CHAPTER XI

MINOR AVATĀRAS II.
CHAPTER XI

M I N O R A V A T Ī R A S U

Hayagrīva:

Among the minor avatāras of Viṣṇu, Hayagrīva (Viṣṇuvaṅktra, Hayāśīṛṣa or Hayāśīra) is considered to be the most important one, both from the mythological and iconographic point of view. This avatāra is primarily associated with knowledge and wisdom. At the request of Brahmā, this horse-head incarnation of Viṣṇu is said to have dived to the bottom of the ocean to rescue the Vedas stolen by the two demons Madhu and Kaśyapa, whom he killed. ¹ According to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, in the cosmic sacrifice the All-powerful himself was Hayāśīṛṣa, the male of the sacrifice whose colour is that of gold, of whom the Vedas and the sacrifices are the substance and the Gods of the Soul. ² This definite connection of Hayagrīva with knowledge (Vedas) is found only in the epic and Purānic literature of India and the concept of this God is therefore directly based on them. It is in this recognisable form that we come across references to Hayagrīva in the Tamil literature of this period. Tirumangai alone among the Vaipiśava

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1. Mahābhārata, 12:357.

2. II-7: 11 — Satrī namīna bhagavān Hayāśīrṣāthō hākaśūn

viṣṇumānastarpīryavaṇamab! Chandōmarī makhayovi!
hilavatātūtū!
hymnists refers to this concept in the *Auranga Divyam* 3 Hayagriva or Hayagriva is said to be the same as Vagisvara the thirteenth in
the list of thirty-nine *vibhasa* given by the *Abhijñāna Sahita*. 4

According to the *Vigvakesa Saṁhitā* this *avatāra* like the others springs from Aniruddha indirectly through the *fish*, the latter
directly springing from *Yama*.

The importance of the concept of Hayagriva may also be seen from his widespread acceptance in the other religions of India as well as outside as far as China and Japan in the east and Greece and Rome in the west from very early times. 5 In Vedic mythology references are made to divine steeds and to sacrificial horses fashioned out of the sun. 7 From this sun-horse conception of the Vedic period is probably derived the reference in the *Mahabharata* 6 to the Hayagriva *Iditya* who, on every auspicious occasion, rises from the nether regions and fills the world called *'Siva-pra* with Vedic hymns. This passage marks an early stage in the development of the idea of Hayagriva *Yama* who was an *Iditya*.

It is curious, however, that Hayagriva is also the name of

3. *Vibhakti* *nāgara* *kārta* *aṃśalaravah* *yān* *nir*bhvikā *tīrthah* Vedic *nālāpāyān* *nayandavan* ā. — V-3-9.

*Mun* *invulakshana* *invulakṣāya* *nām* *vraja* *divyavah* *tīrthak* *yān* *nir*bhvikā *ān* *nā* *nayandavan* *kārta*  — VII-3-9.


5. Ibid., p. 46.


a demon who appears as an ally of Tārakaśura, the inveterate enemy of Viṣṇu, in the Mahābhārata. The portions in which the name occurs as that of a demon are presumably later. This demon was killed by Viṣṇu in the Tāraka var and for this purpose Viṣṇu is said to have assumed this hybrid form (horse and man) in the same manner as he killed the other demons Hiranyakaṣa and Hiranya-kaśipu in the Varāha and Śarasimha forms respectively. The same demon is also said to have later assumed the shape of Kṣiṇin, the horse-demon to kill Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa (another Vibhāṣa of Viṣṇu). Again the demon Kṣiṇin was killed by Kṛṣṇa and hence his name Kesava. All these stories are evidently derived from earlier legends. But no explanation is given of how the name Hayagrīva as well as the form came to be given to the God himself.

Hayagrīva was also adopted into the cult of Mahāyāna Buddhism as Viḍyārāja Hayagrīva, as an aspect of Avalokiteśvara, as early as the beginning of the 6th century A.D. However, in the Buddhist pantheon, a different orientation is given to the deity and he is endowed with terrific features and is chiefly invoked for the fulfilment of one's desires or for 'abhṛdāra' purposes. Here the deity comes to be associated more and more with magical powers, probably as a result of Tantric influences. An interesting development of the cult of Hayagrīva with Buddhist associations may be found in Assam where there is a temple of Hayagrīva in Hajo.

10. Ibid., p.56.
which attracts hundreds of pilgrims even to-day. The Hayagrīva-Mādhava worship of this region presents many similarities with that of Jagannātha at Puri. Another interesting feature is noticeable in Jain literature, where the name Āvagriṣṭa or Āvakārtha (or Hayagrīva) is the name of one of the Prativāsudēvas who were nine in number and who were the enemies of the nine Baladevas Vāsudevas and Kāśīvas. The particular work to which reference is made here is one of the minor Śāṁkara kāvyas written by a Tōlamōlitēvar, who is believed to be a contemporary of Ṭagavadatman śaṅkara-pāṇi (620-45 A.D.) an early Faḍḍiya king, on the basis of the occurrence of the name Śāndan in verse 4 of the work, in whose court the kāvyā was first recited. Here again Hayagrīva is an enemy of the Gods and this feature points to the early adaptation of the idea in the Jain religion, though unlike the Buddhists, who evolved a cult of the deity, the Jains made him an enemy against whom the Gods had to fight.

In the Brahmanical conception, the god Hayagrīva was throughout endowed with the chief characteristic trait as the presiding.

