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Archæology and Vaishnava Tradition

BY

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# ARCHÆOLOGY AND VAISHNAVA TRADITION.



IN one sense the science of archæology may be said to owe its advancement to a desire to test the authenticity of the sacred traditions. The results of explorations in Bible lands have partially justified expectations, and archæology has proved a useful mediator between the Holy Writ and the natural sciences. Texts unearthed from the mounds of the Euphrates valley have revealed the fact that even the Biblical stories of the creation and the deluge are not the deliberate inventions of priests but are based on hoary traditions not without rational basis. Archæology and religion.

In India also archæological researches have afforded proofs of the antiquity and authenticity of no inconsiderable number of Indian sacred traditions. The Aśoka edicts on the columns of Rumindei and Nigliva and the labelled sculptures on the Bharhut rail prove the antiquity of the legends and traditions relating to Śākyamuni Buddha and his six predecessors. The Brāhmī inscriptions on Jaina sculptures found at Mathurā demonstrate the authenticity of many of the Jaina traditions recorded in the Kalpasūtra of Bhadrabāhu.<sup>1</sup> As compared with these two heterodox creeds the legends and traditions of other Indian sectaries have received very little light from archæological discoveries. Yet monuments that illustrate the history of Vaishṇavism before the rise of Christianity are not wanting. I propose in this memoir to make an attempt to reconstruct the early history of Vaishṇavism on the basis of these monumental records, for, in the words of Foucher, “upon this immutable foundation we can construct inferences more rigorous than upon the moving sand of texts.”

## I.

The earliest known Vaishṇava monument is the inscribed column at Besnagar near Bhilsa in Central India (Gwalior State). In the votive inscription on this column we are told, “This Garuḍa column (*Garuḍadhvajē*) of Vāsudēva the god Besnagar Garuda pillar inscriptions.

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<sup>1</sup> Bühler in *Vienna Oriental Journal*, Vol. I, pp. 165-180; Vol. II, pp. 141-146; Vol. III, pp. 233-240; Vol. IV, pp. 313-331.

of gods (*dēvadēva*) was erected here by Heliodorus, a Bhāgavata, the son of Dion, and an inhabitant of Taxila, who came as Greek ambassador from Mahārāja Antialkidas to King Kāsiputra Bhāgabhadra." Antialkidas is supposed to be one of the earlier members of the line of Eucratides, who came to the throne of Bactria about 171 B.C. after ousting Demetrius.<sup>1</sup> The archaic type of Brāhmī characters used in the inscription of Heliodorus indicates that it was probably engraved some time in the first half of the second century B. C.

A fragment of the shaft of another octagonal Garuḍa column evidently from Besnagar found in a narrow street of Bhilsa and now preserved in the Besnagar Museum bears a Brāhmī inscription in one line on seven out of its eight sides. The occurrence of angular *gas* side by side with round *gas* and of angular *tas* shows that this record must be assigned to about the close of the second century B.C. The inscription, which has been deciphered by Venis with a good deal of skill, reads as follows:—

- (1) Gotamaputēna (2) bhāgavate[na]  
 (3) ..... (4) [*Bhagava*]to prāsā[do]ta-  
 (5) masa Garuḍadhvaja[kārito] (6) [dvā]dasa-vas-ābhi-  
 site (7) . . . Bhāgavate ma<sup>2</sup>.

Professor Bhandarkar takes *bhāgavatēna* on the second side as the name of the donor.<sup>3</sup> The name of the donor was evidently given on the third side where no trace of it now remains, and Venis appears to be correct in taking *bhāgavatēna* as an adjective qualifying that name.<sup>4</sup> So the epigraph may be thus translated:—

"This Garuḍa column of the excellent temple of the Bhagavat was erected by Gautamī-putra (Gautamī's son)....., a Bhāgavata (Vaishṇava), in the twelfth year after the installation of Mahārāja Bhāgavata."

Professor Bhandarkar no doubt rightly identifies Mahārāja Bhāgavata of this record with the Śuṅga king of the same name, "the last but one of the Śuṅga family mentioned in the Purāṇas," who may be supposed to have been reigning about 100 B.C.

In the *Mahābhārata* (I, 33.16-17) we are told that Garuḍa, in return for boons granted to him by Viṣṇu, himself offered a boon to Viṣṇu; so Viṣṇu asked Garuḍa to be his vehicle and made him the emblem of his flag saying, "Thou shalt stay above me."<sup>5</sup> So the mention of Garuḍadhvaja in connection with Vāsudēva in the inscription of Heliodorus shows that, when Heliodorus erected his column, the identification of Vāsudēva with Viṣṇu as conceived in the epic was an accomplished fact.

The designation of Vāsudēva as "dēvadēva" in the inscription of Heliodorus also enables us to explain an obscure passage of the *Mahābhāshya* of Patañjali.

Vāsudēva and  
Arjuna in Pāṇini.

<sup>1</sup> Rapson, *Ancient India*, Cambridge, 1914, pp. 124 and 134. According to Mr. V. A. Smith Antialkidas was one of the princelings of the Indian borderland whom Eucratides subdued (*E. H. I.*, 3rd Ed., p. 324).

<sup>2</sup> The inscription may be better read from the stone. The impression reproduced in Plate Ia was supplied by Mr. Garde, Superintendent of Archæology, Gwalior State.

<sup>3</sup> *A. S. R.*, 1913-14, Part II, p. 190.

<sup>4</sup> *J. B. B. R. A. S.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 144.

<sup>5</sup> Fausboll's *Indian Mythology according to the Mahābhārata in outline*, London, 1902, p. 80.

Pāṇini in IV. 3. 98 states that, "The affix *vun* is added to the names Vāsudēva and Arjuna in the sense of 'this is his object of devotion (*bhakti*)'". Thus Vāsudēva + *vun* = Vāsudēvaka, means "a devotee of Vāsudēva;" and Arjuna + *vun* = Arjunaka, means "a devotee of Arjuna." But in the next following aphorism Pāṇini says that the affix *vuñ* (not *vun*) is added in the same sense to words denoting *gotra* and Kshatriya. While commenting on IV. 3. 98 Patañjali raises the question, why provide for the addition of the affix *vun* after Vāsudēva while, as denoting a famous Kshatriya, the addition of *vuñ* is provided for in the next sūtra and the addition of either *vun* or *vuñ* to Vāsudēva does not make any difference in form or sound. To this Patañjali replies, "*athavā naiśhā kshatriyākhyā samjñaiśhā tatrabhavataḥ*," "Or it (Vāsudēva) is not the name of a Kshatriya. It is the designation of the *tatrabhavat*." The meaning of the term *tatrabhavat* here has been the subject of a good deal of controversy. Kielhorn writes, "In either case the word *tatrabhavataḥ*, by which *samjñaiśhā* is followed, does not in the least suggest that the personage denoted by the proper name is a divine being; the word indeed conveys an honorific sense, but would be equally applicable to a human being."<sup>1</sup> Two other eminent authorities, Professor Berriedale Keith<sup>2</sup> and Sir R. G. Bhandarkar<sup>3</sup>, are of opinion that *tatrabhavat* in this case, as in Patañjali's commentary on Pāṇini IV. 2. 25, refers to a divine being. Later Indian commentators, like the authors of the Kāśikā, understand Pāṇini to denote a divine being by Vāsudēva (*samjñaiśhā dēvatāviśēshasya*) in IV. 3. 98. Patañjali flourished in the middle of the second century B.C. just about the time when our Greek Vaishṇava Heliodorus erected the Garuḍa pillar at Vidiśā. As Vāsudēva is called *dēvadēva* in this inscription, we may safely conclude that Patañjali by saying that Vāsudēva is the name of *tatrabhavat*, 'the adorable one,' and not of a Kshatriya, refers to this *dēvadēva* 'god of gods,' who had Garuḍa as the emblem on his banner.

If Vāsudēva in Pāṇini's aphorism IV. 3. 98 is a god (*dēvatāviśēsha*) and not a Kshatriya, it follows that the other person named in the sūtra, Arjuna, is also a deity and not a Kshatriya. According to Pāṇini's sūtra II. 2. 34, the name Arjuna as consisting of fewer vowels than the name Vāsudēva ought to have been placed first (in sūtra IV. 3. 98) and we should have the compound *Arjuna-Vāsudēvābhyām* instead of *Vāsudēv-Ārjunābhyām*. The non-observance of this general rule by Pāṇini in IV. 3. 98 is explained by a *vārttika* (4) of Kātyāyana which lays down that the name of the (more) venerable person should be placed first in a co-ordinative compound irrespective of the quantity of vowels.<sup>4</sup> So, as the more venerable of the two, Vāsudēva is named first and Arjuna afterwards. A divine being called Nara is often mentioned with Vishṇu or Nārāyaṇa in the *Mahābhārata*. In the story of the churning of the ocean (Book I) Vishṇu takes away the nectar from the mighty Dānavas accompanied by Nara. In the dreadful battle between the gods and the Asuras that follows, Nārāyaṇa enters the field

<sup>1</sup> *J. R. A. S.*, 1908, p. 503.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 847-848.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1910, pp. 168-170.

<sup>4</sup> *Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya* edited by Kielhorn, Vol. I, p. 436.

with Nara who is armed with a heavenly bow. "Then the divine Nara coming to that dreadful conflict of the Asuras and Gaṇas (the followers of Rudra), reducing to dust the rocks (hurled by the Dānavas) by means of his gold-headed arrows, covered the heavens with the dust." When, after defeating the Asuras, the gods returned to heaven, they made over the vessel of nectar to Nara for careful keeping (*rakshitum*).<sup>1</sup> In Book III, chapters 145 and 156 of the epic, Nara and Nārāyaṇa are represented as two divine sages in whose hermitage at Vadari the five sons of Pāṇḍu lived for some time during their exile. In another chapter (41) of the same book of the epic Arjuna is told by Yama, "Thou wert in thy former life a Rishi of immeasurable soul, known as Nara of great might. At the command, O child, of Brahmā, thou hast been born among men." So the association of Arjuna with Vāsudēva in Pāṇini's *sūtra* shows that Vāsudēva and Arjuna were not only recognised as gods at the time of Pāṇini, but also as a divine pair as described in the *Mahābhārata*. As it is admitted that Pāṇini was familiar with a Pāṇḍu epic called *Mahābhārata*, it may be presumed that Vāsudēva and Arjuna already figured as a divine pair in the *Mahābhārata* of the time of Pāṇini.

