CHAPTER I

MAJOR MYTHOLOGICAL DIVINITIES

This chapter dealing with the Major Mythological Divinities is divided into two sections, the first dealing with — (A) Viṣṇu, (B) Lakṣmi and (C) Sarasvatī and the second with (A) Śiva, (B) Durgā, (C) Kārttikeya and (D) Gaṇeṣa.

SECTION I

(A)

VIṢṆU

The Vedas are generally considered as the earliest literary sources of our religious history. The hymns in them are mainly aimed at the personified divinities of the elements of the nature. Prayers are invoked to appease Agni, the fire; Indra, the firmament; Vāyu, the air; Varuṇa, the water; Āditya, the Sun; Soma, the Moon and personages representing the nature. The main purpose of the worship was domestic welfare. Initially there was perhaps no image worship and it is often believed that in the thoughts embedded in the Vedas, hints at the same were hidden. However, not much being known from the Vedas about the thoughts of the sons of the soil, we have to consider the resultant force after their interaction with the Aryans acting behind the rise of different religious beliefs, which placed some deities to higher stratum, some to the lower. Personal faiths and devotions and the faiths of the Kingdoms played a major role here. In this connection it may be of some interest to examine the available dated or datable epigraphical evidence to ascertain the influence of different deities in different periods. Let us now discuss about Viṣṇu around whom one of the most prominent Brāhmaṇical cults developed.

The first epigraphical evidence of prevalence of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal, is however, found in the Śuṣunī (Bankura District, West Bengal) rock inscription

belonging to c. 4th century A. D. Mahārājā Candravarman of Puṣkaraṇa dedicated the cave to the weilder of the Cakra (i.e. Viṣṇu) and called himself as the foremost of the servants of Cakravāmin. Here Viṣṇu is called as Cakravāmin. The epithet Cakravāmin of Viṣṇu mentioned in the inscription seems to have a literary background.

The epithet reminds us of Viṣṇu’s solar origin. According to Macdonell¹, the name Viṣṇu comes from the root vis, meaning ‘the active one’. Viṣṇu, represented in the Rgveda as minor god² is presented as a manifestation of the Sun in one of its hymns.³ The Rgveda describes Viṣṇu as setting in motion like a revolving wheel having 90 steeds of four seasons each, apparently referring to 360 solar days. He is also described to envelope the earth with his mayūkhas, i.e. rays of light. A legend of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa⁴ describes, once Viṣṇu’s head struck off from his body, became Āditya. Reference is also there of the Sūris, who according to D. C. Sircar⁵, are a class favoured by Viṣṇu, may be the sectarian devotees of the god. In the epic mythology⁶ gods as sons of Aditi, are called Ādityas and Aditi is called Mahādevī as mother of Viṣṇu. In the Harivamsa⁷, Viṣṇu is called as the lord of the Ādityas.

DIFFERENT NAMES

D. C. Sircar has drawn our attention to the appellation of the god Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa as sahasra-nāma or śata-nāma and the details of names are listed in the Samhitas of later days (c.1000-800 B. C.) and certain sections of the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda.

2. S. Bhattacharji, op. cit., p. 284.
also give the expression of sahasra-nāman. It is known that the recitation or singing of Viṣṇu’s names was of paramount importance to the Vaiṣṇavas.¹

Our study reveals that a large number of names of Viṣṇu, besides Cakrasvāmin referred to above, are mentioned in the early Bengal inscriptions. The names (other than those discussed in relation to avatāras in a different section below of Viṣṇu) till now noticed to occur are mentioned here and dealt with below chronologically. Govindasvāmin, Pradyumneśvara, Śrilokanātha, Ananta-Nārāyaṇa, Hari, Puruṣottama, Nanna-Nārāyaṇa, Kaitabhārī, Murārī, Cakrayudha, Gopāla, Upendra, Mādhava, Laḍahamādhava, Acyuta, Purāṇapuruṣa, Gadādhārin, Muraripu, Janārddana, Gadādhara, Sujanārddana, Vaikuṇṭha, Kamalārdhāṅgīna-Nārāyaṇa, Phalgunātha, Vanamālī, Yājānapuruṣa, Govarddhana, Harimedhas, Vāsudeva, Nārāyaṇa and Dāmodara.

**Govindasvāmin**

Besides Cakrasvāmin of the Śuṣuniā rock inscription mentioned above, the mention of Govindasvāmin is noticed to occur in the Baigrām copper-plate inscription² of the time of Kumāragupta I of Gupta year 128 (448 A.D.). Here we find that two common family head-men apply for purchasing land for repairing the temple of Lord Govindasvāmin and making provision for regular supply of perfumery, incense, lamps and flowers (Line 7). Line 14 of the record mentions the grant of land for the temple of Viṣṇu called Bhagavato Govindasvāmin. We find that Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu are treated as one and the same person in the inscriptions of Bengal from the 5th century onwards and various names of Kṛṣṇa are applied to Viṣṇu. The name Govinda mentioned twice in the Baigrām inscription reminds us of Kṛṣṇa’s cow-herd association. According to R. G. Bhandarkar,³ Govinda may be a later form of ‘Go vid’, an epithet of Indra, used in the Rgveda in the sense of ‘the finder of the cows.’ The name also occurs in the Bhagavadgītā.⁴ The Harivamsa⁵

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4. I, 32.
describes Goloka, the world of cattle, as the highest region which is ruled by Kṛṣṇa.

**Pradyumneśvara**

Chronologically, the next name of Viśṇu noticed to appear in the inscriptions of Bengal is Pradyumneśvara which is mentioned in the Gunāighar copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of Vainyagupta (c. 495-509 A. D.) dated in the year 188 of the Gupta Era. The name is mentioned in course of defining the boundary of the properties of a monastery (Line 2). According to K. G. Goswami\(^2\), the name appears to denote an image of Lord Viṣṇu (*Pradyumneśvara-devakula*).

The name Pradyumneśvara also occurs in an inscription of much later date. Thus in Verse 2 of the undated Deopārā inscription\(^3\) of Vijayasena (c. 1096-1159 A.D.) the composer is stated to bow down to the temple called by the name Pradyumneśvara.

Verse 26 of the said inscription describes beautifully the lofty edifice, the plinth and the huge main structure of the temple of Pradyumneśvara.

**Śrīlokanātha**

Viṣṇu is adored as Śrīlokanātha at the beginning of the Mallasārul copper-plate inscription\(^4\) of regnal year 3 of Gopacandra (c. 540-580 A. D.) as the bestower of fortune to the good-doers.

**Ananta-Nārāyaṇa**

We find this name of Viṣṇu in the Comillā copper-plate inscription\(^5\) of Lokanātha (c.650-670 A.D.) dated in the year (3) 44 of the Gupta Era. The inscription states that an image of Ananta-Nārāyaṇa was installed in a temple erected in the forest

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region of the district of Suvvuṅga. The land was granted for perpetual maintenance of əstapuspikā and other oblations to Bhagavān Ananta-Nārāyaṇa who was adored by the chief Gods, the Asuras, the Sun, the Moon, Kuvera, the Kinnaras, the Vidyādhāras, the chief Serpent (gods), the Gandharvas, Varuṇa and the Yakṣas (Lines 21-26).

In the epic mythology¹, Ananta is regarded as the endless Serpent with thousand mouths who supports the earth from beneath. Viṣṇu reclines on his hood while he sleeps between the creations. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa² echoes the same expression. S. Bhattacharji remarks³ that in all mythologies solar gods have a close association with Serpents.

In an inscription of much later days we find mention of two individual images of Ananta and Nārāyaṇa. Verse 29 of the Bhuvanesvara inscription⁴ of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva, a minister of Harivarman (c. 1073-1127 A. D.), states that images of Viṣṇu in the form of Nārāyaṇa, Ananta and Nṛṣimha were placed in the garbhagrhas of a temple of Viṣṇu. According to N. G. Majumdar, the probable date of Bhavadeva should be “earlier than the first quarter of the 12th century and even the last quarter of the 11th century A. D.”⁵

Hari

This name of Viṣṇu is noticed to appear in four inscriptions, chronologically the first one being the Kailan copper-plate inscription⁶ of 8th regnal year of Śridhāraṇarāta (c. 660-670 A. D.). The record begins with an adoration to the god Hari (Viṣṇu) and Verse 2 refers to the king as a Vaiṣṇava. King Jivadhāraṇa, father

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5. Ins. Beng., p. 32.
of Śrīdhāraṇārāta, is also described as a Paramavaiśṇava. According to D. C. Sircar\(^1\), the worshippers of Vāsudeva-Visṇu were generally called Parama-bhāgavata and they were prominent among the Vṛṣṇi people of Mathura region. Śrīdhāraṇārāta is also called as Parama-Kāruṇika suggesting his hatred against animal slaughtering.

2) Again we find the name Hari in Verse 16 of the undated Maināmati copper-plate inscription\(^2\) of Govindacandra (c. 1020-1055 A. D.) of the Candra dynasty. It records a prayer to the gods Svayambhū (Brahmā), Hari (Viṣṇu) and Hara (Śiva) i.e. Hindu Trinity.

3) Hari is invoked in Verse 1 of Bhuvanesvara stone inscription, referred to above\(^3\) with an expression of amorousness. According to K. G. Goswami\(^4\), it is a “special feature of the religious outlook of the medieval period”. The inscription narrates here that god Hari already had a mark in his body by embracing Lākṣmī. Now he wanted to do so with Vāgdevī. So Sarasvatī passes a taunting remark – “do not spoil (thy) fresh garland (oh! Lord!)”\(^5\).

Verse 14 of the same inscription mentions Bhavadeva as a manifestation of Lord Hari, son of Kaśyapa. He had two lotus-marks on his palms and had Kaustubha in his heart as a mark of his glory. According to N. G. Majumdar\(^6\), perhaps the poet-composer wanted to indicate that Viṣṇu held one lotus in one of his hands, but Bhavadeva had two such lotuses. In the epic mythology\(^7\) Hari is mentioned a son of Kaśyapa.

4) Another inscription mentioning Hari is the Kamauli copper-plate inscription\(^8\) of Vaidyadeva (c. 1128-1136 A. D.). Verse 1 of this inscription invokes Hari as the

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1. Ibid., p. 234.
3. See above, p. 5.
5. N. G. Majumdar, Ins. Beng., p. 36.
6. Ibid., p. 37, n. 9.
measuring pillar of the space and the pitcher of preserving the seeds of the universe. In the next verse, the Sun is mentioned as the right eye of Hari. In mythology, Hari is considered as “the Saviour, he who takes possession of.”

Puruṣottama

The name Puruṣottama occurs in four inscriptions of Bengal, the earliest of which is the Kailan copper-plate inscription, referred to above. Here in Verse 2, king Jivadhāraṇa is mentioned as a devout worshipper of god Puruṣottama (i.e. Viṣṇu).

2) Verse 12 of the Jagajibanpur copper-plate inscription of the 7th regnal year of Mahendrapāla (c. 847-862 A.D.) describes the king as Puruṣottama whom Lakṣmī chose as her lord (husband).

3) Viṣṇu is invoked as Puruṣottama in the Gayā Viṣṇupāda temple inscription of regnal year 7 of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A.D.) (Oṁ namāḥ Puruṣottamāya namāḥ oṁ).

4) Viṣṇu has been mentioned as Puruṣottama and Gopāla-priyakāraka, in Verse 17 of the Bādāl Garuḍa pillar inscription of the time of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A.D.).

The epic mythology refers to Nārāyaṇa Puruṣottama as an ascetic, who lived thousand of years worshipping the Supreme God. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa comments that the meaning of the word Puruṣottama implies best (uttama) spirit (puruṣa) or male or sacrifice or “Mokṣa, Dharma whatever sense Puruṣa may bear”. D. C. Sircar

2. See above, p. 5.
5. A. K. Maitreya, op.cit., p.75.
points out\(^1\) that in the later vedic period, Viṣṇu attained the highest position among the gods to a section of people. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*\(^2\) calls him as the Parama and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*\(^3\) adores him as the most excellent of the gods.

**Nanna-Nārāyaṇa**

We find this name Nanna-Nārāyaṇa in the Khālimpur copper-plate inscription\(^4\) of Dharmapāla (c. 775-810 A.D.) of regnal year 32 (Line 50). It records that Paramesvara Paramabhaṭṭāraka Mahārājādhirāja Dharmapāladeva at the request of his Mahāśāmantādhipati Nārāyaṇavarman, granted four villages to a temple of the god N[l]uṇna-Nārāyaṇa. According to some scholars\(^5\), the word Nūna or Nanna might have been pre-fixed before Nārāyaṇa according to the name of the father of the person, who built the temple, or the person Nārāyaṇavarman had another name Nanna.

**Kaiṭabhāri**

Viṣṇu is mentioned as Kaiṭabhāri i.e. enemy of Kaiṭabha in Verse 3 of the undated prasasti\(^6\) of Pāhila (9th century A.D.), a subordinate to Devapāla (c.810-847 A.D.).

**Murārī**

Viṣṇu is adored as Murārī in Verse 1 of the Gaya Viṣṇupāda temple inscription\(^7\) of the 7th regnal year of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A.D.). According to a mythological legend,\(^8\) Hari slew the demon Muru of Prāgyoṭiṣa by the discus and thus was called as Murārī.

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2. I, 1.
3. XIV, 1,1.
5. Ibid., p. 247, n. 6.
Cakrayudha

Viṣṇu is mentioned as Cakrayudha in Verse 3 of the Bhāgalpur copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of regnal year 17 of Nārāyanapāla (c. 876-930 A.D.).

Gopāla

Besides Govindasvāmin mentioned above, another example of Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa being treated as the same person in the inscriptions of Bengal is found in Verse 17 of the Bādāl Garuḍa pillar inscription referred to above\(^2\). Here Puruṣottama is referred to as Gopāla-priyakāraka, who was the son of Devakī accepted by Yaśodā as her own son and was also the husband of Lakṣmī (Sā devakīva tasmāt Yaśodayā svākytāṁ patīm Lakṣmīyā Gopāla-priyakāraka masūṭa Puruṣottamaṁ tanayāṁ).

The name Gopāla, an epithet of Vasudeva-Kṛṣṇa, may have originated from pastoral culture. D. C. Sircar observes\(^3\) “Yadava-Sātvata-Vṛṣṇi people were not actually of non-Aryan origin, at least they must have absorbed a good deal of non-Aryan blood”. The epigraphs where Kṛṣṇa is depicted as an avatāra of Viṣṇu will be discussed below.

Upendra

Viṣṇu is mentioned as Upendra, younger brother of Indra in Verse 5 of the Bhāgalpur copper-plate inscription, cited above\(^4\). As the youngest of Adityas, Viṣṇu is called as the younger brother of Indra.\(^5\) The Harivamśa\(^6\) also mentions Viṣṇu as the younger brother of Indra.

Mādhava

We find that Viṣṇu is called as Mādhava in a recently discovered Rājbiṭā stone-

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2. See above, p. 7.
4. See above, p.9.
6. 1,42,5.
slab inscription\(^1\) of the 33rd regnal year of Mahipala I (c. 989-1037 A.D.). The said inscription states that a lady named Sonakadevi granted some land for god Madhava and money obtained by selling betel and coconut was spent for maintenance of the temple. It is interesting to find that a warning is given at the end of the inscription that he who disobeys the order, his father would be an ass and mother a dog. Images of asses and of a pig are also embossed on the slab, perhaps to make people aware of the curse resulting from any dishonesty.

Mādhava, one of the thousand names of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, according to some scholars “may be derived as a patronymic from Matha, who is mentioned among his ancestors, or be considered equivalent to Madhusūdana ‘slayer of Madhu’\(^2\). In another opinion, Mādhava means ‘made of honey’, or a descendant of Madhu\(^3\).

**Laḍahamāḍhava**

We find this name mentioned in two inscriptions. Here Viṣṇu is named after the king Laḍahacandra of Candra dynasty. Kielhorn remarks\(^4\) that there was a general practice in Ancient Bengal of naming the gods or their temples after the name of the donor (example of Nanno-Nārāyaṇa has been cited above).\(^5\)

1) The same practice is also noticeable in the Maināmatī coper-plate inscription\(^6\) of regnal year 6 of Laḍahacandra (c. 1000-1020 A.D.). The record states that the land-grant was made by Paramasaugata king Laḍahacandra in favour of the god Laḍahamāḍhava bhaṭṭāraka.

It may be mentioned here that the charter was endowed with a dharmacakra emblem and Laḍahacandra named his son Govindacandra after the name of

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5. See above, p. 8.
Govinda. D. C. Sircar remarks\(^1\) that Laḍahacandra and Govindacandra are conventionally called as *Paramasaugata*, but the kings were devoted to the gods Viṣṇu and Śiva respectively and were influenced by Hindu mythology.

2) The second inscription mentioning Laḍahamadhava is the copper-plate charter of Čārpatramūra\(^2\) of regnal year 15 of Viradharadeva (c. 1230 – 1250 A.D.).

The charter registers a land-grant in favour of lord Viṣṇu under the name of Laḍahamadhava. It requires a special mention here that the plate bears a seal with wheel of Viṣṇu on both sides. D. C. Sircar opines\(^3\) that apparently king Viradharadeva was a devotee of Viṣṇu.

**Acyuta**

We find this name of Viṣṇu in two inscriptions, the first one being the Maināmatī inscription of Laḍachacandra of regnal year 6, cited above. Verse 2 of this inscription while comparing the lineage of the Candra dynasty with the Hindu Trinity mentions Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu as Acyuta.

The other inscription which refers to Viṣṇu as Acyuta is the Bhuvanesvara inscription of Bhavadeva, cited above\(^4\). Verse 2 of this epigraph describes that Govardhana (the son of Ādideva) became like Acyuta (i.e. Viṣṇu) to the world (*Govardhanamacyutapamam*).

Acyuta means 'he who is imperishable'. The *Mahābhārata* interprets Acyuta as one, who has no decay (*ksayahinaḥ*). A commentator on the Kāśikhaṇḍa of the *Skanda Purāṇa* explains Acyuta as one, who never declines from his own proper nature. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* comments that 'Acyuta' is 'he who does not perish with created things.\(^5\)

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4. See above, p. 5.
Purāṇapuruṣa

This name is mentioned in the undated Bāṅgadh inscription1 of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A. D). Verse 18 of this epigraph narrates that the hundreds of trees planted in the garden (by the ascetic Mūrtiśīva) look like the hairs of the body of the Earth goddess raising in joy, on the arrival of her husband, the Primeval Being i.e Viṣṇu (Purāṇapuruṣagamāl).

The inscription elucidates in details about the great Śaiva matha constructed in Bengal by Mahipāla I and the great śaivācaryas who assembled there. But D. C. Sircar suggests that perhaps Viṣṇu was also worshipped there in the Śaiva temple complex as a subordinate deity, as in Verse 14, Viṣṇu has been described as the disciple of Paśupati.

In the epic mythology,2 Nārāyaṇa-Kṛṣṇa is adored as the primeval creator whom even Prajāpati worshipped.

Gadādhārin

Viṣṇu is called by this name in a temple inscription. We come to know about the date and the name of the donor Viśvarūpa of the temple of Gadādhārin (i.e. Viṣṇu), from the Gayā Narasimha temple inscription3 of regnal year 15 of Nayapāla (c.1037-1043 A. D.).

Muraripu

Viṣṇu is mentioned as Muraripu (the enemy of the demon Muru) in Verse 7 of the Kṛṣṇa-dvārikā temple inscription4 of regnal year 15 of Nayapāla. The verse describes that Muraripu was attached with Lakṣmī forever (samaśrito lakṣmya).

Janārddana

This name of Viṣṇu is noticed in the same Gayā Kṛṣṇa-dvārikā temple inscription of Nayapāla, cited above. Verse 17 of this inscription mentions the installation of

2. Mahābhārata, VI, 63.
4. Ibid., pp. 84 ff.
the temple of Janārddana by Viśvāditya. Verse 1 of the same adores Viṣṇu in a poetic way by describing him as having the complexion of blue lotus (nila-kamalākara-kāyikāntiḥ) and wearing yellow dress (svaṇabhīrāma-rucirādyutī-pitavāsah). Verse 2 praises the place Gayā as a place of emancipation (mokṣadvāram-anargalam jagati sā śrīmadgīyā gīyate). From Verse 7 we come to know that Gayā became an important centre of various sects of Hindu religion in the 11th century A. D. during the rule of Pālas of Bengal.

The name Janārddana is derived from ‘Jana’ i.e. men and ‘Arddana’ i.e. worship, which means object of adoration to mankind. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa tells that Janārddana is the one and only god who creates, preserves and destroys as the manifestation of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.¹

### Gadādhara and Sujanārddana

These two names of Viṣṇu appear in another Gayā temple inscription² of the time of Vigrahapāla III (c. 1043–1070 A. D.), which records the names of two images of Gadādhara and Sujanārddana.

### Vaikunṭha

Viṣṇu is mentioned as Vaikunṭha in a fragmentary stanza of the undated Siyān inscription³ of the time of Nayapāla. Verse 61 states that an image of god Vaikunṭha (i.e. the Vaikunṭha Caturmūrti form of Viṣṇu) was installed in a matha.

In the Rgveda⁴ a hymn is addressed to Vaikunṭha Indra. According to S. Bhattacharjī,⁵ Viṣṇu borrowed attributes from Indra and in the epic-purānic mythology Vaikunṭha became the abode of Viṣṇu. The Harivamśa⁶ adores Viṣṇu as Hari in all ages, Vaikunṭha among the gods and Kṛṣṇa among men. The Viṣṇu

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4. X, 47.
6. I, 42, 1; cited by ibid., p. 311.
\textit{Purāṇa} describes Vaikuntha as the heaven of Viṣṇu. It is said that in the seventh Manvantara Viṣṇu was born of Vikuntha, as Vaikuntha.

\textbf{Kamalārdhāṅgina-Nārāyaṇa}

This name we find in Verse 12 of the Gayā Śitalā temple inscription of Yakṣapāla (c. 1075-1085 A.D.) It is stated that Yakṣapāla, a subordinate to a Pāla ruler of Bengal, built a temple where he installed several deities including one called Kamalārdhāṅgina-Nārāyaṇa “meaning combined image of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmi”. D. C. Sircar thinks that prevalence of the worship of the deity of Nārāyaṇa, one-half of whose body is Lakṣmi, in Eastern India is also suggested by a \textit{dhyāna} in the \textit{Tantrasāra}. He also points out that the \textit{Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa} seems to refer to a form of Viṣṇu having two arms on the right side and four arms on the left which “may be a combined image, the left half being the wife of the right half”. However, drawing attention to a number of images of earlier dates from Nepal, Kashmir and Hariyana, Samaresh Bandyopadhyay observes that it is difficult to be certain regarding the origin of the concept.

\textbf{Phalgunaṇātha}

This name also we find in Verse 12 of the above mentioned Gayā Śitalā temple inscription. According to D. C. Sircar, the name probably refers to Viṣṇu and according to Samaresh Bandyopadhyay the word possibly stands for Kṛṣṇa, since the very popular festival of \textit{phalgutsava} is closely associated with Kṛṣṇa.

\begin{enumerate}
\item Wilson, \textit{op.cit.}, Vol. I, Ch. VI, N.10, p. 383, n. 10.
\item Prakṛti-khanda, XXXV, 10-12; cited in \textit{Foreigners in Ancient India and Lakṣmi and Sarasvati in Art and Literature}, p. 133.
\item \textit{Lock. cit.}, p., 133.
\item \textit{Foreigners in Ancient India and Lakṣmi and Sarasvati in Art and Literature}, p. 133.
\item Personally communicated to me.
\end{enumerate}
Vanamālī

Various names of Viṣṇu are noticed to appear in Bhuvaneśvara inscription of Bhavadeva¹, some of which we have discussed earlier. This name Vanamālī (i.e. Viṣṇu) appears in Verse 1 of the said inscription.

Yajñapuruṣa

Next name appearing in the inscription of Bhavadeva, referred to above, is Yajñapuruṣa. Verse 6 of this inscription describes that Bhavadeva stands between his elder and younger brothers Mahādeva and Atthahāsa like Viṣṇu, the soul of sacrifice (Yajñapuruṣa) is between Brahmā and Śiva.

The epic mythology² illustrates that the cult of Viṣṇu demands only harmless offerings. In the Mahābhārata, Viṣṇu himself, who receives sacrifice as Kṛṣṇa or in other name, inculcates that sacrifice should not be bloody. He likes only simple flowers and cakes. The god himself is known as the sacrifice.

