The Narasimha Images in Pakistan

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Many sculptural reliefs showing the images of Narasimha (the 4th avatāra of Viśṇu) have been reported from different parts of the Indian subcontinent, however, the following exhibit some of the well-known examples:

1. Narasimha in yogic pose in a candrasālā of the Gupta period temple at Deogarh (Banerjea 1956: 417, Pl. XXIII, no. 3).
2. Peaceful Narasimha (in lālitāsana) on a terracotta seal (No. 191) from Basarh excavated in 1913-14 by D.B. Spooner, who claims it to be the oldest datable sculpture of this deity in India (Banerjea 1956: 417).
4. Seated Kevala Narasimha from Helebidu, Mysore, (Rāo 1914, I, i: 156, fig. XLIII).
5. Standing Kevala Narasimha from Cave No. III at Bādāmi (Rāo 1914: I, i: 156, fig. XLIII).

Bhaṭṭaśāli (1929:104-7, Pl. XXXVII, nos. a-d) has recorded a few Narasimha images in Hiranya vadham pose from Bangladesh. Recently two Narasimha icons were published one each by Abdul Aziz Farooq (1988: 21-30) and M. Nusim Khan (1998: 12-20, Pls. 1-2) both in private collections in Pakistan.

Since it is difficult to encompass here all major Narasimha images in the subcontinent, we have, therefore, concentrated on those presently known at Pakistan. Contrary to other Hindu gods and goddesses, Narasimha figures are rarely found in Pakistan. As such, we could trace only three images of the deity each housed:

A. At the 'National Museum of Pakistan', Karachi (Farooq 1988: 12-30).
B. In the private collection of General Babar at Peshāwar (Khan 1998: 12-20).
C. In a private collection of an anonymous collector at Peshāwar.

Before discussing the above-mentioned sculptures, it is pertinent to familiarise ourselves with the different mūrtis of Narasimha. Gopināṭh Rāo (1914 I, i: 149-61) enumerates the following four types:

1. Girija-Narasimha: Generally figured singly on padmāsana in the utkutika pose in which the fore-legs are kept in the position of meditation with the help of yogapatta (belt) going round them and the back of the body. Rāo uses this term synonymously with Yoga-Narasimha and Kevala-Narasimha. He maintains that the term 'Girija' is employed in the sense as if a lion emerges out of a mountain cave.
ii. Sthauṇa-Narasimha: The lion bursts out of a column in a terrific form to fight and put Hiranyakasaśi to an end thus also called Ugra-Narasimha who is shown seated on simhāsana.

iii. Yānaka-Narasimha: This kind of Narasimha is depicted seated on the shoulders of Garuḍa or the folds of Adiśeṣa. This Narasimha should have four arms, in two of which he carries śankha and cakra.

iv. Lākṣmi-Narasimha: This Narasimha is shown seated on padmasana in more or less lālitāsana with Lākṣmi seated on his lap.

R.S. Gupte (1980:31) gives three types—Girija, Sthauṇa and Yānaka, thus omitting Lākṣmi-Narasimha. Rahman Ali (1980: 127) closely follows Gopināth Rāo’s classification with the difference of avoiding the Girija type and, instead, gives Yoga and Kevala Narasimha images as two distinct groups. He records Sthauṇa-Narasimha (in action), Yoga-Narasimha (in meditation), Kevala-Narasimha (standing alone) and Lākṣmi-Narasimha (with his consort). Yānaka-Narasimha, in his list, is conspicuous by its absence, which in the words of Rāo (1914:1, i:154) is rarely noticed. Moreover, H.K. Śastri (1916:66-70, figs.43-5) designates another variety with the name of “Jvāla-Narasimha” (the fiery Narasimha). This is the personified Sudarāṣṭa, brilliant like fire, having four, eight or sixteen arms. He should be represented seated in yogāsana (cf. Venkatachari 1987:268, figs.). This type is also called “Sudarāṣṭa-Narasimha” (cf. Venkatachari 1987:269).

