India's literary narrative tradition has a great antiquity easily traced to the *Vedic* period. Its web spread across the country in course of time. The advent of Buddhist and Jaina sects and the growth of Saiva and Vaishnava sects contributed greatly to expansion of this web. When Buddhist ideas found expression in sculptural art literary narrative tradition began to assume visual narrative form. The engraving of an elephant beside Ashokan Rock Edicts in fact represents not only the Buddha but also the myth related to Mayadevi’s conception. The fact that these elephant figures do stand for Buddha Gautama is proved by its description in the Kalsi Rock Edict as *Gajatame (Gajottamah)* “the best of elephants” or “the white elephant”. The use of elephant (*Gajottama*), lion (*Sakhya-simha*), bull (*Mahavrisha*) and horse (*Abhinishkramana*) are all easily demonstrated in Maurya context as symbolic representatives of the Buddha.

Early narrative tradition therefore embraced symbolism as the means to communicate one or the other episode related to Gautama Buddha. The expansion of narrative art in Buddhist context bloomed in the post-Mauryan art, such as at Barhut, Bodhagaya and Sanchi from about 2nd century B.C.

Wherever Buddhism traversed the impact of Buddhist narrative art was eminent. Jainism's participation in narrative visual presentations is witnessed in Udayagiri Jaina caves near Bhuvanesvara, Orissa, during 1st Century B.C.-1st Century A.D. span. Sannati in Karnataka provides early instances narrative art related to Buddhism (1st-3rd century A.D). The tradition of presenting visual
narration in stone was revived with great vigour in the 6th century A.D. and onwards for over two centuries when Chalukyas of Badami reigned supreme. Their monuments located in Badami, Aihole, Mahakuta, Pattadakal, Alampur, etc give an idea of the quantum and diversity of visual narratives of this period. They embraced itahasas, puranas, secular narratives like the Panchatantra etc.

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Narrative techniques employed in visible narratives are of a number of varieties. Artists, depending upon their convenience, used mono-scenic, continuous and sequential techniques with certain sub-types. Both Buddhist and Jaina as well as Hindu visual narratives conform to one or the other of these techniques. The richest number of their varieties are presented under the Chalukyas of Badami.

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Ashoka’s association with Sannati in Karnataka is demonstrated both by epigraphic and sculptural evidence. His separate Rock Edicts discovered here hint of the fact that Karnataka and Andhra were probably annexed to the Maurya empire after the Kalinga war by Ashoka. The near by site of Kanaganahalli has the remains of the stupa discribed as Sakhya-Maha-Chaitya in the inscriptions. Probably this stupa was one of those 8400 stupas containing relics of Buddha erected by Ashoka in various parts of his empire and beyond. The discovery of Ashoka’s inscribed portrait sculpture at this site proves the original Ashokan authorship of the stupa. In the narrative art associated with this stupa there are not only scenes from Buddha’s life and the Jatakas but also those associated with significant political events of the Satavahana dynasty, both symbolic and anthropomorphic. After the 4th century A.D. this tradition subsided possibly owing to the reason that there was no brisk stone constructional activity. It is possible that the tradition of wooden architecture may have contained visual narrative art. During this period the pace of development of Buddhism seems to have dwindled in Karnataka.
The situation continued till the advent of the Chalukyas of Badami in the political arena of the Deccan. The stone structural art of this period is particularly restricted to sanctum images of temples of Narasimha, Vishnu and Durgabhagavati.

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One of the most fond themes for the artists of the Chalukya period was the Ramayana. Except the Uttarakanda the remaining six kandas of Ramayana namely Balakanda, Ayodhya Kanda, Aranya Kanda, Kishkindha Kanda, Sundara Kanda and Yuddha Kanda have found place in visual narrative of the Chalukya period either selectively or extensively. The most extensive presentation of the Ramayana is found on the walls of the Papanatha temple at Pattadakal which belongs to the fag end of Chalukya period corresponding to Kirtivarma-II’s reign. It begins with the putrakameshti and ends with coronation of Rama, the thrust being on the main episodes of the story. In pre-650 period, generally the kantha part of the temple’s adhisthana accommodated selected episodes from the Ramayana (Upper Sivalaya, Badami). The choice of episodes was diverse. Some artists focussed on the abduction of Sita (Aranya Kanda). Others as in the Durga temple at Aihole chose episodes of the Rama’s departure to the forest (Ayodhya Kanda) and Hanuman in Lanka (Sundara Kanda). In the last decades of the Chalukya architectural activity the abduction of Sita and Vali-Vadha (Aranya and Kishkindha Kandas) acquire greater importance, as indicated by their occurrence on Virupaksha and Mallikarjuna temple walls at Pattadakal. (733-744).

