India may be assumed on the evidence of the image No. 1 and other evidences.

2. **Gupta style**

The transition from the Kushāna to the Gupta style of sculpture is well marked, and the characteristic differences between the two are easy to define on the basis of the images of Buddha and Bodhisattva of the two styles. The heavy stolidity and earthliness of the Kushāna images offer a striking contrast to the “delicate, reposeful and intensely spiritual type of Buddha in the Gupta period.” It is not necessary for our present purpose to trace the different stages in the process of evolution which gradually led to the shifting of emphasis from the mere physical aspect to the spiritual concept of the divinity. For this is not illustrated by the sculptures in Bengal.

The Gupta sculpture is presented in its best form in the Buddha images of Śārnāth which may be said to be the product of the classical age and show the highest grade of excellence which the Indian art ever reached. It is also regarded as the best exponent of the artistic conception of the highest spiritual ideals in India. Its chief characteristics are not only a delicacy and refinement of form and a relaxed attitude indicated by the calmness of the face, the disposition of the two hands avoiding harsh angles at the elbows noticed in the Kushāna images, and, generally speaking, graceful pose of the body in place of the erect posture. In the words of R. P. Chanda “The Median line instead of being perpendicular and dividing the body into two exactly equal halves, bends into a graceful curve by the inclination of the torso to one side and throwing the weight of the body on one leg, so that one hip is slightly higher than the other.” This imparts to the form a degree of luteness and movement in refreshing contrast to the columnar rigidity of the images of Mathurā of the Kushāna period.

The Bengal sculptures of the Gupta age were inspired by the ideal of Śārnāth artists, but it is evident that they imparted to it something of their own, probably derived from earlier traditions which have left no visible trace. This modification is described by art critics as the “Eastern Trend” of Gupta art “distinguished by a vivacious emotion”. Stella Kramrisch describes this as “the eastern version of the classical idiom of Śārnāth.” It is characterised by
an emotional feeling which even the sublimity of the Sārnāth inspiration fails to suppress. There is, at the same time, a subtle change in plastic content and the figures acquire thereby a sensuous import, hardly to be expected in the spiritual and impersonal creations of Sārnāth.  

So far as Bengal is concerned this "Eastern Trend" is illustrated by several examples:

1. Standing image of Buddha from Bihārail (Rajshahi Dt.). It is executed in Chunar sandstone, the material used in Sārnāth, and so closely resembles the images of Buddha found at that site (cf. close-fitting dress and general style) that it may be mistaken for the latter. It may be assigned to the beginning of the fifth century A.D.  

2. The emotional trait, characteristic of the "Eastern Trend", which is subdued in No. 1, makes its appearance in the two Sūrya images, one from Kāsipur (24 Parganas Dt.) and the other from Deorā (Bogra Dt.).

These two Sūrya images also exhibit, from iconographical point of view, some development as compared with those of the Kushāṇa period noted above, such as the single wheel of the chariot, seated charioteer and two additional attendants, Ushā and Pratyūshā, to which reference has been made before. Both the figures show the chief traits of Gupta style, but "in physiognomical form each reveals a certain sensuous grace". They have been assigned "to the sixth century A.D. in view of their resemblance with those of the panels of Daśāvatāra temple at Jhānsi."

4. The gold-plated bronze image of Mañjuśrī from Mahāsthān (Bogra Dt.), now in the Museum of V.R.S. Rajshahi, also shows definite marks of Gupta style. This graceful, and exquisitely modelled figure is one of the best specimens of the Bengal school of sculpture of this period. Artistically viewed, it presents several features of special importance. Its simple naturalism and the paucity of ornaments offer a refreshing contrast to "the inordinate taste for over-ornamentation and complexity of design which became prominent factors in all artistic attempts of the later period." On these grounds the image has been referred to the sixth century A.D. The image is of great interest for its gold-plating which shows an advanced skill in the casting of metal images. This is the earliest known gilt bronze so far discovered not only within the limits of Bengal but even in Eastern India. It is almost certain that there were earlier specimens, for otherwise it is difficult to explain the state of perfection reached
by this image, as evidenced by the fact that its gold-plating, though
"thinner ever than an egg shell" still sticks to the surface (though it
has peeled off in many places) after the lapse of nearly 1400 years. 63

With the exception of some sculptures fixed on the basement wall
of the great temple at Pāhāṛpur, the date of which is a matter of
dispute, the four figures, mentioned above, practically represent all
that we know of the sculptures in Bengal exhibiting the idiom of
Gupta art, namely, a combination of the sublime spiritualism and
the emotionalism of its eastern version, as Stella Kramrisch puts it. 64

Mention may also be made of stucco heads belonging to the
Gupta and Post-Gupta periods excavated at Rājbāḍīdāṅgā (ancient
Karṇasuvarga in Murshidabad Dt.). 65

Reference may be made to some images which belong to the
period of transition from the Gupta to the period of fully developed
Bengal school of sculpture which took a definite shape during the
Pāla-Sena period (8th to 12th century A.D.). First in point of date
are two octo-alloy images unearthed together from Deulbāḍī
(Tippera Dt.), and probably belong to the same period. The first is an
inscribed image of Sarvāṇi (p. 78) of the time of the Khaḍga dynasty
ruling in this region in the 7th century A.D. It may thus be definitely
dated—a rare thing in the history of sculptures in Bengal. This
image has been described above (p. 550). The second is a miniature
of Śūrya in the Dacca Museum, shown as seated—a rather rare
specimen. Another metal image of the same style is the image of
Śiva standing erect, found at Manir Tat described above (p. 544). To
the same period also probably belongs the Vishṇu image of
Kākadiṅgi and, somewhat later, the Vishṇu-Vāmana image found
in West Dinajpur and now in the Asutosh Museum of Calcutta
assigned to the eighth-ninth century A.D. To the same period also
belong three beautiful bronze images, two Buddhist and one of
Gaṇeśa found at Rājbāḍīdāṅgā.

A small seated image of Tārā of about seventh century has been
found amid the ruins of a Gupta temple at Karṇasuvarga
(Rājbāḍīdāṅgā). 66 These images indicate, in their plastic form and
content, an intermediate stage between the domination of the Gupta
idiom of art and the growth of a distinct school of sculpture in
which the regional trends and tendencies are clearly traceable.
The marks of transition are thus described by S. K. Saraswati:
"We find in the stiff and erect Sarvāṇi a likely antecedent of the
conventional Pāla image. The surrounding rim to which the hands
of the goddess and other ill-fitting decorative devices serve as struts anticipates the stela composition of Pāla sculpture. The Śiva image from Manir Tat as well as the Vishṇu from Kākadighi foreshadow also the composition of the conventional type of Pāla images. The Sūrya image with its composite elements of attendants, charioteer, horses, etc., represents not a very distant approach to the full-fledged stela composition of Pāla art. Some critics may condemn a Pāla sculpture as being stiff, rigid and conventional. But one should not forget that the more rigid lines of the main figure in the composition seem to be consciously contrasted with the flowing rhythm of the attendant figures, the vigour of the animal mount and of the decorative motifs. This characteristic of Pāla art is even now conspicuous in these seventh century images in which the rhythmic flexions of the female attendants in the image of Sarvāṇī, the vigour and spirited attitudes of Uṣhā and Pratyūṣhā and of the horses in the Sūrya image offer pleasing contrasts to the stiff attitudes of the main deities, one standing perpendicularly erect in rigid samapadasthānakā and the other seated in clear paryāṅka-bandha. What later on came to be known as the Pāla type of image is clearly reflected in the images under notice, but as the term Pāla would be an anachronism they should be better termed as pre-Pāla.”

III. SCULPTURES AT PĀHĀRPUR

Reference has been made above to the great temple at Pāhārpur. The lower part of the basement wall of this temple is decorated with sixty-three stone sculptures in a fair state of preservation. Before describing the subjects of these sculptures it is necessary to make a few general remarks.

In the first place, there is a great variation among these sculptures in regard to artistic style. Some of them follow the Gupta tradition of ‘eastern version’ referred to above, but many others, forming a majority of the group, show, according to K. N. Dikshit, S. K. Saraswati and others, “a distinct original tendency in which one may recognise the beginnings of the Bengali school.” Midway between the two there is another group which may be regarded as a compromise between the first two. It is noteworthy that the majority of each of these three groups use a distinct material, namely grey sandstone (Group I), bluish-basalt (Group II) and black basalt (Group III).
Secondly, although the temple is built in a Buddhist monastery, the subject matter of almost all the sculptures is taken from the Brāhmaṇical religious literature.

Thirdly, and this is the most important of all, the distribution of the sculptures around the basement does not follow any systematic plan.