Of the three Narasimhamūrtis at our disposal, Numbers 1 and 3 are Sthauṇa or Ugra-Narasimha, while Number 2 represents Kevala-Narasimha. Let us discuss them in the same sequence.

A. Sthauṇa-Narasimha in the National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi (Pls. 1-4)

This sculpture was published by Abdul Aziz Farooq (1988:21-30) together with other images of Hindu deities lying preserved either on display or in the reserve of the National Museum of Pakistan at Karachi (Pl. 1). Unfortunately, the learned scholar did not elaborate the sculpture and made himself content with rather insufficient and superficial study perhaps because of the nature of his work.

The relief sculpture depicting the Narasimha avatāra of Viṣṇu measures 65 x 35 cms. and is apparently divided into two parts. The lower part serves as pedestal while above the mahāmbuja (or viśvapadma) (i.e. double petalled lotus, one set of whose petals pointing upwards and the lower set gracefully dropping down, see Banerjee 1956: 299) is the arch-typed panel where the whole story is more systematically accommodated. The sculpture was first reported by N.K. Bhāṭṭaśāli (1929:104-5, Pl. XXXVII, No. 3A (i)d/2) followed by Kamal Ray (1985: 379) and Banerjea (in Majumdar 1963 : 436) among the masterpieces of the Pāla and Sena art discovered from the District of Dacca (Bangladesh). (For the general history of the Pālas and the Senas, see Majumdar 1980: 164-71; Dani 1992: 174-92; Hayat 1996: 19-35).

This Ugra-Narasimha is in alīḍhāsana which is consistient with the description of the Viṣṇudharmottara (Rāo 1914:1, i: 153-4). He is shown bedecked with his usual ornaments. Vanamālā can be seen between the two knees and the auspicious jewel, Kaustubha (?), tightly clung to his neck (Garrett 1987:328; Swati 2001:84). The deity wears karaṇḍamukuta (Rāo 1914, 1, i : 151) in contrast to his other forms where he is shown putting on kiritamukuta. The tip of the nose, upper lip and the area around the face as well as the left eye are scratched which partly mar beauty of the figure. The protruding tongue and jaws in the angrily opened mouth are visible. Eyes are wide open and look directly at the observer (Pl. 2).

Bhāṭṭaśāli (1929:105) asserts that the divine wrath is personified as flames shooting upwards behind the head of the deity. But the author does not incline to convince with this explanation and rather suggests that it may be the thick mane (cf. Rāo, 1914, 1,i:152). If we take them to be
flames, then the leonine head will remain deprived of mane which is quite strange. Rahman Ali (1980:128, Pl.23) mentions a Narasimha image, discovered by Banerjee from Manora, a small village near Bhadanpur Railway Station in District Satna, Madhya Pradesh. This four-armed Sthauṣa-Narasiṣṭha holds saṅkha (?) in his upper right hand and cakra in the corresponding upper left. With the lower two hands, the god is shown pulling out the entrails of the demon-king. The deity is represented in Ugra pose whose "...mane and shaggy hair are shown raised in air" (Ali 1980:128). Pratāpaditya Pāl (1985:28-29, fig.6) favours in recording a Sthauṣa Narasiṣṭha then standing in the Changu Nārāyaṇa temple (Nepal) dated in the 12th century (formerly dated to 8th century). The very words of P. Pāl (1985:29) "...the enraged god with his mane flying like flames..." further substantiate our view.

The artist was not a novice as the modeling and plasticity of the image suggest who had a long apprenticeship in producing images of artistic perfection par excellence. The whole story is adequately accommodated in a single panel by giving a proper place to each episode glorifying the figure of god boldly projecting against the background. Although in alidhāsana, the god is shown taking the support of a three-stripped bench set transversely across the panel to sit on while throwing Hiranyakaśipu on his lap. Gopalkrishnan (1996:424-5, fig.11) labels this type of scene as "Narasimha-Hiranya vadham".

