The book is a study of the fundamental principles of ancient Indian art and architecture, dealing with essentials of Hindu thinking and practice of art like the Hindu view of Godhead, iconography and iconometry, and symbols and symbolism in Hindu art. Referring to major classical Indian literary works shedding light on art and architecture, it undertakes a survey of Indian art and temple architecture from the 3rd century BC through the medieval period, highlighting the directional changes that marked the history of art, specifically sculpture and painting. It elaborately views the various terms and concepts associated with the field of art and iconography like *mudrās, āsanas, pīthas*, explaining the nature of Buddhist and Jain deities as well as those of Hindu sects like Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śāktism. Pointing out the importance of studying Hindu temple architecture in order to fully appreciate Hindu art which was meant for propagation of dharma, it analyses the basic features of the temple architecture and its regional variants.

Tracing the differences in conception and delineation of a Hindu temple, a Muslim mosque and a Christian church, the research focuses particularly on the principles of visualisation of symbols and signs in Hinduism and Christianity. It also reveals how the West has viewed Indian literature and art, exposing the inner contradictions of some European thinkers who while praising literary works of Kalidāsa and others condemned the Hindu images.

The work contains more than 300 illustrations, half-tone and line drawings, that make the discussion easy to comprehend for a range of readers — scholars, students as well as laymen.
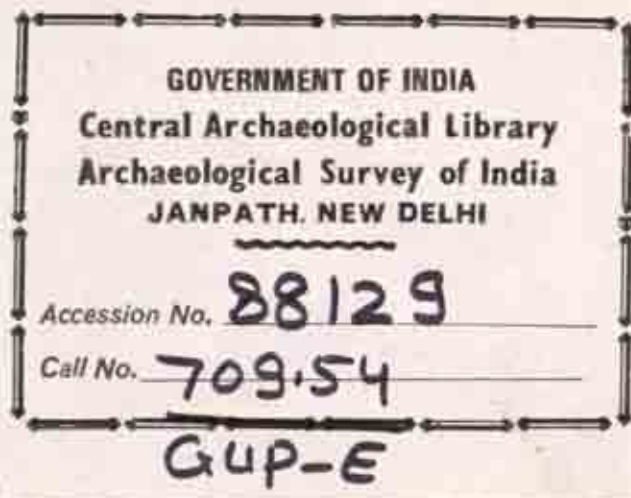
alki, Buddha, Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma,
na, Varāha, Kūrma, Matsya

Śiva Gaṇas, Kailasa temple, Hoyasala

Elements
of
Indian Art

Including Temple Architecture, Iconography & Iconometry

Elements of Indian Art

S. P. Gupta
Shashi Prabha Asthana

Elements of Indian Art
Including Temple Architecture, Iconography & Iconometry

Devi with attendants, terracotta, Candraketugarh, West Bengal, 2nd century BC
(courtesy: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

Elements of Indian Art

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S. P. Gupta
Shashi Prabha Asthana

Indraprastha Museum of Art and Archaeology
New Delhi - 110 016

Preface

HAVING served the National Museum, New Delhi and the Allahabad Museum for more than thirty years, I felt that the visitors to museums rarely get to know the context and meaning of the works of art that they see there. Often the available books are either too large to consult or too small to learn even the basic facts. This is true of the foreign as well as national visitors. We, therefore, thought of producing a book of medium size, almost like a handbook, which a visitor can easily take with him or her in galleries devoted to ancient Indian art and learn about it through this book. For this purpose we have embellished the book with a large number of illustrations.

For a number of years I have been taking classes and delivering lectures in the National Museum Institute. There also I felt the same lack of basic knowledge about the art and architecture of ancient India amongst the students of M.A. courses, and the Tour Guides who join the courses of Art History. The book will serve them also because they are supposed to tell the tourists visiting museums and monuments all about our ancient art and architecture.

The National Museum Institute also runs courses in Art Appreciation for the common men who are eager to know the fundamentals of Indian art. I have been taking some lectures for them also. I am sure they will certainly benefit from this book.

Finally, what about scholars? Yes, there will be enough food for their thought also, since at times I have given views which are a lot different from those propounded by others.

It is common knowledge that in ancient India works of art were not produced for their own sake. Instead, these were required to be the parts of temples, either as deities to be worshipped or as parts of the structures. It was, therefore, felt necessary to include here the

subject of iconography as well as temple architecture; the subject of iconometry included here is only an extension of iconography. We have here not included the Prehistoric and Protohistoric Art since they form different cycles of Indian Art and rarely connected with the Art Tradition which started in the Mauryan period.

There is a small story behind this book. In the year 1982 the second author of this book, the late Dr. Shashi Asthana, had to appear for the post of Keeper (Archaeology) in the National Museum. For this purpose she prepared a manuscript on the subject of Iconography. Unfortunately, it remained unpublished in her lifetime; she died in 1997 at the age of less than 50 years because of kidney failure. Last year, I found it in a bundle of papers she had left behind. When I called the publishers to publish it, they asked me not only to enlarge it but also add a few chapters to make it more meaningful and useful. As a mark of my love and respect for her, who was one time my student, who did her Ph.D. under my guidance, and later my colleague in the National Museum, she was Asstt. Director there when she passed away, I decided to do it.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Late S. Ganesh Rao, my friend from 1957 when we were together working at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa excavations. He was then a surveyor. Later on we both moved to New Delhi, he was working in the Archaeological Survey of India and I was in the National Museum. In the 1970s and 80s whatever I wrote I generally showed it to him for critical evaluation. Dr. Asthana also did the same. He used to be very ruthless. We liked it and changed many parts of our writings since he felt that much more data were required to buttress our claims. Today he is not with us, but I do cherish my memories with him. I am sure had Dr. Asthana being alive she would also have decided to dedicate this book to the memory of our friend Shri Ganesh Rao.

In the preparation of this book I was greatly helped in many ways by Ms. Anuja Geetali and Ms. Mahua Bhattacharyya. Shri M.S. Mani has been very kind to me in preparing all the drawings appearing in this book. Shri Jassu Ram made the maps. Shri Tejas Garge and Shri Laxmi Narain helped me in selecting the photographs for which I am beholden to them. I am equally beholden to Sarvashri Rakesh Dutta

and Manoj Harbola for typing the manuscript; Shri Himanshu Joshi, in addition, generated maps and charts on computer. Dr. B.S. Harishankar and Shri B.S. Rajput helped me in getting books from the library for which I am indeed thankful to them.

To Sarvashri K.S. Ramachandran and K.N. Dikshit, the authors will ever remain thankful for their most friendly advice and support.

I acknowledge my indebtness to the writers whose books we have consulted and from which we have drawn not only material but also illustrations. The first and foremost being the book entitled *Indian Art* authored by Dr. V.S. Agarwala. The second major book is the *Iconography of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains* by Dr. R.S. Gupte. The third major book is *Pratimā Kośa* by Shri S.R. Ramachandran. The fourth major work is the *Encyclopaedia of Temple Architecture* in several volumes published by the American Institute of Indian Studies, Gurgaon, New Delhi. The fifth major work is the *Development of Hindu Iconography* by J.N. Banerjea. There are several other books also which have helped me in various ways, e.g., *Mathurā Kalā* by Dr. Shashi Prabha Asthana, *Kuṣāṇa Prastar Mūrtiyon Me Samāja Evaṁ Dharma* by Dr. Rani Srivastava and *Bhubaneswar*, a guide book beautifully written and illustrated by Dr. (Ms.) Debala Mitra and published by the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi. I have also drawn a lot from my own book *The Roots of Indian Art*.

I am also thankful to the National Museum, New Delhi and Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi for a number of photographs, which they supplied to us.

Shri Susheel Mittal of D.K. Printworld deserves my appreciation for the personal care which he took in seeing the book through the press.

New Delhi
30-08-2002

S.P. Gupta
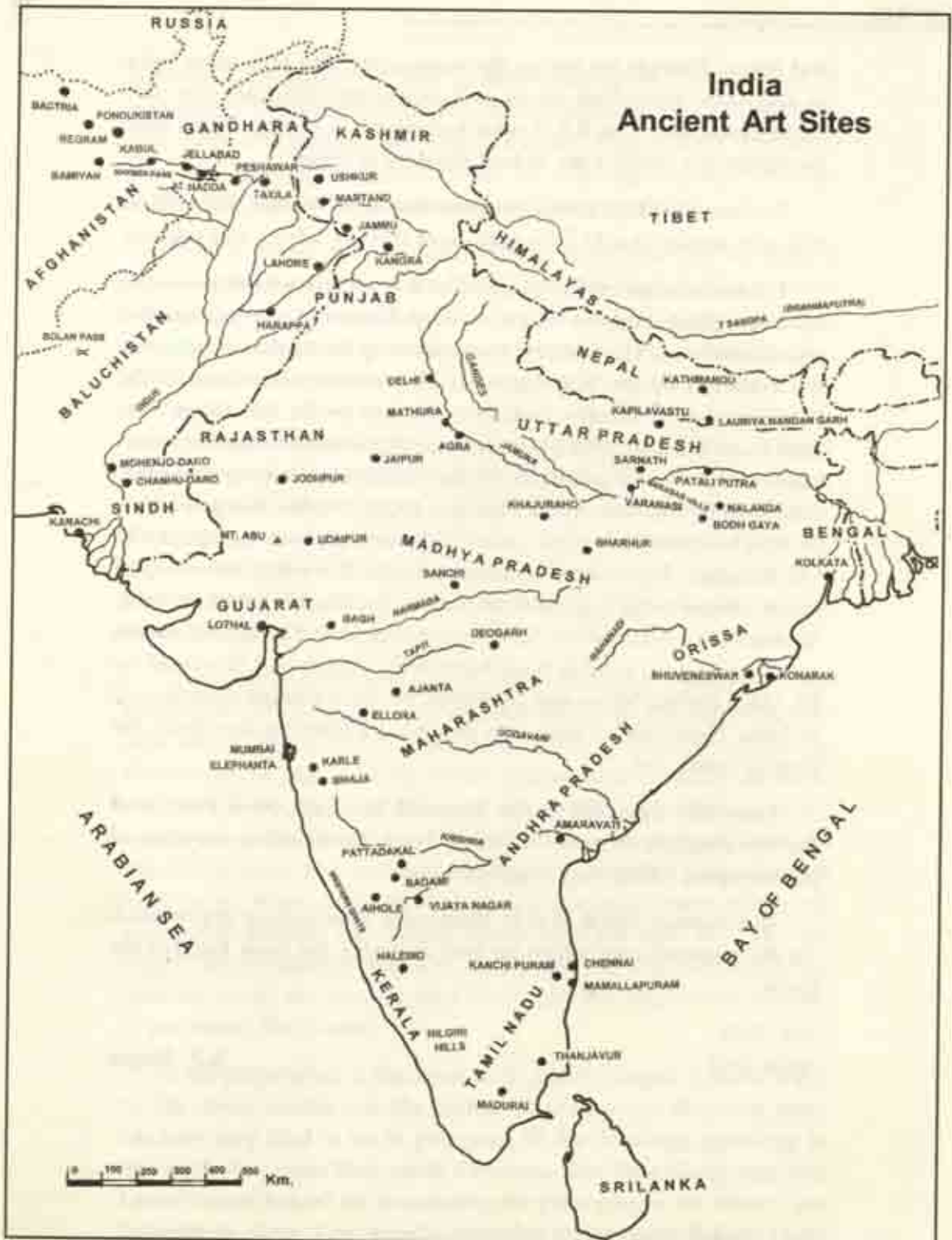
Map of Ancient India showing important Art Sites

Contents

Buddha, Mathurā, U.P.,
Kuṣāṇa, 1st century AD

Transliteration Chart

a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	e	ai	o	au
अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ

ṁ	ḥ	ṛ
अं	अः	ऋ

ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa
क	ख	ग	घ	ङ
ca	cha	ja	jha	ña
च	छ	ज	झ	ञ
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण
ta	tha	da	dha	na
त	थ	द	ध	न
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma
प	फ	ब	भ	म

ya	ra	la	va
य	र	ल	व
śa	ṣa	sa	ha
श	ष	स	ह

kṣa	tra	jña
क्ष	त्र	ज्ञ

INDIA
SITES OF PRINCIPAL TEMPLES

Scale

Km

Modern Town ⬚   Temple Sites ●

AFGHANISTAN

SRINAGAR

Jagatsukh

PAKISTAN

CHINA

NEPAL

BHUTAN

DELHI

Oslan   Abaneri   LUCKNOW   Brahmaputra R.

JAIPUR   Bhrargaon

Gwalior   Amrol   Nalanda
Ekalinga   Surwaya   Pawaya
Ghanerao   Menal   Mahua   Ramgarh   BANGLADESH
Nagda   Barwasagar   Rajgir
Abu   Chittorgarh   Ramgarh   Khajuraho   Bodhgaya
Vadnagar   Jagat   Deogarh   Chandrehi
Sunak   Mehsana   Mukundawara
Kera   Baroli   Eran
Anjar   Modhera   Badoh   Gyaraspur   Nachna   KOLKATA
Pindara   Than   Pilidra   Sanchi   Nohta   Tigawa   Sohagpur   Baranagar
Viraingam   Bharaghat   Bishnupur
Sejakpur   Narmada R.   Nemawar
Ghumine   Girnar   Un
Prabhas Patan   Balsana   Mahanadi R.
Jhodga   Sirpur
Ambernath   Bhubaneshwar   Konark
MUMBAI
Godavari

ARABIAN SEA   Warangal

HYDERABAD   BAY OF BENGAL

Mahakuteshwar   Pondugala
Badami
Patadkal   Aihole
Lakkundi   Hampi

Nandi   Tiruttani   CHENNAI
Halebid   Belur   Kanchipuram
Shravanbelgola   Vellore   Mahaballpuram
Panamalai   Gangaikondacholapuram
Srinivasanallur
Tiruchur   Srirangam   Darasuram
Kodumbalur   Thanjavur
Panangudi   Narttamalai
Spivilliputtur

INDIAN   Kerkai   SRI LANKA   OCEAN

Map of India showing sites of Principal Temples

Fundamentals of Indian Art

FOR an average Indian it is very easy to understand and appreciate Indian art since everything is both old and contemporary; everyday he lives with it. For foreigners also it is not difficult to appreciate it provided he or she devotes just a little time to know the background of the Indian traditions. The Indian traditions are manifested in Vedic literary texts such as the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the Epics, the Purāṇas, the Āgamas and Śilpa-śāstras as well as in folk and local practices, oral literature and the classics. There are also several, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Buddhist and Jaina literary works. There are some treatises on various aspects of art and architecture, including iconography and iconometry.

Art is not for art sake, it is for 'Dharma'

To begin with, what goes in the name of Indian Art of pre-modern period has been part and parcel of Hindu concept of *dharma* (धर्म) and all religions born in India but following various belief-systems and modes of worship. Many of the basic ideas underlying these religions seem to have originated in the Vedic times. These ideas, however, developed through various literary works of the succeeding periods. It is through them that we come to know about the socio-cultural life of the people and its ideational foundations. Thus, in India, we find that during the olden days 'art was not for art sake' as it

Jina, Deogarh, U.P.
10th century AD

A Bhakta (Devotee),
Tiruvenkaḍu, Tamil Nadu,
11th century AD

is now. The so-called 'works of art' were parts of some belief-system, written or unwritten, and some monument, religious or secular with religious beliefs attached to it. It was also spiritual, the ultimate goal of all Indian religions. That is why 'art' was always manifested in temples and shrines of one kind or the other in the form of images, icons, idols, votive objects, symbols, etc. Its purpose was to heighten one's spiritual experience. Hence, in order to appreciate Indian art one has to have some knowledge of Indian religious literature and village-based traditions. Of social ideals and social behaviour. Of moral precepts. Of the way a human life is to be lived to fulfil its mission and goal in an atmosphere of non-conflictlessness. This is much beyond the concept of 'religion'. It is called *dharma* which can hardly be translated in English language because this concept is exclusively Hindu, its roots lie in the Ṛgvedic concept of *ṛta* (ऋत). And it is also universal in its application as Vivekanand used to say. The roots of Indian art lie in this holistic concept. Not that there were no pictures or sculptures of non-religious themes, these were there but in ancient period these were generally incidental; only in the medieval period we find the secular art as an independent stream of art flowing mainly in paintings, made in the courts of the kings or else for the kings and the nobility.

Religion and Art

The religious establishments and edifices in India belong to countless sects and sub-sects of religions, but all of them can be grouped in five categories, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Śākta, Bauddha and Jaina. However, the first three are sometimes collectively called 'Hindu', although great art historians like Ludwick Bachhofer used 'Hindu' for all religions

which originated in India, including Bauddha and Jaina, since these were basically only the streams of a single system, i.e., Indian view of life as a whole, including its spiritual moorings, starting from the Vedic times. Thus, religious cults led to the growth of cult-icons, iconography and icon-making techniques.

Hinduism has no Hierarchy Amongst Gods

It may, however, be noted that there is no concept of 'hierarchy' amongst gods in Hinduism in which one is the highest and the others are level-wise lower than the previous one. As a matter of fact, by turn Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śakti becomes the Supreme Deity, the others are shown paying homage to Him or Her, depending on the occasion arising in the narrative of the mythology. The notion of One Supreme Reality is, however, very much there since in the ultimate analysis that alone is sought to be realised by the devotee. The gods are many, one, if so wishes, can select any one of them as per his or her own choice for the purpose of concentrating his or her mind on the Ultimate. But it is not idolatry since the idols themselves are not worshipped, what is in reality worshipped is the Supreme Being, called by various names, including Brahmā, Īśvara, Paramātmā, etc. One attains Godhood through the realisation of the True Nature of the Self which too is God. In other words, there is no duality, man and God are the same, only the ignorance of man makes him feel that he is different from the God. This concept is 'I am Brahma', अहं ब्रह्मास्मि. This is called 'Advaita' (अद्वैत). But this also is only one view, although dominant view. The others are slightly modified views, e.g., Viśiṣṭādvaita (विशिष्टाद्वैत) in which 'I' and 'He' are one and the same yet both exist independently in a particular sense.

Rāvaṇa shaking Kailās where Śiva and Pārvatī are sitting, Hinglājgarh, M.P. 11th century AD

Viṣṇu, Madhya Pradesh,
11th century

Narasiṁha, 14th century,
Karnataka

Hinduism vis-a-vis Christianity and Islam

In this respect Hinduism is entirely different from Christianity and Islam where there is the concept of only one God and one *paigambar* (पैगम्बर) or prophet, the Son, or the 'Chosen One' by God, Jesus Christ and Prophet Muhammad, respectively. This is their Fundamental. For example, the words of Koran Sharif are the words of God communicated to the world through the last Prophet, Mohammad Saheb. These cannot be changed, therefore. In Hinduism the words of the Vedas (वेद) are not the words of God; these were of the *ṛṣis* (ऋषि) or saints who composed the hymns, one could accept or reject their authority. That has been happening all the time. Buddha and Mahāvīra openly rejected them. So did many others. *Ṛṣi* Cārvāka, for example, who was absolutely a materialist philosopher. That is why Hinduism has no Fundamentals. It is only a way of life and each one has countless alternative paths to choose from for attaining salvation.

THE AVATĀRAS OF VIṢṆU

THE CONCEPT OF AVATĀRA
OR INCARNATION OF GOD

Of all the Hindu gods, Viṣṇu has one aspect which is different from the rest — it is the concept of *avatāra* (अवतार), i.e., incarnation or God taking human or animal or partially human and partially animal form. These are ten in number, *daśāvatāra* (दशावतार). In each incarnation God Viṣṇu took one form to fulfil one specific mission in order to save the world from evil. For example, Viṣṇu incarnated himself as Rāma in order to kill the wicked king Rāvaṇa; as Kṛṣṇa to defeat the Kauravas by their righteous brothers, the Pāṇḍvas and establish the rule of *dharma* or Righteousness; as Narasiṁha to kill the demon

Hiraṇyakaśyipu; as Varāha to save the mother Earth or *Pṛthvī* (पृथ्वी) from the demon who took her to the depths of ocean, etc. There are also *Vāmanāvatāra, Kūrmāvatāra,* and *Matsyāvatāra.* Balarāma, Paraśurāma and Kalki are the other *avatāras.* From the seventh century even Buddha was included in the list of *avatāras* as is proved from an inscription discovered on the plinth of the Shore Temple at Mahābalipuram.

BUDDHA: THE LIFE AND TEACHING

The case of Buddhism is slightly different. Buddha, the originator of Buddhism, has been considered as a historical being with definite date of birth and death backed by a genealogy. He was born as Siddhārtha, the son of the Śākya king Śuddhodhana and queen Māyā, more than 2500 years ago, in the year 563 BC. He was born in a garden at Lumbinī, located in south-east Nepal, while his mother was on way to her mother's house. He, however, grew up at Kapilavastu, the capital city of his father, located at Siddhārth Nagar in eastern Uttar Pradesh. One day he left home, leaving behind his wife Yaśodharā and son Rāhul, in search of the Truth. The 'Truth' dawned upon him at Bodh-Gayā located in north-eastern Bihar while meditating under a *pīpal* tree. On getting Enlightenment, or *nirvāṇa* (निर्वाण), a Buddhist term, he came to Sārnāth near Vārāṇasī and delivered his First Sermon. This act is called *dharmacakra-pravartana* (धर्मचक्र-प्रवर्तन) or 'Rolling the Wheel of *dharma*', often written as *dhamma* (धम्म), the Pāli form of Sanskrit *dharma*.

He preached what he called 'The Middle Path', *madhyama mārga* (मध्यम मार्ग), not too much of austerity and not too much of indulgence, no killing of the animals and no rituals connected with Vedic Fire Sacrifice, instead accumulate merit by doing

Buddha, Maṅkuṅwar, U.P., Gupta, 5th century AD

Footprints of Buddha with auspicious marks, Amrāvatī, A.P. 2nd century BC

good to fellow beings since *karma* alone will determine the nature of the next birth. However, one should aim at annihilating the 'cycle of birth and death' and thus achieve what he called *nirvāṇa*. He died at Kuśīnagara, in eastern Uttar Pradesh, at the age of 80. He was the originator of the Bauddha Dharma in which celibacy and monastic life for the aspirants of *nirvāṇa* were recommended.

MAHĀVĪRA: THE LIFE AND TEACHING

Jainism was also founded in the middle of sixth century BC in northern Bihar. Vaiśālī was its main centre of activities. Its greatest teacher was Mahāvīra, etymologically 'great hero', but his original name was Vardhamāna. He was born in 599 BC at Kauṇḍinyapur near Vaiśālī, in a princely family. He was the son of Śuddhodhana and queen Tristā, a daughter of ruler of the Licchavi king of Vaiśālī. At the age of 30 he, like Buddha, left his wife and daughter at home and became ascetic. He believed in great austerity and thus was called *jina*, meaning 'conqueror', the conqueror of all passions, greed and hatred which, according to Jainas even Hindu gods could not conquer. By rightful thought and conduct one could easily achieve salvation, according to him. Although he never met Buddha he too stood for ascetic life and monastic order which had originated centuries ago by twenty-three previous *jinas*, called *tīrthaṅkaras*, the first of them was called 'Ādināth' as well as Ṛsabhanāth. He stood for extreme austerity and adopted the principle of *Syādvāda* (स्याद्वाद) which stands for the fact that the Truth cannot be absolute and only one, there may be at least seven alternatives such as the elephant according to seven blind men could be like a fan (one who touches the ears alone) or like a trunk of a tree (one who touches only the legs), etc.

Mahāvīra, Mathurā, U.P., Gupta, 5th century AD

Art and Architecture

Art in India includes architecture. It is so because most of the works of art are the architectural members of some temple or shrine, only a portion of which is carved, the remaining part is used to build the inside of the architecture. The independent images are many but not as many as the sculptured architectural pieces. It applies

Architectural piece with drum-player decoration, Gupta, Mukandara, Rajasthan, 5th century AD

to rock-cut temples and shrines as well, which were, strictly speaking, not architecture but sculpture carved with great care and devotion besides great technical skill and huge labour in giving it the form of a built structure.

Sacred Structures

KUṬĪ AND PRĀSĀDA

The earliest form of sacred structures or temple emerged from the huts (कुटी) in which human beings themselves lived, round huts with domical roofs, called *kūṭa* (कूट), and rectangular huts with gable roofs, called *śāla* (शाला), both made of bamboos. With the growth of civilization the system of kingship emerged and along with this institution the concept of palace (home for the king) architecture developed. It became not only larger in dimension but also multistoryed. Obviously, bamboo was replaced by hard wood to give it proper shape and also bear the weight of upper floors with pavilions and residential quarters. The palace is called *prāsāda* (प्रासाद), hence very often the temples are also called *prāsāda*, or Palace of God.

The temple architecture emerged out of these two traditions in a mixed manner. It replaced the open-air platform system of shrines at many places, particularly, where organised religions with the

Temple-door, Garhwa, U.P. 10th century AD

Slab covering the aṇḍa of a Stūpa.
Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Ikṣvāku, A.P.,
3rd century AD

backing of money and men became available.

Thus, the *kūṭa* and *śālā* put together gave the elephant-back ended or apsidal *śālā* architecture. Later on, the rounded form was largely replaced by square and rectangular forms. Most of the temples from Gupta period onwards adopted these geometric forms because now stone started replacing the wood and brick as constructional materials, which if square or rectangle in shape made things easy and strong.

STŪPA

Stūpa (स्तूप) as an object of veneration in its own right, as a replacement of Buddha himself, became very popular with Buddhists although Jainas also erected

Stūpa Sāñcī, 2nd century BC

stūpas. *Stūpa* is, in fact, a sepulchral monument, i.e., burial in which the ashes of the cremated bodies of the saints were buried. It is domical structure, called *aṇḍa* (अण्ड), erected on the ground or on a platform. At a later date, a railing *vedikā* (वेदिका) was erected round it on the ground level, leaving in between sufficient space *patha* (पथ) for the devotees to go round it, the ritual called *pradakṣiṇā* (प्रदक्षिणा). If the *stūpa* is very large, such as at Sāñcī, such as path was also created on a higher level, approached by a series of steps called *sopāna* (सोपान). Generally a *stūpa* has on
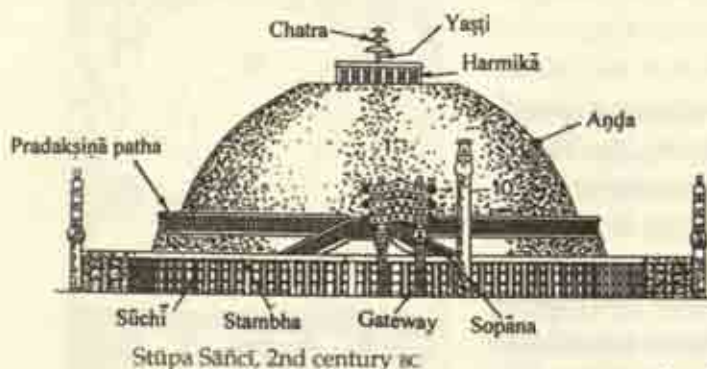
Stūpa being worshipped by semi-divine beings, the Gandharvas and Kinnaras.
tympanum, Kaṅkālī Ṭīlā, Mathurā, Śuṅga, 2nd century BC

the top of the *aṇḍa* a small square railing, called *harmikā* (हर्मिका), in the centre of which one can see a stick *yaṣṭi* (यष्टि) with three discs called *chatra* (छत्र) in diminishing sizes, placed one above the other. As time passed, the hemispherical or bubble like *aṇḍa* started becoming elongated, so much so it became to tower with several storeys or floors, as in China and Japan. *Stūpa* of earth, brick or stone, is also called *caitya* (चैत्य) because it was, to begin with, raised at the very place where the dead body was cremated on *citā* (चिता), the pile of wood. The term *caitya* was also used for the *pīpal* tree under which Buddha got Enlightenment. As a matter of fact, this term was used for all sacred items which the Buddhist worshipped, including the image of Buddha and the *bodhisattvas*.

Plan of Sāñcī Mahāstūpa

There are some regional variations also. For example, in Andhra Pradesh, the *stūpas* had on four sides small platforms and five independent pillars standing in a row. These are called *āyaka* platform and *āyaka* pillars. On the platform offerings were placed. Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa have such *stūpas*.

CAITYAGṚHA

The covered structure or temple in which such sacred objects are kept for worship is called *caitya-gṛha* (चैत्यगृह), sometimes the term *bodhi-ghara* (बोधि-घर) is used for the temple housing *pīpal* tree.

The *caityagṛha* is an elongated building, structural or rock-cut, with apsidal end. Near the apsidal end, *stūpa*, *stūpa* with Buddha image, Buddha image in sitting or standing posture, etc., is erected with a path for circumambulation (*pradikṣiṇā*).
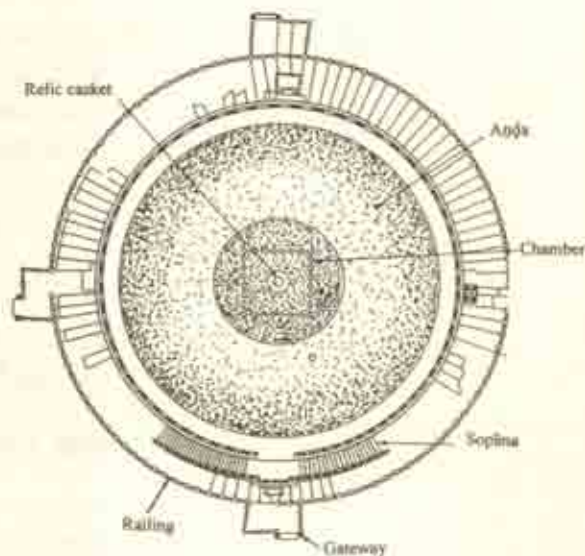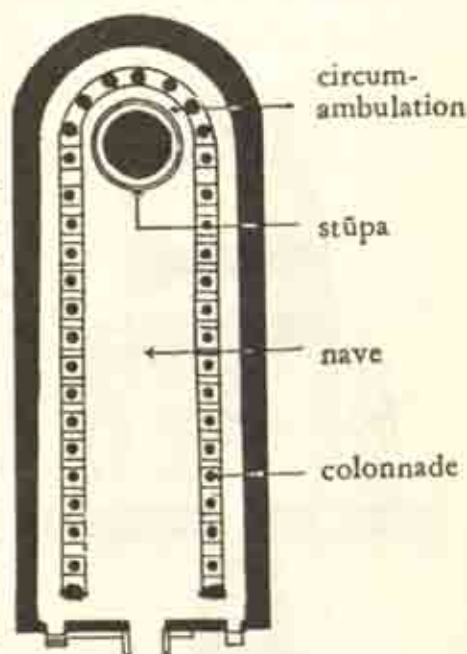
Plan of Caityagṛha, Kanheri, Maharashtra, 2nd century AD

In a developed *caityagṛha* we see a colonnade or series of columns, starting from near the entrance and passing behind the *stūpa* and returning right up to the entrance. It, therefore, leaves a lot of space in front of the *stūpa* for the devotees. This is also the plan of a Christian church where this hall is called '*nave*'. Since the entire ceiling is ribbed, the architecture is certainly a copy of the wooden architecture; as a matter of fact in the rock-cut *caityagṛha* the wooden ribs are still intact.

THE VEDIKĀ

A large *stūpa* in the open, as noted above, is seen surrounded by a *vedikā* (वेदिका) or railing. This is also a copy in stone of an original wooden fencing with uprights, *stambha*s (स्तम्भ) and cross-beams *sūcī*s (सूची) topped by coping *uṣṇīṣa* (उष्णीष).

The railing had one to four gateways erected on two uprights and three cross-beams, the entire surface of which is embellished with various kinds of decorative elements, sacred as well as non-sacred, such as the scenes of everyday life.

There are also independent pillars (स्तम्भ), standing with a capital (शीर्ष) fixed on top of it. The shaft could be round and smooth or faceted. The capital may bear the images of sacred animals or else the images of gods, besides several other decorative elements carved on the abacus.