Thus while all the projecting angles (with one or two doubtful cases) have sculptured niches on both sides, the number of niches containing sculptures in the intermediate spaces between these angles widely vary, there being none in the north-western sector, only four each in the north-eastern and south-western, and quite a large number in the south-eastern.

Various suggestions have been made to explain this irregularity, but the most reasonable one seems to be the one expounded by S. K. Saraswati after discussing the weak points in other views. He observes:

"The foregoing analysis leads to the evident conclusion that the intermediate niches and sculptures, whether on the main walls or between the projecting angles, did not form part of the original plan, which admits of stone sculptures only at the angular projections, one on each face, as pieces de accent. Such an inference gains further strength when one finds that the sculptures in these projections are almost always of approximately the same height corresponding to the height of the plinth, executed in the same kind of material, pertain to the popular narrative themes (having hardly any cult significance), and belong to a popular idiom of art, quite distinguished from the classical and hieratic, but intimately related to the vast number of terracottas—undoubtedly part of the original decorative scheme—stylistically as well as iconographically. These sculptures, assignable to a period not earlier than the eighth century A.D., primarily as binding the corners of this stupendous brick monument, come in the logic of a well-planned decorative arrangement, and the construction of the monument in all its essential elements during the period of Dharmapāla may safely be postulated. The intermediate niches, mostly fitted in sculptures pertaining to the Brāhmaṇical faith, appear to have been provided for in later times to accommodate sculptures, as gathered from the earlier monuments at the site or in the neighbourhood. When one takes into consideration the eclectic nature of the Pāharpur establishment in the later phases of its existence the subsequent fixing up of
Brāhmanical sculptures on the walls of the temple, avowedly belonging to a Buddhist establishment, might be attributed to the followers of the Brāhmanical faith who had already begun to frequent and even reside within the establishment. During the long life of the Pāhārpur monastery, necessitating successive periods of repairs and renovations, it is only reasonable to apprehend that the existing niches were more than once disturbed and that even new ones were added. This may account for some, but only a few, sculptures of the second group now appearing at the corners, pieces that can be definitely recognised as belonging to the corners now filling up the intermediate niches, or reliefs belonging to the basement decoration being picked up from the upper levels of the monastic cells.”

On the basis of this theory we may now discuss the sculptures from the point of view of style and age.

It was at first held by both Dikshit and R. D. Banerji that the central temple at Pāhārpur with all the sculptures on the face of its walls was built in the sixth century A.D. There is, however, now a general consensus of opinion that the temple, along with the monastery surrounding it, was constructed by Dharmapāla (c. 770-810 A.D.). It is also agreed, as stated above, that the sculptures stylistically belong to different classes or categories. But some, not all, hold further that an analysis of them would show that the three groups belong to different chronological periods. Here, again, we may accept the views of Saraswati who is the chief exponent of the theory regarding the main characteristics of the style exhibited by each group.

The first group is represented by only a few specimens. The finest among them all is an amatory couple described by Dikshit as representing Kṛishṇa and Rādhā. But this identification is opposed by many on the ground that the Rādhā-Kṛishṇa cult cannot be traced back to the eighth century A.D. In view of the fact that many scenes from the traditional life of Kṛishṇa are depicted at Pāhārpur, the utmost that can be said is that the male figure represents Kṛishṇa. It has been suggested that in such a case the female figure may be Rukmiṇī or Satyabhāmā. Among other sculptures of this group may be mentioned the images of the river goddess Yamunā, Balarāma and Śiva.

The characteristics of this group from artistic point of view are analysed as follows:

“The bodily forms, though generally heavy, show a soft and
tender modelling and a refinement and delicacy of features. It is only in the so-called Rādhā-Kṛishṇa (?) sculpture that we find slender body types. In case of the male figure we usually find the broad chest smoothly gliding down to a narrow waist, whence in its downward course the line again bulges a little at the hips and gradually flows down to the pedestal in a soft and sensuous modelling of the legs. The bulging breasts and hips and the soft and graceful folds of the belly in case of the female figure add to the beauty of the female form. In linear scheme we have always a smooth and gliding rhythm which gives an impression of soft elasticity and pliability all through. The features are well defined and the forms well proportioned."

The ornaments are simple and in good taste and there is no overcrowding as in the later sculptures. "Plastically, too, this group of sculptures at Pāhārupur exhibit charming features. The naivete, suavity and massiveness are all enlinked and synthetised into pleasing specimens of art which appear to be nearer to those of the best days of Gupta classical idiom. The drawing of the figures is generally spirited and the attitude is not only easy but graceful and the expression dignified. The smooth and gliding linear effect is also remarkable. The full round breasts and the bulging hips of the female figures do not affect at all the soft flowing line. In these sculptures the refined sensuousness of the eastern trend of the Gupta classical idiom is found to be fully valid together with a certain abstraction derived from the Sārnāth trend.""

The second group of sculptures, numbering 15, represent several scenes in boy Kṛishṇa's life, such as (1) uprooting the two Arjuna trees, (2) wrestling contest of Kṛishṇa and Balarāma with Chānuṛa and Mushtika, the wrestlers of Kāmsa, and (3) slaying of the demon Keśin. In addition there are images of Indra, Agni, Yama and Kuvera. There are several images of Śiva and at least one of Gaṇapati. The identification of three images is doubtful, as they have been identified, respectively, both as (1) Brahmā and Bṛihaspati, (2) Śiva and Chandra, and (3) Śiva or Manu.

The characteristic features of these sculptures are thus described: "They are marked by a comparative heaviness all through. The bodily forms are usually flabby and distended. A certain definition of features is evidently there, but there is not the same refinement and delicacy as in the first group of sculptures. In form and proportion, too, these sculptures fail to reach the standard of
the first. Again, one misses in this group the gliding linear rhythm of the first, and at times the line seems to be sharply broken. Though the sculptures are sometimes marked by lively actions and movements (cf. the panel showing Kṛiṣṭhṇa and Balarāma fighting with Chānūra and Mushṭika), in case of the simple standing figure there may be noticed a straightening and stiffening of the attitude, and the legs, with slight or no modelling, look more like columns supporting a rather heavy torso.”

While independent images form the majority of the second group, the narrative reliefs far exceed these in number in the third group. The sculptures are not well preserved due perhaps to the coarse material used, and it is not easy to identify or interpret them as the details are mostly worn away. Subject to this some of the sculptures may be identified as

(1) Devakī handing over new-born Kṛiṣṭhṇa to Vasudeva.
(2) Vasudeva carrying the baby from Kaṁsa’s prison to Gokula.
(3) Child Kṛiṣṭhṇa tasting stolen butter.
(4) Sports of Kṛiṣṭhṇa and Balarāma with cowherd boys.
(5) Kṛiṣṭhṇa’s dalliance with the cowherd girls.
(6) Kṛiṣṭhṇa’s slaying of Pralamba.
(7) Fight between Kṛiṣṭhṇa and Arjuna in the well-known episode of the abduction of Subhadrā by the latter,—or the fight between Indrajit and Lakshmana.
(8) Fight between Rāvaṇa and Jaṭāyu over the abduction of Sitā by the former.
(9) Austerities of Triśira.
(10) Kṛiṣṭhṇa’s fight with Kaṁsa or meeting of Rāma and Lakshmana with Bharata and Satrughna.
(11) A woman standing with crossed legs and holding branches of a tree with a child in her right, has been doubtfully interpreted as the scene of the birth of Gautama Buddha.

Apart from these doubtful cases there are two sculptures that may be definitely identified. One is the scene of Kṛiṣṭhṇa’s holding up Mount Govardhana, and an image of Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara, the only definitely Buddhist sculpture in Pāhārpur.

Among the miscellaneous subjects mention may be made of the following:

(1) Graceful female figures dancing in elegant poses, or apparently marking time in tune with dance by beating cymbals. There
are also other dancing scenes showing different poses described in the Nāṭyaśāstra.

(2) Several figures of the Dvārapālas.

(3) Several groups of amatory couples in one of which the male figure puts one hand round the neck of the female and presses her breast with the other. These are differentiated from the so-called Rādhā-Kṛishṇa figures mentioned above by the lack of restraint and elegance and the absence of halos over the heads.

The other sculptures represent a variety of subjects such as scenes of daily life of various types of people, popular stories, two ascetics absorbed in discussion, Kinnaras, Vidyādharaś, scenes of fight, frolic, etc.

