THE SPREAD OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

For a map showing the spread of Indian art see back end-paper
The Flowering of INDIAN ART

The Growth and Spread of a Civilization

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PREFACE

The art of India is the image and vehicle of her thought and civilization. It cannot be rightly understood and interpreted without an appreciation of the inner life and vision of the Indian people. Art sets forth the latter in profound, luminous and enduring images and symbols through the ages. Symbols, icons and motifs reveal in the sensuous patterns and formal or stylistic values of art the abstract concepts and values of metaphysics, religion and immediate spiritual experience.

Indian culture is rooted in a broad universalism and socialism, human tenderness and compassion. Religion and philosophy in India, in the first instance, define and expound certain cosmic notions, values and myths. Art, in its turn, discovers and crystallizes patterns of symbolism, images and norms of truth and beauty and integral motifs that render in visual terms the same universal or generic experiences of Life, Universe and Deity beheld and transmitted as myths.

Art has been the perennial medium not merely of the revelation and clarification of India's universal metaphysic and ethos, but also of their spread and diffusion far beyond the confines of the land. This explains the constructive historic role of Indian art in shaping and moulding the manners, values and attitudes of half of Asia through about two millennia. Even now there is a living Greater India in the East which is the product less of Buddhism and Brahmanism and the Indian Smritis and schools of philosophy, and more of the serene and beatific metaphysical images of Indian art. Buddhist and Brahmanical philosophy invested the myths and legends of the Buddha, Bodhisattva, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Vairochana, Śakti and Apsarā with transcendental meanings and values. The artistic forms embodying these became also epochless in their vitality, poise and power, overstepping the rigid prescriptions of creed and iconography. Set forth from the innermost experiences of spiritual contemplation such images brought vast numbers of Asian peoples in Nepal, Tibet, Ceylon, Indonesia, Farther India, China, Mongolia, Korea and Japan in closer proximity to the universal spiritual values and aspirations of mankind.

Buddhist art in Asia treated the historical events of the Nativity, Renunciation, Temptation, Enlightenment and Charity of the Buddha as eternal episodes of the realisation of Being. The depiction of the Buddha Tathāgata's Miracles, therefore, stirred the depths of the Asian man's soul, and called him to the joy, silence and glory of Being, whether in Bhārhat, Sāfchi, Gandhāra, Ajantā, Nāgārjunakoṇḍā and Amarāvati, or in Polonnaruwa, Borobodur, Pagan, Tun-huang and Nara. The magnificent, contemplative figures of the Buddha and Bodhisattva at Bamiyan and Fondukistan in Afghanistan, at Karashahr, Kizil, Bezeklik and Chortchuk in Central Asia, at a thousand cave-shrines from Tun-huang to Yun-kang in China, at Sōkkuram in Korea, at Nara, Toshodaji and Kyoto in Japan, at Anurādhapura and Polonnaruwa in Ceylon, at Pagan in Burma, at Borobodur and Chandi Mendut in Jāvā, at Sukhhotai and Ayuthia
in Siam and at Angkor in Cambodia, are all born of the womb of Indian Buddhist metaphysics. Their sweet, compassionate humanism, blended with profound serenity and clarity, closely follows the Indian prototypes of Mathurā, Sārnāth, Amarāvati, Ajantā and Nālandā which render a majestic, beatific vision of Nīrāga, a self-luminous transcendental existence beyond name and form. This supernatural idyllic apparition was however by no means limited to India, nor to the epoch of the spread and diffusion of Mahāyāna Buddhism from India from the 1st century B.C. to the 8th century A.D. Everywhere the Buddhist ideal of Nīrāga is plasticly expressed through the particular beauty of the physiognomy of the racial type, whether Central Asian, Chinese, Khmer, Thai, Jāvānese and Sinhalese. It is a marvel how the identical simple pattern of the Buddha figure evolved in India in the 5th century A.D. has been invested with profound and subtle differences of expression across the centuries in the various Asian countries.

Another august, supernatural vision was provided for Asia in a later epoch by the Indian Tāntrika conception of the ambivalence of hope and grimness, joy and terror in the metaphysical-empirical world. It gave birth to the Tārās of Nepal, Tibet and China, the Prajñāpāramitā of Jāvā and the lovely dancing Apsaras of Jāvā, Siam and Cambodia, as well as to the awesome Mahākāla, Yamāntaka and Dākinī of Tibet, the Trailokyavijaya and Bhairava of Jāvā, the Dwārpāla of Ceylon, Siam, Cambodia and Japan, and the Heruka of Nepal, Tibet, Sumatra, Jāvā and Cambodia. The transcendental serenity and sweetness of the former and the majesty and tension of violence of the latter corresponded to their prototypes in the homeland. Similarly the Chinese and Japanese paintings of the magic diagram of the cosmos or the Tāntrika mandala with Mahā-vairochana, the Great Illuminator or Pure Consciousness in the centre, like the resplendent sun, and the Primeval Buddhas surrounding him as planets breathed a sense of fulness and self-competence derived from the last Indian Tāntrika synthesis that spread throughout Asia from Bengal to Jāvā, China and Japan from the 7th to the 9th centuries A.D. The sculptures and paintings of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of Wei, Sui and T'ang China, and Hakuho and Nara Japan and the Japanese Shingon representations of Dai Itoku, Fudo and the Four Guardian Kings, counterparts of the horrendous Indian images of Bhairava, Vairochana and Dwārpālas respectively, which are some of the marvels in world art, owe more than is generally imagined to Indian inspiration.

All this was possible because Indian Buddhist and Tāntrika metaphysics came to live and move as Buddhist and Tāntrika art in Asia. It thrilled the imagination of the various Asian peoples, and, becoming inseparable from a total, harmonious and vivid experience, gave ample scope for free creative expressions and inventions of national character. All roads in Asia led from India for more than a millenium and a half.

There are two regions beyond the frontiers of India where the ancient Indian civilization met its sister, the ancient Chinese civilization half-way during
the first millenium of the Christian era. One is the Tarim (Sanskrit Sītā) basin, where Hindu colonies and kingdoms along the oasis-fringed Silk Routes became the spring-boards of the spread of Indian culture of which Indian art was the vehicle. From Ajantā, Taxila, Nagarāhāra and Bamiyan through Kucha, Kizil and Turfan extended a chain of cave monasteries in China as far as Korea and Yunnan, with carvings and frescoes, of the Buddha, Maitreyya, Avalokiteśvara or Kuan-Yin, Amitābha and Vairochana that showed a remarkable blend of the art of Ajantā, Mathurā and Gandhāra with the Chinese Wei and T'ang traditions. Tun-huang, Yun-kang, Lung-men. T'ien Lung Shan and Maichishan treasure some of the most sublime specimens of Buddhist sculpture as the Chinese rock-cut shrine itself is the product of Indian architectural and sculptural techniques. For about a millennium and a quarter from the establishment of the Kuśāna Empire and the rise of Mahāyana Buddhism in the latter part of the 1st century B.C. to the sojourns of Al-Biruni (A.D. 1030), who found that Khorasan, Iran, Iraq, Mosul and the country up to the frontiers of Syria were Buddhist, and of Marco Polo (1271-1275), who also found Buddhist monasteries in the cities of Kashgar, Yarkhand, Kucha and Khotan, Indian religion and art comprised a living heritage for the Orient. This was constantly replenished by the exchange of visits of hundreds of ardent and sturdy Indian and Chinese monk-pilgrims who braved the burning sands of the Taklamakan desert and the snows of the Hindukush.

The other region is in the Pūrvasāgara, Dvīpāntara (in Sanskrit) or Kun-lun (in Chinese) or Bhūmyantara (in Javanese)—the land mass intervening between (antarā) India and China. In the words of the Vāmanapurāṇa, Dvīpāntara with its “Nine Islands” is a part of the territory of India, “sanctified by the performance of sacrifices, warfare, trade and diverse other activities”. The construction of numerous temples and monasteries with their gods and goddesses in the great Hindu colonies and kingdoms of Śrī Ksetra, Funan, Champā, Pan-Pan, Dvārāvati, Kambuja, Gandhāra, Śrī Vijaya, Kalinga and Majapahit brought about a close similarity of their religion, manners, culture and art with those of the motherland. In the 5th or 6th century A.D. India’s greatest poet Kālidāsa in his Rāghuvaṃśa, the saga of Guptā Imperialism, referred with legitimate pride to the sovereignty of the Imperial Guptas over “Dvīpāntara” and the installation of Brahmanical sacrificial posts in the “Eighteen Islands” beyond the seas. Half a millennium later the Arab geographer Masudi (A.D. 943) mentioned Zabag (i.e. Śrī Vijaya in Sumatra under the imperial Sailendras) as comprised within India and separating this country from China.

The Hindu dynasty of the Imperial Sailendras who ruled in Central Sumatra from the sixth to the fourteenth centuries built the colossal temple-cities of Borobodur and Prambanan in Jāvā, the first in the eighth century and the second in the late ninth century. In Kambuja two other colossal temple-cities, Angkor Wat (Nagara or city as monastery) and Angkor Thom (Nagara the Great) were built in the middle of the 12th and the 13th century by the Hinduised Khmer Emperors Sūryavarman II and Jayavarman VII respectively.
These are all immortal creations of art and engineering derived from Indian inspiration. Another powerful Hindu empire, the Majapahit Empire was founded by Vijaya in Jávā in 1293 and continued till the 16th century. Brahm.anical temples of huge dimensions were built by the Majapahit kings in Jávā. A Jávâinese text Nagarakretagama dated as late as A. D. 1365 shows that people from Gauḍa or Bengal and Karnātaka came to the Javanese capital Majapahit or Tiktavilva “unceasingly in large numbers. They came in ships with merchandise. Monks and distinguished Brāhmaṇas also came from these lands and were entertained.” Jambudvīpa (India), Kambuja, China, Yavana, Champa, Karnātaka, Gauḍa and Siam are mentioned as having intimate trade relations with the Majapahit Empire of Jávā which was the last Hindu Empire to emerge supreme in the Archipelago with its suzerainty acknowledged in the major islands including the Philippines and a large portion of the Malay Peninsula in the middle of the 14th century. Such has been the process of “Hinduisation” in South and South-East Asia accomplished through more than fifteen centuries with the aid of religion and art. Not only are the essential qualities of Indian art discernible in Ceylon, Farther India and Indonesia but these have evolved further, and sometimes reached their acme of perfection under colonial conditions. Indian art has been the resplendent harbinger and carrier of Indian myths, symbols and images abroad—the fountain-head of Asian unity.

The task of students of Indian art is by no means easy. It should embrace the following: first, to understand the religious and philosophical movements in India through the ages that have gone into the making of the epoch-less images, symbols and motifs of Indian art—visual representations of doctrines of a purely metaphysical order; second, to appreciate the structure and development of Indian art for the delineation of its basic and indelible characteristics in terms of the relations between vision and form; and, third, to survey the influences of Indian art on the art, religion and culture of Indian Asia in certain favoured epochs. The fundamental styles, themes and motifs of Indian art have endured through the centuries in several art regions of Asia, while in others the art became cold and mechanical or was smothered and replaced by the archaïsms of folk art.

The spread of Indian art was a continuous process covering about two millennia. It may be defined, however, by certain successive waves of influences corresponding to the major Renais.sances of Indian civilization. These may be distinguished as follows:

(1) The period of the rise and spread of Mahâyâna Buddhism across the Himalayas and the Middle Asian caravan routes which emanated from Gandhāra and Kashmir (1st century B. C. to the 4th century A. D.). The Romano-Buddhist art of Gandhāra and Kucha carried Buddhism to Turkestan and China. Great monasteries were constructed, such as those at Kucha, Khotan and Kashgar in Central Asia and Chang-an in China. Numerous cave temples and shrines were also scooped out of the living rocks in Gandhāra, Central
Asia and China, at Bamiyan and Kucha (1st and 3rd centuries A. D.), Kizil, Tun-huang (4th to 8th centuries A. D.), Yun-kang (A. D. 414-520), Lung-men (5th and 6th centuries), Tien Lung Shan (5th to 8th centuries A. D.), and Mai Chi Shan (4th to 6th centuries A. D.).

(2) The golden period of Gupta Renaissance and after (4th to 8th century A. D.) which influenced the art of entire civilized Asia of the time as evidenced by the following: the frescoes of Bamiyan, Kizil, Bezeklik and Tun-huang in Central Asia and the sculptures of the Yun-kang and Lung-men caves in China; the sculptures at Isuruminya, Rununmahâvihâra and Anurâdhapura (4th century A. D.) and the wall paintings of Sigiriya in Ceylon (5th century A. D.); the early images of the Buddha and Viṣṇu in Old Prome in Burma, Śrī Deva and Dvârâvatî in Siam, and Kedah and Perak in the Malay Peninsula (5th and 6th centuries A.D.); and the magnificent reliefs of Borobodur and Loro-Jongrang in Jâvâ (8th and 9th centuries) and the frescoes in Pagan in Burma (11th to 13th centuries).

(3) Overlapping these waves of North Indian cultural expansion were the South Indian influences. The 5th century A.D. witnessed an active Buddhist missionary movement to South-East Asia from Kâñchi which was then an important centre of the Hinayâna school. The impact of the art of Amarâvatî and Nâgârjunakoṇḍâ (2nd and 3rd centuries A. D.) and of the Pallavas (5th to 8th centuries A.D.) was felt particularly in Ceylon, the Malay Peninsula, Siam, Annam, Sumatra, Jâvâ, Celebes and Borneo. Chalukya and Chola art of the succeeding epochs (9th to 12th centuries) had powerful influences especially on the architecture of entire South-East Asia.

(4) The Pâla-Sena Renaissance (8th to 12th centuries A. D.) influenced particularly Burma, Nepal, Tibet, Sumatra, Jâvâ, Siam and Cambodia. The Buddhist Tântrika cult of Mahâ-vairocana or the Golden Primordial Person spread during the renaissance of Buddhism under the Pâlas from Bengal to Central Asia, China, Mongolia and Japan as well as Indonesia (from the 7th to the 9th centuries A. D.). Its mysticism and cosmology governed a good deal of architecture, sculpture and painting of Central Asia, China and Japan from the 9th to the 17th centuries A.D.

(5) The Tântrika Renaissance of Buddhist Saiva and Vaiśpava derivation (12th to 14th centuries) resulting from the displacement and migration, due to Muslim violence, of the monks, scholars and artists of Nâlandâ, Odântapuri and Vikramaśilâ influenced not only Nepal and Tibet but also Burma, Sumatra, Jâvâ, Bali and Cambodia beyond the seas and that was interrupted only after the Muslim conquest of the Malay Peninsula and Jâvâ.

Indian art actually reached the fullest expression of its broad humanism and compassion not within the frontiers of India, but amidst the tropical luxuriance and prolificness of Dvipântara Bhûrâta. The most splendid and colossal Hindu and Buddhist temples, recognised today as wonders of the world, were built at Borobodur and Prambananam in Jâvâ, Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom in Cambodia and Pagan in Burma—the five most magnificent
temple-cities of Asia, all embodying in their design and architecture the cosmological beliefs of India. On the walls of their shrines the tales of the Rāmāyana, the Mahābhārata, the Harivāmanas, the Viṣṇupurāṇa, the Jātakas or the Lalitavistara were depicted, and Indian religion and piety found expression also in numerous gifts, tablets and inscriptions. The episodes of the Mahābhārata are mentioned in the Ban That inscription of Suryavarman II (A.D. 1113-1145) of Kambujā as painted or engraved on the walls of temples. The dance-images of Śiva Natyeśvara and Naṭakeśvara-daśabhuja are mentioned in another Kambujā inscription, while there is also reference to the festival manifestation of Śiva (Utsava-mūrti) for taking out in procession as in South India. One of the kings of Kambujadeśa, Indravaranman, who became king in A.D. 877, seems to have been himself a great artist and craftsman. He built a magnificent golden palace of several storeys according to his own design and installed three images of Śiva and Devī respectively also designed by him (svaśilpa-rachita).

Kambujā or Funan (literally, mountain) where Hindu colonisation started in the 2nd century A.D. under the auspices of an Indian Brāhmaṇa Kaṇḍinya, said to have been a pupil of Asvathāma, comprises India’s most outstanding gift to the civilization of Asia. The civilization of Kambujā throve for more than a millennium and a half under Indian influences, and this Hindu colony became the magnet of Western traders and the meeting-ground of the East and the West. The peak of Kambujā art and culture was reached from the 11th to the 13th centuries eclipsing the achievements of other Hindu colonies and kingdoms in the East and even those of the home-country. The last king referred to in the Kambujā inscriptions, Jayavarmā-Paramēśvara ascended the throne in A.D. 1327. But the Kambujā kingdom still continued till 1854, when it became a French Protectorate. For more than one thousand years the mother-land invested Khmer social life and art with a poise, beauty and humanism that were unparalleled in South-East Asia.

There are several Indian colonial and Indianesque masterpieces of sculpture and painting that vie with or even outnumber their counterparts in the homeland. Among these may be mentioned the images of Padmapañi Tārā and Śīnhanāda Avalokiteśvara in bronze in Nepal; the Bodhisattvas, white Tārās and Sarva-Buddha Dākinis in the painted scrolls and banners of Tibet; the figures of the seated Buddha and the sage Kapila at Anurādhapura, the Buddha’s Parinirvāṇa at Polonnaruva and the standing Buddha at Awakana in Ceylon; the reliefs representing Jātaka and Purāṇa legends in the stupas of Borobudur and Prambanan, the images of the seated Buddha and Bodhisattva from the Chandi Mendut, Prajñāpāramitā from the Leyden Museum, Ganeśa, Bhairava and Durgā from Singasāri, Śiva-guru from Banon and Trailokyavijaya from the Batavia Museum in Jāvā; the stone heads of the Buddha from Lopburi and Ayuthia and the bronze walking Buddha from Sukotai in Thailand; Hari-Hara at Prasat Andet, the relief of the Churning of the Milky Ocean at Angkor Wat, and the smiling Buddhas and the four
colossal faces of Śiva at Bayon, Angkor Thom, in Cambodia; the bronze standing Buddha at Dong-Duong in Champā; the smiling Wei Buddhás at Yun-kang and Lung-men, the T'ang kneeling and standing Bodhisattvas (only the torso) now in New York, in China; and the paintings of Bodhisattvas at the temple of Horyuji, of Miroku Bosatsu at the temple of Koryuji and of the descent of Amida and the Parinirvāna of the Buddha at Mount Koya in Japan.

Asian piety, tenderness and compassion are largely the products of Indian art, spreading far beyond the Himalayas and across the seas in several privileged centuries. The art of India shaped the unity of Oriental civilization in a manner that neither Christianity, nor medieval Renaissance nor modern science and technology could achieve for the Occident.

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THE FLOWERING OF INDIAN ART
Part I

Introduction
Chapter 1

THE VISION AND FORM OF INDIAN ART

The Significance of Formal Qualities in Indian Art

The pioneers in the study of Indian art, Havell, Coomaraswamy and O. C. Ganguly, attributed the significance and glory of Indian art mainly to Indian idealism, relatively neglecting its intrinsic qualities. An unfortunate result is that esoteric symbolism and iconography continue to hold the field in Indian art study, instead of the naturalism, rhythm and proportions of artistic practice. Herein lies the chief value of the recent contributions of Codrington, Stella Kramrisch and Benjamin Rowland who have taken into account matters of style, form and technique in their treatment of Indian art development. Considerable work, however, remains to be done in respect of the analysis of the formal qualities of Indian sculpture and painting and the inter-dependence of form and vision. Such inter-dependence, which is as direct and intimate as that of word (vāk) and meaning (artha), of Pārvatī and Śiva (to use the imagery of Kālidāsa), has to be clarified from the art-styles of various epochs and regions. The evolution of Indian art through the centuries shows that, while art obeys the demands of the cult image, it coins into ever-renewed, luminous plastic forms the experience of the cosmic and the transcendent.

Indian art is neither archaeology nor history. It underlies and impels history, carrying its burden and message through the epochs amidst the vicissitudes of Indian civilization. Neither is it metaphysics nor religion. It makes these living, their truths and values an integral part of man's imagination and consciousness through its sensuous rhythms and patterns. It brings about the identity between the sensible and the supersensible that neither doctrines of philosophy nor dogmas of religion can achieve.

Neither the speculative myths of the Vedānta and the Yogāchāra, nor the Buddhist code of amity and goodwill, nor, again, the spiritual realisations of the sages and saints could inspire and stimulate that sense of unity and continuity of Life as the unending compositional rhythm and dynamic movement of the plastic mass and the intense compactness of divine, human and animal figures of the art of Bhārhut, Sāñchī, Ajantā, Māmallapuram and Borobodur could. Indian sculpture and painting through the ages record a perennial sense of the diffusion and communion of Life that spread from form to form in an all-encompassing and palpitating, yet poised and serene plastic movement. While it is this serenity which differentiates Indian art from the art of other peoples and cultures, its flexibility and vitality are abundantly evident from the introduction of novel styles, formal qualities and patterns of symbolism for the clarification as well as discovery of new myths and values through the ages.

As a matter of fact, when we think of the solidarity of all Life that has been
given the subtlest expression in plastic terms by the art forms from Sāñchī and Bhārhat to Māmallapuram and Borobodur; of the clarity and serenity of Yoga and its stages of achievement by Gupta art from Mathurā and Ajantā to Yun-Kang and Suk’ot’ai and from Banaras and Pataliputra to Pagan and Prambanam; of the supremacy of the cosmic and transcendental forces over finite man and his destiny by rock-cut sculpture from Ajantā and Taxilā to Tun-huang and Lung-Men; of the profound mystery and sanctity of sex in the images of the Divine couple Śiva-Ūmā from the middle Ganges valley to Indonesia and the ambivalence of joy and pain, tenderness and fierceness by Tāntrika sculpture from Bengal, Nepal and Tibet to Jāvā and Indo-China; and of the inherent kinship and communion of Man with Nature in the cycle of summer, rains, autumn, winter and spring by Rajasthani and Himachala paintings from Jaipur and Orchha to Kangra and Garhwal, we find Indian art essentially carrying out its own inherent trends and over-reaching the aims and goals of metaphysics, myth and religion.

The distinction between traditional or functional and non-traditional or realistic types of art expression drawn by certain Western art critics, such as Rowland and Greenough, does not hold good of Indian art. It is only the school of Buddhist Tāntrikism which developed a complex Byzantine phase in Eastern India, Nepal and Tibet that might be called traditional and magical. Here Indian art in some measure devoted itself to making icons, symbols and diagrams according to precise canons of proportion, colour and arrangement for religious and practical ends. But by and large Indian art is neither magical nor utilitarian. Concerned with the underlying spirit operating behind the outward appearances of Nature, Man and Society, its naturalism and realism are basically different from what they are in European art, proceeding as these do from the living, forming and conscious metaphysical principle in nature and the visible world envisioned by it as parts or aspects of the supersensible Reality.

The art-forms of India are sometimes efflorescent in the clarity of man’s contemplation of the Absolute, as in the classic phase of Gupta art, sometimes agitated with inscrutable, transcendental values as in medieval rock-cut sculpture; sometimes engaging with the charm and delight of the senses that throw open the doors of the supersensible, as in post-medieval sculpture; and sometimes oscillating freely and courageously between the charming and the formidable, the serene and the tumultuous, in accordance with the dialectical march of the mind and soul, as in Tāntrika art. Indian art in the course of its long evolution has its autonomous field of experience of the formless, the limitless and the unattainable that can only be appreciated by special attention to the formal excellences and aesthetic qualities peculiar to regional and epochal art styles, traditions and techniques.

*Appeal to Tactile rather than Visual Sensation and Imagination in Indian Sculpture*

The distinction is now usually made in sculpture, grounded in contrasted
types of sensibility, defined by Worringer as abstraction and empathy, between abstract or geometric and naturalistic or organic forms. Indian art-style largely stresses geometrical patterns rather than naturalistic and organic forms and integralness of mass, dynamic coherence and plastic quality rather than sensitive modelling and linear and angular expressiveness. This is to be attributed to the Indian man’s metaphysical bias and his derivation of the norms of beauty of the phenomenal world, including man, from inner experiences of a higher reality than exists in this world. It is the absolute values of Indian metaphysics and myth that are plastically rendered into a simplicity, solidity and heaviness of shape or form, massiveness or monumentality of volume and stern discipline and coherence of modelling of surface and outline in three dimensional extensiveness. Such an art-style stirs the inner depths of man’s being. For man’s apprehension and feeling of volume, mass and depth, conveyed by the experience of ponderousness and weightiness, rather than sensuous charm, conveyed by the play of surfaces, give him a sense of wholeness and transcendence of Being rooted in the arousal of kinaesthetic sensations and emotions. All great sculpture evocates these kinaesthetic feelings, and through these the consciousness of the whole, the numinous and the Absolute or transcendental Reality. Neither smoothness, nor polish nor scintillation of surface, which are largely visual in their appeal, and with which we are so familiar in Western sculpture, but rather an unhesitating approach to the integral mass, the tense volume and the vital depth, which largely appeal to touch and pressure, and with which are associated vague and yet powerful kinaesthetic emotions, is distinctive of all great works of sculpture. It is the inchoate kinaesthetic experiences that constitute the psychological components of man’s cognition and feeling of the ineffable, the whole and the Beyond. The essential quality of Indian sculpture is that it appeals directly and dominantly to touch and pressure and the images of massiveness, heaviness, depth and full, solid existence rather than to sight and definition of outline and the pictorial or descriptive image; and light, darkness, space and atmosphere enter into and strengthen the tactile sensations and imaginings.

The simplification and solidity of forms, the amplitude and compactness of mass and the heaving, surging rhythm from within a solid creation in Indian sculpture form the basis for the revelation of the order and harmony of the transcendental realm, of the ineffable values of elevated contemplation and ecstasy. Out of this is born the profound repose of that which is the dominant characteristic of Indian art and is psychologically related to yogic intuition. At the same time the realization of the transcendental reality always implies a tension that keeps the plastic sense from deadening. This explains the vitality and creativeness of Indian art through the centuries. The sensibility to the world-process is particularly acute and poignant in art epochs and schools, that are touched by mystical currents. This leads to the combination of monumentality and ponderousness with sensitive, differentiating modelling.
and linear expression, of the qualities of integral mass and palpability with serene or agitated linear rhythms.

*Influence of Mystical Movements on Plastic Treatment*

As a matter of fact even the classic forms of Gupta art largely owe their clarity, sincerity and elegance to the mystical ardour that impregnated both the Hindu Vedānta and Buddhist Yogāchāra idealism during the Gupta Renaissance. Mahāyāna Buddhism with its veneration for the Great Compassionate One and its stress of the positive virtues of love, tenderness and goodwill to all sentient beings melted the rigidity and compactness of the stern and massive yogic form of the Buddha. It introduced the sweet, understanding smile and gracious, compassionate gesture into the severe lineaments of the monk from Mathurā and Sārnāth to Taxila and Tun-Huang. His hands and facial features were linearised and became intense and decisive. His diaphanous robes were contoured with lines that created a soft, tranquil rhythmic movement. The formal triangular composition of the seated Buddha, reinforced by ovals and circles, also breathed complete poise and ideal harmony. The rhythmic etherealisation of the human body has nowhere reached such perfection as in the Gupta and T'ang representations of the Buddha and Bodhisattva in India and China; and the technique gradually spread to civilized Asia. The technique, which is discernible in classical Gupta sculpture at Mathurā, Kauśambi, Sārnāth and Nalanda consists in the skilful tracery of the apparel, jewellery and adornments that creates a mellifluous linear rhythm, and at the same time underlines the heaving quality of the bodily structure underneath. The best examples of the plastic and linear expressiveness of the enclosing garment are afforded by the standing Buddha at Mathurā; the Buddha and Avalokiteśvara at Ajantā; Lokesvara from Bengal, Orissa and Siam; the Buddha at Awkana in Ceylon; Maitreya and Prajñāpāramitā in Jáva; and many Bodhisattvas from Tung-huang, Yung-kang and Lung-Men in China and from Horyuji in Japan.

Similarly, the exaltation of personal spiritual ardour (*bhakti*) in Bhāgavatism in the succeeding centuries saturated the Brahmanical, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Devī images with love and compassion throughout Northern India from Saurashtra to Kaliṅga. A subtle blend was possible between impersonality and tender sensibility, echoed in the compromise between massiveness and curvilinear play, between the flowing and the angular movement in sculptural treatment. Later on in the medieval and post-medieval period, under the impact of Purāṇic, Tāntrika and Bhakti myths and values, Indian sculpture became even more charming and tender through the subtle and delicate modulations of sensuous modelling and the surging and receding curvilinear tensions, and at the same time remained vital, forceful and expressive. This was because even though a soft, even melting lyrical quality was introduced into sculpture, it never sought to create a pictorial illusion of the living flesh. It never sacri-
fixed mass, weight and volume to smoothness, polish and the surface play of light and shade, as was true of the entire Greek and Renaissance tradition. Indian sculpture, even when sensuous, incisive and mellifluous, makes its appeal to the direct or imaginable tactile values rather than to the visual values, and reveals the all-pervasive urge of Life and consciousness of Indian metaphysics surging forth from within to the outside in the art object through a synthetic realisation of its mass and ponderability. This is the key-note of all noble sculpture.

The Blend between the Plastic and Linear Expressiveness

It is the greater triumph of Indian plastic forms that remaining true to the tactile feel and imagination their articulation makes possible in medieval Purāṇic and Tāṇtrika sculpture an association with emotions of awe, despair and supplication, and in post-medieval Rājput, Chandela, Gānga and Chola sculpture with the opposite emotions of love, tenderness and devotion piquantly expressed by linear rhythms. Thus a new blend between the essential Indian massiveness and expressive, naturalistic modelling, between the plastic and flowing and the linear and angular patterns is established in Indian art.

Though the linear motif becomes predominant in Indian medieval and post-medieval sculpture, the lineation of garment, garland, jewellery and adornment does not merely play over a two-dimensional plane surface, but precisely traces the contours of the semi-nude bodily form beneath, and gives expression to perpetual thrust and counter-thrust and balance of up and down in the rendering. Lineation becomes itself invested with the highest plastic sensitiveness. The innate and indestructible plasticity of form of the early classical age still regulates and reinforces the tremulous curves and outlines of psychological utterance, whether heroic or lyrical, in the stones of Khajurāho, Rāmpal, Bhuvanesvara and Koṇāraka and the bronzes of Tanjore and Madura. There is marriage, so to speak, between ideal harmony and expressive vitality in plastic art.

This reflects, indeed, the psychological balance between the urge of the Beyond and the delights in the self, senses and nature that the poetic interpretation of the universe in terms of the dual masculine and feminine principles Puruṣa-Prakṛiti, (Śiva-Śakti) in Sāṅkhya and Tāṇtrika thought and of the immanence of the Divine (Īśa-Jīva, Śiva-Jīva) in Bhāgavatism and the Bhakti renaissance introduces into Indian thought. Such is the intimate Indian and delicate interchange between art-form and metaphysics in India. Often art creates novel symbols of the most profound spiritual tensions and experiences by delving into the depths of Being and the panorama and evolutions of Becoming, and thereby awakens new spiritual insights and delights. It can truly be said of the Indian artist that he does not seek but finds.
Religion or metaphysics does not chill Indian art, because the nuances of spiritual experience, ever fresh and subtle, discover new patterns of expressiveness. We shall illustrate this from the treatment of two major themes and motifs through the centuries in the development of Indian art. Let us first compare and contrast three images of Bodhisattva. The first is from Bodhgaya (Gupta), belonging to early 4th century A.D. (Indian Museum, Calcutta); the second is the celebrated standing Bodhisattva figure from Mathurā of the 5th century A.D. (Curzon Museum, Mathurā); and the third is the Bodhisattva from Lalitagiri, Orissa, belonging to the 8th century A.D. (Indian Museum, Calcutta). In the Bodhgaya image, belonging to the epoch-making art tradition of Mathurā of the Kuśāna period, monumentality and ponderousness are conspicuous. It breathes and commands the profound poise and other-worldliness of the Buddha. But the delicate touch of linearism of the folds of the robe curling over the left shoulder and hand and the simple neck ornament as well as the decorative treatment of the monk’s hair and usnīṣa introduce a slight human warmth and relieves its overwhelming massiveness. This image is one of the outstanding contributions of Mathurā art and a most glorious example of plastic simplification of forms and rigour of proportions achieving a concentration of stillness and self-luminosity appropriate to the dhyānī Buddha.

Within a century Mathurā produced the second image, which is its most memorable gift to the Buddhist art of Asia. The stylistic handling of the face, pose and drapery has here changed towards a new pattern, characterised by a linear and differentiating modelling which imparts a new animation and liveliness. The linear treatment of the diaphanous robe with its sharply defined contours and edges, revealing the profiles of the body, is the outcome of Scythian and Hellenistic influences thoroughly assimilated and etherealised on the Indian soil. The serenity of the linear rhythm embodies the Buddha’s complete cessation of desire and perfect clarity, and at the same time invests his figure with youthful charm and refinement. A most delicate modulation of the lips produces a half-hidden smile even more meaningful than the half-hidden eyelids. No Buddha image has reconciled so marvellously the Buddha’s profound compassion for world misery with the impersonality of Nirvāṇa. And yet the image is mutilated and has lost its highly sensitive right hand and fingers which showed the abhaya mudrā, and also partly the left hand which held the decorated fringe of the garment. The overhanging circular nimbus with its elaborate decoration comprising concentric rings of abstract floral motifs about a central lotus pattern mitigates the severe verticalism and immense height and bulk of the image. It corroborates the message from the supersensible world that the human figure embodies. Contemporaneous with the birth of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India of which it is perhaps the purest
embodiment, it is this image which served as the type and model of Buddha figure-art in Central Asia and China through the centuries.

The figure from Lalitagiri, Orissa, is the greatest contribution of the School of Kaliṅga to Buddhist art. It may lack the unfathomable profundity of the Mathurā, Sārnāth and Nālandā images. But it certainly shows a superior innate coherence and linear rhythm of plastic treatment. The entire composition is here governed by the flowing linear rhythm of the lotus stalk, and even the legs are stiffened to form parts of this sinuous rhythm. Yet the sweep and suppleness of the curves come under the rigid discipline of the plasticity of the mass. The blend between the mellifluousness of linear treatment and the power of compact mass is here easy and perfect forming the basis of an inner vision characteristic of the noble art tradition of Orissa.

We shall now review the sculptural treatment of another common Indian theme and motif, the subjugation of Mahiśāsura by Durgā by contrasting the forms and styles of three outstanding images in art history. Durgā at the Rāmeśvara cave, Ellorā, belonging to the 7th century A.D., is a most striking example of the expression of numinous power by an essential breadth and weightiness of simplified forms and plane-surfaces in Indian plastic art. The excessive generalisation of limbs, weapons and adornments is relieved by the decoration of Durgā’s crown. Her bodily appearance, heroic and yet placid gesture and movement and four hands wielding different weapons all suggest the concentration of supernatural strength and majesty transcending the limitations of earthly existence. Linearism is at a discount. Diagonals, parallels and verticals lead to the concentration of might in the quelling of evil. This is also stressed by the darknesses that gather in the spaces between the figures and between the limbs. Ellorā has created a mountainous Durgā unsurpassable in her strength, poise and consummation and silence of victory, stressing largely the palpable volumes of the features of man and animal.

The second image of Durgā we select is from the Vaitāldev temple at Bhuvaneśvara belonging to the 11th century. Here the smoothness, luxuriousness and amiability of limbs of the Goddess are superbly reconciled with the all-encompassing plastic rhythm that embraces the charming youthful Devī and the crude, crouching animal in one. The formal composition, dominated by the curvilinear tensions of the multiple hands, weapons, waist and legs, the diagonal thrust of the spear and the spacing of the limbs, embodies the triumph of Mahiśa-mardini whose action on the mundane earth is thus raised to Divine sport (Devīyukti). The linear and angular play coexists with the plastic and flowing. The sharp, diagonal movement of the ensemble is appropriate for the depiction of supramundane power. The sensuousness that caresses the body is restricted to the torso of the goddess, decked with garlands and jewellery. These skirt her sensitively modelled tender, swelling bosoms that suggest, whatever may be her action, the beneficence and compassion of motherhood.

The third image of Durgā is from Singsari, eastern Jāvā, belonging to about
the 13th century. Here the plastic and flowing predominates over the linear and angular aspects of sculpture. Separated by many centuries the Javanese image shows the same breadth and massiveness of summary modelling and diffuses the same numinous power and majesty as the Ellorā figure; but while the latter is steeped in silence, the former is concentrated in action and struggle as the Goddess catches by hair the demon which emerges from the buffalo-shape before dealing the death-blow. Yet her movement is only external, for her face is suffused by an all-filling, transcendent serenity and aloofness. The ease of her victory is underlined by the freedom of her legs standing wide apart and the horizontality of the recumbent buffalo’s back. Only the shield remains among her many implements. If all her hands and weapons were intact, the elegance of the grand, inevitable onslaught could have been better appreciated. The decorative treatment of Durgā’s drapery, garland and adornment adds a feminine charm and grace, absent in the Ellorā image, and reminiscent of the celebrated image of Prajñāpāramitā from the same place and belonging to the same century. The broad and massive and the sensitive and differentiated modelling, the plastic and the linear play interpenetrate in Indian sculpture. These comprise the enduring warp and woof of the fabric of art tradition. Even when the plastic art is concerned with the expression of entirely human feelings and lyrical sentiments, when it is sensuous, tender and incisive, it makes its appeal to the direct or imaginable tactile values, to the palpable volumes of human features rather than to their sensuous ones.

The Revelation of Absolute Values in Cave Sculpture in India and China

Goethe wrote in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century that the topmost aim of all plastic art is to render the dignity of man within the compass of human form. Humanism is only one of the sets of values of civilization—a predilection prized by Europe. There are other values of human life and culture. It is the absolute, transcendental values of metaphysics and myth, dear to Indian civilisation, that Indian art expresses, and Indian sculpture has done it enduringly through the sense of vital depth, compactness and palpability of mass. No doubt Indian art that never aims at the glorification of the image of man, nor at the realistic rendering of human form, as European art prefers, reveals dimensions of reality that usually elude the arts of many other countries. Relatively simply and impressively, and yet delightfully, do Indian art-forms explore and reveal the eternal and absolute values, the imponderable realm of the human spirit in modes of expression that no other art-forms of the world have done.

India’s achievements in cave art are especially most unique and magnificent in the world, utilising the modulations of light and shade and the vibrating atmosphere in the plastic composition for the production of mountainous figures and their heroic gestures and movements, embodying man’s transcen-
dental values, his supra-mundane tensions, emotions and experiences. More than a thousand cave shrines, with innumerable statues and frescoes, were built in China from Tung-huang to Lung-Men and from Yun-kang to Yunnan after the model of the ancient Indian cave shrines from Karle and Ajantā to Taxilā and Nagarahara. In India as in China, and in the latter country on a more colossal scale, the abstract and summary treatment of the ponderous bodies of the Buddha, Bodhisattva, Śiva, Viṣṇu or Devī, the utmost generalisation of their broad chests and mighty shoulders invest them with superhuman power, majesty and vitality. The massiveness and compactness of their human forms and the width and heaviness of their limbs, weapons, gestures and movements are markedly stressed everywhere by cave sculpture in the setting of various architectonic devices. These are set off by the linear expressiveness of the contours and pleats of the Buddha’s and Bodhisattva’s mantle in China and the minute ornamentation of the bejewelled crowns of Viṣṇu, Śiva and Devī in India. The gradations of light and darkness in the cave interior are parts of the three-dimensional material.

One of the unique peculiarities of cave sculpture in India is the manner in which space is included in the rendering of plastic form as a source of creative energy. Interior space and cavity, whether natural or artificially produced, are deftly utilised in the grand sculptures and reliefs, especially at Māmalla-puram, Ajantā, Bādāmī, Ellorā and Elephanta, heightening the three-dimensional effects as well as intensifying the psychological moods and gestures. The majesty and dignity of the colossal cave figures as well as the dramatic and tense character of their supernatural gestures depend as much on the breadth of summary modelling of the body and limbs as on the nature of the spaces between the limbs and between the figure groups suffused in light or darkness, the tension of confined and surrounding spaces and the architectonic composition. “A hole can in itself have as much shape-meaning as a solid mass. The mystery of the hole—the mysterious fascination of caves in hill-sides and cliffs,” observes the great modern sculptor, Henry Moore. In the works of Lehbruck, Moore, Epstein, Zadkine and Hepworth, among other outstanding sculptors, we find the device of utilisation of interior space and hollow as an integral part of sculpture, as in India, China and Ceylon, where cave sculpture has also greatly influenced the technique and style of sculpture, in the temples and monasteries. The bas-reliefs and sculptures of Borobodur and Prambanan in Jāvā and Aṅkor and Banteai Srei in Cambodia are also vivid illustrations of the success of the Indian procedure of full utilisation of interior spaces and hollows for majestic as well as gorgeous effects even outside cliffs and boulders of the hills.

Reality and Beauty in Indian and European Art

Indian cave sculpture, no doubt, achieves an unsurpassed refinement of techniques and skills that are adapted to the treatment of supernatural themes and
of man's permanent and absolute values and shows marked similarities to the works of many modern masters in the West. Indian civilization considers humanism as a limited perspective. Indian cave as well as temple art seeks to reveal metaphysical, infinite and transcendent values. The forms, symbols and dimensions of fresco and sculpture suggested by rock-cut monuments and vast temples reject the human scale and limits imposed upon Western art by the ancient Greeks. In both the range of cosmic superhuman rather than finite human moods, sentiments and values and the dynamically open, enlarging and transcending pattern of the plastic composition, art in India reflects cosmic immensities. It aims at revealing transcendent Reality or Truth rather than Beauty or Harmony and at its highest fuses Reality and Beauty. Rage, despair and other violent human emotions that Lessing in his *Laokoon* thought should be entirely eschewed by art are depicted movingly, powerfully and majestically in a beyond-human cosmic setting by Indian plastic forms. No other art in the world has expressed and commanded such absolute and eternal silence in its mountainous figures, and at the same time ventured to reveal the Terrible, the Repellent, the Bewildering and the Violent in all its expressionistic dignity and wonder as Purānic and Tāntrika art did in India, Nepal, Tibet, Indonesia, Cambodia and Japan. We need only refer to the images of Narasimha, Bhairava, Mahākāla, Durgā, Tārā and Chāmuṇḍā in India and of Durgā, Trailokyavijaya, Heruka and Hevajra in South-east Asia. The *dvārapāla* in the Buddhist temple of Dong-duong in Champā (9th century A.D.) and Nara in Japan are some of the most awesome images, in art. The bronze Trailokyavijaya of Jāvā, the awful Heruka of Bahal II, Padaag Lava (Sumātrā) and the common motif of the all-devouring Kāla or Time in Singhalese (Kāla-makara), Javanese and Champan, as in Pallava and Chola architecture, are also some of the most formidable creations in art. Bhairava, Māhakāla, Yamāntaka, Sarva-Buddha, Dākinī and Kāli, symbolising the emotions of terror and repulsion, are nowhere depicted with such vitality and power as in the images of Eastern India and Nepal and the temple banners of Tibet. From all such emotions European art has abstained entirely or it has attenuated or modified them to a degree in which these may be capable of a certain measure of beauty. It is only recently that modern art criticism in Europe demands from the artist an expression of truth and stresses the subjective criterion of vitality rather than the objective criterion of harmony. As Herbert Read appropriately remarks: "In this revaluation of aesthetic values—from beauty to truth, from idealism to realism, from serenity to vitality—the whole of the modern movement in art, beginning with Impressionism, is involved as a practical activity and the whole of the modern criticism of art is involved as a philosophical activity."

The aim of Indian art is not sensuous delight, nor is it sensuous delight only incidentally. Indian art has been through the centuries a sensitive organ of the Indian man's progressive apprehension of the total Reality. From age to age Indian civilisation has met with reverses and misfortunes, and art has
been ravaged and destroyed by war, foreign vandalism and greed. It is
because of the essential abstract and geometrical harmony and the plastic
rhythms and linearisms of Indian art that many a decapitated and mutilated
sculpture survives as a valuable work of art. A human or divine figure, a body
image, without its formal aesthetic appeal and metaphysical purpose subtly
blended with each other, could not have survived general dilapidation and
defacement to which Indian art had been exposed, due to a series of invasions,
devastations and conquests, as no other art in the world. The stylistic sequence
of art, the evolution of its traditions and techniques can be easily discerned
in spite of the interruptions and violence that art development experienced
in India. The very continuity and vitality of the Indian art tradition largely
rest on the search for the total Reality, as Indian myth and metaphysics have
envisioned it from epoch to epoch, rather than for mere sensuous charm and
ideal beauty. The broad movement of art in India has in fact gone on unche-
quered through five millennia, embodying certain vital, formal attributes that
can yet precipitate new ideas, styles and techniques in the world. That is
the unique legacy of Indian art.

Yet there are periods and movements when Indian and European plastic
arts touch each other and show striking similarities of expression. It is re-
markable that an advanced Gothic phase of art has been encountered not
merely in Christian Europe but also in Buddhist and Brahmanical India
whenever metaphysics has yielded to mysticism and the sense of divine imma-
nence replaced or become as strong as the sense of divine transcendence. Due
to similar psychological transformation the plastic arts show the old abstract
classic forms, whether in India or in the West, discovering new qualities of
surging linear rhythm and melody, born of the revelation of the Divine in
man and nature, and merging into a charming, lyrically tinged naturalism.
What Worrington has spoken about the transition characteristic of advanced
Gothic holds good of several phases and schools of Indian sculpture under the
influence of widespread mystical movements. “All rigidity melts, all that is
hard becomes soft, every line is saturated with spiritual feeling. A smile dawns
of the stern features of the statues, a smile which is born from within and
seems the reflection of an inward blessedness. The hard, rigid outlines of the
characteristic drawing grow soft. Rhythmically smooth calligraphy is substi-
tuted for crinkly angularity. The intellectual energy of the line expression
ebbss away into calligraphic intricacy. What is lost in greatness is gained in
beauty.”

Indian civilization may, in a general way, be described as metaphysical and
poetic rather than theological and religious, and so Indian art is cosmic and
mythopoeic rather than hieratic, mystical rather than traditional. But the
mythopoeic and mystical world of Indian art is not separable from the art-
object; it takes form through the expression art achieves of it. It comes as an
ecstatic revelation—the Buddha and Śiva’s serene conquest of the suffering

1 Worrington: *Form in Gothic*, p. 177.
and mystery of existence; the slumber of Viṣṇu in the waters of cosmic
dissolution; the three faces of Śiva that image the three aspects of the contemplative self-transcendence, creativity and withdrawal; the Divine Couple Śiva-Umā and the Celestial Lovers in erotic rapture and self-transcendence embodying the metaphysical principle of the Two in One; the eternal sport of Māyā-Śakti, charming and fierce, life-giving and life-destroying, in the delights, wonders and catastrophes of the earth; the darkness of infinite space which broods upon the august presence of the nude, dark-hued Kāli; the charming danseuses of heaven and earth revealing the ecstasies and flights of the human soul; and, finally the dance of Śiva Naṭṭarāja, Gaṇeśa and Kṛiṣṇa embodying the ever-recurrent rhythm of silence and creation in nature and the human soul. The image of Man, Cosmos and Reality makes in each case definite, full and ever-lasting what as ecstatic experience is ineffable, relative or incomplete. Ecstasy and poetry come as naturally to Indian art as flowers to a plant. Investing these flowers with unfading bloom, Indian art scatters them in every field and garden of life’s complex sensibility and experience.
The Universal Language of Indian Art

Identification of Land and Culture

India, in spite of the vulnerability of the north-western frontiers and a series of foreign invasions and conquests, hardly fostered a kind of racialism or nationalism as Europe. This is largely due to the fact that the historic foreign invasions of India were slow infiltrations rather than swift, devastating movements that would, avalanche-like, sweep away every state, institution and cultural pattern before them. The hindrances offered by the north-western gateways, the desert of Rajputana and the Aravali mountains and by the rise of fortified cities and warlike principalities in the Indus valley and the Punjab blocked quick and easy movement and occupation by invading armies.

One of the early invaders and conquerors, the Indo-Aryans who occupied the Sapta-Sarasvati, the region watered by the seven rivers belonging to the Sarasvati system, and at that time identified with the whole country, early developed the basic conception of the identity of land and culture. This was strongly reinforced in the spacious times of Gupta imperialism by classical Sanskrit literature, art and historiography (Purāṇas) that influenced Asian civilisation for half a millennium. Purāṇic myths, rituals, observances and pilgrimages, fostered during the Gupta Renaissance and after, instilled into the Indian mind the most essentially fundamental unity of India. With her varied climate and soil and her extensive plains and grasslands, intersected by lofty mountains and mighty rivers, India is subdivided into many regions inhabited by congeries of races and peoples. But in their vision there is one motherland from the snow-clad mountains in the north to the bridge of Śrī Rāma-chandra in the southern ocean (Himavat-setu-paryantam), with the Ganges as the pearl garland (Gangā-mauktika-hārini), the Himalayas and the Vindhya as ear-pendants (Himavat-Vindhyā-kunda) and the people all common children of Bharata. It was the clan of Bharata which first established sovereignty over the land and spread Vedic myth, worship and sacraments—the legacy of Indian civilization through the centuries.

Art and the Sacred Cities and Temples of India

Accordingly India is not a mere geographical or political integration. The sacred cities, lakes, rivers and mountains of the country are distributed throughout the length and breadth of the land including sites in the Himalayas as well as in the far south up to the Setubandha. Indian sculpture has transformed sacred forests, lakes, hills and mountains in every quarter into temples. It has come to the aid of the Indian man through the centuries, making caves, grottoes, hill-sides and forests fit for his shelter and meditation in solitude.
The seven holy cities of India (saptamokṣadā-puri) are Ayodhya, Mathurā, Māyā (Hardwar), Kāśi (Vārānasi), Kāñcī (Conjeevaram), Avantikā (Ujjain) and Dwārakā (Dwārakā) representing all the cultural regions of India. These have been adorned with a hundred temples and seats of learning by kings, nobles and merchants from age to age. The seven sacred rivers are the Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Godāvari, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Sindhu and Kāverī with their bathing and cremation ghāṭas fringed with temples and pariṣads. The seven holy mountains (saptakulāchala) are Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Suktimāna, Gandhamadana, Vindhyā and Pāriyātra with famous shrines and halls scooped out of the rocks.

The sacred temples of Viṣṇu, Śiva and Devī, embellished by art through the ages, are placed on the banks of the mighty rivers and on the principal mountains, lakes and sea-shores scattered throughout the vast country. Many are the temples of gods and goddesses located on the meandering courses of the rivers Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Godāvari, Sarasvatī, Narmadā Sindhu and Kāverī, at the water-falls in the mountain fastnesses, such as the source of the Gaṅgā (Gomukh) in the Himalayas, of the Kāverī in the dense forests of Karnataka and of the Narmadā in the hills of Amarakanṭaka and also on their mouths on the sea. Wherever a river takes a circuitous course or flows in a northerly direction or again joins another river, and a high scarp or hill overlooks a valley, or a great lake spreads out its pellucid waters, or the plain and the desert meet in vivid contrasts of life and vegetation, we have sacred temples and shrines that must be visited by the pious pilgrims from every part of India.

Influence of Pilgrimage on Art

Art has transformed India herself into the scripture and temple of Indian religion. Pilgrimages to the holy places in different parts of the country are a highly aspired mode of attainment of spiritual bliss. The major temples of Viṣṇu are located at Badarī in the Himalayas, Mathurā, Vṛindāvana, Gayā and Mandāra in the Gaṅgā valley, Dwārakā in Saurāstra, Jagannātha in the Orissa coast and Kāñchī and Janārdana in the south. The supreme God Maheśvara or Śiva has four eternal faces, gestures or manifestations: the fifth is invisible and incomprehensible and is represented by the non-iconic, Liṅgam pillar. The image of Śiva looks out with his four faces (mukha-liṅgams) in different directions from the Śiva liṅga, the symbol of the generation and energy of the cosmos, which is installed in the twelve principal Śiva shrines of India. These include Kedāranātha and Amaranātha in the north, Chandranātha in the east, Paśupatinātha in Nepal, Rāmeśvaram in the south, Viṣveśvara in the Ganges valley, Somanātha in Gujarat, Mahākāla at Ujjain, Pātāleśvara at Amarkanṭaka and Orḵāranātha on the Narmadā. The sacred temples of his consort Pārvati, the Mother Goddess, are as many as fifty-two, each a tīrtha (place of pilgrimage) holding one of the many fragments of her sacramented corpse cut into pieces, according to the Kālikā Purāṇa, by Viṣṇu's
disc as Śiva with the corpse on his shoulders could not endure his grief and madly danced about the earth.

Cognate to the institution of pilgrimage, is the practice enjoined by religion of going round certain specially sacred sites for the offer of oblations to ancestors (śrāddha). These are Badri Nārāyaṇa, Haradvāra and Kurukṣetra in the north, the sea-shore at Jagannātha in the east and Prabhāsa in the west, Gayā, Prayāga, Puṣkara and Amarakaṇṭaka in middle India and Dhanuṣkoṭi in the extreme south. Here again the whole of India is pictured on the occasion of man's dream beyond life and death. All Indians must also visit at least once during their life-time the eternal city of India, Banāras, about three thousand years old, and aspire to lay their bones on its sacred ghāṭ by the Ganges. Here are the celebrated temples of Viśveśvara and Annapūrṇā. Banāras is the national resting place of old age and final repose; for he who dies in Śiva's city attains Śiva-hood.

The ancient myths of Rāma and Sitā and the dramas and pageants of Rāma and Rāvaṇa come to the whole of India from Ayodhya and the forests of Chitrakūṭa, Pańchavaṭi and Dāṇḍakāraṇya while those of Kṛṣṇa come from Mathurā, Brajabūmi, Dwārakā and Hastināpura. The tales and legends of Agastya and Paraśurāma are derived from the Deccan and the Arabian sea-coast. The sojourns and adventures of the five Pāṇḍava princes cover the pioneer areas of colonisation within Bhārata and those of Agastya and Bhrigu outside her frontiers. The myth and worship of the Mother Goddess Chaṇḍi even connect India with Lāṅkā, where Rāmachandra offered his lotus eye at her feet on the eve of the final encounter with the demon king Rāvaṇa. Thus is Ceylon included in the geographical synthesis of India. The festivals of India are cyclical in the recurrent procession of the twelve or thirteen moons of the solar year and temple sculpture and ritual commemorate the birth of an incarnation of God, a mythical hero, a patron saint or a religious head, or the rise of an important religious myth or philosophical doctrine, each associated with some State or other in the sub-continent and reinforced by regional initiatives in art.

The meditative attitude is fostered by the stimulating religious atmosphere of the sacred cities and towns and their ancient temples with their numerous bas-reliefs and sculptures, proclaiming the everlasting presence of divinities and recurrence of cosmic myths in which they participated. Through the ages kings, nobles, merchants and the common people have visited the great pilgrimage sites and their famous shrines are richly endowed by gifts from all social strata. The votive offerings of the people include lands for the maintenance of architects, sculptors and craftsmen as of priests, cooks, water-carriers, danseuses and musicians. Even lands are set apart for the daily offerings of lotuses at the temples of Jagannātha and Minākṣi. Across the centuries the sacred temples of India, where the principal gods and goddesses have chosen to stay, have been enlarged and beautified, often bearing the impress of a sequence of art movements and schools. The influence of pilgri-
mage on the vitality and continuity of art and architecture in India can hardly be exaggerated. Indian art and architecture have been the gifts as much of the common people as of the princes, nobles and merchants.

*The Metaphysical Images of Indian Art*

Geographically, the image of India as a whole is brought daily into the cults and faiths of the people, into their ritual ablutions and worship by hymns and prayers, and periodically by the institution of pilgrimage to the sacred cities, rivers, lakes and mountains and the principal temples of gods and goddesses distributed in every part of the land.

Culturally, the image of Man in India is cosmic or universal (vaśvānara); "his mother-land comprises the three realms—earth, heaven and the underworld". The Cosmic Man or Puruṣa is the true eternal expression of human freedom and perfection in India. The temple architecture of the country is based on the symbolism of the metaphysical Cosmic Man. The temple is built as a replica of the body of Puruṣa or Prajāpati, which comprehends the universe as a microcosm. The different parts of the temple spire (śikhara) are designated as His skin, trunk, neck and skull. The spire is capped by the ring stone called āmalaka, literally 'stainless' which represents the dome of his crown. In the Rāgvedic myth Puruṣa divided Himself into the different parts of cosmos, life and society. The temple design is rooted in the concept of the recovery of the primordial wholeness before creation, symbolised by the central mountain of the cosmos called Sumeru on the summit of which lies heaven or by the Universal Tree which bears the fruits of holy wisdom. The plan and elevation of the temple accordingly embody not only the body of Puruṣa which corresponds to the shape of the physical and the spiritual universe, but also man's ascent to Him through the life divine, through contemplation and withdrawal. This ascent or release is considered, stage by stage, and thus the temple construction embodies tiers upon tiers until the finial is reached which is in the same line with the seat of the deity within the sanctum sanctorum. Here the image of Man merges into the universality, grandeur and transcendence of the Real, Cosmic Man or Deity.

Indian sculpture through the ages has envisioned the Cosmic Man of Indian metaphysics and morals in images that are abstract and transcendent, and yet serene, luminous and charming. Whatever may be the religion, whether Buddhism, Śaivism, Vaśnavism or Tāntrikism, that might have inspired art in a particular epoch, it has spoken in the language of universal symbols—the images of beatitude of Viśṇu, Śiva, the Buddha, Tārā or Prajñāpāramitā resembling the human figure but different from it, urging the individual towards wholeness, holiness and transcendence, and arousing collective visions of beauty, goodness and serenity among the millions. Buddhist, Śaiva, Vaśṇava and Tāntrika art could best aid both religion and culture because it was neither chilled by formal motifs and conventions of iconography nor circum-
scribed by anthropomorphic symbols and rationalisations. This was possible because philosophy and metaphysics changed the contents of iconography, anthropomorphic or otherwise, making it less earthly, historical and anecdotal and more abstract, ethereal and transcendental.

Indian metaphysics does not brook the historicity of Kṛṣṇa, Mahāvīra and Gautama and thus paves the way to art envisioning Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, the Buddha and Tīrthaṅkara in images that cross the boundaries of time and space and live and love eternally in the paradise of human hearts. Buddhist art entered its golden age, and spread across the face of Asia as soon as Mahāyāna idealism replaced the historical personage and associations of Gautama the sage by the eternal, metaphysical Buddha Tathāgata dwelling and preaching in all ages and realms. Similarly Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Tāntrika art overstepped the boundaries of the Indian myths of Śiva, Kṛṣṇa and Śakti so as to give them universal philosophical and spiritual import. By accepting metaphysical principles it became generic and timeless in its appeal and inspiration spreading the message of serenity, power and compassion far beyond the confines of India.

In Christian Europe the secularisation of art resulting in the artistic humanisation of Christ or the Madonna stressed all-too-human sentiments and ended in vulgarising religion itself. In India such triviality of humanism is avoided by the emphasis of mythical and metaphysical elements of the legends of Viṣṇu, the Buddha, Śiva or Śakti. The course of art is here stimulated and replenished by generic meanings and values that are neither canalised nor warped by anthropomorphic figurations, sentimental appeals and historical accidents of the story. The art of India and Indian Asia accordingly rejects euphemism, and reveals universal and immortal things through the particular and mortal, the invisible things of God through the things which are made. The Avatāra of Indian religion and art is always the Hero-god whose essence is Being and whose mythical and miraculous attributes hide human idiosyncrasies. All this is far different from the outlook in Western art. Goethe observed: “The topmost aim of all plastic art is to render the dignity of man within the compass of the human form. To this aim every non-human element, in so far as it lends itself to treatment in this medium must support itself.” No doubt the entire art development in the West since the Renaissance committed itself to the expression of the values of humanism. This is a limited and partial metaphysical outlook stemming from the Greco-Roman heritage of Europe.

*Indian Art, Instrument of the Unification of Asia*

It is the stress of metaphysical idealism and universalism that underlies not only the unity and stability of Indian civilisation but also its remarkable spread and diffusion in Asia during the first millennium of the Christian era. The inscriptions of Kambuja refer to the performance of lakṣahomas and koṭihomas (one and hundred lakhs of sacrifices) by its kings, and of daily rituals,
and ceremonies in the different tilhīs for which donations are recorded. These clearly reveal that the consecration of temples to the gods, the foundation of villages, the construction of tanks and embankments, the building of resthouses and monasteries are intended, as in India, to promote public welfare. One inscription speaks of an ascetic endowing a temple for the following purpose: "I, who am a Brahmāriṣṭ, place the gods in charge of the kings who will reign in the town of Yaśodharapura. May they interest themselves in the maintenance of these gods. I pray that the kings who come legitimately to the throne be free from troubles, invulnerable to the enemies, malady, fever and infirmity of all kinds, and that all the creatures be prosperous." Certain inscriptions of King Mūlavārman in East Borneo, dated as early as the 3rd and 4th century A.D., also record a Brahmanical sacrifice that sanctifies the land and the installation of the sacrificial post (yūpa). Such is the 'sanctification' of foreign lands by Indian rites and ceremonies. Ptolemy referred to the eastward geographical extension of India as 'Trans-Gangetic India'. In the Golden Age of the Imperial Guptas, some sort of Indian hegemony was established over the various Islands, together with Ceylon (Sārav-dvīpa-vāsibhiḥ), in the eastern seas, Kālidāsa mentioning as many as eighteen islands, where Brahmanical sacrificial posts were installed as tokens of sovereignty of the king of Anūpadēśa. In A.D. 673 I-Tsing who came from China to India by the sea-route, after a sojourn of six months in Sumātrā for the study of Sanskrit grammar, mentioned more than ten Hindu Colonies in this region, where Indian customs and religious practices were prevalent, including Śrī-Bhoga (Śrī-Vijaya) in Sumātrā, Kaliṅga (Pūrva Kaliṅga in Jāvā), Mahasin and Pembua in Borneo and the islands of Kun-lun, Bāli and Bhojasapura. The Empire of Śrī-Vijaya in Central Sumātrā was founded by the Śailendra dynasty in the 6th century A.D.; it became most powerful in the 8th and 12th centuries and lasted till the end of the 14th century. At the peak of their power the Śailendras controlled the Straits of Malacca and of Sunda, all of Sumātrā and the Malay Peninsula, and the western half of Jāvā; its authority was recognised in Champā and Kambuja and as far away as Ceylon and Formosa, and in many colonies throughout the East Indies including the Philippines. It is the Imperial Śailendras who had built the celebrated stūpa of Borobudur (probably Bhūmisambhāra) between A.D. 750 and 850 and the temple at Prambananam (Brahmavanam) in the late 9th century A.D. These two comprise some of the world's most extensive and thick forests of stone, that have created shining paradises on earth under the influence of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Śaivism and the Pāla sculpture from Bengal.

In A.D. 964 the Chinese Emperor sent a band of 300 monk-scholars under the leadership of Ki-ye to India to collect relics of the Buddha and Buddhist manuscripts. They journeyed in India till A.D. 976 and returned to China by the eastern land-route connecting Bengal and Yunnan through Upper Burma. Two years before this last big Chinese mission to India the Kingdom of Ghazni was founded by Alaptagin who declared himself independent of the authority.
of the Samanids of Khorasan and also seized a part of Kabul. The Ghaznavid rulers' occupation of this strategic territory across the ancient Middle Asian caravan routes and their prosecution of 'holy wars' led to the cessation of the millennium-old currents of Indian influences to the Asian continent across the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush. The celebrated eastern land-route from Kāmarūpa through Upper Burma to Tonkin (Agranagara) and Yunnan (Gan-dhāra), which was linked with Dvāravatī and Kambuja, and the sea-route from the Bay of Bengal (Pūrva Śāgara) through the Straits to Kambuja and Champā and through the Indian Ocean (Mahodadhi) to Jāvā, Borneo, Celebes and the Philippines then became more important and continued to maintain brisk Indian cultural intercourse with South and East Asia for another six centuries.

The closing of the Central Asian land-routes for India and China due to the Muslim conquests, diverted the lucrative trade between Europe and the East through the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. This gave a great impetus to all Hindu Colonies and Kingdoms in Farther India and Indonesia from the beginning of the tenth century, culminating in the most glorious periods of Śailendra civilisation in Sumāetrā and Jāvā under Chūdāmanīvarman, Vijayottungavarman; and Trailokyārāja of the Khmer civilisation in Cambodia and Annam under Udayādityavarman II (1050-1065), Sūryavarman II (1113-1145) and Jayavarman VII (1181-c.1218); of the Javanese civilisation under Airlīga (1000-1049); and of the Burmese civilisation under Aniruddha (1044-1077), Kyaukkyattha (1084-1112) and Narapatisithu (1173-c.1192) in Pagan, all in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

The Sea-route Makes Civilisation in India and South-East Asia

Here is essentially a case of the route making a civilisation. History repeats itself. Cosmopolitan Gandhāra and Ser-India lying across the Central Asian caravan routes to China and the Mediterranean developed a mature and dynamic civilisation for more than half a millennium which breathed a purely Buddhist-Indian spirit and spread to Western Asia and China. The choking of the currents of East-West traffic, due, first, to the Muslim conquests in Central Asia, and secondly, to the loss of the suzerainty of China over Turkistan led to the unprecedented expansion of sea-borne trade in the Indian ocean and the Pacific. Such sea-ports as Broach, Cambay and Quillon in the Arabian Sea; Tāmrālipti, Palaura, Kāveripaddinan, Māmallapuram, Nāgapattanam, Prome, Thatun, Takkola and Kaţāha in the Bay of Bengal; Śri-Vijaya in Sumāetrā, Pūrvakalinga in Jāvā; Pāṇḍuraṅga, Vijayapura and Kaţahāra on the Annamese coast; Tonkin in Cambodia and Zayton (Chuan-Chow) in China became famous in the East. The ports of the Indian Archipelago played the same role as the oasis cities of the Taklamakan deserts—spring-boards of the spread of Indian culture; and Śri-Vijaya, Dvāravatī and Angkor took places of Khotan, Kucha and Karashahr in Central Asia of the previous centuries.
From Bengal to Burma and Ceylon and from Śrīmāṭrā and Jāvā to Siam, Cambodia and Southern China there was a continuous interchange of scholars and traders, scriptures and works of art. Thus could some of the colonial civilisations even outshine their models in the homeland. The eleventh and twelfth centuries indeed witnessed a glorious renaissance in the Hindu colonies and kingdoms of South-East Asia.

The same centuries comprised the golden era of the maritime civilisation of India, from coast to coast, stimulated by the East-West trade and cultural intercourse that after the choking of the land-routes of Asia sought the sea-routes through the Red and Arabian Seas, the Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal and the North China Sea. In Gujarāt, the Malabar and Coromandel coasts, Kaliṅga, Bengal and Ceylon which all lay on the high roads of sea-borne commerce, great maritime cultures arose and throve, of which the most important were those of the Chālukyas, Cholas, Eastern Gaṅgas and Pālas. The maritime empire of the Cholas who superseded the Pallavas saw its golden age under Rājendra Chola the Great (1014-1044), Vira-Rājendra (1063-1070), whose overseas conquests included the sea-board of Kaliṅga and Bengal, Ceylon, Malaya and a part of Śrīmāṭrā, and Rājendra Chola Kulottungī I (1070-1122) in whose reign the Hundred Years' maritime war with the Śailendras rose to its peak. The golden era in Ceylon was marked by the prosperous reign of Vijaya Bāhu (1065-1120) and Parākrama Bāhu I (1164-1187). The latter constructed many celebrated shrines including the Gol Vihāra and the Potgul Vihāra at Polonnaruva (Pulatthipura). The famous rock-cut Barinirvāṇa image of the Buddha, the Northern Temple, the Thūpārāma Vihāra, the Jetavana monastery and the Waṭa-dā-gē are all attributed to the 12th century. On the coast of Kaliṅga in the Bay of Bengal there was the efflorescence of culture in the 12th century under Anantavarmā Chōḍa Gaṅga (1076-1150) who ruled the territory from the mouth of the Ganges to the mouth of Godavari and built the famous temple of Jagannātha at Puri. In Bengal 11th and 12th centuries saw the second Buddhist Pāla renaissance stimulated by the Vajrayāna creed under Mahāpāla (988-1038), Vīgrahāpāla III (1055-1070) and Rāmapāla (1077-1119) and the great missionary enterprises to Nepal, Tibet, further India and Indonesia. In the twelfth century the artistic and cultural renaissance under the Sena king Vijayasaṇa (1100-1165) restored the prosperity and culture of the Pāla rule which ended after four centuries of eventful history. On the Arabian Sea coast as well 11th and 12th centuries also witnessed the rise of the maritime power and culture of the Deccan under Vīkramaditya VI (1076-1127) and Bījjalakālachūrya of Kalyan (1156-1167). The Gujarāt coast also saw a cultural renaissance under Kumārapāla Chaulukya of Anhilavāda (1143-1172) who rebuilt the temple of Somanātha after Muslim vandalism and of Chauhān Vīgrahārāja IV or Viśaladeva of Gujarāt (1153-1163) who legitimately claimed that he made Āryāvarta the land of the Āryas by repeatedly vanquishing the Muslims. The lavish temple building in Gujarāt belonged to this period. The beginning of the 11th century saw the conquests of Mahmud
of Ghazni of considerable parts of Central Asia, Iran and Seistan and the first
invasion of India that took place from A.D. 1000 to 1027. The end of the 12th
century saw the defeat and death of Prithvirāja at the hands of Muhammad
of Ghor at the second battle of Tarain (A.D. 1192). The maritime powers of
India, the Chālukyas of Gujarat and the Deccan, the Pālas of Bengal and the
Cholas of the South were struggling for the Indian Empire along with the
Mamluk or the Slave Dynasty which under Iltumish (1210-1236) succeeded
in first establishing a strong and compact Muslim monarchy in Hindustan.
The maritime kingdoms at this phase of Indian history were of no avail against
the might of a powerful Muslim state in Northern India, constantly replenish-
ing its supplies of soldiers and horses from the wilds of Central Asia.

The eleventh century also saw the entry of the Muslim Arab merchants into
South-East Asia which ultimately ended in the conversion of the people of the
Indian Archipelago into Islam, aided by the Mongol invasions of South-East
Asia that began in A.D. 1282 with Kubla Khan’s invasion of Champā from
Canton by sea. In 1287 Pagan was pillaged by the Mongols. Soon Annam,
Champā, Suk’ot’ai and Lopburi were forced to admit vassalage. In 1296 when
Kubla Khan’s ambassador visited Angkor, he, however, found it a most pros-
perous and luxurious city inhabited by over a million population and endowed
with hospitals, complete with nurses and doctors, attached to its numerous
 temples of Hindu deities and pleasure-boats on its beautiful lake.

The eastern land-route connecting India with Burma, Thailand, Indo-China
and China was used from the 1st century of the millennium till at least the
11th century A.D. Two Indian Buddhist monk-pilgrims went to China by this
route in the 1st century A.D. I-Tseng mentions twenty Chinese pilgrims as
having reached India through Upper Burma in the 3rd or 4th century A.D.
From India in the reverse direction travelled Buddhhabhadra of Gandhāra
along with a companion of Fa-Hien through Upper Burma and Tonkin to
China in the 5th century A.D. Germini mentions that from the Brahmaputra
valley and Manipur to the Tonkin gulf can be traced a continuous string of
small Hindu colonies and kingdoms: Tagon, Upper Pagan and Sen-wi in
Burma; Muang Hang, Chiang Rung, Muang Khwan, and Daśārṇa in the Laos
country and Agranagara and Champā in Tonkin and Annam. The Hindu
names of some of the states are Kauśāmbī, Atavirāstra, Suvarnagrāma,
Unmārgaśīla, Yonakarāṣṭra or Haripūjyaya, Agranagara, Videha, Gandhāra
and Champā. All these became important centres of culture and art. From
the tenth century the eastern routes both by land and by sea became some of
Asia’s most frequented highways of traffic and pilgrim travel as well as of
migration and invasion.

India, China and South-Eastern Asia

In A.D. 1033 the Chinese Emperor T’ai-t’i Song of the Song dynasty got a stūpa
erected at Bodhgayā. In A.D. 1077 the Chola Emperor sent the last Indian
embassy to China. The same year saw the accession to the throne of the most famous emperor of Burma, Kyanzittha who invited many Buddhists and Vaiśṇavas to settle in Burma and built the Ānanda temple in his capital Pagan. While Pagan is the most colossal temple-city of the world, Ānanda Temple that is to all intents and purposes an Indian temple, is its supremest marvel bearing glorious testimony to Indian architectural and plastic skill. In A.D. 1090 the Śailendra Emperor sent envoys to the Chola Emperor with the request that he should make free of taxes the village which he had purchased for maintaining a Buddhist monastery constructed by the Śailendra Emperor Chūdāmaṇivarman at Nagapatam. The twin colossal lake cities of Aṉkor Wat and Aṉkor Thom in Kambuja were built in the middle of the 12th and 13th century respectively—immortal dream-temples of world art derived from Gupta-Pāla inspirations from Bengal or from Jāvā. In the 13th century arose in Jāvā a mighty Hindu Empire which had its capital at Tikta-bilva (Majapahit) and continued till the 16th century. The chief Majapahit emperor was Rajasanagara who reigned from A.D. 1350-1398 and completed a magnificent set of bas-reliefs depicting scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇāyaṇa at Panataran. A lively impressionistic art style developed at Panataran where the last temple built is dated A.D. 1454. A superb relief of Hanumān in the forests of Laṅkā, characterised by rare vitality and vigour, has been found at the principal temple at Panataran, belonging to the 14th century. It was here that Indonesia consummated the supreme religious synthesis embodied in the poet Tantulara's aphorism "The Buddha is one with the Trimūrti". Such synthesis could not be reached on the Indian soil.

Like India, China from early times absorbed many alien invaders and conquerors on her soil such as the Hūphas, the Tartars, the Mongols and the Manchus. But unlike India she sometimes went beyond the confines of her land to subjugate nomadic and less advanced cultures in her neighbouring regions and imposed her civilisation by the force of arms. She had no noble art like India which could carry to them the messages of her tolerant religions, morals and philosophies of life. Both in the northern and north-western borderlands of India beyond the Himalayas and the Hindukush and in Further India and Indonesia across the seas, Indian and Chinese merchants were found to trade together from very early times. But India has also sent there her priests, monk-scholars and missionaries as well as craftsmen and architects. Thus she built temples, monasteries and universities and her works of art had a perennial fascination for the indigenous peoples in these distant lands. Obviously neither Chinese religion nor Chinese art could make any corresponding impression. India established her colonies and kingdoms abroad as the result entirely of peaceful trade, evangelisation and missionary enterprise. It was a process not of conquest but of social Hinduisation, a gradual fusion of races encouraged especially by the egalitarian outlooks of Buddhism and Tāntrikism. Such harmonious and peaceful uplift of distant semi-civilised races and peoples on a large scale and across a whole millennium
through the dissemination of scriptures, images, social customs, institutions, laws and forms of government has hardly any parallel in world history. It is remarkable that while China insisted upon the Hindu colonies and kingdoms of South-East Asia to offer tribute and accept vassalage to the Imperial dynasties of China, and treated them as alien and barbarous, they were on the contrary treated on terms of political equality by the various States of India and constantly invigorated by the migration of her traders, nobles, priests, scholars, monks and craftsmen. Asian humanism and sense of the brotherhood and sanctity of life are largely the products of Indian spiritual art and culture.

The Triumph of Indian Humanism

The spirit of non-violence and non-injury to all sentient beings and universal compassion are the most precious gifts of India to civilised Asia through the centuries. The Ta Prohm inscription of Jayavarman VII of Kambuja (1181-1200 A.D.) who built the famous city of Angkor Thom (Nagara-dāma or Yaśodharapurā) and whose empire extended from Burma and Malaya to the borders of China mentions 102 hospitals (ārogyasaṃśāla) in different parts of the kingdom with physicians and nurses. An elaborate list of medicaments and other commodities provided for the hospitals is furnished. The Indian spirit of complete identification with the pain and suffering of fellowman underlies the foundation of the hospitals of the Pacific by the Hinduised Kambuja Emperor as revealed by his inscription:

“The pain of the diseased became in the king a mental suffering more severe than the former for the real pain of a king is the pain of his subjects, not his own bodily pain.”

The same humane spirit actuated the Burmese king Kyanzittha (A.D. 1084-1112) who built the Ānanda temple in Pagan as recorded in an inscription of his:

“With loving kindness shall king Kyanzittha wipe away the tears of those who are parted from their trusted friends—his people shall be unto him as a child to its mother’s bosom—he shall soften the hearts of those who intend evil. With wisdom, which is even as the hand, shall kind Kyanzittha draw open the bar of the Gate of Heaven, which is made of gold and wrought with gems.”

On the base of one of the granite towers in Zayton (Satin, modern Chuan-chow), the far-famed ancient Chinese port in the province of Fu-chien, was sculptured in A.D., 1228-1250 the scene of the Buddha’s self-immolating compassion that drives him to embrace death by a fall from a cliff in order to nourish a starving tigress about to eat up its own cubs. The same edifying story was represented in a fresco in a cave in Tun-huang in the 6th century,
the Kizil in the 7th century, in a shrine in the Horyuji temple at Nara in the 8th century and in Tibetan tankas from the seventh to the nineteenth centuries. Such is the perennial fascination that this birth-legend depicting the supreme compassion of the Bodhisattva had in civilised Asia. The site of its enactment was commemorated by a stūpa built in the early centuries of this millennium by one of the Kuśāṇa Emperors and located by Hsiun Tsang at some distance from Taxila in the Second Holy Land of Buddhism in Gandhāra.

In the 16th century at Wat Sutat Temple in Bangkok, there was carved on a door a lively, radiant forest scene proclaiming Buddha’s great law of love to all sentient creatures with a solicitude, tenderness and skill unsurpassed in the world’s animal sculpture. Bird, deer, monkey, hog, lamb, flower and luxuriant vegetation here show the same dynamic rhythm of movement and vitality of modelling born of a profound kinship with nature which one comes across in the remarkable animal carvings of Sānchi, Bhārhut and Bodhgayā (3rd to 1st century B.C.). Once again Indian myth and imagery of the animal world renovated and beautified the tropical jungle of the East as if by a magical wand. The reverence for all life has now become the precious heritage of Indian Asia rooted first and foremost in love as the Anguttara Nikāya expounds it,

‘To the two-legged, love;
To the leg-less, love;
To the four-legged, love;
To the many-legged, love.’

**Art And Colonisation**

The history of Indian colonisation remains yet to be systematically written. As in the cases of the colonies of Hellas and Great Britain, Indian settlements abroad adopted celebrated names from the homeland. Regions of India such as Kamboja, Gandhāra, Kaliṅga, Utkala, Daśārṇa, Malaya, Śrīkṣetra, Videha, and Ayodhyā reappeared across the Pūrvasāgara. Such farfamed Indian cities as Kauśāmbi, Mathurā, Saṅkiśā, Mithilā, Champā, Dvārāvaṭi, Amarāvaṭi, Suvarnaprāṇa and Vikramapura sprang up and, embellished by Indian art and architecture, revived hoary memories of the homeland in the Indian colonies and kingdoms of the Pacific. Just as in the uplands of Western Punjab and Afghanistan, so in the upper valleys of the Mekong and the Red River the Indian regions of Gandhāra and Videha (with its capital Mithilā) were re-established and the sacred sites of Buddhism, the Pippala cave, the Griddhrakūṭa, the Bodhi tree and the āśrama of Upagupta were replanted by art. The local legends also replanted even the place of the Buddha’s Enlightenment near Lake Ta-li in Yunnan. In Cambodia by the sides of the twin cities of Angkor the sacred śālās of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā were relocated in the great lakes. Hindu settlements in Further India were collectively called Brahmadeśa, a name which is now confined to Burma. It is here that the adoption of
names of ancient regions and cities of the mother-land is most discernible—a lasting testimony to the spirit of loyalty and emulation of the rich traditions of the mother-land. Another collective designation is Ramanna-desa or Ramen-Mon. The list of Indian names includes Śrīkṣetra, Hastināpura, Sudhammavatī, Dvāravatī, Haṁsāvatī, Rāmāvatī, Asitāhjana, Kusimanagara, Rāmapura, Muttima-manḍala, Utkala-desa, Aparānta, Avanti, Vārāṇasi, Gandhāra, Kamboja, Mithilā, Puṣkara, Rājagriha, Saṅkiśā and Vaiśāli—all within the present geographical boundaries of Burma. Ptolemy has mentioned many Sanskrit and Pāli place-names from Burma which indeed has remained a division of India, both geographically and culturally, from at least the 1st century a.d. The great vehicle for the spread of Indian civilisation in Middle, East and South-East Asia had been the art of India introducing through the ages among the less advanced peoples her myths, religions and philosophies. The great Indian colonies and kingdoms of Śrīkṣetra (Burma), Funan (Cochin China), Champā (Cambodia), Pan Pan (Malaya), Tambralinga (Ligor), Śrī Vijaya and Majapahit or Tiktablva (Sumāṭrā) were fed by a constant stream of migration of princes, nobles, merchants, priests, monks, temple-builders and craftsmen from India and developed a distinct colonial culture of their own with its celebrated seats of culture, art and learning. A Second India, Dvīpāntara Bhārata, intervened between India and China in the Eastern seas, both geographically and culturally.

Greater India

Throughout this entire region the methods of polity, titles and designations of officers became Hindu. The laws of Karma supplied the source and ground of morals as the myths and philosophies of the Mahāyāna and the Vedānta the inspiration of worship. South-Asian inscriptions were often found written in classical Sanskrit Kāvyā style. The inscriptions of Kambuja bear evidence of elegant, flawless Sanskrit composition as well as familiarity with the classical Sanskrit metres. They give references to the Vedas, epics, Purāṇas, the Manusmṛiti and the Raghuvanaṁsa as well as certain Tāntrika texts, viz. the Vināśikha, Nāyottara, Sammohā and Śrivaschheda, and to Pāṇini, Vātsāyana, Viśālakṣa, Pravarasena, Mayūra, Guṇāḍhya, Suśruta and Saṅkara. One inscription mentions that as King Jayavarman VII (1181-1218) of Kambuja returns to the capital after his expedition from Champā his queen entertains him by a dramatic performance, the plot of which is derived from the Jātakas, and which is played by a body of nuns, recruited from abandoned girls. As many as 20,400 images of Indian deities made of gold, siver, bronze and stone are mentioned as being installed by the same king and 514 separate temples and 2066 minor edifices as being constructed for the purpose. The Cambodian gods include Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Bhagavatī-Śrī, Devī, Gaṅgā, Umā, Mahiṣāsūramardini, Indrāni, and Vāgīśvarī and such composite deities as Śiva-Viṣṇu, Śiva-Devī, Śaṅkara-nārāyaṇa and Hari-Hara as well as Kambu Śvayambhuva.
and his wife Merā, the mythical couple form whom the Kambujas were descended. The entire territory came to be dotted with temples, monasteries, colleges (āśramas), schools (viprasālās), libraries (sārasvatis), hospitals (ārogyaśālās), rest-houses (vahni-śālās), alms-houses (satras) and hotels (bhaktasālās) for public benefit. The whole heritage of Indian culture in Sanskrit and of temple art and architecture came to belong to the people. Their literatures were saturated with Hindu and Buddhist myths, legends and fables. Even in the distant islands of the Philippines some of the primitive peoples still use the Indian alphabets. The Indonesian language also shows strong affinity with Hindi and Urdu. Sacerdotalism and Brahmanical ritualism still persist in Bālī.

The Indianisation of Middle, East and South-east Asia was, no doubt, due largely to the universal language of Indian art. Indian religion, law and custom could rule exotic societies only so far as the great living Indian art could import into them shining, universal and enduring meanings and values. Thus did Indian art easily and effectively transcend the barriers of culture, race and epoch, giving half of mankind in Asia peace, goodness and fortitude. There is actually a living Indian Asia which is what it is, less because of Hindu law, morals, religions and philosophies of Buddhism and Brahmanism that cannot impel nor invigorate, but more because of the serene art that they created, directing Asian peoples to the profound and abiding values and ideals of universal humanity.
Chapter 3

THE OLDEST RELIGION AND ART OF INDIA

Extension of the Indus Culture

The oldest historical civilisation of India (C. 3000-1500 B.C.) is that of the Indus valley. Who built up this civilisation that was contemporaneous with the ancient Sumerian and Elamite civilisations of the Middle East is one of the greatest unsolved puzzles in human history. All that is known is that the Indus people built a string of cities and towns, with mighty granaries, spacious bath-houses, broad streets and extensive sewage channels, developed a variety of highly refined and luxurious arts and crafts, and were thriving over an extensive region when the so-called Indo-Aryans arrived in the Punjab. The latter called them their “slaves” and “enemies”, dāsa-dasyu (Iranian daha-dahyu). They established a vast empire extending from the Indus valley (Mohenjo-daro), Kathiawar and Cutch in the south, to Ambala (Rupar) in the north and to Baluchistan (Shahi Tump) in the north-west. Important sites of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa culture have been discovered in Rajputana on the banks of the ancient dead rivers, the Sarasvati (modern Ghaggar-cum-Sarsuti) and the Drīṣadvatī (modern Chitang) and in the upper reaches of the Sutlej at Rupar and other adjoinging sites. It appears that the Indus culture advanced up-stream from its original seat in the Indus basin to the valleys of the Sarasvati and Drīṣadvatī, and thence to the banks of the Sutlej and its tributaries, these latter in ancient times forming a part of the Sarasvati system. Probably not long after their advent on the banks of the Sarasvati, the Drīṣadvatī and the Sutlej, the Indus people and the Vedic Aryans came in bloody conflict. The latter designated their god and leader Indra as the ‘fort-destroyer’ and ‘breaker of cities, seven, ninety-nine and even a hundred cities,’ and many chiefs of the Indus peoples slain by Indra are enumerated by name in the Vedic hymns.

The stages of the spread and development of the Indus civilisation may be roughly indicated. The sifting of evidence from plain and painted pottery throughout the region shows that the earliest stratum is represented at Amri which may reach back to 3000 B.C., followed by the Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, Jhukar and Jhangar cultures. Some remains at Mohenjo-daro bring down the date of the extensive civilisation to about 600 B.C. Between pre-historic Sind and Baluchistan and further west there was constant intercourse through the passes of the Bolan, Lake Phusi and the Gaja valley; while the Indus valley also carried on trade by the sea-route with Sumer, Elam and probably also with Egypt. Some scholars identify the Asuras of Vedic literature with the Assurs or Assyrians, who, according to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, seem to have founded settlements as far east as Magadha.

Mohenjo-daro, where at least four major racial types have been discerned,
viz. (i) Proto-Australoid, (ii) Mediterranea, (iii) Mongoloid and (iv) Alpinoid, had remarkable facilities of land and water communications and became one of the earliest cosmopolitan cities in world history. The Indus people appear to have shifted toward the north-east and dominated the Sarasvati-Sutlej basin until the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C. About the end of the millennium the early Aryans came to this area. The remains of various strata of civilisation recently excavated in Bikaner State and at Rupar in Ambala district of the Punjab indicate the following movements of the Indus people:

1. The march from their original homes in the Indus basin to the Sarasvati-Drisadvati doab, and thence along the Sutlej river right up to its upper reaches during the period circa 2000-1400 B.C. The Indus people seem to have reached Rupar towards the end of the third millennium B.C.

2. Their settlement on the banks of the Sarasvati and Drīsadvati rivers destined to be buried in the sands of the Rajputana desert in the later centuries. More than a hundred sites have been found by A. Ghosh in the valleys of the Sarasvati and Drīsadvati and Hastināpur with unmistakable affinities with the culture of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro of the 3rd and early 2nd millennium B.C. In the Drisadvati valley there is also evidence of development of a later, eastern phase of Harappa culture of the 2nd to the 1st millennium B.C.

3. The displacement of the Indus people at Rupar about 1500 B.C. by the Aryans who used iron along with bronze and who also appear to have abandoned the area about 700 B.C. A stone relief of the Goddess of fertility, a collection of punch-marked coins and an ivory seal in Mauryan Brahmā characters, besides terracotta figurines, bring down the Rupar diggings to the Mauryan period.

The Indus valley culture ultimately extended from Chanhu-daro in the Indus delta to the Sarasvati and Sutlej basin through Rajasthan in the north-east and to the south through Saurashtra to Ahmedabad as recent diggings have led to the discovery of Indus seals at Rangpur and Lothal covering a distance of about 950 miles. Undoubtedly this was the most extensive empire of that ancient part. Probably there were two empires with Mohenjo-daro and Harappa as their respective capitals.

The Indus Trade-Seals and their Contacts with Mesopotamia

Lying in the extreme, well-watered margin of the Indian continent, the Indus civilisation had contacts both by land and sea with Sumerian and Akkadian civilisations in Mesopotamia. A hair-pin with a double spiral head found at Chanhu-daro resembles pins found on islands of the Aegean Sea. Two seals of the Mohenjo-daro type have also been found in Elam and Mesopotamia; while a cuneiform inscription of the Euphrates valley has also been discovered at Mohenjo-daro. The Indian seals found at Zel Asmar in Iraq could be dated at about 2800 B.C., while those discovered at Sumer belonged mainly to the Akkadian level (2370 B.C.), but a few also were found in pre-Akkadian and
post-Akkadian strata. Archaeologists on the basis of the study of pottery in the different layers of the ruins and other evidences consider that Quetta, Amri and Zhob preceded the civilisation of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. Nal, Shahi Tump, Jhukar and Jhangar were later cultures of the Indus valley. The skilfully fabricated steatite seals, with representations of animals and pictographic writings, are believed to have been used in connection with trade, the seal-cutter having reached almost his perfection. That these seals might have been used for commerce is inferred from the fact, stressed by Hutton, that cotton fabric bearing a seal impressed with an Indus valley stamp has been discovered from a prehistoric site in Iraq. The writings on the seals remain yet undeciphered. It is suggested that the ideograms on the seals represent descriptions of commodities packed in bales which were protected by clay labels bearing imprints of the seals, or names of the traders or guilds. A seal of Indian origin which was found at Umma near Lagash actually lay on a bale of cloth. Or, these seals may have had a religious significance.

From Harappa on the Ravi, the cities of Bahawalpur on the Sarasvati and Mohenjo-daro on the Indus to the trade-towns of Mehi, Dabar Kot and Sutkagen-dor in Baluchistan, Rangpur in Kathiawar and Lothal in Gujarat and beyond the boundaries of India to Ur, Lagash and Anau, industrial and commercial prosperity was writ large on the face of the Indus culture with its uniform commercial code and script and an elaborate system of trade seals, weights and measures. Literacy must have been prevalent at least among the trading class throughout an extensive territory.

