

BALARĀMA

BALARĀMA: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN AN EARLY INDIAN CULT

By

LAVANYA VEMSANI

M.A. (Osmania University), M.Phil. & Ph.D. (University of Hyderabad)

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

© Copyright by Lavanya Vemsani, December, 2004

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2004)

McMaster University

(Religious Studies)

Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Balarāma: Change and Continuity in an Early Hindu Cult

AUTHOR: Lavanya Vemsani, M.A (Osmania), M.Phil & Ph.D (Hyderabad)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Phyllis E. Granoff

NUMBER OF PAGES: xiv, 258

ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the evolution of Balarāma in Vaiṣṇavism through comparative analysis of Balarāma stories from selected Hindu purāṇas: the *Harivaṃśa* (HV), the *Viṣṇu purāṇa* (Vi.pu), the *Brahmā purāṇa* (Br.pu), and the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* (Bh.pu). Through careful analysis of Balarāma stories from these texts, I argue that Balarāma was a multifaceted deity of considerable importance in early Vaiṣṇavism. I will also argue that the modifications introduced in the earliest stories reveal a process whereby Balarāma's popularity and status declined and he became a minor deity as Kṛṣṇa grew in importance. In this process his personality is modified from his association with food, abundance, fertility and protection to that of an ordinary warrior.

I also demonstrate that the early supremacy and personality of Balarāma is reflected in the depiction of this deity in select Jain texts: the *Vasudevahindī* (VH), the *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* (HVP), the *Cauppannamahāpurisacariyam* (CMC), and the *Triṣaṣṭiśālākāpuruṣacaritra* (TSP). A comparison of Hindu and Jain purāṇa stories of Balarāma also reveal that the Jain Balarāma stories are derived from independent sources other than the Hindu purāṇas.

My research demonstrates that it is through gradual transformation of a deity and modifications in the stories that a deity is gradually assimilated into an evolving major religious system. This process is marked by establishing different relationships and equations that reshape and redefine the existing features associated with a deity rather than complete annihilation. The analysis of Balarāma stories allows us to gain insight into such intermediary processes involved in the long process of evolution of Vaiṣṇavism.

A study of the Balarama stories also contributes to current scholarship on the textual history of the Hindu purāṇas. In the course of this thesis I analyze the stories divided into a series of plots and compare them across the different texts. I demonstrate that changes to these basic plots indicate the evolution of the story. I therefore propose that the more different a story from the basic story the later it must be while the less the different the story the closer contemporary it must be. I take as the basic story that is the HV, which scholars agree is earlier than any of the purāṇas. My working hypothesis is that the further a purāṇic story diverges from the HV, the later it is in date. My comparison of the stories indicates that the HV was the source of the Vi.pu, which served as the source for the Br.pu and Bh.pu. A comparison of the latter two texts reveals that the Bh.pu is the latest of the texts while the Br.pu shows a combination of early and late stories. This pattern is consistent with what scholars working on the purāṇas have described.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gururbrahmā gururviṣṇuh gurudevo maheśwarah|

Guruh sāṅṣāt parabrahmā tasmaiśrī gurave namah||

“My salutations to the teacher who is Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheswara.

The teacher is parabrahmā incarnate.”

I feel that the above verse reflects the multifold roles Phyllis has assumed as my supervisor. The thought of expressing my gratitude for Phyllis overwhelms me, since I feel that no words can adequately express my feelings towards her. I can say that these last five years have been the best years in my academic life and the time I have spent here with Phyllis was precious, inspirational and a best learning experience. I owe the subject and the outcome of this thesis to her. I thank you Phyllis, for every thing you have done for me during these last five years.

As a member of my supervisory committee Dr. Koichi Shinohara has supported my efforts at producing a clear and concise thesis right from the beginning through his long and detailed notes. His focus to the central theme has kept me from wavering and diverging from the subject of the thesis. The structure that is there in this thesis, I owe to Dr. Shinohara’s suggestions.

I thank Dr. Kay Koppedray, another member of my supervisory committee, for her many insightful suggestions over the years and for her patient reading of the thesis. I especially thank her for her suggestions on the introduction and conclusion.

I thank Dr. Graeme MacQueen, who has supported me during the first year I was here and for introducing me to the critical study of texts. Although he has been on my supervisory committee for only the first two years, his help was valuable.

Although not a member of my supervisory committee, Dr. Eileen Schuller, Chair, Department of Religious studies has kept in constant touch with me and provided the moral strength I needed as a foreign student and mother of a child.

I thank Dr. Paul Younger, for the many animated and spirited discussions about my thesis and many other subjects.

My research trip to India was made possible by the financial assistance of McMaster University. I would like to thank the school of graduate studies for the financial support for my Ph.D. and also for awarding me the Archival Research grant that helped me travel to India. I thank the department of Religious studies for awarding me the Margaret Schammel travel scholarship, which helped me undertake my research in India.

During my research trip to India I conducted my research at many institutions, but I would like to record my acknowledgements for the staff at the Deccan College Post-graduate Research Institute and Archaeological Survey of India, in Delhi and Hyderabad. Especially, I would like to thank Mr. J.E. Dawson of National Museum, New Delhi, for his help and letting me use the resources at the National museum. I would like to thank

Dr. K.P. Poonacha, Deputy Director, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, for his thoughtful discussions on Balarāma and Mr. Jayadev Namala for his help at the photo archive in the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi. I thank the staff at Mathura museum for providing me access to their collections and resources. I thank Dr. K. Peddayya, Director, Deccan College Post-graduate research institute, Poona, India, for his help with my research during my stay at the institute.

I thank Dr. David Palmer, Institute of Higher Learning, Sharjah, for reading earlier drafts of this thesis and his suggestions. I thank Mrs. Margaret John and Dr. Brian John, Mrs. Dhanam Nayar and Mr. Devan Nayar who have tried to help me in every way they can.

I would like to thank the staff and especially Helen Creedon, of the Inter-Library Loans in Mills Memorial Library at McMaster University for the speedy and accurate service.

I would like to thank Laurie, and Patrick Donley especially for their warm welcome and my stay at their home and the support that they have provided me during their short stay here and after through constant e-mails. I would like to thank Dr. Richard Mann and Paula Holmes for their friendship and many discussions. I would like to thank Shaul Katzenstein and Faydra Shapiro for all their support and friendship throughout all these years. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Patrick Edwards who has helped me in tremendously throughout my graduate studies. I thank my friends and fellow

graduate students in the department of Religious Studies, Ian Scott, Jennifer Nettleton, Kimberly Harding, Scott Dunham and Tinamarie Jones, Chris Austin, Benjamin Fleming, Rubens Turci, Joe Larose.

I thank my parents for their encouragement and their confidence in me which kept me going in the many tough times in life. I thank my brother and sister for their encouragement and assistance especially during my research trip to India.

I thank my husband, Ramana, for being patient and supporting me financially and morally throughout all the hard times and my efforts at grad school. Finally, I would like to appreciate the support my son, Aashish, has given me through his innocent smile and uncompromising love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Charts
List of Figures
List of Maps
List of Abbreviations

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND PRIMARY SOURCES.....	1
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. Early Scholarship on Balarāma and Vaiṣṇava Theology..	8
1.3. Significance of the Study of Purāṇas/Methodology.....	22
1.4. Primary Sources.....	27
1.4.1. Hindu Texts.....	27
1.4.2. Jain Texts.....	36
1.5. Overview of the chapters.....	42
CHAPTER II: BALARĀMA IN THE HINDU SOURCES.....	45
SECTION I: INTRODUCTION.....	45
2.1.1. Balarāma in the Hindu Purāṇas.....	45
Section II: <i>BĀLYA</i> : THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF BALARĀMA.....	49
2.2.1 The Birth Of Balarāma	49
2.2.2. The First Version of Balarāma's Birth Story.....	51
2.2.3. The Second Version of the Balarāma's Birth Story	56
2.2.4. Analysis of Second Version of Balarāma's Birth Story...	61
2.3. Family of Balarāma and Early Features Associated with Balarāma	70
2.3.1. Rohiṇī: Celestial Mother.....	71
2.3.2. Nidrā: Ambiguous Sister.....	75
2.3.3. Dual Heroes Rāma -Keśava in Vraj.....	79
SECTION III: <i>KAUMĀRA</i> : YOUNG ADULT LIFE OF BALARĀMA.....	82
3.1.1. Balarāma in Vṛndāvan.....	81
3.2. Dhenuka Story in the Purāṇas.....	88
3.2.1. Nature of the Early Cult of Balarāma from Dhenuka Story	93
3.2.2. Identity of Balarāma in the Dhenuka Story.....	94
3.3. Pralamba Story in the Purāṇas.....	97
3.3.1. The Game and Killing of Pralamba.....	101
3.3.2. The Praise Passage.....	106
3.3.3. Interaction of Balarāma with Tree Cults in the Pralamba	
Episode.....	112
3.4.1. Revelation of Balarāma to Akrūra	115

SECTION IV: <i>YAUVANA</i> : ADULT LIFE OF BALARĀMA	122
4.1. Balarāma in Mathurā.....	122
4.1.1. Balarāma Returns to Vraj.....	123
4.1.2. Balarāma Returns to Vraj in the Purāṇas.....	126
4.1.3. Balarāma's Association with Fertility and Water.....	131
4.1.4. The Significance of Balarāma's bringing Yamunā to Vraj...	136
4.1.5. Early cult of Balarāma and Later Vaiṣṇava identity	140
4.2.1. Defeat of Jarāsandha.....	141
4.2.2. Personality and significance of Balarāma in the defeat of Jarāsandha.....	146
CHAPTER III: BALARĀMA IN JAIN SOURCES.....	154
SECTION I: BALARĀMA IN THE JAIN PURĀṆAS.....	154
3.1. INTRODUCTION.....	152
SECTION II: <i>JANMA</i> : BIRTH OF BALARĀMA.....	161
3.2.1. Marriage of Balarāma's Parents Rohiṇī and Vasudeva.....	161
3.2.2. Analysis of marriage of Balarāma's Parents in Jain tradition	165
3.3.1. The Birth of Balarāma.....	168
3.3.2. Analysis of the Birth Story of Balarāma	170
SECTION III <i>JANMĀNTARAṆI</i> : PAST LIVES OF BALARĀMA	173
3.4.1. Past lives of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa from the HVP.....	174
3.4.2. Past lives of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa from the TSP.....	178
3.4.3. Significance of Balarāma in the past lives.....	179
SECTION IV <i>YAUVANA</i> : ADULT LIFE OF BALARĀMA	185
3.5. Transfer of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa to Vraj.....	185
3.5.1. Transfer of Kṛṣṇa.....	186
3.5.2. Analysis of Transfer of Kṛṣṇa.....	188
3.5.3. Transfer of Balarāma	192
3.5.4. Devaki visits Vraj	196
3.5.5. Balarāma Escorts Kṛṣṇa to Mathurā.....	198
3.5.6. Battles with Jarāsandha.....	202
CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION.....	210
4.1. Conclusion.....	210
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	223
FIGURES.....	237
MAP I Sites of Early Inscriptional and Sculptural Evidence of Balarāma.....	258

LIST OF CHARTS

Chart I	Early Archaeological and Literary Sources of Balarāma.....	9-13
Chart II	The Second Version of Balarāma's Birth Story	59-60
Chart III	Balarāma Kills Dhenuka.....	88-89
Chart IV	Balarāma Kills Pralamba.....	99-100
Chart V	Kāliya and Pralamba Stories.....	102
Chart VI	Revelation of Balarāma to Akrūra.....	117-18
Chart VII	Balarāma's Return to Vraj.....	128-30
Chart VIII	Yamunā in Kāliya and Balarāma's return to Vrajā	137
Chart IX	The Battle with Jarāsandha in the Purāṇas.....	145
Chart X	Marriage of Balarāma's Parents	163-64
Chart XI	Rohiṇī in Jain and Hindu Purāṇa Traditions.....	167
Chart XII	Birth of Balarāma in Jain and Hindu purāṇas.....	170
CHART XIII	Past Lives of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa in the HVP.....	179-80
Chart XIV	Past Lives of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa in the TSP.....	180
Chart XV	Six brothers in the past lives of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa.....	183
Chart XVI	Transfer of Kṛṣṇa to Vraj.....	187-88
Chart XVII	Transfer of Kṛṣṇa in the Jain and Hindu Purāṇa Stories.....	191
Chart XVIII	Transfer of Balarāma in Jain texts.....	193
Chart XIX	Transfer of Balarāma in the Jain and Hindu Purāṇa texts.....	195
Chart XX	Travel to Mathurā in the Jain and Purāṇa Stories.....	200

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1. Petroglyphs of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa from Chilas II. Karl Jettmar, ed., *Rock Inscriptions in the Indus Valley*, Antiquities of Northern Pakistan vol. 1 (Mainz: P. Von Zabern, 1983), Plate 4.
- Figure 2. Obverse of Agathocles Coin from Ai Khanum, Rémy Audouine, Paul Bernard, “Trésore de Monnaies Indiennes et Indo- Grecques D’ Aï Khanoum,” *RN* (1974), figure 1.
- Figure 3. Reverse of Agathocles Coin from Ai Khanum, Rémy Audouin and Paul Bernard, figure 2.
- Figure 4. Balarāma on a Silver Punchmarked Coin datable to the Mauryan Era, preserved in the Mathurā Museum. P.L. Gupta, “Early Coins of the Mathurā region,” Doris M. Srinivasan, ed., *Mathurā: The Cultural Heritage* (Varanasi: American Association of Indian Studies, 1989), illustration 2 of Figure 14.2, pp. 129.
- Figure 5. The half-lion and the half-elephant symbol mounted on a pillar. N.P. Joshi, *Iconography of Balarāma* (New Delhi: Abhinav Prakasan, 1979), figure 1b, pp. 117.
- Figure 6 and Figure 6 a. Front and back illustrations of Balarāma image from Lucknow museum datable to the first half of the 200 B.C.E. N.P. Joshi, pls. 7, 8.
- Figure 7 and 7 a. Front and back of Balarāma from Harisingh Gaur Museum Sāgar datable to last half of 200 B.C. E, N. P. Joshi, pl. 8a and 8b.
- Figure 8. Balarāma from Harisingh Gaur Museum datable to 100 C. E. N.P. Joshi, pl. 8c.
- Figure 9. Balarāma datable to Śuṅga period from Bhāratkala Bhavan Museum Vāraṇāsi, N.P. Joshi, pl.9.
- Figure 10. Ekānamśā triad of Kuṣāṇa period. N.P. Joshi, pl. 14.
- Figure 11. Balarāma and Ekānamśā datable to Kuṣāṇa period. N.P. Joshi, pl. 15.
- Figure 12a, 12b, 12c, Balarāma, Ekānamśā and Vāsudeva images from Devangarh. Arun Kumar Singh, *Archaeology of Magadh Region* (Delhi: Ramanand Vidyabhavan, 1991), pl. XV A, B, C.
- Figure 13. Palm pillar capital datable to Śuṅga period from Lucknow Museum. J.N. Banarjea, *Religion in Art and Archaeology* (Lucknow: University of Lucknow, 1968), pl. I.

- Figure 14. Palm leaf capital from from Mainhai- Kauśāmbi. G.R. Sharma, ed., *Archaeology of Vindhyas and the Gangā Valley*, No. 1 (Allahabad: Department of Ancient Indian History and Archaeology, University of Allahabad, 1980), pp.32.
- Figure 15. Balarāma killing Dhenuka from Mandhal, Mahārāṣṭra. Hans Bakker, “The Manbaus’ Seat on Rāmték hill,” R.S. McGregor, ed., *Devotional Literature in South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.19.
- Figure 16. Balarāma killing Pralamba from Gangetic Valley datable to 600 C.E. Benjamin Preciado-Solis, *The Kṛṣṇa Cycle in the Purāṇas* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), pl.20.
- Figure 17. Balarāma, Dinajpur, V.R.S. Museum, Rajshahi, Medieval period. J. N. Banerjea, *Religion in Art*, pl. XI.
- Figure 18. *Pañcavīra pattika* from Kondamotu, Andhra Pradesh datable to 325 C.E. Ratan Parimoo, *Vaiṣṇavism in Art and Archaeology* (New Delhi: Books and Books, 1989), pl.15.
- Figure 19. *Caturvyūhas* datable to Kuṣāṇa period. N.P. Joshi, *Iconography*, pl.19.
- Figure 20. Balarāma, Kumbha Prabhuvu, Mathurā, Courtesy National Museum, New Delhi. No. 77.193.
- Figure 21. Balarāma datable to early Medieval period, Pāla period. Courtesy National Museum, New Delhi. Acc. No. 64.380.
- Figure 22. Balarāma from Nineteenth Century Tamilnādu. Courtesy National Museum, New Delhi, Acc. No. 81.7.
- Figure 23. Balarāma from Nalanda. Pala Bronze image. Courtesy National museum, Acc. No. 47.36.
- Figure 24. Balarāma, Ninth Century, Bīhar. Courtesy National Museum, New Delhi, Acc. No. 71.228.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Arts Asiatique
ABORI	Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute
AS	Asiatische Studien/ Études Asiatiques
AAA	Archives of Asian Art
BDCRI	Bulletin of the Deccan College Post- Graduate and Research Institute
BEI	Bulletin de Études Indiennes
Bh.pu	Bhāgavata purāṇa
Br.pu	Brahmā purāṇa
CMC	Cauppannamahāpurisacariyam
EAION	Estrato da Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli
EW	East and West
HR	History of Religions
HV	Harivamśa
HVP	Harivamśapurāṇa
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly
IHR	Indian Historical Review
IA	Indian Antiquary
IJJ	Indo-Iranian Journal
IT	Indologica Taurinensia
JA	Journal Asiatique
JAOS	Journal of American Oriental Society
JAIH	Journal of Ancient Indian History

JIP Journal of Indian Philosophy

JRASB Journal of Royal Asiatic Society Bengal

JRAS Bombay Journal of Royal Asiatic Society Bombay Branch

JVS Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies

JIABS Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies

JOIB Journal of Oriental Institute of Baroda

JUB Journal of University of Bombay

Pro. IHC Proceedings of the Indian History Congress

PTAIOC Proceedings of the Transactions of the All India Oriental Conference

SR Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses

TSP Triṣaṣṭīśalākāpuruṣacaritra

UCR University of Ceylon Review

VH Vasudevahindī

Vi.pu Viṣṇu purāṇa

WZKSO Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens und Archiv für Indische
Philosophie

ZDMG Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft

WZKSO AIP Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens und Archiv für
Indische Philosophie

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND PRIMARY SOURCES

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Innumerable are the other feats and exploits (of such a nature) of the mighty Balarāma who is infinite =Ananta / serpent Śeṣa and incomprehensible by nature. He has assumed the form of a mortal being by his own māyā potency.

He who remembers and contemplates the feats of Balarāma, who performed miraculous deeds, both in the morning and the evening, becomes a beloved of the infinite lord Viṣṇu.

Bhāgavata purāṇa.X.79.33-34¹

The portrayal of Balarāma in the above verses from the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* (Bh.pu from now on) represents the culmination of the image of Balarāma in the Vaiṣṇava² sect of Hinduism. According to these verses Balarāma is a form of the minor Vaiṣṇava deity, the divine snake Śeṣa, born on earth as a human being, and worshipping him leads to the

¹ *The Bhāgavata purāṇa*, trans., Ganesh Vasudeo Tagare, Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology volume 10 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), 1752. All the references to the Bh.pu in the present thesis are to this translation, although I have consulted the Sanskrit original wherever necessary.

² The term Vaiṣṇava in fact describes a religious phenomenon much later than what is studied in this thesis. I use this term here to denote the early religious movements, such as *Sāttvata*, *Pañcarātra* and *Bhāgavata* systems, which resulted in what we now know as Vaiṣṇavism. While waiting for a better word to describe these early religious phenomena, I continue to use this generic title that designates all these early religious movements.

realization of Viṣṇu. However, consideration of the petroglyphs from Chilas II³ dated to 50 C.E and numismatic depictions of Balarāma from 2 c B.C.E indicates that this was not always the case. This thesis will argue that Balarāma was not originally a form of Ananta/Śeṣa, but an independent being. He was absorbed into Vaiṣṇavism, where he was initially identified with Viṣṇu as an equal of Kṛṣṇa during the early phase of his worship. Through a careful analysis of religious texts I will show that Balarāma was a multifaceted deity of considerable importance in early Vaiṣṇavism.

I first became interested in Balarāma when I read the book, *Rock Inscriptions in the Indus Valley*⁴, a collection of articles on the antiquities of northwest Pakistan. An article⁵ in this book describes the petroglyphs of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa on the rock cliffs of Chilas II that the German team had studied during their expedition in northwest Pakistan during 1989. In this article, Gérard Fussman mentions that Balarāma is depicted much larger in size than Kṛṣṇa. Moreover, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa hold a similar weapon in their

³ Chilas is the headquarters of the district of the same name in northern Pakistan that lies below the Nangaparvat (now known as Dyamar- derived from the ancient name *Daiva- Meru* meaning “heavenly mount”), the second tallest peak of the Himālayas. It lies 310 miles northeast of Islamabad and 90 miles south of Gilgit along the Karakorum highway. Chilas is 4010 feet above the sea level. The city of Chilas is spread on the highest terrace formed by the Harpan hill. The hillocks with prehistoric and historic carvings have been discovered on the Harpan hill just at the mouth of the river Buṭoga. On the lowest hillock are the hill outcrops that are utilized to sketch the carvings. The easternmost of these boulders is known as Chilas II and the westernmost as Chilas III. A.H. Dani, *Chilas: The City of Nanga Parvat (Dyamar)* (Islamabad: Quaid-I- Azam University, 1983), 1-11.

⁴ Karl Jettmar, ed., *Rock Inscriptions in the Indus Valley*, Antiquities of Northern Pakistan, Reports and Studies volume 1 (Mainz: P. Von Zabern, 1989). I thank Dr. Phyllis Granoff for giving me this book with the suggestion that it contained interesting information about Balarāma.

⁵ Gérard Fussman, “Les Inscriptions Kharoṣṭī de la Plaine de Chilas,” Karl Jettmar, ed., *Rock Inscriptions*, 1-41. Fussman dates the inscriptions that accompany the rock depictions of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa to 50 C.E.

respective right hands, while the weapons in their left hands differ. In this hand each shows his characteristic weapons. Balarāma holds the plow and Kṛṣṇa holds the wheel in his left hand. I consider this significant for understanding the role of Balarāma in the early phase of their evolution; both gods are shown holding a similar weapon that can either be identified as a pestle or a staff but not as a club⁶. This shows that the characteristic attributes of Balarāma have been standardized by this period, which was not the case with Kṛṣṇa, who later does not hold a pestle. The depictions of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa here are very close to the representations of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa on the coin of the Indo-Greek king Agathocles⁷, which is dated to the 200 B.C.E. Another punch marked

⁶ Although both the images are depicted as holding the same weapon in the same style, Jettmar identified the one held by Balarāma as a pestle and the one held by Kṛṣṇa as a club following the identification of Dani (A.H. Dani, 1983, 117-120). I differ with his identification of this weapon as club, because the regular depiction of the club shows it with the hand held down and the club touching the ground. The pestle however is depicted as held up in a hand raised above the shoulder similar to the Chilas II depictions. I do not wish to enter into a detailed argument here on the weapons of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. However, I would like to suggest that the earliest weapon associated with Balarāma is a pestle. The weapons held up in the hands of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are similar in appearance and are held up like a pestle. Therefore I think, the weapons can be identified in both the cases as a pestle rather than variously as a pestle in the case of Balarāma and a club in the case of Kṛṣṇa. (See figure 1 of the present thesis.)

⁷ Rémy Audouin and Paul Bernard study this coin legend and its depiction in detail. They date the coin of the Indo-Greek king Agathocles to 180-170 B.C. E. Balarāma is depicted on this coin holding the same weapons, as we see in the Chilas II petroglyphs. But significantly, Kṛṣṇa's right hand holds a pear shaped object, identified as a conch, *Śankha* and the wheel in the left hand: this coin represents Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu, but not clearly Kṛṣṇa. (Audouin, Bernard, 21) (See figure 2 and 3 of the present thesis) Rémy Audouin, Paul Bernard, "Trésore de Monnaies Indiennes et Indo-Grecques D'Ai Khanoum (Afghanistan)," *Revue Numismatique* 16 (1974), 7-32. On the obverse of this coin Balarāma is depicted with his usual weapons. On the reverse Kṛṣṇa is depicted. The importance of Balarāma is indicated here by depicting him on the obverse and in bigger size while Kṛṣṇa is depicted on the reverse in smaller size than Balarāma. The official legend is written on the obverse in Greek which states *basileos* on the right side and *Agathacleos* on the left side of Balarāma, meaning (coin) of the king Agathocles. The Prakrit legend on the reverse records *rājane* on the right *agathuklayeśa* on the left, meaning (coin) of the king Agathocles. The group of six coins from Ai Khanum is attributed to Agathocles, who ruled between 180-165 B.C.E. A.K. Narain, "The Two Hindu Divinities on the Coins of Agathocles from Ai Khanum," *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India* 35 (1973), 73-77.

coin of Mauryan period now preserved in the Mathurā museum is identified as depicting Balarāma due to the similarity of posture and weapons as seen on the Agathocles coin⁸.

The depictions of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa at Chilas II are also accompanied by inscriptions containing their names as Rāma-Kṛsh (the last letter in this inscription is missing). The inscription and the petroglyphs are said to belong to the same date. On palaeographic grounds the inscription is dated to 50 C.E, prior to the rule of the Kuṣāṇa king Kaniṣka. On the basis of this evidence Fussman⁹ remarks that Balarāma must have been a distinguished and more significant deity than Kṛṣṇa during the early period, and I was drawn to the subject of Balarāma, because in later Vaiṣṇavism, Balarāma is depicted as a minor deity of secondary importance, while Kṛṣṇa is the central figure. This propelled me to consult other early literary and archaeological sources and to study scholarly works on the portrayal of early Balarāma. During this research I discovered that the literary sources have not been adequately used to study the evolution of Balarāma in Vaiṣṇavism, although archaeological sources have been extensively utilized. When I consulted the stories of Balarāma from different Vaiṣṇava and Jain texts, my hypothesis that Balarāma was a significant deity in early Vaiṣṇavism gained support. I was able to

⁸ P.L. Gupta discusses one of the rarest punch marked coins datable to the Mauryan era now preserved in the Mathurā museum (Mathurā Museum Coin Register No. 578/438). This coin depicts a person holding a plow and a pestle or a stick in similar way as depicted on the Agathocles coin noted above. On the basis of these weapons Gupta identified the image on this coin as Balarāma. If this coin is accepted as representing Balarāma, he will be one of the earliest Vaiṣṇava deities to be represented on the punch marked coins of ancient India. Gupta argues that these coins continued to be in circulation up to 100-200 C.E, even though their minting had been stopped in 200-175 B.C.E. (Gupta, 172) (See figure 4 of the present thesis). P.L. Gupta, “Early Coins of Mathurā Region,” Doris M. Srinivasan, ed., *Mathurā: The Cultural Heritage* (Varanasi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1989), 124-140.

⁹ Fussman, “Les Inscriptions,” 2-7.

identify modifications and alterations in the stories of Balarāma in these texts, which could be best explained by assuming that he was an important deity whose popularity declined as his personality underwent changes over time¹⁰.

In the complex mythology of Balarāma preserved in the purāṇas there are passages that refer to Balarāma as a form of Viṣṇu equal to Kṛṣṇa (HV.58). These passages indicate that Balarāma was once a figure of some importance. It is unimaginable that Vaiṣṇavism would otherwise have so meticulously preserved his mythology (amidst numerous confusions) by making him equal to its central deity Kṛṣṇa and given such a significant position if he were an insignificant and unknown god. Various identification doctrines (*vyūha*, *avatāra*, *mūrti*)¹¹ that connect Balarāma to Viṣṇu played a major role in accommodating changes to his position in Vaiṣṇavism. Further early evidence indicates that initially Balarāma was a multifaceted deity with significant status (chart I. Early archaeological and literary sources of Balarāma). As Vaiṣṇavism evolved his stories were changed and new stories were added in conformity with the new theological changes. A closer study of the mythology reveals the alterations to the position and personality of Balarāma in early Vaiṣṇavism. This thesis seeks to demonstrate that there

¹⁰ While the absolute chronology of the purāṇa texts still eludes us, efforts to establish a relative chronology have been more successful. Based on the textual similarities and differences Kirfel grouped the texts into groups representing varied chronological stages. Willibald Kirfel, *Das Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa: Versuch einer Textgeschichte* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1927), XXI-XLVIII. See also, Adriaensen, H.T. Bakker, H. Isaacson, eds., *The Skandapurāṇa, Critically Edited with Prologomena and English Synopsis* (Gröningen: E. Forsten, 1998-), 26. They accept the broad outlines of Kirfel's chronology.

¹¹ *Vyūhas* are different from the *avatāras* in the purpose of their manifestation. The *avatāras* manifest in the evolved world and are linked to reducing the burden of the earth, while the *vyūhas* are involved in the process of creation, absorption and recreation of the world. Kṛṣṇa becomes an *avatāra*, while Balarāma identified with Samkarṣaṇa is more commonly treated as a *vyūha* in late Vaiṣṇavism.

is evidence, even within this carefully rewritten corpus of sectarian religious texts, of Balarāma as an important figure in his own right.

In the *Harivaṃśa* (HV from now on) Balarāma is a deity associated with fertility, food and abundance, and he is also a protector of the people¹². Balarāma is not described in this text as a *kṣatriya*/warrior in the sense of the term as an empire - building warrior. Though a notable wrestler in the HV, his warrior skills serve to protect the people of Vraj rather than to expand the kingdom. However, in the other purāṇas under study and especially in the Bh.pu, these early concepts associated with Balarāma are relegated to the background. He is depicted here with a new personality as a teacher of Vaiṣṇava doctrine, or *sāttvata dharma*, protector of brāhmanical *dharma*, and is described in terms similar to the other religious preceptors such as Uddhava (to be studied at length in chapter II. 4.1.1-4.1.5 of this thesis). In later texts his connection to fertility and his role as protector are altered to present him as a warrior hero, one who battles with conventional weapons like other warriors. My argument in this thesis is that these modifications in fact suggest that the stories of Balarāma from the HV have changed in later purāṇas in tandem with later theological developments in Vaiṣṇavism.

It is also interesting to note that the Jain texts, except the *Vasudevahinī* (VH) and the *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* (HVP), while preserving for Balarāma a significant position, depict

¹² The fertility of Balarāma is not connected to childbirth, but to food and agriculture and in that he provides resources such as water, grazing grounds, groves etc. (see chapter II of this thesis for detailed discussion).

him in this image of protector, teacher and follower of Jain *dharma* including non-violence rather than as a god of fertility, food, abundance, and protection. The aspect of protection in the personality of Balarāma forms part of the VH and the HVP stories. He is the protector of Kṛṣṇa, while Kṛṣṇa is vulnerable. The HVP further reinforces this image of Balarāma by including additional stories that depict Balarāma as a protector. However, these stories were quickly forgotten in later Jain texts, which preserve only a short story of Balarāma. In fact, the *Cauppannamahāpurīṣacariyaṃ* (CMC) and the *Triṣaṣṭīśālākāpuruṣacaritra* (TSP) display a trend that indicates an image of Balarāma that is closer to the one found in the later Hindu purāṇas (to be studied in detail in chapter III).

This study attempts to trace the process of alterations in the significance and personality of Balarāma from earlier texts to the more recent ones. In other words, such a comparative study of the stories of Balarāma allows us to gain insight into one aspect of the formation of Vaiṣṇavism, which grew by assimilating other existing deities into its fold, as it developed a coherent and complex theology. This was not always accomplished smoothly and has left numerous confusions and gaps in the narratives concerning Balarāma. Such confusions and gaps can be seen as indications that the tradition is adopting or changing an earlier story to meet new needs. The sources concerning Balarāma are varied. The Hindu and Jain religious texts preserve stories of Balarāma that can be evaluated against one another to gain an insight into the alterations in the characteristic features of Balarāma during the early phase of the evolution of his

cult. These texts span roughly over a period of a thousand years and present versions that are different from each other in details, events and treatment of the subject of Balarāma stories . Thus in this thesis I consider multiple versions of the stories of Balarāma from different texts of the two ancient religions of India, which date from different periods, to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the depiction of Balarāma. A description of the selected textual sources for the present study and significance of the different versions of the stories of Balarāma is undertaken in section 1.4 of this chapter.

1.2. EARLY SCHOLARSHIP ON BALARĀMA AND VAIṢṆAVA THEOLOGY

In the following pages, I will survey scholarly works on Balarāma and Vaiṣṇavism to situate my thesis in terms of current scholarship. Archaeological sources, although limited, were used extensively in early scholarship to understand the origin of Balarāma. A synopsis, in chart form, of early archaeological and literary evidence of Balarāma is followed by a discussion of modern scholarship on Balarāma.

CHART I

EARLY ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND LITERARY SOURCES OF BALARĀMA

SOURCE	CONTENT	REMARKS
Petroglyphs from Chilas II ¹³	Depictions of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa followed by Kharoṣṭī inscriptions stating their names, which was the basis for dating these depictions to 50 C.E (discussed above in pages 2-3).	Discussed in the previous pages 2-3.
Coin of Indo-Greek king Agathocles ¹⁴	Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are depicted on the obverse and reverse respectively. This coin is datable to the early 200 B.C.E, which is contemporary to the stone images of Balarāma although similar images of Kṛṣṇa of such an early date are yet to come to light.	Discussed on page 3 above.
Punch marked coins ¹⁵	A solitary punch marked coin from Mathurā museum depicts the image of Balarāma while the other punch marked coins are assigned to Balarāma based on the half lion-half elephant symbol depicted on them.	Mathurā museum punch marked coin is discussed on page 3 above.

¹³ See footnotes 3-6.

¹⁴ I think that the image depicted on the obverse of this coin represents *vyūha* Vāsudeva rather than Kṛṣṇa, the *avatāra*. See footnote 7. The identification of these early images had been controversial. However, the images depicted with the conch or an object identified as pear shaped object, seen in the above coin depiction, are commonly identified as *vyūha* Vāsudeva. Numerous Kuṣāṇa period images with four arms holding a conch in the upper right hand and wheel in the upper left hand have been identified as representing Viṣṇu or Vāsudeva, the *vyūha*, variously. Srinivasan discusses a number of these images identifying them under the composite name, Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. Doris M. Srinivasan, “Vaiṣṇava Art and Iconography at Mathurā,” Doris M. Srinivasan, ed., *Mathurā*, 384-386.

¹⁵ Punch marked coins (except the one in the Mathurā museum) do not depict Balarāma, but are assigned to him based on the evidence of the half lion - half elephant symbol depicted on them. A silver punch marked coin, now preserved in the British museum, depicts a half lion - half elephant symbol mounted on a pillar. It is inscribed with a Brāhmī legend, *vṛṣṇi rājaṇa gaṇasya trātarasya*. Based on the evidence of this legend Devendra Handa dates this coin to 100 C.E. The Brāhmī legend shows that it had been issued by the Vṛṣṇi tribal republic of Punjab region. The legend is interpreted differently as representing Kṛṣṇa or Balarāma. Handa argues that this coin as well as other copper coins found in the

Mora well inscription ¹⁶ : This inscription is recovered from a well in the village Mora located seven miles to the west of Mathurā in Uttar Pradesh state. This inscription is dated to 10-25 C.E. This inscription is composed in Sanskrit mixed with Prakrit written in Brāhmī script.	This inscription mentions the installation of the images of the Pañcavīras of Vṛṣṇis in a temple by a lady called Toṣā during the reign of the Mahākṣatrapa king Śoḍāsa son of Mahākṣatrapa Rājūvula.	The identification of the five heroes of this inscription has been controversial ¹⁷ . Further, the identification is based on literary sources that date at least 500 years later than the inscription.
Ghosūṇḍi inscription: Ghosūṇḍi ¹⁸ is a village near Nagarī in Chitorgadh district in Rājasthan. This inscription is dated to	It mentions the installation of stone enclosure. <i>Nārāyaṇa Vātaka</i> for the worship of Bhagavān Saṃkarṣaṇa and	Clearly this inscription mentions a stone enclosure for the worship of Saṃkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva, but does not provide any further

Sunet region of Punjab with similar legend and the half lion - half elephant symbol indicate Kṛṣṇa. (Handa, 68). Devendra Handa, “Vṛṣṇi Copper Coins from Punjab,” *Studies in Indian Coins and Seals* (Delhi: Sudeep Prakashan, 1985), 66-68. However, N.P. Joshi dates this coin to 100 B.C.E, and argues that the half lion-half elephant indicates Balarāma, based on the Jain textual evidence of the divine dreams, seen by the mothers of *Baladevas* when they are pregnant. These dreams include visions of a lion and an elephant, the full moon and the ocean. N.P. Joshi, *Iconography of Balarāma* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1979), 22 (see figure 5 in this thesis).

¹⁶ *Mahākṣatrapasa rājūvulasa putrasa svāmi(sya mahākṣatrapasya śoḍāsasya saṃvatsare)... bhavatāṃ vṛṣṇiṇāṃ pañcavīrāṇāṃ pratimāḥ śailadevagr(he sthāpitāḥ)...yastoṣ(ā)yāḥ śailāṃ śrīmadgṛhamatulamudadhasamadhāra (?)...ārcadeśāṃ (?)... śailāṃ pañca jvalata iva parama vapuṣā* D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilisation* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1965), 122. J.P. H. Vogel, *Catalogue of the Archaeological Museum at Mathurā* (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1971), 184.

¹⁷ Based on the source of Vāyupurāṇa 97.1-2. J. N. Banerjea and V.S. Agrawala identify them as the Vaiṣṇava deities, Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Sāmba. J.N. Banerjea, “The Holy Pañcavīras of the Vṛṣṇis,” *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* 10 (1942), 65-68. V.S. Agrawala, *Indian Art* (Varanasi: Prithvi Prakashan, 1965), 235. Ramaprasad Chanda attempted a variant reading of the word *Vṛṣṇiṇāṃ* as *Vṛṣṇena* following a modified reading of J.P.H. Vogel and identified the Pañcavīras in this inscription as the Pāṇḍava brothers. Ramaprasad Chanda, *Archaeology and Vaiṣṇava Tradition*, Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India No. 5 (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, reprint 1998. 1st ed. 1920), 166. H. Lüders identified the Pañcavīras from Jain sources as Baladeva, Anāḍṛṣṭi, Akrūra, Sāraṇa and Vidūratha. He concluded that they are worshipped in the Jain religious context here. Heinrich Lüders, “Seven Brāhmī Inscriptions from Mathurā and its Vicinity,” *Epigraphia Indica* XXIV (1938-39), 196-198. John Rosenfield regards the five Vṛṣṇi heroes of the above inscription to be five ancient kings of Mathurā. John Rosenfield, *Dynastic Arts of the Kuṣāṇas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 151.

¹⁸ The text of this inscription is reconstructed from two similar inscriptions discovered in Ghosūṇḍi and Hāthibādā in Chitorgadh district of Rājasthan. (*kārito ayaṃ rājñā bhāgavate) na gājāyanena pārāśarī putreṇa sa(rvatātena aśvamedha yā) jinā bhagava(d)bhyāṃ saṃkarṣaṇavāsudevābhyāṃ (anīhatābhyāṃ sarveśvarā) bhyāṃ pūjā śilā prākāro nārāyaṇa-vātaka*. (The text in the parenthesis represents the words from Hāthibādā inscription not readable from Ghosūṇḍi inscription). D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 90-91. D. C. Sircar considers this stone enclosure (Nārāyaṇa Vātaka) to be the structure now known as Hāthibādā at Nagarī. D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 91, footnote 4.

second half of the 100 B.C.E. This inscription is composed in Sanskrit mixed with Prakrit.	Vāsudeva, invincible lords of all, was installed by the Bhāgavata king of the line of Gāja, Sarvatāta, victorious son of Parāśari who has performed <i>Aśvamedha</i> .	information about these deities.
Nānāghaṭ inscription: Nānāghaṭ cave is located in the western ghāts in a pass leading from Konkan to Junnār in Poona district of Mahārāṣṭra. This inscription is dated to second half of 100 B.C.E.	It begins with salutations to Saṃkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva, Candra, Sūrya and the four powerful <i>lokapālas</i> , Yama, Varuṇa, Kubera and Vāsava ¹⁹ .	The context of this inscription is not clear. Especially the inclusion of Saṃkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva with the guardians of the four quarters (<i>lokapālas</i>) cannot be explained in the Vaiṣṇava context in which they are predominantly worshipped later ²⁰ . Specific inscriptions concerning Balarāma are yet to come to light, although art history preserves numerous early sculptures of Balarāma.
Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya ²¹	1. May the strength of Kṛṣṇa accompanied by Saṃkarṣaṇa increase. 2. Temple of Dhanapati, Rāma and Keśava.	Except for the mention of the names of these deities, this evidence is not helpful to understand the early cult of these deities.
Arthaśāstra ²²	An agent appearing as an ascetic with shaven head or with matted locks and as a devotee of god Saṃkarṣaṇa, should reach (the forest robbers) and distribute the alcoholic liquid.	Although this reference provides evidence of the use of spiritous drinks in association with Balarāma, the information is out of context as it is mentioned as an advice to spies rather than as historical data.

¹⁹ *Siddham...no dhammasa namo īdasa namo saṃkasaṇa vāsudevāna camda sūrānaṃ (mahi)mā(va)tānaṃ catumnaṃ caṃ lokapālānaṃ yamavarūṇakuberavāsavānaṃ namo*. D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 192.

²⁰ The connection between the dynasties of the Kṣatrapas of Mathurā and the Śātavānas of the Deccan region is unknown. However, appearance of the names Saṃkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva in similar context in their inscriptions is notable. John Rosenfield, however offered an alternate explanation regarding Saṃkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva as the ancestral deities of Śātavāhanas in similar context to the Pañcavīras of Mathurā. It is interesting to note that in the Ghosūṇḍi and Nānāghaṭ inscriptions Saṃkarṣaṇa is mentioned first followed by Kṛṣṇa. John Rosenfield, *Dynastic Arts*, 152-53.

²¹ *Saṃkarṣaṇa dvitīyasya balaṃ kṛṣṇasya vardhatāmiti-Mṛdangaśankhatūṇavaḥ pṛdamaṃ danti samsadi prāsāde dhanapatirāmakeśavānāṃ*- F. Kielhorn, *The Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali* volume 1 (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller Verlag, reprint 1970, 1st ed. 1880-85), 426, 435-36. Bhandarkar dates *Mahābhāṣya* to 400 B.C.E. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Sects* (Varanasi: Indological Book House, reprint 1965, 1st ed. Strassburg: Trubner, 1913), 13.

²² *Saṃkarṣaṇadaivatīyovā mundaḥaṭilavyaṇjanaḥ pravahaṇakarmaṇā madanarasayogenātisamdhyāt. Arthaśāstra* II. 13.3.54 R. P. Kangle, *The Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra* Part II (Bombay: University of Bombay, 2nd ed. 1972, 1st ed. 1963), 485. The dating of *Arthaśāstra* had been

Pāli Niddesa ²³	In this list Balarāma and Vāsudeva are mentioned as deities along with animals and birds.	The context of the appearance of the names of Balarāma and Vāsudeva together with animals and birds and other deities is not clear.
Early images of Balarāma ²⁴	Four early images of Balarāma were discovered from various places in Uttar Pradesh datable to 200 B.C.E-100 C.E.	All these images have snake hoods on their heads and wherever the hands are preserved they carry the characteristic weapons of Balarāma, the plow and pestle.
Early Ekānamśā triads ²⁵	Four Ekānamśā triads were discovered in Mathurā and its surrounding regions.	Balarāma is always depicted on the right side of Ekānamśā and he is in larger size when compared to Kṛṣṇa, who is depicted on the left side of the goddess. The ambiguity of relationship of the goddess to the gods in this triad is said to indicate her status as independent goddess before being placed in the kinship triad.

controversial. However, it is generally accepted that it had been written by Viṣṇugupta = Cāṇakya / Kauṭilya in the court of the Mauryan king Candragupta (321-297 B.C.E). The text is dated to 300 B.C.E, although it is accepted that it might have been subjected to additions later on. Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 218-225.

²³ *Mahāniddesa, Suddhaṭṭhakasuttaniddesa*, eds., L. de La Vallée Poussin, E. J. Thomas (London: Pali Text Society, 1978), 89, 92. Bhandarkar dates *Mahāniddesa* to 400 B.C.E. R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism*, 3. Jaiswal dates *Mahāniddesa* to 100 C.E. Suvira Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism* (Vaiṣṇavism from 200 B.C to A.D. 500) (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967), 59, 72.

²⁴ The earliest of these images was discovered in Jānsuti near Mathurā. This image is dated to the first half of 200 B.C.E based on the iconographic features characteristic of early Śūṅga art. This image is preserved in the Lucknow museum at present (see figures 6, 6a in the present thesis). Two images of Balarāma datable to the second half of 200 B.C.E were discovered in Tūmain, Sāgar district of the former Gwalior state. These images are preserved in the Harisingh Gaur Museum in Sāgar (see figures 7-8 in this thesis). A bust of Balarāma image was discovered at Ādikeśava Ghāt in Vāraṇasī, now preserved in the Bhāratkalā Bhavan museum in Vāraṇasī, dated to pre-Kuṣāṇa period, slightly later than the above images (see figure 9 in this thesis). N.P. Joshi, *Iconography*, 25. Bigger considers the identification of these early images ambiguous since their characteristics overlap with those of the early nāga images unearthed in Mathurā and its surrounding regions. Andreas Bigger, *Balarāma im Mahābhārata*, Beiträge zur Indologie 30 (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 1998), 7.

²⁵ The following article is a comprehensive study of the story and art of Ekānamśā triads. André Couture, Charlotte Schmid “The *Harivaṃśa*, the Goddesses Ekānamśā, and the Iconography of the Vṛṣṇi Triads,” *Journal of American Oriental Society* 121.2 (2001), 173-192. Joshi lists four of these triads, now preserved in Mathurā Museum dated between 100-200 C.E. N. P. Joshi, *Iconography*, 75-77. These Ekānamśā triads are very small and measure between 6-7.5 mm, and are carved on red sandstone. Another curious Ekānamśā triad is carved on a Śiva linga from Nānda near Puṣkar in Rājasthān dated to 300 C.E. On one side of the Śiva linga is a carving of Viṣṇu, while the remaining three sides are utilized for carving

Clay objects ²⁶	A solitary clay image of Balarāma measuring 2 mm is preserved in Mathurā museum at present datable to 200 B.C.E. It is said to indicate the popularity of this deity during 200 B.C.E. Numerous clay seals depicting the half lion - half elephant indicate the prevalence of the cult of Balarāma.	
----------------------------	---	--

As described above the early evidence concerning Balarāma is cryptic and limited although more widespread and diverse than other Vaiṣṇava deities including Kṛṣṇa, it therefore provides only a partial understanding of Balarāma. In fact, inscriptions naming Balarāma as opposed to Saṃkarṣaṇa, another of his names in our texts, have yet to come to light. These early sources need to be supplemented by a study of later textual sources. However, what these archaeological sources can tell is that the worship of Balarāma/Saṃkarṣaṇa was not confined to Mathurā and its surrounding area, as was initially thought, but had spread to Chilas II in the northwest, to Vāranāśi in the east and to Mahārāṣṭra in the southwest of India.

the Ekānamśā triad, Balarāma, Ekānamśā and Vāsudeva. Bronze images of Ekānamśā triads are discovered from Devangarh in Gaya district of Bihār and from Imadpur in Uttar Pradesh now preserved in Patna Museum. P. L. Gupta, “Ekānamśā and her images,” *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* LIV (1968), 240-242. Srinivasan lists an interesting specimen of Ekānamśā triads carved on a weight stone based on the information provided by prof. J.E. Van Lohuizen- de Leeuw, who had seen it in the Pakistani collection. D. M. Srinivasan, “Vaiṣṇava Art,” *Mathurā*, 390, note 10. (see figures 10-12 in this thesis for some Ekānamśā triads).

²⁶ A number of clay seals depicting the half lion - half elephant on a pillar are procured from Punjab region. Based on this evidence Handa argues that the worship of *Pañcavīras* flourished in this region into 200 -100 B.C.E. On the basis of a seal discovered at Sunet, with the legend, “*jaya pañcalaya*” along with a half lion - half elephant symbol, he argues that a temple of the five heroes existed in Sunet. Devendra Handa, “Seals and Sealings from Punjab: A Study,” *Studies in Indian Coins*, 121. Saraswati dates the seals of Vṛṣṇis to 300-500 C.E based on palaeographic analysis. Swami Omanand Saraswati, “Vṛṣṇi Rājanya Gaṇa ke Mudraṅk,” (Hindi) *Journal of Numismatic Society of India* 35 (1973), 95-100.

Many early scholarly works do not focus on the study of Balarāma exclusively but utilize the above sources to understand early Vaiṣṇavism. Nonetheless, in the process these studies include some remarks about Balarāma. One of the predominant theories regarding the origin of Vaiṣṇava deities is their origin from a ‘hero’ cult. Underlying these studies is the belief that the early Vaiṣṇava deities lived as humans in the past. This theory accepts their presentation in the mythology, which connects them to the Vṛṣṇis, the rulers of Mathurā region. R.G. Bhandarkar, through a study of inscriptions of Ghosūṇḍi and Mora in collaboration with the stories of the M.Bh, suggested that Kṛṣṇa and the other Vṛṣṇi heroes were *kṣatriya* leaders²⁷ before they were deified as *vyūhas* in early Vaiṣṇavism. He proposes the origin of Vaiṣṇava deities, Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and others in a new cult, which was later enriched by *Pañcarātra*, *Bhāgavata* and *Sāttvata* theologies. Thus for him the origin of Vaiṣṇava deities is a combination of a ‘hero’ tradition and Vaiṣṇava theology. Furthermore, Bhandarkar proposes that the worship of Kṛṣṇa evolved as part of a new theistic system that was different from the Vedas and Upaniṣads.

Bhandarkar considered Vāsudeva and Kṛṣṇa to be two different persons contributing to the development of this new theistic system. He understands Vāsudeva, not as a patronymic, meaning son of Vasudeva, but as the name of a person belonging to

²⁷ R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism*, 1-38. Numerous studies followed arguing against or in support of the theories proposed by Bhandarkar. Here I do not wish to enter into argument about his theories, but I review it in order to understand the limited use of sources on Balarāma, so typical of the early scholarship on Vaiṣṇavism.

the Vṛṣṇi clan, who founded the devotional religion. The followers of Kṛṣṇa, Kanhāyanas, followed another philosophical system which was brought into the devotional religion of Vāsudeva by identifying it as the *gotra* name of Kṛṣṇa, their founder. He says that Nārāyaṇīya indicates two stages in the development of this religion of Vāsudeva and Kanhāyanas. According to him the first stage is marked by sacrifices and centered on Hari while the second stage marks the philosophical refinement promulgated by Citraśikhandins with their religion centered on Vāsudeva and his brother Saṃkarṣaṇa, son Pradyumna and grandson Aniruddha. He further proposes that this religion evolved further as Vāsudeva, the founder of this religion has been identified with Nārāyaṇa, the primeval *puruṣa*, Viṣṇu the Vedic god and helper of Indra and Gopāla Kṛṣṇa the child god of the Abhiras. His study focussed on understanding the development of Vaiṣṇavism as a composite religion of followers of Vāsudeva (devotional religion centered on the Vṛṣṇi heroes), Kanhāyanas (followers of Kṛṣṇa) and cowherd god Kṛṣṇa (local religion of the Abhīras, the nomadic tribe). He projected these resulting theories from the study of Kṛṣṇa stories on the remaining deities of Vaiṣṇavism, without undertaking any further study of the individual stories. However, a careful study of the stories of Balarāma does not support the evolution of Balarāma as a heroic deity, in the sense of the term as *kṣatriya* or warrior. Balarāma is indeed a notable wrestler in these stories, but he participated only in direct combats necessary for the protection of his people (to be studied in detail in chapter II. 3-4).

The theory of origin of Vaiṣṇava deities from a hero cult is taken a step further by J.N. Banerjea²⁸. He suggests that the *vīravāda* (hero cult), the first stage of early Vaiṣṇavism, attributed primacy to Balarāma, which is indicated by the appearance of the name Saṃkarṣaṇa first in the early inscriptions from Ghosūṇḍi and Nānāghaṭ. He argues that the worship of Balarāma existed independently during 200 B.C. E – 100 C.E, as indicated by sculptural representations of Balarāma. He further suggests that as the *vīravāda* evolved into *vyūhavāda* (cult of *vyūhas* or emanations), Balarāma was relegated to the second position identified with Saṃkarṣaṇa, the second *vyūha*. In this study Banerjea makes the assumption that the *vīravāda* precedes the *vyūhavāda* in the evolution of early Vaiṣṇavism. However, literary evidence does not support the theory that the significance of Balarāma declined with the prominence of *vyūha* theory in Vaiṣṇavism. On the contrary, recent studies of the Nārāyaṇīya section of the M.Bh have established that Saṃkarṣaṇa retained his important position among the *vyūhas*²⁹ and was equal to Vāsudeva during the early phase. Although I agree with Banerjea with regard to

²⁸ J.N. Banerjea, *Religion in Art and Archaeology* (Lucknow: University of Lucknow, 1968), 9-18. John Rosenfield argues that Saṃkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva were invoked in the context of ancestor worship in the Nānāghaṭ inscription of Nāganika and that the five heroes of the Mora well inscription were the deified legendary heroes of Vṛṣṇis. See footnote 20. However, I think that the heroes invoked in this inscription are mythical heroes and not historical persons. As we have already noted above with regard to the inscriptions of Ghosūṇḍi and Nānāghaṭ, different unrelated dynasties claim their descent from the same mythical lineage attributed to these deities. In view of the numerous dynasties claiming mythical descent from deities, it is difficult to know the exact history of the deities listed in the inscriptions and purāṇas, and their actual connection to the historical dynasties of ancient India. In this regard I agree with Hildebrandt who said that the history was projected backwards on mythology rather than mythology being derived from history and he ruled out the assumption that Kṛṣṇa and other heroes of these stories might have been historical figures. Alf Hildebrandt, “Kṛṣṇa at Mathurā,” Doris M. Srinivasan, ed., *Mathurā*, 93-102.

²⁹ Reinhold Grünendahl, “Zur Stellung des Nārāyaṇīya im Mahābhārata,” Reinhold Grünendahl, Angelika Maliner, Thomas Oberlies, Peter Schreiner, ed., *Nārāyaṇīya-Studien*, Purāṇa Research Publications, Tübingen, volume 6 (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 1997), 197-240.

the early significance of Balarāma, in my research I try to show that the concept of hero is not original to the identity of Balarāma, but grafted on to the existing stories.

