



## Śaiva Cult at Mathura

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Śiva is one of the two most prominent gods of Brahmanism since the epic period. “Śiva—a living God—transcends all categories. He is existent with all its paradoxes. Beyond existence, he is the indefinable absolute.”<sup>1</sup> In proto-historic art the Harappan seals depicting bull, the famous Pāśupata seal and the various *liṅga* and *Yoni* symbols found from various sites might be indicative of their association with some incipient Śaiva cult. Though from the Harappan times to early historical times, no substantial evidence has been found indicative of any continuity of Śaiva cult, still there are literary evidences datable to this period. It is only during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE that one finds evidence of Śiva worship in the sculptural art. The earliest representations of Śiva in Indian art have been found from Bhita situated near Allahabad along the River Yamuna and Gudimallam near Renigunta in Andhra Pradesh. Bhita *Pañcamukha liṅga*<sup>2</sup> is made of buff coloured sandstone and is dated to second century BCE based on inscriptional evidence. The central shaft of it has been carved in the shape of the two armed Īśāna whose straight strands of hair fall on his shoulders. In the left hand, bent at elbow, he holds a water pot and the right hand is raised, probably in *abhayamudrā*. He is wearing a *yajñopavīta*. Under his arms the four different heads could be noticed. Directly below the left arm is the *Aghora mukha*. Next to *Aghora mukha* shown clockwise, is the *mukha* representing Śiva as a *Yogin*. Next is the *Uṣṇīṣin* form and the fourth one is adorned with earrings, necklace and fillet around the hair, perhaps portraying the mild, feminine (*strī*) form of Śiva. In the Gudimallam Śiva-*liṅga*<sup>3</sup>, two-armed Śiva, carved in high relief before the *liṅga*, stands astride upon the shoulders of a creature belonging to aquatic realm. The God with *jaṭābhāra* hair holds a small horned animal in the lower right hand, a battle-axe and water pot in the left. His lower *membrum virile* is seen through the folds of drapery. Besides, on a unique Śuṅga terracotta of unknown provenience, C. Sivaramamurti has observed Śiva, Lord of Music and Dance, depicted.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Liṅga* Worship**

#### **The early phase (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE - circa 80 CE)**

In addition to the above representations Śaivite figures occur on the coins from 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE onward, most of these early examples are reported from Mathura and the nearby area. The earliest Śiva-*liṅga* from Mathura is the colossal, free standing *liṅga* from Kankali Tila (height above ground 38.2”), presently housed in Lucknow Museum (accession No. H.1).<sup>5</sup> It is realistically conceived and composed of

three parts; these are the dome, the shaft and the base portions set in the ground. This *liṅga* dates back to the *circa* 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE or early 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. It resembles another plain *liṅga* of the same period on an altar (*vedī*), under a tree depicted on a Mathura relief from Bhuteshwar (M.M. No. 52.3625). The dome part of both these *liṅgas* is thicker than the shaft and is quite naturalistic as was evident in the *liṅgas* found during the pre-Kushana time. Both these *liṅgas* have a simple band encircling the dome. Joshi has opined that this ornamentation might be related with '*Padmamālākṛtoṣṇīṣa*' mentioned in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*.<sup>6</sup> The Bhuteshwar *liṅga* is quite an important example depicting the ancient form of Śiva worship where Śiva-*liṅga* has been enshrined inside a square railing under an auspicious tree. Two winged *Yakṣas* or griffins are shown offering garlands to worship the almighty. An *Ekamukha-liṅga* from Mathura now preserved in Philadelphia Museum, is dated to *circa* 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE by Srinivasan.<sup>7</sup> According to her it shares a realism with the plain *liṅgas* mentioned above. An incised rim circles the dome just above the central fold, and above this point the human head appears. According to her, the treatment of the ringlets of hair in which a snake slithers, and the wide open eyes, also indicate this piece to be dated 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. According to Stella Kramrisch this image could be dated to 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.<sup>8</sup> Except for the peculiar hair style, this appears to be close to Srinivasan's observation. During and after late 1<sup>st</sup> century CE more Śiva-*liṅgas* came into existence. The earliest *Ekamukha-liṅga* (Bharatpur Museum, acc. No. 52) has been found from Aghapur, 5 km south of Bharatpur in Braj region.<sup>9</sup> The 5' high colossal realistic *liṅga*, depicts *Uṣṇīṣin mukha* on its shaft. An architectural fragment from Mathura (M.M. No. B 141) depicts an *Ekamukha-liṅga* with *Yogin's* head. The *liṅga*, installed upon a *vedī* platform under a tree, retains the realistic dome which is adorned with a patterned band. A free-standing colossus of Śiva *Ūrdhvaretas* was found at Rishikesh which is a certain product of Mathura school and possibly dates back to 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.<sup>10</sup> Srinivasan ascribes a Śuṅga date to this sculpture.<sup>11</sup> From Musanagar in Kanpur district, a pillar of 1<sup>st</sup> century CE was noticed by Joshi, on the top portion of which two Śiva reliefs have been represented.<sup>12</sup> In one of the reliefs two handed *Ūrdhvaretas* Śiva is shown standing with his right hand in *abhaya-mudrā* and the left hand kept at his waist holding a water pot. To his right, near his feet a lion is shown while to his left near the feet is seen dwarf *Gaṇa*. The other relief depicts him in *lalitāsana* with *Ūrdhvaretas*, having his right hand in *abhaya-mudrā* and the left hand at the waist holding a water pot. Beneath his seat there is depiction of lion. The most important aspect of this relief is the emergence of three figures behind the main Śiva figure. This relief appears to be the precursor of the Hathiya (described below) and Parel Viśvarūpa images. The broken lower portion of an image (M.M. No. 214) from Tokri Tila, Manth (Mat) datable to early Kushan period is also identified as Śiva by V.S. Agrawala.<sup>13</sup> His identification gets further support from Musanagar reliefs which also show a lion associated with Śiva. A relief from a site near Dampier Park, Mathura (M.M. No. 2661, Pl.9.1) shows a Śiva-*liṅga* on a pedestal, being worshipped by two men holding garlands and wearing coat and trousers (akin to the dress of northwestern region).<sup>14</sup> A flying celestial figure in the left corner is shown throwing flowers on the deity. There is a beautiful border of vine creeper with a peacock perched on it on the proper left side. The relief datable to 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, is a very important example of Śiva worship during ancient times. The top of the *liṅga* is not as realistic as in the other images.

