

The Story of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* in Sculptural Art of India

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Introduction

Kuvalayāpīḍa was the state elephant of Mathura maintained by the king Kaṁsa. He was the son of Bali, called Mandagati in his previous life. Mandagati was strong and giant like with the strength of a hundred thousand elephants. He once pushed his way through, amidst the crowd, like a mad wild elephant and crumpled them down while on a pilgrimage to *Raṅga-kṣetra*. While doing so, he also pushed to the ground an elderly sage called Trita. The sage cursed Mandagati to become an elephant. Mandagati pleaded with the sage to show mercy on him. Trita informed him that he would attain liberation in the city of Mathura by Lord Kṛṣṇa. Mandagati, because of the curse, became an elephant and lived in the Vindhya. Once the king Jarāsandha captured him with the help of a hundred thousand elephants and eventually gave him to Kaṁsa as a wedding present when Kaṁsa married Asti and Prāpti, the daughters of Jarāsandha (*Gārgī Saṁhitā* 5.11).

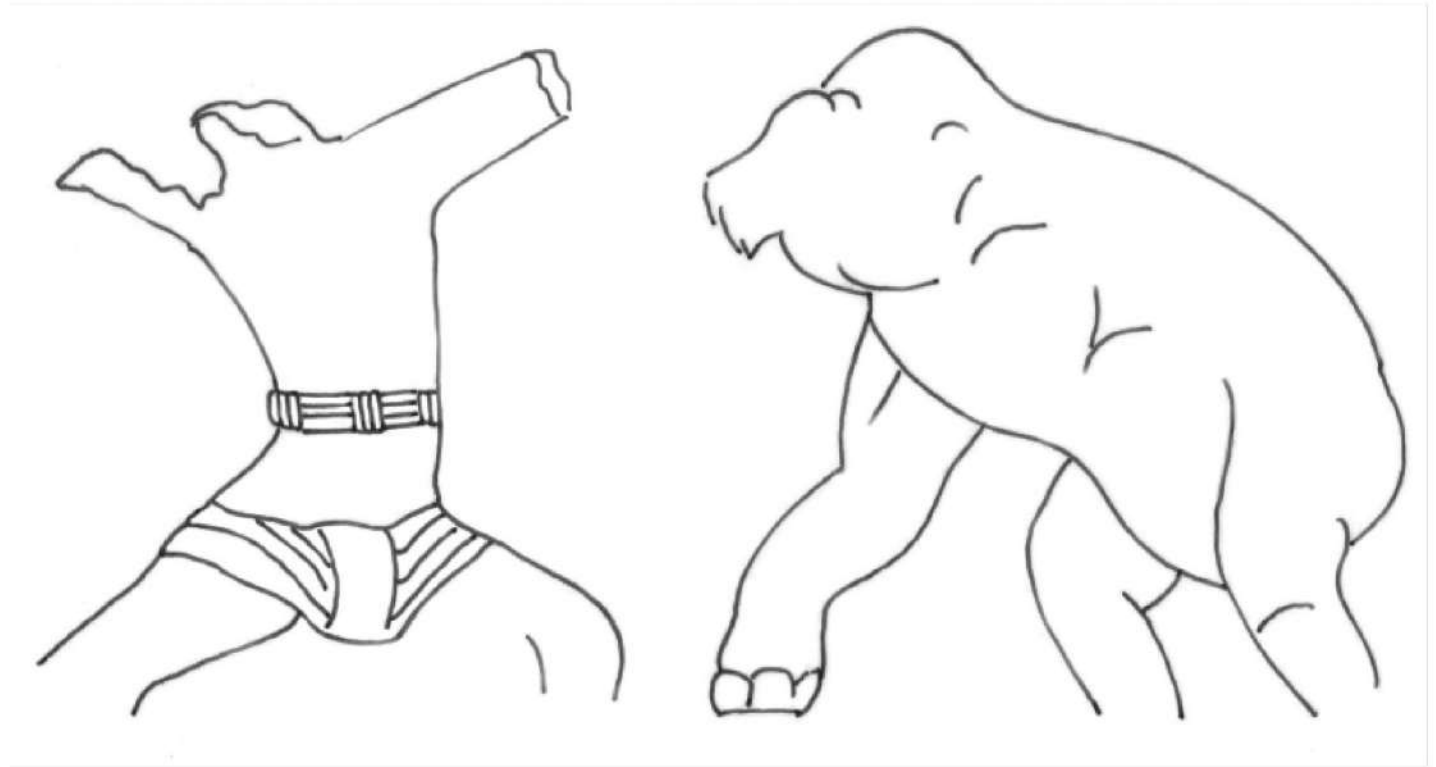
Kaṁsa invited Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma for *Dhanuryajña* festival in Mathura with the intention of killing Kṛṣṇa. When Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma reached Mathura, Kaṁsa arranged wrestlers called Muṣṭika, Cāṇūra, Kūṭa, Śala and Tośala to fight with them. Kaṁsa kept Kuvalayāpīḍa also on the way to the wrestling ground. When Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma came near Kuvalayāpīḍa, Ambaṣṭha, the *mahāvata* (mahout), prompted the elephant to attack them. Angry Kṛṣṇa took hold of Kuvalayāpīḍa's tail, whirled it round and round, hit on its front, killed Kuvalayāpīḍa, pulled out its tusks and gave them to Balarāma. Balarama killed the *mahāvata* with the tusk (*Bhāgavata* 10.43). *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* (2.29),

Brahmavaivarta Purāna (72.87) and *Gārgī Samhitā* (5.11) have mentioned the killing of Kuvalayāpīḍa by Kṛṣṇa more or less the same way.