THE ENTRANCE

One of the most fascinating elements of the *caityagṛhas* is the entrance which is very richly carved, particularly in rock-cut caves. These are marked by huge windows, called *gavākṣa*s (गवाक्ष) in the form of ogee or pointed arches with flat ended base resting
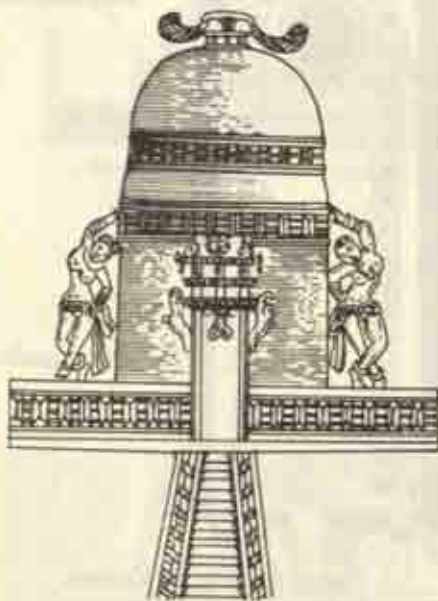
Jaina stūpa, Kankāli Ṭīla, Mathurā, Kuṣāṇa, 1st century AD

on the two inward tilted pillars of the entrance. On the sides of the window-arch are depicted series (or *jāla* जाल, i.e., *pañjara* पञ्जर) of small *caitya* windows and other decorations filling up vacant spaces.

THE VOTIVE STÛPA

There is a class of *stūpas* called *'votive stūpas'*, usually small in size, either built or carved in the round. These *stūpas* had no funerary remains. These solid structures were meant for receiving offerings. When built they served as the subsidiary shrines to which offering were offered.

Votive Stûpa, Gāndhāra, 2nd century AD

HINDU TEMPLE

THE CONCEPTS

Generally speaking, a temple is a 'Place of Worship'. It is also called the 'House of God'. However, for a Hindu, it is both and yet still more. It is the whole cosmos in the miniature form. Stella Kramrisch defined temple as 'monument of manifestation' in her *The Hindu Temple*. Hence its morphology is not arbitrary. From top to bottom the Hindu temple seeks to represent everything of which the cosmic world *brahmāṇḍa* (ब्रह्माण्ड), the entire universe, is composed of. The earthly world, the heavenly world, the astral world, and the world below the waters *pṛthvī* (पृथ्वी), *ākāśa* (आकाश) with *svarga* (स्वर्ग), and *pātāla* (पाताल), respectively. That is why on the walls of a Hindu temple one can see the representations of men, women, children, animals, birds, pests, insects, reptiles, trees, rivers, flowers, seas, mountains, houses, forts, palaces, villages, huts, etc., which constitute the earthly world. It includes even copulation amongst men and, among animals since it is through this mode of life that creation takes place.
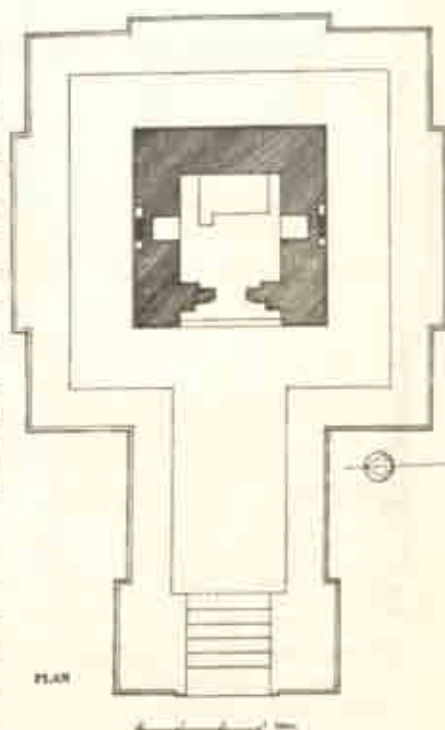
Plan of north Indian Temple, Parvati Temple, Nacnā, M.P., Gupta, 5th century AD

Lintel of a temple, Dudhai, U.P., 8th century AD

The Hindu temple architecture, i.e., its morphology, follows the requirements of his vision of the cosmos which he wants to recreate on the earth, it is not the fancy of the architect. Visions differ, therefore forms differ but forms are not experiments of architects.

The temple also contains the images of gods and goddesses as well as semi-divine and mythical beings, including half-human and half-animal or half-bird and half-reptile forms, as described in Hindu mythologies contained in epics, Purāṇas, and *kāvyas*. The world of waters with fish, tortoise, crocodile, coral, plants, rocks, etc., which constitute the life below the seas is also represented.

Underlying all these so simple yet so complex ideas is the water cosmology (science of universe) as well as water cosmology (origin of the universe) which means that water is the basis of all creation and sustainer. It is for this very reason that from the Gupta times itself the temple pillars are shown emerging from *kalaśa* or water-pot, and the finial or top is embellished with a *kalaśa*.

HINDU AND NON-HINDU VIEWS ON SACRED STRUCTURE

Plan of north Indian Temple,
Śiva Temple, Bhūmarā,
M.P., Gupta, 5th century AD

Thus, a Hindu views his temple slightly differently than a Christian views his church or a Muslim views his mosque. For a Christian, the church is just a 'place of worship', it is neither the House of God nor Mini Cosmos; for a Muslim, the mosque is just a 'place for offering prayer to God'.

A Hindu may worship many gods at one and the same time since he believes that in whatever form or forms one may worship, all will eventually reach God, the only one, the ultimate reality 'as wherever

the rain water from heaven may fall it goes to the ocean', similarly 'prayers offered to one and all gods go to God alone'.

THE PLACEMENTS OF IMAGES

The sculptures representing gods and goddesses can be placed anywhere and worshipped even under a tree, or over a platform, or in a cave, or under a rock-shelter, or on the bank of river, or a tank, or ocean; in fact, anywhere and everywhere. However, from purely temporal point of view, a temple is a cover to protect the image from the vagaries of nature as well as animals. A temple may be either in the form of a huge sculptured rock, called rock-cut temple, or else it is a built-structure using bricks, or wood, or stone pieces; sometimes even terracotta is used.

FORMS OF TEMPLES

However, it is not the material used which is important, what is really important is the 'form' of the temple. The form is not one but many, depending upon regional traditions. The temples of northern India generally belong to the category called 'Nāgara' (नागर), those of south India are called 'Drāviḍa' (द्राविड). Those belonging to the middle region (Karnataka) and of mixed types (Nāgara and Drāviḍa) are called 'Vesara' (वेसर) or 'Besara' (बेसर). However, this classification is very old and based upon some south Indian texts, but at the scholarly level there are many more of them. Here we will deal only with three most basic forms of temples, the northern, the southern and the Orissan because of elevational differences and forms of the
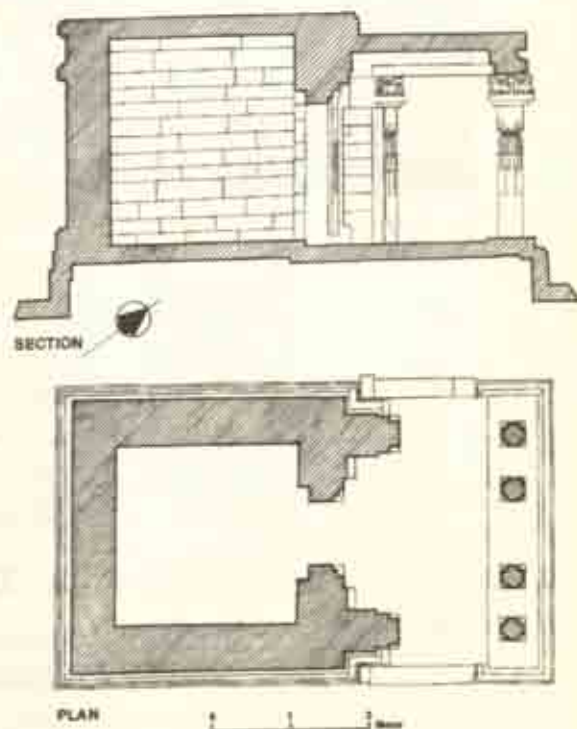
Temple, Sañci, Gupta, late 4th century AD (Temple No. 17, probably Bauddha temple)

Dvāra of a temple, Garhwā, U.P.,
10th century AD

*śikhara*s. However, the three traditional types mentioned in the southern texts can been explained in following terms on the basis of the morphology of temples.

A Nāgara type is four-sided. The *garbhagṛha* is perfect square, but the whole temple plan could be oblong. Its elevation is marked by four-sided neck or *grīvā* and a tall tapering *śikhara*. A Drāviḍa type temple, marked with terraces, is, on the other hand, hexagonal or octagonal from the plinth to the finial. Or else, it is marked by hexagonal or octagonal *grīvā* or *śikhara*. A Vesara type temple is, however, circular, or else ellipsoidal, or else apsidal from base to the top. Or else it is marked by this plan (circular, ellipsoidal or apsidal) in its *grīvā* and *śikhara*.

It may be noted that while the Nāgara and Drāviḍa are considered the pure types, the Vesara type is considered *mixed*, in which the elements of both the pure types are found mixed in a variety of ways. Thus, one can see a Vesara temple having a square body at different *tala*s (तल) but the *grīvā* (ग्रीवा) and *śikhara* circular, octagonal or apsidal in form. In the same way the body may be oblong but the *grīvā* and *śikhara* may be elliptical.

It may, therefore, be clearly noted that what is really important is not so much the shape or form of the basal parts of the temple, or even of the body, it is the plan of the *grīvā* and *śikhara* components which is critical in this classification.

TEMPLES OF NORTH INDIA

A north Indian temple of Prāsāda (प्रासाद) or Nāgara (नागर) style has two basic components:

(i) *Garbhagṛha* (गर्भगृह) or *sanctun sanctorum* or central cella, with only one door, in which

the image of the main deity is placed,

(ii) *Maṇḍapa* (मण्डप) or porch in front of the *garbhagṛha*, usually open from three sides for the worshippers to stand under shade to have *darśana* (दर्शन) a concept in which the deity is revealing himself or herself and the devotee is perceiving it within the depths of his or her inner-most consciousness) or view of the deity and offer prayers while look-ing at the image and experiencing his or her spiritual presence.

We have such a simple temple (Temple No.17) with flat roof at Sāñcī, in Madhya Pradesh, belonging to the Gupta period (fifth century AD), it was possibly a Buddhist temple. During the same period but towards the end of the century, perhaps, at Deogarh, near Jhānsī, Uttar Pradesh, a slightly more elaborate temple for Viṣṇu was built; in this the roof over the *garbhagṛha* became pyramidal, i.e., tall and pointed, resembling mountain. It is called *śikhara* (शिखर) which is, in fact, the spire, a tall structure that tapers to a point above. The

Elements of a north Indian Temple

Plan of a north Indian Temple with
Pradikṣiṇā-patha around Garbhagṛha

Elements of the Base of
a north Indian Temple

śikhara, the walls and the pillars, as well as the roofs over the *garbhagṛha* and the *maṇḍapa*, are often decorated with floral and geometric patterns as well as with the images of gods and goddesses and scenes from mythologies.

In the third stage a couple of more *maṇḍapa*s are found added, the narrow covered area or the *maṇḍapa* in front of the *garbhagṛha* is called *antarāla* or vestibule. The large hall in front of the *antarāla* is called *mahāmaṇḍapa* (महामण्डप) or *gūḍhamaṇḍapa* (गूढमण्डप). A smaller *maṇḍapa* in front of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* is called *ardhamaṇḍapa* (अर्धमण्डप), or half porch, which is reached by a *dvāra* (द्वार), i.e., doorway, with flights of steps. In this stage of development, the *garbhagṛha* is surrounded by a corridor or *pradakṣiṇāpatha* (प्रदक्षिणापथ) or circum-ambulatory path, through which the devotees moved round the *garbhagṛha*. At times windows, called *gavākṣa* (गवाक्ष), were added at different points to allow light and air pass through the entire inner space.

The Concept of Vāstupuruṣa: Parts of Temples

A Hindu temple is also called *vāstupuruṣa* (वास्तुपुरुष), i.e., an architectural piece resembling the body of a human being. 'Human being' here stands for God or 'Supreme Being' since he is conceived in the form of man. Later this concept developed into the *maṇḍala* concept called *Vāstupuruṣa-maṇḍala*, (वास्तु-पुरुष मण्डल). Generally, a *nāgara* style temple stands on a large and high platform, called *jagatī*, made of stone or bricks, with several mouldings. It represents the feet of man. Over this stands is a smaller platform of stones, called *pīṭha* (पीठ). Over the *pīṭha* rises a still smaller platform, called *adhiṣṭhāna* (अधिष्ठान) or *vedī-bandha* (वेदी-बन्ध), the immediate base of the

superstructure of the temple. It is on this platform that the pillars and walls of the temple are raised; the top of this *adhiṣṭhāna* or platform is the floor of the temple. Three parts of the temple, represent the ankle, lower feet and upper feet of the human body.

THE ŚIKHARA

The pillared area of the temple forms the *jaṅghā* (जंघा) or the thighs. On the gateway, at the top level of the *jaṅghā* is *chādya* (छाद्य) or sun-shade, while on the top level of the pillars are the mouldings called *varāṇḍikā* (वराण्डिका). It is from this level that the *śikhara* or spire emerges. Since there is a series of small *śikharas*, in the form of pilasters, i.e., half *śikhara*, placed one above the other along the corners of the *śikharas*, till the top of the entire *śikhara* is reached, these are called *śṛṅga śikharas* (भृंग शिखर), the first or the lowest one is named *karṇa* (कर्ण) or corner *śṛṅga* and the above ones as *uru-śṛṅgas* (उरुभृंग). The areas beyond the *karṇa* and *uru-śṛṅgas* have a series of *āmalakas*, shaped like cogged wheels, or *āmalā* fruit, called *bhūmi-āmalakas* (भूमि-आमलक), each one of which represents one floor or one storey of the building. In fact, all Hindu temples, both in the north and south are found following the principle of *prasāda* or terraced palace, or multi-storied structure. In north Indian *śikhara* the terraces are compressed but clearly marked by *bhūmi-āmalakas*. This is true of Orissa temples also.

PLAN

SECTION
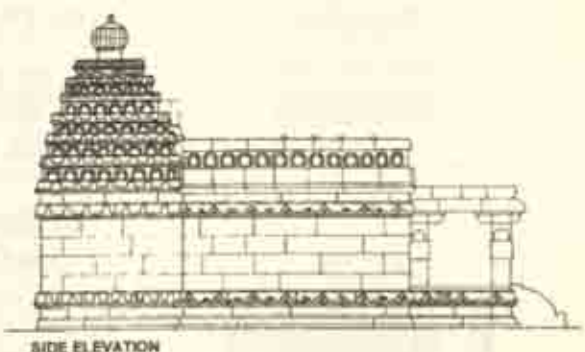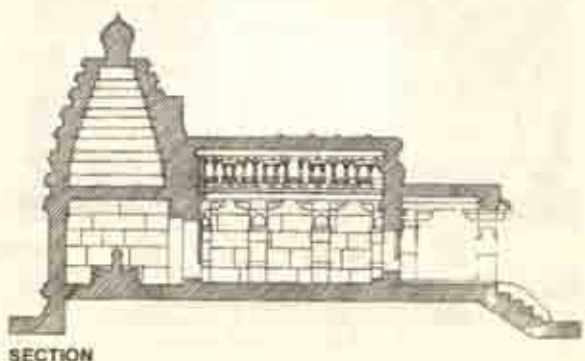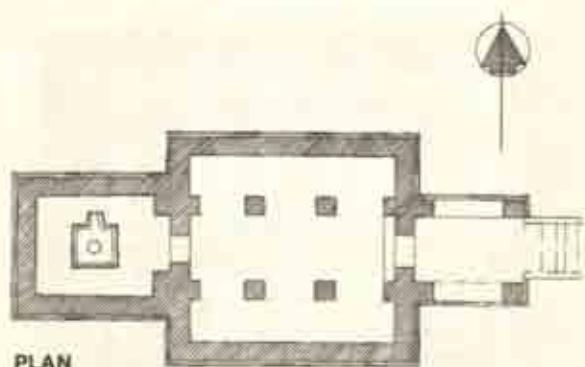
SIDE ELEVATION

Plan, Section and Side Elevation of a north Indian Temple style in Karnataka, Mallikārjuna Temple, Aihoḷe, early 8th century AD

Gateway of a north Indian Temple

Labels on image: Lalātabimba, Mithuna Śākhā, Sirhha Śākhā, Patra Śākhā, Gandharva Śākhā, Uttarānga, Mandāraka, Udumbara

THE BHADRA

The front pleat or tall and tapering facet, called *bhadra* (भद्र), with parallel narrower facets called *prati-bhadras* (प्रतिभद्र), above the gate, usually decorated with floral and geometric designs, called *latā* (लता), are cut in stencil style.

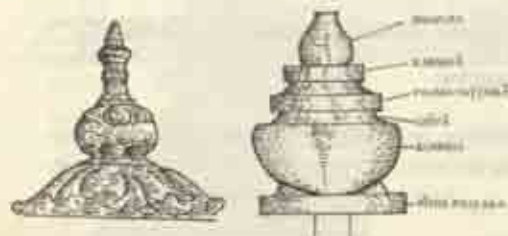## THE ŚĪRṢA: ĀMALAKA (आमलक) AND BĪJAPŪRAKA (बीजपूरक)

On the top of this body of the temple, i.e., *śīrṣa* (शीर्ष), is a constricted moulding, called *skandha* (स्कंध), i.e., *kandhā* or shoulder, followed by *grīvā* or neck. It is topped by a large *āmalaka*. On the *āmalaka* are a series of discs, called *candrika* (चन्द्रिका), over which lies a small *āmalaka*, called *amala-sārika* (सारिका) and on the top all these is the *kalaśa* (कलश) with a coconut fruit called *bījapūraka*, inserted in its mouth. The whole thing represents the head of man and represents the finial.

THE CHĀDYA (छादय) AND RATHIKA (रथिक)

On the gateway and above the *chādya* one or two, one above the other, are small gateways with *śikharas*, called *rathīka*, representing storeys.

THE ŚUKANĀSIKĀ (शुकनासिका) AND BHŪMI-ĀMALAKA (भूमि-आमलक)

On the top of an upper *bhūmi-amalakas* sometimes a fabulous lion, carved in the round, is fixed which is called *śukanāsikā*, representing the nose.

Somewhere in the *grīvā*, or near about, a ring-stone is fixed, meant for hoisting a flag.

Top of a north Indian Temple

THE DOOR-FRAME AND ITS DECORATIONS: LALĀṬA-BIMBA (लंलाट-बिंब) AND DVĀRA-ŚĀKHĀS (द्वार-शाखा)

A *nāgara* style temple has a highly decorated entrance door-frame, including the threshold, with vertical and horizontal friezes, panels and runners. In the centre of the lintel is placed the image of some god or goddess, called *lalāṭa-bimba*. The doorjambs may have one, three, five or seven parallel vertical *śākhā*s or offsets, called *dvāra-śākhā*s each one decorated with friezes and panels depicting gods and goddesses, floral and geometrical designs. At the bottom there may be panels depicting either the *dvārapāla*s (द्वारपाल), i.e., security guards, or Gaṅgā and Yamunā, the two sacred rivers.

THE PILLARS AND THEIR DECORATIONS

The pillars are also decorated in a number of ways with *pūrṇa-ghaṭa*s (पूर्णघट), *devakanyā*s (देवकन्या), *apsarā*s (अप्सरा), *yakṣa*s (यक्ष), *yakṣī*s (यक्षी), *padma* (पद्म), *āmalaka*s (आमलक), floral garlands (माला), capitals (शीर्ष), chains with bells (जंजीर एवं घंटिका), etc.

THE OTHER PARTS AND THEIR DECORATIONS

The *jagatī* (जगती), *pīṭha* (पीठ) and *adhiṣṭhāna* (अधिष्ठान) are also beautifully decorated with a variety of offsets and mouldings with definitive nomenclature, like *grāsapaṭṭī* (ग्रासपट्टी), *khura* (खुर), *kapota* (कपोत), *antarpātra* (अन्तर्पात्र), *vedikā* (वेदिका), etc., friezes and panels, including those depicting elephants (*gaja-thara* गज-थर), horses (*aśva-thara* अश्व-थर), human beings (*nara-thara* नर-थर), etc.

In short, a north Indian temple is generally marked by a *garbhagṛha* (गर्भगृह) or room in which the image of the main deity is placed and can be seen only from one door placed in the front, generally
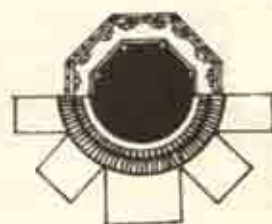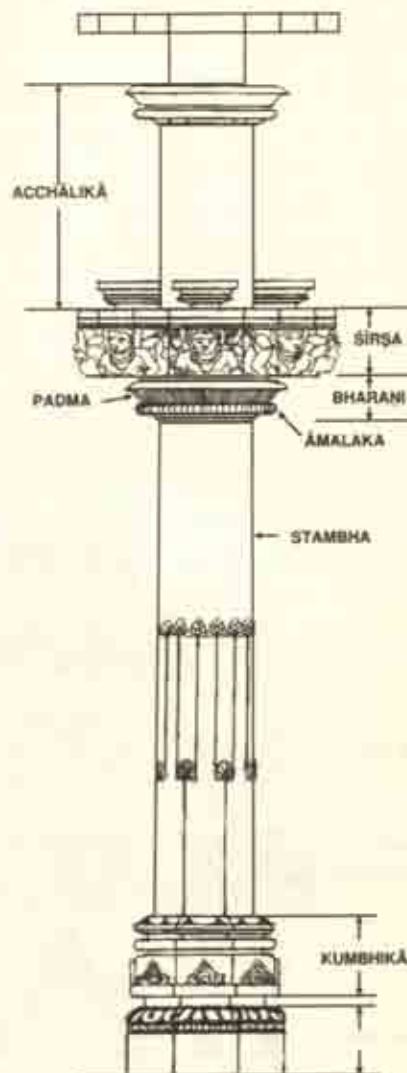
Architectural Components of a Temple Pillar, north India

facing east. In front of this room are one or more side-opened or covered spaces, called *mandapas* (मण्डप). There is also a circumambulatory path or *pradakṣiṇāpatha* (प्रदक्षिणापथ) for the devotees to go round the *garbhagrha*. This structure is placed over a high platform called *jagatī*. There is also a tall spire raised over the *garbhagrha* which is called *śikhara*.
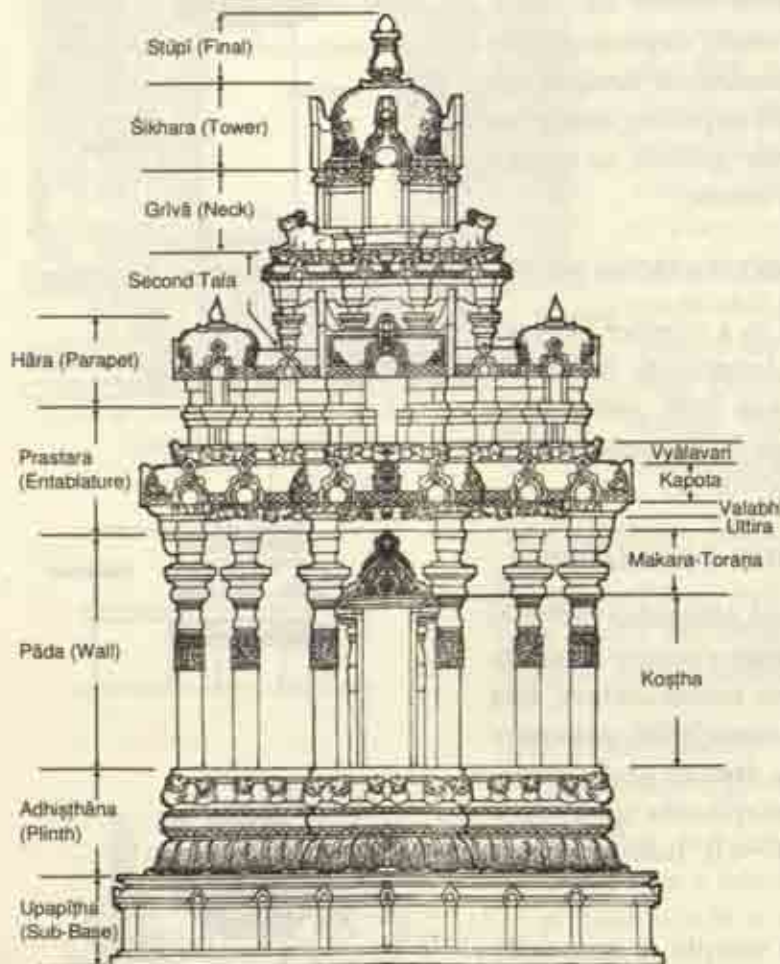
TEMPLES OF SOUTH INDIA

A general south Indian or Drāviḍa type temple, commonly called 'Vimāna type', *vimāna* (विमान) means ship or boat, is based upon *Āgamas* (आगम) and, *Śilpa* (शिल्प) and, *Vāstu Śāstras* (वास्तु शास्त्र). It is marked by six major body parts or *aṅgas* (अंग):

    (i)   the *adhiṣṭhāna* (अधिष्ठान): the base or pedestal or platform on which the whole superstructure rests;

    (ii)   the *pāda* (पाद): walls (*bhitti* भित्ति) with pillars (*stambhas* स्तम्भ) in between them which make and enclose the cella or room, the *garbhagrha*, in which the main of presiding deity is placed;

    (iii)   the *prastara* (प्रस्तर): the architrave, i.e., the horizontal beam which marks the end of the cella *garbhagrha* walls, and the beginning of the

Elements of a Vimāna of south Indian Temple (Elevation)

Labels on figure:
Stūpi (Final)
Śikhara (Tower)
Grivā (Neck)
Second Tala
Hāra (Parapet)
Prastara (Entablature)
Pāda (Wall)
Adhiṣṭhāna (Plinth)
Upapīṭha (Sub-Base)
Vyālavari
Kapota
Valabhi
Uttira
Makara-Toraṇa
Koṣṭha

spire of *śikhara*, on which is constructed the sun-shade or cornice, i.e., eave, called *kapota* (कपोत) since on this projection birds are seen sitting and resting in rows (*kapota* means 'bird');

(iv) the *grīvā* (ग्रीवा): the neck or clerestory, i.e., the upper row of windows or the recessed part of the beginning of the spire or *śikhara*. It is the clerestory over the sanctum (*garbhagṛha*) terrace and entablature;

(v) the *śikhara* (शिखर): the spire or pyramidal roof covering the top of the clerestory of *grīvā*; and

(vi) the *stūpī* (स्तूपी): the finial in the form of a small *stūpa* or bulbous pot, a *kalaśa* crowning the top of the *śikhara*.

Sikhara of a south Indian Temple (Half)

Such a simple construction may be *ekatala* or single storeyed temple or else multi-storeyed type, *bahutala*, each succeeding storey is diminishing in dimensions, making the whole structure pointed or pyramidal. Each storey or *tala* (तल) consists of two major parts: (a) *harmya* (हर्म्य), or body, and (b) *prastara*, i.e., architrave. In the south Indian *śilpa* texts we get the mention of as many as sixteen-storeyed *vimāna*, each rising storey called *jāti* (जाति) *vimāna*, the longest one, the first one, the bottom one, is called *mukhya* (मुख्य) *vimāna*.

It makes it clear that a typical south Indian temple is marked by distinctly made storeys or flat floors. In the beginning these storeys were functional, i.e., one could go on them and move around on the roof, but very soon this became only notional, a design of the spire or *śikhara*, a form, a style and no one could actually go to them separately and move about freely.

Kūta, Māmallapuram, Tamil
Nadu, 7th-8th century AD

DECORATIVE ELEMENTS

The first thing that attracts our attention in a south Indian temple is the decoration of the flat portion just above the *prastara*, i.e., the horizontal beam, the parapet wall, at each storey. Since it runs round the entire parapet wall in a garland or string like manner, it is called *hāra* (हार). It contains miniature *vimāna*-like shrines. However, in later temples, from around eleventh century, the *hāra* of the topmost *tala* or storey is replaced by the *lāñchanas* (लाञ्छन) or *vāhanas* (वाहन) or mounts of the god to whom the temple was dedicated, for example, if it was a Śiva temple, the bull or even *bhūta* (भूत) images were made and placed in a row, and if it was a Viṣṇu temple it could be *garuḍa* (गरुड) or eagle.

KŪTA VIMĀNA

Many a time one sees the top portion of the *vimāna* of a south Indian temple in the rounded bulbous form, like a dome, plain or faceted and decorated in a variety of designs. It is surmounted by a single finial, the *stūpi*. This is called *kūṭa vimāna* with *kūṭa* (कूट) *śikhara*; the term *kūṭa* stands for the domed shrine. Where the *śikhara* is not domed, the four corners are decorated with *kūṭa* or domed shrines with square plan.

ŚĀLĀ VIMĀNA

There is yet an absolutely different kind of roof in a south Indian temple and shrines. It is called *śālā* (शाला) type. Here there is absolutely no pyramidal *śikhara*. The roof is like an oblong wagon-top, or vault. It resembles a boat placed upside down leading to a double-sided roof with a central ridge over a rectangular house. Along the central ridge of the longer axis we find a series of *stūpis* or finials placed at regular intervals to decorate it. It is


Śālā, Sāncī, M.P., 2nd century BC

sometimes called *śālā vimāna* and sometimes *koṣṭha* (कोष्ठ), or even *sabhā* (सभा) *vimāna*, meaning one and the same, rectangular house; *koṣṭha* means room and *sabhā* (सभा) means a large rectangular hall in which meetings take place. A slightly modified form of this double-sided *śālā* type roof is the *gaja* (गज) or *hasti-pṛṣṭha* (हस्ति-पृष्ठ) type roof — here the hind part of the barrel-shaped roof is rounded, hence resembles the back of an elephant. For this category of *śikharas* the texts use the terms *pañjaras* (पञ्जर) and *nīḍas* (नीड़) also, the former is more commonly used.

PAÑJARA VIMĀNA

It is significant to note that the *hāra* (हार) or parapet wall decoration of every *tala* or storey consists of a row of diminutive forms of these three types of shrine-forms: *kūṭa* (domical), *śālā* (barrel-shaped) and *pañjara* (elephant back). At the four corners of the *hāra* we get large *kūṭas* or domes, called *karṇa-kūṭas*, *karṇa* (कर्ण) means corner. The *hāra*, i.e., the garland of miniature shrines, has naturally interspaces also amongst all the shrine models; these vacant spaces are called *harantara* (हरन्तर), *antara* (अन्तर) means 'space'.

BHITTI

The outer face of the walls or *bhittis* (भित्ति) of the temples are broken by vertical offsets or projections marked by pilasters, or half pillars, at regular intervals. These are called *bhadras* (भद्र). This is true of the north Indian Nāgara style temples also where these offsets are called *ratha* (रथ). Some of these *bhadras* alternate with sunken spaces which are like
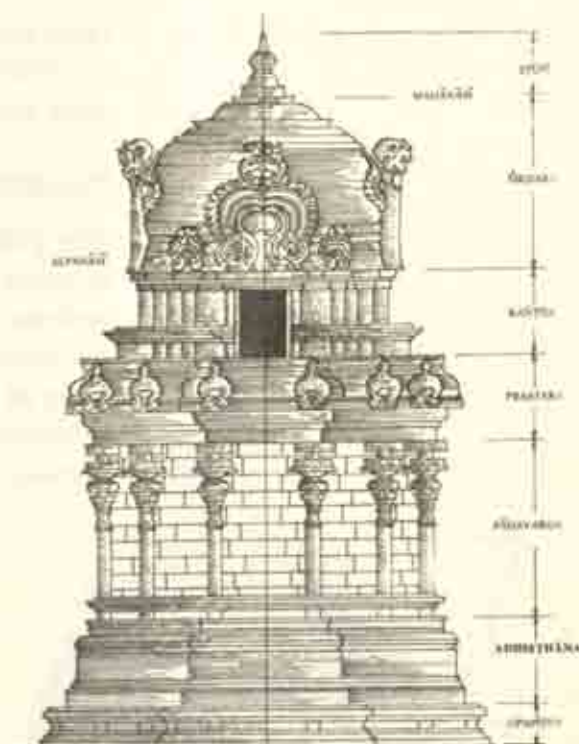
Elements of a south Indian Temple
(Elevation)

Pañjara Vimāna

Base of a Temple, Ellorā (Cave 2),
8th century AD

large vertical niches called *kosthas*, or else *devakosthas* (देव-कोष्ठक), particularly in which we find images of gods and goddesses carved boldly.