The discussion between Prahlāda and Hiranyakasipu is portrayed to the left of the deity. While the scene showing the demon-king kicking the column of the verandah of his palace with his right foot can be seen to the right. The two-storeyed column rests on a plinth with a rectangular plain abacus at the top. The god is furiously bursting out of the column with raised hands as if he is coming to wane the haughtiness of the demon-king and to help, in disguise, his ardent devotee, Prahlāda (Pl. 3).

The two natural (front) hands of the caturabhuja Sthauṣa-Narasimha are shown engaged in tearing open the entrails of Hiranyakasipu (Pl. 4). Bhaṭṭaśāli (1929:105) and Kamal Ray (1941:379) unanimously hold that the upper right and left hands display abhaya and tarjani mudras respectively. The author, however, is not inclined to agree with the view of the learned scholars and, instead, suggests the two well-known attributes of saṅkha and cakra respectively for the right and left hands in spite of latter's being badly mutilated from elbow to the tips of the fingers yet the countenance of the broken part of the left hand suggests once its having held a cakra (cf. Rāo 1914: I.i:152; In South India, the four armed Narasimha holds in extra hands saṅkha and cakra, see Joshi 1987:243). Material evidence from other parts of India may be cited in the support of our opinion. Sthauṣa Narasimha from Manora (District Satna, M.P.) and Gurh hold in either case saṅkha and cakra in his upper right and left hands respectively (Ali 1980:128-9, Pl. 23). R.S. Gupte (1980:31) gives similar attributes for these hands. B.N. Sharma (1969:422, fig.16) reports a caturbhujya Narasimha now in the National Museum, New Delhi, originally belonging to the Sena ascendancy in Bengal (now Bangladesh). The upper right hand, according to him, holds an identifiable object while the corresponding left is mutilated. Perhaps both hands might have held saṅkha and cakra. Śaṭṭī (1916:26) suggests saṅkha and cakra for the two upper hands of Narasimha in all his forms.

Our Narasimha is profusely bejeweled with his usual ornaments such as karanḍamukuta, square tilak on the forehead, valaya (bracelet), keyūrās (armlets), nūpurās (anklets) and short and long hāras symbolizing victory of Viśnū. The short hāra (perhaps Kaustubha) is woven of beads and precious gems with a central locket. The long hāra is composed of two strands of beads the outer of which shows a śrīvatsa locket.

Śrīvatsa is an equally important symbol in the Brahmanical, Jain and Buddhist texts and is an emblem of mahāpuruṣa (great persons). It is one of the aṣṭamaṅgalas whose antiquity is traced back to 6th century BC (Śrīvastava 1979: 38). Śrīvatsa appears to be symbolic representation of the goddess Śrīdevī (or Lakṣmīi), the consort of Viśnū, in recognition of latter's intense love for the former (Rāo, I, ii,1914: 373). Association of śrīvatsa with Viṣṇu is already explained in the
Rāmāyaṇa (Śrīvastava: 47). It is absent on Viṣṇu images in the Gupta period but popularised in the medieval period (Ibid.:48). The śrīvatsa in the long hāra of this deity is fashioned in the form of four petals around a small circle and is comparable to its examples of 11-12th centuries (Ibid.:50, figs. 5.25, 5.26, 5.30, 5.32), a date which one way or the other corresponds to the Pāla-Sena rule in Bengal. It is sometimes described as a mole of hair on the chest of Viṣṇu symbolising his immortality (Swati 2001:84; Banerjea 1956: 290 fn.). Kaustubha and śrīvatsa of Viṣṇu are also equated with the sun and moon (Bhaṭṭaśāli 1929: 78 fn. Actually both the hāras adorn the neck and the breast of Narasimha—kantī or graiveyaka, which is a broad necklace close to the neckline like a collar and the long one is decorated with śrīvatsa mark serving as jewel-cape. See Stronge 1995:6-10; Banerjea 1956:290).

