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**MONUMENTAL ART
AND ARCHITECTURE OF INDIA**

MONUMENTAL ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF INDIA

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PREFACE

IN THE present monograph I have attempted to clarify the basic concepts involved in the study of the monumental art and architecture of India and to describe its evolution through the course of centuries. I have been a teacher of this subject for over a decade and the present work embodies the fruits of my labour in understanding the subject and in communicating it to the students not initiated into the field of ancient history and culture of India. I have confined myself in this monograph to the study of contributions made by the Buddhists and the Hindus to Indian art and architecture.

The book was prepared with the financial assistance given to me by the Board of Research Studies, Andhra University, under U. G. C. IV Plan grant. I thank the Vice-Chancellor, Sri L. Bullayya and other members for awarding this grant.

Waltair

— K. SUNDARAM

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PROLOGUE

THE TERM 'art' has a wide range of connotation since even child-rearing can be considered as an art. The etymological meaning indicates that the term was used first by the Italians in order to suggest skill or craftsmanship. The ancient Hindus used this word in a similar fashion to indicate proficiency or skill in any special field. The Hindus opine that there are sixty-four such arts, the most notable being music, painting and architecture. Vatsyayana, who flourished in the early centuries of this era, stipulates that a person can be called a cultured man only when he acquires proficiency in different arts.

The basic factor which is responsible for the emergence of any art-form like a piece of literature or sculpture is the urge for creativity which is innate in a human being and which profoundly distinguishes him from those of the lower order with whom he shares his reproductive urge. This creative impulse finds expression in different forms of art and is greatly linked with his environment. If a primitive savage expresses his creativity by tattooing his body, a socially evolved being expresses his own creative talent in sophisticated forms like painting and sculpture. Thus for an understanding of any art-form, the total perspective of the society is a necessary condition.

The study of art has been attempted in a number of ways. An art-critic approaches the subject in order to analyse its aesthetic component. On the other hand, a historian undertakes the study of art in a chronological and special sequence. For a historian, the study of art becomes the study of the entire society since he presupposes that an art-form is but a reflection of a par-

ticular period in a nation's history. Thus a history of art is basically a study of the cultural history of a nation.

The term 'architecture' is defined in a fashionable way as the art of 'organising space.' Following the craft-manuals (*Silpa-sastras*) of the Hindus, architecture can be defined as the art of bringing into existence a structure suitable for a particular function. A study of architecture involves an examination as to how man has spent his energy in order to construct structures convenient for the needs of his society. His ingenuity is revealed in the arrangement of the ground plan and elevation of an edifice. The success or otherwise of his effort can be judged by the canons of strength, functional utility and beauty. When an architect is successful in translating his conception into a well-ordered structure, there results a great piece of architecture.

In the organisation of the elevation of a building, the most important problem relates to that of holding its weight. A structure has necessarily to hold the weight of the ceiling, making allowance at the same time for openings in the wall portions to accommodate doors and windows. The builders of the ancient world adopted two different forms of construction to solve this problem. The first is the form of construction based upon two pillars and a connecting lintel (Fig. 1A). This is known as the trabeated type of construction. The second is the one in which the strength of the building rests on an arch. The Greeks adopted the trabeated type of construction while the Romans preferred the arcuate form in their building art. The ancient Indians used mainly the trabeated type of construction. Sometimes, they also used a peculiar form of arch known as the corbelled arch. In this form, courses of stone or brick are piled one above the other in such a way as to fashion the shape of an arch (Fig. 1B). This principle of arch construction was further elaborated for building vaults which can be termed as arched

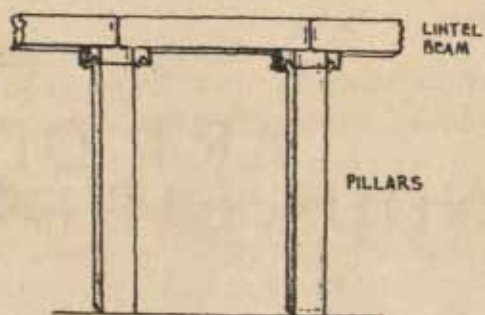
crowning part of a building (Fig. 1C). Ancient Indians, like the Chaldeans, the Egyptians and the Greeks, regarded architecture as a liberal art. They never utilised any adhesive substance like mortar or cement in constructing walls. By an intuitive knowledge of the gravitational forces, they raised enormous structures which withstood the vagaries of wind and wave in a surprising fashion. The emphasis of Hindu architecture was always on the transformation of a symbolic idea into a convenient material form. In architectural symbolism, ancient Indians adopted a number of forms. One is the shape of a circle which was adopted by the Buddhists to symbolise the Wheel of Dharma. The Hindus, on the other hand, adopted the symbol of a square in order to indicate the manifested universe. To the Buddhists, the stupa reflected the earth, the heavenly arch, and the celestial world. The Hindus, on the other hand, regarded the temple as the body of the Cosmic Man (*Purusha*).

In contrast to architecture, sculpture is a plastic art. A sculptor proceeds to translate an idea into an appropriate form on a given material. Materials of different types, stone, wood, ivory, and bronze, were used by the ancient Indian craftsmen in order to create great works of art. In giving shape to his idea, a sculptor incorporates most intricate details (pose, contours, plains, portlines and striations), which are inherent in any form either from the animal world or from the world of human beings. However, mechanical perfection alone does not make a piece of sculpture great. A sculpture can attain greatness only when the form is integrated to an idea. The images of the Buddha, created by the craftsmen of the Saranath school of art, attained great fame since the artists were able to relate the technical qualities of the form to the ideas of peace and tranquillity contained in Buddhism.

Sculpture is generally divided into two categories. The

first is the free-standing sculpture in which a figure exists independently in three-dimensional volume (Fig. 1D). In contrast to this form, there is also the relief sculpture in which figures are carved against a background (Fig. 1E). Sculpture in the round is generally designed for the portrayal of an image of a divinity or a secular person. Relief sculpture, on the other hand, is mainly utilised for decorating the wall-surface.

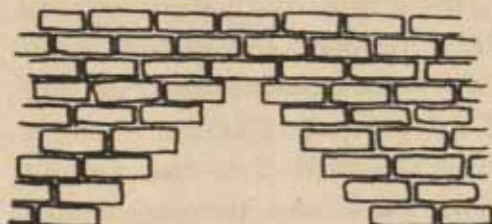
In a descriptive account of sculpture as well as architecture, the word 'style' is used by historians as well as art-critics. The word denotes a set of manifestly peculiar characteristics which have a general validity in the unfoldment of sculpture and architecture of any country. Three such important styles are noted by art-historians in any phase of art. These are, the archaic, the classical, and the baroque phases. The term 'archaic' indicates the early stage of art, and in this phase ideas are presented in a symbolic way. The sculptor or architect suffers from all the failings of a novice as this is a stage of experimentation. On the other hand, the matured phase of art is termed as the classical phase, since ideas are presented in this stage in a harmonious shape exhibiting a great amount of poise and restraint. The artist controls his exuberance in the recesses of his mind and produces a piece of art which hides under its visible form ideas of great depth. In the third phase of art, the art-form becomes generally repetitive and is given to over-ornamentation and often decadence. Thus in studying art history, these terms can conveniently be used in order to indicate the phases of beginning, maturity and decline.



A. TRABEATED TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION



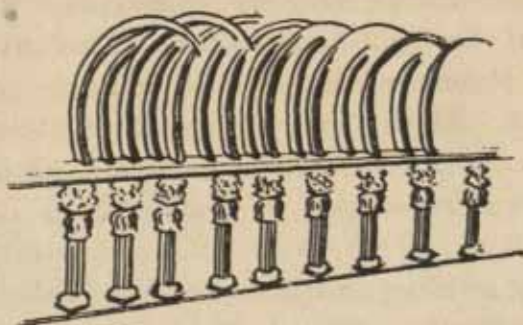
D. FREE STANDING SCULPTURE



B. CORBELLED ARCH



E. RELIEF SCULPTURE



C. VAULTING

FIG. 1
FORMS OF CONSTRUCTION

1 ART OF INDUS CITIES

A HISTORY of monumental art and architecture of any people can conveniently be narrated from the beginnings of civilised life of that community. In India such an attempt at organised living was made by the people who lived in the then riverine plains of the Indus. The cities built by the Indus dwellers were unearthed in the second quarter of the present century by archaeologists who christened this highly developed urban civilization as the 'Harappan' after the name of the first city discovered by them. The excavators have brought to light enough material to visualise the main characteristics of the life of the Indus people although the script found on the relics left by them remains undeciphered even to date (1). In the present chapter, an attempt is made to relate the art and architecture of this period to the context of the general life of the city dwellers and also to examine the legacy of this civilization to the later art of India.

The cities representing the Indus Civilization are firstly the twin capitals, Harappa (near Multan in Pakistan) and Mohenjodaro (Larkana district of Sind, Pakistan). Recent excavations have brought to light many other cities like Kalibangan in Rajasthan, Rupar in the Punjab and the port town of Lothal in Gujarat. Thus, the relics of this civilization cover an extensive area stretching from Harappa in the north to Lothal in the south. The dwellers of this city maintained commercial and cultural contacts on the one hand with the peasants of the Zhob and Kulli Valleys, residing on the highlands of Baluchistan, and on the other hand with the urban dwellers of Susa and Ur in the region of

Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley respectively. From these well-documented contacts, archaeologists have been able to assign the Indus Civilization to 2500-1700 B.C., basing their testimony on the known chronology of prehistoric West Asia.

Strictly speaking, the Indus cities present no example of true architecture. The people had no artistic taste and all the structures raised by them were strictly of a utilitarian character. Marked proclivity for utility naturally tends to diminish the importance of other canons of architecture and because of this, the architecture of the Indus Valley people can be called as 'functional'. It can be analysed under the following heads: town planning, brick-laying craft, and the techniques of construction.

The town planning of the Indus cities exhibits most of the common features of an urban life. The two principal cities were planned systematically on two well-marked zones. The first region is the elevated citadel area in which all important public buildings were erected. The second region is the town proper consisting of houses and market places. All the structures of the citadel area were erected on a high brick platform thirty feet high. These structures include a citadel to house the high dignitary of the city, a granary for storing the tribute in kind and other accessory buildings. The site at Mohenjodaro includes, in addition to these structures, a public bath (39 ft. x 23 ft. x 8 ft.),¹ suitable both for religious and secular purposes. Though lacking in aesthetic taste, the buildings of the citadel area are the most imposing pieces of Indus architecture. Coming to the city proper, the alignment of the main thoroughfares and streets was carefully

¹All measurements in this book have been given in inches and feet as our monuments have been measured more accurately in this system in the past. However, all dimensions can be converted to the decimal system on the basis of 39.37 inches to the metre or 1 foot as being equivalent to 0.30 metre. One mile equals 1.61 kilometres.

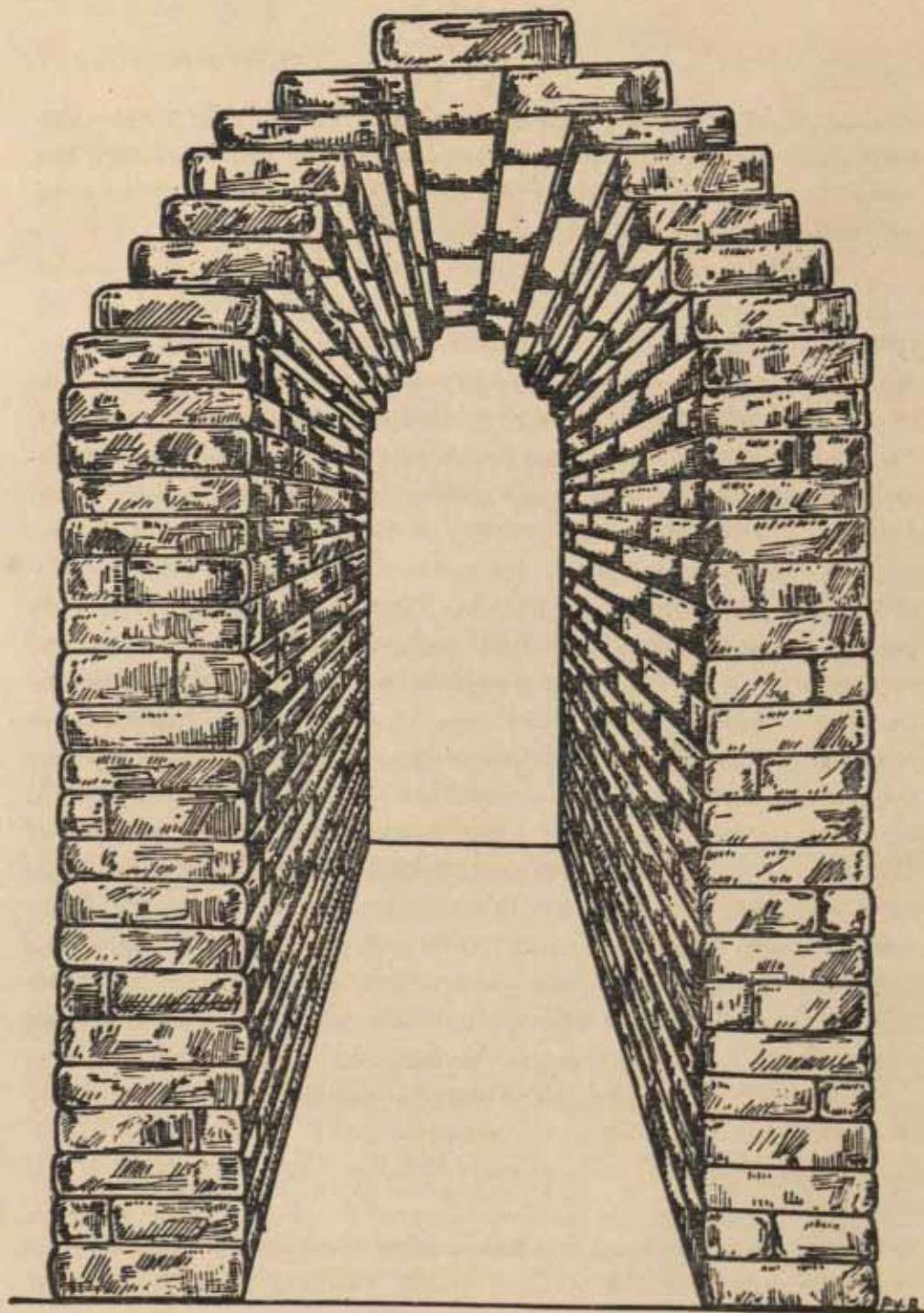


FIG. 2
VAULTED DRAIN, MOHENJODARO

planned to facilitate the scheme of drainage which covers the entire city (Fig. 2). An aerial photograph of the site at Mohenjodaro appears like a grating or a gridiron composed of intersecting horizontal and vertical lines.

The houses of the city were constructed of bricks and consisted of apartments built around an open courtyard. This type of house-planning runs parallel to that of the cities of other contemporary river valley civilizations of Egypt and Sumer. The notable constructional practice of the Indus people is the marked usage of bricks. Unlike the Sumerians, the Indus people made use of kiln-burnt brick for constructing their houses. The method of brick construction is invariably that of alternating a course of headers with a course of stretchers, this system being known as the English bond. The builders knew the device of spanning space by means of a corbelled arch obtained by a schematic arrangement of bricks so as to leave an empty space resembling the shape of an arch.

The builders of the Indus cities constructed houses as well as public buildings on a solid foundation. The houses usually had an upper storey presumably constructed with timber. In an effort to make the structures withstand the vagaries of wind and water, the builders gave maximum importance to strength. The great granary, which is an important building in the citadel area, stands on a base 150 ft. wide and 200 ft. long. The manner of construction of the public bath is interesting. It is rectangular in shape with attached rooms on all sides. The builders took particular care in erecting the lining of the side walls. The courses of brick were carefully and systematically alternated with a course of bitumen, an adhesive which is damp-proof. This example alone would testify to the character of the Indus people; they spent their entire ability and skill to ensure functional utility.

If the architecture of the Indus Valley people is frankly

utilitarian in its character, their art exhibits a definite aesthetic sensibility. Taken together, the art objects of the Indus Valley remind us of the traditions of folk art and are known for their naturalistic modelling. A large number of terracotta figures and seals bearing the carvings of animals have been discovered and the art of these products can easily be connected to the art traditions of the people of the Zhob and Kulli Valleys situated in Baluchistan. Apart from the art found in the terracotta figurines and glyptic seals, the artistic taste of the people can be studied from four sculptures in the round discovered at Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Two of these figures hail from Harappa and are mutilated. The first one is designated by scholars as the 'male torso' and the other as the 'statuette of a dancer.' The other two hail from Mohenjodaro and depict the bust of a priest (?) and the figurine of a dancer made of copper. The technical skill exhibited in the objects hailing from Harappa makes one doubt whether they were the products of the third millennium B.C. But, as Piggott points out, these sculptures present 'inlay' and 'metal' work characteristic of the art of West Asia in prehistoric times (2). About the authenticity of the figures hailing from Mohenjodaro, there can absolutely be no doubt as they were discovered in a definite datable archaeological context.

The limestone torso hailing from Harappa is justly famous for its technical quality (Pl.1). It is difficult to believe that the people of the Indus Valley could produce such a technically superb art object like this limestone figure from Harappa. Though we are not fortunate enough to know the expression on the face, the artist was able to produce the sensual warmth of the human body by a suave rendering of the typical contours and portlines of a well-nourished human being. The massive character and the emphatic fold-lines on the abdomen have led a few scholars to

presuppose a stylistic affiliation to the Kushana art of a later period (3). But the affinity is only superficial. The Mathura craftsmen were actuated by the lofty conception of translating into stone the concept of the Buddha as a super-human individual (*Mahapurusha*). The Harappan craftsmen, on the other hand, presented only a strictly material form. The present writer cannot agree with Benjamin Rowland when he says in his description of the statue that the artist has attempted to capture 'the suggestion of an inner tension' of a spiritual being (4). The general texture of life of the Harappan people and the facial types that are present in the extant remains, forbid one to conceive of a higher spiritual dimension in the Indus people.

The second limestone statuette from Harappa represents a person in a dancing pose (Fig. 3). The massive nature of the neck portion of this figure has led scholars to think that the body might have supported the head of an animal. The artist was able to conceive and represent in graphic detail the physical anatomy of a dancer. The striations of the abdominal muscles and the plain facet of the pelvis are portrayed with the utmost naturalism. In spite of the vivid nature of the portrayal, the figure does not appear to be a precursor as Rowland imagines of the grand conception of the dancing Siva (5). The moving spirit is one of naivety and not a conscious effort to translate an ideal into the physical plane.

One of the best known pieces of sculpture from Mohenjodaro is the bust of a male. This piece of sculpture is remarkable for its human interest since it represents a characteristic facial type. The face is oval-shaped with a clean-shaven upper lip and a full beard. The figure wears a designed robe with a trefoil design, leaving the right shoulder bare. The right hand is adorned with a disc. Compared to the two figures hailing from Harappa, the art of this figure is formal. The artist aims to capture the facial

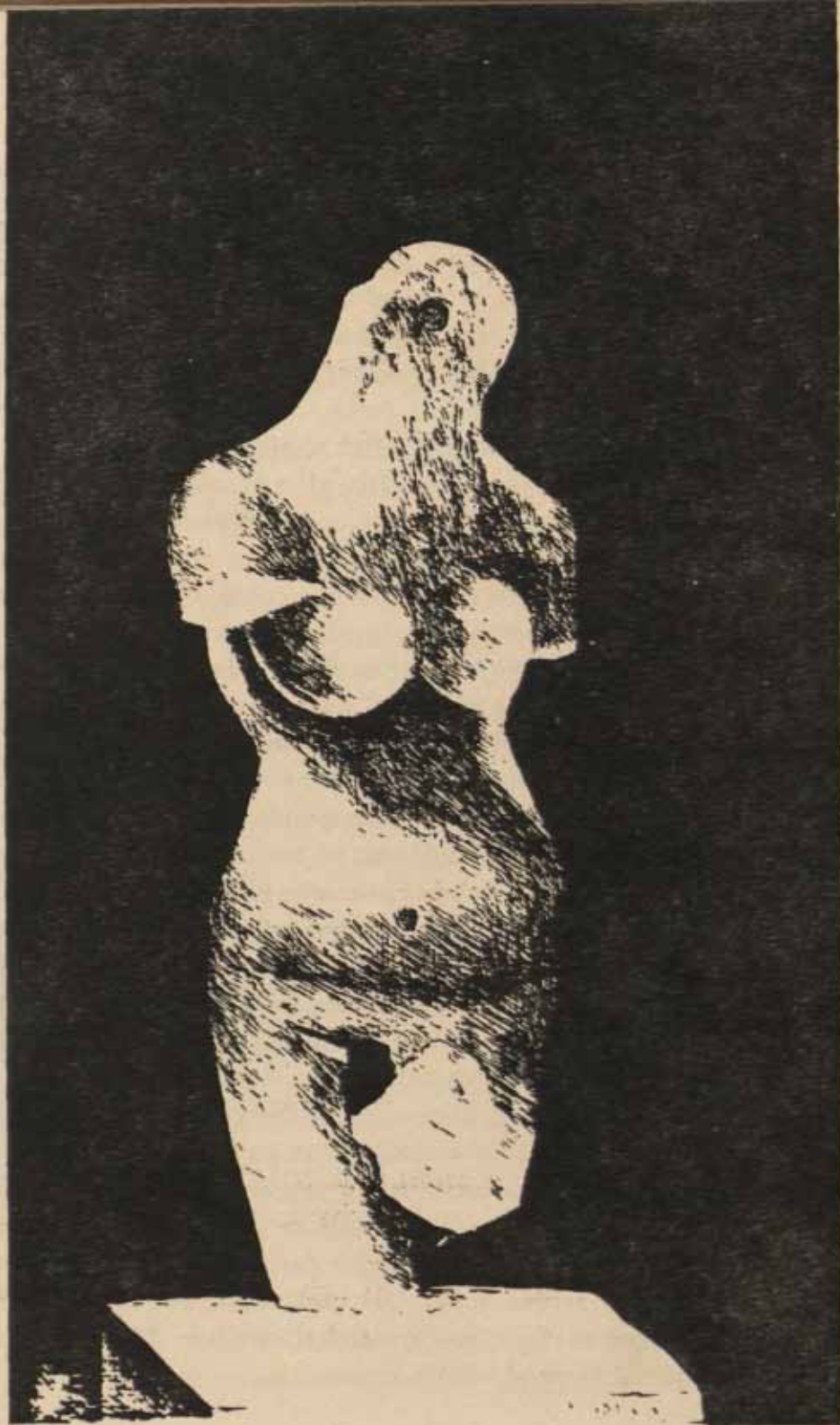


FIG. 3
FIGURE IN LIMESTONE, HARAPPA

type of a particular class and does not try to specify the characteristic features of an individual. The manner of wearing the dress and the slight forward tilt of the face have led scholars to designate the portraiture as that of a priest and the facial type as that belonging to the Mediterranean race.