PILLARS

The pillars as well as pilasters of south Indian temples are beautifully decorated. The base or pedestal of the pillar, called *oṁ* (ओम्), is often given the form of a squatting mythical creature with the body of one animal and other part of some other creatures. These are called *vyālas* (व्याल), or else a grotesque human figure called *bhūta* (भूत) or else elephant, serpent, lion, etc. The shaft above it, i.e., the middle portion, could be round square or multi-faceted.

TEMPLES OF ORISSA

Architecturally, Hindu temples are basically the same irrespective of their regional peculiarities and local nomenclature of their body parts. It is true of Orissa also. The lower part of the main temple is *garbhagṛha* and the upper part is *śikhara* locally called *rekhā* (रेखा). Each one of these two major parts is divided into a number of mouldings. In front of this main structure is a porch or *maṇḍapa*, called *jagamohana* (जगमोहन) in which the devotees stand and face the deity in the *garbhagṛha*. It has a roof which is slightly different from the porches in north Indian temples. However, in Orissa, as time passed, a couple of more porches were added in the same axis, each one used for a different purpose, *bhoga deul* (भोग देउल) and *nāṭya deul* (नाट्य देउल). In rare examples an independent *toraṇa* was also erected at the entrance.
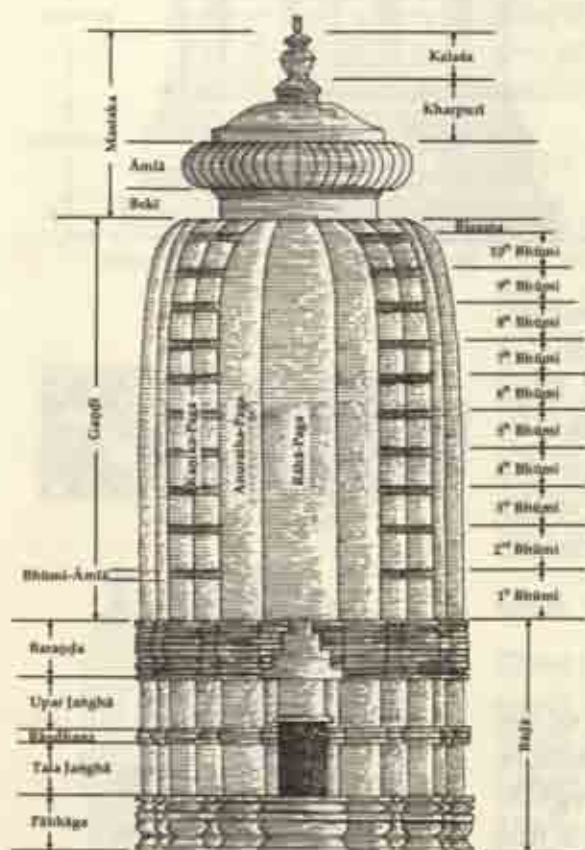
Elements of an Orissan Temple, *after* Lingarāja temple of Rekhā Deul type, early 12th century AD

Orissa has given us several texts which governed the temple architecture in the region.

REKHĀ DEUL

Coming to the temple proper, i.e., the structure over the *garbhagṛha*, i.e., *śikhara*. The Orissan *śikhara* type temple is called *rekhā deul* (रेखा देउल), etymologically, 'curvilinear temple' because the *śikhara* here is slightly curvilinear; less in the lower portion but sharp in the upper part. The porch or *maṇḍapa*, on the other hand, is called *pīḍhā deul* (पीढ़ा देउल), etymologically, 'flat-seat temple' because the roof here is like a stepped pyramid marked by a series of flat platforms, placed one over the other, in diminishing dimensions, each one representing a storey.

In rare examples, the roof on the *garbhagṛha* is vaulted with a few *kalaśas* or *stūpīs* (स्तूपी) placed on the central ridge of the gable roof.

A *rekhā deul* is broadly divided into three major parts, from bottom to top these are:

Elements of a Storied Orissan Temple of Pīdhā Deul type, *after* Liṅgarāja temple, early 12th century AD

(1) *Bāḍa* (बाड) (perpendicular wall)

(2) *Gaṇḍī* (गण्डी) (trunk or *śikhara*)

(3) *Mastaka* (मस्तक) (top)

Each one of these is further sub-divided into many mouldings.

Bāḍa: from bottom upwards, has

(i) *Pābhāga* (पाभाग) (*pā* means feet, i.e., basal part, the low platform)

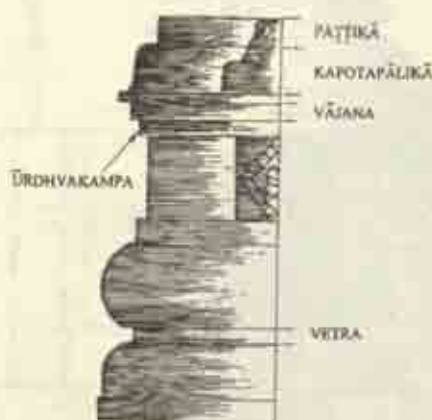(ii)   *Tala jaṅghā* (तल जंघा) (lower level thigh or shin with vertically laid pillars and walls of the *garbhagṛha*)

(iii) *Bāndhanā* (बान्धना) (centre mouldings to divide the vertical wall of the *garbhagṛha*)

(iv)   *Ūpara jaṅghā* (ऊपर जंघा) (upper level thigh)

(v)   *Baraṇḍa* (बरण्ड) (entrance mouldings)

Gaṇḍī: from bottom upwards the sub-divisions are

(i)   *Bhūmi* (भूमि) (floor or storey)

(ii)   *Bhūmi-āmalaka* (भूमि-आमलक) (*āmalaka* on top of the vertical wall of the floor or storey)

(iii) *Bisama* (बिसम) (the topmost floor with sharply in curved profile)

Mastaka: is divided into the following sub-divisions:

(i)   *Bekī* (बेकी) (or *kaṇṭhī* (कण्ठी), i.e., neck which is recessed vertical wall which separates the *gaṇḍī* or *śikhara* from the overhanging *āmalaka* placed on top of it)

(ii)   *Āmalaka* (आमलक) (or *āmlā* fruit, *Emblic Myrobalan*, like cogged wheel)

(iii) *Kharpurī* (खरपुरी) (etymologically, skull, but shaped like a flat bell)

(iv)   *Kalaśa* (कलश) (sacred water pitcher or *pūrṇa kumbha*)

(v)   *Āyudha* (आयुध) (on the *kalaśa* may be placed the *āyudha* of the deity in the *garbhagṛha* if Śiva, it will be *triśūla*, but if Viṣṇu, it may be a *cakra*)

The *gaṇḍī* (or *śikhara* of an Orissan temple is divided into a number of vertical parallel facets, anywhere from there to seven, but in odd numbers.

PAṬṬIKĀ
KAPOTAPĀLIKĀ
VĀJANA
ŪRDHVAKAMPA
VETRA

Base of a Temple, Ellorā (Cave 12) 8th century AD

The central facet or projection is called *rāhāpaga* (राहापग) with *jālī* (जाली) or screen having window mouldings. The two or more side ones intricately carved projections are called *anuratha-paga* (अनुरथ-पग) or secondary *rāhās* (राहा).

The four corner *pagas* with *āmalakas* at each floor or storey are called *kaṇikā-paga* (कणिका-पग).

It may be noted that the same divisions and sub-divisions exist in the case of *piḍha deul* or the *jagamohana*, except for the fact that here the *bhūmis* are marked by *piḍhā* or horizontal terraces and there is only one, the central *rāhā*: there is neither the *anuratha-paga* or *kaṇikā-paga*.

MUNḌIS

Small shrines, called *muṇḍī* such as *piḍhā-muṇḍī* (पीढ़ा-मुण्डी) (small terraced shrine), *khakharā-muṇḍī* (खखरा-मुण्डी) (small terraced shrine with *ghaṭa* or *kalaśa* on top), *vajra-muṇḍī* (वज्र-मुण्डी) shrine with *gavākṣa* and floral decoration besides *alasakanyās* (अलसकन्या), loving couples, and *bho* (*kīrtimukha* कीर्तिमुख) being garlanded by two men motif inside a niche in *rāhā* (very often) and thousands of *nāga-nāgī* (नाग-नागी), floral and faunal motifs decorate the outer surface of the temple. As a matter of fact, the *muṇḍī*s or miniature shrines, show in them the images of gods and goddesses. Similarly, on top of the *rāhā* and *rathas* are the images in the round of lions with their backs to *bekī* or neck. Such statues are found in the middle of the *rāhās* and *anurathas* also.

The Icons

RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

Objects through which 'worship' is offered to God, the icons, idols and images, are, of course, sectarian.

Piḍha-muṇḍī, Konārka, Orissa, 13th century AD

Khakharā-muṇḍī, Konārka, Orissa, 13th century AD

Vajra-muṇḍī, Konārka, Orissa, 13th century AD

Pārśvanātha, seated, Jaina Temple,
early 9th century AD

Śiva may be worshipped either through *liṅgam* (लिंगम्), a Sanskrit term which means *cihna* (चिह्न) or sign, even symbol, in this case it is the symbol of cosmic energy, or else through human form, with or without his consort Pārvatī. Viṣṇu may be worshipped either through the form of *śaligrāma* (शालिग्राम), an oval piece of stone, or else through human form, with or without his consort Lakṣmī. Viṣṇu can also be worshipped through any one of his ten incarnations, such as Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Narasiṁha and others. Brahmā is, however, worshipped only through the human form. Śakti (शक्ति), the female as the goddess supreme, is also generally worshipped through human forms. The Śaktas worship Durgā, Kālī, Yoginīs, and others through different forms of Mothers. Nava Durgā (nine forms of Durgā) worship during the *Navarātra* festival is the biggest event in Śākta or Śakti cult.

Buddha is, however, worshipped either in the form of *stūpa* (स्तूप), a hemispherical or cylindrical structure, often raised on the ashes of the Buddha or a Buddhist saint, or a symbol such as the *pīpal* (पीपल) tree under which he got Enlightenment, or the seat sitting on which he got *nirvāṇa* (निर्वाण), or through the image of his feet bearing auspicious marks, *cakra* (चक्र), *svastika* (स्वस्तिक), etc., or else in the human form. It may be noted that Buddha was against image worship. That is why till about the first century AD Buddhists paid homage to Buddha only through symbols manifesting his life and thought. For a Buddhist the *stūpa*, was, therefore, Buddha himself. Hence worshipping *stūpa* is worshipping Buddha himself. Buddha's image in human form appeared as late as the beginning of the first century AD if not the later half of the first century BC as now art historians believe.

The Jainas generally worship any or all the 24

tīrthaṅkaras (तीर्थंकर), including the last one, Mahāvīra, and a few other deified saints like Bāhubali; the *stūpa*, raised on the cremated remains of the Jaina saints, was worshipped only till the Kuṣāṇa period. However, similar to Bauddha practice, the Jainas also worshipped through symbols, including *stūpa*, the images of *tīrthaṅkaras* in human form started in the first-second centuries AD in case the two Lohānīpur (in Patna) torsos do not belong to *tīrthaṅkaras*. The Sikhs worship only the *Guru Grantha Saheb* (गुरुग्रंथ साहिब), their most sacred book, placed in a temple called *mandira* (मन्दिर). The Ārya Samājīs perform Fire Sacrifice in line with the Vedic traditions, and invoke gods like Agni (अग्नि), Mitra (मित्र), Varuṇa (वरुण) and others. The *tāntrikas* (तान्त्रिक) attach great sacredness to *yantras* (यन्त्र) and *maṇḍalas* (मण्डल), which are diagrams made for ritualistic performances, using *mantras* (मन्त्र) or sacred chants and *tantras* (तन्त्र) or sets of rituals with symbolic meaning, generally confined to the practitioners in great secrecy since these were the parts of *sādhanā* (साधना) which is absolutely personal. The Tantra literature often uses terms which on their face appear to be sex related but they actually mean something entirely different, connected generally with hands, fingers, gestures, etc., for *sādhanā*.

Symbols

The dictionary meaning of 'symbol' is

> "something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention, especially a material object used to represent something invisible."

For example, lotus represents purity and cross represents crucifixion of Christ. Metaphor, on the other hand, is defined as

Gandharva, Hoyasala, Karnataka, 13th century AD

"figure [of speech] in which a term is transferred from the object it ordinarily designates to an object it may designate only by implicit comparison or analogy."

For example, *garbha* or womb of mother to the *garbhagrha* of temple.

Every society lives with symbols and metaphors which it creates for the language of its ethos. The national flag, the national anthem, the national bird, the national flower, sacred groves, sacred trees, sacred dates, memorable events, and many others form part of the language of symbols and metaphors. A 'symbol' is the shortest form for a whole set of ideas and feelings. The picture of heart stands for one's most intimate love and affection for the other. *Svastika* (स्वस्तिक) symbol denotes the well-being in all human endeavours. A 'U' or 'V' shaped mark on the forehead is called *viṣṇupāda* (विष्णुपाद) and is enough to inform us that the person is Vaiṣṇava. The three horizontal lines on the forehead, called *tripuṇḍra*, make him a Śaivite. These are also called *cihnas* (चिह्न) or marks of identifications.

NATURE OF SYMBOLS

Indian art embodies a long list of symbols, each with multi-layered meaning developed through ages but generally one or two significant meanings. A Hindu temple is conceived as a lofty mountain with a series of gradually rising peaks and cave. Therefore, a temple is said to represent Mount Meru. It is a metaphor.

Symbols may be in geometric forms and diagrams such as the squares and triangles; flowers, fruits and leaves such as the lotus, *śrīphala* (श्रीफल) and *pīpal* leaf; birds and reptiles, animals and insects,

Eight auspicious symbols:

1. *Chattra* (Umbrella), 2. *Mīna mithuna* (two fish), 3. *Pūrṇa ghaṭa* (full pot), 4. *Padma* (lotus), 5. *Saṅkha* (conch-shell), 6. *Ananta* (continuous knot) or knot of Life, 7. *Dhvaja* (flag), 8. *Cakra* (wheel)

such as the peacock, serpent, bull and ant; heavenly bodies like Sun and Moon and other elements of nature such as trees, water, mountains, seas and rivers called Himālaya, Sindhu Sāgar, and Gaṅgā, as well as many man-made items such as the water pitcher or *pūrṇa-ghaṭa* (पूर्णघट), sandles or *pāduka* (पादुका), trident or *triśūla* (त्रिशूल), etc. Each one of these denotes something sacred or something specifically meaningful. They together embody the cultural ethos of India.

SYMBOLS AND SIGNS IN CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM, ETC.

In Christianity there are two complementary terms, 'Sign' and 'Symbol', while the former *represents*, as the Cross represents Christ's Crucifixion, the latter *resembled* for example, Christ resembled the Lamb of God, like lamb he too was sacrificed as an act of atonement. In Christian art the figure of the ape symbolises sin and malice of man and *śaitāna* (शैतान) and ass symbolises the entry of Christ in Jerusalem. There are many more of them such as the dove, cock, bat, etc., with their specific symbolism. In Islam also there are a few symbols such as the moon and crescent connected with its calendar based on the appearance of moon. In China a frog with three feet and a coin in mouth is kept on the front-door of the house since it is the symbol of wealth. The pot-bellied Laughing Buddha also represents wealth and well-being for the family.

UNIVERSALITY OF SYMBOLS IN HINDUISM

Symbols or *pratīka* (प्रतीक) in Hinduism are only rarely sectarian, by and large they form the common pool out of which each religion picked up the ones which it thought would represent their ethos best. Lotus, *pīpal*, snake, bull, elephant, crocodile, conch, *svastika*,

Centaur symbolises sin of adultery in Christianity

Griffin, the symbol of Saviour as well as of those who persecute Christians

Owl, the symbol of *śaitāna*

Svastika, symbolises Good Luck and is solar symbol in Hinduism

Mithuna or loving couple, Khajurāho, M.P.,
Candela, 11th century AD

Maithuna, Ellorā, Rāṣṭrakūṭa,
Maharashtra, 8th century AD

cakra, triśūla, sun, moon, *chatra* (छत्र) or parasol and several other items formed part of the common gamut of symbols which one finds associated individually and also in combinations in Buddhism, Jainism, Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Śāktism, etc. Lotus, for example, is the most sacred flower for all religions hence all gods and goddesses of all religions are shown sitting or standing on the blossoming lotus. So also the *dhyāna-mudrā* (ध्यान-मुद्रा) or sitting posture of a *yogī* (योगी) which is common to all gods of all religions in India because spiritualism is the core-idea of all religions born in India and this element is manifested in this *mudrā* which is the *mudrā* of perfect concentration of mind-and-body and long journey within. However, *triśūla* was picked up by the Śaivas, almost exclusively, although Durgā also used it to kill the demon Mahiṣāsura.

It shows the fundamental unity of Hindu civilization, the commonness of the symbols of Indian cultural ethos. It is like one hand with five fingers, each finger is different from the other in every respect but each one is deriving its sustenance from the common hand, if the hand is removed, all fingers loose their very existence. Thus, lotus is common to all religions but *śrīvatsa* (श्रीवत्स) was selected by the Jainas for putting it on the chest of the *tīrthaṅkaras*. Still, Viṣṇu also sports it sometimes. *Svastika,* as an auspicious solar symbol, is also used by all religions and all over India.

MITHUNA AND *MAITHUNA* SCENES IN ART

From the second century BC Indian art has incorporated the symbol of 'loving couple', called *mithuna,* as the most auspicious symbol for the health, wealth and progeny, the three basic desires of human beings as spelt in the Vedic literature. This symbol is found depicted on the walls of the shrines

of all religions, including the so-called orthodox religions like Buddhism and Jainism. There was nothing erotic in it. Copulation or *maithuna* (मैथुन) is only the next stage of *mithuna* (मिथुन) — it is the symbol of procreation, a phenomenon without which no one of us could have been born in this world. The birth of a child is, therefore, considered to be the result of meritorious work that the couple may have done in their previous births. This viewpoint is totally opposite to the Christian view of life in which a human being is born of sin, being part the 'Original Sin' that Adam and Eve committed. The symbols of *mithuna* and *maithuna* are, therefore, not erotic and debased.

HINDU ICONOGRAPHY

Images and icons, are distinguished from each other on the basis of what are generally called the 'marks of cognisance' or *cihna*s (चिह्न). These are of various kinds, from hair-do to head-cover, from marks on the chest to marks on the soles, from objects held in hands to objects covering the feet, from *vāhana*s (वाहन), i.e., mounts of gods, or associated men and animals acting as carriers, to objects held in hands often called *āyudha*s (आयुध), meaning weapons, although all of them are not weapons.

ŚIVA

Śiva is supposed to be the Destroyer of the Universe. He is sometimes shown with three heads, and also the third eye, as the symbol of supreme wisdom, on the forehead. One of his popular forms is Naṭarāja (नटराज) or Master of a Dance-form called *tāṇḍava* (ताण्डव) which symbolises one of the major functions of Śiva — the Destroyer of Evil, the evil is marked by a short deformed human being, called *apasmāra* (अपस्मार), who personifies ignorance and evil, and is,

Naṭarāja, Coḷa, Tamil Nadu, 10th century AD

Naṭarāja dancing on bull, Śankarbandha, Bangladesh, Pāla, 10th century AD

Śiva, Coḷa, Tamil Nadu, 11th century AD

Ekamukhīliṅga, Khoh, M.P., Gupta, 5th century AD

Dancing Gaṇeśa, Nāyaka, Tamil Nadu, 16th century AD

Viṣṇu, late Cola, Tamil Nadu, 12th century AD

therefore, trempled by Śiva. Śiva's hair is matted, i.e., divided into a number of braids in rope-like manner and wound up in coils, called *jaṭa* (जटा) or *jaṭā-mukuṭa* (जटामुकुट), symbolising his ascetic character. He has snakes on his body and *tripuṇḍra* (त्रिपुण्ड्र) on the forehead. On the head he may also be seen sporting half moon and a human skull. His mount is the bull named 'Nandī' (नन्दी). Sometimes Śiva is shown ithyphallic or *ūrdhva-retasa* (ऊर्ध्व-रेतस्), which symbolises his greatest asceticism in which sexual passion and the lust of different senses are fully controlled, to the extent no human being can ever hope to control once the erection takes place. All the forms of *Śivaliṅgas* (शिवलिंग) are, therefore, in a sense represent the yogic form of Śiva or the highest spiritual form of Śiva. His consort is Pārvatī.

In Śaivism there are many lesser gods who too are worshipped. For example, Gaṇeśa, the son of Śiva and Pārvatī, who has the elephant head and is considered by all religions, including Buddhism, as the one who removes all obstacles in the way of performing any good action, Vighna-Vināyaka. Kārttikeya, with peacock as his mount or *vāhana*, is also worshipped as the second son of Śiva. Pārvatī; Nandī, Śivaliṅga in *yoni-pīṭha* (यो नि-पीठ), etc. Commonly found items of worship in Śiva temples.

VIṢṆU

Viṣṇu, on the other hand, is the Preserver of the Universe. His role is that of a king. Hence, he wears a cylindrical crown studded with jewels, called *kirīṭa-mukuṭa* (किरीट-मुकुट). He wears a *vanamālā* (वनमाला), or a long garland of flowers, sometimes studded with five jewels, hence in that form it is called *vaijayantī-māla* (वैजयन्ती-माला). He generally holds in his four hands *śaṅkha* (शंख) (conch), *cakra* (चक्र) (wheel), *gadā* (गदा) (mace) and *padma* (पद्म)

(lotus). His mount is lotus. His consort is Lakṣmī.

In Vaiṣṇava religion there are many forms of Viṣṇu which are not covered in the 'Incarnations of Viṣṇu' category but are worshipped in independent temples, for example Viṣṇu lying on Śeṣanāga, or Raṅganāth, Keśava, etc. However, Sūrya was the most popular god of the Vaiṣṇava category. He is usually shown with full boots on legs and lotus flower in hands. He is also shown riding on a chariot drawn by four or seven horses. He, like Viṣṇu, wears a *kirīṭa-mukuṭa*.

Bramhā, Aihole, Karnataka, 7th century AD

BRAHMĀ

Brahmā is the Creator of the Universe. He is old and wise, hence shown with a beard. He holds a *pothī* (पोथी), i.e., book of wisdom, Vedas in particular, a rosary, a *kamaṇḍalu* (कमण्डलु), i.e., water pot, and lotus. His mount is swan, i.e., *haṁsa* (हंस), (sometimes Garuḍa) which symbolises the highest wisdom in separating milk from water or virtue from evil. His consort is Brāhmī but he is only rarely shown with her.

Bramhā emerging from the navel of Viṣṇu, Behta Bazar, Kanpur, U.P., 10th century AD

The three principal gods of Hinduism had, therefore, three major functions to perform which are partly reflected in their iconography as described above. However, sometimes they are seen interchanging their function: Śiva becomes the preserver and Viṣṇu the humbler of the proud of human beings.

THE ŚĀKTA

Amongst all the forces of *maithunī saṁsāra* (मैथुनी संसार) or the world born of copulation, according to the Purāṇas, the mother occupies the prime position of creative as well as sustaining force, hence divine. Divinity, even otherwise, has these two major roles

Ardhanārīśvara, M.P., 13th century AD

Mother-goddess, terracotta,
Mathurā, 3rd century BC

to play in human life. Mother is, therefore, all powerful, the Śakti (शक्ति), hence Goddess. With her inherent power she is capable of vanquishing all forms of evil to protect her children, the humans.

She, in another sense, also provides to her consort, the male god, the 'power' to do what is expected of him — Śiva, Viṣṇu or Brahmā — thereby becoming his Śakti or Energy. This concept is best epitomised in the iconography of Ardhanārīśvara (अर्धनारीश्वर) where Pārvatī occupies the half of Śiva's body. The underlying idea is, which we get to know from various narratives in the Purāṇas, that she besides power, also supplies to her consort wisdom (*prajña* प्रज्ञा), intelligence (*buddhi* बुद्धि), consciousness (*cetanā* चेतना), mind (*citi* चिति), compassion (*karuṇā* करुणा), faith (*śraddhā* श्रद्धा).

The roots of Mother Goddess or Devī (देवी) concept, of course, goes back to the Vedic times, for example, Rākā (राका) and Sinīvalī (सिनीवली) are the two prominent ones who later on find mentioned in *Rudrayāmala* (रुद्रयामल) with their iconographic details. However, the concept of Mother Goddess as Śakti developed in stages and pervaded Buddhism and Jainism as well in which there are now so many female deities many of them are the same as in Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava Tāntrika cults although they may have assumed new names.

From the Mauryan period at least we start getting the glimpses of the Mother Goddess through her terracotta images, but by the Kuṣāṇa period we get her definite from, to begin with, as Mahiṣā-suramardinī (महिषासुरमर्दिनी), an image in which she is shown killing the demon Mahiṣāsura using her hands as well as *triśūla* (त्रिशूल) or trident. From Sonkh, near Mathurā, and other places we have several terracotta images of this Goddess. This form

is over and above many simple forms of Mother Goddess in which she is shown highly bejewelled and sitting or standing, sometimes on lotus, as we find from Mauryan through Śuṅga times. In one of the most popular forms, the Mother Goddess, found depicted in Buddhist and Jain contexts as well, she is shown standing on lotus and being bathed with water flowing out of water pitcher (*kalaśa*), held high over head by two elephants, one on each side. In this form she is called Gaja-Lakṣmī (गजलक्ष्मी).

Śakti, or Ādiśakti (आदिशक्ति), i.e., primordial power, took various forms from the Gupta period onwards all over the country of which the following ones are important:

(1) Durgā and her nine forms (Nava Durgās) (दुर्गा)

(2) Ten Mahāvidyās (महाविद्या)

(3) Pīṭha-Devīs (पीठ-देवी)

(4) Asuramardinī (असुरमर्दिनी)

(5) Mātṛkā (मातृका) and her seven (or eight) forms (*sapta* or *aṣṭa*-Mātṛkās)

(6) Yoginīs (योगिनी), 64 of them (*Caunsaṭha* Yoginīs)

The sources of our knowledge about them are the Purāṇas, Tantras and the Āgamas. Some of the prominent texts are *Mānasāra* (मानसार) (seventh century), *Mayamata* (मयमत) (eighth century), *Samarāṅganasūtradhāra* (समरांगणसूत्रधार) of King Bhoja (eleventh century), *Abhilāṣitārthacintāmaṇi* (अभिलाषितार्थचिंतामणि) of Someśvaradeva III (twelfth century), *Aparājitapṛcchā* of Bhuvanadeva (twelfth-thirteenth century), *Caturvargacintāmaṇi* (चतुर्वर्गचिंतामणि) of Hemādri (thirteenth century), *Rūpamaṇḍana* (रूपमंडन) and *Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa*

(देवतामूर्तिप्रकरण) of Sūtradhāra Maṇḍana (early sixteenth century) and *Śilparatna* (शिल्परत्न) of Kumāra (late sixteenth century).

DURGĀ (दुर्गा)

Literally meaning 'Beyond Reach', impregnable, terrible, invincible, the destroyer of all difficulties and afflictions. She as Pārvatī is said to have killed the demon Durga (दुर्ग). She is equated with Mahiṣā-suramardinī. She created Kālī and other female goddesses to kill the Mahiṣāsura.

The world has two opposed phenomena such as the Good and Evil, the *devatā* and the *dānava*, and Light and Darkness, both existing side by side, both influencing each other's conduct. Hence the world is constantly at war and shall remain so till eternity. Yet, if the world has to survive with all its life, the Good has to keep on winning. But, who will win the war against the Evil? Śakti, the invincible force that keeps on killing the Evil in whichever form it may appear and in the process sustaining the world of life. Everytime a *dānava*, like Śumbha (शुम्भ) and Niśumbha (निशुम्भ), strikes she kills him.

The nine forms of Durgā (दुर्गा) are:

(i) Śailaputrī (शैलीपुत्री), (ii) Brahmacāriṇī (ब्रह्मचारिणी), (iii) Candrakhaṇḍa (चन्द्रखण्ड) or Candraghaṇṭā (चन्द्रघंटा), (iv) Skandadurgā (स्कंददुर्गा) or Skandamātā (स्कंदमाता), (v) Kusamāṇḍa (कुसमाण्ड) or Kusumāṇḍī (कुसुमाण्डी), (vi) Kātyāyanī (कात्यायनी), (vii) Kālarātri (कालरात्रि), (viii) Mahāgaurī (महागौरी), and (ix) Siddhidāyinī (सिद्धिदायिनी).

The south Indian Āgamas have, however, a few different names but that does not matter much.

Simhavāhinī Durgā, Suvarṇeśvara temple, Śākuntalapur, Orissa. 15th-16th century AD

TEN MAHĀVIDYĀS (महाविद्या)

The Tāntrikas have special favour for the worship of Mahāvidyās since according to them they are the Ultimate Sources of all that is to be known in the world. These are (i) Kālī or Śyāmā (काली अथवा श्यामा), (ii) Tārā (तारा), (iii) Chinnamastā (छिन्नमस्ता), (iv) Sundarī (सुन्दरी), (v) Bagalā (बगला), (vi) Mātaṅgī (मातंगी), (vii) Bhuvaneśānī or Bhuvaneśvarī (भुवनेश्वरी), (viii) Siddhavidyā (सिद्धविद्या), (ix) Bhairavī (भैरवी), and (x) Dhūmāvatī (धूमावती). Each one of these has different iconographic features most of which are mentioned in the *Śrītattvanidhi*.

The temple-complexes of these Tāntrika deities are, in fact, the centres of all kinds of esoteric practices which the initiated ones alone know: Datiā in Madhya Pradesh is known for such centres.
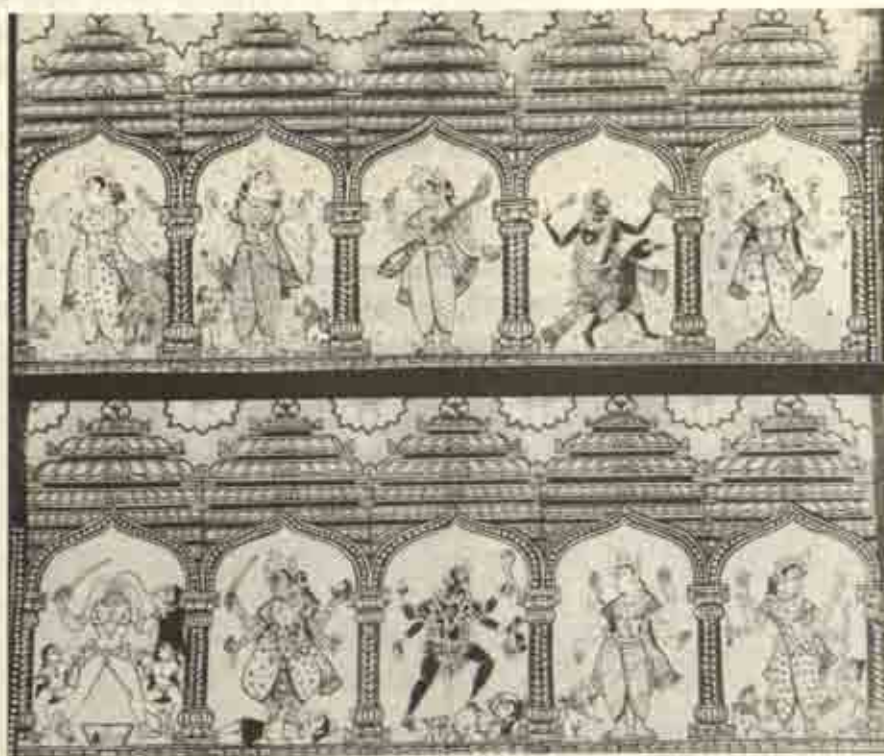
Ten Mahāvidyās (from top left) Bagalā, Bhairavī, Mātaṅgī, Dhūmāvatī, Kamalā (from bottom left) Chinnamastā, Tārā, Kālī, Bhuvaneśvarī and Ṣoḍaśī: Paṭṭanaikiā; modern wall painting

PĪṬHEŚVARĪS OR PĪṬHADEVĪS (पीठेश्वरी अथवा पीठदेवी)

There are many Śāktapīṭhas (शाक्तपीठ), said to have been formed out of the limbs of Pārvatī, in the country, each one presided over by one Śakti. The Tāntrika texts give various figures for them, ranging from 7 to 8, 10, 18, 42 and 50 to 108. They are mentioned in texts like *Pīṭhanirṇaya* (पीठनिर्णय) or *Mahāpīṭhanirūpaṇa* (महापीठनिरूपण). It may, however, be noted that some of these Śāktapīṭha Devīs occur in Mahāvidyā lists and other lists given in other texts, such as the *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (देवी भागवत पुराण).