Antiquity of the worship of the image of Vishnu. Indian Herakles and Krishna-Vishnu.

The Garuḍa pillars of Besnagar not only indicate that Vāsudēva was already identified with Vishṇu as conceived in the *Mahābhārata*, but they also bear witness to the existence of one if not two temples of Vishṇu at Vidiśā at the time of their erection. In the inscription on the fragment of our second pillar it is distinctly called "the Garuḍadhvaja of the excellent temple (*prāsādotama*) of the Bhagavat (Vishṇu)." A temple of Vishṇu must have contained an image or some form of concrete representation of Vishṇu within it. The Garuḍa columns were of course surmounted by images of Garuḍa. The making of the image of Garuḍa, the *vāhana* or carrier of Vishṇu, presupposes the making of the image of Vishṇu.

The inscription on the Besnagar column of Heliodorus not only affords presumptive evidence of the prevalence of the worship of the image of Vishṇu in the early Śuṅga period, but lends indirect support to the statement of Q. Curtius "that an image of Herakles was carried in front of the army of Porus as he advanced against Alexander."<sup>2</sup> The Indian Herakles has been identified by some scholars with Kṛishṇa and by others with Śiva. The reasons for the latter view are thus stated by Mr. Kennedy:—

"The identification of the Indian Herakles is fairly easy. The Greek Herakles figures on the Indo-Scythic coins of Kadphises I, and is replaced by the Indian Śiva on coins of Kadphises II under the name of Oesho, and with various attributes including the club, Śiva figures on coins of Kanishka, Huvishka and Vāsudēva. Mr. D. R. Bhandarkar has shown that the incarnation of Śiva as Lakuliśa, "the Lord who bears the club," goes back to this period. It is held that the name of the people called Sibi in Sanskrit—the Sibai of the Greek writers, who mention them as descendants of the followers of Herakles—marks them as special worshippers of Śiva, the letters *b* and *v* being constantly interchanged. Lastly,

<sup>1</sup> Fausboll, *Indian Mythology* pp. 9-27.

<sup>2</sup> Cunningham's *Coins of Ancient India*, p. vii.

Herakles' daughter, Pandaia, recalls the kingdom of Pandion or Pāṇḍya, a famous kingdom of Southern India, while we infer from the 'Periplus' that Kumārī was especially worshipped at Cape Comorin. Now, the Dravidians of this region are still noted for their devotion to Śiva, and Kumārī is at once his Śakti, his daughter and his wife."<sup>1</sup>

The occurrence of the figure of the Greek Herakles on the coins of Kadphises I and of the Indian Śiva on the coins of Kadphises II can hardly be taken seriously as an argument in favour of the identification of Herakles with Śiva. But the other arguments of Mr. Kennedy deserve detailed examination.

(1) Mr. Kennedy's statement, "under the name Oesho, and with various attributes including the club, Śiva figures on coins of Kanishka, Huvishka and Vāsudēva," is rather misleading. The figure of Śiva, either two-armed or four-armed, is one of the most common features on the reverse of the coins of these Kushān kings. But Śiva with club is very rare and exceptional. Mr. Vincent A. Smith in his *Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta*, gives an account of a few specimens of a type of copper coin of Kanishka with two-armed Oesho (Śiva) grasping a spear or a staff in the right hand and with left hand resting on a club.<sup>2</sup> But the absence of the trident, a necessary attribute of Śiva, renders this identification very doubtful. Mr. Whitehead describes one copper coin of Kanishka on the reverse of which "Śiva is without trident, and the name Oesho on right reads upwards."<sup>3</sup> Śiva with club is found on a type of gold coin of Huvishka, of which two specimens are known. Here the deity is figured three-faced and four-armed, standing, facing, holding in two right hands thunderbolt (or drum) and water-vessel and in two left hands trident and club.<sup>4</sup> But as the club is not associated with other types of Śiva figured on the ancient coins whether two-armed or four-armed, it cannot be recognised as a necessary attribute of Śiva as conceived in the first and the second centuries B.C., but only an abnormal feature. The earliest representations of Śiva are probably found on some of the coins of the Indo-Parthian king Gondophares where the god is figured as holding a trident in one hand while the other hand is either empty or holds a palm.<sup>5</sup> One of Gondophares's titles on his coin legends, *dēvavrata*, 'devoted to gods,' indicates that he had adopted the Indian worship of the *devus* as distinguished from the Iranian worship of the Ahuras. On the coins of the Kushan king Kadphises II Śiva is figured as two-armed and invariably holding a trident in the right hand, in one type combined with a battle-axe, and the left hand is either empty or holds a gourd. In the *Mahābhārata* the dreadful spear called Pāśupata, the battle-axe (*paraśu*), the bow called Piṇāka and the trident (*triśūla*) are named as the weapons of Śiva.<sup>6</sup> Varāhamihira in the *Vṛihatsamhitā* (LVII,

<sup>1</sup> *J. R. A. S.*, 1907, pp. 967-968.

<sup>2</sup> V. A. Smith's *Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta*, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> Whitehead's *Catalogue of Coins in the Panjab Museum*, Vol. I, p. 192.

<sup>4</sup> *Numismatic Chronicles*, 1892, p. 118; Smith's *Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta*, p. 78.

<sup>5</sup> Whitehead's *Catalogue of Coins in the Panjab Museum, Lahore*, Vol. I, p. 151, *J. R. A. S.*, 1903, pp. 285-286.

<sup>6</sup> Fausboll's *Indian Mythology*, pp. 150-151.

43) names the trident and the Piṅāka as the weapons of Śiva and in the Matsya Purāṇa (CCLXI, 23) only the trident is named. In the *Mahābhārata* and in all other texts *gadā* or club is mentioned as an attribute, not of Śiva, but of Viṣṇu. Śiva is *śūlin*, 'the holder of the trident,' and *piṅākin*, 'the holder of the bow piṅāka,' while Viṣṇu is *śaṅkha-chakra-gadādhara*, 'the holder of conchshell, discus (*sudarśana*) and club,'<sup>1</sup> or briefly, *gadādhara*, 'holder of club.' Therefore it is more reasonable to identify the Indian Herakles with Viṣṇu than with Śiva.

(2) Professor Bhandarkar and Dr. Fleet are of opinion that the incarnation of Śiva as Lakuliśa, 'the lord who bears the club,' may go as far back as the time of Huvishka. But Greek accounts of the Indian Herakles are derived from the works of writers (the companions of Alexander the Great and Megasthenes) who visited India in the fourth century B.C. and to whom therefore a knowledge of the legend of Śiva as Lakuliśa cannot be reasonably attributed, unless this legend is older than has yet been shown.

(3) How the name *Śibi*—the Sibai of the Greeks—marks the people bearing that name as special worshippers of Śiva is not explained by Mr. Kennedy. The Śibis are said to have derived their name from a king of old called Śibi, son of of Uśīnara, who, according to the *Mahābhārata*, sacrificed himself to save a dove from a hawk.<sup>2</sup> According to the Paurāṇik geneology King Śibi had four sons, Vṛishadarbha, Suvira, Kekaya and Madraka.<sup>3</sup> Uśīnara is the name of a people mentioned in the *Aitarēya-Brāhmaṇa*, *Sāṅkhyāyana-Āraṇyaka*<sup>4</sup> and Pāṇini, and Śibi, Kekaya and Madraka are also tribal names. The Paurāṇik genealogies indicate traditional relationship between these tribes or nations who lived in the north-west of India. But there is nothing in the epic or Buddhist legends to show that Śibi was a Sivaite.

(4) The story told by Megasthenes that the Indian Herakles had a daughter named Pandaia who was born in a land called after her Pandaia and was entrusted with the sovereignty of it cannot be connected with Śiva, for Hindu mythology knows no legend about Śiva which may be cited as even a remote parallel. The suggestion of Lassen and Weber that "the reference made by Megasthenes to the Indian Hercules and his daughter Pandaia can be best explained as a misunderstanding of the epic stories of Kṛishṇa and Draupadī, the spouse of the Pāṇḍavas"<sup>5</sup> comes nearer the mark. An even better explanation is afforded by the stories of Kṛishṇa and his sister Subhadrā who was married to Arjuna.<sup>6</sup> In the epic and the Purāṇas the descent of the later Kuru kings including Parikshit and his son Janamejaya is traced to Abhimanyu, son of Subhadrā and Arjuna.

But another well-known statement of Megasthenes relating to the Indian Herakles furnishes us with decisive evidence for the identification of that deity with Kṛishṇa-Viṣṇu. It runs:—

"Herakles was worshipped by the inhabitants of the plains—especially by

<sup>1</sup> Fausboll's *Indian Mythology*, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> See also Sivi-Jātaka (499).

<sup>3</sup> *Vāyupurāṇa*, 99, 19-24; *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, IV, 18.

<sup>4</sup> Macdonell and Keith's *Vedic Index*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XXX, p. 281.

