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Some Mathura Sculptures of the Kushan Period

That Mathura during the Kushan period (1–300 A.D.) was of seminal importance for the history of Indian art and religions is now well-known. The abundance of artistic remains from this ancient city and its surrounding areas that have so far come to light are of great significance for the history of Jainism, Buddhism, as well as Hinduism. Although much has been written about the early art of Mathura, new discoveries continue to surprise us and continuously add to our knowledge. In this paper, I propose to discuss a few sculptures that throw a flood of light on early Hindu images and cults that prevailed in Mathura between the birth of Christ and the foundation of the Gupta Empire in A.D. 320.

Gajalakshmi

It is perhaps auspicious to begin with a representation of Gajalakshmi which is chronologically the earliest sculpture of the group under discussion (Figs. 2–4). As it now stands propped up on the verandah of a private house in Calcutta, it is exactly 1.22 m. high. Since the figure is broken just below the knees, originally, with the base, it must have been a little over 1.50 m. Thus, the sculpture is of an impressive size, and, certainly, is the largest stele of Gajalakshmi of this period found in Mathura or anywhere else in the subcontinent. While the cult of Gajalakshmi is much more ancient, and older representations are well-known, none is larger than about 30 cm. or so, and, therefore, this somewhat rubbed sculpture clearly demonstrates that the small representations, whether in stone, terracotta, or coins, must have been based on larger cult figures that were enshrined in impressive sanctuaries. Some of these shrines may have been structural and others hypaethral. It so happens that the Los Angeles County Museum of Art has recently acquired a well-preserved terracotta plaque showing possibly a hypaethral shrine of the goddess belonging to a slightly earlier period (Fig. 1). The image of the goddess stands on a raised platform, access to which is attained by a flight of stairs, and the entire

sanctified area is surrounded by a railing, either of wood or stone. There does not appear to have been a superstructure over this shrine. It should also be pointed out that so far, except for the colossal figures of Saṃkar-*shaṇa*/Balarāma, the elder brother of Krishna and one of the five deified heroes of the Vṛishṇi tribe, large images of identifiable Hindu gods from Mathura of the Kushan period are extremely rare. Others include a fine and unusual Vishnu image and a couple of representations of a thunderbolt-bearing deity who is probably Indra¹. In any event, considering the paucity of impressive images of Hindu deities from Kushan Mathura, this Gajalakshmi is a significant addition to our knowledge.

The sculpture shows the goddess with her full-bodied voluptuous form standing upright and holding a lotus with her left hand. Her right hand was probably raised to her shoulder in the gesture of reassurance, as was common with most early Indian deities of all religious persuasions. Her head is protected by an arch, which too is encountered in several other Kushan period images of related goddesses. This probably represents an umbrella of sovereignty. On either side of the goddess, the recessed back-slab is filled with stalks of lotuses, the leaves and flowers rendered realistically, also a characteristic of early Kushan art. Above, at the level of her head, two elephants stand on two lotuses holding upturned pots with their trunks and thereby bathing the goddess. The rendering of the animals is somewhat more conceptualized than that of the flowers.

There is, of course, nothing new about her iconography or configuration. This type of Gajalakshmi images, where she is depicted literally in a "lotus forest" (*padmavana*), had become standardized much earlier in Indian art (Fig. 1) and was an obvious visual translation of her familiar epithets, such as *padmavāsini* or one who dwells in the lotus. Thus, while the unknown sculptor was not particularly innovative, certainly he was a master with the hammer and the chisel. He was equally deft in representing animals, plants, and the human form.

The stone, of course, is the mottled red sandstone typical of the region, but often this stone has streaks of buff in it. In this instance, the buff areas are the left hand, the breasts, parts of the face, the arched canopy,

¹ Most early Indian colossal figures of the pre-Kushan period are identified as yakshas. For a large figure identified as Nārāyaṇa, see D. Srinivasan, "God as Brāhmaṇical Ascetic: A Colossal Kushāṇ Icon of the Mathura School", *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, n.s., X, pp. 1-16. Other identifications of this figure, however, are possible. Fragmentary images of Siva-Pārvatī have also been found that are of a good size; but, usually in a Siva temple, the linga rather than an anthropomorphic representation would have received cultic focus. See N.P. Joshi, *Mathura Sculptures*, Mathura 1966, for examples of large cult images of Hindu deities. Nāgarāja images, which are often very large, cannot be identified specifically as Hindu.

and the entire upper portion containing the elephants and the lotuses. It is, of course, very likely that the devotees who worshipped the image never noted these differences, for the sculpture would have been painted and may also have been clothed.