The fourth important art object hails from Mohenjodaro and represents a dancer (Fig. 4). Unlike the previous art pieces, it is made of copper and is stylistically akin to the art of the contemporaneous peasant settlements of Baluchistan. The conspicuous features of the dancer are the profusion of bangles worn on the left hand and the elaborate coiffure. The body is that of a wiry girl lacking the supple grace of a maiden. The tilt of the face and the pose of the right hand suggest the devil-may-care attitude and nonchalance of a tomboyish female. This figure alone would testify to the essentially terrestrial element of the culture of the Indus people.

The sites of the Indus cities have yielded a variety of objects made of terracotta. These are statuettes of men and women, of animals and mythical beings, and of a variety of toys. Most prominent among these are the figures of the mother-goddess which resemble the small statuettes of gods and goddesses made of sandalwood, available even today at the stalls in the precincts of all renowned temples of the country. In almost all the figures, the breasts and the pelvic region are emphasized to symbolise a deity of fertility.

Another aspect of the Indus art is exhibited on the seals which contain a great variety of figures (Fig. 5). The Chimera, the bull-man and the lion-killing episode as represented on the seals reveal the imaginative quality of the artist. One of the seals represents a seated male surrounded by animals (Fig. 6). This figure has been identified by scholars with Lord Siva who is also known as the Lord of Beasts (*Pasupati*).



FIG. 4
FEMALE DANCER IN COPPER, MOHENJODARO

Most of the art products of the Indus Valley can be related to the traditions of folk art. The perfection and the artistry attained by the craftsmen in the depiction of the animal figures and the terracotta figurines can be explained in terms of long practice in the craft.

The limestone bust of a male and the copper statuette of a dancer from Mohenjodaro undoubtedly represent a formal art tradition characteristic of the intrinsically urbanised people. But the limestone torso and the figure of a dancer from Harappa exhibit a technical efficiency which is not characteristic of the general texture of art of the people.

The art of the Indus people has been designated by scholars as 'naturalistic'. Piggot, in his *Prehistoric India*, goes to the extent of stating that the art of the Indus people foreshadows later Indian artistic modes (6). This generalisation needs modification. Though the Indian art of the later period presents naturalistic art, the true genius of the Indian artist lies in the idealization of nature. The Indian mind, as shown in the masterpieces of sculpture, is never satisfied in stating the obvious. The art of the Indus Valley runs contrary to this ideal and its naturalism is formal and hieratic.

Though it is difficult to co-ordinate the main trends of art and architecture of the Indus people with later currents of art history, certain aspects of the Indus art can be related to the later period. The culture of the Indus people represents a substratum of indigenous culture of India the echoes of which can be heard even now. The worship of the mother-goddess is a case in point. In a similar fashion, in the realm of art and architecture, the brick-layer's craft and the use of the corbelled arch for spanning space, are practices which survived into historical times. In the field of art, the naturalistic art tradition of the Indus people formed one of the main strands of later Indian sculpture.



FIG. 5

ANIMAL FIGURES SEEN ON THE INDUS VALLEY STEATITE SEALS, MOHENJODARO



FIG. 6

SIVA (PASUPATI) AS THE LORD OF BEASTS. INDUS VALLEY
STEATITE SEAL, MOHENJODARO

REFERENCES

1. The basic work on the Indus Civilization is Sir John Marshall's, *Mohenjodaro and Indus Civilization*. See also Stuart Piggot's *Prehistoric India*.
2. Stuart Piggot, *Prehistoric India*, p. 186.
3. Piggot, loc. cit., p. 185.
4. Benjamin Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India*, p. 15.
5. Rowland, loc. cit., p. 15.
6. Piggot, op. cit., p. 187.

2 RELIGION AND ART

THE HISTORY of India after the collapse of the Indus Civilization in about 1700 B.C. till the rise of the Mauryan dynasty in the fourth century B.C. is mainly based on the literary data supplied by Vedic and post-Vedic literature. During this entire epoch, the building art was practised only with perishable materials and as such there is no concrete evidence of art and architecture. In spite of this fact, a review of this period is necessary for understanding the ideas as well as designs which inspired the Indian art and architecture of a later period (1).

It is usual to describe the authors of Vedic civilization as Aryans, the name which stands for cultured people. The culture of the Vedic people, unlike that of the people of the Indus Valley, found expression in a simple village life marked by an overflowing creative energy. The early habitat of the Vedic Aryans was the region of the Punjab where the tributaries of the Indus flowed. Inhabiting the villages in the centre of forests and pursuing a simple pastoral-agricultural life, the Aryans evolved a cultural pattern suitable for the natural setting of the Indian soil which is reflected in the Vedic hymns. The geographical extension of this Aryan culture can be noticed in the later Vedic texts known as the Brahmanas, Upanishads, Aranyakas, and the Sutras. From these, we can infer that the Aryans moved from the Indus to the region of the Ganges and from there to the South. By about the 4th century B.C. the entire country was suffused with the Aryan culture. The progress of the Aryans was marked by the growth of royal power. Firstly, the Kuru-Panchala king-

dom, later the kingdom of Mithila and Kasi and finally the kingdom of Magadha successively dominated the political scene. By about the 6th century B.C., the kingdom of Magadha became paramount. In the realm of society, the later Vedic civilization witnessed the crystallisation of the fourfold caste system, the growth of crafts and industries, the elaboration of earlier sacrificial rituals, and the growth of philosophic speculation. This was indeed the formative period which supplied ideas for the progress of later Indian civilization.

The early Vedic and later Vedic periods were most notable for the growth of incessive religious thought. By ritual and philosophic enquiry, the Aryan seers tried to conquer the limitations of space and time and perceive the Reality (*Brahman*) behind all forms. In the later Vedic period, monks and acolytes moved about from place to place in order to participate in religious gatherings. Such religious assemblies were held in the courts of kings or in specially erected pavilions like the Gabled Pavilion constructed by the Lichchavis at Vaisali. This intense philosophic enquiry led to the foundation of two new religious sects in the 6th century B.C. These two were founded by Mahavira and Goutama Buddha, both belonging to Kshatriya clans of the republican kingdoms which flourished in the region of the river Gandak. Though both these religions became popular throughout North India by the 5th century B.C., yet it was Buddhism which became the predominant religious faith by the 4th century B.C. The Buddhists could attract the popular element of the society by their simple religious faith propagated through Magadhi, a local dialect in Eastern India.

The growth of Vedic religion and Buddhism in the centuries following the fifth contributed to the development of art and architecture. In order to satisfy the popular element in the society, the Buddhists first incorporated a popular form of worship in

their creed. A mythology of tales and stories grew around the personage of the Buddha and the innate folk traditions, such as the worship of the serpent, the tree and the fertility deities like the Yakshinis, made their way into the creed of Buddhism. It was this popular creed which was responsible for the emergence of the art-form centering around the personage of the Buddha. From this early stage, slowly the worship of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas became a common feature with the growth of a theistic creed (Mahayana) of Buddhism. This growth of the cult not only led to the deification of images but also to the elaboration of ritualistic practices which necessitated the creation of halls of worship and places of residence for the Buddhist monks.

The development of art-forms in the realm of Brahmanical religion took place in the early centuries before and after the Christian era when image worship was introduced in the religion. In order to satisfy the popular demand, the Vedic religion underwent a great transformation. New mythology, in the shape of the Puranas and the Epics, transformed the Vedic religion into a creed which could be understood by the masses. Out of this Puranic and epic lore grew the Saiva and the Bhagavata devotional sects of Hinduism. The growth of Bhagavatism and Saivism led to the practice of image making and this in its turn led to the construction of a temple to house the images.

The religious ideas of the people of the Vedic Age influenced the modes of construction of the later periods. In the Vedic hymns, the imagery of identifying the macrocosm in the microcosm is repeated on and off. Both the stupa as well as the Hindu temple of the later date were conceived on this imagery and symbolized the universe in miniature. The Upanishadic seers, in order to express the inexpressible, introduced for the first time the language of symbolism into the Indian mode of thinking. This language of symbolism found its way into the

monumental art of the later periods.

The Vedic Aryans, unlike the people of the Indus Valley Civilization, cremated their dead. After the completion of the cremation, the ashes of the departed were collected and buried in circular mounds, and such sites were marked by wooden sacrificial posts. The origins of the stupa can be traced back to this funeric mound, and the early stupas, like the Piprahwa stupa (Nepal) and the Bhattiprolu stupa (Andhra), were marked likewise by wooden posts even though functionally this practice served no purpose. In a similar fashion, the ideas relating to the path of circumambulation were conceived by the Vedic sacrificial ritual.

For a student of art and architecture, the history of the thousand years that witnessed the growth of the Aryan culture marks the formative period. In the very early centuries of Aryan life, the houses were of a rudimentary type consisting of structures made of bamboo and thatch (Fig. 7). By about the 6th century B.C. the bamboo and the thatch were replaced by wood which became freely available as more and more forests were felled to advance the torch of the Aryan culture. The growth of cities and kingdoms necessitated the construction of palaces and luxurious houses and to cope with the rise of civilization, timber was introduced on a large scale. The cities were surrounded by a wooden rampart with gates and towers, battlements and loopholes (2). Inside this fort-like enclosure, the city was planned in such a way that all the public buildings occupied a central position. From the central point, all the roads and streets were laid to reach all the nooks and corners of the city (3). The houses of the rich were invariably double-storeyed. Palaces and pinnacled houses of this period can easily be visualised not only from the Buddhist literature of this period but also from the panels of sculpture which represent the legend of the Buddha at a later date, fully preserving

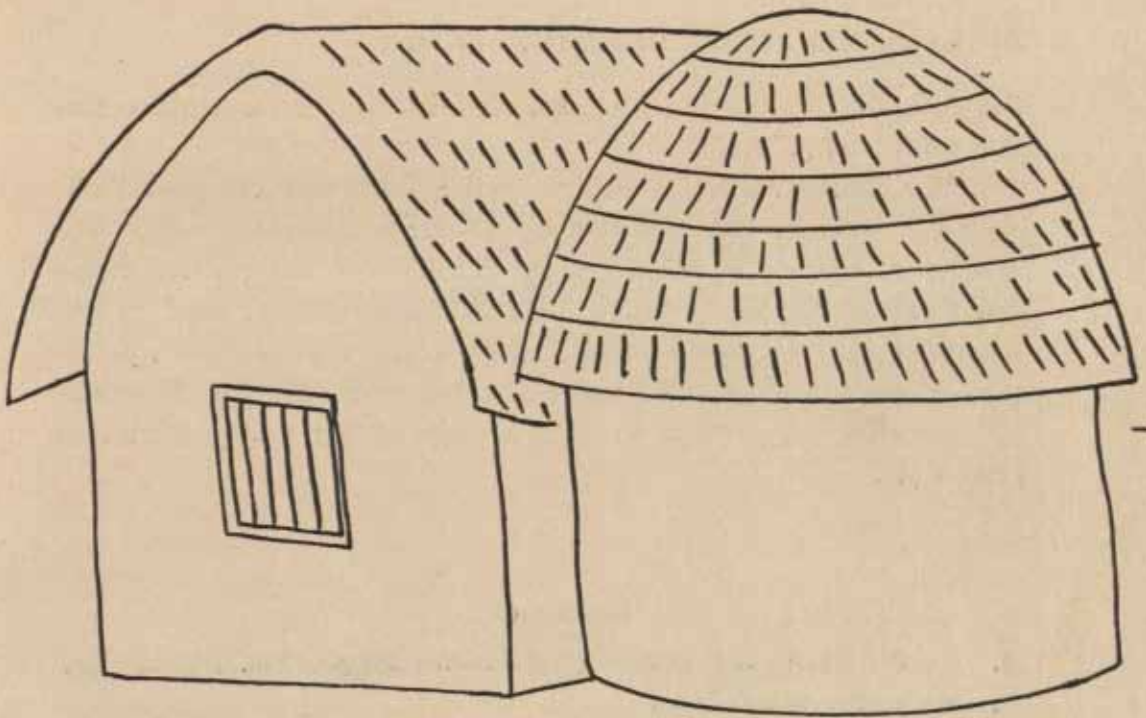


FIG. 7

ARCHITECTURE OF THE AGE OF BAMBOO AND THATCH.
AFTER A RELIEF FROM AMARAVATI

the essential details of cities with glories of timber architecture and sculpture (Fig. 8).

The constructional practices of the Vedic and the post-Vedic ages survived in the architecture of the historical period. The railings of the stupa recalls to the mind's eye the constructional practices of the Vedic hut. Likewise, the vaulted roof of the Buddhist chaitya was a stone imitation of the practice of the timber age. Indeed, the entire architecture of the Buddhist age owes its inspiration to the designs of this early formative period (4).

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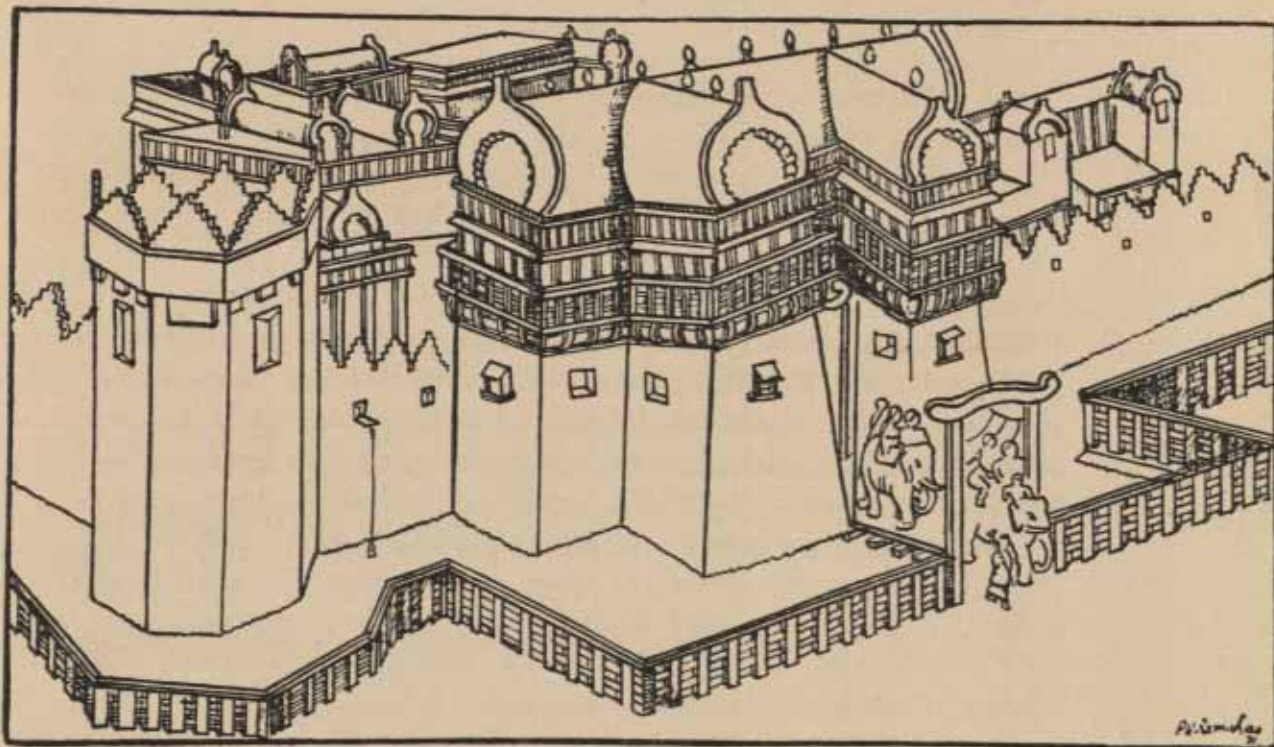


FIG. 8
TIMBER ARCHITECTURE. AFTER A RELIEF FROM SANCHI

3 THE AGE OF THE MAURYAS

THE EARLIEST remains of monumental art in India are ascribed by historians to the Mauryan period. The epoch of the Mauryas is in fact unique in several respects. For the first time in Indian history, a strong unified state was built by Chandragupta, the first Mauryan ruler (321-297 B.C.) and this was further strengthened by his two great successors, Bindusara (297-272 B.C.) and Asoka (273-232 B.C.). Inscriptions on stone, the account of Megasthenes, a foreign eye-witness, and Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, a treatise on polity, appearing as they do for the first time, document the history of the period, bringing into light its unique character (1). In much the same fashion, for the first time, stone was used in the building art as a medium for propagating the Buddhistic creed. The character of the monuments, which owe their inspiration to king Asoka, can best be understood against the background of the Mauryan state as a whole.

The culture of the Mauryas is a strange admixture of native and foreign traditions. The circumstances of the rise of the Mauryas under Chandragupta shortly after Alexander's invasion in 327 B.C., and the intimate contact which the three Mauryas maintained with the Asiatic Greeks, made the Mauryas susceptible to the influence of Greek culture. Through the Greeks, the Mauryas inherited also the traditions of Persian monarchy and culture since the Asiatic Greeks were the political successors of the Achaemenid kings of Persia (6th-4th centuries B.C.) and were the inheritors of the rich cultures built by the Persians in cities like Persepolis, Behistun and Nakshi-i-Rustam. At the same time, the

Mauryan polity, as outlined in the *Arthashastra*, was not a replica of the Greco-Persian monarchy. Its enlightened outlook in seeking the welfare of the people, its respect for the time-ordained usages regarding the collection of revenue and disbursement, are all clearly derived from indigenous traditions. During the heyday of Asoka, the Mauryan society was suffused through and through with the ideas of Buddhism. If one understands the cumulative nature of these influences, which shaped the polity under the Mauryas, one can readily perceive the nature of the Mauryan art which is also an eclectic blend of these different influences.

All the products of Mauryan art are attributed by scholars to king Asoka. This is mainly because of the fact that he alone from among the Mauryan kings, felt the need for propagating ideas through the medium of art to the people. In the ninth year of his reign, Asoka was drawn, after the ravages of the Kalinga war, towards Buddhism and became in the latter part of his reign the foremost missionary of Buddhism. From the central ethical code of Buddhism, he drew up his own policy of Dharma and in order to propagate this new policy, he issued a number of rock-edicts. One such edict was incised at Dhauili (Orissa) underneath the carved image of a giant elephant.

For propagating Buddhism, Asoka built stupas and erected pillars; he was also responsible for constructing rock-cut sanctuaries in the Barabar and Nagarjuni Hills and a palace at Pataliputra, his capital city.

The most spectacular character of the pillars, which are the principal products of Mauryan art, lies in their finished surface. Some of the designs of the pillars unmistakably point out that the inspiration for carving them came from West Asia. On the basis of this evidence, it can be argued that Asoka requisitioned craftsmen hailing from Persia just as he employed Tushaspa, a foreigner, as a governor of the north-western part of his empire. That

Asoka was influenced by the traditions of the West Asian kings is undeniable. Even in the practice of issuing the edicts on rocks, he borrowed the inspiration from king Darius (527-486 B.C.) of the Achaemenid dynasty. This tradition of West Asian courts must have reached him through the agency of Asiatic Greeks whose dominions in north-western India lay contiguous to the Mauryan empire under Asoka. Asoka, as Percy Brown rightly points out, might have employed the craftsmen hailing from West Asia, guided them to adapt their work to the Indian conditions and made them to work in collaboration with their Indian counterparts (2).

In the realm of architecture, the Asokan period witnessed the emergence of two architectural forms which continued to dominate Buddhist architecture of the subsequent period. The first is the stupa and the second, the rock-cut chamber. The rudimentary stupa and the rock-cut chamber of the Mauryan period were developed into a full-fledged stupa and chaitya in the Sunga period. The technique of rock-cut architecture continued to dominate architecture even in the Hindu period.

Asoka mentions in his inscriptions that he erected stupas in order to enshrine the relics of the Buddha. While some of the stupas built by him succumbed to the ravages of time, others were obscured by later renovations. Thus the core of the stupa at Sanchi can be attributed to the Asokan period on the basis of the artifacts discovered there. According to the Buddhist tradition, the foundation of the stupa at Amaravati can also be attributed to Asoka. In addition to this, excavations conducted near an Asokan pillar at Bairat in Madhya Pradesh revealed the foundations of a brick stupa which can be assigned to the Asokan period. The primitive shape of this stupa is at once an indication that it was the earliest effort in the direction of the stupa architecture. It is covered by wedge-shaped bricks

and is enclosed by a wooden railing.

Though a Buddhist, Asoka extended equal patronage to other religious sects like the Ajivikas. For the residence of the monks of the Ajivika sect, he ordered the excavation of nine cells in the Barabar and Nagarjuni Hills. These rock-cut chambers, excavated into the perpendicular cliffs situated in the vicinity of Bodhgaya (Bihar), were the first of their kind in India. Architecturally, these chambers do not have much to offer. Of modest proportions, they are devoid of any organic plan or sculptural decoration. The interior, however, is remarkable for its high polished surface, a characteristic which is notable in all products of the Mauryan age. In addition to this factor, these rock-cut chambers show in unmistakable terms their affiliations to earlier prototypes in wood and bamboo. The Lomas Rishi cave of the Barabar group clearly presents a facade which is a stone copy of a hut made of bamboo. The interior of the Gopi cave exhibits a vaulted roof which is clearly out of place in a stone construction. Evidently, this is a stone copy of the pre-existing timber constructions. The frieze containing a row of animals on the facade of the Lomas Rishi cave is a clear indication of the technical expertise of the craftsmen of the Mauryan period in carving animal figures.

One of the few surviving examples of secular art, the Asokan palace at Pataliputra, was constructed in imitation of the columned halls built by the kings of the Achaemenid dynasty at Persepolis. Though the structure survives now only in a ruinous state, there is sufficient evidence to relate it to the prototypes of the Persian architecture. First of all, the arrangement of the plan, closely parallel to the Achaemenid buildings, is a fort-like structure with large columned halls, enclosed in an enormous rampart. The most important structure within the enclosure is the large audience hall. Built to impress the public with its grandeur and

majesty, it is planned on a square (250 ft.) platform. The division of the main hall into columns arranged in rows conforms to the examples of columned halls built by Xerxes at Persepolis. Another example of Persian influence can also be seen in the practice of leaving specific marks on the pillars in order to establish the identity of the craftsmen. The surviving examples of the pillars, however, show that in contrast to the Persian models, they are monoliths and rise from the platform without a base. While the plan and the general features of the palace are related to the Persian influence, the pillars exhibit marked Indianisation of the Persian model.