Some of these Śāktapīṭhas are:

(i) Karavīra (करवीर), (ii) Vidyānātha (विद्यानाथ) or Kālīghāṭa (कालीघाट), (iii) Ujjayinī (उज्जयिनी), (iv) Gandakī (गण्डकी), (v) Tripura (त्रिपुर), (vi) Kāmagiri (कामगिरि), (vii) Kurukṣetra (कुरुक्षेत्र), (viii) Vṛndāvana (वृंदावन), (ix) Prayāga (प्रयाग), (x) Nāsik (नासिक), (xi) Vārāṇasī (वाराणसी), (xii) Vindhyagaṅgā Saṅgam (विन्ध्यगंगा संगम), etc.

Their presiding deities are respectively:

(i) Mahiṣamardinī (महिषमर्दिनी), (ii) Jayadurgā (जयदुर्गा), (iii) Maṅgalā (मंगला), (iv) Caṇḍī (चण्डी), (v) Tripurasundarī (त्रिपुरसुंदरी), (vi) Kāmākhyā (कामाख्या), (vii) Sāvitrī (सावित्री), (viii) Kātyāyanī (कात्यायनी), (ix) Kamalā (कमला), (x) Mahāvidyā (महाविद्या), (xi) Annapūrṇā (अन्नपूर्णा), (xii) Vindhyavāsinī (विन्ध्यवासिनी), etc.

In fact, the Śākta cults are most prominently practised at these Śāktapīṭhas where people go to worship the presiding Mother Goddess.

Bodhisattva, Padmapāṇi, in perspective, Painting, Ajaṇṭā, Maharashtra, Gupta, 5th century AD

ASURAMARDINĪ (असुरमर्दिनी)

It may be noted that She is the mother of both, the *devas* (देव) and the *dānavas* (दानव), but she has to kill the latter, her own sons, because of their acts of wickedness, according to various Purāṇas. The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, for example, gives detailed accounts of her battles against demons or *asuras* in three phases or *caritas*. In the *Pūrvacarita* she battled against Madhu and Kaiṭabha; in the *Madhyama-carita*, she kills Mahiṣāsura; and in the *Uttaracarita* she vanquishes five *asuras*, viz., Śumbha, Niśumbha, Caṇḍa, Muṇḍa and Raktabīja. The text *Devī Māhātmya* of *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, and *Vāmana Purāṇa* give details of these exploits of the Goddess Durgā who is often shown Simhavāhinī or one riding a lion. In the Mahiṣamardinī form she may or may not be shown with a lion but the bull or else bullhead, symbolising demon Mahiṣa, has to be there.

Asuramardinī, Bengal, 16th century AD

SAPTAMĀTṚKĀS (सप्तमातृका) OR SEVEN DIVINE MOTHERS

In the *Varāha Purāṇa* there is a story according to which Śiva had to create Mātṛkās to lick the blood of Andhakāsura, a demon, who tried to kill Śiva

Saptamātṛkās (Mother Goddesses), Sandstone, Pratihāra, Allahabad, U.P., 10th century AD

since everytime the *asura*'s blood fell on the ground a new *asura* or demon was created out of that blood. First he created Yogeśvarī, and then Māheśvarī to do this job. When the *devas* found that this is not sufficient, Brahmā, Indra, Varāha, Viṣṇu, Kumāra and Yama also sent their own Śaktis to help Śiva in doing this job. In some texts, instead of seven, eight Śaktis are mentioned, as in *Varāha Purāṇa*. These are:

(i) Brahmāṇī (ब्रह्माणी) (ii) Māheśvarī (माहेश्वरी), (iii) Kaumārī (कौमारी), (iv) Vaiṣṇavī (वैष्णवी), (v) Vārāhī (वाराही), (vi) Indrāṇī (इन्द्राणी), and (vii) Cāmuṇḍā (चामुण्डा).

The name of Narasiṁhī (नरसिंही) replaces Yogeśvarī (योगेश्वरी) in some texts. In some texts these are replaced by Mahālakṣmī (महालक्ष्मी).

The Mātṛkās are shown in art either collectively in a row or else individually and can be identified with the iconography which they often share with the iconography of their male counterparts. They are shown sitting or standing or even in dance-pose.

Sometimes Sarasvatī sporting swan as the emblem, sharing Brahmā's emblem, is also included in the Mātṛkās. Lakṣmī, as the consort of Viṣṇu, also assumes the forms of Annapūrṇā and Tulasī, and included in the Mātṛkās. So also Śrī and Bhūmi. Gaurī, also named Pārvatī, Umā, Kālī, Ambikā, etc., is included amongst the Mātṛkās but mainly as the consort of Śiva.

YOGINĪ (योगिनी)

Yoginīs are generally considered to be the attendants of Durgā or Kālī to help her in various jobs. Their names, however, suggest that they represent human passions, fellings and other mental faculties, such

Two-armed Yoginī no. 30; peacock on pedestal. Kaumārī; Hirāpur, Orissa

as the *kāma, buddhi*, etc., as well. They kill demons also, bestow favour, fulfil desires and remove distress. Although they are more than 200, generally 64 of them are found in temples which are mostly round in shape and are found at places like Bherāghāṭa in Madhya Pradesh and Hīrāpur in Orissa. Views differ on their cultic associations which range from Kaula-Kāpālikas, a *vāmamārgī* Śaiva cult, through Sahaja cult and Nātha Sampradāya. These goddesses are many a time found naked with *yoni* fully opened for worship. And it is for this reason also they are called 'Yoginīs'. Many of them are also fearful to look at sharing the features of Durgā. These are found either sitting or standing or else dancing. Each of them has her own individual iconographic features.

The Śakti, symbolising the Female Energy, does not represent a single cult, it is a concept which took various forms in various sects but she figures prominently in Śaiva and Tāntrika contexts throughout the country, particularly at Śaktipīṭhas.

THE TANTRA

Indian religious thought and practice has one major component, that of Tantra. Tantra has been defined variously by various ancient authors but by and large it means a science through which we come to know the powers lying hidden in the human body itself. However, now it stands for a system of esoteric practices involving mental and physical faculties in which Śakti is worshipped through Yogic exercises which completely control sexual passion and make the act of copulation a test for the Tāntrika, redundant since the real *yoga* will make semen flow upwards through different *cakras* up to the *sahasrāra*, same as the point of *uṣṇīṣa* of the Buddha. The Tāntrikas in Mediaeval period introduced the

Four-armed Yoginī no. 4 with jaṭā-maṇḍala; tortoise, Yamunā; Hīrāpur, Orissa
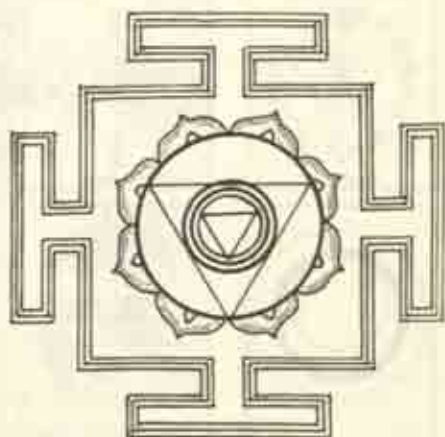
Chinnamastā Yantra, contemporary
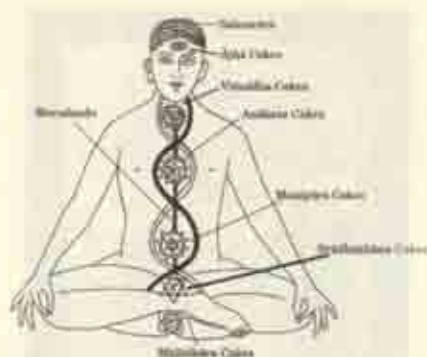
Positions of six *cakras* in the body
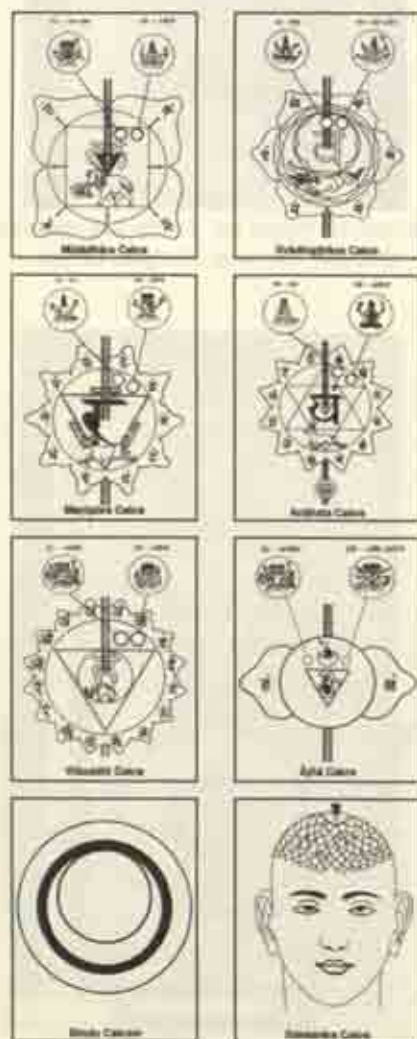
Contemporary

practice of *pañca-makāra* or taking *madya* (मद्य), *mīna* (मीन), *maithuna* (मिथुन), etc. It is found in one form or the other in Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Bauddha systems of late medieval times.

Tantrism, both in Hinduism and Buddhism, is closely related to *yoga* in terms of body-mind control exercises, eight of them, viz. *yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā, dhyāna* and *samādhi*. Tantra gives importance to *mantra, yantra, pratibhā* and *siddhi*. However, Tantra and Yoga both lay special emphasis on *ṣaṭacakra, kuṇḍalinī, yoga* and *kuṇḍalinī-siddhi*. The *ṣaṭa* (or six) *cakras* are common to all Yoga and Tantra concepts. At the base is *mūlādhāra*, located between the anus and the genital, in the form of coiled serpent, and supports the *merudaṇḍa* or spine. Over this is located the *svādhiṣṭhāna-cakra* which is above the genital. Over this is the *maṇipūra-cakra*, located at the navel. Then follows the *anāhata-cakra*, located in the heart. Over this is the *viśuddhi-cakra*, located at the base of the throat. The sixth *cakra* is called *ājñā-cakra* which is located between the eyebrows. The seventh *cakra* is called *sahasrāra* which resides in the centre of the skull, called *brahmarandhra*; this is the highest centre of vitality. Each one of these seven *cakras* is like a lotus flower but each with a different number and series of petals as we see in Indian art. Men and women are shown in art with these *cakras*. Tantra therefore, is not debased as it is taken to be, the roots of Tantra go deep into the *Atharvaveda* and are found even in China in Taoism. In Himālayan Buddhism, the term *Tantra-Yoga* is, therefore, very popular.

In the *tantra-vidyā, yantras* and *maṇḍalas* also play important roles. A *yantra*, also called *cakra*, is a geometric diagram, formed by lines, dots, deities, human forms, animals, plants, etc. A *yantra* is,

according to Tantra Śāstra, angular, consisting of triangles cutting each other, producing rectangles in the process, and ending up in trident like projections. These figures are filled at specific places with *bījākṣaras* or seed-letters. These letters belong to *mantras* or spells invoking the power of the god or goddess to which it is addressed. It is a technique of manifestation of a deity and his or her power. The Buddhist Tantras use *dhāriṇīs* which are like the Hindu *mantras* meant to be recited since 'power' is inherent in them. *Maṇḍala* is a circular diagram containing symmetrical configurations of Tāntrika deities and symbols. Buddhist Tāntrikas used it widely by making them on cloth banners. The most popular *yantra* is *śrīyantra* and practically all Śākta Tantras mention it since it is considered to be the unified *tantra* of Śiva and Śakti. This and many other *yantras* are formed round open-petalled lotuses.

Durgā Yantra, contemporary
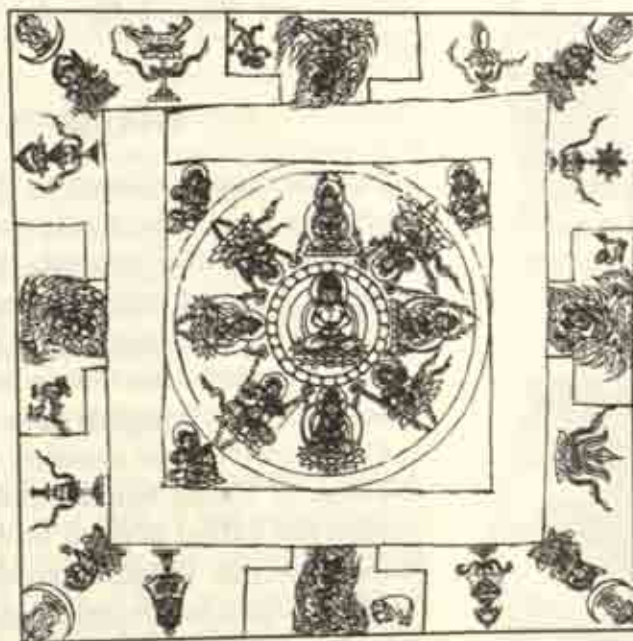
Maṇḍala of five Dhyānī Buddhas, Central Asia, Dun-huang, China, Late 9th century AD

Fish-bull Īhāmṛga, Bhārhūt, Śuṅga,
2nd century BC

Gandharvas worshipping stūpa,
Mathurā, U.P., Śuṅga, 1st century BC

Lion-bird-deer, Sāñcī, M.P.,
Śuṅga, 1st century BC

Crocodile-fish, Mathurā, U.P.,
Kuṣāṇa, 1st century AD

There are many other *yantras* such as *rakṣā-yantra, durgā-yantra, chinnamastā-yantra, sarvato-bhadra-yantra*, besides the *yantras* of all the Mahāvidyās and of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva as well as of Buddhist gods. These *yantras*, engraved on metallic sheets, are found even inside the Śāktapīṭha shrines in south India. The illustrations of many of these forms are found in the famous text of *Rudrayāmala Tantra*. The Tantra texts have some common topics such as the origin and dissolution of the Universe, ascertainment of *mantra*, installation of deities, description of places of pilgrimage, the duties attached to different stages or *āśramas* of life, survey of traditional history, similar to the Purāṇic approach, *kālacakras* or cycles of existence, duties of kings, signs of masculinity and femininity, spiritual elevation, etc., which have been classified into four *padas* or groups of subjects: (i) *jñāna* (philosophical doctrine), (ii) *yoga* (meditation), (iii) *kriyā* (temple building and idol-worship), (iv) *caryā* (observances and rites).

ĪHĀMṚGA

Somewhat closely related to the *devavāda* is the concept of composite figures called in our texts *īhāmṛga*, a term which normally stands for the mixed human and animal forms. For example Mahiṣāsura has the trunk of human being but the head is of buffalo. Narasimha has human body and lion head. Gaṇeśa, Vārāhī, Hayagrīva have the same features. In Greek art there are centaurs with horse's body and male or female human heads. In India similar images are called *kinnara* and *kinnarī* who are heavenly beings. In Indian art there are also *vyāla* figures in which two images from the animal world are crossed — lion's body but parrot's face. In the *Ṛgveda* such images are called *yatu*. In the epics and

the Purāṇas the terms *ihāmṛga* and *vyāla* are found occurring together, often interchanging themselves. Kālidāsa also uses these terms which stand for mythical and fabulous forms.

In Indian art we get *ihāmṛgas* in the form of winged lions, beaked lions, horned lions, winged bulls, bull with elephant face, crocodile with fish-tail, stag with fish-tail, sea-monsters, etc., from the Śuṅga-Sātavāhana-Bactrian Period itself, starting in the second century BC. Such fabulous figures were earlier found in the Greek, Persian and Assyrian art from the seventh-sixth century BC. As the decorative elements of pillars, copings, beams, etc., we find them repeatedly occurring all the time in the Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Bauddha and Jain contexts.

Kinnarī with consort, Sāñcī, M.P., Śuṅga, 2nd century BC

Mythology: What it is in Hinduism?

The mythologies connected with these gods have been the subject-matter for most of the narrative scenes in temples and shrines. Hence, Purāṇas are repeatedly referred to identify them. Mythology, it may be noted, is the product of the collective wisdom of a people grown over a long period of time, it is not a story or novel written by a single author at a single point of time. A mythological story has a moral to convey, one has only to read it in between the lines. Mythology is, therefore, not a fantasy created by an author to entertain people.

BUDDHA

Buddha is shown either as shaven-headed, like an ascetic, or else with small curls of hair or with wavy hair with a round bump on the top of the head covered either with locks of hair or else a piece of cloth, called *uṣṇīṣa* (उष्णीष). Very often he is shown with a round *tilaka* (तिलक) like mark on the forehead. It is called *ūrṇa* (ऊर्णा) formed out of a piece of curled

Double Eagle, Taxila, 1st century AD

Buddha, Sārnāth, U.P., Gupta,
5th century AD

Bodhisattva Maitreya, Mathurā,
U.P., Kuṣāṇa, 1st century AD

hair. It represents his super-knowledge. His ears are long and on his soles there are several auspicious marks. These are the Marks of *mahāpuruṣa*, great or extraordinary human being, called *mahāpuruṣa laksaṇa*s (महापुरुष लक्षण).

These normally number 32 though 64 also occur in texts.

Buddha sits on lotus in *padmāsana* or lotus-posture. He sometimes sits on a *siṁhāsana* (सिंहासन), i.e., a chair with two lions, one on either side, generally front legs, or hands shaped as lions. Below the seat is *dharmacakra* (धर्मचक्र) or the Wheel of Dharma, sometimes flanked with two stags representing the forest of stags, called *mṛgadāva* (मृगदाव), at Sārnāth, where he gave his first Sermon. Since Buddha belonged to the *śramaṇa paramparā* (श्रमण परम्परा) or ascetic tradition, he was never shown with his consort although he was married.

BODHISATTVA

In Buddhism, besides Buddha, *bodhisattva*s (बोधिसत्त्व) are also worshipped. In China and Japan very often *bodhisattva*s are independently worshipped. These images are usually shown with crown on the head, ornaments in the neck and pensive in mood, representing his period of princehood. The *bodhisattva*s, according to Buddhism, were the personages who refused to *nirvāṇa* (निर्वाण) or salvation for themselves although they were capable of achieving it. They also refused to leave the worldly affairs, instead assumed the role of the Saviour of the Humanity for serving the suffering human beings who are in fact suffering due to ignorance.

BUDDHIST TRIRATNA

In Buddhism three things are most important —
Buddha (बुद्ध) himself, his *dhamma* (धम्म) or religious
teachings and the *samgha* (संघ), i.e., the monastic
order; all human beings are asked to take refuge in
them. It is called *triratna* (त्रिरत्न) or Three Jewels
representing Buddha, Dharma and Samgha.

In Buddhist art scenes from the life of the
Buddha and the *Jātaka* (जातक) stories, i.e., stories
connected with the previous lives of the Buddha,
around 500 of them, are very popular. There are
other stories also, called *avadānas* (अवदान), which also
form the themes of art.

JINA

Jinas (जिन) or *tīrthankaras* (तीर्थंकर) may be naked or
wearing a white dress. When naked they represent
the Digambara (दिगम्बर) sect but when wearing cloth
they represent Śvetāmbara (श्वेताम्बर) sect. *Jina's* seat
is lotus as that of the Buddha and other gods.
However, each of the 24 *tīrthankaras*, i.e., deified
saints, has one mark of cognisance, often on the seat,
like *śankha* on the seat represents the 22nd
tīrthankara Nemināth while tortoise on the seat
represents the 20th *tīrthankara* Muni Subrata.
Tīrthankaras are also distinguished by their own
pairs of *yakṣas* (यक्ष) and *yakṣīs*, called *śāsana-devatās*
(शासनदेवता), the protectors of *jina*. Since the
tīrthankaras, like Buddha, also belonged to the *muni*
or *yati* or *tapasvī* (तपस्वी), i.e., *śramaṇa paramparā* (श्रमण
परम्परा), i.e., the ascetic tradition starting from the
Rgvedic times, they were also not shown with
consorts.

It may be noted that while the images of the
Digambara sect are naked and with no ornaments
to adorn them, the images of the Śvetāmbara sect

Jain Tīrthankara Rṣabhadeva,
Mathurā, U.P., Gupta, 5th century AD

Agni Yaksa, Mathura, U.P., Sunga,
2nd century BC
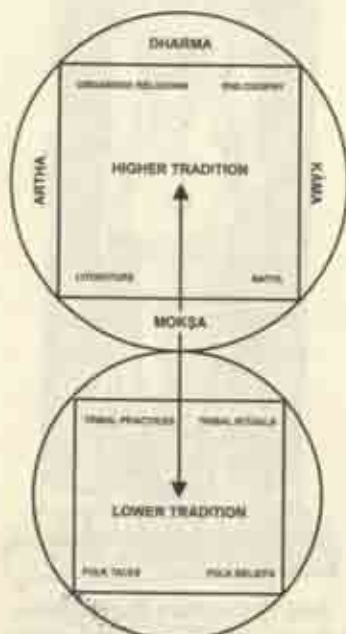
Higher Tradition – Lower
Tradition Interaction

are decked with a variety of ornaments, including *kirīṭa mukuṭa*. All these were, of course, the later developments, in the second and first centuries BC even the Jainas offered prayers through eight auspicious symbols, called *aṣṭa māṅgalika cihna*s (अष्ट मांगलिक चिह्न), generally engraved on stone tablets or *āyāga-paṭṭa*s, i.e., *phalaka*s. These are *matsya* (मत्स्य), *divyamāna* (दिव्यमान), *śrīvatsa* (श्रीवत्स), *ratna-bhāṇḍa* (रत्नमाण्ड), *padma* (पद्म), *bhadrapīṭha* (भद्रपीठ) or *indrayaṣṭi*, *pūrṇa-kumbha* (पूर्णकुम्भ) and *matsya* (मत्स्य). We find them on a stone tablet from Kaṅkāli Ṭīlā at Mathurā.

Basic Nature of Indian Art

Indian art has been the product of Indian culture as the Greek art has been the product of Greek culture or the Roman art has been the product of Roman culture. Indian culture, however, has been the product of two streams of thoughts and practices, one, the Folk, belonging to the oral traditions operating at the folk level, in the villages, and, the other, classical, belonging to the sophisticated literary traditions, the former is sometimes called 'Lower Tradition' and the latter 'Higher Tradition'.

'LOWER TRADITION' AND 'HIGHER TRADITION' INTERACTION

The two traditions are not exclusive to each other, the roots of the Higher Tradition lay in the Lower Tradition or Little Tradition, as anthropologists name it. In other words, items like snake worship, tree worship, water worship, spirit worship, mother goddess worship, etc., which usually characterise the Lower Tradition, are picked up by the practitioners of the Higher Tradition and assimilated them in their own belief-systems through inventing mythologies. Thus, *yakṣa*s (यक्ष) and *yakṣī*s (यक्षी) characterise all religions from the Vedic times. A

snake was called 'Mucalinda' and incorporated in the life-history of Buddha as his saviour against heavy rains. Another snake was called 'Śeṣanāga' (शेषनाग) on whose coils Viṣṇu was shown reclining. Pārśvanāth, the 23rd *tīrthaṅkara*, had the snake with open hoods at his back. There was thus an upward mobility in the case of gods and goddesses of the Lower Tradition. The two traditions were, thus, complementary to each other.

SOME TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Engraving, relief and in-the-round

The Indian art had many technical aspects. Some are engravings and etchings, some are peckings, while others are sculptures in low or high relief. Some are also images in the round. One category is pseudo-round, i.e., although the back is also carved but it is flattish and schematic in comparison to the frontal part of the body even though garments and ornaments are carved on them. Most of the *yakṣa* and *yakṣī* images belonging to the third century BC to first century AD time-bracket fall in the category of 'pseudo-round'.

Many of the high-relief sculptures show deep undercutting, particularly when the figures are shown in partial or three-fourth profile filled with the element of animation. Such figures give false impression or illusion of figures in-the-round. However, by casting light and shadow in the day-time due to the changing positions of sunlight, this technique created extremely enchanting figures.

Stencil style

Carving on temples has one more style, called 'Stencil Style'. In this technique the entire surface

Yakṣī, sculpture in the round, Didārgañj, Patna, Bihar, Mauryan, 3rd century BC

Yakṣī in low relief, Amarāvatī, A.P., 2nd
century BC

Gaṇa (weightlessness), Nagardan,
Maharashtra, Vākāṭaka, 5th century AD

remains plain but the cutting of figures and designs is done deep into the stone. The carvings on the *śikhara*s of the Hindu temples are done in this style. Later day Islamic art used this technique in abundance, as one can see in the carvings of Qutab Minar.

Perspective and weightlessness in body

When figures are composed in groups some consideration to perspective and depth (things in the background are shorter in size than the things in the foreground even though they may be of equal size, because of optical illusion), poise and gaiety (standing at an angle with the hips a lot thinner than the chest), visual weight and weightlessness (heavy body versus light body) is given. But most of these elements of great art developed slowly and gradually, over a period of 800 years, from the Mauryas of the third century BC to the Guptas of AD 500. Further refinement of details took 500 years more, around AD 1100 the Candelās of Madhya Pradesh at Khajurāho and the Coḷas at Thanjāvur and Gaṅgaikoṇḍacoḷapuram developed the sculptural art in stone and bronze to greatest height. For 300 years this graph continued to rise but after AD 1300 craftsmanship started replacing the virtues of artistic creations with spirituality reflecting itself in the face which the onlooker himself or herself experiences. The Vijayanagar (fourteenth century) and the Nāyaka (sixteenth century) schools of art are more or less the examples of highly stylised art.

PAINTINGS

Painting has all along been a very powerful medium of art in India as in most of the countries of the world. It is easier to execute it than carve sculpture. That is why even the Stone Age men in France, Spain and

India decorated their caves and rock-shelters and also expressed their beliefs with paintings done in a variety of colours made out of the local earths and minerals applied directly on the rock surface. Madhya Pradesh is the paradise of these rock-shelter paintings depicting animals as well as scenes of everyday life, such as the hunting, dancing and cooking. There are also scenes of worship of natural objects and animals. The most famous group of painted rock-shelters is located at Bhīmbeṭakā in Raisen District. However, such shelters are found in most of Indian states, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala.

There are three terms used in Sanskrit literature for pictures: *citra* (चित्र) = image in the round *ardha-citra* (अर्धचित्र) = image in relief, low relief (French: Bas relief) and high relief; and *citrābhāsa* (चित्राभास) = Painting in which some attempt is made to create impression of third dimension through the use on light and shade of colours in a picture drawn by line-sketch.

Wall painting of Bodhisattva, Padmapāṇi in a cave-shrine, Ajantā, Maharashtra, Gupta, 5th century AD

Texts like *Viṣṇudharmottara's* (विष्णुधर्मोत्तर) *citrasūtra* (चित्रसूत्र) have given us a list of Six Limbs or *ṣaḍāṅga* (षडांग) which make a painting beautiful. These are:

1. *Pramāṇam* (प्रमाणम्) = Correct perception of the objects being painted in terms of overall structure of anatomy of men, women, animals, etc., and their measurements. It includes even the element of perspective.

2. *Rūpabheda* (रूपभेद) = The perfect knowledge of all the differences in the appearances of figures, natural and man-made, or subject-matter which constitute the picture to be drawn and painted.

3. *Sādṛśyam* (सादृश्यम्) = It is the element of

Snāna, Painting, Ajantā,
Maharashtra, 5th century AD

Similitude, i.e., faithfully copying the items of painting.

4. *Bhāva* (भाव) = It stands for the faithful and effective depiction of the inner feeling of all the living creatures being painted; if it is a narrative painting, then as the situation demands from an actor of the play at a particular moment being caught in the picture. It, therefore, also relates to all doings in the world.

5. *Lāvaṇya yojanam* (लावण्य योजनम्) = Infusion of gracefulness, beauty and charm in the figures.

6. *Varṇikābhaṅga* (वर्णिकाभंग) = Artistic manner of using the brush and colours. It relates to the perfection in techniques being used by the painter artist.

Citralakṣaṇa (चित्रलक्षण), another treatise on painting, gives us precise rules for making pictures of divine beings and kings, and also general rules for others. Fore example, it tells us that the standard faces should be quadrangular, sharply outlined, beautifully finished with shining and splendid attributes.

It should not be made triangular, or crooked, nor should it be made oval or round. Whosoever has painted a face accordingly will constantly possess blessings. For ordinary men a face longing after peace, lengthy or round, or triangular, etc., may be used . . . the hair or the head of a lord of men or of the gods should be fine and curly, and painted a heavenly blue.

Nine Rasas (नव रस)

Rasa śāstras talk about nine *rasas* or juices, i.e., emotional status in *kāvyas* (काव्य) which apply to all forms of artistic creations. These are: (i) *śṛṅgāra* (शृंगार) or love-making sentiment. It includes *vātsalya* (वात्सल्य रस) also, (ii) *hāsya* (हास्य) or Comic Sentiment, (iii) *karuṇā* (करुणा) or Sentiment of pathos, (iv) *raudra* (रौद्र) or Ferocious Sentiment, (v) *vīra* (वीर) or Heroic Sentiment, (vi) *bhayānaka* (भयानक) or Terrible Sentiment, (viii) *vibhatsya* (वीभत्स्य) or Odious Sentiment, (viii) *adbhuta* (अद्भुत) or Marvellous Sentiment, (ix) *śānta* (शांत) or Quescent Sentiment.

It may, therefore, be seen that in ancient India proper guidelines were worked out by experts for the newcomers in the profession.

Adbhuta Rasa, Sculpture, Mathurā, 1st century AD

Tempera and Fresco Techniques

During the second and first centuries BC, organised religions, such as the Buddhism, employed the medium of painting to propagate their belief-systems. In Ajantā caves Nos. 9 and 10, for example, there are the remains of paintings depicting scenes of the *Chadanta Jātaka* (छदन्त जातक) done in a style which reflects the style of stone sculptures of the Śuṅga-Sātavāhana period seen in the caves of Pītalkhorā in Maharashtra and other sites in northern India. Other cave paintings at Ajantā, Bāgh, etc., belong to Gupta-Vākāṭaka period of fifth century AD. And the third series belongs to the Early Cālukya period of sixth-seventh centuries. The tradition of Buddhist cave paintings continues even in the Hindu temples as well as the palaces of kings in all the major subsequent periods, the remains of which are still preserved in south India.

The Ajantā paintings done in tempera technique in which paints are applied on the dry clay or lime

Śṛṅgāra, Painting, Ajantā, Maharashtra, Gupta, 5th century AD

plaster covering the rock-surface, depict men, women, animals, floral motifs and geometric patterns in a variety of colours and in a variety of moods from sacred to profane. The strong points of these paintings are the use of free flowing lines for delineating beautiful figures and their delicate inner feelings, the use of shading different parts of the body to produce three-dimensional effect in images, and the use of proper colours, sometimes contrasting and sometimes matching to create magical effect. It is called 'chiaroscuro'.

Ajantā, near the village called Ajinthā (अजिन्ठा), is the ideal-most place for the proper study of the classical art and architecture of India — painting and sculpture, as well as monasteries, temples and caves, all at one place. Not too far from Ajantā is the site of Ellorā (एलोरा) where rock-cut art and architecture of Buddhist, Jaina and Hindu origin, belonging to the period of eighth-ninth centuries, excelled. The huge rock-cut Kailāsa Temple is the marvel of the world.