Generally, sculptures such as this Gajalakshmi are dated to the 1st–2nd century A.D., and it is difficult to be more precise. Stylistically, she is not far removed from the ladies in the famous Āmohinī relief, which is usually dated to the early part of the 1st century. In this connection, mention should be made of a recently discovered inscription from Mirjapur in the Mathura district. As translated by B. N. Mukherjee², the inscription informs us:

By Kauśikī, Pakshakā, the wife of Mūlavasu, a Brāhmaṇa of the Śegravagotra (and) the treasurer of Svāmīn Mahākshatrapa Śā(or Śu)mdāsa, and the mother of Vasu, a tank (which is) the eastern of these twin tanks, a garden, an assembly hall, a reservoir, a pillar, and a stone slab of (or for) an image of Siri or Śrī (Lakshmi) (*i.e.*, a stone slab bearing the image of Śrī) are caused to be made.

The significance of this inscription is immense. It not only provides us with the name of the family which could not be deciphered from a fragmentary inscription discovered long ago in the Jamalpur mound but confirms the fact that Śoḍāsa's treasurer and his wife had established a complete temple complex which included not one but two tanks. This is also one of the earliest Indian inscriptions to describe the various components of an ancient temple complex which included, apart from the tanks, a garden, an assembly hall, probably for the devotees and visitors as well as for the performance of religious ceremonies, and a pillar. The presence of a pillar is interesting and confirms how the ancient pillar had been well integrated into the newly emergent Hindu temple complex and practices. Even more significantly, the shrine was obviously dedicated to the goddess Śrī–Lakshmi, although no mention is made of a structure. Possibly her image was placed in a hypaethral shrine surrounded by a railing as we see in the terracotta plaque (Fig. 1). However, the more important question is whether the Gajalakshmi discussed here is in fact the one mentioned in the inscription. In my opinion, the probability is extremely strong. In that case the sculpture would belong to the first quarter of the first century when Śoḍāsa was the satrap of Mathura. The date is not incompatible with the stylistic evidence. Finally, it should be noted that Gajalakshmi was an extremely important deity in the Mathura region as is clearly evi-

² K. Das (Bajpayee), *Early Inscriptions of Mathura: a Study*, Calcutta 1980, pp. vii–viii, where Dr D. C. Sircar briefly discusses the two inscriptions. B. N. Mukherjee, *Mathurā and its Society – The Śaka–Pahlava Phase*, Calcutta 1981, pp. 219–220 and Appendix III.

dent from her strong presence on the coins of the Mathura rulers, both the Scytho-Parthians and the Mitra kings, as discussed by Mukherjee in his publication cited in note 2. It would in fact appear that she may well have been a sort of a city-goddess. So far, only small images of the goddess, both in terracotta and stone, have been discovered, meant probably for domestic use. This impressive image, now in a private collection in Calcutta, provides the first sculptural confirmation of the importance of her cult in the Mathura region, which is well attested by both inscriptions and coins.

A Vaishnava Triad

With slight iconographic variation, the figure of Gajalakshmi is encountered again in an oblong relief depicting a Vaishnava triad that enjoyed considerable popularity during the Kushan period (Fig. 5). The central figure differs from the Gajalakshmi in that she holds a pot with her left hand rather than the lotus. She is now identified as Ekānamśā, the sister of Saṃkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva, the two deified Vṛishṇi heroes who flank her³. The two brothers, too, are identical except for minor differences.

