

THE *VYŪHAS* IN STONE

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Studies of the Pāñcarātra Āgama are usually about written texts, but this one is about stones. The stones in question constitute two structures built according to the characteristic Pāñcarātra doctrine of God's four *vyūhas* or formations. One is the freely standing *vimāna* at the center of the Vaikuṅṭha Perumāḷ Temple built about 770 in Kāñcipuram, a city about 70 km inland from modern Chennai (formerly Madras). The other is the Ādivarāha Cave-temple built over a century earlier at Kāñcipuram's ancient port of Māmallapuram on the Bay of Bengal. In contrast to many other temples, these two have changed little over the centuries. They document the importance of Pāñcarātra to Bhāgavata Dharma, a religion important to Kāñcipuram by the time the city appears in the ancient Tamil poem *Perumpānāṟruppaṭai*, or "Long Bardic Praise of a Donar," dated from ca. 190 CE to ca. 350 CE.

The relevance of this study to the relationship of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta to Pāñcarātra and their mutual influences lies in this city, also known as Kāñci or Kacci. Temples of this ancient Pallava capital document the Pāñcarātra Āgama and Bhāgavata Dharma prior to their development into the Śrīvaiṣṇava Sampradāya. The great Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya Rāmānuja, who developed Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, became devoted to the Bhagavān residing as Varadarājan in one of these temples, one that follows the Pāñcarātra Āgama. His non-Brahmin friend named Tirukacci Nambi after a Tamil title for this King Who Gives Boons (*varadarājan*) played the crucial role in mediating Rāmānuja's life-long devotion to His embodiment as icon (*arcā*; CARMAN 1974: 29-41).

Our focus on these two temples will be as visual texts that are as important as written texts for understanding Bhāgavata Dharma and the role of the Pāñcarātra Āgama in it. As many photographs as space allows will be discussed as documents, and the reader is asked to imagine visual structures and patterns by means of words. Historians of Indian art customarily do this, but it's a difficult skill for the rest of us. There is no way around it here, however, and I ask readers to exercise their imaginations, and to study visual details as carefully as they do written ones.

THE VAIKUṆṬHA PERUMĀḶ TEMPLE

Its Bhāgavata Predecessors in Kāñci

The Bhāgavata temple built by the emperor Nandivarman Pallavamalla houses the sitting icon carved of black stone known in Tamil today as Vaikuṇṭha Perumāl, “Great Viṣṇu of those without obstacles (*vikunṭha*).” This title is interpreted to mean “Great Viṣṇu who brings about the union of all” (*sarveṣām samśleṣayin vaikuṇṭhaḥ*), because he removes obstacles to union with Him.¹ But Nandivarman’s Tamil name for this temple is Paramēccuraviṇṇagaram, which is equivalent to the Sanskrit Parameśvaraviṣṇugṛha. It means the “Emperor’s Viṣṇu-house,” and, as the Āḷvār poet Tirumaṅkai suggests in the first stanza of his poem about this temple (Periyatirumoli 2.9.1), the word emperor (*paramēccura*) denotes both Nārāyaṇa Vaikuṇṭha housed by the temple and Nandivarman as the emperor who built it.

By the eighth century CE this Pallava capital already had an ancient Bhāgavata presence. Five temples celebrated in Tamil by Āḷvār poets illustrate this fact. The oldest three may have existed by the end of the second century CE, before the Pallavas emerged as rulers two centuries later (RAMAN 1992: 39). All house very large bas-relief icons. One of these is the Ūrakam, which faces west at the city’s ancient and elevated center. It houses the icon of Dwarf (*vāmana*) standing about thirty feet tall as Thrice-strider (*trivikrama*), who is depicted in a drawing available at the temple today:

¹ This is the Pāñcarātra interpretation given by the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya Parāśarabhaṭṭar (ca. 12th century) in his Bhagavadgūṇadarpaṇa explication of the “Thousand Names of Viṣṇu” (Viṣṇusahasranāma) taught by Bhīṣma in the Mahābhārata (13.135.4-120). Vaikuṇṭhaḥ is given in 13.135.57a (*vaikuṇṭhaḥ puruṣaḥ prāṇaḥ prāṇadaḥ prāṇavaḥ prthuh*), and is numbered as 406 by Bhaṭṭar (BhgD 122,11-20). Bhaṭṭar says: *sarveṣām samśleṣayin vaikuṇṭhaḥ*. “*kuṭhi gatipratighāte*”. *sa cātra samśleṣavighātaḥ. sa ca vigato yeṣām te vikunṭhāḥ, teṣām eṣa vaikuṇṭhaḥ* (BhgD 122,11f.). In the Mahābhārata *devas* address Him as Nārāyaṇa Vaikuṇṭha, and as Madhusūdana who became Boar (*varāha*), Man-lion (*narasiṃha*), and Dwarf (*vāmana*), and defeated the *asura* archer named Jambha (MBh 3.100.17-24).

Ulakaḷaṅṭaperumāḷ

This icon is known in Tamil as *Ulakaḷaṅṭaperumāḷ*, “Great Viṣṇu Who Measures the World,” and illustrates the crucial moment in the encounter of the *asura* king Bali, who had usurped Indra’s throne, with Viṣṇu in the form of a Brahmin dwarf – a story referred to in the *Mahābhārata* (3.81.86-87; 3.100.17-24; 3.299.12-13),² and told at length in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (8.15-23). *Vāmana* the Dwarf swells up to take the three steps of land the *asura* Bali has given him, and two



of his three strides take over all of spacetime; in this depiction his left foot stands on a head (presumably of Bali) and his right leg stretches upward in the second step. His toenails touch the shell enclosing the cosmos, and when *Brahmā* pours water over His foot to venerate it, this water descends to earth as the *Gangā* River (*BhP* 8.21.1-4). The small moveable icons on the altar in front receive the rites of daily worship (*pūjā*).

Complementing this temple is the *Pāṭakam*, which faces east in what was the prosperous section (*pūmpāṭakam*) of the ancient city. Its icon is about twenty-five feet tall and portrays *Kṛṣṇa* sitting as depicted in this drawing available at the temple today:

² The story is briefly told in the supplementary passages to the *Āraṇyakaparvan* in the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* (after 3.256.28d: App. I, 27.67-81).



Pāñṭavatūtar

Here Kṛṣṇa is known in Tamil as Pāñṭavatūtar, “The Pāñḍavas’ Messenger [to Dur-yodhana],” which refers to a crucial event in the narrative of the Mahābhārata (5.129). Kṛṣṇa is enthroned facing east in the posture of ease (*lalitāsana*), with his left hand forming the gesture of giving gifts (*dānamudrā*) and his right hand the gesture of giving protection (*abhayamudrā*).

Each year in the Tamil month of Kārtikkai these two huge stucco icons are smeared with a preservative oil mixture, which gives each form a

glistening black texture. The third ancient icon depicts the Bhagavān reclining on the Snake in the temple called Vēḥkā, head to the south, feet to the north, and turned toward the west. This temple originally stood outside the ancient city, southeast of its wall and moat.

Sometime later, during Pallava rule, two other temples were built near Vēḥkā to house standing icons and they also face west. By now this was a settlement known as Attiyūr, “village of *atti* wood.” *atti* in Sanskrit is *udumbara*, and at least one of these two standing icons was made of it, but today both are of stone. One depicts the standing Bhagavān as Aṭṭapūyaṅ, or Aṣṭabhūjan, because He possesses eight arms. The other, originally made of *atti* wood, depicts the Bhagavān with four arms. He stands on a raised platform or hill (*attigiri*) as Varadarājan, the one who transformed Rāmānuja’s life.

Successive dynasties patronized these five temples and worship continues in them today. The Ūrakam and Varadarājan Temples follow the Pāñcarātra Āgama. The Pāṭakam follows the Vaikhānasa Āgama. I have no information regarding the liturgical schools governing the Vēḥkā or the Aṣṭabhūjan Temples. The history of Bhāgavata Dharma and the celebrations of these five temples by Ālvār poets, however, suggest to me that they all began with the Pāñcarātra

Āgama. After the Pallava dynasty ended at the end of the ninth century, however, Cōla kings or others apparently replaced the Pāñcarātra with the Vaikhānasa Āgama in the case of the Pāṭakam Temple and, as we shall see, of the Vaikuṅṭha Perumāḷ Temple. But this is only plausible conjecture; changes from one liturgical school to another in South Indian temple worship requires further research.

The Vaikuṅṭha Perumāḷ Temple, however, obviously began as Pāñcarātra. Its fifty-six sculpted panels illustrating the Bhāgavatapurāṇa and specific Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās confirm this. Moreover, the Āḷvār poet known as Tirumaṅkai, but who signed himself as Kaliyaṅ (“warrior”) and Kalikaṅṅi (“slayer of Kali”), was the Bhāgavata ruler of Maṅkai in the Kāverī River delta during Pallavamalla’s rule.³ He wrote at least five poems about his emperor’s religious and political acts and these conform to Pāñcarātra theology and liturgy. These poems are now contained in his anthology known as the Periya-tirumōḷi (PT).⁴

The Vyūhas

A defining doctrine of Bhāgavata Dharma is that God embodied a portion of His complete self as the dark skinned man named Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa born in the Sātvata clan of Vṛṣṇis at the end of the previous age, the *dvāparayuga*. Moreover, God’s three *vyūhas* of Pāñcarātra theology took birth as Kṛṣṇa’s kinsmen. We learn about them all, and about Bhāgavata Dharma, from Sanskrit scriptures, especially the Mahābhārata (MBh), its Bhagavadgītā (BhG), and the

³ He corresponds to the Maṅgalarāṣṭrabhartr, or Maṅgalaṅṅāḷvān, both meaning “ruler of the Maṅgala region.” He requested land for sixteen Brahmins to form a village in the Nāgapattinam area of the Kāverī delta in the sixty-first year of Pallavamalla’s reign (792-793). See EI 18 (1925-26): 115-124.

⁴ According to my understanding of these poems, PT 2.8. records the first part of Pallavamalla’s Bhāgavata *dīkṣā* at the Aṣṭabhūjan Temple; PT 5.8 records its completion at Śrīraṅgam; PT 5.10 records his post-war purification at Nandipuram; PT 2.9 records his imperial rule and the Paramēcuraviṅṅagaram he built; and PT 2.3 records his (or perhaps his son’s) patronage of the Tiruvallikkēni Temple at Mayilai on the coast in what is now the Triplicane section of Cennai.

Bhāgavatapurāṇa (BhP); from Saṃhitās of the Pāñcarātra Āgama; from Ālvār poems; and from archaeological evidence provided by sculptures, temples, inscriptions, and coins.

In the following discussion I shall understand *vyūha* to mean “formation” rather than the usual “emanation.” My guide in this is the use of the term in the Mahābhārata account of the Great Bhārata war. When the Pāṇḍava and Kaurava armies assembled on Kurukṣetra facing each other, each assumed a primary *vyūha* or formation (MBh 6.17.38-39; 6.19.3-7; 6.20.3-5). During the eighteen days of battle, each army’s primary *vyūha* strategically shaped itself into other *vyūhas* to attain specific goals, but in each case remained the same army. On a given day of battle, those in charge decided which specific *vyūha* would emerge next, and each had a specific name, such as “Needle Mouth” (*sūcī mukha*), “Curlew” (*krauñca*) or “Kite” (*garuḍa*; MBh 6.19.5; 6.47.1; 6.52.1-17).

A single army turning itself into a sequence of named formations to attain specific goals captures the subtle complexity of the Pāñcarātra doctrine of God’s *vyūhas*. The primary formation in God’s case is named Vāsudeva, a name that may be glossed as “God (*deva*) dwelling (*vasu*) in all things, and all things dwelling (*vasu*) in God (*deva*).” This repeats a meaning of the important name Nārāyaṇa as “the dwelling of man” who “dwells inside man.”⁵ Vāsudeva’s being (*sat*) consists of pure consciousness (*cit*) in a mode of unification (*yoga*) possessing the energetic potency or power (*śakti*) of a great creativity (*mahāmāyā*) that is imaginative and magical. By means of this *mahāmāyā* He brings directional space and chronological time into being as the *brahmāṇḍa*, a term I shall translate as spacetime. Vāsudeva’s strategy in achieving this goal, like an army in battle, is to arrange His self into a sequence of specific formations. The primary Vāsudeva formation is present in each specific formation He makes, and each formation is similarly present in all the others. But until a formation rearranges itself, all others remain hidden within it. To illustrate this doctrine let’s turn to Pallavamalla and the Viṣṇu-house he built in Kāñcipuram.

⁵ Names 246 and 334 in BhgD.

The Pallava Emperor

Sometime around 731 CE Pallavamalla assumes the throne at about twelve years of age and receives the consecration name of Nandivarman. Later, sometime around 753-754, he returns to Kāñcipuram from a long exile supported by the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Maḷ-khēḍ. At the Aṣṭabhūjan Temple he begins a long sequence of ceremonies consecrating him a Bhāgavata ruler. In Tirumañkai's words, "The king and sovereign of Toṅṭai's people worships Māl with the tall crown while Vayiramegha's forces and his glory surround Kāñci, where the Primordial One dwells in the house of the Lord with Eight Arms."⁶

Like almost everyone else Pallavamalla first has to be purified by the Bhagavān as Narasiṃha, or Man-lion. His lengthy story is told in the Bhāgavatapurāṇa (BhP 7.1-10), and his two Upaniṣads are in the Atharvaveda (DEUSSEN 1980/2: 813-858). Vāsudeva tells Saṃkarṣaṇa the components of this *dikṣā* in the Sātvatasamhitā (SS 16-17; SMITH 1975: 526-528). In the first of two poems Tirumañkai composed about Pallavamalla's transformation into a Bhāgavata emperor he uses Pallavamalla's voice to ask the *arcā* and *ācārya* who they are; each time he receives the same answer, "I am the Lord with Eight Arms." The *narasiṃhadikṣā* appears in the first stanza: "[Śiva] who burned up the wandering Three Cities, and [Brahmā] the lord up high on the Lotus, marvel while the three worlds roar like the crashing waves of the Great Sea and worship in the proper manner while He in the form of a lion with burning claws and teeth slicing like swords splits Hiraṇyan's body into two – 'Who is this man?' I ask, 'I am the one dwelling in the house of the Lord with Eight Arms,' he says."⁷

The *tāpa* branding comes later and appears in the fourth stanza. The one being initiated wonders if his *ācārya* holding the burning brands of wheel and conch is Kṛṣṇa who first subdued Indra by lift-

⁶ *mannavan tonṭaiyarkōṅ vaṇaṅkum niṅmuṭi mālai vairamēkaṅ |
tan valitan pukal cūlnta kacci aṭṭapuyakarattātitanai |* (PT 2.8.10ab).

