I

ANCIENT INDIAN SCULPTURE
SCULPTURE OF THE INDUS VALLEY

ABORIGINAL in trend and quality, the earliest works of Indian plastic art yet known, from the fourth and third millenium B.C., do not mark the beginning of sculpture in India. On the contrary, the few but variegated relics found at Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, Jhukar, Amri and elsewhere in the Pañjāb, Sind, Baluchistān and Seistān, suggest a high sophistication based on age-old artistic experience. The art of the Indus valley had already reached its creative climax when it indulged in deliberately subtle or snugly powerful form. The main medium in India of translation from actual seeing into artistic form is modelling. In this respect the heritage of the palæolithic art is carried on into the chalcolithic stage, to which the Indus civilisation belongs.

Within this common basis of modelling, a variety of trends seems to point to distinctions of purpose. Among human figures, the massive portliness (Fig. 1) or the slender and ambiguous sensuousness (Fig. 3) of the two Harappa statuettes, or the wiry vigour of the bronze dancing-girl (Fig. 4) from Mohenjo-Daro, contrast with the dignity of another group of stone figures from the latter site, which are characterised by an attitude of concentration with yoga-glance and the corresponding fixation of the mind. This bestows a remote greatness on them. There, too, the body is not appreciated as such, and is, therefore, not shown nude. It is, on the contrary, rigidly compressed into garments. The first group seems to anticipate and out-do even that component of
naturalism which we find in Greek art and which is derived in the figures of the Indus valley from forces deeper rooted in primeval experience. The more abstractly conceived figures, however, have some counterparts in the statuary of Mesopotamia. But neither of them can be understood with the help of cognate civilisations. For the easily carried bulk of the one (Fig. 1), the gliding bodily movement of the other (Fig. 3), anticipate inalienable features of Indian sculpture of subsequent ages—the long eyes, with upper eyelids summarily but sensitively modelled, their glance directed towards the tip of the nose in a yoga-like concentration, and the summary treatment of the full cheeks of the second group are physiognomical characteristics without which Indian sculpture of later days can hardly be imagined.

The human figures shaped by the artists of the Indus civilisation are thus the far distant, although not solely responsible, ancestors of the multitude of images and groups that were carved and moulded thousands of years later, during one and a half millennia, throughout the many provinces of Indian art. They contain a leaven whose efficacy outlasted the struggles of many novel civilisations and their amalgamations. Yet at the time when we first meet its products it had not begun to act just then, but much earlier.

On a higher level of spiritual convention are the reliefs of animals, real or imaginary (Figs. 6, 8, 9), i.e. composite—that occupy so prominent a place on the majority of seals. Invariably shown in profile, the 'naturalism' of the treatment of their, at times emasculated, yet always mighty, bodies is instinct with aristocratic aloofness (Fig. 6). A sustained animality also breathes through the sacred stillness of their pose. Naturalism, here, as elsewhere in Indian art, is not an endeavour as in Western art, but it is an unavoidable condition. Its meaning will be explained along with the versions in which it appears in Indian sculpture.
Appearance, in the Western sense of an illusion, is unknown to the Indian mind. What is visible is real to the Indian artist and contains the data that facilitate a creative rendering of the potentialities of dynamic movement and power that are in the animal. Aloof in stillness, the animal does not stir. But pent up and concentrated within its outline, that swells its volume and bulges into form, what sustains its animality.

The modelling, which is a heritage of palaeolithic achievement, has crystallised, through the pressure of ages, into a phantom of its pristine force. The outline, with a predilection for the horizontal, is brittle, not flowing, and where it condenses into line itself, as in the curves of the horns or the tails, its sensibility is that of an insect's feelers. In spite of obvious affinities with animals as treated in Mediterranean art, the brute force in these is altogether different from the sophisticated 'innervation' of the animals on the seals belonging to the Indus civilisation.

Innervation is the energy which brings about movement. But even where figures are shown standing still, they may yet be innervated. A strain, which does not result in movement, may keep the figure spellbound with pent-up energy. The powerful and partly over-exaggerated modelling of the bull does not suggest any action. It shows the vitality of the animal at play (Fig. 6).

The seals, inexplicable as long as their script remains undeciphered, show further that the trees were of much consequence. An asvattha-tree on one of them is conspicuous by a linear stylisation, and the rendering of the leaves there is not wholly unrelated to those of the Bodhi-trees in Bhārhut, in the second century B.C. Other trees on these seals contain, in the sinuosity of their stems (Fig. 5), the swaying movement of growth peculiar to the rendering of trees and vegetation (lotus-creeper) throughout Indian plastic art. (See pp. 16, 37).

The tree, where associated with the human-divine figure,
plays a significant role. This is not so much when the figure squats on its branches, as when it stands, sometimes by the side of a tree, sometimes between the two halves of the tree, which seems to have been rent asunder. Branch-like the split stem is joined below the figure in a U-shape (Fig. 8). At times it is joined above it like an arch (Fig. 7). Sometimes the leaves, more and more denaturalised, approach the shape of flames or rays, and the arch curls upwards at its bottom, anticipating in some respects the innumerable halos and niches of variegated shape that were to surround the gods of India. The tree is bent into an arch of vegetative origin (Fig. 7). This aspect of the prabhāmaṇḍala, the halo around the entire divine figure, persists to the end of Indian sculpture and is subsequently amalgamated with other origins of the halo.6

Other devices on seals, sealings and on terra-cottas are also relevant, if as motifs only, for the future: the centrifugal combination of various figures or their parts diverging from one centre;7 the many-headed divinity and the standing figures with long arms so that the hands touch the knees;8 the over-high head of goddesses, which anticipates the usṇīṣa, i.e. the excrescence of the head of Buddha images;9 the mode of sitting;10 the part played by the Nāga (serpent11); and the alignment of repeated figures (Fig. 8), as well as the freely symmetrical arrangement of single figures on the surface of the relief.12

What hitherto has come to light of Indus sculpture shows that the vitality of the human body is understood by a supple firmness of modelling, outline and texture of the surface, yet it is not appreciated as much as that of the animals, who seem to be of nobler lineage and to belong to a higher plane of existence. Trees, though not as frequently, are given the same importance as bulls, mythical animals, elephants, etc. It is by being associated with these trees that the human-divine figure, either by its co-existence in the same
composition (Fig. 9) or else by entering into the tree (Fig. 7) or again by embodying into itself partly animal limbs, such as horns, hoofs or tail (Figs. 8 and 9), gains a wider importance.

Another way of making the human figure appear superhuman consists in a multiple of heads or limbs13 (see also four-armed human pictographs of Indus script). These, however, are not a number of different heads or limbs, but they represent stages of one movement and have to be understood dynamically14 (see also figures radiating from one centre) as indicative of the potency of the superhuman being in the simultaneousness of their presence. Multiplicity of the parts of the body for ever remained an outstanding feature of Indian divinities; it is full-fledged in the art of the Indus valley, but anticipated in the palaeolithic period, where parts of the animal's body were reiterated, indicative of various stages of movement.15

The plastic art of the Indus civilisation contains the accumulated store of ancient tradition. This in future was destined to carry an ever fresh life and with an influx of new blood was given a partly new meaning.

**Chronology of Indian Plastic Art**

The plastic art of the Indus civilisation must have begun in the palaeolithic age, and continued to that of Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa, etc. But there it did not come to an end. Potentially it persisted further, and underlay Indian sculpture as long as it remained creative. This compels us to view Indian art under its own chronology,16 which is twofold. On the one hand, chronology in the accepted sense indicates what happened along the arrow of time in the direction from now to then. On the other hand, it suggests what persisted throughout those happenings and which could not have come about without that underlying and persistent potency. Chronology along the time line rests upon ephemeral factors, such as mainly invasions by foreign civilisations. These last, how-
ever, once they had begun to participate in the art of the country, were drawn into and supported by the vitality of its soil. Every seemingly passing aspect of Indian art, if at all it is an aspect and not a stray incident, sank into and drew its forces from the fertile and enduring potency.

This chronology is potential and enduring on the one hand, and transitory on the other. Between these two—the movement on the surface and the existence as well as the movement underground—an active and ceaseless connection is established.

Plastic art of the Indus valley is mainly conspicuous for its ponderosity and its naturalism, i.e. innervation. Animals chiefly, but also trees, with their sinuous stems suggestive of vegetation, occupy exalted positions. Associated and combined with them, the human figure becomes divine. It also transcends human limits by such devices as multiple heads and limbs, indicative of superhuman potentialities. In the case of animals with multiple heads, super-animalic potentialities are suggested. Nature and the supernatural are experienced as dynamically connected.

**Summary**

1. **Character of form:** Dynamic naturalism = innervation.
2. **Geography:** Aboriginally Indian. At present traceable in the Indus valley and further east.
3. **Chronology:** Link between palæolithic and later Indian art.
4. **Inner meaning:** Matter of fact representation of the supernatural by the side of, or within, the seen.
MAURYAN SCULPTURE

The trend persists, while the quality has weakened, in the next chapter of Indian sculpture (Figs. 2, 10, 25). It is the Gangetic aftermath of the art of the Indus valley. Its largesized and highly polished sculptures have a somewhat 'colonial' accent, although they are to a considerable extent (Fig. 10) imperially patronised by Aśoka Maurya (272–232 B.C.). An interval of two thousand years or more, between the last days of the Indus civilisation and its expansion from the west to the east of the country, did not sever this connection.

Most conspicuous amongst the scanty relics of the plastic art of that age are the colossal statues of Yakṣas and Yakṣis and monumental animal figures. The latter, as a rule, form part of capitals of gigantic pillars; an elephant is carved out of the rock at Dhauli in Orissa, whereas a pair of griffins from Patna and a hooded serpent canopy from Rājgir complete what is left of animal sculpture in stone of the Mauryan age.

Whatever form of cult the colossal Yakṣa and Yakṣī figures assisted (Figs. 2, 25)—and they are not images—they carry the fly-whisk that marks them as attendants; they belong to the earth; obvious burliness is one of their essential qualities. The majestic portliness of the two headless figures from Patna (Fig. 2) is directly derived from the tenser bodily vigour of the Harappa statuette (see p. 4). But if naturalism lies at the root of either, it is living in the case of the Indus figurine,
while in the statuary of the Mauryan period it takes a conventionalised turn. Meticulous attention is given in parts to anatomy. The way in which the elbows, for instance, are fashioned tells of much knowledge. On the whole, however, what originally had been justified as innervated and three-dimensional extension of the living body now contains a weight of congested flesh, with little sap and no vigour. Parts and limbs of the body are joined in a conglomerating manner; the head, for example, to the bulk of the torso almost without any neck, so as not to interfere with the juxtaposition of weighty volumes. Needless to mention, such garments or jewellery as are placed on those bodies share that quality to the exclusion of linear movement.

Chronological sequence can be observed in the modifications of treatment of about half a dozen of Yakṣa and Yakṣī statues. The Yakṣī from Dīdaraṇīj (Patna) stands out in artistic achievement (Fig. 25). The two Yakṣa figures from Patna are conscientious in the rendering of earthbound weight (Fig. 2). Last of them the Yakṣī from Besnagar, and the Pārkham Yakṣa (Mathurā), with their inane burliness, carry on the Mauryan tradition of colossal statuary into the subsequent century.

These statues have impersonal yet physiognomically manifold heads; curvatures of lips, varieties of noses, shapes of cheeks and eyes are as carefully marked as the folds of turbans, the smartness and elaboration of headgear and the way of wearing moustaches. An inquisitiveness into the plastic connection, though not at all into the psychology of facial types, records these as well as the fashionable vagaries of whatever surrounds them (Figs. 13, 25).

No magic is known to these artists, who render the comfortable earthliness of things. For this reason, the colossal animal sculpture on the capitals of free standing columns, into the shafts of many of which were inscribed the edicts of Aśoka,
is heavy with their physical bulk only. The 'sacredness' of the animals of the Indus civilisation altogether escapes the urbane Mauryan artist. For the rest, their degree of relationship with the animals on the Indus seals is the same as that of the colossal Mauryan Yakṣas with the Harappa statuette, i.e. an inverse proportion between size and motive power (Figs. 1, 2 and 6, 10).

To allude to the much-discussed question of Persian or Hellenistic influence, it suffices to state that Hellenism has left its undeniable traces in Mauryan India (finds at Basārh, the ancient Vaiśāli). Equally obvious is the impression that Persian achievements had made on Ašoka. But neither altered the trend of Indian sculpture. Considering the sculpture of Harappa (p. 4), it is impossible to deny that Mauryan sculpture is of the same stock as that of the Indus valley and that the artistic attitude of this ramification in the Ganges valley, as well as those of Persia and of Greece, as far as their affinities go, have probably the same root, and that as far as the palæolithic age.

The civilised quality of Mauryan plastic art is further attested by contemporary terra-cotta figures from Patna; they are slight and graceful contributions, in which the charm of the faces of a child, of dancers and musicians quaintly contrasts with a barbarically exuberant apparel (Fig. 13). What a distance is there from the forbidding and solemn 'mother-goddess,' uncouth and primeval, as conceived by the Indus craftsmen, as well as from the serene far-sightedness of the grey earthenware heads from Mathurā (Fig. 12). The latter group is plastically closely related to the terra-cotta figurines from Patna. But the affinity of the modelling betrays only a nearness in age and not in outlook. Their summary handling is based on the more detailed treatment of Mauryan plastic art.

In the organism of Indian art Mauryan sculpture has
only marginal importance. Absence of emphasis lends dignity to it. It is borne by volume, the specific medium of Indian art. The quality of its treatment proves Mauryan art, on the whole, to belong to ‘ancient’ culture, firmly founded on this earth, as far as its artistic outlook goes.

With all its sated comfort, Mauryan art nevertheless is not homogeneous. Towards its end some reliefs89 (Fig. 11), all too scanty in number yet of profound importance, have a lyricism of flowing linear composition and modulation of the surface and although dynamic in context are but remotely related to the bulk of Mauryan sculpture. It is here that qualities of ‘classical’ Indian art are shown (p. 17).

From now onward, such features of the ancient art of India as had been peculiar to the Indus valley civilisation and had survived right into the Mauryan empire, act at a subterranean level, stirred into creation by many fertilisations. The blood of many people is the active factor that works on the soil of India (cf. p. 128); into the latter had become integrated, as a tangible instance, the art of the Indus valley, with its after-crop in the Ganges valley, at the time of the Mauryas.

