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Reflecting from Hindsight: Thoughts on a New Post-Kuṣāṇa Mathura Panel of Gaṇeśa and Śrī-Lakṣmī

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When Dr. V.K. Gupta so generously shared with me his finding of a panel from the Bharatpur region, I knew that we had the perfect object to contribute to Dr. N.P. Joshi's Felicitation Volume. Though the panel is much worn, it is possible to determine its depiction of a subject on which Dr. Joshi has made a noteworthy contribution. His monograph on *Mātrkāś*, Mothers in Kuṣāṇa Art (New Delhi, 1986) was the first to treat this subject comprehensively. Our paper continues, as it were, where his monograph left off. It is a pleasure for us to felicitate Dr. Joshi whom I remember taking on considerable responsibilities at the time of my symposium on Mathura, organized in January 1980 by the American Institute of Indian Studies. Through the ensuing years, it had always been a useful and pleasurable occasion to converse with Dr. Joshi at the various learned gatherings where we could meet. His rare knowledge of Mathura art and relevant classical Sanskrit texts stands as an example for all researchers in the field. For Dr. Gupta as well, he is one of his *Gurus* from whose writings he has learned so much on Brahmanical and Jaina art. He considers him as one of the most important contributors-cum-authorities in the field of studies dealing with Mathura art, which is also a field of his specialization.

Part I : The Kanawara Panel – The Description Vinay Kumar Gupta

This unique sculptural panel (Fig. 125) was found from Village Kanawara in Kaman *tehsil* of District Bharatpur of Rajasthan. The core of Braj region (area in and around Mathura) includes Kaman *tehsil* as its integral part. Kanawara is a small village situated about 2.5 km south-east of Kaman town and is about 70 km (by road) north-west of Mathura and about 8 km distant from Barsana connected by unmetalled road. The panel is in worship at a small temple constructed in the name of local village goddess and is worshipped as a female deity irrespective of what it represents⁶⁰. The sculptural panel made of spotted red sandstone is quite defaced, especially at the top. The total length of the panel is 64 cm / 25 inches and its height is 41 cm / 16 inches. The panel depicts two deities in high relief seated close to each other and it appears that the

sculpture would not have contained more than two figures in any case as the broken edges suggest. The male deity is seated in *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*/*mahārājāḥilāsana* to the right of the female deity and has an elephant's head as the face^(vi). It seems that the deity is two-armed. In his left hand, he holds a *modaka-pātra* from which he is picking *modakas* with the help of his trunk turned towards his left. The trunk is having only one tusk (*ekadanta*) which is missing except for its mark which is visible as a buff spot. What the deity held in his right hand is not clear since it is too mutilated, but on the basis of other contemporary images of the deity who is for sure Lord Gaṇeśa, it might be identified either as a tusk or a fruit (pomegranate). The body of the deity is corpulent and stout. *Nāgajyōtopavita* is running down from the left shoulder and is tied at his protuberant belly in a peculiar manner with the snake having many curves (similar to *udarahandha* in appearance). He is possibly not shown nude (or ithyphallic) as a part of the folds of *dhoti* is visible between his legs. The head is probably devoid of any headdress like a *mukuta*. The female deity to his left is seated in *bhadrāsana*/*utkuṣṭikāsana* with her mount lion. The face of the lion is missing but the paws and the shape of the body confirms the identification of the animal. It seems that she is also two-armed. It is quite difficult to identify the object held in her left hand which is positioned near the navel with open palm. The possibility of a child sitting on the palm is negated as no legs of child are visible hanging below the palm as well as there are no other indications of a child in the mutilated image. So, the open palm might have held some round object like *bilva* fruit or *bilva-phala* (*śrīphala*)^(vii). The head and the right hand of the deity are missing but there is a possibility that in her right hand, she holds a lotus flower in profile. There is a possibility of the presence of wings on the back of the female deity as visible by the bulge near the left shoulder of the deity, otherwise this bulge has to be a part of some important feature like the base for lustrating elephant (though not known in case of this panel). In spite of the much mutilated condition of the panel, there is no possibility of the presence of any other figure besides these two as is clear from the edges on both the sides. The maximum mutilation has been on the portion lying above the neck of the female deity. The length of Gaṇeśa figure at the base of the pedestal is 29 cm and that of lion is 33 cm. Whether there are lustrating elephants above the female deity's head, is a very interesting proposition. Since in some medieval reliefs where Gaja-Lakṣmi sits with Kubera, this feature is found.