Two of the *liṅgas* found during the explorations conducted by the author also seem to belong to the time bracket of 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. One of these (Pl.9.2) is a plain *liṅga* from Barbari village, District Bharatpur which is situated near Govardhan. It was under worship at a village shrine. The part of *liṅga*, now visible, is about 3' in height which appears quite realistic with a thicker dome portion

than the shaft. There is possibility of the presence of a *mukha* or some lotus type decoration below the domical portion, but it is not clear in the photograph. The second *liṅga* (Pl.9.3) found during the explorations at a shrine in Bhadar village, is unique Śiva-*liṅga* of *Ekamukha* variety. It is about 5' in length. The *liṅga* is divided into three portions comprising the square base, the cylindrical shaft and the domical top. These types of *liṅgas* have been observed during 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE but the most interesting and unique aspect of this image is that the *mukha* is carved at the domical section whereas in all other known examples of *Ekamukha Śiva-liṅgas*, the *mukha* is carved below the domical section. The *mukha* of this image is quite worn out and not exactly identifiable, though there is slight possibility of its being *Raudra* (*Aghora*) *mukha*. Another important aspect about its early date is the presence of ogre-shaped silhouette of the *frenulum praeputium* as was observed in the Aghapur image. This feature is considered as one of the important features in the evolution of the *liṅga* by Mitterwallner.<sup>15</sup>

### Second phase (Kushan and Gupta periods)

During the Kushan period, number of Śaivite images grew significantly. The plain *liṅgas* of this period are large and rather realistically sculpted, like the style set in the preceding ages. An encircling wreath or a circle of floral petals is used to mark the division of the top portion and the cylindrical shaft. Sometimes the circular wreath is shown in the centre of the top domical portion like in the Maholi example (M.M. No. 15.652). Examples of some of the plain *liṅgas* from Mathura are: M.M. Nos. 36.2661, 40.2885 and 52.3625. Jateshwar Śiva-*liṅga* under worship at Sahpau in Hathras District bears an inscription that dates it to the Kushan period. A very interesting Śiva-*liṅga* (Pl.9.4) is under worship at Chauma Shahpur village near Fatehpur Sikri in Agra district. The length of the *liṅga* is about 5'. At the visible base of its shaft, four different representations are noticed though small in dimension. The four figures, carved in four different directions appear to be a female head (?), a pot-bellied *Yakṣa* or *Gaṇa*, couchant lion and a water jar. A similar kind of Śiva-*liṅga* representation (Pl.9.5) in a much broken state was observed at Cheeta Khera site in Mathura district. The newly explored Śiva-*liṅga* from Daulatgarh (Pl.9.6) in District Bharatpur also dates back to this period of *circa* late 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. Pls.9.7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 are also plain *liṅgas* found from four different villages of Mathura namely Aiyera Khera, Palson and Umraya respectively and possibly assignable to the 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE.

There is unprecedented increase in the occurrence of *Mukha-liṅgas* showing a large variety during this period. All types of *Mukha-liṅgas* are observed during this period except for a *Trimukha-liṅga*. Some variety is introduced in those *Ekamukha-liṅgas* that can be comfortably dated between the first and third centuries CE (Lucknow Museum no. H 2; National Museum No. 66.225; Russek Collection No. 246 IMG; M.M. Nos. 1615; 5382; 2206, Doris Wiener Gallery S 342, Norton Simon Collection F 72.16, 6 SA).<sup>16</sup> Kreisel attributes several other Mathura *Ekamukha-liṅgas* to late Kushan period.<sup>17</sup> Unlike the shape of plain *liṅgas* of this period, *liṅgas* of *Ekamukha-liṅgas* are not naturalistic (except National Museum No. 66.225). The *mukha* of majority of these *liṅgas* shows the ascetic form (*Yogin* or *Tatpuruṣa* aspect of Śiva). The head is identified by the presence of ascetic locks (*jaṭājūṭa*); the strands are raised in a topknot and some strands may fall behind the ears. A moustache and a third eye is generally observed on these sculptures. Prior to the Gupta period the third eye more commonly is placed horizontally but some examples also show vertically placed third eye as evident in late Kushan period. One *Ekamukha-liṅga* representing the terrific (*Ghora*) aspect of Śiva is also known (Lucknow Museum No. H 2). Uptill the late Kushan period almost all *Ekamukha-liṅgas* are found from Braj region except a few.