Mauryan sculpture, for all its impressive size, is one of the slightest contributions within Indian art. The supernatural appears familiar and even domesticated, whereas nature supplies the dignity and grace which a civilised bearing exacts.

**Summary**

1. **Character of form:** Impersonal record of the seen and stagnant compactness in rendering it.
2. **Geography:** Eastern Indian idiom of art of Indus valley.
3. **Chronology:** Late sequel to art of Indus valley.
4. **Inner meaning:** Sated and civilised approval of an earth-bound sense of being alive.
II

CLASSICAL SCULPTURE
FOUNDATIONS

Ethnical Factors

The persistence of an artistic attitude, irrespective of passing ages and the shifting of scenery, had not allowed for a long time any disturbance to alter its course. Even the new blood in the ethnical structure of the country did not affect it for many centuries. When finally it did, classical art was born. Ancient sculpture is seen to be un-Āryan, so far as the Indus civilisation goes; yet not in point of time only, for even in the third century B.C., about two thousand years after the Āryan immigration, it remained essentially un-Āryan. The tardiness of Āryan utterance in Indian art is not only due to the tenacity of the pre-Āryan idiom. The explanation for it must also be sought for in the attitude of the Āryan invaders towards art and in their reaction to what they found in the country. One component of the heritage of the palæolithic period, that is, the naturalism or innervation of ancient Indian sculpture, originally repelled them. After they had settled in the country, however, they could not but succumb to it. Neither during the classical period, from the second century B.C. to the eighth century A.D., nor even in the middle ages, did the ancient trend ever become extinct. We call it ancient not only for its priority in time, but also because it survives in spite of all vicissitudes, like the soil of India itself, of which it is a spontaneous and ever-recurring creative product. The Āryan invaders, on the other hand,
were reluctant to give shape to their work in the likeness of things.

It must be borne in mind that the ethnical problem is not confined to the Āryan factor on the one hand and the non-Āryan on the other. The later includes various civilisations and correspondingly various traditions of art. Plastic art of the Indus and Ganges valleys, in its Indian peculiarity directly grown out of palæolithic art, is a tangible whole, irrespective of trends within it. As such it has to be considered as one factor only in the non-Āryan complex. It has become known but lately. The other factors, with their monuments, as yet have not emerged from the soil that may still cover some of them. Their fusion has been accomplished and is apparent in the early phase of classically Indian sculpture.

Still, there are signs of friction and uneasiness in the early phase of classical plastic art as well as compromises and tentative solutions. Where, however, naturalism and rhythm are one, classical Indian plastic art has come into existence.

**Plastic Quality**

Indus art had shown the tree, the animal and the human figure by the side of one another, or else interpenetrating each other. Indus art had pronounced this, but it had not completely expressed it in the medium of creative form. This the flowing linear rhythm of classical art facilitates. It divests the appearance of each type of isolation, it approximates the one to the other, by making the limbs of human figures not too different from the branches of trees, etc. (Fig. 15). Every part and all the figures are permeated by one and the same vitality, and this is carried from form to form by an inner rhythm that constitutes, together with the bodies through which it passes, the plasticity of Indian sculpture (Figs. 15–20, 24).

An inner pliability bends and models the form. The paradox
of the solid material (stone, etc.) and the fluid aspect of its artistic transformation make the high tension and complexity of Indian sculpture (Fig. 27). This may be called plastic. As an essential quality of classical Indian art it is not confined to sculpture, but is equally immanent in painting. Indian sculpture and painting are never merely decorative or ornamental. Their adaptations to a given surface and its equilibrium are by-products of the slighter kind in Indian art.

Whereas it is the allurement of the illusionistic factor in Western art to break through the surface from outside with a deceptive display of space and depth, the temptation in Indian sculpture acts just from the other direction. A superabundant tendency of the plastic urge to swell into form from within the material does not easily brook limits imposed by anything except the extension of the material itself. Borders, neatly carved and decorated, are at times as, for instance, in Śānci and Amarāvati (Fig. 49), encroached upon and over-sected by a superabundance of figures, which will not acknowledge limits. In the case of reliefs carved in the rock, frames or regular limits need not exist at all, but the relief expands as far as the plastic impulse can throw it forth, bubbling with modelled form (Figs. 39, 74, etc.). The taming of this superabundance by limits and line is one of the tasks of this phase of classical sculpture.

The fragment of the sorrowing woman from Śārnāth (Fig. 11) brings home this aspect more poignantly than the more exhaustive and somewhat later railing-reliefs from Bhārhut and Bodhgayā. That curve of the woman's back encompasses the tender modulations of a young body. The heaviness of loin cloth, anklets and hair ornament, and the harsh stiffness of the resting leg, set off the delicate plasticity of the body. In spite of an unequal execution of the single parts, they cohere plastically. The outline as limiting, co-relative to the
modelled surface, has accepted the part it is to play in classical sculpture.

The enlargement and linear circumscription of the eyes of the burnt earthenware heads (Fig. 12), within a face relatively richly modelled, assigns to them a position stylistically between ancient and early classical art. The somewhat later faces from Bhārhut (Figs. 26 and 27) have not this far-seeing and wide-awake expression. Their flattened masks seem to disguise it.

The majority of the sculptures of this period are reliefs. They belong to railings or gateways of stūpas, or they are rock-cut adornments of monasteries.

**FUNCTIONAL DEVICES OF INTER-RELATEDNESS**

*A. Elimination of Time*

Certain features are constitutional to this phase, and beyond it. These are the formulae that help to show the importance of, and the connection between, the single figures, and the kind of animation given to the figures. Like all early art that serves as a vehicle of communication in the service of religion, classical Indian sculpture, too, at its dawn adheres to continuous narration, i.e. in one and the same relief-compositions various incidents of one story may be depicted, with the necessary figure of the main person repeatedly shown. The figure of the donor of the sacred grove appears twice, supervising the purchase and dedicating the grove; it is shown at two significant stages of the story (Fig. 16). This mode of presentation visualises the main events of an entire story. It synthesises the duration into one visual unit. The basis is frequently the locality where the story took place, and the specifically Indian version is that not only immediately successive stages are brought together, but, however widely apart in time two or more of its events may be, that they took
place on the same spot justifies their representation in one and the same composition. Time thus coalesces and is eliminated altogether. It is an invisible element. The significance of the story as a whole becomes ever present in the relief, just as it had been present in the mind of the craftsman while he visualised it. The subsisting link lies in the continuity, i.e. in the presence of the story to the mind of the craftsman and in the sameness of place. 'Uni-local' narration is the specially Indian and the most logical version of continuous narration. The continuity is one of connectedness and relation, and not of sequence along an intangible timeline. The sameness of locality acts as an equivalent to the inner field of vision, where the various situations of the story lie in readiness side by side. Vicinity and extensiveness, instead of sequence, are allocated by the early Indian artist to the happenings of the stories he carves.

B. Visualization of the Third Dimension

The conquest of the third dimension is one of the foremost tasks of every art tradition in the making. Each will solve it according to its susceptibilities. The system accepted by early classical Indian sculpture is not less systematical in its own way than that of the Italian Renaissance. But where the one endeavours to be optically correct, the other undertakes to be functionally consistent. Formulae to serve this purpose in the main are adopted during the second century B.C., while in the first century B.C. the system is finally elaborated. They consist of a serviceable stock in trade, and have nothing to do with any optical perspective, be it a bird's-eye view or any other. These devices are the outcome of a rationalisation of the connection of objects. An object does not present itself to the eye of the Indian artist as an illusion, different from the underlying reality. On the contrary, what the eye sees is the perceptible side of that underlying reality. It exists by itself,
irrespective of the perceiving eye. But the eye can perceive it only because in it those qualities are active that are conspicuous in the object. The Indian craftsman, therefore, makes it his task to record the data of the visible. It consists of many things contained within their limits. None of them exists apart from the other. This compels him to exclude, as far as possible, the personal element, inasmuch as this contains modifications and shortcomings that detract from the validity of the record. To safeguard the process of artistic creation from the limitations of the individual, conventions were elaborated as to how to tackle the extensiveness of objects and their relation.

The following are the most noticeable conventions:

1. The figures are shown above each other on the ground of the relief, instead of being placed behind each other, as in actuality they are (Figs. 16, 17, 22, etc.). This translation from the dimension of depth into one of surface may have originated in the alignment of figures (cf. Mohenjo-Daro seals, Fig. 8), repeated in horizontal bands, not unlike Egyptian representations or that of the Rāis, in the relief of Varāha avatāra (Udayagiri, Gwālior, Fig. 63) and on later statues of Varāha, but with an omission of the ground line. Its effect is, that figures, which according to optical perspective would be hidden or partly covered, can be shown in entirety or covered only to the desired extent.

2. The figures neither decrease nor increase in size according to their distance or nearness, because they are not thought of in such terms at all. Yet their size is regulated, though not according to any sort of optical impression; for with the Indian craftsmen size is not a thing conditioned by what is seen, but it shows, on the contrary, the importance of each person or object. As such, however, it is not stationary, but is regulated according to the importance of other persons or objects with which it enters into relation.
Thus, for instance, an elephant and a female figure may be given about the same size when the elephant is the Buddha to be born and the woman’s figure that of his future mother, Queen Māyā (Fig. 21). But an elephant, again, need not be larger than a lotus flower, where both of them are but the indispensable surroundings of the comparatively gigantic figure of the goddess Lakṣmī (Fig. 31).

3. Just as the size of the figures is determined functionally by importance, so is the visibility of objects. The third dimension, according to Western perspective, has to be inferred, and cannot be seen as such, if rendered in relief; for then one surface only, i.e. the one parallel to the ground of the relief, can be shown entire. The early Indian craftsman, according to the demands of the scene and its visibility or knowability, will tilt into the relief any surface on the top and at the sides of the vertical surface, to show the whole cube or prism of each single volume or object. So it comes about that altars of the Buddha, for instance, which were centres of worship, show the whole of the top surface almost as well as the front surface (Fig. 17, 22). The same is true of houses, where the two sides as well as the gabled roof make a compact stereometrical shape (Fig. 24). This method, however, is carried out with utmost rigour in the rendering of rocks, specially in paintings (Ajañṭā, cave ix). There the hill is imagined as an array of several boulders, and each of them is abstractly transformed into a prism, of which three sides at a time are delineated, in contrasting colours as far as possible, so that extensiveness may be punctiliously demonstrated.

4. These functional formulae condition a peculiar stage as playground for the single scenes and narrations in relief. It is flat, and on it the figures are served as if on a tray (Figs. 19, 21); atmosphere and horizon do not exist; whatever is tangible is contained within the frame of the relief and makes up the
space, i.e. the extensiveness of that special story or event. It is replete with volumes of single figures and with the tension between them (Fig. 24). Static distance does not exist. Space as a void does not exist.

Some of the most logical applications of this method are to be found in a typical scene, where a group consists of a railing surrounding a sacred tree and umbrellas (Bodhgayā, Fig. 18; Ananta Gumphā, Khaṇḍagiri). There the sacred tree is shown in outline as if on one level with the eye; the railing, however, stands on edge, and all the four sides of its quadrangle are to be seen as if looked at from above, whereas the inside of the open sunshades appears as if viewed from below. The sacred tree, i.e. the main object, is given a view that makes it unmistakably and fully visible, whereas the function of surrounding as well as of giving shade to the sacred spot demand their appropriate formulæ.

This system builds up the logical relationship within the single compositions. Yet it is only a scheme and needs filling. This is done by the single objects themselves having extension two dimensional as well as cubical, by the dynamic or rhythmical manner in which they are connected, and by such over-secting and foreshortening as are desirable (Figs. 15–17, 19). The latter are employed with ease; they do not achieve any illusion of depth, for this does not extend beyond their plastically tangible volume.

In the reliefs of Bhārhut, and to a large extent of Bodhgayā, etc., a markedly linear and rhythmical tendency keeps in check the extent to which over-secting and foreshortening are being made use of. No rhythmical discipline, however, of this kind coerces the freedom of movement nor the volume of the figures in Sāñci (Figs. 33, 34).
CLASSICAL SCULPTURE

CO-ORDINATION OF RELIEF FIGURES

Placed as a definite unit into this context, the human figure acts an integral part, but not to any further extent than, for instance, a tree; it does not bear any accent. Such a thing as scenery does not exist. For nothing is superfluous, and every item has its allotted place in the story and the composition. Nor is any setting required, for the diction is direct and has its background in the mind of the craftsman and people alike. The co-ordination of nature, man-made things, and man himself, is complete (Figs. 15–20, 22, 24).

Where man and his work are apprehended as a part of nature, the life given to the human figure is neither different in kind nor degree from that of plants or animals. Psychology is unknown, but there is a great gulf between the quiet and vegetative being of all figures in Bhārbhut and the sheer intensity of life experienced by figures in Sāñci (Figs. 33, 34). But both are spontaneous. They live fully, unbroken by any working of the mind, at one with themselves and with whatever happens to be their neighbour. No knowledge stands prohibitively between them. Each abides within itself. All are parts of nature.

LOCAL IDIOMS AND COLLECTIVE METHOD OF WORK

A tradition, brought about by a widespread and intricate fusion of people on one soil in common, prevails throughout the early classical phase. Nevertheless the contributions of local idiosyncrasies are clearly discernible; besides these provincial differences, even on one and the same monument various trends are noticeable. Craftsmen from one part of the country gave their services to great tasks in other parts of the country (Sāñci, etc.). This collective method of working is as much responsible for differences of levels and trends in one and the same monument as it is essential for the formation of a lingua franca of artistic conventions.
Conspicuous as local idioms are, those of (1) Madhyadeśa, with monuments at Bhārhut, Sānci, Bodhgayā, Mathurā, etc.; (2) Kaliṅga, i.e. Orissā; (3) South India, with sculptures from Veṅgi and Guḍimallam; and (4) Bhājā, in the Western Ghāṭs. Madhyadeśa then was leading. Its influence is patent in Kaliṅga and to a lesser extent in Veṅgi sculptures. Bhājā stands apart. It derives its peculiar quality from similar origins to those of the bulk of work in Sānci, stūpa I, and part of Bhārhut reliefs (Ajātasatru pillar, etc.), but is nearer to the sources than either.