The following comments are made on the artistic style of the third group of sculptures by Saraswati:

"The figures are exceptionally heavy with neither the proportion nor the definition of form. In case of the single standing figures, which happily are not too many, the legs are perfect columns supporting in each case a rather heavy bust. The hands too look like staffs with arms and palms distorted to an extent. The execution and modelling are coarse and crude in the extreme. The features invariably are too harshly modelled and there is little or no attempt at all at transitional planes. Instead of the graceful and naturalistic folds of the belly, which we notice in the first and sometimes in the second group of sculptures, we have in this group extremely crude and schematic lines. The smooth and gliding linear rhythm is altogether lacking. The eyes are bulging and the mouth is perfectly crescent-shaped. The heavy drapery hangs down completely covering the body underneath or, in a majority of instances, we find on each figure a close-fitting garment, which looks like a pair of shorts, clinging fast to the waist and the thighs. Instead of the elegant girdles and ornaments and pleasing decorative designs that we see in the first group of sculptures, we have in the third crude and heavy imitations of the same. Quite surprisingly, however, these sculptures are almost invariably distinguished by the most lively action and naturalistic and unsophisticated expression." Saraswati further adds, "such a grouping as the above is unmistakable in the Pāhārpur sculptures, and in view of this varied contrast in workmanship and artistic quality, it is difficult to hold that all of them belong to a single period."
In his opinion, the three groups which belonged to different periods of time and represent more or less gradual evolution of the Bengal school of art, may be referred, respectively, to the sixth, seventh, and eighth century, though it is regarded as possible that both the first and the second groups belong to the seventh century A.D.  

He further suggests that while the first two groups show respectively pure and subdued Gupta plastic traits, the third group "represents a genuine and undiluted indigenous tradition."  

IV. SCULPTURES OF THE PĀLA & SENA PERIODS  

1. Introduction  

As noted above, the sculpture of Bengal (as of many other regions of the rest of Northern India) up to the seventh century A.D. was profoundly influenced and to a large extent inspired by the traditions of the classical Gupta art, but local traditions and ideas gradually began to assert themselves from the end of the seventh or beginning of the eighth century A.D.  

These ultimately led to the evolution of a regional school of sculpture with its own distinctive and characteristic features, which may be truly called the Bengal School of Sculpture. This art flourished from the eighth to the end of the Hindu rule at the beginning of the thirteenth century A.D. covering the periods of Pāla and Sena rule in Bengal.  

There was no doubt transition and evolution during these four centuries, but the process of evolution was a continuous one through broad stages which have been clearly marked by art critics. It would be convenient, therefore, to begin with a brief account of the general features, followed by a short description of important specimens characteristic of each period, and conclude with general observations on the evolution of the artistic style.  

2. General Features  

Most of the sculptures are carved out of what is known as Kashṭi-pāthar, a sort of black stone, both fine and coarse-grained, quarried in the Rajmahal hills, the nearest and the most easily accessible source of stone from the point of view of the plains of Bengal. There are also metal images cast in brass or octo-alloy
(āṣṭādhaṭu) of eight metals, namely, copper, tin, lead, antimony, zinc, iron, gold and silver. One or two gold and silver images are also known. The magnificent head from Deopārā is a special preparation of unburned clay, covered and made watertight with the help of vajralepa, a decoction of buffalo hide. A figure carved in ivory and some wooden carvings have also come down to us. The large majority of stone-images, particularly those in the earlier period, are stelae carved in relief. But there was a gradually growing tendency to model in the round which reached its culmination only towards the end of the period. "The relief becomes more and more independent from the stelae background, so much so that sometimes single metal figures modelled in the round are connected only by struts with the back slab, and in stone stelae the back slab is cut along the edges of the central figures in order to give them an appearance of images in the round." 

'The sculpture of this period centres round the images of gods and goddesses represented as human figures, the delineation being regulated by canonical injunctions which, in effect, means a combined product of realism and abstraction with religious and sensuous suggestiveness. Following in the footsteps of Sanskrit poets the sculptors also made a conscious effort to exaggerate the masculinity of the male and femininity of the female figure. Shoulder of the male figure is broad like that of the bull, and the waist, slender like that of the lion, while the female figures have over-large round breasts and bulging hips. These features were the result of following the old artistic traditions sanctioned by the sādhanaṇālā and handed down from generation to generation. The exaggeration was the result of an attempt on the part of the artists to make the actual appearance conform, as far as possible, to the canonical regulations and abstract idea evolved from inner contemplation. The same idea which leads to exaggeration also accounts for suppression of details. The sinews and veins of most of the figures are made invisible in order to convey the idea of a superman, the placid face showing no signs of any worry or emotion, and the figure stands erect in an abstract posture of meditation or concentration. Sometimes, however, we come across portly figures of deities, while those of destructive nature like Chāmudā are made to appear as emaciated, almost a skeleton covered by veins. Further, not only the size of the whole figure but also that of each limb is regulated by canonical directions. Although realistic anatomical details are generally suppressed in Indian art, the Pāla and Senā
sculptures not unoften exhibit the supple roundness of the flesh or soft fleshliness. The scanty and almost transparent garments were intended to show as much as possible of the firm skin of the body, with its smooth surface of sensuous satisfaction. For the same purpose, the static body of single figures, standing stiffly on both legs like the trunk of a tree, is sometimes shown in seated or reclining postures (vajraparyāṅka motive). This was facilitated by the canonical conception of the different poses of the body and the mudrā or attitude of hands. But whatever the attitude—animated or violent—the facial expression always indicates calmness and bliss.

The stela containing the divine image is designed like a throne. It has a plinth, with one or more projections on which are carved, along with other decorations, the figures of the devotees and the vāhana of the deity and the lotus flowers on which the god rests. At first, only a simple prabhāvali surrounded the deity, but gradually the ornamentation grew richer and richer by the introduction of leogryph, kinnara or haṁsa motives on the sides of the throne and above its lintel which terminated in makara-devices. A halo and gandharvas flying in the clouds are placed above the figure of the main deity and on his right and left. He occupies the central position of the stela with the smaller figures of attendant deities seated on lotus pedestals on either side.

“In the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries, the accompanying elements, in spite of their seeming exuberance and sensuous luxuriousness, maintain a balance, but in the twelfth, not unoften they simply overwhelm the main figures by their overgrowth.”

3. Stages of Evolution

a. Introduction

The number of images which bear a definite date during the period 800 to 1200 A.D. is very few and may be listed as follows with approximate date according to the chronology adopted in this book (pp. 161-2)

1. Rajibpur (Dinajpur Dt.) Image of Sadāśiva (c. 953 or 1150 A.D.) (B. 62).
2. Baghaura (Tippera Dt.) Image of Vishnū (c. 991 A.D.) (B. 36).
3. Kulkuḍī (Faridpur Dt.) Image of Sūrya (c. 1021 A.D.) (B. 86)
4. Betkā (Dacca Dt.) Image of Vāsudeva (c. 1032 A.D.) (B. 87).
5. Paikor (Birbhumi Dt.) Image of Manasā (C. 3) (during the reign of Vijayasena doubtfully identified with the Sena King of that name who ruled from c. 1095 to c. 1158 A.D.)
6. Dacca Image of Chaṇḍī (c. 1181 A.D.) (C. 10)

Thus of the hundreds of images, so far discovered, the dates of only four (2, 3, 4, 6) are definitely known, and those of two others are very doubtful. Of these No. 1 is placed by some scholars about the middle of the tenth century while others refer it to the middle of the twelfth. The dating of No. 5 depends upon the very uncertain question about the identification of king Vijayasena.

It is thus quite clear that all the views about the approximate dates of the sculptures and the gradual evolution of artistic style depend upon a theoretical assessment of the stylistic trend. It is, therefore, difficult to accept the following statement of S. K. Saraswati based on the known dates of Nos. 1-4, and 6. "These furnish us with five milestones from about 990 A.D. to 1180 A.D., and help us to determine the stylistic trend with more or less certainty."80

It is true that there are many images found in Bihar which are dated in the regnal years of the Pāla kings, and the writer, quoted above, thinks that the conclusion based upon the five dated images of Bengal "is further reinforced by dated images from Bihar" which also enable us to determine the chronological sequence of sculptures in Bengal during the period 800 to 990 A.D. for which no dated image is available. But the same writer admits, a few lines later, that "the stylistic evolution in Bihar does not exactly correspond to that in Bengal" and rightly points out that "in Bihar the Gupta tide and tradition persist for a longer period than in Bengal proper, where the regional element asserts itself with power and strength earlier than was the case in Bihar. There is also a considerable difference in facial features, emotional characteristics and decorative details."81

There seems to be no doubt that other art critics who have discussed the evolution of Pāla and Sena sculptures have relied largely on the images of the Pāla period found in Bihar.82 The conclusions they have reached should thus more properly be regarded as applicable to the Pāla sculptures in general, and, specifically speaking, to those of Bihar rather than Bengal.

