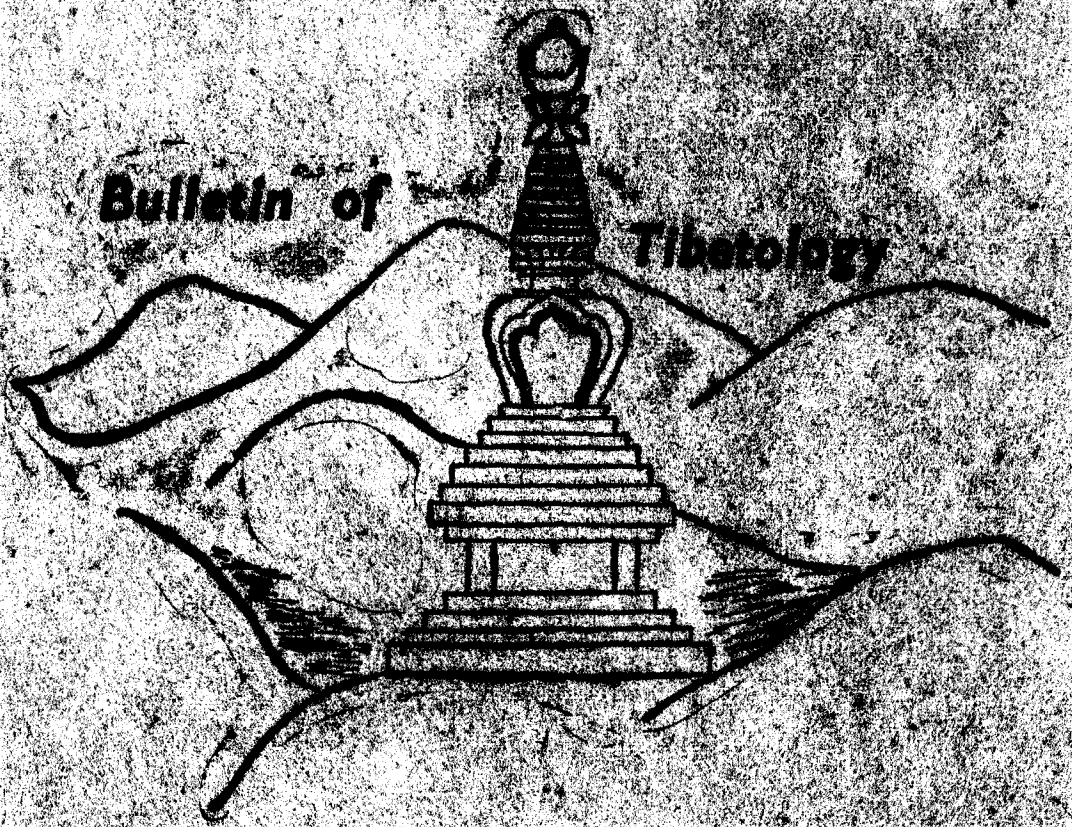


Bulletin of

Tibetology



VOL. XI.

No. 3

NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY  
GAGTOK, SIKKIM.

Sir Tashi Namgyal Commemoration Lectures  
1974



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6th NOVEMBER 1974

PRINTED BY THE MANAGER, SIKKIM GOVERNMENT PRESS  
AND PUBLISHED BY THE DIRECTOR, NAMGYAL  
INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY GANGTOK

**SIR TASHI NAMGYAL MEMORIAL LECTURES**

**1974**

**BUDDHIST ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN INDIA  
AND NEPAL**

**By**

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KATHMANDU (NEPAL)**

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## PREFACE

I am indeed grateful to the Chogyal of Sikkim and Dr. A.M. D' Rozario, the President and Director respectively of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, for having invited me to deliver the 1974 Sir Tashi Namgyal Memorial Lectures.

I have been a student of Indian art and architecture including Buddhist art during my long service with the Archaeological Survey of India and have also studied the art and architecture of Nepal during the last ten years and more intensively during the last two years as Archaeological Adviser to His Majesty's Government of Nepal. Nepal has been open to the artistic and religious influences flowing from her great southern neighbour India and her great northern neighbour Tibet and has had the genius to so catalyse these influence that her art and culture have become truly Nepali. Sikkim has likewise been open to the cultural, religious and artistic impacts coming from not only India and Tibet but also from Nepal and has similarly had the genius to assimilate them into her culture. The late Denjong Chogyal Chempo Tashi Namgyal, who was a distinguished scholar, artist and a versatile personality, was a brilliant exponent of Buddhist art and culture. Since these lectures are organised in the memory of Sir Tashi, I have chosen to speak on the Buddhist Art and Architecture in India and Nepal which have so much to do with the art of Sikkim.

I am indebted to the Archaeological Survey of India for supplying some of the photographs accompanying the text. The Archaeological Survey of India retain their copyright.

KRISHNA DEVA.

## BUDDHIST ART IN INDIA

### Mauryan Art

The animal capitals of the Mauryan pillars mark the beginning of Buddhist art in India. The pillars are tapering monolithic shafts with an inverted lotus capital, crowned by an animal sculpture resting on an abacus, and are made of Chunar sandstone with a highly lustrous polish. The animal capitals are characterised by high finish, triumphant execution and symbolical significance. The best examples are provided by the Lion capital from Sarnath and the Bull and Lion capitals from Rampurwa. The Rampurwa Bull is outstanding for its quality of naturalism and nervous tension indicated by pent-up volumes following the anatomical details. The lion sculptures on the Mauryan capitals are more stylised than the figure of Rampurwa Bull, though they are more realistic as suggested by the tense muscles and the swelling veins. The capitals at Rampurwa, Vaishali and Lauriya-Nandangarh have each a single lion figure seated on the haunches in the conventional manner; and of all these the Rampurwa lion displays the most powerful modelling and developed feeling for form.

The quadripartite Lion capital from Sarnath, adopted as the national crest of India, is the best finished and most famous among the animal capitals, though its treatment is generally similar to the single lion figures from Rampurwa and Lauriya-Nandangarh. But it is its abacus, carved with a galloping horse, a striding elephant, a walking bull and a prancing lion which excels in modelling and feeling for form and expression the crowning figures of the four addorsed lions. Compared to the animal figures on the abacus, the lion figures are more stylised and conventional and lack freshness. Although some influence from the Achaemenid art is not ruled out, the attribution of the Sarnath Lion capital to Persepolitan inspiration rests on very slender grounds. The Mauryan capital is entirely Indian in conception and spirit and is imbued with a lively naturalism and fulness of form which is in sharp contrast with the dry aridity of the Persian art tradition.

The affinity of the Mauryan pillar with the Persepolitan column is often stressed and the former is sometimes mistaken as imitated or adapted from the latter. The Persepolitan column, however, is different from the Mauryan one conceptually, functionally as well as stylistically. While the Persepolitan is made up of smaller aggregates and is intended as a true pillar to bear the weight of a superstructure, the Mauryan one is a monolithic animal standard and stands independently as a grand sculpture with no architectural function at all. The Mauryan pillar

is a plain tapering shaft with an inverted lotus capital supporting an animal sculpture, while the Persepolitan column is decorated with flutings and the bell-member forms its basal component. Thus the two are disparate not only in function and design but also in tradition and basic concept. The affinities between the two of form, finish and gloss are really due to the 'inheritance of common artistic traditions' in the words of Coomaraswamy, rather than to direct influence or adaption.

A rock-cut sculpture depicting the forepart of an elephant at Dhauti in close proximity to the Asokan rock-edicts is imbued with quiet dynamism and shows a remarkable delineation of bulky volume and living flesh. This sculpture is in the indigenous tradition and is superior aesthetically to the animal standards which represent the Mauryan court-art. The only animal standard which approaches it in aesthetic excellence is the Rampurwa Bull, and these two, constituting the finest specimens of the Mauryan art, carry on the indigenous plastic tradition initiated by the Bull seal of Harappa and convincingly bring out the nobility and the quiet dignity of the great animals, ancient known as the *maha-ajaneya-pasus*.

The plastic tradition of the Yaksha and Yakshi figures representing the indigenous folk-cult also flourished during the Mauryan period and continued late into the post-Mauryan times. The earliest stage which may have had its beginning in the pre-Mauryan epoch is represented by the Parkham Yaksha characterised by archaic stolidity, massive frontality and a flattened treatment with no co-ordination of parts. The Patna and Besnagar Yakshas and Yakshis and similar figures found in many parts of north and central India share the burlesque and the earth-bound weight with the Parkham Yaksha but show greater roundness of features and less harsh linear treatment, approximating in modelling and plasticity the Yaksha figures on the Sanchi gateways. The culmination is marked by the Didarganj Yakshi; which with its fully rounded form and fluid lines, its lively and sensitive modelling of limbs, its graceful stance and the almost sensuous touch of the soft, warm flesh anticipates the voluptuous Yakshi forms on the Mathura railing.

## SUNGA AND SATAVAHANA ART

The post-Mauryan art which flourished during the Sunga and Andhra-Satavahana periods, was mainly narrative and relished telling the stories sacred to Buddhism in bas-reliefs with a simple and direct diction. This art was truly national and belonged to the people as opposed to the Mauryan art which was a court art and was eclectic and elitist and more sophisticated. The method of narration was synoptic and uni-local or topographical and the time-element was inconsequential. That which existed was real to the artist and the main *dramatis personae*



appeared as many times as required by the story. The figures in the reliefs were shown above and not behind each other and were generally depicted in entirety and seldom as partly hidden. Again, the problems of the perspective or depth and the third dimension were tackled in a peculiar way. Things were shown as large or small not according to their nearness or distance as the optical impression would demand but according to their importance in the story. The figures were shown not in depth but on the surface and the relief looked like a tray packed with forms, presenting a jumbled appearance.

This art belonged to the Hinayana phase of Buddhism when the presence of Buddha was indicated symbolically by means of foot-prints, empty throne, *bodhi*-tree, *dharma-chakra* or *stupa*, etc. This art also effected a synthesis between the higher religion and the folk religion as represented by the popular divinities like the Yakshas, *nagas* and the *vrikshakas*, etc.

The earliest phase of the Sunga art is represented by the reliefs on the ground balustrade of Stupa 2 at Sanchi, which are executed in low and flat relief and look like sketched linear patterns. The next phase is provided by the reliefs on the gateways and the ground balustrade of the Bharhut Stupa which are accompanied by inscribed labels in Brahmi. The gateway posts are carved with figures of Yakshas, Yakshis and other semi-divine beings while the balustrade reliefs depict Jataka stories and scenes from the life of the Buddha in oblong, square, round and semi-round panels. The coping stone of the balustrade shows the flowing creeper design which binds together the dispersed reliefs in its endless meandering waves. A flowing linear rhythm inspired by vegetation enlivens majority of the figures and reliefs at Bharhut. This art, however, is primitive and is marked by rigid frontality and obsession for details which is carried to such extremes that an impression of the whole is difficult to get. Irrespective of anatomical accuracy, the folded hands and feet here are turned sideways and shown in their broadest parts.

The carvings on the Bodhgaya railings are in the Bharhut style but show an advance in technique and plastic effect. There is a more convincing grouping and the narrative reliefs are freed from unnecessary details. As a result, the compositions are less crowded and the figures move more naturally and freely and have softer contours and better animation. An advance is registered also in the representation of depth or the third dimension.