<sup>6</sup> *Mahābhārata*, Book I, 221-223.

the Sourasenai, an Indian tribe possessed of two large cities, Methora and Kleisobara (Kṛishṇapura), and who had a navigable river, the Jobares, flowing through the territories.”<sup>1</sup>

Methora is recognised as a transliteration of Mathura and Jobares a copyist's error for Jomanes, *i.e.*, the river Jumna or Yamunā. It was at Mathurā, as we shall see (p. 167), that the worship of Kṛishṇa-Vishṇu had its origin. The Bhāgavata Heliodoros who came to Vedisa from Taxila as ambassador of Antialcidas and erected the Garuḍa column either adopted Bhāgavatism (Vaishṇavism) after coming to Vedisa or was a Vaishṇavite before he left his native town. The latter alternative seems to be the more reasonable one, and leads to the inference that Vaishṇavism flourished in the Western Punjab in the first half of the second century B.C. If this assumption is right, and if the Indian Herakles of the Greek writers may be identified with Kṛishṇa-Vishṇu, we may conclude that the image (simulacrum) carried in front of the army of Porus that assembled on the eastern bank of the Jhelum was an image of Vishṇu.<sup>2</sup>

In connexion with the Garuḍa column inscription of Heliodoros there arises this side issue, how could an alien, a Yona or Yavana like Heliodoros, become a Bhāgavata (Vaishṇava)? Early Indian coins and inscriptions reveal to us the names of other alien invaders and immigrants who were also Brahmanised in religion. It has already been stated above (p. 155) that on the coins of the Indo-Parthian king Gondophares the king is called *dēvavrata* and Śiva is represented with trident on the reverse. Śiva is also figured on the coins of Wema Kadphises who calls himself *mahīśvara*, meaning probably the worshipper of Maheśvara or Śiva. The successor of Huvishka has the Brahmanic name Vāsudeva and is represented on the obverse of his coins as making an offering with his right hand over a small altar and holding a long trident in the left hand. The reverse of Vāsudeva's coins bear the figure of Śiva. The Buddhist caves of Nasik and Karle contain inscriptions of Ushavadāta (Ṛishabhadatta) son of Dinika, and son-in-law of the Kshaharāta Kshatrapa Nahapāna, in one of which he calls himself a Śaka (Lüders' List, No. 1135), wherein is given a long list of donations made by him to Brahmans at various places of pilgrimage.<sup>3</sup> Other inscriptions in the caves of Nasik refer to Śakas and Yōnakas (Yavanas) bearing such orthodox names as Agnivarmman, Indrāgnidatta and Vishṇudatta.<sup>4</sup> The Western Kshatrapas of the dynasty of Chasṭana, so many of whom bear names beginning with Rudra, were probably early Brahminised. In his Junāgaḍh inscription Rudradāman, grandson of Chasṭana, boasts “that he twice defeated Sātakarni, the lord (*pāti*) of Dakshināpatha, but on account of the nearness of their connexion did not destroy him.”<sup>5</sup> The ruthless Huna king Mihirakula was

How Heliodoros could become a Vaishṇava.

<sup>1</sup> McCrindle, *Ancient India as described in Classical Literature*, Westminster, 1901, p. 64, note 3.

<sup>2</sup> M. Foucher writes on this image (simulacrum) of Indian Herakles in *L'Art Greco-Bouddhique du Gandhāra*, Tome II, (Paris, 1918) p. 382: “We have no evident proof that a true statue was brought in procession before the infantry of Porus; but one century later, images of Yakshas and Nāgas attest in Central India an already elaborated iconography of a very anthropomorphic appearance.”

<sup>3</sup> Lüders' *List of Brāhmī Inscriptions*, Nos. 1099, 1131-1135.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Nos. 1137, 1140, 1148.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 965.

evidently a Śaiva. On the reverse of his coins occurs the figure of a bull with crescent above and below the legend *jayatu vṛiṣha*, "may the bull be victorious." Both bull and crescent are the symbols of Śiva. Kalhana in his *Rājataranginī* (I. 306-307) says that Mihirakula founded at *Śrīnagarī* the [shrine of Śiva] *Mihireśvara*, and was a patron of the Gandhāra Brahmans. With Mihirakula we come up to the first quarter of the sixth century A.D.

The proselytizing activities of the Brahmans were not confined to alien invaders and immigrants only, but found a wider field in the islands of the Indian archipelago and in the adjoining parts of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula. Two rather puzzling questions which suggest themselves in this connexion are, how was the admission of aliens to the orthodox Brahmanic fold possible then, and why is it not possible now? To begin with the first question, let us hear what the grammarian Patañjali, a contemporary of Heliodorus, has to say about the status of the Śakas and the Yavanas from the orthodox standpoint; for Patañjali was a great champion of orthodoxy. He begins his *Mahābhāṣya* with the statement, "Grammar should be studied in order that we may not turn Mlechchhas."<sup>1</sup> In his commentary on Pāṇini's *sūtra* II. 4. 10 Patañjali classifies the Śakas and the Yavanas as Śūdras who are *aniravasita*, that is to say, who do not permanently pollute the utensils from which they take their food. The utensils from which such Śūdras take their food may be purified by cleaning. Then, as now, the theory is the same:—a Hindu is born and not made. A man may be recognised as a born Hindu when he is born either as a Brahman, or a Kshatriya, or a Vaiśya, or a Śūdra, for, according to Manu, there is no fifth (*nāsti tu pañchamaḥ*). So at a time when the Śakas and the Yavanas were recognised as clean Śūdras, the door of the orthodox fold was open to them as Śūdras, that is, on their acknowledging the supremacy of the Brahmans, and not, like the Kshatriyas of old, disputing the same. Manu goes a step beyond Patañjali and says that alien peoples like the Śakas, Yavanas, Pahlavas, Chīnas, etc., were originally Kshatriyas and have degenerated into Śūdras on account of giving up sacred rites and not seeing or being in touch with the Brahmans (X. 43-44). This and similar other texts from the *Mahābhārata* are quoted and translated by Muir in his *Original Sanskrit Texts*, Vol. I (2nd Ed.), Chapter V (pp. 480-488), including also legends from the *Vishṇu-Purāna* and the *Harivamśa* which tell us that when Sagara, a king of the Ikshvāku race, was about to slaughter the Śakas, Yavanas, Kāmbojas, Pāradas, and Pahlavas, they sought the protection of the sage Vasishṭha, through whose intercession Sagara allowed them to escape after destroying their caste (*dharma*) and making them change their costumes. A dialogue from the *Mahābhārata*, Book XII (quoted by Muir) between king Māndhātṛi and the god Indra is very interesting. In this dialogue the king asks the god, what religion (*dharma*) should a king like him prescribe for such folks as the Śakas, Yavanas, Pahlavas, Kāmbojas, etc., and "persons of the Vaiśya and Śūdra castes." Indra says in reply that these Dasyus should perform ceremonies ordained in the Vedas and on proper occasions bestow gifts on the Brahmans. It is to be noted that here the alien barbarians or Dasyus are placed in

<sup>1</sup> *Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya*, edited by Kielhorn, Vol. I, p. 2

the same category as the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras. When such beliefs obtained among the Brahmans it was not difficult for a Śaka or a Yavana immigrant to obtain admittance into the orthodox fold as a Vaiśya or a Śūdra and for an alien ruler to rank even as a Kshatriya.

The answer to the next question, why and when the Hindus abandoned the practice of admitting foreigners to the Hindu fold, is furnished by a Muham-

Why and when did Hindus abandon the practice of admitting aliens to the Hindu society.

madan writer, Abu Raiḥān Alberuni, who came to the Punjab after A.D. 1017 in the reign of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni to study the different branches of the Sanskrit literature and wrote his work on India in the year of Mahmud's death (A.D. 1030). In Chapter I of his book Alberuni describes "the barriers which separate Muslims and Hindus" and endeavours to trace their roots. The barriers mentioned by Alberuni are three in number; (1) the difference of language; (2) the religious prejudices of the Hindus; and (3) the self-conceit of the Hindus and their depreciation of anything foreign. About the second barrier he writes:—

"They (the Hindus) totally differ from us in religion, as we believe in nothing in which they believe, and *vice versa*. . . . All their fanaticism is directed against those who do not belong to them—against all foreigners. They call them *mlechchha*, *i.e.*, impure, and forbid having any connexion with them, be it by intermarriage or any other kind of relationship, or by sitting, eating, and drinking with them, because thereby, they think, they would be polluted. They consider as impure anything which touches the fire and the water of a foreigner; and no household can exist without these two elements. Besides, they never desire that a thing which once has been polluted should be purified and thus recovered . . . They are not allowed to receive anybody who does not belong to them even if he wished it, or was inclined to their religion."<sup>1</sup>

So it may be noted here that at the time of Alberuni the alien invaders from the west are no longer recognised as *aniravasita* Śūdras, but as impure (*niravasita*) outcastes whose water or fire, to say nothing of utensils used for taking food, are permanently polluted. Alberuni ascribes this change of attitude on the part of the Hindus towards aliens to three different causes. First, to the degradation of the aliens by king Sagara in which legend he seems to find nothing incredible.<sup>2</sup> Secondly:—

"Another circumstance which increased the already existing antagonism between Hindus and foreigners is that the so-called Shamaniyya (Buddhists), though they cordially hate the Brahmans, still are nearer akin to them than to others. In former times, Khurasan, Persis, 'Irak, Mosul, the country up to the frontier of Syria, was Buddhistic, but then Zarathustra went forth from Adharbaijan and preached Magism in Balkh (Baktra). His doctrine came into favour with king Gushtasp. . . . The succeeding kings made their religion (*i.e.*, Zoroastrianism) the obligatory state-religion for Persis and 'Irak. In consequence, the Buddhists were banished from those countries, and had to emigrate to the countries east of Balkh. There are some Magians up to the present time

<sup>1</sup> Alberuni's *India*, Eng. tr. by Sachau, London, 1888, Vol. I, pp. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

in India, where they are called *Maga*. From that time dates their aversion towards countries of Khurasan."<sup>1</sup>

The only historical interpretation that this confused statement admits of is that the establishment of the Sassanian monarchy (A.D. 226) and the subsequent vigorous revival of Zoroastrianism in the Persian kingdom led to the expulsion of the Buddhists from Khurasan and other countries and thereby caused a revulsion of feeling among the Hindus with regard to the westerners. Whether there ever was any actual banishment of the Buddhists from the Sassanian kingdom we do not know. But the literature of the period in India that followed the establishment of the Sassanian monarchy discloses great veneration for foreign teachers on the part of the Indians. Vātsyāyana in his commentary on Gautama's *Nyāya-darśana*, I, 1, 7, says that authoritative testimony (*āpta-vākya*) may proceed from Rishis, Āryas as well as from Mlechchhas. Vātsyāyana's commentary is usually assigned to about the end of the fourth century A.D.<sup>2</sup> Alberuni, while speaking of the self-conceit of the Hindus of his own day, writes:—

“If they had travelled and mixed with other nations, they would soon change their mind, for their ancestors were not as narrow-minded as the present generation. One of their scholars, Varāhamihira, in a passage where he calls on the people to honour the Brahmans, says: “*The Greeks, though impure, must be honoured, since they were trained in sciences and therein excelled others. What, then, are we to say of a Brahmin, if he combines with his purity the height of science?*”<sup>3</sup>

Varāhamihira died in 589 A.D. The door of the Hindu society of those days was open to foreigners. Huns, Gujars, and Ye-tas<sup>4</sup> (Yets or Gats) who poured into the north-western parts of India in the fifth century A.D. were absorbed by the Hindus. So Alberuni's statement that the aversion of the Hindus for westerners dates from the time of the Zoroastrian revival in Persia is not quite correct. But Alberuni himself offers the best explanation of this great change of the Hindu attitude towards foreigners in what he says after his reference to the expulsion of the Buddhists from the Persian kingdom. He writes:—

“But then came Islam; the Persian empire perished, and the repugnance of the Hindus against foreigners increased more and more when the Muslims began to make their inroads into their country; for Muhammad Ibn Elkasim Ibn Elmunabbih entered Sindh from the side of Sijistan (Sakastane) and conquered the cities of Bahmanvā (Brāhmanavāṭa) and Mulasthāna (Multan), the former of which he called Al-mansura, the latter Al-mamura. He entered India proper, and penetrated even as far as Kanauj, marched through the country of Gandhāra, and on his way back, through the confines of Kashmir, sometimes

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> M. M. Satis Chandra Vidyabhusana traces the influence of Aristotle on Akshapāda, the author of the *Nyāya-sūtras* commented on by Vātsyāyana and on other writers on Nyāya (logic). *J. R. A. S.*, 1918 pp. 469-488.