⁷ *tiripura mūṅṅerittāṅṅum marrai malarmicai mēlayaṅṅum viyappa |
muritirai mākaṭal pōl muḷuṅki mūvulakum muṛaiyāl vaṇaṅka |
eriyānakēcaravāḷeyiṛrōṭu iraiṇiyanākam iraiṇṭu cūrā |
ariyuruvām ivarārkolenna aṭṭpuyakarattēṅ enṛārē ||* (PT 2.8.1).

ing the mountain Govardhana (BhP 10.24-27) as depicted in a famous relief at Māmallapuram;⁸ and later slew the elephant Kuvala-yāpīḍa and held its tusk when he entered the Mathurā wrestling ring to slay Kāṃsa (BhP 10.43.1-17):

“The man of wondrous deeds held up the great bell of a mountain high to the clouds to shield the black rain and the elephant feared him. – Is he the cowherd who held its tusk that day? I don’t understand the mystery. He holds the conch and wheel burning with light, and in front of me recites the Veda like a bright light from the Heaven of Justice – ‘Who is he?’ [I ask]. ‘I am the one dwelling in the house of the Lord with Eight Arms,’ he says.”⁹

Like a bright light from the Heaven of Justice, the *ācārya* burns away Pallavamalla’s defilement and brands him on his shoulders as Kṛṣṇa’s property. Hereafter he bears the title *perumānāṭikal*, “Venerable Slave of Great Being,” a Tamil equivalent to *bhāgavata*, “Slave of the Bhagavān.”

Pallavamalla’s *dīkṣā* is completed at the island (*raṅga*) in the Kāverī River known as Śrīraṅgam, where he receives the *mūla*, or root, *mantra*. The *ācārya*, who as his “mother” gave him rebirth through the *dīkṣā*, “nurses” him at the end of the ceremony in the meaning of the *mūlamantra* for seven *nalikai* (about three hours). Tirumaṅkai speaks in this poem: “The breast filled with affection oozes with sweet grace for an incomparable man of true valor, the enduring Pallava ruler, benefactor of kings with tall glittering crowns, and is with him there for seven *nālikai*. And I your slave know the way the *mantra* filled with riches speaks to him, and take refuge in the Golden Foot measuring the world and am saved, O Father on the Island graced with beautiful groves.”¹⁰

⁸ ZIMMER 1960: 2, plates 290-293; LOCKWOOD 1993: 124-129.

⁹ *mañcuyar māmaṅkkuṅṅam ēnti māmaṅkaṭtorum āyavālai |
yañca ataṅ anmaruppanṅuvāṅkkum āyarkol māyam aṅiyamāṭṭēṅ |
veñcuṅṅarāṅiyum caṅkum ēnti vētamunōṅṅuvar nītivāṅṅattu |
aṅcuṅṅar pōṅṅrivarāṅkol enṅa aṅṅapuyakarttēṅ enṅārē ||* (PT 2.8.4).

¹⁰ *tuṅṅaṅku nīṅṅmuṅṅiyaracar tam kuricil toṅṅai manṅavan tiṅṅiṅṅaloruvārku |
uṅṅaṅkoṅṅaṅṅpīṅṅōṅṅinnaruṅṅ curantu aṅkoṅṅu nāṅṅikaiyēṅṅuṅṅaṅṅ iruppa |
vaṅṅaṅkoṅṅ mantiram maṅṅṅavaṅṅkarulicceytavāṅṅaṅṅiṅṅaṅṅarintu ulakam |
aṅṅanta pōṅṅṅaṅṅiṅṅyēṅṅaṅṅaintuṅṅyṅṅtēṅṅ aṅṅipolṅṅil tiruvaraṅṅkattammāṅṅē ||* (PT 5.8.9).

Eventual victories over an alliance led by the Pāṇḍya king Maravarman Rājasimha (730-765) gives Pallavamalla firm control of his throne. After this he builds the Paramēccuraviṇṇagaram to which we now turn.



The Emperor's Viṣṇu-house

This northwest view of the Paramēccuraviṇṇagaram captures its mountainous *vimāna*, its enclosing *prākāra* wall, and the wall enclosing the present-day Viṣṇu-house arena.¹¹ Hidden within its *vimāna* are three sanctums, one on each of three stories, and each sanctum shelters an icon (*arcā*) carved of black stone:

¹¹ Photograph courtesy of the American Institute of Indian Studies, Ramnagar, Varanasi, India.



The Three Sanctums and Three Icons of the Viṣṇu-house

This sketch depicts the *vimāna*'s western side and the postures of its three icons: sitting in the bottom sanctum, reclining in the middle sanctum, and standing in the top sanctum.¹² Above the third sanctum is a hidden empty cube, which may merely have an architectural function, but perhaps an esoteric meaning too. Today the standing icon is missing from the top sanctum and a variation of the bottom sanctum's sitting posture is sculpted on its back (eastern) wall. The missing icon of black stone, however, appears in the midst of battle depicted on the *prākāra* wall enclosing the *vimāna*:

*Icon of Kṛṣṇa Depicted in the Midst of Battle on the prākāra
(Southwest Corner)*

This photograph captures the icon of Kṛṣṇa in the midst of a battle, part of a sequence along the bottom register of sculpted panels in the southwest corner illustrating Pallavamalla's rule as Bhāgavata emperor.¹³ The sequence includes a portrayal of Pallavamalla en-

¹² Sketch by AMY WYNNE, Smith College, based on REA 1909.

¹³ Photograph by D. HUDSON.

throned, of his *ācārya* and of a model of the *vimāna* the *ācārya* guided the imperial architect to design.

Kṛṣṇa's stiff shape contrasting the vigorous bodies in battle at either side defines it as an icon (*arcā*). Kṛṣṇa is crowned as ruler of Dvārakā with two pairs of arms. His back left hand holds the conch and his back right hand the wheel, which has broken off. His front left hand rests on his thigh and his damaged front right hand forms the *abhayamudrā* denoting protection. In his poem about this temple Tirumaṅkai refers to this icon as Pallavamalla's possession:



“He owns the *tiṅcilai*, which scorched the valor of the Southern King steady in chariots during battle on enemy ground.”¹⁴ Tirumaṅkai uses the words *tiṅ cilai* as a double entendre meaning “hard (*tiṅ*) stone (*cilai*)” and “firm (*tiṅ*) bow (*cilai*).”¹⁵ The black stone icon was believed to embody the Unobstructed's *śakti*, whose *tejas* brought the victories over the Pāṇḍya alliance and thereby established Pallavamalla's firm control of the Pallava throne. Tirumaṅkai in the ninth stanza identifies this icon as Kṛṣṇa when he defeats lust (*māl*) in the form of seven bulls to win his cousin, the *gopī* Pinnai as his bride; and then links its potency to that of the royal conch and drum used in rites of war:

“Pinnai's forehead is a gleaming crescent moon and she is a cousin, so long ago in battle he subdued deceiving Lust in the shape of seven bulls. Now he owns beautiful Kacci with its surrounding wealth, where the Sovereign of Pallavas serves the Viṣṇu-house he

¹⁴ PT 2.9.2c: *tēr mannu tennavaṇai munaiyil meruvil tirālvāṭṭiya tiṅcilaiyōn*.

¹⁵ The Tamil *cilai* means “bow”; but as the Tamil form of the Sanskrit *śilā* it means “stone” or “rock,” which in Tamil also denotes a stone statue or icon.

built (after he conquered those angry kings with swords stained black from blood). He is the Emperor who owns the drum with a bitter mouth, and the conch with the roar of the sea.”¹⁶

The *śakti* embodied in this standing Kṛṣṇa may explain its absence from the top sanctum: Perhaps a ruler at the end of the Pallava dynasty took the icon to his realm because of its powerful potency; if so, it has not yet been identified.

The top floor sanctum where this icon once stood has no sculptures on its outer sides, no pathway for circumambulation, and cannot be reached except by ladder. In contrast, stairways connect the bottom floor and middle floor sanctums; both of these have circumambulation paths, and both have sculpted panels on their outside walls. These panels, combined with those of the *vimāna* wall enveloping the bottom floor sanctum, and with those of the *vimāna*'s porch (*ardhamaṇḍapa*), total fifty-six. All of them face outward toward the cardinal directions. As I argue at length in “The Body of God,” soon to be published, the Bhāgavatapurāṇa and the Pāñcarātra Āgama explain them all. They reveal that this Emperor's Viṣṇu-house is a visual summa of Bhāgavata Dharma as it had developed in South India by the eighth century.

The Bottom Floor Sanctum

To introduce this summa of Bhāgavata Dharma and its use of the Pāñcarātra Āgama we shall focus on the manner in which the *vyūhas* carved in stone on the bottom floor sanctum guide the sculpted program of the entire building. The bottom floor sanctum is the square center of a three-dimensional *maṇḍala* oriented to the cardinal directions.¹⁷ Each *vyūha* is identified with one side of the

¹⁶ *piṛaiyuṭai vāṇṭal piṇṇai tiṛattu munnēyorukāl ceruvil urumin |*
maṛaiyuṭaimāl viṭai yēlaṭarttār kiṭantāṇ taṭaṇcūlntalakāya kacci |
kaṛaiyuṭaiṅṅaṅ maṛamannar keṭak katalpōl mulaṅkum kural kaṭuvāy |
paraiyuṭaip pallavarkōṇ paṇinta paramēccuraviṇṇakar atuvē || (PT 2.9.9).

¹⁷ It appears to be a built form of the *cakrābhjamaṇḍala*, or “Wheel and Lotus *maṇḍala*,” found in the edition of the PādS, vol. 2, pp. 568-571. This built form of the *maṇḍala* is consistent with the meanings of the four directions in the *śrauta* rites of the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa (ŚB 5.4.1; HUDSON 2002b: 82-86; 99-105).

maṇḍala, and this side faces outward toward a cardinal direction. The direction toward which a side of a *maṇḍala* faces is specific to the meaning of the formation it signifies.

Vāsudeva, The Primary Formation

Vāsudeva, the primary formation, sits inside the sanctum and faces west toward its entrance. This photograph of Vāsudeva, known locally as Vaikuṅṭha Perumāḷ, captures Him dressed for worship with small moveable icons in front.¹⁸ Gold plates cover portions of His black stone body. The cloth hides His relaxed posture (*lalitāsana*), for He sits with His right leg folded on a flat throne and His pendent left leg rests its foot on a stool. He forms the protective *abhaya-mudrā* with His right hand and the open-handed gift-giving *dānamudrā* with His left hand.



This large black icon fills the sanctum and leaves only enough room for the serving priest (*arcaka*) during *pūjā* worship. There are no icons of Brahmā and Śiva.

Vāsudeva deploys His formations from His right side clockwise (*pradakṣiṇa*) according to the chronology of an *ahorātra*, or day-and-night. A hall separating the sanctum from the *vimāna* enclosing it allows viewers to circumambulate their sculpted depictions on the three exterior sides of the sanctum. Vāsudeva's three formations begin with Saṅkarṣaṇa the Plower facing north during the final hour of night.

¹⁸ Photograph by D. HUDSON.

Samkarṣaṇa the Plover, Vāsudeva's First Formation

This first formation is omniscient knowledge (*jñāna*) in the shape of the endless (*ananta*) white Snake who serves as Vāsudeva's supreme abode (*dhāman*).¹⁹ This drawing (from REA 1909) replicates His sculpted icon in the middle of the sanctum's northern wall, where He gazes to the north through the central window of the enclosing *vimāna*. Samkarṣaṇa sits on a flat throne in a posture of royal relaxation (*rājatilāsana*): His left leg is pendent and His right foot rests on the throne (SAUNDERS 1960: 128). He has two pairs of arms. The back pair holds the wheel on His right and the conch on His left at the level of his head. Of His front pair, the right arm, which is broken off, bends up and its elbow rests on His raised right knee; His left elbow rests on an object to His left and His forearm hangs down toward His lap with casual grace. The Plover's head is crowned and behind it appear the hoods of five cobras (*nāga*). Two male figures fly toward these hoods while facing the viewer. On a level below the throne is Brahmā with four heads standing to His right and Śiva standing to His left, both badly damaged. Two unidentified figures kneel below His feet.

Samkarṣaṇa the Plover is pleasantly inebriated because He has voluntarily drunk enough liquor to enable unified *jñāna* "to see double."²⁰ This intentionally defiled omniscience will serve as the basis for everything that follows; and *jñāna*'s indefatigable and transformative power called *bala* will operate within it to produce, among others, *amṛta*, a food that confers prosperous longevity. The Plover faces north because, according to the *maṇḍala*, this is the direction of

¹⁹ BhP 10.2.8; BhG 15.6.

²⁰ BhP 5.17.20; 5.25.7.

human life on Bhārata; it is the period of about 4-6 a.m. known as the *brahmamuhūrta*, or Brahmā’s Hour. Bhāgavatas on Bhārata awaken during this pre-dawn hour to worship God through *mantra* recitation (*japa*) and visualization (*dhyāna*).²¹ The *brahmamuhūrta* and the north also signify the perfect *kṛtayuga* on Bhārata, the age when the bull of *dharma*, or true order, stands on all four feet and human consciousness is dominated by the material “thread of purity” (*sattvaguna*) visualized as white.²² In this age there is only Nārāyaṇa as *deva*, the Veda is expressed by the single *praṇava* mantra *om*, Agni the fire is one, and there is only a single ritual class (*varṇa*; BhP 9.14.48). If we were to apply the Pāñcarātra prescription of rites for five periods of the day-and-night (*pañcakāla*) to the four sides of this *maṇḍala*, this northern side would denote the ceremony called *abhigamana* performed before the sun rises.²³

Pradyumna the Pre-eminently Mighty,
The Second of Vāsudeva’s Formations

The Plover’s “double vision” produces the second formation named Pradyumna the Pre-eminently Mighty. He is sovereignty (*aiśvarya*) over the passion (*rāga*) that begets Brahmā, that urges Brahmā to turn his self into spacetime and to populate it, that stimulates desire (*kāma*), and that propels spacetime as an ever-moving cosmos (*jagat*).