Part II : Analysis of the Panel

Doris Meth Srinivasan

As is so often the case with Mathura sculpture, it may be small, it may be fragmentary, it may be worn or defaced, but it marks a giant step towards our understanding of Hindu iconography. The panel from Kanawara, an area around Mathura, does this. It lets us catch a glimpse of the process that made the school an incubator for future iconographic norms. From pre-Kuṣāṇa through Gupta times, Mathura artists were foremost in creating forms whose symbols carried meanings so apt and effective that they entered the mainstream of Indian art. The panel from

Kanawara when seen from the vantage point of a later iconographic text, is viewed as a forecaster of future tendencies.

By separating what is known from what problematic in the Kanawara panel, we can straightaway focus attention on the innovative aspects of the relief (Fig. 125).

There can be no doubt that Gaṇeśa seated in *sukhāsana*¹ is depicted. The conclusive element is his trunk which reaches over to the left to garner the sweets (*modakas*) in his left hand. This is a typical gesture of the god although there is no secure occurrence of its appearance until after the Kuṣāṇa Period.² The figure to the left of two-handed Gaṇeśa is unusual, but identifiable due to recent studies of the iconographic impact from the Northwest upon Hindu Gupta imagery, including Gupta numismatics (see below). Two points relating to the figure can easily be determined: the figure is a two-armed female and she sits on what seems to be a lion. The round rump, on the left edge of the panel is discernible. So are the front and back paws. The flaked portion of what originally was the head, resting on the front paws, still retains the outline of a mane around the facial area. The female on the lion assumes a characteristic seated position called *bhadrāsana*. This is not an ordinary seated position for her haunches are quite low to the ground and her bent legs are splayed wide open on either side while the ankles are close together. The area of the sex organ could be, but is not in this instance, exposed. The posture is however not an erotic one. Any female instinctively knows that the posture approximates-but for the near-touching ankles-the birth-giving posture. In short, the female on the lion would appear to be a *Mātṛkā*. There are plenty of *Mātṛkā* reliefs in the Kuṣāṇa period, as Dr. Joshi has shown, but the style and iconography of this female and the presence of her companion, Gaṇeśa, strongly suggest that the panel was not made during the Kuṣāṇa period.

Arguing against a Kuṣāṇa date is - first of all-the absence of a *Mātṛkā* seated on a lion, in the Kuṣāṇa corpus of *Mātṛkā* reliefs. Second, Dr. Joshi's monograph and the subsequent monograph by Katherine Anne Harper on the development of the iconography of the *Saptamātṛkās*, published in 1989, (but apparently based on the author's 1977 Ph.D. dissertation³), agree that Gaṇeśa is a later addition to the *Mātṛkā* group; Joshi makes no mention of this god within his thirteen categories itemizing the way *Mātṛkās* are represented in the Kuṣāṇa period⁴. Harper notes that by the Gupta period, Gaṇeśa (also known as 'Gaṇapati' and 'Vināyaka'), joins the group⁵. The reason why Gaṇeśa was pulled into the post-Kuṣāṇa orbit of the *Mātṛkās* is perhaps most candidly summed up by Harper when she says: "The role of Gaṇeśa in *Mātṛkā* symbolism is not clear".⁶ Correlated with this uncertainty is the fact that it is difficult to trace Gaṇeśa's rise as a popular god in Hinduism. There seems to be precious little material in Sanskrit literature prior to the purāṇas to account for the prominence he gains from the time of the purāṇic texts onward.⁷

The ensuing analysis of the style and iconography of the panel will show it was probably made just prior to purāṇic descriptions, that is, during the time when a changeover from Kuṣāṇa *Mātṛkās* to Gupta (and beyond) *Saptamātṛkās* occurred. Both Joshi and Harper recognize that the changeover occurred in post-Kuṣāṇa times.⁸ Whereas it is not possible to be certain, due to its fragmentary nature, whether the Kanawara panel originally showed *Mātṛkās* or *Saptamātṛkās*

or just the two figures, the relief is best analyzed on the basis of what actually remains : two figures. Additionally, Dr. Gupta who has studied the relief firsthand maintains that originally the panel did not extend beyond these figures.