11. See Mahasvar Neog, HAYAGRĪVA WORSHIP IN ASAM. JOR, XXII, pp.31-39.
12. Tōlamōlitēvaś, ŚILAMĀṇI, vv.296-97, 402, 408, 1199, 1463 etc. There are numerous references to him as in the story he is pitched against the hero called Vivitṛṣṇa, who is compared to Vāsudeva or Viṣṇu himself.
deity over knowledge and wisdom. Substantiating the view that the god stands for knowledge, the Viṣṇudharmottara endows Hayagrīva with eight arms and calls this form a part of Śaṅkarāṇya. Śaṅkarāṇya himself, as is well-known, typifies two of the six ideal gajasūpa jñāna and balasūpa. Though certain late Brahmical manuscritoś lay emphasis on the dire aspect of the God under Mahāyāna influence, the chief characteristic is never lost sight of throughout the history of the cult of Hayagrīva.

Two varieties of Hayagrīva images are described by iconographic texts. According to the Viṣṇudharmottara, Hayagrīva should be represented with a horse’s face and eight hands; in four of the hands he should carry the jānaka, sakra, yadā and yadma and the remaining four should be placed on the heads of the four personified Vedas which were rescued by him from the nether region. Images of this type are rare and a late representation of it is cited by T.A. Capanatha Rao from Nuzvehalī, Mysore. The image of the horse-faced God stands in dīgha pose and has eight hands carrying all the attributes usually associated with the eight-armed Viṣṇu images. The figure stands on a platform over the prostrate body of a demon who may be the demon Hayagrīva. In the

14. "Satyavara karṇa kārya vedāna dakṣātiḥ ādekhāriṇī
davamaṁrajavyasāṁ sarvaravānapa bhārī
dāvaśṛṅgava davamaṁ kārya vedā na samuddhrīkṣā
dāvāhitya śānavaramrayāḥputrā rasaśāna-davaraṇapena hena
samuddhrīkṣā śānavarama-sukhvā turasa śāniṁna mahāpattāśinaṁ"
(ch.30, vv.4-6)

15. ibid., p.261, pl.LXXVII.
Agni Purāṇa he is attributed with only four arms holding the conch, discus, mace and book (Veda). It is also stated that his left foot should be placed on Mīśa and the right foot on a tortoise. The Vīṣṇudharmottara, on the other hand, stipulates that the feet of the God should be placed on the open palms of the earth Goddess. The Kāraṇātīlakesī says that the image should have four arms, the upper ones having the jānka and sakra and the lower should repose on the knees, probably referring to the Yogasana posture.

An early bronze image of Hayagrīva of about the 10th century A.D., is found in the Museum of Art and History at Brussels, in which the deity is shown with four arms, seated in aṣṭaṇgaśrīyamuka or Yogasana on a lotus throne. But the upper left seems to carry a rosary while the lower right is in vīśākhā mudrā, the upper right holding conch and the lower left holds the book (Veda). It is interesting to notice that this image is in entire agreement with the dhyānasālōka of Hayagrīva given in the Tantra Ārā of Śrī Madhavārya. A late bronze in a private collection in Calcutta is noticed by J.N. Banerjea and this figure is seated

17. XV, 78; rathāngaśrīsankhaṇkitaḥkānyagranjānadvayam
19. Vanda puranga vadanam āṣṭāmsika samasthānān / aṅgirāvadāntāmārtikānākh samāśānta //
    aṅgāntaraḥ sabhīravi prakīṁbhasantānām //
    tathāsramamāṅgustakam aṅgirāvadāntānām //
in dvaravasana on a double-petalled lotus pedestal with four arms carrying sankha in upper right, sakra in upper left, matsaka in lower left while the lower right is in the vyabhichara mudra. This seems to partially answer to the Asmi Aruna description but more fully to another dhyanasloka of the deity.

In the Tamil country Hayagriva is rarely represented in stone or metal before the 12th or 13th centuries A.D. However, it is possible that one of the vertical panels on the north wall of the main temple of Vaikunthaperumal in Kanchipuram, represents this God as standing with four arms, holding the sankha and sakra in the upper left and right hands, while the lower right is damaged and the lower left is in katiyalambita. The figure appears to have the face of a horse and above it are found four figures, probably the personification of the Vedas and three figures in front of the God, obviously in adoration (Fig.133).

Later representations in stone and metal show the God with four arms but usually seated either in yugaśana or in lañchana, with lakṣmi seated on his left lap. The latter is called lakṣmi Hayagriva. The yugaśana figures bear the sankha and sakra in the upper hands and the lower two are reposed on the knees which are bound by a yugapatra. In the other form the sankha and sakra are found as usual in the upper hands the lower left holds the

21. Sanka sakra sadi vedanāpīṇāsāvāstra Harib /
    yamapāda abhitab (abhitab) saka dekapinab kūma apythagab /

22. In this dhyanasloka of Hayagriva, the four hands are described (contd.)
consort and the lower right is in vyākhyaṇa mudrā (Fig. 134).

