

## The Narasimha Images in Pakistan

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Many sculptural reliefs showing the images of Narasiṃha (the 4<sup>th</sup> *avatāra* of Viṣṇu) have been reported from different parts of the Indian subcontinent, however, the following exhibit some of the well-known examples:

1. Narasiṃha in *yogic* pose in a *candraśālā* of the Gupta period temple at Deogarh (Banerjea 1956: 417, Pl. XXIII, no. 3).
2. Peaceful Narasiṃha (in *lālītāsana*) 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).
3. *Narasimha-Hiraṇya yuddham* at Ellurā (Sarasvati 1957: Pl. XXVI, fig. 116).
4. Seated Kevala Narasiṃha from Helebidu, Mysore, (Rāo 1914, I, i: 156, fig. XLIII).
5. Standing Kevala Narasiṃha from Cave No. III at Bādāmi (Rāo 1914: I, i: 156, fig. XLIII).
6. Standing Narasiṃha at Eran, early 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, (Harle 1974: Pl. 25).
7. *Narasimha-Hiraṇya vadham* of the Gupta period at Varanasi (Biswas *et al* 1985: 52, Pl. III, figs. 6, 6-a).
8. Standing Kevala Narasiṃha carved in the niche of a stone pillar from Rājghat, Varanasi, 478 AD, (Biswas *et al* 1985: 39-41, Pl. VII, No. 12; Pl. VIII, No. 12-d; Pl. IX, No. 13-b).
9. Seated Kevala Narasiṃha from Verinag, Kashmīr now in Śrī Pratāp Singh Museum, Śrīnagar, dated to 8<sup>th</sup> century by Ohri and 10<sup>th</sup> century by Malla, (Ohri 1991: 84, Pl. 4.66; Malla 1990: 49-50, Pl. 69).

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

Since it is difficult to encompass here all major Narasiṃha images in the subcontinent, we have, therefore, concentrated on those presently known at Pakistan. Contrary to other Hindu gods and goddesses, Narasiṃha 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 Narasiṃha. Gopināth Rāo (1914 I, i: 149-61) enumerates the following four types:

- i. *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 *yogapaṭṭa* (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 Hiraṇyakaśipu to an end thus also called *Ugra-Narasimha* who is shown seated on *siṃhāsana*.
- iii. *Yānaka-Narasimha*: This kind of Narasimha is depicted seated on the shoulders of *Garuḍa* or the folds of *Ādiśeṣa*. This Narasimha should have four arms, in two of which he carries *śaṅkha* and *cakra*.
- iv. *Lakṣmi-Narasimha*: This Narasimha is shown seated on *padmasana* in more or less *lālītāsana* with Lakṣmi seated on his lap.

R.S. Gupte (1980:31) gives three types---Girija, Sthauṇa and Yānaka, thus omitting *Lakṣmi-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 *Lakṣmi-Narasimha* (with his consort). *Yānaka-Narasimha*, in his list, is conspicuous by its absence, which in the words of Rāo (1914:I, i:154) is rarely noticed. Moreover, H.K. Śāstri (1916:66-70, figs.43-5) designates another variety with the name of "*Jvālā-Narasimha*" (the fiery Narasimha). This is the personified *Sudaraśaṇa*, 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 "*Sudaraśaṇa-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 drooping 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. Bhaṭṭaśāli (1929:104-5, Pl. XXXVII, No. 3A (i)d/2) followed by Kamal Ray (1985: 379) and Banerjēa (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 *alīdhāsana* which is consistent with the description of the *Viṣṇudharmottara* (Rāo 1914,I, 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, I, i: 151) in contrast to his other forms where he is shown putting on *kirītamukuta*. 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).