The reliefs on railings and gateways of stūpas mostly narrate stories of the life and previous incarnations of the Buddha; others contain mainly vegetative devices. They are arranged in oblong, square, round and half-round panels, according to the exigencies of architectonic decoration. Yakṣas and Yakṣīs, Nāgarājas and Devatās occupy prominent positions. In large size, and frequently accompanied by their tree and vāhana—the vehicle in the shape of an animal—or by both (cf. the human figure, tree and animal on Indus valley seals), and in bolder relief than that of the other compositions, they cling to, or project from, the entire surfaces of railing posts without frames (Bhārhut, Figs. 26, 27); or else, fully carved 'in the round,' they act as brackets (Sānci). The bold and frameless relief of some of these large figures is a compromise between full and three dimensional extension (Mauryan Yakṣas, Figs. 2, 24) and the flat post. On the Sānci gates another type of large-sized figures in the round, namely horsemen or riders on elephants, are placed between the small upright of the toraṇas. Both of these types, or else the notions underlying them, are pre-Buddhistic.

Attitude Towards Symbols

Symbolic representation, however, is confined to the allusion of the Buddha's presence.
Indian plastic sense is averse to the symbol, which is the substitute for a reality. The un-formed clamours for form, for this is the way in which it shows its reality. Symbols are ready-made and block the approach of the un-formed towards form. They stand in the way of creation. If in ancient Indian sculpture, of the Indus civilisation and in the Mauryan age, animal or plant were represented in lieu of the corresponding divinity, they were meant to be vāhanas, i.e. vehicles of the divinity, and not abstracts or parts of its appearance, such as footprints or hair relics, or of its presence, such as the seat or the walk (caṇkrama), in the case of the Buddha. They were truly vāhanas, of which the artistic treatment in the Indus art 'conveyed' divinity. The sacred tree, alone amongst the symbols for the Buddha, has maintained some of these earlier qualities. Non-iconic signs for the Buddha are an exceptional incident within the whole of Indian plastic art and their origins are to be sought for in a mentality which is not that of the Indian craftsman. He had, however, to submit to it.

Symbols again play a considerable part in later centuries. But then they are additional attributes to figures of divinities, themselves endowed with form. Wheel, flame, lemon, lotus, etc., held in the hands by various divinities, are part of their apparel, and belong to the same category as crown, scarf or armlet. Nor do they then stand for an entire reality, they support only one of its many qualities, objectified and rationalised.

The sacred tree, the seat, the wheel, the stūpa and the footprints are the ever-recurring devices substituted for the accomplished one. Or he may be present even—by not being alluded to at all—in the absence of concrete symbols (Figs. 16, 19). But not only are the symbols worshipped and treated as the centre and origin of an hieratical symmetry of composition (Fig. 18), but they also take part in the narration, and this they do to such an extent that they are divested of unchangeable
permanency and are torn asunder. Such are the footprints in Bhārhut, which, apart from each other, climb down, the one on the top-most and the other on the lower-
most rung of a ladder, to bring home the Buddha’s
descent from the heaven of the thirty-three gods (Fig.
22). In Sāñci, moreover,44 footprints, tree-motif, wheel and
umbrella are combined in vertical succession, alluding in
a childish way to the bodily appearance of man. There were
definite injunctions in Buddhism against depicting the human
form and taking delight in it, and there was felt a general
awe of doing so.45 But these were expressions of religious
experience and not of the artistic urge. The way in which
the inexorably prolific sensuousness of the Indian artist
struggled with, and eventually overcame, the scruples of the
mind, and succeeded in dragging the symbol into the current
of life and form, can be followed from generation to gener-
ation in the course of classical sculpture. The narrative reliefs
in the second century B.C. select Jātaka stories as their
favourite themes; whereas in the first century B.C. events from
the actual life of the Buddha and his miracles are preferably
chosen.

MADHYADEŚA

(A) Railing of Stūpa II, Sāñci

The ground balustrade of stūpa II, Sāñci (second century
B.C.), almost exclusively decorated with low reliefs in ‘plant
style’ (Coomaraswamy), is the most logical effort in this line
during the early classical period (Figs. 29–31). The lotus-
creeper is vegetative life visualised. Its rhythmical sway is also
peculiar to stems of trees, as shown in Indus art. Stem of tree
and stalk of lotus in Indian sculpture are channels which the
recurring movement of vegetation bends according to its own
rhythm. The stalk of the lotus issues and rambles through the
reliefs, and from its own fertility, like a diver from the deep sea,
brings forth unexpected treasures—flowers in abundance and spirits too, animals, human figures and symbols. The animal, too, even if shown by itself alone, takes part in this rhythm (Fig. 14). An angular reticence of the postures of some of the human figures ill-fits the heaving, sprouting luxuriance of the theme. The craftsmen seem to have subdued modelling by a linear scheme, that allowed a seeming quiet where wilder forces and more powerful handling appeared to be out of place. Primeval Indian folk art is overlayed by rhythmical discipline.

These early reliefs of stūpa II, Sāñci, are but patterns in disguise—rhythmical exercises in linear composition, and hesitating in the handling of the human figures which have been subjected to its yoke.

(B) Bhārhut: Main Trend

With a similarly careful awareness, the artists in Bhārhut (second half of second century B.C.), too, approach their themes. But there is relatively more ease in their attitude and a more leisurely expansiveness. The lotus scroll moves with homely assurance through its self-created jungle, which, in its turn, and with all the exuberance of vegetation, of which jewellery and apparel are also part, obeys a rhythm of slow but ceaseless measure\(^46\) (Figs. 15, 24). Its movement is felt even where it is not itself shown and in some of the roundels the beginning and end are joined in an elastic balance (Fig. 16). By it are supported the actors of the story, loosely dispersed over the ground of the relief. Their distances, i.e. the tension between the single figures, their positions and gestures recline, and are carried by that swaying free rhythmical movement. No attempt is made to group the figures; each abides in the place assigned to it with a generous sense of well-being, in which quietly breathes the life of Bhārhut.

Few of the difficulties of 'primitive' art, such as a limited
range of attitudes, are to be found here. For although this is an early stage of classical art, yet it has the vast experience of ancient practice behind it. But the use it makes of it is circumscribed by an orientation that realises life as a ceaseless flow and has lost interest in the compactness of detached objects. (See Chapter I.) How the latter was gradually abandoned is tangibly shown by some of the large pillar figures; for instance, that of Sīrimā Devatā and that of Sudarśanā Yakṣī (Figs. 26, 27). While the one consists of an inane superposition of massive forms, the other, mellifluous in gliding lines, balances her body like the languid stalk of a full-blown flower. Monumental stiffness, with knees stretched and arms pressed to the body, has melted into a lyricism of vegetative grace.

(C) Bhārhut: Subsidiary Trend

The majority of compositions in Bhārhut are subject to this gentle rhythm; a group of reliefs, however, of which those of the Ajātāsatru pillar are most prominent, is not touched by its caress (Fig. 22). Harsher and less imaginative, the figures are densely packed, lacking melody though not discipline and are set in horizontal rows (cf. Fig. 8), which crowd the panels with their mechanical parallels. The relief in their case is so full of figures that the ground, with its calm and bare surface, no longer can be seen. This trend, which was destined to rule almost exclusively in the work on the Sāñcī gateways, is unaware of the silent and secure wisdom of swaying balance and self-supporting rhythms. Whereas the freely rhythmic manner is a favourite solution in Indian art, the seemingly inexhaustible onrush of form after form is one of its main problems.

Irrespective, however, of the contexts into which they are implicated, the single figures are hesitating in their movements (Figs. 16, 17, 22, 24); these almost seem to come about
without their knowledge. So unaccentuated are their actions that the manner in which hungry jackals prickle up their ears does not differ in intensity from the way that branches curve (Fig. 15). A state of being, irrespective of all actions, has found variegated form in all those modest figurines. They exist in a permanent mood of shy approval, which at times amounts to veneration of that unending life that carries and supports them for the moment they are there.

The physiognomy, common to all the faces in Bhārhut, sets each feature clearly marked into a but little differentiated round or oval, flatly modelled. These masks, with wide open eyes, which bulge but have no pupils, and are not seeing at all, are intent with the keenness of the life they are made to fit, eager but undirected (Figs. 21, 22, 24, 26, 27); whereas that of Sirimā (Fig. 26) is attracted by the without, the within is kept in abeyance by that of Sudarśanā (Fig. 27).

(D) Bodhgayā

The part of the square railing of Bodhgayā of the first half of the first century B.C. is an elegant, if superficial, sequel to Bhārhut. The scrupulously exhaustive manner of telling stories has dwindled into abbreviations, comprehensible to those only who are well-acquainted with the subject pictured. The same subjects in their versions in Bhārhut and in Bodhgayā (Figs. 16, 17, 19, 20) show this clearly. The figures now move with greater self-assurance and their rhythmical ease is not confined to the surface only, but extends into depth.

They are placed at a slight angle with the ground of the relief, so that the whole body offers a broader surface to be modelled. The flying Kinnara of Fig. 20 may be contrasted with the woman in the tree from Bhārhut (Fig. 15), whose chest, although placed in a similar position, appears pinned to the surface by the four corners marked by her hands and feet.
In equal measure, with an increasing freedom of physical movement, the surface of the body awakens also. The Sārnāth fragment (Fig. 11) had already anticipated this, but there was little scope for this quality in the second century B.C. Now, however, with bolder movements and prouder carriage, the surface of the stone is modelled in detail and with subtle gradations, so as to give a suggestion of soft, warm flesh. (Fig. 19, the man with the basket, for instance.) Sensuousness is tempered and supported by the lyrical measure of linear movements. To this stage approximately belong also, besides part of the Bodhgayā railing, the carved railings from Patna, Sārnāth, and fragments from Mathurā⁴⁷ (Fig. 40).

(E) Sāñci, Gateways of Stūpa I

The Southern, the earliest (middle of first century B.C.) amongst the gateways of the Sāñci stūpas, marks a decisive turn from the trend prevalent in Bhārhut and on ground balustrade of stūpa II, Sāñci. What had struggled for expression in the work on the Ajātaśatru pillar has now broken into boisterous freedom. There still are some reliefs (Lakṣmi panel and lotus landscape panel)⁴⁸ permeated by the endless melody of Bhārhut. Yet it is silenced where the clash and din of tumultuous groups clamour for self-assertion and expansion (Fig. 33). No longer are the single figures loosely scattered in the composition. With a larger freedom of bodily movement and increased depth of the relief, they are turned at various angles and enter into group connections. The group now is the acting unit, and within its compass what variety of poses, what outbursts of blossoming, frolicsome and frenzied existence! As if from a cornucopia the wealth of figures throngs forth from the stone, increasing in vigour and reverberating with its onrush like the sound of a trumpet. The relief on the whole offers its field full to the point of bursting, with figures and nameless darkness between
them. Instead of placidly swaying and clearly pronounced linear rhythms, what bewildering mass of compositional factors! With diagonal movements, and with planes intersecting, the figures appear as if breaking out of the solid mass of stone; loaded with energies that could carry them farther afield, they are kept with difficulty only within the confines of the relief. The boundless un-formed demands an almost boundless supply of form. Unmitigated creativeness fiercely and inexorably throws forth form next to form.

To measure the degree of maturity of Indian art by Western standards—not to speak of influences—is nowhere as futile as it would be in case of the Sāñcī reliefs. Daring in diagonal arrangements, furtively broken by light and darkness, modelled with a delicacy and experience that would do credit to the Western Baroque, the genius which produces this seeming similarity assigns it to quite a different level. No consciously exalted striving and no exaggerated and calculated effects, but an inexhaustive young resourcefulness to cope with its onrush, seizes all possibilities that promise adequate form. Side by side, intersecting movements in depth and yet a reference to the surface, fullness of modelling and a clear cut outline—all these, achievements already of the South gate, shortly afterwards are also to be seen on the North gate; but about a generation later in the East and West gates ultimate outbursts of tumultuousness are not far from aridity (Fig. 34). It finally seizes the Sāñcī tradition in the work on the ‘Fifth gate’ (about the Christian era), the only gate of stūpa III.49

On the whole, however, chronological sequence does not imply one line of stylistic development. Some of the panels of the South gate, which is the earliest, represent the climax of the specifical trend of Sāñcī, and are the work of craftsmen most alive to its urge (Fig. 33). Those craftsmen, however, of lesser sensibility and more addicted to the older version of
this idiom (as practised in Bhārhut on the Ajātasatru pillar), keep it valid throughout the sculptures of Śānci, but without the spellbound cogency of repetition that had kept the figures there so tightly gripped. This leads to stiffness without rhythm, to a discipline that only succeeds in mechanising the composition (Fig. 35).

In its most vital compositions, the work of Śānci is tumultuously naturalistic. There a profusely surging plastic mass demands a high relief, with a rich interplay of light and darkness, that, combined with the three dimensional tangibility of objects, their variegated grouping and the freedom of the movement of the full-limbed figures, produces massive and vigorous compositions. Their coherence results from the impetuousness of this special creative impulse. The living stone, it seems, eagerly clamours to burst out into scenes full of its own life, which it imparts to the touch of the craftsman. Reluctant to recognise limits, the force which inheres bursts the volume in which it inheres. The frames, so neatly outlined, are at times transgressed upon by the figures. On the West gate,\(^5\) in the scene of the War of the Relics, the composition brims over them. In this accomplished rendering (an earlier version of the same scene is on the South gate), the incompatibility of any frame with a composition that follows its own dynamic expansiveness is actually realised. This trend demands an extensiveness of which the limits are settled by its own propelling force, just as seeds will burst out from the seedpot and fall down according to the energy that has thrust them forth.

Supplementary to this, and almost in opposition to its lack of rational design, the other tendency stresses the vertical and the horizontal in keeping with the order prescribed by the frame (Fig. 34). In some compositions it goes further than that, and endeavours to tie the entire throng of figures to the ground of the relief, parallel with it and preventive of any
outburst from the un-formed depth of the stone diagonally into
the light of day (Fig. 35). But the achievements of this restraint
are not primary. Its qualities in respect of modelling, sense of
volume and light and darkness, belong to the former group.
The trees, for instance, even where they have not thrown
off altogether the continuous outline filled by modelling (see
Figs. 15, 17, 18, 20, etc.), with their branches jutting out
freely,⁵¹ but observe the outline that neatly binds the foliage
into a round or otherwise regularly shaped bouquet, are
dishvelled within and eaten up by darkness (Figs. 34, 35).