The tradition of wall paintings continued in post-Gupta-Cālukya periods both in the south and the north in caves, temples and dwelling houses. In Coḷa temples there are many fresco paintings.

From the twelfth-century manuscripts on palm-leaf as well as on paper were also beautifully illustrated with paintings, particularly those belonging to Jainism and found in western India, mainly in Gujarat. Cloth was also used for making paintings.

The caves of Ajantā, Maharashtra

Differing Attitudes Towards Indian Art

THE LOVE AND HATE OF THE WEST

One should not think that the Indian art and architecture had favourable appreciation in the West from the times the Europeans started coming to India. In fact, for centuries together, almost from thirteenth century when Marco Polo comes to India on his way to China, through the early twentieth century, the West was most uncharitable to Indian art in spite of the fact that from the eighteenth century itself Sanskrit classics were translated in English and greatly appreciated, such as the *Ābhijñānśākuntalam* (अभिज्ञान-शाकुन्तलम्) of Kālidās. Even *Bhagavad Gītā* (भगवद् गीता) was translated and greatly appreciated. Even scholars like Ruskin and Goethe abhorred Indian art. This *internal contradiction* in the Western attitude towards the Indian culture in which Sanskrit Literature is superb in quality but its product, the Indian art, is debased, was resolved only from the 1920s when scholars like Havell, Bachhofer, Coomaraswamy, Stella Kramrisch and others started looking at the Indian art from Indian point of view and discarding the yardstick of Greek art to measure the quality of Indian art. In the beginning Indian art of Hindu and Buddhist idols was considered 'monstrous' depicting 'devils' with many heads, many hands and awfully looking countenance but now these are taken to be very gracious and highly meaningful in terms humanity and spiritualism because it has been realised that the techniques applied to demonstrate the superhuman qualities of god should not be at all be confused with the 'form' of god himself and the meaning that the 'form' is intended to convey.

Devil's head in 1484 German edition of Mandeville (courtesy: Partha Mitter)

Devil's head in 1482 German edition of Mandeville (courtesy: Partha Mitter)

Siṁhanāda, Nālandā, Bihar, 10th century AD

The Role of European Travellers Coming with Christian Bias

This change in attitude has not been sudden. Earlier, for almost 500 years European travellers to India, who were Christians, judged the Indian art from the Christian point-of-view in which the concept of hell and *śaitāna* (शैतान) was predominant. Those who were scholars tried the Greek classical model to judge the Indian art.

Both the approaches failed because a culture is a unique creation of its originators and practitioners hence the art that a culture produces has necessarily to be evaluated within the parameters of its own cultural norms. Once this was realised, things became easy for the serious scholars of Indian art all over the world. It became clear to all of them that for the Hindu the image or *mūrti* (मूर्ति) is not God at all, it is just a *bimba* (बिम्ब) or reflection of the real, hence unreal, the image has a very small and limited purpose to serve — to concentrate on the Godhood behind the idol. It is, thus, temporary. It is transitory. And, therefore, an image when judged aesthetically is an entirely different matter, it has to be completely dissociated from the religious aspects which the images are supposed to be portraying.

Indian approach

A.K. Coomaraswamy, the greatest exponent of the virtue of Indian art in the West, aptly observes :

> The immediate purpose of Indian civilization is not *nirvāna* or *mokṣa* (मोक्ष), but *dharma*; not a desertion of the household life, but the fulfilment of function. And here, in *karmayoga* (कर्मयोग), the spiritual support is found, not in pure knowledge, but in devotion to higher powers, personally

conceived, and directly approached by appropriate offices (*pūjā*) (पूजा) and means (*sādhana* साधना).

However, it must be clearly understood that ancient Indian art combined in its personality both, the mind and the matter, that is, ideas and forms merged into one, often supported by technical excellence. This is called 'stone turned into image, image that stirs your heart as well as mind and takes them together to the eternal bliss' *saccidānanda* (सच्चिदानन्द).

That is why it is said that in ancient Indian Art was just not for art sake, the urge to carve or paint emerged from the deep sense of spirituality combined happily with the intense desire to live a life of fulfilment in terms of materialistic enjoyments. Other-worldliness was the ultimate goal but world-liness was the immediate concern. *Preyas* (प्रेयष्) and *śreyas* (श्रेयष्) co-exist.

Bodhisattva, schist, Gāndhāra,
2nd century AD

Indian Art in Historical Perspective

The Terminology

'Icon', 'Image' and 'Idol' are the three commonly used terms in English language for the objects of ritualistic worship and spiritual experience in Hinduism. These are also freely used in the context of other religions. But in fact these are not inter-changeable, *image* or *pratimā* alone is basic to the concept of God as one sees Him since it alone means the 'true mental-picture' of 'an object of desire'. *Idol*, on the other hand, stands for a kind of object which only 'represents' god. *Icon* (which comes from Greek word *eikon*) means any 'sign' which 'resembles' the god it represents. For a Hindu, the object of worship is neither God, nor a 'god', nor it 'represents' or else 'resembles' god. Instead, it is the true 'image' of his god, it is *bimba* (बिम्ब), complete reflection, it is *pratimā* (प्रतिमा) or *mūrti* or image, it is the full-fledged or complete reflection of the moon in clear water and it is the concrete form of the mental image of his *iṣṭa-devatā* (इष्ट-देवता). It is the god of his desire. But it itself is not God or god. This is precisely the reason why *iconography*, is only an apology of the term *mūrti-vijñāna* (मूर्ति-विज्ञान) since 'icon' is not *mūrti*, it is only symbol. The term, however, now stands for the scientific or systematic study of the images or *pratimā* so often conceived in ancient Indian religions. We, therefore, prefer the term *pratimā* or

Gaṇeśa, Bhubaneśvar, Orissa, 11th century AD

Rock-cut Elephant, Dhaulī, Orissa,
Mauryan, 3rd century BC

'image' for our use here keeping in mind that for a devotee of his or her personal god it is the *bimba* or reflection of that god. As we as individuals cannot see and identify ourselves except through the image or reflection that we see in the mirror so do we identify our gods through the images we ultimately start worshipping. Iconography further particularises these gods.

Vedic Heritage

'Images' in India, in the sense of complete reflections of conceptual entities, undoubtedly existed in the Early Vedic period. But from the times of the *Ṛgveda* to the times of Pāṇini of 500 BC we have hardly any archaeological evidence to prove that the images described therein were translated into any material medium — the gods Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, etc., remain in verbal pictures. Similarly, not that the mother goddesses like Aditi (अदिति) and Pṛthvī (पृथ्वी) were not conceived by the Vedic seers, these are in fact graphically described in the Vedas, in fact the Vedas give us a very long list of the *devatā*s (देवता), Candra, Sūrya, Agni, Soma, Vāyu, Jala, etc., and many natural items of environment which directly support human and animal life on the earth, a system of beliefs sometimes called Paganism in Western parlance but they are doubtfully represented in sculpture and painting during this period.

The earliest material remains of imagery are terracottas. Terracottas have their own story to tell in the entire history of Indian imagery both content-wise and form-wise. The interaction of this tradition with other traditions of plastic art starts only when from the Mauryan period the tradition of stone sculptures emerges as its most powerful competitor, at least in the elite. It is precisely at that point that

Śinivalī, terracotta, Śuṅga, 2nd century BC

the concepts and forms popular with the terracotta makers enter into the tradition of stone sculptures and *vice versa*. But, and this is very significant, neither all the concepts and forms popular with the terracotta makers entered into the *ateliers* (workshops) of stone sculptors nor all the concepts and forms popular in the workshops of the stone sculptors entered into the potters' houses. The interaction was two-way but limited and selective on the part of both the groups of artists, the folk and the elite.

Elephant on abacus of a Mauryan pillar, Sārnāth, 3rd century BC

MAURYAN ART
(Fourth-Third Centuries BC)

Aśoka's own efforts to articulate his preference in stone was not of the Vedic order although it was not totally devoid of the Vedic cultural heritage just as Buddhism, his favourite religion, was not devoid of Vedic cultural heritage; in the origins of Buddhism, the later Vedic heritage of the Upaniṣads had a significant role to play. Thus, although Aśoka did not initiate the stone sculptures of Indra, Agni, Sūrya, and others, he did cause the *dharma-stambhas* (धर्म-स्तम्भ) or the pillars of piety, with four *mahāpaśus* (महापशु) or sacred animals (the bull, the horse, the lion and the elephant), *dharmacakra* or wheel representing *dharma*, *haṁsa* (हंस) (goose), *pīpal* leaf *aśvattha* (अश्वत्थ) lotus (*padma*) depicted on them in a variety of combinations. As we know, each of these was traditionally sacred to the Indian people, the Vedic as well as non-Vedic. What is to be noted in this context, is, however, something else: the Vedic gods were conceived in human form, the Buddha himself was a human being, the terracotta tradition had human forms, but with Aśoka it did not appear to have found much favour. The reason for the comparative absence of anthropomorphic gods in

Elephant bearing 'gajatame' inscription, Kalsī rock-engraving, U.P., 3rd century BC

Nāgapuṣpa on Mauryan pillar abacus, 3rd century BC

Lion-face, Pāṭaliputra, Bihar,
3rd century BC

Terracotta, female,
Bulandībāgh, Pāṭaliputra
Bihar, 3rd century BC

Yakṣī, from Dīdārgañj,
Pāṭaliputra, Bihar, 3rd
century BC

Yakṣa from Parkham,
Mathurā Distt., U.P.
3rd century BC

stone during this period appears to be Buddha's own instructions to his disciples against imagery. Aśoka, who, through his the so-called 'schism edicts', appears to have assumed the *de facto* role of the Protector of the *dhamma*, the Pāli form of *dharma*, could hardly be expected to flout the specific instructions against imagery.

FROM WOOD TO STONE

But Aśoka possibly never realised that by adopting stone as the medium of sculpture, he had opened a floodgate through which one day the water will be gushing out in such an forceful manner that his successors will not be able to withhold the prohibitory orders of Buddha which he himself had so zealously honoured and guarded. For example, a Viṣṇu image, with a dedicatory inscription in late Mauryan or early Śuṅga characters, has been unearthed at Malhār in Chhatisgarh. Then we have a large number of more than life-size *yakṣa* and *yakṣī* images in stone, from northern India (Mathurā, Kauśāmbī, Pratāpgarh, Vidiśā, Pāṭaliputra, etc.) belonging to the second century BC, if not the late third. Some of them are inscribed such as that from Parkham, near Mathurā and those from Pāṭaliputra in Patna city.

WORKS OF ART: MAURYAN AND EARLY POST-MAURYAN

There are two nude male torsos from Lohānīpur locality of the Patna city, one with the mirror like (Mauryan) polish, and the other not so brightly polished, both housed in the Patna Museum, and both are sometimes identified as *jina* images. Then we have also the famous Dīdārgañj (Patna city) *yakṣī* in this museum which too bears the highest quality of Mauryan polish.

At Gudimallam, Andhra Pradesh, there is the *śivaliṅga* with the standing Śiva trampling the *apasmāra* (अपस्मार), 'ignorance' personified. There is a large-sized stone sculpture in high relief of Balarāma in the Lucknow Museum which is from Mathurā and is datable to second century BC. Significantly, the Ghosuṇḍī (Rajasthan) inscription mentions Saṁkaraṣaṇa and Vāsudeva also but their actual images have not been so far found at the site. Thus, in the 86 years' period which elapsed between 236 BC, when Aśoka died, and 150 BC when the Garuḍadhvaja of Heliodoros was erected at Vidiśā, witnessed a kind of sculptural activity the like of which India had not witnessed before. From the north to the south the flood of anthropomorphic gods swept all major religions, except for Buddhism.

BUDDHA IMAGE

But how long the puritanism of Buddhism could last when the Buddhist zealots saw the people flocking around these anthropomorphic gods of the non-Buddhist faiths. By the latter half of the first century BC they killed the instructions of their own Master by flouting his instructions and made him reborn as a young handsome *yogī*, sitting on pedestal and wearing a single piece of the upper garment covering one shoulder called Saṁghāṭī. A full group of such images in high relief, on life-size stone tablets, has been found at Butkara and Saidu Sharif in the Swat Valley, Pakistan. J.E. Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw, who has made a detailed study on them, is of the opinion that they belong to the Mathurā style, although at Mathurā we do not have any exact parallel of it, and they are pre-Gāndhāran i.e., pre-first century. There is, however, a small sitting figure in a medallion of a cross-bar of first century BC at Mathurā, in local style, which, acording

Saṅkisā

Allahabad

Bansī, Bastī

Rāmpurvā

Floral motifs on abacus of Mauryan capitals, 3rd century BC

Buddha, *Kapardina* hairdo, Mathurā, U.P., Kuṣāṇa, 1st century AD

Mauryan Pillar Capital
(bull) Rāmpurvā, Bihar, 3rd century BC

Aśokan Pillar, Lauria Nandangarh,
Bihar, 3rd century BC

Sārnāth   Saṅkisā

Mauryan Pillar capitals, 3rd century BC

to R.C. Sharma, may be the representation of the Buddha.

Our knowledge about the Mauryan art comes from the (i) Capital decorations of the Mauryan Pillars, (ii) Rock-cut caves and Sculptures, (iii) Images, (iv) Palace and Pavillion, (v) Ringstones and Discstones.

PILLARS

A Mauryan pillar is carved out of pinkish buff fine grained sandstone which is abundantly found in the Gaṅgā Valley at a place called Chunar, near Mirzapur and Vārāṇasī in Uttar Pradesh. So far two dozens of them have been found, but only a few of them still standing for example, at Vaiśālī, Lauria-Nandangarh and Kauśāmbī. It is made of two parts: (i) the monolithic or single piece tapering shaft, round in section, and often bearing Aśokan edicts, and (ii) the monolithic capital, depicting in high relief on inverted lotus, followed by a rope design, capped by the abacus on which one can see in low relief panels of floral and faunal designs in running order. On the abacus sits one or more images of lions or bulls or elephants, and perhaps of the horse since Hieun-Tsang mentions that he had seen such a pillar at Śrāvastī but it has since disappeared. At Sārnāth, where four lions are shown sitting on haunches back-to-back the capital was topped by a free-standing stone *dharmacakra*, some surviving pieces of which are preserved in the Sarnath Museum. As we know this capital is now our nation's emblem. The symbolism of these four animals in Buddhism perhaps relates to the Buddha's own life. The elephant represents his nativity since he entered the womb of his mother as a white elephant. The bull represents the *rāśi* and *nakṣatra* in which he was born. The horse represents his departure from his

palace in search of Truth, called *mahābhiniṣkramaṇa*. The lion, on the other hand, represents his social status, he is called 'Śākya-Siṁha', i.e., lion of the Śākya clan. The pillar and the capital in all examples are highly polished, the shine was produced mechanically by rubbing the surface repeatedly with sand, cloth and hide for a long time and not by applying any outside substance over it.

It may be noted that the abacus was the area in which a variety of representations are found depicted — *nāgapuṣpa*, *haṁsa*, leaves, flowers, etc.

ROCK-CUT CAVES AND SCULPTURES

Bārābar and Nāgārjunī are the twin granitic hills near Bodha-Gayā, only 40 km away. In them are scooped eight caves with walls bearing typical Mauryan polish. Some of them were got carved by Aśoka and some by his grandson Daśaratha. In cave called 'Sudāmā' one finds a beautifully carved round hut while Lomas *ṛṣi*. Cave has an arched gateway showing low-relief carvings in panels with pictures of *stūpas* being worshipped by elephants. Rock-cut sculpture of monumental size in pure indigenous style was carved on the Dhauli hill near Bhubaneshwar in Orissa. In is the front part of the elephant only, as if the animal is emerging from the depths of a cave in hills.

The images in-the-round bearing typical Mauryan polish include the world-famous fine sandstone Dīdārgañj *yakṣī* with a *cauri* (चौरी or चंवर) held in the right hand. Two black stone torsos of nude mates from Lohānīpur. These places are located in Patna, the ancient Pāṭaliputra, the capital city of the Mauryas. These are a number of terracotta female figurines from Bulandībāgh, the palace-area of the kings. Mathurā and other places,
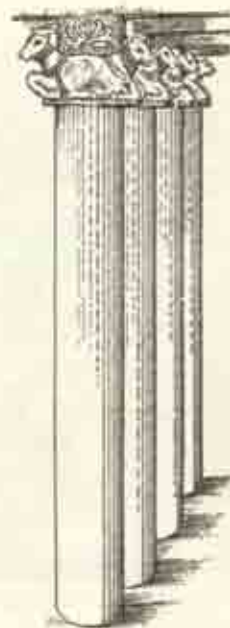
Pillars with double bull capitals, Pāṭaliputra, Bihar, 3rd century BC (Reconstruction)

Lomas Ṛṣi Cave Sculptures, Bārābar Hill, Bihar, 3rd century BC

Mauryan Wooden Palace, Bulandībāgh,
Patna, Bihar, 3rd century BC

such as Buxar, have yielded several examples of
terracotta mother goddesses.

PALACE AND PAVILION

The Mauryan palace of Bulandībāgh in Pāṭalīputra
was made of plain wood whose remains have been
found in excavations. At Kumrahār, near the palace
area, there was a pavilion in which sandstone pillars
were used. The beam-bearing capitals has two bulls
sitting back-to-back.

RINGSTONES AND DISCSTONES

Along with these monumental works of art and
architecture produced under the royal patronage,
there were some works of art depicting folk beliefs
of nude mother goddesses and faunal and floral
worship. These are carved
very minutely in ringstones,
i.e., round polished stones, less
than three inch in diameter,
having a central hole. There
are also many examples
without hole, hence called
'discstones', which depict
lotus, palm tree, birds and
animals.

It may be noted that the
tradition of Mauryan art and
architecture continued for all
times to come although the
polishing technique initiated
by Aśoka was abandoned
around the beginning of the
Kuṣāna era.

Some early sites of Indian Art

ŚUŅGA-SĀTAVĀHANA ART
(Second-First Centuries BC)

INDIGENOUS GROWTH VS. FOREIGN IMPACT

The second and first centuries BC also witnessed the growth of earlier forms and birth of many new anthropomorphic forms of gods of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava religions. Our main source of information on this front is numismatics although rock engravings on Karākoram Highway, at places such as Chilas, also depict them. Strangely though it may look, these gods appear on the coins of foreign rulers of north-western India, may be they did it for political reasons, to become acceptable to the Indian population, nevertheless, they, in the process, emerged as the rulers in whose times several new anthropomorphic forms in plastic art took birth. Thus, on the reverse of the coins of Plato we have the Sūrya in the form of a radiating deity, driving a chariot drawn by four horses, a familiar feature of the early north Indian Sūryas as at Bodh-Gayā. The coins of Greek rulers like Hippostratus, Pantaleon and Peucolus show a goddess with lotus or cornucopia in the right hand, which appears to be Lakṣmī. Some Ujjainī coins, in the hinterland of India, bear Gaja-Lakṣmī. On the reverse of the coins of Agathocles we have the Aśvamukhī Yakṣiṇī. Maues had on his coins Śiva standing to front with a long trident in the left hand. On another series of his coins Śiva is shown standing to front with a long trident in the left hand. On yet another series of his coins Śiva is shown with a club and a trident on shoulder, striding to the left. On a few coins of Agathocles (second century BC) from Ai-Khanum in northern Afghanistan, we have the beautiful representations of Balarāma with a plough or *hala* (हल), and a corn-beater or *mūsala* (मूसल), and

Ringstone, Taxila, 3rd century BC

Lotus and Nāgapuṣpa Top of the Gateway, Bhārhūt, M.P., 2nd century BC

Gaja-Lakṣmī, Khandagiri, Orissa, 2nd century BC

Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva, on copper coin of
Agathocles, 2nd century ɴc

Balarāma on copper coin of Agathocles,
Greek ruler of Bactria, 2nd century ʙc

Vāsudeva with a spoked wheel or *cakra* (चक्र) and a
conch-shell or *śaṅkha* (शंख). A.K. Narain and A.N.
Lahiri identify even a sitting Gaṇeśa on a coin of
one of these kings. Maues also issued a series of coins
with Lakṣmī sitting on lotus but dressed in
somewhat Greek style of clothes. Azilises introduced
the *abhiṣeka* (अभिषेक) or *gajalakṣmī* type silver coin in
which the standing goddess is being bathed by two
elephants.

NEO-VEDIC TRENDS

One may, therefore, clearly notice that in the second
and first centuries ʙc, under the impact of the Neo-
Vedic trends, in Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sects, gods in
anthropomorphic forms were introduced in plastic
media both in the hinterland and the peripheral
regions of India. Those found in the mainland are
purely indigenous in physical features, dress,
ornaments, posture, etc., but those found in north-
western India and Afghanistan show strong
undercurrents of Hellenistic features in all these
respects. This historical situation, it is extremely
significant to note, existed in the following four
centuries: in the hinterland there developed again
and again pure indigenous forms while on the north-
western frontier there developed hybrid forms in
which hinterland forms crossed with the Hellenistic
forms both in physical features and dress.

GREEK AND INDIGENOUS ELEMENTS IN ART

On conceptual grounds, it should be clearly
understood that except for Sūrya or sun, none gods
and goddesses had its origin outside the country.
The image, the *bimba* or the *mūrti* with all its *āyudhas*,
was the product of an Indian mind. Similarities
between Indian and Hellenistic forms have
sometimes been noted by scholars but these are only

incidental, they exist even without these similarities. In other words, the image of, say, Balarāma or Vāsudeva or Lakṣmī or Śiva or Gaṇeśa was not conceived by any foreigner in north-western India on the basis of the Greek gods and goddesses with whom he was familiar from birth, conceiving these images or *bimbas*, with all their attributes was the outcome of inheritance of a long tradition or *paramparā*, the acquisition of supreme knowledge or *jñāna*, and an act of intense devotion or *bhakti*, all of which came naturally to an Indian mind.

GREEK AND HINDU INTERACTION

It is extremely doubtful if in the second and first centuries BC the Greeks, who had hardly two centuries of history of stay in Bactria and Afghanistan, and that too under the pressure of constant threat of risings and counter-risings, and the actual wars which broke very often, were favourably placed for this kind of job. As noted earlier, none of these Hindu gods was conceived *after* a Greek god, it was just not a question of effecting certain modifications in the existing forms of Greek gods and goddesses in order to get the forms of these Hindu gods and goddesses, it was a matter of original ideas, in fact, it was a matter of sheer revelation, i.e., dawning upon effortlessly.

THE BIRTH OF IMAGE-WORSHIP: BHAKTI AND PERSONAL GOD

The birth of an image is a matter of self-creation in the mind of a *bhakta*, a devotee of the highest order to whom god reveals himself or herself. We feel that at that point of time, only a Hindu mind had that kind of ploughed and manured mental field for the proper germination of the images of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava gods and goddesses. Bhandarkar's brilliant

Śiva, standing on a *kīcaka*, shown against *liṅgam*, Gudimallam, Andhra Pradesh, Sātavāhana, 2nd century BC

Lotus stalks emerging from the mouth of Yakṣa, Sāñcī, M.P., Śuṅga, 1st century BC

Tree-Yakṣa, Sāñcī, M.P., Śuṅga, 1st century BC

Dying queen, Goli, Sātavāhana, 3rd century AD

exposition of *Bhakti* movements of the second and first centuries BC in the Indian hinterland of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh does not leave any doubt in our mind that the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava images were originally conceived in this part of the world, their occurrence in north-western India was a matter of diffusion of ideas, quick diffusion, of course, through trade-routes connecting them with the north-western regions. The differences in some costumes, postures and physical features were the natural outcome of culture-interaction between the East and the West, and the mixed nature of population of north-western India. Ideas always precede art. Theories always precede practice.

PAN-INDIANISM IN ART

The Śuṅga-Sātavāhana art had the pan-Indian dimension in which Buddhist system of Monastic life played the major role because of two reasons. First, attention to embellish the architecture of the monasteries with sculptures and paintings was given in the framework of the concept 'Art is Worship'. Therefore, many inmates, who were bachelors, devoted themselves to the pursuits of carving and painting. Second, mobility of the lay-disciples and workmen, going from one monastery to another, sometimes as part of Pilgrimage, but often for getting better education, created commonality in art styles. Thus, if we take, for example, the *yakṣī* images from Mathurā, Bodha-Gayā, Bhārhūt, Sāñcī, Udaigiri-Khaṇḍagiri, Pītalkhorā, Amarāvatī, Guḍimallam, Sannati, etc., their idiom and style remain the same, the difference was confined to the colour, nature and texture of the stone, for example, in Bhārhūt it was red and granular sandstone while at Amarāvatī it was greenish and smooth soapstone or limestone.

WORKS OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE

The earliest examples of works of art come from Bhārhūt, a Buddhist *stūpa* site in Madhya Pradesh, near Satanā. Here a large brick-*stūpa* with a huge railing and a gateway, both of red sandstone, existed in the second century BC. At Sāñcī also the *mahāstūpa* and several smaller *stūpas* with railings and gateways were erected. At Pītalkhorā there was a rock-cut monastery. There was at Bhājā, near Pune, a rock-cut monastery. All these four centres of fine art, architecture were Buddhist. The Udaigiri-Khaṇḍagiri cave monastery was, however, Jaina. At Mathurā also there was a Jaina monastery.

THE SUBJECT-MATTER

The *yakṣas*, *yakṣīs*, ordinary men and women, royal couples, all kinds of animals, birds and reptiles, various narrative scenes from the life of Buddha as well as from the *Jātakas*, stories of the 500 and odd known previous births of Buddha, besides Buddhist symbols of *dharmacakra, triratna, stūpa, Buddha-pada,* etc., provided the subject-matter of art. It may be noted that Udaigiri, Pītalkhorā, Amarāvatī; etc., we see foreigners clad in high boot and short tunic, and carrying lances guarding the caves. It is repeatedly mentioned in texts and notices of the foreigners that Indian kings from the Mauryan times employed West Asian men and women for guarding their palaces.

THE ART STYLE

The style of the works of art of human beings was folkish, since the models before the artists during thie period of time included village headman and village woman, many of them were coming from the tribal background. The faces, therefore, have

Worship of Buddha's feet, Amarāvatī, A.P., 2nd century AD

Chulakokā Devatā
standing on elephant,
Bhārhūt, M.P., 2nd
century BC

Supavāso Yaksa
standing on
elephant, Bhārhūt,
M.P., 2nd century BC

Headless image of Kaniṣka,
Mathurā, U.P., 1st century AD

been treated as heavy and bold with fully open eyes, thick nose, thick lips, high jaw-bone, and short neck. The headgear or turban in men and large scarf on the head of women, is also very heavy. Nudity through transparent *dhotī*.

The trunk is equally very heavy. There are tatoo marks in many examples on the face and the rest of the body of women. The *dhotī* with folds is also not tied with any sophistication. The figures are mostly frontally portrayed with legs oddly crossed while standing. These figures are heavy and earth-bound. The hands and legs are awkwardly portrayed. The ornaments, with which the men and women adorned themselves, and these were many, were very heavy, whether these were neck-ornaments or hand, hip and leg ornaments.

KUṢĀṆA ART
(First-Third Centuries)

The Kuṣāṇas were as much foreigners as the Indo-Greeks but they were thoroughly naturalised, at least the successors of Kaniṣka at Mathurā and Peshawar. The process of Indianisation of foreign rulers, as shown earlier, had started in the third century BC itself as a bye-product of peculiar socio-political situation in north-western India where intense cultural interaction between Indian and Hellenistic traditions was taking place. The Greeks in Bactria were now rulers, but in the first century BC they lived in hopeless minority and more or less completely cut off from their mainland. It may have been a painful realisation on their part that they had to seek their fortune in an alien land and live there permanently, the homeland promised little to them. Once it dawns on someone that he has to live and die in a foreign country amongst the foreigners, even as a ruler, it changes radically his entire attitude

towards life, his own and those of the local people. He starts accepting many cultural items of the local people in order to get himself acceptable to them. This is generally called 'Historical Process'. This historical process, which was initiated by the Indo-Greeks in the second century BC, continued during the Śaka and Pahalava times in the first century BC and first half of the first century AD.

When the Kuṣāṇas come on the political scene in late first century BC and early first century AD they had hardly any other choice except continuing the wise policy of their predecessors. In fact, they not only continued this policy and helped the growth of the historical process we have outlined above, but they also accelerated it to its maximum.

ACCULTURATION AND POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY MARKED THE KUṢĀṆA HISTORY

What were the underlying reasons which prompted the Kuṣāṇas to accelerate it? These were mainly two: first and foremost was the fact that while the Indo-Greeks had come to India with a long tradition of their own gods and goddesses, the Kuṣāṇas, a branch of the Yu chi tribe from Chinese Central Asia, came to India without any developed religion and imagery of their own. For them the Indian religions offered the first choice in the non-mundane world and they accepted it whole-heartedly, perhaps partly as a political expediency and partly as a cultural mission, although they did not neglect the strong element of Greco-Roman imagery of the local population.

The second is the tremendous growth during this period in the field of religious experiences and image formulations on the part of all the Indian religions because two factors, first: all of them — Buddhism,

Yakṣī on Railing-post, Sanghol, Punjab, Kuṣāṇa, 1st century AD
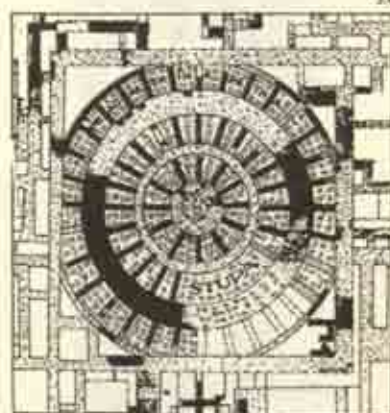
Stūpa, plan, Sanghol, Punjab, Kuṣāṇa, 1st century AD

Lakṣmī, Mathurā, U.P.,   Backside of
Kuṣāṇa, 1st century AD   Lakṣmī

Scenes from the Life of Buddha (narrative
style), U.P., 1st century, BC

Jainism, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, etc., assumed 'all India' character — by this time they had developed deep roots in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu besides the north Indian states, and secondly, the fierce competition which had developed in each one of them to outdo the popularity of the other, even at the cost of adopting the philosophical thoughts and formal imagery of the others.

The birth of Mahāyānism and image worship in Buddhism, through as many forms, numerically speaking, as the Śaiva and the Vaiṣṇavas had, is a case in point. Similarly, the Buddhist love for symbols and *mudrās* or hand gestures had its singular effect on Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Jainism.

THE ART OF NARRATION

The perceptible results of mutual borrowings was astonishing on imagery in the major Indian religions. A large body of *ākhyānas* (आख्यान) or religious stories developed in each one of them, and that too often sharing similar characters — the *Jātakas* (जातक), Purāṇas and Āgamas started swelling. And, hand in hand with this, another trait developed: in order to present the gods and their deeds to the common men, for their easy comprehension as well as to stabilise their devotion, rituals round the gods were multiplied and their superhuman actions narrated through the media of plastic art in stone, terracotta, metal, bone and ivory.

SYMBOLS AND MUDRĀS FORMED THE COMMON POOL FOR ALL RELIGIONS

As a matter of fact, there was nothing sectarianism in individual symbols and *mudrās*, they formed the common pool of Indian Art Language, sectarianism

developed only in their combinations reflected in iconography. For example, *śankha, cakra, gadā* and *padma* as well as *dhyāna-mudrā, sukhāsana* (सुखासन), etc., were common to all only their combinations made them Vaiṣṇava or Buddhist or Jaina.

ROYAL PATRONAGE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

This brings us to another ticklish problem: how far the royal patronage was responsible for the phenomenal growth of imagery in the Kuṣāṇa period?

We have several series of Kuṣāṇa coins of each Kuṣāṇa ruler. They depict various Indian deities — Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Bauddha, obviously under the direct orders of the kings. There are a few public buildings, such as temples, both Vaiṣṇava and Buddhist, in and around Mathurā, such as Sonkh and Bhūteśvara, which have yielded folk deities in stone, like *nāgadeva* (नागदेव), and important cult deity in terracotta, like Mahiṣāsuramardinī (महिषासुरमर्दिनी). None of them was made under the patronage of a Kuṣāṇa king. On the other hand, at Mathurā we have a number of structures for, and sculptures of these deities which were made under the patronage of Kuṣāṇa kings and queens. It is not surprising when we see their epithets, and even their names, like Vāsudeva, which clearly show that they were completely Indianised. Besides Mathurā, we have a large number of sites in northern India, such as Kauśāmbī, Ahicchatrā and Rājaghāta which have yielded sculptures and temples of the *yakṣas, nāgas,* Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Bauddha deities.