The recently explored *Ekamukha-liṅgas* found from various sites in Braj region are assignable to Kushan period. The Pingri image (Pl.9.12) of about 4' length was traced outside the village which was under worship. The *mukha* represented on it is of *Yogin* with *jaṭājūṭa* and wears a necklace (possibly *Rudrākṣa mālā*). A small *Ekamukha-liṅga* was found at a mound lying outside Ranhera in Chhata *tehsil* of Mathura district (Pl.9.13). The *mukha* represented on it also appears to be of *Yogin* with *jaṭājūṭa* and wearing a necklace (*Rudrākṣa mālā*). It would have been used for household worship at the site. The Śiva-*liṅga* from Ladpur, District Hathras (Pl.9.14) is a very fine specimen of late Kushan art and is about 10" in length. The representation exhibits a contemplative mood and the pleasing facial attributes which are really remarkable. There is an inherent feeling of emancipation which the onlooker experiences while observing the image. The head represented appears to be of *Yogin* with a *jaṭājūṭa* and wears a *Rudrākṣa mālā*. At the famous site of Parkham village in District Mathura, an *Ekamukha-liṅga* (Pl.9.15) was found. It is about 5' in length and is fully covered with vermilion. It appears to be of Kushan period. The sculptural fragment (Pl.9.16) from village Karahri in District Mathura is part of an *Ekamukha-liṅga*. The 4" long *mukha* is tied with *liṅga* with the help of a rosette design as is found usually on Kushan head gears. The *Ekamukha Śiva-liṅga* from Umri village (Pl.9.17) is under worship. It is placed under a tree. The Kushan period *liṅga* of about 2' length is represented with *Yogin's* face having moustache and *jaṭājūṭa* hair. The miniature *Ekamukha Śiva-liṅga* from Ladpur in Hathras district (Pl.9.18) also belongs to the typical Kushan tradition with a *Yogin's* head with *jaṭājūṭa*. Another Kushan period *Ekamukha Śiva-liṅga* was observed near Prayag Ghat along Yamuna in the city of Mathura where it is still under worship. The *Ekamukha-liṅga* from Dirawali near Sahar in Mathura district (Pl.9.19) is made of buff sandstone and is of about 3' long. This *liṅga* is slightly different from the specimens mentioned above and might be of later period than 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. The *mukha* represented on it appears to be of *Yogin*. Another *Ekamukha Śiva-liṅga* from Husaini village near Kosi in Mathura district (Pl.9.20) is a typical example of Gupta period. Unlike the examples of previous period, the realistic nature of *liṅga* is wanting and the length of the phallus part has also been shortened. The *mukha* represented (possibly *Yogin*) starts just above the square base. The stone used is buff coloured sandstone and the features of the face are in conformity with the Gupta art tradition.

There is a solitary example of Kushan *Dvimukha-liṅga* found from Aring in Mathura (M.M. No. 14.462). The principal face represents a *Yogin*. The face on the reverse side is identified as a *Yakṣa* or a *Gaṇa*.<sup>18</sup> Joanna Williams suggests that the reverse face could be of female while relating the *liṅga* with *Ardhanārīśvara* concept.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Pañcamukha-liṅga***

Development of the iconography of *Pañcamukha-liṅgas* (with four heads generally and the top part of the *liṅgas* serving as fifth head) was possibly an innovation of Mathura artist. Of the total number of six *Pañcamukha-liṅgas* (or some may call *Caturmukha-liṅgas*), four are definitely products of Mathura region. One of them is a unique example from Dampier Park, Mathura (M.M. No. 516) which shows four *Ekamukha-liṅgas* joined together to form a *Pañcamukha-liṅga*, the fifth or the top face of which is missing. In case of other five *Pañcamukha-liṅgas*, not much difference is noticeable. One of the earliest *Pañcamukha-liṅgas* (except Bhita) is the one found from the vicinity of the Mahavidya Devi Temple in Mathura (National Museum No. 65. 172). The other four *Pañcamukha-liṅgas* are : Russek Collection No. 176 IMG from Mathura Region; Allahabad Museum No. 636 from Kaushambi; Bharat Kala Bhawan

