

Cālukya Caves at Bādāmi Reconsidered

Vasundhara Kavali-Filliozat

The artists of Bādāmi during Cālukyan times, who moulded the rough rocky mountain and excavated four world famous caves, really merit more than what human beings can express in words. Bādāmi was the first capital of Calukya kings who ruled over Karnataka between c. 500 and 757 CE. The credit of getting the caves excavated in a rough, savage rocky mountain goes to the first few kings of the said dynasty (Fig.1).

Now Bādāmi is a small tāluka place in the Bagalkot district, Karnataka. Once upon a time it had the glory of being the royal city, capital of a vast empire. But now it is reduced to a small and not much advanced city. But that in no way hinders one to go there and enjoy the beauty of sculptures in the caves along with the nature. In the modern era it is not difficult to reach the place; there are many ways : trains to the city of Bādāmi, buses and other means of transport by road. There are trains from Bangalore, Mysore, Belgaum and Hubli. So also buses ply from different headquarters to Bādāmi. For staying now there is no problem. Hotels, resorts, etc. are there suiting the purses of all categories of people.

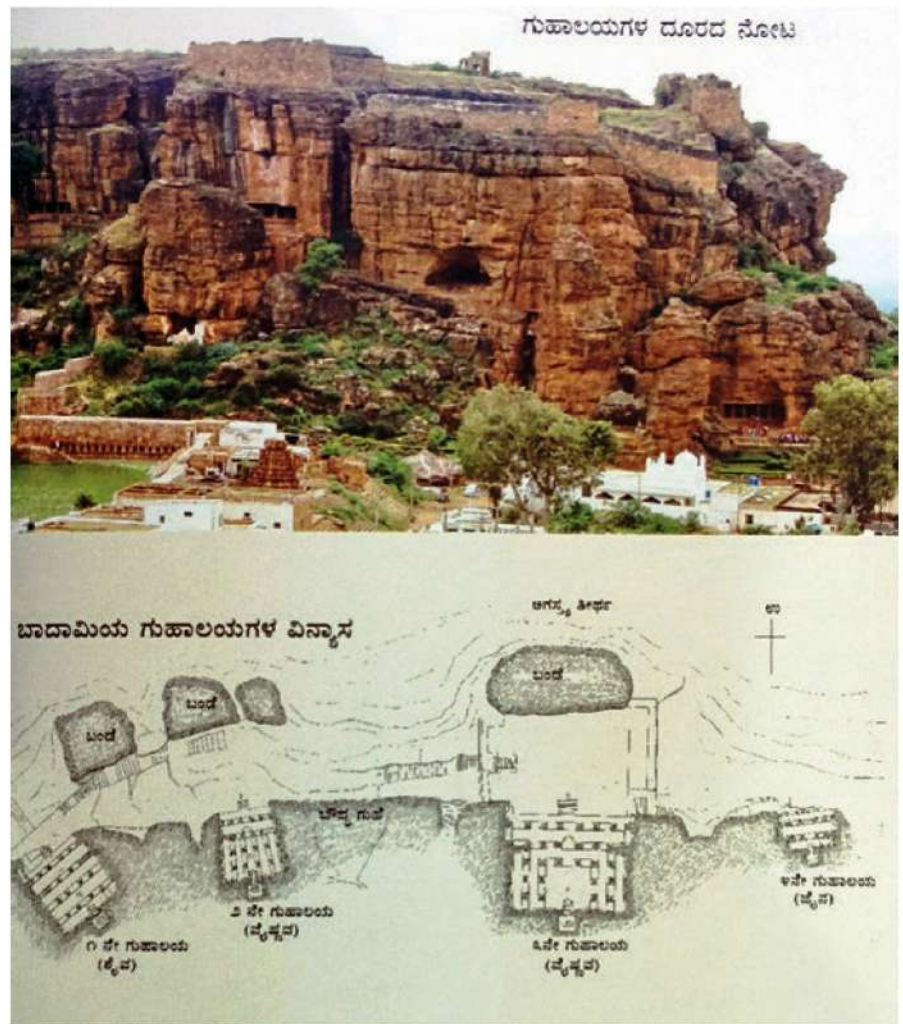


Fig.1 : Plan and emplacement of caves

The name of Bādāmi was known to Ptolemy. He mentions a place called Badamoyi and modern historians are of the opinion that it stands for Bādāmi. The name of sage Agastya is very much associated with the place. According to legends there were two demon brothers who were known for their misbehaviour. One of the brothers was called Vātāpi and the other Ilvala. The latter used to kill his brother, prepare dishes and feed the Brahmins and ascetics. Once they had their meals Ilvala would call his brother Vātāpi to come back. The latter would come out tearing the stomach of Brahmins. Thus, the tomfoolery of brothers went on for some time killing a number of Brahmins. Being quite aware of their naughty game, sage Agastya went there to have his meals. Soon after having his food, before Ilvala would call his brother to come back, Agastya said *Vātāpi jirṇo bhava*, "be digested, Vātāpi." Thus Vātāpi lost his life. Having realised his aberrant job, Ilvala repented and prayed to the sage that the place should be known after his brother's name Vātāpi. Bādāmi is the vernacular form of Vātāpi in Sanskrit.