Govardhana

Next comes the name Govardhana (Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa) which is mentioned in Verse 11 of the same Bhuvaneśvara inscription of Bhavadeva mentioned above. Verse 11 elucidates that the son of the holy person Adideva (who became an able minister of the king of Vaṅga mentioned in Verses 9 and 10) and his wife Devakī, was named as Govardhana, who attained a high standard in pauruṣa and had Sarasvatī as his wife. Verse 12 says that he justified his name Govardhana (i.e. Viṣṇu) in two ways — by increasing land and displaying learning skill.

The epic mythology³, the Harivamśa⁴ and the Viṣṇu Purāṇa⁵ elucidate the legend of upholding the hill Govardhana by Kṛṣṇa. According to the legend, Kṛṣṇa protected the inhabitants and cattle of Vraja from Indra’s rage by holding up the

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1. See above, p. 5.
3. Ibid., II, 6, p.9.
4. II, 19.
hill Govardhana with one finger for seven days and night. But finally Indra backed out and Kṛṣṇa was named as Govardhana.

Harimedhas

Another uncommon name of Viśnu, Harimedhas, appears in Verse 30 of the inscription of Bhavadeva, referred to above1.

Vāsudeva

In eight inscriptions, Viṣṇu is mentioned as Vāsudeva. According to chronological order they are —

a) A terracotta Plaque inscription2 of the 7th –8th century A. D.

b) The two Maināmati inscriptions3 of regnal year 6 of Laḍahacandra (c. 1000-1020 A.D.).

c) The Gayā Kṛṣṇa-dvārika temple inscription of regnal year 15 of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A. D.).

d) The Undated Siyān inscription of the time of Nayapāla.

e) The stone-slab inscription of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva.

f) The Kamauli copper-plate inscription4 of Vaidyadeva (c. 1128-1136 A. D.).

g) A recently discovered stone-slab inscription5 of 6th regnal year of Lakṣmaṇasena also begins with salutation to Vāsudeva. The inscription registers that a tank was excavated and two temples were erected by a local family where in one temple images of 1) Kṛḍā-kroḍa, 2) Nṛṣimha, 3) Vāmana and 4) Hayagriva were installed.

h) From the Belava copper-plate inscription6 of Bhojavarma (c. 1173-1145 A.D.) we know that the charter was issued in the name of

1. See above, p. 5.

2. K. G. Goswami, op. cit., p. 130.


Vāsudevabhāṭṭāraka (lines 46-47) and a seal containing Viṣṇu’s wheel Viṣṇucakramudrā was attached to the plate.

A study of the various names of Viṣṇu in early Bengal inscriptions reveals that in a number of inscriptions Viṣṇu is named as Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva. So, a brief discussion regarding the identification of Viṣṇu with Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva and Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa may not be irrelevant here. Nārāyaṇa is depicted in the Mahābhārata as an ancient ṛṣi of thought, son of Dharma and he was associated with another ṛṣi called Nara.¹ The system of Bhagavata school was taught by him creating a Nārāyaṇiya tradition of religion.²

The Sātvata race developed a system of religion based on the idea of devotion for the Supreme God under Vasudeva of Vṛṣṇi family³. Vāsudeva (son of Vāsudeva), widely known as Kṛṣṇa, became the fountain-head of the Vṛṣṇi family among the five Vṛṣṇi heroes mentioned in the Vāyu Purāṇa and in the Morā (near Mathurā) inscription of the 1st century A. D.⁴ In the epic-purānic period when Viṣṇu reached the highest position of the triād (Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva), vedic Viṣṇu, the manifestation of the Sun, was identified with Vāsudeva and was addressed as Nārāyaṇa, the almighty god. R. G. Bhandarkar opines that the names Kṛṣṇa, Janārddana and Keśava were given to Vāsudeva when his worship became prevalent.⁵ Identification of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa with Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa is considered by R. G. Bhandarkar as a matter of post-Christian Era⁶.

Nārāyaṇa

Perhaps Nārāyaṇa is the most popular name of Viṣṇu till to-day. In the early Bengal inscriptions, we notice that mention of Nārāyaṇa has increased from the 11th century onwards, the earliest one being the Bhuvanesvara inscription,⁷ referred to above.

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3. Ibid., p. 9.
The Bhuvanesvara stone inscription of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva is actually a *prasasti* of the great scholar and writer Bhavadeva. From Verse 27 of this inscription we learn that Bhavadeva built a beautiful temple of god Nārāyaṇa on earth, for crossing the ocean of re-birth. The beauty of the god is described in a poetic way. The composer elucidates he (Viṣṇu) is like blue sign on the moon-like face of the eastern quarter (*pracivadanendunilatilako*), the lotus-ear-ornament worn by the Earth and the terrestrial Pāriyāṭa tree which fulfills all human desire (*līlavantsotpaliṁ bhūmerbhūtalapārijātavīṭapi saṅkalpasiddhipradaḥ*).

Another interesting aspect of the religious practices of that period is illustrated in Verse 30. From here we come to know that hundred damsels having eyes like young deer (*sārangasāvidṛśah*) were dedicated for the entertainment and service of god Harimedhas (i.e. Viṣṇu). These beautiful girls were experts in dance and music and created such an illusion that it seemed celestial nymphs came to the earth to take rest. These girls were known as devadāsis. The prevalence of the devadāsi system in Bengal in the 11th-12th century is known from the undated Deopārā inscription\(^1\) of Vijayasena (c. 1096-1159 A.D.). Verse 30 of this inscription states that hundred beautiful girls were dedicated to Śiva whose charms were enhanced by jewel-studded ornaments.

Verse 29 of the inscription of Bhavadeva elucidates that in the temple of Viṣṇu, Bhavadeva ardently placed images of the god in the form of Nārāyaṇa, Ananta and Nṛsiṁha in their respective sanctums (*garbhagrhas*).

It is evident from the epigraphical examples that from the early period of the Christian Era, worship of Viṣṇu was quite popular in Bengal. Even the Buddhist rulers like the Pālas encouraged the Viṣṇu cult. The early rulers of Sena dynasty showed leaning towards Śaivism. But Laksmaṇasena became an urdent devotee of Viṣṇu. Here it may be interesting to mention the seven epigraphs of Laksmaṇasena (c.1179-1206 A.D.) beginning with obeisance to lord Nārāyaṇa (*Om Om namo Nārāyaṇa*):

1. Govindapur copper-plate\(^1\) of regnal year 2,
2. Sundarban copper-plate\(^2\) of regnal year 2,
3. Tarpaṇḍīghī copper-plate\(^3\) of regnal year 2,
4. Ānuliā copper-plate\(^4\) of regnal year 3,
5. Śaktipur copper-plate\(^5\) of regnal year 6,
6. Bhāwāl copper-plate\(^6\) of regnal year 27 and
7. Māḍhāinagar copper-plate\(^7\) of regnal year 27.

The king is called as Paramavaīṣṇava in the Ānuliā and Tarpaṇḍīghī records and as Paramaṅarasiṇha in the Govindapur, Sundarban and Māḍhāinagar records. The land is also donated in the name of Lord Nārāyaṇa.

After Laksmaṇasena, we may mention the three epigraphs of his son Viśvarūpasena (c. 1206-1225 A. D.) and grandson Sūryasena (c. 1210-1215 A. D.) which also begin with adoration to god Nārāyaṇa. The inscriptions are —

1) The Madhyapāḍā copper-plate inscription\(^8\) of 13th regnal year of Viśvarūpasena,

2) The Madanapāḍā copper-plate inscription\(^9\) issued in the 2nd regnal year of Sūryasena and revised and reissued in the 14th regnal year of Viśvarūpasena and

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3) The Idilpur copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of Sūryasena.

It may be mentioned here that in line 37 of the Madanapāḍā record, Viśvarūpasena is presented as a staunch worshipper of the Sun-god (Parama-Saura).

Mention of god Nārāyaṇa is noticed in another rare piece of silver-plated epigraph. It is a dated copper-plate grant from Sundarban, known as Rākṣaskhāli inscription\(^2\) of Dommanapāla (c. 1195-1215 A. D.), a Sāmanta Pāla of Pūrvakhāṭikā. The upper part of the plate is engraved with a striking image of sitting Viṣṇu, in front of a kneeling devotee, probably Garuḍa. The emblems of the four hands of the god mark the image as of Nṛsiṁha variety. Lines 1-3 of the inscription describe the handsome vassal chief as friendly to god Nārāyaṇa (bhagavān= Nārāyaṇa-nīrdrōṭha).

**Nara-Nārāyaṇa**

R. G. Bhandarkar points out\(^3\) that the word Nārāyaṇa means the resting place or goal of men (narāṇām), where 'Nara' denotes gods as manly persons. In the epic mythology\(^4\) Arjuna is depicted as Nara. The purāṇas echo the expression of Manu "that water is called Nārā, because they are off-spring of Nara, the Supreme spirit and as in water the first (Ayana) creation was begun by Brahmā, he is thence named Nārāyaṇa"\(^5\). According to D. C. Sircar,\(^6\) probably Nārāyaṇa was an ancient leader of thought born in the family of a sage Nara. As they were Sun worshippers, the solar deity Viṣṇu was identified with them. It is not impossible that followers of Nārāyaṇa later merged with those of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa.

The tradition of companionship of Nara and Nārāyaṇa is also reflected in an early Bengal inscription.

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6. *Cul. Her. Ind.*, Vol. IV, p. 120.
In Verse 13 of the Irda copper-plate\(^1\) of regnal year 13 of the Kamboja king Nayapāladeva (c. 1030-1055 A. D.), Nārāyaṇapāla is described as devoted to the worship of the lotus feet of Vāsudeva. In the next verse, Nārāyaṇapāla has been compared with younger brother Nayapāladeva as Nara is to Nārāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa, the holder of śārṅga-bow is to Saṅkarañāṇa (Balārāma) and Dhanañjaya (Arjuna) is to the son of Dharma (Yudhiṣṭhīra). It is notable here that Nara and Nārāyaṇa are mentioned as two closely associated personalities of mythology without properly denoting their identification. But in the epic and purānic texts Nara is recognised as Arjuna.

Dāmodara

The name Dāmodara appears in the Chittagong copper-plate inscription\(^2\) of Dāmodaradeva (c. 1230-1255 A. D.). Verse 1 of this inscription is an ideal example of the amorous phase of devotion through which the faith of Vaiṣṇavism was passing at that period. In the beginning of the verse, god Dāmodara (i.e. Viṣṇu) addresses his beloved affectionately to remind her that it was morning and the gentle breeze carrying the fragrance of Kadamba flowers was blowing from the Nandana and the Moon was showing its beam no more. Then the god forcibly embraced his consort Lakṣmī, whose limbs were unsteady and the god kissed her face.

According to the Harivamśa,\(^3\) Kṛṣṇa tore the rope with which he was bound and thus was called Dāmodara.

It is note-worthy that the names of the kings of the Deva dynasty, who issued the charter under discussion, are found as Puruṣottama, Madhusūdana, Vāsudeva and Dāmodara (names of Viṣṇu). It indicates their faith in god Viṣṇu. Their seals also bear the representation of Viṣṇu on Garuḍa.

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3. II, 27.
AVATĀRAS

A study of the early Bengal inscriptions reveals that the incarnatory or *avatāra* concept of Viṣṇu made a strong impact on the composers of the epigraphs. Nine *avatāras* of Viṣṇu are noticed to be mentioned in the epigraphs of early Bengal which are Varāha, Kūrma, Narasiṁha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Balarāma, Rāma, Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and Buddha. Thus, though in the literary description we find mention of ten *avatāras* accepted all over India, as pointed out by R. G. Bhandarkar long ago, the *avatāra* called Matsya is yet to be traced in the said epigraphs. The *avatāras* mentioned in early Bengal epigraphs are dealt with below following the order of the literary description.

Varāha

We find mention of Viṣṇu in Boar incarnation in five inscriptions. The two inscriptions – 1) Dāmodarpur copper-plate inscription of the time of Budhagupta (c. 475-495 A. D.) and 2) another Dāmodarpur copper-plate inscription belonging to year 224 of Gupta Era (c. 543 A. D.) refer to Śvetavarāhasvāmin in lines 7-8 and line 10 and in line 8 and line 18 of the two inscriptions respectively.

3-4) The two Medinipur copper-plate inscriptions of Śaśāṅka (c. 600-625 A.D.) dated in his 8th and 9th regnal years invoke Viṣṇu in his boar incarnation. The first two verses of these inscriptions describe that the illustrious Śaśāṅka is protecting the Earth, who became afraid when Viṣṇu as a boar tried to raise her. The great body is elucidated as placed in the middle of the infinite hoods of the Śeṣa-nāga.

5) We again notice the same expression to occur in the Kamauli copper-plate of Vaidyadeva (c. 1128-1136 A. D.). The invocatory verse of the inscription implores

Hari as the lord who assumed the form of a boar sportively to rescue the Earth (Haridantaramita-mūrtiḥ kṛiḍā-potri hari). From the literary sources we find different versions regarding the different avatāras of Viṣṇu. The Taittirīyasamhitā associate the Matsya, Kurma and Varāha forms with Prajāpati for the well-being of creation. Later when the doctrine of incarnations was well established with Viṣṇu, the three forms were regarded as the composite god’s achievements. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa2 tells the story of Prajāpati who as a boar called Emūṣa, rescued the earth by raising her up. From a version of the epic mythology,3 we come to know that once the Earth was over burdened with population and appealed to Viṣṇu, who in the form of a unicorn boar raised her (the Earth) from pātāla.

According to the Viṣṇu Purāṇa4, “Nārāyaṇa in the form of Brahmā, being desirous to raise the earth beneath the water, assumed the form of Fish, Tortoise and Boar in different Kalpas”. The mighty Boar is illustrated in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa as well as in the Matsya Purāṇa and in the Vāyu Purāṇa, as a huge body with thundering roar but with eyes like the lotus.

Kūrma

Mention of Kūrma avatāra is noticed in two inscriptions, the earliest of which is 1) the undated Ghoṣrāwā stone-slab inscription5 of the time of Devapāla (c. 810-847 A.D.).

Verse 18 of the said inscription states that as long as the Tortoise bears the burden of the earth, the Sun shines with its hot rays to dispel the darkness, the night showers the cool rays of the Moon; — so long may the glorious fame of Viradeva remain triumphant in the world.

2. XIV, I, 2, 12, cited by S. Bhattacharji, op. cit., p. 287.

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2) The Jagajjibanpur inscription of Mahendrapāla (c. 847-862 A. D.), cited above, prays in Verse 34 that may the eulogy of Vajrata exist, as long as the Sun rays continue to dispel the darkness from all directions and the Tortoise (Viṣṇu in his Kūrma avatāra) bears the burden of the Earth (yāvat=prthivi-valaya-vahan=āścaryakarmā ca kūrmmaḥ).

The Tortoise form was not related with Viṣṇu in the Brāhmaṇas. The Śalapatha Brāhmaṇa narrates — “Having assumed the form of a tortoise, Prajāpati (Brahmā) created offspring. That which he created he made”; hence the word Kūrma. Kaśyapa also means tortoise. ‘Kacchapa’, as suggested by S. Bhattacharji is the Akūpāra (means unbounded, in the Rgveda), the cosmic tortoise. Later, the purāṇic mythology interpreted, Kāmatham rūpam as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. In the Tortoise incarnation, Hari himself, in the form of a Tortoise, served as a pivot for the mountain Mandara, as it was whirled around by the Devas and the Asuras, to churn the Ocean of Milk.

Nṛsiṁha

1) Verse 2 of the praśasti of Pāhila of the time of Devapāla (c. 810-847 A. D.), cited above, describes elaborately about the weapons disc, mace, sharp sword, bow, shield and arrows of Viṣṇu by which the god destroyed the great wealth of Hiraṇyakaśipu. It is further said that hardly the utterings of the worried gods rose above (i.e. in the sky), Kamsāri i.e. Kṛṣṇa had another festivity by piercing the demon Kamsa with his sharp tips of finger nails.

Here the concept of Nṛsiṁha avatāra of Viṣṇu is associated with the killing of Kamsa by Kṛṣṇa.

1. See above, p. 7.
2. VII, 5, I, I.
5. V, 39, 2.
7. See above, p. 8.
2) Verse 29 of the stone-slab inscription of Bhatta Bhavadeva, cited above, informs us about a Nṛśimha-mūrti placed in a garbhagrha of a temple of Nārāyaṇa.

3) Installation of a Nṛśimha image in a temple erected by a local family is mentioned in the stone-slab inscription of regnal year 6 of Laksmanasena.

4) The Gayā Viṣṇupāda temple inscription of the time of Nārāyaṇapāla, referred to above, mentions the Narasimha form of Viṣṇu as Lokaikanātha.

The legend of Nṛśimha avatāra of Viṣṇu is not a favourite subject of vedic and epic mythology, but of the Harivaṁśa and the Purāṇas. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa illustrates that Viṣṇu descended in the Man-lion form to vanquish the daitya-rāja. Hiranyakaśipu and protect Prahlāda, son of daitya-rāja, a faithful worshipper of Viṣṇu. According to Wilson, the Man-lion legend is referred to in several purāṇas, but the Bhāgavata gives a detailed account. Here Viṣṇu is stated to exist everywhere, even in non-living things. This terrific form is very rare for Viṣṇu’s lovingly appearance. But it shows that he destroys the evil.

Vāmana

We find the reference of Vāmana avatāra of Viṣṇu in three inscriptions of Bengal, the earliest one being the Jagajjibanpur inscription of Mahendrapāla, cited above.

1) Verse 4 of this inscription states that the great king Dharmapāla handed over the kingdom to the suppliant king Cakrāyudha, like the demon king Bali honestly gave the entire earth to Vāmana, the incarnation of Viṣṇu.

2) Chronologically, the next inscription which glorifies Vāmana avatāra is the Bhāgalpur copper-plate inscription of regnal year 17 of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A. D.). Verse 3 of this inscription mentions the Vāmana avatāra of Viṣṇu in

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1. See above, p. 5.
2. See above, p. 16.
connection with the glorious activities of the great king Dharmapāla (c.775-810 A.D.) of the Pāla dynasty. The verse indicates dual meaning. In one way Dharmapāla won the kingdom of Kāanyakubja by defeating Indrāyudha. On the other way he is compared with the daitya-raja Bali who defeated Indra (the king of gods) and earned a great fortune (jitvendrarāja-prabhṛti-narātinupārjītā yena mahodaya-srīḥ dattā punah sā balinārttayitre cakrāyudhāyānati-vāmanāya).

It is also apparent from the verse that as Bali surrendered his kingship to Lord Viṣṇu appearing in a dwarf form, Dharmapāla handed over the kingdom of Kanauj to Cakrāyudha, a feudatory leader.

3) We come to know of another image of Vāmana avatāra installed in a temple built by some common people, from a stone-slab inscription of regnal year 6 of Laksmanasena, referred to above1. The inscription begins with salutation to Vāsudeva. It clearly indicates the popularity of Viṣṇu cult in the society.

The Rgveda does not mention the dwarf incarnation of Viṣṇu. But the whole mythology “grew out by stages of the Āditya Viṣṇu’s attributive epithet of Trivikrama.”2 The three strides of Viṣṇu are mentioned in the Rgveda3 a number of times. The hymns of the Rgveda say — “Viṣṇu strode over this Universe and in three places he planted his steps.”4 The interpretation is given by different commentators in different ways. One says, the hymns manifest the three forms of god — fire on the earth, lightning in the atmosphere and solar light in the sky. Another understands, the three steps of Viṣṇu represent the three different positions of the Sun at rising, culmination and setting5. The third stride is as the para ma achievement where lies the fountain of honey6. By these strides Viṣṇu

1. See above, p. 16.
3. I, 23, 17,18,20; VII, 99, 7 etc.
reached the god’s region\(^1\). S. Bhattacharji thinks\(^2\) that the *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā* and the *Taittiriya samhitā* establish Viṣṇu’s overlordship of the three regions by the three strides.

According to a legend described by the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Viṣṇu, the dwarfest among the gods, covered the whole of the universe, to push aside the Asuras\(^3\). One passage of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*\(^4\) says — “Now Viṣṇu was a dwarf”. In the epic and purānic mythology, the dwarf incarnation of Viṣṇu is described elaborately.

But the vedic three steps story was the nucleus of the developed legend. Viṣṇu took birth as a dwarf son of Aditi and Kaśyapa, to restore the heaven for gods, from the hold of *dāitya-rāja* Bali, the grandson of Prahlāda. The dwarf wanted only that portion of earth which he could cover by his three small steps. Bali granted and the dwarf transformed himself into a colossus, covering the whole universe. He placed his third step on the head of Bali and pushed him to *pāṭāla*. Vālmīki often refers to this *avatāra*.\(^5\) The *Mahābhārata*\(^6\) tells the same story. S. Bhattacharji considers\(^7\) that Viṣṇu’s shortness is due to his spiritual greatness.

**Paraśurāma**

The next three incarnations Paraśurāma, Rāma and Balarāma are related to earthly affairs where Viṣṇu descended to the earth in human forms. The purpose of the Paraśurāma incarnation was to destroy Kārtavīryārjuna and to exterminate the Kṣatriya class. Twenty-one times Paraśurāma cleared the earth of the warrior caste. But some-how some of them survived to perpetuate the race. The story is often taken as a clear indication of a conflict between the two classes, Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas.

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4. I, 2, 5, 5.
6. XII, 200.
The courage and heroism of the militant people became a perpetual threat to the superiority in wisdom of the Brāhmaṇa class. Paraśurāma saved these values and hence was considered as *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. But according to J. N. Banerjea¹, *avatāra* hood was induced to him for a time being as Āveśāvatāra or possessed temporarily by Viṣṇu. Paraśurāma is mentioned in two early Bengal inscriptions, but not referred to as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu.

1) Earlier of the two inscriptions is the Monghyr copper-plate charter² of regnal year 33 of Devapāla (c. 810-847 A.D). Verse 14 of this record mentions Bhārgava i.e. Paraśurāma as belonging to *tretā-yuga*.

2) The other inscription mentioning Paraśurāma is the Bādāl Garuḍa-pillar stone inscription of the time of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A.D.), referred to above³. Verse 18 of this inscription mentions Paraśurāma as the person who was born of the family of Jamadagni and wanted to destroy the warrior caste (*Jamadagnikulotpannah sampannakṣatra-cintakah*).

The epic mythology mentions that by the time of later epic, Rāma Jāmadagnya, "instead of being a Śivaite foe of Viṣṇu", has become an *avatāra* of the god. This older Rāma descends from Bhṛgu and is son of Jamadagni and Renuka. Hence he is called Bhārgava, Jāmadagnya and Kauśika. He is called Paraśurāmā because of the weapon he obtained from Śiva⁴. The epics depict him as the killer of his mother and thousands and thousands of Haihayas, filling five lakes with blood. Paraśurāma "cut off the arms of Arjuna Kārtāviryya (whose followers killed Jamadagni), through the curse of Vaśiṣṭha"⁵. But perhaps he became hero for he saved the prestige of the Brāhmaṇas and got thousand arms by the grace of Dattātreya, a form of Viṣṇu.

5. Ibid., p. 184
Rāma

Other than Kṛṣṇa the most popular incarnation of Viṣṇu is Rāmacandra, the central figure of the great epic the Rāmāyaṇa. The scion of the solar dynasty is famous for his honesty, valour and politity. In northern India he is worshipped till now with pomp and grandeur. He was also popular in the Bengal region as is known from some early Bengal epigraphs. Rāma considered as one-half avatāra of Viṣṇu (as his brothers enjoy the rest) is mentioned in seven inscriptions. It is interesting to find that his characteristics are depicted in the inscriptions.

1) The earliest inscription of Bengal mentioning Rāma is the Khālimpur copper-plate inscription1 of Dharmapāla of regnal year 32. Verse 10 of this inscription mentions Rāma-rāghava along with Prthu and Nala, as the great kings of different eras, earth has ever produced.