Both hold the massive club with their upper right hands, while the lower hand displays the gesture of reassurance. The lower left hand of Saṃkarshaṇa, the figure on Ekānamśā's right, is placed against the waist with clenched fist, the remaining hand holds the lion-faced ploughshare which is his distinctive attribute. He is also further distinguished by a wide pectoral of leaves and wildflowers, probably representing the *vanamālā* or garland of wildflowers that later became characteristic of Vishnu (see below). Vāsudeva's upper left hand once held the wheel, which has broken off, and the lower left hand holds what at first sight looks like a pot but which is probably a clumsily rendered conch shell upside down. He seems also to have a roughly marked dot or *urṇā* between the eyebrows, although this is more frequently encountered in Buddhist images. It need hardly be pointed out that, except for certain attributes and the additional arms, these two figures are remarkably close to the Kushan bodhisattva figures, thereby once again demonstrating how certain stock figural forms were repeatedly used with slight variations by the Kushan artists to depict

³ For a detailed discussion of this type of Kushan period Vaishnava triad, see D. Srinivasan, "Early Krishna Icons: The Case at Mathura", *Kalādarśana*, ed. J. G. Williams, New Delhi 1981, pp. 127-36. The three examples discussed by Srinivasan are fragmentary, while this piece is complete. I cannot also agree with her that the male on the left of Ekānamśā represents Vasudeva/Krishna and *not* Vishnu (p. 130). What these images do demonstrate is that the Vedic Vishnu and the Vṛishṇi deified hero had become identified by the Kushan period.

the gods of the different sects. It also clearly indicates that certain artistic and iconographic norms were already established, and the sculptors had little freedom to deviate from them.

Certain other minor differences between the gods should also be noted. While Vāsudeva (who, of course, is none other than Vishnu) stands firm and erect like a column, Balarāma's is a slightly more relaxed figure with his right leg bent a little and the weight transferred to the left leg. He also is not given the thick sash which is tied diagonally around Vāsudeva's thighs and forms a loop on the left. While Vāsudeva seems to have a dot between the eyebrows, Balarāma's right eye and brow are represented obliquely. This must have been intentional and, together with his stance, one wonders if these are not subtle but discreet indications of Saṅkarshaṇa/Balarāma's inebriated state. In other Mathura images, he is often shown holding a wine cup and is described in literature as being inordinately fond of liquor. The oblique right eye very likely represents such epithets as *ghūrṇaitānana* or *madavibhravamalochana*, both of which imply rolling eyes due to drunkenness⁴. I know of no other figure of Balarāma where an attempt has been made to show this trait. Another noteworthy feature is that Saṅkarshaṇa/Balarāma is given only one ornament in the left ear, while his brother has two. This is in keeping with his descriptions in the *Harivaṃśa*, as are, in fact, most of his features⁵.

A few comments must be made about the pillar-like object held by the upper right hand of both deities. Although the sculptor has made no attempt to distinguish them, they, in fact, represent two different attributes. In the case of Balarāma, it is a pestle or *mushala* used for pounding rice. Thus, both his attributes emphasize his agrarian origins. Vāsudeva, on the other hand, is supposed to hold a club or *gadā*, but in other Kushan representations as well, it is shown much like a pestle rising all the way from the base. While no distinction is made between the two objects, they are held differently by the two figures. This, too, may have been a subtle means to distinguish the two brothers.

It has already been noted that, stylistically, Ekānamśā is not too far removed from the more impressive Gajalakshmi. Balarāma and Vāsudeva also may be compared with the Kārttikeya of the year 11, now in the Mathura museum⁶. The two gods are further reminiscent of the deities that flank the Buddha in the early Kushan Buddhist triads and, in fact, Balarāma's closed left fist is similar to that seen in early Buddha/Bodhi-

⁴ N. P. Joshi, *Iconography of Balarāma*, New Delhi 1979, p. 48.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁶ J. M. Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, Berkeley 1967, pl. 49.

sattva images. Thus, a late 1st century or early 2nd century date for this relief is not improbable. However, it must be admitted that the workmanship of this triad is not as refined as that of the Gajalakshmi. The details of garments, ornaments, and the attributes appear more roughly carved. This, in fact, is often the case with smaller reliefs from Kushan Mathura. The reasons were probably economic; the larger and more expensive the sculpture, the better its quality. The Gajalakshmi was obviously commissioned by a wealthy patron, whereas the triad was meant for the domestic shrine of a less affluent Vaishṇava. He (or she) therefore got his (or her) money's worth.