There is a tank called Agastyatīrtha. On the tank bund, to the south is a fort with an inscription dated Śaka 465¹ or 543 CE recording the construction of the fort. The speciality of this inscription is that it is practically the first to record a historical fact by mentioning the Śaka date. Earlier, the Kadamba kings were registering the facts giving the king's regnal year. So it was difficult to maintain the archival documents chronologically. It was Pulikeśin I who had the marvellous idea to introduce Śaka era to record historical data. This Śaka era was already known in the north right from Kaniṣka's period. Pulikeśin I's inscription on the cliff at Bādāmi records the building of an impregnable fort either from the top or from below. This epigraph is practically the first official record to mention the date in Śaka era. From this year onwards (Śaka 465 equivalent to 543 CE), in Karnataka almost all inscriptions record the date of an event in the Śaka era. Moreover, they introduced counting in Śaka years wherever the rulers from Karnataka were present.

Building of the fort on the northern side of the hill hints that the town was developing from this side. From here probably there was a way leading to the famous grottos. There are four cave temples on the north side of the hill. Out of four caves, two are dedicated to the worship of God Viṣṇu whereas only one each to the Jaina and Śaiva cult. The reason why the Vaiṣṇava caves outnumber the others is because earlier kings of the Cālukya dynasty were *Parama-Bhāgavata*,² 'supreme devotee of Bhagavān', that is Viṣṇu. Prince Maṅgaleśa and his nephew King Pulikeśin II have qualified themselves as *Parama-Bhāgavata*.³ Their ardent devotion to Viṣṇu is expressed through the two caves to Vaiṣṇava cult.

A change occurs from the times of Vikramāditya I after a historical event in the 5th year of his rule. He undergoes initiation in Śaivism through the rituals of *Śivamaṇḍaladīkṣā*.⁴ Unfortunately, we have failed in finding more details about what is the *Śivamaṇḍaladīkṣā*. Dr. Padigar cites in the footnote of the introduction in his *magnum opus*⁵ an extract from M. N. Joshi's book on the *Śaivāgamas - A Bird's Eye View*. "The male person to be initiated will be in a *Śiva-maṇḍala* (in

the case of female *Gaurī-maṇḍala*) and he will undergo the following five rituals and ceremonies :

1. *Tāpa*: To have the impression of *Śiva-liṅga* on the shoulders;
2. *Puṇḍra*: Wearing the *Rudrākṣa* and the sacred ash, which represent the external appearances of god *Śiva*;
3. *Nāma*: Names such as *Mahā-śaiva*, *Anu-śaiva*, *Antara-śaiva*, etc., the class to which the initiated belongs;
4. *Mantra*: The advice by means of or through *Śiva-pañcākṣarī* (*Namaḥ Śivāya*)
5. *Homa*: Offering worship to god *Agni*. The initiated *Brāhmaṇas* will have the status of *Mahā-śaiva*; *Kṣatriyas* and *Vaiśyas* that of *Anu-śaiva*, and a *Sūdra* that of *Antara-śaiva*."

At present we have no other source material except this little information offered by Dr. Padigar on the *Śaivamaṇḍaladīkṣā*. Even in the *Somaśaṁbhupaddhati* there is no word on this particular type of *dīkṣā*, 'initiation'. As all other published books on *Āgama* and *Paddhati* deal with *Śuddhaśaiva* rituals, *Śivamaṇḍaladīkṣā*, in our opinion, perhaps, seems to be a particular ritual amongst *Lakulīṣa-Pāśupata Śaivites*. From the times of *Vikramāditya I* onwards the activities of building temples of *Śiva* in the *Cālukya* domain came into practice with unprecedented vigour.

The aim of the article is to fix tentatively the chronology of the creation of *Bādāmi* caves. Keeping in mind the religious changes in the royal family let us turn our attention towards the chronology of the caves at *Bādāmi*.

Facing north there are four caves excavated in a rough rocky hill. One is wonderstruck on seeing the massive rough hillock with artistically carved images in the caves. At the foot of the hill are steps leading to the caves. The first cave the visitor sees is dedicated to *Śiva*. It is relatively



Fig.2 : General view of the Agastya tirtha?

smaller in size when compared to the other two in which different images of Viṣṇu have found their place. After climbing up a few steps one reaches the last and the fourth cave which is devoted to the Jaina religious leaders. One must take the pains of going up to the fourth cave if one wants to enjoy the nature's beauty. Seated on the steps of the fourth cave one can see the tank 'Agastyatīrtha' (Fig.2) below with people washing clothes on the steps of the tank, with a group of small shrines all around and the nature in its variety of colours. It is really heavenly, if one can be there either in the early hours of morning or at dusk.

Modern scholars are not unanimous in their opinion with regard to the dates of these caves. Except the so called third cave or big Viṣṇu cave, others are undated. The hypotheses of historians are left to their imagination and arguments. There are three opinions which are current. According to one of them the so called third cave with an inscription was the first to be excavated. Then came to be realised the other two caves, first and second. And the fourth one, the Jaina cave, is the last in their list which according to them is an 8th century work.

A second group proposes that the first cave was the first to be done. Then the second and third and the last is the fourth. The third group thinks that the Jaina *layaṇa*, 'cave' was the first to be hollowed out in the earlier decades of the 6th century and then the Hindu monuments in successive years that is third, second and lastly the first that is Śaiva *layaṇa*.

In our opinion the third and the last group is partially correct. If we look at the religious and literary history of Karnataka we notice that Jainism has advanced first before the Vedic culture. A lion share of earlier Kannaḍa literature is on Jaina themes.