DYNASTIC ART AND COMMON MAN'S ART

Amongst the terracottas, a series of crudely made

Yakṣa, Pītalkhorā, Maharashtra, Sātavāhana, 2nd century BC

Yakṣī playing ball, Mathurā, U.P., Kuṣāṇa, 1st century AD

Āyāgapaṭṭa, Mathurā, U.P.,
Kuṣāṇa, 1st century AD

heads of *devatās* with tennons to fit into big statues have been found. And they exist along with another series of beautiful plaques depicting various semi-divine female figures with voluptuous features comparable only with the Bhūteśvara (Mathurā) *yakṣīs* on stone railings. Besides these, we have a more than life-size *bodhisattva* in red sandstone with a large halo and decorated umbrella or *chatra* in the Sarnath Museum. In the National Museum another somewhat similar *bodhisattva* with robust body exists. In the National Museum, an inscribed sitting *bodhisattva* with prominent top-knot and terse attitude, from Kaṭarā (Mathurā), is housed. There are two large pieces of Jaina *āyāgapaṭṭas* (आयागपट्ट) or stone tablets, with auspicious marks for worship from Mathurā. Most of these sculptures were donatory and caused by the laity in the Śuṅga-Sātavāhana tradition. All these facts show that although the Kuṣāṇa kings and queens extended royal patronage to imagery, they are many images of Kuṣāṇa royalty in and around Mathurā, such as those of Kaniṣka, Mastana or Chastana, they were neither solely nor largely responsible for the unprecedented growth in imagery; their contribution in this respect was of a different kind.

Map showing Silk Routes

THE KUṢĀṆAS AND THE SILK ROUTES

First of all they ushered in a long era of peace and prosperity in the country by their stable rule over a vast empire and the tremendous success they achieved in opening long-distance trade-routes connecting Indian mainland with Central Asia. The bridges over the Oxus allowed Indian goods to reach the

famous Silk Routes which connected China with Egypt through Syria, Assyria, Iran, Uzbekistan and Khotan. Indian colonies were established in Bactria as well as around Taklamakan desert in Chinese Central Asia, such as in the Khotan Oasis, Niya, Miran, etc. And secondly, consciously and purposely, they adopted the most liberal attitude towards all religions prevalent in their empire. In fact, they gave us a perfect secular state in spite of the fact that each one of the Kuṣāṇa rulers had his own personal preferences in matters of religion.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF ART

In such a congenial politico-economic situation, the social condition was equally free from major strains, a fact which is reflected in the somewhat non-conflictness of the religious sects — establishments of all religions existed side by side. Mathurā, a capital city of the Kuṣāṇas, presents us all the best that the era gave us. The Swat Valley and the Gāndhāra region shared their artistic beauty with Bactria. Their combined echo is present in the Kṛṣṇā basin, at Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, as well as in the Gaṅgā basin at Kauśāmbī and Sārnāth. The Indo-Gangetic divide had so many townships, like Kurukṣetra and Shugh, to support the Kuṣāṇa ethos in every field of life, including art, and literature, both religious and non-religious. There was all round progress and innovations without oppressive constraints of organised churches and well laid canons. The field was free for individual artists to evolve his own style of art and method of work. The image was still simple with limited number of icons and iconographic features. The religious art, as opposed to the 'dynastic art' of the Kuṣāṇas, in which portraits of kings and nobility were carved in large numbers, as noted above, was extremely free and dynamic.

A Greek person, Gāndhāra, 1st century AD

Profile of a Bactrian person, 1st century AD
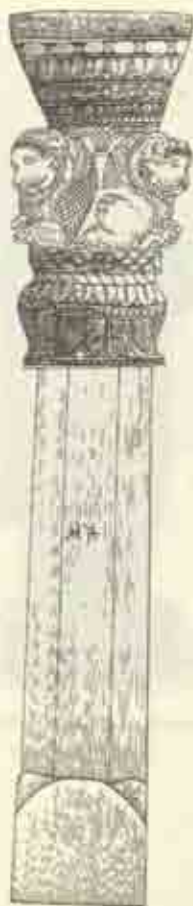
Pillar, Mathurā, U.P.,
Kuṣāṇa, 1st century AD

The Kuṣāṇa art, therefore, was both a logical outcome of the Śuṅga-Indo-Bactrian art and a great improvement on its heritage. It was the flowering of the buds which burst forth in the period immediately preceding it. Under the cool shadows of the liberality of the kings, the Kuṣāṇa artists worked with full vigour sharing the ideals of the men of all religions and the aspiration of the folk with whom he shared his joys and sorrows of everyday life. Still, the culmination had not reached and perfection was not achieved. Possibly, the necessary discipline of body and mind was still lacking on the part of the artist. Long periods of labour and apprenticeship coupled with conscious search for new idioms and technical perfection was yet to become the order of the day in every field of art.

THE PROCESS OF INDIANISATION OF ART OF FOREIGN ORIGIN

The process of Indianisation was yet not complete; we have still the curious mixture of indigenous and foreign elements. Images were beautiful to look at but the Indian ethos of spiritualism could not penetrate the figures to reveal their godliness. It was a great progress indeed, nevertheless a halting

Fasting Buddha, Gāndhāra, 1st century AD

Atlantic figures of Greek origin in Gāndhāra, 1st century AD

progress as far as art was concerned. But India had not to wait for long to achieve the full success in these fields. It happened in the period immediately following it. The Gupta period undoubtedly witnessed the art of India to its culmination. Hence classical. Hence golden.

BACTRIAN, MATHURĀ AND GĀNDHĀRA SCHOOLS OF KUṢĀṆA ART

The Kuṣāna had at least three capital cities — Ai-Khanoum in Bactria, Purushapur (Peshawar) in NW Pakistan, and Mathurā in India. At all these three places excavations have revealed the existence of several temples and works of art. At each, however, a style developed which was peculiar to that region even though there was a common thread running amongst them and binding them together.

Thus, the art of Ai-Khanum has many Bactrian elements, the art of Gāndhāra has many classical (Greco-Roman) elements while the art of Mathurā has been predominantly indigenous.

BACTRIAN SCHOOL

The image of Kaniṣka found at Ai-Khanum shows in its dress typical Bactrian motifs. The design of the *pyjāmā* and tunic also show the same chracteristic features. Here was found a Greek temple with a Greek inscription.

GĀNDHĀRA SCHOOL

Gāndhāra region was a great centre of Mahāyāna Buddhist art and architecture. The Buddha and *bodhisattva* images and narrative scenes in low and high relief show that while the subject-matter was by-and-large Buddhist, there are very few Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava images, the costumes and coiffure were

Śiva, Gāndhāra, 1st century AD

Buddha, Gāndhāra, 2nd century AD

Śiva Head, Greek style, Mathurā, U.P.,
Kuṣāṇa, 1st century AD
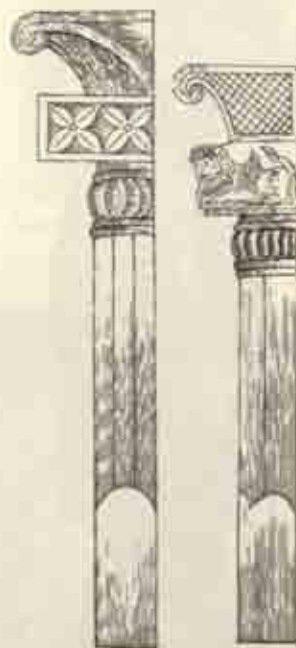
Pillars of Kuṣāṇa period,
Mathurā, U.P., 1st century AD

mixed: Indian, classical and Bactrian. The Buddha
head is marked by curly hair, wavy hair, flame-like
hair, etc., which characterised classical art. The
upper garment, i.e., *saṁghāṭi*, shows heavy folds
which remind us of the toga, a loose outer garment
worn by men in ancient Rome. The sandles are also
classical in form. Buddha in the beginning was
shown sporting prominently moustache, which also
reminds us of the Greeks and the Romans.
According to one view, even the clean-shaved oval
face with youthful countenance of the Buddha face
was modelled after the image of sun-god Appolo.
However, after the works of Coomaraswamy, it is
now generally agreed that the radiant face with
spiritual element in it could be produced only in
India, perhaps at Mathurā where there was a long
tradition of carving out *yakṣa* images and where the
philosophical background of Buddhism of
Mahāsāṁghika School was prevalent.

The Gāndhāra School of art was largely done
on bluish schistose stone and slate, particularly up
to the third century AD. The Gāndhāra School of the
post-Kuṣāṇa period, i.e., of the Gupta period (fifth-
sixth century AD), was mostly done in clay and
stucco, particularly in the Kabul valley and beyond.

MATHURĀ SCHOOL

The Mathurā School of Kuṣāṇa art, done on red
blotchy sandstone, on the other hand, shows Indian
dhotī generally covering only the left shoulder, hair
arranged in small curls, or else in a *kapardina* top-
knot, like that of a *sādhū*, left hand held on hip,
heavily built, open eyes, thick lips, eyes partly closed
and face round or oval. *Abhaya-mudrā* and *yoga-
mudrā* have been most popular although *bhūmi-
sparśa-mudrā* was not wanting.

Some Gupta Period Sites

The plants, leaves, animals and birds were drawn realistically and handeled delicately. So also the female figures which are marked by semi-nudity, transparent *dhotī*, full breasts, fish-like eyes, *tribhaṅga* posture, a variety of ornaments, and sitting or standing in full and half profile.

The Kuṣāṇa art of Mathurā was the culmination of the Śuṅga art where also we see many *yakṣa* and *yakṣī* figures marked by voluptuous elements.

GUPTA ART
(Fourth-Sixth Centuries)

The Guptas had absolutely no foreign moorings. They had no foreign blood in them. They originated in India's mainland. Their empire also did not extend beyond the Hindu Kush. They had no particular love for foreign dress, ornaments and mannerism

Nāga Devatā, Mathurā, U.P., Kuṣāṇa, 1st century AD

save perhaps a couple of first kings, Candragupta, for example, who is seen in the Kuṣāṇa trousers and tunic in his coins, which is natural for a king who steps into the shoes of a ruler whose preferences had a long history behind them. Significantly enough, they, like the Kuṣāṇas, also gave the country a long period of peace and prosperity — political, social, economic and religious. Thus, under them, the civilization marched ahead, practically by leaps and bounds.

ALL ROUND DEVELOPMENT DURING THE GUPTA PERIOD

There was all round development, particularly in fine arts — literature, both religious and non-religious, sculpture and painting, music, dance and drama, nothing lagged behind. In fact, each one of these worked in such close collaboration that their mutual interaction is more than clear from their actual products. Kālidās's literary metaphors, lyrics and norms of beauty are found translated in stone as much as the softness and suppleness of limbs of sculpture are found translated in painting. The Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (नाट्यशास्त्र) is completely

PLAN

Plan of a Deogarh Pañcāyatana type temple, M.P., Gupta, 5th century AD
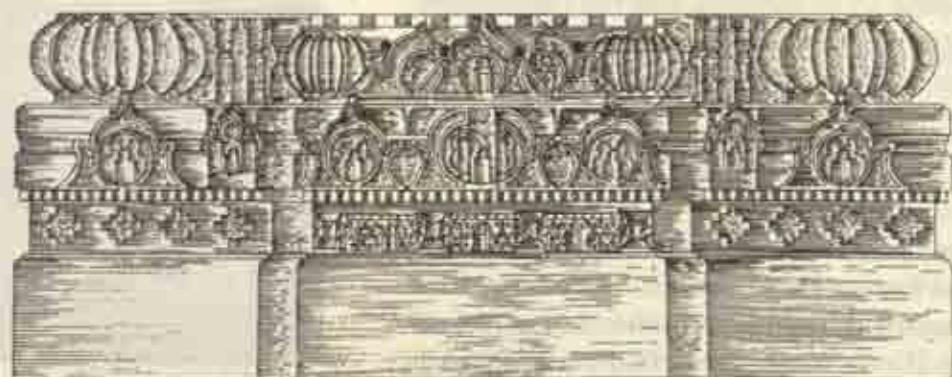
Deogarh temple lintel, Gupta, 5th century AD

reflected in the dance and drama scenes of not only the sculpture and painting but also in the notes of music, both vocal and instrumental. The *Visnu-dharmottara* (विष्णुधर्मोत्तर) is articulated in the iconic art and architecture of this period. The epics, Purānas and Āgamas provided most of the themes to artists and litterateures. India in this way achieved the orchestral harmony in different arts which beautify human life and make it worth living.

CREATIVITY AND SPIRITUALISM IN ART

The Gupta art, in spite of the constraints of implied discipline of 'the orchestra', offered full liberty to artist to beautify his own creations. This beautification was real and not the product of imposed sophistication with the help of excessive ornamentation or some other method. It was 'real' because it completely harmonised the mind with matter. The 'idea' and the 'image' became inseparable, thanks both to the technical excellence that the Gupta artist achieved in the arts of sculpture and painting and the idiom that he chose for himself. All this is completely reflected in the famous Sārnāth Buddha head housed in the National Museum, New Delhi. This is often described as the best example of 'spiritual content in stone'. In other words, now a new value-system was attached to human life, the value which we still cherish in India — spiritual attainment is the highest

Sculptured windows, Nacnā temple, M.P., Gupta, 5th century AD
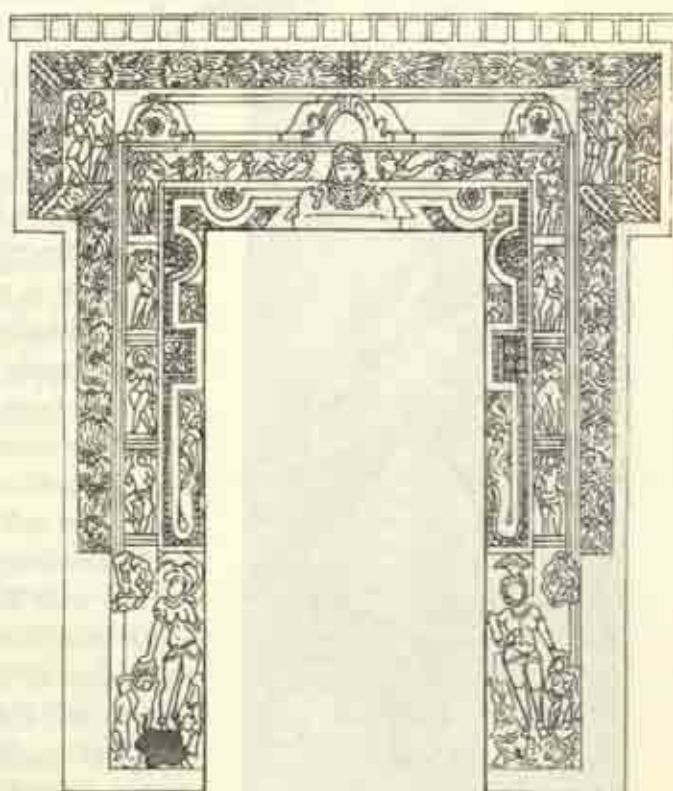
Dvāra of Śiva Temple, Bhūmārā, Gupta, 5th century AD

form of joy. It is called *ānanda* (आनन्द) or 'bliss'. The ideal of bliss is the triumph of extra-mundane over mundane.

FORM (रूप) AND IDEA (भाव) IN GUPTA ART

Religious revitalism spelt out the Vedāntic ideal through numerous writings, literary as well as ecclesiastical. It was now held that only that remains the best which leads you to spirituality and not to gross, although gross is as real as the subtle and cannot be ignored. Still the path that leads to spirituality is the path of beauty in form and content both. The form was, therefore, as important to the Gupta artist as the content. What is not formally beautiful, cannot hope to lead you to spirituality or bliss, according to new approach in art. The description of the formal beauty of Pārvatī by Kālidās is not incidental — it is the outcome of the new idealism. Similarly, the captivating beauty of the female forms in the Ajantā painting, the charming faces of Lakṣmī, Sītā, Pārvatī in terracottas and stone from Ahicchatrā, Sārnāth and Kauśāmbī, and the soft and flowing contours as well as the posture of self-assured ease in the Nara-Nārāyaṇa and Gajendramokṣa panels of Deogarh temple, the Varāha with Bhūdevī panel of Eraṇ and the Sārnāth style Buddhas in stone and bronze in various museums of the world and the figures of kings, queens and Lakṣmī on Gupta gold coins present the eloquent testimony for this idealism articulated in sculpture and painting.

PHALAKA
PADMA
GHATA
LASUNA

Pillars: (A) Ajantā Cave 7, 5th century AD
(B) Kanherī, Cave 1, 6th century AD

Caves, Ajantā, Maharashtra, Gupta,
Vākāṭaka, 5th century AD

ARTISTIC ELEMENTS IN GUPTA ART

The Gupta figures are large in proportion but extremely light in visual weight even when they are carved in crude stone, which, of course, they generally avoided. The figures just float in air. They are marked by the sense of weightlessness. They are not at all heavy and earth-bound, and, therefore, present a sharp contrast with the Śuṅga *yakṣa* and Kuṣāṇa *bodhisattvas*. In narrative panels, the compositions are not only perfectly balanced but also each one forms an unbreakable unit. This is quite clear from the biographical scenes of Buddha in a Sārnāth panel housed in the National Museum as well as from the scenes in the Deogarh panels. By and large, they use very few ornaments, and the dress is scanty. Their eyes are often very beautifully shaped and somewhat half-closed, looking slightly downwards, as if in contemplation. It is often called 'yogic posture with eyes fixed on the tip of the nose'. The faces are generally oval with sharp features. The anatomical proportions are true to life although the overall treatment of physical features is highly idealised, evoking serenity in mind and admiration in heart. The drapery clings to body as if it is wet and transparent exposing the softness of flesh and contours of body in partial concealment.

Buddha Head, Sārnāth, Gupta, 5th century AD

THE IDEALS OF GUPTA ART

Thus, the figures are not nude but the youthfulness of body is also not concealed under heavy drapery. In fact, for this very purpose the drapery is generally transparent as if it is made of fine thin silk. Buddha images from Mathurā and Sārnāth bear out this fact very clearly. These are, therefore, unlike the Gāndhāran figures and Mathurā images of the Kuṣāṇa period where they are either nude or dressed heavily. The Gupta and the Vākāṭaka figures of the

Buddha, Early Gupta period (Sārnāth style), Govindnagar, Mathurā, 5th century AD

Śiva-Vāmana, Mansar, Maharashtra,
(Vākāṭaka), 6th century AD

Image of Nārāyaṇa, Deogarh,
Gupta, 5th century AD

fifth-sixth century AD also present a great contrast to the Greek norms of beauty even though anatomical precision is emphasised in both the arts. The contrast lies in the norms of beauty. The Greek norm was based on Olympic beauty, i.e., the beauty of the male athelets who participate in Olympic games, while the Gupta norm is based on the beauty of a youthful *yogī*, calm and composed not showing off his developed muscles but expressing his bliss. Some adherence to *iconometry* (प्रतिमा-विज्ञान), as given in *Viṣṇudharmottara*, etc., is equally visible although the iconographic canons were still not meticulously followed.

THE CLASSICAL ART OF THE GOLDEN AGE

The Gupta art was, therefore, the culmination of the developmental process that started in the Śuṅga times. The apex was now reached. It was, therefore, classical which provided model for the later periods. But after attaining this height, some stagnation set in, in the quality of art in northern India after the sixth century. Although there occurred a marked prolification in artistic activity but that spirit could not be recaptured. The quality was sacrificed at the altar of quantity and technical achievements. Slowly and gradually spirituality or bliss gave way to draftmanship and craftmanship. In short, art in north India was replaced by craft, technically excellent, canonically perfect but artistically a bit poor from the ninth century onwards.

But the decline in spirituality in the works of art did not occur instantly. It passed through a long period of slow and gradual process of change. The art of late sixth, seventh and eighth centuries are still having a large amount of classical Gupta style and feeling. The happenings of this period are fascinating and may now be recounted.

THE BIRTH OF REGIONAL STYLES IN ART AND ARCHITECTURE

The last phase of the Guptas in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and the Vākāṭakas in Maharashtra coincided with the emergence of a number of powerful dynasties in different parts of the country. The Cālukyas in Karnataka, the Pallavas in Tamil Nadu, the Vallabhīs in Gujarat, the Maitrakas in Rajasthan and Gujarat borderlands, the Pālas in Bengal and parts of Bihar, and the Gurjara-Pratihāras in northern India are known for their architectural and artistic achievements. This was the period, it may be noted, in which the canonical texts and the Purāṇas and the Āgamas, which started taking concrete shape in the Gupta period, got completely crystallised and started throwing their weight all round.

POST-GUPTA ART — PHASE I
(Sixth-Eighth Centuries)

The post-Gupta periods in India are marked by prolification of regional styles both in art and temple architecture. This period is marked by great religious starides which simultaneously witnessed the birth of a plethora of cults in each religion. The net result of this phenomenon was the multiplication of cult-gods and goddesses.

MAITRAKAS ART (Sixth-seventh centuries)

The Maitrakas of Vallabhī in Saurashtra embodied the Gupta tradition in a remarkable manner with most of its sensitivity. The finest examples of sculptures of this school come from the Sun Temple of Gopā as well as from Shāmalājī. Akotā, on the outskirt of Vaḍodarā, has also yielded a large number of beautiful bronzes. Works of art in stone are equally of superb quality. In the National Museum

Buddha, Gupta period, Jamālpur mound, Mathurā, 5th century AD

Jambhala, Deccan, 8th century AD

Dvārapāla, Eastern Cālukyan,
Vijayawāḍā, A.P., late 7th century AD
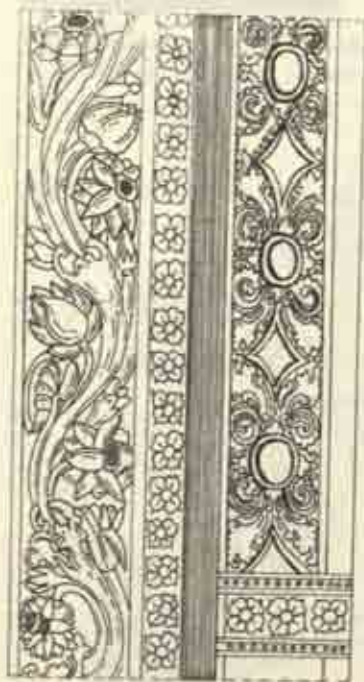
Rāṣṭrakūṭa art-motifs, Ellorā,
Cave 2, 8th century AD

there is a beautiful figure of a lady in greenish soft stone belonging to this school of art.

EARLY CĀLUKYAN ART (Sixth-seventh centuries)

Bādāmī and Aihoḷe in Karnataka give us the best examples of Early Cālukya art and architecture. They clearly show two dominant features: (i) in architecture there is the coexistence of Drāviḍa and Nāgara *śikhara* styles, and (ii) trend towards exhuberance of ornamentation, both in architectural members, such as pillars with triple brackets, and in art in the figures of Brahmā, Śiva and Viṣṇu. The famous Anantaśāyinī Viṣṇu in Aihoḷe temple shows the same trend although the trend is incipient. The Rāmeśvara cave temple of Ellorā also shows the same.

In the eighth century these trends became well marked since now the Cālukyas were receiving cultural waves from the Pallavas of Kāñcīpuram in Tamil Nadu. The Kailāsanāth temple of Kāñcī offered the model for the Virupākṣa temple of Paṭṭaḍakal, near Bādāmī.

RĀṢṬRAKŪṬA ART (Eighth-ninth centuries)

The Rāṣṭrakūṭas succeeded the Cālukyas in the Deccan in AD 753. Kṛṣṇa II, their greatest ruler, caused the world famous 100 ft tall, Kailāsa temple at Ellorā since it represents all the features of an architectural temple in rock-cut monument — *gopuram, nandī maṇḍapam, mahāmaṇḍapam, garbha-gṛha,* etc.

In the second half of the eighth century, their rulers made another world famous rock-cut temples — at Elephaṇṭā — with superb sculptures, such as that of Maheśa or Sadāśiva (erroneously called *trimūrtī*) form.

This art still retains the basic qualities of the Gupta Art — serenity, spirituality and excellence in balance, poise and gaity. However, compositions now become a bit crowded and ornamentation moved towards multiplication.

PALLAVA ART (Sixth-eighth centuries)

The Pallavas start their career in the sixth century at Veṅgī, with an still earlier beginning, but it is in the seventh century that Mahāmalla created some of the most magnificent rock-cut temples at Mahābalīpuram or Māmallapuram. The Pallavas gave us three types of monuments. The first includes five rock-cut *ratha* (रथ) temples, each one free-standing. These are the text-book examples of Indian rock-cut temple art and architecture. The Dharmarāja Ratha at Mahābalīpuram is the highest and is known for the second example of a Hindu king getting his portrait sculptured; earlier to this only his father Mahendravarman (AD 600-25) had his and his two queens' effigies carved in Ādivarāha cave. They were in the position of devotees. The Draupadī Ratha is known for its roof being merely single cell of *parṇaśālā* (पर्णशाला) type where the roof is a copy of thatched hut.

The second type is *maṇḍapas*, or rock-cut caves, such as the Ādivarāha cave.

The third type is called *tīrtham* or open-air carving on the face of a rock. At Mahābalīpuram, we have the famous *Gaṅgāvataraṇa* (गंगावतरण) scene, sometimes called 'Arjuna's Penance' (अर्जुन-तपस्), carved in this style.

However, the Pallava art of the seventh century differs form the Gupta art in the following ways:

the forms of human bodies in the Pallava art

Family scene, Pallava, Māmallapuram, Tamil Nadu, 7th century AD

Cowherd scene, Māmallapuram, Tamil Nadu, Pallava art, 7th century AD

show greater slenderness; the faces are near oval; the faces have high cheek-bones; the humans are infinitely gracious; the animals excel the rest of the figures. Rājasiṁha, however, wanted structural temples as well and, therefore, caused the Kailāsanātha temple built at Kāñcī; the figures, their dresses and ornaments, countenance and lightweightness, are simple and gracious.

On the whole, the Pallava art is nearer to Gupta art *tradition*, just as the Early Cālukyan and Maitraka arts were, than to the later art traditions either of the north or of the south.

That brings us to the last eighth-twelfth century bracket.

POST-GUPTA ART — PHASE II
(Ninth-Twelfth Centuries)

GURJARA-PRATIHĀRA ART (Eighth-tenth centuries)

In the north the Guptas were succeeded by the Vardhanas whose greatest king was Harṣa-vardhana, and after him the Gurjara-Pratihāras came to power. They, under Nāgabhaṭṭa and Mihir Bhoja, produced some of the great works of art and architecture marked by elaboration in jewellery and craftsmanship in figure carving. The brick temple of Lakṣmaṇa with great elaboration found at Sirpur in Chhatisgarh, and Temple 18 at Sāñcī belonged to the Vardhana period.

COLA ART (Ninth-twelfth centuries)

The Pallavas were succeeded by the Colas in Tamil Nadu. They were the most powerful dynasty of the south Indian history since their two kings, Rājarāja (AD 985-1018) and Rājendra (AD 1018-33) had a vast

Vṛṣabhavāhana Śiva, bronze, Cola, Thañjāvur, Tamil Nadu, 10th century AD

Back of Śiva showing Jaṭā-bhāra

empire with intimate political, cultural and economic contacts with South-East Asian countries and Sri Lanka. The art that flourished in this period, both in stone and bronze, as well as in painting, represents the Mature phase of Indian art. The Coḷa art indeed marks the culmination in the south Indian art, which started in the early Cālukyan and Pallava times, just as the Gupta art marked the culmination in the north Indian art which had started in the Śuṅga times. In both the cases it involved the period of five centuries — from the Śuṅga to Gupta it was from the second century BC to the fifth century and from the Pallavas to Coḷas, it was from the sixth to the twelfth century.

The two temples which represent the highest water-mark of the Coḷa art and architecture are Bṛhadareśvara temple (AD 1000) of Thañjāvur (Tañjor) and the Gaṅgaikoṇḍacoḷapuram temple, near Kumbakoṇam (AD 1025). The former temple is marked by a huge and tall *vimāna* (विमान), with thirteen diminishing storeys, over the *garbhagṛha*, with the *gopurams* comparatively lower in height, while in the latter temple these positions interchange themselves, the *vimāna* on the *sanctum sanctorum* or *garbhagṛha* becomes smaller than the *gopurams* (गोपुरम) on the four gateways. It is significant to note that in the subsequent periods, the temples of south India follow the latter tradition. In Kāñcīpuram the Coḷas built what is called the 'town of temples', indeed we get the temples here in largest concentration.

The Gaṅgaikoṇḍacoḷapuram temple is possibly the only example in which all the 108 forms of dance, as mentioned in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, are depicted through various panels of dancing Śiva. The Thañjāvur temple, on the other hand, is famous not only for various Śiva images on the walls of the

Cāmuṇḍā, Hiṅgalājgarh, M.P., 10th century AD

Śiva-Pārvatī, Tamil Nadu, 10th century AD

Devī, bronze, Cola, IIth century AD

Bṛhadareśvara temple, modelled on Āgamic texts, but it is also known for a very powerful school of painting done under the patronage of the kings.

The Bronzes

The Cola art is, however, best represented through bronzes, mostly housed in temples and the State Museum, Chennai but found in small numbers all over the world; some beautiful examples are in the National Museum, New Delhi. They produced the best Śiva Naṭarājas. The best of all, of the eleventh century, is from Tiruvelangaḍu, District Chittor. Rāma, Sītā and Hanumān group in the State Museum Chennai is another important collection of superb castings in bronze. 'Bharat with Rāma's sandles' is a unique piece in the National Museum, New Delhi. In the same collection is the famous *Caturatāndava* (चतुर्ताण्डव) form of Naṭarāja of the Pallava-Cola transition period, ninth century.

The Cola Naṭarāja images solved one of the greatest problems facing Indian art: how to express the cosmic metaphysical concept of *Motion and Rest* which lies under the very foundation of creation myths. The Cola art is also known for perfecting the technique of *cire-perdue* or lost-wax process of bronze casting, which, of course, was first initiated in India in the Indus-Sarasvatī times, some 5000 years ago, but then lost to us for over a millennium. In this technique the image is first made in wax; it is then coated in several fine clay coats and dried in shade; followed by making two holes, one on the top and the other on the bottom. It is then put into fire; due to heat the wax runs off through the hole. Thus, was created a hollow mould. Just fill it up with molten metal. Allow it to cool down and then break the mould. The metal image can be filed for final dressing. It reappeared in the Maurya-Śuṅga

times. Belonging to this period, we have the unique image of a woman playing on *vīṇā* (वीणा) from the excavations at Ropar, now Rupa Nagar, near Ambālā, in Punjab.

Cola bronzes are marked by not only soft modelling, graceful flowing contours and tasteful ornaments but also by serenity which goes with the inner 'bliss' of the gods and goddesses transmitted to the *bhaktas* or devotees. Poise and gaity are also marked in them. That is why these are so very delicate, sophisticated and charming to look at. And this applies not only to Devī images but also the male images, such as those of *go-pālaka* Kṛṣṇa.

PĀLA ART (Eighth-eleventh centuries)

Contemporary with the Late Pallavas and Colas, i.e., from the eighth to the eleventh century, we have the early Pāla kings patronising stone sculptures and bronzes, both. Nālandā was the greatest centre of Pāla art of the ninth and tenth centuries, maintaining close contacts with South-East Asia.

South-East Asian countries of Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, etc., show strong Indian currents of art and architectural traditions and created in history what was once called 'Greater Indian Art' with active support from the Cola art and architecture. Somewhat similar situation in the context of European Art the roots of which lie in the Classical Art of Greeks and Romans.

The Pāla art of Nālandā, iconographically, passed through three different stages:

(i) *Early Mahāyāna* (महायान) *phase* with Buddha and *bodhisattva* images, both in stone and bronze.