Raghu was a distinguished mythical Mahārāja of the solar race and sovereign of Ayodhyā.2 Rāma as a descendant of the family of Raghu, was called Rāghava. Rāma and his brother Lakṣmaṇa have been depicted in the Rāmāyaṇa as valiant heroes from their young age. Once Indra’s discus was given to Rāma by the sage Viśvāmitra3. In one passage of the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāma is called as the Indra- padmanābha4. S. Bhattacharji remarks that “Indra’s demon-killing was inherited by all Viṣṇu’s incarnations”.5 Thus the greatest achievement of Rāma as an avatāra of Viṣṇu is the killing of the mighty Rākṣasa king Rāvana of Lāṅkā. But before that Rāma had to overcome many difficulties. One such incident occurred when he had to cross the vast sea with his troop of monkeys. With the services of a tribe of dāsyaś (servants), together with the monkey-soldiers a bridge was constructed in five days. This achievement of Rāma is mentioned in the Bengal epigraphs.

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4. Ibid., VI, 102, 16; cited by S. Bhattacharji, op. cit., p. 278.
2) Verse 15 of the Monghyr copper-plate inscription of Devapala (c. 810-847 A.D.) of regnal year 33, mentions the incident as an achievement of Rama (sapatraśīnyā-māsetoh prāthīta-daśāyaketu-kīrteḥ). It is said in the verse that the boundary of the kingdom of the great king Devapala extended from the Himalayas (gangāgamahitāt) to the bridge, proclaiming Ramaś fame (i.e. from north to south) and from the abode of Varuṇa to the residing place of Goddess of fortune (i.e. from west to east). Rāmacandra is considered as an ideal character, not only for his valour, but for his truthfulness also.

3) Verse 4 of the Bhāgalpur copper-plate inscription of regnal year 17 of Nārāyanapala (c. 876-930 A.D.),

4) Verse 3 of the Bāṅgādh copper-plate inscription of regnal year 9 of Mahipala I (c. 989-1037 A.D.) and

5) Verse 3 of the Manahali copper-plate inscription of regnal year 8 of Madanapala (c. 1143-1161 A.D.) describe Rāmacandra as satyatapas. In this passage Vākpaḷa, the younger brother of Dharmapala, is compared with Lākṣmaṇa, the brother of Rāma, a devout follower of truthfulness. Both the brothers are described as resort of polity and valour (Rāmaśyeva grhita satyatapasa stasyānurūpo gunaiḥ Soumitre rūdapi tulīya-mahīmā Vākpaḷanāmānujaḥ).

6) The verse is repeated in the Āmgāchi copper-plate inscription belonging to the regnal year 12 of Vigrahapala III (c. 1043-1070 A.D.).

7) The heroic and pious acts of Rāma and Lākṣmaṇa are mentioned in the Jagajjībānapur copper-plate inscription of regnal year 7 of the Pāla king Mahendrapala (c. 847-862 A.D.), cited above. In Verse 14, Rāma is described as the destroyer of ten headed demon (daśakandhar-āri) and his arrows are said to churn

3. Ibid., pp. 91 ff.
4. Ibid., pp. 147 ff.
the sea once. In Verse 21, Sūrapāla, the dūtaka is compared with Laksmana, the brother of Rāma (Saumitrir-īva Rāmeṇa), both of whom were fond of pious deeds. Verse 30 praises the Mahāsenāpati Vajrādeva, possessing power and habit of doing good to others, like Śrī-Rāma.

Inscribed Image of Rāma

The earliest inscribed representation\(^1\) of Rāma in a royal dress, belongs to the 5th century A. D. with a fragmentary terracotta plaque identifying the god as Rāma written in Brāhmi script near the figure’s left thigh.

Pratapaditya Pal comments that the Gupta period terracotta piece might have come from Nachar Khera. Gouriswar Bhattacharya draws our attention to\(^2\) some early inscribed terracotta plaques discovered in Bangladesh, illustrating various episodes of the Rāmāyaṇa. Short label inscriptions are used here to identify the characters. According to Bhattacharya the plaques might have been attached to the plinth of a brick temple dedicated to Viṣṇu and more than thirty of them are inscribed. He further suggests that the Kailan copper-plate inscription belonging to the later half of the 7th century refers to a temple of Lord Govindasvāmin and undoubtedly brick temples of Viṣṇu existed there. These plaques under discussion, called Palasbari plaques, also belong to the same period.

In the epic mythology\(^3\) Rāma is considered as one-half avara of Viṣṇu. In the Rāmāyaṇa his valour is depicted as parallel to Indra, but his Viṣṇu-form is fully recognised in Bāla and Uttara Rāmāyaṇa. The Mahābhārata calls him as Viṣṇu. S. Bhattacharji opines\(^4\) that Rāma is in the direct line of the Indra-Viṣṇu epiphany. He also fulfills the ideology of avara-nāḍa by destructing the evil power and protecting the devotees. According to R. G. Bhandarkar,\(^5\) Rāma was considered as

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an incarnation of Viṣṇu possibly in the early centuries of Christian Era. Inscriptional evidences from early Bengal also reveal the same.

Krṣṇa and Balarāma

We have already referred to some of the inscriptions identifying Viṣṇu with Krṣṇa where names of Krṣṇa are applied to denote Viṣṇu. Verse 2 of the Praśasti of Pāhila, cited above¹, illustrates the weapons of Viṣṇu who destroyed Hiranyakaśipu and then describes that Kamsāri i.e Krṣṇa, pierced the demon Kaṁsā with his sharp tips of finger nails. Verse 12 of the Jagajjibanpur copper-plate inscription is another example of the fact mentioned above. Here the same person king Mahendrapāla is compared with son of Devaki (i.e. Krṣṇa) and with husband of Lakṣmī (i.e. Viṣṇu).

R. G. Bhandarkar² has said that Krṣṇa induced a religious reform among a large number of worshippers. According to D. C. Sircar,³ the earliest mention of Krṣṇa in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad⁴ of 6th or 7th century B. C., is not as Vāsudeva, but as Krṣṇa-Devakiputra who was a disciple of the rṣi Ghora of the Āṅgirasa family. In the Gītā⁵ Krṣṇa himself has said that whenever there is demotion of righteousness and humiliation of nobility, God incarnates himself to exterminate the evil. In the epic mythology⁶ worship of Krṣṇa is recommended, as if Krṣṇa is accepted as avatāra in later purāṇic works.

In the Bengal inscriptions we find that Krṣṇa is depicted as a partial avatāra of Viṣṇu in the Belava copper-plate inscription⁷ of the 5th regnal year of Bhojavarman (c. 1137-1145 A. D). Verse 1 and Verse 2 of the inscription describe the lineage of family of Yadu from whom the Varmans emanated.

¹. See above, p. 8.
⁴. III, 17, 6.
⁵. IV, 7.
According to N. G. Majumdar, Verse 3 "seems to indicate that Viṣṇu and Lākṣmī were reincarnate in the Yādava family as Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā." The manifestation of Hari as Kṛṣṇa is mentioned in the next verse.

Verse 4 states that Hari incarnated in this world as Kṛṣṇa and sported with hundred milk-maids (gopisatakelikāraḥ Kṛṣṇo mahābhārata-sūtradhāraḥ). He was also the sūtradhār or the leading figure of the Mahābhārata. The venerable god in his partial incarnation (ardhaḥ pumānaṁśaktīvalāraḥ) took the burden of the earth. Thus Kṛṣṇa is considered here as partial incarnation of Viṣṇu.

We may mention here that Viṣṇu is described in the form of Gopa adorned with peacock-tail (gopaveśasya Viṣṇoḥ) in the Meghadūtāni of Kālidāsa. The expression regarding Kṛṣṇa referred to in the above inscription is also found in the Gitagovindam of Jayadeva, the court poet of Lākṣmaṇasena of the same period.

Balarāma or Baladeva is considered as mythological brother of Kṛṣṇa. Their almost twin nature is described in detail in the Mahābhārata.

Verse 13 of the Irdā copper-plate inscription of Nayapāladeva (c. 1030-1050 A. D.) of regnal year 13 mentions Saṅkarṣaṇa as a close associate of Kṛṣṇa.

According to a legend of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, once Viṣṇu wanted to establish righteousness in the earth. The Supreme Lord plucked off his two hairs, one white and one black. The white one gave birth to Balarāma with a portion of Śeṣa and the black one gave birth to Kṛṣṇa. The name Saṅkarṣaṇa (i.e. Balarāma) reminds of the avatāra's connection with agriculture.

We again find mention of the two brothers Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma in the undated Dubi copper-plate inscription of Bhāskaravarman (c. 600-625 A. D.) of Varman dynasty of Kāmarūpa. Here the battle against Bānāsura is mentioned in which Bala-Acyuta

2. I, 15.
3. I, 189.
won. Verse 69 of the same record describes the fierce battle fought by the two brothers Supratisthitavarman and Bhāskaravarman against the soldiers of Gauḍa kingdom who came by the water way. Next the valiant two brothers are compared with Bala-Acyuta who won the battle against Bānāsura.

D. C. Sircar points out that the inscription begins with adoration to god Śiva, but the next three verses describe the descent of Varman family from Naraka, the son of Viṣṇu by Earth.

The seal attached to the plate also bears a legend of eleven lines describing the ancestry of Bhāskaravarman along the line of Naraka.

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa corroborates the fact that Naraka was the son of the Earth by Viṣṇu in his Varāha avatāra. Later, Naraka was adopted by Janaka, a ruler of Prāgjyotisa. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa gives an elaborate description of the battle against Bānāsura. Bāna was the great grand-son of Prahlāda. Once Aniruddha, the grandson of Kṛṣṇa, was captured by Bāna. A fierce battle erupted between Kṛṣṇa and Bāna. Kṛṣṇa was assisted by Balarāma, Pradyumna and Garuḍa. On the other hand Bāna was assisted by Śaṅkara and Karttikeya, as Bāna was a devotee of Śiva. The valiant Kṛṣṇa- Balabhadra group scorched the opponent group by their flaming weapons. The creation was almost on the verge of destruction. Behloding Kṛṣṇa almost to launch the discus again, Śaṅkara bowed before Hari and pacified him by addressing him as, ‘lord of the world’. Govinda assured Hara, that he would not kill Bāna who was blessed by Śaṅkara. Even Hari said to Hara, “that which I am, thou art”.

Inscribed Images of Balarāma

Three inscribed metal images of Balarāma belonging to the period 9th-10th century reveal that the practice of worshipping Balarāma was prevalent in the Bengal region during the Pāla period.

1) The earliest of the three inscribed images is a bronze statue of standing Saṅkarṣṇa found from Nālandā of the time of Devapāla (c.810-847 A.D.) A three lined votive inscription\(^1\) states that “In Nālandā when the blessed and illustrious Devapāladeva (was ruling). Of the great sthavira Da (or U)jjaka. For Padmadānasimha this pious gift has been made.”\(^2\) The translation of the same record by Amalananda Ghosh\(^3\) runs as follows:

“The inscription records the dedication of the image of Nālandā in the Devapāladeva āhṭa, by Nisīṅgha (?) kā, the wife (?) of Śouijjeka”.

2) Another inscribed metal image of Balarāma\(^4\) is found from Kurkihār of the Gaya District of Bihar which belongs to the 9th regnal year of Devapāla. It records the gift of the image of Balarāma in favour of Mallapore (possibly a monastery). Interestingly it was gifted by a lady, the wife of Śidhmaka may be the village-chief of Saddhu village in Vāhiravaṇa.

3) The third image of Balarāma\(^5\) is now preserved at the Albert and Victoria Museum of London. It is inscribed in the back side of the image which belongs to the 37th regnal year of Rājayapāla (c. 930-967 A.D.). It records the gift of the image to the temple of Balabhadra (Balabhadra-stāna) by a donor named Soma, the son of Asthi, a resident of Āhṭajibalagāmā in the Rājagrha Viṣaya.

Buddha

D. C. Sircar traces\(^6\) a rapprochement of Buddhism and Vaiṣṇavism in the maṅgala verses of the Mallasārul inscription\(^7\) of the time of Gopacandra (c. 540-580 A.D.) He suggests\(^8\) that the Cakrapuruṣa presented on the seal of the Mallasārul plate

\(^{2}\) *Lock. cit.*, p. 89.
\(^{7}\) N. G. Majumdar, *ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 159 ff.
may be a combination of the concept of Dharma-cakra of Buddhism and Sudarśana-Cakra of Vaiṣṇavism and the idea of Buddha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu was taking shape from the 6th century A.D.

As D. C. Sircar points out, there is a remarkable similarity between the Mallasarul plate and the Gaya Viṣṇupāda temple inscription of regnal year 7 of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A.D.). Verse 8 of the Gaya Viṣṇupāda temple refers to a vāsa (house) for housing the yatis or ascetics as an āśrama of the brahmacārins. The āśrama is again mentioned in Verse 11 and the concluding verse refers to it as a matha apparently to indicate a monastery. It is seen that the Mallasarul plate adores Lokanātha, Dharma and santah and the Viṣṇupāda temple inscription praises Lokaikanātha, Murāri and the muni-jana.

Similar rapprochement is noticed in the Vajrayogini tortoise-shell inscription of about the 11th century A.D. It pays adoration to the most worshipful Vāsudeva and to Buddha (namo bhagavate Vāsudevāya/namo Buddhāya). According to D. C. Sircar this indicates the fact that Buddha was regarded as an avatāra of Viṣṇu before the 11th century A.D.

2. Ibid., pp. 225 ff.
VAHANA OF VIŠNU – GARUDA

The inscribed stone-pillar of Bādāl¹, of the time of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A.D.), carved in the shape of a Garuḍa reminds us of the close association of Garuḍa with Viṣṇu. The inscription is an eulogy of the great scholar Guravamisra. Verse 27 of the inscription declares that the figure of Garuḍa (tārkṣya), a sworn enemy of the serpents and a dear friend of Hari, was a mark of excellence of Guravamisra (Hareḥ priyasahastārkṣyoya māropitaḥ).

Verse 28 says that the fame of the great man travelled in all directions, reached even the bottom of the earth (Pāṭālamūla) and came out to appear here as the form of serpent killer Garuḍa (hṛtāhi-Garuḍa-Chalādamalan).

According to A. K. Maitreyā² the last passage may indicate that Garuḍa stood here to defeat the serpent like wicked persons who were jealous of others fame.

In the late verses of the Rgveda³ Garuḍa is named as Tārkṣya twice, meaning a horse. In the epic mythology⁴ Garuḍa is identified with vedic Garutmat and described as the Vāhana of Viṣṇu. Garuḍa is also described as the brother of Aruṇa, the forerunner of Śūrya and thus is connected with solar god Viṣṇu.

Verse 15 of the Bhuvaṇesvara inscription of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva, referred to above, mentions Garuḍa as nāgāntaka i.e. enemy of the nāgas.

Garuḍa, the huge divine bird has got enormous importance in the epic-purāṇic mythology. The Ādiparvan of the Mahābhārata (Ch.43-50) narrates the legend of Garuḍa’s amṛtaharana to rescue his mother Vināṭa from the bondage of Kodrū, the nāga co-wife of Kaśyapa and about a perpetual enmity with his half-brothers nāgas⁵. It is said that Garuḍa agreed to become Viṣṇu’s mount after much persuasion and became the emblem of Viṣṇu’s flag, Garuḍadhvaja⁶.

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3. I, 89, 6; X, 178, 1; as cited by J. N. Banerjea, op. cit., pp. 529-530.
5. Ibid., p. 21.
SYNCRETIC FORMS

It is found that the early Bengal epigraphs are replete with material on different aspects of religion. One such aspect is the composite Hari-Hara concept which is revealed by the Dāmodarpur copper-plate inscription1 of the time of Budhagupta (c.475-495 A.D.) of Gupta year 163 (482 A.D.). It registers a land grant for the creation of the temple of Kokāmukhasvāmin and Śvetavarāhasvāmin, the two gods being identified by scholars as Śiva and Viṣṇu. According to D. C. Sircar2 both the gods represent Varāha avatāra. From the inscriptional evidences we come to know that from the 11th century onwards a growing sense of unity between Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism was gaining ground in Bengal.

In Verse 9 of the undated Bāngaḍh stone inscription of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A.D.), cited above,3 we find that Indrasiva, the disciple of Dharmasiva is compared with Hari-Hara.

Verse 2 of the undated Deopāra inscription4 of Vijayasena (c. 1096-1159 A.D.) describes the temple of Pradyumnesvara as the abode of the beloved of Lakṣmī (Lakṣmīvallabha) and husband of Mountain’s daughter (Śailajādayita) i.e. Hari and Hara. It seems that Hari and Hara were worshipped in the temple.

We find the hint of fusion of Hari and Hara in the same body from the Madhāinagar inscription5 of regnal year 27 of Lakṣmaṇasena (c. 1179-1206 A.D.). In Verse 1 of this record Lord Nārāyaṇa is adored and then prayer is made to Lord Śiva for granting prosperity. Here the five faced god (Pañcānana) is described as Gaurī-priyā, who sustained Hari in a half of his most wonderful body (dehārdhena Hariṁ samāśritabhūddhasyāticitraṁ vapuḥ.).

It would thus appear that though in the initial stage Śiva and Viṣṇu were mentioned as separate deities, later on there was fusion of the two.

5. Ibid., pp. 109 ff.
NAMES OF COMMON PEOPLE

It is interesting to note that the names of a large number of common people as noticed in our epigraphs, exhibit influence of the different names of Viṣṇu or of his incarnations. The names which exhibit such influence, as noticed in some of the early epigraphs are discussed below.

i) Viṣṇu, Viṣṇubhadra, Rāmaka, Gopāla, Śrībhadra and Rāma occur in lines 5-6 of the Dhanāidaha copper-plate inscription1 of the Gupta Year 113 (432 A.D.) along with a person whose name ended with Viṣṇu (line 7) and the Brāhmaṇa named Varāhasvāmin (line 12).

ii) Siṃhanandin, Yaṣodāman, Kṛṣṇadāsa, Harisirinha, Yaśo viṣṇu, Kṛṣnamitra, Hariśarman, Hari, Kṛṣṇadatta, Nandadāman, Kṛttiviṣṇu, Nārāyaṇadāsa, Guhaviṣṇu, Acyuta, Sarvaviviṣṇu and Gopāla are mentioned in lines 2 to 12 of the Kalāikuḍi-Sultānpur copper-plate2 inscription of the Gupta Year 120 (439 A.D.).

iii) Śāmbapāla occurs in line 5 of the Dāmodarpur copper-plate inscription of the Gupta Year 128 (447 A.D.).

iv) Gopālasvāmi is mentioned in line 5 of the undated Faridpur copper-plate inscription3 of Dharmaditya (c. 530-540 A.D.).

v) Garuḍa Vṛhacatta occurs in line 4 of the Faridpur copper-plate inscription4 of regnal year 3 of Dharmaditya.

vi) Śrīdatta occurs in line 6, Hari the Swordsman in line 7 and Hari the inspector of horses, in line 8 of the Mallasārul charter5 of Gopacandra (c. 540-580 A.D.).

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4. Ibid., pp. 195 ff.
CONSORTS

We mention here chronologically the names of four consorts of Viṣṇu referred to, in some early Bengal inscriptions. Lakṣmī and Sarvaṭi are however discussed in details in a separate part below.

1) The Earth-goddess

a) Mahī

The two Medinipur copper-plate inscriptions1 of Śaśāṇka (c. 600-625 A. D.) associate Viṣṇu with Mahī, the Earth-goddess.

b) Vasundhāra

Verse 12 of the Maināmatī grants2 of Laḍahacandra (c. 1000-1025 A. D.) states that the king had the goddesses Sarasvatī, Śrī and Vasundhārā (Earth) under his control.

c) Verse 18 of the undated Bāngaḍh inscription3 of the time of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A. D.) describes Viṣṇu as the husband of the Earth (Mahī).

2) Rukmini

Verse 33 of the undated Siyān inscription4 of the time of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A. D) mentions of an image of consort of Rukmini i.e. Vāsudēva.

3) Sarasvatī

Verse 1 of the Kṛṣṇa-dvārīka temple inscription5 of Nayapāla mentions Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī as Viṣṇuḥ priyādvaya.

4) Lakṣmī-Śrī

a) Viṣṇu is mentioned as Lakṣmīvallabha in the undated Deopārā inscription6 of Vijayasena (c. 1096-1159 A.D) as beloved of Lakṣmī (other inscriptions with such expressions will be discussed below in the section on Lakṣmī).

b) It is found that in Bengal inscriptions ‘Śrī’ is used as a synonym word of Lakṣmī. Verse 18 of the Kamauli grant7 of regnal year 4 of Vaidyadeva (c. 1128-1136 A. D.) mentions Viṣṇu as Śripati and in Verse 19 the great ruler of Kāmarūpa is compared with Śripati in good action (satpaurūṣaiḥ Śripati).

INSCRIBED IMAGES

Countless images of Viṣṇu in different forms of the medieval period, found from different sites of Bengal and Bihar, prove the popularity of the cult in the region. Some of them are inscribed and those inscriptions are discussed below in chronological order.

1) A stone lintel found at Bodh-Gayā\(^1\) of the 26th regnal year of Dharmapāla (c. 775-810 A. D.) records the erection of a four faced god Śiva, though the stone lintel presents images of Sūrya, Lakuliśa and Viṣṇu. This is rightly believed as an example of co-ordination among different cults of early Bengal.

2) S. Huntington gives information about an unpublished inscribed image\(^2\) of Viṣṇu of the time of Devapāla, preserved in the Dacca Museum. The early Bengal epigraphs help us to realise the fact that even during the reign of the Pālas, Vaiṣṇavism penetrated into the core of the society. Even common people used to gift the image of the deity for acquiring religious merit.

3) S. Huntington mentions about an inscribed Viṣṇu image\(^3\), probably found from Kurkihar of the 12th regnal year of Śūrapāla I (c. 862-875 A. D.). From the translation of the text done by D. C. Sircar, we come to know that the image of Viṣṇu was the religious gift of a cobbler of Thisavi to the famous Āpaṇaka-mahāvihāra. It was made by Manuka.

4) An image of Viṣṇu, discovered from Bāghāurā of Comilla (formerly Tippera) District of Bangladesh contains an inscription\(^4\) which states that the image is dedicated in the 3rd regnal year of Mahīpāla I (c. 989-1037 A. D.), by a merchant Lokadatta, a great devotee of Viṣṇu and son of Vasudatta, for the furtherance of the spiritual merit and fame of himself and his parents.

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5) S. Huntington\(^1\) drew our attention to another inscribed metal image of Viṣṇu from Nimdghi of Rajsahi District of Bangladesh of regnal year 23 of Mahāpāla I. According to G. Bhattacharya\(^2\), from the iconographic point of view, this image can be compared with Bāghāura image of Viṣṇu. Both the images hold varada-mudrā, gadā, cakra and śaṅkha in four-hands in clock-wise direction and are flanked by two consorts of Viṣṇu, Śrī and Sarasvatī. But in the Bāghāura inscription, the deity is called Nārāyaṇa, whereas in Nimdghi inscription the god is called, Mādhava. The English translation done by G. Bhattacharya of the Nimdghi inscription runs as follows: “Success! (This is the image of) Mādhava (donated by) the illustrious Jaṭila, a Brahmīn from Pāṭuka, son of Gaṅgā, in the victorious ruling year 23 of the illustrious Mahāpāladeva, on the second day of the month of Āṣāḍha (June).”\(^3\)

The Viṣṇu image called as Jaṭila-mādhava reminds us of the name Laḍaha-māḍhava of the Viṣṇu image installed by the Candra king Laḍahacandra (c. 1000-1020 A. D.), cited above\(^4\).

This form of Viṣṇu with padma, gadā, śaṅkha and cakra is described in the purāṇas as Trivikrama and also in the early vedic texts Viṣṇu is mentioned as Trivikrama.\(^5\) Afterwards, mythology grew up around the three strides concept and it is frequently mentioned in the Rgveda.\(^6\) The samhitās elaborate that by his three strides Viṣṇu cover three regions. The third step has been given most importance, as here lies the fountain of honey\(^8\) and this stride is called as parama\(^7\) where Viṣṇu reached the god’s region\(^9\). Later, the epic-purāṇic mythology developed around this myth.

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3. Ibid., p. 497.
4. See above, p. 10.
8. Ibid., I, 23, 10.
"The Sātvata Samhitā includes the Trivikrama form in the incarnatory forms of the lord". J. N. Banerjea has described clearly that the image of Viśnu with emblems is called as Trivikrama form and shows the influence of vedic constituent of Āditya-Viśnu on the cult. But according to Haque, in no inscription the image is called as Trivikrama. According to G. Bhattacharya, "the sculptors or the donors of the images did not care much for the particular name of Viśnu following the different texts."  

The Nimdighi Viśnu image of the 11th century A. D. contains Garuḍa with outstretched arms and two lions in the hollow of the pedestal.