Ardhanārīśvara

The third sculpture (Figs. 6–7) in the group introduces a rare representation of the androgynous form of Siva and Pārvatī (or Umā). To date, two other depictions of this theme have been published and both are from Mathura and belong to the Kushan period⁷. The Victoria and Albert example is similar to the piece under discussion, but the Mathura museum representation forms part of a relief (Fig. 8). It shows Ardhanārīśvara together with Vishnu, Gajalakshmi, and a fourth deity identified as Kubera, but, more likely, he is Kārttikeya. Although not as well preserved and of poorer quality, the Mathura museum relief is probably earlier than the Los Angeles and London examples.

The androgynous figure stands against an obelisk-like tapering and rounded Siva linga that is partially flat at the back (Fig. 7). The slim figure is generally contained within the contours of the linga except for the right arm and shoulder and the left hip. The two halves are articulately differentiated along the vertical axis, the right half being male and the left female. Beginning at the top, the typical *coque de chevelure* hairstyle of Kushan females at Mathura is seen only on the left of the head which is considerably broader on the right. The eyes are shaped differently in the two halves, and the right ear has no ornaments, while a moustache is added above the mouth on the right. The breast is prominently carved on the left side, which also has more ample hips and a fleshy waist as befitting a woman. The erect penis with one testicle is depicted on the right half and, in fact, it is tilted away from the female half in a manner that appears to have been characteristic of Kushan Mathura. Even the left thigh of Pārvatī swells out much more emphatically than Siva's right thigh. While Pārvatī is given ample hips, Siva's shoulder is made much

⁷ R. C. Sharma, *Mathura Museum and Art*, 2nd ed., Mathura 1976, fig. 43; Srinivasan, *op. cit.*, pl. IV, 14.

broad. Common to both are the string of pearls around the neck and the sacred cord that comes down diagonally from the left shoulder. Both wear bangles, but Pārvati has more of them. The design of the armlet is different on the two arms. Siva's right hand is raised to the shoulders in the gesture of reassurance and a rosary is slung across the palm. Pārvati's arm hangs along her body and holds a flower.

But for the linga at the back, the figure is almost sculpted in the round. The slim, elegant proportions and the svelte plasticity of the modeling clearly indicate a much later date than that suggested for either the Gajalakshmi or the triad discussed above. Sensuous though the figure still is, Pārvati's voluptuousness is not as blatant and the form is less concerned with the swelling volumes of early Kushan sculpture. Instead, the expressive contours reflect a linear fluency which almost echoes the qualities that one encounters in the sculptures of the Amaravati school of the 2nd–3rd century. In any case, much more sophisticated than the Mathura museum's Ardhanārīśvara, this sensitively rendered and animated sculpture shows the unknown sculptor's remarkable technical virtuosity and uncompromising aesthetic sensibility.

Durgā Killing the Buffalo Demon

Stylistically close to the Ardhanārīśvara is another small relief depicting the Hindu goddess Durgā killing the buffalo demon (Fig. 9). The relief represents a well-established type that was invented by the sculptors of Kushan Mathura, probably in the 1st century, and remained popular throughout the period. All the known examples are small in size and were probably intended for domestic shrines. As the type has been studied by several scholars⁸, I shall restrict myself to discussing only the peculiarities of this image and offer some general comments towards elucidating the composition's most distinctive feature – the manner in which the animal is killed.

Distributing the weight on her right leg and thrusting her right hip out prominently, the goddess holds the buffalo in a deceptive embrace with her two principal hands, one of which presses his back and the other encircles his neck. The additional pairs of hands hold a sword, which is not intended to be used, and an unidentifiable object in the corresponding left hand, which may have been a shield or another weapon. The remaining two hands hold two discs which will be discussed presently. Significantly,

⁸ G. von Mitterwallner, "The Kuṣāṇa Type of the Goddess Mahiṣāsūramardīnī as Compared to the Gupta and Medieval Types", *German Scholars on India*, II, Bombay 1976, pp. 196–213.

she does not hold a trident which is invariably her principal weapon in later representations of the theme.