(ii) *Sahajayāna* (सहजयान) *phase* with images,

Crowned Buddha, Kurkihāra, Bihar, 10th century AD

Tārā, Kurkihāra, Bihar, 9th century AD

mostly bronzes, of various new Buddhist deities, both male and female.

(iii) *Kāpālika* (कापालिक) *phase* during which *kālacakra* images, mostly of bronze, were made, and even exported.

The Pāla bronzes of highest quality, however, come from the Kurkihāra hoard in Bihar, although such bronzes have been found at Vikramaśilā and other places also. The Pāla stone sculptures, mainly Buddhist, and secondarily Vaiṣṇava, have been discovered at Nālandā, Bodha-Gayā, Rajashāhī, and Khiciṅga in Mayūrbhañja. They are generally in schistose black stone of Rājamahal type with very smooth and oily touch. These are marked by large proportions, poses or *mudrā*s of ease, and iconographic details, particularly those which belong to the Late Pāla period. Like the post-Cola art examples they also started becoming stereotyped, more important as examples of iconographical details of complex esoteric nature, than as works of great art. Technically excellent, aesthetically pleasing but artistically slightly less expressive.

HOYASALA ART (Eleventh-thirteenth centuries)

Contemporary with the late Pāla and early post-Cola period (eleventh-thirteenth centuries) we have in the southern region of Karnataka the rule of the Hoyasalas who developed their own characteristic style of art and architecture. First of all, they chose a very fine textured soft stone, bluish-black chlorite schist, which could yield to lathe work as well as initiate the minute carvings of the carpenters and goldsmiths. The figures are simply loaded with intricately carved ornaments from top to bottom. The Halebid temple in District

Hasan, about 85 km from Mysore, presents the best examples of the Hoyasala art. On it is portrayed the entire heaven of Indra. Men, women and gods on the walls of this temple present the climax of workmanship, though with less degree of spirituality. The nose is sharp, the eyes are long, narrow and idealised, the poses have various twists, although the legs are rather heavy and the body proportions squatish.

Another group of important Hoyasala temples is in Beḷur, in the same Hasan District. The Keśava temple of Somnāthpur, around 32 km from Śrīraṅgapaṭṭanam, is another outstanding example of Hoyasala School of art and architecture.

ORISSA SCHOOL (Eighth-thirteenth centuries)

Contemporary with the Pāla-Sena School (eighth-thirteenth century), we have in Orissa some of the finest examples of art and architecture of another style.

    (i) Paraśurāmeśvara (AD 750).

    (ii) Mukteśvara (AD 950).

    (iii) Liṅgarāja (AD 1000).

    (iv) Rājā-Rānī (AD 1150).

    (v) Sūrya temple of Koṇārka (AD 1250).

On the one hand, these intricately carved temples show the gradual development of basically *nāgara* style of architecture, from the simple *śikhara* on the *garbhagṛha* of Paraśurāmeśvara through the addition of front *maṇḍapa*, called *pīḍhā deula* (पीढ़ा देउल), of the Rājā-Rānī, to the chariot on twelve wheels, run by seven horses, and a separate *nāṭya-maṇḍapa* (नाट्य-मण्डप) or pavilion for Dance of Koṇārka. The sculptures present exuberance of a

Temple *Jālī*. Astabhya Hills, U.P., 10th century AD.

Pārśvanāth Temple, Khajurāho, M.P., 10th century AD

Khajurāho, M.P., Candelā, 10th century AD

Close-up of a pillar, Khajurāho, M.P., Candelā, 10th century AD

rare kind — enormous, multiplying but not crowding. The emphasis, in the post-AD 1000 sculptures, is on craftsmanship as was the case in south India as a whole. In temple architecture the emphasis was on monumentality, largeness and expansiveness, leading to what is called the birth of 'Temple Complexes'. But the conception, both in art and architecture, was absolutely fresh. In fact, with the passage of time tastes also keep on changing and no value judgement should be given either with regard to the changing styles of art and architecture in Orissa or elsewhere.

CANDELĀ ART (Tenth-eleventh centuries)

Khajurāho in Madhya Pradesh was the capital town and temple town of the Candelā rulers. About 30 temples, mostly Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, but some Jaina also, were erected within 100 years times AD 950-1050. Of these, the Kandarīyā Mahādeo is superb both in quality of architecture and quantity of sculptures. Beside the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva gods and goddesses these temples are known for *devakanyās* (देवकन्या) some of whom may have acted as *prekṣaṇikā*s (प्रेक्षणिका) or actresses in the dance-dramas with which the royal courts were entertained regularly. The Śaiva temples were mostly made under the patronage of Kaula-Kāpālikas and they exhibit many forms and scenes which go with the rituals of their sects.

These sculptures are marked by superior craftsmanship which was the order of the day, both in the south and the east. The facial features are very sharp — the nose and the eyes are angular, the chin is short, often with bifurcation line, and the preference is for tall figures. They are imbued with great movement, flexibility and animation as well as undercutting and high relief.

Other Mediaeval Monuments and Art Traditions

NORTH INDIA

Belonging to the Mediaeval tradition of art and architecture, we have in northern India the following important monuments:

(i) The Sun Temple at Moḍherā, near Vaḍodarā, Gujarat (eleventh century).

(ii) Udayeśvara temple, near Gwalior (eleventh century).

(iii) Vimalā, Tejpāla and Vastupāla temples of the Jainas at Mt. Abu (twelfth-thirteenth century).

(iv) Jayastambha (twelfth century), and Kīrtistambha of the Jainas (fifteenth century) at Chittor, in Rajasthan.

The outstanding image of this period is the famous Jaina Sarasvatī in white marble from Pāli in Bikaner, now in the National Museum, New Delhi. It is the best example of craftsmanship and ideal female forms as well as perfect example of iconographic texts. The only comparable example, perhaps better, is from Fatehpur Sīkrī, near Agra excavated recently by D.V. Sharma. It is of sandstone and painted.

SOUTH INDIA

The Vijayanagar monumets of Hāmpī (fourteenth century) and the Nāyaka temples of Śrīraṅgapaṭṭanam as well as the Mīnākṣī temple of Madurai (sixteenth century) present us the largest panorama of sculptures in stone, metal and stucco of such a large number of gods and goddesses whose identity is possible only in terms of the *Mānasāra* (मानसार) and

Yakṣī, bracket figure, Hanamkoṇḍa, A.P., Kākatīya, 12th century AD

Ṛṣi, Tamil Nadu, 16th century AD

Āgamas (आगम). As said earlier, they represent the practically last phase of ancient Indian art — technically superb, aesthetically enchanting but spiritually somewhat poor. It was birth of a new taste.

And it is this taste which dominated the Indian art traditions for another two to three hundred years in south India, north India unfortunately witnessed repeatedly waves of wholesale destruction of Hindu temples from twelfth century AD in the hands of barbarous Muslim invaders.

Iconography: The Making of Cult Images

THE first grammar of image-making was possibly written in the late Gupta period, before that there were only the descriptions of images and some attempts to create well proportionate figures. This grammar was elaborated and perfected in the subsequent periods. Commensurate to the differences in the language of art of the north and the south, we have the grammar of the north and the grammar of the south which differ not so much on vital points as on details and variations in contours.

The grammar of image-making is called 'iconography' which literally means 'detailed description of icons'. There is another term used by art historians, the scope of which is precise but wider and comprehensive. It is 'iconology' which literally means 'the science of icons'. The scientific study of icons obviously is not the mere description of the attributes, postures and positions of icons for their correct identification and labelling, it has necessarily to take into account the various social factors, religious injunctions, literary works and personal experiences besides narratives of *bhaktas* and saints as well as measurements, etc. In other words, while iconography describes an image in its own
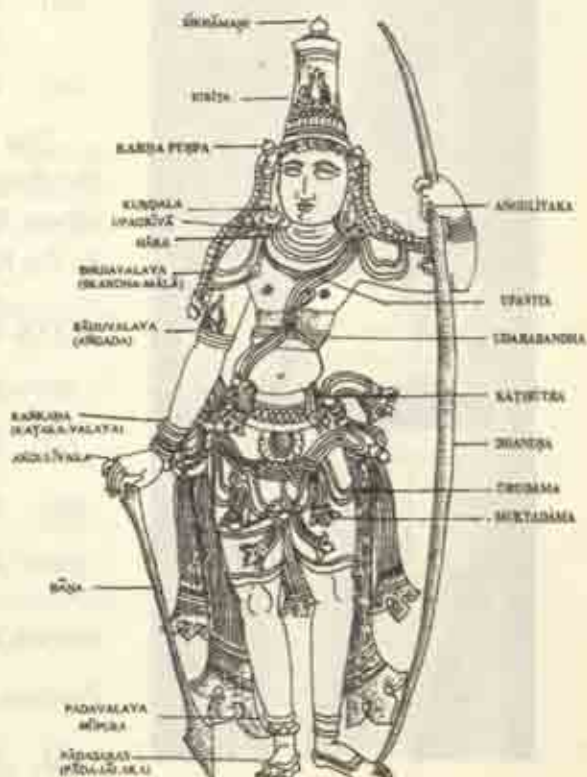
The Image of Rāma

terms, iconology takes into consideration different contextual materials which formed the proper background of the image required to be described. Here we shall confine ourselves to Indian iconography which is largely based on canons of image-making, i.e., iconometry of material for icons exists in the non-iconometric texts also.

Iconometric Sources

The important iconometric texts are the following:

TEXTS GOVERNING THE NORTHERN SCHOOLS

(i)   Maṇḍana's *Vāstuśāstra* (मण्डन का 'वास्तु-शास्त्र')

(ii) Bhuvanadeva's *Aparājitpṛcchā* (भुवनदेव का 'अपराजितपृच्छा')

(iii) *Samarāṅgaṇa Sūtradhāra* of Mahārāja Bhoja (महाराज भोज का 'समरांगण सूत्रधार')

(iv) *Viśvakarmā Prakāśa* (विश्वकर्मा प्रकाश)

The second is dated to the eleventh century while the third is dated to the thirteenth century. About others the dates are not precise but they all belong to the time bracket of tenth to fifteenth century.

TEXTS GOVERNING THE SOUTHERN SCHOOLS

(i)   *Mānasāra* (मानसार)

(ii) *Mayamata* of Mayāsura (मयासुर का 'मयमत')

(iii) *Sakalādhikāra* of Agastya (अगस्त्य का 'सकलाधिकार')

(iv) *Aṁśumadbheda* of Kāśyapa (काश्यप का 'अंशुमद्भेद')

NON-ICONOMETRIC OR ŚĀSTRĪYA SOURCES

Purāṇas, mainly for northern tradition

(i)   *Viṣṇudharmottara* (Khaṇḍa III) of *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (विष्णु पुराण का विष्णुधर्मोत्तर – खण्ड 3)

Rāma, Garhwā, U.P., 10th century AD

(ii) *Matsya Purāṇa* (मत्स्य पुराण)

(iii) *Agni Purāṇa* (अग्नि पुराण)

(iv) *Vṛhat-saṁhitā* of Varāhamihir (वराहमिहिर का 'वृहत्-संहिता')

Besides these, *Garuḍa* (गरुड़), *Liṅga* (लिंग), *Skanda* (स्कंद) and *Bhaviṣya* (भविष्य) Purāṇas also contain passages on iconography and iconometry.

Viṣṇu Purāṇa (विष्णु पुराण) and *Vṛhat-saṁhitā* (वृहत्संहिता) are of the Gupta period.

Āgamas, mainly for southern tradition:

(i) *Kāmikāgama* (कामिकागम)

(ii) *Karṇāgama* (कर्णागम)

(iii) *Vaikhānasāgama* (वैखानसागम)

(iv) *Aṁśumadbhedāgama* (अंशुमद्भेदागम)

(v) *Suprabhedāgama* (सुप्रभेदागम)

It may be significant to note that the Āgamas contain *Liṅgodbhava-mūrtis* (लिंगोद्भव-मूर्ति), the feature which is only casually present in the Purāṇas. Similarly, the *dhruvabera* (ध्रुवबेर) images of Viṣṇu are common in the Āgamas, and, therefore, in the south, but not in the Purāṇas and the north. That is precisely the reason why one has to be a master of these Āgamas before he or she can hope to identify the south Indian images.

The Āgamas have three major schools — Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Śākta. The Vaiṣṇava school has two major branches: the Pañcarātra (पञ्चरात्र), and the Vaikhānasa (वैखानस).

TANTRAS

In common parlance, Śaiva Tantras as called 'Āgamas' and Vaiṣṇava Tantras are called

Paraśurāma, Garhwā, U.P., 10th century AD

Matsyāvatāra of Viṣṇu, 9th century AD

'Pañcarātras' but strictly speaking the term Tantra (तन्त्र) is to be applied only to those texts in which Śaivite and Śakti-devīs have been enumerated. Buddhist Tantras are also excluded here.

The important Tantras are as follows:

(i)   *Gautamī Tantra* (गौतमी तन्त्र)

(ii) *Kālī Tantra* (काली तन्त्र)

(iii) *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* (महानिर्वाण तन्त्र)

(iv) *Hayaśīrṣa-pañcarātra Tantra* (हयशीर्ष-पञ्चरात्र तन्त्र)

OTHER WORKS

Besides these important texts we have the following selected works which have ample material on iconography:

(a) *Abhilāṣitārtha-Cintāmaṇi* or *Mānasollāsa* (अभिलाषितार्थ-चिंतामणि अथवा मानसोल्लास)

(b) *Haribhakti-vilāsa* (हरिभक्ति-विलास)

(c) *Īśānaśivagurudeva Paddhati* (ईशानशिवगुरुदेव पद्धति)

It is not easy to date all these texts, those for which agreed dates are available have been mentioned. But circumstantial evidence shows that although a few scholars of iconometry, like Nagnadeva, mentioned in the *Viṣṇudharmottara*, may have belonged to the Kuṣāṇa period, majority of them belonged to the period bracketed between AD 500 and AD 1300, those coming later than this period, like the writer(s) of *Śukranītisāra* (शुक्रनीतिसार) depended mainly on the existing texts for description and classification of the images, their postures, pedestals, attributes, etc.

There is one other point worth noting: it should not be imagined that all the available images can be identified on the basis of *śilpa*-texts. J.N. Banerjea

has quoted a number of examples which are not mentioned in them. Similarly, the texts often give a very large number of forms of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Liṅgas and Śaktis but all of them are not found in plastic art and painting. This appears to be due to the personal images, dreams, literary descriptions, etc., which were not always accepted or incorporated by the canon writers.

SOME CLASSIFICATIONS OF IMAGES

The classification of images in India has been done by various scholars and variously, such as northern and southern, or Hindu, Śākta, Bauddha and Jaina, or as Gandhāra, Mathurā, Sārnāth, Amarāvatī, or else as Śuṅga, Kuṣāṇa, Gupta, Pallava and Coḷa, i.e., on the basis of dynastic names. There is, however, one other but very important Āgamic classification of Hindu images. It is as follows:

(a) *Cala* and *acala*, ('चल' एवं 'अचल'), i.e., portable and unportable or fixed.

(b) *Pūrṇa* and *apūrṇa* ('पूर्ण' एवं 'अपूर्ण')

(c) *Śāminta* and *aśāminta* ('शामित' एवं 'अशामित')

The *cala* or portable images are generally made of metal or wood or light stone, and in proportion these are small for obvious reasons — these are to be carried on chariots through the town or village as the case may be on certain festive occasions. The *acala* or non-portable images are generally large in size and heavy in weight, usually made of stone or metal. These are permanently installed in the temples, some as the main deity in the *garbhagṛha* or *sanctum sanctorum*, some as *parivāra devatās* or family gods of the main deity, and some in the subsidiary temples, such as those in the *pañcāyatana* form of temples.

Female decorations

Varāhāvatāra of Viṣṇu, Dudhai, U.P.,
11th century AD

According to *Bhṛgu Vaikhānasāgama* (भृगु वैखानसागम्) these two kinds of images are further divisible as follows:

CALA (चल) OR PORTABLE IMAGES

These images could be :

(a)   *Kautuka bera* (कौतुक बेर), meant for *pūjā* or worship. The term *bera* used for image is popular in south Indian texts.

(b)   *Utsava bera* (उत्सव बेर), those meant for festive occasions.

(c)   *Bali bera* (बलि बेर), those meant for votive offerings in daily *pūjā*.

(d)   *Snapana bera* (स्नपन बेर), meant for bathing the image with sacred water or milk or honey or all put together.

ACALA (अचल) OR STATIONARY IMAGES

These images could be :

(a)   *Sthānaka* (स्थानक), standing.

(b)   *Āśanīya* (आशनीय), lying stretch in rest. Meant only for Viṣṇu and Buddha.

There are several other categories of sub-classification, but that is a matter of details.

PŪRṆA (पूर्ण) OR COMPLETE IMAGES

These are the images carved fully in the round with all hands, legs, attributes, face, hair-do, etc. These are also called, 'Manifest Images'.

APŪRṆA (अपूर्ण) OR INCOMPLETE IMAGES

These images are not full, they are sculptured and often only up to the bust. These are sometimes

combined with another cognate form. These are also called 'Partially Manifest', even 'non-Manifest'. *Mukhaliṅga*, the so-called *trimūrti*, i.e; Sadāśiva image of Elephaṇṭā, *bāṇa-liṅgas* are the examples of this category.

ŚĀNTA (शांत) IMAGES OR IMAGES WITH PLEASING COUNTENANCE

These images portray serenity, spirituality and bliss, such as Viṣṇu in Nara-Nārāyaṇa panel of Deogarh.

AŚĀNTA (अशांत) IMAGES OR IMAGES ON AGITATED COUNTENANCE

These images show anger and are in aggressive mood and posture, such as those of Narasiṁha, Tripurāṁtaka and Mahiṣāsuramardinī.

Nava-grahas, Gorakhpur, U.P., 12th century AD

As mentioned earlier, there are various other classifications, for example, one can classify them on the basis of *rasas* (रस), nine or ten of them mentioned in the *Rasa Śātras*, but that is again a matter of details.

Mudrās

In Hindu Iconography, *mudrās* (मुद्रा) or body-poses supported by hand-poses and gestures created by fingers and palm, play a very important role simply because it is through them that the images speak all about themselves and the worshipper makes a perfect rapport with his or her *iṣṭa-devatā* (इष्ट-देवता) or the image of the god of his choice. A thing made of non-living matter, such as stone and metal, is afterall dead and mute but once it is given a recognisable form through specific marks of cognisance, man comprehends that. Give it a

combination of specific poses and attributes and it starts speaking which is understable to those who know the language of these poses and gestures of the whole body or *mudrās*. This language of poses and gestures, i.e., *mudrā-śāstra*, is to be learnt from the iconographic texts (canons, epigraphs, devotional poems, etc.) since it is embodied in them.

In the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the *Abhinaya Darpaṇa* we have a long list of these *mudrās*. R.K. Poduval has divided them into Vedic *mudrās* (45), *laukika mudrās* (64) and *tāntrika mudrās* (108). In total 217. According to *Tantraśāstra* Viṣṇu has 19 *mudrās* which here actually means attributes (*śaṅkha, cakra, gadā,* etc.), Śiva has 10 (*yoni, triśūla, liṅga,* etc.), Gaṇeśa has 7 (goad, elephant tooth, sweet-balls, etc.), Sarasvatī has 7 (rosary or *akṣamālā, vīṇā,* sacred book Veda, etc.), Sūrya has 1 (*padma* or lotus), Agni has 7 (flames, etc.), and so on. In the *tāntrika mudrās* or attributes we have *tilaka, jaṭā, bhasma,* etc. In the *Viṣṇudharmottara, nṛtya* or dance is also included in the list of *mudrās*. The *Samarāṅgaṇa Sūtradhāra* gives a list of 64 hand-poses, 6 poses of legs, and 9 poses of body.

HASTA-MUDRĀS (हस्त-मुद्रा) OR HAND POSES

Abhaya-mudrā (अभय-मुद्रा) : In it the right hand is raised to the shoulder with palm facing the viewer in a manner of protection. The idea conveyed here is that the deity protects you from all evils. 'Move fearlessly, I am here to protect you', is the message conveyed.

Varada-mudrā (वरद-मुद्रा) : In it the right hand is generally hanging down with palm facing the viewer. The idea conveyed is that the god gives boon to his devotee, the boon is that no harm could be done to him.

Abhaya-mudrā

Varada-mudrā

Jñāna-mudra

Jñāna-mudrā (ज्ञान-मुद्रा) : In it thumb and the middle finger of the right hand meet each other and touch the heart. The hand faces inwards. The idea conveyed is that the knowledge comes from within.

Vyākhyāna-mudrā (व्याख्यान-मुद्रा) : In it the thumb and the middle finger join but they face the viewer. It is also called *cin-mudrā* (चिन-मुद्रा), the idea conveyed is that the knowledge is given to others as was done by Buddha at Sārnāth and as is done while one delivers a lecture or makes a speech. In a cognate form the other hand is also raised and held against the chest almost touching the right palm. It is called *dharmacakra-mudrā* (धर्मचक्र-मुद्रा) for the same reason since it is in this pose that Buddha is said to have delivered his First Sermon.

Sometimes *jñāna* and *vyākhyāna mudrās* are mentioned together since the two are closely related like the two sides of the same coin.

Katyāvalambita-mudrā (कट्यावलंबित मुद्रा) : In it the hand, generally right, is half-raised at ease and kept on the hip. It is also called *kaṭi-hasta* (कटि-हस्त) (hip-hand) *mudrā*.

Namaskāra-mudrā (नमस्कार-मुद्रा) : In it the two palms facing and joining each other are raised to the chest. The idea conveyed is that of salute and reverance. It is normally used by the devotees and the *bhaktas*.

Gajahasta-mudrā (गज-हस्त-मुद्रा) : In it the hand is stretched like a staff or the trunk of an elephant, half-raised up to the chest and then taken across the body with palm facing downwards. It is generally seen in the Naṭarāja *mūrtis*. It is also called *lola-hasta* (लोल-हस्त) as well as *daṇḍa-hasta* (दण्ड-हस्त).

Dhyāna-mudrā (ध्यान-मुद्रा) : A posture of *yoga* (योग) or *samādhi* (समाधि), i.e., meditation. In this pose the

Vyākhyāna-mudrā

Katyāvalambita-mudrā
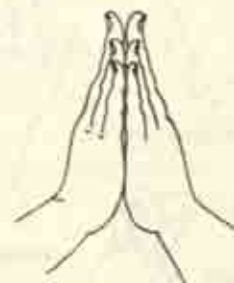
Namaskāra-mudrā

Gajahasta-mudrā
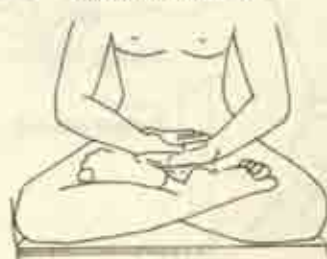
Dhyāna-mudrā

Harini (stag or deer)-
mudrā

Kartarī-mudrā

Kaṭaka-mudrā

itarka-mudrā

Vismaya-mudrā

Tarjanī-mudrā

Sūcī-mudrā

figure sits in the *padmāsana* (पद्मासन) and the palms of the two hands, one over the other, generally right on the left, sometimes *vice-versa* also, are kept at ease. In Chinese Turkestan, the palms are sometimes seen open with extended fingers. The palms face upwards.

Hariṇi (stag or deer) -mudrā (हरिणि-मुद्रा) : In it the form of the hands form the shape of the head of a stag, the thumb touching the middle and ring fingers, resembling ring or circle, the little and the index fingers are straight and held upwards.

Kartarī-mudrā (कर्तरी-मुद्रा) : Here the index and middle fingers are held straight upwards to form a 'V', to hold an emblem. The thumb and the ring fingers, however, touch each other and form a ring. The hand is kept at the level of the shoulder.

Kaṭaka-mudrā (कटक-मुद्रा) : It is also called *siṁhakarṇa-mudrā* (सिंहकर्ण-मुद्रा) and is meant to hold a flower, generally offered and inserted everyday. In this *mudrā* the tips of the fingers are loosely joined to the thumb to create a ring.

Vitarka-mudrā (वितर्क-मुद्रा) : *Vitarka* means argumentation. In this the thumb and the index finger join to form a ring while rest of the fingers are slightly twisted and face upwards.

Vismaya-mudrā (विस्मय-मुद्रा) : In this posture astonishment, coupled with the sense of enquiry, is indicated. The hand is raised up to the shoulder, the palm is turned inward, while the fingers are spread out in a circular manner.

Tarjanī-mudrā (तर्जनी-मुद्रा) : As the term suggests, in it the forefinger is held out straight while the others are closed. The idea conveyed is that the other person is scolded, admonished or warned to behave.

Sūcī-mudrā (सूची-मुद्रा) : It is exactly like the *tarjanī-mudrā* with the only difference that the raised

forefinger in this *mudrā* points to an object below.

Tarpaṇa-mudrā (तर्पण-मुद्रा) : In this *mudrā* the hand is raised up to the shoulder of the palm, open with joint fingers, face downwards. The idea conveyed is that of paying homage.

Kṣepaṇa-mudrā (क्षेपण-मुद्रा) : This is the posture of showing the pot of *amṛta* or nectar taken to achieve immortality. In it the two palms are joined, the forefingers stretch out, touching each other intimately, while the other fingers are locked strongly. The joined hands are then turned downwards pointing towards the vase of nectar.

Uttarabodhi-mudrā (उत्तरबोधि-मुद्रा) : The hands in this pose are held exactly like *kṣepaṇa* with the only difference that in this case the outstretched forefingers point upwards and the crossed thumbs are also seen by the viewer. It denotes perfection and goes with the Buddha.

Buddhaśramaṇa-mudrā (बुद्धश्रमण-मुद्रा) : As the term suggests, it is a pose meant mainly to denote the important Buddhist *śramaṇa*s or wandering mendicants and is found with Uṣṇīṣavijayā and Vasudhārā. In it, the hand is raised up to the level of the head, with palm facing up and fingers joined and extended.

Bhūmi-sparśa-mudrā (भूमि-स्पर्श-मुद्रा) : Literary, it means 'touching-the-earth pose'. It denotes that incident in the life of Buddha in which he called the Mother Earth as witness to his virtues due to which he remained unmoved even when the wicked Māra and his beautiful heavenly damsels, the daughters of Māra, tried to disturb his resolve when he was meditating under the *bodhi* tree. In this posture his right hand dangles in front of his right crossed leg and touches the lotus seat *padmāsana* or the earth

Tarpaṇa-mudrā
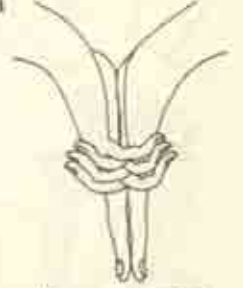
Kṣepaṇa-mudrā

Uttarabodhi-mudrā

Buddhaśramaṇa-mudrā

Bhūmisparśa-mudrā

Bhūmisparśa-mudrā

Bhūtaḍāmara-
mudrā
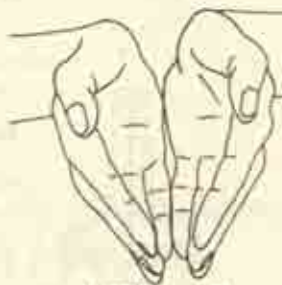
Añjali-mudrā

Vajrahuṁkāra-mudrā

with palm open and facing inward. Akṣobhaya, one of the Dhyānī Buddhas, is also shown in this *mudrā*.

Bhūtaḍāmara-mudrā (भूतडामर-मुद्रा) : In this two hands at the wrist cross each other at the level of the chest. The palms open outward with fingers twisted at different angles. It is meant to create awe and fear in the minds of the viewers. Vajrapāṇi is often shown in this *mudrā*.

Añjali-mudrā (अञ्जलि-मुद्रा) : This is the pose of offering flowers, grains, money, etc., to god. In it, with palm open and facing the viewer, the two hands join each other and are held at the chest or below it.

Vajrahuṁkāra-mudrā (वज्रहुंकार-मुद्रा) : As the term suggests, it has a *vajra* or thunderbolt in one hand and a *ghaṇṭā* or bell in the other to sound loudly. It symbolises the eternal Buddha. In it two hands cross

Dharmacakra-mudrā

Dhyāna-mudrā

Karaṇa-mudrā

Simhakarṇa-mudrā

Hariṇa-mudrā

Sūcī-mudrā

Hariṇa-mudrā

Dharmacakra-mudrā

each other from the wrist at the chest, in one hand a *vajra* is held and in the other a *ghaṇṭā*.

PĀDA MUDRĀS (पाद मुद्राएं)

In Hindu iconography the *pāda-mudrā* or the posture of legs is equally important if not more. In fact, it is the *pāda-mudrā* which makes the figures action-packed by infusing animation in them. The six *pāda-mudrās*, according to the *Samarāṅgaṇa Sūtradhāra*, are as follows:

Vaiṣṇavam (वैष्णवम्) : In it one of the legs is straight but the other one is slightly curved at an angle. The thighs are, however, a little bent. This is the *ādhidaivatya* form of Viṣṇu.

Sampādam (सम्पादम्) : In it the god stands erect with both the legs joined, hands straight and touching the sides with face fully towards the viewer. Here the weight is distributed equally on both legs. Brahmā is often shown in this posture.

Ālīḍham (आलीढम्) : In it the posture is that of an archer with right leg brought forward and left backwards. Arjuna is shown in this posture.

Pratyālīḍham (प्रत्यालीढम्) : It is the opposite of *ālīḍham* — the left leg is brought forward while the right leg is pushed backward.

Vaiśākham (वैशाखम्) : In it while one leg is thrown out the other remains stable. Viśākhadeva images are made in this style, hence this term.

Maṇḍalam (मण्डलम्) : In this case also one leg is outstretched and the other remains stable. Indra is shown in this posture.

Vaiṣṇavam

Ālīḍham

Udarabandha

Sampādam

Ardhaśam
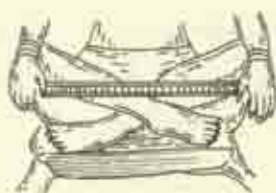
Pāda-paṭṭa or yoga-paṭṭa

ŚARĪRA MUDRĀS (शरीर मुद्राएं)

The body as a whole is also having its posture irrespective of the postures of the hands and legs. These are four in number :

Samabhaṅga (समभंग) : In it the whole body, sitting or standing, remains perpendicular to the horizontal axis of the earth — the body remains straight, divisible in two equal parts, with weight divided equally on its own axis. Jaina *tīrthaṅkaras* are often shown in this posture.

Abhaṅga (अभंग) : In it the body is slightly bent forward or backward, as the kings are shown in many Gupta gold coins, e.g., in the Candragupta-Kumāradevī type coin.

Tribhaṅga (त्रिभंग) : In it the vertical axis of the body is broken at two points to give three bends in the body — one is at the hip and the other is at the neck. 'Kṛṣṇa playing on flute' images are often shown in this pose. Vyāntara *devatās* are also shown likewise.

Atibhaṅga (अतिभंग) : In it the body of the god is bent at various places, sometimes even twisted. Śiva Naṭarāja is mostly shown in this posture.

In the *Viṣṇudharmottara* we have one more category of *śarīra-mudrā* which is based on the different views of the body. It is of nine types:

Ṛjvāgata (ऋज्वागत) : This is the front view of the body.

Anṛju (अनृजु) : This is the back view of the body.

Sācīkṛta śarīra (साचीकृत शरीर) : It is the bent position in profile.

Ardhavilocana (अर्द्धविलोचन) : It is the three quarter profile of body and full profile of the face.

Pārśvāgata (पार्श्वगत) : It is the side view proper.

Parivitta (परिवित्त) : In it the head and shoulder are bent and turned backwards.

Parivṛta (परिवृत) : In it the body is sharply turned back from the waist upwards.

Pṛṣṭhāgata (पृष्ठागत) : This is the back view with the upper part of the body partly visible in profile view.

Samanata (समनत) : This is the back view in sitting posture with body bent.

With the help of perspective these positions have been extended to twelve but that is a matter of details.

Besides these major postures, there are the following other postures of images :

(a) Flying figures, as the *gandharvas* (गंधर्व) are often shown.