<sup>3</sup> Alberuni's *India*, I, p. 23 and II, p. 263. The stanza of the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (II, 15) quoted here is thus translated by Kern; “The Greeks (*Yavanāḥ*), indeed, are foreigners (*mlechchhāḥ*), but with them this science is in a flourishing state. Hence they are honoured as though they were Rishis; how much more than a twice-born man well-versed in astrology.” *J. R. A. S.*, 1870, p. 441.

<sup>4</sup> Watters, *On Yuan Chwang*, I, p. 200.

fighting sword in hand, sometimes gaining his ends by treaties, leaving to the people their ancient belief, except in the case of those who wanted to become Muslims. All these events planted a deeply rooted hatred in their hearts.”<sup>1</sup>

The Arab invasion did something more far-reaching than mere planting “a deeply rooted hatred” for aliens in the hearts of the Hindus. It led to a revolutionary change of the Hindu angle of vision. Hindus could no longer recognise in the new invaders from the west the representatives of those Śakas, Yavanas and Pahlavas, who, according to their sacred books, were originally Kshatriyas but had degenerated into Śūdras merely from not enjoying the opportunity of *seeing* Brahmans. The new Yavanas came, they saw Brahmans, but instead of rushing to the feet of the latter to pray for the restoration of their lost Kshatriyahood, summoned them to accept the Koran. The coming of the Muslims caused bitter disappointment and disillusionment both to the Brahmans and to the Śramaṇas who were otherwise indifferent to political changes and fortunes of war. The Muslim desecraters of the temples could not of course be recognised as *niravasita* or clean. Muhammad Ibn Alkasim “himself hung a piece of cow’s flesh” on the neck of the famous Sun-god of Multan “as a sign of mockery.” “When the Karmatians occupied Multan, Jalam Ibn Shaiban, the usurper, broke the idol into pieces and killed its priest.”<sup>2</sup>

The cultured and tolerant Arabs are the actors in the first act of the great drama of the Muslim conquest of Hindustan. In the second act were concerned a different type of Muslims, the ruthless and fanatical Turks. Alberuni is an eye-witness of the tragedy. I shall conclude this long digression with this acute and impartial observer’s account of those events and their consequences:—

“Now in the following times no Muslim conqueror passed beyond the frontier of Kabul and the river Sindh until the days of the Turks, when they seized the power in Ghazna under the Samani dynasty, and the supreme power fell to the lot of Nasir-uddaula Sabuktigin. This prince chose the holy war as his calling, and therefore called himself Al-ghazi (*i.e.*, warring on the road of Allah). In the interest of his successors he constructed, in order to weaken the Indian frontier, those roads on which afterwards his son Yamin-uddaula Mahmud marched into India during a period of thirty years and more. God be merciful to both father and son! Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country, and performed there wonderful exploits, by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions, and like a tale of old in the mouth of the people. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims. This is the reason why Hindu sciences have retired far away from those parts of the country conquered by us, and have fled to places which our hands cannot yet reach, to Kashmir, Benares and other places. And there the antagonism between them and all foreigners received more and more nourishment both from political and religious sources.”<sup>3</sup>

Now to return to ancient Vidiśā; besides the two inscribed Garuḍa columns **Makara-dhvaḥja of Besnagar.** there are the remains of another Vaishṇavite archæological document at Besnagar.

<sup>1</sup> Alberuni’s *India*, I, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup> Alberuni’s, *India* p. 22.

These are the capital of a column and a *makara* which originally surmounted the capital now lying by it a few yards off the column of Heliodorus. The *makara* and the capital are thus described by Professor Bhandarkar :—<sup>1</sup>

“Near the second fan-palm were lying and are still lying two sculptures, which cannot be chronologically far removed from Khām Bābā (*i.e.*, the column of Heliodorus) itself. One of these is a rail capital.<sup>2</sup> The bell, which forms the lowermost part, is 2' 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " in height. The upper half of the bell is very much battered and injured. Above is a cable necking, which divided the bell from the abacus. The latter is 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " high, and is circular in shape. It is divided into two compartments, the lower of which is occupied by the bead and reel ornament, and the upper with honeysuckle patterns alternating with crocodiles. On the abacus is a rail moulding 2' 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ " square and 1'  $\frac{1}{2}$ " high, and above it comes another member in the form of an *āmalaka*. It is 1' 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ " high thus bringing the total height of the whole capital to 4' 10", excluding the tenon at the top, which is 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ " long, 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ " broad, and 6" high. This tenon seems to have been fitted into the mortise of the soffit of the *makara* pinnacle, the other sculpture lying beside it<sup>3</sup> The mortise is 9" long, 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ " broad, and 8" deep. This no doubt appears to be a little too large for the tenon of the rail-capital, and militates, according to Mr. Lake, against the above supposition. But in early Indian architecture the mortise holes were frequently much larger than the tenons, and Sir John Marshall assures me that he has met with many similar instances at Sanchi. This crocodile again bears such a close resemblance to the similar animals figured on the edge of the abacus of the rail capital, that their connexion can scarcely be seriously called in question. I, therefore, quite agree with Cunningham in holding that it was the pinnacle of this capital. The greatest height of the *makara* is 2' 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "; but the tail is broken, and if we judge by the proportions of these animals on the rail capital its original height must have been about two feet more. Cunningham says :—“There is a mysterious hole at a short distance behind the eye which has puzzled me very much. Perhaps a horn or a fin, which the sculptor has forgotten, was inserted here as an after-thought.” There is not one hole, but two holes, one behind each eye, and it seems more likely that they served as mortises for holding the tenons of the crowning piece.”

What Professor Bhandarkar means by “the crowning piece” is not clear. But there is a singular consensus of opinion among such eminent archæologists as Cunningham, Sir John Marshall and Professor Bhandarkar himself regarding the *makara* being the pinnacle of the capital. So we have to recognise in the *makara* and the capital the remnants of a *Makaradhvaja* or a “column with crocodile symbol.” In Sanskrit literature Krishṇa's son Pradyumna, identified with the god of love, is called *makaradhvaja* or *makarakētana*, ‘one with the crocodile as his symbol.’ In some of the sculptures of the Greco-Buddhist school of Gandhāra one of Māra's daughter is seen holding a staff with a *Makara* on it, Foucher's *L'Art Gréco-Bouddhique du Gandhāra*, Tome II. Premier Fascicule,

<sup>1</sup> *A. S. R.*, 1913-14, Part II, pp. 189-190

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Pl. LIV, a.

<sup>3</sup> *A. S. R.*, 1913-14, Part II, Pl. LIV, b.

Figures 400 and 401, facing p. 192), and in Sanskrit Buddhist works like *Mahāvastu* and *Lalitavistara* Māra is frequently called *Krishṇa-bandhu*, “Krishṇa’s kinsman.” We shall see presently that the Pāñcharātras or Bhāgavatas worshipped Pradyumna as the third of the four *vyūhas*, and in their philosophy he was recognised as the personification of *manas* or mind. As a *Garudadhvaja* presupposes a temple of Vāsudēva, may we not assume that a *makaradhvaja* in an ancient centre of Vaishṇavism like Vedisa dating from the time of our *garudadhvajās* presupposes the existence of a temple of Pradyumna or an image of Pradyumna in the temple of Vāsudeva? The documents dealt with in the next section show that the first two *vyūhas*, Vāsudēva and Saṁkarshaṇa, were worshipped together in the same period.

## II.

Next to the Garuḍa pillar of Heliodorus in point of time is the Ghasundi stone slab inscription. The slab was found “on the right hand side of the door or entrance leading down to a tank in the village of Ghasundi about 4 miles N. E. of Nagari” in the Udaypur State, Rajputana.<sup>1</sup> The inscription is engraved in Brāhmī characters of the second century B.C. *Bhas* with a long straight right-hand vertical line in place of two short lines forming an angle, as in the inscription of Heliodorus, and roundish *ga*, indicate that the Ghasundi inscription is later in date than the inscription of Heliodorus, while the occurrence of archaic screw-like *ras* shows that the distance of time is not long. This inscription in corrupt Sanskrit runs:—

1. [Bhāgava] [tē]na Gājāyanēna Pārāsarīputrēṇa sa..
2. ... jinā bhagavabhyām Saṁkarshaṇa-Vāsudēvābhyām..
3. ... bhyām pūjā-śilāprākāro Nārāyaṇavāṭē kā[ritaḥ]

### Translation.

“A stone enclosure of worship for Bhagavats Saṁkarshaṇa and Vāsudēva... has been erected within the enclosure of Nārāyaṇa by the Bhāgavata Gājāyana, son of Pārāsarī....”

*Nārāyaṇavāṭa* or the enclosure of Nārāyaṇa denotes the compound of a temple or place of worship of Nārāyaṇa. *Pūjāśilāprākāra* for Bhagavats Saṁkarshaṇa and Vāsudēva evidently denotes a smaller stone enclosure round either the images or other cult objects representing Saṁkarshaṇa and Vāsudēva within the *Nārāyaṇavāṭa*. As Vāsudēva was already identified with Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu the place presumably came to be known as Nārāyaṇavāṭa from the presence of the cult object representing Vāsudēva within it. The *pūjāśilāprākāra* was probably something analogous to the railing round a stūpa or a holy tree.