The carvings on the four gateways of the Great Stupa at Sanchi, executed around 50 B.C., mark the culmination of the Sunga-Satavahana art. The horizontal and vertical arrangement of the reliefs unfolds its fullest possibilities at Sanchi and leads to variegated and bewildering

compositions of epic grandeur and quality. There is an increase in the depth of the relief and the figures are presented at various angles with an amazing variety of attitudes and poses. The forms appear to burst forth from the stone and spread over the surface in endless masses producing dramatic compositions surging with life to the point of boisterous frenzy. The scenes of the War of the Relics best illustrate the dramatic quality of the reliefs. The human figures remain squat and sturdy but the contours are softer and mellifluous and the body appears as a lively, integrated union of single parts with gliding sinuousness and sure movement. The guardian figures and the Yaksha, surging with pent-up energies, move freely and the Yakshi-dryads with full curves and charming female contours stretch their limbs with easy grace. Equipped with an advanced technique and plastic vision, the Sanchi reliefs depict the contemporary life of India in all its varied aspects and moods. There is a faithful and loving portrayal of the aristocratic life at the court, the exciting life in the town, the modest life of the country side and the luxuriant vegetation of the forest and against such a varied background the edifying Buddhist stories are narrated in the simplest and most direct language. Although the artists are actuated by religious impulse, their main concern is the depiction of the worldly life and existence in its various manifestations. This early Indian art is a popular art, free alike from artificiality and idealism and is characterised by simple naturalism and transparent sincerity with a wide and universal appeal.

### VENGI SCHOOL

The Buddhist art of the Vengi School which started with Amaravati and Jaggayyapeta in *circa* 2nd century B.C. developed into a strong regional school with prolific and sustained artistic activity that reaches its height in the 2nd century A.D. at centres like Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Alluru, Gumadidurru and Goli. Coomaraswamy has aptly described the Vengi art as "the most voluptuous and delicate flower of Indian sculpture". Delicate and alluring female forms with full busts, heavy hips and serpentine suppleness are seen here to jostle one another. Delicately modelled bodies exhibit heavy heaving torsos supported on legs of unearthly slenderness. Human figure in this art replaces the plant and appears in all elasticity, exuberance and pliability. Scene after scene teems with tall and slender figures with sturdy torsos, in all poses and attitudes, sitting, standing, bending, flying, dancing and hovering with an amazing elasticity of movement. Although the purpose of this art is to narrate the legends of Buddhism in exhaustive details, "religion is being used as a pretext for singing a wildly rapturous paean of worldly life!" It is indeed the most voluptuous art. But compared to the unabashed lewdness of Mathura, the sensuousness of Amaravati seems to be more refined and restrained. The Vengi art expresses innocent joy of existence and love of life. Here

we have the wildest transports of joy alternating with violent outbursts of passion. Everything is dramatic, agitated and dynamic, amounting almost to boisterous frenzy. "It appears that Indian art had taken leave of this world with a tumultuous feast before deliberately entering the cold fields of spirituality".

Technically, each composition is knit together by rhythmic lines that portray the movements and directions of the figures. The movements slide from figure to figure and bind together the whole scene. The figures often entwine and interlace in spiral or parabolic movements. There is also a much greater mastery over depth and perspective and a greater command over rendering psychological states, ranging from passionate and ecstatic outbursts to benign and tender moods.

### Mathura Art

Although Mathura was a reputed centre of art right from the 2nd century B.C. onwards, its yield was most prolific under the rule of the Kushanas during the first two centuries of the Christian era. The greatest contribution of Mathura art was the evolution of the cult image which synchronised with the introduction of the image of the Buddha. With the anthropomorphic conception of the divinity, there was a revolutionary change in the artist's outlook of the importance of the human figure and its relation to the surrounding. The earlier concept of continuous narration in bas-reliefs is now discouraged and there emerges the image stela with supreme importance given to the central divinity attended by subsidiary figures as determined by iconographic formulations. The divine image is fashioned in the form of the familiar Yaksha primitive. The earliest Buddha figure, called Bodhisattva out of deference to the old scruples against the human representation of the Great Teacher, is fashioned in the form of the colossal Yaksha and is likewise characterised by massive burliness and earth-bound volume. The known early images of the Buddha, including some dated in year 2 and year 3 of Kanishka, are all executed in the likeness of the primitive Yakshas and stand with their burly massive form firmly planted on the pedestal, with their right hand raised shoulder-high in the *abhaya-mudra* and the clenched left hand kept on the waist holding the gathered ends of the *sanghati*. The entire gesture and the features including the broad shoulders and the sturdy masculine torso are suggestive of physical strength and energy. Thus the early Buddha image expresses only the mundane or physical aspect as that of a world conqueror and the open eyes and the smiling countenance do not suggest any spiritual introspection which was yet to come. In course of time the earthy massive form gets relaxed and grows supple with a gliding linear contour as expressed through both standing and seated Buddha images which undergo gradual iconographic and

artistic refinement. But despite these developments the Kushana Buddha figures remain earth-bound with no suggestion of supra-physical existence.

Related to the old Yakshi and *vrikthakas* formally and iconographically, the female figures from Mathura including those depicted on the Buddhist railings, have attained greater freedom of movement with increased plasticity and refinement of physical mass. The increased plasticity lead to alluring female forms of which the aim is frankly sensual and suggestively erotic.

### **Gandhara Art**

The Gandhara area to the north-west of India was a melting pot of foreign settlements ever since the 2nd century B.C. and nourished a hybrid culture that found expression in an eclectic School of art, prolific in output and contemporary with the Kushana art of Mathura. Its principal patrons were the Sakas and the Kushanas. Its technique was borrowed from Hellenistic standards as modified by elements such as Iranian and Scythian, while its themes were Indian and almost exclusively Buddhist.

The Gandhara School also produced the Buddha image, but the Gandhara Buddha plastically belong to an extraneous and hybrid art-tradition which follows the Indian tradition only in regard to iconography. The Mathura Buddha lacked spiritual expression, so did the Gandhara one. But the former, based on indigenous standard plastically and iconographically, expressed an Indian conception and was true to Indian ideals psychologically as well as culturally. The Gandhara figures and reliefs lacked spontaneity or emotional character that distinguished the art of Bharhut, Sanchi, Amaravati and Mathura. The Gandhara art was really an improvised art an exotic plant which had no root in the Indian soil. This eclectic art is an eastward expansion of Hellenism, as transformed by strong Iranian and Scythian elements and applied to Indian subjects. The Gandhara art is 'Indian and colonial from the Hellenistic point of view, and is Hellenistic and colonial from the Indian point of view'.

### **Gupta art**

The Gupta period witnessed the fulfilment and culmination of the earlier trends of the Indian art. Art under the Guptas attained a maturity and poise and an unsurpassed naturalness and felicity of expression. Its plasticity was derived from Mathura and its elegance from Amaravati, but the two underwent a transformation informed by a heightened aesthetic vision and intellectual consciousness. A

closer synthesis is established now between art and thought and between the external form and the inner spirit and art emerges as the conscious vehicle of the intellectual and spiritual urge.

The human figure becomes now the pivot of art and bends and sways, absorbing the rhythm of the creeper and the lotus stalk. The human frame of the divine image combines a disciplined body with a conquered mind. The human figure is elevated to a state of subtile spiritual experience and the body flows with the sap of life ever flowing within and the face is lit up with this experience and the eyes with dropping eye-lids now look within where every thing is at rest. Once this physical and mental discipline is achieved, there is no scope for a massive body or a nervous tension nor for elaborate drapery or jewellery which are indeed used sparingly with an eye on the plastic sensitiveness. While the earlier art was extrovert and concerned with mundane existence, this art is introvert and aims at visualising the superman endowed with the highest wisdom (*anuttara-jnana*) which is declared as life's supreme goal.

This was indeed a classical art marked by refinement or elegance, simplicity of expression and a dominant spiritual purpose. The artist now had achieved a mastery of technique and dealt with individual figures as well as complicated myths and narrative legends with equal ease and confidence. This art was characterised by a sensitively modelled and rarified body form and a serenity of expression which marks not only figures of gods but also of mortals. The sensitivity and luminosity of this art are best illustrated by the Buddha images. The Preaching Buddha from Sarnath with its spiritual expression, tranquil smile and serene contemplative mood indeed represents the highest triumph of Indian art.

## BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE IN INDIA

The places connected with the four principal events of Buddha's life, viz. his birth, enlightenment, first preaching and decease, which took place respectively at Lumbini, Bodh-Gaya, Sarnath and Kasia, were looked upon with greatest sanctity. To these were added four other places also intimately associated with his life, viz. Sravasti, Sankasya, Rajagriha and Vaisali, which together with the first four were regarded as the eight holy places (*ashtamahasthanas*), celebrated alike in Buddhist lore as well as art. At Sravasti and Sankasya (modern Sankisa, District Farrukhabad) Buddha is believed to have performed great feats of miracles. At Rajagriha the Master tamed the mad elephant which had been let loose on him by his cousin Devadatta. Vaisali witnessed the memorable event of the offer of honey to the Master by the monkeys. There were several other places in the present States of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, such as Nalanda and Kausambi which were also hallowed by Buddha's visits during his ministry extending over nearly half a century. It is but natural that those places should be adorned by devout Buddhists with shrines, *stupas* and monasteries. Further, according to tradition king Asoka (273-32 B.C.) opened the eight out of the ten original *stupas* enshrining the body-relics of the Master and distributed them into eightyfour thousand *stupas*, which he is said to have erected throughout the length and breadth of his vast empire. This explains why sites like Sanchi and Taxila (Pakistan) have such fine Buddhist monuments, even though they were not visited by Buddha.

The earliest Buddhist monuments in India are attributable to Asoka (273-32 B.C.) who exerted his energies and the resources of his empire to the propagation of Buddhism. He is credited with the authorship of three principal types of monuments, viz., (1) pillars, (2) *stupas*, and (3) rock-cut caves, of which the first two have Buddhist associations. Asoka set up at least thirty pillars including ten inscribed with his edicts on sites which are scattered in Districts Champaran and Muzaffarpur of north Bihar, in the Nepal Tarai, at Sarnath near Varanasi and Kausambi near Allahabad, in the Meerut and Ambala Districts and at Sanchi in central India. Made of Chunar sandstone and bearing a highly lustrous polish, the pillars are tapering monolithic shafts, between 10 and 15 m. high, with an ornamental capital, surmounted by powerful animal-sculpture of symbolical significance. Distinguished by dignity, exquisite finish and monumental quality, these free-standing columns probably formed part of larger architectural schemes on sites like Sanchi and Sarnath. The best-preserved pillar is that at Lauriya-Nandangarh (District Champaran), which is complete with the Asokan edicts and a capital crowned by a stately figure of lion.

## 1. STUPA—ARCHITECTURE

The *stupa* originated as a piled-up burial-tumulus and constituted the most characteristic monument of Buddhist religion, although *stupas* of other faiths are not unknown. Symbolizing the decease (*parinirvana*) of Buddha, the *stupa* came to be looked upon as an object of Buddhist cult-worship by the time of Asoka, who, as stated above, is believed to have erected an enormous number of *stupas* over Buddha's relics which had originally been enshrined in eight or ten monuments. *Stupas* were of three types and were built either to enshrine the body-relics (*saririka*) or the personal effects (*paribhogika*) of Buddha and Buddhist saints or to commemorate spots and events of religious significance (*uddesika*).

The *stupa* was a solid structural dome (*anda*), usually raised on one or more terraces and surmounted by a railed pavilion (*harmika*) from which rose the shaft of the crowning umbrella (*chhatra*). The *stupas* had one or more circumambulatory passages (*pradakshina-patha*) which were usually enclosed by railing (*vedika*). The earlier *stupas* were hemispherical in shape with a low base, while the later ones assumed an increasingly cylindrical form with a well-developed drum. In the later examples, which tended to be more ornate, the base-terraces and the umbrellas were multiplied.

The only brick *stupa* of a probable pre-Asokan date is that at Piprahwa in Basti District of Uttar Pradesh, which yielded among its relics a vase, inscribed in characters believed to be pre-Asokan, and a figure in gold relief, representing the mother-goddess in a frontal pose. The *stupa*, built of large bricks, has a diameter of 116 ft. and an extant height of 21 ft. indicating a low ratio of height to diameter, which is a sign of antiquity. According to the inscription on the relic-casket, the relics found in the *stupa* pertained to Lord Buddha himself.