As Jainism was more active prior to Vedic religion we may not be far wrong if we say that the cave dedicated to Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras was the first to be hollowed out. A close observation of the *layaṇa*, 'grotto' suggests that initially there were only two statues, namely one of Supārśvanātha and another of Mahāvīra. In the subsequent centuries many images were carved, some being placed in niches and others in *nichettes*⁶ (small niches). Main figures are in alto-relievo and the others are in depression in the nichettes. We know that the figures in alto-relievo were carved at the same time when the grotto was in making. In subsequent centuries additions were made by carving figures in depression and set in small niches. It may not be wrong to assign the date of this cave to the beginning of the Cālukya reign in Bādāmi because the city was already an established town judging from the term used in the inscription of Pulikeśin I. If Ptolemy mentions the name of Bādāmi in his book, it is a proof that the town was already well known and merchants were going far off places for the trade. Probably, Ptolemy must have met one such merchant who has given him the name of Bādāmi. Perhaps, the town was active enough to conduct religious activities. One of the deeds is to build temples. Instead of building temples caves must have been hollowed out and we think that as Jainas were more active than the others of Vedic faith in Karnataka it is possible that in Bādāmi the Jaina cave was the first to be excavated. It is only the expression of our

opinion and not an assertion. Waiting to hearing from the readers we are proposing our hypothesis to them.

Being a *Parama Bhāgavata*, 'Supreme devotee of Viṣṇu', in Śaka 500 or 578 CE Prince Maṅgaleśa, son of Pulikeśin I, brother of Kīrtivarman I, had the grotto excavated to house the images of Viṣṇu⁷ recalling his different sports. It is recorded in the inscription :

*"layaṇo mahāviṣṇugṛham atidāivamānuṣyakam atyadbhutakarmaviracitam
bhūmibhāgopariparyantātīśayadarśanīyatam kṛtvā..."*

*pralayoditārkamaṅḍalākāracakraksapitāmarāripakṣasya viṣṇoḥ pratimāpratiṣṭhā-
panābhyudayanimitam..."*

"Having done a most wonderful grotto for installing Great (god) Viṣṇu, where lower, sides and upper portions (were) charming ... he installed the image of Viṣṇu who throws the discus which is like a rising Sun at the time of deluge (*pralaya*), on enemies of Eternal (Gods) ..."

On the basis of this and other facts recorded in this charter it is clear that this cave (second in our list) is dedicated to Viṣṇu. Next to this cave, at a distance of a few steps is another cave which is also for Viṣṇu where the cave walls are adorned with images representing narrative panels of Viṣṇu's sports namely the churning of the milky ocean – *Samudramanthana*, plays of Kṛṣṇa, except the one panel on a pillar on which a seated figure of Śiva in the form of Lakulīśa is represented. It is interesting to note that almost all figures of Lakulīśa on the temple walls of Paṭṭadakala and Mahākūṭa are in standing pose. But here he is seated reminding us of the representation of the image of Lakulīśa in the Jogeśvarī cave (mid 6th century work), Bombay. It is also a proof that the Lakulīśa-Pāśupata religion was present at the time of the creation of these two caves. The work of this cave must have started soon after the Viṣṇu cave by Maṅgaleśa in 578 CE. Padigar also assigns the creation of this cave (no.3 in our list) to the latter half of the 6th century.⁸

From this *layaṇa* descending down a few steps one reaches the last cave in our list but the first for the visitors. Images of two *līlās*, 'plays', of Śiva have been depicted on the major walls of the cave. At the entrance is a small niche in which are housed Durgā as Mahiṣamardinī in the centre with Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya on the side walls. When a visitor enters the area of the caves he is welcomed by a marvellous image of *Naṭeśa*, 'dancing Śiva'. From the iconographic representations, there is no doubt that the whole cave is dedicated to Śiva and his various *līlās*, 'sports'. This cave, like all others, faces north. This is the last cave in the list of excavated grottos and the work must have been carried out during Vikramāditya I's period when he underwent *Śivamaṅḍaladīkṣā*.

Sadāśiva concept is prominent in temples built by Lakulīśa-Pāśupata devotees. Let us have a look at their religious concept. To them Śiva is the main deity and

everything emanates from him and at the end immerses in him.⁹ That is why He is called *Liṅga*. The word is formed after the first syllable of roots of both verbs *Lī* (*līyate*) and *Gam* (*gamyate*).

Now a question arises: why only the two particular *līlāmūrtis*, 'plays', of Śiva are depicted in this cave? To find the solution, we have to look at the Āgama treatises to know what they say. It is a well known fact that the *Vātulāgama* is the last in the list of twenty-eight *Śaivāgamas*. Each Āgama has some *upāgama* or secondary Āgama. The *Vātulaśuddhāgama* is the *upāgama* of the main *Vātulāgama*. This *Vātulaśuddhāgama* also known as *Śuddhākhyatantra* was and is very much in use in Karnataka. We have proved it in many of our articles and books.

According to the *Śuddhākhyatantra* when the whole world was immersed in darkness and water there emerges a light from which appears *Śivatattva*, 'reality of Śiva'. As this reality was too subtle, not to be perceived by ordinary eyes for the benefit of the world *Sadāśivatattva*, 'reality of Sadāśiva', emanated from the *Śivatattva*. *Sadāśivatattva* has five faces and each one of the four looks at one direction whereas the fifth and last tops all of them.