Hayagrīva figures also in the composite scene of Viṣṇu from the north. In one of them he is shown with only two hands standing above the head of a five faced Viṣṇu. There are similar representations of Hayagrīva on three faced Viṣṇu images and also as forming part of the sculptural represnting the vyāhār form of Viṣṇu. Besides these, there are independent standing images with four arms found in Rajasthān and datable in the ninth and tenth centuries. 25

25 नरायण

The story of Nara and Nārāyaṇa, two other vyāhāra, appears to be known in this period as indicated by the hymns of the Śvāmś, especially those of Tirumangai. In two of them Tirumangai, merely addresses Viṣṇu by the two names Nara and Nārāyaṇa while in a third he says that as Naranārāyaṇa the God taught or explained the Dharma. 26 Epigraphical confirmation of the knowledge of the story and the close connection between Nara and Nārāyaṇa as Arjuna

26 (contd.) carrying the viśāka and sakra (upper two) and the mātaka in the lower left and the lower right showing the vyākhyaṇa mudrā. According to this śloka Hayagrīva is the God of learning.

"vyākhyaṇa[?]-mudrā[?] mātaka[?] viśāka[?] sakra[ ]

śvetāmbara sampradāya dattāntībhīḥ naṇavantarā

hayagrīvadīna gosanatā sahaṃ haṃsaṃ vrkaḍāḥ

hayagrīvajñānakaṃ Upanipad.
and Kṛṣṇa, who were friends, may be found in verse 6 of the larger Bhāgavata Purāṇa section of the Mahābhārata. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the Devī-bhāgavata also narrate the story giving more details. According to the account given in the Devī-Bhāgavata, Nara and Kṛṣṇa were two of the four sons (the other two are known as Hari and Kṛṣṇa) of Dharma who was himself born from Brahmā's heart. While Hari and Kṛṣṇa took to yogic practices, Nara and Kṛṣṇa, who are said to be parts of Viṣṇu, went to Badarikāśrama in the

24. K.N. Munshi, Sata of Indian sculpture, Pl.66.
26. Narasimharāmāya Prasādattu Arohī
Singeśaṇa virittavan, ambacālī

--- Parīva Tirumalī, X --- 6-1;

For the other two references: VII-1-6; 7-4,

28. Kantinarva, ch.344, v.34; Yavanarva, 47, 13; 90, 27.
29. XI, 4, vv.6 ff.
30. IV, ch.5-10.
Prayāḍri (Himālayas) and practised severe austerities there on the banks of the Ganges for a thousand years. Indra, who got frightened at their activities, came down to the Sandhanādhana mountain on his elephant and tried to allure the two sages by offering a boon to them. Failing in his object, Indra took to other means and created by his magic powers wolves, lions and tigers and caused rain, wind and fire for terrifying them. Having failed once again, he sent Kāma (dúpid) with Nāti and Vasanta (or spring) and the other apsarasas such as Sambhā and Thītattvā to divert the sages from their austerities. But the sages remained unmoved and Narāyana even created an apsara called Urvasī from his hair (śatu), who was more beautiful than the celestial nymphs sent by Indra. He sent her along with the others as a present to Indra, who was not only impressed with the power of the sage but was also pleased with the present.

The Yāsava Purāṇa also gives the same story as the one found in the Mahābhārata. Of the two sages, Nara and Narayana, the latter has a definite mythological character of his own, distinct from the cosmic God Narāyana, the chief constituent element of the composite cult picture of Vaipavism. The Mahābhārata describes the feats of the two, who were more effulgent in their brilliance than the Sun and who were endowed with the suspicious

31. ch.VI.
32. J.N. Banerjea, IBA, XIV, p.59.
śrīvatsa mark and matted locks of hair and with arms like those of the न यव, the soles of their feet being marked with the dises and conch. All the mahāsūyalakṣaṇas are attributed to them. The Vīṣṇudharmotkara gives the details of the iconographic representation of the two. According to the text, Nara should be dark-green, have two hands and possess strength and Narāyana should be of the colour of the blue lotus and have four arms. A bhadra (śaṅkha) tree full of fruits and bloom should be shown between them and the earth goddess should be placed on the tree. Under the tree the two 'śaṅkha' should be shown on a chariot of eight wheels, each holding a rosary, wearing antelope-hide (kṛṣṇalīna) and have matted locks of hair secured in a topknot on the head. They must be shown in a placid aspect. One of their legs is to be placed firmly on the ratha and the other bent in (against) the knee, as perhaps in kneeling. The last detail is found in the verse which also refers to Hari and Kṛṣṇa, of whom, Hari should be made similar to Nara and Kṛṣṇa's form should be like Narāyana's. This verse is considered to be of far-reaching importance to the student of Brahmanical Iconography as it not only introduces us to Hari and Kṛṣṇa but also defines their correct pose.

33. Kāntinārā, vv.35-38.
34. Sk.III, ch.75, vv-2-6.
35. 蛩kṣa caikena ratha-abhitena vādēna caikena ca-dārsena / kāyaṃ Hariā-nātra Narapā tulyāḥ kṛṣṇōnī Narāyana-tulyāḥ- śānti // - v.5.
in the chariot, as Kṛṣṇa standing or seated like Nārāyaṇa and Hari kneeling perhaps in front. This feature supports the observations of R.G. Bhandarkar 36 and the suggestion that Nara and Nārāyaṇa are the same as Vāsudēva and Arjuna, who are the twin-man-Gods first mentioned in the śūtra of Pāṇini. 38 The above verse seems to suggest the advent of Arjuna (Nara) kneeling on the chariot before Lord Kṛṣṇa in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, where Kṛṣṇa taught the Bhāgavad-gītā for the good of the world. The Mahābhārata associates Nara and Nārāyaṇa with Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa. Gopinatha Rao takes the names Hari and Kṛṣṇa to stand for the same persons Nara and Nārāyaṇa. 39 Vṛṣṇi and Viṣṇu are two other names given to Nārāyaṇa and Nara in the Mahābhārata. 40 The above details may be compared with the Taṇḍavaśāstra text, which gives a description of Kṛṣṇa as Pārthasārathī, resembling the concept of Nara-Nārāyaṇa. Here Pārtha or Arjuna is to be shown on the ratha (chariot) with the bow and a quiver of arrows, wearing the kīrtā and other ornaments looking attentively at the God. Kṛṣṇa should be dark in colour, and shown at the front of the chariot, with the ṣaṅkha in the left hand and ṛgma (rein ?) in the right, looking at Phalguna (Arjuna) with a smile. 41 However there are