The Indus City Planning

The Indus culture shows a careful town-planning with sewage and drainage channels, wells and public swimming and hot-air baths for the common people; while the probable absence of temples suggests that there was no priestly class as in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Palaces and tombs found in the latter also did not exist in the Indus valley or were indistinguishable from private houses. Strongly fortified citadels have been discovered, however, at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. These indicate both strong, centralised administration and military precaution against attacks, probably from the fierce Rig-Vedic Aryan tribes who wore coats of mail and rode on horses, which the people of the Indus culture did not probably possess. In Harappa we find remains of workmen's dwellings built in serried ranks together with working floors and granaries under the protection of the citadel. Commodious granaries or storehouses which constitute arrays of long halls, supported on massive plinths of burnt bricks and provided with ventilating passages beneath their timber floors, have been discovered both at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. These were obviously State granaries that, in the age when all taxes were paid in grains, were scattered throughout the land. Brick architecture was one of the chief glories and gifts of the Indus civilisation. The house of the average citizen
on the banks of the Indus was as well-built and comfortable as that in modern civilisation. It was from the Indus valley that the elegantly built domestic structure spread to the cities of Mesopotamia. The bigger size of the cities of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, as compared with the other thirty-five small towns and villages that have been discovered, as well as the perfection of city design under the direction of expert engineers and architects suggest imperialist centralisation. The latter might have been the outcome of a defensive scheme against the Aryan invaders, and could be easily evolved in the valley due to the easy river transport. The need of security both against military raid and devastating flood is, no doubt, writ large in the city planning in the Indus valley. Violence and slaughter are suggested by the discovery of groups of skeletons of men, women and children with contorted limbs in a large room at the foot of a staircase at Mohenjo-daro. Some archaeologists like Sir Mortimer Wheeler find a complete resemblance between the organisation and lay-out of the cities of the Indus valley and those of Ur or Lagash with priest-kings or autocratic priesthoods in temple-citadels forming the strong-holds of centralised government on a feudal basis, and surrounded under their protective surveillance by the serried lines of workmen's barracks and work-places. Piggott even speaks of regimented slave-labour in connection with his description of what he characterises as the dreary 'cooie-lines', the great State granaries and the municipal flour-mills and of one united Indus empire with Harappa and Mohenjo-daro as its northern and southern capitals respectively. The dominance of a priestly royal organisation, as in the case of the other ancient riparian civilisations, cannot, however, be inferred on the basis of existing evidence. The whole matter is as obscure as the pictographic writing which is yet to be deciphered.

Types and Characteristics of the Indus Statuary

Sculpture in the Indus valley shows a high degree of finish and excellence. Some figurines are, indeed, among the most superb specimens of ancient art and craftsmanship. The human statuary throws light upon the physical anthropological characteristics—flat cheek-bones and noses, low foreheads and narrow eyes, obvious non-Aryan features. Gold, silver, ivory and precious stones used in elaborate ornaments for both sexes, domestic utensils including drinking cups, incised polychrome and glazed pottery, fine fabrics of wool and cotton, artistic terracotta toys for children, and the elaborate coiffure of both men and women, all testify to the development of a highly sophisticated artistic culture.

Sir John Marshall has given his considered judgment that the jewellery of the Indus people in gold and silver reached the same standard of artistic excellence as that of the jewellery houses of modern London.

The Indus valley culture has contributed certain permanent elements to Indian culture and art. There is, first, the worship of the primordial Mother
Goddess (bedecked with jewellery), as in Asia Minor and Crete, along with phallic worship, as evidenced by the discovery of a large number of phalli and ringstones from which stemmed in India the worship of Śakti in the later centuries. From the Aegean to the Indus and the Sutlej female statuettes symbolising the Divine Mother have been discovered in large numbers indicating the universal character of worship of the Mother Goddess. One of the Harappa seals shows the Goddess as nude and upside down with the lotus plant issuing from her navel. This is the prototype of the Earth-goddess Prithvi, Aditi, or Śrī-Mā of the Vedic Aryans and of Śrī Lakṣ̄ṇī, Gaja-Lakṣ̄ṇī and Yakṣ̄ī that we come across in Bhārhut, Sāñchī and Orissa caves. The Harappa Mother Goddess seems to have been propitiated by human sacrifice that is portrayed on the obverse of the seal. Another Harappa figure, standing amongst the branches of a pipal tree, appears to be the prototype of the later tree-spirit Yakṣa or Yakṣ̄ī, Gandharva or Vṛkṣakā. It is not clear whether the tree-spirit is a god or goddess. It is likely that the Indus people conceived the pipal as the Tree of Life (anticipating the celestial Tree of Wisdom of the post-Vedic age) with the devatā inside embodying the power of fecundity. In a Harappa terracotta sealing the familiar horn motif indicating divinity as in Mesopotamia appears on the pipal tree. The goat on the Mohenjo-daro and Harappa seals (Nos. 430 and 316 respectively) is, as in many primitive religions, associated with fertility; while the seven ministrant figures who wear head-dresses of tree-branches and are usually portrayed on the seals comprise deities of a lower status. One of the seals shows two-beaked bird and dragon-bodied creatures facing each other as they remain poised in the air from two sides of the pipal. Their tails are entwined on the treetrunk round a spot in which four pipals (fruits) are shown. B.M. Barua identifies these creatures with the Nāga-bodied suparṇas (mythical birds), which eat or do not eat the fruits. This Indus seal, accordingly, gives a pictorial representation of a familiar theme in R̄g-Vedic thought the Universal Mother and Śiva Proto-types. The tree in Indus valley seals is often stylised as a U-figure, straight and inverted that one encounters very often—the yoni symbolic of the Mother Goddess or the process of creation. In the Zhob culture north of Quetta (c. 2500—2000 B.C.) the female figures are grim and fierce, embodying the terrifying, destructive aspects of the Mother. In the Kulli culture of South Baluchistan (c. 2500—2000 B.C.) and Harappa (c. 2000 B.C.), the goddess wears ornaments and is invested with magical charms and fertility symbols. In one of the Zhob sites we have a figurine with enormously exaggerated yoni and thighs. In a railing pillar from Bhārhut (in the Allahabad Municipal Museum) we see a Yakṣ̄ī from whose navel issues forth a lotus stalk. The navel is the seat of all vegetative fertility in ancient Indian myth and art.

The earliest Indo-Aryan Mother Goddesses, Śrī and Lakṣ̄ṇī—Beauty and Abundance—described as twin mistresses of Man, that we come across in early Indian art, have therefore obvious filiations with the Indus valley Mother Goddess that was worshipped for a whole millenium in that region and must
have influenced the rise of the Mother cult also in the Ganges valley. This is corroborated by the discovery of ring-stones of hematite from Rājghat, Bhītā, Ahichchatra, Kosam, Mathurā and Pātaliputra—all showing a mother deity with alternating tree and animal motifs. The cylindrical seal from Rājghat is of special interest as it represents a bull with a crib in front, similar to the unicorn and crib of the Indus valley. Certain terracotta figurines of the Mother-Goddess found in the Indus Valley at Harappa, Mohenjo-daro and Chanhu-daro have been compared with terracottas from Sāri Dheri, north of Charsada, Taxila, and in north-western India, Attock and Kosam in Allahabad and also with the sculptures of Bhār hut, Sāñchī and Bodh gayā.

The female religious figures seem to belong to several types in ancient culture, viz. the Universal Mother or Isis type, the Divine Woman or Anahita Ishtar and Yaksini type and the personified Yoni or Baubo type. Besides, there were also secular figures. These figurines, whether religious or secular, bequeathed by Indus valley and Maurya ages, throw a flood of light on the development of ancient Indian religion and sculpture. The Maurya terracotta female figurines, unearthed in Northern India from Taxila to Pātaliputra, especially recall the Harappa Universal Mother type with exaggerated breasts and hips and wearing a broad girdle. Coomaraswamy points out that we do not come across the girdle in Sumerian examples, while the bejewelled chain fastened in front below the breasts is also typically Indian and steatopygous, forestalling the Indian adornment, chhannavīra met with in sculptures in the later centuries.

There is also the nude god of the Indus valley in the posture of meditation with three faces, a pair of horns crossing his head, a fan-shaped head-gear or piled up matted lock, and several animals round him. This is believed to be the prototype of Śiva-Pasupati or Śiva as Lord of the Animals. Śiva is three-faced (Tryambakā) in Aryan legend and sculpture. The Indus valley (Mohenjo-daro) figure is three-faced, while its triple horn anticipates the trisūlā and its legs bent double in the padmāsana posture recall the Supreme Yogi. Another figure represents the god as the archer, the prototype of the later Śiva-Kirāta, the deity of the hunting folks. In the Śiva images of the Pallavas in the south, the Mohenjo-daro pair of horns is met with. The crescent moon on the Purānic Śiva’s forehead is probably connected with the pair of horns, as in some other cults of Sumer and Babylonia where these denote the deity. It is also noteworthy that the upraised phallus in the Mohenjo-daro representation is the usual manner in which Śiva as well as Śiva’s incarnation, Lakulīśa, were represented in the Middle ages in Western and Eastern India. Many figures of clay, obviously representing male deities, have been found at Mohenjo-daro, which are entirely nude and also wear horns on the head. These may be the Śiṅnavēla of the Rig-Veda, meaning nude gods (gods possessing śīna) of the enemies of the Indo-Aryans. All these male nude figures stand erect. Some standing deities on seals also show the bull in the foreground. Now in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, Śiva is described as completely nude and
as Īrāva-linga and Sthira-linga and the god and the linga become identical. The Vāmana Purāṇa describes four sects of Śiva worshippers, viz. those who revere the lingam, Paśupati, Mahākāla and the Kapilas. The cults of the lingam and Paśupati probably originated in the culture of the Indus valley. A four-armed figure, occurring among the signs of the Indus script, anticipates the four-armed Śiva of the Hindu pantheon. A copper sealing representing a yogin, with two devotees on the two sides and coiled serpents facing, shows another distinct feature of Śiva, who in Aryan tradition wears serpents. The Harappa image, called the Dancer, also strongly suggests Śiva Naṭarāja as the Mohenjo-daro figure suggests Śiva-Paśupati.

The cult of the Vrātyas, referred to in the Atharva Veda (15th kāṇḍa) as nonsacrificers and worshippers of Eka-vrātya (the Supreme Being, prototype of Śiva), with his associate the Pumśchali, and wearing woollen apparel and sheepskin, wielding bows and lances and practising neither agriculture nor trade, seems to belong to the Mohenjo-daro civilisation. This was once widespread in India among her indigenous peoples, necessitating Aryan conversion through the Vṛāyastoma ceremony, by performing which groups of Vrātyas became eligible for social intercourse with the Aryas and ceased to be Vrātyas, as Kātyāyana observed. It is the aboriginal folks, the non-sacrificing Vrātyas, regarded in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas as outcastes, vagrants and mixed peoples, who perhaps have given to the country the universal institution of vrata or religious ritual or vow, as mentioned by Āpastamba. It was probably in the Gupta period that the social absorption of the Vrātyas and introduction of the vrata rites into Brāhmaṇism were completed.

The people of the Indus valley as well as the Vrātyas were worshippers of the lingam, the generative male energy of the universe, symbolic of Śiva. Both the male symbol of the lingam and its counterpart, the primordial nude goddess with lotus in her hair, are found at Mohenjo-daro, embodying two main currents of worship and ritual of later India. Similarly, the huge tank found in the centre of the city of Mohenjo-daro is probably the prototype of the holy bathing tanks of Hinduism of the later ages. It may be that the tank of Mohenjo-daro is the temple of the river god Indus worshipped by the Indian people.

Finally, there is evidence of the worship of spirits of trees and animals in the Indus valley which gave rise to the later Apsarā, Nāga and Yamśa cults. The aśvattha and neem are among the sacred trees in the Indus valley, and in one seal-amulet the deity presiding over such trees is actually represented as a horned goddess. Another horned deity makes obeisance to her, while behind him is a goat with a human face. The bull, the tiger, the buffalo and the goat are all sacred animals (probably vāhanas or vehicles of deities) with a food-vessel or altar usually represented before them in the seal-amulets. The snake also seems to have been an object of veneration. The Atharva Veda definitely mentions the cults of the serpent, the aśvattha tree, and Eka-vrātya, and gives an account of a variety of magic and sorcery—all of non-Aryan origin and significance.
The Blend of Abstraction and Naturalism in the Indus Sculpture

All true art conserves and transmits the spiritual values and traditions of a civilisation. Art in fact is the most efficient vehicle of expression and evocation of the ensemble of beliefs, values and ideals of a given culture. Through the vicissitudes of her history India's sculpture has given supreme expression to what is permanent and universal in man, his perennial vision of serenity, power, passion or love with overtones of meaning brooding over his progress in the generations. This we find even in the pre-historic phase of her Indus culture. One of the most notable pieces of sculpture found in the Indus civilisation is the dancing, three-headed androgynous figure from Harappa, of which only the torso now remains. The male-female combination of the entire body suggests that this may be a prototype of Ardhanārīśvara or the composite image of Śiva-Pārvatī. The simplicity and dynamic quality of modelling that blends a profound sense of volume and movement with the perception of the soft quality of flesh in stone makes it one of the masterpieces in Indian sculpture. In the dawn of India's history her plastic art suggests an inner tension rather than anatomical accuracy, while the refinement and smoothness of the surface of the body are intended to define certain spiritual attributes rather than represent bodily characteristics as in Hellenic art. Even in that dim age India's technical imagination subserved the realm of the spirit. In this particular case the image embodied one of the seminal ideas of Indian culture, viz. the juxtaposition of the masculine and feminine principles within the human body. Another torso from the same ancient city is that of a heavy male figure where the concentration of power and poise is reached through sculptural devices, such as the inter-penetration of smoothly modelled planes and rich surging curves. The inflation of the abdomen is intended to embody a fundamental idea of Indian sculpture across the ages, viz. the presence of the life essence or prāṇa, filling and activating the inert body. Once again, physical vigour and poise, derived from the metaphysical notions and embodied in broad softly modelled convex and concave surfaces, are in sharp contrast with the interplay of exaggerated muscles and tissues of Greek art aiming at a pictorial rather than symbolic representation of the human figure. Similarly, an ideal representation that has supplied the norms of feminine loveliness in India across the ages is represented by the well-known copper statue of the dancing girl from Mohenjo-daro in which we find the sensuous tilt of the hip joint, the outward turning of the elbow and the tense balance of the legs familiar in the later representations of goddesses, angels and courtesans in Gupta and medieval sculpture. The wiry lengthening of arms, legs and head-dress, underlined by the repetitiveness of the bangles, has achieved a remarkable blend of refinement and seductiveness anticipating the bronze statues of the Chola period.

Links between the Art of the Indus and the Art of the Ganges

Contrasted with this sophisticated courtesan or temple-girl (gaṇikā or devadāsi)
of Mohenjo-daro are thousands of female figurines of the Mother Goddess which have been unearthed generally in a damaged condition from such widely dispersed ancient Indus settlements such as Zhob, Kulli, Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, and which must have been worshipped by the common people of the Indus valley in every household. The fertility Goddess of the Indus valley is a virgin rather than a mother. The scarves she wears crossing between her breasts anticipate the garment invested with the attribute of conferring longevity (āyusyam) in the Atharva Veda, and correspond to a similar fertility symbol found in the images of the Mother Goddess from the various Mesopotamian and Iranian sites. The jewelled girdle (mekhalā) worn by her is also a longevity (āyusyam) charm as mentioned by the Atharva Veda (vi, 133). Younger sisters of the Mohenjo-daro Mother Goddess with her magical scarf and girdle are represented by the pre-Mauryan terracotta figurines at Mathurā (1000-300 B.C.), the gold leaf image at Lauriyā Nadangaṛ (about 800 B.C.), the terracotta figurines at Basārā, Taxila, Bhiṣā and other places (800 to 100 B.C.) and the later Yakṣī forms linking the art of the Indus with the art of the Ganges valley.

The Mesopotamian horn on the head of the Indus Paśupati has been transformed into the nandipaḍa of Śiva in the Ganges valley, while his seated yogic posture of meditation has become a type of the āsana and pitha of deities in the major religions of India. Magic, fertility and yoga wove the texture of the Indus valley religion. There is also a three-headed Indus figure seated in yogic posture and surrounded by various animals, a prototype of Śiva Paśupati. But while Śiva has no horns this God has horns that apparently represent a Mesopotamian survival indicating divinity. Two other Indus seals of the same deity embody profound serenity generally associated with Śiva in Rig-Vedic culture. Rig-Veda mentions Śiva as Rudra. Offerings can be made to Him only at the cross-roads or other forbidden places indicating that this deity was an outcaste in the hierarchy of Rigvedic gods and was of non-Aryan derivation. Several other Indus seals represent horned Dryads in trees, obvious prototypes of the tree-spirits of the Atharva Veda and of the later Yakṣīs of early Buddhist sculpture. Here again art was the handmaid of the popular cult of vegetative fertility that is the most vivid expression of fecundity typified by the Great Mother of the ancient world. A sprig of leaves springs from the head between the horns of the fig-tree spirit, from that of the Śiva prototype and, again, from the womb of a nude female deity turned upside down with legs overstretched.

The Dryad represents the fecundity of vegetation in the Indus valley; the nude goddess with a leafy spray gushing out of her womb like a stream represents the reproductive force of water; the bull which also appears with three heads in Mohenjo-daro represents the power of generation in the animal world; and the Śiva prototype together with various conical and cylindrical stones that are obvious phallic emblems the fecundity of man. All this testifies to the profound homage that the Indus civilisation paid
to the principle of reproduction and growth in nature, animal and man. The animal modelling on the Indus valley seals as well as the terracotta figurines represents a remarkable example of animal sculpture in the world history of art. Animal sculpture in the Indus valley is inspired by the cult and magic of fertility and is at its best in the representation of the bull, the elephant, the squirrel and the monkey, combining an abstract organisation of the mass with a dynamic movement of contours and achieving a profound suppleness and sensitiveness that are prophetic of the whole evolution of Indian animal modelling from the animal representations of Bhārhatu and Sāñchi to those of Mahābalipura and Koṇāraka. The pre-Aryan art of the Indus valley bequeathed to Indian sculpture a blend of abstraction and naturalism and a vital dynamic quality that persisted in spite of vicissitudes across many centuries.

The Genesis of Pūjā and Mūrti

During the age of the civilisations the worship of Nature was the oldest and most firmly rooted and took the form among the peaceful, agricultural prehistoric peoples of the Indus the worship of fecundity in Nature, Animal and Man. The Dryad that bestows vegetative abundance, the Bull that safeguards the multiplication of herds, Śiva and the Mother Goddess who assure human fecundity and welfare are the perennial and universal objects of human worship that the Indus civilisation bequeathed to India. Such cults are extended from the Indus Valley to the Mediterranean. The possibility cannot be eschewed of the Indus Valley being the cradle of the Sumerian, Babylonian and even Egyptian cultures. Just as the Indian cults of tree and nature spirits, lingam and yoni and mother-goddesses persist in Indian civilisation, the symbolic and metaphysical rather than naturalistic treatment of the body of man and animal, discernible in the Indus art, endures. Art in the cities and towns of the Indus Valley reached an acme of perfection, and though there are about two thousand blank years separating the most ancient arts of India and the Mauryan art of the Ganges, the motifs, symbols and patterns of the former are continued when Indian art emerged in the second and third century B.C. under the impulsion of Buddhism. Both pūjā (worship) and mūrti (image of art and religion) have the oldest civilisation of India and of the whole of the Ancient East behind them.

The civilisation of the Indus was more widespread and deep-rooted than the less extensive, contemporary, sister civilisation of the Sarasvatī. Its worship of the Mother Goddess and Śiva, and of the sex-organs, lingam and yoni, as contrasted with the Vedic Aryan deities of Indra, Varuṇa and all the rest, materially enriched the Indo-Aryan religious beliefs and practices. The ubiquitous worship of trees, serpents and animals, pūjā as distinguished from yajña, also came from the Indus people. Many symbols, motifs and designs found in the pottery of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa were bequeathed
to later Indian arts and crafts. The use of cloth in apparel, the form of the ox-cart, the domestication of many animals, including the elephant, hand-loom weaving and several arts and crafts as well as city and village planning were also among their precious gifts to Indian civilisation. The plastic conceptions of the lime-stone bust from Mohenjo-daro and the statuettes from Harappa, characterised by the revelation of breath or consciousness filling and distending the entire body, and of the copper figurine of the danseuse from Mohenjo-daro, with its provocative, bent posture and attenuation of limbs, comprise a tradition and style that have dominated Indian art through the centuries. Animal sculpture of the Indus people with its blend of abstraction and rigour of composition with sensitive, differentiating modelling also bequeathed a rhythm of form that has persisted in Indian art. The dynamic quality and abstract sense of Indus plastic art, seen at its best in the human torsos and statuettes from Harappa and the seals of bulls from Mohenjo-daro, are its permanent gifts to Indian art development. The grass-roots of Indian culture and art are encountered in the extensive and deep-rooted civilisation of the Indus people.
Chapter 4

THE HERITAGE OF VEDIC MYTHS AND LITERARY TRADITIONS

The March of the Rig-Vedic Aryans from the Sapta-Sarasvati

During the third millennium B.C., when a dry climatic period began in the modern belt of Asia, bands of the Aryans or Aryas migrated from the grasslands and steppes of Central Asia, using horses and wheeled vehicles and gradually found themselves in the plains of the Seven Rivers called the 'Saptasindhuv'. The Seven Rivers comprise either the seven streams of the Sarasvatī, mentioned in the Rig-Veda and the Śalya-parva of the Mahābhārata, or the five streams of the Sarasvatī referred to in the Atharva Veda along with the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā. In ancient time the Sarasvatī was a mighty river-system that flowed westward into the Gulf of Kutch. But this river was captured by the sands of the Rajputana and the active part of it flowed eastward and became the Yamunā. The Indo-Aryans first settled in the valleys of the Indus, the Sutlej, the Sarasvatī and the Drīṣadvatī before moving to the upper reaches of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā. The Sarayū marks the eastern-most frontier of Rig-vedic and the Sadānirā of later Vedic culture. From the Sapta-Sarasvatī to the Sadānirā was a long arduous march of the Vedic Aryans. Among their gods and goddesses were included Sarasvatī, who was at the beginning a river deity and was worshipped later as the Goddess of Wisdom. The Sarasvatī, the river of the Bharatas, is constantly mentioned in connection with Bhāratī, the personified divine protective power of the Bharatas. Tho Goddess Bhāratī and the God Agni were the guardians of the Bharatas in their eastward expansion. Agni Vaīśvānara, according to the Vedic myth, travels eastward from the river Sarasvatī. Rivers cross his path but Agni burns on across all the streams. The spread of the Aryans to the quarters of the earth was symbolically the extension of the suzerainty of Sarasvatī or Bhāratī, the goddess of the Bharatas.

The Fascination of Rivers and Forests

Rivers and forests have had strange fascination for Indian culture and art since the Vedic period. Rivers were invested with sanctity and majesty during the march of the Indo-Aryans through the Punjab, literally, the Land of the Five Rivers, and the region west of the Sindhu. In the famous river-hymn of the Rig-Veda (X,75), most of the rivers that find mention belong to the Indus system. The Sarasvatī and the Drīṣadvatī also occur many times. In the later Vedic age as the Indo-Aryans swept down from Brahmāvarta or the Sarasvatī-Drīṣadvatī doab along the Gaṅgā-Yamunā corridor, the lower Indus valley offering obstacles or no attraction, they encountered vast inaccessible
forests. These forests came into even greater significance than the ancient rivers. It was in the clearings of the forests that the Vedic literature designated as the Āranyakas (literally, belonging to the forests) and the Upaniṣads (literally, confidential sessions) first took shape in the later phase of Aryan expansion. South of the Kurukṣetra region extended the impenetrable forest called the Khāṇḍava. Not before the eastern backwood clearings and forests were reached—far away from the home of the Bharatas—Indian wisdom could mature as the result of the impact of the rise of theistic devotional cults and development of ascetic schools. There was need of coordinating the divergences of rituals and sacrifices under the officiant priests. The upsurge of the Kṣatriya clans engendered a sense of solidarity among the Brāhmaṇas. The age of unification of tribes and peoples by powerful kings aided by wise rishiis followed a period of petty rivalry and struggle. All this promoted the compilation, first, of the Rig-Veda, and then of the Sāma Veda in a meeting of seers in the Naimiṣa forest, and then the elaboration of the Brāhmaṇa literature, that treats not only domestic sacraments but also public ceremonies of the Vājapeya, Aśvamedha and Abhiṣeka or large-scale conquest and coronation reminiscent of the development of big States with associated myths and legends of sovereignty and empire.

The Hermitage Scenes in Indian Art

The Upaniṣads were composed in the forests of the Ganges valley in the later period of Aryan colonisation and settlement. The development of the various Upaniṣadic schools was part of an active philosophical movement prevalent from 1000-800 B.C. that culminated in the reformism of Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva and the heterodoxy of the Buddha, Mahāvira and Maskari-Gosāla in the 6th century B.C. Such is the profound influence of the characteristically Vedic institutions of hermitages and philosophical debates in the forests that academic gatherings of sages and pupils in the sylvan retreats comprise familiar themes of Indian art through the centuries.

There are remarkable representations of forest retreats of sages (rishiis, munis) in the early Buddhist sculpture of Bhārhat and Mathurā (2nd-1st century B.C.). One of the Bhārhat reliefs showing a hermitage scene bears the inscription: ‘the anchorite of long penance instructs his pupils’, the instruction relating to the rhythmical chanting of the Sāma Veda hymns with the help of the fingers. The Mathurā relief shows a rishi offering food to birds, deer and snake that all live peacefully in the hermitage. Another Mathurā relief shows the arrival of a pupil with his baggage hung on a pole in the hermitage. A fire-altar and a kamaṇḍalu are placed in front of the rishi’s leafy cottage. The serenity and austerity of the hermitages, where pupils used to spend a dozen years under their distinguished teachers and learnt from them the highest truths, relating to the Ātman and Brahman—the special subject matter of the Upaniṣads—are recaptured from the Vedic times by Indian art in later epochs. Among the
later master-pieces of representation of the hermitages of ṛisīś in the forests are
the hermitage of Nara and Nārāyaṇa in the Badarikāśrama in Gupta sculpture
at Deogaṛh, the magnificent hermitage scene in the Ajanta painting and the
austerity of Bhagiratha in the forests for bringing down Gaṅgā on the earth at
Māmallapuram.

The River Goddesses

Many are the rivers mentioned in the Āraṇī Vedic hymns. Of these the Sarasvatī
and the Sindhu are cited most. The Drīḍadvatī is mentioned along with the
Sarasvatī in several places while there are only occasional references to the
Gaṅgā and the Yamunā. It is noteworthy that the shrine of the river goddess
at the Kailāsa temple, Ellorā, includes the representation of Sarasvatī. The
river goddess here stands on a lotus with creepers and birds among their leaves.
She is on the left of the figure of Gaṅgā while Yamunā is on the right. Gupta
art introduced the images of the river goddesses, Gaṅgā and Yamunā. The
Imperial Guptas extended their empire from Pāṭaliputra to the upper Ganges
basin washed by the twin rivers, Gaṅgā and Yamunā. The most outstanding
representation of the river goddesses is that of Gaṅgā Devī at Besnagar, scul-
tured about a.d. 500 and now preserved in the Boston Museum.

The Symbolism of the Vedic Fire-Altar: Its Influence on Stūpa and Temple

The living and undying contributions of Vedic culture to Indian ideology and
values are its metaphysics and symbolism. The Brāhmaṇa literature clarifies
and elaborates the Vedic rituals and ceremonies, including those connected
with royalty, for the instruction of the priestly class. It is also concerned with
myths and legends. The hymns came later than the rituals and are found in
the Āraṇīyakus and Upaniṣads.

The Vedic rituals and hymns interpreted sacrifices comprehensively and
symbolically in the context of the stage of man's spiritual development. Sacrifice
or yajñā is a symbolic and vicarious offering to the cosmic Person or Puruṣa,
and the building of the fire-altar (agnīśāla) is the reconstruction of the universe
in the form of the Puruṣa. Man, as he builds up the sacrificial altar with his
elaborate and minute rituals and procedures, builds up his new, invisible,
boneless and immortal body. The altar symbolises Puruṣa, or the Cosmic
Spirit. By the sacrament man obtains a new birth, becomes 'twice-born' in
a divine society.

The focus of Vedic sacrifices is the family altar (agnīśāla) where burns the
perennial sacred fire, the building of the altar being undertaken with meticulous
propriety, symbolising the structure of the unity of the cosmos, the fire (Agni)
being identified with the Progenitor (Prajāpati), and man being identified
with the both Prajāpati and Agni. Prajāpati is also Death. Thus does man,
“endowed with a luminous, ethereal nature,” by his sacrifices become immortal.
Vedic hymns rich in imagery and metaphor give a metaphysical interpretation to life, worship and art. The construction of the fire-altar serves the Myth of Puruṣa or the Absolute and projects its rhythms. The Vedic āvē (altar), round or square, constructed with mathematical precision according to the prescriptions of the Śulva Śāstra, is the prototype in Indian art of the Buddhist and Jain stūpa. It rises like a colossal, ephemeral bubble that resembles the universe-egg of creation (brahmāṇḍa) just as the sacrificial fire rises from the altar to the gods of the sky.

Indian architecture shows a superimposition of layers of plinth, socle and terrace on the plain, low pedestal of the sacrificial altar reinforcing the profound symbolic meaning of the oblation of every Indian householder who repeats the supreme sacrifice of the Virāṭa Puruṣa. Agni or sacrificial fire serves as the messenger of the kingly gods of heaven who are conjured by hymns of praise, 'dripping with ghee' and invoked by incantations of mantras. They come from heaven to the earth, take their seats by the fire-altar, participate in the offerings of rice cakes and butter and after being honoured and sumptuously fed depart to heaven. The holy Vedic hymns and oblations and the elaborate ritualism along with the ancient simple ladles, spoons and pots have been handed down to modern India through the millenniums. There were also elaborate Vedic sacraments in which the animals in large numbers used to be sacrificed. At Isapur, Mathurā, an octagonal yūpa or sacrificial stake has been found used for tying animals. This belongs to the 2nd century A.D. and bears an inscription mentioning that it was set up on the occasion of the Dvādaśa sacrifice.

**Vedic Motifs and Symbols in Indian Art**

In the field of Indian art, Vedic culture has provided the fundamental motifs and symbols such as the swastika, lotus, conch, umbrella, altar, wheel, sun, thunder-bolt, nāga-garuda, the Tree of Life and the full vase that have been reproduced through successive ages. O. C. Ganguly remarks: “Examples of plastic art contemporary with Vedic literature are very few, and it is hoped that further studies of the pre-historic Indian terracottas may help to establish the existence of a system of plastic parallels to the Vedic literary traditions.” These symbols are parts of the Brahmanical Vedic heritage. A few important motifs in Buddhist art can, however, be easily traced back into the Vedic literary traditions. The World-Tree of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, of which the moving spirit is called Yakṣa, is the symbol of the Buddha in the art of Śāńchi, Bhārhut and Amarāvati. In Buddhism the Buddha is also the Yakṣa, the Brahman of the Kena Upaniṣad. The fiery pillar which represents the Buddha at Amarāvatī is reminiscent of the Vedic myth in which the fire-god appears as a pillar or axis of the universe separating earth and heaven. The representation of Śri-Lakṣmī, either aniconally by the lotus or in human form with the elephants giving her a lustral bath in Śāńchi, Bhārhut and Bodh Gayā corresponds closely to the description of Śri-Lakṣmī in the Śri Sūkta of the Upaniṣads and the
Brāhmaṇas. The elephants in the reliefs represent the rain-clouds that with their downpour bring forth wealth, prosperity and happiness symbolised by Śrī Lākṣmī. At the Kailāsa temple, Ellorā (8th century A.D.), we have a representation of Śrī Lākṣmī, right at the entrance. The goddess is flanked by two four-handed deities on the right and the left, each carrying a jar of nectar. Two heavenly elephants pour their lustral waters from inverted jars on the head of the goddess. Below the pedestal is a lotus lake with blossoming flowers, buds and leaves, amongst which there are two nāgas, carrying jars for receiving the nectar. More significant is the derivation of the Buddhist symbol of the Dharmacakra or Wheel of the Buddhist Norm from the Rig-Vedic conception of the Wheel of the Sun or of Time (Kāla) as the Sun representing the rhythm of the entire universe. The Wheel is the Universe, and he who sits on the navel or navel of the Wheel is Being. “On whom the parts stand fast as it were spokes on the navel of the wheel, Him I deem the person to be known,” says the Prāśna Upaniṣad. Likewise in Buddhism, the Buddha turns the Wheel. Finally, the blossoming expanding lotus, so important in early Buddhist art, is the Vedic symbol of Becoming. The Rig-Veda speaks of Agni as born from the lotus—the ground of all existence; while in the Upaniṣads and the Brāhmaṇa the lotus is the firmament coextensive with space in the heart which maintains life and the universe, the primordial womb or receptacle on which Brahman is created by Brahman. The birth of Agni or Vasiṣṭha in the Rig-Veda is the prototype of the birth of Brahmā Prajāpati as demiurge, so often represented in Gupta and neo-Brahmanical art.

A very significant Vedic art-motif is represented by what O. C. Ganguly appropriately calls the Indian dragon, which is the whirling reptile Vṛitra cut into two by Indra (Vṛitra-Samhāra). This appears as a decoration in a late Gupta pillar, now in the Allahabad Municipal Museum. The serpent is represented in the motif in an inverted and whirling posture with mouth agape as it disgorges Agni and Soma; the upper and lower parts of its body are separate in the stylised plastic treatment, suggesting Indra’s severance of the body into two portions. The convolutions of the reptile body are artistically conceived in terms of tendrils and flowers, but the lion-face with its pricked up ears shows the agony of the beast as it cries out to Indra: “Cast not thy bolt, only dissever me.” A corresponding ancient art-motif is the Swan (haṁsa) which occurs on the opposite face of the same pillar. The symbolism of the Swan is rooted also in the Vedic myth. The Swan appears in the decoration with a spray in its mouth. At the Virūpākṣa Temple, Paṭṭadakal (about A.D. 740), there is a vigorous carving of the Swan in a small panel on the north wall. The Bird as it strides forward suddenly looks back with a spray in its mouth, its plumage forming a finely elaborated decorative scroll and curl. At the Brahmā Śvara temple in Bhuvanesvāra (11th century) we also encounter the sacred Swan with a spray in its mouth as part of an elegant decorative scroll pattern in a panel. At the Hoysala temple in Somnathpur rows of swans cover the ornamental friezes along with makaras. The Swan with extended wings
appears as abacus supports in Khmer architecture. Another decorative motif, derived from the Vedic literary tradition, is the Tree or Creeper of Wish-fulfilment (kalpa-drūma, kalpa-latā). We encounter both the tree and the creeper in the sculptures of Sāñchi, Bhārhut and Amaravati. In Gupta and medieval Indian sculpture we come across the kalpa-latā on the inner door jambs of temples. Coomaraswamy observes: “The symbolism and iconography of Indian art can almost always be referred to Vedic formulations; apart from these sources, the symbolism and iconography cannot be explained, but only described.”

Similarly the myths of Indian art are generally derived from Vedic literary traditions. Such well-known Vedic myths as the combat between the devas and asuras, the incomprehensibility of Māyā or Creative Energy, the Supreme God asleep in the Cosmic Waters or the Great Serpent of the Universe have supplied the dominant themes of Indian art, defining and clarifying the cosmic process applicable to life, mind and the universe through the ages.

**The Goddess Aditi, Prithvi or Śrī of Vedic Traditions**

Rig-Vedic culture was aniconic, but gradually the influence of the Indus civilization that flourished by its side for many centuries introduced images and temples. Within the fold of Brahmanical culture the common people worshipped tree-spirits, local godlings and feminine deities of fertility and motherhood. The Atharva Veda refers to Chaitya Vṛkṣas and the Dryads. Big trees are invoked as deities that seem to be connected with human fertility and confer boons of offspring to married couples. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to a building for the performance of Vedic sacrifices, while elaborate regulations are given for the construction of fire-altars in the Śulva Śūtras. It is probable that as a result of the impact of the Indus art and religion images of gods such as the Golden Cosmic Man, Śūrya, Agni and Savitri were sculptured. In the Vedic myth the Self or the Sacrificer was symbolised as the Golden Imperishable Man. Indra, Agni, Varuṇa, Śūrya or Savitri are but forms of the same Puruṣa or the Absolute. As Indra he uses his power of Māyā to manifest himself in different bodies. The Puruṣa as Agni is effulgent in many forms. As Śūrya he sways the whole Universe. As Rudra he reveals all this. Thus does the Puruṣa become the many, and all the gods (Viśvadevas) though imaged separately are the same. In the Rig Veda (VIII, 69, verses 15-16), there is a definite reference to the image of Indra who is invoked for worship. In Rig Veda (IV, 24), there is the interrogation: “Who will buy my Indra?”, obviously indicating the existence of the Indra image. In the later Brāhmaṇas and Śūtras references to such images become clearer and more frequent.

The image of the great Mother of the gods, Aditi or the Earth Mother, Prithvi, was also there and must have resembled the gold plaque of the Goddess found in a burial casket, regarded as post-Vedic at Lauriyā Nandangarh dated about 800 B.C., the Mauryan gold figure found at the stūpa of Piprāwā,
district Basti, and the Mauryan goddesses engraved on a ring-stone bearing
the well-known Mauryan polish discovered at Rupar (dated circa 600-200 B.C.)
recollecting also similar stones and terracottas of Aditi, Prithvi or Śrī from Taxila,
Kosam, Mathurā, Saṅkiṣā, Rājaghaṭa, Tāmralipti and elsewhere.

The polished, broken stone disc at Rupar shows not only the Mother Goddess,
probably Aditi, but also her temple, a leaf-made cottage, overhung by a tree,
and her aboriginal priest offering fruit to a woman worshipper. On the right
is her husband who supplicates to the Goddess. The fruit is the boon of the
Goddess, the assurance of offspring for the barren wife. Such worship of the
Mother Goddess for the bestowal of progeny is still current in India after more
than two millennia and a half. Below the scene of worship is another figure of
the Mother Goddess with the same exaggeration of breasts and hips, and
big snakes both on the right and left. The snake is an object of worship in the
Indus valley, and the cult of the snake also finds mention in the Atharva Veda.
The Rupar image of the Mother Goddess, with the snake on each side (probably
her vāhana or vehicle) may be compared with a faience tablet in the Indus valley,
where a deity is worshipped on either side by a kneeling man with a big cobra
behind him. There is a remarkable similarity between the Mother image at
Lauriyā Nandangarh and the images at Rupar. Both show the same arrange-
ment of hair with locks hanging down and the expressive gestures of the out-
stretched arms and hands. In fact the Mauryan or pre-Mauryan images might
simply have changed their places, and both have affinities with their elder sister,
the goddess of Mohenjo-daro. Another figure of the Mother Goddess has also
been found on a broken bronze object in Rupar belonging to the stratum
600-200 B.C.

Three Śuṅga terracotta figurines which are not of the nude variety but
decorated with elaborate head-dress, jewelled and beaded bands and ornaments
of various kinds, girdles and emblems, have a close resemblance with the
Indus and Maurya Mother-deities: one from Mathurā, another from Kosam
(Kausāmbi) and the third from Tāmralipti. The Tāmralipti figurine wears a
broad ribbon that contains four auspicious symbols, identified as a pair of
fishes, a bird, a sleeping doe and a mākara. The emblem of two fishes is also
found in other terracottas from the Śuṅga period. One terracotta figure from
Basār stands on a lotus and shows two wings. The winged type has also
been found at Akhun Ďheri and also occurs in a stone relief from Mathurā
belonging probably to the 1st century A.D. Some of these forms at least can
be identified with the Goddess Śrī of the Rīg-Vedic tradition. She is first
mentioned in literature in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa and then subsequently in
Sūtra literature where offerings are made to her as the Goddess of love
and fertility. At least there are two terracotta specimens of the Śuṅga period
representing the Goddess Śrī flanked by stalks of lotus flowers which support
a pair of elephants (i.e. clouds) pouring streams of water (i.e. rain) on the
Goddess.

The aim of this archaic terracotta art is symbolic representation. Each part
of the body conforms not to its human counterpart but to certain objects in nature and is joined to another part artistically. The entire pattern comprises a symbol of fertility and maternity, and not a realistic representation of the deity. Such an idealistic treatment of feminine beauty is characteristic of Indian art of all periods and provinces.

Aditi, Prithvī or Śrī in the Śuṅga and Maurya terracottas is commonly nude with a girdle on her waist, and an exaggeration of breasts and loins. She represents the beneficence and fecundity of Mother Earth. Thus she has affinities with the Babylonian Ishtar. It is to Prithvī that the Rig-Veda addresses this funeral hymn: “Go to thy mother, this earth, the widely extending, very gracious Prithvī. That maiden, soft as wool to the pious, may protect thee from the abode of destruction.” The treatment of sculpture, abstract and metaphorical, is the same in such images as in the Indus valley figurines or of the later Yaksīs of the Maurya and Śuṅga periods. How the older ubiquitous Indus image of fecundity was assimilated into the figure of the Vedic Goddess Aditi, Prithvī, Śrī or Lakṣmī and the Buddhist image of Māyā Devī cannot be traced, but the interpenetration of both notions and practices was inevitable. The numerous, crudely executed terracotta icons of the Mother Goddess found in Indus valley culture suggest that these were worshipped in every home by the common people, the upper classes probably disfavouring the cult. The Rūpar stone disc also shows an aboriginal priest as distinguished from a Brāhmaṇa priest, wearing the sacred thread and a turban, as repeated in a bronze figure recovered from the Rūpar stratum belonging to 200 B.C.-A.D. 600. No doubt the nude Mother Goddess was the supreme non-Aryan feminine deity pertaining to a cult that once spread from the Near East to the Bay of Bengal, who was later on absorbed into the Brahmanical and Buddhist pantheon. Coomaraswamy considers that the nearest Vedic deities who approach the non-Aryan prototypes are Aditi, Vāsini, Umā and Śrī Lakṣmī. In all these divinities one or other feature of the Mother Goddess of the non-Aryans is encountered. The Sūtra literature indicates generally the gradual incorporation of popular religious practices into sanctioned rituals. All great art is conceived and executed in terms of popular myth and imagination. Below the superstructure of the priestly theology and aristocratic philosophy of Brahmanism flourished the cults of the Mother Goddess and the tree spirits followed by the mass of people. The realistic and sensuous popular art, bequeathed by the Indus civilisation, catered to this and continued to serve as a matrix of Indian art in Mauryan and Śuṅga times.

Ancient Vedic Images and Image-making

It is possible that the cosmic forces representing the Vedic deities might have been imaged along with the Golden Puruṣa. These are described by the Agni-Śayana as Daivatas, Pratimās, Pratikritis or Ankas even in the Vedic period, but definite evidence is not forthcoming. There is however definite reference
to images and image-making in Pāṇini and Kauṭilya. Pāṇini refers to images both for worship and sale (pāṇya). These are fixed (achala) or itinerant (chala) images that were means of livelihood but were not for sale. An image of what the Greek writers described as Heracles and what may be Vāsudeva-Kṛiṣṇa, Balarāma, Śiva or Yāksa was carried in front of the army of Porus as he encountered Alexander in battle. The image would be named with the Ka suffix such as Vāsudevaka, Śivaka, Skandaka, etc. Actually in later Buddhist art Brahmā, Indra and Yāksas (also mentioned in Pāṇini) came to be imaged as subservient to the Buddha, while the Yāksa or tree-spirits, nymphs and dryads, Śivakas or Skandakas of popular religion were also treated as the Buddha’s guardians or servants.

Ṛg-Vedic deities embody cosmic forces. The Sun-God Śūrya traverses the sky and dispels darkness. Indra or rain-god covers the firmament with a serried mass of lightning-clouds (airāvata) and gives rain. Vāyu or the wind-God covers the earth and sky. Varuṇa is the source and guardian of the order of the cosmos. Agni or the god of sacrificial fire carries holy offerings from the domestic altar to the celestial realm. All these deities represent invisible cosmic presences having no local habitation like their worshippers themselves, the nomadic Aryan pastoral folks, who set forth in their long wanderings from the Central Asian steppes. These fill their minds with the sense of mystery, awe and wonder so eloquently expressed in the Vedic hymns.

Among the Vedic deities Īndra, Agni, Śūrya and Prithvi are found represented in many later sculptures. The worship of these ancient deities was linked through the centuries with the great Vedic hymns and invocations and the Vedic ceremonials of oblation. Especially the cult of Agni, ever present in the fire of the domestic altar, persisted through the ages. The holy oblations in every hearth and home have a dual purpose in India, the flames lead the sacrificer with his gifts to the invisible celestial realm, and also appease the forces of evil in the realm of death and destruction.

The Indo-Aryans have made an elaborate and complex art out of the offering of rice cakes and clarified butter to Agni invoked by hymns and incantations. It is the richness, depth and spiritual interpretation of symbolism of Vedic liturgy that explain the complete absence of decoration and adornment of the objects and utensils of Brahmanical daily ritual—the wooden ladles, spoons and pots as well as the pestles, mortars and shovels. The worshipper’s prayer and ritual blaze the mystic paths of complete identification with the cosmic presences that shine in the bright sky, rule in the broad earth and dwell in the intermediate sphere between. Equally simple and bare is the Vedic altar where is enacted daily the dramatic symbolic transformation of the sacrificer into the Indivisible and Imperishable Golden Man, who is his effigy and who lies on the massed pile of the altar. The pillar placed on the altar symbolises the ascent of Man to the celestial realm which it holds aloft. At a later period of Indian civilisation this symbolic pillar traverses the dome-shape of the Indian temple, whose overvault represents the celestial sphere, and also strikes the ground
in the centre of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. Āmalaka (untarnished) or dome on the towering superstructure of the temple symbolises the door of the Sun-God and is pierced by the pillar. Beyond the āmalaka or dome there is the finial, the culminating point to which the pillar carries man’s worship and faith. The Vedic altar and pillar have governed the symbolism of temple architecture in India.

Vedic Myth and Imagery in Indian Art

We may now adduce a few instances of Vedic myth and imagery from Indian art history. Vedic myth and imagination are embodied in the sculptures at Bhājā, the oldest extant, sculptures of India, dated about the third or second century B.C.—a period that witnessed an all-pervasive Brahmanisation influencing every aspect of popular Buddhism. Here in a Buddhist monastery the more ancient Vedic Hindu art has been adapted to the purpose of the new Protestant faith. One of these sculptures represents the sovereign God Indra or Māndhātā, the archetype of the ancient pious Emperor, the all-mighty suzerain of the three worlds, and conqueror of the gods, asuras and men, seated triumphantly on an elephant of colossal dimensions. He looks down upon the whole earth covered with tiny figures of falling creatures under a tree uprooted by the elephant. There is also depicted Uttara Kuru or the Northern Continent, the early home of the Indo-Aryans, later on considered as the Elysium, where the Great Conqueror finds his ultimate abode and where dwell all happiness and beauty along with complete freedom from desire. There revel joyous couples, a king with his court, musicians and dancers, and a vast assemblage of people with the Tree of Wish-fulfilment in the centre. In the myth of Indra-Māndhātā the ancient Brahmanical conception of the Rājārṣi and the Buddhist conception of the Bodhisattva find an interesting fusion, derived as both these were from a common spiritual heritage. The bas-relief magnificently illustrates the basic Rg-Vedic conceptions of the victory of righteousness (deva) over evil (asura), of the falsity of the world of appearance and enjoyment (rūpa, māyā) and of the bliss of the eternal kingdom of righteousness and non-attachment (svarga). It is like a work in brush rather than in stone, and envisions the classical Vedic world-interpretation—the view of nature as a magic world of fleeting and deceptive appearances, of the supremacy of the forces of goodness over those of evil, and of the way of wisdom and renunciation as the way to immortality. The proliferation of countless, minute living forms that rise like thin, evanescent clusters of bubbles from the formless, undifferentiated cave-rock—the matrix of the phenomenal world—symbolises the supreme power of Māyā or Becoming according to Vedic thought.

Another sculpture represents the Sun-god with his consorts triumphantly traversing the sky on a chariot drawn by horses banishing two nude ugly female demons of darkness, who float downwards below the horses and wheels of the
chariot. The rock surface is left as an inchoate and inarticulate but heaving mass out of which, as from the primordial matrix according to the Vedic theory of creation, sentient beings rise and unto which they ultimately dissolve. The same myth is repeated in another relief where the demons of darkness, overcome by the Sun-god as he marches triumphantly accompanied by many female attendants riding on horses, sink like floating clouds into the bottom. Outside the Bhājā reliefs of the 2nd century B.C. and the much inferior sculptures of the Orissan caves of the first century A.D., there are no extant vestiges of Vedic vision revealing the profound mystery of the cosmic order, the wonder of the solar resplendence in earth and sky, the awe and majesty of the rainstorm and the vast amplitude of the earth. Bhārhut and Sāñchi, which are almost contemporary, are by striking contrast human and orderly, completely denuded of cosmic imagination and sense of supramundane mystery. These are revived about eight to ten centuries later in the classic idiom of Bādāmi, Ellorā and Elephanta, and of Sūmātrā, Jāvā and Cambodia in the Purvasāgara. The mythopoetic heritage of the Sarasvatī or Bhārati is inseparable from the verities and values of the culture of Bhāratavarṣa, whether in the homeland or Indian Asia. Vedic myth, religion and literary imagery and tradition set forth the norms of Indian culture and art through the millenniums.
Chapter 5

THE MYTH OF KṚṢṆA IN INDIAN ART

The Historicity of Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra, Vedic Reformer

The religious beliefs and rituals of Vedic culture encountered serious opposition and protest during the period of Indo-Aryan expansion and pressure further down the Ganges from the holy land of the Sarasvati-Dṛṣadvatī doab. This was inevitable as the Vedic sacrifices and rituals became exceedingly elaborate. The protestant metaphysics was developed largely in the half-Brahmanised eastern territories of Magadha and Videha; while the home of orthodoxy was the Kuru-Pāṇchāla country in the west. Intellectual ascendency gradually shifted from the Brāhmaṇas of Kuru-Pāṇchāla to the learned Kṣatriya princes and seers in Magadha and Videha. In Videha King Janaka's court became practically the focus of Aryan wisdom and culture in later Vedic times. It was here that flourished Yājñavalkya who identified Brahman with Ātman, and preached the doctrine of Brahman as pure intelligence and bliss manifesting itself in all phenomenal existences (Madhuvindya). Yājñavalkya's denial of Vedic deities and ceremonies and uncompromising idealistic monism represent the acme and culmination of Vedic wisdom and culture.

Such absolute monism as that of the Upaniṣads was, however, compatible with the worship of various deities coming down from the early Vedic Age. The Pāñinian pantheon includes Agni, Indra and Āditya or Śūrya. Rudra, Śarva and Bhava were considered as forms of Agni in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. Among the post-Vedic deities mentioned by Pāṇini was the Goddess Pārvatī with local names such as Śarvāṇi, Rudrāṇi, Mṛidāṇi, and Bhavāni and the God Vāsudeva. The Arthaśāstra mentions the GodApratihata or Viṣṇu for whom temples were built. Pāṇini also refers to the worship of the Guardians of the Four Quarters called Mahārājas. It is evident that the common people in the post-Vedic age worshipped not merely these ancient Indo-Aryan gods but also various minor deities such as Yakṣas, Gandharvas and tree and fertility spirits. Popular devotion to gods and godlings, worship of images and performance of yajñas accordingly went hand in hand with the ascendency of metaphysical idealism, the growth of ascetic orders and the spiritual interpretation of Vedic sacrifices among the intellectuals.

The most distinguished Kṣatriya seer and renovator of Vedic teaching was Kṛṣṇa who is by no means a legendary figure. Scholars are generally of the opinion that Kṛṣṇa was a most distinguished historical personage who flourished about 1000 b.c., if we accept the Jain tradition of Kṛṣṇa having preceded Pārśvanātha (817 B.C.). The latter's immediate predecessor Tīrthāṅkara Ariṣṭnemi was the brother of Kṛṣṇa's father Vasudeva. Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra was the disciple of Ghora Āṅgirasa, a priest of the Sun and worshipper of the Fire-god (Agni), who taught him in such a manner "that he never thirsted"
again”. The Rig-Veda also testifies to Kṛiṣṇa’s Āṅgirasa’s descent; for Viśvaka, who is a son of Kṛiṣṇa, calls himself Āṅgirasa. It is also curious that Kṛiṣṇa in Vedic literature is both a seer and a non-Aryan warrior. As a warrior Kṛiṣṇa fights against Indra on the bank of the river Amśumatī with ten thousand warriors, shines with effulgence and makes Indra and the gods drink the soma rasa. In the Taîtiriya Āranyaka we find a famous śloka of meditation in which Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva and Kṛiṣṇa become identical.

The Deification of Kṛiṣṇa as Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu

It is probable that Kṛiṣṇa inherited the Dravidian religious tradition through his teacher Ghora Āṅgirasa, since Angirasa Veda is connected in the Vedic literature with Ghora, i.e. some dark practice derived from the autochthones of the land. The Mahābhārata also mentions Kṛiṣṇa as having descended from Āṅgirasa and as a pitvij, adept in the Vedāṅga, and the scripture of Āṅgirasa as the noblest Šrutī (VIII, 69, 85). From his master Kṛiṣṇa learnt a unique view of sacrificial offerings as well as of the nature of the Self as the Absolute. According to the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad, Ghora Āṅgirasa taught Kṛiṣṇa that the righteous conduct—the practice of the virtues of austerity, charity, uprightness, non-violence and truthfulness—was as efficacious as fees given to a sacrificing priest. According to the Taîtiriya Āranyaka, Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu are three aspects of the same god. It was the Sātvatas, an important branch of the Yādava race, who first recognised Kṛiṣṇa not merely as their tribal hero and leader (Satvataṁ-varah) but as the Supreme God, or the Sun whom he taught them to meditate upon. Vāsudeva-Kṛiṣṇa’s identification with the Sun is clearly indicated in the Mahābhārata. Besides the appellations of Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva, the radiant Lord of the sky and Bhagavān, the Almighty, Kṛiṣṇa’s more familiar names include Hari, Keśava, Govinda and Janārdana. Pāṇini refers to Vāsudeva and Arjuna together which is an obvious indication of Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva; the word for Kṛiṣṇa-worshipper in Pāṇini is Vāsudevaka. In Patañjali (150 B.C.) we find Vāsudeva mentioned as Bhagavata, the term used by himself for the object of his worship, meaning the ‘Almighty’ or ‘the Adorable’. Vāsudeva is no mere Kṣatriya but the word is the name of God in Patañjali, whose references indicate the versatility of this Hero-God who has already become a legend.

The Bhagavad Gītā, India’s most widely read scripture, owes its name to the fact that this was spoken to Arjuna by the Supreme Lord (Bhagavān) on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra as the contending armies faced each other in grim resolution. The Mahābhārata also calls the Gītā Harigītā. It unfolds “the ancient wisdom of the Ayans” (yogah purātana), and is hence also called Nārāyanīya Sūtata and Aikāntika (monotheism). Its basic teaching is summarised in a nutshell in the following conception of the Godhead:

“I will mention my principle holy powers,
Although there is no end to my fulness.
I am the self in the inmost heart of all that are born.
I am their beginning, the middle, the end, of all creation.
I am unending time,
I am the ordainer who faces all ways,
I am destroying death,
I am the source of all that is to be.
I am the silence of what is secret,
I am the knowledge of those who know,
And I am the seed of all that is born.
There is nothing that can exist without me,
There is no end to my holy powers.
And whatever is mighty or fortunate or strong,
Springs from a portion of my glory."

_Bhāgavatism and Art_

The Gupta age saw a revival of Bhāgavatism with its emphasis of Kṛṣṇa as at once the historical teacher, hero and avatāra and the metaphysical essence of the Vaiṣṇava doctrine, and among the numerous Viṣṇu images met with in this epoch we have several myriad-headed and myriad-armed cosmic forms (Viśvarūpa of the Bhagavad Gītā) as, for instance, from Kanauj and Aligarh, the relief from Mathurā and the architrave from Gaṅgāśāla (near Allahabad). The Viśvarūpa conception of course echoes and amplifies the Vedic conception of the Cosmic Man in the Puruṣa-Sūkta.

Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism was essentially moral and mystical, and focussed a protest not only against ceremonialism and priesthood but also against religious rationalism. It reconciled the worship of the Deity with the transcendence of the Absolute, the Brahman or the Self as expounded in the Upaniṣads. The Mahābhārata repeatedly refers with respect to the Pāṇchalitā or Bhakti literature which deals with the worship of Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu as Nārāyaṇa and Puruṣa. Such worship must have become popular among the lay populations of the large states rather than among the Brāhmaṇa schools. The new theistic doctrine quickly obtained considerable numbers of adherents, especially among the Śakas, Yavanas, Ābhīras and other foreigners, all called Bhāgavatas or Vāsudevakas, after Vāsudeva who is Kṛṣṇa himself and who is later identified in an Āraṇyaka with Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa and in the famous Besnagar of Taxila) inscription of the convert Heliodorus (the Greek envoy of King Antialkidas with the Supreme God, Deva-deva Viṣṇu. Simultaneously a cult of Saṁkarṣaṇa (later considered as Kṛṣṇa’s brother) emerged and became popular especially in Central India and the Deccan up to the 7th Century A.D.

As early as the Śuṅga period we find the worship of the image of Kṛṣṇa as is evidenced by the statement of Curtius that an image of Heracles was carried in front of the army of Porus as he advanced against Alexander. Scholars
usually identify the Indian Heracles with Kṛiṣṇa. Magasthenes refers to the deification of Heracles-Kṛiṣṇa. "He, the Indian Heracles, excelled all men in strength of body and spirit; he had purged the whole earth and sea of evil and founded many cities; and after his death divine honours were paid; this Heracles is especially worshipped by the Saurasenians (or the Śaurasenas), an Indian nation in whose land are two great cities Methora (or Mathurā) and Kleisobara (or Kṛiṣṇapura); through it flows the navigable river Johares (misprint for Jomanes or Jamunā)." A Mathurā inscription of the time of the great Śaka Satrap Sodēsa (c.81 B.C.) relates to the 'Mahāsthāna' of Bhagavato Vāsudeva (va), probably marking the holy spot of the birthplace of Kṛiṣṇa or the scene of his assassination of the tyrant Kaṁsa in this city. There are standing four-armed figures of Vāsudeva Kṛiṣṇa at Mathurā, the earliest images of deified Kṛiṣṇa, belonging to the Kuśāna period; while the Mathurā Museum possesses two early Kṛiṣṇa sculptures, one showing the flight of Vāsudeva across the Yamunā with the babe-Kṛiṣṇa in his arms and the other representing the lifting of Mount Govardhana.

Although the Mahābhārata was the chief vehicle of Kṛiṣṇa-Bhāgavatism and deified Kṛiṣṇa in many places, the picture of Kṛiṣṇa as the ideal man, seer and friend was no less stressed. Kṛiṣṇa himself says in the Mahābhārata: "Whatever I shall accomplish is due to my own will and power; nothing which is in any manner divine I can undertake." Thus the Mahābhārata did not eclipse the divine by the human aspects of Kṛiṣṇa.

The Hero-God in Indian Art

Kṛiṣṇa's personality in history and legend was indeed many-faceted. In fact there is no hero or culture-builder in the long history of Indian civilisation whose genius was so versatile and many-sided as Kṛiṣṇa. First, Kṛiṣṇa Devakiputra, as he is depicted in the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad, is Kṛiṣṇa Āṅgirasa, the disciple of Ghora Āṅgirasa. He cleanses Vedic rituals and gives a profound spiritual interpretation of Vedic sacrifices as symbolic sacrifices of the senses, knowledge, yoga and ātman. Secondly, Kṛiṣṇa is also Pārthasarathi, the counsellor of kings and peoples. He is the ruler of Mathurā and Dwārakā, the Saṁghamukhya (President) of the Confederation of the republican tribes, the Vṛṣṇis, Andhakas, Kukuras, and Bhojas, which he saves from internal disruption due to the party politics of Bhabru, Ugrasena, Āhuka and Akrūra. He is the political seer, prophet and builder of a united India. The Superman of the Mahābhārata is par excellence a warrior and statesman who forged the unity of Bhāratavarṣa at the battle of Kurukṣetra. The great battle is depicted in Gupta art in a terracotta at Ahichchhatra (5th century A.D.) where the episode of the fight between Yudhiṣṭhira and Jayadratha is illustrated, and in a lintel from Gaṇghwā representing the fight between Bhīma and Jarāsandha in the presence of Kṛiṣṇa and Arjuna (5th century A.D.). The battle-scene is vigorously represented also in the Hoysalesvara temple at Halebid (12th century A.D.).
Krīṣṇa as the charioteer (Pārthasārathī) and Arjuna with his gāndīva bow are here prominent. Krīṣṇa is worshipped in the midst of the battle, while arrows shot by Karṇa fly back through a miracle after grazing his crown. Behind the chariot of Arjuna is depicted the Gariḍa standard. After the installation of Yudhiṣṭhira on the imperial throne at Hastināpura Krīṣṇa returned to Dwārakā as leader of the Yādavas who played an important role in the Aryanisation of Rajputana, Malwa, Kathiawar and the Deccan. Thus Krīṣṇa was like Rāma, a pioneer coloniser.

The Pastoral Krīṣṇa-Scenes in Art

Thirdly, Krīṣṇa was Govinda, 'the cattle-fender', the idol of the pastoral folks and the agriculturists whom he saved from many dangers and catastrophes. Krīṣṇa says to the shepherd folks: "Our gods are the cows, the meadows, the hills and the forests," and teaches them their worship instead of the worship of Indra, the rain-giving god of the Indo-Aryan culture. And if the non-Aryan worship of cows, pastures, forests and hills arouses the anger of Indra, Krīṣṇa protects the shepherds and their animals as the supreme Herdsman of the Universe. His killing of the Kāliya Nāga symbolises the reclamation of a miasmatic marsh and the rescue of agriculture and cattle-keeping. His lifting of Mount Govardhana symbolises the protection of farms and villages from devastating floods brought about by the wrathful Indra. Both the subjugation of the Nāga and the lifting of Govardhana have been familiar themes in Indian Art. In far-off Cambodia at the temple of Aūgkor-Wat, there is a magnificent relief of Krīṣṇa Govardhana at one of the entrances. The mountain is being easily lifted by the left hand by youthful Krīṣṇa with Khmer visage to the joy of the shepherds and cattle. With his dark non-Aryan complexion and yellow apparel and peacock-feather in his headgear, Krīṣṇa shows himself as the man of the people, the hero of a hundred myths and legends of devotion of the common man, and the cynosure of cowherd maidens whom he ravishes by his flute-singing. Krīṣṇa's miracles in the fields and pastures of Vraja, where he plays with shepherd boys and girls and on the banks and bathing ghats of the Yamunā, alternately attracting and dismissing the cowherd maidens from whom he elicits the entire gamut of self-consuming passion are prized by the Indian popular consciousness as thrice blest: "for hearing, for meditation and for the welfare of the world" (śravaṇa-mangalam, dhyāna-mangalam and viśva-mangalam).

The Rādhā-Krīṣṇa metaphor was a later development in the history of Bhāgavatism although the amorous relationship between Krīṣṇa and the cowherd maidens (gopīs) was delineated in the Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Bhāgavata Purāṇas. The connection between Krīṣṇa and Rādhā finds clear mention in the Prākṛta Saptasāti of Hāla, and, above all, in the Gitagovinda of Jayadeva who flourished in the Court of Laksmana Sena in Bengal (A.D. 1179-1205). The Gitagovinda is one of the finest lyrical dramas in world's literature. It is
based on the theme of the love of Kṛiṣṇa and Rādhā in its varied nuances, expressed in melodious Padāvalis which are intended to be sung in Rāgas and skillfully adapted to different love situations. One of the earliest images of Rādhā-Kṛiṣṇa, characterised by a melting tenderness due to the soft modelling and delicacy and rhythm of movements and gestures, is to be found in Pahārpur, Bengal, belonging to the 8th century A.D., while an inscription of Bhojavarmān (about A.D. 1100) refers to Kṛiṣṇa sporting with a hundred gopīs. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa of course passionately developed the doctrine of Rādhā as the special favourite of Kṛiṣṇa but did not mention her specifically. The mystical and philosophical treatment of the Kṛiṣṇa-Vadhā theme in the Bhāgavata subsequently led to the introduction of the figure of Rādhā and her crucial role in Kṛiṣṇa’s life and love. The sweet and devoted figure of Rādhā, self-oblivious in love and worship, was in all probability a Bengali invention, dating shortly before the time of Jayadeva and associated with the development of Tāntrikism, Rādhā being regarded as the Śakti of Kṛiṣṇa and the instrument of Kṛiṣṇa-realisation.

A vast literature, theological, philosophical and devotional, has centred round the life and teachings of Vāsudeva-Kṛiṣṇa. The Pāṇcharātra system of philosophy early provided a cosmological foundation to the Vāsudeva-Kṛiṣṇa myth. The Mahābhārata with its well-known section, viz. the Bhagavad Gītā, the Harivaṃśa, the Viṣṇu and Brahmavaivarta Purāṇas and later on the Śrīmad Bhāgavata, with the entire Bhakti literature stemming from it, all deal with some aspect or other of Kṛiṣṇa’s career and doctrines which indeed constitute the most colourful thread in the tapestry of Indian religion. The Vāsudeva-Kṛiṣṇa myth has indeed, provided a perennial inspiration to Indian art through the centuries. It is noteworthy that some of the earliest Vaiṣṇava sculptures represent beautiful Kṛiṣṇa scenes from the meadows and pastures of Vṛindāvana. A Kūṣaṇa slab in the Mathurā Museum represents Kṛiṣṇa decked with a flowing garland, surrounded by cows and cowherds and lifting Govardhana. A Kṛiṣṇa-Govardhanadhāraṇa and a Dānaliḷā scene are represented in moulded bricks and terracottas at Suratgarh in Bikaner belonging to the late Kūṣaṇa or early Gupta period. The sculptures at Mandor near Jodhpur belonging to the 4th-5th century A.D. depict scenes from Vṛindāvana including the raising of Mount Govardhana. In Pathārī, Gwalior, there is a massive relief representing the nativity of Kṛiṣṇa lying by the side of the reclining Indian Madonna Devaki, with four attendant chaufū-bearers on the right. This belongs to the 7th century A.D. and is sometimes considered as one of the finest and largest pieces of Indian sculpture.

Contrasted Kṛiṣṇa Representations, Metaphysical and Lyrical

Sometimes the artistic utterance of the Kṛiṣṇa legend is tranquil and restrained, akin to the spirit of the Bhagavad Gītā, sometimes it is exuberant and lyrical corresponding to the spirit of the Pāṇcharātras and the Bhāgavata. Such
contrast is discernible in its vividness if we compare the classical Vaiṣṇava art of the Gupta period which is serene and metaphysical with medieval north Indian sculpture and later Rajput and Himāchala painting, which are tender and passionate, and concentrate on the love-play of Rādhā and Kṛiṣṇa. For the illustration of early serene Nārāyaṇa or Vāsudeva-Kṛiṣṇa art motifs we may mention three notable sculptures: (1) The Gupta standing image of the four-armed Viṣṇu from Mathurā which vies with the Buddha images of Śārṇāth and Mathurā in its poise, serenity and ethereality. All over India and South-East Asia such a typical image of the standing Viṣṇu and also of the recumbent Viṣṇu sleeping on the Serpent of Eternity (Viṣṇu Ananta Śayana) as in the Gupta Daśāvatāra Viṣṇu temple at Deogarh, are symbols of silence and tranquillity of the soul in Brahmanism. The Viṣṇu images of the schools of Mathurā, Śārṇāth and Kanauj, and later on of Eastern India (Pāla-Sena), characterised by a subtle and profound blend of stern discipline of surface and outline with suavity and elegance of differentiating modelling and elaboration of details of apparel and ornaments, comprise some of the greatest contributions of Indian plastic art. Across the seas in Cīmā, we have a magnificent, serene image of the Slumber of Viṣṇu with the god Brahmā seated on a stylised lotus coming out of his navel at Mi-som, belonging probably to the 7th or 8th century A.D. Garuḍa holding serpents is seen on his two sides. The colossal Pāla sculpture of Viṣṇu (A.D. 1000-1200), seated on the back of Garuḍa with his two wings, may be regarded as one of the glories of Indian sculpture. Profusely embellished as it is, there is a superb blend of the plastic and the linear expressiveness commanding stillness. The Pāla type of the image of Viṣṇu on his vehicle spread to South-East Asia. Two well-known images are that in the temple of Prasat Kravan in Cambodia (dated A.D. 921) and that at Belahan in Jávā, belonging to about A.D. 1043. Garuḍa in Indian religion and art is the fair-winged sun-bird which carries Viṣṇu through the sky—the symbol of celestial illumination. Hence Garuḍa is in perpetual conflict with the Nāgas who represent the waters of the dark under-world. Viṣṇu mounted on Garuḍa is the symbol of metaphysical Reality in India, the all-pervasive cosmic silence. Like the Buddha’s face of silence, the face of Viṣṇu has been of aid through the centuries in India and Indian Asia in directing elevated meditation towards the ultimate Reality. (2) The image of Nara-Nārāyaṇa as the Supreme Self, One in Two, in Deogarh temple (6th century A.D.) and (3) the Gajendra Mokṣa image from the same temple. The second image is metaphysical, the third lyrical in its note. The background of the former is the Badarikā Āśrama, with its luxuriant vegetative growth, its wild animals living in concord and its ascetics. The two pedestals on which Nara and Nārāyaṇa are seated represent their separate pīthas as mentioned in the Mahābhārata. Above, Brahmā as well as Viṣṇu and Śiva with their consorts are happy at man’s triumph (siddhi) and Uṛvaśī’s discomfiture. The myth in a sense represents a Brahmanical rejoinder to the myth of the Buddha’s victory over Māra, but is more significant metaphorically. Nara and Nārāyaṇa are Arjuna and Kṛiṣṇa,
the Deity's incarnations for the Battle of the Bharatas. By *yoga-māyā* Vāsudeva creates his own double or multiple. Nara and Nārāyaṇa may also be interpreted as *Jīvātmā* and *Paramātmā* or Kṣara or finite and Aksara or eternal Purusā or Self of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The conception of the Jīva or the individual soul and the Paramātmā or the cosmic soul as two facets of the Supreme reality is a dominant notion in Indian metaphysics and religion. Seldom does art so eloquently represent a metaphysical truth—the reconciliations of the notions of transcendence and immanence, of the One in Two. It is rare that in sculpture intervening empty spaces (as between the two Selves and between their large limbs) as well as parallels and horizontals are so effectively utilized for an emphasis of poise and fulfilment. The two ascetic figures carved with melting softness and largeness, suitable for the luxuriant modelling of nudes appear as ever-lasting exponents of the mood of perfect self-absorption and help each other both artistically and psychologically in the consolidation of that mood. They both breathe *prajñānam* (wisdom) and *sāntam* (tranquillity) recorded by a combination of restraint and amplitude in modelling and the large expansive rhythm of the ensemble. The other image from Deogarh represents the episode of Kṛiṣṇa delivering the lord of elephants, whose leg is in the relentless clutches of an alligator (curiously enough a reptile rather than an alligator is sculptured). This sculpture underlines the poignancy and tenderness of self-surrender characteristic of the Bhakti doctrine, common to contemporary Vaishnavism, Saivism and Buddhism. The plastic treatment here is less stern and austere in keeping with the devotional and humanistic theme, revealing Kṛiṣṇa as the compassionate Saviour akin to the Bodhisattva of the Mahāyāna myth.

It is remarkable that in ancient Vieu Sra near Jaya in South Siam a standing Viṣṇu image has been found with a heavy rectangular head-gear and peculiar ear ornaments reminiscent of the sculptures of Deogarh, Bādami, Kanheri and Auraṅgábād of the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. This image and another Viṣṇu image in Māmallapuram style found near Takopa belong to sometime between the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. In East Jāvā the famous Śaiva temple at Prambanam (belonging to the 9th century A.D.), the Buddhist Chaṇḍī at Jago (end of 13th century) and the Śaiva temple of Panataran (14th century A.D.) comprise sets of reliefs which illustrate the legends of Kṛiṣṇa developed at a later stage in the Javanese version called the Kṛiṣṇāyana. At Anghkor Wat in Cambodia (12th century A.D.) there is a magnificent relief depicting Kṛiṣṇa and the milk-maids on the bank of the Jamunā.

At various shrines in Māmallapuram we find depicted along with the cosmic events of the Lifting of the Earth by the Vārāha incarnation and of the Traversing of the Universe by the Vāmana incarnation of Viṣṇu and the Ananta-Sayana, the Kṛiṣṇa myths of Dugdhdhāraṇa and Govardhanadhāraṇa in the pastoral landscape of Vṛindāvana. The flute-player, cows, calf and milk-maids are all there in a lively composition, spilling bhakti on all sides and creating an atmos-
sphere of miracle, mystery and illusion. This belongs to the middle of the 7th century A.D.

*Kriṣṇa-Viṣṇu in Medieval Cave Sculpture*

In the medieval cave-temples of the Deccan, belonging to the 7th and 8th centuries A.D., we encounter large-shaped, ponderous Vaiṣṇava sculptures that are far different from the suave, serene and idealised images of Gupta art and the tender, passionate and vibrant figures of Rajput sculpture and painting. At Bādāmī, Ellorā and Elephanta we find a concentration on the supernatural powers of Kṛiṣṇa-Viṣṇu that are in entire accord with the phantasmarial style of cave art. The figures of Viṣṇu are here colossal and massive like the supramundane myths and legends of the Harivamśa and the Viṣṇu-Purāṇa, and depicted with concentrated power and majesty, utilising fully the rich depth and darkness and the modulation of light and dark effects within the cave interior. The magnificent carvings of Viṣṇu seated on the endless serpent Ananta, Viṣṇu traversing the universe by three strides and Narasimha disembowelling Hiranyakāśipu at the cave temple of Bādāmī are apposite illustrations. In the Daśāvatāra cave at Ellorā we have similar majestic carvings such as Kṛiṣṇa holding up Mount Govardhana, Viṣṇu reposing on Ananta, Viṣṇu riding on his vehicle Garuḍa, Viṣṇu rescuing the Earth goddess from the deluge, Viṣṇu traversing the universe in three strides, and Viṣṇu in his Man-Lion form Narasimha slaying Hiranyakāśipu. The unfinished cave, subsidiary to the Kailāśa temple, also depicts the same supernatural scenes in a grandiose manner. More than the mystery of God transforming himself into Man (avatāra), we find in the medieval Kṛiṣṇa-Viṣṇu cave masterpieces the supramundane power and splendour and epochal miraculous deeds of the Almighty Lord created as part and parcel of cosmic tension and poise.

*The Sports of Kṛiṣṇa-Rādhā in Indian Painting*

Post-medieval Vaiṣṇava art was dominated by the human-cum-divine mysticism, characteristic of the ardent Bhakti cult that was focussed round the love-play of Kṛiṣṇa and the shepherd maidens of Vrajabhūmi. This was introduced into the religious consciousness of India by the Śrīmad-Bhāgavata, composed probably about A.D. 1000, which became the Bible of India’s millions—the scripture of the Bhakti movement as it spread to every nook and corner of the land during half a millennium, from the eleventh to the sixteenth century.

Throughout India the archetype of Rādhā-Kṛiṣṇa, the eternal Woman and the eternal Man, represented the pair of metaphysical opposites, Being and Becoming, in the vernacular of human love, and was reproduced in Vaiṣṇava song and legend, literature and painting which were most popular among the masses. Sculpture naturally cannot do justice to the devotional mysticism which underlies the līlā (sport) of Rādhā and Kṛiṣṇa. That līlā or the sport of
Being is eternal. Vṛindāvana or the Garden of Dalliance of Rādhā and Kṛiṣṇa is in every human heart. Rādhā is every human soul as it responds to the call of the Infinite, the far-off, melodious flute of Kṛiṣṇa that sounds in the twilight of the sub-conscious. The abandon of the human soul as it sacrifices family honour and caste prestige when it seeks the Beloved, and the entire gamut of spiritual moods exhibiting the different degrees of approach to Being can best be represented only in lyrical poems and paintings. Rājasthāni and Himāchala paintings deal with this popular archetype, and nowhere are the relations of poetry and painting closer and deeper than here. Very often a song or a couplet is illustrated by the painting which reveals the specific aesthetic rasa centred round the interplay of Rādhā, Kṛiṣṇa and the milk-maids of Vrajabhūmi—the souls of men. Painting, song, tale and dance all repeat and strengthen this archetype among the rural masses of India. The villagers deal with these metaphysical truths in their own way in little poems and songs, in their mystery plays, and devout dances and picturesque journeys in the rainy season. And painting also gives expression to the same moods and ideals that spring from the heart of the village population. Rarely is cultivated such art of the people, for the people and by the people.

Among the many episodes of the play of Rādhā and Kṛiṣṇa that reveal the eternal relations between Being and Becoming, and hence are symbolic and eternal, none reaches greater profundity than the representation of the Rāsa Manḍala or Collective Dance in which Kṛiṣṇa or Being by a sort of illusion (yogamāyā) multiplies his appearances, and dances with the milk-maids (human souls) in a ring, interlaced between each pair as common to all and special to each. The Being is linked with each and all in an all embracing Love that is the rhythm of the process of creation, the alternation of the seasons, the nuance of spiritual aspiration and the delight of the senses. This magnificent theme has been represented in many paintings, the most superb among which is a large-size fresco in the Jaipur Palace collection belonging to the 18th century.

In spite of the later emphasis of symbolic attitudes and emotions in the moving drama of human-cum-divine love in Kṛiṣṇa-Gopi mysticism the note of the transcendence of Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva as the Almighty Lord or Bhagavān is never obscured in India. Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva is the supreme deity and there are ten chief incarnations or avatāras of the Lord: the Viṣṇu-Fish, the Viṣṇu-Tortoise, the Viṣṇu-Boar, the Man-Lion, the Dwarf, Paraśurāma, Rāma, Kṛiṣṇa, the Buddha and Kalki. Indian art has through the ages depicted these avatāras separately, or together in connection with the delineation of Viṣṇu. The image of Mahā-Viṣṇu Trinity of Aligarh, belonging to the Gupta period, shows the faces of Vāsudeva, Nṛśimha and Vārāha together in the same bust and corresponds to the Triune Śiva-Maheśvara. The ten avatāras appear in the arching frame of the superb Sena image of Viṣṇu Trivikrama belonging to the 12th century. The evolution of monotheistic thought in India has done justice to the religious concepts of both transcendence and immanence or incarnation, and to the religious experiences of both mystical in-
effableness and warm, human intimacy. Indian art has revealed these in monumental grandeur and power of simplicity on the one hand, and in symbolic, lyrical and pictorial mode, on the other.
Chapter 6

THE REVOLUTION IN RELIGION AND ART: HUMANISM AND LYRICISM IN CLASSIC BUDDHIST SCULPTURE

Jainism and Buddhism as Religious Reformations

There was a remarkable global religious ferment in the 6th century B.C. In China there sprang up great teachers like Lao Tzu and Confucius; Zarathustra taught in Iran; and Parmenides and Empedocles taught in Greece. In India there flourished Mahāvīra, Makkhali Gosāla, Purāṇa Kassapa and the Buddha, among other teachers. There were many ascetic schools that rose and led a popular upheaval against ceremonial religion, priesthood and caste system in India in the 6th century B.C. Both Jainism founded by Mahāvīra, and Buddhism founded by Gautama approximated to the general pattern of revolt against the worship of deities and ceremonialism which Yājñavalkya and Śri Kṛṣṇa focussed earlier; but they differed from the post-Vedic reformist leaders in preaching strict asceticism and rigid moral code. No religion in the world has stressed more man’s immaculate purity, chastity and conquest over the body, the senses and world-stuff (pudgala) than Jainism. The moral grandeur of the Jina or the conqueror and the bleak, metaphysical solitude of the Kevalin or the Alone, indeed, represent some of the sublimest peaks of man’s dignity and freedom ever envisaged by him. Mahāvīra asserts, “Man, thou art thine own friend. Why wishest thou for a friend beyond thyself?”

The acme of Jain perfection is represented by the two categories of human soul, viz. Tirthankara or Maker of the Order, who, in his bodily form but with boundless knowledge, righteousness and patience, goes about propagating the truth to the world for endless ages; and the Kevalin, who is without body and is untouched and unhindered by matter, and can neither be worshipped nor adored by the world. The Tirthankara corresponds in some measure to the Avatāra in Brahmanism and the Bodhisattva in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The descent of the Tirthankara in Jainism marks the revival of Dharma and the reorganisation of the four communities (tīrthas) of monks and nuns and the male and female laity.

The Transcendental Silence and Bleakness of Jain Art

The Jain worship of Tirthankaras, which is now an established institution, hides the worship of God since the Tirthankara typifies all that is perfect and infinite in the soul of man, and at the same time undertakes the teaching of righteousness, faith and insight in the divine manner to those who worship him. With the introduction of the worship of the Tirthankaras in the 2nd or 1st century B.C., in Jain temples, no hard and fast distinction between Hinduism
and Jainism could be made by the common people of India. It is note-worthy that the Sthānakavāṣī sect among the Jains does not believe in idol worship. The Jīna (Victorious) or the Tīrthankara image of Jainism breathes profound silence and detachment in Jain art and was first constructed probably at Mathurā from the 1st century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D. along with the Buddha and Viśṇu figures on the pattern of the ancient Parkham and other yakṣa images. The bleak metaphysical religion of Jainism was thus tempered by the worship of the Tīrthankaras which fulfilled the emotional needs of the common people. The Jain cave temples and monasteries from those of Udayagiri and Khāṇḍagiri (2nd Century B.C.) to Ajantā, Bādāmī and Ellorā (6th century A.D.) have been veritable retreats of silence and other-worldliness through the ages commanded by the Tīrthankaras. Pārvanātha, overshadowed by a snake, Gomateśvara entwined with a creeper and Mahāvīra in his adamantine lion posture were carved with a ponderous, realistic monumentality embodying a frigid human aloofness and transcendence that only Jain art could express.

Jain art shows a greater simplicity and continuity than Buddhist art though it was hieratical, circumscribed and confined within the borders of India. It did not experience anything of that magnificent development that Mahāyāna bhakti and Tāntrikism introduced into Buddhist art and iconography in successive centuries. The introduction of Tāntrika notions and practices into Jainism is responsible, however, for certain superb specimens of Jain art that depart from the main abstract, monumental trend and belong to the Gupta epoch, such as the four-faced Jain image from the Son Bhaṅḍār cave at Rājgir and the four-armed Jain yakṣi Padmāvati from Nālandā. The most superb examples of Jain sculpture belong to the medieval period, as represented by the group of Jain temples at Khajurāho and Deogārh, and the exquisite temples in Ajmer, Rājpūtāna, Mālwā and Gujarāt. Medieval Jain images in the temples of Mount Ābū show a unique blend of inner poise and serenity with sensuous beauty and exuberance, especially in the treatment of the Tāntrika Vidyās, remarkable for the sinuous delicacy and elaboration of minute and sensitive carving and decoration. Mostly the art of Jainism was, however, restricted to the depiction of the Tīrthankaras and scenes from their lives, and through the ages these were marked by a rigid archaic artistic treatment, born of the detachment of the religion from the social order and the values of mundane life. There is no doubt that the monumental figures of the Tīrthankaras scooped out of the living rocks at Ajantā, Ellorā, Gwālior and Šravana Belgodā, have a majesty, silence and severe transcendental aloofness which the art of few countries could express. In medieval Jain sculpture, as in the Ellorā caves, the stern detachment of Pārvanātha and Gomateśvara, stressed by the severe verticality of the posture of abjuration of the body (Kāyotsarga), is relaxed in the eyes of the devotees by the depiction of charming Vidyādevis or attendant damsels in their tribhanga posture and of the hovering gandharvas and angels above. In the middle ages as Jainism assimilated Tāntrikism with its
worship of the sixteen Vidyādevis or Mahāvidyās, Jain art discarded the classical massiveness, abstract rigidity and portentous stillness in favour of sensitive and delicate modelling and soft, flexible handling of the linear elements. In the Jain temples of Khajurāho and Dilvārā we come across numerous images of celestial Saktis, as at Bhuvaranśvara and Kopaśraka, executing ravi-
shing dance poses with trees nearby (Śālābhadājiśās) and swords in their hands that dispel ignorance and desire. The dainty, sensuous bloom and voluptuous movement of these lovely women of the Gods—Vidyādevis—are in striking contrast with the profound dignity and silence of the Tīrthankaras and the poise and other-worldliness of Goddess Sarasvatī in the same temple. The image of the Goddess of Wisdom with the abstract rigour of the poised triangular composition and the stern verticalism of the four hands and their imple-
ments is entirely in keeping with the severity of Jain intellectualism; while the vivacious and seductive diagonal and arched movements of the numerous Vidyās echo the Tāntrika sense of immanence of Śakti.

Humanism in Buddhist Art

Buddhism was in a large measure the child and heir of Jainism. The basic principles of Buddhism are formulated in the famous Mīgadāva sermon delivered by the Buddha at Sārnāth, Banāras, called the Dharmachakra-
pravartana-sūtra. The episode of the First Teaching, the Turning of the Wheel of Dharma by the Tathāgata, is a favourite theme in Buddhist art. Man should pursue the Middle Path by adopting right views, right intentions, right conduct and right goal. These are rooted in the basic conceptions of the transience of life and its pleasures, the falsity and futility of craving that leads to the round of births and deaths, and the way of renunciation, self-knowledge and compassion to all creatures as leading to nirvāṇa and the cessation of suffering.

The most remarkable and enduring contribution of Buddhism was the great emphasis on goodwill (mettā), non-violence, compassion and love. Buddhism declared that “all other ways are not worth a fraction of the way of goodwill or metta”. “As a mother even with her life protects her child, her own and only son, so let one cultivate a loving heart (mānasam) without measure towards all living beings. Let one cultivate a loving heart (mettā-chitto) without measure throughout the world, above, below, from side to side, unstinted, with-
out-strife, without rivalry.” Thus observes the Khuddaka-Nikāya. The Buddha thus exhorts the brothers of the Saṅgha: “Monks, teach Dhamma which is lovely at the beginning, lovely in the middle, lovely at the ending. Walk monks, on tour for the blessing of the many-folk, for the happiness of the many-folk, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the blessing, the happiness of gods and men.”

Buddhism emphasised both the metaphysical and moral aspects of Dharma. Dharma analysis is “the discernment of an eternal, orderly, conditioned sequ-
ence of things”, in the words of Suttapitaka. (Buddhist dharma is the Law of Altruism, complete, balanced and practical, as embodied in the Eight-Fold Path and based on the metaphysical notions of unity, continuity, metempsychosis and transience). We read in the Suttanipata:

"The man who plunges in the spate,
Flooding and turgid, swift of flow,
He borne along the current's way,
How can he others help to cross?

As one who boards a sturdy boat
With oars and rudder well equipt,
May many others help to cross—
Sure, skilful knower of the means.

So the self-quicken'd love-adept,
Listener imperturbable,
By knowledge may help others muse,
The eager-eared adventurers."

It was the solicitude for world-misery and the spirit of redemptive sacrifice of Buddhism that ushered in a revolution in Indian art. Buddhist art, saturated with the broad compassion, moral zeal and missionary fervour of the Tathagata and the Saingha, early developed a soul-kindling humanistic and lyrical note. In Buddhism the glory of Man overshadows that of the Devas. The Tathagata as the Supreme Man (Mahā-purissa) has left his perennial footprints in the holy land of Buddhism. The places of the Buddha’s Birth, Enlightenment, his First Preaching, Display of Miracles and Parinirvāṇa became sacred places of pilgrimage. His relics became objects of ardent worship in the stūpas that also commemorated historic events and came to be built in thousands. Thus the words of the wise man Droṇa spoken immediately after the Parinirvāṇa came to be true!

"Let stūpas spring widespread in every land,
That in the Light of the World mankind may trust."

The Buddhist āramaṇas used to retire regularly during the rainy season to caves and rocky shelters. These were transformed into monasteries, chapels and places of Saṅgha meditation and discourse. Above all, the multi-born Bodhisattva’s infinite compassion and sacrifice for man and animal through a thousand births were unfolded in tale after tale by innumerable carved reliefs, and their blend of beauty, serenity and intense lyrical fervour deeply stirred the hearts of the common people. Intellectually also the Great Miracles of Nativity, Departure and Demise of the Buddha came to be invested with an
eternal, metaphysical character. This for the first time added a timeless dimension to Indian plastic art and introduced its early classic phase. Lyricism and timelessness were blended accents in classic Buddhist sculpture.

The Taboo on the Depiction of the Buddha

No doubt Buddhism preached the total abnegation of desire and enjoyment and in a sense decried art and beauty. The Dhamma Sutta observes: "Beauty is nothing to me, neither the beauty of the body, nor that which comes of dress. Sound, taste, smell, touch, these intoxicate human beings; cut off the yearning inherent in them." Buddhism forbade the delineation of the human form or the expression of delight and even interest in it. But this was only a religious scruple and injunction. In artistic imagination even the foot-prints, the tree, the wheel, the umbrella, the horse, the lion and the throne-motifs could convey the Buddha's divinity and express the pent-up religious emotions that broke out of the solid mass of pillars and railings. Or the Buddha was not shown at all even by a concrete symbol, but a profound atmosphere of spirituality could be created by delicate and pious movements and gestures. In the narration of the Jetavana Jātaka story on the railing post both at Bhārhat and Bodhgayā, neither the Master nor any symbol by which he is usually represented appears. Yet the sacredness as well as the munificence of the millionaire's gifts are adequately expressed by the massive and well-balanced composition and the rhythm of movement of the full-limbed figures and their animated poses swayed by the invisible presence of the Master. Symbols such as the foot-prints sometimes move about in the same relief dramatically participating in the story-telling. Thus at Bhārhat the Buddha's gradual descent from heaven is brought home to the devout crowd by marking with foot-prints the topmost as well as the lowermost rung of Heaven's ladder and by depicting the Bodhi-tree and the altar decorated with flowers. The combination of symbols reinforces the narration as well as the upsurge of religious feeling.

It is characteristic that due to the taboo on the representation of the Buddha's image, and also perhaps the innate love of the Indian craftsman of modelling animals the early religious art of India (about 2nd century B.C.) figured the Buddha in his previous births in the forms of various animals following the Jātakas. It was somewhat later (about 1st century B.C.) that the four Great Miracles—Birth, Renunciation, Enlightenment and the first Teaching—Death and other great events of his earthly life came to be represented through the use of various symbols. The large variety of symbols, motifs and conventions, some of which are probably ancient symbols of "the Fertile Crescent", constituted, indeed, a most forceful vocabulary in Buddhist iconography.

Naturalism and Lyricism in Early Buddhist Art

Often the plastic language takes delight in depicting the daily routine of the
villagers, the enjoyment and luxury of the nobles and the wealth and magnificence of the merchant princes in prolific sensuousness, true to the Indian vision of human life and destiny as an integral part of a cosmic scheme which is much older than the experience of Enlightenment of the Buddha. Early classic art as it unfolds the stories and fables of the Jātakas presents the panorama of life and labour of the common people, while Buddhist piety also brings to the holy altar and tree of the Buddha the gods of heaven and the nāgas of the underworld, apsārās, gandharvas and Kinnaras as well as historical kings and emperors. We see King Śuddhodana going out of Kapilavastu to meet his Parivṛājaka son; Bimbisāra, proceeding on a visit from the imperial capital to meet the Buddha; Ajātaśatru and the physician Jivaka in another famous scene; and Aśoka undertaking his pilgrimage to the stūpa of Rāmagṛāma and to the Bodhi-tree at Gayā. There is no other monument in India besides Śāñcī which depicts Aśoka, beloved of the gods. Such authentic historical scenes depicted at Śāñcī aroused ancient memories and pious feelings through the ages.