6) The Mandoil metal image inscription of Viśnu belongs to the 4th regnal year of Vigrahapāla III (c. 1043 – 1070 A. D.) and refers to the religious merit of Śrī Gayidanu.

7) The Valgudar image of Nārāyaṇa, dated Śaka 1083 (1161 A. D.) and belonging to the 18th regnal year of Madanapāla (c. 1143-1161 A. D.) is inscribed on the pedestal. It records the installation of an image of Nārāyaṇa by two paramavaishnavā brothers, namely Abhi and Inda (Indra).

8) An inscribed sculpture showing the ten avatāras of Viśnu was first noticed by Cunningham in Rāmgayā of Gayā District of Bihar. Later R. D. Banerji gave a complete reading of the inscription which records that on the year 8 from the coronation of Mahendrapāla (c. 847-862 A. D.), the dasavatāra image was the gift of Sahadeva the son of ṛṣi Sauḍī.

2. Ibid., p. 411.
4. Lock. cit., p. 496.
9) Another image inscription\(^1\) of Vāsudeva of the 23rd regnal year of Govindacandra (c. 1020-1055 A.D.) of the Candra dynasty of Bengal was discovered from Pāikpārā of the Dāccā District of Bangladesh. The inscription containing three and half lines of writing at the right and left ends of the pedestal informs that in the year 23 of Govindacandra this image of Lord Vāsudeva was made by Gaṅgādāsa, son of late Pāradāsa, an inhabitant of Ralaja\(^2\). K. G. Goswami reads\(^3\) the first word of 2nd line as Bālajika i.e. Bārai or betel-leaf planter. According to him, this inscription proves that some of the Bārai people were worshippers of Lord Vāsudeva in the 11th century A.D.

10) Another pedestal inscription of a stone image of Viṣṇu (Trivikrama) found at the village Karanji of Dinajpur District reads: “pāler ayam Thakkuraḥ”\(^4\). It means the deity belongs to Poliyas or the so-called backward classes of the society.

The evidence available in the early Bengal epigraphs convinces us that the medieval period Bengal was flooded with the religious ideology of Vaiṣṇavism. According to some scholars vedic minor god Viṣṇu rose to the height, absorbing the essence of cosmic deity Nārāyaṇa, historical god Vāsudeva and cow-herd leader Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa. The cult gathered enormous strength over the centuries and pervaded the society to the core. Ultimately Kṛṣṇa became the mightiest representative of the religious movement.

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Among the consorts of Viṣṇu, we notice, Lakṣmī is mentioned maximum number of times in the early Bengal epigraphs. We discuss below chronologically the different names Lakṣmī, Śrī, Padmā and Kamalā as well as the different facets of the goddess mentioned in the early Bengal inscriptions.

**DIFFERENT NAMES**

**Lakṣmī**

1. Lakṣmī is depicted as beloved of Viṣṇu in the undated Nidhanpur copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of Bhaskaravarman (c. 600-625 A.D.). Verse 19 of this inscription states that the king Śrī-Mrgāṅka gave away lands to his applicants, like Hari kept Lakṣmī in his bosom like a miser as a very special treasure.

2. Verse 10 of the Bādāl Garuḍa pillar inscription, cited above\(^2\), mentions Lakṣmī as consort of Hari.

3. The invocatory verse of the Gaya Narasimha temple inscription\(^3\) of regnal year 15 of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A.D.) adores Lakṣmī as consort of god Puruśottama (Viṣṇu).

**Śrī**

1. Consort of Hari is referred to as Śrī in the undated Maināmatī copper-plate inscription\(^4\) of Govindacandra (c. 1020-1045 A.D.).

2. Verse 6 of the undated Rāmpāl copper-plate inscription\(^5\) of Śricandra refers to Śrī as consort of Hari.

**Lakṣmī and Śrī**

In two Bengal inscriptions we find both the names Lakṣmī and Śrī are mentioned

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2. See above, p. 7.

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in different verses to refer to the goddess of fortune and her different characteristics are also depicted.

1. a) Verse 2 of the Khālimpur copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of regnal year 32 of Dharmapāla (c. 775-810 A.D.) refers to the goddess as Śrī.

b) Verse 5 of this inscription mentions the consort of Mura’s foe (i.e. Viṣṇu) as Lakṣmī.

c) Verse 10 depicts Śrī as strong as an elephant who though fickle minded (cancalā) but was persuaded to stay with the Pāla king. It glorifies the king by describing him as the mighty pillar, created in the Kali-yuga by the creator, who was able to fasten the elephant, the fickle goddess of fortune (Śrī-kariṇī-nibandhana-mahāstambhāḥ).

d) Verse 17 of this record again mentions the goddess as Śrī, who is compared with the unsteady human-life, like the water-drops on lotus petals (Kamaladāmbu-bindu-lolāṃ).

e) Again in the next verse Lakṣmī is described as brisk as lightning (taḍittulyā).

2. Lakṣmī-Śrī is expressed as beloved of Hari in the undated Praśasti of Pāhila (9th century A.D.) of the time of Devapāla (c. 810-847 A.D.), cited above\(^2\). In Verse 1, prayer is made to Hari along with Lakṣmī (Lakṣmī -sa-nātho Hariḥ) to grant perpetual happiness to all.

Again in Verse 3 of this record, prayer is made to Śrī who resides in the heart of Viṣṇu, to bring happiness to all (sā kaiṭabhārī-hṛdaya-sṭhala-vāsini śrīḥ kalyāṇam). Here Śrī is adored as the goddess, who is uniquely honoured in the universe and “whose fortunes are many fold on the universe from the obtainment of the, kingdom of reptiles, men, demons and gods due to grace”\(^3\).

From the literary texts we come to know that Lakṣmī, as the name of the goddess of fortune, is not mentioned in the Rgveda, “though the word itself occurs in a

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2. See above, p. 8.

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kindred significance.”¹ According to S. Bhattacharji, “the Lakṣmī-Śrī aspect of her personality was a direct continuation or survival of the cult of an agrarian goddess”². In the epic-purānic mythology Lakṣmī-Śrī has always retained her position as a symbol of prosperity and beauty which is reflected in the early Bengal inscriptions also.

From the epic mythology we find, “Śrī herself instructs Indra that only character ensures success; she used to live with the Dānavas because they were virtuous, but she deserted them when they became immoral”³.

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa⁴ elucidates that Śrī, the bride of Viṣṇu is the mother of the world, who is eternal, imperishable. If Hari is the symbol of polity (nyāya) and understanding, Śrī is prudence (nītī) and intellect. Hari is all that is called male and Lakṣmī is all that is termed female.

Our study reveals that the words ‘Śrī’ and ‘prosperity’ appear inseparable from each other in the early Bengal inscriptions. The following inscriptions may be cited as examples.

1. Verse 4 of the Pāhila Praśasti of the time of Devapāla, cited above⁵, states about a maṇḍala (division) called Bhattala which is associated with Śrī i.e. fortune (Śrīy=ārvite bhaṭṭala - nāmi maṇḍale).

2. A man of wealth is depicted as Śrībhṛti⁶ in Verse 21 of the Bādāl Garuḍa pillar inscription of Narayanapāla (c. 876-930 A. D.).

3. The undated Kedārpur copper-plate⁷ of Śrīcandra (c. 925-975 A. D.) explains the cause why ‘Śrī’ was attached with the name of the king. Verse 6 of the inscription eulogises the king Śrīcandra as a kind hearted person in respect of merciless sacrificial slaughter (of animals), eloquent regarding the virtues

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2. S. Bhattacharji, op. cit., p. 172.
5. See above, p. 8.
of others but dumb about others faults, beautiful to look at and proportionately built. Considering all these excellent qualities Brahmā, the creator, forcibly united the goddess of fortune Śrī in spirit as well as in name with the king, as Śricandra.

Here ‘Śrī’ in one sense represents the goddess of fortune attached with the king Śricandra, in other sense attached with the name only.

4. In Verse 8 of the Belāva copper-plate inscription1 of regnal year 5 of Bhojavarman (c. 1137-1145 A.D.) we find ‘Śrī’ has been attached to six different words to glorify them, such as –

Prthuśrīyam – glory of Prthu,
Viraśrīyam – daughter of the king,
Kāmarūpaśrīyam – dignity of Kāmarūpa,
Divyabhujaśrīyam – strength of the arms,
Govarddhanaśrīyam – fortune of Govardhana and
Sārvabhaumaśrīyam – Brāhmaṇas versed in vedas.

5. In Verse 28 of the Bhuvanesvara inscription2 the huge temple built by the great scholar Bhavadeva is described like Hari himself endowed with Śrī which possessed the Śrīvatsa mark and the emblem of flashing disc (vaddhitaśrīḥ śrīmān śrīvuccchalakśmā Haririva vihito visphuraccakraciḥnaḥ).

N. G. Majumdar suggests3 that here Śrī means both beauty as well as Lakṣmī or prosperity.

**Padmā**

We find this name mentioned in two inscriptions.

1. Verse 5 of the undated Kedarpur copper-plate inscription4 of Śricandra (c. 925-975 A.D.) mentions Lakṣmī as *Padmā*. It is said that the goddess is kept awaken by Hemantasena as the Sun opens the lotus-buds (*padma*).

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2. Verse 4 of the Rāmganj copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of regnal year 35 of Īśvaraghoṣa (c. 1040-1080 A. D.) describes that Sadbhāvā (wife of Dhavalaghoṣa) was devoted to her husband as Sīta (herself) and resembled Padmā, the wife of Viṣṇu.

It may be mentioned here that Lakṣmī is described in the Rāmāyana as the queen of Beauty and Fortune\(^2\) who sprang from the lotus. The epic mythology\(^3\) describes that Śrī came out of the lotus, sprang from Brahmā's fore-head and is called as Śrī Kamalālayā as the wife of Dharma and Padmahastā with lotus in hand. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa adores the goddess as “Śrī, seated on her lotus throne with eyes like full-blown lotus, reclining on the breast of Viṣṇu.”\(^4\)

Sītā is also the incarnation of Padmā, when Viṣṇu appeared as Rāma avatāra.

It may be interesting to mention here that Lakṣmī is treated in a different way in the Idilpur copper-plate inscription\(^5\) of regnal year 3 of Sūryasena (c. 1210-1215 A. D.). Verse 22 of this inscription states that the goddes of learning gained the title Padmālayā, by which Lakṣmī was known to the three worlds (Padmālayeti yā khyātir lakṣmyā eva jagatrāye Sarasvatya pi tān lebhe yadānanakṛtālayā).

Here in this inscription Sarasvatī is depicted as Padmālayā. We can cite an example from the purānic literature where Śrī is eulogised as the goddess of letters. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa\(^6\) adores goddess Śrī as the divine ambrosia (sudhā) which purifies the Universe, evening, night and dawn, power, faith and intellect as she is the goddess of letters (sandhyā rātri pravā bhūtirmedhā sradhyā Sarasvati). She is the abode of beauty and eternal liberation also.

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1. Ibid., pp. 157 ff.
Kamalā

Lakṣmī is called as Kamalā in two inscriptions.

1. Verse 24 of the Jagajjilbanpur copper-plate inscription, cited above,\(^1\) describes that Nārāyaṇa, a son of a respectable person, always resides with goddess of wealth Kamalā (Tasy = ātmajo = bhūt-kamalā-nīvāsah).

The puranic mythology\(^2\) describes Lakṣmī as “one of the two goddesses into which the first Saravatī was divided, the two being Sarasvatī proper and Kamalā.”

2. Verse 1 of the Bhuvanesvara inscription, cited above,\(^3\) mentions Lakṣmī as Kamalā. Here it is said that Hari had his body marked by the saffron-lines on the jar-like breast of Kamalā (gādopagāḍa kamalā kucakumbha patramudrāṇkītena).

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1. See above, p. 7.
3. See above, p. 5.
CO-WIVES

In four inscriptions Lakṣmī-Śrī is mentioned with co-wives which we discuss below chronologically.

i) Verse 2 of the Monghyr copper-plate inscription¹ of regnal year 33 of Devapāla (c. 810-847 A. D.) mentions Śrī along with the Earth as co-wives (saubhāgyadhadatulam Śrīyāḥ sapatnyā Gopālah pati rabhavadhyasundhārayāḥ).

ii) Verse 14 of the copper-plate inscription² of regnal year 3 of Śūrapāla I (c. 862-875 A. D.) describes queen Māhātā, wife of the king Devapāla as co-wife of the Earth as her husband is the lord of the earth (i.e. Viṣṇu). Here indirectly the queen is mentioned as Lakṣmī.

iii) In Verse 1 of the Kṛṣṇa-dvārīka temple inscription of the time of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A. D.), cited above,³ Lakṣmī and Sarasvati share the position of consorts of Viṣṇu as the goddesses are described as Viṣṇu Priyādvaya.

iv) Verse 14 of the Idilpur copper-plate inscription⁴ issued in the 3rd regnal year of Sūryasena (c. 1210-1215 A. D) mentions goddess Lakṣmī along with the Earth as co-wives (Lakṣmīrūpiḥ vāchchitāni vidadhe yasyāḥ sapatnau).

In this context, we may cite examples where Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Earth have been mentioned as symbols of fortune, learning and power.

i) Verse 12 of the two Maināmati grants⁵ of regnal year 6 of Laḍahacandra (c. 1000-1020 A. D) describe Laḍahacandra as a master of all the sciences who holds control on Sarasvatī, Lakṣmī and Earth symbolizing learning, wealth and power.

ii) Verse 15 of the Bhuvarāśvara inscription⁶ of Bhavadeva mentions Lakṣmī as consort of Viṣṇu and goddess of wealth. The verse states that as if, to conceal the divine characteristics of his body, Bhavadeva placed Lakṣmī on his right hand (usually Viṣṇu places her in the left), the Earth under his counsell, Sarasvatī on the tip of his tongue, the bird Garuḍa in the body of the enemies and the discus on (the soles of) his feet. It seems that this verse means that Lakṣmī (wealth), Sarasvatī (learning) and Earth (power) were under the control of Bhavadeva.

³. See above, p. 12.
LADIES OF ROYAL FAMILIES COMPARED WITH LAKŚMI

Early Bengal inscriptions further show that Lakśmi-Śrī aspect became an ideal object of comparison for beauty, prosperity and purity of ladies of royal families. We discuss below nine such inscriptions chronologically.

i) Verse 5 of the Khālimpur copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of Dharmapāla (c.775-810 A.D.) describes that like Rohinī to the Moon, Svāhā to Fire, Sarvāṇī to Lord Śiva, Bhadrā to Kuvera, Śacī to Indra and Lakśmi to Viṣṇu, queen Deddadevī was to the king Gopāla, the source of comfort.

ii) Verse 10 of the Monghyr copper-plate inscription\(^2\) of regnal year 33 of Devapāla (c. 810-847 A. D.) compares queen Raṇṇādevī with Lakśmi and Earth, as embodied in human form.

iii) Verse 28 of the Jagajībanpur copper-plate inscription\(^3\) of regnal year 7 of Mahendrapāla (c. 847 – 862 A. D.) compares Kalyāṇadevī, wife of Nārāyaṇadeva, with Lakśmi. But a doubt arises in the next verse\(^4\) that whether such a pious lady like Kalyāṇadevī should be compared with fickle minded Lakśmi or with Arundhatī, the symbol of chastity.

iv) Verse 10 of the Bādāl Garuḍa pillar inscription of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A.D.), cited above\(^5\), describes Rallādevī as a lady, worthy to her husband Someśvara as Haririva Lakṣmyāh (i.e. as Lakśmi is to Hari). Verse 16 of the same inscription advises not to compare Babbādevī (queen of Śūrapāla) with Sāti as she is issueless and with Lakśmi also as she is fickle minded (atulyā calayā Lakṣmyā satyā cāpya [napatya] yā). The very next verse describes the queen praiseworthy, for giving birth to a son like Lakśmi’s husband (sā Devakīvā tasmāt Yaśodāyā svikṛtaḥ patim Lakṣmyāh).

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4. Ibid., p. 80.
5. See above, p. 7.
v) Verse 9 of the Paścimbhāg copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of regnal year 5 of Śricandra (c. 925 – 975 A.D.) introduces Kāṇcikā, the beloved queen of Trailokyacandra as Śrī. According to D. C. Sircar, the queen is called as Kāṇcana in other records of Śricandra.

vi) Verse 6 of the undated Rāmpāl copper-plate inscription\(^2\) of Śricandra compares the gold (Kāṇcana) like charming queen Kāṇcana with Śaci of Jiṣṇu (Indra), Gaurī of Hara and Śrī of Hari.

vii) Verse 9 of the two Maināmatī copper-plate inscriptions of Laḍahacandra (c. 1000 – 1020 A.D.), cited above\(^3\), presents Kalyāṇacandra as the god Viṣṇu and his queen Kalyāṇadevi as Lakṣmī and both of them are said to worship the same goddess.

viii) Verse 9 of the Mādhainagar copper-plate inscription\(^4\) of regnal year 27 of Lakṣmanaśena (c.1179-1206 A.D.) eulogises Rāmadevī, the beloved wife of Vallālasena as a subject of high esteem to the goddesses Lakṣmī and Earth.

ix) Verse 14 of the Idilpur copper-plate inscription\(^5\) of regnal year 3 of Sūryasena (c. 1210-1215 A.D.) praises the great queen Cāndrādevi by declaring that her desires were fulfilled by the co-wives Earth and Fortune (Lakṣmīrbhūrapī vācchitāni vidadhē yasyāḥ sapatnau mahārāgñī Cāndrādevī).

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3. See above, p. 10.
VARIOUS VIEW-POINTS

We find that Lakṣmī has been reflected in the early Bengal inscriptions in many different aspects other than those we have discussed already. We would like to discuss those significant aspects.

i) Verse 2 of the Jagajjibanpur copper-plate\(^1\) states that on seeing the king Gopāla endowed with several gem-like qualities, Śrī offered oblations of water to the comforts she accrued from her stay in the abode of Hari (in other words, she deserted her lord Hari and took shelter under the king).

Verse 5 of the same inscription says that the goddess of fortune took rest in the robust hands of the king Gopāla whom (i.e. the fortune) he earned by his own might.

Verse 12 of this epigraph needs special mention. Here it is said that Mahātā (the queen of Devapāla) like Devakī, gave birth to a son, by name Mahendrapāla, to whom several kings offered obeisance, who easily bore the burden of governing the earth and who was like god Viṣṇu.

Here Viṣṇu is introduced as the god whom goddess Lakṣmī chose as her husband on her own accord\(^2\) (Lakṣmīyāḥ svayamvarapatim). Here we get the hint of the special right of a woman to choose her own husband.

2) Lakṣmī is depicted as the daughter of Śiva in the undated Siyān inscription of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A. D.), cited above.\(^3\) Verse 44 of this inscription states that the image of Śrī was installed in the temple of Mataṅgeśvara (Śiva), so that daughter Lakṣmī did not stay away from her father for a long time.

3) In Verse 14 of the undated Bāngadh inscription of Nayapāla, cited above,\(^4\) it is stated that Śiva gifted Lakṣmī to his disciple Hari.

\(^{1}\) S. Bhattacharya in Jl. Anc, Ind. Hist., Vol. XXIII, pp. 61 ff.
\(^{2}\) Lock, cit., p. 74.
\(^{3}\) See above, p. 40.
\(^{4}\) See above, p. 12.
4) From the two inscriptions of Vijayasena (c. 1096-1159 A.D.), the Barrackpur copper-plate of regnal year 62 and the other undated Deopara stone inscription, we come to know that Lakṣmī attained a special status among the goddesses. Verse 2 of the inscriptions, cited above, present Viṣṇu as husband of Lakṣmī (Lakṣmīvallabha).

Similar expression we notice in Verse 18 of the Kamauli copper-plate inscription of Vaidyadeva (c. 1128-1136 A.D.), cited above, where Viṣṇu is mentioned as Śrīpati.

**MAHĀLAKŚMĪ**

Verse 18 of the Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva prāśasti, cited above, mentions the name of Mahālakṣmī. It describes that the paramount lord (Parameśa) of the world, the king Harivarmmadeva derived his fame and power from the assemblage of the Female energies of Mahāgaurī, Caṇḍi, Mahālakṣmī and Sarasvatī, who rendered beautiful appearance and speech to him by nature.

**Inscribed Image of Mahālakṣmī**

Reference may be made here to a beautiful inscribed image of Mahālakṣmī, resting on the back of a lion in a sitting position on a double petalled lotus-seat. The Triratha pedestal bears a votive inscription, “Deyadharmma (rmmo) Ya (yam) Suna (ta) Kasya”.

This twenty-armed image of the goddess is said as seated in latitasana pose with her right leg dangling down the lotus placed on the back of her mount, bearing a fruit (pomegranate), boon, protection, discus, sword, pestle, arrow etc. in the right hands and conch-shell, water-vessel, bows, trident, mirror etc. in the left hands, with a miniature liṅga on her head among the jaṭās. From the inscription we come to know that the image is a pious gift of Sunaka or Sutaka. According to the Devi-bhāgavatam, the number of hands of Mahālakṣmī is not fixed.

1. N. G. Majumdar, Ins. Beng., pp. 61 ff; See above, p. 18.
2. See above, p. 16.
3. See above, p. 5.
5. Cf. Devi-bhāgavatam, Sk. V, Ch. 8, 46.

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BIRTH-PLACE

It is noticed that the account of the churning of the Ocean of Milk described elaborately in the epic\(^1\) and purānic mythologies, is mentioned in several inscriptions in relation to the birth-place (janmaniketanam) of Lakṣmi. The inscriptions are –

a) Undated Nidhanpur plate of Bhaskaravarman (c. 600-625 A. D.), cited above\(^2\) (Verse 17),

b) Khālimpur plate of 32nd regnal year of Dharmapāla (c. 775-810 A. D.) cited above\(^3\) (Verse 2),

c) Bāngāḍh plate of 9th regnal year of Mahipāla I (c.989-1037 A. D.), cited above\(^4\) (Verse 2),

d) Āmgāči plate\(^5\) of 12th regnal year of Vighrahapāla III (c. 1043 – 1070 A. D.)-
(Verse 2),

e) Manahāli plate\(^6\) of 8th regnal year of Madanapāla (c. 1143 – 1161 A.D.) –
(Verse 2),

f) Naihāṭi plate\(^7\) of 11th regnal year of Vallālasena (c. 1159 – 1179 A. D.) – (Verse 6) and

g) Mādhaṅiṅgar plate\(^8\) of 27th regnal year of Lakṣman asena (c. 1179 – 1206 A. D.) – (Verse 5).

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa\(^9\) gives a beautiful account of Śrī coming out of the waves, after churning of the Ocean of Milk as sitting on a full-blown lotus holding water-lily in hand, radiant with beauty and the elephants pouring pure water from gold vases over the goddess. Lakṣmi in this form is popularly known as Gajalakṣmi.

\(^{1}\) Hopkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 55 ff.
\(^{2}\) See above, p. 45.
\(^{3}\) See above, p. 29.
\(^{4}\) See above p. 30.
\(^{9}\) Wilson, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Ch. VIII, p.85; Ch. IX, pp. 106 ff.
GAJALAKŚMĪ

The name of Gajalakśmī is not noticed so far to occur in the Bengal epigraphs but it is interesting to mention that certain inscribed seals bear the Gajalakśmī symbol, which we discuss below chronologically:

i) the Faridpur copper-plate¹ of Dharmāditya (c. 535 – 540 A. D.),
ii) the undated Vappaghośavaṭa copper-plate² of Jayanāga (c. 625 A. D.),
iii) the undated Kalapur copper-plate³ of Maruṇḍānātha (7th Century A. D.),
iv) the Tipperā copper-plate⁴ of Lokanātha (c. 650-670 A. D.) of Gupta year 3[44] and
v) the Kailan copper-plate⁵ of 8th regnal year of Śrīdhāraṇārāṭa (c. 660- 670 A. D.).

The seals were actually the symbols of authentication of the inscriptions bearing some order or notice of the administration. According to Morrison⁶ in most of the plates, the pre-cast seals are soldered or riveted to the middle of the short edge on either the proper right or on the top of the plate. In the later days seals were engraved on the top centres of the plates. In the third type, which are rare (found on Bhāskaravarman plate), a ring is made to pass through the holes cut in the middle of the proper right of each plate. The separately cast seals bear two parts – a symbol and an inscribed legend. The Gajalakśmī symbol depicts two elephants pouring water over Lakṣmī on lotus. Other symbols on seals are discussed in relevant sections.

