

EROTIC
SCULPTURE
OF INDIA

A SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDY

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Page 40

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DEVANGANA DESAI

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EROTIC SCULPTURE OF INDIA

A SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDY

मकारपञ्चकं देवि देवताप्रीतिदायकम् ।
कौलावलीनिर्णय ४, २७



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Foreword

IN ITS ORIGINAL version this book came to me in the form of a dissertation for adjudication for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Bombay. I could see at a casual first reading of the voluminous typescript and a scrutiny of the supporting evidence of hundreds of photographs, that here was a solid piece of research which for the first time attempted to present a balanced and analytical, historical and sociological perspective on a much publicized, discussed and debated but, nevertheless, much misunderstood theme. Later, as I read it through more carefully I felt increasingly convinced that a better, more critical, objective and exhaustive treatment and presentation of the subject had not yet been made; at any rate it had not yet come to my notice. Without hesitation, therefore, I recommended the dissertation for acceptance for the award of the doctoral degree and for its publication after a certain amount of pruning and editing.

Dr. Devangana Desai, the author, has done this pruning and editing as competently as she had done the original writing, and the book is now ready for release from press. She wanted me to write a Foreword by way of introducing the book to its readers. I agreed with pleasure, not so much to introduce the book or its author since the book itself carried, I was sure, the best introduction to both, as to record my deep appreciation of the study she had made.

The book purports to be a study of practically the entire corpus of the empirical material of erotic motive and action and their significance as provided by the art and archaeology of what is usually called ancient India. This material has been studied, first descriptively and then critically and analytically, along the arrow line of time, the emphasis being on the period between A.D. 500 and 1400. The analysis has involved classification and sub-classification of erotic situations as actually manifested in art: explanation of each situation and its classification with the help of references to literary texts and their correlation with the social and religious milieu which sustained the various types, forms and situations; their geographical and chronological distribution; and significantly, their cult affiliations, among other things. Evidently a great deal of field and library work, critical and analytical study of the material itself, as much as of the sociology of religion and art, of psychology in general, and sex-psychology and practices in particular, and an amazing vitality and alertness of intellectual effort have gone into the making of this book. But all this has given the author



good dividends. She has been able to formulate a set of interesting hypotheses which should provide, for the first time, a clear and comprehensive guide-line for any serious study of this fascinating and intriguing aspect of Indian art, life and general culture. It should be, to my mind, the best reference book on the subject for years to come. I could not commend the book in stronger terms.

This certainly does not mean that the treatise has answered all the questions which may yet disturb a serious student of the subject. For such questions further analytical study and investigation would, of course, be called for. But I have no hesitation in saying that this book has laid the basis for all future studies in this regard, and that the method of inquiry adopted in this book should be valid for further investigation on the subject.

New Delhi
January 1, 1974

NIHARRANJAN RAY



Preface

THE ORIGIN OF the book lies in my curiosity regarding the enigmatic presence of sex in the religious art of a culture that had glorified austerity, penance and renunciation. Interest in the subject led me into seven years of research which resulted in a doctoral dissertation presented to the Bombay University in 1970.

The subject is vast and complex. For an understanding of its many facets and for the formulation of viable concepts an interdisciplinary approach was found to be necessary. A mere stylistic or aesthetic approach to erotic sculpture would have been inadequate to account for the presence of sex in religious art and its profuse display. Various disciplines such as Anthropology, Comparative Religion, Sociology of Art and Religion, Social History and Art History were called in for an understanding of this complex phenomenon. The research involved a study of the Tantras, the Purāṇas, the Śilpaśāstras, the Kāmaśāstras, Sanskrit Drama and Poetry, inscriptions of the period, etc. The primary requirement was an empirical survey of sculptures, specially their thematic content, their placement and position in the architectural scheme of the temple, and their distribution in different regions. Various existing hypotheses were tested against empirical evidence of erotic representation on the walls of temples. It is an analysis of erotic sculpture, as actually represented, rather than spiritual conjecture or romantic idealization, which can take us towards an understanding of its nature.

Photographs have been selected to put the facts in proper perspective and to unfold the problem before the reader rather than for the aesthetic quality of sculpture or for interest in eroticism for its own sake.

It may be mentioned here that diacritical marks are confined to Sanskrit words and are generally not used for place names.