Bhaṭṭaśāli (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, I,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 Narasiṃha image, discovered by Banerjea from Manora, a small village near Bhadanpur Railway Station in District Satna, Madhya Pradesh. This four-armed *Sthaṇa-Narasiṃha* holds *śaṅkha* (?) 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 *Sthaṇa Narasiṃha* then standing in the Changu Nārāyaṇa temple (Nepal) dated in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (formerly dated to 8<sup>th</sup> 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 *aliḍhāsana*, the god is shown taking the support of a three-stripped bench set transversely across the panel to sit on while throwing Hiraṇyakaśipu on his lap. Gopalkrishnan (1996:424-5, fig.11) labels this type of scene as "*Narasiṃha-Hiraṇya vadham*".

The discussion between Prahlāda and Hiraṇyakaśipu 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 Sthaṇa-Narasiṃha* are shown engaged in tearing open the entrails of Hiraṇyakaśipu (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 *śaṅkha* 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 Narasiṃha holds in extra hands *śaṅkha* and *cakra*, see Joshi 1987:243). Material evidence from other parts of India may be cited in the support of our opinion. *Sthaṇa Narasiṃha* from Manora (District Satna, M.P.) and Gurh hold in either case *śaṅkha* 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 *caturabhuja Narasiṃha* 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 *śaṅkha* and *cakra*. Śāstri (1916:26) suggests *śaṅkha* and *cakra* for the two upper hands of Narasiṃha in all his forms.

Our Narasiṃha is profusely bejeweled with his usual ornaments such as *karaṇḍamukuta*, square *tilak* on the forehead, *valaya* (bracelet), *keyūras* (armlets), *nūpurās* (anklets) and short and long *hāras* symbolizing victory of Viṣṇu. 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 Brahmānical, Jain and Buddhist texts and is an emblem of mahāpuruṣa (great persons). It is one of the *aṣṭamaṅgalas* whose antiquity is traced back to 6<sup>th</sup> century BC (Śrīvastava 1979: 38). *Śrīvatsa* appears to be symbolic representation of the goddess Śrīdevī (or Lakṣmi), the consort of Viṣṇu, 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 11-12<sup>th</sup> 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 Narasiṃha—*kanthi* 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-pendant. See Stronge 1995:6-10; Banerjea 1956:290).

The Narasiṃha is shown trampling under the left foot a prostrate male figure perhaps an *apasmārapuruṣa* (cf. Ali 1980: 128-30). In the New Delhi example, B.N. Sharma (1969:423, fig. 16) identifies a similar figure as Hiranyakaśipu who is finally trampled on by the deity. But in our case, in each scene of the *stèle*, the god is shown engaged with Hiranyakaśipu 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 Narasiṃha either an *apasmārapuruṣa* (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 Hiranyakaśipu (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 *aljalīmudrā* to obtain his blessings (Bhaṭṭaśāli 1929:105; Farooq 1988: 26). According to a manuscript of the *Vaikhānasāgama*, Gopināth Rāo (1914, I, i: 153) maintains, on the right and left of the *Sthaṇa Narasiṃha*, while busy in killing Hiranya, should be represented Śrīdevi, Bhūdevi, Nārada and Prahlāda in *aljalīmudrā* 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 *alīdhāsana*, Narasiṃha takes the support of this seat just to make room for stretching the body of Hiranyakaśipu in his lap. It might represent the doorsil of the verandah of the palace of Hiranyakaśipu where he was destined to be killed to honour the immunity boon of Brahmā. The scene showing Narasiṃha dissecting the entrails of the demon-king is called *Narasiṃha-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 *Kīrttimukha* design (the face of glory) at the top centre of the relief panel. "*Kīrttimukha* serves primarily as an apotropaic demon-mask, a gruesome, awe-inspiring guardian of the threshold. The votary, however—the orthodox devotee—greeted the 'face' with confidence and faith; for he knows that *Kīrttimukha* 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 Kīrttimukha 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 vaccui*, it was a sacred symbol depicted for its auspicious effect (Nath 1978:125; 1986:60).