Grünendahl³⁰ departs from the hero theory and maintains that the *vyūha* names existed as philosophical terms separate from the Vṛṣṇi *vīras* (heroes of Vṛṣṇi clan), and that the name Vāsudeva was not a patronymic in the earlier stage. The philosophical term became a patronymic by changing the name of Kṛṣṇa's father from Ānakadundubhi to Vasudeva. Grünendahl suggests that these two terms, the patronymic Vāsudeva and the *vyūha* name Vāsudeva, were identified as one and the same at some stage in the evolution of *Pañcarātra* or *Bhāgavata* theology. He sees this identification as a step in the long process of integrating two personalities of different origin, viz. Vāsudeva and Kṛṣṇa Gopāla. Thus he proposes the independent existence of *vyūhas* and Vṛṣṇi *vīras* initially. There is a lot of merit to the combination theory for understanding the origin of a deity's identity. Hence I will briefly study similar scholarly theories of origin of Balarāma here.

Other scholars have proposed that Balarāma originated as a composite deity from a mixture of two or more deities. Ruben³¹ proposes that Balarāma was derived from a combination of the world snake Śeṣa and a hero. He said, the serpent identity also

³⁰ Reinhold Grünendahl, *Viṣṇudharmāḥ Precepts for the worship of Viṣṇu*, Part 3 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1989), 41.

³¹ Walter Ruben, *Kṛṣṇa: Konkardanz und Kommentar der Motive seines Heldenlebens*, Istanbul: Istanbulischer Schriften 17 (Istanbul: Istanbulischer Schriften, reprint 1944, 1st ed. 1941), 44, 55-56.

connects Balarāma to farmers, as serpents are worshipped for fertility. Thus for him, the major characteristics of Balarāma are derived from a serpent deity worshipped by farmers combined with heroic traits. Many scholars have supported the partial identity of Balarāma as a serpent deity.

Early studies invariably connected Balarāma to a nāga or serpent cult, as he is depicted in a manner similar to the nāgas³² with snake hoods. In fact, the origin of Balarāma as a nāga is advocated by one of the earliest studies. J.P.H. Vogel³³ concludes that the serpent cult prevalent in the Mathurā region during 500 B.C. E influenced the worship of Balarāma. On the basis of prevalence of nāga worship in the Mathurā region during the early centuries of the current era and due to the similarities between the nāga and Balarāma images, and the similar features associated with them such as water and agriculture, Vogel proposes that the worship of Balarāma developed as part of nāga cult. Similar to Ruben, he sees the worship of Balarāma as an agricultural deity as a notable feature that connects him to the nāgas. He said that the mythical personage of Baladeva was developed from a nāga lord, Baladeva. In his opinion the worship of nāga Baladeva was “absorbed into Kṛṣṇaism,” when the cult of Kṛṣṇa rose into prominence.

³² Joshi, *Iconography*, 32-35.

³³ J.P. H. Vogel, “Nāga Worship in Ancient India,” *Archaeological Survey of India Annual Report* 1908-09 (Calcutta: Government of India, 1912), 159-163; Sadashiv Gorakshar, “Some Inscribed Balarāma Images from Eastern India in Victoria and Albert Museum,” *Lalit Kala* 19 (1979), 27-32. Gorakshar understands Balarāma as a bucolic or harvest deity popular during the Kuṣāṇa period.

Although numerous works have been devoted to the study of Kṛṣṇa, only a few are exclusively devoted to Balarāma. I will consider the works devoted exclusively to Balarāma in the following pages.

Suvira Jaiswal³⁴, in her paper on Balarāma, examines the historical works of Greek writers such as Arrian, Megasthenes as well as the works of ancient Indian authors Kautilya, Patañjali, along with the Vaiṣṇava texts. Jaiswal concludes that the cult of Saṃkarṣaṇa- Baladeva developed from a non-brāhmanical agricultural deity. Accepting Vogel's contention that the nāga identity forms a major part of the character of Saṃkarṣaṇa- Baladeva, she adds that hardly any distinctive traits remain if the nāga character is removed from Saṃkarṣaṇa- Baladeva. She also supports Vogel's contention that the nāga identity of Balarāma was a direct product of his origin as an agricultural deity.

This view is upheld with some reservations by Andreas Bigger in his recent study, *Balarāma im Mahābhārata*, the most comprehensive work on Balarāma³⁵ that we have to date. Bigger argues that Balarāma is a combination of a Vṛṣṇi hero, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa, and Saṃkarṣaṇa, one of the four vyūhas, but he opposes the nāga affiliation. He maintains that the identification of Balarāma with Śeṣa, another serpent deity, was very

³⁴ Suvira Jaiswal, "The Worship of Saṃkarṣaṇa-Baladeva," *Proceedings of the 26th Congress of Orientalists* Jan 4-10, 1964, Delhi, volume III, Part. I (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1969), 379-384; see also Suvira Jaiswal, *The Origin*, 51-60.

³⁵ Bigger, *Balarāma*, 11, 97-99, 165.

late and had taken place after the identification of the *Vṛṣṇi* Balarāma and *vyūha* Saṃkarṣaṇa was complete. Bigger maintains that Balarāma was a Yādava hero first and his subsequent identification with the *vyūha* Saṃkarṣaṇa is what contributed to his even later identification with the *nāga* Baladeva, a serpent deity. He also draws attention to the absence of Balarāma's *nāga* connection in the oldest parts of the M.Bh. Thus for him Balarāma is a combination of different religious concepts represented by different names that are used simultaneously to address Balarāma. He also rejects the theory that Balarāma had an independent cult outside the worship of Kṛṣṇa or the five *Vṛṣṇis*, stating that the early images cannot be identified as those of Balarāma in the absence of any other supporting evidence. However, as we shall see later in this thesis, the stories of Balarāma in the HV do support a distinct status for Balarāma, and my analysis of Hindu and Jain texts will demonstrate that Balarāma evolved in a religious milieu different from the M.Bh. Furthermore, the earliest literature does not support the theory that Balarāma originated as a *nāga*, which other scholars have tried to establish. Due to the absence of a *nāga* connection of Balarāma in the oldest parts of the M.Bh and the story of Balarāma's death being late, Andreas Bigger ruled out the origin of Balarāma as a *nāga* deity. I agree with Bigger that the *nāga* identity is late, and not part of his original identity. I do not address the question of his origin as an independent deity in this thesis due to the nature of the sources I study here. However, what can be understood from my study of the textual sources is the process of change in his personality and position in the texts under study. These modifications will suggest his origin in a different milieu than the one in which he is placed in the later texts.

N.P. Joshi's *Iconography of Balarāma*³⁶ is a comprehensive survey of myths, art and inscriptions of Balarāma. In this study he traces the changes in the depiction of Balarāma from the Śuṅga period up to the early medieval period. He notes that in the Śuṅga sculptures Balarāma is always depicted with snake coils on the back and snake hoods above the head, unlike the later period where the snake hoods may or may not form part of the depiction. The inconsistency between these early iconographic representations and the textual evidence discussed by Bigger remains a problem.

The purāṇas do not allow us to differentiate between a Balarāma identified as Viṣṇu, a *vyūha*, a culture hero of the Yādavas, or a fertility god. The *purāṇa* stories do not betray any evidence for Balarāma as a composite deity, derived from two or more deities. A cursory glance at the early sources, the inscriptions noted above, makes it clear that Balarāma is regularly addressed as Saṃkarṣaṇa and Balarāma interchangeably (chart I: Early archaeological and literary sources of Balarāma). If Bigger is correct that there was a Vṛṣṇi hero Balarāma, and a *vyūha* Saṃkarṣaṇa that were later brought together, then this clearly happened at a very early period, indeed a period earlier than or contemporary with the evidence for the developed *vyūha* theology. This highlights another feature of this study: our evidence does not permit us to go back beyond a certain point in the development of Vaiṣṇavism. I would emphasize that Balarāma appears as a significant deity in the early inscriptions and the other archaeological sources, the

³⁶ Joshi, *Iconography*, 25, 33.

inscriptions of Ghosūṇḍi and Nānāghaṭ, petroglyphs from Chilas II, images of Balarāma from Mathurā region and also in the earliest purāṇa, the HV. I will show that the early concepts associated with Balarāma in the HV gradually underwent modifications that are reflected in the depiction of his personality and the decline of his significance in the other purāṇas under study. Therefore in this thesis I argue in support of a multifaceted deity Balarāma whose main features include protection of people, children and beings, and fertility that is connected to resources such as water, food and abundance, which may result in bountiful harvest. In other words, his wrestler and heroic skills are connected to the protection of people while his fertility is connected to providing resources. His worship as serpent deity is only secondary to his character of protector and provider. I also do not consider Balarāma as a historical hero with military might. His worship originated in the milieu of an agricultural society where he was worshipped for protection and food and abundance rather than as a militaristic deity leading battles.

1.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY OF PURĀṆAS/METHODOLOGY

The purāṇas have attracted scholarly attention as primary documents to understand the early history, religion and culture of India. F.E. Pargiter³⁷ has proposed that the subject matter of all the purāṇas was collected from ancient tales and consisted of similar themes presented with minor variations, although he did not prepare any

³⁷ F. E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint 1962. 1st ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), 21-27, 33-37.

concordance to prove his theory. He especially stressed the fact that the original “purāṇa” must have consisted of the *Pañcalakṣaṇa* texts only, which marks a broad categorization of the subject matter of stories that occur in the purāṇas. The five characteristics, *Sarga* (creation), *Pratisarga* (dissolution/recreation), *Vaṃśa* (divine genealogies), *Manvantara* (ages of Manu), and *Vaṃśānucarita* (genealogies of kings), are called the *Pañcalakṣaṇas*.

Gradually this theory was adopted by many other scholars in purāṇa studies in search of the original or oldest purāṇa that might have developed into numerous other purāṇas. Willibald Kirfel³⁸ gathered together what he called the *Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa* texts by utilizing this method. Kirfel reconstructed stages in the development of the purāṇas by means of a comparative study of different purāṇas with four chapters i.e., *Sarga*, *Pratisarga* (Abschnitt I), *Vaṃśa* (Abschnitt II), *Manvantara* (Abschnitt III) and *Vaṃśānucarita* (Abschnitt IV). He concluded that the *Pañcalakṣaṇa* texts in the *Brahmā* purāṇa and the HV, are the oldest, and the *Brahmānda* purāṇa and the *Vāyu* purāṇa were texts that have undergone major changes. He said that the *Mārkaṇdeya* purāṇa consisted of the revised form of the stories. He divided the texts into text group I, II A, IIB and III etc. to illustrate successive alterations in the material. Kirfel’s pioneering efforts have allowed us to begin serious comparative work on the purāṇas.

³⁸ Kirfel, *Das Purāṇa*, xxxii-il.

One of the pioneering works that successfully adopted this method is Paul Hacker's, *Prahlāda Werden und Wandlungen einer Idealgestalt*³⁹. Hacker's work successfully demonstrated the evolution of Prahlāda story in the purāṇas and alteration of motifs through a closer examination of the purāṇa stories. This work has served as the model for the study of purāṇa stories to understand the evolution of deities. Numerous other works followed, examining the purāṇa stories in order to understand the nature and origin of various *avatāras* of Viṣṇu and achievements of Śiva and Śakti and their place in Hinduism. This resulted in works on purāṇa myths by Klaus Rüping⁴⁰, Adalbert Gail⁴¹, Utz Podzeit⁴², Walter Ruben⁴³ and numerous others. All of these scholars studied a

³⁹ Paul Hacker, *Prahlāda, Werden und Wandlungen einer Idealgestalt, Beiträge Zur Geschichte des Hinduismus*, 2 Teile, Abhandlungen der geistes-und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse 9 und 13 (Wiesbaden: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literature in Mainz, 1959).

⁴⁰ Rüping studied the questions, the composition of *Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa* texts of Kirfel has brought forward, regarding the procurement of Amṛta from the milk ocean. He undertook the study of the two versions of this myth in order to understand its connection to the origin and development of Kūrma *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. Through this study he proposed that the *amṛtamanthana* myths may have evolved later than the *avatāra* myths in the purāṇas since the early myths of *amṛtamanthana* do not include the support of a tortoise (Kūrma *avatāra* of Viṣṇu) for the churning rod, mount Meru, although the *avatāra* myths are known to have existed separately. Klaus Rüping, *Amṛtamanthana und Kūrma – Avatāra: Ein Beitrag zur Puranischen Mythen und Religionsgeschichte*, Schriftenreihe des Südasien- Instituts der Universität Heidelberg (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1970), 4-5.

⁴¹ Gail studied the stories of Paraśurāma from the M.Bh and other purāṇas. He traces how the stories of Paraśurāma increased in size and details gradually over time. However, he asserts that these changes have not affected the theological nature of Paraśurāma and that he has retained a mixture of kṣatriya and brāhmaṇa qualities. Although depicted as a devotee of Śiva, his incorporation as one of the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu indicates, according to Gail, the relationship of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. Adalbert Gail, *Paraśurāma: Brāhmaṇe und Krieger* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977).

⁴² Podzeit studied the presentation of Kṛṣṇa in different aspects as a cowherd, a hero, an opponent of Indra, the great man (*Mahāpuruṣa*) and finally as an *avatāra*, suggesting that the myths depict his evolution from human hero to divinity. Utz Podzeit, *Die Wandlungen Kṛṣṇas zum höchsten Gott: Philologische Studie zur Kṛṣṇa-Gopāla- Legende*, Europäische Hochschulschriften Series 23 Theology volume 598 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997).

⁴³ Ruben studied the motifs that occur in the Kṛṣṇa stories in the M.Bh, the HV, and the Vi.pu. However, his work differs from the above works in that in addition to studying the major motifs in the

selected episode or section from several different texts. This method views the parts of the text as independent units and the text as the compendium of loosely knit units. Freda Matchett⁴⁴ criticizes this method of studying certain parts of the purāṇas as independent units. As a method of critical inquiry it fails to take into account the overall philosophy or theology of each text, which may nuance and shape the narration of each and every story in the text. Therefore, she advocates that the various Hindu texts present the stories with variations in accordance with their own philosophy and theology.

In agreeing with the methodological concerns expressed by Matchett as discussed above, in this thesis I see each text's presentation of the Balarāma stories as part of the larger process represented by each text. I assume the changes in the Balarāma stories are an expression of the text's own philosophical and theological outlook, spread across all the parts of the text, which is influenced by the historical, geographical and cultural phenomena in which the different texts might have evolved or existed. Therefore I see each story representing part of the process of the evolution of Vaiṣṇavism which is reflected by each text. Furthermore each selected text represents a different theological and philosophical stage in the evolution of Vaiṣṇavism, which is evidenced in the Balarāma stories. These earlier academic works make clear the many benefits to be gained by analyzing the mythology of different purāṇas together to understand the origin and evolution of a deity. I propose to study Balarāma stories in the purāṇas with a similar

Kṛṣṇa stories from the purāṇas, he compares these motifs to those in the Indo- European and North American folk mythology. Walter Ruben, *Kṛṣṇa: Konkardanz*, 1-8.

⁴⁴ Freda Matchett, *Kṛṣṇa: Lord or Avatāra* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), 9-12.

methodological approach utilized by Hacker and others, in order to understand the evolution of Balarāma across different texts. At the same time, I share Matchett's concerns about overlooking the philosophical and theological tendencies unique to each text. I approach the individual stories as part of the larger picture represented by each text. Therefore, in this study I do not try to isolate the story elements in order to find the original version; rather I consider that the modifications to the Balarāma stories in each text represent a different philosophical or theological stage in the evolution of Vaiṣṇavism.

In this thesis I will study two or more selected themes from each story and compare them across the selected texts in order to understand how the narrative changes altered the personality and position of Balarāma within Vaiṣṇavism. I prepare charts of the story elements discussed before proceeding to the final analysis for each of the sources, which are grouped according to the religion. This will help broaden my subject base as well as facilitate cross comparison between different traditions, the Hindu and Jain stories for the study of Balarāma. My aim is not necessarily to find the original story of Balarāma, but to trace the process of the evolution of Balarāma from what we can surmise to be the oldest extant version.

Although cross comparison has been utilized for a long time as a method of textual analysis, it is necessary to acknowledge that this approach assumes a basic story, which becomes the baseline for comparison. While recognizing that these assumptions

are not conclusive, I realize that my analysis must start somewhere and Paul Hacker has demonstrated the validity of this approach. My study is also limited to a selection of Balarāma stories found in selected purāṇas and Jain texts. Within these parameters, my study contributes significantly to our understanding of the evolution of Balarāma and early Vaiṣṇavism, and lays groundwork for future study of the evolution of other deities in Vaiṣṇavism.

1.4. PRIMARY SOURCES

The following is a description of the texts from Hindu and Jain traditions that are selected for the present study.

1.4.1. HINDU TEXTS

1. THE HARIVAMŚA

The HV⁴⁵ is one of the earliest texts that describes the stories of Balarāma in detail and throughout this thesis I assume that it represents our earliest version in the Hindu tradition. I do so on the basis of established scholarship. Although the date of the

⁴⁵ *Harivaṃśa*, 2 volumes, critical ed., P. L. Vaidya (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1969). I use the critical edition of this text for the present study. I cite summaries of my translation of the Balarāma stories from this text. I thank Dr. Phyllis Granoff for helping me with the translation of the Sanskrit stories from the HV. In this thesis I assume that the HV represents the earliest version, which may have been adopted by the later texts. These in turn may have adopted stories from more than one source and modified them as the differences in each version may indicate. It may be true that there might be more than one factor that has contributed to these modifications in each text's rendering of a particular version of the story. Nonetheless, I propose as a working hypothesis that story changes reflect changes in Vaiṣṇavism, which can be documented from other sources.

text is controversial, it has generally been assigned to 200-300 C.E. N.P. Joshi⁴⁶ has identified a series of the HV passages that he argues belong to the Kuṣāṇa period. As evidence he studies the images of several deities dated to Kuṣāṇa period discovered in the Mathurā region in comparison with the HV passages that describe the iconography of those respective images. In the case of Balarāma, he demonstrated that the images of Balarāma of the Kuṣāṇa period are exactly similar to the descriptions of Balarāma in the HV. Hence he dated the HV to the Kuṣāṇa period, that is between 100-300 C. E. Accepting this theory, André Couture⁴⁷ proposed 200-300 C.E as a feasible date for the HV. P.L. Vaidya in his introduction to the critical edition of the HV, maintains that the original HV was composed about 400 C.E, although the stories may have been current about 300 C.E⁴⁸. Arguing against the late dating of the HV proposed by P.L. Vaidya, V.V. Mirashi⁴⁹ dates it to the first half of 200 C.E based on the analysis of an inscription of the Vākataka king Sarvasena. He argues that Sarvasena was the author of a Prakrit text *Harivijaya* which deals with the subject of *Pārijātāpaharaṇa*, the theft of the divine tree (HV.92.63-67).

⁴⁶ N.P. Joshi, “Some Kuṣāṇa passages in the Harivaṃśa,” *Indologien Tagung* (1971-73), 238-253.

⁴⁷ André Couture, *L'enfance de Kṛṣṇa* (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval 1991), 77.

⁴⁸ P.L. Vaidya, *Harivaṃśa*, XXIX.

⁴⁹ V.V. Mirashi, “The Date of the Original Harivaṃśa,” V.V. Mirashi, *Studies in Indology* (Collection of Articles), (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), 3-15. He maintains that a story of Kṛṣṇa is composed in Prakrit as early as 300 C.E by the Vākataka king Sarvasena (330-355 C.E). Based on this observation he states that the HV might have been known at least a hundred years before that date.

I accept the early date of the HV established by the above scholars. One of the criteria for selecting the HV as the basic text is its early date. Another criterion to support the HV as the basic text is the simplicity of the stories that depict the preeminent position of Balarāma⁵⁰. This preeminent position of Balarāma is supported by early studies in art and archaeology, where Balarāma is depicted as equal if not greater than Kṛṣṇa (see section 1.2 above).

Another controversy regarding the HV is the reference in the *parvasangraha* of the M.Bh which labels it as a *khila* (supplement). However, André Couture cautions that this should not be taken to mean “appendix” in the Western sense of the term, but as a necessary supplement fulfilling a requirement. John Brockington⁵¹ maintains that the HV is a *khila*, *kāvya* and *purāṇa* at the same time. He considers it the earliest *purāṇa*, although it is not named as such. In my study of the Balarāma stories I use it as the earliest *purāṇa*, the reference point against which I compare the stories of Balarāma from other *purāṇas*.

Although the HV is one of the earliest texts to attract the attention of scholars as a major source for the study of Hindu religion, D.H. Ingalls noted more than thirty years

⁵⁰ The early images and inscriptions of Balarāma are dated between 200 B.C.E- 200 C.E, and predate the HV. However, as one of the earliest texts to contain the story of Balarāma I assume that the HV contains remnants of this early pre-eminence of Balarāma.

⁵¹ John Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics*, Handbuch der Orientalistik Zweite Abteilung (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), 314.

ago that this text had been greatly neglected during the current century⁵². More recently André Couture⁵³ noted that to date no study has been undertaken to fully utilize its resources. Veenapani Pande's⁵⁴ study of the HV is a general study of society, religion and culture of India as revealed in the HV. André Couture has utilized the stories of the HV to understand a number of subjects⁵⁵ including the religious change in early India, the form of the early *Bhāgavata* religion, the nature of early goddesses and aspects of the Kṛṣṇa cult.

The HV contains the stories of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. In the HV Balarāma is described as a form of Viṣṇu, as equal to Kṛṣṇa, and his identity with the snake Śeṣa, so common in the later texts, has not been clearly established in this text. I will show that the HV preserves the early significant status of Balarāma in Vaiṣṇavism, although the trend is towards portraying Kṛṣṇa as the central deity.

⁵² D.H. Ingalls, "The Harivaṃśa as a Mahākāvya," *Mélanges d'Indianisme à la Mémoire de Louise Renou* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1968), 381-394.

⁵³ André Couture, Charlotte Schmid "The Harivaṃśa," 173-192.

⁵⁴ Veenapani Pande, *Harivaṃśa purāṇa ka Sanskr̥tik Vivecana*, Hindi Samiti Granthamala 44, (Lucknow: Publications Division, Government of Uttar Pradesh, 1960).

⁵⁵ André Couture, "Akrūra et la tradition *Bhāgavata* selon le Harivaṃśa," *Studies in Religion/ Sciences Religieuses* 15. 2 (1986), 221-231; see also "The Problem of the Meaning of Yoganidrā's Name," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 27 (1999), 35-47; "Kṛṣṇa's Strange Name of Dāmodara," *Brahmavidyā: The Adyar Library Bulletin* 62 (1999), 169-191.

2. THE VIṢṆU PURĀṆA

The *Viṣṇu purāṇa* (Vi.pu from now on) contains the entire story of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa in the fifth *aṁśa* (part). It is the first Sanskrit purāṇa to be completely translated into English⁵⁶ and has attracted much scholarly attention. It is recognized as a *Pañcarātra* text⁵⁷. It has been repeatedly compared with the other purāṇas in the studies of the Kṛṣṇa cycles, although its evidence is regarded as secondary⁵⁸. H. H. Wilson⁵⁹, through a comparison of the Kṛṣṇa story from the Vi.pu and the Bh.pu, suggested two possibilities, saying that either the Bh.pu amplified the Vi.pu or that the Vi.pu was an abridgement of the Bh.pu story. He supported the former theory, which was also supported by other studies. My study of the Balarāma stories also supports the theory that the stories of the Vi.pu are amplified in the Bh.pu. This will be clear in the discussion later. Succinctly

⁵⁶ *The Viṣṇupurāṇa: A System of Hindu Religion*, trans., H.H. Wilson (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 3rd ed., 1972, 1st ed., London: John Murray, 1840). The references and translations in this thesis are to this text wherever they appear unless otherwise stated.

⁵⁷ R.C. Hazra, *Studies in the Purāṇic Records of Hindu Rites* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2nd ed. 1975, 1st ed. 1940), 19. Pañcarātra is a form of Vaiṣṇavism described in a number of Pañcarātra texts. J.A.B. Van Buitenen, "The name Pañcarātra," *History Religions* 1 (1961-62), 291-299. The central theology of Pañcarātra religion utilizes the *Vyūha* theology. Otto Shrader explains the term *vyūhas* (emanations) as a chain, where each emanation except the first originates from an antecedent emanation. He explains the word *vyūha* as a combination of the root *ūh*, "to shove" and the preposition *vi*, "asunder" of the *guṇas* into three pairs acquired by the three successive *vyūhas* from Vāsudeva i.e., Samkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. F. Otto Shrader, *Introduction to the Pañcarātra and Ahirbudhnya Saṁhitā* (Madras: Adyar Library, 1916), 35.

⁵⁸ Walter Ruben thought that the Vi.pu was secondary for the Kṛṣṇa story while the Br. pu contains the original story. Walter Ruben, "The *Kṛṣṇacarita* in the *Harivaṁśa* and certain *Purāṇas*," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 61 (1944), 115-127.

⁵⁹ H.H. Wilson, *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, lxviii.

then, the Vi.pu is later than the HV and earlier than the Br. pu and the Bh.pu, at least for the stories of Balarāma.

The Vi.pu has been dated variously by scholars between 100 – 1045 C.E. If the theory that the Vi.pu belongs to a stage prior to the Bh.pu is correct, then it should be dated prior to 800 C.E. as the Bh.pu is dated between 800-900 C.E on the basis of the South Indian Vaiṣṇava material it possesses⁶⁰. The Vi.pu is certainly said to be a post-Gupta text. F.E. Pargiter⁶¹ saw in the text evidence of the Hindu “revival” of the Gupta period, a concept no longer used by scholars of the period. Nonetheless, his dating seems sound. He dated the text between 400-500 C.E. Additional strong evidence for dating the Vi.pu between 500-600 C.E comes from Adalbert Gail⁶² in his study of Paraśurāma. Gail states that the name of Paraśurāma appears for the first time in the inscription of Gangā king Durvinīta dated to 522-23 C.E. As neither the early texts nor Kālidāsa used the name Paraśurāma, Gail asserts that the works that use this name can only be dated later than 500 C.E. Using this criterion Gail dated the Vi.pu to 550 C.E. Although I agree with Gail’s dating of this text, I assume 550 C.E as the latest limit for the text since the name of Paraśurāma could have been in vogue a few centuries before it first appeared in the inscription. Therefore I assume the date of 450 C.E to 550 C.E as the date for the Vi.pu in the present thesis.

⁶⁰ Thomas J. Hopkins, “The Teaching of the *Bhāgavata purāṇa*,” Milton Singer, ed., *Kṛṣṇa: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes* (Honolulu: East- West Center, 1966), 3-23.

⁶¹ F.E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian*, 80.

⁶² Adalbert Gail, *Paraśurāma*, 54.

There is no question that the stories of Balarāma in the Vi.pu are later than those of the HV and therefore indicate a later phase of evolution in the understanding of Balarāma.

3. THE BRAHMĀ PURĀṆA

The *Brahmā purāṇa*⁶³ (Br.pu from now on) has passages in common with many other purāṇas⁶⁴ and has even been called a “composite purāṇa”. However, Walter Ruben remarked that the Kṛṣṇacarita of the Br. pu is similar to the HV, only shorter, leaving him to conclude that the Br. pu contains the oldest story of Kṛṣṇa⁶⁵. Peter Schreiner has refuted this conclusion, although he noted the close verbal similarity between passages of the Vi.pu and the Br. pu⁶⁶. He concluded that the Br. pu is younger than the Vi.pu. Schreiner also concluded through a comparison of the HV, the Vi.pu and the Br. pu texts

⁶³ *Brahmā purāṇa*, J.L. Sastry, ed., Translated by Board of Scholars, Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology 34 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985). All the references in the present thesis are to this text unless otherwise stated.

⁶⁴ Rocher, *The Purāṇas*, 245-249.

⁶⁵ Ruben studied the Kṛṣṇa story across different texts to identify the original/ core story that might have contributed to different versions in the texts. He comes to the conclusion that the HV and the Br. pu are exactly similar in the story except for length. He proposes that the Br.pu is the original, assuming that the shortest text must be the original. Walter Ruben, “The Kṛṣṇacarita,” 115-127. Kīrfel supports the hypothesis of Ruben that the HV and the Br.pu display the story of Kṛṣṇa without interpolations. However, I think the Br.pu story differs from the HV in preserving the story of the incarnation of Balarāma from the hair of Viṣṇu which is not mentioned in the HV. Willibald Kīrfel, “Kṛṣṇas Jugendgeschichte in den Purāṇa,” Willibald Kīrfel, ed., *Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte Indiens: Festgabe Hermann Jacobi* (Bonn: Fritz Klopp, 1926), 298- 316.

⁶⁶ Schreiner, Renate Sohnen, *Brahmapurāṇa*, xxvii-xxx.

that the HV must be considered as the oldest testimony for the transition of epic to purāṇa. This is also supported by the study of Balarāma stories, as the HV preserves some of the earlier themes associated with Balarāma that we can see were subjected to gradual change.

The Br.pu reflects the promotion of the worship of Jagannatha as a form of Kṛṣṇa. Almost all the stories of Balarāma are modified to a great extent in this text and his heroic exploits are sometimes attributed to Kṛṣṇa. My study of the stories of Balarāma places the Br.pu later than the HV and the Vi.pu, but earlier than the Bh.pu in the case of some stories. We will see that the stories of Balarāma in the Br.pu are subjected to more changes in the Bh.pu. It is interesting to note that although the Br.pu is dated after 1000 C. E. and thus later than the Bh.pu, it contains stories with fewer modifications than the Bh.pu and is similar to the Vi.pu. Therefore, it is possible that although later in date, the Br.pu consists of older stories from other sources, which it has adopted without major changes.

3. THE BHĀGAVATA PURĀṆA

The *Bhāgavata purāṇa* (Bh.pu) has been the subject of numerous studies. The dating⁶⁷ of this text had been controversial and it was assigned various dates between 500-1300 C.E. Based on the theory of the South Indian composition of the Bh.pu,

⁶⁷ Rocher, *The purāṇas*, 155.

Thomas Hopkins had dated it to 850 C.E, when the Āḷvārs lived under the patronage of Pallavas and Cāḷukyas, but before the rise of Coḷas⁶⁸.

The largest part of the Bh.pu is the tenth *Skanda* (section), which consists of the Kṛṣṇa story. The Bh.pu stories of Balarāma show us the culmination of the image of Balarāma in Vaiṣṇavism, where he is identified with Śeṣa as a minor deity. In this text Balarāma is not connected to fertility and protection. Rather, the Bh.pu depicts Balarāma as a teacher, counselor and *Yogin*, which are the features associated with Śeṣa. These attributes modify or replace the earlier aspects associated with Balarāma in the other texts. Matchett⁶⁹ sees no direct connection between the HV and the Bh.pu and adds that the Bh.pu has modeled itself in many respects upon the Vi.pu. As we shall see in chapter II of this thesis, the Bh.pu adopts the stories of the M.Bh in addition to those already known from the HV.

The Bh. pu is said to represent the *Bhakti* tradition of the Āḷvārs of South India, which was centered around Kṛṣṇa⁷⁰. Therefore the depiction of Balarāma has been modified here according to the needs of the *Bhakti* tradition.

⁶⁸ Hopkins, “Social Teaching,” Milton Singer, ed., *Kṛṣṇa*, 3-23.

⁶⁹ Freda Matchett, *Kṛṣṇa*, 109.

⁷⁰ Hopkins, “Social Teaching,” 18; Velcheru Narayana Rao, “Purāṇa as Brāhmanic Ideology,” Wendy D. O’Flaherty, ed., *Purāṇa Perennis* (New York: State University of New York, 1993), 95.

1.4.2. JAIN TEXTS

Some Śvetāmbara canonical texts mention Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa⁷¹ stories in brief. The *Antagada dasāo* preserves a somewhat complete story of Kṛṣṇa, and other Vṛṣṇi heroes, although it preserves only a brief story reference of Balarāma. I will utilize these descriptions in the course of my study of the Jain purāṇas wherever pertinent.

In Jainism *Baladeva* is the name of a category of extraordinary people rather than of an individual. Jain texts nonetheless preserve their own account of the stories of the ninth *Baladeva*, as part of the biographies of the great men⁷². This ninth *Baladeva* corresponds to the Balarāma of the Hindu texts. Jain texts offer valuable evidence to understand the evolution of the cult of Balarāma, thereby supplementing the Hindu texts. Some medieval Jain texts were written by a single author and can be dated exactly, unlike the Hindu texts. This allows us to locate in time, often in place, some of the changes we are highlighting.

⁷¹ There is a controversy about the Jain canon. The Śvetāmbara Jains maintain that they preserved all the canonical texts except the *Dṛṣṭivāda* while the Digambara Jains believe that the entire Jain canon was lost except for a small part of the *Dṛṣṭivāda*. Paul Dundas, *The Jains* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 60-65.

⁷² The actual number of Mahāpuruṣas is 51(60), because some of the Mahāpuruṣas are also the *Tīrthaṅkaras* and the *Cakravartins* at the same time (*Tīrthaṅkaras* 16-18 are also *Cakravartins* 5-7). However the tradition keeps the number at 54 or 63 (24 *Tīrthaṅkaras*, 12 *Cakravartins*, 9 *Vāsudevas*, 9 *Baladevas* and 9 *Prativāsudevas*) counting the 3 *Tīrthaṅkaras* and the 3 *Cakravartins* (even though the same) again instead of leaving them out.

1. THE VASUDEVAHIṆḌĪ

The *Vasudevahiṇḍī* was composed in two parts. The earliest text, *Vasudevahiṇḍī* (VH hence forward), was composed by the Śvetāmbara mendicant ācārya Sanghadāsagaṇi Vācaka⁷³. This work is edited by Jain Munis Caturvijayaji and Puṇyavijayaji (1930-31) using twelve manuscripts. It is written in Jain Mahārāṣṭri and is dated to 300 C.E based on the language. The later text *Vasudevahiṇḍī Majjimakhando* (VHM from now on) was composed four hundred years after this, during the 700 C.E by Dharmadāsagaṇi Mahattara⁷⁴. I use the VH stories of Balarāma in the present study.

The VH consists of six *ahigāras* (parts) dealing with different subjects. The first part *kahupatti* (origin of the story) deals with religious stories. In this part king Seniya asked Mahāvīra how Vasudeva acquired the right faith and obtained the fruits of this world and the next (VH.2-26). In reply to this *Dhammillahiṇḍī*, is narrated which addresses religious questions (VH. 27-76). The second part *peḍhiyā* (introduction) deals with the stories of Padyumna and Sāmba (VH. 77-104). The third part *muha* (head) consists of the stories of the rivalry of Sāmba, son of Jāmbavatī and Subhānu, son of Satyabhāma (VH.

⁷³ *The Vasudevahiṇḍī: An Authentic Jain Version of the Bṛhatkatha*, trans., J.C. Jain, L. D. Series 59 (Ahmedabad: L.D. Institute of Indology, 1977). The text references of the *Vasudevahiṇḍī* in the present thesis are to this translated and edited text unless otherwise stated.

⁷⁴ This text, *Vasudevahiṇḍī Majjimakhando* (VHM), was composed by Dharmadāsagaṇi Mahattara with the claim that it represents the missing parts of the original VH of Sanghadāsagaṇi Vācaka. Dharmadāsagaṇi Mahattara inserted it from the eighteenth Lambho of the original VH with the claim that Vasudeva had in fact married a hundred women in the course of his wanderings for a hundred years instead of twenty-nine whose stories were narrated in the original VH text. Bhayani dates the VHM to 700 C.E based on the orthography (75), a date which places it 400 years after the original VH. *Vasudevahiṇḍī Majjimakhando*, H.C. Bhayani, ed. L. D. Series 99 (Ahmedabad: L.D. Institute of Indology, 1979).

105-109). The next part *paḍimuha* (beginning of narration) consists of the introduction to the stories of the marriages of Vasudeva, which he narrates to the request of his grandsons, i.e., sons of Kṛṣṇa (VH. 110-113). The *śarīra* (body) contains the actual stories of the travels of Vasudeva and his marriage to numerous women, after which this text is named (VH. 114-370). The text of the VH is incomplete, the next section *uvasaṃhāra* (conclusion) is missing from the extant text.

The *śarīra* contains twenty-eight chapters describing the marriages of Vasudeva to twenty-nine women. This also includes the marriage of Rohiṇī (mother of Balarāma), and the marriage of Devakī (mother of Kṛṣṇa) to Vasudeva. Thus this is the first text in Jainism that presents the story of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa together. Recent research has established that the VH is a compendium of stories collected from various sources⁷⁵. This supports the view that the stories of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa may have existed in a pan-Indian tradition before they were absorbed into the purāṇa texts of India and subjected to selective modifications according to new theological perspectives. Although the story of Balarāma is brief in this text, what it can tell us is important. It is similar to the HV, in that it portrays Balarāma as the protector of Kṛṣṇa in a significant position.

⁷⁵ J. C. Jain, “Is *Vasudevahiṇḍī* a Jain Version of *Bṛhatkatha*,” *Journal of the Oriental Institute Baroda* 23 (1973), 59-63.

2. THE HARIVAṂŚAPURĀṆA

The *Harivaṁśapurāṇa* (HVP) of Digambara ācārya Punnāṭha Jinasena is an enormous work describing in detail the life of the twenty second *Tīrthaṅkara* Neminātha along with the stories of his cousins Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. According to the information provided by the author himself in the colophon, Jinasena was a disciple of Amitasena of *Punnāṭha gaṇa*⁷⁶. He also said that his HVP was composed at the Pārśvanātha Jina temple at Vardhamānapura (identified with Vadwān in Gujarāt) in the Saka year 705 i.e. 783 C.E and was completed at the Śāntinātha Jina temple (in Gujarāt state, India).

The HVP deals with the themes of the HV and the M.Bh and is intended as an alternative and true Jain version for the Hindu versions. I selected this text as the basic text for comparison with other texts for my study because it contains the first detailed version of the Jain Balarāma story, which is considerably different from the Hindu story.

Neminātha, Balarāma, and Kṛṣṇa are described here as the descendents of Hari. It is interesting to note that Jinasena decided to call his text *Harivaṁśapurāṇa* (similar to the Hindu text *Harivaṁśa*) under the name of one of the little known kings of the Yadu lineage, rather than after one of the famous persons of this lineage: Neminātha, Balarāma,

⁷⁶ *The Harivaṁśapurāṇa* of Jinasena, ed., Hindī trans., Panna Lal Jain, Bhāratīya Jñānapīṭha Mūrtidevī Jaina Granthamālā Sanskrit Granth No.27 (Kāshi: Bhāratīya Jñānapīṭha, 1962), 10-23. I cite brief translations of this text in the course of the present thesis. I thank Dr. Phyllis Granoff for helping me with the translations of this text.

and Kṛṣṇa or after the generic name of distinguished men (śalākāpuruṣas= mahāpuruṣas) like the other texts.

In the HVP Neminātha was a renouncer representing the ascetic ideal of life, Balarāma represented the ideal lay disciple as the follower of the Jain *dharma*, while Kṛṣṇa represented violence and worldly life. Thus the story of Balarāma is narrated in a different context from the Hindu purāṇas. Similar to the VH, in this text Balarāma is presented as the protector of Kṛṣṇa. The additional stories indicate a Jain Balarāma cycle persisted well into the 800 C.E and that the accommodations similar to the Hindu purāṇa stories came later.

3. THE CAUPPANNAMAHĀPURISACARIYAṂ

The *Cauppannamahāpurisacariyaṃ*⁷⁷ (CMC) contains a brief description of the lives of fifty-five great men (*mahāpuruṣas*) composed by Śvetāmbara ācārya Śīlāṅka in 868 C.E. It contains the stories of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa in brief and mentions Jarāsandha in a brief story. The *Vāsudevas* of the Jain purāṇas are supposed to be born from time to time to fight the *prativāsudevas*, in this case Jarāsandha. Although separated from Punṇāṭha Jinasena (of the HVP above) by only a few years, Śīlāṅka's story of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa is much different from the HVP. Not only are the stories of Balarāma short,

⁷⁷ *Cauppannamahāpurisacariyaṃ* by ācārya Śrī Śīlāṅka, ed., Pt. Amritlal Mohanlal Bhojak (Ahmedabad: Prakrit Text Society, 1961). The references in this thesis are to this text.

the additional incidents Jinasena has used to portray Balarāma in a significant role in comparison to Kṛṣṇa do not form part of this text. CMC shows a tendency towards adopting stories closer to the Hindu purāṇa stories of Kṛṣṇa, departing from his Jain predecessors.

4. THE TRIṢAṢṬIŚĀLĀKĀPURUṢACARITRA

The *Triṣaṣṭiśālākāpuruṣacaritra* (TSP from now on) was composed by Śvetāmbara ācārya Hemacandra between 1160-1172. It deals with the lives of sixty-three great men in great detail. Hemacandra is associated with Kumārapāla, the Cālukya emperor of Gujarāt. Although this is a text dated later than all the texts studied here, its detailed stories help complete the picture of evolution of Balarāma gained from other Jain sources. Kṛṣṇa story is more longer and detailed in this text than the others described along with him in this story. Even though the volume five of the text, *Triṣaṣṭiśālākāpuruṣacaritra*⁷⁸ of Hemacandra deals with the subject of the life of the twenty-second *Tīrthaṅkara*, Neminātha, it describes the story of the life of Kṛṣṇa in more detail in this part of the text.

⁷⁸ Helen Johnson notes that a major part of the story in the books VIII-IX of volume V is devoted to Kṛṣṇa story even though the volume V itself is named as *Nemināthacaritra* after the twenty - second *Tīrthaṅkara*, Neminātha. *Triṣaṣṭiśālākāpuruṣacaritra*, volume V (Books VIII-IX), trans., Helen M. Johnson, Gaekwad's Oriental Series No.139 (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1931-62), introduction. All the references in the present thesis are to this translation unless otherwise stated.

Although the Hari lineage is traced from Yadu similar to the Hindu purāṇas, the Jain texts also include a mythical genealogy of this lineage⁷⁹. Although the TSP continues to depict the status of Balarāma as the ninth *Baladeva* as more significant than the ninth *Vāsudeva*, Kṛṣṇa, his personality is depicted differently from the other Jain texts studied in this thesis. Unlike the other texts, here he is depicted as an assistant of Kṛṣṇa rather than his protector in Vraja and in Mathurā. This image of Balarāma is similar to the image of Balarāma depicted in the M.Bh.

1.5. OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

As already explained, I will primarily use the stories from these above mentioned texts to trace the basic evolution of Balarāma as his position gradually declined in Vaiṣṇavism. Reference will be made to data from art, coinage, and inscriptions wherever pertinent.

⁷⁹ The mythical lineage of Nemi, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa is traced from the ancestor Hari as follows.
HVP- Vidyādhara of Vijayārdha (unnamed) Hari Mahāgiri Himagiri Vasugiri Giri.

TSP- Hari→Pṛthvipati→Mahāgiri→Himagiri→Vasugiri→Giri→Mitragiri.

Then from Giri or Mitragiri descends Yadu and this part of the lineage is similar in all the texts and is well known. VH (p. 357-58)- Yadu HVP (18.6-16) Yadu TSP (V. p.37) Yadu

Śauri		Vīra	Narapati		Śūra	Śūra
Andhakavṛṣṇi	Bhogavṛṣṇi		Śūra	Suvīra	Śauri	Suvīra
			Andhakavṛṣṇi		Andhakavṛṣṇi	

The ten sons known as *Dasārhas* including Vasudeva, Samudravijaya are mentioned as descendents of Andhakavṛṣṇi in all the above texts. While Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are born to Vasudeva, Neminātha is born to Samudravijaya. Jha undertakes a detailed study of the lineage of Hari in comparison with the Hindu purāṇa texts. Shaktidhar Jha, *Aspects of Brāhmanical Influence on the Jaina Mythology* (Delhi: Bharat Bharati Bhandar, 1978), 153-184.

In this thesis, I analyze the selected stories in two ways. Firstly, I analyze the basic story for inconsistencies. Secondly, I compare the different versions of a selected story from all the texts under study to trace the evolution of the story and show how a given story developed through time, according to the theology of each text in question. My study is not exhaustive, as I have selected certain episodes in the life of Balarāma that are sufficiently rich to provide us with evidence of the evolution of Balarāma in Vaiṣṇavism.

I discuss the method of study for the Hindu and Jain sources individually in the respective chapters that follow. In each of these chapters, I have divided the study of Balarāma stories into sections similar to the stages in a human life cycle such as birth, childhood and adult life, for convenience of study.

The episodes selected for the present study from the HV, the Vi.pu, the Br. pu and the Bh.pu are as follows. All these episodes are described in all the purāṇas in different order.

1. Birth of Balarāma.
2. Childhood of Balarāma in Vraja and his family.
3. Balarāma in Vṛndāvan and his killing of Dhenuka and Pralamba.
4. Divine revelation of Balarāma in Akrūra's vision.
5. Balarāma's return to Vraja.
6. Balarāma's defeat of Jarāsandha.

The stories selected for the present study from the Jain purāṇas, the VH, the HVP, the CMC and the TSP are as follows:

1. The *svayaṃvara* of Rohiṇī and marriage of Vasudeva and Rohiṇī.
2. Birth of Balarāma.
3. Balarāma transfers Kṛṣṇa to Govraj.
4. Balarāma deputed by Vasudeva to take care of Kṛṣṇa.
5. Balarāma brings Devakī to Vraj.
6. Balarāma escorts Kṛṣṇa to Mathurā.
7. Battles with Jarāsandha.

The broad division of my chapters is based on the texts of the religion that I use for my present study. In the second chapter, I will analyze the selected episodes of Balarāma's life from Hindu texts and in the third chapter I analyze the selected episodes of Balarāma story from the Jain texts. The first and last chapters form the introduction and conclusion respectively.

CHAPTER II: BALARĀMA IN THE HINDU SOURCES

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

2.1.1. BALARĀMA IN THE HINDU PURĀṆAS

Balarāma is a non-Vedic deity whose stories appear for the first time in the purāṇas¹. In the purāṇas he is described as a form of the divine snake Śeṣa and Viṣṇu. In addition to this Vaiṣṇava context we are also made aware of Balarāma's connection to the Vedic god, Varuṇa, as a subject of Varuṇa's watery kingdom (see section IV. 4.1.1- 4.1.4 in this thesis). However, the depiction of Balarāma is not always consistent or uniform in all the purāṇas. Though there is a major trend to describe him in a consistent way, differing views can be discerned in the stories of Balarāma upon careful examination. This thesis argues that the HV stories of Balarāma were taken up by later purāṇas and modifications were introduced in accordance with the theological changes taking place in the evolving Vaiṣṇavism.

It is the objective of this chapter to show how the image of Balarāma from the HV is subjected to changes in the later purāṇas in order to arrive at the image of Balarāma, which is in conformity with the developing Vaiṣṇava pantheon. The HV stories of

¹ Although the M.Bh contains considerable amount of data on Balarāma I have not included it in the present study since I assume that the M.Bh depiction of Balarāma is one of the latest versions evolved according to the later Vaiṣṇava theology. In this regard I agree with Tadpatrikar that the original Kṛṣṇa stories of the M.Bh. developed outside the M.Bh, that is in the purāṇa complex. Tadpatrikar, "The Kṛṣṇa Problem," *ABORI* 10 (1929-30), 269-354. There is also the recent work by Bigger that covers this material. Bigger also supports the above view, adding that the stories of Balarāma in the M.Bh developed outside the M.Bh, in the purāṇas. Bigger, *Balarāma*, 14 9.

Balarāma preserve a personality of Balarāma associated with themes that are similar to those associated with early deities such as the yakṣas and nāgas. Features such as protection, food, drink, water, abundance and fertility are gradually modified, leading to the emergence of an image of Balarāma that is different from his early image in the HV. These early concepts have been altered in the subsequent purāṇas to accommodate the new identity of Balarāma as warrior hero (*kṣatriya*) and follower of *dharma*.

Furthermore, this change to his personality has not contributed to the elevation of his position in Vaiṣṇavism, but rather, to the decline of his status. Although represented as the superior god of Vaiṣṇavas in the HV, he is depicted as a minor deity in the later purāṇas. Therefore, I argue that the change of his personality and position reflects the broader changes taking place in the Vaiṣṇavism. I propose that these changes play major role in relegating him to a secondary position thereby leading to his identification with Śeṣa.

In order to study the stories more closely, I consider the stories from the HV as the base against which I compare the other versions from the other purāṇas listed in chapter I of this thesis (1.4.1). Although the purāṇas do not present the Balarāma stories in the same order, for ease of discussion, I have grouped them into four sections, corresponding to different periods of human life². In each section I highlight the divine attributes associated with Balarāma and show how they are distinctive for each stage of

² The death of Balarāma is an independent story and does not form part of the HV, my basic text of study in this thesis. Hence I have not included it in the present study.

his life and discuss their modifications across the different texts. I explore the significance of the cult of Balarāma and the process of his later assimilation into Vaiṣṇavism through a consideration of his relationships with other figures in his stories in each section.

SECTION II *BĀLYA*: THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF BALARĀMA

In this section, I study the birth and early childhood of Balarāma. This period could be termed as a period of bonding in the life of Balarāma. Relations of Balarāma to other family members in this section can tell us much about the early features of Balarāma in Vaiṣṇavism. It is my contention that modifications to these relationships in fact show the declining status of Balarāma. The birth of Balarāma is ultimately linked to the birth of Kṛṣṇa and in this section I will discuss the birth story of Kṛṣṇa as well. Comparison between the story from the base text (HV) and the later texts (Vi.pu, Br.pu and Bh.pu) will highlight the differences between the birth story of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa across different texts. These differences display a pattern indicating that the birth story of Balarāma was remodeled in a way so as to conform to the birth story of Kṛṣṇa. An analysis of the inconsistencies in the birth stories, and a discussion of his relationship to the goddesses in the birth story reveals the origin of this deity in a milieu that is different from that of Kṛṣṇa.

SECTION III *KAUMĀRA*: YOUNG ADULT LIFE OF BALARĀMA

In this section, I will study the life of Balarāma in Vṛndāvan. This period could rightly be called a period of revelation. During this period Balarāma kills the demons Dhenuka and Pralamba, and his divinity is revealed to Akrūra as well as to other inhabitants of Vṛndāvan. These stories show the displacement of early cults prevalent in Mathurā and depict Balarāma as a deity associated with food, abundance and protection. The stories also indicate that he was regarded as an important deity. In fact, in the revelation to Akrūra he is represented as the highest god of Bhāgavatism.

SECTION IV *YĀUVANA*: ADULT LIFE OF BALARĀMA

Here, I study the life of Balarāma in Mathurā and his return to Vraj. This period reveals a constant interplay of the human and divine. The divine aspects associated with Balarāma in this section depict him similar to earlier non-Vedic deities, such as yakṣas and nāgas. However, these features are utilized in the later texts to connect Balarāma to Hindu deities such as Varuṇa and Lakṣmī. For all of them the connecting principle is water. A study of the Balarāma stories in this section indicates how some of the early characteristics of Balarāma are modified in order to securely place him in the Hindu cosmology.

SECTION II

BĀLYA: THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF BALARĀMA

This section deals with the birth and early childhood of Balarāma in two parts. Two versions of the birth of Balarāma are studied in this section. The first and short version is from the M.Bh. I.189.31, the Vi.pu.V.1.60-63, and the Br.pu.II.72.26-27. The second and longer version is from the HV.47-48, the Vi.pu.V. 1. 70-85, V.2.1-2, the Br.pu. II. 72.36-44, and the Bh.pu. X.2.6-15.

2.2.1. THE BIRTH OF BALARĀMA

Despite the importance of what it can contribute to the understanding of early Vaiṣṇavism, the birth stories of Balarāma have received scant scholarly attention. These birth stories³ were solely studied as the birth stories of Kṛṣṇa, ignoring Balarāma altogether although he forms part of the story. Suvira Jaiswal's "The worship of Saṃkarṣaṇa-Baladeva,"⁴ shows the typical lack of interest in Balarāma. Jaiswal did not study the first version of the birth story of Balarāma and ruled out the second version as a fanciful invention. André Couture⁵ recognized the significance of the birth story for an

³ It is always the second and longer version that is studied in detail.

⁴ Suvira Jaiswal, "The worship of Saṃkarṣaṇa- Baladeva," 382.

⁵ André Couture and Charlotte Schmid, "The Harivaṃśa," 173-174.

understanding of the three important deities of early Vaiṣṇavism: Saṃkarṣaṇa, Ekānamśā, and Vāsudeva. Couture maintains that the birth story is the key to understanding the Ekānamśā⁶ triads, in addition to the other episodes. Although I agree with him regarding the triads, I would like to add that the birth story of Balarāma provides important information for an understanding of the religious milieu of these deities, in that it preserves the multiple themes associated with them. I will analyze these themes including fertility, childbirth, and protection of children in the following pages. In addition, the earlier significant status and gradual decline of Balarāma's status in Vaiṣṇavism can be understood from the changing identity of Balarāma as depicted in the birth stories. While in the first version of the birth story he is depicted as having originated from Viṣṇu, the central deity of Vaiṣṇavism, in the second version he is progressively delineated from Viṣṇu, and identified as an incarnation of other minor deities associated with Viṣṇu; thus portraying him in a lesser status.

Although the two versions of Balarāma's birth story are different, they are not contradictory and they do contribute to a clearer understanding of what was going on in his portrayal during the early phase of his evolution. The first version (M.Bh. I.189.30-

⁶ See chart I in chapter I of this thesis for more information on Ekānamśā triads. Dennis Hudson identifies these triads a little bit differently as quartets representing the four *vyūhas*. According to him these images represent the first *vyūha* Saṃkarṣaṇa, Ekānamśā as the second *vyūha* Vāsudeva (with Pradyumna hidden inside her) and the third one as Aniruddha, the last *vyūha* (Hudson, 153). Hudson also proposes a variant reading of the birth story of Balarāma. He saw the metaphorical representation of a recently converted *bhakta* (devotee) in the birth story while studying the sacred geography of the Tanjāvūr temple. He read the birth story as representing the process that takes place within a devotee when receiving *mantras* from an *ācārya*. (Hudson, 148). Dennis Hudson, "Early Evidence of *Pāñcarātra Āgama*," Katherine Anne Harper ed., *The Roots of Tantra* (New York: SUNY press, 2002), 133-167.

33, Vi.pu. V.1.60, 63, Br.pu II. 72.26-27), found in only a few texts is the shortest⁷ and, has not been studied in detail. It emphasizes Balarāma's divine origin as similar to Kṛṣṇa, though it omits the actual description of his birth. This first version of his birth story is the most explicit statement that we have of Balarāma as a god equal to Kṛṣṇa.