The original number of pillars which Asoka constructed, as evidenced by tangible components, comes to thirty. Percy Brown rightly points out that Asoka planted these pillars to mark and commemorate the ancient Buddhist pilgrim route which existed between Bodhgaya at one end and Lumbini at the other (3). V. S. Agrawala adds that the other pillars mark the boundaries of the principal political divisions (*Janapadas*) of Madhyadesa like Kuru, Panchala, Chedi and Vatsa (4). The best known examples are the pillars at Saranath and Rampurva whose capitals are preserved. The pillars which are still in situ are those at Kolhua and Lauriya Nandangarh, both in the Champaran district of Bihar. All of them, built of sandstone quarried from Chunar (near Mathura, now called Muttra), glisten with a similar type of polished surface. It is thus possible to visualise that a central workshop for producing the pillars existed at Chunar and hundreds of craftsmen worked on stone for a considerable number of years till the completion of the project which the royal builder had conceived.

The pillars built by Asoka rise from the ground without a base and resemble the well-known Indian palm-tree. They consist of two parts: a shaft and a capital of about thirty feet and ten

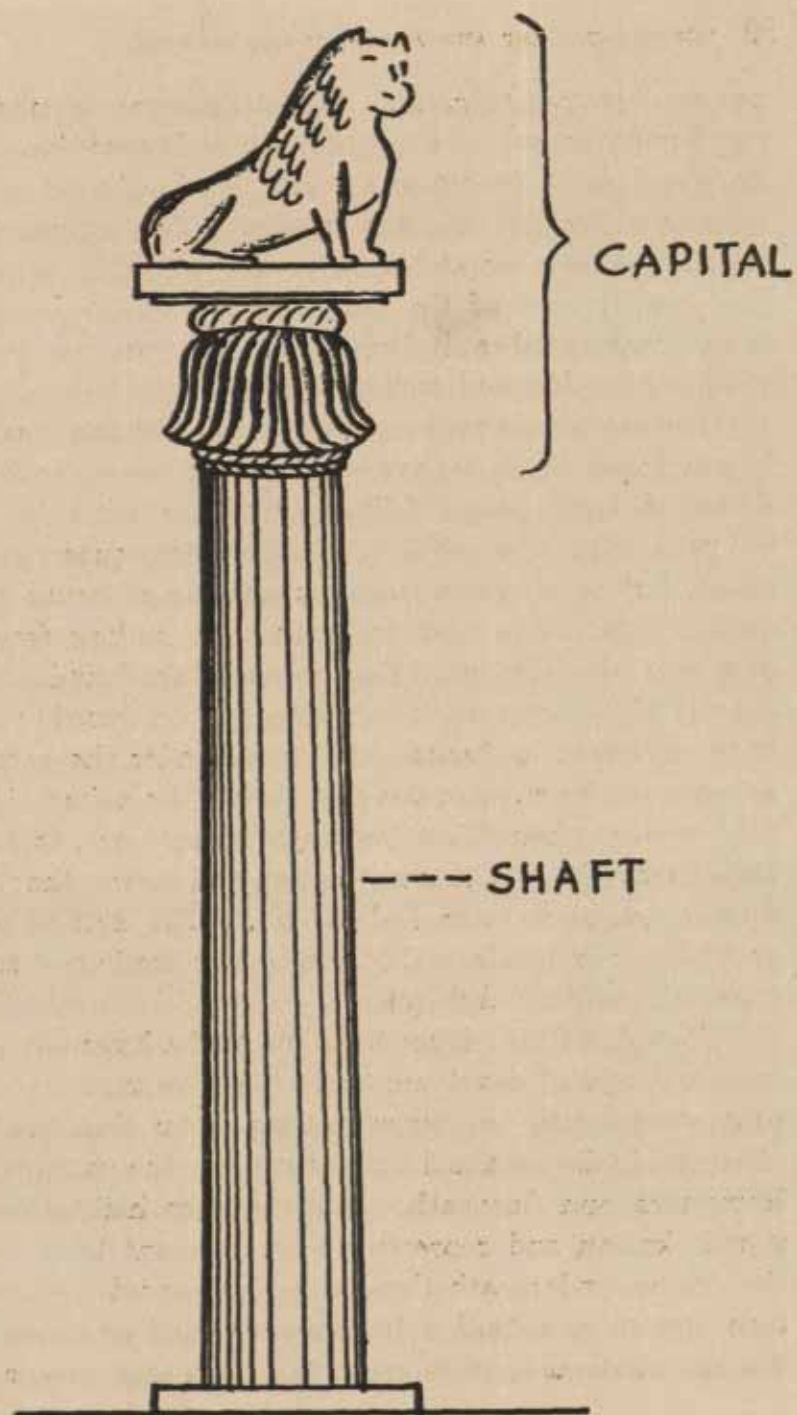


FIG. 9
PARTS OF AN ASOKAN PILLAR. AFTER
THE LION PILLAR AT KOLHUA

feet respectively (Fig. 9). That these two members are fitted together by means of a copper bolt is known from the example recovered from Rampurva. The shaft of the pillar is plain, unornamented and slightly tapered. The capital consists of a bell-shaped member and an abacus supporting an animal figure. This combination of the plain unornamented shaft terminating in an ornamented capital and a superbly wrought animal figure is at once beautiful and well-conceived.

The most important segment of the Asokan pillar is its capital. The principal shape is that of a bell and this is brought about by elongated lotus petals falling gracefully all alike in a natural wavy motion. The abacus is sometimes square and sometimes round, but in all cases supports an animal figure carved in the round. The most notable is the one hailing from Rampurva (Fig. 12). The designs of flowers which are found on this abacus are not of Indian extraction. They can be traced to the repertoire of motifs found in Persian art reared under the patronage of the Achaemenid kings. On the other hand, the animal figures, though they originate from West Asiatic influences, are, to a great extent, Indianised. In fact, it is in these animal figures that one discovers definite traits of later Indian art. The artists were able to present 'a plentitude of life and a new freshness' to the models derived from West Asia (5).

Though all the pillars built by Asoka have not survived, one can see stages of development in the growth of style. Beginning with an uncouth specimen hailing from Bakhira, the artistic effort gradually attained its maturity in the capitals hailing from Rampurva and Saranath. The specimen hailing from Saranath is well known and represents four rampant lions (Fig. 10). On the abacus underneath these lions are carved a wheel and miniature figures of a bull, a lion, a horse and an elephant (Fig. 11). Though the lions seem to symbolise the august power of the State,

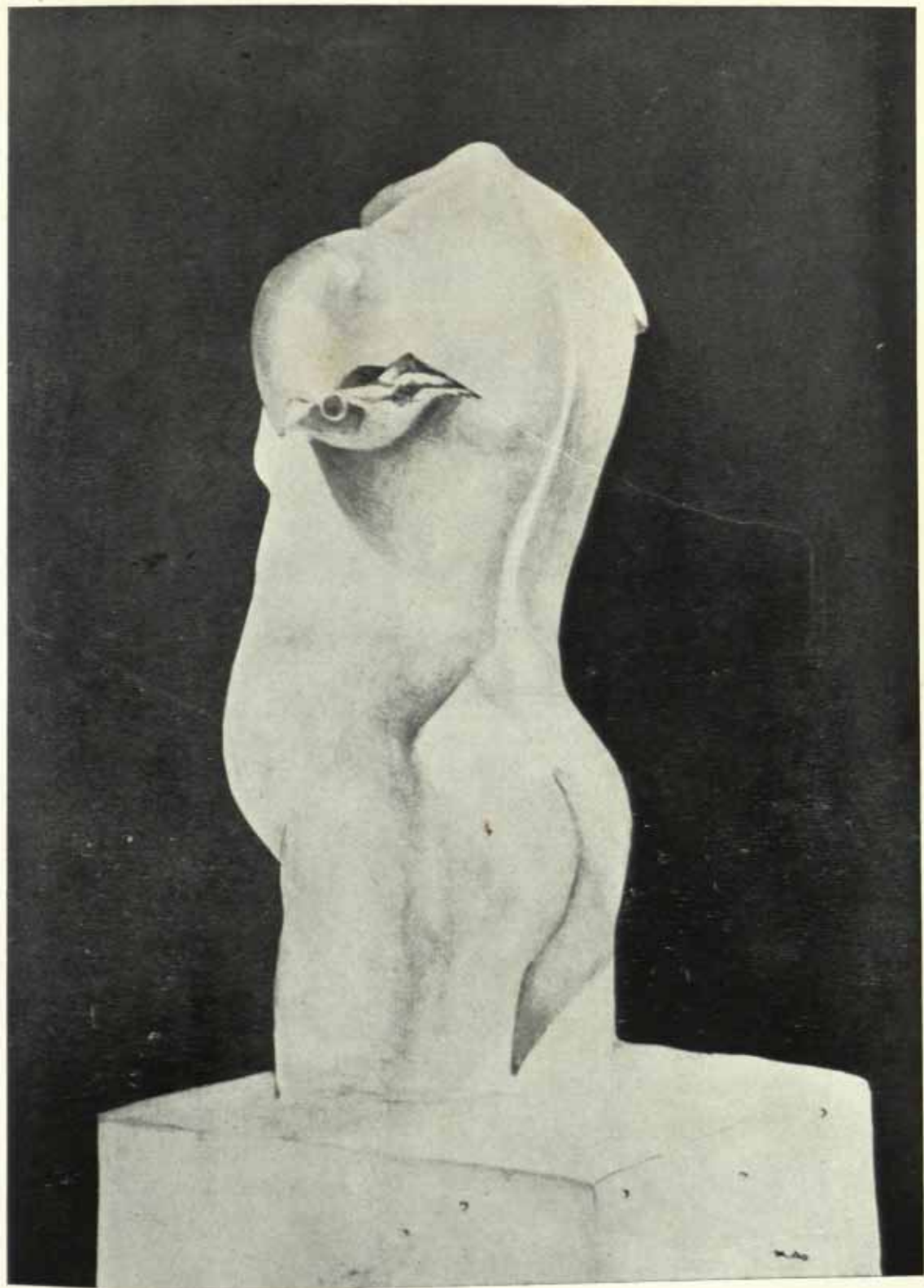


PLATE 1
TORSO OF A MALE, HARAPPA

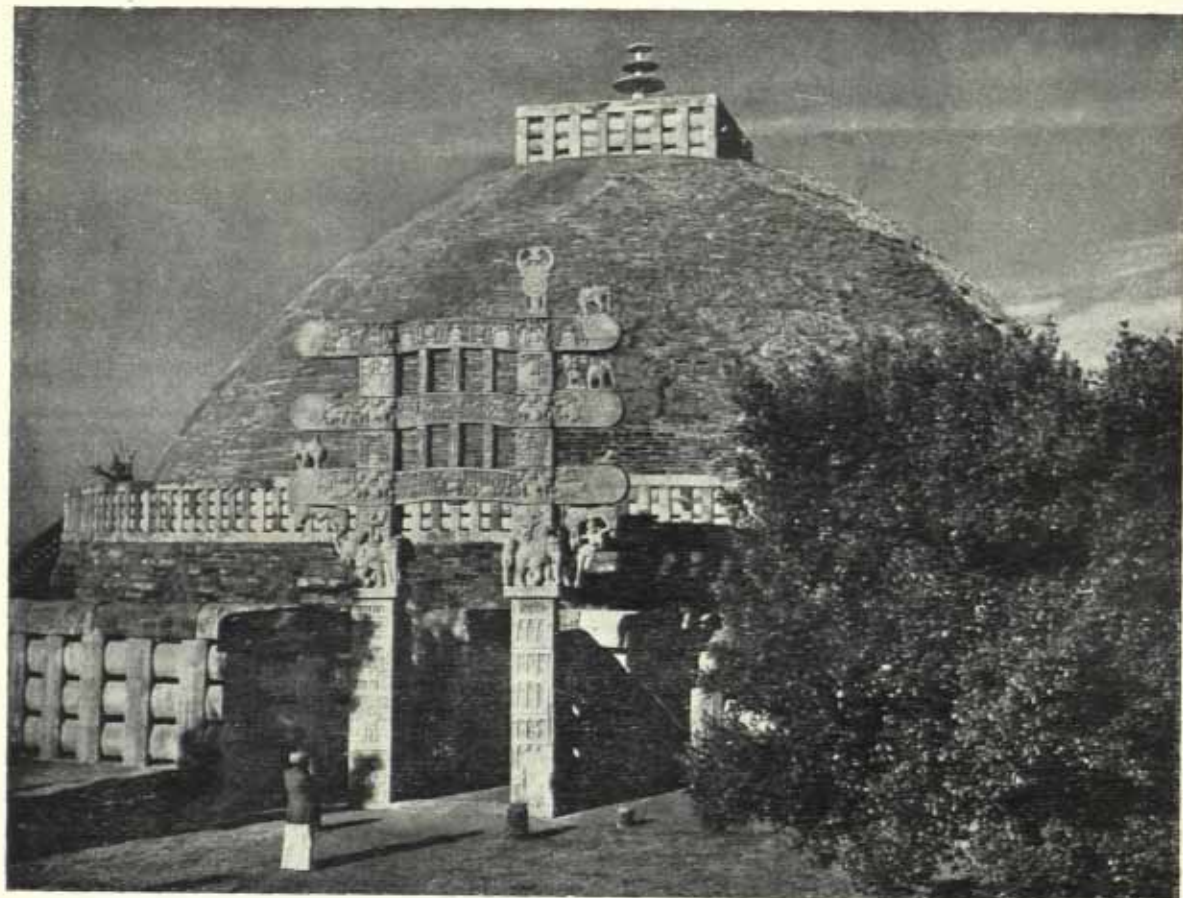


PLATE 2
STUPA No. 1, SANCHI
(Photo, Jagan V. Mehta)



PLATE 3
TORANA, EAST GATE, STUPA No. 1, SANCHI
(Photo, A. L. Syed)



PLATE 4
BACCHANALIAN PANEL, MATHURA
(Copyright, Archaeological Survey of India)



FIG. 10
LION CAPITAL, ASOKAN PILLAR, SARANATH

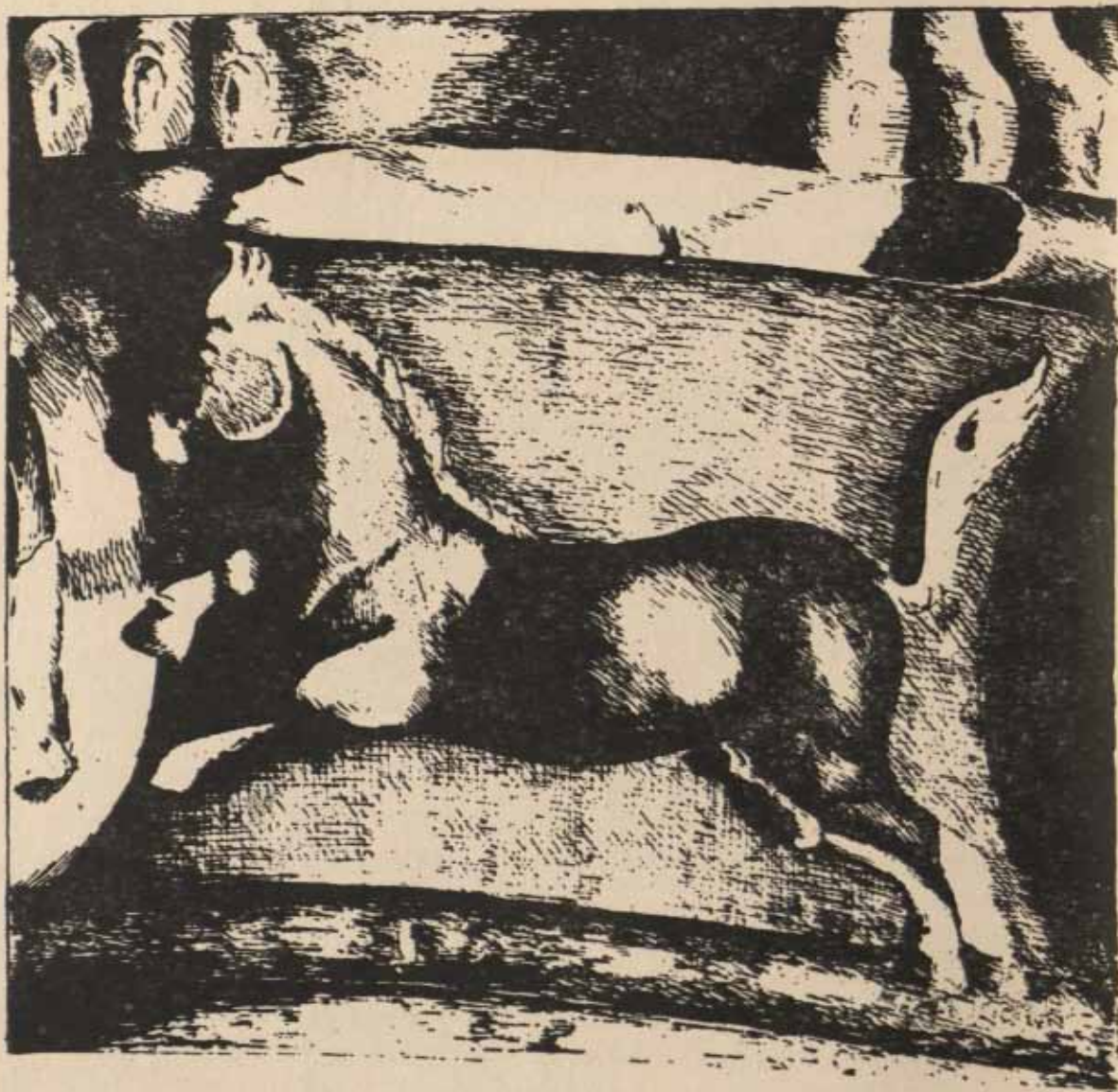


FIG. 11

FIGURE OF A HORSE, ASOKAN PILLAR, SARANATH

the symbol of the wheel transforms the entire conception and connotes the triumph of Dharma. The bull hailing from Rampurva is a noble creation and breathes the very spirit of Buddhism, emphasizing the love which Lord Buddha cherished towards animal life (Fig. 12).

The exact significance of the animal figures is not known. Some scholars have pointed out that they represent the four quarters of the Buddhist tradition. Percy Brown, on the other hand, believes that they are a continuation of the Vedic tradition which accords an honoured place to these animals (6). The wheel carved on the Saranath pillar offers a clue to the explanation of these animal figures. The wheel, no doubt, symbolises the first sermon delivered by the Buddha at Saranath. Just as the wheel can be associated with one of the incidents in the life of the Buddha, the animal figures can also be taken to symbolise other incidents in his life. The elephant and the bull symbolise the scenes of the Buddha's birth since the Jatakas mention that the Buddha entered the womb of Mayadevi in the shape of an elephant and that he was born in the ascendant of the bull (*Vrishabha Lagna*). The horse can be associated with the scene of the Great Renunciation of the Buddha and the lion can be taken to personify the Buddha himself since he was considered as the lion of the Sakya clan. Both in the manner of conception and execution, the Asokan pillars differ from the Persian examples. While the Persian pillars are conceived as segments of a major architectural composition, the Asokan pillars are independent free-standing units capable of greater aesthetic beauty than the Persian examples. The artistic maturity of the craftsmen is indicated not only by a subtle rendering of the body of the animals but also by the ease with which the full three-dimensional volume of the body is achieved. The technical quality of these figures, particularly the treatment of the abdomen, reminds one of the

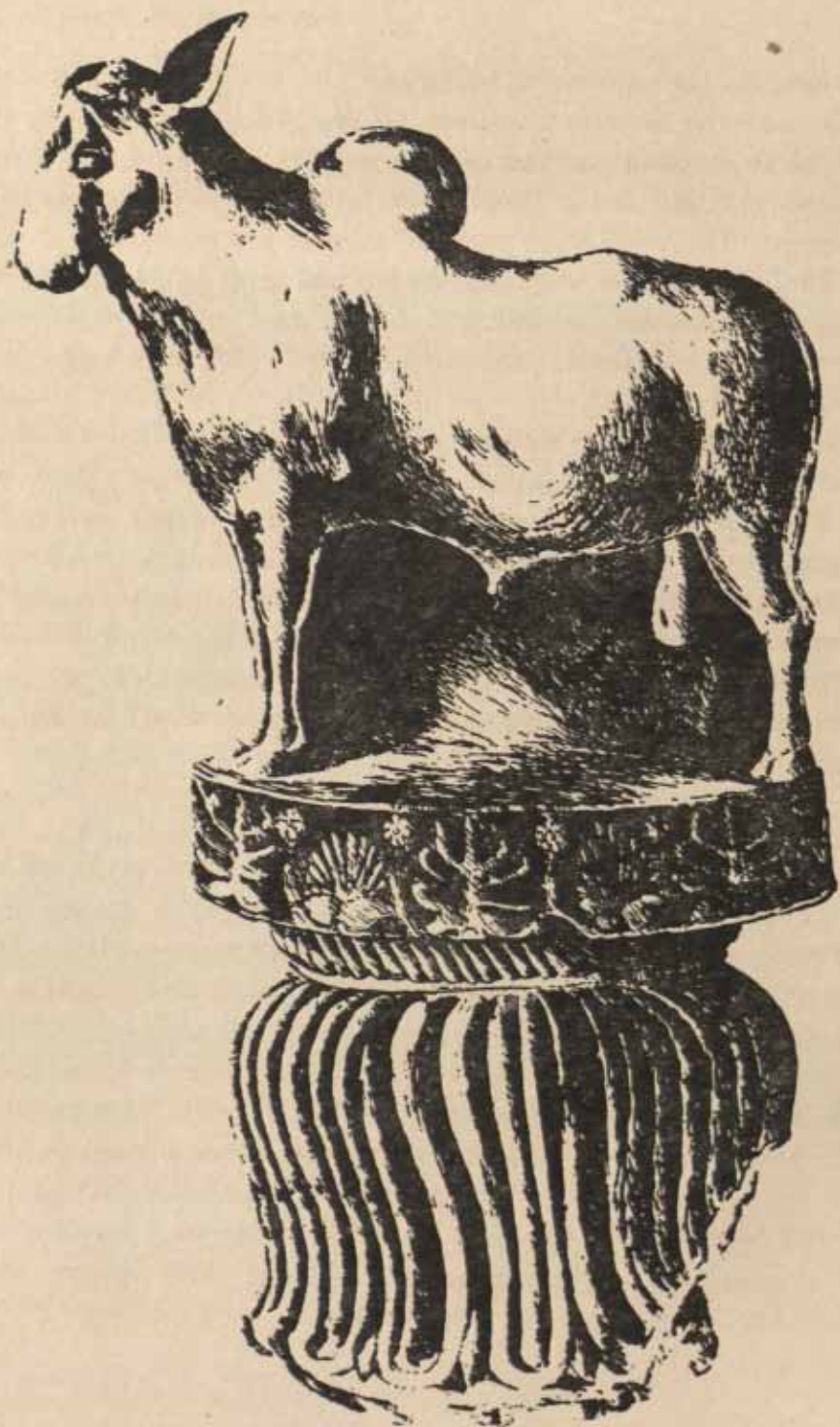


FIG. 12

BULL CAPITAL, ASOKAN PILLAR, RAMPURVA

tradition of the Indus Civilization.