The seal of the plate of Jayanāga shows traces of an upright female figure, apparently looking like Lakṣmī with either one or two elephants performing the kumbhāviṣekā and bears now illegible inscription below.

The seal affixed to the Kalapur plate of Maruṇḍanātha bears the usual figure of Gajalakṣmi with a writing below the goddess Kumārāmāty-ādhikaraṇaṣya. The upper part shows a recumbent bull and lower part possibly holds the name of Śrī-Maruṇḍanātha. The reverse shows a full-blown lotus1.

On the seal of Śridhāraṇārāta beneath the Gajalakṣmi symbol an emblem of two lines are written:

i) Śrī- Samataṭeśvara-pādānuṇḍhyātasya and

ii) Kumārāmāty-ādhikaraṇaṣya

The names of the king Śrī-Śridhāraṇārāṣya and Lokanāṭhaṣya are also embossed on the seals of the respective kings2.

According to J. N. Banerjea,3, the motif of Gajalakṣmi is known to Indian artists from the pre-Christian period.

The association of Gajalakṣmi with the elephants characterises her non-Aryan connection. Her Buddhist association is also known from Buddhist legends4.

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa5 tells the story of rising of Lākṣmī from the ocean of milk, where the goddess is described as a symbol of beauty, seated on a full-blown lotus holding water lily in hand. Hymns are sang in her praise. Gaṅgā and holy streams attend for her ablutions and the elephants of the skies pour pure water from golden vase on her.

2. Ibid., p. 15.
The other goddess whose name comes naturally with Śrī is Sarasvatī. The different names of the goddess noticed to appear in early Bengal inscriptions are Kādambarī, Gir, Urunilapdmā, Mātasarasvatī, Vāgdevī and Padmālayā. She is also mentioned as consort of Viṣṇu, goddess of learning and close associate of Brahmā. We discuss below chronologically the different names of the goddess and the different aspects through which she has been characterised in the early Bengal epigraphs.

**DIFFERENT NAMES**

**Kādambarī**

We find the earliest mention of Sarasvatī in the Bengal inscription as Kādambarī in the Khālimpur copper-plate record.¹

Here we find reference of a small shrine (devakulikā) of the goddess Kādambarī, while describing the boundaries of the donated villages in the 32nd line of the Khālimpur record of 32nd regnal year of Dharmapāla (c. 775-810 A. D.). A. K. Maitreya opines² that the word deul meaning temple is originated from devakul. Kielhorn³ suggests that devakulikā means small temple. According to Monier Williams⁴ Kādambarī is mentioned in the Lexicons as a name of Sarasvatī.

Goddess Sarasvatī is recognised in the Medinikosa⁵ as Kādambarī, one of whose synonym is Bhāratī. According to Sukumar Sen⁶, probably Vāruṇī, another synonym of Kādambarī, later became identical with Sarasvatī. So, it is likely that goddess Sarasvatī had an individual status in the religious life of ancient Bengal.

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¹. See above, p. 29.
⁵. A. K. Maitreya, op. cit., p. 25, n. 2.
⁶. Vanga-Bhumika (Beng.), p. 152.
In mytholgy, the goddess enjoys special status. The vedic mythology\textsuperscript{1} praises her as the great river-goddess and the greatest among the goddesses. According to a story of the \textit{Satapatha Brāhmaṇa}\textsuperscript{2}, once Prajāpati became tired in creating beings and at this state, Śrī originated from him with enviable beauty. Gods became jealous. But Prajāpati persuaded them to take away the attributes of Śrī instead of killing her. But later, on Prajāpati's advice, she managed to restore everything by offering sacrificial dishes to ten divinities. Interestingly, the names include the name of only one goddess, Sarasvatī. According to the epic mythology “all rivers are Sarasvatis i.e. holy”.\textsuperscript{3} Thus it may be assumed that Sarasvatī, the goddess presiding over knowledge, art, music, science and letters, retained unique independent position among the dominating world of gods.

Gīr

This uncommon name of Sarasvatī we find in Verse 12 of the Maināmatī grants of 6th regnal year of Laḍāhacandra (c. 1000-1025 A. D.), cited above.\textsuperscript{4}

\textbf{Urū-nilapadmā}

Sarasvatī is mentioned as \textit{Urū-nilapadmā} or Mahāsaravatī in the Kṛṣṇa-dvārikā temple inscription of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A. D.), cited above.\textsuperscript{5} Verse 4 of this inscription states that Mahāsaravatī chose a noble Brāhmaṇa family, pure as kunda flowers, as her peaceful abode.

\textbf{Mātassarasvatī}

The goddess is invoked as a mother (\textit{mātassarasvatī}) in Verse 4 of the undated Čangadh stone inscription\textsuperscript{6} of Nayapāla. Here the poet composer Śrīkaṇṭha prays to the goddess of learning to be kind to him so that by her grace, he may compose the \textit{prasasti} successfully.

\textsuperscript{1}. R̥gveda, II, 41, 6.
\textsuperscript{2}. XI, 4, 1 ff.
\textsuperscript{3}. Hopkins, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 207.
\textsuperscript{4}. See above, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{5}. See above, p. 12.
Vāgdevī

In Verse 1 of the stone inscription of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva, cited above, Sarasvatī has been mentioned as Vāgdevī.

In Verse 2, the composer of the eulogy of Bhavadeva and his family prays to the goddess of speech (i.e. Sarasvatī), to reside on the tip of his tongue and help him to fulfil his desire, as the poet has been worshipping Vāgdevī daily from his very childhood.

As a river deity of the vedic mythology, Sarasvatī is associated with the reputation for sanctity. As all the rituals and ceremonies were performed on the banks of the river, blessings of the river deity were invoked for successful performance of the rituals. Scholars think that this connection developed in identifying her as the goddess of speech, Vāc.

Sarasvati has been attributed with many epithets in the mythology. The river Sarasvati, along whose banks vedic and Brāhmaṇical culture disseminated, might have associated the goddess with learning and they were inseparable in the purāṇic age. In the xth Maṇḍala of the Rgveda the goddess is depicted as the embodiment of Śakti and in the purāṇic mythology she emerges as an independent goddess of learning adorned in all white dress with vīnā, pustaka, pūndarika, kamanḍalu etc. in hands. The epic mythology presents Sarasvati as Viṣṇu’s tongue.

Padmālayā

As referred to above in connection with our discussion on Lakṣmī, the Idilpur copper-plate inscription of regnal year 3 of Sūryasena (c. 1210-1215 A.D) adores the goddess of learning as Padmālayā, instead of Lakṣmī.

VARIOUS VIEW-POINTS

Consort of Viṣṇu

Sarasvatī has been depicted as one of the two consorts of Viṣṇu (Viṣṇu priyādovaya) in Verse 1 of the Kṛṣṇa-dvārika temple inscription of the time of Nayapāla, cited above¹, the other being Lakṣmī.

Sarasvatī as companion of other consorts of Viṣṇu

1) In the popular belief of Bengal, co-existence of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, i.e., wealth and wisdom, is very rare. The idea is reflected in the Bādāl Garuḍa pillar inscription² of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A. D.). Verse 21 of the inscription eulogises Guravamiśra, as a man of both learning and wealth, to whom Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī both surrendered, forgetting their usual enmity (yasmin mithāḥ śrībhṛtī vāgadhīše vihāya vairāṇi nisarggañāṇi. Ubhe sthite sakhyamivādi (dhi) gantryātakatra Lakṣmīśca Sarasvatī ca). It is interesting to note that in one passage of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa³ Sarasvatī is invoked as a bestower of prosperity⁴. The epithet applied to her as Subhaga in the Rgveda⁵ also echoes the impression.

2) Verse 12 of the Maināmati copper-plates of Laḍahacandra (c. 1000-1020 A. D.) narrates that the king kept the three goddesses Sarasvatī, Śrī and Vasundharā (Earth) under his control.

3) As referred to above, Verse 15 of the eulogy of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva mentions that the three consorts of Viṣṇu were under control of Bhavadeva.

Interestingly, a story of the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa⁶ narrates that once Sarasvatī accused Hari for partiality towards Gaṅgā and a quarrel broke out between Sarasvatī and Gaṅgā. Lakṣmī tried to pacify them. But Sarasvatī cursed her and Gaṅgā in return cursed Sarasvatī to be the river. As referred to the epigraphs of

¹. See above, p. 12.
³. II, 4, 3, 7; 4, 3, 16.
⁵. I, 89; V II, 95; VIII, 21.
⁶. Prakṛti khaṇḍa, Ch. VI.
early Bengal we find Earth as a co-wife of Sarasvatī and Śrī. According to later mythology, Viṣṇu transferred Sarasvatī to Brahmā, Gaṅgā to Śiva and contended himself with Śrī alone.¹

**Goddess of Learning**

Verse 11 of the Bhuvanesvara stone inscription of Bhavadeva, discussed above, depicts Sarasvatī as the goddess of learning and also as consort of Viṣṇu. The verse describes that the able person whose manly attainment reached a high standard was married to the goddess of learning Sarasvatī and thus resembles Acyuta and became famous as Govardhana in the three worlds (Sarasvatijñānimajjanatsutam jagatsu Govardhanamacyutopamaḥ).

Verse 12 of this record narrates that the person justified his name by expanding territory with the power of his arms and by increasing learning by the display of his oratorical skill (yo varddhayan Vasumatiṇca Sarasvatīṇca).

**Association with Brahmā**

Verse 21 of the Kamauli copper-plate inscription² of regnal year 4 of Vaidyadeva (c. 1128-1136 A. D.) narrates that once Sarasvatī got tired in wandering through the four faces of Brahmā and took rest on the mouth of the sage Kauśika, the greatest of his gotra.

A purānic legend³ describes Sarasvatī as daughter of Brahmā born from Brahmā's own immaculate substance as the first woman of his creations and later became his spouse.

A beautiful passage of the Kāvyādārśa of Daṇḍin may be mentioned here. The passage records — Caturmukha mukhāṁvojavanahāṁsabadhūrmāṁ Mānase ramatam dirghā sarvaśuktā Sarasvatī, which means "May the all-white Sarasvatī- the Harmsi midst the group of the mouth-lotuses of the four-faced (God)- find for long delight in my mānasa (mind)"⁴.

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¹ Garrett, *op.cit.*, p. 529.
In our latest popular belief Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are regarded as the two daughters of Durgā. But early Bengal inscriptions bear no trace of that idea. The idea of river goddess of vedic mythology\(^1\) is not found mentioned in the inscriptions.

But Sarasvatī as the personification of speech (vāc), repeatedly described in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa\(^2\) is referred to in the inscription\(^3\) of early Bengal. In the epic mythology the goddess is adored mostly as the goddess of learning and once is attributed as mother of vedas.\(^4\) We still worship her as the goddess of learning, art and music.

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2. II, 5, 6; III 1, 4, 9; 3, 9, 17 etc.
3. See above, p. 61.
SECTION II
(A)
ŚIVA

It has been noticed by the scholars that Viṣṇu and Śiva, the two supreme gods of Brāhmaṇical religion, have got some basic differences in their characteristics. Viṣṇu is always described as adorned with kingly dresses, valuable jewelleries and having a fast moving bird of sky, Garuḍa, as his vāhana. On the contrary, Śiva is always clad in animal skin with an ascetic looking appearance, associated with nāgas and moves with a slow moving animal of the earth, bull, as his vāhana. According to R. G. Bhandarkar¹, if feelings of love and admiration contributed to the formation of Vaiṣṇavism, the sentiment of fear was responsible for the formation of Rudra, referred to in the Rgveda² as ‘man-slaying’ (nṛ-han). Thus it was felt that Rudra was to be appeased to become out of danger and prayer is made to him, “nor do, thou harm our dear (frail) bodies, O Rudra” ³. Śiva has got his prototype in vedic Rudra⁴.

DIFFERENT NAMES

Śiva is mentioned in early Bengal inscriptions in various names highlighting his different characteristics and such names are chronologically discussed below.

Kokāmukhasvāmin, Mahādeva, Maheśvara, Vṛṣabhadhvaja, Vṛṣadhvaja, Śaśiśekhara, Śambhu, Śaṅkara, Māhateśvara, Indumauli, Naṭṭeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka, Hara, Śiva, Trilocana-guru, Paśupati, Cāṇḍiguru, Purāri, Hetukeśa, Bharākṣeśvara, Vāṭeśvara, Mataṅgeśvara, Vaidyanātha, Prapitāmaheśvara, Vāṭeśa, Gaṅgeśa, Viśvarūpeśvara, Sahasralinga, Someśvara, Kedāra, Dhūrjaṭi, Īśvara, Bhava, Somanātha, Ardhanārisvara, Pañcānana and Sudhākiraṇaśekhara.

². IV, 3, 6.
³. Rgveda, I, 114, 7.
Kokāmukhasvāmin

The first epigraphical evidence of the prevalence of Śaivism in Bengal is the Damodarpur inscription\(^1\) of the time of Budhagupta (c. 475 – 495 A. D.). As referred to in Section 1 (A), here Kokāmukhasvāmin is mentioned in line 7 and line 10, describing the temples of two gods on the summit of the Himalayas (hinavacchikhare).

In the *Mahābhārata\(^2\)*, Kokāmukha means Durgā who is described as wolf-faced and found of loud laughter and battles. Again Pārvati is called as Kokamukhā in Arjuna’s litany to her, which means a pigeon\(^3\). R. G. Basak opines that Kokāmukhasvāmin is Śiva\(^4\). K. G. Goswami supports the opinion\(^5\).

It appears from this inscription that the chief merchant Ribhupāla was inclined more to Śaivism as he intended to establish a *linga*, named after Kokāmukha (Line 5).

K. G. Goswami\(^6\) draws our attention to the devotional aspect of the epigraph as the donee says in line 15 that the donation would be approved out of devotion to the deities (*Taduttara-kālaṁ saṁvyavahāṁribhir-deva-bhaktyānumantavyā uktam vyāsena*). According to him, devotional phase of religion began to influence Śaivism in the 5th century A. D.

R. G. Bhandarkar\(^7\) observes that the phallic worship element of Rudra-Śiva cult was borrowed from the so-called barbarian tribes who lived here before the Aryans came. Aryan Śaivism was connected with phallic worship, at a later age. One passage of the *Ṛgveda*\(^8\) states that once Indra was asked to control the people

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2. VI, 23, 8; as cited by Hopkins, *op. cit.*, Ch. IX, p. 225.
8. VII, 24, 5.
whose god was Śiśna or phallus (Śisnadeva), so that they might not disturb the performances of vedic rites. The phallic symbols of large stone found at Mahenjodaro support the idea. But N. Sastri opines that "the liṅga may have been in origin no more than just a symbol of Śiva, as the sālagrāma is of Viṣṇu".

Mahādeva
Śiva is called as Mahādeva in two early Bengal inscriptions.

1) The 1st line of the Guṇāighar copper-plate inscription of Vainyagupta (c. 495-509 A.D.) of Gupta year 188 (507 A.D.) describes the king as a devotee at the feet of Mahādeva (Mahādeva pādānudhyāto mahārāja Śri Vainyagupta). It may be interesting to mention here that a triangular bottom piece of a baked red clay seal was recovered from Nālandā which contains the name of Vainyagupta (Paramabhāgavato mahaśrī-adhirāja Śri Vainyaguptaḥ – line 5.)

While commenting on Panini's Sūtra, Patanjali mentions a Saiva sect known as Śivabhāgavatas carrying an iron lance (āyahasālikah) as an emblem of the deity they worshipped.

2) Further, the Bodhgaya stone inscription of regnal year 26 of Dharmapāla (c. 775-810 A.D.) records that Kesava, the son of sculptor Ujjvala, set up an image of the four-faced Mahādeva for the spiritual benefit of the Mallas of Mahābodhi.

The above said inscribed stone-slab contains a figure of Viṣṇu in the right, figure of Śūrya in the left and perhaps a Bhairava in the middle. Huntington suggests that the middle figure is of Lakulīṣa.

5. V. 2, 36; cited by J. N. Banerjea, op. cit., p. 449.
Verse 1 records the consecration of four-faced Śiva in phallic form -
Campeśāyatane rāmye ujjvalasya śilābhidaḥ keśavākhyena putreṇa Mahādevaḥ-
catūrmukhaḥ.

J. N. Banerjea opines³ that the Bhairava image of Śiva belongs to his ghora or
ugra form. A. K. Maitreya says² that in the medieval period it was customary to
make and worship caturmukha Śiva-liṅga. This form is also mentioned in the
Mahābhārata³. The epic mythology⁴ also says that Śiva became four-faced through
staring at Tilottamā.

According to R. G. Bhandarkar⁵, in one aspect Rudra was worshipped by the
habitants of forests, far away from civilized section. Gradually, in the Atharvaveda
and the Yajurveda, Rudra was raised to the supreme position. He became the
Mahādeva or Mahāndevah. He reigned the sky, the middle region. He was in fire
and water, in plants and herbs, in all beings. He became the protector of the Vṛātyas,
the ultimate ruler. R. G. Bhandarkar observes⁶ that both the terrific and benign
aspects of Śiva became immensely popular among ordinary people. Even the
famous poets like Kālidāsa, Subandhu, Bāṇa, Śrī-Harṣa, Bhaṭṭa-Nārāyaṇa,
Bhavabhūti paid reverence to god Śiva.

Maheśvara

This name we find in four early Bengal inscriptions where the kings are
described as māheśvara i.e. devotee of Maheśvara.

i) The Jayrāmpur copper-plate inscription⁷ of the regnal year 1 of Gopacandra
(c. 540-580 A. D.) describes the king as a devout worshipper of Maheśvara
(paramamāheśvara Mahārājādhirāja Śrī Gopacandra – Lines 9-10).

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3. Anuśāsanaparvan, 17, 76.
6. Ibid., p. 118.

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ii) Besides the description of kings as *māheśvara*, kings are also noticed to be described as *paramamāheśvara*. The 4th and 5th lines of the undated Egrā copper-plate inscription¹ of Śaśāṅka (c. 600-625 A.D.) describe the king as *parama-daiva* and *paramamāheśvara*.

iii) Lines 30-31 of the Naihāṭi copper-plate inscription² of regnal year 11 of Vallālasena (c. 1159-1179 A.D.) describes Vallālasena as *paramamāheśvara*.

iv) The Kamauli copper-plate³ of Vaidyadeva (c. 1128-1136 A.D.) describes the king as *parama-māheśvara* and *parama-vaiṣṇava* i.e. devotee of both the gods (Line 47).

**VĀHANA: NANDI, THE VRŚABHA**

Popularity of Saivism in early Bengal is further confirmed by the seals attached to some of the plates bearing figure of a recumbent bull, *vāhana* of Śiva. It is interesting here to draw attention to six inscribed seals having the figure of the bull including the Rohtāsgarh stone seal-matrix⁴ of Śaśāṅka (c. 600-625 A.D.) containing damaged representation of bull and mentioning him as Mahāśāmanta. The five copper-plates of early Bengal attached with such seals bearing figure of bull are –

i) Guṇāighar record⁵ of Vainyagupta (c. 495-509 A.D.),

ii) Jayrāmpur record⁶ of the time of Gopacandra (c. 540-580 A.D.)

iii) Ganjam record⁷ of the time of Śaśāṅka of the Gupta year 300 and iv-v) Aśrāfpur record⁸ of the 13th regnal year of Devakhaḍga (c. 658-673 A.D.).

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The Ganjam copper-plate record, mentioned above, issued by Mādhavarāja II of the Śilledabhava family shows that the king was also a worshipper of Śiva. The inscription eulogises him as a man of virtue, devoted to the lord of the three worlds (Śiva), who is the cause of creation, existence and destruction, whose arms are placed on the hump of the great bull (Nandi) as if on the pillow of a couch and whose matted hair is illuminated by the crescent of the Moon.

Śiva’s matted hair is identified in the literature with flames of Agni and thus he is also known as ‘Kapardin’. Nandi, the bull is invariably associated with Śiva. Rudra is called as Vṛṣabhāṅka (the god whose emblem is bull) in the Rāmāyaṇa. The Mahābhārata describes Śiva as seated on a bull. S. Bhattacharji points out that in the Matsya Purāṇa Śiva is described as Dharma in the shape of a bull. According to the epic mythology “Śiva has the bull standard because he approves of cows as the root of prosperity.”

Two names of Śiva Vṛṣabhadhvaja and Vṛṣadhvaja, related to his vāhana, are noticed to occur in the early Bengal inscriptions.

Vṛṣabhadhvaja

Verse 12 of the undated Bhāturiyā stone inscription of the time of Rājyapāla (c. 930-967 A. D.) states that the king dedicated a village in favour of the god Vṛṣabhadhvaja (i. e. Śiva) installed by Yosodāsa, the administrative officer.

Vṛṣadhvaja

Śiva is mentioned as Vṛṣadhvaja in the Naihāti plate of Vallālasena. Here Verse 5 praises Hemantasena as a person who was like a bee at the lotus feet of the god with bull-standard (Vṛṣadhvajacaraṇāṃbuja-ṣatpado guṇābharaṇah).

2. II, 25, 36.
4. XCIII, 66; as cited by S. Bhattacharji, op. cit., p. 147.
Here we notice that the name of Śaṅkara is attached to an unit of land measurement. In line 45, we find an expression śrī-vṛṣabha-śaṅkaranalena, in connection with measurement of land.

It is noticed that the same expression vṛṣabha-śaṅkara-nala occurs again in lines 36-37 of the Ānuliā copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of the 3rd regnal year of Lakṣmaṇasena. N. G. Majumdar suggests\(^2\) that though Lakṣmaṇasena braced Vaiṣṇavism, probably he followed the method of land measurement introduced by his grand-father.

It may be mentioned here that the Mādhavpur stone-slab inscription\(^3\) describes that a temple of Śiva was dedicated by a lady, a devotee of Śiva (line 16). Here in line 8 we find mention of a vṛṣa-saudha. According to B. N. Mukherjee and Pranab Roy the record belongs to the Bhaumakaras of Orissa and the temple was built in 368 abda (as mentioned at the end of the record). They suggest that the abda was started by the Bhaumakaras of Orissa in c. 736- A. D. which indicates that the date of the Mādhavpur record should be c. (736+368) = c. 1104 A. D.

The epithets mentioned in the epigraphs of the Sena kings Vijayasena and Vallālasena, show that they were ardent devotees of Śiva. The epithet Ari-Vṛṣabhaśaṅkara has been applied to Vijayasena (c. 1096-1159 A. D.) in the Barrackpur copper-plate inscription\(^4\) of his regnal year 62 (Line 49), Āri-rāja-vṛṣabhaśaṅkara in the Idilpur grant\(^5\) (Lines 42-43) of Suryasena (c. 1210-1215 A. D.) and in the Madanapādā copper-plate grant\(^6\) issued in the 2nd regnal year of Suryasena (line 32).

Lines 38-43 of the Idilpur copper-plate inscription mention Vallālasena as Ariśṭa-nihśaṅka-Śaṅkara, Lakṣmanasena as Ariśṭa-Madana-Śaṅkara, Śūryasena as

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2. Lock. cit., p. 84.
3. B. N. Mukherjee and Pranab Roy in Sāhitya-Parīṣat Patrikā, pp. 91-95.
5. Ibid., pp. 118 ff.
6. Ibid., pp. 132 ff.
Arirāja-vasāhyā-Śaṅkara and in line 38 of the Madanapāḍā plate, Viśvarūpasena is mentioned as Arirāja-vṛṣabhaka-Śaṅkara.

Śaśiṣekhara

Śiva is called as Śaśiṣekhara in the two undated Dubī and Nidhanpur copper-plate inscriptions of Bhāskaravarman (c. 600-625 A. D.) of the Varman dynasty of Kāmarūpa which give a beautiful description of Śiva.

"The Dubī record begins with a verse in adoration to the god Śiva which also occurs at the commencement of the Nidhanpur inscription."3 Verse 1 of both the records salute the god who is lovely with the moon as his head-gear, the wielder of the bow and adorned with particles of ashes –

pranāmaya devaṁ śaśiṣekharanipriyam pinākīnaiḥ bhasma-kaṇair-vibhūṣitaṁ (tam) vibhūtaye bhūtimat (āṁ).