Among the upakhyanas of the Ramayana the occurrence of Indra and Ahalya story in Virupaksha and Mallikarjuna temples at Pattadakal, is noteworthy. The narration is unique because of the appearance of Vajra and Tilottama as Indra’s messengers to Ahalya. No known version of this story ever mentions Vajra or Tilottama. Further the narration seems to imply that Ahalya received Indra voluntarily and it was not without her knowledge that Indra come to her in the guise of Gautama. This proves the existance of a
different version of Indra and Ahalya story known in Karnataka as late as the 8th century.

A significant fact relating to the occurrence of *Ramayana* episodes in post-650 A.D. period is the popularity of the theme on Saiva temples. The fact that Vikramaditya-I was initiated into a Saiva sect by the ritual of *Sivamandala diksha* in the region of Karnool Mehaboobnagar area of Andhra Pradesh suggests that a new Saiva sect affiliated to *Pasupatism* had made its overwhelming presence in Chalukya dominion. This sect seems to have accorded the *Ramayana* Vishnu in his incarnation as Rama is believed to have established and worshipped Siva lingas during his journey in Southern India in search of Sita. These lingas were popularly known as Ramesvara linga. This seems to have given credence to *Ramayana* as approving Vishnu as a devotee of Siva, thereby making Siva superior to Vishnu. Saivas therefore appropriated the *Ramayana* story to their mythological fold. This explains the regular presence of *Ramayana* episodes in the visual narrative art of post 650 A.D. Saiva temples. The new sect affiliated to the *Pasupata* could be the *Kalamukha* sect.

The importance given to Sita’s abduction in the narrative visuals should be viewed as the legitimising of the contemporary social ethics insisting on faithfulness of a women to her husband and keeping distance from another's wife.

The Ahalya and Indra story and the story of Yasodhara and Amritamati stand in distinct contrast as they represent infidelity of the woman as unacceptable model for the society.

Thus episodes of the *Ramayana* in narrative visuals of the period have religious, ethical and moral import.

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The *Mahabharata* has been considered in India as an encyclopaedia in which “every thing found in the world may also be found” and “nothing which
is not found in the *Mahabharata* can be found in the world*. It has been considered as a work with ample instances of ethics and morals. Its diadactic contents incorporated Saiva themes as also a discourse on *Pasupatism*.

Chalukya temples incorporate in their narrative visuals selected episodes particularly from *Adiparva, Sabhaparva, Vanaparva, Virataparva, Bhishmaparva and Salyaparva*. Interestingly, the lesser known episodes like *Gajakachchhapa-yuddha* and the story of Garuda also find place in the narrative scheme. But the most popular episodes relate to the *Gangavataraṇa* and *Kiratarjuniya*. This was the period when the river Ganga had become a pan-Indian sacred river in the minds of the people. As a parallel development South Indian rivers also gained sacredness. The Malaprabha river which flowed in the core of the Chalukya empire and joined the Tungabhadra was dotted with sacred spots or *tirthas*. There were Saiva *acharyas* like Jnanasivacharya who migrated to places like Pattadakal from the distant region north of the Ganga. It is no wonder therefore that the *Gangavataraṇa* theme deeply influenced the Chalukya artists. It may be noted that mono-scenic representations of Gangadharamurti are found in considerable number in Saiva temples.

In the *Kiratarjuniya* episode Arjuna, the Pandava hero, is known to have worshipped Siva in the forest for obtaining *Pasupata* weapon. This was a popular theme with the *Mahesvaras* or *Pasupatas*. As such this *Mahabharata* episode also entered the Saiva *Pasupata* fold. The *Pasupata-Kalamukhas* approved the existence of Vishnu, Siva and Brahma as a group in which Siva was considered supreme. Therefore myths related to Vishnu could find a place in Siva’s temples.

However both *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* had a place in temples both of Vaishnava and Saiva affiliation. Like the *Ramayana* therefore the *Mahabharata* narrative visuals in Chalukya context have religious, ethical and moral import.