One of the notable products of the Mauryan period is the figure of an elephant carved in high relief in the proximity of the rock-edict hailing from Dhauli. A pedestal inscription bearing the legend, 'the best of elephants,' reveals its identity with the Buddha. Sculptured in massive proportions the elephant is full of life. The sculptor is able to convey the idea of peace and the gentleness of the Buddha in the nimble gait and half closed eyes of the elephant.

Scholars who have written on Mauryan art and architecture regard this art phase as a parenthesis in the art-history of India. They opine that it is an isolated phase and does not partake of the qualities of later Indian art. But, a close examination of the products of this period reveals that though there is unmistakable evidence of foreign influence, yet there is marked Indianness in most of the products. The technical method of polishing relates as much to the indigenous stone-cutters' craft as to any exotic influence.

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4 EARLY BUDDHIST ART AND ARCHITECTURE

THE MAURYAN dynasty was replaced in the 2nd century B.C. by the Sunga dynasty and the Satavahana dynasty in the regions of Magadha and the Deccan respectively. The rulers of the Sunga and the Satavahana dynasties extended their patronage to Buddhism, which had become by then the most popular religion in the country. The popularity of Buddhism, however, owes much to the rigorous missionary zeal of the Buddhist ascetic orders (*Sanghas*). The fervour of the people towards Buddhism was such that they tried to express their religious faith in the worship of the Buddha embodied in a stupa. The Buddhist *Sanghas*, for the preservation of the traditions of Buddhism, found it convenient to excavate rock-cut chambers out of the living rock in the region of the Deccan. Thus this period of the Sunga-Satavahana supremacy, which extended from the 2nd century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D., was an important landmark in the history of Buddhist art, and the stupa and the rock-cut chamber emerged as two important contributions of the Buddhists to Indian art (1).

STUPAS. The purpose of erecting the stupa was to enshrine either a relic or a place associated with the Buddha. Though the beginnings of such an attempt could be traced back to the funerary customs of the Vedic age, yet the stupa in the hands of the Buddhists became an architectural entity. Its shape is that of a hemispherical mound and it consists of three major parts. The first part is the circular base (*Medhi*) which usually terminates in a small balustrade. This base supports a hemispherical dome (*Anda*) which in its turn is crowned by an apex (*Harmika*).

During the supremacy of the Sungas, three stupas underwent renovation. These are located at Barhut (Madhya Pradesh), Bodhgaya (Bihar), and Sanchi (Madhya Pradesh). These places were important junctions on highways which connected Pataliputra (the capital of Magadha) with other cities like Ujjain, Mathura (Muttra), and Champa. At Barhut, the original stupa was not altered but only the railing was renovated. At Bodhgaya, a railing was erected to enshrine the place where Lord Buddha was known to have walked. At Sanchi, a complete renovation of the stupa took place. Since only the stupa at Sanchi today preserves its ancient glory, the architecture of this period can be studied only with reference to the stupa at Sanchi (Pls. 2, 3). The study of the progress of sculptural art can, however, be made by an examination of the sculptures of these stupas in a consecutive order. During this period, the stupa at Sanchi was enlarged and the entire surface was covered with dressed stone (Fig. 13). In its renovated form it measures 50 ft. in height and its circumference is about 120 ft. At a distance of about 16 ft. from the ground level, a terrace with a small railing was constructed to provide for an upper processional path around the stupa. Access to this terrace was provided by two stair-cases (*Sopana*) approaching the stupa from two of its sides. At the top of the hemisphere, another square railing was erected to enclose a pedestal (*Harmika*). This pedestal is the most important part of the entire stupa since it is usually the place for the reception of the casket containing the relic of the Buddha. To mark the importance of the place, an honourific in the shape of an umbrella was erected. At the ground level, the builders built a magnificent railing which provides a processional path around the stupa at the base level. The railing (*Vedika*) is composed of a framework consisting of vertical posts and cross-bars. The uprights, in imitation of the carpenter's method of joining, are tenoned into the cross-bars

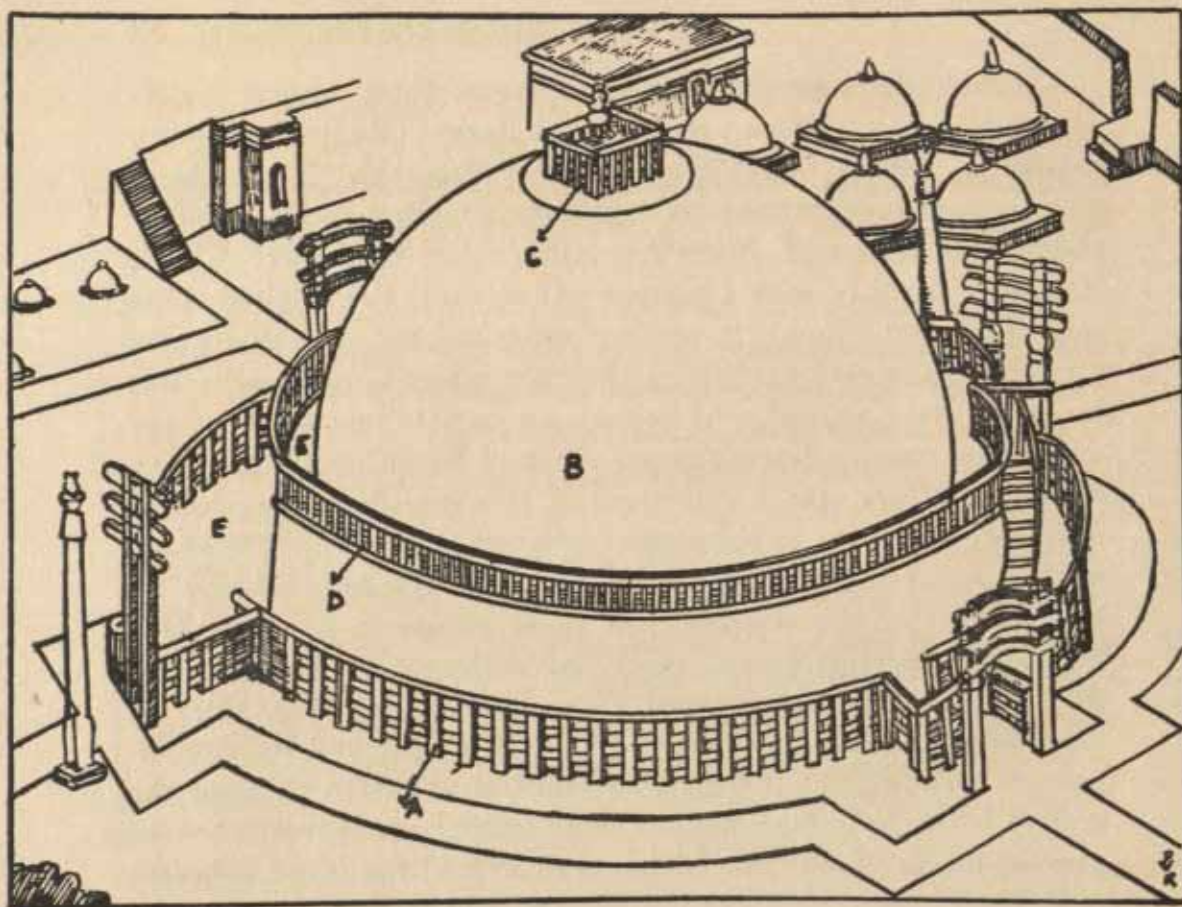


FIG. 13

NORTHERN STUPA AT SANCHI

A, Vedika; B, Anda; C, Harmika; D, Medhi; E, Pradakshina-path.

at about 9 ft. The latest addition to this renovation was the erection of four gateways (*Toranas*) which was attempted during the supremacy of the Andhra Satavahanas (Pl. 3). Each gateway, measuring to a height of 34 ft., consists of two pillars which support at their top three handsome architraves (Fig. 14). The entire gateway was carved with most beautiful sculptures depicting the entire panorama of contemporary life. The stupa at Sanchi remains even today in the manner in which it was renovated in the early centuries before and after the Christian era except for the addition of four life-size statues of the Buddha in the 5th century A.D.

The builders of Sanchi were able to turn the hemispherical mound into an object of great aesthetic beauty by the erection of railings and gateways. In the technique of construction, the masons continued the earlier techniques of timber construction. As observed by Percy Brown, during this period the sculptural art was more advanced than the functional art (2).

ROCK-CUT SANCTUARIES. The first experiment in the rock-cut technique was initiated by Asoka. The Barabar and Nagarjuni caves, excavated under his patronage, were hewn out of the granite rock. The Buddhists of the Andhra-Sunga period chose the Deccan trap since it was more amenable to the chisel than the granite. The choice of this rock as well as the rise of wealthy Buddhist communities were the two factors which contributed in a large measure to an organised attempt at excavating a group of sanctuaries in the cliffs of the Western Ghats. These are all located in the state of Maharashtra and the more important among them are the following:

Bhaja (Poona District); Kondane (Kolaba District); Pithalkhora (Aurangabad District); Ajanta No. IX, Ajanta No. X (Aurangabad District); Bedsa (Nasik) and Karle (Poona District).

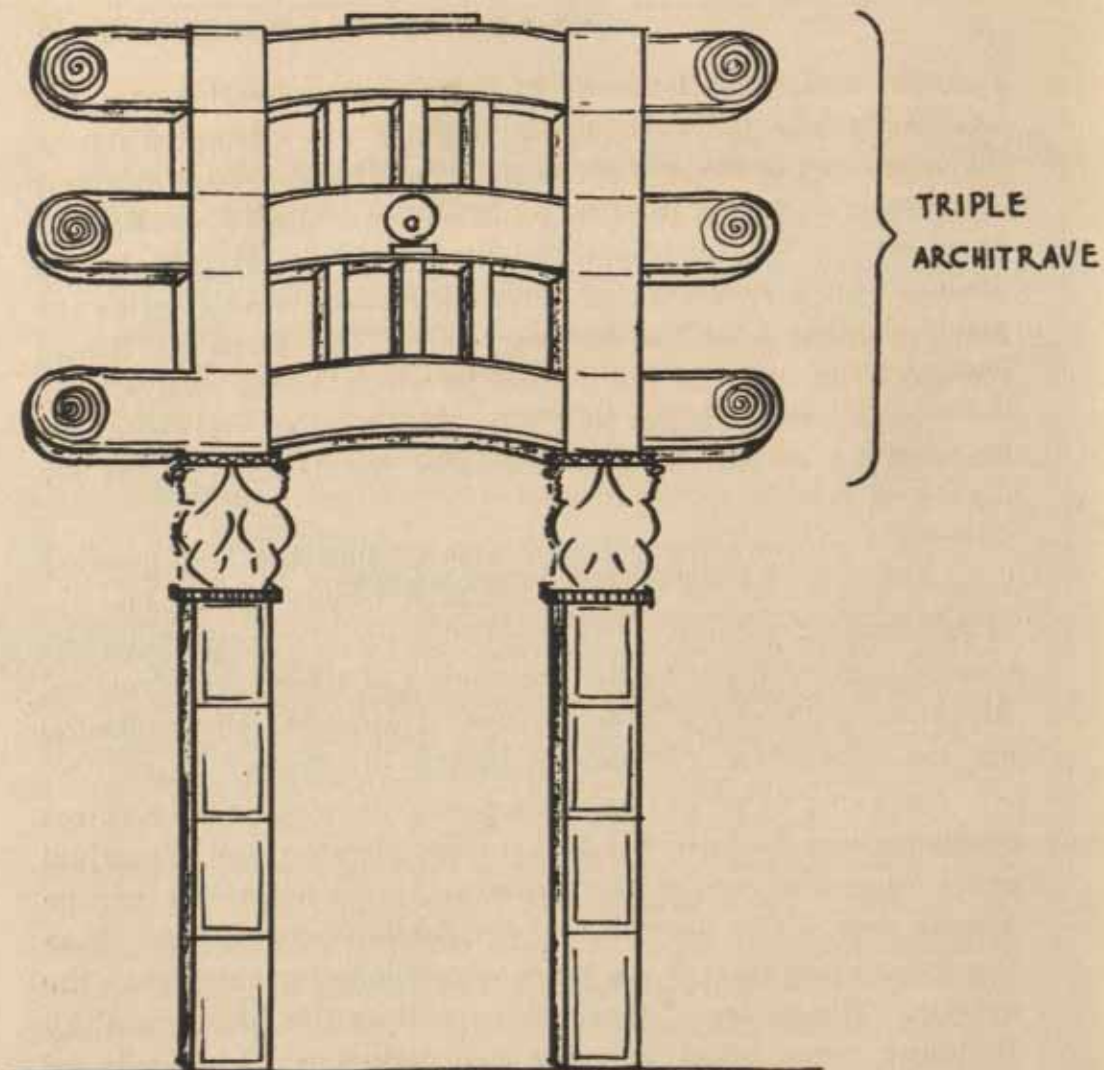


FIG. 14

GATEWAY OF STUPA AT SANCHI

The earliest of these can be dated to the 2nd century B.C. and the latest, to the beginning of the 2nd century A.D.

Rock-cut sanctuaries are named in different ways by scholars. Fergusson, who was the first to write on the subject, describes them as cave-temples (3); Percy Brown, on the other hand, calls them rock-cut chambers or sanctuaries (4). They can also be referred to as Chaityagrihas and Viharas. The term 'Chaitya' indicates that it is a place of Buddhist worship and the 'Vihara', a Buddhist monastic establishment. Since the technique involved in scooping out the sanctuaries belong to the realm of sculpture, rock-cut architecture is designated sometimes as sculpture on a grand scale.

The plan of a rock-cut chamber was evoked in order to facilitate religious services around the principal symbol of worship, namely, the stupa. In free-standing stupas like the one at Sanchi, there is no room for a religious congregation and in a chaitya this is rectified. Accordingly a chaitya hall consists of an ornamental facade, a central hall divided by means of pillars into a nave and aisles and a rock-cut stupa at the rear end of the hall with enough space around it for performing the rite of circumambulation. The technique used for bringing this plan into being is known from unfinished examples found in the caves of Ajanta. After carefully clearing the rock surface, the sculptors at first marked out the outline of the facade. Thereafter, the sculptors started tunnelling into the rock from the highest point of the facade. As layers of rock were cleared, the sculptors slowly brought into being the interior pillared hall and the stupa in the hollow of the rock. After finishing this main work, the sculptor sculpted the designs on the facade, decorated the interior and produced the vaulted roof.

The chronology of these rock-cut sanctuaries can be fixed by a comparison of the details of construction of the eight caves.

It must be first emphasized that they are replicas of the earlier timber structures. Hence, in the examples like the chaitya halls at Bhaja and Kondane, there is ample use of timber but this is gradually discarded. Apart from this practice, there is a gradual evolution in the shape of the arched entrance and the pillars in the nave. At Bhaja, the entrance itself constitutes the arched opening to the chaitya and is decorated with the designs of the railing and miniature shrines. An important change in the style of the facade was first effected in the chaitya at Bedsa. Here it takes the most elegant and typical shape which became a hallmark of the entire rock-cut method. Now it is formed of two stages; the ground floor composed of a pillared entrance portico and the upper storey consisting of an open terrace. Corresponding to the entrance in the lower portico, the upper storey carries the sun-window serving the double purpose of ventilating the interior and acting as a decorative arch. From the chaitya hall at Bhaja to the chaitya hall at Karle, there is a gradual evolution even in the pillars of the interior hall. The pillars of the chaitya at Bhaja are plain and unornamented. There is also a slight flexion in the pillar indicating crude craftsmanship. At Bedsa, the pillar becomes a full-fledged one and consists of a vase-shaped base, faceted shaft and a bell-shaped capital. At Karle, in addition to the earlier development, the capital supports on its top a group of elephant riders (Fig. 15).

SCULPTURE. The sculpture of this period mainly appears on the railings of the stupas at Barhut, Bodhgaya and the gateways of the Sanchi stupa. The Sunga period was notable for the transference of the indigenous tradition of art, which was till then practised on such perishable materials as wood and ivory, to stone. The craftsmen, who were mainly carvers, learnt the technique of monumental art by stages. The sculpture at Barhut marks the stage of infancy, that at Bodhgaya, the stage of transition, and



FIG. 15

PILLARS IN THE CHAITYA AT KARLE

that of Sanchi, the period of comparative maturity. In the realm of rock-cut architecture, sculpture can only be found in the later examples.

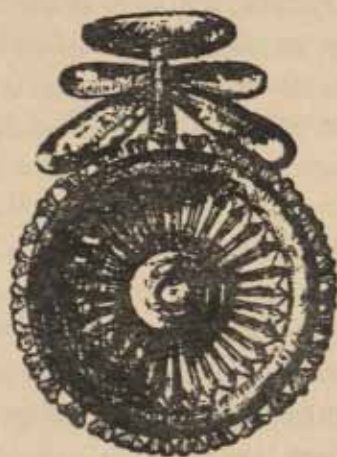
The sculptural art of Barhut, represented on the railing of the stupa (now preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta), is a graphic portrayal of the folk-lore traditions of villagers deeply immersed in the adoration of the Buddha. While there are scenes depicting the worship of Yakshas, Yakshinis and Nagarajas, the central theme is the worship of the Buddha and the depiction of incidents connected with his life. It must be noted, however, that during this period, the Buddha himself was never portrayed but his presence was indicated by means of symbols. The symbol of the lotus is used to indicate the incident of the birth; the caparisoned horse, the great departure from Kapilavastu; the throne with the feet, the great penance; the Wheel of Law, the first sermon; and the stupa, the great decease (Fig. 16).

The technique of carving of the sculptures at Barhut suffers from a number of shortcomings. The carving is flat and rigid and there is no attempt to present the entire figure to the spectator's view and hence the composition of the human figure does not stand as an articulate whole. In the depiction of the female figures, the breasts and the pelvic region are abnormally emphasised. Because of these characteristics, the carvings of the Barhut stupa are described by scholars as memory pictures. In the manner of narration of the birth stories of the Buddha (*Jatakas*), all the incidents connected with a story are depicted without reference to the time sequence. It is left to the spectator to visualise the story out of the stray and disconnected representations.

At Bodhgaya, there is a marked advance in the technique of carving and for the first time the figures convey a sense of movement. Illustrative of this new mastery are the figures of the Sun-god riding on the heavenly chariot drawn by horses and the figure



BODHI TREE



DHARMA
CHAKRA



STUPA

FIG. 16

SYMBOLS OF THE BUDDHA

of Indra holding the sacred grass (*Kusa*). In the first composition, the artist was able to suggest movement of the chariot by carving the horses in a galloping pose. The second image alludes to the mythological story connected with the life of the Buddha. We are told, in the Buddhist lore, that Lord Indra in the guise of a gardener, offered a handful of the sacred grass to the Buddha in order to prepare a seat for meditation. The portraiture truly represents the story since Indra appears as if he is stepping out of the column with his proffered hand to employ himself in the service of the Buddha.

The sculpture of the Sanchi stupa illustrates a variety of scenes from contemporary life. The craftsmen, after mastering the technique of carving on stone, present with ease vegetable, animal and human life in their most natural environment. Particularly, the full-sized female figures which decorate the architraves of the gateways illustrate the ability of the sculptor to portray the human figure in its entirety. In the method of narration of a story, the artist was able to adopt convincing representation of successive incidents connected with the story. In the depiction of the Jataka dealing with the conversion of heretical monks by the Buddha, the artist conveys the idea of sequence by portraying different episodes one beneath the other. The first panel represents the incident of testing the Buddha by the heretical monks; portrayed in the second scene is the incident where the heretical monks, having been convinced of the greatness of the Buddha, pay obeisance to him. The two panels thus represent the story in a clear and convincing fashion.

The sculpture of the rock-cut chambers of this period is limited and is to be found in the chaityas of Kondane, Bedsa and Karle. Even this limited sculpture indicates that the carvers of the Deccan were able to master the problems of stone carving in no time. The hesitancy and awkwardness which one observes

at Barhut finds no place here. The figures of dancers carved on the facade of the cave at Bedsa illustrate this proficiency of the carvers in no uncertain measure. In one panel, a man and a woman are portrayed in love-play. On the capitals of the pillars of the chaitya hall at Karle are depicted pairs of handsome couples riding on elephants (Fig. 15). The faces of these men and women indicate that they are village folk. The sculptor has been able to capture and present the simplicity and naturalness of people born and bred in an atmosphere devoid of artificiality.

The great attraction of the sculpture of the Sunga period lies in the informal and sincere way of the sculptural representation. By successfully establishing a rapport with the contemporary life, the sculptor was able to present various scenes in tender and intimate terms. For all these reasons, Sunga art can be described as the beginning of a great art-movement of the Buddhist phase in India.

REFERENCES

1. See S. K. Saraswati, *A Comprehensive History of India*, p. 710ff.
2. Percy Brown, op. cit., p. 16.
3. Fergusson and Burgess, *Cave Temples of India*.
4. Percy Brown, op. cit., p. 19.

5 EVOLUTION OF THE BUDDHA IMAGE

IN THE history of ancient India, foreigners like the Indo-Greeks, the Sakas, the Parthians and the Kushanas played a considerable role, not only in the political arena but also in the field of culture. Particularly the Kushana dynasty espoused the creed of Buddhism, and encouraged art and architecture. Kanishka (A.D. 78-102)¹ the greatest of the Kushanas, convoked a council of the Buddhists of the country and prepared the ground for a theistic movement in the creed. Under his patronage, a large band of craftsmen were engaged in building stupas, chaityas and viharas around Peshawar (Gandhara) and Mathura². The artists of Gandhara and Mathura were thus the first exponents of the theistic movement of Buddhism and produced the image of the Buddha in stone for the first time.

The region of Gandhara (roughly corresponding to the districts of Rawalpindi and Peshawar of Pakistan), was a centre of great cultural activity of diverse races. The Indo-Greeks, the Iranians, the Sakas and the Kushanas successively held sway over this region during the period extending from 2nd century B.C. to 2nd century A.D. Overland trade contacts exposed this region to the Roman influence and objects belonging to the Roman art of the early centuries of the Christian era were discovered in and around Peshawar and Taxila. The cumulative effect of this heterogeneous culture can be found in the art encouraged by the Kushanas. Even though many of the structures raised by the craftsmen of

¹ The date of Kanishka is very uncertain, the year of his accession being differently placed between 58 B. C. and A. D. 288. Opinion today is divided between A. D. 78 and 144.

² Muttra.

this region have since succumbed to the ravages of time, there are enough remains to enable us to visualise the architectural contributions of the craftsmen who worked under the patronage of the Kushanas. In the case of plastic art, sites like Shahji-ki-Dheri, Bimran, Takht-i-Bahai and Taxila have yielded a number of figures representing the Buddha, Bodhisattvas and other secular scenes. While the architecture of the region made no impact on the outside world, the plastic art did exercise a considerable influence on the art of India and other regions of Asia (1).