This photograph captures the large figure of Pradyumna enthroned at the center of the sanctum’s eastern wall prior to recent



²¹ For characteristics of the four ages on Bhārata see BhP 12.3.18-52; 9.14.48; their dominant modes of worship are summarized in 12.3.52.

²² The colors of matter’s “threads” (*guṇa*) appear in BhP 10.3.20.

²³ The *pañcakāla* rites are prescribed in JS 22.64-80.

restoration.²⁴ He gazes eastward through the *vimāna* doorway on the east. This Pre-eminently Mighty sovereign with two pairs of arms sits facing directly eastward in a manner that replicates Vāsudeva’s *lalitāsana* inside the sanctum facing the opposite direction. His back pair of arms holds the wheel and conch at the level of His head. But His tall crown differs from Vāsudeva’s, and from Saṃkarṣaṇa’s, as does His front pair of arms. His front left arm hangs to the side and the forearm appears to reach out with a *mudrā*, but the hand is broken off. His front right arm bends upward at the elbow in a *mudrā* gesture also obliterated. Two figures (possibly female) hold chowries on either side of Pradyumna’s head, and two smaller figures gesturing praise fly behind them at the panel’s corners. On a level beneath Pradyumna’s throne stand Brahmā to His right and Śiva to His left, both with the *añjalimudrā* of veneration. Three other figures with the *añjalimudrā* remain unidentified.

Pradyumna faces east toward the realm of *devas* during the morning. In terms of Bhārata’s ages, the bull of *dharma* now stands on three legs in the *tretāyuga*, and the material “thread of passion and activity” (*rajas-guṇa*) visualized as red in color dominates human consciousness. Thanks to Purūravas the single Veda has become threefold, morning worship is conducted through the three fires of *yajña* sacrifice directed eastward toward *devas*, and the motivation for worship is the desire (*kāma*) for its results (*phala*; BhP 9.14.43-49). Pradyumna’s *aiśvarya* sovereignty over passion may nevertheless produce in the consecrated devotee, or *sādhaka*, a “heroic” or “virile” mode of consciousness called *vīrya*; it motivates the performance of fire sacrifices in imitation of God, but is unaffected by their results, because it does not cling and is completely free from desire or anger (*kāmakrodha*; BhG 3.22-43). In terms of the *pañcakāla* ceremonies, this side of morning would be for the two called *upādāna* and *ijyā*.

Aniruddha the Unobstructed, The Third of Vāsudeva’s Formations

Pre-eminently Mighty sovereignty over impassioned consciousness becomes the third formation named Aniruddha the Unob-

²⁴ Photograph by D. HUDSON.

structed. He is the potency or power (*śakti*) of Vāsudeva's unified consciousness (*yoga*) embodied by sound as *mantra*.

As this drawing (from REA 1909) illustrates, Aniruddha's *lalitāsana* at the center of the sanctum's southern wall resembles Vāsudeva's and Pradyumna's, but His crown resembles Saṃkarṣaṇa's. He, too, has two pairs of hands. His back pair holds the wheel and conch as usual. His front pair is damaged, but appears to form the *tattvamudrā* or *jñānamudrā* of teaching: His left hand



on the ankle of His right leg resting on the throne is open as if holding a palmleaf book; the open palm of His right hand faces the viewer, but its forefinger is broken off; in the *tattva-* or *jñānamudrā*, the forefinger would touch the tip of the thumb (PādS, vol. 2, p. 580, nos. 13-14). Two crowned figures hold chowries at the level of His head, but are positioned differently from those in the previous Pradyumna panel. Beneath His throne the figure of Śiva at His left is ruined, but Brahmā's three visible heads are intact at His right.

Aniruddha the Unobstructed gazes southward during the afternoon. South is the direction from which *rākṣasa* demons attack humans on Bhārata and is the location of the purgatory (*naraka*) of Yama, *deva* of death. This is the *dvāparayuga* on Bhārata and the bull of *dharma* stands on only two legs; impassioned human consciousness is dominated by the "material thread of darkness" (*tamas-guṇa*) visualized as dark. People in this afternoon age worship by focusing their six senses on *devas* embodied by means of *mantra* in material bodies or as icons; they house these bodies of God in temples and homes, and celebrate them with periodical festivals. As sunset approaches and shadows grow long, things may not be as they appear; like Saṃkarṣaṇa facing north, people facing south in the growing shadows of the afternoon "see double." But while the Plower's "double vision" is voluntary, their's is not. This is therefore the time for Aniruddha the Unobstructed to teach, and some of His teachings employ "language in the manner of twilight" as ALEX

WAYMAN defines *saṃdhyābhāṣā* (WAYMAN 1973: 130). The *pañcakāla* rite presumably prescribed for this last period of daytime is called *svādhyāya*.

Vāsudeva Facing West

Moving counterclockwise from Aniruddha we return to Vāsudeva where we began. In the terms of a day-and-night, this western side denotes nighttime. Vāsudeva faces westward toward the realm of *asuras* underneath Earth; periodically they emerge from the west at sunset and attempt to take over Earth and Heaven. According to ancient lore, *asuras* long ago possessed Earth, but lost her when *devas* deviously brought them Viṣṇu as the *yajña* sacrifice in a dwarf's shape (*vāmana*). Viṣṇu the *yajña* spread out and pushed *asuras* westward off of Earth. *devas* then placed an altar and some of the *soma* liquid crucial to the sacrifice into the moon (*candra*) for safekeeping in case *asuras* should take over again, and this is why Moon is known as Soma.²⁵ *asuras* repeatedly attempt to regain what they lost and frequently succeed, but Vāsudeva invariably intervenes to restore spacetime's proper order (*dharma*) by pushing them westwards into the dark waters underneath Earth. On Bhārata this western side denotes the *kaliyuga* when the bull of *dharma* stands on only one leg of righteousness. People in this age of night worship primarily by reciting God's thousand names (*śahasranāman*) as taught by Bhīṣma in the Mahābhārata (13.135.14-125), and by singing *saṅkīrtana* hymns; among the latter are Tamil poems composed by Āḷvār poets like Tirumaṅkai and Āṅṅāḷ. In terms of the *pañcakāla* ceremonies, this side would be for the ceremony called *yoga*.

The Sculpted Panels of the Vimāna

As is by now evident, the sculpted panels of this Viṣṇu-house function in the manner of poetry addressed to sophisticated Bhāgavata viewers. A single panel contains levels of meaning defined by the scene it depicts, by the direction it faces, and by its specific place in the sculpted program. Let's now examine selected panels on each

²⁵ The earth of the altar in Moon takes the shape of a hare (*śaśa*), so he is known as *śaśin*, "having the hare" (ŚB 1.2.5.18; 11.1.5.3).

side of the *vimāna* enclosing this bottom sanctum to see how Vāsudeva and his three formations orchestrate their sculpted programs. Each side contains six panels; the two at the corners of each side define the content of the four panels in between. The western side, however, is modified because its four framed panels extend westward to form the face of an entrance porch (*ardhamaṇḍapa*). These are the panels visitors see first after entering through the *prākāra*'s western gateway. But if we conceptually collapse this entrance porch back into the western wall, we have the square *maṇḍala* I shall use to guide our discussion.

Vimāna Panels on Vāsudeva's Side Facing West

Upon entering through the *prākāra* gateway visitors see two sculpted panels flanking the porch entrance. They signify the *kaliyuga* in which we live (BhP 12.1). At the top of each is an identical portrayal of Kalki on his horse Devadatta facing northward as if to signal circumambulation clockwise *pradakṣiṇa*. Beneath Kalki's horse is the portrayal of a man who will restore a royal Kṣatriya dynasty to Bhārata when Kalki appears to put the bull of *dharma* back on all four feet when our *kaliyuga* ends (BhP 12.2.17-38).

Kalki and Devāpi
of the Lunar Dynasty
South of the Porch Entrance

This photograph captures a set of three standing figures set into the porch's face; they are south of a lion pillar standing adjacent to the guard at the southern side of the entrance.²⁶ The central figure is Devāpi who will restore



²⁶ Photograph courtesy of the Institut Français d'Indologie, Pondicherry, India.

the Lunar Dynasty (*somavaṃśa*); the figures at his sides remain unidentified. Devāpi stands facing directly forward with two arms, royal clothes, and a tall crown. His right hand forms a *mudrā* that may correspond to the *anantamudrā* of the Pādmasaṃhitā.²⁷ His left hand rests at his stomach forming an unidentified *mudrā*.

Two pillars frame him and support a lintel on which Kalki rides his rearing horse Devadatta, whose hind feet stand above the southern pillar. Kalki holds the reins with his right hand, and with his left hand raises a sword high above and behind his head.



Kalki and Maru of the
Solar Dynasty
North of the Porch Entrance

The panel in this photograph is directly north of the standing lion pillar adjacent to the guard at the northern side of the entrance.²⁸ Kalki on Devadatta appears above Maru who will restore the Solar Dynasty (*ikṣvākuvāṃśa*). Maru faces forward with two arms and wears royal garb with a tall crown. Behind his head appears what may be a halo characteristic of Sūrya the Sun. Maru's right hand at his stomach forms a *mudrā* resembling the *lakṣmīmudrā* of the Pādmasaṃhitā.²⁹ His left shoulder and arm are set back into the niche, and his left hand holds an unidentified object at his chest.

²⁷ PādS, vol. 1, App. p. 19, no. 27: The right palm faces forward, the thumb is open, and the fingers bend toward the palm.

²⁸ Photograph courtesy of the Institut Français d'Indologie, Pondicherry, India.

²⁹ PādS, vol. 1, App. p. 16, no. 15: The palm faces inward, the tips of the index finger and thumb touch, and the other fingers are straight or curve inward.

Maru also has a figure to each side. The large crowned figure to his right looks to the southwest. His right arm and hand are hidden, but his left hand at his chest forms a *mudrā* resembling the *balimudrā*, or *muṣṭimudrā*, of the *Pādmasaṃhitā*.³⁰ The figure standing to his left, however, is radically different. He is not in a niche and is very small and slender, reaching from Maru's knees to his chest. He wears a garment around his waist and has no crown. His feet are spread apart facing south and a rope encircles his ankles, or perhaps two large anklets appear as merged. He bends forward at the hips, arches his back toward the north, twists his chest westward, stretches his two arms above his head, and joins his fingers to form a circle through which he gazes. He depicts a man using the *gāyatrīmantra* to worship Sūrya the Sun on his way to Bhārata from the east.

This figure corresponds to Yājñavalkya in a story explaining the origin of the fifteen Vājasaneyya branches of the Yajurveda studied and transmitted by the Kāṇvas, Mādhyandinas, and others. Yājñavalkya in this story recites the *gāyatrīmantra* to Sūrya, and Vāsudeva appears to him in the shape of a horse (*vājirūpa*): He is a male person with the head of a horse, made of *dharma* to embody *dharma*, known as Hayaśiras (“head of a horse”) and Hayagrīva (“neck of a horse”).³¹ Yājñavalkya as depicted here anticipates two predawn events represented ahead by panels at the northwest corner. One is the story of the Bhagavān as Horsehead who rescues the Vedas from the dark waters under Earth and then becomes Madhusūdana to allow Brahmā to use them as his “eyes” to emanate space-time; and the other is the story of Boar who rescues Goddess Earth from the same dark waters in order for Brahmā to organize her as a dwelling for humans and other beings.³²

³⁰ PādS, vol. 1, App. p. 42, no. 107: The palm of the fist (*muṣṭi*) faces the viewer.

³¹ BhP 5.18.1-6; 7.9.37; MBh 12.327.79-86.

³² For these stories see JS 1-2 (Madhu and Kaiṭabha with no mention of Horsehead or Madhusūdana); BhP 10.40.17, and MBh 12.327 (GANGULI 1970: 142-150; Horsehead); and BhP 3.13.1-50 (Boar).

Vimāna Panels Saṃkarṣaṇa's Side Facing North

The *vimāna*'s northern side depicts the contents of the Plower's *jñāna* relevant to human life on Bhārata. Numerical symbolism for Vāsudeva's three *vyūha* formations begins with this side, for each corner panel visually encodes the sequential place of the formation it signifies. The early sixth-century Viṣṇu-house facing west at Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh, employs the same visual numerical code.³³ In this case, the dominant single figure in the two corner panels signal Saṃkarṣaṇa the Plower as Vāsudeva's first formation gazing outward through the *vimāna*'s central window from His position on the sanctum inside.

Vāsudeva as Vaikuṅṭhanātha
At the Northwest Corner

This panel at the northwest corner portrays the ultimate content of *jñāna*, which is Vāsudeva as supreme (*paravāsudeva*) and as formation (*vyūhavāsudeva*); as SANJUKTA GUPTA observes, anyone who attains Vāsudeva as formation automatically attains Vāsudeva as supreme (GUPTA 1992b: 184 and 188).³⁴ Vāsudeva appears here as the dominant figure in His own realm (*svaloka*).³⁵ He looks directly north, wears a tall crown, has two pairs of arms, and sits in the middle of the panel in the *lalitāsana* of Vāsudeva inside the sanctum. But He more closely resembles the depiction of Aniruddha on its southern side because He is teaching: His left hand rests in His lap as if holding a palmleaf book; His front right arm bends up at the elbow

³³ See HUNTINGTON 1985: 206-211 for plates. The single scene of Hari rescuing Gajendra on the northern side signals the first formation (plate 10.31). The two large figures of Nara and Nārāyaṇa (with Urvaśī springing up above in the middle) on the eastern side signal the second formation (plate 10.30). And the panel on the southern side divided into three horizontal scenes signals the third formation: *devas* are at the top, Madhusūdana is in the middle, and on the bottom the *asuras* Madhu and Kaiṭabha on the west face Madhusūdana's weapons as persons (*āyudhapuruṣa*) on the east (plate 10.29).

³⁴ Photography courtesy of MARYLIN M. RHIE, Smith College.