36. T.N. Ramachandran, 
37. Vaiśnavism, Jaiśram etc., p.33.
38. IV, 3:98 - Vaiśnavas-Ārjunābhāyān yānā; See J.N. Banerjea, VIṣṇu, 
XIV, p.60; However different views prevail on the existence

(contd.)
four different entities mentioned in all the works dealing with
the subject. At the later stage in the development of Bhāratīya
worship all the four came to be included as the vihāyas of Viṣṇu.
They are described in the Śatkārya Samhitā as four ascetics clad

38 (contd.) of Viṣṇudēva worship in the time of Pāṇini - See
K.C. Subrahmanyan, A note on the evidence of Pāṇini on Viṣṇudēva,
IHQ, Vol.3, pp.186-8; pp.264-5; U.C. Bhattacharya, Ibid.,
pp.409 ff.


41. Fārthasārāthīś vīhāryaśāstite śatōpiśācayatan/
rathasāthitan rathā kuryātāryārga dhūpītan //
satvedāpya lataṇa tu vikrāṛayaśa sānasām //
āyāna varṇam ca tan kavyātātmānārāhugitan //
ratha mārālinārya tu kṛṣṇamadāha kunteṇa //
śaṅkheṇa vāsakāre kuryādēkṣaṇe nāsā māva sa //
abhūmāniva mukheṇa vikṣya kīṣit-āsantā harṣatāb //
avam hīnam ca kṛtyāra tadāsam kautikānam saat //

Śaṁśātāramāṇīdhikaram, chap.60, vv.77-80.

T.A. Gopinatha Rao quotes another description of the image of
Fārthasārāthi according to which Arjuna should be shown standing
on the ground in anālī pose and Kṛṣṇa, with one of the legs
placed on the ratha, should be shown precessing i.e. the right
hand showing vyākhyāna in mudrā and the left holding the reins.

42. F.C. Schrader, op. cit., pp.46-48; In the Abhiruddhāvya list of
39 vihāyas they represent the 31st to 34th - Nāra, Narāyaṇa,
Hari and Kṛṣṇa.
in deer skin, one reciting mantras, the second absorbed in meditation, the third teaching meritorious work and the fourth performing mysteries. 44

The only known relief which depicts the above story, is the remarkable panel in the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh, Jhansi district. Various identifications of the theme were put forward such as that of Siva as an ascetic (avadāya), Siva as Daśagīgañṭiśūri, Śiva as Jñāna-gaśa, Venkatesa, etc. till it was correctly identified by B. Ch. Sastri and D. R. Salvi as the scene of the penance of Mara and Narāyana. 45 While the general view seems to be that this panel is based on the Viprābhāvatī, T. N. Ramachandran has attempted to point out that it drew its inspiration largely from the Divi Bhārat. 46 His description of the details as based on this work has been called into question by R. C. Hazra both on account of the absence of some of the details as mentioned by the other writer as also because of the late date assigned to the version of the Divi Bhārat which has striking innovations and also mentions

43. 12139-48.

44. The two saints Mara and Narāyana are said to have brought to the world the message of divine love and devotion envisaged as an instrument of spiritual realisation — Narāyana 732. The Markapīyara Purāṇa calls them "best among men". They were the sons of Righteousness (Dharma) and his wife Kālī or Kālī and here we find a clear indication to the symbolism and an attempt to personify the abstract. Another work which treats of the story is the Divi Purana — See R. C. Hazra, Is the Divi Bhārat the source of the Deogarh Relief of 7 1903, XXII, 1933, p. 362, p. 362 and Alain


It is more probable that the sculptor drew his subject directly from the *Mahābhārata* story. Whatever may have been the source of inspiration, the panel under reference, is accepted as one of the finest reliefs of the Gupta period and assigned to about the close of the 6th century A.D.

While it is beyond doubt that the above story was well known in the Tamil country in this period (6th-9th centuries), we do not come across any sculptural representations of it. Again, from the way in which Tirumangai uses the two names together we may conclude that he was also influenced by the *Pānāvatra* concept which treats them as *vihbavas* of Viśnu.