A survey of literature and a study of sculptures present in different temples and museums in India indicate that there are many depictions of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* in sculptural art of India. They have been observed in India since 5th/6th century CE. This paper analyses important sculptures of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* in terracotta, stone and wood recorded from India.

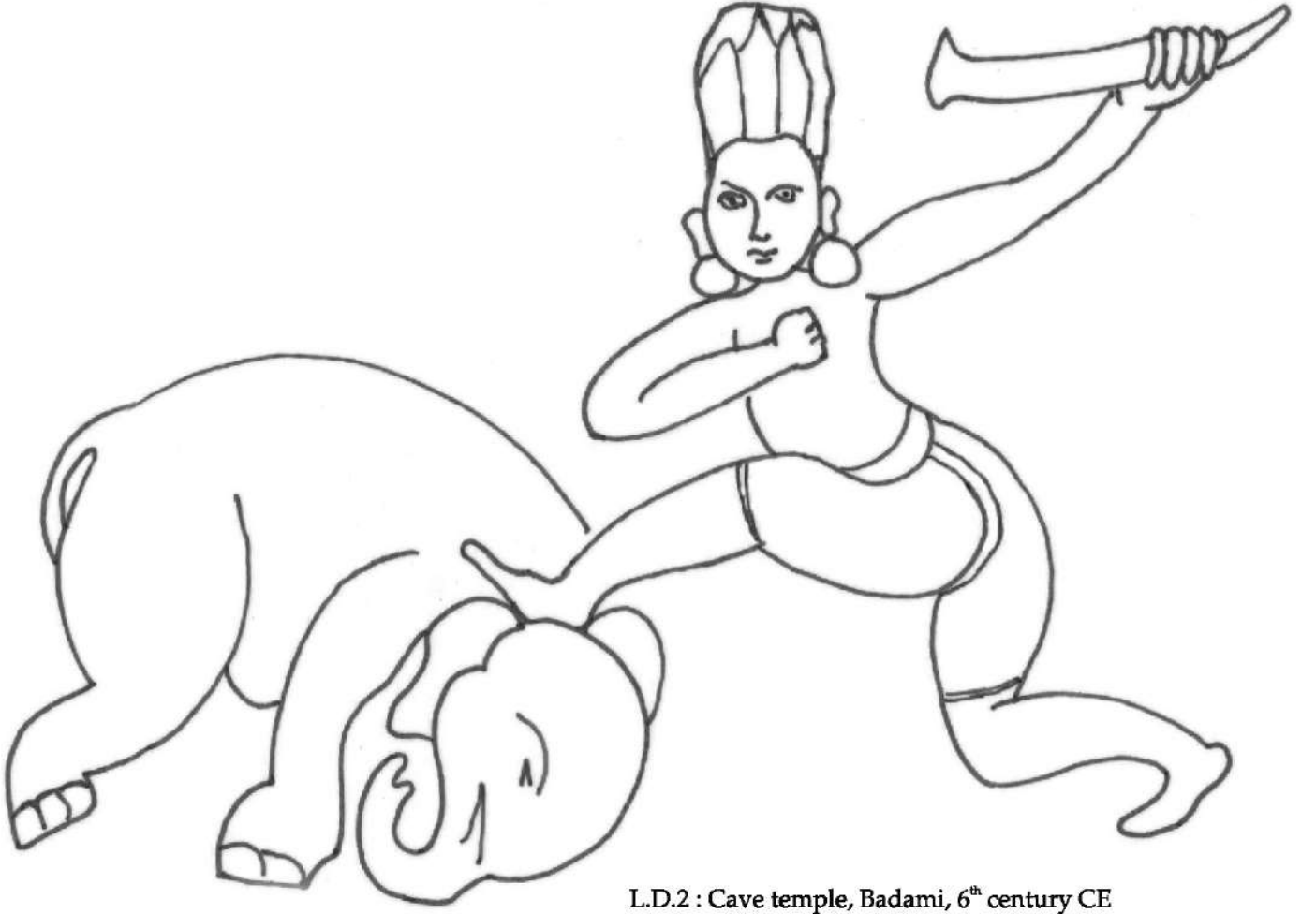
***Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* Sculptures**

One of the earliest representations of the story of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* is seen in Bhitargaon terracotta panel of 5th century CE (L.D.1). It shows Kṛṣṇa and Kuvalayāpīḍa fighting with each other. Both the figures are mutilated. Head and hands of Kṛṣṇa and the trunk, tail and the front left leg of Kuvalayāpīḍa are broken. Depicted in *ālīḍhāsana* posture, Kṛṣṇa is shown about to strike the elephant with both his hands. Kuvalayāpīḍa is presented standing on its hind legs charging Kṛṣṇa.



L.D.1 : Bhitargaon Terracotta panel, 5th century CE

Cave temple at Badami in Karnataka dated to 6th century CE has a depiction of Kuvalayāpīḍa in stone (L.D.2). Kṛṣṇa, shown as a youth, tramples



L.D.2 : Cave temple, Badami, 6th century CE

Kuvalayāpīḍa by pressing his left foot on the neck of the elephant which is shown falling down. He holds the pulled out tusk of the elephant in his uplifted left hand. The gesture of Kṛṣṇa's right hand suggests that he is about to hit the elephant with the elbow of his folded right hand. The elephant falls with his head hitting the ground. The fallen *mahāvata* is depicted between Kṛṣṇa and Kuvalayāpīḍa. The two figures presented at the background could not be specifically identified.