Buoyancy, with its rich resources, is not in keeping with the
meagre orderliness that attempts to tame them and arrives at
compromises at times, but fails on the whole. Of this, the
Fifth gate, with its inconsistency of mollified volumes in rigid
orderliness, gives evidence.

Some of the scenes, such as the War of the Relics, the
Chaddanta Jātaka⁵² and in other monuments other scenes—the
dream of Māyā, for instance, in Amarāvatī—are repeated.
This recurrence of the one and the same scene on one monu-
ment establishes the ever-present actuality of the scene. What
matters is not that it once happened, but that in all its
importance it did happen and this cannot be repeated too
frequently. In its significance the scene is ever present. The
repetition of the same scene in several compositions on one
monument is a feature cognate with the timelessness in the
rendering of each composition (p. 18).

All the while the human figures have remained squat in
proportion, with short necks and heavy heads, non-Ṛṣāyan
as well as non-Drāviḍian in type, even more noticeable than
in Bhārhat, where the relatively flat treatment and strongly
linear compositional rhythm have made use of them more as
signs or names than in their actual pertinence. In Sāfici,
however, a sturdy type is chosen without the mundane ease
and self-assurance of the Bodhagaya figures, but unthink-
able without its Śuṅga and Mauryan ancestors (Fig. 32). Yet however wide apart the main Bhārhut tradition of the flowing linear rhythm may be from that of Sāñcī, the later craftsman could not but unwittingly imbibe and carry on its achievements. The result is that a mollified volume is bounded by an outline ever more fluid in its gliding sinuousness. While lyricism and generalisations formulated during the second century B.C. were during the first century B.C. drowned in the onrush of more vigorous expressions, these ultimately, if outwardly only, were smoothed and disciplined by the former achievements.

**ORISSĀ (KALIŅGA)**

The sculptures in Orissā during the second and first centuries B.C. have a provincial aspect. They mainly depend on Madhyadeśa, but to some extent also on the south. While the Mañcapuri cave relief in Udayagiri preserves the Mauryan idiom in certain features, such as the compact rendering of the main actors, and is also instinct with the vitality (Fig. 37) which distinguishes the relatively later work of Sāñcī, the reliefs on the Ananta Gumpha, Khaṇḍagiri, are not only stylistically, but, even in their iconographic types (relief with Sūrya, etc.), directly dependent on Bodhgayā railing reliefs. Other relics of a capital, for instance, and posts and a fragment from a railing, add one further characteristic only, where a pillar figure is treated with that utmost economy of relief so peculiar to the marbles of Jaggayapeṭa.

**SOUTH INDIA (VEŅGI AND GUḌIMALLAM)**

Marble slabs of the stūpas and railings of south India, from Jaggayapeṭa (Fig. 38) and some from Amarāvati belong to the second and first centuries B.C. respectively; yet, in spite of the stylistic connectedness of contemporary form, their linear sensitiveness is more highly strung and their modelling,
with a minimum of means, is generous. Not unlike, however, to figures on the ground balustrade, stūpa II, Sānci, those of Jaggayapeṭa frequently stand on boulsters, with their feet as if dangling, and this impression is further intensified in their case by an extraordinary length of limbs, drawn out to an unearthly slenderness. The bodies themselves, however, are as sturdy as any in Madhyadeśa. Yet stilts limbs, scarves fluttering away from the figures in thin and sharp diagonals, angular movements with sustained power and a self-assurance of outline, speak of energies ethnically different from those in Madhyadeśa and assignable to the Drāviḍian element.

The marbles of Amarāvatī, of the first century B.C., are already of a slightly deeper cut relief, with a predilection, too, for a fuller modelling of the body. Yet never hitherto has the lotus creeper been so delicately burdened with ingeniOUS flowers, nor were men or beasts given such tough elasticity and elegance. Subtly passionate faces carried by a delicately modelled but forcefully built body, that steps out lightly on legs with an unearthly tread, these are peculiar to Amarāvatī from now onward.

Outside the school of Veṅgi, the Śivaliṅgam from Guḍi-mallam (Fig. 36), North Arcot district, occupies a position of its own. Vehement in its sturdy presence, the figure in front of it has but little in common with those of the Veṅgi marbles, except that there, too, the body was shown as vigorous; but this was minimised by a decisive outline and the delicacy of the flat modelling. Nor is it on the same level with the milder version of Yakṣa and allied figures from central India of the same phase. On the whole it belongs to 'ancient' sculpture in India, and shows one of its possibilities. With the firm pressure in the resolute manner of standing, with its tight modelling and the sightless grin, replete with the savour of its own juice, it sums up an aspect of ancient Indian art not preserved in any other monument.
Coming as if from the unsounded depths of the earth, in comparison with other contemporary sculpture, are the large rock-cut reliefs of Bhājā, in the Western Ghāts (Fig. 39). They are the relatively purest examples of plastic art, heaving with a modelling in unheard of proportions, akin to the settling down of the surface of the earth when the inner fire was receding further and further inward from the crust that cooled into shape. The demon over whom passes the chariot of Sūrya and the elephant of Indra have the brooding weightiness of the earth. These reliefs, even if they decorate a Buddhist monastery, as in fact they did, are free from measure and restraint. They contain those possibilities of Indian sculpture that brought about the Varāha relief cut in the rock at Udayagiri (Gwālior, early fifth century) and those of Ellora and Elephanta (Dekkhan, seventh and eighth centuries). The reliefs are not contained in any frame, but they extend as far as their inherent expansiveness carries them and the rock allows. The reliefs in Śānci show this characteristic, transferred, as it were, from the scope of the rock to the limitations of framed compositions (p. 32). The rock-cut reliefs, moreover, are not confined to one surface only of the rock, but are conveyed over the side-wings at right angles, in an untamed, plastic exuberance. They appear to be truly aboriginal, even more striking in their Indian peculiarity than other contemporary reliefs.

There are thus immanent in the early phase of classical sculpture those foundations which, through the coming centuries, were to uphold the structure of the subsequent phases of classical Indian art. Āryan, but to a greater extent non-Āryan, forces have met and united. Rhythmical design redeems a measureless vitality from its plastic exuberance. Exuberant plastic vitality in its turn graces their corresponding patterns, with the cognisance of an ever-productive soil.
CLASSICAL SCULPTURE

With all the convincing spontaneity of an early expression, integral motifs, which were to persist under one or the other aspect, were formulated at this period. The most prolific is that of the lotus creeper. The reiteration of its ample curves, fertile with the wealth of life—floral, animal, human and of man-made things—is more than a favourite motif. Where its generous vegetation is not explicitly shown, implicitly it underlies and is reborn ever afresh, an eternal melody of many compositions and attitudes.

The texture of the plastic language is tantamount to a twofold outlook: everlasting because ever recurring, and steadily rhythmical in one version (for instance, Bhārhat), the other condenses the display of all inherent potentialities into one moment of outburst or manifestation (for instance, Sānci). Being as an ever-becoming, being concentrated in its plenitude yet not spent in the explosiveness of one moment—these are the twofold expressions of this plastically dynamic diction.

**Summary**

1. Character of form: (a) Fluid and plastic, (b) dynamic and compact.
2. Geography: Three marked but connected provinces; Madhyadesa, Veṅgi and Dekkhan, on the basis of different factors and degrees of ethnical mixture.
3. Chronology: An early art, while the three main provinces contribute their own aboriginally or otherwise ethnically conditioned heritage.
4. Inner meaning: Abandon to the unending and vegetative rhythm or to the intensity of the moment.
EARLY MATURITY

While the artistic activities of the former period had been diffused through the country, they are now concentrated in Mathurā and Veṅgi. During the first and second centuries A.D., Mathurā is of primary importance, whereas just previously (Fig. 40) the idiom of its sculptures, although broader and more relaxed as far as modelling goes and livelier in the rendering of physiognomy and movement, conformed with reliefs (p. 39) as those from Bodhgayā. Although it gives to Indian imagery its pantheon of Buddhist and Jaina as well as of Brāhmanic denominations, it fails—or, rather, never makes the attempt—to experience and create the spirituality of any. Firmly footed on earth-bound Mauryan survivals, it imbues the massiveness of its large-sized figures with the self-sufficing serenity of physical superiority. Reliefs are of minor importance, but, even so, they have undergone relevant changes. The main interest, however, is devoted to the large-sized cult image. Mauryan colossal statues are its ancestors, as far as appearance is concerned. But what with them had been dignity and civilised bearing is a more relaxed, while cruder, sturdiness in Mathurā.

Where did this demand for images come from, and where did the Buddha image originate?

ORIGIN OF BUDDHA IMAGE

Representations of some of the gods in human shape are as frequent as they are standardised in Bhārhut and other
monuments. Early classical sculpture, however, does not show these gods as being worshipped. Allusions to the anthropomorphic appearance of divinities occur in the Ṛgveda. Anthropomorphic, too, are some figurines and representations on seals of the Indus art. That these had been worshipped is shown on one fayence sealing from Mohenjo-Daro. But anthropomorphic images, it appears, as an essential part of the ceremony of worship in any of the forms of cult that are recorded in scripture, were not in vogue in India prior to its contact with Hellenism. This did not exclude a tendency towards image worship amongst the masses which had maintained this attitude from early days, such as those of the Indus civilisation. Yakṣa statues, for instance, although distinctly not images (p. 9), may nevertheless have been worshipped by the people. The Yakṣa Maṇiḥhadra, from Pawāyā (Gwālior, about the beginning of the Christian era, i.e. of later date), is inscribed as ‘Bhagavān,’ i.e. ‘Worshipful.’ That an anthropomorphic tendency existed amongst the craftsmen, and allowed itself to be repressed with difficulty only, is shown within the non-iconic reliefs themselves from Bhārhut and Sāṅcī (p. 26).

This innate tendency of the Indian craftsman towards giving shape in the likeness of living things, asserted itself in Mathurā unreservedly.

The Buddha there is given the appearance of a Yakṣa, who excels others of his kind by being a Cakravartin (a world-ruler), endowed with marks of a 'great being.' In this powerful and worldly manner the craftsmen from Mathurā fashion their images of the Buddha, whom they prefer to think of and to call a Bodhisattva. Popular belief and imagination interpret according to their own resources what the Buddha means to them. The 'Bodhisattva' image from Mathurā is a robust figure (Fig. 41). In conception and treatment it has ancient Indian sculpture for its background. That the earliest
preserved image dates from as late as the end of the first century A.D., whereas in Gandhāra the Buddha was shown in human shape at an earlier date (p. 45), may be due to the accident of preservation. But in no case does priority establish a claim of the Gandhāran type as origin of the Buddha image. The type as formed in Mathurā is totally different and in keeping with the quality and meaning of contemporary Indian sculpture. It is, moreover, the outcome of an aboriginal attitude of the masses towards image worship.

The image from Gandhāra, on the other hand, is a resourceful adaptation of Indian notions by syncretistic craftsmen. A weary eclecticism distinguishes it. The two types of the Buddha image, from Mathurā and Gandhāra, have different origins, psychologically as well as culturally. The character and the later date of the image set up by Friar Bala, A.D. 81, and of other figures from Mathurā, prove the independence of this thoroughbred Indian type.

**Mathurā**

With the notion of the cult-image foremost in the mind of the artist, his conception of the importance of the human figure and of its relation to its surroundings changed. Compared with those in the early reliefs, the figures now have actually grown up, so much so that the height of the main figure in a number of scenes now preferably is equal to the entire height of the panel (cf. Āmohini relief, Mathurā, A.D. 14), and the subsidiary figures are graded accordingly. This novel proportion, when strictly followed, excludes the use of 'spatial' formulæ as well as of continuous or uni-local narration. Large figures are boldly carved, isolated objects are more definitely foreshortened than hitherto; they are set against the plain surface of the ground.

During the first century A.D. the quality of Mathurā figures, be it in relief or in the round, is heavy with the
burden of Mauryan tradition; but this volume has been modified in unavoidable heritage to the Śunga idiom. Whatever there was left of innervation in the bodily bulk of the third century B.C. has melted into relaxed flesh, encumbered by scarfs, thrown across shoulders and drawn across legs and hips. The scarfs preferably are not allowed to lie flat, but are twisted into bulging ropes, and into loops dangling sideways on one side only. To treat the garment as separate volume, where it does not cling to the body, had been a Mauryan feature. In the subsequent period, however, the garment was made as invisible as possible, and indicated by a few scratches only in the modelled surface of the body, or else it hung like an apron in front of it, where it was meant to suggest the loose ends of drapery. Now, however, as in the case of the body, so in that of the garment, Mauryan and early classical traditions attempt a cumbersome fusion.

The faces of these figures are full of bonhomie; their open eyes and smiling mouths ill-fit the head of a Buddha. When, by the end of the first century A.D., the Buddha-Bodhisattva was given an image, it is that of a ruling and self-pleased figure (Fig. 41). The garment covers the left shoulder only. The body clearly shines through its transparency, and is modelled with soft and summary treatment up to the waist, while the legs, stiff and hardly modelled, are decisive in their outline.

In the beginning of the second century A.D. the reins are loosened, the possibilities of movement have increased and for the first time the figures exhibit their gestures. All 'early' spontaneity has vanished. In Mathurā, in the second century A.D., a complaisant lewdness (Bhūteśvar pillars, about A.D. 130) is carried by exuberant limbs (Fig. 28). Rustic stolidity, with its attempt at largeness, has become a thing of the past. It helped to prepare a more excitable, though
not a nobler, appearance. The naturalism of Mathurā, in the first and second centuries A.D., has physical mass for its substance and sensual appeal for its aim. The former is gradually absorbed by the latter. Flesh—tight, resilient or relaxed—is suggested by the modelling. At no other stage of Indian sculpture has the plastic sense been so entirely steeped in the physical.

At the same time, too, the Gandhāra Buddha type is being purposely copied, and from now onward the folds of the garment covering both the shoulders becomes a favourite, though more and more linearised and conventionalised, attribute of Buddha images made in Mathurā.

Hellenism at this phase plays by no means a negligible part in the sculpture of Mathurā. It is assimilated with understanding and a certain amount of freshness, for it meets an indigenous tendency of this school towards a somewhat detailed modelling for the sake of sensual associations.