Śambhu

Śiva is called as Śambhu in the following seven early Bengal inscriptions.

i) Verse 2 of the Comilla copper-plate of Lokanātha (c. 650-670 A. D.), cited above, describes that the prosperous king sprang from the good family of the sage Bharadvāja and his brilliant consecration was performed by a shower of dust from the lotus feet of Śambhu.

ii) Verse 5 of the copper-plate inscription4 of regnal year 3 of Sūrapāla I (C. 862 – 875 A. D.) justifies the name of Dharmapāla as the defender of dharma or religion. The verse illustrates dharma as the True Faith (i.e. Buddhism) and again as the enemy of Khara (i.e. Rāma) or of Śambhu (i.e. Śiva) or of Murārī (i.e. Viṣṇu).

iii) Verse 27 of the undated Bāṅgadā inscription of the time of Nayapāla (1037-1043 A.D.) cited above, states that the splendor of the temple of Bhavāṇī would

make her husband Śambhu happy remembering the house where he was married (i.e. Himālaya).

iv) Verse 16 and 17 of the two Maināmatī charters of the 6th regnal year of Ladahacandra, cited above, describe that like Hindu pilgrims, the king visited Vārāṇasī, the abode of Śiva and Pārvatī, mentioned as Śambhu and Girisūtā.

v) The undated Nimdighi stone-slab inscription of the time of Gopāla IV (c. 1128-1143 A. D.) invokes god Śambhu in Verse 1. The purpose of the inscription was probably to record the construction of a Śaiva temple.

vi) We again find mention of Śambhu in the Govindapur record of regnal year 2, Tarpaṇdighi record of regnal year 2 and Ānuliā record of regnal year 3 of Lakṣmaṇasena (c. 1179-1206 A. D.), where after paying salutation to god Nārāyaṇa, prayer is made to Śambhu (Śiva).

Verse 1 of the above mentioned inscriptions describe the matted hair of Śambhu as the cloud which removes the heat of sufferings of existence. The flash of the jewels of the lord of serpents act as its lightning, the crescent Moon is its bow of Indra, the Heavenly River is its water and the string of white skulls act as its line of craness. It contains within itself, air controlled by meditation which leads to the growth of the sprout of welfare.

vii) In the undated Deopāra stone-slab inscription of Vijayasena (c. 1096-1159 A. D.), cited above, we find Śambhu in anthropomorphic representation. Incidentally it may be mentioned here that in this inscription we find a glimpse of the masterly composition of the great poet Umāpatidhara.

Verse 1 enumerates that Pārvati in fear of removal of his breast-garment,

1. See above p. 40.
pulls down the wreath from her head. Even the light of the pleasure-chamber (ratālaya) is put to shame by the brilliance of the wreath and the faces of Śambhu (five) smile, seeing the bashful bud-like moon-face of Pārvatī in moon-light.

According to N. G. Majumdar,1 ratālaya refers to the seat of effulgence of the Tāṇtrikas.

Śaṅkara

This name is noticed to occur in three inscriptions.

i) Comilla copper-plate inscription2 of Lokanātha (c. 650–700 A. D.) mentions about an image (vigraha) of Śaṅkara.

Verse 1 begins with obeisance to god Śaṅkara, who destroyed the evils and the god of love (Manmatha) out of anger. It further says that for happiness of the three worlds, the god divided himself into eight forms, in each of which his greatness was present (bhuvanatraya-suthi-ti-sākha-prāptyarthamānāṣṭadha).

The incidents described in the inscription seem to have a literary background. According to a purānic legend3, once when Kamadeva (Manmatha) tried to influence Śiva with passion of love for wife Pārvatī and discharged an arrow of flower with this intention, Śiva became so furious that he reduced Kāma to ashes by a flame issued by his third eye.

We come to know from the Mahābhārata4 that Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna pray to Śiva and Umā for getting eight boons from the god of eight principles and forms. The eight forms of Śiva are described as water, fire, priest, Sun, Moon, space, earth and wind5. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Padma Purāṇa, Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, Kūrma Purāṇa, Liṅga Purāṇa and Vāyu Purāṇa mention the eight forms of Rudra-

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1. Ibid., p. 50.
5. Ibid., p. 223.
Śiva. The eight manifestations of Śiva given by them are Rudra, Bhava, Śarva, Īśāna, Paśupati, Bhīma, Ugra and Mahādeva.

ii) In Verses 11 and 12 of the undated Bhāturiyā stone inscription of Rājyapāla (c. 930-967 A.D.) we find mention of a huge temple of Śaṅkara which was built by Yaśodāsa and a Śivalinga was installed inside it. The temple was surrounded by eight shrines of other deities (suramandiraiḥ).

iii) Verse 6 of the Naihāti copper-plate of Vallālasena, cited above, narrates that god Śaṅkara was terrified with the whiteness of fame of Hemantasena and feared, if it was the overflowing of Ganges gushing backward to the source (pratyābyāttrapraṇaḥocalitasuradhināśankayā Śaṅkaraṇa).

Māhateśvara

The copper-plate charter of regnal year 3 of Sūrapāla I (c. 862-875 A.D.) records that “of the four gift villages, two were granted in favour of the god Māhateśvara, installed by the Queen Mother at Vārāṇasī and the other two in favour of the paśaṇ of the Śaiva-ācāryas, which was adored by her.” The name reminds us of the religious practice of naming the god according to the name of the devotee. In this case, it is the mother of the king, Māhatādevi, according to whose name the god was named as Māhateśvara (i.e. Śiva).

Indumauli

Śiva is mentioned as Indumauli in a tenth century pillar inscription bearing the name of the Kamboja king Kuñjaraghatāvarṣa which was found amidst the ruins of Bāngadh. It records that the king erected a temple of Indumauli (i.e. Śiva).

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1. Wilson, op.cit., Ch. VIII, p. 84.
3. See above, p. 69.
5. R. Chanda, Gaudarājamāla, p. 41.
Naṭṭeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka

The undated Maināmatī copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of Govindacandra (c. 1020 – 1055 A. D.) issued in the name of Śiva-bhaṭṭāraka records that the grant was made in favour of the god Naṭṭeśvara-bhaṭṭāraka for gaining religious merit of the donor and his Parents.

Verse 13 of the inscription compares young Govindacandra with Skanda and his parents with Śiva and Śivā.

Hara

1) Verse 16 of the same Maināmatī plate records a prayer to the Brāhmanical trinity where Śiva is called as Hara.

2) This name we find again in verse 30 of the Bāṅgaḍh inscription of Nayapāla, discussed below.

Śiva

Eight of the early Bengal inscriptions beginning with salutation to Śiva (Oṁ namah Śivāya), are enlisted below chronologically.

a) The god is mentioned as Śiva in Verse 5 of the Khālimpur copper-plate inscription of Dharmapāla (c. 775 – 810 A. D.), cited above (Sarvāṅiva Śivasya).

b) The Irdā copper-plate\(^2\) and the Kālāndā copper-plate\(^3\) belonging to the 13th and 14th regnal years of Kamboja king Nayapāla (c. 1030-1055 A. D.),

c) Gayā Aksayavata temple inscription\(^4\) of the time of Vigrahapāla III (c. 1043-1070 A. D.),

d) The undated Deopāra stone-slab inscription\(^5\) of Vijayasena (c. 1096-1159 A.D.), and Barrackpur copper-plate inscription\(^6\) of the regnal year 62 of Vijayasena,

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5. See above p. 18.
e) The Rajghat stone-slab inscription\(^1\) of Bhimadeva of the time of Madanapāla (c. 1143-1161 A. D.),

f) The Naihāti copper-plate inscription\(^2\) of regnal year 11 of Vallālasena (c. 1159-1179 A. D.) and

g) The Mādhavpur stone-slab inscription\(^3\) belonging to the 12th century A.D.

Trilocana-guru

This name reminds us of the three eyes of Śiva. Verse 8 of the Bāṅgaḍh stone inscription of Nayapāla, cited above\(^4\), describes that the ascetic Vidyāśīva’s disciple Dharmaśīva built a Kailāsa-like temple for the god Trilocana-guru (Śiva) who was the ornament of Vārāṇasi.

According to the epic mythology, Śiva lives in the Mountain Kailāsa with his consort Durgā. The Mahābhārata tells the story of creation of his third eye. Once when Śiva was engaged in austerities in the Himalayas, Umā playfully covered his eyes. Suddenly the world became dark. But instantly a third eye, luminous as the Sun, appeared on his fore-head. The fierce eye burned the Himalayas. Umā was sorry for her father. So Śiva restored it to former condition\(^5\).

Paśupati

In one inscription we notice Śiva is called as Paśupati. Verse 14 of the Bāṅgaḍh inscription of Nayapāla, cited above\(^6\), elucidates that Sarvaśīva, disciple of Indraśīva, gave up his status in favour of disciple and brother Mūrttiśīva and himself adopted the life of renunciation in the forest. The great ascetic is compared with Paśupati (Śiva), who after churning of the ocean gave away Lakṣmī to his sīṣya Hari and took viṣam himself.

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2. See above, p. 69.
4. See above, p. 12.
In the *Atharvaveda* Rudra has been called as Paśupati, meaning the lord of the beasts\(^1\).

**Caṇḍīguru**

The uncommon name of Śiva is noticed in Verse 28 of the Bāṅgaḍh plate of Nayapāla, cited above. It introduces Rūpaśīva, a disciple of Mūrttiśīva, as a learned person who recovered the lost philosophy of Caṇḍīguru (i.e. Śiva).

D. C. Sircar thinks\(^2\) that the word ‘Caṇḍīguru’ is used in the sense of Śiva as the instructor of his consort Caṇḍī. Perhaps he revived a branch of Śaiva philosophy which lost its popularity.

**Purāṇi**

The undated Siyān stone inscription\(^3\) of the time of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A.D.) tells us mostly about Śaiva religious establishments. A few associated with Śakti, Viṣṇu, Śūrya, Ganeśa and Lakṣmī are also referred to. Verse 24 of this record describes a temple (*aṭṭatana*) of the god Purāṇi (i.e. Śiva) and a two storied monastery as a residence of the Śaiva ascetics. Verse 25 tells about the *kalasa* on the top of the temple and the installation of eleven Rudras.

The epic-purānic mythology describes Śiva’s numerous great acts as demon-slayer. He destroyed Tripura, the three cities of demons, with a single arrow, for which he had to wait for thousand years, to get the three in one line\(^4\). The legend of Tripuradahana is narrated in the *Mahābhārata*\(^5\).

According to R. G. Bhandarkar,\(^6\) the concept of Rudra was created among people, out of fear of destructive phenomenon of nature and felt that Rudra was to be appeased. The word Śiva is not used as a proper name in the *Rgveda*, but as the

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5. VIII, 24; XIII, 160.
epithet of several vedic gods\(^1\). The original sense of Śiva is auspicious. When the
terrific god Rudra becomes benevolent, he becomes Śiva. Rudra is raised to supreme
power in the Ṛgveda. But in the later Samhitās he is expressed in much developed
forms. In the Atharvasveda Rudra is called in many names\(^2\). The epic mythology\(^3\)
gives eleven names of Rudra as sons of Tvaṣṭr. The Harivamśa says that the eleven
Rudras were brought forth by Surabhi from Kaśyapa through Mahādeva’s favour\(^4\).

Hetukeśa

Verse 28 of the above-said Siyān inscription of Nayapāla refers to the prāśāda
(temple) of god Śiva called Hetukeśa.

D. C. Sircar opines that the name Hetukeśa may not be due to the fact that
some-one named Hetuka installed the Śiva-liṅga, but is derived from the name of
the god as Hetuka-śūlin which is referred to in some documents of Sālastambha
dynasty of Assam\(^5\). Again he says\(^6\) that one of the gaṇas of Śiva is named as Heṭuk
and hence the name was Hetukeśa.

Bharākṣeśvara

A temple made of stone of the god Bharākṣeśvara is mentioned in Verse 32 of
the Siyān plate, cited above\(^7\). Verse 35 of the same inscription mentions that the
king installed a Bhairava image named Ghaṇṭiśa with 64 images of mother-
goddesses around him.

\(^1\) J. N. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p. 447.
\(^3\) Hopkins, *op. cit.*, VI, p. 173.
\(^7\) See above, p. 43.
Vaṭesvara, Mataṅgeśvara and Vaidyanātha

We find the above mentioned names of god Śiva in Verse 38, Verse 43 and Verse 48 of the Siyan plate, discussed above. It is a rare occasion that Verse 43 depicts Śiva as father of Lakṣmī as discussed in our section I B above. Verse 53 mentions about a silver image of Sadāśiva. Another interesting point of the inscription is that its Verse 56 mentions of a gold image of Śiva. It is also said that a gold trident was installed in the temple of Sāgara (Gaṅgāsāgar) by the bhūpati (king).

Prapitāmaheśvara

The damaged Verse 1 of the Gayā temple inscription affixed to the wall of a small shrine under the Akṣayavaṇa of regnal year 5 of Vigrahapāla III (c. 1043-1070 A. D.) perhaps mentioned “a prayer for the purification of the people from sin by the kind heart of Śiva”¹.

Verse 14 mentions the erection of a temple of god Prapitāmaheśvara. D. C. Sircar thinks² that god Prapitāmaheśvara is Brahmā. But S. K. Sarasvati and K. C. Sarkar suggest that the deity is a phallic emblem of Mahādeva whose temple is still present near Akṣayavaṇa³.

Vaṭeśa, Gaṅgeśa, Viśvarūpeśvara

Among the deities mentioned in Verse 17 of the inscription, referred to above, such as Gātheśa, Kanakeśvara, Ambujabhava, Viśvarūpeśvara, Gaṅgeśa, Gadādhara, Śukla-bhānu, Gr̐ddhraṭa, Sujanārādana and Vaṭeśa – Vaṭeśa and Gaṅgeśa refer to Śiva lingas and Viśvarūpeśvara is Svākṣa or Svānāma linga i.e named after the donor Viśvarūpa or Viśvāditya.

Sahasralinga, Someśvara, Kedāra

Verse 12 of the Gayā Śītalā temple inscription⁴ of a local ruler Yakṣapāla (c. 1075-1085 A. D.) describes that Yakṣapāla built a temple for the accommodation of

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2. Ibid., p. 89.
several deities including Sahasralinga and two gods called Someśvara and Kedāra, which names probably refer to Śiva. D. C. Sircar points out that the inscription does not mention the name of the Pāla overlord of Yakṣapāla.

Dhūrjaṭī

In Verse 1 of the Barrackpur copper-plate inscription¹ of regnal year 62 of Vijayasena (c. 1096-1159 A.D.) we find Śiva in a jovial mood. Here Dhūrjaṭī, who protects the world, is depicted in a homely atmosphere when he is laughing at the quarrel between the enemy of the Krauṇca mountain (i.e. Kārttikeya) and the elephant faced one (i.e. Ganeśa). The two sons are shouting and playing in the water of the Ganges on the head of their father and pulling the crescent moon amidst his matted hair, mistaking it for a sapharī fish entrapped in mass of weeds.

Īśvara

In Verse 3 of the undated Deopārā stone slab inscription² of Vijayasena, golden circle of the matted hair of Īśvara (i.e. Śiva) is depicted as the throne of the Moon, who is fanned by the cluster of water-sprays of the Ganges and whose umbrella is the serpents, encircling Śiva’s head.

The serpent has an inseparable association with Śiva in the mythology. From a number of Grha sutras we come to know that offerings to Rudra should be placed in snake –infested areas³. The dwelling place of the snakes are the mountains, Śiva is also Girīṣa. Śiva is nilakanṭha by the poison he took in his throat. The Mahābhārata⁴ describes once Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna prayed to Śiva for a divine weapon and according to the advice of the god two serpents in a pond turned into a bow and arrows for them. The Moon is also an inseparable part of Candrasekhara i.e. Śiva. The Rgveda and the Yajurveda mention Mūjavat hill as the abode of Soma and Rudra⁵. Soma later becomes the Moon (about which we will discuss in chapter II below) in mythology. Śiva is also presented as the god of lunar group.

3. S. Bhattacharji, op. cit., p. 149.
4. VII, 57, 16.
5. S. Bhattacharji, op. cit., p. 152.
Ardhendu mauli

Verse 32 of the Deopārā inscription depicts Śiva as Ardhendu mauli, the half-Moon crested lord.

The mythological legend of descent of Gaṅgā to the earth by Śiva is indicated in Verse 2 of the Mādhavpur stone-slab inscription, cited above1. After paying obeisance to lord Śiva the verse states that the god would bring the holy water to the world.

The story of holding the force of descending torrent of Gaṅgā on Śiva’s head indicates Śiva’s power and sanctity. The epic mythology describes the story elaborately2. S. Bhattacharji opines3 that Śaivism spread and flourished following the tract of Gaṅgā from its origin at Kailāsa via Vārāṇasi, Prayāga down to the Bay of Bengal.

Bhava

Verse 6 of the Rājghāt stone-slab inscription4 of Bhūmadeva of the time of Madanapāla (c. 1143-1161 A. D.) originally embedded in the wall of a Śiva temple on the bank of the Ganges in Benaras, refers to the construction of a temple of Bhava (i.e. Śiva) by Bhūmadeva, on the bank of the Avimukta-nadi, adorned with āditya-kāca (probably Suryakanta maṇi), which created wonder even in the minds of the enemies.

Bhava and Sarva are mentioned as the two names of Rudra, who are invoked for happiness removing sins and for long life in the Atharvaveda5. The epic mythology6 mentions Bhava among the eleven names of Rudra inherited from the vedas. The Atharvaveda considers Bhava (the king, rājan) and Sarva (the arrow-wielder), as two distinct deities who are invoked to launch the lightning against evil-doers7.

1. See above, p. 77.
5. VIII, 2, 7; cited by S. Bhattacharji, op. cit., p. 117.
Somanāṭha

Verse 26 of the Kamauli copper-plate of Vaidyadeva, cited above, describes that the donee of the grant, Śrīdhara pleased his god of worship Somanāṭha (i.e. Śiva) by observing various rites in the Kali-yuga.

Ardhanārisvara

Verse 1 of the Naihati copper-plate inscription of regnal year 11 of Vallālasena (c. 1159-1179 A.D.), cited above, describes the Ardhanārisvara form of Śiva.

It enumerates that Śiva dances (sandhyā-taṇḍava) with the Nandi song. His female part produces charming body movements while the other half (male part) produces terrible extra-ordinary currents.

According to J. N. Banerjea this form does not belong to any particular mythology, but shows the saumya aspect of the god Śiva and goddess Pārvatī, the primeval cause of creation. Śiva appears as patron of arts and literature in the later epic. He is the inspirer of artists (sarvaśilpapravartaka) and makes sixty-four divisions of kalā. The Anuśāsana parvan of the Mahābhārata describes the Ardhanārisvara aspect of Śiva. In this form as Jagatpitr, Śiva becomes the god of creation.

The Nātyaśāstra illustrates that god Śiva became the lord of creation, preservation and destruction through his dances and he taught this art to Taṇḍu which was defined as taṇḍava.

Verse 1 of the Naiḥāṭi inscription, discussed above, invokes the Ardhanārisvara, who dances taṇḍava as well as lalita with the Nandi song (Nandi-nināda).

1. See above, p. 16.
2. See above, p. 69.
5. XIII, 14, 298-313.
6. For different versions of the stories regarding the formation of Ardhanārisvara, see 'The Bhakti cult and Ardhanārisvara' by S. Bandyopadhyay in The Bhakti cult and Ancient Indian Geography edited by D. C. Sircar, pp. 127 ff.
7. IV, 264-265.
When Śiva danced tāṇḍava, Pārvatī danced with pleasant, charming movements which is called lāṣya in the Nāṭyaśāstra\(^1\). Nāndī is the song, sung during the commencement of a drāma\(^2\).

**Pañcānana**

It is interesting to find that the Mādhaiṇāgar inscription\(^3\) of regnal year 27 of Lakṣmaṇasena (c.1179-1206 A. D.) opens with obeisance to god Nārāyaṇa as his other inscriptions but Verse 1 elucidates the various aspects of Śiva. Here we notice Hari and Hara, both are presented in one body. Here prayer is made to lord Śiva (Pañcānana) to bestow prosperity. The god is described to hold his beloved (Gauri-priyā) in his lap, like a flash of lightning on the autumn cloud and sustain Hari in another half of his most wonderful body (i.e. Hari-Hara rūpa). Śiva in both malign and benign aspects is remembered here.

His countenance is said to be fearful because of the three eyes, which dazzle like the bright rays of the Sun (diptārkādyutilocanatrayarūcā ghorāṁ dadhāno mukham) and that five-faced god is said as the terror of the gods and subduer of elephantlike demons (devatrasanirastadanava gajah puṣṇātu pañcānanah).

The epic mythology\(^4\) grants a number of epithets to Śiva. He is Trisūlin and Trinetra. Śivas third eye is like a Sun on his brow. Greater importance has been given on Śiva in the later part of the epic. But in the earlier books also we find Arjuna to offer regular nightly offering to Tryambaka which may indicate less antagonism between the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva sects. Kurus are Śaivites, but in Devadeva form, Rudra gives Arjuna his own raudram astram. Śiva’s terrible image is also presented in the Mahābhārata. At Brahmā’s request Śiva created danda i.e. punishment to restore order and discipline\(^5\). In one episode Brahmā gave a Khadga to Śiva to destroy the evils and Śiva gave a sword smeared with blood of demons to Viṣṇu\(^6\). The Rāmāyaṇa also mentions about Śiva’s Pāśupata weapon\(^7\).

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A legend in the *Mahabharata* describes the cause of the formation of the third eye of Śiva. Once when Śiva was engaged in austerities, Pārvatī playfully put her hands over his eyes. Suddenly the whole world became dark and a third eye appeared on the forehead of the god, luminous as the Sun. The three eyes are said as the Sun, the Moon and the Fire. Śivas five faces (*Pañçaśana*) represent five elements – earth, water, heat, wind and sky. They are also known as Mahādeva (eastern), Bhairava (southern), Nandivaktra (western), Umāvaktra (northern) and Sadāśiva or Īśāna (fifth face on the top). The crescent on the forehead is called *aiśvarya*, Vāsuki is the symbol of anger, tiger-skin is desire and the mount bull is the divine dharma.

**Sudhākiranāśekhara**

Verse 4 of the Idilpur copper-plate of 3rd regnal year of Sūryasena (c. 1210-1215 A. D.) describes Vijayasena as the crescent-headed god himself (*svayāmi* Sudhākiranāśekhara). Every one of the kings bowing down to him looked like Rāvana and the brilliant flash of the nails of his feet were reflected by their heads.

A legend of the *Rāmāyaṇa* states that once Rāvana’s chariot got stuck because of some mischievous acts towards Śiva and the ten-headed demon tried to lift the Kailāsa angrily, but Śiva stuck it in one place only with his toes. Wounded Rāvana yelled for a thousand years, ultimately only to be blessed by the god with the boon that the demon would be vulnerable to man only.

**Sakala-suro-guroḥ**

Śiva is praised as the foremost of all the gods (*sakala-suro-guroḥ*) in Verse 2 of the Mehār copper-plate inscription of the 4th regnal year of Dāmodaradeva (c.1230-1255 A. D.) of Deva dynasty of Vāṅga-Samataṭa.

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5. VII, 16; XVI, 27.
SECTS

Study of the early Bengal inscriptions reveal the existence of two sects of Śaivāites in the religious life of medieval Bengal — Pāṇḍava Vaṣṇu and the other Durvāsa Vaṣṇu discussed below chronologically.

i) Pāṇḍava Vaṣṇu Sect

Epigraphs prove that Śaivism was flourishing in the reign of the Buddhist king Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A. D.). The 38th line of the Bhāgalpur inscription1 of 17th regnal year of the king describes that the king himself constructed thousands of Śiva temples.

It is further stated that the king installed the deity Śiva-bhaṭṭāraka and donated a village Makutikā for daily rituals and maintenance of the temple as well as to meet the various needs of the Pāṇḍava Acāryas (mahārajadhiraṇa-śrī-Nārāyaṇapāla devena svayam-kāraṇa-sahasraśayatanasya/tatra/pratiṣṭhāpitasya/bhagavataḥ Śiva-bhaṭṭārakasya/pāṇḍava-cārya/pārśada ca/ bhagavantam Śivabhaṭṭārakam-uddhīṣya śāsanikṛtya pradattah).

It is understood from the inscription that the viṣaya of Kakṣa within the province of Tirabhukti (modern Tirhut region of Bihar) was a popular seat of Śaivism where Pāṇḍava Acāryas (teachers) pariṣadas gathered in numbers and the Buddhist king took care of their necessities.