³⁵ Kṛṣṇa also reveals this realm to *gopas* in BhP 10.28.14-17.

and His damaged hand stands away from His body in what probably was the *jñāna-* or *tattvamudrā*.

This panel portrays the shape (*rūpa*) Brahmā sees when Vāsudeva teaches him during the predawn hour before his daytime we know as our *varāhakaḷpa* (BhP 2.9.5-36). Six symmetrically arranged males frame Him, three on each side. The two flying above His head hold an arm upward in veneration and mark the panel's vertical axis running down through His crown. The remaining four correspond to Vāsudeva's chief servants Sunanda, Nanda, Prabala, and Arhaṇa, whom Brahmā names first in his description of this scene (BhP 2.9.14).

Sunanda (“delighting”) and Nanda (“pleasing”) match the pair of crowned males whose torsos are at the level of Vāsudeva's head. The figure standing to His right (east) forms the *añjalimudrā* of veneration and has a large circular halo around his head. He is Sunanda waiting to emerge from the east to delight others as Sūrya the Sun. His flying companion on the opposite side (west) bends his left leg backward and raises his right knee to the level of his waist. He is Nanda moving westward as the pleasing light of Soma the Moon. Prabala (“might”) and Arhaṇa (“honor”) match the two crowned figures sitting on the ground at the level of Vāsudeva's footstool, their legs crossed in front with their knees raised. Whatever *mudrās* they hold are lost by damage. Prabala as might is beneath Vāsudeva's right hand; Arhaṇa as honor is beneath His left hand.



Vāsudeva is also known as Hari, a name suggesting the tawny color of a lion noted for its predawn roaring in the mountains.³⁶ His realm is prior to spacetime, of course, and once Brahmā produces it Hari’s realm remains transcendent by “containing” it. But in the fifth *manvantara*, or Manu Term, a part of Him (*svakalā*) is born through Śubhra’s wife, Vikuṅṭhā, and becomes Vaikuṅṭha; and a group of *devas* do the same as the Vaikuṅṭhas. For the pleasure of His consort, Rāmā the Beloved, Vaikuṅṭha creates the pure realm called Vaikuṅṭha. It appears on a three-peaked island on Earth in the Ocean of Milk, northwest of Bhārata, which is the location of this panel on the *maṇḍala*.³⁷ The Bhagavān Vaikuṅṭha resides there as Lord of Vaikuṅṭha (*vaikuṅṭhanātha*), and His brilliance gives this island the name Śvetadvīpa, “White Island.” It is the locale of the stories of the elephant Gajendra and the Churning of the Milk Ocean among others.³⁸



Samkarṣaṇa
as Ananta the Endless
At the Northeast Corner

In contrast to Vaikuṅṭha’s brilliant purity, this panel at the opposite northeast corner depicts a dark part of the Bhagavān (*kalā bhagavatas tāmasī*) as the self-decluded or “inebriated” snake Ananta, or “Endless” (BhP 5.25.1).³⁹

³⁶ In Tiruppāvai 23, the poet Āṅṭāl depicts a lion in its cave awakening and roaring as her metaphor for Kṛṣṇa awakening in the Śrīvilliputtūr Temple during the *brahmamuhūrta* leading to the daytime of the full moon of the month Mārkaḷi (Mārgaśīrṣa).

³⁷ BhP 8.5.1-6; 3.15.12-50. See also the description in MBh 12.322.6-12 (GANGULI 1970: 118).

³⁸ For Gajendra see BhP 8.2-4; for the Milk Ocean Churning see BhP 8.5-12.

³⁹ Photograph courtesy of the American Institute of Indian Studies, Ramnagar, Varanasi, India.

Ananta with two pairs of arms and a tall crown resembles Saṃkarṣaṇa sitting in the *rājalilāsana* on the sanctum wall inside except that it is His left foot resting on the throne, not His right, and we can see the toes of His right rather than left foot resting on a stool in front of the throne. His right front hand placed on the throne bears His weight, His front left elbow rests on His left knee, and His left hand forms an unidentified *mudrā*.

Ananta depicted here is thirty thousand *yojanas* beneath the *pātāla* level of Brahmā's spacetime body, which sits on one of His many hoods. When Brahmā's daytime ends, eleven of Rudra's formations (*vyūha*) will emerge from His forehead to destroy Brahmā's body and bring on his night (BhP 5.25.2-3). To His left stands a daughter of Vāsuki, *pātāla*'s premier *nāga* (BhP 5.24.31). She has two arms and stands slightly behind Ananta's left with the *añjalimudrā*. She has come to ask for a husband (BhP 5.25.4-5; 3.8.5-6). Directly above her appears the torso and uncrowned head of a male gesturing in praise with his open right hand. He is the ruler of Surasena named Citraketu, who experiences Saṃkarṣaṇa by means of a *mantra* taught to him by the seer (*rṣi*) Nārada. Citraketu will become the ruler of *vidyādharas*, and then will become the *asura* named Vṛtra (BhP 6.14-17, esp. 15.27 and 16.18-65). Both identities illustrate Saṃkarṣaṇa's intentional defilement of *jñāna*.

At the bottom of the panel in the eastern corner sits Sanatkumāra facing Ananta's right foot on the footstool. He has piled matted hair, long earlobes, bands around his forearms, and a cloth around his waist. His right hand holds an undecipherable *mudrā* at the level of his right breast and his left hand is damaged. This youngest of four Kumāras, or youthful, princely sons born of Brahmā's pure consciousness has just arrived and touched Saṃkarṣaṇa's foot with his head dripping water from the Gaṅgā River. Saṃkarṣaṇa the Endless, absorbed in contemplating Vāsudeva as depicted at the northwest corner (in the previous plate), has just opened His eyes to bless Sanatkumāra and teach him what the narrating Maitreya calls the *bhāgavatam purāṇam* (BhP 3.8.7).⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Kṛṣṇa teaches what he calls the "Bhāgavatam" to Uddhava, and says he first taught it to Brahmā born in the lotus (presumably to inform him of what had transpired before he appeared; BhP 3.4.13). This "Bhāgavatam" is the first part of Maitreya's teaching to Vidura (3.5-7). Maitreya then teaches Uddhava an account of what he calls the "Bhāgavatam Purāṇam,"

The Four Bracketed Panels Facing North

This north side's remaining four panels (not illustrated here) demonstrate the role the four bracketed panels on the other *vimāna* walls play in developing the theme established by the corner panels. In this case each panel represents a specific Bhāgavata teacher of *jñāna* in the following order moving from west to east. Let's consider them briefly.

Nārada

Nārada is born in the previous *kalpa* as a *gandharva* and then as a Śūdra. He hears the Kṛṣṇa story, spends his days devoted to Kṛṣṇa, and receives a brief vision of Nārāyaṇa. His desire for further perception of Nārāyaṇa carries him into this *varāhakaḷpa*, where he is born through Brahmā's lap and retains his memory (BhP 3.12.24). He now has a *vinā*, travels unobstructed through the three worlds of death and birth singing Hari's names and Kṛṣṇa's story, and remains forever celibate (BhP 1.6.27-39).

Among Nārada's teachings are: 1) the story of Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-kathā*); 2) the "most secret knowledge" (*jñāna guhyatama*), which contains a *mantra* addressed to Vāsudeva and His three *vyūhas* during a sacrifice to the Person of Sacrifice (*yajñapurusa*; BhP 1.5.23-38); 3) the "*pāñcarātra upaniṣad*" he learns from Nārāyaṇa on White Island;⁴¹ 4) the *Sātvatasamhitā* (SS) he learns from Saṃkarṣaṇa after Vāsudeva teaches it to Him (SS 1); 5) the *Jayākhyasamhitā* (JS) he learns directly from the Bhagavān and teaches to his disciple named Śaṅḍilya (JS 1-2); and the *ślokas* he and Tumburu sing in Brahmā's presence about Ananta's material form of pure *sattva* holding the material sphere as a minute particle on one of His thousands of hoods (BhP 5.25.8-13).

But another of Nārada's disciples named Sāvarni connects him also to 6) the *Devīmāhātmya* (DM) as taught by the seer (*rṣi*) Mārkaṇḍeya; and 7) to the *purāṇasamhitā* taught by Fish to the Pāṇḍya

which Saṃkarṣaṇa taught to Sanatkumāra and other seers in *pātāla*, and which passed down to him through Parāśara (BhP 3.8-4.31). Sanatkumāra teaches Nārada a related doctrine in *Chāndogya* 7.

⁴¹ MBh 12.326 (GANGULI 1970: 132-142).

king named Satyavrata during the deluge between this and the previous *kalpa*. Satyavrata now rules as the seventh Manu named Śraddhādeva, the son of Sūrya the Sun (*vaivāsvata*); his younger brother is Nārada's disciple Sāvārṇi, who will become the eighth Manu.⁴²

Kapila

Brahmā's son born of his shadow is Kardama ("shadow") and he is meant to procreate. To obtain a perfect wife Kardama goes to Bindusaras on the Sarasvatī River and for ten thousand years practices unification in ecstasy (*samādhi*) by means of ceremony (*kriyā*) and self-discipline (*yoga*). Finally, but through devotion, he attains Hari, who bestows inexhaustible boons for *prapanna* refugees.⁴³ Kardama perceives Hari sitting on Garuḍa in a manner suitable for the *ṛtayuga*; the panel depicts this scene (BhP 3.21.1-13). Hari tells Kardama that he will marry Svāyambhuva Manu's daughter Devahūtī, and that they will have nine daughters who will marry Brahmā's sons beginning with Marīci, but excluding Nārada. Then "I, by a part of my own portion (*svāmśakalayā*), shall enter through your *vīrya* into your field, Devahūtī, to teach *tattvasaṃhitā*."⁴⁴ After Kapila is born and his father Kardama leaves for the life of a *saṃnyāsin*, he teaches his mother perception of the *ātman* (*ātmadarśana*; 3.24.36), a very long lesson about *sāṃkhya*, *bhaktiyoga*, and the importance of *satsaṅga*, or associating with people whose being is true.⁴⁵ He later plays a role in the descent of Gaṅgā (BhP 9.8-9.15).

⁴² For Sāvārṇi's story see BhP 5.19.10; 8.1.19-22; and DM 1.1-46 (MP 81.1-46); 13.5-17 (MP 93.5-17).

⁴³ ... *saṃprapade hariṃ bhaktyā prapannavaradāsūṣam* (BhP 3.21.7).

⁴⁴ BhP 3.21.32: *sahāhaṃ svāmśakalayā tvadvīryeṇa mahāmune | tava kṣetre devahūtyāṃ praṇeṣye tattvasaṃhitām ||*.

⁴⁵ For the story of Kardama, Devahūtī, and Kapila see BhP 3.21-24; for Kapila's teaching see BhP 3.25-33.

Brahmā

Hari teaches Brahmā the *jñāna paramaguhya*, or supreme secret of omniscience; it consists of four stanzas customarily known as the *Catuṣślokībhāgavatam*, or “Bhāgavatam in Four Stanzas” (BhP 2.9.32-35 and Śrīdhara Svāmin’s Commentary ad loc.). Brahmā teaches it to Nārada as the *bhāgavatam purāṇam* (BhP 2.9.43), which in this case consists of ten topics (BhP 2.9.39-2.10.47). Nārada passes it on to Vyāsa, and Vyāsa passes it on to Śuka. Interestingly, Śuka is the embodiment of Brahmā (BhP 12.13.21). By the time Brahmā embodied as Śuka teaches it to the emperor Parīkṣit awaiting death from snakebite, this teaching is an early form of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* we know today (BhP 12.13.18-23).

Mārkaṇḍeya

The seer Mārkaṇḍeya teaches the *jñāna* embodied by the *aṣṭākṣaramantra*, or *mantra* of eight syllables, *om namo nārāyaṇāya*. The twin seers Nārāyaṇa and Nara as they appeared to him are the major figures of this panel.⁴⁶ Nara is white (*śukla*) and Nārāyaṇa is dark (*kṛṣṇa*), both are tall and have two pairs of arms and eyes like fresh lotus blossoms, and are dressed consecrated (*dīkṣita*) for sacrifice (BhP 12.8.32-34). Their appearance to Mārkaṇḍeya illustrates the statement “*om*, veneration to Nārāyaṇa,” because Nara, as the *paramahansa* disciple who forgets, venerates Nārāyaṇa who remembers. The pair is invisibly present on Bhārata throughout this *kalpa* to generate detachment from the body in others; nevertheless their *kṛtayuga tapas* produces the *apsaras* Urvaśī, who becomes Purūruvas’ lover, and thus begins the Lunar Dynasty.⁴⁷ Their passionate desire

⁴⁶ They are born through the *prajāpati* named Dharma and his wife Mūrti. See BhP 1.3.9; 2.7.6-7; 3.4.21-22; 4.1.53-59; 5.19.9-15; 10.89-60; and 11.4.6.

⁴⁷ For Purūruvas and Urvaśī see BhP 2.7.6-7; 5.19.1-15; 9.1.34-35; 9.14.15-49; 11.4.7-16. Urvaśī appears in the depiction of Nara and Nārāyaṇa facing east at Deogarh as mentioned in note 33 (HUNTINGTON 1985: 210, plate 10.30). She springs up above the antelope horn Nārāyaṇa holds in his back left hand. In *dīkṣita* rites, the black antelope skin signifies the fire sacrifice (*yajña*) and its horn the womb (ŚB 3.2.1.28-30).

(*kāma*) produces the fire of the Vedic sacrifice at the beginning of the next age, the *tretāyuga*, when the single Veda becomes threefold (BhP 9.14.49). In the *dvāparayuga* “Nārāyaṇa, the ancient friend of Nara,” who remembers everything, appears as Kṛṣṇa residing in Dvārakā (BhP 10.69.16); and Nara who forgets appears as Arjuna (BhG 4.5).

Mārkaṇḍeya depicted as a smaller figure at the panel’s bottom is born in the first Manu Term of this *varāhakaḷpa*, but sustains *yoga* into the seventh when Nārāyaṇa and Nara appear to him as depicted above. Nārāyaṇa promises him experience of the *māyā* that causes the world and its protectors to think that unified true being (*sat*) is differentiated (*sadbhidā*; BhP 12.9.6). This is Mārkaṇḍeya’s famous vision of the baby on the banyan branch (BhP 11.8-10; MBh 3.186-185). The Bhagavān Rudra and his *devī* companion later give Mārkaṇḍeya a lifetime that lasts throughout the *kalpa*, knowledge of the past and future, and the status of an *ācārya* of *purāṇas*. This is why Mārkaṇḍeya is still alive and there is the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa (MP).