Mallikarjuna temple at Pattadakal in Karnataka dated to 7th century CE shows a depiction of Kṛṣṇa in stone pulling out the tusk of Kuvalayāpīḍa by firmly holding its neck by the left hand. Kuvalayāpīḍa raises his front left leg and trunk to hit Kṛṣṇa back.¹ A stone sculpture in the 8th century CE Harihara temple at Osian in

Rajasthan shows an adult Kṛṣṇa attacking Kuvalayāpīḍa (Fig.1). His gesture indicates that he is about to strike the elephant on its forehead. Kṛṣṇa tries to pull



Fig.1 : *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha*, Harihara temple at Osian, Rajasthan, 8th century CE

out the right tusk of the elephant with his left hand. The elephant is shown seizing the left leg of Kṛṣṇa with its trunk. The gesture of the *mahāvata* who sits on the back of Kuvalayāpīḍa suggests that he is prompting the elephant to attack Kṛṣṇa. The figure of the *mahāvata* is seen mutilated. Balarāma stands behind Kṛṣṇa. A snakehood is presented over Balarāma's head to indicate his identity. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are shown at the right side of the panel dancing with happiness. Kṛṣṇa holds a wine cup in his hand.

Allahabad Museum has a stone Memorial Pillar with seven segments dated to 9th century CE. Of the seven, five segments have *Kṛṣṇalīlā* depictions. *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* is found in the second segment from the bottom. Kṛṣṇa, presented as a boy, stands fearlessly in front of the mad elephant which charges at him. He strikes the elephant on his forehead with his right hand. Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh has a 10th century sculpture which shows Kṛṣṇa lifting Kuvalayāpīḍa by its trunk with his left hand.² The depiction shows that Kṛṣṇa is about to strike the trunk of the elephant with the sword held in his right hand. He presses the body of Kuvalayāpīḍa with his left leg. Kuvalayāpīḍa here is sculptured as a very small figure as compared to that of Kṛṣṇa.

There is a depiction of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* in two vertical tiers in a stone panel in the collection of Thakur of Shohagpur.³ It is dated to 10/11th century CE. The upper tier shows Kṛṣṇa standing on the front legs of the crouching Kuvalayāpīḍa and lifting its head up with his hands. The two other figures standing behind the elephant are shown striking the elephant. The *mahāvata* is shown falling down from the back of Kuvalayāpīḍa. The lower tier depicts the subdued Kuvalayāpīḍa with its head down. There is another stone panel of 10/11th century CE with the presentation of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* in the collection of Thakur at Shohagpur.⁴ It shows Kṛṣṇa pulling out the tusk of Kuvalayāpīḍa with his left hand and pressing the right front leg of Kuvalayāpīḍa with his left leg. The right hand of Kṛṣṇa is not visible. Balarāma, standing behind with snake-hood canopy over his head, is shown lifting the tail of the elephant. Its hind portion is about to touch the ground because of the pressure applied by Kṛṣṇa on its front portion. The *mahāvata* is shown falling from the back of the elephant. The two figures standing behind the elephant express their anger by raising their hands to strike the elephant. One of them holds a tusk like object in his hands.

An eleventh century *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* sculpture present in one of the stone pillars of Modhera Sun temple in Gujarat shows Kṛṣṇa seated in *ālīḍhāsana* and lifting Kuvalayāpīḍa with his two hands above his head (Fig.2). Balarāma sits near Kṛṣṇa in wonder.* Chennakeshava temple at Belur dated to



Fig.2 : *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha*, Modhera Sun temple, Gujarat, 11th century CE

* It seems that Fig.2 is wrongly identified by the author as Kṛṣṇa in *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* episode at Modhera. The physical and hair treatment of the figure is quite different than the other similar figures.

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13th century CE has a sculpture in stone (L.D.3). It shows Kṛṣṇa preventing the charging of Kuvalayāpīḍa by firmly holding its tusks. The fury of the elephant with its tail twisted up and the calmness of Kṛṣṇa visible on his face are evident in the sculpture.

A 13th century stone sculpture present in Tiruvalla Shrivallabha temple in Pathanamthitta district in Kerala



L.D.3 : Chennakeshava temple, Belur, 13th century CE

shows Kṛṣṇa lifting Kuvalayāpīḍa by its trunk with his left hand and raising the right hand as if to hit the elephant on its head (Fig.3). Kṛṣṇa's foot of the raised leg



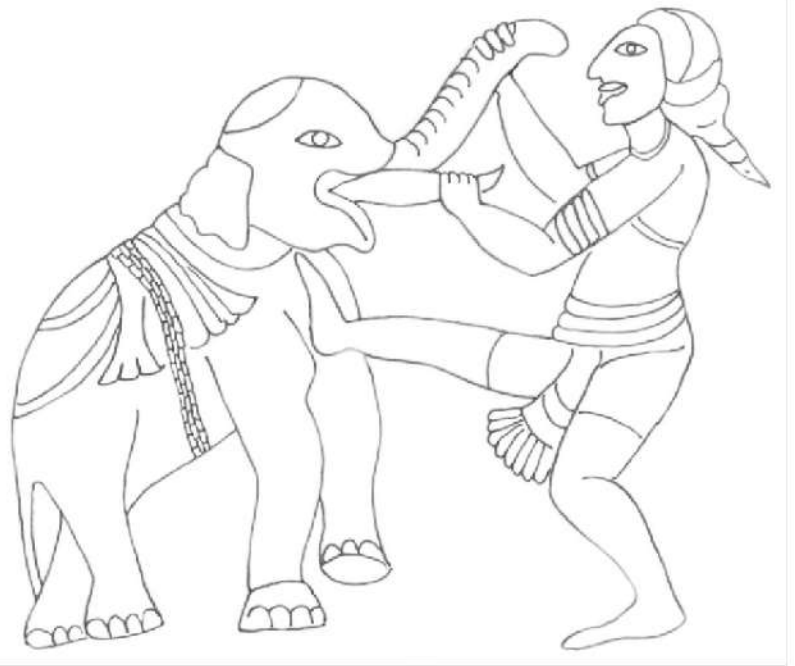
Fig.3 : *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha*, Tiruvalla Shrivallabha temple, Kerala, 13th century CE

