CHAPTER V
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Religion in Uttarākhaṇḍa revolves around three main deities: Śiva, Viṣṇu and the goddess Nandā. Scores of temples dedicated to these gods were constructed, and land and villages were granted for their upkeep. Some of the legends related to these gods were recast to suit the social formation of this region. These deities were also linked to the processes of state formation during the early medieval period, particularly the goddess Nandā, who acquired an important position in the region through her association with the royal household. Nandā was also associated with the goddess Pārvatī, the consort of Śiva. The local gods were incorporated into Śiva and Viṣṇu cults, whereas local female deities were assimilated within the cult of Nandā. Apart from Śiva, Viṣṇu and other brahmanical deities, Buddhism also infiltrated this region. In the following pages, we will discuss the main aspects of religious history of this region during the period of our study.

Buddhism

Buddhism was the first religion to reach this region. The early Kuṇindas were Buddhists, as is apparent from the fact that many of the symbols appearing on their coins are Buddhist\(^1\) symbols. However, later Kuṇinda coins appear to contain Saiva symbols. On the Amoghabhūti silver coins we have a deer, a Buddhist symbol (♀) between its horns, a caitya between legs, and a female figure holding a flower towards the deer. On the reverse\(^2\) of these coins, we have a

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\(^2\) Ibid., pp.289-90.
caitya surmounted by combined triratna and dharmacakra symbols, below dharmacakra we have a snake and a tree along with a railing. It seems that the early Kuṇinda kings had adopted Buddhism, but the later ones changed over to Śaivism. The change was gradual. While later coins have Śaiva symbols, there are still many coin-types which have both Buddhist and Śaiva symbols. This shows a sort of transitional phase when the main Kuṇinda line became fragmented, and many small kingdoms arose issuing their own coins. These new kingdoms came under Śaiva influence, and Śaiva symbols along with the Buddhist symbols were struck on the coins. On some of the coins of the first century B.C., Sri-Laksmi appears on a lotus with a deer by her side.

It has been shown that the tribal republics of the centuries preceding the Christian era were favourably inclined towards Buddhism, as it had a favourable attitude towards trade practices and contested the superiority of the brāhmaṇas over the “kṣatriya” ruling elite. The Kuṇindas were no exception to this trend.

There is some evidence to show that Aśoka had extended his control over the Himalayan region. The account of Tārānatha contains a confused story of Nemita the king of Camparan, who had six sons born of lawful wives, and a natural son named Aśoka born of his liaison with the daughter of a merchant. Aśoka defeated the people of Nepal and Khaśya (the country of the Khaśās) who had revolted against Nemita, and received the principality of Pāṭaliputra as reward.

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According to another tradition,\(^5\) Asoka after quelling the revolt at Taxila entered the area of Khaśa which was located in the south-east of modern Kashmir. These two traditions show that the Khaśas were in Mauryan control nominally and that is why we find Asokan inscriptions at Kalsi. According to Romila Thapar,\(^6\) there is no reason to disbelieve that the Mauryan empire included the Khaśa-deśa. Buddhism seems to have been already present in the region even before the Mauryas. But with the decline of the Mauryas and the spread of brahmanism, it became a dying force. However, Buddhism did not completely vanish from the region as we have evidence of its presence even in later times.

A Buddhist stūpa\(^7\) at Nala near Gupta-Kashi was discovered by K.P. Nautiyal. This remains undated. In the Devadhunga village about 1.5 km from Purola, a Mauryan brick structure\(^8\) of about 1.35m high from the surrounding level was noticed in 1982-83. According to L.M. Wahal, it looked like a Mauryan Buddhist stūpa. A partly-excavated mound in the township of the antibiotic factory at Rishikesh revealed the remains\(^9\) of brick structures rising to a height of about 1.20 m to 1.50 m. It was supposed to form part of a Buddhist monastery, and this conjecture was further strengthened by the find of wedge-shaped bricks, probably used in the construction of a stūpa or the apsidal end of a caitya hall. The associated pottery\(^10\) was a dull red ware assignable to the early centuries of the Christian era. A temple of

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\(^5\) *Divyavadana*, Sanskrit - Buddhist Text, no.20, p.234, Quoted in M.R. Singh, op.cit., p.366.


\(^7\) *Ind. Arch. AR.*, 1961-62, p.103.

\(^8\) *Ind. Arch. AR.*, 1982-83, p.103.


\(^10\) Ibid. p.45.
Buddha,\textsuperscript{11} with inscriptions of the seventh century A.D. was discovered at Palethi in Tehri-Garhwal.

Another evidence of the prevalence of Buddhists in the region is provided by the Chinese traveller Hieun Tsang.\textsuperscript{12} He has described five places which he visited after leaving Thānesāvar.\textsuperscript{11} These are: (1) Śrughna (Su-lukin-na), 2. Madavar (Mo-ti-pu-lo or Mādipura), 3. Māyāpura or Mayura (Mo-yu-lo), 4. Brahmapura (Po-lo-ki-mo-pu-lo), and 5, Goviṣāṇa (Kiu-pi-ang-na). These five places were either in the modern Uttarākhanda or on its southern boundaries. Description of these places by Hieun Tsang shows that there was a substantial presence of Buddhists in the region. While describing Śrughna,\textsuperscript{13} the pilgrim notes the existence of five monasteries and 1000 monks belonging to the Hīnayāna sect. One was located in the south-west of the main town situated on the west bank of the Yamuna river. On the eastern gate of this large monastery was an Asokan stupa which was located at a place where Buddha had preached and admitted men into his samgha. Beside this stupa was one which had hair and nail-relics of the Buddha, and round about were some tens of stūpas with similar relics of Sariputra, Mudgalaputra, and the other great arhats. According to the Chinese pilgrim, people of this place had been led astray into believing in wrong religions after the death of the Buddha, and Buddhism declined. Then the Buddhist teachers from other places came and defeated the Tīrthikas and brāhmaṇas in discussions. The five monasteries mentioned above were built\textsuperscript{14} at the places where the discussions were held in order to commemorate the victories.

\textsuperscript{11} Ind. Arch. AR., 1968-69, p.52.
\textsuperscript{12} A. Cunningham, The Ancient Geography of India, pp.290-303.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.

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However, archaeological excavations\(^{15}\) so far show the existence of only one monastery.

After Śrughna, the traveller proceeded to the Mo-ti-pu-lo, i.e., Matipura (Mayūra) identified by St. Martin and Cunningham\(^ {16}\) with Madawar near Bijnor. The ruler of this place, according to Hieun Tsang, was a sudra and did not believe in Buddhism. Still, there were about ten Buddhist monasteries with more than eight hundred monks mostly belonging to the Sarvastivādin school of the Hinayāna sect. From Matipura, Hieun Tsang went to Ku-pi-sang-na i.e. Govisāna. There were two Buddhist monasteries with above one hundred monks (Hinayānists). He further mentions that close to the city there was an old monastery with an Aśokan stūpa to mark the spot at which the Buddha preached for one month on religious essentials. Besides this, according to the traveller,\(^ {17}\) there were sites of the sitting places and exercise grounds of the four previous Buddhas, and two stūpas with hair and nail relics of the Buddha.

After describing Matipura, Hieun Tsang described Po-lo-Kinmoku-pu-lo or Brahmapura\(^ {18}\) where he found five Buddhist monasteries with only a few monks residing in them. Brahmapura, as we know, was the seat of the Paurava-Varman dynasty which followed brahmanical religion. From Govisana, Hieun Tsang travelled to Ahicchatra where he found about ten Buddhist monasteries and more than one thousand Buddhist monks belonging to the Sammitiya school of the Hinayāna sect. Outside the capital, he found an Aśokan stūpa where Buddha preached to the dragon for seven days. Beside it, there were four small

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\(^{15}\) Ind. Arch. AR., 1963-64, p.28.  
\(^{16}\) A Cunningham, op.cit.  
\(^{17}\) Ibid., p.331.  
\(^{18}\) Ibid. p.329.
stūpas at the sitting and exercise places of the four former Buddhas.

So, till the middle of the seventh century, the Buddhist presence was still noticeable at several places in the region. But, as state support declined most of the monasteries wore a deserted look. Archaeological evidence pertaining to Buddhism is negligible in the Uttarākhaṇḍa proper. Moradhwaj, which lies on the outskirts of Uttarākhaṇḍa shows signs of its association with Buddhism. The Buddhist association of the site is indicated by the remains of a stūpa and numerous small tablets bearing the image of the Buddha. But this site was abandoned after the Kusāṇa period. At Moradhwaj, distrist Bijnor, an inscription on a terracotta statue of Buddha belonging to the seventh century A.D. and written in Brāhmī and Sanskrit, records the Buddhist doctrine of the four noble truths, i.e., the world has misery, there is a cause of misery, it is possible to annihilate misery and there is a way to get rid of the misery. It is further said that whatever happens has a cause (hetu). This has been shown by the Buddha. Whoever believes in this doctrine is the great monk (mahāśrāmana). Five stone inscriptions found in the Mana village of Chamoli district show influence of Tibetan Buddhism and trade relations with Tibet. All the inscriptions are in Tibetan language, but the date of these inscriptions is difficult to determine. The first of these is fragmentary and damaged. It refers to a king and relates to the conduct of trade between the “Rongpa” (the people of the valley) and the “traders” (Bhotias?). The inscription seems to record the levy imposed probably on the people of the valley if the loads of separate

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20 Ibid.
21 *Ye dharmā hetuprabhava hetum teśāṃ tathāgato hyabadat Teśāṃ ca yo nirodhaḥ evam vadi mahāśrāmanāḥ*; S.P. Dabral, Uttarākhaṇḍa ke Abhilekh evam Mudra, pp.99-100.
articles fell short and the thief was recognized and not caught. It also mentions\textsuperscript{23} that in case of a thief being caught his hands should be cut off. The second inscription\textsuperscript{24} contains further details about the levy. The third inscription refers to a king, a Lha’iblon Po (Divine minister, Royal Minister) and a Lha-blama (Divine Lama). The last two inscriptions\textsuperscript{25} contain the formula: \textit{Om ma ni pādme hum}. All these five inscriptions were found in the same village. The contents of the inscriptions suggest that all the fragments are part of one inscription. However, in the absence of details on palaeography, the typology of stone, date, etc., it is difficult to say anything. But if they do belong to the same inscription, it may show that Buddhism was a dominant religion in that part of Uttarākhaṇḍa dominated by Bhotias, and that the state exploited this situation to further its interest in the profits from trade. In this part of Uttarākhaṇḍa popularly known as Bhotia Valleys and in the contiguous regions of Nepal, there are groups who still profess Buddhism.\textsuperscript{26}

Uttarākhaṇḍa is poor in the iconography of the Buddha. The reason seems to be the fact that the region was dominated by the Hīnayānists. Rahula Sankrityayana\textsuperscript{27} noticed a Buddhist metallic statue of five-six inches in height at Tuṅganātha. This statue is in \textit{bhūmisparśa} posture. He further noted only three Buddhist icons and \textit{stūpas} in the Garhwal region. The one in Barahat (Uttarakashi) is a

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
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\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid., the details however are not reported.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Rahula Sankrityayana, op.cit., p.452.
\end{thebibliography}
metallic statue of the Buddha in standing posture and is presently worshipped as Dattātreya. This statue is supposed to have been created at the instance of a king of western Tibet named Nāgarāja. A stone stūpa is situated near a temple at Nalachatti in the Mandakini valley. A third piece is the Buddha icon of Badarīnātha. The origin and real identity of this celebrated idol is quite controversial. The black-stone image is in a highly mutilated condition and as such it is difficult to identify it satisfactorily. Rahula Sankrityayana identified it as an image of the Buddha in padmāsana posture. This identification was also supported by the then temple priest known as Rawal, as well as by a former Rawal named Vāsudeva. Rahula Sankrityayana found many more Buddhist idols on both sides of the main idol. Local tradition is that this image was taken out of Nāradakūṭa by Śaṅkaračārya, who got it installed on the bank of Taptakūṭa. The Skanda Purāṇa records this tradition: “then in the form of a recluse, I (Siva) will raise Hari from the tīrtha called Nārada and install him with a desire for the welfare of the worlds”. This recluse was, according to the translator, the Advaita Vedānta teacher Śaṅkaračārya.

Rahula Sankrityayana’s reports were published in 1953. Since then many other Buddha images have been found in this region. One bronze image of the Buddha is kept in the museum of Kumaon University. This is in the yoga posture. The right hand is in bhūmisparsa mudrā and left hand in abhayamudrā. Another stone

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28 Ibid.; p.475.
29 Ibid.
30 Tatoahāṃ yatirūpaṇa tīrthānāradasaṅgītakāt/ Uddhāṭya sthūpāviṣyāmi harim lokahiteccchayā, SKP.II.iii, 5.24.
image was found in the Ritha village in Gagas valley. This headless image appears with two attendants in bhūmisparsā posture, and is seated on a lotus. This image appears to have belonged to the 11th-12th century A.D. In 1982, K.K. Saxena discovered an image\(^{33}\) of the Buddhist goddess Tara of 9th-10th century at Jakheta village in Almora district. This shows the presence of Buddhist tantrik cults in the region. Yashavanta Singh Kathoch and Pati Ram\(^{34}\) had reported many Buddhist images from Gopeshwar (stone images) in Lata-Niti valley (such as, two inscribed copper images in padmāsana posture of the 10th century A.D), Mana valley, Shrinagar (Avalokitesvara image), Tuṅganātha, Agastamuni and Nala.