Pradyumna’s Side Facing East

The panels sculpted at the corners of the side facing east are divided into two parts to signal Vāsudeva’s second formation emerging from Saṃkarṣaṇa as the Pre-eminently Mighty Pradyumna. All six panels on this side represent Pradyumna as *aiśvarya*, or sovereignty over the passion that brings all things into being and propels them. We shall discuss only the two corner panels.

Brahmā Worshiped on the Continent of Puṣkara And His Four Kumāra Sons

This panel at the northeast corner represents sunrise.⁴⁸ It’s divided horizontally between Brahmā above and his four Kumāra sons below. They face eastward and represent both Brahmā’s creative passion and the Kumāras’ non-clinging consciousness, both focused on Vāsudeva as the Person to whom morning sacrifices are offered (*yajñapurusa*). The upper two-thirds depict Brahmā as he is worshiped

⁴⁸ Photograph courtesy of the American Institute of Indian Studies, Ramnagar, Varanasi, India.



on the continent Puṣkara. An ocean of pure water separates this continent at the outer edge of Earth from Lokāloka, spacetime's enclosing membrane dividing our realm of spatial directions (*loka*) from the realm without them (*aloka*). Four elephants stand on Lokāloka to define the cardinal directions for us, and the Bhagavān, who is the Master of all great powers and the *ātman* controlling all beings from within (*mahāvibhūtipatir antaryāmyātmanah*), appears on the entire mountain

in a shape made of pure *sattva* matter (*viśuddhasattva*) to protect the realm of spatial directions and its inhabitants (BhP 5.20.39-41).⁴⁹

On the Puṣkara Continent inside Lokāloka is the mountain range called Mānasottara, or Boundary of the Mind. It divides Puṣkara into two portions, each ruled by a king.⁵⁰ They worship the Bhagavān with the *karma*-constructed body of Brahmā as the paradigm of the human male qualified to perform *kriyā*, or ceremony (BhP 5.20.33). Brahmā passed this form onto the Manus, and of course it has only one head and face. He uses this body, and its shadow and reflection, to populate the spacetime he has already created (as represented by the third panel ahead; BhP 3.20.12-53).

The panel portrays Brahmā standing behind his throne, a shining lotus blossom of numerous petals beginning to open as it bends toward Sūrya rising. Brahmā faces directly eastward, is dressed royally, and wears a tall crown on his single head. He has two pairs of arms. His back pair of hands rest on his hips; the forearms and hands of his front pair are missing, but they appear to have formed the

⁴⁹ The sculpted depiction of this shape, which has four faces directed toward the cardinal directions, appears on the face of the porch at the southwest corner.

⁵⁰ For Mānasottara see BhP 5.1.22-41; 5.20.29-46; 5.21.7.

añjalimudrā at the center of his chest. The two ruling kings of Puṣkara are the smaller figures praising him at his right and left sides; behind them at a higher level two badly damaged figures also gesture in praise.

The bottom third of the panel portrays Brahmā's four Kumāra sons born earlier of his pure consciousness; they are established in knowledge of the *ātman*, are continent, and completely devoted to Vāsudeva (BhP 3.12.4-7). Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana, and Sanatkumāra sit on the same level, two on each side of the vertical axis running down from the top of Brahmā's crown, each pair slightly turned toward the middle. They sit mirrored with legs crossed. All four have piled matted hair, long earlobes touching their shoulders, one pair of arms, and damaged hands at the waist. In the order of their birth, Sanaka the elder sits at Brahmā's extreme right (south), and to his left sits Sanandana, who raises his open left palm to gesture toward the scene above. Sanātana follows him, and Sanatkumāra ends the sequence as the youngest sitting at Brahmā's extreme left. K.K.A. VENKATACHARI informed me that Śrīvaiṣṇavas believe the Kumāras to be the ancestors of Brahmin families performing Pāñcarātra liturgies in Śrīvaiṣṇava temples.⁵¹

Śiva Venerates Pradyumna

This panel on the southeast corner represents the end of morning at midday; and it moves us from Earth's outer continent, Puṣkara, to its central continent, Jambu.⁵² It is divided vertically between two standing males, each



⁵¹ Personal communication from Dr. K.K.A. VENKATACHARI, Director Emeritus, Anantacharya Indological Research Society, Bombay. For stories of the Kumāras see BhP 3.15-16 and 4.22.

⁵² Photograph by D. HUDSON, 1990.

royally dressed, possessing four arms, and facing forward. They are not quite equal, however, because they stand on different levels. Pradyumna on the south (the viewer's left) stands on the lower level as if in the foreground and gazes straight ahead. He wears a crown and holds the wheel and conch in his back pair of hands. He rests his front right hand on his hip and his front left hand forms a *mudrā* of uncertain shape at his chest. To his left (the viewer's right) Śiva stands on the higher level as if behind Pradyumna and slightly oriented toward him. He is not crowned and his matted hair is piled up on the top of his head. Three of Śiva's four arms are visible. His back right arm appears to have broken off, but his back left hand rests on his hip to mirror Pradyumna's posture. His front hands form damaged *mudrās* at his chest. Two figures at the panel's top fly inward toward the vertical axis running down Pradyumna's left side. At the bottom a small chubby figure adjacent to Śiva looks up at Pradyumna and gestures upward with his right hand in praise. He may depict a weapon of Śiva as person (*āyudhapuruṣa*).

This panel reverses the relation of Śiva to Pradyumna implied by the famous story of the *deva* named Kāma, or Desire. Pradyumna manifests His self in Indra's realm to the east as Kāma, known also as Pradyumna; and, as if to refute this title of "pre-eminently mighty," Śiva burns Kāma to ash and he becomes bodiless (*anaṅga*). Only his wife Rati can see him.⁵³ But here Śiva venerates him as truly the pre-eminently mighty one. The scene is Mount Kailāsa in the central region of our Jambu continent, which is called Ilāvṛta. At Ilāvṛta's center stands Mount Meru, at whose center resides Brahmā surrounded in the cardinal and intermediate directions by the eight *lokapāla* world protectors (BhP 5.16.28-29). It is perpetually midday on Mount Meru (BhP 5.21.8); and midday is the period of time this panel signifies. Mount Meru is surrounded on its four sides by eight mountains, one of which is Kailāsa. Mount Kailāsa stands south of Meru to the east, and southeast is the location of this panel.

⁵³ The poet Āṅṅāḷ devotes the first poem of the fourteen that constitute her Nācciyār-tirumoḷi to Kāma as bodiless; she enlists him to "shoot her" into Kṛṣṇa on Veṅkata mountain (HUDSON 2000: 221-224). For the Śaiva telling Śiva burning Kāma, see Śivapurāṇa, Rudrasaṃhitā 2.8-9; and 3.17-19.

Śiva known here as Bhava resides on Mount Kailāsa with Bhavānī *devī* and meditates on Saṃkarṣaṇa (BhP 5.17.16). But in his prayer Śiva addresses Saṃkarṣaṇa as unaffected by the universe He controls and directs, and by its ignorance and passions (BhP 5.17. 19): This describes the sovereignty of the Pradyumna formation. This formation emerges from within the Plower on this eastern side of the *maṇḍala* and the visual duality of this panel signals Him as Vāsudeva's second formation. But its duality also represents Bhāgavata stories about Pradyumna's passion propelling bisexual pairs. Two important ones tell the story of the origins of the Solar and Lunar Dynasties, and the story of Kṛṣṇa's half-brother sons named Pradyumna and Sāmba.⁵⁴

Aniruddha's Side Facing South

The side facing south represents afternoon, beginning with midday at the southeast corner and ending with sunset at the southwest corner. Aniruddha the Unobstructed gazes through the central window of the *vimāna* wall as Vāsudeva's *śakti*, which is His power and potency embodied as *mantra*. When these *mantras* are properly employed in ceremony (*kriyā*) they either produce worldly pleasure (*bhukti*) ending in emancipation (*mukti*), or worldly pleasure for its own sake. Rites for *bhukti* alone are called *prayoga*, the "hurling or casting of missiles"; the missiles in this case are *mantras*.⁵⁵ *śakti* emits *tejas* or brilliant conquering power to destroy all obstacles to prosperous longevity by keeping *amṛta* out of the hands of *asuras* and keeping *rākṣasas* at bay. The tripartite organization of these two corner panels on this southern side signals this third of Vāsudeva's formations.

⁵⁴ For the origin of the Solar and Lunar Dynasties, see BhP 9.1.13-42; 9.6.4; 9.14. For Pradyumna and Sāmba as sons see BhP 10.61.8-12. For them as Kāma and Guha reborn see 3.1.28 and 30. For Pradyumna see BhP 10. 55 and 62-63; Maṇimēkalai 3.116-125; and Cil 6.39-63. For Sāmba see BhP 10.68; and for Sāmba as the means of destruction see BhP 11.1 and 30. Āṅṭāl addresses Kāma with his younger brother Sāmba in Nācciyār-tirumoli 1.

⁵⁵ MONIER-WILLIAMS 1964: 688b; SMITH 1980: 66-67.

Dattātreyā Sits with Soma and Durvāsas



This photograph captures two panels.⁵⁶ On the viewer's right is the panel at the southeast corner, which is midday as afternoon's beginning. It portrays Dattātreyā sitting enthroned with his brothers Soma and Durvāsas. On the viewer's left is the panel depicting Kṛṣṇa at Dvārakā teaching his friend Uddhava the long *brahmavādasya samgrahaḥ*, or "Summary of the *brahman* Doctrine" (BhP 11.6-29). The panel following it (not illustrated) represents its first lesson by depicting the

avadhūta Dattātreyā instructing Kṛṣṇa's ancestor king Yadu (BhP 11.7-9). We shall focus only on the corner panel.

This badly damaged panel is horizontally divided into three portions, and the central portion is vertically divided into three figures. These three males are portions (*aṃśa*) of the *trimūrti*, or triad of material forms as they appear on Bhārata in the shapes of humans: A portion of Viṣṇu as the *ātman* pervading and sustaining everything became Datta, the knower of *yoga*; a portion of Śaṅkara the Īśa [Ruler] became Durvāsas; and a portion of Brahmā became Soma [the Moon].⁵⁷ The three are born as triplets through Atri and his wife Anasūyā (BhP 4.1.15-33). Viṣṇu sits in the center and is named Datta, because in response to the seer Atri's desire for a son, the

⁵⁶ Photograph courtesy of the Institut Français d'Indologie, Pondicherry, India.

⁵⁷ BhP 4.1.15 and 33. Two cave-temples and an inscription record Pallava patronage of the *trimūrti* cult in the seventh century, but in these cases the central figure is Śaṅkara, with Viṣṇu to his left and Brahmā to his right. Here the Bhāgavata arrangement places Viṣṇu the *ātman* in the center with Śaṅkara to his left and Brahmā to his right. See JOSHI 1965: 78-79; LONGHURST 1924: 15-16; EITA 1.1: Text, 23; and SRINIVASAN 1964: 156-161, plates XLIX and L.

Bhagavān says “I am the one given by My self” (*datto mayāham iti yad bhagavān sa dattaḥ*; BhP 2.7.4). But because he takes birth through Atri and his wife Anasūya he is usually referred to as Dattātreyā, “The one given as Atri’s son.”

To his right sits Brahmā named Soma (or commonly Candra). And to his left sits Śaṅkara/Śiva as the irascible seer named Durvāsas. All three brothers share the same throne, and each has two arms and one leg pendant in the *lalitāsana*. Soma and Dattātreyā wear tall crowns, but Durvāsas’s badly damaged head has the hair of an ascetic. Dattātreyā is the panel’s axis and center of attention. He is slightly taller than the other two and faces directly south toward the viewer. The foot of his pendent left leg rests on a footstool carried by a short plump figure on his head. Both Soma and Durvāsas turn toward Dattātreyā; their pendent legs mirror each other and their feet share his footstool. Soma’s right hand forms an unidentified *mudrā* at his chest, and his left hand rests on the throne. Durvāsas appears to mirror his posture, but the damage is too great to be certain.

At the bottom level of the panel are four males with one pair of arms each. They refer to the story of Dattātreyā and his two brothers as told in the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa, which was introduced earlier on the northern side by the panel depicting Nārāyaṇa and Nara and the *ṛṣi* Mārkaṇḍeya. This seer elaborates the story of Dattātreyā and his brothers told in the Bhāgavatapurāṇa (4.1.15-33). This Bhāgavatapurāṇa account also includes Dattātreyā’s worship by King Yadu, and by Arjuna son of Kṛtavīrya; and through the latter it develops into the story of Paraśurāma, “Rāma-with-the axe” (2.7.4; 9.9.40-41; 9.15-16.27; 9.23.19-38; 9.24).

In the Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa this story of the three sons of Atri and Anasūyā is told by a Brahmin boy named Sumati who is *guru* to his Bhrigu father. He teaches his father about the birth of Soma, Dattātreyā, and Durvāsas in a way little different from the Bhāgavatapurāṇa account, but he adds considerably more information about Dattātreyā. Dattātreyā is such a great *yogin*, he says, that he has a wife, he has sexual intercourse with her, he drinks liquor with her, and he enjoys singing and music with her. Yet he remains pure all the while, just as Mātariśvan the fire remains pure in the houses of corpse-burning *caṇḍālas* (MP 16-17). Then he teaches his father about two of Dattātreyā’s royal devotees (MP 18-44). One of them is Kṛtavīrya’s son Arjuna. The other is not Yadu but Alarka, who appears in the Bhāgavatapurāṇa briefly (9.17.1-7).

The bottom portion of this panel depicts Sumati teaching his father about Dattātreyā's royal devotees, Arjuna and Alarka. These two crowned kings are dressed royally and stand on each side of the fraternal triad; the powerful king Arjuna son of Kṛtavīrya is beneath Soma's right arm, and the royal ṛṣi Alarka is beneath Durvāsas' left arm. They are in mirrored postures: Both gaze upward toward Dattātreyā, gesture toward him with an open hand, and rest the other hand on a hip. Beneath Soma's foot Sumati's Bhṛgu Brahmin father kneels on his right knee holding the *añjalimudrā* of veneration as he listens to his son teach. Sumati is depicted as an ascetic with tied-up matted hair sitting in a cross-legged posture beneath Durvāsas' foot. With his open right hand he gestures upward toward Dattātreyā.