What is intriguing about these Kushan reliefs is the manner in which the goddess is shown destroying the animal without using any of her attributes. The buffalo looks almost like a calf, no doubt in conformity with the demands of the hieratic scale. Although the animal is shown lunging at the goddess, she is totally unruffled and holds the buffalo as one would fondle a calf. Yet, undoubtedly, the intent was to emphasize the fact that the goddess killed the animal with her bare hands. The ease with which she does so is effectively expressed by contrasting her equanimity and equipoise with the diagonal and forceful position of the buffalo with his raised forelegs, taut body and an open mouth through which his tongue hangs out.

The most well-known and the earliest textual version of the myth represented in this relief is that contained in the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*, probably redacted in the Gupta period (320–600 A.D.). Mitterwallner⁹ noted that this story was not the literary source for the Kushan composition and she used, unconvincingly however, another myth – that of the goddess' destruction of the demon Sumbha – to explain the representation. In fact, no other puranic version of the myth seems appropriate, though something similar is found in the *Vāmanapurāṇa* which, however, is not much earlier than the 9th century¹⁰.

In this version, the story begins with the sage Nārada asking his colleague Pulastya why, despite possessing innumerable weapons, the goddess killed Mahishāsurā by pressing (*mardana*) him with her feet. So here we get a reference to a tradition that was aware of the goddess not resorting to her weapons. Then the battle is discussed at length and, almost until the end, the goddess seems quite unconcerned and mockingly indulges in laughter, drinking, dancing, and even playing the vina while the two armies of the gods and demons destroy each other. Finally, she jumps on the buffalo and, with her delicate feet, massages his back to lull him into a dull stupor and then pierces his neck with her spear. In the Kushan reliefs, too, we note the unruffled goddess almost caressing the buffalo, though with her hands rather than her feet, as if to put him to sleep. Although the present *Vāmanapurāṇa* is a much later text, it may have preserved in this story an earlier tradition that was the basis for the Kushan reliefs, for as Pulastya tells Nārada, it was a very old (*purātani*) story. It may also be noted that the strangling of the animal, rather than killing

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 209–10.

¹⁰ *Vāmanapurāṇa*, ch. 20.

him with a weapon, was more appropriate for a sacrificial victim, and the buffalo, indeed, is being sacrificed by the goddess, just as the animal, usually a calf, is still sacrificed before the goddess in Nepal today ¹¹.

A final note on two other unusual attributes of the goddess which occur, to my knowledge, only in this Kushan relief. These are the two discs held by her two uppermost hands. There seems little doubt that they represent the sun and the moon. As if to drive home the point, the sculptor has delineated a circle within a crescent in the disc held by the left hand, thereby emphasizing both the new and the full moon. Although rare, the sun and the moon are held as attributes by other early Indian deities, and later by Buddhist gods in Central Asia, and, undoubtedly, they were meant to symbolize the deity's cosmic nature ¹². At least in one Kushan representation and in a later image of the goddess from Himachal Pradesh, she holds the two symbols in a similar fashion ¹³.

Varāha

These two cosmic symbols also occur as divine attributes in another Kushan relief depicting Varāha, the Boar avatar of Vishnu, now in the Mathura museum ¹⁴. Significantly, in this representation, the god is four-armed and his two upper hands hold discs decorated with tiny images of two figures riding chariots drawn by horses. Joshi identified both figures as sun-gods, but I suggest that one represents the sun and the other the moon. This is supported by the *Vishṇudharmottara-purāṇa* (a text of the Gupta period), which states that both deities are to ride chariots drawn by horses ¹⁵. In Central Asian Buddhist paintings, too, both are given horse-driven chariots and only in the medieval period was the moon god's mount changed from a horse to a gander. Thus, there is no doubt that in the Mathura museum relief, which was probably carved no later than the 2nd century, Varāha's cosmic nature is emphasized, and it would be more appropriate to identify him as Mahāvarāha. It also demonstrates that there already was a precedent at Mathura to use the symbols of the sun and the moon as divine attributes when the Los Angeles Mahishāsūramardini was carved.

¹¹ Although the Nepalis now chop off the animal's head, in ancient India it was more customary to strangle the sacrificial animal.