With the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Buddha had become as much an object of worship and pious devotion as any other deity. By the Gupta period,\(^{35}\) there was no longer any difference in the social basis of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Vaiṣṇavism. Brahmanical views had infiltrated Buddhism, and the Buddhists also respected brahmanical institutions. This resulted in the identifications of the Buddha\(^{36}\) with Nārāyaṇa. Although this identification initially met with some opposition, Buddha was ultimately included in the list of incarnations of Viṣṇu. This identification was rooted\(^{37}\) in those social conditions which had mitigated the differences between brahmanism and Buddhism. The identification of the Buddha with Nārāyaṇa is clearly reflected in the representation of the Buddha in the temples of

\(^{33}\) Ibid.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., p.79.

\(^{35}\) Suvira Jaiswal, The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism, p.145.

\(^{36}\) Ibid. p.146.

\(^{37}\) Ibid.
Uttarakhanda. There are many temples in Kwali, Bageshwar, Pubhaun and Bayala in which the Buddha is shown in the dasavatara panels. In a temple near Almora town, Buddha has been shown along with a figure of Kalki-on-horse.

Buddhism and Sankaracarya

It would be worthwhile to discuss the question of Šaṅkarācārya, his coming to Badarīnātha and the persecution of Buddhists in the region. The date of Šaṅkarācārya has been a matter of great controversy. Orthodox religious scholars maintain that Śri Šaṅkara lived from 509 to 477 B.C. following strictly the chronology of the guruparamparās. Swami Prajnananda Saraswati places his birth in 44 B.C. while R.N. Ghosh suggests 686 A.D. Fleet and K.T. Telang attempted to place him in between the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. Keith says that Šaṅkara may have been born in 788 and may have died or become a sanyasin in 820 and at any rate, was active in 800 A.D. Haripada Chakrabarti came to the conclusion that Sankara may be placed “anytime between two extreme points 684 and 841 A.D. and we cannot be more precise until further records are explored”. G.C. Pande has fixed the date of Sankara between 650 A.D. and 775 A.D. on the basis of the dates of Dharmakirti, Kumārila, Dignāga, Maṇḍana,

38 K.K.Saxena, op.cit., p.78.
39 Ibid.
41 IA, XVI, 1887, 41 f.
42 IA, XIII, 1884, 95 f.
44 Haripada Chakraborty, Asceticism in Ancient India: In Brahmanical, Buddhist, Jaina and Ajivika Societies (from the earliest times to the period of Sankaracarya), Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1973, pp.188-193.
Santaraksita, etc. However, the date generally accepted by historians is the years A.D. 788-820.

It appears from the hagiographies that Śaṅkaracārya visited Badarikāśrama twice. First, he moved to Vyāsa Guhā near Badarikāśrama from Kashi at the insistence of god Śiva, and composed a commentary on the Brahmaśūtra and on the Upaniṣads at the age of twelve. He placed the image of Badarī Nārāyaṇa in the temple and employed some Nambudiri brāhmaṇas for its worship. Śaṅkara founded the Jyotirmāṭha with Tōtakācārya as its head. He went to Badarī for the second time as part of his digvijaya. Madhava draws our attention to a tradition that Śaṅkara went to Kashmir to open the gate of Sāradāpīṭha which was admissible only to the omniscient. He defeated all rival scholars there and was honoured by all as the omniscient. Then Śaṅkara went to Badarī with some of his disciples, and lived there for some days. He came to Kedāraka and as it was too cold, he prayed for hot water and was blessed with the flow of a river with a hot water.

According to Haripada Chakraborty, Śaṅkara had divided India into four zones and established a matha in each zone. In the north zone, he established Jyoti at Badarī and placed it in charge of Tōtakācārya. This centre followed the Atharvaveda, its sacred formula was ‘Ayamātmma Brahma’, and it is still presided over by the gods

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47 Śaṅkara - digvijaya by Madhava, quoted by Haripada Chakraborty, op.cit., p.172.
48 Ibid., pp.172-73.
49 Ibid., pp.177-78.
50 Ibid., p.179.
Nārāyaṇa and Pūrṇagiri. The branches of the matḥa attached to this matḥa were Giri, Parvata and Sāgara. The Ānandavara sub-sect of the Daśnāmis were given charge of this matḥa, who used to abstain from begging and live only on freely given alms.

The above description is based on the biography written by Mādhava which is without doubt the most important of the hagiographies of Śaṅkara. Accordingly to Baldev Upadhyaya, he belonged to the later half of the seventeenth or first half of the eighteenth century, and was different from the famous fourteenth century Vijayanagara rājaguru Mādhava Vidyārāṇya with whom he is traditionally identified. As there is a long gap between the time of Śaṅkara and the composition of his hagiographies, it is difficult to accept the narratives literally. Lorenzen has studied these hagiographies in detail. These depict Śaṅkara as an incarnation of Śiva who defeated his non-Vaiśṇava, theological, sectarian opponents. But the superiority of Saivism is established in a subtle manner. For example, the ideal of Saivism is linked with the ascetic while the ideal of Vaiśṇavism is identified with that of the householder and the superiority of the ascetic over the householder is implied and rejected by Śaṅkara, according to Lorenzen. Other Saiva motifs interspersed with Vaiśṇava ones are woven into the accounts of Śaṅkara’s life. Those forms of Saiva devotionalism deemed incompatible with Śaṅkara’s doctrine are, according to Lorenzen ascribed to Śaṅkara even

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51 Ibid., p.183.
52 Ibid., p.184.
54 David N. Lorenzen, op.cit.
55 Ibid.
though many of Śaṅkara’s opponents were, in fact Śaivite.\textsuperscript{56} Lorenzen further suggests that the symbolism of water/river similarly combines Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava motifs, as Śaṅkara confronts the river in the manner of Śiva even though water imagery is more commonly associated with Viṣṇu. Lorenzen concludes\textsuperscript{57} that Vaiṣṇava themes were woven into the mythologies surrounding Śaṅkara in order to elevate Śaṅkara to a level of popularity equal to Kṛṣṇa and to “prove” the superiority of Śiva over Viṣṇu.

With regards to the causes for the disappearance of Buddhism from the Himalayas in general and Uttarākhaṇḍa in particular, there is a tradition\textsuperscript{58} prevalent in Uttarākhaṇḍa and Nepal, according to which the Buddhist scholars after being defeated by Śaṅkara in religious and philosophical discourses had to flee and many of them were put to death. Those who did not accept the defeat were killed, but those who accepted the defeat but refused to change were ordered to sacrifice animals. Śaṅkara also compelled the nuns to marry and forced the ordinary Buddhists to perform caṇḍā karma. There were at least 84,000 works on Buddhism which he destroyed. Six times the goddess Maṇi Jogini raised storms and prevented him from going to the Maṇicūra mountain. Śaṅkara then decided that Mahākāla, who was a Buddha and abhorred sacrifice, should have animals sacrificed to him. Having thus overcome the Buddhists, he introduced the Śaiva religion in place of Buddhism. This is evidently a late and crude attempt to appropriate Śaṅkaraśārīrya in support of popular Śaivism. The works of Śaṅkara do not show any special preference for either Viṣṇu or Śiva.\textsuperscript{59} Many

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} ATK., p.464-465.
\textsuperscript{59} Most scholars have followed the hagiographies in assuming that Śaṅkaraśārīrya was a Saivite although Paul Hacker has recently argued, on the basis of Śaṅkara’s philosophical works, that he was a Vaiṣṇava. Paul Hacker, “Relations of early Advaitins to Vaisnavism”, Weiner Zeitschrift für die kunde Sud-und Ostasiens, IX, 1965, pp.147-54. Quoted in David N. Lorenzen, op.cit., p.139, fn. 15.
devotional hymns attributed to Sankara express impassioned devotion to a number of brahmanical gods and goddesses. Although a majority of the hymns praise Śiva and his consort, many hymns are dedicated to other gods including Viṣṇu. More important, the deity installed by Śaṅkara at Badarīnātha is Viṣṇu and not Śiva as the Śaivas would have us believe. It seems that the original legend relating to Badarīnātha was quite different, and his cult was appropriated by Śaivas in later times.

The Bageshwar stone inscription of Bhūdevadeva describes the Katyuri king as paramamāheśvara, paramabrahmapārayaṇa and parambudhaśramanaripu i.e. the great worshipper of Maheśvara, great devotee of Brahma and a great enemy of the Buddhists. According to M.P. Joshi, Buddhism seems to have expanded after Hieun Tsang’s visit owing to the catholicity of Kumaon kings who, unlike Bhūdevadeva, might not have checked its growth if not actively patronized it. He further conjectures that Bhūdeva might have angered the followers of Buddhism, and they in turn helped Salaṇḍaditya to overthrow Bhūdeva. According to Joshi, this may have resulted in a permanent strife and weakened the Katyuri kingdom which broke up in the subsequent centuries. The reasons behind the disintegration of the Katyuri kingdom as put forward by Joshi seem to be rather naive. Buddhism was never strong enough to influence the politics of the region. The disintegration of the Katyuri kingdom was more because of its internal dynamics. On a pan-India level also, Buddhism had started declining gradually after the seventh century and it virtually disappeared from India after the twelfth century. In any case, the monasteries of Brahmāpura were not in a good condition when Hieun


61 B.N.S. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century, p.345.
Tsang reported about them. However, the significance of the epithet *paramabuddhasramagāriṇī* adopted by Bhūdeva in the 9th century remains a puzzle. It certainly shows a kind of strife and persecution of the Buddhists in the region. If the Buddhists had helped Saloṇāditya in taking over the kingdom they would have been patronized by him. But Saloṇāditya was a devout Śaiva.

The popular tradition discussed above would have us believe that Buddhism completely disappeared from Uttarākhaṇḍa and Nepal. But our sources do not support this. In the twelfth century, Nepal was under the Mallas who invaded the Kumaon and Garhwal region and have left three inscriptions. Asokacalla claimed himself to be *abhīnav-bhodhisatvatāra* and Krācalladeva claimed to be *paramasaugarā*. But these invaders do not reflect the religious inclination of the region. Asokacalla compared himself with god Nārāyaṇa whereas Krācalladeva donated land to the god Ekarudra Śrībālesvara. In Kumaon, as noted earlier a few icons of the Buddha belongings to the eleventh-twelfth centuries have been found.

**Vaiṣṇavism**

The most important Vaiṣṇava deity in Uttarākhaṇḍa is Badarānātha. The earliest references to Badarikāśrama occur in the Āraṇyaka Parva and the Śānti Parva of the *Mahābhārata*. We are told that while on pilgrimage the Pāṇḍavas reached Badarī where there was a large Badarī tree. They stayed there for a month. The practice of

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63 Rahula Sankrityayana, op.cit., p.111.
64 Ibid., p.114.
65 III. 174.8
going on pilgrimage is very old and is connected with the idea that certain spots on the mountains, caves, rivers, etc., are abodes of holy spirits. The *Vāyu Purāṇa*\(^{66}\) states that all parts of the Himālaya are holy, and the Ganges is holy everywhere. All rivers falling into the sea and all seas are holy. The *Padmapurāṇa*\(^{67}\) says that all rivers, whether flowing through a village or a forest, are holy and that where no name of a *tīrtha* on rivers is known, it should be called Viṣṇu-tīrtha. During the time of the final redaction of the *Mahābhārata*, the concept of pilgrimage as a meritorious act was well established. In the *sūtras* and early *smṛtis* like those of Manu and Yājñavalkya, *tīrthas* do not occupy a very prominent position. It seems that during the Gupta period, with the inclusion of large number of people in the brahmanical fold aboriginal cult spots came to be regarded as holy places and were associated with brahmanical deities. Badarikāśrama and its association with Nara-Nārāyaṇa too seems to have been taken place in the Gupta period. It is not a remote possibility that the place was sacred to the Khaṇḍas earlier, and with their inclusion in the brahmanical fold, their deity was included in the brahmanical pantheon as the form of Viṣṇu.

The *Mahābhārata* says that Manu Vaivasvata\(^{68}\) had performed a severe penance at the Badari Āśrama. The holy āśrama\(^{69}\) of Nārāyaṇa is said to have been situated at Badarī near the river Ganga and was once the abode of Viṣṇu and Jīṣṇu.\(^{70}\) Nārā, a friend of Nārāyaṇa, passed thousands of years at Badarī doing penance. At one place,\(^{71}\)

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\(^{66}\) *VP.*, 77.117.

\(^{67}\) Bhumikhand, 39.46-47.

\(^{68}\) III.185.4.

\(^{69}\) III. 88.22-23; III.45.19.

\(^{70}\) III.41.1.