(b) Figures with wings, often flying like Garuḍa (गरुड), but sometimes standing like the Śuṅga female figures on plaques from Kauśāmbī, Vaiśālī, etc., whose identification is doubtful.

(c) Figures in dance pose. According to Śaiva Āgamas there are 108 forms of dance *mudrās*. Śiva and Kṛṣṇa are often in dance pose.

(d) Figures shown lying and resting, *śayana*, as Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu (शेषशायी विष्णु).

Attributes or objects held in hands

WEAPONS OF WAR AND CHASE

Aṅkuśa (अंकुश)	=	Goad
Bāṇa (बाण)	=	Arrow
Cakra (चक्र)	=	Wheel

Aṅkuśa

Bāṇa

Cakra

Dhanuṣa

Gadā

Khadga

Khaṭvāṅga

Kheṭaka

Paraśu

Kheṭaka

Pāśa

Śakti

Triśūla

Vajra

Viśva-vajra

Dhanuṣa (धनुष)	=	Bow. Also called *pināka*.
Gadā (गदा)	=	Club
Khaḍga (खड्ग)	=	Sword
Khaṭvāṅga (खट्वांग)	=	Club of bone with skull(s)
Kheṭaka (खेटक)	=	Shield
Paraśu (परशु)	=	Battleaxe
Pāśa (पाश)	=	Noose
Śakti (शक्ति)	=	Spear
Śūla (शूल)	=	Javelin
Triśūla (त्रिशूल)	=	Trident
Vajra (वज्र)	=	Thunderbolt
Viśva-vajra (विश्ववज्र)	=	Double thunderbolt

HOUSEHOLD AND AGRICULTURAL OBJECTS AND IMPLEMENTS

Agni (अग्नि)	=	Fire
Darpaṇa (दर्पण)	=	Mirror
Hala (हल)	=	Plough
Kalaśa (कलश)	=	Vessel. Also *Amṛta-ghaṭa* (अमृत-घट)
Kātri (कात्रि)	=	Knife
Kamaṇḍalu (कमण्डलु)	=	Spouted vessel
Kartṛkā (कर्तृका)	=	Chopper
Mudgara (मुद्गर)	=	Wooden pestle with round flat end
Mūsala (मूसल)	=	Wooden pestle with pointed rounded end
Pātra (पात्र)	=	Bowl
Taṅka (टंक)	=	Chisel or stone cutter

Agni

Darpaṇa

Kalaśa

Gadā

Mūsala

Kamaṇḍalu

Hala

Pātra

Taṅka

Kartṛkā
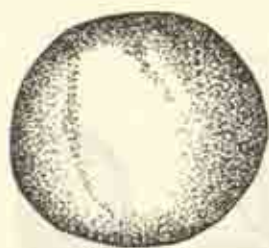
Bilvaphala

FRUITS

Bilvaphala (बिल्वफल)	=	Woodapple
Jambhāra (जंभार)	=	Lemon
Myrobalan (मीरोबलन)	=	A fruit
Śriphala (श्रीफल)	=	Coconut

FLOWERS

Nalinī (नलिनी)	=	Lily. Same as *kamalinī* (कमलिनी)
Padma (पद्म)	=	Indian Lotus with broad petals

Myrobalan

Jambhāra

Nalinī

Śriphala

Padma

Lily

ANIMAL WORLD

Aja (अज)	=	Goat
Kukkuṭa (कुक्कुट)	=	Cock
Mayūrapiccha (मयूरपिच्छ)	=	Peacock feather
Meṣa (मेष)	=	Ram
Mṛga (मृग)	=	Deer
Nakula (नकुल)	=	Mongoose
Śaśa (शश)	=	Rabbit
Śaṅkha (शंख)	=	Conch-shell

Aja

Kukkuṭa

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Ḍamaru (डमरू)	=	Small drum, hour-glass shaped
Ghaṇṭā (घंटा)	=	Bell
Karatāla (करताल)	=	Cymbals
Mṛdaṅgam (मृदंगम्)	=	Drum, tubular
Muralī (मुरली)	=	Flute. Same as *veṇu* (वेणु)
Vīṇā (वीणा)	=	String instrument held against the chest

Mayūrapiccha

Śaṅkha

Meṣa

Nakula

Muralī

Vīṇā

Ḍamaru

Ghaṇṭā

OTHERS

Akṣamālā (अक्षमाला)	=	Rosary
Ātapātra (अटपात्र)	=	Parasol
Caitya (चैत्य)	=	Stūpa
Caurī (चौरी)	=	Flywhisk
Dhvaja (ध्वज)	=	Flag
Kapāla (कपाल)	=	Skull Cup
Kaumudī (कौमुदी)	=	Half-moon
Khakkar (खक्कर)	=	Alms staff. If without rings on the top it is simply *daṇḍa* (दण्ड) or staff
Laḍḍū (लड्डू)	=	Sweet balls
Patra-kuṇḍala (पत्र-कुण्डल)	=	Disc or leaf-shaped ear-ring
Pustaka (पुस्तक)	=	Book
Śaṅkha-patra (शंख-पत्र)	=	A slice of conch-shell used as ear-ring
Śruka (श्रुक)	=	Sacrificial spoon. *śruva* (श्रुव) also
Triratna (त्रिरत्न)	=	Three jewels of Buddhist creed — symbolising Buddha, Dharma and Saṁgha. The term is used by the Jainas also in which context the three jewels stand for Right
Upavīta (उपवीत)	=	Deer skin

Akṣamālā

Ātapātra

Caitya

Caurī

Dhvaja

Kapāla

Khakkar

Śruka

Triratna

Śaṅkha-patra

Patra-kuṇḍala

Āsanas (आसन) or Sitting Postures

The gods and goddesses are often shown sitting on pedestals. There are various ways in which they have been shown sitting in sculpture and painting. This may be enumerated as follows:

Ardhaparyaṅka (अर्द्ध पर्यंक) : It is also called *mahārājalīlā* (महाराजलीला). In it one leg is folded at the hip, touching the thigh of the other, which hangs, with the heels slightly raised above the pedestal which is touched only by the toe or a few fingers.

Paryaṅka (पर्यंक) : In it the god sits in *padmāsana* (पद्मासन), i.e., both legs crossed with soles looking up.

Bhadra (भद्र) : Sitting with legs crossed as in *kūrmāsana*, with soles touching pedestal but holding the two toes with hands.

Dhyāna (ध्यान) : Like *paryaṅka* and *padmāsana*, sitting cross-legged with soles upwards, in meditation. Same as *yogāsana* (योगासन) and *padmāsana* (पद्मासन).

Kūrma (कूर्म) : In it the god sits cross-legged with the soles of the feet touching the pedestal.

Lalita (ललित) : It is also called *sukhāsana* (सुखासन) or *savya-lalitāsana* (सव्य-ललितासन). In it the god is generally shown sitting on a high pedestal with right leg folded and resting on a cushion or a small pedestal, while the left leg is hanging.

Vāma lalita (वाम ललित) : It is the opposite of *lalitāsana* in the sense that the left leg is folded and the right leg hangs down.

Pralambapāda (प्रलम्बपाद) : In it the god is shown sitting in the European style, i.e., with both legs hanging down.

Siṁha (सिंह) : In it the god is shown sitting in *kūrmāsana* with the palms, having stretched fingers,

Ardhaparyaṅka Āsana

Sukhāsana

Pralambapāda Āsana

Utkuṭika Āsana

kept on the thighs. The eyes remain in *yogāsana*, i.e., fixed on the tip of the nose, but mouth open.

Sopāśraya (सोपाश्रय) : In it the god is shown sitting with legs locked loosely and soles resting in front.

Svastika (स्वस्तिक) : It is the posture in which the god is sitting cross-legged with the toes touching the opposite knees.

Utkuṭika (उत्कुटिक) : It is the posture in which the god is shown sitting with the heels brought together and kept close to the bottom. The legs which are obviously bent inwards is kept in position with the help of a *yoga-paṭṭa* (योग-पट्ट) or a band of cloth. The back of the deity is slightly bent in comfort.

Vajra (वज्र) : It is the sitting pose in which the legs are crossed with the soles turned upwards, as in *padmāsana*, but with the specific provision that the hands are placed on the knees.

Vīra (वीर) : In it the god is shown sitting with the left leg resting on the right thigh.

Yoga (योग) : It is sitting in *padmāsana* with two hands on the lap, palms one over the other, both in upward position.

Āsanas or Pīṭhas ('आसन' अथवा 'पीठ') (Pedestals)

The term *āsana* is also used for the pedestals or seats (पीठ) on which gods sit or stand.

Anantāsana (अनन्तासन) : It is a triangular seat or stool and is used usually when one views sports.

Bhadrapīṭha (भद्रपीठ) : It is a seat, rectangular or circular in form.

Kūrmāsana (कूर्मासन) : The seat, oval in shape, is in the form of a tortoise.

Makarāsana (मकरासन) : It is a pedestal shaped like the crocodile.

Siṁhāsana (सिंहासन) : It is a rectangular seat with four legs shaped like lions. Often it has a back, making it a modern chair used for kings and gods alike.

Vimalāsana (विमलासन) : It is hexagonal in shape and is generally used as a low stool kept before the god for placing offerings.

Viśva-padmāsana (विश्व-पद्मासन) : *Padmāsana* is the seat of lotus while *viśva-padmāsana* is the seat of double lotus.

Yogāsana (योगासन) : The seat is octagonal and is used in the ritual of worship, sometimes for placing offerings.

Pretāsana (प्रेतासन) : It is rare. It is the *āsana* of a dead hardened corpse.

Śayana-pīṭha (शयन-पीठ) : It is a long seat, oval or rectangular, meant for deities shown in lying position.

Vāhanas (वाहन) or Mounts

A number of gods and goodesses are shown with their *vāhanas* or mounts, generally, one with one, but not always, and they identify the god or goodess very closely. These *vāhanas* are generally animals and birds but sometimes humans also.

Gaja (गज) : Elephant. It is the mount of Indra.

Gardabha (गर्दभ) : Donkey. This is the mount of Śītalā Devī.

Garuḍa (गरुड़) : Eagle. This is the mount of Brahmā and Sarasvatī.

Kīrtimukha

Female decoration

Haṁsa (हंस) : Swan. This also is the mount of Brahmā and Sarasvatī.

Kūrma (कूर्म) : Tortoise. This is the mount of Yamunā, a river goodess.

Makara (मकर) : Crocodile. This is the mount of Gaṅgā, another river goodess.

Mayūra (मयूर) : Peacock. It is the mount of Kārttikeya.

Mūṣaka (मूषक) : Rat. It is the mount of Gaṇeśa.

Nandī (नन्दी) *or Bṛṣabha* (वृषभ) : Bull. It is the mount of Śiva and Pārvatī and the identification mark, put on the pedestal, of Ṛṣabhanāth or Ādinatha, Jaina *tīrthaṅkara*. Nandī, of course, is the name of that bull which served the mount of Śiva and Pārvatī exclusively.

Siṁha (सिंह) : Lion. This is the mount of goddess Durgā.

Ulūka (उलूक) : Owl. This is the mount of Lakṣmī.

Mukuṭas or Hair-Do and Head-Gears
(मुकुट एवं केश-विन्यास)

In the *Mānasāra* twelve kinds of *mukuṭas* have been enumerated, and they also distinguish one category of gods from the other.

Alakacūḍa (अलकचूड) : Or simply *cūḍā*, hair-do of the *devīs*.

Dhammila (धम्मिल) : A particular hair-do for *devīs*.

Jaṭāmukuṭa (जटामुकुट) : Hair arranged in long braids and then tied around. Hair-do for Śiva and Brahmā. It has no *mukuṭa* as such, it is hair-do.

Karaṇḍa (करण्ड) : A tall conical head-gear or *mukuṭa*, often with a series of diminishing tiers of roundels used mostly in the south for *devas* and *devīs*, other

Karaṇḍa mukuṭa

than Vāsudeva and Nārāyaṇa.

Keśabandha (केशबन्ध) : It is a band that holds up the hair-do in position. Used by *devīs*.

Kirīṭa (किरीट) : It is also a conical head-gear but short and with tiered rounds. It is cap like, beautifully decorated; kings, Kubera, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, and other Vaiṣṇava *devas* and *devīs* are shown in it.

Kuntala (कुन्तल) : Locks of hair used by *devīs* in particular.

Maulimukuṭa (मौलिमुकुट) : It is a form of hair-do of *jaṭās*. In it the tubular braids of hair are tied in the form of a round sea-shell. Used by *devīs*.

Mukuṭa (मुकुट) : Head-gear, caps of various forms. Used by *devas*, kings and emperors.

Śirastraka (शिरस्त्रक) : Same as *śirastrāṇa* (शिरस्त्राण). It is a heavy but loosely tied turban twisted on the left. It is a kind of turban, popular from Śuṅga times. Used by *yakṣas*, *nāgas*, *vidyādharas*.

Ābhūṣaṇa (आभूषण) or Ornaments

Gods like human beings are shown wearing various kinds of ornaments (आभूषण); sometimes these are also helpful in identifying the deities.

KARṆĀBHŪṢAṆA (कर्णाभूषण) OR EAR-ORNAMENTS

These are also called *kuṇḍalas* (कुण्डल) and have been classified as follows:

Karṇāvalī (कर्णावली)	= Beaded ear-ring, used by Pārvatī
Karṇāpūra (कर्णापूर)	= Used by Sarasvatī
Karṇika (कर्णिका)	= Used by Kālī

Kirīṭa mukuṭa

Karṇāvalī

Karṇāvalī

Karṇāpūra

Maṇi-kuṇḍala (मणि-कुण्डल)	=	Jewelled ear-ring used by Lakṣmī
Patra-kuṇḍala (पत्र-कुण्डल)	=	Leaf ear-ring used by Umā
Śaṅkha-kuṇḍala (शंख-कुण्डल)	=	Conch-shell ear-ring used by Umā
Sarpa-kuṇḍala (सर्प-कुण्डल)	=	Serpent ear-ring used by Śiva

KANṬHĀBHŪṢAṆA (कण्ठाभूषण) OR NECK-ORNAMENTS

Vaiṣṇava deities and *devīs* are more fond of these ornaments than the others.

Graiveyaka (ग्रैवेयक) : Broad necklace covering the whole upper part of the chest. Used by Śaiva deities.

Hāra (हार) : Necklace.

Kaustubha (कौस्तुम) : It is a *maṇi* or gem recovered during *samudra-manthana* and worn on chest by Viṣṇu.

Niṣka (निष्क) : Necklace of coins.

Vaijayantī (वैजयन्ती) : Same as *vanamāla* (वनमाला) in form which is a long necklace, going up to the knees, and made of flowers. It is, however, studded with five sacred jewels worn by Viṣṇu as against *vanamāla* which has no jewel, only flowers.

VAKṢĀBHŪṢAṆA (वक्षाभूषण) OR CHEST ORNAMENTS

Some ornaments were particularly meant for the chest.

Channavīra (छन्नवीर) : Cross-belt. Basically it denotes valour. Used by Viṣṇu. Others also sport it.
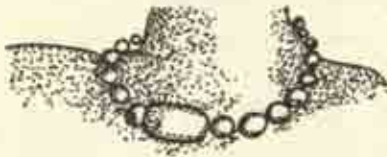
Kaustubha
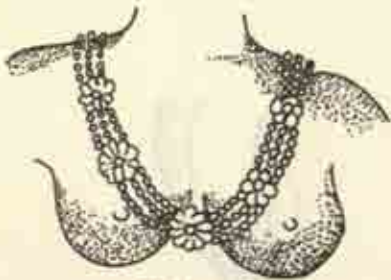
Vaijayantī
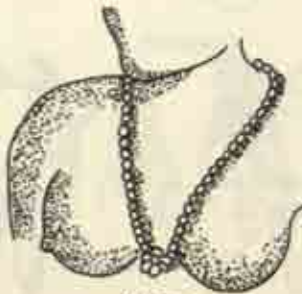
Niṣka

Kūcabandha (कूचबन्ध) : Breast-band. Used by *devīs*.

Śrīvatsa (श्रीवत्स) : A sacred stylised human form. On the chest of Viṣṇu. Jina's chest is also often bears this mark. Its form is like a stylised babe with hands and legs twisted. When stylised it is like the bud of a flower.

Kaṇṭhābhūṣaṇa

Yajñopavīta (यज्ञोपवीत) : Sacred thread. Single, goes across the chest.
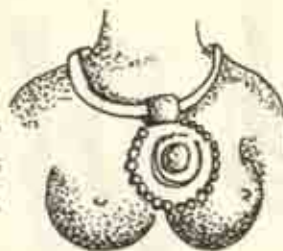
KAṬI-ĀBHŪṢAṆA (कटि-आभूषण) OR HIP ORNAMENTS

Ornaments on hip have been of special interest to sculptors.

Kāñcīdāma (काञ्चीदाम) : Strings with small bells.

Kaṭibandha (कटिबन्ध) : Any girdle.

Mekhalā (मेखला) : Girdle with strings.

Channavīra necklace

Girdle
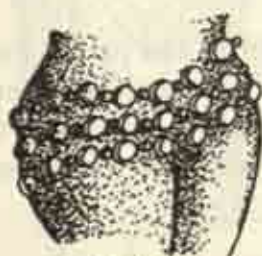
Mekhalā

Foot-ring

Muṇḍarī

Keyūra
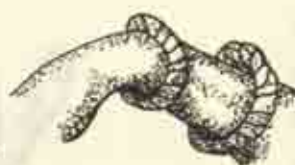
Kaṅkaṇa

Bangles
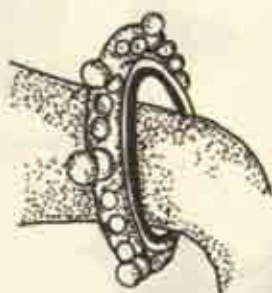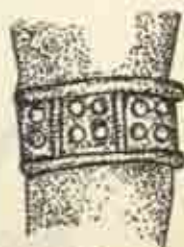
Aṅgada

Kaṅkaṇa

Valaya

PĀDA-ĀBHŪṢAṆA (पाद-आमूषण) OR FEET ORNAMENTS

Mañjarī (मञ्जरी) : Strings embedded with small bells.

Muṇḍarī (मुंदरी) : Ring worn in fingers.

BĀHU (बाहु) AND BHUJĀ ĀBHŪṢAṆA (भुजा-आमूषण) OR ARMLETS AND WRISTLETS

Aṅgada (अंगद) : Wrist ornaments.

Kaṅkaṇa (कंकण) : Wrist-band.

Keyūra (केयूर) : Armlets of various shapes.

Valaya (वलय) : Armlet.

NĀSA-ĀBHŪṢAṆA (नास-आमूषण) OR NOSE ORNAMENTS

The most popular nose ornament, called *vesara* (वेसर), was worn by Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Paridhāna (परिधान) or Dress

Gods are also known by their special dresses. These are of two kinds — *bandha* (बन्ध) and *vastra* (वस्त्र).

BANDHA (बन्ध)

Kaṭibandha (कटिबन्ध) : Belt of cloth or metal tied at the hips.

Udarabandha (उदरबन्ध) : The part of loincloth or a separate piece of cloth used as a belt round the belly. Used mainly by *yakṣas*. It is also called *ūrdhabandha* (ऊर्ध्वबन्ध) particularly when it is just above the belly.

VASTRA (वस्त्र)

Dhotī (धोती) : One piece of long cloth which covers the lower body fully and upper body partially.

Laṅgoṭī (लंगोटी) : A small piece of cloth worn by ascetics just to cover the private parts.

Uttarīya (उत्तरीय) : A piece of cloth that is separately used to cover the upper part of the body.

SPECIAL DRESS OF THE BUDDHAS
(बुद्ध के वस्त्र)

Antaravāsaka (अन्तर्वासक) : Innermost garment.

Uttarsaṅga (उत्तरसंग) : Garment covering the *antaravāsaka*.

Samghāṭī (संघाटी) : Cloak. Also called *cīvara* (चीवर).
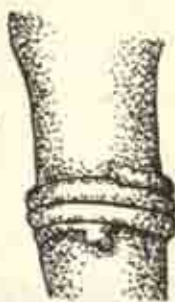
Keyūra

Keyūra

Keyūra

Valaya

Saṁghāṭī

Uttarasaṅga

Dress of Buddha, Gāndhāra, 1st century AD

Śiva marrying Pārvatī, ivory, Madurai, 17th century AD
(Courtesy: Victoria & Albert Museum, London)

Principles of Iconometry

THE Hindu Iconometry or Tālamāna (तालमान) has the grammar of proportionate measurements of different parts of the body of human beings as well as of gods (देवता) and devils (दानव); of birds and animals too. At one stage it became necessary since iconometric forms also laid down the rules of *āyudhas, ābhūṣaṇas, mukuṭas*, etc., and for a balanced composition of Paurāṇic and Āgamic scenes, this important aspect could not be left to the whims of every individual artist. True, it created unsurmountable constraints for the real artists since he could not now take initiative to do otherwise and use his talents freely, but at the same time the common sculptors now also produced objects which was in conformity with those made by the masters. In any case, in the mediaeval times, it became essential for the sculptors to know the proportions of different parts of the body in relation to each other, whether it was the body of a human being, or of a god, or of an animal, or of a bird, or of a devil or *rākṣasa* or a *daitya* or a *dānava* as laid down by the masters and codified in texts.

However, in order to allow some variety, texts have suggested variations also, and of various kinds. In one kind of variation, the canon writers made five kinds of human beings, each with one set of measurements. In another kind of variation, the height differed — eight units or nine units or ten units.

Parts of Human Body

12 AṄ
4 AṄ
12 AṄ
12 AṄ
12 AṄ
12 AṄ
12 AṄ
4 AṄ
12 AṄ
4 AṄ
108 AṄ

Navatāla Type
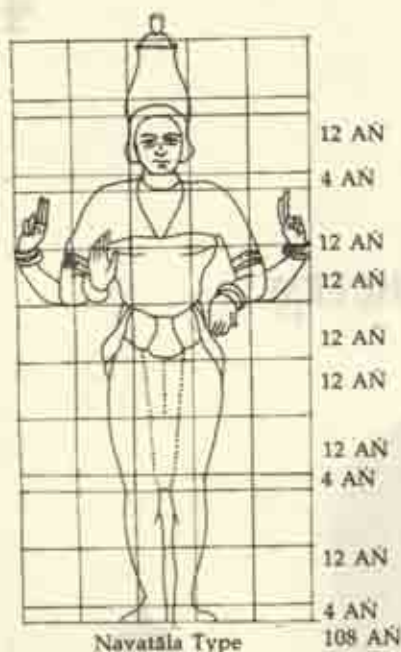
Tāla (ताल) as Main Unit of Measurement

In Hindu iconometry, one unit is called *tāla* (ताल). One *tāla* is one palm-length, i.e., when the palm is spread, the longest length is measured from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the middle finger. *Tāla* is also called *vitasti* (वितस्ति), *mukha* (मुख), *yama* (यम), *arka* (अर्क), *rāśi* (राशि), and *jagati* (जगति).

Aṅgula (अंगुल) as the First Unit of Measurement

This *tāla* unit is, however, further divided into *aṅgulas*, one *aṅgula* (अंगुल) is the thickness of the middle finger. One *tāla* has twelve *aṅgulas*.

Height and Girth Measurements

All measurements given in the texts are according to this *tāla* system. As noted earlier, Vārāhamihir says that there are five kinds of men — each has a measurement for the height and girth as follows:

Proportions of the Male Body

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
7½
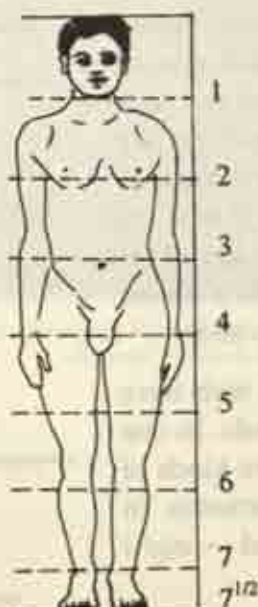
Tālamāna

Length of the Land
= 1 Tāla (12 Aṅgula)
Middle Digit of the Medius
= 1 Aṅgula

(i) *Haṁsa* (हंस) : 96 *aṅgulas*, height as well as girth.

(ii) *Śaśa* (शश) : 99 *aṅgulas*, height as well as girth.

(iii) *Rūcaka* (रूचक) : 102 *aṅgulas*, height as well as girth.

(iv) *Bhadra* (भद्र) : 105 *aṅgulas*, height as well as girth.

(v) *Mālavya* (मालव्य) : 108 *aṅgulas*, height as well as girth.

In this, the first, i.e., the *haṁsa* type is *daśatāla* type, while the last, the *mālavya* type is *navatāla* type, *daśa* is ten while *nava* is nine. The measurement is taken from the top of the head, up to hair-line or *keśa-rekhā*, to the bottom of the feet.
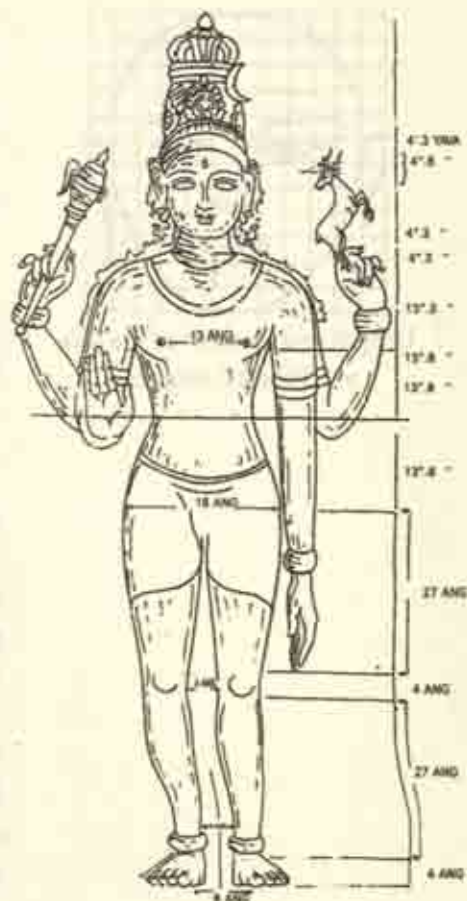
Measurements of Different Parts of the Body

The *Vaikhānasāgama* (वैखानसागम) of south India mentions six ways of the measurements of different parts of human body:

(i) *Māna* (मान) : Measurement of the length (height) of the body.

(ii) *Pramāṇa* (प्रमाण) : Breadth of the body.

(iii) *Unmāna* (उन्मान) : Thickness of the body.

(iv) *Parimāṇa* (परिमाण) : Girth or periphery of the body.

(v) *Upamāna* (उपमान) : Interspaces between different parts of the body, i.e., between one limb and the other.

(vi) *Lambamāna* (लम्बमान) : Total height, taken along the plumb lines.

Length and Breadth of the face
= 1 Tāla (12 Aṅgula)

The *Vṛhat-saṁhitā* has given the measurements of face, neck, etc., so that all remain proportionate and balanced.

It is interesting to note that the northern texts, except for the *Matsya Purāṇa*, do not use the term *tāla*, they use *aṅgula*. The southern ones use *tāla* frequently. *Matsya* mentions that while Rāma, Narasiṁha, and other great men and gods were of *daśatāla* measurement, *Vāmana Purāṇa* recommends *saptatāla* measurement.

Uttama, Madhyama and Adhama Measurements

The texts like *Vaikhānasāgama* also mention *uttama* (उत्तम), *madhyama* (मध्यम) and *adhama* (अधम) *daśatāla* measurements — the first is 124 *aṅgulas*, the second is 120 *aṅgulas*, and the third is 116 *aṅgulas*.

The *Vaikhānasāgama* lays down the following rules:

(i) Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva : *Uttama daśatāla* (उत्तम दशताल) (124 *aṅgulas*).

(ii) Śrī, Bhūdevī, Umā and Sarasvavtī : *Madhyama daśatāla* (मध्यम दशताल) (120 *aṅgulas*).

(iii) Indra, Lokapālas, Sūrya, Candra, 12 Ādityas, 11 Rudras, 8 Vasus, the Aśvins, Bhṛgu, Mārkaṇḍeya, Garuḍa, Śeṣa, Durgā, Guha (Kārttikeya) and seven ṛṣis : *Adhama daśatāla* (अधम दशताल) (116 *aṅgulas*).

(iv) Yakṣas (including Kubera), Navagrahas, other deities : *Navārdhatāla* (नवार्द्धताल) (114 *aṅgulas*).

(v) Rākṣasas, Asuras, Indras : *Navatāla* (नवताल) (108 *aṅgulas*).

(vi)   Men : *Aṣṭatāla* (अष्टताल) (96 *aṅgulas*).

(vii) Vaitāla : *Saptatāla* (सप्तताल) (84 *aṅgulas*).

(viii) Pretas : *Ṣaṭtāla* (षट्ताल) (72 *aṅgulas*).

(ix)   Hunchbacks : *Pañcatāla* (पञ्चताल) (60 *aṅgulas*).

(x)   Dwarfs : *Catuṣtāla* (चतुश्ताल) (48 *aṅgulas*).

(xi)   Bhūtas, Kinnaras : *Tritāla* (त्रिताल) (36 *aṅgulas*).

(xii) Kuṣmāṇḍas (Kumbhāṇḍas) : *Dvitāla* (द्विताल) (24 *aṅgulas*).

(xiii) Kabaṅdhas : *Ekatāla* (एकताल) (12 *aṅgulas*).

This text also suggests that each of these *tāla* measurements has three varieties, viz., *uttama*, *madhyama*, and *adhama*. Recently, P.O. Sompura has illustrated a set of other measurements for different categories of images which have come into use in modern times following some old traditions. Obviously, although the southern text *Vaikhānasāgama* (वैखानसागम), used by T.A.Gopinath Rao and others, as given above, has been the basis of iconometric studies, there have been many other traditions, one of which has been given by Sompura and which is being practised by his family of traditional architects, the *sthapatis* (स्थपति).

Some Textual Differences

It is interesting to note that the term *tāla* is comparatively of late usage; also, used more in southern system than in northern. As we know, neither the earlier portion of chapter 57 of *Vṛhat-saṁhitā*, nor Utpala's commentary on it explicitly refers to the word *tāla* or its equivalent(s). Kaśyapa is also silent about it. The *Pratimālakṣaṇam*, as edited by J.N. Banerjea, is based on early texts, but it is also silent about it. According to W.S. Hadaway, terms

like *daśatāla*, *navatāla*, etc., refer to the divisions of the 'whole used length of an image', e.g., in *daśatāla* an image, say meant to be 5 metre high, is divided in ten equal parts for the measurement of other parts of the body. But Banerjea has rightly observed that this is based on the present-day practice of the south Indian architects — *sthapatis* (स्थपति) and not on the authority of the old texts.

It is also interesting to note that many early texts tell us that the face should be of one *tāla* length and the same one *tāla* breadth, which, in effect, makes it round. But possibly from very early times, may be early Gupta, if not pre-Gupta, the south Indian or Dravidian system had long faces — 14 or 13½ *angulas* in length and 12 *angulas* in width. This conclusion is based on the fact that one canon-writer, Nagnajit, from whom Varāhamihir quotes some passages, was of early or pre-Gupta period, as has been shown by Dr. Priyabala Shah, who has edited the *Viṣṇudharmottara* in the Gaikwad Series, Baroda. According to the verse of Nagnajit, the length of the face of the image, with the hair on the head, should be 16 *angulas*.

<div align="center">

अस्यं सकेशनिचयम् षोडश
दैर्घ्येण नग्नणित प्रोक्तम्।।
— Ch.57,V.15

</div>

Significantly, some of the important south Indian Āgamas, such as *Karṇāgama* and *Vaikhānasāgama*, mention that the length of the face should be 14 or 13½ *angulas*.

All these details show that while the general practice in the north was of round faces of 12 *angulas* length and 12 *angulas* breadth, the practice in the south was of long faces of 13½ or 14 or 16 *angulas* in length and 12 *angulas* in width.

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Abhaya of Buddha, Mankunwar, U.P., Gupta, 5th century AD

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Art – India

Daśāvatāra: (from left) Kalki, Buddha, Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma, Rāma, Vāmana, Narasimha, Varāha, Kūrma, Matsya

Śiva Gaṇas, Kailāsa temple, Hoyasala