The Narasimha is shown trampling under the left foot a prostrate male figure perhaps an apasmarapurusa (cf. Ali 1980: 128-30). In the New Delhi example, B.N. Sharma (1969:423, fig. 16) identifies a similar figure as Hiranyakṣipu who is finally trampled on by the deity. But in our case, in each scene of the stele, the god is shown engaged with Hiranyakṣipu at one time. It does not appear reasonable that the god should be represented simultaneously ripping the entrails of the demon-king and trampling him under his foot. We are, rather, inclined to identify the male figure under the left foot of Narasimha either an apasmarapurusa (personified evil or evil of forgetfulness) or a combatant of the host of demons whom the deity wished to crush simultaneously with the killing of Hiranyakṣipu (Ali 1980: Pl. 23). However, identification of the kneeling figure beside his right leg is a bit puzzling. The figure, if not Śrīdevi, may be Prahlāda who is shown busy in adoring his master deity and praying in aljalimudrā to obtain his blessings (Bhaṭṭaśāli 1929:105; Farooq 1988: 26). According to a manuscript of the Vaikhānasagama, Gopināth Rāo (1914, I, i: 153) maintains, on the right and left of the Sthāna Narasimha, while busy in killing Hiranya, should be represented Śrīdevi, Bhūdevi, Nārada and Prahlāda in aljalimudrā to "appease the highly excited wrath" of the god (cf. Ali 1980: 130).

There are two vidyadharas one each on either side towards the top of the relief panel (Huntington 1985:730, figs.18.25, 18.28). They may not be gandharvas as asserted by some scholars (Ali 1980:130; Farooq 1988:26). The vidyadharas, or bearers of wisdom, are here shown in complete human rather than hybrid form. They fly towards the principal deity and the floral wreaths they carry symbolise victory (Stutley 1977:382). It became one of the characteristic features of the later Pāla sculptural art of Bengal (Harle 1986:214).

Almost in the middle of the panel, three horizontal strips are carved extending to the decorative margins of the panel. In alidhāsana, Narasimha takes the support of this seat just to make room for stretching the body of Hiranyakṣipu in his lap. It might represent the door sill of the verandah of the palace of Hiranyakṣipu where he was destined to be killed to honour the immunity boon of Brahmā. The scene showing Narasimha dissecting the entrails of the demon-king is called Narasimha-Hiranya vadham (Gopalkrishnan 1996:424-5, fig.11).

A distinguishing feature of the lapidary sculpture of the Bengal school of art is the depiction of Kṛttimukha design (the face of glory) at the top centre of the relief panel. "Kṛttimukha serves primarily as an apotropaic demon-mask, a gruesome, awe-inspiring guardian of the threshold. The votary, however—the orthodox devotee—greets the 'face' with confidence and faith; for he knows that Kṛttimukha is an active portion of the substance of the divinity himself, a sign and agent of his protective, fiend-destroying wrath" (Zimmer 1953:182). It also defends the staunch believers, their homes and hearts from the tyrant forces of the greedy world (Ibid.:180). This magical device renders beauty to the place above the lintels in Śivaite temples to guard the entrance whereupon the whole "strength and stability" rests (Stutley 1977:148; Donaldson 1976:419). Zimmer (1953:175-85) has given a detailed account of the mythology associated with the motif (cf. Stutley 1977;148). The Skanda Purāṇa, according to him, relates that Jalandhara, the Titan king, received boons from gods in reward for his extraordinary austerities. He sent Rāhu (the eclipse-demon) to Śiva commanding him to surrender Pārvati (his bride-to-be). Hearing this, Śiva became extremely
furious and manifested from his third eye a terrifying lion-headed demon "with emaciated body and flying mane". Having seen, Rāhu feared and prayed for taking refuge in Śiva. Now the lion-headed demon requested for food. Śiva asked him to eat his own body and limbs; and he did so leaving only his head but his hunger did not appease. Śiva pleased with his compliance and granted him the name Kirttimukha and said that he should dwell at his doorsil and those who fail to worship him will never attain Śiva's grace. It is symbolic manifestation of the terrible aspect of Śiva. Besides its application as *horror vacui*, it was a sacred symbol depicted for its auspicious effect (Nath 1978:125; 1986:60).

