CHAPTER III
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

Lion and Lion Worship

The Lion

The lion (Panthera leo) is a member of the family Felidae and one of four big cats in the genus Panthera. With exceptionally large males exceeding 250 kg (550 lb) in weight, it is the second-largest living cat after the tiger. Wild lions currently exist in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Asia with a critically endangered remnant population in western India, having disappeared from North Africa, the Middle East, and Western Asia in historic times. Until the late Pleistocene (about 10,000 years ago), the lion was the most widespread large land mammal beside humans. They were found in most of Africa, much of Eurasia from Western Europe to India and, in the Americas, from the Yukon to Peru.

In India the distribution of lion in the ancient period was from the Himalayas in the north to Narmada valley in the south and from Sindh in the west to Bihar in east. According to Sudipta Mitra, “The African lion first branched out as Panthera leo persica some 100,000 years ago and started migrating towards the east. Gradually, the lions established their territory in the western part of Asia, ranging from the Black and the Caspian seas and the Mesopotamia right up to the Son river valley in Bihar. The Lion colonized mainly in the area bordering the sub-Himalayas and Haryana in the north, Rajasthan and Gujarat in the west, Patna and Son river in the east and Narmada river in the south”(Sudipta Mitra, 2005 : 43 – 48). Now, in India, lions survive only in the protective reserve of Gir in Gujarat.
The lioness has been recognized, however, as the pinnacle of hunting prowess from the earliest of human graphics and writing representations. The lionesses are the hunters for their pride and capture their prey with precise and complex teamwork. Each lioness develops specific skills for her role in the hunting techniques used by her pride and, generally, assumes that role during most hunts. Members of human cultures living among lions in natural habitats have understood this characteristic and often have chosen the lioness to represent their most ferocious war deities and warriors, often naming their male rulers as her "son". There are several examples in the ancient world, the conquering hero was regarded as a lion amongst men and he conquered the lion was the invincible, supreme hero, like Heracles in Greek mythology. According to the myth after killing the lion, he assumed all its powers by wearing its skin and using the jaw as a helmet (Fig.1). In pre-dynastic Egypt, the king was represented in battle palettes as a lion seizing and destroying his enemies who were depicted in human form (Bharatha Iyer, 1977:63).

Visually, the male is highly distinctive and is easily recognized by its mane. Its majestic appearance, strength, courage, and its mighty and terrifying roar have all added to its prowess and glory. With the mane picturesquely surrounding its head, resembling a sun-disc, the lion became a symbol of the sun king to the ancient peoples of Asia Minor. The sun-lion association prevailed wherever sun worship was in vogue. Amongst the Mithraites, the sun as well as fire were represented by the lion symbol (Bharatha Iyer, 1977:63). The head of the male lion is one of the most widely recognized animal symbols in human culture. It has been depicted extensively in literature, sculptures and paintings. The most consistent depiction is in keeping with their image of "king of the jungle" or "king of the beasts"; hence lions are popular symbols of royalty and stateliness and a symbol of bravery.
throne on which the Indian kings sat was called sinhasana or simahasana (lion-seat) and this is usually indicated by the representation of lions on the base of the throne; sometimes rearing lions also appear on the upper part of it forming a decorative pattern. That this was not an exclusive Indian conception is evident from the fact that Hittite thrones had lion supports ((Bharatha Iyer, 1977:64).

Lion or vyala riders appear quite early at Bharhut, Sanchi and Mathura (Fig. 2) and continue as a symbol of the hero for centuries. Later, Chandragupta II (fourth century CE) is represented in his coins as shooting a lion with an arrow, an indication of his role as the victorious hero (Fig.3) to commemorate his victory over Malwa and Saurashtra or modern Kathiawad (the habitat of lions), and the Hoysala crest of king Sala attacking the lion (Fig.4) is the repetition of an age-old and deathless symbol (Bharatha Iyer, 1977: 63 – 64).

The importance of lion found in the religions of almost all the ancient civilizations of the world. The lion, which symbolises the sun, often figures in African and Asiatic art as tearing apart a bull which stands for the lunar principle; it signifies the victory of light (day) over darkness (night) and summer over winter (Cirlot, 1962: 181). On Sumerian cylinder seals, lion-men hold bulls at bay. In prehistoric African art, while all animals were shown in profile, the lion alone enjoyed the distinction of being depicted full face. This was done to emphasise the magical powers of the eyes of the lion (Brison Marcel, 1959: 16). The Anatolian deity Cybele (Fig.5) rides a lion and the gods of Minoan Crete are accompanied by lions and leopards. Ishtar Arbela, the Babylonian Goddess of war, rides a lion as seen from a relief Til Barsip in the Tell Ahmar (eighth century BCE) (Bharatha Iyer, 1977: 64).
There was an ancient belief that lion cubs are born dead and that the mother lioness licked them into life in three days and were then awakened to life by the roar of the parents (Jobes Gertrude, 1961: 3). Based on this belief, the lion became a symbol of the resurrection of Christ and early Christians referred to him as the Lion of Judah.

In India, God Shiva is known as Pancānana (five faced) because he is the lord of the five elements (air, fire, water, earth, and sky). The lion is also referred as Pancānana, because of its wide gaping mouth and also because this animal is supposed to symbolise the five element, being the servant of Bhutapati (lord of five elements) (Bharatha Iyer, 1977: 64). In the historical period in India, the lion plays an important role in mythology and religion. “Purushamriga chandramase”, “the human-beast to the Moon”, is mentioned in the Yajur Veda (Keith, 1914: 452). The “Asian Sphinx”, mythical animal with lion body and human head, sculptures found in India starting from the third century BCE proves that the idea is not foreign influence. In south India especially in Tamilnadu, the "sphinx" is known as purushamriga in Sanskrit or purushamirukamin Tamil, meaning "human-beast" (Tamil Lexicon, Vol. V. Part-1:2777). It is said, by tradition, to take away the sins of the devotees when they enter a temple and to ward off evil in general. It is, therefore, often found in a strategic position on the gopuram or temple gateway, or near the entrance of the sanctum sanctorum. We find examples of these purushamriga in the Govardhanagiridhari panel (Fig. 6) in Mamallapuram and in the Nataraja Temple at Chidambaram (Fig. 7). The Hindu Gods and Goddesses were mounted on the lion, and temples have lion based pillars and decorated with the Yalis (mythical animal of lion-elephant combination). Images of mythical lions in sculpture and painting are famous in the temples of south India.
Lion in Early Rock Paintings

The earliest recorded depictions of lions can be found in some of the earliest Paleolithic human cave art possibly dating to 32,000 B.P. in the Chauvet Cave in the Ardeche region of southern France, where lionesses are depicted hunting for the pride in much the same strategy as contemporary lionesses (Packer, 2000: 52 – 57).

