Aindrī is endowed with a thousand eyes holding a thunderbolt in her hand. Devī Cāmuṇḍa is dark complexioned and terrifying the enemies in the battlefield. Other goddesses mentioned are Mārica, Tārā, Mahālakṣmī, Vindhyavāsini, etc. The terrific and ferocious attitude of the goddesses of the Śakti is manifested in most of the forms worshipped here.

But some of the goddesses like Kāmākṣī, Mahālakṣmī, Sarasvatī are praised for their forgiveness and compassion. The king seems to have more devotion towards Vārāhi for he says himself to be the son of Vārāhi. In the last of the inscription the king prays to the killer of Buffalo demon called Ambikā.

This inscription shows the attitude of the goddess cult towards various gods and by implication sects. As pointed out by Coburn114, although the polarity of Śiva and Śakti is well known in later Śākta doctrines and Tāntric circles, the Devī Māhātmya shows no preference for Śiva when it is discussing Devī as Śakti.

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Devi-Māhāmya establishes the identity of Devī in Sanskrit tradition by incorporating the familiar Vaiṣṇavas myth of Madhu and Kaitabha. This does not reflect the historical interaction between Vaiṣṇavas and Devī sects according to Coburn.\textsuperscript{115}

It appears more likely that the Devī-Māhāmya section is offering a reinterpretation of a familiar myth in order to capture the attention of those who had a chance to hear the text. Similarly the use of regal imagery in the Mahiśāsura episode has a Vaiṣṇavas aura, the Devī-Māhāmya uses the distinctively Vaiṣṇavas epithets Lakṣmī and Śrī almost casually without drawing out their theological ramifications. And this can hardly be taken as the fundamental conciliation between Vaiṣṇavism and the worship of Devī.

Of course the cult of Devī was apprehensive of the dilution of its authority as being envisaged in such rapprochements. On the other hand Vaiṣṇavism was not ready for an all-powerful goddess, which might endanger the authority of the chief male god Viṣṇu. Vaiṣṇavism incorporated only those goddesses into its pantheon, which were placed as subordinate wives. The incorporation of Lakṣmī and Śrī can be placed as an example.

Śaiva sect is however known for inclusion of Durgā and all tribal and terrible goddesses into its pantheon. Apart from Pārvatī and Durgā as considered as the goddesses of Śaiva pantheon, the inclusion of Kāli into it, prove the more open attitude of Śaiva sect towards them. Kāli is often portrayed as terrible in appearance and as offensive and destructive in her habits. Her habits and associations reinforce her awful appearance. Her two favourite dwelling places are battlefields and cremation grounds. Unlike most other Hindu deities she does not have an animal vehicle but instead rides a preta or ghost. In the mythology she is often associated with Durgā, Pārvatī and Śiva.

Two of Kāli’s most famous deeds are recounted in the myth of the goddess Durgā’s destruction of the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha. According to Devī-Māhāmya section, Kāli is born when two demon generals, Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, are sent to haunt

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, p.163.
and attack Durga. Durga loses her composure, grows furious and from her darkened brows springs Kālī. She capitulates Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa.

Later in the battle she is called by Durgā to kill Raktabija. This demon has the magical ability to recreate him every time a drop of his blood touches the ground. Kālī rescues Durgā by swallowing the swarm of blood-born demons and sucking the blood from the original Raktabija until he falls lifeless. In these myths Kālī seems to be Durgā’s embedded fury, appearing when Durgā losses control or is confronted with a formidable task.

Kālī’s association with Śiva is further emphasized by the story, which connects Pārvatī with Kālī. In the Vāmana Purāṇa Pārvatī is called Kālī because of her dark complexion. When Pārvatī hears Śiva using this name, she takes offence and does austerities to rid herself of her dark skin. After she succeeds she is named as Gaurī, the golden one.

