Introduction – Archaeology of Religion: A Study of Religious Diversity in Gujarat from the Ancient to the Early Medieval Times-

Third century BC to Eighth century AD

As the title suggests, this study proposes to be different from those carried out earlier on religion. The stress here is on the use of archaeological data to highlight the diversity of religion in early Gujarat, and how Buddhism, Jainism, Saivism, Vaishnavism and other sects related to each other in this region. It is only from archaeology that one can understand the dynamics of religious diversity in a region in a given time period. Archaeology provides clues to understand the various forms of worship, communities involved and the different modes of worship, beginning with domestic worship and ending at royal patronage. It is essential to view religious structures not in isolation as topics of architectural analysis, but in their archaeological context to have a comprehensive understanding of historical as well as religious developments and to demonstrate religious diversity in the region.

The area of study includes Saurashtra, Kutch and northern and southern parts of Gujarat. The sub-areas within the region are defined not according to the present political boundaries. Instead, in this study the major and important rivers demarcate the sub-areas within Gujarat.

The time period under study starts at third century BC and extends up to the eighth century AD. The study aims at the reconstruction of religious diversity in this region focusing on Buddhism, Jainism, Saivism, Vaishnavism and other sects in the given time period. A study of the religious landscape is undertaken, which would include not only the architectural remains, but also sculptures, local deities, various categories
of shrines as well as associated religious remains. Data would also be acquired from a study of coins and the religious imagery present on them.

Most studies have concentrated on the growth and development of Buddhism, Jainism or Hinduism in a region, or else have been comparative in nature. As a result one gets an incomplete picture as either one or only two religions are analysed. The aim of this study is to bring out diversity not only as far as the major religions are concerned, but also within them. Also the study will bring out continuity, changes and relative importance of each one of them over a period of time. What is also interesting is that in the medieval period Jainism came to acquire a stronghold in Gujarat, but why and how this happened is not very clear. Thus before the medieval period Jainism must have not only existed but was slowly spreading across different parts of the region. The study aims at tracing this very growth and development that made Jainism an important religion in this region.

Also, Buddhism continued in this region well into the eighth century AD, and was also the recipient of royal patronage as well. The study aims at tracing its gradual spread within the region, and developments within the religion.

A study of the religious landscape would be incomplete if the communities involved are not taken into consideration. In this case, a study of the available inscriptions would reveal data regarding the donors and supporters of the religion. The issues will be dealt with over a period of time to demonstrate that the region was not static, as far as religious developments were concerned, but dynamism and change was an essential trait in this region in the time period under study. The time period covered in the thesis is from the third century BC to eighth century AD, and to demonstrate dynamism the period is further sub divided into:
Third century BC to first century BC/AD: The study starts from this period since by this time Buddhism and Jainism seem to have penetrated into the region, and the early temple starts taking root. For this time period, the data is available to us mainly through numismatics, inscriptions and some monumental architecture.

First century BC/AD to third century AD: The next period is so chosen since from this period onwards one comes across not only sculptural remains, but even religious architecture in terms of the numerous Buddhist caves found in Gujarat.

Fourth century AD to eighth century AD: It is from fourth century onwards that a vast amount of archaeological data, in terms of sculptures as well as monumental remains, is available. This is also the time that one notices the beginnings of temple architecture all across Gujarat. Worship seems to have become more complex and sacred sites more clearly defined. The study ends at eighth century AD since by this period temple architecture reaches its height and the religions have by now their established sacred sites.

Religious studies have been mostly based on data extracted from the respective religious texts. These have been studied mainly with relation to doctrines and philosophies of various religions. In this survey of secondary literature, we start with textual studies and then discuss writings by art historians and archaeologists.

**Text as a source of History of Religions**

1. **Buddhism**

Historians have utilised literary data such as the *Epics* and the *Purâṇas* to a great extent in studying religions and religious developments. These texts have also been the main source in attempting to relate religion to the social milieu. This trend is also seen in the case of Buddhism where literary data has been extracted to either expound Buddhist philosophy or to show the existence of various sects within...
the larger fold of Buddhism as is evident in the works of S.N. Dasgupta\(^1\), A.K. Sarkar\(^2\), and N. Dutt\(^3\). Data has also been used to show the geographical distribution of various schools of Buddhism. Translations of the travel accounts of the Chinese travellers give further insight into the existence of different schools of Buddhism that existed in India when they visited the country. S. Beal’s *Si-yu-ki*\(^4\), a translation of the travels of Hieun Tsang informs us that seventy-one mixed Theravada monasteries populated by nearly five thousand monks existed in Bodhgaya, Kalinga, Bharukaccha and Saurashtra. The *Sarvāstivādins*, among other parts of the country, were located in Gurjjara, in Valabhi were monasteries with followers of the *Sammitiya* school, while in Lata existed followers of the *Sthaviravāda* school\(^5\). A. Mitra Sastri’s *Outline of Early Buddhism*\(^6\) is a historical survey of Buddhism, Buddhist schools and *sanghas* based mainly on a study of pre Gupta inscriptions. B. N. Chaudhari’s *Buddhist Centres in Ancient India*\(^7\) demonstrates the geographical distribution of early Buddhist schools on the basis of Pali sources.

Historical studies on Buddhism have mainly focussed on the causes of the rise and decline of this religion in the subcontinent, or otherwise have tried to establish the patronage of the extant religious architecture of the Buddhists that would have required vast resources. The increase in the number of Buddhist lay followers has been attributed to increase in trade and trading activities, resulting from an increase in agricultural production and conversely a decline of the religion due to decline of

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\(^3\) N. Dutt, *A Early History of the Spread of Buddhism and the Buddhist Schools*, Rajesh, Delhi, 1986 & *Buddhist Sects in India*, Motilal Banarsidass Delhi, 1978

\(^4\) Samuel Beal (translated), *Si-yu-ki-Chinese Accounts of India*, Sushil Gupta (India) Ltd., Calcutta, 1958


\(^7\) B. N. Chaudhari, *Buddhist Centres in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1969
trading activities resulting in the growth of feudalism. In the opinion of R.S. Sharma, "Ordinary people were certainly attracted to it (Buddhism) because of its successful response to the challenge posed by the social developments generated by the material conditions created by the use of iron, plough agriculture and coins and by the rise of towns in eastern U.P. and Bihar." As for decline D.D. Kosambi opines that Brahmanism divested of expensive rituals strengthened its hold on the newly colonized areas and their aboriginal population, Buddhism and its vast unproductive monastic foundations served no useful purpose after the decline of trade and emergence of closed village economic units, when it "had become a drain upon the economy instead of stimulus." This interpretation of Kosambi and Sharma is not supported by ethnographic data drawn from a study of present Buddhist communities. A study carried out by Gombrich on present day Buddhism in Sri Lanka demonstrates that majority of the followers do not belong to the mercantile class but are rather from the countryside. Also there is a unique blend of worshipping the Buddha as well as Hindu gods and goddesses by the people. The Buddhist devotees see all other gods beneath the Buddha, but the Buddha being a god who does not intervene in human affairs the people worship other deities that can aid in fulfilling their worldly desires. Buddha is worshipped for salvation and the gods for fulfilling their emotional needs. A number of studies on architectural remains and sculptures have been carried out such as A.K. Coomaraswamy’s *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, J. Burgess’s
Antiquities of Kathiawad and Kacchch, and numerous articles such as 'Early Buddhist Caves of Junnar' by Vidya Dehejia, 'Evolution of the Buddhist Rock Cut Shrines of Western India' by M.K. Dhavalikar, 'An Amitabha Image from Chavaj' and 'A Bronze Image of Buddha from Valabhipur' by R.N. Mehta, to mention a few.