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The narrative visuals related to the *Avataras* of Vishnu particularly focus on Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Dasarathi-Rama and Krishna. Among these Rama figures only as part of the *Ramayana* narratives. A study of the Bhuvavaraha representations reveals the absence of Hiranyaksha. This suggests that the Hiranyaksha episode in the Varaha myth was probably not popular. The umpteen representations of Bhuvavaraha owe to Varaha being the royal insignia of the Chalukyas. In fact they are described in their inscriptions as *Prihivivallabha* or *Sri-Prihivivallabha*, thereby suggesting the king’s equation with Vishnu as Varaha, the lord of the earth goddess. In the case of Narasimha both *kevala* and *sthauana* forms have found place. The *kevala* Narasimha facing *Adimurti* (Vaikunthamurti) in Cave-III at Badami suggests him to be an emanation of the highest. He seems to have been conceived have as god of knowledge (with *Sahasradala padma* on the crown) and as such personification of *sudarshana-chakra*. In scenes representing Hiranyakasipu’s fight with the Narasimha the *lila* (play) of the Supreme in dramatically subduing the evil is emphasized. It is also worth noticing that the earliest depiction of Yoganarasimha figures already in the first half of the Chalukya rule. Perhaps the most significant narrative visuals of the *avataras* in the Chalukya series is the one connected with the Vamana incarnation. Normally the story is depicted in continuous mode within a single frame. The depictions of pre-650 A.D. period differ distinctly from the depictions of post 650 A.D. In the earlier phase Namuchi, the son of Bali, obstructs Trivikrama from measuring the universe by holding his right leg tight in vain. But depictions of the second phase show three events of the story. The first relates to Bali confirming the gift to Vamana; the second shows Vamana in Trivikrama form raising his leg to measure the universe; and the third depicts Garuda belabouring Bali and arresting him with *Varunapasa*. It may be noted that the latter event is noticed only in the *Bhagavatapurana* version of the story.

The Krishnavatara episodes are common in the Chalukya period. A significant component is Krishna’s killing the *Baka* demon. Since the *Bhagavatapurana* attaches importance to this episode, one may understand its
occurrence as signifying the advent of Bhagavatapurana concepts in the region. Among the other Vaishnava myths found in visual narratives, one may mention the Gajendramoksha as significant at Pattadakal. Different Puranas contain this story with minor variations, but it is extensively treated in the Bhagavatapurana, emphasising Bhaktavatsala aspect of Vishnu.

Thus Vaishnava narrative visuals of the Chalukya period demonstrate a changeover to the Bhagavatapurana versions in post 650 period.

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Saiva monuments being relatively greater in number, the variety of Saiva narrative visual particularly of mono-scenic mode are diverse and unprecedented in number.

As in the case of Vaishnava themes the Saiva narrative visuals of pre 650 A.D. period differ from those of post 650 A.D. period in respect of approaches to the myths. There is a total absence of Samharamurti representations of Siva in the earlier phase. On the other hand, the emphasis is on Saumyamurtis of Siva and on syncretic forms such as Ardhanarisvara and Harihara. In the Saiva cave at Badami the absence of Lakulisa is indeed surprising. The dvarapala is a smiling two-armed sober personality. Similarly the absence of apasmara dwarf under Nataraja's feet in this place is noteworthy. Obviously the Saiva caves imply their authorship to a mild variety of Saivism, probably of Srotriya Brahmanical tradition.

In the post 650 A.D. narrative visuals Anugrahamurtis (e.g. Ravanunugraha murti) and Samharamurtis of Siva (Andhakasura samhara, Gajasura samhara, Tripur samhara etc) assume unprecedented popularity, along with such themes as Lingodbhava-murti, purporting Siva's superiority among gods. Similarly literally all the Nataraja depictions show apasmara dwarf trampled under the foot of Nataraja.

Thus post 650 A.D. Saiva visuals stand in distinct contrast to the pre 650 A.D. period depictions. These changes should be considered against the
background of embracing of *Pasupata* Saivism of a distinct order by Vikramaditya-I in 659 A.D. whence he assumed the epithet *Parama-Mahesvara*. As already pointed out, this sect is likely to be *Pasupata-Kalamukha* of initial stage.

The popularity of Nataraja theme in Saiva temples is also noteworthy in post 650 A.D. depictions. In one depiction of Nataraja at Pattadakal fire (Agni) figures as an attribute. The obvious suggestion is that the symbolic and philosophical explanation attributed to Anandatandava Siva was already present in Chalukya dominion by second quarter of 8th century A.D. The Pattadakal inscriptions attest to the ritual importance of dance, drama and music in Saiva temples. Nataraja theme therefore corresponds to this development.

The syncretic forms of the deity namely the Ardhanarisvara and Harihara carry the message of unity of the godhead. Probably the idea seems to have originated in *smarta* brahmanical conception. However it was appropriated in *Pasupata Kalamukha* tradition, which accepted the existence of the Hindu trinity side by side with Siva as the supreme among them. Thus Saiva narrative visuals of 6th century demonstrate the popularity of *Puranic* themes as also mirror the contemporary socio-religious developments.