In her association with Śiva, Kālī’s tendency to wilderness and disorder, although sometimes tamed or softened by him, persists. It appears to Kinsley that Kālī was never finally subdued by Śiva and is most popularly represented as a being who is uncontrollable and is more apt to provoke Śiva to dangerous activities than to be controlled by him.117

Such a dangerous and uncontrollable goddess could not find a place in the Vaiṣṇavas pantheon which always goes for orderly movement. Śaiva pantheon being more receptive of these goddesses, find favourable ground among the tribals of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

Vaiṣṇavism which incorporates sublime and orderly goddesses find favour among the worshippers of Lakṣmī or Śrī. These goddesses are invariably shown as caressing the feet of the Viṣṇu in various sculptures. A tribal goddess in ancient Chhattisgarh called Śabari has been associated with Viṣṇu in one of his sculptures found from

Seorinarayan temple. The inferior status of the goddess is depicted in the miniature image of the goddess in contrast to the life size image of Nārāyaṇa.

This image of Lakṣmī is clearly visible in the Ratanpur stone inscription of the time of Prthvīdeva II. The inscription is one of Brahmadeva, a feudatory prince of Prthvīdeva II, of the Kalacuri dynasty of Ratanpur. The object is to record the religious and charitable works of Brahmadeva at several places. The inscription can be called as a Śaiva inscription as it speaks of the construction of the temple of Śiva under the name of Dhūrjati, Trayambaka, Somanātha, etc. and the construction of the shrine of Pārvatī. This inscription describes Śiva as the lover of Pārvatī in verse 2. And the next verse describes Viṣṇu whose feet are caressed by the lotus like hands of Lakṣmī. The making of the shrine of Pārvatī also stands in contrast of that of Vaiśṇavas inscriptions none of which speaks of the construction to the shrine of Lakṣmī. The inscription is dated in Kalacuri Cedi era 915, corresponding to 1163-64 A.D.

The kind of relationship established in the Śaiva tradition towards the Śākta tradition can be traced in the Ardhanārīśvara form of Śiva where goddess Pārvatī is depicted as the left part of god Śiva. As such the goddess is treated on equal footing with that of Śiva. The Rewa stone inscription of the time of Karna invokes the Ardhanārīśvara form of Śiva in verse 4. The inscription is dated in Kalacuri era 800, corresponding to 1048-49 A.D. No equivalent to Ardhanārīśvara form is found in Vaiśṇavas tradition.

The cordial relation of Śiva worship with other forms of Śākta worship is evident in the Bhera Ghat Gauri Śankara temple inscription of Vijayasimha. The inscription is incised on the stone slab let into the front wall on the right hand side of the door leading to the sanctuary of the temple of Gauri Śankara at Bhera Ghat, 13 miles from Jabalpur. It records the obeisance of the Mahārajī Gosaladevī, Mahārāja Vijayasimhadeva and (the heir apparent) Ajayasimha to the enshrined god who appears to be named as Bhagnakhidrā (destroyer of diseases). The inscription is undated but it belongs to the 11th century A.D. on paleographic grounds.

Various stories abound in the region regarding the Šabarī, the great devotee of Nārāyaṇa. She got a boon from the god in return for her service and her miniature image was added to the shrine. The peculiarity of the sculpture is that the image identified as Šabarī is that of a male. It can be that of a devotee, or Garuḍa or some other male. But the popular memory associates it with the worship of Šabarī. The vermilion pasted on the image says its story. There is no reference to a goddess called as Šabarī in the texts. She might be the local goddess of the Šabara tribe, which was invariably portrayed as residing in the Vindhyas. The popular tradition of the cult of Šabarī was incorporated into the Vaiṣṇava pantheon.

VIII

Thus, the texts of the period show different types of relationship and pattern of interaction between sects. Sometimes they do depict conflict between the ideas and the sects. However, on the whole, the catholic attitude of the region in all the periods was maintained and preserved. It was true for other sects also. Vaiṣṇavism assimilated other sects into it as did Saivism on a much larger scale.

Sometimes there was no choice left for the religion of the vanquished. However, for a region of diversity and multiple ethnic groups, this can be a reality. The conflict with other sects did not lead to fight or violent submission. This was not the characteristic of the religion but of the social groups of the period, religion was of-course a reflection of their mentality. The region of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh was subject to continuous influx of new people, sometimes due to trade and sometimes due to invasion. There could not be any other mode of survival for the sects but assimilation and submergence. The attitude of Vaiṣṇavism towards other sects reflects the reality of the time and place.