Besides these studies that specifically study data from Gujarat, most of the studies carried out on Buddhist sites on an average do not include many of the sites in Gujarat. A detailed description of the remains at Junagadh is to be found in the guide book Junagadh by K.V. Soundara Rajan. The site of Devnimori contained a mahastupa, two viharas and a caitya, and sixteen seated images of Buddha were recovered. Kantilal F. Sompura's book provides a detailed list and description of the stupas, caityas and viharas found in the region of Gujarat, as well as the sculptures and images found. He also describes the ground plans, pillars and arches and the motifs of these Buddhist sculptural remains.

Then there is the trend in archaeology, which is concerned mainly with reporting the various finds in the region. Archaeological data reveals numerous Buddhist remains in the region. One comes across Buddhist caves in Saurashtra as seen at Junagadh, Babriawad, Dhank, Jhinjuri Jhar, Porbandar and Khapara Kodina. Archaeological finds include images found at different sites such as at Amreli, Vala, Uparkot, Boria stūpa

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18. K.V. Soundara Rajan, Junagadh, Asi, Delhi, 1985
19. H.D. Sankalia, Pre Historic and Historic Archaeology of Gujarat; Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, Delhi, 1987; p.137
and at Kambalida, where images of Bodhisattvas were found.\textsuperscript{21} The grants made to the Buddhist vihāras by the Maitraka rulers point to the existence of Buddhism at least up to the Maitraka period, or beginning 8\textsuperscript{th} century AD. Both the Mahayana and Hinayana forms of Buddhism were prevalent as attested by Hiuen Tsang and also had the support of the royalty well into the early medieval times since they received a number of grants.

2. Jainism

In the case of Jainism studies carried out on the basis of the literary data are not as numerous as in the case of Buddhism. Here too the texts are used to prove the existence of Jainism in different parts of the country mainly with the aid of data from epigraphs and at times archaeology. The religious texts of the Jainas also give an insight into the rites and rituals that were performed, as seen in the book by Paul Dundas\textsuperscript{22}. Paul Dundas Phyllis Granoff\textsuperscript{23} and N.N.Bhattacharya\textsuperscript{24} rely mainly on textual sources in their studies on Jainism. Literary data has also been a source for the reconstruction of the socio economic conditions prevalent at the time the text was written, as seen in the study by Jagdish Chandra Jain\textsuperscript{25}.

Literary tradition, if valid, would date the spread of Jainism in Gujarat to circa 3\textsuperscript{rd} century BC, since according to it Samprati, disciple of ārya Suhastin, gave food and clothes to Jaina monks. This tradition also mentions Sasiluka, brother of Samprati Maurya, as having contributed to the spread of Jainism in Saurashtra, and there is the traditional association of Gujarat Kathiawar with Jainism going back to the period of

\textsuperscript{21} H.D. Sankalia, \textit{Pre Historic and Historic Archaeology of Gujarat}; Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, Delhi, 1987; p.144
\textsuperscript{22} Paul Dundas, \textit{The Jainas}, Routledge, London and New York, 1992
\textsuperscript{23} Phyllis Granoff, \textit{The Forest Thieves and the Magic Garden}, Penguin India,Delhi, 1998
\textsuperscript{24} N.N.Bhattacharya ed., \textit{Jainism and Prakrit in Ancient and Medieval India}, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, Delhi, 1994
\textsuperscript{25} Jagdish Chandra Jain, \textit{Life in Ancient India as Depicted in the Jaina Canons and Commentaries}, New Book Company Ltd.,Bombay, 1947
the twenty second *tīrthankara* Neminatha who renounced the world in Kathiawar. As
mentioned by S.B. Deo “thus by the 2nd century BC. Kalinga, Avanti and Saurashtra
seem to have felt the force of Jainism.”

In the context of Jainism whatever archaeological data exists has been utilized to
corroborate the Jaina literary tradition. This is seen in the book edited by A. Ghosh
where the spread and presence of Jainism in different parts of the country is
reconstructed on the basis of literary data and an analysis of the sculptural and
architectural remains, with the emphasis being on dating them. Studies carried out on
Jainism either have adopted the art historical perspective or have been based on a
combination of archaeological data and literary tradition. This has been the case since
archaeological data is considered to be meagre in the region of Gujarat when it comes
to Jainism. Traditionally Valabhi became the home of Jainism in the 4th – 6th centuries
AD after it had to shift from Magadha. Thus for the reconstruction of the existence of
Jainism in Gujarat there is no option but to rely mainly on literary data. As stated by
Virji, “The paucity of the epigraphical evidence, apart from archaeological one, is a
puzzle and all we can say about it is that the influence of Jainism may not have been
as great as Buddhism.”

The literary data point towards the existence of Jainism in
the region, even though archaeological data may be limited in nature. In the
Digambara tradition, given by Virasena *ācārya*, some time 680 years after Mahavira’s
Nirvana (ie. end of the 1st century AD or the 2nd century AD) the Jaina monk *ācārya*
Dhavasera taught scriptures to Puspadanta Bhitabali in Candrasala caves near
Girinagara. According to U.P. Shah, “in view of inscriptions of this Digambara Jaina

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Jnanpith, New Delhi, 1974; p.27
28 K.J. Virji, *Ancient History of Saurashtra*, Konkan Institute of Arts and Sciences, Bombay, 1952; p.178
29 Ibid.; p.90
tradition the Jaina association of the caves seems obvious.”\textsuperscript{30} Using further literary evidence, it is suggested that in circa 2\textsuperscript{nd}-1\textsuperscript{st} century BC there existed a group of Jaina monks in Saurashtra. This is based on the Soratthiya-saha starting from Sthavira Rishigupta mentioned in the Kalpa Sūtra Sthaviravali.\textsuperscript{31}