From *Sadāśivatattva* emanates *Maheśatattva*, 'reality of Maheśa', because the *Sadāśivatattva* is *sakala* and *niṣkala*, 'with form and without form'. For the sake of His devotees, Śiva took the form Maheśa who is *sakala*. He can be represented in various forms, that is *mūrti*, 'image'. Śiva's twenty-five *līlās*, 'sports or plays', can be represented in image form for the sake of His devotees. Each one of his five faces corresponds to a few sports of His. Twenty-five sports and corresponding faces are :

Face	Corresponding Līlāmūrti	Direction
Iśāna	Serenity	Ether
1	Candradhara – wearing the Moon to save him from the curse of Dakṣa, his father-in-law	
2	Umāsaḥita – with Umā	
3	Vṛṣārūḍha – mounted on Nandin which represents <i>Dharma</i>	
4	Nṛtyakopama – dances on different occasions such as marriage, <i>pralaya</i> , etc.	
5	Vaivāhaṁ – marries Umā for the creation of world	
Aghora	Non-terrific to devotees but terrific to enemies	South
6	Brahmaśiraschedana – cutting off the head of Brahmā	

7	Kāmāri – burnt Kāma, love god, to show that he is not affected by love	
8	Kālāri – kicks Yama to save His devotees	
9	Tripurāriḥ – enemy of three forts of three brother demons	
10	Jālandharavadha – killing of demon Jālandhara	
11	Ajāri – teaching a good lesson to Brahmā who loved his own daughter	
12	Vīrabhadra – coming in the form of Vīrabhadra to destroy the sacrifice of Dakṣa	
13	Haridhvaṁsin – destroyer of pride of Viṣṇu	
Sadyojāta	Grace to his votaries	West
14	Caṇḍeśānugraha – showering benediction on Caṇḍeśa	
15	Kirātaḥ – appears in the guise of a hunter to grace Arjuna with the <i>pāśupata</i> missile	
16	Viṣāpaharaṇa – consumes poison to save the world at the time of churning of the ocean	
17	Cakradāna – donation of discus to Viṣṇu	
18	Vighnaprasāda – showering benediction on Vighneśa (Gaṇeśa)	
Vāmadeva	Charm of Śiva	North
19	Somaskanda – with Umā and Skanda after the death of demons like Tārakāsura and Andhakāsura	
20	Bhikṣāṭana – after cutting off the head of Brahmā wanders as mendicant to ward off the sin <i>brahmahatyā</i>	
21	Ardhanārī – Giving half of his body to his consort Pārvatī	
Tatpuruṣa	Grandeur of Śiva, magnanimity	East

22	Ekapāda – Śiva stands on one foot after the destruction of the world. Then Viṣṇu and Brahmā emanate from his left and right side, respectively	
23	Sukhāvahak – becoming Śaṅkara to accord pleasure to the world	
24	Dakṣiṇāmūrti ¹⁰ – facing south, seated under a tree, revealing the secrets of Veda to his four disciples	
25	Liṅgodbhavamūrti – appears in the middle of the <i>Liṅga</i> to dissipate the ignorance and pride of Brahmā and Viṣṇu	

From the above table it is clear that the face of Vāmadeva is peaceful and beautiful and exactly opposite of Aghoramūrti in sentiments and qualities of iconographic representations. Vāmadeva faces north and the Aghora south.

Coming back to our subject about the Bādāmi caves, we have said that the last (or 1st on the list of ASI) cave was dedicated to the worship of Śiva. The cave faces north. According to the Āgama texts Vāmadeva faces north. Sadāśiva concept is very much prominent in temples built by Lakulīśa-Pāśupata devotees. On the eastern facade of these temples images of Liṅgodbhava, Naṭeśa, etc. representing the grandeur of Sadāśiva with his Tatpuruṣa aspect are carved. On the southern facade all stories associated with his Aghora face are depicted emphasising his victory over demons like Andhakāsura, Tripurāntaka and so on. On the western facade the Sadyojāta concept of Sadāśiva with his serenity is shown. His North face is Vāmadeva. So his handsome figures like Ardhanārī, Bhīkṣāṭana, etc. find place there. Very often on the same facade Haryārdha or Hariharamūrti is also carved. But why?

Gopinatha Rao, in the *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol.II, pt.i, explains in his own scholarly way how and why the other half of the body of Śiva is occupied by Viṣṇu : “... it is related in the *Vāmanapurāṇa* that Viṣṇu is reported to have said to a *ṛṣi* that he and Śiva were one and that in him resides Śiva also and manifested himself to the *ṛṣi* in the dual aspect of his.” Rao continues further : “Umā, Durgā or Devī is considered to be a female aspect of Viṣṇu” (p.332). This great scholar of yore also affirms that “Durgā, the consort of Śiva, is represented in all sculptures with the *śaṅkha* and the *cakra*, the weapons characteristic of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu is also viewed as the *prakṛti-tattva* and hence we see Viṣṇu substituted in the place occupied by Devī in the Ardhanārīśvara aspect of Śiva (*Ibid.*, pp.332-333).

His postulation can be further strengthened through other evidences from the *Vāmana* and the *Kūrmapurāṇa*.

In the *Vāmanapurāṇa* Śiva says to his disciples who were wonderstruck when he embraces Mahāpāśupata : “Owing to the ignorance you are disregarded and made hostile. What I am is the mighty Viṣṇu, I am the imperishable.

There is no difference between us two; certainly I have not been known by you as much as by those tiger brave men, the devotional Gaṇas. As I have always been slandered by you, blockheads, so (your) knowledge is lost, (and) hence (you) have not been embraced by me” (Chapter XLI, śloka 27-30).

There is another interesting story in the *Kūrmapurāṇa*¹¹ to clarify the reason why Hariharamūrti is interpreted on the north facade not far from Ardhanārī. In the *Bhikṣāṭana* episode : “The trident bearer Hara (Śiva) went to Dāru forest telling the faults of those sages who had directed their minds to active worldly life.”