The female's posture and her mount also provide chronological information. The vast preponderance of Kuṣāṇa *Mātṛkās* seated in *bhadrāsana* have legs shaped and poised differently than the legs of the female on the Kanawara panel. Kuṣāṇa female legs are sturdier, fatter, rounder and the ankles are noticeably farther apart.⁹ Perhaps the posture on a Kuṣāṇa relief closest to the Kanawara example is found on a Mathura panel depicting Kubera and a *Mātṛkā* who is seated in *bhadrāsana* with a baby on her left lap.¹⁰ The *āsana* of this Kuṣāṇa *Mātṛkā* is rather similar to the lower fragment of a 4th century seated *Mātṛkā* preserved in the State Museum, Lucknow (Fig. 126). The Lucknow fragment also comes from Mathura and also shows (the lower part of) a child seated on the left thigh of its mother. The sculpture, as Harper correctly notices, exhibits some features that are reminiscent of the Kushan era but it is already on the threshold of Gupta imagery. She notes that its size, 49 x 36.5 cm is distinctly larger than the Kuṣāṇa *Mātṛkā* panels.¹¹ A perusal through Shri Joshi's monograph proves her to be nearly correct. Out of the 104 *Mātṛkā* figures he catalogues from museum inventories¹², I find about 19 that are about as large as figure 2.¹³ The Kanawara panel belongs to the larger variety (see Gupta's description above). Therefore its size is another indication that the panel is likely to date to post-Kuṣāṇa times.

There is still more chronological information to be gained from the seated posture. Scanning the illustrations of *Saptamātṛkās* in Harper, several observations can be made on the way the females are seated. In general they are seated in either *lalitāsana*, or *padmāsana*-or-if both feet are on the ground and in front, then the ankles are not close together and the haunches are not low to the ground.¹⁴ However the *Saptamātṛkās* at Deogarh deserve special attention. The cave's dedicatory inscription states that it was made to house images of the *Saptamātṛkās*. Dated to the 6th century, the sculptures are of interest in the present context because Gaṇeśa appears twice : once, as an adult at the end (i.e. the left side) of the *Mātṛkās* group (thus different from his placement in the Kanawara panel), and the second time as baby Gaṇeśa with the *Mātṛkā* Māheśvarī, who sits on a lion.¹⁵ Could the Kanawara female represent Māheśvarī? It seems unlikely : the Deogarh Māheśvarī balances the baby on her left thigh and holds the babe with her left arm which circles him in back (It is unclear what Māheśvarī has in her right hand). The entire left arm of the Kanawara female is visible. And whereas now there are no remains of an infant (perhaps there never was one), the Kanawara female holds a roundish object in the cupped palm of her left hand. In short, the gestures are quite different. So are the postures. The Deogarh Māheśvarī does not sit in *bhadrāsana* and the lion does not seem to be pressed down by her weight as in the Kanawara carving.

Two charts produced by Michael Meister show the physical arrangement of *Mātṛkās* in different regions of India; these charts provide additional guidance for dating the Kanawara panel.¹⁶ Chart A maps the arrangement of Gupta and Early Post-Gupta *Mātṛkā* sets at seven

sites. Only the Śiva cave at Aihole (CE 550-600) contains Śrī, (in proximity to Gaṇeśa, who does not end the set). Chart B maps the arrangements of *Saptamātṛkās* at twelve later sites (7th through 11th century CE) and Śrī-Lakṣmī is not included in any set.¹⁷

In sum, all the foregoing evidence suggests that the Kanawara panel (or what is left of it), was made before the 5th-6th centuries CE. It was probably made on the cusp of the Gupta Period, that is, in the late 3rd to early 4th century CE.

If that date is accepted then there is but one motherly female who sits on a lion: Śrī-Lakṣmī sits regally on the lion on the earliest Gupta gold coins. The royal Guptas (Candragupta I or Samudragupta; Candragupta II and Kumāragupta I) minted some gold Types featuring on the reverse Śrī-Lakṣmī on a lion.¹⁸ Her leonine seat on these Gupta coins is the result of Kuṣāṇa influence on early Gupta coin designs. After Kumāragupta I (c. 415-447 or c. 420-450 CE.¹⁹), that is, on later Gupta coin designs, Lakṣmī on the lion is no longer found, confirming I believe, the pre-to-early Gupta dating of the Kanawara panel which contains the imagery. Recently Ellen Raven, and then myself following her analyses, have summarized the ways in which early Gupta gold coins look back to Kuṣāṇa models in art and coins.²⁰ Some of Śrī-Lakṣmī's attributes on certain Gupta gold coin Types reflect characteristics in Kuṣāṇa art in the Northwest. When the goddess cult became established in the Northwest, Śrī-Lakṣmī acquired traits of foreign goddesses popular in that region. The basis for transposition is similarity in domain(s) of power. Lakṣmī's lion seat on Gupta coins relates to the imagery of Nanā, a most important deity for the Kuṣāṇas. The lion is the seat of Nanā in Kuṣāṇa art of the Northwest. No other Gandharan goddess, not Hārīti, nor Ardoxsho can claim that seat as her own. Perhaps attributing the lion seat to Lakṣmī was due in part to a recognition that the awesome powers of Nanā and Śrī-Lakṣmī, namely sovereignty, fertility and prosperity, overlap²¹. However, by adopting Nanā's lion's seat for their favourite goddess, the Guptas were not simply accepting a foreign symbol; the lion is also an ancient emblem of royalty in India.²² To be seated on the lion bespeaks of kingship (*śatrapa*) a power assigned to Śrī as early as the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (ŚB XI. 4. 3. 1-20). Moti Chandra notes "that at the time of the Rājasūya sacrifice, the lion-skin on which the king sat is called Śrī (ŚB X.1.4.14)".²³ Śrī-Lakṣmī on the lion expresses her sovereign nature, a quality with which she can invest the earthly king, and therefore an appropriate symbol on imperial coinage.