Information provided by literary sources indicates that for the period between A.D.300 – 600 Jaina monks seemed to have lived in Saurashtra near Girinagra. In the beginning of 4\textsuperscript{th} century AD two Jaina councils were held, almost simultaneously, at Mathura and Valabhi, with the former under ārya Skandila and the latter under ārya Nagarjuna. The second council, which was held to edit and preserve the Jaina canon, met at Valabhi under the chairmanship of Devarddhi Gani Ksamamraman in AD. 453-454. According to U.P.Shah, before the second council all Jaina tīrthankara sculptures were carved without any drapery. He states, “According to Digambara tradition, noted in the Bṛhatkathā of Harisena, the use of drapery by some Jaina monks seems to have started in western India at a place called Kambalika tīrtha. Therefore it is not surprising that the earliest tīrthankara image in the Svetambara fashion hails from a site in western India ie. Akota.”\textsuperscript{32} A number of Jaina bronzes were found at Akota dating from 3\textsuperscript{rd} -4\textsuperscript{th} to 11\textsuperscript{th} centuries AD.\textsuperscript{33}

From Vala five bronze images have been recovered so far. U.P.Shah dates them to 6\textsuperscript{th} century AD and points out that “treatment of drapery on the Vala figures anticipates that on the fine bronze image of Jina dated to A.D.687 from Vasantgarh, district Sirohi.”\textsuperscript{34} It would seem as though Valabhi became the most important centre for the

\textsuperscript{30} U.P.Shah Monuments & Sculpture 300BC-300AD West India -in A.Ghosh ed. Jaina Art and Architecture, Vol. I, Bharatiya Jnanpith, New Delhi,1974 ;p.91
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.; p.91
\textsuperscript{32} U.P.Shah, Monuments & Sculpture AD300-600, West India in A.Ghosh ed. Jaina Art and Architecture, Vol.I, Bharatiya Jnanpith, New Delhi,1974; p.135
\textsuperscript{33} U P Shah, Akota Bronzes, Department of Archaeology, Govt. of Bombay, 1959
\textsuperscript{34} U.P.Shah, Monuments & Sculpture AD600-1000, West India, in A.Ghosh ed. Jaina Art and Architecture, Vol. II, Bharatiya Jnanpith, New Delhi,1974; p.180
Jainas in Saurashtra region by the beginning of the 4th century AD, as the literary evidence would suggest. Mallavadi defeated the Buddhists in a dispute at Valabhi in V.S.414 (AD. 357), and the two councils were held here as well. In the late 6th-7th century AD the site with Jaina traits are the caves at Dhank. While Sankalia dates the rock cut relief to circa early 4th century A.D, the date given by Ghosh is late 6th or 7th century AD. This he concludes on the basis of the presence of a yaksī Ambika. The yaksī, as pointed out, was not introduced before 6th century AD in Jaina worship, and therefore these figures are assignable to 7th century AD. After taking into account all the available evidence from Jaina literature, Virji is of the opinion that, “the existence of Jainism in Valabhi is an established fact, in spite of the absence of epigraphical evidence.” The archaeological evidence for the existence of Jainism in this region would include the five Jaina bronzes dating to 6th century AD found at Valabhi. Also found were sculptures of Parsavanatha and Neminatha of the medieval period at Talaja, probably hinting to the Jaina affiliation of the caves.

As pointed out by Dr. Harihar Singh, “In the historical period Jainism seems to have passed over Gujarat in 4th century BC when Bhadrabahu, head of the Jaina sangha visited Girnar during his migration from Magadha to south. The Mauryan king Samprati was a staunch Jaina. He led a Jaina congregation from Ujjain to Shatrunjaya in the company of ācārya Suhasti with 5000 śramaṇas. Jainism was prevalent in Gujarat in the 1st century BC. The Kalakācāryakathā reveals that Kalaka went to Broach and taught Jaina tenets to the people there.” The Bawa Pyara caves, which

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35 Ibid.; p.135
36 Ibid.; p.133
38 K.J.Virji, Ancient History of Saurashtra, Konkan Institute of Arts and Sciences, Bombay, 1952; p.183
39 Mahendrasinhji K.Thakor, A Bronze Image from Valabhipur, in JOI, Vol. XVI, 1966-67; p.83
40 IAR, 1986-87; p.117
41 Harihar Singh, Jaina Temples of Western India, PV Research Institute, Varanasi, 1982; p.19
are arranged in three lines, are the only ones that are ascertained to have belonged to the Jainas. H.D. Sankalia believes that these caves were of Jaina affiliation on the basis of an inscription and also certain symbols. U.P. Shah also supports the Jaina affiliation of these caves, but his reasons differ. According to him along with the mutilated inscribed slab (buried in front of a cell) from the time of Jayadamana’s grandson referring to those who had attained kevala jñāna, the absence of any definite Buddhist symbol in the caves could mean that Jainas had a monastic establishment near Girnar.

3. Sacred Centres and Political Legitimization

The Purāṇas have been utilised for the reconstruction of religious beliefs and practices and to highlight the changes that occurred as compared to earlier Vedic beliefs and practices. It is suggested that Puranic religion came up mainly to counter the forces of Buddhism and Jainism to which Hinduism was losing its adherents. Based on inscriptional data the theory of Brahmanisation was proposed coinciding with the growth of a feudal economy, since rulers of the newly emerging states donated land to brahmanas on a large scale to spread Puranic religion and bring more people under the authority of the rulers with the aid of religion.

In his study of early medieval India, B.D. Chattopadhyaya cites various examples to stress the role of important religious centres in cultic assimilation. According to him the brahmanas came to control the major cults and cult centres and this mechanism transformed the character of earlier local and tribal cults. B.D. Chattopadhyaya is of the opinion that temples were used to provide cultic integration. According to him, “In the religious atmosphere in the early medieval period the trend was of integration of local cults, rituals and sacred centres into a pantheistic supra local structure and this

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43 B.D. Chattopadhyaya, The Making of Early Medieval India, OUP, Delhi, 1999; pg. 30
was done by affiliating to a deity or a sacred centre that had supra local significance.  

A similar opinion is held by Hans Bakker in the case of the Vakataka dynasty and the Ramtek hill. According to him, “A religious policy is an important device for gaining this recognition (as a central authority). … This certainly was the active policy of the Vakataka rulers: through construction and patronage (e.g. by means of temple construction) of local deities, large groups of population were won over to their regime, while at the same time, by enforcing ‘higher’ or Sanskritic cult and images and ritual proceedings.”

The political importance of temples has also been emphasized by Kulke, who sees it as a potential media used by the political elite. In his opinion, “The Hindu rajas of these regional kingdoms, in the absence of a centralized bureaucracy, tried with their traditional patrimonial power to counterbalance these dangerous local forces by ritual means. This aim was achieved mainly through three measures:

1. royal patronage of important places of pilgrimage within their respective kingdoms
2. a systematic and large scale settlement of Brahmins and
3. the construction of new “imperial temples” within the core region of the kingdoms.”