Lauriya (District Champaran) contains, besides an inscribed Asokan pillar, fifteen *stupa*-mounds. Four of them were excavated in 1904-07 and as two of them yielded a deposit of burnt bones with charcoal and a gold leaf with a mother-goddess figure (akin to the one from Piprahwa), they were regarded by the excavator to be Vedic burial tumuli. As a result of their re-examination in 1935-37 they were definitely recognized to be *stupas* of mud or mud-bricks with baked-brick revetments (in two cases with actual brick-lining) and were regarded as roughly contemporary with the Piprahwa *stupa* on account of the analogous find of the mother-goddess figure on the gold leaf.

Nandangarh, about 2 km. from the Asokan pillar, represents a fortified habitation-site. At one end of the site was excavated a large brick-*stupa* reared up on multiple polygonal terraces with numerous

re-entrant angles. This edifice, of the early centuries A.D., is the earliest example of a form of terraced *stupa* which culminated in the celebrated monuments of Paharpur in Bangladesh and Borobudur in Java, both dating from *circa* A.D. 800.

Vaisali (District Muzaffarpur), which was a favourite resort of Buddha and one of the eight holy places of Buddhism has an uninscribed Mauryan pillar, besides extensive remains of ancient shrines, *stupas* and habitations including a fortified citadel (*garh*). A *stupa* was excavated here by Dr. A.S. Altekar in 1957-58. It was seen to have started as a mud *stupa* of unpretentious size (7.5m. in diameter) in the pre-Mauryan age and was enlarged four times, the first enlargement being executed in neat brickwork during the Mauryan times. From the find of a relic-casket within an ancient breach inside the core of the *stupa*, the excavator surmised that this was the *stupa* built by the Lichchhavis over their share of the body-relics of Lord Buddha, which, according to tradition, were opened up by Asoka for redistribution of the relic-contents.

Sanchi was a flourishing Buddhist settlement teeming with temples, monasteries and *stupas*, dating from the Mauryan to the medieval ages. The original nucleus of Stupa 1, Plate I



STUPA 1 SANCHI Plate I



attributed to Asoka, was a low brick structure, of almost half the diameter of the present *stupa*, in the core of which it is now concealed. This structure, built of large bricks, was much damaged when excavated. Presumably it was hemispherical in shape with raised terrace at the base, enclosed by a wooden railing, and a stone umbrella at the summit, of which pieces were recovered from the site. The only other structure which went with this was the Asokan pillar which stands at its original place near the southern gateway. About a century later, the original brick *stupa* was enveloped in a stone casing and was enlarged to its present dimensions (diam. over 120 ft., Ht. 54 ft.) to form an almost hemispherical dome, truncated near the top. At the same time a lofty terrace, approached by a double flight of steps on the southern side, was built against its base to serve as a processional path. The masonry of the dome and terrace was originally covered with plaster decorated with colour. At the summit of the *stupa* was built a diminutive square railing *harmika* (*harmika*) with a pedestal, from which rose the shaft of the triple umbrella that crowned the superstructure. Another paved processional path was provided on the ground-level which was enclosed by a plain and massive stone-balustrade. This balustrade, consisting of tenoned uprights, triple cross-bars of a lenticular section and copings with scarf-joints, was obviously copied from wooden prototype and formed the gift of individual donors.

It was in the latter half of the first century B.C. that the four lavishly-carved gateways were erected, one in each cardinal direction, as magnificent entrances to this imposing monument. These were manifestly conceived in wood and executed in stone, and each of them, over 10 m. high, was alike in design and consisted of two square uprights, surmounted by capitals, which in their turn supported three curved architraves with a row of sculptured balusters in between. Each of them was carved on both faces with the *Jataka* tales, scenes from the life of Buddha and miscellaneous motifs, the entire composition being significantly crowned by the symbol of *dharmachakra*.

Remains of Mauryan brick *stupa* of a unique type have been recovered at Bairat (Jaipur District). Of the *stupa* only bits of foundation have survived together with pieces of a stone umbrella and a bowl, bearing the distinctive Mauryan polish, the former being probably the crowning member of the *stupa*. The main interest of the monument lies in the enclosing circular shrine (diam. 27 ft.) which was made of lime-plastered panels of brickwork alternating with twenty six octagonal pillars of wood. The shrine was entered from the east through a small portico, supported on two wooden pillars and was surrounded by a 7 ft. wide circular processional path with an opening on the east, the whole being enclosed at a later date within a rectangular compound

containing an open space for assembly in front of the entrance. This *stupa*-shrine resembles on plan and in design a circular *chaitya*-cave in the Tulaja-lena group at Junnar.

Sarnath, where Buddha first preached the Law, was among the four holiest places of Buddhism and developed as one of the greatest Buddhist establishments of India. Excavation at the site conducted between 1904 and 1928 uncovered numerous temples, *stupa* and monasteries, the earliest attributable to the time of Asoka. The nucleus of the brick-built Dharmarajika Stupa at Sarnath, comprising a hemispherical dome (diam. 60 ft.) with a low terrace at the base, was probably built by Asoka. A monolithic railing bearing a Mauryan inscription and polish, found near the *stupa*, presumably formed its *harmika*. The inscribed Asokan pillar with the celebrated Lion-capital, which was recovered not far from the *stupa*, appears to have formed part of its architectural scheme. The original *stupa* was encased in six successive ones, each larger than the other, which range in date from the second to twelfth century A.D.

Of the Bharhut stupa in Central India the surviving remains mainly consist of portions of the enclosing stone railing, dating from c. 125 B.C., and the eastern gateway, erected fifty years later. These are of the same design as the Sanchi railings and gateways and are richly carved with bas-reliefs. The *stupa*, of which all traces have now disappeared, was constructed of plastered brickwork. It had a diameter of 67 feet and contained recesses for lamps at the base.

Pauni in District Bhandara (Maharashtra) has recently revealed the remains of two *stupas* built during the pre-Christian period. One of the *stupas*, built of bricks with an original diameter of 38.20 m. and enclosed by wooden railings, was enlarged by 3.20 m. in diameter. In a subsequent reconstruction which was effected during the 2nd century B.C. the wooden posts were replaced by pillars and an outer railing with cardinal placed gateways in stone. Some of the railing pillars are inscribed and carved with figures of *yakshas*, *yakshis*, *nagas* and symbolical and decorative designs in the typical Sunga style. The other *stupa* built partly of baked and partly of mud-bricks and subsequently strengthened by a brick-revetment, measured 41.6 m. in diameter and was a plain structure, though it yielded in the centre a painted reliquary pot containing bone-fragments within a *kunda* surmounted by a wooden post. The latter *stupa* is assignable to circa 1st century B.C.-A.D.

Between the first century B.C. and third century A.D. were built numerous *stupas* along the Krishna in South-east India on sites including Amaravati and Nagarjunkonda in Guntur District and Jaggayyapeta, Ghantasala, Gudivada and Bhattiprolu in Krishna District. These

*stupas* consisted of brick-built hemispherical domes on a low base and were characterized by rectangular projections from the base of the dome at the four cardinal points, the projections supporting a row of five ornamental pillars (*ayaka-khambhas*). The earlier examples at Bhattiprolu and Gudivada were of solid brickwork, while those at Amaravati and Ghantasala had in the interior radiating brick walls with a hub and spokes, the spaces between the walls being filled with earth-packing, before the outer brick casing was constructed. The *stupas* were finished with plaster and most of the larger ones were embellished at the base with sculptured marble panels, the example at Amaravati being particularly noted for them. The superstructure of the *stupas* is invariably missing, but it can be visualized by contemporary plastic representations on the Amaravati marble friezes. As regards dimensions, their diameter ranges from 31 feet for the smallest example at Jaggayyapeta to upwards of 100 feet for those at Bhattiprolu, Gudivada, Ghantasala and Amaravati, the last having an approximate diameter of 162 feet for the *stupa* and 192 feet for the enclosing railing with a conjectured height of about 100 feet. The examples at Nagarjunikonda, definitely datable to second-third centuries, range in diameter from 27 to 106 feet.

Ter (District Osmanabad), is yet another site which yielded, during recent excavations, a *stupa* with *ayakas* and an apsidal *chaitya-griha*, both of brick and of the second century A.D. The brickwork within the core of the *stupa* is in the form of an eight-spoked wheel. The carved limestone slabs and copings, found at the site, bespeak the influence of the Amaravati School.

Like plastic art, architecture also had a peculiar regional development in ancient Gandhara, or the north-west region of Pakistan, during the first five centuries of the Christian era. This region is studded with numerous Buddhist sites, like Taxila and Manikyala in Rawalpindi District; Takht-i-bahl, Sahri Bahlol and Jamalgarhi near Mardan; and Charsada in Peshawar District, which have both *stupas* and monasteries, the latter built on the plan of an open rectangular court enclosed by cells and verandahs on four sides with an annexe comprising assembly-hall, kitchen and refectory. The *stupas*, which, like the monasteries are executed in stone-masonry and finished with lime or stucco-plaster, are embellished with Buddhist images and designs of Indo-Corinthian pillars which are typical of the Gandhara art. The earlier *stupas*, represented by the example at Manikyala and the *Dharmarajika-stupa* at Taxila, are characterized by a hemispherical shape. But the remaining Gandhara *stupas* are distinctive tall structures, raised on lofty square terraces, the drum consisting of several diminishing tiers crowned by multiple receding umbrellas. The top of the square platforms, approached by flight of steps, was utilized as a processional path. The *stupas* are generally surrounded by a large number of votive *stupas* or small chapels which, like the main

monument, are usually decorated with Buddhist images in niches framed with Indo-Corinthian pilasters. A representative and well-preserved example of the Gandhara-stupa occurs at Takht-i-bahi, which, though small, has retained all essential architectural features and is situated in the centre of a court enclosed by chapels. An example of exceptional plan and dimensions (diam. 286 feet) was unearthed at Shahji-ki-dheri near Peshawar which yielded the celebrated relic-casket of Kanishka. This monument has a cruciform base with circular tower-like projections at the four corners, though its superstructure is of the normal Gandhara type.

A series of brick *stupas* were built in Sind (Pakistan) during the fifth-sixth centuries in the characteristic Gandharastyle, the only difference being of the building-material. These monuments show a liberal use of moulded bricks for mouldings and designs which include the Indo-Corinthian pillar of Gandhara. The most notable of these is the *stupa* at Mirpurkhas which is embellished with sculptured terracotta panels in the best Gupta style. While sharing the general plan and design with other monuments of the group, it is unique in having three arched cells in the basement, each being treated as a sanctum with an image of Buddha in it.

The recent excavation at Devnimori in District Sabar-Kantha of Gujarat has exposed the remains of large Buddhist establishment, comprising a brick-stupa and monastery. The *stupa* with a cupola, resting on two square platforms, is a massive edifice measuring 26 m. square and is more than 10.4 m. high. The lower platform, which served as a processional path, was divided into eleven bays by twelve Indo-Corinthian pilaster, while the upper platform was adorned by ten similar pilasters on each face. The central bay on each face contained an ornate arch, while each alternate bay appears to be adorned with a Buddha image in terracotta. Thus the facades of the *stupa* were elaborately embellished with statuary and decorative patterns including pot-and-foilage, scrolls and dentils. This monument resembles the brick-stupa at Mirpur-Khas (Pakistan) in design and style and elegance of terracotta sculpture. The discovery from the heart of the *stupa* of an inscribed relic-casket recording that the 'great stupa' was built near the 'great monastery' during the reign of (the Western Kshatrapa) king Rudrasena (III) in the year 127 (A.D. 375) probably dates it to the second half of the fourth century. There is evidence to show that the *stupa* underwent reconstructions later on.