I am indebted to Dr. G. S. Ghurye, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, University of Bombay, under whose guidance my thesis was prepared. At an early stage of research when I was thinking of limiting my work to the erotic sculpture of Khajuraho, it was Dr. Ghurye who encouraged me to take up the issue at an all-India level and deal with it in its total social situation. The wider perspective I thereby gained gave shape and form to my work.



I express my deep gratitude to Dr. Niharranjan Ray, Professor Emeritus, University of Calcutta, who examined my thesis and made valuable suggestions for editing it in book form. I thank him immensely for his keen interest in my work and for writing a Foreword to it.

I am grateful to the University Grants Commission for the Research Fellowship which financed three years of my research, including the tours I undertook during that period. I record my thanks to Prof. D. N. Marshall and Dr. B. Anderson of the Bombay University Library for providing me facilities for research.

To Dileep Purohit I owe a debt of gratitude not only for his photographs, but also for the entire visual layout and for his constant help throughout the writing of my book. I am grateful to Nitin Desai and Dr. Dev Nathan for going through the manuscript and making valuable suggestions. I thank Dr. Jaya Chemburkar for helping me through several Sanskrit passages. My thanks are due to Hansa Jhaveri for her assistance in reading proofs and various other matters, Sri and Smt. S. Y. Pradhan for preparing line-drawings, and Sri Abhijit Barua for the jacket-design.

The work would not have been possible without the constant encouragement and intellectual stimulation of my husband, Jayant Desai, who need not be formally thanked.

I take this opportunity to thank my publishers, their editors, and the printers for their kind co-operation throughout the production of the book.

Finally, I record my deep and sincere gratitude to all the authors whose works have been helpful in formulating my thoughts and shaping my work. I am indebted to various scholars who discussed or made suggestions on the subject at different stages of my work.

August, 1974
Bombay

DEVANGANA DESAI



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FOR PERMISSION to reproduce the photographs listed below I am indebted to the Director-General of Archaeology, New Delhi, Director of the National Museum, New Delhi, and the Curator of the Archaeological Museum, Mathura. I thank the Director-General of Archaeology for permission to reproduce line-drawings (Figs. I, XIV-XVII). The copyright of these photographs and line-drawings rests with the respective authorities.

My thanks are due to the Director of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay, for supplying photographs as listed below.

I am beholden to the Directors of the following museums for letting me incorporate in the book photographs of objects in their collection: the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, University of Calcutta; the Indian Museum, Calcutta; the Museum and Picture Gallery, Baroda; the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

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PHOTOGRAPHS



I. Introduction

MEDIEVAL HINDU TEMPLES all over India are replete with sexual motifs. Not only renowned temples like those of Khajuraho, Konarak and Bhubaneswar, but also temples of lesser known sites have portrayals of erotic figures. Sexual representation is not limited to two or three places but is seen all over India in the period A.D. 900-1400. It is so profuse and, on some temples, so blatant and obtrusive, that it could have hardly escaped the eyes of devotees and pilgrims. It seems to present a glaring contrast to the goals and ideals of Hindu culture which is generally characterized as spiritual, otherworldly, rationalizing and extravagant in its ethos.¹ The phenomenon appears, at first sight, to be a paradox, a contradiction between avowed cultural goals and the content of art. A pertinent question asked by all interested in the subject is that if sex were considered a distraction and hindrance to self-realization in the highest thought and wisdom of our culture, why was it so flagrantly depicted on its religious buildings? Why is it that temple-sculpture does not reflect the religious ideology expounded in the Upaniṣads and the Gītā?

Sex in the religious art of Indian culture presents an interesting problem to students of society and culture. Such widespread and riotous sexual depiction throughout India could not obviously be the creation of the whims and caprices of a few individuals but must be the reflection of the social reality of the period. Its spread and variety could not have been fortuitous, bearing no relevance to the socio-cultural background. A sociological study of sexual representation in Indian religious art is undertaken here to understand and explain the socio-cultural forces behind the seemingly anomalous situation.