Subject to these general observations, we may proceed to give a short account of the evolution of sculptures in Bengal during
800-1200 A.D. In view of the paucity of materials, the opinions are bound to differ and the following account is based on the views of the latest writer on the subject.

b. NINTH CENTURY A.D.

No dated image of this period is found in Bengal, but a large number of such stone and metal images has been found in Bihar. The following images in Bengal are referred to this period.

1. Vishnu on Garuḍa, Lakshmankāṭi (Barisal) (Private collection)
2. Clay head, Kalinjar (Bogra Dt.) (Rajshahi Museum)
3. Tārā, Mangalbari (Dinajpur Dt.) (Do)
4. Vārāhi, (Hooghly Dt.). (Ind. Arch. 1955-6, p. 62)

"These are modelled so as to suggest the soft texture of the flesh and skin. The general tendency is one of the fulness of modelling. In some, however, this fulness becomes somewhat stiff and coagulated. It is difficult to say whether this denotes the work of a later generation or not. A calm contemplation is on every face, but the modelling of the fleshy body invariably reveals a contented sensuousness. The shape of the stelae is generally half-round at the top, occasionally with slight suggestions of a pointed end. The folds of garments cling to the body like a wet sheet, and their folds are indicated by schematic and parallel scratches or ridges with a diaper pattern of rosettes or of lozenge-shapes."^{83}

c. TENTH CENTURY

To this period have been assigned the following images, among others.

1. Lokeśvara Śiva, Barisal (A.M.)
2. Garuḍa, Nagail (Rajshahi Dt.) (R. M.)
3. Jambhala, Sukhbaspur (Dacca Dt.). (In situ)
4. Manasā (N. Bengal) (I. M.)
5. Tārā, Dondai (Rajshahi Dt.) (R. M.)
6. Manasa, Khidrapalli (Rajshahi Dt.) (R. M.)
7. Varāha, Silimpur (Bogra Dt.) (R. M.)
8. Indrāṇī Paogachha (Bogra Dt.) (R. M.)
9. Buddha, Ujani (Faridpur Dt.) (In situ)
10. Rishabhanātha, Surohar (Dinajpur Dt.) (R. M.)
11. Mahishamardini (Hooghly Dt.) \textit{(Ind. Arch. 1955-6, p. 62)}.
13. Seated Bronze Buddha, Maynamati, (Tippera Dt.) (Ibid)
14. Vishnu, Navagram (Murshidabad Dt.) (Ibid)

Generally speaking, “the tenth century retains the quality of the ninth.” But the following distinctive features may be noted:

“Out of the soft fleshliness controlled within definite outlines the 10th century evolves a powerfully massive form of the body which is shaped with a disciplined vigour, and shows a conscious strength that seems to swell the outline from within (Nos. 1-9 above). In some instances this is controlled by a strict discipline even to the extent of petrification of the flesh, but in most cases it is a soft and tender discipline and the vigour is spread out into the surface. This vigour transformed the softness of the fleshly form into mighty majestic roundness. Almost all specimens are moulded into high relief and the trunk and limbs are all pregnant with the subdued vigour of a mighty form. Throughout the century Pala art retains this quality.”

\textit{d. ELEVENTH CENTURY}

The following images, among others, are referred to this period.

1. Surya, Jora (Rajshahi Dt.). (R. M.)
2. Surya, Kukudi (Faridpur Dt.). Dated
3. Buddha, Šivabāṭi (Khulna Dt.). (In situ)
4. Vāsudeva, Betka (Dacca Dt.) Dated
5. Vishnu, Baghaura (Tippera Dt.) Dated
6. Hṛishikeśa, Sāgardighi (Murshidabad Dt.) (V.S.P.M.)
7. Gajalakshmi, Belāmlā (Bogra Dt.) (R. M.)
8. Sarasvati, Chhātingram (Bogra Dt.) (R. M.)

10.-11. Two Bronze images of Vishnu (Murshidabad Dt.)
12. Chlorite statue of a bearded royal personage (?) with family and attendants, from Contai (Midnapore Dt.). \textit{Ind. Arch. 1957-8, p. 72}.

According to Saraswati the dated image No. 5 above (c. 991 A.D.) “may be taken as stylistic index of specimens for the next three or four generations. The deep broad outlook of the 10th century becomes somewhat thin and circumscribed, and the elegance of the
slender bodily type gradually becomes more evident. The legs have stiffened to a great extent and given up all elasticity, even in postures that suggest movement; the knees are still modelled but not so perfectly as in the 9th century specimens; they tend to be indicated by an incised curved line. The upper trunk, with its liveliness of graduated modelling and a face with a blissful happy expression, is, however, in striking contrast with the lower part of the body. Accessories, namely, the attendant divinities, the architectonic decorations, the flying gandharvas, the motives on the slab, and the ornaments decorating the main and accompanying figures become more independent, and they have all an equal share in the general effect of the stelae. They introduce a sort of liveliness which is still kept in balance, but is already on its way to overwhelm the main figure by their sumptuousness. The emphasis on the decorative aspect is, clear, which, with the progress of time, gradually tends to be almost playful, and later on, voluptuous in its formal treatment and appearance. Curls of hair and fluttering scarves are on their way to increase, and deep perpendicular and oblique cuts introduce a full display of light and shade. Independence of ornaments, the flexions of the accompanying figures and playfulness of the rich decorations keep on increasing round iconographic conventions. The bodily form becomes stereotyped, but the elegance of the modelling is retained throughout the century; the facial type is fully expressive of sensitiveness, and whatever its shape, is enlivened by a downward stroke of the chin, full round lips and heavily-laden eyes. The garments are set as within ridges against the modelling of the body, and in some specimens the hem of the robe is modelled with tenderness and with wavy curves. In some specimens one also notices eye-brows that have double curves, bending once more towards their outer ends; this accentuates the sensitiveness of the eyes which in the images of the next century becomes more and more effective. The stela is either rounded or pointed at the top, but already its division into three or four architectonic parts becomes clear. The pedestal forms a definite unit; the main figure rises up from the pedestal in one plastic mass: but the back slab with its accompanying figures and accessory decorations is treated in separate masses controlled within different architectonic units. The compositional scheme is thus well-determined, and within this scheme there is an ever-growing attempt at introducing liveliness with the help of flexions of the body, decorations of ornaments which gradually
dissolve into single items very delicately chiselled, and elaborate display of light and shade with the help of deep cuts, either oblique or perpendicular or both.\textsuperscript{85}

e. Twelfth Century

The following images, among others, may be referred to this period.

1. Chaṇḍī, Dacca. Dated \textit{In situ}.
7. Śiva-Iśāna, Byabatterhāṭ (Dt. Midnapore) (Ibid).
8. Seated Sadāśiva from West Dinajpore (Ibid).

The characteristics of the style of this period have been thus summed up:

"The slender bodily type and the formal treatment of the preceding century are retained, but the modelling becomes a bit more petrified (Vishṇu, Rangpur). The sensitiveness of the facial expression disappears and is replaced by a serious heaviness; the modelled eyebrows seem to exist without any significance, merely for decoration; the legs have become almost column-like without any elasticity, and are decorated by, an incised round line to indicate the knee. The relief in three or four architectonic units is covered by dense and heavy multitudes of accompanying figures and decorative details which grow more and more sumptuous and elaborate, and ultimately cover the compositional scheme altogether. Not only the modelling but also the volume becomes petrified and gradually loses its plastic significance. Ornaments are inordinately lavish and sumptuous, and do not seem to be connected organically with the figures. The accessories and ornaments, independent by themselves, are exaggerated to the utmost. They lose their significance and degenerate into decorations. The flexions of the body become extended to their utmost limit; bends to their last possibilities are
employed; but the expression of movement is only that of pattern without any suggestiveness. . . . The facial features, in spite of voluptuous and full curly lips and doubly-curved eye-brows and smiling expression, become pointed, almost to a triangle, and rigid, without any deep spiritual significance. The blissfully happy and glowing expression of meditation that had been attained in the preceding centuries is now laden with a moist expression of heavy enjoyment of deep pleasure of a past moment (cf. No. 1, above, the Chaṇḍi Image of the 3rd year of Lakṣhmanasena). One, however, notices here and there signs of a new artistic inspiration, of new creativeness amid a degenerate system that was already on its way to suffocation by worldly exuberance. A spontaneous power of modelling in a completely round form inspires a tough and vigorous artistic form in some rare specimens, and in spite of sump- tuousness of ornaments and a precise outline it reveals a conscious dignity and strength, a freshness of elementary experience that could yet save the art from final stagnation (Gaṅgā, Deopara). But that was not to be. Left to itself, the art could perhaps yet find out new channels or new experiences, but all chances were set at rest by the rapid rush of Islam."