Thus, religion including the temple has been tied to the polity. Kulke’s view is that religion was used by the rulers to strengthen their position, since “It is most likely that through the construction of these temples the rajas tried to create a new and

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44 B.D.Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, OUP, Delhi, 1999; p.203
45 Hans Bakker, Throne and Temple- Political Power and Religious Prestige in Vidarbha, in Hans Bakker ed., *The Sacred Centre as the Focus of Political Interest*, Egbert Forsten/ Groningen, Netherlands, 1992; p.89
46 H. Kulke, *Kings and Cults- State Formation and Legitimisation in India and South East Asia*, Manohar Publishers, Delhi, 2001 (reprint); p.10
centralized ritual structure, focused on the new state temple and its royal cult." The political elite utilized it as a means to widen the base of their rule. The ruler was respected as god and incorporated within the main cult. This was done to create vertical legitimisation in order to legitimise the new rule within the nuclear area and its people. He further argues that the Hindu temple also provided ‘horizontal legitimization’ so that the new raja would equate in status with the neighbouring princes and Hindu rajas. “An important aspect of the temples was their integrating function within the regional kingdoms…. The great temples were associated vertically in an often closely and enmeshed network of ritual and legendary relations with sub regional and local cults of their hinterland, as well as horizontally with other temples of the region.” An example of this is seen in Orissa where the temples of the five important cults were brought together in a system of five gods – Visnu/Jagannatha in Puri, Siva/Lingaraja in Bhubhaneswar, Durga/Viraja in Jajpur and Surya in Konarak. This was done to secure the local loyalties of the nuclear area and the peripheral zones with the cults of the central temples. According to him it was mainly through bhakti that orthodox Brahmin Hinduism in a continuous two way communication came down to the villages and rural centres. He is also of the opinion that a systematic settlement of the brahmanas was a counterbalancing measure against the centrifugal forces in the regional kingdoms. But he makes an important distinction between royal policies of land donations. While in the early centuries of the Christian era donations were given usually to royal priests at central courts, to individuals and small group of brahmanas, some of whom were settled in

47 Ibid.; p.14
48 H. Kulke ed., State in India-1000-1700AD, OUP, New Delhi, 1988; p.240
49 Ibid. p.261
50 Ibid.; p.261
51 H. Kulke, Kings and Cults: State Formation and Legitimisation in India and South East Asia, Manohar Publishers, Delhi, (reprint) 2001; p.10
remote places where they carried out the task of "inner colonization". The trend, towards the end of the first millennium AD, was of systematically settling brahmanas, at times in large numbers, near political centres.\(^{52}\)

Certain studies speak of temples and sacred sites as tools that aided regional dynasties in establishing and extending their authority. According to Wink, "The Brahmanical cults and rituals performed in these new temple establishments were typical expressions of the 'vertical' linkages which came to characterize rising regional kingdoms... These new religious expressions were concomitant with growth in power of local and regional dynasties and with a process of settlement and agrarian expansion."\(^{53}\)

While the above mentioned studies may be applicable to the regions concerned, other studies demonstrate that this model is not applicable in all parts of the country. In the case of Bengal, for instance, Kunal Chakrabarti points out, "Bengal never developed the culture of temple building as a part of state policy."\(^{54}\) The region also "never developed an overwhelming cult focus or a temple based centre of pilgrimage."\(^{55}\)

R.S. Sharma extracts information from the inscriptions to show large-scale migration of brahmanas from their original homes.\(^{56}\) According to him a number of brahmanas are mentioned as coming from places different than those where they were granted land. He adds that the post Gupta epigraphs on the western coast speak of a continuous migration of brahmanas from towns into that area. Sharma believes that

\(^{52}\) Ibid.; p.11
\(^{53}\) Andre Wink, Kannauj as the Religious and Political Capital of Early Medieval India, in Hans Bakker ed., The Sacred Centre as the Focus of Political Interest, Netherlands, 1992; p.106
\(^{54}\) Kunal Chakrabarti, Religious Processes- The Purânas and the Making of a Regional Tradition, OUP, Delhi, 2001; p.305
\(^{55}\) Kunal Chakrabarti, Religious Processes- The Purânas and the Making of a Regional Tradition, OUP, Delhi, 2001; p. 293
\(^{56}\) R.S. Sharma, Urban Decay, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, Delhi, 1987
this dispersal of brahmanas in the countryside raised the cultural level of the peasantry and enriched agricultural technology.

The theory poses problems when applied to the region of south India, as shown by R. Champakalakshmi. She mentions, “In so far as Tamilakam is concerned, the theory of urban decay and the consequences of de urbanization pose several problems. There was a general change in the pattern of settlements both with a rural and urban base. No uniformity or homogeneity in the pattern and nature of settlements is attested to by the archaeological data.” In her view the region of south India did not witness decline in trade, and the post Sangam works point to continuity of trading centres of the early historical period like Kanci, Vanci, Madurai and Kaveripumpattinam. As for a movement of brahmanas she opines, “Nor is there evidence of brahmana migration from towns to rural areas in the post Sangam age, i.e. post third century AD period.”

In the case of Gujarat, M. Njammasch carried out a detailed study of the Maitraka inscriptions and points out the non applicability of the theory of “Brahmanisation” in Gujarat during the Maitraka period. She analyses the details pertaining to various brahmana donees to demonstrate the existence of not one but six categories of brahmanas in the Maitraka inscriptions. According to her these were

1. Brahmanas who lived in the capital city of Valabhi
2. Brahmanas who lived in cities located in districts
3. Brahmanas who lived in important religious centres

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57 R. Champakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization- South India 300 BC to AD 1300*, OUP, Delhi, 1996
58 R. Champakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization- South India 300 BC to AD 1300*, OUP, Delhi, 1996; p.17
59 R. Champakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization- South India 300 BC to AD 1300*, OUP, Delhi, 1996; p.16-17
60 R. Champakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization- South India 300 BC to AD 1300*, OUP, Delhi, 1996; p.17
4. Brahmanas who lived in smaller towns

5. Brahmanas who lived in the villages

6. Brahmanas who lived in adisthānas as the priestly community.  

According to her brahmanas around Valabhi rarely moved out as it is mentioned nine times as the place of residence and not once as the place of origin in the inscriptions.  

In most cases the fields donated were located in one or more villages and it would have been impossible for the brahmanas to cultivate the land himself. Further she points out that the brahmanas preferred to live in the cities and district headquarters, and only a small minority lived in the villages.  

It was possible for the brahmanas to live in cities and receive revenue there from the land donated to them which was located in the villages. As for their role in colonization, Njammasch opines that the brahmana community were not colonizers in the sense of bringing new land and areas under cultivation, and neither is there any evidence of them dispersing agricultural technology or teaching techniques to plough fields in the tribal areas of Gujarat.  