\(^{71}\) III.156.9-10.
Badarikasrama is shown to be located at some distance from the source of Ganga. However, this reference is found in the Bombay edition and is not included in the critical edition. As such it is post-Gupta, and apparently refers to the present location of the temple. The *Mahābhārata* states that the āsrāma is situated on the mountain Gandhamādana which has a large Badari tree on it. However, the present village in which the temple is located is situated in the middle of a valley of the river Viṣṇugaṅgā, and not on the top of a mountain. The name of the āsrāma as well as that of the temple is said to have derived from the sacred ‘Badari’ tree or jujube. But the tree of jujube does not grow here. One can find only shrubs of jujube. The god’s association with Badarī tree may show that originally he was a god of the pastoral people. In the Kārtavīryopākhyāna of the *Mahābhārata*, Badarī is said to be the favourite āsrāma of Viṣṇu. This reference also is not found in the critical edition. This suggests that Viṣṇu’s association with Badarī could be post-Gupta. In the Āstika Parva of the Ādiparva, Śeṣa is said to have performed penances in the forests of Puṣkara, Gandhamādana, Gokarna, Badarī and the Himalayan foothills. We still have the presence of non-Aryan nāga cults in the region. And in the above references, Badarī is merely shown as a sacred forest. In the Rājadharma section of the Śānti Parva, it is said that the eternal Nārāyaṇa took birth as the son of Dharma in a quadruple form, viz., Nara, Nārāyaṇa, Hari and Kṛṣṇa. Amongst them, Nārāyaṇa and Nara underwent severe austerities by repairing to the Himalayan retreat of Badarī. All these references show that Badarī was mainly associated with the ascetic Nārāyaṇa form of Viṣṇu.

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72 III.142.23.  
74 I.32.3.  
75 XII.321.9-10.
Mahābhārata\textsuperscript{76} says that in the kṛta yuga, a rākṣasa named Cārvāka performed austere penances for many years at Badari. The Purāṇas\textsuperscript{77}, too contain similar descriptions of Badarikāśrama. Thus, Hari is said to have performed tapas here: Kṛṣṇa visited this place and he directed Uddhava to make Badari his abode. However, Badarikāśrama does not find much space in the digests. The Tīrthakalpataru\textsuperscript{78} of Lakṣmidhara, one of the earliest digests (12th century A.D.) devotes more than half the work to Varāṇasī and Prayāga alone but assigns only two or three pages to such famous tīrthas as Puṣkara, Prthudaka, Kākamukha, Badarikāśrama, Kēdāra, etc. The Skanda Purāṇa, however, devotes a section to the glorification of the Badarikāśrama, called Badarikāśramamāhātmya.\textsuperscript{79} This Mahātmya seems to be an attempt to combat the growing popularity of the cult of Rudra-Śiva who was celebrated at Kēdāranātha, and of other local deities. In this section, Śiva himself narrates the importance of Badarikāśrama as the abode of Nārāyanā-Viṣṇu\textsuperscript{80} who is called Jiṣṇu, i.e., the victorious. At one place, Mahādeva says that there is no difference between Śiva and Viṣṇu, and those who differentiate between them will meet with disastrous results. At another place\textsuperscript{81} Śiva says, \textquote{then in the form of a recluse (yatirūpeṇa), I will raise Hari from the tīrtha called Nārada and install him with a desire for the welfare of the worlds.} Apparently this passage refers to the popular tradition, according to which Śāṅkarācarya, the advaita teacher who is regarded as an incarnation of

\begin{enumerate}
\item \text{XII.39.39.}
\item P.V. Kane, \textit{op.cit.} p.565.
\item Book II Section iii.
\item SKP., II, iii. 6.18.
\item \text{SKP., II, iii. 5.24.}
\end{enumerate}
Śiva, had taken out the idol of Viṣṇu from the Nāradakunda and installed it in the present temple.

When and how the presiding deity of Badarīkāśrama came to be known as Badarīnātha is not known. The three feet and nine inches black stone idol\(^\text{82}\) is in the dhyāna mudrā. The front side of the head is completely broken and the overall structure is in a mutilated condition. After examining it closely Rahula Sankrityayana came to the conclusion that the image was of the Buddha in bhūmisparsā mudrā. The Marchhas of Mana valley call it the god (Buddha) of the Bhotias. However, people living around Gangotri believe that this Badarī is not the original one but a replica\(^\text{83}\) established for the people of the plains. According to them the original Badarīnātha is in Tholing Gumba. Tholing Gumba is a Buddhist monastery belonging to the eleventh century. A Rawal of Badarīnātha also claimed that the hind part of the head of the present image depicts a hair-style, which has a very close resemblance to the Buddha images from other parts of India. In addition to it, a thin line on the upper part of the chest has a sharp resemblance to the sacred thread\(^\text{84}\) of the Buddha images. Interestingly, the temple of Badarīnātha receives gifts in kind from the Lama of Tibet\(^\text{85}\) and sends return gifts to them. All this shows that at an earlier stage, the temple was associated with Buddhism. In this regard, Rahula Sankrityayana ‘s hypothesis\(^\text{86}\) seems quite convincing. According to him, there was a confrontation between the Tibetan rulers and the local chiefs over the control of the region in the ninth century. As a result, a

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\(^{82}\) Rahula Sankrityayana, op.cit., p.340.
\(^{83}\) Ibid.
\(^{84}\) Ibid., pp.475-77.
\(^{85}\) Ibid., p.341.
\(^{86}\) Rahula Sankrityayana, pp.477-478.
large number of Buddhist monasteries and brahmanical idols were destroyed. The present Badarinātha idol is one of them which was thrown in the Naradakundā. After that, some Katyuri king erected the temple of Badarinātha at that spot, or there may have existed a temple already in which the idol was reinstalled. According to Sankrityayana, the destruction of the idols might have occurred again during the invasion, of Husain Khan in the last quarter of the sixteen century or during the invasion of the Ruhellas in 1741-42. During any one of these invasions the idols could have been destroyed and thrown into the Naradakundā. Later perhaps someone tried to retrieve the idols from the Kunḍa, found the present idol of the Buddha, and installed it in the temple as the idol of Badarinātha. This hypothesis seems quite convincing and may also explain the epithet Mahābuddhaśrāmanaripu adopted by the Katyuri ruler Bhudevadeva some time in the 9th-10th centuries A.D.

The present temple of Badarinātha situated at an elevation of 10,284 feet above sea level, is traditionally said to have been erected some 800 years ago by Śaṅkarācārya. But the present structure\(^87\) has a modern appearance. There is absolutely no trace of any old structure nor is there any trace of an archaeological site. Absence of archaeological remains may however be due to the nature of terrain.

**Vaiśṇavism in the Inscriptions**

The inscription\(^88\) of Īśvara datable to the seventh century A.D. begins with a homage to Viṣṇu along with Brahma and Rudra, the


trinity of the brahmanical pantheon. It states, “obeisance to the supreme lord, who destroys the circle of births and assumes the three forms of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Rudra for the sake of the creation, continuance and dissolution of the universe”. However, earlier than this we have reference to the existence of a temple of Viṣṇu in the grant of Dyutivarman. It mentions a settlement called Nārāyaṇadevakulakamālkākhānaka, which means a settlement of the attendants of a devakula or temple of Nārāyaṇa. It was granted to the temple of Vīraṇeṣvara Svāmī, a form of god Ananta. Vīraṇeṣvara Svāmī is described as bhujaga-rāja-rūpa, having the form of the king of snakes. This shows the prevalence of snake or Nāga worship in the region. The Nāga worship may have had a totemic origin, and was later incorporated into the brahmanical pantheon through its association with Śiva and Viṣṇu. The fact that Nāga worship was popular in this region is shown from scores of temples dedicated to Nāga deities found in the region. A number of Nāga gods were worshipped in this area, such as Benī-Nāga, Karakata-Nāga and Vāsuki-Nāga. Out of these Karakota-Nāga holds an important position, and he is worshipped in Uttarākhanda as well as in Nepal and Kashmir. At present, Nāgas are connected with the cults of Viṣṇu and Śiva but in prehistoric times they were worshipped as independent deities. Rivett Carnac noticed a few cup-markings along with figures of snakes carved on the rocks in and around the region of Almora. K.P. Nautiyal also reported the sculpting of a snake on the rock near Kasar Devi temple in Almora. This could not be dated, but according to Nautiyal appears to be considerably

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90 Quoted in K.P. Nautiyal, op.cit. p.224.
91 Ibid.
old. Atkinson counted the temples dedicated to the Nāgas\textsuperscript{92} in Uttarākhaṇḍa and came to the conclusion that there are over eighty temples, in which various forms of Nāgas are still an object of worship. Following are some of these temples: at Bastir in Mahar; at Pungraun (Kedāra Kālināga); in Baraun (Benī Nāga); at Pandegaon and Chhakata (Karkoṭaka Nāga); at Gadyara in Danpur (Vāsuki Naga); at Dol in Salam (Nāgadeva Padamgi); at Lodh in Borarau (Nāganātha). Nāganātha is also worshipped at Than in Katyur, at Champavat and in Dhyanirau. In Garhwal, we have the temple of Śeṣanāga at Pandukesava, of Bhekul Nāga at Ratgaon, of Sangal Nāga at Talor, of Banpā Nāga at Margaon, of Lohadevi Nāga at Jelam and of Puṣkara Nāga at Kṣetrapāla Pokhri in Nagpur. All these temples are of Vaiṣṇavite affiliation. However, there are also a large number of Nāga temples with Śaiva affiliation. Out of eighty Nāga temples that Atkinson\textsuperscript{93} studied, sixty temples are of Śaiva association.

The grant of Viṣṇuvarman\textsuperscript{94} also shows Vaiṣṇava influence. First, the name of the king itself and second, the king compares himself with the Cakradhara, i.e., Viṣṇu. There were only a few Katyuri kings who were Vaiṣṇavas and made landgrants to the temples of Viṣṇu and his devotees. Thus, it is recorded that Vasantanadeva, the first king of the Katyuri dynasty, had donated a village called Śaraṇesvara Grāma to the Vaiṣṇavas \textit{(Viṣṇudharmmaṇam viṣaye).\textsuperscript{95}} This village was later donated to the god Vyāghresvara. Perhaps it was taken away from the Vaiṣṇavas by Vasantanadeva’s son whose name is missing in the inscription. This particular reference shows some sort of sectarian feud.

\textsuperscript{92} ATK., p.835.
\textsuperscript{93} ATK., p.835
\textsuperscript{94} Y.R. Gupte, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{95} ATK., pp.469-70.
which resulted in the loss of a grant to Vaisnavas. Lalitasuradeva who claims to be a devout worshipper of Mahesvara (Siva) nevertheless, compared himself to the Boar incarnation of Visnu. Lalitasuradeva donated the land owned by Denduvāka and situated in Thappalasāri, to the god Narâyana installed at Garudagrāma. This deity had been established by Bhaṭṭa Śripuruṣa. This inscription also mentions that in case of the violation of the grant, proper measures would be taken by the brahmacārins attached to the Tapovana belonging to Badarikāśrama—"whatever is to be done in this regard should all be done by the Brahmacārins." This is the first inscriptional reference to the existence of the Badarikāśrama and tapovana with a number of inmates. Its power, prestige and importance can be gauged from the fact that the temple of Narâyana established at Garudagrāma was put under the charge of the brahmacārins of Badarikāśrama. Bhaṭṭa Śripuruṣa, who installed the god Narâyana, might have belonged to Badarikāśrama. In to his second inscription Lalitasuradeva granted three villages, one belonging to the Khaśiya situated in Gorunnaśāra and the other two belonging to Guggula (pariṣad) situated in Palibhūtikā, to the god Narâyana, which image was set up by the personal order of the queen Mahādevī Samādevī at Gorunnaśāra. It seems that by the ninth century the importance of Badarikāśrama as a pilgrim centre had increased considerably because of the growing popularity of the custom of pilgrimage. It has been argued by R.N. Nandi that the decline of trade and urban centres after the third-

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96 D.C. Sircar, op.cit., p.282.
97 D.C. Sircar, op.cit., p.283.
98 Ibid.
century A.D. led to elevation of certain urban centres as *tīrthas* in order to retain their importance. But this would not be applicable to Badarikāśrama. Nevertheless, the texts of early medieval period undoubtedly encourage the custom of going on pilgrimages and a large number of *tīrthas* are mentioned in the later Purāṇas. The custom helped in the spread of brahmanism in remote tribal areas and received state support. The development of Badarīnātha into Pañcabadarīs and Kedārānātha into Pañcakedāras reflect this process. However, this development seems to have taken place quite late-probably after the thirteenth century. The *tīrthas* provided a connection between the different areas which in turn resulted in a degree of uniformity not only in the religious spheres but also in social spheres. In this sense, the role of pilgrimage is similar to that of the development of regional languages. Regional languages tried to unify diverse linguistic groups within a region, while the proliferation of the *tīrthas* unified the religious practices and social norms. While the religious rituals and scriptural knowledge were reserved for the upper varnas, the *tirthayātṛas* were open to all giving them a sense of belonging at least at some superficial level. We have many examples in the Purāṇas of sudras being liberated after visiting holy places.