Some have proposed a more conservative estimate in line with the better known cave paintings of the Lascaux region of France, that are dated to 15,000 B.P. In the Lascaux, two lions were depicted hunting in the Chamber of Felines (Fig. 8) (Zuchner, 1988: 4).

The prehistoric people of Africa are also well aware of this animal. Petroglyph of a huge lion on the rock-face from the Neolithic rock art site of the Yashu plateau in Sahara, Africa, dated to 4,000 B.P. reveals their respect for this animal (Fig. 9) (Alan, 1948: pl.34).

India has the third largest concentration of rock art after Australia and Africa. The mountain regions of Vindhya, Satpura, Aravalli, Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats consist of numerous rock shelters which have the drawings of the pre-historic people. Among these rock art sites Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh is found to be the largest. Nearly 740 rock shelters are identified here with paintings dated from 20,000 B.P. to 200 B.P. (Upper-Paleolithic – Late Historical), which depict the lives and times of the people who lived in these shelters and caves, including scenes of childbirth, communal dancing and drinking, and religious rites and burials, as well as the natural environment around them (Wakankar, 1975: 29).
The paintings executed mainly in red and white occur with the occasional use of green and yellow with themes taken from everyday events. The scenes usually depict hunting, dancing, music, horse and elephant riders, animal fighting, honey collection, decoration of bodies, disguises, masking and household scenes. Animals such as bison, tiger, lion, wild boar, elephants, antelopes, dogs, lizards, crocodiles etc. have been depicted abundantly. In some caves, popular religious and ritual symbols are also found.

The representation of Lions in these rock shelters shows that the people lived in this part of the land are familiar with the activities of this beast. According to Yashodhar Mathpal, “Shelter IIIC-21 At Bimbetka, above the animal figures there are five human motifs formed with barbed lines, a trumpet player and an inverted image of a lion, all executed in orange” (Mathpal, 1984: 62).

It is interesting to note that a painting resembling the story of Gilgamesh (a Sumerian King who ruled his nation with mythical powers) was found by early scholars like Gordon and Jagdish Gupta at Monteroja rock-shelter at Pachmarhi, Madhya Pradesh. This painting depicts a human standing with raised hands in between two animals. The lion is shown on his right side and bull on his left side (Fig.10.). This painting is dated to 4000 B.P. – 2500 B.P. (Neolithic/Chalcolithic). Although the identification was not proven systematically through the cultural relationship of the cave dwellers with the Sumerians, but we can consider it as an idea that evolved indigenously to show the supremacy of man over nature. Neolithic man settled down to do agriculture and domesticate animals. This figure seems to symbolize man’s supremacy over both nature and agriculture: the lion is the symbol of wildlife and the bull of agriculture (Pandey, 1993: 224).
Another painting from the same shelter depicts two big cats, probably lions, standing back to back with a human figure in the centre (Fig. 11.). This again is reminiscent of the painting of lions accompanies Aker, who was an ancient earth-god of Egypt. He was believed to guard the gates of the dawn from which the sun rose each morning. He was portrayed as a double-headed lion, or as two lions sitting back-to-back. In between them is shown the sun with the sky overhead. In this way, they form the *akhet* symbol, which was a symbol of the horizon. Occasionally they were portrayed bearing the *akhet* on their backs. The two lions were called *Sef* and *Duau*, which means "Yesterday" and "Today" respectively (Fig. 12.) (George Hart, 1986: 11).

The Pachmarhi painting is identified as a deity by Pandey, but it may have been drawn by the rock dweller with the idea of expressing the supreme quality of the god who is as strong as an animal or who can control two lions at the same time. Almost reminiscent of this is at the capital of a temple at Sanchi belongs to the Gupta period (fourth century CE) with lions on either side of a talipot palm where the tree may represent a god (the Buddha). It is an example of the continuation of indigenous thought (Bharatha Iyer, 1977: 66).

**The Lion-Man Statue**

More than 30,000 years ago, at the beginning of the upper Paleolithic age, the Suebian Mountains have been part of the living area of the early anatomically modern humans (*Homo sapiens sapiens*). They crossed the valleys marked by the ice age in small groups tracking animals like mammoth, reindeer and wild horse. In the caves we find evidence of their habitation, as traces of campfire, tools, weapons and jewelry made out of stone, bone, antler and ivory have been found (http://www.loewenmensch.de/lion_man.html).
Apart from that in other few caves, several small figures have been discovered. Most of them are carved with stone tools out of mammoth ivory represent the oldest objects of primitive art. They show the most important animals to hunt, but also the most dangerous individuals, as the bear and the lion that have been admired for their force and strength. This fascination was expressed through the lion-man, the biggest and most spectacular of the ivory figures, excavated in the Hohlenstein-Stadel - cave in the valley of the Lone.

This statuette, masterly sculpted out of a mammoth tusk, reconciles animal and human attributes (Fig. 13). The animal part is represented by the lion-head, the long shaped body and the arms formed like hind legs, the human part by the legs and feet, as well as the upright position. One cannot decide whether the statue was characterized as feminine or masculine, because it is only preserved only in fragmentary form. The fantastic creature of the lion man represents a unique relic which refers to the intellectual and religious state of mind of the humans during the last ice age (http://www.loewenmensch.de/lion_man.html).

The above sculpture, the oldest known sculpture in the world, is 29.6 cm in height. It was carved out of Mammoth ivory using a flint stone knife. The sculpture has also been interpreted as anthropomorphic, giving human characteristics to an animal, although it may have represented a deity. The figurine was determined to be about 40,000 years old by carbon dating material from the same layer in which the sculpture was found. It is associated with the Aurignacian culture (Martin Bailey, January 31, 2013: 1).
There is one more lion-headed sculpture which has been found in this same place in another cave leading to the possibility that the lion-man played an important role in the mythology of humans of prehistoric times.

**Human Figures with Animal Masks**

Human figures with animal heads are also frequent in rock art. The human figures with beaked heads are identified as bird heads. There are several other animals like the horse, antelope, bison and other unidentified heads worn by humans, which are seen in the rock paintings. Many scholars, have identified these as masks worn by humans during hunting and other ceremonial activities.

A Rock painting from La Mola Remigia (c. 7000-4000 BCE) in Eastern Spain depicts a group of hunters rushing to their game (Fig. 14.). In this painting, the hunting group was shown with different attributes. Alan Houghton Brodrick says, “All the men wear some kind of headdress, while the chief (of the tribe or hunting group) are so stylized that they look like caricatures of masks, but the leader’s grim, determined profile is almost, if not quite, human. In this, scene, infact, we have one of the very rare prehistoric paintings of a human face” (Alan Houghton Brodrick, 1948: 13).