No. 22755, possibly from Kaushambi and M.M. No. 72.23 from Mathura.<sup>20</sup> In all these sculptures the south facing head could be identified as the terrific aspect of Śiva, *Aghora*. The east facing head is generally *Yogin* with moustaches and *jaṭājūṭa*. Sometimes the east facing head represents the *Uṣṇīṣin* aspect and in that case the west facing head is of *Yogin*. The north facing head is either *Brahmacārin* or *Saumya*. The west facing head is generally *Uṣṇīṣin* except for the Russek Collection No. 176 IMG where it represents the *Ardhanārīśvara* aspect.<sup>21</sup>

The recently discovered *liṅga* (Pl. 21a-d) in an open shrine at village Mora is actually a *Pañcamukha Śiva-liṅga* (one of the most majestic *liṅga* images ever seen) datable to 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE and is comparable to other Kushan *Pañcamukha-liṅgas* in facial features. The similarity of the main face of Śiva in this image and that on *Ekamukha-liṅga* in Russek Collection (No. 246 IMG, Kreisel 1981, fig. 16) is striking. As the plain *liṅga* is the unmanifested form of the Supreme creative power, the *Mukha-liṅga* form is the manifested form of the same divine creative power. The plain shaft (*the rudrabhāga* or *pujābhāga*), which is still about 5' deep in the earth,<sup>22</sup> is the unmanifested form of the supreme cosmic creator who starts manifesting himself firstly as the topmost divine power of Īśāna, facing towards the east or heaven, not visible in this image. Then the four cardinal forms start manifesting. There is also a possibility of Īśāna not being represented and only the phallus top portion might have indicated the fifth face. The uniqueness of it lies in the representation of the four faces in four cardinal directions. In no such images, so much emphasis on one aspect of the Supreme Being is observed, as is the case with this *Mukha-liṅga*. The over-emphasis on the eastern face almost makes it disproportionate in its overall treatment. The eastern face is almost double the size of the other three cardinal faces. The eastern face of it is shown with moustaches and a third eye in horizontal position, appears to be a possibility, which helps in dating it to Kushan period. Its hair was arranged in braids probably tied as a top knot. Some peculiar marks on the left side of cheek could be observed which might be there to show the beard of the *Yogin*. The other faces are deteriorated which makes it impossible to exactly identify them. But as has been the norm in other *Pañcamukha-liṅgas* from Mathura region, these could be identified accordingly. The west facing head might be of *Uṣṇīṣin* as it is found facing opposite to the *Yogin* head. The south facing head is definitely *Aghora* head as the terrible features of it indicate. The north facing head might be *Saumya* form of Śiva or *Brahmacārin* form of Śiva as is generally observed. The delicate attractive features of it also indicate towards its identification as a *Saumya* form of Śiva.

Two new *Pañcamukha Śiva-liṅgas* were noticed at Aira and Bachhagaon villages in Mathura. The Bachhagaon *liṅga* (Pl.9.22) is quite unique as on the shaft of the *liṅga* four different faces of Śiva are depicted. Below it on the shaft eleven small faces of Śiva are depicted possibly indicating Ekādaśa Rudras. All the faces on it are having matted locks. The Aira *Śiva-liṅga* (Pl.9.23) also belongs to the same period as Bachhagaon *liṅga* but it is quite simple having only four faces represented at its shaft. Both these images might be dated to post-Gupta or early medieval period.

### Other possible *Liṅga* images

There are two very unique images of Kushan period which appear to be the *Śiva-liṅgas*. One was found at a shrine in Jikhangaon village, Mathura (Pl.9.24) and the other was seen at a shrine in Siwal village in Mathura (Pl.9.25). The Siwal image appears to be a part of a sculptural panel. During the post-Gupta period, a few *Śiva-liṅgas* took the shape of a (*stambha*) and the possible *liṅga* from Bharnakhurd (Pl.9.26) might be an example of it. A floral wreath encircles this *liṅga*. Two other fragments of Śiva-

*liṅga* belonging to about 1<sup>st</sup> century CE were seen at a shrine in village Bati in Mathura district (Pl.9.27). These two pieces appear to be the parts of the same *liṅga*.

