

G. VAISHNAVIS (VISHNUISM): Vishnu (the Vedic Heavenly King; Cat. 188); Vishvarupa (the almighty), Vaikunthanatha (Lord of Paradise), Narayana (creator, also Padmanabha, Anantashayin, Seshashayin), Lakshminatha or Srinata (Lord of Sri-Lakshmi the goddess of luck); 24 old forms, such as Keshava, Damodara, Vasudeva, and others. His ten incarnations (Avatara) are more popular: Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise), Varaha (boar), with Bhudevi (earth), Nrisimha (man-lion), Vamana (dwarf), the same as Trivikrama (conqueror of the three worlds), Parashurama (a Brahmin hero), Rama (the hero of the Ramayana epic), Krishna (the shepherd god, a hero of the Mahabharata epic and teacher of the Bhagavadgita, the holiest Hindu scripture); the wives Rukmini and Satyabhama, Buddha (reinterpretation of the founder of Buddhism) and Kalkin (the redeemer of the future, apparently the same as Yashodharman, liberator of India from the Huns in the sixth century A. D.). All these have been more or less displaced since the fifteenth century by Krishna and Rama, whose names today for practical purposes simply mean God. The myth of the love of Krishna for the shepherd-girls (Gopis) of the country of Mathura, particularly for Radha and her dancing (Rasamandala) in the Brinda Forest, has become the song of the mystic love between God and the soul. Rama and Sita (abducted by the giant Ravana and set free again) are the ideal man and wife, Rama the ideal king. The monkey king Hanuman, however, has become the most popular mediator with Rama.

The part played by all these godheads and their types has changed continuously. Until the Gupta period Buddhism dominated, at first only hinting at Buddha (footprints, lotuses, Tree of Enlightenment, Dharmacakra, Wheel of Law, Stupa), then representing him as a clothed Yogi with a lock of hair between his brows (urna) and an excrescence (ushnisha) on the crown of his head. The Bodhisattvas, however, wore princely clothing. The Jaina saints are similar to the Buddha figures (standing or seated in the Yoga position), but they are naked, generally have no excrescence on the crown of the head, and are accompanied by a Yaksha or a Yakshi. The flower of the Sivaitic-Vishnuistic sculpture falls in the period of the third to the twelfth century, persisting in the south up to the present day. Siva (black or white) is always recognisable by his ascetic hair-style, the trident (trishula), the drum made of skulls (damaru) and his bull Nandin. Vishnu (blue) wears royal jewelry and a crown, holds a club, a lotus, a shell and a flywheel and rides on the eagle Garuda: Rama and Krishna are blue-skinned, wear yellow robes, Krishna with

peacock feathers in his crown and is often playing a flute (venu, murali), surrounded by cows. In the art of the Mohammedan period, especially at the Rajput courts, the gods generally wear the court dress of the period. Religious pictures (murti, pratima, arca) were made into a habitation for the god by special rites.

Applied Art

The character of Indian handicrafts is decided by the climate, which for a great part of the year favours sitting and lying on the ground: beds of very simple construction (a few rods and straps), arm-chairs and thrones (the privilege of princes), small stools, chests (often of metal); they were often inlaid with precious metal and stones or richly-carved ivory. Of brass (but also iron) articles it is usual to find oil lamps (often in the shape of a girl: Dipalakshmi), jewel-cases and pomade-boxes, perfume flasks, writing-cases, water-pipes and eating utensils. Silver and gold were used for jewelry and also in great quantities for embossed and chased doors in temples, tombs and palaces, but little of this work has been preserved from ancient times. For swords, Arabian and European (including many German) blades were often preferred, the hilt consisting of steel, walrus ivory, jade or crystal inlaid with silver. A characteristic type of dagger (Kattar) has an H-shaped stirrup handle. Cannon and muskets (although known in the fourteenth century), came into general use only from the sixteenth century onwards, generally very long muzzle-loaders with a forked support. Chainmail and plate-armor were known since the Scythian invasion, but owing to the heat were only put on for the battle itself; it became more general in Mohammedan times; the plate-armor consists as a rule only of four simple breast-plates (charaina), often beautifully worked in niello. Shields were of hippopotamus hide or metal, often richly incised or painted, but never with coats of arms. Simple pottery utensils were customary from the earliest times, often richly painted. Glazed pottery and also porcelain, imported from China, Persia and finally Europe, were customary almost exclusively with the Mohammedans; it was rejected by the Hindus on ritual grounds, although the Hindus admitted glazed wall-tiles and decorative vases. Indian applied art is at its best in textiles: Lunggis, Odhnis, Dopattas, Saris, Kamerbands, etc., swathed artistically in one piece round the whole body, the hips, the shoulders, the head (the turban, pagri), transparent as a spider's web or heavy, interwoven with gold thread, some-