The craftsmen of Gandhara produced remarkable stupas and viharas. While the stupas discovered at Taxila, Jamalgarhi and Manikyala conform to the shape of the hemispherical mound, the stupas at Takht-i-Bahai present a different shape. Here the Gandhara craftsmen tried to convert the prosaic shape of a stupa into a more sophisticated architectural entity by constructing a square base (*Medhi*) and by interposing gradually diminishing tiers in the shape of the drum (*Anda*). At Jandial near Taxila, the craftsmen constructed a Buddhist monistic establishment based on the plan of a Greek temple. Apart from these examples, the hybrid character of this school of architecture is revealed by the discovery at Taxila of niches, arches, capitals and remains of secular buildings. These architectural pieces reveal the combined influence of the Indian, Parthian, and Greco-Roman cultures on the architectural school of Gandhara.

The sculpture of the region of Gandhara has been described by scholars as Greco-Buddhist. But as Benjamin Rowland has pointed out, it is the art of the Roman world that directly inspired the productions of the Gandhara school (2). The result of this influence is far from happy since the craftsmen of the Gandhara school aimed at expressing the highly spiritual Buddhist thought through the medium of art which gave emphasis only to material culture. The Buddha figure fashioned by the craftsmen of Gan-

dhara appears like a god of the Roman world. Unable to impart a spiritual dimension to their products, the artists were merely satisfied in endowing to the figure of the Buddha a great amount of physical perfection. Where they tried to emphasize the spiritual quality of the Buddha, they could succeed only to a limited extent (Figs. 17 and 18).

The craftsmen of the Gandhara school produced a number of Buddha images and there is no consensus among scholars about the relative chronology. Some scholars would regard the seated image of the Buddha discovered by Spooner at Shahji-ki-Dheri as the earliest, while there are others who regard the figure of the standing Buddha from Begram as the earliest (3). A broad demarcation between the early and the later figures of the Buddha can be made on the basis of the arrangement of drapery noticed on these figures. In the early sculpture, the drapery is invariably thick and it progressively becomes thinner and thinner in later examples.

Riencourt in his book *The Soul of India* describes the Gandhara art as insincere (4). Such a type of categorical description is not apt since specimens of Gandhara show a gradual evolution. In the early figures, the Buddha is represented as a prototype of a god belonging to the Hellenistic world, seated insecurely on a small lotus stand. But in the example of the seated image of the Buddha hailing from Takht-i-Bahai, there is a definite Indianization (Fig. 18). Here the Buddha is seated securely on a lion pedestal and his facial expression is one of repose and tranquillity. Viewed from this angle, the Gandhara craftsmen contributed their mite to the evolution of the Buddha image.

Simultaneously, with the development of the sculptural school at Gandhara, another school of sculptural activity grew around the centre at Mathura under the patronage of the Kushanas. While the craftsmen of Gandhara took their inspiration from the



FIG. 17

HEAD OF THE BUDDHA, GANDHARA



FIG. 18

FIGURE OF THE BUDDHA, TAKHT-I-BAHAI

Greco-Roman art repertoire, the craftsmen of Mathura imbibed the traditions of the earlier Buddhist centres like that of Barhut and of Sanchi. An examination of the art products of this school is not only necessary to understand the stages of evolution of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva image but also for the understanding of the early stages of progress of Brahmanical and Jain sculpture.

Situated in the heart of North India, Mathura was a centre of the Brahmanical religion. With the spread of Buddhism in the 4th and 3rd centuries before the Christian era, this centre came under the influence of Buddhism. It is probable that the first interaction between the Brahmanical faith and the Buddhist faith took place in this region. The Buddhists as well as others could find in theism a happy reconciliation. It was again this theism which reconciled the higher religious thought with the popular beliefs of the community. The worship of the images of the Buddha and Hindu gods could easily be reconciled with the worship of Nagas and Yakshas. The joy reflected in the Mathura art is the joy of reconciliation, of discovering a common platform embracing different religious beliefs.

The architecture of Mathura is scanty and no structure worthy of its name is extant. Subsequent invasions and vandalism have destroyed all traces of architecture and to-day, only pieces of stupa railings, pillars and the like are preserved still intact. It is certain that there must have existed a stupa at Mathura. The presence of door-jambs points to the existence of a shrine dedicated to the Brahmanical faith. Among the architectural vestiges, the most important are the pillars since they exhibit the most typical carvings of the place. These are the figures of graceful females (*Yakshinis*) portrayed in different poses and attitudes.

The Mathura craftsmen tried their level best to convey the spiritual grace and loftiness of the Buddha by employing symbolic gestures (*Mudras*) and physical signs (*Lakshanas*) of a great being.

The most notable figure sculpture is the representation of the Buddha hailing from the Katra Mound near Mathura. The master is portrayed here as a physically energetic monk giving assurance to his devotees. In contrast to the Buddha of the Gandhara school, the Buddha from Katra resembles a Buddhist monk both in the manner of his dress as well as the arrangement of the hair. He is seen seated comfortably on a lion pedestal with hands poised in the protection-giving (*Abhaya*) gesture. The auspicious signs indicating his greatness can be seen conspicuously on the feet.

The essential difference between the Gandhara and Mathura schools of art lies in the conception of the figure of the Buddha. The Gandhara craftsmen never tried to capture the spiritual quality of the Buddha. To them, the Buddha meant a god and nothing more. On the other hand, the Mathura craftsmen had the vision of a highly spiritual being who had shown to humanity a way out from their suffering. He is an illuminated soul, full of spiritual energy and the craftsmen tried to portray him as such by means of gestures and signs.

The relief sculptures hailing from Mathura depict a number of scenes from the life of the Buddha. The scene of enlightenment is indicated by the seated figure of the Buddha wherein the master is seen touching the earth. The Buddha is portrayed by the side of a wheel to indicate the incident of the first sermon at Saranath. The carving of the reliefs is not deep and the method is a continuation of the technique of Barhut and Bodhgaya.

Besides the specimens of Buddhist art, the site at Mathura has yielded as well a number of statues of the Brahmanical deities, Jina figures, Naga and Yaksha figures, royal portraits and secular scenes. Some of the secular scenes clearly demonstrate the influence of the Gandhara art on Mathura. The most typical is the panel which represents two women with a man (Pl. 4). The man clutches the hand of a kneeling woman while the other lady

stands looking on in a challenging way. Though the meaning of the entire composition is not clear, it is generally taken by scholars as a representation of an intoxicated group and it is popularly designated today as a Bacchanalian scene. In a similar way, the influence of West Asian art traditions on the Mathura school can be seen on the portrait statues produced by the craftsmen of the Mathura school. The statues, as can be inferred from the pedestal inscriptions, depict two important figures from the royal house of the Kushanas. One is that of Kadphises and the other is that of Kanishka. Though the head is missing, the heavy form, the tunic and the boots indicate a foreign art tradition. The discovery of a similar type of portraits in Afghanistan has led scholars to presuppose the influence of Central Asian art on Mathura (5).

REFERENCES

1. See Sir John Marshall, *Excavations at Taxila*.
2. Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
3. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 51.
4. Amoury de Riencourt, *The Soul of India*, p. 140.
5. B. N. Puri, *India under the Kushans*, p. 198.

6 BUDDHIST PERIOD IN THE SOUTH

THE ART and architecture of the Buddhist period in South India was confined to the region of Andhra. Monuments dedicated to Buddhism and its Church are to be seen in all parts of North India. But in the case of the South, the Buddhist activity was concentrated in the lower reaches of the river Krishna. In the second century B. C. the whole of Andhra was suffused through and through with Buddhist thought and this resulted in a concentrated effort to build stupas and Buddhist settlements (*Sangharamas*), the most notable of them being the stupas at Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda.

The Buddhist period in Andhra stretched from the 2nd century B.C. to the 3rd century A.D. Though the major concentration of the movement was in the Krishna and Guntur districts of Andhra isolated efforts were made by the Buddhists to found settlements elsewhere in Andhra. The earliest of such isolated structures is the masonry hemisphere found in the Buddhist remains at Guntupalle (Krishna District). At the northern extremity of Andhra are to be seen three settlements of the Buddhists. At Sankaram (near Anakapalle, Visakhapatnam District), there exists a Buddhist settlement (*Sangharama*) consisting of a large monolith stupa and a vihara. At Salihundam, one can even now see the remains of a large stupa and a number of votive stupas. The other places include the one at Ramatirtham where a stupa and a vihara can be found. But as Percy Brown has remarked, these examples are notable for their antiquarian interest rather than for their architectural merit (1). The major concentration is in the lower reaches

of the Krishna and in these series, the Buddhists of Southern India made notable contributions to the art and architecture of India as a whole.

The earliest stupa of this region is the one at Bhattiprolu. Inscriptions hailing from this place enable us to date the stupa to the 2nd century B.C. Other important stupas are situated at Gudivada, Jaggayyapeta, Ghantasala, Goli, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. All these stupas were built of brick. Some of them were covered with plaster while a majority of them were cased with slabs made of limestone, a material which is even today freely available in this region. The stupas at Bhattiprolu and Amaravati were built of solid brick while those at other sites were constructed without a solid brick core by adopting a wheel-shaped ground-plan. The stupas at Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda illustrate the peculiarities of the southern stupas in the manner of laying the ground-plan and in arranging the elevation.

A visitor to the site at Amaravati (about 20 miles north of Guntur) will be disappointed by the lonely and forlorn state of the entire edifice. Even the museum at the site fails to satisfy the visitor as part of the remains of the stupa are now in the British Museum, London, and the rest in the Government Museum, Madras. Fortunately, however, from the representations of the stupa found on the casing slabs, one can visualise the original grandeur of the stupa.

The sculptural reliefs found on the remains of the stupa reveal that they were carved in different periods. Some of the sculptures clearly show the Hinayana phase while there are others which can definitely be assigned to the Mahayana phase of Buddhism. A traditional legend associates the foundation of the Amaravati stupa to Asoka and it is certain from the inscriptional evidence that the stupa was in existence in the 2nd century B.C. From the illustrations on the casing slabs and from the examples at Bhat-

tiprolu and Gudivada, it can be inferred that the original stupa was a low hemispherical mound. This was enlarged and embellished during the 2nd century A.D. when the tract came under the active rule of the Andhra Satavahanas.

In its renovated form, the Amaravati stupa appears to have been larger in dimensions than the Sanchi stupa. Like the latter, it is composed of three segments: the base, the hemisphere and the apex. The entire stupa is built of brick and is covered with marble slabs upto the lower region of the hemisphere. The upper part of the hemisphere is plastered over and is ornamented with a garland-like pattern. The base at the four cardinal points is projected by means of a rectangular platform (*Ayaka*) which terminates in five slender pillars. This vertical projection is a distinctive attribute of the stupas of the Krishna region and the five slender pillars symbolise the five important incidents of the Buddha's life: the birth, the renunciation, the penance, the first sermon and the great decease. Thus the southern craftsmen made a definite contribution to the stupa architecture by innovating a vertical element in the construction of a stupa. The *Ayaka* platform added a new grace by relieving the monotony of the hemispherical shape. The platforms were integrated into the structure of the stupa since the stairway leading to the upper processional path was provided on its rear side. Finally, the casing slabs and the decorative garland-pattern transformed the entire stupa into a highly artistic creation.

The sculptural wealth of the Amaravati stupa can be divided into the sculptures of the early period and those belonging to the later phase. In the sculptures of the early period, which obtain mostly on the casing slabs, the sculptor paid greater attention to the representations of animal and vegetal life rather than the human form. The themes of representation are few and mainly consist of scenes depicting the adoration of the Buddha. The carv-

ing is not deep and the sculpture can be related to the early Buddhist art found in the caves of the Deccan. The figures of a man and a boy found on the slabs of Amaravati bear close resemblance to the male and female figures, probably donors, carved on the facade of the chaitya at Karle.

The best specimens of the sculptural art of the Amaravati stupa were carved in the 2nd century A.D. when the stupa was renovated. The craftsmen had by this time attained a great felicity in handling the stone and freely depicted not only the life of the Buddha but also the entire panorama of contemporary life. The sculptures also reveal the general rise of the material culture of the people as they portray a gay and sophisticated urban class.

The appeal of the art of Amaravati lies in the presentation of delicate, long-legged men and women in dynamic action and alluring poses (Fig. 19). The panels representing the universal monarch with his seven jewels, the one portraying the transit of the Buddha's bowl to heaven, are some examples of this dynamic representation. The other charm of Amaravati art lies in the dramatic presentation of human emotions. The panel representing the pacification of the infuriated elephant Nalagiri by the Buddha offers a great study in human emotions (Pl. 5). In one panel, the sculpture portrays two contrasting scenes: the left scene depicts a crowd of people agitated by the presence of the infuriated elephant and the second one presents the same crowd restored to normalcy by the calming presence of the Buddha and the elephant on its knees in obeisance before him.

The Buddha image carved by the craftsmen of the Amaravati school bears close resemblance to the images carved at Mathura (Fig. 20). The arrangement of drapery, however, reveals the persistence of the Gandhara tradition. The face of the Buddha of this school can easily be recognised by its oval shape and the snail-shell curls on the top of the head. By endowing a great



FIG. 19

A KING WITH HIS QUEENS. SCULPTURE FROM AMARAVATI



FIG. 20

HEAD OF THE BUDDHA, FROM AMARAVATI

amount of smoothness to the body, the carvers of Amaravati made a further improvement in the evolution of the Buddha's image.

The art of Amaravati exercised a profound influence not only on the art of India but also on the art of the rest of Asia. The influence of the tender and delicate human form evolved by the craftsmen of the Amaravati school can be found on the art of Ajanta and Mahabalipuram situated in the northern and southern regions of Amaravati. The Buddha image carved by the Amaravati sculptors also travelled beyond the frontiers of India and served as a prototype for carving the images of the Buddha throughout the entire South-East Asia.

REFERENCES

1. Percy Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 36.



PLATE 5

"SUBJUGATION OF NALAGIRI", SCULPTURAL PANEL. AMARAVATI STUPA,
GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, MADRAS.



PLATE 6

"VISHNU ON SHESHA," SCULPTURAL PANEL, DASAVATARA TEMPLE,
DEOGARH

(Copyright, Archaeological Survey of India)



PLATE 7
MUSICIANS AND DANCERS, CAVE No. 7, AURANGABAD
(Copyright, Archaeological Survey of India)



PLATE 8
LINGARAJA TEMPLE, BHUVANESWAR
(Copyright, Archaeological Survey of India)

7 THE CLASSICAL AGE OF THE GUPTAS

IN THE 4th century A.D. India witnessed a great cultural change under the impact of a succession of rulers belonging to the Gupta dynasty. Though the origin of this dynasty is shrouded in mystery, it is certain that the dynasty was founded in the region of Bihar by Sri Gupta in the second century A.D. His grandson, Chandragupta I (A.D. 319-35), by contracting a matrimonial alliance with the Lichchavis, laid the foundation of a viable state in Magadha which was further developed by his successors, Samudragupta (A.D. 335-75) and Chandragupta II (A.D. 375-415). In their heyday the Guptas not only maintained their political supremacy throughout the country, but also conferred the blessings of good government on a large area of North India. Naturally enough, there was a cultural upsurge in the country resulting in marked achievements in different pursuits of peace.

During the supremacy of the Guptas in India, new changes in the field of religion took place. The Bhakti sects of Hinduism, namely, the Bhagavata and Saiva sects, now began to occupy the place which was previously enjoyed by the Buddhist creed. Encouraged by the royal patronage, these new religious faiths of the Brahmanical religion captured the imagination of the people. Since this new faith expressed itself in the worship of Siva and Vishnu in the form of images, there arose the necessity to search for a suitable type of structure in order to house the image. It was this necessity that led to the birth of a Hindu temple, the nucleus of which consisted of a 'womb-house' (*Garbhagriha*). Thus for the first time, in the Gupta period, there appeared a new archi-

tectural form which dominated the architectural activity of the Hindus ever after.

The Guptas not only patronised the devotional sects of Hinduism but also encouraged Buddhism in their dominions. Simultaneously with the growth of icono-plastic art in the fold of Hinduism there was also equal development in the realm of Buddhist artistic activity. While the earlier centre at Mathura continued image-making, a new school of art arose at Saranath.

The earliest phase of architectural activity of the Gupta period can be seen in the rock-cut chambers at Udayagiri, which can definitely be dated to the reign of Chandragupta II on the basis of the inscriptional evidence. At Udayagiri, there are nine chambers dedicated to the newly renascent Brahmanical faith. Their value lies not so much in the development of the rock-cut technique but in introducing a new style of architecture. The features of this new movement manifest themselves clearly in the treatment of the pillars and door-jambs.

The nine rock-cut chambers at Udayagiri, hewn out from a sandstone cliff of this region, are partly rock-cut and partly built with stone. Their significance lies in the fact that they contain an appropriate shrine chamber with a pillared portico in the front. This augurs the development of a Hindu temple since the nucleus of a temple consists of a sanctum for the reception of an image and a pillared portico to serve as an altar. Apart from this development towards the emergence of a new order like the temple, the rock-cut chambers underline the characteristics of this new order by their pillars and door-jambs. The typical pillar consists of a square base, multifaced shaft, and a capital consisting of an ornamental vase. Thus in this pillar, the earlier bell capital was converted into the shape of an ornamental vase which in the tradition of the Hindus symbolises economic plenty and well-being. In a similar way, the door-jamb, which is richly carved, contains

the figures of Ganga and Yamuna, the deities of neo-Hinduism. By these typical pillars and door-jambs, the temples at Tigawa, Sanchi No. 17, the Narasimha shrine at Eran, temples situated at Bhumara, at Nachna and at Deogarh, can be attributed to the Gupta period.

The Vishnu temple at Tigawa is a typical example of the early group of temples built during the Gupta period. In style and craftsmanship, it is cognate with the temples at Sanchi and Eran and all these three can be assigned to the latter half of the fourth century A.D. The temple consists of two apartments, a square sanctum and a frontal porch. The sanctum, which measures 12½ ft. square, was constructed with neatly dressed stone blocks. The pillared hall in the front measures 7 ft. and serves as a facade to the shrine. This small temple contains three dominant features: the decorated door-jamb, the typical architrave running around the temple and the sculptured pillar. The door-jamb is an expanded one and is sculptured with ornamental designs and the figures of Ganga and Yamuna. Starting from the height of the lintel beam, the architrave runs all along the temple encircling it like a garland. The pillars are composed of a square base, a multi-faced shaft, and a capital with a beautiful vase. The pillar terminates in an abacus supporting the figures of miniature elephants. The temple at Tigawa is the typical effort of a new movement in architecture and it reflects the religious faith of the people by the designs of the Vase of Plenty (*Purna-Kalasa*) and the figures of Ganga and Yamuna on the door-jambs. The Parvati temple at Nachna and the Siva temple at Bhumara, built during the fifth century A.D., mark the next stage in the development of the temple architecture of the Guptas. In both these cases, the central shrine is enclosed by a larger chamber, thus providing an intermediary space for circumambulation. The *mandapa* (hall) in front of the shrine is more than double the size

of the *mandapa* of the Tigawa temple. Both these temples were built on an elevated platform with a flight of steps serving as an approach to each shrine.

The temple architecture of the Guptas attained perfection in the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh. Here for the first time, the builders transformed the flat roof of the earlier order into an elegant tower. Though ruined, the tower presents the earliest mode of the typical curvilinear spire which becomes the prototype of a North Indian temple ever after.

Built on an elevated platform, the Deogarh temple consists of a square central shrine with pillared porticos on all sides. An ornamental expanded door-jamb serves as an entrance to the shrine. To relieve the monotony of the outer walls of the temple, the builders created false windows on three sides of the outer walls, with the aid of an architectural framework of two pilasters and an architrave, the entire frame being covered with ornamental and figurative sculpture. Into this framework is sunk a panel representing a unique figurative drama from the legends of Puranic Hinduism. The temple represents fully the spirit and power of the new Hinduism which the Guptas ushered into India. In the realm of the early architectural effort in India, this temple is a perfect specimen which combines both functional utility and aesthetic taste.

The temple at Deogarh anticipates the development of the entire temple architecture of the medieval period. The projections on the wall portions together with the curvilinear tower, marks the beginning of the development of a typical North Indian temple. The icons presented in the niches of the outer wall presage the development of later temple iconography. The niches, the pilasters in the wall and the decorative arches on the cornice further anticipate the development of temple architecture of South India. And again, the decorative patterns found on the door-jamb fore-

shadow the development which was to occur in the temples of the Deccan. Thus the temple of Deogarh is an essential landmark in the development of temple architecture in India.

The sculptural art of the Gupta period is represented by a variety of images belonging to both the Hindu and Buddhist creeds. A variety of influences moulded the taste of the Gupta craftsmen. The Buddhist sculpture turned out at the centres of Mathura and Saranath exhibits a national consciousness and the spirit of the age. Just as there was Indianisation of coinage during the Gupta period, there was also the Indianisation of the image of the Buddha. The religious consciousness of the age tended to make the craftsmen turn to nature and they moulded the human figure from the similitudes drawn from nature. The spiritual evolution of the age is reflected in the increasing use of hand poses (*Mudras*) and flexions (*Bhargas*) to symbolise the inner feelings.

During this period, the art centre at Mathura produced a number of images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. The most representative are the figures of the standing Buddha and Bodhisattvas now preserved in the Curzon Museum at Mathura. The important aspect of these figures lies in the transformation which took place during the lapse of two centuries. The heaviness and the terrestrial quality of the early figures produced in the Kushana age are replaced by elegance and refinement (Fig. 21). While the Bodhisattva figure is an example of a royal youth full of nobility, the figure of the standing Buddha emphasizes the essentially human quality of the Buddha. Apart from producing the Buddha and the Bodhisattva figures, the centre at Mathura produced a number of Jina statues and gods of the Hindu pantheon. The famous figure of Vishnu (now in the National Museum, Delhi) reveals the attempt to present the Hindu god as a noble soul by a soft rendering of the entire surface of the body.



FIG. 21

STANDING BUDDHA, FROM MATHURA

Using the finely grained sandstone quarried from Karri (near Benaras), the craftsmen of the Gupta period produced religious sculpture of great significance at Saranath. Though there are a number of figures of standing and sitting Buddhas, the best specimen is easily the one which depicts the Buddha sitting majestically with hands poised in an attitude which symbolises the preaching of the First Sermon at Saranath (*Dharmachakra Pravartana*). The craftsmen were able to present the master in a serenely idealized pose against the background of an enormous halo (*Siraschakra*). Thus the Saranath figure marks the beginning of a glorious period in Indian art which is characterised by a perfect blend of the human form with the beauty of nature (Fig. 22).

