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A NEW HISTORY OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE

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THE VAKATAKA-GUPTA AGE

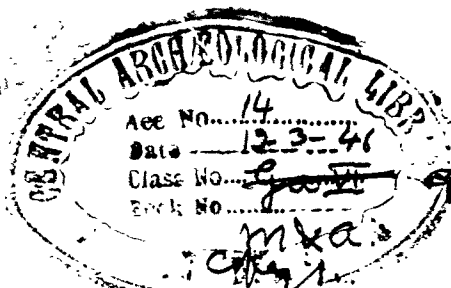
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be due to the efforts of the remodellers of the Purāṇas, the majority of which hold up Vishṇu as the highest god. A very large number of the epigraphs of our period refer to the temples of Vishṇu¹. Among his ten incarnations epigraphic evidence shows that Varāha² and Kṛishṇa were most popular. This was probably due to the country being recently rescued from foreign yoke. The achievements of Kṛishṇa often figure in our epigraphs by way of similes, and sculptures have been recovered at Paharpur in Bengal illustrating some of his feats in his childhood.

It is interesting to note that the cult of Rāma had not become popular in our period. Kālidāsa no doubt refers to him as an incarnation of Vishṇu, and there was a temple dedicated to him at Ramtek near Nagpur. But there is no evidence to show that Rāma had become the object of popular worship down to the end of the 6th century A.D. No king or minister of our period describes himself as a devotee of Rāma, nor does his name figure in *Amarakosha* as that of a deity. His temples also were very rare in our period.

Śiva has also been held up as the highest god in several Purāṇas of our period, though their number is relatively small, and we find Śaivism almost equally popular with Vaishṇavism. If the Gupta, Pallava and Gaṅga kings were mostly Vaishṇavas, the rulers of the Bhāraśiva, Vākāṭaka, Naḷa, Maitraka, Kadamba and Parivrājaka dynasties were usually Śaivas. Śāba and Prīthvīsheṇa, who were both officers under the Vaishṇava Guptas, were themselves Śaivas.

The custom of establishing a Śiva temple to commemorate

¹ Meharauli inscription refers to the erection of a *Vishṇu-dhruva*; Gangdhar and Eran records mention the temples of Vishṇu and Junagadh and Bhitari epigraphs describe the construction of the temples of Chakrabhṛit and Sārṅgin. There was a temple of Vishṇupāda at Nagari.

² At Udayagiri a beautiful Gupta sculpture vividly represents the rescue of the earth by Vishṇu in this Vaarāha incarnation. In Puṇḍra-vardhana, there was a Varāha temple, as also at Eran.