According to Bharatha Iyer, “To the primitive man, the half-human and half-animal composite figure was quite a credible one. He himself assumed it, believing in the magic efficacy of such forms for ensuring success in hunting. Prehistoric cave paintings (Leo Trois Freres, France) depict him as a fantastic man-cum-animal with a bearded face, having the round eyes of an owl and the ears of a wolf, wearing the antlers of a stag, the claws of a lion and the tail of a wolf or horse (Fig. 15). In all
probability, this bizarre figure helped to confuse and unnerv the animal he hunted. The composite form, made up of different creatures, must have appeared to the imagination of ancient man as more powerful than its constituents, having drawn to itself their varied qualities and thus possessing magical virtues. Narasimha alone had the capacity to annihilate the redoubtable demon king Hiranyakasipu.” (Bharatha Iyer, 1977: 2)

In India, human figures with horns and masks are found in many of the sites. We get these types of paintings from the upper Paleolithic age. In northern India rock art sites like Bhimbetka, Sagar, Raisen, Ladi bai, Jerai, Pachmarhi, Bhopal, Jaora, Lakhajour, Kathotia, Firengi, Urden, Nagouri, and Mahadeo hills have a major number of different types of human figures with animal heads and masks. These figures are so far not clearly identified. They are identified only with the related materials available in the painting in which they found. They were identified as shamans, demons, ceremonial objects, heroes, and deities.

In Tamil Nadu, human figures with horns, beaked heads and masks are found at Kilvalai, Alambadi, Kiradipatti, Sirumalai and Vellari Kombai rock art sites. At Kilvalai four human figures are shown standing on a boat in a row (Fig. 16.), all facing to their left and their noses are like a bird’s beak. Another painting from the same shelter has six men standing and a few others with outstretched hands. The horned headgear of the men and their faces resemble bird’s beaks, which bear a very close similarity to some of the Egyptian paintings of the second millennium BCE. At the Settavarai and Alambadi Rock shelters in Villupuram district, paintings depicting human figures with masks of birds and animals might have established a link with the ritualistic belief. Even today masked dances are an integral part of
Indian culture in rural and tribal life. These paintings are dated between 1000 BCE – 500 BCE. Similar types of human figures with birds head were found at Kidaraipatti, Madurai District. Here the human figure’s body is drawn as X type, holding a weapon in his right hand and overall he looks like a warrior (Fig.17.) (Sridhar, 2005: 63).

An interesting painting from Sirumalai in Dindugul district depicts a human figure standing between two big cats. The human figure is seen holding a weapon in his right hand and the animals are facing the human from both the sides (Fig.18). The exact significance of the image is not known but it resembles the Pachmarhi painting, which we have already discussed and interpreted as a form of Gilgamesh.

Vellari Kombai in Nilgiri district has been identified as one of the oldest rock art sites in Tamilnadu (c. 1000 – 500 BCE). In this site, human figures and animals are painted with red ochre (Fig.19). The interesting features of these paintings are different types of masks or head dresses of each figure. Nearly nine human figures are seen drawn not in a row, but at different levels, some figures even overlapping the other. The bodies of all the figures are rectangular in shape and decorated differently with dots and lines. The hands and legs are not clearly drawn. The heads are very prominent with each having a different style of head mask or dress. The heads are decorated with horns of the bison, leaves and feathers of birds.

In Tamil Nadu nearly 30 rock art sites were identified in the Eastern Ghats and Western Ghats. Paintings are found on the rock shelters, isolated rock boulders and on the inner side of the megalithic dolmens (early Iron Age). Animals were the most frequent subject matter of paintings, after which come the humans,
anthropomorphic images and then the symbols. The Indian bison, buffaloes, antelope, deer, elephants, wild boar and horse were the frequently drawn animal figures (Sridhar, 2005: 63). The image of the lion has so far not been found anywhere in these rock art sites. It is natural since lions did not inhabit this part of the country.

The above factors show that early man wanted to be superhuman with extra powers. With that aim, they decorated themselves with the masks of the birds and animals. Wings of birds to make them fly high in the sky, the strength of the animals like the lion which is strong in hunting, the strong big horns of the bison, and defending power of the wild boar, which were all admired by early men. Later on, during the development of religious cults, the same attitude continued and they were given those special characters they saw in birds and animals. Even prehistoric weapons like, hand axe, mace, spear, sword, bow and arrow, etc., are seen in the rock paintings and later transferred to the gods. Nanditha Krishna says that, “to summarize the development of the Cakra (Vishnu’s weapon), we may say that the tribal weapon was given to their deity by his worshippers” (Krishna, 1980: 51).

Pandey states that, in the Hindu mythology, fish, tortoise, boar and Narasimha (half-man and half-lion) are supposed to be the earliest incarnations of Vishnu. The worship of these species became part of the Hindu religion. In Indian art fish, elephants, lions, etc., are also used as decorative motifs. It is thus clear that the religious significance of the animals and birds was recognized from very early times. The Indus seals also depict animals and birds (Pandey, S.K. 1993: 225).

According to the above evidences we can get a clear idea that lion was considered as a symbol of royalty. The prehistoric man believed in superhuman
concepts and tried to incorporate the animal powers particularly the majestic look and braveness of the lion in their religious thoughts. So, we can consider the anthropomorphic forms, animal headed figures and masked human figures are the outcome of their religious beliefs. The importance of lion and the belief in god paved the way to create an anthropomorphic figure with lion head and human body. These ideas of the mankind served as a platform and given a root for the origin and development of Narasimha icon in India.

**Ancient Civilizations**

Since ancient times, lion deities have been revered in mythology and legends. People feared the power and strength of the animal. Humans have always tried to emulate the lion, whose handsome masculine appearance was a role model. The lion was a symbol of greatness. Human beings desire to be like lions, and with this idea they made hybrid heroes, monsters and gods.

In ancient civilizations like Egypt and Mesopotamia we often find gods and goddess with extraordinary powers and having animal combinations in their forms. The Ancient Egyptians always saw lions as guardians and protectors. As lion gods guarded the gates of morning and evening, statues of lions guarded tombs and palaces, protecting both the dead and living, keeping demons and human enemies at bay.

There are different categories in the mythical form of the lion in ancient mythology. Anthropomorphic, hybrid beasts and animals are the main forms. In
anthropomorphic form, both god and goddess are shown with any one of the attributes of a lion mostly with the head or whole body. Here, the important cause behind the form is to give more attraction, power or to create fear. Anthropomorphism is the attribution of uniquely human characteristics to non-human creatures and beings, natural and supernatural phenomena, material states and objects or abstract concepts. But here the lion serves to raise the power of belief in the supernatural.