The lower part of the *stele* which serves as pedestal (*pītha*) must have undergone some stages in the course of its evolution during the political supremacy of the Pālas and Senas in Bengal. In the beginning, J.C.Harle (1986:215-6) suggests, the slab was rounded at the top and the pedestal bore one projection (*ekaratha*). By the end of 10th century, when the production of the Hindu images was highly patronised by the local rulers, the slab took a pointed shape at the top crowned by *Kirttimukha*. Now, the base became *pañcaratha* (having five projections) and *saptaratha* (with seven projections) but the number was never even (cf. Banerjea 1956:299).

The present Rāmpāl *Sthauṇa Narasirpha* is provided with a *pañcarathā* base decorated with lotus scrolls, donors and Garuḍa (Farooq 1988:26). These separate *stelae* were either placed in the niches to decorate buildings or in the shrines serving as the main object of devotion (Huntington 1985:388).

A bulk of the stone sculptures of the Bengal school under the Pāla and Sena kings (8th-12th centuries) was rendered in a type of locally-quarried, fine-grained, slate stone designated as "black chlorite" (Bhaṭṭaśālī 1929:xviii-xix; Huntington 1985:388). The rock was "weather resisting" with "non-crystalline grains" which resulted in the minute carvings and high polish. Sculptures carved out in this rock were of sharp clean-cut features and of oily finish. This raw material was quarried from Rājmahal hills "just where the Ganges leaves Bihar and enters Bengal" (*Ibid.*: xviii; cf. Majumdar 1963:429). The chiselled slabs were transported by means of boats to supply to all art centres in Bengal. One side of the large slab was used by the sculptor for carving (*Ibid.*: xix). Sculptures in other than black chlorite are met with but rarely.

B. *Kevala Narasirpha in Peshāwar* (Pl. 5)

The *Kevala-Narasirpha* or *Yoga-Narasirpha* is an important mythological aspect of the man-lion incarnation of Viṣṇu. In Indian art, almost each and every stage in portraying the myth of killing the demon-king, Hiranyakasīpū, and that follow the destruction of evil or ignorance is beautifully visualised.

Since Viṣṇu is the "god of peace, tranquility and yogic meditation" (Banerjea 1956:417), he is held responsible for the preservation of the Universe and keeping the *Dharma* established. His taking every step, performing every act and assuming every form is destined, in disguise, to save the mankind and its abode, the earth. His assuming the terrific or *Ugra* form in the *vibhava* (*avatāra*) as Narasirṣa meant to safeguard human being and ensure their deliverance from the mischievous *asura* king (Bhaṇ 1987:378). Hiranyakasīpū had, in fact, extremely provoked the divine wrath of Narasirṣa and it was a difficult job to bring him to normality. Śāstri (1916:26) credits Prahlāda for praying earnestly to the master for coming into his peaceful form to be followed by yogic practice.

After the final extinction of Hiranyakasīpū and having liberated the world from his demonic grip, the god sat alone to meditate for some time in *yogāsana*. In iconplastic art, Narasirṣa in this form at this stage is designated as *Kevala-Narasirṣa* or *Yoga-Narasirṣa*. Besides his seated examples (Śāstri 1916:29,fig.19; Ohri 1991:84, Pl.466), a good number of standing images of *Kevala-Narasirṣa* are also reported (Rāo 1914,1:156, fig.XLIII; Harle 1974:Pl.25; Biswas *et al.* 1985: 39-41, Pls.VII-VIII). The sculpture in hand belongs to this stage of the Narasirṣa myth.
This inscribed Kevala Narasimha, now preserved in a private collection at Peshawar, was published by M. Nasim Khan (Khan 1998:12-20, Pls.1-2). The material utilised in fashioning the sculpture is white lime stone. The sculpture, measuring 34.5x24x10 cm. inclusive its pitha (pedestal), is contained within an arch-shaped recessed panel. The space left blank between the contours of the image and the outer lithic frame is schematically filled in with pointed leaves with prominent central ribs. This arrangement might have served as later prabhāvalī in an oval form with outstretching leaves as its Jālās (protruding tongues of flames) (Rao 1914, I:i: 32 introd.).