The emphasis in Buddhism of the moral grandeur of man and his symbiosis with Nature and all sentient existence abolished the barrier between the earthly and the spiritual, overcame all restriction of expression by sheer exaltation of feeling and striving, and played a decisive role in the development of Indian art. Classic Buddhist art is spontaneously and exuberantly naturalistic, lyrical and brimful of the joy of life that spills from the Foot-prints, the Wheel and the Tree of the Buddha, and enters into the elephant, the deer, the monkey and the peacock of the Buddhist world, and finally into the fresh, voluptuous limbs of the Yakṣī. The popular godling, with her heaving breasts, swaying like a mango-blossom under the canopy of the mango-tree, is spiritualised by Buddhist kinship and affection towards the whole universe. So she swings at Śāñcī as the guardian of the gateway, forming a bracket to the architrave as thousands of Buddhist pilgrims pass under her, while circumambulating the stūpa. Thus is the Yakṣī, a tutelary deity of popular faith and imagination, transformed by Śāñcī in the Mauryan age into the angelic, frolicksome guardian of the Buddha’s Citadel.

The Assimilation of Folk-Elements

Both Bhārhut and Śāñcī represent a phase of Indian religious evolution in which the ancient widespread folk cults of Yakṣas and Yakṣīs, tutelary gods and godlings of forest and village life, of trees and serpents and of fertility spirits are not dismissed as irrelevant or superstitious, but have come under the ambit of, and been subordinated to, the message of the Great Illumination. The Buddha under the Bodhi tree simply replaces the Yakṣa or Vṛkṣa-devatā to whom the maid Sujātā used to bring daily her offering of milk-rice; and the Bhārhut and Śāñcī sculptures had no compunction in representing the various trees under which the Mānuṣa-Buddhas sat for their
enlightenment. The cult of trees and fertility spirits, handed down from the Indus valley culture to the common people, becomes the handmaid of the new philosophy. The Yakṣa in early Buddhist art is the spirit of fecundity, and is derived on the one hand from the tradition of the Indus valley where horned female figures are represented in trees, and on the other from the Indo-Aryan Yajur and Atharva Vedas which mention the cult of the dryad or tree-nymph.

Several elements in the more ancient folk culture, sacred or secular, mingled in early Indian art. First, the gods and goddesses of the more ancient popular religion—Yakṣis, Nāgas, Devatās and Vṛiṅgakā—the came to terms with the higher religion, Buddhism, Jainism or Hinduism. The Mahābhārata mentions the chaitya vṛikṣa or sacred tree: “Not even the leaf of a chaitya may be destroyed, for chaityas are the resort of devas, yakṣas, nāgas, apsarās and bhūtas.” A chaitya is a holy spot, a grove or a single tree on the outskirts of human habitations where dwelt the godlings, tree-nymphs, snake spirits and genii whom the common people worshipped for the bestowal of boons. Such worship was of course less elaborate and expensive than the worship of the great gods of Brahmanism. The Yakṣi is the nude, popular nympha of the simpler folk of India, a propitious symbol of vegetative fecundity that Buddhism assimilated from folk religion. It was at Mathurā in the upper Ganges valley that the first fusion of Aryan and Dravidian culture and art took place—the integration of Aryan rationalism and Dravidian magic and ritual, of abstract or symbolic Aryan and artistic or decorative Dravidian art-motifs. The dryad or tree nymph (Vṛiṅgakā), with the prostrate dwarf under her feet, is a reminder of the myth and cult of fertility of Dravidian India. One of the figures at Mathurā holds a parrot which is the vehicle of the God of Love and the traditional companion of the Indian hetaira (gaṇikā).

Besides the Yakṣī, Apsara or Devata, associated with the kadamba, sōla and asoka trees connected with fecundity, there are also at Mathurā figures of the charming mortal courtesan (gaṇikā) bathing under a water-fall, holding a bird, a bird cage, an asoka branch, a lotus bud or a spray of mangoes, filling a drinking bowl and wringing water from her tresses. Some of these stand on the back of a dwarf or the latter crouches at her feet supplicating for the lotus bud. The dwarf (nara-vāhana) under the feet of the Yakṣī and courtesan symbolises the enslavement of man by feminine lure in folk culture. Kubera Yakṣa also dances on such a dwarf, while on his left Chandrā Yakṣī, whose lovely pose blends harmoniously with the flowering asoka tree, dances on a goat-headed griffin. The masculine and feminine principles of power and fecundity are symbolised by Kubera and Chandrā Yakṣī respectively. Right from the very beginning of Indian art we find stress of the juxtaposition of the sexual principles psychologically rendered in the background of Indian religion and metaphysics that have constantly gone on assimilating from the more ancient aboriginal folk magic and ritual.

Secondly, in India while the sexual and religious motifs were always blended
together, the hetaira was a familiar figure in both secular literature, such as Vātsyāyana’s Kāmasūtra, and religious literature such as the Divyavadāna. Whether the Yakṣi at Bhārhut, Bodhgaya, Sāñchī and Mathurā is a Devatā who symbolises the beauty of the flowering lotus, sāla and kadamba, of the moonbeam piercing the tree-branches and of the interplay of sunlight on water, or she is a voluptuous mortal woman (with such names as Chandrā or Sudarśanā Yakṣiṇī as at Bhārhut), depends entirely on the context. In Buddhist legend and art both the Yakṣiṇī (demi-goddess) and the sinful woman are subdued by the spiritual power of the Buddha.

The Blend of Sensuousness and Disciplined Linearism in the Modelling of Nudes

The Yakṣi, Apsarā or Gaṇikā is modelled with the same delicacy and undulating rhythm of a fresh mango-bud as is discernible in the Devatā of Sāñchī and Bhārhut. Yet the sensuousness of the soft nude body is tempered by the discipline of an intensely restrained linearism. Balancing herself like the full-blown blossom, she is not provocative but remains absorbed in her dignity and joy of life. The Dravidian feeling for the sensuous fulness of life is here subordinated to the Aryan discipline and abstraction. Buddhism as it incorporates the indigenous cults of the soil and vegetation gains in impulsion and releases the surge of popular enthusiasm, while it also introduces a new feeling for life and careful observation in the treatment of animal, flower and foliage and the human figure. The more primitive sense of earth and vegetation as evident in the earthiness of the Yakṣa from Parkham and the Yakṣi from Didārganj, with their power and stolidity underlined by the frontality, the space between the legs and the folds of the heavy drapery, subtly blends with the mollified modelling of the Yakṣīs at Bhārhut and Mathurā that translates into stone mental and spiritual attributes. The latter emerge in the popular consciousness with the superimposition of the Buddhist lyrical note of tenderness towards the living world on the aboriginal naturalism and vitalism, and are rendered in plastic terms by the richness of curves of the outline, the dynamic rhythm of the composition and the abandonment or attenuation of frontality.

The Fixation of Their Three-fold Inflection

The three-fold inflexion or tribhanga pose of the nude Yakṣi, with its sinuous curves of the thin waist and swelling hips and breasts of the Indian classical ideal, discernible whether at Mathurā or at Bhārhut and Sāñchī, became the established motif in Indian art for the representation of female loveliness. It is remarkable how in what was practically the beginning of Indian sculpture, the extraordinary buoyancy and vitality of the full-limbed human and animal figures and the freedom of plastic rhythm and movement could be combined with a delicacy and experience of psychological characterisation, an intent
The melodious quality and gliding plastic rhythm of the Yakṣīs and Vṛksakās of Bhārhat, Sānci and Mathurā are renovated and refined in the Devis and River Goddesses—Gangā and Yamunā—of Gupta art and the Surasundarīs, Apsaras, Śālābhaṅjikās and Nāyikās of the medieval period. A whole millennium after Bhārhat and Sānci, the fertility goddess, Vṛksakā with her tribhanga bend reappears at Gyarāspur (Gwalior Fort, Archaeological Museum), Khajurāho and Bhuvaneswara, and fifteen centuries later at Koṇāraka (base of the north facade, Van der Heydt collection, Ascona, U.S.A., and panels in the upper storey). Each image shows the stem of the flowering tree above the right shoulders, reminiscent of capricious fecundity that is echoed in the firm and full bosoms and smooth abdomen, the soft melodiousness of the curves of the body and the relaxed, provocative triple bend.

But the intervening centuries have added elaborate ornaments, coiffure and apparel and a calculated, languid wantonness of the face. Every limb, every torsion, every gesture now displays the erotic moods and sentiments, śringāra rasa) more charmingly and more convincingly. At Koṇāraka, Bhuvaneswara, Koṇāraka, Puri and elsewhere in the middle ages the Tāntrika ideology has superimposed upon the ancient popular myth of the spiritual intimacy between the life of vegetation and the life of woman the new idea of the feminine as the very source and symbol of Being and Becoming, of the manifoldness and generation of the universe. The delights of the senses and the acts of love that woman elicits become initiations into the apprehension of the metaphysical reality. The traditional gestures of kicking the tree and grasping the branches that gave the meaning to the motif of the Tree-goddess are accordingly abandoned. The Śālābhaṅjikā now charms and fecundates the universe by her mere presence. Her feet are placed on the stylised lotus blossom that traditionally stands for the prolificness of creation. At Bhuvaneswara in the Rajārāni temple and at Koṇāraka the lotus motif is curling and intertwining under her feet and is enlarged and elaborated into a beautiful, decorative design.
The Tree-goddess bending down the branch of the sāla tree now stands for the sportiveness and exuberance of Śakti, the immanence of God in the visible world including the plant world as well as in the striving, aspiring human soul. The plastic treatment has also changed. It is characterised by a surge from below upwards within the buoyant voluptuous figure raising the whole body with the swelling breasts and the lithe, bejewelled and sometimes raised arms towards its final goal, the achievement of salvation (mukti) which in its essence and movement is now symbolised by the lure and enjoyment of the senses (bhukti). At Koṇāraka she sometimes holds in her right hand a branch of sāla fruits, symbolising the consummation of enjoyment, while her left hand is placed most elegantly on the waist-girdle.

Indigenous Folk-Traditions

Classic Buddhist art has aided early Buddhism in assimilating the gods and spirits not only of the older popular faiths—Yakṣas, Nāgas, Vrīka-devātās, Apsaras and Kinnaras—but also such Brahmanical deities as Indra, Śūrya and Laksmi, who equally appear in the reliefs of Bhārhut and Bodhgaya. All folk-gods and godlings remain as worshippers or guardians of the Buddha; while the troop of singing and dancing Apsaras and Gandharvac of Hinduism is not eschewed by art through puritanical zeal. In one of the panels of the Ajātaśatru pillar at Bhārhut that depicts the deposition of the future Buddha's hair tuft in the mansion of Indra, we find the Apsaras executing elegant and classic dance poses and gestures to the accompaniment of song and beating of drums spreading hilarity all around. Another panel at Bhārhut shows the nymphs deployed by Māra to tempt the Buddha executing vivacious movements. It is striking that the pose and gesture of each of the danseuses are different. From the viewpoint of artistic treatment, Bhārhut, Sāñchi, Mathurā and Bodhgaya and the Chaitya-cave at Bhājā represent a tradition of symbolism and conventional iconography as well as a flowing linear rhythm and harmony of composition that matured later at Mathurā, Sārnāth, Amaravati, Ajanta and Ellorā.

Indian sculpture showed very early a capacity to impart liveliness and swaying grace to the modelling of the human body. Its early creation of third-dimensional forms in both secular and religious art was unique in world history in revealing at once the exuberance and capriciousness of sensual figures as well as the serenity and radiance of religious forms. The balance and unity of form and the sinuous curve of compositional movement produce a sense of volume combined with a melting quality that becomes basic in the plastic conception. This is indigenous folk art which is plastically the most distinctive in India.

The Legacy of the Classic Art Tradition

Early Buddhist art in Bhārhut, Sāñchi, Mathurā and Bodhgaya achieved a profound synthesis between the Aryan and the pre-Aryan idiom, between ab-
straction and naturalism, and between rhythm and convention, and represented a phase of Indian plastic utterance in its classic fulness and perfection.

Bhārhat is situated on the Imperial Mauryan high-road from Pātaliputra to Ujjain and Bhrigukachchha. The sculptured panels on the gates and railings of the Bhārhat stūpa (2nd century B.C.) exhibit a delightful, heaving and free linear rhythm that binds together man, animal and tree, and that echoes not only an underlying unity in the Indian art of story-telling but also the deeper metaphysical connectedness of all existence in Buddhist thought. A soul-enrapturing lyrical imagination that springs from the basic notion of the essential continuity and solidarity of Life and Mind governs the entire plastic conception as well as the specialised motifs and devices in classical Buddhist art. The railing decoration in Buddhist monuments is strikingly maintained and supported by the dynamic rhythm of movement of the rambling, undulating lotus stalk, which often covers the whole length of a sculptured frieze, as in many other Buddhist monuments. Scenes from the Jātakas, the goddess Śrīmā, houses, trees, fruits and jewels are all parts of the continuous, oscillating lotus wave. The lotus is the wish-fulfilling creeper (kalpalata) and stands for the realisation of human desires and goals illustrated by the actual events of the Jātaka stories. It is symbolic of Becoming in which man, animal and their actions and consequences are all inextricably involved as parts of the vast ramifying life-process. This is one and the same as the procession of the multiborn Bodhisattva's career of sacrifice through various levels of existence which the Jātakas illustrate. Another symbol that reinforces the same notion is the elephant-and-scroll. From the mouth of the elephant that represents the Buddha—the heavenly cloud that bears rain symbolising the conception and animation of the earth—shoots forth the rambling, ramifying creeper or floral scroll. The sinuous, yet vigorous movement of the scroll stands for the firm resolve and noble career of Man as the Bodhisattva who practises the three charyās and ten pāramis that led him to perfection in the earlier pre-Buddha phase of his development. Not the way of the flesh but the way of the Bodhisattva with the development of his classic ten virtues of perfection (pāramis), is the lesson of the sculpture of Bhārhat with its poignant narration of the story and clinching of the moral—the Buddhist Truth.

The treatment of the figures in the legend is lyrical, tense and condensed, appropriate for the story, fable and moral. The Bodhisattva's compassion, of course, is the central theme of representation although he is not depicted at all. But he is feelingly and realistically represented by the animal of the legend, his holy seat or altar, his foot-prints, sacred tree and umbrella. Because every episode in man's life is the way to his supreme enlightenment, Bhārhat sculpture raises story-telling into an enduring and tranquil realm of self-actualisation and transcendence. All figures in the inexhaustible narration are dignified and refined. Men are broad-shouldered and noble, women are heavy-bosomed and charming, animals elegant and vigorous and the vegetation lively and prolific, all reflecting the vast upsurge of Becoming that repre-
sents the Buddhist cosmic law. The operation of the cosmic law is also revealed in classic Buddhist art by depicting in one small panel or medallion the entire sequence of events of a legend together with the finale that bears in its bosom the teaching of the Bodhisattva, Witness, for example, the representations of the intricate stories of the Kurangamiga and Migas Jātakas, each concentrated in the same medallion. It is Buddhist meditation (jhāna) that unfolds the vision of happenings separated by time and space. Time is telescoped to invest the cumulative result of the chain of actions with supreme significance and concentrate on one fateful instant, one single mood of supreme spiritual exaltation. And that the entire living world participates in this exaltation is shown by the fact that all creatures, gods, men and nāgas, queens and ordinary women-folk, commoners, nobles and princes wear the same kind of festive apparel, and can hardly be distinguished from one another. It is the long perspective of man's life, the cosmic principle of karma binding his actions in an infinite series of births and re-births, and the inevitable cumulative fruition of a continuous chain of actions and consequences, ending in his final freedom from bondage, that engender reposefulness in both mind and art. The dominating note of tranquility in Indian art is abstractly and forcefully revealed at Bhāhrut. "All that have come into existence are mutable", so runs an inscription recorded on one of the fables at Bhāhrut. The sense of the transitoriness of life and life's progress towards Reality through a succession of births and deaths underlie the joy and repose in early classic Indian art.

Sāñchi is situated at the junction of the ancient Mauryan highways from Taxilā and Mathurā in the north-west and from Kausāmbī and Pātaliputra in the Gaṅgā basin to Bhrigukacheha on the Arabian Sea and to Pratiśṭhāna and Amarāvati in the Deccan. It enshrines the relics of the Buddha and of his celebrated disciples Sāriputta, Moggallāna and other Buddhist divines. It not only symbolises in Buddhist art the Great Passing Away, but also images the spirit and tempo of an entire Indian epoch associated with the rise of Buddhism and Jainism. As compared with Bhāhrut the Sāñchi reliefs are relatively free from archaism even though these are still tied to the mythical context, and show fundamental dynamic patterns of plastic composition that invest them with greater vitality and vigour. Besides, these reveal a vaster panorama of epic grandeur governed by an all-comprehensive moral principle. It is this which animates the many separate figures involved in the complex relations of narratives and their existence in time and space, sometimes in silence and discipline, and sometimes in tumult and conflict. The Sāñchi reliefs admirably enshrine the unique art technique of achieving a perfect harmony in the treatment of man, his animal kindred and the flora, all linked together in the time-less procession of life and karma, and breathing the essentially Indian spirit of dignity, compassion and brotherhood, not to be found in the art motifs of the supreme creations either of Hellas or China of the Classical periods. On the other hand, man, animal, tree and flora are sculptured with a naturalism, freedom and lyrical concentration of feeling that even Greek
art could not equal. The delicacy and sensibility of ivory workers, whose
guild is mentioned in connection with the construction of one of the relic
mounds, have left their indelible impress on the animal figures. With these
have mingled the broad humanism and the strong faith in the continuity
and solidarity of all sentient life, which Buddhism and Jainism introjected into
the popular consciousness raising it to a new lyrical dimension. Nowhere in
the history of art have elephants, deer, monkeys and peacocks in particular
been sculptured with such power of observation and almost human lyrical
quality and tenderness. Sāñchi, like Sārnāth, has been the focus of attraction
of Buddhist pilgrims from many lands of Asia for well-nigh two millennia.
It has remained in the Buddhist mind the perennial symbol of man’s infinite
tenderness and sympathy for all sentient creatures, as taught by the life of the
multi-born Bodhisattva, and of man’s supreme moral worth, as taught by the
illumination of the Tathāgata.

A unique combination of vigour and exuberance of expression with a su-
ffused lyricism and of incisiveness of modelling with a sinuously gliding linear
treatment; a dynamic rhythm of composition with diagonal movement
of throngs of figures; a balanced arrangement of groups of reliefs at
various angles and symmetrical organisation of planes; a clever use of the
chiaroscuro and the shaded underground for setting off the movement of plas-
tic mass in finely graduated bas-relief, aided by the strong feeling for volume;
all these make the maturation of sculpture at Sāñchi: buoyant, resourceful
and even daring as it depicts delightfully tale after tale, hardly permitting
the canons of a hieratic art to obscure the ancient profound interest in the
art of story-telling that migrated beyond India to Asia Minor and the East
through Taxilā as early as the 6th century B.C. The stones of Sāñchi, like those
of Bhārhut tell stories and legends that are as old as the rivers, hills and forests
of India, more ancient than the great organised religions which utilised and
interpreted them for their own purpose. Thus the sculpture of Sāñchi is essen-
tially lyrical and overflowing, and exhibits the moral earnestness, freedom
of composition and expansiveness of framework that constitute the abiding
legacy of Indian art. Such techniques and values indeed gained in refinement
and delicacy across the centuries. The Sāñchi plastic tradition has been peren-
nial and inexhaustible in India.

Historically, the Sāñchi stūpa was built on an original Asokan foundation
that was later on greatly enlarged under the patronage of the Śatavāhana
kings. Not far from the site of the stūpa was planted an Asokan column;
while one of the panels of the stūpa depicts the Maurya Emperor’s visit to the
Bodhi tree. The Sāñchi and Bhārhut reliefs do not depict the human figure
of the Buddha, but it was Emperor Asoka who appears to have conceived and
constructed the first image of the Buddha for worship. Leaving aside the
romantic elements that are to be found in the story of Asoka’s Akkhipājā
(Consecration of Eyes) as preserved in the Mahāvaṃsa of Mahārāma as well
as in the Cambodian Mahāvaṃsa of Moggallāna, it appears that Priyadarśī
Aśoka was the first Indian king and also perhaps the first Buddhist devotee to have an image of the Śākyamuni Buddha made for the purpose of worship. The image was made as much realistic as possible by endowing it with all the special features of the body of the Buddha. Thus, in it were to be found the thirty-two major and the eighty minor lakṣaṇas (marks) indicative of a Mahāpuruṣa, or Superman, and the radiant head. It was also so made as to suggest that rays were issuing from the body, by having it encircled by some such device as to give the appearance of a ring of comets (Ketumālābhīṣottam). For a full week, this image was worshipped day and night for the blessing of the mortal eyes (Akkhīpūjā).

Aśokan sculpture, like the Edict pillars with their conventional and formalised modelling of the four animals of Buddhism, showed a superior polish, craftsmanship and technical quality, but stood apart from the broad current of the Indian plastic tradition. It was a courtly art and left little impress on the structure and form of Indian art. Yet if we consider the figuration of the elephant at Dhauli carved over the Edicts of Aśoka we encounter a freshness, naturalism and linear rhythm that we hardly meet with in the animal figures surmounting the Aśokan pillar capitals. Here it is the Kaliṅga folk tradition, which saturates the court art with a new plastic feeling, born of India's tenderness for the animal kind that Buddhism reinforced.
Chapter 7

LINK OF ASIAN UNITY (FIRST EPOCH):
BUDDHIST ART ON THE ASIAN ROAD

The Indianisation of the Middle and Western Asia in
Mauryan Times and After

The building of powerful, extensive empires in Persia, China and India proved favourable for the Indianisation of Middle and Western Asia—a trend that first became prominent in the two centuries before and after Christ. Seleukos Nikator I (312-282 B.C.), contemporary of Chandragupta Maurya (322-298 B.C.) and general of Alexander, obtained the satrapy of Babylon as his share of the conqueror’s empire (306 B.C.) and ultimately extended his suzerainty from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indus. The establishment of the Seleucid and Mauryan Empire was almost synchronous. The consolidation of the Mauryan Empire (324-187 B.C.) in India was followed by the unification of China by Shih Huang Ti (about 230 B.C.). The Mauryan Empire included for the first time not only Āryāvarta and Dakṣiṇāpatha but also the entire plateau of Kabul, Herat, Kandahar and Baluchistan in the vulnerable north-western borderland of India up to the boundaries of the sister Seleucid Empire of Syria. Enduring peace in Persia, China and India immensely facilitated the spread of the Buddhist gospel of universal compassion—the finest and the noblest feature of Indian civilisation. The Middle Asian caravan routes became carriers of merchandise, religion and culture from the Mauryan times. Trade and commerce connected India with Turkestan and China on one side and Western Asia and the Mediterranean on the other. Indian merchandise was transported along the ancient Gangetic highway from Pāṭaliputra through Taxila and Puskalāvati to Kapīśa and Bāhūka (Balkh, Pāṇini’s Uttarāpatha) whence it was carried down the Oxus to Europe by way of the Caspian and the Black Seas. Indian culture and religion followed the heels of commerce traversing the highways of the ancient world. It was in the reign of Aśoka (273-232 B.C.) that Buddhist envoys and missionaries were sent from Pāṭaliputra to Syria, Egypt, Cyrene, Macedonia, and Epirus. Gandhāra, which is at the meeting-point of the great ancient arteries of Asian caravan trade, as well as Kashmir were visited by the Asokan Buddhist monk-preacher Madhyantika in 242 B.C. The countries mentioned by the Mahāvamsa to which Buddhist missionaries were sent in Asoka’s time were Yavana, Himavanta-pradeśa, Laṅkā and Suvarṇabhūmi. Yavana and Bactriana, inhabited by the Greeks, were called by the Greek writers “White India”. Himavanta-pradeśa is perhaps Kashmir and the trans-Himalayan tract including Khotan. Laṅkā is Ceylon. Suvarṇabhūmi is the name applied to the coastal strip of Burma. The arts of India were no doubt established beyond the mountains under the regime of the Imperial Mauryas. The Greek geographer Ptolemy included within the boun-
daries of India her entire trans-Indus borderland from Kandahar to Seistan, comprising within it Bactria, Badakshan, Afghanistan and Baluchistan. For two centuries before and after Christ this region was known as "White India", and remained more Indian than Iranian until the advent of the Ghaznavids towards the end of the tenth century.

That Indian culture came to the Khotan region during the pre-Buddhist period is the conclusion reached by F. W. Thomas who has assembled the following evidences: "Clearly items of administration and common life are sure to have come with the first Indian settlers. Accordingly we may reckon with (1) a certain number of Greek terms in the Shan-Shan inscription, viz. sadera and trakhme, stater and drachme, which may well have been brought from the Indian side, unless indeed they came from Bactria at a still earlier date; (2) a division of the country into parishes (śimā) which was recognised in India, and further into hundreds (śata); possibly also into 'thousands', since such a division certainly existed in Shan-Shan at a later date and is an Indian institution, mentioned (sastras-pati, ruler of a thousand) in the Arthasāstra of Kauṭīliya; (3) the ornate, formal, official and epistolary style, which is certainly Indian, developed in the Maurya chancellories and partly preserved in India down to modern times. With the last-named we may associate the letter (lekha), the letter-carrier (lekha-hāraka) and the book (pōthi). The town-mayor (nāgaraka) also is likely to have come more or less contemporaneously with the foundation of the city". Seals with effigies of Kubera and Trimukha have been discovered by Stein at Niya (that was deserted before the end of the 2nd century A.D.) and a painted Ganesa at Endore.

The genesis of the state of Khotan is attributed by local legend to a visit of Emperor Asoka and the birth on that occasion of his son, Kustana. Kustana, after the foundation of the city of Khotan (about 224 B.C.), visited China and returned with a Chinese army and in association with an Indian minister Yāsa, settled in the country. This minister seems to have come from Kashmir which had intimate intercourse with the countries beyond the Hindukush as well as with China from very early times. From Kustana the name of Khotan was derived. Kustana’s grandson Vijaya Sambhava introduced Buddhism to Khotan under the inspiration of a Buddhist monk-scholar Ārya Vairochana who came from Kashmir. The first Buddhist monastery was established in Khotan in 211 B.C. For 56 generations an Indian dynasty, which was Buddhist in faith, ruled the country and built hundreds of Buddhist establishments—monasteries, temples and chapels.

Emperor Asoka (c. 273-232 B.C.) sent his dūtas or envoys for the preaching of Buddhist Dharma to the distant states from Khotan to Cyrene and from Macedonia to Ceylon. The Emperor laid claim to his Dharmavijaya over the Hellenistic, South Indian and Ceylonese kingdoms. There is no doubt that Buddhism spread in some measure, and Buddhist saṅghas and humanitarian institutions were planted in his reign in Western Asia.

Not long after Asoka’s death we hear of the introduction of Buddhism into
China. The *Record of Buddhism and Taoism of the Wei Dynasty* shows that this took place in China during the age of the Emperor Wu Ti in early Han Dynasty (148-80 B.C.). The record runs as follows: "When China became connected with Central Asia, a Chinese envoy named Chang-Chien returned from Ta Yuehshih (Bactria) and brought the information that there was a country named Hien-tu of which another name was Tien Chu which bordered upon Bactria and it is in connection with this country that we hear about Buddhism."\(^1\)

In 121 B.C. "in the reign of Emperor Wu ‘the Brave’ of the Han Dynasty, a certain general, leading his victorious army in pursuit of the Hsiung-nu tribesmen and tracking them deep into the desert of Turkestan, came upon various huge golden images, worshipped by these barbarians, many of which he carried back to the Han capital as booty. The images were mostly ten feet high, and the Emperor took a fancy to these ‘tall men’, as he thought they were nearer Heaven. He had them set up in the palace, where incense was burnt before them. He put golden plates in their hands to catch the sweet dew from Heaven, by drinking which, His Majesty hoped to win eternal life. Some historians think that they were Buddhist images, the first to appear in China."\(^2\)

As the Western Han dynasty established itself in China (202 B.C.-A.D. 9) with its capital at Ch’ang-an, the Mauryan empire had disintegrated and the Bactrian Greeks became independent of the Selucid empire. Demetrios I of Bactria conquered Ariana (Afghanistan) and entered and subjugated the Indus region about 190 B.C. For the rest of the 2nd century B.C. the Indo-Bactrians ruled the whole of North-Western India. The most famous Indo-Bactrian monarch was Menander or Milinda who ruled from Sākala in the Punjab (160-140 B.C.). Meanwhile the Yueh-chi tribe or the Kusāṇas driven from north-west China by the Han king took possession of Bactria (about 10 B.C.). By about A.D. 50 the Kusāṇa kingdom included Gandhāra and the Punjab. The Kusāṇa empire rose to its highest glory under Kaniska when it included Afghanistan, Gandhāra, Kashmir, Mathurā and probably also the Ganges basin as far as Bihar.

*The Efflorescence of Romano-Buddhist Art in Gandhāra*

It was under the patronage of the Kusāṇa emperors that the school of Romano-Buddhist art known as the Gandhāra school rose, gradually assimilating Hellenistic forms and motifs into the Indian themes and traditions making art, as never before, the vehicle of the expansion of religion and culture. It is one of the paradoxes of the history of art that Romano-Buddhist art did not appear until the downfall of the Indo-Bactrian kingdoms in North-western India. It suddenly emerged in the first century B.C. and attained its zenith of expansion in the reign of Kaniska (A.D. 78-101). The rise of Mahāyāna

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Buddhism and the efflorescence of Romano-Buddhist art were indeed synchronous; both religion and art sprang from a region, which became the Second Holy land of Buddhism, dotted with monasteries, stūpas and sites of the memorable Bodhisattva miracles and legends. The art produced Buddha images of a distinct iconography in prodigious quantity, thanks to the religious upsurge among the people; while it directly and powerfully aided the proselytizing activities of the religion. In a sense Gandhāran art represented an expansion of Indian civilisation far beyond the frontiers of India although it wore at the beginning a Hellenistic garb.

There is discernible, no doubt, a close stylistic similarity between the early images of Christ and the Buddha of the beginning of this millennium, formal and rigid and emulating the Roman Apollo type. The naturalistic treatment of the robe of the Greek philosopher with its incised lines and sharp ridges and even the arrangement of the hands are the same in the first statues of Christ and of the Buddha. This is the Gandhāra image of the standing Buddha. The seated Buddha image at Gandhāra is dressed with the same Roman toga in a somewhat inappropriate manner. Gandhāran art borrowed from Roman imagery the motifs and formulae of representation of the narrative scenes of the Buddha's life, just as early Christian art used Roman figure types and formulae for illustrating the legends and miracles of Christ. The systematic and coherent representation of the events of the Buddha's life in Buddhist art owes its origin to the conscious adaptation of early Christian art in glorifying the cycle of Christ legends. H. Buchthal refers to a few instances of classical genre scenes, such as the ploughman with his yoke of oxen, and the mare suckling her foal which the Gandhāran artists selected as significant also in Buddhist mythology for the Bodhisattva's First Meditation and the Birth of Chhandaka and Kaṇṭhaka respectively. Thus the combination of classical and Indian elements produced remarkable results, the earliest Buddhist school in Gandhāra following the Indian tradition as far as possible. But gradually the Gandhāra Buddha freed itself from the Roman technique and iconography and became more symbolic, spiritual and Indian, governed by the ancient Indian conception of the silent and reposeful yogi with his characteristic abhaya and dhyāna mudrās. This transformation coincided with the rise of the Mahāyāna that brought about a great upsurge of religious emotions in North-West India and its borderlands.

Art, the Vehicle of the Spread of Buddhism

Obviously the Romano-Buddhist art of Gandhāra played an important role from early times in the spread of Buddhism in Parthia, Turkestan and China. The Divyāvadāna represents the Buddha as meeting King Udayana's wishes to have an image of himself drawn on canvas. This was later on "borne through the air" to Khotan where it became the archetype of innumerable later representations beyond the Himalayas. About two centuries later in A.D. 65, Emperor Han Ming Ti (A.D. 58-75) dreamt the famous dream according to which a
golden man, resplendent with the light of the sun, came flying into the royal palace. He consulted his ministers who assured him that this celestial being was the sage of the Western world named the Buddha. Immediately a delegation was sent to bring to China Buddhist scriptures and scripts. Some forty-two chapters of Buddhist scriptures and a portrait of the Buddha were obtained by this delegation and two Indian monks named Kaśyapa-Mātanga and Dharmarakṣa also came to the capital city of Lo-yang riding on white horses. A Buddhist monastery was established here in their honour called the White Horse Monastery, the first to be set up in that country. The two Indian monks lived there for many years and translated many Buddhist texts. Of these only the Sūtra of Forty-Two Sections is extant. This has seen many versions and editions in the history of Chinese Buddhism representing impacts of Hinayāna, Mahāyāna and Tao thoughts. One of the earliest sculptors whose name is handed down across the centuries is the monk Hai-Tong who carved the colossal statue of the Buddha, 170 feet high, at Kai-ting-fou in A.D. 73.

Buddhist missionary activities became prominent and systematic from the middle of the second century when three Central Asian monks visited China. Lokottama went to China in A.D. 148 from Parthia and stayed for twenty-two years at the Lo-yang monastery translating more than thirty Buddhist sūtras. He also visited South China. After two years came another Central Asian monk Lokarakṣa, a Yueh-chi, who also undertook important translation work. Another Central Asian monk translator was Am-hsuan who learnt Chinese. During the last period of the Han dynasty Buddhism, starting from Parthia, the Saka country and other Western states, gradually spread all over China. Buddhism became the state religion in China after the fall of the Han Empire. This took place in the Wei kingdom in the reign of the Emperor Fei Ti (A.D. 240-253). Four great Buddhist apostles came to the Wei kingdom and contributed to the spread of Buddhism by fresh translations. These were Dharmakāla from Central India, Saṅghabhadra from Sogdiana and Dharmasatya and Dharmabhadra from Parthia. In A.D. 260 a Chinese monk, who was the disciple of an Indian apostle, went from Lo-Yang to Khotan in search of Buddhist scriptures and lived there for about two decades. The Wei Kingdom (A.D. 220-280) was visited by a Śaka monk named Chih-Chien who translated many Buddhist sūtras. To South China also came an Indian monk named Vighna in A.D. 224. He translated the Dhammapada. This translation contained the following sūtra which every Chinese monk at the beginning of his monastic career had to recite:

"Rising in the morning you should think:  
My life will not last long.  
It is like the vessel of the potter, easily broken.  
He who dies does not return.  
On this is grounded an appeal to men to  
Learn the Buddha's Law."
The Image of the Chinese Avalokiteśvara, Kuan-Yin

The proselytizing zeal of Indian and Central Asian monks who braved the hazards of life in foreign soil, mastered the Chinese language and translated hundreds of Buddhist texts, and the support of Chinese Emperors, some of whom became ardent converts and built pagodas and monasteries, contributed to the spread of Buddhism throughout China. Some Chinese Emperors during the period of the Sixth Dynasties themselves became monks and this powerfully aided the propagation of Buddhism. The disruption of the Han empire, internal commotion and civil war and the consequent misery and suffering of the people stimulated other-worldliness and asceticism among the intellectuals on the one hand, and the search of the common people for the bliss of the Western Paradise as a set-off against the sorrow and insecurity of the world here and now. The Buddhist ideal of achieving nirvāṇa while on earth receded in the background. Side by side with the compassionate Buddha, Kuan-Yin, first a male attendant of the Buddha, and later on the Goddess of Mercy, became the objects of popular adoration in China. Kuan-Yin is the Chinese version of Avalokiteśvara whose worship was introduced in China towards the end of the first century A.D. Getty observes: “Fa Hsien worshipped him in the fifth century, and by the sixth century the god of Mercy was worshipped in all the Buddhist temples. In the seventh century he was still popular, for Hsuan Tsang speaks of him with enthusiasm”. Gradually Avalokiteśvara or Kuan-Yin became feminine, due to the Chinese word ‘mercy’ denoting feminine attribute. In the Tun-huang caves we find a magnificent image of Kuan-Yin as a male deity. The Sung Kuan-Yin is usually a female deity while the Tang Kuan-Yin is male. Chinese art across the centuries excelled in the treatment of the beauty, serenity and compassion of the Bodhisattva Kuan-Yin, and of the joy of the Western Paradise, where dancers and musicians beguiled the faithful on shining terraces that rose above radiant lakes, full of lotus blossoms. Buddhism as adopted by the common people of China was remoulded to an emotional pattern that could give them solace and comfort in the Ages of Troubles.

The New Dispensation of the Mahāyāna

This was the new Mahāyāna doctrine of Indian Buddhism far different from the abstract speculation and rational outlook of the Hinayāna. In India in the beginning of the first millennium A.D. the older Buddhism was completely transformed by Mahāyāna Bhakti or what may be called Buddha Bhāgavatism that departed fundamentally from the agnosticism and passive ethics of the earlier dispensation. It had four celebrated early patriarchs: Nāgārjuna, Aśvaghosa, Āryadeva and Kumāralabha.

Encyclopaedic in learning, Nāgārjuna (A.D. 137-194 according to Tibetan sources) was the real founder of the Mahāyāna as author of the Prajñāpāramitā.
In this important Mahāyāna scripture, he delineated the ideal of the Bodhisattva or the Compassionate One who rejects the narrow ideal of the Arhat and devotes himself to the redemption of humanity at large through the cultivation of the active virtues of benevolence, pity and non-violence. The myth of universal compassion of the Bodhisattva, linked with the formula of universal salvation by simple faith, had a much profounder appeal for the foreigners, who were fairly numerous in Gandhāra, Kashmir and the Indian borderlands, than the austere Hinayāna creed of the enlightenment of the Arhat by strenuous moral and intellectual discipline. Nāgārjuna also formulated the Mādhyamika doctrine that anticipated the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara. The Sātvāhana king Pulomāyi III (A.D. 156) established a monastery in his honour, according to the description of Hiuen-Tsang, at Nāgārjunakonda in Andhra State tunneling Śrīparvata. The poet of the Mahāyāna movement was Āśvaghosa who was also called the Father of Mahāyāna Buddhism. He was one of the founders of Sanskrit kāvya, a celebrated musician and discoverer of a musical instrument and author of such distinguished Mahāyāna scriptures in Sanskrit as the Sūtrālankāra and the Mahāyāna Śraddhahotpāda. His famous kāvyas, the Buddhacharita and the Saundarananda-Kāvya, extolled Gautama the Superman (aprapudgata) in the same manner as the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavad Gītā have done Śrī Kṛṣṇa the Divine Man (purusottama). These provided the inspiration of some of the most magnificent Buddhist sculptures in such widely separated regions as Gandhāra, Tun-huang, Yun-kang, Amarāvatī and Borobodur. Āryadeva hailed from Ceylon and was the most illustrious disciple of Nāgārjuna. As an expert dialectician he was a tower of strength of the new metaphysics of the Mahāyāna. His relics have recently been discovered at Buddhani in Guntur district. The last Mahāyāna patriarch Kumāralabdha was the founder of the Sautrāntika doctrine of Buddhism. Mahāyāna metaphysics as embodied in the Saddharma Pundarika and the Prajñāpāramitā texts replaced the mutable, historical Gautama by the eternal, metaphysical Tathāgata. The Buddha could now be, and was represented as a living human though transcendental figure, serenely contemplating the emptiness of Saṁsāra and saving it by his inexhaustible compassion and sacrifice. To the living multi-born human figure, incarnate in many forms, hymns could be more easily sung, flowers and garlands offered, and stūpas, chapels and monasteries built as places of rest, pilgrimage and congregational meditation and worship.

The Transformation of Buddhist Art in Mathurā and Gandhāra

The revolution in Buddhist philosophy, replacing the austere simple creed of the Hinayāna, was accompanied by a mighty transformation in art that excited the enthusiasm of millions, both Indians and foreigners, through fervent devotion to the personified ideal of the Bodhisattva. We see the actual stages of the replacement of the worship of symbols such as the wheel, the
stūpa and the chaityavrikṣa not in the art of Gandhāra but in that of Mathurā in the Kuśāṇa period. The human figure of the Buddha in course of time replaced the wheel and other symbols though the composition remained the same. Assignable to the Kuśāṇa period is the image-making of as many as sixteen Buddhas with different hand poses such as abhaya, dharma-chakra and dhyāna; while the differences between the Buddha the śramaṇa, and Bodhisattva the prince, are clear in the delineation of the scenes relating to the life of the Buddha from his birth to parinivṛtta. Besides, the incidents stressed in the Mahāyāna, viz. Buddha's meditation in the Gandhakūṭi at Jetavana, his descent from the heaven of thirty-three gods where he went to teach the Dharma to his mother, the presentation of the alms-bowl to the Buddha by the Lokapālas and the worship of the Buddha by Indra are sculptured in the Mathurā panels. The worship of images of a hierarchy of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and archangels harnessed a nascent art that became the hand-maid of the new myth and voyaged forth in unexplored regions of symbolism spreading the new theistic doctrine far and wide.

On the one hand, the vast quantity of Buddhist images, produced by the so-called Romano-Buddhist art workshops of Gandhāra and Kapiśa, made a permanent impression not only on India but on the Indian borderlands. On the other hand, from Mathurā during the Kuśāṇa period (c. A.D. 50 to A.D. 253), radiated the artistic impulsion which gradually made the Buddha figure spiritual and symbolic. Mahāyāna bhakti from Gandhāra to the Ganges valley was fixing the iconography of the Buddha and Bodhisattva that was destined to win acceptance by entire Asia in the course of only three centuries. The historical evidence of the first dated Buddha and Bodhisattva images is fairly definite and may be culled as follows: (1) The first dated Buddha image is a copper statuette of the seated Buddha, flanked by two of his foremost disciples (agras-rāvakas or Sāriputra and Maudgalyāyana), on the lid of the celebrated Kaniṣka's reliquary. This was made by Agisala in the first year of Kaniṣka's reign, i.e. A.D. 78. On the cylinder of the casket seated Buddhas are also represented along with Kaniṣka and the sun and moon deities. On Kaniṣka's coins as well the Buddha is represented. Prior to Kaniṣka the Buddha is figured on the coins of Maues (c 78 to 58 B.C.) and Kadphises I (c. A.D. 50-60). The Buddha appears in Kuśāṇa coins in the bhūmisparśa mudrā, while the figure of Śiva is often represented on the other side. (2) The first dated Bodhisattva image belongs to Sārnāth and is dedicated by Friar Bala. It bears the date of the third year of Kaniṣka's reign, i.e. A.D. 81 (Epigraphia Indica, VIII, p. 173). (3) The earliest stone image of the Buddha belongs to Sāñchi, the year falling in the reign of Vasiṣka, i.e. A.D. 106 (Epigraphia Indica, II, pp 269-70). (4) The earliest stone image of the Buddha at Mathurā belongs to the reign of Huviṣka, i.e. A.D. 129 (Epigraphia Indica, X, p. 113). (5) The earliest Bodhisattva image at Mathurā, no. 1557 of the Mathurā Museum, inscribed in the twentieth year of Kaniṣka, i.e A.D. 98, shows for the first time on pedestal a seated Bodhisattva wearing the royal mukūṭa and jewellery.
It took about three centuries more for the specific Bodhisattva designations and images to be crystallised and differentiated from the Buddha image. But the beginning of the transformation is discernible in the Mathurā workshops in the Kuśāṇa period. The seated Bodhisattva image from Kaṭrā in the Mathurā Museum, for instance, attributed to the time of Kaniṣka, bears the auspicious symbols of the Mahāpuruṣa or the superman Buddha. He sits under the Bo-tree and wears his monastic robe, while his hand inflection of fearlessness (abhaya mudrā) is markedly stressed. Soon the silence, poise and ethereality, together with the auspicious symbols and gestures of the Buddha and Bodhisattva, spread from the workshops of Mathura to those of Gandhāra and Kapiṣa. Mathurā art, in the intellectual and religious climate of Bhakti in Kuśāṇa-Bhāgavatism, Śaivism, Jainism and Buddhism alike took the first steps in defining the iconographic conceptions and details not only of the Buddha and Bodhisattva, but also of the major Hindu and Jain deities. It was in the Kuśāṇa period at Mathurā that the iconography of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Śūrya, Durgā, the Sapta-Mātrikās and the Jain Tīrthankaras was first definitely recognised and settled. The Sarva Buddhhas, the various Jain Tīrthankaras, the Seven Mātrikās, the Mukhas-lingas and the Vāsudeva-Kuśāṇas, sculptured during the Kuśāṇa period at Mathurā, all bear the impress of a widespread upsurge of religious emotions among the common people. There is no doubt that the Yavanas, the Kuśāṇas, the Bactrians, the Śakas, the Huns and other foreigners of North-western India were inspired more by theism, bhakti and iconography than by religious rationalism and intellectual dogma. The vast Kuśāṇa Empire, extending from Gandhāra and Turkestan to the Ganges valley and embracing heterogeneous foreign populations, proved peculiarly favourable for the spread of the new religious theism of which the principal vehicle was a spiritually expressive devotional art.

India in the 1st century A.D. established intimate trade contacts with Central Asia, China, Asia Minor, Egypt, Greece and Rome and welcomed and assimilated Hellenistic, Semitic, Iranian and Chinese currents of culture. With its highly devotional, ceremonial and ecclesiastical character and the ethical impulsion of its doctrine of universal salvation, vouchsafed by the Divine grace of innumerable Buddhhas and Bodhisattvas, the Mahāyāna became a dynamic missionary world-religion. Encouraged by the powerful monarch Kaniṣka (A.D. 78-101), elucidated by a band of most talented Indian philosophers, and propagated by a tender, sensitive and lyrical art and iconography, the Mahāyāna theism started on its long and fateful treks and voyages on the Middle Asian Silk Route continent in the first century of this millennium. Stecherbatsky observes: “The history of religions has scarcely witnessed such a break between new and old within the pale of what nevertheless continues to claim common descent from the same religious founder.” The spread of Buddhism into Asia would not have been, however, possible but for this extraordinary metamorphosis. The source of the upsurge, the teaching and spread of a new dispensation, was the cosmopolitan Gandhāra, Uddiyāna,
Kashmir and Jālandhara, the outer fringe of the expanded, heterogeneous, fluent Indian world.

The first contacts of China with the Mahāyāna theism came obviously along the Caravan Route and might have preceded the establishment of Kaniska’s Empire. According to the Chinese legends as early as 121 B.C., huge golden images, supposed to be Buddhist, were found in the desert of Turkestan as a general of the Chinese Emperor Wu pursued the Hsiung-nu tribesmen deep into the desert. These were carried to the Imperial capital and set up in the palace. In 2 B.C. a Yue-chi transmitted certain Buddhist scriptures to the Chinese. This is authentic history recorded in Wei-lueh. In A.D. 65, Emperor Ming sent a delegation to the “Western Regions” for bringing the teachings of the Buddha. Some Buddhist scriptures and a portrait of the Buddha were obtained; while two Indian monks, Kaśyapa Mātaṅga and Dharmaratna, also accompanied them and settled in the Imperial capital for translating the texts into Chinese. Mātaṅga’s translation of the Forty sayings of the Buddha is extant. The first Buddhist monastery called the White Horse Monastery was then established in China, the first of its kind in that country.

Among early Buddhist missionaries who travelled along the famous Silk Route to China are also mentioned a Parthian, An-Shih-Kao (A.D. 148-170), an Indian monk Chu Shu Fu and a Kusāṇa monk, Chih Chao (both arriving in China in A.D. 170). The last monk established one of the first monasteries in Loyang. From the Kusāṇa Empire also came to China another Indian monk Chih Chien between A.D. 223-253. He brought to the court of Emperor Fei Chinese translations of the Buddhist laws. By imperial edict, the Chinese monks were now compelled to conform to it. A Chinese pupil of the Indian monk, named Chu Shih-hing, travelled to Chinese Turkestan, where Buddhism was already flourishing, and brought back many ancient editions of Buddhist texts. The stimulation of this fateful overland enterprise and adventure was essentially evangelical, proceeding from Gandhāra and Central Asia—what was then one of the most cosmopolitan culture-zones of the world.

The Gift of Gandhāra Art

For about five centuries an unparalleled religious enthusiasm in the construction of a thousand stūpas, chapels and monasteries with images of the dhūnī Buddha and Bodhisattvas gradually transformed the north-west into another Buddhist holy land. Even the common people in distant Khotan had small stūpas of their own in thousands with icons receiving their daily devout worship. This is the testimony of Fa-Hien who in the beginning of the 5th century found in Gandhāra and the Punjab numerous large monasteries accommodating many thousands of monks of both the Hinayāna and the Mahāyāna schools. Many sacred relics found their way from the holy land of the Ganges to the north-west and were enshrined in stūpas built for the purpose of bestowing health, peace and honour to princes and peoples. Legends were created
about the transport of the Buddha himself to this region for working miracles, and certain north-western sites came to be associated with famous episodes in the lives of the Bodhisattva. In Puṣkālaṇḍi (Peshawar) Aśoka built a colossal stūpa at the site where the Buddha in a previous life had made “the gift of his eyes”, and Kaniṣka at the spot where four of the Buddhas of the previous existences sat under the pipal tree. It was here that the latter also built the celebrated stūpa and tower filled with the sacred relics. Buddha’s alms-bowl was also here enshrined in a stūpa and a monastery, as found by Fa-Hien, until after many vicissitudes it was taken to Kashgar and finally to Iran. Similarly the legends of Hārīti and Vessantara had also their locations sanctified by stūpas in Puṣkālaṇḍi, as the legends of “the gift of the body” to the tigress and of flesh to the falcon were celebrated by stūpas in the province of Udūṇi. In Takṣaśīlā (Taxilā), the Emperor Aśoka created a stūpa on the site where the Buddha in one of his previous existences made “the gift of his head”. North-west of Taxilā on the right bank of the Indus, another stūpa was erected on the spot where in one of his previous existences the Buddha made “the gift of the body” to the hungry tigress. Sung-yun mentioned in about A.D. 520 that the sounds of the Buddhist bells could be heard during the whole night and filled the valleys in Udūṇi. Kashmir was also the home of an intense Buddhist faith with stūpas built by Aśoka and Kaniṣka. It seemed that the peace and serenity of the groves of Bodhgaya, Sārnāth and Śrāvasti came to be permanently settled on the rugged landscape of Afghanistan, Punjab and Kashmir that became in the early centuries of this millennium the foci of an intense religious awakening and the spearheads of a mighty proselytising drive across the caravan routes of Middle Asia.

Hiuen-Tsang in the 7th century (A.D. 629-645) mentioned that Nāgārjuna, Aśvaghōsa, Āryadeva and Kumāralabdha (or Kumāralatā) were contemporaries, calling them the four suns which illumined the world. It appears that all the four were living for some time together in North-west India in the 2nd century A.D. Kalhaṇa notes that Nāgārjuna was the only lord of the land in Kashmir at the time of the Kuśāṇa Emperors. The Emperors themselves adopted one or other of the Indian theistic cults. Kaniṣka was a devout Buddhist. W’ima or Kâdphises II (A.D. 40-A.D. 77) and Vâsudeva (A.D. 138-176) were Śaiva devotees.

The emergence of the ardent Gothico-Indian sculpture in Gandhāra in the 3rd century A.D., of which the most notable examples have come from the Kabul valley, especially from Haḍḍa near Jalalābād, also testifies to the spontaneity and intensity of the new religious upheaval among the Kuśāṇas, the Bactrians and other converts of foreign origin. Soon the Saddharma-pundarika and the Jātakamālā, two of the principal texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and, perhaps, also the Lalitavistara and portions of the Divyāvadāna crossed, the Hindukush; the kāvya and plays of Aśvaghōsa, the minstrel of the Mahāyāna, migrated as far as distant Turfan on the fringe of the Gobi desert. The third century A.D. also saw the greatest glory of the university of
Taxilā. Important since the Maurya times as the chief centre of medical studies, Taxilā became the most important cosmopolitan centre of learning and the principal home of Mahāyāna philosophy under the Kuśānas until its ruthless destruction by the White Huns in the 5th century, when the University of Nālandā came into prominence. At Taxilā in the late 2nd century A.D. there flourished the celebrated Sautrāntika philosopher Kumāralāta, who was Aśvaghoṣa’s junior contemporary. From Aśvaghoṣa to the distinguished brothers Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, who developed about the beginning of the fifth century the Yogāchāra or idealistic school in Puruṣapura, this ancient Buddhist capital of the Kuśāna Emperors radiated the intellectual and artistic influences associated with the development and spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The Transformation of Buddhism on its Way to China

The galaxy of gods and saktis, saints and angels of the Mahāyāna, its eternal Buddhakhetta, its Tuṣita and Sukhāvatī paradises of Maitreya, Amitābha and numerous other sanctified, adoring Bodhisattvas and its soul-stirring legends of miracles satisfied the social and religious affections of the less advanced peoples in Yue-chi, Parthia, Turkestan and China. Conversion to Buddhism was powerfully aided by Gandhāran sculpture and fresco-painting that depicted the paradises of the Buddhas as well as innumerable Bodhisattvas, angels, apsarās and saints, stimulating the zeal and faith and giving hope and assurance to congers of foreigners such as the Yue-chis, Parthians, Tokharians and Chinese. Mahāyāna metaphysics, miracle and art could feed both intellect and imagination. Mahāyāna image and ritual, dramatisation and allegory substituted and metamorphosed popular rites and forms of worship of foreign races and peoples without detriment to central Buddhist dogmas and doctrines. Thus the Mahāyāna could launch upon a successful career of digvijaya in Asia aided by an eclectic, tolerant outlook and adaptive assimilation of indigenous beliefs and rituals.

On its way to China through the ancient Caravan Routes in the Tarim basin Buddhism was largely transformed. The Saddharma Pundarika (first century A.D.) or the Lotus of the True Law gave a metaphysical interpretation of the eternal character of the Buddha. The Buddha is Being, “who has entered into the Suchness”, and has never left his eternal seat of meditation on the Vulture Peak at Rājagriha. The Pundarika also stressed the immanence of the Buddha. There is Buddhahood in every creature that awaits realisation. The Pundarika which became the scripture of millions in Middle Asia and China was translated into Chinese as early as A.D. 78 by Dharmarakṣa, and later by the celebrated Kumārajīva in A.D. 406. Besides the metaphysical principle of Buddhahood, the essence of all Bodhisattvas, the Pundarika stressed the cults of Maitreya and Amitābha, and the simple tenets of the Paradise or Pure Land to reach which was easier for the faithful or believers in God’s grace than through the difficult way of the Āryas. Thus the fresco-painter now began to paint the Tuṣita and
Sukhāvati heavens, arousing the piety and capturing the imagination of the converts in Middle Asia and China. The heavens of Maitreya and Amitābha far eclipse in glory Gridhrakūta or the Vulture Peak, beloved and sanctified by the historical Gautama. The paradise of the primordial Buddhas is more resplendent than the site of Gautama’s meditation. In religion and art Maitreya and Amitābha far outshine Gautama. Furthermore, in the early development of Chinese-Buddhist art the peace and happiness of the Pure Land are more discernible than any threats of suffering in hell that are so much emphasised in the later centuries. Much in the same manner Christian art concerned itself not with the scenes of the ministry and sufferings of Jesus, but rather with the eternal birth of the Son of God, the majesty of the Divine Mother and the perfection of Christ in glory.

Metaphysics rejects the historicity of either Gautama or Jesus, and thus paves the way to art envisioning Buddha and Christ in images that are eternal and kindle human hearts for all time. The Buddha is the beloved Teacher and Conqueror and Victor in the fight, “the peerless Master of the human Caravan”, “the King who ruleth all the world”, the very embodiment of Dharma. The profound love and adoration of the person of the Master supplied the human sweetness, tenderness and vitality of Buddhist art, whether in India or in China. Well has Chavannes remarked that the distinction of Buddhist art lies in giving “a moral value to the human figure”. Similarly in Christian art, Christ is the Good Shepherd who giveth his life for the sheep, and the Man of Sorrows who lives eternally in the life of love and sacrifice of mankind.

The Gothic Phase of Sculpture in France and Gandhāra

Another interesting parallelism in the history of the development of Buddhism and Christianity is that the Greco-Roman art largely supplied the first iconographic types in both early Buddhism and Christianity. Apollo became Buddha in the Gandhāra school of art as well as Christ in the Mediterranean. But in the Orient the influence of Mathurā and Sārnāth early developed an expression of profound, contemplative abstraction combined with graciousness, tenderness and delicacy that travelled from India to Turkestan, Central Asia and China, and soon superseded the Hellenistic, Iranian or Persian models. It was only in the 13th century that Europe could achieve similar spiritual expressiveness in the cathedral sculpture at Chartres, Rheims and Amiens. It took ten centuries or more for Christian Europe to rise to the mystical exaltation that could give the supernatural, idealised, gracious ‘Gothic’ human type that is so sharply contrasted with the Greek type. Great epochs of religious enthusiasm are epochs of magnificent artistic achievement, whether in the East or the West. Both religion and art feed mankind’s recurrent hunger for infinite love, goodness and compassion.

At Bérgām (near modern Kabul) a great art-centre developed in the third century A.D. in the Gandhāra-Taxilā region, blending, as in the essential Indian mode, an abstract and symbolic treatment with exquisite charm
and sensitiveness. There thrived Indo-Greek artists in Gandhāra who could execute fine and delicate ivory work depicting a Goose Girl in the familiar Indian tribhanga posture, and at the same time carve mountain sides into the Buddhas of colossal dimensions. The unexpected Gothic phase of artistic development in this region is best represented by a large number of sculptures at Hadda (the Hi-lo of Hiuen Tsang), near Jalālābād, Afghanistan, most of which date from the 3rd to the 5th century A.D. Many of the master-pieces of what may be called the new Gothico-Indian phase of sculpture adorn the Muse Guimet in Paris. Among these Grousset mentions “bearded heads of divinities which recall the fine figure of God at Amiens or the saint on the south-west portal at Rheims; demons in scenes of the assault of Māra which no longer have any affinity with Greek art, but are akin to the devils—whether decorative heads, caryatids or gargoyles—of Rheims, Amiens and Notre Dame, Paris. There is a tiny terracotta head here, with a smile like that of the angels at Rheims, spiritual, penetrating and acute.” Such vigorous and remarkable development of new qualities in sculpture in the Kabul valley in a period when Gandhāran art was showing deadening and insipidity has perhaps a political background. It was synchronous with the disintegration of the extensive Kuśāna empire into numerous small states after the death of Vāsudeva (3rd century A.D.) A petty dynasty ruling in the Kabul valley in the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. might have stimulated greater freedom, depth and spirituality and rescued the Gandhāran school from ossification just before the advance of the Ḥūnas from the west and north and of the Guptas in India.

This flowering of Gothico-Indian sculpture, representing one of the finest achievements in the world history of art, was most tragically checkmated by the invasion of the Ephthalite Ḥūnas who occupied Persia and Kabul and crossed the Indus in the last quarter of the 5th century A.D., and of the Muslim Arabs a century later. Yet for at least two out of six centuries of the rise and sudden decline of Gandhāran art the Apollonian Buddhas were superseded by the Gothico-Indian Buddhas, characterised by the blend of a sharp individuality with the traditional contemplative type, of sensitiveness of eyes, lips and hands with profound poise and serenity. The intensity of expression produced in Indian monks and Bodhisattvas the smile of the angel of Rheims and the tender compassion of the Beau Dieu of Amiens. Nor should we forget the Madonna-like warmth and penetration we come across in a magnificent female head from Hadda. Barbarian violence has seldom nipped in the bud such a most exciting and promising revelation of the creative human spirit in the history of art as it did in Kapiša, Lampāka and Gandhāra. This will be apparent from the description of Hiuen-Tsang who coming to this area (A.D. 630) two centuries after the havoc caused by the Ḥūna hordes found that “millions of monasteries” were in ruins and deserted, treasures of art completely destroyed and roads often abandoned and infested with robbers in Lampāka, Gandhāra, Nagarahāra, Puṣkalāvatī, Uḍḍiyāna and Takṣaśilā though their inhabitants continued to be Buddhist.
PART III

THE GOLDEN AGE OF GUPTA CLASSICISM
Chapter 8

LINK OF ASIAN UNITY (SECOND EPOCH):
THE IMAGE OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE
UNIVERSAL MAN IN GUPTA ART

The Meaning of Gupta Classicism

The Gupta Age is one of the privileged and spacious epochs in Indian civilisation. It saw a remarkable synthesis of elements of religion, culture and art in India and the systematisation of the canons of art, leading to a common classic artistic expression extending from Turkestan to Ceylon, and from Gandhāra and Kashmir to further India and Indonesia. The development of a full and complete scheme of man’s life inspired by the cultural renaissance, the broad spirit of religious tolerance and social assimilation and the growth of trade and commerce with Persia, Turkestan, China and South-eastern Asia promoted the secularisation of art marked by an exquisite balancing of material and spiritual forces.

The Kuśāṇa art of Gandhāra and Mathurā with its Hellenistic and Iranian traditions first started secularisation and fashioned the figure of the Buddha in India. But it was left for Gupta art to foster secularisation much further and embody man’s supreme moral grandeur and beauty in the Buddha, Śiva, and Viṣṇu images. The major formative forces were the inspiration of folk cults and pastimes; the upsurge of devotion in Bhāgavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism; and the social and economic ferment of the Gupta period. Secularisation means in India something very different from Europe. Gupta art achieved the full possibilities of plastic expression of contemplation (yoga), comprehended in the sense of the balance and integration of the whole of life (yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam). That which is serenity of mind in inner yoga or Being embodied itself in classic, formal and suave expression of all human relations—the entire realm of Becoming. Gupta art was the true classical art of India—the vehicle of universal myths and images of the cultural renaissance of Āryāvarta. It was a secular art but it expressed modes of universal consciousness. It identified aesthetic and mystical exaltation and thus could easily shake off the restraints of a hieratic expression. This explains its clarity, sincerity and freedom. The autonomy and perspicuousness of classic Gupta art were reinforced by the current conception in religion and metaphysics of the immanence of Being or Divinity in Man and Nature. No art in the world can vie with Gupta art in the revelation at once of the majesty and sublimity and the charm and tenderness of the human figure. Gupta classicism comprises in the first place, the perfection of the image of man, grounded in the moral and spiritual potentialities of mystical contemplation or yoga, and freed from the plastic injunctions and restraints of the cult image. Herein lies the humanist, universal character of classic Gupta art. Secondly, it establishes the norms of Indian plastic
expression through the stress of essential massiveness and integral volume maintained by a dynamic heaving rhythm and linear movement and an intense living compactness of forms. These are among the basic and permanent attributes of Indian art. They go back to early Buddhist Mathurā and Sārnāth traditions, and reveal a dimension of plastic conception derived from within the whole being and not from mere visual perception. Thus does Gupta classicism blend naturalism and abstract or geometrical treatment, visual and tactile values, furnishing the ideal and style for the art of the succeeding centuries.

The Classic Treatment of the Buddha and Bodhisattva

During the peace of the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., Indian art traditions could come to their own and find classic expression, and the Romano-Buddhist Gandhāran art was quickly replaced by Gupta art—the natural culmination of ancient Indian art reconciling vivid appreciation of form, mass and rhythm with the ethereality and sublimity of the human figure. Thus it was that the contemplative Buddha image was spiritualised and universalised in the new social climate of the Gupta empire, no longer disturbed by the chaos and unsettlement of the Kuśāna period, due largely to the influence of the indigenous Mathurā and Sārnāth schools of culture: The treatment of the Buddha is now characterised by a fine tracery of the monk’s robe, rounded lines on the body, and a profoundly contemplative face, the ensemble showing remarkable harmony, serenity, grace and vigour. In striking contrast with the Romano-Buddhist types, there is the celebrated Sārnāth Buddha image commemorating the deliverance of his first sermon at Mrigadāva in Banāras. The Buddha is here shown in the attitude of discoursing the Wheel of the Law, while the Master’s five earliest disciples (together with woman donor of the image with her child) are appropriately carved on the pedestal. The composition is most delightful, breathing poise, profundity and sweetness that are stressed by horizontals, triangles and circles. The stable triangular pattern is overhung by an elaborately decorated circular nimbus. The hovering angels, deftly integrated into the nimbus, produce an atmosphere of ethereality. Nicety and simplicity of composition blend with a serene linear rhythm embodying the complete cessation of desire, perfect clarity and spiritual at-homeness and poise. Thus did Gupta art for the first time in human culture invest human figure with the highest spiritual value derived from ancient Indian yoga experience. Similarly the famous lofty standing figure of the Buddha is one of the world’s most outstanding symbols of the serene and cosmic Man at home with the world. Behind its half-closed eye-lids is hidden profound knowledge of the mystery of the world-process, while the benignant comprehending smile, not discernible in the more celebrated Sārnāth image of the discoursing Teacher, reconciles the silence and impersonality of Nirvāṇa with the Master’s profound pity for the world. The image, it should be remembered, is contemporaneous with the
teaching of Mahāyāna idealism in Ayodhyā and one of its purest embodiments.

The Ayodhyān school of Buddhist idealism has also gone into the making of the grand images of the Buddha and of the Bodhisattva Padmapānī—some of the noblest creations of Indian sculpture. Markedly different from the Mathurā representation in their deeper profundity and introspection as well as in their sterner treatment of mass and outline and emphasis of ovals and circles, these images also have none of the regular wave-like movement of the Buddha’s diaphanous drapery, a motif which has gone far beyond the confines of India and has been imitated from Mathurā by the art of Central Asia and Turkestan. The net effect is decidedly a greater inwardness, pointing to these as some of the earliest representations of the Great Ascetic (Mahārāmaṇā).

These have their prototypes in the Buddha of Friar Bala, Sārnāth, of the early second century A.D., and the Buddha, so-called Bodhisattva from Bodhgaya (in the Calcutta Museum) of the early 4th century A.D.—both characterised by simple, restrained and yet vigorous piling up of mass upon mass integrated together by a sweeping, dynamic rhythm. The Bodhisattva Padmapānī is also decidedly more indigenous than the Mathurā image, with his matted locks resembling those of Sārnāth Lokeshvara or Śiva, though much more summarily treated; the hems of his garment are more simply designed, and his feet delicately poised on the lotus blossoming amid its foliage. The image is hard to excel in its sheer clarity, balance and serenity. The gracious, hardly imperceptible smile, as in the Mathurā figure, along with a few rebellious curls and the necklace invest the image with youthful charm and sweet benignity. Banāras influenced profoundly the Eastern Indian School of art. The colossal standing copper image of the Buddha from Sultānānaj, Bhāgalpur, is similar in style to the standing stone Buddhas of Sārnāth in the Indian Museum. But its vigour and forcefulness are enhanced by the absence of the halo or backslab and the movement of the hands unfurling the folds of the over-spreading drapery. The latter half revealing the smooth, simplified body and limbs accentuates vitality and liveliness. The animation of the image is such that we feel that the Buddha steps forward to his disciples. The standing image of the Buddha from Bihārail, Rājaśāhī, in Bengal in the early 5th century A.D., which is executed in Chunār sandstone, shows the same concentrated inwardness as well as human warmth as the Sārnāth figure with a sinuous but disciplined linear treatment. This elegant image, like the Sārnāth type, has neither the decorated nimbus nor the extremely thin stylised robe of the Mathurā figure. As in Sārnāth, so in Bihārail, the robe covers both the shoulders, the thin incised lines indicating its folds. Bengal very early deviated from the Kuśāna idiom of Mathurā and had its own Gothic variant of the Gupta idiom with a dynamic rhythm and broad smooth modelling of the figure for the expression of silence as well as refined grace and lyrical sensibility.

The Classic Treatment of the Feminine Nudes

Mathurā, Sārnāth and Pāṭaliputra have been the perennial springs of Indian
classical plastic expression, abstract, perspicuous and suave. Indian classical art was, however, by no means only supramundane. The classicism of Gupta art no doubt lies in its clear definition of the synthesis between the earlier popular cults of yaksā and tree-worship, Buddhist and Jain heresies and Brahmanical renaissance, all welded together by the upsurge of Bhāgavatism as well as by the new literary and scholastic traditions of the period. The Gupta age, though the age of nationalism, was marked by cultural synthesis promoted by the peace, might and prosperity of the Gupta Empire and the renewed intercourse with the Roman, Iranian and Chinese worlds. Art, like literature, fully records this synthesis. The unsophisticated charms of the Yaksīṇīs on the railing pillars at Mathurā are reproduced but with refinement and stern discipline of surface and outline in the tribhanga poses of the River-Goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā, Tārā and Pārvatī, Māra’s seductive daughters the Gandharvas and maiden chauri-bearers in Gupta sculpture. All these are, characterised by vivid appreciation of the dynamic rhythm and quick pulsation of the living human figure that is quite new in Indian art. The classicism of Gupta art is excellently illustrated by the manner in which the representation of Gaṅgā and Yamunā on the door-lintels of Gupta temples assimilates the traditions not only of Goddess Śrī or Gaja-Lakṣmī of early Buddhist art but also the Damsel of Abundance from the folk art of Mathurā. Vālmiki mentions Gaja-Lakṣmī being carved on the door-lintels of palaces. The image of Śrīmā Devatā or Gaja-Lakṣmī became a popular motif, found on the gates of Śāṅchi and also at Bhārhat and Bodhgaya. In early art Śrī or Lakṣmī has sometimes no connection with the elephants, but is represented in a floral setting in a superbly elegant standing tribhanga pose, characteristic also of the Damsel of Plenty from Mathurā and the River-goddess on the makara on the Amaravatī rail. This becomes the type of the Gupta Gaṅgā and Yamunā with their swelling breasts the tribhanga pose and the water jar in one of the hands. In Bhārhat there is an actual representation of the River-goddess on the makara (makara vāhinī Gaṅgā) from whose mouth issues forth a sprouting lotus. In the Gopuram on the door-jamb of the South Indian temples Gaṅgā stands on the makara with a decorative stylised lotus creeper emerging from the animal’s mouth and surrounding the goddess as a frame. The Śalabhaṅgikā and the Nadi-devatā motif sometimes intermingle showing the foundation of both in the concept of fecundity whether of vegetation or of water. Gupta imaging of nude goddesses has bequeathed to Indian art development the exquisite blend of natural grace and refinement with sense of volume, buoyancy and compactness of form. The natural balance and poise in both repose and movement superbly blend in the age of luxury, refinement and adornment of the Imperial Guptas with the desire to deck the human body with apparel, jewellery and garland that all, however, stand in organic and supple relation to the limbs and contribute towards the consistency of the plastic composition. The exquisite ornamentation of the lotus prabhāmanḍala (padmātapatra chhāyāmanḍala, in the words of Kālidāsa) with foliage and arabesques, the sensitive lineation
of the monk's transparent robe and the tender naturalistic treatment of the feminine body with prominence of breasts and hips and profusion of jewellery are all on a par with the imageries and linguistic embellishments of Kālidāsa, Bhāravi and Bhavabhūti in grand style. Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanism as well as folk cult found their gods and goddesses, spirits of the woods and waters, serpents, streams and phalli not in antagonism with, nor in segregation from one another but all assimilated and integrated together by the metaphysical mind and the syncretic art and religion of this age. And if any one still thinks that the message of art was only religious he has only to look below the cult-image even of the Buddha to the pedestal with its standing dragons and sitting lions amalgamated into one pair of fanciful romping creatures, or to the elaborate Arabesque carvings of typical intertwined creepers with leaves fluttering in exuberant display subserving the general decorative pattern of the temple. There was also as much emphasis upon narration as upon the cult; the stories of the Jālakas, the Purāṇas and the epics found their representation in unending series of elegantly carved panels where the secular and the religious slipped into each other. The Buddha vanquishing the daughters of Māra so often depicted in Buddhist art, and Śiva burning Kāma to ashes as the fair Pārvati disturbs his serene contemplation (Kumārasambhava, III, 72) represent the great myths of the Gupta age; while the self-immolation of the Bodhisattva before the tigress depicted in the Buddhist art of Gandhāra and far-off China and Japan and its Hindu counterpart, the sacrifice of Dilipa before the lion as it pounces upon the cow Nandini under his protection, epitomize its spirit of service and renunciation. The classicism of Gupta art springs from the Gupta cultural ideal of the contemplative, universal Man, combining discipline with enjoyment, renunciation with obligation and wisdom with beauty, so elegantly and forcefully presented by Kālidāsa in his Rāghuvamśa.

The Gupta age witnessed the secularisation of the state and society under the impetus of vast economic change and accumulation of wealth and the absorption of congeries of foreigners into the Hindu social hierarchy. The rich merchant and official class aspired after release from the bondage and suffering of sāmasāra, and yet did not forget fellowman nor sentient creatures. Such were the large-heartedness and altruism of the age. On the base of the image of the Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi at Sārnāth we read: "Om. This is the pious gift of the lay-member Suyatra, the head of a district (Viṣayapatni). Whatever merit there is in this gift, let it be to the acquirement of supreme wisdom by all sentient beings."

The Accent of Formal Values

Gupta classical sculpture freely drew upon naturalism and realism, but at the same time regulated these without loss of compactness, ponderability and vitality of forms according to the new scholastic canons of abstract beauty. It, indeed, created the iconography of Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanism
and reached to the masses the message of great religious and social movements. At the same time it showed a new sensibility to the beauty of the human body, especially the rhythmic quality of the feminine body, and developed artistic norms, conventions and formulae that in their refinement and clear definition governed the art construction of half of Asia for many centuries. Mere canon and formula cannot, however, make an art true and noble. Gupta art in imaging the figures of the Buddha, Bodhisattva, Viṣṇu and Śiva or the goddesses, angels and women superbly reveals the metaphysical and the symbolic through the formal sculptural values of integral mass, ponderability and weightiness. Saturated as it is with the serenity, humanism and universality of Kṛiṣṇa and Buddha-Bhāgavatism, it is at the same time marked by an accent of idealistic charm and delicacy of treatment. It redounds to a greater glory that the sculpture, while expressing the metaphysical and the universal through its attributes, of monumentality and ponderousness shows a profound appreciation of light and dark effects, a dynamic rhythm of supple curves and a spontaneous beauty and economy of linear network that bridge the gulf between man’s affective state and state of suprasensible wisdom. It is these qualities which make Gupta sculpture a unique contribution to the world history of art.

The Combination of Vigour and Charm

It must not be supposed that Gupta sculpture undervalued Brahmanical motifs and subjects. Both the Viṣṇu and Śiva of the new Bhāgavatism were modelled with a superb combination of poise and charm, vigour and fineness usually one associates with the Gupta images of the Buddha and Bodhisattva. The well-known images of Viṣṇu from Mathurā (E.6) and the cosmic form of Viṣṇu from Aligarh as well as the Ėkamukhi Śivalinga from Khoh combine profound serenity with elegance, universality with liveliness. The Jain Ṭīrthankara’s images equally illustrate the harmony of the external form with the message of the human soul. If Mahāyāna idealism and compassion for world misery have given India the sublime images of the Bodhisattva at Sārnāth, Mathurā and Ajantā, the intense Kṛiṣṇabhakti in the same epoch similarly embodied itself in the magnificent images of Viṣṇu at Mathurā and Aihole, of Viṣṇu’s rescue of Gajendra or Lord of Elephants, and of Nara-Nārāyana at Deogārh, reconciling the impersonality of Brahman with Viṣṇu’s profound tenderness for jīva, “which has no other refuge in the seven worlds”. Two important episodes of Vāsudeva-Kṛiṣṇa’s rescue of his devotees that assumed great prominence in the later Bhakti literature were carved with great feeling in the Gupta period and immediately after, viz., the deliverance of the Lord of Elephants at the Deogārh temple (about A.D. 600), the Virūpākṣa temple at Pattadakal (A.D. 740) and the Undavalli cave in the Deccan and the slaying of Hiranya-kasippu and rescue of Prahlāda by the Man-lion Avalāra at the Daśavatāra cave at Ellorā (8th century). The grace of Govinda rescuing the elephant from the clutches of the Nāga runs parallel to the Bodhisattva’s redeeming
love for animals in his many previous births, and is superbly expressed in the Lord's compassionate attitude towards the elephant in profound adoration in the Deogarh sculpture. The angels above dance in joy at the Lord's answer to his devotee's cry. Not the crocodile's jaws but the coils of the Nāga from Pātāla have caught the legs of the elephant at Deogarh. In the medieval and post-medieval representations of the same theme in South India the Nāga is replaced by the crocodile, as in the well-known literary version, Viṣṇu rushing in all haste to protect the afflicted creature. The Ellora sculpture of the deliverance of Prahlāda is characterised by a far greater tenseness of the scene, the fury and majesty of the Lord's wrath and Hiraṇyakaśipū's shrinking acceptance of death. In the Daśavatāra cave, there is also represented a Śaiva counterpart of the Kṛiṣṇa-Bhāgavata episodes—the rescue of Śiva's devotee Mārkaṇḍeya whom the god of Death is about to drag off to his dark abode when Śiva springs out of the linga and delivers him.

Religion and art, Buddhist and Brahmanical, speak with the same fervour of devotionalism. The picture of Śiva in yogic meditation in Kālidāsa's Kumāra-sambhava has an affinity with the seated Buddha image in Buddhist art, just as the universality, serenity and piety of the Bodhisattvas of Mahāyāna Buddhism reiterate themselves in the profound clarity, tranquillity and sweetness of the Viṣṇu images and the Śiva-mukha-lingas of Gupta sculpture. Śiva's visage on the Eka-mukha-linga stones at Khoh, Nagod, shows a penetration, poise and delicacy that are quite on a par with the balance and charm of the Mathurā-Banāras images of the Buddha and Bodhisattva. Brahmanical sculpture has added an elaborate head-gear and jewellery to Śiva who is less of an ascetic than the great Śrāmaṇa, the Buddha in Gupta art. In the Gupta image of the Bodhisattva it is only the halo that is elaborately decorated showing resemblance to the full-blown lotus flower; in the Brahmanical images of Śiva and Viṣṇu the tiara and the necklace give scope for much ornamentation.

The Treatment of Cosmic Myths

Gupta art for the first time also tackled some of the basic Brahmanical cosmogonic and metaphysical concepts, and the stones of Udayagiri, Mandasor, Bhītargaon and Deogarh were elevated to ontology and metaphysics. There is, for instance, in Udayagiri one of the grandest representations of a comical event—the creation of the Earth which is rescued from the waters by the Boar-God. The colossal rock-cut relief, simple, massive and monumental, over-reaches the size of the wall, thronged with gods, men, saints and demons. The surrounding lotus decorative motifs, the flowing garland as well as the loin cloth, with its three folds hanging down vertically, serve to balance the composition as Viṣṇu, by the sheer weight of his ponderous body, lifts up the Earth that resigns herself to this fateful movement and as she rises delicately places her feet on a lotus bud. On the plane of history this magnificent image records Emperor Chandragupta II Vikramāditya's rescue of India from chaos and
confusion as the near-by images of Gaṅgā-Yamunā in the same cave indicate his conquest of Middle India. There may be, if Viśākhadatta’s drama Devichandra-guptam is to be believed, even a more direct reference to Chandragupta rescuing Dhruva Devī, his brother Rāmagupta’s wife, later on his consort, who was cowardly offered by her imbecile husband to the Śaka invader in exchange of peace in the realm. In the same cave there is the magnificent image of Viśnu reclining in the cosmic waters representing another cosmical event—the silence before creation or withdrawal of the soul into meditation. The fixity of meditation is stressed by the severe horizontality of the reclining image, the flattening of physiognomy and the repetition of the coils of the mythical Serpent Ananta symbolising eternity.

Not far from Udayagiri, at a place called Pathāri, there is a temple containing a massive relief on the nativity of Kṛiṣṇa who lies by the side of his mother Devaki watched by four attendants. This is one of the finest and largest specimens of Indian sculpture. The serene happiness of the mother is stressed by the horizontals of the reclining figure and its summary treatment as well as by the reiterated verticalism of the stiff-limbed maidens standing in vigil with their chaurīs. Here is a representation of the generic archetype of motherhood into which cosmic rather than individual emotions and attitudes have been introduced. Gupta sculpture has expressed not only the serene beauty of motherhood but also the sensuous elegance of river-goddesses, apsarās and danseuses, but on the whole the charms of the flesh are subdued by a moral ideal so magnificently presented by Kālidāsa in his description of the austerity of Pārvatī whose incomparable loveliness was not enough to win Śiva as her husband.

Reference may be made here to another cosmic image found near Aligarh, of the triple-faced Viṣṇu, with right and left faces those of the Lion and the Boar incarnation, and with a large circular nimbus depicting the nine planets (Nava-graha), the twin stars (Āśvinikumāras) and the four sons of Brahmā as well as Agni. The Gupta age saw the synthesis of the sectarian god, Kṛiṣṇa or Vāsudeva, the object of adoration of the Bhāgavatas, with the Vedic deity Viṣṇu who is associated with the sun and the life of the cosmos and takes three strides in the sky and pervades the whole cosmos, and also with his Purānic avatāras—Nrisimha and Varāha. The composite image, representing the sky with the various gods and the three faces of Viṣṇu, comprises a highly interesting example of iconographic reconciliation. The clarity and tranquillity of the four-armed Mahā-Viṣṇu in the centre, with his gorgeous mukuta, are in striking contrast with the movements in the sky and the dynamisms of the Lion and Boar faces. The Trimūrti Mahā-Viṣṇu is the Bhāgavata counterpart of the Trimūrti Mahēśvara of the Śaivas, equally significant in the Gupta age. Another cosmic image of Viṣṇu is the god in his Dwarf incarnation suddenly assuming an indefinite dimension to the discomfiture of Bali. As early as the sixth century A.D. we find at Bādāmi the sculpturing of Viṣṇu Trivikrama in the rock-cut cave. The fury and majesty of the cosmic god are expressed by
the colossal size and heaviness of the figure underlined by the verticals of his mace, sword and bow and of the heavy cylindrical mukuta, all placed against the asymmetrical horizontal projection from the cave-ceiling. The small, delicate and supple bodies of the supplicating gods and goddesses to whom Viṣṇu pays no attention are in marked contrast with the tense, momentous occasion of the triumph over the Asura-god Bali. Viṣṇu’s three steps symbolise the sky, the other and the earth, whence darkness is dispelled or the daily rise, movement across the meridian and setting of the sun. The Trivikrama figure of Viṣṇu embodying a cosmic myth has, since the Gupta period, been executed in many temples of India, such as Mahābalipuram, Ellorā and elsewhere in the later centuries.

Kṛiṣṇa-Bhāgavatism accordingly inspired some of the best specimens of Brahmanical art during the Gupta period. The temples of Pathārī, Deogārh, Bhātargaon and Mandasor contain some of the best images of Viṣṇu and Kṛiṣṇa in India. We may mention the striking image of Nārāyaṇa at the temple of Deogārh as the supreme or universal Self, one in two, revealing the profound metaphysical doctrine, expounded in the Bhagavadgītā, of the identity of the immediate, fragmentary self and the rational, eternal self (Nara-Nārāyaṇa or Kṣara-Akṣara). Nara is the individual, empirical self and Nārāyaṇa is cosmic or universal self, Viṣṇu, the goal of mankind. Nara and Nārāyaṇa were in ancient literature two eminent seers and great ascetics; later on Nara was identified with Arjuna and Nārāyaṇa with Viṣṇudeva-Kṛiṣṇa, both being worshipped together as deities. Here are two very similar images, both of self—the four-handed one is Nārāyaṇa or Puruṣottama, the omnipresent ruler of the Universe (Īśvara or transcendent), and the other is Jīva-Ātman who dwells in every human soul (Antāyāmi, or immanent Īśa of the Bhagavadgītā and is imaged in the attitude of ratioincation. It is rare that in sculpture intervening empty spaces (as between the two selves—the mutable and the immutable and between their large limbs) as well as parallels and horizontals are so effectively utilized for an emphasis of poise and fulfilment. Both of them breathe prajñānam (wisdom) śāntam (tranquillity) and anantam (universal[ity]) recorded by a superb combination of restraint and amplitude in modelling and the large expansive rhythm of the ensemble. Seldom has art so eloquently represented a profound metaphysical truth—the identity of the concrete and universal, empirical and real self that is achieved through yoga contemplation. On the top the brisk movement of the flying angels is in sharp contrast with the serenity of the scene of contemplation on the earth.

In the same temple we have in another panel the representation of Viṣṇu as the Eternal, sleeping on the Cosmic Serpent that symbolises Time (Anantaśāyin) and also as Kṛiṣṇa delivering the Lord of Elephants (Gajendra-mokṣa), saturated with the piety and devotion of Kṛiṣṇa-Bhāgavatism. On the lower panel of Viṣṇu-Anantaśāyī we see carved images of the Pañcika Pāṇḍavas with Draupadī, all Kṛiṣṇa-Bhāgavatas that in their tender devotion (bhaktī)
remind one of the disciples of the Buddha in the sculptures at Amarāvatī and Borobodur.

Ajantā, the Classic Expression in Indian Painting

Like Gupta sculpture, Gupta painting reached a marvellous phase of development, unique in the history of art, and commands even greater admiration. Ajantā and Bāgh paintings show a most harmonious blend of ethereality and supernatural atmosphere with the joyousness of the senses. Its methods and techniques have guided not only Indian but Oriental art through the centuries. The identification of the worldly and contemplative life, which underlies the universal quality of Gupta painting, is itself the result of the Mahāyāna world-interpretation that effects the spiritual transformation of samsāra and exalts it. Thus we discern in the frescoes as much piety and tender human sadness as the beauty and sensuous perfection of the feminine form in an astonishing variety of postures and moods. The essence of Mahāyāna faith—the unity, wholeness and pervasiveness of life—finds in Ajantā and Bāgh grand, classic expression in painting. Over the panorama of a unified universe, in which gods, gandharvas, kinnaras, animals and creatures of the nether land jostle together through a continuous sequence of births and deaths, broods the profound piety of the Bodhisattva—the magic apparition of the Buddhist middle ages of Asia. The dramas of human love and separation, happiness and suffering, passion and compassion, the movements of armies, the gatherings at the royal courts, the sports of animals, the processions of ants in search of the tree-sap as well as the sacred happenings in the previous lives of the Buddha, are all there set within a cosmic frame; the sense of the unity of all life and its transience and futility weave them all into a single, palpitating pattern of Life and Craving.

The Ajantā frescoes are distributed over sixteen out of twenty nine caves and cover the entire period of classic Indian painting from the 2nd century B.C. to the 7th century A.D.—about a whole millennium. In the world history of art there is nothing comparable with this unique gallery. Unfortunately preservation both in quality and number is markedly disparate in the different caves. Not merely is the chronology of the art works that belong to successive epochs and styles uncertain, but the excellent preservation of paintings of some caves and paucity and damaged condition in others are apt to warp the judgment in respect of style and development. The earliest frescoes belong to the 2nd century B.C., and are found in caves nine and ten, executed under the Śatavāhana Empire. The highest perfection seems to have been achieved in the art works in the 5th and 6th centuries A.D., due to the combined cultural influences from the Gupta and Vākātaka realms. The marked features of the earlier Bhārhat and Śānchī art are clearly discernible at Ajantā in the representation of the Chhaddanta and Syāma Jātakas. Amarāvatī has also left its impress upon the refined sensuousness and Botticellian grace in the figures of princely
men and their nude women, slender and yet vibrant, tender and elegant and yet never sensual and unchaste. Thus Bhārhut and Sāñchi from the north and Amarāvatī from the south have contributed towards the creative spirit and tradition of Ajantā. Yet we find a new refinement and delicacy as well as range of human expression and a romantic love for nature and animal life that in association with a superb linear treatment and dynamic sweep of colours makes the Ajantā frescoes the grandest art creations of India. The representation of the moving herd of elephants in the forest and of the solicitude of the king and his attendants for the fainting queen Subhadrā shows rare observation, sympathy and earth-boundedness that are all lifted to another plane by the Mahāyāna piety, compassion and idealism. With unusual charm and delicacy are also depicted the tender affection of the blind hermit parents and the filial attachment of the boy Bodhisattva in the background of the forest with the running antelopes that used to accompany him whenever he went down to the river to fetch water. The scene represented is from the Syāma Jātaka. The paintings of episodes in the Chhaddanta and Syāma Jātakas belong to the Śātāvāhana period when India through maritime activity and commerce in her Deccan ports, Vaijayantī and Kalyāṇi, and the eastern port of Amarāvatī experienced a new cosmopolitanism and humanism. The naturalism, piety and sense of rhythm of the reliefs of Sāñchi, the famous stūpa of the Śātāvāhana Empire, mingle here with the freedom, elegance and subtlety of expression that characterise the mature phase of Ajantā art.

The Blend of Classical Kāvya and Mahāyāna Idealism

Gupta art from Sārnāth, Mathurā, Vidiśā and Ujjain (which is only 170 miles from Ajantā) powerfully influenced Ajantā figuration, possibly after the marriage of Prabhāvatī Guptā, daughter of Chadragnātha II with Rudrasena II and her regency. Most of the frescoes indeed belong to the art idiom of the Gupta age with its wealth, power and luxury expressing themselves in the fashion and jewellery of queens, the pomp and voluptuous languor of kings and the love-making of Yakṣa couples in Alakā that Kālidāsa loved to dwell upon. In fact the amorous poses of the Ajantā lovers, the husband with the beloved on his lap indulging in madhupāna are reminiscent of Kālidāsa’s verses in the Rāghuvamśa (iv, 36). Yet the Gandharva world pictured in the poems of Aśvaghoṣa and Kālidāsa amidst the snow-capped, misty Himalayan heights, with the clouds floating about as messengers, that stirred the imagination of the frescoe painters mingles harmoniously with the asceticism and mystical wonderment of the Lalitavistara, the Buddha-charita and the Jātakamālā. This full toned blending is really the crux of Indian classic painting. It could never have been reached by the exclusive emphasis of the Arhat ideal so eloquently represented in figures of the Brāhmaṇa or Śramaṇa, or of the divine Buddha and Bodhisattva ideal. The charm and otherreality of the Ajantā figures were indeed derived from the happy marriage of Mahāyāna idealism with the fervour of
classical Sanskrit Kāvyā. The Himalayan paradise of romantic poetry and the Tuṣita heaven of the Buddhist faith both lent their grace and subtlety of expression to the Ajantā figuration of true human grandeur.