Among the representations of Durga one may notice a sequential development of artist’s imagination in a majority of visuals. They also suggest inspiration from other regions like the Pallava country (7.130-7.131) in the last stage.

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The Sun temples of the period are impressive in number, but the Saura themes occurring as visuals on them are too few. It is well known that many *vedic Saura* myths were transferred to god Vishnu in course of time. By the time *Puranas* were composed mythological themes connected with Surya had dwindled. As such only two themes, namely Yajnyavalkya’s learning the
Vedas and Surya chiding Chhaya are identifiable. But they are unique in the whole series of Indian art, as they are not found elsewhere.

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Buddhist monuments of 6th-8th century period in Chalukya country are disappointing in number. In fact this suggests the low level of popularity of Buddhism. The best specimen of Buddhist architecture in this region is the Buddhist Chaityalaya-cum-Vihara at Aihole. It is a Mahayana monument. The narrative visuals are found particularly in the sakhas of the doorframes. They are very small in size and hence lacking details. The narrative visuals exhibit the excellent acquaintance of the artists with the episodes of the Buddha’s life and the Jatakas. This may be the result of discourses of the Buddhist monks in the premises of the monument.

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Jainism was quite a popular religion in Karnataka from early times. Its surviving monuments in Chalukya dominion are not many. There is also a pausity of visual themes on them. A seated Jina in sermon is common to the sancta of the these monuments. The artist has given considerable attention to depicting the seven pratiharyas of Jina in sermon. The unfinished visual of Samavasarana-kalyana of Parsvanatha in the Jaina cave at Aihole is a unique specimen in early Jaina art.

Two themes seem to have to dominated the Jaina minds of the Chalukya period. Both are found in the mukhamandapa walls in the Jaina caves, one in Badami and another in Aihole. The first is Parsvanatha’s Kamathopasarga. The visual follows the continuous narrative mode and suggests the victory of Parsvanatha over Samvara, overcoming the obstacles thrown by the latter. The second is a mono-scenic presentation of Bahubali’s penance. The depiction of this theme at Aihole is suggestive of great imagination of the artist.

The emphasis on these two themes in both the caves hints that they were treated as a pair with something common in between. This was probably the
naga (snake) associated with them, Naga Dharanendra Yaksha and Padmavati in the case of Parsvanatha and Kukkutasarpas in the case of Bahubali. One may discern the folk psychology playing its role in the preference to these two themes.

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The narrative visuals which may be regarded as secular in nature comprise selected stories from the *Panchatantra* on the one hand and a singular representation of Yasodhara story on the other. Chalukya *Panchatantra* stories are restricted to those of wedge pulling monkey, the plover who fought the ocean, the geese and the tortoise, the story of Narayanabhatta, the monkey and the crocodile, the loyal mongoose, Bherunda birds and the Brahmana and the crab. Only some of these are repeated more than once. The related inscriptions found in Alampur imply closer resemblance to Sanskrit summary verses found in Durgasimha’s Kannada *Panchatantra* (11th Century A.D.) which work was based on Vasubhaga’s Sanskrit *Panchatantra*. It is noteworthy that *Panchatantra* visuals occur only in post 650 A.D. temples. Obviously it may be observed that Vasubhaga’s *Panchatantra* must have been composed some time before 650 A.D. and that possibly Karnataka was the home of Vasubhaga.

The Yasodhara story is of distinct Jaina affiliation. Popular in Karnataka. Vadiraja wrote *Yasodharacharita* in Sanskrit and Janna rendered it into Kannada with some alterations. But in Chalukya context the visual figures in the Saiva temples of Mallikarjuna at Pattadakal in the second quarter of the 8th century. Obviously the inspiration for the artist was from a non-Jaina source of secular origin. Accordingly it may be inferred that the story had still retained its secular appeal in the 8th century A.D. in Karnataka. This also is a unique representation since no where else in Indian art it is known to have repeated.

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In the present thesis several aspects of narrative sculptural visuals of Karnataka were studied and discoursed upon. The resultant of the researches has been already summarized above. The study makes it clear amply that the
narrative visuals of Karnataka are not only significant from the points of view of narrative technique and art, but also from the points of view of changes in the presentation of identical themes and preferences to themes. They also are significant for their religious, moral and ethical import.

So far as the scope for further researches is considered the following suggestions may be made.

1. Identification of those visuals which could not be identified here.

2. Extension of the area of study of narrative visual art of Karnataka to post 750 A.D. period.

3. Comparison of Karnataka’s visual art tradition with that of the remaining part of India.