Padmaśādeva\(^1\) too donated as many as four *pallikās*, fifteen *bhāgas*, two *karmāntasthalikas*, one *vṛtti* and four *dronavāpas* of land to Badarīkāśrama Bhaṭṭaraka. One interesting aspect of these grants to Badarīkāśrama is that all the kings who donated land and villages were Śaivas. Does it indicate that the Badarīkāśrama was gaining popularity? We also find that the number of lands and villages granted to Badarīkāśrama increased in later inscriptions, and finally

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\(^1\) D.C. Sircar, op.cit., p.285.
Subhikṣarājadeva claims to have become paramavaṁśava. Subhikṣarājadeva was the last important king of the main line of Katyuris ruling from Karātikeyapura (Subhikṣapura). Subhikṣarājadeva donated one hundred and ten dronavāpas, one khārīvapa, six nalikavāpas, four pieces and two hastakas of land in twenty-four different localities to the god Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭāraka, installed on the bank of the river Viśṇu-gaṅgā. All these lands were granted together with a Mathikā. It seems that the Vaiṣṇava faith received great impetus during this period and most of the legends about Viṣṇu’s sojourn at Bādarī were invented during this period resulting in the composition of Badarikāśrama Māhātya. Thus, an inscription on the pedestal of a Garuḍa image at Bājnātha states that the image was the kīrti (glory?) of Dāmodaradaṇḍila and records a gift of land. Palaeographically, the inscription has been dated in the twelfth century. There is a fragmentary inscription on the pedestal of the Garuḍavāhana Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa image at Bājnātha temple belonging to the thirteenth century A.D. Another inscription on a rock below the shrine of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa at the Sangama Ghat in Devaprayag reads ‘Caturvyūhaḥ’ in characters of the fourth century A.D. Caturvyūha, a name of Viṣṇu in reference to his four Vyūha forms, might have been the name of some pilgrim who came to visit the place from some other locality. An inscription on the pedestal of an image of Garuḍa at Ādībadrī states that the image was made by sthapati Mahuka, a devotee of Viṣṇu. The sculptor was Jajeru, son of Subhaṅkara.

102 SKP., II. iii.
104 Ibid., 1959-60, p.115, entry no.678.
105 Ibid., 1948-49, pp.11-14, entry no. 87.
106 Ibid., entry no.103.
Palaeographically the inscription has been dated to the tenth century AD. A dated inscription\textsuperscript{107} at Gaṅanātha in the Suryamandir, records that the image of Vaikuṇṭha (i.e. Viṣṇu) was caused to be set up by the king who is described as the son of Indrapāla and grandson of Lakhanapāla. Another inscription\textsuperscript{108} in Sanskrit mixed with the local dialect in Nagari characters belonging to the eleventh century, mentions Nārāyaṇa Svāmī, Mahāparabhadra, and a Paramabhaṭṭāraka, and refers to a donation of three thousand drammas. However, it is not clear whether Nārāyaṇa Svāmī refers to the god or if it was the name of a pilgrim. This inscription is inscribed on a slab fixed in the door of a modern temple, indicating that the slab formed part of another temple and was reused. At Dwarahat, on a Viṣṇu image we have a long record\textsuperscript{109} containing a number of personal names each with a numerical figure, apparently recording donations. The inscription is paleographically dated in the ninth century A.D.

**Vaiṣṇava Iconography**

Vaiṣṇavism is a rather late phenomenon in this region. That is why we lack early evidence of Vaiṣṇava temples and icons. Even in the early medieval period, Vaiṣṇavism was less popular than Śaivism. Thus, out of one thousand temples that were studied by Atkinson,\textsuperscript{110} about eight hundred temples were of Śaiva affiliation and the rest that of Viṣṇu. Although this is an important indicator of the limited spread of Vaiṣṇavism in the region, there is one important limitation of Atkinson’s study. He studied only those temples which were still in use.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 1960-61, p.113, entry no.611.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid. 1963-64, p.104, entry no.478.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid. 1959-60, p.127, entry no.479. The details are not given.
\textsuperscript{110} ATK., p.701.
In the nineteenth century, as is apparent from the list appearing on pages 809-814. However, I could not find any important variation in the results reached by Atkinson as fewer number of icons and temples of exclusive Vaiṣṇava affiliation are found in the region.

In Uttarākhanda, the Viṣṇu images are usually found in standing (sthānaka), seated (āsana) and recumbent (śayana) postures. However, the standing images seem to be more popular. A stone image of the god in his Trivikrama form has been found at Nainital,\textsuperscript{111} and it is stated that the image has the name of the sculptor carved in the Gupta script. Another Viṣṇu image\textsuperscript{112} in Trivikrama form is found at Kashipur. This image carved out of Mathura sandstone depicts the four-armed god with the gada and cakra in the right and left hands. While the front right hand is held in the jñānamudrā, the fourth hand is broken. The image\textsuperscript{113} bears in the back the name of the sculptor Rāmadarasa on its back in characters of the 4th century A.D. These two images provide the earliest iconographic representation of Viṣṇu in the region.

The five feet high image of Viṣṇu in standing posture in the Ādibadari temple has four hands holding a padma, a gada, a cakra and a śāṅkha. On the left of this idol, we have an image which appears to be of Śiva holding a trident. The top most end of the image is occupied by Viṣṇu in his Yoganārāyaṇa aspect.\textsuperscript{114} This shows that this Śiva image must have belonged to some Viṣṇu temple, and Śiva is depicted here as a subordinate of Viṣṇu. The image has been assigned\textsuperscript{115} to the last quarter of the tenth century A.D., on stylistic

\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Ind. Arch. AR.}, 1960-61, p.69, pl. LXXIX, A.

\textsuperscript{112} K.P. Nautiyal, op.cit., p.153.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid. p.152.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
Two images\textsuperscript{116} of śayana variety of Viṣṇu are noticed at Baijnatha and Dwarhat. In both the icons, the god is shown resting on the coils of Śeṣa, whose hoods are spread over his head. The slightly raised head of the god is resting on his back left hand. The other hands hold saṅkha, cakra and gadā. The left leg rests on the bed, while the right is being attended by Lakṣmī. There are two figures besides it in a militant posture representing Madhu and Kaiṭabha. A lotus stalk issues out of his naval on whose blossom is seated the three - faced Brahmā in the kamalāsana pose holding a kamanḍala. On the pedestal is carved a frieze of fishes and crocodiles indicating the ocean. The image at Baijnatha has been assigned to the eighth century A.D., while that of Dwarahat has been assigned to the eleventh century A.D. An icon in the Virātarūpa\textsuperscript{117} or Viṣvarūpa form of Viṣṇu also was found at Baijnatha. This image has been dated in the ninth - tenth century A.D.

The sthānaka image at Dewalgarh\textsuperscript{118} is flanked by many male and female figures in adoration. On the top left corner is carved a figure in the yogāsana posture probably depicting the Yoganārāyaṇa aspect of Viṣṇu. The main icon is heavily adorned with various types of ornaments and has a thin halo round the head. This image has been dated to the eleventh century A.D. on stylistic grounds, by K.P. Nautiyal.\textsuperscript{119}

Although the Narasimha incarnation seems to be known in Uttarākhaṇḍa, we do not have many images in this form. There is a

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p.156.
\textsuperscript{118} K.P. Nautiyal, op.cit., p.150.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., pp.150-51.
temple dedicated to this god at Joshimatha with an image in a broken condition and another disfigured image is kept in Talihat. These images have not been dated. However, in Uttarākhaṇḍa Narāyana is worshipped more as a disciple of Gorakhanātha and less as the incarnation of Viṣṇu.

A stone sculpture\textsuperscript{120} of Viṣṇu assignable to circa 10th century A.D. was noticed at Uttar-Kashi by L.M. Wahal. A Steatite figurine\textsuperscript{121} of Viṣṇu of about the eighth century A.D. is kept in the Government Museum, Almora. L.M. Wahal located sculptures\textsuperscript{122} of Viṣṇu, Anantāśayī Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa and Garuda at Bhaney belonging to the 8th-9th centuries. An image\textsuperscript{123} of Anantāśayī Viṣṇu in buff-stone in the vicinity of the Sun temple at Katarmal was also found. This sculpture has been stylistically dated to the ninth century A.D. A sculpture\textsuperscript{124} of Viṣṇu belonging to the seventh century was noticed in the vicinity of a temple locally known as Nandā Devi Ka Mandir. An image\textsuperscript{125} of the Trivikrama form of Viṣṇu dated to the thirteenth century A.D. was picked up during the excavation at Kashipur, Nainital. An image\textsuperscript{126} of Rāma, son of Daśaratha, in black basalt belonging to the thirteenth century A.D. was also found in Nainital. We have an evidence of a viṣṇupattā\textsuperscript{127} in the Satyanārāyaṇa temple at Baijnath. The temple is of recent origin but viṣṇupattā has been dated in the thirteenth century A.D. Thus, iconographic representations of

\textsuperscript{120} Ind. Arch. AR., 1981-82, p.103.
\textsuperscript{121} Ind. Arch. AR., 1984-85, p.170.
\textsuperscript{122} Ind. Arch. AR., 1983-84, p.170.
\textsuperscript{123} Ind. Arch. AR., 1975-76, p.78.
\textsuperscript{124} Ind. Arch. AR., 1974-75, p.51.
\textsuperscript{125} Ind. Arch. AR., 1970-71, plate 67.
\textsuperscript{126} Ind. Arch. AR., 1965-66, pp.53-54.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., p.157.
Viṣṇu are found in this region from sixth century A.D. onwards.

The chief characteristic of Vaiṣṇavism from the Gupta period onwards, has been the worship of the *avatāras*, in the wake of the growing influence of the *Purāṇas*. This doctrine of incarnation, according to Suvira Jaiswal, played a major role in mitigating regional and tribal separatism and extending brahmanism to semi-civilized indigenous tribes. According to her, it also fostered hero-worship, and kings, nobles and celebrated personages were often described as incarnations of the god Hari. We find confirmation of this in the records of the Canda kings. Thus, three Canda rulers named Dipacanda, Tirumalcanda and Paunḍanda were deified and their statues were erected at Kātarmal and Jageswar. In the fifteenth century, the queen Dhyanamala was deified and temples dedicated to her were constructed. This is evidenced from two inscriptions at Jagesvara recording the construction of the temples.

**Śaivism**

Śaivism is the most important brahmanical religion in Uttarakhaṇḍa. This is apparent from the overwhelming number of temples of Śiva and his associate deities. The introduction and spread of Śaivism in the region was basically related with the diffusion of brahmanical religion in the post Buddhist phase from the brahmanical heartland. It also played an important role in integrating tribal groups in one cultural framework. Interaction with brahmanism was a two way process. Thus, the god Mahāśu who is worshipped in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhaṇḍa was probably a local deity and was recognised as a form of Śiva. We shall discuss this later. Here we shall

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129 K.P. Nautiyal, op.cit., p.121.
see how Śaivism developed in Uttarākhaṇḍa.

We find that Śiva was worshipped in the region during the time of the Kuṇindas. Interestingly, most of the tribal oligarchies flourishing in the early centuries of the Christian era, the Yaudheyas, Audumbrās, Kāḍa or Kādravas, Mālavas and Uddehikas, appear to have had pronounced Śaivite leanings. The figures of Kārttikeya and Śiva with a bull appear on the reverse side of the Yaudheya coins,131 and a Śaiva temple is depicted on the Audumbara coins.132 The Kāḍa coins have a figure of Kārttikeya. A recumbent bull is shown on the coins of the Mālavas; and the Uddehika coins also depict the figure of a bull with a tree in railing, similar to that on Ujjayānī coins, which have the representation of Śiva on the reverse. However, the earliest of Kuṇinda coins, i.e. Amoghabhūti type, bear symbols related both to Buddhism and Śaivism, which shows a transitional phase. But, the later Kuṇinda coins, i.e. Chatresvara type, issued about the second century A.D. show clear signs of Śaiva leanings. The obverse of these coins shows a male figure (identified with Śiva) standing, facing and holding a trident -axe in the right hand. The legend written in Brāhmi reads: Bhāgavata Chatresvara. Altekar133 thinks that it was the name of a Kuṇinda king. But according to J.N. Banerjea,134 the tribal state of the Kuṇindas was dedicated to lord Śiva at one time and the coins were issued in the name of the god who was looked upon as sovereign ruler of the kingdom. Ajay Mitra Shastri, however, believes that the legend on the coins are actually bhagavato chitresvara-mahātmānaḥ and not.

133 Quoted in M.P. Joshi, Morphogenesis of Kuninda Society, p.62.
 Bhagavatachatrśvara mahātmanah. D.C. Sircar on the other hand reads it as Bhagavataḥ Catrśvara Mahātmanah. M.P. Joshi supporting D.C. Sircar has drawn our attention towards the orthographic peculiarities existing in the Kumāon Himalayas in which Jhulaghat becomes Julaghat and Dharcula becomes Darchula. Whatever may be the case, our main concern here is that the Kuṇindas had become Śaiva at a later period. The names of the coin issuing kings of a still later period (second and third centuries A.D.) such as Śivadatta, Haradatta, Śivapālita, also show Śaiva leanings.

We have a fragmentary stone inscription in Brahmi of about the fifth century A.D., in which the auspicious word siddham is followed by obeisance to Nāgendratanayā, meaning the daughter of the mountain or Pārvatī, wife of Śiva. The next line refers to Paśupatiratitarurūpam i.e. the elegant form of Paśupati i.e. Śiva (The word paśupatirati may also refer to Parvati herself). However, the purpose of the prasasti is not clear since only seven out of twenty lines could be deciphered. The Lakhamandala inscription of Isvara as mentioned earlier, speaks of Rudra along with Brahma and Viṣṇu in its triadic form. This inscription also mentions that Isvara caused to be built a temple of Bhava, i.e. Śiva.