What strikes us as a contradiction probably did not appear so to Medieval Indians. The Śilpaśāstras, Vāstuśāstras and other authoritative texts embodying rules of sculpture and architecture, written after the Gupta period, refer to the portrayal of erotic figures on doors and other architectural parts of religious monuments, but none of them saw in this a contradiction with cultural values. None of the Sanskrit writers, theoreticians, philosophers and thinkers have even bothered to mention the issue. Writers like Kṛiṣṇa Miśra, Kṣemendra, Bilhaṇa, Kalhaṇa, etc., who have shed light on the social reality of their times, are totally silent about erotic display on temples. Kṣemendra in the 11th century could find fault with Kālidāsa's erotic descriptions in the *Kumārasambhava* on grounds



of *auchitya* (propriety).² But his critical judgement did not encompass erotic art on temples. The same can be said of Kṛṣṇa Miśra, the court poet of the Chandellas in the 11th century, who has written an anti-sex play, which was staged at Mahoba, about 50 miles away from Khajuraho. Bilhana, who was a widely travelled 11th century "intellectual" must have seen the temples of Kashmir, Dāhala (Central India), Gujarat and the Deccan. But he too does not refer to their erotic figures. Of course, he proudly describes in his *Vikramāṅkadevacharita* (XVIII, 11, 23) the voluptuous *devadāsīs* of the temples of Kashmir. What does this indifferent attitude to erotic sculptures by the critical and astute observers of the period indicate? Does it not suggest that the depiction of sex was so widely accepted in the socio-cultural setting of the period that it did not appear to them as a contradiction? It is therefore necessary to probe into this socio-cultural background and look for factors which not only permitted sexual representation but even glorified it.

Sexual representation was not an isolated occurrence confined merely to few places. Social conditions giving rise to it were common and instead of studying them piecemeal and atomistically as social conditions, for instance, of Khajuraho and Konarak, the study of the total socio-cultural structure of the Medieval period is necessary. The root of the problem lies not in the social conditions of particular temple sites or regions which express sex largely or loudly, but in the social conditions common to all-India culture. It is for this reason that this work studies sexual representation at an all-India level.

Explanations for this cultural phenomenon have so far been sought mainly at idealistic levels. Sexual expression has been interpreted as the symbolic representation of the Eternal Bliss or the overt manifestation of Kāma, the third *puruṣārtha*. But the problem is not solved by such *a priori* speculations. They fail to take into account, as we will see in Chapter V, the actual representation of sex with themes involving orgies and bestialities. These idealistic hypotheses also do not explain why, in this particular period of history, there is such a vast outburst of sexual depiction.

There is also a tendency to explain these sculptures as symptoms of degeneration and sexual indulgence. This factor does explain, to a certain extent, their historical development but leaves out one of the significant aspects of the situation, viz. the presence of sex in religious art. The *bhogīs* (voluptuaries) would be satisfied with the decoration of palaces and the aphrodisiac function of sexual themes on their objects of daily use. It would not be necessary to have sexual representation on temples. Sexual depictions in secular art are common occurrences all over the civilized world. It is when sex is represented on religious monuments that it poses a problem to us.

Explanations based on cursory references to factors like Tāntrism, beliefs in the evil eye, *devadāsī* institution, etc. are only empty statements, if not explained as a part of a total configuration. We have to examine the role of different factors in their totality in the historical development of erotic motifs.

The emphasis in the book is on the study of empirical reality—the observation of actual sexual representation, its nature, extent, variety—in order to formulate a hypothesis or to offer an explanation for it. The study and analysis of the actual representations of sex seemed to be a fruitful method to put the problem in its proper perspective and to enable us to study its relevant social background. It is necessary to know, for instance, whether the motifs display sexo-yogic poses, whether they are placed in the interior and on the *garbhagriha* walls, etc. The rejection or acceptance of views should be based on the observation of sculptures. Without knowing what is actually portrayed, it is no use delving into idealistic rationalizations and justifications.

In the early stages of the research on which this book is based, the temple sites which are known to have erotic sculptures were visited without any preconceived theories or explanations. If one temple of the area was known to have erotic figures, other temples nearby were also visited. For instance, as the temple of Modhera in Gujarat was known to have them, temples of the same region such as Sunak, Motap and Siddhapur were visited.

An interesting and significant discovery was made on such visits to places in the same region. It was clearly revealed that the nature and type of erotic motifs were conditioned by the architectural conventions of the region. Erotic figures of the same region showed a pattern different from those of other regions. Each region thus appears to have had its own interpretation of erotic motifs as reflected in the size and placement assigned to them in the architectural scheme of the temple and the nature and extent of erotic display. Temples erected in the period A.D. 900–1400 reveal the influence of regional conventions.