2.2.2. THE FIRST VERSION OF BALARĀMA'S BIRTH STORY

This version is important for two reasons. Firstly, this is the only place where Balarāma is exclusively identified as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. Here, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are equal manifestations of Viṣṇu, although from an insignificant part of the body: the hair. Secondly, he is said to have been conceived by Rohiṇī, unlike the second version where he is first conceived by Devakī and then transferred to Rohiṇī. The Jain stories of Balarāma's birth precisely describe these two points (to be studied in detail in chapter III. 3.3.1- 3.3.2). Therefore, I presume that the first version of the birth story of Balarāma, which is shared by the Jain sources, represents an early common story that was later modified. It also best accords with the earliest archaeological evidence, for example, the

⁷ I label the M.Bh version as the first version for the sake of convenience, but by no means to indicate it as the earliest version. The second and longer version found in the HV might be equally early. While the M.Bh is dated variously between 500 B.C.E to 500 C.E, for the Vi.pu, I assumed the date of 450- 550 C.E while for the Br.Pu I assume 1000 C.E-1200 C.E. Therefore for this version, among the three texts studied in this thesis, the birth story in the M.Bh may represent the earliest version. As already noted in footnote 1, above the M.Bh contains modified and shorter versions of the Balarāma stories. The birth story of Balarāma from the M.Bh is one of the simple stories that expresses earlier significant themes associated with Balarāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu and son of Rohiṇī. These are the same ideas expressed in the second version of the birth story of Balarāma in its earliest version in the HV, which underwent modifications in later texts.

petroglyphs of Chilas II and the coins of Indo-Greek ruler Agathocles, in which Balarāma is clearly depicted as the main deity.

HERE IS THE BIRTH STORY FROM THE M.BH. 1.189.30-33⁸

Together with them the God then repaired
To the measureless God Nārāyaṇa.
He too ordained that it should be so,
And so it befell all were born on earth.

God Hari had plucked two hairs of head;
One hair was white, the other was black.
These hairs then went into the Yadu women,
Into Rohiṇī and Devakī.
The one of them became Baladeva,
The other, the black one, Keśava.

Those Indra forms that of yore were cloistered
Inside that cave of the lofty mountain,
Have been born here the powerful Pāṇḍavas;
The left-handed Archer is Indra's part.

This story also occurs in the Vi.pu and the Br.pu with minor changes, which I consider below.

⁸ J. A. B. Van Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata*, Vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1973), 373.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY VI.PU. V.1.60-63⁹

When the god Brahmā had finished describing the woes of the earth and requested the god Viṣṇu to reappear on the earth, he agreed. Then the supreme god Nārāyaṇa plucked two hairs from his head and threw them down saying that the white one would be born as Balarāma and the black one would be born as Kṛṣṇa to end the burden of earth.

It is surprising that such a significant story has gone unnoticed in the studies concerning Balarāma¹⁰. Bigger¹¹ rejected this first version of the birth story of Balarāma from the M.Bh, claiming it was an isolated reference not supported by further textual evidence. He considers the two parts of this story (M.Bh.I.189.30-33), that of the incarnation of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa from Nārāyaṇa and that of the Pāṇḍavas from the five Indras as late¹². In rejecting the first version of the birth of Balarāma, a complete story,

⁹ A similar version of the story also occurs in the Br.pu. II. 72. 26-27.

¹⁰ Although Ruben has studied it, his focus was different. He considered the motif of birth from hair as indicative of common/shared motifs in the world mythology. He traced the motif of birth from hair or hair incarnation from a number of myths in North America, Central Asia and Europe. He also traced it to tribal mythology of India. He understood the white and black hair of Viṣṇu as symbolising the nature indicating day and night represented by the pair of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, and also Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa. He further said that the hair incarnation motif in fact connects this story to Balarāma, as he was an incarnation of the world snake, Śeṣa, because in one of the Amazonian myths a woman gives birth to a snake after ingesting a hair in a raw egg. Borrowing of this motif from Amazonian myth, which is implied in this theory, is hard to establish. Therefore, I propose that this story should be understood on its own and not in connection with other world mythology as it is hard to establish the origin and spread of these motifs around the world. I think this incarnation story is included in the Hindu mythology as indicative of the origin of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa equally from Viṣṇu stressing the importance of their incarnation. Ruben, *Kṛṣṇa Konkardanz*, 44-45. Ruben also observed that the identity of Balarāma is ambiguous in the birth story. He said the story does not clearly indicate if he originated as a hero, anthropomorphic deity or the ancestor of nāgavamśi rulers of India (Ruben, 56).

¹¹ Bigger, *Balarāma*, 27-28.

¹² In accepting this second reference (M.Bh. I. 61. 90-91) as the authentic version representing Balarāma as an incarnation of Śeṣa, Bigger is in fact contradicting his own postulation that the nāga

and accepting the second brief reference mentioned out of context, Bigger was influenced by one of the M.Bh's internal plans, the establishment of the centrality of the Naranārāyaṇa pair¹³. In the second reference (M.Bh. 1.61.91) Balarāma is briefly mentioned among the list of the incarnations (*aṁśāvataṛaṇas*) of all the characters of the M.Bh (their death and return to own abodes is mentioned in the M.Bh. 18). It is interesting to note that Balarāma is mentioned only in the list of the incarnations, and his death is not narrated along with the others in the M.Bh. 18, but rather in *Mausalaparva*, of the M.Bh. 16. Bigger considers this death story of Balarāma where he emerges as the divine snake, as not original to the M.Bh, but as a condensed version of a longer story that developed outside the M.Bh. This irregularity makes one question the originality of this second incarnation reference of Balarāma. In fact this may be an isolated reference not supported by further evidence, which indicates an effort to present Balarāma as a form of Śeṣa in opposition to Viṣṇu as seen above. I understand this as an interpolation precisely because of the reason noted above. Therefore, I believe that this second reference to Balarāma's incarnation in the M.Bh provides evidence for understanding

identity of Balarāma was a later addition to the personality of Balarāma, a Yādava hero. He notes that the identification of the *vyūha* Saṁkarṣaṇa and the Yādava hero, *vārṣṇi* Balarāma occurs earlier. According to him, to this earlier identity was added that of the serpent Baladeva, which is facilitated by the identification of the *vyūha* Saṁkarṣaṇa and Śeṣa, the divine serpent. Bigger, *Balarāma*, 100- 101. Bigger has argued elsewhere in his study that the story of the death of Balarāma in the *Mausalaparva* was a condensed version of an already existing story and hence not original to the M.Bh. Bigger, *Balarāma*, 64-65.

¹³ Peter Schreiner noted that it is the concern underlying the whole of the M.Bh to establish the Naranārāyaṇa pair, but not only in the *Nārāyaṇīya* section. Peter Schreiner, "Schau Gottes- Ein leitmotiv Indischer Religionsgeschichte?" Reinhold Grünendahl, *Nārāyaṇīya Studien*, 159-95. According to this internal plan of the M.Bh later on only Arjuna is exclusively identified as an incarnation of Indra and Kṛṣṇa as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. As the most preeminent pair in the M.Bh they come to replace all the others incarnated along with them to form this exclusive pair as incarnations of Viṣṇu and Indra. Other Pāṇḍava brothers and Balarāma are identified differently as forms of other minor deities.

what is happening elsewhere in the purāṇas in the birth stories of Balarāma. This second incarnation story depicts the basis on which the later purāṇa stories of Balarāma's birth are fashioned. However, the second version of Balarāma's birth story which I presume is a result of such efforts did not submit to such corrections easily, but left numerous inconsistencies in the story (to be considered in detail in the next section). In short, I suggest that this first version of the birth story is the original presentation of Balarāma: a form of the highest god of Vaiṣṇavism. Although not the earliest version, it represents the central themes associated with Balarāma's incarnation, which are embellished in other later versions amidst confusions. This early theme (of the origin of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa from Viṣṇu) is also found in the second version of the birth story of Balarāma in its earliest version in the HV, although it is modified in the subsequent texts¹⁴. This superior status of Balarāma as the god Viṣṇu, the highest god of Vaiṣṇavism is clearly stressed again in other stories of Balarāma such as the Pralamba episode and the vision of Akrūra (to be studied in detail in section III of this chapter).

Apart from the origin from Nārāyaṇa, the first version does not provide any other information about the actual birth of Balarāma on earth. The second version begins by furnishing these details. Any alterations in these relations in the birth stories between the different texts under study in the following sections reveal hints of the later evolution of Balarāma in Vaiṣṇavism.

¹⁴ HV.45. 38. Here, Brahmā directs Viṣṇu to be born from both Rohiṇī and Devakī.

2.2.3. THE SECOND VERSION OF BALARĀMA'S BIRTH STORY

Let us begin now by considering the second version of the birth story of Balarāma (HV. 45, 46.11-17, 47. 9-38, 48. 1-28; Vi.pu. V. 1. 70-80, 2. 1-2, 3. 1-26; Br.pu.II.72. 38-46, 73.1-30; Bh.pu. X.1. 21-25, 2.7-16, 3.47-53, 4. 7-13), which is the longest and found in all the purāṇas that contain the story of Balarāma. The second version of the birth story builds on the tendency to depict Balarāma as an incarnation of Śeṣa, as observed above, thus distancing him from Viṣṇu as whose incarnation he was depicted in the first version of his birth story. This process is gradual and can be detected in stories across different texts.

The second version of the birth story of Balarāma indicates that Balarāma was originally conceived by Devakī and was transferred to Rohiṇī's womb. Eventually, in circumstances that are not entirely clear, he ends up with Kṛṣṇa under the care of Yaśodā and Nanda in Vraj. It is worth noting that Balarāma is in fact said to be the son of Rohiṇī. Indeed he is often referred to by the matronymics such as *Rauhiṇeya*, *Rohiṇīnandana*, etc. The texts do not refer to his connection to Devakī except in this birth story. This leads to the suspicion that the story of Balarāma's conception by Devakī is a modification to an earlier story of Balarāma, who was dearly known as the son of Rohiṇī. This is only one of numerous changes that follow to present Balarāma as a minor deity rather than a deity of child protection on his own right which I study below.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY

The god Viṣṇu consented to the request of the god Brahmā and attended the assembly of gods in Nandanavana. He agreed to be incarnated on earth to kill the demons, especially the demon Kāṁsa, to decrease the burden of the earth. Nārada informed Kāṁsa about the plan of the gods that Viṣṇu would be born as the eighth child to Devakī (Kāṁsa's sister), to kill Kāṁsa. Thus Kāṁsa undertook elaborate plans to curtail the plan of gods and imprisoned Devakī and decided to kill all the children that were to be born to her. (HV. 46.6-27, HV. 47. 1-8)

The god Viṣṇu then saw the *Ṣadgarbhās*¹⁵ asleep in the womb in *pātāla* (underworld), and he traveled to *pātāla* where the *Ṣadgarbhās* were asleep in the water-womb house (*jalagarbhagṛhe*¹⁶). He entered them as

¹⁵ *Ṣadgarbhās* actually means "six fetuses". The story of *Ṣadgarbhās* varies in all the texts under consideration. In the HV the six fetuses are children of the demon Kālanemi. They had worshipped Brahmā and obtained the boon that they were not to be killed by gods, snakes, *yakṣas*, *gandharvas*, *siddhas* etc. This angers Hiranyakaśipu, who had not been included in the boon. He curses them, saying that they will be killed in the womb by their own father HV.47.11-26. In a slightly different version they are described as sons of Hiranyakaśipu rather than Kālanemi (Vi.pu.V.1.69, Br.pu. II. 72. 36). In the Bh.pu the *Ṣadgarbhās* are presented as gods in addition to their identity as sons of Hiranyakaśipu. In the Bh.pu.X.85.47-51, they are described as the sons of Marīci before being born to Hiranyakaśipu, thus indicating two past lives before their birth to Devakī. Here, while restoring the dead sons upon the request of Devakī, Kṛṣṇa narrates the story of the *Ṣadgarbhās*. According to this narration they were initially the sons of Marīci and Ūṛṇā and were gods. Their names are mentioned as Smara, Udgīta, Pariṣvanga, Patanga, Kṣudrabṛt and Gṛṇin. They laughed when Brahmā cohabited with his daughter and Brahmā cursed them for their audacity. They were born as sons of the demon Hiranyakaśipu and taken away by the goddess Nidrā (Bh.pu. X.85.48) and transferred to Devakī's womb and they were killed by Kāṁsa after their birth. Hacker observed that as the *Bhāgavata* religion developed, all the characters that interact with Kṛṣṇa reach heaven, including the demons. The demons then became the allies of Viṣṇu rather than his enemies. The depiction of the *Ṣadgarbhās* as sons of Hiranyakaśipu in the above stories might demonstrate this change in concepts. One of the famous sons of Hiranyakaśipu, Prahlāda, is a *bhakta* of Viṣṇu. Therefore presenting others in similar way might represent a similar idea. Paul Hacker, *Prahlāda: Werden und Wandlungen*, 596-613. Suneson observed that the identity of the *Ṣadgarbhās* changed over time; see also Carl Suneson, "The *Ṣadgarbhā* Tradition in the Harivaṁśa, the purāṇas and the Kṛṣṇacaritranāṭaka of Ranjit Malla," in *Proceedings of the VIII World Sanskrit Conference, Wiener Zeitschrift Kunde Süd- (und Ost-) Asiens* 36 (1993), Supplementband, 197-211.

¹⁶ Water womb - house is a true translation of the Sanskrit word, *jalagarbhagṛha*, that is used to describe the location of the *Ṣadgarbhās* here in the HV. 47.23. I adopted this translation because I understand that the text may be using this word here to indicate that they were asleep in a womb of water. If this word simply meant to indicate that they were only located inside the water, it would suffice to say - *jalāntargatagṛha* or *jalāntaragṛha*. I understand it as central to the story to indicate that these embryos

sleep and then took out their souls and gave them to Nidrā. He instructed the goddess Nidrā¹⁷, who concealed them in the form of *Kāla*, about the plan of action. “Go Nidrā! Take these *Ṣadgarbhās* and introduce them to the womb of Devakī in proper order. Then Saumya¹⁸ will also take his place in the womb of Devakī. But then, transfer his embryo to Rohiṇī, another wife of Vasudeva, residing in Vraja. Being pulled from the womb by you, he will be known as Samkarṣaṇa and will become my elder brother. Then I will enter the womb of Devakī, while you enter that of Yaśodā. I will be born on the *Aṣṭamī* (the eighth day after the dark half of the moon) and you on the *Navamī* (ninth day after the dark half of the moon) approximately at the same time at midnight and then we will be exchanged. Thinking you to be the eighth child of Devakī, Kamsa will grab you and kill you. Thus you would reach heaven and would be worshipped by the whole world.” (HV.47.9-38)¹⁹

The six children of Devakī were destroyed as predicted above. Kamsa killed the *Ṣadgarbhās* by hitting them on a rock. The seventh embryo, Saumya, was carried to Rohiṇī by Nidrā. In the middle of the night Devakī noticed the embryo leaving her as if in a dream. She fell on the floor overcome by sleep. Nidrā addressed the terrified Rohiṇī, in the middle of the dark night: “Having been pulled from the womb improperly your son will be known as Samkarṣaṇa.” Then Kṛṣṇa and Nidrā were born simultaneously to Devakī and Yaśodā as per the previous plan and were exchanged by Vasudeva. (HV. 48.1-26)

I have prepared the following chart to highlight the modifications to the base story in the different purāṇas. I will base my comparison on the following table.

were in fact in a womb of water. It indicates their vulnerability and the necessity of a similar carrier, womb or womb - like substitute.

¹⁷ Nidrā is the goddess or the Śakti of Viṣṇu, said to be a personified form of the sleep of the supreme god. André Couture, “The problem and meaning of Yoganidrā’s name,” *JIP*, 35-47. He has extensively studied the meaning of the name of Nidrā and suggested that Nidrā is not only a form of sleep of gods and kings, but also a powerful energy.

¹⁸ N.P. Joshi, *Iconography*, 14. He explains Saumya as the epithet of Vāsudeva, the first *vyūha* of Pāñcarātras. Also identified as Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa, Saumya can also mean related to the moon, or Soma. Rohiṇī is the wife of the moon, as the HV itself tells us in HV. 48.5.

¹⁹ In the second version of the birth story Balarāma’s embryonic transfer occurs in the Vi.pu.V.2. 1-2; Br.pu.II.72.39-40; Bh.pu. X.1. 7-8.

CHART II

THE SECOND VERSION OF BALARĀMA'S BIRTH STORY

	HARIVAMŚA (HV.47-48)	VIṢṆU PURĀṆA (Vi.pu. V.1-2)	BRAHMĀ PURĀṆA (Br.pu. II.72-73)	BHAGAVATA PURĀṆA (Bh.pu. X.1-4)
Request of gods	The gods request Viṣṇu to incarnate on the earth. The meeting of the gods in Nandanavana is described in detail.	The gods under the leadership of Brahmā went to milk ocean to meet the god Nārāyaṇa, who plucked two hairs and said they would become Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa.	Same as Vi.pu.	The gods visit Nārāyaṇa under the leadership of Brahmā. Nārāyaṇa was not visible; Brahmā heard his command and directed that the others also have to be born in Vraj.
Plan of Viṣṇu	Viṣṇu went to <i>Pātāla</i> and instructed Nidrā about the impending transfer of <i>Ṣadgarbhās</i> (sons of Kālanemi) and Balarāma.	Viṣṇu instructed Māyā about the impending transfer of, <i>Ṣadgarbhās</i> , (sons of Hiraṇyakaśipu) and Balarāma.	Same as Vi.pu.	Viṣṇu instructed Nidrā about the impending transfer of Balarāma. Her interference is not required in the birth of <i>Ṣadgarbhās</i> sons of Marīci and Ūrṇā previously, who are reborn as sons of Hiraṇyakaśipu due to the curse of Brahmā.
Samkarṣaṇa	Incarnation of Saumya and called an <i>aṃśa</i> of Viṣṇu. (HV. 47.30)	<i>Aṃśāṃśa</i> (part of part) of Śeṣa who was an <i>aṃśa</i> of Viṣṇu. (Vi.pu. V. 1.72)	Same as Vi.pu. (Br.pu. II. 72. 39)	<i>Aṃśāṃśa</i> of Śeṣa imbued with part of Viṣṇu. (X.1.24) and as <i>aṃśa</i> of Viṣṇu known as Śeṣa (X.2.8).
Transfer of Samkarṣaṇa	After 7 th month of pregnancy.	Before birth of Balarāma, but no time specified.	No time specified.	No time specified.
Transfer of Balarāma by Nidrā	The goddess is in <i>Pātāla</i> (under world). She transferred the <i>Ṣadgarbhās</i> from the water womb-house in <i>Pātāla</i> to Devakī. Two chapters are devoted to her	The goddess appears from Viṣṇu in his heaven. She transferred the embryo of Balarāma from Devakī to Rohiṇī before birth without any one's	The goddess appears to god in his heaven. She transferred the embryo of Balarāma from Devakī to Rohiṇī.	Viṣṇu commanded his own Yogamāyā to transfer the embryo of Balarāma from Devakī to Rohiṇī. Three verses describe all her achievements.

	story and eulogy. She transferred the embryo of Balarāma during the seventh month of pregnancy of Devakī.	knowledge.		
Kṛṣṇa	Devakī and Yaśodā got pregnant at the same time and both children were born about the same time at midnight, one before midnight (<i>Aṣṭamī</i>) and the other after midnight (<i>Navamī</i>) on the same day.	Same as in HV.	Same as in HV.	Kṛṣṇa was born at midnight.
Devakī	Devakī fell down, overcome by sleep, but saw her embryo leaving her as if in a dream.	Not mentioned.	Not mentioned.	Not mentioned.
Rohiṇī	Happy to receive the embryo as instructed by Nidrā.	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
Transfer of Kṛṣṇa by Vasudeva	Vasudeva transferred him to the house of Yaśodā overcome by affection towards his son.	Viṣṇu, born as Kṛṣṇa, showed his true form and told Vasudeva if he was afraid he could transfer him to Vraj. Vasudeva carried Kṛṣṇa on his head in a basket and Śeṣa protected him from rain with his hoods.	Viṣṇu, born as Kṛṣṇa, showed his true form and told him to transfer him to Vraj. Vasudeva carried him on his head while Śeṣa protected him from rain with his hoods.	Viṣṇu, born as Kṛṣṇa, showed his true form and told Devakī and Vasudeva as soon as he was born. Devakī requested Kṛṣṇa to grow up unknown to Kāṁsa (X. 3. 29).
Transfer of Balarāma by Vasudeva	No time or place specified. But he physically handed Balarāma to Nanda. Nanda was aware of the parentage of the children.	When released from prison Vasudeva met Nanda at Mathurā and asked him to take care of the son of Rohiṇī born in Vraj.	Same as Vi.pu.	Not clear how Balarāma comes to stay with Nanda.

2.2.4. ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND VERSION OF BALARĀMA'S BIRTH STORY

Three observations can be drawn from a study of the second version of the birth story of Balarāma. Firstly, the story did not evolve according to a single model, which is clear from the mention of inconsistent timings of birth and processes of the transfer of Balarāma. Secondly, it indicates what becomes the dominant trend in Vaiṣṇavism, depicting Balarāma in a diminished position as a partial manifestation of Śeṣa. Thirdly, the discrepancies in the transfer indicate that the purpose of his transfer to Vraj is for the protection of Kṛṣṇa. In addition, I will try to understand the early characteristics of Balarāma from an analysis of the features of deities related to him in this version of the birth story.

1. ABSENCE OF A SINGLE MODEL STORY

The above chart indicates that the details of the Balarāma story differ from text to text, although the story of Kṛṣṇa is fairly uniform. As we move through different texts, the story of Balarāma and Nidrā changes, ascribing them minor roles, while the role of Kṛṣṇa becomes longer and more significant.

These texts are not clear about the details of the process of transfer and birth of Balarāma²⁰. All these texts give different times of transfer, such as the seventh month of

²⁰ On the other hand, the texts are clear about the birth and transfer of Kṛṣṇa. He is always born at midnight and Vasudeva exchanged him with the daughter of Yaśodā in Vraj.

pregnancy, or no details at all. Was he born immediately, as soon as he was transferred to Rohiṇī, or after a few months? It is not clear from the stories in the above purāṇas under consideration. The lack of uniformity indicates that the story of Balarāma was still in flux, in contradistinction to the Kṛṣṇa story that was fixed much earlier. The inconsistencies about Balarāma's birth date and age indicate perhaps that the stories are trying to do different things: make him the elder in some cases, the same age in other. Depicting Balarāma as an elder brother might be a remnant of his earlier significance, also witnessed in the petroglyphs of Chilas II. If this is the case, then modifications to Balarāma's birth story parallel the currents of evolution in Vaiṣṇavism where Kṛṣṇa became the central deity. These variant details suggest an attempt to harmonize the story of Balarāma with that of Kṛṣṇa, thereby diminishing Balarāma's position in Vaiṣṇavism. Unlike the above texts, we shall see that the Jain texts indicate another pattern, in which the birth stories of Balarāma are set in a fixed form early on, while the story of Kṛṣṇa accumulates new features and changes continually in different texts. I return to discuss the significance of this below (detailed study in chapter III. 3.3.1-3.3.2 and 3.5.1-3.5.3 of this thesis).

Ruben²¹ noted that the Kṛṣṇa story evolved to a set pattern and form early and that this pattern was followed in all the purāṇas. He showed the close connection between the stories of the HV and the Br.pu in the case of Kṛṣṇa, the only difference between the two versions being that the HV was long. In the case of Kṛṣṇa, he maintains that the core

story remained uniform in all the selected versions, with expansion in details. However, this is not the case with the Balarāma stories. His story is not uniform in all the versions, which might indicate that the stories of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa did not evolve in the same way. Although longer, the HV story preserves what I have called the second version of the birth story of Balarāma (see 2.2.3 above), while the Vi.pu and the Br.pu preserve a synthesized story of the first and second version of the birth story together (see section 2.2.2 above). Both versions of the birth story of Balarāma in its earliest version, the M.Bh (first version) and the HV (second version), describe Balarāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu which was not the case in the Vi.pu, the Br.pu and the Bh.pu. By joining the two versions of birth together the Vi.pu obscures the identity of Balarāma, making him a part of the snake Śeṣa, who in turn is a part of Viṣṇu, a modification also found in the Br.pu. Therefore, I assume that for the Br.pu, the stories of the Vi.pu rather than the stories of the HV are the source. Although the Br.pu and the Bh.pu have adopted the story of the Vi.pu, it is only the Br.pu that has remained close to the Vi.pu version while the Bh.pu differs from Vi.pu considerably. The Bh.pu story differs from the HV and resembles the Vi.pu story in describing *Śadgarbhas* as sons of Hiranyakaśipu and transfer of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa to Vraj. However, in including divine parentage to *Śadgarbhas* and not enlisting the support of Nidrā in their transfer, it differs from all the other texts considered.

²¹ According to Ruben the story of Kṛṣṇa evolved into a fixed model as a set of events that occur in a set pattern very early in the redaction process of the story. Ruben, “Kṛṣṇacarita,” 119.

Unlike the Vi.pu, the Bh.pu preserves only the second version of the birth story introducing its own innovations, the source of which is unknown. In this process it reduces the story of Balarāma and the goddess to only a few verses, while a large part of the story is devoted to the description of the birth of Kṛṣṇa. In the following pages I discuss these variations in the birth story from different texts, which in turn will help us understand the various theological changes in Vaiṣṇavism that might have contributed to these changes. In this way, I hope to show that a study of the Balarāma stories provides us with alternative evidence to understand the development of Vaiṣṇavism, which used the narratives of both these gods.

2. DECLINING IDENTITY OF BALARĀMA ACROSS DIFFERENT VERSIONS

Ambiguity surrounds the actual (or past) identity of the seventh child of Devakī, although this child is repeatedly identified with Balarāma. Devakī's first six children were identified with the *ṣaḍgarbhās*, sons of Kālanemi/Hiraṇyakaśipu, destined to be killed by Kamsa, and the eighth child Kṛṣṇa, a form of Viṣṇu, descended to kill the demons. The seventh child of Devakī, Samkarṣaṇa or Balarāma (as he is variously named here), is neither destined to be killed by Kamsa nor is his specific role clearly stated, and he is variously identified as an incarnation of Viṣṇu and Śeṣa. This begs the question, who is Balarāma, and what is his divine destiny? His identity is not clear from the second version of his birth story. However, this story declares the names Balarāma and Samkarṣaṇa as representing the same deity, stating that Samkarṣaṇa is the name of

Balarāma (HV.48.6). It explains the name Saṃkarṣaṇa as derivative of the verb *karṣaṇa* from the root *kṛṣ*, as that of *karṣaṇa/ saṃkarṣaṇa*, meaning “that which is pulled or extracted,” based on the story of his extraction from the womb of Devakī. In considering the identity of Balarāma below I consider the Saṃkarṣaṇa of the inscriptions and Balarāma of the stories as the same.

I have shown that there is evidence that Balarāma was regarded as a divinity equal to Kṛṣṇa if not greater in the first version of Balarāma’s birth story, as he appears to have been in the early archaeological sources (see chart I. Early archaeological and literary sources of Balarāma). In the inscriptions Saṃkarṣaṇa is always placed first in the list of deities, and occupied the right side in bigger size in Ekānamśā triads, indicating his distinguished status. This distinguished status is also evident in the first version of his birth story supporting my argument that Balarāma was regarded at first as a equal to if not greater than Kṛṣṇa. This identity of Balarāma as a form of the supreme god Viṣṇu is again found mentioned in its earliest version in the HV, although changes are introduced in the second version of the birth story in later texts. I discuss the modifications to his identity in the second version of the birth story below.

In the HV, while requesting Viṣṇu to be born on earth, Brahmā tells him to be born to “both Devakī and Rohiṇī” (HV. 45.38). In the HV (47.30), Viṣṇu informs Nidrā that an *aṃśa* (part) of Saumya (Viṣṇu) would be incarnated in the seventh pregnancy of Devakī. These two references from the HV therefore present him in a similar status with

Kṛṣṇa, as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. However, in the Vi.pu (V.1.72) Balarāma is stated to be an incarnation of an *aṃśāṃśa* (part of part) of “Viṣṇu, that is part of Śeṣa who is a part of Viṣṇu”, in the Br.pu (II.72.39) “an *aṃśa* (part) of Śeṣa, who is sinless part of Viṣṇu”, and in the Bh.pu (X.2.8) “an *aṃśa* of Viṣṇu known as Śeṣa” and as “an *aṃśa* of Śeṣa imbued with part of Viṣṇu” (X.1.24).

Although the HV contains the second version of the birth story of Balarāma, it preserves the identity of Balarāma similar to the first version, as an *aṃśa* (part) Viṣṇu. In the first version of the birth story in the M.Bh 1.189.31, Vi.pu V.1.60,63 and Br.pu. II. 72.26-27, he was represented as a manifestation of Viṣṇu. However, as already noted above, in the second version he was represented as a part of Śeṣa, who was a part of Viṣṇu. He is no longer a direct incarnation of Viṣṇu. Thus the second version, while identifying Balarāma with Śeṣa, a minor deity in Vaiṣṇavism, nonetheless continues to maintain a presence of Viṣṇu, albeit in a small way. This is significant, because it represents a shift away from the prominence, and marks the tendency to dilute Balarāma’s identity and importance, while preserving traces of Balarāma’s identification with Viṣṇu.

From my analysis of the birth stories above, it appears that Balarāma was originally a significant deity in Vaiṣṇavism identified initially as an incarnation of its central deity Viṣṇu. Later on he came to be regarded as an incarnation of the minor deity Śeṣa. The Vi.pu in offering two contradictory explanations (the two hairs of Viṣṇu and a

part of Śeṣa) together, shows how the new element (part of Śeṣa) has been clumsily grafted on to the older identity known from the first version of the birth story.

3. BALARĀMA AS PROTECTOR OF CHILD KṚṢṆA

Two things can be understood from the discrepancies in the stories of the transfer of Balarāma. Firstly, the purpose of his transfer is for the protection of Kṛṣṇa and others. Secondly, we may discover the characteristic features associated with Balarāma as revealed through his relationships with other deities in these stories.

The birth of Balarāma requires two consecutive transfers involving three different mothers (Devakī, Rohiṇī and Yaśodā) in the process. This in turn connects him to two families: one royal family (Vasudeva and Devakī) and one humble (Nanda and Yaśodā); two places: the town of Mathurā and the village of Vraj. Inclusion of these multiple motifs has led to many discrepancies in this version of the birth story.

Discrepancies occur in the birth story at the points when Balarāma is joined with the others in this story, indicating that his position in relation to others has been subjected to changes.

The efforts of the tradition in trying to harmonize the story of Balarāma with Kṛṣṇa can be observed clearly in the second transfer. While the first transfer (as an

embryo from Devakī to Rohiṇī), I will argue, indicates his early significant status and relates him to goddess, the second transfer (turned over to Nanda and Yaśodā as a child) forcefully locates him in the company of Kṛṣṇa. Although Balarāma was brought to Vraj by the first transfer as described above, apparently his transfer is not complete until he was joined to Kṛṣṇa. This is the purpose of the second transfer - to join Balarāma to Kṛṣṇa. As we shall see below the texts do not explain clearly the reasons for this second transfer, which is important to understand as it might indicate the earlier concepts associated with the early cult of Balarāma. This can be done by collaborating this detail with the other available textual evidence. For example, the Jain texts are much more explicit in stating the reasons for his transfer to Vraj, to protect Kṛṣṇa from the various dangers surrounding him in Vraj (detailed study follows in chapter III. 3.5.1-3.5.3).

The second transfer of Balarāma is problematic. Why was it necessary? It should not have been motivated for the safety of Balarāma. After the primary transfer as described above had already taken place (Devakī to Rohiṇī), it would have rendered his subsequent transfer in Vraj redundant, unless motivated by another significant cause. This is because the danger to the life of Balarāma from Kaṁsa had been averted when he was not born to Devakī as Kaṁsa planned to kill only the children born to Devakī²². It can be observed from the above birth stories that knowledge of this transfer was limited to Viṣṇu and Nidrā. Thus Balarāma's safety is not the key factor in the second transfer.

²² HV.47.1-8. Kaṁsa instructed his guards to go to Devakī and keep watch on her. It is also clear in the course of the story that Kaṁsa sends demons Vrajā to kill the child Kṛṣṇa, but not Balarāma.

Instead, this transfer brings Balarāma into a direct relationship with Kṛṣṇa where he can support Kṛṣṇa and participate in killing the demons in Vṛndāvan and Mathurā. This transfer paradoxically indicates the importance of Balarāma. Kṛṣṇa needed the support of Balarāma, as the HV makes clear, although this will change in later texts. Thus I argue that Balarāma might be a deity of child protection in the early stage of the evolution of his cult; his clear function in the HV, indicated by the second transfer, is to protect the child Kṛṣṇa. His close connection to the goddess Nidrā (to be taken up in detail in 2.3.2) in this transfer story might also indicate the milieu of his origin, and his previous role as protector of children in Mathurā region in conjunction with the goddesses.

I now look more closely at the stories.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY (HV.49.1-16)

Previously, Vasudeva had heard about the birth of a son to Rohiṇī in Vraj. He told Nandagopa to go quickly to Vraj and perform *jātakarma* (birth rituals) and take care of the son of Rohiṇī and his son. Thus instructed, leaving Vasudeva, Nandagopa ascended the chariot with his wife, Yaśodā. He placed one child on his shoulder and placed another on the chariot to sleep. He traveled on the road along the banks of Yamunā and reached Vraj.

This clearly indicates that Vasudeva handed the two children to Nandagopa when they were infants. This detail conflicts with the earlier details: the first transfer of Balarāma as an embryo (HV.48.5-6) and the transfer of Kṛṣṇa as a newly born child, which should have already taken place (HV. 48. 18-20).

This transfer of Balarāma is mentioned only briefly in the other texts under consideration. In the Vi.pu (V.5.1-6) and the Br.pu (II.75.1-5) versions, Vasudeva met Nanda in Mathurā when he had come there to pay taxes, and asked him to take care of the son of Rohiṇī born in Vraj. The Bh.pu does not mention any transfer of Balarāma by Vasudeva (Bh.pu. X.5.27). However, Vasudeva had met Nanda at Mathurā and asked about the well being of Balarāma. Nothing is said about how Balarāma had come to stay with Nanda as his son. Thus the transfer of Balarāma to Nanda in our texts is a confused story. The result, however, is clear. The second transfer is necessary in order to join Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa together to grow up in Vraj. In the HV passage, in which Vasudeva transfers Balarāma to Nanda, he also warns him to look after the children and enumerates some of the dangers that beset them. Perhaps Balarāma's protection was necessary for the child Kṛṣṇa to survive. If this is the case, the story also indicates the early significance of Balarāma, as the protector of Kṛṣṇa, and perhaps more generally a protector of children²³.

2.3. FAMILY OF BALARĀMA AND EARLY FEATURES ASSOCIATED WITH BALARĀMA

Balarāma's relationship to Vraj, to his mother Rohiṇī, sister Ekānaṃśā and brother Kṛṣṇa help in understanding his significant position as part of an early cult, perhaps related to goddesses as a protector of children. He shares an ambiguous

²³ Phyllis Granoff, "Paradigms of Protection: Jain, Buddhist and Hindu Stories," Piotr Balcerowicz ed. *Essays in Jaina Philosophy and Religion* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2002), 181-212.

relationship with his sister Ekānaṃśā²⁴ and his brother Kṛṣṇa. These relationships also provide information about the assimilation and development of Balarāma in Vaiṣṇavism. In the present section I will discuss the family relationships of Balarāma and how they may give us evidence of his earlier personality and significance in Vaiṣṇavism.

2.3.1. ROHIṆĪ: THE CELESTIAL MOTHER

Multiple mothers is a phenomenon associated with some of the early deities in Hinduism²⁵. The parentage of these deities is often unclear in the texts and by identifying the multiple mothers we can trace some of the steps in their early cult and changing identities.

Balarāma is the son of four mothers. Devakī is the mother in whose womb he was first conceived, Rohiṇī is his birth mother, Yaśodā is his foster mother, while Nidrā is his

²⁴ The identity of Ekānaṃśā is controversial and identified with Subhadrā and Citrā variously. Mukherji argues that Ekānaṃśā is identified with Subhadrā, the daughter of Yaśodā. S.C. Mukherji, "The Cult of Ekānaṃśā," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 35. 3 (1959), 189-208. Ghosh argues that the identity of Ekānaṃśā as Subhadrā is only a change of name for the goddess Ekānaṃśā. He further adds that this change of name resulted in decreasing the significance of the goddess. J.C. Ghosh, "Ekānaṃśā and Subhadrā," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters* volume II (1936), 41-46. Ruben rejects the identity of Subhadrā and Ekānaṃśā. He argues that the story of Ekānaṃśā as a goddess in the HV is a later interpolation. Ruben, *Kṛṣṇa Konkardanz*, 68. Vaidya supports the identity of Ekānaṃśā with Subhadrā. However, he denies that Subhadrā was the daughter of Yaśodā. Instead he maintains that she is Citrā, popularly known as Subhadrā, the daughter of Rohiṇī, and sister of Balarāma. He says that Citrā is a divine nymph born to Rohiṇī due to the curse of a sage. She died soon after birth and was born again as a daughter of Rohiṇī with a desire to see the deeds of Kṛṣṇa on earth. P.L. Vaidya, *Harivaṃśa*, Critical Notes, 792.

²⁵ Skanda is another Hindu deity whose stories depict similar phenomenon of multiple mothers associated with childbirth. M.Bh. III. 215-216. Richard Mann studied the cult of Skanda and the Mātṛs in detail understanding their relation to child protection. Richard D. Mann, *The Early Cult of Skanda in North India: From Demon to Divine Son*, unpublished Ph.D thesis (Hamilton: McMaster University Library, 2003), 21-38.

surrogate /carrier mother. The role of Devakī and Yaśodā is clear, in that by being his mothers they assure that Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa have the same parents, and a link to the royal family at Mathurā and to Vraja. On the contrary his relationship to Nidrā and Rohiṇī suggests he had his own independent existence which, moreover, was connected with goddess cults of Mathurā connected to food, abundance, childbirth, and protection of children. This may in fact give us a clue to his earlier personality before he was brought into Vaiṣṇavism. I will consider the portrait of Rohiṇī and Nidrā in the following pages in order to understand the personality of Balarāma in relationship with these goddess cults. While Rohiṇī is indirectly connected to abundance and giver of children by the texts which say she is an incarnation form of Surabhi, the wishing cow and symbol of abundance, Nidrā is connected to the transfer of embryos. Balarāma, I argue, shares with these goddesses the roles of protecting children and providing sustenance (to be studied in detail in section III of this chapter).

Although Rohiṇī's role in the birth of Balarāma is brief, the fact that Balarāma is known by the names *Rauhiṇeya*, *Rohiṇīnandana*, all terms meaning son of Rohiṇī, indicate her significance as his birth mother²⁶. Rohiṇī is the first and favorite wife of Vasudeva (HV.25.1). She received the embryo of Devakī (HV. 48.1-8), but the son, Balarāma was transferred to Nanda and Yaśodā in Gokula (HV.49.1-16). Rohiṇī is identified as an incarnation of the divine cow Surabhi (HV.45.21). Brahmā informed

²⁶ On the contrary Kṛṣṇa is always referred to as his father's son - Vāsudeva (son of Vasudeva) although the name Vāsudeva is interpreted differently by scholars (see chapter I pp. 14-17 for some observations).

Viṣṇu that Kaśyapa²⁷, Aditi and Surabhi (the divine cow) had manifested themselves on the earth as Vasudeva, Devakī, and Rohiṇī, waiting for the birth of Viṣṇu. In fact, Rohiṇī means deer, red cow and also red color²⁸. Surabhi is the symbol of abundance and fertility in epic mythology suggesting that Balarāma in his connection to Rohiṇī is associated with abundance²⁹. Although Rohiṇī and Surabhi are regarded as two different individuals, there is considerable similarity in their personality. Both are known as daughters of Dakṣa and mothers of cows. Both are regarded as the cow of plenty.

Rohiṇī is also the name of a cluster of stars described as the ninth star constellation and wife of the moon. Balarāma's mother, Rohiṇī, is compared to a star³⁰, "Shining like the star, Rohiṇī of the Moon, Rohiṇī of Vasudeva was pleased to receive

²⁷ Varuṇa cursed Kaśyapa to be born on earth. HV.45. 20-36. Here, Viṣṇu is to be born from both Devakī and Rohiṇī. HV. 45.38.

²⁸ Abundance is one of the common qualities associated with Rohiṇī and Surabhi and both of them have been described as divine cows. Rohiṇī is described in the Sanskrit dictionary as "a red cow or (later) any cow (represented as a daughter of Surabhi) and mother of cattle, esp., of Kāmadhenu, 'cow of plenty,' in the Veda". The other meaning of this name is stated as "the name of 9th nakṣatra or lunar asterism. It is personified as a daughter of Dakṣa and as the favourite wife of the moon called 'the red one'. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Etymological Dictionary*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint. 1997), 890. The name Surabhi is described as the "name of a fabulous cow (daughter of Dakṣa and wife of Kaśyapa, mother of cattle and Rudras, sometimes considered as one of the Mātṛs or as a cow of plenty". Monier- Williams, 1235.

²⁹ Sarga I of the *Raghuvamśa* of Kālidāsa describes how King Dilīpa was unhappy at not having any children. When approached by him the sage Vaśiṣṭa advised him to wait upon his cow Nandinī, daughter of Surabhi, for Dilīpa has not honored the divine cow Surabhi in the past. Thus he waited upon the cow, Nandinī, for twenty-two days and was blessed by the cow with a child. This is one illustration of fertility associated with the cow. *Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa*, ed., R.D. Karmarkar (Poonā: Damodar Karmarkar, 1925), 1-53.

³⁰ Buddhist texts describe the festival of a certain goddess of a star constellation at the time of Buddha's visit to Mathurā. This goddess is said to have appeared naked to Buddha to dissuade him from entering Mathurā. Although the connection of this goddess of Buddhist texts and Rohiṇī of our stories is not clear, it indicates the existence of the worship of a goddess of star constellation in Mathurā, with which Balarāma might be associated. Nalinaksha Dutt, Vidyaridhi Pandit Shiv Nath Sharma, *Gilgit Manuscripts* Vol. 3, Part I (Srinagar: Calcutta Oriental Press, 1942), 14-15.

Samkarṣaṇa from Nidrā” (H.V.48.5). Rohiṇī is described as a princess from Bāhlika³¹, as the daughter of Bāhlika of Puru lineage. She also had eight sons and a daughter in addition to Balarāma³² and her children are described as *Rohiṇīkulaja* (born in the lineage of Rohiṇī). She is also depicted as an incarnation of Kadrū, known as *sarpamāta* (mother of snakes)³³. As already noted, her incarnation from Surabhi makes clear her connection to abundance and fertility.

Balarāma’s designation as *Rauhiṇeya* (son of Rohiṇī) may in fact emphasize his association with abundance. This is reinforced by his close association with Nidrā, with

³¹ K.D. Bajpai identified Bāhlika with the region in the Hindukush on the borders of Punjab. He identifies Bāhlikas as people living in the western Punjab and with the present Balis of the Balistan spread in the valleys of Bolan and Nari, Gokh rivers in the Bolan and Quetta pass. He opposes the identification of Bāhlika with Bactria in Ketumālavarṣa as identified by other scholars earlier. K.D. Bajpai, “Identification of Vanga and Vāhlika in the Mehrauli Iron Pillar Inscription,” *DR. Mirashi Felicitation Volume* (Nagpur: Vidarbha Samshodhan Mandal, 1965), 355-361. B.C. Law identifies Bāhlikas with the *Bactrioi* occupying the country near Arachosia in Ptolemy’s time. B.C. Law, *Historical Geography of Ancient India* (Paris: Société Asiatique de Paris, 1954), 267.

³² Balarāma, Sāraṇa, Śaṭha, Durdama, Damana, Śubhra, Pindaraka, Kusitaka and a daughter Citrā. *Brahmānda purāṇa*, II.71.163-170. Rohiṇī is not mentioned much in the life of Balarāma during his adult life once he left Vraj. Rohiṇī is not mentioned as leaving Vraj or visiting any other place. She was not even mentioned as visiting Mathurā during the killing of Kāṁsa. The Bh.pu (Tagare, Bh.pu. pp.1528) translator adds a note that she might have come to Mathurā to participate in the *Upanayana* ceremony of Balarāma as it was necessary for the mother to be present in this ceremony. The texts are silent on this matter.

³³ *Brahmāvaivarta purāṇa*, Vol. II Śrī Kṛṣṇajanma Khanda, Gurumandal Series XIV (Calcutta: Gopal Printers, 1955) 9.17-40. The mention of Rohiṇī as *Sarpamāta* (mother of snakes) in this text is interesting. Here she is mentioned as a reincarnation of Kadrū, the mother of snakes. Aditi when she saw Kāśyapa and Kadrū together cursed her to be born on earth. It is not known if the identity of Rohiṇī as an incarnation of Kadrū is a result of the identity of Balarāma with Śeṣa or it indicates a connection of the goddess with snakes. However, I think that this identification of the mother of Balarāma as an incarnation of Kadrū, the mother of snakes, instead of Aditi, the divine cow, reflects similar changes taking place in his personality. The evidence at our disposal shows that the original nature of Balarāma is associated with food and abundance and it was modified gradually as he was associated with Śeṣa, the divine snake. As his original qualities are replaced by those representing the nāga identity, his mother, Rohiṇī, an incarnation of divine cow Surabhi may have been replaced by Kadrū, mother of snakes.

whom he is associated as protector of children. I now turn to the study of Nidrā, to examine her features that might help to illuminate the role of Balarāma. .

2.3.2. NIDRĀ: AMBIGUOUS SISTER

The relationship of Balarāma to his sister, Nidrā, is ambiguous. The goddess Nidrā appears as a protector of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in the HV (HV.49.29-33, 51. 1-16). Her identity in the Ekānamśā triads is ambiguous, so also is the relationship between the three deities depicted in these triads viz. Balarāma, Ekānamśā, and Kṛṣṇa³⁴. Here I study

³⁴ The goddess of the triads is identified variously as sister, mother and wife of Kṛṣṇa. Denis Hudson proposes that Ekānamśā is the sister and wife of Kṛṣṇa. He analysed the stories of Čilappadikāram and later Śrīvaiṣṇava texts and concluded that the Śrīvaiṣṇavas regarded her as another wife of Viṣṇu. But I think the HV story of the goddess does not support such a claim. Denis Hudson, "Pinnai, Kṛṣṇa's Cowherd wife," eds., J.S. Hawley and D. M. Wulff, *The Divine Consort: Rādhā and the Goddesses of India* (Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1982), 238- 61. Misra says that the goddess Subhadrā should be considered as a Śakti (energy) of Viṣṇu but not as a wife and sister of Kṛṣṇa at the same time. K.C. Misra, *The Cult of Jagannatha* (Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1971), Appendix IV, 217-18. Charlotte Vaudeville argues that the goddess can be considered as only the mother of Kṛṣṇa and not as his wife. She notes that Ekānamśā was a form of the great goddess in her dark and her luminous aspect. In her dark form as Kālī she is conceived as the mother- or possibly the elder sister of both male gods, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. She also notes that therefore she cannot be conceived as the consort of either of them (Vaudeville, 9). Charlotte Vaudeville, "Kṛṣṇa -Gopala, Radha, and The Great Goddess," J.S. Hawley, D.M. Wulff, *Divine Consort*, 1-13. Charlotte Schmid identifies Nidrā with Ekānamśā and concludes that Ekānamśā stands between Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa as a unifying force. She says the goddess of the Vṛṣṇi triads should first be considered as a goddess and only secondarily as a sister and wife. She further explained that the vagueness of the familial status allows Ekānamśā to represent the female divinity cults of Mathurā before being placed in the family relationships. Votive basins adorned with serpents and women with a child are typical of Mathurā. She also notes that the female divinity cults took on numerous forms peculiar to Mathurā region although the connection between the goddesses of the archaeological sources and the goddess of the HV is not clear. André Couture, Charlotte Schmid, "The Harivaṃśa," 173-192. Nidrā is referred to as Māyā and Mahāmāyā in the Vi.pu and the Br.pu in the second version of the birth story of Balarāma. Although māyā is connected with Indra in the Vedas it is connected to Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa in the epics. Teun Goudriaan notes that the māyā of god and the magical power of spreading delusion are very closely connected. He says that the māyā in the Vedic Samhitās stands for a neutral force used for the creation of a real, material form, human or non – human and by means of which the creator of that form demonstrates his incomprehensible power. Teun Goudriaan, *Māyā: Divine and Human* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), 2-55. Coburn said that the name Nidrā is used as an epithet of Devi along with Mahāmāyā in the narration of Madhu- Kaitabha myth. He considers Nidrā as one of the forms of Devi (Coburn, 191-195). The water –womb nature and the praise of goddess are described only in Harivaṃśa. Coburn has established in his study that Nidrā is unknown in

the identity of the goddess Nidrā from the HV story and compare her features with the cryptic data regarding the goddesses of Mathurā region known from archaeological sources. This will in turn help in understanding the early characteristics of Balarāma. By virtue of his relationship to Nidrā, a goddess connected with childbirth and protection, I submit that protection of children was an important aspect of Balarāma's early identity. In her role of transferring embryos she recalls a well known god of children/pregnancy: Harinaigameṣin, who transferred the embryo of Mahāvīra³⁵. Nidrā as protector of embryos and involved in the embryo transfers thus belongs to a recognizable group of gods and goddesses. In his relationship to Nidrā as brother Balarāma is her ally in protecting the children. While she protected embryos before birth, Balarāma protects children once born, from demons and other potential dangers. The role of Nidrā and Balarāma indicates this interrelated aspect of their identity as protectors. Linked together in this story with a similar background they seem to have shared a cultic identity.

Considering these popular beliefs, it is not surprising that the HV story of Nidrā associates her with embryos and childbirth. In this, as in the other aspects, the HV seems to reflect a religious environment consistent with early Kuṣāṇa *mātṛka* (mother goddess) figures. The goddess myth here reflects the earlier concepts associated with *mātṛka* figures rather than Lakṣmī or other Vaiṣṇava goddesses known in the purāṇas. I will

the Vedas and only found in the purāṇas. Coburn notes that it is (HV. 47) the only time a hymn employing numerous "Goddess motifs" appears in a constituted text of the critical edition of the text. (Coburn, 113, Note.89). Thomas Coburn, *Devi Māhātmya* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), 191-195.

³⁵We know that Harinaigameṣin was the focus of a cult and numerous terracotta sculptures of him exist. U.P. Shah, "Harinegameṣin," *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* 19 (1952-53), 19-41.

highlight these differences in the following section in support of my argument that these motifs connected to childbirth and protection in fact are shared by Balarāma, although not to be found in the later Vaiṣṇava deities.

This brings one to the question about the identity of this goddess Nidrā. She is the goddess of embryos and childbirth in the HV, and cannot be identified with Lakṣmī, the consort of Viṣṇu. In the HV this goddess embodies the characteristics different from that of Lakṣmī³⁶. However, she is described as unmarried, worshipped throughout the world. Taking a vow of “non-marriage” (*kaumāraka vrata* HV.47.45), she roams the three worlds. These details make it clear that the goddess of the HV, Nidrā, was not the wife of Viṣṇu as is commonly assumed, and an indication that the goddess of the HV is worshipped on her own in the earlier stage without having been connected to any male god as his wife. Therefore this early text, the HV, preserves a glimpse of Nidrā similar to other earlier local goddess cults of Mathurā. She appears terrible when Kaṁsa kills her by smashing her on rock, whereupon she announces his impending death. She proclaims that she will split open his body and drink his blood at the time of his death (HV.48.30-

³⁶ I assume that the goddess Nidrā is not associated with Lakṣmī in this early stage. Although the goddess Nidrā is described here as the energy of Viṣṇu, similar to Lakṣmī, she seems to embody different characteristics from Lakṣmī. Moreover, it has been established that the goddess Lakṣmī is not associated with Viṣṇu during the initial phase (300 B.C.E –100 C.E) of development of Vaiṣṇavism. Lakṣmī is mentioned as another name of Subhadrā and related to Viṣṇu only once in the M.Bh. (1.55.34). She is also mentioned as one of the daughters of Prajāpati married to Dharma (M.Bh. 1.60.13) and the wife of five Indras (M.Bh 1.189.33). The above evidence indicates that the goddess of the HV, Nidrā, was not identified with the Vaiṣṇava goddess Lakṣmī at this stage. Suvira Jaiswal has concluded that the goddess is united with Viṣṇu as his consort during the Gupta age (300-500 C.E). Jaiswal, *The Origin*, 102-105. *Pañcarātra* literature presents Lakṣmī and her other forms as associated with *vyūhas*, which could be a still later adaptation. Upendra Nath Dhal, *Goddess Lakṣmī* (New Delhi: Oriental Publishers, 1978), 98-99. Nidrā is mentioned as a slayer of Madhu- Kaitabha and as an incarnation of Lakṣmī in *Pañcarātra* literature. *Lakṣmī Tantra*, ed., trans., Sanjukta Gupta (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 9.15-19.

35)³⁷. Further, in the HV she is taken by Indra as his sister (HV.47.46) and thus known by *Kauśika gotra*, the *gotra* of Indra. This *gotra* also indicates her ritual connection. The goddess has been worshipped traditionally by the brāhmins of *Kauśika gotra*³⁸. This *gotra* actually indicates the assimilation of the goddess into the brāhminical fold where she is propitiated with rituals by a particular group of brāhmins. This indicates that the goddess cult was separate from the cult of Vaiṣṇava gods. This completes our analysis of the features associated with Nidrā in the HV.

Before proceeding further on how the above goddess of the HV connected to the early cult of Balarāma, I will consider here the ancient goddess cults in Mathurā in brief, the possible cultic context for the evolution of Balarāma and the goddess Nidrā. Numerous goddess images and a goddess temple were discovered in the excavations near Mathurā³⁹. The HV story of Nidrā utilizes the motifs associated with local goddesses typical of Mathurā region such as fertility and child protection. In addition, many terracotta goddess seals depict goddesses with children and weapons respectively. This

³⁷ This motif is not followed up further. The goddess does not take any part in the killing of Kāṃsa in Mathurā. Therefore, I assume that the goddess in this stage is connected to embryos and protection rather than to violence.

³⁸ J.N. Banerjea, *Purāṇic and Tāntric Religion* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1966), 119.

³⁹ Härtel excavated an apsidal temple with unknown affiliation, and near by it is found a female sculpture. H. Härtel, *Excavations at Sonkh* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1993), 64-67 and 88-105. N.P. Joshi discusses the terracotta sculptures and other goddess forms found in the area of Mathurā. Numerous sculptures depict the goddesses with children, and are peculiar to Mathurā region. He considers fertility aspect as the major trait associated with the sculptures of the goddesses of Mathurā region. N.P. Joshi, *Mothers in Kuṣāṇa Art* (New Delhi: Kanak Publishing House, 1986), 1-17. Sharma and Yaldiz include the particularly interesting votive basins, some of which are adorned with the goddesses and others, with snakes. R.C. Sharma, M. Yaldiz, eds., *Palast der Götter: 1500 Jahre Kunst aus Indien* (Berlin: Staatliche Museum zu Berlin, Museum für Indische Kunst, 1992), 139-114.

archaeological evidence supports the literary depiction of Nidrā in the HV, which draws on the motifs of fertility and child protection⁴⁰. Developing amongst this milieu, it is not surprising that the HV story of Nidrā associates her with embryos and children.