The Paurava-Varmanś were the worshippers of Viṇaṇeśvara Svāmi who is said to be an incarnation of the serpent god Ananta.
Harivamsa\textsuperscript{141} states that Ananta, another name of Śesā, who is invariably identified with Saṅkarśaṇa, was born of Śiva. Although Saṅkarśaṇa, came to be associated with Viṣṇu, Ananta became Śiva himself. A legend\textsuperscript{142} on a seal found at Basarh belonging to the Gupta period mentions Lord Ananta as the chosen husband of Nandesvarī (Durgā). Thus, although Ananta at times is also identified with Viṣṇu, at least in this region he appears to be predominantly associated with Śiva. The temple of Virāṇēśvara Śvāmi was situated at Brahmapura, the capital of the Paurava-Varmans, and it appears to have played a major role in the development of state ideology in the region.

The grant is supposed to have been reissued on the request of the devadronyadhikṛta who was perhaps also the Mahāsattrapati called Trāṭa Aikākisvāmin. In the case of the Grant of Viṣṇuvarmana\textsuperscript{143} it was Trāṭa Bhāripatisārmma who held this office. The fact that the mahāsattrapatis Trāṭa Aikākisvāmin and Trāṭa Bhāripatisārmma held the office of devadronyadhikṛta too shows that the temple was functioning under state control. An adhikṛta, i.e. the chief of an adhikaraṇa, in most cases is an office of the state. Devadronyadhikṛta might have been the superintendent of the properties of all the temples in the state.\textsuperscript{144}

There is an inscription\textsuperscript{145} on a stone outside the temple of Bhānu (Sun) at Palety near Devaprayag which states that paramabhaṭṭāraka mahārājādhirāja parmeśvara kalyāṇavarman conquered the mlecchas and secured his overlord’s (svāmin) kingdom. It also mentions that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{141} Hopkins, Epic Mythology, p.24 Quoted by Suvira Jaiswal, The Origin and Development of Vaisnavism, p.54.
  \item \textsuperscript{142} Ibid., p.207.
  \item \textsuperscript{143} Y.R. Gupte, EI, vol.13, no.7B, p.119.
  \item \textsuperscript{144} See chapter II for details.
  \item \textsuperscript{145} S.P. Dabral, Uttarakhonda ke Abhilekha evam Mudra, p.55-56.
\end{itemize}
Karkavardhan, son-in-law of Ādityavardhan, became an ascetic and the king of Śaila viṣaya got a temple of Sun (dhamabhānoḥ) constructed. Since the inscription is broken, the purpose is not clear. However, the kings of this line seem to be the feudatories of the Paurava-Varmans of Brahmāpura. The inscription is in Brāhmī and belongs to the seventh century A.D. The phrase jitva mlecchagaṇa shows that the kingdom was extended to this new area in the seventh century, and to commemorate this expansion the temple of the Sun (Bhānu) was erected. Kusumāgarabhukti, to which the engraver of the inscription belonged, cannot be identified. The trident inscription of Gaṇapati Nāga found at Gopesvara belonging again to the seventh century. mentions that the king Gaṇapati Nāga in the second year of his consecration got a Rudra Mahālaya constructed and established a trident. The Siroli inscription of Naravarman mentions that he got the temple of Vṛddhesvara constructed. This could be a reference to Vṛddhakedāra. This inscription belongs to the sixth century A.D. Another inscription of the same period belonging to Śrīguha mentions that the king named Gaṇesvara got a large temple of Śiva constructed, and his son Śrīguha established a sāktistambha in front of the god. However, these kings do not seem to have ruled over Uttarākhaṇḍa and may have come as pilgrims.

The above survey shows that the influence of Śaivism spread in Uttarākhaṇḍa from the Gupta period onwards and culminated in increased construction activity during the Katyuri period. Most of the Katyuri kings declared themselves to be devout Śaivas. Thus, the

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146 Ibid., p.57.
Bagesvara stone inscription of Bhūdeva, mentioning that Vasanta Deva's son, whose name is missing, set apart provisions for the continuous worship of Paramēśvara and caused several public roads to be constructed leading to Jayakulabhukti. He provided for fragrant substances, flowers, incense, lamps and ointments to be offered to Vyāghresvara Deva in Ambalipālikā. Paramēśvara here, according to Rahula Sankrityayana, stands for Śiva who is called Vyāghresvara. The most important point, noted earlier also, is the fact that this king took away the grant of a village named Śaraṇēśvaragrāma (literally, the abode of one who provides refuge) from the Vaiṣṇavas and gave it to Vyāghresvara Deva for worship. Although grants to temples belonging to different gods by a ruler are not rare, the practice does show Vasanta Deva's Vaiṣṇava leanings whereas his son had a preference towards Śiva. In the second line of the Katyurīs, the third king, i.e., Tribhuvanaraśajadeva, is also said to have given two dronas of a cultivated field called Naya in the village Jayakulabhukti to Vyāghresvaradeva and also ordered the fragrant substances and other items produced in it, to be employed in the worship of the same god. It also mentions that a son of the king Tribhuvanaraśajadeva's Kirāta friend gave two and a half drona land to Vyāghresvara Deva as well as to the god Gambiyāpiṇḍa. Another son of Adhidhaja, i.e., a brother of Tribhuvanaraśajadeva, donated one drona of land to the god Bahārake (Bhātaku) and caused a grant of two drona of land to be engraved on a stone. He also gave one drona of land to the god Vyāghresvara and fourteen parcels (khaṇḍa) of land to Caṇḍalamunḍa Devī and also established a prapā (baoli or well) in honour of the former. The successor of Tribhuvanaraśajadeva claimed to have acquired fame by the

149 ATK., pp.469-70.
150 Rahula Sankrityayana, op. cit., p.81.
force of his arms through the favour of Dhūrjjaṭi, a name of Śiva. He is also said to have performed many yajñas.\textsuperscript{151} Lalitāsura\textsuperscript{deva}\textsuperscript{152} is also supposed to have had the blessings of holy Dhūrjjaṭi. All the kings of the Katyuri dynasty\textsuperscript{153} with the sole exception of Subhikṣarāja\textsuperscript{deva} were paramamāheśvaras, i.e., great devotees of Īśvara (Śiva). But they patronized the establishments of other sects too. A stone inscription\textsuperscript{154} of Rudra’s son was found on the wall of a Lakṣmī temple at Kalimaṭha. The inscription mentions the construction of some temple by the son of a feudatory called Mahārudra who was the gopīṭa of the Giripati temple. The personal names betray Śaiva leanings. Another inscription\textsuperscript{155} at the same place mentions a minister named Bhaṭṭa Bhavaśarman, son of Bhaṭṭa Rudra and Bhogāvalī and records the construction of a temple named Bhavesvara by the minister. The inscription belongs to the tenth century.\textsuperscript{156} On the face of a pillar at Kalsi in characters of about the tenth century, there is an inscription which states that this was caused to be made by Śrī Prakāśa, a devotee of Śambhu.

The inscription\textsuperscript{157} on the wall of the Gopeśvara temple mentions Prasāda Vāsudeva and BaḍuvāMahâdeva. The inscription is engraved in characters of about the twelfth century. The BaḍuvāMahâdeva could have been a local deity assimilated into the cult of Śiva. Another inscription\textsuperscript{158} at the same place belonging to the thirteenth century

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{152} F. Kielhorn, \textit{IA}, vol. XXV, 1896, p. 179, line 3; D.C. Sircar, \textit{EI}, vol. 31, no. 38, 1, line 3.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{154} A part of the text can be found in Rahula Sankrityayana, op. cit., p. 441.
\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Ind.Ep.AR.}, 1966-67; pp. 43-45, entry no. 274.
records the obeisance of some persons to Rudradeva.

Thus, we see that the cult of Śiva has been very popular since the early historical period in Uttarākhaṇḍa and continues to be so even now. It assimilated a large number of local deities of the region. However, the cult of Kedāra acquired a character which transcended the regional character, so much so that two sthalapuruṣas:- Manasākhaṇḍa and Kedarākhaṇḍa, and a section of the Skanda Purāṇa were named after this cult.

Literally, Kedāra means a field or meadow, especially under water. This type of field is especially suited for rice cultivation. That is why Kedaraka is the name of a kind of rice. All this suggests that Kedāra was originally a deity of agriculturists and was later assimilated into the cult of Śiva. The assimilation may have been facilitated by the fact that Śiva is intimately associated with fertility and agriculture. However, it seems that the assimilation of god Kedāra took place during the post-Gupta phase. He is worshipped as a form of Śiva in at least six places. Kedāra is one of the eight Śivatirthas in Vāraṇasi. In the Agni and the Linga Purāṇas, Kedāra is considered a very fit place for śrāddha. The Mahābhārata and the Viṣṇudharma-sūtra speak of the Kedāra of the Himalayan region. The Mahābhārata, however mentions it as the tīrtha of the Mātaṅgaś. Interestingly, there is neither a Śivalinga nor an icon of Śiva in the modern Kedāranatha temple. There is only a longish stone and people worship this mass of

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159 Suvira Jaiswal, The Origin and Development of Vaisnavism, p.55.
160 Mbh. III, 87.25; Matsya Purana, 181.29; Kūrma Purana, 1. 35.12; II.20.34; Agni Purāṇa, 112.5; Linga Purāṇa, 1. 92.7.
161 P.V. Kane, op.cit., vol.IV, p.768.
162 Mbh., III. 83.15 Critical edition.
163 P.V. Kane, op.cit., p.768.
164 Mbh. III 83.15. Mātaṅgasya tu kedārastraiva.
stone as Siva in the form of a buffalow. There is a legend\textsuperscript{165} that when
the P\=n\=ḍavas came to Himalayas to go to \textit{sarga}, they looked for Śiva
in Kedāra bhūmi. Śiva, on the other hand, did not want to show his
face to them because they had committed genocide. In order to disguise
himself Śiva took the form of a buffalo and joined the herd of buffalos
grazing there. However, the P\=n\=ḍavas were able to identify him and
tried to catch him. In order to escape, Siva started going inside the
earth but his back remained above the earth and in this form Śiva was
worshipped at that place. According to Rahula Sankrityayana, the
legend of buffalo was invented later and the stone was being
worshipped since earlier times.\textsuperscript{166} It is well-known that many aniconic
symbols of worship have been assimilated into Puranic religion
through the medium of Śiva-liṅga. There is another Kedāra\textsuperscript{167} in
Kāśmir which is mentioned in the \textit{Haracaritacintāmaṇi} of Jayadratha.
A Kedāra is also located in the great \textit{tīrtha} of Gaya\textsuperscript{168} as mentioned in
the \textit{Nārādiya Purāṇa}. In the \textit{Tīrthayātrā Parva} of the \textit{Mahābhārata},
Kedāra is mentioned as Kapiśthalasya to which the P\=n\=ḍavas went as
pilgrims. Another Kedāra having a Kedāresvara temple is located at
Belagave in Shimoga district, Karnataka. The Kedāra temple of Śiva
at Belagave is called Dakṣiṇa-Kedāresvara as opposed to the Kedāra of
the Himalayas in the north. The temple of Dakṣiṇa-Kedāresvara
belongs to the early medieval period.\textsuperscript{169} The \textit{Skp. Kedārakhanda}\textsuperscript{170}
locates the Kedāra liṅga in the region of the dead. This temple was the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{165} Rahula Sankrityayana, op.cit., p.432.
\item \textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{167} \textit{Haracaritacintāmaṇi}, 8.69, Quoted in P.V. Kane, op.cit., p.768.
\item \textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{169} The earliest inscription is dated to C.A.D. 1078.
\item \textsuperscript{170} \textit{SKP.}, 1, i, 7.28-35.
\end{itemize}
nerve centre of the Kālāmukha Saivas.\textsuperscript{171} Śrīparvata was an important pilgrimage centre for the Kālāmukhas and is frequently mentioned in their epigraphs. [Śrī] Parvata, according to Lorenzen may refer to the holy Himalayan mountain Kedāranatha\textsuperscript{172} after which the Belagave temple is named, or it may refer to the goddess Parvati, who was the daughter of the Mountain. It seems that in the development of the Kālāmukha sect, Sakti-pariṣad with its headquarters at Kedāresvara temple at Belagave played an important role, and it is highly probable that these Kālāmukhas played a role in the development of the cult of Kedāra. Kedārasakti, an ascetic of the Lakulīśa sect is said to have been the founder of the Dakṣiṇa-Kedāresvara temple and the priesthood and the temple seems to have derived its name from him; he headed the monastery between about A.D. 1025 and 1050.

A record\textsuperscript{173} of 1129 A.D. makes an attractive comparison between both the Kedāra temples in the following words:

Moreover the course of the sacred bathing streams there at the temple is like that of the Ganges at Kedāra, the lofty tower of the Śiva temple piercing the sky rises up like the peak of Kedāra, and the holy ascetic performing penance there are like holy ascetic at Kedāra whose minds are bent on the performance of the most difficult penances, - thus this is a new Kedāra, the standing crops of its fertile fields resembling the horripilation arising from the Śiva-liṅga worship, its temple the abode of Parameśvara. The god Kedāra therein, who, thinking with supreme benevolence on his faithful worshippers, - afraid of the cold and unable to make the distant pilgrimage (to Kedāra) - frees them from all sins (here) ... may he protect you the wearer of the crescent moon.