In the North Indian plains the *stupas* were made principally of bricks and continued to be built till the twelfth century. They occur on Buddhist sites like Sarnath, Saheth-Maheth (Gonda-Bahraich District), and Kasia (Deoria District). The earlier nuclei of the Dharmarajika at

Sarnath exhibiting a hemi-spherical form have already been referred to. Most of the existing *stupas* date from the Gupta and later times and are of a definitely cylindrical shape with a high base, usually consisting of more terraces than one. The cylindrical type is best represented by the Dhamekh stupa at Sarnath, dating from the Gupta period. It is a massive towering structure (diam. 93 feet; extant ht. 143 feet including foundation) with a 36 feet high basement made of solid masonry, while its foundation and lofty cylindrical drum are built of bricks. The basement has eight projecting faces with niches for statuary. The monument is further adorned with delicately carved arabesque and geometrical patterns. The *stupas* of the post-Gupta period, while retaining the cylindrical form, tended to be even more ornate in design and with their multiple terraces and umbrellas inspired the *stupa*-architecture of Greater India including Tibet, Burma, Siam, Cambodia and the islands of Indonesia.

The development of the *stupa* in western India generally followed the lines identical with other parts of the country, as evident from a study of the rock-cut *stupas* which were but replicas of the structural forms. We shall see in the following section how the earlier type with a low drum and few or no ornaments evolved through successive stages into a lofty drum with an elongated dome, decorated with a wealth of imagery, and finally culminated in a kind of shrine.

## 2. CAVE ARCHITECTURE

The earliest rock-cut caves in India are attributable to Asoka (273-232 B.C.) and his grandson Dasaratha both of whom excavated a group of seven caves on the Barabar and Nagarjuni hills in Gaya District of Bihar. All of them bear the distinctive Mauryan polish and, with the exception of one cave, are engraved with inscriptions of Asoka and Dasaratha, which testify that they were excavated for the recluses of the Ajivika sect. The remarkable examples of the group are the Sudama cave, dedicated in the twelfth year of Asoka's reign, and the Lomash Rishi cave, the only excavation without a Mauryan inscription. Both are lithic copies of structures in wood, their plan consisting of a rectangular antechamber leading to a circular cell. The antechamber ( $32\frac{3}{4}$  feet x 19 half feet x  $12\frac{1}{4}$  feet) in the Sudama cave has a side-entrance and is vaulted, while its cell (diam. 19 feet; ht.  $12\frac{1}{4}$  feet) has a hemispherical domed roof with an overhanging cave representing thatch and parallel grooves on the walls imitating wooden planks. The Lomash Rishi cave is even more notable and shows an ornamental entrance-porch, caved to represent the gabled entrance of a wooden building with sloping uprights, jointed beams and rafters, an egee-arch of laminated planks crowned by a finial and perforated lattice-work—all features of wooden architecture. Below the lattice-work occurs a beautiful carved frieze depicting elephants worshipping *stupas*.

The rock-cut architecture, initiated by Asoka in the third century B.C., blossomed from second century B.C. onwards into a powerful and popular architectural mode, as is evidenced by nearly twelve hundred excavations, scattered throughout the country from Kathiawad and Rajputana in the west to Orissa in the east and down in the south to the tip of the peninsula. This architecture has three definite phases, the earliest dating from the second century B.C. to second century A.D., the second from the fifth to seventh century and the last from seventh to tenth century. All the phases developed primarily on the Western Ghats, the trap-formations of which were particularly suited for excavations, while they occur only secondarily in other parts of the country. The greatest centres of excavations in western India are Bhaja, Bedsa, Junnar and Karle in Poona District; Elephanta and Kanheri near Bombay; Nasik; and Pitalkhora, Aurangabad, Ajanta and Ellora in Aurangabad District. Ajanta has twenty nine Buddhist excavations ranging in date from second century B.C. to seventh century A.D., while Ellora has as many as thirty-four excavations, dating from fifth to eighth century, of which the earliest are Buddhist followed by Brahmanical and Jaina caves in the chronological order.

### EARLY BUDDHIST CHAITYA-HALLS OF WESTERN INDIA (c.200 B.C. A.D. 200)

The first phase of excavations in western India was exclusively devoted to the earlier form of Buddhism which worshipped Buddha in a symbolical form. The excavations took the shape of (1) *chaitya*-hall and (2) monastery and copied in rock the structural forms practised in less permanent material like wood. The *chaitya*-hall is more important of the two constructions and consists of vaulted congregation-hall with an apsidal end containing a *stupa* (also cut out of the living rock), the hall being longitudinally divided by a double row of colonnades into a central nave with two side-aisles. In its elementary form this plan is directly derived from the Sudama cave at Barabar by eliminating the barrier between the antechamber and the cell of the latter and providing a circumambulatory passage round its circular cell which is substituted by a *stupa*. That these *chaitya*-halls were copies of timber structures is evident not only from the servile adoption in rock of many designs and devices peculiar to wood-architecture, but from the actual presence in many cases of woodwork in the roof and the entrance arch, etc.

The most attractive and carefully-designed part is the facade which consists of a screen with a doorway or doorways below and a prominent arch-window above, through which light is admitted into the hall. The facade is relieved with designs of arcade and railing and occasional sculpture and in some cases has a front portico or vestibule, usually of timber, attached to it.

The more important *chaitya*-halls occur at Bhaja in Poona District, Kondane in Kolaba District; Pitalkhora and Ajanta (cave no. 10) in Aurangabad District; Bedsa in Poona District; Ajanta (cave no. 9); Nasik (Pandu-lena); Junnar and Karle in Poona District; and Kanheri on Salsette island near Bombay. They are mentioned in an approximate chronological order which is largely determined by stylistic development based mainly on the degree of imitation of wooden prototype, the earlier examples being closer to the latter with a liberal use of actual timber. The evolution of the shapes of the window-arch from a simple to elaborate curve, of the pillar from a plain to decorated form, and of the *stupa*-dome from a hemisphere to a cylinder are other guiding principles.

The earliest *chaitya*-hall at Bhaja, which dates from roughly 200 B.C., betrays its initial character in many features including a pronounced slope of the pillars, wooden roof-girders, a free use of timber in other parts, and an undeveloped ogee arch-window, closely approximating the form of the Loma-sh Rishi cave. The hall measures 55 feet x 26 feet x 20 feet high, each side aisle being  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide. The Kondane example, which is a little larger and later than Bhaja, differs from the latter in having the facade-pillars of stone instead of wood. In the Pitalkhora and Ajanta (cave no. 10) *chaitya*-halls the roof-ribs over the side-aisles are not of timber but are cut out of rock. The latter is a more ambitious production, measuring 100 feet x 40 feet x 33 feet, and its *stupa* has a double tier at the base and a slightly elongated dome. The Bedsa cave shows elaborate facade with pillars and pilasters in the front decorated with bell-capital crowned by spirited human and animal sculptures. Cave no. 9 at Ajanta and the Pandu-lena at Nasik have no timber attachments to their frontage. The former has the distinction of containing a rectangular hall with flat-roofed aisles and an elaborately designed facade with a minstrel galley. The latter shows a two-storeyed ornamental facade characterized by a carved lunette above the doorway and an arcade with repeated *stupa* motif and with bell-capital pillars flanking the arch-window. The pillars of its interior are almost perpendicular and better proportioned and have a pot-base and a square abacus, while its *stupa* has a tall cylindrical drum. The Manmoda *chaitya*-hall at Junnar is contemporary with the previous example and shares many of its features including a carved lunette on the facade and the absence of a front portico. There are four other roughly contemporary caves at Junnar of which the *chaitya*-hall known as the Tulaja-lena is remarkable for its circular plan (diam.  $25\frac{1}{2}$  feet) with a *stupa* in a domed aisle of twelve pillars.

The *chaitya*-hall at Karle is the largest (124 feet x  $46\frac{1}{2}$  feet x 45 feet) and most evolved example of its class, showing truly perpendicular pillars and a well-developed screen. It has an ornate two-storeyed

facade with an enormous sun-window surmounted by structural woodwork in the upper storey and three doorways with the intervening space decorated with fine sculpture of donor couples and indifferent Gupta palimpsests of Buddha-figures in the lower storey. The sides of the outer porch are sculptured with architectural storeys, the lowest one showing grand elephant figures. In front of the facade stood two free-standing pillars with bell-capital, surmounted by a vivid group of addorsed lions, originally supporting a *dharmachakra*. But more impressive than these are the pillars dividing the nave from the aisles, which show a pot-base, octagonal shaft and an elaborate capital, crowned by spirited statuary, consisting of two kneeling elephants, each bearing a noble couple in front, and caparisoned horses with riders at the back. The *stupa* is of the tall cylindrical variety with two rail-courses, and with the original wooden umbrella intact. Datable to the close of the first century A.D., this is indeed one of the most magnificent monuments of India.

The chaitya-hall at Kanheri is the latest example of the phase dating from c. 180. Architecturally it is an inferior copy of the Karle *chaitya*, though it maintains the quality of the sculptural decoration intact.

#### LATER BUDDHIST CAVES OF WESTERN INDIA (c.A.D. 500-642)

After a lapse of more than two centuries of inactivity started the second phase of the rock-architecture of western India in the fifth century. This phase is characterized by a practical elimination of timber constructions or imitations thereof and by the introduction of the Buddha statuary as a dominant feature of the architectural design. Nevertheless, the plan of the excavations, particularly the *chaitya*-hall, remained essentially identical with that of the previous phase. This is exemplified by *chaitya*-halls nos. 19 and 26 at Ajanta which are the earliest products of this phase. The former, which is the earlier (c. 500) and finer of the two, has practically the same plan and dimensions as Ajanta *chaitya*-hall no. 10. Its facade has only one doorway instead of the usual three, but in front of it is an elegant pillared portico which opens in an attractive entrance-court with side-chapels. The pillars of the interior have decorated shafts with cushion-capitals and massive bracket which support a broad panelled triforium or frieze running round the nave. Over this triforium rises the vaulted roof, the ribs of which are now hewn out of rock. The brackets and the triforium, like the facade, are richly sculptured with figures of Buddha and attendants in niches or panels. But the focal point of the entire composition is the large canopied figure of Buddha, occurring in a recessed niche on the *stupa* which is of a very ornate and elongated design with a tall finial, consisting of a *harmika*, triple umbrellas and a vase, the last touching the roof above.



*Chaitya*-hall no. 26, which is a little larger and later (c. sixth century), resembles hall no. 10 in the general architectural design. It, however, lacks the grace and dignity of the preceding, as its style is too ornate and encumbered with an excess of sculpture which is particularly evident on the pillar brackets and the triforium of the interior. The elongated drum of its *stupa* is richly laden with plastic carvings of which the central one is a seated image of Buddha in an elaborate pillared niche.

The last *chaitya*-hall of this phase and the best known of the Buddhist excavations at Ellora is the Visvakarma cave, datable to c. seventh century. Larger (85 feet x 34 feet) than the foregoing Ajanta *chaitya*-halls, it is not so lavishly sculptured as the latter, though its *stupa* is more evolved and shows conspicuous projecting niche containing a large seated image of Buddha flanked by attendants and flying figures. The entrance to the hall lay through a large open court surrounded by a pillared corridor with a carved frieze above the pillars. Its most distinguishing characteristic, however, is the facade where the great sun-window is now replaced by a small circular opening with an ornamental trefoil curvature, comprising the culmination of the original horse-shoe opening.

While the rock-cut monasteries of the earlier phase (as exemplified by Ajanta caves nos. 8, 12 and 13) were essentially copies of structural dwellings, consisting of cells surrounding a courtyard, those of the later phase were combined shrines and dwellings and may be briefly noticed here. They are generally single-storeyed excavations, entered through a verandah, with a large central hall having a cella in the rear. The addition of a shrine-chamber to the monastic plan and the decoration of the mural surface by niches containing images were innovations brought about by the introduction of the Buddha statuary in the architectural scheme. The representative examples of this class are the Ajanta caves (all with the exception of nos. 8-10 and 12-13), of which nos. 1 and 16 are the finest; they are of the same size and design, each having an outer verandah, 65 feet long; a main hall, 65 feet square, containing an aisle of twenty pillars; together with the usual group of cells and shrine-chamber. The monastic plan was developed still further at Aurangabad and Ellora, the latter site showing some enormous triple-storeyed monasteries of elaborate design like the Tin-thal and Do-thal, besides simpler ones.