The lower part of the *stela* which serves as pedestal (*pīṭha*) 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 *Kīrttimukha*. 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 Narasiṃha* is provided with a *pañcarathī* 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 (8<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> centuries) was rendered in a type of locally-quarried, fine-grained, slate stone designated as "black chlorite" (Bhaṭṭaśāli 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 Rājmaḥal 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 Narasiṃha in Peshāwar* (Pl. 5)

The *Kevala-Narasiṃha* or *Yoga-Narasiṃha* 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, Hiranyakaśipu, 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 *Narasiṃha* meant to safeguard human being and ensure their deliverance from the mischievous *asura* king (Bhan 1987:378). Hiranyakaśipu had, in fact, extremely provoked the divine wrath of *Narasiṃha* 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 Hiranyakaśipu and having liberated the world from his demonic grip, the god sat alone to meditate for some time in *yogāsana*. In iconoplastic art, *Narasiṃha* in this form at this stage is designated as *Kevala-Narasiṃha* or *Yoga-Narasiṃha*. Besides his seated examples (Śāstri 1916:29,fig.19; Ohri 1991;84, Pl.4.66), a good number of standing images of *Kevala-Narasiṃha* are also reported (Rāo 1914,I,i: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 *Narasiṃha* myth.

This inscribed *Kevala Narasiṃha*, now preserved in a private collection at Peshāwar, 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 *pīṭha* (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 *Jvālās* (protruding tongues of flames) (Rāo 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 "*giriya-Narasimha*" signifying his emergence from mountain-cave or jungle (Rāo, *Ibid.*, 150), an appropriate place bearing congenial atmosphere for *yogic* practices.

Narasimha is shown seated on a *siṃhāsana* (Rāo, *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 *yogapaṭṭa* (belt) which usually goes round the legs of the seated figure and his back (Blurton 1992: 125) to keep him seated unshakably firm. This practice had been common among the *yogīs* 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 (*Vṛṣa*) (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). *Nandiśvara* and *Adhikāranandin* are his other names (Banerjea 1956:534). *Nandi*, *Nandiśa* or *Nandikeśvara* is described as one of the *Śivagaṇas*. Originally an ascetic, *Nandi* rose to the status of the head of all *Śivagaṇas* by virtue of his austerities and devotion to Śiva (Śāstri 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 (*Vṛṣa*) 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,ii: 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 *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa*, further reveals that Brahmā, having created the universe, craved for its enduring protection. So from his right side, sprang a being wearing *kuṇḍalas* 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), *śānti* (peacefulness) and *ahimsa* (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, *Vṛṣapriya*,...". *Yajñamūrti* or *Yajñeśa*, another minor *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, is also described in the *Rīg 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, Hiranyakaśipu, as Viṣṇu 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 Viṣṇuism over Śivaism. Thus it may be the outcome of the sectarian conflict between the followers of Śiva and Viṣṇu. The Vaiṣṇavas might take bull as Śiva or the *vāhana* of Śiva in a subdued form. Śivaite accounts, on the other hand, records that almost a similar fate was meted out to Narasiṃha, when Śiva, heard of the destruction of his ardent devotee, Hiranyakaśipu, assumed the form of a mythical hybrid animal, *Śarabha* or *Śarabheṣamūrti*, killed Narasiṃha and "wore his skin as a garment using his face as an ornament on the chest" (Rāo 1914;I,i:155). Śāstri (1916:147-9, fig.94) gives the iconography of *Śarabha*, the hybrid form of Śiva, on the authority of *Kārnāgama* as having eight legs, three eyes, long nails, two hands, leonine face, two wings and trampling on the body of Narasiṃha to crush his pride. The depiction of bull is thus significant.

The antiquity of the worship of Narasiṃha 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 therianthrope 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 Narasiṃha flanked by five *Vṛṣṇi vīras* (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, Āndhradeśa (*Ibid.*:344).