**Lion-Headed Gods of Egypt**

In Egyptian mythology there are many gods and goddesses found with lion combinations. Aker is an ancient Egyptian earth god who guarded the gate of the dawn through which the sun emerged every day. Other attributes included being able to heal people afflicted by the bites of snakes, and if someone had swallowed a poisonous fly, he could neutralize the effects of that poison in the victim's stomach. When a pharaoh died, Aker symbolised as lion was the god who opened up the earth's gate for the king to pass into the underworld he. Later still, the Aker became Sef and Duau, which means 'yesterday' and 'today'. Aker also known as Akeru was sometimes represented either as two lions seated back to back, or else one lion with two fore-parts. A more threatening side to Aker can be detected when he pluralises into the Akeru or earth-gods. In apostrophic passages in the Pyramid Texts the Akeru are said not to seize the monarch; later there is a general hope for everyone to escape the grasp of the earth-gods. The Akeru appear to be primeval deities more ancient than Geb, earth-god of the cosmogony of Heliopolis (George Hart, 1986 : 11).
Arensnuphis is an anthropomorphic Egyptian god who is either depicted as a lion or as a man with a plumed crown. He is often referred to as a companion of Isis and there is a temple dedicated to him in Philae built during the reign of Ptolemy IV Philopator in about 2250 BCE (Fleming F. & Lothian A., 1998: 56). Menhit is another ancient Egyptian deity, Menhit means "she who slaughters". Menhit is the wife of Chnum or Khnum and together they had a son named Hike or Heka. The three of them were worshipped as a trinity in the city of Latopolis. Like other gods of war, Menhit was thought to ride ahead of the army, slaughtering enemies.

Sekhmet, (Fig.20) her name simply means the ‘powerful’ and is extremely apt in view of the destructive aspect of her character. She is shown with the body of a woman and the head of a lioness. She is a very powerful ancient Egyptian goddess of war and vengeance. She is a daughter of the sun-god RA and she was married to Ptah. She was worshipped in Memphis and Luxor. In battles she would breathe fire on the King's enemies. At one point, however, Sekhmet lost the plot and began a systematic slaughter of all humankind. Ra, the sun god, fearing the death of all of humanity, intoxicated her with a blood coloured beer which she believed to be real blood. She awoke slightly hung over but satiated of her need for further destruction (George Hart, 1986: 138).

A corresponding relationship was made between Sekhmet of Memphi and the goddess Mut, wife of Amun at Thebes, a fusion facilitated by the fact that both goddesses could manifest themselves under leonine forms. Hundreds of statues of Sakhmet were set up in the reign of Amenhotep III (Dynasty XVIII) in the precinct of Mut’s temple (known as ‘Isheru’) south of the Great Temple of Amun at Karnak. Their quantity is attributable to their ritual purpose in receiving offerings as part of
the Litany of Ra, each statue being so honoured on one particular day of the year. Sakhmet’s black granite statues either show her seated holding the sign of life (‘ankh’) in her hand or standing with a scepter in the shape of the papyrus, heraldic plant of North Egypt. Inscriptions on these statues emphasise her warlike aspect, e.g. ‘smiter of the Nubians’ (George Hart, 1986: 138 – 139).

Sekhmet also had a male form, when she was known as Sekhmet Min. There is a representation of her in this aspect in the Temple of Khonsu at Karnak, Luxor, (Fig.21) which shows the king standing before her to invoke her mighty strength in Min form (Malek, Jaromir, 2006). Apedemak, Bast, Ari-he-nefer were the other leonine deities, they also have the warlike nature and were worshipped by the people to overcome their misfortunes and illnesses.

Bes (Fig.22) was one of the most popular gods among the common people of Egypt. Although he does have a war-like aspect, he is primarily a cheerful and benign god, associated with domestic matters, as well as laughter, dancing and general merrymaking. He is the lion dwarf, most likely of African origin, even though his name is properly Egyptian. Bes has an almost comical, grotesque appearance. He is small and squat, with a great shaggy head of hair like a lion's mane. His nose is flat and beneath it his tongue protrudes as if it's too big for his mouth. He has long arms and short bowed legs, and his body is adorned with a lion or panther skin, whose tail trails down behind him. He is generally shown wearing a crown of tall feathers, like ostrich plumes, which resembles a tribal head-dress. In paintings, the figure of the Bes is often shown full-faced rather than in profile, which is unusual in Egyptian art. He was reputed to bring good luck to families and to protect them from the common threat of snakes and scorpions (Veronica Ions, 1968:}
It is interesting to mention that the laughing Buddha image is similar to Bes, but without the lion face. The idea of Laughing Buddha originates from the later beliefs of the Buddhists that good life and contentment can be attained in this living world. There goes a belief in Chinese mythology that an image of smiling Buddha can bring forth good luck, success, happiness, fulfillment, prosperity and wealth. This belief has motivated not only the Chinese but also people of all communities to keep laughing Buddha idols where they reside. In India the God of Wealth, Kubera, has similar features.

Beset, Lioness-demon, is a feminine form of Bes. Some figurines of Beset show her as having the normal proportions of a woman rather than being dwarf-like, although like Bes, she has a mask-like face that resembles a lion. One surviving representation of Beset is a wooden figurine, dating from the second millennium BC. The figure wears a Beset mask and holds metal serpents. A recent excavation in Egypt unearthed a carving of Beset which has similar features of Bes (Veronica Ions, 1968: 111).

Maahes was pictured as a man with the head of a male lion and worshiped as a Sun-God, occasionally holding a knife and wearing the double crown of Egypt, or the atef crown (Manfred Lurker, 1987: 116). He was considered to be the devourer of the guilty and protector of the innocent and his name means ‘he who is true beside her’ (Alan W. Shorter, 1978). According to Caroline Seawright that, “Maahes (Mahes (in Egypt) and Mihos, Miysis, and Mysis (in Greek)) was the ancient Egyptian lion-god of war (Fig.23). He was both a god of war and guardian deity of the horizon. He also had links to perfumes and oils. Maahes was a god who seems to have first appeared in the New Kingdom, and is thought to have been a deity of
foreign origin. Usually depicted as a lion-headed man carrying a knife or a sword, Maahes sometimes wore the *atef* crown or the solar disk and *uraeus* on his head. Occasionally he was portrayed as a lion devouring a captive. Maahes was thought to be the guardian of sacred places, and the one who attacks captive enemies. He protected the innocent dead and condemned the damned” Claudius Aelianus a Greek historian says, “In Egypt, they worship lions, and there is a city called after them... the lions have temples and numerous spaces in which to roam; the flesh of oxen is supplied to them daily... and the lions eat to the accompaniment of song in the Egyptian language” (http://www.thekeep.org/~kunoichi/kunoichi/themestream/maahes.html).