Balarāma's relationship to Nidrā who is his sister might reveal something about his early cult. As I mentioned earlier, the archaeological evidence depicts Balarāma with a goddess in triads⁴¹. Given the milieu in Mathurā, where goddesses were worshipped widely, and his close association with two goddesses of fertility and protection, I speculate that Balarāma may have been worshipped in a context similar to Nidrā or a goddess like her, associated with fertility and protection of children. This would explain why his presence is required in Vraj for the protection of the child Kṛṣṇa.

2.3.3. DUAL HEROES: RĀMA-KEŚAVA IN VRAJ

The relationship of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa has acquired a special place in the complex mythology of Vaiṣṇavism. I have noted above that Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are

⁴⁰ Naman Ahuja, Seminar presentation in the Department of Religious Studies, McMaster University, March 28, 2003. He included numerous goddesses from the Mathurā region in different contexts in terracotta medium in his presentation. He concluded that such a large number of goddess images in terracotta indicates the popularity of goddess worship in this region. Scholars have attempted to connect cryptic early evidence with the later literary evidence regarding the goddesses in Hinduism. A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1971), 9. "Yakṣiṇi cult was a prototype of goddesses cult in Hinduism. It is beyond doubt that the Yakṣiṇis were extensively worshipped in part as beneficent and in part as malevolent beings.... The seven Mātṛkas (who are in part connected with Kubera) to 64 Joginis, the Dākinis and some forms of Devis of medieval and modern cults must have been Yakṣiṇis."

⁴¹ See chart I for details on Ekānamśā triads and see figure 10-12 for an illustration of the triads.

described as equals and as a unit in every aspect in their childhood, although they diverge and acquire different personalities in their adult life. Jan Gonda, while examining the dual deities in the Vedas, has noted the pairs function as a unit⁴². However, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa show two differing aspects rather than complementarity.

Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are said to be of equal age in the course of the myth in the HV. In Vraj, as they are growing up, they are described as acquiring every skill together as children⁴³. In fact, the whole chapter of the text HV.51 is composed in *dvandva* compounds to describe the growing brothers together, almost like twins. Thus, according to the HV (52. 1-8) they acquired every skill together and started tending the cows when they were seven years of age. This event is actually intended as a disguise of Balarāma as a companion of Kṛṣṇa. It is only after their arrival in Vṛndāvan that the true identity and nature of Balarāma is revealed in various incidents⁴⁴.

In only one detail are the birth stories of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa divergent: their birth mothers are different. Otherwise, the story tells us that both of them have been conceived by the same mother, Devakī, and that they were taken care of by the same foster parents,

⁴² Gonda notes that pairs are common in nature, which is replicated in religions again. He states that dual divinities such as Mitrāvaruṇau essentially constitute biunities of conjoint principles, which in their functions and activities often complement each other. Jan Gonda, *The Dual Deities in the Veda* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Co. 1974), 16-19.

⁴³ Couture describes this period in the life of Kṛṣṇa as a period of gestation, based on the evidence of 'Śisuvratam' = vow of childhood (HV.51.3), and 'Mānuṣidīkṣa' = vow of human (HV.58.8), mentioned in connection with Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. André Couture, *L'enfance de Kṛṣṇa*, 44.

⁴⁴ Although the later texts include similar descriptions of their childhood, the description of their assumption of "human form as vow" is avoided. Vi.pu V. 6. 32-36; Br.pu. II. 76.25-28; Bh.pu. X. 8.21-28.

Nanda and Yaśodā. Thus they are united as one with common parentage and common purpose. However, I will argue below, that they represent two different principles of life, which might indicate the origin and development of the Balarāma cult in a different context from that of Kṛṣṇa. Despite the common parentage and similar childhood, the special features of Balarāma differ from those of Kṛṣṇa.

CONCLUSION

I have studied the birth stories and the early identity, personality, and relationships of Balarāma in this section. An analysis of the first version of the birth story in which he is mentioned as a form of Viṣṇu, established the superior status of Balarāma in early Vaiṣṇavism. The second version of the birth of Balarāma also depicts him in a superior status in its earliest version in the HV, although this changes in the later texts. I understand his connection to food and abundance in his connection to Rohiṇī who is indirectly connected to food and abundance in mythology. I showed that Balarāma shows some common features with the goddess cults by his connection to the goddess, Nidrā. This indicates the milieu of his origin and the early functions associated with him. As depicted here, he is the protector of children. This function also dominates events in his young adult life stories, to which I will now turn.

SECTION III: *KAUMĀRA*: YOUNG ADULT LIFE OF BALARĀMA

3.1. 1. BALARĀMA IN VṚNDĀVAN

The accounts of the young adult stage of Balarāma's life are interspersed with interesting episodes that provide clues to the early features associated with his cult and its assimilation into Vaiṣṇavism. Again, studying his relationships to other figures that appear prominently in his stories is a useful analytical tool to aid our understanding of his early identity and his later assimilation into Vaiṣṇavism. Therefore, in the present section, I will study the stories of the young adult stage of Balarāma's life, first in Vṛndāvan and then in Mathurā. While the incidents at Vṛndāvan reveal the nature of his divinity and his early cult, the incidents connected to Mathurā establish his position as a superior deity.

The incidents at Vṛndāvan help us understand Balarāma in two ways. Firstly, through an analysis of his conflict with the demons, the nature and early origin of his cult can be studied. Secondly, through an analysis of his projected identity in the story, his relations to Kṛṣṇa and his assimilation into Vaiṣṇavism can be examined. As already observed in section 2.3 of this chapter, his relationships towards the goddess and Kṛṣṇa are amicable. By contrast, his relations towards Dhenuka and Pralamba in Vṛndāvan are marked by enmity. My assumption is that all of these characters involved with him in one way or the other can be viewed as representatives of other early cults, which came into contact with the Balarāma cult. I have already shown in section II of this chapter that Balarāma's close relations with Nidrā connected to embryos and child protection may be

related to a similar role of Balarāma as child protector (protector of Kṛṣṇa). The demons Dhenuka and Pralamba are connected with trees and food. Dhenuka is the controller of a palm grove (*tālavana*) while Pralamba is connected with the banyan tree (*Nyagrodha* tree named Bhandīra in this story) and grazing grounds around it. The fertility⁴⁵, food, and protection are the major themes associated with Balarāma in this story in its earliest version from the HV. These same themes are the cause of the conflict between Balarāma and the demons in these stories. His killing of the demons in the Dhenuka and Pralamba episodes marks the release of the necessary resources for the use of the cowherds and protection of the cowherds from these alien forces simultaneously. Therefore, the stories about the killing of Dhenuka and Pralamba are crucial to understanding the nature of Balarāma's early cult as protector of the people, and his connection to food and drink. They preserve early motifs associated with the worship of Balarāma that have undergone changes from the HV to the other versions (see chart I.). The association with food and drink remains the main feature associated with him before his personality was changed to connect him to *dharma* in Vaiṣṇavism. Balarāma killed Dhenuka and made the tāla forest accessible for the people of Vṛndāvan while he killed Pralamba and made the Bhandīra tree and its surroundings safe for play and grazing. The tāla forest and Bhandīra tree together represent the livelihood of the people of Vṛndāvan.

⁴⁵ A plow, Balarāma's weapon, is described as an indication of his earlier connection to agriculture. However, in the stories that are studied in this thesis he never uses it to plow. It is some kind of a weapon. However, it can be noted that Balarāma's fertility is connected to food and abundance; in other words, he is a provider of sustenance. He is not a bestower of children like other early fertility deities.

Early cults of the sacred groves and trees are known from the Buddhist⁴⁶ and the Jain⁴⁷ sources, and, to a lesser extent in the purāṇas⁴⁸. The trees are worshipped in ancient India as abodes of gods, yakṣas and other spirits. The popularity of tree worship in ancient India is also indicated in the HV when the two Aśoka trees were felled by the force of a mortar dragged by Kṛṣṇa. The fact that these trees had cultic significance is indicated in the report of the Gopis (cowherd women) to Yaśodā that the “wish granting trees” of Vraj had been knocked down⁴⁹. I will return to the theme of tree worship after I discuss both the Dhenuka and Pralamba episodes.

⁴⁶ Ferguson observed a number of different trees, including the tāla tree, are depicted on the panels at Sanchi sculptures datable between 100 B.C.E to 100 C.E. He also noted tree worship in panels depicting trees in enclosed in a railing. James Ferguson, *Tree and Serpent Worship in Ancient India* (Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1971), 117-119, pl.xxvi-xxvii. See also Padmanabh S. Jaini, “Political and Cultural Data in References to Mathurā in the Buddhist Literature,” Doris M. Srinivasan, *Mathurā*, 1989, 215-222; Mittwallner discusses the yakṣa cults of Mathurā. Gritli v. Mitterwallner, “Yakṣas of Ancient India,” *Mathurā*, 367-82. Buddhist sources mention an ass yakṣa, Gardhabhaka as presiding yakṣa of Mathurā; D.C. Sircar, “Mahāmāyūri, List of Yakṣas,” *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, 5.1-2 (1971-72), 23-24; Misra notes the benevolent and malevolent aspects represented by yakṣas in early literature, especially Buddhist texts. R.N. Misra, *Yakṣa Cult and Iconography* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981), 152-153. Although tree worship existed in India, trees are often worshipped as abodes of different deities such as yakṣas and others. These motifs associated with tree spirits still persist in 19th century India. Some of these motifs are vividly utilized by Satyajit Ray, in his film, *Gopi gain Bāgha Bain*. In this film, two brothers, Gopi and Bhāga, banished from the village for their bad music, went to the forest and rest under a banyan tree. When they play music that night the spirits that reside on the tree were pleased and fulfill all their wishes. This paves the way for their future success in life. Worship of a big banyan tree, the size of a village as an abode of gods, in the village of Thimmamma marrimanu in Andhra Pradesh must be a reminiscent of the cult of tree worship in ancient India.

⁴⁷ *Antagada dasāo* describes a temple of yakṣa Pūrṇabhadra. Though described as a temple it is in fact a big raised platform, located in a forest under a big aśoka tree. L.D. Barnett, *Antagada dasāo* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1907), 2-7.

⁴⁸ This article examines the evidence of the purāṇas on the festival of trees and their reverence. V. Narayanan, “One Tree is Equal to Ten Sons: Hindu responses to the problems of Ecology, Population and Consumption,” *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 65.2 (1997), 291-332.

⁴⁹ HV.51.21-22. These verses are also noted by Brockington in connection with tree worship. J. Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics*, 336.

The Dhenuka and Pralamba episodes have elicited the interest of the scholars of Indian art. These episodes were initially studied in connection with the identification of sculptures of Balarāma. Perhaps the earliest example of this type of sculpture depicting the killing of Dhenuka by Balarāma is reported from central India, Chandausi in Uttar Pradesh,⁵⁰ datable to 100 C.E. Another well known example of this sculptural representation is from Mandore (Jodhpur district) in Rājasthān datable to 400 C.E. Here the story of killing Dhenuka is depicted in a series of events that are connected to the childhood exploits of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa⁵¹. Excavations at Māṇḍhal (1975-76) in Mahārāṣṭra revealed a free standing sculpture of Balarāma killing Dhenuka, datable to the Vākātaka period (about 400 C.E)⁵². Hans Bakker⁵³ identified the Bhogārāma temple of Vākātaka period, on Rāmték hill, as originally dedicated to Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa together, with two separate cellas dedicated to each one of them. This makes it one of the earliest temples dedicated to Balarāma in southwest India. Acknowledging the prototype of the Ghosūṇḍi inscription, which mentions place of worship of Samkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva, he

⁵⁰ Excavations at Chandausi near Allahabad revealed a sculpture of Balarāma killing the demon Dhenuka, dated to 1c. C.E. Excavations at Minhāi 2.4 km from Kosambi revealed a fan palm capital similar to the one from Besnagar but without the palm fruits. These sculptures are now preserved in the Allahabad Museum. *ASI Annual Report 1963-64*, 72.

⁵¹ *ASI Annual Report*, 1905-6, 135-140. Krishna Deva, "Are there Regional Variations in the Plastic Representations of Kṛṣṇalīla," Ratan Parimoo, ed., *Vaiṣṇavism in Art and Archaeology* (New Delhi: Books and Books, 1989), 396.

⁵² A. P. Jamkhedkar, "Vaiṣṇavism in Vākātaka times," Ratan Parimoo, ed., *Vaiṣṇavism*, 337. See also G.B. Deglurkar, "Balarāma as Dhenukāntaka from Māṇḍhal," eds., Chandramani Singh, Neelima Vasishta, *Pathways to Literature and Art and Archaeology* (Pt. Gopal Bahura Felicitation Volume) Volume II (Jaipur: Publication Scheme, 1991), 197-199.

⁵³ Based on the evidence of an inscription of Prabhāvati gupta, Hans Bakker dated this temple to Vākātaka- Gupta period, around 500 C.E. Hans Bakker, "The Manbaus' Seat on Rāmték hill," R. S. McGregor ed., *Devotional Literature in South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 11-29.

suggests that the Bhogārama temple might have been built with a similar theological perspective, in which the above two deities are worshipped together, although supremacy is attributed to Balarāma. He further explained that the name Bhogārama as indicating Balarāma, as signifying Rāma with bhoga (serpent coils) and not Rāma Dāsarathi during 100 C.E. S.K Saraswati⁵⁴ identified the Paharpur sculptures as depicting the episodes of Dhenuka and Pralamba. These are the first representations of Balarāma from Eastern India, dated to 600 C.E. A rare four- sided sculptural panel was reported from Ujjain⁵⁵ that depicts incidents from the life of Balarāma. It is now in the Hanuman temple in the Garhkhalika area of Ujjain. Numerous palm tree capitals have been discovered in excavations in north India⁵⁶. In the association of the palm tree with Balarāma, I see the supplantation of a cult that worshipped the palm tree by the cult of Balarāma.

⁵⁴ S.K. Saraswati, *Early Sculptures of Bengal* (Calcutta: Sambodhi Publications, 1962), 83-89.

⁵⁵ C. Kṛṣṇa, Deputy Director of Archaeology and Museums, Central Circle, *ASI Annual Report* 1963-64, 66.

⁵⁶ J.N. Banerjea, *Religion in Art and Archaeology* (Lucknow: University of Lucknow, 1968), 10-11. Banerjea lists three of the palm capitals from Patna, Pawaya and Allahabad. He identified them as representing the cult of Balarāma.

3.2. DHENUKA STORY IN THE PURĀṆAS

Not much is known about the ass demon Dhenuka in the HV other than the conflict with Balarāma⁵⁷. Here is the story in brief from the HV followed by a chart representing the story from all four texts considered.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY (HV. 57.1-26)⁵⁸

The brothers, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, began walking towards Govardhana after the victory of Kṛṣṇa over the serpent, Kāliya. On the north of the mountain near the river Yamunā they saw a big beautiful palm forest. The palm trees were full of fruits.

Kṛṣṇa said to Balarāma, “See the tāla fruits that are ripe in this forest! Fell some fruits! They are good, fragrant, dark and juicy. From their smell, it seems that they must be good in taste like *Amṛta* (divine drink- ambrosia).”

Hearing that, Rauhiṇeya laughed. He felled some fruits by shaking the trees. This forest had been abandoned by the villagers as it was guarded by an ass demon, Dhenuka. Hearing the sound of the falling fruits, the ass demon awoke and rushed towards the noise. He came equipped with numerous weapons to attack Balarāma who was “without weapons”. He thrust his hind legs on the chest of Balarāma to kill him.

⁵⁷ Buddhist texts contain the description of a certain yakṣa, by the name Gardhabhaka (ass yakṣa) of Mathurā subdued by Buddha. Although the significance of the similarity in name and motifs connected with this ass yakṣa of Buddhist stories and ass demon, Dhenuka, of the Balarāma story is not clear, this information is notable in association with the early cults of Mathurā. It indicates the local belief that associates yakṣas or demons with the abduction of children, in to which category Dhenuka and Pralamba can be placed. When the Buddha visited Mathurā, he did not enter the city but stayed in the house of a yakṣa named Gardhabha. He sat in the Gardhabha yakṣa’s courtyard under a tree for the rest of the day. The people of Mathurā visited him and complained that the Gardhabha yakṣa was hostile to them and took away their newborn children and asked the Buddha to subdue the Gardhabha yakṣa. Nalinaksha Dutt, Vidyardhi Pt. Shivnath Sharma, *Gilgit Manuscripts*, Vol. III, pt. 1, 53.

⁵⁸ A similar story is found in the Vi.pu. V.8.1-13; Br.pu. II. 78.1-14; Bh.pu. X.15.1-46.

Balarāma caught hold of his legs and threw him on to the top of the tāla trees. The demon fell down with broken head and back, along with few more tāla fruits.

With the death of the ass demon, the beautiful tāla forest became even more beautiful. The cowherds wandered there without fear and their cows grazed there. Thus having made it habitable and good for grazing, they left with gait resembling the king of elephants.

The following chart illustrates the changes to this story in the texts considered.

CHART III

BALARĀMA KILLS DHENUKA

	HARIVAMŚA (HV.57.1-26)	VIṢṆU PURĀṆA (Vi.pu. V.8.1-13)	BRAHMĀ PURĀṆA (Br.pu.II.78.1-14)	BHĀGAVATA PURĀṆA (Bh.pu. X.15.1-46)
Going to the tāla forest	After <i>Kāliya damana</i> , only Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, without cowherds enter the tāla forest.	Along with cowherds both Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa enter the forest for the fruits after Kāliya episode.	Same as Vi.pu	Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa enter the forest with cowherds. An elaborate description of the divinity of Kṛṣṇa appears in the beginning of this episode. Kāliya episode follows this episode.
Request for tāla fruits	Kṛṣṇa praises the fruits for their appearance, fragrance and taste and requests Balarāma to fell some.	Cowherds praise the fruits in the grove belonging to the great Dhenuka and request Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa to fell the fruits.	On seeing the palm fruits, the cowherds became desirous of eating them. They informed Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa that the palm tree was always guarded by Dhenuka and hence the palm grove had been avoided by them.	Sudāma addresses Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma describing the forest and fruits.

Who Killed Dhenuka	Balarāma	Although Balarāma killed Dhenuka, all other demons kin of Dhenuka that came rushing there were killed by Kṛṣṇa and other cowherds.	Kṛṣṇa	Balarāma
Who felled the fruits	Balarāma	Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa.	Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa.	Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa.
Result	Forest made accessible to the people and cows of Vraj.	Hence forward cattle grazed unobstructed where they never ventured before.	Same as the Vi.pu.	Balarāma as a form of Śeṣa killed the demons. He was praised. Gods showered flowers from heaven.
Return	Sat there on comfortable seats of grass for a while and then proceeded to the Bhandīra tree to play and graze cows.	Proceeded to Bhandīra to play and graze cows.	They proceeded to Bhandīra to play and graze.	Return to Govraj. People heard of the exploit and worried. Gopis received Kṛṣṇa with great reverence. Descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's divine nature.

The Vi.pu story resembles the HV story, but shows numerous differences, which might point to another source or its own innovations. I discuss the changes between the HV and Vi.pu stories in the following pages. The Br.pu story is similar to the Vi.pu story and differs from the HV in ways that make it similar to the Vi.pu. Although the similarities in the Br.pu point to the Vi.pu story as its source, the differences between these two texts clearly indicate that the Vi.pu is not the only source for the Br.pu, although it is difficult to point to all the exact sources in this limited study. The Br.pu is more explicit about the demon Dhenuka and has Kṛṣṇa kill the demons, which differs from all the other texts considered in this study. The Bh.pu shows numerous changes

from the above three versions. Inclusion of motifs of *bhakti* theology, for example the description of Kṛṣṇa's divine nature and a full-fledged Vaiṣṇava cosmogony points to different sources and religious environment. The Bh.pu assigns major role to the cowherd Sudāma. The differences between the above versions do not point to one unique source that had been adopted with modifications by all the other texts, but show that there might have been more than one source for these stories.

Tracing changes to this story reveal that the centrality of Balarāma in this episode is lost in the later texts. Attribution of this story to Kṛṣṇa indicates the trend in Vaiṣṇavism where the central figure is presented as all powerful and all embracing at the expense of other deities, in this case, Balarāma. I attempt an analysis of the above story in the following pages, to illustrate how a typical Balarāma story is ultimately retold as a story emphasizing the significance of Kṛṣṇa, the central deity of Vaiṣṇavism.

I have divided the Dhenuka story into four parts for the convenience of study.

PART 1: GOING TO THE FOREST

While the brothers proceed to the tāla forest by themselves in the HV, in the other three texts numerous cowherd boys accompany them. Some cowherds are even mentioned by name in the Bh.pu story. Part 1 of the myth becomes very elaborate in the

Bh.pu. It includes a detailed description of the forest and an elaborate account of the divinity of Kṛṣṇa as the supreme deity. Thus by having Part 1 describe Kṛṣṇa rather than Balarāma, the story highlights the significance of Kṛṣṇa. The simple story of Balarāma in the HV has been modified as a Kṛṣṇa story in the later texts by inserting the elements associated with him: the cowherd boys, Kṛṣṇa's friends such as Sudāma, and a praise portion of the divinity of Kṛṣṇa. If the HV represents the initial phase of this development, the Bh.pu represents the mature phase.

PART 2: REQUEST FOR THE TĀLA FRUITS

In the HV, Kṛṣṇa does not directly request Balarāma to fetch the tāla fruits although he praises them for their color, flavor, and taste. His remarks highlight the quality of food as well as its inaccessibility. In the Vi.pu and the Br.pu, the cowherds make a direct request for the tāla fruits, while Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa fell the tāla fruits. In the Bh.pu, Sudāma, a cowherd, addresses everyone about the tāla fruits, praising their taste, color, and smell. Here, Sudāma performs the role performed by Kṛṣṇa in the HV. Thus Kṛṣṇa is relieved of his passive role in the HV and this role is attributed to the cowherd boys in the Vi.pu and the Br.pu and to Sudāma in the Bh.pu. In the Br.pu, cowherd boys also tell them that the demon Dhenuka guards the forest. Thus the brothers were fully aware of the dangers of entering the forest, unlike the HV, where they enter the forest innocently. By including the cowherds and relieving Kṛṣṇa of a passive role,

this modified story (Vi.pu, Br.pu, Bh.pu) paves the way for a stronger presentation of Kṛṣṇa over Balarāma.

PART 3: KNOCKING DOWN THE FRUITS AND KILLING THE DEMON

In the HV, Balarāma fells the tāla fruits while in all the other three texts, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa fell the tāla fruits together. Thus Kṛṣṇa becomes an active participant in the events of the story, similar to Balarāma. When the demon, Dhenuka, rushes to the spot to kill them, Balarāma kills the demon in all the versions under considered except the Br.pu. In all the texts (except the HV) as soon as Dhenuka is killed, other ass demons, the relatives of Dhenuka, rush to the spot and are killed by Kṛṣṇa and other cowherds. Thus even in this part of the story there is an active role assigned to Kṛṣṇa and the cowherds, though the main act of killing the demon is attributed to Balarāma. Thus Kṛṣṇa becomes an active participant in felling the fruits and killing the demons similar to Balarāma, rather than being a mere spectator as in the HV. By introducing the group's participation in addition to Balarāma, the killing of the demon and freeing the forest is turned into a joint effort of every one present and is no longer the single-handed achievement of Balarāma, “without weapons” (HV.57.18). The alterations that have taken place in the course of the development of the myth clearly indicate that the story of Balarāma underwent numerous changes to accommodate the growing centrality of Kṛṣṇa.

PART 4: THE RESULT AND AFTERMATH OF THE KILLING

The result of this act is described in simple words in all the purāṇas. In the HV, the Vi.pu, the Br.pu, it is stated that the beautiful tāla forest became even more beautiful on account of the death of the demons and cows and cowherds moved there freely. The HV further adds that with their cows scattered everywhere, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa had prepared seats of grass and sat there for a little while. In the Vi.pu, the Br.pu and the Bh.pu, cowherd boys praise Balarāma and the gods shower flowers. In each case, the result is that the forest is domesticated and made safe for the herders.

3.2.1. NATURE OF THE EARLY CULT OF BALARĀMA FROM DHENUKA STORY

The tāla tree is not known in Vedic literature, although it is referred to in the purāṇas. However archaeological evidence provides considerable amount of information about the tāla tree. It is depicted on numerous ancient sculptures (datable between 200 B.C.E- 200 C.E) which indicates the popularity of tāla tree among some groups of people of ancient India before it found a place in literature as already noted in the section 3.1.1 above. The descriptions of the tāla forest in the HV and other texts indicate its special importance for Dhenuka and his kin.

In the HV, the forest is full of food for people and cows, but is jealously guarded by Dhenuka for his own people, who inhabit it. The defeat of Dhenuka and his group associated with tāla forest by Balarāma marks the subordination of this group to Balarāma, rather than simply a fight without consequence. The fact that tāla became the emblem of Balarāma may indicate the submission of this group to Balarāma's authority. The description at the end of the story in the HV states that Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa made seats of grass for themselves and sat there, symbolic of the transfer of power to them from the defeated group. I would suggest that the Balarāma story is an account of the displacement of an earlier cult by him. Here, he appears as the protector of people and provider of resources. I will consider below how this early association of Balarāma underwent changes to accommodate the growing cosmogony of Vaiṣṇavism.

3.2.2. IDENTITY OF BALARĀMA IN THE DHENUKA STORY

Two significant modifications affect the identity of Balarāma in this story. In the HV, he is the sole wrestler, protector, and provider of resources. More importantly his significance is noticed in the supplantation of a group, who proclaimed monopoly over the tāla forest. This is seen in the relaxation of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa on seats of grass after killing the demon Dhenuka in the HV. The identity of Balarāma is altered in two ways. Firstly, Balarāma is dissociated from the original characteristics associated with him in the HV, and his significance is decreased by eliminating events that point to his superiority. Secondly, he is depicted as acting according to Vaiṣṇava cosmology as an

incarnation of Śeṣa, the divine snake, but no longer as a deity with his own characteristics. I will discuss these processes as they are noticed in the Vi.pu, the Br.pu and the Bh.pu below.

The Vaiṣṇava identity is imposed on Balarāma gradually in this story. The HV simply states that Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are sons of Vasudeva (HV.57. 2) and almost all the story is composed in *dvandva* compounds, giving them equal status except for the part that describes the killing of Dhenuka. In the HV (57.18), Balarāma is described as strong and “without weapons” which is notable because this stresses the superior wrestling skills and perhaps divine nature of Balarāma. It is also often said of the goddess Durgā, who kills the buffalo with her bare hands to stress the divine nature⁵⁹. Furthermore, the HV story also indicates the displacement of a local cult associated with a tāla grove (57.26). The killing of Dhenuka is described as play (*līlā*)⁶⁰ in the later texts. In the Vi.pu the killing of Dhenuka is described as play (V.8.11), in the Br.pu Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa playfully seized all the demons that followed the demons Dhenuka and killed them (Br.pu II.78.11) and in the Bh.pu Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa killed the demons as if in sport (Bh. X.15.37). This draws Balarāma into the Vaiṣṇava theology, for *līlā* is a key

⁵⁹ In the HV when the baby girl (a daughter of Yaśodā brought by Vasudeva in exchange for Kṛṣṇa) is killed by Kāṁsa by hitting her on the rocks, she assumed the form of the goddess raised up into the sky. She proclaimed to Kāṁsa that when he is killed by his enemies she would split open his body with her hands and drink the blood (as we have seen on p.77-78). HV 48.35. Mitterwallner notes that the goddess is depicted as killing the demon with bare hands, and that she is not accompanied by the lion in the early sculptures. Gritli von Mitterwallner, “The Kuṣāṇa Type of the Goddess Mahiṣāsūramardīnī as Compared to the Gupta Medieval Types,” *German Scholars on India, Vol.II* (Bombay: Nachiketa Publications, 1976), 196-212.

⁶⁰ A.K. Coomaraswamy, “Līlā,” *Journal of American Oriental Society* 61 (1941), 98-101.

concept of developed Vaiṣṇava theology. The Br.pu presents it entirely as a story of Kṛṣṇa and does not comment on the identity of Balarāma (Br.pu. 78.8-9). Only the Bh.pu (X. 15.35) includes a praise of Balarāma as an incarnation of the divine snake, Śeṣa. It says, “It is not miraculous in the case of the glorious Lord Śeṣa, the ruler of the universe, in whom the universe is woven warp and woof, like a piece of cloth into the thread.” As Balarāma achieved this feat as a form of Śeṣa here, the story of Balarāma is turned into a Vaiṣṇava story where Balarāma is a minor Vaiṣṇava deity. His initial qualities such as his superior wrestling skill, protection and provider of resources are no longer emphasized. These accounts illustrate the process of assimilation of Balarāma into Vaiṣṇavism: initially, the simple stories of Balarāma were only slightly modified by adding Vaiṣṇavism themes to the stories; later Kṛṣṇa displaces Balarāma as the hero of the story.

In the HV, the killing of Dhenuka is a simple story of Balarāma, in which Kṛṣṇa participated as a spectator. In the Vi.pu, it is a *līlā*, which takes the story a step closer to Kṛṣṇa, since *līlā* is increasingly associated with Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa’s divine will. In the Br.pu, it is a story of Kṛṣṇa. In the Bh.pu it is an exploit of Śeṣa, in the form of Balarāma. The tradition thus used different strategies to minimize the importance of Balarāma. He is eliminated as the principal actor, with Kṛṣṇa doing the act, or he is made an incarnation of a minor deity in the Vaiṣṇava pantheon.

We thus see that the story of Dhenuka is modified in two ways. Firstly, the supplantation of a local cult by Balarāma is remodeled in distinctive Vaiṣṇava language and Balarāma's role is taken over by Kṛṣṇa. Secondly, his personality as a singlehanded warrior in connection with food and abundance is modified to present him as a warrior participating in battle where numerous others participate along with him.

3.3. PRALAMBA STORY IN THE PURĀṆAS

The killing of the demon Pralamba⁶¹ is an important incident in the childhood of Balarāma. It also provides evidence of the concepts associated with Balarāma and his early origin, and helps us to further understand the process of his assimilation into early Vaiṣṇavism. While the passage concerning the killing of Pralamba establishes his early identity as a protector god in conflict with tree cults, the praise passage in the middle of the episode makes clear the way in which he is being assimilated into Vaiṣṇavism.

Although this story provides important information about the early cult of Balarāma it has not been studied in detail. Utz Podzeit⁶² has attempted a study of the

⁶¹ While the purāṇas describe Pralamba as a dreadful demon living on the Bhandīra tree, the Jain texts describe a yakṣa associated with this tree. Bhandīra Jakka was a popular deity of Mathurā whose abode was in the Bhandīra tree, to which people of Mathurā went on an annual pilgrimage. J.C. Jain, *Life in Ancient India as Depicted in the Jain Canon* (Bombay: New Book Co., 1947), 222, 255.

⁶² Podzeit assigns the killing of Pralamba to Kṛṣṇa based on the evidence of one of the epithets of Kṛṣṇa as *Pralambahan* in the M.Bh. 7.10.5 Vulgate. This did not find place in the critical edition. This makes suspect the attribution of this episode to Kṛṣṇa in the earlier works. This epithet is attributed to Balarāma twice in the *fīrthayātra parva* of the M.Bh. (9.46.12 and 9.59.15). Although the M.Bh vulgate reference has led Podzeit to assign this story to Kṛṣṇa, it is not tenable in the light of the other sources that attribute this story to Balarāma. It is not unusual for the attributes of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa to be

Pralamba episode in order to understand the date of the composition of the earliest Kṛṣṇa story in the purāṇas. He assumed that Pralamba story was a Kṛṣṇa story and attempted to see in it the earliest Kṛṣṇa story in the purāṇas, although in the texts he cited the defeat of Pralamba was attributed to Balarāma. This assumption is typical of current scholarship to view the HV as a collection of Kṛṣṇa stories⁶³. The HV actually represents a collection of a number of story cycles rather than a unitary story cycle of Kṛṣṇa. It is my contention that the Balarāma stories underwent a different evolution from the Kṛṣṇa stories.

Not much is known about the background of this demon Pralamba, other than the fact that he approached Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa in disguise. The story of his death appears in a detailed form in all the Vaiṣṇava purāṇas as a story of Balarāma.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY (HV. 58.1-60)⁶⁴

Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa went to the Bhandīra forest from the tālavana and joined the cowherds playing there. Seeing the brothers playing with the cowherds there, the demon Pralamba joined them, assuming the form of a cowherd. He chose to attack Balarāma rather than Kṛṣṇa, knowing Kṛṣṇa to be very strong. All of them divided themselves into groups of

interchanged (for example. Bh.pu.X.43.25, 30). Utz Podzeit, "A Philological Reconstruction of the Oldest Kṛṣṇa Epic: Some Remarks in the Light of the Pralamba Myth," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Sudasiens* 36 (1992) 55-56.

⁶³ Balarāma stories form a significant part of the HV and especially the Dhenuka and Pralamba stories indicate his early significance. Matchett undermines his significance when she says that the narration of the Dhenuka and the Pralamba stories immediately following the Kāliya episode indicates a diversion rather than the continuity in the story. Matchett, *Kṛṣṇa*, 50.

⁶⁴ Vi.pu.V. 9.1-38; Br.pu.II. 78.17-44; Bh.pu.X.18.1-32.

two and started playing a game, *Hariṇakrīdāna*⁶⁵. Balarāma played against Pralamba and defeated him. As per the rules of the game the loser had to carry the winner up to the Bhandīra tree and return to the playing area. Pralamba went up to the Bhandīra tree carrying Balarāma, but instead of returning from there he went further, and when Balarāma noticed it, Pralamba started rising up in the sky. Unable to sustain Balarāma's weight, the demon increased his size. Balarāma was bewildered and asked Kṛṣṇa for advice.

“I am being carried away by the demon who is high like a mountain. He assumed human form by the power of magic. Tell me what to do to Pralamba, this unseen enemy who has doubled his weight and takes this strange form?” To this Kṛṣṇa replied at length, describing the attributes of Balarāma followed by a lengthy praise passage. Thus reassured by Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma killed Pralamba by hitting him on the head with his fists.

The following chart illustrates the Pralamba episode from the texts under consideration. I will base my analysis of the Pralamba episode on this chart.

⁶⁵ *Hariṇakrīdāna*, ‘deer play’, is a children’s game of children in which a pair of boys compete in a running race, jumping or hopping like deer. The losing contestant carries the winner on his back to the assigned spot. V. Raghavan, *Festivals, Sports and Pastimes of India* (Ahmedabad: B.J. Institute of Learning and Research, 1979), 231.

CHART IV

BALARĀMA KILLS PRALAMBA

	HARIVAMŚA (HV.58)	VIṢṆU PURĀṆA (Vi.pu.V.9.1-38)	BRAHMĀ PURĀṆA (Vi.pu.II.78.17-44)	BHĀGAVATA PURĀṆA (Bh.pu. X.18.1-32)
Game	<i>Hariṇakrīdana</i>	<i>Hariṇakrīdana</i>	<i>Hariṇakrīda</i>	<i>Vāhya-vāhaka</i>
Teams	All cowherds divide themselves into pairs and play.	The boys played in pairs.	The boys jumped in pairs.	Kṛṣṇa summons all the cowherds and taught them how to play the game. Two teams under the leadership of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma play the game. Kṛṣṇa also noticed the demon Pralamba joining them under the disguise of a cowherd, but remained silent.
Pralamba	Appears as a cowherd. Plans to kill Balarāma knowing Kṛṣṇa to be strong.	Appears as a cowherd. Plans to kill first Kṛṣṇa and then Balarāma.	Planned to kill both Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa.	Appeared as a cowherd. Carried Balarāma away knowing Kṛṣṇa to be invincible.
Balarāma	Bewildered (<i>sandigdha</i>) and asked Kṛṣṇa what to do.	Seeks advice of Kṛṣṇa.	Was dismayed and addressed Kṛṣṇa.	Balarāma was disturbed but regained his confidence in a moment.
Praise of Balarāma by Kṛṣṇa	Soul of the world etc. I study this praise passage in detail in section 3.3.2.	Similar to the HV, but shorter. It contains all the five parts of the praise passage as noticed in the HV, but only short.	Does not state the identity of Balarāma as the supreme god. Kṛṣṇa said "O Soul of all, you are the most worthy of being concealed among all concealable persons. For the sake of the	Not mentioned

			universe we are stationed as separate even though one. Let the Ātman be remembered and kill the demon. In fact, the praise passage indicates the Ātman as different from Balarāma.	
--	--	--	---	--

Although the Vi.pu story shares similarities with the HV, the individual events are fundamentally different. The Br.pu differs from the HV in similar ways as the Vi.pu, although its praise portion does not indicate the unity of Balarāma and Ātman as noted in the Vi.pu and the HV. The Bh.pu differs considerably from all the above texts. It does not include any praise of Balarāma, and it increases the role of Kṛṣṇa by altering his role in devising games and assuming leadership. Therefore, I submit that although the HV constitutes the basic story, it may not have been the source for these later texts other than the Vi.pu. Hence, the narrative differences indicate the possibility of multiple sources for the Br.pu and Bh.pu. I will discuss the differences between the individual story elements across the above texts below.

3.3.1. THE GAME AND THE KILLING OF PRALAMBA

From this chart we see that as the story developed Balarāma's role in the story declined while that of Kṛṣṇa acquired more importance. In the HV, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa

are equal and like other cowherds and participated together in the games and sports (see II. 2.3.3 for details). In the subsequent texts, Kṛṣṇa assumed a leadership role in organizing the games. The Bh.pu (X.18.19-21) states that he devised games to amuse the cowherds. According to this text, Kṛṣṇa summoned the cowherds and told them to divide into two groups to play. The democratic character of the play in the HV is thus replaced by a lead role attributed to Kṛṣṇa in the Bh.pu. In the HV, the Vi.pu, and the Br.pu, Kṛṣṇa was not aware of the presence of Pralamba. However, in the Bh.pu (X.18.18) he had noticed Pralamba joining the group dressed as a cowherd but remained silent. In this way as well, the superiority and omniscience of Kṛṣṇa are stressed in the Bh.pu.

Although Pralamba is said to have chosen to attack Balarāma assuming Kṛṣṇa to be stronger, it is an expression of the demon's personal thoughts while the praise passage following this is a concrete expression of the superiority and strength of Balarāma. Moreover, this is announced to everybody present there, by none other than Kṛṣṇa, whose strength Pralamba had assumed to be greater initially. Therefore, I think that this episode is a clear expression of Balarāma's early significance and superior strength.

In the HV, Balarāma was bewildered when the demon started carrying him off; similarly in the Br.pu Balarāma is dismayed and asks Kṛṣṇa for advice. Balarāma does not seek the advice of Kṛṣṇa in the Bh.pu. In the HV, as an answer to the question of Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa praises him at length to encourage him. The praise passage is small in the Vi.pu, very small in the Br.pu, and eliminated altogether in the Bh.pu. The

elimination of this praise passage from the Bh.pu makes it clear that the composers of this text felt that it was not appropriate for the central god of the Bh.pu to praise another, now minor deity. Through these alterations the significance of Balarāma is decreased while that of Kṛṣṇa is increased in the Pralamba episode. So over a period of time, a Balarāma story became a story of Kṛṣṇa. Our understanding of these changes is facilitated by considering a related story: The story of Kṛṣṇa's defeat of Kāliya, the snake.

CHART V

KĀLIYA AND PRALAMBA STORIES (HV. 56, 58)

Kāliya	Pralamba
Kṛṣṇa was dragged down into water.	Balarāma was raised up in the sky.
Whole village is worried about Kṛṣṇa.	Balarāma is bewildered, but no one else is worried.
Balarāma counsels Kṛṣṇa briefly, and does not state Kṛṣṇa's divinity exclusively.	Kṛṣṇa reminds Balarāma in a lengthy passage. His divinity and similarity with Viṣṇu are explicitly stated in the presence of all the cowherds.

As we see from this chart, the whole village is worried about the safety of Kṛṣṇa and laments his fate in the Kāliya episode. However, in the Pralamba episode, even though a number of cowherds are present, no one expresses worry or concern about the safety of Balarāma. It might be an indication that the others are already aware of his

superiority and need not worry about his safety. The superiority of Balarāma is also stressed in the Kāliya episode, as I now discuss.

Sheth⁶⁶ considered the Kāliya and Pralamba episodes as complimentary and indicating the significance of Kṛṣṇa. He used the model of the “two- brother tale” in the case of these two episodes, a model suggested by Ruben for the Kāliya episode. In the “two- brother tale” the greatness of one is known to the other. However, I think the “two- brother tale” model is not applicable to the Pralamba episode since the praise of Kṛṣṇa is long and explicit and stated in the presence of a group. Sheth explains this saying the latter (praise of Balarāma) might be later interpolation. He finds it contradictory that the divinity of Kṛṣṇa is not expressed in the Kāliya episode, while that of Balarāma is expressed most explicitly in the following episode. However, the fact that Kṛṣṇa is not praised explicitly and that Balarāma is praised explicitly similar to Viṣṇu in the following episode, makes it clear that at this stage of the textual composition Balarāma commanded more significant position. In her recent study, Matchett⁶⁷ sees the Kāliya and Pralamba episodes as an acknowledgement of Kṛṣṇa’s divinity. However, another interpretation is possible. These episodes may actually preserve an earlier tradition which emphasizes the

⁶⁶ The conclusion of Sheth is typical of the scholarly views on Balarāma. I think he came to this conclusion partly because he assumed Kṛṣṇa’s superiority in all the texts. Noel Sheth, *The Divinity*, 11-13.

⁶⁷ While comparing the Kāliya and Pralamba episodes she says that the description and praise passages indicate the superiority of Kṛṣṇa over Balarāma. She did not study the Kāliya and Pralamba episodes from the HV closely. When comparing these episodes she relies on later texts. In the HV Kṛṣṇa’s divinity is not stated explicitly in Kāliya episode. On the contrary Balarāma’s divinity is stated in the most explicit way in the Pralamba episode. Further she states that Balarāma cried for help when he was being carried away by Pralamba. But this feature is added in the later texts, in our base text the HV, he is simply bewildered. Matchett, *Kṛṣṇa*, 50-51, 188-89.

superiority of Balarāma over Kṛṣṇa initially. Although Balarāma asked Kṛṣṇa for advice, his confusion was only momentary and regained immediately and overcame the demon by himself. In this regard I agree with Ruben⁶⁸ who has compared the Pralamba episode to much larger cosmogonic incidents such as the battle of the gods with Kālanemi, and the battle of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa against Rāvaṇa, where the participation of not only the brothers, but also the presence of a large group is indicated. Therefore, the killing of Pralamba is similar to such cosmogonic events, which is indicated by the lengthy praise passage and presence of large group.

In my reading, the Kāliya episode actually stresses the significance of Balarāma, where Balarāma says, “Only I know your true nature” (HV. 56.26). In this way the text indicates Balarāma’s superior knowledge as opposed to the others and even Kṛṣṇa himself. Balarāma, however, avoids speaking explicitly of Kṛṣṇa’s divinity. In contrast to the Kāliya episode in the Pralamba episode, Kṛṣṇa explains Balarāma’s superior nature and divine identity at length almost like a follower or devotee (HV.58. 31-50). This may suggest that at an early stage of evolution Balarāma commanded the more significant position. As the stories of Kṛṣṇa developed by assimilating more and more stories, this changed. Kṛṣṇa acquired his central position and the praise of Balarāma became smaller and was ultimately excluded from the Vaiṣṇava texts in which Kṛṣṇa is the supreme

⁶⁸ Ruben, *Kṛṣṇa Konkardenz*, 89, 95-97.

deity, such as the Bh.pu (praise passages are excluded from both Kāliya and Pralamba episodes in this text). I turn now to study the praise passages.

3.3.2. THE PRAISE PASSAGE

I have divided the praise passage into five parts for the purpose of analysis. I give the gist of the praise passage from HV (58.31-50) here:

To the question of Balarāma on how to overcome the demon, Kṛṣṇa responded with a smile, and answered with a lengthy praise containing the true strength and nature of Balarāma.

Part I (HV. 58. 35-37)

“You surely have taken your role as a human being oh elder! You are the one composed of the entire universe. You must remember your true self, at the time of the destruction of the worlds, and how all the ancient gods, Brahmā and the waters came from you.”

Part II (HV. 58. 38-39)

“The sky is your head, the water is your body, the earth is your base and the fire is your mouth and wind is your breath and life of beings. Your mind is Manu, the creator. You have thousand faces, thousand limbs, thousand eyes, and a thousand petal lotus navel. You have thousand rays and are the slaughterer of enemies.”

Part III (HV. 58. 40-42)

“What you have declared the gods know. Whatever knowledge there is to know has been told by you. Your true self is not seen. Gods worship your manifested form.”

Part IV (HV. 58. 43-45)

“Your limits are invisible even to the gods. Thus you are called, Ananta, “endless”. You are a unique being, small and big. On you rests the Earth, the source of all creatures. You are the enjoyer of the four seas, you are the divider of the four castes, the lord of four *yugās*, the receiver of the fruit of four sacrifices.”

Part V As one with Kṛṣṇa (HV. 58. 46-49)

“ We are one body divided into two for the sake of the world. You are the permanent eternal reminder of the worlds. You and I are the eternal gods, divided into two in our bodies alone, we support the universe. Whatever I am you are. What you are I am, eternal”.

“You previously destroyed the demons by hitting them on the head with blows from your fists that are like *vajrāyudha* (thunderbolt), during the fight between gods and demons”.

This praise passage may represent an initial attempt to incorporate Balarāma in the developing cult of Viṣṇu by identifying him directly with Viṣṇu. Many of the epithets in the praise passage also reappear in the Viṣṇusahasranāma⁶⁹ in the M.Bh. In the HV, this lengthy praise passage is actually a praise of Balarāma as Viṣṇu. I will examine some of the similar epithets in the praise passage above and the epithets of Viṣṇu in the Viṣṇusahasranāma. For convenience, I have divided the verses in the praise passage according to theme.

⁶⁹ M.Bh.13.135.1-142. I thank Dr. Phyllis Granoff for helping with the reading of these passages.

Part I Balarāma as the source of creation

Balarāma is praised here as the cause of the universe, the one from whom Brahmā and the first gods appear. This praise passage actually reminds one of the creation myth described in the purāṇas. It is described that only Viṣṇu remains after the dissolution of creation, as a child floating on the water, from whom arises Brahmā and creation begins again. The M.Bh also contains a brief description of this creation myth⁷⁰. To the request of Mārkaṇḍeya, Viṣṇu permits him to enter into Viṣṇu's body and observe the creation of all beings inside him there. These features are also included in the descriptions of Viṣṇu in the Viṣṇusahasranāma. The epithets in the Viṣṇusahasranāma describe Viṣṇu as the source of the world (*viśvayoni*. M.Bh.13.135.29), with a lotus in the navel (*padmanābha* M.Bh.13.135.34), the indestructible father (*avyayaḥ pitāḥ*. M.Bh.13.135.10), source of the first father (*prapitāmaha*. M.Bh.13.135.117), self-born (*ātmayoniḥ svayamjāto* M.Bh.13.135.119), eternal and unchangeable (*śāśvataḥ sthiraḥ* M.Bh.13.135.80). Viṣṇu as the source and destiny of all beings is again described in the following verse:

From whom all beings arise at the beginning of a *yuga*
 into whom they go again at the end of the *yuga*
 of that first of the world, lord of the world, lord of earth,
 hear the thousand names that destroy sin and fear. (M.Bh.13.135.11-12)⁷¹

⁷⁰ M.Bh. III.186-188.

⁷¹ *yataḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni bhavantyādiyugāgame |*
yasminsca pralayaṃ yānti punareva yugakṣayaṃ ||13.135.11

Part II Balarāma as the universe and cosmic being

The praise passage contains two verses (HV.58.38, 39) that describe the physical attributes of Balarāma. The verse HV.58.38 describes him as composed of natural elements such as wind, water and fire. Viṣṇusahasranāma includes similar epithets that describe Viṣṇu as physical forces such as wind, fire (*anila*, *vahni* M.Bh.13.135.38, *pavanaḥ*, *anila* M.Bh.13.135.45) and great water reservoir (*mahāhrada* M.Bh.13.135.99), ocean or source of water (*ambhonidhi* M.Bh.13.135.68).

The next verse (HV.58.39) describes Balarāma as possessing multiple organs such as thousand heads, thousand feet and thousand eyes. This verse reminds one of the *puruṣasūkta*⁷² in the Ṛgveda. The primeval *puruṣa* is said to have possessed 1000 heads, 1000 eyes and 1000 feet and thousand rayed. These epithets are also used to describe Viṣṇu in the Viṣṇusahasranāma, as the one with thousand heads, thousand eyes and thousand feet (*sahasramūrdha sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt*, M.Bh.13.135.37) thousand rayed (*sahasrāmsu* M.Bh.13.135.64).

tasya lōkapradhānasya jagannāthasya bhūpateḥ|
viṣṇornāmasahasram me śruṇu pāpabhayāpaham|| 13.135.12

⁷² Ṛgveda, X.90.1.

Part III Possessor of All Knowledge

In part III the praise passage describes Balarāma as the possessor of all knowledge who declared it to the world and who is at the same time unknowable to anyone. He is also described as the slaughterer of enemies. The Viṣṇusahasranāma also describes Viṣṇu as possessor of all knowledge and at the same time unknowable to the others and slaughterer of enemies. It is reflected in terms such as all knower, possessor of great knowledge (*sarvadarśī vimuktātma sarvanjño jñānamuttamaṃ* M.Bh.13.135.61), knower of Brahmā (*brahmajña* M.Bh.13.135.84), knower of the four Vedas (*caturvedavivekapāt*, M.Bh.13.135.95), lord of all speech (*sarvavāgīśvara* M. Bh.13.135.99), all knower (*sarvajña*, M.Bh.13.135.100). He is expressed as unmanifest, sinless, incomprehensible (*amūrtiranaghaḥ acintyaḥ* M.Bh.13.135.102), unknowable (*ameyātma* M.Bh.13.135.32). He is also described as slaughterer of enemies of gods (*surārihan* M.Bh.13.135.35).

Part IV All Pervader

This part of the praise passage describes Balarāma as small and big at the same time. He is also described as infinite (*ananta*) and as enjoyer of four seas, receiver of sacrifices and base of the earth. These same concepts are expressed in the Viṣṇusahasranāma in connection with Viṣṇu. Small and big at the same time (*aṇurbṛhatkṛśaḥ sthūlo*, M.Bh.13.135.103), infinite form (*ananta rūpa*

M.Bh.13.135.113), infinite and receiver of sacrifices (*ananto hutabhukbhoktā* M.Bh.13.135.108), receiver of sacrifice (*yajñabhuk* M.Bh.13.135.118), holder of earth (*dharaṇīdharah* M.Bh.13.135.38, *mahīdhara* M.Bh.13.135.53, *dharādhara* M.Bh.13.135.93), holder of three worlds (*trilokadhṛk* M.Bh.13.135.93).

Part V Balarāma as Kṛṣṇa

Here the praise passage identifies of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa as one. This reminds one of the first version of the birth story discussed earlier in this chapter (section 2.2.2), according to which both Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are said to have been born from two hairs of Viṣṇu. The same idea is also expressed at various other places in the HV. During their childhood in Vraja (HV.51.1-7) they are described as one body made into two. This motif is repeated here in the Pralamba episode (58.47).

This careful analysis of the praise passage, highlights the effort to portray Balarāma as similar and equal to Viṣṇu in the early version of the Pralamba story. The praise of Balarāma here is actually praise of Viṣṇu.

As the tradition evolved, the importance of Balarāma decreased and his identity with Viṣṇu also became occluded. This praise passage became smaller gradually until it was totally eliminated, and Balarāma is eventually seen not as Viṣṇu but as Śeṣa, the

divine snake. A careful study of the fate of the praise portion of this episode across different texts reveals the decline of Balarāma's position (see chart. IV above).

The superior identity of Balarāma declines in the other texts considered. In the Vi.pu although the praise portion is similar to the HV and contains all five parts of the praise as discussed above, it is very brief. However, the Vi.pu is unique in preserving the identity of Balarāma with Viṣṇu, the supreme god of Vaiṣṇavism. At the end of the praise passage the Vi.pu states, "Calling to mind who you are, destroy the demon." This changes in the Br.pu, which includes only a small praise of Balarāma and does not indicate his identity with the supreme god. Here, Kṛṣṇa only tells Balarāma to remember the Self and kill the demon. The Br.pu differs from the HV and the Vi.pu in not stating the identity of Balarāma as one with the Ātman (the self).

I would like to return now to the question of Balarāma's conflict with the tree cults, something seen in both the Dhenuka and Pralamba episodes.

3.3.3. INTERACTION OF BALARĀMA WITH TREE CULTS IN THE PRALAMBA EPISODE

I would like to suggest that the Pralamba and Dhenuka episodes can be understood as evidence of Balarāma's conflict with other early cults, in this case the demons/deities or yakṣas associated with trees. As I noted earlier tree worship/cult forms

an important part of the ancient religion of India, which found expression in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain religions⁷³. Although not much is known about the origin of tree worship in ancient India, its popularity can be understood from the numerous sculptural panels and extant early literature (see section 3.1.1). Terracotta plaques datable between 200 B.C.E – 200 C.E depict the worship of trees. The banyan tree is especially associated with many beneficial and auspicious qualities⁷⁴.

The connection of Pralamba to the banyan tree cannot be insignificant, especially in light of the early art and archaeological evidence that points to the connection between early cults and tree worship. The expulsion of well known tree cults⁷⁵ is already noted earlier in the uprooting of two aśoka trees by Kṛṣṇa. Pralamba resided in the banyan tree and harmed any children who might have wandered there. Pralamba's affinity to yakṣas/tree spirits can be understood from his description in the HV. Similar to the tree spirits he is protean and can change his shape. He can acquire any form through magic, similar to tree spirits (HV.31-33). Tree spirits are said to have magical powers. One of the principle characteristics of yakṣas is their capacity to assume any form at will though they are said to reside in trees and are worshipped as such. Similar to the tree spirits that live on trees Pralamba seems to live in the Bhandīra tree where the cowherds are playing.

⁷³ Coomaraswamy explained that the ancient devotional practices surrounding the tree and yakṣa cults led to similar practices in later devotional religions in India. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, 24-27.

⁷⁴ S.A. Dange, *Encyclopaedia of Purāṇic Beliefs and Practice* Vol. V (Delhi: Narang, 1990) 1477-78, 1528, 1546.

⁷⁵ See footnote 49.