The dvībhuja (two-armed) god is shown in contemplative posture with crossed legs and both hands seem to meet on his lap just above the head of a bull. To elucidate the actual position of hands is a little confusing because of its being in eroded condition. Sculptural arrangement is consistent with the term "girija-Narasimha" signifying his emergence from mountain-cave or jungle (Rao, Ibid., 150), an appropriate place bearing congenial atmosphere for yogic practices.

Narasimha is shown seated on a simhāsana (Rao, Ibid.) covered with some sort of cushion or cloth with tassels hanging downwards frontally on the throne which is guarded by two lions. The right one is recumbent with frontally extended paws while that on the corresponding left is seated sejant with the forepaws standing erect. Among the distinguishing features of the present Narasimha is the absence of yogapatta (belt) which usually goes round the legs of the seated figure and his back (Burton 1992: 125) to keep him seated unshakably firm. This practice had been common among the yogis while performing deep meditation and self-mortification. The method is even still practised by a sphere of the Muslim mystics.

The most remarkable feature of our sculpture which makes it distinguished from its other counterparts in the rest of the subcontinent is the depiction of bull-head with full ears and horns as if gazing gently frontally at the observer. It was put forth that "the pleats of the skin of a bull, along with his head, fall on to the rectangular seat between the knees" (Khan 1998:13) without giving further iconographical or mythological interpretation for this sculptural arrangement. It is not strange to say that bull (ṛṣa) (also designated as Nandi or the propitious one) once represented Śiva himself in theriomorphic form "which later became his vāhana when Śiva was represented anthropomorphically" (Stutley 1977: 204; cf. Banerjea 1956: 252). Nandīvara and Adhikārānandī are his other names (Banerjea 1956:534). Nandi, Nandīśa or Nandikesvara is described as one of the Śivaganas. Originally an ascetic, Nandi rose to the status of the head of all Śivaganas by virtue of his austerities and devotion to Śiva (Sāstri 1916:162-3). The idea of the bull as the vāhana of Śiva may be traced prior to first century BC or first century AD (Banerjee: 535).