Nefertum is another lion god of Egypt (Fig.24). The important feature of his depiction is that he normally shown as a young boy or young man with a lotus crown on his head but occasionally he is depicted as a lion headed man with the lotus crown (George Hart, 1986: 99). Temple complex of Seti I at Abydos shows different forms of Nefertum in its walls as a paintings as well as relief sculpture. On the northern wall of the Chapel, a relief shows Seti burning incense and pouring a libation in honour of the god. Nefertum stands before the Pharaoh, holding an eye of Horus against his chest in his left hand. Upon his head, a falcon perches and is crowned with a lotus flower. On the southern wall, Nefertum is shown as a lion-headed mummy, again with a lotus-crowned falcon on his head. The chapel walls are carved with hymns to Nefertum, as well as other pictorial representations of the god. He is said to be the protector of the Two Lands (may be upper and lower Egypt) and the common people and their children (Veronica Ions, 1968: 106).
Lion-Headed Gods of Mesopotamia

Apart from gods, the mythical animals are also very famous in ancient civilizations. They created hybrid monsters with a combination of the special attributes of different animals. For example, Pazuzu is the ancient Mesopotamian demon who has the wings of an eagle, the tail of a scorpion and the claws of a lion. Pazuzu was known as the "king of the evil wind demons," but he was also often seen on amulets which were used as protection during childbirth (John Gray, 1988: 15).

The Sphinx is a being which appears in both Egyptian and Greek mythology. (Fig.25) Sphinxes have the body of a lion and the head of a human. The Greek Sphinx also has wings, which the Egyptian does not have. In Greek mythology, the Sphinx poses a riddle to all who seek to pass a rock near Thebe and strangles all people who cannot solve it. Oedipus accepts the challenge and the Sphinx asks him: "What walks on four feet, two feet and three feet, but cannot move well on three and four?" Oedipus gives the right answer: it is Man. As a child he crawls on all fours, as a grown-up he walks on two legs and old people need a cane for walking. After hearing the right answer, the Sphinx destroys itself by throwing itself down the rock. The Egyptian Sphinx is a goddess of wisdom and knowledge (Robin, Waterfield, 2011).

The Griffin/Gryphon is a Greek mythical monster, the guardian of a hidden treasure. The creature is composed of the body, tail, and hind legs of a lion, and the head, forelegs and wings of an eagle. The griffin represents speed and majesty (Friar, Stephen, 1987: 173).
The Chimera (Fig.26) is a fearsome beast in Greek mythology, with the head of a lion, the body of a goat, and the tail of a snake or dragon (Graves, Robert, 1968: 146). Modern interpretations have given it three heads and dragons wings. Homer and Hesiod, the Greek poets of eighth century BCE, report about the Chimera as an awful, fire breathing monster that terrorizes the land of Lycia. The local tyrant, Iobates, asks the hero Bellerophon to get rid of it. Bellerophon carries out this task by flying over the monster on the winged horse Pegasus, firing arrows towards the creature. Others say that he thrusts a block of lead with a spear into the creature's throat. The hot breath melts the lead, and the beast dies suffocated (Graves, Robert, 1960: 252–56).

Imdugud or Anzu was a servant of the Sumerian sky god Enlil (Lord of the Soil / God of Water). Imdugud is the South Wind and carries the rain on its back. It has the body of a bird and the head of a lion, whose roar is the thunder (Stephanie Dalley, 1989: 203). Ningirsu is the god of rain, fertility and irrigation in Sumerian and Babylon. He is depicted as an eagle with a lion's head. In the ancient Sumerian city of Girsu a temple was devoted to Ningirsu. He has close similarities with Imdugud or sometimes he has been identified with Imdugud (Graves, Robert, 1968: 63). Nadushu-namir, a man lion created by Ea, god of deep. Nadushu’s duty is to rescue and protect Ishtar from evil (Mackenzie, 1915: 148).

Chnoubis is a Roman god with Egyptian and Greek elements. He is depicted as a snake with the head of a lion. Chnoubis is an Egyptian Gnostic solar icon, found most often on Gnostic gems, and amulets for protection against poison and disease. It is a composite figure with the head of a lion and the body of a serpent, usually with seven rays emanating from the head, sometimes, with the twelve zodiacal signs.
Chnoubis is an aspect of the Gnostic Demiurge, Yaldabaoth, and is associated with Abraxas. Images of Chnoubis are most often found inscribed on Gnostic gems, small talismans made from semi-precious stone that date from the first century onward (Attilio Mastrocinque, 2005: 61-64).

The Manticore is an early Medieval Heraldic beast. The Manticore myth was of Persian origin, where its name was "man-eater" (from early Middle Persian martya "man" and xwar- "to eat"). The English term "Manticore" was borrowed from Latin mantichora, itself derived from the Greek rendering of the Persian name, martichora. It passed into European folklore first through a remark by Ctesias, a Greek physician at the Persian court of King Artaxerxes II in the fourth century BC, in his notes on India ("Indika"), which circulated among Greek writers on natural history but have not survived.

The Greek Pausanias, in his Description of Greece (ch. Xxi: 5), recalled strange animals he had seen at Rome and commented, “The beast described by Ctesias in his Indian history, which he says is called martichora by the Indians and "man-eater" (androphagos) by the Greeks, I am inclined to think is the tiger. But that it has three rows of teeth along each jaw and spikes at the tip of its tail with which it defends itself at close quarters, while it hurls them like an archer's arrows at more distant enemies; all this is, I think, a false story that the Indians pass on from one to another owing to their excessive dread of the beast”.

According to Egyptian and Greek mythology the gods and goddesses with lion head and other characters are commonly depicted as the protectors of the people, destroyers of evil, and creators of the gods, goddesses and kings. Compared with other deities these gods are more ferocious and powerful.
The worship of Mithra was practiced in the Roman Empire from about the first to fourth centuries CE. The name of the proto-Aryan god Mithra of ancient Iran, adapted into Greek as Mithras, was linked to a new and distinctive imagery. Writers of the Roman Empire period referred to this mystery religion by phrases which can be anglicized as Mysteries of Mithras or Mysteries of the Persians; modern historians refer to it as Mithraism, or sometimes Roman Mithraism (Beck, R.L. 2002).

The origin of Mithraism goes back to the Mitra of the Aryans, through it underwent transformations. Herodotus mentions a sky-goddess Mitra and in Persian *mihr* meant ‘Sun’. This is a long way from the old god of contracts, common to India and Iran; however the duality Mitra-Ahura of the Zend-Avesta corresponds to the duality Mitra-Varuna of the Vēdas. According to one authority the Mithra of Mithraism was a divinity who formed a link between the Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu of Zoroaster; for it is time, marked by the revolutions of the sun, which regulates the alternation of light and darkness (Graves, Robert, 1968: 314). Mithras is depicted some times as being born from a rock or coming out of a cave. He is shown as emerging from a rock, he his youth, with a dagger in one hand and a torch in the other. He is nude, is wearing a Phrygian cap and is holding his legs together (Vermaseren, M. J. 1951. 93 – 109).