A brief discussion about the Pāṇḍava Acāryas may not be out of place here. The Nārāyaṇiya section of the Mahābhārata2 enumerates five systems of Śaiva doctrines named as Sāṁkhya, Yoga, Pāñcarātra, Veda and the Pāṇḍava. Here Śiva-Śrīkaṇṭha, the lord of Umā is presented as the teacher of the Pāṇḍava system3. According to J. N. Banerjea4, the more reliable source of purāṇic and inscriptional

2. Śāntiparvan, Ch. 349, V. 64-67.
information refer to a human being, Lakulīśa by name, who may be regarded as the organiser of the system. It directs that a Pāṣupata (follower of the system) should bathe thrice a day and should lie on dust or ashes. The Atharvaśīras Upaniṣad, a sectarian work in favour of Śaivas, describes Pāṣupatavrata as besmearing the initiate’s body with ashes along with muttering a mantra. The Chinese traveller Huen Tsang in the middle of the 7th century mentions the Pāṣupatas twelve times in his book. He tells about temples where Pāṣupatas worshipped and somewhere even resided. At Benaras he found thousands of followers of Maheśvara who besmeared their naked bodies with ashes and tied knots.

ii) Durvāsas Sect

The Bāngāḍh stone-slab inscription of Nayapāla (c. 1073-1043 A. D.) makes us aware of many important facts. For the first time we come to know about a Pāla king, Nayapāla, who was a disciple of the Śaiva saint Sarvaśīva in contrast of the other Pāla kings who were Buddhists by religion. Secondly, we know about the Śaiva teachers in Bengal belonging to the line of Durvāsas sect and of a great Śaiva matha built in Bāngāḍh.

Bāngāḍh was a prosperous city at the time of both Mahīpāla I (c. 989-1037 A.D.) and Nayapāla. We know from the Bhagalpur inscription how Nārāyaṇapāla was influenced by Śaivism and from the inscription under discussion we find that Mahīpāla I was greatly influenced by Indraśīva, a Śaiva ascetic of the Durvāsas sect and built a monastery at Bāngāḍh where Indraśīva was appointed as pontif.

D. C. Sircar observes that “the great influence exercised by this sect on the religious life of Bengal is indicated by the fact that Indraśīva’s disciple Sarvaśīva is described in our inscription as the guru of the Pāla king Nayapāla (son of Mahīpāla I), described as his śiṣya or disciple” (Verse 12).

1. For more information about Lakulīśa, See, Mathurā pillar inscription of Candragupta II, Sel. Ins., Vol. I, p. 278, n. 3.
5. Ibid., Vol. XIII, p. 41.
Verse 5 of this record introduces the fearful sage Dūrvāsas, who, at the beginning of the history of Śaiva sect, favoured Hari and made Vajrāṅga to become famous for his valour while the world lost its prosperity being out of the sage’s favour. The verse definitely glorifies Śaivism.

Verse 6 describes that in that spiritual lineage of the sage Vajrāṅga came up the great monastery of Colagī, of which the Śaiva ascetics resembled eleven Rudras.

The birth of eleven Rudras is elaborately narrated in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa.1 Once Brahmā became so angry that he was about to devour the three worlds and the flame originated out of his anger enveloped the heaven, earth and hell. A darkened angry frown from his forehead, gave birth to Rudra. He was radiant as the Sun, fierce and vast with a figure of half male and half female. With Brahmā’s order he separated himself in Male and Female beings. Then the Male being was again divided into eleven persons of whom some were agreeable, some hideous, some fierce and some mild. There are different versions in different Purāṇas regarding the myth. The Kūrma Purāṇa shows Rudra to have come out from Brahmā’s mouth, the Varāha Purāṇa makes the appearance of Rudra as a consequence of a promise made by Śiva to Brahmā to become his son. The Mahābhārata refers to Viṣṇu’s personification of anger as Rudra’s origin2.

Hara as Kirāṭa

Verse 30 of the above mentioned inscription describes the resemblance of Rūpaśiva with Hara in defeating the pāsandin philosophers (i.e. Buddhist and Jain scholars) with his bow-string and arrow like eloquence and knowledge, just like Śiva (probably as kirāṭa) hunted the deers that trespassed in the forbidden land.

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2. Ibid., Ch. VII, p. 73, n. 3.
IMAGE OF SAIVĂCĂRYA

It is interesting to know from Verse 31 of the Bângaḍh inscription of Nayapāla, referred to above, that Rūpasiva constructed an image of Mûrttiśiva.

It may be interesting to mention here that a damaged inscribed stone image\(^1\) is preserved in the Asutosh Museum of University of Calcutta, which bears the name of Mûrttiśiva on the pedestal.

Another image of a Śiva-ācārya is known from an inscription\(^2\) of about 12th century A. D. engraved on the pedestal as *siddham* (symbol) *paṇḍitācārya-śrī-Vidyāśivah*, preserved in London.

The male central figure of the image sits on a double-petalled lotus in *dhyanamudrā* and wears a *kaupin* and *uttariya* without any jewellery except *upavīta*. He has an ascetic like hair-style, which according to G. Bhattacharya is rarely seen in the sculptures of Pâla-Sena period. There are four other seated male figures beside the root of the lotus—two are with ascetics like appearance, one with normal hairstyle and fourth one who may be the donor, is called as *hāraḥ* in the inscription written above head. The extreme right figure has the inscription written below him as *tekko*.

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**HARI-HARA**

Verse 9 of the above-mentioned Bangadh inscription describes that Indrasiva, disciple of Dharmasiva was like Hari-Hara in appearance (*Śrīmān Indraśivah sphutam Hari-Hara-prāyāṁ Śivendrākṛti*).

The Hari-Hara\(^1\) concept has been discussed already in section I (A). Mention of the same in this inscription reflect the friendly attitude between the two popular cults of Viśṇu and Śiva in the medieval period of Bengal.

The purānic legends also corroborate this sentiment. One such legend\(^2\) narrates that once when Lakṣmī thought that her husband was superior to Durgā’s husband, Viśṇu entered the body of Śiva to prove that both were the same. Another legend of the *Skanda Purāṇa* describes that once Śiva clasped Viśṇu so tightly that their bodies became one and thus were given the name Hari-Hara.

The record, discussed above, contains interesting facts about the religious ceremonies performed.


We further know that Mūrttiśiva, the great Śaiva acārya, was also proficient in the philosophy of the Digambara Jains and refuted *Kṛṣṇa-ādvaita* doctrine (Verse 22). *Tulāpuruṣa* ceremony was performed by weighing the ascetic against gold.

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INSCRIBED IMAGES

The votive inscriptions on the pedestals of the images of Śiva are found as short, but rich in information. We find the images as Umā-Maheśvara, Naṭarāja, and Sadāśiva.

Umā-Maheśvara

i) A metal inscribed image of Umā-Maheśvara belonging to the 31st or 32nd regnal years of Rājyapāla (c. 930-967 A. D.) records that the gift of the image was made by Mūlakā, the wife of Mahiaru, a resident of the Āpanāka monastery.

Naṭarāja

ii) The Bhārellā stone image inscription of Śiva Naṭarāja belonging to the 18th regnal year of Laḍahacandra (c. 1000-1020 A. D.) refers to the name of the king Layahacandradeva and also to the day, date and name of the engraver. N. K. Bhattasali says that this type of huge Naṭēsa-Śiva or dancing Śiva (inscribed on the pedestal) is very rare in Bengal. In the medieval Bengal only the south-eastern districts produced Śiva images of this variety. So it is quite possible that some Śaiva family of this area worshipped these images.

Sadāśiva

iii) A Sadāśiva image inscription is found at Rājibpur belonging to the 14th regnal year of Gopāla IV (c. 1128-1143 A. D.).

The translation of the text by D. C. Sircar is given as—"Let it be well. Installed by the illustrious Puruṣottama during the victorious reign of the glorious Gopāla endorsed with [the titles] Paramēśvara, etc., the holy Sadāśiva stands here : year 14, the 15th day of Māgha".

According to J. N. Banerjea\(^1\), the fifth face of Śiva or Sadāśiva face can not be seen even by the Yogīs. Sadāśiva image intends to illustrate the Śuddha Śaivism. N. G. Majumder says\(^2\) that Sadāśiva aspect is intimately associated with the *saṭcakra* concept of the Tāntrikas. He is one of the six Śivas: Brahmā, Viśnu, Rudra, Īśvara, Sadāśiva and Paraśiva.

**SADĀŚIVA SEALS**

Growing popularity of Śaivism in Bengal during the reign of the Sena kings is also clear from the seals attached to their copper-plates with figure of Sadāśiva. The two copper-plates—

i) Barrackpur plate of Vijayasena\(^3\) and

ii) Naihati plate of Vallālasena, referred to above\(^4\), bear a representation of a seated image of ten-armed Sadāśiva on the seal affixed at the top.

Lakṣmaṇasena and his sons Viśvarūpasena and Sūryasena adopted the faith of Vaiṣṇavism, but they followed the tradition of affixing Sadāśiva seals with the copper-plate charters.

iii) Charters of Lakṣmaṇasena, referred to above, bear seals with Sadāśive figures.

iv) Line 46 of the Madanapāḍā charter of Sūryasena (c. 1210-1215 A. D.), cited above\(^5\) calls the seal as *Sadāśivamudrayā* and declares that the grant was made to earn the benefit of land-grant as enumerated in the Śiva Purāṇa.

v) Line 56 of the Idilpur charter of Sūryasena, cited above\(^6\), mentions the seal as *Sadāśivamudrayā*.

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3. See above, p. 71.
4. See above, p. 69.
5. See above, p. 19.
6. See above, p. 49.
Scholars observe that ancient Bengal was associated with the concept of *śakti*, the power or energy, personified as the female divinity, and was an important seat of worshipping the mother or fertility-goddess\(^1\). Though the vedic literature does not give much prominence to female divinities, the seed of the developed thought of the *śakti*, the divine energy, as some scholars point out, is hidden within the concept of Vāc, outlined in the hymns of *Devi-sūkta*\(^2\) and also in the hymn associated with Rātri\(^3\). D. C. Sircar suggests\(^4\) that the aboriginal elements have a large contribution in the traditional concept of mother goddess. The concept of a central goddess is believed to be a matter of comparatively later ages\(^5\). Bengal has a long tradition of worshipping the Mother goddess in the forms of Durgā and Kāli. From the epigraphic material of early Bengal we find that the goddess is often presented as the spouse of Śiva and daughter of Himālaya with different names. The names till now noticed to occur are mentioned here and dealt with below chronologically— Sarvāṇi, Śyāmādevi, Gaurī, Budhaguru-stutā, Śivapriyā, Mahābhubhūt-sūtā, Sāilasūtā, Ėrisūtā, Himāśailajā, Girirāja-putrikā, Girijā, Umā, Durgā, Śivā, Bhavāni, Jaimāni, Durgottārā, Canḍikā, Carccā and Piṅgalāryā.

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DIFFERENT NAMES

Sarvāṇī

This name we find in the Khalimpur copper-plate inscription of Dharmapāla (c. 775-810 A. D.), cited above. Verse 5 of this record mentions the goddess as Sarvāṇī, wife of Śiva (Sarvāṇītva Śivasya) and the queen Deddaevī, beloved of the king (Gopāla), is compared with her.

The Atharvaveda mentions Sarvāṇī as the Śakti of Śarva, one of the eight forms of Rudra. The appellation Sarvāṇī is found in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa and is mentioned as one of the sixteen names of goddess Durgā in the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa.

Śyāmādevī

The name of the goddess Śyāmādevī mentioned in the undated Nidhanpur copper-plate of Bhaskaravarman (c. 600-625 A. D.), cited above, may be a form of Kāli. Verse 20 of the record describes that the good behaviour, honesty and holiness of the mother of the king makes her comparable to Śyāmādevī (Kārttayugīva Śyāmādevī).

In the Rāmāyaṇa goddess Umā is referred to as the consort of Śiva. But the purāṇas gradually imparted more importance on the female divinities as the energy or śakti of the male gods. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa traces the origin of the goddess to Rudra, by first disjoining his male and female nature and then multiplying the female nature manifold in black and white complexions. The Vāyu Purāṇa enumerates the same theory. The Linga Purāṇa and Vāyu Purāṇa specify the names as Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Gaurī, Umā etc. in white complexion and those of the dark complexions as Śītalī, Bhūdevī, Bhadrā, Sūryādevī etc.

2. LXXXV, 9-10.
3. Prakṛti Khaṇḍa, LVII, 2.
4. See above, p. 45.
5. VII, 4, 30; 13, 22.
7. Ibid., p. 74, n. 4.
and fierce disposition as Dūrgā, Kālī, Caṇḍi, Mahārātri etc. D. C. Sircar points out¹ that the Matsya Purāṇa² mentions the mother goddess as Kātyāyani.

Gaurī, Mahābhūḥṛt-sūtā, Budhaguru-stūtā, Śivapriyā

In the undated Chittagong copper-plate inscription³ of Kāntideva (c. 800-825 A. D.) of Harikela, we find a number of appellations of Dūrgā.

Verse 4 of the inscription describes Vindurāti, the wife of Śrī-Dhanadatta, as fair in complexion (gaurī), daughter of a great king (mahābhūḥṛt sutā), praised by the learned and the elderly persons (vuh(bu)dha-gr-ṣūtā) and a favourite of Śiva (Śivapriyā). R. C. Majumdar points out⁴ that all the epithets given to Vindurāti also can be applied to Dūrgā, who was Gaurī (by name), mahābhūḥṛt-sūtā (the daughter of the great mountain Himālaya), Budhaguru-stūtā (praised by the preceptor of gods) and Śīva-priyā (spouse of Śiva).

In Bengal we find a tradition of worshipping goddess Dūrgā as Mahiṣamardinī. From the text of the Life of Hiuen Tsiang⁵ we come to know that robbers used to sacrifice a handsome youngman before Dūrgā in autumn every year. D. C. Sircar thinks⁶ that the legend of Dūrgā-Mahiṣāsura encounter as referred to in the book, can not be later than the first century B. C. Winternitz remarks⁷ that the episode of Devimāhātmya is added in the Markandeya Purāṇa in the 6th century A. D. In the Devī bhāgavatam⁸, Dūrgā is mentioned with other goddesses in Verse 1 of the IXth Skandaḥ as Gaṇeśa-jānanī. The purāṇic mythology depicts her as Dūrgā, the

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2. Ch. 260, Verse 11 ff; Verses 19-20; Verse 57.
4. Ibid., p. 318, n. 1.
5. Life of Hiuen Tsiang, translated by Beal, p. 86.
presiding goddess of fort (*durga*). The *Markandeya Candi* calls the goddess as Durgā as she defeats the demon Durgā.

Besides the name Mahābhūḥīrt-sūtā, discussed above, five other names mentioned in the Bengal inscriptions describe goddess Durgā as the daughter of the Himalaya, which are discussed below.

i) Āilasaūtā

Line 58 of the Nālandā copper-plate of Devapāladeva (c. 810-847 A. D.) mentions the goddess as Āilasaūtā whose husband is the enemy of Manmatha.

ii) Girisūtā

Verse 17 of the Maināmatī records of regnal year 6 of Laḍahacandra (c. 1000-1025 A. D.), cited above, mentions Pārvatī as Girisūtā.

iii) Himāśailājā

Verse 8 of the Irdā copper-plate inscription of regnal year 13 of Nayapāla (c. 1030-1055 A. D.), cited above, compares Bhāgyadevi, the wife of Rājyapāla with the daughter of Himavat (*devīva Himāśailājā*).

iv) Girirāja-Putrikā

In Verse 5 of the Kṛṣṇa-dvārikā temple inscription of the time of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A. D.), cited above, Śiva is described as the beloved of Durgā. (*girirāja-putrikā-priya*). The expression shows a special status enjoyed by the goddess.

v) Girijā

The goddess is mentioned as girijā in Verse 15 of the Idilpur record of regnal year 3 of Śūryasena, cited above.

4. See above, p.40.
5. See above, p. 33.
7. See above, p. 49.
Umā

Verse 31 of the Nālandā copper-plate inscription¹ of Devapāla (c. 810-847 A. D.) mentions the name Umā as the mother of Kārttikeya.

The earliest texts do not present Umā as the wife of Śiva, but the relation grew afterwards². A legend of the Harivamsa describes that once Aparṇā (the daughter of Himavat and Menā) gave up food while practising severe penance, her mother cried out u mā i.e. “oh, do not” and Aparṇā was named as Umā who got married with Śiva³. The Rāmāyana⁴ mentions Umā as wife of Śiva.

Durgā

Durgā, beloved of Śiva, is often mentioned in the epigraphs of early Bengal as daughter of Himālaya with different appellations, as mentioned above. The goddess is mentioned as Durgā in Verse 10 of the Jagajjibanpur copper-plate inscription of the 7th regnal year of Mahendrapāla (c. 847-862 A. D.), cited above⁵, which describes her as the daughter of Himālaya (Durggāyās = ca Himālay = ācala-bhuvah). It states that the king was like another Paramesvara (i.e. Lord Śiva), who collected taxes from the kingdoms he won in the Himālaya region, comparable to Śiva, obtaining the hands of Durgā, the daughter of Himālaya. It is interesting to note that wife is considered in this inscription as the prized possession of the husband.

The Kena Upaniṣad⁶ refers to Umā Haimavatī, the daughter of Himavat as the personified Brahmavidyā (‘the knowledge about the Brahman’).⁷ The composite picture of a developed cult of the goddess is understood from the Durgāstotras of the Mahābhārata⁸ depicting the goddess as the saviour of her devotees and from

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2. S. Bhattacharji, op. cit., p. 159.
5. See above, p. 7.
8. IV, 6; VI, 23.
the Āryāstava in the Harivaṃśa, revealing her non-Aryān character, as worshipped by the Savaras, Barbaras and Pulindas.

Śiva

This name is noticed to appear in two inscriptions.

i) Verse 17 of the Mirjapur copper-plate inscription of regnal year 3 of Śūrapāla I (c. 862-875 A.D.) mentions the spouse of Śiva as Śivā.

ii) Again we find the name in the Bādāl Garuḍa pillar inscription of the time of Nārāyaṇāpāla (c. 876-930 A.D.), cited above. Verse 10 of the record states that as Śiva accepted the hand of Śivā and Hari of Lakṣmī, the king desirous of entering the life of gṛhāsrama, accepted duly in marriage the hands of Rallādevi.

Bhavānī

We find mention of Bhavānī in four inscriptions.

i) Verse 9 of the Paścimbhāg copper-plate inscription of regnal year 5 of Śricandra (c. 925-975 A.D.) refers to Bhavānī as wife of Bhava i.e. Śiva (Bhavānīva Bhavasya).

ii) Verse 4 of the Rāmganj copper-plate inscription of regnal year 35 of Īśvaraghoṣa (c. 1040-1080 A.D.) describes Sadbhāvā, the wife of the king Dhavalaghoṣa as the second Bhavānī in appearance (Bhavānīvāparā mūrttyā).

iii) Mention of a separate temple of Bhavānī is found in Verse 27 of the Bāṅgaḍh Praśasti of Mūrttiśiva, cited above. It is stated here that Śiva was mesmerised at the sight of the temple of Bhavānī (bhavānamidamvetyāsanna

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1. III, 3.
4. See Above p. 7.
7. See above, p. 12.
iv) Verse 15 of the undated Silimpur stone-slab inscription\(^1\) of the Kāmarūpa ruler Jayapāladeva (11th century A.D.) describes that Svarga the consort of a Taponidhi, resembles Bhavnā in austerity. According to a purāṇic legend\(^2\) after the death of Satī, Pārvatī went through severe austerities to obtain Śiva again as husband and so she is called Tapodhikā as Śiva is Taponidhi.

**Jaimani**

We find the name of a goddess Jaimani in the Paścimbhāg plate of Śricandra, cited above\(^3\). The copper-plate records the grant of land for four desāntariya (foreign) temples and four Vaṅgāla temples housing the gods Vaiśvānara (Agni), Yogēśvara, Mahākāla and goddess Jaimani. The name Jaimani has not yet been traced in any other early Bengal inscription.

**Rudrāṇi**

Verse 9 of the two Maināmati records of Laḍahacandra (c.1000-1020 A.D.), cited above\(^4\), mentions the goddess mother of Kāṛttikeya as Rudrāṇi.

**Gaurī**

This name is noticed to appear in three inscriptions besides the Chittagong record of Kāntideva, discussed above.

i) Verse 6 of the undated Rāmpāl copper-plate inscription\(^5\) of Śricandra (c. 925-975 A.D.) compares golden coloured Śrikāṇcanā, the queen, with Gaurī of Hara.

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3. See above, p. 53.
4. See above p. 53.
ii) Verse 10 of the Naihati copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of Vallalasena (c. 1159-1179 A.D.) compares the queen Vilasadevi with Gauri, the wife of the god having the young Moon on his crest (*Gaurīva vāla-rajanikara-śekharasya*).

iii) Verse 1 of the Mādhāinagar copper-plate inscription of regnal year 27 of Lakṣmanasena (c. 1179-1206 A.D.), cited above, describes the beloved of *Pañcānana* as Gauri, who is sitting on her beloved's lap, like a streak of lightning (*ḥke saradamvudorasitaḍillekheva Gaurī priyā dehardhena*).

In the epic mythology\(^2\) Gauri is the sister of Vāsudeva. In one of the purānic legends\(^3\) we find Śiva reproached Pārvatī for her black complexion and Pārvatī went through severe penance until Brahmā blessed her to be of golden complexion and so she was known as Gauri. Gauri was at first wife of Varuṇa, but in the *Mahābhārata* she is the great goddess of mountain-peak, Mahādevi\(^4\).

**Durgottārā**

We find this uncommon name of the goddess in the Maināmati copper-plate inscription\(^5\) of regnal year 17 of Harikāladeva Raṇavaṭkamalla (c. 1204-1230 A.D.). Verse 6 of the record states that land was granted for the small monastery (*vihārī*) dedicated to the goddess Durgottārā, built nicely in the city of Paṭṭikera.

**Devi**

We find the two words *mātuḥ-krte* and *Devi* in Verse 26 of the undated Siyān inscription\(^6\) of the time of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A.D.). D.C. Sircar suggests\(^7\) that probably these two words indicate the Mother goddess.

**Candikā**

Verse 27 of the same inscription tells about some lofty stone temples where the nine images of Candikā might have been installed.

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D. C. Sircar points out that Verse 29 of the record might have referred to a stone image of the goddess. Verse 53 refers to a gold image of Caṇḍikā and also to gold pīṭhaka (seat of a deity).

Yoginīs

Verse 35 of the above said Siyān inscription tells about 64 Yoginīs around the Bhairava image named Ghanṭiśā.

Carccā

Goddess Carccā is referred to in two inscriptions.

i. Verse 37 of the Siyān inscription, according to D. C. Sircar¹, may refer to the Mother goddess. Verse 40 elucidates the construction of a temple or pinnacle of goddess Carccā and both the kings Mahendrapāla and his father are described as devotees of the goddess.

ii. In Verse 1 of the Bāṅgadh Prāṇastī of Mūrttiśiva² of the time of Nayapāla, "the poet prays that the particles of dust at the feet of the goddess Carccā, which were worthy of being worshipped even by the creator of the universe, protect the earth."

Carccikā

The Bāṅgadh prāṇastī begins with a salutation to Carccikā, the Mother goddess³. According to D. C. Sircar it seems that there was a shrine of goddess Carccikā, also called Carccā, in the temple complex.

Verse 2 of the record describes goddess Carccikā in a terrible form. It elucidates that the goddess is wearing a garland of human skulls and she is so hungry and thirsty that she thinks of devouring the universe and drink up the water of the seven seas.

D. C. Sircar observes⁴ that this terrible description reminds us of the terrible Cāmuṇḍā form of the Mother goddess, though Carccikā or Carccā and Cāmuṇḍā are separately mentioned in the list of the eight forms of the Divine Mother.

1. Ibid., p. 118.
3. Ibid., p. 49.
4. Lock, cit., p. 50.
J. N. Banerjea points out\(^1\) that Carcca or Carccikā is the name of one goddess among eight or even more Mātrkās.

**Piṅgalāryā**

Verse 63 of the Siyān inscription, referred to above\(^2\), mentions about the construction of a pinnacle of the temple of the goddess Piṅgalāryā, by the king.