The qualities of earthiness and sensuousness in Ajantā paintings are subordinate to the same literary norms of abstract beauty that govern Aśvaghoṣa’s and Kālidāsa’s conceptions of human charm and elegance; the amplitude of forms and gestures is ordered by dramatic expressiveness, and the moving pageantry of life subdued by the dominant conception that every episode of life is human and divine simultaneously. The scenes of human passion and sorrow and the supreme ordeals of the Bodhisattva triumphing over human wickedness by his gentleness, compassion and goodwill symbolise in Mahāyāna thought the nature and destiny of saṃsāra to which deliverance is vouchsafed by the infinite wisdom and charity of the Bodhisattva. Saṃsāra and Nibbāna thus slip into each other, and Ajantā art derives its sincerity, pathos and enchantment form this beatific Mahāyāna vision of the human spirit. The most outstanding examples that shine among the great masterpieces of Ajantā pictorial art are those depicting the blind hermit parents with their child, welded together by a marvellous expression of tender pathos; the collapse of the delicate, charming princess with the spectre of imminent death leaving her unruffled amidst the bewilderment of her youthful attendants; the meeting of Yośodharā and Rāhula with the Buddha after his Enlightenment, dominated by their mixed feeling of expectancy and of reckoning the spiritual status of the Master; and the king’s punishment of the beautiful prostrate woman, with her hands touching his feet in trembling supplication.

India’s Sense of the Unity and Communion of Life

Over the marvellous things of beauty and enjoyment of the earth painted in the Ajantā frescoes broods the spirit of the Mahāyāna Yogāchāra idealism founded by Asaṅga, who found retreat in the monastery of Ajantā and declared that the world was no more than the dream of dreams. Not merely the world but also thought is ephemeral, a perpetual series of moments. Even the universal subconscious basis of all, the ālaya-vijñāna, is in perpetual flux, arising and perishing, carrying with it all kleśa and activities, and preventing sentient creatures from passing out of existence. The Great Deliverer is the Bodhisattva.

This over-all metaphysical frame of reference, myth and ideology created its own set of formal values that are contributions of India to the world history of paintings: decisive and vigorous but supple and delicate lines; a plastic sense in figuration underlined by the interplay of lights and shades; a sense of movement along with roundness and relief communicated by the repetition of figures with their swaying limbs in a crowd or procession in somewhat Cezannean landscapes; simple but consummate colour schemes; and smooth dynamic rhythm of composition on a grand scale unrestricted by any rigid demarcation of frames. The dominating note of composition of the Ajantā
frescoes is the flowing rhythm of swarming figures, gods, angels, animals and plants in vital communion or rapport with one another. This is born of India's ancient sense of the unity and compositeness of life which had its profound impress on Buddhist art from the Bhārhat and Sāñchī reliefs of the second century B.C. to the carvings in the Borobodur Stūpa of the 8th century A.D.

In well-balanced patterns of colours, usually brown, relieved by blue, crimson, white and green, trees, flowers, animals, men and spirits are marvellously and intricately interwoven as in a colourful fabric of numerous folds, markedly resembling the magnificent rhythmic colour schemes of the murals of Riviera and Orozco. There is also a remarkable geometrical quality discernible in the pliant, graceful and elusive human forms as one meets with in the Mexican frescoes. But Ajantā figures exhibit formal geometric values associated not with passion and agitation but with serenity and poise that are reiterated in Indian dancing. Yet the painting as an ensemble gives the impression of an exuberant vitality that is spilled on all sides and cannot be contained within the various colour areas separated by the cleft rocks and architectural motifs. Due to the skilful gradation of tones, the careful distribution of spaces and the fluent composition of the countless forms, real and fanciful, all nature seems to be vibrant with life that seems to issue forth from the walls of the caves, dance across the pillars and sweep through the ceilings. The composition at Ajantā has no rigid bounds, and often moves from wall to wall until it encounters rock cleft and architectural motif, but is focalised round certain calm, detached, majestic and reiterated figures of the Bodhisattva as man or as beast, thus lending a poise and serenity to the whole scene. Witnessed by a throng of devotees in the caves in their shimmering darkness, the frescoes, the spectators and the cave interiors become all fused into one collective thrill of religious ecstasy. Ideal as well as formal elements in their sum total contribute towards making some of the world's best art creations.
Chapter 9

THE BUDDHA’S FACE OF SILENCE:
THE TRIUMPH OF BUDDHIST ART IN ASIA

The Stepping-Stones of the March of Buddhist Culture and
Art across the Hindukush

A most affluent and cosmopolitan age in India was that of the Imperial Ku-
sāñas (1st to 3rd centuries A.D.). In their heyday their vast empire that ex-
tended from Parthia and the Indian borderland, the ante-chamber of both
India and China, to Ayodhyā and Banāras, gave peace and prosperity in an
extensive region that was then one of the world’s melting-pot of cultures.
With their summer capital at Kapiṣa and winter capital at Taxila-Puṣkalāvatī,
Kuśāṇa emperors stimulated an intellectual, religious and artistic Renaissance
grounded in the blend of Indian, Iranian and Hellenistic culture elements,
with the Indian influence dominant in religion and art.

The Guptas (A.D. 320-535), that emerged on the Indian scene after
the fall of the Kuśāṇas, obtained allegiance from the Śaka and Kuśāṇa rulers
of West and North-west India and fostered active commercial and cultural
intercourse with both China and Europe. The great Indian leader of Chinese
Buddhism, Kumārājīva, spent twelve years at the Chinese capital between
A.D. 401 and 412. Three Indian missions to Rome are recorded for the years
330, 361 and A.D. 530; and two to China for the years A.D. 641 and 731. A
procession of Chinese monk-pilgrims came to visit the Holy Land of Buddhism
from the beginning of the 5th century. Of these, the most famous are Fa-Hien
(A.D. 399-414), disciple of Kumārājīva, Sung-Yun (A.D. 518), Hīne-Tsang
(A.D. 600-654) and I-Tseng (A.D. 635-713). Between the 3rd and 8th centuries,
as many as 187 Chinese scholar-pilgrims, according to Liang Chi-Chao,
visited or attempted to visit India at different times. Hundreds of Indian
monk-scholars also travelled from different parts of India to China to translate
Buddhist texts, establish monasteries and spread Buddhist religion and learn-
ing. Of those who travelled by the Central Asian routes, the most famous
are Kasyapa Mātāṅga (c. A.D. 65), Dharmarakṣa (A.D. 284), Buddhahadra
(A.D. 398), Kumārājīva (A.D. 401 to 413), Buddhabhaja (A.D. 423), Buddhibhadra
or Dharmagupta (A.D. 590) and Prabhakaramitra (A.D. 627-653). India also
maintained active interchange with Persia and the Mediterranean. The fre-
scoes of Ajantā indicate Indian intercourse with Persia early in the 7th century
A.D. through, it may be, by the sea-route after the incorporation of Gujarat,
Kathiwār and Sind within the Guptas Empire by Chandra Gupta II. The
period of active Indian influence in Central Asia, then, covers at least seven
centuries from the beginning of this millennium. Such influence must have
been interrupted, however by the invasion of the Sassanians who devastated
Kapiṣa in A.D. 241 and the establishment of the short-lived empires of the
White Hūnas or Ephtalites and of the Western Turks. The white Hūnas (A.D. 407-553) gradually extended from the Oxus valley to Bactria (A.D. 425), Gandhāra, Kabul (after A.D. 475) and Persia (A.D. 484) to Khotan and then to the valley of the Punjab (c. A.D. 450). Only the memorable epoch-making victory of Skandagupta over the savage Hūnas in about A.D. 456 saved “Mid-India” (the designation of Fa-Hien) from Hūna occupation. The coalition of the Sassanids and the Western Turks destroyed Hūna power in Central Asia between A.D. 553-567. Then, the Western Turks took Bactria from the Sassanids and occupied parts of Central Asia. In A.D. 641 the Chinese Emperor, Tai-tsing the Great (617-649), of the Tang dynasty, destroyed the empire of the Western Turks, gradually conquering the whole of Central Asia from Turfan to Khotan (632-648), and obtained also the allegiance of Bokhara, Samarquand, Kapiṣa, and Tibet. Embassies were sent by the Chinese Emperor to India in A.D. 643 and 647. The Tang Empire (A.D. 618-907) touched the Pamirs and Hindukush, and restored the communication between China, Middle Asia and the Holy Land of Buddhism until the middle of the 8th century, when the Chinese lost Turkestan to the Arabs after their defeat at their hands at Talas (A.D. 751). Huien-Tsang found Kapiṣa, in A.D. 630 still a flourishing city, and an important centre of the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism, with splendid and imposing stūpas and monasteries. But, Nagarabāra (Haḍḍa near Jalalabad) was in ruins in the 7th century A.D. The monasteries were still there, but the priests were few, and the stūpas were desolate and ruined. Nagarabāra is extremely important in the history of Indian Buddhist art. For, it was here, that there evolved in the 3rd century A.D. what is termed a Gothic phase of Buddhist art, characterised by an intensity of spiritual expression and dynamic realism, that profoundly affected the art of Turkestan and China.

The stepping-stones of the march of Buddhist culture and art from India across the Hindukush were Takṣaśilā, Puṣkalāvatī, Nagarabāra, Kapiṣa and Bamiyan, all in Gandhāra. Bamiyan is the terminus of the Indian overland route through Balkh to China and the Mediterranean. Just as Balkh had a famous monastery known as Navasaṅghārāma, Bamiyan was also noted for a monastery which was carved out of the living rocks as at Ajantā and Takṣaśilā, and which contained many mural paintings and sculptures. It had two colossal statues of the Buddha, one 120 feet and the other 175 feet high. The paintings, showing a blend of Hellenistic, Sassanian and Indian elements, and depicting the Bodhisattva, the Sun-God and flying Gandharvas, influenced the Buddhist painting of Central Asia up to Tun-huang; while the Buddha statues inspired similar colossal in China up to Yun Kang. Leaving Bamiyan and traversing the southern caravan route, Khotan, Dandan-Uilik, Niya and Miran, and on the northern route Bharuka, Kashgar, Kucha, Kizil, Karashahr ( Ağnideša), Turfan and Hami became the important landmarks for the expansion of Buddhism to China during the 2nd to the 8th centuries A.D. Khotan became famous for its great monastery called the Gomatīvihāra. Several tens of thousands of Buddhists of the Mahāyāna school were encountered here
by Fa-Hien in 400 A.D. Kucha also won celebrity for its numerous monasteries and chapels, about a hundred monasteries being counted by Huen-Tsang in A.D. 630. It had also some colossal statues of the Buddha. Near Kucha is Kizil, another caravan stop on the northern "Silk-Route", with its thousand caves. Three heads of Buddhist deities from a fresco in the cave temple at Kizil (6th century A.D.) show marked influences of Gupta art. Although the faces are more rounded than in India, the inward glance, sensitive lips and elongated ears are essential features of classical Gupta physiognomy (C.T.Loo, Inc. Collection). The nude female Devatā in the Treasure Cave at the same place similarly reveals the Indian tribhanga inflection and fullness of the hips and breasts associated with the Classical Gupta ideal of female beauty. A magnificent fresco depicts the Miracles of the Life of the Buddha culminating with the Parinirvāṇa. This last event is being shown to Emperor Ajātaśatru by his minister, along with the former Miracles, so as to lessen his shock of grief and is saturated with the Indian sentiment of veneration and tenderness blended with each other. At Bezeklik, near Turfan, there are hundreds of Buddhist cave shrines. In the wall paintings there are depicted Indian monks in yellow robes with their names inscribed in Brāhmī script. At Niya and Endore, on the southern "Silk-Route", have been discovered seals embodying figures of Kubera and Trimukha (Śiva-trinity) and painted Ganeśa. At the same places images of Śiva and Viṣṇu have been discovered. At Dandan-Uulik, near Niya, there is a fresco depicting a River goddess or Nāgī rising from a pool of lotus buds and flowers with a child fondly clinging to her. The suppleness and charm of her nude body, and the sweet restraint and modesty of her posture, are reminiscent of Ajantā and Bāgh. The Botticellian sureness, delicacy and agility of draftsmanship, and the fullness and vitality of pose are undoubtedly classical Gupta and are akin to the sophisticated carving on the ivory plaque at Begram. From the 6th century onwards the schools of painting of Bamian, Haḍḍa, Kucha, Kizil, Karashahr, Dandan-Uulik and Tun-Huang breathe the mystical idealism and super-sensuousness of Ajantā, which sometimes are juxtaposed with, and sometimes subordinate the cold symmetry of Gandhāran art and exuberant decoration and meticulousness of the Sassanid tradition.

At Miran, on the southern Silk Route, and also at Kizil, the famous episode of the Viśvantara Jātaka is feelingly delineated in one of the frescoes. The treatment of the greed of the black Brāhmaṇa beggar and the trepidation of the sons before they were gifted away by the compassionate Bodhisattva at Kizil (about the 7th century A.D.) is vivid, poignant and dramatic. The same glorious episode of the Bodhisattva's philanthropy is met with in several sites in Western Asia and also at Dura-Europos where, according to some scholars, the paintings date from the third century. In Khotan, and also at Dandan-Uulik, Gupta influences can be detected in various Buddha figures with closely clinging drapery and flying Gandharvas carrying garlands. Several frescoes from Khotan collected by Stein, and now belonging to the Museum of Central
Asiatic Antiquities in Delhi, obviously bear evidence of Ajantā influences. The treatment of the hands and fingers, and also of the torso, is reminiscent of Ajantā delicacy and spirituality. Similarly, the murals of Miran bear the impress of Ajantā in their modes of production of relief and in their mellow-coloured figure compositions. These are, however, juxtaposed with purely Iranian and Chinese art elements. At Kizil and Kumtura we have cave sanctuaries dug into rocks as at Ajantā, Bamiyan, Nagarāhāra and Taxila. The art of Kizil is specially significant for its delineation in frescoes of the Buddha on his funeral pyre, and an episode of the Viśvantara Jātaka and yet another from the Rupavatī Avadāna. Gupta and post-Gupta influences are evident in the grace, delicacy and refinement of the figures, and the serenity and other-worldliness of the contemplative Bodhisattva faces. Statues of the Buddha, at Kumtura, are clad in Gupta stylized drapery. At Karashahr, in one of the temples, we have the remains of statuary depicting the Buddha’s Parinirvāna in which Gupta influences are clearly discernible. It is noteworthy that in the frescoes of Central Asia, the figures, the Buddha, Sāmantabhāra, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha and Kuan-yin, represent the serenity and the chaste, yet voluptuous tenderness of Ajantā but the portraits of donors, loka-pālas or secondary figures are different in type, some rather Turkish or Iranian, going beyond Indian influences and joining hands with native Sassanid and Chinese traditions. The softness, delicacy and spiritual refinement and grace of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, apsarās and devatās from Bamiyan to Turfan, and from Khotan to Tun-huang, released Indian classic Gupta art influences that ultimately led to the confluence of Ajantā and Horyuji. The ancient Silk Routes from India to Persia and China passed through the high mountain-passes of the Hindu Kush and through the Taklamakan, Lopnor or Gobi deserts, full of perils for travellers and monk-pilgrims. Particularly at Bamiyan, Khotan, Kucha and Tun-huang, all travellers used to pray for the success of the journey and gave donations to the monasteries and cave-chapels which could, therefore, be richly embellished with reliefs, statues and frescoes through the ages.

The Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, Tun-huang

Hundreds of cave-chapels were scooped out of the rocks in the caves and decorated with frescoes and images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. At Tun-huang, in the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, and also at other cave shrines, we find paintings of merchants and nobles whose donations aided the construction and decoration of the cave shrines. As at Ajantā, so in these cave-shrines from Kizil to Yun Kang, the entire panorama of life giving a vivid picture of the work-a-day world was often depicted.

Art critics distinguish carefully between the art of Central Asia, centred round Karashahr and Kizil, and that centred round Turfan and Tun-huang. The sculptures and paintings of Karashahr and Kizil, dealing mostly with
the Hinayāna themes, show dominant Indian influence with an admixture of Sassanid Iranian elements. A fresco in the grotto of Māyā, at Kizil, comprises a representation of the Four Great Miracles of the Buddha, in which the queen Māyā in the attitude of a dancer before the Tree of Nativity is, in the opinion of Grousset, directly related to the most supple figures of Ajantā. On the other hand, the art of Turfan and Tun-huang "is really a provincial form of Chinese art of the Tang period with only a remote connection with Indian prototypes. It may be mentioned here that the sixth century wall-painting at Tun-huang in Western-most China reveal both Indian and Indo-Iranian technique, while the paintings of Bezeklik from the 8th to 10th centuries are almost completely Chinese in style."

For well-nigh five centuries, from the 4th to the 8th, the oasis of Tun-huang or the Blazing Beacon had been the port of entry and exit for Buddhist monks from India and China, and here developed one of the greatest Buddhist shrines of Asia. I.V.Vincent observes, "A chain of Buddhist rock-cut chapels seems to have extended from India through Central Asia at least as far as the mountains south of Kanchow in Kansu and, besides these, cave-temples are found in many other parts of China."

Twelve miles distant from Tun-huang at Ch'ien Fo Tung, or the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas (started in A.D. 366) about 450 cave-temples were carved out and decorated through several centuries.

The major landmarks here are:

(1) The Cave of Unequalled Height—one of the most gigantic cave-temples of the world—built by an Indian monk, called Lo Ts'un, in A.D. 366. This bears the imprint of Gandhāran art from Bamiyan, where cave temples were scooped out of rocks as at Ajantā, Taxila and Nagarahāra. The Buddha colossus is at Bamiyan, on the much frequented Asian highway, also became prototypes of giant Buddhas in Central Asia and in China (as at Lung Men and Yun Kang).

(2) Numerous chapels excavated and decorated during the rule of the Wei dynasty in the 5th and 6th century A.D. This shows a blend of foreign and indigenous elements—Slavic, Iranian, Indian and Chinese—in art. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Wei Tartar dynasty (5th century A.D.) show everywhere the classical Gupta pose of meditation with interlocked legs, and hands folded in the lap as well as the usnīsa or protuberance on the top of the skull. But the symmetrical pattern of the folds of the garment, the smiling face with high cheek-bones, and the slit eyes, the leaf shape mandorla and the fringe of flames surrounding the figure represent Tartar features—a heritage of the Central Asian artists before they accepted Buddhism. In the Yun Kang caves in Shansi, and the caves at Lung Men near Loyang, these characteristics as well as the mass effect of the grouping of figures, harking back to the steppe inheritance, are more discernible than elsewhere in China. There is a large standing Maitreya in bronze in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, which

1 The Sacred Oasis, p. 14.
shows vividly Indian influences from Gandhāra or Mathurā. This statue is dated A.D. 477. Only the curved smiling lips and the slit eyes betoken the Khotanese type. The cave-temples of Turfan, Tun-huang, Yun Kang and Lung Men were scooped out of the living rocks in the manner of the cave-temples of Bamiyan, Kizil and Gandhāra. Likewise, the Buddhist images in stone and bronze from North China to Tonking were taken over from the clay and mud-statues of India though Kucha was the intermediate source of borrowing of Indian sculptural techniques and motifs. According to Siren, the Chinese borrowing from Kucheian art probably goes back before the year A.D. 444, for there exists a little bronze statuette of a standing Buddha bearing that date which displays all the characteristic features of Kucheian sculpture.

(3) Chapels constructed during the regime of the Sui dynasty (A.D. 580-618) that constitute the link between the earlier phase and the balanced complexity and clarity of T’ang art.

(4) Chapels built and beautified by T’ang sculptors and painters who had a most powerful influence on the sculpture and painting in the whole of China, Tibet and the Far East. The paintings from the closed chapel at the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas belong to five groups: (i) Scenes from the Buddha’s life, (ii) Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, (iii) Lokapālas and Vajrapāṇis, (iv) Devatās and (v) Buddhist paradises. These are examples of the Chinese style of painting of the T’ang period (A.D. 618-907).

Tun-huang was to China as Ajantā had been to the whole of Asia. The magnificent frescoes at the caves unfolding the Buddhist paradises, envisioned by Śāntideva and Hiuen Tsang and belonging to the T’ang period, vie in their moving quality with the frescoes of Ajantā, Kizil and Bamiyan. Here, we have tender Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with worshipful Hindu gods, Brahmā, Indra and Śiva, Buddhist monks and Vajrapāṇis, as well as flying Apsaras, all limned with Botticellian elegance and sensitiveness of line, yet radiating a profound serenity and saintliness that belong to the land of India. One of the wall-paintings at Tun-huang, which is attributed to the 8th century A.D. depicts King Sibi yielding his flesh to the knife for buying off a bird wounded by a vulture. The magnificent pose and attitude of the king blending serenity with compassion are entirely classical Gupta. The cave chapels of Wan Fo Hsia—the Myriad Buddhas situated at about three days’ march from Tun-huang—are coeval with those of Ch’ien Fo Tung, and are attributed to the 9th-10th centuries. In all essential points of architectural disposition and artistic decoration, these show the closest resemblance to the average type of Ch’ien Fo Tung shrine. A grotto of singular beauty is Cave 5 whose decorations are of the developed T’ang style comparable in suavity of line and grandeur of composition to the greatest of the Ch’ien Fo Tuang wall paintings. According to Langdon Warner, its importance is further enhanced by the fact that it bears witness to the esoteric cult of Vairochana then sweeping through the Far East.
The T'ang regime in China (A.D. 618-907) was indeed the most glorious period of Chinese Buddhist art that achieved perfection in sculpture, temple-banner and wall-painting, fully assimilating the norms and ideals of Indian art into the Chinese traditions. T'ang art spread with Buddhism from China to Korea and Japan. It was T'ang art that also largely moulded the smile of beatitude of the famous Siamese and Cambodian Buddhas. Buddhist wall painting at the Kondo, Horyuji, in Japan bears the impress of both Ajantā and Ch'ien Fo Tung. At another famous cave-temple, Yun Kang in Shansi, 10 miles from the capital city of Tatangfu, we have a mile long wall of Buddhist caves in the sandstone cliffs and remarkable Buddhist sculptures that were begun in A.D. 414 and completed about A.D. 520. These are unique in as much as they show a remarkable combination of a sensitive linearism and rhythmic movement in compact grouping of figures—an inheritance from the art of the steppe region reinforced by a lyrical abandon that leads to repetitiveness in art pattern—with the spirit of humanism and compassion of Gupta Buddhist art of India. It is well known that a copy of the celebrated sandalwood image, made by King Udayana, of the Buddha during his lifetime reached the Chinese Emperor Wu Ti of the Liang dynasty in A.D. 511 and another copy was brought to China by Hiuen Tsang in A.D. 644. The marble torso of the Buddha, from China, belonging to the 6th and 7th century A.D., now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, shows distinct Indian affinity and probably echoes the Udayana type. And so does also the magnificent torso of the Bodhisattva on the lotus pedestal (8th and 9th century), now belonging to the Rockefellers, New York. This is sometimes regarded as one of the finest examples of Buddhist sculpture.

The Shih-Chia Fo cave, in Yun Kang, comprises the most remarkable specimens of sculpture characterised by the beauty and vitality of individual Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (Maitreyas) and the dynamic rhythm of compact patterns of figures, whether compassionate Bodhisattvas, worshipful adorers or flying Apsaras. All show a profound dignity and spirituality in their movements and gestures that are characteristically Indian, and eagerly turn towards the Buddha for enlightenment. What is distinctly Chinese in the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is the treatment of the monastic robe, with its broad sweep and spread, resembling the wings of an ethereal being or with its folds passing over the shoulders in a series of flame-points. This is in marked contrast with the serried mass of ridges in the mantle of the Gandhāra and Gupta images. In the best specimens of Chinese Buddhist sculpture, whether at Tun-huang, Lung Men, Yun Kang or Mai Chi Shan, we come across “Gothic” charm and humanity reflected in the slim countenance, the understanding smile, the parting of sweet, sensitive lips, the tension of arched eyebrows or

1 Milliken and Hotchkis: Buddhist Sculptures of Yun Kang Caves.
the half-closure of eyelids that all override Indian asceticism and other-worldliness. Here and there, we have also figures of Bodhisattvas or adorers who exhibit distinct characteristics of individual living personalities worthy of the portraits of Durer or Holbein. One such remarkable example is the statue of the Monk Kaśyapa with his old shrivelled meditative face, parted lips and closed deep-set eyes.

Another celebrated cave temple in China is Lung Men (near the capital city of Loyang), where the chapels were excavated and decorated after A.D. 495. The Wei dynasty, after its continued conquest of China, removed their capital to Loyang in A.D. 494, and it was there that the ardent missionary fervour of Buddhism created the cave sculptures of Lung Men, which are in some cases even more magnificent than those of the Yun Kang caves. According to Siren, the stylistic ideals of Northern Wei continued to dominate Buddhist art until the middle of the 6th century. At about this time, he observes, a new artistic influence came to China from Northern India. This is best seen in the sculpture made in the Northern Ch‘i and Northern Chou Dynasties. At the T‘ien-Lung Shan caves (A.D. 560-580), in Northern Shansi, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, with their garment covering only the left shoulder, and their full meditative faces, are almost classical Gupta in their expression. The sculptures here show a remarkable combination of the art elements of Gandhāra, Iran and China, while the iconography of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arhats and guardians of law and order, is entirely Indian. Rowland also mentions the adoption of ornate Indian floral designs, such as those of Mathurā and Ajantā, in the Buddhist art of China from the 530s, reaching full development in the second half of the 6th century.

Another set of cave chapels with Buddhist sculptures was excavated at T‘ien Lung Shan in Northern Shansi. The best work here was sculptured in the late 7th to early 8th century A.D. and proclaims the influence of the art of Nalanda of the Pāla period. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas there can hardly be distinguished from those sculptured in Bengal and Kaliṅga. The fulness and radiance of the face, the soft and sensuous modelling of the torso including the abdomen, the ease and freedom of the lalitāsana posture, the draping and folding of the robe in the Indian style and the slight sideward tilt of the hips recall Lokanātha, Maitreya and Mañjuśrī from Nalanda, Varendra and Mayūrānā. T‘ien Lung Shan is simply Pāla classic, transcendental as well as charming. In Western China, in the province of Szechuan alone, there exist over a hundred thousand Buddha cliffs where the sculptures cover a long period from the regime of the Five Dynasties and early Sung to the Mings. At Mai Chi Shan, or the Mountain of the Hay Stack, in Kansu province, were found recently more than 200 Buddhist temples and grottoes cut into a cliff face during the Wei period, between the 4th and 6th centuries A.D. There are here magnificent frescoes embodying religious and secular subjects that are dated from the end of the 4th century A.D. The Compassionate Buddhas with Indian hand inflections, overlooking the Chinese countryside from the grottoes, are
some of the most serene and ethereal figures carved and painted in China. There are wooden galleries here constructed by the Buddhist monks to get across the face of the cliff from one grotto to another. The faces of the Buddhas are slim, youthful and tender, the lips are exceedingly thin and sensitive, and the eyelids almost closed; while the palms of the hands are big and prominent, stretched in the Indian mudrā of self-assurance (abhaṣya). The dominant note is that of melting human tenderness and pity for world misery, rather than the impersonality and aloofness that, broadly speaking, rule the Indian archetype. Cave temples have been found also in South China, in Yunnan, excavated in the reign of the Yuan Dynasty.

The greatest of the Buddhist cave temples and shrines in China are, of course, those at Tun-huang, Yun Kang, Lung Men, Tien Lung Shan and Mai Chi Shan. Other important cave sites are Elephant-chapel and Ta Fossu in Kansu, Lung Tung and Yun Men Shan in Shantung, and Ling Yen in Chekiang. In Korea, at Sukku-lam, cave temples were constructed early in the 8th century.

*The Artistic Ideal of Mathurā, Sārnāth and Ajantā in East and South Asia*

As centuries passed, China evolved a synthesis of the Hinayāna and the Mahāyāna, and Ānanda and Mahākāśyapa representing the ideal of the Arhat's personal salvation, and the Buddha, Aṃitābha and Maitreya, standing for Universal Compassion and Salvation, dominated the imagination of Chinese sculptors and painters. Everywhere, the rock and the wall face were transformed into magnificent revelations of the Mahāyāna Buddhist ideal of beatitude and compassion. Beyond China, in Japan, we again encounter the supernatural tenderness and compassion of Mahāyāna idealism in the remarkable frescoes of the Golden temple of Horyuji at Nara, reminiscent of the profound faith and reposeful sweetness of Ajantā and Bāgh, Tun-huang, Lung Men and Yun Kang. The sculptures of the Horyuji temple, which belong to the beginning of the 7th century A.D., have direct affinities in their style and iconography to those of the Chinese cave temples of Lung Men and Yun Kang. Among the famous sculptures the Kannon Bosatsu (Avalokiteśvara) in the Toindo of the Yakushiji, the Buddhist triad in repoussé, the clay Monju, and the Amida triad in the Horyuji, show the unmistakable impress of the classic Gupta style introduced into Japan in the Tang regime. The austerity of the yogic posture, whether seated or standing, the serene, yet compassionate expression of the oval face, the stylised knot on the locks, the treatment of the diaphanous drapery carved with rounded ridges and the exaggeration of the hand gestures are typically Indian Gupta producing a kind of tender, supra-sensuous beauty that became the Asian heritage. In A.D. 606 a colossal bronze Buddha was sculptured in the temple of Gangoji, and in the next year, a statue of the Healing Buddha in the temple of Horyuji. To the same period belongs a fresco depicting certain Jātaka stories, for instance, the Sacrifice to the Hungry Tigress—a theme that was well known in Gandhāra, the second
holy land of Buddhism. The Bodhisattvas in lacquer painting, as well as the wooden and bronze images at Horyuji, often decorated with the traditional Indian halo, and wearing the Indian monastic robe, exhibit the ubiquitous Buddhist compassion and tenderness blended with inexpressible grace and charm approximating to the ideal of Mathurā, Ajantā and Nālandā.

Similarly the school of Veṇīgī (Jagayapeta, Amaravati and Nāgarjunikondā) influenced the sculpture of South and South-east Asia far and wide: at Anurādhapura in Ceylon as evidenced by the dolomite standing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and the Dvārapālas with cobra-hoods; at Śrī Vijaya, in Sumātrā, as proclaimed by the colossal stone Buddha at Palembang; at Śrīdeva in Thailand as shown by the superb sandstone torso of the Yaksī at South Djember in Javā, at Dong-duong in Annam, and at Kota Bangoen, in Borneo, where we come across finds of bronze Buddhas; at Sikendeng, in the Celebes, as discernible in the large, broken standing bronze image of the Buddha; at Vat Romtok, in Funan, as shown by the head of a Buddha in Nāgarjunikondā style and, finally, at the Nan-Hsing-Tang and cave temples in Honan, China, as revealed by the relics of the Buddhas and Buddhist paradises. The heritage of Ajantā, belonging to the Gupta age, is also clearly discernible, as much in the paintings at Bamiyan and Tun-huang in the north, as in the magnificent frescoes of Sigiriya in Ceylon and Nara in Japan. The art of Mathurā and Ajantā penetrated to China and Japan, not only through Gandhāra and Central Asia, but also through Burma, Indonesia, Siam and Cambodia. Across the Himalayas, through the caravan routes of Middle Asia, the route through Nepal and Tibet, and the sea routes in the Indian ocean, Indian influences of art and religion penetrated to East Asia as far as Korea and Japan. All over civilised Asia, the matured classical Buddha image of the Gupta age assimilating the earlier Mathurā and Gandhāra types influenced Buddhist art.

The figures of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas at Mathurā, Sārnāth and Ajantā, of the Buddha in contemplation at Anurādhapura in Ceylon, at Borobodur in Javā, at Angkor Vat in Cambodia, at the cave-temples of Yun-Kang and Horyuji in Japan repeat the same archetype. These are the world’s most significant symbols of Being representing at once its serenity, clarity and profundity and the ecstasy of the human frame as it becomes incandescent with the inner illumination. The massiveness of volume and the structural coherence and simplicity of design are, in all cases blended nicely with the fine tracery of the monk’s robe and the prince’s ornaments, that are defined in linear rhythms of intimate sensibility, and with the delicate and refined expression of the highly sensitive hands and fingers that are eloquent of the message from the super-sensitive world.

Reconciliation of Impersonality with Lyricism:
Cambodia, China and Japan

Of all the images, that at Cambodia with its exquisite divine-human smile

\footnote{For illustrations of the Indian images see Coomaraswamy: History of Indian and}
reconciling the impersonality of Nirvāṇa with a profound pity for the world and its creatures reaches perhaps the summit of expression of the archetype that, born of the womb of philosophical Brahmanism in India, could not reach such sweet, comprehending and compassionate humanism in the mother country. Not less majestic and sublime is the image of Prajñāpāramitā of Eastern Jávā, now in the Leiden Museum, which is comparable with the Pārvatī image of Southern India in its transcendent serenity and yet breathes human sweetness and grace not so marked in the Indian prototype. Is there not also a similar contrast between the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of Mathurā and Sārnāth with those of the Yun-Kang caves? The Chinese types are longer-limbed, more flexible and delicate. Eyes and lips are also thinner and more sensitive than in India, sometimes represented by exquisitely carved lines that express a charming, reserved smile one does not usually come across in the Indian archetype. The beautifully designed folds and wing-like thrusts of the drapery and the tremulous inflections of the tender hands, no doubt, emphasise the super-sensible immaterial aspects, but the image is essentially that of a human monk who feels life but not its desires. Saturated also with the sense of human personality are the Bodhisattva images in the Horyuji frescoes in Japan which show richer ornamentation like that of a prince and more meltly tender limning of beautiful bodies than their prototypes at Ajantā. And yet, what a sweet and harmonious reconciliation between the soft beauty and pride of youth and the metaphysical realisation of the vanity of these is achieved in these Japanese Bodhisattvas!

- Not that the Indian archetypes could not express the feeling for human personality. In the school of East Indian painting and sculpture we have Buddhist images like the Buddha, Lokanātha, Maitreya, Mahāpuṣṭi and Tārā painted and sculptured with a human mellowness and tenderness hardly met with in other parts of India. The Pāla Bengal design of the Bodhisattva is characterised by extreme simplicity on the one hand and a fine sense of spatial values on the other, while the linear rhythms of drapery and ornaments that mould themselves to the underlying forms of the body give it a combination of the sweetness and delicacy of Botticelli with the joy and purity of Fra Angelico. Particularly noteworthy in the delineation of the Buddhist Tārā with her sideward way of the hips and compassionate gentle face. She is far less removed from the vicissitudes of the world than the South Indian Pārvatī in her unfathomable stillness.

Indonesian Art, plates XL, XLI, XLII, XLVIII, XVIII; for the Buddha in Jávā and Cambodia, see Grousset: Civilisations of the East, Vol.II, figures 104 and 139; for the images at Yun-Kang, see ibid., vol.III, figure 134, and for Horyuji frescoes, see ibid., vol. I, figures 19, 20 and 21.

2 See figures 79 to 84 in Le May: Buddhist Art in Siam.
3 For the illustration of Prajñāpāramitā, see Grousset: Civilisations of the East, vol. II, figure 127, and for Pārvatī, Havell: The Ideals of Indian Art — Plate XI.
4 Mullikin and Hotchkis: Buddhist Sculptures at the Yun-Kang Caves — plates on pp. 36 and 48.
The World's Supreme Revelations of the Buddha Spirit

The imaging of the Buddha has shown indeed a marvellous similarity and a marvellous diversity in Asia. The Buddha images that stand paramount in the history of world art may be mentioned below, although opinions are bound to differ in this regard: the Mathurā image of the Bodhisattva, the Sārnāth image of the Discoursing Buddha, the Great Avalokiteśvara painting at Ajantā, the images of Lokānātha and Maitreyā at Bishenpur-Tandāwa, Gayā, the bronze Padmapāṇi from Kurkihar and the image of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī at Bīrbhum from India; the bronze Padmapāṇi from Nepal at Boston; the colossal image of the Smiling Buddha at the Yun-kang cave shrine (cave XX), the colossus at Lung Men and the Buddha and Bodhisattva at Tien-Lung-Shan in China; the seated Buddha at Anurādhapura in Ceylon; the seated Buddhas and Bodhisattvas at Borobodur and at Chandī Mendut in Jávā; the Buddha with the "Smile of Bayon" at Ángkor, Cambodīa; the bronze Buddha from Sukotai, Siam; the Bodhisattva paintings at the temple of Horyuji, Nara, the image of Miroku-Bosatsu (Bodhisattva), at the temple of Horyuji, Kyoto, and the clay statue of the Bodhisattva at the Todaiji Monastery at Nara, from Japan.

The accents of humanism and transcendentalism have varied in different periods and art regions in Asia, largely depending on the intensity of religious experience on the one hand, and the degree of artistic sensibility of the people, on the other. It is, however, through a perfect dynamic reconciliation of transcendentalism with humanism that Asian art solves the mystery of expression of identity of Being and Becoming. There seems to be a universal tendency in art, under similar metaphysical influences, to pass from the monumentality and ponderousness of forms that express absolute or transcendental values to a tender, lyrically suffused naturalism, a caress in lines and curves associated with warm, romantic idealism and mystical conviction of immanence. In the Ganges basin there has been an evolution from the compactness, weightiness and ponderable values of the Buddha figure in earlier Mathurā, Sārnāth and Bodhgayā sculpture of the Kuśāna period to the marvellous elegance and preciosity of gesture of Gupta art and then to the rare charm, incisiveness and tenderness of Pāla art. This is Indian Gothico-Buddhist art seen at its best in the Pāla-Sena school of Indian sculpture from the 8th, to the 12th centuries. Similarly there is Chinese Gothico-Buddhist art revealing exquisite youthful charm and elegance of expression with spiritual depth. Certain phases of Wei and Tang Buddhist sculpture illustrate this. The sculpture of Tien-Lung-Shan is perhaps the most glorious illustration of the blend of warm spiritual emotion and mystical quality with divine majesty and tranquillity. A conviction of immanence of the Divine, a mystical exaltation produce a softening of the plastic that emanates a profound human charm far different from any divine aloofness or leads to an endless multiplication of similar images of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as in the best Christian Gothic of Western Europe.
In certain phases of Buddhist sculpture in Asia, whether in India or in China and Javâ the divinity or Being keeps aloof from mankind, is indifferent and even severe like the Egyptian statue, and shows similar solidity of construction and amplitude of proportion. Such effect is usually produced by extreme simplicity and massiveness of the design and clearly articulated treatment of plastic planes in contrast to sinuous, mellifluous modelling from one plane to another of the body. But again and again Asian vision has sought to stress identification. Thus we have myriads of images of Buddhas and Buddhisattvas outspokenly filled with the rapture of contemplation, and the pervasiveness of a lyrically tinged spirituality; through an inundation of the human feelings of tenderness, compassion and reassurance, art reveals the supreme awareness of life, i.e., Becoming. The sculptural technique in this case is a happy blending of firmness and coherence of the skeletal frame-work with delicate, nervous and sensitive modelling of the body and fluent lineation of folds of the drapery scarpas and ornaments in curves of intimate sensibility and elegance with all their complex suggestions of mood and character.

The Ruin of Buddhist Civilisation in Gandhâra and Central Asia

As Buddhist art was experimenting with the images of the Buddha among diverse peoples of Asia, a major art region, that of Gandhâra and the Central Asian Hindu kingdoms, whence emanated vast movements of style and technique for more than half a millennium, began to decline markedly as a result of repeated foreign invasions and conquests. This was from the fourth to the eighth century A.D. The advance of Muslim arms to Central Asia led to the ruin of the brilliant Buddhist civilization in this entire region. But the disruption of the civilization of Gandhâra started at least a century earlier, when the Epithalite Hûnas advanced from the valley of the Oxus towards 425 A.D., crossed the Hindukush and destroyed the monasteries of Gandhâra, Kashmir and the Punjab at the close of the fifth century. At the beginning of the 6th century the Tarim Basin came under their control. Their vast empire, with Bamiyan and Balkh as the principal headquarters, extended from Persia to the Punjab in the south and to Khotan in the east that was invested in the 6th century. Their ruler Mihiragula, often called the Indian Attila, ascended the throne about A.D. 515 and settled in Śâkala in the Punjab. The monasteries and stûpas of Gandhâra, Kashmir and the Punjab were destroyed and the monks massacred at the end of the 5th century A.D. The Hûna empire did not thrive long in the north-western borderlands of India but was overthrown by the Turks shortly after the middle of the 6th century. About A.D. 520 the Chinese pilgrim Sung Yung saw the Gandhâra region ruled by a “cruel and malicious” Turkish prince, descended for two generations from the chief appointed by the Hûnas. But a century and a decade later when Huen Tsang visited Kapiša in A.D. 630 he found the Turkish ruler converted to Mahâ-
yana Buddhism and offering him a warm welcome. Thus even in the 7th century Gandhara continued to be Indian under the Turkish Buddhist king who “ruled over a dozen kingdoms” and extended his authority as far as the Indus. Then the Western Turks came into the Buddhist scene with their iconoclastic zeal. The Muslim ruler of Kashgar devastated the monasteries of Kucha in the 8th century. By the 10th century almost the whole of Turkestan came to be occupied by the Muslims. The Ghaznavid ruler Sabuktagin (977-997) extended his Kingdom from the Oxus to the Indus, wrested Khorasan from the hands of the Samanids (994) and defeated the Rajputs. The Ghaznavid dynasty (977-1186) ruled at Ghazni and Lahore. Mahmud of Ghazni (998-1030) made several raids into India, pillaging many Hindu temples and Buddhist monasteries and annexing the Punjab. In the beginning of the 13th century Muslim Turkestan, Transoxania and Afghanistan succumbed to the devastating arms of Chenghiz Khan (1206-1227). Yet the spell of Indian idealism, self-transcendence and compassion of the spacious Gupta age continued in large measure in Central Asia and Turkestan along with the refinement of manners, leisure and piety of the people that remained Buddhist until at least the end of the 13th century.

This is the testimony of the successive travellers, Fa-Hien (A.D. 400), Dharmagupta a.d. 590, Hiuen Tsang (7th century A.D.), Al-beruni (A.D. 1030) and Marco Polo (A.D. 1271-1292). According to Fa-Hien the entire Tarim basin, including Khotan, Karia, Niya, Kashgar, Kucha and Karashahr was dotted with Buddhist monasteries. The Indian monk-pilgrim Dharmagupta starting from Kanauj reached the Chinese capital Chang-an in A.D. 590. He passed by the northern caravan route in Middle Asia through Kashgar, Kucha, Agnidesa, Turfan and Hami and found Buddhism in a flourishing state everywhere. For the purpose of teaching the tenets of Buddhism, he stayed at each of these cities for a year or two. Then he crossed over to the Chinese territory. The oasis cities and kingdoms in the northern zone of Turkestan testified to a high-grade polished Buddhist culture at the end of the sixth century. Similarly the monasteries of Khotan, the frescoes of Dandan Uilik and the hundreds of Buddhist shrines, statues and grottoes painted and carved along the entire southern caravan route also bear evidence of the Buddhist culture of the southern region of Turkestan that Fa-Hien and Hiuen Tsang so piously delineated. Al-beruni (973-1048) who followed Mahmud of Ghazni to Punjab found that Khorasan, Iran, Iraq, Mosul and the country up to the frontiers of Syria were Buddhistic. Marco Polo, who in his famous journey to China (A.D. 1271-1275) crossed the Pamir and travelled through the cities of Kashgar, Yarkhand and Khotan, was also struck by the large number of Buddhist monasteries and the devotion and piety of the people of this region, the bulk of whom he described as Buddhist. Thus Buddhism continued to be the dominant religion of Central Asia even toward the close of the 13th century in spite of the conquest of the Muslim Arabs. Marco Polo’s description is extremely significant in this connection. He writes: “The Town of Campichu (Kucha) is large and magni-
ficent. The bulk of the people worship idols and they have many monasteries and abbeys built after the manner of the country. In these are a multitude of idols, some of wood, some of stone and some of clay. They are all highly polished and covered with gilding. They are carved in a masterly style. Some are of very great size and others are small. The former lie in a recumbent posture, the smaller figures stand behind them and have the appearance of disciples in the act of reverential salutation. Both great and small are held in extreme veneration.” The colossal reclining image of Kucha mentioned above by Marco Polo is obviously that of the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha with Ananda sadly standing by, found also in Gandhāra, Kuśinagara, Ajantā and Nasik in India, Anurādhapura and Polonnaruva in Ceylon and Pegu in Burma. Within a few decades, however, this tender and humane culture and art that for about two millennia tamed the warlike nomadic peoples of the deserts and steppes of Central Asia were destined to be wiped out by Muslim Arab invasion and violence.

The last defenders of Indian religion and culture in the Tarim Valley were the Uigurs who had dominated the region following the T’ang period and sturdy maintained their independence, although only in the Turfan and Kucha regions, against the devastating onslaughts of the advancing Islamised Turks until the 15th or 16th century. The Turks actually founded a vast empire in this region in the middle of the sixth century after subjugating the Avars in A.D. 552 and the Ephthalites (White Huns) in A.D. 565. China under the Ming dynasty finally withdrew from the Tarim Basin in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, leaving the Uigurs to fight their last battle for the tradition inherited from the culture of India and Western Asia in this region. With the Islamic incursion and gradual conquest of the entire region, its art, isolated from the Indian and Iranian sources of inspiration, assimilated extraneous influences only from China in the later periods.

The six centuries from the eighth to the thirteenth that saw the gradual disintegration and ultimate ruin of Buddhist culture and art in one of the favoured cosmopolitan regions of Asia, were, however, witnessing the full maturation of Buddhist culture and art in South-East Asia. As the Middle Asian caravan-routes came under the control of Muslim states, Indian cultural intercourse with China depended on the land-routes across upper Burma to Yunnan and from Nepal and Tibet and on the sea-route across the second India, or Dvīpāntara, from Suvarṇadvipa to Kambuja, where Indian civilisation met the Chinese half-way, in the Eastern waters. From Nepal and Tibet across the difficult mountain route went the Nepalese adventurier Aniko to the court of the Mongol Emperor of China, Kublai Khan, in the thirteenth century. He was warmly received and later rose to be the Controller of Imperial Manufacturers at the royal court. Not only did he himself fashion a considerable number of Buddhist statues and paintings, but his disciple Yi Yuan who learnt from him the art of image-making provided many images for the Buddhist shrines at Peking and Shanghai. China’s cultural and commercial traffic
with the Hindu colonies and kingdoms in Farther India and Indonesia was well maintained from the 8th to the 13th centuries. Each of the art regions of south-East Asia, Burma, Jāvā, Siam and Cambodia produced in these centuries some of the most serene, graceful and subtle images of the Buddha and Bodhisattva—outstanding examples in world sculpture of how art and piety, beauty and holiness can find perfect harmony.
FROM INDIA ACROSS THE SEAS:
THE TEMPLE-CITIES OF DVĪPĀNTARA BHĀRATA

Indian Art in Ceylon, Burma and Malaya

The Golden age of the Guptas witnessed India's cultural expansion not merely in the heart of Asia with Indian colonies and kingdoms distributed from the frontiers of Gandhāra and Kashmir northward to the oases of Central Asia and north-eastward to the Chinese frontier, but also beyond the seas in South-east Asia.

Tāmraparṇa or the island of Ceylon was the first of the Dvīpāntara Bhārata to come under the ambit of Indian culture. According to the Ceylonese chronicles, the first introduction of Buddhism into the island was due to the mission sent by Aśoka and headed by his brother or son, Mahendra (c. 251 or 250 B.C.). Later on Aśoka's daughter, the nun Saṅghamitrā, carried to the island from Bodhgaya a branch of the famous Bodhi-tree that was planted in the Mahāvihāra established in their honour and is still recognised as the Jaya-mahābodhi. The conversion of the king, Devānāṃpiya Tissa, and the activities of Mahendra, Sumana and Saṅghamitrā led to the whole island going Buddhist. The Singhalese kings built magnificent monasteries and stūpas bigger than any in India; and Ceylon still treasures some of the most sacred relics of the Buddha and his early disciples. One of the greatest and most pious king-builders of Ceylon was Dutṭhagāmani or Dutugemunu (101-77 B.C.) who rescued the island from the subjection of the Chola conqueror, Elara, accomplished the task of political unification and constructed the famous Ruanwell Dagoba that enshrined the Buddhist relics. Mahāyāna Buddhism came to Ceylon in the early centuries of the Christian era as indicated by the Nāgārjunīkondā inscriptions. Ceylon has remained Buddhist for about twenty two centuries; her arts and crafts, drama and music still bear the impress of Indian culture and way of living. The statues of the Buddha and Bodhisattva at Anurādhapura revealing complete repose and impersonality of nirvāṇa and the frescoes at Sigiriya with the lithe apsarās of the cloud-land combining sensuous beauty and movement with divine detachment and serenity show the typical Gupta Indian style at its best, vying with the creations at Mathurā, Ajantā and Amarāvati in their formal values, poise and serenity. The sculptural technique of Māmallaipuram, associated with the Pallava dynasty, is clearly discernible in the rock-cut sculpture at the Isuruminya Vihāra near Anurādhapura. Noteworthy is the grand, massive seated figure of the sage Kapila depicted as vigilantly guarding Sagara's sacrificial horse against the wiles of Indra in the nether world. The memorable episode, nowhere else represented in Indian art, is mentioned in Kālidāsa's Rāghuvamśa (XIII, 3). This work is attributed to the period immediately before the removal of the Singhalese capital.
from Anurādhapura to Polonnaruva (Pulastipura) that flourished as capital from A.D. 781 to 1290. The most famous ruler of the later centuries was Parākrama Bāhu I, who ruled from A.D. 1164 to 1187 and built the Gāl vihāra. A majestic colossal sculpture here is the Parinirvāna of the Buddha with Ananda standing by in sad demeanour. The lineation of the Buddha’s garment and stylised treatment of his locks add to the massiveness and weightiness of the plastic form that commands absolute silence. The folded arms of the beloved, becreaved disciple and the slight bend of his knee embody a blend of adamantine strength of mind with calm sorrow. The massive Buddha seated in dhyāna mudrā from Gāl vihāra is also superb in its perfect poise and other-worldliness underlined by the vacant gaze. The compactness and severity of the treatment is in some measure softened, as in the Indian technique, by the series of parallel ridges of the monk’s robe in a delightful linear movement. Another august, Bhaṭāra-guru-like image, generally considered as depicting Parākrama Bāhu himself, is even a greater masterpiece of monumental sculpture. The king is here represented as a bearded sage in meditation while reading from a palm-leaf manuscript in his hands. The ponderable values of the human figure are exquisitely reconciled with the dynamic linear rhythms of the drapery and the contrasted planes of the body surface in a unique plastic revelation of grandeur and strength along with an inner tension of the soul. For the counterparts of such noble sculptures we have to go to the massive figures in the caves of Ajantā and Ellorā in India, and Yun-Kang and Lung Men in China. Sinhalese sculpture is entirely in line with the best traditions of Indian monumental sculpture, its ponderousness of volume, simplification of forms and heaving plastic rhythm from within the solid work. The Hindu temples of Polonnaruva bear the impress of the Chola style, while many bronze images of Hindu deities that have been found show South Indian influences.

Definite proof of Indian colonisation of Burma long before the second century A.D. is afforded by Sanskrit and Pāli place-names mentioned by Ptolemy. Numerous images of the Buddha and scenes of his life and terracotta tablets have been unearthed by excavations at the ancient site of Śrī-Kṣetra in Burma, dating from the 5th to the 8th century A.D. The colonisation of Southern Burma was from South India as indicated by the resemblance of the Pyu characters, in which Burmese inscriptions and manuscripts were written, with early Kannada-Telugu script and the use of the Pallava royal title of Varman by the Burmese rulers. Both Hinduism and Buddhism thrived in Burma; a part of Śrī-Kṣetra was called Viṣṇu’s city. Old Prome or Hmawza was in early times known as Bissunamyo or Viṣṇupura, and it is here and in Thaton or Rāmaṇiadeśa that the earliest images of Viṣṇu standing on Garuḍa, and Anantaśayana Viṣṇu have been discovered. The earliest Śiva images are derived from Thaton. It appears that in Burma, Malaya and Jávā, Viṣṇu was the most popular deity unlike in Champā and Kambuja where the worship of Śiva or Mahēśvara and the Liṅgām was popular from very early times. The heyday of Burmese culture was not reached before the 11th century,
when Aniruddha or Anoratha and his son Kyanzittha ruled in Pagan (Arimardana-pura), the new capital on the banks of the Irawadi, that with its fifty thousand pagodas became the most magnificent temple-city of Asia. Elegant representations of the Buddha in stone relief and of Jātaka scenes in glazed terracotta panels are characteristic of the art of Pagan, the fresco paintings showing marked Pāla filiations. It is noteworthy that King Kyanzittha, the most celebrated monarch of Burma, who employed Indian architects for building the famous Ananda temple at Pagan, sent a special mission to Bodhgaya for the restoration of its well-known ancient shrine.

The Malay Peninsula was known in the Purāṇas as the Malaya-dvīpa and the country of Kaṭāha as Kaṭāha-dvīpa in the Kathāśārītāṅgāra. In Kedah and Wellesley we have Buddhist inscriptions which are written in Sanskrit and which belong to the 4th century A.D. The pillar at Bukit Miriam, erected by Buddhagupta the navigator, belongs to the 3rd or 4th century A.D., while Raktamāttikā, whence he comes, is identified with Rāṅgā-māṭi (Red clay) in Murshidabad. Another inscription on the river Bhujang (Bhujāṅga) which is of Mahāyāna import, and which uses the script of the Pallava grāntha is dated the 6th century A.D. On the same river Buddha images of Gupta style have been found. By the 5th century A.D. many Hindu kingdoms were also established in Malaya of which the most famous were Tāmrālīṅga with its capital at Ligor (modern Nakon Sritammarat) that goes back to the 2nd century A.D. and P’an P’an, on the Bay of Bandon which had a definite cultural connection with Dvārāvati and Kambuja or Funan in the East. The art of Amarāvatī has left its impress on the reliefs and bronzes from P’ong Tuk and Nakon Pathem, but the features of Gupta art are unmistakable in the sculptures from Wieng Srah, Kedah, Perak and Jambi. The region of Takuap in Malaya images of Viṣṇu and Bodhisattva have been discovered. These show affinities to the Pallava style and belong to about the 7th or 8th century A.D. The well-known Ligore inscription of 775 A.D. gives evidence, according to Bosch, of the marriage of the Śailendra Emperor of Śri-Vijaya or Javaka (Zabag of the Arabs) with a daughter of the ruler of the old Sumātrān Buddhist Kingdom. With this marriage the Śailendras were converted to Buddhism and there markedly developed the influence of the Mahāyāna Buddhist Pāla culture from Bengal over this region. The three Mahāyānist bronzes of Avalokiteśvara from Perak give ample evidence of this far-reaching influence from Bengal. According to Goetz, the latest Buddhist works from Jaya, Nakon-Pathom, Sumātrā, Jāvā and North-Western Borneo are completely dependent on the art of Nālandā and its Vajrāyana pantheon. Winschedt mentions that the lotus motif derived from India is favourite in Malaya silver-ware craft.

The Art and Architecture of Kambuja and Champā

The ancient Hindu kingdom in South-east Asia was Kambuja or Fu-nan (Cambodian Phnom or Mountain) which comprised the whole of Cambodia
and Cochin China. The earliest influences discernible in Fu-nan were Pallava, centred round the kingdom of Ba Phnom in the south-east that thrave between the 3rd and 5th centuries A.D. Hinayāna Buddhism flourished in Fu-nan up to the 7th century when the Mahayāna appeared. Brahmanism was, however, established by the 4th century. In the 5th century in both Champā and Fu-nan, the worship of both the Brahmanical Mahēśvara and the Buddhist Avalokiteśvara seemed to have prevailed. The later phase of development was an amalgamation of Brahmanical deities such as Viṣṇu as Harihara, and of Brahmanical and Buddhist deities such as Lokesvara, an exceedingly complex god with four arms like those of the Brahmanical Brahmā and having filiation with both Śiva and the Bodhisattva of Compassion or the future Buddha. Lokesvara, Avalokiteśvara or Lokanātha was one of the most common deities which the Pāla Buddhist revival, based on the assimilation of the Mahāyāna with the Tantras, introduced into Eastern India and thence into Nepal, Tibet, Siam and Cambodia. In Cambodia as well as in Pāla Bengal, Lokesvara holds in his four hands the rosary, water-vessel, book and the lotus flower or varadā mudrā. Another striking feature of similarity of Buddhist Pāla and Khmer art is shown by the sculpturing of the Buddha image with snakehoods over its head. The earliest of the nāga-hooded Buddha image comes from Nālandā, and belongs to the reign of Devapāla. Bengal produced several sculptures of Lokesvara-cum-Viṣṇu with serpent hoods. The amalgamation of the notions of Lokesvara or Śiva, Buddha and Viṣṇu was characteristic of Pāla Bengal and discernible in its iconography although this was more developed and elaborated in Cambodia. The most important Lokesvara image in Kambuja is the stone sculpture at Āṅgkor Thom belonging to the reign of Jayavarman VII. It was the same spirit of religious syncretism that underlay the development of the cult of king worship or Devarāja introduced into Cambodia by Jayavarman II (c 802-850) on his return from exile in Jāvā to Āṅgkor. The iconography of Cambodia then began to present Śiva, Buddha or Lokesvara in the royal aspect, the human and the divine features of the countenance commingling.

The temple-city of Āṅgkor Wat or Amarendrapura was built in the 12th century A.D. by Sūryavarman II (A.D. 1112-1152) who was a worshipper of Viṣṇu and took the title of Paramaviṣṇuloka. It witnessed the assimilation of the entire Brahmanical pantheon which was magnificently sculptured in the friezes of the temple walls. Āṅgkor Thom or Yaśodharapura was constructed in the 12th and 13th centuries A.D. with its colossal Lokesvara gates and causeways of demons and nāgas and the supremely marvellous Bayon dedicated to Lokesvara. Āṅgkor Wat and Āṅgkor Thom are two of the marvels of the world’s architecture and sculpture. With its mountainous and mysterious, and yet elegant and serene one hundred and seventy-two faces of Lokesvara or Śiva (mukhalingam, each 6½ feet from brow to chin), the temple of Bayon in the centre of Āṅgkor Thom was built as the earthly replica of Śivaloka or Buddhhaloka. In the inscriptions of Kambuja, Śiva is often referred to as the
four-faced deity (*Chaturāṇana* and *Chaturmukha*), and the four faces represent
the four Tāṇṭrika texts, the *Śirakṣhedha*, the *Vināśikha*, the *Sammohā* and the
*Nājottara* that were introduced into Kambuja from India during the reign
of Jayavarman II (A.D. 802-850), the founder of Aṅkgor (Sanskrit *Nagara*).
This king introduced the mystic cult of Devarāja, which is intimately associated
with the worship of Śiva *linga* on the top of the temple-mountain as well as
with the deification of royalty. Later on the Śiva cult was assimilated into
the cult of the Lokeśvara Bodhisattva at Aṅkgor. A Buddhist Renaissance
was experienced in Kambuja, due probably to the influx of refugee Indian
Mahāyāna Buddhist monk-scholars from the universities of Nālandā and
Vikramaśīla after their destruction by the Turko-Afghans. This was at the
time of King Jayavarman VII (A.D. 1181-1218). This powerful monarch
introduced Mahāyāna Buddhist elements into Aṅkgor Wat, originally predo-
minantly Viśuṅgistic, and largely constructed Aṅkgor Thom (Sanskrit Nagara-
dhāma, Yaśodharapura, the City *par excellence* with its central shrine the
Bayon, having a forest of face-towers representing Lokeśvara. He harmonised
Śaiva and Mahāyāna Buddhist cults and both with the concept of the Devarāja
or King as the Lord of the Universe.

Jayavarman VII was once a recluse and priest, twice renounced the throne
and finally became the most powerful ruler of Kambuja. The grandiose concep-
tion of Aṅkgor Thom built by Jayavarman is evident from an inscription
which tells us that the king fashioned a *jayagiri* and a *jayasindhu*, referring to
the walls and moats of Aṅkgor Thom. Consecrated to Lokeśvara we have
here the king's supreme, epoch-less dedication of the city of Aṅkgor Thom and
temple of Bayon which is its heart to Śiva, the Compassionate future Buddha
and himself, all coalesced together. More than that, the king utilised the Mahā-
yāna doctrines of universal incarnation and universal salvation for the erection
of deities in hundreds to the deification of all his subjects. The temples of
Aṅkgor symbolised the self-apotheosis of the Khmer people. Has not the king
declared in one of his inscriptions, "The afflictions of men's bodies became the
afflictions of his soul, and all the bitterer because it is the grief of the people
that causes the grief of kings and not their own grief"? The redemption and
self-worship of the king merged in the redemption and self-worship of the
people. Such syncretism and upsurge of religious emotion brought about a
veritable revolution in Khmer life and culture and ushered in an unprecedented
era of creation of forests of stone, inspired by the assimilation of a hundred
deities, Vaiśnavas, Śaivas, Hinayānas and Mahāyāna Buddhist and Tāṇṭrikas,
Hindu, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, derived from India and Jávā. Another
inscription of Jayavarman VII records that he erected statues of his mother
and spiritual teacher and assembled around them the images of 260 deities
and that at the annual spring festival he worshipped 1619 images, for "it is
important, to worship all existing gods omitting none, lest those neglected
should be offended". Besides the usual Hindu and Buddhist divinities we find
such unfamiliar forms as Harihara, Muchalinda Buddha, Hevājra, the horse-
faced Yakṣa, the moon-god. Pṛithvī, the temple-guardian Garuḍa and the Śivalingam with the Buddhas on different sides. Not merely Indian religion but also Indian art planted the Indian paradise in the flat plains and lakes of Aṅkor.

The massive faces of Śiva or Lokesvara in the towers of the Bayon most remarkably blend the suavity and tranquillity of Pāla sculpture, whether derived from Bengal or from Jāvā, with the ponderousness and the mountainousness of ancient Khmer art that had a peculiar fascination for the temple-mountain symbolising the abode of their gods, later on identified with Mount Meru of India. Aṅkor in its arrangement of monumental masses of architecture, crowned by towers represents the Indian cosmology, harmonised with ancient Khmer notions and symbols. The two thousand or more of the ṛṣṇī at the temple of Aṅkor Wat embody the serenity and sublimity of the Tāntrika sculpture of the motherland. But their frenzied repetition has far outstripped the lavishness of the Indian temples, echoing the same sense of immanence of the deity. They comprise the chorus of danseuses of Viṣṇu’s heaven, Vaikuṇṭha, arranged in a vast charming and gorgeous procession, that must have formed a characteristic feature of the Kambuja royal ceremonial. They wear the bejewelled Khmer headgear with discs and multiple points and their garment has also peculiar side-panels whose geometrical patterns are in remarkable contrast with the soft sinuous contours of the body. The lusciousness and delicacy of the nude ṛṣṇī figures are enhanced by the background frame with its carvings so fine and minute that they resemble embroidery superimposed on the stone—a reminder of Khmer mastery in artistry of wood in which material all their ancient palaces and temples were built. How closely does the following quotation from a stele of the East Mebon (A.D. 955) follow the Tāntrika teaching that the Devatā of Love and Beauty leads man to self-discipline and self-transcendence!

"Where could one find another example of such perfect beauty? The bare surface of her mirror is unworthy of the face which it reflects.

Like the swarms of bees flying to the Pārijāta, like the souls of the sages aspiring to the meditation of the ātman, so do the eyes of men lay aside all activity and direct themselves towards her alone.

Ceaselessly and unwearying she penetrates into the hearts of men, as if seeking to smite the pirate Love, who lies in ambush within them."

And yet Kambuja adds to the Tāntrika idealisation of Beauty, the exuberance and prolificness of passion of the tropical jungle, albeit disciplined by the serenity of Indian religion and art. Most fascinating is the blend of smile with other-worldliness in the Bayon ṛṣṇī (12th-13th centuries A.D.). The celebrated "smile of Bayon" transfers itself from the sculptures of Śiva, the Buddha or Lokesvara to the celestial beauties. Their mudrās are also classical Indian.

In Aṅkor Wat and Aṅkor Thom we have a combination of the mountain-
ous and the lyrical, the monumental and the pictorial in sculpture and bas-relief on a colossal scale unparalleled in world art. The blend has varied with the theme. The monumental is seen at its best in the Gates of Victory at Angkor Thom surmounted by four colossal, smiling faces and the celebrated sculptured parapets on two sides of the roadways to the gates representing lines of gods and giants holding up the body of the serpent Nāga. The Chinese traveller Chou Ta-Kuan (A.D. 1296) records that "there are 54 of these demons who hold the serpent and look like gigantic and terrible generals turned to stone". The immensity of the scale in which twenty colossal faces for the five gates and 108 statues of the gods and giants for each avenue was monumentally sculptured staggers the imagination. The planning of Angkor Thom was like that of the Indian world-mountain Sumeru which corresponds to the central temple-mountain of the ancient Khmer capitals; the most surrounding the city and extending more than eight miles, corresponds to the Milky Ocean that girdles the universe; while the serpent pulled by the gods and demons on each avenue is the cosmic serpent of Hinduism, Vāsuki. By the side of each gate are sculptured vast, triple-faced stone elephants. The same colossal conception has permeated the magnificent flat style of relief with its half light and shade and modulation of tones in the representation of the epic struggle between the Gods and the Titans as they churn the Sea of Milk at Angkor Wat. From this churning are produced the charming apsarās and the delicious nectar which confers immortality. As many as eighty-eight Gods and ninety-two Titans are represented as pulling the Serpent of Eternity coiled round Mount Meru, the axis of the universe, which is held up in the centre by Viṣṇu in the form of the tortoise. The critical moment is depicted when innumerable apsarās emerge from the foam of the sea during the churning and are represented as dancing frolicsomely above the heads of the contending parties. The tenseness of the mighty, fateful "tug of war", which is underlined by the parallels of the frantically exerting arms and legs of the many gods and demons, is delightfully relieved by the easy movements of dance and flight of the apsarās above, obeying no law of gravitation, nor the order of the ceremony then being undertaken. Similar grand representations on a colossal scale are the Fight between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas of the Mahābhārata and the Judgment of Mankind representing heaven and hell, both characterised by the elegance of symmetrical forms and the power of vast simple compositions. Nowhere in world art are such teeming masses of figures running on the wall surfaces continuously more than eight hundred yards held in such gentle and suave restraint by the abstract order of design and the monotony and repetitiveness so superbly overcome by the delicacy and sensitiveness of modelling. Masses of vegetation, stylistically treated, form the background or intervene here and there in the crowded scenes for relieving the multiplicative effect. Incredible animation, vitality and power are concentrated in the world's most colossal layered reliefs that embody the highest sculptural values of easy and smoothly flowing rhythm and perfect harmony of outlines and profiles. Ra-
rely has such plastic display of lavishness and exuberance been compatible with artistic triumph.

The most lovely illustrations of the lyrical and pictorial in Angkor sculpture are represented by the scenes of the struggle of Rāvana attempting to overturn the Himalayan abode of Śiva-Pārvatī and the fight between the two giants for the hand of the apsarā Tīlottamā. At the lintels of the Banteai Srei or the Citadel of Women (so called from its small size and daintiness) (14th century), every stone is carved with meticulous care and devotion, sometimes approximating to finished lace work. Here the figures are half-relief and half in the round as at Māmallapuram whence Pallava art traditions influenced across the sea route. No doubt we miss in the representation of the struggle of Rāvana here the supramundane tension and majesty of the Ellorā relief dealing with the same subject in the shimmering light and darkness of the cave interior. But instead we come across extreme liveliness and vitality, idyllic serenity and marvellous softness that lead to the approximation of the bas reliefs to Rājput paintings. It is the strength of simplicity and dynamism of the composition that move the figures of Rāvana and the animals, gods and pīṣis and the stylised trees of the Garden of Kailāsā in an exquisite flowing rhythm in successive five terraces (corresponding to those in Khmer temple mountain), spreading serenity all round. The profuse ornamentation, delicacy and sensitiveness of impeccable workmanship are consonant with intense expressive vitality. There are realism and psychological appeal, lyricism and naturalism here, but these never over-ride the sculptural values of imponderability of the mass and geometrical rhythm and abstract harmony of the plastic treatment.

India's richest gifts to lands outside her own boundaries are the art and civilisation of the Khmers, the most magnificent in South-East Asia. Indian art has given the reliefs and sculptures of Angkor a blend of vitality and classic poise that surpass those of Borobodur and Prambanan. The Bayon is not a temple but an elusive and mysterious mountain, and is perhaps the most imaginative and dramatic creation in the world's architecture and sculpture. True to the monumental tradition in Indian art, the four faces of Śiva or Lokesvara on each of the many towers of the Bayon embody an unperturbable dignity and serenity that are essentially Indian (classical Gupta-Pāla). But the mountainous figuration and prodigious multiplication in parallel rows of innumerable colossal figures in the vast pyramidal complex in architecture that literally becomes the mythical world mountain, far exceed in conception and execution anything witnessed in the motherland. Similarly, as at Māmallapuram, Ellorā and Elephanta, so at Angkor Thom and the Bayon, monumental sculpture over-reaches the cave or temple, unrestricted by any space or limitation. The narration of the legend in an endless array of moving figures and scenes overwhelms the whole temple and even the outer walls of the enclosures. This is an inevitable development, far away from the shores of India, of the unrestricted conception of sculpture and relief in Indian cave art. If this be the culmination of Indian monumental sculpture, the lyrical and pictorial
phase of Indian sculpture equally finds its climax in the reliefs of the Bayon, characterised by a lightness, delicacy and sensitivity of conception hardly found in the motherland. Here the hundreds of reliefs of the bejewelled, dancing *apsarās* in their different poses within their floral enframement show in the sinuous contours of their arms and legs, *mudrās* and fluttering garments a lyrical intensity and softness of expression that are echoed also in the pliant growth and movement of the lotus plant, buds and blossoms. Sometimes the lithe *apsarās* softly dance on the full-blown lotus flowers while the buds and shoots of the proliferating lotus stalk dance in unison. Inspite of the delirious ecstasy of the dance, the self-absorbed face of the *apsarās* shows the serenity of the gods. Side by side with the mountainous architecture and sculpture, we encounter at Angkor Thom and the Bayon an exquisite refinement and delicacy of modelling and a soft ethereal quality in the rendering of gods, angels, men and women and a meticulous lavish repetition of the floral decoration that are reminiscent of the charming Pāla style and reflect the vast upsurge of spiritual emotions connected with the Vajrayāna phase of Tantrikism. The elegant, spiritually expressive head of Śiva with his third eye at Banteay Srei (A.D. 967), the sweetly reposeful and other-worldly *apsarā* as self-introspective as Pārvatī, and the Bodhisattva with the Amitābha on his crown at Preah Khan (A.D. 1191) and the gods dancing on lotuses in the pillar of the Bayon temple (12th-13th centuries) especially show undoubted affinities with the Pāla School of Bengal. As in India so in Cambodia, but in the latter country on the most grandiose scale in the world, the alternation of high metaphysics and mystical fervour has left its deep impress on the massiveness and severity or the dreamy elegance and intensity of feeling of the plastic conception.

Champā was another ancient Hindu kingdom in the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, established probably by Śrī-Māra in the 2nd century A.D. George Coedes points out that until the 5th century, most of the images found in South-East Asia were those of the Dvīpāṅkara Buddha (Buddha of the Isles), the patron Buddhist deity of seamen and overseas settlers. Derived from the Amarāvatī school of art, Dvīpāṅkara Buddhas have been found at P’ông Tuk and Korat (Siam), Dong Duong (Annam), Palembang (Sumātrā), Jamber (East Jāvā) and Sampanga (Celebes). These images sometimes constitute the earliest evidence of Hinduisation of the respective regions. The oldest Sanskrit inscription of South-East Asia—that of Vo Chanh of Champā—in an early South Indian script of 2nd or 3rd century A.D. is believed to be of Buddhist inspiration, as were some at least or those of Wellesley province in Malacca. Among the Buddhist images in South-east Asia the following appear to show the indelible impress of the style of Nāgārjunikondā and Amarāvatī: the images from Dong Duong in Champā; from the village of P’ông Tuk and Sri deb (Srīdeva) in Thailand, from South Djember in Jāvā, from Sikendeng in Celebes, from Palembang in Sumātrā and Kota Bangoen in Borneo. The distribution especially of the Dvīpāṅkara Buddha images of the Amarāvatī type in South-
East Asia during the early centuries of the millennium points to the fact that the first impetus to colonisation in the East came from the great ancient ports of Gudurú (Ptolemy's Kōdoura) and Ghaṇṭasāla (Kanṭakaśaila) of the Śatavāhana Empire that dominated for about three centuries (73 B.C. to A.D. 218) the strategic territory in middle India extending from sea to sea. Upto the 6th century Cambodia was mainly Śaiva, but since then Buddhism began to thrive. In the eighth century both Champā and Cambodia were subdued by the Śailendra king of Śrī-Vijaya, and then Tāntrikism was introduced. Both religion and art showed a strong syncretic trend hardly met with elsewhere. The art of Dvārāvatī, found mainly at Lavapuri (Navapura), shows distinct Gupta filiations. Brahmanical and Buddhist images of Viṣṇu, Śiva and Buddha here are closely related to the art of Sārnāth, Mathurā and Ajantā. The Hinduised ruler of Chieng Mai invited Sumana, disciple of Udumbara, who effected certain reforms in Buddhism. Noteworthy illustrations of the early Gupta style are represented by the bronze standing Buddhas from West (P'ong Tuk) and North-East Siam, now in the National Museum at Bangkok, and the stone sculptures (Early Mon) from Pra Patom and from the temple at Bangkok. Later on Pallava and Pāla influences are discernible, the former in the images of Viṣṇu and the latter in some strikingly serene bronze images of Lokeśvara, both standing and seated. Sikholai or Sukhodaya produced a magnificent type of the Buddha in bronze, the so-called Buddha on the march, largely influenced by the late Gupta and Pāla art. Another remarkable type of the Siamese Buddha was produced by the school of Chieng-sen, blending the silence and suavity of the Indian style with the physiognomic expression of the Lawā people.

**Indian Art in Jávā**

Although the earliest Indian reference to Yavadvipa occurs in the Rāmāyana, the first Hindu kingdom seemed to have been established in Jávā only by the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. By the 5th century A.D. Buddhism took firm roots in Jávā. Indian colonisation in Jávā reached its acme in the 8th century when the cult of Agastyā, the Vedic teacher of Śaivism, was introduced in Jávā from South India. Sculpture and architecture were dominated by Brahmanism, particularly by Śaivism, and bore the impress of Gupta, Pallava and early Chālukyan art. The earliest temples of Jávā are Brahmanical and called after the heroes and heroines of the Epics. These belong to about the 8th century A.D. and are situated in Dieng plateau in Central Jávā, bearing obviously the impress of the classical Gupta art of India.

Then came the period of two big maritime Hindu empires of South-east Asia, viz. of the Śailendra dynasty of Śrī-Vijaya (6th to 9th century A.D.) and of the Javānese dynasty of Majapahit or Tiktabilva (1294-1478). The Śailendras seem to have come under the inspiration of the Mahāyānist or Tāntrika Buddhism from Bengal. Under the influence of the famous Buddhist
sage of Bengal, Kumārāghoṣa who was the Guru of the Śailendras (Gaudī Dvīpa-guru), the famous temple of Tārā was built in A.D. 778. Four years later an image of Mañjuśrī was dedicated by a royal priest from Gaudā. The two inscriptions of Kalasan and Kelurak that testify to the above are inscribed in a North Indian script. The image of Tārā, probably in bronze and now lost, represented the later Mahāyāna phase of Buddhism that flourished in Bengal, Nepal, Tibet, Sumāṭrā and Jávā after the 8th century. At Chaṇḍī Mendut and elsewhere in Jávā we have the Mahāyāna Trinity of Bodhisattvas: Mañjuśrī (or Amitabha) Padmapāṇi and Vajrapāṇi that are met with in the Buddhist Pāla art and—worship. The influences of the Buddhist Pāla art are clearly evident in the stūpa of Muara Takus and the temples of Chaṇḍī Bungsu and Chaṇḍī Padang Lawas in Sumāṭrā and the temples of Chaṇḍī Kalasan, Chaṇḍī Mendut, Chaṇḍī Sewu and Chaṇḍī Banon in Jávā. The Emperor Bālapuratdeva of the Śailendra dynasty sent to Deva-pāla of Bengal (810-850) an embassy with the request to grant five villages to endow a monastery he had built at Nālandā. For several centuries the art and temple architecture of Sumāṭrā and Jávā were profoundly influenced by the Pāla art of Bengal. From the university of Vikramaśilā Dipākara Śrījñāna came to Śrīvijaya in the 11th century indicating the penetration of Vajrayāna Buddhism into Jávā. The migration of monk-scholars and artists from Nālandā and Vikramaśilā after the Turk-Afghan vandalism at the beginning of the 13th century led to the gradual spread of the Vajrayāna worship and art from Bengal to Sumāṭrā, Jávā and Cambodia. R.D. Banerjee refers to the specific similarity between the Bodhisattva from Chaṇḍī Mendut and the Buddha from Kurkihar and the so-called Nāgārjuna at Nālandā, between the stilted pose of the standing Hari-Hara from Simping and the posture of several images of Viṣṇu and Śūrya now in the Calcutta Museum, and between Viṣṇu and Garuḍa from Belahan and Viṣṇu from Deora in the Rajshahi Museum. The seated Buddhas at Borobodur bear a striking resemblance with the 7th and 8th century images of the Buddha at Kurkihar and Nālandā, and with the undated images at Ujani, Mahākālī and Sabhar in the Dacca museum in Eastern Bengal. The 10th century Padmapāṇi (copper) of Jávā resembles contemporary images of South Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. Much later the figure of Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva from Jávā of the 14th century (in Berlin Museum) has similar marked filiation with the Mañjuśrī image from Jalkunḍi (of the Dacca Museum) belonging to the 12th century, and the undated image of Eastern India (I.M. No. 627). The Śailendra Emperors built during A.D. 750-850 the great stūpa of Borobodur which far surpasses in its stupendous size and artistic excellence the temples in the Indian homeland and is regarded as one of the wonders of the world.

Buddhist art reached the fullest expression of its broad humanism and compassion not within the frontiers of India, but amidst the tropical luxuriance and prolificness of the Indian Archipelago. In the great stūpa of Borobodur in Jávā we have the procession galleries adorned by a series of some two thousand bas-reliefs, illustrating the life of the Buddha according to the Lalitavistara,
the *Divyāvadāna*, the *Karmavibhanga*, the *Gandavyūha* and the *Jātakamālā* as well as various other legends. Referring to these Coomaraswamy observed, “We have here a third great illustrated Bible, similar in range, but more extensive than the reliefs of Śāṅchi and the paintings of Ajantā.” This is a profoundly tender, devout and sincere art, naturally lacking the austerity and abstraction of the early Buddhist primitives, but marvellously gracious, decorative and comprehensive. The narrative element is more conspicuous than at Ajantā, the craftsman closely adhering to the book, while he portrays social life, birds and animals and vegetation of his own land. Following the *Gandavyūha* a magnificent series of panels at Borobodur relate the story of Sudhana’s journeys in search of enlightenment throughout India until his final meeting with Maitreyā. Such reliefs vie with the classic Gupta sculpture in their clarity, spontaneity, grace and ardent spirit of adoration, but while man and woman are real and universal—man in his detachment, poise and serenity, and woman in her chaste nudity and fervent self-surrender,—the foliage, birds and animals are all local, Indonesian. The reliefs are so extensive that if laid end to end they would cover a space of about three miles. Visited by thousands of devoted pilgrims through the centuries, these long series of highly decorated, lively and gracious panels unfold a poignant epic drama of human emotions in a cosmic setting, where man reaps the fruits of good and evil deeds in previous births, where god, angel, man and animal form links in a continuous chain of sequence of existences inexorably working out the universal Law of *Karma*, and where the profound lesson is to end the uninterrupted cycle of births and deaths through the absence of desires and the good deeds of love, compassion and sympathy for all. Nothing is discarded in the scenic representations—the pomp of wealth, the might of arms, the ardent passion and serene grace of women and the beauty of nature, but all is subdued by the sincere expression of the triumph of purity and wisdom as embodied in the story of the Buddha’s Enlightenment. This triumph is expressed in every single gesture and mood of gods and angels, men and women in the vast panorama.

It is not easy to choose the masterpieces among the Borobodur panels, and opinions must differ. But we may mention four most exquisite ones: first, the panel of the Temptation of the Buddha in which the daughters of Māra show the lures of the feminine flesh as they dance provocatively before the Šramaṇa, steeped in and commanding silence; second, the panel representing the offering of the golden bowl of milk-rice to the Buddha immediately before his Enlightenment by the lovely, adoring Sujātā whose charm and piety are immortalised in stone; third, the panel delineating the bath of the Buddha at the Nairājañā river with the pious princes kneeling in reverence on the bank, the lambs happily grazing in the forest and the Gandharvas singing in the upper air; and, fourth, the panel representing food and succour being offered by ordinary householders to ship-wrecked mariners in distress. Each of these human episodes represents not a transitory event but an eternal happening, and
and distils a universal truth and value that rise above the contingencies of time and place. The Buddha appears in all these reliefs as a primeval unchangeable, metaphysical figure as he is in the Mahāyāna myth. The single, large-sized figurations of the Dhyānī Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, covering the stūpa from top to bottom, are also supreme embodiments of spiritual poise and ethereal grace that Buddhist art could ever reveal.

In the buried basement the reliefs illustrate a popular Buddhist text depicting the working of the Law of Karma—the Karmabibhaṅga. Step by step from gallery to gallery the pilgrim is led through illustrations of the law of retribution of good and noble deeds, the stories of the Buddha’s preparation in the course of hundreds of past lives, the episodes in the life of the historical Buddha and the 110 travels of the youth Sudhana all over India in his insatiable thirst for enlightenment until he witnesses in the upper terraces the search for the highest wisdom revealed by the Bodhisattvas of the Mahāyāna—the six Dhyānī Buddhas—Aksobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi and Vairochana or Vajrasattva with Mahā-Vairochana or Vajrasattva as their chief. “When at last,” writes Vogel, “the pilgrim has reached the summit of the stūpa, the phenomenal world vanishes from his sight and he is transported into the sphere of mere thought.” The stūpa constructed as a replica of the Vajrayāna-maṇḍala rises from the lotus pedestal and has no visible opening. The closed stūpa is situated at the exact centre and zenith of the stupendous cosmological structure in stone, and perhaps hid the image of Tathāgata Mahā-Vairochana or Vajrasattva, now lost. This is entirely in consonance with the Vairochana doctrine that identifies the effulgence of Pure Consciousness (Vairochana) with the existence of the material world—an uncompromising, absolute idealism in metaphysics.

Comparable with the sculptured panels in Borobodur are those of the Brahmanical temples of Loro-Jongrang in the Prambanan (Brahma-vanam) valley (late 9th century A.D.) which have not attracted the attention of art historians as these deserve. The ninth century was a period of Śaiva revival in Jāvā, and Krom considers that Prambanan represents the apotheosis of Śaivism as Borobodur does of Buddhism. P.H. Pott refers to an inscription of a Mañjuśrī image in a temple near Chaṇḍi Sewu or the One thousand Temples. Mañjuśrī who holds the Vajra is also called Brahmadeva, Viṣṇu and Śiva Mahēśvara in this inscription. It is remarkable that Indian religions were more assimilated to one another in the Javanese soil than in homeland. This is further evident from the close proximity of Prambanan, the largest and the most magnificent Hindu temple complex in Jāvā to Borobodur. This magnificent, colossal shrine was built by King Daksā of Mataram about A.D. 915. It is constructed on a walled terrace, enclosed by a group of 240 smaller temples built in three rows along the walls. Inside the vast enclosure are the temples of Brahmadeva, Viṣṇu and the central Śiva shrine—an unmistakable testimony to the spirit of religious eclecticism among the local East Javanese kings who succeeded the Śailendras in power and emulated their liberal spirit and piety.
The temple ensemble is a grand culmination of the Indian genius in temple-building in a distant land. It comprises the shrine of Śiva called Mahādeva in the middle, and the shrines of Brahman and Viṣṇu on two sides, and the shrines of Trimūrti opposite (with Nandi in place of Śiva). The central temple embodies the sikhara style with the topping āmalaka. Its marvel is derived from the perfect harmony of vertical and horizontal masses with the ascent underlined by the succession of seried turrets, inevitably directing the vision to the final āmalaka crown. The temple pattern closely follows the ancient Indian metaphysical symbolism in architecture although the originality of the local genius is also unmistakably evident. There is a remarkable similarity between the central shrine here and Kandariya Mahādeva temple at Khajurāho, both with their contours of successive horizontal belts, turrets or uruśringas and their silhouettes of the sacred sikhara representing the Himalayan home of the Supreme God. Loro Jongrang and Kandariya Mahādeva temples are indeed very similar and contemporaneous—two brightest gems of Indian temple-architecture, yet separated by thousands of miles of land and sea. In the main shrine at Loro Jongrang the image of Mahādeva, sculptured in the standing posture with four arms, and holding the traditional implements, is most impressive. Mahādeva’s jata-mukuta is decorated with the skull and crescent of the moon. A serpent cord constitutes his sacred thread. A youthful charm is exquisitely blended with profound meditative poise which is underlined by the severity of the vertical posture and the lack of adornment of the oval halo. To the left and right are the images of Mahākāla and Nandiśvara, other manifestations of the supreme deity. In front there are eight Dikpālas who decorate twenty four panels of the central shrine and repeat the same heavenly tranquillity. On the other hand, sixty two panels on the outside of the balustrade are carved with the images of Śiva in his tāṇḍava dance-poses, corresponding fully to those mentioned in the Nāṭya-śāstra. These are replicas of the images of Naṭarāja in the Indian cave shrines and temples. In front at a distance was a cella, now destroyed which contained the Bull or Nandi, fortunately preserved. A monumental rigour and massiveness are here exquisitely combined with naturalism making this work one of the noblest pieces of animal sculptures in Asia. In other cellas there are images of Agastya-muni, Gaṇeśa and Durgā. The famous Indian seer, Agastya, the incarnation of Śiva himself, was the founder of the Śiva cult in South India and Indonesia. He stands with profound poise and dignity on a lotus pedestal with Śiva’s rosary and Trident in his hands. The location of the cellas of Śiva-Guru, Gaṇeśa and Durgā with reference to the central cella of Mahādeva, follows the Śaiva metaphysical concepts of their roles for the realisation of supreme Śiva-hood, i.e., the identification between the empirical self (jīva) and the Supreme Self (Śiva-Tatpuruṣa). The Prambanan reliefs grandly represent not only Śiva and Mahiṣamardini but also Brahman and Viṣṇu Anantaśayana and associated Garuḍas, Gandharvas and Apsaras but also depict the legends of the Rāmāyaṇa—Rāvaṇa’s abduction of Sītā, the killing of Bāli and Hanumāna’s visit to Sītā at the grove in Lāṅkā as well as
the exploits of boy Kṛiṣṇa protecting his shepherd companions against
demons. These exhibit the same ardour and spiritual idealism as we discern
in Borobodur, but in addition a human sensitiveness and feeling for the tense
and the dramatic which have a universal appeal. Remarkable development
has been also seen at Prambanan in respect of the treatment of some of the
ancient Indian art motifs. The makara is seldom depicted in art with such
power and vehemence commanding terror as at Prambanan. The opposition of
the angry makaras of the ocean against the construction of the bridge by Rāma
before his conquest of Laṅkā is also exhibited with tremendous vitality and
force. The kinnaras guarding the Vase of Prosperity are carved with great
feeling and imagination, diffusing the opposite feelings of peace and felicity.
The art of Loro Jongrang vies with, if it is not superior to, the art of Borobodur.
It represents the perfection of Indian art in bas-reliefs in Jāvā, uniquely blending
poise and depth with liveliness and vigour of movement in a broad sweep
of composition. In its melting tenderness, elegance and spirituality it resembles
Gupta-Pāla art; in its dynamic rhythm, restlessness and poignancy it carries on
the plastic traditions of the Amarāvati and Pallava school. Repetition and
decorativeness make the art approximate to tapestry rather than to sculpture,
retaining however all the dignity and grace of Borobodur. The unity of the
realm of Becoming has nowhere been more sincerely expressed in sculpture
than in Borobodur and Prambanan. Over the procession of human episodes
which are linked together under a master-plan, and in each of which every
figure is absolutely unique and sincere in expression of face, gesture and pose
of body, there broods the ineffable mystery of the oneness and harmony of
Life. In all ages the transformation of the metaphysical doctrines of the unity
of Life and immanence of the Deity into an emotional mysticism bridges the
gulf between the concrete and the abstract, and between the human and the
spiritual. Such idealism elevates, deepens and intensifies the artistic conscious-
ness, inspiring some of the highest achievements in the realm of art.

The Five Temple-Cities of Asia

That the Indianisation of South-East Asia was largely the product of Indian
art, Gupta, Pallava and Pāla, is evident from the construction of the five
most magnificent, colossal temple-cities of the world that are really its five
wonders from the viewpoint of art and engineering. These five temple-cities
are the twin cities of Borobodur and Prambanan of the Śrī-Vijaya Empire of
Sumātrā, the twin cities of Aṅgkor-Wat and Aṅkgor-Thom in Cambodia and
the city of Pagan in Burma. The gigantic stūpa of Borobodur was built under
the impulsion of Mahāyāna Buddhism and the metaphysics of Vijñānavāda
or absolute idealism. The five Dhyāni Buddhas are here installed in succession
in tier above tier until we reach the holy of holies. The upper storeys with
their latticed domes within which are placed seventy two half-visible and half-
hidden Buddhas symbolise the Logos or Dharmakāya—the spiritual body of
Vairochana that remains incomprehensible. In the lower storeys representing the Rūpakāya are installed the Buddhas manifest in the phenomenal world. It is significant that there is no statue at the summit of the tiers; the terminal stūpa is empty, and both the phenomenal and ideal worlds vanish into void. The architectural scheme, gigantic in its magnitude, with its regular gradation and development symbolized in its galleries, embodies the Mahāyāna picture of the universe and follows closely the pattern of the Pāla Pahārpur (Brahmanical) stūpa in Bengal. The design of the Pahārpur temple, defined as the Sarvatobadhra type of Bengal and Orissa, i.e., a square shrine with four entrances at the four cardinal points and with an ante-chamber on each side, is adopted not merely at Borobodur but also in several other temples in Central Jāvā, notably Chadri Loro-Jongrang and Chadri Sewu and at Pagan in Burma. Colonial architecture develops and perfects the final phase of the plan and structure of the Indian temple at Aṅgkor Wat and Aṅgkor-Thom in Cambodia. But art and metaphysics have reached in Jāvā and Cambodia an acme of revelation hardly reached in the Indian world. The Prambanam temple, sometimes considered more perfect than even Borobodur, deals with the myths of the Rāmāyana and unfolds Amarāvati and Pallava as well as Gupta-Pāla heritage. The Borobodur colossal temple-mountain was completed by the middle of the 9th century, while Prambanam was built in the late 9th century A.D.—a period which witnessed the consolidation of power of the Muslim Sultanate of Ghazni under Alaptagin and Sabuktagin, the predecessors of the infamous Mahmud of Ghazni whose invasions and depredations of Hindustan in the first two decades of the 10th century threatened to destroy the morale of Hinduism. The twin cities of Cambodia, Aṅgkor-Wat and Aṅgkor-Thom, were built under the impulsion of Śaiva Tāntrikism and the lingam cult, while the four enigmatic colossal faces that decorate the famous towers of Bayon and the four city gates are the four faces of Tumburu or Rudra. According to the inscription of Sdok Kak Thom, as interpreted by P.C. Bagchi, the Cambodian cult of Devarāja comprises the four faces of Tumburu or Śiva who communicated to Cambodia the four basic Tāntrika texts of India, viz. Nāyottara, Śīraschheda, Vināśikha and Sammoha. The architecture and sculpture of Aṅgkor-Thom bear the imprint of the Mahāyāna and the Vajrayāna as the worship of the Khmers included elements of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism and the Tāntrika Śaiva cult of Devarāja (Mukhya Linga) and linga worship. The fifth temple-city, that at Pagan or Arimardanapura, was built between 1057 and 1286. The Ānanda temple which is the most celebrated in this city bears the impress of Buddhist Pāla art, the design being very similar to that at the Brahmanical temple of Pahārpur in Bengal. It was built by Buddhist monks from India during the reign of King Kyanzittha. The name Ānanda is a corrupt form of the name Nandamūla, the Indian hill where the visiting monks dwelt in the mother-land or it may have been derived from the Ananta cave at Udayagiri in Orissa. Hindu and Buddhist sculpture under the Pāla renaissance in Bengal provided the inspiration of the art of the temple-city of Pagan
reproducing the elegance and refinement of the Gupta style blended with the somewhat elaborate ornamentation that is typically indigenous. Mahāyāna Buddhist culture was introduced from Bengal into Old Prone in the 8th and 9th centuries A.D. and into Pagan, in its Tāntrika form, before the 10th century A.D. The stone sculptures of the early Pagan period in Burma and the early Tai period in Siam were derived from the Pāla art of Bengal and Bihar; while the frescoes of Pagan are attributed by Duvoiselle to the work of Bengali and Nepali artists of the Varendra school.