**Mahini**

The popular legend of the churning of the ocean of milk by the devas and asuras for obtaining amrita, which would give immortality, is narrated in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and with some variations in the *Mataya Purāṇa*. The devas and asuras together lifted


48. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, ch.VIII; *Mataya Purāṇa*, ch.249-61; *Mahābhārata*, *Aīkavya*. The Bhāgavata *Purāṇa* version is as follows:

The Gods, who had become greatly diminished in number, due to their flight with the *gānavaṇas* went to Brahmā for advice. Brahmā counselled them to pray to Viṣṇu and accordingly the Gods went to the Ocean of milk and began to pray to Hari. On Viṣṇu appeared before them and advised them to make peace with the Daityas and to produce a nectar which would make themselves immortal. Though the Daityas would participate in the act, the fruit of the labour would be enjoyed only by the *śivas*.
up the Mandara mountain by force and brought it to the ocean of milk. They however grew tired and let it go on account of its weight and in the process many of them were killed. Vipra came to the spot, revived the dead ones and made Garuḍa carry the mountain to the sea. Then the dīvas and asuras made Vasuki the charming rope with Mandara as the stick and began to churn the ocean. Vipra adopted a ruse to make the asuras take the head of the snake, as poisonous fumes were coming out of its mouth. As the Mandara did not have a receptacle it sank into the Ocean but then Vipra assumed the form of a huge gm tortoise and entered the sea to hold up the mountain with his body.

Dhanvantari rose from the ocean of milk with a pitcher, containing the nectar, but the asuras took the jar away by force. Now Vipra, assuming the form of a beautiful woman, lured the asuras away and deceived them into parting with the jar of nectar to himself. Then he played the deception of distributing the nectar to the dīvas along by making the two parties sit in distinct rows. When Haim tried to get into the row of the dīvas by disguising himself as a God, Vipra detected him and cut his head off with his cakra. Then the distribution over, he returned to his abode. However, a fierce battle ensued between the asuras and the dīvas, the former having learnt of the deception.

The above story, apart from symbolising the everlasting enmity between the dīvas dīvas and asuras, has been the source of
four important concepts adopted as themes in sculptures and paintings. The tortoise of Kāma form taken by Viṣṇu has been dealt with earlier. The main theme of the charming of the ocean, along with the other details, itself has been made the subject of fine bas-reliefs in the Vaippava caves II and IV at Śāndami (6th century) where the Purāṇa version with some deviations has been largely followed. Yet another theme which owes its origin to the same source is the form of the enchantress Mohini assumed by Viṣṇu. This has been treated as one of the minor avatāras taken by Viṣṇu on a particular occasion for a temporary purpose. In this form Viṣṇu not only duped the antigods but also captivated Śiva and made him realise his power of māyā.49

Reference has been made in the previous chapter to the knowledge in the Tamil country of all the episodes connected with the charming of the Ocean, as evidenced by the Paripūḍal, one of the Sangam anthologies. In the period under study the same story is often mentioned by the Vaippava hīvāra who seem to be familiar with all the concepts which evolved from the legend. While the story is known to all the hīvāra, particular reference is made by Tirmangai to the female form of the Mohini assumed by Viṣṇu.50

49. The story of Mohini is also found in the Kāvīyam, 1-46 and the Padma Purāṇa, 3-10.
50. Poygai, Tiruvandāl, 81; Šey, Tiruvandāl, 27, 33, 46 & 64; Tirumalaiṭal, Tiruvantaka 21 and 81; Tirmangai, Pariva Ṭittimoli, I-3-4; V-7-4; Parivaṭyār, Tirmoli, I-5-10; Nāmāṭyār, I-3-11; 6-6. (contd.)
While in the references from the *Malāyiraṇiyarṇaprabandham*, the Kūrma form and the actual role played by Viṣṇu in the incident are often mentioned, the Kūrmi form is noted only by Tirumangai who clearly describes the occasion when this form was taken and how Viṣṇu played a deceptive role in distributing the ambrosia only among the devas, by going with the jar of nectar between the two groups. In the contemporary Pallava and Pāṇḍya sculptures we do not see...

80 (cont'd.)

**Malāyiraṇiyarṇa vaittu vāmkaiyalourri**

**taliyānai tėppu karparri - alaiyānai**

**pākkakkenīda parurēn tiṇumēm**

**kārumēd vēṟṟikku nēṟru - Tiṇumēnai, Nānaippu**

Tiṇumēnēdu, 49.

Again,

**Aṯaiṇditṭu anarmēndi ĕkkēdi tennai**

**niṉalindittu mandarēm sattē mēštī**

**vēṟṟum sērti vēmēkki vankarifēka**

**kaṯalindittu kēḻalēl emōṉti**

--- Periyāḻvār, Tirumoli, I-6-10.

51. "Viṉī nēṉar vēṟṟar sēṭṭar

**Viṉantudi ĕṉuvan-neṟṟuvuruvi**

**nēṉalvēruvudan emē sētēnēk**

**Tiṇumēlkēppi kaṟṟēndū"  --- Periya Tirumoli, II-3-3.


"Kaṟṟēndu vaḷamperḷaṉṟukkum vēṉarēn-

**neṟṟar** sēḻidittu nēṟṟēṉēṟ **. . . . . .**

not meet with any representation of the scene of the charming of the ocean, whereas much earlier, at Häsāmi, bas-reliefs of the themes were executed. However, there is a panel in the Kailäsá-
nātha temple in Kāññī, in which the theme seems to be depicted with the minimum of details (Fig.135). On the other hand, the Mohini form mentioned above may be recognised in one of the panels of the south wall of the antarāla of the Vaikúṭha Perumāl temple at Kāññī. The sculptures of the walls of the main shrine and vestibule of this temple are of great iconographic significance. Unfortunately, they are considerably damaged due to the corrosion of the sandstone used in the construction of the temple. Many of these reliefs have been the victim of deformation due to ravages of time and hence there is great difficulty in identifying the themes. However, on close examination, a few of them at least may be recognised. One such panel is that mentioned above, wherein we find the beautiful figure of a female with a small pot (kalaśā) in her hands depicted as if she is moving forward between two groups of figures, one of them consisting of three rows of male figures and the other to her right representing probably the asuras and devas respectively (Fig.136).