The writer starts with the observation that "the stylistic index of the 12th century is supplied by two images, one of Saḍāṣiva from Rājibpur inscribed in the reign of Gopāla III and another of Chaṇḍi from Dacca." As mentioned above (pp. 164-5), the former is more probably to be referred to the reign of Gopāla II who ruled about 991 A.D. and not of Gopāla III whose reign falls about the middle of the 12th century. A generalisation of twelfth century images based on the style of an image which was very likely two centuries earlier shows the weakness of the conclusions. Curiously enough, the general description of the style of the twelfth century, quoted above, does not seem at all applicable to the Rājibpur image. But this one instance is sufficient to warn us against placing too much reliance on generalisation of style of a particular period. At the same time we should not ignore the fact that in the absence of a sufficient number of dated images, such theoretical generalisation on the basis of style is the only means left to us to form even a rough idea of the gradual process of evolution. Of course, we should remember, also, that the style is not always evolved in a regular manner, and local and personal factors often play a prominent part in it.
4. Terracottas

In all climes and countries the artistic instinct of primitive man to make images of visible objects must have led him to select clay as the proper material. For it was easily available without incurring any cost, and it was the most tractable one—that is to say, one could give it any desirable shape far more easily than was possible in the case of any other material within reach of man, such as wood, stone or metal. There was only one serious objection against using clay as a plastic material, namely the short tenure of its life. This was partially removed by hardening the soft clay image by exposing it to the sun or burning it by fire.

The latter process also enabled man to prepare the mould so that a large number of the same image could be easily produced,—a very important point from commercial point of view. All this led to the evolution of what is known in art as 'terracotta.'

It may be easily taken for granted that this art must have flourished in hoary antiquity in the riverain plains of Bengal, where all kinds of clay suitable for good type of terracotta are within easy reach of everybody. But the earliest specimens of terracotta with artistic design, so far found in Bengal, that may be dated on grounds of style, cannot be placed long before the Maurya period.

It is also easy to imagine—what is verified by actual discoveries—that terracottas served various purposes, from objects of children's play to decoration of religious and other edifices. Accordingly, they must have been the products of skill varying in degrees from the childish and most primitive form of dolls to the finest specimen of artistic skill vying with the best stone or metal sculptures in point of duration and artistic style.

The terracotta was primarily a folk art and portrayed the familiar things and scenes such as human beings, birds, animals, floral and vegetal motifs, life of the rural people, their activities, religious beliefs, various occupations, and popular tales. These are depicted mostly in primitive or crude form, but occasionally we also find fine figures—objects of beauty for beauty's sake—showing the true instinct of a real artist. The terracottas have accordingly been divided into two broad groups. The first, which forms the great majority, belongs to the primitive type, specimens of which go back to the Indus Valley civilisation and may be seen even today, specially in villages and in the melās i.e., gatherings on festive occa-
sions. The other type, though not large in number, reminds us that there were possibly unknown and even undeveloped artistic genius who has left some imperishable memorial of his latent artistic genius in these images of perishable materials.\textsuperscript{88}

The oldest specimens of the first type are the two exotic terracotta human heads (one with pointed helmet, and both with exaggerated chin) found in the course of the excavation at Pāṇḍu Rājār Dhibi (see pp. 27 ff.) at a level which has been referred to the pre-historic period.\textsuperscript{89} Another terracotta piece having the shape of the forepart of a bull with a fan-shaped hump and perforated mouth, found at Harinārāyanpur, has been claimed to be proto-historic.\textsuperscript{90} Terracottas have been found almost in every ancient site all over Bengal which has been excavated. The following report in the \textit{Indian Archaeology} for discoveries during a single year (1955-6) would give a fair idea of the occurrence of terracottas.

"Continued search at Tamluk yielded further terracotta plaques of Suṅga and Kushān periods, some of them depicting Jātaka-scenes, and an inscribed seal with a seated Devī image of the early Pāla period. A terracotta female head was recovered from Panna in the Silavati Valley (pl. LXXIA), a series of terracotta heads from Raghunathbāri in Midnapore District and early terracotta figurines and pottery, including the Rouletted Ware, from Bachri in Howrah District and Harinārāyanpur in 24 Parganas. From Tilda, District Midnapore, came a unique object, viz., a terracotta piece with three lines of Greek inscription, the middle line of which, according to Father P. Turmes, S. J., of St. Xavier's College, Calcutta, may mean that the terracotta was an offering to the 'East Wind and the Dawn', i.e., 'the East Wind that comes with the Dawn'."\textsuperscript{91}

Prof. S. K. Saraswati has observed:

"The wealth and variety of terracotta objects discovered within recent years from different sites in lower Bengal are considerable. To these may be added the objects that had been previously found from Mahāsthān, Bāṅgarh and Birol in North Bengal, Sābbhār in Dacca (East Bengal), Gitāgram and Rāṅgāmāṭi in Murshidābād and a few other sites in different regions of Bengal."\textsuperscript{92}

One of the oldest specimens of a terracotta, showing a high degree of artistic excellence, is a female figure in rich dress and decorated with elaborate jewellery, found at Tamluk (the ancient seaport of Bengal—Tāmralipty) along with some cast coins, and exhibited in a monthly meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, in 1888.
But after a few years it disappeared and was recently rediscovered in the Indian Institute at Oxford (England). Even after its rediscovery its original findspot was unknown until E. H. Johnston of Oxford wrote an article on it with a photograph. Its identity with a photograph of the Tamluk image, exhibited in the Asiatic Society (of which a photo was fortunately published in the Society’s Journal) left no doubt that the long-lost terracotta figure—a priceless heritage of Bengal’s ancient art—was the image at Oxford described by Johnston, which was wrongly believed by him and many others to have been found at Kauśāmbī.93

The following extract from Johnston’s description would give a general idea of the figure.

“The head-dress is elaborate; the hair itself seems to be enclosed in a close-fitting bonnet (or fillet), bordered with four rows of beads and terminating in two flower tassels, the frontal hair being just visible...... On each side of the bonnet are two turban-like rolls of cloth, each bound with a belt and highly ornate. The left-hand one, which is the larger in accordance with the usual practice of this class of figure, is made up of five vertical strips with dependant tassels or strings of beads at regular intervals, while the right-hand one appears to be in a single piece, embellished with six rows of a flower ornament between which are strings of beads. Stuck into the latter are five emblems...... Their exact identification would perhaps help us to guess whom the figure represents. The lowest is an āṅkuśa...... and the middle one an axe. The two on each side of the latter are of the triśūla shape.”94 Two similar terracottas are also known, and said to have been found at Kauśāmbī. Fragments of two other terracottas have been found at Tamluk which show close resemblance to the one described above. Closely allied terracottas have been discovered at Hari-nārāyanpur and Berachampā (Chandraketugarh) in Bengal. It has been reasonably presumed that all these terracottas were the products of Bengali artists and the type is characteristic of Bengal or at least Lower Bengal to which belong all the specimens whose find-places are known with certainty.95

The beautiful specimen from Tamluk has been assigned to the second century B.C. on fairly reasonable grounds. But there is a great deal of uncertainty about its identification. Kramrisch describes it as an apsaras (celestial damsels of easy virtue famous for their power of enchanting men, particularly hermits and sages),
and identifies this particular one as Pañchachūḍā, who arose out of the churning of the ocean, according to a well-known Purānic legend. Johnston takes the image to be a mother-goddess whose cult was prevalent in Near East and extended over a large area of the ancient world. His view is based on the reference in the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus No. 1820 to an Indian Mother Goddess Maiya who is invoked as bringing the flood in the Ganges and was worshipped in the Gangetic basin as a goddess specially associated with rain and fertility. She may be the same as the goddess named Māyā in the Saundarāṇanda Kāvya of Aśvaghosha.