Ever since the conquest of Central Asia by the Samanid rulers and the subsequent rise of the Slave Dynasty of Alaptagin (A.D. 962-1030) who made himself independent in Ghazni and conquered a part of the kingdom of Kabul, India’s north-western gateways through which flowed vast currents of religion and art to the Asian mainland for more than a thousand years were entirely choked. But the vitality of Indian culture and art was quite evident from the outflow of influences from the Pāla, Pallava and Chola Empires across the Purvaśāgara through the far-famed ports of Tāmralipti, Koṇāraka, Paloura, Masulipatam, Ghaṇṭasila, Māmallapuram and Kāveri-paddinam. Dvīpāntara Bāhārata was still culturally and artistically a part of India until the fifteenth century. In 1287 Mongol forces looted Pagan and destroyed its culture. This was followed by the invasion of the Shan tribes, forced southward by the Mongols, and the division of Burma into a number of petty States. In 1431 the famous cities of Aṅkor of the kingdom of Cambodia were devastated and captured by the Tai after a hundred years of warfare leading to the surrender of an age-old civilisation to the jungle. In 1471 after an internecine struggle between the Chams and the Annamese the ancient state of Champā was overwhelmed by the latter to vanish completely. From the West the Arab Muslims entered the Indian Ocean and began to spread Islam by force in this region during the 15th century. The Majapahit Empire which was founded in A.D. 1293 and which in the 14th century extended from Jāvā to the Malay Peninsula and the Philippines, disintegrated with the advent of the Arabs who gradually obtained supremacy in this area. The downfall of the Majapahit Empire commenced on the death of the Emperor Rājasanagāra in 1389, the last Emperor being Girindravardhana Raṅgavijaya before the conquest of Jāvā by the Muslims. Muslim invaders captured the city of Majapahit itself in A.D. 1478. Then Jāvā was converted to Islam. Hinduism found its refuge ultimately in the small island of Bālī, where the King of Majapahit along with many Javanese sought protection from Muslim oppression. During the whole of the 15th century Muslim commercial operations, were based chiefly on Malacca which was founded at the beginning of the 15th century by a fugitive Hindu chief from Jāvā. It soon rose to be an important political and commercial power. Its second ruler embraced Islam that gradually penetrated into Jāvā in the wake of trade, and spread eastward to the Spice Islands, important commercially as the source of cloves and nutmegs for the Eastern trade, and north-eastward to Mindanao among the Philippine Islands. Muslim commerce was extended to
the whole Archipelago, and some twenty States accepted Islam as the State religion. The large-scale forcible conversion of the people into Islam finally destroyed the millennium-old influence of Indian religion, culture and art in this entire region. Only in the tiny island of Bālī, Hindu culture, art and ritual still retained their hold practised by the “men of Majapahit”. Bālī lost its freedom at the hands of the Dutch who included it as part of their empire in A.D. 1911.
Part IV

THE GOLDEN AGE OF NEO-BRAHMANICAL ART
Chapter 11

THE COSMICAL GRANDEUR AND TENSION OF MEDIEVAL CAVE ART

Art and Culture in the Post-Gupta Age

The disintegration of the Gupta Empire, like that of the Roman Empire, was due to the continuous inroads of the Hūnas although the role played by the rise of the Puṣyamitrās cannot be minimised. The Hūnas under Toramāṇa (A.D. 495) established themselves in the Punjab. His successor, Mihiragula, pushed his conquests as far as eastern Mālā. But the Hūnas were completely overthrown by Yaśodharman of Mandasor A.D. 533. The Hūna Empire in Northern India was short-lived. For five centuries from the defeat of the Hūnas to the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni (A.D. 1001-1030) India had enjoyed complete immunity from foreign invasion, excluding the Arab conquest of Sind that was a local episode and had hardly any political consequences for the country. The results were, on the other hand, intellectual and cultural for it was the Arabs who carried Indian philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and medicine to Arabia and to Europe. For full five hundred years India’s intellectual and religious ascendency in Asia continued along with her supremacy in world trade and commerce due to which gold and silver were flowing to her shores from the Roman Empire of the West and the newly exploited Golden Chersonese of the East. Peace and prosperity under Indian conditions were responsible for profound contributions made to knowledge and religion by a galaxy of monk-scholars in universities and seats of learning distributed over the entire continent and for phenomenal achievements in religious sculpture and architecture that practically built up the civilisations of whole countries beyond the Indian borders, Eastern Turkestan, Tibet, Malaya and Indonesia, Hiuen Tsang who visited this country from A.D. 630 to 644 and travelled from Taxila to Tārānārāti and from Kanauj to Conjeeveram was impressed by the peace and prosperity and religious piety and devotion of the people, contributing towards the development of temple art and architecture throughout the land.

Neither the fall of the Gupta Empire nor the Hūna invasion could eclipse or disturb the remarkable movements in art, literature and culture that the Gupta renaissance ushered in the country. As a matter of fact a large number of independent kingdoms arose that became the seats of high culture no longer Buddhist but Brahmanical. The Vardhanas of Thānēśvara, the Gurjara Prathihārās and Gāhaḍavālas of Kanauj, the Pālas and Senas of Bengal and the Chālukyas, Rāstrakūṭas and Pallavas of the South renewed the glories of Gupta architecture and sculpture in their respective empires and regions of influence far beyond them. Mahodaya-āri under Harṣa and Yaśovarman, Kāśmira under Lalitāditya and Vinayaditya, Pāṭaliputra under Dharmacāla

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in the North, Mányakhetā (or Malkhed) and Ilapura (or Ellorā) under Dantidurga and Kṛiṣṇa Rāja I, Kāñcchipura and Māmallapuram under Siūha-viśnu and Mahendravarman and Vātāpi-pura (or Bādāmi) under Pulakesīn I and II in the South, became celebrated seats of a tolerant and luxurious art and culture. The great achievements of art in the post-Gupta age were based on figure sculpture and monolithic temple building seen at their best at Ajantā and Ellorā in the Deccan, Bādāmi, Aihole, Mahākāṭeśvara and Paṭṭaḍkal further south and Māmallapuram on the Bay of Bengal. All these cover early medieval art of India, 5th to 8th century A.D.

**Gupta Traditions in the South**

The Chālukya dynasty (c. A.D. 550-750) was founded by Pulakesīn I (550-566) with his capital at Bādāmi or Vātāpi within a few miles of which are situated Aihole and Paṭṭaḍkal. The rise of Chālukya power was associated with a neo-Brahmanic revival, rooted in the Purāṇas and Śaiva Āgamas that ushered in an era of brisk construction of cave shrines and temples. The magnificent sculptures of Aihole, Paṭṭaḍkal, Bādāmi and Ajantā, together with early Ellorā and Elephantā, are all due to Chālukya inspiration and patronage. The Pallavas (c. A.D. 400-700) succeeded the Veṅgis as rulers of the Godāvari-Kṛiṣṇī deltas with their ancient traditions of the art of Amaravati and Nāgarjunikondā in the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. Then they lost Veṅgi to the Chālukyas and extended their suzerainty to the south with their capital at Kānchipuram at the end of the 6th century. They captured Bādāmi from the Chālukyas in A.D. 642 but lost Kānchi to them for some time in A.D. 674 and again in A.D. 740. They were formerly Buddhists but came under the influence of the Śaiva revival in the Tamil-land after the conversion of King Mahendravarman I (A.D. 600-625) by the renowned Śaiva Saint Apparasaṃī. The Pallavas built the cave temples at Māmallapuram in the 7th century A.D., the Kailāsana-tha temple at Kānchi about A.D. 700 and the pagoda at Babur near Pondicherry about A.D. 800. They had a far-reaching influence on the art and architecture of Further India and Indonesia. The Rāṣṭrakūtas (A.D. 750-975) became powerful in the South from A.D. 780 to 975 decisively defeating the Pallavas about A.D. 780 and built the cave temples at Ellorā and Ajantā.

The early rock-cut reliefs and sculptures at Aihole, Paṭṭaḍkal and Bādāmi are bridges between contemporary Gupta sculpture and the sculpture of the Deccan. At Aihole (Aryavolite) the sculptures of the Durgā temple (about A.D. 500) and Lāḍkhan temple (about A.D. 450) and at Mahākāṭeśvara the sculptures of the temples of Ravarāga (about A.D. 525) built by the Chālukyas follow the Gupta tradition, but have not yet reached the vitality, massiveness and surging dynamic rhythm of Bādāmi. Yet the images of Durgā-Mahiṣāmardinī and of Śiva in the temple of Durgā (5th century) reclining on his vigorous bull have profound clarity and serenity, reminiscent of the Gupta image of Viṣṇu at Deogārh. The flying Gandharvas in the same temple are
more ethereal than those of the Gwalior Museum. Viṣṇu as the Boar Incarnation at Aihole also shows a high attainment anticipating the Bādamāi sculptures. Similarly the androgynous Śiva at the temple of Mahā-Mukteśvara combines massiveness with efflorescence in poise as seen perfected in the Ardhanāris at Bādamāi, Ellorā and Elephantā.

The Art of the Pallavas: Superhuman Sublimity and Lyricism in Cosmic Themes

The School of Mahābalipuram or Māmallapuram on the coast (middle of the 7th century) shows a slender, superhuman sublimity, delicacy and sensuousness, and maintains a subtle and elegant balance between the vigour and tension of movement, especially in serene flight and languorous repose, worthy of gods and angels. Māmallapuram was the sea-side capital of the Pallavas who dominated the Coromandel coast from about A.D. 400 to 700 and were in chronic conflict with the Chālukyas. But there was interpenetration of the influences of art of their respective empires. The cave temples and the five rathas were executed in Māmallapuram in the middle of the 7th century A.D., and this must have influenced contemporary Chālukya cave temple architecture and sculpture. The most magnificent sculptures at Māmallapuram are represented by the Descent of Gaṅga (Gaṅgāvataraṇa), Durgā killing the Buffalo-headed Asura (Mahisamardini) and Viṣṇu Reclining on the Cosmic Serpent (Ananta Śayin). While the plastic composition in each is flawless, animal sculpture reaches its apex, and the dynamic interconnectedness of the various levels of existence obtains perfect plastic expression in the first relief. In the second relief a moment of the hard-fought battle of Durgā with Mahiśasura when victory still hung on a balance is made eternal, and the slender dignity, the sportive ease and the self-assurance of Durgā echo a profound metaphysical truth. In the third relief the Cosmic Slumber of the Lord is superbly underlined by contrast with the movement of the flying gandharvas, the different attitudes of adoration of Lākṣmī and other goddesses and the defiance of the twin demons, Madhu and Kaśitabha. The supple length and slenderness of the limbs, the slimness of the abdomen and the narrowness of the chest and shoulders at Māmallapuram invest the body with a celestial lightness that is especially appropriate for the representation of the flight of devas and gandharvas. But even for men and especially for women, the note of slender sublimity dominates. The effect is usually enhanced by the long and pointed crowns they wear.

The Descent of Gaṅga, which appears on a panel in Kailāsa temple at Ellorā, was built by the Rāstrakūta king Krīṣṇa II (c. 757-783) perhaps as a copy of the Pāpanātha temple at Paṭḍakal and of the rock-hewn rathams of the Pallavas at Māmallapuram (early 7th century). The Māmallapuram techniques, first, of organising a whole boulder into the plastic composition on a large scale over-stepping the shape and size of a regular frame; and, second, of
fitting the composition into a rectangular panel or recess, and setting the figures against the flat surface of the rock or making them appear as emerging from within the unformed rock influenced not only cave sculpture but also relief on temple walls in India and abroad.

The Gaṅgā rock-cut relief is one of the perfect examples of cave art in the world conceived and executed on a colossal scale in harmony with the cosmical event it represents. The traditions of Bhāja, Kanheri, Kārli and Udayagiri here obtain a new, refined and poised expression aided by the creation of a slender, agitated human type. In a sense the rock-cut figures of Pallava art do not show the earth-born power and grandeur of the contemporary cave sculptures of Ellora that reflect the weightiness of the earth and of the body, as in the ancient reliefs of Bhāja and Udayagiri. This is mainly due to the Pallava heritage of Amarāvatī with its elegant attenuation of forms and animated gestures and movements and to the fact that the reliefs at Māmallapuram are carved on the surface of the rock or in caves that are much less deep than at Bādāmi, Ellora or Elephantā. In the latter cave temples the reliefs obtain their artistic significance by being set back into the depth of the cave recess, or the plastic conditioning of an atmospheric volume in their front through projecting pilasters on the sides. Thus there is a profound contrast between the superhuman slenderness and lightness of the figures at Māmallapuram and the massiveness, strength and poise of the Deccan cave figures.

Such a contrast will be strikingly evident from a comparison between the contemporary reliefs of Durgā Mahiśāsuramardini from Māmallapuram and Ellora respectively. At Ellora there are several Durgā images, the most important being the images in Rāmeśvara and Daśa-Avatāra caves. In the Māmallapuram relief the dominant note is lyrical; due to the Divine sportiveness (divyakriyā), the triumph over the asura is a foregone conclusion. Thus Durgā here shows greater ease and playfulness and the asura shrinks back spontaneously. In the Ellora reliefs the dominant note is heroic. In the Daśa-Avatāra Cave relief Durgā is in the thick of the hard-fought battle, well poised on her lion mount and the asura valiantly lifts the mace coming out of the buffalo whose head is severed. In Rāmeśvara the fight is ended and the asura supplicates in worship. Here the stillness of the triumph of the deity and the defeat of the asura are magnificently reinforced by the breadth and heaviness of modelling and the light and dark effects of the cave recess. Durgā herself is steeped in unfathomable silence, and her agitated lion is replaced by the subservient buffalo. While the blend of poise and majesty with the violence of Divine playfulness are discernible at their best in the medieval cave sculpture of India, these qualities of the Mahiśamardini image are abundantly evident in the best temple representations of the Goddess such as those from Bhumrā (Nagod), Dulmi (Manbhum), Mukhed (Hyderabad), Khiching (Mayurbhanj) and Kumbakonam (Tanjore). Outside India Mahiśamardini standing on the buffalo in Jāvā is also exquisite in its expression of vitality and serenity.
The art of Bādāmi or Vātāpi near the West coast (middle of the 5th to middle of the 7th century) and Paṭṭḍalakal (7th to 8th centuries) eight miles from Bādāmi, is impregnated with a strange sense of self-absorption, solidity and strength, gathering as it were the weightiness of subterranean forces that are astir, and that break out into cosmical gestures and movements. The bas-reliefs of the Boar Incarnation (Varāha-avatāra) in Cave 2 and the Cosmic Viṣṇu (Virāta Purusa), Viṣṇu Ananta Śāyin, and Viṣṇu Tri-Vikrama, all in Cave 3 at Bādāmi show what the round and heavy mass in summary modelling, intense compactness and dynamic balancing of different parts of a powerful composition can achieve in the direction of concentrated strength and vigour in sculpture. Into the plastic conception enter light, darkness and space showing skills and techniques of transmuting psychologically suggestive contrasts into stone that are perfected at Elephantā. In the rock-cut reliefs of Bādāmi we discern in the serene massive figures not the suavity and self-absorption of the Gupta Mathurā and Sārnāth images, but rather self-transcendence that diffusing throughout the body enriches itself by entering into the boundlessness of the rock; while in the figures in action or movement the tension is that of the piled up energy of the rock that is plastically expressed by angles and diagonals of ponderous bodies and limbs and their extension beyond the panel or recess, breaking out into supramundane gesture and divine violence. On a smaller scale the dancing Naṭarāja, Durgā Mahiṣamardini and Ardhanārīśvara in Cave 1 are also conspicuous for their remarkable poise and power.

The earth-born breadth, heaviness and vigour of Bādāmi art that command and spill silence have also caught the Śālabhaṇjikās and erotic couples on the brackets and medallions of pillars that all blend delicious charm with dignity, and grace of limbs and poses with serenity and restraint. Apparently conflicting plastic treatments are reconciled with great skill, viz. a stern generalisation of body and limbs subduing all details, and a detailed and accurate elaboration of apparel, ornaments and jewellery for combining a profound sense of repose that belongs to the earth with a lyrical sensitiveness that belongs to man. Kāma and Rati, myriads of mithunas, nāgas and nāginīs and Śālabhaṇ- jikās here embody a profound calm and detachment that are unearthly. The Śālabhaṇjikās of Bādāmi (on brackets in front of Verandah in Cave 2), the three river-goddesses, Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Sarasvatī of Ellorā (in the entrance porch at Kailāsa) together with a pillar figure in Rāmeśvara cave and the several Tārās with their attendants at Aurangabad are on a par, uniquely combining nubile grace with dignity, and charm with power; while their tallness and slimness even suggest the Greek ideal of feminine beauty, rarely embodied in Indian art. While largely depicting myths and episodes of the transcendent realm and supra-mundane emotions and activities of the Eternal Masculine (Puruṣa) in all their vehemence or stillness, power or dignity, Bādāmi and Ellorā also express the tenderness and bliss of the Eternal Femi-
nine (Prakṛiti) with a lyrical fervour. At the Kailāsa temple we have a most lovely image of the Goddess Pārvatī, throbbing with vitality and bewitching in charm and glamour, and yet massive in dignity and completely free from all that is sensual. The rounded and heavy volume underlines the dominating note of silence of Pārvatī, although flexibility is introduced by the flexion of her hands and legs, the delicate treatment of her bejewelled head-gear and ornaments and the suppleness of curves of her outline and form. Pārvatī beholds her face in a metal mirror, held by her left hand as she arranges her coiffure by her upper right hand. Her lower right hand is most exquisitely placed on the ground stressing the relaxation of her lalitāsana posture. A string of heavy pearls skirts her full, naked bosoms; the smoothness and delicacy of her skin are in marked contrast with the general rough treatment of the torso in most cave images. Rarely has cave sculpture produced such a sensitively modelled and lively feminine nude with a marvellous blend of abstraction and naturalism.

It is no wonder that René Grousset has thought that in such works of Bādāmī and Ellorā, with their noble beauty of rhythm, worthy of Athens and Florence, Indian sculpture perhaps reaches its apex. Perhaps painting also reached the same degree of perfection as sculpture at Bādāmī as evidenced by the fragment of a fresco of Śiva-Pārvatī, showing Botticellian charm and sensitiveness of lines and delicacy in the arrangement of colours. The keynote of mediaeval Brahanmical sculpture is represented by regional initiative and development in art through the development of inland intercourse, the complete eschewing of Hellenistic-Roman influences due to the political confusion in the West and the broad current of migration of culture and art from the motherland to the Hindu colonies and kingdoms beyond the seas.

Comparison between Gupta and Medieval Sculpture

Medieval Brahanmical art, celebrating the Purānic and Tāntrika awakening of India for well-nigh seven centuries, has not obtained proper appreciation due to its obscure myth and metaphysics hiding its formal excellences. How does the medieval art of India compare with the classical art of the Gupta period? While Gupta art is sharp, poised, meditative and formal, mediaeval art is tense, subtle, dynamic and elusive, filled with a primitive freshness and vigour that are especially emphasised in the art of Eastern and Central India, where the Tāntrika element is more dominant than in the art of Western India. Some images of the Bodhisattva, Lokanātha, Vajrapāṇi and Śiva of medieval Bengal and Orissa, show a happy blend of abstraction with warmth of feeling, of formalism with luxuriance, and impersonalism with delicacy and charm, rare in Indian plastic treatment. If Gupta classicism has shown its exquisite achievements of combination of fineness and poise with formalism and impersonality in the Mathurā and Sārnāth types of the Buddha, the Boar Incarnation at Ajantā and the Nativity of Kṛiṣṇa in Pathārī, medieval art can offer shin-
ing examples of plastic harmony and rhythm in the majestic Śiva and Pārvatī images at Ellorā and Elephanta, the standing Viśṇu types at Khajurāho, Sultanpur, Murshidabad and Koṇāraka, the standing sun-God types at Vikrampur, Rajmahal, Chapra and Koṇāraka and the many seated images of Bodhisattva and Tārā, Śiva and Chaṇḍi of Bengal, Bihar, Kalinga, Central India and Rajputana. Kanauj under the Imperial Pratiharas (750-915) became a most important seat of art and learning for about two centuries and its artistic suzerainty extended from Gujarat to Gayā. A few of the most magnificent sculptures of the period may be mentioned. The cosmic Viśṇu (from Kanauj, c. 8th century A.D.) with a nimbus thickly studded with devas, angels, the sun and the planets shows a superb lively composition fully consonant with the Gītā idea of the immanence of the Deity. The Deity himself is so full of animation that He seems to step out of the pedestal to his devotee. The Pāṇi-grahaṇa of Śiva and Pārvatī is a masterpiece comparable with the famous image at Elephanta; it shows a refined naturalism blended with repose and solemnity. The composition, marked by a large empty pregnant space between the couple, is most delightful. The dancing Ganeśa (from Kanauj c. 8th century A.D.) is a masterly representation of the rhythm of Tāṇḍava dance. The Chaturmukha Śiva liṅga (from Kanauj, private collection) is Gothic in its expression of human piety and tenderness. The delicate contours of the feminine body, slender and long-limbed, have hardly found a more caressing treatment than in the image erroneously supposed to be of Rukmiṇi, found at Nokhā in Etah, U.P. (about the 9th century). The slim and standing pattern of feminine beauty of the so-called Rukmiṇi is far different from other slender long-limbed types of women as represented by the Bāḍāmi figures on brackets (6th century), the more well-known images of the river-goddesses at Ellorā (8th century) and the image of Vṛiṣakā at Gyarāspur (10th century). The slender feminine type corresponds to the Greek ideal of beauty reinforced by the Schools of Florence and Venice and is different from the Indian classical norm that approximates to the smooth ample, rounded pattern with its promise of motherhood. Indian sculpture has produced through the centuries strikingly divergent forms of woman’s beauty, combining a refined naturalism with spiritual poise and depth. A natural sensuous feeling of beauty and voluptuous elegance, rooted in the appreciation of living models in different art-regions, has often overcome classic restraint leading to a fresh orientation of the ancient traditions of beauty.

Contrasts between Classic Ajantā and Classic Ellorā Cave Art

Medieval art in India exhibits passion and dynamism that stand in marked contrast with the earlier suave but static, classic Gupta expression. This may be best illustrated by the vivid contrast between the classic Gupta art of Ajantā and the classic medieval art of Ellorā. The art of Ajantā is anthropomorphic, clear, sharp and serene, like the myth of Mahāyāna Buddhism, of
which it is a supreme expression. The art of Ellorā is supra-human, agitated, dramatic and elusive like the myth of Purānic and Tāntrika Hinduism, of which it is a magnificent embodiment. At Ajantā India worships Man as Master and his destiny in nīrāṇa that is more glorious than the order and harmony of the cosmos. At Ellorā she worships God as Śakti, Power or Tension, mysterious and supra-human; and yet what is transcendent and inscrutable manifests itself in the passion and aspiration of man, and underlies the order of cosmic manifestation and human destiny. Buddhist art is humanistic and serene, and is easier to appreciate than Brahmanical art which is cosmic, tense and mysterious. The latter rejects the Buddhist notion of the primacy of Man in the scheme of the cosmos, and expresses cosmic, trans-human moods and values in pictorial and poetic symbolisms. Creation, Preservation and Destruction in their supra-mundane aspects are the main concerns of medieval Brahmanical art that finds joy at once in the infinite tenderness of love and compassion which perpetually creates life, and in the unrestrained fury of destruction which perpetually rebuilds and transforms it.

At Ellorā Śiva is the principle of dynamic tension and change and Viṣṇu that of order and permanence. Both are attuned to the majestic rhythm of the cosmos and the human soul. Ellora, Bādāmi and Aihole, all depict the myths and legends of both Śiva and Viṣṇu, thanks to the eclectic Śmārta spirit of the age. In the Rāvaṇa-kā-khai cave at Ellorā we find the sculptures of Śiva and Viṣṇu myths mixed on the same wall while in the Daśa-Avatāra cave the Śaiva and Viṣṇuva sculptures are found on opposite sides. The colossal Śaiva guardian (ārāpaḍā) is on watch at either end of this cave. The Kailāśa temple that is consecrated to Śiva includes sculptures of Viṣṇu and the entire galaxy of Puranic gods and goddesses. Indian myth and poetry have introduced into this neutral, super-natural frame of reference the triumph of goodness over evil, of unity and stability over chaos and disorder. At the Daśa-Avatāra cave in Ellorā the colossal Śiva-Bhairava, engaged in grim fight against the demons, and accompanied by both his consorts—the gaunt, terrific Kāli as well as the charming Pārvatī—is a marvel in Indian sculpture. The transcendent fury of destruction of wickedness which is the same thing as the beneficent spread of God’s compassion and love is suggested by the sweeping diagonal posture supported by the movements of the various hands and the heavy diagonal thrust of the trident piercing the demon. The entire plastic composition of the group of figures shows a dynamic coherence that can only be discerned within the cave temple itself. Similarly the grand images of the Dance of Śiva-Nāṭarāja, Rāvaṇa’s shaking of Kailāśa and his humiliation at the hands of Śiva (in several variants), of the slaying of Hiraṇyakaśipu by Viṣṇu in his lion-form and of Mahiśāsura by the many-armed Durgā embody supra-mundane majesty, pride, indignation and tumult of the soul that are indispensable for bringing about an ordered harmony in the scheme of creation. Thus are metaphysical notions and transcendental moods dramatically expressed in ever-lasting, momentous myth and drama. The supra-mundane activity
(divyakriyā) of archetypal deities in the interplay of generic attitudes and emotions of the human soul embodies in Nietzschein fashion India's acceptance of universal tension and pain, power and insight. The dance of Tārā surrounded by six mātrikās or divine Mothers at the cave temple of Aurangabad blends majesty and serenity with feminine charm and delicacy of movement in a manner unique in Indian sculpture. At Ellorā even when Śiva converses with Pārvatī in the company of her attendants, embraces her carelessly or plays a game of dice with her in a delightful homely scene in which his bull and attendant gānas have also their practical jokes, the countenance of the Divine Couple command silence by their grandeur and power that Gupta art with a preference for sweet serenity and bliss could never master.

The Supra-Mundane Tension and Harmony of Neo-Brahmanical Art

Buddhist art deals with cosmic order rather than cosmic tension, and with man's poise and serenity rather than his transcendence and triumph. These latter are the main themes of neo-Brahmanical art. Man's power and majesty, the victory of the good over the evil, Eternity or Mahākāla and its devourer the skeletal Kāli or Chāmuṇḍā, Mahākāla's partner, with Man on his knees, Śiva as the flaming linga with Viṣṇu and Brahmā in attitudes of wonder and supplication, or, again, the Divine Ālingana (embrace) of Śiva-Umā born of the exaltedly poetic participation of the deity in the life of the senses are treated with intensity and grandeur by neo-Brahmanical art. The tumult of the human soul and the vehemence of human moods and passions are completely set at rest in the background of the cosmic and the eternal. Tranquility, which is the essential note of Indian art, is established even in turbulent scenes and episodes by man's self-transcendence. The victory of the transcendent Self or Śiva over the ambition, over-weening conceit and challenge of power of finite creatures (asuras) restores order and harmony in the universe. Such is the insight of Purānic and Āgamic myths and legends. At Ellorā in Rāvaṇa-kā-khai, Kailāsa and Rāmesvāra caves we encounter the horrendous representations of Great Time (Mahākāla) as a grinning skeleton with four arms holding the emblems of death and with the garland, amulets and girdle of snakes. He is accompanied by his grim consort Kāli along with one of her sixty-four yoginiś. He has his seat on two dying men, the leg of one of which is being gnawed by a wolf and the skeleton of a man clasps his foot frightened by the apparitions of Kāli and her attendant yoginiś. The celestial angels fly above. Such a dreadful image strikingly resembles the depiction of Death in the post-medieval art of Germany. Kāli is the symbol of world destruction, and from her early representations at Ellorā the tradition persists of her being imaged as an emaciated, yet beautiful woman with sunken eyes, thirsty lips and frame of bones. The most exquisite representations of Kāli answering to this description are from Bhuvanesvāra and Jajpur in Orissa and Devagram in Bengal. The grim sitting or dancing images of Chāmuṇḍā in her eight varieties
as described in the *Agni* and *Matsya Purāṇas* are magnificently executed in Bengal where the Devī Māhātmya of the Mārkandeya Purāṇa in which her origin is described, is very popular. Śiva is also at Ellorā in his several awe-some forms: Kāla-Bhairava (Time) in the frenzy of destruction of man and the universe and Aghora killing the demon Andhakāsura with his trident and displaying the elephant hide of another demon, Gajāsura, or as engaged in the majestic Tāṇḍava dance of annihilation and creation. According to the legend as recorded in the *Varāha-Purāṇa* Śiva slays Gajāsura, prior to his combat with Andhakāsura and appropriately dons the elephant hide as his garment for the next encounter. From his flaming third eye issues forth his emaciated consort Chāmuṇḍā for witnessing the episode. But Śiva at Ellorā is also the Compassionate Redeemer as when He springs out of the linga pillar to rescue his sage-devotee Mārkandeya in the clutches of Death (Yama). Then there are the Seven Protective Mothers (each with a child now mutilated) in Rāmeśvara cave with their benedictions for man, while the many images of the wedding of Śiva-Umā and of the holy pair in conjugal devotion and embrace embody the notion of the consecration of senses. In the same cave the series of elegant sculptures embodying the episodes of the marriage of Śiva and Umā—the preliminary proposal of the marriage of Umā, the penances which Umā had to undertake to soften the heart of of the ascetic God and the final consummation of nuptials of the Divine Couple breathe piety and serenity, blended with human warmth and intimacy that raise the Indian conception of marriage and love to the metaphysical plane. Here are the famous *ślokas* of Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* (Canto VII) deftly and magnificently transformed into stone. As many as twelve panels in the north corridor of the Kailāsa temple represent Śiva and Umā sitting together, or Śiva bestowing his blessings on his devotees such as Mārkandeya and Rāvaṇa; while in the south corridor we encounter more than a dozen emanations of Śiva, Kāla-Bhairava, Baṭuka-Bhairava, Bhūpati-Bhairava, Kapāla Bhairava, Virabhadra, Sadāśiva and the rest. At Ellorā the entire panorama of man's life from serene piety and devotion to the arrogance and furor of power, from severe asceticism and penance to marriage and domestic bliss, and from the mighty recurrent challenge of evil forces to the inevitable triumph of goodness are placed in the background of the cosmic and the eternal. Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Śākta myths and legends are all harnessed by the reliefs and sculptures here for grandly depicting the unchanging order and harmony of the transcendent realm far above the excitements of human life and the contingent realm of space and time. The myriad forms of Śiva, compassionate and grim, are but passing appearances in the boundless stage of Time (Kāla). The asceticism of Śiva as Yogiśvara, the penance of Umā, the domestic felicity of the Divine couple, the rescue of Mārkandeya, the majestic dance of Śiva Natarāja, the frenzied excitement of Śiva Kāla-Bhairava with the Seven Mothers at his feet, and even Śiva's relentless struggle and fight against the *āsuras*—the triumph of goodness over evil are but ephemeral bubbles in the ocean of Time (Kāla), the empirical
projections of a state of eternal, supreme silence or Being (Śāntam). The essential feature of the Deity that is to be apprehended by Man is its unconditioned, unchangeable basic character (mūla-vigraha) which is symbolised by the lingam (that has now disappeared) in the inner-most cell at Kailāśa. The vast Kailāśa temple, the burden of which is borne with ease by eight pairs of Elephants of the Four Quarters (Diggaja), representing the supporters of the canopy of heaven, is scooped out of the living rock as a celestial chapel, an ecstatic vision of heaven. It celebrates with dramatic vigour and éclat the final victory of neo-Brahmanism over Buddhism, of the supra-mundane and the transcendent over the human and anthropomorphic. "On seeing the temple," so reads a passage in an inscription of Krisna I, "the best of immortals who move in celestial cars, struck with astonishment, think constantly saying, 'This temple of Śiva is self-existent. In a thing made by art such beauty is not seen.'" Kailāśa embodies the triumph of human engineering and art over the living mountain and rock and the acme of human creation of beauty—man's transport of the Abode of God to the earth.

The Triumph of the Trans-Human and Cosmical in Cave Sculpture

Medieval Brahmanical art on the whole shows a courage and tolerance that Buddhist art does not possess, including within its ken both supernatural ecstasies and glories of life as well as tenderly human emotions and delights. Ellora, Aihole, Badami and Elephantā are successful equally in the serene and tender expression of the immanence of God or the divinity of Man as well as in the palpitating, turbulent representation of cosmic energy that perpetually frightens, frustrates and destroys, as it creates, loves and protects man. These are equally at home in creating angels and divinities as well as monsters and goblins, in recording man's glorious triumphs and beatitudes as well as his frightful degradations and apparitions. Ajantā and Ellorā express different accents of man's meditative life, contrasted poles of spiritual experience in a manner unparalleled in the world's art forms. Yet a distance of only seventy miles separates them, and at Ellorā the construction of twelve Buddhist caves actually preceded that of the sixteen Brahmanical ones. Ellorā, no doubt, celebrates the eclipse of Buddhist by Brahmanical culture, the triumph of the trans-human and cosmical over the human and the earthy that embody themselves in the vicissitudes of man's life and destiny.

Medieval Indian sculpture may be considered classical in so far as it shows sharpness and clarity of aim and purpose, whether concrete and sensuous, or transcendental and metaphysical, and is subjected to the literary and artistic formulæ of the dhyānas that govern the iconplastic representation. It is Gothic in its expression of dhyāna or spiritual ardour, whether human or supra-human, in the enrichment and variegation of the traditional poses, gestures and movements, and the elegant and meaningful treatment of the arms and hands, hips and breasts, jewellery and weapons. At the same time it is dramatic
tense and mysterious through the use of the mellow half-light as well as the chiaroscuro in the cave niches and apartments, and of the material of the living rock whence the energies of the sculptures seem to burst forth with elemental energy.

**Indian Cave Art—A New Type of Sculpture**

Badami, Ellora, Aurangabad and Elephantā cave shrines, all show the possibilities of sculpture in the unsounded depths of the earth and the world of nebulous light and darkness and vibrating atmosphere, plastically conditioned and circumscribed that have been hardly utilised in world art, except of course, in the cave temples of central Asia and China from Bamiyan to Yun Kang built under the inspiration of Indian rock-cut art. In these cave temples it is the pent-up power and grandeur of heaving, seismic forces that crystallise into colossal compositions. It is the depth and darkness of the unprobed caves that burst forth into the unrestrained gesture, the supra-mundane elation and the sublime action of deities, angels and men. The high tension of ever-lasting events and the dramatic interplay of elemental, unmixed emotions of mythical personages are unfailingly revealed by the contrast, gradualness or suddenness of light and shade effects. The exuberant extension of the sculptures and reliefs as far as the rock permits, and also into its side-wings; the conditioning and parcelment of light and darkness among the various figures, according to the needs of psychological treatment, by skilful openings into the rock; the crowding of space by figure reliefs or the retention of blank, resilient space emphasising either tension or poise; and above all, the utilisation of the abysmal darkness of the cave recess comprising the mysterious background in which the age-less scene is represented, embody a new type of sculpture which reaches its perfection of majestic utterance at Elephantā.

Man looks at the mythical events depicted by the reliefs at Badami, Ellora and Elephantā not as something external to him. He is transported into the vibrating space and atmosphere of the cave shrine and is captured in such manner that the spectacular tableaux go on endlessly in his inner vision. Thus do myths and philosophies become perennial. In India man is accustomed to see the image of the deity in the dimness of the temple’s sanctum sanctorum (garbha-griha) that has hardly any windows and is lit even in daytime by the flicker of lamps that throw long shadows. The image emerges steady and luminous in his inner consciousness only there. In the cave shrine which is even less accessible to the broad daylight, the setting, background and atmosphere are most appropriate not only for the fabrication and revelation of supra-mundane images and myths, irrespective of his tradition, sect and social predilection, but also for their realisation in pristine intensity and grandeur. Finally, all myths and legends lead to metaphysics in India. The garbha-griha or the sanctum sanctorum at the Daśa-Avatāra and Dhūmāra Lena caves and Kailāśa at Ellora enshrines the Śiva-Śakti lingam, while that
at Elephanta is dedicated to the Maheshvara image. The inscrutable mystery and transcendence of the Śiva lingam are shown at the Daśa-Avatāra by a novel representation: Śiva stands upright in self-absorption inside the liṅga from the sides of which flames issue forth; Brahmā and Viṣṇu in a contemplative mood stand on the right and left, and the Boar-incarnation is prostrate in worship. Both the emblem of liṅga and the image of the Triune Maheshvara embody profound metaphysical concepts. Nowhere in the world are man’s cosmic truths and values so grandly, so powerfully expressed as in Indian medieval rock-cut sculpture that developed a style and technique that the modern world has come across only in the large-shaped works of Rodin, Epstein and Henry Moore.
Chapter 12

THE THREE FACES OF ŠIVA: THE PLASTIC CONCEPTIONS OF BEING AND BECOMING

Religious Tolerance and Eclecticism in the Middle Ages

The forms and motifs of medieval Indian sculpture are derived from the tolerant, liberal social culture and the eclectic religions and philosophies, characteristic of India during the period covering seven centuries from the 6th to the 13th. This entire epoch saw a synthesis and interpenetration of various religions and schools of philosophy and of scholasticism and mysticism throughout the country. Medieval myth, metaphysics and mysticism fostered and clarified the fundamental synthetic notions of pure Being as embodied by Śiva, the Buddha and Viṣṇu and of Becoming as embodied by Śakti, Tārā and Pārvati. Such notions erased the boundaries that theology had created, and medieval art fully availed itself of this synthesis of elevated thought. In medieval image-making, Śiva and Lokanātha, and Tārā, Vāgiśvarī or Pārvatī and even the Buddha and Viṣṇu are not easily distinguishable without reference to the mythology and practice of meditation (śādhanamālā). The poise of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva strengthens the plastic serenity and harmony of Śiva and Viṣṇu, and vice versa. Yet the specific idiom and accent of Buddhist, Paurānic or Tāntrika literature, myth and dhyāna underlying each sculpture are clearly discernible. Thus a medieval Bodhisattva, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Tārā or Pārvatī image, saturated with the same passionate, romantic and humane spirit and exalted by the same myth, metaphysics and literature, is recognisable whether it may be at Bādāmī, Ellorā or Elephanta, or at Aurangabad, Aihole or Vikrampur, or at Kanauj, Bhuvarṇesvara or Mayurbhanj.

The medieval Chandela art in Central India, the Madhya Pradesh and the Uttar Pradesh is predominantly Brahmanical. But in Mahobā or Mahotsava, not far from Khajurāho, the capital seat of the Chandela dynasty, Buddhist sculptures of about the 11th century A.D. have been found—images of the Buddha, Avalokiteśvara, Tārā and Lokanātha, composite Śaiva-Buddhist figures especially Lokesvara or Lokanātha, associated with the contemporary dominance throughout Northern India of the Nātha tradition that merged Buddhism in Śaivism. The graceful, well-decked and smiling Mahobā Padmāpati very closely approximates to the Pāla Śiva and Bodhisattva images in its combination of the warm current of lyrical or romantic idealism with formalism and abstraction. Similarly the superb Tāntrika image of Mārīchī, goddess of dawn, with three heads and six arms, found in Kurkihar, U.P., has a distinct affinity to similar Pāla goddesses in its dynamic rhythm and swirl of the many hands and weapons, echoed by the movements of the hovering worshippers above and below.
There is, however, a profound difference between the Gupta and Pāla metal images of the Buddha, between Sārnāth Lokesvara or Śīva and Pāla and Kaliṅga Lokanātha or Śīva or between the Gupta Viṣṇu lying on the snake at Deogarh and the Pāla Anantaśayana figure at Joypur in Bankura. The medieval art of the east is more passionate and delicate, and combines mysterious power and sublimity with Gothic charm, characteristic of the evolution of the Gupta tradition under the impetus of the mystical religious and social currents of the Pāla age. Pāla sculpture is indeed characterised by great boldness of plastic composition embodying also soft and tender fleshliness that blends with a stern discipline of outline and form; while the treatment of the drapery, the jewellery, the pāśvadavatās, the gandharvas and stelae underlines the psychological message (Illustrations: Avalokiteśvara with Ţārā in the mountain cave at Kurkikār (Gayā), Śyāma Tārā and Vāgīśvarī at Dacca, Nairātmā and Māričhi at Nālandā, all of the 10th century; Māričhi at Bihar and Vāgīśvarī at Chhattingram (Bogra) and Hṛṣīkēsa at Murshidabad of the 11th century.) During the Sena period, the spiritual abstraction and human sensitiveness of the Pāla tradition were continued and we have some of the most elegant metaphysical icons that Indian art has produced. (Illustrations: Umālīṅgana at Dacca, Khadiravani Tārā at Bihar, Lokeśvara at Bhāgalpur and Chaṇḍi at Dalbazar, Dacca.) There is, on the other hand, a marked resemblance between the mediaeval sculptures of Bengal, Kaliṅga and Central India with contemporary images of Ellorā and Elephanta. The plastic art of the Deccan and Eastern India, dynamic and tense, has moved far away from the Gupta classical art, efflorescent in poise, fineness and abstraction. In pattern and spirit the figures of Tārā found at Nālandā, Ratnagiri and Ayodhyā (Balasore), of Indrāṇī at Jajpur, Kaliṅga, and of Durgā-Mahiṣamardini at Vaitāl Deul, Puri, are close to some figures of goddesses in the famous caves of Ellorā and Elephanta. Yet there is distinctiveness of the mediaeval East, born of the infusion of Tāntrika culture that has invested it with a strange combination of charm with power, of human affection with mystery and an immanent, all-pervasive dynamism akin to the serpent-coiled Kuṇḍalinī-Śakti, that is tender and motherly, yet abysmal, indefinable, all-encompassing. It is not easy to explain the difference. But one can refer to the mediaeval images of Bodhisattva, Lokanātha, Śīva, Maṇjuśrī, Tārā and Bhagavatī painted and sculptured in Bengal and Kaliṅga with Gothic mellowness and tenderness and mysterious power hardly met with in other parts of India.

The Pāla-Gothic design of the Bodhisattva or Śīva is characterised by extreme simplicity and dignity on the one hand and a fine sense of spatial values on the other, while the linear rhythms of drapery and ornaments that mould themselves to the underlying forms of the body give it a combination of the sweetness and delicacy of Botticelli with the serenity and purity of Fra Ange-
lic. Similarly the several figures of the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi from Lalitagiri, Kaliṅga (early 8th century), are marvels of compositional rhythm, that integrates the compassionate deity’s triple flexion, the pattern of coherence of his ornaments and body, the linear movement of the proliferating lotus stalk and the posture of his attendant Śaktis, underlined in some measure by the stiffness of the legs. Superbly emphasised also is the blend of sweetness and profundity of the Buddhist Tārā or the Purāṇic Chaṇḍī in Bengal and Kaliṅga. The sideward sway of their hips and their gentle compassionate faces with a Mona Lisa expression of the lips mollify other-worldliness and introspection, distinctive of the South Indian Pārvatī with her unfathomable impersonality. Gaurī and Pārvatī among the Brahmanical deities in Bengal and Kaliṅga similarly show a sweet motherliness and tenderness in their expression that are not incompatible with their transcendent mystery. The images of Tārā, Prajñāpāramitā, Gaurī and Pārvatī are transcendent in spirit like the Great Mother asleep within the body, but have inexpressible grace and power that belong to her when She is awakened in her full numble glory.

Animal Motifs Expressing Becoming in Medieval Art

Medieval art in India, under the influence of Tāntrikism, liked best to express man’s transformation or Becoming rather than essence or Being, and created varied and wonderful images of Śakti or Becoming, as complement and contrast to the Śiva or Viṣṇu type of pure Being. Becoming in medieval art embraces not merely human but also animalic manifestations. In the classic phase of Indian art, the deer, the monkey, the elephant and other animals were treated in Sānci, Bhārhat, Ajantā and Bāgh with a most kindly and tender spirit, born of the Buddhist myth that the animal is but one stage of life in the long chain of man’s karma where the transitions from animal to man and from man to deva are continuous and ever-recurrent both ways. Both naturalistic and ideal treatment marked by extreme delicacy, refinement and sensitiveness of animal motifs was characteristic of Gupta art. Medieval art, especially of the Tāntrika phase, appreciates more than the animal art of any other period or country in the world, the supra-animalic and supra-human potentiality of the beast. Thus the animal is the appropriate vehicle or implement of the divine mission of Viṣṇu-Narasimha and Durgā Mahiṣamardini. The animal’s super-natural power, discipline and restraint break out into super-human vigorous action as the lion-vehicle (vāhana) of the goddess Durgā aids her against Mahiṣāsura or as the lion-divinity, Narasimha instantaneously tears the wicked Hiranyakāșipu to pieces. Animal attributes here are a part and parcel of the divinity, which Durgā and Viṣṇu represent, and of their plan of action embodying the transformation of man’s inner life and experience. Here is, therefore, no mere animality but animality-cum-divinity which is the essential meaning of the Purāṇic conception of the animal-vehicle (vāhana)
of gods and goddesses. Such myth and metaphysics underlie the psychological treatment of animals in medieval, especially Chandela and East Indian sculpture, where bulls, lions, swans, serpents, garudas, šārdūlas or eyālas (tigers) invested with an inscrutable mystery and vitality, are assigned an order of existence superior to human.

In Indian classical sculpture at Sāñchi and Bhārhat or Amarāvati, the animal such as the elephant, bull, horse, deer, goat, ram, peacock and swan, is represented in suave, gracious forms in keeping with the orderliness of Life and the cosmic scheme of things. In medieval sculpture at Khajurāho, Bhuvenēśvara and Koṇāraka the animal such as the rampant leogryph (śārdūla), tiger (eyāla) and elephant is the embodiment of super-animalic tension and power imported into human experience. The śārdūla at the Khajurāho Museum has the face of man and the manes of lion, combining the buoyancy and strength of the animal with the understanding and feeling of man. The net result is the revelation of a marvellous, super-natural human-cum-animal attitude which shrinks from the grossness of the animal body and distils a human expression of wonder and compassion. The same is true of the śārdūla at Pārśvanātha temple where, however, the lion has an animal body treated abstractly and mythically with decorative conventions such as whiskers, mane, whorl and necklace.

At Koṇāraka the elephant is repeated in the recesses of temple walls on par with the leogryph. It shows a subtle blend of the power and majesty of the animal with the responsiveness of the human spirit. At the same temple more significant than the elephant motif is the hybrid elephant-lion (gajasimha) which subtly integrates the characteristics of the two stately beasts. The motif symbolises the transition or Becoming of Man as he participates in the spirit and power of both the elephant and lion in the cycle of his births and re-births. It is from the viewpoint of man’s own transformation from devilry to animality, from animality to humanity and from humanity to divinity, which is the gift of Śakti, that animal motifs in medieval art have to be interpreted. In the strange admixture of the elephant and lion Indian medieval art has reached one of the most fantastic and powerful expressions of Becoming. The conquest of the Sun-god Śūrya, symbolised by the lion, over the rain-cloud symbolised by the elephant, is also subtly suggested by the common motif of the lion or griffin on the crouching elephant. The classical literary tradition is that the lion which is the king of beasts is the deadly enemy of the elephant species, and loves to pounce upon their temples whence gaja-muktās (pearls from the crown of elephants) are scattered or stick to their claws. Such a tradition underlies the universality of the gaja-simha or gaja-eyāla motif in East Indian sculpture. Sometimes the rampant lion on the elephant has a frolicksome, youthful rider holding the rein nonchalantly. The griffin, with or without the rider, possessing stylised manes, tufts of hair and eye-brows and angry protruding eyes is a common embellishment of the facades of the temples of Orissa and has also spread to Jávā. As in High Gothic sculpture in Europe so in medieval Tān-
trika sculpture in India the lavish multiplication of carvings of monsters, chimeras, grotesque and imaginary animals reflects the exaltation and exuberance of the human spirit under the impact of a mystical upsurge.

The Human-Animalic Interchange

We may here refer to the curious, but lively and vigorous sculpture of a woman seated before a colossal lion at the Mahādeva temple, Khajurāho, that reveals a strange, playful intimacy between the animalic and the human as an exquisite creative expression of medieval sculpture. The gigantic but softly disposed lion wearing a pearl necklace, a fluff of mane and conventional strings of pearls in the limbs, extends his paws with human tenderness and affection before the crouching, supplicating woman whose posture is also that of melting, reciprocating love. Elegance blends with a pose of power in the clear and subtle linear composition of the animal; while in that of the woman it is combined with a gesture of entreaty. The concave curves of the backs and bellies of the lion and the woman are accentuated by the angularity of their hands and legs. In the entire plastic treatment the complementary gliding concave rhythms of the bodies of animal and woman that maintain a rounded fulness underlie the emotional interchange. The details of modelling and pliability are exponents of communication between the animalic and the human, the mighty and the feeble in a most subtle fashion.

The mythical, horned leonine animal (śārdūla) is generally vigorously treated and is a most distinctive medieval sculpture. He is the vāhana of Śakti, and as such echoes her tremendous energy, agility and swiftness of action stressed in the sculptures by the ferocity of the animal face and the torsion of the limbs. Man sometimes fights him, sometimes rides on him, sometimes clings to his tail and is protected by him. The inscrutable nature of the supernatural śārdūla or vyūla reflects the mystery of Mahāmāyā—Śakti or Surasundari with her ambivalent attributes. At Khajurāho and Konāraka the śārdūlas and Surasundarīs, apsarās, Śālabhaṇijākās and Nāga-damsels are placed in recesses and pilasters side by side, continuing and complementing the contortions of their respective postures in the plastic composition and reinforcing a common theme.

Indian animal sculpture in the middle ages reveals indeed a concentrated power and mysterious aloofness of the animal that easily slip into the attributes not only of Śakti but of such male divinities as the Varāha-Avatāra and the Narasimha. These deities which are manifestations of Viṣṇu are also superb illustrations in Neo-Brahmanical religion and art of the interpretation of animal nature as an essential ingredient of man’s transcendent experience. The classic examples of the Varāha form of Viṣṇu are those of Udayagiri in Gwalior, Bādāmi and Māmallapuram while there are excellent specimens also from Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bengal and Orissa. The images of Eran, Bilhārī, Khoh, Nālandā, Rajshahi and Murshidabad are outstanding. The Man-lion form of Viṣṇu is also very popular. The early representations
are from Bādāmī and Māmallapuram. The best medieval and post-medieval images are represented by those from Vikrampur, Rampal, Sirohi, Jhansi and Hampi. Throughout India, Nandi, Śiva’s bull-vehicle, is sculptured in the round, sometimes into a colossal image characterised like the Egyptian sphinx by a portentous solemnity and detachment. The spirit of the Bull symbolises Śiva’s ascetic discipline and withdrawal from the world and thus claims and obtains the adoration of thousands of worshippers before they enter the temple of God. A masterpiece of sculpture of the sacred Bull comes from the temple of Vettavankoil, Kalugumalai, in the South (about the 9th century). The Bull wears a necklace of bells and its poise and silence are by no means inferior to those of Śiva. The Boar is a reflection of Viśṇu’s supreme might involved in the process of creation as He lifts Earth-Mother from the deluge of dissolution. In the Varāha temple at Khajurāho we find the whole body of the Boar carved with innumerable figures of gods, goddesses, angels, nāgas, gandharvas, dikpālas, men and planets. The Boar’s body represents the cosmos and symbolises the primordial sacrifice of the Creator. Its limbs that depict the various levels of life represent parts of the original ritual that brings the universe into existence. Similarly the zoomorphic boar form of Viśṇu from Eran, Jubbulpur, and from the Gwalior and Lucknow Museums bears within the body of the animal the entire cosmos. The Lion is an apparition of the Goddess Durgā’s terrific anger and might in her fight against Mahiśāsura, the demon-foe of the gods. Perhaps the earliest representation of Durgā Mahiśa- mardini on the Lion-mount is that on a terracotta plaque recovered from Nagar, Rajasthan (now in the Sardar Museum, Jodhpur) and attributed to mid-first century B.C. or early first century A.D. The Lion-mount of the Goddess became most popular in the Gupta period. The Lion is often sculptured independently and placed on the terrace of a temple or it flanks the steps. The representation is symbolic as its necklace, whiskers, mane and whorls on the limbs show. Masterpieces of images of the Lion come from Gwalior, Khajurāho and Ko- nāraka sculptured in the middle ages. Similarly, Viśṇu’s vāhana, Garuḍa, is the fair-winged celestial bird reflecting the spirit of the God’s pervasiveness just as the cosmic serpent Ananta on which He rests stands for his infinitude. The Swan (haṁsa) is the Bird of Brahmā. In temple sculpture the Bird’s swift flight across the sky is always brought out. A superb example of the image of haṁsa is that on the north wall of the Virāpāksa temple, Paṭṭadakal (about A.D. 740). The Swan suddenly bends its neck backwards in the course of its forward stride; the plumage expands and is most artistically stylised into decorative scrolls. In Indian sculpture while the weapons and implements support one of the many attributes of the divinity, the vāhana conveys his total supra-mundane quality and constant presence. Thus is the animal invested with all the supernatural meanings and potentialities of the deity, sculptured with all the skill, devotion and meticulous attention to details that the craftsman can muster, and worshipped with ardour by the common people in the same manner as they worship the deity.
Medieval Indian art, impregnated with the conception of the all-pervasive mysterious Energy or Śakti, immanent in gods, angels, nāgas, men and animals, has taken upon itself the paradoxical task of creating transitions and identifications of good and evil, of divinity and humanity, animality and devilry that make an extraordinary appeal to man. Man likes best to see his own transformation or Becoming, and art is its best account, his most effective bridge between the real and the ideal, between the sensible and the super-sensible. Since the deity is not a human individual but the embodiment of a supernatural or metaphysical abstraction, there is often a striking departure from the human form or symmetry as in the human-animalic image, such as the Nārasimha and the Varāha or in the multiplicity of heads, hands and feet so as to suit the cosmic vision. In the images of Viṣṇu in his avatāra as the Man-Lion at Ellorā and four centuries later at Devanagara we find the super-animalic assimilated into the divine. The concentrated, swift and supernatural power of the king of animals becomes a constituent of God’s terrific might in everlasting revenge against the impiety and blasphemy of man. Yet man accepts the terrible retribution as the bestowal of His grace. Medieval Indian art restored to the image of the animal the same prominence as it enjoyed long ago in early Buddhist art, and produced some of the masterpieces of animal sculpture, rooted in the sense not of the continuity of the sequence of Life, whether man, animal orb god, ut of the mysterious transcendental character of animality akin to the inscrutable power of Śakti. In Tibet we have the image of Vajravārāhi (the Śakti of Heruka) who has a sow-like excrecence to the right side of her face, symbolising the conquest of sex passion. Mārīchi’s face is also distorted sow-like. Then there are the lion-faced Ṣākinī or the supreme goddess or the bull-faced Yamāntaka, God of Death, in their world-destroying dances.

In medieval Tibetan sculpture we find as the result of the impact of Buddhist Tāntrikism spreading from Eastern India, the super-animalic ingredient in transcendental experience more prominently than in India. Indian plastic art over-steps anthropomorphism, and seeks nothing more and nothing less than the expression of the Beyond, reached by cosmic meditation with none of the limitations set by measurable human goals and ideals. Thus what is asymmetrical from the standpoint of naturalism and realism becomes in sculpture the vehicle of the cosmic and transcendental. It must, however, be remembered that in certain schools and epochs art retained its human and anthropomorphic character, as instanced by Gupta and Pāla-Sena art in India, Tang and Sung art in China, and Nara art in Japan.

The Complementary Apparitions of Self in the Mahēśvara Image at Elephantā

The medieval Brahmanical renaissance in India was the focus of the confluence of the cultures of Āryāvarta and Daksināpatha at various levels. It assimilated
the ancient phallic cults of liṅgam and yoni, Paśupati-Rudra and the Mother-goddesses with the purity and discipline of yoga and the absolute idealism of the Vedānta. It harmonised the Southern wisdom of the mother-earth and of the human body with the Northern subtlety and refinement of the human spirit. Perhaps the noblest creations of medieval Brahmanical art are represented by the grand set of sculptures at Elephantā, embodying in particular a synthesis of Āryāvarta and Dakṣīṇa tradition, both spiritually as well as artistically. They blend the largeness, weightiness and sustained power of the Dakṣīṇa form, adapted to architectonic composition in the rock-cut caves, with the suavity, sublimation and sensitive modelling of the temple images of Āryāvarta.

Four millennia of experience of religious fears, anxieties, and fulfilments of the primitive aboriginal races, foreigners and the Indo-Aryan peoples, with their ethno-regional differences seem to have been epitomised in the strange composite conception and image of Mahēśvara at Elephantā. Miscalled the orthodox Brahmanical Trimūrti, this metaphysical image represents the three-fold aspects of the Self identified with the cosmic spirit: the serene Sadāśiva, Tatpurusa or the Absolute, in the middle; the frowning, skull-crowned Aghora-Bhairava, the Terrible One, on the right; and the charming, compassionate and bejewelled Umā, the goddess, or Vāmadeva, the Blissful One, on the left.

All universe, all life, find an equilibrium through the rhythm of conservation and dissolution, aggregation and dispersion, light and darkness, ebb and flow, motion and rest. Man establishes his own equilibrium through the pulsation of anabolism and katabolism, impulse and satisfaction, self-actualisation and transcendence. By stamping rhythm upon the phenomena of nature and the activities of the mind and society that lack order and unity, he obtains his supreme poise and bliss. The distinctive idiom or vernacular of the human soul accordingly is its apprehension of the rhythm of Being and Becoming, of silence, activity, of generation and destruction.

In the venerable Śaiva Trinity at Elephantā, the self enters into its deepest and widest level of experience through the simulation of the oscillating cosmic creative process in which Being rhythmically alternates between nīrēṣa and activity, withdrawal and manifestation, protection and destruction, life and death. The generative and protective principle in life, mind and universe dwells in Umā or Vāmadeva; the withdrawing and destructive principle is embodied in Bhairava or Aghora. These are complementary antinomies that are harmonised and reconciled in Sadāśiva or Tatpurusa, who represents the immanent-transcendent, attributeless essence of the Supreme or Real Self.

Sadāśiva or Tatpurusa is the Supreme Self (Paramātman), the ever-present witness (sākṣi) of creation and destruction and the dynamism of time—the undifferentiated, all-supporting, non-dual essence of life, mind and universe (advaitam). All operations in time, all tensions and rhythms of nature, life and
soul proceed from and dissolve into Tatpurusa, the Absolute and the Beyond. At the same time supporting the individual mind and consciousness that experiences the basic rhythms at different levels of existence, there is the Cosmic Mind, the Real or Universal Self, the transcendent consciousness—the unchangeable Supreme Silence. This is the nature of Sadashiva or Tatpurusa. And this Sadashiva or Tatpurusa is not a vision but the Supreme vision, not God, but the Supreme God (Mahesvara).

The Trinity of the Self or Absolute, or Identity of Being and Becoming

The remarkable achievement of this sculpture—considered by some Western art critics as the greatest masterpiece of the world’s art—is the translation of the derivation of two metaphysical categories or values of the Self (Becoming) from an indivisible Supreme Self or Absolute (Being) into a plastic conception through the bold, magnificent reconciliation of three gigantic images in the same massive bust. Three tiaras of three different deities are integrated into a single gorgeous mukuta embodying the metaphysical synthesis. The matted locks of Siva the ascetic blend harmoniously with the jewels and adornments of Uma and the serpents and skull-crown of Bhairava. Such is the transfiguration of the human soul by wisdom. For the enlightened, life’s enjoyment, renunciation and indifference become one and the same.

Metaphysically, the indifference or neutrality of the Supreme Self or Being governs the conception of the Mahesvara image. The non-dual spirit of this magnificent art-work is best expressed in the following verse of the poet-philosopher Saunaka:

“I am the lord of all my senses;  
All attachments have I shed, even freedom lures me not;  
Changeless am I, formless and omnipresent.  
For bliss-consciousness am I,  
I am Siva, Siva is in me.”

This profound metaphysical truth is plastically expressed through several skilful devices. First, the distribution of light and shade gradations in the deep niche is such that the central visage of Sadashiva that stands for indifference or silence is provided the best sheen and visibility. Secondly, the three countenances of Mahesvara representing different accents or phases of consciousness are skilfully differentiated: the fierce frown of Aghora-Bhairava, the sweet and tender smile of gracious Uma and the placid, adamantine serenity of Sadashiva with his full, pouting lips. Thirdly, the delicately carved and ornate headdresses and necklaces are in marked contrast with the extremely simplified broad treatment of the ponderous bust, and like the thin, delicate tracery of mantle in the Buddha images of Classical Gupta art give an immaterial and supernatural character to the whole image. Like the teachings of the
Āgamas and the illuminated pages of the mystic's mind, the image of Maheśvara impressively and unequivocally utters this profound message of Śaiva metaphysics: "Activity is true worship when every act is done for the sake of Śiva or Being. Silence again is true worship when it is the absolute, permanent repose of self in the Self."

Fourthly, the metaphysical synthesis or mystical self-transcendence is enhanced and consolidated by the transmutation of many pilasters of the cave shrine into ethereal, mysterious pillars of heaven, while the gigantic guardians or dvārapālas, standing in front of the pilasters, by their strange but well-executed apparels, ornaments and head-gears and their enigmatic but elegant postures and mudrās, sometimes with demons under the feet and gaṇas on the shoulders, transport the mind to the supernatural realm. Such is the harmony at Elephantā between the formal values of reliefs and sculptures in their elemental dimensions and the notions and beliefs of a metaphysical order. This reaches its impeccable consummation in the marvellous reconciliation of the three faces of Maheśvara in the same figure—the three complementary apparitions of an ecstatic vision. It is mystical insight that underlies the development of the purely mythopoetic plastic style of Bādāmi, Paṭṭadakal and Aurangabad which reaches its culmination at Elephantā, and at Elephantā in the Śaiva Trinity.

The composite Elephantā image has its counterparts or variants in different parts of India. We may mention two less familiar Madhya Bhārata sculptures, now in the Gwalior Museum, with Śadāśiva in the middle, Aghora-Bhairava licking blood from a platter on the left, and gracious Umā holding a mirror on the right. There is also the Trimūrti of the Devī Jagadambā temple at Khajurāho (1050-1100 A.D.). Here Vāmadeva-Umā is on the right and Aghora-Bhairava is on the left. The deity has eight arms and is accompanied by Jayā and Vijayā. Behind is probably the figure of Chāmuṇḍā. In Koṇāraka we come across a mutilated Trimūrti. Across the Himalayas at Dandan Uliq the same image is encountered. This migrated in the early mediaeval period, or it might be even earlier, and might have been Buddhist in import (Lokesvara). Coomaraswamy observed that the Śaiva trinity type which already occurs in Gandhāra, and in coins of Vāsudeva could easily have reached Khotan through Kashmir in the second century; it extended later even to China (Yun Kang Cave) and appears in Japan as Dai Itoku, usually rendered as Yamāntaka. Huien-Tsang, who was awe-struck, obviously encountered such a colossal Maheśvara image at Vārānasi, full of grandeur and majesty that has since disappeared and given its place to the present Viśvesvāra liṅgam. Once this kind of composite Śiva image was familiar in India and Central Asia. The majestic figure at Elephantā was fashioned with the artistic excellence of an epoch that reached the high watermark and perfection of the rich and prolific cave sculpture of India. In the rock caves the marked contrasts of light and shade enhance the dramatic effectiveness of mythical events conceived as all life is in Indian philosophy as illusions due to human ignorance, set
against the matrix of eternity that is symbolised by the unlimited and mysterious darkness of the pristine grottos.

*Being and Becoming: Unity in Duality and Trinity in the Elephantā Tableaux*

The grandeur and sublimity of the sculpture of the Śaiva Trinity are due to deep and subtle harmony between the bold plastic composition of the three colossal faces of Maheśvara in terms of light, shade and vibrant atmosphere within the cave, and the antinomic metaphysical concepts that the three contrasted heads signify. But the high metaphysical wisdom is brought home to the pilgrims through a series of ten panels which they encounter before they actually reach the garbha-grīha containing the Maheśvara image. Thus the position of the niche of the Maheśvara Trinity—the principal object of worship at Elephantā—*vis-a-vis* the ten tableaux consecrated to one or other myths and moods of the Supreme Being or Śiva is extremely significant. As the pilgrims enter the portico of the main cave the first panel they encounter to their left represents Yogīvara Śiva as Lakulīsa, who is the God’s last incarnation. A more reposeful sculpture of a yogī can hardly be carved. This tableau is an echo of, and preparation for, the central Sadāśiva figure of the the Triune deity. To the right of the portico is Śiva Natarāja, whose vast sweeping movement majestically represents the ever-recurrent pulsation of silence and manifestation, creation and destruction, life and death in the universe and in the human soul. The metaphysical meaning of the cosmic dance of Śiva is explained in a nutshell in the *Abhinava-bhāratī*: “Verily shines Śiva the Great Dancer on the supercosmic stage with all the potentialities of his gestures, and movements (*angahāras*) ready for manifestation. And verily shines He, the Architect of the Cosmic Stage, exhibiting forms out of formlessness and in His own image.” The rhythmical dance of Śiva simulates the anger and fury of destruction; it is a measured lyric of gesture as it destroys everything and everybody in the contingent realm of space and time, leading all to a supernal state of timeless silence and dissolution. The seven Protective Mothers nearby await in silence the inevitable doom of the cosmos. On a panel on the side large skeletons are represented forecasting the grim consequence for Man. This is an echo of the fierce and terrible Aghora-Bhairava figure to the right of the Triune Deity. Crossing the shrine with the *lingam-yoni* that is guarded by eight *dvārapālas*, and that symbolises the unmanifested form of the supreme deity—his pristine form (*mūla-vigraha*)—the pilgrims stand in mute adoration before the panel of the Betrothal of Śiva and Umā, Śiva Kal- yāṇasundaramūrti, an extraordinarily animated yet solemn presentation of a lyrical mood and scene that are invested with a timeless import. The human soul here is tender, expectant and tremulous, and yet in its absorption participates in what is eternal, beyond the vicissitudes of a human wedding. The stones of Elephantā breathe the same sanctity and stillness as does the
famous śloka of the Kumārasambhava (VII, 76) as it depicts Himavat offering Pārvatī in marriage to Śiva. On the opposite side of the pillared hall, before the pilgrims proceed further for entry to the antarāla of the Triune deity they come to the panel depicting an amorous scene of Kailāsa—Śiva’s consort in a sweetly indignant mood (māna). Umā, apparently angry after a love quarrel, turns her face away. She is ready to leave Kailāsa, and proceeds to mount on Nandi the bull just below her. Śiva is equally perturbed. With his right leg slightly raised, he abandons his accustomed adamantine lotus seat of meditation. These two tableaux celebrating the eternal youth and beauty of Life, far transcending the amours of the holy pair which are represented, prepare the pilgrims for an appreciation of the sweet, charming, bedecked visage of Umā, the third member of the Maheśvara Trinity. Beyond these two panels as the pilgrims are about to enter the cave of the holy holies, the Triune Deity itself, they appropriately behold and worship on two sides of the antarāla Śiva Gaṅgādhara, holding the celestial stream Gaṅgā on his matted locks, and Śiva Ardhanārīśvara, half-male and half-female. Śiva Gaṅgādhara breaks the impact of Gaṅgā’s descent to the earth by holding her in his matted locks. On his jaṭāmukuta is discernible the triple-headed figure of the Celestial Waters, the triple streams of the Alakanāndā, Mandakini and Bhāgirathī that compose the Gaṅgā.

Metaphysically, Śiva and Śakti or Umā (and Gaṅgā) are accents or oscillations of the same ultimate Being or Supreme Self. Śiva is Being, unconditioned and unmanifest. Śakti is Becoming, the dynamism of time and space (Mahākāli) and the impulsion of God’s creation and love (Umā). While Śiva is impersonal and attributeless, Śakti is defined and manifested in Relations and Attributes, though all-comprehensive, as Love, Power, Beauty and Goodness. Though apparently opposites, Śiva and Śakti are fundamentally the same.

Psychologically, the Supreme God holds in balance within one body and one mind the opposite and complementary principles, urges and values of masculinity and femininity. This is the meaning of the Ardhanārīśvara representation, a composite form showing one half male and the other female. Early superb representations of this are to be found at the Dharmarāja-ratha at Mahābalipuram and the Kailāsanātha temple at Kāñchipuram. In Bengal a magnificent image with a profound contrast and sense of proportion between its masculine and feminine parts comes from Purapādī near Rampal (now in the Rajashahi Museum), while a seated image of Ardhanārīśvara with its headdress and ears resembling the Pāla type has also been found in far-off Funan (now preserved in the Ayudhya Museum, Siam). Both the Matsya and the Kālikā Purāṇas describe the genesis of the Ardhanārīśvara image, while Kālidāsa speaks of the merging of the body of Śiva with that of His Beloved that does not however disturb the mind of the Supreme Ascetic in the benedictory śloka of his Mālavikāgnimitra. The composite Śiva-Pārvatī concept anticipates the findings of modern sexology that seeks to abolish the polarity of human nature and reach a bi-sexual androgynous completeness. Artistically,
the charming and the grim, the tender and the stern, the sweet and the repellent are wonderfully juxtaposed in both iconography and the formal values of cave art.

The strength and majesty of Śiva and the slender sublimity of Umā are brought out in vivid antithesis in the simulated architectonic panels with the help of the contraction or swelling of parts of the male and the female body, the curvature of the compositional arch and the parcelment of light and dark effects so as to reinforce the mood of each divinity and the message of the ever-lasting myth. The breadth and heaviness of living rocks saturate every feature and movement of the Divine Couple. The simplified summary treatment of the limbs underlined by the elaboration of head-gear, jewellery and weapons and the meticulous modelling of the faces aid the concentration of emotions, lyrical, heroic or fierce, that are transformed into the supramundane raptures, elations and terrors of myths. Yet elemental power and grandeur that are earth-born and cosmical are enlivened by the innate plastic rhythm and dynamic coherence of all parts and factors of the composition that together with the light of the sun and the vibrating atmosphere invest the forceful poses and gestures with profound permanent meanings. The gestures and movements of Śiva or Umā, of demons, gods and ascetics, in their original human acts, become dieyakriyā, eternally fixed and vibrant with life for mankind. The pilgrims who enter the cave become absorbed in the tableaux and in the overwhelmingly rich dimness of the cave in which it is enacted. They stand before the tableaux not as spectators but as participants, suddenly losing themselves in the celestial crowd. The noiseless flight of the jubilant gandharvas and apsarās in the sky and the silent adoration of the great gods, rīṣis, goblins and gaṇas below keep eternity on-going. The troubles and crises of man’s life together with his conflictful emotions, attitudes and values are finally set at rest, obtaining their true meaning as part and parcel of cosmic tension and poise. The poignant moment is transformed into eternity, the special incident into a timeless myth and the passing scene into a permanent, unchangeable truth or value.

The Metaphysical and the Moral in Art

The colossal cave reliefs of Elephantā represent the perfection of the techniques of Indian plastic art for the revelation of transcendent mood and experiences, focussed round the Śiva-Umā myths and legends, and these are so arranged in the set-up of the shrine as to lead the pilgrims’ minds through the familiar themes to the central metaphysical truths of the Śaiva Āgamas, viz., first, the oneness of Śiva-Śakti or Unity in duality, Śiva representing the passive aspect of the Absolute and Umā embodying the activating energy or the dynamism of time; and, secondly, the oneness of Sadāśiva, Aghora-Bhairava and Umā or Unity in trinity, i.e., the identity of the triple categories or accents of the single, Supreme Self—the alternate, ever-recurrent rhythms of Activity,
Withdrawal and Silence that underlie the inner life of man and the world process.

Two other tableaux face each other at the entrance of the main cave farthest from the garbha-griha. These represent Śiva vanquishing two asuras, Andhaka and Rāvana respectively. Both these demon kings embody the intoxication of power. Andhaka is covetous of Umā whom he wishes to abduct from Kai-lāśa, Śiva’s abode in the Himalayas; while Rāvana in his overweening conceit wishes to destroy Kai-lāśa that obstructs his voyage in the sky on a celestial car. The panel depicting the slaying of Andhakāsura is unique in Indian art in its sheer condensation of the fierce energies of destruction of evil that saves love and goodness for humanity. Śiva’s head-gear shows an elaborate ornamentation, which is in striking contrast with his terribly angry visage and his violent movement of impaling the demon on the spear. Behind him are stretched an elephant head and hide that constitute a frame, a reminder of Śiva’s quelling another demon-adversary Gajāsura. The spilling of the blood of demons and the triumph of Righteousness (Śiva) are ever-recurrent in the life of mankind though Indian art has excelled in the expression of horrendous majesty and splendour. The moral victory, i.e., the uprooting of mana, buddhi and ahaṅkāra is the first step towards metaphysical wisdom. Then only can the ephemeral self be ready to obtain metaphysical visions. Only these two tableaux at Elephantā are on the moral plane. The rest are on the metaphysical plane, providing fuller understanding of the Śaiva Āgamic truths of the Two-in-One (Śiva-Umā or Being-Becoming) and the Three-in-One (Sadhāsiva-Umā-Bhairava or Silence-Activity-Withdrawal of Self). Man’s mind is lifted by the series of blessed apparitions to the complete self-absorption and transcendence of Sadāsiva—the august, serene central face of the Maheśvara Trinity. One may also recall that an image of Sadāsiva, a remarkably fine sculpture—one of the masterpieces of Elephantā—has been removed from the caves to the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay. Indian cave sculpture of the heydey of neo-Brahmanical renaissance during the early middle ages embodied deep and subtle metaphysical truths in gigantic carvings and evolved marvellous techniques and skills, appropriate for the revelation of the symbolic and the mythopoetic that are unknown in world sculpture. Nowhere in the world history of art are the rocks so eloquent as at Elephantā.
Chapter 13

THE THOUSAND FACES OF ŚAKTI: THE COSMIC MYSTERY AND LYRICISM OF TANTRIKA ART

The Development of Śakti Worship in Buddhism

Religions in India usually alternate between a stage of systematisation of metaphysical doctrines and a stage of mystical orientation and yoga experience. The simple creed of Hinayāna Buddhism largely confined itself to certain external aspects of religion and a simple code of morality without much concern with those heights of religious experience that remain on the whole inaccessible to the average man. The Mahāyāna, influenced both by the traditional mysticism of Hinduism and Taoism, constituted a marked departure from the Hinayāna. It rooted itself in ardent contemplation and bhakti, on the one hand, and the ecstatic feeling of the divine immanence in every sentient creature, on the other. The note of worship and mysticism in the Mahāyāna fitted Buddhism for a world conquest. The identification of the Bodhisattva with Lokesvara, Lokanātha or Śiva in India and with Kuan-yin or rather the feminine counterpart of Avalokiteśvara in China and the rise of Śakti worship within the bosom of the Mahāyāna represented a shift from traditional dogma to symbols of mystical inspiration. The Mahāyāna, not only replaced the historical by the metaphysical Buddha, but also built its theology and modes of mystical contemplation on the conception of Śaktis of the various categories of the Buddha and of Bodhisattva. This again paved the way towards the development of Vajrayāna which means the way of enlightenment through the pursuit of Vajra, another name of śūnya or void, so called as this is indivisible, indestructible and adamantine as the thunderbolt.

As early as the 5th century A.D. the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hien found the worship of the Buddhist Śakti Prajñāpāramitā associated with the Mahāyāna cult of the Bodhisattva. He observes: “Adherents of the Mahāyāna offer sacrifices to Prajñāpāramitā, Mañjuśrī and Avalokiteśvara”. The Buddhist cave temples of the Deccan, Ellorā and Aurangabad, belonging to the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. show many images of Śaktis of the Bodhisattvas that are not encountered at Ajantā. But it was in the famous Buddhist monasteries of Nālandā, Vikramaśīla, Odantapuri, Paṭṭikera, Devikot and Paṇḍita that a hundred variety of Tantrika images was constructed from the 9th and 10th centuries onwards. The Pāla art of Bengal carried Vajrayāna Tāntrikism to the temples and monasteries of Nepal and Tibet and also to Jāvā. In the ancient cult of Tārā, she was associated with Mañjuśrī, as we find from the Sanskrit hymn on Tārā and Mañjuśrī, composed by Chāndragomin of Bengal, well-known for the famous Chandra’s grammar, who seems to have flourished between 465 and 544 A.D. The earliest forms of Tārā are the Sitā and Mahot-
tari Tārā, representing the first appearances of Śaktis in Buddhist Tāntrikism and belonging to the 8th and 9th centuries.

The Genesis of Vajrayāna Deities

From the 9th and 10th centuries, when a large number of Tārās and different forms of Bodhisattvas along with Mārīchī and Vajratārā were first encountered to the 12th century which saw the conquest of Northern India by the Muslims, the Vajrayāna predominated in Bengal and Assam and attempted a representation of the Buddhist void and the associated sentiments of Compassion, Wisdom and Bliss in a manner unique in religion and art. The following classification gives an outline of the ancestry of the Vajrayāna deities of Eastern India of the Middle Ages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Five Dhyāni-Buddhas of the Mahāyāna classified according to the Buddha's five memorable gestures (mudrās), the five senses or the five skandhas.</td>
<td>The Five Buddha-Śaktis of the Mahāyāna corresponding to the five Dhyāni-Buddhas.</td>
<td>The Vajrayāna gods corresponding to the Dhyāni-Buddhas.</td>
<td>The Vajrayāna goddesses who are emanations of the corresponding Dhyāni-Buddhas. Vajratārā and Prajñāpāramitā are considered as the emanations of the original five Dhyāni-Buddhas combined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Vairochana</td>
<td>Vajradhātuvārī</td>
<td>No male emanation</td>
<td>Mārīchī; Uṣṇīṣavijayā.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Akṣobhya</td>
<td>Lochanā</td>
<td>Heruka</td>
<td>Mahāchīnātārā; Nairātīmā; Pargasavāri; Vajracheythikā.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Ratnasambhava</td>
<td>Māmaki</td>
<td>Jambhala</td>
<td>Mahāpratisarasā; Vasudhārā.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Amoghasiddhi</td>
<td>Āryatārā</td>
<td>No male emanation.</td>
<td>Khaḍiravanī-Tārā; Vajra-tārā; Mahā-Māyūrī.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Vajrasattva (the sixth Dhyāni Buddha later on added)</td>
<td>Vajrasattvātimākā</td>
<td>No male emanation</td>
<td>Chudā or Chudāra.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The śūnya or void of the Vajrayāna, differing as it did from that of the Mādhyaamika and Yogāchāra schools in the inclusion of the three elements of void, consciousness and bliss (Śūnya, Viśnū and Mahāsukha), made the rapprochement with Hinduism easy. The ground was already prepared for this by the religious eclecticism and synthesis of the Gupta and post-Gupta ages. Tāntrika art enormously aided this process of assimilation. The ultimate essence, śūnya or void, was metaphysically identified with compassion, bliss and wisdom. These were represented in the form of a thousand gods and goddesses in Tāntrika art and worship. This helped the diffusion of the Vajrayāna that considered Śūnya Nairātma as the ultimate reality, but conceived it in the form of myriad gods, goddesses, masculine and feminine, remaining in eternal embrace with each other. The basic type is represented by the form of Heruka embodying the void either alone or in embrace with Nairātma that also stands for the void.

The Mutual Borrowing of Deities by Buddhist and Hindu Tāntrikism

A few Vajrayāna deities were incorporated wholly into Hinduism in Bengal. The most important of these are Lokānatha and Mahākāla (sometimes sculptured in Bengal as holding an umbrella over the couple Śiva-Pārvatī at the time of their wedding) among the male divinities, and Tārā, Ugratārā or Mahāchīnā-tārā, Ekajatā, Kāli and Mahānālakṣāvatā among the female divinities. Kāli is an adaptation of Kālikā, an attendant of the Buddhist deity Mahākāla. Kāli, like Kālikā, holds the kapāla and the kartari, is blue in her complexion and stands on a corpse. That Kāli, the favourite Hindu goddess of modern Bengal, was originally a deity of Buddhist Tāntrikism, an associate of Tārā, is definitely proved by the fact that on a palm-leaf manuscript of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajjāpāramitā, dated later 12th century, A.D., a figure of Kāli appears along with the miniature of Tārā. A form of Kāli is Kālikā who is the consort of the Buddhist deity, Mahākāla. Another significant example of borrowing from Buddhist Tāntrikism is the Hindu goddess Chhinmanastā which is counted among the ten Mahāvidyā goddesses. In the Buddhist Tāntrikism her name is Vajrayogini, one of the consorts of Heruka, who holds in her left hand her own head severed by herself. The Hindu goddess Manasa or Visaharik is derived from the Buddhist Jānguli which epithet is used in the Hindu dhyāna formula. A most striking experiment in religious contemplation and symbol-making based on the assimilation by Hinduism of the fundamental doctrine of the void is represented by the image of Mahākāli discovered in Vajrayogini in Dacca. Mahākāli is seated on a lotus pedestal, her one upper hand holds a fish, while the other a human skull; two lower hands hold her consort Śiva as a new-born babe (sadyajāta) on the lap. In the case of Chhinmanastā the name of the deity is changed but the Buddhist dhyāna as given in the Sādhanaamalā persists. Thus the basic Vajrayāna doctrine of the non-existence of gods and goddesses that are mere manifestations of the void and the true word and imageless meditation of the adept, who completely identifies himself with
the void, were thoroughly assimilated into Hindu Tantrikism. In the case of Tārā the formula of meditation, given in the Hindu Tantrika texts the Tārārahasya and the Tantrasāra, is the same as that given in the Buddhist Sādhanamālā. Even the crest of Akṣobhya is retained for the Hindu goddess Tārā. There can be no greater testimony of wholesale derivation or Hinduization of the Buddhist Tantrika deities emanating from the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya. Kāli, Tārā and Chhinnamastā are obvious symbols of the Buddhist void in Hindu Tantrika worship.

On the other hand, Sarasvatī, Aparājitā, Mahāmāyā, Vasundhara and Śītālā (among the female deities) and Hayagriva, Yama, Kubera and Gaṇapati (among the male deities) are major examples of assimilation of Hindu divinities into Buddhist Tantrikism. But Siddhīdātā Gaṇeśa or Bestower of Success in Hindu Tantrika rites is sometimes imaged as being trampled by Aparājitā and Paṇḍavaśavarā, just as the gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Indra are treated as Māras or wicked spirits who lie prostrate below the feet of several Buddhist deities. Similarly there is the Buddhist deity Lokeśvara who has three successive vehicles (vāhanas) riding upon one another, namely, lion, Garuda and Viṣṇu. Thus the supremacy of the Buddhist deities over the Hindu is celebrated by the image.

Images of New Tantrika Deities in the Buddhist Monasteries

Tantrika dharma, as contrasted with Purānic dharma, found its most congenial home in Eastern India, especially in the Buddhist monasteries. There was nothing secret or esoteric about this Tantrikism (Tantrayāna), for we find that the Buddhist Universities at Nālandā and Vikramālā, true to their catholic spirit, recognised the new cults and rituals and made arrangements for the teaching of the Tantras. The craftsmen and artists were soon busy in making images of various Tantrika deities that were installed in the various seats of learning of the country. Nālandā in particular was a common meeting-place of diverse creeds, sects and heresies “with possible and impossible doctrines” (I-tsuang). In the University of Nālandā Hsiian Tsang refers to the worship of female Mahāyāna deities such as Tārā (consort of Avalokiteśvara) and Hāritī (consort of Jambhala). But the images of other female deities such as Prajñāpāramitā, Vasudhāra and Vāgīśvarā or Sarasvatī (Brahmanical and Buddhist goddess) have also been found. Early elegant images of the goddess Tārā, both seated and standing, Mārichi, Vasudhāra and Sarasvatī are to be found at Sārnāth. A remarkable figure here is also that of the four-headed Tārā with elaborately carved jewellery. Vajrayāna, which became popular in the 7th and 8th centuries in Bengal, brought in the following new female deities at Nālandā: Aparājitā, Vajrasāradā, Vaṭṭalī, Vaḍalī, Vasālī, and Varāhamukhi. Heruka is found without his consort in the images of Bengal and Cambodia while he is conjoined with his Saktis in Yab-yum in Tibet. The Tantrika male deities at the University of Nālandā include Vajrapāṇi, Maṇjuvara or Arapachana Maṇjuśrī, Yamāntaka, Trailokyavijaya (trampling on Śiva
and Pārvatī), Heruka and Jambhāla; while the common female deities comprise Tārā, Prajñāpāramitā, Mārichi (with three faces, one of which is that of a boar), Aparājīta (trampling on Ganeśa and attended by Indra holding a parasol) and Vidyādārā Karāli (with Indra, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva as vāhanas and the severed head of Brahmā in one of her hands). Most of these images were sculptured in the Pāla period—some of the most exquisite specimens of Indian plastic art indicating the new vigour and vitality that Tāntrikism introduced into Indian culture.

During the long reigns of Dharmapāla (A.D. 770-810) and Devapāla (A.D. 810-880) there was a Buddhist renaissance of art and culture in Eastern India accompanied by the establishment of great monasteries and workshops for image-making. The most celebrated monasteries of the Pāla period include Traikūṭaka in the Rādhā country, Devikota in North Bengal, Paṇḍita in Chittagong, Sannagara (somewhere in East Bengal), Phullahari near Monghyr, Pattikerkela in Tippera, Vikramapurī or Vikrampur in Dacca, Jagaddala in Varendra and Somapura in Murshidabad. Tibetan sources indicate that by the second-half of the 10th century, when the Chandras were ruling in eastern Bengal, Buddhist Tāntrikism began to thrive in Vaṅga. The period from the close of the 10th to the 12th century saw the second Pāla artistic renaissance in Bengal, inspired by Buddhist Tāntrikism that covered the entire Varendra and neighbourhood extending from Gayā and Purnea to Bogra and Pabna with exquisite images of Tāntrika deities—Mañjuśrī, Khasarpāṇa, Trailokyavijaya or Sthirachakra and Tārā, Mārichi, Prajñāpāramitā, Mahāpratisarā, Uṣṇīsavijaya and Parnaśavari, replacing the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Lokanāthas or Lokeshvaras of the first Pāla renaissance. The Buddhist Tāntrika composite images characteristic of Tibet (where these are called Yab-yum) also could be found even in Bodh-Gayā, Pañnapur and Murshidabad. The beginning of Pāla empire, when the Pāla kings called themselves Paramasubhagatas instead of Parama-bhagavatas, the title of the Imperial Guptas, saw the wide vogue of the images of Buddha and Lokanātha in the 8th and 9th centuries. The 11th and 12th centuries saw the conquest of the Mahāyāna by the Vajrayāna or Tāntrayāna with the vogue of myriad forms of Lokanātha and Tārā and other Śaktis. The great Buddhist monasteries of Bengal, Odantapurī, Somapura, and Vikramaśilā with their connections with Nepal and Tibet reflected in their teachings and Tāntrika texts and rituals the change over to the esoteric cult. The Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā of the 11th century mentions among others the following deities worshipped in different parts of Bengal; Bhagavatī-Tārā in Chandradvipa, Champita Lokanātha and Buddhārdhi Tārā in Samatata, Chunḍa in Paṭṭikerkela and Lokanātha in Harikela. Mahāyāna Buddhism developed, especially in Tibet, elaborate pantheons of Buddhas, Avalokiteśvaras, Amitābhas, Rudras, Bhairavas, Mahākālas and Yamas, beneficent and grim, with their attendant Śaktis, lesser divinities and saints forming constellations. Such constellations, are called maṇḍalas that show a systematic design, being appropriate vehicles
for some cosmic notion which the deities symbolise. The Tibetan \textit{pataś} (paintings), with their major deities, placed in the centre of the \textit{manḍala} and accompanied by their many satellites, \textit{sakti}s, saints or disciples and the four guardians of the quarters, have often shown delicate and sensitive drawing and superb rhythm of colours, and served as objects for contemplation and worship in temples and homes. Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna iconography reached its Byzantine phase in Tibet out of the admixture of Tāntrika and Lāmāist doctrines of Reality, Void, Power, Eternity or Death, and only an insight into later Buddhist and Tāntrika metaphysics and esoterism can furnish the clue to its proper understanding.