The Narasiṃha, as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, occupies central position among the *Vṛṣṇi* heroes in the panel. Iconographically, Narasiṃha is seated frontally on a raised platform in sejanant 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 Narasiṃha 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* form with leonine head). Curiously, and naturally as may be expected with his seated posture, the Narasiṃha is shown in ithyphallic form in that the erect penis might indicate his yogic potential "because Nrsimha 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 Narasiṃha when the idea of later *therianthrope* form of the deity was not yet fully evolved.

### C. *Sthaṇa* Narasiṃha in a Private Collection in Peshāwar (Pl. 6)

The sculpture, representing the *Sthaṇa-Narasiṃha*, is presently lying in a private collection in Peshāwar. The owner, besides our making several requests, remained reluctant to let us visually examine 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 Narasiṃha 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 render a double lotus seat (*viśvapadma*) (cf. Banerjea 1956:299). In contrast to the prescription of the *Viṣṇudharmottara* (cf. Rāo 1914, I, i: 154) which suggests *alīdhāsana*, the deity sits in *pralambapādāsana* (the so-called European fashion). His feet rest on the inclined lower part of the *pīṭha* 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 Narasiṃha which is suggestive of the accumulation of *yogic* powers (Kalidos 1996::402, f.n.26).

Iconographically, the *caturabhujā Narasiṃha* 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 Hiraṇyakaśipu lying helplessly stretched in 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 Narasiṃha, though partly broken, are carved just above the temple which touches the god's *mukūṭa*.

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 *hāra* can be seen with a flower-shaped central locket which rests traditionally on his breast.

The Narasiṃha is attended by two figures one on either side in *aljalīmudrā*. 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 Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī 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 Narasiṃha of late 8<sup>th</sup> century from Chamba (Ohri 1991:85, Pl.4.55).

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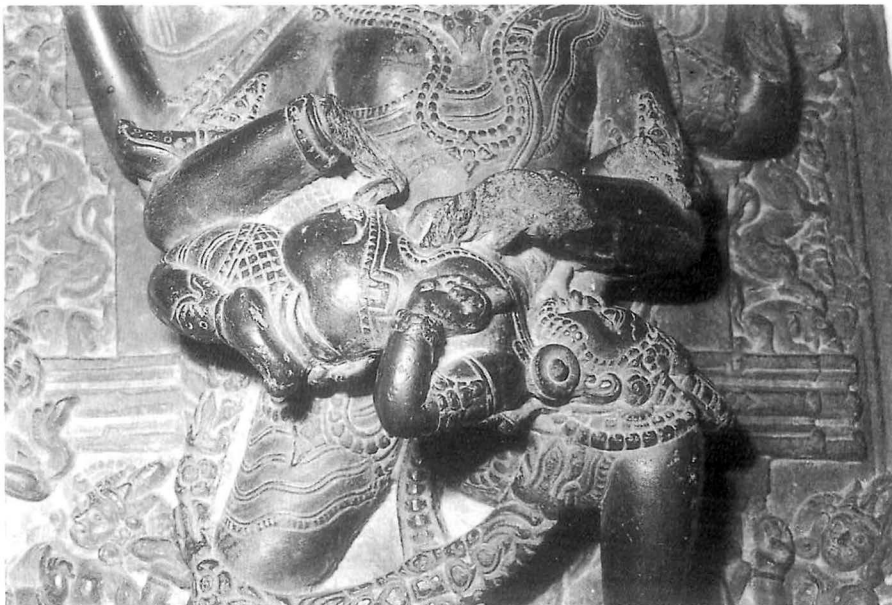
Pl. 1: Sthaṇa - Narasimha in the National Museum of Pakistan, Karachi.



Pl. 2: Close-up of the bust of the above.



Pl. 3: Kicking at the column by Hiraṇyakaśipu and bursting out of Narasimha from it.



Pl. 4: Hiraṇyakaśipu in the lap of Narasimha who is tearing open his abdomen.



Pl. 5: Kevala Narasimha in a private collection in Peshawar



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