Taking Viṣṇu the teacher of the universe with him, the god Śaṅkara, the great Lord, went to Dāru forest for establishing the doctrine of inactivity.

Śiva enters Dāru forest because there the sages were more absorbed in performing sacrifices by which they thought that they had controlled their sentiments, especially anger. Śiva wanders in forests like a mendicant to get rid of his sin of having cut off a head of Brahmā. On his way to Kāśī, He enters Dāru forest to teach a lesson to the sages residing there. The text says how he was in the Dāru :

“The Lord of the world went there after having assumed a profound form, twenty years in age, sportive, large armed, possessing fleshy limbs, beautiful eyes, golden body and glory, face resembling the full moon, moving like an intoxicated elephant and naked...

The imperishable Puruṣa, Hari Viṣṇu, the source of the world, was following the trident bearer after assuming the form of a lady with the face resembling the full moon, with a fleshy and elevated breast, smiling brightly, extremely delighted, with a pair of jingling anklets, yellow coloured clothes, moving like a fine swan, charming and very attractive” (Chapter XXXVIII, śloka 6-7 & 9-11).

When Hara and Hari were on the road in disguise, women and young sages, forgetting their duties, began to follow them. Enraged ṛṣi began to send one by one the arms to get rid of the Beggar. But the latter was able to subdue them and hold them in his hands as his emblems. Finally the sages went and consulted Brahmā to know who these adamant beggars are? Brahmā replies :

“He is regarded to possess another form which is naked, auspicious and eternal, where Brahman exists endowed with Yoga.

His wife whom you saw staying near him, who was talked by you, is the Supreme soul and eternal god Nārāyaṇa. ... Hari is the ancient *Puruṣa*, thousand headed, thousand eyed, thousand footed, single horned, the great soul according to *Śrutis*” (Same chapter, śloka 70-73).

In this way there are many more allusions to say that Viṣṇu is Pārvatī, the consort of Śiva. As Pārvatī occupies his left part similarly Viṣṇu is also on the same side. Moreover, we can add one more instance to strengthen this point.

In the *Ekapādamūrti*, one of the twenty-five sports of Śiva, Viṣṇu upsurges from the left side of Śiva when the latter stands on one foot. This fact and all other statements mentioned above prove that Viṣṇu is on the left part of the body of Śiva. So Viṣṇu is on the left side in the Harihara form of Śiva. As Viṣṇu is identical with Pārvatī so it is justified to carve the images of Ardhanārīśvara and Haryārdha on the same facade that is north wall of Lakuliśa-Pāśupata temples having the Sadāśiva concept. In the cave under study it faces north. So it is but natural to have images of Ardhanārī and Haryārdha in the same place.

Brief Description of the Grottos and Images

It may not be out of place if we give a brief description of caves and images there as they deserve to be described. We shall not go into many details, just deal with what is necessary for our present study. We shall start with the cave dedicated to Śiva and Śaiva images about which we have discussed above (Fig.3)

It may be the last cave according to our chronological description but the visitor enters first in this cave. Dr. S. V. Padigar dates back the cave to the mid 6th century but according to us it must have been excavated after King Vikramāditya I embraced Śaivism in 660 CE. This cave is dedicated to Śiva and Śiva only. Facing north, at the rear end of the cave is a small sanctum hewn in the same block and a rock cut Śivaliṅga is installed there (Fig.4). An image of Nandin, the vehicle of Śiva, is placed facing the *liṅga*. There are well decorated pillars behind Nandin. Passing through the series of pillars the visitor arrives at an open veranda with beautifully coiled Nāgarāja image on the ceiling. In this veranda on the east and west walls are the man-size images of Ardhanārīśvara and Haryārdha.



Fig.3 : Cave dedicated to the worship of Śiva



Fig.4 : Śivaliṅga in the sanctum

Ardhanārīśvara (Fig.5) : By and large modern historians have identified this image as Ardhanārīśvara. But the special feature of this image is that it is not just Ardhanārī but it is Viṇādhara Ardhanārī. There are separate images of Viṇādhara Śiva and Ardhanārīśvara but the combined form of Viṇādhara-Ardhanārī is rare and we may not be wrong; if we say that this icon at Bādāmi cave is a unique piece.

Facing east, the standing Śiva Ardhanārī icon occupies the central place of the wall. The right half of the image is like Śiva adorned with a tiara of matted hair decorated with the crescent moon whereas the other half is feminine with many bangles on hands, beautiful chignon, hipped, waist-belt and anklets. A musical instrument is on the chest going from left shoulder down to the right hand. The gourd is exactly at the level of the elevated breast of Pārvatī. In C. Sivaramamurti's book on *Natarāja* there is a similar image of Śiva (p.159) playing on Viṇā at Ellora (Fig.6). His way of holding the instrument



Fig.5 : Ardhanārī, Śaiva cave, Bādāmi

and playing on the strings is exactly similar to the image in the Bādāmi cave under study.



Fig.6 : Śiva Viṇādhara, Vākāṭaka, 5th century, Ellora

The most noteworthy point is that she is striking the wires of the lute with the fingers of her upper hand and He with the index and middle finger of his lower right hand makes the instrument to resound. Here again the idea of *avinābhāva*, 'inseparable', union as propounded in the Āgama texts is well presented.