### Śiva figures (in association with *Liṅgam*)

There are some other varieties of Śiva-*liṅgas* of Kushan period where the complete human form of Śiva is represented. Examples of this type are two *liṅgas* published by Coomarswamy (Fig. 68 and Fig. 80).<sup>23</sup> The *liṅgam* (Fig. 68, Coomarswamy) depicts four-handed Śiva image in front. The lower right hand of the deity is in *abhaya-mudrā* while the lower left is placed at his waist. The deity raises his two extra hands above his head as he puts a wreath upon his locks. Coomarswamy has wrongly identified the Fig. 80 as that of a Bodhisattva as it is a Śaiva sculpture in front of the *liṅga*.<sup>24</sup> This two handed deity, in his left hand, holds a *kamaṇḍalu* and his right hand is raised in *abhaya-mudrā*. A *Dvimukha-liṅga* with two adorsed bodies was found from Gamri village, Bharatpur district. On one side *Yakṣa* figure is identified while the figure on the reverse side is too mutilated to identify.<sup>25</sup> When the village was visited recently, people informed that this image no longer exists there. There are some other Śaivite images (Maheśamūrtis) from Mathura which are either related to *liṅga* or have some relation to the concept of *Pañcamukha-liṅga* iconography. In the figure of Russek Collection (No. 177)<sup>26</sup>, the deity stands in front of the *liṅga*. His iconography is quite similar to other Śiva images of the period except for three ancillary heads oriented in the directions. The Mathura Museum image (No. E 12)<sup>27</sup> has one Śaivite figure standing in front wearing a *mukuṭa*, typical of the Kushan period. The right forearm is lost but probably it was raised to the shoulder in *abhaya-mudrā*. The left arm possibly held a water pot at the waist. The lower portion is clad in a *dhotī*, a twice bound belt above it, and a scarf passing across the legs, falling on the left side. On the proper left side projects a head covered with matted locks. The figure on the back side is either of a *Yakṣa* or a *Gaṇa*. Perhaps there was a fourth head which is now lost. It is possible that the shaft was either surmounted by a fifth head on the top part of *liṅga*. There are two other late Kushan Maheśamūrtis (like the famous *Caturvyūha* image of Viṣṇu in Mathura Museum) in Mathura Museum (acc. Nos. 47.3259 and 14.382).<sup>28</sup> Kreisel has published another Maheśamūrti, now housed at National Museum (N.M. No. 66.24), which is datable to late Kushan period.<sup>29</sup> An exceptional late Kushan period *liṅga* with full figure of Ardhanārīśvara from Mathura is housed in Pritzker Collection, Chicago.<sup>30</sup>

### Śiva figures and Śiva heads

Besides these *liṅga* images, a number of Śaivite images in human form have been found from Mathura region. The iconographic features of many of these images originated from Mathura for the first time. Though, on the basis of coins and seals it appears that free images of Śiva would have been made in a good number but surprisingly such examples of Kushan and early Gupta period are few. Two early Śiva images, one from Rishikesh and the other (M.M. No. 214) have already been mentioned. The Musanagar sculpture would also fall in this category and is already mentioned earlier. There is an image in Russek Collection (No. 209) which is identified by Kreisel as Śiva dating back to Kṣatrapa period<sup>31</sup>, but it might actually date to late Kushan period. Mathura Museum Nos. 71.90, 3340, 67.411 are the other Śiva images in standing position datable to Kushan period. There are some other standing Śiva sculptures datable to Gupta period (e.g. M.M. Nos. 3764, 67.411, 71.23, Bharat Kala Bhawan No. 584 and Berlin Museum No. I 15).<sup>32</sup> A Late Kushan Śiva sculpture (Bharat Kala Bhawan No. 22208) is found in sitting posture. Most of these images show following features (where intact): *Ūrdhvaretas*, *kamaṇḍalu* in left hand,

*Rudrākṣa mālā* in right hand with *abhaya-mudrā*, *yajñopavīta*, a beaded necklace, bull as vehicle, *jaṭājūṭa* and a third eye. One Gupta period terracotta panel (M.M. No. 1629) is identifiable as Śiva by his *trinetra*. A sculptural relief (M.M. No. 1570) is a beautiful example of Śiva imagery. A very good example of a late Kushan Śiva head (acc. No. L 668) is now housed at National Museum, New Delhi. This sculpture from Mathura, has its hair arranged in snail shell curls. This type of hair of Śiva is called as *Kṛṣṇakuñcitamūrdhaja* in the *Mahābhārata*.<sup>33</sup> The head is diademed like the Greek kings and the diadem might be identified with *lalātapapṭa* of *Śilparatna*.<sup>34</sup> On the left side of the head *ardhacandra* is represented and it is the only example showing half moon in any north Indian Śaiva sculpture of that period. The third eye is shown in vertical position. All these features along with the delicate features indicate the impact of northwestern region's influence on this piece. Other Śiva heads from Mathura are: M.M. Nos. 454, 2734, 2085 (all belonging to late Kushan and early Gupta period). Kreisel mentions four other Śiva heads, which are housed in foreign museums and collections.<sup>35</sup> He also mentions six other Śiva heads with *Ugra* aspect (*Aghora-mukha*).<sup>36</sup> Some Rudra-mukhas are observed on the Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu images (M.M. 54.3827, Lucknow Museum No. J 683 C).<sup>37</sup> There is one *Ūrdhvaretas* Śiva image in terracotta of late Kushan period from Mathura.<sup>38</sup> One form of Śiva of which the only the head remains (Bharat Kala Bhawan No. 21490) is made up of Mathura red sandstone. This image is identified as Virupākṣa with hair on the face and terrifying features.<sup>39</sup> Another head from Mathura (Lucknow Museum No. H 35) could also be identified as Virupākṣa, which has been identified by Kreisel as Mahākāla.<sup>40</sup>