is placed up on the mouth of the elephant. Since Kṛṣṇa is in the action of lifting the elephant, it is depicted standing on its hind legs. Shasthamkulangara Narasimha temple in Alappuzha district in Kerala belonging to 14th century CE has a wooden sculpture (Fig.4) depicting *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* similar to that of Tiruvalla Shrivallabha temple. Kṛṣṇa lifts the elephant holding by its trunk. The elephant is depicted standing in air, above the ground.



Fig.4 : *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha*, Shasthamkulangara Narasimha temple, Kerala, 14th century CE

Chintala Venkataramana Temple at Tadpatri in Tamil Nadu dated to 16th century CE has a depiction of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* in stone showing Kṛṣṇa lifting the elephant by its trunk with his right hand and pulling out its tusk with his left hand. Kṛṣṇa kicks on the chest of *Kuvalayāpīḍa* with his right leg (L.D.4).



L.D.4 : Chintala Venkataramana Temple, Tadpatri, 16th century CE

There are a few depictions of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* in temples of Kerala belonging to 17th/18th centuries CE. All of them are in wood. Tiruvarppu Krishna temple in Kottayam district has a representation of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha*. Kṛṣṇa is shown standing in *ālīḍha* posture and lifting the elephant holding by its trunk (Fig.5). His right hand



Fig.5 : *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha*, Thiruvvarppu Krishna temple, Kerala, 17th-18th century CE

is raised to strike the elephant. Kaviyur Shiva temple in Pathanamthitta district has a similar sculpture.⁵ The uplifted *Kuvalayāpīḍa* is presented opening its mouth in pain. *Kṛṣṇa* is presented as a boy. Ernakulam Shiva temple has a depiction of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* on the wooden panel of its *shrikovil* wall. *Kṛṣṇa*, presented as a young boy, is lifting the elephant with ease by its trunk with his left hand. The gesture of his right hand is as if about to strike on the head of *Kuvalayāpīḍa*. The elephant is presented smaller than *Kṛṣṇa* and is depicted standing up in the air, above the ground because of the force applied by *Kṛṣṇa*. Ramapuram Devi temple in Alappuzha district has a depiction of this story showing *Kṛṣṇa* lifting *Kuvalayāpīḍa* up by its trunk with his left hand (Fig.6). *Kṛṣṇa* pulls out the left tusk of the elephant with his right hand. The elephant is shown standing on its hind legs. Its mouth is wide open and it excretes in pain. There is a bracket figure of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* similar to the above depiction in Chengannur Mahadeva temple in Alappuzha district. The gesture of *Kṛṣṇa*'s right hand indicates that he is about to strike the elephant.