Important temples of the five regions, viz. Central India, Orissa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Mysore, were visited. Photographic evidence was utilized in respect of the temples not personally visited. Differences in erotic representation of the five regions have been described, but no attempt is made to give the socio-cultural factors behind the individual patterns of each region. This falls beyond the scope of the present work but opens directions for further research. Our concern is to give the general social background of sexual representation in Indian culture.

It was realized that in order to understand the rationale of erotic figures in religious art, it was necessary to study them before they were conventionalized in *śilpa*-canons. Forms, once accepted in art, have a tendency to become conventionalized and assume the character of motifs. In the culture of India which glorifies traditional values, the process of conventionalization became a major factor leading to persistence and inertia in the use of motifs. It is for this reason that a sociological study of an art motif is incomplete without taking into consideration its historical tradition. The prolific depiction of sex on Medieval temples, though resting on numerous other factors, is also embedded in the tradition of art. It has its own history in the art of Ancient India and therefore cannot be adequately treated without taking into consideration the earlier representations of sex. O. C. Gangoly,³ one of the first scholars to bring this subject to the fore, has traced the historical development of erotic motifs and has suggested the possible connection of erotic motifs in Early art with those in Medieval art. His treatment of *mithuna* as an architectural motif is one significant contribution to the study of erotic art.

All important religious sects of the country—Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina—have presented erotic motifs in their art. Sexual representation was a pan-Indian cultural feature. It implies a common cultural substratum which influenced religious sects all over India. This common substratum is seen in those beliefs and practices which show the primal connection between sex and religion. Far from being suppressed or moralized upon, sex played an important part in the religious life of early communities and civilizations. For this, the elaborate material from James Frazer's gigantic venture, the *Golden Bough*, and books and articles by Robert Briffault, Havelock Ellis, Jane Harrison, etc. have been of great help. Although recently there has been a tendency to discredit the evolutionary approach of the early anthropologists, it is realized that without understanding their studies on the sexual aspects of religion, it would not be possible to probe into the subject. We have selected informative data from their works to show the prevalence of sex in religion.⁴



Works by Ananda Coomaraswamy, J. Gonda, Mircea Eliade, E. O. James, D. D. Kosambi, D. P. Chattopadhyaya, Moti Chandra, to mention but a few, have also recognized the role of sexual magic and fertility rites in Indian culture. The importance of the concept of "fertility" is emphasized by Gonda and is quoted here: "It may be of some use to enlarge here upon this point, because many scholars of the West living in modern towns and devoted to abstract thought, would seem apt to underestimate the importance of the idea of fertility for rural life all over the world. This idea has been, and still is, far and wide the centre of a more or less primitive world concept. Fertility was life in plants, in animals, in men."⁵ We have used the word "fertility" in its wider application to include both its primary purposes of multiplication and revitalization of animals, vegetation, earth and human beings as also its wider connotations, the aversion of evil, death, misfortune and the promotion of life, happiness, prosperity and auspiciousness. In Chapter VI we will see that the depiction of sex is one of the magical devices for fertility. Sexual motifs are "sacra,"⁶ including magical power. They belong to the tradition of ancient religion. Coomaraswamy saw this aspect clearly in his appraisal of the *śālabhañjikā* of Sanchi. In his words: "Or if we recognize in this very sensuousness with which the art is saturated, a true religious feeling, then it is religious on a plane very far removed from that of the aristocratic philosophy of the Upaniṣads and Buddhism. It is religious in the very real sense of the ancient cults of mother goddesses and fertility spirits, not in the sense of the Great Enlightenment."⁷

If sanction to sex in religious art can be seen in magico-religious beliefs and practices, what is it that sustains its depiction and leads to its prolific display? Not a single Śilpaśāstra speaks of profuse depiction and it is obvious that no religion will go so far as to specifically advocate loud and large-scale depiction of sex. Besides religious sanction, the analysis of sociological factors which generated the permissive atmosphere and mood underlying this depiction is an essential part of our inquiry. It is necessary to find out why so many temples were built in this period and why erotic motifs were depicted on them so prominently and profusely.

The study of socio-economic history is a recent development in Indian historiography. The works of some of the contributors in the field, such as R. S. Sharma, D. C. Sircar, L. Gopal, Romila Thapar, S. K. Maity, Puspa Niyogi, B. P. Mazumdar and Buddha Prakash, have been helpful in reconstructing the Medieval social set-up.