### Umā-Maheśvara or *Umāsahita Mūrti*

Umā-Maheśvara sculptures were quite popular during Kushan and Gupta periods. In such type of sculptures (M.M. Nos. 11.2106, 34.2495) Śiva and Pārvatī are shown standing side by side and Śiva is shown as *Ūrdhvaretas*.<sup>41</sup> The bull Nandī is shown with a hump and stands behind. A fine example of Śiva-Pārvatī from Mathura is published by Czuma which belongs to *circa* 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE and is a part of Russek Collection, Zurich (No. 545 IMKG).<sup>42</sup> Another such image of early Gupta period carved on both sides is now housed in Mathura Museum (No. 2084).<sup>43</sup> Other Umā-Maheśvara sculptures belonging to Kushan and Gupta periods are: M.M. Nos. G 52, 67.191; Berlin Museum for Indian Art No. I 3210 and National Museum No. 72.72.<sup>44</sup> During the medieval period Umā-Maheśvara *mūrti* was one of the most popular themes and a number of such images have been found from Mathura. Many broken Umā-Maheśvara sculptures were observed during the course of explorations. These were found from Bachhagaon, Nandghat and Lohban in District Mathura, Kanawara, Jaghina, Akata in District Bharatpur, Sandhan and Patsal in District Agra. Umā-Maheśvara *mūrti* from Sandhan Khera (Pl.9.28) seems to be of late Gupta period. A number of other temple remains of Gupta and late Gupta periods were observed at that site. In this broken sculpture, the four-handed Śiva is shown sitting with Pārvatī in *ālīṅgana-mudrā*. The left natural hand of Śiva, who is shown sitting to the right of Pārvatī, rests on the left shoulder of Pārvatī. Lord Śiva is shown wearing a *jaṭāmukuṭa*. Both the deities are shown wearing heavy *kuṇḍalas* in both the ears. In the sculptural relief from Lohvan (Pl.9.29) both the deities are shown sitting over Nandin in *ālīṅgana-mudrā*. In fact Pārvatī is shown sitting on the lap of Śiva. The sculpture from Kanawara (Pl.9.30) near Kaman is quite similar to Lohvan image and might be dated slightly earlier, about 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century CE. In this depiction small figure in the centre of the sculpture, might be a *Gaṇa* but its position is quite interesting. Pārvatī is shown possibly holding a mirror in her left hand. An interesting episode is depicted in this image as Lord

Śiva is shown putting a small ring in the right hand finger of Pārvatī; the hand of Lord Śiva is shown underneath the hand of Umā. The image from Akata (Pl.9.31) near Kaman represents Śiva and Pārvatī in standing pose side by side which is slightly different from the previous three sculptures. It was observed that in the iconography of Śiva-Pārvatī sculptures until Gupta period, the majority of such sculptures are in standing pose while majority of the medieval sculptures are in sitting pose. At the base, their two sons, Skanda riding on a peacock (near Pārvatī) and Gaṇeśa (near Śiva or to the right of Skanda) are shown along with the face of Nandī. Two attendants are shown standing on either side of Umā-Maheśvara panel.

### Other important forms of Śiva

#### Ardhanārīśvara

It is one of the most important depictions of Śaivite imagery and is highly philosophical in its nature. Mathura region has provided a number of such images which are some of the earliest images of this type, so far known. The earliest Ardhanārīśvara image so far known is housed in Mathura Museum (No. 2520). In this sculptural relief four deities Ardhanārīśvara, Viṣṇu, Gaṇalakṣmī and possibly Kārttikeya are shown standing in a row. Ardhanārīśvara is shown two-handed without any attribute. The right side is of a man and the left is that of a female. Both the genital organs—the *liṅga* and *yoni* are shown together. Other Ardhanārīśvara images from Braj region are: Mathura Museum Nos. 800, 874, 772, 362, Berlin Museum of Indian Art No. I 10051 and Victoria and Albert Museum No. I.M. 5-1931.<sup>45</sup>

#### Rāvaṇānugrahamūrti

There is a solitary example of this type in Mathura Museum (No. 2577) which dates back to the Gupta period and is the earliest example of this type known in India. In this sculpture the proud Rāvaṇa is shown lifting the mount Kailāśa in which Śiva and Pārvatī are sitting. Pārvatī is shown terrified because of it but the Lord of Lords shows no anxiety and just presses the mountain with his toe to teach Rāvaṇa a lesson.

#### Image of Harihara

The composite form of Śiva and Viṣṇu is known as Harihara form in which Viṣṇu is shown on the left side (*vāmāṅga*) of Lord Śiva like the female aspect is shown in Ardhanārīśvara images. No complete image of Harihara form has been reported from Mathura region but there are four heads available, dating back to late Kushan and Gupta periods. It shows that iconography of this form was also developed at Mathura. The examples of Harihara images from Mathura are: Mathura Museum Nos. 1336, 1333, 2510 and Bharat Kala Bhawan No. 4849.

#### Lakulīśa

At Kāyāvarohaṇa *tīrtha* (modern Karwan) in Kathiawad, an *Āchārya* named Lakulīśa had established Pāśupata sect before 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.<sup>46</sup> During the course of time this sect became so popular that Lakulīśa became one of the representations of Śiva.<sup>47</sup> The most identifying feature of Lakulīśa image is its short stature and *tunḍila* body, *Ūrdhva-liṅga* and a stick held in one of the hands (*daṇḍa*). The representation of Lakulīśa on the famous Nand Śiva-*liṅga* has to be accepted as the earliest representation of this deity in art and it dates back to early Kushan period.<sup>48</sup> In this image Lakulīśa is shown seated wearing an *uṣṇīṣa*.