Balarāma's victory over Pralamba, the tree dwelling demon, may (actually) reflect the historical shift from a cult associated with the banyan tree to the worship of Balarāma.

By killing a demon associated with the banyan tree, Pralamba in this case, Balarāma is depicted in the HV as a deity to be praised for his heroic efforts to make the resources, the banyan tree and the grazing grounds available to the people of Vraj. In fact, both the Pralamba and Dhenuka episodes celebrate Balarāma's role as a liberator who provides for his people.

Thus it can be understood that Dhenuka of the tālavana and Pralamba of the Nyagrodha tree are similar to the tree spirits (or yakṣas as seen in the Buddhist and the Jain sources) thought to have constrained the resources of the Vṛndāvan forest. Balarāma, by killing these two demons, made these resources available to the people, thus obtaining their reverence. Our study of the Balarāma stories in Vṛndāvan shows us an independent figure, Balarāma, whose status is equal to that of Viṣṇu, the cosmic god, and also equal to Kṛṣṇa, whose cult is expanding.

As already indicated in the second section of this chapter (2.2.5-9), Balarāma's transfer to and birth in Vraj were necessitated by reasons other than his personal safety. A study of the Dhenuka and Pralamba stories helps us identify the reasons more clearly: for the protection of Kṛṣṇa and others as well as the procurement of resources. I have already shown above that these stories suggest the early features associated with Balarāma as

wrestler, protector and provider of resources. As these concepts underwent gradual modification across different versions, Balarāma lost his significance and came to be identified with divine snake Śeṣa.

This early superior position of Balarāma found in our earlier source, the HV, is also apparent in the portrayal of Balarāma in the Akrūra episode, which I will focus on next.

3.4.1. REVELATION OF BALARĀMA TO AKRŪRA

The mission of Akrūra⁷⁶ to bring Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa to Mathurā is spread over two chapters in the HV. The first chapter describes Akrūra's travel to Vṛndāvan and the second chapter, his return to Mathurā along with Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. In this section I will consider the return of Akrūra⁷⁷, as it is here that the worship of Balarāma by Akrūra is described, which preserves important information for our study. The preeminent position of Balarāma in early Vaiṣṇavism is revealed in these prayers and the descriptions of Balarāma that follow.

⁷⁶ I thank Dr. Phyllis Granoff for drawing my attention to the central themes of this story and also for helping me with the translation of the difficult verses in this story.

⁷⁷ André Couture, "Akrūra et la *Bhāgavata* selon le *Harivaṃsa*," *Studies in Religion* 15.2 (1986), 221-32. He studied the Akrūra episode with a view to understanding the *Bhāgavatism* presented in the HV. On the basis of a study of the revelation to Akrūra, he concluded that the *Bhāgavata* religion at this stage was a composite religion of local traditions along with the beliefs of traditional brāhmanic religion.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY (HV. 70.10-39)⁷⁸

Kamsa sent Akrūra to bring Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa to Mathurā. He reached Vraja in the evening and spent the night there. He began his journey towards Mathurā along with Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa the next day. They reached the Yamunā lake by noon time, when Akrūra stopped to offer his prayers. He told them to wait there for a few minutes as he wished to honor the lord of snakes with the *Bhāgavata mantras*.

In the middle of the lake, he saw the world of snakes. There in their midst he saw the thousand headed snake, with palm flag, with plow and pestle, wearing blue garments, of white complexion, with a single ear ring, drunk, with lotus eyes, supporting the earth on his head. He was sitting on a throne and was attended by other distinguished snakes, nāga Kambala, Aśvatāra, Vāsuki, Karkoṭaka and others. On his lap is seen Viṣṇu, like a cloud, wearing yellow garments. He wanted to ask Kṛṣṇa but his speech was controlled by the power of Kṛṣṇa. He regained consciousness, dipped into the lake, and repeated his prayers once again. He saw Kṛṣṇa in the lap of Śeṣa. He left the lake to join the cowherds, Balarāma, and Kṛṣṇa on the journey to Mathurā. Kṛṣṇa asked him what wonders he had seen at the lake; he had replied, there is nothing more wonderful than Kṛṣṇa.

The following chart illustrates the above episode from the four texts under consideration for the present study.

⁷⁸ Vi.pu. V.18.33-55; Br.pu. 84.34-62; Bh.pu. X. 39.38-57.

CHART VI

REVELATION OF BALARĀMA TO AKRŪRA

	HARIVAMŚA (HV. 69-70)	VIṢṆU PURĀṆA(Vi.pu . V.17-18)	BRAHMĀ PURĀṆA (Br.pu.II. 83-84)	BHĀGAVATA PURĀṆA (Bh.pu. X.38-39)
Kaṁsa's request	Kaṁsa asked Akrūra to bring Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa to Mathurā.	Kaṁsa asked Akrūra to bring Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa to Mathurā to participate in the wrestling.	Kaṁsa told Akrūra that Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa should be brought to mathurā to participate in the wrestling.	Kaṁsa informed Akrūra of his plan of trying to kill Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa under the pretext of bow festival.
Akrūra's travel	As he travelled to Vraj, he saw the beauty of natural forest on the way in the evening.	As he travelled he congratulated himself on his fortune, for the opportunity to see the incarnate portion of Viṣṇu.	Same as the Vi.pu.	He congratulates himself on being able to see Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. He sees auspicious omens on the way.
Akrūra in Vraj	Rests the night there in Vraj among the cowherds.	Same.	Same.	Same.
Akrūra meditates in the Yamunā lake	Akrūra meditates on Ananta (Śeṣa), with <i>Bhāgavata</i> mantras to please the great god of <i>Bhāgavatas</i> .	Meditates on Samkarṣaṇa.	Not mentioned.	Meditates with mantras (<i>agha marṣaṇa</i>).
Vision I: Balarāma and Viṣṇu	He enters Yamunā and sees the world of snakes. In the middle he sees the 1000 headed snake, with palm flag, with weapons plow and pestle, with single ear ring, with eyes like lotus, inebriated supporting earth on one of his heads. His body is white and smeared with sandal paste. He is sitting on his throne attended by other snakes. And on his lap was Viṣṇu in yellow garments adorned with his emblems.	Not mentioned. He sees the second vision described below in the first vision also.	Not mentioned. Same as Vi.pu.	Not mentioned. Sees the second vision in the first vision also. Both visions are same. Instead of Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa is seen in the first vision also.
Vision II: Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa	Sitting on the lap of this divine snake, Śeṣa he	Saw the divine snake as Balarāma as having 1000	He saw Balarāma with thousand hoods, white as kunda flower, with	He saw Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa in the river when he performed the

	HARIVAMŚA (HV. 69-70)	VIṢṆU PURĀṆA(Vi.pu . V.17-18)	BRAHMĀ PURĀṆA (Br.pu.II. 83-84)	BHĀGAVATA PURĀṆA (Bh.pu. X.38-39)
	saw Kṛṣṇa dark as a cloud, wearing yellow garments, marked by swastika.	heads, garland of jasmine flowers, large red eyes, attended by other snakes, inebriated, standing at the bottom of the river. He saw Kṛṣṇa as Viṣṇu sitting on the lap of this divine snake. Realized them as forms of Viṣṇu.	eyes like lotus, blue garments, attended by Vāsuki and other snakes. He was inebriated and was sitting on the bottom of the river. On his lap he saw Kṛṣṇa in yellow robes, marked with śrīvatsa and adorned with his usual weapons.	meditation and jumped into the water. He came up and saw Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa as usual. Then he went under water again and saw their divine forms again Śeṣa with thousand heads and crowns, with blue garment, lotus flowers, white as Kailāsa and then Viṣṇu on his lap.
Realization	Regained consciousness and repeated the mantras once again.	Akrūra offers a prophetic praise of the vyūhas, Vāsudeva, Samkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha although he only saw Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa.	Same as the Vi.pu.	Supremacy of Kṛṣṇa is stressed. Another chapter following this vision (X.40) indicates the prayers Akrūra said especially for Kṛṣṇa following the above vision.

The vision of Akrūra is remarkable in that it can be read to recapitulate the history of the development of the early Vaiṣṇavism and the role of Balarāma in that syncretistic movement. Akrūra leaves Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa on the shore of the lake and proceeds to enter the lake. He sees the thousand-headed serpent, who bears the attributes of Balarāma⁷⁹. There is no doubt here that the serpent Śeṣa is identified with Balarāma: he

⁷⁹ Vogel considers this vision not as representing Śeṣa identified with Balarāma, but as that of the serpent Baladeva referred in the M.Bh (XIII. 132). He said that in this vision shows how “the superhuman and supersnake are curiously blended.” In the M.Bh (XIII. 132) a certain nāga, Reṇuka, is sent by the gods to the *diggajas* (world elephants) to find out the secrets of *dharma*. The world elephants teach him the *mantras* for the worship of nāgas and direct him to worship nāga Baladeva. Vogel considers the Baladeva of this reference to be the same as the one seen by Akrūra in the lake as opposed to Balarāma. However, he has his own reasons to consider this representation as the nāga Baladeva, although no further information

has the plow and pestle, the palm banner and is inebriated- all of which are characteristics of the god Balarāma as they are known from the HV and other sources⁸⁰. At the same time, this serpent shares some of the attributes of Balarāma the cosmic god as he was identified with Viṣṇu in the praise passage at the end of the Pralamba story, which we have just analyzed. Like the cosmic Viṣṇu, he is thousand-headed (HV.70.17 *sahasrāśya*; HV. 58.39 *sahasrāśya*), and has a lotus coming from his navel *padmanābha* (HV. 58.21). He is the lord of all the oceans (*ekārṇaveśvara* HV.70.22), which recalls HV.58. 37, where Balarāma is said to be the primordial god, who remains at the destruction of the universe when all the oceans come together.

At the same time, Balarāma seems to be superior to Viṣṇu and not entirely identified with him, for Akrūra sees Balarāma / Śeṣa holding Viṣṇu in his lap. It seems possible to read the vision as representing a stage in the evolution of Vaiṣṇavism in which Balarāma is the superior god, whose identification with Viṣṇu is only beginning.

But the vision does not end here. Akrūra comes out of the lake. He looks at Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, who are waiting for him back in the chariot (HV. 70.30) and sees

about the attributes of this snake are known. This actually supports his theory of the origin of the worship of Balarāma from nāga cult rather than independently. However, I think the differences between these two events do not allow for such identification. Firstly, that the worship in the M.Bh reference is directed to nāgas while the HV reference is directed to the Bhāgavata deities and indicate the use of different *mantras*. Secondly, the attributes of the nāga Baladeva are unknown and his worship is never described again in the M.Bh. On the other hand the attributes of Balarāma are well known and are clearly stated in the above episode in the HV. Therefore, I think in its earliest version this episode is intended to depict Balarāma rather than the nāga Baladeva. This story also reflects the superior position of Balarāma at this stage, in early Vaiṣṇavism. J.P.H. Vogel, *The Indian Serpent Lore* (New Delhi: AES reprint, 1995), 197.

⁸⁰ Bṛhatsamhita, 57.36; see also M.Bh. 13.135.77.

their wondrous forms. Now he dives back into the lake and this time it is Kṛṣṇa whom he sees in the lap of the great snake, but not Viṣṇu who was seen in the first vision. This marks the identification of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu and establishes the greatness of Kṛṣṇa over Viṣṇu, whom he has here supplanted. When he returns and Kṛṣṇa asks him what wondrous thing he has seen, he tells Kṛṣṇa that there is nothing so wondrous as Kṛṣṇa himself. Viṣṇu and Balarāma have been forgotten.

In my discussion of the stories of Pralamba and Dhenuka I suggested that Balarāma's absorption into Vaiṣṇavism came first through his identification with Viṣṇu, a process in which Balarāma is seen as a supreme deity. His eventual place in the fully developed Vaiṣṇavism associates him with the minor deity, the snake Śeṣa. Akrūra's vision is at the border of this change. The language describes Balarāma as Viṣṇu, but he is also the snake. This corresponds in fact to the first vision that Akrūra has. The logic of the narrative (Akrūra gets out of the water and starts back to the chariot where he has left Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa) would suggest that the vision might well have ended here. That he repeats the vision, this time seeing Kṛṣṇa instead of Viṣṇu, seems to me to be evidence that the HV, having inherited this story which glorified Balarāma, has reworked it to make it into a Kṛṣṇa story. Now it is Kṛṣṇa who is seen, and in Akrūra's gloss on the significance of his vision, it is Kṛṣṇa alone who is singled out. Again, the vision in an uncanny way mirrors the process I have been trying to reconstruct. It was Kṛṣṇa's growing prominence that ultimately settled the position of Balarāma as Śeṣa, the divine

snake, support of Kṛṣṇa. While the first vision supports the identity of Balarāma with that of Viṣṇu, the second vision indicates the shift in attribution of this identity to Kṛṣṇa.

The vision of Akrūra story appears in the other texts under consideration. But none of the subsequent texts records the first vision where Balarāma held Viṣṇu in his lap. Only the second vision is mentioned where Akrūra sees Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa under the water as Śeṣa and Viṣṇu. By omitting the first vision found in the HV account, the later texts reflect the tendency to diminish the superior status of Balarāma. In fact, the HV account itself hints at the historical process by which Balarāma was supplanted by Kṛṣṇa in the vision that is doubled. It is also noteworthy that the Bh.pu includes an additional chapter of prayer and praise for Kṛṣṇa as Viṣṇu. While the Vi.pu and the Br.pu connect the vision to *Pañcarātra* doctrine by having Akrūra meditate upon the *vyūhas*, the Bh.pu includes a separate chapter where Akrūra praises Kṛṣṇa as Viṣṇu. Thus this section which initially included the portrayal of Balarāma as a superior god, is later altered to present the superiority of Kṛṣṇa.

CONCLUSION

In this section, we see Balarāma playing a distinctive role in the life and welfare of the cowherds. By defeating the demons Dhenuka and Pralamba, Balarāma gives them access to the resources that they need: food and grazing land. The above stories also present Balarāma as a protector of children, especially in the Pralamba story. In addition,

in the praise section of the Pralamba episode he is depicted as a supreme deity, in language that is used for Viṣṇu in the Viṣṇusahasranāma. Finally, we have seen that Akrūra's complex vision can be taken as encapsulating the history of the cult of Balarāma: his vision is really two visions. In the first one Balarāma is again described with language usually reserved for the supreme god and reminiscent of the praise passage in the Pralamba story. Viṣṇu appears on his lap; he remains superior even to Viṣṇu, and is the object of worship by the *Bhāgavata mantras*. He seems here to be the central deity of the Bhāgavata cult. In Akrūra's second vision, Viṣṇu is displaced by Kṛṣṇa, and Balarāma, although still present, is omitted from the vision by Akrūra in his retelling to Kṛṣṇa. According to Akrūra, the awe and wonder of the vision was only Kṛṣṇa.

SECTION IV

YĀUVANA: ADULT LIFE OF BALARĀMA

4.1. BALARĀMA IN MATHURĀ

The stories of the adult life of Balarāma constitute the most important stage of the life of Balarāma for understanding two of the main features that predominate his character and underwent drastic changes contributing to the decline of his status in Vaiṣṇavism. In the corpus of his adult life stories Balarāma resides in Dvārakā, although the scene of action does shift more than once to other places, including Mathurā and Vraj, which are connected to his childhood. The events in these two places help us understand two major aspects of Balarāma's personality; first, his association with fertility, as a

provider of sustenance, food and abundance (in the return to Vraj story); second, as the protector of the people (in the defeat of Jarāsandha story). Analysis of these stories underscores these two early concepts associated with Balarāma and the later modifications to these themes during the process of his assimilation into Vaiṣṇavism.

Stories about Balarāma’s ability to manipulate the forces of water and his defeat of the powerful enemies of Yādavas provide significant evidence to help us understand the nature of Balarāma’s early cult. In this section, I will study two selected stories that show these major aspects in connection with Balarāma, Balarāma’s return to Vraj, and his defeat of Jarāsandha.

4.1.1. BALARĀMA RETURNS TO VRAJ⁸¹

I will study the story of Balarāma’s return to Vraj to understand Balarāma’s association with fertility, a notion expressed in the narrative by reference to water. In this aspect, such as his connection to water, I will argue, he resembles the yakṣas whose cults are known from literary and archaeological evidence. As already noted in section III of this chapter, Balarāma’s connection to food and abundance continues to be one of the main characteristics associated with him during his adult life. When he returned to Vraj as an adult, which he had to leave as a child due to its barrenness, he refertilized it by

⁸¹The story of Balarāma’s return to Vraj occurs in a different narrative sequence in the texts under study. In the HV it is inserted after the defeat of Jarāsandha (HV. 83). In the Vi.pu V.24. 8-21-V.25. 1-28 and the Br.pu. II. 89.8-21- II. 90. 1-18, it follows the defeat of Jarāsandha and foundation of Dvārakā. It is inserted after the foundation of Dvārakā, marriages of Kṛṣṇa and Aniruddha in the Bh.pu. X.65. 1-32.

pulling the river Yamunā through it, thereby providing abundant resources, food, and drink for the people of Vraj.

In the HV, the main purpose of Balarāma's return to Vraj is to pull the river Yamunā through Vraj. The story indicates that this action restores the livelihood of the people of Vraj. However, this is not the central concern in the other purāṇas, which emphasize instead his association with drink and other Hindu deities.

I will highlight how his connection to water, and fertility was changed to cement his status within Vaiṣṇavism. I will argue that this major shift in the personality of Balarāma was necessary to postulate his identity with Śeṣa. Balarāma's association with water provided the basis by which he is linked to Varuṇa, which in turn paved the way for Balarāma's inclusion in Vaiṣṇavism as the divine snake, Śeṣa.

Despite its importance, the story of Balarāma's return to Vraj has received scant scholarly attention. Most scholars have used this story to find his local origin as a deity of Vraj. Charlotte Vaudeville, through a study of the childhood stories of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa and festivals of Mathurā region, has noted the connection of these two deities with the pre-Buddhist worship of nāgas and yakṣas⁸². I will argue in the present thesis that the features associated with Balarāma may also be found in part of other early popular

⁸²Vaudeville sees Balarāma as a local nāga deity while she sees Kṛṣṇa as evolved from a local yakṣa deity of Vraj. Charlotte Vaudeville, *Myths, Saints and Legends in Medieval India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 21-27.

deities, although sufficient evidence is lacking to derive his origin from any of these early gods. By contrast, section III of this chapter establishes that the cults of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa evolved in conflict with local cults such as yakṣas and nāgas while sharing some of the common features associated with these deities. Balarāma's association with nāgas or his identity as nāga Śeṣa is a later development in Vaiṣṇavism. Accepting Balarāma's origin as a nāga deity is accepting the agenda of the later Vaiṣṇava texts that present him as a form of nāga. I will show in the present section that the nāga identity of Balarāma is promoted through changes introduced in this story.

Previous studies of this story link Balarāma as a local deity to Vraj⁸³. Although I do not wish to belittle the contribution of these studies to the understanding of Balarāma, my focus is different. I will try to show that it is his personality (as a god of water and fertility) as revealed in this story that has led to the particular role he would assume in the developed Vaiṣṇavism, but not his association with the place Vraj or his evolution from a local cult of Vraj. Vraj actually means only a confinement or settlement of cows which could have been established in any geographical region surrounding Mathurā⁸⁴. It is also noteworthy that in this story Vraj is referred to interchangeably with Vṛndāvan, and although Balarāma is mentioned as visiting Vraj, the incident of pulling the Yamunā is described as having been taken place in Vṛndāvan. Projecting modern knowledge of

⁸³ Whitney A. Sanford, "Festival of Balarāma in Vraj," a paper presented at the *AAR annual conference*, Toronto, December, 2002. Through a study of festivals of Balarāma she connects Balarāma to Vraj.

⁸⁴ Couture proposes that Vraj is a temporary encampment for cows and cowherds in Mathurā rather than a permanent geographical entity. André Couture, "Campement de bouviers et forêts dans Versions du anciennes du mythe d'enfance de Kṛṣṇa," *Journal Asiatique* 270. 3-4 (1982), 385-400.

geography and festivals on ancient texts is always problematic. Furthermore, these stories are more helpful in analyzing the theological evolution rather than localizing the worship of Balarāma. As Charlotte Vaudeville⁸⁵ had shown, Braj (Vraj) roughly corresponds to the western part of Mathurā district of Uttar Pradesh rather than the village proper. The modern pilgrimage and sacred circuit in and around Mathurā were developed during the 1500 C.E by the followers of Chaitanya and Vallabha. Therefore I propose that Balarāma's connection to Vraj indicates the localization of his developed cult rather than the place of his origin as a local deity.

As I study the story of his return to Vraj, I will highlight the main features of Balarāma's early character, later changes and its implications for the evolution of his cult below.

4.1.2. BALARĀMA RETURNS TO VRAJ STORY IN THE PURĀṆAS

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY (HV 83.1-52)

Balarāma remembered the Gopas and visited Vraj with the permission of Kṛṣṇa. The Gopas welcomed him and he gave greetings to everyone as was appropriate according to their age. The Gopis spoke to him very sweetly and some younger Gopas joked with him. The elder Gopas spoke with affection to Balarāma, who had returned after a long absence. They welcomed the son of the Yadu lineage back to his homeland. They were happy at the return of Balarāma who was famous in

⁸⁵ Charlotte Vaudeville, "Braj: Lost and Found," *Myths*, 41-71.

the world as terrifying to the enemies. They praised him, saying that he killed the Mallas of Kāṁsa, crowned Ugrasena as the king of Mathurā, fought the demon of the ocean, and was praised by gods when he entered Mathurā. To them Balarāma replied that all the Yādavas were his own relatives, among whom he had spent his childhood, played in the forest; and he had eaten together in their houses, and herded the cows. He remarked that all his relatives were kind hearted. Then, Balarāma, the strong one, along with the Gopas, enjoyed himself wandering in the forest.

After a little while the Gopas brought Vāruṇi (alcoholic drink) to Balarāma, the all knowing one. Having taken the drink Balarāma became inebriated and roamed in the forest. Balarāma, with his white body, appeared like the moon inside a dark cloud. He was bright with beautiful hair, with a knot on the top, with a single earring, smeared with cool sandal and other scents, adorned with a forest garland, wearing blue clothes, brilliant with a plow on his shoulder, surrounded by snake hoods (HV. 83.22-27).

Balarāma wished to have a bath and ordered the beautiful Yamunā, the wife of the Ocean, to flow towards him. Yamunā disregarded him, noting his inebriated state, and continued to flow in her usual path. The inebriated Balarāma then took his plow and plunged it in the river and pulled Yamunā, which was filled with pure water adorned with lotuses. He pulled her through the forest. Yamunā, whose waters were thus disturbed, followed the path of the plow, out of fear.

She used to flow in one course only through the middle of Vṛndāvan⁸⁶, but now pulled by the plow she flowed in different ways in Vṛndāvan. Thus she flowed in Vṛndāvan surrounded by birds and other creatures on her banks.

Then taking the form of a woman, Yamunā approached Balarāma and made a request. She said: “I am afraid of this strange form of mine with the water flowing in an abnormal manner. Please leave me now, Oh Halāyudha! I want to go in my own path” (HV.83.46). Then Lāṅgalāyudha, the one with plow as his weapon, having seen Yamunā, said, “Flow in the path of the plow forever, providing water to the people of this country.” (HV.83.48)

Then Balarāma returned to Vraj. Having seen the pulling of Yamunā, all the residents of Vraj praised Balarāma and saluted him. The

⁸⁶ Although this story is described as happening in Vraj, the texts mention Vṛndāvan as the place where Balarāma dragged the river Yamunā.

son of Rohiṇī then returned to Mathurā again. He went to see Kṛṣṇa there, himself adorned as a forest dweller, adorned with garland of wild flowers, etc. Kṛṣṇa asked him about the welfare of the people of Vraj, to which Balarāma replied at great length.

The following chart illustrates the changes to the above story in the different texts under study. I have divided the story into four parts in order to facilitate a clear understanding of the story. I will base my analysis in the subsequent section on the following chart.

CHART VII

BALARĀMA'S RETURN TO VRAJ

	HARIVAMŚA (HV. 83)	VIṢṆU PURĀṆA (Vi.pu. V.24- 25)	BRAHMĀ PURĀṆA (Br.pu. II.89- 90)	BHĀGAVATA PURĀṆA (Bh.pu. X.65.1- 32)
Part I: Balarāma's return to Vraj and reception in Vraj	All the Gopas, elder as well as younger received him with affection. He answered them in proper order according to their age. They received him happily and praised him to which Balarāma replied appropriately.	All the Gopas received him affectionately, while some Gopis spoke to him with anger as they enquired about Kṛṣṇa. The Gopis whose minds were fixed on Kṛṣṇa addressed him as Dāmodara, Govinda etc. Balarāma consoled them by conveying sweet messages from Kṛṣṇa.	Same as Vi.pu, but adds that Balarāma spent two months in Vraj.	The reception of Gopas is similar to the Vi.pu and the Br.pu accounts. However the descriptions of Gopis and their questions were more elaborate. Balarāma, skilled in various ways of consoling, comforted them by conveying to them the messages of Kṛṣṇa which were most soothing to them. He spent two months <i>Caitra, Vaiśākha</i> there.

Part 2: Balarāma's play in the forest	Gopas brought drink for Balarāma knowing that he enjoyed drink. Balarāma consumed that and became inebriated.	Varuṇa in order to provide recreation to Balarāma, told his wife Vāruṇī to go and promote the enjoyment of Balarāma. Therefore Vāruṇī went and established herself in the hollow of the Kadamba tree in the forest of Vṇḍāvan. Balarāma inhaling the fragrance of liquor and observing the drops of alcoholic beverage on the Kadamba tree approached the tree and obtained the drink and had it.	Same as in Vi.pu, but adds that Balarāma saw a stream of liquor suddenly falling from the Kadamba tree. He drank it joyously.	The heavenly beverage Vāruṇī sent by Varuṇa began to flow from a tree and filled the whole forest with its aroma, which was inhaled by Balarāma. He drank it and became inebriated.
Part 3: Balarāma pulls Yamunā	Balarāma wishing to have a bath asked Yamunā to flow towards him, which she refused. Balarāma then pulled her through the forest of Vraj with the tip of his plow. She obtained a human form and said that by pulling her this way he made her unfaithful to her main course and requested him to let go of her. He then instructed her to flow in this new path forever. The pulling of Yamunā is described as akin to violating a woman. This aspect is not mentioned in any other version.	Inebriated and with drops of perspiration on his limbs like pearls, he ordered Yamunā to flow to him in order to have a bath. The river disregarded the words of Balarāma, the drunken man and in anger he took his plow and pulled the river through Vṇḍāvan forest and let her go when she had watered all the country.	Same as in Vi.pu.	He let go of the river Yamunā after he sported to his hearts content. The river Yamunā flows even now in the diverted path in Vraj.

Part 4: Balarāma's bath and conclusion	Not mentioned	When he bathed the goddess Lakṣmī came and gave him a beautiful lotus to place in one ear, an ear ring to place in the other, forest garland of lotus flowers sent by Varuṇa and garments of blue color as expensive as the wealth of the ocean.	When he finished his bath in the Yamunā, Lakṣmī presented him with a blue lotus, ear-ring, garland of never fading lotus flowers sent by Varuṇa and two blue cloths.	When he had his bath in the Yamunā, Kānti (a form of Lakṣmī) presented him with two dark cloths, precious ornaments and an auspicious garland.
--	---------------	--	--	--

Although the Vi.pu story is similar to the HV story in the general outlines, the story differs greatly from the HV story in details, which makes it difficult to assess the exact sources of this version. This may indicate more than one source for this version. Although the Br.pu story is similar to the story of the Vi.pu, it also shows similarities with the Bh.pu in stating Balarāma's stay as two months. Like the Br.pu, the story of the Bh.pu is closer to the Vi.pu than the HV. However, the Bh.pu adds more details that indicate the erotic sentiment. Other details in this text alter the personality of Balarāma in such a way to portray him as the messenger of Kṛṣṇa.

This story in its earliest version in the HV is a story of Balarāma alone, without any connection to Varuṇa or Lakṣmī. It is also the one story of Balarāma where Kṛṣṇa is not even present. In the following pages, I will analyze the story of Balarāma's return to Vraj from the four texts under study. I will outline the alterations that might have taken place in this story in the four texts under study and then analyze the evidence in order to

understand the stages through which the Balarāma story evolved as he was assimilated into Vaiṣṇavism.

4.1.3. BALARĀMA'S ASSOCIATION WITH FERTILITY AND WATER

PART 1: BALARĀMA'S VISIT TO VRAJ AND HIS RECEPTION

As the story begins in the HV, the most notable characteristic is the mutual affection between Balarāma and the people of Vraj. Ten verses of the text (HV.83.7-17) narrate the excitement and delight of the Gopas and Gopis at Balarāma's return. If we examine the chart we see that this depiction of Balarāma changes gradually as the subsequent texts introduce the Gopis lament for the absent Kṛṣṇa. This lament occupies several verses of the story in the other purāṇas under study (Vi.pu. V.24.12-19, Br.pu. II.89.12-18, Bh.pu. 65. X.9-15), With this addition to the base text, Balarāma is transformed into a messenger of Kṛṣṇa or a poor substitute of Kṛṣṇa, who is the object of the Gopi's love. He even loses his own identity as the Gopis, whose minds were fixed on Kṛṣṇa, even call Balarāma by the names of Kṛṣṇa, such as Dāmodara, Govinda etc. (Vi.pu. V. 24. 18), Kṛṣṇa and Dāmodara (Br.pu. 89.19); in the Bh.pu an erotic element is added to this diminishing role of Balarāma who has been described as a messenger (Bh.pu. X. 65.9-16). The Bh.pu states that he stayed two months in Vraj (*Caitra* and *Vaiśākha*) and entertained the Gopis at night (Bh.pu. X. 65.17) adding, "Balarāma's mind was fascinated with the sweet qualities of the young women of Vraj, so he felt all the

nights passed in sports at Vraj as one continuous night” (Bh.pu. X.65. 32). This reminds one of the *rāsa* of Kṛṣṇa during the autumn nights in Vṛndāvan⁸⁷. Thus, in addition to assigning a new role to Balarāma, as a counselor and messenger of Kṛṣṇa, the Bh.pu further blends the identity of Balarāma with that of Kṛṣṇa. With these modifications in the later purāṇas, a story originally told of Balarāma has been converted into a Kṛṣṇa story, thereby minimizing the role of Balarāma. The original identity of Balarāma as restorer of fertility is pushed into background. Kṛṣṇa, although absent from the actual scene of action, is kept in a dominant position by introducing these alterations into the story. These purāṇic versions give clear evidence of Balarāma’s decline in status. It seems as though Balarāma has visited Vraj to convey the messages of Kṛṣṇa, much like Uddhava⁸⁸, rather than to restore his birthplace to prosperity by diverting the course of Yamunā.

PART 2: BALARĀMA’S PLAY IN THE FOREST

There are significant modifications to this part of the story which merit close attention for their religious implications. The most significant difference is the agency through which Balarāma receives the drink. In the base text, the HV, the Gopas bring

⁸⁷ Bh.pu X.29. Kṛṣṇa’s *rāsa* with Gopis.

⁸⁸ Bh.pu. X.46.3-6. Uddhava is a preceptor of the Yādavas. Kṛṣṇa has asked Uddhava to go to Vraj to convey his message to his parents and the Gopis to comfort them. Hardy expresses another view on the episode of Uddhava. Hardy considers this episode as modeled on the return of Balarāma story, adding that Uddhava is conceived in this episode as similar to Arjuna. However, Hardy notes that the two episodes of Uddhava’s return and Balarāma’s return are presented together as messages of Kṛṣṇa, although the

Balarāma a drink to please him (HV.83.19). The subsequent purāṇas insert the Vedic deity Varuṇa, who sends the drink for Balarāma through Vāruṇi (Vi.pu. V. 25. 1-4; Br.pu. II. 90.1-3; Bh.pu. X.65.19), which connects Varuṇa to the alcoholic drink and water rather than having Balarāma procure the drink directly. These stories therefore also connect Balarāma to a Vedic deity, whose position was on the decline. In this connection it is also notable that the intervention of Varuṇa is preceded by an identification of Balarāma with Śeṣa (Vi.pu. V.25.1; Br.pu. 1-2; Bh.pu. X.65.26.). This leads us to the conjecture that the connection of Balarāma to Śeṣa, so often made in the Vaiṣṇava sources, was brought about by the intermediacy of Varuṇa. Balarāma is connected to Varuṇa due to his connection to water and drink, and Śeṣa is connected to Varuṇa as a subject of Varuṇa's watery kingdom⁸⁹. Thus this story of the interference of Varuṇa inserted into the episode of Balarāma's return to Vraj acts in two ways: it subordinates him to Varuṇa, thereby depriving him of a primary connection with water and intoxicating drink as indicative of fertility⁹⁰, and also helps cement his identification as Śeṣa. Therefore in the end his connection to drink and water is not indicative of fertility,

messages that are said to have been conveyed by Balarāma are not repeated, as they were already stated in the Uddhava episode. Hardy, *Viraha- Bhakti*, 507-511.

⁸⁹ Nāgas are described as subjects of Varuṇa in the M.Bh (V.108). Śeṣa replaces the regents (*dikpālas*) of the world as the carrier of the world. He obtained this privilege from Brahmā after a long and severe penance and by forsaking his serpent family. J.P.H. Vogel, *The Nāgas in the Hindu Lore*, 192-198.

⁹⁰ Coomaraswamy notes the intimate connection of yakṣas to waters. He considers the yakṣas as representing the life cult, which is connected to water and plants. He sums up the nature cosmology of water as "from primeval waters arose plants, from plants all other beings. Rasa, as an essence of waters, or sap in trees is variously identified with soma, amrita, semen, milk, rain, honey and liquor. There is a cycle in which the vital energy passes from heaven through the waters, plants, cattle and other typically virile or productive animals, and man, thence ultimately returning to the waters. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, 13-14.

but of his relation to Varuṇa. The connection of alcoholic drink (*surā*) to farmers and food is noted in the Vedas, although the drink is associated with warriors in the epics⁹¹.

Another narrative detail of significance is the source of alcoholic drink. The Vi.pu (V.25.4) and the Br.pu (90.4) mention the flow of the drink from the Kadamba tree⁹². The Bh.pu avoids naming the tree. This added detail is significant for two reasons. First, the Kadamba tree is associated with Vedic sacrifices and later regarded as a seat of Viṣṇu in classical Hinduism. Second, this may be an intentional reminder of Kṛṣṇa who jumped from a Kadamba tree on the banks of Yamunā to suppress Kāliya, who resided in the lake (HV. 56.1-2, Vi.pu. V.7.10, Br.pu. II.77.10, Bh.pu X.16.6). Thus the Vi.pu and the Br.pu by inserting this information about the Kadamba tree, may be reminding the reader of Kṛṣṇa and this exploit of his.

The implication of these modifications to the base text is clear. By changing the agency and introducing the source of the alcoholic drink, the later texts establish an

⁹¹ Oort notes that during the early period, the alcoholic drink *surā* is connected to farmers and agriculture as indicative of food, although it is connected to princes and warriors in the epics. She quotes the *Sautramaṇi* ritual from *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* in its descriptions of the use of *surā* rather than soma as is common with the other Vedic rituals (Oort, 226). Marianne Oort, “*Surā* and Other Spirits in Ritual and Non-Ritual Contexts,” N.V. Gurov, Y. Vasilkov ed. *Sthāpakaśrāddham. Prof. G. A. Zograph Commemorative Volume* (St. Petersburg: Petersburgskoe Vostokovedenie, 1995), 221-231. Bigger notes another aspect of drink as that of indicating the martial aspect of warriors. He explains that *mada* in elephants and in warriors is a martial aspect that denotes terrible warriors, rather than indicative of inebriation. I think, this differs from its original association to fertility and agriculture associated with Balarāma although it may play a role in later stories. Bigger, *Balarāma*, 143-144.

⁹² The Kadamba tree is also connected with fertility rites and associated with a number of religious themes such as the *Dohadā* motif of yakṣiṇi's. J.P.H. Vogel, “The Woman and the Tree or *Śālabhañjikā* in Indian Literature,” *Acta Orientalia* Vol.7 (1929), 201-231; see also Renate Syed, *Die Flora Altindiens in Literature und Kunst* (München: Unveränderter Nachdruck, 1992), 149-157. Parts of Kadamba tree are offered into Agni to control Yakṣiṇis. S.A. Dange, *Encyclopaedia* Vol. IV, 1073.

association with the Vedic tradition whose declining importance signals a parallel demise (or decline in status) for Balarāma. These narrative changes reflect the process by which Balarāma became a minor deity in Vaiṣṇavism.

PART 3: BALARĀMA PULLS YAMUNĀ

In this part Balarāma restores the fertility of Vraj similar to the other stories studied in Section III earlier where Balarāma functions as a restorer of resources. This part of the story remained the same in all the texts under study, although the descriptions of Yamunā and the significance attached to the act underwent modifications. The inebriated Balarāma asks Yamunā to flow towards him, but she disregards his orders because he was inebriated. Then the angry Balarāma pulls Yamunā with his plow all through Vraj (mentioned as Vṛndāvan here), and tells her to flow in this new path forever. This establishes without doubt that the core of the story common to all the texts under consideration was the affectionate visit of Balarāma as an adult to Vraj to refertilize it. These two details: affection of Balarāma for Vraj and the pulling of Yamunā, remain unchanged in all the texts under study. In the HV, the mention of Gopis is minor while the descriptions of Yamunā are elaborate. In the other texts the descriptions of Gopis and their lament are long, while the descriptions of Yamunā and her dialogues are considerably reduced.

The connection of Balarāma to fertility is clearly depicted in the HV. When Balarāma pulled Yamunā through Vraj animals and humans are said to rejoice on the banks of the river (HV. 83. 39-40). This is a clear indication of the connection of Balarāma already noted above as provider of resources. This identity is not discernable in the later purāṇas.

PART 4: BALARĀMA'S BATH AND CONCLUSION

This part of the story is not mentioned in the HV, although it is described in great detail in the other three texts. This addition to the base text features the appearance of the Vaiṣṇava goddess Lakṣmī, common to all three purāṇas, who comes to Balarāma after he finished his bath (Vi.pu. 25.15-16; Br.pu. 90.15-16; Bh.pu X.65.29). She presents him with clothes and ornaments. Varuṇa also sends the never fading lotus flowers through her. One form of Lakṣmī is said to be Śakti (energy) and wife of Samkarṣaṇa (*Lakṣmī Tantra* 22.31-36) according to the *Pañcarātra* religion. Thus the addition of the deity Lakṣmī to this part of the story successfully places Balarāma in the Vaiṣṇava pantheon.

4.1.4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BALARĀMA'S BRINGING YAMUNĀ TO VRAJ

The importance of Balarāma as the restorer of fertility to Vraj is highlighted by comparison with another episode in which the Yamunā figures. This is the episode of Kṛṣṇa defeating the snake Kāliya, to which I have referred several times before. The following chart makes our comparison clear.

CHART VIII

YAMUNĀ IN KĀLIYA AND BALARĀMA'S RETURN TO VRAJ EPISODES

	Balarāma's Return to Vraj (HV. 83)	Yamunā in the Kāliya episode (HV.55)
Yamunā	Balarāma asked her to come near him, as he wished to have a bath, but she refused. (HV. 83. 28-29).	Kāliya made the Yamunā lake a residence for himself and his family. Thus with serpent holes on its banks, poison in the water, the water was no longer useful for the people of Vraj and became deserted by people and beings (HV. 55. 41-46).
Balarāma/ Kāliya	He obtained his plow and with the tip of the plow he pulled Yamunā, who followed him like an agitated woman. She flowed in Vṇḍāvan along the path of the plow followed by screaming birds etc., (HV.83. 30-32). Thus she left her main path and flowed wherever the plow took her. Thus the wife of the Ocean became available to everyone.	Because of the residence of Kāliya the wife of Sāgara is scorned and abandoned (HV. 55. 50-55) by the people of Vraj.
Balarāma/ Kṛṣṇa	Appearing in the form of a woman she spoke to Balarāma to let her go (HV. 83. 41). However Balarāma told her to flow in the path of the plow providing water to people.	Kṛṣṇa desires to punish Kāliya to protect people and beings. Kṛṣṇa defeated Kāliya and his kin and banished them from Vraj and the Yamunā (HV. 56).

As seen from the above chart, although Kṛṣṇa defeated and banished the nāga Kāliya from the Yamunā lake, he did little to improve the resources in the village. It was Balarāma, who accomplished this task when he returned there as an adult.

According to the HV, Vraj was fertile and beautiful when Balarāma lived there as a child. By the time he left it as a young adult it was barren and bereft of resources. This earlier abundance and later barrenness are clear from the following summaries of descriptions of Vraj in the HV.

1. VRAJ DURING THE CHILDHOOD OF BALARĀMA

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY (HV. 49.16-30)

Vasudeva traveled along the banks of Yamunā along with his wife Yaśodā and the two infants Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. As he approached the village, Vraj, at the foot of the mountain Govardhana, on the banks of Yamunā, he saw a beautiful forest with tall trees, abundant grass, beautiful flowers and edible fruits.

The village Govraj, is a good habitation with happy people and satisfied beings (cows, calves etc.) and was filled with different noises - of cows, gargling of calves everywhere, and sighs of cowherd women.

2. VRAJ WHEN BALARĀMA LEFT

Later, when Balarāma left Vraj the forest was devoid of grass and large trees, while the villagers faced numerous hardships in obtaining food and other necessary resources. Kṛṣṇa describes to Balarāma that Vraj is devoid of resources and not able to sustain the population. He sought the advice of Balarāma to leave this place and move to Vṛndāvan.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY (HV.52.8-20)

“Oh noble one! It is not possible to play with cowherds in this forest anymore. This forest has been mined by us. Everything in it had been eaten. The Gopas have destroyed its trees. It seems almost empty. All the wood of the trees has been consumed as fire wood. The little wood and grass that are left are very far. Let us therefore move to Vṛndāvan which is beautiful and abundant in resources.” (HV. 52. 8-20)

Balarāma along with Kṛṣṇa spent his childhood in Vraj and later moved to Vṛndāvan along with the cowherds at the insistence of Kṛṣṇa. This story appears in the other purāṇas with similar descriptions. That Vraj was a land of plenty during the childhood of Balarāma but lost its vitality was an important factor in the stories of Balarāma. Balarāma functions to restore fertility to Vraj.

4.1.5. EARLY CULT OF BALARĀMA AND LATER VAIṢṆAVA IDENTITY

Control over the forces of water is one of the important aspects of the early cult of Balarāma indicated in this story. He is also described as fond of drink. In the HV, it is clear that the intention of Balarāma in pulling the Yamunā was to refertilize Vṛndāvan. However this characteristic is changed in the other texts under study. In the later texts Balarāma visited Vraj as a messenger of Kṛṣṇa, and he is described as ravisher of women and drink. I consider his connection to drink in this story to be one of the qualities he shares with the other fertility cults popular in Mathurā region such as nāgas and yakṣas. Given the milieu of his worship in the Mathurā region, it is logical that Balarāma shares some of the qualities with them. I consider his association with drink to be one such feature that he shares with the other early fertility cults popular in Mathurā.

I turn now to the last story I consider from the purāṇa texts, the defeat of Jarāsandha.

4.2.1. DEFEAT OF JARĀSANDHA

The story of the battle between Jarāsandha and Balarāma is described in great detail in the HV⁹³. The M.Bh preserves a sequel to it, the story of the death of Jarāsandha in a duel with Bhīma⁹⁴. While the Vi.pu⁹⁵ and the Br.pu include the story of the battle of Jarāsandha similar to that of the HV, the Bh.pu includes not only the battle but also the death of Jarāsandha. Since only the story of the battle with Jarāsandha includes Balarāma, but not the story of the death of Jarāsandha, I will study the story of the battles with Jarāsandha in the present section. An examination of this story lends credibility to the theory that Balarāma was more significant and played an important role in the numerous stories in the early phase of the evolution of Vaiṣṇavism. It is the only battle in which Balarāma participated as an adult, as a protector his people, the Yādavas.

Although the second part of Jarāsandha story which is described in the M.Bh has formed the subject of numerous studies, these studies do not analyze the role of Balarāma in this battle, which reflects the attitude of previous scholarship to Balarāma. Bigger said that the M.Bh narrates very few incidents where Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa and the Yādavas have participated together⁹⁶. Balarāma participated only in one of the two major battles of the

⁹³ HV.80-82.

⁹⁴ M.Bh.II. 13. 29-59. Kṛṣṇa describes the battle of Yādavas and Jarāsandha to Yudhisthira and also acknowledges the significant role of Balarāma in defeating Jarāsandha.

⁹⁵ Vi.pu, V. 22, Br.pu. II.87; Bh.pu. X. 52, 70, 72.

⁹⁶ Bigger, *Balarāma*, 41-44.

Yādavas described in the M.Bh viz., the battles against Jarāsandha and the city of Saubha. Bigger concludes by saying that Balarāma's participation in the battles with Jarāsandha are of minor importance even though Kṛṣṇa himself described the role of Balarāma in a significant way. Therefore a further study of the role of Balarāma in this battle is necessary to evaluate the early depiction of the character of Balarāma. Balarāma is never described as a terrible warrior but he is a powerful protector of the people. It is due to his superior skill in wrestling and mace duel that Jarāsandha was defeated in the battle in the HV.

Another aspect of the Jarāsandha story is that numerous themes including history, religion and rituals got intertwined with the story of Jarāsandha⁹⁷. The Jarāsandha story is not part of the central story cycle of the M.Bh, and it has been subjected to numerous additions. Many scholars focus on the M.Bh presentation of the Jarāsandha stories⁹⁸,

⁹⁷ Ruben finds additional evidence in support of his composite origin of the Kṛṣṇa stories in this story. He postulates three layers in the growth of Jarāsandha story from independent story cycles. Firstly, the Mathurā cycle, in which various folk elements are linked with Kāṁsa and Jarāsandha. Secondly, Dvārakā stories, based on Kṛṣṇa's flight, and finally the fusion of these two in the Hastinapura stories, where Bhīma kills Jarāsandha. Walter Ruben, *Kṛṣṇa Konkardanz*, 17.

⁹⁸ Sadashiva L. Katre through a study of the story of Jarāsandha, tried to establish the historicity of Kṛṣṇa and the gradual evolution of his divinity. He postulated that Kṛṣṇa's stature in the Jarāsandha episode was human as opposed to his divine imagery in the other episodes of M.Bh. Sadashiva L. Katre, "Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 8 (1932), 500-508 & *Indian Historical Quarterly* 9 (1933), 854-865. Prahlād Chandrashekhar Divanji attempted a study of the lives of Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha with a similar premise from the purāṇas and from Jain texts. He advocates the use of the purāṇic literature as an independent source for the reconstruction of ancient Indian history. He used the text historical method of comparing different versions of the story from purāṇic and Jain sources and concluded that the Jain sources were more reliable for historical information. Prahlād Chandrashekhar Divanji, "Historical Value of Purāṇic Works," *Journal of the Gujarat Research Society* 4 (1932 Indrajī Commemoration Volume), 102-125. Ulrich Schneider interpreted the Jarāsandha episode as the last attempt of western tribal communities (Andhakas, Vṛṣṇis, Bhojakas and others) to resist the domination of eastern empire (Magadha- the kingdom of Jarāsandha). Through this study he attempted an analysis of the rise of Kṛṣṇa from a historical figure to a divine one. He studied the transformation of Kṛṣṇa from a human hero to the

considering it as an historical story. However to gain a fuller appreciation of the role and status of Balarāma, I begin with the HV version, a simple story, which indicates Jarāsandha's hatred of the Yādavas for the death of Kaṁsa and highlights the significant role of Balarāma in the battles. As I study the battle with Jarāsandha and Balarāma in the following pages, I will undertake the study of the events that depict the character of Balarāma which will in turn lead to an understanding of early features associated with him. I will not be attempting an analysis of the historicity of the kings who accompany Jarāsandha in the battle or his religious affiliation.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY

Arrival of Jarāsandha (HV. 80. 1-27)

Jarāsandha has arrived along with the six categories of his armed forces to attack the Yādavas. He was angered by the fact that Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa killed his son-in-law Kaṁsa and crowned Ugrasena the king of Mathurā. He surrounded Mathurā with a huge army of his friends and allies.

god of the *bhakti* movement utilizing the above episode. Ulrich Schneider, "Kṛṣṇas Postumer Aufstieg: Zur Frühgeschichte der Bhakti Bewegung," *Saeculum* 33.1(1982), 38-49. Asko Parpola explains the Jarāsandha episode as reflecting the last wave of *Āryan* immigration into India. He suggested that the Pāṇḍavas might represent the new wave of *Āryan* immigrants pushed to the south by the expansion of Magadha around 500 B.C.E in a southwesterly direction. Asko Parpola, "On the Jaiminiya and Vadhula Traditions of South India and Pāṇḍu/ Pāṇḍava Problem," *Studia Orientalia* 55 (1984) 3-42.

Preparation of the Yādava forces (HV. 81. 1-104)

Watching the army of Jarāsandha that surrounded the city of Mathurā Kṛṣṇa asked Balarāma to prepare for battle quickly to face the king Jarāsandha. He contemplated as he saw Jarāsandha and his army of kings, “Here stands the martial kings of earth. With them gone to heaven, the burden of the earth will decline. Within a short time the earth will be relieved of its burden with the hundreds of kings being dead”. Balarāma remarked, “as our first battle this will be the ‘touch stone’ of our skill in warfare”.

Jarāsandha laid siege to the four sides of Mathurā. A great battle ensued between the Yādava forces and that of the army of Jarāsandha, which was similar to the battle of gods and demons previously.

Their ancient weapons descended in the battlefield. Balarāma obtained the plow named *Samvartaka*, which was swirling like a snake and agitated. He took the pestle, named *Saunanda*, in his right hand, which is the destroyer of the enemies and appeared angry. The bow, ‘*Sāranga*’, conch, ‘*Śankha*’, mace, ‘*Kaumodaki*’, were taken by Kṛṣṇa. They both appeared like Vishnu in the battlefield.

Balarāma appeared like an angry serpent in the battlefield. Balarāma attacked Jarāsandha and destroyed his chariot with a desire to defeat him.

The battle of Jarāsandha and Yādavas: (HV. 82. 1-26)

Balarāma hit Jarāsandha with his pestle and cut up his weapons. Then Jarāsandha devoid of his weapons, and chariot, obtained his mace. They both waged a mace duel in the battlefield, while others remained mere spectators. Those two skilled in the mace fought like elephants fighting with their tusks, and the clash of their weapons (tusks) resounded in all the ten directions. Hit by the mace of Balarāma, Jarāsandha fell down. Then Balarāma attacked him with his mace with great speed to punish him. Then a divine voice from heaven said, “Jarāsandha is not to be killed by you. Leave him. He will die in a short time” (83.20). Having heard that, Jarāsandha became depressed. Balarāma did not kill him, but the humiliated Jarāsandha left the battlefield himself. He attacked Vṛṣṇis thereafter eighteen times and they were never able to defeat him.

CHART IX
THE BATTLE WITH JARĀSANDHA IN THE PURĀṆAS

	HARIVAMŚA (HV.80-83)	VIṢṆU PURĀṆA (Vi.pu. V.22)	BRAHMĀ PURĀṆA (Br.pu. II.87.)	BHĀGAVATA PURĀṆA (Bh.pu. X.50)
Part 1. Preparation for the battle	Mentions a list of numerous kings that come as allies of Jarāsandha. Seeing the army of Jarāsandha Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma remark about their ability to defeat him. Balarāma said this is the first battle and a ‘touch stone’ for his skill in warfare.	Jarāsandha came with 23 divisions of the army but does not mention any names of other kings.	Same as in the Vi.pu.	Same as in the Vi.pu.
Part 2. Divine weapons	Plow, pestle, bow, conch, mace.	Mace, two quivers filled with arrows and plow and pestle.	Discus, bow, two quivers with inexhaustible arrows, iron mace, plow and pestle.	Two chariots equipped with arms descended.
Part 3. The battle of Jarāsandha and the Yādavas	A terrible battle ensued between the armies of Jarāsandha and the Yādavas. Detailed descriptions in HV. 81-82 describe the defeat of Jarāsandha by Balarāma.	Very brief account of the battle that does not mention the fight between Balarāma and Jarāsandha.	Same as in the Vi.pu.	Describes the battle of Balarāma and Jarāsandha briefly and how Jarāsandha was left without being killed at the suggestion of Kṛṣṇa. Jarāsandha intends to leave the kingdom and undertake a penance, but is dissuaded by other kings.
Part 4. Killing of Jarāsandha	Not mentioned.	Not mentioned.	Not mentioned.	Kṛṣṇa along with Bhīma and Arjuna visited Girivraj, the capital city of Jarāsandha disguised as brāhmins. They challenged Jarāsandha to a duel with any one of them. After 27 days of battle Bhīma confessed to Kṛṣṇa that he was not able to defeat Jarāsandha. Kṛṣṇa taught him how to kill Jarāsandha by splitting a twig. Kṛṣṇa was telling Bhīma to split Jarāsandha which Bhīma followed and successfully killed Jarāsandha, by splitting him. (Bh.pu. X.72.41-47)

The HV story preserves the most detailed description of the battles with Jarāsandha. A shortened version exists in the Vi.pu, which was then adopted by the Br.pu. Bh.pu expands upon the Vi.pu story by including the second part of the story, the death of Jarāsandha as described in the M.Bh. Thus for the Bh.pu, the stories of the Vi.pu are not the only source.

Based on the story in the four texts under study, and the above chart, I will analyze the battle with Jarāsandha in order to understand the nature and evolution of Balarāma.

4.2.2. PERSONALITY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF BALARĀMA IN THE DEFEAT OF JARĀSANDHA

A study of the Jarāsandha episode indicates that the army of Yādavas was led by Balarāma and he is described as playing a significant role in this episode. Balarāma's fight with Jarāsandha is exhaustively and elaborately described in the HV (HV. 81.82-88, 82.5-20), while the fight of Kṛṣṇa is described in only a few verses (HV. 81.79-81). I have divided this story into four parts for the convenience of study, which I study below before attempting an analysis of the significance of Balarāma here.