Saṁkarshaṇa and Vāsudēva, “the descendants of the moon (*Chanda*=*Chandra*) are invoked together with Dhamma (*Dharma*), Ida (*Indra*) and the guardians of the four cardinal points, Yama, Varuna (*Varuṇa*), Kubēra and Vāsava in the beginning of the long Nānāghaṭ cave inscription<sup>2</sup> which may be

<sup>1</sup> J. A. S. B., Vol. LVI, Pt. I, pp. 77-78, and Plate Va. Lüders' List, No. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Lüders' List, No. 1112.

assigned to the end of the second century B.C.<sup>1</sup> In Saṁkarshaṇa and Vāsudēva named side by side in these two epigraphs, we recognise two of the four *Vyūhas* which, according to the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mahābhārata*, Book XII, and Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Vēdānta-Sūtras* II, 2. 42, were worshipped by the Pāñcharātras or Bhāgavatas. These Vyūhas are, Vāsudēva or the highest self, Saṁkarshaṇa or the individual soul, Pradyumna or the mind (*manas*), and Aniruddha or the principle of egoity (*ahamkāra*). It was further held by the Pāñcharātras that Saṁkarshaṇa or individual soul originated from Vāsudēva, Pradyumna or *manas* from Saṁkarshaṇa, and Aniruddha or *ahamkāra* from Pradyumna. A more orthodox view of the doctrine of the Vyūhas supported by both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja is that the highest Brahman called Vāsudēva abides in a fourfold form, or reveals itself by dividing itself fourfold as the four Vyūhas. In all available expositions of the Pāñcharātra system Vāsudēva is mentioned first and is followed by Saṁkarshaṇa. But in both of our inscriptions the order is changed; Saṁkarshaṇa is named first and Vāsudēva comes as the second. This is in agreement with the epic and Paurāṇik legends wherein Saṁkarshaṇa is represented as the elder step-brother of Kṛishṇa-Vāsudēva. But this aspect of the epigraphical evidence has escaped the notice of Sir Ramakrishna Bhandarkar and Dr. Otto Schrader. The former traces the second (Saṁkarshaṇa), third and fourth Vyūhas to the three of the Prakṛitis of Vāsudēva as the Supreme being in the *Bhagavadgītā* VII, 4-5.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Schrader writes, "The original worship, proved by archæology and the Buddhist scripture, of only Vāsudēva and Baladeva-Saṁkarshaṇa can signify nothing else, in our opinion, than that by the original Pāñcharātrins Kṛishṇa was worshipped as the transcendent Highest God, and his brother, the 'God of strength,' as His immanent aspect appearing as the world, this dogma of the double aspect of God being simply the Pāñcharātra solution of the old, old Indian problem of a God becoming the world without sharing its imperfections."<sup>3</sup> No such philosophical ideas can be credited to the author of the Nānāghaṭ Cave inscription who invokes Saṁkarshaṇa and Vāsudēva along with some other divinities of the Brāhmanic pantheon and indicates their difference from the other divinities named by calling them descendants of Chandra or belonging to the lunar Yādava line. The mention of Saṁkarshaṇa first and Vasudēva afterwards in two records of such two distant places as Ghasundi in Rajpūtana and Nānāghāṭ in the Deccan shows that in those days Saṁkarshaṇa was popularly recognised as a divinity equalling Vāsudēva in rank. Kauṭilya in his *Arthaśāstra* says:—

"Spies disguised as ascetics with shaved head or braided hair and pretending to be the worshippers of god Saṁkarshaṇa, may mix their sacrificial beverage with the juice of the *madana* plant (and give to the cowherds) and carry off the cattle."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs A. S. I.*, No 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Vaishṇavism Śaivism* etc., pp. 12-13; for criticism of this theory by the present writer see *The Indo-Aryan Races*, Part I, pp. 97-98.

<sup>3</sup> *Introduction to the Pāñcharātra and the Ahirbudhnya Samhitā*, Madras, 1916, pp. 144-145.

<sup>4</sup> Shamsastry's English translation, p. 485.

This passage incidentally bears witness to the existence of a special order of ascetics devoted to Saṅkarshana and, taken together with the Ghasundi and Nānāghaṭ inscriptions, indicates that the Pāñcharātra or Bhāgavata religion originated in the worship of the Yādava (Vṛishṇi) brothers Saṅkarshana and Vāsudēva as hero-gods of equal rank. Saṅkarshana came to be consigned to a secondary place when the worship of Vāsudēva as *dēvadēva*, 'god of gods' superseded the worship of the Yādava hero-gods. That the worship of Vāsudēva as 'god of gods' was prevalent even before these two epigraphs were engraved is evident, as we have already seen, from the Besnagar pillar inscription of Heliodorus. The existence of two different varieties of Vāsudēvism side by side, the worship of Vāsudēva as 'the god of gods' and also as a god second to Saṅkarshana, in the second century B.C., indicates that the basic cult originated in a much remoter antiquity. The second of these two varieties of Vāsudēvism is undoubtedly the older of the two. Now the question is, how did these cults originate? Garbe's answer to this question is ingenious and elaborate. He writes:—

Origin of Vaishnavism.

"It may be assumed as probable that Krishna was originally the leader of the warrior and pastoral tribe of non-Brahman race, and that he lived long before the Buddha. He became the eponymous hero of his people, not only because of his prowess in war, but also probably because he was the founder of the religion of his race—a religion independent of the Vedic tradition and monotheistic, in which a special stress was laid on *ethical* requirements. The adherents of this religion were called 'Bhāgavatas,' adopting other names later on. As the form of Krishna within the race to which he belonged was advanced from the position of a demi-god to that of god (identified especially with the god of the Bhāgavatas) Brāhmanism claimed as its own this popular and powerful representation of the Deity, and transformed it into an incarnation of Vishṇu. In this way Brāhmanism succeeded in gaining over the entire community of the Bhāgavatas, and the latter (a still existing sect) were merged in Brāhmanism. The Bhagavadgītā was originally a text-book of this sect, and in the course of time has won a position of such significance for the whole of Brahman India that in recent years educated Hindus have put it forward as a rival to the New Testament."<sup>1</sup>

In this statement we have a kernel of truth with much that is not quite accurate. According to Brahmanic, Bauddha and Jaina traditions Krishna-Vāsudēva was the chief of a warrior tribe, the Yādavas (Vṛishṇis and Andhakas), who were Brahmanist Kshatriyas and in the epic period represented the Rigvēdic Yadus. But at Mathurā and at Dvārakā (in the Kāthiāwār peninsula) the Vṛishṇis and the Andhakas lived amidst Ābhīras and Saurāshṭras who are said to have been outside the Brahmanic pale. It may, therefore, be presumed that from the very outset Vāsudēvism might have had two distinct phases, one Brahmanic professed by orthodox Brahmanist tribes and castes and the other un-Brahmanic professed by the Ābhīras and the Saurāshṭras. The present writer

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 2, pp. 535-536.

has elsewhere collected and discussed texts that condemn a phase of Vāsudēvism called Bhāgavata or Pāñcharātra as un-Vedic.<sup>1</sup> The un-Vedic or un-Brahmanic Pāñcharātra evidently grew out of the primitive worship of Saṁkarshaṇa, Vāsudēva and other Vṛishṇi chiefs such as Vāsudēva's son Pradyumna and his grandson Aniruddha as hero-gods by the barbarian Ābhīras and Saurāshṭras. The religion of the Bhagavadgītā, on the other hand, represents the orthodox phase of Vāsudēvism in its fully developed form. If we may assume any basis of fact in the epic legends and traditions, we must believe that the worship of Vāsudēva as the founder of the religion of the Bhagavadgītā and Anugītā originated among the Vṛishṇis, Andhakas and Kurus and was handed down by them to the Sūrasenas. According to the *Mahābhārata* the venerable Bhīshma, the mightiest and the most chivalrous of the Kurus, was its first champion, and the five sons of Pāṇḍu its foremost adherents. The story of the Indian Herakles and his daughter Pandaia told by Megasthenes, as we have seen above (p. 6) indicates that as early as the fourth century B.C. the connexion of Kṛishṇa-Vishṇu with the Pāṇḍavas was an article of popular faith. The obscure and damaged Mora stone-slab inscription of the time of the Mahākshatrpa Rājuvula furnishes evidence of the prevalence of this faith before the beginning of the Christian era. From the few letters still legible on the slab and from Cunningham's facsimile (*A. S. R.*, Vol. XX, Pl. V, No. 4) Dr. Vogel thus reads the first two lines<sup>2</sup>:—

Mora stone-slab  
inscription.

1. Mahak(sha)t(rapasa Rājuvulasa putra).....

2. Bhagavatā Vri(sh)ṇē(na pañcha Vīrānām pratimā).....

Dr. Vogel writes elsewhere<sup>3</sup> "Apart from the mention of the son of Rājuvula the only certain point with regard to this inscription is that in the second line it refers to 'images of the five heroes' (*pañcha Vīrānām pratimā*). The words are distinct on Cunningham's facsimile ..... It seems quite plausible that these 'five heroes' were the five Pāṇḍava brothers whose exploits are extolled in the *Mahābhārata*." But the reading *bhagavatā Vri(sh)ṇē(na)* is open to objection. As pointed out by Vogel, all letters after the *ha* of *maha* in line 1 and after *vri* in line 2 are either partially or wholly damaged on the slab now in the Mathura Museum of Archæology. It will be seen in a facsimile of the inscription published in the *Memoirs A. S. I.*, No. I, Plate VI, No. 5, that in line 2 after *vri* the outline of *sh* and the subscript *ṇ* are clear and so the conjunct may be read as *shṇe*. But after *shṇe* there is no sign of *na*. So it seems more reasonable to read the name as *Vrishṇe(h)* instead of *Vrishṇēna*. The letter that follows *bhagava* may also be read as *to*, for the vowel sign above *t* extends a little to the left as well. In a votive inscription the instrumental case indicates the donor. But a donor could not very well call himself *Bhagavat*, and nowhere else is he found to do so. So, for *Bhagavatā Vrishṇēna* in line 2 we should read *Bhagavato Vrishṇeḥ* and understand the line as referring not only to the images of the five Pāṇḍavas but also to an image of the Blessed or Divine Vṛishṇi, that is, of Kṛishṇa-Vāsudēva, who belonged to the Vṛishṇi branch of

<sup>1</sup> *The Indo-Aryan Races*, Pt. I., Chapter III.