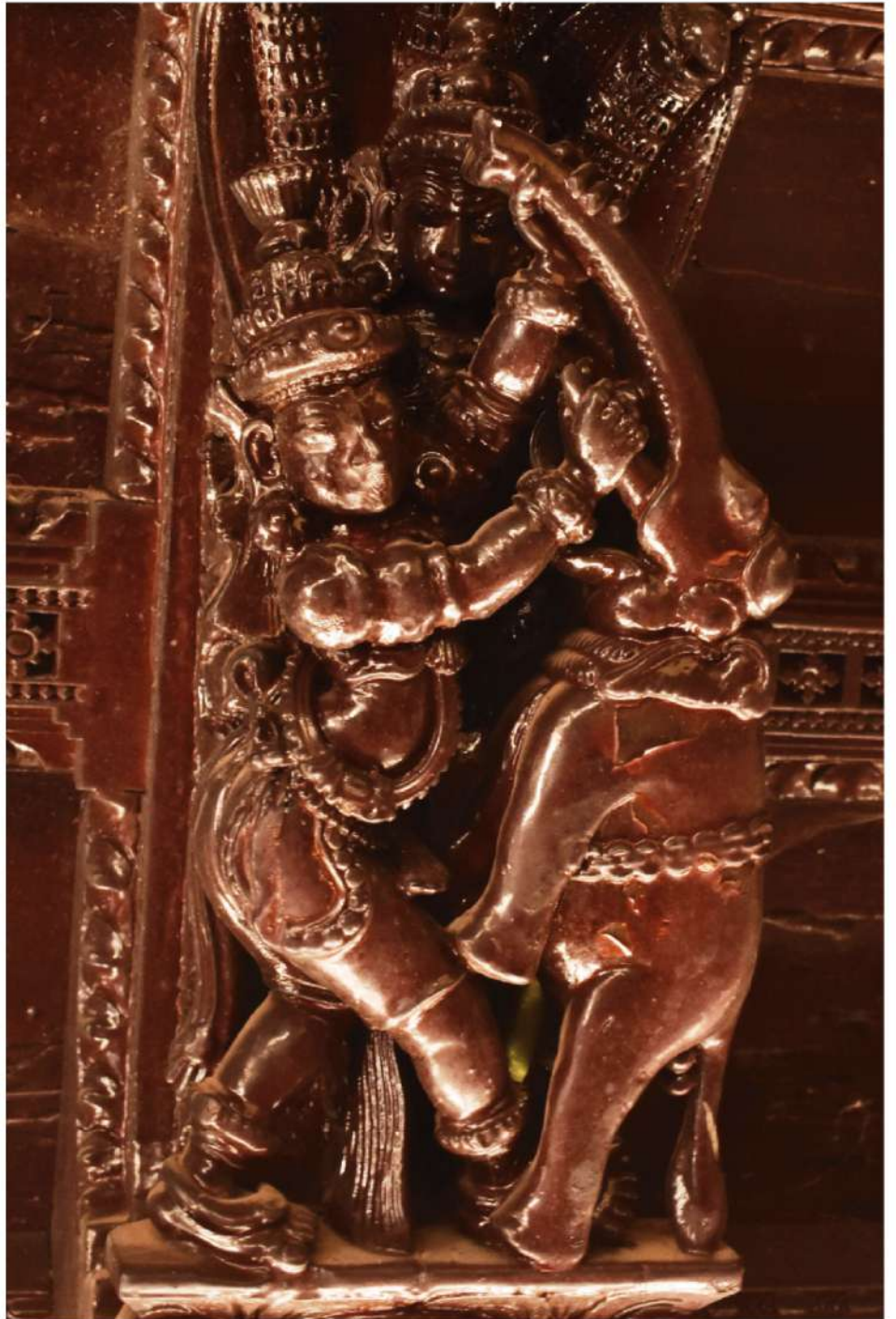


Fig.6 : *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha*, Ramapuram Devi Temple, Kerala, 17th-18th century CE

Thuravur Narasimha temple in Alappuzha district has a sculpture depicting Kṛṣṇa tightly holding the trunk of Kuvalayāpīḍa and lifting it with his left hand like a toy. He is about to strike the elephant with his right hand. The elephant is presented with wide opened mouth to indicate the pain he suffers from Kṛṣṇa's attack. Another *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* sculpture observed in the same temple shows Kṛṣṇa standing in *uromaṇḍalakarṇa* and lifting the trunk of Kuvalayāpīḍa with his right hand and striking the elephant with his outstretched right hand (L.D.5).



L.D.5 : Thuravur Narasimha Temple, Kerala, 17-18th century CE

Venganellur Shiva temple in Thrissur district has a sculpture of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* showing Kṛṣṇa pulling apart the tusks of Kuvalayāpīḍa with his both hands pressing down the seated elephant with his left leg (L.D.6).

Harippad Subrahmanya temple in Alappuzha district has a beautiful representation of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* (Fig.7). This sculpture depicts Kṛṣṇa pulling out the tusks of Kuvalayāpīḍa with his hands while pressing apart the legs of the elephant with his own left leg. The elephant is shown in a knelt posture excreting in fear and pain. Its protruded penis, perhaps, indicates its excitement and fear.



L.D.6 : Venganellur Shiva temple, Kerala, 17-18th century CE

Balarāma is portrayed standing behind Kṛṣṇa and Kuvalayāpīḍa. A woman is shown running, keeping her right hand over her head in fear and helplessness.

National Museum, New Delhi houses a 19th century wooden sculpture of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* obtained from Tamil Nadu temple car (L.D.7). It depicts Kṛṣṇa as a sturdy boy, twisting back the head of the fallen Kuvalayāpīḍa and splitting



Fig.7 : *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha*, Hrippad Subrahmanya temple, Kerala, 18th century CE

open its mouth by pulling apart the trunk and jaw. Kṛṣṇa's left leg is placed on the body of the elephant.

Discussion

Kṛṣṇalīlā anecdotes narrate the divine power of child Kṛṣṇa. The episode of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* comes under *Kṛṣṇalīlā*, wherein how a mighty elephant positioned to attack Kṛṣṇa by the King Kaṁsa in Mathura was effortlessly killed by Kṛṣṇa is described. In



L.D.7 : National Museum, New Delhi, 19th century CE

sculptural art, this simple story, however, finds expression with great diversity, which is mainly brought about by depicting (i) different kinds of actions shown by Kuvalayāpīḍa in attacking Kṛṣṇa, (ii) diverse responses exhibited by Kṛṣṇa in counter attacking the elephant, (iii) distinct presentations of different characters involved, (iv) the dramatic elements contained in the story depiction and (v) various decorations provided for the main characters, Kṛṣṇa and Kuvalayāpīḍa.

Depiction of Kuvalayāpīḍa

The earliest depiction of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* observed in Bhitargaon terracotta panel shows a plain illustration of the elephant charging on Kṛṣṇa. Though similar depictions are found in 7th, 9th, 10/11th or 13th centuries CE, a more action oriented presentation of the *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* appeared in the 8th century CE in Harihara temple at Osian in Rajasthan, wherein the elephant is shown seizing the left leg of Kṛṣṇa with its trunk. Other recorded sculptures show the elephant as a fully surrendered one in front of Kṛṣṇa, like depicting it in a seated position, as in one sculpture in the collection of Thakur at Shohagpur; lifted by

Kṛṣṇa as in another sculpture in the above collection, Tiruvarppu Krishna temple or Kaviyur Shiva temple; lifted fully like a toy by Kṛṣṇa as in Modhera Sun temple, Shasthamkulangara Narasimha temple or Chengannur Mahadeva temple; kicked by Kṛṣṇa as in Tadpatri Chintala Venkataramana Temple; kneeling with front legs down as in Harippad Subrahmanya temple; sitting with front legs raised up as in Venganellur Shiva temple or head twisted by Kṛṣṇa as in the sculpture kept in the National Museum, New Delhi.