Cautes and Cautopates are the two deities accompany Mithra (Fig.27). In appearance they are clones of Mithras, and they represent through their primary attributes of the raised and lowered torches paired opposites in nature and in the heavens (e.g. rising sun and setting sun, flanking Mithras as the midday sun). Within the mystery, they symbolize and, as agents, control the entry of the soul downward into mortality (Cautopates) and its exit upwards into immortality (Cautes) (Beck, R.L. 1984: 2084-6).
One of the most characteristic features of the Mysteries is the naked lion-headed (leontocephaline) figure often found in Mithraic temples (Fig.28). He is entwined by a serpent, with the snake's head often resting on the lion's head. The lion's mouth is often open, giving a horrifying impression. He is usually represented having four wings, two keys (sometimes a single key) and a scepter in his hand. Sometimes the figure is standing on a globe inscribed with a diagonal cross. In the figure shown here, the four wings carry the symbols of the four seasons and a thunderbolt is engraved on the breast. At the base of the statue are the hammer and tongs of Vulcan, the cock and the wand of Mercury. A more scarcely represented variant of the figure with a human head is also found. Although animal-headed figures are prevalent in contemporary Egyptian and Gnostic mythological representations, an exact parallel to the Mithraic leontocephaline figure is not found (Von Gall, Hubertus, 1978: 511).

The name of the figure has been deciphered from dedicatory inscriptions to be Arimanius (though the archeological evidence is not very strong), which is nominally the equivalent of Ahriman, a demon figure in the Zoroastrian pantheon. Arimanius is known from inscriptions to have been a god in the Mithraic cult (CIMRM 222 from Ostia, 369 from Rome, 1773 and 1775 from Pannonia) (Jackson, Howard M. 1985: 17-45). While some scholars identify the lion-man as Aion (Zurvan, or Kronos) others assert that it is Ahriman (Barnett, R. D. 1975: 467). There is also speculation that the figure is the Gnostic demiurge, Ariel ("the lion of God" in Hebrew) Ialdabaoth (David M Gwynn, 2010: 448). Although the exact identity of the lion-headed figure is debated by scholars, it is largely agreed that the god is associated with time and seasonal change (Beck, R.L. 2004: 194).
According to Cumont, “Mithra was the only Iranian god that was introduced into the Occident, and that everything in his religion that does not relate directly to him was adventitious and recent. This is a gratuitous and erroneous supposition. Mithra was accompanied in his migrations by a large representation from the Mazdean Pantheon, and if he was in the eyes of his devotees the principal hero of the religion to which he gave his name, he was nevertheless not its Supreme God.

At the pinnacle of the divine hierarchy and at the origin of things, the Mithraic theology, the heir of that of the Zervanitic Magi, placed boundless Time. Sometimes they would call it Αἰών or Sæculum, Κρόνος or Saturnus; but these appellations were conventional and contingent, for he was considered ineffable, bereft alike of name, sex, and passions. In imitation of his Oriental prototype, he was represented in the likeness of a human monster with the head of a lion and his body enveloped by a serpent. The multiplicity of attributes with which his statues are loaded is in keeping with the kaleidoscopic nature of his character. He bears the scepter and the bolts of divine sovereignty and holds in each hand a key as the monarch of the heavens whose portals he opens. His wings are symbolic of the rapidity of his flight. The reptile whose sinuous folds enwrap him, typifies the tortuous course of the Sun on the ecliptic; the signs of the zodiac engraved on his body and the emblems of the seasons that accompany them, are meant to represent the celestial and terrestrial phenomena that signalize the eternal flight of the years. He creates and destroys all things; he is the Lord and master of the four elements that compose the universe, he virtually unites in his person the power of all the gods, whom he alone has begotten. Sometimes he is identified with Destiny, at others with the primitive light or the primitive fire; while both conceptions rendered it possible
for him to be compared with the Supreme Cause of the Stoics, the heat which pervades all things, which has shaped all things, and which under another aspect was Fatality” (Cumont, Franz Valery Marie, 1903: 105).

The Mithraic temples are found build in underground and inside the caverns because Ahriman had been an underworld deity. The Thebaid (c. 80 CE) an epic poem by Statius, pictures Mithras in a cave, wrestling with something that has horns. The context is a prayer to the god Phoebus (Ulansey, 1991: 29). The philosopher Porphyry, (third-fourth century CE), gives an account of the origins of the Mysteries in his work *De antro nympharum* (The Cave of the Nymphs). Citing Eubulus as his source, Porphyry writes that the original temple of Mithras was a natural cave, containing fountains, which Zoroaster found in the mountains of Persia. To Zoroaster, this cave was an image of the whole world, so he consecrated it to Mithras, the creator of the world.

Angra minyu – Ahriman – was the prince of demons. It is striking that the demons of the Zend-Avesta are called by the same name as the gods of the Vēdas – in Sanskrit deva, Persian div, and Latin divus. This reversal of meaning may result from the fact that a specifically Iranian religious reform like that, for instance, of Zoroaster, altered the brilliant and serene cohort of the Aryan gods into dark and malignant genii, while in India they continued to be revered as celestial genii (Graves, 1968: 317). The attributes and nature of the Mithraism and its god are though different from the Vaishnavism and Vishnu but the imagery and few other iconographical details are looks common with Vishnu and his incarnation Narasimha. The following table shows the similarities of the lion headed god of Mithraism and Narasimha incarnation of Vishnu.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Mithra and Aion/ Ahriman (Lion headed god) in Mithraism**</th>
<th>Narasimha in Vaisnavism*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>He is linked to the Sun</td>
<td>Narasimha’s face itself symbolises Sun and Vishnu is the Sun god in Vedic period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>He is a guardian deity and holds in each hand a key as the monarch of the heavens whose portals he opens.</td>
<td>He is the guardian deity of the West where sun sets and darkness begins. In most of his shrines he will be shown seated facing west.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>One of the Mithraic principle is that an ardent zeal for moral purity obtained and preserved by the belligerent attitude, that of a ‘warrior’ of the faith (whence the prestige of this cult among the Roman legions)</td>
<td>The principle behind the Narasimha cult also the same that of faith and protection. He also worshipped as the deity of war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>He has a lion head with human body sometimes depicted with human head</td>
<td>He has a lion head with human body sometimes depicted with human head (as Vishnu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>His wings are symbolic of the rapidity of his flight.</td>
<td>Eagle is the Vehicle of Vishnu which takes him fast where ever his presence is needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>He has been shown enwrapped with the coils of the Snake. Hood of the snake will be shown resting on the lions head.</td>
<td>Narasimha shown seated on Snake and the hoods of snake stand as umbrella above his head. He also shown wearing snake as yajnopavita (sacred thread) on his left shoulder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>He will be shown standing on the globe because he is the creator and protector of all the living beings in the world.</td>
<td>In Hindu trinity Vishnu is the protector of the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Mithra born from rock</td>
<td>Narasimha came out of pillar to kill the demon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>He has a thunderbolt is engraved on the breast.</td>
<td>*Sri vatsa a symbolic figure of Lakshmi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>His temples found in underground cellars and sometimes natural caverns also converted as shrines.</td>
<td>His temples found in caves and literatures mention him as cave dweller. <em>Girija</em> Narasimha form is that of lion sitting inside the mountain cave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>He holds a scepter</td>
<td>Vishnu has scepter and some icons of Narasimha has scepter in one of his hands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Mithra will be shown escorted by two figures representing Cautes and Cautopates.</td>
<td>Vishnu’s door keepers are Jaya and Vijaya. In the first life they were born as Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha in the Krita Yuga, to Diti (daughter of Daksha Prajapathi) and sage Kashyapa. Vishnu took Varaha and Narasimha incarnations to kill them to protect the earth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*This table is compiled from the following works:-