<sup>2</sup> *Catalogue of the Archæological Museum at Mathura* p. 184.

<sup>3</sup> *A. S. R.*, 1911-12, Pt. II, p. 127.

the Yādava tribe.<sup>1</sup> Mora is a village 7 miles west of the Mathurā city. The stone slab on which this inscription is engraved measures 11' 2" by 2' 11". It is probably one of the pavement slabs of a big temple in which the images of Kṛishṇa and the five Paṇḍava brothers were enshrined.

From a passage of Megasthenes quoted above (p. 6) it will be seen that in those days Herakles (Kṛishṇa-Vishṇu) was specially worshipped by the Sourasenai of Methora (Mathurā). The Sourasenai are the Śūrasēnas of the Brahmanic and Buddhist sacred books. Manu (II. 19) includes the country of the Śūrasēnakas together with Kurukshētra and the lands of the Matsyas and the Pañchālas within Brahmarshidēśa or the country of the Brahmanical sages. The Śūrasēnas are not named in the Vedic literature; but in the Purāṇas they are connected with the Yādavas. The orthodox Brahmanic Vāsudēvism was probably handed on to the Śūrasēnas by the Kurus and the Yādavas. The *Bhagavadgītā* is the text-book of this religion. The framework of the *Bhagavadgītā*, the association of Vāsudēva and Arjuna as a divine pair, is, as we have already seen, as old as Pāṇini and Megasthenes, so it may be as old as Buddhism or even older. for the antiquity of Buddhist traditions is certified by nothing older than the edicts of Aśoka. The background, again, of the picture within the frame, the philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā* called the epic Sāṅkhya, is held by Deussen<sup>2</sup> and Hermann Oldenberg<sup>3</sup> as the precursor of Buddhism. Now let us turn to the chief element of the religion of the *Bhagavadgītā*—the path. We are not here concerned with the other elements of the religion of the *Bhagavadgītā* or the date of the composition of the work as we have it. The path taught by Vāsudēva to Arjuna is the *karma-yoga* (path of work) of the *yogins* (III. 3; V. 2-6; XVIII. 3-7) and the goal is Brahmanirvāṇam (II. 72; V. 24-25). This *karma-yoga* or "the path of work" involves the performance of rites and duties enjoined in the Vedas as a householder without attachment to the worldly pleasures and pain and the dedication of the fruits of the 'works' (karma) to Vāsudēva, and is contrasted with the *jñānayoga* or 'the path of knowledge' of the Sāṅkhyas (III. 3; V. 4-5) which involves the renunciation of the world and works and wandering as a mendicant in search of the knowledge of self. In this connexion the question arises, does the author of the *Bhagavadgītā*, by giving preference to *yoga* or *karma-yoga* as distinguished from *jñānayoga* involving *saṁnyāsa* (renunciation), discourages *saṁnyāsa*? Śaṅkara's answer to this question in effect is;—Vāsudēva in the *Bhagavadgītā* disapproves of the view of the Sāṅkhya extremists who hold that all should renounce the world whether they are fit for such renunciation or not; *karma* or the performance of the secular duties and sacred rites is obligatory on average ignorant persons like Arjuna; so Vāsudēva does not discourage *saṁnyāsa* on the part of those who have risen above the world by means of knowledge (*na tu jñānanishṭhān vyutthāyinaḥ saṁnyāsinohapekshyaḥ*), for final emancipation is not possible without *saṁnyāsa* in the end (Śaṅkara's *bhāshya*

The antiquity of orthodox Vaishnavism—*Karma-yoga*, of the *Bhagavadgītā*.

<sup>1</sup> In the *Bhagavadgītā* X. Kṛishṇa is made to say *Vṛishṇinām Vāsudēvosmi*, 'I am Vāsudēva among the Vṛishṇis.

<sup>2</sup> *Outlines of the Indian Philosophy*, Berlin, 1907, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> *J. R. A. S.*, 1918, p. 321.

on XVIII. 3 and II, 11 and 21). But in his introductory remarks to the commentary on II. 11 and to chapter III, Śaṅkara refers to earlier commentators (*kechit*), and particularly to the general introduction (*sambandha-grantha*) of an earlier commentator, called *vr̥ttikāra* by Ānandagiri in his sub-commentary, who held quite an opposite view of the trend of the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Śaṅkara quotes :—

“In that connexion some say “Final emancipation is not attainable by the pursuit of the knowledge of self only after renouncing all works. Then what should be done? That final emancipation is attainable by means of (the pursuit of) knowledge along with (the performance of) Agnihotra and other rites enjoined in the Veda and Smṛiti is the incontrovertible meaning of the entire Gītā.”<sup>1</sup>

This view of the ancient *Vr̥ttikāra* is called “the doctrine of the combination of (the pursuit of) knowledge (of self) and of (the performance of) work” (*jñāna-karma-samuchchaya-vāda*). Śaṅkara has no difficulty in refuting this doctrine by stating that it is inconsistent with the division of a man’s life into four stages, in the fourth stage of which (the order of the *yati* or *bhikshu*) renunciation of all works is obligatory. The unnamed *vr̥ttikāra* whose work has been superseded by the *bhāshya* of Śaṅkara undoubtedly preserved an older tradition regarding the character of the religion of the *Bhagavadgītā*. The incompatibility of this religion with the scheme of the four *āśramas* (stages of life) can only be explained by the supposition that it came into being before the promulgation or adoption of the scheme of the four *āśramas* by the orthodox Brahmanists. The *āśramadharmā* or “the duties of the (four) orders” is fully recognised in other parts of the *Mahābhārata*, so the *karma-yoga* of the *Bhagavadgītā* is older than the *Mahābhārata* as a whole. The scheme of the four orders (*āśramas*) is also expounded in the earliest extant Dharmasūtras, those of Gautama and Āpastamba, assigned by Bühler to the fifth and the third centuries B. C. respectively. The four *āśramas* are not named in the older Upanishads such as the *Bṛihadāranyaka* and the *Chhāndōgya*. In these works we come across two different types of seekers of the knowledge of Brahman; the first type is represented by the Brahman Yājñavalkya who renounces the world for that purpose; the second type is represented by the Kshatriya king Janaka of Videha who performs sacrifices, gives gifts, governs his kingdoms while seeking the knowledge of Brahman for final emancipation. The *karma-yoga* of the *Bhagavadgītā* was evidently the religion of such royal sages as Janaka of the Videhas, Aśvapati of the Kekayas, Ajātaśatru of the Kāśis, and Pravāhana of the Pañchālas named in the Upanishads, who regularly perform Vedic rites that are intended to secure life in paradise, but aim at something different,—union with Brahman through knowledge of self. It is clearly stated in the *Bhagavadgītā* III. 20 : “Janaka and others reached the goal (*samsiddhimāsthita*) by works. You should perform (works) in order to prevent people from going astray (*lōkasamgrahameva*).” So it may be assumed that this *karma-yoga* originated within the orthodox fold side by side

<sup>1</sup> *tatra kechidāhuḥ,—sarvva-arma-samnyāsapūrvvakāt ātmajñānanishṭhāmātrādeva kevalāt kaivalyaṁ na prāpyate eva, evaṁ kim tarhi? agnihotrādi śrauta-smārtā-karmasahitāt jñānāt kaivalyaprapṭiriti sarvasu Gītāsu nischitorṭha iti (II. 10.)*

with the *jñāna-yoga* of the older Upanishads, and the scheme of the four *āśramas* was formulated in the Brahmanic schools later on to reconcile the two. The *karma-yoga* of the *Bhagavadgītā* was essentially a creation of Kshatriya orthodoxy and was originally confined to that community. Says Vāsudēva in the *Bhagavadgītā*, IV. 1-2, "This imperishable (*karma*) *yoga* I explained to Vivasvat; Vivasvat communicated it to Manu; and Manu to Ikshvāku. Thus handed down in succession it was known to the royal sages (*rājārshayah*). That *yoga*, O thou that burn your enemies (with the heat of your prowess), that *yoga* is now lost owing to the lapse of a long period of time." Vivasvat or the Sun-god and Manu called Vaivasvata or the son of Vivasvat are the mythical progenitors of the ancient Kshatriya race of India, and Ikshvāku is one of the ancient Kshatriya kings. When the doctrine of transmigration found general acceptance and the Vedic sacrifices and penances were thought insufficient for procuring release from the cycle of re-births, *jñāna-yoga* with *saṁnyāsa* for reaching the goal arose among the Brahmans, and the *karma-yoga* taught in the *Bhagavadgītā* arose among the practical and worldly-minded Kshatriyas. Probably it was Vāsudēva who elaborated and propagated it. Under the name of Kṛishṇa-Dēvakīputra he finds mention in the *Chhāndogya-Upanishad* (III. 17-6) as a distinguished pupil of a distinguished teacher, Ghora Āṅgīrasa. In such matters we can expect no better evidence than tradition and tradition points to such a conclusion.

### III.

Our last document throwing light on another phase of the early history of Vaishnavism is a fragmentary stone inscription of the time of the Mahākshatrpa Śōḍāsa that relates to the great place (*Mahāsthāna*) of Bhagavat Vāsudēva evidently at Mathurā. It is incised on the side of a carved door jamb of red sandstone (Plate XXV) now in the Mathurā Museum of Archæology (8' by 8" by 1' 3"). The inscription probably consisted of twelve lines, of which the first 5 lines containing the name of the donor are defaced; and each line consisted of 9 to 11 *aksharas* (letters) of which four to five *aksharas* are missing. From a close examination of the stone it appears to me that the epigraph was originally incised on a square pillar each side of which measured about 1' 4" and which was afterwards cut lengthwise through the inscribed side into two halves and turned into carved door jambs (Plate XXVI). For there is no other way of explaining the occurrence of this fragmentary inscription on that side of a door jamb that is built up with the wall. According to Rai Bahadur Pandit Rādhā Kṛishṇa, Honorary Curator of the Mathurā Museum of Archæology, this stone was dug out of an old well in the Mathurā (Muttra) Cantonments in 1913. The inscription is briefly noticed in the *Annual Progress Report of the Superintendent, Hindu and Buddhist Monuments, Northern Circle, for the year ending 31st March, 1917*, p. 10. I am now enabled to edit it through the kindness of Dr. D. B. Spooner, Officiating Director-General of Archæology in India, and Rai Bahadur Daya Ram Sahni, Officiating Superintendent of Hindu and Buddhist Monuments, Northern Circle.