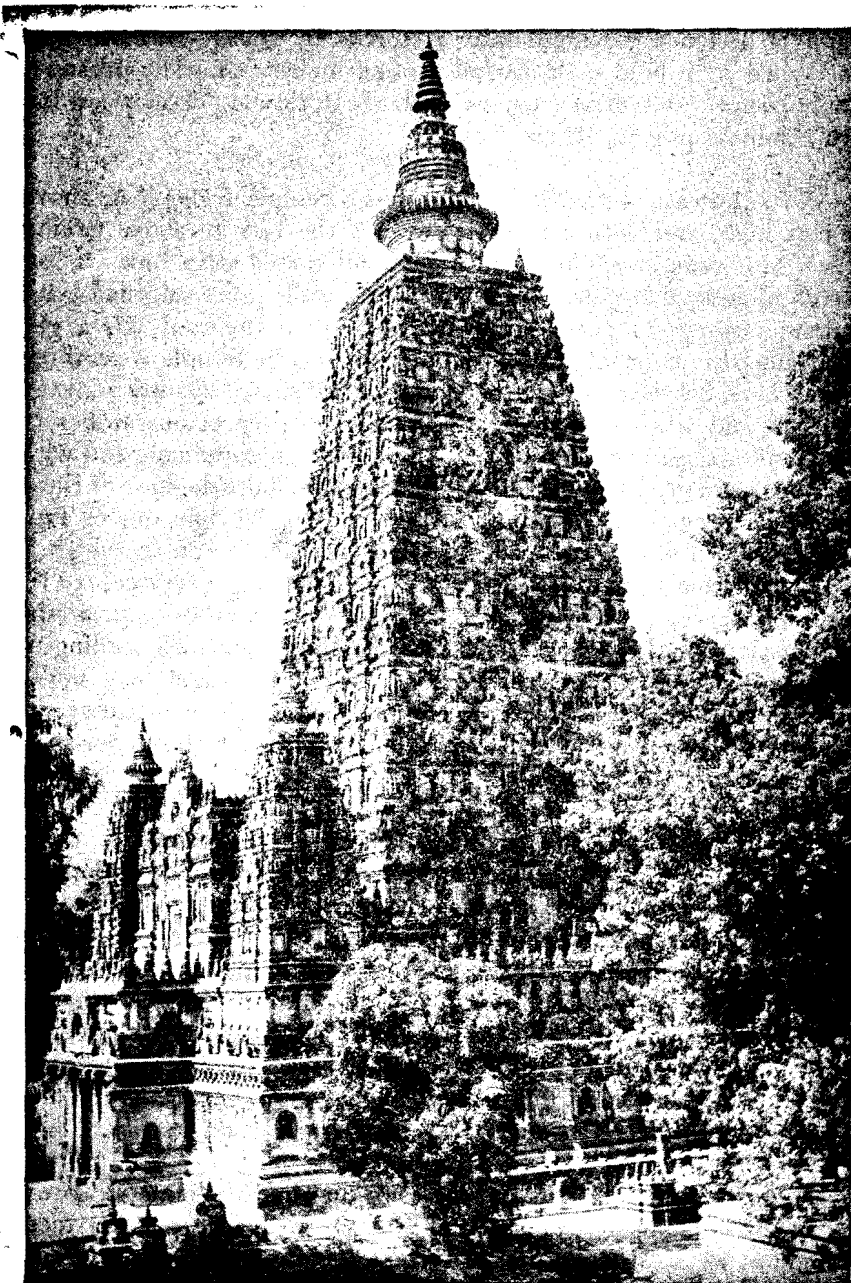
### 3. TEMPLES AND MONASTERIES

Buddhist art and architecture is largely undistinguishable from the general run of Indian art and architecture in technique, style and form and differs mainly in its iconographical content. Since the same guilds of artists worked for all the religions, there is hardly any difference

in the treatment of Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain temples in a particular region at a given period.

The earliest structural Buddhist temple is Temple 17 at Sanchi which is also the earliest known example of the Gupta temple style. It is a plain, flat-roofed structure of ashlar stones comprising on plan of a square sanctum with a shallow portico resting on four pillars in front. The decoration is confined to its doorway showing a pair of bands of scrolls and rosettes and the pillars which are square below and eight and sixteen-sided above with a fluted bell-capital surmounted by lion-brackets. Considered as a classic example of lucid diction, perfect articulation and restrained decoration, this temple lays the logical foundation of temple architecture in north India, which developed in due course a *sikhara* over its basic form.

Marking the holy spot of the enlightenment of the master, Bodhi-Gaya is looked upon with greatest sanctity and became a flourishing Buddhist establishment with numerous temples, *stupas* and monasteries. According to tradition a large number of shrines and memorials were erected at the site to commemorate the incidents before and after enlightenment but only few can now be recognized. Of the earliest shrine, traditionally attributed to Asoka, only the *vajrasana* or the sandstone throne with the characteristic Mauryan polish and decorative designs has survived and is seen beneath the holy Bodhi tree. To the Sunga period belongs a portion of the sandstone railing carved with bas-reliefs, typical of the age. The remaining portion of the railing pertains to the Gupta period. The main brick-built shrine known as the Mahabodhi temple Plate II,



MAHABODHI TEMPLE, BODHGAYA PLATE II

which appears to have been originally erected in *circa* second century A.D., is encumbered with heavy renovations, the four corner-towers being an arbitrary addition of *circa* fourteenth century. Its central

tower is a 170 ft. high *pancha-ratha sikhara* of a straight-edged pyramidal design demarcated into 7 storeys by *bhumi - amalakas* and embellished with bold *chaitya*-windows and niches framed by pilasters. Its appearance substantially agrees with the following description left by the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang:—

“To the east of the Bodhi Tree was a temple (*ching-she*), above 160 feet high, and with a front breadth at the base of above twenty paces. This temple was made of bricks and coated with lime; it had tiers of niches with gold images; its four walls were adorned with exquisite carvings of pearl-strings and genii; on the roof was a gilt copper amalaka; connected with the east side of the temple were three lofty halls one behind another; the woodwork of these halls was adorned with gold and silver carvings and studded with precious stones of various colours, and an open passage through them communicated with the inner chamber. On the left-hand side of the outside door of these halls was an image of Kuan-tzu-tsai P’usa, and on the right one of Tzu-shi (Maitreya) P’usa, each made of silver and above ten feet high.” The temple is built in two stages, the first stage being a terrace, 50 ft. square and 20 ft. high which encompasses the lower cella (now the main sanctum) with its porch and two flanking stair-ways leading to the terrace and the upper cella. Both the lower and the upper cellas are vaulted. The great tower described above constitutes the second or the upper stage and rises immediately over the upper cella as a prominent landmark.

According to literary tradition, Nalanda, 10 kilometres north of Rajgir and a suburb of the ancient city, was visited by Lord Buddha. Asoka is said to have worshipped at the *chaitya* of Sariputra, Buddha’s disciple, and erected a temple. But the excavations which were conducted here from 1916 onwards have not revealed any per-Gupta remains. By the time of Harsha (A.D. 606-48) Nalanda had become the principal centre of Mahayana learning and a famed university-town with numerous shrines and monasteries which attracted scholars from far and near. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang and I-tsing studied at Nalanda and have left accounts of the settlement and its life.

Nalanda had a planned lay-out with an almost symmetrical row of monasteries facing a row of temples, with wide spaces in between. The temples were solid rectangular structures of two tiers, the sanctum being placed on the upper tier which was approached by a grand flight of steps. The facades of both the tiers were plastered and embellished

with elegant pilasters and niches containing images. Temple 3 was more than 31 m. high and consisted of seven successive accumulations of which the two latest belonged to the eleventh and twelfth centuries

and the fifth one, dating from *circa* sixth century, was a *panchayatana* with its four *stupa*-like corner-towers and facades adorned with niches containing fine Buddhist stucco images of the late Gupta style. The monasteries were imposing multi-storeyed rectangular buildings, each with an open courtyard, enclosed by a covered verandah which led into cells, arrayed on the four sides. The cell facing the entrance served as a shrine.

Nalanda was also an important centre of Pala sculptures and bronzes and has also yielded seals and sealings of great historical significance.

The Jetavana monastery at Sravasti, the capital of the Kosala kingdom, was the scene of many a sermon of Buddha and has been identified with the twin sites of Saheth-Maheth, located in Gonda and B.Jhaich District of Uttar Pradesh. Excavations conducted between 1907 and 1911 have revealed at Saheth, representing ancient Jetavana, a number of shrines, monasteries and *stupas*, the earliest of which, probably of the Mauryan age, yielded a sandstone casket containing bone-relics together with a gold leaf and a silver punch-marked coin. Maheth, representing Sravasti, is a fortified town with ruins of residential houses as well as brick *stupa* and shrines, one of which exhumed more than three hundred terracotta panels, depicting scenes from the *Ramayana* in the Gupta style.

Kausambi (District Allahabad), the reputed capital of the ancient Vatsa kingdom, is one of the oldest and richest historical sites of India, claiming intimate association with Buddha. Following a small excavation by the Archeological Survey in 1937-38, the site is being continuously excavated by the Allahabad University since 1949. The excavations have thrown light on the age and character of the massive fortifications which enclose the ancient ruins and of the connected habitations. In a corner of the fortified city have been cleared the extensive remains of the Goshitarama monastery, intimately associated with Lord Buddha, which show continuous occupation from *circa* sixth century B.C. to sixth century A.D. when it was destroyed by the Hunas.

The excavation conducted since 1958 at the Buddhist site on the Ratnagiri hill in District Cuttack of Orissa has confirmed the testimony of the late Tibetan traditions that Ratnagiri was a great centre of Mahayana and Vajrayana learning and art.

The main *stupa*-shrine made of brick, had a base measuring 14.5 m. square with six elegantly-moulded projections on each side and a circular drum, the interior of which was designed as a wheel with twelve spokes with the interspaces packed with mud-filling. Dating from *circa* eight century, it was twice enlarged and enclosed by numerous votive *stupas*

of brick and stone, including clusters of miniature monolithic ones. Facing the main stupa were two brick monasteries in a row, with the usual plans, the larger one measuring 54.8 m. square and the smaller one 29 m. square. One of them had a magnificent entrance-porch flanked by pylons and a shrine in the back wall with elaborately-carved stone door-frames, exhibiting a rich wealth of sculptural and decorative ornaments. At least this monastery was multi-storeyed and was in occupation from *circa* eighth to thirteenth century. The second one had also a shrine in the back wall.

The site has also yielded an eleventh century temple of Matakala in the typical Orissan style, besides a rich crop of Buddhist images of bronze and stone and terracotta sealings.

## BUDDHIST ART IN NEPAL

All principal religious currents which stirred India also registered their ripples in Nepal. Historically, Buddhism was the first established religion which reached Nepal perhaps as early as the time of Asoka. The early form of Buddhism believed in worshipping the Buddha through symbols and regarded the *chaitya* or the *stupa* as an important cult object symbolising the Master. The immense popularity of *chaitya* - worship in Nepal is indeed a relic of the Hinayana stage and well-finished Lichchhavi *chaityas* of a pristine hemispherical form are found in hundreds scattered all over the length and breadth of the Kathmandu Valley. It must, however, be admitted that except for the earliest *stupas* at Patna Plate III,



ASOKAN STUPA, PATAN PLATE III

which are attributed to Asoka, no other monumental *stupas* of the pristine Hinayana form have yet been identified in Nepal. It is not unlikely that the older folk divinities like Yakshas and Nagas, which may have commanded popular worship in Nepal as they did in India, were assimilated in the Buddhist cult as acolytes or subordinate deities. The earliest image of the so-called Yaksna-Bodhisattva discovered in the valley and recently published is more likely to represent a Yaksha (presumably as an attendant of a Buddhist *chaitya*) than a Bodhisattva who at such an early age represented the Buddha himself.