¹² See P. Pal, "Cosmic Vision and Buddhist Images", *Art International*, XXV 1-2, 1982, pp. 8-40.

¹³ Rosenfield, *op. cit.*, p. 90, fig. 12; P. Pal, *Bronzes of Kashmir*, New York 1975, pp. 230-31.

¹⁴ Joshi, *Mathura Sculptures*, cit., fig. 101.

¹⁵ P. Shah, *Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa*, Third Khaṇḍa, II, Baroda, Oriental Institute, 1961, p. 150.

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art also possesses a late Kushan Varāha image from Mathura which, in many ways, is even more significant than the much smaller Mathura museum relief (Fig. 10). Originally, the figure must have been at least 70 cm. high. It may, therefore, have been used as a cult image in a shrine, or it may have adorned the side niche of a Vaishnava temple. In any event, it does indicate that the cult of Varāha also originated in Kushan Mathura and became rapidly popular during the Gupta period. Even more important is the fact that the Los Angeles sculpture is much more the prototype of the Gupta Varāhas than is the figure in the Mathura museum relief. The composition, the posture of Vishnu, and the placement of the earth-goddess are features that remained standard for subsequent representations of this theme.

The relief shows Varāha as a heavy, muscular figure, standing with his left leg bent and the weight placed on his right leg. The placement of his hands on his hip and thigh also enhances the sense of solidity and stability. Except for his head, which is that of a boar, he seems to have been modeled after a wrestler. He wears the usual *dhoti*, under which the outline of his penis is clearly indicated, as was the custom in Kushan male figures, thereby further emphasizing his virility. His left hand holds a flower, perhaps a lotus of dalliance (*lilākamala*), and he is adorned with plain bangles and a heavy garland of wildflowers (*vanamālā*). Additionally, a scarf thrown around his neck is held together by a clasp, thereby making it a cape.

With his head turned to the left, Varāha suspends the Earth goddess, whom he has just rescued from the depths of the ocean, by gently biting her bent right arm, as a sow or a cow would carry a calf. The goddess is given stability by the lotus on which she stands. Her right hand seems to carry another lotus, while the left holds her scarf across her knees. Behind her a human or divine couple is watching the cosmic drama. Although the sizes of the various figures were determined by the hieratic scale, by creating two different planes for the placement of his figures, the sculptor has also created a sense of spatial depth unusual for such reliefs.

Hari-Hara

Just as the beginning of the cults of Varāha and Ardhanārīśvara can, with some confidence, be traced back to Kushan Mathura, so also that of Hari-Hara through a fragmentary sculpture which once was in the Pan-Asian collection (Fig. 11). Hari-Hara is a composite image that depicts Vishnu (Hari) and Siva (Hara) in the same figure similar to the androgynous form of Siva and Pārvati. The right half of the composite figure portrays Siva, and the left half Vishnu. The cult of Hari-Hara at-

tained popularity both in Gupta India and in distant Cambodia, and, to date, no incontestable artistic evidence has been found on the subcontinent to push its history earlier than the Gupta period, even though the literary evidence is older. Attempts have been made to identify a wheel-bearing Siva on a coin of the Kushan emperor Huvishka (2nd century) as a prototype of Hari-Hara, and a figure on a seal, which, however, may not be Kushan, as a deity combining the three gods Vishnu, Siva, and Surya, but the suggestions are not convincing¹⁶. Even if these two images do reflect syncretic tendencies, they have little or nothing in common with the standard Gupta image of Hari-Hara, where the two halves are clearly distinguished along the vertical axis.

In the fragment under discussion, only the head and part of two arms are preserved, but the distinction between the two halves could not have been more explicit. No attempt had been made to differentiate the facial features except to add the third eye to the right half. Interestingly, an entire eye, rather than a half, is added, but to make sure that it does not impinge upon the Vishnu half of the forehead, the sculptor has placed it off center and carved it obliquely. This is in keeping with the oblique representation of Siva's penis in the Ardhanārīśvara image (Fig. 6). Although Siva's ear is broken, that of Vishnu sports a *kuṇḍala* as prescribed. Similarly, the left half of the head is adorned with a tall crown characteristic of Vishnu with an additional crest placed at the side, while Siva's hair is matted as is appropriate for an ascetic. Here, also, the bun is tilted away from Vishnu's crown. The right hand, of which only fingers remain, holds the trident, Siva's distinctive attribute, and the left grasps the wheel.