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Indus Valley Civilization

A highly developed and mature civilization, known as the Indus or Harappan civilization, flourished on the banks of the rivers, Indus and Saraswati around 2500 BCE. The Indus civilization claims a larger area than any of the known pre-classical civilization. Its northern border was Manda in Jammu. Its southern most point was Daimabad in Maharashtra. The eastern limit stretches up to Hulas in U.P. and the western limit upto Suktagendor in Baluchistan. From north to south it covered an area of 1600 kilometers and from east to west about 960 kilometers; the axis of Egypt and Mesopotamia civilizations was less than this (Pant, 1995:3).

The remains of the Indus Valley culture have yielded abundant terracotta figurines of animal representations. The animal art of the Indus valley was one of the vigorous expressions whose influence is discernible in the art of the historic period. The animals represented in their seals at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro include the lion, bull, elephant, bison, rhinoceros, buffalo, tiger, ram, hare, monkey, squirrel, cat, camel, snake, crocodile, pigeon, kite, fowl, pig, ibex, donkey, bear and grasshopper. The urge to represent such a variety of animals is indeed a remarkable phenomenon and goes beyond the needs of religion, which would require only the representation of a few chosen animals held sacred. Apart from these mythical animal figures like unicorns, three or five horned animal heads sharing a single body, animal with human face trunk of the elephant and body of the bull, etc. are also found.
Animal figures are found in media like steatite, terracotta, bronze, copper and faience. Steatite seals with animal figures with Indus script are found in numerous numbers from the Harappan sites. So far, the script has not been deciphered. So, the names of the animals are identified by the scholars visually and not according to the script. The seal of Pasupati is a famous concept in the art of animal worship. He is shown seated on a pedestal with horned head gear in yogic posture surrounded with animals like the tiger, elephant, rhinoceros, bear etc. According to Bharatha Iyer, “The earliest of such representations occurs in the Neolithic age when figures of the Mother Goddesses are found in association with animals. The Great Mother is the mother of all creation. Popularly known as the Lady of Beasts, she was worshipped in several countries of the ancient world: in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Africa, Asia Minor, Crete, Greece, Southern Spain, and Sicily. She possessed animal attributes; sometimes, she figures as a cow, lioness or ewe” (Bharatha Iyer, 1977: 6).

A double headed lion bust made of terracotta dated between circa 2350 – 1500 BCE, found at Mohenjo-Daro was known to be the earliest sculpture of the lion in India (Fig.29) (Ghosh, 1989: 338). The pottery engraving of a lion dated to the second millennium BCE, was found in the Nal-Nundara in Baluchistan, a border area were the Iranian plateau drops into the Indus plain, in a distinctive style which succeeds in conveying regal dignity of this animal (Fig.30) (Bharatha Iyer, 1977: 65). A terracotta figure with a lion head and a fish like body dated to circa 2700 BCE and now kept at National museum, New Delhi was found at Mohenjo-Daro. It was identified as a mythical lion. It has bulging eyes, broad lips and lines to show that the manes around its head are distinct features of a lion (Fig. 31) (Chauhan, 1997: 6).
There is a school of thought (Thapar, 2013: 108), which believes that the lion was alien to India and was first brought in during the invasion of Alexander and, thereafter, imported for use as tame animals for canned hunting. This theory cannot be accepted in view of the existence of the lion in Indus terracotta and pottery, as described above. The Rig Veda also mentions the lion. While the lion may not be as prolific as the tiger, its existence in more than one Indus site and in the Vedas means that it was certainly known to live in India.

We also know from the pre-historic paintings of Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh (Amirthalingam; Sudhakar, 2013:40) that the lion was known as early as ten thousand BCE – there are paintings where the tiger and lion are even found together. With such evidence we cannot accept the theory that the Asiatic lion was not native to India. Maybe it existed in lesser numbers because it lived on open plains where it could be easily hunted down, unlike the tiger, a shy and retiring animal living in the deep jungle.

Apart from the lion, Indus seals and other objects reveal half man and half animal figures. These figures may have some religious significance. A unique square steatite seal depicts the figure of a god seated in yogic posture with heels touching and facing each other. He has three faces and is surrounded by animals and a man. The crowning head has two horns. His hands, fully covered with bangles, are stretched and resting on the knees. On top there is an inscription (Fig.32). Three seals of this type are reported from Mohenjo-Daro. The god was identified as Pasupathi (Siva) or “lord of animals”. A Pasupathi figure in the form of a bull-head is also found painted on a big jar from Padri, and also on pots excavated at Kot Diji, Burzhom and Kunal which are dated to the third millennium
This evidence implies that Pasupathi Siva in this form or the other had been worshipped in India since the early Harappan period (Dep Prakash Sharma, 2000: 23). The above seal stands as an example of a continuation of worship of multi headed gods in the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain religions, which emerged in India.

A seal represents a horned female fighting with a horned tiger (Fig.33). An interesting feature of this seal is that the lower part of the human figure is shown as an animal with a tail that is half human – half animal. There are some more examples that show that the horned or animal headed human figures were worshipped as deities. A seal from Mohenjo - Daro depicts a horned deity shown standing in between two branches of a tree. In front of the deity a kneeling figure is shown with folded hands. At the bottom, seven figures with caps having long hair tail are standing in a row (Fig.34). These factors support that the Indus Valley people gave importance to the animals in their lives and also they added their own creativity and instincts to regulate and influence the depiction of these objects.