Śrī-Lakṣmī on the lion also occurs in a sector of a Hindu shrine made during the reign of Kumāragupta I. Lustrated (or *abhiṣeka*) Lakṣmī on the lion is carved on the Gupta Bilsaḍ pillar relief dated c. 420 C.E. (Fig. 127).²⁴ Bilsaḍ is about 150 kilometers east of Mathura and the style of the carving suggests that it may have been made by an artist from Mathura.²⁵ The *abhiṣeka* convention composed of two elephants besprinkling Śrī-Lakṣmī from above is another symbol of sovereignty. It originates from the Indian subcontinent and was so intimately associated with the goddess that the motif travelled with her to the Northwest²⁶. One Northwestern seal, interestingly, associates the *abhiṣeka* motif with a probable Mother Goddess (Fig. 128). Her babe nuzzles close to her left breast while the deity is lustrated by two elephants²⁷. The 5th

century CE. Bilsaḍ relief may be said to render two symbols of sovereignty associated with Lakṣmī: the lion throne and the sprinkling elephants. Lustrated Lakṣmī seated on the royal (i.e. lion) throne is the embodiment of royal power. She can confer this power and thus legitimize a ruler. The way in which the Gupta period uses the *abhiṣeka* symbolism indicates that it was recognized as a stamp of authority. For example, a standing *abhiṣeka* Lakṣmī is seen on two early Gupta copper plate inscriptions from the Raipur region which belong to the rulers Raja Maha Jayaraja and Raja Maha Sudevaraja.²⁸

None of the aforementioned depictions of Śrī-Lakṣmī on the lion show the goddess with wings. There is a sculpted curved volume on the side of the upper left arm of the goddess. This area cannot however be interpreted as one of a set of wings because there is nothing on the other side to warrant that conjecture. That side unfortunately has suffered extreme bedding plane erosion. It is therefore difficult to interpret the 'curve' on the left. Perhaps it is part of another figure, or something associated with the goddess.²⁹

Pre-dating the Bilsaḍ relief, the Kanawara panel seems to be India's earliest known relief depicting Lakṣmī on the lion. It cannot be prefigured by the Mathura sculpture of c. 2nd century CE (in the Berlin Museum of Indian Art), depicting the Warrior Goddess standing on the couchant lion (Fig. 129). The Warrior Goddess with her aggressive weaponry is neither related to Śrī-Lakṣmī, nor a Mother Goddess. Her straight stance upon the lion, perhaps an expression of her fierceness, conveys no hint of maternity.