The upper level of the panel portrays three males flying. The one in the center, directly above the head of Dattātreyā, emphasizes the panel's vertical axis: He emerges from behind Dattātreyā's head and looks slightly downward with the *añjalimudrā* of veneration. The figure flying to his right raises his open left hand high in a salute of praise and the figure to his left positions both hands at the level of his chest with indistinct gestures.

These portions of the *trimūrti* appear on Bhārata during the first Manu Term of this *varāhakaḷpa* while Svayambhūva Manu's children are populating the universe (BhP 4.1; 6.6.1-2, 23-24). The seer Kapila explains that they correspond to dimensions within the consecrated devotee (*sādhaka*). Durvāsas is the consciousness of "This I am" (*ahaṃkara*). Soma is mental activity (*manas*) and intellect (*buddhi*; BhP 3.26.60-61; 70). Datta is the consciousness (*citta*) of the Knower of the Field (*ḷṣetrajña*), who resides within the heart as the *ātman* bringing the material body to life. Kṛṣṇa illustrates the fundamental consciousness Datta embodies by beginning his long "Summary of the *brahman* Doctrine" with an episode in which Dattātreyā teaches King Yadu that delusion can be eliminated by means of thought alone (BhP 11.7-29).

Aside from Dattātreyā, both Durvāsas and Soma are figures significant to the *dvāparayuga* and afternoon's twilight concerns. Durvāsas' curse leads to the churning of the Milk Ocean and to Mohinī's appearance (BhP 8.5.16). He gives the *mantras* to Vāsudeva's sister, Prthā or Kuntī, which lead to the Great War of the Mahā-

bhārata.⁵⁸ He also uses his skill in improper *abhicāra* rites against King Ambarīṣa, but this backfires and Durvāsas learns the importance to ritual performance of the protective power of the wheel named Sudarśana (*sudarśanacakra*).⁵⁹ Durvāsas learns more about this when he overhears Rudra as Ahirbudhnya, or serpent of the deep, teach Nārada the Ahirbudhnyasamhitā's lessons on the *sudarśanacakra* (SMITH 1975: 43-44).

Durvāsas as depicted here also alludes to the Śaiva Āgama patronized by Pallavas in Kāñcipuram by this time, and followed by Tamil Śaiva poets known as Nāyaṅār. Narasiṃhavarman Rājasimha (700-728) built his temple for Śiva in Kāñcipuram as Rājasimheśvara, "The Ruler of Rājasimha"; it was completed about 720 and is now known as the Kailāsanātha Temple. An inscription on its sanctum describes its builder as "His Majesty Atyantakāma, born, like Subrahmaṇya the Guha prince, from the Supreme Primal Ruler into the Path of Śaiva Siddhānta known for the *śakti* of its many systems which crush all foes."⁶⁰ Decades later Pallavamalla remembered him as "Narasiṃhavarman, the supreme Māheśvara supremely devoted to Brahmins."⁶¹ What "Śaiva Siddhānta" refers to in early eighth century Kāñcipuram is uncertain. We know from the Mattavilāsaprahasana, one of two Sanskrit farces the Pallava ruler Mahendravarman wrote early in the seventh century, that Māheśvaras and Pāśupatas were plentiful, that Kāpālikas lived at the capital's Ēkāmra Temple for Śiva, and that Buddhist Śākyabhiṣṣus lived in the Pallava-sponsored royal *vihāra* south of the city's wall and moat.⁶² The panel's tripartite theme suggests that Rājasimha's Śaiva Siddhānta may have belonged to one of three Śaiva Āgama lineages (*vaṃśa*) believed to

⁵⁸ MBh 1.104-115; VAN BUITENEN 1973: 240-259.

⁵⁹ For this story see BhP 9.4-5.

⁶⁰ ...*subrahmanyah kumāro guha iva paramādīśvarāttajamā | śakti(:)kṣuṇṇārivarggo viditabahunayaśśaivasiddhāntamargge | śrimān atyantakāma[:]** (SII 1: 12, *śloka* 4, first two lines of four).

⁶¹ ...*paramamāheśvaraḥ paramabrahmaṇyo narasiṃhavarmā* (SII 2: 366, lines 17-18).

⁶² See the Bhagavadajjukaprahasana and the Mattavilāsaprahasana by King Mahendravarman, edited and translated by MICHAEL LOCKWOOD and A. VISHNU BHAT (LOCKWOOD/BHAT 1994, part 2).

have been founded by Durvāsas through his three mind-born sons named Tryambaka, Āmardaka, and Śrīnātha.⁶³

Soma's presence alludes to the *tīrtha* on the western coast known as Prabhāsa, or Splendor. Soma the Moon once bathed there to be freed of wasting away (BhP 11.6.34-38). This explains the *tīrtha*'s name to derive from the splendor of Soma the Moon, but it's a twilight splendor, because Prabhāsa is where the Lunar Dynasty disappears and the *asura* Kali takes over Bhārata. The curse Kṛṣṇa's son Sāmba evoked when he dressed as a pregnant woman fulfills its self there so that the Yādavas destroy themselves, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa leave Earth, and the *kaliyuga* beings.⁶⁴

Mohinī Feeds *Amṛta* to *Devas* as *Asuras* Watch

At the southwest corner of sunset, where the realms of *rākṣasas* and *asuras* converge in the dangerous domain of *nirṛti*'s disorder, three sets of actors signal Aniruddha the Unobstructed as Vāsudeva's third formation. Mohinī is depicted here feeding *amṛta* to *devas* while *asuras* watch.⁶⁵ The panel is divided in halves, with *devas* in the entire eastern half and Mohinī and *asuras* in the western half. Mohinī nevertheless dominates the scene, for the panel's central axis runs along her left side and she is the largest figure.

⁶³ Abhinavagupta of tenth century Kashmir tells of them in *Tantrāloka* 36 (PANDEY³2000: 134f.). Aghoraśiva, a Sanskrit exponent of Śaiva Siddhānta in the twelfth century Cōla court, who had been consecrated a priest in Kāñcipuram, identified himself with the Āmardaka lineage.

⁶⁴ BhP 1.15.36-37; 11.1.8-24; 11.30.1-40. A story also connects Prabhāsa with an *asura* named Prabhāsa. The *asura* Namuci (whose head Indra slices off with foam on the shore of the Milk Ocean in BhP 8.11.37-41) is reborn as Prabāla and then as Prabhāsa, who is connected to a cave in Moon's Realm (*candrapada*). This cave opens down into the *pātāla* realm and *asuras* come up through it to do battle on Earth (Kathāsaritsāgara, transl. by TAWNEY²1968: I, 444-446). This may explain the advent of the *kaliyuga*: when the *asura* Kali emerges from this cave in Moon's Realm after Yadu's descendents are gone, no one remains who can defeat him.

⁶⁵ Photograph courtesy of the Institut Français d'Indologie, Pondicherry, India.

Mohinī wears a crown and turns slightly toward the east, her knees bent and her left foot placed behind her right foot in a graceful serving posture. Her left hand holds the pot of *amṛta* at the level of her waist as her right hand grasps its top. She looks directly south at the viewer while tilting her head slightly eastward. Mohinī's full breasts and wide hips reveal her delusive sensuousness as a harlot (*pumścalī*) dazzling *asuras*.



Three *asuras* aligned vertically crowd the panel's edge on Mohinī's right. At the top stands the crowned *asura* king Bali and at the bottom sits an *asura* waiting to be fed. Eight *devas* in rows to Mohinī's left face directly south. The middle *deva* at the bottom sits with his hands in his lap to receive the *amṛta*. Behind him are the necks and heads of two *devas*. Above them stand two wearing crowns, the tallest is Indra's. A male above him appears to hold the *añjalimudrā* to articulate Indra's veneration of Mohinī, and a male above Mohinī, whose left arm and hand are obliterated, similarly articulates her meaning. His right hand appears to form the *muṣṭimudrā*, or *mudrā* of the fist, which has the same form as the *balimudrā*. The latter is relevant here because it denotes an offering (*bali*), or the possessor of power (*balin*), or both (PādS, vol. 1, App. p. 42, no. 107). Mohinī's powerful offering is the *amṛta* she holds in her hands. We shall return to it below at Māmalla-puram.⁶⁶

This panel at *nirṛti*'s dangerous sunset corner evokes Dattātreya at the midday corner, because it signifies Aniruddha's *śakti* using lust to solve the problem of lust. It illustrates Kṛṣṇa's statement concluding his "Summary of the *brahman* Doctrine": "This is the intelligent judgment of the wise and prudent, that one reaches Me,

⁶⁶ For the story of Mohinī and the *amṛta* see BhP 8.8.38-46; 8.9.1-29; 8.10.1-2; 5.24.1-3. For her seduction of Śiva see BhP 8.12.1-44.

the True One, the Immortal One, by means of a false mortal [body] here [in this world].”⁶⁷ Here *śakti* takes the shape of Mohinī; and Mohinī has the shape of Evening Twilight (*saṃdhyā*); and Evening Twilight is the shape of *lolupā*, or eager desire (BhP 3.20.23-37). The panel is obviously using twilight language (*saṃdhyābhāṣā*). *śakti* plays a role in a story involving pre-dawn twilight and afternoon twilight which is connected to this southern side. A panel on this same side of the sanctum on the floor above illustrates Nārada’s telling of the story of Madhu and Kaiṭabha in the Jayākhyasamhitā (JS 2). It’s telling takes place during the pre-dawn twilight. Mārkaṇḍeya’s brief telling of the same story in the Devīmāhātmya includes this episode, but extends the story into the afternoon twilight.⁶⁸

According to Mārkaṇḍeya, during the *brahmamuhūrta* hour prior to the sunrise of this *varāhakalpa*, *śakti* envelopes Madhusūdāna as *yoganidrā*, the sleep of unified consciousness. She does this as part of the Bhagavān’s strategy to slay the *asuras* Madhu and Kaiṭabha before they slay Brahmā. Brahmā anxiously requests *yoganidrā* to release Madhusūdāna, which she does, and he slaughters the *asura* brothers. Brahmā is now free to transform his self into the universe of space and time. *yoganidrā* later enters into spacetime in response to *deva* pleas for help against the *asura* named Mahiṣa, or Buffalo. She enters through the bodies of *devas* and collects their *tejas* into a single brilliant form known as Goddess Caṇḍikā Durgā. After she slays Buffalo she takes on other forms to slay other *asuras*, and all her victories as the embodiment of *tejas* illustrate the concerns of afternoon twilight on this southern side.

As we noted the Emperor’s Viṣṇu-house depicts Madhusūdāna on the sanctum above, but it nowhere portrays any episode in the story of *yoganidrā* as Goddess Caṇḍikā Durgā, even though it amply employs her lion in its design. All the Devīmāhātmya’s major episodes, however, are represented by seventh century sculptures at Māmallapuram. And this brings us to the second temple in this study.

⁶⁷ BhP 11.29.22: *eṣā buddhimatām buddhir manīṣā ca manīṣiṇām | yat satyam anṛteneha martyenāpnoti māmṛtam ||*.

⁶⁸ Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa 81-93 (or 78-90 in one edition as discussed by COBURN 1985: 51, n. 155). For the scripture’s independence, see COBURN 1985: 51-69; for the Sanskrit text, a translation and a discussion, see COBURN 1991.

THE ĀDIVARĀHA CAVE-TEMPLE AT MĀMALLAPURAM

Of particular interest to us at Māmallapuram is the Ādivarāha Cave-temple built by the emperor Narasiṃhavarman Māmalla (ca. 630 – ca. 668), who gave this port its name; today it is often called Mahābalipuram.⁶⁹ The cave-temple consists of a sanctum flanked by two shrines on the eastern wall, all facing west and enclosed by a *maṇḍapa*, or hall. Visitors entering the hall see depictions of Brahmā to their right facing north and of Śiva to their left facing south. Following these they see two royal portraits identified by later inscriptions.⁷⁰ Māmalla’s father, Mahendravarman (ca. 580 – ca. 630), stands with his two wives to the viewers’ right facing north. He is the author of the two Sanskrit *prahasana* farces noted earlier, the Mattavilāsaprahasana and the Bhagavadajjukaprahasana, and, interestingly, is portrayed pointing to the shrine of Goddess Caṇḍikā Durgā directly ahead of him. We shall return to this visual detail later. Mahendra’s father, Siṃhaviṣṇuvarman (ca. 550-580), sits to the viewers’ left facing south, and his two wives stand at his sides.

Walking a few steps further visitors are face-to-face with the sanctum and the two shrines adjacent to it. Each contains a specific *mūrti* of Vāsudeva’s *śakti* relevant to kingship.

Goddess Śrī Receives Unction as Majesty and Wealth

The shrine north of the sanctum depicts Hari’s consort named Rāmā (“the Beloved”), who receives unction (*abhiṣeka*) as majesty (*śrī*) and its wealth (*lakṣmī*). He has just churned her up from the Milk Ocean.⁷¹ She is portrayed as “She Who Possesses the Lotus” (*padmāvati*): an open lotus blossom brought by Great Indra (*mahendra*) is her throne, and she holds a closed lotus blossom in each hand.

⁶⁹ SRINIVASAN 1964: 166-175, plates LIII-LVI; LOCKWOOD 1993: 138-149. Worship has recently commenced in this privately owned cave-temple and entrance is now restricted.

⁷⁰ SRINIVASAN 1964: plate LV-A and B; ZIMMER 1960: plate 280-A; LOCKWOOD 1993: 143. For a discussion of the issues involved in the authorship of Māmallapuram’s monuments, see LOCKWOOD 2001: 73-89.

⁷¹ Photograph from SRINIVASAN 1964: plate LIV-A.



At her sides two women hold golden pots of pure water given by Gaṅgā and other rivers. Behind them a female attendant at the north holds a basket of plants required by the ceremony, and a female attendant at the south holds a pot containing the cow's five purifying elements. Two elephants from Lokāloka stand behind the throne to pour the unction fluids over her head; the one on her right turns a full pot upside down above her head as the one on her left reaches down to lift a second *pūrṇakalaśa* (BhP 8.8.8-16).