Stylistically, the fragment displays some features that are strictly Kushan and others that anticipate elements seen in Gupta sculpture. The designs of the trident and the wheel are closer to Kushan representations of these implements than those seen in Gupta art. Vishnu's crown, with the small crest on the side, is also reminiscent of the crowns of Kushan period Vishnu images rather than those of the Gupta period where the crest assumes a prominent place in the middle of the crown. Certainly, the oblique representations of the eye and the turban are Kushan features and are seldom encountered in Gupta images. On the other hand, the shape of the face, the full, sensuous lips, the perfectly chiseled nose, and the almost half-shut eyes are features that anticipate the Gupta idiom. Noteworthy, also, is the subtle and refined modeling of the noble though

¹⁶ J. N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta, University of Calcutta, 2nd ed., 1956, pp. 123-24 and 544.

slightly remote face which is informed with an expression of inner serenity that is more characteristic of Gupta period faces, whereas Kushan faces have a more open and welcoming expression. Thus, a late 3rd century date for this marvelous head seems a strong probability. It may further be noted that proportionately this image, when complete, would have stood at least 1.50 m. high, which would have made it a figure as large as the Gajalakshmi. This, too, was probably installed as a cult image in a temple.

Conclusion

To sum up, the group of sculptures discussed here not only considerably expand our knowledge of Hindu art and religion at Kushan Mathura, but reaffirm the belief that most important iconographic types originated in that entrepôt during the first three centuries of the Christian era. The Kejriwal image of Gajalakshmi clearly confirms what was already known from smaller representations, that at least one important temple in the city was dedicated to this goddess. And, by the 3rd century, temples must also have been built to house the Varāha and the Hari-Hara images. To date, the archaeological evidence for the antiquity of the cults of both Varāha and Hari-Hara could not be pushed back earlier than the 5th century. It also becomes clear that composite or syncretic images, as some would prefer, such as Ardhanārīśvara and Hari-Hara, were already familiar in Kushan Mathura. Thus, even as the sectarian Hindu gods were taking shape, the spirit of non-duality (*advaita*) was also being cultivated simultaneously.



Fig. 1 - Gajalakshmi Shrine, Uttar Pradesh, 1st century B. C., 15 cm. Red terracotta. *Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Indian Art Special Purposes Fund.*



Fig. 2 - Gajalakshmi, Mathura, 1st century A. D., 1.22 m. Mottled red sandstone. *Mr & Mrs I. K. Kejriwal Collection, Calcutta.*



Fig. 3 - Detail of fig. 2.

Fig. 4 - Detail of fig. 2.

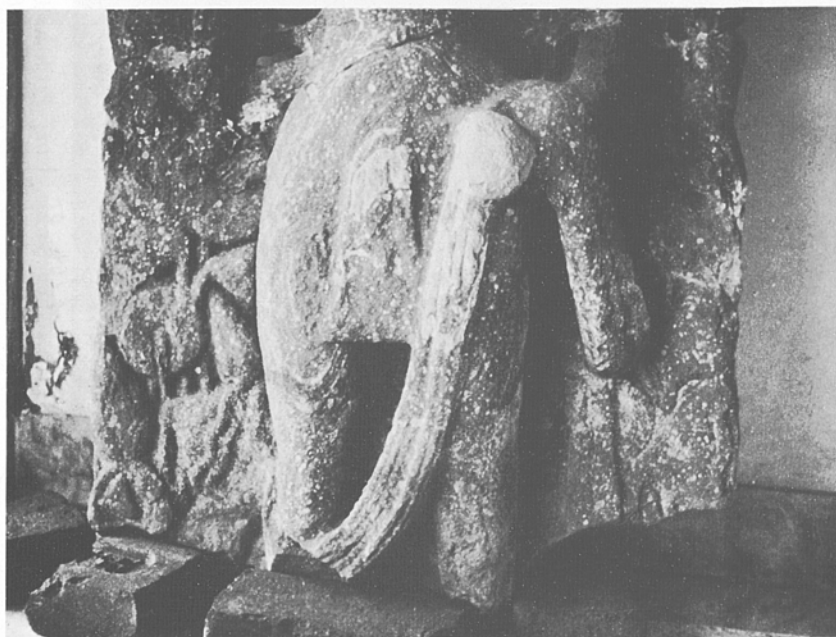




Fig. 5 - A Vaishnava Triad, Mathura, 2nd century A. D., 21.7 cm. Mottled red sandstone.
Ex-Pan Asian Collection. Property of R. H. Ellsworth.