The Gupta period was an era of great material prosperity. The happiness and joy of life is reflected in the figure of the Sun-god hailing from Pawaya in Rajasthan. Taking into consideration the plastic treatment of the body and the *Siraschakra*, the figure can stylistically be related to the images of Saranath. Surya, the Sun-god, stands majestically with one hand poised in *Abhaya hasta* and with a characteristic half-smile on the face. In addition to this, the panel showing a dancing party hailing from the same place reflects the happiness and prosperity of the times.

One of the best specimens of the sculptural art of the period is the colossal figure of the great boar carved on the wall of Cave No. V at Udayagiri. The sculptor was able to capture and present the might of a great primeval being when he was engaged in the act of rescuing the mother-earth from the nether regions.¹ The figure reflects the spirit and might of Chandragupta II who made a determined effort to build an invincible empire in the heart of India by crushing the last shreds of power of all foreigners.

The Deogarh temple contains panels representing scenes

¹The panel represents the Boar Avatara of Vishnu.

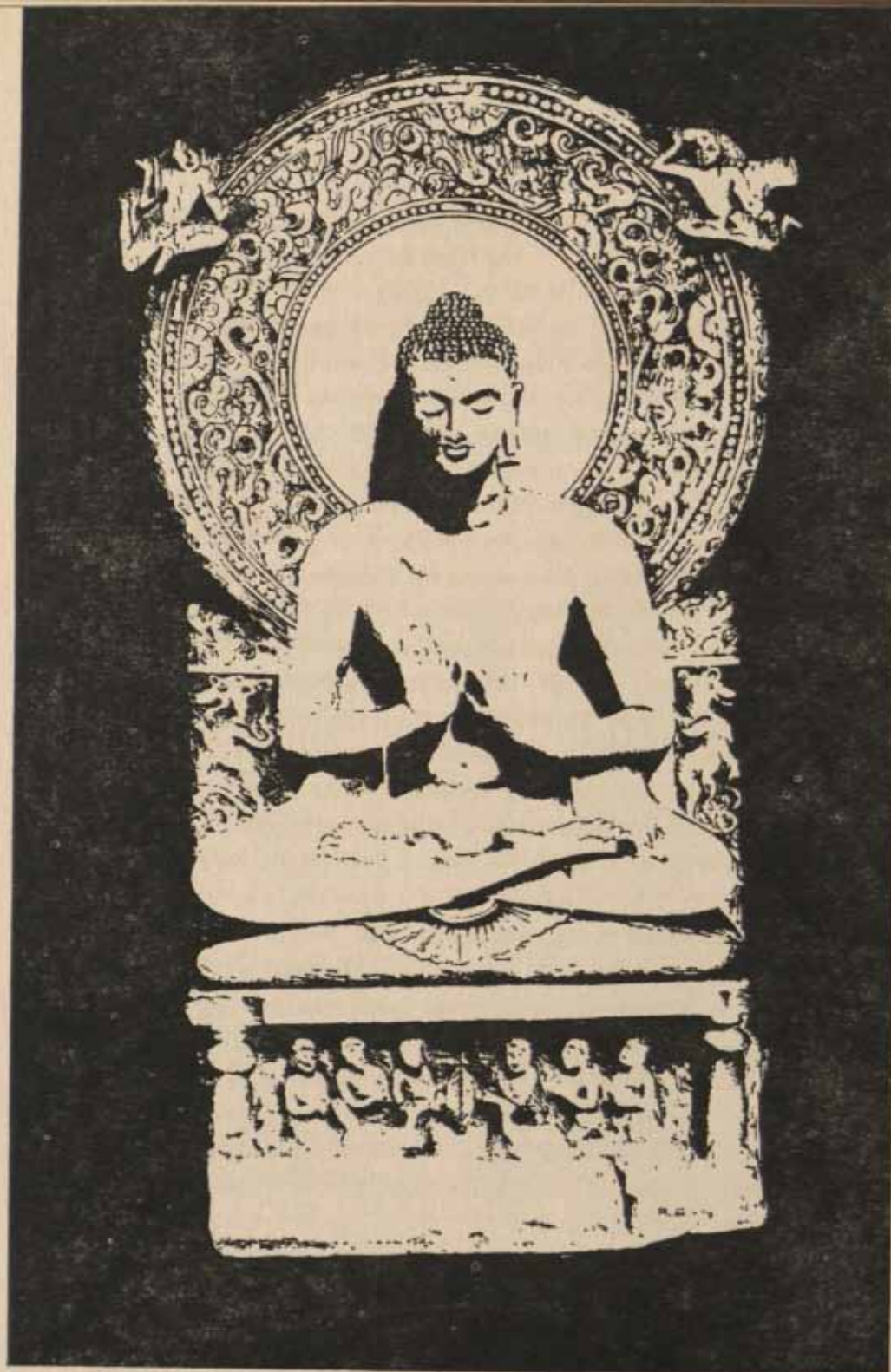


FIG. 22
SEATED BUDDHA, FROM SARANATH

associated with the Bhagavata religion. One panel represents the scene of rescuing an elephant by Lord Vishnu. Another depicts Lord Vishnu in a trance. In the third panel, the penance of Lord Vishnu is portrayed. These figures indicate the influence of the Bhagavata religion on the people of Central India. Here the sculptor was guided by the injunctions laid down in the canonical texts and depicted the figures in a conventional way. In one of the panels, Lord Vishnu is shown as reclining on the coils of the serpent Adishesha (Pl. 6). His consort, Lakshmi, is seen engaged in the act of massaging the feet of Lord Vishnu. A number of deities are represented on the top and at the bottom of the panel. All these adjuncts are purported to convey the idea to the spectator that the sculptor is attempting the depiction of Lord Vishnu at the time of the Great Deluge. The sculptor thus tended to depend on known conventions to represent the mythological scenes.

The sculpture of the Gupta age foreshadows the sculptural art of the later period. It was during this period that all the conventions relating to the depiction of images were formalised. During the medieval period, the artist tended to follow more and more these conventions instead of depending on originality.

8 AJANTA, ELLORA AND AURANGABAD

THE CULTURAL upsurge of the entire northern part of India under the benevolent rule of the Guptas and the effective sway of the Vakatakas in the region of the Deccan gave to the Buddhist community a revival in the fifth and the sixth centuries. There was a growth in the numerical strength of the community and in tune with it there was also an increasing elaboration in the conduct of the ritual. Under the patronage of the royal dynasties and the rich sections of the community, the Buddhists excavated large groups of cells at Ajanta, Ellora, and Aurangabad. This phase began at Ajanta (66 miles north-west of Aurangabad) where after a lapse of nearly two and a half centuries the Buddhists excavated twenty-nine chambers. Out of these, four are chaityas and the rest of them are viharas. At Ellora, there is only one chaitya and the rest are viharas.

At Ajanta, the Buddhists were able to choose a place which at once is a natural marvel. Nature itself produced a semi-circular mountain range overlooking a narrow ravine wherein flows the small rivulet named Waghora. The place itself is a natural retreat evoking the feelings of sublimity even in a materialistic soul. The Buddhists, who had discovered this place in the early centuries of the Christian era, renewed their earlier work in the fifth century A.D. and decorated the entire surface of the semi-circular hill with chambers of exquisite beauty. The fervour of Mahayana Buddhism was such that it brought out the best in the ancient Indian artists. Not only the chisel of the sculptor moved freely to beautify every corner of the rock-cut chamber but also the brush of the

painter aided the sculptor to make Ajanta an immortal centre of art.

The architectural activity at Ajanta owes its inspiration to the patronage of the Vakatakas, a dynasty which was matrimonially related to the Guptas of Magadha. Inscriptions of Harisena, the Minister of Varahadeva, appear in Cave No. XVI at Ajanta and in a vihara at Aurangabad. Out of the over twenty viharas excavated at Ajanta, most of them show stages of experimentation. In caves like Nos. XI, VII and VI, the craftsmen tried a number of alternative arrangements for evolving a suitable monastic establishment for the Buddhists.

Much of the beauty of the rock-cut chambers at Ajanta is derived from the ease with which the artists were able to handle stone. The craftsmen of the Hinayana period were simply copying into the stone what they had earlier learnt in wood and timber. Though the traditions of the timber age still persists even at this stage, the artists were able to show their originality in evolving the vihara and in beautifying the chaitya. The manipulative dexterity and the aesthetic taste of the craftsmen are exemplified in Caves No. I and No. XIV at Ajanta. Particularly in the evolution of the pillar, the technique of rock-cut architecture reaches perfection. Beginning as a simple one in the Hinayana period, it now assumes the full dimensions proportionate to the order. Two forms of capitals, one melon-shaped and the other with a vase, and the entwining foliage, convert even the pillar into a work of great art.

Of the many viharas at Ajanta, Cave No. I is the most representative of the group (Fig. 23). It is entered through a porch and a verandah measuring 64 ft. in length and 9 ft. in width. The central hall, which is 64 ft. square, is symmetrically planned by means of twenty beautiful pillars. The walls of the pillared hall as well as the ceiling are decorated with wall paintings. The total

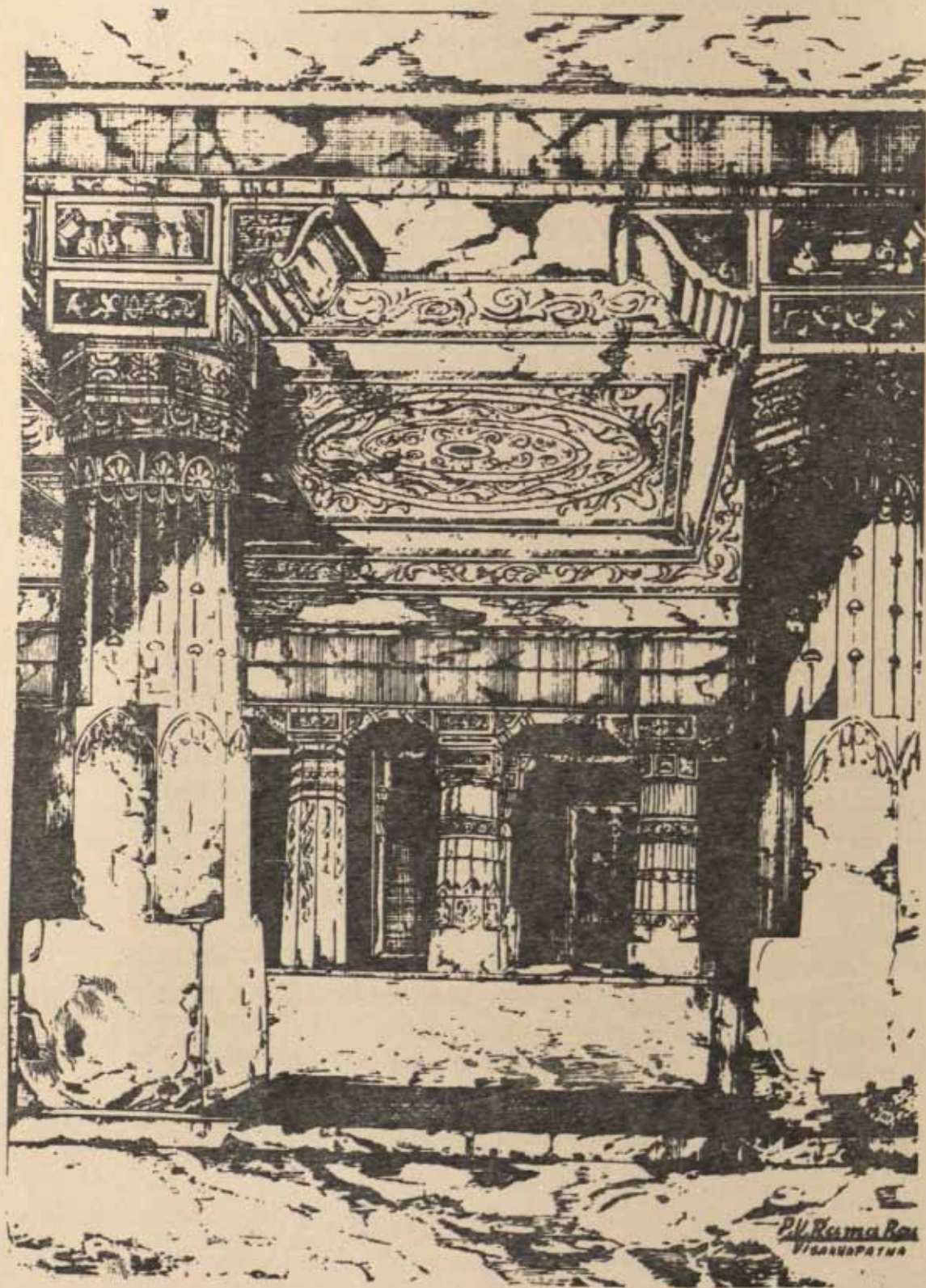


FIG. 23

INTERIOR OF VIHARA NO. 1 AT AJANTA

effect is further heightened by the presence of a large shrine chamber (20 ft. square) with an imposing figure of a seated Buddha flanked by two Bodhisattvas. Cave No. I thus illustrates the attempt to elaborate the plan of a vihara in such a way so that it would serve the purpose of a place of worship as well as a place of residence. Cave No. XIX represents the evolution of a chaitya hall during this period. The most pleasing development is the entrance portico and the upper arch. Richly carved pillars and the elaborately sculptured arch offer a prelude to the entire edifice. The interior, which measures 46 ft. in depth and 24 ft. in breadth, is divided into a nave and aisles by a colonnade of fifteen pillars. The carving is not confined only to the pillars but is extended to the entablature. As a fitting finale, the stupa at the rear end measures 22 ft. in height and a seated image of the Buddha is enshrined in a niche wrought on the front of the domed part of the stupa (Fig. 24).

The sculpture of the caves at Ajanta illustrates the development of the rock-cut technique. The august nature of the interior made the sculptor chisel figures on a massive scale and in large dimensions. Though the figures lack the dynamic agility of the Amaravati art, they are dignified and are quite in keeping with the background. Each shrine chamber is invariably accompanied by the figure of the Buddha carved in high relief. Apart from these, the walls of the chambers are filled with figures of celestial beings, dancers, Nagarajas and of other deities of the Buddhist pantheon. The most important are the colossal statues of the Buddha hailing from Ajanta. In spite of the heaviness and the colossal size, the artist was able to show the inward calm and bliss of a realized soul in these figures. In a similar fashion, the carving of the scene of the great decease (*Parinirvana*) in Cave No. XXVI portrays the dramatic quality of the scene. The face of the master shows tranquillity and repose while that of the spectators, pathos and grief.

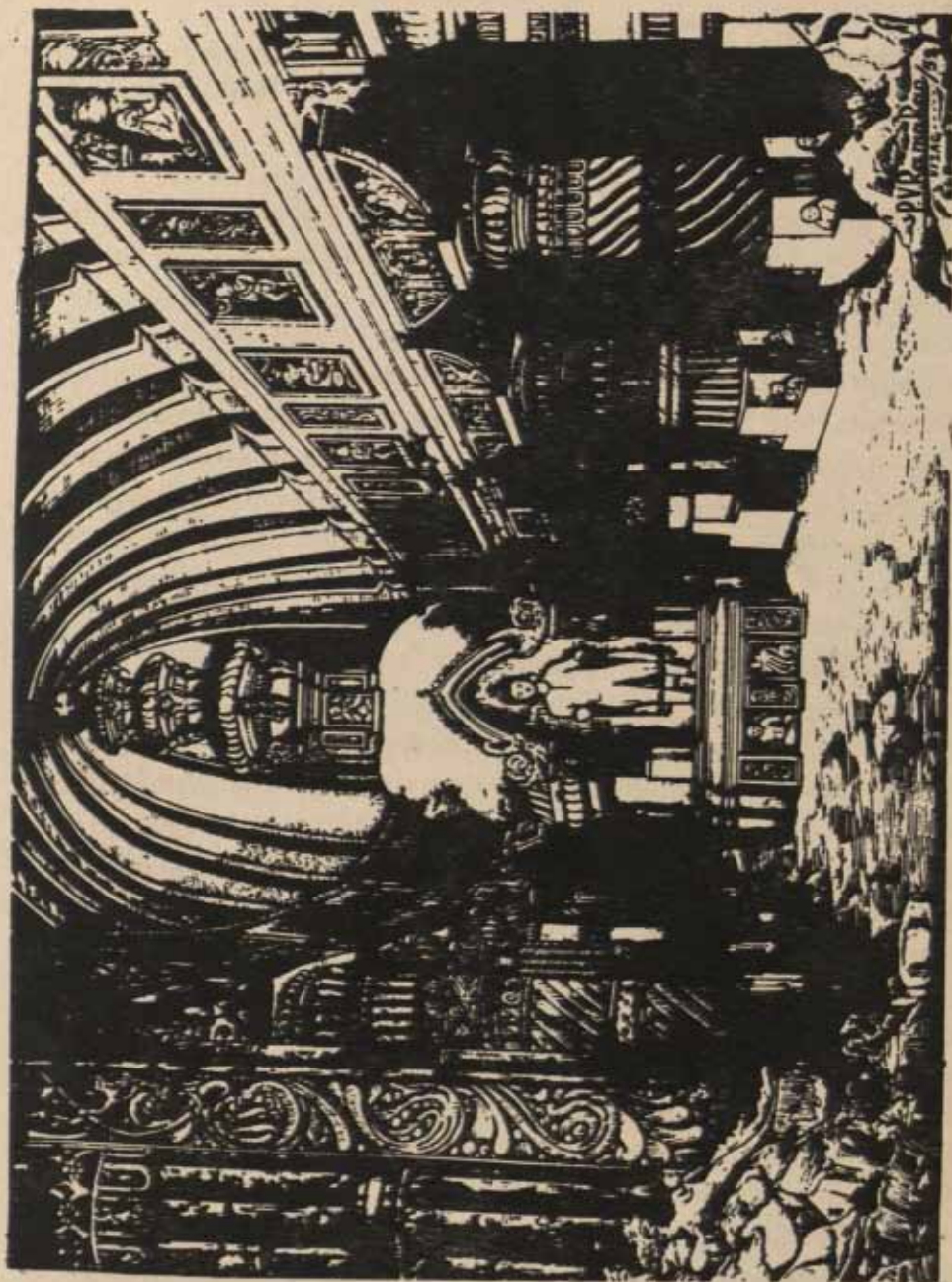


FIG. 24

INTERIOR OF CHAITYA NO. XIX AT AJANTA

Although lacking in the natural charm and the scenic beauty of Ajanta, the caves at Ellora (20 miles from Aurangabad) have a different type of appeal. The largeness of the undertaking and the august nature of the sculpture, reveal the vigour and energy of the Buddhists. The caves at Ellora can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of simple viharas except for one peculiar chamber known as the Mahanwada. Each of these chambers comprise a pillared hall with cells on all sides. The second group consists of two-storeyed (Do-thal) and three-storeyed (Teen-thal) excavations consisting of large pillared halls leading the visitor to the shrine chamber in the interior. The later group contains a chaitya hall. Because of its elegant appearance and the correctness of the architectural manipulation, this chaitya acquired the name of Lord of Arts (Viswakarma).

The most peculiar structure at Ellora is the chamber known as the Mahanwada. It is a large undertaking (117 ft. x 58½ ft.) and combines in itself the features of a chaitya and a vihara. The central hall is divided by means of twenty-four pillars into a nave and aisles and is terminated by a stupa. While this arrangement satisfies the requirements of a chaitya, the cells on all sides and the shrine chamber beyond the stupa convert this into a vihara also. Apart from this, the most notable chamber is the one known as the Lord of Arts. The facade consists of an open portico and this supports a sculptured entablature. The chaitya window above the entrance gate assumes the design of a beautiful trefoil. The interior hall, which measures 85 ft. x 44 ft., is divided into a nave and aisles by means of twenty-five pillars. The stupa at the rear end is a mammoth structure assuming the proportions of a free-standing stupa. The most notable among the Buddhist sculptures of Ellora are the figures of Bodhisattvas Padmapani and Vajrapani. In these figures, there is a faithful rendering of a Bodhisattva since they exude the spirit of compassion.

Here at Ellora are twelve Mahayana Buddhist, seventeen Brahmanical, and five Jaina Caves. The finest of the Brahmanical works is the Kailasa carved out of the volcanic rock of the hillside.

Out of the precipitous rocks which lay one mile north of the city of Aurangabad, the Buddhists excavated twelve rock-cut chambers. All of these were excavated in the sixth and the seventh centuries A.D. when the religious fervour was on the wane. In the architectural manipulation, there is nothing new in the productions at Aurangabad. Excepting for Cave No. IV, all the chambers are viharas. The interesting aspect of these caves relates to the plastic art. They are filled with colossal statues of the Buddha and other figures. In Cave No. III are represented a multitude of figures worshipping the Buddha. Free from stylisation and conventionality, the sculptor was able to present the picture of living human beings immersed in devout adoration, clearly expressed both in their faces as well as in their gestures. Cave No. VII contains a scene depicting the performance of a dance (Pl. 7). Grouped together are seven female dancers, each one performing the requisite function assigned to her. The central one is seen in the typical flexion of a classical Indian dance. The immediate followers indicate the characteristic moods of the dance. These are followed by cymbal players, a flute player and a drummer. Taken together, the entire group is a live representation of a dancing party and the spectators are made to feel the mood and the grace of the entire dance recital.