One other element in the Kanawara panel could point to the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī. It is the roundish object in her hand. Its identity is by no means certain, but it might be the favourite fruit of Śrī, namely the *bilva*. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (III. 82.1-16), Lakṣmī should hold a *bilva* fruit in one of her hands. Moti Chandra has shown that both the tree and the fruit have a long, prior association with the goddess.³⁰ The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (II. 1.6 ff.) says that those desirous of *śrī* (prosperity) should raise up the *yūpa* made of the *bilva* tree. The *Manusmṛiti* (V. 120) calls the *bilva* '*Śrīphala*', Śrī's fruit. And the *Vāyu Purāṇa* (XXXVII. 9.15) mentions a forest (*vana*) of *bilva* which was known as '*Śrīvāna*'.³¹ To be sure an obstacle exists in proposing that the Kanawara image is limited to Gaṇeśa and Lakṣmī. I cannot point to another early Gupta, or Gupta, or post-Gupta representation limited to these two figures. A late 10th century CE bronze from Eastern India is not really applicable because it casts Gaṇeśa as subordinate to the Devī.³² In the center Gajalakṣmī sits enthroned; she is attended by four-armed Gaṇeśa on her right. Originally, there would have been an attendant on her left, but that figure is now lost. The dearth of Gaṇeśa-Lakṣmī imagery is noticed by Lawrence Cohen, who states-without giving substantiating evidence-that there is little to suggest a popular tradition of joint worship of Lakṣmī and Gaṇeśa as distinct personalities until the recent past. This is an oversimplification if not false, as both J.N. Banerjea and T.A. Gopinatha Rao refer to medieval icons that look as if they are under the influence of Tantrism.³³ Gudrun Buhnemann who has written on Tantric forms of Hindu deities, including Gaṇeśa, confirms that there is a form called Lakṣmī-Gaṇeśa, but it does not appear until medieval times.³⁴

Can the question of religious significance therefore be meaningfully addressed since uncertainty exists regarding the relief's original limits and since no comparative examples exist? Based solely on what actually remains, it is clear that the relief represents Gaṇeśa and Śrī-Lakṣmī as *Mātṛkā*. Lakṣmī, recognized by the lotus she holds, already exist as a *Mātṛkā* in Kuṣāṇa reliefs.³⁵ Shri Joshi (in his *Mātṛkā*s) mentions several examples all from Mathura and most are in the Government Museum, Mathura [i.e. GMM] GMM F 26; GMM F 35; GMM 75. 20; GMM C 30; GMM 61.5371; GMM 14. 410; GMM 72.16; GMM 57. 4349; State Museum, Lucknow (SMI) 0.241; his Fig. 24 is from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Of interest is the fact that in all the reliefs Joshi illustrates³⁶, Lakṣmī sits in the *bhadrāsana*. The Kanawara panel continues her predominant Kuṣāṇa posture as *Mātṛkā*. In addition to all her other powers, Śrī-Lakṣmī seems to epitomize motherhood in antiquity; in Moti Chandra's long study on the cult of the mother goddess in ancient India, the focus is mainly on Lakṣmī (see fn. 24 and fn. 25 on Śrī-Lakṣmī's powers).

Gaṇeśa's position to the right of *Mātṛkā* Śrī-Lakṣmī is at variance with his usual place which is after the last *Saptamātṛkā* - in later imagery. Possibly his unusual placement here is due to the changeover date attributed to the panel-an interim during which fluidity reigns. Of course, Gaṇeśa has no prior connections with *Mātṛkā*s and may have been brought into the context by Śrī herself due to her own close association with (lustrating) elephants. But all this is speculative since the religious significance of the panel is at best vague.

Unexpectedly, another possible significance-surpassing the religious one-holds promise when the panel is compared to descriptions in a later text. *Khaṇḍa* III, *Adhyāya* 82 of the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* describes Lakṣmī's imagery. The text, likely to date to the 5th century C.E.³⁷, is therefore a good century after the production of the panel. Priyabala Shah's summation of parts of *Adhyāya* 82 needs to be quoted in full, not because we have found descriptions that accurately pertain to Lakṣmī in the panel, but because we have here descriptions that act like a rear view mirror casting past signposts in a new light.

"When the goddess is represented separately, she has four hands and seated on a beautiful *śirībāsana*, i.e. lion-seat (82.3). On this *śirībāsana*, a lotus with a beautiful pericarp and eight petals should be made (82.4). On the pericarp she sits like Vināyaka (82.5)³⁸. In her right hand should be a lotus with a big stalk touching the end of the armlet and in her left should be a charming nectar pot and similarly the other two hands should carry a *bilva* and a conch (cf. 82.7). Behind her back there should be a pair of elephants bending down the pots as if in the act of pouring..."³⁹ [insertions of vss. are mine].