In course of time Hinayana, which comprised of the Sravakayana and Pratyekabuddhayana and was a strict and rigorous system, gave place to the more humane Mahayana or Bodhisattvayana, symbolised by the compassion of Bodhisattva Padmapani who is believed to have refused *nirvana* until the entire mankind had attained deliverance. Mahayana soon swept Nepal with the result that the simple *chaitya* begins to be decorated with Buddhist images and we start getting images of the Buddha from *circa* fifth century and of the Bodhisattva from *circa* sixth century onwards. Then followed successively the Tantrayana and the Vajrayana, each ensuring further loosening of the rigours. This is no place to go into their metaphysics and philosophy which are indeed subtle and abtuse. Suffice it to say that to the solid base of the *viññānavāda* of the Yogachara school, which was an improvement on the *śūnyavāda* of the Madhyamikas, the Vajrayanists added a new element of *mahasūha* which marked the culmination of the liberalising process of Buddhist religion and philosophy. "Vajrayana introduced many innovations of a revolutionary character. It introduced, for instance, the theory of the five Dhyanī Buddhas as embodiments of the five Skandhas or cosmic elements and formulated the theory of the Kulas or families of the five Dhyanī Buddhas from which deities emerge according to need. It introduced the worship of the Prajñā or Śakti in Buddhism for the first time and a host of other things including a large number of gods and goddesses, their Sadhanas for the purpose of visualisation, Mantras, Tantras, Yantras, Mudras, Mandalas, mystic realization, and psychic exercises of the most subtle character."

Vajrayana was indeed a catholic and eclectic system which combined the tenet and practices of the Buddhist Mantrayana as well as Tantric Saivism and included in its purview the subtlest mystic experiences and philosophical speculations to the grossest rites and practices. Vajrayana also believed in psychic culture and the attainment of supernatural powers known as *siddhis*. Distinguished adepts in these were known as *Siddhas*. These spiritual attainments were often accompanied by esoteric rites and practices involving not only animal and human sacrifices and consumption of wine and meat but also indulgence in sexual orgies. Such permissiveness was often abused and exploited by the lesser adepts and the black sheep and led in course of time to the debasement of these exalted cults.

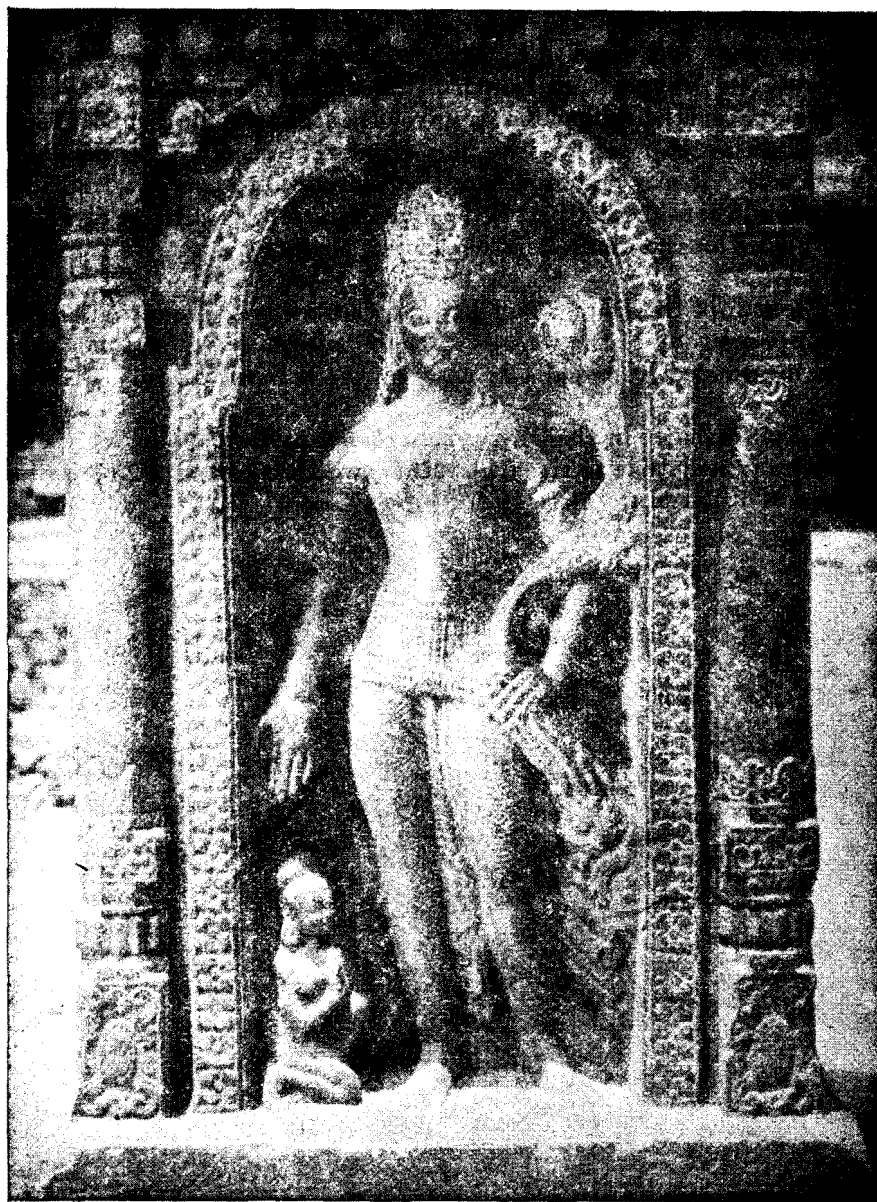
Whereas under the Mahayana the pantheon had been limited to the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas and just a few goddesses like Tara and Bhrikuti, under the new dispensation of Vajrayana there was a vast increase of the pantheon and a prominence was given to the female element called Śakti or Prajñā. Under Vajrayana deification was carried to an excess and all conceivable objects and ideas, including even abstract and philosophical concepts, were anthropomorphised. Further, many fierce



divinities were introduced and the female deities were often represented in the *yab-yum* posture, i.e., in physical union with their consorts. Not being content with the five Kulesas or Dhyani Buddhas, Vajrayana conceived of the Adibuddha or Primordial Buddha as the progenitor of even the Kulesas and the Adibuddha was given the iconographic form of either Vajradhara or Vajrasattva, who was often represented with his Sakti in *yab-yum*. It may be noted here that cultural intercourse with Tibet also played a considerable part in the multiplication of the fierce divinities and the deities represented in the *yab-yum* posture.

The cult of the Dhyani Buddhas, who are assigned definite positions in the cosmogony of the *stupa* is quite popular in Nepal and may have been introduced from India as early as the seventh century A.D.

This is shown by the Dhvaka Bana *chaltya* palaeographically and artistically assignable to the 7th century, which is carved with standing figures of Padmapani Plate IV,



DHVAKA BAHA CHAITYA, KATHMANDU PLATE IV

Buddha (is he Maitreya?). Vajrapani and Buddha in the lower portion and four identical Buddha images seated in *dhyanasana*, of obviously representing four Dhyani Buddhas, the fifth one being left unrepresented. A similar contemporary *chaitya* from Gahiti,

Thamel, shows four figures of Buddha seated respectively in *dhyana*, *abhaya*, *varada* and *bhusparsa-mudras*, confirming that these represent Dhyani Buddhas. A pair of Lichchhvi chaityas from the Alko hiei, Ikachhe Tol, Patan, displays in the four niches Dhyani Buddhas seated respectively in the *varada*, *abhaya dhyana* and *vykhyanamudras*, the latter depicted in one case in the *prelamba-padasana*.

The cult of the Adibuddha, which is equally popular in Nepal, grew in the Buddhist monasteries of eastern India not earlier than the tenth century. According to the *Svayambu-Purana*, Adibuddha first manifested himself in Nepal in the form of a flame of fire and Manjusri erected a temple over it. This temple is identified as the Svayambhu-chaitya which is the most celebrated Buddhist monument in Nepal. According to a variant local tradition, *Svayambu* is the self-born or the Adibuddha who manifested himself in the form of a lotus.

Since the five Dhyani Buddhas played a primary role in the formulation of the Buddhist pantheon, we may define their characteristics indicating the deities which emanate from each.

The progenitor of the *dvesha* family is Dhyani-Buddha Akobhya, who is blue in colour, exhibits *bhusparsa-mudra* and presides over the eastern direction. His Sakti is Lechana, his Bodhisattva is Vajrapani, his cognizance is *vajra* and a pair of elephants constitutes his vehicles. Heruka, Hayagriva, Yamari, Chandaroshana and Buddhakapala are the principal gods, while Mahachina-Tara, Janguli, Ekajata, Prajnaparamita, Mahamantanasini, Mahapratyangha and Nairatama are the principal goddesses emanating from him.

The *maha* family is presided over by Vairocana who holds *dharma-chakra-mudra* and is white in colour. His Sakti is Vajradhatvi's vari and his Bodhisattva is Samantabhadra. He is assigned a place in the centre of the *stupa* and is often shown between the east and south. Among deities owing their origin to him may be mentioned Marichi, Ushnishavijaya, Sankapetra, Aparajita, Mahasahasrapramardini, Vajravahni, Kshitigarbha and Maitreya.

The *raga* family originates from Amitabha who is red in colour, shows the *dhyana-mudra* and presides over the western direction. His cognizance is lotus and *vahana* is a pair of peacocks. His Sakti is Pandara and his Bodhisattva is Padmapani. Prominent deities of this family include Lokasvara, Saptasatika, Hayagriva, Chandraprabha, Jalini-prabha, Kurukulla, Bhrikuti and Mahasitavati.

The originator of the *chintamani* family is Ratnasambhava who is of yellow colour, holds the *varada-mudra* and presides over the south. His Sakti is Mamaki, his Bodhisattva is Ratnapani, while a pair of lions constitutes his vehicle. Prominent deities emanating from him include Jambhala, Uchchushma-Jambhala, Gaganaganja, Jnanaketu, Khagarbha, Pratibhanakula, Maha-pratisara, Vasudhara and the twelve Paramitas.

The *samaya* family is presided over by Amoghasiddhi who is of green colour and exhibits *abhaya-mudra*. He presides over the north direction, his cognizance being *visvavajra* and vehicle a pair of Garudas. His Sakti is Tara, while his Bodhisattva is Visvapani. Principal deities of this family are Vishkambhin, Vighnantaka, Khadiravani-Tara, Dhanada-Tara, Parnasabari, Mahamayuri, Vajrasrīkhala and the twelve Dharinis.

#### **Yaksha - Bodhisattva**

The earliest image hitherto found in Nepal is the sandstone torso of a Yaksha - Bodhisattva Plate V,



Yaksha Bodhisattva,  
National Museum,  
Kathmandu Plate V.

which has only recently been brought to notice. Although the head, hands (except for some fingers of the left hand) and feet of the figure are missing, its stylistic affinity with the figures of early Indian Yakshas and Mathura Bodhisattvas leaves no doubt that it belongs to the same genre. The sculpture is fully carved in the round, though it is more sensitively modelled in the front than at the back. It stands in *samabhanga* and shows a sturdy build with broad shoulders, heaving chest, strong thighs and not too flabby a belly. It dons an *ekamsika uttariya* on the left shoulder, the gathered folds of the *uttariya* being held in the clenched left hand of which only the thumb and traces of some fingers have survived. The stance of the figure and the treatment of the *uttariya* and its folds, partly held in the left fist kept akimbo, are identical with the early Buddha—Bodhisattva images of the Mathura School. The rendering of the lower garment, however, differs from the said Mathura type in detail and is shown as almost diaphanous, though the double-wound waist-band is again akin to the Bodhisattva figure from Maholi (Mathura). The modelling of the back is sketchy and follows the earlier tradition of the Yaksha figures. In fact the peculiar rendering of the buttocks, and the treatment of the *kachchha* of the *dhoti* and the looped and tasselled ends of the *kantha-hara* at the back are strongly reminiscent of the figure of Manibhadra Yaksha from Pawaya.<sup>2</sup>

Since our figure wears a *kantha-hara* and a *sakachchha dhoti*, it is more likely to represent a Yaksha than a Buddha-Bodhisattva. But as already indicated, it imbibes certain stylistic mannerisms of the early Bodhisattva type of Mathura and in some respects improves thereon by making the upper part of the body less stocky and more proportionate and by delineating the lower garment as practically diaphanous. Besides being the earliest known sculpture from Nepal, this figure is thus remarkable for providing a link between the early Yaksha and Bodhisattva types and is assignable to *circa* first century A.D.