Bull (ṛṣa) is also described as one of the Sādhyas, the sons of Dharma, whose abode is sky from where they absorb water and other aqueous substances (Rāo 1916: II:i: 558,455-60, Pls. CXXXI, CXXXII). In the Mahābhārata, the term "Nandi" is used for the personified form of Dharma (moral law) and thus applied to Viṣṇu (Stutley 1977:204; Kalidos 1996:403). Dharma is enlisted among the minor avatāras of Viṣṇu (Rāo 1914, I:i: 265). Gopināth Rāo (Ibid.: 265-6), referring to the Brhaddharmapurāṇa, further reveals that Brahmā, having created the universe, craved for its enduring protection. So from his right side, sprang a being wearing kundalas in his hair, a hāra of white flowers round his neck and white sandal paste on his body. He had four legs and resembled a bull. He was called Dharma whom Brahmā took as his eldest son. The four limbs of Dharma are satya (truthfulness), dayā (mercy), sānti (peacefulness) and ahiṁsa (kindness) (Ibid.:266), that is why Dharma is associated with the bull. Banerjea (1956:573) in the context of ideology of the Hindu images mentions the bull (Śiva’s vāhana) as the Divine Dharma with four feet. Hopkins (1968:206) while discussing bull’s intimate association with the Epic Viṣṇu mentions the latter as "the bull, fond of bulls, with a bull like belly, having eyes and form and the acts of a bull, as he is gohita, Vṛṣapiṇya,...". Yajñāmūrti or Yajñēśa, another minor avatāra of Viṣṇu, is also described in the Rig Veda as a bull having four horns, three legs, two heads and seven hands (Rāo, 1914, I, i: 248).
It may be deduced from the above discussion that the bull represents the personification of the re-establishment of Dharma after killing the evil-doer, Hiranyakasipu, as Vishnu is the preserver of the Universe and the restorer of Dharma. At the completion of the task, the lord sat on meditation taking along the insignia (or the incarnated Dharma in the form of bull). The other interpretation of the depiction of bull or the skin of bull with head and fore-limbs in a position subservient to the lord connotes to the victory of Visnuism over Sivaism. Thus it may be the outcome of the sectarian conflict between the followers of Siva and Vishnu. The Vaisnavas might take bull as Siva or the vahan of Siva in a subdued form. Sivaite accounts, on the other hand, records that almost a similar feat was meted out to Narasimha, when Siva, heard of the destruction of his ardent devotee, Hiranyakasipu, assumed the form of a mythical hybrid animal, Sarabha or Sarabheśamūrti, killed Narasimha and "wore his skin as a garment using his face as an ornament on the chest" (Rao 1914:11:155). Sāstrī (1916:147-9, fig.94) gives the iconography of Sarabha, the hybrid form of Siva, on the authority of Kānñāgama as having eight legs, three eyes, long nails, two hands, leonine face, two wings and trampling on the body of Narasimha to crush his pride. The depiction of bull is thus significant.

The antiquity of the worship of Narasimha has been traced back to at least the Gupta age (Khan 1998:17). No doubt a good number of the images of this god are available produced during this period but in an already developed therianthropic form. It must have passed through formative stages which can be ascertained somewhere else in the domain of Indian art. Luckily, we have an artistically and iconographically interesting example of Narasimha flanked by five Vṛṣṇi viras (five great heroes) (probably the five Pāṇḍava brothers). This relief panel measures 1.5 x 0.6 metre and is housed in the State Museum, Hyderabad (India) (Nigam 1987:343). It is carved from creamish lime stone indigenously termed "Palnad marble" (Ibid.). The sculpture is reported from Kondamotu in District Guntur, Andhradesa (Ibid.:344).

The Narasimha, as an avatāra of Viṣṇu, occupies central position among the Vṛṣṇi heroes in the panel. Iconographically, Narasimha is seated frontally on a raised platform in sejant with the two forepaws standing erect which support the fore-part of his body and head. Two human hands issue from the back (at almost the shoulder level) of the lion holding gada (?) in the right and a beautifully executed cakra in his left hand. The image is further imparted beauty by placing a short Vanamālā and a hāra in his neck with śrīvatsa locket on his chest signifying its Vaiṣṇava association (Huntington 1985: 181-2).

The depiction of Narasimha is significant also because of its having been executed in a perfect leonine (theriomorphic) form with the only addition of two human hands holding the two common attributes of Viṣṇu (in contrast to his later representations in anthropomorphic from with leonine head). Curiously, and naturally as may be expected with his seated posture, the Narasimha is shown in ithyphallic form in that the erect penis might indicate his yogic potential "because Nṛsīma is a great yogin, having complete control over the sensual desires" (Nigam 1987:344). This relief panel is dated by Huntington (1985:181-2) in the late third century A.D., by Nigam (Ibid.) on the basis of style and execution in the third-fourth century A.D. and by M.C.Joshi (1987:206,211) in the fourth century AD—all seem to have benefitted from Abdul Wahid Khan’s work (1964:1-5). No doubt, the sculpture marks one of the early iconic representations of Narasimha when the idea of later therianthropic form of the deity was not yet fully evolved.