PART 1. PREPARATION FOR THE BATTLE

All the texts mention that Jarāsandha came prepared with a huge army to Mathurā to avenge the death of his son-in-law Kamsa. But the details of the composition of the army vary between the texts. In the HV story he came with a huge army accompanied by his numerous allies⁹⁹. In the Vi.pu, the Br.pu, the Bh.pu, he is accompanied by 23 divisions, but these stories do not mention any of his allies, instead, in these texts, the whole chapter is devoted to the description of Kṛṣṇa while only two verses describe Jarāsandha. I would suggest that the detailed description of Jarāsandha’s army was omitted in these texts in order to promote and elevate Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa, the divine player, is described as leading the events of the battle and the foe has almost been eclipsed. This is true for the descriptions of Balarāma as well. The result of this shift in narrative emphasis is the decreased importance of Balarāma and his defeated foe. Similarly, other purāṇas do not attribute any significance to Balarāma. Instead, he is portrayed Kṛṣṇa’s assistant. Thus the single-handed achievement of Balarāma in the HV gradually came to be

⁹⁹ H.H. Wilson, in his study of the *Rājatarangīṇī*, considers Jarāsandha as a historical person and contemporary and related to one of the kings of Kashmir, Gonarda (reigned in 1260 B.C.E). King Gonarda is said to have participated in the battle between Jarāsandha and the Yādavas (HV81.38), as an ally of Jarāsandha and Balarāma killed him in the battle. He estimated the historical date of Jarāsandha, Kṛṣṇa and Pāṇḍavas based on the evidence of *Rājatarangīṇī*. H.H. Wilson, “Histoire de Kashmir, Traduite de Original Sanskrit du *Rājatarangīṇī*” *Journal Asiatique*, 7 (1825) 3-31 and 65-90. Reprint. H.H. Wilson, *The Hindu History of Kashmir* (Calcutta: Susil Gupta (India) Pvt. Ltd., 1960), 14-16, Appendix IV-V. Appendix IX (pp. 135) This book contains an excerpt from Bühler’s translation of the *Rājatarangīṇī*, which mentions the death of Gonarda in battle with Balarāma. This is significant because this indicates the major role of Balarāma in the battle. M.Bh adds that the ministers of Jarāsandha, Hamsa and Dimbhaka were killed by Balarāma in the battle known from Kaśmīrian tradition. Balarāma defeated Jarāsandha. In addition *Rājatarangīṇī* states that Balarāma killed Gonarda. Even though it does not describe it as an historical event, this event actually indicates the remembrance and acceptance of the important role of Balarāma in this battle.

described as the joint effort of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in later texts. Descriptions of Balarāma are discarded or altered to preserve the importance of Kṛṣṇa. In the HV (81.5), Kṛṣṇa asks Balarāma to prepare quickly for the battle. In the HV, the role of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa is described separately. In the HV (81.6), Balarāma, seeing the army of Jarāsandha, remarks that this battle would be the ‘touch stone’ of their battle skills. All the descriptions of Balarāma and his remarks are also eliminated from the story in the other purāṇas. In the Bh.pu, Kṛṣṇa contemplates his divine purpose of killing the demons when he heard about the arrival of Jarāsandha with his army (Bh.pu. 10. 7-9) and two chariots equipped with weapons.

This is not the case in the other texts. In the Vi.pu (Vi.pu.V. 22. 4) and the Br.pu (Br.pu. 87.4), Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa came out of the city with their army together. The battle is described in *dvandva* compounds so as to present the joint efforts of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, but description of the individual personality of Balarāma is eliminated. Balarāma’s role in preparing and leading the army is no longer evident in the Vi.pu and the Br.pu where the battle is described as a joint action of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. In the Bh.pu the preparation for the battle is achieved by the contemplation of Kṛṣṇa. This narrative modification eliminates the role of Balarāma in the preparations for the battle with Jarāsandha.

PART 2. DIVINE WEAPONS

In the HV, the four weapons of Balarāma received the plow and the pestle, and Kṛṣṇa received the bow, and the mace and a mace that appeared from the sky (HV. 81. 60-64). In addition, the plow and pestle are described as having their own personality and appeared agitated and angry. The plow was decorated and swirling like a snake, and the pestle appeared agitated (HV. 81.60-62)¹⁰⁰. In the HV, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa's weapons appear from the sky. As noted above Balarāma's weapons are described with personality while Kṛṣṇa's weapons are not animated, although they are described with distinctive adjectives. It is also interesting to note that *Sudarśana cakra* (the wheel) which is later described as the most important weapon of Kṛṣṇa is not mentioned here. According to the Jain texts, the *cakra* (the wheel) is the weapon of Jarāsandha, which Kṛṣṇa obtained in his battles with Jarāsandha (see chapter III. section. 3.5.6). Although the weapons of Balarāma are mentioned in the other purāṇas under study, the descriptions of their personalities are eliminated. In the Vi.pu (Vi.pu.V.22.4-7), the Br.pu (Br.pu. 87.6-8), the order of the appearance of the weapons of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa is reversed. While in the HV, the weapons of Balarāma appear first, in the Vi.pu and the Br.pu Kṛṣṇa's weapons appear first, thereby transferring primacy to Kṛṣṇa. The Bh.pu (Bh.pu. 10. 50.11) describes how two chariots equipped with weapons descended as Kṛṣṇa contemplated the battle, without the knowledge of Balarāma. In fact, in the Bh.pu, Kṛṣṇa informs Balarāma

¹⁰⁰ Br.pu. II. 87.7. The plough of Balarāma is described as resembling the *Samvarta* fire. Br.pu. II. 87.6. mentions the wheel in the list of the weapons of Kṛṣṇa.

about the appearance of his weapons (Bh.pu. 10. 50.13). As seen from the above changes in the story, the significance of Kṛṣṇa is gradually increased while that of Balarāma is decreased.

PART 3. THE BATTLE

This is the one section where modifications are introduced on a large scale. The direction of these modifications is not difficult to understand. Balarāma is presented here as participating in a big battle as a great warrior rather than a great wrestler and protector of people. All the descriptions of Balarāma's direct combat are avoided in the later texts, thereby minimizing his role in the battle and also modifying his identity.

Balarāma's battle with Jarāsandha (HV.81.82-88) and the subsequent defeat of Jarāsandha (HV. 82.14-20) are described in great detail in the HV. Emphasis is placed on Balarāma's ability as wrestler in 'one on one' combat rather than on his military skills. Here, when Balarāma wages the mace duel with Jarāsandha all others are said to stand aside and watch as mere spectators.

When Balarāma defeated Jarāsandha and was about to tie him a divine voice interfered saying, "Oh Balarāma! He is not to be killed by you. He will die soon" (HV.82.20). Thus Balarāma left him alive. In the other purāṇas under study, the battle descriptions are very brief. In fact, this detail is confined to a single verse in the Vi.pu

(Vi.pu. V. 22.8), and the Br.pu (Br.pu. 87.8). These texts include neither the wrestling of Balarāma and Jarāsandha nor the subsequent defeat of Jarāsandha. Although the Bh.pu includes a detailed description of the battle, modifications are introduced in order to establish the superiority of Kṛṣṇa (Bh.pu. X.50.28). It was at Kṛṣṇa's insistence that Balarāma let Jarāsandha go (Bh.pu. X.50.31-32). Thus the Bh.pu story replaced the anonymous divine voice of the HV with Kṛṣṇa's, the only divine being present. The reason Kṛṣṇa gave for letting go of Jarāsandha was that while left alone he would gather more army and it would be easier for them to accomplish their purpose of decreasing the burden of the earth (Bh.pu. X. 50.32). This is contrary to the HV (81.9-13) story, where Kṛṣṇa initially thinks to himself that the battle would be an opportunity to decrease the burden of the earth by killing the numerous kings that accompanied Jarāsandha.

It is interesting to note that despite its modifications, the Bh.pu still gives hints of the primacy of Balarāma. When Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma challenged him in the battle, Jarāsandha told Kṛṣṇa that he would not fight with him. Jarāsandha says, "I won't fight with a young boy like you (X.50.18)". But then he challenged Balarāma, "Oh Balarāma! If you have faith and confidence in yourself, muster some courage and fight with me"(X.50.19). This statement is certainly contrary to the presentation of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa virtually as twins in the texts describing their childhood (section II.2.3.3 of this chapter).

Thus the stories of Balarāma's battles with Jarāsandha once again describe him as protector of the people. In not killing him and letting Jarāsandha go, we see Balarāma as not participating in empire building activities; It is notable that Jarāsandha was killed later on in a combat by Bhīma as part of their preparation of Rājasūya- an empire building ritual. Balarāma avoided in participating in such activities.

CONCLUSION

The defeat of Jarāsandha once again presents Balarāma as a powerful wrestler and protector of people in the HV, similar to his personality in the earlier sections. This depiction of Balarāma changes in the other texts under study. In these texts the descriptions of Balarāma's combat are avoided and the battles with Jarāsandha are described as cosmogonic events according to the later Vaiṣṇava theology, where the major role of incarnations is to reduce the burden of earth, by killing the evil doers. In this process of avoiding the description of personal participation and including the descriptions of formal battle Balarāma's identity is modified from protector of people to that of an ordinary warrior. Earlier I have noted in his battles with Dhenuka that his single- handed defeat of Dhenuka in the battle in the HV is later described as a battle utilizing weapons. Thus in all these stories, the trend is to depict Balarāma as a normal figure representing *kṣatriya* ideals. This is more clearly seen in Jarāsandha story than any where else in the stories representing the life of Balarāma. It is another strategy that eliminates his distinctiveness.

I now turn to the Jain stories of Balarāma in order to examine whether alterations similar to the Hindu purāṇa stories are incorporated or they reflect an independent story tradition of Balarāma. This will in turn provides an opportunity to study the early significance of Balarāma from an alternative source.

CHAPTER III: BALARĀMA IN THE JAIN SOURCES

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

3.1.1. BALARĀMA IN THE JAIN PURĀṆAS

Unlike the Hindu purāṇa texts, which preserve only a brief story of the first Jain *Tīrthaṅkara*¹, Ṛṣabha, the Jain texts preserve a considerable amount of story literature about Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. The Jain accounts of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are as vivid and may even be as early as the first Hindu purāṇa stories of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. In fact, the earliest Jain story of Balarāma may well be contemporary to our earliest Hindu purāṇa stories of Balarāma (see chapter I. 1.4.1-1.4.2 for a descriptive study of the primary sources). For example, the Jain text VH and the Hindu purāṇa text HV are datable to 200-300 C.E.

¹ P.S. Jaini, “Jaina Ṛṣabha as an Avatāra of Viṣṇu,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 40. 2 (1977), 321-327.

It is uncertain whether Jain stories of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are derived from older sources independent of the Hindu purāṇa stories or whether they are reworked from the Hindu purāṇa stories². A close study of the Balarāma stories reveals a different pattern of evolution for the Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa stories in the Jain texts which may indicate an independent origin for the Jain stories. For the convenience of study, I divide the Balarāma stories in the Jain texts into two categories based on the differences or similarities with the Hindu purāṇa stories of Balarāma. The stories in the first category are distinctive and are found only in Jain texts, while the second category of Balarāma

² Alsdorf suggested that the original Jain stories might not have been received from the brāhminical sources, but from some independent sources. L. Alsdorf, *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* (Hamburg: Frederichsen, De Gruyter and Co M.B.H, 1936), 119-122. Jacobi concluded from his study that the Jains canonized Kṛṣṇa when they spread and settled in the original area of Kṛṣṇa legend. H. Jacobi, "Die Jaina Legende von den Untergange Dvāravatī und von dem Tode Kṛṣṇas," *ZDMG* 42 (1888), 494. Divanji upheld the authenticity of Jain versions and considered them as old as any Hindu purāṇas. P. C. Divanji, "Origin of Bhāgavata and Jaina Religions," *Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Silver Jubilee Volume (1917-42), 107-25. Based on the evidence of the Draupadi story, Geen argues that the Jain stories are derived from an older independent story tradition different from the M.Bh tradition. Jonathan Geen, *The Marriage of Draupadi in the Hindu and Jaina Mahābhārata*, unpublished Ph. D Thesis, Department of Religious Studies (Hamilton: McMaster University, 2001). Ratan Parimoo, through a study of the Kāliya episode from the Jain and the Hindu purāṇa and art sources proposed that the Jain stories preserve an independent account of the Kāliya episode not known to the Hindu purāṇas. He showed that pulling of Kāliya by a nose cord to be an adaptation from north Indian local tradition adopted in the Jain stories. On the other hand the dancing of Kṛṣṇa on the hoods of Kāliya is said to be a reminiscent of south Indian tradition. Ratan Parimoo, "Kāliyadamana Ceilings from Gujarāt Temples," Ratan Parimoo ed., *Vaiṣṇavism*, 6-7. H.C. Bhayani thinks that the tradition of Rādhā and the rāsa dance of Kṛṣṇa evolved within the Jain sources which was derived from Prakrit sources before they were finally adopted by the Hindu purāṇas and other literary texts such as *Gītāgovinda*. Thus he attributes primacy to the Jain sources for preserving independent local traditions. H.C. Bhayani, "Some Pre-eleventh Century Prakrit and Apabhramśa Texts Relating to the Childhood Exploits of Kṛṣṇa," Ratan Parimoo ed., *Vaiṣṇavism*, 58-64. However, recent studies such as those listed below attempt to show the influence of Hindu purāṇa stories on the Jain stories of Kṛṣṇa. P.S. Jaini, "Jaina Purāṇas: A Purāṇic Counter Tradition," Wendy Doniger ed., *Purāṇa Perennis* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 207-25. B.N. Sumitra Bai, Robert J. Zydenbos, "The Jaina Mahābhārata," Arvind Sharma ed., *Essays on the Mahābhārata* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 251-274. Tadpatrikar considers it doubtful that *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* of Punnāṭha Jinasena, the first detailed Jain story of Kṛṣṇa written in 800 C.E could have been derived from independent oral sources, while numerous written accounts of Kṛṣṇa stories were current in the purāṇa tradition by that period. Tadpatrikar, "The Kṛṣṇa Problem," *ABORI*, 269-344.

stories are common to both Jain and Hindu purāṇa texts, although differences exist in details.

The Jain stories of Balarāma in the first category include: the marriage of Balarāma's parents, birth story, past life stories of Balarāma, Balarāma's role in the life of child Kṛṣṇa, and Balarāma's escort of Devakī to Vraj. These stories are not only different in content, but also present Balarāma with a personality and position that differs considerably from the Hindu purāṇas. An analysis of the Balarāma stories of the first category therefore lends support for the theory that Balarāma stories might have existed in multiple versions and found expression in different ways in each religious tradition.

The second category of Jain Balarāma stories follows the pattern and broad outline of the Hindu purāṇa stories of Balarāma, but differs mainly in the supplementary details that bring about some alterations to the content of the story. Jain stories of this category narrate the incidents of the adult life of Balarāma³ and Kṛṣṇa. Included in this category are: transfer of Kṛṣṇa, transfer of Balarāma to Vraj, Balarāma's participation in the life of Kṛṣṇa in Vraj, wrestling match in Mathurā, and battles with Jarāsandha. However, I will argue in this chapter that the stories in the second category are assimilated from different sources from the Hindu purāṇas as can be indicated by the numerous differences among these stories. The second category of stories resembles the

³ The story of the death of Balarāma is an independent story and needs special examination and hence I do not attempt a study of this in the present thesis.

stories of the childhood and adult life of Balarāma from the Hindu purāṇas (the Jain texts however omit the young adult life stories of Balarāma seen in the Hindu purāṇas)⁴. A comparative analysis of these two traditions may help us understand the evolution of Balarāma stories.

Scholars have debated whether the Hindu purāṇa or Jain stories are the older, and who borrowed from whom. This question has engaged scholarly attention over the last few years, but has not led to any satisfactory answer. In the absence of any earlier supporting evidence to validate the arguments in support of the early origin of either one or the other tradition the scholarly attempts were inconclusive⁵. The study of the Jain stories of Balarāma may give us new evidence to answer this question. Through a study of Balarāma stories from Jain stories, I will try to show that the Jain stories are derived from independent and perhaps older sources other than the Hindu sources. I argue that the

⁴ The Jain texts do not mention any events connected to the heroic exploits of Balarāma. These texts avoid any incidents connected to the life of Balarāma in Vṛndāvan such as the killing of Dhenuka and Pralamba, the pulling of Yamunā etc. This may be a deliberate omission to remodel the story of Balarāma in accordance with his depiction as an ideal follower of Jain *dharma*. Jain literature however, mentions a Baladeva, leader of the Pañcavīras. I consider Baladeva and Balarāma are two different persons in the *Antagada*, although it does not differentiate between the two in other texts. In the other texts Balarāma is referred as this Baladeva or Balarāma simultaneously. I believe that *Antagada* is referring to a different Baladeva in its reference to him as leader of Pañcavīras, (*Antagada*, 14) and as a king in Dvārakā (*Antagada*, 78). However the most intriguing reference comes from the well known episode of the death of Kṛṣṇa in this text which leads to the view that the Baladeva referred in the above instances might not be the same as Balarāma. Here, Kṛṣṇa questions Neminātha about the future of Dvārakā and himself (*Antagada*, 81). Neminātha said that Dvārakā would be destroyed in a fire and added, “together with Rāma and Baladeva though shalt set forth toward the southern ocean onto the Pāṇdu-Mahurā.” I think this is the only reference to Rāma (Balarāma?) in this text while Baladeva mentioned here along with him might be the one referred in the above references. This Baladeva might be a warrior and different from Balarāma. L.D. Barnett, *Antagada dasāo*, 14, 78, 81.

⁵ See footnote 2 above for contradictory arguments of scholars regarding the sources of the Jain texts.

Jain stories know an independent tradition in which Balarāma played a major role; their reliance on Hindu purāṇa sources increases with time suggesting that the “borrowing” is a relatively late phenomenon.

Another notable feature in the Jain sources is the depiction of Balarāma as the Ninth *Baladeva* (an associate deity of Neminātha) and an ideal follower of the Jain *dharma*. This tendency is sometimes seen as the counter tradition to the Hindu purāṇas since Jain texts include a series of *Baladevas* who are born on earth from time to time similar to the *avatars*. As indicated by the differences between the two traditions, it can be said that each tradition derived its sources independently and remodeled them according to their own conventions. As the Jain stories try to present Balarāma as a follower of *dharma*, the stories show a clear shift in presenting the personality of Balarāma. The Jain texts therefore show an opposite tendency to that noticed in the Hindu purāṇas with regard to the personality of Balarāma. While the Hindu texts progressively add details to his stories to depict him as an ordinary warrior, the Jain texts depict him as non-violent, by minimizing his participation in the battles.

Among the texts selected for the present study, the VH represents the earliest Balarāma story in the Jain tradition, which was not influenced by the Hindu purāṇa stories of Balarāma. The HVP and the TSP show differing degrees of awareness of the Hindu purāṇa stories. Being a late text in comparison to the HVP, the TSP stories are the most influenced by the growing cult of Kṛṣṇa and portray similar trends of modifications

that were noted in chapter II of this thesis. These modifications diminish Balarāma's significance in comparison to Kṛṣṇa, a phenomenon observed in the Hindu purāṇa stories.

As before, I will consider the life of Balarāma by dividing it into life stages similar to a human life. I will explore his relationships to the other important persons involved in these stories such as Kṛṣṇa, Vasudeva, Rohiṇī and Devakī. I divide the present chapter into three sections for the convenience of study.

SECTION II *JANMA*: THE BIRTH OF BALARĀMA

In this section I will study the stories of the marriage of Balarāma's parents Rohiṇī and Vasudeva and his birth. This section is unique in that these stories are the same in all the Jain texts under examination with only minor variations. Thus the Jain stories of the marriage of Balarāma's parents and his birth are different from Hindu purāṇas and consistent in all the Jain texts. Therefore it can be assumed that this part of the Balarāma story, unlike the Hindu purāṇa stories, was fixed at a very early stage of its evolution. Birth stories identify him as the ninth *Baladeva*, last of the series of *Baladevas* known in Jainism. This identity places Balarāma firmly in the Jain pantheon and at the same time assigns him a superior position at least equal to that of Kṛṣṇa.

SECTION III *JANMĀNTARĀṆI*: PAST LIFE STORIES OF BALARĀMA

In this section, I consider the stories of the past lives of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. The past life stories of Balarāma are confined only to the HVP of Jinasena and these are not to be found in any other Jain text under study. The VH and the CMC do not mention the past life stories while the TSP mentions only the past life stories of Kṛṣṇa. As I study the past life stories of Balarāma from the HVP in comparison with the TSP, I will explain the significant status of Balarāma as depicted in these stories, arguing that they indicate his early superior status compared to Kṛṣṇa.

SECTION III *YĀUVANA*: ADULT LIFE OF BALARĀMA

In this section I will consider the stories of the adult life of Balarāma in connection with Kṛṣṇa and Vasudeva. On the other hand, the adult life stories of Balarāma differ in the Jain texts under study and provide a much more varied account of the life of Balarāma. The personality of Balarāma differs considerably from the Hindu texts. Any mention of his participation in battles and violence is omitted in the Jain texts, with the exception of the battles with Jarāsandha in which his role is depicted as minimal, unlike the Hindu texts considered in chapter II of this thesis.

SECTION II

JANMA: THE BIRTH OF BALARĀMA

3.2.1. MARRIAGE OF BALARĀMA’S PARENTS ROHIṆĪ AND VASUDEVA

In this section I first consider the story of the marriage of Balarāma’s parents, Rohiṇī and Vasudeva followed by a study of his birth story. This story provides ample information about the background of Rohiṇī about whom the Hindu purāṇas are silent (chapter II. 2.3.1). A study of this story is important to understand the derivation of Jain sources from an independent story tradition.

The earliest Jain story of the marriage of Rohiṇī and Vasudeva is narrated in detail for the first time in the VH. It contains the stories of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa within the frame of the other stories from the Bṛhatkatha attributed to Guṇāḍhya⁶. As shown in the chart below, the VH story is not influenced by the Hindu purāṇas and it forms the basis for the later versions of the Balarāma stories in the HVP, the CMC and the TSP, which I discuss in detail below. Preservation of a separate story of the marriage of Balarāma’s

⁶J.C. Jain, *Vasudevahiṇḍī*, 1976. Alsdorf proposed through a study of the VH that the VH possessed an earlier version of the Kṛṣṇa story in the Jain mythology independent of the Hindu purāṇas. The VH is dated to 300 C.E on the basis of language, which makes it chronologically contemporary to the Hindu purāṇa, the HV which is dated between 100-300 C.E. Therefore, we may conclude that the VH represents a collection of an alternate version of the stories of the Kṛṣṇa cycle of stories known during the early centuries of the current era. L. Alsdorf, “The *Vasudevahiṇḍī*, a Specimen of Archaic Jaina Mahārāṣṭri,” Albrecht Wezler ed., *Ludwig Alsdorf Kleine Schriften* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1974), 56-71.

parents in the Jain texts unlike the Hindu purāṇas may well indicate the important status of Balarāma in Jainism.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY (HVP 31. 9-137)⁷

Vasudeva escaped from the palace where his brother, Samudravijaya, confined him due to the contention of the citizens that women of the town were not attending to their tasks, intent upon catching a glimpse of Vasudeva as he roamed the city because of his extreme beauty and charm. Therefore Samudravijaya had forbidden Vasudeva from roaming in the town during the day. (HVP. 19.24-41)

After having roamed around the world for a hundred years and having married twenty-eight women already, Vasudeva arrived in Ariṣṭapura. Here he heard an announcement about the *svayaṃvara* (bridegroom choice) of Rohiṇī, princess of Kosala. He disguised himself as a drummer and took his place among the musicians in the hall of the Bridegroom choice. Rohiṇī was brought to the arena full of kings and princes and was introduced to everyone by her nursemaid. Finally, the nursemaid asked Rohiṇī to choose whomever she liked. Rohiṇī replied that she could not choose anyone and fate alone would help her decide her choice. At that minute she heard the beat of a drum that pierced her heart. She followed that sound and chose Vasudeva. This resulted in an unpleasant situation among the kings and princes who attended the bridegroom choice. The kings condemned the choice of a drummer as inappropriate for a princess in the presence of all the distinguished princes and kings. King Rudhira explained that a girl was free to choose anyone to marry in the *svayaṃvara*. Vasudeva also challenged the questioning kings to try to resolve this by the test of their strength. This enraged the princes and kings assembled there and Jarāsandha shouted to the kings to imprison Vasudeva along with Rudhira and his son Hiraṇyanābha.

⁷ Although the VH contains the earliest version of this story, I provide summary of the HVP story above in order to avoid using one text for the first section and another text for the rest of the chapter. The VH text is incomplete, and includes only three stories of Balarāma viz., marriage of Balarāma's parents, his birth and transfer to Vraja. Therefore I selected the HVP as the base text for study in this thesis for uniformity.

In the battle that ensued, Rudhira, Hirāṇyānābha and Vasudeva fought the kings led by Jarāsandha. As the battle began a *Vidyādhara*, Dadhikarṇa, came with a chariot full of arms and wished to act as the charioteer of Vasudeva in the battle. As the battle progressed Vasudeva fought valiantly with the numerous kings who surrounded him. But to many kings assembled there this was not an acceptable practice, as the battle of numerous kings against one person was not fair. So they approached Jarāsandha and expressed their views about the inappropriateness of the battle, Jarāsandha agreed. He then directed that one person at a time fight with Vasudeva. After Vasudeva had defeated a number of kings who were sent to fight against him, Jarāsandha sent Samudravijaya to fight Vasudeva. Although Vasudeva was aware of his relationship with him, Samudravijaya could not recognize his younger brother as he was in the disguise of a drummer. As the battle continued Vasudeva revealed himself by inscribing his name on one of the arrows shot towards his brother. This resulted in his recognition and an end to the battle. All the kings assembled there, attended the wedding of Vasudeva and Rohiṇī. Invited by his brother, Vasudeva went to live in Śauryapura along with Rohiṇī.

CHART X

MARRIAGE OF BALARĀMA'S PARENTS

	VASUDEVAHIṆ DĪ (VH 364.1- 366.25)	HARIVAMŚAPU RĀṆA (HVP. 31. 9-137)	CAUPPANNAMA HĀPURISACARI YAṀ (CMC.45.40-42)	TRIṢAṢṬISALĀK ĀPURUṢACARIT RA (TSP XII. PP.149- 152)
Rohiṇī	Daughter of Ruhira, king of Kosala.	Daughter of king Rudhira of Ariṣṭapura	Narrates a very brief story of Rohiṇī's marriage to Vasudeva and birth of Balarāma in two verses 45.40-42.	Same as in the HVP though the name of the kingdom is Rittapura.
Arrival of Vasudeva at the <i>svayamvara</i>	He left Lalīyasirī without informing her and he reached the kingdom of Kosala. A god informed him to attend the	His enemy Sūrpaka dropped him in the Mahānadi river. Thereafter roaming in the forest he married four	Not mentioned	Same as in the VH. In addition the text mentions that Vasudeva played the drum with the words inviting her to marry him.

	<i>svayaṃvara</i> of Rohiṇī and said that he himself had bestowed her on Vasudeva.	women, Jarā, Sūrasenā, Avantisundarī and Jīvadyaśā and arrived in Ariṣṭapura. He heard of the announcement of the <i>svayaṃvara</i> of Rohiṇī and attended it disguised as a drum player.		
<i>Vidyādhara</i> as charioteer of Vasudeva	As the battle was about to begin a <i>Vidyādhara</i> lord Dadhimuḥa arrived with a chariot full of arms and acted as the charioteer of Vasudeva.	The <i>Vidyādhara</i> Dadhikaṇṇa arrived with a chariot full of weapons and wished to act as a charioteer of Vasudeva in the battle.	Not mentioned.	Same as the VH. In addition it is said that Vasudeva took the bow and quivers given to him by Angāravatī, mother of Vegavatī whom he had married earlier.
Battle of Kings	Kings at the <i>svayaṃvara</i> fought a battle with him not knowing his identity. In the process of the battle he met his brother Samudra and his identity was revealed to every one.	Same as in VH.	Not mentioned.	Same as in the VH.
Intervention of Goddess	Rohiṇī used to worship goddess Vijjudevaya who has instructed her to choose Vasudeva who could be recognized by the beat of the drum.	Not mentioned.	Not mentioned.	Same as in VH.

3.2.2. ANALYSIS OF THE MARRIAGE OF BALARĀMA'S PARENTS IN THE JAIN TRADITION

The Jain story of the marriage of Rohiṇī and Vasudeva is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it is uniform in all the Jain texts under study as I showed in the above chart, with the exception perhaps of the CMC, where the story is so brief. Secondly, it is completely different from the Hindu purāṇa story.

I will first consider the unique features of the Jain story to analyze what it contributes to our understanding of the evolution of Balarāma. Existence of a completely different Jain story as old as the earliest known Hindu purāṇa story indicates that the sources of the Jain story might not be the same as the Hindu purāṇas in the case of this particular story. This supports the view that the Balarāma stories may have existed differently in various traditions. Differences among the stories from the four Jain texts are minor as seen from the above chart. The central points of the story such as the *svayaṃvara*, battle and the final outcome remain the same. Differences in the narration occur in the external events not connected with the main plot of the story, such as the previous marriages of Vasudeva and divine intervention. The VH narrates the marriages of Vasudeva to twenty-six other women before he arrived in the *svayaṃvara* of Rohiṇī. The list is different in the HVP and the TSP, as they utilize the list of marriages of Vasudeva from the VH as well as the VHM (*Vasudevahiṇḍī Majjimakhando*, see chapter I, 1.4.2. 1. Vasudevahiṇḍī), while the CMC avoids the narration of these previous

marriages altogether. In the VH immediately before his marriage to Rohiṇī he married Laliyasirī and he left her without informing her. He came to Kosala and then attended the *svayamvara* of Rohiṇī. This differs in other texts. In the HVP he married a series of four women after having been thrown into the Mahānadi river by his enemy Sūrpaka. In the TSP also he married four women after he was thrown in the Gangā river by his enemy Sūrpaka, but the stories and names differ. The details regarding the women in these stories of marriages to Vasudeva differ in the HVP and the TSP. This suggests that the uniformity in the stories does not extend to all characters within the story, and is confined only to the main characters of Rohiṇī and Vasudeva. This leads to the conclusion that the story of Rohiṇī and Vasudeva was well known in the tradition and attained its final format at a very early stage, before 300 C.E to be precise, when the VH is dated. It was not subjected to any further changes, while other stories may have gathered around it.

Other differences in the Jain stories occur in the case of divine intervention in the marriage of Rohiṇī and Vasudeva. The divine intervention is not mentioned in the HVP and the CMC. The VH and the TSP mention that a deity instructed Vasudeva to attend the *svayamvara* of Rohiṇī, whom the god himself had bestowed upon Vasudeva. The VH also mentions the advice of goddess, Vijjudevaya, to Rohiṇī to recognize her groom by the beat of a drum. In the TSP the magic art, Prajñāpti⁸, informs her about Vasudeva and

⁸ This is a magical art and also a personified messenger in the Jain texts. J. C. Jain, "Magical spells in Prakrit Jain Literature," 68-78, "Vidyādhara in the *Vasudevahiṇī*," 34-38, J.C. Jain, *Studies in Early Jainism* (Delhi: Navrang, 1992).

adds that he is to be recognized by the sound of a drum. Mention of the gods and magical arts are typical devices in Jain stories and can be considered as literary embellishments.

I will now consider the differences between Jain and Hindu purāṇa stories of Rohiṇī to understand the evolution of Balarāma stories.

CHART XI

ROHIṆĪ IN JAIN AND HINDU PURĀṆA TEXTS

	JAIN	HINDU PURĀṆAS (CHAPTER II.2.3.1)
Place of Rohiṇī and family	Kosala (VH), Rittapura (HVP), Ariṣṭapura (TSP)	She is from the Bāhlika region. Family unknown. Mentioned as daughter of Bāhlika in some texts simultaneously.
Divine themes	Presence of magical arts in the process of the marriage is indicated.	Not mentioned. Incarnation of Surabhi, the divine cow and wife of Kaśyapa. She is compared to the ninth star constellation, Rohiṇī, wife of the moon.
Marriage	Detailed descriptions of <i>svayamvara</i> and marriage. She is said to be living with Vasudeva in Śauryapura after their marriage.	Details of marriage unknown, however she is said to be living in Vraj. Her connection to Vraj is unknown.

The differences between the Hindu and the Jain stories of Rohiṇī imply two points about the Jain literary tradition. Firstly, the origin of Jain stories is derived from sources independent of the Hindu texts. In these stories Rohiṇī is not mentioned as divine and her marriage takes place with the help of magical arts. These themes connect the story to the distinctive Jain tradition. This makes it clear that this story evolved in the Jain religious

tradition without being influenced by the Hindu stories even though the Jain texts (except the VH) are dated later than the Hindu texts such as the HV, the Vi.pu. This suggests that this might have been derived from local prakrit narratives. Rohiṇī's connection to Kosala suggest the possibility that our story traditions have different local origins, although it is impossible to go beyond such a suggestion.

The Jain texts show clear evidence of efforts to assimilate Balarāma into Jain religion similar to the tendency noted in the later Hindu texts in an effort to place Balarāma in the Vaiṣṇava tradition. This trend of Jain assimilation of Balarāma is notable in the other stories that I discuss below. It is even more evident in the birth story of Balarāma to which I now turn.

3.3.1. THE BIRTH OF BALARĀMA

Among the texts considered only the HVP and the TSP provide a detailed story of the birth of Balarāma; whereas VH and CMC preserve only a brief story. Birth stories are important to understand the origin and evolution of a deity in a particular religious tradition. Birth stories contain evidence of prior origins and the later significance as well as the particular role a deity is to assume in a given religion. When the birth story of Balarāma is carefully analyzed it will provide evidence to understand the origin of this deity as well as his significant status in Jainism. Finally, a comparison of these stories with the Hindu purāṇa stories of Balarāma indicate that the Jain stories were derived from sources different from the Hindu purāṇas.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY (HVP 32.1-43)

One day while sleeping on the terrace with her husband, Vasudeva, Rohiṇī dreamed four visions. She saw a lion, the ocean, a white elephant and the full moon. She narrated these visions to her husband in the morning when she awoke from her sleep. Vasudeva then explained to her that she would give birth to a handsome son who would rule the world. A *mahāsamanika* god from *Mahāśukra* heaven entered the womb of Rohiṇī. After the completion of the full term of pregnancy Rohiṇī gave birth to a beautiful son who was named Rāma on account of his pleasant face.

One day when Vasudeva was in the assembly with his brother Samudravijaya and other elders, a *Vidyādhara* woman arrived there and requested Vasudeva to follow her, as his wife Vegavatī, and her daughter, Bālacandrā wished to see him as soon as possible. Then obtaining the permission of his elders he went with her. After staying for some time with his wife Vegavatī he also married her friend Bālacandrā, daughter of the *Vidyādhara* woman. Then along with Vegavatī and Bālacandrā he visited all the other women he had married earlier during his hundred years of travel. He returned to Śauryapura accompanied to by all his wives and children, who were received by his elder brother Samudravijaya and his wife, Śivā with proper honors. Thereupon he settled in Śauryapura and taught the science of arms to young men.

I do not include here a chart to analyze the birth story of Balarāma from the various texts under study in this chapter, since the birth story is similar in all the Jain texts under study and does not show alterations. However, the following is a chart to show the differences between the Jain and Hindu birth stories of Balarāma, based on which I analyze this story in the following pages.

CHART XII

BIRTH OF BALARĀMA IN JAIN AND HINDU TEXTS

	JAIN TEXTS	HINDU PURĀṆAS
Born to Rohiṇī	Rohiṇī is his birth mother.	The white hair of Viṣṇu is said to enter Rohiṇī to be born as Balarāma in the first version of the birth story. (chapter I. 2.2.2) Rohiṇī received the embryo of Balarāma from Devakī, transferred by Nidrā.
Dream sequence	Rohiṇī sees four dreams which indicate the birth of a <i>Baladeva</i> , a series of associate gods of <i>Tīrthaṅkaras</i> .	Not mentioned.
Identity	Ninth <i>Baladeva</i> .	Form of Viṣṇu in the first version. Form of Śeṣa in the second version (although indicated as Viṣṇu indirectly in the HV).

3.3.2. ANALYSIS OF THE BIRTH STORY OF BALARĀMA

I will consider here the unique features of the Jain birth story of Balarāma in order to understand the personality and status of Balarāma in Jainism. These unique features also support an independent source of Jain Balarāma stories.

The most important feature of the Jain stories is the superior status accorded to Balarāma over Kṛṣṇa. The VH mentions that Balarāma was born with a *Śrīvatsa*⁹ mark on his chest. The *Śrīvatsa* is a characteristic mark of Viṣṇu, it is an auspicious mark connected with the *Tīrthaṅkaras*. The attribution of this mark to Balarāma in the VH may

⁹ *Śrīvatsa* is one of the eight auspicious signs of the Jinās. L.D. Barnett, *Antagada*, 48.

indicate a connection of Balarāma to the *Tīrthaṅkaras* in the Jain texts at an early phase of development and his superior position. This is paralleled by the first version of the birth story of Balarāma in the Hindu purāṇas (chapter. II. 2.2.2) where Balarāma originates directly from Viṣṇu, though his position continued to decline in later Hindu texts. It is also significant that Balarāma's identity and status are maintained uniformly in all Jain texts studied in this thesis, in direct contrast to his declining identity and status in Hindu purāṇa stories as discussed in chapter II. The Jain sources continue to depict him in a significant status by including him in the series of *Baladevas* that are born from time to time in equal status if not more significant status than Kṛṣṇa.

The most important narrative difference in this story is the inclusion of Rohiṇī's dream sequence. Inclusion of dreams in his birth stories is an indication that the Jains have put Balarāma into a particular category of important individuals. The mothers of all the *śalākāpuruṣas* (distinguished men) are said to see a certain number of dreams¹⁰. The birth story of Balarāma is therefore set to the pattern of the birth stories of *śalākāpuruṣas* in Jainism¹¹. The VH, the HVP and the TSP mention the same list of dreams, while the CMC story is too brief to mention the dreams.

¹⁰ *Antagada dasāo* mentions a list of fourteen dreams that are seen by the mother of a *Cakravartin*, from among the total number of thirty-two dreams. From among this list the mother of *Vāsudevas* sees seven dreams while the mother of *Baladevas* sees four of them. L.D. Barnett, *Antagada*, 44.

¹¹ Dreams acquired a special place in the art of foretelling the future. Chapter 42 of *Angavijja* deals with the dreams and their symbolism.

Another distinctive feature of the Jain birth story of Balarāma that marks it as different from the Hindu purāṇa stories is the absence of his embryonic transfer from Devakī to Rohiṇī. This suggests that the Jain story of the birth of Balarāma is independent of the Hindu purāṇa story and perhaps of the Kṛṣṇa story itself, given that one function of the transfer in the Hindu stories was to bring the Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa stories together, as I have argued earlier.

The absence of the embryonic transfer also removes the involvement of the goddess in Balarāma's story, which might reflect a lesser role of the goddesses in Jainism, but this is difficult to support given the variety of yakṣis in the medieval Jain pantheon¹². Another possibility is that the presence of goddesses in the Hindu purāṇa stories of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa might be derived from an independent goddess tradition brought in with the inclusion of new influences from multiple sources. The source of the Jain story may be an earlier story not yet subjected to such influences¹³. I support the second reason as evidence of an earlier origin of this birth story, which can be deduced from the special attributes mentioned in this birth story in the VH discussed above. As noted in the previous section regional differences in the cults may have played an important role in the inclusion or non-inclusion of goddess stories in the birth story of

¹² U.P. Shah, *Iconography of Jain Goddess Saraswati*, reprint from *Journal of University of Bombay* Vol. X, Part. II (1941); See also, "Introduction of Śāsanadevatās in Jaina Worship," *Proceedings and Transactions of the All India Oriental Conference*, Vol. II, Part. I (25 Session, 1959), 141-152. This article notes the worship of goddesses and yakṣis in early Jainism.

¹³ Charlotte Vaudeville, "Kṛṣṇa Gopāla and the Great Goddess", John Stratton Hawley and Donna Marie Wulff, ed., *The Divine Consort*, 1-13. She concludes that the stories of the goddess and Kṛṣṇa coalesced sometime during the evolution of *Bhāgavatism*.

Balarāma, though I cannot go beyond such suggestion, as the story does not describe any geographical region in particular.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the Jain birth story of Balarāma indicates his identity as one of the *Baladevas* and his significant position. The Jain birth story is clearly distinct from the Hindu purāṇa accounts. It may connect Balarāma with a *Tīrthaṅkara* or Viṣṇu in its earliest version, but not with goddesses. At the same time it represents a distinctive story tradition in which Balarāma was sufficiently important to merit an account of his parent's marriage and birth that was set in a fixed form relatively early. I consider the stories of the past lives of Balarāma in the following section, which provide further evidence in support of the early significance of Balarāma.

SECTION III

JANMĀNTARĀṆI: PAST LIVES OF BALARĀMA

The past life stories of Balarāma not only indicate his superior status in early Jainism but also the derogatory status of Kṛṣṇa in contrast to the Hindu purāṇa texts. Another significant feature in these stories is the presentation of Balarāma as a follower of the Jain *dharma* of non-violence, which becomes a dominating feature of Balarāma stories in Jainism. In the HVP, the story of the past lives of six other brothers is part of

Balarāma story in his two past lives and occurs with Kṛṣṇa in his third past life, which indicates the significance attached to the six other children in the Jain texts by the virtue of their connection to Balarāma. They are depicted with a different personality from Kṛṣṇa and worthy of enlightenment, with the highest Jain merit possible. Alterations to these stories in the Jain texts such as omitting the stories of past lives of Balarāma and six other brothers bear witness to the predominant tendency of diminishing the status of Balarāma, a trend we have already observed in our study of the Hindu purāṇa stories in chapter II of this thesis earlier. I include brief summaries of these stories and my analysis.

3.4.1. PAST LIVES OF BALARĀMA AND KṚṢṆA FROM THE HVP

HVP includes three past life stories each for Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. I cite my summaries of the past life stories in the following pages.

1. HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE PAST LIVES OF BALARĀMA FROM THE HVP

First past life of Balarāma (HVP.33.96-126)

Bhānu was a rich merchant in Mathurā living with his wife, Yamunā. He had seven sons, Subhānu, Bhānukīrti, Bhānusena, Sūra, Sūradeva, Sūradatta and Sūrasena. All of them were addicted to gambling and squandered all their money after their parents renounced the world. Then all the seven brothers leaving their wives behind, proceeded to Ujjain with the intention to steal. Six brothers went for stealing, leaving the youngest brother, Sūrasena in the Mahākāla cremation ground. There Sūrasena observed the misconduct of a certain woman called Mangi.

Dhṛḍhamuṣṭi and Kamalā, parents of Vajramuṣṭi, married Mangi to their son Vajramuṣṭi. This woman was loved very much by her husband, Vajramuṣṭi, guardian of the king Vṛṣabhadhvaja. She always stayed with her husband neglecting her mother-in-law, which caused discontent to her mother-in-law. One day Vajramuṣṭi had gone to see the spring festival along with the king. The mother of Vajramuṣṭi stopped her daughter-in-law, using the pretext that she must make garlands. When the daughter-in-law went to fetch the flowers from the pot a poisonous snake hidden in it bit her and she became unconscious immediately. Then Kamalā left her in the Mahākāla cremation grounds with the help of servants. Vajramuṣṭi, when he returned home that night, learned about the death of his wife from snakebite and went to the burning grounds in search of her. He found her lying unconscious there. He then saw a sage there standing like a statue in meditation. Vajramuṣṭi circled the sage thrice, saluted him and prayed that if Mangi was restored to life he would worship the sage with a thousand lotuses. Mangi then opened her eyes. He then left Mangi at the feet of the sage and went in search of the lotuses to fulfil his prayer to the sage. Sūrasena, seeing the affection of Mangi's husband towards her wanted to test her fidelity towards her husband. He then appeared to her from behind the tree. As soon as she saw him she became afflicted with desire and spoke to him. Sūrasena also talked to her playfully. She told Sūrasena that she wished to go with him. When Sūrasena questioned her about her husband she said that she would kill him. Vajramuṣṭi returned and bent down to pay homage to the sage with flowers. Mangi attacked him with a sword, but Sūrasena caught hold of the sword and stopped her. Mangi pretended innocence and fainted. Vajramuṣṭi held her and thought that she was scared of the cremation grounds and took her home. His six brothers returned with stolen money and divided it among themselves, offering Sūrasena his share. But Sūrasena relinquished his share and became a Jain monk. All the brothers also became monks, having practiced the Jain penances and with the merits thus obtained they were born as *Saudharma* gods in *Trayātrimśa* heaven.

Second past life of Balarāma (HVP. 33.130-140)

When all the seven brothers fell from the *Trayātrimśa* heaven, they were born as sons of Citracūla in Nityapura in the Ghātaki continent. They attended the bridegroom choice of the daughter of King Dhananjaya of Meghapuri. The bridegroom-choice was attended by *Vidyādharas* and numerous kings. However the princess chose her own cousin to marry. Thus all the attendees of the bridegroom choice were enraged and

questioned the king Dhananjaya about the propriety of conducting the bridegroom choice when she was to marry her own cousin¹⁴. All the seven brothers detested the shameful killing of warriors that followed and understood the dangers of senses. They became Jain monks, and having performed the rituals for dying, the seven brothers became *Śamaṇika* gods in the *Mahendra* heaven and stayed for a long time in the heaven.

Third past life of Balarāma (HV.33.141-149)

The eldest of the seven brothers was born as Śankha, the son of a rich merchant and Bandhumatī in Hastina in Bhārata. The other six children are born as sons of the king Gangadeva and Nandayaśā in three twin pregnancies. Nandayaśā had unbearable burning when she was pregnant the fourth time with her seventh child. She left him with her maid Revatikā who named him Nirnāma, “Noname”. One day Śankha went with Noname to the pleasure garden in the city. There, seeing the king’s six sons were eating together, Śankha approached them, and asked them to let Noname join them since he was also their brother. The queen- mother who came there at that time, got very angry seeing Noname there, and hit him with her foot. Śankha then thinking that he was responsible for this humiliation of Noname, decided to renounce the world and went to the forest while the king and others followed him. There they met the sage, Dṛmasena and learned from him the past lives of Noname (who was to be born as Kṛṣṇa). Noname performed the difficult penance *simhaṇiṣkrīdita* to be born as a Vāsudeva in his next life.

2. HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE PAST LIVES OF KṚṢṆA FROM THE HVP

First past life of Kṛṣṇa (HVP. 33.150-157)

In this past life Kṛṣṇa was a cook named Amṛtarasāyana, who specialized in cooking meat dishes. He used to cook delicious meat dishes for the king Citraratha and his wife Kanakamālā. The king was pleased with the cooking of Amṛtarasāyana and made him the lord of ten villages.

¹⁴ Reminiscent of the *svayaṃvara* of Rohiṇī where the invitees battle over the choice of the bride.

The king once attended the sermon of sage Sudharma and learned about the sins of eating meat dishes. He gave up his wealth and pleasures for liberation and adopted a simple way of life. He bequeathed his kingdom to his son, Megharatha, and became a monk along with 300 other kings. This new king was a *Srāvaka* and did not prefer meat dishes and thus made Amṛtarasāyana lord of only five villages. Amṛtarasāyana then became angry with the sage Sudharma for spreading awareness about the meat dishes. He prepared a curry of poisonous gourd and offered it to the sage Sudharma, who ate it and died. The sage then became an *Ahamindra* god in *Aparājita* heaven. The cook, after he died, was born in the hell *Vālukaprabha*, then falling from there he roamed as an animal in the forest.

Second past life of Kṛṣṇa (HVP.33.158-160)

He was eventually born as the son of Yakṣadatta and Yakṣilā and his elder brother was Yakṣasva. Once the two brothers were going in a cart and Yakṣilaka drove the cart on a blind snake thus killing it ignoring the warnings of his brother Yakṣasva. The female snake whose hood was broken died with great pain and by the yoga of *akāmanirati* obtained human life in her next birth.

Third past life of Kṛṣṇa (HVP.33.141-149)

In the third past life Yakṣilaka was born as Nirnāma, the hated son of Nandayaśā, who in the previous life was the female snake killed by Yaksilaka in his last life. Thus she carried enmity towards Yakṣilaka in herself from the past life and gave away the child to the nursemaid Revatikā as soon as he was born. She humiliated Nirnāma when he was invited to eat with his six other brothers which led them all to renounce life and proceed to the forest where they learned about their past lives. In their next life Śankha was born as Balarāma, son of Rohiṇī, while Nirnāma was born as Kṛṣṇa, the seventh son of Devakī. The nursemaid Revatikā was born as Alakā in Bhadrilapura as the wife of merchant Sudriṣṭi. The six sons are born as three sets of twins to Devakī and are transferred immediately to Alakā by Harinaigameṣi.

3.4.2. THE PAST LIVES OF BALARĀMA AND KṚṢṢṢA FROM THE TSP (TSP. V. 153-154)

The TSP, which is almost 400 years later than the HVP, alters the narration of the past lives and narrates only one set of past lives (that of Kṛṣṣṣa) rather than the two sets of past lives as seen above. It includes only two past lives of Kṛṣṣṣa in which he and future Balarāma are brothers. These are similar to the last two past lives of Kṛṣṣṣa narrated in the HVP. In this way the TSP avoids the narration of the first past life story of Kṛṣṣṣa and eliminates the stories of the past lives of Balarāma altogether. TSP reverses the order of the stories here. It narrates the second past life story followed by the first, which order I follow below.

1. BALARĀMA AND KṚṢṢṢA IN THE SECOND PAST LIFE (TSP. V. pp.153)

According to this story Lalita, who was to be reborn as Balarāma, was the elder brother of Gangadatta who was to be reborn as Kṛṣṣṣa. They are born of the same parents, Nandayaśā and Gangadeva. Gangadatta was abandoned by his mother Nandayaśā. His elder brother, Lalita, along with his father Gangadeva, took care of him secretly without the knowledge of the mother. One day they invited Gangadatta to have lunch with them. They made him sit behind a curtain and eat together with them, so that the mother would not notice him. A wind blew the curtain off and the queen mother noticed Gangadatta. As soon as she saw him, she hit him with her feet and then dumped him in a drain. Lalita and Gangadeva cleaned him and they all renounced the world.

2. BALARĀMA AND KṚṢṢA IN THE FIRST PAST LIFE (TSP. V. pp.153-154)

After that pitiable fate related above, the father and sons approached the sages who came there for alms and asked them for the reason behind Gangadatta's bad fate. The sages narrated a past life whereby a younger brother killed a snake (Chakkulunda=two headed snake) while driving a cart despite the warnings of his elder brother. That younger brother was born as Gangadatta and the female snake as his mother with enmity from previous life.

3.4.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF BALARĀMA IN THE PAST LIVES

I will plot the details of the past life stories in the following chart to be analyzed below.

CHART XIII

PAST LIVES OF BALARĀMA AND KṚṢṢA FROM THE HVP

BALARĀMA				KṚṢṢA		
PAST LIFE	NAME	PARENTS	STATUS	NAME	PARENTS	STATUS
First	Subhānu with six other brothers.	Rich merchant Bhānu, Yamunā	Son of a rich merchant although addicted to gambling.	Amṛtarasāyana	Unknown	Cook making delicious meat dishes.
Second	Citrāṅgada with six other brothers.	King Citracūla & Manoharī	Prince	Yakṣilaka with elder brother Yakṣasva.	Yakṣadatta, Yakṣilā	Villager with an undeveloped mind.
Third	Śankha	Rich merchant & Bandhumatī	Rich merchant	Nirnāma with six other brothers.	King Gangadatta, Nandayaśā	Although born as a prince, he was

						disowned by his own mother, and brought up by nursemaid Revatikā.
--	--	--	--	--	--	---

CHART XIV

PAST LIVES OF BALARĀMA AND KṚṢṆA IN THE TSP

	PAST LIFE	NAME	PARENTAGE	STATUS
Balarāma	Second	Lalita	Gangadeva and	Same
Kṛṣṇa		Gangadatta	Nandayaśā	
Balarāma	First	Elder brother	Rich merchant	Same
Kṛṣṇa		Younger brother	Nāga	

An examination of the above charts makes it clear that the HVP is the source of the TSP, although the author of the TSP chose to utilize only the second set of past lives belonging to Kṛṣṇa for both Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa.

An examination of the past lives of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa leads to the conclusion that the Jains originally placed greater emphasis on the stories of Balarāma, although this is changed in the later texts. Balarāma was always born in rich high families and once as prince in the HVP, in far more significant in status than Kṛṣṇa. But in the TSP Balarāma

was born in a similar status to Kṛṣṇa. In these two past lives from the TSP, they are brothers, whereas in the past lives in the HVP they are not brothers. Their past lives are narrated separately. In all the past lives as narrated in the HVP, Balarāma always practiced *dharma* and attained heaven. In contrast to Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa was born in a low status in the HVP and always went to hell. His life improved only in the last life just before his birth as Kṛṣṇa where he was born as prince Nirnāmaka, although with a bad fate. This may not be insignificant. Jagadish P. Sharma¹⁵ in his study of the past lives of Jinas proposed that the Jinas seem to be born as gods in the life just previous to the last past life in which they attain *kaivalya*. He also noted that the most dominant Jain bias in the social origins of their heroes is to favor their rebirth in heaven. The fact that Balarāma is always born in rich and high caste families and reborn in heaven proves the importance of Balarāma in the Jain tradition. On the other hand, Kṛṣṇa is always born in low families and went to hell in the HVP, although the TSP alters the narration and mentions that he was born in the heaven *mahāsūkra* just before his birth as Kṛṣṇa.

As seen from these stories of past lives, the TSP makes an effort to homogenize the mythology of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa by including only the last two past lives of Kṛṣṇa commonly for both of them. TSP also avoids the three past life stories of Balarāma and the first past life story of Kṛṣṇa. Thus it eliminates the significance of Balarāma and also avoids the mention of the bad life of Kṛṣṇa in which he killed a sage and went to hell. By

¹⁵ Jagadish P. Sharma, “The *Jinasattvas*: Class and Gender in the Social origins of Jaina heroes,” N.K. Wagle, Olle Quarnstrom ed., *Approaches to Jaina Studies: Philosophy, Logic, Rituals and Symbols* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1999), 72-85.

avoiding the mention of the story with a bad fate of Kṛṣṇa, the TSP removed any taint in Kṛṣṇa's life. In the two past life stories that are mentioned in the TSP, sympathy is still with Kṛṣṇa. He was denounced and humiliated by his own mother, which actually led him to perform a *nidāna* to be born as Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, a more distinguished role than any of his past lives. The TSP goes one step further to bring Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa together by narrating their past lives together with common parentage.

This illustrates how the stories of Kṛṣṇa in the Jain texts underwent changes over time which elevates his significance at the expense of Balarāma. As seen from the above chart in the three past life stories in the HVP Balarāma was always born in families of high social status. The absence of these stories in the TSP indicates that the position of Balarāma underwent a decline, making these stories inappropriate. I study the stories of six other brothers in the following pages in order to understand the significance of the modification of their stories in connection with Balarāma.