Boar Rescues Goddess Earth as Realm

There is no photograph of this icon because a cloth hides it, but K.R. SRINIVASAN says it resembles a panel in the Varāhamāṇḍapam Cave-temple (SRINIVASAN 1964: 166; plate XLI). Goddess Earth (*bhūdevī*) as depicted there sits in the arms of Boar, who rescues her from dark waters in order for this *varāhakaḷpa* to begin (BhP 3.11.33-36; 3.13.1-50). Boar appears in a human form with two pairs of arms and a Boar's head, which is crowned. Goddess Earth, also in human form, has two arms, and is also crowned. She sits on Boar's front right hand as he holds her lower right leg with his front left hand. They gaze into each other's eyes. Boar holds the conch and wheel as usual, but his wheel has its rim facing the viewer as a *prayogacakra*, which matches this Adivarāha Cave-temple where all its sculpted wheels are *prayogacakras*.



Suratha and Samādhi Offer Their Blood To Goddess Caṇḍikā Durgā

Goddess Caṇḍikā Durgā in the shrine south of the sanctum appears as the material form (*mūrti*) King Suratha and the merchant Samādhi build to serve for their worship as described at the conclusion of the Devīmāhātmya (DM 13.5-9 [MP 93.5-9]).⁷² This gracefully sensuous and symmetrical *mūrti* depicts her as Destroyer of the *asura* Buffalo (*mahiṣāsuramardini*). She stands on Buffalo's head with her left leg, and her right leg bends back in a *tribhaṅgi* pose, one that bends thrice. She is crowned and wears a breast band (*kucabandha*) characteristic of her Māmallapuram cult at this time. She has four pairs of arms. Her back pair holds a *prayogacakra* in the right hand and a conch in the left. The next pair holds a club in the right and a shield in the left. The third pair holds a bell in the right and a bow in the left. But the front pair is the most interesting: Her right hand holds a small cup on her inner thigh; her left hand at the level of her hip hangs down from the wrist, and a parrot (difficult to see in this photograph) perches on it looking toward the cup.

⁷² Photograph from SRINIVASAN 1964: plate LIV-B.

Two females with bare breasts stand with their feet on the panel's bottom at its sides; the one on Durgā's left holds a bow. At the same level King Suratha kneels at Durgā's right side and holds a knife to a vein in the back of his left forearm to draw blood. The merchant Samādhi kneels opposite, holding in his left hand what appears to be a vessel to catch the blood as he gestures with his right hand toward the Goddess they worship.⁷³ Above to her right and left fly two chubby males whose identities are uncertain. Next to them, gazing from the panel's upper two corners, are the heads of a lion to her right and a stag or antelope to her left.

These animals place this *mūrti* in a Tamil telling of Mārkaṇḍeya's story in royal courts at least since the middle of the fifth century. The Goddess rides a lion according to Mārkaṇḍeya, and before she slays Buffalo, she drinks a portion of "supreme liquor" (*pānam uttamam*). In an impassioned state of intoxication she springs upon the great Buffalo, strikes him with her feet, beats him with her spear, and has him trapped. The *asura* tries to escape by coming out the mouth of his buffalo shape fighting, but when he emerges halfway Caṇḍikā Durgā cuts off his head with her great sword (DM 3.33-39 [MP 83.33-39]; COBURN 1991: 47). The Tamil courtly poem Cilappatikāram (Cil), dated ca. 450, captures this unusual detail of Buffalo's two forms when it says of her *mūrti*: "She is Korṟavai with the victorious sword, She of Symmetry (*taiyal*) standing on the head of the *asura* having two shoulders of two different shapes, [and] many worship her as ... Māl's younger sister, ... [and] as the Goddess on the leaping stag (*kalai*) with trusty sword in hand ..." ⁷⁴

This describes *yoganidrā* as Goddess Caṇḍikā Durgā. *korṟavai* means "she is victory," and corresponds to Durgā's title Jayā. She is born to Yaśodā as younger sister to Māl, who is Kṛṣṇa the Great (DM 11.38 [MP 91.38]). We know that the lion she rides replicates her *tejas*, but what about her leaping stag (*kalai*)? Since this Tamil term does not refer to a specific species, but denotes a hunted wild

⁷³ They also appear in her shrine in the Varāhamaṇḍapam Cave-temple and in the Draupadī Ratha, where Suratha is depicted drawing blood from a vein on the left side of his throat (SRINIVASAN 1964: plate XLIII).

⁷⁴ *valampatu korṟattu vāyvāṭ korṟavai/iraṇṭuvēruvīṟ-iraṇṭatōḷ avu-ṇaṇ/talaimicai ninṟa taiyal palar toḷum/...mālavark-iḷaṅkiḷai/... veyyavāṭṭa-tak-kaip/pāykalaiṭ pāvai...* (Cil 12.64-70).

animal, we may assume it refers to the black or spotted antelope (*kr̥ṣṇasāra mrga*), which signifies *yajña* sacrifice and the civilized realm where it is performed.⁷⁵ In other words, the lion and antelope in this panel refer to Goddess Caṇḍikā Durgā's *tejas* operating victoriously through the ceremonies of sacrifice to preserve the *dharma* order of civilization.

A clue to some of these ceremonies may appear in the cup and parrot of her front pair of arms. They bracket the visual center of this entire panel, which is her *yonī*, or vagina. Two belts, one above and one below her *yonī*, complete the frame. Devotees customarily mark her *yonī* with red powder as can be seen in the photograph; and they do so probably because tradition connects it to her ability to conquer obstacles and protect. Two doctrines suggest this interpretation. One is that Caṇḍikā Durgā's *tejas* is unobstructed because her extraordinary "heat" as a virgin has not yet been "cooled" by sexual union with a husband.⁷⁶ The other is that the *yonī* is the source of two crucial elements of the *amṛta* served in the ceremonial *tejas* meal called *pañcamakāra*. This meal has dual "twilight" modes depending whether it is served in the early afternoon or at night. The first element, drops of female sexual fluid, is part of the *amṛta* served both times. The second element, a drop of blood from a girl's first menstruation, is put into the *amṛta* only in the nighttime serving (HUDSON/APFFEL-MARGLIN 2002: 116-118).

The Inscription Above

Above this shrine for the Goddess is an inscription, the earliest known to list the Bhagavān's ten *avatāras*. "This is the earliest epigraphical enumeration," SRINIVASAN says, "which is interesting in that it excludes Kṛishṇa, but includes Buddha in the ten *avatāras*" (SRINIVASAN 1964: 173). The Sanskrit text appears as follows:

[a] *matsyaḥ kūrṃō varāhaś-ca nārasimhaś-ca vāmana[h]*

[b] *rāmō rāmaś-ca rāmaś-ca buddha[h] kalkī-ca te daśa*

My literal translation retains the sequence, but identifies the three Rāmas:

⁷⁵ ŚB 1.1.4.1-2; 3.2.1.28-20; Manu 2.23.

⁷⁶ A doctrine illustrated today by the story of Durgā as Goddess Mī-nākṣī of Maturai (HUDSON 1982: 107-112).

[a] Fish, Tortoise, and Boar, and Man-lion, Dwarf,

[b] Bhārgava Rāma, and Rāghava Rāma, and Balarāma, Buddha, and Kalki, these ten.

The uses of “and” (*ca*) and the meter divide these ten *avatāras* into four sets. Each set corresponds to one of the four ages (*ca-turyuga*) descending in length of time from the longest:

4: *kṛta*: Fish, Tortoise, and Boar.

3: *tretā*: Man-lion and Dwarf.

2: *dvāpara*: Bhārgava Rāma, Rāghava Rāma, and Balarāma.

1: *kali*: Buddha and Kalki.

SRINIVASAN’s observation that this list replaces Kṛṣṇa with the Śākyamuni Buddha is true only if we consider this inscription by itself. But if we read it in the larger context of the cave-temple in which it appears, Kṛṣṇa is included in the listing of *avatāras* as are three others. These fourteen *avatāras*, moreover, are the fourteen Akrūra venerates when he prays in a pool of pure Yamunā River water while driving Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma from Gokula to Mathurā. They go to slay Kaṁsa, the rebirth of the great *asura* Kālanemi previously killed by Viṣṇu (BhP 10.2.68). While he is immersed in this pure water Akrūra perceives the passengers sitting in his chariot waiting for him to complete his bath as Vāsudeva and Saṁkarṣaṇa. He then prays to them (BhP 10.40). Akrūra begins his prayer with the name Nārāyaṇa and ends it with the name Vāsudeva; in between these two definitive names for the Bhagavān he venerates fourteen *avatāras* in this sequence:

1) The causal Fish who overcomes the deluge;

2) Horsehead (*hayaśīrṣan*) who slays Madhu and Kaiṭabha;

3) The Unbounded (*akūpāra*) [Tortoise] who supports Mandara;

4) Boar (*sūkara*) who lifts up Earth (*kṣiti*);

5) Wondrous Lion (*adbhutasimha*) who dispels fear from pious people (*sādhulokabhayāpaha*);

6) Dwarf (*vāmana*) who steps over the three realms of death and birth (*krāntatribhūvana*);

7) Master of Bhṛgu who destroys wicked rulers;

8) Rāghava who brings Rāvaṇa to an end;

9-12) Masters of Sātvatas who are Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha;

13) Buddha the Pure (*buddha śuddha*) who deludes Daityas and Dānavas (*daityadānavamohin*); and

14) Kalki whose shape destroys those who decline into barbarians (*mlecchaprāyākṣatrahantṛ*; BhP 10.40.17-22).

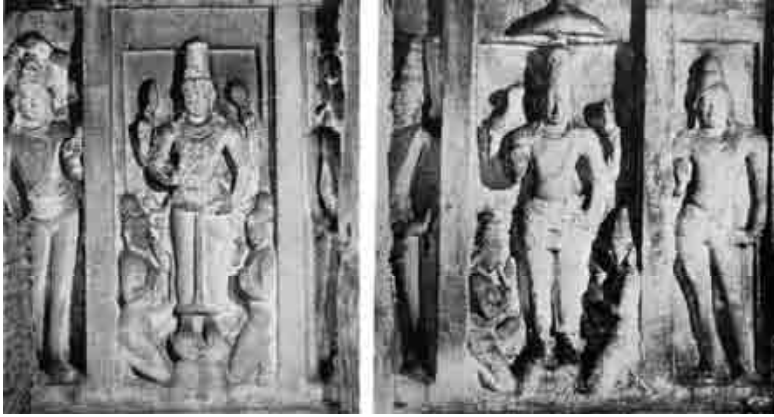
When we compare Akrūra's list with the inscription, with Caṇḍikā Durgā's shrine beneath, and sanctum's central shrine they match exactly.

First of all, the Goddess enshrined beneath the inscription represents the Bhagavān as Horsehead because the Horsehead shape begins the story that Durgā's shape ends: The Bhagavān assumed the Horsehead shape to retrieve the Veda; He then abandoned it for the shape of Madhusūdāna in order to kill Madhu and Kaiṭabha; *yoganidrā* released him from sleep to fulfill that task and let Brahmā produce the *varāhakaḷpa*; and during this *varāhakaḷpa yoganidrā* is embodied by Goddess Caṇḍikā Durgā as depicted here. Secondly, Balārāma in the inscription is the eldest of the four Masters of Sātvatas and he therefore represents them all; furthermore, all four stand adjacent to this shrine as we shall see. Thirdly, the Buddha's inclusion in this list does not replace Kṛṣṇa as SRINIVASAN says, but gives him a place of his own: In Akrūra's words, he is "Buddha the Pure who deludes Daityas and Dānavas," and he appears here in the midst of Bhāgavata Dharma, the Pāñcarātra Āgama, and a liturgical concern for protective *tejas* produced by rites following "language in the manner of twilight." This brings to mind Mahendrarman's farcial Mattavilāsaprahasana, where the sophisticated dialogue plays around with the Śākyamuni Buddha as born of *māyā*, or illusion, and with a Śākyabhikṣu who enjoys roasted meat and longs for liquor and women.⁷⁷ All of this may be some sort of "twilight language" about esoteric rites of *tejas* because, as we recall, the author of this farce is depicted in this cave-temple pointing directly toward this Goddess shrine and the inscription above it.

The Vyūhas Depicted as Masters of Sātvatas

As our conclusion let's turn to the *vyūhas* born as the four Masters of Sātvatas venerated by Akrūra in his prayer. They appear on the face of the sanctum as in this photograph; but here the sanctum entrance has been removed.

⁷⁷ The Śākyabhikṣu enters the play from line 59 in LOCKWOOD/BHAT 1994: part 2, 65-74.



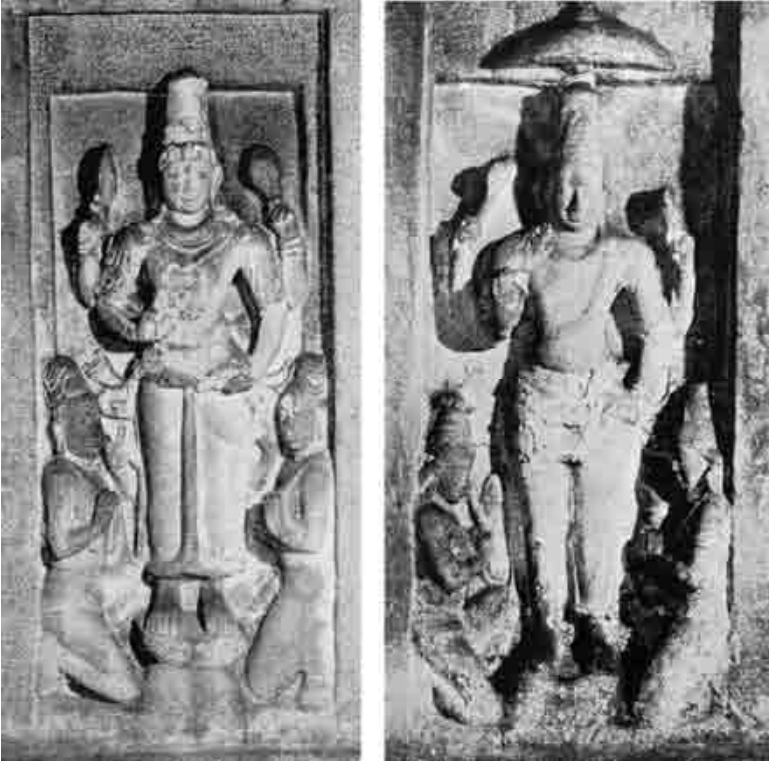
The Masters of Sātvatas on the Face of the Sanctum

The four Sātvata kinsmen line up by pairs, two on each side of the sanctum doorway.⁷⁸ If this were a strict depiction of their kinship relations, Balarāma would stand at the head as the eldest and the others would stand to his left in the order of their birth. This sculpted program begins exactly that way, for at the viewer's left is Balarāma and to his left is Kṛṣṇa. But this kinship order breaks down at the doorway, because Kṛṣṇa's grandson Aniruddha is next and Aniruddha's father Pradyumna follows him. This irregularity of sequence means that these Sātvatas do not depict a kinship lineage, but the four *vyūhas* embodied as Masters of Sātvatas in their formation sequence *pradakṣiṇa*.