R. S. Nandakumar, son of the famous musicologist R. Satyanarayana, informs us that there are varieties of Viṇā and one of them with only two cords giving notes of *vādi* and *sainvādi* of a *rāga*. With the movements of fingers of two hands one can produce the desired musical notes. Śiva and Pārvatī, in their

Ardhanārī form are playing the same instrument of music. It is an example of their *avinābhāvasaṁyogabhāva*. Really, this image is unique in its genre.

By the side of Ardhanārī is a female figure carrying a plateau. Some historians think that it is a jewellery box. Since she is by the side of the divinity it may be offerings to the deities. Her hairstyle is in typical Cālukyan style.

There is a skeletal figure to the right of Śiva. He is identified as Bhṛṅgi. Behind the Ardhanārī is Nandin the carrier of Śiva and Pārvatī. Above the image are demi-gods carrying garlands for the divines.

Haryārdha or Hariharamūrti (Fig.7) : Facing Ardhanārīśvara is the man-size figure of Harihara. The right portion is Śiva and the left Hari or Viṣṇu. The nomenclature of Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa is more justified for this image than Harihara because of their position. Spouses of Hari and Hara are also figured here. Pārvatī is to the right of Śaṅkara and Lakṣmī to the left of Nārāyaṇa. In between Pārvatī and Śaṅkara (Śiva) is standing Nandikeśvara. He has a human body with the face of a bull. As he is the guardian of the door of the divine couple he holds a stick in his right hand. He is Nandikeśvara and not Nandin, the vehicle of Śiva.

One more noteworthy fact in these two images is that in the Ardhanārī panel Nandin is in the zoomorphic form, whereas Nandikeśvara is in the anthropomorphic form in the Haryārdha. According to the *Śivapurāṇa* and *Liṅgapurāṇa*, *Dharma* takes the form of Nandin, whereas Nandikeśvara is the son of Śailādamuni. Nandikeśvara is the guardian of the doors of Śiva and Nandin is His vehicle. But often both are called Nandin and that has led to the confusion.



Fig.7 : Haryārdha, Śaiva cave, Bādāmi

Between Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī is standing Garuḍa, the vehicle of Viṣṇu. He is in human form. The height of Nandin and Garuḍa is not higher than the mid thigh of Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa, whereas goddess is not higher than the neck of the God. The head of the god is adorned with an aureole. In the superior part of the niche are demigods singing the lore of their Lords.

On the east side of the cave is the image of a *Dvārapāla*, 'guardian of doors', with a robust body and a smile on lips, standing with a trident in his hand (Fig.8). Above

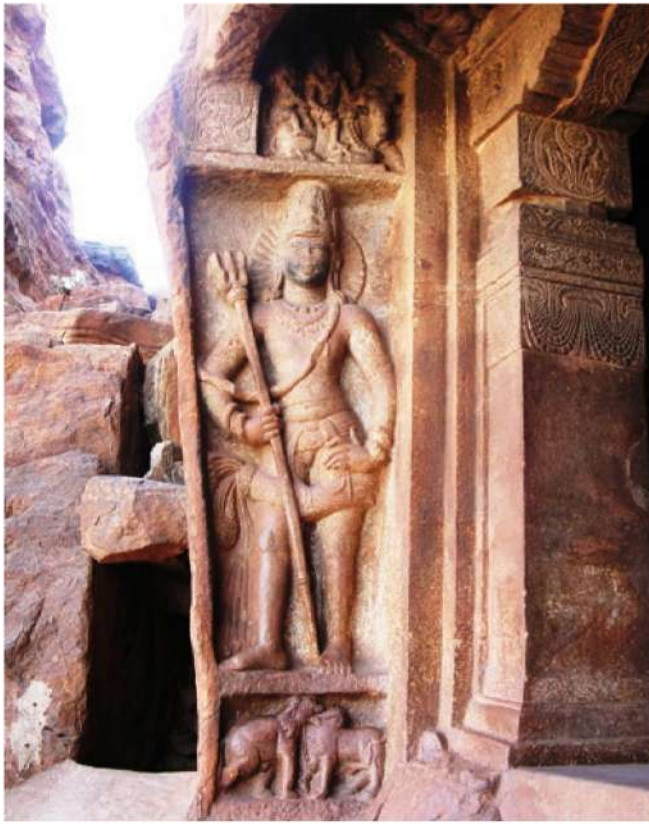


Fig.8 : Dvārapāla, Śaiva cave, Bādāmi

towards the single goal of betterment of the universe!

To the east, facing Dvārapāla is a small cave in which are housed Gaṇeśa and Skanda with Mahiṣāsūramardini on the central wall. The depiction of Mahiṣāsūramardini is very interesting. She holds that animal by its tail and pierces her trident on its head near the horns. She is doing it with such an easy deportment in her action as if it was not at all difficult for her to curb the pride of the demon and put an end to his haughty activities (Fig.9).