The final question regarding the art of Ajanta, Ellora, and Aurangabad is this: wherefrom did the sculptors and the artists hail? The scenes of the paintings of Ajanta bear the unmistakable imprint of the art of Amaravati. The august nature of some of the sculptures appears to be a derivative from the early tradition of the art of Western India. Finally, the cultural influence of the



PLATE 9
SUN TEMPLE, KONARAK
(Copyright, Archaeological Survey of India)

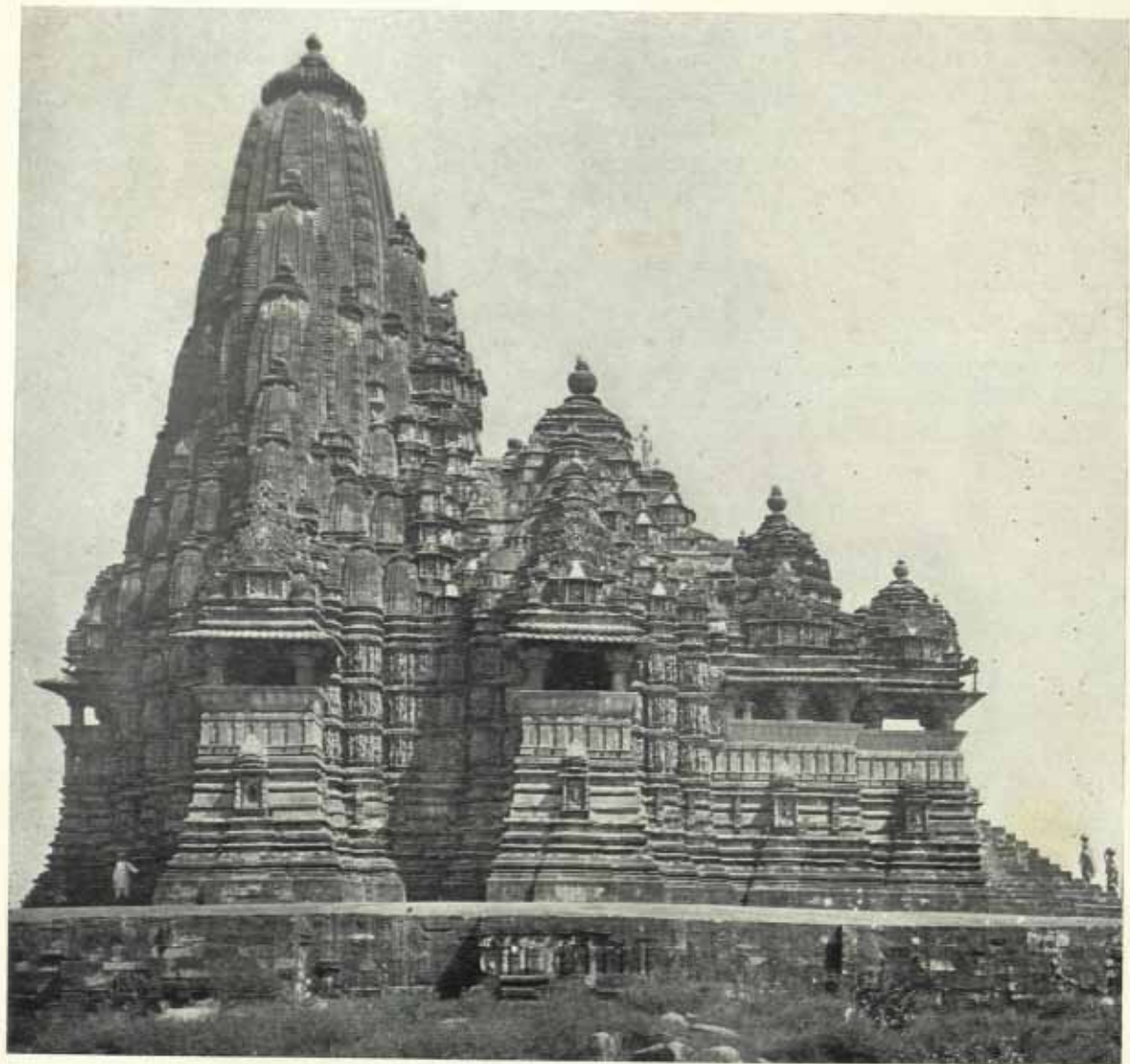


PLATE 10
KANDARIYA MAHADEVA TEMPLE, KHAJURAHO

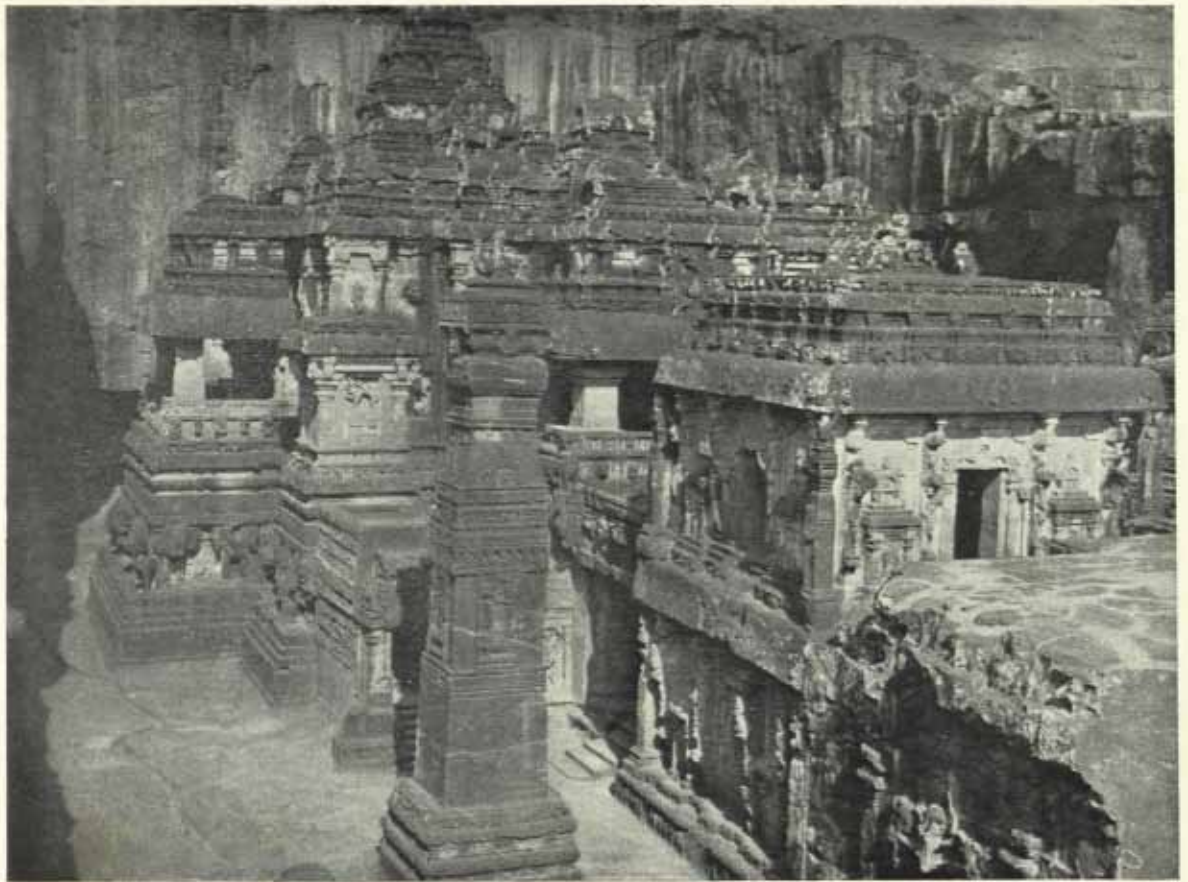


PLATE 11

CAVE No. 16 ("KAILASA"), ELLORA

(Copyright, Archaeological Survey of India)

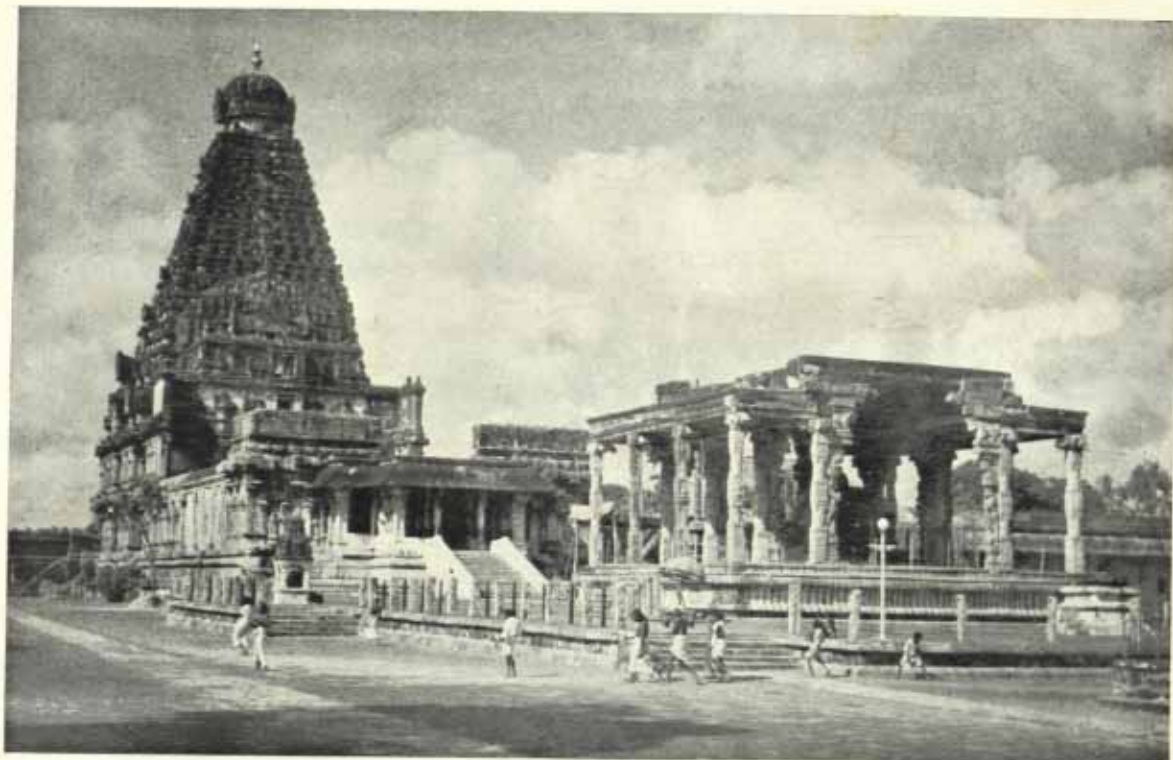


PLATE 12
BRIHADESWARA TEMPLE, THANJAVUR (TANJORE)
(Photo, Jagan V. Mehta)

Saranath school of Eastern India can be seen in the seated images of the Buddha and in the standing Bodhisattvas. The artistic work of Ajanta and the other two places were the result of the combined talent of artists hailing from all parts of India and it is for this reason that even now the art of these centres draws evocative response from the people of the entire country, and from abroad.

9 THE TEMPLES OF INDIA

AFTER the fall of the Gupta dynasty, the course of Indian history followed a regional pattern. The ideal of an all-India empire gave place to the ideal of a 'regional kingdom.' Though Hindu institutions established during the supremacy of the Guptas continued to survive, the pattern of history during the medieval period was one of regional development. However, a number of royal dynasties encouraged temple building activity in spite of constant dynastic struggles. In the pattern of construction novel innovations were made and the growth of the temple architecture of the medieval period was mainly the result of an elaboration of the procedure of ritual. In the manner of construction, elaborate manuals were written in order to make the ground-plan and elevation religiously efficacious.

The growth of temple architecture is reflected in the growth of texts on architecture and iconography. Starting from the Gupta period, a number of Puranas, Agama and Tantra works enumerate regulations regarding the construction of the temples and the preparation of images. Among these texts, the most important are the *Matsyapurana*, the *Vishnudharmottarapurana*, the *Hayasirsha-Pancharatra* and the *Vaikhanasa Agama*. Apart from these texts, there are regular craft manuals (*Silpa Shastras*) which can be divided into the northern and the southern texts. Among the northern texts, which claim inspiration from Viswakarma, the *Samarangana-Sutradhara* and the *Rupamandana* are the most important. The texts like *Mayamata*, *Manasara* and *Tantrasamuchchaya*, which owe their inspiration to the tutelary deity Maya, belong to the

southern variety. The monumental art and architecture of the medieval period was governed by these texts.

In the medieval period, the builders of the temples attempted to construct the temple so as to conform to a magical ritualistic formula (*Vastupurusha Mandala*) which would confer blessings on the builders as well as on the devotees. Adopting the symbolism from the Vedic sacrificial rituals, the master-builder tried to geometrize his own values regarding the Cosmos and the gods. The *Sthapati* regarded himself as equal to Brahma, the Creator. Like him, he forces a being into existence by his conscious effort. The square, the most perfect form, is chosen to represent this materialisation of the invisible. In this magical square, the entire universe is made to enter. Brahma is assigned the central position. The space of the entire universe is indicated by the eight cardinal points of the square and the time is represented by the signs of the Zodiac. The cosmic drama is complete, and by participating in it, the Purusha rises above time and space. The devotees who realise this symbolism may likewise escape the limitations of time and space and enjoy perennial bliss.

Texts on architecture offer a number of classifications of the temple architecture of the medieval period. A clearly datable text, Bhoja's *Samarangana-Sutradhara* (11th century A.D.) divides the temples of the country into five types: Nagara, Lata, Bhumija, Varata (Vesara) and Dravida. A contemporary inscription from Mysore adds another variety, viz., the Kalinga. A cursory examination of these terms would reveal that this classification is based on the geographical context. A South Indian text, the *Kamikagama*, clarifies that the term 'Nagara' is applied to all the temples of the country from the Himalayas to the Vindhya, the 'Vesara' to the temples from the Vindhya to the Krishna and the 'Dravida' to the temples from the Krishna to the southern extremity. On the same analogy, the Lata can be applied to the

local style which prevailed in Gujarat and the Kalinga to the style of Orissa. The term Bhumija perhaps refers to the region of Malwa where the *Samarangana-Sutradhara* was composed.

In spite of this classification based upon geography, the fact is that only two types of temples stand out prominently. The first is the Nagara or the North Indian type, and the second is the Dravida or the South Indian type. The most important aspect of a temple is its tower portion and in the description of this, there is an inherent difference in the nomenclature used by the builders (*Sthapatis*) of the North Indian and South Indian temples. In a North Indian temple the *Sikhara* refers to the entire tower which is curvilinear in shape. In South Indian temples, the term *Sikhara* refers to the topmost member only and its tower portion is composed of gradually diminishing storeys (*Talas*).

There are a number of theories regarding the origin of the different shapes which distinguish the temple architecture of the country. Scholars like Longhurst tried to derive the shape of the temple tower from the stupa (1). According to him, the temple tower is nothing but an elongation of the shape of the stupa. On the other hand, R.P. Chanda derives the shape of the temple tower from primitive huts (2). According to a number of other scholars, the shape of the tower of the temple is derived from the shapes of the chariots (*Rathas*) which had been in vogue since the Vedic period. The term *Vimana*, a technical term applied to the temple, is first used with reference to chariots in the Vedic and the Epic literature. On this basis, it may be surmised that the shapes of the temples were perhaps derived from the pre-existing wooden *Rathas*.

During the course of the medieval period, hundreds of temples were built in various parts of India, mostly by royal patronage. The kings could get building materials freely as all the quarries belonged to the State. They had to pay only the sculptors and the men engaged in the task of transportation of the building mate-

rials. The sculptors were paid in kind which was mostly precious metal. For building large temples, the masons had to face many problems. One such problem relates to the carrying of the building material to the top of the shrine which often rose to an enormous height. It is probable that an earthen ramp was constructed around the temple in order to take the material from the ground up to the top.

The medieval temples are decorated with deities of the Hindu pantheon. In Orissa as well as in Central India, it is customary to represent the nine planets (*Navagrahas*) on the top of the entrance gate of the central shrine. The guardians of the eight quarters (*Ashta-dikpalas*) mounted on their respective vehicles are shown on the wall portion of the main shrine. The temples dedicated to Siva usually depict the pacific (*Saumya*) and the terrific (*Ugra*) forms of the deity while the temples erected in the honour of Vishnu are usually decorated with carvings of the several incarnations of Lord Vishnu.

One of the most recurring themes of decoration is the design of the *Kirtimukha* which is an arch with the face of a lion in the centre and the figures of tortoises on the terminating ends. The lion or the sign of Leo in the Hindu Zodiac represents birth and the tortoise, the termination of life. Hence, the *Kirtimukha* symbolises human life. Apart from this arched form, described as *Kalamakara torana*, there is another form known as the 'garland issuing from the mouth of Rahu' (*Rahu-mukhermala*) which adorns the walls and pillars of the temples both in Orissa and Central India. In this form, the grinning head of a grotesque lion is shown and out of its mouth issue beaded tassels terminating in bells. The contraction seen on the face of the lion symbolises the inhalation and the tassels, the exhalation. Thus in both these forms the *Kirtimukha* is a symbol of life and it is appropriately used as a decorative motif in the temples of India.

The outer walls of the temples of the medieval period are clothed with a variety of decorative sculptures. In Orissa, the sculptor tried his best to fill the walls of the temple with scenes from vegetal and animal life. In Central India, the builders used human forms to fill the area of the walls. Apart from these, there are also the mythical beings and gods carved in great profusion on the outer walls of the temples. In many of the temples of North India and Orissa, erotic sculpture covers a large section of the outer space of the temple wall. The beginnings of such sculpture, no doubt, can be traced to the effort on the part of the craftsmen to represent the symbolism of the unchanging being (*Purusha*) and the eternally changing nature (*Prakriti*) in the form of a couple (*Mithuna*). This original inspiration later gave way to unnatural and obscene scenes. This symbolism of 'Being and Becoming' was truly captured by the craftsmen of South India who represented this symbolism in the figures of Ardhanariswara and Nataraja.

TEMPLES OF ORISSA. The region of Orissa constitutes an important landmark in the temple building activity of India. Beginning in the early 7th century A.D., scores of temples were erected in and around Bhuvaneswar, the present capital of Orissa State. By a close study of these monuments, a student of art and architecture can follow the development of temple architecture as a whole because of the availability of extant temples and indigenous *Silpa Shastras*. The inspiration for the temple building activity in the region of Orissa came from different sources. Firstly, the Saivites of the Pasupata cult, hailing from North India, settled themselves in the interior of Orissa and spread not only the Siva cult in the entire region, but also the traditions of art which prevailed in Central India. The native dynasties, like the Sailodhbhavas and Bhaumakaras, patronised Saivism and encouraged temple building, and spurred on by these favourable circumstances, the builders

of Orissa engaged themselves in building temples, quarrying the rock from the Udayagiri and the Khandagiri Hills. The chronological development of the Orissan temples is known from inscriptions and stylistic peculiarities of the temples. The earliest of this group is confined to Bhuvaneswar and is represented by such temples as the Parasurameswara, the Vaital Deul and the Sisireswara. The sculptural treatment of the door-jamb and the vase and foliage designs found on the temples, testify to the influence of the tradition of the Guptas on the region of Orissa. They also reveal the stage of infancy when the builders experimented with different types of construction. In the Parasurameswara temple, the builders experimented with a peculiar type of roof construction, resembling a clerestory, and in the Vaital Deul with another type of construction in which the temple is made to look like a free-standing chaitya hall. After these stages of experimentation, the builders were able to develop and standardise their own peculiar type of construction which is reflected in the temples built from the 10th century A.D. onwards.

The mature stage of construction of the Orissan temples is exemplified by the Mukteswara, the Lingaraja (Pl. 8) and the Rajarani temples at Bhuvaneswar, the temple of Jagannatha at Puri, and the Sun temple at Konarak (Pl. 9). They owe their origin to the munificence of the Somavamsis and the Gangas. These two royal families not only conferred the blessings of good government on Orissa but promoted a liberal, cosmopolitan, religious outlook favouring the growth of both Saivism and Vaishnavism. The Mukteswara, Rajarani, and Lingaraja were built in the 10th and 11th centuries during the heyday of the Somavamsis and the other two temples in the 12th and 13th centuries which witnessed the glorious epoch of the Gangas. Simultaneously with the development of constructional practices, there grew a corpus of religious tradition sanctioning the existing modes of

construction and prescribing new details in accordance with the religious trends of the period. This tradition of the temple building activity can be found in texts like the *Bhuvanapradipa* and with the aid of this text and the extant temples, we can describe the essential features of a fully grown Orissan temple.

The nucleus of the Orissan temple is composed of two portions, a central shrine and a porch in its front. Generally, both these structures are raised on a square ground-plan. Both these structures do have towers, the central shrine, a curvilinear tower and the porch, a tower composed of gradually diminishing tiers (*Pidhas*). The central shrine is described in the native terminology as the *Rekha Deul*. Because of its emphasis on vertical lines, it resembles the shape of a bamboo tree. The frontal porch is described as the *Pidha Deul* or the one composed of *Pidhas*. This is also described as the 'auspicious one' (*Bhadra Deul*) and also as the 'one which pleases the entire world' (*Jagamohana*). To this nucleus were added in a later period, two more structures, one intended for celebrating music and dance festivals (*Natamandir*) and the other intended for other festivals (*Bhogamandir*).

Most of the beauty of the Orissan temples is derived from the projections on the outer walls of the temples. The outer walls are divided into five or seven sections systematically and these projections are carried up the entire elevation of the temple. Even the internal construction is systematically planned and a number of ceilings were erected in order to maintain the strength of the temple, which sometimes rose even to a height of 180 ft.

As in other parts of the country, the Orissan builders tried to symbolise the human body in the composition of the vertical sections of the temple. Corresponding to the lower portion of a human body, the base is called the foot (*Bada*) and is composed of horizontal mouldings ensuring the stability of the structure. The next section, which corresponds to the main body of a human being,

is described as a trunk (*Gandi*). The apex which corresponds to the head portion of the human body is designated as the *Mastaka*. The trunk is decorated with the motifs of miniature shrines and the crown by a beautiful fluted disc (*Amalaka*). Thus, both in the description as well as in the actual construction, the temple is made to look like a tabernacle of the Godhead (Fig. 25).

The best specimens of the Orissan architecture are the Lingaraja at Bhuvaneswar (Pl. 8). and the Sun temple at Konarak (Pl. 9). The Lingaraja temple, which rises to a height of 180 ft., exhibits the matured stage that the Orissan craftsmen attained in the temple building activity. The Konarak temple, though in ruins, is a unique masterpiece in the entire realm of Indian architecture since the builders tried to translate into stone the idea of the Sun-god moving in his chariot, the temple taking the shape of a chariot with wheels. After these colossal undertakings, the temple building activity began to decline. The inroads of the Sultanate kings of Delhi into Orissa and the political instability during the later medieval period convulsed the energy of the State and shorn of royal patronage, the building activity tended to decline. Only two unimposing temples, the Papanasani and the Kapileswara, were built during the dynastic rule of the Suryavamsa Gajapathis, the last important Hindu dynasty to rule over Orissa.