The voluptuous sensuousness and material exuberance in arts also calls for a study of the sexual behaviour and attitude of their patrons and public. The picture is not very difficult to reconstruct from Sanskrit court literature, which was patronized by the upper class and which reflects their values. Works on Kāmaśāstras, Śilpaśāstras, travellers' accounts, etc. have considerably helped in the reconstruction. Available material on secular art—from a few extant art objects and literary references—have been utilized in depicting their luxurious life and leisure. The study of the behaviour of the patrons offers an important clue to the understanding of the transformation in the function of sexual motifs.

Both the magico-religious and secular aspects of sex have fused together in the actual depiction of sexual motifs on temples. Susanne K. Langer's⁸ study of dance and its development as an art form has been helpful in understanding the role of romanticization and secularization of ritual items. There is always a possibility of "the shift from religious to romantic uses." H. Licht⁹ in his study of Greek culture also notes the shift in the original fertility functions of Greek festivals which gradually became occasions for sexual gratification. From Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra* (I, iv, 42) we can infer a similar

process in the urban culture of the time when the *nāgarakas* (cultured citizens) treated fertility festivals as *krīdās* (sports).

The process of secularization and sensualization brings about the transformation of the original ritual items. Not that religious and ritual significance cannot be retained but that with the possible intrusion of the motives of pleasure and playful aspects of sex, they would tend to become, to use Jane Harrison's expression, "mimicry."¹⁰ The constant interplay of magico-religious and secular aspects of sex is seen throughout the history of sexual representation in Indian art. The relative importance of secular and ritual aspects of sex in actual depiction in any period calls for the study of the corresponding socio-religious conditions.

The chapters in the book are divided according to the three main levels of inquiry: (i) the description of the actual representation and the historical development of erotic motifs; (ii) the role of sex in religion which gives sanction to sexual depictions in temple art; (iii) the social forces generating the permissive atmosphere and the willingness to sustain and glorify sexual depictions.

Chapters II, III and IV deal respectively with sexual representation in its historical development in the three periods: (i) Ancient, up to A.D. 500, (ii) Early Medieval, A.D. 500-900, (iii) Medieval, A.D. 900-1400. These three chapters are descriptive, laying bare the actual situation before the reader without which it is not possible to grasp the problem in its true perspective. Chapter V analyses the sculptural data focussing on certain relevant aspects of sexual representation which include its regional conditioning, distribution and thematic content. It draws attention to some important facts concerning sexual depictions which include themes such as ascetics and royal persons in sex-play, exhibitionism, bestiality, dance and revelry in erotic scenes, lotus pedestals provided for sexual figures, etc.

Chapters VI to X are concerned with the socio-cultural background of sexual representation. Chapter VI seeks to provide the rationale for the existence of sex in religious art. It studies the essential connection between sex and religion in general and their intimate relationship as manifest in the religion associated with the Hindu temple in particular. It examines the magico-sexual devices used for fertility purposes and lays bare the magico-sexual content of Vedic rites, fertility festivals, the *devadāsī* institution, and rites and ceremonies of the Hindu temple.

Chapter VII examines sex in Tāntrism which considerably influenced the religious behaviour of Medieval society. It is common among the writers on the subject to attribute erotic figures to the influence of Tāntrism. But mere statements unsupported by adequate analysis do not amount to an explanation. It is pertinent to look for those aspects of Tāntrism which are relevant to the outburst of sexual representations on temples. We have studied Tāntrism as an agency through which an impetus was given to the depiction of sex that was already prevalent in the pre-Tāntric period. The emphasis in the chapter is on two aspects of Tāntrism: magico-sexual and social. The spiritual aspect of Tāntrism is not denied but it is shown that its goal of attaining the Divine bi-sexual unity is not relevant to our subject. The geographical spread of Tāntric sects is described in order to examine their social influence. The thematic content of erotic sculptures is studied to examine their possible Tāntric aspects.

Chapters VIII and IX deal with the factors which led to secularization and sensualization of sexual symbols. Chapter VIII portrays the social milieu of the Medieval Hindu temple, its feudal aristocratic surroundings, the importance of *dāna* in Medieval religion and society, the consequences of large-scale temple-building and donations, the growing wealth and power of temple functionaries,

the increasing importance of the *devadāsī* system, the sensual atmosphere around the temple and the court influence on temple art. In Chapter IX we have attempted to describe the *bhoga* (pleasure) element and its glorification in Indian culture, indicated by factors like the cultivation of the art of sex, Kāmasāstra literature, recognition of secular prostitution, designing of special buildings for sexual gratification, portrayal of sensuous themes on objects of daily use, etc.