CHART XV

SIX BROTHERS IN THE PAST LIVES OF BALARĀMA AND KṚṢṆA

	Balarāma and six other children	Kṛṣṇa and six other children
First past life	Balarāma is born as the eldest son of Bhānu and Yamunā. Six other brothers are his younger brothers.	Born as a cook, Amṛtarasāyana, but family relations are not known.
Second past life	Born as eldest son of king Citracūla with six other brothers who are younger to him.	Born as younger brother, Yakṣilaka with an underdeveloped mind. His elder brother is Yakṣasva, who tries to take care of him.
Third past life	Born as Śankha as the only son of a rich merchant. Śankha is the friend of Noname.	Born as Noname, youngest son of King Gangadeva and Nandayaśā, given away soon after birth. Though disowned by the mother, other six brothers invited him to eat lunch with them on the insistence of Śankha (Balarāma in his third past life), their friend.

As I presented in the above chart the six other children, known as *Ṣadgarbhas*¹⁶ in the Hindu purāṇa tradition undergo a different fate in Jain tradition. The HVP presents the six other children sometimes in the past lives of Balarāma and sometimes in the past lives of Kṛṣṇa while the TSP eliminates their accounts altogether from the past life stories¹⁷. They are included as brothers of Balarāma in his first two past lives; they are

¹⁶ See footnote 15, section 2.2.3 of chapter II of this thesis.

¹⁷ These six children are killed by Kamsa in the VH. They are transferred by Harinaigameṣi in the other texts under study. L.D. Barnett, *Antagada dasāo*, chapter.3, HVP. 35.4-10, TSP. 8. 5.89-97. They are killed by Kamsa in all the Hindu texts under study. However, they are brought back from the under world, *Sutala*, by Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma at the request of Devakī. Bh.pu. X. 50-56.

included as brothers of Kṛṣṇa in his third past life, while Balarāma was separated from them in this past life and was born into a different family. It is by connecting the six other children to Balarāma that their fate is portrayed as different from that of Kṛṣṇa. Through their connection to Balarāma, in their first two past lives, the six brothers obtained sufficient merit to be born in a royal family. In the fourth life when the six brothers were born along with Kṛṣṇa to Devakī and Vasudeva, they were transferred to Sulasā and Nāga by Harinaigameṣi, and became Jain monks, thus obtaining the highest merit in Jainism. While in the Hindu tradition they are transferred by the goddess Nidrā and killed by Kamsa, the Jain tradition differs in its account. Although in VH, they are born to Devakī and killed by Kamsa similar to the Hindu stories, they are transferred by Harinaigameṣi in all the other texts under study and are protected. The VH story is modified in the later texts, therefore, to avoid the violence of the death of these children. It is also worth noting that the TSP stories have no place for the six other brothers or the three sets of twins that were connected to Kṛṣṇa mythology. This may indicate that the Jain tradition regarded these stories as inessential, which would be consistent with the account of the development of the Jain stories that I have given above.

A study of the past life stories therefore reveals the early significance of Balarāma and the six other brothers in comparison to Kṛṣṇa. The narrative differences between the accounts of the HVP and the TSP indicate the declining status of Balarāma, a trend already noted in the Hindu purāṇas. Thus it leads to the conclusion that as the stories of Balarāma as evolved in Jainism they lost their unique character and became more like the Hindu purāṇa accounts of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa.

SECTION IV

YĀUVANA: ADULT LIFE OF BALARĀMA

As already noted many of the Jain stories of the adult life of Balarāma are similar to the Hindu purāṇa stories of Balarāma, but differ in context and details. Two features are noticed in the Jain stories in this section. Firstly, the significance of Balarāma is indicated by his major role in the life of Kṛṣṇa. Secondly, the stories are remodeled to demonstrate the Jain *dharma* of non-violence. While the Hindu purāṇa stories alter his stories to present him as a warrior, the Jain stories show an opposite trend of showing him as the follower of non-violence, one of the main principles of Jain *dharma*.

In the following pages as I study the events of Balarāma's adult life from the Jain stories I will analyze the significant features that distinguish the Jain Balarāma and then compare these features with the Hindu purāṇa stories of Balarāma.

3.5. TRANSFER OF BALARĀMA AND KṚṢṆA TO VRAJ:

In the Jain texts transfer of Balarāma always occurs following that of Kṛṣṇa to protect him. I will follow the order of the Jain texts here, beginning my analysis with Kṛṣṇa's transfer.

3.5.1. TRANSFER OF KṚṢṆA

The transfer of Kṛṣṇa is described in different ways in the four Jain texts under study.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY (HVP 35. 22-32)

As soon as Kṛṣṇa was born to Devakī, Balarāma took him in his hands and proceeded towards Vraj. As it had been raining very heavily for a week in Mathurā, Vasudeva held an umbrella for them. Balarāma proceeded to the doors that lead out of the city. The doors were opened by the touch of the feet of the child Kṛṣṇa. At that instance a raindrop entered the nose of Kṛṣṇa and he sneezed. Ugrasena, imprisoned in the *gopura* right above the door, heard that sound and responded with the blessing, “Live long without obstacles”. Balarāma and Vasudeva became glad after hearing his blessings and Vasudeva said, “Please guard the secret and wait for your release. May this son of the daughter of your brother grow up unknown to his enemy.” Then they left Mathurā and walked towards Vraj in the middle of the night in that heavy rain. A bull with luminous horns led the way and Yamunā split up making a path for them. When they reached Vṛndāvan they were approached by Sunandagopa and his wife Yaśodā. Having given his son to Nanda, Vasudeva took their new born daughter from Yaśodā and returned to Mathurā. After giving the infant girl to Devakī, Balarāma and Vasudeva remained in hiding. The guards of Kamsa as soon as they woke up told Kamsa that a daughter had been born to Devakī. He came to see the child and seeing that it was a girl he did not kill her. However, thinking that her husband might cause danger to his life, he destroyed her nose and went away.

CHART XVI

TRANSFER OF KṚṢṆA TO VRAJ

	VASUDEVAH INḌĪ (367.1- 370.12) pp.554- 555	HARIVAMŚA PURĀṆA (35.11-32)	CAUPPANNAMA HĀPURISACARI YAM (pp.183.v.48)	TRIṢAṢṬISĀL ĀKĀPURUṢA CARITRA (viii.98-144) pp.160-161
Devakī	Devakī, on the completion of the term of her pregnancy, requested Vasudeva to save the child saying that otherwise they would be committing a sin.	Not mentioned.	Not mentioned. Only a single verse mentions his birth and reaching Vraj.	As soon as Kṛṣṇa was born Devakī summoned her husband and said, “save this child even by deceit. There is no sin towards a criminal in protecting a child. Please take him and leave him in Nanda’s cattle station. He will grow up there as in his maternal grand father’s house.
Divine intervention	At the birth of Kṛṣṇa the elders appointed by Kāṁsa remained sleeping due to some divine power. The heavenly gods held an invisible umbrella over the child. They held illuminating lamps on both sides and a white bull stood in front. River Jauṇā (river Yamunā as spelled in Prakrit) provided the way.	A white bull with luminous horns led the way and the Yamunā split up making a path for them.	Not mentioned.	Gods rained flowers, held an umbrella and held eight torches in the road as the gods assumed the form of white bulls to lead the way. The gods made the guards of Kāṁsa slept as if they had eaten poison.
Vasudeva	He handed the prince, Kṛṣṇa over to Yaśodā and took the infant girl and returned quickly.	Vasudeva held an umbrella for Balarāma as Balarāma held the child Kṛṣṇa in his	Not mentioned.	Vasudeva transferred Kṛṣṇa to Nanda as soon as he was born and brought back his

	He placed the child by the side of Devakī and went away.	hands.		daughter to Mathurā.
Balarāma	Not mentioned.	As soon as Kṛṣṇa was born Balarāma took him in his hands and proceeded towards Vraj.	Not mentioned.	Not mentioned.
Ugrasena	Ugrasena was struck with wonder and asked Vasudeva “where are you taking this most wonderful thing?” Vasudeva replied that, indeed it is wonderful. Since you are our king do not give away the secret.	A raindrop entered the child’s nostril and made him sneeze when they were about to cross the gateway of the fort where Ugrasena was imprisoned by Kāṁsa. Ugrasena blessed the child.	Not mentioned.	Ugrasena asked who the child was and Vasudeva replied that he was the enemy of Kāṁsa and said, “He will bring about the destruction of your enemy and your rise to power will take place from him.”

3.5.2. ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSFER OF KṚṢṆA

This story is important for the portrayal of the roles of Devakī, Vasudeva, Balarāma and divine intervention in the transfer of Kṛṣṇa to Vraj. Alterations in their roles in the four texts under study will reveal the trends in the evolution of the story. Comparison of these features with the Hindu purāṇa stories can then help us understand the differences in the portrayal of Balarāma. These differences in turn will help us understand the various story traditions concerning Balarāma.

Devakī played a major role in the transfer of Kṛṣṇa in the Jain stories. In the VH, she insists on the transfer of Kṛṣṇa to Vraj, saying that not protecting him will be a sin. In

the TSP she plays a decisive role and advocates the protection of Kṛṣṇa even through deceit. She also decides the place and house of the person where Kṛṣṇa should be transferred. In the Hindu purāṇas, only the Bh.pu includes a description of the request of Devakī for the transfer of Kṛṣṇa. In the Bh.pu (X.3.29-30), Kṛṣṇa showed his divine form as soon as he was born. Seeing the divine form of Viṣṇu, Devakī was happy and praised him, but asked him to withdraw his divine form and requested him to remain unknown to Kamsa.

Vasudeva transferred the child Kṛṣṇa to Vraj both in the Hindu purāṇas and Jain texts except the HVP (see chapter II.2.2.3-2.2.4) for the birth story and transfer of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa in the Hindu purāṇas). In the HVP Balarāma transfers the child, although Vasudeva accompanied him to Vraj. In the Hindu purāṇa stories studied in the second chapter it was always Vasudeva who transferred the child. Balarāma is also a child himself and is not aware of these transfers.

The mention of Balarāma in the HVP as the main role player in the transfer of Kṛṣṇa may not be an innovation of Jinasena himself. The dominant role of Balarāma in the life of Kṛṣṇa subsequent to this transfer is consistent with his role in the transfer. Balarāma in fact replaced the father figure in bringing up Kṛṣṇa in Vraj (HVP. 35.64). Vasudeva was completely absent in the life of Kṛṣṇa in Vraj and never visited him again, although Devakī is said to have visited him once. It was Balarāma who visited him every day to train him in the arts and sciences of arms and wrestling and helped him prepare for

the wrestling match at Mathurā. This story attributes significance to Balarāma not seen in the Hindu purāṇa stories.

The appearance of gods and their role in the transfer of Kṛṣṇa are more explicit in the VH and the TSP than in the HVP. The divine elements or supernatural elements such as the path across the Yamunā, the appearance of the white bull, are common to all the Jain texts. While the gods held an invisible umbrella in the VH and the TSP over Vasudeva, since it was raining heavily, in the HVP the umbrella is held by Vasudeva himself. Whereas the Hindu purāṇas directly connect the supernatural elements with Viṣṇu or gods in the Vaiṣṇava pantheon (Śeṣa for example), the Jain texts speak of a more general participation of various gods not specifically related to Viṣṇu. The Jain texts thus know a variant of the story in which different supernatural motifs appear.

The supernatural theme common to both Hindu purāṇas and Jain texts includes the sleeping of Kamsa's guards and the split of the Yamunā to make a path for Vasudeva. Splitting of the Yamunā is mentioned only in the VH, and the HVP, but not in the other Jain texts under study. Among the Hindu purāṇas studied in chapter II, the Vi.pu, the Br.pu, the Bh.pu (all texts except the HV) mention the split of the Yamunā, to help Vasudeva carry Kṛṣṇa across the river. In these Hindu purāṇas, Śeṣa held his hoods as an umbrella for Vasudeva as he was crossing the Yamunā. While the splitting of Yamunā is absent from the earliest Hindu purāṇa, the HV, it is found in the earliest Jain source of Balarāma story, the VH. This indicates that an earlier independent tradition might have

been the source of the VH, which was adopted by later Jain and Hindu texts. Therefore, in this case it is interesting to note that the Jain story rather than the Hindu purāṇa story may have served as a template for later Hindu purāṇas.

CHART XVII

TRANSFER OF KṚṢṆA IN THE JAIN AND HINDU PURĀṆA STORIES

	Jain Texts	Hindu purāṇas (Chapter II. 2.2.1-3)
Devakī	Major role is attributed to her in planning the procedure and place of Kṛṣṇa's transfer. The transfer in fact takes place at her insistence.	She was not aware of the transfer of Kṛṣṇa in the HV. Very minor role is attributed to her in the Vi.pu, the Br.pu and the Bh.pu.
Balarāma	Transfers Kṛṣṇa to Vraj in the HVP.	Not mentioned
Vasudeva	Vasudeva meets Yaśodā and Nanda and exchanges the child with them. Although in the HVP Balarāma carried the child, Vasudeva tells Nanda to take care of the child as his own child.	The story of transfer of Kṛṣṇa is not clear in the HV. His transfer takes place twice. Although the Vi.pu, the Br.pu and the Bh.pu describe the transfer in detail, these texts do not mention Vasudeva's meeting with Nanda in Vraj.
Divine themes	Numerous divine themes are mentioned such as, splitting of Yamunā, sleeping of guards, white bulls with luminous horns, gods held the lamps, showered flowers and held umbrella.	All the divine interference is attributed to Viṣṇu. While the Yamunā split up to make the path, Śeṣa held his hoods as an umbrella in the Vi.pu, the Br.pu and the Bh.pu (except the HV) remind of Vaiṣṇava motifs.
Ugrasena	Ugrasena blesses the child and Vasudeva said that the child would obtain Ugrasena's release.	Not mentioned.

Despite similarities in the story of the transfer of Kṛṣṇa, in the Jain and Hindu purāṇa texts (chapter. II. 2.2.4), small details set the Jain version apart from the Hindu purāṇa texts. The attribution of significant roles to Balarāma and Devakī and the split up

of Yamunā appear for the first time in Jain texts. The split of Yamunā may have influenced the Hindu purāṇa stories, since crossing the Yamunā is not part of this story in its earliest Hindu version in the HV. These differences consistently appear from the earliest Jain text (VH) to the latest texts (TSP) under consideration in the present thesis. Such a consistent and uniform story tradition with telling narrative differences from the Hindu purāṇa stories suggests that the source of these stories would not be the same as those of the Hindu purāṇa stories.

3.5.3. TRANSFER OF BALARĀMA

Balarāma is the protector, teacher, counselor and companion of Kṛṣṇa in the Jain sources. We have already noticed while studying the Hindu purāṇa texts that the second transfer of Balarāma to Nanda was redundant and not necessitated by any clear reason as he had already been transferred as an embryo by the goddess Nidrā to Rohiṇī and was born in Vraj. However a study of the Jain texts reveals that in the Jain story tradition it was only after the birth of Kṛṣṇa that Balarāma was asked to go to Vraj to protect him.

CHART XVIII

TRANSFER OF BALARĀMA IN JAIN TEXTS

	VASUDEVAH INDĪ (pp.556)	HARIVAMŚA PURĀṆA (35.36-39)	CAUPPANNAMA HĀPURISACARI YAṂ	TRIṢAṢṬIŚĀL ĀKĀPURUṢA CARITRA (pp.162)
Kamsa	Suspecting Kṛṣṇa's presence, Kāṁsa ordered black Jakkas to go and kill him. They let donkeys, horses and bulls loose and troubled people.	The seven goddesses give a boon to Vasiṣṭa (Kamsa in his past life) to help him in his next life. They were requested by Kāṁsa to kill Kṛṣṇa and they assumed different forms and tried to kill Kṛṣṇa in Vraj.	Not mentioned.	Vasudeva's enemy Sūrpaka's daughters assumed the form of Pūtana and Śakuni and tried to kill Kṛṣṇa, but were killed by him. Sūrpaka's son assumed the form of two aśoka trees and tried to kill Kṛṣṇa unsuccessfully and was killed by him.
Vasudeva	In order to guard Kṛṣṇa, Vasudeva appointed Saṁkarṣaṇa to teach him secretly.	Not mentioned.	Not mentioned.	Vasudeva had Rohiṇī and Rāma brought from Kosala, and having talked to them he sent them to Śāuryapura. One day he called Rāma, gave him instructions and turned him over to Nanda as his son.
Balarāma	Not clear if Balarāma stayed in Vraj or visited Kṛṣṇa from somewhere regularly. But Balarāma's role in protection and training Kṛṣṇa is clearly stated.	Balarāma visited Kṛṣṇa in Vraj from Mathurā regularly and trained him in arts and sciences.	Not mentioned.	Balarāma stayed in Vraj along with Kṛṣṇa and trained him. They did various things together and never separated even for a minute.

The VH mentions that Vasudeva sent Balarāma to guard Kṛṣṇa from dangers although it is not clear if Balarāma stayed in Vraj. In the HVP, Balarāma clearly did not stay in Vraj with Kṛṣṇa; rather, he visited Kṛṣṇa from time to time making sure that he was safe and training him in arts, sciences and military crafts (HVP.35.64,). As already seen in the previous section, Balarāma was involved in the transfer of Kṛṣṇa to Vraj in the HVP, which might have been followed by his constant supervision of Kṛṣṇa. Thus the HVP depicts Balarāma as a father figure in the life of Kṛṣṇa. The CMC avoids the descriptions of transfer and childhood of Balarāma and altogether. The story of the transfer of Balarāma in the TSP is a mixture of Jain and Hindu purāṇa sources (TSP. pp.162-3). In this text though Balarāma was sent to Vraj to take care of Kṛṣṇa, the concept of transfer is similar to the Hindu purāṇa stories. Unlike the other Jain sources he is described as the son of Nanda which is similar to the Hindu purāṇa stories. Balarāma is also described as a unit with Kṛṣṇa, not parting with him even for a minute. Also the TSP depicts the declining role of Balarāma; as Kṛṣṇa battles with the bull, the text tells us, “Rāma knowing his brother’s strength looked on like a stranger” (TSP.V.pp.163). It also says “Rāma like an excellent stage manager, clapped to keep time for the milkmaids singing and cowherd Kṛṣṇa dancing” when Kṛṣṇa danced with the cowherdresses (TSP.V. pp.164). The TSP story seems close to the Hindu purāṇa story rather than the other Jain texts under study as it evolved in the later Hindu purāṇas.

CHART XIX

TRANSFER OF BALARĀMA IN THE JAIN AND HINDU TEXTS

	Jain	Hindu purāṇas
Reasons for the transfer of Balarāma	The VH mentions the dangers to the life of Kṛṣṇa as the main reason for sending Balarāma to Vraj. The HVP places Balarāma in the position of a foster father, and he plays a major role in the transfer and upbringing of Kṛṣṇa in Vraj. In the TSP Vasudeva has sent him to Vraj as the son of Nanda.	The reasons for his transfer are not clear. His transfer stories become smaller and ambiguous gradually.
Vasudeva	Vasudeva appointed Balarāma to take care of Kṛṣṇa in the VH, and sent him as son to Nanda in the TSP, while Balarāma himself volunteered in the position of foster father in the HVP.	His transfer is described twice in the HV, as an embryo and as an infant. In the HV (HV.49.1-16) Vasudeva personally hands over Balarāma as a son to Nanda. In the Vi.pu (V.1-16), the Br.pu (II.74.5) he requests Nanda to take care of Balarāma born to Rohiṇī in Vraj. The Bh.pu (X.5.2-7) avoids the description of transfer of Balarāma altogether and mentions it indirectly.

The presence of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa together in Vraj is common to both the Jain and the Hindu purāṇa texts. However, the difference between the two traditions is the depiction of the personalities of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. In the Jain sources Balarāma is depicted in an important position as a guide, teacher and protector, similar to a father in the life of Kṛṣṇa. On the contrary in the Hindu purāṇa texts Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa (chapter

II. 2.3.3) are depicted as identical, performing the same actions at the same time and are mentioned as a unit, although the specific features of their characters differ.

The significance of Balarāma in the life of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja can only be inferred through the confusions and contradictions in the Hindu purāṇa stories. The role of Balarāma is, however, indicated clearly in the Jain texts under study. He is transferred precisely for the purpose of protecting Kṛṣṇa. I have argued that the Hindu purāṇa stories underwent modifications that led to unprecedented confusions in the stories. The Jain stories show no such confusion and give Balarāma a major role in this key episode in Kṛṣṇa's life. Though Balarāma is not shown as killing the black Jakkas, his role in Vraja to protect Kṛṣṇa from their attacks indicates that he was thought to prevent them from harming the children (VH. pp.556). In other words this depiction projects Balarāma as protector of children.

3.5.4. DEVAKĪ VISITS VRAJA

This episode has no parallel in the Hindu purāṇas. The Jain stories (in VH) attribute the introduction of cow worship to Devakī, which occurs as part of the narration of Devakī's visit to Vraja. The story in the HVP differs from others in including the presence of Balarāma in this story. The HVP indicates the significance of Balarāma by assigning to him the specific role of guarding the identity of Devakī and Kṛṣṇa.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY (HVP 35.49-63)

As Kṛṣṇa was growing up in Vraj, the goddesses upon the request of Kamsa assumed different forms and tried to kill Kṛṣṇa although unsuccessfully¹⁸. When Balarāma heard of the adventures of Kṛṣṇa, he went to Devakī and narrated these events from time to time to her. Upon hearing about the adventures of Kṛṣṇa Devakī went to Vraj to see her son for herself under the pretext of a fast and cow worship. Nandagopa met her there along with Yaśodā. Yaśodā brought Kṛṣṇa to her presence. Unable to control her emotions Devakī took him in her lap and milk started overflowing from her breasts. Thus Balarāma sensing the danger of their identity being revealed emptied a pot of milk on her head, therefore wetting her with milk. And then hiding behind the crowd of white cows he led her back to Mathurā. Thus Devakī escaped without revealing her identity as mother of Kṛṣṇa and reached Mathurā safely with the help of Balarāma.

CMC does not mention this event while the VH, the HVP and the TSP mention it with slight variations. This story is unique to the Jain tradition. These texts then connect the cow festival with Devakī as she visited Vraj on the pretext of worshipping cow tracks. The VH mentions that the festival of worshipping cow tracks came into vogue since Devakī worshipped the cow tracks¹⁹. The motif of a mother's breasts overflowing with milk on seeing her child is ubiquitous in India.

¹⁸ In his previous life, Kamsa was the monk Vasiṣṭa. He used to perform austerities for one month in the forest and then come to city for alms to break the fast. Then he would go back and continue his fasting and austerities. He was invited by the king of Mathurā Ugrasena to seek alms at the end of his month long austerities. However, the king forgot to offer the alms to Vasiṣṭa three times in a row and the monk was unable to continue his austerities as planned. He gave up his life by performing a *Nidāna* (HVP.35.36-39). While he was performing the *Nidāna*, he was approached by the seven goddesses who were sympathetic towards him for his suffering. They offered to help him, but he sent them away saying that he would ask them for help in future. He then invited them in his next life as Kamsa and asked them to kill Kṛṣṇa (HVP.35.75-83).

¹⁹ Gabriella Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi, *The Self-Milking Cow and the Bleeding Lingam* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1987), 99-110. She suggested that the emphasis on cow worship in the Kṛṣṇa cycle reflects south Indian tradition.

3.5.5. BALARĀMA ESCORTS KṚṢṆA TO MATHURĀ

This is common to all the sources that contain the Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa story.

However, the story differs in details and narration from the Hindu purāṇa stories.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY (HVP. 36.16-30)

Kaṁsa announced the wrestling match in Mathurā to bring Kṛṣṇa into the open²⁰. Kṛṣṇa requested Balarāma to participate in the wrestling match. Balarāma then came to fetch Kṛṣṇa to go to participate in the match. He told Yaśodā to prepare for Kṛṣṇa's bath to get ready to go to Mathurā. Seeing that Yaśodā was delaying and not quick enough in the preparations, Balarāma scolded her saying, "Why you are delaying like this. I have told you before, but you never change your habits" (HVP.36.26). Then he took Kṛṣṇa to take a bath in the Yamunā. While they were going towards Yamunā Kṛṣṇa became sad and his eyes were filled with tears. Balarāma asked why Kṛṣṇa was sad. Kṛṣṇa asked him why he had talked in such a harsh manner to his mother Yaśodā. Balarāma then told him the truth that his true parents were Vasudeva and Devakī now living in Mathurā, imprisoned by Kamsa. As Kṛṣṇa, the seventh child of Devakī was predicted to be the killer of Kaṁsa, Kṛṣṇa was transferred secretly to Vraj to grow up unknown to Kaṁsa. It is now the duty of Kṛṣṇa to defeat Kamsa and release his parents from prison. Thus knowing the truth, Kṛṣṇa became determined to kill Kaṁsa.

²⁰ Kaṁsa understood that Kṛṣṇa was growing up somewhere in the forests of Vraj through the two competitions that he announced before the final contest of wrestling. These were the contest to win Satyabhāmā by stringing a bow and the collection of blue lotuses (HVP. 35. 61-79 and 36.6-9).

ANALYSIS OF THE STORY OF BALARĀMA'S ESCORT OF KṚṢṢṢA TO MATHURĀ

The culmination of the childhood of Balarāma and KṚṢṢṢa is the wrestling match at Mathurā. The special features of Balarāma that distinguish his character in the Jain texts are his compassion and his significant role in the upbringing of KṚṢṢṢa. Although Balarāma participated in the wrestling match at Mathurā, his major role in this incident is training KṚṢṢṢa, preparing him and accompanying him to the big wrestling match in Mathurā (36.32-34 and 35.64). Balarāma showed everyone sitting in the arena to KṚṢṢṢa (36. 38-48) telling their names and relation to him, thus providing a grounding for KṚṢṢṢa, who has visited Mathurā for the first time. In this way he revealed to KṚṢṢṢa his true identity at the appropriate time and guided him at every step until his final victory at Mathurā. The story of this section in the HVP shows an awareness of the significance of Balarāma not seen in the Hindu purāṇa texts.

This is one of the major differences in the depiction of Balarāma between the Hindu purāṇas and Jain texts. By including this episode the Jain texts develop a personality of Balarāma which depicts him in an elderly role unlike the Hindu purāṇas which indicates that the sources for Jain story might be different from the Hindu texts. I will consider these differences in detail in the following pages.

CHART XX

TRAVEL TO MATHURĀ IN JAIN AND HINDU PURĀṆA TEXTS

	Jain	Hindu purāṇas (chapter II. section II and III.)
Balarāma & Kṛṣṇa in Vraja	Kṛṣṇa's participation in stringing the snake bow and collecting blue lotuses led to the suspicion of Kāṁsa that Kṛṣṇa was alive somewhere in his kingdom.	Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa grew up in Vraja together almost as a unit.
Vṛndāvan	Vṛndāvan is not mentioned in Jain sources. It is only in Vraja that all the events take place. Therefore this excludes the stories of Balarāma's killing of demons Dhenuka, Pralamba and also his revelation to Akrūra.	Killing of various demons in the forests of Vṛndāvan sent messages of the presence of Kṛṣṇa to Kāṁsa.
Travel to Mathurā	Balarāma narrated the story of his parents to Kṛṣṇa and prepared him for the big wrestling match in Mathurā. Both of them then took a bath in Yamunā, dressed in their usual blue and yellow garments, had lunch and proceeded to Mathurā.	Kāṁsa had sent Akrūra to fetch Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa to participate in the wrestling match in Mathurā. Akrūra mentioned the sorry state of Vasudeva in the prison in Mathurā, which prepared Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa to accompany him to Mathurā. The vision of Akrūra is the best evidence that illustrates Balarāma's significance in the early Vaiṣṇavism.
Arrival in Mathurā	As it was the first time for Kṛṣṇa in Mathurā, Balarāma showed him all the dignitaries of Mathurā sitting in the wrestling arena.	After their arrival in Mathurā Akrūra left them by themselves. He did not even heed to their request of visiting their father. They then visited the house of arms of Kāṁsa, roamed in the main streets of Vraja acquiring clothes, perfumes and flowers from the royal servants of Kāṁsa. Kṛṣṇa plays the main role where Balarāma is depicted as following him. Kṛṣṇa entered the arms hall of Kāṁsa and played with the arms and bow of Kāṁsa.
Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa in Mathurā	Kṛṣṇa has visited Mathurā once earlier without revealing his true	Kṛṣṇa plays lead role where Balarāma is depicted as following

	identity. Anādr̥ṣṭi, son of Madanavegā another wife of Vasudeva provoked Kṛṣṇa to go and participate in the contest announced by Kaṁsa to marry Satyabhāma. However, he returned to Vraj without anyone noticing him while Anādr̥ṣṭi tried to take credit for Kṛṣṇa's acts.	him. Kṛṣṇa entered the arms hall of Kaṁsa and played with the arms and bow of Kaṁsa.
--	---	--

As already discussed in section III of chapter II earlier, the incidents in Vṛndāvan actually reveal the early significance of Balarāma rather than Kṛṣṇa, though this changes over time. Now, a study of Jain stories establishes the superiority of Balarāma over Kṛṣṇa in this episode. In addition Jain texts establish the significance of Balarāma in his role in Mathurā, which is different from the Hindu purāṇa texts. While the role of Balarāma in the Hindu texts is to accompany Kṛṣṇa, in the Jain texts his role is that of escort, clearly indicating the difference in the function he performed.

The childhood and young adult life stories of Balarāma in the Hindu purāṇa texts also give an important role to Balarāma, although in an indirect way. Balarāma acted as a counselor and supporter of Kṛṣṇa in the Kāliya episode (see chapter II. 3.1.1). The divinity and significance of Balarāma are revealed to Akrūra in the HV (see chapter II. 3.3.1). This vision is modified considerably in the Vi.pu, the Br.pu, the Bh.pu, as already noted. The Jain texts in fact favor Balarāma by attributing a major role to Balarāma in the events that are related to the wrestling match at Mathurā. This image is not modified and stays uniform in all the Jain texts under study.

Balarāma played an indispensable role in training Kṛṣṇa and escorting him to Mathurā. It is this depiction of Balarāma as a father figure in the life of Kṛṣṇa that distinguishes him from Balarāma in the Hindu purāṇas. Balarāma is not a warrior in the actual sense of the term *kṣatriya*/warrior. He was depicted here as non-violent. His participation in the wrestling match in Mathurā is only to support and protect Kṛṣṇa. In the next section, I will discuss his participation in the battles with Jarāsandha which further support this image of Balarāma.

3.5.6. BATTLES WITH JARĀSANDHA

The only battles in which Balarāma participated in the Jain texts are the battles with Jarāsandha. The HVP and the CMC include only passing remarks about the participation of Balarāma in the battle, while the TSP includes the descriptions where Balarāma crushes the twenty - eight sons of Jarāsandha like ants with his pestle and was hit by Jarāsandha in turn. I study the Jarāsandha episode below to understand the differences in the depiction of Balarāma between the Jain and Hindu texts.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE STORY (HVP. 36.64-74)

Jīvayaśā went to her father Jarāsandha after Kaṃsa was killed by Kṛṣṇa in the wrestling arena in Mathurā. Her sorrow at the death of her husband made Jarāsandha very angry. He vowed to annihilate the Yādavas and decided to invade Mathurā. He sent his son Kālayavana with a large army to defeat the Yādavas and kill Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa who had caused the death of his son-in-law, Kaṃsa. Kālayavana went along with his army and attacked the Yādavas seventeen times. He was killed on a mountain known as Atulamālavatam by Kṛṣṇa. On receiving the news of the death of his son Kālayavana, Jarāsandha became furious, and sent another

invasion under the command of his brother Aparājita to destroy the Yādavas. Aparājita attacked the Yādavas numerous times and was finally killed by Kṛṣṇa.

JARĀSANDHA’S ATTACK FOILED (HVP. 40. 1- 45)

Having heard of the death of his brother, Aparājita, Jarāsandha decided to invade the Yādavas himself and vowed to kill all the Yādavas. He assembled a big army and marched towards the west. On the other hand, having heard the news of Jarāsandha’s preparations, the elders of the Vṛṣṇi, Bhoja and Yādava lineages thought that Jarāsandha was proud; that he did not respect the deities Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa and the *Tīrthaṅkara* Ariṣṭanemi born among them. They also said that he was not aware of the fact that all the *lokapālas* stay on guard around the *Tīrthaṅkara*. They wondered how could any human harm that lineage even though the *Tīrthaṅkara* was a child (40.9-13). Jarāsandha passed through many kingdoms towards the west in order to reach the Yādava kingdom; he arrived at the Vindhya mountain. On the other hand the Yādavas were also eagerly waiting for the battle along with their armies. Having seen a slight difference in size of the armies of the Yādavas and Jarāsandha, the goddess created an illusion of fire for Jarāsandha, which showed him the burning of the Yādava armies. Jarāsandha saw a crying old woman passing near his camp. He stopped her and asked her the reason for her crying. That old woman controlled her crying with great difficulty and informed him that the Yādavas had tried to save themselves from the attacks of Jarāsandha. They sought refuge in a number of neighboring kingdoms. None of the neighboring kings agreed to give refuge to Yādavas as they were afraid of inviting the wrath of Jarāsandha. The Yādavas created a fire and entered it in order to avoid war with Jarāsandha. She also added that she was the maid- servant of the Yādavas for many generations, and unable to bear the sight she was crying this way. Having heard the story Jarāsandha became very bewildered, although he trusted the words of the old woman. He returned to his kingdom and performed the death rituals for the dead people of Mathurā.

FOUNDATION OF DVĀRAKĀ (HVP.41.1-14)

After Jarāsandha had left the people of Daśārha, Mahābhoja and Vṛṣṇi clans went to the ocean and enjoyed the ocean’s characteristics and appearance. Thereafter Kṛṣṇa along with Balarāma performed austerities known as *aṣṭabhukta*, which involves three days of fasting, to obtain a place (to found his kingdom). The great Gautama swami then pushed the

ocean away making a place in the middle of the ocean. Kubera then built a beautiful city Dvārakā with many palaces and houses. The Yādavas then crowned Kṛṣṇa as king of Dvārakā and entered Dvārakā to live there. They lived in the buildings that were assigned to them by yakṣa Pūrṇabhadra (HVP. 41.15-43).

JARĀSANDHA PREPARES FOR BATTLE (HVP.50.1-134)

A merchant brought excellent jewels for sale to Magadha, the kingdom of Jarāsandha. Having seen the jewels Jarāsandha asked the merchant from where had he brought these jewels. The merchant replied that he brought them from Dvārakā where the gods had rained precious jewels on the birth of Neminātha for fifteen months²¹. He then said that these jewels were among those that were rained. Having heard this, Jarāsandha consulted his ministers. He started to plan for a battle saying that Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa killed his son-in-law Kamsa, son Kālayavana and brother Aparājita. However, his ministers warned him that Neminātha, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa born in the Yādava clan could not be defeated by anyone. Jarāsandha intent upon waging a battle, sent an envoy, Ajitasena, to the court of the Yādavas. After receiving Ajitasena courteously, Samudravijaya sent his envoy Lohajangha to the court of Jarāsandha in reply. Lohajangha, who was skilful in peacemaking, obtained a six months of peace treaty with Jarāsandha. However, Jarāsandha continued his preparations for the battle and arrived with a large army in Kurukṣetra. The armies of the allies of Kṛṣṇa joined the armies of Yādavas.

DEATH OF JARĀSANDHA (HVP. 53. 56-85)

The battle between Jarāsandha and the Yādavas was a big battle in which all the kings of the Bhārata participated. After fighting for a long time, Jarāsandha exhausted all his weapons. He then took his *cakraratna* (wheel) and hurled it towards Kṛṣṇa. Seeing that, Balarāma and other

²¹ There are some contradictions in the story. First it was mentioned in chapter 51 of the HVP that Neminātha was a small child when Jarāsandha first prepared for the battle to attack Mathurā- but now it is said that he was born in Dvārakā. Dvārakā was only founded after Jarāsandha turned back from the battle the first time he invaded Mathurā. The HVP first mentions Neminātha while describing the first invasion of Jarāsandha, when he says that the *Dikpalas* are on guard in Śūaryapura and that although the *Tirthaṅkara* is still a child nobody could harm the Yādavas (HVP40. 9-13). The birth and celebration of the *Tirthaṅkara* Neminātha are described as having taken place in Suryapura (HVP. 36-37). The merchant's statement that the gods rained jewels in Dvārakā for fifteen days after the birth of Neminātha is contradictory to these previous statements.

distinguished Yādavas prepared their weapons and surrounded Kṛṣṇa. Neminātha stood close to Kṛṣṇa. The wheel of Jarāsandha came there and slowed down encircling them thrice. It bowed to Neminātha and then settled in the right hand of Kṛṣṇa. Praises from heaven were heard that said, “the ninth Vāsudeva is here,” followed by a shower of flowers. Seeing this Jarāsandha was dejected. Kṛṣṇa told him to leave the battlefield and accept the supremacy of the Yādavas. Jarāsandha, still proud, provoked Kṛṣṇa instead. Thus Kṛṣṇa hurled the wheel towards him and Jarāsandha was finally killed.

The earliest version of the Jain story of battles with Jarāsandha are from the HVP, which served as a template for all the other Jain texts dealing with the subject of the M.Bh and the HV. I have included a brief summary of the major events of the Jain story of the battles of Yādavas with Jarāsandha above. These battles are actually a combination of three different battles known from the Hindu sources; battle of Kālayavana²², the battle of Kurukṣetra between the Pāṇdavas²³ and Kauravas, and finally that of Jarāsandha and the Yādavas. In addition to these three battles the Jain texts also include the participation of the *Vidyādhara*s in this battle which is specific to the Jain sources.

²² In the Hindu purāṇas Kālayavana is not related to Jarāsandha, but is represented as an Indian king with Yavana (Greek) upbringing, unlike the Jain texts. In the Hindu purāṇas Kṛṣṇa killed Kālayavana by a ploy leading him into a cave where Mucukunda was asleep. Kṛṣṇa left his yellow robe on him. Previously Mucukunda had obtained a boon from Brahmā for uninterrupted sleep. Thus when Kālayavana wakes him up by mistake thinking him to be Kṛṣṇa, he is burnt to ashes. HV. 85, Bh.pu. X.51. Hein studies the Yavana traditions reflected in this story. Norvin Hein, “Kālayavana, A Key to Mathurā’s Cultural Self-Perception,” D. M. Srinivasan, ed., *Mathurā*, 224-34.

²³ The Hindu purāṇas never mention the participation of Pāṇdavas in the battles of Jarāsandha, although Kauravas (HV. 81. 44), and Angarāja (Karṇa?) (HV. 80.12), are said to have participated as allies of Jarāsandha. Kālayavana is mentioned in the Hindu purāṇas as allies of Jarāsandha (HV. 80.15).

BALARĀMA IN THE BATTLES WITH JARĀSANDHA

Two points can be understood from the study of Jarāsandha episode in the Jain texts. Firstly, the marked differences of this episode from the Hindu purāṇa stories and secondly, the differences in the personality of Balarāma which I discuss below.

The Jain texts minimize the participation of Balarāma in the battles involving violence. Balarāma plays a very minor role in the Jain story unlike the Hindu purāṇa story of battles with Jarāsandha where a major role is attributed to Balarāma. This is because of the different ideals Balarāma represents in the Jain texts. In the Jain texts Balarāma is a follower of the Jain *dharma* and the protector of Kṛṣṇa. Although Balarāma's participation is not described in this story, his role as the protector of Kṛṣṇa is clearly depicted in the HVP. It is in this role as protector of Kṛṣṇa that Balarāma participated in battles with Jarāsandha once again. When Jarāsandha attacked Kṛṣṇa Balarāma went ahead prepared with his weapons and stood beside to protect him (HVP. 52.61-62). As is already noticed in the TSP in the earlier sections in this chapter, Balarāma's role as protector and his significance is further diluted in this story also. In the TSP he is described as any other warrior participating in the battle, in a derogatory role. In the TSP he was hit by Jarāsandha and spitting blood cried loudly for help and Kṛṣṇa came to his rescue (TSP.p.237-38). Here Kṛṣṇa acts as the protector of Balarāma. In fact this shows a reversal of the roles not noticed in the other stories of Balarāma. He is not given any particular role in the CMC. Thus the Jain texts minimize the role of

Balarāma in the battles with Jarāsandha and depict him in accordance with the Jain *dharma*.

CONCLUSION

The Jain stories of battle of Jarāsandha depict Balarāma as a protector of Kṛṣṇa once again in the HVP, similar to his personality already noted in the previous sections of this chapter. But this description of Balarāma changes in the other texts, most notably in the TSP where he was described as screaming for help, to be defended by Kṛṣṇa. In the Jain stories the central role is given to the *Tīrthaṅkara* Neminātha followed by Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. The Jarāsandha story also makes it clear that even though Balarāma is presented in the role of protector in the Jain sources similar to the Hindu texts, his role is limited to the protection of Kṛṣṇa, unlike the Hindu texts that depict him as the protector of the people of Vraj as seen in the HVP. Here the primary protector of the people is the *Tīrthaṅkara*. It is also notable that this role of Balarāma as protector is omitted and his status declined in the other texts under study as depicted in the TSP. Therefore, I conclude that the differences among the Jain and Hindu texts in the description of the Jarāsandha story indicate a different source of Jain texts other than the Hindu texts.

In the following pages I will review the results of my study of the Jain stories of Balarāma in this chapter. The alterations among the stories in the first and second category of Jain Balarāma stories are different although the direction of the alterations is

clear, to diminish the role and status of Balarāma akin to the Hindu purāṇa stories of Balarāma. Among the first category of Jain Balarāma stories, the only stories that remained uniform in all the Jain texts under study. This is because the identity of Balarāma, as ninth *Baladeva* is unchanged in all the texts. However his position shows decline in comparison to Kṛṣṇa. Other stories of the first category of Jain Balarāma stories are specific to the HVP and are not known from any other Jain text under study. The past life stories of Balarāma, his role in the transfer and upbringing of Kṛṣṇa and his significant role in Vraj, such as the visit of Devakī, indicate his persisting significance during 800 C.E. However, these stories are quickly forgotten in the later texts, the CMC and TSP, which undergo a similar evolution like the Hindu stories of Balarāma. The fact that Jain texts preserve special stories of Balarāma such as the marriage of his parents and his birth unknown in the Hindu tradition indicates the significance attached to him in the Jain tradition. Since these stories did not undergo any further changes indicates the continuation of his position as ninth Baladeva in Jain tradition. His significance showed a clear increase in the HVP as new stories continue to be narrated detailing the significance of Balarāma.

The second category of Jain stories of Balarāma depict his declining significance. Balarāma's role in the upbringing of Kṛṣṇa and his participation in the battles with Jarāsandha show drastic changes. Although portrayed as a protector of Kṛṣṇa in the VH and HVP, this portrayal is diminished in the TSP. He is depicted as an assistant of Kṛṣṇa

rather than a protector in Vraja and their roles are in fact reversed in the story of the battles with Jarāsandha as seen above.

Therefore it can be said that the Jain texts indicate a different tendency from Hindu texts. Although his identity as ninth Baladeva remains intact in all the texts under study, his position declines in comparison with Kṛṣṇa and his role as protector undergoes changes. The one fact that remains unchanged in these texts is his image as the follower of Jain *dharma*. I think this is in accordance with his portrayal as a *Baladeva*, which remained unchanged in all the Jain texts under study. In other words, even though his position declined and his role changed in comparison with Kṛṣṇa, his identity as a *Baladeva* and his personality as a follower of *dharma* remained unchanged.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

4.1. CONCLUSION

Vaiṣṇavism has undergone a long and complicated process of evolution. None of the sources describes this process explicitly; rather it is the careful analysis of the available sources that provides a glimpse of this process. My analysis of the Balarāma stories as found in the carefully selected Hindu and Jain texts, provides clues to understanding some of the broader processes in the evolution of Vaiṣṇavism. My thesis systematically charts out the significant differences for each stage of Balarāma's life. Through my analysis of the stories it is clear that the stories of Balarāma are not fixed; rather, it shows different variations and versions that vary not only in length, but also in content and themes. My analysis indicates that the evolution of the Balarāma stories in the Hindu and Jain purāṇas was not a singular but a multi-linear process. This has implications, then, for our understanding of the evolution of Balarāma in Vaiṣṇavism.

1. TEXTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BALARĀMA STORIES

In this thesis I have assumed the HV as the basic text for the Hindu purāṇas against which I compare the stories from other texts. Although the HV stories are adopted

by the Vi.pu, and the Vi.pu stories are adopted by the Br.pu and the Bh.pu, there might have been more than one source for the later texts. Even though the HV is likely the source for the Vi.pu, as noted by the similarities between these two versions, the differences indicate a more complicated process. For example, the birth story of Balarāma in the Vi.pu combines both the first and second versions of the birth story, whereas the HV contains only the second version. Another detail missing from the HV story, but present in the Vi.pu, Br.pu and Bh.pu, as well as the Jain sources considered, is crossing Yamunā to exchange Kṛṣṇa with the baby girl born in Vraj. These differences indicate that the stories of HV can not be the only source for the Vi.pu.

Similarly, the Vi.pu alters the basic story of Dhenuka by adding more characters to the scene, so that Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa, and Dhenuka are no longer the only participants in the story. The participation of cowherds and kin of Dhenuka may not have been the innovation of the Vi.pu itself, but of some other now unrecoverable source. The praise passage in the Pralamba episode in the Vi.pu is very brief even though all the major features noted in the HV praise passage are present. This also indicates a major change in the Vi.pu retelling of the story. Two different visions of Akrūra as described in the Akrūra episode in the HV are modified to include only the second vision in the Vi.pu. The Jarāsandha episode is shortened by omitting the descriptions of the participating kings in the battle and the description of Balarāma's duel with Jarāsandha. These are some of the changes that are noticed between the HV and the Vi.pu versions, which indicate that although the Vi.pu depended on the HV for its basic stories, it has adopted

modifications that change the stories in a major way. The reason for such changes may have been its own religious orientation and/or dependence on additional sources.

The details of the Br.pu stories are closer to the Vi.pu than the HV. In fact, the Br.pu stories show similar modifications as introduced in the Vi.pu. It is unlikely that the Br.pu adopted the stories of the HV and independently inserted same changes as the Vi.pu. Therefore, I assume that the Br.pu directly adopted Balarāma stories from the Vi.pu rather than from the HV.

Yet there is evidence to show that the Br.pu introduced its own modifications to some of the stories. For example in the Dhenuka episode, it is Kṛṣṇa not Balarāma who killed the demon Dhenuka¹. This change shifts the focal point from Balarāma to Kṛṣṇa as the central figure, a characteristic of later Vaiṣṇavism. We can also note that the Br.pu shares modifications with the Bh.pu. Both the Br.pu and the Bh.pu indicate that Balarāma stayed in Vraja for two months, in the story of his return to Vraja episode. This raises the possibility of interdependence between these texts, or a shared source. Identifying the exact source of the Br.pu is impossible. However, we can suggest the possibility of more than one source, and we can certainly rule out the argument that the Br.pu possessed the

¹ Bālarita describes the story of Dhenuka and Pralamba together and attributes the killing of Dhenuka to Kṛṣṇa. The dating of Bālarita is controversial. Its role in the development of the stories is unclear, although it does raise the possibility of competing versions of our stories. *Bālarita, Plays ascribed to Bhaṣa*, ed., C. R. Devadhar (Poona: Oriental Book agency, 2nd ed. 1951) Act. III. 85-89, pp. 538.

original stories, which were greatly expanded by the HV². I concur with other scholars in that the Br.pu represents a composite of stories from various sources and can only be dated later than all the other texts under study³.

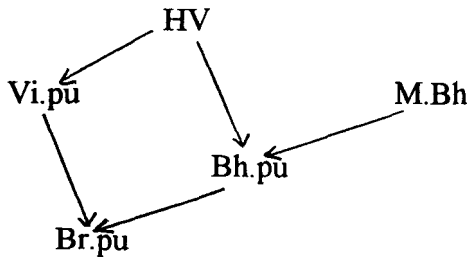
The Bh.pu stories considered in this thesis differ significantly from the HV and the Vi.pu stories. The Bh.pu modified the stories to depict the personality of Balarāma in the light of heroic kṣatriya ideals as a guardian of *dharma*. This may be directly related to the *Bhakti* philosophy evident in the Bh.pu⁴. Uncovering the motivations for these changes is beyond the scope of investigation in this thesis. However it can be said with certainty that the Bh.pu stories differ in a major way from the other three Hindu texts studied in this thesis. The Bh.pu stories mark a complete transformation where Balarāma is presented as a minor deity and form of Śeṣa in the shadow of Kṛṣṇa, the *pūrṇa avatāra* (full incarnation of Viṣṇu). Although the Bh.pu stories seem to have adopted the Vi.pu stories (as indicated by similar modifications in the stories) the stories sometimes show similarities with the HV and the M.Bh stories. The narration of the Dhenuka episode differs considerably from the Vi.pu in including detailed descriptions of the divine nature of Kṛṣṇa. This text describes the story of killing the demon as divine drama of Kṛṣṇa as an incarnation of Viṣṇu rather than simply as Balarāma story. The Pralamba story differs from all the other Hindu purāṇas under study in not including a praise passage describing

² Ruben, “Kṛṣṇacarita,” 115-127.

³ R.C. Hazra, *Studies in the Purāṇic Records*, 1975, 45-146.

⁴ Adalbert Gail. *Bhakti im Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1969), 4-9.

the superior identity of Balarāma. The story of Balarāma's return to Vraj is one of the stories that has been modified significantly. Unlike the other purāṇas, the Bh.pu descriptions of cowherdesses form a major part indicating a new element, erotic depiction, not seen in the other Hindu purāṇas under study. The Jarāsandha episode is not incomplete as in the above texts, but the killing of Jarāsandha by Bhīma is described in detail, which is similar to the M.Bh. Therefore for the Bh.pu not only the Vi.pu but the HV and the M.Bh are also sources. I cannot rule out the possibility of other sources, not considered here. A representation of the relationship among the four Hindu purāṇas under study might look like this.



These textual changes as noticed above do not merely alter the length and details of the story, but in this way contribute to changes in which Balarāma is imagined. They are useful indicators of the evolution of Vaiṣṇavism. Although it is now difficult to establish the reasons for these changes, tracing them enables us to understand something of the course of this long process of evolution.

When we turn to the Jain texts under consideration, we observe that the Balarāma stories conformed to a fixed model very early on during their evolution. The early Jain texts do not appear to be influenced by the Hindu stories. The later Jain texts, especially the TSP, do, however, show a tendency to model their stories of Balarāma parallel to the Hindu purāṇas. The only stories of Balarāma that were not modified in the Jain texts are the marriage of Balarāma's parents and birth of Balarāma. While the HVP omits his conflict with yakṣas, it includes new stories such as the past life stories of Balarāma, his participation in the transfer of Kṛṣṇa, and Devakī's visit to Vraj. The TSP omits these details again and follows the model of the VH. While the HVP minimized the participation of Balarāma in the battles with Jarāsandha, the TSP further decreases his role by describing him as defeated by Jarāsandha. TSP omits the past life stories of Balarāma altogether. The textual transmission of the Jain tradition is not as clear as in the Hindu purāṇas studied above, but the textual evidence does suggest different underlying sources from the Hindu texts.

2. EARLY IMAGE AND LATER VAIṢṆAVA IDENTITY OF BALARĀMA: HIS PERSONALITY AND POSITION

Balarāma may or may not have originated as a nāga, *vyūha* or hero. The evidence does not permit us to decide, however, the stories in the HV do indicate the popular nature of this deity, and there are similarities to other popular cults in Vraj such as the goddesses and yakṣas. In the early stages of his evolution Balarāma is depicted as a deity

of food, abundance, fertility and protection in the HV. The second version of the birth story of Balarāma hints that he is transferred to Vraj for the protection of Kṛṣṇa. This aspect of protection continued to dominate his depiction in the Dhenuka and the Pralamba episodes in the HV. Here, his killing of demons is not a heroic feat representing his nature as a traditional warrior, but a part of his image as protector and provider of resources, food, and abundance. Furthermore, the praise passage in the Pralamba episode of the HV indicates the significance accorded to Balarāma in early Vaiṣṇavism as a form of the supreme god Viṣṇu. The revelation of Balarāma in divine vision to Akrūra in the HV is another indication of the early superior status of Balarāma. The return to Vraj story in its earliest version in the HV demonstrates Balarāma's connection to fertility. In the HV, in the battles with Jarāsandha he is a protector of his people with superior wrestling skills. In these episodes, then, the HV presents a Balarāma connected to food, abundance, fertility and protection. Although he is depicted as a notable wrestler, he participated in only one- on- one wrestling with minimal use of weapons. When depicted with these early characteristics in the HV, he is also a superior deity of Vaiṣṇavism, worshipped with *Bhāgavata mantras*. In this thesis I have tried to show that as these early features associated with Balarāma are modified, so also his personality and status in Vaiṣṇavism change.

As the Vi.pu and the Br.pu retell the Balarāma stories there is a notable shift in his characterization. Now the Vaiṣṇava identity becomes the defining character of Balarāma rather than the early features associated with Balarāma discussed above.

In the Dhenuka story Balarāma shares the stage with Kṛṣṇa and the other cowherds. The praise portion of the Pralamba story is condensed in the Vi.pu and the Br.pu, thereby diminishing any superiority of Balarāma in this episode. The vision of Akrūra in the Vi.pu eliminates altogether the descriptions of Balarāma. The return to Vraj story is modified so as to include Varuṇa and Lakṣmī in a major role, which was not part of the original HV story. Balarāma is no longer a deity of fertility but a messenger of Kṛṣṇa. The cumulative result of these changes is a different deity. Balarāma represents a heroic warrior who participated in the battles and who has limited significance in the Vi.pu and the Br.pu. In these texts, Balarāma is no longer a wrestler participating in one-on-one combat but a warrior supported by an army of people participating along with him in the battle. In other words, his grandeur in combat is diminished as he becomes one of many who battle, rather than the sole champion.

The Bh.pu completes the evolution of Balarāma's identity. In this text Kṛṣṇa is the *pūrṇa avatāra* (full incarnation) of Viṣṇu. Hence Kṛṣṇa is presented as superior to all others around him in these stories. This has implications for Balarāma's identity. The Dhenuka and Pralamba stories are modified to present the superiority of Kṛṣṇa by indicating that all the events are planned by him. In the return to Vraj story Balarāma is a mere messenger of Kṛṣṇa. He simply participated in the cosmic drama enacted by Kṛṣṇa the supreme god. In the Jarāsandha battles Balarāma becomes a chariot - riding warrior using sophisticated weapons. Furthermore, Balarāma stories unique to the Bh.pu, and not

studied in this thesis, depict him as a teacher of *dharma*. Balarāma's characteristics are modified to represent *dharma* by presenting him as a teacher of *dharma*⁵. He is the protector of yajñas and brāhminical *dharma* as an ideal *kṣatriya*⁶. So not only is Balarāma sidelined by Kṛṣṇa's importance in the Bh.pu, but also his personality is completely transformed from the deity of protection, food and fertility to a *kṣatriya*, heroic deity.