Depiction of Kṛṣṇa

Actions of Kṛṣṇa, while dealing with the attack of Kuvalayāpīḍa, are much more diverse than that of Kuvalayāpīḍa. The earliest depiction of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* in Bhitargaon terracotta panel, as mentioned earlier, suggests Kṛṣṇa holding the tusk of the elephant and striking it. Later depictions show Kṛṣṇa pressing the neck of the elephant and exerting pressure with his leg standing in *pratyālīḍha* as in the case of Badami Cave temple, or doing so, standing in *samasthānaka* and pulling the tusk of the elephant as in Mallikarjuna temple at Pattadakal. Holding or pulling the tusk with one hand and raising the other to strike the elephant, one action alone or both actions together, is the common feature in majority of the depictions of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha*. Kṛṣṇa standing in *ālīḍha* posture with the elephant between his legs and holding a sword in his raised hand is a rare depiction as seen in Lakshmana temple at Khajuraho. Kṛṣṇa standing on the front legs of the elephant and pulling the tusk as in the sculptures at the collection of Thakur at Shohagpur, kicking the elephant on the chest, lifting the trunk of the elephant with one hand and pulling the tusk with the other as in Chintala Venkataramana Temple at Tadpatri, pulling apart the tusks of the elephant as in Harippad Subrahmanya temple, pulling out both the tusks by pressing his leg on the body of the elephant as in Venganellur Shiva temple or twisting the head of the elephant and splitting open the mouth and pulling apart the trunk and jaws as in the sculpture maintained in the National Museum, New Delhi are other interesting presentations which bring about the diversity in depiction.

There are a few other depictions that evidently exhibit the divine power of Kṛṣṇa. With various combinations of actions - like holding the legs of the elephant so as to lift it up or striking the elephant keeping his foot on the mouth of the

elephant - Kṛṣṇa is sculptured lifting the elephant without any effort. Such depictions are observed in Modhera Sun temple, Tiruvalla Shrivallabha temple and Shasthamkulangara Narasimha temple. Doing the impossible is the main character in all *Kṛṣṇalīlā* anecdotes and this is evident in all *Kṛṣṇalīlā* sculptures like *Kāliyāmardana*,⁶ *Pūtanāvadha*,⁷ *Bakāsuraavadha*,⁸ *Śakaṭāsuraavadha*⁹ and others. It is a point of interest to observe that all *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* sculptures meaningfully show Kṛṣṇa as the bigger figure than that of the elephant, though the degree of difference in size varies in different depictions. Another fascinating observation is that none of these sculptures has provided any indication to the previous life of Kuvalayāpīḍa.

Dramatic Elements

The presentation of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* anecdote attains a dramatic dimension with the depiction in Badami Cave temple of the 6th century CE. In this sculpture, the elephant imparts the impression that it was hurled away by Kṛṣṇa as the elephant is shown falling with its head hitting the ground. This brings movement to the depiction. The sculptor has dramatized the occasion with the inclusion of the *mahāvata* being presented between Kṛṣṇa and the elephant while falling down from the back of the latter. Moreover, the depiction of two persons, possibly representing the people around witnessing the incidence of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha*, as in this sculpture, or the two persons involved in striking the elephant as in the sculpture seen in the collection of Thakur of Shohagpur, or a woman running, keeping her right hand over her head in fear and helplessness as in the depiction of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* in Harippad Subrahmanya temple, or Kṛṣṇa shown with a wine cup in his hand and the depiction of Balarāma behind but close to Kṛṣṇa as in the sculpture observed in Harihara temple at Osian - all these add dramatic elements in picturization of *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* in sculptural art, so also the depiction of diverse actions of Kṛṣṇa and Kuvalayāpīḍa.

Depiction of Kṛṣṇa and Kuvalayāpīḍa

Kṛṣṇa is depicted as a child, an adolescent or a youth in these sculptures as normally found in many other sculptures depicting the events of *Kṛṣṇalīlā*.^{10&11} As a

child, he is shown with prominent multi-belled girdle, long hair spread at the back and a portion of the hair tied as top bun decorated with peacock feathers as in Tiruvalla Shrivallabha temple, Shasthamkulangara Narasimha temple and Kaviyur Shiva temple. As an adolescent, he is depicted wearing short trouser like lower garment, with or without pleats, falling in front between the legs as in the sculptures of Osian Harihara temple, Venganellur Shiva temple and National Museum, New Delhi. When Kṛṣṇa is shown as a youth, he is found wearing *kirīṭa* or having pleated hair and long lower garment as in the sculptures of Khajuraho Lakshmana temple, Belur Chennakeshava temple and Chintala Venkataramana temple.