Tamluk has proved to be a rich quarry for ancient terracottas, and has so far yielded a large number in addition to the ones described above. A terracotta female figurine found there has been tentatively assigned to the Maurya age. Another male figure, assigned to the Śuṅga period, with two wings on the shoulders, has been found there. He holds two stalks with lotus blossoms and wears ear-studs, a heavy neck collar, and bracelets. Other beautiful and typical terracotta figurines of 3rd—2nd centuries B.C. and terracottas, assigned to the 3rd—4th century A.D., showing Kushāṇa and Gupta influence, and the lower part of “superb terracotta figurine characterized by a graceful modelling and transparent drapery of the early Gupta period” have also been found at Tamluk. A terracotta female figurine like that of the Maurya period at Tamluk, mentioned above, has been found at Pokharna (Bankura Dt.) A few other terracottas of the Śuṅga-Kushāṇa periods including yakshiṇīs and a plaque depicting a damsel dancing before a throned personage have also been found at Tamluk. The excavations at Chandraketugarh (Berachampā, 24 Parganas Dt.) and many other sites like Harinārāyanpur have yielded a rich treasure of terracottas some of which have been assigned to the pre-Mauryan period. Though such antiquity has no sure basis to stand upon, there is no doubt that a very large collection of terracottas, of varied character, some of them exhibiting a high degree of artistic merit, have been found, which may be reasonably placed between the second century B.C. and the sixth century A.D. or even later. Among the most notable ones may be mentioned the following:

1. Female figures and yakshiṇīs with elaborate head-dress tentatively assigned to the Maurya period.

2. To the Śuṅga period may be assigned a royal couple on a
caparisoned elephant led by a Mahout (driver), a scene probably depicting the Dummedha Jātaka, a figure closely resembling the Tamluk female figure (now at Oxford described above), winged male and female figures (generally regarded as images of yakshas and yakshinīs a class of demigods).

3. To the Kushāṇa period may be assigned a royal personage (?) in a chariot driven by a pair of bulls, a headless warrior, exquisitely moulded figurines showing elaborate coiffure and drapery, and an erotic plaque.

4. To the Śuṅga-Kushāṇa periods may be assigned some terracottas characterised by distinctive costumes and jewellery—noteworthy among them the dampati plaque, a toy cart with a divine couple under a shrine, unusual female figure holding a pair of fish, a plaque showing two warriors in Graeco-Roman cuirass throwing round and square coins, and a plaque with Kinnaras and dikpālas. Terracottas depicting ships with masts probably also belong to this period.100

5. To the Gupta period may be assigned “a unique terracotta plaque representing a richly adorned dancing male figure.” Terracottas of the typically Gupta period include a unique piece in the round with applied eye-balls, pinched-up nose and ears and outspread ornamented short hands shown up to the waist.”101 Some terracotta moulds and an inscribed seal also belong to this period.

Terracottas have been found in many other places in Bengal. In addition to yakshas and yakshinīs, other divine beings and mithuna (couple of men and women) are also represented on terracotta plaques. More interesting are the numerous plaques containing narrative reliefs, some of which have been identified with well-known stories like the hunting scene of Dushyanta, immortalised by Kālidāsa in his drama Abhijñāna-Sākuntala, and Jātaka stories (of the previous lives of Buddha).

The number of terracotta plaques, even of the early period, before the birth of Christ, is quite large, and these have been discovered in various sites, almost all over Bengal. These were all cast from moulds, of which a few have come to light, and the similarity of several figures in a site indicate that moulds were prepared for many castings, probably on a commercial scale. It is not unlikely, therefore, that a terracotta plaque may belong to a period much later than that indicated by its style, but the
age of the original which bore that style itself remains undis-

turbed.

The chief characteristics of the terracottas during the early cen-
turies of the Christian era are the introduction of new ethnic types, rep-
resenting the racial influx of the period, and an improvement in the plas-
tic idiom resulting in a physical form, slender and refined, and with rounded features, melting planes and flowing contours. The drapery is entirely diaphanous, and the figurines usually stand in extremely flexible attitudes unknown in the earlier epoch. A fragment-
tary terracotta female figurine of the Kushāṇa period found at Birol
(Rajshahi Dt.) belonging to this period has been described as follows :

"The face is a perfect oval, the eyes are wide open and the
cheeks rounded and full. The lady wears a short necklace which
has two taurine ornaments just over the breasts. The spherical
breasts, the sensitive modelling of the back lend to the figure an
effect of warm and sensuous beauty, the distinguishing character-
istic of the Mathura yakshīnas."

102

The terracottas of the Gupta period are comparatively much
fewer in number, and some of them fully exhibit "all the refined
traits of the Gupta plastic tradition, but the style is more human
and less hieratic and the spiritual experience is less intense."
103 A
terracotta sealing with the legend Śrī Bhadrasya in late Gupta charac-
ters and a terracotta Jain figurine have been found at Tilda (Midnap-
pore Dt.). A terracotta with Buddhist creed inscribed in characters
of the eleventh century has been found at Rāṅgāmāṭi.104

A small terracotta figure of Buddha found at Pānnā (Midnapore
Dt.) is thus described: The Buddha is "fully draped with the
folds of the drapery indicated by shallow curved lines. The head
is surrounded by a halo and within the halo are representations of
foliage, indicating apparently the foliage of the Bodhi tree. The
Bodhi tree is usually associated with the images of Buddha in
bhāmisparṣa-mudrā signifying his enlightenment. The presence
of foliage in a representation of the incident of the preaching of
the first sermon seems to be inexplicable. The plaque bears several
characters in Gupta Brāhmī script of the fourth-fifth century A.D."105
Some interesting terracotta plaques have been recently discovered in
Deulpota and Harinarāyanpur (24 Parganas Dt.). Two particular
types are specially noteworthy.

The first depicts both male and female busts and heads with
peculiar style of hair-dressing.
The second depicts a woman with a baby in arms—perhaps representing female nurses in charge of babies of royal and aristocratic families, referred to in the Divyāvadāna. These have been found in many ancient sites in North India, and referred to the Gupta period.  

New ethnic types are found in several terracottas of the period. One found at Tamluk belongs to a type "unknown in the vast range of Indian terracotta art, the likely parallels of which are to be found in the figures of the temple boys of ancient Greece. A Hellenistic physiognomy, discernible to a certain extent in the treatment of the face and of the body, and Hellenistic dress may indicate a foreign impression." Another terracotta, also from Tamluk, shows two male heads whose treatment probably follows "a simplified version of that of the Roman portrait figures." The head and bust of a figure in a third terracotta at Tamluk also show an un-Indian feature. All these are explained by the fact that Tamluk represents the ancient Tamralipti, an international port of maritime trade where the Bengali artists probably got new ideas from their intercourse with foreigners.

An innovation is noticed in the preparation of large-sized terracotta plaques which were evidently used for decorating brick temples. Another innovation of the same nature is the perforation at the top of plaques indicating that they were used as pieces of decoration hung on the wall. A human couple, evidently engaged in love-making, on a medallion shaped like a lotus flower is a good illustration of the former.

Another innovation during this period is the use of stucco as a medium of artistic expression and a head of this material found at Rāhgamati is a good illustration.

The above account would give a general idea of the terracotta art from the pre-historic to the Gupta period. But this type of art activity continued unabated at least during the next five centuries. This is proved by the terracottas of the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. unearthed by the excavations at Rājbāḍiḍāṅgā (ancient Kānasuvarṇa) and other places.

"But by far the most important series of terracottas are those found during the excavations at Pāhārpur, to which reference has been made above (p. 613). About three thousand terracotta plaques once adorned the Great Temple, but of these only a small percentage is now found in situ, while a larger percentage was found lying
about, and a still larger percentage has been destroyed, the fragments of which were found scattered about the excavated ruins of the temple. But even the comparatively small number of terracotta plaques that have survived are of very great importance from two points of view. "Technically, they represent a "local and indigenous trend," whereas hitherto the art showed "the classical and hieratic trends" prevailing in the rest of Northern India." Secondly, it is mainly an art of the common people depicting visually the life of ancient Bengal in such abundant details, as can be gleaned from no other source, literary or archaeological. Indeed, collectively, they may well be said to form a veritable museum of everyday life in Bengal in the post-Gupta and Pāla periods, depicting in a vivid manner the different types and classes of men and women, their dresses, activities, occupations, social life with all its joys and sorrows, their sports, pastimes, amusements and entertainments, religious faiths and beliefs, divine and semi-divine images, popular tales and other stories current among the common people, etc., as well as the animals, birds, fish etc. familiar to them. For a detailed account reference must be made to the Report of the Excavations at Paharpur,\textsuperscript{111} Chapter V, and the corresponding illustrations. A short account under different broad headings is given below:

\textit{a. Dress}

The usual dress of men consisted of a short dhoti, reaching the knee, and an upper scarf, though sometimes the dhoti is long enough to reach the ankles in graceful folds, one end of which is tucked up behind as a kāchhā—a remarkable similarity with the present dress of the common Bengalis. Women usually wore Śādīs, but in some instances shorts or long drawers are also noticed. Shoes as well as head-dress were lacking, but we notice elaborate coiffures of both men and women. "Men wore their hair long with thick tresses falling on the shoulder, tied a knot on the top and had curls or ringlets on the forehead kept in place by a neat fillet. Women had their hair gathered in a bunch at the back or arranged it fan-wise behind the head. Both men and women put on ornaments such as necklaces, bracelets, armlets, girdles, anklets, and ear-rings of different kinds."\textsuperscript{112}
b. Different types of men

The most interesting type is furnished by the figures of primitive men and women belonging to the Śabara tribe. The men wear a number of leaves, bound by a string, which hardly cover their nudity, but put on a cuirass for the breast, and sometimes are shown with bows in hands and quivers at their back. The Śabara woman also wears nothing but a string of leaves round her waist, but sometimes cover her breast with leaves or a narrow long strip of cloth with ends tied on the back, also a garland of leaves across her shoulders. She is represented as wielding a bow, or holding a child and dagger in her hands, or carrying a dead deer. Several Śabara couples are depicted in amorous posture, and some of the scenes are very carefully executed.