\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., p.98.

\textsuperscript{173} Quoted in Ibid., pp.104-105.
Although the Kālāmukha sect became prominent in Karnataka after the tenth century, the early Kālāmukha teachers seem to have migrated from Kashmir\footnote{Ibid., p.108.} as some inscriptions clearly mention this fact. According to Lorenzen, there was an actual migration of Lakuliśa devotees to the Karnataka region from various parts of north-western India. Lakuliśa sect seems to have originated in the second century A.D. There are many Lakuliśa sculptures\footnote{K.P. Nautiyal, “Two Lakulisa Representations from Kumaon”, \textit{Journal of Oriental Researches}, vol.XIII, no.1, pp.54-58.} found in Uttarākhaṇḍa also. However, the Lakuliśa representations appear to belong to the period ranging from the ninth to eleventh centuries A.D. According to Nautiyal,\footnote{Ibid.} in the medieval period the Lakuliśa cult was absorbed by the Kanaphaṭaṇa sect. This is the period (eleventh century A.D.) when the Lakuliśa cult seems to have shifted its activities to southern India,\footnote{David N. Lorenzen, op.cit., p.108.} especially to the Mysore region. The reason behind this shift in the activity, according to Lorenzen,\footnote{Ibid.p.170.} could have been famine, loss of patronage as well as the incursions of Mahmud of Ghazni.

The priests of the Kedāranātha temple of Uttarākhaṇḍa belong to the Vīraśāiva sect and hail from Karnataka. Even in Karnataka\footnote{Ibid., pp.108-109.} many former Kālāmukha temples are now controlled by the Vīraśāivas which includes the Kedāreśvara temple in Belagave. Of the five most sacred Vīraśāiva mathas, one is at Śrīparvata in Kurnool district and one at Kedāranātha in the Himalayas, both with important Kālāmukha
associations. The priests of the Viśvanātha temple at Gupta-Kashi are also Kannada speaking Śaivas. It seems that the Kālamukhas of Dakṣiṇa-Kedāresvara had at some point of time after the thirteenth century come on a pilgrimage to the worth, and they took over the temples of this region and to gain acceptance among the people invented the stories of Śaṅkarācārya. In all the grants of the Paurava-Varman and the Katyuris, Kedāranātha is not alluded to even once, even though these were devout Śaivas. The earliest inscriptions found on the walls of the temple cannot be read, according to Rahula Sankrityayana and these cannot be earlier than the twelfth century A.D. This is the period when Kedāranātha seems to have shot into fame. In A.D. 1191 the invader Aśokacalla left an inscription at Gopeśvara which for the first time mentions that the region was known as Kedārabhūmi. However, the only inscription which pays obeisance to Kedāra is the inscription of Subhaṭa, the superintendent of the treasury of the king Bhoja or Bhojavaran. The inscription is assigned to about the end of the thirteenth century. It mentions that Śiva manifests himself as Kedāra. According to another inscription, the attendants of Devapāla (810 A.D.-850 A.D.) had performed pilgrimage to Kedāra and Gokarṇa. According to the lines 21-22 of the first prasāsti of Baijanath, a certain rājānaka named Lakṣmaṇa Candra is said to have performed a pilgrimage to Kedāra. The inscription belongs to the beginning of the ninth century. According

180 Rahula Sankrityayana, op.cit., p.419.
181 Ibid., p.432.
182 Ibid., p.111.
183 F.Kielhorn, “Two Chandella Inscriptions from Ajaygadh”, El. vol.l, no.XXXVIII, II.
184 Om namḥ kedārāya; ... Kedārārūpvidhūtayā namḥ śivāya; Ibid. line 1.
185 Monghyr Copper Plate of Devapala, line 10.
to the verses 23-24, Tripurāntaka's pilgrimage was first directed to the Himalaya where he visited Kedāra, i.e., Kedāranātha in Garhwal, and there worshipped Śiva with lotuses taken from the pure Brahmāsaras. This inscription\textsuperscript{187} belongs to the 13th-14th century. The Malhar inscription of Jajalladeva\textsuperscript{188} dated in A.D. 1167-1168 records the erection, at the town of Mallāla, of a temple of god Kedāra (i.e. Śiva), by the brāhmaṇa Somarāja.

From the above discussion it may be clear that the cult of Kedāra existed from an early period, but it became prominent only after the twelfth century and later the cult developed into pañca-Kedāras. It may be taken as the period when the \textit{Śth. Kedārakhaṇḍa}\textsuperscript{189} was composed to celebrate the \textit{tīrthas} of the region. The \textit{Śkp. Kedārakhaṇḍa} which does not mention the god Kedāra even once and mainly deals with two events of Śiva's life, i.e. destruction of Dakṣa's \textit{yajña} and his marriage with Pārvatī, might have got its name just to celebrate the god.

\textbf{Cult of Mahāsu}

H.A. Rose\textsuperscript{190} communicated through the pages of \textit{Indian Antiquary} the legend related to the god Mahāsu. According to this legend, when Krṣṇa disappeared at the end of the \textit{Dvāpara yuga}, the Pāṇḍavas followed him. On the road to Badarīkāśrama they crossed the Tons, and Yudhiṣṭhira, struck with the beauty of the place, ordered Viśvakarma to build a temple there. Here the Pāṇḍavas, with Draupadī

\textsuperscript{189} The text has not been dated as yet.
halted for nine days. They named the place Hanoi, and thence journeyed by the Gangotri and Yamunotri ravines, through Kedāra to Badarīnātha. There they disappeared, and the kali age began. At the commencement of the kali age, demons wondered over the Uttarākhanḍa, devouring the people and plundering towns and villages. The greatest of the demons was Kirmar, who had Beshi, Sengi, and a host of minor demons under him at Maindarth on the Tons, whence they ravaged towns and villages until the people sought refuge in cliffs, caves and ravines. The demons devoured every one who came in their way. Once the seven sons of Hūṇa brāhmana, who practised penance in the Deoban forest, went to bathe in the Tons river and encountered Kirmar, who devoured them all. Their mother Kirtaka went looking for her sons and encountered Kirmar. Kirmar was fascinated by her beauty and wanted her to marry him. Somehow she managed to get back. Now Kirtaka with her husband Hūṇa went to worship Ḩāṭa-koṭi Īsvara mātā, known as Ḩāṭeśvari Durga with eight hands. The goddess suggested that they to go to the mountains of Kashmir and pray to Śiva. Hūṇa went to Kashmir and prayed to god Śiva and finally, Śiva assured him of the destruction of Kirmar. Accordingly, he performed pūjā from which Sakti emerged from the ground with a fountain. From her forehead and other limbs Nāga Cautha or Mahāsu was born who finally killed the demon Kirmar. All the four Mahāsus are worshipped in eastern Himachal Pradesh and western Uttarākhanḍa on both sides of the Tons and Pabar rivers.

The legend clearly mentions that the crisis appeared in the kali age. The kali age generally refers to a social crisis but since the age of the legend can not be determined one cannot determine the exact nature of the crisis. It could be connected with the post-Katyuri period political chaos, or with the Khasia-rebellion of the thirteenth century.
However, it is clear that the legend was appropriated by the brāhmaṇas who gave it a Puranic touch by mixing up the legend of the birth of Sakti who killed many demons in many Puranic legends like that of Mahiṣāsura.

Three proper names in this legend are worth noticing. The first is Mahāsu itself. According to Rahula Sankrityayan\textsuperscript{191} su or śu is a word which connotes god in the archaic language of the Kinnaras. Prefixed with Sanskrit mahā it became Mahāsu, i.e. the great god. This is very similar to Mahādeva, an epithet of Śiva. So it is a possibility that su or śu was the original deity of the Kinnaras, first appropriated by the Khasas and then with Brahmanical influence it became Mahāsu, and new myths were created around this god so as to accommodate him in Śaivism, the earliest Brahmanical sectarian religion to penetrate the Himalayas. The second name is Kirtaka which is phonetically very similar to Kirāta, a tribe of the region or to the Kīra, a tribe frequently referred to in the early medieval inscriptions. The third name is Hūṇa, again phonetically similar to an invading tribe called Hūṇa. Many communities in Uttarakhaṇḍa are called Huniya by the people of that region. Hūṇa and his wife Kirtaka were, it seems Kirātas and Mahāsu their chief god. At some point of time there occurred a mixing up of the tribes and also their assimilation into the Brahmanical socio-religious system, and consequently, the invention of the above legend and Mahāsu’s identification with Śiva.

H.A. Rose\textsuperscript{192} however, thinks Mahāsu is a corrupt form of Mahā Śiva, which seem improbable in the light of the above-mentioned analysis. The original tribal and non-Aryan character of Mahāsu is also

\textsuperscript{191} Rahula Sankrityayan, op.cit., p.50.
\textsuperscript{192} H. A. Rose, op.cit., p.253.
indicated by the rituals associated with the birth of Mahāsu. First, Śakti emerged from the Pipal tree situated in the jungle with the help of rice, flowers and lamp. Then, from her limbs sprang the four gods called Nāga Cūauthā for Mahāsu, Kiyālu and Bānar. Although the Brahmanical orientation of the legend is clear, it has preserved archaic elements in the form of a ritual association with the pipal tree standing outside the settlement area. No doubt, Durgā is called Kirāti as well. The Śakti that appeared from the fountain is called Deva Lārī Mai, a local deity. The four brothers Mahāsu are supposed to be the incarnation of Buddar, by which name Śiva is locally known in the Jaunsar region. Mahāsu holds a conch, quoit, mace and trident in his hands, with which he killed the demons.

Mahāsu is the supreme deity of the Jaunsaris, who practise fraternal polyandry and also revere the characters of the Mahābhārata in general, and the Pāṇḍavas in particular. Draupadi is special for them because of the commonality of the polyandrous practices in this region. We also know that the Jaunsaris are comparatively less brahmanized in their socio-religious attitudes and practices. Hence, there is no doubt that Mahāsu was originally a tribal deity.

The Worship of Pāṇḍava Brothers and Draupadi

The above mentioned legend of Mahāsu starts and ends with the story of the Pāṇḍavas. The Pāṇḍavas and some other epic characters are held sacred in the region where Mahāsu is worshipped. Thus, Pāṇḍavas are highly revered in Rawain and Jaunpur whereas Duryodhana is worshipped in the Kurva village of Chakrata tehsil in Dehradun district. There, an image of his with broken knees is placed

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in a temple, where his followers scorn the Pāṇḍavas. The followers of Duryodhana call themselves Shathi or Shathir whereas the followers of the Pāṇḍavas are called Panshi\textsuperscript{194} or Panshars. According to a tradition, the Kaurava brothers were sixty and not hundred and that is why their followers are called Shathi literally meaning belonging to the sixty. The followers of both were, till very recently, bitterly hostile to each other. However, it is difficult to determine the antiquity of this tradition. In the north-western region of Uttarākhanda many sub-regions exist, people of which worship\textsuperscript{195} either the Pāṇḍavas or Kauravas. Thus, Jaunsar-Bawar is the region of Pāṇḍavas. Har ki Dun is dominated by Duryodhana worshippers whereas Naitwad is sacred to Karna. The adoption of the characters of the Mahābhārata as gods, is the result of the spread of Purānic and epic stories, in the wake of the dispersal of Brahmanic ideas in these regions. The stories were adapted to suit the regional socio-religious environs. Since, the epics and the Purāṇas were such literature which could be heard by all the varṇas of the society, the diffusion was easy and fast. It was made easier by the practice of going on pilgrimage to holy-places, whose number grew rapidly in the early medieval period. The Devaprayag Brāhmī inscriptions\textsuperscript{196} show that people had started coming to this region as early as the second century A.D. Inscriptions contain only proper names and were probably engraved by pilgrims. The first of the list, Mānaparavata refers to the Mana mountain which lies higher up in the Himalayan range beyond Badarīnātha. The personal name Mātrceta

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.


reminds us of the early Buddhist author of that name, sometimes identified with Aśvaghoṣa. Many of the remaining names show that their bearers were followers of either Śaivism or Vaiṣṇavism. Some of the personal names are taken apparently after the name of their favourite deity. For instance, the name Adhiṣṭhāna is known as one of the thousand names of Viṣṇu. Similarly the ‘Yajña’ and ‘Caturvyūha’ also figure among the thousand appellations of Viṣṇu. ‘Rudravrddhi’, ‘Rudravarman’, etc., show Saiva affiliation. Most of the inscriptions of this series are in Brāhmī with southern characteristics, and central Indian alphabet of about the fourth century A.D. This may show that the early pilgrims were from central India. A similar inscription comes from Kasardevi temple, Almora. The characters of this two line inscription exhibit an admixture of the north Indian script and south Indian alphabet of the Telugu-Kannada-speaking area of about the sixth century A.D. The inscription reads: ‘by Rudraka, the son of Vetila’. According to Sircar, there is little doubt that Rudraka hailed from the Telugu-Kannada-speaking region of south India, and may have been a hermit settled at least for sometime in these parts of the Himalayas. There seems to be an increase in the number of pilgrims and their activities in the region after the eighth century A.D. An analysis of these inscriptions shows that most of the pilgrims belonged to the eastern region. Interestingly some pilgrims are supposed to have come on behalf of others. The term used in this sense in the inscription is pakṣapāta, which literally means ‘adopting a side or argument, siding with, partiality or inclination for’. Its derivative pakṣapātin means the person who exhibits partial behaviour. It is this