She points out that the brahmana community in Gujarat played a different role compared to those in Orissa, Deccan and south India. The brahmanas mostly belonged to various Vedic schools and the priestly class was divided into many sects and hence was not strong enough as yet to be collaborators with the ruling dynasty.
In the case of temples found along the coastline of Saurashtra and at sites such as Roda, Shamalaji and Methan, there is no direct evidence pointing to the involvement of the ruling dynasty in the construction or maintenance of these temples. Thus it is important to carefully analyse data that is region specific before making generalisations regarding the role of the brahmanas or that of temples and sacred sites in aiding the regional ruling dynasties in establishment and extension of their authority and rule.

Thus, religious transformation in early India has been discussed largely on the basis of inscriptions and economic factors have been stressed. The emphasis has been on the role of brahmanas and the temple as providing legitimisation to the newly emerging states around the 5th-6th centuries AD onwards.

4. Religious Structures: The History of Art

Religious structures and sculptural remains have generally been analysed from an art historical perspective and the trend has been to focus on chronology, tracing origins and styles. For the region of Gujarat studies on temple remains have been carried out by K.F. Sompura, J.M. Nanavati and M.A. Dhaky. These studies have concentrated mainly on classification and dating of temples such as seen in the work of M.A. Dhaky and J. M. Nanavati.\textsuperscript{69} It must be mentioned here that the temples under study are modest in structure, have limited sculpture and in most cases the identity of the original deity under worship is not known.

M.P. Vora and M.A. Dhaky mainly concentrate on the structural forms of the temples found.\textsuperscript{70} They categorize them into pre Nāgara and Nāgara style clearly indicating that the vast number of temples, belonging to this area, developed stylistically and

\textsuperscript{69} M.A. Dhaky and J.M. Nanavati, \textit{The Maitraka and Saindhava Temples of Gujarat}, Artibus Asiae, Switzerland, 1969

architecturally under the influence of the northern style. These temples are seen as either Sāndhāra or Nirandhāra i.e. with or without ambulatory passage. The former was, represented by temples with a square or rectangular plan, the exterior walls of which formed the ambulatory around the garbhagṛha and extended to surround the hall in front of it. The temples described by them in great detail are those of Gop, Kadvar, Bilesvara and Khimesvara located in Junagadh district.

Kantilal F. Sompura has studied the structural portions of the temple in an almost similar manner. He studied them on the basis of being single square cells adorned with a śikhara or ones with a square garbhagṛha at times surmounted by a pradaksināpatha and a single maṇḍapa attached in front.71

J.M. Nanavati and M.A. Dhaky have studied these temples in great detail. They list the work done by various people in the Saurashtra region, starting with the pioneer James Burgess in the years 1874-75.72 They even trace the style of some temples of the Maitraka period to the cave at Uparkot in Junagadh of 4th century AD. They use the superstructure for classifying pre Solanki temples, which are studied in terms of Gandharic, Dravidic and Nāgara styles. The temple of Gop, believed to be the oldest, belongs to the Gandharic category and the other one belonging to the same category is at Kadvar. The Dravidic group is further subdivided into Pseudo and Neo Dravidic, and that of Nāgara into Proto, Eo and Early Nāgara. This they did in order to give a relative chronology to the temples. But in doing so, they have studied the temple structure only in comparison to the northern or southern styles, and this seems to leave out the possibility of studying the development of temple architecture within the

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20 Kantilal F Sompura. Structural Temples of Gujarat (upto 1600 AD), Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, 1968; p.461
architectural tradition of the region. Temples are structurally also described in terms of Uni or Bi cellular, with or without ambulatory, closed hall, porch and pilastered hall.

As far as the sculptural remains are concerned, the sculptures from Shamalaji have been studied in detail. The book by Sara L. Schastok provides useful insights and she places the sculptures found from the sites of Devnimori and Shamalaji in north Gujarat, in relatively smaller time frame as compared to V.L.Devkar. The method of dating that Schastok uses is based on a comparative analysis of other images and sculptures from the same period found at Udayagiri, Mandasor and Elephanta. She also takes into consideration the terracotta images that were found at Devnimori, a Buddhist site located on the other side of river Meshvo, on the banks of which is situated Shamalaji.

"Art history – in India perhaps even more than elsewhere- increasingly may have to take on some of ethno history's methodologies in order to create an accurate understanding of the roles art has played within her many cultural environments." Meister provides a different perspective to the study of art history, which goes beyond the architectural form. According to him, it is the institution and it's changing cultural consensuses and conventions that constitute the monument. The Dahima brahmanas founded the Dahimati temple in the 7th century AD, and this community claims the protection of the goddess who is their kuladevī. Another community, that of the Ratava Jats from a nearby town also claim the temple as their protector and the goddess as their kuladevī, and the story associated with the temple, as narrated by the

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73 Sara L. Schastok, *The Samlaji Sculptures and Sixth Century Art in Western India*, E.J.Brill, Leiden,1985
Jats, is not known to the Dahima brahmanas.\(^{77}\) It is these communities that play the crucial role in the continued importance of the temple over a period of time, which otherwise would have been a mere abandoned structure and would have lost its religious importance.

**Archaeology of Religion**

The study of religions or reconstruction of religious beliefs and practices solely on the basis of textual data provides an incomplete picture. As pointed out by Robert Coningham in the case of Buddhism, there are clear dangers of using textual sources compiled centuries after the actual event.\(^{78}\) In other instances, such as in the case of the Arabian peninsula, archaeological data provides for the evidence of the extensive Christianisation of the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf Coast between the fourth and seventh centuries.\(^{79}\) Without the aid of archaeology, this chapter on the spread of Christian religion would have remained unknown since now mainly a Muslim population inhabits the area.

Dilip Chakrabarti demonstrates how with the aid of archaeological data one can trace continuities in religious beliefs and practices from an earlier time.\(^{80}\) According to him archaeology can trace the different ritual behaviour that Hindus traditionally associate with Hinduism. He points out that instead of beginning with a checklist and then looking for their archaeological manifestations, one should look at the archaeological record as a whole and point out the categories of evidence, which make sense from the point of view of later, well documented Hinduism.\(^{81}\) He divides the period of

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study into prehistory, the Harappan civilisation and its antecedents, the Neolithic-Chalcolithic and later proto Historic cultures of non Harappan India and early Historic India in order to take the totality of the archaeological data. The presence of small terracotta female and cattle figurines at various Harappan sites reflects a ritual concern with mother goddess and cattle, both Hindu concerns. The symbols associated with major Hindu cults had already assumed their identities in the early Historic period. Importance of archaeology becomes evident in the case of Vidisa where according to the inscription found at the site, a Visnu worshipping Greek erected the pillar, and hence one would assume the site to be a Vaishnavite one. Excavations have revealed that the pillar belonged to the second phase of a Visnu temple. The earlier structure was a Saivite temple, and the other structure that was a Visnu temple was about 300 feet away.