The famous Gupta period pillar inscription from Chandul – Mandul Bagichi at Rangeswar Temple in Mathura clearly establishes the popularity of this sect in the religious life of ancient Mathura. D.R. Bhandarkar while editing the Mathura Śaiva inscription of the time of Candragupta II, showed that a powerful branch of the Pāśupata Śaivas adhering to the tenets of teacher Lakulīśa was established at Mathura by one of his four disciples, Kuśika, in the beginning of 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.<sup>49</sup> The earliest inscription of the reign of Candragupta II so far known records the installation of two Śiva-*lingas* named Upamiteśvara and Kapileśvara, by one Ārya Uditācārya who was tenth (in apostolic succession) from Bhagavat Kuśika and fourth from Bhagavat Parāśara, and who was a *prasiṣya* of Bhagavat Upamitra, and a *śiṣya* of Bhagavat Kapila, in the *Gurvāyatana*, to commemorate his two immediate predecessors, Kapila and Upamitra.<sup>50</sup> This pillar (M.M. No. 1931) shows the representation of god Lakulīśa holding a *daṇḍa* and his trident. There are two other representations of Lakulīśa from Mathura (M.M. No. 3211 and Lucknow Museum No. J 550). In both these representations of Gupta period, Lakulīśa is shown seated in a teaching posture.

### Other New Discoveries

Two human busts of Gupta (or late Gupta) period appear to be of Lord Śiva. The bust from Sonkh Khera in District Mathura (Pl.9.32) cemented in the wall of a village shrine, seems to be of Śiva because of its head-gear. This type of crown was not used for Viṣṇu images and the possibility of it being some other deity, other than Śiva is very limited. The broken figure from Sandhan Khera in District Agra (Pl.9.33) has a slightly short and *tunḍila* body. There are two possibilities of its identification either as a *Yakṣa* or Śiva. It appears that this image represented the *Yakṣa* aspect of Lord Śiva. It must be kept in mind that in the same heap of sculptures many other Śaivite images of Gupta period were observed.

The lower portions of two images (Pls.9.34 and 35) belong to early medieval period and are from two Śaivite shrines at villages Akata in District Bharatpur and Bachhagaon in District Mathura. There might have been one or more Śiva temples at both the sites but were perhaps destroyed. The sculpture from Akata (Pl.9.34) cemented in a temple wall,<sup>51</sup> possibly belongs to *Samhāramūrti* of Śiva in which the left leg of Śiva is in raised position and is kept upon the demon, possibly Andhakāsura. The sculpture from Bachhagaon (Pl.9.35) is almost similar in iconographic features but its orientation is opposite to Akata image. In this sculpture the right leg of Śiva is raised over the demon. The story of *Andhakāsuravadha* is as follows<sup>52</sup> - the demon Andhaka was having lustful desires towards the wife of Lord Śiva and hence a fight broke out between them. During the fight to counter the ever increasing number of the demons from his blood drops, Śiva created Chāmuṇḍā and *Sapta-Mātṛkās* to drink the blood. Even then, Śiva was not able to win the battle and then he sought the help of Viṣṇu. On Viṣṇu's suggestion, Śiva won the battle and was just about to kill the demon that he begged for pardon and praised Śiva. Lord Śiva being the most benevolent of all, forgave the demon and made him the chief commander of his *Gaṇas* and named him Bhṛṅgīrṣi. In the visible portion of these sculptures, demon Andhakāsura is visible lying under the feet of the Lord and begging for pardon.

The two other broken sculptures from Bachhagaon and Lathakuri village in Mathura District (Pls.9.36 and 37 respectively) belong to early medieval period and also appear to be *Samhāramūrtis* of Śiva. The sculpture from Bachhagaon (Pl.9.36) could be identified as *Andhakāsuravadhamūrti* which was an important and popular Śaiva theme in northern India. In this sculpture to the right of Śiva, goddess Chāmuṇḍā is

represented as per the above mentioned story. For the sculpture from Lathakuri (Pl.9.37) no definite identification seems possible at this stage.

### **Aṣṭamūrti/Viśvarūpa Śiva from Hathiya (Pl.9.38)**

It is one of the most striking new finds from the explorations in Braj region. It is only the second specimen of its kind, first being the famous Parel Viśvarūpa image. Till now, Parel image was considered to be the only exceptional image of its kind, but this new image would add some new dimension to the already existing knowledge. Hathiya is an ancient town (presently a village) situated about 3 km south of Barsana in District Mathura near the Rajasthan border. The image is in worship at the Chamar (*devī*) Temple in the town and is affixed with cement and mortar into the wall of the temple. Many other important sculptures were observed in that temple but most of them were in much broken condition because that town had to suffer a lot of devastation at the hands of attackers in the past. Perhaps this was the reason which forced the people of the town to place these sculptures (in spite of being mutilated) in a temple of *devī* and thus preventing them from being stolen as is common in this part of the country.