Ascetics or mendicants are a favourite theme. Sometimes they are represented with long beards, their bodies bent and in some cases reduced to skeletons, carrying staff in hand and their bowls or other earthly possessions hanging from the two ends of a pole which they carry on their shoulders.

Military activities are displayed by figures of male and female warriors clad in coats of mail and carrying gadā (stout club), sword, dagger, and shield, as well as archers seated in four-wheeled chariots, singly or facing each other in two adjacent plaques as if they were actually engaged in battle.


c. Amusements and Entertainments

Men and women are depicted as dancing in various poses and singing, beating time on pitchers, handling drums or tabors (mṛidanga), playing on vīṇā (lute) and flute, blowing trumpets, etc. Hobbies such as fishing, hunting and various acrobatic feats, figures of men and women in various postures and engaged in various occupations such as women drawing water from well or carrying pitchers of water are very common. A manuscript on a tripod and a canoe like a small craft used by fishermen indicate that the highest as well as the lowest professions of men were within the purview of the artists.

Story-telling must have been a favourite entertainment. The Purānic story of the royal sage Triśāṅku as well as popular stories
from the Pañchatantra are illustrated in the terracotta plaques. Even stories not found in the Pañchatantra, but evidently based on Aesop's Fables, are illustrated.

There are also scenes of love-making but they are not obscene.

d. Religious Ideas

A large number of legends of Kṛishṇa's life are depicted (as is also the case with the sculptures of Pāhārpur), testifying to the popularity of the Kṛishṇa cult. The scenes of Rāma and Lakshmana in exile with Ṣūgriva indicate the popularity of the Rāmāyana or Rāma legend. There are many images of Śiva, Śivalīnga (sometimes four-faced), Brahmā, Vishṇu, Gaṇeśa, and probably also of Sūrya. Images of Buddha are depicted in different mudrās, but those of Bodhisattvas far outnumber them. Among other divine and semi-divine figures may be mentioned Tārā (some with high plastic quality), Gandharvas (in one case riding a rhinoceros), Vidyādharas, etc.

e. Animal world

The animal world represented in the terracotta plaques at Pāhārpur may be regarded as "fairly complete so far as the fauna of Bengal is concerned. We find successful life-like representations of elephant, buffalo, antelope, caparisoned horse, galloping mare, camel (including Bactrian variety with double hump), couchant and running bull, cow and a calf, goat, etc. Monkeys are among the most popular themes. Among the wild animals the lion and the bear are easily the most widely figured, and there are scenes of man's combat with lion, or of lions on elephants. The tiger is comparatively rare, but we find rhinoceros. Smaller animals, such as hare, tortoise, mongoose, otter, porcupine, lizard and mice, as well as birds such as duck or goose, parrot, peacock, etc., are also depicted. There are fishes shown with a chain, and also two fishes crossing each other, which is regarded as an auspicious symbol. The tortoise and crocodile also occur.

From about the end of the Pāla period terracottas depicting human figures, animal, bird and vegetal motifs become very rare and walls of temples, unlike those at Pāhārpur, seem to have been decorated with ornamental motifs in painted or plain stucco plaster.

The antiquity of the terracotta art in Bengal poses an intriguing
problem. As stated above, terracottas showing a high degree of artistic skill were produced in Bengal in the 3rd century B.C., or even earlier, yet no stone sculpture assignable to a date before the Christian era, has yet been found, and it has been doubted whether even the few earliest sculptures were produced in Bengal or were imported from outside. The terracottas prove that the plastic art had made great progress in Bengal long before the beginning of the Christian era. This not only furnishes an argument in support of the local origin of the early pre-Gupta sculptures so far found in Bengal, but also makes it highly probable that the stone sculptures were also not unknown; but owing to the paucity of the material the number of such sculptures was very small and they have disappeared.

V. PAINTING

Literary evidence leaves no doubt that the art of painting was cultivated in India from remote antiquity for decorating walls of houses, and life-like portraits are referred to in the Pāli canonical texts as well as in the Epics and dramas. But even the most ancient paintings in India cannot be dated on any reasonable ground before the first or second century before the Christian era, and most of them are later than the first century A.D. and found in the walls of caves. Paintings were generally used for decorating the walls of houses and temples or other religious structures. As mentioned above (p. 603), most of these have been destroyed by man and nature, and the paintings also have perished with them. So far as Bengal is concerned, no extant specimen of painting may be referred to a period earlier than the 11th century A.D. The only positive reference to the cultivation of the art of painting in Bengal before that date occurs in the statement of the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hien at the beginning of the fifth century A.D., that during his stay at Tāmralipti (Tamulk) for two years he spent his time in writing out the Buddhist Sūtras and drawing pictures of images. It may be reasonably inferred from this that in Bengal, as in the rest of India, the art of painting had fairly developed at the time.

So far as actual specimens of paintings in Bengal during the Hindu period are concerned, they are, almost exclusively, the coloured illustrations in the Buddhist manuscripts. These com-
prise (I) five manuscripts of the Ashtasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, dated in the fifth and sixth regnal year of Mahāpāla,114 39th year of Rāmapāla,115 15th year of Gopāla (II)116 and 19th year of Harivarman; 117 (II) Two MSS. of the same book dated in the Nepal Era 191 (=1071 A.D.)118 and 268 (=1148 A.D.) 119 (III) three MSS. dated in the 4th year of Gopāla (II or III), 120 14th year of Nayapāla121 and 18th year after Govindapāla;122 and (IV) one Ms. dated 1015 A.D.123 and three MSS.—one of Kāraṇḍavyūha,124 one of Bodhicharyavatāra,125 and a third of Ashtasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā126 which have been referred, on palaeographic grounds, to the 12th century A.D. A few other illumined Mss. have also been noticed without any details.

It is very difficult to say how many of these Mss. were copied or illustrated within the geographical limits of Bengal and, as such, may be taken as evidence of the pictorial art of Bengal. For, excepting Harivarman, the dominion of the other kings whose regnal years are mentioned in the Mss. extended beyond Bengal (in the case of Govindapāla it did not probably include any part of Bengal), and it is not unlikely that the style of painting, like that of sculpture, in Bihar or Nepal might not exactly correspond to that of Bengal (see p. 637). Further, it is to be noted that the paintings, mentioned above, represent almost exclusively the new development of Buddhism, known as Vajrayāna and Tantrayāna (p. 527), followed only by a small section of the total population of Bengal, towards the very end of the period under review. It is, therefore, doubtful how far the pictures in these Mss. may be regarded as fairly representative of the development of the art of painting in Bengal during the Hindu period.

Subject to the above considerations a few general observations may be made in regard to the art of painting in Bengal on the basis of the coloured illustrations in the Mss. mentioned above.

The general features of these paintings have been described as follows:

"It must be pointed out at the very outset that these miniatures do not represent a separate style of book-illustrations; they are in fact mural paintings in reduced dimension, and can in no way be compared with a truly characteristic phase of book-illustration which constitutes a fascinating chapter in the history of art in Persia, China, mediaeval West or in mediaeval India. This is evident from the fact that the miniatures mostly represent gods and goddesses
belonging to different temples and monastic establishments of the period and are not illustrative of the subject-matter of the Mss. in which they find place. In fact, they have hardly any relation whatsoever with the subject of the texts they embellish.

"The colours used in these paintings are orpiment yellow, white, indigo-blue, Indian ink-black, cinnabar red, and green. The last appears to be a mixture of orpiment and indigo, unlike the green of Ajanṭā. All these are used in different shades. But on the whole, the general colour arrangement of the divinities is mostly determined by iconographical requirements. Neither Indian red or any ochres, nor ultramarine is used. Tonality of colours is practically unknown. The outline is either drawn in black or in red, and as usual in Indian painting, seems to have been sketched out first, and later on filled in with colour."127

As regards details, the following characteristics are more or less noticed in all these illuminations, indicating thereby that the general trends and tendencies of the art of painting remained the same and were practically fixed, during nearly two centuries.