Colossal statues of the Kuśāṇa kings, that had been set up in the Devakula at Māt, Mathurā, occupy a position of their own. Unfortunately, none of the heads of the figures of Kaniṣṭha, Vima Kadphises and of the satrap of western India, Caśṭana, from the end of the first century A.D. have been preserved, but the bodies in themselves are sufficiently characterised to show what type of portrait was aimed at by the artists. The custom of setting up portrait statues, or carving them out of the rock, is substantiated by literature of about the same time as well as by actual remnants. There was no novelty in the task, but only in the idiom of execution. The novelty is not of the Mathurā school that has produced innumerable images. Stern economy confines the main effect of the first and last named statues to the surface, to harsh angles and to lines incised as if with the stroke of the sword. The balance peculiar to all Indian sculpture is absent. Without the cohesion of ancient Mauryan ponderosity and
without the rhythmic consistency of the early classical type, an upright posture weighs on the ground with the firmness of will. The angles of Kaniska's coat, the enormous horizontal bar of his boots, the inscription of his name across the surface of his vestments, indicate that the artist was of the same race as his patron. A Scythian inspiration, that had learned in Mathura how to model—as can be seen from the treatment of the chest—has commemorated the dignity of the Kushana kings and of one of their contemporary rulers. The statue of Vima Kadphises, however, is the work of a local and inferior craftsman, who endeavoured in vain to reach the arid altitude of the Scythian incident.

Reliefs of the Western Ghats

The school of Mathura left its impress with the craftsmen of the Western Ghats. But in this case what has been influenced is far more rich and vital than the influence that was brought to act on it (Figs. 43, 44). It has already been pointed out how aboriginally plastic the reliefs of Bhaja are (p. 36). This primevally surging plastic mass now becomes impressed with a knowledge of the stateliness and self-sufficiency of the human physique. It is soothed and further aggrandised by the breadth and fluidity of this thoroughly plastic idiom. Large and fully-developed human bodies carry animated heads. Their eyes, and smilingly expectant mouths, face the world with the dream they carry of themselves, warm and proud with the breathing of their body. Physical life seems to halt on the threshold of its being. There it listens to deep sources that well up to an unruffled surface. The nearness of man and woman is visualised in its simplest, confident of existence as completeness in itself (Kari, about A.D. 100). Later on Maithuna couples, in their accuracy of the erotic situation, pay the penalty of the conscious mind and its reassurances.
The school of Mathurā formulated prototypes of the Indian pantheon, and raised the figure of man to sculptural supremacy. In other parts of the country, which but remotely fell under its sway, parallel processes are to be seen at work. In Sāṇci (ground balustrade reliefs of stūpa II, of the second century A.D.) the stretched proportions of the human figure—no longer top-heavy and stunted in growth, as in the underlying Austro-Asiatic type (p. 33), are clad with soft flesh and versatile movement and outline. The tendencies of Bodhgayā (p. 29) have now made sure of their faculties. In Orissā, too (Rānī Gumphā, and Gaṇeśa Gumphā, first and second centuries A.D.), such achievements as those on the gateways of Sāṇci, are made to serve as a field of action for bodies with free and impetuous gestures, and for physiognomies aflame with the zest of being alive, while older conventions linger on in a provincial manner. Provincialisms and atavisms are further conspicuous in reliefs of this period from the Central Provinces.

Scantily preserved sculptures of the third century show, in Gwālior, for instance (Fig. 45), the idiom of the school of Mathurā still active. A summarising consistency belongs to this age. A flattening and hardening of the plastic context makes the character of form in this age of transition appear parallel to that of Indian sculpture of the eighth century (pp. 72, 78 and Figs. 69, 81, 83).

GANDHĀRA

Gandhāra, with the sculptures produced there in the early centuries A.D. to the fifth century A.D., occupies a position apart. For if it is Indian and colonial from a Hellenistic point of view, it is Hellenistic and colonial when viewed from India. Of the earliest phase the little that is known is
definitely provincial Hellenism, with but slight concessions to Indian predilections (see the jewel borders on the Bimarān reliquary; uṣṇīṣa, mudrā, etc., of the Buddha). Later on, however, Indian standards of modelling, proportion and poise are also accepted inconsistently, and therefore lifelessly. Yet a certain amplitude of facial features, of drapery and demeanour of Gandhāran figures throughout is a local symptom of Indian heritage. It is the redeeming factor of these otherwise hybrid and sapless products.

The weary vacancy over which these large and slow curves are laid, may, in later sculptures (Fig. 46), be adapted to an expression of scepticism, all the more hopeless because it is part of an obstinately placid and thoroughly poised structure of form. The largeness and regularity of such a face contains a mouth of which the descriptively naturalistic treatment is set against an incompatible, while unavoidable, situation with tired disgust.

The crudity of some works (Kaniṣka casket, A.D. 78) is due to Scythian hands. Their firm and sharp linear strokes, however, have nothing to rest upon in the ambiguity of the Gandhāran output. Their impress does not outlive the second century A.D. The picturesquely melting folds and features after the third and up to the fifth century in Gandhāra are not arranged by Indian currents.

The syncretistic craftsmen of Gandhāra attempted, without scruples, to make images with the help of such conventions, the effect of which on the mind of the Buddhist worshipper they could calculate. These they either applied, or else interpreted in terms more familiar to them (see ‘uṣṇīṣa’). All that this school, apart from the iconographic fact of making Buddha images to be worshipped, did contribute to the fabric of Indian art, amounts to very few motifs speedily transformed, such as the rendering of drapery of the Buddha’s robe (p. 42).
VEŅGI

The south expressed itself in ardent form. Amarāvati was the centre of the school of Veṅgi (second century B.C. to third century A.D.). With the work of Jaggayapeṭa as precursor, with the work on, and connected with, the stūpas of Nāgārjunikonda, Alluru and Gumadidurru as contemporaries, albeit of chiefly the later phase and with the reliefs of the stūpa at Goli among the last contributions, the school of Veṅgi, condensed within a circumscribed locality, has contributed a vast amount of sculptures. In the last two centuries B.C. (p. 34) the delicacy of the modelling, the slimness of the over-elongated limbs, the powerful character of the bodies, and with it all a sensibility and keenness of movement, were distinctly of local origin. Later, by about the first century A.D., a heavy and spreading plastic form in some reliefs precludes linear fineness. This trend is fully unfolded in Nāgārjunikonda, in the second century A.D. and later, whereas in Amarāvati it is disciplined in future and swayed by linear rhythms. From about A.D. 100 onward, influences from Mathurā had their chance. This can be seen in some of the Veṅgi reliefs, with stately figures of relatively round and heavy form and dispassionately postured (Fig. 42). But a tremor now seems to pass all through the most luxuriant bhaṅgas, when the artists of Veṅgi, their age of receptiveness being over, re-ascertain their own genius. By the middle of the second century A.D. another external factor was to leave its impress. Hellenism reached southern India by way of trade. As also in the school of Mathurā, it was neither dully accepted nor was it misunderstood by the south Indian artists. It is significant that their interest was captivated, as a few reliefs show, not by Hellenistic anatomy and modelling but by the contrapost, the Hellenic tradition of carrying the weight of one's body. A novel sense of equilibrium was appreciated as affording further possibilities of movement,
with their not wholly unrelated contrast to the tribhanga posture.

With that autochthonous heritage and those northern Indian and other reverberations, in the second century A.D., the art of Veñgi refined what it had come to inherit, and transformed it into the deadly beauty of life at its fullest.

Buddhist subject-matter at this phase has changed its importance. Not that symbols as well as actual representations of the Buddha do not occur in plenty. But they do no more than this, for the breathless sway of the compositions does not halt before them. They are just part of it (Figs 47, 50). The scene of Māyā Devī’s dream, for instance, which in Bhārhut had been told so simply but exhaustively with the sleeping queen and the flying elephant, both of about the same size, in a bare room, indicated only by the presence of a narrow bed, a light and drowsy maid attendants, serves now an opportunity of exhibiting an opulent scene where the Buddha-elephant has no room; in one panel the Buddha-elephant in miniature edition is relegated to the border, while in another it is omitted altogether. Miracles now are true because they are intensified instances of life. Accuracy of narration is not required. Assemblies and festival scenes (Figs. 49–51) are favourites with the school of Veñgi. But equally significant with any of them is the frieze of the coping stone from Amarāvati, an issue of the rambling lotus landscape of the Bhārhut type (Figs. 47, 48). There peace had been given the form of vegetative thriving, of an existence where there is room for all and none may feel his importance. Here the ‘lotus stalk’ has swollen to serpentine bulk, its threatening onrush, however, is merely the heavy weight of a twisted garland of many flowers and beads. It almost bursts the thick rings and elaborate plaques that help to clasp it, it almost crushes those who carry it, rush along with it in mad exhilaration and stop still defiantly and exhausted.
The Bhārhat lotus creeper, with its bounteous stalk, had equally carried all. Now that this conveyance of the life-sap has expanded its movement means doom. There is no escape.

The reliefs are deprived of nature, understood hitherto as co-ordinate existence of human figure, plant and animal, each of equal significance. Now the human figure itself is nature. Where perchance rocks, trees and water are shown, they indicate locality or their own symbolical meaning and help to fill the relief; artistically the trees, be they Bodhi trees or other, have mostly dwindled into inert signs of lost interest (Figs. 47, 50, 51, 53). But wherever the scene takes place it teams with human figures (Figs. 49–52). They sit, stand, dance and fly with the same abandonment. They join their hands and it is a hymn and incantation to life that fleets; they bend their bodies with heavy, heaving shoulders and willowy spine, with a tension that is beyond endurance but that will not break. They fly out of sheer elation, while stepping through the air and hovering in it horizontally. One of the favourite attitudes—and which would be outside the range of the Veṅgi artists—is a three-quarter view with the curve of the bent arm over-sectoring it, so as to preserve in most of the cases the integrity of the outline, while giving largest scope to a modelling that in its vibrations yields the most intimate pleasures of touch (Figs. 50, 51). As counterpart to the high tension of active movements (Fig. 52) there is the elegant langour of physical relaxation, from where this exalted sensuousness inexhaustively replenishes its strength (Fig. 49).

Devices of inter-relation (p. 18) are taken for granted and are extensively used (Fig. 49). At the same time, however, experiments in over-sectoring and foreshortening (pp. 22, 40) have matured. They are made use of in parts only, like ornaments to enrich the composition (Fig. 47, extreme right with altar and wheel and a figure circumambulating the latter),
with the whole gamut of the technique at the disposal of the craftsman. This is also the case in the representations of interiors, where the actually suggested limits of the room coincide with the depth of the relief.

Here, too, for the first time, buildings visible almost totally, from two of their sides, according to the old formula, are treated as open pavilions, their roof or storeys supported by slender corner-pilasters only. They are filled with human figures, and thus set up a cube, a body-space so frequently employed in the later paintings of Ajanṭa.\(^{80}\)

The approach towards the dimension of depth, however, —it scarcely need be said—is not that of the eye and its illusion, but it is derived from a dynamic relatedness of volumes. This can be clearly seen in the reliefs where no indications of an actual room are given, but where a plain background delimits a group of figures (Fig. 47, extreme right and group round Bodhi tree). These, however, attitudinise in such a way that a shallow area results from being occupied by bodies turned at various angles towards each other and towards the ground.\(^{81}\) It is mostly built from the ground of the relief towards the front (p. 17 and also Figs. 49, 50; see, however, Fig. 51, lower part).

The preferred appearance of the figures in their vigour and elegance is that of youth where it is nearest maturity. To complete by contrast and to paraphrase its accomplishment, in some compositions pot-bellied dwarfs, vainly endeavouring to outgrow their deformities, make a counterpoint of body-physiognomies (Fig. 48). This tension between the perfect and its opposite is not, however, only projected into separate figures, it is immanent in every single figure, with its sturdy body carried by limbs of an unearthly tread (Figs. 48, 50, 51). But the face as a spiritual physiognomy is yet unknown. There is no enlightenment, no liberation, in any of them. It is still, as it had been during the whole of early
classical sculpture, but a part of the body, now so expressive of its passion, fatigue and elation.

So far did early classical sculpture go, so utterly steeped in the body, that the mastery of its modelling seems to come from within (Fig. 52). The tangible vibrations of living flesh are the surface movements of deeper stirrings. Such is the naturalism of Amarāvati. Nothing, in spite of the surrender of either to the beauty of the body, could be less Grecian. This is one of the supreme and complete artistic forms of the soil and the mind of India; for ever, that is, as long as it is active and creative, outside salvation the body cannot escape from itself, yet it can help in the attainment of salvation and eventually it is plastically transmuted into its receptacle. (See next chapter.)

In the second half of the second century A.D. the school of Veṅgi is at its height. Linear composition now has not only become more flexible, but has grown in the same direction and to the same degree as the movement of the single figures. From the days of Bhārhat onwards an ever-increasing use was made of the joints of the body in their pliability: as in the fettered shyness of Bhārhat postures (Fig. 27), in the slow sway of the Bodhgayā figurines (Fig. 19), in the vivacious experimenting with new movements and angles of posture in Sānci (Figs. 33, 34). These, by the end of the first century A.D.82 (‘Loṇaśobhikā’ relief, Mathurā), are rounded off into one sweeping boldness, that bends head against shoulders, shoulders against waist, supported by legs reciprocal in their crossed attitude to the body and surmounted by arms that continue the pattern of the body-rhythm (see also Fig. 42).

In unison with the bodily movement, the outline in Bhārhat had been reticent in its flow (Figs. 26, 27), but it gathered momentum as well as sinuous continuity in the subsequent century (Fig. 32), and in the first century A.D. it
reached an amplitude that seemed to distend the movement
now to the right, now to the left, except for a diagonal com-
position, which held together the exuberant outline. In the
second century A.D. the turn and bend of the neck matter
much and the threefold fléxion (tribhaṅga) of the figures
becomes the favourite pose (Fig. 42). This may be seen in
the Mathurā and in the Veṅgi school. But the latter, being
more subtle and expressive, gives it a different scope.

Hitherto the movements of the single figures were contained
within the appearance and extent of the figure. Now,
however, and nowhere in such degree as in the reliefs from
Amarāvatī, the rhythmical, i.e. compositional or dynamic,
movement of each figure seems to transcend its bodily move-
ment. The compositional movement of an upraised arm, for
instance, does not end at the tips of the fingers. On the
contrary, surging along the legs and passing across a powerful
body, with mighty chest and vigorous shoulders, the move-
ment is thrown forth from there across the arms and beyond
the physical reach of the figure (Figs. 52, 51, etc.).