\textit{Classification of Vajrayāna Deities of the Void according to the Major Rasas}

The metaphysical principles of Buddhist Tāntrika iconography are complex. All the divinities, male and female, including the Dhyāni Buddhas are void, i.e. \textit{sūnya} or Nairātman, in essence. Represented as an icon, Sūnya may be Lokeśvara, Mañjuśrī, Heruka, Hevajra and Mahākāla, when considered as a male divinity. Sūnya as female divinity takes such concrete forms as those of Tārā, Mārichi, Jāṅguli, Khādiravani, Vajra-vārāhi, Aparājītā and Prajñā- pāramitā. There is actually a blue-coloured goddess Nairātma devī dancing on a corpse with a scimitar and \textit{nara-kapāla} which symbolises the void. Sūnya in the manifold, concrete representations of a deity covers the entire gamut of human sentiments. In India these sentiments or \textit{rasas} are recognised as nine in number. Accordingly the Vajrayāna deities may be classified as depicting the major \textit{rasas} as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentiments</th>
<th>Male Deity</th>
<th>Female Deity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tranquility (Śanta)</td>
<td>Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, Vajrasattva Padma pāṇi, Jambhāla.</td>
<td>Tārā, Hāraśṭra, Prajñāpāramitā, Mahāpratisarā, Vasudhārā, Śitaśpatrā and Sarasvatī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Compassion (Karunā)</td>
<td>Lokaṇātha or Lokeśvara, Mañjuśrī</td>
<td>White or green Tārā; Mahāmāyūrī, Khādiravani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Heroic Valour (Vira)</td>
<td>Vairochana; Vajrapāṇi</td>
<td>Mārichi, Vaṭṭallī, Vaḍallī and Varāhamukhī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Awe (Bhaya)</td>
<td>Heruka, Mahākāla, Vighnāntaka</td>
<td>Bhrīkuṭi-Tārā, Ekajāṭā and Nairātma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Disgust (Vibhata)</td>
<td>Yamāntaka; Hayagrīva</td>
<td>Parpaśavari, Śitālā, Vajrachārhiṇī and Chūḍāmā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Fury (Raudra)</td>
<td>Mahākāla; Trailokyavi-jaya</td>
<td>Aparājītā, Kālikā, Cārhiṇī; Chaṇḍesvarī, Kuḷiṣevarī; Vidyujjvalā Kaṟalī, Kuruṅkulla; Mahajalā; Vajravārāhi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Love (Śringāra)</td>
<td>Vajrānaṅga</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Buddhist Tāntrika meditation the devotee contemplates and realises himself as the deity which is śūnya itself, but which is manifest in the manifold passions, desires and sentiments of Man. No image has real existence and all images lead the Bodhichitta or the mind seeking enlightenment to the all-pervasive, ever-present, eternal Void. This is dramatically symbolised in art and religion by the Yuganaddha (Tibetan Yab-yum) or commingling of the masculine and feminine principles, the void or the ultimate reality being embraced by the emptied mind or Nairātmā as void. This is the same principle of elevated meditation as that stressed later by Gaudapāda: “The Unborn (Brahman) can be comprehended only by the unborn (ātman)”. The Brahmanical worship of the composite Śiva-Śakti in the form of the liṅgam on the Gauripatţa, with Pārvati placed behind in bold relief against a slab in the attitude of meditation-cum-union with Śiva, as in the remarkable Śivaliṅga at Kagachhipara, Dacca, or the Cambodian liṅgam pillar opening up on the four sides and revealing from inside the ten-armed Mother-Goddess as the creative energy of the phallus and the cosmos, or again, the familiar image of Ardhanārīśvara, as in India and Jāvā, illustrate the same principle of commingling of the antimonic metaphysical masculine and feminine principles of Tāntrikism.

The Victory of Sculpture over Architecture

The profound wisdom of Indian spirituality born of the Tāntrika metaphysical synthesis is that the life of the senses and the life of the spirit are identical, equally pure and authentic. The concrete and the transcendental are the same. This introduces into Indian art inspired by the Tāntrika movement, Buddhist or Brahmanical, a strange blend of cosmical grandeur with lyrical quality, of abstraction and mystery with ardour and passion. The Tāntrika images of the embrace of the Divine couple, Śiva and Umā (Umāliṅgana), the composite images of half-Śiva and half-Gauri and the Vajrayāna images of myriad gods and śaktis as void (Bodhichitta or mind) comprehending and conjugating with the void (cajra or reality) reconcile power with melting tenderness, poise with sense of dynamism. The metaphysical truth, unity in duality, is revealed in profound images of Divine couples Śiva and Pārvati, Viṣṇu and Lakṣmi and Avalokiteśvara and Tārā that express and elicit neither erotic mysticism nor sensual spirituality as often posited by foreign art critics, but a profound awareness of Life in its full comprehensiveness, grandeur and tension that Tāntrika meditation imports into man’s vision.

Or, again, Śakti is imaged in tenderly lyrical fashion in thousands on temple walls, pillars, railings and niches. The Indian temple itself in the middle ages from the tenth to the fifteenth century was dramatically transformed by Tāntrika symbolism into a giant sculpture of phantasy embodying the cosmic force of Śakti in the tension, fulfilment and action of Man in luminous images profusely multiplied in the pillars, niches, walls and facades.
The temples of Khajurāho, the spiritual centre of the reascent Śiva-Śaktism, built by the Chandelā Rajput dynasty (A.D. 950-1050) in the forests of Bundelkhand, show a profound contrast with Gupta sculpture and architecture. The mediaeval Tāntrika renaissance inspired the construction of about eighty temples at Khajurāho, consecrated to Śiva, Devī, Viṣṇu or Sūrya as symbols of Mount Kailāsa or Mount Meru with the steeples or śikharas rising above the architectural mass like the peaks of the Himalayas to Brahman above the firmament. The waist of the temples is constuted by three-tiered sculptured bands which are not to be considered as embellishment but as embodiment of the cosmic forces of Śiva-Śakti epitomised in the temple, the body of Śiva. But Śiva-Śakti also shines from the facades and walls in all the various moods in which deity of the garbha-griha manifests itself. Architecture here is completely subordinated to sculpture. The temple looks like a colossal sculpture reaching up to heaven with detailed sculpturing of gods and goddesses, Surasundaris or nymphs of the gods, Yoginis or female anchorites, nāginīs or serpent goddesses, sārdūlas or mythical lions and amatory male and female figures. All these are carved and repeated endlessly tier upon tier giving an exposition of the metaphysical theory of Tāntrikism—the omnipresence of Śiva-Śakti in the unceasing world creation. Surasundaris, apsarās, nāginīs and Caryatids uphold from the three-tiered waist bands the colossal structure of the house of God. These embody, as it were, the centrifugal force of Śiva-Śakti which supports the cosmos. Khajurāho, and later on Bhuvanesvara and Koṇāraka mark the complete triumph of the art of sculpture over architecture under the impulsion of Tāntrikism transforming the ritual of the every day life of man into a thousand radiant images and symbols of spiritual life. The images of unearthly female figures, surasundaris and apsarās, dominate with their beyond-human fascination and transcendence. Cognate to these motifs are the figures of the amatory couples. Sculpturally speaking, the Mithuna images, many of them large-sized, are significant and hold principal positions in the temples dedicated not only to Śiva and Devī but also to those of Viṣṇu and Sūrya, reflecting the incarnation and transcendence of Śakti irrespective of the image of the deity or Puruṣa (Being) in the temple. Architecturally speaking, the conjointness of Śiva and Śakti or Puruṣa (Being) and Prakṛti (Becoming) corresponds to the embrace of Puruṣa within the temple by its walls, railings and facades whose essence is Prakṛti. Thus does the full bloom of celestial and earthly beauties, sculptured lavishly without particular reference to the specific gods of the temples at Khajurāho, Bhuvanesvara and Koṇāraka embody the unique vision of Tāntrikism—the immanence of Śakti in every phase of human life and affairs. The entire cycle of life of the people from morning to evening, the every day routine of life, its amusements and recreations, hunt, warfare and dance are delineated on the temple walls with vivid realism. Khajurāho, Bhuvanesvara and Koṇāraka produced the most humanistic art in India as tense, tender and universal as was the classical poetry of the previous Gupta renaissance.
The magnificence of these post-mediaeval temples lies in the conversion of their architecture into colossal sculpture and of their sculpture into lavish and gorgeous display of feminine loveliness in inexhaustible variety and multiplicity, echoing the cosmic mystery and lyricism of Tāntrikism in one of the most profound and intense hours of mediaeval Hindu renaissance. Radiant with a sensuous charm, the lovely nymphs of the gods or Surasundarīs and Yoginīs, danseuses of heaven or apsarās, serpent-damsels or nāgini, and earthly heroines of love or nāyikās are carved at Khajurāho, Bhuvanēśvara and Koṇāraka in seductive attitudes, not derived from any human models, as well as in self-transcendence and aloofness from the world. Their precursors in the development of Indian art are the celestial corps de ballet depicted in the Bhārhat reliefs, in the frescoes at Ajantā and Bāgh and in the reliefs in the Gupta shrine of Deogarh. But it is the apotheosis of the female sex by Tāntrikism that endows the mediaeval plastic treatment of woman’s hearn with bewitching grace and seductiveness blended with extreme subtlety and refinement. In the Sun Temple at Koṇāraka, there is an entire dance hall covered with the sculptures of apsarās together with their spouses, the gandharvas; while the sculptured forms of mithunas or amatory couples are also numerous. There is a masonic injunction on the text of the Agniipurāṇa which makes it obligatory for builders and sculptors to represent amatory pairs as auspicious carvings on the last tier of the temple embellishments (Śākhā Śeṣam Mithunair Vibhūṣayet). At Koṇāraka there may be an additional motive derived from the worship of the Sun as the universal fecundating force for the representation of amatory pairs in a great variety of poses and attitudes. In the Sun temple of Modherā, Gujerat, similar amatory couples are met with.

Surasundarī : Goddess and Celestial Nymph

It is at Khajurāho, Bhuvanēśvara and Koṇāraka that Indian sculpture reaches its acme of perfection in both the conception and treatment of sensuous beauty in the dazzling figures of Surasundarīs, apsarās and nāyikās. In Tāntrika texts Surasundari is another name of Gauri or Pārvatī in her aspect of seductiveness, one of the sixty-four attendant female anchorites (Yogini) of the Supreme Goddess. Or she is one of the lovely nymphs of the gods (Surānām Sundarayaḥ) who are mentioned by Bhoja as decorating the walls of Mount Meru. Or, again, Surasundari is a celestial beauty who attends and entertains the knowers of Brahman. Says the Matsya Purāṇa: “The worshipper who attains the knowledge of Brahman is attended by five hundred celestial nymphs—one hundred carrying scented powders, saffron, turmeric and the like in their hands, one hundred carrying fruits, one hundred carrying various ornaments, garlands. They adorn him with ornaments befitting Brahman himself. Thus adorned with Brahman ornaments and knowing Brahman, he goes to Brahman.”
Surasundari accordingly is the embodiment of the beauty and bliss of realisation of Brahman. And she is not one celestial nymph, but many celestial nymphs.

In the sculpturing of Surasundari an exotic loveliness and romance are combined with profound serenity and transcendence, true to the ideology of Tantrikism and the well-known principles of Indian erotics and rasa-śāstra. At Khajurāho, the earthly paradise of Śiva-Śakti, with its eighty Chandela temples, Surasundari, apsarā and nāyikā are hardly distinguishable, for each is the incarnation of Mahāmāyā, whose enchantment transcends the loveliness of the most beauteous things on the earth (Soumehyāḥ atisundari). The danseuses of heaven and earth, pure, sublime, immaculate virgins, are not only sensuous delight incarnate; they are also messengers of Mahāmāyā, the Supreme Enchantress who lead man to Mahāvidyā through the realisation of sensuous delight (bhoga) as identification (yoga).

In the temples of Khajurāho she is sometimes a shy, unsophisticated girl who hides her eyes or face at the approach of her lover, and sometimes a mature, self-conscious lady who looks at him superciliously or turns her face away from him in a non-chalant attitude. She emerges from her bath, wrings her hair and looks fresher and lovelier. She looks at the graceful rhythms and contours of her body twisted in a voluptuous bend. She contemplates serenely and unconsciously her charms reflected in the mirror in her hand. She dresses her long, sinuous braids of hair, colours her foot with lac dye and extricates thorn from it in a playful spirit. She undertakes her toilet (prasādhana) in diverse, coquettish fashions. She plays with the ball, sounds the flute and practises dance. She touches her soft breast, writes a love letter, joins her palms in prayer and takes a child on the lap. She displays her nudity from all sides of the body and unloosens the knot of her garment tantalisingly.

All the while she displays her youth and loveliness provocatively in every curve and contour of the body, and expresses the most seductive and erotic moods, gestures and movements, even with calculated, fantastic twists and turns of the body. Yet her eyes are always seen half-closed or drooped in silence and withdrawal. And sometimes she places her palm on the brahma-randhra, the seat of deity, Mahāvidyā or Mahāśakti, in the elevated recess of the brain. For she is the sport and delight of Mahāvidyā (Supreme illumination) or Mahāmāyā (Supreme illusion). Mahāmāyā casts the spell and deludes man as the emanation of Viṣṇu in the disguised resplendent form of Mohini, the Divine Enchantress. It is she who not only decoyed the titans during their fateful struggle with the gods for the possession of the jar of amṛita (nectar of immortality) but also on one occasion ensnared even Viṣṇu himself who could not resist her fascination. Mahāmāyā is the quintessence of beauty and love, the source at once of human fascination and wisdom. She or her angel, maid or messenger has to be propitiated in order that in her infinite love and compassion she may bestow enlightenment and freedom to man in the bondage of the senses. This is symbolised significantly in the Khajurāho,
Bhuvanesvara and Konâraka sculptures by a diminutive man, gana or monkey standing or crouching at her feet in a spirit of complete self-abasement and surrender or sipping drops of nectar that inadvertently come down from the brim-ful vessel she carries.

The Identification of Bhukti and Mukti

The Tantras declare, “Śakti is both pleasure and wisdom, light and darkness”. “She is night and twilight. She is death. She also appears under a thousand graceful or splendid forms. She is the resplendence of the stars, the beauty of young maidens and the happiness of wives.” “Her body is both the tranquillity of the world and the supersonsensibly subtle material of the heavens and the hells.”

The Mahânirvâna speaks of Śakti thus: “Thou art the very Parâprakrîti of Brahman, the Paramâtmâ, and from Thee has sprung the whole universe. O Gracious One! Whatever there is in this world of things which have and are without motion, from Mahat to an atom, owes its origin to, and is dependent on, Thee. Thou art the origin of all manifestations, Thou art the birth-place of even us (the members of the Trinity). Thou knowest the whole world, yet none knows Thee. Thou art in the form of all the Śaktis and Thou pervadest the bodies of all the Devás. Thou art both subtle and gross, manifested and veiled, though in Thyself formless, yet Thou hast form.” The Mantra-śāstra thus describes the emanations of Śakti as worshipped by the various systems of metaphysics and religion. “The Śiva-worshippers call her Śakti, the Sânkhyas Parâprakrîti, the Sun-worshippers Mahâ-rajanî, the Buddhists Târâ, the Chârvâkas Aśa, the Pâñupatas Snâtâ, the Jains Śrî, the Brahmâ-worshippers Svadhâ, the Vaidikas Gâyâtrî and the ignorant Mohini.” She is the one quintessential Being that is both world illusion which imprisons all creatures in the shackles of desire and world-transcending wisdom that bestows freedom from bondage. In Śakti worship, according to the Kulârâvâna Tantra, enjoyment (bhoga) becomes the complete union of the subjective self with the real Self or Paramatman (yoga), bad deeds are transformed into good deeds and the world becomes the seat of salvation. The amorous and voluptuous woman, the image or function of Śakti, loving and being loved, plays the role of Śakti as she initiates man in the consecration of bhoga or enjoyment. Her lover plays the role of Śiva, adept in masculine yoga detachment and transcendence. Thus the couple may conjointly realise within themselves the immanence of Śiva-Śakti, the Two in One, Eternal and Inseparable.

Unity in Duality: Śiva-Śakti

In the Kandariya and Pârśvanâtha temples at Khajurâho we have perhaps India’s most charming and subtle representations ever sculptured of the conjugal bliss of a Divine pair—Śiva-Pârvatî—that symbolises the core of Tântrika
teaching of the apotheosis of marriage and sex. Śiva has a placid, austere posture, but slightly tilts his head towards Pārvatī. He caresses her breast with transcendental aloofness and poise. Pārvatī with a radiant face looks up to Him expectantly in a fond embrace, holding the mirror that symbolises the illusion of the world-process which she is Herself. The verticality of Śiva's serene pose is contrasted with the sinuous, nervous modelling of Pārvatī's soft, full breasts and three-fold inflection of her body. The holy couple, the male eternally self-absorbed and poised, and the female eternally fascinating and fascinated, melts into each other in the plastic treatment, which most elegantly yet forcefully embodies in stone the metaphysical truth of Tāntrikism, unity in duality. Such an image contemplated and worshipped makes love a meditative observance rather than pleasure, a profound spiritual rapport for the realisation of supreme bliss (ānanda) rather than psychological adjustment.

The world’s most self-absorbed and self-transcending figures of lovers (mithunas) adorn the walls of the temples at Mallikārjuna, Khajurāho, Bhuvanēśvara and Konāraka, symbolising the human sexual embrace as the appropriate earthly echo of the realisation of the bliss of identity with the ultimate Reality or the Supreme Self. The Upaniṣads use the metaphor of sexual congress as representing the joy of identification of Ātman with Brahman and of Puruṣa with Prakṛti. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad observes: “In the embrace of his beloved man forgets the whole world—everything both within and without, in the very same way, he who embraces the Self knows neither within nor without.” Again, “the union of the sexes is equivalent to the mystic syllable AUM. When the two sexes come together, each fulfils the desire of the other.” In the Bhagavadgītā we have the conception of the Supreme Being or Puruṣa as the Seed-bearer, and the Primordial Feminine (Prakṛti) as the genetrix of the universe. India’s foremost poet Kālidāsa speaks of the inseparableness of the Creators of the Universe, Śiva and Pārvatī, of unity in duality. In India the masculine symbolises Being and eternity (Śiva), while the feminine represents Becoming and the power of illusion and time (Śakti). These are opposed but complementary accents of the Absolute, envisaged in Indian thought through the dichotomy of sex. The image of human sexual conjugation stands for and elicits absorption into the Divine, the deity also being conceived in a dual aspect of the masculine (Śiva) and the feminine (Śakti). Such sexual conjugation, which is the supreme ritual of the Divine Mother herself, is realised not in the spirit of the beast (paśu) but of the hero (vīra) identifying himself with Śiva. Such is the Tāntrika mode of the transmutation of the pleasures of love into a way of yoga. We read in the Tantrasāra, “Into the fire which is the Supreme Self brightened by the pouring on of the ghee of merit and demerit, I, by the path of Śuṣumnā (the arousal of Kundalini Śakti through the six chakras or circles within the body) ever sacrifice the functions of the senses, using the mind as the ladle of the offering.” The body is not flesh but the vehicle of Śiva-Śakti, the senses and
desires that lead to man’s fall must aid his ascent from jīvahood to Śivahood. His body, life and mind, the tension and fulfilment of his desires, emotions and aspirations are Śiva-Śakti.

The Self-Transcendence of Śaktis

It is this mystical conception of the Two in One or of the unity in duality of Tāntrikism which also explains the prolific multiplication of the images of the divine couples of Śiva and Gaurī and Viṣṇu and Lākṣmī in close embrace and of Surasundarī, Yoginīs, apsarās, nāyikās and mithunas in all the temples of the Khajurāho group, Kandariya, Viśvanātha, Pārvanātha and Devi Jagadambā. An exquisite, sensuous beauty and warmth of romantic fervour invest these amatory figures with unusual liveliness and charm that are at the same time an impersonal adoration of beauty. For if beauty is the lavish spill of the human soul, this is beauty indeed. This outlook enables us to understand why in the triple horizontal bands of sculptural adornment of the facades in Kandariya and Viśvanātha temples enshrining the Śiva-liṅgam, Śiva is sometimes depicted on his two sides by standing figures of beautiful damsels in a variety of voluptuous poses and attitudes. The entrancing figures represent Surasundari, which is another name of Śiva’s consort, one of the sixty-four Yoginīs or female anchorites—the charming and beguiling aspect of the deity. The god Śiva himself in spite of his matted locks and his two hands holding the triśūla and the snake also stands in elegant abhanga flexion. The images of Surasundari possess great charm and vitality expressed by the sensitive modelling of their soft and slim semi-nude bodies seen from different angles. Ravishment is rendered piquant by the torsion of their postures, the treatment of the flowing pieces of cloth setting off the contours of the smooth, rarefied flesh and the delineation of a variety of erotic moods, postures and gestures. Each mood or gesture of love demands concentrated attention from the spectator. Each is a flawless masterpiece of composition maintaining a perfect integrity between the erotic mood and the plastic mass and movement. Yet each Surasundari, in spite of her blandishments that enthrall or bewilder the spectator, shows a profound self-transcendence in her countenance. In fact the faces of Pārvatī and Surasundari are identical, illumined by divine beatitude and serenity. The same self-absorption or transcendence spreads to the faces of the yoginīs, apsarās, nāyikās and nāginīs.

The Sculptural Embellishments Embodying Kaula Symbolism

The vibrant, continuous waves of enchanting Śiva-Surasundari figures in the three-tiered waist bands of the temples are punctuated by recesses occupied by nāginīs or serpent-damsels. These are also depicted with rare delicacy and grace and display an attitude of self-absorption with joint palms of worship (aṅjali mudrā). The snake is the characteristic symbol of Śakti. It represents
the energy of the Great Goddess, Kundačalini Śakti, dormant or awake in man. The nāginī is sometimes flanked by the mythical sārdūla or lion which is the symbol of Śakti awake in nature. The sculptural adornments of the facades immediately above the plinths in the Khajurāho temples that encircle the waist of each temple, like the gorgeous melkhalā or girdle of a virgin, accordingly, epitomise the whole message of Kaula worship. Collectively, Surasundaries, Yoginis, apsarās and nāginīs maintain and uphold the temple that symbolises the universe, representing as they do its primordial driving and upholding energy, according to Kaula symbolism. Each individual unit of the plastic composition is represented by Śiva with his kalasha (jar) of immortality and his hand-gesture of benediction, flanked by two Surasundaris on the right and left, proclaiming the dual aspects of the Absolute or Being that are inseparable—the power of wisdom and silence and the power of illusion and time. Surasundari or Yogini is both wisdom and illusion, Mahāvidyā and Mahāmāyā, and both these rest in Being or Śiva. In the phraseology of the Kaula creed, underlying the architecture and sculpture of Khajurāho, Śiva is the Absolute or the Infinite (Akula) and Śakti is the immanence of the Absolute, the manifestation of Śiva in finite forms, emotions and experiences (Kula). Śiva and Pārvati, Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī and Balarāma and Revati in these temples embrace each other in moods of deep absorption, the god caressing the breast of the goddess, who holds invariably in her right hand a lotus symbolising world illusion or creation. The goddess is Mahāmāyā or Mohini or the Supreme Enchantress or any of her emanations.

The Categories of the Damsels, Earthy and Angelic

The allurements of Mahā-Śakti, Mahāmāyā or Mohini are accordingly reflected in Khajurāho, Bhuvaṃśvara, Koṇāraka, and other mediaeval temples in innumerable images of Her angels and maids in their walls and niches, pillars and facades. Surasundari or Yogini is the Great Goddess Pārvati herself. There are also sixty-four Yoginis, attendants of Kāli in her fight with the asuras. The apsarās are the danseuses of heaven. Clad in diaphanous garments, they are depicted in erotic moods and gestures dancing in the court of Indra. The nāyikās are the courtesans of the earth, well-known in Indian classical poetry. They represent categories of women-lovers whose divergent seductive moods and gestures are analysed and classified in the texts on Indian poetics. These “heroines of love”, with their youth blossoming forth in every curve of the body and with the nuances of love in every pose, gesture and movement, come now to vaunt their manifold charms in temple sculpture. Surasundarīs, apsarās, nāyikās and nāginīs are all “entertainers” of the gods (ākṣaras) and “messengers” (dūtīs) of heaven; they are not made of gross matter, but are ethereal, and their gestures and postures are heavenly, dances and movements. It is their radiant angelic charm which brings man close to Mahāmāyā or Mahāvidyā. Such metaphysical conceptions underlay Śakti-worship and
art in various forms in mediaeval India, and made the human sexual approach in post-mediaeval sculpture a symbol and an observance, filling the facades of temples with numberless Surasundaris, Yoginis and nāginis, as well as nude apsarās and nāyikās whose seductiveness and charm are components of the most elevated spiritual experience. The human love affair is metamorphosed. Marriage, love and conjugation are divinised. The mithunas or amatory couples become the symbols of the purest abstractions of divinity. This explains the self-absorption and rapture of the figures of the mithunas with their vacant, glanceless gaze, the serene and melting rhythm of their inter-locked limbs and their delicate and refined erotic approaches transcending mere physical allurement. These are consummately revealed by sculpture integrating the softness of the living flesh with monumentality, the linearising, flattening tendency with an innate plasticity.

The Plastic Treatment of Sensuous Beauty and Romance

Art utilises to the full the plastic potentialities of its sensuous quality, shattering all aesthetic barriers as well as the contradictions of life and social convention and merging erotic ecstasy into both the tranquil inflection of the body, and the silence of the soul—the final consummation of life. Most of the images of the couples at Khajurāho are chaste, innocent and elegant in their love play which is transformed into a love ritual embodying the holy-conception of the union of Two into One. The same human-cum-divine love enactment is also true of the sculptures of mithunas at Nāgārjunākonda, Deogarh, Aihole, Mallikārjuna, Ellora, Bhuvanesvara and Koṇāraka, all of which blend a refined, sensitive and languid eroticism with profound depth and beauty that carry the mind beyond the merely physical.

At Khajurāho, Bhuvanesvara and Koṇāraka we encounter the largeness and fullness of classical Gupta sculpture and the three-dimensional character of carving of smooth, semi-nude bodies blended superbly with extreme delicacy in modelling and elastic handling of the linear elements, producing a distinctive physiognomy of face and body, artistically and psychologically. This is most appropriate for the revelation of exquisite sensuous beauty and romance in the teeming enchanting figures of Surasundaris, apsarās and nāyikās and of mithunas which crowd the temples in a heavenly chorus. It is because mediaeval Tāntrikism regards them not as frail mortals but as messengers and incarnations of divine beauty and beatitude that the plastic art invests their forms, faces and gestures with a resplendent loveliness that there never was on sea and land.

The traditional postures (bandhas) of the Kāmasūtra and the Ratimāṇjari are often depicted. The eyes of the amatory couples (mithunas) are always closed, stressing the tensions and delights of the inner world. The Kaula and Kāpālikas symbolic cults exalt the physical union into spiritual aspiration and frenzy. These are plastically expressed in a continuous, delightful rhythmical
wave sweeping through the curvatures of the inter-twined arms and legs of the loving couples, and the folds of their scarf and loin-cloth, loosening, slipping and opening. The summary modelling and straightness of the legs and arms accentuate roundness and softness of the breasts, hips and bellies and the drawing of the amatory gesture. In the most perfect composition of the mithuna at the Kandariya, Chitragupta, Kāli Devī and Devī Jagadambā temples at Khajurāho, the profile of the faces and the angularity of the limbs underlie a softening of the plastic and a delightful linear rhythm. These are set off by the sinuous movements of the scarf encircling the nude back and breasts and slipping down the body in rhythmic folds. The harmony of the interlocked bodies of the couple goes hand in hand with the smooth, rounded surface of their nude breasts, abdomens, backs and loins, with the sensitiveness of the fingers, the wavy movement of the tresses and the twisting of the scarves and loin-cloths, all symbols and rituals of love-making. Yet on the whole the subtle modelling and linear sensitiveness, psychologically so suggestive of the varied nuances of love, are subordinated to the plastic treatment in three dimensions. The elaboration of the head-wear and coiffure of both male and female lovers at Khajurāho, Bhuvanesvara and Koṇāraka sets off the largeness and purity of modelling of the radiant, elliptical faces. And as these come together for a fond, final kiss we find them expressing through their half-closed, slanting or drooping eyes, under eye-brows stylistically designed in charming, elongated curves, the innocence and virginity of human passion akin to the exuberance and sportiveness of Śakti.

Bhuvanesvara and Koṇāraka mithunas markedly differ from those of Khajurāho in their less emphasis of linearism and angularity that aid so much in the subtle and piquant depiction of psychological tensions in the latter. Their charm, vitality and concentration are derived from the round and soft modelling of luscious forms, full, smoothly balanced gestures and postures and the inherent serene and melodious rhythm of composition. Often these rise to an almost divine thrill and rapture, symbolic of the immanence of Śakti in the living flesh. Ecstasy makes the monumentally treated, large-sized apsarās playing cymbals, flutes and drums on the terraces at Koṇāraka, resemble veritable goddesses. The masterpieces of eloquent and yet abstractly treated self-absorbed mithunas in Koṇāraka are the Kiss under a Tree, preserved in the local Museum and the Caress in the Jagamohana (eastern side of the temple).

In one sense Koṇāraka is an everlasting memorial of the victory of the arms of the heroic king Naraśimha (1238-1264) over the Muslim invaders. Twice the Gaṅga kings Anaṅgabhima Deva and Naraśimha, the last independent rulers of Northern India, vanquished the Turko-Afghans. But the heroic stand of Naraśimha at Katasin, the frontier outpost of independent Kaliṅga, was epoch-making, followed as it was by Naraśimha’s intrepid march to northern Bengal and his devastation of the Muslim capital of Lakhnauti. The carving of foot-soldiers, cavalry, and war horses and elephants in their gorgeous military accoutrement on the temple walls and of single war horses and elephants,
sculptured with unsurpassed realism and vigour in the spacious compound, celebrates, as no Indian temple does, the military triumph and the rescue of the land and culture against the imminent peril from foreign aggressors and vandals, symbolised by the triumph of the Sun over darkness in the sky and earth. Konāraka with its vimāna, 230 feet high, almost double the height of the vimāna at Lingarāja temple of Bhuvanēśvara, and its main shrine, which has toppled down and which was the loftiest, biggest and most magnificent ever constructed in Orissa, the land of temples, is the grandest and most exquisitely proportioned temple in the whole of India, as it exhibits the most perfect reciprocal balance and adaptation of architecture, sculpture and bas-relief. The śikhara is very much loftier and more imposing than in any temple of Northern India. The vimāna and Jagamohana are much bigger and grander. The ground-plan of the temple is much more complex and elaborate with its angles, recesses and projections. The grandiose elaboration and repetition of the temple architecture are echoed by the profuse sculptural decoration and embellishment that cover the entire surfaces of the walls of various parts of the temple. Gods, nāgās, apsarās, dancers and musicians of the celestial realm and men and animals and their couples as well as hybrid monsters of all descriptions are carved with zest and minute attention to details expressing the exuberance and fantasy of Life and Nature, and unravelling the bonds of passion and delights of loveliness that bind them all to the moving procession of creation, fulfilment and death. Transcending and underlying them all is the energy of the Sun, as the Cosmic Lingam or Power of Sex. It impregnates, creates and destroys in all dimensions of existence in the earth and sky, and in the visible and invisible worlds. As the invisible, all-pervasive living sap of desire it fecundates and spills on all sides, perennially and universally. It permeates the limbs and gestures of mithunas as they melt into one another into tender caress, fond kiss and delirious conjugation. It bursts forth in the procession of saṃsāra with its round of good and evil deeds of passion and compassion, cruelty and warfare that are lavishly depicted on the walls. It creates strange hybrid creatures, half-men and half-birds and animals resembling the Gargoyles of the medieval European Churches, hovering between phantasy and reality. In the medieval Indian temples Śakti as Passion is immanent in all relationships between living creatures and binds them together in unison. But it is the exaltation of the artist’s vision at Konāraka that gives the frank, final and impeccable utterance to this vision in swelling modulations of stone.

Konāraka is the last, and most wonderful consummation of the sculpture and architecture of mediaeval India before these were overwhelmed by Muslim vandalism. Amazing was the handling of some of the colossal beams of iron and monoliths of stone—the largest iron beam weighing 90 tons, the monolithic colossal lion-figure, intended for the summit of the vimāna, weighing 45 tons, and the monolithic water-jar that was once placed on the śikhara of the main temple weighing as much as about 2,000 tons. Similarly the mono-
lithic chlorite slab depicting the Nine Planets (Navagraha), half of which lies embedded in the sands, weighed 26.5 tons. No wonder that various legends are repeated in Oriya songs, ballads and dance dramas pointing to the stupendous, if not incredible skill of engineering and craftsmanship displayed in the achievement. One story is that Konarak was nearing completion 1,200 masons under their guild chief were in despair and anguish and waited for mass execution by King Narasimha as they were unable to affix the colossal monolithic kalasa to the sikha of the main temple. The young and unrecognized son of the master-builder, who was born after his father had left home sixteen years back, suddenly appeared on the site and solved the engineering puzzle to the relief of everybody. In order to save his father and the brotherhood of 1,200 elderly and experienced masons from humiliation, the boy committed suicide flinging himself from the sikha to the waters of the Chandrabhaga. Such is the story of self-immolation that is repeated from mouth to mouth by the unsophisticated peasants of Orissa as they assemble in thousands on the seventh day of the bright fortnight of Magha every year to have a ritual bath in the Chandrabhaga and to worship the Sun-God, at once the invisible Progenitor of the Universe and the visible flame of Sex and Love. The Sun-God in his eternal procession in the universe burns and melts the thousand loving mithuna couples, human as well as animal, irradiates itself in the beauty and grace of gods, apsarases, nagas, men and animals, and holds together their activities and movements in the Wheel of his Cosmic Chariot that symbolises the cycle of their creation, maintenance and release.

The Eternity of Love

Both at Khajuraho and Konarak the most intense and pervasive of human desires which uplifts man to divinity or degrades him to animality becomes incarnate as it were, in the lovers’ inter-twined bodies and gestures. Their passionate, yet graceful conjoint rhythms monumentalise in stone the eternity of love. The male lover is always contemplative, protective and tender, while the female is expectant and passionate, but never affected, nor crude, nor immodest. There are few sculptures that betray lust. Just as the carved love-poses themselves follow the Sutras—the Kamasutras of Vatsyayana, an ancient and refined erotic tradition has imported spiritual values into physical enjoyment that is transformed into a ritual and an observance. The diverse ardent poses and postures, never coarse nor vulgar, of the mithuna couples illustrate their reaching out to each other with entire body and soul and sum up the meaning of mithuna as echoing the boundless joy of Siva-Sakti, or linam-wni in world creation. The miracle of the Khajuraho and Konarak mithunas is their serenity, reflecting the supersensible values of which the physical embrace is merely the expression. In the most ardent kiss there are not only mutual psychological rapport and exchange which Vatsyayana commended as the soul of the art of love, but there are also detachment and poise symbolised
by the closure of eye-lids or the omission of eye-balls and the serene inflection of the inter-twined bodiès of the lovers. The knowing, self-absorbed smile of the lovers reflects their sojourn to the beyond:

"So long as lips shall kiss, and eyes shall see
So long lives this, and This gives life to Thee."

Or again the female figure sometimes holds a mirror in such manner as not to catch any reflection; for the rhythm and harmony of two bodies express what the mirror cannot show. Pārvatī also holds a mirror that reflects her charms—the variety and perfection of the world-process or Becoming. Every damsel is a maid and messenger of Pārvatī, a fragment of Prakṛti—the subtle material for the conception, generation and unfoldment of the universe.

A mithuna and a Surasundari or Yogini stand in close proximity to each other in the scheme of sculptured decorations. Each image in its own recess is meant to be seen and appreciated independently. The collateral image of Surasundari or Yogini (which is another name of the Divine mother or Śakti) harps on the same theme—the unfoldment of love and beauty in the universe of which she is a symbol and vehicle.

The mithunas in mediaeval temple sculpture are, no doubt, plastic revelations of consummate beauty and power of the total transcendence of the lover and the beloved making the moment of their mating eternal, and symbolising the mystery of Divine bi-unity of Puruṣa and Prakṛti, Śiva and Śakti, Being and Becoming. Mediaeval Indian sculpture unsurpassingly expresses the totality of life’s emotions and experiences, physical, spiritual and transcendent. It is the raptures of the body which give access to, and merge in, the enjoyment of perennial beauty and love that constitute the supersensuous essence of Śiva-Śakti.

The Caricature of Degraded Kaula-Kāpālikā Rites

There are, however, several scenes at Khajurāho, exhibiting orgiastic activities of Kāpālikā and Kaula ascetics to which Pramod Chandra has recently drawn our attention. The Kāpālikas and their degraded practices are encountered in mediaeval Indian literature such as Bhavabhūti’s Mālatī-Mādhava and Somadeva’s Kathāsarit-sūgara, Kṣemendra and Somadeva’s Vetal Pāñcha Viśnūtikā, Rajaśekhara’s Karpūrmaṇjarī and the Prabodhachandrodaya. The Kāpālikā or Kaula is scornfully depicted in Khajurāho sculptures as a nude priest with shaved head and pot-belly and as carrying a mace. Such features closely follow the description in literature. He is associated with women companions called Kapālavanitās who show provocative, lascivious postures. One scene in the Kandariya Mahādeo temple at Khajurāho actually represents the rite of initiation to the Kaula-Kāpālikā cult, with the guru in the centre giving discourse to a woman disciple, while the orgiastic ceremony
(ratichakra mahotsava) is celebrated to the right. In another scene in the Devī Jagadambā Temple, the guru with his symbolic staff presides over the ritualistic mithuna, while an uninitiated girl bashfully hides her sex. A sculpture in the Viśvanātha temple shows the male lover standing steady and tranquil on his head, while the female lover is also in a yogic posture above him. The ritualistic mithuna here resembles a difficult yoga exercise that demands two women attendants for assisting the couple in the conjugation. Several art critics regard such representations as degrading and revolting, but the literature of the age shows that the practices were common in the age associated with the Kaula and Kāpālika cults that identified yoga and bhoga.

It is quite clear, however, that the majority of Khajurāho sculptures comprise tense and elegant images of lovers uncontaminated by lewdness, self-introspective, fascinating expressions of the metaphysical doctrine of divine bi-unity and the identification of bhoga and yoga. This conception is defined in the following two Kaula texts. The Vijñāna Bhairava observes: "The delight that springs from sex should be contemplated apart from any sex object or situation." Such fixation on the love emotion, says the commentary on the text, leads to the suffusion of the mind by pure delight eschewing all other modes of awareness. The content of mind becomes a pure emotion of joy and nothing else. The sex situation is merely an occasion for the expression of this pure supersensible bliss (ānanda)." The Kaulajñāna-nirnaya defines the ultimate aim of the Kaula as "the state in which the mind and the sight merge into the object to be visualized." Kula is Śakti and Akula is Śiva, the unity of the two is Kaula, and the process by which this relationship is established is the Kaulamārga, the way of the Kaula. Śiva Akula is represented in one of the Khajurāho temples most superbly in his supreme poise and beatitude with the uplifted male organ (ūrdhvalingam) symbolising the complete cessation of the triple stirrings of consciousness (chit), breath (prāṇa) and semen (reta) according to the Kaula practice. The innate plasticity and compactness of the mass blend in the image with exquisite rhythmic movement of lines and curves echoing the reconciliation of the impersonality of yoga with the cosmic mystery and lyricism of sex. The esoteric Kaula rites seem to have been widespread in India from the 10th to the 13th centuries, systematised by Minanātha or Matsyendranātha, author of Kaulajñāna-nirnaya, and Akulavira-tantra, who founded Nāthism and the Kaula order of Tāntrikism and preached the doctrine of Yogini-Kaula. The Chandela dynasty which flourished from the 8th to the beginning of the 13th century built the Khajurāho group of temples as a part of the mediaeval Tāntrika renaissance, centred round this new esoteric Kaula and Kāpālika worship. The Kāpālikas, also called Somasiddhāntins, used to live in spiritual intimacy with their female yoginis or anchorites who were conceived as emanations of Gauri. It is the yogini who is the instrument of the transformation of her associate anchorite into Śiva in and through the insights and pleasures of sex that constitute the bliss of Śakti in her world illusion and creation. The temple of the Sixty-four
Yoginis which was constructed about the 8th century and is the oldest in Khajuraho gives evidence of the popularity of the Yogini cult. It is noteworthy that the Yogini temples, comprising images of sixty-four manifestations of Sakti, were quite widespread in the middle ages in India. Such shrines are met with at Bheragha (Jubbulpore), Rampur-Jharia (Sambalpur), Dudhahi (Lalitapur), Kalahandi (Orissa) and Coimbatore (Madras). Of the sixty-four yoginis the leading figure is Gauri, called Surasundari, or nymph of the gods. The drama Prabodhachandrodasa, composed to celebrate the victory of the Khajuraho king Kirtivarman over the Kalachuris (about 1065), also bears witness to the prevalent Kaula rites followed by the Kapalikas who calls himself Kaulacharya. The Kaulacharya here believes in salvation only through the pleasures of love, his ideal being to incarnate himself in the form of Siva and enjoy a woman as beautiful as Parvati. It seems that the aim of the Khajuraho sculptures, dealing with the Kaula-Kapaika rites, is to condemn and ridicule the lecherous Kaula practices and the associated siddhis that have crept in. The same admonitory purpose is that of Rajaekhara's Karpuramañjiri (close of the 9th century A.D.) and Ksemendra's Desopadesa and Narmamala (verses 8, 9, first half of the 11th centuries). In Karpuramañjiri the Kapaika guru named Bhairavandana does not care for any mantra, yantra, worship or prayer, but only seeks wine and woman through the enjoyment of which he hopes to obtain salvation. The literary objective of Rajaekhara, as that of his famous precursor Bhavabhuti in his drama Matali-Madhava, is to ridicule the orgiastic ritual that seems to have developed as an aberration of the secret esoteric Kaula worship. For it is the unequivocal warning of the Akulagama Tantra that "those who are addicted to external wine (mada), sexual intercourse (maithuna) and meat-eating (mamsabhakarna) undoubtedly go to hell". Such admonition had obviously less effect on the lower castes converted wholesale to Kaula dharma than on the upper castes in this period of development of Tantrikism.

In any case India between the 10th and 13th centuries universally accepted the yoga of sexual conjugation or the mating of lingam or Siva and Yoni or Sakti as the door to the conquest of the flesh and full spiritual awareness grounded in the compromise and correlation of the aesthetic and sporting function of sex with the exacting discipline of orthodox yoga. The self has its seat in the Yoni, and meditation of the process of conjugation leads to freedom from the bondage of desire. This is the core of the Kaula-marga. The widespread adoption of a host of ritualistic mithunas and meditative exercises as a part of the sacrament of marriage on the basis of identification of bhoga with yoga explains why the erotic scenes got on to the walls and niches of Khajuraho, Konarak and Bhuvasvara. The deities Siva and Sakti, whom men worship, delight and at the same time consecrate the senses. The passion of human love or Sringara Rasa is the aesthetic counterpart of the super-abundant bliss of God realisation. As the worship of Siva and Parvati, symbolised by the Uma-lingana image at Khajuraho, holds the key to the
adept's realisation of the world process, and identification with pure intelligence (chit-Śakti) and bliss (ānanda-Śakti), reflecting on himself as Śiva or Śakti (Śivoham) (Sa-aham), so in the same religious context the sexual extravagances and aberrations indulged in secrecy by certain Kāpālikas, Kaulas and Matta Mayūras are discountenanced and caricatured in some of the Khajurāho sculptures in the spirit of the contemporary literary works, such as the Karpuramañjari, the Prabodhachandrodaya, the Deśopadeśa and the Narmamālā. On the whole, however, the emphasis of the art of Khajurāho, Bhuvanesvara, and Koñāraka, where the mithuna sculptures are most abundant and the frankest, is the apotheosis of Śakti, the embodiment of charm and passion untainted by lewdness and vulgarity. Her bewitching fascination as well as her aloofness from the world, portrayed from wall to wall and from niche to niche in these temples symbolise the immanence of Śakti as the sport and delight of human love, as the illusion and allurement of Becoming and the bliss and wisdom of Being.

The Ambivalence of Passion and Transcendence, Enchantment and Wisdom

Śakti in Tāntrika art, whether Brahmanical or Buddhist, is at once vidyā or avidyā, wisdom and enjoyment, freedom and bondage. She is depicted sometimes with a brooding motherly tenderness and compassion, sometimes with grimness and ferocity, and sometimes with voluptuous charms and gestures infinite in their range of seductiveness. Her domination and mystery are shown in medieval temple sculpture by the frequent figuring of a diminutive man supplicating at her feet, whether she appears as Surasundari, apsarā and nāyikā or as a mother clasping a child fondly to her bare, full breasts. Even in the Jain temples at Dilvārā, the Śrīs or Vidyādevis, who are sculptured lavishly in the struts of the domes dancing in the most fascinating poses and brandishing their swords, are accompanied by crawling, entreatying diminutive male figures. An iconographically significant image is that of the danseuse in the Neminātha and Parśvanātha temples at Ranakpur, Rajputana, who thrusts her sword into the mouth of a diminutive man, writhing in pain below her feet, while unconcerned she beckons him with the hand-gesture of love. In the conceptions and treatment of the charm of woman's form in medieval temples we encounter a dual paradox: the combination of a sense of woman's inscrutable mystery, and transcendence with her tenderness and compassion, and the reconciliation of her loveliness and fascination with immaculate purity, wisdom and sanctity. The images of Śakti in such ambivalent forms, moods and gestures are derived from an inward, comprehensive awareness gained through subtle and intense yoga experience in Tāntrika worship. This is the inner secret of the delineation of the charm of woman in a thousand ways by medieval plastic art: each limb, each posture, each gesture revealing the one truth and feeling of love, and distilling love and its sensual delight to a
subtle, exalted consciousness and bliss of Being. Such images are multiplied lavishly in medieval architectural and sculptural embellishments celebrating the joy and exuberance of the feeling of immanence of Śakti. Śakti is Universal Wisdom, Bliss and Transcendence, mysterious, cosmic and suprahuman. She is also universal Tension, Charm and Allurement, the perfection of finite life and the world of senses and desires, of romance and beauty that transport men to heaven. What is elusive, transcendental and inscrutable incarnates itself in the impulse and intoxication of man, the passion and excitement of each moment. Accordingly man’s instinctive drive and tension, the striving and satisfaction of his desires are phases of the arousal and manifestation of Śakti. And so also are his emotional fulfilment and poise, his spiritual exaltation and bliss. The fascinating celestial Surasundarīs of Khajurāho and Konāraka and the frolicsome, dancing apsarās of Bādāmī and Bhuvaṇesvara, Siam and Cambodia, interwoven rhythmically in belts and storeys from wall to wall and from corner to corner in the temples, reveal the undefined, transcendental spirit of Man indistinguishable in its essence and movement from the primordial sportive Śakti, who ensnares him in the bondage of the senses and desires and also frees him from the ensnarement. Śakti is at once Mahā-Māyā, the Supreme Enchantment and Mahā-vidyā, the Supreme Wisdom.
Chapter 14

LINK OF ASIAN UNITY (THIRD EPOCH): 
THE MARCH OF TĀNTRIKA ART OVER 
THE PACIFIC

The Spread of Tāntrikism from Bengal to Burma, Nepal and Tibet

Like Mahayana Buddhism, Tāntrikism, due to its syncretic tendency and universality, spread far beyond the boundaries of India. Nepal, Tibet and Burma could easily come under the ambit of Buddhist Tāntrikism due to the facilities of communication across the Himalayan passes to Nepal and Tibet and the routes to upper Burma through Kāmarupa and Arakan. In Arakan images of Durgā Mahisamardini have been found which belong to the Gupta period. That Śaivism spread in Arakan and upper and lower Burma in the post-Gupta period is evident from the discovery of numerous coins and terracotta tablets bearing the triśūla and the sacred bull in these regions. In the Rangoon Museum there is an Umāliṅga bas-relief from Thaton (about 9th century A.D.) representing Śiva with his jaṭāmukuta, trident, rosary and vajra. His consort Umā is seated between two arms to his left in firm embrace while the demon Mahiṣāsura is below Umā’s seat. The relief obviously bears the imprint of the familiar Umāliṅga images of Bengal and Utkala of the 9th and 10th centuries. The tilting of Śiva’s body has close resemblance with that in the Utkala image of Lokanātha. Altogether this image, though defaced, is one of the most artistic among the mediaeval sculptures of Burma. The Burmese chronicling Mahayazawin associates the foundation of old Prome with the goddess Chaṇḍi along with Viṣṇu and Garaḍa. The spread of Buddhist Tāntrikism in upper Burma is also evidenced by the discovery of images of Tārā along with Lokanātha, Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya in Pagan. This is confirmed, according to N. R. Ray, by the Tibetan texts as also by the evidence of Tārānātha and by the wall-paintings of the Payathouzin and Nandamanna temples of Minnauthu in Pagan. He has discovered a life-like standing image of Lokanātha, accompanied by Tārā and Hayagrīva, represented in line and colour on the right wall of the entrance vestibule of the Khyaubaukkyi Pagoda, Pagan. The prevalence of the Aris, a school of Buddhist Tāntrikism, in Burma is also the outcome of the impact of the Vajrayāna from Eastern India. This is responsible for certain unique frescoes of an erotic character found in two old temples near Pagan. In Nampaya temple, Pagan, there is a beautiful Trimiṃūrti which is probably a Śiva-Maheśvara seated on a lotus-pedestal with lotus leaves and buds rhythmically arranged all round. Attributed to about the 11th century A.D. this image superbly blends profound serenity with elegance. The post-Gupta period saw also the spread of Śaiva Tāntrikism in the Hindu kingdom of Champā (Annam) with its capital at Myson where was built the famous temple of Bhadresvarasvāmin (Śiva), the national shrine of
the Chams, before the 8th century A.D. With the worship of Śiva was associated that of Śakti in various names: Umā, Gauri, Mahā-Bhagavati and Mahādevī. The Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Pallavas probably played the largest role in the colonisation of Champa.

Winternitz observes: “From the 8th century onwards Tāntrikism proceeded from the territory of Bengal and Assam in a veritable triumph to Tibet and China where it mingled with native cults. Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra went to China in about A.D. 720 and contributed largely towards the propagation of the Tantras. In Japan where only the Manrayāna, and not the Vajrayāna, obtained a footing, the Shingon sect takes its stand upon the Tantras.” In Tibet the founders of the school of the Vajrayāna were Padma Sambhava (middle of the 8th century) who came from Nālandā and was later on deified and Atiśa Dipaṅkara Śrījñāna (A.D. 980-1053) who spent thirteen years (1040-1053) in Tibet and wrote many Vajrayānist texts known as Sūdhanas. Other Tāntrika teachers were Mar-pa (disciple of the great Tāntrika teacher of Nālandā, Naro-pa), Abhayakaragupta, Jetari, Divākarachandra, Kumārachandra, Kumāravajra, Dānasīla, Putali and Kambala. Out of the Vajrayāna and the Manrayāna later on emerged the popular Tāntrika cults of the Vairochana, the Mahāmāyā, the Yoginī-kaula and Nāthism in Tibet. In Mongolia the founder of Tāntrikism in its Lamaist form was Sakaya Paṇḍita who came to this country from Tibet in A.D. 1246. The twin founders of Buddhist Tāntrikism in China were Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra.

Land-Marks of the Expansion of the Religion and Art of Vairochana

According to Chinese and Japanese legends, quoted by Getty in her ‘Gods of Northern Buddhism’, Vairochana was the originator of Buddhist Tāntrikism in the pattern it spread to the Far East. May be an Indian monk named Vairochana, who flourished in the 8th century A.D. was the real founder. He imparted this mystical doctrine directly to Vajrasattva who lived in an iron tower somewhere in South India. Nāgārjuna is said to have visited Vajrasattva in his inaccessible tower and learned from him the esoteric doctrine of the Mandala of the Two Parts, Vajradhātu, pictorially representing the metaphysical World of Wisdom or Complete Enlightenment, and Mahā Karuṇa-Garbhadhātu, pictorially representing the Compassionate World of Matter, Body and Mind. Nāgārjuna transmitted this doctrine to his disciple Nāgabodhi. Nāgabodhi was the teacher of Vajrabodhi who transmitted it to Amoghavajra. Such is the traditional genealogy of the cult of Vairochana, the mystical offspring of the latest Indian Tāntrika synthesis, that traversed the whole continent of Asia from Bengal to Japan and from Jávā to Mongolia from the 7th to the 9th centuries A.D.

The rise and expansion in Asia of the religion and art of Mahā Vairochana, the Golden Primordial Person, resplendent in pure consciousness, whose illumination in the World of Spirit is the existence of the World of Matter,
have not so far received adequate attention. The landmarks of the development of the Mahā-Vairochana cult are as follows:

(1) In Mahāyāna Buddhism, Vairochana was originally one of the five Dhyāni Buddhas—may be the foremost and the oldest among them, who was not generally represented, and dwelt in the sanctum sanctorum. His Śaktis are many. The principal are Uṣṇiṣavijayā, Mārīchī, Aṣokakrāntā, Vajradhātriśvari and Vajra-Vārāhī. In Bengal during the renaissance of Buddhism under the Pālas Vairochana appears with the gesture of dharmachakramudrā over the head of Lokanātha. At Nālandā Vairochana is imaged as seated cross-legged with three heads and six arms of which two hold the Vajra against the breast and the others a rosary, bow, arrow, and an unidentified object, probably wheel. His Śakti is seated by his side. It was in Nālandā that the conception of the self-born Buddha (Ādi Buddha) which is the basic notion of the Vajrayāna originated in the 10th century. From him the Five Dhyāni Buddhas associated with the four directions of the cosmos are derived according to Vajrayāna Buddhism. At Nālandā, Vikramāsilā, Odantapūri and other universities of the east new sects of the Vajrayāna originated according to their allegiance to one or the other of the Dhyāni Buddhas as the Ādi Buddha. The followers of the cult of Vairochana made all the Dhyāni Buddhas, except Vairochana, bear the miniature figure of the latter, while this image also appeared on the crowns of Mārīchī and Uṣṇiṣavijayā among other Śaktis. There are some sculptures supplied by the excavations of Nālandā that show figures of the Dhyāni Buddhas seated on separate lotuses derived from different stalks of lotus, while Vairochana is on the lotus springing from the central stalk indicating his central position in the hierarchy. The nāgas are seen on the sides.

(2) In Nepal Vairochana was worshipped as Ādi-Buddha, and not as one of the five Dhyāni Buddhas. His vehicle (vāhana) is a pair of dragons or gryphons. All monasteries in Nepal are dedicated to Vairochana and the mystic Buddhas of the four directions. The Vajrayāna ideology and worship of Vairochana came to Nepal from Nālandā and the Buddhist universities of Bengal. The relief sculptures of Vairochana and the four directional Buddhas at Śambhūnātha in Nepal and other places are executed in a style derived from the Pāla school of sculpture in Bengal.

(3) In China and Japan Vairochana is regarded as the originator of the Tāntrika yoga system transmitted through a succession of Indian leaders viz. Vajrasattva, Nāgarjuna, Vajrabodhi and Amoghasvajra in sequence. The worship of Vairochana was introduced into China in the 7th century A.D. In the Teng-hsien temple, part of the cave shrine at Lung Men, we have a gigantic group of sculptures erected between A.D. 672-675 where the colossal central figure of the Tathāgata is represented by Vairochana. According to the new cult Vairochana, unlike Śākyamuni or Amitābha, is not a saviour but personifies the creative spirit of the universe, the logos which underlies the Buddhist way of life or dharma, the refugent Sun fixed at the centre of the cosmos whence he reigns. As the crowned sovereign of the world and the cosmos, he is
seated on a lotus throne of a thousand petals, each of which is a universe with its Buddha, and each of these universes itself contains a hundred million worlds or galaxies of Buddhist Tāntrika worlds.

(4) With the development of this Tāntrika system the four mythical Dhyānī Buddhas or the eight great Bodhisattvas become regent deities governing the four directions and exist only as a frame around the Universal King and Ineffable sage Vairochana, who is the Axis of the Universe. The lion is the Tāntrika vehicle of Vairochana. On his lion or lotus throne the Primal Lord Vairochana, the Great Illuminator, shines unlimited by any form. He is omniform and sets in motion the Cosmic Wheel remaining himself still as the pole.

(5) In the Tāntrika maṇḍala or magic diagram of the cosmos, as we come across in Chinese and Japanese paintings, Vairochana or the metaphysical Buddha of the Zenith sits as the Resplendent Sun at the very centre, surrounded by the four pramaeval Buddhas as planets associated with the four directions. This is the Vajradhātu diagram, ‘the diamond element’ corresponding to the spiritual world. In the diagram of the Mahākārūṇa-Garbhadhātu, “the womb or matrix element” corresponding to the material world, Vairochana is the heart of the lotus; the eight petals around represent the eight Bodhisattvas who have created the four worlds (with the fifth yet to come) and their respective four Dhyānī Buddhas or Spiritual fathers. The fundamental conception of the Vajrayāna is the affirmation of an infinite negation, a cosmic silence against which the Primordial Vairochana or Ādi-Buddha shines. When all is perfect void it is this Perfect Sage’s meditation which brings into existence the four Dhyānī Buddhas and their countless worlds in the four directions. Man is an emanation of Vairochana even as the Buddhas of the four directions are his emanations, and can return to him only through meditation on the Maṇḍala of the Two Parts, the Vajradhātu and the Garbhadhātu that lead him to the One Reality or Truth in which all things, manifest and unmanifest, have their source, existence and finale.

(6) The cult of Vairochana reached Jāva by the 8th century A.D. The great stūpa of Borobudur, in its plan and iconography, embodies the mystic hierarchy of levels of existence symbolised by the Tathāgata Vairochana, Dhyānī Buddhas and Bodhisattvas fundamental in the metaphysical doctrine of Vairochana.

The first five galleries with their Buddha statues illustrate the Garbhadhātu Maṇḍala or diagram, corresponding to the material world. The fourth gallery depicts Vairochana in the centre surrounded by the four directional Buddhas. To give more details, the terraces contain five rows of Dhyānī Buddhas: there are ninety-two on each side: in the east is Akṣobhya; in the south Ratna Sambhava; in the west Amitābha and in the north Amoghasiddha. The uppermost row comprises Vairochana figures sixty-four times repeated and placed along the edge of the highest square terrace, while there are seventy-two images of Vairochana in perforated niches making five hundred and four in all. On each facade the Buddha images number one hundred and eight, the auspicious number in all Indian pantheons. The terminal stūpas show
the Tathāgata Vairochana surrounded by seventy-two other Vairochanas, half-visible, half-concealed, symbolizing the endless procession of yugas or eras of time. The number seventy-two represents for the ancients infinite duration, and actually in the Vajradhātu-mandala the number of principal Buddhist deities is seventy-two. At the summit of the whole stūpa—the highest closed dome of Borobodur—at the exact centre, the deity installed in the holiest and innermost level was in all probability Vairochana himself. The original image is missing. Vogel identifies this with Vajrasattva. But in the mystic doctrine of the Vajrayāna, Vajrasattva is an aspect of Vairochana when he departs from his cosmic silence to manifest himself in the universe.

(7) The cult of Vairochana was introduced to Japan in the Mantrayāna rather than the Vajrayāna form in the 9th century A.D. and survives there in Tendai and Shingon Buddhism, especially the latter. A magnificent dry lacquer statue of Vairochana was installed in the Toshodaiji monastery in the 8th century. A colossal bronze statue of the deity was dedicated by the Shingon sect at Nara in the Tempyo period (A.D. 702-810). The legendary founder of the cult of Vairochana is Vairochana himself, but it is history that Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra taught this in China in the 8th century A.D. Thence it spread to Japan in the next century.

The Spiritual Patriarchs of Tāntrikism in East and South-east Asia

Both Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra went to China from Further India in A.D. 724. Vajrabodhi was the spiritual teacher of the king of Kāñchi and was educated at Nālandā whence he went to Ceylon before his visit to China. In China he preached the form of Buddhism till his death in A.D. 732. He translated eleven Tāntrika texts. His disciple Amoghavajra worked in Loyang till A.D. 731 and returned to Ceylon in A.D. 737 for collecting Sanskrit texts. He translated about 119 texts and was one of the great propagators of the Vajrayāna in China visiting various cities including Lo-yang, Ho-si and Liang Chou. Two other Indian teachers are also credited with the introduction of Tāntrikism into China, viz. Śubhākara (Shan-Wu-Wei) who was formerly a king of Orissa and Vajramati (Kin-Kang-Chi). In China the school of Buddhist Tāntrikism is known as Chen-Yen (mantra) and in Japan as the Shingon, which name is also derived from Sanskrit word mantra. The Chinese teacher Hui-Kuo who is credited with spreading Buddhist Tāntrikism to all parts of China learnt his doctrine from the Indian monk Amoghavajra. It was from the Chinese sage Hui-Kuo (Japanese Kei-Kwa) that Kukai (A.D. 773-835) or Kobo Daishi derived the secret doctrines of the Tāntrika system. He came over to China for obtaining initiation from his Chinese master, and brought from Tang the diagrammatic representations, the Vajradhātu Mandala and the Mahākaruṇa-garbha Mandala, now kept in the monasteries at Kyoto and Nara. Kukai or Kobo Daishi was the founder of the Shingon sect which had
enormous influence on the masses of people in Japan. Its Indian derivation
is also clearly shown by the pictures of the seven great patriarchs of Shingon
Buddhism in the Toji, Kyoto, including Nāgarjuna and Nāgabodhi that
Kukai brought to Japan from China.

Towards the end of the 8th century (about A.D. 780) Tāntrikism spread
to Jāvā where Chandikalasan dedicated to the Buddhist deity Tārā was built
by the Śailendra Emperor Paṇānikarana under the inspiration of his pre-
ceptor Kumāraghosa of Bengal. While the Chaṇḍi Kalasan is one of the most
elegantly decorated temples in the island of Jāvā, the life-size bronze image of
Tārā that was installed in it by the Gauḍa Rājaguru and that is now lost,
must have been exceedingly beautiful. In the beginning of the 9th century
during the reign of Jayavarman II, the four Tantras, the Nāyottara, Śīrā-
chheda, Vināśikha and Sammoha were taken to Cambodia from North India. It
was from Bengal that Tāntrikism spread to Tibet, Nepal, Burma, and Indonesia,
especially under the regime of the Buddhist Pāla monarchs. As late as the
15th century one of the inscriptions (A.D. 1442), collected by Forchhammer
from Pagan, Puṇya and Ava in upper Burma mentions the gift of 295 texts,
along with monastery lands and slaves, to the Buddhist Order by a Governor
and his wife. These include not only texts derived from Sanskrit sources in
logic, alaṅkāra, astrology, astronomy and war but also Vajrayāna and Siddha-
nātha texts, viz. Mrityuvaṃśhaka (a name of white Tārā), Mahākālachalika and
Mahākālachakkita. The first text belongs to the school of Matsyendranātha,
the founder of Haṭhayoga and Nāthism which finally brought about the com-
plete absorption of the later forms and practices of Buddhism in the more
ancient religion of the land. The last two belong to the Buddhist Tāntrika
Kālachakra tradition that was in popular vogue in Bengal, Nepal and Tibet.
Tārānātha’s remark in this connection is apposite: “Although in the countries
of Koki realm Vinaya, Abhidhamma and Mahāyāna works are well known,
the secret mantras had become very rare with the exception of Kālachakra
and a few others.”

From the 8th to the 15th centuries the Buddhist as well as Brahmanical
Tāntrika religion and art of Bengal seemed to have greatly influenced Tibet,
China and South-east Asia, communication being established with Tibet
and China across the Himalayan passes through Sikkim and the Chumbi
valley, and with Further India and Indonesia by regular sea-voyage from
Tāmralipti to Suvarṇadvīpa and Jāvā through Kaṭāḥa, and also by a much
frequented land route from Puṇḍravardhana and Kāmārūpa to upper Burma,
Tonkin and Annam. “Sweeping over Central Asia and China, and later reaching
Japan at the beginning of the 9th century,” writes the Japanese scholar
Anesaki, “a kind of Buddhist Cosmotheism succeeded in absorbing the panthe-
on of different peoples into its cosmotheistic domain and in uniting them with
the central conception of a Cosmic Lord, the Great Illuminator (Sanskrit,
Mahā-Vairochana, Japanese, Dainichi), a former title of Buddha which was
now specified as a distinct personality.” The development of cosmotheism on
the basis of the conception of the Tathāgata Buddha or Vairochana not as a mere metaphysical entity, but as also comprising the whole of material existence in his physical body is the final synthesis which Indian Tāntrikism contributed to Asian thought. Corresponding to the Tāntrika conception of Vairochana is that of Prajñāpāramitā, the “wisdom of all the Tathāgatas”, who is also Tathāgata-garbha, “womb of all the Buddhas,” potential and maternal.

The Tāntrika Principles in Shingon Buddhism

In Japan the Shingon (the name is derived from the Sanskrit word mantra) sect, founded by Kobo Daishi at the beginning of the 9th century A.D. was based largely upon the Mahā-Vairochana sūtra and other Indian Tāntrika sūtras. The recitation of mantras or dhāraṇīs is regarded by Shingon Buddhism as basic to the achievement of wisdom. Shingon Buddhism largely adheres to the Tāntrika ideal and practice but the Tendai sect in Japan has also assimilated a few of the mystical principles and practices of Buddhist Tāntrikism. It is noteworthy that in Japan the Tāntrika tradition is retained and practised far above the sphere of sexuality. H. V. Glassenapp observes in this connection with reference to Tendai and Shingon Buddhism: “The female Bodhisattvas figuring in the Maṇḍalas, like Prajñāpāramitā and Chunḍi, are sexless beings from whom, quite in accordance with the ancient tradition, associations of a sexual nature are strictly excluded. In this respect these schools differ from those known to us from Bengal, Nepal, and Tibet, which emphasize the polarity of the male and female principles.” While in Nepal, Tibet and Mongolia the Tāntrika metaphysical notion of the union of the spiritual with the material, of the cosmic with the finite, is symbolised by the conjugation of Yab-yum, yab, the male principle or deity representing the Diamond or Indestructible Essence or Vajradhātu and Yum, his Śakti representing the Womb-store or Garbhadhātu in Japan, it is represented by the Tāntrika hand-inflexion (mudrā) of the Six Elements. The index finger of the left hand of Vairochana or the Great Illuminator is clasped by the five fingers of the right. The left-hand index finger symbolises the mind, or the spiritual world while the five fingers of the right hand represent earth, water, fire, air and ether or the matrix of the material world. Such a hand-gesture denotes the unity of the cosmic and the finite. In the Garbhadhātu, the two hands hold the dharmachakra, implying their distinction in the plane of experience. In Shingon Buddhism the Vajradhātu and the Garbha-kośa synergetic cycles or Maṇḍalas, comprising the two parts of the Tāntrika world-picture, are well-known. Anesaki in his Buddhist Art in Asia reproduces certain Japanese diagrammatic representations of Maṇḍalas, belonging to the 17th century in which Sanskrit letters are substituted for figures of the deities in both cycles. These letters called Shuji (Sanskrit, Bijā) or seed are regarded as efficacious symbols of the Shingon deities. The various Tāntrika tattvas or principles are personified in the Maṇḍalas.
in intellectually or sensibly manifested forms. Vairochana is represented in the womb cycle by the Tathāgata or Ab or again by the seed-letter A (in Bengali script) upon a lotus pedestal supported by a thunderbolt (vajra) stem which rests in turn upon a lower lotus. The Sanskrit letter A is the beginning and source of all letters. In the Diamond cycle he is represented by the letter Vam (in Bengali script), the consummation of all letters. Coomaraswamy in his *Elements of Buddhist Iconography* reproduces from the work of Omura Seigai a Womb or Garbha-koša mandala, the original of which was brought from China to Japan by Kobo Daishi in A.D. 806. The Buddhas here occupy the centre and four petals of the lotus, and the Bodhisattvas the four remaining petals. Vairochana Tathāgata (Chinese Pu-tung-fo, Japanese Dai-nichi Nyorai) is the primordial Ādi-Buddha identified with the Supernal Sun in whom as in the Mighty Sun all things, visible and invisible, have their consumption and absorption. The four other Dhyāni Buddhas—Ākṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amoghasiddha pictured represent the four quarters—four planets or constituent elements of the cosmos that revolve round one Truth. The Dhyāni Buddhas are accompanied by four corresponding Bodhisattvas as attendants, all emanating from the central Vairochana or the Great Illuminator. The panels immediately above and below the central area contain each five representations as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit name.</th>
<th>Japanese name.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chūndā-Bhagavatī; Saptakoṣi-Buddha-mātri</td>
<td>Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddha-Lōchana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarvātmaca-jēānamudrā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mahāvīra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vajramaharamayasattva, Mahāsukhamogha-Vajrasattva</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gayā Kaśyapa</td>
<td>Smaller figures on the central symbol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruvilva Kaśyapa</td>
<td>On the right</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trailokyavajra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yamāntaka</td>
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<td>Prajñāprārāmitā</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vajra-humkāra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achalanātha</td>
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</table>

The Flowering of Tāntrika Art in Japan

It is remarkable that there is an exact equivalent of the cycle or Maṇḍala in the abbreviated Shuji (bija, seed-letter) form following the Indian Tāntrika ritual. The Tāntrika symbolism borrowed from India relating to the syncretic
world-pictorial cycles (Māṇḍalas) is this. The Womb-store or Mahākaraṇa Garbhahātu represents the manifested universe, comprising twelve compartments or levels of existence conceived in the forms of 414 deities, all emanating from Vairochana or the cosmic soul. Such deities are charming or repellent, calm or furious, as in the Tāntrika pantheon, embodying certain functions or aspects of the cosmic process and behaviour of the individual mind. The Diamond Cycle or Vajradhātu, on the other hand, comprises the spiritual foundation of the cosmos, which is pictorially represented by the gradual evolution and emanation of certain eternal ideas or archetypes of Buddhas from Vairochana or the universal soul. The central square comprises 1061 figures symbolising the diversity of the mind, individual and cosmic, as its unity is symbolised by the central figure of the Great Illuminator effulgent with a pure white radiance. The aesthetic genius of the Japanese people has made art an integral part of worship focussed on the Tāntrika cosmoeletic view with its elaborate symbolic suggestions and boldly imaginative personifications. Among the myriad divinities there are four, which appear within the central square of the Diamond Cycle representing Play, Garland, Song and Dance denoting that worship cannot be divorced at all from the cult of beauty. As Aneasaki puts it: "The Play is the beauty of manner and posture; the Garland, of form and composition; the Song of word and metre; the Dance, of movement and rhythm; the Flower, of colour and fragrance, the Lamp, of light and warmth." Far away from the homeland of Tāntrikism, the artistic representation of deities and the organisation of elaborate rituals have become characteristic features of Shingon Buddhism, thanks to the artistic sensibilities of a nation that serves truth and beauty at the same time and by the same action. The Shingon religion has given the highest place to the art of painting, making it an indispensable aid to cosmic communion through the figuration of different levels of existence and behaviour in the forms of deities, compassionate and dreadful, serene and furious, charming and repellent. The rigid conventions of iconography have not stood in the way of the representation of such deities with great sensivenes, delicacy and freedom in Shingon art and religion.

The absolute monism, the emphasis on yogic discipline of the body and mind and regulation and transmutation of the life of the senses, the freedom from ritualism, sacerdotism and caste and the social egalitarian trend account for the popularity of Tāntrikism and its spread in countries outside India in the wake of Buddhism and its later forms. The living faiths of Tibet, Nepal, China, Mongolia and Japan and of Further India and Indonesia still bear the impress of the metaphysical notions, meditative practices and use of mantras, yantras and mudrās of medieval Indian Tāntrikism, while sculptures, banners, wall-paintings and Māṇḍalas reproduce in distant foreign lands the philosophy and iconography of Indian Tāntrika images. Subtle metaphysics combined with bold imaginative figurations of emotions, powers, virtues and vices, consecration of daily life and behaviour through sublimation and symbolisation, expression of cosmic communion in and through deities including every
kind of intention and experience, deities of grace and serenity mingling with apparitions of horror: these are the essential characteristics of Tāntrika religion and art, and nowhere have these flowered the noblest and the most beautiful as in Japan.

The Major Ways and Seats of Indian Tāntrikism

Everywhere it was the Sādhana literature of Buddhist Tāntrikism which provided prescriptions for the sculptors to construct the images of deities and formulae of meditation and worship. The Indian Sādhanaṃalā comprises no less than 312 Sādhanas giving details of attributes and adornments of the Tāntrika images. The Vajrayāna Śaktis were once found in considerable numbers throughout Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Orissa and Nepal, Tibet and Indonesia. B. Bhattacharya has found Sādhana for the following deities still current in Tibet: (1) Ratiṣṭīṣṭā, (2) Yaksānataṇati, (3) Kilkilā, (4) Hārītī, (5) Nāgī, (6) Manshári, (7) Subhagā, (8) Ratibagā, (9) Pūrṇabhadrā, (10) Bhūtisundari, (11) Vimalasundari, (12) Kṛṣṇapīṣācha, (13) Alakā, (14) Alaguptā, (15) Kharamukhā and (16) Kusumusri. On the other hand, several Hindu Mother-Goddesses such as Tārā, Ugratāra, Ekaījāta and Mahānīla-Sarasvatī are derived from China and Tibet. In Tibet the Tāntrika practice called Lāmāyamanaya is current. Certain Tantras also refer to the Lāmāvarga Śākunīs and Dākunīs that represent special Tāntrika schools and practices of Tibet. The Sammoha Tantra actually mentions the following Tāntrika zones outside India: Bāhlīka (Balkh), Bhotan (Tibet), China (China), Mahāchina (Mangolia), Māida (Media), Pārśvakīka (Pārasīka—Persia), Aīraka (Iraq), Kamboja, Hūṇa, Yavana, Gandhāra and Nepal. Tāntrika schools and practices for several centuries travelled far and wide from India.

The entire Tāntrika literature is divisible into two broad categories: the orthodox represented by the Āgamas, the Yāmalas with their supplements and the Samayācāra and the heterodox represented by the Vajrayāna, Sahajayāna, the Vāmaśāra and the Kulāchāra. The latter are both Buddhist and Brahmancial. The Hevajratantra, an important Vajrayāna Tāntrika text, that is older than the 8th century A.D., mentions four important pīṭhas or seats of Tāntrikism in the following order: Uddīyāna in the Swat valley, that connects India with Balkh and Khotan; Jalandhar between Nepal and Kashmir, that connects India with Tibet through the Shipki Pass; Purṇagiri, that cannot be clearly identified and Kāmarūpa or Brahmaputra valley that connects India with both Western and Southern China through North Burma. All the pīṭhas are situated on the main routes to China and Tibet. Now Indrabhūti (about A.D. 687-717) was the king of Uddīyāna and Siddhāchārya Luipāda is, according to Tibetan authorities, a writer of the king of Uddīyāna. Both are regarded as major exponents of the Vajrayāna. At the beginning of the 7th century Hiuen Tsang noted that in the Swat valley the people used to make the acquisition of the magical formulae their occupation. This refers obviously
to Tāntrikism. Bengal had also been an early home of Tāntrikism. Here the orthodox varieties of Śakti image such as Durgā, Mahiṣamardini, Laksmi, Kātyāyanī and Sarasvatī were only met with and presumably the orthodox traditions of Tāntrikism prevailed up till the Pāla and Sena periods. But a plethora of Tārā images in various Vajrayāna forms such as Mārichi, Parpaśavari, Chuṇḍā, Ekajata, Sitātapatrā, Khadiravani Tārā, Vajra-Tārā and Bhṛikuṭi-Tārā could be encountered in Eastern India in the 11th and 12th centuries. The manuscript of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, that belongs to the 11th century A.D. includes such Śaktis as Bhagavati-Tārā, Buddhārdhi Tārā and Chuṇḍā. It is noteworthy that during this period the worship of Hevajra, with Śakti in Yab-yum or Mithuna posture, was developed. The Hevajra cult, associated with the latest phase of Buddhist Tāntrikism, still occupies an important place in the Tibetan pantheon and once it was widespread in Bengal. Hevajra is an Indo-Tibetan Buddhist deity and its image has been found at such widely different places as Paharpur and Murshidabad in Bengal. The teaching of the Hevajra Tantra is this: “Bliss (sukha) is the ultimate reality. It is Dharmakāya, the metaphysical Buddha. It is the whole Universe. It is Prajñā. It is Upāya. It itself is the Union. It is existence. It is non-existence. It is the Lord Vajrasattva.” Saroruha-vajra or Saroruha Siddha, also called Padma-vajra, is known, according to Bagchi, in the history of Buddhist Tāntrikism as the author of Hevajra-Sādhana and one of the pioneers of Hevajra Tantra and as the guru and paramaguru of Anaṅgavajra and Indrabhūti of Udḍiyāna. The Hevajra Tantra has played an important historical role in the 13th century in the conversion of Kublai Khan, the Mongolian Emperor by the great lama P’ags-pa whom Mahākāla or the Great Time in the Mongolian form of m-Gon-po himself inspired on the fateful occasion. The Chinese pilgrim I-tsin mentions that the image of Mahākāla was found at the doors of all Buddhist monasteries in India.

The Foreign Contributions to Indian Tāntrikism

The Rudrayāmala (Paṭala xvii) definitely mentions Mahāchina as one of the sacred regions that should be visited for the objective of Mahā-siddhi. The Kubjikā Tantra is of foreign derivation as is clearly indicated by the stanza, quoted by H. P. Sastri: “Go to India to establish yourself in the whole country and make manifold creations in the sacred places of primary and secondary importance.” The Tārā Tantra similarly declares that the cult of China-Tārā came from the country of Mahāchina which Vasiṣṭha visited in order to obtain his initiation into the esoteric doctrine from the Buddha which was to be found neither in India nor in Tibet. P. C. Bagchi finds a close agreement between the Sādhanas of Mahā-China Tārā and Ekajata, and regards these goddesses as identical. Thus the Brahmānical goddesses Tārā, Ugra-Tārā, Śyāmā, Ekajata and Mahānila Sarasvatī are derived from China where they were worshipped as Chinakrama-Tārā or Mahā-China Tārā. Hiuen Tsang refers
to a statue of the goddess Tārā in China "of great height and endowed with divine penetration." He mentions that on the first day of each year kings and nobles of the neighbouring region came to offer her flowers and the ritual was celebrated with great pomp for eleven days. According to the Sādhana-māla Ekajaṭā or Nila-Tārā and Parṇāsavarī or Green Tārā whose images are to be found from Nālandā and Vikrampūr, are along with Mahā-Čina Tārā emanations of Akṣobhya. The priest of the cult was Siddha Nāgārjuna who perhaps took the name of the sage Vasiṣṭha in order to hide his Buddhist derivation. In the Sammohā Tantra, which was discovered by P. C. Bagchi in Nepal and which was taken to Cambodia in the beginning of the 9th century A.D. from Northern India being composed a century or two earlier, there is a significant passage showing the Chinese origin of Mahānlīlā-Sarasvatī or Tārā.

"The Mahesvarī said to Brahman: hear from me about Mahānlīlā-Sarasvatī with attention. It is through her favour that you will narrate the four Vedas. There is a lake called Chola on the western side of the Meru. The mother Goddess Nīlogratārā was born there. The light issuing from my upper eye fell into the lake Chola and took a blue colour. There was a sage called Akṣobhya, who was Śiva himself in the form of a sage, on the northern side of the Meru. It was he who meditated first on the goddess who was Pārvatī herself reincarnating in China-desa at the time of the great deluge."

The word Chola denotes a lake in the Mongol region while the western side of the Meru forms a part of China. From China through the Middle Asian caravan route to Udyāna or Suwāt (Swat) and Kashmir, from China and Tibet through the Shipki Pass to Jālandhara and through the Nepalese passes to Nālandā, Odantapuri, Vikramaśīla, Jagaddal and Traikūṭaka and again, from China through the North-eastern Burmese route to Kāmarūpa, Śrīhāṭṭa and Chittagong flowed in the middle ages many cults of Tāntrikism in which Vajrayāna, Śaiva, Siddha and Brahmanical Tāntrika ideas and practices blended. There is definite evidence that in Traikūṭaka, Phullahari, Sonnagara and Jagaddala Vihāras of Bengal, Tibetan translations of a large number of Sanskrit texts were prepared. There was indeed a constant interchange of religious doctrines and exercises from the 8th century, when Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla visited Tibet in the 12th century, the period of the later Siddhāchāryas, whose works are mostly preserved in Tibetan translations and Bengali dohās.

Bengal, Kāmarūpa, Nepal, Tibet and Udyāna came to participate in a common system of esoteric discipline that gradually passed from Vajrayāna Buddhism to Śaivism and Haṭha-yoga and thence to Yogi-kūla and Sahaja-Siddhi through a galaxy of Siddhāchāryas who flourished between the 10th and the 12th centuries. Many of them composed Buddhist Tāntrika works that had been included in the Tibetan Bstan-hgyur, and were or are still recognised as gods and saints in Eastern Bengal, Nepal and Tibet.

It is they who ultimately brought about a complete assimilation of the last phase of Buddhism in to the Brahmanical Tāntrikism of Bengal. Outside the pale of orthodox Hinduism, Nāthism, Avadhūta, Bāul and Sahajiyā still
remain as the lingering traces of the now forgotten Buddhist Sahajayāna. While the Sahaja cult of Bengal, stemming from the poet-mystic Chandīdāsa, who belonged to the 14th century A.D. and wrote the Kṛṣṇa Kirtana assimilated into itself the Vaiṣṇava theme of Kṛṣṇa and his Śakti Rādhā and at the same time attached importance to the Hāṭhayoga with its cultivation of inner Nādiś, Chakras and lotuses, it is the sect of the Bāuls that has kept alive faithfully the Sahaja Sādhanā and Sahaja Siddhi and bliss of derelict Buddhism.

It is noteworthy that the Indian Sahaja and the Chinese Tao are identical. We may recollect that Bhāskaravarman, king of Kāmarūpa, told a Chinese envoy to India that his family belonged to Mahā-China and requested him to send a Sanskrit translation of Tao-ti-king, the sacred text of Taoism, together with a portrait of Lao-tsu. Whatever may be the foreign contributions there is no doubt that Tāนtrikism, whether of the Vajrayāna, the Sahajayāna or the Kulāchāra pattern, though it may have developed certain rituals and practices in connection with the foreign culture, followed the well-established system of Indian thought, derived from ancient Sāṅkhya dualism of Prakṛiti and Puruṣa in which the categories of Śiva and Śakti, Śāṅkāya and karunā, prajñā (Vajra) and upāya and sahaja and compassion (karunā) play the same roles in contemplation and activity. In fact it was the acceptance of this basic metaphysics of dualism that facilitated the adoption and assimilation of various local, aboriginal or foreign goddesses into the established categories of Śakti worship whether in India or abroad.

Local Adaptations of Tāntrikism in Foreign Lands

A remarkable instance of local adaptation of the Indian Śakti cult in foreign lands is represented by the spread of the Mother cult of Hārīti from Central Asia, China and Japan, on the one hand, and to Further India and Indonesia on the other. Gandhāra art represented the mother Hārīti playing with many children around her. The Chinese traveller I-tsing found the image of Hārīti holding a child in her arms and with some other children playing about her in all Indian monasteries. In Bengal the Mahāyāna images of Hārīti holding a babe with her two arms and the upper arms holding a fish and a skull cup assimilates the dual notions of Hārīti as the Compassionate Mother and as the ogress or the cannibal yaksīni. We find similar images of Hārīti in wall paintings in Domoko and Turfan in Chinese Turkestan and beyond in temple sculpture in China and Japan. Hārīti with the child in her lap is a beneficent deity worshipped in the Far East for warding off disease. Sometimes she is both angel and ogress; as the angel she is Koyasu Kwan-non in Japan, as the ogress she is worshipped as Kishi-mo-jin. A modern Japanese image of Hārīti is included in the collection of H. H. Getty. In Annam Hārīti receives daily offerings of food as the Mother of Demon Sons.

Another instance of the introduction of Tāntrika cult in a foreign land is
represented by the adoption during the reign of Jayavarman II (A.D. 802) in Cambodia of the mystic cult of Devarāja or Śiva Liṅga that became one of the more celebrated deities of Kambuja along with four Tantras, viz. Śiras-ehheda, Vināśikha, Sannohe and Nāyottara. These four śāstras were considered as the four faces of Tumburu or Śiva. The four faces turning to four directions appear in the central tower of the temple of Bayon at Aṅgkor-Thom. In many inscriptions of Kambuja, Śiva is described as four-faced (Chaturānana) and Tumburu is an aspect of Śiva which has some connection with the Devarāja or Mukhaliṅga cult of Cambodia. It is noteworthy that at the cave temple of Yun-Kang in North China in the Buddhist sculpture directly inspired by Indian art there is a representation of the four-faced Śiva, seated on a bull with an attendant standing nearby and holding a triśūla.

Many Āgamas and Tantras were taken from Northern India to Nepal, Tibet, Indonesia and Far East along with Tāntrika rituals and practices. Several remarkable adaptations are seen in Indonesia. The Tāntrika metaphysical notions are responsible in Jāvā for certain unique dynamic images such as Ganesa from Singasari seated on a row of skulls, Bhairava with a garland of human skulls dancing on an array of skulls and, above all, the ferocious, four-headed, eight-armed Trailokya-Vijaya stepping with the fierce gesture called Vajra-humkāra on the bodies of Śiva and Pārvatī. The Trailokya-Vijaya image in Jāvā may be considered as the most magnificent representation of the terrible in world art. Jāvā is full of awful and weird images of Indian Tāntrikism uniquely blending the antinomies of joy and fierceness, hope and terror—a synthesis in religion and art that were not reached in the homeland.

Thirteenth century Jāvā and Sumātrā saw a revival of Buddhist Tāntrikism in the reigns of kings Kṛitāagara and Ādityavarman. The former who ascended the throne in 1268 erected a Tāntrika temple at Jago with a pantheon of Tāntrika deities. The central figure here is Amoghapāśa; while her attendants are Tāra, Sudhanakumāra, Bhikuti and Hayagrīva—the same that surround Khasarpaṇa, Lokesvara or Lokanātha in the Pāla images of Bengal and Bihar (as for instance the elegant image of Vikrampur, Dacca). Amoghapāśa with these four subsidiary deities is worshipped in Tibet and Nepal. In the temple of Bahal a mutilated image has been found which when restored shows itself to be Heruka, the well known Tāntrika deity of Bengal and Tibet. In one of the inscriptions on the back of the Amoghapāśa stone replica of Sungei Langsat despatched there in 1289 by king Kṛitāagara we find a mention of two dancing deities Mātāṅgini, one of the Śaktis of Buddhist and Hindu Tāntrikism and her husband Mātāṅginiśa. In certain paintings studied by P. H. Pott and attributed to the time of Kṛitāagara and Ādityavarman we have the Śasana-maṇḍala or the Tāntrika mystical group of the cremation ghāṭa, with its eight Bhairava and corresponding Śakti or Nāyikās, following the well-known Bengal Tāntrika practice as described in the following words by the Mahā-nirvāṇa Tantra:
"Let the devotee (sādhaka) place (in contemplation by mental action) in the heart-lotus Ānandakanda (padma) the Sun, Moon and Fire and the eight Śaktis (Nāyikās) on the petals—then follow the names of the eight Bhairavīs;—the eight Bhairavas—their names follow—should be placed on the tips of the petals of the lotus, etc."

The Dissociation of Sexuality from Tāntrikism in China and Japan

For the first time in the history of world, religion and art Tāntrikism stresses the dual aspects of the cosmos—the profound serenity and silence of Being and the wild tumult and destruction of Becoming. It is this rather than the metaphysical dualism of the sexes and unity of the Two in One that is the central concept of Indian Tāntrikism, both Brahmanical and Buddhist. While Nepal, Tibet, Burma and Mongolia accepted and developed the phase of Tāntrikism rooted in the polarity and complementariness of the sexes, the diffusion of the cult of Vairochana in Jāvā, Cambodia, China and Japan showed the complete emancipation of Tāntrikism from the notions and values of sexuality. In China and Japan the worship of the female principle or Śakti, associated with Indian Tāntrikism did not gain ground. The only feminine deity which has won universal allegiance and worship is Kuan-yin in China and Kwan Anon in Japan, who is regarded not as the consort of Avalokiteshvara but as the manifestation of the deity himself. Similarly even Tārā, Prajñā- pāramitā, Chūndā and Sarasvatī remain in their esoteric aspects in China and Japan and are found more often in mystic Maṇḍalas than as icons of worship as in the rest of Indian Asia. Mongolian civilization has exaggerated the male principle, and in the sphere of religion asserted that a woman cannot enter the paradise of Amida unless she gains masculinity through rebirth. Thus the Śaktis of Indian Tāntrikism are often a-sexual divinities, little known outside their metaphysical spheres in China and Japan. Yet the contrasted aspects of silence and manifestation, rest and movement, withdrawal and action, tranquillity and fury in the universe stressed by Indian Tāntrika religion and art have received grand and unique visual expressions throughout the Far East.

The Blend of the Charming and the Fierce in Asian Art

As Tāntrikism spread from India far and wide in the Asian continent, both the charming and fierce aspects of the divinity, male and female, have been embodied in worship and art from Mongolia to Jāvā and from Balkh to Japan.¹ The march of Tāntrikism from India from the 8th century downwards is charted below:

¹ See Getty: The Gods of Northern Buddhism, for the foreign names of many Indian Deities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indian Tāntrika Deity</th>
<th>Names in Foreign Lands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A — Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Lokanātha, Lokeśvara. Avalokiteśvara or Khasarpaṇa.</td>
<td>Lokeśvara in Siam, Cambodia and Indo-China.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Amoghapāśa (Tāntrika form of Avalokiteśvara)</td>
<td>in Java and Cambodia.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Trailokya-vijaya</td>
<td>Kiang-san kie in China; Go-san-ze in Japan; and Trailokya-vijaya in Tibet, Java and Indo-China.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Heruka or Saṅvara</td>
<td>Bde-mog in Tibet; and San pa-lo in China; Heruka in Java.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Hevajra</td>
<td>Hovajra in Tibet and Mongolia and Hevajra in Siam and Cambodia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Kubera (Brahmanical); Jambhala (Buddhist counterpart of Brahmanical Kubera or Vaiśravaṇa)</td>
<td>Rnam-t'os-stras in Tibet; Bismar tegr in Mongolia; Pi-aha-men or Ts'ai Shen or To-wen in China; and Bishamon in Japan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Hayagriva (Brahmanical and Buddhist Tāntrika image; Viṣṇu-Hayagriva in Brahmanism and Vidyārāja, the king of the Vidyādhāras in Mahāyāna Buddhism, probably the symbol of fecundity.)</td>
<td>Hayagriva in Pagan, Burma; Rta-mgrin in Tibet; Morin qogholai-tu in Mongolia; Pi-mih-ma-t'eu kin-kang in China and Bato Kwan-non in Japan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Mahākāla</td>
<td>Mahākāla in Nepal and Java; Mgon-po or Nag-po-c'en-po in Tibet; Yekte gara in Mongolia; Ta-hei-wang in China; Dai-kok in Japan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B — Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Tārā, Sitatārā, Śyāmatārā, Ugratārā, Bhrikutī, Ekajātā, Chinakramatārā, Mahānīlasarasvatī,</td>
<td>Tārā in Pagan, Burma; Sgrol-ma or Saviouress in Tibet; Dara-eki (or the mother Tārā) in Mongolia; China-Tārā in China; Ro-tara-ni-bi in Japan; Tārā in South East Asia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Prajñāpāramitā
S’es-rab-pha-rol-tu in Tibet;
Bilig-un-cinadu kijaghar-a kurusen in Mongolia;
Hannya in Japan;
Prajñāpāramitā in Nepal, Jávā,
Indo-China, Cambodia.
Ma-bya-c’en-mo in Tibet;
Kun-syo ming-wang in China;
Kujaku Myo-o’in Japan;
Mahāmāyūri in Nepal.
Gdugs-dkar-can-ma in Tibet;
Caghan sigurtei in Mongolia;
Byakusangai in Japan.
Hārīti in Tibet, Turkestan and Jávā;
Kui-tzu-mu-shen in China;
Koyasu Kwan-non in Japan.

3. Māhāmāyūri

4. Aparājita-
Sitātapatrā

5. Hārīti (consort of the
Brahamanical god Kubera
and Protectress of children) (Buddhist Tāntrika image found in
Nālandā and Bengal).