Robert Coningham opines that the stūpa, the caitya and the vihāra represent only a fragment of Buddhist practices. The grha in Buddhist architecture consisted of 'a hall with the object of worship', but Coningham shows that the bodhi grha, or 'bodhi tree sanctuary' is not to be found in the excavation reports, even though an inscription records the donation of one at the site of Nagarjunakonda, and one has been excavated at the site of Sigiriya in Sri Lanka. As has been rightly pointed out by him on Buddhist studies carried out so far, 'The majority of these studies have been restricted to the archaeology of formal Buddhist sites, that is sites with one or more of the three Buddhist monuments, and are therefore limited in their

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interpretations of Buddhist material culture." The study carried out by him makes us aware that while looking at archaeological data in studying religions it is important to move beyond considering the grandiose structures and look for other smaller but equally important remnants that were essential components of the religion.

Anila Verghese's book deals with Vijayanagara and even though it pertains to a later period, the author provides us with various perspectives through which one can approach the study of religion. The data utilised by her is a combination of structural remains, archaeological data, and inscriptions as well as accounts of various foreign travellers who had visited the kingdom. Issues like food distribution, local deities as well as memorial stones are for the first time dealt within a single book itself.

5. The Data from Inscriptions

Another source material for the study of religion can be inscriptions. Most of these have been utilised mainly to reconstruct the genealogy of the various ruling dynasties, or in the case of early medieval India, to prove the emergence of feudalism. Inscriptions provide valuable information for the reign of the Mauryas, Kshatrapas and the Gupta dynasties in the region. Inscriptions at the site of Girnar prove that the Maurya, Kshatrapa and the Gupta dynasties held sway over this region. The rock edict at Girnar contains inscriptions pertaining to the Mauryan, Kshatrapa and Gupta periods. Belonging to the Mauryan period are the Asokan edicts, and the inscription of Rudradamana records the reconstruction of a dam, situated near the rock edict, which was originally constructed in the time of Candragupta Maurya, and in the time of Asoka, the Sudarsana lake was adorned with conduits. The lake was repaired again during the rule of Skandagupta of the Gupta dynasty. The edicts of Asoka, as well as

88 Anila Verghese, Archaeology, Art and Religion- New Perspectives on Vijayanagara, OUP, Delhi, 2000
the inscriptions of the time of Rudradamana, and Skandagupta engraved on a single rock, have been utilised by historians to reconstruct the rule of these major dynasties over Gujarat. Other inscriptions that are used for similar purposes are the Mulvasar inscription and the Jasdan inscription pertaining to the rule of the Kshatrapas. An interesting point in the Girnar inscription is the mention of the construction of a Visnu temple in the vicinity of the dam. According to Campbell the only trace left of the original temple is a pilaster built into the wall to the right as one enters the modern Damodar temple, built in the fifteenth century.89

After the rule of the Guptas it is the Maitrakas of Valabhi that ruled Gujarat and held sway over a great portion of it. There are a vast number of inscriptions attributed to them and it is only from the Maitraka period onwards that one comes across inscriptions covering a wide period of time and these yield valuable data. H.D. Sankalia tries to reconstruct the area under the Valabhi kingdom on the basis of the places from where the grants were issued, various places mentioned in the grants and on the testimony of Hieun Tsang.90 S.B.Rajyagor follows a similar pattern wherein the name of the rulers, the number of grants, those who issued them, their military encampments and expeditions are mentioned.91 Ramlal Parikh and Rasesh Jamindar give details on find spots, name of donee and year of discovery of the inscriptions.92

R.S. Sharma,93 M. Njammesch94 and K.J. Virji95 in their books have studied the inscriptive data from three different perspectives. Perhaps the most comprehensive study of the Maitraka inscriptions is by Virji. She was a pioneer in extracting

89 James M. Campbell, History of Gujarat, Vintage Books, Gurgaon, 1989; p.70
90 H.D.Sankalia, Pre Historic and Historic Archaeology of Gujarat, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1987
91 S.B.Rajyagor, History of Gujarat, S.Chand & Comp., Delhi, 1982
92 Ramlal Parikh and Rasesh Jamindar, Epigraphic Resources in Gujarat, Butala & Co.Delhi, 1981
93 R.S.Sharma, Urban Decay, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1987
95 K.J.Virji, Ancient History of Saurashtra, Konkan Institute of Arts and Sciences, Bombay, 1952
information such as administrative units and the division of territory under the Maitrakas from these inscriptions, and also provides us with names of functionaries mentioned, and their possible functions. The territorial divisions mentioned by her are āhārani, sthali, pethaka, āhāra, viṣaya, bhūkti, pethā and grāma to mention a few. She then goes on to equate āhāra, viṣaya and bhūkti. Some of the administrative officers were rājaputra, dūtaka, rājasthāniya, mahāsāmanta, mahāsenāpati, vinīyuktaka and āyuktaka. At the āhāra head quarters were stationed adhikārīṇika, daṇḍapāśika and sthānādhikaraṇa. Under the daṇḍapāśika, the head police officer, were stationed chaurodhāraṇikas, the vartamāpalas and the pratisārakas. Detailed work on inscriptional data on the Maitraka period has been carried out by M. Njammasch as well. Her work differs from that of Virji in the sense that she concentrates more on the extraction of data to provide a detailed analysis of the Buddhist community and establishments, and of the Brahmanical community as well. She extracts data to study the village community during the Maitraka rule, the position of the independent cultivators and tenant farmers, distribution and location of land and the status of property ownership and some characteristics of the social structure in the village named Madarsa. She also analyses the inscriptions to extract details regarding various water bodies mentioned such as vāpis. As for Buddhism she provides a list of the various vihāramaṇḍalas mentioned, as well as the various individual monasteries that existed within each of the vihāramaṇḍalas. A study of the economic functioning of the early medieval period Buddhist monasteries in north India with special reference to the nunnery of Kathiawar is also provided in the book. An in depth study of the various categories of brahmanas and the various Vedic

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96 K.J.Virji, Ancient History of Saurashtra, Konkan Institute of Arts and Sciences, Bombay, 1952; p.235
97 Ibid.; p.233
98 Ibid.; p.238
99 M.Njammasch, Bauern, Buddhisten und Brahmanen- Das frühe Mittelalter in Gujarat, Harroswitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2001
schools they belonged to, as well as detailed study of inscriptions describing donations to temples are also to be found in the book.