The dynamic movements of these figures transcend
them; their sway, their curves and even the tremulous and
disintegrating outline (Fig. 53), specially of the later reliefs
from Veṅgi, are attempts at escape with the help of the body,
and from its limitations.

The linear composition of the relief panels, too, as a
whole, in its preference for parabolic curves (Figs. 49–52), is
dynamically open. However filled with figure the relief may
appear, it does not solely rely (see Sāñci) on crowded shapes
that have accumulated within a given frame; their multitude
is bound together by linear rhythm. This, however, has none
of the satisfied recurrence, none of the composed conclusiv-
ness, peculiar to Bhārhat. On the contrary its movement is
left open; it just begins only within the given relief field, but
transcends it dynamically.
In the first century B.C. (Sāñcī, South gate) groups of figures had begun to be formed, but they were sprinkled into the density of otherwise inarticulate crowds (Fig. 33). Now, however, the entire linear composition comprises but one group, i.e. that of all the figures taking part in the scene of the relief (see also Sāñcī, West gate, War of the Relics). With as many subordinate groups as there are interests and actions binding the single figures together, the whole is swept by a major movement, which, with its parabolæ, leaves open the entire constellation of any scene futile in its ardour. The perfection of the Veñgi school, incomplete, however, in its attempt to transcend the limits of the single compositions and of the body, with an intensified awareness of its vitality, has an eternal poignancy.

In the third century the discipline of the late second century no longer checks a truly excentrical sense of movement. With a tremulous mannerism of modelling (casing slabs of stūpa of Amarāvatī, reliefs from a stūpa near Goli, etc.), the highly-sophisticated school of Veñgi dissolves (Fig. 53).

Classical Indian sculpture experiences its early maturity in Mathurā in the fullness of sense-perception and enjoyment. In Veñgi the intensity of this experience transcends the experience itself. While early classical sculpture had been based on, and rendered in, plastic terms, the infinite connectedness of all life and form, the later phase, on the self-same basis and with related means, seeks an escape from its very foundation, which cannot be avoided. The direction only alters.

The pendulum of the attitude of the artist towards life has swung back. The oneness with nature in its extended aspects is now condensed and transferred into the human frame. This integration aggrandises the latter to superhuman dimensions and constitutes the notion, if not as yet the form, of the image (Mathurā). The other alternative is that it burdens or elates
in order to transcend the human figure (Amarāvati). In the sculptures of Veṅgī transcendentalism is rendered in terms of locality; the movement of figures and compositions exceeds their actual extension. Transcendentalism, in the sense of a transubstantiation of the body itself and within its frame, was expressed by subsequent generations of craftsmen.

SUMMARY

2. Geography: Two centres: Mathurā and Veṅgī, while the contributions of the other provinces are brought up to date. Expansion of Mathurā idiom.
3. Chronology: Unfoldment of all the artistic faculties as part of a process of inflexion.
4. Inner meaning: (a) Hedonism of Mathurā and (b) transcendentalism of Veṅgī as alternatives of an experience of life which turns back upon itself.
TRANSUBSTANTIATION

A. INFLEXION

A stage is now reached of ‘inflexion’ in its literal as well as in its most intense meaning. Whereas vegetative devices, for instance, such as the lotus-creeper (p. 30), have become rare or disappear altogether from the compositions, their movement seems to persist in that of the bodies and attitudes of the human figures, and in the manner in which they are modelled (Figs. 56–58, 62, etc.). This movement now seems to have its origin within the human frame which it moulds and the limbs of which it conducts according to its own sway. Thus it may be said that what hitherto had been shown as extensive (for instance, in the case of the endlessly rambling creeper) has now withdrawn into the within of the human figure, dynamically active there, yet seemingly at rest in the form it has brought about. In flowing, shallow and altogether unbroken curves, this movement glides along the outlines of the figures, and although varied in strength it can be found in any profile or section across the figures.

The vegetative rhythm of this recurrent and undulating movement has no longer plants for its carrier. While these have disappeared from the compositions they leave their movement in them, freely rhythmical and diffused throughout them, as if it were a strong scent. It clings to and permeates the human figures, now entirely moulded according to this unending rhythm. What had been beheld as extensive
is now shown as acting from within, with an irrefutable calmness. This inflexion of vegetative life and of its rendering in expressive signs, reminiscent of their plant-origin, leads to a 'transubstantiation' of the body. The naturalism of the modelling is now rarified and is brought about by the flowing movement of life itself (cf. p. 50).

Transubstantiation comes about in the following manner: The principle of the vegetative movement persists, while vegetation in which it had been beheld originally withdraws. It immigrates into the human body and makes it its vessel. But the shape remains suggestively human and the principle of the movement from its plant-origin reaches a human destination. Within the body this movement belongs to the physical as well as to the inner life. The movement of the inner life as well as that of the vital currents is identical with the vegetative movement. While in this aspect the body becomes plant-like in swaying rhythm and plasticity, it is the vessel of the movement of the physical and of the inner life. The long-prepared miracle of transubstantiation has thus come true. Hindrances have dissolved; the human body, as given form to, does not stand for physical appearance. It is the form of the movement of life. The 'without' when transferred into the 'within' becomes identical there with the beyond.

This did not come about suddenly. The means for it had been prepared from the very outset. The movement of vegetative growing was rendered in the art of the Indus valley by the undulating stem and branches of trees and in early classical art a device had been invented for its sake, that of the lotus creeper, for which there is no prototype in nature. At the same time human and animal figures had, together with the compositional rhythm, been subject to this movement. But other aims, such as the framing of devices of the inter-relation of the relief figures, an increasing mastery of
foreshortening and various other formal and technical problems demanded solutions (pp. 40, 44). Still, in the ample naturalism of early maturity, transubstantiation of the body drew near.

The ceaseless movement originally seen and felt in the outer world, and mainly in vegetation, became felt also as belonging to the substance of the inner life. This experience is visualised by showing the human body entirely made up of that movement. Its repercussions have shaken off what is gross in the body and what hinders its circulation. Fluid throughout in plastic treatment, the movement now reverberates freely within its self-created form. But in so far as allusion to human appearance remains, it is always made to youth, with its smoothness of limbs, as an homage of the inner life movement, in whose realm there is no waste. The bodies of the gods always look 'as if sixteen years old.'

These bodies of the gods are lent to all the figures, irrespective of their status, whether divine, semi-divine or human. Art form knows no such difference. For the body has now become in every instance an embodiment of the life-movement. It is an aspect of existence itself, in its plenitude of consciousness.

Three centuries follow, from the fourth to the sixth, where the harvest is reaped with suspended breath, in vibrant silence. Throughout the country a largeness of conception visualises super-personal existence. The compositions now no longer narrate; they are, on the contrary, representational. In them aspects of existence itself are contained and expressed. Whatever action is suggested, this takes place in a dimension where time does not pass, but in which, paradoxically, the inner life movement is unfolded.

Gestures, for instance, there are of the single figures; and each has its meaning. One of the most frequently repeated gestures of the Buddha, and of other divinities, is the abhaya
mudrā (Figs. 41, 45, 55, 59), the gesture of fearlessness. The sculptures in Gandhāra and Mathurā were equally familiar with it. But they rendered it merely as a sign or symbol. With them it did not become artistic form. Iconography refers this gesture to a special incident in the life of the Buddha, when he tamed the raging elephant Nālagiri. But the actuality of the situation has left the mudrā. It is shown when the particular incident is not alluded to and when the figure is not that of the Buddha. The gesture permanently conveys fearlessness. From its intransitive experience it is turned, with open palm, into the transitive reassurance, which the presence of divinity gives to the devotee (Fig. 59). The gesture, in its origin an act, exists now in the timeless state which it establishes itself. It is unchangeable in the duration of its being.

In this fixed position it is vibrant with life, artistically potent and not a dead symbol. The rhythmical life-movement pulses through its palm and fingers in telling curves and full modelling.

Whatever action is suggested, this takes place in a dimension where time is at rest and does not pass.

Whether the object is an image to be worshipped, a myth or a scene to be beheld, the inter-related presence of the entire situation, as well as of each single figure that supports it, is what the artist endeavours to fix according to definite measures. Thus every scene or image becomes a vāhana and every part of it, subordinated to that aspect, is transformed according to its meaning within, and in relation to, the whole. Now definite canons of proportion and appearance of the figures come to be laid down systematically as well as definite attributes. Where everything has its bearing in a context that results from artistic creation, and is yet meant to indicate an existence unchangeable in the duration of its action, every part of the compositional unity must be
unmistakable with regard to its suggested purport, and has to be rationalised.

The human figure prevails in scenes and images, to the almost complete exclusion of floral and plant motifs, as has been the case already in Mathurā and Veṅgli from the first century a.d. There is scope for trees as accompaniment for Vṛkṣakās (tree-goddesses), etc., but otherwise all vegetation is relegated to the borders, where the lotus-scroll, now partly still, with its original meaning mostly, however, as a flowing, curling and flaming device (Bādāmī), is treated in a manner that for the first time has been made use of in Amarāvati and Mathurā. Cut obliquely, its rambling stalk ramifies into scrolls that turn point-like upon themselves.

Plastic Transformation of the Body

Endowed with a language of gestures and a canon of poses, proportions, etc., the figures now again (see Bhārhat) are sparsely and clearly placed on the flat ground (Figs. 56–58, 64, 65). There is poise in their attitude and balanced tension in their distance. The ground, in its seeming bareness, acts as a significantly dynamic interval to the consistency of the modelled parts. All energies are concentrated in the superhuman figure, superhuman because, on the basis of actual appearance, its aspect is so modified as to suggest qualities and possibilities beyond the range of mortals. Bodily discipline suggests supernatural strength, freed from the encumbrances of earthly well-being (Fig. 54). The figure of woman, on the other hand, with ample hips and full breasts, retains, whatever may be her name, the promise of motherhood (Fig. 60, etc.). Multiplicity of limbs (p. 7), combined with a transformed body, amounts to an incorporation of further, i.e. transcendental, possibilities (Figs. 64, 66, 67). The shape is prepared that will yield what is attainable beyond the purpose of actual limbs. By a generalisation on
the basis of the physiological and by substitution of the principle of fluidity for that of innervation, the skin becomes a plastic tegument, under which throbs the pulse of life. Whereas the solid parts of the body make the foundation of Western anatomy, the vital currents and that which allows their circulation demand a peculiarly Indian artistic anatomy. It is not scientific in the sense of observation and description of its structure, but it is suggestive of the vital currents that percolate the entire living frame, which in relation to them is secondary and conditioned (Fig. 62).

Innervation, the nervous tension of the body, expressive of animal vitality and of emotions, is relaxed. In this soothed condition it lies dormant. Its capacity of being highly strung is kept in ever-present readiness to envelop the continuous circulation of the life sap, i.e. of the vegetative principle, of the vital currents and of the inner life movement. The muscular substance seems to melt away while it is being sustained and transmuted. It supplies cover and conducts and yields reverberations. It is wrapt all round the bones that are not visible, so that all joints appear as passages of a ceaseless and consistent movement. The transubstantiation of the body is made visible by the transformation of the plastic means.

Just as the notions of bodily appearance are much older than their plastic versions in Gupta and other contemporary sculpture—the feminine ideal, for instance, goes back to the palaeolithic age—so has the plastic transformation of the body been prepared from the end of the Mauryan period onward. As soon as the swaying linear rhythm had begun to animate the figures, and to bend them according to its demands, their compactness was dissolved and transmuted into an appearance more flowing. This comprises the outline, ever more sinuous and gliding, as well as the surface, with its subtle ups and downs of plastic rhythm. In the early centuries of the Christian
era this process had continued, but other problems at that time were paramount. Now the latter having been formulated, the continuity of the movement attains balance between the ever-present foundation of ‘ancient’ volume (mass), and its linear superstructure.

An art, concentrated on the innermost sources of life and on its own contemplation within them, has but little scope for superfluities such as apparel and jewellery. The burdensome ornaments of the early classical period (Figs. 26, 32, 36), the experiments in wreaths and folds of the age of early maturity (Figs. 28, 41, 44), had already been employed in the school of Veñgi to a lesser extent (Fig. 50). There, too, a delicate and at the same time abbreviated formulation had set in. Now, the little that is tolerated, of garment, jewellery or garlands (Figs. 56, 58, 60), stands in sensitive relation to the body, of which it is a sheath and foil, accurate in its delineation (robe of the Buddha, Figs. 54, 55, 59, 62), or delicate with flowers (garland of Varāha avatāra, Udayagiri, Fig. 63).

Between these two, i.e. the systematically accurate and the blossoming surface (Figs. 56–58, 62, 66), Gupta and contemporary sculpture are unfolded.

In the empire of the Guptas in Āryāvarta,92 craftsmen of high spiritual knowledge worked in Sārnāth, but also in Mathurā, in Garhwā, in Udayagiri (Gwālior), and other places, side by side at times with craftsmen who, while carrying on the old traditions, just succeeded in bringing them up to date. Central India keeps pace with the course taken in Sārnāth, yet, while its measure is the same, the experience is on a different level, altogether nearer to the earth and to the past. The east as well as the west now begin partly to acquire and partly to consolidate features that were destined in the future to turn to a considerable extent into local, i.e. ethnical, characteristics. The Dekkhān, however, makes the body of the rock the cradle of portentous qualities.
If perchance at this or any other period an artist inscribed his name, he did it as master of his craft, but through no consciousness of his genius. There never was any scope in Indian art for individual problems and their solutions. Individual problems did not exist. Fixed rules guided the man who had learnt the craft according to his inborn gifts. Those works, however, that rise above the average achievement must be attributed to artists who were by immediate experience in touch with the visualized reality itself. The degree of intensity differs and the subtlety of visualisation, but not the kind of vision nor the means of fixing it in form within each locally circumscribed unit.