Chapter X is an attempt to provide a further glimpse into the culture that had glorified *bhoga* and *śṛīṅgāra*. In it we study the erotic elements in the literary art of the culture. The similarity of approach in literary and sculptural arts is noted and at the same time some significant differences are pointed out.

The interpretation of the sensuous life of the art public as presented in the book would appear to run counter to the Freudian hypothesis of the economy of the libido and the interpretation of art as sublimation of sex-energy. Also the view of J. D. Unwin¹¹ that sexual opportunity determines cultural condition and that a reduction in sexual opportunity is accompanied by a rise in cultural condition does not seem to apply here. The society of Medieval India was suffused with sex on all fronts—in life as well as in art and religion. As our approach to the problem is not psychoanalytical, we have not dealt with the relationship of sexual energy to civilization or that of sexuality to cultural manifestations. It would engender a totally different approach from the one followed here, with its different conception and meaning of religion, magic, art-symbols, etc. Psychoanalysts may, however, find interesting material in some of the sculptural manifestations, such as exhibitionism, auto-eroticism, bestiality, *puruṣāyita* pose in which the woman acts the role of the man, oral-genital congress, etc.

It may be clarified here that our interest in erotic representation is from the point of view of its socio-cultural, anthropological and historical aspects. We are not directly concerned with aesthetic appreciation of erotic art. It is for this reason that the photographs are selected not for the artistic excellence of sculptures but because these sculptures unfold the essential elements of this cultural phenomenon. It is also for this reason that sexual representation in the temples of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Mysore receives almost the same importance as that in the elegant and magnificent temples at Khajuraho and Konarak.

The work attempts to study cultural reality in its totality without shunning those aspects which seem to tarnish the self-image of Indian culture. The actual operative aspects of culture, as distinct from its conceptual and idealistic sides, are emphasized. Instead of treating it as an anomalous feature, sexual representation is shown as a part of Indian culture and society. It is hoped that the study of this significant aspect of our culture will bring alive its many facets in a better light—objectively and without the involvement of value-judgements.

Two specific issues, (1) periodization and (2) classification of erotic motifs, may be mentioned here.

Periodization. There is controversy among historians and art authorities over the beginning of the Medieval period. Zimmer¹² begins his account of Medieval Indian art from A.D. 550. Coomaraswamy¹³ considers the Early Medieval period to start from A.D. 600. Vincent Smith,¹⁴ Percy Brown¹⁵ and S. K. Saraswati¹⁶ have taken A.D. 650, i.e. three years after Harṣa's death, as the date of the beginning of the Medieval period. Hermann Goetz¹⁷ puts the date of the beginning at A.D. 770. H. C. Ray¹⁸ considers the year A.D. 916 to be the dividing line between the Ancient and the Medieval.

The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's series, *The History and Culture of the Indian People*,¹⁹ puts the date of the commencement of the Medieval period at A.D. 1000 just after the first invasion of Mahmud of Gazni in A.D. 998.

Most of these datings are based on the criterion of political changes and events. But as R. S. Sharma²⁰ says, "politics was the preoccupation of a smaller section of society in early times," and "for those who think in terms of the changing pattern of human society throughout the ages, the real point to look for is not the presages of decline and prosperity but the nature of change in the existing way of life. If the change is of a fundamental nature, it should be regarded as heralding the advent of a new period."

It is from about A.D. 500 that there is a shift towards the feudal tendencies which determined the productive and economic basis of Medieval Indian society. Feudal beginnings are seen in the land-grants made in the time of the late Gupta rulers (see Chapter VIII). After A.D. 480, which marks the end of Gupta rule and of centralized power in India, except for a brief period in the time of Yaśovarman and Harṣa, feudal tendencies gathered momentum. This age also witnessed the rise of Tāntric and Paurāṇic religions. The large-scale building of Hindu temples in stone slightly earlier than A.D. 500 is itself a new process which culminated in the 13th century. It is also from about A.D. 500 that we see the portrayal of *maithuna* or coitus on religious monuments.

The period A.D. 500–1400 is further divided into two parts, viz. A.D. 500–900 or the Early Medieval period and A.D. 900–1400 or the Medieval period. From about A.D. 900 there is a marked change in the depiction of erotic motifs and the corresponding socio-cultural developments.