The date of the above temple has been established as the period of Händivarma II, Pallavamalla and Miraṅgaṅga, it may be noted, was most probably his contemporary.
The other forms connected with this episode are not known in the sculptures of this period. In later sculptures of stone and metal Māhini is represented not only in Viṣṇu temples, but also in temples dedicated to Śiva (Fig. 127), evidently due to the association of the Māhini form with Śiva, as the latter is said to have requested Viṣṇu to assume that form once again for his benefit and to have become captivated by it and learnt the power of Viṣṇu's Ākṣ. 52

An early epigraphic reference to the story of the charming of the Ocean occurs in the Larger Siṇṇaṁśir Plates of the early Pāṇḍya king Rājasimha (II). Here one of the Pāṇḍya kings by name Trilōcana is said to have married the daughter of the friend of Nara (Viṣṇu) and to have tamed the Ocean. 53

In the Tiruvāḷangāṭṭu copper plate record of Rājendra I, Cōla (1018 A.D.), Anjuna, one of the predecessors of the king is said to have obtained the Lakṣaṇi of victory by stirring the Ocean of his enemy (forces) with the charming rod of his mountain (like) shoulders rubbing against the bow string. 54

It is significant that the theme of the charming of the Ocean of milk as also the other Vaippava concepts travelled beyond 52. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, VIII, 12.
54. V. 10, SII., III, No. 205.
the seas into South East Asian countries and are found depicted in the sculptures of Cambodia, where they are found in the large temple complexes of the Kambuja or classical period in Khmer history, between the 7th and 12th centuries A.D.

DHANVANTARI

Dhanvantari, the physician or God of medicine, was at first the bearer of amṛta who arose with the vessel of ambrosia during the churning of the ocean. According to the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Dhanvantari was assigned by Viṣṇu a place in the sacrifice along with the sacrificial deities. As a king of Banaras he is also said to have brought medical science to the earth. At some stage in the development of the Vaishnava pantheon he came to be regarded as an avatāra of Viṣṇu himself. For he may be the same as Kāntātman who is mentioned as twentieth in the list of thirty-nine vīhāras given by the Abhīchudānya Sambhūtā. Kāntātman is described in the Sāttvata Sambhūtā as a beautiful youth with "eyes unsteady by love" etc. i.e. he is said to be Pradyumna, or Kāma reborn (after his destruction by Śiva) as the son of Kṛṣṇa. In the Abhīchudānya Sambhūtā, Kāntātman has the epithet amṛta-abhiraka.

56. 93:9-122.
"carrying nectar", which seems to point to Dhanvantari. 58
Piyāsāharana, the eighteenth vibhava in the abhirudbhaya list also
seems to indicate the same aspect. There is yet another called
Dadhiksharka
dadhiksharta mentioned as an avatāra in the Viṣṇukanda saṃhitā, to
whom Indra is said to owe the amṛta. A similar epithet is
amṛtabharana which is, however, applied to Garuḍa as the stealer
of amṛta. 59 As a Vedic deity Dhanvantari is a god to whom offerings
are made at twilight in the north-eastern quarter. He is said
to have had several existences and in each one, to have been a
master of universal knowledge.

His character as the god of medicine led to his individual
representation as the presiding deity of the hospital usually
attached to a big temple of Viṣṇu. He is not known from individual
sculptural representations of the period prior to the latter half
of the 13th century A.D. in the Tamil country, though the story
of the churning of the Ocean and a few early representations of the
scene in sculpture may have existed as indicated by a panel from
the Aiilāsanātha temple in Kāṇči.

A shrine of Dhanvantari is located in the north side of the
fourth prakāra in the Ranganātha temple at Bīrāngam. It appears

58. F.O. Mohrader, Introd. to the Pāṇchārātra and the Abhirudbhaya
Saṃhitā, p.45.
59. Ibid., pp.43-46 and f.n.3; for the story of Garuḍa stealing
away amṛta see infra, pp 497-509.
60. Alain Daniélou, Hindu Polytheism, pp.184-5.
to be unique, as the feature is uncommon and not met with in other Virupaksha temples in the Tamil country. An inscription found on a slab set up in front of this shrine in the Srirangam temple supplies important evidence relating to the probable date of the shrine and the image housed in it. This record belongs to the 3rd regnal year of the Noyasea king Vira Ramanathadeva (1256-66 A.D.) and registers a gift of land for maintaining a jilai (hospital) in the tirunaagaijalai (verandah) to the west of the northern gomura in the fourth arthara. It is evident that the jilai referred to here is the hospital, of which Dhanvantari was set up as the presiding deity in the above shrine. Additional support is lent by another inscription of the same king dated in his 3rd regnal year, which records the founding of the jilai on the western side of the gomura enshrining the God Ruttukai elagaiya Mayaor (Narasimha) in the Raiganatha temple.