Fig. 6 – Ardhanārīśvara with Linga. Mathura, Early 3rd century A. D., 30.8 cm. Mottled red sandstone. *Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Mr & Mrs Herbert Kurit Collection.*

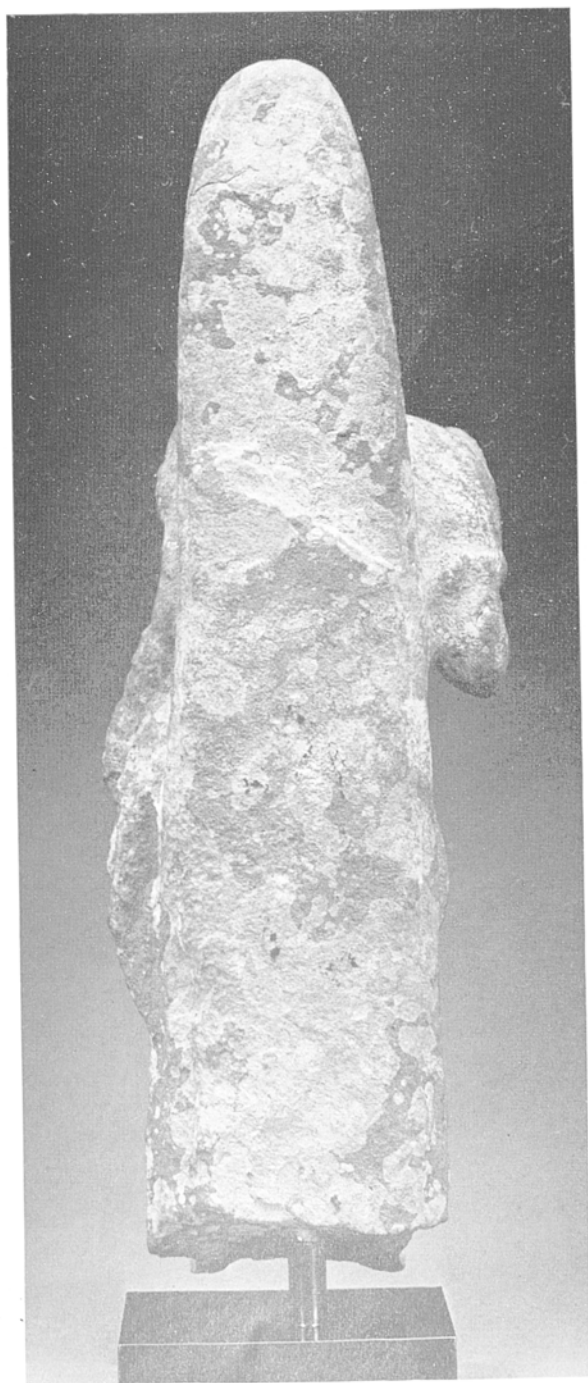


Fig. 7 – Reverse of fig. 6.



Fig. 8 — Relief with Hindu Deities, Mathura, 2nd century A. D., 26.5 cm. Mottled red sandstone.
Mathura Museum.



Fig. 9 – Durgā killing Mahishāsura. Mathura, 3rd century A. D., 24.1 cm. Mottled red sandstone. *Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of Dr & Mrs P. Pal.*



Fig. 11 - Hari-Hara, Mathura, 3rd century A. D., 27.6 cm. Mottled red sandstone. *Ex-Pan Asian Collection. Property of R. H. Ellsworth.*



Fig. 10 - Boar Avatar, Mathura, Late 3rd century A. D., 57.1 cm. Mottled red sandstone. *Los Angeles County Museum of Art, From the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection.*