197 ibid.
198 ibid.
200 ibid.
meaning which suits the context. It was basically a favour to someone who could not go on a pilgrimage on his own, and who deputed somebody else to do so on his behalf, in return for some material gain. The concept of the transfer of merit accruing out of a pilgrimage helped such a practice. Obviously, in early medieval period the importance of pilgrimage had increased so much that people were ready to finance others. In inscription no.1, Balavarman is said to have performed pilgrimage to Jagessvar as a proxy for four persons named Śrī Śadārṇāva, Gandhahasti, Vasantalīla and Harṣavarddhana. Balavarman is described as one hailing from Pūrva-desa or eastern India, defined in ancient Indian literature as the land lying to the east of the eastern districts of U.P. In inscription No.2, again a person called Vatēśvara of Pūrva-desa is said to have performed a pilgrimage on behalf of Peṭṭa, Ānarth, Lava, Kracha, Bhanḍa, Vidyādhara, Churga and Vajrāha. According to D.C. Sircar, Balavarman of inscription No.1 and Vatēśvara of No.2 visited Jagesvara together and probably both of them hailed from Bengal. This conclusion of Sircar is based on the form of ‘s’ in No.2 which does not resemble the shape of that letter in other alphabets of the eastern region such as Maithili and Oriya. But one does not know if Balavarman and Vatēśvara had taken along an engraver as well. The inscription No.3 states that a person named Jejjāta was responsible for the epigraph while it was written by Prabhudatta of Pūrva-desa. Jejjāta is described as a lover of

201 Ibid., no. VI. 1, p.250.
202 D.C. Sircar, Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India, Delhi, 1960, pp.172-83.
204 Ibid.
205 Ibid.
206 Ibid., p.251.
the stories told by Vāghe (or Jejjāṭa) who was the paksapāta of Prakāṭa-Bhaṇḍa, Abhimāna-Chāṅga, Khadga, Ānartha and Arjana (Arjuna). According to Sircar, he may have come in the company of Balavarman (No.1) and Vatesvara (No.2). The important aspect of this inscription (No.3) is that it mentions story-telling, which must have occupied an important place in the life of the pilgrims while travelling. This was an important method through which the epic and Puranic tales reached the people of different regions.

**Iconography**

Although Śiva is worshipped mostly in his liṅga manifestation, he is also represented in human forms. Thus, Śiva figures are carved on the temples. A large number of temples bear the Trimūrti images of Śiva on the pediments, doorway, lintels and caitya windows. This type of representation according to J.N. Banerjea\(^ {207}\) represents the composite form of Śiva, where his two aspects, saumya and ghorā are combined with Śakti Uma. The garbhagṛha lintel of the Kedāranātha shrine depicts Śiva in the Vajrāsana pose.\(^ {208}\) Śiva’s dancing images are found in the Gopeśvara shrine as well as in the Naṭarāja temple at Jageśvara. A Vyākhyaṇa-Dakṣiṇamūrti of Śiva is carved on the facade of a small shrine at Jageśvara and most of the other icons from Jageśwara and Baijanātha belong to the period after the twelfth century. In the temples of Śiva, he is worshipped in the form of liṅga only, although images of gods and goddesses were being made since the eighth century A.D. in this region. Śaivism became more popular after the eleventh century A.D.

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\(^ {208}\) K.P. Nautiyal, op.cit., p.129.
Goddesses and the Cult of Nandadevi

The figures on the Kuninda coins show that Lakṣmi was worshipped along with Śiva in Uttarākhaṇḍa. Lakṣmi appears\(^{209}\) on a lotus with a deer by her side on some of the Kuninda coins of the first century B.C. On some of the coins, a figure of Śiva appears on the obverse and a deer on the reverse. The figure of Lakṣmi and the symbol of Śrīvatsa jointly establish the identity of the deer-device and this according to J.N. Banerjea\(^{210}\) is the theriomorphic representation of the goddess herself. The first verse of the Śrī Śūkta, a late supplement of the Rigveda, contains a description confirming that the goddess Lakṣmi was conceived also as a deer. The sūkta does not differentiate between Śrī and Lakṣmi and invokes the goddess with both the names, although in some later vedic texts their separate identities\(^{211}\) are more or less clear. But later the two are completely merged. However, the important point here is the fact that Śrī or Lakṣmi was a goddess in her own right, independent of Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava sectarian faith. It is generally believed\(^{212}\) that Śrī was a fertility goddess of pre-Aryan origin. In popular tales, she is connected with the Nāgas. According to Suvira Jaiswal, the Śrīvatsa\(^{213}\) symbol is a sacred Nāga symbol which found equal recognition in Buddhism, Jainism, Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism. The exclusive association of Śrī-Lakṣmi with Viṣṇu is a late development and before that Śrī was associated with Indra, Kubera, Vaiśravaṇa and Kārttikeya. On the Kuninda coins she is


\(^{210}\) Quoted in M.K. Sharan, op.cit., p.306.

\(^{211}\) Suvira Jaiswal, op.cit., pp.92-93.

\(^{212}\) Ibid., p.94.f.

\(^{213}\) Ibid., pp.53-54, fn.1.
clearly associated with Śiva. Thus, the obverse\textsuperscript{214} of the Amoghabhūti type of coins shows a two armed female figure standing on a lotus identified as Lakṣmī. On the reverse of these coins,\textsuperscript{215} we have a six-arched mountain symbol surmounted by a chatra, and above it a nandipāda symbol which is a well known Śaivite emblem. But finally, some time in the third-fourth centuries A.D. Lakṣmī was adopted into the Vaiśṇava pantheon as Viṣṇu’s wife.

In the Mahāmayuri\textsuperscript{216} it is mentioned that Uṣtrapāda was the presiding Yakṣa of the Kuṇindas. Uṣtrapāda denotes a being either animal or human, with the feet of a camel but not a camel. Following J.N. Banerjea,\textsuperscript{217} we recognise the Yakṣa Uṣtrapāda among the animals represented on some of the Kuṇinda coins; the attendant female figure may stand for Lakṣmī.

Thus, the earliest traces of the worship of goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī is found on the Kuṇinda coins in association with Śiva. Next we have references to the goddess Nandā patronized by the Katyuri kings. The Pāṇḍukēśvara plates of Lalitasuradeva\textsuperscript{218} mention that Nimbaratadeva was endowed with fortune derived from the worship of the lotus feet of the holy Nandā. The Pāṇḍukēśvara Plates\textsuperscript{219} of Padmātadeva and Subhikṣarājadeva mention that Salmāditya was “distinguished” (lakṣītaḥ) by the lotus-feet of Nandādevi. An inscription\textsuperscript{220} engraved

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{214} J. Allen, op.cit., p.103.
\item \textsuperscript{215} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{217} J.N. Banerjea, op.cit., p.134.
\item \textsuperscript{218} F. Kielhorn, “Pandukesvar Plate of Lalitasuradeva”, IA, vol. XXV, 1896, p.179, line 4; D.C. Sircar, EI., vol. XXXI, no.38.1, p.279, line 4.
\item \textsuperscript{219} D.C. Sircar, EI., vol. XXXI, no.38. II, p.287, line5; no.38. III, p.293, line4.
\end{enumerate}
on the wall of a small Śiva shrine near the Jagesvara temple, mentions that a person named Aghorasiva alias Viṣanirghaṣa was desirous of ending his life at the temple of Nandā-bhagavati. Aghorasiva, according to D.C. Sircar, appears to have been a Śaiva ascetic while Nandā-bhagavati was apparently the same as Nandādevī worshipped in a temple at Almora, and the ascetic was probably a resident of the Nandādevī temple. This association of Nandā-bhagavati with a Śaiva ascetic shows that Nandā was worshipped as a member of the Śiva-sakti cult. As most of the shrines of Jagesvara belong to the period ranging from the eighth century to the tenth century A.D., the worship of Nandā-bhagavati must have been established by this period in this region.

Nandā is a goddess of the Śaiva pantheon and identified with Pārvatī and Durgā. A seal of the Gupta period found at Basarh (Muzaffarpur, Bihar) by Bloch has a shield on an altar and two conches with the legend *jitam bhagavatonantasya nandesvarivarasvāminah*, “Victorious is the Lord Ananta (Śiva), the chosen husband of Nandesvari (Durgā)”. According to J.N. Banerjea, Nandesvari of this legend should be identified as Lakṣmī since the emblems (Śrivatsa and conch-shell) on the seals are Vaiṣṇavite in character. According to Suvira Jaiswal, however, neither the Śrivatsa nor the conch shell can be described as typically Vaiṣṇava. The seal may be indicative of a form of worship in which Nārāyaṇa and Nandesvari were jointly invoked. However, such associations of Nandesvari or Durgā with Viṣṇu are comparatively rare and the tradition of Śiva being the
husband of Ambā-Nandesvarī Durgā is overwhelmingly clear.

In Purāṇas, we have three legends relating to the origin of Nanda. In the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa,\(^2\) it is stated that Nandā was born of the pleasure of Bharadvāja. She has four arms; one of her hands is in the varada pose, another in the abhaya pose; the third and the fourth hands carry a lotus and an aṅkuśa respectively. Or, she may be shown as holding the khaḍga and the khetaka in her hands. Her complexion is white and she is seated on an elephant. Varāha Purāṇa\(^2\) has the following version of the origin of Nandā: The king named Sindhudvīpa, knowing that in his previous birth he was killed by Indra, practised penance with a view to beget a son who could kill Indra. The river Vetrāvati assuming the form of a young woman approached Sindhudvīpa, and through their union was born a child named Vetrāsura. The child of theirs in due time became the king of Prāģiyotiṣa. He vanquished all rival kings and then began to give trouble to Indra and the other gods. The gods with Indra at their head, and having Śiva also with them went to Brahmā to complain to him of the annoyance caused by Vetrāsura to them. On hearing their complaint, Brahmā suspected that the trouble was due to Māya created by Viṣṇu; and then at once a damsel, clad in white robes wearing a kirīṭa on her head, and having eight hands carrying in them the sāṅkha, cakra, gadā, pāśā, khaḍga, ghanta, dhanus and bāṇa, appeared before him and undertook to kill the troublesome Vetrāsura. She then transformed herself into innumerable heroic damsels, and fought with the asura and put an end to his life. Brahmā and other gods, while complementing her on her success, prophesied that she would be called

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\(^{2}\) Ibid.
upon on a future occasion to destroy another troublesome asura of the name of Mahiśāsura. The gods then retired to the Himalayas where they set up the goddess Nandā as an object of worship and were feeling happy. Because they were so happy, they named this goddess Nandā. In the Devīmāhātmya\textsuperscript{227} section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, the Devī is made to say that in the Vaivasvatamanvantara, at the end of the Dvāpara-yuga and the beginning of the kali-yuga, a new set of asuras called by the names Śumbha and Niśumbha would be born and then she would be born as Nandā to the cow-herd Nandā-gopāla. This brings her in association with Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva legend. However, the brahmanical texts generally identify her with Durgā and Devī and in this way her worship contributed to the development of Śakti cult in India.

It is generally held that the origin and development of Śākta elements and their inclusion in brahmanical texts reflect the process of assimilation of local, regional and tribal female deities in the brahmanical ideological system. Since most of the aboriginal population was assimilated into the lowest śūdra varṇa it was natural that Tantrism was rooted in the low castes, the people who were outside the Aryan pale and on the periphery of the brahmanized area. Without doubt, the practices of the Himalayan and Vindhyān tribes contributed to the development of tantric rituals. The same can be said of Tibet, especially in the period of Tibetan military ascendancy in regions to the south of the main Himalayan chain, during the seventh century A.D. Such outlying regions are often mentioned in the Tantric texts.\textsuperscript{228} The process of formation of Tantric rituals can, therefore, be

\textsuperscript{227} Ibid.

expected to have been localized primarily in those areas of Aryan occupation which possessed a relatively strong element of non-Aryan tradition. The most important centre of Tantricism seems to have been in north-western India, and it may have spread from there to the east as far as Bengal and Assam along the Himalayan foothills.

It is held that the penetration of brāhmiṇaṇas into the tribal belts added to the number of śūdra castes. Since the tribal people were given a low social rank, some spiritual compensation was necessary, and this was done by prescribing tantric initiation for them. It seems that the growth in the number of Sākta-Pīṭhas is linked to the growth of brahmanical social and ideological system in the outlying tribal belt. The number of Sākta-Pīṭhas which was initially three was inflated to one hundred and eight by the twelfth century, when most authoritative treatises on Sākta-Tantrik culture had come into existence. This horizontal expansion of Tantricism is reflected in the interest of the Tantras in religious geography. They know of various kinds of sacred places and pilgrimage to them is commended. Śaivism and Śāktism both have their own places of pilgrimage, although in most of them Śiva and Devī in some form are considered to dwell together. A characteristic of a Śākta centre of worship is that the Śakti who is the main resident is accompanied by Bhairava, a form of Śiva.