New Mathura inscription of the time of the great satrap Śōḍāsa.

The characters of this fragment resemble the characters of the other known inscriptions of the time of the great Satrap Śōḍāsa,—the Mora inscription (Lüders' List, No. 14), the Mathurā Jaina inscription on sculptured stone-slab of the year 72 (Lüders' List, No. 59), and the Mathurā Jail mound stone inscription (*Ep. Ind.*, Vol. IX, p. 247). The test letters *ya* consisting of nearly a semicircle bisected by a short vertical line and *na* with straight base-line indicate that the inscriptions of the time of Śōḍāsa must be assigned to an earlier age than those of the time of Kanishka. Though scholars differ widely relating to the date of Kanishka, no one has assigned Śōḍāsa to a later epoch than the first quarter of the first century A.D.<sup>1</sup> The language of our fragment resembles the sort of Sanskrit used in the Mathurā Jail mound stone inscription.

*Transcript.*

6. vasunā Bhagava.....
7. vasya Mahāsthāna.....
8. lam tōraṇam vē.....
9. shṭhāpitō prītō[bha].....
10. dēvaḥ svāmi[sya].....
11. pasya Śōḍā[sa].....
12. samvartayatam.

*Remarks.*

In line 10 *svāmisya* is quite clear and so is *Śōḍāsa* in line 11. From the published Mathurā inscriptions of the time of Śōḍāsa referred to above we know that the word that must have intervened between *svāmisya* and *Śōḍāsa[sya]* is *mahākshatrapasya* of which *-pasya* occurs in the beginning of line 11. So *Mahākshatra* should be restored at the end of line 10. This indicates that 4 to 5 letters occurred in each line of the missing portion of the inscription, and the restoration of these missing letters of the other lines may also be attempted. The *sya* of *vasya* in the beginning of line 7 is evidently the genitive termination of the name of a deity qualified by *bhagava* and so *to* should be restored after *bhagava*. The *va* of *vasya* indicates that the name of the deity must have ended in *dēva* and so by restoring *dē* at the end of line 7 we obtain *bhagavato.. dēvasya* with an intervening space for two *aksharas* belonging to the name of the deity. The two *aksharas* that fit in here best are *vā su* and we may restore the name as *(Vāsudē)vasya*. *Vā su* should also be restored before *devaḥ* with which the following line opens, for in line 9 *prīto* was evidently followed by *bhavatu* the first *akshara* of which word, *bha*, is still discernible on the stone. The find place of the stone (Mathurā) renders the restoration of the name of the Bhagavat of the inscription as *Vāsudēva* unavoidable. If it may be assumed that the monument to which this inscribed red sandstone pillar originally belonged stood at Mathurā—and the occurrence of the name of the Mahakshatrapa Śōḍāsa strengthens this assumption—the Bhagavat whose 'mahāsthāna' is at Mathurā can be no other than *Vāsudēva*. *Prati* must be restored at the end of line 8

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs A. S. I.*, No. 1.

to form *pratishthāpitō* with *shthāpito* in the beginning of line 9. In line 8 the word preceding *tōraṇam* and ending in *laṁ* and the word following *tōraṇam* and beginning with *vē* may be restored as *chatuḥśālam* and *vēdikā* respectively. Two words are now wanting to complete the fragment; (1) a word of two *aksharas* in line 7 between *Mahāsthāna* and the restored *chatuḥśā*; (2) a word of three or four *aksharas* after *Śōḍāsa[sya]* in line 11. Though we cannot restore these words with certainty, we can guess their meanings. The word in line 7 after *mahāsthāna* probably denoted 'shrine' and the missing word in line 11, as the verb *saṁvart[e]yātām* in the following line shows, must have been in dual number and denoting dominion. The fragment, thus restored, reads as follows:—

6. vasunā Bhagava[to Vāsudē]
7. vasya mahāsthāna..[chatuḥśā]
8. laṁ toraṇam vē[dikāḥ prati]
9. shthāpitō prītō bh[avatu Vāsu]
10. devaḥ svāmisyā [Mahākshatra]
11. pasya Śōḍāsa[sya]....
12. saṁvart[e]yātām.

*Translation.*

“By ....vasu a quadrangle enclosed by four buildings (*chatuḥśālam*), a pillared gateway (*tōraṇam*) and a square terrace in the middle of the courtyard (*vēdikāḥ*) have been built (at the shrine at) the great place of the Bhagavat Vāsudēva. May Vāsudēva be pleased. May (*the dominion*) of the lord, the mahākshatrāpa Śōḍāsa, endure.”

*Bhagavato Vasudēvasya Mahāsthāna* may also be interpreted as “the great *Mahāsthāna* of shrine of the blessed lord Vishṇu” on the analogy of another Brāhmī inscription *Vāsudēva* of Mathurā which records<sup>1</sup>:—

*bhagavato nāgēndrasya Dadhikarṇasya stāne silāpatto pratishthāpito*

“A stone slab has been dedicated in the temple of the blessed lord of serpents Dadhikarṇa.”

The rendering of *stāna* (Skt. *sthāna*) as ‘temple’ (*dēvakula*) is justified by another Brāhmī inscription of Mathurā which reads:—

*Dānam Dēvilasya Dadhikarṇadēvikulikasya<sup>2</sup>*

“The gift of Devila, the seryant or priest at the temple of Dadhikarṇa.”

In modern Indo-Aryan vernaculars *sthāna* (Āstānā) is used indifferently of an altar or a place of worship of a deity as well as of a spot sacred to the memory of a holy man. In the Sarnath inscription of Mahīpāla, king of Gauḍa, of Samvat 1083, *mahāsthāna* is used in the latter sense in the compound *ashtamahāsthānaśailagandhakuṭim* denoting “a stone *gandhakuṭi* (temple) of the eight great places, *i.e.*, containing a slab illustrating the scenes (of Buddha’s life) that took place on the eight principal places.”<sup>3</sup> The old fortified city of Mahāsthān, on the river Karatoya, 7 miles to the north of Bogra in Bengal, is evidently

<sup>1</sup> *E. I.*, Vol. I, p. 390, No. 18; Lüders’ *List*, No. 85.

<sup>2</sup> *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 102; Lüders’ *List*, No. 63

<sup>3</sup> *A. S. R.*, 1906-07, Pt. II, p. 99.

so-called because two spots within it are sacred to the memory of two holy persons; Śilā Devī's Ghāt, a flight of steps leading to the water of the river wherefrom Śilā Devī, the daughter of the last Hindu king of the city, is said to have jumped into the river and drowned herself; and the *āsthān* or tomb of the Muhammadan saint—Māhi-sawar ("the fish-rider"), who is said to have conquered the city.<sup>1</sup> In our fragment the absence of any case-ending after *mahāsthāna* shows that it is part of a compound word the other member of which is lost. If I am right in guessing that this lost word denoted 'shrine' to which the four buildings enclosing the quadrangle (*chatuḥśālam*) were attached, *mahāsthāna* may be understood to denote a spot sacred to the memory of Kṛishṇa-Vāsudēva. According to the *Mahābhārata*, the Purāṇas, Bhāsa's *Bālācharita*, and other Brahmanic works, Mathurā is the birth place of Kṛishṇa-Vāsudēva and the scene of one of his most important feats, the slaying of Kāmsa. Mathurā is still held holy as the *janmāsthāna* or birth place of Kṛishṇa-Vāsudēva. A spot near the modern temple of Kēśavadēva marked by a small cell is held sacred as the prison house of Kāmsa where Vāsudēva and Dēvakī were confined and where Kṛishṇa was born. In the *mahāsthāna* of Vāsudēva mentioned in our fragment we have to recognise a spot that was believed to have been either the birth-place of Kṛishṇa or the scene of some other notable event in his early career. Pilgrimage to places sacred to the memory of holy men must have been a time-honoured custom as early as the time of the composition of the *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta*. In this *Suttanta* Buddha says, addressing Ānanda, "There are these four places, Ānanda, which the believing man should visit with feelings of reverence and awe (*chattāri imāni Ānanda saddhassa kulaputtassa dassaniyāni samvējaniyāni thānāni*)"<sup>2</sup> And the places named are the places where the Tathāgata was born, where the Tathāgata attained to the supreme and perfect insight, where the kingdom of righteousness (*dhammacakkam*) was set on foot, and where the Tathāgata passed finally away. That this commandment of the Blessed One was faithfully carried out in the third century B.C. is shown by the Rumindei pillar inscription which tells us that twenty years after his anointment Aśoka himself visited Lumminigāma and "worship having been performed, because here was born Buddha the saint of the Śākya he had a slab of stone bearing a horse made and a stone pillar raised up."<sup>3</sup> In the *Divyāvadāna*, No. XXVII, Aśoka says, falling at the feet of Sthavira Upagupta, "O Sthavira, this is my desire. I shall worship the places where the blessed Buddha lived and (thereon) erect monuments (*chihñāni*) for the benefit of posterity."<sup>4</sup> The prevalence of the custom of making pilgrimage to the *thānāni* (*sthānāni*) or places connected with the life of Buddha in the reign of Aśoka on the one hand, and the prevalence of the worship of Saṃkarshaṇa and Vāsudēva in the second century B.C. on the other, warrant us in assuming that the *Mahāsthāna* of Vāsudēva at Mathurā did not suddenly become popular in the time of the Śāka satraps, but must have been a place of pilgrimage long before their rise. The statement of Megas-

<sup>1</sup> Cunningham, *Arch. Survey Reports*, Vol. XV. p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> *S. B. E.*, Vol. XI, p. 90; *The Digha-Nikāya*, Vol. II, p. 140.

<sup>3</sup> *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XLIII, p. 20.