Kṛṣṇa and Aniruddha

Kṛṣṇa and his grandson Aniruddha each stand in formal posture on a lotus pedestal (*padmāsana*), Kṛṣṇa on the doorway's north side and Aniruddha on its south side. Both are dressed royally with crowns, have four arms, rest their front left hand on their hip, and have two male devotees kneeling at their right and left. These devotee pairs do similar things: one man in each pair appears to hold an object in his

⁷⁸ Photograph from SRINIVASAN 1964: plate LIII.



hand as the other man gestures adoration with his hand, and both use their second hand to suggest the *añjalimudrā* of veneration.

At first sight Kṛṣṇa appears familiar. He holds a *prayogacakra* in his back right hand, a conch in his back left hand, and rests his front left hand on his hip. But his front right hand forms the *tarjanī-mudrā* by pointing his forefinger upward. This *mudrā* signals warning, scolding, and rebuke.⁷⁹ Aniruddha also appears familiar at first sight. He forms the *abhayamudrā* with his front right hand and rests his front left hand on his thigh. But his back pair of hands is unusual: he holds an axe (*paraśu*) in his right hand and a *prayogacakra* in his left hand, and he stands under an open umbrella.

⁷⁹ SRINIVASAN 1964: 170 identifies it as the *sucimudrā*. BANERJEA 1956: 259 says the *sucihasta*'s projected forefinger usually points downward, but in the *tarjanīhasta*, it points upward as if the person is warning or scolding.

The open umbrella above Aniruddha signifies a righteous reign. During ancient Cōla rule its pillar was an emblem of Indra's son Jayanta and the object of worship during the spring Indra Festival, when a courtesan regenerated it through her dance in imitation of the *apsaras* Urvaśī (Cil 3). When it and the scepter falls in a dream there is royal unrighteousness (Cil 20.1). Its significance continued into the eighth century, for Tirumaṅkai says "the Sovereign of Pallavas ... employs a righteous scepter in the shade of the White Umbrella."⁸⁰

Aniruddha's axe refers to Śiva or Hara, and his wheel to Viṣṇu or Hari. When they are combined in a single body, as they are here, it is known as Harihara ("Viṣṇu-Śiva"). Viṣṇu in this case is the body's left side; which is significant because it implies that he is female in relation to the male Śiva. A common example of this bisexual idea of the body is the depiction of Śiva as the Ruler Who is Half Woman (*ardhanārīśvara*), where his left side is his female half. As we recall, the virgin Durgā as Victory (*koṛṛavai, jayā*) wears a male ankle band on her right leg and a female ankle band on her left leg.

A "female" Viṣṇu immediately suggests two identities. One is Madhusūdana's *yoganidrā* as Goddess Caṅḍikā Durgā embodying *tejas*. The *prayogacakra* in Aniruddha's left hand articulates this identity. The other is Mohinī. In the Bhāgavatapurana Mohinī not only seduces *asuras* and feeds *amṛta* to *devas*, she also seduces Śiva (BhP 8.12). This suggests that the "female" left side of the sculpted Aniruddha has power over the "male" right side. Her identity as Mohinī also accounts for existence of the well-known guardian of villages in South India known as Hariharaputra, "Son of Hari and Hara," with the titles Śāstā, Aiyinār, and Ayyappan. By at least the eleventh century Kāñcipuram was famous for its "exalted and fascinating true Śāstā, the protector of Kāmakōṭṭam," who had been born of Śiva's embrace of Mohinī.⁸¹

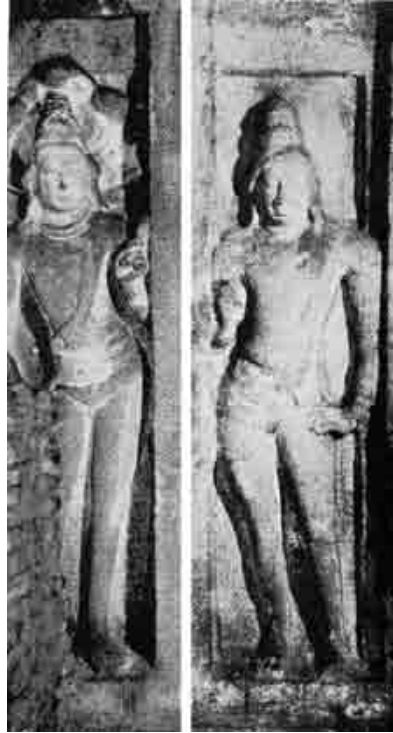
⁸⁰ *veṅkuṭai nīlal ceṅkōl naṭappa ... pallavarkōl ... || (PT 2.9.6cd).*

⁸¹ The Lalitāmāhātmya, an addendum to the Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa, is about Kāñcipuram and says that when Śiva embraces Mohinī his semen drops down and gives birth to Mahāśāsta (Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa 10.74-75). The quote is from Cayaṅkoṅṭār's Kalīṅkattupparaṇi (12th century) cited by U.V. SWAMINATHAIYAR in Cil, p. 161.

All of these elements – Śiva’s axe in Aniruddha’s right hand, Viṣṇu’s *prayogacakra* in his left hand, the umbrella shading him, his identity as Harihara, the division of his body between Śiva the “male” and Viṣṇu the “female,” and the latter’s identity as Caṇḍikā Durgā and as Mohinī – they all add up to visual *saṃdhyābhāṣā*. Its subjects are *tejas* and the *kriyā* ceremonies that deploy it. The protector in this temple context is the Bhagavān as Boar; the protected are Goddess Earth held by him, Māmalla’s lineage represented by the sculpted depictions of his father Mahendra and his grandfather Siṃhaviṣṇu, and their Pallava realm. These ceremonies (if we follow these clues consistently) combine *mantra* rites of the Pāñcarātra Āgama with those of the Śaiva Āgama, and the former dominate the latter. This hierarchy is consistent with Bhāgavata Dharma, because in Akrūra’s prayer discussed above, he says that Nārāyaṇa may be worshiped as *mūrti* in various ways, one of which is in the shape of Śiva (*śivarūpin*) according to the path taught by Śiva (*śivoktena mārgena*), but with differences according to the *ācārya* (BhP 10.40.8). Given the presence of “Buddha the Pure who deludes Daityas and Dānavas” in this cave-temple, and of the Śākyaabhikṣu royal *vihāra* south of Kāñcipuram’s wall and moat at the time it was built, Buddhist *mantra* rites of the Vajrāyāna may also have been involved in these liturgies of protection (HUDSON 1997).

Balarāma and Pradyumna

The remaining two figures are gracefully passive. Balarāma to Kṛṣṇa’s right and Pradyumna to Aniruddha’s left are nearly mirror images. Both have two arms and stand in the relaxed *tribhāṅgi* pose with their hips bending toward the sanctum. They are not royally dressed or crowned, do not stand on a pedestal, and do not have devotees kneeling at their feet. Balarāma



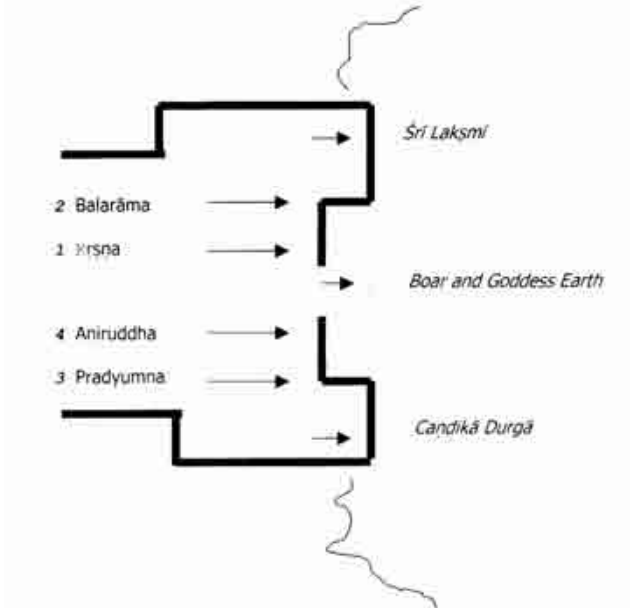
holds a flower in his left hand and rests his right hand on his hip. Pradyumna holds a flower in his right hand and rests his left hand on his thigh. Five snake hoods emerging from behind Balarāma’s head identify him explicitly as the *Samkarṣaṇa vyūha*.

Emanation of the Vyūhas

If this cave-temple’s sanctum were freely standing, as is the Emperor’s Viṣṇu-house, each of these human Sātvata modes of the four formations would face outward toward one of the cardinal directions: Kṛṣṇa to the west, Balarāma to the north, Pradyumna to the east, and Aniruddha to the south. Worshipers would venerate them by walking in the clockwise direction beginning in the west. But in this cave-temple, if worshipers want to “circumambulate” these depictions of the *vyūhas* they have to adapt the rite to the flat plane of the cave-temple wall as illustrated by the diagram given below:

The Ādivarāha Cave-temple: Sequence for Venerating Shrine Icons as Vyūhas

The arrows point to the icons, the numbers indicate the order of veneration of the formations in human shapes: Worshipers first ven-



erate (1) Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa; they then move from his right to venerate (2) Saṃkarṣaṇa Balarāma at the northern corner; they then walk to the southern corner to venerate (3) Pradyumna, and afterwards move from Pradyumna's right to venerate (4) Aniruddha. A few steps to Aniruddha's right place them at the door of the sanctum to venerate Boar protectively holding Goddess Earth.⁸²

CONCLUSION

This study is an attempt to demonstrate that in India's religions texts are not only written, but are also sculpted; and that they, too, can be read and translated. This effort, I hope, will lead others to study visual texts similarly, for they are an extraordinarily rich resource for reconstructing India's religious history. These two Viṣṇu-houses of the seventh and eighth centuries have been discussed as examples. The Ādivarāha Cave-temple reveals esoteric *prayoga* rites by means of stone figures carved inside royal temples for those who had been consecrated to this knowledge. The placement of this temple at the Pallava port, moreover, implies that the three generations of Pallava rulers the temple documents employed the Bhagavān's brilliant conquering *tejas* to protect Pallava interests eastward in Southeast Asia as well as on the subcontinent. In contrast, the Vairāṅṅa Perumāḷ Temple inside the Pallava capital reveals a royal concern to articulate a summa of Bhāgavata Dharma visually. Its subtle and complex sculpted program presumably was addressed to Bhāgavatas of learning who knew how to "read" this three-dimensional built *maṇḍala*, and used it as a means to transform their perceptions of themselves, of others, of the world, and of God.

These two temples are specific seventh and eighth century fruits of a religion patronized in royal courts throughout the subcontinent for centuries past. In this respect they may be used to cast light backward to understand earlier structures in other places. They are also cultic sites of a religion that continued to develop for centuries to come, notably through Nāryāyaṇa Vāsudeva residing in Kāñcīpuram as the icon named Varadarājan according to Śrīvaiṣṇava belief:

⁸² The fragmentary four *vyūha* figure from Mathurā dated to the Kuṣāṇa period follows the same sequence on a flat plane (HUDSON 2002a: 143-144).

He used his devoted servant Tirukacci Nambi to lead Rāmānuja into this *sampradāya* of Sanskrit and Tamil scriptures, and made him its most significant Ācārya. Rāmānuja propagated Bhāgavata Dharma and Pāñcarātra Āgama according to his wisdom, developed Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta theology in its classical form, and Ācāryas commented on it, developed it, and continue to teach it today. In this respect these seventh and eighth century stone “texts” in Kāñcīpuram and its Māmallam port may cast light forward to illuminate temple liturgies, sculpted programs, and literary texts in Sanskrit, Tamil, and Mañipravāḷa written by authors who worshiped in temples such as these.

When palm leaf books and sculpted programs are studied together in specific places and specific times, the history and meanings of sacred works like the Bhāgavatapurāṇa, which the Paramēccuraviṇṇagaram illustrates, open up; and so do the social contexts and liturgical performances that shape vernacular poems of devotion composed by poets such as Tirumaṅkai and Āṅṅāḷ. The same is true for buildings. Pallavamalla’s three-dimensional *maṇḍala* of stone, which faces west, suggests that west-facing temples in other places and of other times similarly may have been built to serve as visual summaries of Bhāgavata Dharma. Two candidates for examination come to mind. One is the famous but ruined Viṣṇu-house built in northern India at Deogarh (Devgadh) in the early sixth century (VATS 1952). The other, surprisingly, is the huge and largely intact temple in Cambodia known today as Angkor Wat. Along with other religions the Khmer court had patronized Bhāgavata Dharma and Pāñcarātra Āgama for centuries. Early in the twelfth century Sūryavarman II (1112-1152) built this spectacular palace to house a golden icon of Viṣṇu on Garuḍa. Like Pallavamalla’s Viṣṇu-house it consists of three stories, it faces west, and is enclosed by a *prākāra* replete with sculpted episodes from Bhāgavata lore, including (as in Kāñcīpuram) episodes in the career of its imperial sponsor Sūryavarman II on the same southern side of the *maṇḍala* governing the entire structure (ROBINSON/WHEELER 1992: 103-106).