As a general rule, the law of perspective, as in sculptures, is linear and there is a conscious attempt to leave no space vacant and fill it by various types of devices of a decorative character. The main divinity is generally placed in the centre with the lesser divinities on his two sides; and in a few cases they occupy, respectively, the two sides, leaving the centre for decorative designs.

The artists were certainly no novices, and their works give evidence of a highly developed artistic skill. It has been observed that "the artist depends for his effect as much on the modelling in colour as on the modelling capacity of the line, sinuous and flowing, —lines increasing and decreasing in thickness in accordance with the degree of the surging roundness of the contour that they accompany or outline."128

But these qualities are often lacking in delineating subsidiary figures. Even in some of the finest specimens of Bengali painting like the miniatures in the Ms. of the 39th year of Rāmapāla, both the treatments, namely, the plastically modelled treatment and the modelled treatment of the flowing and sinuous line appear side by side in the same manuscript. In fact, both treatments are synchronous and both can be seen side by side in many miniatures in one and the same Ms. On the whole, as an art critic has rightly observed, 'these paintings are, stylistically speaking, painted equi-
valents of contemporary plastic art of the Pālas and Senās, both in outer form and inner quality."

It is generally held that these miniature paintings are "basically and fundamentally related to and derived from" the art traditions of Ajanāta and Ellora—both their classical type of a thoroughly plastic conception and the medieval type of linear conception, which appear simultaneously and side by side, and are sometimes even fused together, as elsewhere.

The linear conception is also illustrated by the engravings on the Sundarban CP. of Ḍommanapāla (No. C. 24, p. 234), dated 1196 A.D., and Mehar CP. of Dāmodaradeva (No. C. 17, p. 275). The principal figure in the first engraving, incised with a sharp instrument, is Lord Vishṇu in his Nṛsiṁha rūpa seated in the lalitāsana pose on a ratha (wheeled chariot). In front of the deity is the supplicating figure of Garuḍa with a staff sticking out from under his armpit. The other engraving shows two human figures engaged in deadly combat with each other. "In both these drawings the modelling quality of the line is fully valid; still flowing, alert and sweeping. It continues to retain its large sweep and undisturbed flux, though wherever there is the slightest pretext, it loves to indulge in brisk curves. It has, moreover, an exuberance, a vivacity that seems to be out of all proportion to the subject-matter."

An eleventh century CP. with engravings of a bull and tail-piece is mentioned by Coomaraswamy.
Footnotes

1 Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Periods)*, p. 179.
6 Ibid, p. 484.
7 Ibid, Pl. lxvi, fig. 160.
8 Foucher-Icon, Pl. 1.3-4, p. 54, fig. 4.
9 *HB*, pp 485-6.
10 Ibid, p. 488.
11 Brown, op. cit., p. 181.
12 This description is based on Pāhārpur which gives a detailed account of the monuments at Pāhārpur.
13 *ASI*, 1927-8, p. 106.
14 It is mentioned in inscriptions from Bodh-Gaya (Ibid, 1908-9, p. 158) and Nālandā (*EI*, XXI, p. 101) and in Tibetan translation of Buddhist works in Sanskrit. (Cordier—*Cat*, II, pp. 98. 116, 120, 250; III, pp. 5, 299.)
15 *EI*, XXI, p. 97.
16 The accounts of the annual excavations at these places are reported in the *Indian Archaeology—an annual publication of the Archaeological Department of the Government of India*. For the latter, cf. also, *Rājbādi-dāṅgā*, 1962, by Sudhir Ranjan Das (Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1968).
17 *Indian Archaeology*, 1963-4, p. 64.
22 *JGIS*, IX, pp. 5-28.
23 *HB*, p. 507.
24 Pāhārpur, p. 7.
25 *HB*, p. 511.
26 *Bṛhat-Samhitā*, L11. 36. *Matsya Purāṇa*, Ch 269, vv. 34-5;
27 *JSIOA*, II. 137.
28 *HB*, p. 510.
30 *Indian Archaeology*, 1960-61, p.67, Pl. 78B.
31 Now in Asutosh Museum.
32 Noticed and illustrated in Foucher-Icon., Plates. III. 4; V. 1; VI. 5; VII. 1.
33 In Dacca Museum.
34 In Rājshahi Museum.
35 *HB*, p. 499.
36 *ASI*, 1934-5, p. 43, Pl. xix. a.
38 *JSIOA*, II. 139-40, Pl. xlvi. 6.
Ibid, 140, Pl. xlv, 7.
31 HB. p. 502.
33 EISMS, p. 157, Pl. lxxxix (e).
34 Journal of Arts and Crafts, III. p.5.
36 VR., M. No. 4, p. 29, figs 2-3; ASI, 1921-22, p. 79.
37 EISMS, pp. 160-61.
38 HB. pp. 517-8
40 Ibid, p. 516.
41 Ibid, p. 519.
42 Indian Archaeology, 1957-8, p. 72, Pl. lxxxvi-A.
43 For the images 2-6, cf. Saraswati-Sculpture, pp. 11 ff.
46 Ibid, p. 13 (quoted from Rāpam, No. 40).
49 Indian Sculpture, p. 67.
50 Saraswati-Sculpture, p. 22.
51 Ibid, p. 23, fig. 5.
52 Ibid, pp. 24-5, Figs. 8, 9.
53 Ibid, pp. 26-7, Fig. 7; Modern Review, Vol. XL, 1926, p. 426.
54 Saraswati-Sculpture, pp. 27-30.
55 A miniature stone image of Śimhavāhinī from Pokharna (Bankūra Dt.), and now in the Asutosh Museum, has been referred to the Gupta period. But it is hopelessly mutilated (Ibid. p.31).
56 Indian Archaeology, 1963-4. p. 63, Pl. xlvii-E.
58 Saraswati-Sculpture, pp. 33-4.
60 "The majority of monastic cells, which originally were meant for residential purposes, exhibit in the uppermost levels, i.e., in the later phases of occupation, ornate pedestals on which there occasionally remain in situ Brāhmaṇical sculptures, thereby proving adequately that in the later periods the followers of the Brāhmaṇical faith had already begun to frequent the establishment." Saraswati-Sculptures, p.50.
61 Ibid, pp. 44-45.
64 Ibid, p. 41.
65 Ibid, pp. 41-2,
66 Ibid p. 47. For other views cf. Ibid, pp. 45-47
68 Stella Kramrisch, 'Pāla and Sena Sculptures' in the Rāpam, No. 40. p. 115.
69 HB. p. 535.
“Two stational attitudes, that of Samapāda-sthānaka where two trunk-like stiff, weighty and massive legs carry a strictly erect bust, and another of vajra-parīṇāka,—a seated posture with soles turned upwards and resting on thighs, seem to have been directly derived from a high spiritual experience, that of unshakability in the face of extremes of temptation or anger, happiness or misery, peace or storm, and unchangeability in the midst of the ever-changing world outside.” HB, p. 536.

HB. p. 536.

HB. p. 539

Ibid.


HB. pp. 540-41.


Ibid, pp. 542-3.

Ibid, pp. 544-5.


For the recent discoveries of terracottas in various sites and their present location (mostly in Museums) cf. Indian Archaeology (henceforth referred to as Ind. Arch.) 1954-5 (p. 20), 1955-6 (pp. 61-2), 1956-7 (p. 73), 1957-8 (p. 70), 1958-9 (pp. 56, 77), 1960-1 (pp. 70-71), 1962-3 (pp.46, 74), 1963-4 (pp. 60, 63, 64), 1964-5 (p. 50). A large number of illustrations are also given.

Ind, Arch., 1963-4, p. 62.

Ibid, 1960-1, p. 70.


Saraswati-Sculpture, p. 103.

JISOA, X (19-42), pp. 94-102, Pl. ix ; For a full account, cf. Saraswati-Sculpture, pp. 110-11, f.n. 9.


Saraswati-Sculpture, p. 97.

Ind. Arch. 1958-9, p. 77.

Ibid.

Ibid, 1963-4, p. 64.

Saraswati-Sculpture, p. 105.


Ind. Arch., 1960-61, p. 70.

Saraswati-Sculpture, p. 112.

For an account of these terracottas, cf. Monthly Bulletin of the Asiatic Society, January, 1971 (Vol. VI. No 12.) pp. 6-7

Saraswati-Sculpture, p. 106.

Ibid.

Ibid, p. 107:

Ibid, p. 108.


Excavations at Paharpur, Bengal, by K. N. Dikshit (ASM, No. 55).

Paharpur, p. 67.
Add on p. 638, line 5, after the words "found in Bengal":

except an image of Sūrya found at Mahisantosh set up about A.D. 900, (p. 122, p. 182, f.n. 120a [and the addition to p. 555, noted above.)