D. C. Sircar observes\(^3\) that the Bāngadh inscription begins with an adoration to the goddess Carccā or Carccikā, i.e. Mother goddess and thus greater importance has been given on the goddess than her consort. He further opines\(^4\) that Bāngadh and Kotivarṣaviṣaya might have been very early Śāktapīṭhas.

According to the legend of Dakṣa-Yajña, the different parts of Satī’s body were scattered over different places and those places are known as Śāktapīṭhas. It is believed that to keep watch over the parts of his beloved’s body, Śiva assumed the forms of different Bhairavas and stayed near the pīṭhas\(^5\). The presence of Ghanṭiṣā Bhairava near the sixty-four Yoginis (Verse 35 of the Siyān record) reminds us of the above legend.

According to the purāṇas, the number of Yoginis varies from eight to sixty-four. They are said as associates of the Mother goddess, emanated from the goddess herself in different forms. The Kālikā Purāṇa\(^6\) gives a detailed account of Yoginis. Goddess Durgā has eight Yoginis or Śaktis known as Ugracaṇḍā, Pracaṇḍā, Cāmuṇḍā, Caṇḍikā, etc. The Devī Purāṇa and the Kālikā Purāṇa contain details about the worshipping of sixty-four Yoninīs along with Durgā\(^7\). The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa\(^8\) describes that the Śaktis from the bodies of Brahmā, Śiva, Kārttikeya, Viṣṇu

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\(^2\) See above, p. 40.


\(^5\) J. N. Banerjea, op. cit., p. 495, n. 1.

\(^6\) Cf. Ch. 60, 61, 63, 65 etc.

\(^7\) S. Kundu, Prācin Vaṅga Purāṇīk Dharma O Devabhāvanā, p. 315.

\(^8\) Ch. 88, 12.
and Indra came out to help Devī to fight the Asuras. The *Agni Purāṇa* describes a
terrible form of Cāmūṇḍā which is nearer to the concept of Kālī. J. N. Banerjea
points out that the almighty goddess Cāṇḍi is first presented with an image of a
glorious embodiment of the accumulated power of all the gods, in the
Devimāhatmya section of the *Mārkandeya Purāṇa*.

**Jagannāta**

Verse 50 of the Siyān inscription mentions the installation of a golden pitcher
on the temple top of *Jagannātā* at Pāṭahāsā. The light reflected from it created an
illusion of a second Sun. D. C. Sircar points out that Pāṭahāsā finds a place among
the lists of Śākta Pīthas described in some medieval texts.

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1. 50, 21-23.
According to J. N. Banerjea\textsuperscript{1} the root idea of image-worship can be traced to animism but the idea of god-head may also be traced within it. According to him, images are the symbols of various concepts and aspects of worshipping the divinities\textsuperscript{2}.

We find that many of the inscribed images of the female divinities found in Bengal are called by different names of the goddess. We discuss below those images (other than Mahālakṣṇī discussed above\textsuperscript{3} and the snake-goddess discussed in Chapter IV) chronologically. The names of the goddess in the inscriptions of the images appear as Sarvāṇī, Pārvatī, Gaurī Śilāmayī, Subhadrā, Brahmāṇī, Kumārī, Vaiṣṇavi, Puṇḍeśvari, Bhaṭṭārikā, Cāṇḍi and Mahiṣamardinī.

**Sarvāṇī**

The Deulbāḍī image inscription\textsuperscript{4} of Devakhaḍga (c. 658-673 A. D.) is identified as the image of the goddess Sarvāṇī. The pedestal of the metal image records the names of the king of Khaḍga dynasty as Khaḍgodyama, his son Jāta-khaḍga and his son Devakhaḍga, who was like a sword and conqueror of all foes. The record states that Prabhāvatī, the queen-consort of this king, out of reverence for goddess Sarvāṇī, covered her image with gold.

The image of the goddess, one of the many forms of Durgā, possesses eight arms and two maids on her two sides. Devī stands on a lotus seat on the back of a couchant lion.

It is interesting to note here that being a queen of a devout Buddhist Khaḍga dynasty, Prabhāvatī devi paid respect for the Brāhmaṇical goddess. It implies that the goddess worship was popular in the Samatata region in the 7th century A. D. and that the Buddhists and the Hindus had no major conflict among them.

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3. See above, p. 55.
Pārvatī

We find three inscribed images of Pārvatī till now.

i) The Uddandapur image inscription1 of Pārvatī with Kārṭtikeya of regnal year 54 of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A. D.) records that the pious gift was dedicated by Thāruka, son of Rānaka Ucha (Utsa).

ii) The Bihar hill image inscription2 dated in the year 3 of Madanapāla’s reign (c. 1143-1161 A.D.) and engraved on the pedestal of a four armed image of goddess Pārvatī, records the installation of the image by a person called Māmayika, who had in his possession naval boats and chariots in equal number.

Cunningham refers to this image as Saṣṭhi. But according to P. Banerjee3, the image of the Devī with a child on left lap and a trident in right upper hand and with the presence of a lion on the pedestal, prove beyond doubt that it is Pārvatī.

iii) Another image of Pārvatī flanked by a carving of Śiva līṅga, bears an inscription4 at the Gayā Viṣṇupāda temple, which begins with obeisance to Vāsudeva.

Verse 1 describes that Vidyādhara (an incense burner in a temple), son of a dviveda Brāhmaṇa at Gayā, deposited some money at the temple of Gadābhṛt (Gadādharma), for the Brāhmaṇas. The inscription bears a date of VikramaEra 1232 (1175 A. D.) and also the year 14 of Govindapāla. According to D. C. Sircar the record indicates the time of 14 years after Govindapāla’s reign.

3. Ibid., p. 105, n. 1.
It may be mentioned here that another broken pedestal image inscription\(^1\) was found from Nongadh, Bihar, which belongs to the reigning period of Madanapâla. It records that the image was a gift of \textit{dānapati} Šeja and his wife Ašokā, installed at a place called Dakâ. However the name of the deity is not referred to.

Till now we find five inscribed images of the goddess where she is presented as Mother with a child.

i) \textit{Gauri Šilamayi}

An inscribed image\(^2\) of a recumbent mother and child of the time of Vigrahapâla II (c. 984-989 A. D.), found from Kosham Shahar, Bogra District of present Bangladesh is called as \textit{Gauri šilamayi} i.e. Gauri made of stone. The inscription states that this stone image of Gauri was donated by a lady called Catuḥśamā, wife of Līla Nandin, a treasurer of the Pāla king Vigrahapâla II and daughter of Kāyastha Subhaṅgala Datta and Sumānuṣī. Līla Nandin was the son of Vāpila or Vāyila Nandin, a minister of war and peace of the Pāla king Rājayapâla (c. 930-967 A. D.), father of Vigrahapâla II\(^3\).

G. Bhattacharya identifies the image as Gaurī with Sadyojāta Śiva, in accordance with the opinion of N. K. Bhattacherli\(^4\) who identified the scene as the marriage of Gaurī with Śiva when Śiva took the form of a child (described in the \textit{Brahma Purāṇa}).

The name ‘Sadyojāta’ is given in the Atharvaveda\(^5\) to Agni and later became one of the five names of Śiva in the Pāsupata cult.

ii) \textit{Puṇḍeśvari}

Another image\(^6\) of a four-armed goddess called Puṇḍeśvari (a form of Durgā) with a child on her lap is found at Rājaunā. The inscription on the pedestal records

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   Huntington, \textit{op. cit.}, No. 55, p. 236.
5. V. 12; cited by S. Bhattacharji, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 192.
the dedication of the image of Śrī-Pūndeśvari-bhaṭṭārikā by one Sāñaka and is dated in the 13th regnal year of the illustrious Nayapāladeva (c. 1037 - 1043 A.D.).

D. C. Sircar thinks\(^1\) that images of Devī with child on lap is very common in south Bihar. He further points out that this rural deity possibly had some connection with the concept of Pārvatī with Skanda as indicated in the Kālidāsa’s Kumārasambhavam, or with Buddhist goddess Hāriti and was worshipped in various local names in Various localities.

iii) The inscription\(^2\) on a broken image of the goddess with child on lap, found from Valgūdar records that the image was installed by a person named Nṛkaṭṭa at the adhīṣṭhāma or city of Kṛmilā.

iv) Puṇṛeśvarī Bhaṭṭārikā

The Jaynagar image inscription\(^3\) belonging to the year 35 of Palapāla (c. 1165-1200 A. D.) mentions the installation of the goddess Bhaṭṭārikā Puṇṛeśvari (or Puṇyeśvari) by Utakva. The sculpture represents the four-armed Devī with child, whose worship was popular in Bihar in the early medieval period. This Jaynagar image inscription, which is in the custody of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, reminds us the name of the goddess Puṇḍeśvarī. But D. C. Sircar remarks – “it is difficult to say whether the same name was intended here also.”\(^4\)

The inscription further states that the merit of dedication should go to the communities of siddhas and the congregations of śramaṇas (siḍḍhasamāja-śramaṇa-saṅghānāṁ) as well as to all the relatives (saṅga-κuṭumbhānāṁ) of Utakva.

v) D. C. Sircar\(^5\) draws our attention to another image of the goddess found

\(\text{\footnotesize 1. Ind. Hist. Quart., Vol. XXVI, pp. 139-140.}\)
\(\text{\footnotesize 2. D. C. Sircar in Ind. Hist. Quart., Vol XXVI, p. 140.}\)
\(\text{\footnotesize 4. Ibid., p. 150.}\)
\(\text{\footnotesize 5. Ibid., p. 146.}\)
from Jaynagar, but not exactly with the same attributes which contains an inscription written in character of about the 12th century A.D.

Subhadra, Brahmani, Kumari, Vaisnavi

Two metal sculptures found from the village of Imadpur of Muzaffarpur District of Bihar, were re-discovered in the British Museum. One of the sculptures represents Balarama, Ekanaṃśā i.e. Subhadra and Krṣṇa-Vāsudeva and the other one, Ganeśa, Brahmani, Kumari, Vaisnavi and Kuvera. Both are dated in the year 48 of the reign of Mahipala I (c. 989-1037 A.D.). D. C. Sircar also agrees with the reading of the year as 48.²

It is understood from the epigraphs that female divinities gained popularity in medieval Bengal enjoying paralell status with male gods.

Devi

A pedestal inscription³ of an image (Devi) found from Ārmā of the Monghyr District records the gift of the image by Sonikā, wife of the merchant Vāmbha in the year 26 of Rāmapāla (c. 1072-1126 A.D.).

D. C. Sircar draws our attention to another inscription where the deity is not identified. According to him, the Lai image inscription⁴ found from the Monghyr District of Bihar, possibly belong to the 32 nd year of Palapala (c. 1165-1200 A. D.). The object of the inscription is that the image on which it was engraved belonged to the chief queen of a person who was possibly subordinate to Palapala.

Caṇḍī

i) A unique image of Devi Caṇḍī was discovered in Dacca which belonged to the 3rd regnal year of Lakṣmaṇasena (c. 1179-1206 A. D.). The inscription⁵

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incised on pedestal of the image records that the image of Caṇḍī was installed by Nārāyaṇa, brother of an officer named Dāmodara and son of Māladeva.

From the description given by R. D. Banerji, we come to know that the four handed goddess holds a lotus and a water pot in her right hands and a battle axe in her upper left hand. The lower left hand is in the posture of blessing. The Devī image is accompanied by two female attendants with fly-whisks and a lion below the pedestal and the goddess is bathed by two elephants holding pitchers. The picture usually reminds us of Gajalakṣmī, but the inscription refers to Śrī Caṇḍidevi.

According to N. K. Bhattasali, the image is that of Bhuvaneśvarī, which corroborates the description of the goddess given in the Sāradatilaka tantra (Ch. VIII).

Another black-stone ten-armed image of Mahiṣamardini was discovered at Sakta (Dacca) with a pedestal inscription of, Śrī-Māsika-Caṇḍī in character of the 12th century A. D.

Durgā

S. Huntington draws our attention to a Durgā image which was installed in the year 147 of the Lakṣmaṇa-Saṁvat. D. C. Sircar calculates the date of the image to be Friday, June 18, 1255 A. D. Provenance of the image is Khojpur of Darbhanga District.

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An interesting stone-image of Devī is found at the modern temple of the Sun-god at Badgaon, near Nalanda with a pedestal inscription. Here the Goddess stands on a lotus wearing various jewelleries with Kārtikeya at her proper right and Gaṇeśa at left. On either side of her head is the crescent moon and the sun. There is a Śiva-liṅga above her mukuta. There are banana plants on both sides and a Godha is shown facing left below the lotus. The name of the donor Purnakamasena or Kamasena is engraved on the pedestal. According to G. Bhattacharya “the figure dates from the 10th century.”

Traces of elements of the Devī concept in the early Bengal epigraphs as well as in the literary texts leave little scope to doubt that medieval Bengal gradually became a stronghold of Śakti cult. Although both non-Aryan and Aryan elements contributed to the formation of the concept of Durgā, the fearful and terrible aspect of Śakti gathered popularity among the people of Bengal. Even to-day Durgā pujā is the most popular festival of Bengal, but the Devī is not only Mahiṣamardini, she is the mother of Lakṣmi, Sarasvati, Gaṇeśa and Kār ttkikeya and wife of Śiva.

2. Lock, cit., p. 184.
Kārttikeya played an important role in mythology. His birth was much desired by the gods as an able divine general needed after Indra. The early Bengal epigraphs echo the same and mention the god with different names – Skanda, Mahāsena, Krauñcāri, Śaktidhara and Guha — which we discuss chronologically.

**DIFFERENT NAMES**

1. **Skanda**

i) Verse 31 of the Nālandā copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of regnal year 35 of Devapāla (c. 813-847 A. D.) states that the birth of Kārttikeya from Umā by Śiva delighted the gods (*Skando nandita-devārṇḍhīdayah Śambhorumāyāmiva*). Here Kārttikeya is mentioned as Skanda. A legend\(^2\) corroborates the incident mentioned in the inscription. Since Tāraka the demon became a perpetual cause of fear to the gods, as he gained dominion of the universe by his austerities, the gods needed a heroic general to destroy him and thus the birth of Kārttikeya was greeted by them with much ecstasy. But in the various mythological legends the birth of Kārttikeya is not related directly with Śiva-Pārvatī always. In one version of the epic mythology\(^3\), we find that Maheśvara's energy through Agni and Gaṅgā (Svāhā in some other versions) gave birth to a beautiful child who was nursed by six Kṛttikās. The child developed six mouths to suck six mothers and was called as Kārttikeya.

ii) The name Skanda we notice again in an inscription of much later period. Verse 14 of the Manahali copper-plate inscription\(^4\) of the regnal year 8 of Madanapāla (c. 1143-1161 A. D.) introduces Śūrapāla as a king, having personality of Indra and valour of Skanda (*Mahendra-mahimā and Skandaḥ-pratāpa*).

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The epigraph clearly indicates the transfer of power from Indra to Skanda. It is an ideal example of the fact that life in earth influenced the formation of mythological concepts.

As the functions of the king became complicated gradually, the role and duty of the army general became more important. Similarly, in the mythological concept, Indra became more famous as the king of the gods than the war-lord. So necessity of a general gave birth to the concept of Skanda, the Devasenāpati. We understand from a story of the Mahābhārata that Indra rescued Devasena (an abstraction of divine army) and gave her to Skanda in marriage. Kārttikeya’s demon-slaying myths also prove his pratāpa. We find that a direct relation of Kārttikeya with Śiva-Pārvatī is established in the story which enumerates that Pārvatī was charmed with the beauty of the six infants born from the sparks of fire emitted by Śiva’s eyes and embraced them so tightly that the six became one, to give birth to Kārttikeya.

The early Bengal inscription adore the mighty divine war-general as the son of Śiva-Pārvatī and mention him with different appellations.

2. Mahāsenā

This name is noticed to appear in four inscriptions.

i) Verse 17 of the Mirjāpur copper-plate inscription of the regnal year 3 of Sūrapāla I (c. 862-875 A. D.) mentions Mahāsenā (i.e. Kārttikeya) as the son of Śiva and Śivā.

ii) Verse 9 of the two Maināmatī records of Ladahacandra of regnal year 6, cited above, describe that Kalyāṇacandra’s wife, queen Kalyāṇadevi gave birth to Ladahacandra as Rudrāṇi gave birth to the god Mahāsenā.

5. See above, p. 40.
iii) Verse 13 of the undated Maināmatī record of Govindacandra (c. 1020-1055 A.D.), cited above, presents the king as equal to Śaktimat Mahāsena.

iv) In Verse 15 of the undated Silimpur stone-slab inscription1 of the time of Jayapādaleva (11th century A. D.), Kārttikeya is mentioned as the issue of Bhava and Bhavānī. The god is praised here for his good service to the gods (deva-kārya), by vanquishing their enemy Tāraka, the demon, with his weapon sakti.

3. Kraunācāri

v) Verse 1 of the Barrackpur copper-plate inscription of Vijayasena (c. 1096-1159 A. D.), cited above2, depicts a picture, where Śiva is laughing at the squabble between Kraunācāri (i.e. Kārttikeya) and Gaṇeṣa. They are playing together in the water of Ganges on the head of their father and with the crescent moon lying amidst the matted hair of Śiva, mistaking it to be a fish entrapped in a mass of weeds.

Here again Kārttikeya is identified as the son of Śiva and he is described as the enemy of the mountain Kraunca (Kraunācāri). The epic mythology shows that "Skanda not only slew Tāraka, Mahiṣa, Tripāda, Hradodara and Bāṇa (son of Bali), but he pierced Mount Kraunca and split it with his weapon 'Śakti', because Bāṇa sought refuge in that mountain. All were destroyed by the lightning flashes of the great javelin."3

4. Śaktidhara

As the possessor of the weapon Śakti, Kārttikeya is called as Śaktidhara. Verse 15 of the Idilpur copper-plate inscription4 of the regnal year 3 of Śūryasena describes Kārttikeya as born from Śiva and Pārvatī having possession of Śakti (śaṣiśekharagirijābhyāmiva vabhūva saktidharaḥ).

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2. See above, p. 71.
5. Guha

The legend of demon slaying hero Kārttikeya is depicted in Verse 11 of the Bāḍāl Garuḍa pillar inscription of the time of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A. D.), cited above¹. Here Kedāramiśra, shining with great personality is compared with Kārttikeya who is described as tapta-kāṇcana-vānābha, with ślokas bearing dual meanings². Śikhisikha-cumbi-dīcakravālo depicts two different meanings. In one way, it is the horizon kissing the flame of oblation – fire of Kedāramiśra, in another way it means the feathers of Kārttikeya’s peacock touching the horizon. The word dūrvvāra-skārasaktiḥ stands for Kedāramiśra’s powerful arms as well as the immense strength of the weapon saktī of Kārttikeya.

Āseṣa-vidyā is the immense knowledge of mīśra which gave him reputation and for Kārttikeya, it is the māttykās who gave him nourishment. Svākriyā is oblation for mīśra and demon-slaying for the war-god. By dint of all these virtues, both Kedāramiśra and Guha (Kārttikeya) earned the appreciation of gods and men.

The name Guha connects Kārttikeya with Agni. It can also be mentioned here that the Rgveda³ calls Agni as Senāpati⁴. Agni being associated with Rudra⁵ Kārttikeya has an indirect connection with Śiva in the vedic mythology. The Mahābhārata⁶ declares that Rudra entered Agni and Umā entered Svāhā to create Kārttikeya⁷.

According to a later account of the Mahābhārata, Gaṅgā could not bear the power and heat of seed of Agni. The seed fell down and the child born of it was Skanda (spilled). It was hidden in the bulrushes and is called Guha⁸.

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1. See above, p. 7.
2. A. K. Maitrey, op. cit., p. 80, n. 3.
3. VIII, 73, 8.
5. Rgveda, II, 33, 12.
6. III, 228, 30-31.
8. Ibid., p. 181.
GANESÁ

In Bengal, Gañeśa is usually regarded as the son of Śiva and Pārvatī. He is the god of good luck and remover of all obstacles. All religious ceremonies are begun by pious Hindus with an invocation to Gañeśa. The vedas do not mention of Gañeśa. The name Gañapati means the leaders of the gaṇas or groups, who were the troop of deities, attendants of Rudra. R. G. Bhandarkar states that the other name Vinayaka denotes a spirit. Rudra is identified with many spirits, Vināyaka is one of them.

Yājñavalkya in his Smṛti states that Rudra and Brahmadeva appointed Gañapati to create difficulties and obstruct the works of men. In the Śūtras the names of four Vināyakas are delivered.

The Smṛti describes that one Gañapati Vināyaka can be made friendly and benign by propitiatory rites by preparing various kinds of food and making an obeisance to his mother Ambikā. The Mahābhārata also describes Vināyaka who can put obstacles to performance of good deeds. J. N. Banerjea observes that the characteristics of Gañapati-Vināyaka like ‘king of obstacles’ (Vighnarāja), ‘the destroyer of obstacles’ (Vighna-vindsana) and the ‘bestower of succes’ (Siddhidātā) are achieved after proper propitiation of the evil spirits. In the Yājñavalkya smṛti, Vināyaka is described for the first time as the son of Ambikā. In the later mythology, different purāṇas like the Padma Purāṇa, the Brahmanda-varta Purāṇa, the Matsya Purāṇa etc. describe Gañeśa as the son of Śiva and Pārvatī.

2. I, 271 ff; as cited by ibid., p. 147.
3. Ibid., pp. 147-148.
5. I. 271 ff; cited by ibid., p. 355.
According to J. N. Banerjea, "this shows the attempts of the later mythologists to bring this cult-god in line with the more important cult deities, Śiva and Śakti, of much earlier origin". The Ganeśa Purāṇa gives an elaborate account of the greatness of Gaṇeśa.

We find mention of Gaṇeśa in two early Bengal inscriptions.

1. Verse 1 of the Barrackpur copper-plate of Vijayasena mentions the elephant-faced one (i.e. Gaṇeśa) as the son of Śiva (Krauncāridhviradāsyasyaśiśutayā) and brother of Krauncari (Kārttikeya).

2. Verse 53 of the Siyan stone-slab inscription, cited above, mentions about an image of Vighnanāyakā Gaṇeśa made of gold and a seat for the deity, which were probably donated to the temple of Gaṅgāsāgara.

Different purāṇas tell different stories about the elephant-head of lord Gaṇeśa. S. C. Bhattacharji suggests that Gaṇeśa is not only elephant-faced, but also holds an elephant-rider's hook to control an elephant. This reminds of killing of elephant-demon Gajasura by Śiva. Thus mythological explanation may be the victory of Śiva cult over Indra, for elephant is his mount.

In Bengal Gaṇeśa is regarded as the offshoot of Śiva. But as a god of remover of obstacles (Vignanaśa) and grantor of success (Sidhvidātā), the deity was specially adored by the merchant class of people from the medieval period. Two inscribed images of the deity corroborate the fact.

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2. Wilson, op. cit., p. VI.
4. See above, p. 40.
INSCRIBED IMAGES

1. The Mandhuk stone image inscription\(^1\) of Ga\(\text{\=n}\)\(\text{\=e}\)\(\text{\=s}\)\(\text{\=a}\) belonging to the 1st regnal year of Gopa\(\text{l}\)\(\text{\=a}\) II states that “the meritorious offering was made by the old merchant Jambhalamitra for the attainment of supreme knowledge by all creatures, headed by his parents.” D. C. Sircar thinks\(^2\) that Jambhalamitra was a Buddhist, but he installed Br\(\text{\=a}\)\(\text{\=h}\)\(\text{\=m}\)\(\text{\=a}\)\(\text{n}\)\(\text{i}\)\(\text{c}\)\(\text{a}\)\(\text{l}\)\(\text{g}\)\(\text{o}\)d to keep his promise (m\(\text{\=a}\)\(\text{n}\)at).

2. The same thing is done in installing the N\(\text{\=a}\)\(\text{\=r}\)\(\text{\=a}\)\(\text{\=y}\)\(\text{\=a}\)\(\text{\=n}\)\(\text{p}\)\(\text{\=u}\) image\(^3\) of the deity during the 4th regnal year of Mahi\(\text{\=p}\)\(\text{\=a}\) I (c.989-1037 A.D.). From the inscription we come to know that the merchant who installed this image was Buddhamitra, the son of Jambhalamitra. Jambhalamitra may be the same person mentioned in both the inscriptions. The Vin\(\text{\=a}\)\(\text{\=y}\)aka image holds a radish and a rosary in the right upper and right lower hands. The left upper hand holds axe and the lower hand holds sweets.

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