In 6, 1415 or 1422 A.D. the jilai or hospital was repaired and the image of Dhanvantari Kuberu was installed (reconsecrated) by one Srinivasa alias Ganugavahana, because the hospital had suffered damage during the Muhammadan raids. This

62. 62 and 66 of 1936-37.
63. 80 of 1936-37.
64. 81 of 1936-37.
Garudavahan was a descendant of a Garudavahan, who figures in the above inscription of King Vira Ramanatha as the recipient of the grant of land made for the maintenance of the jalal. The later Garudavahan of the 18th century was probably the author of Divyadarsanitsa, a kavya narrating the lives of the iyva and learyas. The present image of Shanthavantari in this shrine is a four armed figure carrying the sankha and cakra in the two upper hands and the amrita-kalasa in the lower right hand. The lower left hand rests on a gada.

Another image of Shanthavantari is found among the labelled sculptures in the niches of the thirteenth century amrta on the west of the Naataraja temple at Cidambaram in the South Arcot District. The image in the niche is represented as an aged man with a beard and a pot-belly, standing, wearing a yatirnava and a lower cloth reaching down to the ankle. Both the hands are unfortunately broken and hence nothing can be said about the objects held in them.

Dhanvantari, according to the Rgveda Purana is the same as Naarada personified. He is to be represented as a good-looking person with a pitcher full of nectar placed in both his hands.

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63. MEB., 1936-37, Pt.II, para 49.
64- MEB., 1935-36, Pt.II, para 49.
67. "Ayurvedasthathaa sakshi-javo Dhanvantari-p Brahmap"  
68. "Dhanvantari-cana kartaryap suvinah privadarshinah /  
Karadvayaatam niyana auryan kalesan bhavat /"

--- Bippa dhanvantara, Bk.III, ch.73, v.68.
**Vedavyāsa**

Vyāsa is the reputed author of the **Vedas**, **Nabādhārāta**, and the **Parāpata**. No less than twenty-eight Vyāsas are known from Purānic traditions. Most of them, however, are mythical figures. Vyāsa is said to be a cosmic entity born again and again, to arrange and promulgate the Scripture. "Appearing age after age with the True-one (Satyasvatī), he divides the tree-of-knowledge (veda-druma) into parts? "Born on an island, [Vyāsa], incarnation of Viṣṇu, was the [illegitimate] and only son of Satyasvatī and the Seer Crusher (Parāśara)." He is also said to be "the arranger of the eighteen Parāpata, the compiler of the **Nabādhārāta** and its promulgator." This mythical sage is said to have appeared under different names and as different incarnations of Viṣṇu in twenty-eight successive **Avanara** ages.

According to the **Śāktaśāstras**, Vedavid or Vedavyāsa was one of the thirty-nine **vibhavas** of Viṣṇu and he is the thirty-seventh in the **Ahirbudhnya** list of **vibhavas**.71 Due to his character as the compiler of the Scripture he is ranked along with Hayagrīva and Sarasvatī as the presiding deity of knowledge and learning. Hence his image is represented in temples in this capacity, as

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for instance, in the Ranganātha temple at Śrīrangam. According to the Vaiṣṇavas, a temple of the first magnitude should have a library attached to it and the Śrīrangam temple, being of this type, and being also an important centre of religious activities in the medieval period, it was provided with a library. This library was founded by one Milakaṇṭha Mayaka, in the 14th regnal year of the Hoysala king Viṭa Rāmaṇātha (1266-96 A.D.). The same individual also appropriately set up the images of Hayagrīva, Sarasvati and Vedavyāsa, the three presiding deities of learning, in the mārgaṇa in which this library (Sarasvati-abhāṣṭāna) was situated and made provision for their daily worship. 72

The Viṣṇudharmottara stipulates that Vyāsa should be shown as dark complexioned and of calm appearance and as having profuse matted locks of brown colour. 73 It is further stated that his four disciples, Sumanta, Jaimini, Paila and Vaiśampāyana should be placed by his sides.

In an image from the Subrahmanya temple at Tiruppattankur (Nadurai district), Vedavyāsa is shown as a bearded pījā wearing an elaborate turban and long beard, with two hands, the right showing vyāhāra mark (attitude of preaching) and the left holding sudjana (palm) leaves symbolising the scriptures. The figure wears a yāmānīśrī and has a 'pot' belly (Fig.128).

72. 139 of 1938-39.

Mammatha

Mammtha, Ananga or Kâma was a previous incarnation of Pradyumna, the son of Kâpâ. His role as the God of Love in bringing lovers together, the festival celebrated in his honour during the Spring season (Vasanta) are known both to the Sanskrit and Tamil literature works. The pre-eminent position he enjoyed in the early centuries of the Christian era in the Tamil country has been noticed earlier.

Kings and Princes were often compared to Kâma or Mammatha for their beauty. Mâjasimha, the Pallavaeal king, who bore innumerable Hîrundas called himself Kâmarâja. The beauty of Mammatha is said to have paled before that of Sundara Cōla (967-73 A.D.) References toupid (Kâma) both in epigraphy and literature are too many to be numerous. The story of his being burnt by Śiva, whose penance was disturbed by the floral arrows of Kâma, when Parvati desired to marry Śiva and prayed to him, is also well known from very early times in the Tamil country. His images are thus often represented in Śiva temples also.