As is evident from the survey of the secondary literature carried out above, one does not get a complete picture of the religious developments in the region, as a collective study of all available data has not been carried out. Religious diversity has not been a major topic for any of the above studies since these have mainly concentrated on either one, or two of the religions. Some of the issues that I would take up in my thesis, and have not been discussed in the context of Gujarat, will be as follows:

**Sacred Space**

A sacred site is not only that primary ceremonial structure that is the focus of pilgrimage visitation. A sacred site is also all those other structures, including buildings, institutions, local traditions, and beliefs, that contribute to and are formed by the ongoing pilgrimage to the sacred site. The structure of a sacred place is built not only by the actual architects and craftsmen. It is built also by the millions of pilgrims who have travelled to the shrine and by the hundreds or thousands of lay people and religious persons who live and work near the shrine. Every person who visits a pilgrimage centre in some way contributes to the structure of the site. Some make material contributions such as buildings, temples, dedicatory monuments or other physical objects. Others, whether knowingly or unknowingly, bring some indefinable spiritual energy that adds to the already existing energy field of human intention. Each of these, visible and invisible, is a conduit for the infusion of intention into geographical space.

First we need to see how sacred space was defined in Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism within the region of Gujarat. In the case of Buddhism it is seen that it is mostly monasteries or residential complexes that are to be found. These include
shelters carved out of natural caves in the hilly outcrops, as seen in the caves of Sidsar, Dhank, Khambalida, Talaja and Junagadh. Also, they are mostly located along a river that must have been the main source of water. In the case of Buddhism sacred space in most cases, seem to have constituted secluded shelters in the hills in a serene forest area, with a natural source of water in the vicinity. As for monastic sites, one is to be found at Devnimori, which again is located close to a river. This site was considered a mahāstūpa and consisted of a stūpa, two monasteries, four votive stūpas an apsidal temple and a protecting wall. The casket recovered from the core of the stūpa records that the mahāstūpa was constructed in the precincts of the mahāvihāra during the rule of King Rudrasena. It is noticed that at first it was the vihāra that was in existence and subsequently the stūpa was constructed. Recovered from here were also seventeen terracotta images of Buddha, all in dhyānamudrā, and a plaque depicting a complete stūpa with two Bodhisattvas. What one notices in the case of Devnimori is the gradual extension of sacred space from a vihāra to an enclosed area containing not only a mahāstūpa, but an apsidal temple as well. The presence of Buddha images and the temple are further indicators of the changes occurring in ritual and ceremonies within Buddhism.

In the case of temples it is seen that in the region of Saurashtra, for instance, a majority of the temples are located along the seacoast. These temples vary in size, style and dedication, but the fact that they almost all are on the coastline gives them a common unifying factor. Here also a natural source of water seems to have been a deciding factor. Since seawater is too salty to be directly consumed, these temple complexes have a well next to them from where water could be constantly accessed.

100 Refers to religious structures dedicated to Visnu, Siva, Surya and mother goddess, unless otherwise specified.
Wells are found at the temple sites of Balej, Sonkamsari, Boricha and Adodar. Location on hills is noticed in the case of Sonkamsari and Gop, and near rivers in the case of Shamalaji and Akhodar and Miyani is located at the creek.

As discussed earlier, for Jainism up to the early medieval period there is no structural evidence except for the Bawa Pyara caves which seem to have been a Jaina monastic residence, even though this has not been conclusively proven. Most of our evidence for the reconstruction of the existence of Jainism in Gujarat comes from the numerous bronze images found, especially the Akota hoard that covers a wide period and yields important information. Some of these images contain inscriptions and can yield data pertaining to the existence of Jaina shrines in different parts of Gujarat. One can presume that if such a vast number of images existed they must have been worshipped in some type of structure with rituals centring on them and the find of two incense burners and a small bell being further indicators. In the opinion of U.P. Shah the shrine at Akota probably belonged to some Jaina monk or gaccha.\textsuperscript{101} Further, the presence of the term \textit{vasatikā}, in his opinion, is an indication of the presence of shrines, and the terms found are \textit{Rathavasatikā}, or the \textit{vasatikā} founded by Ratha, a donor referring to himself as belonging to the \textit{vasatikā} of Nanna guru.\textsuperscript{102} Thus even though not many structural remains belonging to the Jainas in the period under study are to be found, a careful analysis of archaeological and literary evidence can help in locating the sacred sites of the Jainas.

Memorial stones in Kutch are another marker of sacred space. These are stones erected in memory of dead relatives, and the few we have belong to the Kshatrapa period. Thus, it is evident that the definition of sacred space varies across the different religions, the question is how it related to each other.

\textsuperscript{101} U.P. Shah, \textit{Akota Bronzes}, Department of Archaeology, Govt. of Bombay, 1959; p.4
\textsuperscript{102} U.P. Shah, \textit{Akota Bronzes}, Department of Archaeology, Govt. of Bombay, 1959; p.4
Coexistence of Religions:

Certain sites in Gujarat contain religious structures of more than one religion. While at the site of Amreli archaeological data informs us of the existence of Buddhism and the Brahmanical religion, on the other hand inscriptive and literary data informs us of the coexistence of Buddhism, Jainism and the Brahmanical religion at Valabhi. The site of Devnimori and Shamalaji can also be cited as examples of case studies. The former is a Buddhist and the latter is a Hindu site, and interestingly both are located in close proximity to each other on either sides of the river that flows between them. Within this theme of coexistence the study shall demonstrate the varied trends of development at each site. At some sites both religions cease to exist (Amreli), while at others one continues though in a different context (Shamalaji- changes from a Saivite to a Vaishnavite site).

Sacred and Residential Space

The next issue will be to locate religious and sacred sites within the context of settlement sites and for this the aid of archaeological and inscriptive data will be taken. The factors that determined both these two different types of spaces close to each other and led to their interaction will be studied. At Junagadh the Sudarsana lake seems to have been the main factor since this lake was constantly repaired in the ancient period. It must have been important for continuous agricultural activities, which may have been the main resource base for the monastery located here. In the case of Dwarka, where the soil is not very fertile, trading activities may have provided the link, and this probably was also the case with Miyani since it is located on the creek. The temple here stands located on a hill and probably served as a marker for sailors. Khimesvara is located right at the seacoast and in all probability served as a marker as well, beyond the complex of which one could access the mainland for
trading purposes. Gop is located at the top of a hilly outcrop but in the interior and can be noticed for a long time even today while travelling from the coast to Jamnagar, and seems to have been midway. Thus, it too may have served as a marker, but instead of trade, the area at the foothill supported agricultural activities. It is communities that not only construct structures at religious spots, but also contribute towards their maintenance and continuity. To have a comprehensive understanding of the factors that played an important role in providing the resources and manpower to construct and maintain sacred sites, it is necessary to undertake a study of the environment, topographic conditions of the region and the economic activities at the sites and their neighbouring environs. This brings in the study of the communities that were essential for the continued sanctity of a sacred spot or religious structure.