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1. *Ancient Nepal*, No.4, pp. 37-39 pl.V.
  2. *Saga of Indian Sculpture* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1957) pl.4.(b).

## BUDDHA

The earliest Buddha images hitherto found in the Kathmandu Valley are the standing figures of Buddha from Chabel and Bangemura, which are both parts of the city of Kathmandu. While the former Plate VI,



BUDDHA FROM CHABEL PLATE VI

is made of greyish stone and has both hands mutilated and the *prabhavali* missing, the latter Plate VII,



#### BUDDHA FROM BANGEMURA, KATHMANDU PLATE VII

is made of dark grey limetstone and is excellently preserved with its oval *prabhavali* and two flanking figures of seated devotees with hands in *anjali* mudra. Both are sculpted in the fifth century Gupta style of India and are heavily influenced by the Sarnath school in respect of the sensitive modelling, the posture of standing with the weight of the body borne on the right leg and the left leg slightly advanced and the diaphanous treatment of the drapery revealing the anatomy, particularly the two knee-joints, the bulging shoulder and the chest and the line of depression at the waist. The Bangamura figure, which is well-preserved, shows the right hand of Buddha stretched in *varada* and the left hand half-stretched holding the gathered ends of the *sanghati*. A comparison of the two figures

shows that the hands of the Chabel Buddha, in spite of their poor preservation, were held identically. The Chabel figure shows a more sensitive modelling and greater affinity with the Sarnath type, and is closely comparable with the standing Buddha figure from Sarnath Museum (DGA NEG. No.189/63). The Bangamura Buddha, however, shows a distinctive oval *prabhavali*, decorated with a design of minute triangular petals at the edges and is notable also for introducing the kneeling devotees at the flanks. This figure also shows a pair of holes on each side of the head similar to those found on the Tilaganga image of Vishnu Vikranta dated in year 389 (A.D.467) of king Manadeva.

A poorly preserved and defaced standing Buddha image found from the ruins of a Buddhist Vihara near Buddha Nilakanth appears to be of the same style and date as the two figures discussed above.

The only early inscribed Buddha image in a limestone relief from Chapatol, patan showing the Buddha seated (*probably in bhuspasa-mudra*), flanked on each side by a Bodhisattva carrying *chamara* and *padma* and wearing unusually tall *kiritamukuta*. Artistically the relief is not of much significance, but the inscription, assignable to the late sixth century A.D. is historically important for its reference to a *gandha-kuti* (Buddhist shrine) and a *bhikshuni-sangha*.

In the next stage the Buddha figures stand in graceful *abhanga* with their right hand stretched in the *varadamudra* and the left hand raised shoulder high, holding the gathered ends of the *sanghati*. To circa 7th century are assignable two such standing Buddha images carved in two out of the four niches of the *sarvatebhadra* (prismatic) *chaitya* at Dhvaka Baha, Kathmandu, one showing Mathura type of drapery and the other the wet drapery of Sarnath, but both revealing the *katisutra* with its knot and the looped scarf-ends. A cognate limestone figure of standing Buddha is known from a private collection at Law Form, Ramshah Path, Kathmandu, Plate VIII,





BUDDHA FORM LAW FORM, KATHMANDU PLATE VIII

which is closer to Sarnath than any other sculpture from Nepal not only in respect of the treatment of drapery but also of refined modelling and delineation of facial features and meditative expression. The Dhvaka Baha figures, on the other hand, have a Nepali physiogromical set and lack the luminous quality of the Ramshah

Path Buddha. (It may be mentioned here that the figures in the remaining two niches of the Dhvaka Baha *chaitya* represent Vajrapani and Padmapani, while the four smaller niches on the *medhi* of its crowning *stupa* show identical Buddha figures seated in *dhyanasana*, representing the beginning of the concept of the five Dhyani-buddhas.)

Another *sarvatobhadra* image kept in the *hiti* at Nag Bahal, Patan, shows standing figures of Padmapani, Maitreya, Vajrapani and Buddha, the last being a replica of the Dhvaka Baha Buddha donning the Sarnath drapery. That these figures are at least half a century later than those of Dhavaka Baha is indicated by their developed modelling and iconographical features and the fact that all of them have flame-fringed oval nimbus and *prabhavali*. A loose Buddha figure of black limestone in the Nag Bahal shrine nearby also pertains to a comparable date and style with its body type and drapery derived from Sarnath and its largish ovoid head from Mathura.

There is a battered and defaced *sarvatobhadra* stele in a dried-up *hiti* at Kasai Tol, Patan, which is practically a replica of the Nag Bahal stele discussed above. The conventionalised treatment of figures including that of the Buddha and the presence of bead-and-flame borders for both the nimbus and the *prabhavali* would indicate a ninth century date for it.

There is a prismatic late Lichchhavi *chaitya* in the Tha Bahil at Thamel, carved with standing figures of the Buddha wearing Mathura type of drapery on all the four sides of its lower portion. Two of them hold the right hand in the *varada* and the remaining two hold the same hand in the *abhaya* pose. But no two figures are alike and a variety is introduced by the divergent way in which the gathered ends of the *sanghati* are held in the left hand, which is either raised shoulder-high or stretched down in the *danda-hasta*. The drapery at the neck is, however, oddly depicted in all the figures which are stylistically assignable to the ninth century A.D.

The next stage in the evolution of the Buddha image is marked by the 11' high standing Buddha from Swayambhunatha Plate IX,



#### BUDDHA FROM SWAYAMBHUNATHA PLATE IX

which follows the iconographical type of the Buddha figure on the Nag Bahal stele derived from the Sarnath model, but its facial features and modelling as also its developed flame-fringed oval nimbus and *prabhavali* approximate the style of the early Pala Buddha figures of eastern India. The Buddha image lying half-buried on the Aryaghat resembles the Svyambhunatha image

with this difference that its head is large and ovoid. These two Buddha figures are stylistically attributable to circa A.D. 900.

The Pala style of seated as well as standing Buddha figures representing the Master in the *varada*, *abhaya*, *vyakhyana* and *bhumisparsa-mudras* and wearing the Sarnath type of wet drapery became stereotyped in Nepal and continued to be made here in limited quantity till circa 7th. century. These are found in or around the Buddhist *chaityas* and *viharas* and a fair number of them may be seen at such Buddhist establishments as the Svayambhunatha and the Mahabodhi Temple at Patan.

It is indeed easy to recognize the Buddha figures when they are represented as standing, but it is difficult to distinguish seated Buddha images from those of the Dhyani Buddhas which are indeed more popular in Nepal.

Sculptural representations of the life-scenes of the Buddha are relatively fewer in Nepal. Two sculptures of circa 9th century representing life-scenes, however, are remarkable for their elegant modelling and narrative vivacity. One of them from Yangal hiti, Kathmandu, now in the National Museum, Kathmandu, is a fragment of the scene of Mara's temptation, showing two charming daughters of Mara standing in seductive poses and trying to tempt the Master (portion broken off), with Mara's host comprising ferocious goblins, demons and *yakshas* including a skeletal figure resembling Chamunda, a buffalo-headed demon and Ganesa wielding axe, gesticulating and launching assaults on the Buddha. The other from Deopatan now in the National Museum



#### NATIVITY SCENE FROM DEOPATAN PLATE X

Kathmandu Plate X represents the scene of Nativity and shows Mayadevi standing in a graceful *tribhanga* holding a branch of the tree which has bent down and quickened to her touch with the infant Buddha standing on a lotus against an oval *prabhavali*, represented on her right flank. The newly born Buddha is being bathed by a pair of flying celestial

devotees with water mixed with lotus blossoms from upturned vases. While the first sculpture is reminiscent of the same scene depicted in Cave 25 at Ajanta and is suggestive of contacts with the art of Deccan, the other, with its supple modelling and mellifluous contours is inspired by the classical art traditions of Mathura and Magadha. Some representations are known also of the descent of the Buddha from the Trayastrimsa heaven, flanked by Brahma and Indra, the latter holding umbrella over the Master's head. These also date from the later Lichchhavi times.

### *Dhyani Buddhas*

The Dhyani Buddhas are invariably represented dressed like the Buddha and seated in *padmasana* or *vajraparyankasana* on a lotus with their hands held in one of the five *mudras* (associated with the Buddha), often carrying also a bowl in the lap. Normally such seated figures should be identified with the Dhyani Buddhas who are indeed very popular in Nepal and are placed in the specified directions of a *chaitya* or *stupa*. Thus Akshobhya with *bhumisparsa-mudra* is assigned a place in the east, Ratnasambhava with the *varada-mudra* in the west and Amogasiddhi with the *abhaya-mudra* in the north. The place of Vairocana with the *dharmachakra* or *vyakhyana-mudra* being in the centre of the *chaitya*, he is generally not represented at all, but may sometimes be shown in the south-east between Akshobhya and Ratnasambhava. It is indeed easy enough to spot the Dhyani Buddhas when they are shown with their respective *vahanas* or cognizance marks, viz. *vajra* for Akshobhya, *ratna* for Ratnasambhava, lotus for Amitabha, *chakra* for Vairocana and *visvavajra* for Amogasiddhi. The last Dhyani Buddha is also distinguished by the canopy of serpent hoods under which he is often shown as seated.

Images of the five Dhyani Buddhas are very popular in Nepal and are found placed around the *chaityas* and *stupas* in the appropriate directions. The lower tiers of the larger *chaityas* and *stupas* also accommodate images of the Buddhisattvas relating to the respective Dhyani Buddhas, as seen on a late Malla *chaitya* behind the Rudravarna-mahavihara at Patan. Plate XI,



CHAITYA BEHIND RUDRAVARNA  
MAHAVIHARA, PATAN. PLATE XI

Since the concept of the Dhyani Buddhas gained popularity after the seventh century, their images found in Nepal are generally later and gain greater vogue under *vajrayana*.

## BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE IN NEPAL

An authentic historical evidence for the existence of an Asokan (may be even pre-Asokan) *stupa* is provided by the edict of Asoka engraved on his Niglihawa Pillar found in the Nepal Tarai, which records the existence of the Konakamuni Stupa and its enlargement by Asoka to twice the original size. Though this *stupa* has not yet been identified, it could not presumably be different in appearance and proportions from such early Indian *stupa* as the Great Stupa at Sanchi, the nucleus of which is also attributed to Asoka. The Piprahawa Stupa on the Indo-Nepal border, which on the basis of its inscription is Asokan, if not pre-Asokan in date, is known to measure 116 ft. in diam. and more than 21 ft. high with a battered top and thus compares favourably with the Great Stupa at Sanchi which is well-preserved measuring 120 ft. in diam. and 54 ft. high. It is well-known that the Piprahawa Stupa yielded an in-crimed casket containing the body relics of Lord Buddha. Two brick *stupas* have been recently excavated at Tilaurakot representing the site of Kapilvastu in Nepal Tarai. The larger *stupa*, measuring 52 ft. in diam. and 7 ft. high, with projections in the four cardinal directions, is of Mauryan date with a pre-Mauryan nucleus, while the smaller one, measuring 26 ft. in diam. and 3 ft. high, belongs to the Sunga period. Tradition attributes five *stupas* at Patan in the Kathmandu Valley to Asoka, and, like the Stupas at Sanchi and Piprahawa two of these are also hemispherical in form characterised by a large diameter and low height which is an index of antiquity. There is also a tradition that a daughter of Asoka named Charumati married a local prince and led a retired life in a monastery built by her at Deopatan, which is designated after her as Charumati-vihara popularly called Chabel, having a complex of a Buddhist *stupa* and monastery. The veracity of these traditions, however, can only be confirmed by scientific excavations, which are yet to be undertaken.

The holiest *stupa* in the Valley, known as the Svayambhunath (diam. about 60 ft., ht. about 30 ft.) which is situated on an isolated hill and is considered ageless according to pious belief, is also hemispherical in form with a flat truncated top, resting on a low circular plinth, and essentially resembles the early Indian *stupas* in form and appearance. The find of two early Lichchhavi inscriptions attests the antiquity of the site and the Stupa itself appears to have been referred to as.....*bhu-chaitya-bha*.....in a mutilated inscription of Amsuvarman (c. A.D. 603-20) found at a place called Gokarna in the Valley. A doubtless record of the Stupa's existence, however, occurs in a Buddhist manuscript of the 11th century which illustrate conventional *stupa*, unlike the one at the site, and labels it as *Nepale Svayambhu*



*Chaitrah.* The (oft-renovated) metal-plated portion surmounting the dome (*anda*) comprises of (1) square *harmika* painted with the eye-motif on all the four faces, (2) a series of 13 tapering circular rings representing the thirteen heavens with a *torana* (tympanum) at the base carved with figures of the Dhyani Buddhas, (3) *amalaka*, (4) *chhatra*, and (5) *gajura* or bell-finial. The *Gopala-vamsavali* attributes its authorship to king Vrishadeva, great-grandfather of Manadeva, who is described as *Sugata-sasana-pakshapati* in the Pasupati Inscription of King Jayadeva II. In a late Sanskrit manuscript text called *Devamala*, preserved in Nepal, it is stated that king Vrishadeva converted a Siva temple into a Buddhist *chaitya*. Be that as it may, there is every probability that the Svayambhu was built during the early Licchavi period as a simple *chaitya* of pristine Hinayana form with a *harmika* and *chhatravali* and was subsequently embellished with shrine-projections and developed crowning members under the impact first of Mahayana and then of Vajrayana and Tantrayana. At present there are nine shrine projections enshrining images of the five Dhyani Buddhas and four Taras which must have been introduced after the tenth century under the influence of Vajrayana, while the cult of Adibuddha with which Svayambhu is popularly identified is a still later development. The compound of the Svayambhu Stupa is cluttered with votive *chaityas*, images and shrines which were put up in different ages, beginning with the Licchavi period. Among the shrines the most notable is the pagoda-shaped temple enshrining an image of Hariti, worshipped as Ajima, which is a late replacement of an original image, regarded by one scholar to be as old as *circa* 2nd century A.D. belonging to the Gandhara art of the Kushana period.<sup>1</sup>

While most of the monumental *stupas* of the Valley are practically smaller replicas of the Svayambhunatha with minor variations, the Bodhnath or the Khasti Chaitya which vies in holiness with the Svayambhu, is larger in size and has a different plan and design. It stands on three rectangular terraces, each with re-entrant angles, which are embellished with turrets. A flight of steps on the south leads to the top terrace which supports the large hemispherical dome (*anda*), round which are arranged niches with Buddhist deities. The crowning members above the *anda* are similar to, though larger than those of the Svayambhu, with this difference that the representation of the thirteen heavens here is pyramidal. Further, the shrine-projections, enshrining the five Dhyani Buddhas are shifted here from the *anda* proper to the lowermost terrace. In its essential plan and design this *stupa* resembles those of Paharpur in Bangladesh and Borobodur in Java, both belonging to *circa* 8th century and anticipated by the Stupas-shrine at Lauriya Nandangarh in North, Bihar, dating from the early centuries of the Christian era.

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1. Pratapaditya Pal, "Buddhist Art in Licchavi Nepal",  
Marg, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, June 1974.

The Bodhnath contains not less than 108 sculptures of which the majority are of Tibetan character. Forty-seven images are represented in the *yab-yum* and at least ten depict the Siddhas of Tibet including Mil-ras-pa Mar-pa Naro-pa and Guru Padm sambhava all wearing the peculiar Tibetan costume. Bodhnath also contains purely Indian gods of the Vajrayana, such as Shadikshari Lokeshvara, Vak, Heuka and Yamantaka. Attributed by the *Vamsavali* to king Sivadeva (c. A.D. 588-613) this *stupa* is obviously later than the Svayambhu which is also attested by its mixed pantheon largely pertaining to the developed phase of Tantrayana.

While discussing Buddhist art in Nepal we have indicated the immense popularity of *chaitya*-worship in the land, which is really a relic of the Hinayana stage when Buddha was worshipped symbolically. Initially representing the *parinirvana* of the Master the *stupa* or the *chaitya* became the symbol *par excellence* of the Master himself. Originally the *chaitya* was a simple structure unadorned by human figures but in course of time under the impact of Mahayana it began to be embellished with niched figures of the Buddha. In due course, with the proliferation of the Buddhist pantheon under the influence of Vajrayana, the figures of Dhyani Buddhas and the Bodhiattvas and even their Saktis found a place on the various tiers of the *chaityas*. In Nepal we have countless *chaityas* of all the three types, of a size varying usually between 2 and half to 8 feet, encountered in the streets and lanes, in and around the Buddhist shrines and in the numerous courtyards of the Bahals, now inhabited by Buddhist householders. These *chaityas* are either votive, i.e. put up as an act of piety, or funerary or commemorative and the practice of erecting them is still in vogue.

The earliest of these, dating from the Lichchhavi times, are smaller in size and usually bereft of human figures and have a distinctive form and design with a well-shaped hemispherical dome (*anda*) and are made of a high quality sandstone which takes a smooth polish. Invariably the dome has an aperture at the top to receive the crowning members which are lost and are now replaced by a very late monolithic piece of different variety of stone showing the design of the *harmika* crowned by the usual 13 rings often carved with *toranas* at the base. With this common denominator, the Lichchhavi *chaityas* have many varieties and types. The smaller or the simpler *chaityas* stand on a square plinth (*medhi*) of one or two receding tiers with a projection in the middle for accommodating a niche design on all the four faces. The *medhis* are thus *triratha* on plan and rest on one or more plain substructures of similar design. The niches are shallow and empty and are framed by pilasters or *patra-latas* (scrolls) crowned by a *kirtimukha*. Sometimes the decoration is extended to the flanks of the niches or to the middle portion of the substructure which are embellished with scrolls, *kinnara*,

*kalahansa* or lion or even *chaitya* designs so typical of the Gupta-Vakataka and early Chalukyan arts of India of 5th to 7th centuries A.D. The depiction of lions at the corners with two bodies and a common head also follows the characteristic Indian pattern as seen on the Gupta temple at Sanchi and Tigawa. The *chaitya*-motif used as a decorative design shows a replica of the simplest *chaitya* with a hemispherical dome resting on one or two circular *medhis* and surmounted by a *harmika* and a finial of three to five receding stages, crowned by an *amalaka* often accompanied by a *vijapuraka* and embellished with fluttering banners and garlands.

On more ornate examples of the actual *chaityas*, the number of *medhis* is increased to three or four and rarely even five tiers and there is a multiplication of the niche design, normally to three on each face. Even with multiple tiers of *medhis*, the basic form of the majority of the *chaityas* continue to be square of the *triratha* or cruciform pattern with a niche-projection in the middle. It is only in highly ornate examples, such as those encountered in the Chabel complex, that we find the lower tiers of *medhis* square and the upper tier circular or twelve-sided, embellished with a string of the familiar ornamental designs sometimes adding a garland of *chaitya*-window motif on the uppermost tier. But the surmounting dome or *anda* is invariably a plain hemisphere devoid of any ornamentation.

The Lichchhavi *chaityas*, hitherto discussed, obviously pertain to the pristine Hinayana form and are obviously earlier than those embellished with figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas under the influence of Mahayana. While dealing with the Buddhist Art in Nepal we have already discussed the figurative type of Lichchhavi *chaityas* and seen how the four-faced *chaitya* from Dhvaka Baha containing four identical figures of Buddha in the top niches and those of padmapani, Vajrapani, Buddha and probably Maitreya (Buddha) in the lower niches are stylistically and palaeographically assignable to the 7th century and are followed by similar but more developed figurative *chaityas* from Gana Baha, Patan, and Thamel, Kathmandu, attributable respectively to the 8th and 9th centuries. These indeed are typical of the later Lichchhavi *chaityas* and are followed by the early and late Malla *chaityas* and *stupas*, loaded with flamboyant vegetal and geometrical decoration in the rococo style and embellished with figures of Dhyanī Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Taras and sometimes with anthropomorphised forms of such devotional objects and concepts as music, dance and ritual equipments, under the impact of Vajrayana and Tantrayana.

The Buddhist monastery in Nepal, as in India, is modelled after the domestic household on plan and is a quadrangular structure with an open courtyard in the middle and a group of buildings on all the four sides, of two or more storeys. Invariably the shrine faces the entrance

and the buildings on the remaining three sides are used as library, community hall, kitchen, refectory and storage room. Normally the living rooms are on the upper floors and the storage rooms are on the ground floor. The monasteries are tile-roofed structures made of brick with liberal use of timber for roofs and ceilings, doors and windows, pillars and architraves and brackets and struts. Some of the monasteries in Nepal Valley show doors and windows with beautifully carved tympanums and contain pillar and architraves and more particularly struts and brackets, embellished with elaborate figures and relief carving. The finest and oldest surviving wood-carvings are seen on the Salabhanjika struts of the Rudravarna-mahavihara, Patan, stylistically datable from circa 13th century. The door-tympanums of the Chushe Bahal and the Mushe Bahal at Kathmandu adorned with Buddhist deities in a setting of elaborate *Kala-makara* and dragon designs crowned by *kirttimukhas*, assignable to circa 15th century, are notable for their artistic execution. The former monastery also contains struts carved with labelled anthropomorphic figures of *nakshatras* (constellations).

The Lichchhavi inscriptions mention a large number of *viharas* to which liberal donations were made by kings and commoners. Some of them appear to have been royal foundations such as Sri-Manavihara which was evidently founded by king Manadeva. Sri-Rajavihara appears to have been founded by king Dharmadeva, father of Manadeva (5th cent.) and was probably augmented by Amsuvarman (early 7th cent.) who is known to have patronized both Hindu and Buddhist shrines and establishments. Sri-Sivadevavihara was evidently founded by king Sivadeva and was later called the Hiranyavarna-mahavihara after it was renovated and gilt by king Rudradeva. The last is one of the best maintained *viharas* with a gorgeous pagoda-shaped shrine of three metal-plated receding roofs with excellent metal figures and carvings some of them dating back to circa 11th century.

The Kathmandu Valley and particularly its twin cities, viz. Kathmandu and Patan, teem with Buddhist shrines and monasteries which are inhabited by householders ever since king Yakshamalla forced the Buddhist monk by a royal decree to take to married life and to accept the Hindu caste system. The Buddhist shrines and temples of the pagoda as well as the *sikhara* type stand pell-mell, rubbing shoulders with the Hindu shrines. While historically the origin of some of them may date back to the Lichchhavi times, often as a part of the Lichchhavi *viharas* mentioned above, they have undergone wholesale and repeated renovations and none of them is earlier than the 13th century and only a handful may antedate the 16th century. Among the pagoda-shaped temples noteworthy are the temple of Machhendranath in Kathmandu and Patan and that of Hariti or Ajima at Swaysmbhunatha, besides the central temple of Lokeshvara at the Hiranyavarna-mahavihara discussed above. Among

the sikhare-shaped temples the most remarkable is the Mahabodhi at Patan, built of Telia (polished) bricks by one Abhayaraja during the 14th century. Modelled after the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya, the complex comprises a *pahchayatana* temple standing on a lofty ornate platform with a principal *sikhara* surrounded by four subsidiary ones. While the main temple enshrines an image of seated Buddha, there is a subsidiary shrine dedicated to Mayadevi. Both the temples are lavishly decorated with rows on rows of terracotta figures of Buddha and decorative reliefs of considerable artistic merit.





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