Considered from hindsight, the Kanawara panel could have acted like a page from a pattern book. From such a 'page' some hundred years later, Gupta artists could juggle forms, experiment, select, and then compose (i.e. see again the Bilsaḍ relief) suitable expression(s) bearing the stamp of Hindu Gupta art. A rare Gupta image probably of the late 4th-early 5th century CE is a most provocative illustration of this hypothesis⁴⁰. The relief comes from Mathura and is now in the National Museum, New Delhi (Fig. 130). It features three deities.⁴¹ First from the

right sits two-armed Gaṇeśa in *sukhāsana*, stretching his trunk to the left for the *modakas*. In other words, he is portrayed as in the Kanawara panel. In the middle sits two-armed Gajalakṣmī also in *sukhāsana* – that is, she “sits like Vināyaka” (III. 82.5 *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*). She holds “a circular object”, which I suppose could be the *bilva* fruit. Kubera, holding a money bag in the left and a cup in the right hand, sits on Śrī-Lakṣmī’s other side. He assumes the same posture as the others. I concur with Sharma’s dating of the National Museum image which, accordingly, comes decades or a century after the Kanawara panel. Thus the former has incorporated some aspects of the latter but the goddess has changed her posture to reflect the prescription in the later text – although she is neither four-armed nor is there a lion! The National Museum relief increases the possibility that the Kanawara panel may indeed have functioned as a ‘pattern page’.

To conclude, the possibility that the piece was not destined for a religious context rests on two observations: the panel’s disparate iconographic factors do not jell into a coherent 3rd/4th century religious statement, whereas the technique of creating models to record new ideas or experimental iconography can be found all over the subcontinent. Excavations of Buddhist art in Gandhara made during the Kuṣāṇa period exposed numerous trial pieces serving as rough sketches, experimental drawings, training pieces and samples for composition⁴². Closer to the Dist. Bharatpur area, one Kuṣāṇa example of a training piece based on a model (of Skanda) can be assigned to Sonkh (Mathura)⁴³. And, an elegant sketch was found in a sculptor’s workshop at Nagarjunakonda (Andhra Pradesh), perhaps just a bit later in date.⁴⁴ The value of experimenting at the beginning of purāṇic Hinduism (i.e. as the Kanawara panel) seems to me quite credible. It is a lot harder to advance a cogent religious reason for the placement of the more important deity, Lakṣmī, to left of the lesser one, or, to find a rationale for Gaṇeśa’s presence to the right of Lakṣmī, symbol of sovereignty and maternity when Gaṇeśa has no prior connection to Mārkās, and when there is little indication that Gaṇeśa had his own early cult following in Mathura.⁴⁵

The uniqueness of this panel could therefore be due to its function as an iconographic sampler rather than as an expression of religious belief – unless, of course, in the future, a 3rd-4th century CE. Mathura panel with Gaṇeśa, Śrī-Lakṣmī and Kubera is found and opens the problem of interpretation.

References and Notes

- (i) There is a tradition in the whole Braj region to keep ancient images at local goddess’s shrines and even if a *Śiva-līṅga* is put there, then it would also be worshipped as a female deity notwithstanding its actual identity.
- (ii) Here it should be kept in mind that this *āsana* is different from *lalitāsana* as well as *bhadrāsana* as in *lalitāsana*, the deity sits on a high pedestal or throne with either left or right leg hanging vertically downwards whereas the other leg is kept folded horizontally. In *mahārājāḥṣitāsana*, the deity sits with ease on the ground or on a low seat with one leg folded horizontally whereas the other leg is folded vertically with a hand kept at knee. For *bhadrāsana*, pose of sitting of the female deity can be looked at.
- (iii) This possibility of the deity holding a *bilva-phala* was first expressed by Dr. Srinivasan.