Kuvalayāpīḍa is presented with or without decorations and chains. Sculptures occurring in Badami Cave temple, Modhera Sun temple and Shasthamkulangara Narasimha temple show Kuvalayāpīḍa without any decorations on the body. A cord or an elaborately decorated ornament around the neck and occasionally a chain around the abdomen are seen as in the depictions found in Tiruvalla Shrivallabha temple, Kaviyur Shiva temple and Thuravur Narasimha temple. There are a few Kuvalayāpīḍa sculptures that show the elephant wearing ornaments on head, neck, abdomen and legs as in Khajuraho Lakshmana temple, Belur Chennakeshava temple and Tadpatri Chintala Venkataramana Temple.

Conclusion

The present study deals with 23 *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* sculptures surveyed and studied from different parts of India. Of these, the earliest and the rarest one is in terracotta, 11 are in stone and the rest are in wood. The earliest sculpture belonged to 5th century CE. Wooden sculptures have been observed since 14th century CE and they are mainly found in the temples of Kerala. *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* depictions occur as independent sculptures but occasionally they are seen as part of *Kṛṣṇalīlā* panels. Though mainly mono-scenic in depiction showing the confrontation between Kṛṣṇa and Kuvalayāpīḍa, the sculptors have brought about great diversity in depiction by illustrating different actions of Kuvalayāpīḍa and Kṛṣṇa generated during their fight. Other characters incidentally found in the depiction are *mahāvata*, Balarāma and the onlookers. Kṛṣṇa is represented as a child, adolescent or a youth in the *Kuvalayāpīḍavadha* depictions. The elephant is shown always smaller than Kṛṣṇa in size symbolizing the divine identity of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

References & Notes

1. P. Banerjee, *The Life of Krishna in Indian Art*, New Delhi, 1994 (Reprint), p.139.
2. *Ibid.*, Fig.164.
3. Donald M. Stadtner, 'Medieval Narrative Sculpture and Three Kṛṣṇa Panels', *Art Orientalis*, Vol.17, University of Michigan, 1987, pp.117-135.
4. *Ibid.*
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6. Preeta Nayar, 'Diversity of Kaliyamardana Sculptures: An Assessment Based on Their Forms in Kerala', *KALĀ* Vol.19, Indian Art History Congress, Guwahati, 2013-2014, pp.51-57.
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Acknowledgement

I thank Shri Kumbhodaran S., Research Fellow, Department of Archaeology, University of Kerala, for providing the photographs of *Kuvalayāpiḍavadha* sculptures of Ramapuram Devi temple, Venganellur Shiva temple, Thuravur Narasimha temple and Ernakulam Shiva temple occurring in Kerala state.

Author's Rejoinder : A Note on the Identification of *Kuvalayapidha-vadha* and Some other *Krishna-leela* Sculptures in Modhera Sun Temple Gujarat

Preeta Nayar

Jñāna-Pravāha (No.XXIII, 2019-2020) carried an invited article by me entitled 'The Story of *Kuvalayapidha-vadha* in Sculptural Art of India' (pp.83-98). I had included the photographs of representative sculptures or their illustrations depicting this anecdote from different parts of India, as all the photographs or line drawings of the sculptures I studied under this category could not be included in such an article. One of the photographs among them (Fig.2, p.87) was that of an icon from Modhera Sun temple. I wrote: ". . . shows Krishna seated in *alidhasana* and lifting *Kuvalayapidha* with his two hands above his heads (Fig.2). Balarama sits near Krishna in wonder". Inserting an asterisk, the previous editor of the Journal inserted a footnote on page 87, which read: "It seems that Fig.2 is wrongly identified by the author as Krishna in *Kuvalayapidha-vadha* episode at Modhera. The physical and hair treatment of the figure is quite different than the other similar figures". 'It seems' means, as I understand, the editor is not categorical. Moreover, how and in which way 'the physical' and hair treatment is 'quite different' is not mentioned. Likewise, 'different than the other similar figures' does not indicate what are these 'other similar figures'.

The Sun temple at Modhera, popularly known as Modhera temple, is a 11th century structure located at Modhera village in Mehsana district of Gujarat state. It was built by Bhima I of the Chalukya dynasty. The whole temple is pillared on a lotus shaped structure and its walls are filled with intricate carvings. These carvings include scenes, though not sequential, from *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavata* and *Kamasutra*. Many of these characters in the depictions have badly weathered in various degrees and some have become even unrecognizable with the passing of time. The passage which leads to the sanctum sanctorum has magnificently carved pillars with *torana* arches in alternate triangular and semicircular designs. There is a *Sabhamandapa* in the temple, which is a diagonally arranged octagonal hall. The interior pillars of *Sabhamandapa* are of particular interest here as they carry sculptural depictions of some anecdotes of *Krishna-leela*, viz.: *Kaliya-mardana* (Fig.B), Krishna stealing butter (Fig.F), *Kuvalayapidha-vadha* (Figs.A & E) and *Govardhana-dhari* (Fig.G). Photographs (Figs.A, B, E, F & G) containing these depictions are shown in Plates 1 & 2 attached with this Note.

The following points are important:

1. Take the depiction of *Kaliya-mardana* (Fig.B) (I hope there will be no dispute about the

interpretation of this presentation as *Kaliya-mardana*) and see the physical treatment (wearing only a loin-cloth below the navel with its beautifully pleated lower portion hung in front - my observation) and hair treatment (hair combed back into ringlets with beaded *lalatapatta* - weathered figure gives such an impression - around the forehead - my observation) of child Krishna (Figs.B & D) and compare these features with 'the physical and hair treatment' of Krishna in *Kuvalayapidha-vadha* depiction (Figs.A & C), though the figures A and C have weathered more than those in *Kaliya-mardana* (cf. Figs.C & D). Are they not similar? They are not only similar but exactly the same.