6. Mārīcchī (Śakti of Vairochana, Buddhist Tāntrika image found in the middle ages)
Hod zer-can-ma or Vajrārvāhī in Tibet;
Marishi-ten in Japan; Queen of the Heavens and Mother of the Dipper in China.
In every temple of Nepal.
Lo ma-gyon-ma in Tibet; Hiyo in Japan.

7. Uṣṇīṣavijaya (Śakti of Vairochana)

8. Parnashabari (Goddess of the Śabaras,
an aboriginal tribe. Buddhist Tāntrika image found in Bengal, belonging to the middle ages)
Sarasvatī or Vajrasarasvatī in Tibet;
Sarasvatī, Áryajángulī or Jángulī and Yellow Tārā in China; Benten in Japan;
Sarasvatī in Sumātrā, Jávā, Siam and Cambodia.
Tsunā in Tibet;
Chun-ti in China;
Chuṇḍā in Jávā and Japan.
Vajrārvāhī in Nepal

9. Sarasvatī or Vajra-sāradā

10. Chuṇḍā or Chaʊṇḍā (Śakti of Vajrasattva-Buddhist Tāntrika image found in Bodhgayā and Paṭṭikhera, Tipperah) with her four attendant-goddesses: Vaṭṭāli (red), Vadalī (Yellow) Vārāhi (white) varāha-mukhī (red). In this form she is called Vajrārvāhī.

11. Vasudhārā
Vasudhārā in Nepal.

In the ancient Indian myth and art Śaktis are represented not merely as incarnations of youthful charm and energy but also as engaged in a strenuous struggle against the asuras or powers of evil, when their gestures and movements become wild and terrible although their faces depict unperturbed tranquillity. A profound detachment and absence of emotion in the movement or
action are combined with an absolute sense of omnipotence, devoid of the least inkling of brutality or vulgar exhibition of physical force. The asuras, again, seem to succumb without opposition or conflict, as if pre-ordained according to the immutable cosmic law of the supremacy of truth and righteousness that the goddess symbolises. Or, again, the goddess is represented in a single image symbolising the struggle within the human soul, the power of destruction of the flesh and the devil in the mind of the worshipper and the beholder. Such are the awful animated images of Durgā, Kāli, Chāmuṇḍā, Tārā or Parṇaśābāri that yet exhibit a magnificent beauty and feeling-import, contrasted with those implicit in the more serene and pleasant types of beauty, such as Parvati, Prajñāpāramitā, Mahāpratisarā, Umā and Gaurī. The sitting posture of the latter is also relaxed in sculpture in sāukhāsana or latitāsana, with the right leg pendent or placed on a lotus in soft, compassionate self-conscious gesture of love and benediction to man. It is noteworthy that in Buddhist or Brahmanical art in Indian Asia the appropriate pose and symmetry that the Indian sculptor could give to the various images in their various seats and gestures (āsanas and mudrās), following the Indian yogic traditions, could not often be achieved. Many of these poses were no doubt unfamiliar to the Buddhist and Brahmanical converts in China and Further India. Finally, when the divinity is represented in Indian sculpture in its wild destructive aspects, dwarf and pot-bellied bodies having none of the youth and elegance of the Buddha, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Parvati are some times figured. Heruka, a dancing Buddhist divinity, terrible in his aspects, and Bhairava, a dancing Hindu-Buddhist god in Javanese sculpture, are apposite illustrations from the sculpture of mediaeval Bengal.

Grimness and Hope as Contrasted Phases of the Reality

The arts of very few countries have the moods of the grim, terrific and furious seldom expressed, and that with such cosmic meaning. The Gods of Eternity, Mahākāla, Aghora or Bhairava, and Hevajra, Heruka or Sarinvara, Vighnāntaka, Hayagrīva and Trailokyavijaya among the male deities, and Vajra or Bhṛikuṭi Tārā, Parṇaśābāri, Mārīcī, Durgā, Chāmuṇḍā, Kāli and Kurukullā, among the female deities, symbolise the destructive aspects of the cosmic process. All that is terrible and repellent are combined in these remarkably vigorous, grim dancing images, intended to detach the beholder or devotee from the life of the senses for reaching the Truth, which is indeed assured by the gesture of hope (abhaya) in one of their many swirling hands, their other hands usually holding the skull, corpse, spear, knife, sword, kettle-drum and bone.

It is easy to understand that in the human mind spiritual truth or wisdom becomes fierce resentment or righteous indignation when it encounters wickedness, vice and ignorance, and that spiritual love and compassion that encompass everybody enforce themselves upon those who deny their power of deliverance.
It is this psychology that underlies the expression of the terrible in Asian painting and sculpture under Tāntrika influence. In Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism and Tāntrikism of Bengal, Tibet, Nepal, Indonesia and China and in Shingon Buddhism in Japan several remarkable representations of the terrible are met with. In Eastern India, Nepal and Tibet Yama or Yamāntaka, the God of Death, is a familiar terrific figure. The grim Kurukullā of Nepal, sometimes called the Red Tārā, who wears a crown of skulls and a garland of heads, shows a superb dancing posture with her right leg upraised, while the left leg is slightly bent under the weight of the moving body (copper gilt image, Collection of Warrington, Cincinnati). The Dākinīs of Tibet, lithe, graceful and completely nude with open mouths emitting a terrific cry are also noteworthy representations of the frightful. In many Oriental temples the devārapāla or gate-keeper is often a divinity with terrible aspects cleansing the pilgrim with the fear of the Lord. Such is the rākṣasa or demon, holding a club and serpent in his hands in Chandi Sewu in Jávā described as "a tangible terror in stone." The devārapāla is equally grim and fierce in the Jetavana temple at Anurādhāpura in Ceylon and the Hall of Mutation in the Todaji temple at Nara in Japan. In the latter shrine, the largest wooden structure in the world, the life-size statues of the four Guardian Kings who ward off wickedness and vice, represent Komokuten (Sanskrit Virūpākṣa), the far-gazer Zochoten (Pāli Virudhaka), the lord of growth, Jikoku-ten (Sanskrit Dhūrītarāṣṭra), the landbearer and Bishamon-ten or Tamonten (Sanskrit Vaiśra-vaṇa), the well-famed. Each harks back to a non-Tāntrika Indian tradition. But as he stands in triumph over the prostrate demon after fierce combat that has left its tension on the face and limbs, he obviously subscribes to Tāntrika ideology. The same horrendous images of the four Guardian Kings of the Quarters, also called Nāgarājas, are met with in Tibet, China and Jávā. At Borobodur in Jávā one pier of the stūpa is entirely devoted to the representation of these awe-some deities. Javanese art has also produced the magnificent bronze image of Trailokyavijaya which has already been mentioned, with four faces revealing different moods and eight hands crushing Śiva and Pārvatī under his feet—perhaps the most powerful and majestic image of destruction ever executed by the human hand. The medieval Bengal images of Trailokyavijaya or the image in the Brahmanical monastery of Bodh-Gayā are much less vigorous and grim. In Cambodia there is the fierce representation of the Indian Vajrayāna deity, Heruka. In Japan there are the formidable images of Dai Itoku and Fudo. Dai Itoku-Myoo or the Great Majestic Power is a modification of the Brahmanical Yamāntaka or Vajra-bhairava, the God of Death. He has six or three fierce faces and six or two arms holding weapons of destruction. His expression is furious and awful; his hair comprises flames. He embodies in Japanese art the terrible and relentless might of destruction (Plate xvii, Aesaki, Buddhist Art). Fudo or the Immobile Deity is the fierce manifestation of Mahā-Vairochana, representing the subjugating powers of

1 See Hackin and others: Asiatic Mythology, pp. 99, 166-70.
the Buddha over the human passions. Fudo in Shingon art embodies the formidable, all-subjugating power of the deity while he himself remains still and serene (Sanskrit Achala, Japanese Fudo). His fiery eyes glare at the human passions, his sword and rope overcome and restrain the base appetites. There is a dragon which is coiled round a sword. The dragon represents the base desires and the sword symbolises their subjugation. Aesaki observes: “Although the art of Shingon was largely controlled by its symbolic conventions, and although some of its figures are ultra-human or even repellent its meticulous care in the matter of symbolic details was combined with an eager effort for the realistic execution of human expressions in face, body and limbs. This was carried out with the object of making visible what is abstract by expressing in tangible manifestations the supernal powers of the deities and thus furnishing not only the raison d’être of Shingon art, but also the strongest motives for delicate painting and vigorous sculpture, the results of which are seen chiefly in the art of the Heian period, from the ninth to the twelfth century.” The paintings of the Red-fudo of the Myouo-in on Mount Koya, the Yellow-fudo of the Onjoji and the Juni-ten (twelve guardians) of the Saikaiji are considered as some of the great masterpieces of Shingon art commanding awe and reverence. There is also a painting of Fudo and his attendants by an unknown artist of the 13th century (now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) breathing rage and fury in the subjugation of human passions and showing a superb blend of vigorous and free technique with taste and reflection. Often in Tántrika religious doctrine and art, whether in India or in Nepal, Tibet, Indonesia and Japan, the serene and the fierce, the compassionate and the furious are contrasted phases of the supreme manifestation of the deity.

No such representation of opposites, of grimness and hope, darkness and light, sacrifice and renewal of life, will be found in the treatment of the terrible in Michael Angelo’s ‘Last Judgement,’ Goya’s ‘Saturn’ or Delacroix’s ‘Medea’, three of the rare representations of the terrible in Western art, while in the representation of the Dance of Death by Holbein, Rethel or other master-artists or in the modern treatment of the same theme by A. Egger-Lienz in Germany we encounter a morbid consciousness of mortality, of the omnipresence of death, that has not freed itself from the narrow medieval spirit. The course of European art in its broad preference for rendering sensuous beauty, idealism and serenity within the compass of the human form has missed the revelation of dimensions of Reality that are grim, awesome and bewildering—supramundane moods and experiences familiar to Tántrika art in India and South and East Asia through the centuries. Such are the differences in art-form arising out of different slants in metaphysics and religion.
Part V

LATER TRANSFORMATIONS
Chapter 15

THE AMBIVALENCE OF RAJPUT LIFE AND ART

Effects of Muslim Conquest and Violence on Rajput Character

The art of India had been powerfully influencing the culture of Nepal and Tibet, further India and Indonesia during the five centuries that the Muslims took after their preliminary adventure of the occupation of Sindh (A.D. 712 to 743) to conquer the whole of Hindustan under Iltutmish (1210-1236), following the subjugation of the most easterly Sena kingdom of Bengal by Bakhtiyar Khalji (about A.D. 1199).

The five most magnificent temple cities of Asia grew from glory to glory when Northern Indian cities from Somanatha to Kancui were being sacked and devastated by the Turko-Afghans. Borobudur was built by the Sailendra Emperors under the influence of the Mahayana during A.D. 750-850; Prambanan was built under the influence of Saivism in the 9th century A.D.; the Cambodian twin cities of Angkor-Wat and Angkor-Thom were built by Jayavarman II, (A.D. 802) and Yasovarman, (A.D. 800-910) under the influence of Tantrika Saivism; and Pagan or Arimardanapura in Burma was built in the 11th century under the influence of Hinayana Buddhism which gradually found its way to the north of Siam where it provided the inspiration of the Siamese national school of art. The Majapahit Empire in Java beginning from the regime of king Kritarajasa in A.D. 1292 accepted such Hindu gods as the Sun, the Earth Mother and Siva though Indian influences waned. Garuda, Bhima and Hanuman were, however, the most popular objects of worship, while Tantrikism from Bengal came to be assimilated to local magic and ritual. A Tantrika renaissance founded on the impulsion of Eastern Indian Tantrikism and its scripture, viz. the Mahanirvana Tantra was witnessed in East Java and Sumatra in the reigns of kings Kritanagara and Adityavarman in the thirteenth century. It was at the end of this century (1297) that Alauddin Khalji invaded Gujarat, the last stronghold of independence in Hindustan.

The impulsion of Indian art in temple architecture and sculpture and the movement of religious synthesis, represented by the assimilation of the Buddha, Vishnu and Triune Siva and Linga cults, were most active throughout Southeast Asia up to the 11th century when Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni was plundering the towns of Hindustan. The Muslim conquest of India and the consequent loss of cultural initiative in the homeland led to the gradual choking of those broad, invigorating currents of culture that had been flowing unimpeded for nearly two thousand years from the Indian continent. From about the beginning of the 15th century Indian colonial culture, torn from its vital roots in the homeland, was gradually overwhelmed by the indigenous Indonesian culture looking back to the ancient Malayo-Polynesian stratum, until the Muslims
spread out into the Indian ocean and introduced Islam by force into this region in the 15th century A.D.

The disintegration of the empires of the Pratihāras and the Pālas in Northern India and of the Chālukyas in Western India in the 11th and 12th centuries contributed towards the establishment of a large number of small independent Rajput States upon whom devolved the task of defending Hindustan and Hindu civilization in Northern India against Muslim aggression. The latter began with the invasion of Sind by Muhammad Bin Qāsim in A.D. 711, but only became a serious menace with the invasion of Mahmūd of Ghaznī in A.D. 1000 and his signal defeat of Jaipāla a year later. The Turko-Afghan invaders and vandals were no doubt sturdily resisted by several small and scattered Rajput tribes and clans. But the latter failed to offer a concerted opposition. Almost one by one they valiantly fought and lost freedom's battle in Northern, Western and Central India. Their unparalleled heroism and sacrifice for about eight centuries since the first Muslim conquest of Sindh, Kathiawar, Malwa and Multan at the beginning of the 8th century A.D. had a critical influence on the course of Indian culture and art. Bhoja I Pratihāra of Mahodaya Śri, Jayapāla Gāhadvāla of Bhaṭīṇḍā, Bhoja Paramāra of Dhārā, Jayachandra Gāhadvāla of Kanauj and Banaras, Prithvi Rāja Chauhāna of Ajmer and Delhi and Mūlarāja Solaṅki of Gujarat, the Chandela Rājās of Bundelkhand, the Kalachuris of the Central Provinces and the Pālas of Bengal created new traditions of valour that were praised by the bards and emulated by all subsequent rulers in the country. Any periods of peace and relaxation that these courageous rulers and fighters enjoyed were devoted to brisk construction of forts and temples and extravagant temple embellishments in their capital cities, towns and citadels. Some kind of a regional renaissance, Brahmanical in Rajasthan, Malwa, Kathiawad and Bundelkhand, and Buddhist in Eastern India as a reaction against Turko-Afghan onslaught and vandalism was witnessed from the 8th to the 12th centuries. This was no doubt limited in scope but otherwise resembled the mightier Gupta renaissance that had met a similar challenge of foreign aggression and conquest three centuries back.

The turmoil and chaos of the Muslim invasions, lasting for about eight centuries, left an indelible impress on the character of the Rajput tribes and clans, who like the knightly class of feudal Europe, became more and more fierce and heroic, and more and more narrow and incomplete as men with their entire clientele all over Āryāvarta. May be, the foreign Iranian, Ephthalite or Turko-Mongol elements in the composition of the Rajput race have something to do with the Rajput "spirit". For in the period intervening between the disintegration of the Gupta empire and the rise of the Rajput clans there was a large scale immigration from Afghan-Baluch border territory that entirely swept away the ancient settlements west of Malwa and north of Kathiawar. But the Gurjara-Pratihāras were thoroughly Hinduised and their empire in the Ganges Valley like that of the Pāla-Senas in the East, was a Hindu
empire; and so were other Rajput clans in Central India, Rajputana and the Eastern Punjab. More than "barbarian" ethnic elements, it was the cultural milieu of foreign conquest and aggression that nurtured the sturdy, ever-vigilant, uncompromising warlikeness in both war and peace of the Rajputs so much consonant with a young ethnic spirit. For the Rajput from the time that a boy reaching puberty was initiated into knighthood by the ritual of "the binding of the sword", the consuming passion was war. His favourite recreations were hunting and hawking and playing chess and chaupar. His models were the heroes of the Indian epics. Courageous and adventurous to the extreme, he was frequently haughty, stubborn and wilful. But as a rule he spared the vanquished, respected the women-folk and was generous to his clientele and even to his enemies. Above all he was never unfair either in love or war. The Rajput warriors show striking resemblances in their conduct with the knights of the middle ages of Europe. Their historian Tod observes: "The Rajput chieftains were imbued with all the kindred virtues of the Western Cavalier, and far his superior in mental attainments". Some of them in contrast with the European warriors of the age of chivalry were no mean poets and scientists. The Rajput woman was dignified, free and chaste and exercised the ancient Kṣatriya right of the maiden's choice of husband (svayamvara). She was the comrade of her husband in war as well as in the hunting field and preferred death in the funeral pyre to dishonour, defilement and servitude. A charming Rajput ritual was the binding of the silken tie on the wrist as a pledge of unflinching, almost quixotic camaraderie through prosperity and adversity between persons and families. No one that sought aid or succour could be refused even at the risk of grave danger. A similar pledge ratified by the eating of opium together, the exchange of turbans or the giving of the right hand was maintained as inviolable under all circumstances. The spirit of heroic warfare for the defence of motherland and culture bred the feeling: "Life is an old garment; what matters if we throw it off? To die well is life immortal." We quote a well-known dohā of Rajasthan: "Never permit your motherland to be occupied by anybody". With such a lullaby song the brave mother even while rocking the cradle of the child makes him understand the sanctity of death for the sake of the motherland. Another dohā runs thus: "Seeing rejoicings all round, the mother-in-law inquires about the joyous occasion in the house. She knows not that her beloved son is going to the battlefield to spread death and to meet death, and the daughter-in-law is filled with the desire of becoming satī."

The Ambivalence of the Grim and the Gentle in Rajput Culture

Such was the uncertainty of Rajput life that the transition from the bridal chamber to the cremation ghāṭ of the satī burning herself immediately after the coveted death in battle of her warrior husband, was as sudden as it was expected by every true Rājpūtanī. Yet the warlike Rajput race, ever vigilant
for the defence of freedom and culture produced at least three royal authors—the famous Bhoja of Dhara (11th century), whose encyclopaedic knowledge is evident from his treatises on diverse subjects such as philosophy, politics, poetics, astronomy and architecture, the Kalachuri Mayuraraja (about A.D. 800) and Vigraraharaja IV Chauhan of Ajmer (about A.D. 1153) who revived the traditions of Samudragupta Kaviraja and of the great Harsha of Kanauj. The Bhutas or Charanas of Rajputana recited old ballads full of the heroism and courage, unsparing loyalty to clan and chieftain of the Rajput warriors and the purity, endurance and sacrifice of the Rajput queens. Here is a famous old Rajput legend of self-immolation of the Rani of Chitor as retold in Tod’s Rajasthan. Her husband having fallen in battle the Rani asks his retinue:

"Boy, tell me, ere I go, how bore himself, my Lord?"

"As a reaper of the harvest of battle I followed his steps as the humble gleaner of his sword. On the gory bed of honour he spread a carpet of the slain; a barbarian prince his pillow he laid him down, and he sleeps ringed by his foes."

"Yet once again, oh boy, tell me how my lord bore himself."

"Oh, mother, who can tell his deeds? He left no foe to dread or to admire him."

"She smiled farewell to the boy, and adding, ‘My lord will chide my delay,’ sprang into the flames."

Perhaps success in arms and triumph over an implacable, unscrupulous foe would have developed the gentler and warmer side of Rajput culture. The grim and sombre aspects of Rajput culture are illustrated by the terrible rite of mass suicide or jauhara (jatu griha of the Mahabharata in which the Pandavas were sought to be burnt en masse) that symbolizes and celebrates the victory of the Rajput soul over death and slavery. The collective self-immolation that elicited the profound admiration even of the Muslims from al-Biruni downwards was largely a reaction against the brutality, cunning and absence of fairness on the part of the Muslim invaders, who prosecuted the jehads fanatically and relentlessly, and from whom no quarter could be expected. The virile and brave Rajput race responded to the chronic insecurity and calamity not only by fierce and unyielding self-destruction but also by infinite toil, unbending fortitude and ardent religious devotion. These were reflected and symbolized by the architectural and sculptural extravaganza rooted in its overwrought emotional life. The ports of Gujarat, such as Cambay and Surat, which were on the cross-roads of sea-borne commerce between the Oriental and Occidental worlds, accumulated in this epoch vast wealth that made magnificence possible; while in many cities the merchants, artisans and craftsmen of all sorts participated in the communal enterprise of temple building, as in mediaeval Gothic cathedral building in Europe. Hardly in the annals of human history have the character and tempo of a whole people, and hence the pattern of their sculpture and architecture, undergone such a profound
transformation as a result of continuous foreign aggression and violence with associated mass emotions of fear, anxiety and religious piety.

Religious Outbursts Echoed in the Architectural and Sculptural Extravaganza

Rajput architecture, sculpture and painting cannot be understood at all without reference to the overwrought affections and sentiments during eight centuries of continuous tumult, chaos and terror at the hands of the Muslims. Thence stemmed equally the frightful rites of jauhar and sati, and the utter self-abandon of Bhakti among the common people, and hectic building of multitudinous temples with their minuta of sculpture and decorative work. While Rajput temples became veritable aery chapels, Rajput sculpture was converted into filigree work of sweet and delicate texture characteristic of each image, each decorative work, each animal or plant motif, on walls, ceilings and pillars. The patient chisel of the mason and carver at the behest of the primordial emotions of anxiety, pain and religious abandon of the masses produced enchanting dreams of fretted marble and carved stones surpassing anything seen elsewhere in the meticulous, elaborate and prolific embellishment of ceilings, pillars, doorways, panels and niches and repetition of radiant fairy forms such as Mahāvidyās and Surasundaris in their manifold poses and moods in Gujarāt, Rajputana, Bundelkhand and Orissa. The crisp, thin and translucent treatment of the white Makrana marble at Dilvārā, Śatruñjaya and Kumbharia, the stress of multiplicity and ornamentation (rather than severity and simplicity) in architectural design and figural and foliate motif, the agitation in the figure compositions and the dissolution of decorative motifs, including Chaitya arches enclosing heads and makaras, in arabesque in numerous Nāgara shrines alike testify to profound intensity and poignancy. Whether at Khajurāho or Bhuvanesvāra, at Koṇāraka or Udayapura or at Dilvārā (Devalavādā), Anhilavādā and Kumbharia, the lavishness is beauty, the sheer profusion is adornment in architectural and sculptural treatment. All these are symbolic at once of the splendour and piety of the Rajput court, and of the high-strung emotional expression of the Rajput people with whom insecurity is as much a habit as devotional self-abandon before Mahādeva, Kriṣna, Durgā or Jain Tirthāṅkara is a familiar experience. At the same time each temple shows a complete discipline and subordination of figures and ornamental motifs, in spite of profuseness and over-refinement of detail, to the overall style and design that have imposed a marvellous consistence for each ceiling, each arch, each column, each panel and each niche. Such is the superb blend of austerity and exuberance, coherence and delicacy in proportion and decoration that indeed represent the continuation of the finest traditions of Gupta art and craftsmanship.

The delicacy, artistry and finesse of Rajput architecture and sculpture in a thousand temples from Kutch and Kathiawar to Bhuvanesvāra and Koṇāraka
built from the 11th to the 13th centuries, some of which in their own Baroque ornamentation may be regarded as the architectural and sculptural wonders of the world reflected, to be sure, the perturbation and prayer of the embattled defenders of Hindu civilisation against Islam. The Bhakti movement that spread throughout the length and breadth of India under the leadership of Hindu saints such as Kabir, Dādū, Mirābāi and Chaitanya in the 14th and 15th centuries found a most congenial home in the Rajput palaces and huts where women pined for love and their warrior husbands were absent for most of the time. It had, no doubt, its well-springs in ancient mystical traditions handed down by the Bhāgavata Purāṇa across the centuries. But it thrived largely in response to the dread and confusion of the Muslim invasions. The overplaying of the tough and fierce but narrowed masculine roles throve upon the Rajput woman the task of cultivating gentleness, piety and aesthetic and spiritual values as counterpoise. Apart from the terrible rite of jauhar when an entire population of Rajput women immolated themselves, their life was punctuated by spells of preparation for suicide and for religious rites and devotions. Tod observed: “In each stage of the Rajpoonti’s life, death is ready to claim her; by the poppy at its dawn, by the flames in riper years; while the safety of the interval depending on the uncertainty of war, at no period is her existence worth a twelve months’ purchase”. This awful tension engendered a strange callousness and indifference to death along with extravagant ceremonialism, supplication and devotion among the princes and peoples of Rajasthan.

If the Rajput man always fought, drank, gambled and quarrelled, chivalry, ardent religious fervour and aesthetic sentiments were nurtured largely by the Rajput woman who played a considerable role in the statecraft, literature and fine arts. The spiritual ecstasy and boldness of Mirābāi of Udaipur are matched with the political sagacity and heroism of Padmānī of Chitor, the courage of Durgāvati of Gurrati and the foresight of Puspāvati of Valabhi. Mirābāi’s devotional hymns have fed the imagination of the common people of Rajasthan through the centuries. The Bhakti movement was, on the one hand, entirely congruent with the egregious, emotional and aesthetic sensibilities of the Rajput women some of whom became well-known poets, musicians and mystics. On the other hand, the mystic poets Mirābāi and Narasimha Mehta nurtured the national movement of resistance in Gujarat against both the Mughals and the Marathas. Finally, it is the sweet and utter self-abandon of Bhakti, which underlies the tenderness, melifuousness and delicacy of Rajput temple building and sculpture, emulating the fineness and technical precocity of Rajput music and dance and the precision and ornamentation of Rajput embroideries.

The Plastic Version of the Rajput National Music and Dance

The ambivalence of Rajput culture and art can be vividly discerned from the alternation between the grim and the soft masculine and feminine roles; the
fierce and the gentle Rajput festivals and observances and the geometrical and rigid and the mystical and lyrical patterns of Rajput architecture and sculpture. On the grim side we have of course the rite of mass jauhar that prefers death to dishonour, the sacred and yet terrible rite of sati, the enslavement of the wives and damsels of vanquished enemies, the worship of the sword during the Navarātri, the embellishment and elaboration of the armoury and the housing of the steeds, the construction of massive frowning forts such as those of Chitor, Udaipur, Dabhoi, Jhinjuvad, Gwalior and Datia and the sculpturing of the dancing figures of Śiva Natarāja, Durgā and Chāmuṇḍā. On the gentle side, we have the Rajput predilection for music, his national Tappā and Śahanāī, poignant and melancholy in their tunes, the setting to music of the divine-cum-human love-poems of Jayadeva's Gitagovinda; the festivals of Spring, Dipāvali; Gauri, Kāmadeva (the god of love), Rambhā (the queen of the apsarās) and Rākhi, the construction of the temples at Mount Ābu and Śatruṣṇayā, all of white marble, sculptured outside and inside, both pillars and roofs with the finish and refinement of carved ivory or ebony, "an ecstasy", in the words of Birdwood, "in the art of mystical architecture", and the sculpturing of the figures of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā and of a thousand damsels, both celestial and earthly, Surasundarīs, Vidyās, nāyikās, apsarās, musicians and dancers.

The elegant scenes of lāsya dance, with the nāyikā in the centre and musicians playing on the lute drum, flute, cymbal and mridanga at her sides, sculptured in the temples of Rajputana from the Purāṇā Mahādeva Temple at Harṣagiri (A.D. 961-973) to Man Singh’s Palace, Gwalior Fort (A.D. 1500), or, again, the dancing Śrīs or Mahāvidyās at the temples of Ādinātha (A.D. 1031) and Nemi-nātha (A.D. 1232) at Mount Ābu show a remarkable lyrical quality in poses, gestures and movements worthy of painting. These represent, indeed, the plastic version of Rajput folk-dance and painting, and fully reveal the besetting passion of the Rajput race for music and dance to which it inevitably turned in the short intervals of peace and relaxation.

The Rajput Cities of Gods

It is due to the same ambivalence of poignant emotions of the Rajput race, alternating its routine life between cruel and awful warfare and lively entertainment by minstrels, geneologists, priests and dancing girls, between hunting and hawking and hymn-singing and performance of rituals before gods and Tirthaṅkaras, that forts were built not for human habitation but consisted only of massive gates, towers and barracks while cities were built not for the shelter of men but of gods alone. More than five hundred temples adorn the city of Śatruṣṇayā. On the slopes of the hills of Girinagara in Kathiawad and Śatruṣṇayā, or Pālitana in Gujarāt, at Mount Ābu in the Arāvali Hills, at Rampur in Jodhpur State, at Sonagir near Datia, at Kunḍalpur in Damoh, at Muktagirī near Gwalgarh in Berar and at Pārasnātha in Bengal we have only temple cities, inhabited only by gods and angels. And when temples are
built in these cities of gods the architecture is converted into an intricate and minute tracery of stone or marble carving and the stone or marble into a malleable material like ebony or ivory. It is neither chiselling nor carving but indefatigable rubbing and polishing that have fashioned the stone into such miraculous tenuity and translucence, spilling sweetness and softness everywhere. We give below the descriptions of Śatruṅjaya and Dilvārā from Forbes and Cousens respectively. Forbes writes:

"There is hardly a city in India, through its length and breadth, from the river of Śind to the sacred Ganges, from Himalaya’s diadem of ice peaks to the throne of his virgin daughter, Rudra’s destined bride, that has not supplied, at one time or other, contributions of wealth to the edifices which crown the hill of Palitāna, street after street and square after square, extend these shrines of the Jain faith, with their stately enclosures, half palace, half fortress, raised, in marble magnificence, upon the lovely and majestic mountain, and like the mansions of another world far removed in upper air from the ordinary tread of mortals. In the dark recesses of each temple one image or more of Ādinātha, of Ajita, or of some of the Tirthāṅkaras, is seated, whose alabaster features wearing an expression of listless repose, are rendered dimly visible by the faint light shed from silver lamps; incense perfumes the air, and barefooted, with noiseless tread, upon the polished floors, the female votaries, glittering in scarlet and gold, move round and round in circles, chanting forth their monotonous but not unmelodious hymns. Śatruṅjaya, indeed, might fitly represent one of the fancied hills of eastern romance, the inhabitants of which have been instantaneously changed into marble, but which fay hands are ever employed upon, burning perfumes, and keeping all clean and brilliant, while fay voices haunt the air in the voluptuous praises of the Devas."

Cousens similarly describes the Dilvārā temples at Mount Ābū made entirely of white marble:

"The amount of beautiful ornamental detail spread over these temples in the minutely carved decoration of ceilings, pillars, doorways, panels, and niches is simply marvellous; the crisp, thin, translucent, shell-like treatment of the marble surpasses anything seen elsewhere, and some of the designs are veritable dreams of beauty. The work is so delicate that ordinary chiselling would have been disastrous. It is said that much of it was produced by scraping the marble away, and that the masons were paid by the amount of marble dust so removed."

_Feverish Temple Building in Northern India from the 8th to 13th Centuries_

The religious frenzy which accomplished a complete transformation of Rajput
architecture into delicate extensive filigree work is the Hindu rejoinder to Muslim jehad and destruction of Hindu temples that began with Mahmud of Ghazni’s sack of Somnath in A.D. 1025. The temple of Risabhanath at Dilwara (literally ‘province of temples’) was constructed in A.D. 1031 by the banker Vimala Shah of Gujarat within only seven years of Mahmud’s vandalism. In Gujarat one of the biggest temples, the Rudramala, was built at Siddhapur by Siddharaj (A.D. 1093-1143) of Anhilavadhapatnam, the chief city of Western India from the end of the 8th to the 15th century. Other imposing temples, at Kumbharia, Vadanagar and Modhera (A.D. 1026-1027), were constructed not long after the period of Mahmud’s devastating campaigns. Kumarpaladev (A.D. 1143-1174) rebuilt the temple of Somnath but this was again looted and transformed into a mosque. The famous groups of Hindu and Jain temples were constructed at Khajuraho between A.D. 950 to 1050. In Madhya Bhara the celebrated temple of Nlakanatha or Udayeesvara was built at Udayapur by the Paramara king Udayaditya of Malwa between A.D. 1050 and 1080. Its exterior is most lavishly decorated with sculptures of Siva-Durgai, and of the various gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon that cover four narrow flat bands directing the eyes from the base to the summit of the tower; while the spaces that lie between them are filled with minute replicas of the main tower prodigiously multiplied. A superb balance between the horizontals and verticals is characteristic of the magnificently unified design of both tower and mantapa. Though not well-known, it is one of the finest, artistically built temples of India—a religious lyric in stone, a cut diamond of artistry of horizontal, vertical and circular lines, planes and volumes scintillating into a form of a curvilinear pyramid. The logical coherence and vigour of the temple plan are combined with an incredible profusion of sculpture and ornamentation on the surface, and on railings, pillars, walls and roofs. Besides this temple, built in the city founded by Udayaditya, there were other beautiful temples of Siva constructed between the 10th and 12th centuries at Nemawar, Kadiwara, Un, Mitaoli, Suhania, Surwata, Jamli, Badhawas, Naresar and Kherat. Some of these temples are also marvels in the art of temple construction and stone carving carried to incredible delicacy and fineness. In Gwalior the Vaishnav temple called Sas-bahu was constructed in A.D. 1093. Magnificent Vaishnav temples were constructed at Chandpur, Dudhahi and Madanpur in Lalitpur district in the 12th century. The temple of Neminath was built at Dilwara in A.D. 1231 by the merchant brothers Tejapala and Vastupala. At Girnar in Kathiawad the great temple of Neminath was built in A.D. 1278. In the same city another temple was built by the brothers Tejapala and Vastupala about A.D. 1230.

The period from the iconoclastic depredations of Mahmud of Ghazni beginning from the first year of the 11th century to the establishment of a strong and compact monarchy embracing the whole of Hindustan at the beginning of the 13th century by Ilutmish (A.D. 1210 to 1236) in fact saw a feverish activity of Hindu temple building in Northern India that began even before Mahmud’s
invasion. A Brahmanic revival was witnessed in Rajputana in the 8th and 9th centuries which stimulated Brahmanical temple-building following the inspiration of the Gupta renaissance ideal. At Osia in the Jodhpur State the shrines of Sūrya and Hari-Hara and of Jain Tīrthaṅkaras were built from the 8th to the 10th centuries with a minute embellishment of figure and foliate motifs and representations of minor Hindu gods and goddesses, navagrahas, garudas and nāgūs, worthy of exquisite Gupta workmanship, and forestalling the richness of carving and ornamentation at Khajurāho and Koṅāraka.

The Art of the Rajput Renaissance

H. Goetz thus describes the essential qualities of what he rightly calls the Rajput renaissance sculpture: “Even in the high medieval temple sculptures of Rajputana, the general art conception is more abstract than in the East and South, and even in the Śākta temples with their highly erotic subjects the subject is not so much that of fully developed ripe fertility than that of the blossoming girl, i.e. the later ideal of Rajput painting. With other words, the Rajput ideal of female beauty stands nearer to the Western conception as expressed in Greek and medieval European art. Figures like those at Kiradu in Jaipur State or Modhera in Baroda State often come strikingly near to the best of Greek statuary, whereas, on the other hand, Rajput painting is so similar to early Trecentist Italian painting that it would be possible to transfer whole figures from one art to the other.” In the treatment of warriors with their swords, shields and quivers, we encounter in Rajput sculpture a characteristic stolidity, rigour and rounded volume. These spread to the figurations of damsels, whose relative sturdiness is not permitted to be overcome by sensitive modelling and soft, flexible handling of the linear elements, true of all medieval sculpture. There has developed a purely Rajput sculptural style side by side with Rajput architecture and painting, which was nourished by the national resistance against Muslim arms and culture.

The Rajputs everywhere accepted valiantly their responsibility as the sole defenders of the old cultural inheritance. In Madhya Bhārata, there was an upsurge of Śaivism from the 10th to the 12th centuries accounting for a feverish construction of numerous Śiva temples, of which the most important was Udayesvara, and of the monasteries of the Mattamayūras (mad peacocks) at Kadwaha, Terai, Ranod and Surwaya. In the 13th century Itutmish sacked and destroyed the most celebrated Śiva temple of Madhya Bhārata—the ancient temple of Mahākāla at Ujjain. The Rajput zeal and gusto for temple construction were intensified by the psychological shock and anguish felt throughout the country by the outrageous desecration and destruction of the temples of Somanāth, Thāneśvar, Mathurā, Kanauj and Ujjain by Turko-Afghan vandals. For about three centuries temples in which sculpture, ornamentation and miniature reached the intimate charm, exquisite fineness and technical precocity of ivory and wood work rose in considerable numbers,
due to the over-wrought mind and heart of the princes and people. The raptures and ecstasies of marble in Rajputana that are unparalleled in the world's architecture and sculpture for the thrill and enchantment of their columns, ceilings, doorways and panels as well as the finish and refinement of their images and decorative motifs avenged the humiliation of Somanāth, Kanauj and Mathurā.
Chapter 16

THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN PAINTING

The Emotional and Literary Background of Rājasthāna Painting

In his well-known work, *Form and Colour*, March Philips stresses that colour is an emotional apprehension while form is an intellectual perception. Consequently, periods of quick and vital thinking would be associated with the highest peaks of development of sculpture, while epochs of emotional sensitiveness and tenderness would be associated with the unique heights of painting. It is significant that in Europe the highest peaks of sculpture were reached in the classical age of the 5th century B.C. and three and a half centuries of Gothic art-periods (1150-1500) characterised by remarkable intellectual clarity and serenity. In India the intellectual ferment and achievement of the Gupta period produced a serene, sharp and vigorous sculpture that reached its apex in the 5th to 7th centuries A.D. Again, when Tāntrikism widened the horizon of human understanding and appreciation, Indian sculpture from the 7th to 12th centuries A.D. became remarkable not only for its beauty but also for its frankness, comprehension and joy. Similarly, Indian painting was at its best in India during two epochs when there was a profound upsurge of emotional tenderness and devotion, the product of the Mahāyāna-Buddha-Bhāgavatism in the 6th and 7th centuries, and of the Bhakti movement of Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism from the 16th to the 18th centuries. The frescoes of Ajantā and Bāgh and of Rājasthāna in both periods have many common features. Equally, an inexpressible human sweetness, tenderness and feeling of oneness with the whole of Life and Nature underlie the magical glow and serenity of the Bodhisattva and Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā paintings in the two epochs of exaltation of Bhakti in India.

The vitality and exuberance of the Rājasthāna and Hīmāchala schools of painting in the 17th and 18th centuries were peculiarly a national reaction against both the humiliation and suffering of the people under Muslim subjection and the sophisticated foreign Timurid and Turkish idioms of painting prevalent in the capital cities and towns of India. The Rājasthāna and Hīmāchala paintings are usually on a miniature scale, strikingly departing from the mural frescoes of Ajantā and Bāgh. But, as Benjamin Rowland aptly points out, the technique here does not differ much from that of classic wall-paintings though the pictures are done on paper. He observes: "The elements of the composition were first outlined with the brush in light red, possibly over a preliminary hard pencil outline. After the entire surface had been covered with a white priming of starch paste, the main lines were re-drawn in black. The background was coloured and the underpainting of the figures then covered with appropriate local pigments and a final definition of the outlines. The technique, in other words, is exactly the same as that of the Ajantā frescoes."
Over and above this perpetuation of classical technique the Rajput school continues many motifs and the rhetoric of the ancient schools.  

The Rājasthāna and Himāchala miniatures belong to an age in the history of Indian art when the appropriate medium of expression changed from architecture and sculpture to music, dohā and painting. This age was ushered in by the great religious reformer and missionary Rāmānanda, who at the beginning of the 16th century initiated the Bhakti movement in the South. This gradually spread to all parts of India, and coalesced with the waning of the Sanskrit tradition, the rise of vernacular literatures, the humanistic and egalitarian movement bringing different sects and creeds of Hinduism and Islam together in common mystical worship and the popularisation of Purānic myths and legends among the common people. The Rāmānandī movement received a new accession of strength and mystical fervour from the teaching and missionary career of that radiant spiritual personality of Bengal, Chaitanya (1485-1533) who by his personal ecstasy and hymn-singing gave an altogether new slant to the loves of Rādhā for Kṛiṣṇa as symbolising the approaches of the human soul to God. He not only popularised the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the Gītāgovinda and the sonnets of Vidyāpati (15th century), but also introduced the practice of līlā sankīrtana in which vast throngs of devotees sang in chorus about the loves of Kṛiṣṇa, Rādhā and the gopīs and danced and preached Bhakti from city to city in Northern India. The Bālagopāla-stuti and the Gītāgovinda also contributed materially to the spread of the Vaiṣṇava faith and movement in the country. The union of song, music and dancing was effective in making a wider appeal to the common people and the new egalitarian socio-religious renaissance spread far and wide in Northern India. All these together with the introduction of paper that was now substituted for cotton cloth and palm-leaf underlay the rise of new schools of painting that fulfilled the demands of the people seeking their own simple faiths and modes of expression with reformist zeal and ardour. Rājasthāna art interpreted the ancient themes of the Mahābhārata, Harivaṇśa and Bhāgavata, now accessible to all in the vernacular version of the hymns and sonnets of Vidyāpati, Mirābāī, Sūradāsa, Premdāsa, Gharibdāsa, Kṛiṣṇadāsa, Paramānanda Dāsa, Kumbhāna Dāsa and numerous other saints and poets. The stories and legends of the Viṣṇu, Mārkandeya and Kālikā Purāṇas, the Gītāgovinda of Jayadeva (12th century), the Bālagopāla-stuti of Bilvamanīgala (1250-1350), the Rasamaṅjarī of Bhānu Datta (composed between 1200 and 1350) and the Rāmacharita Mānas of Tulsi Dāsa (born 1532), all provided inspiration to Rājasthāna and Himāchala art. Finally, the Rasika Priyā composed by Keśava Dasa of Orchha in Bundelkhand in 1591 introduced among the common people the classification of lovers (nāyakas) and the beloved (nāyikās) and of love situations in Hindi verses following the traditions of the Sanskrit treatises on Erotics. In the Rasika Priyā the Kṛiṣṇa-Rādhā love themes became enriched by a large variety of romantic moods, experiences and situations that art could now

1 The Art and Architecture of India, p. 203.
easily envision. As Kṛṣṇa became the hero of all possible romantic situations, and appreciated love, not only from his own side but also from that of Rādhā, and of her many companions, Rājasthāna painting could with confidence, depth and subtlety treat the entire gamut of male and female passions and modes and gestures of tender and amorous behaviour, all in the context of a mystical religion.

*The Bride of God in Romantic Painting and Poetry*

The human soul is portrayed in post-medieval Hindi literature and mysticism as Kṛṣṇa-Vadhū, the Bride of God or Rādhā. The poet Vidyāpati sings:

"Awake, Rādhā, awake
Calls the parrot and its love
For how long must you sleep,
Clasped to the heart of the Dark One?
Listen. The dawn has come
And the red shafts of the sun
Are making no shudder."

The above song celebrates the awakening of love in woman which is the same thing as the first experience of religious longing of the human soul. In the spring-tide of love the Bride of God is full of happiness. But more often Kṛṣṇa-Vadhū or Rādhā is depicted in painting and poetry in utter desolation due to separation from the Beloved, or as stealthily abandoning the home and kindred (Abhīṣārikā-nāyikā) and braving a perilous journey in the thick woods to be with Him. Kāṅgrā and Garhwāl miniatures charmingly depict the love-heroine, Kṛṣṇa-Vadhū traversing the forest full of snakes to visit her Lover on a night of storm and rain. The darkness of the night dispelled for an instant by the flash of lightning echoes the blend of grim determination and joyous expectancy that fills Rādhā’s heart. In Indian romantic poetry and painting the combination of clouds and wreath of lightning signifies the union of lovers that is forestalled in the miniature. A Rājasthāna miniature envisions the Bride of God (Utkā-nāyikā) standing, early in the morning, "on the tip-toe of expectation, still as a painted picture framed by the door-sill." Her night has been spent in profound agony. A Himāchala painting also depicts the nightly vigil. All through the night the fawn-eyed Bride stands at the door gazing into the moonlit landscape. But the dark-blue Kṛṣṇa, having promised to come, does not fulfil his promise. The maid has gone to sleep and the bed lies empty. The Bride is the heroine of the empty bed, Vāsaka-Sajjā Nāyikā. The tranquillity of the night is in sharp contrast with the agitated mood of the human soul, just as the symmetry of the verticals and horizontals of the white marble building is in marked contrast with the tremulous gesture and movement of the damsels that make her charm even more captivating.

Another Himāchala painting from Gulera depicts Kṛṣṇa-Vadhū contempla-
ting her forlorn condition while seated on her bed. She has discarded her ornaments that she can no longer wear due to her body burning with desire. Her hands are clasped over her head indicating her poignant helplessness. Her sense of distraction is echoed by the asymmetrical pattern of the marble architecture, with the sharp angles and diagonals of the walls, roofs, parapets and screens, the candle dimly burning in the spacious, empty hall and the haze of the receding hills at a distance. Another Rājasthāna painting shows Rādhā, who has forsaken her home for the love of Kṛṣṇa but is yet inexperienced in the lore of love (Navodhā), being led by her confidante to her Lover. From the doorstep the maid with the torch will take her to the Chamber of Love where deep darkness hovers. It is the affectionate embrace of her confidante that dispels her coyness and fear. The Bride is the human soul that must undertake its journey to the Dark Chamber in expectancy and trepidation. The radiance of the charmingly limned faces of the two girls is sharply contrasted with the lengthening shadow behind them and the darkness of the silent night above.

A master-artist of the Kāṅgrā school marvelously illustrates the scene where the Bhāgavata depicts Kṛṣṇa-Vadhū suddenly forsaken by Kṛṣṇa in the forest as she in the pride of her intimacy with the Lord has asked him to take her on his shoulders (Rāsapañchādāhyā, II, 38). Kṛṣṇa assents but then disappears instantaneously. Thus does God chastise the most beloved of his devotees for her overweening self-conceit. Rādhā is shown in the miniature as preparing to mount with out-stretched arms that cannot, however, embrace the vanished Kṛṣṇa. Behind is the darkness of the thick forest but in front the atmosphere is saturated with the diffused, silvery shimmer of the autumn full moon that intensifies the utter loneliness of the Bride of God. The solitariness is further underlined by the bleakness and barrenness of the rolling hills and the shadow of the moon cast on the surging Jamunā. The human soul is wayward, and God’s stern and prompt punishment is invested with a profound mystical import by both romantic literature and art. Finally, Rājasthāna artists are fond of depicting the collective dance of Rāsa in which Kṛṣṇa is depicted as dancing simultaneously with His Bride and with a thousand damsels “in between two of them”. The triumph of love of the human soul is a collective celebration, for in, with, and through Kṛṣṇa Rādhā finds the Universal and the Eternal. Kṛṣṇa always appears in such a painting as a transfigured Hero of Love radiant with celestial charm. His dark blue complexion signifies God’s infinitude; the yellow hue of his garment the radiance of pure consciousness. His fish-eye and bow-shaped eye-brows as well as the three-fold inflexion of his posture are true to the ideal of masculine beauty in Indian art. Rādhā and her companions are limned simply as suavely moving, curvilinear rhythms. These have an entirely abstract aesthetic appeal true to the metaphysical message of the painting. The swaying linear rhythm of intertwined figures and the simple but nicely balanced and dynamic organization of the whole composition altogether distil a refined mood of serene adoration which is the soul of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa myth.
In India it is not man burning with passion, but woman driven to distraction by unfulfilled love who symbolizes the approach to God and constitutes the principal theme of romantic literature and painting. Similarly the ultimate unity with God is symbolized by the intimacy of the Lovers, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, which extends and enlarges itself into the loves of Kṛṣṇa with all the gopīs, of each with the All. In the collective Rāsa dance as depicted by the Rājasthānī master-painters, God is found with each and all, and in between, and yet remains beyond their loves and strivings, the transcendent mystery as He is.

Rājasthānī art was essentially a folk-art, saturated with a sense of marvel at the beauties of nature and the exalted raptures of man and woman that it revealed in sinuous, and yet austere flow of lines and curves, and dynamic and yet serene rhythm of colours and compositions. All is diffused with a soft mystical radiance that is symbolic of the sanctification of the human passion and its transformation into a tender, delicate and refined sensitiveness towards the universe. It is the upsurge of spiritual emotions among the common people, embodied alike in the development of Hindi religious poetry and the multiplication of humanistic and egalitarian mystical sects and creeds establishing a spiritual intimacy between Hinduism and Islam, that is linked with the perfection of Rājasthānī painting—"a blithe school of blithe people" as the kindred Italian Sieneese school of painting (13th to early 16th century), invested with similar warmth and decorative linear quality, has been characterised by Western art critics.

How the passion of the soul and the poetry of the land can be subtly and sensitively translated into painting is best illustrated in the history of world art by Rājasthānī and Himāchala miniatures. These are not hieratic paintings at all. Their images and symbols are derived in every case from those of ancient Sanskrit and contemporary Hindi poetry that has achieved a fusion of romantic attachment and spiritual rapture, which constitutes their symbolic background. Rājasthānī and Himāchala paintings are, so to speak, delicate poetic compositions in which the melody of lines and colours replace that of words and rhymes. They show the intertwining of blossoming trees by thick creepers, the swaying of lotus stalks and flowers on the ponds, the upsurge of clusters of buds in flowering plants or the pairing of birds in the woods when a scene of union of lovers is depicted. The swirling torrents and eddies of streams and the streaks of lightning in dark rain-clouds are the visual images of gusts of ungovernable passion. A sudden gathering of the great storm-clouds and rise of dust-storms, familiar in the Indian sky before the monsoon outburst, are in these miniatures symbols of the frenzy of unsatisfied love. The heavy, constant downpour of rains echoes in the paintings the ceaseless longing of the lonely, love-lorn heart. The sudden showers in the meadows and fields that drive the shepherd boys and girls, cattle and birds to an improvised hiding-place suggest the expectancy of ardent and fortunate lovers. The impenetrable darkness of night in the forest with clouds, fringed with lightning, that warn from a distance, and the
hallucinations of cobras, beasts and ghouls nearby reflect in the miniatures the fear and anxiety of the desolate soul. The music, dance and hilarity in spring that include the spraying of saffron-coloured water at the holi festival are in these paintings symbols of the consummation of love. Finally, it is not the concrete individual man and woman that are significant in post-medieval poetry and painting, but Man and Woman, as typified by Kṛiṣṇa and Rādhā—the eternal and universal Lovers; and the love-situations are correspondingly abstract and generic, invested with the magic and miracle of the dream-land Vṛndāvana where human longing is another facet of spiritual exaltation or Bhakti; where all men are passionate lovers like Kṛiṣṇa and all women are Kṛiṣṇa-Vadhūs, Brides of God, tender, shy and self-oblivious. In India due to the ancient sex-culture, the longings, solicitations, anxieties, fulfilments and raptures of romantic attachment, and the entire concourse of love are revealed and carried on by time-honoured images, symbols and conventions that weave the warp and woof of poetry and painting. Even the peacock, the swan, the crow and the cock as well as the common kite are utilised to reveal the nuances of love or transmit its messages. The excellence of Rājasthāna, Kāṅgrā and Garhwal artists is measured by the fusion of a variety of poetic images, symbols and meanings into a single gestalt, a complete harmony—myth and image, form and composition, line and colour revealing and reinforcing the associations of poetry and religion. In many respects Rājasthāna painting produced a type of art which, though literary in its genesis, excelled the achievement of literature.

The Precursors of Rājasthāna Painting

New discoveries and explorations in various parts of India link up the pictorial art of Ajantā, Bāgh, Beṣā, Pithalkorā, Sittannavasal, Bhājā and Kanherī of the classic period with the Rājasthāna and Himāchala schools. Such links are represented by the Śaiva and Vaiśāvā paintings at Ellorā and Madanpur in the Deccan, the Buddhist Pāla paintings in Eastern India and the Western Indian paintings represented by the Jain miniatures. The Buddhist Pāla school of manuscript illustration is characterised by superb linearism and elegance and richness of colour patterns. The illustrations of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā and the Gaṇḍavyūha (dated about the 10th and 11th centuries) in particular are marked by a gliding flow of Botticellian lines and soft, languid and mellifluous curves that import into painting a sweetness and delicacy reappearing in Kāṅgrā paintings five centuries later. We may refer to the most charming, nude, dancing feminine deity with an elaborate head-gear of peacock feathers represented in the centre of one of the leaves of the manuscript derived from Nepal and belonging to the 12th or 13th century A.D. (McGill Library Collection, Montreal). The Pāla school of painting terminated with the Muslim conquest in the 12th century but continued in Nepal and Burma outside the Indian frontiers,
The Western Indian or Gujarātī school of painting covers from the beginning of the twelfth to the end of the sixteenth century. There are striking resemblances between the early Jain paintings and the Solaṅkī sculptures in Gujarat and Rājputānā. But on the whole the paintings show far less sensitiveness and elegance. A half-barbaric ferocity is the outcome of the angular treatment of face, shown only three quarters, the blank stare of the eyes, the wiriness of outline and the pattern of glowing reds and blues in the composition. This has been attributed by Goetz to the foreign filiation and background of the Gurjarā Pratihāras who founded their empire in the seventh century in Marwar, where, according to Tāranāth, the Western Indian school originated. The Gujarātī school of painting was profoundly influenced by the developed miniature painting of Persia, with which country the rich mercantile class of Kathiawad carried on a lucrative commerce from the ports of Broach, Surat and Cambay. They patronized artists and craftsmen just as the Dutch merchants did in Holland. When all royal patronage of art and architecture was wiped out by the Muslim conquest, it was they who kept alive the torch of Indian art and culture in Western India. A popular religious movement of Vaiśṇavism and vernacular literature was also sweeping through Gujarat in this age. The cult of Kṛiṣṇa was popular in Gujarat where as early as a. d. 1291 Bilvamaṅgala, (who flourished between a. d. 1250 and 1350) composed the Bālagopāla-stuti, This text was illustrated with numerous miniatures and decorated borders in the middle of the 15th century in Gujarat. Perhaps the earliest paintings of Kṛiṣṇa appeared in two versions of the Bālagopāla-stuti and in one version of the Gītāgovinda, both dated about 1450. Even earlier the Jain manuscripts Kālakāchāryakathā was illustrated by Daiyaka of Stambhatirtha or Cambay in 1416. The introduction of paper and dye-stuff from Persia gave a big filip to the lavish bourgeois painting of Gujarat characterised by fine draughtsmanship and bold massing of vibrant colours.

Rājasthānā paintings are different from Gujarātī paintings in their more vigorous rhythmic movement, wider range of colour pattern and greater clarity of composition. These cannot be dated earlier than the beginning of the 16th century. Some of the earliest Rājasthānā paintings are miniatures derived from the manuscripts of the Niyamat Nama, belonging to the Digambara Jain sect from the court of Mandu (a. d. 1540), the Mṛigāvatī (Bharata Kala Bhavan Collection, middle of the 16th century), the Bhāgavata Daśamālakandha (Jaipur Collection, 1598, Jodhpur Collection, 1610), Jayadeva’s Gītāgovinda (N. C. Mehta Collection, about a. d. 1600) representing in more than 135 illustrations Kṛiṣṇa’s eternal love-play with the milk-maids, a series of paintings illustrating the cycle of the seasons (Central Museum, Lahore) and also illustrations of Rāga-mālā Scenes (1600-1610, Land’s Album in the Bodelian Library), representing musical modes known as Rāga (male in the form of Kṛiṣṇa) and Rāginī (female in the form of Rādhā). A most significant lot of Rājasthānā paintings, recently discovered in the palace of the Maharaja of Bikaner, includes some “primitives,” a Rasikapriyā sect following the same
mode as that of the archaic Rāga-mālās, and a Bhāgavata Purāṇa series. All these are simple and vigorous in composition and represent a style associated with the beginnings of Rājasthāna art.

As it matured in Jaipur, Udaipur, Kishangarh and Orchha, the Rājasthāna style of painting showed certain remarkable qualities distinctive in art history. The sensitiveness, suavity and mellifluousness of Botticellian lines and curves, full of lyrical fervour, are particularly evident in its delineation of female beauty in a large variety of amorous scenes in the Krisṇa-līlā, Nāyikā-bhedā and Rāga-mālā paintings. The elegance and delicacy of the woman's fragile form and the tenderness of her transparent, yet shy gestures and movements are wreathed in flowing rhythmic lines, melodious curves and soft tones that create a magic world of beauty and romance which is as eternal as the love into which she has poured her soul. Her loveliness is enhanced by the fineness and virtuosity of the highly decorative designs in clothes and other textiles derived from the contemporary art of handloom weaving in Gujarat and Western India, and by the penetration and unaffected liveliness of her symbolic gestures, embodying the moods and emotions of love (śṛṅgāra-rasa) that exalt and metamorphose her whole being. Her trivial gesture, slight tilt of her head and subtle movement of her limbs, the way in which her tresses are arranged, her apparel and ornaments are all significant in the revelation of the nuances of passion that are invested with the enduring qualities of life's supreme fulfilment. Thus there is tranquillity in her longing, joy in her anxious expectancy and fortitude in her frustration. Serenity is breathed by the clarity and simplicity of composition of the miniatures, underlined by the parallels and horizontals of spacious curves and flowing lines. It is also stressed by the symbolism of the simple colour patterns, red, blue and gold, that denote the basic emotions and situations, and by the abstract treatment of the landscape with its white clusters of lotuses, blue pools of water, green pastures, tall symmetrical trees or turrets and winding creepers, antelopes, birds, mellow sunshine and soft rainfall, all replete with a metaphysical meaning and value. The hard lines, sharp corners, angles and diagonals of the architecture of white marble by their very contrasts often reinforce the serenity of the composition as they enhance the softness and gliding grace of feminine forms in poise or movement. Metaphysical values are also imported into dramatic love-situations by limning the faces with identical features. All women are Rādhās and possess the same attributes and appearance. The confidantes, attendants and maids of Rādhā or nāyikā can be distinguished only from their garments and gestures. Such is the translation into painting of the impersonal adoration of Rādhā and Krisṇa for each other, and of the identification of the passionate experiences of the woman's heart with the generic emotions of Bhakti that indeed transform sensuous beauty into a joy for ever and for all. The total effect is the capture of a serene and enduring human charm set in the background of an enchanting dream-land. A genuine love of nature in the cycle of the seasons, a spontaneous delight in the rhythm of music, song and dance, and a time-honoured expressionist
symbolism of fusion of Bhakti and romance suffuse the scenes of ordinary life and affections with a radiance brought from the other world and a fervour of the immanence of the Divine distilled from popular myths, legends and poems that compose visual lyrical poetry. Rājasthāna art also has produced large-sized sets of illustrations from the Bhāgavata and the Rāmāyaṇa that are thronged with hundreds of figures and composed and executed in grand epic style. It is suggested by Goetz that a branch of the early Rājasthāna style reached along the routes of pilgrimage via Mathurā, Vṛindāvan and Prayāga and Haradwāra and other Himalayan sacred sites to the Himalayan Valleys, creating the so-called Basholi school and its derivatives. All these reveal the Rājasthāna ancestry of the Akbar school of Mughal paintings which indeed was entirely adapted to the artistic genius and heritage of India.

Rājasthāna and Mughal Painting

The Rajput renaissance commenced from the 16th century with the establishment and extension of power of the various Rajput chiefs as the various Muslim rulers were contending among themselves in the Ganges valley and Central India. It coincided with the spread of the Bhakti movement from South to North and from Gujarat to Bengal and the rich development of Hindi literature (A.D. 1450-1650). Sixteenth century saw in Rājputānā the revival of both sculpture and painting, characterised by the assimilation of folk-elements and Southern and Western Indian styles together with a new freedom of interpretation and execution. In spite of the dwindling of Rajput power and influence in the regime of Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb, the artistic and religious revival gained vigour and momentum in Rājputānā. The region became the favoured home of the Second Religious Reformation initiated by Rāmānanda and fostered by Kabir, Dādū, Rānā Kumbh and Mirā Bāi. All this kept alive the piquancy and idealism of the Rājasthāna style of painting that in fact infiltrated into the Mughal court style from the end of the 16th century. Excellent examples of Mughal painting embodying notions and techniques of the Rājasthāna school are Woman with fruiting Trees, Kāli on a Visit to the Pānda Camp and A Nocturnal Gathering of Ascetics, all in the Schroeder Collection, U. S. A. The painting of the Tree-Woman with her arms delightfully raised over her head and her slight tribhanga inflexion underlying the contours of her blossoming youthful body closely resembles the familiar Śalabhāṇjikā of mediaeval sculpture. Kāli's awesomeness is entirely traditional and classical in the second work. This is stressed by her size, vivacity of expression and the dominating position she occupies in the composition. The latter has a profound balance in spite of the pell-mell distribution of the corpses and carcasses. In its presentation of the terrible, this painting is closer to the sculpture of Ellora and Bherāghat than anything in Rājasthāna painting. In the third work the gathering of the women ascetics at night in front of a white temple breathes poise and serenity, to which the pose and gesture of each single figure superbly
contribute, as marked in the frescoes of Ajantā. Several Hindu-trained artists in the Mughal Court could superbly blend delicacy of colours and fine draughtsmanship that belong to the Persian heritage with dynamic movement and gesture, an essentially Indian quality; while profound love and appreciation of nature and harmony of human moods and emotions with the cycle of the seasons and the magic of the Indian sunshine and moonlight are discernible in both Rājasthāna and Mughal galleries.

The deeply rooted, ardent and pervasive Bhakti movement that started from Bengal and Mahārāṣṭra and swept across Northern India and the profound awareness and love of the world of nature revivified in provincial poetry mingled with each other, and clearly demarcated the Rājasthāna school of painting from the Mughal school. Once again the folk-traditions of the land inspired creative adventures of the mind even under desperate conditions of political subjugation and humiliation. Like the lyrics of the Hindu poets, the mystical exaltations of the saints and the passionate strains of the classical musicians, among whom must be included the royal bard of Rāṇā Kumbh, who composed a musical commentary on the Gītāgovinda, Rājasthāna paintings bore the indelible impress of the unsophisticated, creative experiences of the common people in the midst of their political vicissitudes. In the courts of Rāja Singh I, Sujāna Singh and Gaja Singh and Chhatrasāla Bundela, in the inaccessible tracts of Rajputana, Bundelkhand and the independent Hill States of the North, the spirit of India through the delicate and sensitive rhythm of lines and curves and magic pattern of colours of numerous paintings made its vigorous protests against the iconoclasm of Muslim rule and the exotic character of Mughal art and culture.

The difference between the Rājasthāna and Mughal painting is largely the difference between folk and court art. The Mughal school, associated with the court of the Mughal Emperors, presents portraits of kings, nobles or saints, darbars, episodes of hunting, drinking, playing or other recreations and court scenes. The Rājasthāna and Himāchala schools, belonging to the States of Rajputana, Bundelkhand, Malwa and Gujarat and the independent Hill States of the North, generally deal with themes from the epics, myths and legends relating to Kṛiṣṇa and Rādhā or Śiva and Pārvatī, that appeal to all classes and depict ideal landscapes with tree-lined river-banks, pastures with cattle, valleys with flowers in full bloom, lotuses blossoming in dark ponds, low, undulating, verdant hills with terraced fields and farmers’ homesteads nesting by the side of meandering streams and high mountains with pine forests and torrential glacial waters. Like Persian painting, Mughal painting is rigorous, severe and methodical; Rājasthāna painting is lyrical, vivid and intense. The former is academic and conventional, associated with the opulence and refinement of the upper social classes who find their quiet emotions and distinguished manners reflected in the conventional faces and gestures of the

paintings; the latter is full of passion, vitality and poetic imagination, deriving its inspiration from the background of folk-life, literature, music and erotics. In point of technique and style the former is characterised by preciseness of line drawing and soft tonality, the latter by swiftness and flow of the drawing and bold colouring skilfully used with plastic sense of space. The former is in the tradition of a miniature, the latter of a fresco. In this manner, the art of the upper social classes and the art of the people represent differences in theme, style and technique, though it is not unusual to have two different schools of painting side by side giving admirable and contrasted expression to the character of each age. Wherever elements of folk-art have mingled with an aristocratic court art, whether in Delhi, Agra, Lucknow and Jaunpur in the North, or in Bijapur, Golconda, Ahmednagar and Hyderabad in the South, lyrical, dramatic and realistic effects lend a new charm and fluency to formal abstract and highly specious tradition.

As early as 1570 we find in Ahmednagar in the Deccan a notable fusion of an early Deccan style with Muslim idioms. The fineness and elegance of Mughal portraiture are strangely juxtaposed with the clouds, lightning and formal landscape and the figures of Kṛiṣṇa and Rādhā in the archaic fashion. Especially in the school of Bijapur the folk Deccani art has produced certain Rāgini paintings distinguished for their harmonious colour schemes and indigenous decorative patterns. On the other hand, some paintings definitely indicate an assimilation of Persian and European renaissance elements into an early Deccan classical Indian style. A striking illustration of this is afforded by the portrait of Ibrahim Adil Shah II of Bijapur (about 1595), now at Lalgarh Palace, Bikaner. Here the exquisitely arranged, elegant and colourful motifs of the courtly apparel and the foreground design of the adroit composition are typically Persian. The aerial perspective also shows the influence of Persian or even European painting. Yet on the whole the traditional Indian cast and pattern of painting are not belied. The interchange of Indian and Persian or European renaissance influences is indicated by the requisition of the celebrated court-painter of Delhi, Bishan Das by Shah Abbas I of Persia to paint his portrait and the reproduction of several Mughal miniatures by the famous Rembrandt who evinced eagerness for the collection of specimens of Indian painting.

The Ambivalence of Passion and Serenity in Rājasthāna Painting

The phrase, the school of Rājasthāna painting, is somewhat misleading, comprising as it does in its ambit art works hailing from scattered parts of Northern India, from Mewar to Garhwal and from Kāṅgrā to Orchhā. Rājasthāna paintings are the handiwork of painters not merely of the petty States and Kingdoms of Rajputana but also of Bundelkhand, Malwa and Gujarat and the Hill States, west of the Sutlej (the Jammu calam) and east of the river (the Kāṅgrā calam). Both the desert of Rajputana and the snow-clad Himalaya
of the North, helped to nurture the traditional spirit of mystical pantheism, symbolism and serenity in the school of Rājasthāna painting. It was a vernacular folk-art inspired by the contemporary Bhakti movement and patronised by the Hindu princes and nobles, in which the old metaphysical conceptions of the oneness of life and the immanence of the Divine were brought home to the rural masses by Brajabhāṣā poetry, music and painting in terms of the popular Rādhā-Krishṇa motifs. The Astachāpa group of Hindu poets (middle of the 16th century) including the blind minstrel Sur Dās had been delineating the Krishṇa-lilā in resplendent songs and lyrics. The passionate verses of Bihārlal (author of Satsaiya or 700 couplets on the Krishṇa myth, A.D. 1662), Keśava Dās (author of Rasikapriya, 1592), Matirām, the court poet of Madhukar Shah of Bundelkhand, and Deva also dwelt on the same mystical theme of human-divine love that supplied the emotional inflatus which produced wonderful results in a pictorial art reproducing the poet’s descriptions of the erotic moods of heroes and heroines.

The intimacy between painting and lyrical poetry can be well brought out by the following verse depicting the lonely heroine who pines for her lover as the clouds darken the sky in autumn. The dohā is full of vivid word-paintings, imageries and symbols on which the pictorial art thrives. Visual and poetic art and mystical fervour reinforce one another:

“When she hears the thundering of the autumn clouds,
the moon-face bids her sakhī not to go upon the roof.
And seeing that the earth was full of rain-drops,
the friendly nāyikās gave her into the pleasant crying of the peacocks
and chātakas.
The fawn-eyed lady wears a spotted veil that is bright of hue
and siris flowers are deftly woven in her tresses.
With waning pride she stands and looks, and pray the
lightning and the laden clouds, “Give me news of my dear Dark One.”

In the Rasikapriya, Keśava Dās classifies the various categories of love-heroines (nāyikās) who are delineated by the painters of Rājasthāna and Himāchala with great fervour across the decades. Such are the Navedhā, a woman too shy to meet her lover alone; Muqdhā, a woman conscious of her charms; Sambhoga Nāyikā, one who looks forward to union with her lover; Svādhīnapatikā, one conscious of having her lover in subjection; Rūpagarvītā, a woman given to affected resentment; Smaranḍhā, a woman in blind love; Vipralabdha Nāyikā, a woman who is frustrated in love and becomes desperate; Abhisārikā, a woman distraught by love who forsakes her home and goes forth to meet her lover; Utkā, the anxious heroine who waits for her lover at the trysting place; Vāsakaśayī Nāyikā, the expectant heroine who waits for her lover at the doorway of her bed-chamber; Prōṣitapakī or Prōṣita-preyasī a woman who suffers separation from her husband; Agatabhartikā, a woman
meeting her husband after long separation; *Abhisandhitā*, a woman who quarrels with her lover but on his departure becomes immediately remorseful; and *Khanditā*, a woman who upbraids her lover because of his infidelity and failure to keep his appointment at night. Each ideal heroine or *nāyikā* typifies a distinct mood or passion of the human soul yearning after union with God. As in the *Rāgamālā* paintings, so in the love-paintings the ubiquitous hero is *Kṛṣṇa*, the divine lover, and the heroine is *Rādhā* or the spirit of man exhibiting the entire gamut of nuances of affections in which the human and the divine slip into each other—natural coyness, anxiety, expectation, frustration, bliss and silence of union with God as the Supreme and Eternal Lover.

The *Bhakti* movement led by Rāmānanda and his ten apostles, strengthened and disseminated by the development of Hindi *Riti* lyrical poetry, found superb visual representation in Rājasthāna paintings. These are characterised by spontaneity, directness and abandon of expression of natural feeling in a lyrical vein true also of mystical devotion and worship themselves.

Art became sweet and tender, yet elusive, at once heart-piercing and tranquil in its revelation as mystical experience. Herein lies the uniqueness in the world’s art of Rājasthāna paintings concentrated towards the representation of the depth, beauty and serenity of man’s life, rooted in the awakening, maturation and climax of Love. This is an integral experience, of which one phase, *viz.*, the human passion derives its true meaning from another — the eternal quest of, and union with the Divine. It is the metaphysical conception of the eternal character (*nitya līlā*) of the love-sport of *Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā* in every human heart — the essential faith of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* and the entire *Bhakti* movement of Northern India — that underlies the soft and serene magical radiance of Rājasthāna painting and its universal appeal. Art was humanised and brought into closer association with the daily routine of life and love and toil and the ordinary happiness and sorrow of man and woman than ever before. Not only the love-sports of *Rādhā* and *Kṛṣṇa* and of the *gopīs*, but also the penances of Śiva and Pārvatī were depicted in painting with deep lyrical tenderness and reverence, the symbols of the common man and woman’s supreme exaltation in love and faith in the Divinity.

*The Contrasted Environments of the Pasture-land and Mountain*

The schools of Rājasthāna painting thrived, as we have seen, in different environments. It is noteworthy that while the artists of Jaipur, Bikaner, Udaipur, Orchha and Bundelkhand found a romantic setting in the holy land of Vrindāvan on the banks of the Jamunā, flowing with milk and honey, for the revelation of the subtle nuances, modes and gestures of the human soul symbolised in the forms of Rādhā and the *gopīs* that were painted with bewitching and serene loveliness, the Himāchala schools of Garhwal, Basholi and Chambā (collectively called the calam of Kāṅgrā or Trigarta comprising the triple valleys of the Rāvī, the Beas and the Sutlej), revelled in the delineation
of the penances of Śiva and the devotions and activities of Śakti in her varied manifestations in the austere and rugged background of the Himalayas and mountain lakes, equally representing the transformation of human attitudes and passions into divine moods. The region from Jamunā to Garhwal including the Hill States of the Punjab and the United Provinces, such as Mandi, Kulu, Suket, Bilaspur, Bushahr, Nahan and Garhwal is as much a distinct cultural area as the region from Marwar to Bundelkhand including Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Bikaner, Bundi, Kotah, Kishengarh, Gwalior, Datia, Orchha and Pannah. It is noteworthy that political vicissitudes were responsible for the dispersal of artists to the surrounding States or principalities. Tārānāth has mentioned about the art of Kashmir. A few representatives of the Kashmir school were employed at the Court of Akbar. Kashmir had a distinctive school of painting from the 9th to the 17th centuries. Moti Chandra suggests that the anarchical conditions there in the 18th century probably led to the migration of some Kashmiri painters to the Punjab Hill States where with the help of the Mughal school they laid the foundation of the new Himāchala school of art. The school of Basholi shows affinities with the Pālas of Bengal, and the influence of Bengal may also be surmised from the racial connection between the Basholi Rājās and the Pālas of Bengal. By the middle of the 18th century the art of Basholi came to be widely diffused and assimilated into the general trend of Himāchala painting. Several distinctive schools were discernible viz. Guler, Jammu, Kāŋgrā and Punch. All these Hill-States of the Punjab suddenly leapt into prosperity after the disintegration of the Mughal Empire, the sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah (1739) and the invasions of Ahmad Shah Abdali. The trade-route to Central and Western Asia came to be diverted and passed through these States, bringing wealth and culture, merchants as well as artists and craftsmen into this sheltered region. Raja Ghamand Chand ruled with much distinction and power from 1751 to 1774 in Kāŋgrā which was famous as the sentinel of the hills. The rise of the Kāŋgrā school of painting is to be attributed to his reign. He was succeeded on the throne by Raja Sansar Chand (1775-1804), who established his supremacy over other States and became a renowned patron of the arts, especially painting for a quarter of a century. A true Kāŋgrā style of painting soon developed and perfected itself and influenced the art of Garhwal, Chamba, Jammu and Lahore. The State, however, encountered an invasion from Nepal and the fortress of Kāŋgrā was besieged by the Gurkhas from 1806 to 1809. Sansar Chand had to take refuge in the hills. The invasion of Kāŋgrā by the Gurkhas led to the migration of the painters belonging to the court of Sansar Chand to Mandi, Chamba and Garhwal as the invasion of Shahjahan brought about the displacement of the artists of the Nurpur court to Mandi, Kulu, Chamba and Basholi. The Himalayan region in particular witnessed political upheavals, leading to the interpenetration of local styles and techniques. All are, however, rooted in the folk traditions and characterised by the melodic loveliness and delicacy of lines and the flat, vibrant colour schemes, and react strongly against the
Mughal realism and naturalism, while they are saturated by the ardent and romantic Kṛiṣṇa-Rādhā mysticism in the serene background of nature that is in striking contrast with the display of pomp and power of courts and scenes of hunting and carousel in Mughal painting. By and large, each region, the Himalaya and Rājasthāna, though working on the same common literary and Bhakti tradition, developed its pictorial art in the setting of its own landscape of hills and mountains or verdant meadows, pastures and lakes. Of the Rājasthāna school of paintings the folk variations are important in Amber, Marwar, Bikaner, Bundelkhand, Gujarat and Malwa; of the Himāchala school similar variations are significant in Kāņgrā, Kulu, Mandi, Suket, Basholi and Garhwal. Sansar Chand, a great devotee of Kṛiṣṇa from his youth, stimulated a vigorous expansion of painting in the state of Kāņgrā focussed not only on the Kṛiṣṇa-Rādhā myth but on all the myths and legends of Kṛiṣṇa from his boyhood as delineated in the Bhāgavata. A master artist named Purkha dealt with the scenes from the Rāsa Pañchādhyaṇya, in several remarkable miniatures producing a strange magical atmosphere of love enchantment under the autumn moons true to the spirit of the Rāsa episode.

The Development of the Himāchala Schools

The development of the various Himāchala schools was largely due to the migration of artists and fugitive chiefs and rulers to the Hill States from the Rajput courts or from Delhi and Agra. For instance, the Garhwal schools owe its birth to the migration in 1658 of Sulaiman, son of Dara Shikoh, to Srinagar with a retinue of seventeen persons, including the Agra court painters, Shamdāsa and Hardāsa to escape the wrath of Aurangzeb. Mola Ram (1740-1833), the most distinguished leader of the Garhwal school, was their direct descendent. He was both a poet and a painter and usually wrote verses on the top of his exquisite paintings. One of his verses runs thus: “I, Mola Ram, care more for sincere appreciation than for reward of thousands of villages and tons of money”. The great patron of the Kāņgrā artists was Sansar Chand (1776-1824) during whose time some superb miniatures were executed.

The Kāņgrā paintings are characterised by a dominant lyrical tenderness depending on the soft and smooth rhythm of lines and curves and the pattern of simple, mellow colour designs and contrasts. The Botticellian grace and delicacy of lines revel in the delineation of the tremulous poses and gestures of damsels. Seldom have the charm and grace of Indian women been more captivatingly presented in Indian painting. Yet all women are alike in most representations. Only their dresses, poses and movements differ. This impersonal treatment brings about a profound concentration of the moods and emotions. Each charmingly limned damsel, with a countenance similar to that of her companions, contributes towards the consolidation of the sentiments and moods (rasa) sought to be envisioned. In the Kāņgrā paintings the agitated
moods and nuances of love of man and woman are set out in contrast with the symmetry of the verticals and horizontals of the white marble architecture that is peculiar to most of them. Through the Mughal school Iranian and European influences have filtered, as shown in the treatment of the haze of trees and mountains in the background suggesting an atmospheric perspective, while we also come across fore-shortening in the foreground. The age-less and, in some sense, new beauty of the Kangra school rests as much on the sweet and tender expression of human moods and sentiments in a lyrical-mystical vein as on the repose and tranquillity that each miniature breathes. The latter depends almost entirely on the meaningful participation of entire nature,—trees, creepers, leaves, flowers, animals and birds—in the poignant drama of the human soul. That universal and eternal drama is envisioned in the setting of the village and the household, in the background of what is familiar and concrete in India’s daily life and happenings. Thus like other Rajasthan and Himachala schools, the Kangra calam achieves a spiritual idealisation of common passions, aspirations and experiences, and charmingly embodies the discipline, dignity and serenity of India.

The different Hill schools show some peculiarities in style and treatment. Kangra and Garhwal are tender, serene, elusive and radiant with a soft magical glow. Basholi and Chamba are vigorous, agitated and dynamic, scintillating with warm hues. There is a remarkable contrast, for instance, between the Kangra miniature of the twilight scene of the cattle being brought home, and the Basholi miniature of Krsna swallowing up the forest conflagration. Tranquillity and sweetness are conspicuous qualities of the former, agitation and fury those of the latter, and yet both show distinctive formal and associational values. The theme of the latter is derived from Surasagas. Krsna’s quenching of the forest fire that threatens destruction of vegetation, beast and man symbolises the Divine quelling of the flames of passion and lust in the human soul. Up in the secluded mountain heights, social life was much less disturbed than in the plains below, and the serenity and delight of the people, underlined by the Bhakti movement and Brajabhas poetry as these ascended the hill slopes, embodied themselves in miniatures counted not by hundreds but by tens of thousands in the Himachala. It is estimated that some 50,000 of such paintings are still preserved in this tract. The artistic renaissance bore a rich harvest for about two centuries—from the middle of the 17th to the middle of the 19th century. Such prolificness was associated with the intellectual and religious upsurge in a relatively isolated region where the indigenous traditions of folk-music and dance were much more vigorous than elsewhere.

The Eternal Vrindavan and Kailas in Art

Once again we find the fusion of spiritual and humanistic values and outlooks giving birth to a supreme and exuberant manifestation of creative art and experience. Siva in Indian metaphysics is the human soul in silence and with-
drawal, and his abode is in the forests and mountains. Krīṣṇa, the flower-bedecked fluteplayer and prince of the shepherds, is very different from the ascetic God, clad in tiger-skin and steeped in meditation. He is the human soul in love and action, yet completely detached from enjoyment and has his home in flowery groves, verdant pastures and tree-lined river banks. Kailās, the home of Śiva and Pārvatī in the Himalayas, looms large in the pictures of the Himāchala schools, while the schools of Rājasthāna revel in picturing Vrindāvan on the Jamunā, the romantic pastoral background for the love-sports of Krīṣṇa and Rādhā. Many painters of the Himāchala schools have no doubt represented Krīṣṇa and Rādhā themes just as the Rājasthāna schools have also dwelt upon Śaiva subjects. For Śiva and Krīṣṇa represent indeed two contrasted eternal archetypes of human approach to the Divinity, of renunciation and of action, comprising different accents of the human soul that the poets and painters of the plains or hills have understood and interpreted. But there is no doubt that the sombre Himalayan landscape with its snow-ranges, jagged cliffs, spurs of low undulating hills, terraced hill-sides, deodars, pines, weeping willows, flights of Sarus-cranes, eddies and torrents of the Alakanandā and camp fires of the hills, shines with greater vividness and sense of natural rhythm, with its suggestion of structure and modelling, in the Himāchala paintings dealing with Śaiva and Śākta themes. Śiva-Uma's tent of hide with logs of wood burning in front is depicted from the common experience of hill-men, while the range of snow-clad Himalayas covering the entire background of a Kāṅgrā miniature suggests severe penance and solitarieness of the Divine ascetics. Similarly romantic subjects from the Rāmāyana, the Mahābhārata and the Bhāgavata (tenth chapter) as well as from such folk-tales as Hir-Ranjha, Sohni-Mahiwal, Mirza Sahiban, Hamira-hattā and Vikramacharita are invested with a strange glamour in the setting of the hills, mountains, and dashing swirling waters. The autumn moons bathing the mountain landscape in shimmering pallor and the streaks of lightning and rows of dazzling white cranes fringing the dark rain-clouds which overlock soft contours of low hills piquantly suggest the supernal character of the episodes of love-making in the hands of the Kāṅgrā masters. The sincerity of the mystical emotions and attitudes is nowhere revealed better than by the effective artistic handling of different types of landscape, riverine or mountainous, by the masters hailing from different calams for revelation of the same.

1 Compare especially The Family of Śiva-Pārvatī (Museum of Art, University of Michigan, Punjab Museum and J. C. French Collection).

2 Compare especially The Tryst by Moonlight and The Interchange of Clothes by Krīṣṇa and Rādhā (Lambagraon Collection), The Water-sports of Krīṣṇa and the Gopiś (Bharat Kala Bhavan Collection), The Abandonment of Rādhā by Krīṣṇa (Illustration from the Bhāgavata) and Krīṣṇa and Rādhā in Moon-light (Latifi Collection).

3 Compare especially The Woman at the Tryst and Rāma and Sītā (Lambagraon Collection), The Love-sick Woman and The Offended Woman (Punjab Museum Collection), The Expectant Woman (Sunder Singh Collection) and Rādhā and the Messenger (Rothenstein Collection).
tender devotions and raptures of human-divine love. The calams of Kāŋgrā, Garhwal and Bundi in particular distil exquisitely the beauty of nature and rapturous joy and serenity in mystical experience, true to the spirit and tradition of Indian classical painting.

Not only radiant painting but also ardent song and lyrical poetry, sensitive music and elegant dance reflect the sweet and tranquil passion and serenity of life and mind, associated with the vast mystical upsurge that was experienced by the common people of Northern India continuously from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.
Chapter 17

THE ORCHESTRATION OF THE FINE ARTS

The Unity and Harmony of Aesthetic Experience.

Among the fine arts painting is widest in its reach and range of themes. These vary according to the contours of a culture or epoch and the purposes of the artist. All new movement in painting is the result of the exploitation of possibilities of the use of formal patterns and colours in adaptation to human emotions and sentiments hitherto unrevealed. The Chinese painters grasped the vitality and spatial rhythm of landscapes. The Indian painters revealed the majesty and tranquillity of metaphysical or religious experience. The Dutch painters elicited the rhythm and design of household scenes and decorations. Cézanne revealed solid forms and rhythms in nature by means of juxtaposition of colours or tones. Van Gogh heightened human emotions by deliberate distortions and exacerbations of technique. The modern Cubists split Nature into cubes, cones and cylinders for purity of expression. The Constructionists elicit the rhythm and intrinsic qualities of shapes and objects of the mechanical world that mould machines into men. Neither the possibilities of technique can be exhausted by description, nor the subtle, sensuous and emotional attractions of techniques and methods fully set forth. The elusiveness of all great art consists in achieving such subtle combination of the sensuous and decorative qualities with human meaning as is profoundly expressive in a particular setting without man being able to find out why it is so.

The finer the configuration and pattern, unity and harmony (Gestalten), the better is the artistic experience. The principles of unity in variety, of structuration or articulation of order in complexity, of integration and differentiation not only obtain in the perceptual field but also in the human meaning and experience embodied in the artistic vision. Psychology cannot reveal the deepest meaning of art as it confines itself to the framework of agreeableness or disagreeableness of perceptions and feelings that have causes and effects. True art is to be judged not from the understanding of technical rules and of their psychological effects but from the over-individual sentiments, meanings and values (rasas) that lift the art work above the limitations of space and time, the sphere of personal moods and desires and agreeable fulfilsments. The richness and nobility of aesthetic life are constituted not by the elaboration and perfection of technical procedures that may be explained by experimental psychology but by the deepest integrations of self and cosmos. In so far as art is concerned with absolute universal meanings, values and harmonies, it transcends the methods and materials of the laboratory.

This aspect of the Gestalt comprising not only the “whole properties” compositional pattern but also the interpenetration of individual and universal sentiments and values (rasas) in artistic expression can be brought out more
adequately by metaphysics. All great art no doubt reveals an integration not only of subjective feelings and moods but also of permanent, cumulative values and experiences of individuals and societies. Its meaning lies in the richness, impersonality and universality of both individual and collective sentiments and attitude it expresses. It embodies the fullness of the personality of the individual in its manifold dispositions, interests and experiences as well as the entire social experience of the culture. It is marked by a profound synthesis of the internal and the external in a logical whole. Certain characteristic art-forms have developed in India that exemplify a most remarkable matching of forms and colours, notes and sounds, images and associations, meanings and values in the background of nature and the emotional life of man—a unique integration of the inner and the outer into enduring aesthetic experiences, subjective and generic.

The Integration of Poetry, Music and Painting in the Rāga-Mālās

The Rajput paintings of the Rāga-Mālās (literally, Garland of Illustrations of the Indian musical scales), exhibit a subtle and harmonious blending of music (rāga), painting and poetry, all in accord with man's basic emotional reactions to the eternal cycles of nature. The rāgas and rāginīs or musical modes, as these are heard, elicit appropriate archetypal images that are painted in conformity to iconographical types and expressed in verses in various styles—the arts combining their resources to consolidate certain universal attitudes and emotions (rasas) of man appropriate for the season in the procession of nature. Verses in Hindi describing the different musical modes shown in the paintings are inscribed on the top and bottom or on the reverse side. Accordingly the Rāga-Mālās represent an appropriate harmony not only of sounds but also of lines, colours and shapes, and of image forms and moods in poetry, all elicited by and collectively tuned to cosmos in the procession of the seasons, the waxing and waning of the moon and the rhythm of the hours of day and night.

A unique field of Indian painting is represented by such depiction of melodies. In the West the compositions of Chopin, Bach, Schumann and others have only recently received visual representation. In the Rājasthāna school there are exquisite miniatures of the musical modes (rāgas and rāginīs) in which the various nuances of love, either in union or separation, are symbolised by typical nymphs of love (nāyikā), singing the tunes most appropriate for the particular situation, season or hour of the day and night. The note and the sentiment (rāsa) of the melody are embodied in the person of the nymph or heroine, incarnating herself in the visual image and auditory form to the painter and the musician respectively.

No art work in the world in its direct expressiveness of sense-forms in vision and audition and its matching of the latter with emotions and attitudes in poetry has responded so effectively and harmoniously to the ever-recurrent
rhythm of cosmos from season to season, from dawn, morning and noon to twilight, evening and night and even from hour to hour. It is, indeed, a unique experiment in achieving a profound integration of the Gestalt, covering human thoughts and feelings at certain times of the day and year in the cosmic envelope that create universal artistic visions and the appropriate external sense-forms that embody such visions. These external and ever-recurrent aspects of nature build up attitudes and sentiments shared by all. Such universal and impersonal experiences, as are embodied simultaneously in the art forms of poetry, music and painting in the Rāgamalās, bring about a rapport between man and man, and between man and cosmos, arousing through the reciprocal aids of sound and colour, form and imagery, emotion and meaning, an enduring aesthetic delight that is at once individual and collective, intensive and extensive.

*Music, Love and Nature*

In Jayadeva’s Gitagovinda composed in the twelfth century of which there are several illustrated manuscripts, we find an intimate association of rāgas and tālas with different moods and nuances of love. Thus the Rāga Vasanta is used in the lyrics of the Gitagovinda for the delineation of the charm and rejuvenation of the spring season and playfulness of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Rāga Gujare for the expression of the agitation of Rādhā or Kṛṣṇa being slighted, Rāga Kedāra for the exhortation to Rādhā to meet Kṛṣṇa at the trysting place by her companion and Rāga Karnāṭaka for the delineation of Rādhā’s supreme desolation and misery. Mahārāṇā Kumbh of Rājasthāna wrote a famous commentary on Jayadeva’s Gitagovinda in the 15th century which therefore supplies for Rājasthāna painting the traditional background of the association of different rāgas and rāginis with the entire gamut of human passions especially the love-sentiment (śringāra). The poet-mystic Sur Dās composed an appropriate Hindi love-poem about Kṛṣṇa for each of the thirty-six traditional rāgas and rāginis interpreting the spirit of Indian musical scales in terms of various nuances of the rapturous meetings and loves of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. Sur Dās sings:

“'The poet’s Lord is the jewel of the passionate,  
And builds His dance in the depths of ecstasy.'”

The Rāgamalā paintings in depicting the scenes or circumstances, appropriate to the invisible presence of a melody, conceive the rāga and rāgini as the Spirit of Nature (or Kṛṣṇa) and his nymph of love respectively. In the Indian system of music each major melody, or rāga is in tune with a generic human mood or sentiment that nature in a particular season and time of the day elicits among the entire gamut of human passions. Recent studies in the psychology of music show that certain notes in the octave (śā, re, gā, mā, pā, dhā, ni, sā)
arouse certain moods and sentiments, such as self-assertion, passion, creation, exaltation, self-abasement, compassion, withdrawal and destruction. In the Indian system of music each rāga comprises the distinctive notes associated with a particular mood and emotion elicited universally in the recurrence of the seasons and hours in the human heart. Each rāga comprises, again, five or six derivative rāginīs or tender forms of the rāga conceived in the feminine—because of its subordination to the rāga in the basic structure of its notes. The songs of the various months of the year and of early dawn, morning, noon, twilight and midnight differ in their characteristic notes in India, expressing and consolidating as these do the permanent and universal sentiments (rasas) of man in the cycle of changes of nature. Rabindranath Tagore observes, “Our songs speak of early dawn and the embroidered, starry midnight sky of India; our song is the world-sundered separation pain of dripping rain and the worldless ecstasy of the deep madness of the early spring as it reaches the utmost limits of the forests”. Each rāga or rāginī is in tune with the generic mood and experience of nature in the diurnal and seasonal rhythm. The first awakening of the sky at early dawn is expressed in the melody of Bhairon; the eternal, poignant desolation of the infinite in Rāmakeli; the separation-grief and incessant shedding of tears of the universe during the rains in Meghamallāra; the fatigue and weariness of the sun-scorched close of the day in Multānī; the losing of the way of dark Night in her quest for the Beloved in Kānārā; the shedding of tears of the love-sick wife in her deserted household in Paraja. The vast seasonal changes of the Indian landscape are accompanied in the musical tradition by the appropriate melodies evoked by the basic feelings periodically experienced in the procession of the seasons, spring, summer, rains, autumn and winter. Such moods find a fitting expression abstractly and symbolically in a particular background of scenes and episodes in both song and Rāga-mūlā painting. The words and characteristic notes of the musical composition and the scenic representation in the painting aid in the distillation of the generic feeling or attitude of the particular season or time of the day. We give below a description of rāga Bhairon, sung early in the morning and expressing its profound tranquillity, from a South Indian text of classical music. The description is full of imagery appropriate for painting: “A beautiful Sanyāsī: he has white ashes over his face. He wears a white and light scarf. In his neck could be found a garland of rubies; from his ears hang earings, on his forehead shines the half moon and matted hair locks crown his head. He has an one-stringed musical instrument (ekatārā) in his hand. He is seated on a white bull on the bank of the river Ganges and engaged in meditation.”