The region of Uttarākhaṇḍa also came to have many Śākta-Tantrik cult centres in the early medieval period. Thus, in the list of the Brhaṇnilatāntra we find Gaṅgādvāra, Kedāra and Haridvāra as

231 B.N.S. Yadava, op.cit., p.360.
Sākta-Pīṭhas. A complete list of the 108 names of the mother-goddesses with the specifications of their association with particular holy places is found in the *Matsya Purāṇa*233 (ch.13). In this list234 Nandā is associated with the Himalayas, Ratipriyā or Haripriyā with Gāngādvāra, Mrgāvatī with Yamuna and Urvāśī with Badari. The *Jñānānṛṇava Tantra*235 mentions that the recognized number of Sākta Pīṭhas are fifty only which includes Kāmarūpa, Nepāla, Kailāsā, and Kedāra. A passage from the *Rudrayāmala* quoted in the *Kulārnava Tantra* speaks of 18 Pīṭhas including Srīrājya. The *Rudrayāmala*236 mentions Māyāvatī (Māyāpura, Haridvāra) as one of the ten Sākta-Pīṭhas. The *Viṣṇusmyti*237 gives a list of 54, tīrthas suitable for performing funerary rites and includes Yamunāīra, Gāṅgā, Kuśāvarta, Nīlāparvata, Kanakhala, Bhṛgutūṅga. Kedāra, Gāṅgādvāra. Uttaraṁanaś etc. all belonging to Uttarākhaṇḍa.

The origin of the Pīṭhas is generally connected with the legend of Sati, who died out of grief because of an outrage committed against her husband, Śiva. The latter afterwards dropped her body limb by limb all over India, and the places where the limbs fell developed into cult centres. The legend of the destruction of Dakṣa’s sacrifice is mentioned for the first time in the Śatapatha and *Kauśītaki Brāhmaṇas*238 where the cause of the slaying of Dakṣa was his illicit relations with his daughter. In the Purāṇas, however, the cause of destruction of the sacrifice of Dakṣa is the insult of Sati, Śiva’s spouse

233 Ibid.
234 Ibid.
235 Ibid., pp.20-21.
236 Ibid., p.17.
237 Ibid., p.66, fn.1.
and Dakṣa’s daughter. There is no Vedic evidence to show that Śiva married Dakṣa’s daughter. The Mahābhārata\textsuperscript{239} describes the destruction of the sacrifice by Śiva with yogic power\textsuperscript{240} in order to mollify his consort Umā, the daughter of the king of Mountains\textsuperscript{241} and not Satī, Dakṣa’s daughter. Uma did not even know who Dakṣa was and Śiva had to inform her that a Prajāpāti called Dakṣa\textsuperscript{242} was performing a horse sacrifice. So the legend of the death of Satī, Dakṣa’s daughter, is a later development and this legend was effectively used by Śaiva-Śākta followers to unite all the Śākta cult centres in India. By the ninth century, many of the cult centres existing in the Uttarākhaṇḍa region became part of an all India Tantric cult system.

We have already mentioned the existence of a temple of Nandā at Jagesvara which was associated with the Śaiva Tantric system. The Bāgeśvara stone inscription\textsuperscript{243} of Bhūdeva mentions that a son of Adhidhajā had granted fourteen parcels of land to Caṇḍalamaṇḍa Devasī. The name of the goddess shows that she was the goddess of the Caṇḍālas. According to Kulārṇava Tantra,\textsuperscript{244} Candālī is to be worshipped as Śakti. Similarly Kirāṭī, a form of Durgā was the goddess of the Kirāṭas. All this show that a large number of tribal goddesses were incorporated in the Śakti cult in the early medieval period.

Several sculptures of Durgā are noticed in Uttarākhaṇḍa and

\textsuperscript{239} XII. 283.
\textsuperscript{240} Yoga-balam kṛtvā-XII, 283-32.
\textsuperscript{241} Śailarāja - suta - XII, 283.7;22.
\textsuperscript{242} Dakṣo-nāma praṭanām apiḥ hayamedhena yajate.
\textsuperscript{243} ATK., p.470.
\textsuperscript{244} R. S. Sharma, “Material Milieu of Tantricism”, p.181.
there are several temples attributed to the goddess. The standing image of Durgā from Baijanātha Museum, two Siṃhavāhini images from Jageswar and Kalimath, a Maḥiṣāsura-mardini sculpture enshrined in the Cakravartesvara temple at Baijanatha, etc., are the main representations of Durgā in the region. The popularity of Durgā during the early medieval period can be seen from the fact that Subhikṣarāja-deva donated seventeen pieces of land to the goddess Durgā-bhaṭṭarika.

However, the goddess Nandā was more popular perhaps because of her identification with the mountain Nandādevī. She was credited with all the heroic acts, which Durgā is said to have performed. Thus, she is said to have killed the three sets of demons, i.e. Maḥiṣāsura, Madhu-Kāṭābla and Śumbha-Niśumbha. In the post-Katyūrya Uttarakhaṇḍa, she became so popular that the Canda dynasty of Kumaon and Panvara dynasty of Garhwal patronized her worship more than that of any other goddess. She came to be associated with the royal household as the sister of the ruling king. She is given various names, such as Mandā, Nandā, Śivānandā, Subhānandā, Sunandā and Sabhananda. Many temples of Nandā were constructed after the fourteenth century. Her temples exist at Almora (the earliest temple belonging to the ninth century A.D.), Amel (Upharani Nanda). Ranachulakat (Nanda), Nauti (Upharani Nanda), Mar (Akasbhajinī Nanda), Karad (Nanda), Hidoli, (Nanda), Devikhet (Nanda), etc. Apart from these, many temples of goddesses of local importance exist in the whole region. Thus, Putrēvāri Devī (Almora), Pūrṇagiri Devī (Talladesh), Naithanā Devī (Pali), Ugiyarī Devī (Dudhiya), Bhramarī.

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Devi (Ranachula), Kotagari Devi (Pugrawun), exist as part of the Sakti worship in this region. All of these were local goddesses.

The cult practices and rituals associated with Nanda show that she was originally an agricultural deity. The main centre of her worship is the Nauti village near Nandaprayag (this place has got its name from Nandā). She is worshipped here as the daughter of the village.247 Here a large pine tree is established and on its branches many fruits and flowers are bound. People make a statue of Nandā with the plant of Kauni (a kind of cereal) and then a procession248 is formed which, accompanied by the goddess in her palanquin proceeds to the Vaidini kunḍa at the foot of the Trishul peak. Here, she is worshipped with great reverence and rejoicing. All the rituals take place on the eighth day of the bright half of the month of Bhādrapada. All this shows that a local agricultural deity was assimilated into the cult of Nandā. According to another popular tradition,249 Nandā was the daughter of Bhānapratāpa, the king of Cāndapura, Garhwal, and was married to Kanakaapāla the prince of Dhārā. This Nandā was later deified and identified with the original goddess Nandā. In the jāta (yātra) which is organized to commemorate Nandā’s marriage with Śiva, the whole population of the region participates and in this way the goddess Nandā Devi unites the whole region more than any other deity.

Matrka Worship

We have evidence of the worship of matrks as well. The

248 ATK., pp.792-93.
249 Govinda Chataka, op.cit., pp.84-85.
Tharus\textsuperscript{250} of Uttarākhaṇḍa worship seven sister goddesses who are represented on the Bhumsena, i.e. the symbolic place of the village goddess near the outskirts of a village where all the gods and goddesses are represented on a platform made of mud, usually under a peepal tree. These goddesses are named as Kālakā, Pārvatī, Hulākā, Sītalā, Jwālā, Pūrva and Durgā. They are taken in a cart driven by the Laṅgūra, i.e., the monkey god. The seven sister goddesses of the Tharus have resemblances with the myth of the seven Samduria\textsuperscript{251} sisters of the Nagas. In Rajasthan, a composite form of the seven goddesses known as Satobahin\textsuperscript{252} is worshipped. In Maharashtra, the Dhangar community (Shepherd Community) worships the Sat Apsaras,\textsuperscript{253} the seven water-nymphs, on the bank of a pond in the form of Chalcolithic flints, after having washed the sheep. Thus, the concept of Sapta-māṭrka seems to owe its origin to the aboriginal tribal forms of worship. The number of Māṭrkas has differed in various literary texts varying from six to sixteen. However, in most cases it is said to be seven and known as Sapta-māṭrka. The variation in number seems to be the result of assimilation of different tribal goddesses at different times. Moreover, the number seven seems to have acquired sanctity. The Mandūka Upaniṣad\textsuperscript{254} describes the seven tongues of the flaming fire as — Kālī, Karālī, Manojavā, Sulohitā, Sudhūmravanā, Sphuliṅginī and Viśvarūcī. The Purāṇas too speak of seven mothers, but they are named after principal brahmanical gods. Thus, they are named as

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\textsuperscript{251} John E. Mitchiner, Tradition of the Seven Rṣis, MLBD, Delhi, 1982, p.228.
\textsuperscript{254} Mandūka Upaniṣad, 1.2.4.
\end{flushright}
Brahmani, Maheśvari, Kaumari, Vasñavi, Varahi, Indrani and Cāmuṇḍī. Only the last is not fashioned from the name of a male god, and represents the goddess in her own right. In the Devi-Mahātmya account of the fight of the Devi with the asuras, the number of the Mātrkās is given as nine, two names Śivadhūti and Nārasimhī are added to the seven mentioned earlier.

There are many sculptures representing the Mātrkās in Uttarākhaṇḍa. The Lakhamandal relief consists of Saptā-mātrkās with Gañesa and Virabhadra flanking on either side. The goddesses represented from left to right are Brahmanī on a lotus, Maheśvari on a bull, Vasñavi on Garuḍa, Kaumari on a peacock, Varahi on a prostrate human figure, Indrani holding a vajra and seated on an elephant, and Cāmuṇḍā on a corpse. The Baijanath slab of four goddesses represents Vasñavi, Varahi, Indrani and Cāmuṇḍā. Their respective mounts are carved beneath the seats. Another relief depicting only two goddesses Kaumari and Vasñavi, also comes from Baijnath. Both are shown seated on their respective mounts. Yet another six Mātrkā panel comes to us from the same place. It, however, depicts Brahmanī with three faces seated on a Haṁsa. Besides these, independent icons of Cāmuṇḍā are met with. At Jagesvara the image of this goddess appears to be dancing vigourously trampling a corpse under her feat. The last figure belongs to the twelfth century, whereas others belong to 8th-10th century A.D.

256 K.P. Nautiyal, op.cit., p.172.
257 Ibid.
258 Ibid.
259 Ibid., p.173.
260 Ibid.
Sun worship

The tradition of sun-worship has been in vogue from early times. The *Brhadāraṇīkāyatā* reveals that the cult of the Sun-god in Northern India was re-orientated, under the influence of the Magas who brought with them the east Iranian form of Sun-worship. The Palethi inscription of Kalyāṇavarman (seventh century A.D.) mentions that he got the temple of Sun constructed at Palethi. This temple is now in a dilapidated condition. The inscription starts with an obeisance to Savitṛ, i.e., Sun. We have another temple dedicated to the god Sun at Katarmal near Almora, locally known as ‘Bara-Adit’, i.e. the great Sun-god, belonging to the eleventh-twelfth centuries. A Sūrya image made of black stone was found at Jagesvara. Dated to the eighth century, the image stands on a chariot being drawn by seven horses with Aruṇa seated on the central horse. An image from Baijanath depicts the god seated on his haunches in the chariot of seven horses. This image belongs to the eleventh century A.D.

Minor Gods:

Apart from the main cult deities we have representations of many minor gods in the region. Gaṇeśa frequently appears after the seventh century in both the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva temples of Kumaon. The Gaṇeśa image in the Chaitī temple at Kashipur belongs to the 7th-

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261 Quoted in B.N.S. Yadava, op.cit., p.365.
262 S.P. Dabral, op.cit., pp.55-56.
263 dhūmabhāmoḥh, Ibid.
265 K.P.Nautiyal, op.cit., p.177.
266 Ibid.
8th centuries A.D. Gañēśā images\textsuperscript{268} from Dwarahat belong to the twelfth century A.D. Two dancing images\textsuperscript{269} of Gañēśā come from Joshimath and Baijnatha. Both of them belong to the twelfth or thirteenth century A.D. Like the Gañēśā images, the images of Karṭtikeya are met with either in association with Śiva panels or independently on the lintels, and most of them belong to the post-eleventh century A.D. period. However, the place name Karṭtikeyapura shows that Karṭtikeya was quite popular in the sixth-seventh century A.D. Apart from these, we have representations of Nava-grahas, Garūḍa, and Kuberā on the panels.

To sum up, it seems that the brahmanical cults started gaining prominence in Uttarākhaṇḍa in the post-Gupta period and slowly built up their base amongst the rulers and the masses. The rulers needed the support of the priests to legitimate their rule and broaden their base and the priests and brāhmaṇas needed state support for their livelihood. In the process, the chief cult deities, i.e. Viṣṇu, Śiva and Durgā, assimilated most of the local tribal deities and brought them into the fold of the brahmanical pantheon.

\textsuperscript{268} Ibid., pp.144-46.
\textsuperscript{269} Ibid.