1. This pose is also sometimes described as *mahārājāñila*. J.N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, 3rd. Edition, Delhi, 1974, p. 271, fn. 2.
2. The occasional allusion to an article by A.K. Narain of the depiction of the god on a Bactrian coin is not referenced here on purpose since this citation is extremely controversial and cited as a misinterpretation of a design on an Indo-Greek coin. A stone Gaṇeśa noted in 1991 as being of the Kuṣāṇa age and in the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf (see Robert L. Brown, ed. *Gaṇeśa Studies of an Asian God*, State University of New York Press, 1991; p. 66, Fig. 4) is dated as circa fifth century CE by Stella Kramrisch, *Manifestations of Shiva*, Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1981; p. 1. 61.
3. Katherine Harper, *The Iconography of the Saptamatṛikas. Seven Hindu Goddesses of Spiritual Transformation*, Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter, 1989; the 1977, Ph. D. title: *An Iconological Study on the Origins and Development of the Saptamatṛikas*, Ph.D dissertation, UCLA.
4. Joshi, *Mātṛkās*, pp. 2-3.
5. Harper, *Saptamatṛikas*, p. 65.
6. *Ibid*, p. 164.
7. This issue is well addressed by Judo Rocher, "Gaṇeśa's Rise to Prominence in Sanskrit Literature", in *Gaṇeśa*, Brown, ed.; 69 - 83. Cf. Banerjea, *Hindu Iconography*, pp. 355-361 who comments on a certain confusion surrounding his imagery.
8. Joshi, *Mātṛkās*, Chapter 6; Harper, *Saptamatṛikas*, Chapter 5.
9. See N.P. Joshi, *Mātṛkās*, Figures. 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21, 23-26, 47.
10. See Figure 27 and description on p. 120 in Joshi, *Mātṛkās*. Joshi states that the female is seated in *godobhikāśana*, which he seems to equate with *bhadrāsana* (see his p. 1).
11. Harper, *Saptamatṛikas*, pp. 73-74.
12. See Joshi, *Mātṛkās*, pp. 100-102.
13. Here are examples ascertained from a quick survey of Joshi, *Mātṛkās*: Fig. Nos. 14, 18, 19, 27; Museum Nos. GMM 17.1357; 15.1024; 12.277. 17.1362; F 2, F3; F 34; F 39; F 38; F5; F 6; MJK Berlin I 5924; SML J 84; L.D. 1 and L.D. 12.
14. Cf. in Harper, *Saptamatṛikas*, the fifth century CE series from Badoh Patāri, the 5th century CE *Mātṛkās* from Besnagar, the mid-6th century CE series from Ellora.
15. See Sara Schastok, *The Samalaji Sculptures and 6th Century Art in Western India*, Leiden; 1985, Fig. 110 a.
16. Michael W. Meister, "Regional Variations in *Mātṛkā* Conventions", *Artibus Asiae*, 47 3/4; 1968; 234-235.
17. Although Meister notes that she does occur in a recessed niche on the doorway of the Jarai Maṭh (Barwasagar, District Jhansi U.P.; c. 900 CE), but she is not included in the depiction of the Saptamatṛkas carved on the same doorway.
18. Please see my paper "Śrī-Lakṣmī on an Early Gupta Gold Coin Type : Study of a Process Evolving from Northwestern Imagery". In Press. Vidya Dehejia Festschrift.

19. The first set of dates are those given by Michael Willis "Later Gupta History : Inscriptions, Coins and Historical Ideology", *JRAS* Series 3, 15, 2 (2005), 135; the second is given by Ellen Raven "The Seated Lady and the Gupta King", *South Asian Archaeology*, 2007, Vol. II. eds. Pierfrancesco Callieri and Luca Colliva; BAR International Series 2133, 2010; 264.
20. Ellen Raven, "Kushan Echoes and Indianization of Early Gupta Coin Design" in *Dal denarius al dinar, l' Oriente e la moneta romana; atti dell'incontro di studio*, Roma 16-18; 2006, 201-237; Ellen Raven, "The Seated Lady", 259-265. See my paper cited in fn. 18.
21. I must register that to date I have not found a Kuṣāṇa example of Lakṣmī on the lion stemming from the Northwest.
22. Jeannine Auboyer, *Le Trône et son Symbolisme dans L' Inde Ancienne*, Paris, 1949. See for example, Śiva seated on a throne underneath which rests a lion. Māsānagar, Mukṭādevī temple, pillar; pre-Kuṣāṇa phase. Pl. 30 in Doris Meth Srinivasan "Significance and Scope of Pre-Kushan Śaivite Iconography", *Discourses on Śiva*, ed. Michael W. Meister, Philadelphia, 1984, and page 37. Śrī-Lakṣmī on the reverse of a variation of the King and Queen Type (of CG I or S), can also sit on a lion while the back of the throne is visible. E.g. see A.S. Altekar, *Catalogue of the Gupta Gold Coins in the Bayana Hoard*, Bombay, 1954; p. 5, No. 6. For other examples of Śiva with the lion, see Doris Srinivasan, "God as Brahmanical Ascetic: A Colossal Kuṣāṇa Icon of the Mathura School". *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, N.S. Vol. X, 1978-1979; 12, fn. 18.
23. "Studies in the cult of the mother goddess in ancient India", *Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India*, No. 12, 1973 sec 11.
24. See my discussion of this relief in "Śrī-Lakṣmī in Early Art: Incorporating the Northwestern Evidence", *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 26.1; March 2010; 77-95.
25. Joanna G. Williams, *The Art of Gupta India. Empire and Province*, Princeton, 1982, pp. 73-75.
26. Srinivasan, "Śrī-Lakṣmī", Fig. 5-7.
27. Srinivasan, "Śrī-Lakṣmī", Fig. 10.
28. See J.F. Fleet, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, Reprint 1970, Varanasi, Nos. 40 and 41.
29. I acknowledge with thanks the observations of John Twilley, Conservation Scientist, who took a look at the photos of this panel and gave me his opinion on this damaged area.
30. Chandra, "Cult of the mother goddess", see especially pages 14 and 16.
31. See also Devendrakumar Rajaram Patil, *Cultural History from the Vāyu Purāṇa*, Delhi, 1946, p. 271, No. 146.
32. See Pradapadīrya Pal ed., "Ganeśa, the benevolent", *Marg* publications, Third impression 2010, Mumbai, Plates 11 and 12 on p. 10.
33. Lawrence Cohen, "The Wives of Gaṇeśa" in *Ganeś*, Brown, p. 122. However Banerjā (*Hindu Iconography*, pages 358 and 361) mentions a Lakṣmī-Gaṇeśa among the numerous iconographic varieties of Gaṇeśa in different texts. He refers to examples in T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Part I, Varanasi, 1971, Plates XI-XIV. These icons appear to be medieval Tantric images.
34. According to Bühnemann, one description appears in the *Mantramahodadhi* (16th century) and some other texts. Gaṇeśa (holding tusk, abhaya mudrā, discus and conch in his hands and a golden vessel in his trunk) is embraced by Lakṣmī who holds a lotus; see Gudrun Bühnemann, *The Iconography of Hindu*