2. Take the depiction of one of the initial sequentials of 'Krishna stealing butter' (Fig.B). Anybody can identify this anecdote as 'Krishna stealing butter' not only because some of the figures and components in the depiction can be connected to the story but also because of the context created through the depiction by the sculptors. It may be noted that even beheaded sculptures are identified by other features like *ayudhas*, emblems and ornaments depicted on the body.
3. Take the depiction of *Govardhana-dhari* Krishna (Fig.G). Can anybody identify Krishna in this presentation to name this depiction as *Govardhana-dhari*? It is difficult as the climate has mutilated the figure of Krishna. However, we identify the anecdote as *Govardhana-dhari* because of its contextual reference and the composition of components contained in the presentation.
4. See another depiction of *Kuvalayapidha-vadha* sculpture (Fig. E) in Modhera temple. I preferred to add figure A to figure E in my original paper 'The Story of *Kuvalayapidha-vadha* in Sculptural Art of India' (pp.83-98) because the former depicted, apart from Krishna, 'Balarama in wonder' making the depiction more dramatic. If anybody argues that the child presented in this sculpture could not be Krishna, then he/she has the responsibility to convincingly tell who the child could be? Anybody can also stretch his/her imagination and say it could be Bhima killing Ashwatthama, an episode from *Mahabharata*, especially in the light of the fact that Modhera temple has depictions from *Mahabharata*. How we confirm that it is Krishna who is depicted fighting with *Kuvalayapidha* in this sculpture? It is relevant to observe that the person depicted with the elephant here is a child whose features are similar to other figures of Krishna in other *Kuvalayapidha-vadha* (Fig.A) and *Kaliya-mardana* (Figs.B & D), not to mention about the image of Krishna disfigured due to the impact of age and time in *Govardhana-dhari* (Fig.G) depiction. Again, Bhima is normally depicted with *gada*. There is no *gada* in the hands of this figure. Moreover, this figure (E) can be considered sequential to the figure A or *vice versa*. So, identification of a sculpture or the depiction of an anecdote in sculptural art depends not only one or two physical features but a combination of presence or absence of many features that could be physical, symbolic, contextual, logical and so on.

It was our Iconography Professor who guided us to the sculptures and art works of Modhera temple while I was a Post-Graduate student of Archaeology at MS University of Baroda. In fact, the temple was a text book in temple art and architecture for us. When I took up a study on *Krishna-leela* sculptures of India, I visited the temple again in 2017 (my invited talk on the platform of Sthapathya Kala Parishad zoom meeting ID: 686 343 9074, password: SKPLS26 dated 08.11.2020). The paper 'The Story of *Kuvalayapidha-vadha* in Sculptural Art of India' (Jñāna-Pravāha, No.XXIII, 2019-2020, pp.83-98) sent for publication in Jñāna-Pravāha, when invited to contribute a paper to the journal, was an offshoot of this study. I am confident that anybody who, even with a rudimentary knowledge on Hindu iconography, visits Modhera temple and sees the *Kuvalayapidha-vadha* sculpture (Fig.A) included in my paper will certainly agree with my identification.

If Dr. Giri had any apprehension about my identification of *Kuvalayapidha-vadha* sculpture, the matter should have been referred to a learned referee as many journals do or the matter should have been referred to me for clarification. Unfortunately, she did not opt any of them. This necessitated me to give this elaborate Note with seven photographs of some *Krishna-leela* episodes from Modhera temple.

MODHERA TEMPLE, GUJARAT

A: Kuvalayapidavadha B: Kaliyamardana Krishna C: Head of Krishna In Kuvalayapidavadha
D: Head of Krishna In Kaliyamardana



Plate 1

MODHERA TEMPLE, GUJARAT

E: Another depiction of Kuvalayapidavadha F: Krishna stealing Butter G: Govardhanadhari Krishna

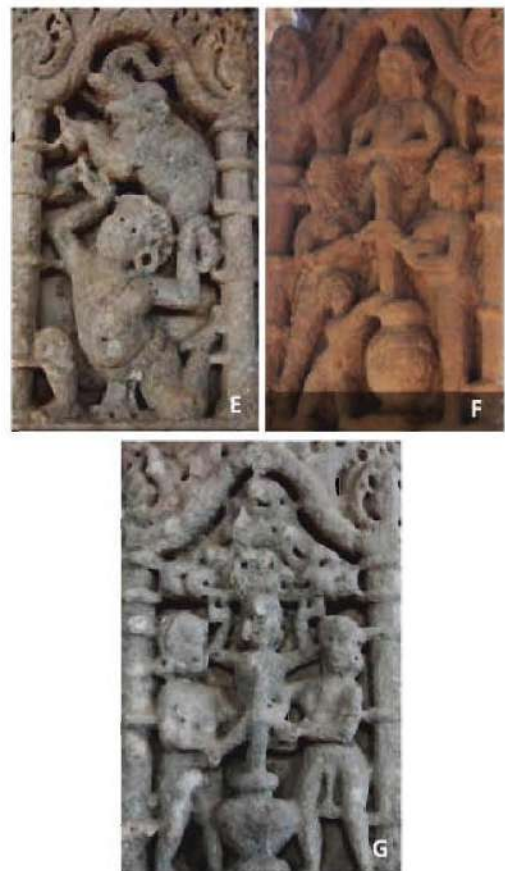


Plate 2