In the beginning of the fourth century, one such eminent craftsman from Mathurā carved the large ‘Buddha’ from Bodhgayā (Fig. 54). Much that is of the Mathurā school of the first and second centuries A.D. is still practised, as, for instance, the type of vajra-paryanka motif (crossed legs), as well as of the garment (Fig. 41). Sweeping and harsh generalisations now sum up what had been the joyous naturalism of an earlier age. On that they are based, while ignoring it. (Transitional type: Fig. 45.) Ruthlessly a firm outline now clasps a monumentalised body. That it is an isosceles triangle matters more than the curvature of full limbs, which it restrains with premeditated balance. That the structure of the entire figure is geometrical impresses the ancient Indian heritage of ponderosity with the seal of the unavoidable. But no longer is there any absorption in things earthly, no longer any vehement pulsation of life. But at the same time, what they had been once has now become the humus which nourishes a rarified life. The Bodhisattva from Bodhgayā is the first image in India which by its form signifies what its name implies. The makeshift appearance of images is gone. In Mathurā, during the first and second centuries A.D., the discrepancy between ‘Buddha’-hood and ‘Buddha’-image had been unsurmountable.
Now, however, not only laksanas (characteristics of supernormal appearance) matter, nor do symbolic gestures, but the entire conduct of lines, planes and of all visual relations itself signify that reality which is hinted at by the very name. If in the period of early maturity the figures had grown up physically (p. 40), they have now attained their spiritual size.

Although the Bodhgayā ‘Buddha’ is the earliest image, in a truly spiritual sense, there must have been others made at the same time. The Buddha from Anurādhapura, Ceylon, near in date, is also not far from it in meaning. The Bodhgayā image is not a precursor. It belongs to the age that produced it to the same extent as the Sāñcī reliefs belonged to the first century B.C.

What holds good for the body is also valid for the face. No longer are the single features related to each other merely in their mask-like context (Bhārhut), equally distanced from the within as they are from the without, accentless thresholds between being and living, nor is physiognomy explored as indicative of emotions that spring from the body (Sāñcī, etc.), or by their intensity seem to trespass its vitality (Amarāvatī). But the single features simplified from, and partly also enlarged in comparison with, actual appearance show various possibilities of transcendental experience by very slight modifications in their angles or distances. In the early fourth century the conquest of the mind is the theme of the face. The ancient ideal of the Cakravartin, or the world-ruler, so mundanely interpreted in Mathurā in the first and second centuries (Fig. 41), has become transferred into the inner mind. There the conquest is wrought under the most intimate, and therefore most destructive, guidance of life over its denser aspects. Struggle and disdainful relaxation after conquest, in the firmly set, full-lipped mouth, a shelter against the outside world in the heavily-lowered eyelids, a glance that, while physically rivetted to the tip of the
nose (yoga attitude, see Mohenjo-Daro), masters the fields of the mind. This inner world-conquerer is the Buddha as conceived by the Gupta artists of the early fourth century. From this time onward almost all figures, whether of gods, men or women, assume a similar ‘in-look.’ Behind eyelids lowered as if behind inscrutable walls, they retire into the abyss and the serenity of the inner mind.

Mathurā and Sārnāth

Although Gupta sculpture to our present knowledge begins with the work of a craftsman from Mathurā, the leading craftsmen during the fifth century were working in Sārnāth. Nevertheless they had learnt their lessons from Mathurā, for impressive images had been exported from Mathurā to Sārnāth and other places from the first century A.D. onwards. Sārnāth images, which are to be ascribed to the third and fourth centuries, clearly betoken their indebtedness (Fig. 55). Yet then the Sārnāth version of Mathurā prototypes is subtler than the original (see similarity of mission of Mathurā school in western and southern India, pp. 43, 46). In the fifth century its delicate touch became acknowledged even outside the confines of the school, and Mathurā itself adopted it to its own purposes. In spite, however, of this mutual interchange, each school in the fifth century retains its well-defined features; that of Mathurā a certain harshness along with some motifs, such as, for instance, the ‘ribbed’ robe of the Buddha image; that of Sārnāth is of a finer grain in its subtlety of surface treatment and its utmost economy of all that is accessory to it. Mathurā knows the discipline which leads towards (Fig. 54), Sārnāth renders in plastic terms the body itself of bliss (Fig. 62).

Trend of Fifth and Sixth Century Sculpture

While the first half of the fifth century still prefers a solidly built body and a stern mien bent upon inner conquest
(Fig. 59), after the middle of the century this conquest is taken for granted. The rounded countenance and fuller limbs contain an appearance of ease, resting for a while on its own perfection. In the second half of this century the limbs and body retain their roundness, but become elongated with an elegance aloof from worldly allurement. The head accordingly becomes relatively small, while the face, with ever more rounded features, is a receptacle of bliss. This difference, compared with facial cast and expression of preceding images (p. 62), results from the slightest variations in angles and sizes of the features. These again depend upon the spiritual as well as the artistic capacity of the craftsman. At the end of the fifth century a perfection, unbearable almost in its flawlessness, is attained. The sixth century endows the slender body with a highly-strung sensitiveness of modelling and outline, mollifying here, petrifying there, the entirely delicate surface of the image (Fig. 62). These changes in the appearance of the image are accompanied by more momentous changes of its formal qualities.

In the beginning of the fifth century the modelling had been relatively hard, on the basis of the knowledge gained in the Kuśāṇa period. The chest rigorously adhered to the surface (Fig. 59). This, together with breadth of shoulders, invested the images with an air of command. The outline was accurate and relatively halting. A gradual budding into the roundness of the plastic context, and a serene and uninterrupted flow of lines, are allied features of the later fifth century. An increase of plastic differentiation of the most discriminating economy and of the highest degree of sublimation belongs to the sixth century (Fig. 62).

After the attempt to transcend the possibilities of the body (Veṅgi, second and third centuries), it is given a new measure beyond them, and within its transubstantiated form, in the fourth century. The speed of existence has slowed down. A
sense of joy falls back upon itself, while it experiences what passes with an understanding that leads towards salvation. In self-willed relaxation, that which originally in nature had given the body its shape is released from the physical. Now it cannot but become transubstantiated form.

At this moment of attainment, whatever the figures may do, play music, distribute alms, be worshipped or sport divinely (Garhwā relief, early fifth century, Figs. 56–58), they are being borne by a proud surrender. The group connections, so closely knit during previous centuries (p. 52), now tend to fall asunder. As there are but slight bonds of interest, activity or emotion between the figures, the unity of the group, with all that it implies in three dimensioned connectedness, gives way to a juxtaposition of the single figures, loosely gathered into fleeting nearness here, or arrested at wider intervals there.

Nature, as visible parallel and accompaniment of man, had already begun to gradually disappear. Nature as a whole is taken into and expressed by a transfigured body. A garland of supra-personal figures, in cadences not outspoken and therefore the more suggestive, is gathered according to the subdued rhythm of the ever-recurrent though no longer visible lotus creeper. Not the motif but its rhythm is present, and has become further differentiated. If at this stage, in the quiet of life's everlasting procession, two heads are turned towards each other or two hands are made to touch, such stray movements for ever settle down in its transitoriness. Now that all accompaniments have been eliminated, the flat surface of the relief-ground appears to exhale a fragrance that fatedly binds all form to its rhythmic pattern.

This distils the toughness of the body, so to speak, to the purest plastic essence. It is caught at a definite stage of in-breathing, and, with breath suspended, the shoulders expand,
support and uphold the rest of the seemingly weightless body.

By the sixth century an attempt is made to free the body from the binding surface of the relief-ground. Hitherto, with breadth of shoulders and a posture parallel to the ground, the figure was its highest exponent (Figs. 54, 55, 59, although the latter is cast 'in the round'). This is now made into the point of departure for a movement that passes vertically and arch-like from head to toe, with the highest curvature in the middle of the body. Hitherto, all the bhaṅgas had been explored laterally, and, to some extent, together with the stances, in three dimensional aspects. Now altitude gains artistic significance, in the sense of an outward movement that lifts the figure across its own existence, and, though standing makes it appear to soar, while yet feet and head lie in the same vertical plane, closely bound to the ground and inseparably one with it (Fig. 62).

Such transformation of appearance makes it free from the law of gravitation. What is heavy and yet appears weightless is the charming puzzle, and the sculptors of this age never get tired of repeating it in figures flying without wings (Figs. 60, 68, etc.), soaring pot-bellied Gaṇas, and urgent heavenly spirits cutting across the air, singly or in couples, on clouds that are the lining to an eternal dalliance. In the second and third centuries, dance had been the element in which the figures appeared at home. Now they are still further freed from all crude gravity, and their bodies are suspended in 'mid-air' and permanent bliss.

The flying motif had been dear to Indian artists from the early classical phase. There, however, at times wings were required in the general ancient Asiatic fashion for showing the motif as one indicative of flight. Wingless, yet impetuously flying figures, display their arts on the walls of Orissān rock-cut caves and in Bhārhut. They cut through the air, propell-
ed by their own power of levitation and direction (Fig. 37). Flight as an ultimate degree of movement the Veṅgī artists rendered with utmost zest (Fig. 51). Now zest and directedness return to their roots like the sap of a plant that has borne fruit. There it rests and supports, contained within the body, its seemingly weightless shape.

FORMATION OF EASTERN AND WESTERN SCHOOLS

The influence of Mathurā and Sārnāth made itself felt in eastern and in western India. The school of Sārnāth was appreciated in Bengal, and reverberations of the Mathurā idiom can be felt as far as Sind.

Irrespective, however, of this, local idioms persist in the east and others are being evolved in the west. The eastern school is even now conspicuous by its warm sensuousness (stucco figures from Maṇiyār Maṭha, Rājgir; Sultānaṇṭi-Buddha), with which it endows the sublimations of Sārnāth. With this there goes as far as narrative reliefs are concerned a fondness of embellishments that have their own capricious and curly way. The nervy manner in which pointed finger-tips are bent slightly backwards, deeper shadows shown around the eyes, and lines that are more drawn from the nostrils to the mouth, add one more note, emotional and somewhat irritable (Fig. 59). But essentially the eastern school bases its idiosyncracies on the Sārnāth school. It lifts to its impersonal level the charm and the failings of humanity.

In the west, however, that is, in the country from Gwālior westward, including Rājputāna, etc., stiffening clasps the legs from thighs downward, and, as if whipped by an alien discipline, they bend in sickle shape (Fig. 61). This strained movement becomes more and more prominent in the following centuries. What is responsible for it 'mediaeval sculpture' will show.
CENTRAL INDIA

In central India a homelier and sturdier build had been inherited from the days of Sānci (see the figure of Bhūdevi in the Varāha avatāra relief, Udayagiri, the various river goddesses from Besnagar, Tigāwa, etc.). This tradition, upon which are bestowed achievements of Mathurā from the second century onward, and later on refinements from Sārnāth, gives the reliefs an antinomy of appeal, where spontaneous existence and wisdom of its transitoriness are blended in a plastic context (Figs. 60, 64). But this is also the case in the output of the workshops of Sārnāth, specially in their lesser productions, such as architectonic reliefs (cf. Kṣantivādin Jātaka lintel). Geographical demarcations, indispensable as they are, must not be drawn too rigidly.

The process from the fifth to the sixth century gone through in Sārnāth has its counterpart in central India.

Relatively heavy in a spreading manner in the early fifth century, the rendering of the figures seems to shrink and to become more concentrated in height and roundness in the late fifth and early sixth centuries (Fig. 64). In central India this is done with a reserved kind of elegance.

This terse plastic diction is soon to relax, and to sink back, by the end of the sixth century (Fig. 60), into a broadly spreading form, still activated and polished in outline and bearing of the figures, until shortly afterwards a heaviness like that of profound sleep lays all the figures at rest in it, while their hardened outlines keep them confined each to its shape (Fig. 65).

It is in central India, too, that in a rock-cut relief, like that of the Varāha avatāra scene in Udayagiri, forces more vital and at the same time more ancient and deep rise into gigantic appearance (Fig. 63).

What had mattered in the Indra and specially in the Sūrya relief at Bhājā (p. 36) has now reached its zenith. Cosmic
myths are wrested from the stone in a language of pure plastic form. Upheavals of the sun, water and earth coagulate into compositions for which there is no man-made law. Primevally organic in its animal-human appearance, Viṣṇu-Varāha rises from the waters; the latter, however, are but a regularly incised pattern of parallel wavy lines, unruffled by the mythical event. The rising and penetrating of the lingering, heavy, yet commanding mass of Viṣṇu betrays no effort in carrying out its mission of rescuing the earth-goddess. This body, from its elephantine legs and arms, gathers the dignity of cosmic confidence in human shoulders and boar’s head.

The convolutions of the Nāga, worshipping in the security of its swelling hood and curling out of it, make the pedestal of the rising Viṣṇu, who lifts and carries with him goddess, garland and lotus stalk, all serpentine in roundness and movement. The undifferentiated state of formlessness seems just left behind. It still clings to the figure of the Varāha avatāra, and paradoxically completes the power of the composition.

This early fifth century rock-cut relief, in its peculiar vitality, is just an outpost in central India. That other contemporary reliefs cut into the same rock of Udayagiri, and that the figure of Bhūdevi are of the average type of central Indian sculpture, is beyond the point. The Varāha relief, in its tough and slow plasticity, heaving with the very breath of creative earth, belongs to the same mentality which had been at work in Bhājā, and now marks the rock with the more differentiated impress of a later age. While currents from Sārnāth, etc., touched upon the sculpture of central India, the connectedness with the tradition of the Dekkhan matters more at this phase.

**Dekkhan**

In the Dekkhan the few reliefs of the fifth century (Lāḍ Khān temple, Aihole) are neither in quality nor in quantity
substantial enough to admit conclusions. In the sixth century, however, temples, images and rock-cut caves afford scope for truly aboriginal sculptures.

A colossal stele, for instance, of a Śivaitic image (Fig. 66) from Parel, Bombay, makes the god, in his threefold presence, appear with a gesture of manifestation and rise above himself with a gesture of collection, and advance further above himself with a plenitude of arms, while the entire high column—lingam of his threefold unity—radiates forth multiples of his likeness, repercussions of his existence, repetitions of his gestures, all the while all of them leaning back against one more and still one more manifestation, supported by, and rising from an inexhaustible supply, all the while all of them steeped in deepest absorption, drowned within themselves and flooded by their strength that moulds their bodies with the deep breath that life draws before it gives birth and before it dies.

The squat dwarfs at the bottom make the music to the silence of the image.

What had sustained the bodies of the figures at Kārlī (Fig. 44) yields now, rarified, the intensity of the image from Parel. That welling up from the deep has now recourse to its own movement. It is led backwards by it and sinks into the bottom from which it has arisen.