- Tantric Deities*, Vol. 1, Groningen, 2000-2001, pp. 87-88 and also her 'Tantric Forms of Gaṇeśa' according to the Vidyānavatantra, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 44-46.
35. In GMM (Government Museum Mathura) F 26 she holds the lotus and cradles a baby lying in her lap.
36. The following are not illustrated in Joshi, *Mātrkāḥ*: GMM 57.4349; GMM F 35; GMM 72.16.
37. For a discussion on the dating and my view, see my review of *The Citrasūtra of the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, by Parul Dave Mukherjee, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts 2001; in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 124.3 (2004); 569-572.
38. I think this means she sits in *sukhāsana*.
39. Priyabala Shah, *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, Third *Khanda*, Vols. I and II, Baroda, 1961, see p. 154 in Vol. II.
40. See B.N. Sharma, "A Rare Image of Gajalakṣmi from Mathura in the National Museum", *Bulletin of Ancient Indian History and Archaeology*, Vol. 2, (1968), pp. 73-75; Plate VI.
41. Sharma also cites other, but later, images of the threesome.
42. See Domenico Faccenna, "Sculptors' Trial Pieces in Gandharan Art", *East and West*, 47.1-4 (1997), 67-93.
43. See Herbert Hartel, *Excavations at Sonkh, 2500 Years of a Town in Mathura District*, Berlin, 1993; p. 305 and Fig. 6a, p. 308.
44. Elizabeth Rosen Stone, *The Buddhist Art of Nāgārjunakonda*, Delhi, 1994, p. 69; Figure 187.
45. Two small and unimpressive stone plaques of Gaṇeśa alone appear first in the Gupta and post-Gupta levels of Sonkh (Mathura). See Herbert Hartel, *Excavations at Sonkh*, p. 249, Nos. 12 and 13; 12 and 13 Pls. 258 and 259.

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Fig. 124: Maṇḍapa-door-way, Venkataramana temple, Tāḍipatri



Fig. 125: The Kanawara Panel (Photo: by Vinay Kumar Gupta)



Fig. 126: Mother Goddess. Mathura. c. 4th century CE, State Museum Lucknow (after Fig. 15 in Katherine Anne Harper, *The Iconography of Saptamatrikas*, 1989)



Fig. 127: Abhiseka Lakshmi on the Lion, Bilsad, relief of Pillar 63, c. 420 CE (Photo: after Fig. 81 in J.G. Williams, *The Art of Gupta India. Empire and Province*, 1982)



Fig. 128: Probable Mother Goddess. Seal from the Northwest, c. Kuṣāṇa Period. (Aman ur Rahman Collection; Photograph by Aman ur Rahman; after Fig. 10 in D.M. Srinivasan, "Sri-Lakshmi in Early Art: Incorporating the North-western Evidence", *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1, March 2010)



Fig. 129: The Warrior Goddess. Mathura. c. 2nd century CE, Museum of Asian Art, Berlin.
(Photo: courtesy: Museum of Indian Art, Berlin).



Fig. 130: Gaṇeśa, Laksmī, Kubera, Gupta period. Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi