CHAPTER XV

COLONIAL AND CULTURAL EXPANSION

From time immemorial the people of India had free and intimate intercourse with the outside world. Even in the dim pre-historic age, the Neolithic people, as we have seen above, had relations with the Far East, and there are good reasons to believe that they emigrated in large numbers, both by land and sea, and settled in Indo-China and the Indian Archipelago. In the succeeding age, while a high degree of civilisation flourished in the Indus valley, there was undoubtedly a familiar intercourse with the countries of Western and Central Asia. Of the two important races that moulded Indian civilisation, the Aryans apparently, and the Dravidians possibly, came to India from outside, and necessarily relations were established and maintained, at least for some time, with the countries where they had lived before the occupation of India. It would, therefore, be reasonable to assume that India as a whole had never led an isolated life completely cut off from the rest of the world.

The intercourse between India and the countries by which she was surrounded on the north, east and west was maintained during the historical period. In the west, there were trade relations with Babylonia, and also with Syria and Egypt. So far as the most ancient periods are concerned, we have to rely upon indirect evidence, such as the discovery of Indian articles in those lands or the use of Indian names for these articles. From the Maurya period we possess more definite evidence. But the most detailed account that we possess of this trade belongs to the first century A.D. Towards the latter half of this century a Greek sailor, living in Egypt, undertook a voyage to India along the coasts of the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea, and recorded a minute account of his experiences in a book called The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea. We learn from this book that there was active trade between India and the western countries. There were important harbours on the coast such as Barbarike, Barygaza, Muziris, Nelcynda, Bakarai, Korkai, and Puhar, and ships built and fitted up by Indians sailed from these ports with their merchandise which consisted, among other
things, of pearls, precious stones, spices, unguents, and fine cotton cloths called muslins, all of which were in great demand in western countries.

These goods were carried to the harbours on the sea-coast from inland cities by a network of roads. We learn from the same book that Indians settled in some islands of the Arabian Sea for purposes of trade, and the island of Socotra had a colony of Indian merchants.

The account of the Periplus is supplemented by later writers. Pliny, for example, complains that for the purchase of luxurious articles Rome pays every year a million sesterces to India. The statement of Pliny is corroborated by the actual discovery of a large number of Roman coins in India which must have been paid for the Indian goods and carried here by way of trade.

It is further proved by the Indian missions sent to Roman emperors. The king of Pândya sent a mission to Augustus in or about 26 B.C. In later periods we hear of seven missions to Roman emperors. The trade with Rome and other western countries was carried through the important port of Alexandria where goods, carried by sea up to the Red Sea coast, were transported either by land, or by small boats through canals of the Nile. There was also a land-route from India to the Mediterranean coast which ran through Persia and along the shores of the Caspian, to Syria and Asia Minor. This route had become familiar after the invasion of Alexander the Great. During the early centuries of the Christian era, Palmyra (in Syria) was one of the principal centres of this trade.

Both the sea and land routes came under the control of the Arabs when they rose to power in the seventh century A.D. Henceforth the Arabs carried on an active trade with India and we have interesting records of it in the chronicles of the Arab merchants.

It is a well-known fact that culture and civilisation follow in the wake of trade and commerce. We find accordingly that the Indian religion spread to the western countries. Aśoka sent Buddhist missionaries to western Asia, northern Africa and south-eastern Europe, and claimed that the tenets of that religion were welcomed in these regions. We have no means of ascertaining the truth of this from independent evidence, but there is no doubt that even long after Aśoka people in Alexandria showed interest in Buddhism, and that both Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical religion were widely prevalent in several countries of western Asia before the advent of Islam. The knowledge of Indian philosophy and literature in the West is also an undoubted fact. There is, however, equally little doubt that Western culture also flowed to India. The knowledge of Greek and
Roman astronomy and Greek influence on the art and coinage of India are undisputed facts. The Arabs imbibed a great deal of Indian culture, and carried it, along with Indian merchandise, to the western countries. Indian medicine and the wonderful invention of the decimal notation in Arithmetic, among others, became through the Arabs the universal property of the world.

In Central Asia the cultural conquest almost completely overshadows the trade relations of India. Here, partly by missionary propaganda, and partly by the political influence of the Kushāns, Buddhism became almost the universal religion of the nomadic peoples that settled in the vast region between the shores of the Caspian and the Wall of China. Indians also settled in large numbers in the region round modern Khotan. The physical aspects of this region have changed so completely that it is now difficult to imagine that flourishing Indian colonies once dotted the area which now lies buried under the sands of the Taklamakan desert. Yet the archaeological explorations of Sir Aurel Stein and many others in this inhospitable tract have laid bare the ruins of numerous Buddhist stūpas and monasteries, the images of Buddhist and Brāhmanical gods, and many manuscripts and shorter records written in Indian languages and Indian alphabets. Sir Aurel Stein has remarked that whilst he moved in these excavated areas under the ground he could have believed himself to be in the familiar surroundings of an ancient Indian city in the Punjab, so complete was the Indianisation of these out-of-the-way colonies. Even as late as the seventh century A.D., when Hiuen Tsang passed through Central Asia on his way to and back from India, he noted the dominance of Buddhism and Indian culture over this wide area. It is believed that Chingiz Khān, the great Mongol leader of the thirteenth century, professed some form of Buddhism.

From Central Asia Buddhism spread to China and there it remains a living faith, even to-day, among her untold millions. It is difficult to exaggerate the influence which Buddhism and Indian culture exerted upon the ancient civilisation of China. She showed the proverbial zeal of the new convert. Bands of Chinese monks undertook the perilous journey to India, both by land and sea, in order to study at first hand the religious beliefs and practices of Indian Buddhists and to collect Buddhist books and images. Hundreds and thousands of Buddhist books were carried from India to China and then translated into Chinese. For this purpose not only did the Chinese themselves learn Sanskrit and Pāli, but they also invited Indian Pandits to go to China and collaborate with them in the arduous task of translating the sacred scriptures
of Buddhism. Hundreds of Indian scholars settled in China and dedicated their lives to the pious task. It is singular to note that there are Chinese translations of Buddhist texts whose originals can no longer be traced in India. In addition to this intimate contact established by religion, we have to take note of the political and commercial relations between India and China, and the existence of a fairly regular traffic by way of the sea.

From China, Buddhism spread to Korea, and from Korea to Japan. Buddhism is still a living faith in both these countries, and has moulded their civilisation during the last fifteen hundred years.

Tibet forms a narrow enclave between India and these northern countries. It was not, however, such an exclusive and isolated region as it is to-day, and a regular route from China to Nepal passed through it. Tibet became a powerful kingdom in the seventh century A.D., and Srong-tsen Gampo, one of its best-known kings (seventh century A.D.), introduced Buddhism into his country. He had married a princess from China and another from Nepal, and presumably the influence of his queens converted him to the new faith. Along with the new religion, he introduced Indian alphabets and thus was paved the way for a new culture and civilisation in Tibet. As in the case of China, Tibetan Buddhists came to India in large numbers, and the proximity of India enabled them to come into closer contact with the home of Buddhism. The Pāla emperors helped towards the reform of Buddhism in Tibet, and there was a lively intercourse between Tibet and the Pāla kingdom. Tibetan monks studied at the monasteries of Nālandā and Vikramāśīla, and many Indian Buddhist monks visited Tibet. The name of Atisa Dipamkara, a monk of Eastern Bengal, who visited Tibet in the eleventh century A.D. in the days of Nāyapāla, is still held in the highest veneration there. Hundreds of the sacred texts of Buddhism were translated into Tibetan, of which two famous collections, Tanjur and Kanjur, still exist.

The spirit of maritime adventure in India found its full and free scope in the south-east. Across the Bay of Bengal lay Indo-China and the Malay Archipelago. They were peopled by primitive races, and held almost a monopoly of the world's spice trade. These fertile tracts were also rich in minerals and soon drew the attention of the Indians. The eastern coast of India, from the mouth of the Ganges to Cape Comorin, was studded with ports, some of which are named in the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea. The author of this book refers to some of the Far Eastern countries as Chryse, or the Golden Land. He implies, though he does not expressly state,
that there was a coasting voyage from Bengal to those regions. Ptolemy, in the second century A.D., knew the names of important trading centres in the Malay Peninsula and the islands of Java and Sumatra. Buddhist texts, written about the same period, give a long list of trading centres in the Far East which agrees fairly well with that of Ptolemy. These names are mostly in Sanskrit. There is thus no doubt that by the second century A.D. Indians had developed important trading relations with the Far East. We learn from Ptolemy that there was a direct route from Palura (not far from Chicacoole and Gañjān) across the sea to the Malay Peninsula.

Indian literature has faithfully preserved the traditions of the early days of this perilous voyage to unknown lands beyond the sea. The stories preserved in the Jātakas, the Kāläśrīśāgara and other similar collections frequently refer to traders' voyages to Suvanabhūmi—the land of gold, which was a general designation of several lands in the Far East. Traders returned with immense riches from the land whose very soil was supposed to be made of gold. On the other hand, many met with shipwreck and there were also sufferings and miseries of other kinds. Some stories represent young Kshatriya princes, dispossessed of their hereditary kingdoms, exiling to Suvanabhūmi to restore their fortunes.

To some such Kshatriya enterprise we perhaps owe the foundation of Indian political power in these far-off regions. From the second century A.D. onwards we find reference to kingdoms ruled by persons with Indian names. Their religion, social manners and customs, language and alphabet are all Indian and we may therefore regard these States as Indian colonial kingdoms. Between the second and fifth centuries A.D. such kingdoms were established in the Malay Peninsula, Cambodias, Annam, and the islands of Sumatra, Java, Bali and Borneo. The history of these kingdoms is known, partly from the Sanskrit inscriptions found in those countries, and partly from the accounts preserved by the Chinese. The Brāhmaṇical religion, mainly Śaivism, flourished in these regions, though Buddhism was also not unknown. The indigenous people adopted the civilisation of their masters and there was a gradual fusion between the two races. Hindu customs and manners were no doubt modified to some extent by coming into contact with these people, but still for nearly a thousand years the essential features of Indian civilisation were the dominant characteristics of society in these regions.

The Indian colonists established great kingdoms, some of which lasted for more than a thousand years and continued to flourish
even long after the end of Hindu rule in India. On the mainland of Indo-China there were two powerful kingdoms, those of Champā and Kambuja. The kingdom of Champā comprised, at its greatest extent, nearly the whole of modern Vietnam (Annam). Some of its kings such as Jaya Paramēśvaravarmadeva Īśvaramūrti (c. 1050-1060), Rudravarman (c. 1061-1069), Harivarman (1070-1081), Mahārāja Gālīrajā Śri Jaya Indravarman (c. A.D. 1167-1180), Jaya Simhavarman (c. 1257-1287), were great heroes and defended their country successfully against the attacks of their western neighbours, the Kambujas, and the great Mongol chief, Kublai Khān. They had diplomatic relations with the Chinese. After a glorious existence of more than thirteen hundred years (c. A.D. 150-1471) their power was virtually broken by the repeated attacks of their northern neighbours, the Annamese, and in the sixteenth century the Hindu kingdom was overrun by these Mongolian hordes. There were many flourishing cities in Champā, and the whole country was adorned with beautiful temples, both Hindu and Buddhist.

The origin of the Hindu kingdom of Kambuja is shrouded in mystery. According to an old legend, Kauṇḍinya married Somā, a Naga princess, and founded the royal dynasty of Kambuja. He planted a spear which he had obtained from Droṇa's son Aśvatthāmā. Another version makes the hero a son of Ādityavairāja, king of Indraprastha. In any case, we can trace the earliest Hindu kingdom in Kambuja to the first or second century A.D. It occupied the southern part of Cambodia and was called Fun-nan by the Chinese. It rose to great power, and exercised suzerainty over several vassal states. On its southern frontier was the vassal kingdom of Tuen-sien. A Chinese author writes about this kingdom as follows: "More than a thousand Brāhmaṇas from India reside there. The people follow their doctrines and give them their daughters in marriage. They read their sacred books day and night." The kings of Fun-nan sent ambassadors to both India and China.

The position of supremacy passed in the sixth century to Kambuja-deśa, originally one of the vassal states of Fun-nan. Kambuja-deśa, at first only a small principality in the north-east, has given its name to the whole country, and its kings ruled in great splendour for nine hundred years. Among its most valiant kings may be named Jayavarman I, II, and VII, Yaśovarman, and Śūryavarman II. In the fifteenth century A.D. the invasions of the Annamites from the east and the Thais (who had conquered Siam) from the west reduced the powerful kingdom to a petty principality which became the protectorate of the French, and is now again an independent State.
The kingdom of Kambuja rose to far greater power than Champā. In addition to the whole of modern Cambodia, Cochin-China, Laos, Siam and parts of Burma and the Malay Peninsula were included within the Kambuja empire at its greatest extent. Numerous Sanskrit inscriptions give us the detailed history of their kings, and wonderful temples like Angkor Vat, those of Angkor Thom and a hundred others still tell the tale of their grandeur and magnificence.

Angkor Vat is, in every sense, a wonder of the world. It is a shrine originally dedicated to Vishnu, and stands on the top of a terraced structure. Each terrace forms a sort of covered gallery, adorned throughout with sculptures, and leads to the next higher one by means of a staircase. There are numerous spires and towers, the eight towers at the four angles of the third and last gallery being each 180 feet high. After ascending the third terrace, we stand in front of the central shrine with its high tower (213 feet above the ground) dominating the entire region. The whole structure is surrounded by a stone enclosure provided with gates and galleries, measuring two-thirds of a mile east to west and half a mile north to south. Outside the enclosure runs a ditch, 700 feet wide. A stone causeway, 36 feet wide, with balustrade, runs over the ditch. It is continued as a broad paved road from the gate of the enclosure right up to the gate of the first terrace, a distance of about two furlongs.

Angkor Thom (Nagaradhaśā) is the modern name of the capital city founded by King Jayavarman VII. The city was square in shape, each side measuring more than two miles. It was surrounded by a moat 330 feet broad and enclosed by a high stone wall. The centre of the city was occupied by the grand temple of Bayon. It is pyramidal in shape and has three stages, adorned with high towers, nearly forty in number. The central tower dominating the whole structure is nearly 150 feet high. Each of these towers has a finely carved human face on four sides, representing the Buddhist deity Avalokiteśvara, or rather king Jayavarman VII. conceived as such. Several other massive structures, both religious and secular, surrounded the temple of Bayon.

The city gates, with towers and guard-houses, were imposing structures. Five avenues, about 100 feet wide, run from the gates to the heart of the city, a distance of a mile. The city was adorned with a large number of tanks with embankments, and a royal terrace about 1,200 feet in length and 13 feet in height with sculptured reliefs of exquisite quality. In short, everything was conceived on a truly noble scale, and it was one of the grandest cities in the whole world in that age.
The Malay Peninsula and the Indian Archipelago saw the rise and fall of two big Hindu empires. The first empire was founded by the Šailendra dynasty in the eighth century A.D. It comprised the Malay Peninsula and nearly the whole of the Archipelago including the islands of Sumatra, Java, Bali and Borneo. The Arab merchants who traded in these parts described in rapturous terms the power, wealth and magnificence of the grand monarch who exercised supreme sway and styled him “Mahārāja”. He owned a powerful navy and made successful raids both against Champā and Kambuja. According to the Arab writers, he “was overlord of a large number of islands over a length of 1,000 parasangs or more”. Many of these chroniclers tell the story how the Mahārāja every morning threw into a lake a brick made of solid gold. According to the Arab accounts, the Mahārāja was held in high esteem by the rulers of both India and China. Ibn Rosteh, writing about A.D. 903, remarks: “The great king is called Mahārāja, i.e. king of kings. He is not regarded as the greatest among the kings of India because he dwells in the islands. No other king is richer or more powerful than he, and none has more revenue.” Ibn Khordadzbeh (A.D. 844–848) estimates the daily revenue of the king as two hundred maunds of gold.

The Šailendra kings were followers of Mahāyāna Buddhism and had diplomatic relations with the rulers of China and India. King Bālaputradeva sent an ambassador to the emperor Devapāla of Bengal (p. 158), requesting him to grant five villages to the monastery which he (Bālaputradeva) had built at Nālandā. Devapāla, of course, granted the request. It appears that the Šailendras derived their religious inspiration from Bengal which was then the chief centre of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India. Kumāraghosa, a Buddhist monk of Bengal, became the guru or preceptor of the Šailendras, and at his bidding the Šailendra emperor constructed the beautiful temple of Tārā. The Šailendras were great builders and the famous stūpa of Barabudur stands to this day as the living monument of their grandeur and magnificence. This noble building, situated on the top of a hill, consists of a series of nine successive terraces, each receding from the one beneath it, and the whole crowned by a bell-shaped stūpa at the centre of the topmost terrace. The lowest terrace has an extreme length of 131 yards. The five lower terraces are each enclosed on the inner side by a wall supporting balustrades so as to form four open galleries. The three uppermost terraces are encircled by a ring of stūpas, each containing an image of Buddha within a perforated framework. The galleries are covered with sculptures, illustrating scenes from Buddhist texts, and the
balustrades are decorated with small niche-temples containing images of Buddha. The images and sculptures are the finest examples of Indo-Javanese art. When we remember that the structure is nearly 400 feet square and that its successive galleries are full of sculptures and images of Buddha, exhibiting the highest skill and workmanship, we may well understand why Barabudur is referred to as the eighth wonder of the world. The art of Java and Kambuja was no doubt derived from India and fostered by the Indian rulers of these colonies, but Barabudur and Angkor Vat far exceed in grandeur of conception and skill of execution anything that we know of in India itself.

The Śailendras ruled in glory till the eleventh century A.D. when the Cholas cast covetous eyes upon the rich maritime empire. Rājendra Chola I (p. 181) possessed a magnificent fleet and invaded the dominions of the Śailendras. His efforts were successful and he conquered a large part of the Śailendra empire. But it was not an easy task to keep such distant provinces under control. The Śailendras continued the struggle and shook off the Chola supremacy after nearly a century. But soon their power declined and an ill-fated expedition against the island of Ceylon in the thirteenth century brought about the final disruption of the empire.

The decline and downfall of the Śailendras gave an opportunity to an aspiring kingdom in the island of Java to assert its power. A Hindu kingdom had been established in the island as early as the fourth century A.D. but it was conquered by the Śailendras. Java formed a part of the Śailendra empire till the ninth century A.D. when it recovered its independence. The seat of political power was, however, removed from the central part of the island, which was at one time the centre of Śailendra power and contained their famous monuments, including Barabudur. Henceforth Eastern Java, with its seat of power at first at Kediri and then at Singhasari, played the dominant part in politics. Towards the close of the thirteenth century A.D. a new royal dynasty was founded by king Vijaya with the city called Tikta-vilva (bitter vilva fruit) or its Javanese equivalent, Majapahit, as its capital. The kingdom of Majapahit conquered the surrounding islands, and by the year A.D. 1365 the empire of Majapahit included nearly the whole of the Malay Peninsula and the Malay Archipelago. Roughly speaking, it comprised the Dutch possessions in the Archipelago in the 19th century with the addition of the Malay Peninsula, but excluding perhaps northern Celebes.
Early in the fifteenth century A.D. a fugitive Hindu chief of Java founded the kingdom of Malacca, which soon rose to be a great political power and an important commercial centre. The conversion of its second king to Islam made Malacca a stronghold of that faith, which soon reacted on neighbouring territories. The new faith penetrated into Java, in the wake of trade and commerce, and even some members of its royal family were converted to it. By a concerted attempt of the votaries of the new faith, the ruler of Majapahit was driven from the throne at the beginning of the sixteenth century. With the fall of the Hindu kingdom of Majapahit, the whole of the island was converted to Islam. But the royal family and a large element of the Hindu population took refuge in the island of Bali, which had been a Hindu colony for nearly a thousand years. With the exception of this island, where Hinduism flourished even to-day, the rest of the Malay Archipelago, generally speaking, adopted the faith and culture of Islam.

Indian art and literature flourished in Java to an extent unknown elsewhere. There are still hundreds of temples in ruins, and an extensive literature, in manuscripts, based on Sanskrit. The Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata were most popular in that island, and even to-day furnish the theme of their popular shadow-play, called Wayang, and theatrical performances. With the fall of Majapahit, artistic activities came to an end in Java.

We may conclude with a broad survey of the Indian colonies in the Far East. For nearly fifteen hundred years, and down to a period when the Hindus had lost their independence in their own home, Hindu kings were ruling over Indo-China and the numerous islands of the Indian Archipelago, from Sumatra to New Guinea. Indian religion, Indian culture, Indian laws and Indian government moulded the lives of the primitive races all over this wide region, and they imbied a more elevated moral spirit and a higher intellectual taste through the religion, art and literature of India. In short, the people were lifted to a higher plane of civilisation. A greater India was established by a gentle fusion of races, which richly endowed the original inhabitants with the spiritual heritage of India. So long as Hinduism was in full vigour at home, Hinduism in the colonies was also a vital force, but the downfall of the Hindus in India also led to the decay of their colonial supremacy. The fountain head having dried up, the streams fed by it were also gradually choked, leading to their ultimate disappearance. It is no mere accident that from after A.D. 1100 or 1200 Hinduism had spent its force in the colonies, and the indigenous element
began gradually to assert itself till Islam was firmly planted in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries A.D.

The history of the colonies demonstrates the unsoundness of the popular belief that Hinduism cannot be adopted by foreigners but is meant only for those who are born within its fold. It shows the great vigour with which it could absorb and vitalise foreign culture and could elevate even the most primitive races to a higher sphere of culture and civilisation. If we remember that Indian culture and civilisation played a similar role, though perhaps in a lesser degree, in western, central and eastern Asia, we can realise an aspect of the true greatness of India, not always sufficiently emphasised. The colonial and cultural expansion of India is one of the most brilliant, but forgotten, episodes of Indian history, of which any Indian may justly feel proud.
CHAPTER XVI

MONUMENTS OF ANCIENT INDIA

The Pre-historic Period

In a previous chapter, reference has been made to the artistic relics of the pre-historic period. They consist, first, of Neolithic implements, and secondly, of seals, buildings, sculptures and implements of copper and bronze found at Mohenjo-Daro and a few other sites.

The most artistic objects at Mohenjo-Daro are no doubt the seal-engravings, portraying animals like the humped bull, the buffalo, the bison, etc. Regarding these, Sir John Marshall observes as follows:

"In no sense can these objects be regarded as products of primitive or archaic art. Small as they are, they demonstrate a thorough comprehension of both work in the round and relief, and exhibit a spontaneity and truthfulness to nature of which even Hellenic art might not have been ashamed."

The same author makes the following remarks on two stone statues found at Harappa:

"When I first saw them I found it difficult to believe that they were pre-historic; they seemed so completely to upset all established ideas about early art. Modelling such as this was unknown in the ancient world up to the Hellenistic age of Greece."

Maurva Period—the Origin of Art

The earliest ruins of Harappā and Mohenjo-Daro have been assigned to a period not later than 2700 B.C. For more than two thousand years after that we possess no ancient monuments that deserve any serious consideration.

In the historical period, we have ruins of monuments that may be referred to as early a period as 500 B.C. But it is only in the age of Aśoka, the great Maurya emperor, that we come across
ASOKAN PILLAR, LAURIYA-NANDANGARH

By courtesy of the Archaeological Department and Lucknow University
monuments of high quality in large number which enable us to form a definite idea about the nature of Indian art.

The finest examples of Aśoka's art are furnished by the monolithic pillars (see p. 218) on which his edicts are engraved. Each pillar consists of a shaft or column, made of one piece of stone, supporting a capital made of another single piece of stone. The round and slightly tapering shaft, made of sandstone, is highly polished and very graceful in its proportions. The capital, equally highly polished, consists of one or more animal figures in the round, resting on an abacus engraved with sculptures in relief; and below this is the inverted lotus, which is usually, though perhaps wrongly, called the Persepolitan Bell. A high degree of knowledge of engineering was displayed in cutting these huge blocks of stone and removing them hundreds of miles from the quarry, and sometimes to the top of a hill. Extraordinary technical skill was shown in cutting and chiselling the stone with wonderful accuracy and in imparting the lustrous polish to the whole surface. But these pale into insignificance before the high artistic merits of the figures, which exhibit realistic modelling and movement of a very high order. The capital of the Sārnāth Pillar is undoubtedly the best of the series. The figures of four lions standing back to back, and the smaller figures of animals in relief on the abacus, all show a highly advanced form of art and their remarkable beauty and vigour have elicited the highest praise from all the art-critics of the world. The late Dr. V. A. Smith made the following observation on the Sārnāth capital:

"It would be difficult to find in any country an example of ancient animal sculpture superior or even equal to this beautiful work of art, which successfully combines realistic modelling with ideal dignity and is finished in every detail with perfect accuracy."

Many other pillars of Aśoka, though inferior to that of Sārnāth, possess remarkable beauty. It may be mentioned in this connection that the jewellery of the Maurya period also exhibits a high degree of technical skill and proficiency.

As compared with sculptures, the architectural remains of the Maurya period are very poor. Contemporary Greek writers refer to magnificent palaces in the capital city of Pāṭaliputra and regard them as the finest and grandest in the whole world. Some seven hundred years later the Mauryan edifices inspired awe and admiration in the heart of the Chinese traveller, Fa Hien. But these noble
CAPITAL OF ASOKAN PILLAR, SĀRNĀTH (NEAR BENARES)

By courtesy of the Archaeological Department and Lucknow University
buildings have utterly perished. Recent excavations on the site have laid bare their ruins, the most remarkable being those of a hundred-pillared hall.

The extant architectural remains consist, besides a small monolithic stone rail round a stūpa at Sārnāth, mainly of the rock-cut Chaitya halls in the Barabar hills and neighbouring localities in the Bihar subdivision of the Patna district. Although excavated in the hardest rock, the walls of these caves are polished like glass.

Asoka also built quite a large number of stūpas. The stūpa is a solid domical structure of brick or stone, resting on a round base. It was sometimes surrounded by a plain or ornamented stone railing with one or more gateways, which were often of highly elaborate pattern and decorated with sculptures. Tradition credits Asoka with building 84,000 stūpas all over India and Afghanistan but they have almost entirely perished. Some of them, enclosed and enlarged at later times, perhaps still exist, the most famous example being the big stūpa at Śāñchī, in Bhopal State, not far from Bhilsa. The diameter of the present stūpa is 121\(\frac{1}{4}\) feet, the height about 77\(\frac{1}{2}\) feet, and the massive stone railing which encloses it is 11 feet high. According to Sir John Marshall, the original brick stūpa built by Asoka was probably of not more than half the present dimensions, which were subsequently enlarged by the addition of a stone casing faced with concrete. The present railing also replaced the older and smaller one. A similar fate has possibly overtaken many other stūpas of Asoka.

It is quite evident from what has been said above, that Maurya art exhibits in many respects an advanced stage of development in the evolution of Indian art. The artists of Asoka were by no means novices, and there must have been a long history of artistic effort behind them. How are we then to explain the almost total absence of specimens of Indian art before c. 250 B.C.?

This is the problem which faces us at the very beginning of our study of Indian art—highly finished specimens of art, belonging to such remotely distant periods as 2700 B.C. and 250 B.C., with little to fill up the long intervening gap.

We are not in a position to solve this problem until more data are available. In the meantime we can only consider various possibilities.

First, it is not unlikely that the artistic traditions of the Indus valley continued down to the Maurya period. The absence of specimens has to be explained by the supposition that most of the monuments being made of wood or other perishable materials
have left no trace behind. Rare specimens in stone or other durable materials may yet be unearthed by future excavations. This solution is prompted by the analogous problem of Indian alphabets. The earliest Indian alphabets so far known, and from which all the current Indian alphabets have been derived, are those found in the inscriptions of Aśoka. How they came to be evolved into that finished stage has been a mystery, and attempts have been made to derive them from various types of alphabets in Western Asia. But the numerous seals found at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappā with pictorial writings (in which an alphabet or a syllable is represented by a pictorial illustration of a material object) have induced some scholars to regard these as the origin from which the Brāhmi alphabet of Aśoka has been ultimately derived. In a similar way, the artistic traditions of the Aśokan period might be ultimately traced to those of the Indus valley. But in both cases, the intermediate stages of development or processes of evolution are hidden from us.

Secondly, it is permissible to hold that the art-traditions of the Indus valley were gradually lost and that Mauryan art has an independent history. What that history may be is involved in doubt, and it is possible to entertain two different views on the subject. We may either hold that, in addition to works in wood, the Indian artists of the pre-Maurya period also excelled in works in stone, though these have perished or not yet come to light. Or we may suppose that the Indians first began to work in stone during the Maurya period. The results of their endeavour to change from wood to stone are seen in the crude inferior pillars of Aśoka while those which are excellent and highly finished were the work of foreign artists employed by that great emperor. According to this theory, Indian art continued more or less under this foreign tutelage long after Aśoka, until a full-fledged Indian art was developed under the Imperial Guptas.

From the End of the Maurya Period to the Rise of the Guptas

The five hundred years that intervened between the fall of the Mauryas and the rise of the Gupta empire constitute a distinct period in the evolution of Indian art. So far as we can judge from extant remains, several important schools of sculpture flourished in different localities during this period—at Bhārhut (Nagod and Sāñchi in Madhya Pradesh, Bodh-Gayā in Bihār, Mathurā in U.P., Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunikonda near the mouth of the Kṛishṇā river, and Gandhāra in West Pākistān.
In the second century B.C., during the reign of the Śuṅgas, a big stūpa was constructed at Bhārhat. Nothing now remains of the stūpa itself, but a portion of the railings that surrounded it, and one of the gateways, are now preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. The railing is made of red sandstone and consists, as usual, of uprights, crossbars and coping-stone. All these have sculptures engraved on them representing incidents from Buddha's life, Jātaka stories and many humorous scenes. Short labels incised below the sculptures enable us to identify the episodes represented therein. Taken individually, the human figures do not appear to be well executed and there are obvious defects in the physiognomy and posture of the bodies. But taken as a mass, the sculptures represent the religious faiths and beliefs, the dress, costumes, and manners, and are executed with wonderful simplicity and vigour. We get an insight into the minds and habits of the common people of India, and a keynote of the joys and pleasures of life seems to pervade them all. Ancient India, with its robust optimism and vigorous faith in life, speaks, as it were, through these stones, in a tone that offers a sharp but pleasing contrast to the dark pessimistic views of life which some of the old religious texts are never tired of repeating. From this point of view, the art of Bhārhat is a great corrective to the impressions which we are likely to form from literature.

At Bodh-Gayā there is a small railing round the great temple. The railing probably belongs to about the first century B.C., but the temple is of a much later date. The sculptures on the railing belong to the same type as at Bhārhat, though the individual figures are somewhat better.

Sāṇchi contains three big stūpas and, happily, they are all in a good state of preservation. The big stūpa, originally constructed by Aśoka, was enlarged during this period, and four gateways of elaborate construction were added to the railing, one in each cardinal direction. Although the railing is quite plain, the gateways are full of sculptures, illustrating the Jātaka stories and various episodes in the life of Gautama Buddha. The scenes represented are similar to those of Bhārhat, and convey more or less the same ideas, but the individual figures, the method of their grouping, mode of expression, and decorative elements—all show a far higher standard of technical skill and artistic conception. The obvious defects in the representation of the physique at Bhārhat are removed, and human figures are elegantly carved and shown in various difficult moods and poses. The sculptors of Sāṇchi are throughout inspired
by a far higher sense of beauty, rhythm, and symmetry, and possess the difficult art of telling a complicated story in a simple lucid way. As at Bhārhat, we find before us a wonderful panorama of scenes of daily life and concrete illustrations of faith, hope, and ideals, though as a rule these are more complex and varied in character, showing a more intelligent appreciation of the facts and views of life.

On the whole, the railings at Bhārhat, Bodh-Gaya and Sāñchi may be regarded as three landmarks in the gradual evolution of

![Sāñchi Gateway](image)

art during the two centuries, 150 B.C.—A.D. 50. The Indian artists had now mastered the difficult technique and acquired a highly-developed aesthetic sense. The stone sculptures proved in their hands to be a valuable medium for expressing faiths and beliefs, and ideas and feelings.

Mathūra has proved a large treasure-house of ruins of this period. No big railing, like that of Bhārhat or Sāñchi, with a continuous series of relief sculptures, has yet come to light, but we have instead numerous fragments of smaller railings with
sculptures, and quite a large number of images, either detached or engraved in very high relief on some architectural fragments.

Photo: A. K. Coomaraswamy

Kushán King, Mathúra

The Mathúra sculptures are easily distinguished by the material used—a kind of spotted red stone. It is possible to classify the sculptures of Mathúra into two chronological periods. The earlier ones are rude and rough works, somewhat resembling those of
Bhārhut, but of a different style, and do not call for any special remark. The sculptures of the later period possess one distinguishing characteristic, viz. the representation of Buddha as a human figure. This is entirely unknown at Bhārhut, Bodh-Gayā and Sāñchi where Buddha is always represented by a symbol such as a wheel, a throne, or a pair of footprints, and never by any human figure. With the evolution of a human type of Buddha at Mathurā begins a new epoch in Indian art, and for centuries the best artistic efforts of India were directed towards giving a concrete expression of the spiritual ideals of India through the images of Buddha and other great beings.

The Gandhāra School

The Gandhāra school of sculpture has attained a celebrity perhaps beyond its merits. There was a time when European scholars considered it as the only school in ancient India which can rightfully claim a place in the domain of art. Many still regard it as the source of all subsequent development of art in India and the Far East. In spite of the undeniable merit of Gandhāra sculptures, the above views seem to be highly exaggerated.

The Gandhāra sculptures have been found in the ruins of Taxila and in various ancient sites in Afghanistān and West Pakistān. They consist mostly of images of Buddha and relief-sculptures representing scenes from Buddhist texts. Some technical characteristics easily distinguish them from all other specimens of Indian sculpture. In the first place, there is a tendency to mould the human body in a realistic manner with great attention to accuracy of physical details, especially by the delineation of muscles and the addition of moustaches, etc. Secondly, the representation of the thick drapery with large and bold fold-lines forms a distinct characteristic.

The Gandhāra sculptures accordingly offer a striking contrast to what we meet with elsewhere in India, viz. the smooth round features of the idealised human figures, draped in a transparent or semi-transparent cloth, closely fitting to the body and revealing its outline.

These distinguishing characteristics of Gandhāra sculpture were undoubtedly derived from Greek art, or, to be more precise, the Hellenistic art of Asia Minor and the Roman empire. Gandhāra art is accordingly known also as Indo-Greek or Graeco-Roman. There is, also, no doubt that this art owed its origin to the Greek rulers of Bactria and North-West India. But though the technique
was borrowed from Greece, the art was essentially Indian in spirit, and it was solely employed to give expression to the beliefs and practices of the Buddhists. With a few exceptions, no Greek story or legend, and no Greek art motif has been detected among the numerous specimens of Gandhāra sculpture. The Gandhāra artist had the hand of a Greek but the heart of an Indian.

The most important contribution of Gandhāra art was the evolution of an image of Buddha, perhaps an imitation of a Greek God like Apollo. Fine images of Buddha and Bodhisatva, and relief-sculptures illustrating various episodes of Buddha's present and past lives, are remarkably executed in a kind of black stone. For a long time it was believed that the Gandhāra Buddha image served as the model for those executed at Mathurā and other centres. But it is now recognised that the Buddha image was evolved independently at Mathurā and Gandhāra. There is a striking difference between the Buddha images of Gandhāra and those of the Indian interior. The former laid stress on accuracy of anatomical details and physical beauty, while the latter strove towards imparting a sublime and spiritual expression to the figure. The one was realistic and the other idealistic, and this may be regarded as the vital difference between Western and Indian art. The rich and varied contents of Gandhāra sculpture, like those of Sāñchi and Bhārhut, hold before us a mirror, as it were, reflecting ancient life and ideals.

It may be added that both the schools of Mathurā and Gandhāra flourished under the lavish patronage of Scythian kings. The
portrait-statues of the Kushān kings add a novel feature to the art of this period. The Kushān art, particularly that of the Gandhāra school, spread through Chinese Turkestan to the Far East and influenced even the arts of China and Japan.

Somewhat later than the flourishing period of the schools of sculpture described above, beautiful stūpas were erected in the lower valley of the Krishnā river, at Amarāvati, Jagayyapeta and Nāgarjunikonda. Not only were the railings of the Amarāvati stūpa made of marble, but the dome itself was covered with slabs of the same material. It must have produced a marvellous effect, when intact. Unfortunately, the entire stūpa is in ruins, and the fragments of its railings have been removed, partly to the British Museum, London, and partly to the Government Museum at Madras. The sculptures of all the stūpas resemble one another and
are marked by striking differences in style from those of Northern India. Hence they are classed as belonging to a new school, viz. that of Amarāvatī. The figures at Amarāvatī are characterised by slim, blithe features and they are represented in most difficult poses and curves. But the scenes are mostly overcrowded, and although there is a distinct charm in individual figures, the general effect is not very pleasing. Yet there is no doubt that the technique of art had reached a high degree of development. The plants and flowers, particularly the lotuses, are most admirably represented in this school. The image of Buddha occurs here and there, but the Blessed One is often represented by a symbol. It thus points to the period of transition between Bhārbhut, Bodh-Gayā and Sāñchi on the one hand and Mathurā and Gandhāra on the other.

At Nāgārjunikōṇḍa, important relics of the period have recently been discovered as a result of excavations made by the Archaeological Survey of India. The finds include a stūpa, two Chaityas and a monastery. Near the stūpa were found slabs of limestone illustrating scenes from Buddha’s life. The panel shown on p. 231 represents the nativity and seven footprints of Buddha on the piece of cloth held by the deities, who were present to welcome the arrival of the Blessed One.

The period under review (c. 200 B.C. to A.D. 320) is not so rich in architecture as in sculptures. There were, of course, beautiful temples and monasteries, and the famous tower of Kanishka at Purushapur (Peshawār) was one of the wonders of Asia. But all these have perished without leaving any trace behind. Excepting the stūpas referred to above, there is only one class of buildings which merit serious attention as works of art. These are the caves hewn out of solid rock, of which hundreds have been found in different parts of India. The caves of the Aśokan period were plain chambers, but now the addition of pillars and sculptures made them beautiful works of art. Some of the caves were used as monasteries, i.e. residences of monks. These were quite plain and consisted of a central hall with small cells on all sides. Others were used as Chaityas or halls of worship. A Chaitya was a fine work of art. The fully developed specimen consisted of a long rectangular hall with apsidal end (i.e. the side opposite the entrance was semicircular and not straight). Two long rows of pillars divided the hall into a nave (big central part) and two side aisles (narrow parts at the two sides). A small stūpa, called a Dāgoba, stood near the apsidal end. The front wall was decorated with elaborate sculptures, and there were three small doorways leading to the nave and the side aisles. But a big horseshoe window above
the central doorway admitted a volume of light which illumined the 
Dāgoba at the far end. When worshippers assembled in comparative 
darkness in the nave (central part) before the bright Dāgoba in 
front, the effect must have been very solemn and impressive.

There are many such Chaitya caves at Nāsik, Bhājā, Bèdā, 
Kārle and other places in the Bombay Presidency. The Kārle cave 
is unanimously regarded as the finest specimen, on account of the 
beauty of the sculptures on the front wall, the remarkable rows

of pillars inside the hall, and the fine proportion of the different 
parts of the building.

In addition to the pillars inside these caves, we have also several 
free-standing pillars, as for example that at Besnagar which was 
dedicated as a Garuḍadhvaja by the Greek ambassador, Heliodorus. 
They are in many cases monoliths (in the case of rock-cut caves 
they are necessarily so) but they lack the wonderful polish, the fine 
proportions and the grand capitals which characterise the best 
pillars of Aśoka. In this respect there was undoubtedly a decline. 
But in sculptures and the construction of stūpas and caves there 
was wonderful progress. It is perfectly true that the fine figures 
of certain animals which we see on the pillars of Aśoka have no
CHAITYA CAVE, KĀŘE
parallel in subsequent times, but the loss is made up by the
delineation of human figures and the evolution of the wonderful
image of Buddha.

The Gupta Period (A.D. 320–600)1

With the Gupta period we enter upon the classical phase of
Indian sculpture. By the efforts of centuries techniques of art were
perfected, definite types were evolved, and ideals of beauty were
formulated with precision. There was no more groping in the dark,
and no more experiments. A thorough intelligent grasp of the
true aims and essential principles of art, a highly developed
aesthetic sense, and a masterly execution with steady hands
produced those remarkable images which were to be the ideal
and despair of the Indian artists of subsequent ages. The Gupta
sculptures not only remained models of Indian art in all times to
come, but they also served as such in the Indian colonies in the
Far East. The sculptures of the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java,
Vietnam, Cambodia and even Celebes bear the indelible stamp of
Gupta art.

The most important contribution of Gupta art is the evolution
of the perfect types of divinities, both Buddhist and Brâhmanical.
A large number of Buddha images have been unearthed at Sârnâth
near Benares, and one of them is justly regarded as the finest in
the whole of India. Stone and bronze images of Buddha have
also been found at Mathurâ and other places. The images of Śiva,
Vishnu and other Brâhmanical gods are sculptured in some of the
finest panels of the Deogarh temple (Jhansi district) and also occur
elsewhere. These images are the best products of Indian art.
They present a beautiful figure, full of charm and dignity, a grace-
ful pose and a radiant spiritual expression. In general, a sublime
idealism, combined with a highly-developed sense of rhythm and
beauty, characterises the Gupta sculptures, and there are vigour
and refinement in their design and execution. The intellectual
element dominates Gupta art and keeps under control the highly-
developed emotional display and the exuberance of decorative
elements which characterise the art of succeeding ages.

The art of casting metals reached a degree of development
which may well be regarded as wonderful. Hiuen Tsang saw at

1 Although the political supremacy of the Imperial Guptas did not last
much beyond A.D. 495, the style of art ushered in by them continued till
A.D. 600 or even somewhat later. Hence the title "Gupta period" in relation
to art covers a much longer period than what would be understood in political
history.
Nālandā a copper image of Buddha, about 80 feet high. The Bronze Buddha, found at Sultānganj, is 7½ feet high and is a fine piece of sculpture. The Iron Pillar of Delhi, near the Qutb Minār, is a marvellous work belonging to the early Gupta period. A century ago, it would have been difficult, even for the best European foundry, to manufacture a similar piece made of wrought iron.

The art of painting reached its height of glory and splendour in this age. The fine fresco-paintings on the walls and ceilings of the Ajantā Caves have extorted the unstinted admiration of the
whole world. Of the twenty-nine caves, sixteen contained paintings which survived, to a greater or less extent, even as late as 1879. Most of these, it is sad to think, have been destroyed, and the rest are also gradually crumbling to dust. Although some are as old as the first century A.D., most of them belong to the Gupta Age. A fine conception, brilliant colour, and admirable drawing invested these paintings with a unique charm which we can only faintly realise in their present ruined condition. In addition to decorative designs "as varied and graceful as they are fanciful" and "executed with masterly skill", they depict sacred objects and symbols, the figures of Buddha, and the incidents of his life (including past lives described in the Jātaka stories). Those known as "The Dying Princess", "The Mother and Child", etc., have won the highest admiration. The fresco-paintings at Sigiriya in Ceylon, executed towards the close of the fifth century A.D., show a close resemblance to those of Ajanta and are in a better state of preservation. Some fresco paintings of high merit also adorn the caves at Bāgh.

Compared with sculpture, Gupta architecture, to judge by the extant remains, must be regarded as poor. The stone temple at Sāñchi, like that at Deogarh, is very small, but exhibits refinement in style. The brick temple at Bhitārgāon is large but ruined. Remains of stone temples of this period have also been found at Nachna-ke-Talai and other places. These temples are well-designed, and consist of a square chamber, a cella (shrine), and a portico or veranda as essential elements. They are decorated with fine sculptured panels, but the decoration is properly subordinated to, and is in full harmony with, the architectural plan of the buildings. There is no doubt that magnificent temples of large dimensions were constructed during the Gupta age, but they have been completely destroyed. High and elaborately-worked towers (śikharas) which surmounted the roofs of temples in later ages, had not yet made their appearance, but the beginnings of this development are seen in the Bhitārgāon temple and the miniature representations of temples on relief-sculptures of the Gupta period.

The artistic excellence of the Gupta period also found expression in the rich variety of gold coins issued by the wealthiest and mightiest monarchs of the age. According to some scholars, foreign influence is clearly traceable in this series, but the engravers who produced them were no mere imitators of the work of others. They gave free and spontaneous expression to their own ideas, and skilfully assimilated alien models with their own national tradition. The masterly execution of these coins is only matched by the elegance of their design, and they are justly regarded as among the finest examples of Indian art.
The Medieval Period (A.D. 600–1200)

During the six hundred years that followed the Gupta age, architecture gradually assumed the more important rôle in the evolution of Indian art. It was during this age that the different styles of architecture were evolved and led to the construction of the magnificent temples which we see to-day all over India.

Broadly speaking, there were two important styles of architecture,—Indo-Aryan or North-Indian, and Dravidian or South-Indian. The difference lies mainly in the shape of the sikhara or the high tower-like superstructure which now almost universally surmounts the cella or the shrine containing the image of the deity. The North Indian sikhara (see illustration on p. 238) has the appearance of a solid mass of curvilinear tower, bulging in the middle and ending in almost a point. The South Indian sikhara (see p. 242) looks like a pyramid made up of successive storeys each smaller than, and receding a little from, the one beneath it. This also ended in a small round piece of stone as its crowning member. Both types of sikharas were minutely carved with decorative sculptures.

There is another essential difference between the two styles of architecture. In South Indian temples pillars play an important part while they are altogether absent in edifices constructed in the North Indian style.

North India

Temples with curvilinear sikharas are found all over Northern India, and there are large groups of them at Bhuvalnesvar in Orissa, and Khajurāho in the State of Chattarpur in Central India. Many of these temples are covered with sculpture from top to bottom, and present a grand and magnificent appearance. Infinite charm and variety are introduced in the sikhara by suitable modification of forms and application of sculptures, without destroying its essential characteristics. In the Khajurāho temples, as in most later examples, miniature sikharas are used as decorative ornaments on the body of the sikhara (see p. 239), and, in course of time, these decorative sikharas are developed into small independent sikharas, round about the central one.

It is impossible to describe in detail any one of these temples. The Lingarāja temple and the Rājarāni temple at Bhuvalnesvar, and some of the temples erected by the Chandella kings at Khajurāho, may be regarded as the finest specimens of earlier and later types. The temple of Jagannāth at Puri, though more famous,
is less beautiful. There are also a good many fine temples in Rājputāna.

In addition to the normal type, independent styles were developed in certain localities, notably Kāshmir and Rājputāna. The Mārtand temple is a good specimen of the former. As to the latter, the two temples at Dilāvarā on Mount Abu deserve special mention. They are small in dimension and not crowned by sikhara. But the dome which covers the shrine and the pillars of the mandapa in front are worked with an elegance and refinement which defy all descrip-

![Image of Lingarāja Temple, Bhubaneswar](image)

**Lingarāja Temple, Bhubaneswar**

...tion. The hard stone is worked as if it were a fragile substance like paper. The rich exuberance of their decoration displays almost superhuman skill and entitles them to rank as priceless treasures of art. One of these was erected by a minister or governor named Vimala Shā in A.D. 1032 and the other by Tejāhpāla in A.D. 1231.

**South India**

The history of architecture and sculpture in the South Indian Peninsula begins with the Pallava temples, and here, for the first
time, we meet with the Dravidian style. In addition to the temples in the capital city, Kāñchī or Conjeeveram, and other places, some of the rock-cut temples, known as the seven Pagodas or Rathas of Māmallapuram, are built in this style which may therefore be justly called the Pallava style. The latter are small temples, each of which is cut out of a single big rock-boulder. They lie near the sea-beach and adorned the town called Māmallapuram or Mahābalipuram, founded by the great Pallava
king, Narasimhavarman (seventh century A.D.) It is now an insignificant place, and its only attraction is provided by these wonderful monolithic temples and a series of fine sculptures on rock-walls (see p. 241). The temples or pagodas are named after the five Pāṇḍava brothers and their common spouse Draupadi (Dharma-rājarath; Bhim-ratha, Draupadi-ratha, etc.). These monolithic temples, wrought out of massive stone, are complete with all the details of an ordinary temple and stand to-day as an undying testimony to the superb quality of Pallava art. Among the sculptures, one large composition has obtained great celebrity. The scene represented is usually described as the penance of Arjuna, but this is very doubtful. There are also many rock-cut caves belonging to the Pallava period.

It is important to note that the earliest specimens of Pallava art already exhibit a fairly advanced stage of development. Although we have no remains of an earlier epoch, we must presume its existence. For the men who built the temples at Kāśī or Māmallapuram, or wrought the sculptures on the rocks at the
MONUMENTS OF ANCIENT INDIA

...iter place, were no novices in their art, and must have been trained in schools with art traditions of centuries and generations at their back. The problem is analogous to that offered by the finished art of the Maurya period, and its probable solution has been discussed above. But the theory that foreign artists were imported to do the work can hardly be maintained in this case. We must hold, therefore, that earlier artists mostly worked in wood or other perishable materials, and hence their work has entirely disappeared, though chance or luck might some day restore a few relics of it.

The style of Pallava architecture not only set the standard in the South Indian Peninsula, but also largely influenced the architecture of the Indian colonies in the Far East. The characteristic Pallava or Dravidian type of śikhara is met with in the temples of Java, Cambodia, and Vietnam. But there are important differences between them and the South Indian temples. The pillars which form such an important adjunct to the latter are altogether absent in the former.

The Cholas who supplanted the Pallavas in South India were mighty builders. The Dravidian style was developed and almost
perfected under them. Perhaps the best example of this style is furnished by the great Śaiva temple at Tanjore built by Rājarāja the Great. The great śikhara, consisting of fourteen storeys, rises to a height of 190 feet and is crowned by a massive dome consisting of a single block of stone. It is said that this huge block was carried to the immense height by being rolled along an inclined road, about four miles long, specially built for this purpose. The massive building is covered from the base to the top with sculptures and decorative mouldings. It occupies the centre of a courtyard with other
subsidiary chapels, but the whole area is dominated by the high tower over the shrine which is a conspicuous landmark in the locality.

There was another massive temple at Gangaikonda-cholapuram, the new capital city built by Rājendra Chola in the Trichinopoly district. The city was also adorned with a magnificent palace and a vast artificial lake, with stone embankment, more than fifteen miles long. All these are now in ruins.

Chola art is characterised by a massive grandeur. The huge structures were decorated with minute sculptures involving immense labour and infinite pains. As Fergusson very aptly remarked, the Chola artists conceived like giants and finished like jewellers.

A new development was slowly taking place in Chola art which was destined to modify Dravidian architecture in later times. This was the addition of a huge gateway, called a Gopuram, to the enclosure of the temple. Gradually, the Gopurams came to be multiplied and assumed huge proportions, being composed, like the temple itself, of a large number of superimposed storeys. Ultimately the gigantic Gopurams, sometimes large in number, came to occupy the dominant place by their towering height and lavish decoration, while the central shrine, being far less imposing, was reduced to comparative insignificance. The Gopuram at Kumbhakonam, for example, is a very splendid piece of work, by itself, but it so completely overshadows the main shrine that the structure, taken as a whole, is less pleasing and produces far less artistic effect than might have been reasonably expected.

There are many massive temples in South India, built in the same style. In addition to Gopurams, pillared halls and long colonnades were added as new features in the later temples. Modern travellers are struck with awe by the sight of the gigantic temples at Madura, Śrīrangam, Rāmeśvaram, and other places, with successive enclosures, long courts with a bewildering maze of buildings, thousand-pillared halls, and long vistas of covered colonnades which seem to fade into the distance. But most of these temples are of a much later period.

The Upper Deccan

Between North India and the Far South, which had evolved two independent styles of architecture, lay the Deccan plateau where both the styles in pure or slightly modified form, known as Chāluṅkya style, were in use. The Chāluṅkyaśas and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas who ruled in this region were great builders. Near the Chāluṅkya capital, Bādāmi, we find a number of cave-temples which are
determined to Brāhmanical gods, and contain a number of fine images and good sculptures. There are also many stone temples at Bādāmi and various other places constructed in the ordinary way. Most of these show the Pallava or Dravidian style. The same style was also largely adopted by the Rāshtrakūṭas, and the world-famous Kailāsa Temple at Ellorā is a marvellous specimen of the Dravidian style. It was constructed during the reign of Krīṣṇa I, in the latter half of the eighth century A.D. The process of construction employed in the case of the Māmallapuram Rathas was repeated here on a much bigger scale. An entire hillside was first demarcated and separated from a long range of mountains; and then a huge temple was cut out of it in the same way as each Ratha at Māmallapuram was cut out of a rock-boulder. The big temple, standing in an open court, now appears like an ordinary one, but it is merely the remnant of a solid mass of stone that once formed a part of the hill which now surrounds the temple on three sides.

The temple has a Dravidian śikhara and is elaborately carved with fine sculptures. Caves, excavated in the sides of the hills round it, contain big halls decorated with finely wrought pillars and images of various Brāhmanical divinities. The Kailāsa temple at Ellorā is a splendid achievement of art, and considering the technical skill and labour involved, is unequalled in the history of the world.

The hill at Ellorā contains a number of rock-cut caves within a short distance of the famous temple. The caves generally resemble those of the earlier period at Nāsik and Kārle, but the façade of the Viśvakarmā cave shows a pleasing modification.

The caves on the island of Elephanta, near Bombay, are also renowned and contain a number of large and remarkable images of Brāhmanical gods.

The Mysore Plateau

The Hoysalas who succeeded the later Chālukyas and ruled over the Mysore plateau in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries A.D. evolved a new style of architecture. They perhaps inherited the art-traditions of their predecessors, the Gaṅgas, during whose rule the famous colossal Jaina image of Gomata was constructed by Chāmunda Ray, a minister, in about A.D. 983. The statue, placed on the top of a hillock at Śravaṇa Belgola, is more than 56 feet high, i.e. about ten times the size of a human being. It is wrought out of a single block of stone of the hardest species. In boldness of conception and difficulty of execution, it has perhaps no rival among the sculptures of the world.
The Hoysalas displayed the same qualities, though in a different way, in the construction of their temples. These temples are not square but polygonal or star-shaped. The essential characteristics of these temples are the high bases or plinths which follow all the windings of the temple and thus offer a huge length of vacant space to be elaborately carved with sculptures. The *śikhara* is pyramidal but low, and may be regarded as a modified type of the Dravidian. The best-known example of the Hoysala style is the famous Hoysalesvara temple at Halebid or Durasamudra. It stands on a terrace, about five or six feet high, paved with stone slabs. The entire height is covered with a succession of eleven running friezes of elephants, tigers, scrolls, horsemen, and celestial beasts and birds. Each frieze has a length of 700 feet or more, and the entire surface is covered with sculptures. The lowest frieze, for example, contains no less than two thousand elephants finely executed, and most of them with riders and trappings. Similar elaboration of decoration is found in the remaining ten friezes. The Hoysalesvara temple contains, as has been aptly remarked, “one of the most marvellous exhibitions of human labour to be found even in the patient East”.

_HOYSALÉŠVARA TEMPLE, HALEBID_
Medieval Sculptures

The medieval sculptures may best be studied with reference to the temples which they adorn. There were, besides, isolated images of gods and goddesses, in considerable numbers. There were many local schools with distinctive characteristics, fostered by different ruling dynasties (e.g. Pālas, Senas, Chandellas, Kalachuris). It is neither possible nor necessary to refer in detail to these numerous schools spread all over India. The medieval sculptures are gradually dominated more and more by religious influence and less by aesthetic ideas. Sometimes they seem ugly and even horrible to the modern eye, though they represent faithfully some religious concept. The conception of Naṭarāja Śiva is one of the few valuable contributions of medieval art, especially in South India. In North India we come across both Buddhist and Brāmanical images of a fairly high standard, but there is hardly any original conception. In the later period they are influenced by Tāntrik ideas which are not always very pleasing to the modern taste.

Art in ancient India has in the main been a handmaid of religion. It has ordinarily expressed the prevailing religious faiths and beliefs, and spiritual conceptions and emotions. To understand and appreciate it properly one must have a thorough understanding of the different phases of religious evolution. In earlier periods, however, there was more of really artistic spirit, and the religious ideas were also more compatible with modern aesthetic taste. Gradually there was a decline in artistic feeling and the artists were mere mechanical instruments in rendering, to order, the later concepts of religion.

Medieval Painting

The ceilings of the rock-cut temple at Kailāsa and the adjoining caves contain pictures of a type and style different from those of Ajantā and Bāgh. The cave temple at Sittamavasal in Pudukottai (Madras) contains some fine paintings of the time of the Pallava king Mahendravarman. Chola paintings of the eleventh century A.D. have been discovered in the great temple at Tanjore. The art of painting in later periods is mostly known from illuminations on palm-leaves of manuscripts found in Eastern India and Gujarāt, but they are of much inferior quality.

Conclusion

A review of the progress and development of Indian art, such as we have attempted above, is necessary for the proper under-
standing of the high culture and refinement of the ancient Indians. For true art is an unerring expression of mind, and a national art is a true reflex of national character. Great nations of the world have left behind them unmistakable evidence of their greatness in their works of art. The nature and excellence of art constitute a sure means by which we can understand the essential characteristics of a nation and make a fair estimate of its greatness. Judged by the standard of art, Indian civilisation must be regarded as occupying a very high place indeed among those of antiquity. It exhibits not only grace and refinement but technical skill and patient industry of a very high order. Taken in a mass, Indian art offers the most vivid testimony to the wonderful resources in men and money possessed by the rulers, and the religious spirit, occasionally reaching to a sublime height, that dominated the entire population. It shows, as the national ideal, the subordination of ideas of physical beauty and material comfort to ethical conceptions and spiritual bliss. Amid the luxuries and comforts of worldly life, the thought of the world beyond never ceased to exercise a dominant influence. The changes in spiritual ideas and ideals, from the sublime purity of early Buddhism to the less pleasing forms of the Tāntrik cult, are also reflected in art. A more detailed study of the subject is beyond the scope of the present work, but its meaning and significance for the correct interpretation of ancient Indian life must be clearly grasped by every student of History.