C. Sthāuṇa Narasimha in a Private Collection in Peshāwar (Pl. 6)

The sculpture, representing the Sthāuṇa-Narasimha, is presently lying in a private collection in Peshāwar. The owner, besides our making several requests, remained reluctant to let us visually examining it. Our description is, therefore, based merely on a single photograph given to the author by his teacher, Mr. Shah Nazar Khan, Assistant Professor, Department of Archaeology, University of Peshāwar, for identification. The author is indebted to him for kindly allowing the photograph for study. It is difficult to determine whether or not the piece of art is genuine—a riddle whose
solution needs personal inspection of the sculpture which is beyond our approach. The owner, however, favoured to inform that the sculpture is chiselled out of white marble and bought from Rawalpindi market.

The Narasimha is shown seated on a raised pedestal with a broad base and flattened top. The seat seems to have been fashioned in an unsuccessful attempt to reider a double lotus seat (*visvapadma*) (cf. Banerjea 1956:299). In contrast to the prescription of the *Viṣṇudharmottara* (cf. Rāo 1914, I, i: 154) which suggests *aliṇḍhāsana*, the deity sits in *pralambapādāsana* (the so-called European fashion). His feet rest on the inclined lower part of the *piṭha* such that the tip of the toes touches the broad base.

The god is draped in almost diaphanous garments whose folds can be seen on both shoulders and on calves (just above knees). The crown worn by the deity is a peculiar one and seems to have been composed of acanthus leaves. At the summit of the crown above the skull is a mutilated object. It may be a lotus like the Bādāmi Cave III example where a fully blossomed lotus is placed atop the head of Narasimha which is suggestive of the accumulation of yogic powers (Kalidos 1996::402, f.n.26).

Iconographically, the *caturabhuja* Narasimha holds a *cakra* and an oval-shaped *śaṅkha* in his upper right and left hands respectively (cf. Sivaramamurti 1974:418, Pl. 644; cf. Rāo, 1914, I, i:152; Joshi 1987:243 both record these attributes in reverse order). His two principal hands are shown busy in dissecting the abdomen of Hiranyakāśipu lying helplessly stretched on his lap. The head of the demon-king, with his dishevelled long hair, is placed on the right thigh of the deity. The mundane status of the demon-king before the divine sublimity of the god can fairly be understood from the anatomical composition of the relief sculpture. The ears of the Narasimha, though partly broken, are carved just above the temple which touches the god's *mukūta*.

The protruding tongue and the furious-looking eyes are expressive of the highly enraged state of the deity. The god is shown wearing minimal ornaments and, in this example, only multi-stranded *hūra* can be seen with a flower-shaped central locket which rests traditionally on his breast.

The Narasimha is attended by two figures one on either side in *aljālimudrā*. The figure on his left has lost his head while that on the right is intact. Traces of breasts, facial features and head-dress of the figures possibly suggest Śridevi and Bhūdevi who are shown engaged in imploring the master for subsiding his anger (cf. Rāo 1914: I, i: 153). An askew broken column can be seen behind the deity as if the god had just emerged out of it.

As stated earlier, so far as the sculpture is away from the eyes of art-historians, its originality will remain engulfed in a thick sheet of mist. It is too much to comment simply on an unseen sculpture. Keeping the dilemma of its originality aside, in many ways our sculpture artistically shows much affinity with the art-traditions of Northern India where they are mostly found (Ali 1980:127) and more precisely Kashmir and the Western Himalayan region. Therefore, this image can well be compared with a Narasimha of late 8 th century from Chamba (Ohri 1991;85, Pl.4.55).

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Bibliographic References


Pl. 2: Close-up of the bust of the above.
Pl. 3: Kicking at the column by Hiranyakasipu and bursting out of Narasimha from it.

Pl. 4: Hiranyakasipu in the lap of Narasimha who is tearing open his abdomen.
Pl. 5: Kevula Narasimha in a private collection in Peshawar

Pl. 6: Sthauna Narasimha in a private collection in Peshawar.