On the northern face of the western wall of the cave, before the entrance is the famous image of Naṭeśa or Naṭarāja with multiple hands. Naṭeśa is accompanied by a drum player who is playing on two instruments of percussion: one is *āṅkhyā* and the other *ūrdhva*. As the *ūrdhva* is very high, the percussionist is obliged to

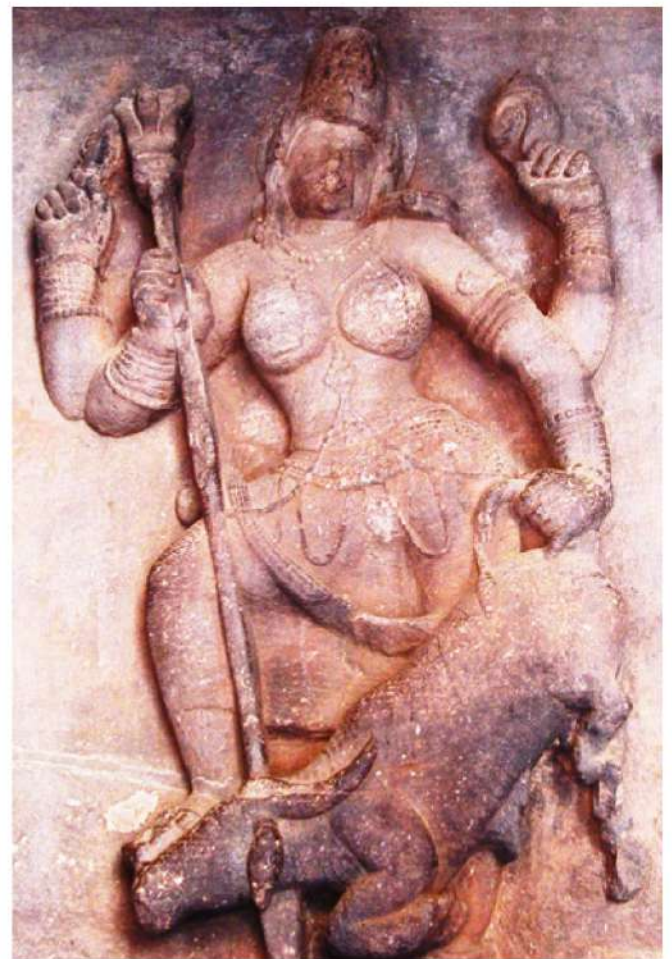


Fig.9 : Mahiṣāsūramardini, in a small cave in the Śaiva cave

* Reference to an image of Vṛṣārdha-Gauda in National Museum, New Delhi is worth nothing for comparison - N.P. Joshi, A. L. Srivastava, Śilpasahasradala, Vol.II, Jñāna-Pravāha Publication, 2012, Upd. 17, p.434.



Fig.10 : Nāṭeśa, near the Śaiva cave

have an elevated seat. He plays with both his hands on these instruments (Fig.10).

At Sirpur, there is a mirror image of this Nāṭeśa but with eight hands, of Gupta period, 5th century CE (See C. Sivaramamurti, *Nāṭarāja*, Fig.9, p.160).

Nāṭeśa's left foot is in *agratala* and the other is fully planted on the floor but bent at the knee level making a beautiful curve. All over Karnataka and at all times Śiva Nāṭeśa is represented with one foot in *amcīta* and the other carrying the weight of the whole body. As far as our knowledge goes it is only in Tamilnadu that the Nāṭarāja images are carved with one elevated leg and the other on the ground. This pose of Śiva is also called *bhujāṅgatrāsita*, 'afraid of snake', by C. Sivaramamurti and other modern scholars. It is really strange to say this to Śiva who carries snakes as

his ornaments. The Nether world of snakes is called 'jewel box of Śiva'. How can he be afraid of a snake?

Coming back to the image of Nāṭeśa, now the question arises "how many hands does he have"? It is really intriguing to note that there is a hand like element extending in between the uppermost first and second left hands. In between these two hands what is seen has also the form of a hand. There is a bracelet at the wrist. It holds something which is not definable. If it is counted as a hand then on the left side there are nine hands and to the right only eight. This enigma needs to be clarified. Modern scholars are of the opinion that the set of each pair of hands may represent one of the dance poses that the artist takes at the end of a long *korave*, 'series of hand and foot movements accompanied with rhythm'. If one looks at the Śivagaṇa represented on the lower portion, one gets the satisfaction of having discovered the same combinations of pairs of hands. Each Gaṇa has the *kaṇa*, 'pose of a pair of hands' of Nāṭeśa. Nandin is at the back of Nāṭeśa.

2nd and 3rd caves : The next two caves are numbered as 2nd and 3rd on the list of ASI but in our list the 3rd was the second to be created and then the next that is second for ASI. Both the caves are dedicated to Viṣṇu and the two panels, *viz.* that of Viṣṇu as Bhūvarāhamūrti and Trivikrama are common to both. The image of Viṣṇu is carved in the anthropomorphic form with the head of a *Varāha*, 'Boar' and the Goddess Bhūdevī is seated on his left palm.

Facing this scene is the narrative panel of Viṣṇu Trivikrama (Fig.11). On seeing this image one feels how mighty the God is. We are not going in detail about these panels because they have been described a number of times by many scholars.

The image of seated Viṣṇu on a coiled Śeṣa as *bhogamūrti* is magnificent in the cave for which Prince Maṅgaleśa was the patron. This cave surpasses all others in grandeur and magnanimity. The most attractive figure is the *Bhogibhogasthita* Viṣṇu – Viṣṇu seated on a coiled serpent. By and large, seated images are categorised as *Bhogamūrti*. Here Viṣṇu is seated on a *bhoga*, 'snake', and *bhoga*, 'coil'. So Viṣṇu is doubly *Bhogibhogasthita-mūrti* (Fig.12).

There is also an unusual image of Narasiṃha (Fig.13). It is huge, man size standing statue with peaceful or appeased look on his face.



Fig.11 : Trivikrama, Vaiṣṇava cave

It may not be out of place if we say a few words about the bracket figures in this particular cave patronised by Prince Maṅgaleśa.