Appropriate and charming is the background of nature in the Rāga-mūlā paintings—flowering mango, champaka and kadamba trees, lakes with blooming lotuses, green meadows with deer, cranes and peacocks in sunshine, cloud and rainfall. The integration of the values of nature, metaphysics and concrete

1 Compare Tagore’s Jīban Smṛiti (in Bengali).
experience is profounder and more poignant than seen anywhere in the world’s arts. The nuances of human love, the modes of melody and the elements of the landscape, all become perfectly fused in a stable feeling and attitude in which the distinction between the self and the rest of the universe, between man and nature, is completely abolished.

The Romantic Paintings of the Musical Modes

Rajpūtānā was an important home of classical music in India as indicated by the Saṅgitarāja, of which the author was Mahārānā Kumbha. Rājasthāna artists fully understood the appropriateness of particular rāgas and rāginīs for arousing the universal mood or sentiment characteristic of the season and hour of the day and night. Consider the representation of the early morning melody, rāginī Bhairavi, in one of the Rājasthāna primitives from Orchhā. She is Umā, the consort of Śiva. Her garment has the colour of the rising sun, and she proceeds on an autumn morning to the temple of Śiva for worship. The melody is sung in the early dawn by Indian musicians in the Bhairavi tune (subordinate to the rāga Bhairava or Śiva) that arouses a poignant sense of futility and impermanence of life and the mystery of the Infinite. A Rājasthāna painting from Hyderabad (Deccan) illustrates the rāga Bhairava in the context of the theme of Kṛiṣṇa and Rādhā. This is also sung at dawn. It delineates Kṛiṣṇa as the Impetuous Lover torn by the whirlwind of passion. On the bed early in the morning Rādhā rubs Kṛiṣṇa’s limbs with sandal to assuage his hot, tumultuous desire. There is coolness all around—the bullocks lift water for the garden, the ducks and fishes swim in the tank, while Rādhā’s attendant goes on preparing the sandal-wood paste as the Lover’s anodyne. Thus Kṛiṣṇa takes the place of Śiva in Bhairava rāga, symbolising the sentiment of the torment of love antithetical to Śiva’s conquest of desire, serenity and sense of the mutability of life. Rāginī Bibhāsa is also a morning tune, represented in painting by a scene in which the Lord of Love (Kāmadeva) strikes with his arrow the cock disturbing with its early shrill cry at dawn the repose of the nāyikā after her night’s love carousel. Lalita rāginī depicts the nāyikā still asleep or she responds to the call of the day and leaves her home carrying the night’s garland of love.

Take the representation of the melody, sung in spring, rāginī Vasanta, depicting the universal lover Kṛiṣṇa dancing with a flute in hand, while two milkmaids play on the drum and cymbal. The scene, full of the excitement of love and youth in the spring season, is appropriately placed on the bank of the river Jamunā under a tree in full vernal blossom. The flowers seem to dance in unison, while a tender creeper rhythmically twines round the tree in the spring-tide of love. Another well-known representation of the same rāginī (British Museum Collection) shows Kṛiṣṇa sporting with Rādhā and the gopīs on the banks of the Jamunā. The gopīs are singing to the accompaniment of the drum or spraying red water with the syringe, according to the ancient
observance of the Spring festival. In the representation of Vasanta rāga (Manuk Collection) we find the King of the Seasons (not Kṛiṣṇa) making dalliance with his beloved.

Consider also the representation of the musical mode, Hiṃḍola rāga, literally the swinging melody, which is sung in the rains in India. In the Malwa painting on the subject, Kṛiṣṇa is seated with Rādhā in a swing and holds the musical instrument, tambūrī, in his hands. The attendants prepare for the music in tune with the swinging which is itself symbolical of the to and fro movement or maturation of love. The sky is overcast with rain-clouds and a streak of lightning looms at a distance. The commingling of blue rain-clouds and lightning symbolises the embrace of the lovers. The peacocks cry aloud echoing the longing in the hearts of the human lovers. On the lake below the swaying lotus flowers, symbolising the male, and the broad leaves, symbolising the female, as well as the sportive pairs of ducks participate in the agitation of the age-less love-scene. In Vrajabhūmi people piously celebrate the Swing festival (Jhūlā-yātrā) of Kṛiṣṇa and Rādhā during the rains. Lovers suspend the swing from trees and swing as men and women sing the melodies of the rainy season and dance. The pageant of the swing with its song, music and dance in the rainy season throughout Uttar Pradesh is symbolical and metaphysical. There is a timeless quality of Indian festivals and observances to which lyricism is added by the orchestration of dohā, song, painting and dance. Consider again, the Megha-Mallāra rāga, sung also during the rainy season. The pictorial representation here is that of a woman, draped in a skirt of leaves agitated by the high wind, and sitting on a lotus in the island of a lake filled with flowers, geese and other wild birds. Or the painting shows Kṛiṣṇa dancing with Rādhā under a kadamba tree in the rains. The gopīs sing and play on their drums. The peacocks rejoice from among the tree-branches and a row of white cranes flies above. Below the cattle seek shelter from the rains (Reproduced by O. C. Gangoly, Rāgas and Rāginīs, Plate LXIV(D)). In the rainy season as it drips, drips and drips, the entire universe feels an inexpressible agony of separation and another song that is sung besides Hiṃḍola and Megha-Mallāra rāgas is Madhu-mādhavī rāgini. In the cases of both Hiṃḍola and Megha-Mallāra paintings, Kṛiṣṇa as the Supreme Lover replaces the figure of a Rajput prince-lover, being clearly recognisable from his blue colour. In Madhu-mādhavī, a love-heroine rather than Kṛiṣṇa is figured. Madhu-mādhavī (literally honey-sweet) is represented as a twilight scene of the early rains when dark clouds and flashes of lightning all of a sudden appear on the horizon and surprise the lovely nymph (the beloved Madhu-mādhavī) who runs back to her house for shelter. Or the nymph gives the honey spilled from her fond heart to the peacock. The peacock, the bird of the rains, knows her expectancy and approaches her. Addicted to drink in the household, it swoops down from the tree to sip the honey from the cup held by her responsive attendant. Even the plantain tree with its flower, participates in the excitement. The placidity inside the house, where the Lover’s cot lies empty, is underlined by the verticals
and horizontals, and contrasted with the eager expectancy of nature and of
the human heart. The skilful treatment, characterised by a plastic organisation
of formal elements, the rhythmic interplay of palpitating colours and oval
patterns, produces a deep sense of poise in a scene of extraordinary animation.
In another painting of the same rāginī we find the nymph of love (nāyikā)
seeking her lover in a dark stormy night, while the peacock sips the rain
drops. No better imaginative transfigurations of nature during the rains in
India can be conceived, translating into the vernacular of line and colour, a
universal mood in profound unison with nature that both lyrical poetry and
music seek to express and elicit.

The traditional Six Seasons of the Indian scene (saḥ-ṛiti) are symbolised by
the six rāgas in the Indian musical system, viz., Bhairava, Mallāra, Śrī-Rāga,
Hindola or Vasanta, Dipaka and Megha. Each of the thirty-six rāgas is associated
with his nymph or rāginī symbolising the attitudes and sentiments appro-
priate for the season and hour of the day or night, and giving a superb scope
to both musician and painter for presenting the diversified imagery in melody
and brush. The Indian man revives in the procession of seasons through his
appreciation of the appropriate rāga and rāginī, the joy and hilarity of lovers
in union during spring, their languour and intensity of repression during summer,
the delight of expectancy and refreshment during the first rains, their deep
unutterable grief of separation in the long rainy season and the fullness of heart,
home-coming and merriment as the bounteous harvest is reaped in autumn.
Rāga painting pictorially sets forth, consolidates and universalises the appro-
priate emotion and sentiment of the season, and establishes a profound rapport
between the human mind and the environment, using the symbolism of
the different phases of human love in union or separation for the expression
of the dialectic of the human soul. On each miniature are also written the
appropriate lyrical stanzas from a well-known poetical work or folk song that
provides the perennial, undefiled springs of the people’s religious and lyrical
imagination and experience.

The Lyrical Paintings of the Twelve Months

In India there are both appropriate melodies of the various seasons viz. Rāga-
mālās or paintings of musical modes and Bārāmāsā or lyrical paintings of the
seasons. Bārāmāsā or the Cycle of the Twelve Months comprise both song and
painting depicting the moods and situations of love in conformity with the
changes brought about by the procession of the seasons in Northern India,
month by month. In the Bārāmāsā paintings each illustration takes the form
not of a symbol or icon but of a dramatic situation conceived in the abstract
and expressive of the universal mood or sentiment appropriate for the season
and the time of the day or night. Kṛiṣṇa is sometimes the main figure here
as the Eternal Lover who sits in the balcony of a mansion watching the happen-
ings below. The sights and scenes are appropriate to the month in the proces-
sion of nature and life of man. In painting as well as poetry, love is depicted and aroused in the context of the cycle of months, the landscape of each season being associated with a specific mood or phase of love, life and behaviour. This is a part of sex culture or the sublimation and idealisation of love-life that Indian civilisation has achieved. Kālidāsa, in his well-known work, Ritu-samhāra, describes man’s passionate love-making against the background of the six seasons. Rājaśāhīa painting and mediaeval Hindi poetry have done the same. The earliest Bārāmāśā paintings are those that now belong to the Central Museum of Lahore, attributed to the late 16th century. One of them depicting the rainy month of Śrāvaṇa is characterised by a simple, yet luminous composition, a vibrant rhythm of pure tones and an intense look and vigour of postures and movements of figures. Two girls stand by a pool playing with fresh rain drops; their frolicsomeness is echoed by hilarious birds on the tree. A rhythm of dance-like movement spreads from the girls to the birds and tree branches and leaves. On the top right a saint or astrologer with a rosary in his hand reads a book placed on a stand. Or he may be the poet who has composed the verses illustrated. Below is the nāyikā who reveals to her confidantes her grief of separation from her lover that the rainy season makes poignant and unbearable. A Būndi painting treating the month of Āśārha (the preceding rainy month) delineates a series of scenes under a clouded sky. Krīṣṇa makes love to Rādhā on the balcony of a marble structure; a lonely nymph (nāyikā) pining for her beloved traverses the wood; while two noble men consult a saint or astrologer before setting out on their journey. The sky is overcast with clouds. The herons are in flight in anticipation of the shower. On a lake in the foreground there is a pavilion where lovers daily while the ducks sport. The contrast between the sombre, threatening horizon pierced by the spire of the white marble building and the luxuriance of tree growth as well as loveliness of pairs of men and birds, animated by passion, is vivid. With great vitality and simplicity of lines and organisation of planes by means of deep colours, the aim of Bārāmāśā painting is to analyse, epitomise and consolidate abstract moods and situations for each season in a vigorous, yet impersonal style, rather than to illustrate an episode or produce picturesque effects. Music is essentially an abstract art; its linkage to painting aids the latter in achieving a degree of abstraction that is normal to music directing the human soul to Being, who is behind all patterns of sounds, shapes and colours. The descriptive imagery in the lyrical poem, the harmony in the rāga or rāginī and the scenic representation in the painting all alike and collectively symbolise and evoke the eternal and universal sentiment of wholeseness, wonder and thrill, associated with the experience of the noumenon or Being in the realm of nature. Being is the deity of the Rāgamālā painting, while his fiancée or nymph (nāyikā) is the feeling of wonder and awe that the human soul through lyrical poetry and melody expresses and symbolises in the cycle of the seasons and hours.
For about three centuries, from the 16th to 18th, three aspects of folk-art, viz. poetry, music and painting, developed in India parallel with one another expressing the same impersonal moods in different idioms. All were impregnated with religious motifs from the legends of the Bhāgavata and the Purāṇas that reached the masses through a galaxy of mystics, poets, musicians and painters. Rarely in the history of the world's culture has there been such collaboration of the arts expressing the communal vision of a whole people and epoch as was then witnessed in Northern India. In the marvellous procession of the seasons in the Indian scene, the languor of summer, the fruition of autumn, the intoxication of spring and the longing and pain of separation during the rains become deeply felt universal experiences and attitudes. These are not only celebrated in popular rituals such as the dance of Kṛṣṇa and the swinging of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in heavy rain, the spring dance of Kṛṣṇa and his sport with the milkmaids with coloured powder or the penance and worship of Śiva and Pārvatī but are also represented as ṛgūs and ṛgūnīs in paintings, mainly based on the motifs of human and spiritual love in its various nuances, either in union or separation. These paintings reveal the spirit of the particular season and time of day and night, and thus help towards consolidating the same universal feelings and sentiments that certain appropriate notes of music evoke. In the Basholi school the classifications and compositions in the Rāgamālās are somewhat different from those of Rājasthāna, due obviously to the differences of climate and season in the Himalayan region. In the music paintings Indian art has achieved interpretations of the landscape something different from the Chinese landscape painting, symbolical and dramatic rather than philosophical. Chinese landscape art shows us the infinite in the mists, the waters and the mountains. Indian landscape art reveals the infinite in human loves, delights and sorrows that spill from the undefiled soul into the heart of nature throbbing in sympathetic resonance. It is thus that the region, metaphysics and collective feeling and vision blend in the creation of art work that has a unique place among the great arts of the world. As in China so in India, the same apprehension is used to compose poetry and paint scenery of surpassing depth, delicacy and abstraction as in music. In the ancient days the Ajantā frescoes were inscribed with verses from Āryaśūra's Jātakaṃālā: while in the 17th and 18th centuries verses from the Gītagovinda of Jayadeva, the Rasamaṇjarī of Bhānudutta the Rasikapriyā of Keśavadās and the Nāyiṅa poems dealing with the classification of heroines (nāyaka-nāyiṅa bheda), according to their temperament, age and circumstances, were quoted by painters of the Rājasthāna school in their works. The eight nāyiṅa of literature and painting are the following: Svādhīnapatikā, Utkā, Vāsakāṣayā, Abhisandhistā, Khaṇḍitā, Prōsita-patikā, Vipralabdā and Abhisārikā. For an illustration we may quote Keśavadās's familiar delineation of the nāyiṅā vainly waiting by her bed in the night for the arrival of Kṛṣṇa. "As she runs
her blue dress hides her limbs. She hears the wind ruffling the trees and the birds shifting in the night. She thinks it must be He. How she longs for love, watching for Kṛṣṇa like a bird in a cage.” Such is the Vāsakṣayā nāyikā or the expectant heroine often depicted in Rājasthāna painting. Let us now have the Hindi poet Sundara’s description reproduced in many a Rājasthāna painting of the Vīpralabdā or the frustrated heroine, who is grieved because her lover does not come to the trysting place and the messenger (dūtī) comes back disappointed. “She came out all dressed to meet her lover at a trysting place, leaving her own room empty,” says Sundara, “she looked for him in and out, but not a trace of Kanar (i.e. of Kṛṣṇa) could be had. Meanwhile, Cupid, the enemy of Śiva, has put arrows to his bows. And oh! Comrade: When she knew she had none to save her, she could only sing at her heart a hymn for Hara.” Another song delineates the feelings of the disappointed heroine thus: “Flowers are like arrows, fragrance becomes ill-odour, and pleasant bowers like fiery furnaces; gardens are like the wild woods, ah Kesava! the moon-rays burn her body as though with fever; love like a tiger holds her heart, no watch of the night brings any gladness; songs have the sound of abuse, betel has the taste of poison, and every jewel burns her like a flower-brand.” The utter loneliness, expectancy, frustration and anguish of the human soul, symbolised by Rādhā or nāyikā (the heroine of love), in the quest of God as the Eternal and Universal Lover Kṛṣṇa, have hardly been expressed in more ardent lyrics. Vaiṣṇava poetry, comprised often of the couplet (dohā) and the quatrain (chāupāi) and pregnant with deep thought and intense feeling, is of the nature of the most delicate miniature painting, and thus poetry and painting interpreted and interpenetrated each other. Man sang and danced what he felt in the lyric and saw in the painting the sports of Kṛṣṇa and the passions of Rādhā in the universal love-drama of nature. In China as well as in India, painting was akin to literature, and what was achieved by calligraphy for Chinese painting towards abstraction was achieved by music for Indian painting.

The middle of the nineteenth century witnessed the modern movements of technology, mechanisation and specialisation catching India’s culture in their grips, and introducing a stultifying segregation of the fine arts, and of the arts, sciences and humanities unfamiliar in her scheme of human knowledge. Just before these had become all-pervasive, the Rājasthāna and Himāchala paintings blossomed forth in every nook and corner of Northern India as shining reminders of the country’s basic concept and tradition of the orchestration of the arts, rooted in her ageless vision of the unity of Truth (Satyam), Beauty (Sundaram) and Bliss (Anandam).
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<td><strong>I 3rd millennium B.C.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Style of The Indus Valley</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 2800-2500 B.C.</td>
<td>Blend of abstract rhythm and sensitiveness of naturalistic modelling aiming at symbolic rather than pictorial representation in the dancing male figure and the torso from Harappa — the keynote of Indian art through the centuries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideal representation of feminine charm in the bronze dancing-girl from Mohenjo-daro.</td>
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<td>c. 2500 B.C.</td>
<td>Proto-type of Śiva-Paśupati; Yaksī or Vṛkṣakā and the humped bull and female figurines representing the Great Mother at Mohenjo-daro.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excavation in Rupar, Ambala (c. 600-200 B.C.) shows the continuity between the art and symbolism of the Indus Valley and the Mauryan period.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 800 B.C.</td>
<td>The Great Mother, Aditi, Prithvi or Śrī at Lauria Nandangarh and Piprawa.</td>
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<tr>
<td>600-200 B.C.</td>
<td>The Great Mother, Śūṅga and Maurya terracottas at Rupar, Taxila, Kausambi, Sankisa, Raighat and Tamralipti.</td>
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<td>3rd century B.C.</td>
<td>Aśokan Rock-Edicts at Shahbaz-Garhi, Gandhara.</td>
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<td>India</td>
<td>Middle And East Asia</td>
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<td>c. 500 B.C.</td>
<td><strong>3rd century B.C.</strong></td>
<td><strong>250 B.C.</strong></td>
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<td>Reference to images and image-making in Pāṇini. Pre-Āśokan stūpa at Rampurwa.</td>
<td>Buddhist stūpas of Śambhunath and Bodhnath at Patan, Nepal.</td>
<td>Planting of offshoot of the Bodhi-tree in Ceylon and import of a variety of symbols of the Buddha. Foundation of the Mahāvihāra at Anurādhapura by Devānampiya Tissa (c. 247-207 B.C.)</td>
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<td>II 3rd century B.C.</td>
<td><strong>Seals of Kubera and triple-headed Śiva at Niya and painted Gaṇeśa at Endore. 211 B.C.</strong></td>
<td>2nd to 1st century B.C. 101-77 B.C.</td>
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<td>c. 273-232 B.C.</td>
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<td>Asokan stūpas, pillars and rock-cut edifices. Folk-art: Patna, Parkham, Besnagar and Dhauli (forepart of elephant).</td>
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<td>III 2nd to 1st century B.C.</td>
<td>Early Classic Buddhist Style</td>
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<td>c. 200 B.C.</td>
<td>Sculptures at Sanchi, Bharhut and Bodh-Gaya.</td>
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<td>Ajanta cave-shrine. 1st century B.C.</td>
<td>Cave-shrines at Karle, Bhaja, Khandagiri and Udayagiri. 1st century to 2nd century B.C.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>First classic śiva-līṅgam with the upper part comprising a head and a bust at Bhita in the North and with the lower part carved with the figure of Śiva at Gudimallam in the South. 8th century A.D. witnesses the installation of a śiva līṅgam in Central Java A.D. 732. In the 9th-14th centuries Mukhaliṅgams revealing the four faces of Śiva were common in Cambodia.</td>
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</table>
The Tower of Faces at the Bayon, Angkor, may be considered as Śiva lingam.

c. 78 to 58 B.C.
First representation of the Buddha, Māyādevī, Śiva and Śrī-Mā on coins of the Indo-Scythian Emperor Maues of North-West India.

c. 38-10 B.C.
First representation of Śrī-Mā with attendant elephants and of standing Śiva-Umā on the coins of Azilises.
1st century B.C.
First representation of Vāsudeva in Scythian temple at Mora, near Mathura, and on the copper coins of Viśpumitra of Pañchāla.

A.D. 10 to A.D. 46.
Representation of Śiva on the coins of Gondophares, Indo-Parthian ruler of Taxila.

1st century A.D.
First classic image of the triple-headed Maheśvara at Charasada, Gandhāra. This cosmic motif has both a Brahmanical and Buddhist significance and spread far beyond the corners of India. It occurred on the coins of the Kuśāna king Vāsudeva (A.D. 74-98) and marched to Khotan (2nd century A.D.), to Turkestan (Dandan Uiliq, 7th to 8th century A.D.), to China (Yun
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<td>Kang, 5th-6th century A.D.) and to Japan (as Dai Itoku or Yam-</td>
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<td>äntaka). The Indian šiva-Trinities at Ele-</td>
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<td>phanta (8th century A.D.), Avantipura (in Kashmir, 9th century</td>
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<td>A.D.) and Banaras (as Vişneśvara, seen by Hiuen Tsang in the 7th</td>
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<td>century A.D.) are fam-</td>
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<td>IV  c. 1st century B.C.</td>
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<td>to 3rd century A.D.</td>
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<td>Romano-Buddhist Style of Gandhāra</td>
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<td>c. 25 B.C. to A.D. 50</td>
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<td>Indo-Scythian style at Mathura.</td>
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<td>1st century A.D.</td>
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<td>Earliest Gandhāra image of the Buddha and pictorial repre-</td>
<td>A.D. 170</td>
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<td>sentation of the Jātaka story, following the early classic Bud-</td>
<td>Indian and Kuśāṇa</td>
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<td>dhist style at Sirkap and the Dharmaśikā stūpa, Taxila, (late Scy-</td>
<td>monks arrive at the</td>
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<td>thian period).</td>
<td>Chinese capital</td>
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<td>c. 50 A.D.-60 A.D.</td>
<td>Loyang where one of</td>
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<td>Representations of śiva and the Buddha in the coins of Kard-</td>
<td>the first monasteries</td>
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<td>phises I.</td>
<td>was establish-</td>
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<td>A.D. 78-101</td>
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<td>The tower (638 feet high) and vihāra of Kanšika at Purusa-</td>
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<td>pura. Agesilaos the Greek architect.</td>
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<td>V 2nd century B.C. to 3rd century A.D.</td>
<td>2nd century A.D.</td>
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<td>Southern Style of Ama-</td>
<td>Sculptors and paint-</td>
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<td>rāvatt, Golf and Nagar, jainikonda</td>
<td>ers busy decorat-</td>
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<td>that grow up in the two Northern capitals of China, Chang-an</td>
<td>ing 180 monasteries</td>
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<td>and Loyang, by A.D. 300</td>
<td>that cannot be</td>
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<td>2nd century A.D.</td>
<td>indigenous pieces of</td>
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<td>Buddhist art in Dong-Duong</td>
<td>art testify to Bud-</td>
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<td>in Champa (Annam) showing the influence of the Amarāvatt</td>
<td>dhist proselytisa-</td>
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<td>style. This and another Amarāvatt bronze from Western Celen</td>
<td>tion in South-east Asia originating from the Kṛṣṇa valley.</td>
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</table>
Its influence upon the early colonial art in Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Siam, Java and Sumatra.

VI 1st to 3rd century A.D. 
_Style of Mathura_
A.D. 81 First dated images of Bodhisattva (3rd year of Kaniska's reign) at Sarnath and later at Śrāvasti.

Early classic images of Bodhisattva (Katra, 1st century A.D.) and of the Buddha at Mathura, A.D. 129.

Mathura representation of the Buddha in abstract, supramundane human form quickly influenced the art of Gandhāra and Amaśrāvati in the 1st century A.D.

Panels at Mathura depict not the historical Gautama but the cosmic and metaphysical Buddha and eternal Buddha scenes: meditation at Gandhakūṭī, visit to and descent from heaven, presentation of the almsbowl by the Lokapālas and worship of Indra.

The Mathura workshops produced simultaneously for the first time, under the impetus of strong currents of Bhāgavatism, not only the images of the Buddhas and Bodhisattva but also those of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Devī
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<tr>
<td>and Tirthaṅkaras—cosmic images of Being and Becoming that spread far beyond the borders of India. First representation of the Birth of Kṛṣṇa in Mathura sculpture, 1st to 2nd century A.D. Images of Yakṣa, Apsarā or Devatā, with its three-fold inflexion, becomes the established motif in the art of India for the representation of feminine loveliness. 2nd century A.D. Representation of the cosmic and transcendent Buddha on the lotus calyx, preaching eternally to the Bodhisattvas, and of the Dhyāna Buddhas in heaven at Karle. This Mahāyāna archetype was followed in Turkestan and China in the later centuries. 3rd century A.D. Nagarjunikonda and Jaggayapeta stūpas. Elegant narrative sculpture of Goli and Nagarjunikonda that influenced, along with Pāla art, the Borošudur and Prambanan reliefs. Further development of the Mathura style at Pādāvatī, Vidiśā and Ujjayin. 2nd to 3rd centuries A.D. Cave-shrines at Bamiyan, Balkh, Khotan, Kashgar, Kucha and Tun-huang along the silk-routes in the Tarim (Sitā) valley modelled after those at Taxila and Nagarahara. Diffusion of Gandhāra style to Bamiyan, Bactria, Khotan, Miran, Kucha and Turfan. Frescoes at Miran and Bazalik. Bamiyan Buddha colossi (174 feet and 112 feet high). 2nd to 4th century A.D. The Gothic style of Gandhāran sculpture at Hadda (ancient Nagarahara), and later sites at Taxila. A.D. 338 First dated Chinese Buddhist image sculptured under the Later Chao. Bronze Śākyamuni in Gandhāran style. 4th century A.D. Jetavana-Vihāra at Anurādhapura. 5th Century A.D. Frescoes at Sigrírya, Ceylon, bearing the imprint of the art of Ajantā and Amaravati. Vaishnava, Śaiva and Buddhist sculptures in Gupta style in Śrīkṣetra and Thaton, Burma. Buddha images at Sempaga in the Celebes, Jember in East Java and Palembang in Sumatra bearing the impress of the Amaravati style. Images of Dvīpaṅkara Buddha worshipped by Indian sea-men and over-seas settlers, and found in Southeast Asia before the fifth century A.D. follow the prototype of the Dvīpaṅkara Buddha at Amaravati.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Indian Art during the Gupta Renaissance.

Classic, National Gupta Style

Buddhist art at Taxila, Mathura, Sarnath, Nalanda, Vidiss, Padmavati and Ajanta;

Brahmanical art at Mathura, Kirtigiri (Deogarh), Udayagiri and Aihole;

Jain art at Mathura, Girinagar and Valabhi.

Ajanta and Bagh frescoes. Classic Gupta art defined the iconographic canons and formulae of art, whether Brahmanical, Buddhist or Jaina. Though a national art, it produced epochless images of the contemplative cosmic Man triumphant in yoga over the world of name and appearance. Such images gradually spread from the Ganges valley to entire Asia for over half a millennium in a privileged epoch when the Imperial Guptas (A.D. 320-720) and the Imperial T'angs (A.D. 680-966) introduced the Golden Age of art and culture in the respective countries of India and China and the lands under their suzerainty.

4th century A.D.

Colossal cave sculpture at Udayagiri.

First image of Durga Mahishamardini on ddhist monasteries in Gandhāra.

Badulla Buddha in bronze shows Gupta-Pallava style.

Resuscitation of Gandhāran art after the return of the Kuññas to power.

c. 460 A.D.

Destruction of the monasteries of Gandhāra, Kashmir and the Punjab by the Epithalite Huns.
one of the rock-faces, a twelve-handed figure slaying the demon in buffalo-form.

5th century A.D.
First image of Śiva Naṭarāja at Nachna Kuthara near Bhumara.
A.D. 526
Bālāditya's construction of the Mahābodhi temple at Bodhgaya, imitated later on in other parts of India, and in China, Burma and Siam.

6th century A.D.
Classic images of Durgā Mahiṣāsamardini at Bhumara in Gupta style and at Aihole in Pallava style—a cosmic motif of the victory of goodness over evil that spread to East Asia (7th century) as Koṭi-Śrī or Buddha-Mātrī (Kwan-non) and to Indonesia at Bagelen, 8th to 9th century, and Singasari, Java, 13th century.

6th century A.D.
Buddha images in Kedah and Perak, Malaya, in Gupta style.

Art of Funan, Dvārāvatī and Śrī-Deva in Pre-Angkor. Cambodia and Siam showing the influence of Gupta and Pallava style.

8th to 8th centuries A.D.
Buddhist sculptures and frescoes in Tum-huang cave-shrines bearing the impress of Gandhāran and Gupta style.
A.D. 366
Sculptures in the Cave of Unequalled Height, Tum-huang, built by the Indian monk Lo Tsun.
A.D. 414-520
Sculptures in Yun Kang cave shrines.
5th to 6th centuries A.D.
Sculptures in Lung-men cave shrines.

5th to 8th centuries A.D.
Sculptures in Tien Lung Shan cave-shrines.

4th to 6th centuries.
Sculptures in Mai Chi Shan cave shrines.
The Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, celestial beings and monks at Tum-huang, Yun-Kang, Lung-men, Tien Lung Shan and Mai Chi Shan bear evidences of the assimilation of Gandhāra, Gupta and Pāla styles with Chinese regional art traditions. Ama-
SYNOPTIC TIME-CHART OF INDIC ART

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| 7th century A.D.), a motif that migrated to Java (Prambanam, 10th century) and to Cambodia (Angkor and Banteai Srei, 10th to 14th centuries). Indian cave-sculpture, as old as Ajanta, Bhaja and Karle, developed styles, techniques and values appropriate for the representation of supra-mundane and cosmic themes of which there is no parallel in world art. These spread to Ceylon, Indonesia, China and Korea where in hundreds of natural or artificial cave-shrines Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were sculptured, giving full scope to the interplay of light, shade, and vibrant volume with the same phantasmagorical effects. 7th Century A.D. First imaging of the Vajrayāṇa śaktis at Nalanda and Sarnath: Tārā, Prajñāpāramitā, Hārīti, Māriche and Sarasvatī. All these cosmic forms penetrated into Middle, East and South Asia in the subsequent centuries. 11th to 12th centuries saw the virtual conquest of the Mahāyāna by Vajrayāna resulting in the predominance of śaktis ravati style discernible in the Buddha reliefs at the Nan-Hasian cave shrines. A.D. 643 Wang Hsuan T'ao, Chinese ambassador, imports to China an image of Maitreya from Bodh-Gaya. At Chang-an the heavenly terraces are constructed in the manner of the Indian stupa. A.D. 645-710 Early Buddhist Nara period in Japan. Wall-Paintings of the Bodhisattva and copper repoussé images of the Buddhist triad, at Horyuji, and bronze Avalokiteśvara at Yakushiy Nara (built in A.D. 607), show the influence of Ajanta and Mathura mediately through the Chinese Sui and Early T'ang style. A.D. 600-650 Tibetan king Strong-tsangampa builds the first Buddhist temples in Tibet introducing Indian art. A.D. 747 Padmasambhava intro- End of the 7th century A.D. Earliest tangible evidences of the arrival of Mahāyāna Buddhism at Palembang in Java. Brahmanical temple art and architecture in the plains of Kedu and Prambanan in the 7th and 8th centuries. A.D. 700 Vajrabodhi, monk from India, introduces Tāntrikism into Sumatra. A.D. 778 Temple of Tārā built in Kalasan, Sumatra, by a monk from Bengal. Middle of 7th to middle of 8th century.
in the art of Eastern India and Indic Asia.

IX 8th to 10th centuries.  
**Pāla-Sena Style in Eastern India:** Gothic Phase of Gupta Art.  
Classic examples of Pāla art in Paharpur, Rajshahi, Vikrampur, Murshidabad and 24-Parganas.  
9th to 12th centuries.  
Frajnāpāramitā, Sādhanaamālā and other MSS. reveal a vigorous school of painting in Bengal founded by Dheman and Betpalo. Spread of Pāla art as the vehicle of the Vajrayāna to Nepal, Tibet and Indonesia (7th to 9th centuries) and to China and Japan (9th to 17th centuries).  
Art of the Prathāras at Kanauj, Osia and Pathari.

X 10th to 13th centuries.  
**Third Golden Age of Indian Art during the Tāntrika Renaissance.**  
Classical Tāntrika Style of Middle and Eastern India  
Tāntrika style and motifs embody a poetic vision of Life, Mind and Universe through the interplay of the antinomic principles of masculinity and femininity. Charm and duces into Tibet Vajrayāna art from Bengal.

8th century A.D.  
Cave shrines at Sukkulam, Korea  
Sculptures and paintings of Hindu gods and goddesses, Brahmā (Bonten), Indra (Taishakuten), Lakṣmī (Kichijoten) and of the four Guardians of the Quarters in Japan.  
The Great Buddha of Nara of colossal size constructed between A.D. 729 and 748  
Dai Itoku, Fudo and the Four Guardian kings as Japanese counterparts of the Indian awesome images of Bhairava, Vairochana and Dvārapālas.

8th-9th centuries  
Images of Mahā-Vairochana and paintings of the Tāntrika maṇḍala of Bengal derivation in Java, China and Japan.  
9th century  
Tibetan paintings found at Tun-huang.  
10th to 19th centuries.  
Influence of Pāla style on Tibetan sculpture and painting.  
10th century.  
Umā-Mahēśvara group in Kathmandu, Nepal and Br-

The colossal stupa at Borobodur dedicated by the Imperial Śailendras of Indonesia to Vairochana or Vajrasattva of Pāla Vajrayāna metaphysics.

Great reliefs depicting the life of the Buddha showing Pāla-Pallava influences.  
A.D. 845 or 849  
Śailendra Emperor Bālapuratrādava obtains from the Pāla Emperor Devapāla (810-850) grant of five villages for endowing a monastery at Nalanda.  
A.D. 915  
The Thousand Temples dedicated to Śiva at Prambanan, Java.  
The central Mahādeva shrine in the Prambanan complex closely resembles the Kaṇḍariya Mahādeva shrine at Khajuraho.  
Images of Śiva, Bodhisattva, Tārā, Gaṇeśa, Śūrya, Hārīti, Durgā, Bhairava and Naṭarāja closely follow Pāla style.  
Culmination of the Gupta-Pallava-Pāla plastic ideal in Java.

The highly complex and elaborate symbolism underlying both the temple architecture and iconography in Borobodur, Prambanan, Chandī Mendut, Chandī Sewu and other shrines are derived from contemporary Pāla Buddhist and Śaiva theology from Bengal.  
Naṭarāja images in the balustrade of the Mahādeva shrine illustrate sixty four Tāṇḍava dance poses of Śiva as at Chidambaram.
fierceness, compassion and terror, grimmness and hope paradoxically intermingle in a daring expressionist art of cosmic import. Indian Tántrika art, grounded in the metaphysical truth of unity in duality, envisioned in the images of the Divine couples, Śiva, Viṣṇu or Buddha and ēkākṣi, had far-reaching influences on the art and symbolism of the whole of Asia.

Khajurāho, Vikrampur, Bhubanesvara and Konāraka.

Sahaja sculpture of Śiva and ēkākṣi, Ummālinganā, Surasundari, Apsarā, Nāyi and erotic motifs.

Representation of the terrible and the repellent in art.

**A.D. 1000-1027**

Mahmud of Ghazni’s first invasion of India and devastation of the temples of Mathura (1014), Kanauj (1018) and Somnath (1026).

A.D. 1000

Śailendra Emperor requests the Chola King for grant of land at Nagapattam on which to build a Buddhist monastery.

A.D. 1033

Chinese Emperor Tai Tsong builds a stūpa at Bodhgaya.

First half of 11th century

Artistic renaissance in

onzes of Tārā and Avalokiteśvara in Pāla style.

10th-11th centuries

Blocking of India’s routes to Middle and East Asia as the result of the conquest of Central Asia by the Samanids, and the Slave Dynasty of Alaptigin (A.D. 962-1030)

This ushered in the golden era of the maritime civilization of India from coast to coast, of the Pālas, Eastern Gaṅgas, Cholas and Chālukyas (10th to 12th centuries) and gave great impetus to Ceylon and to all Hindu colonies and kingdoms in Farther India and Indonesia resulting in the efflorescence of art in Ceylon, Java, Siam and Cambodia.

A.D. 964-976

Last big Chinese mission to India. Three hundred Chinese monk-scholars, sent by the Chinese Emperor to India for the collection of Buddha relics and Buddhist scripts, return to Yunnan by the eastern land-route through north Burma.

A.D. 1030

Al-Biruni finds Khorasan, Iran, Iraq, Mosul and region up to the frontiers of Syria Buddhist.

11th century.

A.D. 1071

Śākya monastery built in Tibet

Frescoes of goddesses found in monasteries in Tibet bearing the impress of Pāla style.

A.D. 1271-1275

Marco Polo finds Buddhism at Kashgar, Yarkhand, Ku-chha and Khotan and describ-
India

Bengal under the Sena king Vijayasena (1100-1165).

Mid-twelfth century lavish temple-building and artistic renaissance in Gujarat. Rebuilding of Somnath temple by Anahilvara (1143-1172) after the vandalism of Mahmud of Ghazni.

End of the 12th century
Destruction of the Buddhist vihāras of Nālandā, Vikramaśilā and Odantapurā (1196-1204)

12th and 13th centuries
Chola architecture, sculpture and bronze work in South India.

13th century
The colossal Buddha at Kamakura in Japan.

10th century
Śiva Nāṭarāja painted and sculptured profusely in temples of Cambodia.

Elegant reliefs depicting legends of Rāvaṇa's attempt to overturn Kailāśa, fight between Bāli and Sugrīva, fight of the demons for the hand of Tilottamā and Rāma-chandra's arrival in Lankā at Bantacī Srei (A.D. 967).

11th century
Art of Ta Prohm in Cambodia. The dance of the Apsaras in reliefs and sculptures showing Pāla-Sena influences.

The great temples of Pagan in Burma, built by King Aniruddha (1040-1077) and his successors. The Ananda temple (1090) built after the model of Phaṭarpur, Bengal.

Pāla-Sena influences in the temple architecture, sculpture and painting in Burma.

12th century
The Towers of Faces of Śiva

Middle And East Asia

es the colossial image of the Buddha's Parinivāṇa at Kucha.

A.D. 1067
Cambodian Trimūrti, composite image of Buddha, Brahmā and Viṣṇu with liṅgam dedicated to Śiva.

8th to 13th centuries
Art of Polonnaruva in Ceylon.

Gol vihāra and Potgul vihāra built by Parākrama Bāhu (1164-1197).

Gupta and Pallava influences in early art and Chola influences in later temple-architecture and bronze image-making in Ceylon.

12th to 14th centuries
Shingon Buddhist art in Japan derived from Vajrayāna Buddhism of Bengal meditatively through China.

13th-15th centuries
Influence of Zen Buddhism on Japanese art and culture. The great school of Zen painters from Mu So (1275-1351) to Sesshu (1421-1506)

South And South-East Asia

8th to 13th centuries
Art of Polonnaruva in Ceylon.

Gol vihāra and Potgul vihāra built by Parākrama Bāhu (1164-1197).

Gupta and Pallava influences in early art and Chola influences in later temple-architecture and bronze image-making in Ceylon.
15th century
Artistic renaissance in Rajputana under Rāṣṭra Kumbha (1433-1468). Chitor and Ranakpur.

15th to 16th centuries
Admixture of Mughal, Indo-Islamic and Rajput styles in architecture and painting.

XI 15th to mid-19th centuries
Lyrical and Mystical Art Style in Northern India
Bhakti transforms temple into aery chapel and sculpture into delicate, sensitive embroidery in Rajputana, Gujarat and Vijaynagar.


or Lokeśvara and Dancing Apsarās at Bayon, Angkor Thom, a marvel in art and engineering in the world, under Indian influences.
A.D. 1215
Mahābodhi temple built at Pagan after the model of Gaya.
12th to 16th centuries
Buddhist art at Chiengmai, Sukhothai, Ayuthia, Java and Pakon Pathom, Thailand, showing Pāla style.
A.D. 1259-1294
Kublai Khan, Mongol Emperor of China, receives the Nepalese adventurer Aniko, who and his disciple Yi Yuan fashion Buddhist statues and paintings in Peking and Shanghai.
A.D. 1284
Kublai Khan's invasions of South-east Asia beginning with his expedition against Champa by sea (1282).

A.D. 1287
Mongol destruction of Pagan
A.D. 1294-1520
Brahmanical temples built in Java under the Imperial Majapahita. The Pantaran complex consecrated to Śiva. (14th century). Rāmāyana and Kṛṣṇāyana reliefs.
A.D. 1343
Hindu-Javanese colonisation of Bali.
A.D. 1350-1430
Wars between the Thais and the Khmers.
A.D. 1365
Last big Indian immigration from Bengal and Gujarat to Majapahit, Java.
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PLATES
DESCRIPTION OF PLATES

Frontispiece: Head of Siva, Loro Jongrang, Prambanan (or Brahmā-vanam). 10th century

Youthful radiance rather than impersonality marks this luminous image. As in the case of the image of Mahādeva in the central shrine of Loro Jongrang, recently discovered, Siva’s crown is decorated with a skull, due to the impact of Tantrikism.

1. Early Classic Buddhist Art. Panel from Sanchi. 2nd Century B.C.

The upper panel shows the Buddha’s Departure from the palace, the stealthy ride on the horse in the dead of night and the return of the horse without the Rider.

The lower panel shows the ceremonial visit of Aśoka and his queen to the Bodhi tree with Śri-Mā or Śri Lakṣmī and elephants on two sides. The three pillars on which the upper panel is supported depict three symbols. From the left these are: (1) the Buddha roaring as the lion, (2) the Dharmachakra on the seated lion (now adopted as the Indian Government seal unfortunately missing the essential wheel) and (3) the Aśvattha tree topped by the umbrella representing the Enlightenment.

The Buddhist philosophical conception of the all-pervasive stream of Life and Consciousness expresses itself in a serene linear rhythm holding together figures of gods, men, animals and nāgas in a swaying endless movement. Time is also treated as an ever-continuing movement, past and present happenings being presented side by side. The moral cosmic law of karma is another myth that orders the events of nature. Reposefulness or the transcendent sentiment (rasa) of tranquillity became the distinctive note of Indian art from its very beginnings.

2. Ruru or Mriga Jātaka. Railing pillar, Bhārhut. 2nd Century B.C.

The birth-legends of the Buddha were depicted with dramatic intensity in Bhārhut where the actual names of the legends are inscribed and in one case a half-verse is quoted. The story here is that of the Buddha as the Golden Stag in a previous birth. Once upon a time he saved the life of a drowning noble man who wanted to commit suicide. The man, however, in gross ingratitude gave information to the king of Banaras about the location of the Golden Stag in the forest. The king came to hunt the Stag in pursuance of his Queen’s dream, but desisted on hearing the eloquent discourse of the Stag. The consecutive events of the story viz. the rescue of the noble man from the waters, his signal to the king, the king drawing his bow for hunting the Stag, and, finally, the king’s conversion are all depicted with zest and reverence, stemming from the bearing of the legend on the vicissitudes of human life and destiny. The barriers of time and space melt away before the piety of craftsmen and people thrilled by hundreds of stories of epoch-less sacrifice of the Compassionate One. Compassion binds together the separate happenings, inevitably moving towards their fulfilment.

3. Early Classic Buddhist Art. Yakṣi or Apsarā from Mathura. 2nd century A.D.

The sensitive and melodious treatment of the nude feminine body expressing an intent frolicomeness evolved much quicker in India than in Greece. Noteworthy is the deliberate fore-shortening or lengthening of limbs encountered in the Mathura Yakṣis that adds to the charm of their pose and movement.


From Amaravati. 1st Century A.D.

This ancient Andhra seat of culture in the South that witnessed remarkable cultural
intercourse with Northern India and the Mediterranean at the beginning of the Christian Era developed a refined sensuousness and Botticellian grace in the figure of princely men and their nude women, slender, vibrant, and elegant, and yet never sensual and unchaste. The composure of the Buddha and his disciples is in striking contrast with the stampede of the crowd of terrified spectators on the street through which the elephant runs to attack the Buddha before falling prostrate at his feet. At Amaravati the composition is characterised by a far greater sense of movement and dramatic interest than at Sanchi and Mathura. These are integrated by the rhythmic curves provided by the dynamic movements and directions of serried figures.

5. **Head of the Buddha. Lime Composition. Gandhāra. 4th-5th century A.D.**

This belongs to the Gothic phase of Gandhāran art characterised by a blend of serenity with human warmth and sweetness. The soft wavy hair covering the conspicuous usniṣa and the elongated half-closed eye-lids together with a slight tilt of the head to the right underline a new freshness and piquancy of artistic treatment, the outcome of Mahāyāna mystical currents.

6. **Classic Gupta Art. 5th-8th Century A.D. Standing Buddha from Mathura. 5th century A.D.**

As the Mahāyāna introduced the conception of the eternal metaphysical Buddha in human shape at Taxila, Mathura, Ayodhya and Sarnath, Buddhism became a world religion. Art became its vehicle, and compassion its prayer. The impersonality of Nīrūpa is in modified in this celebrated image by a benignant, comprehending smile and a delicate and subtle finger-gesture of reassurance that are symbolic of Bodhisattva’s solicitude for world misery.

7. **Classic Gupta Art. 5th to 8th century A.D. - The Discoursing Buddha at Sarnath. 5th century A.D.**

Another celebrated image of the Buddha discoursing. The classic Gupta figuration of the yogin’s ideal body with its adamantine poise and ascetic vigour has become the established norm of human beauty and perfection in Asia from Turkestan to Japan and from Korea to Indonesia.

8. **Classic Gupta Art. The Supreme Brahman from Deogarh. 5th century A.D.**

This is a magnificent rendering of the Bhagavad-gītā doctrine of the Brahman or Isā’s transcendence and immanence. This was taught to the common people through the popular cult of Bhāgavatism of which the Mahābhārata became the classic exponent from the Gupta age. The epic places the scene of the meditation of Nara and Nārāyaṇa in the Himalayas symbolised by the co-existence of the lion and the deer. The danseuse from heaven fails to disturb their contemplation and returns with hands folded in worship. The Gods of heaven rejoice at Man’s becoming. The four handed image is Isā, God or Supreme Self and the two-handed one is Jīva or the empirical self. Both breathe a complete stillness that is plastically expressed by the weightiness, simplicity and dynamic coherence of the modelling and the adroit use of open spaces between the figures and between their limbs.

9. **Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi from Ajanta. 6th century A.D.**

The metaphysical idealism and universal compassion of Mahāyāna Buddhism produced no more enchanting figure than the Padmapāṇi, who combines youthful charm and elegance.
with profound understanding and compassion, symbolic of the balance between the worldly and the spiritual, characteristic of the new dispensation. Here the Bodhisattva is a prince who wears a bejewelled tiara as the symbol of his sovereignty over sakhāra to which he vouchsafes deliverance by his infinite wisdom and charity. Sakhāra and Nirāya thus slip into each other. Ajantā frescoes derive their beauty and grandeur from the beatific vision of the human soul that creates its own set of formal values of colours, curves, rhythms, and motifs. On the whole these make their appeal to vital depth and palpability of mass than to the sensuous and pictorial elements. This gives the key to the whole development of painting in Indic Asia.

10. The Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha. Ajanta. 6th century A. D.

This is a familiar theme met with in Indic sculpture through the ages at Kuśānagara, Taxila, Kucha, Polonnaruwa, Pagan, and other famous Buddhist centres, and often treated on a colossal dimension in keeping with the Buddha’s superhuman status in life and death. The profound grief of monks and laymen who are depicted below the Buddha’s reclining body is underlined by the downward bent of their faces and the parallels of vertical arms and diagonally placed legs. Ānanda who sits alone overwhelmed with grief to the right near the Buddha’s feet shows also the same parallel disposition of arms and the right leg. The sāla trees on both sides are in full blossom. Above, the worshipful gods are seen in a throng “crying in grief with upraised hands” (Dīghanikāya). Mahākaśyapa who seems to have just arrived at Kuśānagara from Vaishālī stands to their left.

11. Śrīnāra. Nālandā. 7th century A. D.

A radiant image superbly reconciling charm with poise, spontaneity with affectation. She is engaged in her toilette—fixing the tilaka on her forehead. Indian art was responsive through the centuries equally to the mood (rasa) of silence (śānta) and that of loveliness and beauty (śrīnāra).


The worshipper has caught the poise and silence of the Tīrthaṅkara though displaying the charming triple bent natural to her. The soft, mellifluous treatment of the torso, the sinuous outline of the waist and legs and the lavish adornment from head to foot emphasise by contrast the impersonality of the Kevalin.

13. Classic Gupta Sculpture. Padmapāni, Nālandā. 7th-8th century A. D.

Every art-region of India—Mathura, Sarnath, Nālandā, Vaṅga and Kaliṅga—shows its own unique gift of combination of human tenderness with nirvāṇic calm in the imaging of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The Nālandā image is exquisite in its blend of the moving, mellifluous rhythm of the lotus stalk and garment with the rigid discipline of the plasticity of the mass, harmonising serenity with lyrical fervour, abstraction with radiant charm.

14. Pāla Gothic. Avalokiteśvara, Lokeśvara or Lokanātha. Bihar. 8th-9th century

This may be considered as a most outstanding contribution of the Pāla School to Buddhist art. Pāla sculpture may be described as true Indian Gothic, and is characterised by a superb mingling of a warm current of lyrical or romantic idealism with formalism and
abstraction. The classic style of Gupta art, characterised by simplicity, clarity and rigour of proportions, become more intense and decisive in Vañga due to sensitive, differentiating modelling and curvilinear expression. The Pâla art technique consists in the skilful, lineated tracery of the apparel, jewellery and adornments that create a soft, tranquil rhythm, and at the same time underline the heaving quality of the bodily structure underneath. The soft, affectionate modelling of the torso, the coherence of the drapery and jewellery with the tender contours of the idealised body and the sinuous upsurging of the lotus plant echo in this noble image of Avalokiteśvara the intense religious fervour of the Pâla Buddhist Renaissance. It was an ardent mystical aspiration which created high Gothic sculpture whether in 13th century France or in 9th and 10th century Eastern India.

8th century A.D.

This is the greatest contribution of the School of Kaliṅga to Buddhist art. It marvellously reconciles a supple, mellifluous treatment of the lotus stalk and garland with the essential Indian massiveness and formalism and gives evidence of rare artistic sensitiveness and inner spiritual vision.

16. The Crowned Buddha. Bihar. 9th to 10th century

The Buddha touches the earth as a permanent witness for his Enlightenment. The decoration with crown and necklace is unique in this class of Pâla images from Eastern India. To the Buddha’s right is Lokeśvara holding the lotus plant; to the left is Maitreya showing the abhayamudrā. Above their heads are stûpas. Stylized branches of the bodhi tree are on the top of the stela. Below the lotus pedestal are lions with the donor in the middle. An essential plasticity and monumentality here dominate over the decorative elements in sculptural treatment, resulting in a superb expression of profound stillness.

17. Umâliṅga-Mârti. 24-Parganas, Bengal. Early 10th century

The image of Śiva-Umâ in which Śiva is seated in lalitâasana with Pârvati on her lap and caresses her is peculiar to Eastern India from 10th to 13th centuries. Under the foot of Śiva is the bull; under that of Umâ is the lion. There is a liveliness in the whole composition underlined by the flight of the gandharvas. Such a composite image is the object of spiritual contemplation in Tântrika worship, and conforms to a dhyâna formula given in the Matesa Purâṇa.

Found at Chakdaha, Nadia, Bengal. Late 10th century A.D.

This admirable Pâla masterpiece combines youthful elegance with deep self-absorption due to an exquisite reconciliation of abstract rhythm with linear interplay in plastic treatment. The lineation of the drapery, the decoration of the double lotus pedestal, the mellifluous curves in the treatment of the flanking Bodhisattvas and of Vidyādharas at the top and the ornamentation of the halo introduce warmth and sensitiveness associated with the mystical currents of the Pâla Buddhist Renaissance. On the pedestal are superbly carved the donor and his wife with a lion on each side.

19. Mârichi. Bihar. 11th century

She is the Buddhist goddess of Dawn and Śakti of Ādi Buddha Vairochana. One of her faces is that of a sow symbolising the conquest of carnal desire as the devotee identifies
himself with her. Four goddesses subsidiary to her, Varttāli, Vadāli, Varāli and Varāhamukhi surround her; at the top the image of Vairochana is figured. A flame design comprises the background and is assimilated into her skirt. Great rigour and dynamism of movement in her Atīḍha posture are harmonised with the serene beauty of her face and limbs. A makara and rāhu are seen below devouring the Sun and the Moon, while the chariot of the goddess of Dawn is drawn by seven boars instead of seven horses. This Vajrayāna goddess, the counterpart of Brahmanical Sūrya, has migrated to Tibet as Vajravārāhī, to Japan as Marishi-ten and to China as Queen of the Heavens and Mother of the Dipper.

20. Maṅjuśrī. Bazarpura, Birbhum, Bengal. 11th to 12th century

Maṅjuśrī personifies transcendent wisdom in Mahāyāna Buddhism. His worship spread from Bengal under the impetus of the Pāla Renaissance to Nepal and Tibet, and beyond the seas to Burma, Malaya, Siam and Indonesia. This image, executed in metal black Rajmahal stone, superbly reconciles profundity and majesty with youthful charm and elegance. This is achieved through a blend of a stern discipline of outline and form with curvilinear expressiveness, distinctive of Pāla regional art-style. The lineation of the beautifully composed drapery and ornaments that mould themselves to the underlying soft limbs and the profuse decoration of the stela with the five Dhyāni Buddhas on the top enhance the delicacy of the composition. Here is, again, an instance of the picturesque and the massive in superb compromise in Pāla Gothic.


Tārā is the most popular goddess of Buddhist Tāntrikism in Indic Asia. In the Mahāyāna she is the consort of Avalokiteśvara, born from the never-ending tears shed by him. In the Vajrayāna she is the Śakti of Amoghasiddhi. The goddess is seated in talātāsana, and shows the dharmachakra mudrā. She is mellifluously carved with blossoming lotus plant on her two sides, whose rhythm her soft limbs have exquisitely captured. Mārichi is to her right and Ekajaṭā is to her left on separate lotus pedestals. On the top are the five Ādi Buddhas. Flying gandharva with garlands are also sculptured. Below the pedestal the donor and his wife (from Mathura) are represented. This magnificent image blends transcendence with charm, serenity with compassion, characteristic of the Gothic phase of the Gupta sculptural tradition ushered in by Tāntrika mystical currents of the Pāla-Sena Renaissance that spread far and wide. She was often sculptured and painted throughout South-east Asia, Nepal, Tibet and China from the 7th to the 13th centuries.

22. Pārvatī. Rajshahi, East Pakistan. 11th to 12th century

From the 9th Century in Bihar (Nālandā, Gorakhpur and Bodh Gaya) to the 12th century in Northern Bengal, we find the Gupta classical breadth and compactness of mass harmonised with sharp and energetic linear play, underlined by the angularity of limbs, gestures and garments which is characteristic of Pāla Gothic. Executed in black Rajmahal stone the Eastern Indian images show great vitality, dignity and forcefulness exquisitely combined with the charming and lyrical elements and innate plasticity and massiveness reconciled with the modulation of differentiated sensitive modelling, deeply and subtly revealing nuances of feelings, emotions and imaginings that are essentially Gothic in temper.

Pārvatī holds a Śiva-līṅga over the palm of her upper right hand. On her two sides are Kārttikeya (with his lion-vāhana) and Gaṇeśa (with antelope-vāhana). Plantain trees so familiar in the Bengal landscape are elegantly carved.

23. Śiva-Nārtakesvara. Rampal, Dacca, East Pakistan. 11th to 12th century

Śiva here dances on his bull-vāhana which with its upturned face also dances in unison.
Gaṅgā on the makara and Pārvatī on the lion are on the right and left respectively. On the pedestal is depicted the Nāgoloka with nāgas, half-human and half serpentine, and a few gaṇas with folded hands. On the top is the Svargoloka with the various gods, many on their vāhanas, congregating in hilarity. Śiva’s cosmic dance, displaying his ten arms with various implements and weapons and comprising a magnificent whirl, records supreme aesthetic comprehension as well as spiritual ecstasy. A serpent represents his sacred thread, but it has a human torso with two hands keeping time on the left shoulder. Hardly has such an ensemble of figures being depicted in Indian art so harmoniously in tune with the world-shattering tāṇḍava.

    c. 11th-12th century A.D.

This is one of the terrific forms of the Supreme goddess, one of the Seven Mothers. She is seated in lalitāsana on a pedestal over a prostrate corpse. She is bare flesh and bone and has an awful demeanour with contracted belly, erect hair and wide-open, fierce eyes. She has six arms. Her main right hand holds a kapāla, while the corresponding left is on the chin expressive of the prospect of cosmos-destruction. Her remaining hands carry the elephant skin, sword and trident. A long garland of human heads falls on the pedestal. Here is an illustration of Indian art and religion depicting the awesomeness of reality.

25. Classical Early Medieval Cave Sculpture. Śiva Naṭārāja. Cave 1, Badami.
    Late 6th century A.D.

Cave sculpture reached a classic stage at Badami, Ellora and Elephanta through combining transcendentalism with humanism, supernaturalism with human poignancy in both poise and dynamic movement. This was a legacy of the School of Amarāvati where the accents of transcendental dimensions of life went far beyond the classic Gupta notions and canons of suavity, fullness and composure. Śiva Naṭārāja was perhaps first represented in sculpture in early 5th century A.D. at Nachna Kuthara, ten miles from Bhumara (old Ajaygarh state), an important Gupta art-centre. This is a massive, magnificent treatment of tāṇḍava, marked by a superb combination of stillness and poise with the energy and vigour of the cosmic dance-rhythm. But within hardly a century, Badami produced in the Deccan a more transcendent and majestic figure with the aid of the special techniques of cave art. In the light and darkness and the vibrating atmosphere of the caves a new art was born that produced mountainous figures with heroic gestures and movements embodying man’s supramundane tensions and experiences. Indian cave art spread from Karle and Ajantā through Taxila, Nagarāhāra, Kapiśa and Bamiyan to South and East Asia, to Ceylon, and Korea, Turkestan and China. The medieval cave shrines celebrate India’s worship of power and tension in the cosmic and transcendental setting with skills and effects never achieved elsewhere in the history of art.

    Early 7th century A.D.

Because the sculptures here are executed on surfaces of boulders or in shallow caves, these do not show the grandeur and power of Badami, Ellora and Elephanta. Yet the techniques are older and influenced cave sculpture as well as relief on temple-walls in India and the whole of South-east Asia.

The Mamallapuram rock-cut relief is considered as one of the master-pieces of large-scale sculpture in India. Bhagfratha’s penance which induces the flow of the celestial stream from heaven to earth—the theme of the sculpture—is represented in two phases viz. at Gokarna and at Gaṅgotri. Śiva-Gaṅgādhara, blessing the earth and mankind on the
descent of Gaṅgā, commands the whole scene from the upper left corner. The devas and gandharvas sit about joyfully in magnificent poses in the upper air, while men assemble with their offerings on the earth below for ablution in the holy waters. A broad vertical cleft in the middle of the huge boulder is utilized for depicting Gaṅgā. The nāgas, king, queen and retinue, have emerged from the depths of the nether world, wonder-struck at the miracle. A cat standing on its hind legs with upraised paws mimics the austerity of Bhagiratha, while the mice are at play near-by. The carving of the stags, monkeys and elephants has also reached here an acme of perfection in animal sculpture.

Rāmeśvara Cave, Ellora. 7th century A.D.

The cave sculpture of the four-armed Durgā vanquishing the Buffalo-Asura most impressively reveals both mighty tension and imperturbable poise in the ultimate establishment of justice in the cosmos.

28. Śiva-Bhairava Slaying Asura. Daśavatāra Cave, Ellora. 8th century A.D.

Empty space is saturated with profound stillness in the Mahiṣamardini and Śiva-Umā marriage sculptures at Ellora. It is vibrant and pulsates with tremendous energy and movement in Śiva-Bhairava and Śiva-Rāvana's sculptures. Here both the quick movement of Śiva and the vast sweep of his trident affixed to his victim are most boldly and dramatically represented. The diagonal composition and the tension of the rhythmic curves emphasise the supermundane fury of destruction of evil. In front of Bhairava are his two consorts: the grim Kāli or Chāmuṇḍā with fierce eyes and open mouth, holding in her upraised left hand a bowl of blood, and the full-bosomed, bejewelled Pārvatī, seated in lalitāsana on a lotus to her left. They embody the contrasted essences of Śiva, one terrible (Rudra-Śiva) and the other compassionate (Dakṣiṇa-Śiva) that we come across in the worship of the God from the Vedic age. The entire group of figures is welded together in the composition by a superb dynamic rhythm and coherence that symbolise India's balance of cosmic tension and poise, fury and tranquillity.

8th century A.D.

This is considered by many as the grandest sculpture in the world. It is the representation of Ātman, Self or Being (Sadhāśiva or Tatpuruṣa) obtaining the fullness of experience through the realisation of its own oscillating accents of creation or manifestation (symbolised by the charming and bejewelled Pārvatī) and withdrawal or destruction (symbolised by the frowning Aghora-Bhairava). Conforming to Śaiva metaphysics, the image is the representation of the Three-in-One (Ātman in the phases of Creation, Destruction and Self-absorption) or of the Two-in-One (Ātman and Śakti). At Elephanta the androgynous icon of Śiva-Śakti is also installed.

30. Chāmuṇḍā. Temple of the Sixty-four Yoginis; Bheraghat. 10th century.

Yogini or Mātrikā is an associate of the Mother Goddess, terrible, awesome and world-shattering. There are temples of the 64 Yoginis at Bheraghat and Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, and Hirapur and Ranipur in Orissa built during the heyday of the Tāntrika movement. Chāmuṇḍā is represented as sitting on a flame of lotus with her mouth open for devouring the universe and her eyes rolling in the frenzy of world destruction. A dying man lies prostrate on the pedestal supplicating her mercy. Two ghosts—disembodied souls of the dead—are on her right.
Indian art differs from the art of any other land in embodying all the nine rasas of Bharata’s Nāṭya-śāstra, not only the sensuous and the charming but also the grim and the terrific in its search for the total Reality and the full Being. It easily oversteps the human dimension and viewpoint and their associated finite range of attractiveness, harmony and beauty. Classical literature, dance, music, painting and sculpture in India all equally reveal the major rasas. Kalidāsa in his Kumārasambhava (VIII, 91) refers to the different rasas that are embodied in appropriate rāgas or melodies, and expressed with suitable anigahāras or gestures and movements. All these latter are elaborated in the Nāṭya-śāstra. Medieval cave and Tāntrika sculpture in particular is unique in its treatment of grim supramundane sentiments and emotions for the revelation of the cosmos reality.

31. Surasundaris. Facade of the Kaṇḍariya Mahādeva Temple, Khajuraho. 11th century A. D.

Surasundari is an emanation and incarnation of Śakti, and hence combines an ethereal loveliness with transcendence. She is not one celestial beauty, but innumerable celestial beauties, as many as there are appearances and movements of form in the universe. Hence she is lavishly carved everywhere on the facade, in the niches, corners and brackets, and on the railings of the temple. Yet each image is distinct in her mood and gesture of love as each is a unique masterpiece of sculptural treatment.

32. Mithuna or Amatory Couple. Chitragupta Temple, Khajuraho. 11th century A. D.

The amatory couple symbolises the metaphysical conception of the Two-in-One. Seductiveness and charm merge into spiritual ecstasy and aspiration, revealing the immanence of Śakti in the flesh. Linearity and angularity, so psychologically eloquent of the thousand nuances of love, are subordinated to the plastic treatment in three dimensions in Khajuraho. Here are often discernible a studied preciosity, affectation and even sophistication in the erotic carvings as compared with a more outspoken and naive treatment at Konaraka. These are intended to stress the suprahuman lure of the feminine form, nowhere attaining such manifold, refined and perfect representation.

33. Śālabhaṭṭājīkā. Raj Rani Temple, Bhuvaneswara. 11th century

This classic, exquisite tribhanga pose of the erotic nāyikā by the side of the blossoming sīla tree is more than a millennium old. For we first came across the Vriksakā or Śālabhaṭṭājīkā with her triple inflexion in the art of Sanchi and Mathura. Fulness, laziness and abandon are writ large on her face and limbs. The fond, self-absorbed clutching of the tree symbolises the identity of the spirit of woman and vegetation handed down by folk myth and religion through the centuries. Her body is exuberant, pliant and swelling like the sīla, and awaits its fruition as the tree offers flower and fruit. But the cult of the primordial Śakti in the intervening centuries has added a new significance to the ancient sublimation and metamorphosis of vegetative fertility. Feminine loveliness is now treated with a deeper understanding of woman’s beauty as Cosmic Energy underlying the creation of the universe and every manifestation or appearance, and there is a richer and subtler psychological characterisation that makes a significant contribution to art. The Śālabhaṭṭājīkā has as abiding a place in Indian art as the Venus has in European art.

34. Durgā Mahiṣamardini. Vaitala Deul, Bhuvaneswara. 11th century

This is a magnificent example of Indian sculpture embodying the consummation of a quick and mighty movement of the gods through a surging, enveloping plastic rhythm.
In the flowing rhythm are caught not only the amiable and luxurious limbs of the Goddess in action, but also the crude, crouching animal body in complete subjugation. The straightness of the spear is in contrast with the curvilinear tensions of the two bodies in mortal combat.

35. Vidyās on the Ceiling of Vimal Shah’s Temple (Temple of Ādinātha). Dilwara, Mt. Abu, Rajasthan. 11th century

Each radial strut of the ceiling carries the figure of a Vidyā. Sixteen Jain Tāntrika Vidyās are depicted. The carvings in white Makrana marble are some of the most delicate and elaborate in India, the marble being treated for minute, translucent tracer almost like cloth or paper. Such technical virtuosity producing veritable visions of marble has few parallels in world art.

36. Celestial Musician. Konarak, Orissa. 13th century

These are India’s noblest free-standing, large-sized figures treated monumentally and yet melodiously with marvellous technical skill and imagination. Amplitude, heaviness and roundness here aid a blissful and other-worldly expression and graciousness and mellifluousness of gesture. The full, luxuriant and smoothly balanced form and movement of the apsarā embody a superb blend of aloofness and beatitude with charm and elegance.

37. Nātakā. Facade of the Nāṭamayādana, Konarak, Orissa. 13th century

A hundred poses of the classical dance of Orissa are represented here with great zest and minute attention to details of movement and gesture. As in Bhuvanesvara so in Konarak, the elaborate ornamentation and figure sculpture on the facade scintillate, due to depth of the carvings and play of light and shade, and invest the temple-body with throbbing life and vitality. This is underlined by the wavy movement of the temple mass as a whole derived from the accentuation of the profiles and the gradation of the terraces, each with its separate string courses. By contrast in the facades of the temples at Khajuraho the crowded figures, groups and modelled danseuses are, relatively speaking, set mechanically against flat and irresponsible walls.

38. Colossal War-horse. Konarak, Orissa. 13th century

This well-caparisoned, ferocious horse, accompanied by the warrior and trampling over the enemy, shows the anger and valour of cavalry men and symbolises the military might of the Gāṅga Kings. Such plastic realism and vitality emulate the best representations of horses in Greek sculpture. In fact both the colossal elephant and the horse are sometimes regarded as the noblest animal sculptures in the world.

39. The Himalayan Goats, Mughal School, Painted by Inayat, 1605-1658 A.D.

Inayat followed the footsteps of Mansur in executing this remarkably sensitive and minutely detailed Himalayan goat. The Mughal school during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jehan reached perfection in depicting the grace and movements of Indian birds and animals.


This is an illustration from Jayadeva’s Gūtagovinda. The offering of tilak is the sign of God’s acceptance of the human soul as His chosen bride. The intimacy of the ritual is
safeguarded by the seclusion of the hill-enclave on the river-bank, while blossoming flowers celebrate the abiding joy of the sacred occasion stamped with the imprint of eternity. Indian folk-art superbly transfigures a familiar scene in the household in a divine-cum-human, mythopoeic setting. Painting, poetry and mysticism combine their resources in the metamorphosis of the love of mortals into the charm and sublimity of the love of the Eternal Man and the Eternal Woman, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.


The Nāyikā Nāyikā is the Bride of God inexperienced in the lore of love. She is led by her matronly confidante to her Divine Lover. The contrast between youth and age, between immaturity and experience is vivid. It is the affectionate embrace of the confidante that dispels the coyness and trepidation of the Bride. Keshav Das’s Rasika Priyā (1591) following the literary tradition of the Gītagovinda (written at the end of the 12th century) and the lyrics of Vidyāpati, Chandidas and Mīrā Bāī, distinguishes the various nāyikās as well as nāyakas, marked a decisive step in Hindi poetry in the fusion of human and divine love sentiments. From this stemmed both the psychological depth and charm of Rājaśthān and Himāchala paintings for at least three centuries. The soft radiance, purity and delicacy of Indian feminine forms and gestures reached their supreme expression in Kāṅgrā paintings in an age which believed Love as the expression of Life’s fulfilment and Woman’s beauty as the radiance of God.

42. Rādhā being led to Kṛṣṇa’s Bower. Kāṅgrā. About 1790. Collection of Maharaja of Garhwal

This is an illustration of Jayadeva’s Gītagovinda. Rādhā is the human soul that must undertake its journey in fear and anxiety to Kṛṣṇa’s solitary bower. In the deep forest he awaits her in expectancy. The contrast between the elation of Kṛṣṇa, the trepidation of Rādhā and the affectionate assurance of her confidante, representing the divergent moods and nuances of the human soul in its spiritual pilgrimage, is vivid. The hills to the left act as a screen for the trysting place. The creeper, twining round the tree nearest Kṛṣṇa, symbolises the forthcoming union. The tree nearest to Rādhā swings its branches beckoning her to hasten.


This is a tempera painting and exhibits a superb elegance of pose and gesture that reveals more grace than voluptuousness.

44. The Abhisārikā. Garhwal. c. 1810 A.D.

She is the type of the Heroine of Love, distraught by passion, who forsakes her home in the hope of finding her Divine Lover in the thick of the forest.

The vitality and spontaneity of Indian folk painting are evidenced by the distinct idioms of style developed in Kāṅgrā and Garhwal. Here is the Garhwal School at its best from the handiwork of the master-artist Molaram. We see in the Garhwal School the same sinuous elegance, purity and serenity as in Kāṅgrā, but a more girlish and unsophisticated cast of countenance, born of a different social environment, a more stylized and decorative treatment of star-shaped flower and star-bespangled dress and a more exuberant display of vegetation in forests and meadows.

The dark night with the lightning flash and rain in the sky and the serpents moving about on the ground symbolises the utter desolation of the lonely soul, which has to await for the Divine in anxiety and anguish. The thick and lush vegetation swinging down upon
the frightened maiden serves not so much to provide a convincing background as to create and consolidate a structure of sentiment (rasa) in which the feelings of man and nature intermingle. Molaram's genius reveals this powerfully even though the emotional associations of the images and symbols he uses may not be fully grasped. The artist was also a poet and composed elegant verses illustrating his pictorial treatment of the Eight Heroines of Love (Aṣṭa-nāyikā).

45. Viśāpaharana Śiva. Pallava Bronze. 8th century.

Pallava and Pāla bronzes, being smaller images, could easily he carried by monks, artists scholars and merchants to lands far beyond the frontiers of India, and played a significant role in the Indianisation of Asia. The rise to prominence of metal work was almost simultaneous in Pāla East and Pallava South—8th century A.D. This bronze image depicts Śiva as the swaller of world-poison. Besides the usual symbols of the axe and the deer, he holds in one of his hands the deadly cobra. The profound tranquillity of the ascetic blends here with compassion for world suffering. Śiva's axe symbolises his wrath against the evil-doer, while the deer symbolises his favour for the devotee. He wears the coronet of matted locks with the crescent moon.

46. Standing Buddha. Bronze. Nālandā. c. 9th century A.D.

Pāla bronzes, dating from the 8th to the 13th century, with Nālandā as an important, early source, were transported to Nepal and Tibet across the Himalayas, and to Ceylon, Burma, Sumātrā, Jāvā, Siam and Cambodia along the sea-routes, profoundly influencing the iconography and art-style of these countries. The whole of South-east Asia remained spell-bound by the qualities of Pāla bronzes for several centuries. Clearness, smoothness and elegance of outline, blending with a sense of volume, invested Pāla metal work with unparalleled vitality and force. For centuries all important cities and towns of Eastern India from Nālandā and Gāyā to Tippera and Chittagong also enshrined Pāla images in metal in their temples.

47. Lokanātha or Lokēswara Padmapāyi. Gilt Bronze. Kurkihar, Bihar. c. 12th century A.D.

This bejewelled bronze with its suavity and elegance of curves; following the soft rhythms of the proliferating, blossoming lotus plants, continues the best traditions of Pāla metal work. It reveals the Bodhisattva's ethereal grace reconciled with his benignant mood.


Breathing unfathomable tranquillity this image embodies the contemporary Pāla style, combining softness with the aloofness of transcendent wisdom.

49. Śiva-Nātarāja. South Indian Bronze

Śiva dances here in the lalita posture. Below his feet is the demon Mursalagam. Only the symbols of the drum and the fire are held in his arms (abhaya). One hand gives the assurance while another hangs down (lalahastra).

50. Śakuntalā. Terracotta. Bhīta, District Allahbad. 2nd-1st century B.C.

Narrative sculpture, religious or secular, is met with in Indian art from its early stages of development. This terracotta medallion in its sensitiveness and delicacy of modelling
reaches the standard of excellence of Sanchi reliefs. The story depicted is that of Śakuntalā, as told in the Mahābhārata centuries before Kālidāsa dramatised it. The obverse shows Śakuntalā feeding deer with leaves from tree branches. From the top Duṣyanta, with a companion on each side, spies Śakuntalā. On the reverse we see the royal chariot entering the hermitage. In front we see a pair of deer and a peacock dancing, and on the left a hut of the hermit.

51. The Paradise of Amitābha. Tun-huang, T'ang Sculpture

For a half-millennium from the 4th to the 8th century A.D. Tun-huang was to China as Ajantā had been to Asia. While Turkish, Scythian and Iranian traditions mixed with Chinese in the portraits of donors, lokapālas and other secondary figures, the Gods of Mahāyāna Buddhism, serene, chaste and tender, showed Indian Gupta art-influences that ultimately led to the confluence of Ajantā and Horyuji. The miracles of supernatural bliss and exaltation of the Tuṣita Heaven, so enthrallingly delineated by the Lotus of the Good Law, began to exercise from the middle of the first millenium A.D. an extraordinary influence on the Chinese mind through hundreds of Buddhist statues and paintings of the Amitābha, and his spiritual sons, Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara, who in China became Kuan-yin, Goddess of Compassion. The (Indian) Western Paradise of the Lotus, presided over by Amitābha, depicted in Chinese Buddhist art, gave to the Chinese people and culture a buoyant, happy and worldly outlook dedicated to the quest for beauty and charity. The Chinese stress of the Great Compassion in Buddhist art tempers the ascetic rigour and speculative bent of a sombre, exotic religion and explains much of its far-reaching influence in East Asia across two thousand years.

Tun-huang art celebrates the gradual evolution of Indian Buddhism in China: first, the stress of the metaphysical Messianic Buddha (Maitreya Bodhisattva) over the historical Śākya Muni; the second, the development of the pietist-cult of radiant Amitābha of the Western Paradise, a single invocation to whom leads to spiritual salvation; and, third, the metamorphosis of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva into the Chinese Madonna of Compassion, Kuan-yin.

52. The Buddha’s Departure. Ramoche Temple, Lhasa

This is a celebrated theme delineated in sculpture and painting in Indian Asia through the centuries beginning from the relief at Sanchi. It shows a superb blend of realism with abstraction and a dynamic rhythm of plastic treatment.

53. The Colossal Buddha at Yun Kang. Cave 20, 460-465 A.D.

The Buddha colossi at Ajantā and Bamiyan influenced the making of the colossal statues of the Buddha in different parts of South and East Asia. The more famous colossal Buddhas are those at Kuśinagara, Ajantā, Śrīnagar and Pārīhāsapura in India, in Ceylon at Polonnaruva, in Burma at Pagan, in Siam at Chinnamai and Ayuthia, and in China at Yun Kang and Lung-men. At Yun Kang there are as many as seven colossal Buddhas, the largest and the most majestic in the world.

The Yun Kang Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with their rounded torsos and delicately idealised features bear evidence of Classic Indian Gupta influences modifying the earlier Gandhāra style. Such influences spread through the Tarim valley and Tibet on one side, and by sea from the ports of Amarāvatī on the other.

The great contribution of Wei and T'ang art to Buddhist art lies in its blending of Chinese slimmness, sensitiveness and individuality with the other-worldliness and impersonality of the Gupta Buddhist traditions. The master-artist’s name has come down to
usin this remarkable case. From 460-465 A.D., in the reign of the Wei king, the Chinese monk, Tipa Hsin, executed many statues at Yün Kang including the colossal Buddha "under the inspiration of the Lotus of the Good Law and the teachings of the Indian monk Vimala Garudārakīrtī."

Indian influence is discernible more directly in Cave 8, where there is installed a figure with five heads and six hands; by his side is also ensconced a three-headed Śiva-Maheśvara mounted on the bull.

54. The Buddha and Bodhisattva at Mai Chi Shan. 4th-8th centuries A.D.

More than the Indian transcendence and detachment, the Chinese melting human tenderness and sweetness rule Mai Chi Shan art. Mai Chi Shan has given to the world some of the most serene and ethereal figures ever imagined by man under the conjoint influence of classic Gupta and T'ang traditions and techniques. The stylization of the drapery, the hand inflection and the halo stress ethereality superbly blended with human warmth.

55. The Buddha. Pienhsien, Shansi. T'ang Dynasty

The idealised contemplative features of the Buddha, together with the stylised treatment of the eye-lids, brows, ears and hair, closely resemble classic Gupta master-pieces from Mathura and Sarnath.

56. The Buddha. Cave of Sukku-lam, Korea. T'ang Sculpture. 8th century

This majestic image embodies silence and impersonality rather than human warmth.

57. Vairochana. Toskodaji Monastery, Nara, Japan. 8th century

Revealing the notion of pure Logos, the image most superbly blends serenity with clarity. The ponderousness and solidity are subtly reconciled with dynamic coherence in plastic treatment. This may be compared with the Jávâneša Vairochana at Borobodur, belonging to the same glorious epoch in Asian art.

58. Mahâkâla. Mongolia. Early 8th century A.D.

The Buddhist god of Time, all-pervasive and all-devouring like fire.

59. The Buddha in Meditation. Anurâdhapura. 3rd-4th century A.D.

The noble poised and adamantine silence of the Buddha seated in yogic posture embody the marvels that Buddhist religion and sculpture could reach, whether in India or far beyond her confines. The broad summary modelling of the body with the stylised treatment of locks and eye-brows closely follows the proto-types of Mathura, Sarnath and Amarâvati.

60. Apsarâs, Sigiriya. 5th century A.D.

We have here the same exquisite blend of sensuousness with ethereality as in the frescoes at Ajantâ and Bâgh. The clouds of heaven veil the apsarâs below the waist. Not only the Boticellian delicacy of lines and curves but also the three-dimensional pattern of treatment of colours and shades in these celestial maidens belong to India, although the physical type delineated is essentially Sinhalese. Some scholars identify the maidens with the queens of Kassapa I (479-497 A.D.).
C. 7th century A.D.

This is an illustration of the legend of the theft of Sagara's sacrificial horse by wily Indra who hid it under the ocean. The sage Kapila is keeping watch over the beast. The celebrated legend is mentioned by Kālidāsa in his Rāghuvaṃśa, (XIII.3) but has never been depicted in Indian art. The style and treatment closely resemble those of the Pallava rock-cut reliefs at Manallapuram. Impressive and Herculian in its bodily proportions, the sage's relaxed limbs and distant gaze powerfully express his intent, fateful vigil. The horse-head emerges from the matrix of the rock.

12th century

This has its Indian colossal prototype at Ajantā and Nasik. It spills profound stillness and grandeur all round, and is a perfect embodiment of the Mahāyāna idea of Universal Nirvāṇa for all creatures as numerous, as the sands on the banks of the Gaṅgā.

63. Parākrama Bāhu I. Polonnaruwa. 12th century

This grand colossal, rock-cut image of a sage with his stylized beard and dignified mien and his eyes lowered in reading a palm-leaf scripture is probably the representation of King Parākrama Bāhu I. According to the Mahāsaṅgīti, the king brought Tamil craftsmen and sculptors to decorate his capital. The simplicity and ponderousness of the composition are relieved by the slight bend of the right leg and by the knot and incised lines on the cloth, and there arises a sense of pent-up energy as if the image will immediately move into action, symbolic of the reconciliation of meditation and activity of the royal sage.

64. The Bath of the Buddha at the Nairāṇjanā River. Borobudur, Java.
Scene from the Buddha Legend. 8th century

The elements of narration and drama in depicting the Indian legends of the Buddha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are more conspicuous in Borobudur and Prambanan than in the art of the homeland at Sanchi and Ajantā. Gupta influences, filtering through Pāla styles and idioms, are the strongest, discernible in an exquisite blend of classic poise and abstraction with sensitive modelling and decoration. This is born of the mystical fervour of the Mahāyāna, the Vajrayāna, and the cults of Mahā-Vairochana and Śiva or Lokēśvara. Gautama here is the eternal, universal metaphysical Essence or Void, and yet the object of adoration of gods, men, angels and denizens of the nether world. The whole panel which is not reproduced here is saturated with Mahāyāna piety. The adoration of the kneeling Princes, the happiness of the grazing lambs and the hilarity of the flying gandharvas record the universal rejoicing at the Buddha's Enlightenment. The spaces between the figures and between the stylized trees are eloquent of the truth of Enlightenment.

65. Sujātā with her Offering of Rice to the Buddha. Scene from the Buddha Legend. 
Borobudur. 8th century

As Man reaches universality in his serenity and poise, so Woman reaches hers in her piety and surrender in Borobudur. Hardly does any art in the world celebrate feminine charm with such stress of immaculate purity of gestures and emotions as in this master-piece The tremulous, three-fold inflexion of the adoring Sujātā is here the vehicle of Asia's adoration of womanhood.
One of the master-pieces of sculpture in the world whose appeal lies in its massiveness and coherence and plastic quality of modelling, embodying an inner metaphysical experience. Like similar images of the Dhyānī Buddha at Anurādhapura, Lung-men and Nara, it goes back to its celebrated Indian prototypes: the Kuṣāṇa image of the Buddha from Kātra, Mathura (late 1st century A.D.), the Bodhisattva from Bodhgaya (early 4th century A.D.) and the Gupta image of the Discoursing Buddha at Sarnath (5th century A.D.). Vairochana is one of the six Dhyānī Buddhas of the Mahāyāna.

67. Durgā Mahiṣamardini. Singasari, Eastern Jāvā. 13th century A.D.

Massiveness and weightiness blend here with fine, decorative treatment of crown, shield, ornament and embroidered drapery so as to reconcile numinos power with youth and grace. On the whole the image, modelled in Pāla-Sena style, is suffused with queenly poise and dignity as Durgā’s face is steeped in, and commands silence, embodying a spiritual mood—the easy and inevitable victory of goodness over evil. Both the spiritual ideology and artistic treatment were superbly assimilated by Indonesia from Bengal of the Pāla-Sena Renaissance. Here the Supreme Mother or the Real Self is in tension, as she shows perfect balance in the more celebrated image of Prajñāpāramitā, belonging to the same place and period.

68. Trailokyavijaya or the Victor of the Three Worlds. Jāvā. Bronze. 9th to 10th century

This may be considered a world’s master-piece in sculpture in the treatment of the terrible. This is the Mahāyāna god Vajrasattva or Vairochana treading on Śiva-Pārvati presiding over the three worlds of name and appearance. The dynamic rhythm of movement of the eight arms with their manifold weapons and of the violently bent legs (pratyālīḍha) plastically expresses the emergence of the silent Buddha or Logos into the tumult of creation.

69. The Faces of Śiva (Tumburu or Rudra). Angkor Thom. 12th century

There are 172 faces of Śiva or Lokesvara overlooking Śiva-loka or Buddha-loka that, due to the vagaries of nature and man, has been overgrown with jungle for centuries. These serene, transcendent faces, gazing simultaneously at all directions, bear the imprint of the suavity and ethereal elegance of Pāla art blended with the monumentality and weightiness of ancient Khmer art. Once seen these haunt the imagination for a life-time. Their lavish multiplication symbolises the truth of universal incarnation and salvation of all finite creatures of the earth. The Bayon, the heart of Angkor, celebrates the apotheosis of the entire Khmer people. Such is the fruition of the Indian metaphysics of the Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna and Śaivism on the soil of Cambodia. Hundreds of towers rise above the massive faces of Śiva or Lokesvara as mukutas or crowns, comprising a vast orderly ensemble, rigorous in balance and proportions. These represent the serried cluster of peaks of Mount Meru, the habitation of the gods. The abode of man and the abode of god become identical as humanity and divinity collectively participate in the same Essence symbolised by the mask-like, uniform faces.

70. Gate of Victory with Causeway Lined with Devas. Angkor Thom

Colossal Devas and Asuras holding the Cosmic Serpent comprise the railings of the avenue. Their types of faces are completely dissimilar. The railings unfold the cosmic myth with dramatic effect for thousands of citizens as they enter the gate of the palace city.
DESCRIPTIO Н OF PLATES

71. The Smiling Buddha

"The smile of Bayon", gentle, sweet and compassionate, hovering in the corners of the Buddha's relaxed tender, understanding lips, is sometimes characterised as "without doubt the supreme expression of Buddhist beatitude". The face markedly differs from the face of the Indian Buddha and Bodhisattva, generally more serene, impersonal and transcendent. It is the outcome at once of the influence of T'ang sculpture and the more realistic view of life and mundane temper of the Khmers.

72. The Apsaras of Bayon

The celestial danseuse shows supernatural rhythms and symmetries, not accessible to human danseuses; her movements in the heavenly sphere brook no earthly laws of gravitation. On the earth her gestures and movements can only approximate to those of the whirling, quivering sparks of flame or the rambling, swaying and blossoming lotus and vine plants that surround her figure as a decorative pattern and frame. The flying or quivering flame motif is definitely Buddhist-Tantrika of the Pala period, symbolising Sakti. In its varied stylised forms it is found frequently in decorations in Burma, Java, Bali, Siam and Cambodia.

In the midst of her ecstatic flights the apsaras with her closed eyes and serene meditative face shows complete self-absorption. She symbolises not only the beauty of Life and Nature but also the spontaneous flight of the human soul. Thus we read about the apsaras in the stele of the East Mebon (952 A.D.): "Like the swarms of bees flying to the pārījata, like the souls of the sages aspiring to the meditation of the Ānman, so do the eyes of men lay aside all activity and direct themselves towards her alone."

73. Rāma Chandra's Encounter with the Golden Deer. Reliefs in the North-west Pavilion at Angkor Wat. 12th century

The story is derived from the Rāmāyaṇa. Rāma Chandra's fruitless chase of the elusive, golden deer in the forest preceded the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa. The bas reliefs emulate the Pāla techniques and traditions but we find here an altogether new vitality and dynamic balance of the composition, born of the indigenous Khmer art tradition. The contrast between the quick movement of the main figures and the poise of the seated forest-sages with their repetitive uniform gestures of benediction adds to the liveliness of the representation. The treatment of vegetation and of the decorative designs reaches a degree of delicacy and sensitiveness approximating the reliefs to Rajput and Moghul paintings.

74. Rāvaṇa Shaking Kailāsa. Pediment at Banteai Śrei, near Angkor, Cambodia. 14th century A.D.

The sculpture delineates the arrogant Rāvaṇa's futile attempt to shake the Himalayan abode of Śiva and Pārvatī—a theme treated in the home-land at Ellora and Bhuvenesvara. The rich and meticulous tapestry-like carving makes this one of the most marvellous specimens in world art.

75. Standing Lokeshvara. Bronze. Peninsular Siam. 9th to 10th century A.D.

The Bodhisattva holds the lotus in his left hand. The right hand shows the gesture of assurance. On his jaṭā-mukūṭa there appears the figure of the Dhyāṇa Buddha Amitābha. The iconography and the treatment of the ornaments and locks show close correspondence to the contemporary Pāla style.
76. Bronze Head of the Buddha. Northern Siam. 13th to 15th century A.D.

The treatment of the matted locks and of usnīsā follows the Pāla style, but the oval face, the rounded eye-brows and the small, firm lips exhibit the northern Tai racial type, belonging to what Reginald Le May calls the Chiengsén or pre-Sukotai period.
PLATE 1. Early Classic Buddhist Art. Panel from Sanchi, 2nd century B.C.
PLATE 2. Ruru or Mriga Jātaka. Railing pillar, Bhārhat. 2nd century B.C.

PLATE 3. Early Classic Buddhist Art. Yakṣī or Apsara from Mathura. 2nd century A.D.
PLATE 4. Early Classic Buddhist Art. The Buddha Quelling the Mad Elephant Nalagiri. From Amarāvati. 1st century A.D.
PLATE 5. Head of the Buddha. Lime Composition, Gandhāra, 4th-5th century A.D.
PLATE 6. Classic Gupta Art. 5th-8th century A.D.
Standing Buddha from Mathura. 5th century A.D.
PLATE 7. Classic Gupta Art. 5th to 8th century A.D.
The Discoursing Buddha at Sarnath. 5th century A.D.
PLATE 8. Classic Gupta Art. The Supreme Brahman from Deogarh. 5th century A.D.
PLATE 9. Avalokiteśvara Pārāja from Ajantā, 6th century A.D.
PLATE 11. Śriṅgāra, Nālandā. 7th century A.D.


PLATE 15. Pāla Gothic. Lokesvara Padmapaṇi. Lalitagiri, Kalinga. 8th century A.D.
PLATE 16. The Crowned Buddha, Bihar.
9th to 10th century A. D.

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THE SPREAD of INDIAN ART

For a map showing the spread of Indian civilization see front end-paper