TEMPLES OF NORTH INDIA. The history of North India after the fall of the Guptas is a chequered one. For a short period in the 7th century, Harsha of the Pushyabhuti family, was able to bring the entire North India under one sceptre. Starting from the 8th century, the region became a bone of contention among the Pratiharas of Kanauj, the Palas of Bengal and the Rashtrakutas of the Deccan. Because of this dynastic conflict, the Pratiharas who ruled over Central India could not continue the traditions of

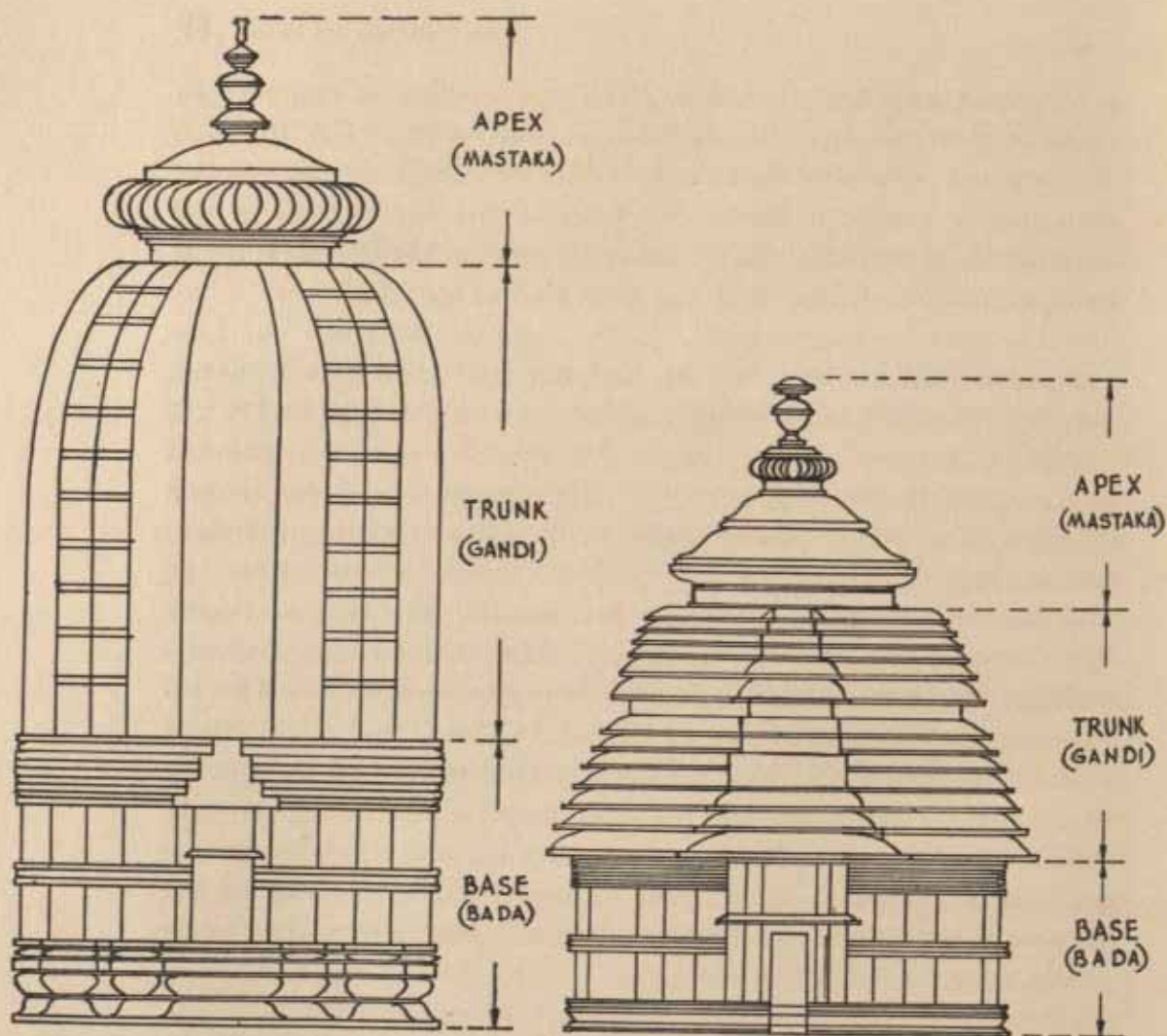


FIG. 25

PARTS OF AN ORISSAN TEMPLE (AFTER THE LINGARAJA TEMPLE AT BHUVANESWAR)

architecture initiated by the Guptas. The temples constructed by them were unpretentious structures, devoid of the fervour which a concerted architectural movement exhibits. However, it was given to the Chandellas, a feudatory dynasty of the Pratiharas, to initiate a vigorous phase of temple building activity at Khajuraho, their capital city. Just as the temples of Bhuvaneswar mark a regional development, the temples of Khajuraho illustrate a beautiful chapter in the temple building activity of North India.

The temples of Khajuraho, which are in varying stages of preservation, can be assigned to the flourishing period of the Chandella dynasty. According to S. K. Saraswati, the temples of Khajuraho which were constructed during the 10th century were destroyed by the invasions of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni and hence the present group should be assigned to the 11th century (3). After a systematic study of inscriptional and stylistic evidence, R. Krishna Deva opines that the temple building activity began in the 9th century and continued upto the 12th century (4). The temples can be divided according to Krishna Deva into two groups. The earlier group consisting of the Chau-sat-Yogini, Mahadeva, Matangeswara and Varaha are unpretentious structures. Built of granite, these temples consist of only a sanctum and a porch. The Lakshmana temple built in about A.D. 950 heralds a new vigorous architectural movement and along with it, the rest of the temples may be assigned to the second group. The second group, constructed entirely of sandstone, is marked by such illustrious examples as the temple of Kandariya Mahadeva (Pl. 10).

A close study of the two most representative temples of the Khajuraho group, namely, the Lakshmana and the Kandariya Mahadeva, enable us to describe the salient features of this group. Taking into account the development of ritual, the temples are planned on one axis. The main structures consist of a central

shrine with a processional passage around, a big audience hall (*Mahamandapa*), an assembly hall (*Mandapa*) and an entrance porch. All the temples are built on a high platform and are approached by a flight of steps. Like the Orissan temples, the plan exhibits projections on the outer walls and these projections form an integral part of the entire scheme of the temple.

Vertically, the Khajuraho temples can be divided into three zones: the base, the wall portion and the tower. The base is composed of horizontal mouldings which resemble the 'roots of a symmetrical and well grown tree.' The wall portion of the Khajuraho temples is interrupted by balconied windows which admit light into the interior. The rest of the wall is divided into three zones and is sumptuously ornamented with statuary. The tower portion of the Khajuraho temples is unique. Curvilinear spires rise out of the wall portions of the four principal units of the temple leading the spectator's eye from the lowest on the entrance porch to the highest on the main shrine. Its unique character is revealed in another way. At different heights of each tower are attached miniature shrines intensifying the soaring vertical movement.

The interiors of the Khajuraho temples are as elegant as the exteriors. The door-jambs, pillars and ceilings are richly sculptured with geometrical designs and other motifs. For example, the entire framework of the pilasters and the architrave which surround the doorway is clothed with the figures of deities, some carved in relief and others in the round. In a similar fashion, the pillars are decorated with a variety of geometrical designs and female figures carved in high relief. The ceilings are likewise ornamented with an intricate system of geometrical designs appearing like a beautiful flower with a bud in the centre.

The Khajuraho temples present a rich and varied iconography of the pantheon belonging to the Brahmanical faith as well as the Jaina faith. In tune with the prevalent religious atmosphere,

gods are represented invariably with their consorts. The syncretic trend among different religious sects of Hinduism is reflected in such figures as Hariharapitamaha. That a happy understanding was reached between the followers of Hinduism and Jainism is evident from the Jaina temples at Khajuraho. The walls of the Jaina temples team with gods of the Brahmanical faith.

The Khajuraho temples have attained universal fame on account of their erotic sculpture. The artists attempted to represent the symbolism of Prakriti and Purusha in tune with the ideas of Tantricism. In this process, they were however sometimes drawn into channels of gross vulgarity. However the technical quality of the female form presented by the Khajuraho craftsmen is generally quite impressive.

The development of temple art and architecture of Northern India can be followed with the aid of the synopsis which we have already presented with reference to the Orissan and the Central Indian monuments. The Brahmanical and Jaina monuments erected in the 8th and 9th centuries at Osia near Jodhpur (Rajasthan) bear close resemblance to the early temples of Orissa. The temples erected at Modhera and at Abu in Rajasthan under the patronage of the Solankis of Gujarat are in many respects similar to the temples of Khajuraho. In the arrangement of the plan, the threefold division of the elevation and the arrangement of miniature shrines on the main tower, the Rajasthan temples recall the essential characteristics of the Khajuraho group. The builders of the Gujarat temples treated the interiors of the temples like the exterior and lavished a great amount of skill in decorating them. Thus the main temple type is the one evolved in Orissa and in Central India and even in temples built in North India during the present century, the entire scheme can be analysed on the basis of the Khajuraho temples or on that of the Orissan ones.

TEMPLES OF SOUTH INDIA. The growth of temple architecture in South India started roughly in the middle of the 6th century in the region of the Deccan under the stimulus of the Brahmanical religious faith and the patronage of royal dynasties. The twin sects of Hinduism, namely, Saivism and Vaishnavism, became the two dominant religions of the South, and the royal dynasties like the Chalukyas of Badami, the Pallavas of Kanchi, the Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta, the Cholas of Tanjore (Thanjavur), the Pandyas of Madurai, the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra and the Rayas of Hampi-Vijayanagar, vied with one another in order to build temples dedicated to Siva and Vishnu. Through the efforts of the builders of the Deccan and of Tamilnadu, the typical South Indian form of temple emerged by about the 9th century. This form was further embellished by the efforts of the royal dynasties like the Cholas, the Hoysalas and the Vijayanagar rulers.

In the temple building activity, the builders of the Deccan used the trap formation of the Western Ghats while the craftsmen of the Tamilnadu for the first time tackled granite under the aegis of Mahendravarman (A.D. 600-630) of the Pallava dynasty. The craftsmen of the Deccan experimented with different types of temple forms at Aihole, the first centre of their activity. During the early part of the 7th century, the builders were able to build a Southern form of temple which differed in plan and elevation from the North Indian form. The builders of Tamilnadu first experimented with rock-cut Mandapas and Rathas and finally were able to build a full-fledged temple in stone at Mahabalipuram in the early part of the 8th century. Though the Southern form of temple developed by the Chalukyas and the Pallavas is one and the same, yet the form differed from each other in minor details. It is for this reason that scholars tend to differentiate the temple development of South India by using the term 'Chalukya' and 'Dravida'. The Chalukyan form obtained in the Deccan and the

Carnatic regions and the Dravida in Tondaimandalam (Tamilnad). Both these regional variants were finally amalgamated in the monuments of the Vijayanagar rulers.

A typical Dravidian temple developed by the Chalukyas and the Pallavas is composed of two principal parts, the central shrine and the frontal porch. While the central shrine is described as 'the immeasurable one' (*Vimana*), the pillared hall in its front is described as the front porch (*Mukha-mandapam*) by the *Sthapatis*. Only the central shrine is provided with a tower, the principal characteristic of which lies in its storeyed arrangement. In fully developed temples, a number of pillared halls were built for conducting various ceremonies connected with the temple rituals.

A typical South Indian temple is generally built either on a square or a rectangular ground-plan and the walls do not exhibit the projections characteristic of the North Indian temple structure. Though different in shape from the North Indian example, yet the South Indian temple is also likened by the craftsmen to the human body. Vertically, it is divided into three zones. The first zone, corresponding to the foot in the human body, is composed of horizontal mouldings and the wall portion; the second zone, which is likened to the upper part of the body, consists of gradually diminishing storeys (*Talas*); each storey is composed of miniature shrines. The crowning part that corresponds to the head portion in the human body consists of an octagonal coping stone (*Sikhara*) and a finial (*Stupi*) as seen in Fig 26.

The Southern form of the temple as developed by the builders of the Deccan presents its own individual characteristics. The ground-plan is not a regular square or rectangle, but takes many diverse shapes. Like the North Indian form, the walls are broken by projections. As the temple construction proceeded, the Chalukyan builders evolved even a star-shaped ground-plan. In the Chalukyan country, the storeyed arrangement of the tower differs

slightly from the examples hailing from Tamilnad. The storeys are so compressed and overlaid with ornamentation that the clarity of the architectural design is obscured. In almost all shrines, the tower on the sanctum sports 'a shield-like' antefix (*Sukhanasa*). In later Chalukyan temples, the door-jambs as well as the pillars are elaborately sculptured. With all these features, the Chalukyan temples are more ornate than the Dravida examples.

The best specimens of South Indian architecture are the Kailasa temple at Ellora (Pl. 11) and the Brihadeswara temple at Thanjavur (Pl. 12). The Kailasa temple, which is hewn out of a living rock, was built under the aegis of Krishna I (A.D. 758-83) of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. Here the builders attempted to give concrete shape to the conception of the abode of Lord Siva found in Indian mythology. The temple was accordingly planned in ascending heights to recall to the mind's eye the shape of a mountain, the traditional abode of Siva. In a similar fashion, the builders of the South tried to represent the might of the Chola Empire in planning the Brihadeswara temple at Thanjavur (Tanjore) which rises to a height of 200 ft.

During the supremacy of the Pandyas and the Vijayanagar rulers (13th-16th centuries), the South Indian builders added to the existing scheme of temple building two structures in the shape of an ornamental gateway (*Gopuram*) and the marriage hall (*Kalyanamandapa*). The origin of this *Gopuram* can be traced back to the cow-gate of the Vedic period. The rudimentary stage in the formation of a *Gopuram* can be discovered in the temples of the Chalukyas and the Pallavas where the entrance gate carries on its top a wagon-shaped apex. In its developed form, the *Gopuram* rises to a height of about 100 ft. and terminates in an ornate wagon-shaped top. Like the temple, a *Gopuram* can be divided into three sections: the base, the tapering section, and the crowning apex. The base is constructed of solid rock and resembles the plinth and the

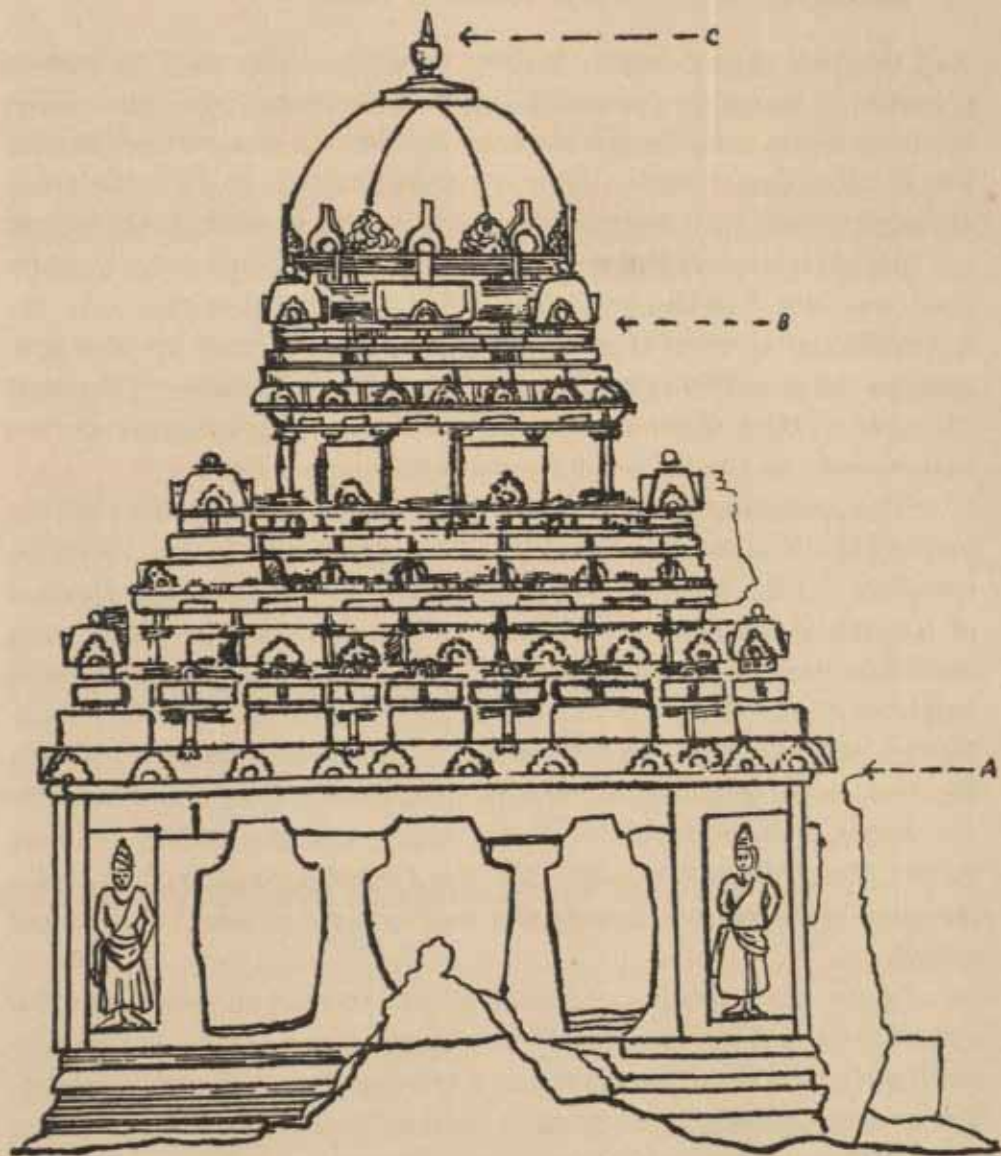


FIG. 26

ELEVATION OF A DRAVIDA TEMPLE
A, base; B, storeyed arrangement; C, apex

wall section of any South Indian temple. The only difference consists in the open passage found in the centre of the base. The tapering body, usually constructed of brick, consists of gradually diminishing storeys. They are decorated either with miniature shrines or with statuary of heroic size. The crowning member of a *Gopuram* is always the wagon-shaped (*Sala*) apex carrying more than one finial on the top. The best example of such *Gopurams* is the fine gateway of the Chidambaram temple built by Sundarapandya of the Pandyan dynasty in about A.D. 1250. The best example of the *Gopurams* built during the Vijayanagar period can be seen at the Sri Venkateswara temple at Tirupati.

The most significant contribution of the South Indian craftsmen of the Vijayanagar period is the erection of the *Kalyanamandapa*. The need for a hall to perform the marriage festival of the deity made the craftsmen invent this appropriate pillared hall. Standing on a high moulded base, the *Mandapas* rise to a height of about 20 ft. The beauty of these *Mandapas* can be seen in the pillars which in fact become 'figurative dramas' in stone. In tune with the ornate treatment, the ceiling of the *Mandapa* terminates in a handsome flexured cornice offering plenty of shade to the *Mandapa* as a whole. The best specimens of such *Mandapas* can be found at Hampi, the capital city of the Vijayanagar rulers.

In the monumental sculpture of the South the most powerful stimulus came from the boundless energy of the Hindu faiths. In the South, God is not conceived as a tranquil being like the Buddha. He is essentially a super-human destroying evil and allaying the misfortunes of the righteous. This conception led the artists of the Chalukya and the Pallava zones to produce great masterpieces of Siva as Bhairava, Durga as Mahishasuramardini and Vishnu as Narasimha. In contrast to these, the placid forms of Siva and Vishnu are shown with their consorts. As a result of the amalga-

mation of Siva and Sakti cults, there evolved a beautiful figure known as Ardhanariswara, with one half shown as a man and the other as a woman. In this figure, the craftsmen of the Dravida country were able to translate into stone the conception of Prakriti and Purusha. Another theme which was developed by the craftsmen was the representation of Siva as the Lord of Knowledge and all Arts. The best examples of this theme are those depicting Siva as the great teacher (*Dakshinamurti*) and as the Cosmic Dancer (*Nataraja*).

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1. Percy Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
2. *Ibid.*
3. S. K. Saraswati, *History and Culture of the Indian People* (Vol. V), p. 563.
4. R. Krishna Deva, *Ancient India*, No. 15.

EPILOGUE

A SURVEY of Indian art and architecture reveals that there are three fundamental characteristics which differentiate the art-form of this country from that of other countries. The first characteristic lies in the religious content of Indian art. Though scenes from secular life are freely portrayed as in the art of the Sanchi stupa, this panorama of variegated secular scenes was integrated by the all-pervading Bhakti of the simple village folk. Even at Ajanta, though there are myriads of secular scenes, the dominating pulsation was one of the Karuna of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. Even in the design of the stupa and the temple, there is an attempt to integrate the constructional practices with the religious experience of the people. Thus the central motivation of the art of India came from the quest to discover the meaning of life and the fundamental values in life. There was an attempt both in sculpture as well as in architecture to relate the macrocosm to the microcosm. The shape of both the stupa as well as the temple were derived from the most fundamental shapes, viz., the circle and the square. Even in the sculpture there was an attempt to concretize the abstract concepts like those of Mahapurusha and Prakriti and Purusha into stone.

The second quality of Indian art lies in its traditional nature. The artist of the Buddhist period derived the image of the Buddha as well as the stories connected with his life from the Buddhist tradition. In the art and architecture of the Hindu period, the influence of tradition is almost overwhelming. The elaboration of the plan of the temple proceeded from the sanctions of the religious tradition. The sculpture was derived from the iconographic norms found in mythology and tradition. The craftsman of the

Hindu period was not a mere worker in stone. He was educated deeply in the entire religious heritage of the country. Even in the depiction of frankly erotic scenes, he tried to justify his role from the religious literature of the Tantras. Thus, tradition provided the necessary apprenticeship for his entire artistic creation. Only when he lacked the creative impulse that the religious tradition inhibited his creative effort and he was stultified by the canons prescribed by it.

The third characteristic of Indian art and architecture lies in its symbolic content. Every architectural device that the Buddhist and Hindu craftsmen innovated, symbolised ideas from his religious life. Even such architectural designs like the stupa railing and the *Ayaka* platform were devised in order to edify one idea or other connected with the Buddhistic creed. In sculpture, all the important ideas were conveyed through symbols. The *Dharma-chakra* devised by the Buddhists represents the eternal law which the Buddha preached. In Hindu art the entire repertoire of *Mudras* and *Asanas* symbolised ideas connected with religious life. The *Siraschakra* or the halo innovated by the craftsmen of the Gupta period indicates the greatness of a supernatural human being. The *Purnakumbha* of the Buddhist period and the vase and foliage motif of Hindu art signify economic plenty and well-being. Finally, the design of the *Kirtimukha*, which is frequently repeated in temple architecture, symbolises life in its entirety. The use of symbolism in Buddhist and Hindu art is carried to such an extent that it is difficult to follow its art-history without knowing these symbols.

As in the art-history of other countries, Indian art underwent the three phases of a beginning, maturity, and decline. The phase from the Indus Valley civilization to the Gupta period is characterised by experimentation. The period from the 4th century A.D. to about the 8th century A.D. can be described as

the classical age since this period reveals a happy coalescence of the idea and the form. The Buddha image produced by the Saranath craftsmen and the temple at Deogarh erected by the builders of Madhyadesa are perfect specimens of art and architecture respectively. The later period is characterised by lack of originality and natural spontaneity. Though there are good specimens of art and architecture in the medieval period, the classical quality of simplicity cannot always be found in medieval art and architecture.

The permanent legacy of art and architecture of the Buddhist and Hindu periods lies in the ability of the artist to conceive from out of his own mind an idea either for representation or for construction and in devising means in order to concretize it into a material form. Even in the medieval period, in such examples like the Kailasa at Ellora and the Sun temple at Konarak and the images of Ardhanariswara and Nataraja, the Indian artist was inspired by an intuitive understanding of an idea. The decline of this art tradition was mainly due to the inability of the artist to conceive new ideas for the continued progress of his art.

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