The characteristic attributes of Mammaths are the sugarcane bow and the flower arrows, which are invariably mentioned by all the texts describing his image. The Śilappatikârâya gives a description

75. BL., I, 48.
76. Anbili Plakat, BL., IV, p.47.
of his image, according to which he should hold the above two attributes. His complexion should be green or red and his form, beautiful. He should be adorned with ornaments and a garland of flowers. The spring season, personified as Vasanta should also be represented by his side. Vasanta should be adorned with various flowers. A flag-bearer carrying the makara banner of Manmatha should also accompany him. Besides, the two consorts Prithi and Ratī (Love and Delight) should also be shown. The former should carry tasteful articles of food and the latter should have a look of expectancy desiring the company of her lord. A pleasure garden should form the background of the whole group. According to the description given in the Hāridhākāṭīvrīśāna of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, Manmatha should be represented with eight hands, four of which should carry the ānka, padma, dhama and hāna and the remaining four should be placed on the bosoms of his consorts, Ratī, Prithi, Nada-Sakti and Ujjvalā. The makara banner should also be shown, with the face marked by the five flower arrows.


78. Hāridhākāṭīvrīśāna, 18:

"Kṣādeyastu kartavyo rūpaṇārhatimabhūvi / āṣṭahākāśa
kartaṇyāṃ ānka, padma, rīhmanaprāṇah/ Gāhāpādharācāya na da
kūśita ṽaṅganaḥ / Ratī Prithiṣṭhātāḥaktīr-Handa (or Nada)
ākāṭiṣṭhātābhīvalā / Cārāraṣṭraṣāya kartavyāḥ rakṣyārṇamanahharāḥ
Gatvāraṇāya kartavyāḥ kāryāḥ śāyāyatanoparaḥ / kartvāca makaraḥ
kāryāḥ nānaḥpāpasamukhamahem".
While the description given in the \text{Silparatna} is based on the \text{Nātaka Purāna} passage on Kausadālvāja (Kāmā), the \text{Haribhadra} seems to have followed the text of the \text{Viśuddhaśāstra}. In actual representations, however, neither of the texts seems to be followed. There are a variety of Kāmā images from the two armed to the eight armed, the latter becoming more common in the Tamil country from the 14th-15th centuries A.D. The two armed variety is illustrated by T.A. Copinatha Rao with several figures from Halebid and Naggehāllī (Mysore), Āṅgūr (Ballary district) all of them with only one consort i.e. Rāti. The figure from Halebid partially answers to the \text{Silparatna} text. The same author also illustrates an eight-handed figure from Tenkālū (Tirunelveli district) with four hands holding the sugarcane bow in one of them and flower arrows in the other three.

In the Śiva temple of Naṭārāja in Cidambaram in the South Arcot district is a panel representing Kāmadeva with his two consorts Rāti and Prīti. The figure of Kāma holds the sugarcane bow and the flower arrow in his left and right hands. The three figures are seen on a chariot drawn by horses. The panel is found in one of the niches of the eastern \text{jūpyūra} built in the 13th century A.D. (Fig.139). While Kāma reborn as Pradysama is included in the list of thirty nine \text{vīhāras} under the name Kāntātma.

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79. J.N. Banerjea, \text{JSOU}, XIV, pp.41-42.
80. \text{op.cit.}, Vol.I, Pt.I, Pls.LXII & LXIII.
Rati and Prāti are said to be two of the twelve Śaktis originating from the Śrīvatasa of Viṣṇu. The Kālanaga Perumāl temple in Mōhār in the Madurai district is an early Viṣṇu temple dating from the period of the Āḷvāra who have sung in praise of the God of the temple as representing the Śanmatha aspect. The sugarcane bow and flower arrows of Kāma are often expressed in the songs of the Āḷvāra as the means of the fulfilment of love. A late figure of about 15th century one of the madapa 12 pillars in this temple shows Kāma with the sugarcane bow and what looks like a flower in the right hand. The figure is adorned with a number of ornaments and garlands (Fig.140). In the images of Kāma of the Vijayanagar and Nāyak periods, the deity is endowed with eighthands, the four left ones carrying the sugarcane bow and the right ones holding flower arrows. The presence of a moustache and ornate decoration are characteristic features of the late images (Fig.141).

The above figures of Kāma are normally seen standing in the ardhacāntaka pose. There are, however, a few representations

81. Sātvata Sanhitā, 9, 35; F. J. Schreuder, Introd. to the Pāñcaratātra etc., p.43.

82. Tirumangai, Śrīva Tirumālal, 74; Namālvār, Tiruvāyulli, I 1-10 - "Kamāpāpasuyam alundalipālam tirumōhīr".

83. e.g. Ippāl, Nācālār Tirumāl, I-10 - "Kamāpāpānambikai-Kāma välaēt"
in which Kāma is seen riding on the parrot, which is his
and holding the two usual attributes (Fig. 142). Occasionally,
Rati, one of his consorts is also represented independently as
riding on a mythical swan (hamsa), which is her cognisance (Fig. 143).
However, these figures are of late origin. Very few images of
Kāma with or without his consorts are known in the period before
the 13th century A.D. Mention has been made earlier of the
combined forms of Kṛṣṇa and Kāma, called Madanagopāla, usually
shown with ten hands two of which hold the sugarcane bow and arrow
and another pair plays the flute, while the other three pairs
carry different weapons.

84. 

84. BURMA, p. 333.
Fig. 133 — Hayagrīva — Kāñci — Pallava — 2th c. A.D.

134 — Lakṣṇa Hayagrīva — Tīrvendipuram
—— 13th-14th c. A.D.
Fig. 138 — Vedavyāsa - Tirupparankunram —
13th C. A.D.

139 — Narmatha, Kati and Priti - Chidambaram — 13th C. A.D.