The above evidences reveal that the Indus Valley people know about the lion and gave importance to the lion. The image of Pasupathi and the half-human half-animal figure attacking a tiger shows the idea of anthropomorphic and mythical gods and animals and there worship was prevalent in India since the earliest times.

While analyzing the different civilizations and its mythology about the lion gods and goddesses, we found many similarities. In India, Narasimha has similar features like the Egyptian gods like, Aker, Nefertum, Pazuzu and Maahes. That is, Narasimha was always shown as a man with a lion head, ferocious, protector and the guardian deity of the west, where the Sun set and darkness emerges like Aker. He is
also the protector of people and the children, like the Egyptian gods Nefertum and Pazuzu who are the protectors of women during childbirth and children. Mithraism also helps us to find some valuable information about the origin and iconography of the imagery of Narasimha incarnation of Vishnu.

**Lion in Jainism and Buddhism**

Jainism and Buddhism had their birth on Indian soil; their similarity with Hinduism is noticed not only in the religious practices of both religions, but also in the ritual worshipping of the gods and goddess either as subordinate deities or any other forms. The role of lion in these two religions is very important to note, because the lion remained as a sacred symbol of both religions which run parallel to Hinduism in India from early historic period onwards.

**Jainism**

It is a religion born in India with the teaching or preaching philosophy of non-violence to all living beings. Its philosophy and practice emphasize the necessity of self-effort to move the soul towards divine consciousness and liberation. Any soul that has conquered its own inner enemies and achieved the state of Supreme Being is called *Jina* (conqueror or victor). According to Gupte, “Jainism is a non-Vēdic school of philosophy which claims a hoary antiquity. Rishabhanatha, the first *Tīrthāṅkara*, is mentioned in the Vishnu and *Bhāgavata Purāṇas* as belonging to a very remote past” (Gupte, R.S. 1972: 174).
There are Twenty Four Tirthankaras who occupy the central position in the Jain religion. They represent the higher ideal of asceticism, of self-denial. Each Tirthankara has a specific identity like lanchchana or symbol, yaksha and yakshinis or attendant deities with their respective symbols and sacred trees. ‘Tirtha’ literally means a ford, a means of crossing over and denotes a spiritual guide or philosophy which enables one to cross over the ocean of recurring births in this world. ‘Kara’ means the one who makes, and the word Tirthankara signifies a Jain saint (Nanditha Krishna, 2008: 20).

The lion is the emblem of Mahavira ‘Great Hero’ (c. 599-527 BCE) the twenty fourth and last Tirthankara. (Fig.35) He revised the Jaina doctrines and established the central tenets of Jainism. Queen Trishala had fourteen auspicious dreams before giving birth to Vardhamana, foretelling the advent of a great soul. These symbols included the elephant, bull, lion, and a pair of fish, which denote great spirituality in Jainism. In the Jain Kalpasutras, Mahvira is depicted as sitting on a lion throne in the puspottara heaven (Bharatha Iyer, K. 1977: 64). Siddhayika the attendant yakshini of Mahavira has the lion vehicle. Nirvani, Vairoti, Ambika, (Fig.36) Mahamanasi, and Manasvi are the other yakshnis which have lion as their vehicle.

Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama (c. 563 – 483 BCE) was the founder of Buddhism. The Noble Eightfold Path is Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration which describes the way to the end of suffering, as it was laid out by Siddhartha Gautama.
It is a practical guideline to ethical and mental development with the goal of freeing
the individual from attachments and delusions; and it finally leads to understanding
the truth about all things. Together with the four noble truths that are Life means
suffering, the origin of suffering is attachment, the cessation of suffering is
attainable and the path to the cessation is suffering. It constitutes the gist of
Buddhism. Great emphasis is put on the practical aspect, because it is only through
practice that one can attain bliss a greater level of existence and finally reach
Nirvana.

The lion is one of the Buddhism's most compelling symbols. Traditionally, the
lion is associated with regality, strength and power. It is, therefore, an appropriate
symbol for the Buddha who was a Prince by birth. The Buddha is repeatedly
referred to as ‘SakyaSimha’ (lion of the Sakya clan) and his preaching of the
doctrine is compared to the roar of the lion which sends all other animals (the
advocates of false doctrines) into hiding. The Saranath pillar erected by King Asoka
houses a capital on the top, which contains four lions kept back to back facing four
cardinal directions, now serves as the emblem of India(Fig.37). This is where the
Buddha first preached, and these lions echo his teachings to the four quarters of the
world. Another pillar with the lion as crowning member is found at Rampurva and
Vaishali in Bihar (Fig.38).

The Bodhi tree with altar surrounded by animals like the lion, stag and
elephant are bound to occur in association with tree worship, the tree in this context
symbolizing the Buddha. On the eastern gateway at Sanchi, two lions are shown
before a vedika tree. Referring to the stag-horned lion on the Sanchi Gateways,
Auboyer says that both the stag and the lion are representations of the sun and as
such, this is an attempt at symbolizing the sun as well as royalty (Salmony, A. 1968: 23-24). The Buddha being the lion of the Sakya clan, it was not unusual to suggest this by the introduction of miniature lions at the feet of the Buddha figures (Fig.39). The lion is the mount of the Bodhisattva Simhanada Avalokitesvara, Dhyani Buddha Vairocana, Dhyani Buddha Ratnasambhava and Bodhisattva Manjusri (Gupte, R.S. 1972: 122 – 128).

In Tibetan Buddhist art, lions are often depicted on the throne, the Buddha sits on, but these are snow lions (mythical creatures), and they actually represent the eight main Bodhisattvas. Simhamukha is a dakini or subordinate goddess of Tibetan Buddhism. She has a body of dark blue in colour, one face - that of a white lion, three red round eyes are blazing fiercely with a gaping mouth, a green beard, eyebrows and hair. The right hand holds aloft a curved knife, left a skull cup of blood, carrying a (khatvanga) staff tipped with a trident. Adorned with a tiara of five skulls, a green silk scarf and bone ornaments, she wears a tiger skin skirt. Trampling on a corpse with the left foot, above a sun disc and pink lotus blossom, she stands with the right leg drawn up, in a mood of great fierceness, dwelling in the middle of a blazing fire of pristine awareness.

The dakini Simhamukha is a tutelary deity arising out of the chakrasamvara cycle of tantras and belongs to the anuttarayoga 'wisdom' classification. The sarma tradition Simhamukha is unrelated to the deity of the same name and appearance in the Nyingma 'terma' (treasure) traditions. She is one of the many forms of Padmasambhava; Simhamukha is a secret form of Guru Rinpoche.
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