This image is about 1.5 m in height (the visible portion) and when complete might have been much larger. The dimension of this image appears to be comparatively smaller than Parel image (about 3.5 m in height) and unfortunately this image is in very poor state because of its being in regular worship unlike the Parel image which was unearthed in 1931 in a sound condition.<sup>53</sup> Definitely the Hathiya image is not in its original condition but appears to be in continuous worship for a very long period. About the Parel image Maxwell has written “at about the time the Shamlaji (Viṣṇu Viśvarūpa from Gujarat) image was being formulated, or slightly later, a Śaiva iconographical development of equal originality though of less complexity was commenced some 550 kilometers to the south (at the suburb of Parel in Bombay)”.<sup>54</sup> Now this view needs some rectification because the Hathiya image in spite of its being so mutilated appears to be earlier than Parel image and in this way should be the image following which Parel image was formulated. It’s no surprise as Mathura is the actual originating place for the iconography of most of the Indian gods and goddesses. But this image highlights the point that even during the late Gupta period (about 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century CE) Mathura was one of the most important art centres where new iconographic forms were being invented, especially this image which is definitely one of the most complex images found in India which still needs a satisfactory explanation of its actual nature and meaning. The Hathiya image is too damaged for a good analysis but it appears that this image is slightly different from the image at Parel. The lower half of the image is possibly missing. What is visible in this image and as compared to the Parel image, it becomes clear that three central emanations are visible, carved in a vertical axis like the Parel image but the style of their representations is different. While in the Parel image only the lowermost central figure is shown in full length with the two central figures above it, shown only above their waist, in the Hathiya image the lowermost central figure is too broken while the second central figure appears to be shown up to its ankles. While in the Parel image, two emanations on either side are shown coming out from the lowermost central figure and the second central figure, in the Hathiya image in the visible section four emanations (two on either side) appear to be coming out of the second central figure. Whether from the central lowermost figure in the Hathiya image any emanations were coming out or not, is not clear. But there is slight possibility that to the right of the lowermost central figure one figure is shown coming out which is different from the Parel image. While in case of the Parel image the central topmost figure has ten hands, in the Hathiya image there seems no such possibility. In the Hathiya image the position of side

figures, their hair style and the position of their hands appear to be slight different from the Parel image. In Parel image all the figures hold a *kamaṇḍalu*, in their left hand and the right hand is in *vitarka* or *vyākhyāna-mudrā* with the position of hands being slight altered. The topmost central figure has ten hands with the usual attributes in the lower two hands as *kamaṇḍalu* and *vitarka-mudrā*. In the Hathiya image these attributes are not identifiable. The treatment of head and their head dresses in Hathiya figure is slightly different from Parel image. There is a possibility that three central figures in a vertical axis might be having three faces unlike the Parel image.

About the Parel image Kraṇrīsch<sup>55</sup> states that “The image from Parel is based on the meaning of the *līṅga*, or Yakṣa and *yoga* power. It visualizes Śiva not with the cosmic suggestiveness of the Naṭarāja image. This shows Śiva in his everlasting activity beheld from without. The image from Parel shows Śiva realized from within his state of power”. According to Sivaramamurti<sup>56</sup>, the Parel image is Śiva *saptasvaramaya*, who is composed of the Seven (Musical) Notes but this identification does not appear to be correct as none of these figures carry any musical instrument except for the figures at the lower half of the image. Besides, this image seems to convey some very complex exceptional cosmological doctrine of Śiva, rather than just denoting the *sapta svaras*. D.C. Bhattacharya bases his explanation of the formulation of this image upon *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 22, 23 and 33, and upon Banerjea’s formulation of Śuddha-Śaivism or Āgamanta-Śaivism.<sup>57</sup> Maxwell<sup>58</sup> has tried to modify the view of Bhattacharya and suggested quoting references from *Līṅga Purāṇa* and *Viṣṇudharmottara* which speak of separate manifestations of Śiva in four consecutive *kalpas*, followed by his universal form in a fifth *kalpa*. Maxwell identifies the topmost central image as the most important of all the figures and considers it the explicit iconographic form of *līṅga* in the form of controller of time Kālarudra and then identifies the second central figure as one of his *kalpa* sons-Aghora, Tatpuruṣa, Vāmadeva or Sadyojāta. And below him the lowermost central figure with feet planted firmly on earth is identified as one of the sons of either of *kalpa* sons (e.g. Lakulīśa), a *mahāyuga*- incarnation, grandson of Kālarudra Viśvarūpa. Srinivasan does not agree with the identification of central topmost figure as Kālarudra but the Parel image has been identified as Maheśa Aṣṭamūrti by her in which she identifies seven manifested forms along with the eighth unmanifested natural form as the eightfold nature of Śiva Aṣṭamūrti.<sup>59</sup>

For the exact identification of the Hathiya image more exhaustive studies are required but roughly it can be assumed to be quite similar to the Parel image and hence can be identified with the eightfold nature of Śiva as Śiva (Maheśa) Aṣṭamūrti, the concept of which was developed in the region of Braj and was quite popular during the Kushan and the Gupta periods.

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