**Ritual and Pilgrimage**

Ritual provides a link between the humane and the profane, and the sacred centres are where these links are completed. Human factor is a necessary ingredient in the creation and continuity of ritual, whether in performing it or providing the means to perform it. Ritual integrates religion with the community and each religion has its own set of rituals, which distinguishes one religion from the other. While ritual takes place in a complex, it is pilgrimage that moves beyond the complex and draws in people from a wider area. Pilgrimage is an ongoing process as with the passage of time when more and more myths and stories get attached to a centre, more and more people are drawn to the sacred centre. A study of the rituals mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Skanda Purāṇa* point to an increasing complexity in rituals such as *dāna* over time, which become more elaborate and are described in greater detail in the latter text. Some of the rituals mentioned in the *Skanda Purāṇa* also hint at an interaction with and adoption of local beliefs and practices. In addition to this an
analysis of Viśvarūpa Visnu and Pañcāgnitapas Parvati images is also carried out to place developments within Gujarat in a wider perspective, as no region can exist in isolation. The images of Viśvarūpa Visnu crafted in Gujarat demonstrate the importance of the region in the iconographical development of the deity and also provide linkages with northern part of the subcontinent. Linkages with southern India and the area towards Maharashtra are seen in the iconographical representation of Pañcāgnitapas Parvati images. These images and plaques representing Parvati performing Pañcāgnitapas found from sites in Gujarat also bring forward the uniqueness of the iconographical tradition in the region. Based on these issues, the following chapterisation has been worked out:

I. Analysis of Sacred Sites with Architectural Remains

An analysis of religious sites belonging to different religions will be undertaken. Gujarat is a state with varied topography and it is within these that various spots were considered sacred and came to contain religious architecture. In this chapter Jainism is not discussed as no definite site associated with the religion has been identified with certainty so far. Since most data pertaining to the religion is sculptural, it shall be taken up in the chapter on sculptural remains. By studying the Buddhist and Brahmanical sites the chapter shall demonstrate the gradual expansion of these religions into different parts of Gujarat and will also bring out the areas of concentration of these in the different periods under study. It will be noticed that over a period of time the sites move out from Saurashtra into areas of east Gujarat, north Gujarat and Kutch as well.

II. Relationship between Sacred and Residential Space

After carrying out a survey of the various sacred spots, settlement archaeology will be the next concern. The main focus will be on how the settlement areas in and around a
sacred site related to it. This will also enable us to know the possible support base of the larger religious establishments and the resource mobilisation that aided in their continuity and growth. The role of the communities that were involved and their nature of involvement will also be a topic of study as without a community and its belief a site would not retain much of its sanctity and importance over a period of time.

III. A Study of the Sculptural Remains

While the area of Saurashtra has a number of architectural remains to its credit, that of north and south Gujarat have more sculptural remains. It is interesting to notice that on the one hand in Saurashtra the Buddhist and Brahmanical architectural remains are devoid of sculptural ornamentations, on the other hand a vast number of images have been recovered from numerous sites spread across Gujarat. These sculptural remains aid in understanding the existence of lesser known deities under worship, such as Lajjāgaurī, and also help identify sacred sites such as step wells. They also help understand the diverse contexts that the images were placed and worshipped in, which ranges from the central image in a temple as elements of architectural decoration to images that were used for ritual processions and worship at the household level. In certain cases, images also help identify sacred sites that may have earlier contained religious architecture, which fails to appear in the archaeological records. Sculptural remains help identify the existence of Jainism in the region and they indicate the existence of a Jaina religious pantheon. The inscriptions on them speak of the presence of a well-defined Jaina community spread across Gujarat by the end of the early medieval period. In the case of Buddhism, as well the images recovered from various sites point to the worship of Bodhisattvas, Dhyāni Buddhas and Tārā in the region.
IV. Coexistence of Religions

Archaeological data along with inscriptive and literary data indicates the existence of more than one religion at many sites in Gujarat. In most of the cases such as at the sites of Amreli, Valabhi, Shamalaji and Devnimori, the coexistence is between the Brahmanical religion and Buddhism. Other sites such as Khed Brahma and Akota and Vadodara contain evidence to prove the coexistence of the Brahmanical religion and Jainism. A combination of archaeological, inscriptive and literary data pertaining to Valabhi points to the coexistence of all three religions, Buddhism, Brahmanical and Jainism, at the site. Even though the sites demonstrate coexistence, they do not follow a similar pattern of development. At certain sites growth and development of the religion occurs simultaneously, at other sites one religion declines and another continues over a period of time, and at some sites while one declines the focus of the other shifts to sites in the surrounding areas. Thus within this theme of coexistence itself one notices diversity in patterns of development.

V. Ritual Practices and Pilgrimage

Here the main data base will be the Mahābhārata, Skanda Purāṇa and inscriptive material as well. Certain rituals such as dāna, śrāddha and pilgrimage are taken up to bring forth the increasing complexities of rituals by the time of the compilation of the Skanda Purāṇa. Existence of certain festivals that aided in the interaction between the Brahmanical and the local beliefs and practices are taken up as well and inscriptive data corroborates the existence of some of these festivals. An analysis of descriptions found in the Mahābhārata and the Skanda Purāṇa and archaeological data pertaining to the sites of Dwarka and Somanatha is also carried out to ascertain a correlation between archaeology and tradition to an extent.

Considering the trading activities of the region throughout history it is plausible to suggest that religious developments in Gujarat were not isolated and were part of wider developments. A comparative study of images of Viśvarūpa Visnu and
Pañcāgnitapas Parvati found in Gujarat and other parts of India is undertaken to locate Gujarat within a wider network.

The thesis is an attempt to study religion and religious developments in Gujarat in a different perspective as it takes all religions, in the time period under study, into consideration and utilizes a combination of archaeological, sculptural, inscriptive, and literary data. Religious diversity, heterogeneous developments within religions and coexistence are brought out in the chapters of the thesis. The thesis takes into consideration not only religious monumental remains, but also sculptures of major and minor deities, votive offerings and lesser discussed sacred sites such as trees and wells. All in all, the thesis is an attempt to provide a more comprehensive picture of religious developments in Gujarat and to highlight the diverse trends identifiable in different areas of the region.

In the thesis, certain words have not been included in diacritics such as place names as they have been continuously changing over time. The name of rulers, individuals and better known deities such as Siva, Visnu, Krsna and Parvati have also been excluded from the category. It shall be noticed in the chapters that different authors spell the site Shamalaji in varying manners, such as Samlaji by Sara L Schastok,¹⁰³ Samalaji by V.L. Devkar¹⁰⁴ and Shamalaji in the excavation report.¹⁰⁵ I have used the spelling Shamalaji, which is found in the excavation report, and in the quotes the spelling used by the authors in their respective books has been left unchanged.

¹⁰³ Sara L. Schastok, The Samlaji Sculptures and Sixth Century Art in Western India, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1985
¹⁰⁵ R.N. Mehta & A.J. Patel, Excavation at Shamalaji, Faculty of Arts, M.S. University of Vadodara, 1967