Fig.12 : Bhogibhogasthita Viṣṇu, Vaiṣṇava cave

The bracket figure on one of the pillars (second from the side of seated Viṣṇu) steals away the mind of all visitors. It is a panel which depicts the divine couple Śiva and Pārvatī standing. She is so intoxicated that she is losing her balance and falling down. Śiva is there to protect Her. With his lower left hand he holds her at the level of her waist and with his right hand gives support to the goddess' head. Her eyes are completely closed and one can make out that she is not conscious of her state. The expression of tenderness on Śiva's face is perfect (Fig.14).

There is no reference to this scene in any of the Purāṇa texts. One should seek the help of literary sources. At the time of the excavation of the cave only the works of Kālidāsa were well known. The birth



Fig.13 : Nārasiṃha, Vaiṣṇava cave



Fig.14 : Śiva and intoxicated Pārvatī

of Kumāra from the union of Śiva and Pārvatī to kill the demon Tārakāsura is the theme of his great poetical work the *Kumārasaṃbhava*. The 8th *sarga*, 'chapter', deals with the marriage and the *madhucandra* of the divine couple. When they were in the Gandhamādana for their enjoyment the goddess of forest offers them the elixir of *Kalpavṛkṣa*. Śiva makes Pārvatī to consume it. The effect of the wine on Pārvatī in the words of Kālidāsa¹² is :

Tatkṣaṇāni viparivartitahriyoḥ śikṣatoḥ śayanam iddharāgayoḥ /
Sā babhūva vaśavartinī dvayōḥ sūlinaḥ suvadanā madasya ca //

“The lovely one became a slave unto two : Śaṅkara and the intoxication of wine as the two had lost all sense of shame, as their passions were inflamed, and as they carried themselves to the sleeping chamber” (Devadhar’s translation).

This verse might have inspired probably the artist to carve this image *saṃbhogaśṛṅgāramūrti*, 'love in union', with the maximum of artistic taste behind. No Purāṇa can be compared with the work of Kālidāsa with regard to the amorous activities of Śiva and Pārvatī on the Gandhamādana. If our assertion is accepted then it helps us to say a word about the date of Kālidāsa. As the cave was created in CE 578 then we may not be far if we say that Kālidāsa must have lived before CE 550.

Most of the bracket figures in the Vaiṣṇava cave belong to Śaiva themes. However, the panels on Vaiṣṇava themes outnumber the Śaiva in this cave. In the times of Karnāṭaka kings of Vijayanagara¹³ images of Viṭṭhala, Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā were also installed there. Now the images are no more in their places.

The fourth cave in the ASI list is devoted to the Jaina cult. We will not go in detailed study about this cave. But we would like to draw the attention of the readers on the names and graffiti engraved on in the caves and also outside.

In the Śaiva cave there are names of Ayyasāmi Kalkutti Doṇasvāmī.¹⁴ Probably, they are of those persons who were responsible for hollowing out the cave or may be the principal architects of this Śaiva cave. Similarly, in and near the Vaiṣṇava caves (2 and 3 in the ASI list), there are many names, such as *Kolimañci* occurring twice – once on the way to the steps leading to the III cave (big Viṣṇu cave) and then again on the rock facing the caves III & IV (big Viṣṇu and Jaina caves). Frequent occurrence of this name may suggest that the caves were created without a long gap of time from one to another. Soon after the Jaina cave the path was done for the excavation of the big cave for Viṣṇu by Maṅgaleśa.

On the left and right side of all the caves are engraved many names. Probably, they are the names of the sculptors : Śrī Āju Ācārasiddhi, Śrī Guṇapālan, Śrī Koḷimañci, Śrī Rūpaśekharaḥ and Śrī Doṇan. The last but one is engraved twice and the last thrice. Probably, they are the names of important sculptors. One might say that they may be the names of pilgrims also. But the habit of pilgrims to write their name in temples starts only during the period of Karnāṭaka Kings of Vijayanagara (or so called Vijayanagara Empire). By and large, either the names are engraved; or their portraits with hands folded saluting the gods are carved on the floor of the temple inside the *prākāra* wall. The idea behind is to show that they are the devotees of the god in the temple and receiving the dust of the feet of devotees on them is as meritorious as worshipping the god himself. We strongly feel that they are the names of artists who have worked for fashioning the caves.

In our opinion the colossal work of excavating the caves starts with the Jaina cave followed by big Viṣṇu cave authored by Maṅgaleśa. Then next the work was that of the small cave again dedicated to Viṣṇu. Lastly, under the strong influence of Lakulīśa-Pāśupata the Śiva cave saw the light of the day. As all the three Hindu caves face north all *saumya*, 'gentle', forms of divinities are exposed including the sports of Viṣṇu because in the Sadasiva concept north facing images should be *saumya*, soft qualities. From our study, we understand that even though the first few kings of Cālukya stock were *Parama-Bhāgavata*, influence of Śaivism was there. This fact is corroborated by the Śaiva sculptures as bracket figures in the Vaiṣṇava caves.

Endnotes

1. Shrinivas V. Padigar, *Inscriptions of Calukyas of Bādāmi*, ICHR, Bangalore, 2Ā10, no.1, p.1.
2. S. V. Padigar, *ibid.*, No.6; in ins.19, line 17, p.32 and (trans.) 33.
3. *Ibid.*, p.Ixiii. Padigar mentions in the introduction that Pulikeśin II also had the title of Parama-Bhāgavata and cites the reference of Chiplun plates of Pulikeśin II (no.24.). But there is no such title for Pulikeśin II in the text of the charter. No.24 must be an error for no.19 (V.F).
4. S. V. Padigar, *ibid.*, no.42, p.67-70, line 27.