As described above, changes in the personality of Balarāma have also brought about a decline in his position in Vaiṣṇavism. In other words, the changes in his personality and position actually reflect the major changes that might be taking place in Vaiṣṇavism from a micro (highly localized) tradition to a macro (pan-Indian) tradition. Although the exact reasons for such changes are difficult to know, these changes to the personality of Balarāma provide clues for understanding the processes of evolution at work in Vaiṣṇavism. The process involves establishing types of relationships and equations that reshape and redefine, rather than completely annihilate the several individual cults. Given the connection I have surmised between Balarāma and local cults at mathurā, I would like to propose that one change was from local religion to a universal religion in the form of classical Vaiṣṇavism.

⁵ King Citraketu was taught the *Sāttvata dharma* by Samkarṣaṇa. Bh.pu. VI. 16.

⁶ Balarāma protects the sacrifices of sages from the attacks of demons, which is an important *kṣatriya dharma*, when he stopped in the Naimiśa forest during the course of his pilgrimage. Bh.pu. X.78. 38- 39, X.79.1-9. The Citraketu story and the pilgrimage of Balarāma are absent from the other three Hindu purāṇas under consideration and do not facilitate the comparative analysis I have adopted in this thesis. Hence I have not attempted an analysis of these stories in the present thesis.

Another notable feature that comes to the fore in the above study is that the evolution of Kṛṣṇa cult shows an opposite trend to that of Balarāma. As Vaiṣṇavism acquired pan-Indian following, the position of Kṛṣṇa became central, overtaking all other deities connected to him.

3. BALARĀMA IN THE JAIN SOURCES

Jain texts preserve independent narratives of Balarāma. He is depicted as the ninth *Baladeva* born from time to time along with the *Tīrthaṅkaras* and *Vāsudevas*. As the *Baladeva*, Balarāma always reaches heaven. These facts remain constant amongst the texts considered, although narrative details do change.

In the VH Balarāma is depicted as a protector of Kṛṣṇa in conflict with the black yakṣas. In this text, Vasudeva deposes Balarāma to protect and teach Kṛṣṇa due to potential danger to Kṛṣṇa's life from the black yakṣas. Although the other sources continue to depict Balarāma performing a similar role in the life of Kṛṣṇa, the mention of black yakṣas is omitted. However, this may not be significant. In the Jain texts Balarāma is represented as a follower of the Jain *dharma*, which is centered on non-violence. Therefore any narration of his participation in combat may have been avoided.

In the HVP Balarāma performs a major role in the life of Kṛṣṇa. It is also unique in assigning a special role to Balarāma and putting him in a position superior to Kṛṣṇa.

Balarāma transferred Kṛṣṇa to Vraj, which was a function attributed to Vasudeva in all the other texts under study. Balarāma took care of Kṛṣṇa in Vraj, visiting him regularly and training him in wrestling, other arts and sciences. Balarāma prepared Kṛṣṇa for the big wrestling match in Mathurā, accompanied him and took part in the actual wrestling match in support of Kṛṣṇa. His role in all these events was invaluable for the success of Kṛṣṇa and was described in great detail. This protective aspect of Balarāma is also enriched in the HVP by adding additional details to the other stories, such as the visit of Devakī to Vraj where Balarāma emptied a pot of milk on her head so as to protect her identity as the mother of Kṛṣṇa. Balarāma appears as the protector of Kṛṣṇa again in the story of Jarāsandha when Jarāsandha attacked Kṛṣṇa with his wheel.

The HVP continued to preserve the significance of Balarāma by including the past life stories of Balarāma not found in any other text considered in the present thesis. In these past life stories Balarāma was always born in high families and was a follower of *dharma*, while in contrast, Kṛṣṇa was born in low families and connected to sins such as killing a Jain sage, blind snake etc., in his past lives.

Although the HVP initiates the process of representing Balarāma as an ideal Jain follower of *dharma*, ridding him of all his connection with violence, it is also unique for preserving the role of Balarāma in a superior position to Kṛṣṇa. The role of Balarāma is very brief in the CMC and does not provide sufficient information to understand the role of Balarāma. Although the TSP describes the stories of Balarāma in a fashion that is

similar to the HVP as an ideal Jain, it introduces its own modifications that depict Balarāma in an image closer to the Hindu texts rather than the HVP. This is evident in the way the TSP covers the “past lives” narratives. The Kṛṣṇa narratives are used commonly for both Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, thereby eliminating the elevated characterization of Balarāma as ideal Jain – a true follower of *dharma*.

A brief comparison of the evolution of Balarāma’s depiction between the Hindu and Jain texts confirms my thesis that Balarāma was a significant deity identified as a form of the supreme deity Viṣṇu whose status declined. Although the exact details are different, there is evidence of the “diminishing” process in both traditions. As we have seen with the Hindu texts, there was a gradual transformation from an important deity connected to fertility, food, abundance and protection to a minor deity who embodied the *kṣatriya* ideals. The starting depiction of Balarāma in the Jain texts is as a protector, although the sole benefactor of Balarāma’s protection is Kṛṣṇa. And, significantly, Balarāma is a faithful follower of *dharma* – the highest Jain ideal. But this high status is compromised in the later Jain text, the TSP, which used similar narrative techniques as the Bh.pu to diminish Balarāma’s importance relative to Kṛṣṇa.

This parallel process of evolution in the Balarāma narratives in the Hindu and Jain texts begs the question of sources. Did the Jain texts modify the Hindu stories, or was there an independent source? It is impossible to determine with any certainty, but the presence of stories in the Jain material unknown to the Hindu purāṇas favours the option

of an independence source. We must also acknowledge that the Jain characterization of Balarāma bears the distinctive imprint of Jain religious ideals.

Our earliest Hindu and Jain texts, the HV and the VH, point to a deity associated with protection and in conflict with the yakṣas. This is Balarāma's core identity common to both traditions. We know from the archaeological evidence (see chart I) that the worship of Balarāma was popular during the early stages in the Mathurā region where numerous other cults such as goddesses and yakṣas were worshipped. Given this milieu it is logical that the early identity of Balarāma shared features associated with these early cults. This common core identity of Balarāma was transformed as Vaiṣṇavism evolved. Careful analysis of the sources reveals that Balarāma's early and later identity are preserved in the textual tradition, often in the same narrative episodes, thereby providing a glimpse of how his identity evolved within Vaiṣṇavism.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

1. Sanskrit texts and translations

Atharvaveda Samhitā. W.D. Whitney. HOS vols 7-8. reprint Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971.

Bhāgavatapurāṇa. Part I and II. Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 1980

-Tr. G.V. Tagare. 5vols. Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology vol.22-6. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983

Bālacarita. C.R. Devadhar ed. *Plays ascribed to Bhāsa*. Poona: Oriental agency, 2nd ed. 1951 (first ed. 1937), 519-60.

Brahmapurāṇa. Sanskrit Indices and Text of the Brahmapurana. Peter Schreiner and Renate Söhnen eds. Purana Research Publications, Tübingen 1. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1987.

Brahmapurāṇa. 3 vols. ed and tr. J.L. Shastri and G.P. Bhatt, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass,

Bṛhatsamhita of Varāhamihira Part I and II. Ramakrishna Bhat. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965.

Cauppannamahāpurīṣacariyam by Ācārya Śrī Śilāṅka. Pandit Amritlal Bhojak. Ahmedabad: Pakrit Text Society, 1961.

Harivamśa 2 vols. ed. P.L. Vaidya. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1969-71.

Harivamśa ou Histoire de la Famille de Hari. French translation. 2 vols. A. Langlois. London: Parbury, Allen and Co, 1834-35.

Harivamśapurāṇa of Punnāta Jinasena. Edited with Hindi translation. Pannalal Jain. Kashi: Jñāpapiṭha Mūrtidevī Granthamāla, 27. Bharatiya Jnanapitha Publications, 1962.

Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra. R.P. Kangle. Part I and II. Bombay: University of Bombay, 1972.

Mahābhārata. Critical Edition. V.S. Sukthankar et al. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933-66.

Mahābhārata 12 vols. English Translation. P.C. Roy/K.M. Ganguly. 4th edn. New Delhi: Munshiram Mahoharlal, 1981. 1st ed. 1883-96.

Triṣaṣṭīśalākāpuruṣacaritra, Vol.5. Translator. Helen. M. Johnson. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1962.

Vasudevahiṇḍī: An Authentic Jain Version of the Bṛhatkatha. J.C. Jain trans. Ahmedabad: L.D. Institute of Indology, 1977.

Vasudevahiṇḍī. Majjimakhando. H.C. Bhayani ed. L.D. Series 99. Ahmedabad: L. D. Institute of Indology, 1979.

The Viṣṇupurāṇa: A system of Hindu Mythology and Tradition. H.H. Wilson trans. Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 3rd ed. 1972. 1st ed. London: John Murray, 1840.

2. Secondary Sources

Agrawala, V.S. “Pūtana and Yaśodā.” *Purāṇa* 2 (1960): 279-281.

Bai, B.N. Sumitra, and Robert J. Zydenbos. “The Jaina *Mahābhārata*.” In *Essays on the Mahābhārata*. ed. Arvind Sharma, 251-73. Leiden: Brill, 1991.

Bakker, Hans and Entwistle, Alan. *Vaisnavism: The History of the Kṛṣṇa and Rāma Cults and their Contribution to Indian pilgrimage*. Groningen: Institute of Indian studies, 1981.

Balbir, Nalini. “Normalizing Trends in Jaina Narrative Literature.” *Indologica Taurinensia* 12 (1984): 25-38.

Banerjea, J.N. *Development of Hindu Iconography*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1956.

Bhandarkar, D.R. *Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Culture*. Madras: University of Madras, 1940.

Bhandarkar, R. G. “Allusions to Kṛṣṇa in Patañjali’s *Mahābhāṣya*.” *Indian Antiquary* 3 (1874): 14-18. Reprint. *Collected works of R.G. Bhandarkar*. Vol.1. Poona. 1933, 209-13

-*Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*. Reprint Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1965. (first ed. Strassburg: Grundriss der Indo- Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde, 1913)

- Bhattacharji, S. *The Indian Theogony: A comparative Study of Indian Mythology from Vedas to Purāṇas*. Cambridge: University Press, 1970.
- Bhattacharya, S. *The Philosophy of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. 2 vols. Calcutta: Santiniketan, Visva-Bharati, 1960-62.
- Bhattacharyya, A.K. *A Pageant of Indian Culture*. 2 vols. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1995.
- Bhattacharyya, N.N. ed. *Jainism and Prakrit in Ancient and Medieval India: Essays for Prof. Jagdish Chandra Jain*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishing and Distributors, 1994.
- Bhattacharya, S.K. *Kṛṣṇa Cult*. New Delhi: Associated Press, 1978.
- *The Vedas to the Purāṇas*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Bhattacharyya, SivaPrasad. "Kālidāsa and Harivamśa." *JOIB* 7 (1958): 182-95.
- Biardeau, Madeleine. *Études de Mythologie hindoue I : Cosmogonies Purāṇiques*. Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient Vol. CXXVIII, Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1981.
- "The Story of Arjuna Kārtavīrya without reconstruction." *Purana* 12 (1970): 286-303.
- Bigger, Andreas. *Balarāma im Mahābhārata*. Beitrage zur Indologie 30. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 1998.
- Blackburn, Stuart. "Death and Deification: Folk Cults in Hinduism." *HR* 24. No. 3 (Feb. 1985): 255-274.
- Brinkhaus, Horst. *The Pradyumna- Prabhāvatī Legend in Nepal: a Study of the Hindu Myth of the Draining of the Nepal Valley*. Alt und Neu-Indische Studien 32. Stuttgart: Franz Stainer Verlag, 1987.
- "Zur Entstehung und Textgeschichtlichen Entwicklung des Hariyamśa." In *Proceedings of the XXIV Deutscher Orientalistentag in Köln*, 1988 (Supplementband de ZDMG, 1990): 415-25.
 - "Early Developmental Stages of the Viṣṇu Prādurbhāva Lists." *Proceedings of the VIIIth World Sanskrit Conference*. WZKS 36 (1993) supplementband: 101-10.

Brockington, J.L. *Righteous Rama: The Evolution of an Epic*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984.

-“Concepts of Race in the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa”. In Peter Robb. *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press: 97-108.

-*The Sanskrit Epics*. Handbuch de Orientalistik. Indica Band 12. Leiden: Brill, 1998.

Van Buitenen, J.A. B. Trans. *The Mahabharata*. Vol. 1-3. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975.

Brühn, Klaus. “ Classification in Indian Iconography.” In *German Scholars on India*. Vol.2. Bombay: Nachiketa Publications, 1976.

Brühn Klaus and Albrecht Wezler, eds. *Studien Zum Jainismus und Buddhismus: Gedenkschrift für Ludwig Alsdorf*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1981.

Bühler, G. *The Life of Hemacandrācārya*. Śāntiniketan: The Adhiṣṭātā- Singhi Jaina Jñānapīṭha, 1936.

Campbell, J. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Bollingen Series vol.17, Princeton, 1968.

Chakravarti, A.C. *The Story of Kṛṣṇa in Indian Literature*. Calcutta: Indian Associated Publishing House, 1976.

Chanda, R.P. *Archaeology and Vaishnava Tradition*. Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India No.5. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1998 (first ed. 1920).

Charpentier, Jarl. *Die Suparṇasage: Untersuchungen Zur altindischen Literatur- und Sagen Geschichte*. Upsala: Akademiska bokhandeln i kommission, 1920

-“Paraśu-Rāma: The Main Outlines of his Legend.” *Mahamahopadhyaya Kuppaswami Sastri Commemoration Volume*. 9-16. Madras: G.S. Press, 1936.

Chatterjee, Asim Kumar. *A Comprehensive History of Jainism*. Calcutta: Firma Klm Pvt. Ltd. 1978.

-“A note on the Uttarakāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa.” *JOIB* 22 (1972-73): 304-15.

Choudhury, Gulab Chandra. *Political History of Northern India from Jain Sources (c. 650 A.D to 1300 A.D.)*. Amritsar: Jaindharma Pracharak Samiti, 1963.

Coburn, T.B. *Devī Māhātmya: The Crystallization of the Goddess Tradition*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984.

Coomaraswamy, A.K. *Yakṣas*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1971 (first edn.1931).

Court, John E. “Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions.” *Numen* 24. Fasc. 2 (1987): 235-255.

-“Genres of Jain History.” *JIP* 23 (1995): 469-506.

Couture, André. “Compement de bouviers et forêts dans trois versions anciennes du mythe d’enfance de Kṛṣṇa.” *JA* 270 (1982a):385-400.

-“Généalogie et réincarantion dans la mythologie de l’enfance de Kṛṣṇa.” *SR* 11 (1982b): 135-49.

-“Akrūra et la Tradition *Bhāgavata* selon le Harivamśa.” *SR* 15(1986): 221-32

-“L’enfance de Kṛṣṇa selon le Harivamśa: Étude de la Composition du Récit.” *SR* 18 (1990): 427-49.

-*L’enfance de Kṛṣṇa*. Québec: les Presses de l’Université Laval; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1991.

-“The Harivamśa: A Suppliment to the Mahābhārata.” *JVS* 4.3 (1996), 127-38

Dahlquist, A. *Megasthenes and Indian Religion*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977.

Dandekar, R. N. “The Mahābhārata and its Critical Edition.” *UCR* 12 (1954): 65-85

-“Heretical Doctrines in the Purāṇas.” *Purāṇa* Vol.XXXVII, No. 1 (1995): 3-20.

-“The Beginnings of Vaiṣṇavism.” *IT* 3-4, 1975-76.

Dasgupta, M. “Early Viṣṇuism and Nārāyaṇīya worship.” *IHQ* 7 (1931): 93- 116, *IHQ* 8 (1932): 64-84.

De, Sushil Kumar. “Vedic and Epic Kṛṣṇa.” *IHQ* 18 (1942): 297-300.

Deo, S. B. “History of Jaina Monasticism.” *BDCRI* 16 (June 1954-March 1955).

Dixit, V.V. *Relations of the Epics to the Brāhmaṇa Literature*. Poona Oriental Series 89,

- Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1950.
- Doniger, W. ed. *Purāṇa Perennis*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Dumézil, G. *Mythe et Épopée*. Tome 1. Paris: Gallimard, 1968.
- Dundas, Paul. *The Jains*. London: Routledge. 1992.
- Dwivedi, R.C. ed. *Contribution of Jainism to Indian Culture*. Varanasi: Motilal Banarsidass. 1975.
- Entwistle, A.W. *Braj: Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage*. Groningen Oriental Studies 3. Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1987.
- Errington, E., Cribb, J. *The Crossroads of Asia: Transformation in Image and Symbol in the Art of Ancient Afghanistan and Pakistan*. Cambridge: the Ancient India and Iran Trust, 1992.
- Eschmann, A. C, H. Kulke, and G.C. Tripathi eds. *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*. New Delhi: Manoharlal, 1978.
- Filliozat, J. “Représentation de Vāsudeva et de Samkarṣaṇa au Siècle Iie avant J-C.” *AA* 26 (1983): 113-23.
- Folkert, Kendall W. *Scripture and Community Collected Essays on the Jains*. Cort E. John. Ed. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993.
- Gail, Adalbert J. *Bhakti im Bhāgavatapurāṇa: Religionsgeschichtliche Studie zur Idee der Gottesliebe in Kult und Mystik des Viṣṇuismus*. Münchener Indologie Studien, vol. 6. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1969.
- Spiegel der Purāṇas.” *ZDMG Supplement* 1, 1969.
- Paraśurāma: Brahmane und Krieger*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1977.
- Ganguli, K.K and S.S. Biswas eds. *Rūpānjali in Memory of O.C. Ganguly*. Calcutta: O.C. Ganguly Memorial Socety, 1986.
- Gehrts, Heino. *Das Märchen und das Opfer: Untersuchungen im Europäischen Brüdermärchen*. Bonn: Bouvier, 1967.
- Ghosh, A. ed. *Jaina Art and Architecture*. 3 vols. New Delhi: Bharatiya Jñānapith, 1975.
- Ghosh, J.C. “Ekānamśa and Subhadrā.” *JRASB* 3rd Series. 2 (1936): 41-6.

- Goldman, Rober P. *Gods, Priests, and Warriors: The Bṛgus of the Mahābhārata*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977.
- Gonda, J. *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975.
- Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint 1969 (first edn. Utrecht: N.V. A. Oosthoek's Uitgevers Mij, 1954)
 - *India Major: Congratulatory Volume Presented to J. Gonda*. Ed. J. Ensink and P. Gaeffke. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972.
 - Selected Studies*. Vol. 1-4. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975.
 - Vedic Ritual: The non- Solemn Rites*. Leiden-Köln: E.J. Brill, 1980.
 - Dual Deities in the Religion of the Veda*. Amsterdam: North- Holland Publishing, 1974.
- Govindacarya Svami, A. "A Lacuna in the Harivamśa." *IA* 40 (1911): 58-61.
- Granoff, Phyllis. "Some Unusual Images of the Goddess of Learning in Medieval India." *EAION* Vol. 38 (N.S.XXVIII): 179-189.
- "Scholars and Wonder – Workers: Some Remarks on the Role of the Supernatural in Philosophical Contest in Vedānta Hagiographies." *JAOS* 105.3 (1985): 459-467.
 - "The Miracle of Hagiography without Miracles: Some Comments on the Jain Lives of the Pratyekabuddha Karakanda." *JIP* 14 (1986): 389-403.
 - "The Biographies of Arya Khapatacarya: A Preliminary Investigation into the Transmission and Adaptation of Biographical Legends," in Granoff, Shinohara eds. 1988.
 - "Religious Biography and Clan History among the Śvetāmbara Jains in North India." *EW* vol. 39. No. 1-4 (Dec. 1989): 195-215.
 - "Jain Lives of Haribhadra: An Inquiry into the Sources and Logic of the Legends." *JIP* 17 (1989): 105- 128.
 - "The Biographies of Siddhasena: A Study in the Texture of Allusion and the Weaving of a Group- Image (part I)." *JIP* 17 (1989): 329-384.

- “The Biographies of Siddhasena: A Study in the Texture of Allusion and the Weaving of a Group- Image (part II).” *JIP* 18 (1990): 261-304.
- “Buddhagoṣa’s Penance and Siddhasena’s Crime: Remarks on Some Buddhist and Jain Attitudes Towards the Language of Religious Texts.” in Shinohara and Schopen eds. 1991.
- “The Politics of Religious Biography: The Biography of Balibhadra the Usurper.” *BEI* 9 (1991): 75-91.
- “Tales of Broken Limbs and Bleeding Wounds: Responses to Muslim Iconoclasm in Medieval India.” *EW* vol. 41. No. 1-4 (Dec. 1991): 189-203.
- “When Miracles Become too Many: Stories of the Destruction of Holy Sites in the Tāpī Khaṇḍa of the Skanda Purāṇa.” *ABORI*. Amṛtamahotsava Volume (1991-92): 549-571.
- “The Violence of Non- Violence: A Study of Some Jain Responses to Non- Jain Religious Practices.” *JLABS* vol.15. no. 1 (1992): 1-43.
- “The Householder as Shaman Jain Biographies of Temple Builders.” *EW* vol. 42. No. 2-4 (Dec. 1992): 301-307.
- “Worship as Commemoration: Pilgrimage, Death and Dying in Medieval Jainism,” *BÉI* 10 (1992): 181-202.
- “Going by the Book: The Role of Written Texts in Medieval Jain Sectarian Conflicts.” in Smet and Watanabe, eds. 1993.
- “Biographical Writing Amongst the Śvetāmbara Jains in Western India.” in Callewaert, Winland M. and Rupert Snell eds. *According to Tradition Hagiographical Writing in India*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 1994.
- “Being in the Minority: Medieval Jain Reactions to other Religious Groups.” in Bhattacharyya N.N. ed. 1994.
- “Ritual and Biography: The case of Bappabhaṭṭasūri,” in Granoff and Shinohara eds. 1994.
- “Patrons, Overlords and Artisans: Some Comments on the Intricacies of Religious Donations in Medieval Jainism.” *BDCRI* vols. 54-55 Sir William Jones Volume Commemorating the Bi-centenary of His Death (1994-1995): 269-91.

- “Jain Pilgrimage: In Memory and Celebration of the Jainas.” in Pal ed. 1995.
- “Sarasvatī’s sons: Biographies of Poets in Medieval India.” *AS* XLIX. 2 (1995): 351-75.
- “Tobatsu Bishamon: Three Japanese Statues in the United States and an Outline on the Rise of this Cult in East Asia.” *EW* 20 (1970): 144-167.
- “Paradigms of Protection in early Indian Religious Texts, or an essay on What to do with your Demons.” In *Essays in Jaina Philosophy and Religion*. Ed. Piotr Balcerowicz. 97-128. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2003.
- Forthcoming. “Images and their Ritual use in Medieval India: Hesitations and Contradictions.” In *Images in Asian Religion: Texts and Contexts*.
- Granoff, Phyllis.ed. *The Clever Adultress and Other Stories: A Treasury of Jain Literature*. Oakville, Canada : Mosaic Press, 1992.
- Gronoff, P. and Koichi Shinohara. *Speaking of Monks: Religious Biography in India and China*. Oakville, Canada: Mosaic Press, 1988.
- *Other selves: Autobiography and Biography in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Oakville, Canada : Mosaic Press, 1994.
- Hacker, P. “Zur Entwicklung der Avatāralehre.” In *WZKSO AIP* Vol.4 (1960), 47-70.
-*Prahlāda, Werden und Wandlungen einer Idealgestalt*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1959.
- Handiqui, Krishna Kanta. *Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture*. Sholapur: Jaina Sankṛti Samrakshaka Sangha, 1949.
- Härtel, H. and Moeller, V.eds. *Indologen Tagung 1971: Verhandlung der Indologischen Arbeitstagung im Museum für Indische Kunst Berlin*. Wiesbaden: Franzsteiner Verlag, 1973.
- Excavations at Sonkh. 2500 Years of a Town in Mathura District. With Contributions by Hans- Jürgen Paeche and Rolf Weber. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1993.
- Hardy, Friedhelm. *Viraha-Bhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Hawley, J.S. *Krishna: the Butter Thief*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.

Hawley, J.S, Donna Marie Wulff, eds. *The Divine Consort: Rādhā and the Goddesses of India*. Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union/ Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982.

Hazra, R.C. *Studies in the Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2nd ed. 1975.

Hein, N. “A Revolution in Kṛṣṇaism: The Cult of Gopāla.” *HR* (1986): 296-317.
-“Kalayavana, A Key to Mathura’s Cultural Self-Perception.” 223-35. *Mathura: Cultural Heritage*. Ed. Doris Srinivasan, 1989.

Held, Gerrit Jan, *The Mahabharata: An Ethnological Study*. Amsterdam: Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1935.

Hill, Peter, “Individual Responsibility in the Mahabharata.” *SA* 16.2 (1993): 3-20.

Hiltebeitel, Alf. “The Mahabharata and Hindu Eschatology.” *HR* 12 (1972-73): 129-37.

- *The Ritual of Battle, Krishna in the Mahābhārata*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976.

-“Kṛṣṇa and the Mahabharata: A Bibliographical Essay.” *ABORI* 60 (1979): 65-107

-“Kṛṣṇa at Mathura.” *Mathura: A Cultural Heritage*. Ed. Srinivasan Doris, 93-102. Varanasi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1989..

Holzmann, Adolf (jun). *Über das Alte Indische Epos*. Durlach: Gymnasium, 1881.

- *Das Mahabharata und seine Theile*. 4 vols. reprint. Osnabrück: Biblio, 1971 (first edn. Kiel: C.F. Haeseler)

Hopkins, E.W. *The Hindu Religious Tradition*. Encino: Dickenson Publishing Company, 1971.

-“The Epic Use of *Bhāgavat* and *Bhakti*.” *JRAS* (1914): 727-38.

-“Gleanings from the *Harivamśa*.” *Festschrift für Ernst Windisch*. Leipzig:Harrasowitz, 68-77.

- *The Great Epic of India. Its Character and Origin*. Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1901 (first edn. 1978).

Hospital, C.G. “Līlā in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.” *Purāṇa* 22.1 (1980): 4-22.

Ingalls, D. H. H. “The *Harivamśa* as a *Mahākāvya*.” *Mélanges d’Indianisme à la*

- Mémoire de Louis Renou*, ed. Herman Jacobi, 381-94. Paris: Éditions E. de Boccard, 1968.
- Jacobi, H. "Incarnation (Indian)." *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. ed. J. Hastings, 193-7. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 7 (1914).
- "Über Viṣṇu- Nārāyaṇa- Vāsudeva." Ed. Bernard Kölver. *Kleine Schriften*. 2 vols. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1970.
- Jackson, A. M.T. and R.E. Ethoven. *Folklore of Gujarat*. New Delhi: Vintage Books. Second ed. 1989.
- Jain, Muni Uttam Kamal. *Jaina Sects and Schools*. Delhi: Concept Publishing co., 1975.
- Jaini, Padmanabh S. *The Jaina Path of Purification*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. 1979.
- "Jaina Monks from Mathurā: Literary Evidence for Their Identification on Kuṣāṇa Sculptures." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* Vol. LVIII pt.3 (1995): 479-94.
- Jaiswal, S. *Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967.
- Joshi, M.C. "Archaeology and Indian Tradition: Some Observations." *Purātattva* 8 (1975-76): 98-102.
- Joshi, N.P. *Iconography of Balarama*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1979.
- "Some Kuṣāṇa Passages on the Harivamśa." Härtel, H, Moeller 1973: 238-52.
- *Mātṛkās. Mothers in Kuṣāṇa Art*. New Delhi: Kanak Publications, 1986.
- Kane, P.V. *History of Dharma Śāstra: Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law in India*. 5 vols. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 2nd ed. Revised and enlarged 1968-75 (first edn. 1930-62).
- Kangle, R.P. Trans. *The Arthaśāstra: A Critical Edition with a Glossary*. Bombay: University of Bombay, 1960.
- Katre, S.L. "Avatāras of God." *Allahabad University Studies* 10 (1934): 37-130.
- "Kṛṣṇa, Gopas, Gopīs and Rādhā." *Journal of Ganganath Jha Research Institute* 1 (1960): 118-122.
- Katz, R. Cecily. *Arjuna in the Mahabharata: Where Krishna is there is Victory*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989.

- Keny, L.B. “The Origin of Nārāyaṇa.” *ABORI* 23 (1942): 250-6.
- Kirfel, W. *Das Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa*. 1st Indian ed. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1979.
- Lahiri, B. *Indigenous States of Northern India (Circa 200 B.C. to 320 A.D.)*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1974.
- Mac Donell, A.A. *The Vedic Mythology*. Varansi: Indological Book House, 1963.
- Majumdar, M.R. “Dwārakā Image of Raṇachhodjī and the Temple at Dākore.” *JUB* Vol. 16 no.4 (1948): 56-91.
-*Cultural History of Gujarat*. Bombay: Popular Prakasan, 1965.
- Malamoud, C. *Cooking the World: Ritual and Thought in Ancient India*. Trans. David White. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Mallison, Francoise. “Saint Sudāma of Gūjarāt: Should the Holy be Wealthy?” *JOIB* vol. XXIX. No. 1-2 (Sept-Dec. 1979):90-99.
- “The cult of Sudāma in Porbandar- Sudāmapurī.” *JOIB*. Vol. XXIX, no. 3-4 (March-June 1980): 216-223.
- Monier-Williams, Sir M. *Etymological Sanskrit English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956, (first ed. 1899).
- Mukherjee, R. *The Lord of the Autumn Moons*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1957.
- Mukherji, S.C. “The cult of Ekānamśa.” *IHQ* 35 (1959):189-208.
- Narain, A.K. *The Indo-Greeks*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.
-“Two Hindu Divinities on the coins of Agathocles from Ai-Khanum.” *JNSI* 35 (1973): 73-77.
- O’Flaherty, W.D. *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1980 (first edn. 1976).
- Olivelle, P. Trans. *Upaniṣads*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Pargiter, F.E. *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*. London: Oxford University, 1922.
- Rao, T.A.G. *Elements of Hindu Iconography*. 2 Vols. New York: Paragon Book 1968 (first edn. 1914).

- Preciado-Solis, B. *The Kṛṣṇa Cycle in the Puranas: Themes and Motifs in a Heroic Saga*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984.
- Rocher, L. *The Purāṇas, A History of Indian Literature Vol.2*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1986.
- Rosenfield, J.M. *The Dynastic Arts of the Kuṣāṇas*. Berkely: University of California Press, 1967.
- Sax, W.S. ed. *The Gods at Play: Lila in South Asia*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Schrader, F.O. *Introduction to Pancharatra and the ahirbudhnya Samhita*. Madras: Adyar Library, 1973.
- Shah, U.P. "Iconography of the Jain Goddess Ambikā." *JUB* Vol. 9, pt.2 (1940): 147-169.
- Iconography of the Jaina Goddess Saraswatī*. Reprint. *JUB* Vol. X, pt.2 (Sept. 1941):
- "Brahma- Śānti and KapardhīYakṣas." *JMSUB* vol. VII, no.1 (March, 1958): 59-72.
- "Introduction of Śāsanadevatās in Jaina Worship." *PTAIOC* 25th session. Oct. 1959, Vol.II, pt. 1, 141-152.
- Jaina- Rūpa-Maṇḍana*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1987.
- Shah, U.P and M.A. Dhaky eds. *Aspects of Jaina Art and Architecture*. Ahmedabad: L.D. Institute of Indology, 1975.
- Sheth, N. *The Divinity of Krishna*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1984.
- Shinohara, Koichi and Gregory Schopen eds. *From Banares to Beijing: Essays on Buddhism and Chinese Religion*. Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1991.
- Shulman, D. *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Śaiva Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.
- Singer, M. *Krishna: Myths, Rites and Attitudes*. Chicago: University Press, 1968.
- Sircar, D. C. *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*. Vol. 1.

- Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1965.
- Solomon, T.J. “Early Vaiṣṇava Bhakti and Its Autochthonous Heritage.” *HR* 10, 1 (1970): 32-48.
- Sontheimer, D.G. *Pastoral Deities in Western India*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1989.
- Srinivasan, D. “Early Vaiṣṇava Imagery: Caturvyūha and Variant Forms.” *AAA* 32 (1979): 39-54.
- Mathura: The Cultural Heritage*. American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi, 1989.
- Many Heads, Arms and Eyes: Origin, Meaning and Form of Multiplicity in Indian Art*. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- Thapar, R.. *A History of India*. Vol.1. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966.
- From Lineage to state: Social Formations in the Mid-First Millennium B.C in the Ganga Valley*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000 (first ed. 1984).
- Thaplyal, K.K. *Studies in Ancient Indian Seals. A Study of North Indian Seals and Sealings from circa 3c B.C to Mid- Seventh Century A.D.* Lucknow: Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad, 1972.
- Vaidya, C.V, “The Date of Bhāgavata Purāṇa.” *JRAS Bombay* N S 1 (1925): 144-55.
- Vaudeville, C. “ Aspects du mythe de Kṛṣṇa-Gopala dans l’Inde ancienne”, *Mélanges d’Indianisme à la Mémoire de Louis Renou*, ed. H. Jacobi, 737-61. Paris: Éditions E. de Boccard, 1966.
- Verardi, Giovanni. “The Kuṣāṇa Emperors as *Cakravartins*. Dynastic Arts and Cults in India and Central Asia: A History of a Theory, Clarifications and Refutations.” *EW* 33 (1983): 225-294.
- Zwalf, W. *A Catalogue of Gandhāra Sculptures in the British Museum*. Vol. I and II. London: British Museum Press. 1991.

Figure 1

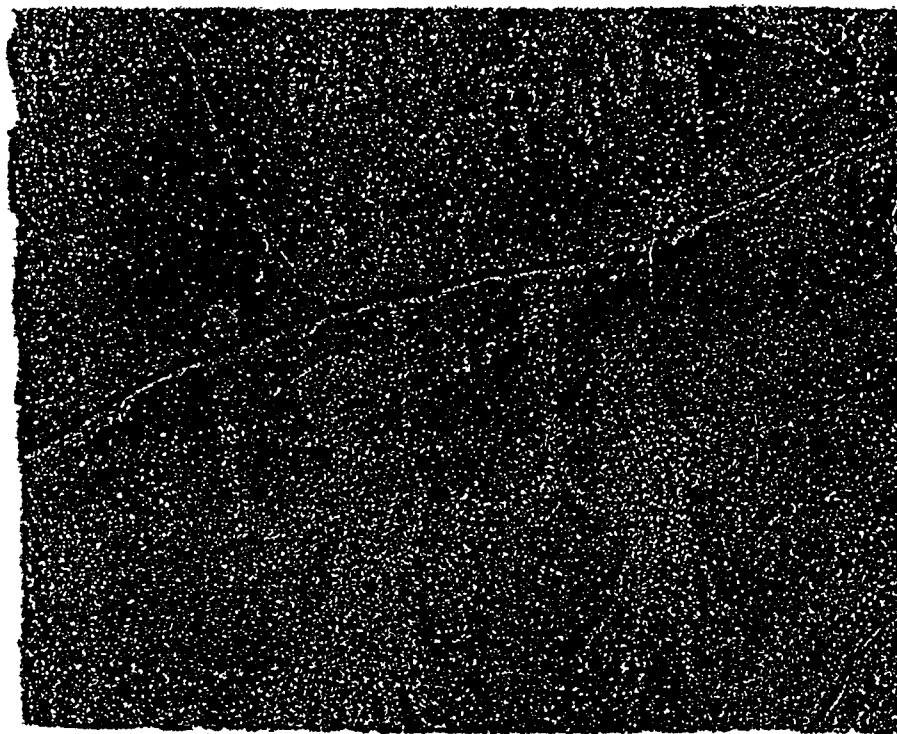


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

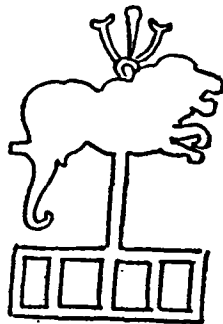


Figure 6



Figure 6 a



Figure 7



Figure 7a



Figure 8

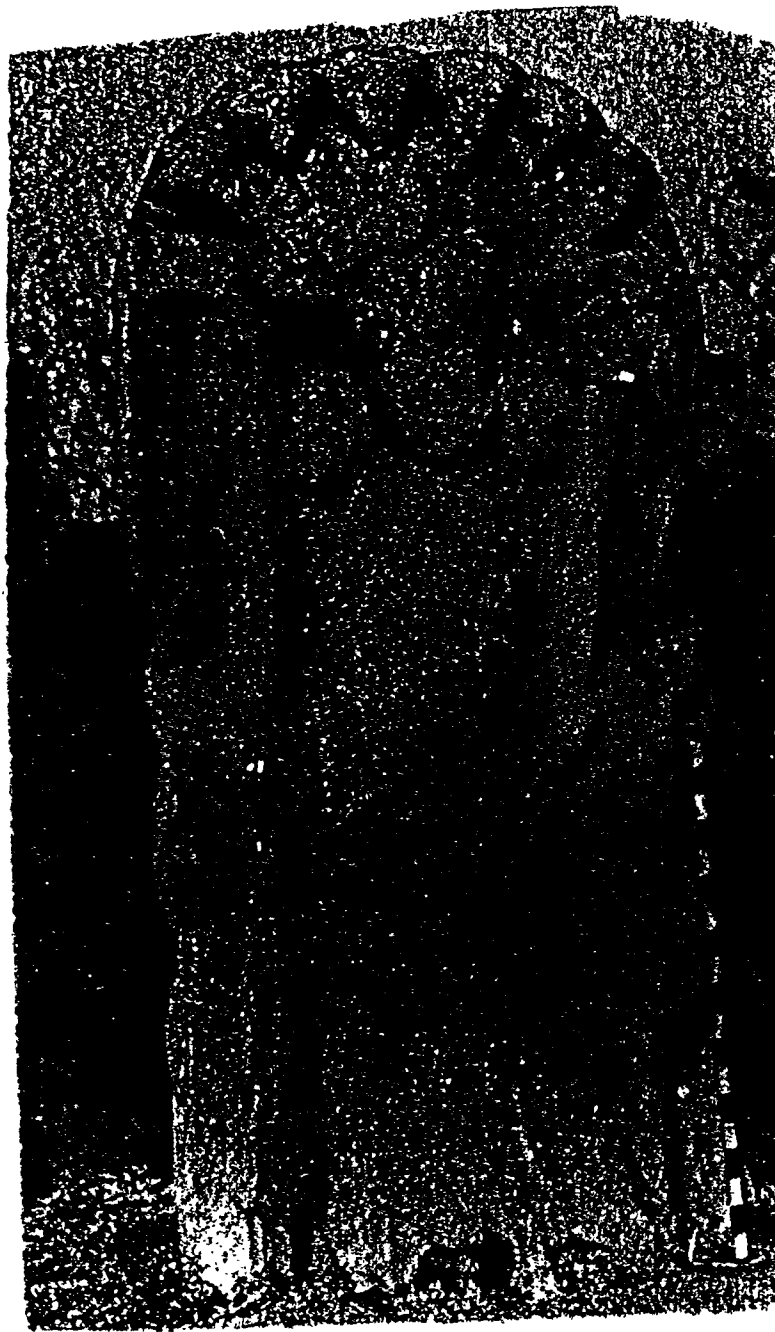


Figure 9



Figure 12a

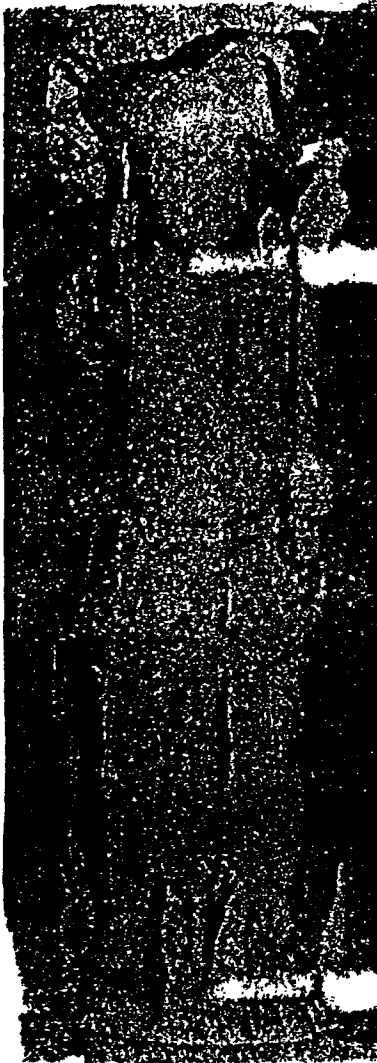


Figure 12b

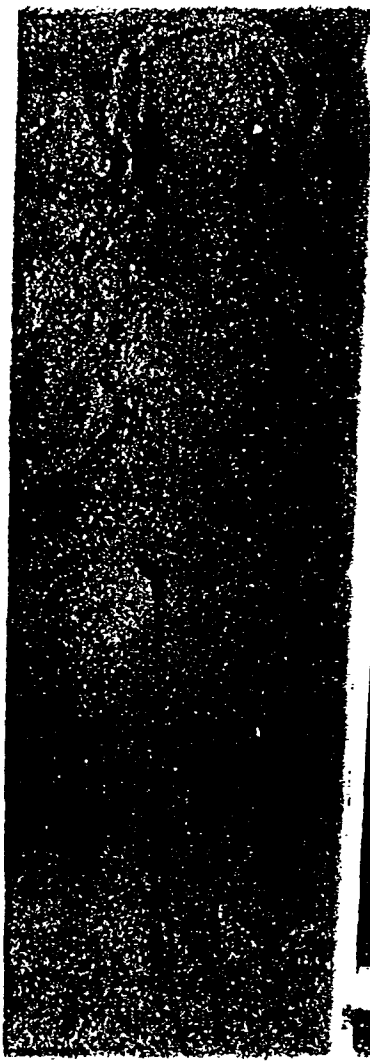


Figure 12c

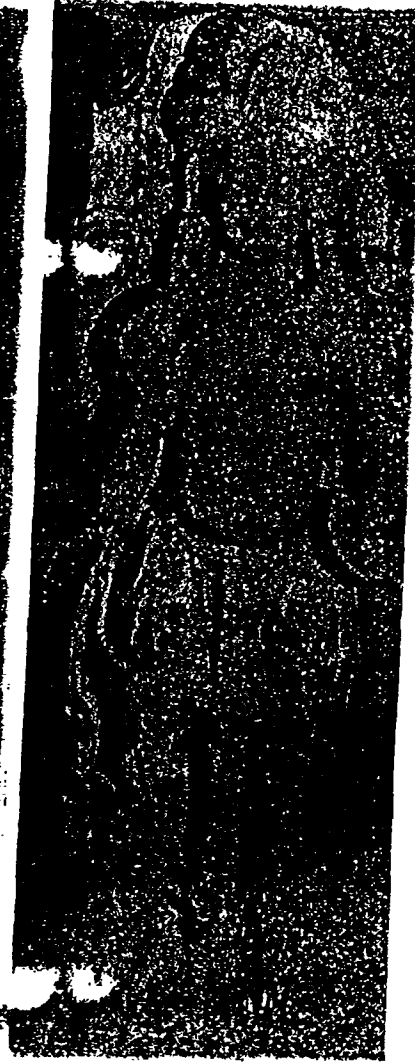


Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 13



Figure 14

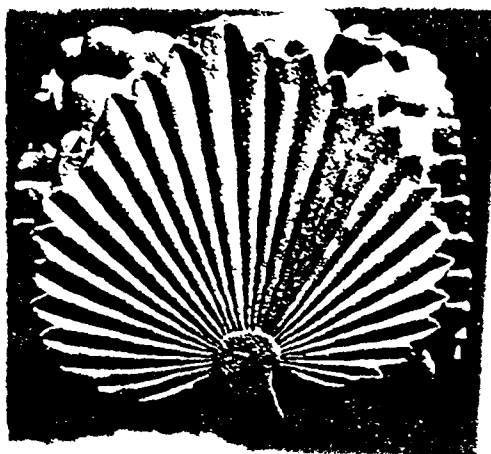


Figure 15



Figure 15a

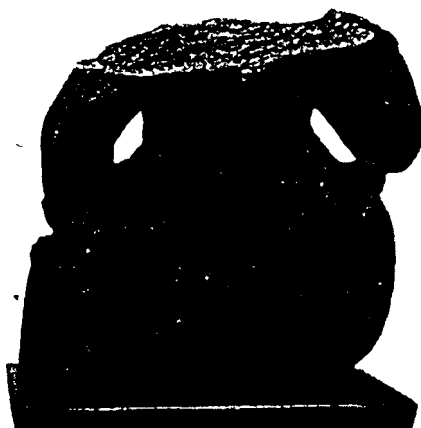


Figure 16

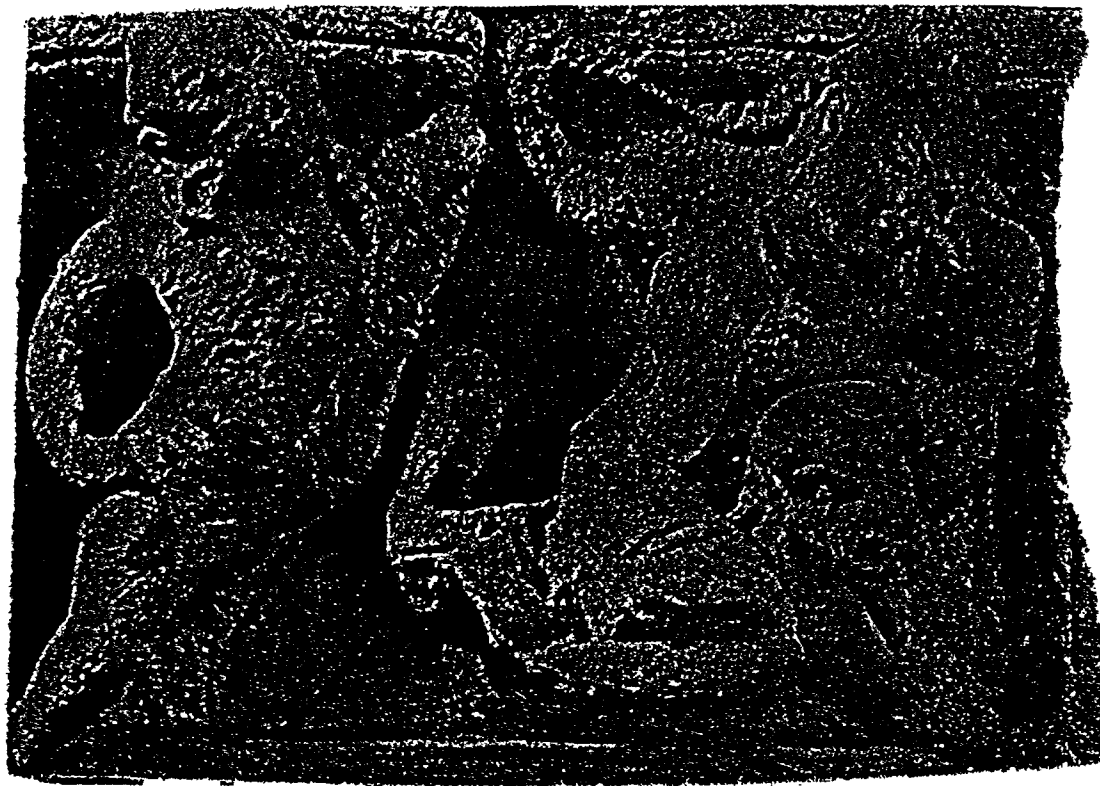


Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22

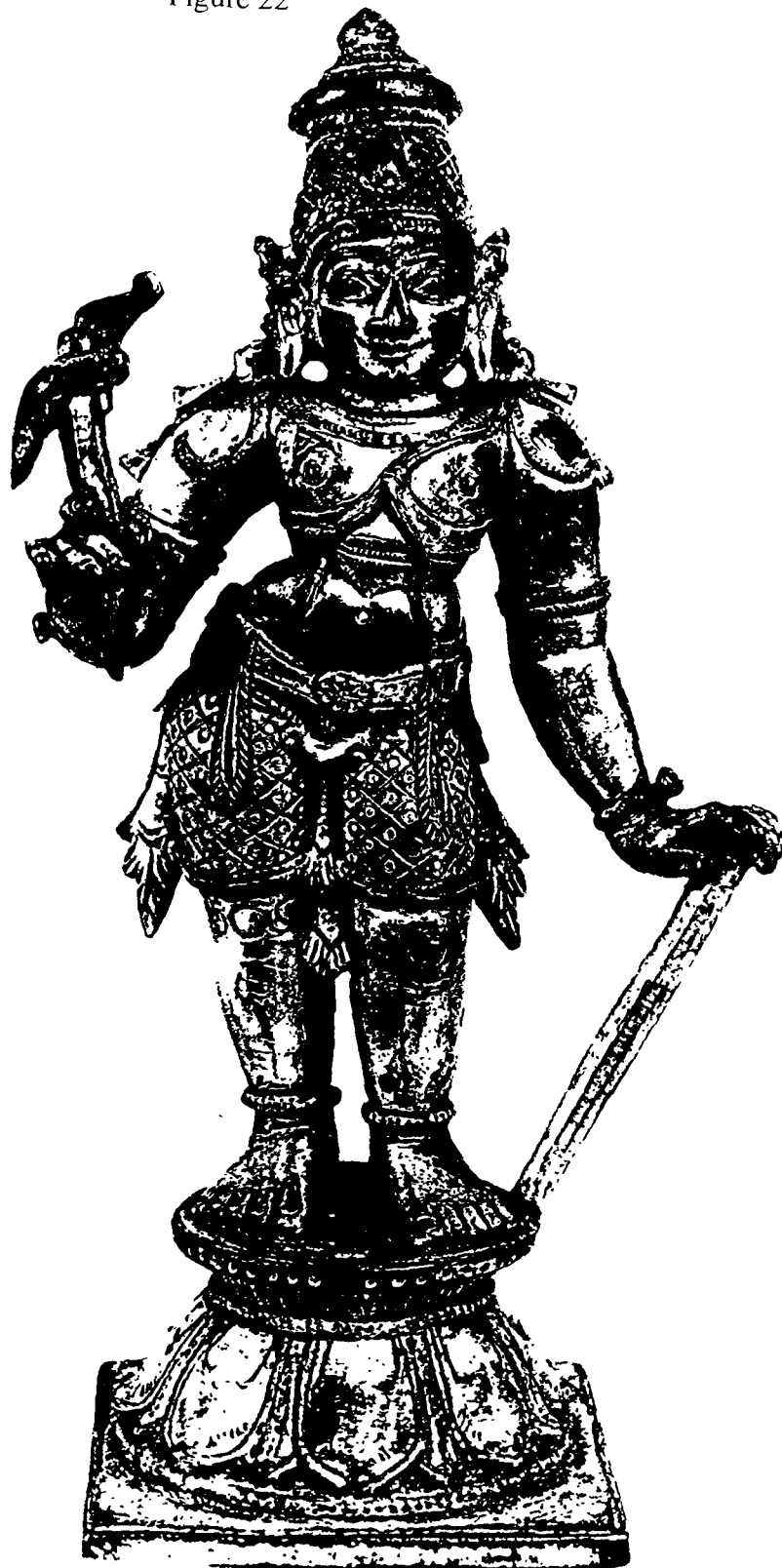


Figure 23

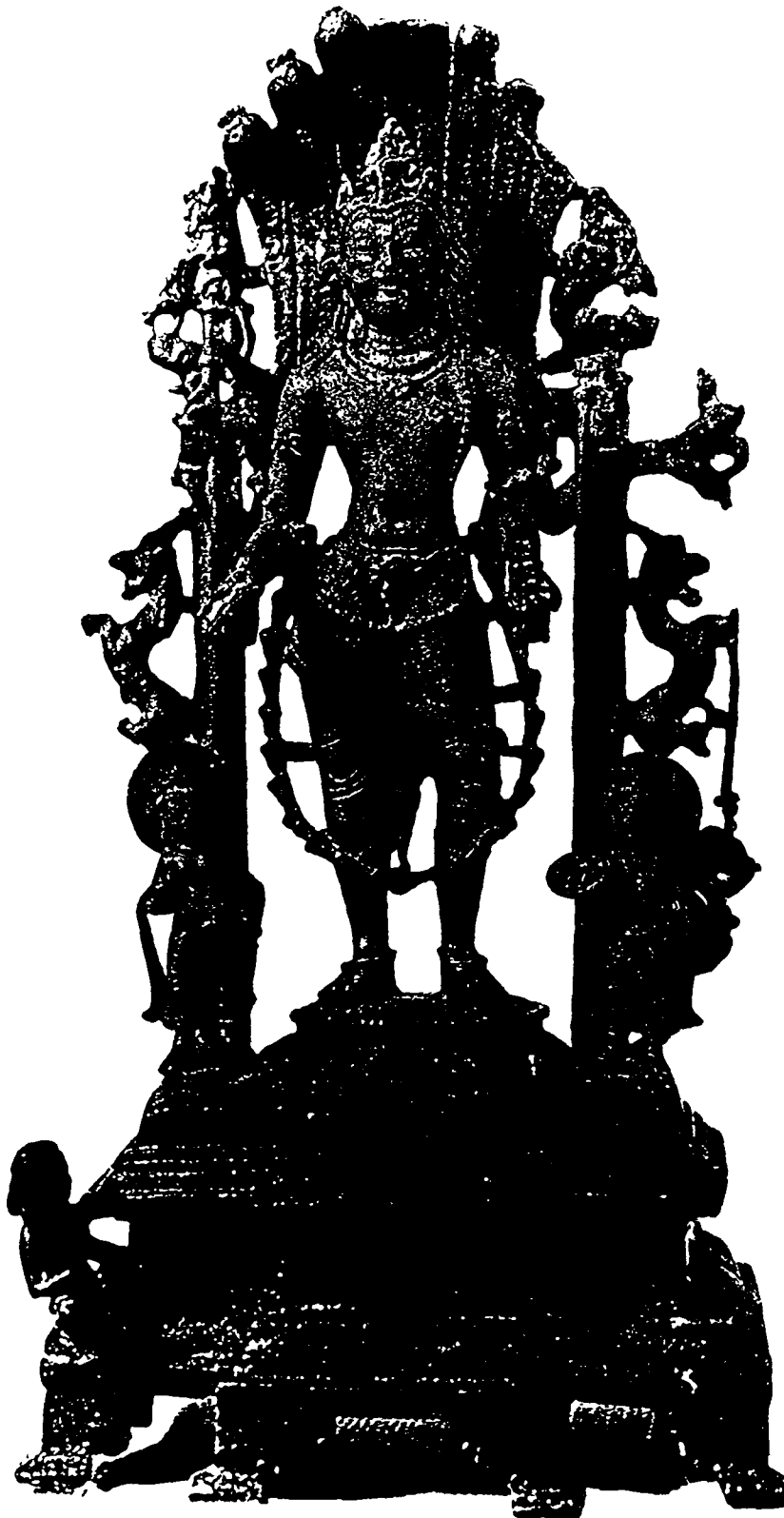


Figure 24



