Vaikuntha – A MASTERPIECE FROM KASHMIR

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The best preserved image is actually from Avantipur (Kashmir). As per Kalhana Avantipur town enjoyed sanctity as a holy tirtha resorted to by people at the approach of death with the hope of obtaining a heavenly life. The image was photographed by me in 1974 on the verandah of the Gadadhara Temple at Srinagar-Kashmir. The image was retouched thus the photograph is a refashioned. Gadadhar Temple, Srinagar, is situated on the bank of the Jehlum and is one of the most beautiful temples in the country.

Vaikuntha carved in the round, this image of fine workmanship has four faces: the principal face, with a mark between the eye-brows, is benign and represents Vasudeva-face; the right face is leonine and stands for Sankarshana; the left face is that of a boar and
symbolizes Aniruddha; and the fierce looking Kāpila face with jatābhāra on the rear signifies Pradyumna. Of his four hands, the upper right and left carry respectively the stalk of a full blown lotus and a conch-shell, while the corresponding lower hands rest above the heads of Gada-devi and Chakra-purusha, both holding a chāmara with their right hand. Between the stretched legs of the image is the upper portion of Prithvi, the Earth-goddess, emerging from the pedestal, with her palms touching the feet of the god. The main image is draped in a dhotī held by a belt to which is attached a small sword. A folded scarf encircles the thigh. With the kaustubha jewel on the bosom and an upavīla, the image is bedecked in a long vana-mālā, a beaded hāra, valayas, armlets, finger rings, flower shaped kundalas and a richly-embellished elaborate crown.

Four headed images of this type are called Vaikuntha, Chaturvyūha and Chaturmūrti.

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