The reliefs of the four caves of Bādāmi, too, are of essential importance. When calling to mind the suavity of Sārnāth sculpture, grave weight of subterranean forces seems gathered in the looming inertia of their full and heavy forms. In Gupta sculpture of the sixth century absorption and bliss of the mind had transmuted the appearance of face and body to a calm that was unearthly yet tender. In the Dekkhan, however, that absorption is not of the mind only, and there is no bliss. The whole being seems to lean back and to sink deeper and deeper into its origin and destiny, where all is so silent that
the pulsing of the blood roars against the limits of the body like breaking sea-waves (see Kārlī, p. 43). This sinking back into the un-formed, yet ever-balanced in its tension, is a state of the most condensed energies. They may appear as if seized by drowsiness; though now pent-up in a sort of self-intoxication, they are ready to break out any moment into powerful gestures and divine fury (Fig. 67, also Viṣṇu on Ananta, cave iii, and Trivikrama relief, cave ii).\textsuperscript{111}

Technically of coarse grain, these Trivikrama reliefs place the large-shaped figures into panels not too deeply sunk and just big enough to accommodate the dynamic dimension of the main figure. The panel or recess does not encase the figure in conformity with its actual extension. The main figure, i.e. that of the god, may be placed asymmetrically to one side of the panel, and the space left at the other side, or on top, is filled with minor figures in such a manner that the movement of the divinity in its power has scope to extend beyond its limbs.

There it encompasses the accompanying figures. These do not carry it any further, nor do they even share in it; on the contrary, whatever be their own actions and movements that while unaffected by it, happen within it, they are wrapt round by it and it is there that they abide.

The weightiness of the main figures is made conspicuous by heavy and very high and cylindrical crowns. While by their height they seemingly elongate the verticalism of the figures, by their weight, however, they press down upon their actual height, so that they appear burdened with the dignity they have to support. By this counter-movement of the ascending growth of the figure and of the descending crush of the crown, tense and unrelieved energies accumulate within the bodies. Nothing could be less familiar to contemporary sculpture from Sārnāth, where slight heads are lightly carried on plant-like and swaying bodies.
This dynamism, latent within the heavy mass of the body, is not compatible with Buddhist notions. But Indian sculpture has at all times essentially carried out its own inherent trends, and only secondarily put them into the service of religion. These may coincide, as in the Brāhmanical rock-cut sculptures of the Dekkhan, or in the Buddhist images from Sārnāth (but see p. 62 with regard to the lateness of artistic formulation of Buddhahood). It does not, however, tally in the Buddhist rock-carved reliefs of the sixth century in the Dekkhan.\textsuperscript{113} Ajañṭā, although with a more sensitive treatment of the plastic surface, stands nearest to the work of Bādāmī, where divinities and figures not exclusively Buddhistic are carved (Fig. 70). But numberless reliefs of the Buddha, seated or standing (Fig. 68), and of other divinities, pass through a lost cause; swelled from within by energies that serve no purpose in remaining there. The form that is their outcome, for all its weightiness, is feeble and seems to collapse (Fig. 68) or else to stiffen (Kaṇheri, cave lxvi) under its own burden.

Later on the rock-cut reliefs of Nāsik, cave xvi, on the other hand, give to Buddhist sculpture in the Dekkhan of the eighth century a subtlety to which only this age dares to aspire (Fig. 69). While the entire appearance of the figures is thinned and stretched, the purity of their outlines is disciplined by its own sway.

To come back to the sixth century, the carved slabs from Aihole,\textsuperscript{113} while in some respects closely related to the Bādāmī reliefs, stand midway between contemporary Gupta sculpture and that—although hitherto scarcely known—of the south; the high attainment at this phase of classical sculpture lifts even the lesser work to its own level. (Ceiling slab of Viṣṇu, flying couples on two slabs, etc.)\textsuperscript{114}

The achievement of the fifth and sixth centuries lies in the perfection of visualizing transubstantiated form on the basis of a knowledge that during the past centuries had derived its
strength and increased its technical facilities by its inherent kinship with, and interpretation of, nature. Within the high level that prevails throughout India, Áryāvarta under the Guptas gives the subtlest expression of yoga and of stages towards the goal attainable through it in plastic terms; whereas the Dekkhan, with its weightier sculptures, conjures into form potentialities and powers that carry with them the knowledge how to withdraw into their origins. Gupta sculpture is an efflorescence in serenity, but in the sculpture of the Dekkhan deeper and darker forces stir. What follows in the seventh century in Áryāvarta are but the remnants of the feast, and these are touched by irradiations from the Dekkhan; whereas the seventh and the eighth centuries in the Dekkhan fulfil the trend of the sixth century.

Between these geographical and ultimately ethnical definitions in the main provinces of classical sculpture of this phase, it is specially in central India that the past comes up to the high mark of achievement. Connected with either of them, essential characteristics remain the same in Sāñci (p. 30), in the sculptures of the temples in Nāchnā Kuṭhārā\textsuperscript{116} and later on in the ‘middle ages.’

Apart from the many sculptures in stone or metal, the terra-cotta reliefs (Bhitārgāon, Chausa, etc.),\textsuperscript{116} of which species there must have been numberless examples, deserve a passing remark. An acute sense of frolicsome freedom, and of vigorous action reveals the Indian artist from yet another side. May be that the more perishable material was welcome to him for the rendering of moods that do not claim to be permanent; but there is no essential difference in the plastic treatment.

**Vegetative and Abstract Motifs**

A synthesis of the fabric of classical Indian sculpture would not be complete without a discussion of the part played in it by vegetative motifs and abstract devices. It has already
been pointed out (p. 54) that motifs of vegetation have more or less withdrawn from the figured scenes; they are separated from them and relegated to borders or to panels exclusively replete with them. The latter may be seen in the Dhāmek stūpa (sixth century) of Sārnāth, endowed with all the rich resources of Gupta craftsmanship (Fig. 107). The round modelling of stalk, etc., according to early classical tradition, and the oblique cut of the scroll as it appeared in Mathurā and Amarāvatī combine. But their prolific and vital wealth are set next to other panels, neatly kept apart within their own confines. There is, however, no vegetative exuberance there. Purely geometrical patterns, all based on the svastika motif, in endless repetitions and manifold combinations, fill the given space in patterns of light and darkness, like woven fabrics, cut with flat and angular surfaces into the stone. Such purely abstract motifs had been rare hitherto. Bhārhut contains only one roundel filled in similar fashion, and in Gandhāra the ‘chessboard pattern,’ etc., had further opportunities. Apart from these sparse instances, however, the purely geometrical device found but little response within classical Indian art (plinth of monastery, No. II, Nālandā, and svastika reliefs from Bādāmi). The reason for this lies in tendencies that determine Indian art in the centuries to come; the ornamentation of the Dhāmek stūpa is partly a survival of ancient motifs (see Mohenjo-Daro for vegetative rhythm as well as svastika motif) and partly a precursor of a northernisation of Indian art. This inaugurates ‘mediæval sculpture.’

But before this found expression, states of supra-personal existence, i.e. of the inner life, were given form with the help of the transmuted human body.

In the transubstantiated body the urge of the un-formed towards form has proceeded one step further. This does not lead beyond the body (p. 53). In its twofold possibilities,
as rhythmical and time-born or momentary and all-embracing, it is timelessly at rest within the body, through the fullness of movement which it integrates.

This is attained through a complete mastery of the functioning of consciousness (Mathurā) and is suggested as bliss (Sārnāth). It is attained by the immersion of consciousness into the nameless sources and balance of life, and is suggested as dormant power (Bādāmī and Parel), ready for manifestation.

These two alternatives are the same that inhere in plastic form in the early classical phase (p. 37). Only the levels differ and the points from where they are reached. Unconsciously creative, within the plasticity of the former the same experience is now gone through within the consciousness of the inner life.

Integrally part of nature, and on the way of becoming artistic form, it has to halt before its ultimate goal, which is formless and limitless. There all the means of expression are insufficient, words as well as form. But in order to show that the direction towards the ultimate goal lies within the living body, the craftsman transsubstantiates it in art, so that it becomes the visible vāhana, the unmistakable conveyance, towards, and it also may be said as well as of, the form—and limitless.

This now finds intense utterance in a medium whose diction from that early phase has been equipped for the task, and has refined its means in the process of centuries.

**Summary**

3. Chronology: Form equivalent to movement of the inner life and to modes of universal consciousness; substrate: the human body.

4. Inner meaning: Plastic form establishes the balance between the urge of the un-formed and the experience of the formless = the limitless.
TRANSUBSTANTIATION

B. FULFILMENT

So lavish had been the efflorescence of Gupta sculpture that for some time to come a large part of Āryāvarta remained spell-bound by its qualities. During the subsequent century (the seventh) the artists dwelt on the achievements of the past. A brooding heaviness possesses all form; yet it has none of the latent dynamism of contemporary and earlier Dekkhani sculpture. What actually was added in Āryāvarta at this period is a coarsening of the plastic texture, and the tendency to formularise the tradition of the Gupta period. All the avenues of classical sculpture seem explored, and the only solace of these generations is to drag their heavy tread across paths that once had been in flower.

The Sārnāth school, now exhausted from centuries of its highest conception and continuous creation, lingers in reminiscences of the past. On broader, and therefore securer, foundations than the exalted refinement of Sārnāth genius, the central Indian artists impart the leavings of Gupta art with the now frequently inevitable Dekkhani flavour (Fig. 65).

In the eastern school at this time the Gupta style of the sixth century is still alive in a provincial manner. Some reliefs from Pahārpur and other sites in this respect connect Gupta sculpture and the Pāla and Sena school of eastern India
(pp. 67, 111). But of deeper artistic significance, though not of greater consequence, are other panels at Pahārpur. They have to be assigned to a genuinely local and popular eastern tradition of immediate power and purposeful rhythms (Fig. 80). This, in the subsequent Pāla and Sena schools, is given but little scope. It survives up to the nineteenth century in Bengal scroll paintings and on painted book covers.

Another provincial modification of the Gupta tradition, but more in the central Indian than the Sārnāth version, is offered by the wooden reliefs of the temple at Brahmor (Cambā, about A.D. 700). Of about the same age, yet already ‘mediæval’ formally, are some large metal images from Cambā (p. 117).

In the eighth century the heaviness is overcome by linear discipline. The outline firmly grips a modelling that has tightened. Its generalisations come near the ‘mediæval’ phase of Indian plastic art. The transitions from the classical to the mediæval are gradual. In Bihār (Nālandā, Fig. 81), in Bengal, in Orissā (Utkala, Fig. 83), in the Central Provinces (Sirpur) and in south India (Kailāsanātha temple, Kāñci-puram), this phase is equally conspicuous.

**South India: Māmallapuram**

While Āryāvarta, as far as sculptures go, had been largely seized by torpor, in the south the rocks were carved at Māmallapuram in the middle of the seventh century under the Pallavas. What preceded them in the beginning of that century is of little consequence. It only shows that the slender figures of the Veṅgi school had become aggrandised and simplified, but were at the same time subjected to the heavy impress of the Dekkhanī form (rock-cut reliefs at Bhairavakonḍa, etc.).

Most conspicuous amongst the Māmallapuram reliefs is that of the Gaṅgā (part view, Fig. 71). Here the rock
CLASSICAL SCULPTURE

itself becomes material as well as theme. A cosmical event is visualised on a large scale, transcending shape and size of any regular frame. Such a composition is truly inspired by the rock, its quality and secret. The neat rectangles, roundels and other simple frames, such as were suggested by architecture or the necessities of any craft, appear slight and man-made if held against the mass of the rock that allows itself to be organised into relief. The idea is not new. Bhājā furnished the first example; Udayagiri, with its Varāha avatāra, had been the grandest attempt; while the Gāṅgā-relief of Māmallapuram is the completest. The unlimited conception of the relief had been transferred even to the walls of a structural temple, with little success, as can be understood.\(^{129}\)

Most of the other rock-cut reliefs of Māmallapuram are architectonic in their structure.\(^{130}\) Whether they represent Viśnuitic myths and Śivaite divinities or the royalty, the rectangular frame is the keynote of the composition. Where single figures are made to fill sunk panels on the rathas (rock-cut temples), their extraordinary height is one with that of the shafts of the pilasters that flank those panels (Figs. 72, 73). But not only is the remarkable elongation of the figures in keeping with architectonic devices. Their postures, too, whatever bend the body may assume, have none of the swaying softness of Āryāvarta figures. The vertical direction remains predominant, and bases its slimness on the shallow curves which cling to the tall limbs and make them smooth. High and invariably pointed crowns, of many shapes, further enhance the verticalism of the figures. (Contrast Bādāmī, p. 71.) The body in its simplified appearance is but a richer pillar-shape itself. If this is the relation of the single figure, or the pair of figures, to their architectonic frame, the result in this peculiar appearance of the figures is maintained where they belong to a composition, such as that of a myth or of a representative
scene, even where it is not part of a supposedly architectonic context (Fig. 74).

While the full slenderness of the Veṅgi type persists as far as proportion goes, its ripe sensuousness is lost, for its peculiar modelling has dwindled away as if it had been ironed. A simplified appearance results, so that the arms or legs, when tretched, are column-like. Yet these limbs, when bent, have all the pliability a Veṅgi artist could have endowed them with. This simplification, though it reduces the sensuous appeal of appearance, conduces, on the other hand, to such possibilities as are now sought after (see p. 54). There is a keen vigour and resolve in the movement of the limbs that have divine energy for their motif power (Fig. 71). Instead of the languorous relaxation of the Veṅgi figures, those of Māmallapuram, on the other hand, persevere, under all circumstances, in carrying their bodies according to a destined measure.

With this attitude the physique of the figures is also somewhat different, not so much in the case of the male as of the female figures. The male figure, with elongated torso, is supported by long legs, its broad shoulders are still conspicuous. (See Veṅgi, p. 49.) But otherwise the form has become superhuman, with its slim waist and without any allusion to the nervy modelling of the broad chest of the Veṅgi type (Figs. 71, 73). The shoulders and chest of the female figures, moreover, have become narrow, and the breasts small. When standing, their bodies rest submissively, and in a curve almost concave on firm hips. In keeping with this comparative slightness is a sparing use of jewellery and apparel (Figs. 73, 74). These, in fact, in the case of woman, are reduced to a minimum. Yet the crowns they wear are as variegated and elaborate as of the male figures (Figs. 71, 73). In their case, loin-cloths, girdles and scarves are simplified to narrow and flat bands or pads. When the figures, according to their