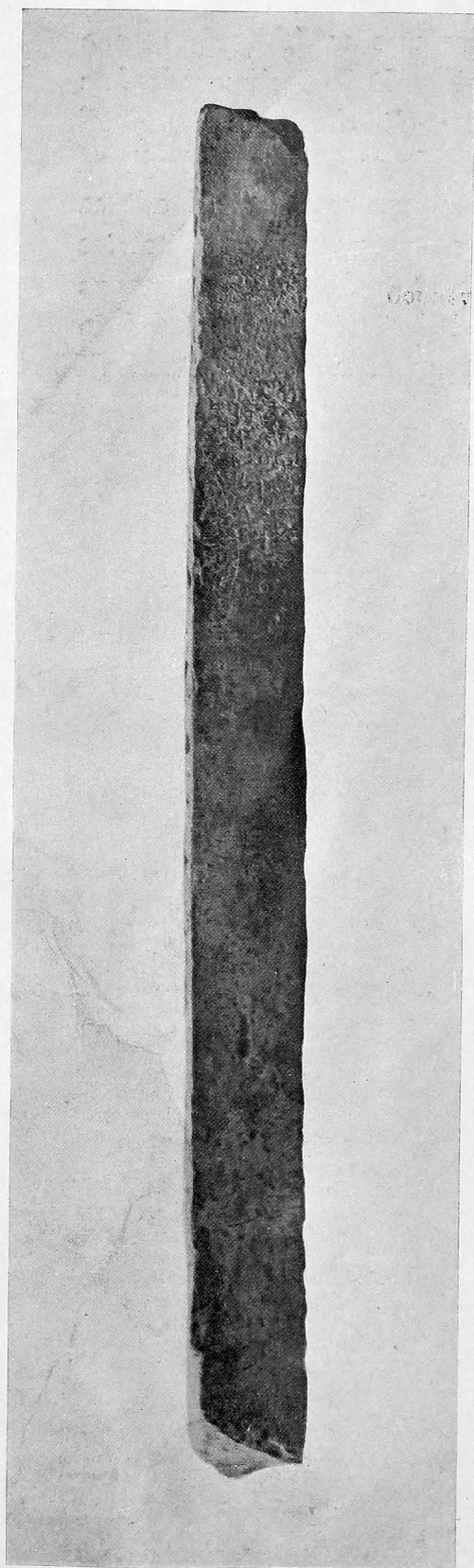
<sup>4</sup> *Divyāvadāna*, p. 389

thenes that the Sourasenai who lived in and about Mathurā held Krishna (Herakles) in special honour lends support to this view.

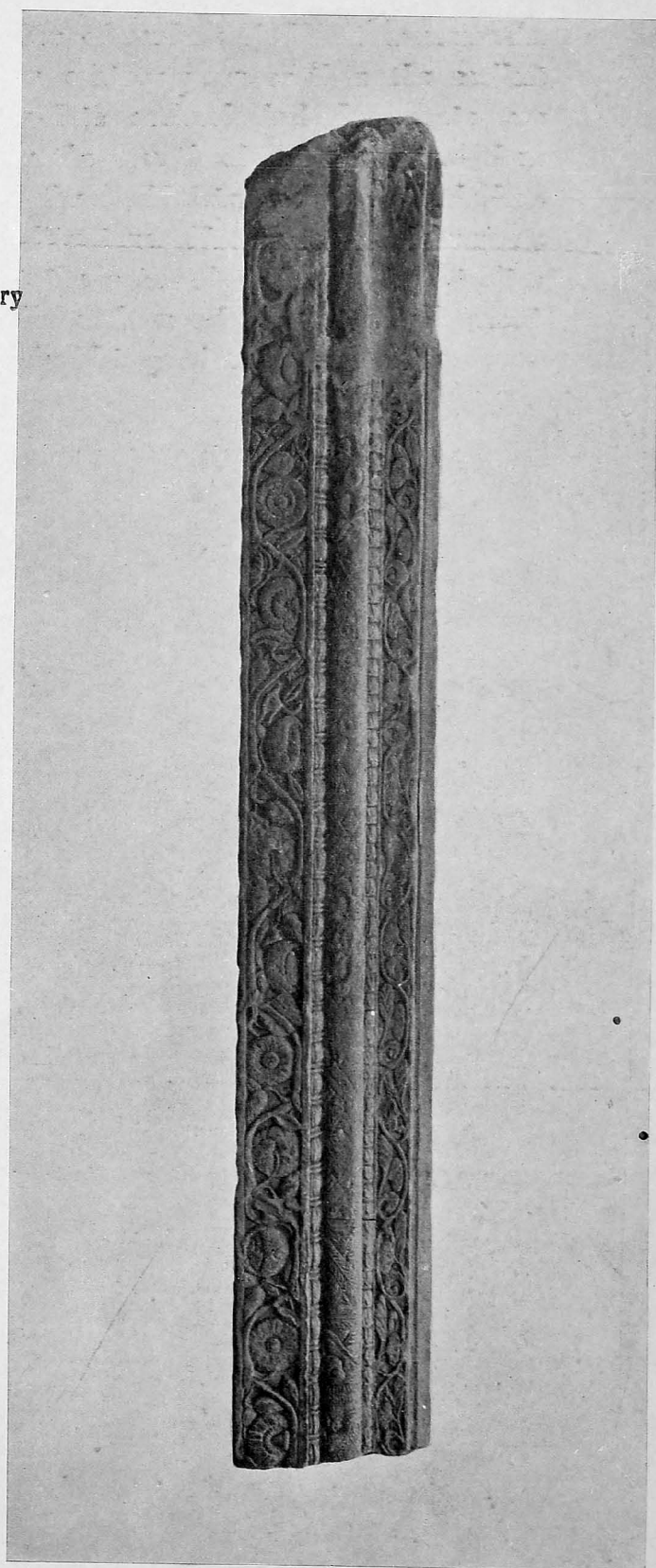
The Vaishṇava monuments dealt with in this Memoir all together make up **Conclusion** a mere handful as compared with the number of ancient Buddhist monuments, and the earliest of them is more than half a century younger than the earliest Buddhist ones. So these few comparatively late archæological documents can hardly be expected to throw as much light on the growth of Vaishṇava traditions as the Buddhist monuments do on those of the Buddhists, and the conclusions set forth above are necessarily tentative in their nature. But these few documents appear to be sufficient to create a belief that the excavation of the ancient sites of Western and Central India, and particularly those of Besnagar and about Mathurā, will reveal more materials for the early history of Vaishṇavism.

RAMAPRASAD CHANDA.

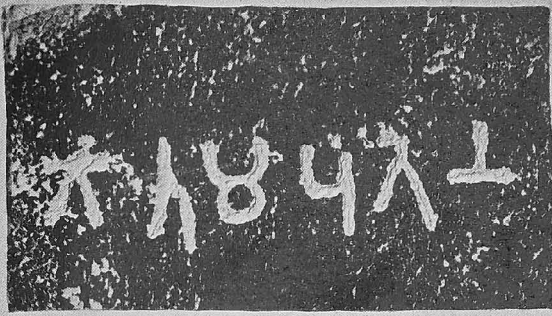
INSCRIBED DOOR-JAMB IN THE MATHURĀ MUSEUM OF ARCHÆOLOGY.



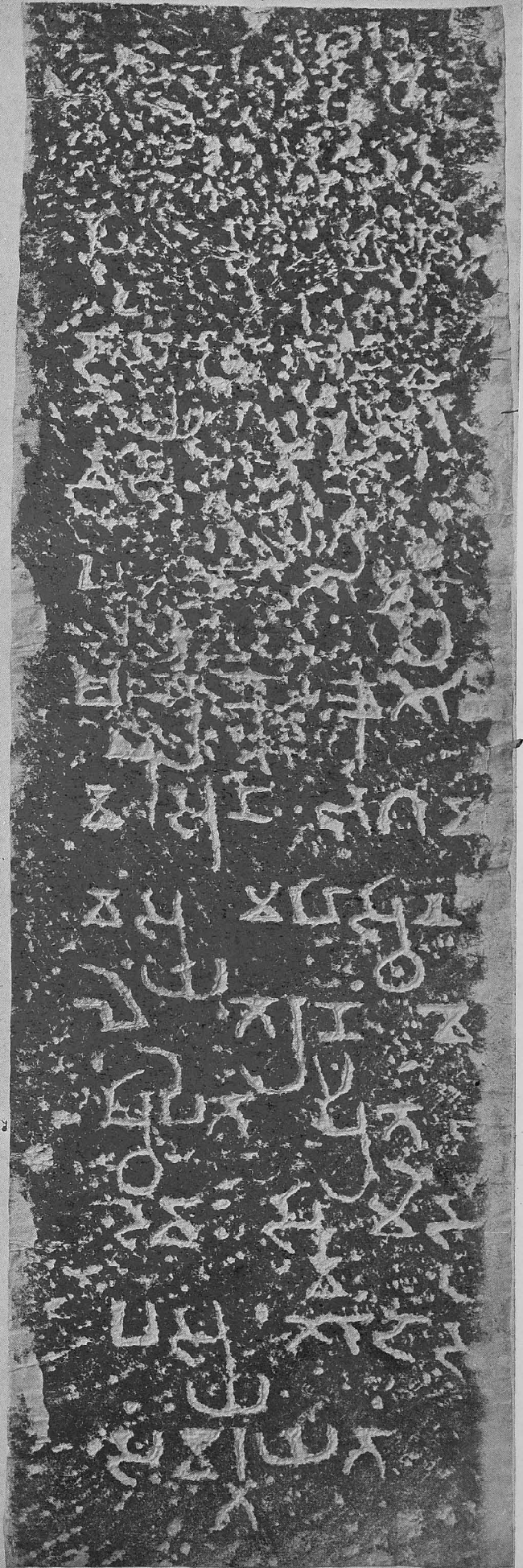
*a.* INSCRIBED SIDE.



*b.* SCULPTURED SIDE.



Connemara Public Library



a. BESNAGAR MUSEUM GARUDA PILLAR INSCRIPTION OF THE YEAR 12 AFTER THE INSTALLATION OF MAHARAJA BHAGAVAT.

b. MATHURA FRAGMENTARY PILLAR INSCRIPTION OF THE TIME OF MAHAKSHATRAPA SODASA.