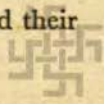
Classification of erotic motifs. As sexual motifs in sculptural art present a variety of themes, some sort of classification is considered necessary for the sake of clarity in presentation and avoiding ambiguity and confusion. It should be borne in mind that no classification, however exhaustively made, could accommodate all instances of sexual representation in temple art. The artists had no classification in mind.

The term "erotic motif" as used in the work does not denote an iconographically fixed form. The nature and content of the motif vary according to the spatio-temporal setting. The word "erotic" is used here as expressive of sexual love. It covers an extensive range of sexual expression from the mild gesture of the lover's putting his hand on the chin of the beloved to the extreme form as represented in the scenes showing the sexual act. The elementary erotic motifs in Indian art are the *mithuna*, the *maithuna* and the erotic group. Over and above the man-woman relationship, the portrayal of individual men and women in sexual and auto-erotic attitudes and in relationship with animals, known as bestiality, is also included in the term erotic motif.

The word *mithuna* means a couple or a pair who may or may not be involved in an erotic relationship. Wherever used by us, the word indicates a human couple unless specifically stated as *nāga-mithuna* or a pair of snakes, *haṁsa-mithuna* or a pair of swans, and so on.

Maithuna means coitus. *Maithuna*-couple hence is used here as indicating couple in coitus.

The expression "erotic group" is used for scenes which depict more than two people in erotic activity. We have classified the erotic group into different types according to the amatory activities of the participants and the number of men and women involved in the group. There are, theoretically, innumerable possible types of the erotic group, but we have given six basic types and their sub-types which are commonly found in Indian sculptural art.



Type I. It represents subdued or moderate eroticism and is non-orgiastic in nature. It can be divided into two sub-types: I-A, where one man is seen with two women (phs. 41, 56—upper row), and I-B, where one woman is seen with two men. Types I-A and I-B, though similar to each other in their erotic nature, have to be sharply distinguished because of their different social implications. Type I-A is a natural mode of depicting the polygynous husband with his two wives. He is acting as a *dakṣiṇa-nāyaka*²¹ or courteous lover towards both of them. But type I-B would most possibly suggest non-marital relationship, probably with a courtesan or a *devadāsī*.

Type II. It represents *saṅghāṭaka* relationship, described by Kāmasāstra writers,²² and involves three persons in highly erotic activity or copulation. The type is subdivided into type II-A, where a man is involved with two women, and type II-B, where two men have relations with one woman (phs. 99, 146, 149). It is significant that Vātsyāyana and Kokkoka use the same word for both these sub-types, though the relationships have different social implications.

Type III. It depicts a copulating or love-making couple being helped by a male, female or eunuch attendant or attendants. This type is divided into four sub-types: (i) type III-A, where the attendants just stand by, sometimes holding a jar or similar objects, but without directly helping the couple involved in amorous activities of a non-coital type (ph. 21); (ii) type III-B, in which attendants stand near a copulating couple (phs. 8, 54, fig. XIX, p. 63); (iii) type III-C, where the attendants help the couple or one of the partners in sexual activity but do not themselves directly participate in the sexual act (phs. 56—lower row, 107); (iv) type III-D, where the attendant or attendants while helping the couple are also shown in an excited condition and participating actively in the love-play (phs. 67, 68).

Type IV. It is similar to what Vātsyāyana calls *goyūthika*²³ where one man takes part in sexual activity with more than two women (ph. 53), or where one woman participates with more than two men (phs. 73—scene on the left, 118). The former is called by us type IV-A, while the latter where the woman is the centre of *goyūthika* is called type IV-B. Vātsyāyana does not use separate words for the two varieties.

Type V. It represents a regular orgy where many men and women simultaneously participate in sexual activity (phs. 74, 75, 80, 81).

Type VI. It is also an orgy where many couples participate in sexual activity at the same place and time. Unlike type V, the couples participate as couples and not promiscuously (phs. 65, 77, 84).



II. Sexual Representation in Early Art

EROTIC MOTIFS of Khajuraho, Konarak and a host of other Medieval temples are only one particular phase in the development of sexual representation in religious art of India. Sexual themes do not suddenly make their appearance in the Medieval period. They are a part of a history and tradition which can be traced back to ancient times. If so, their role in religious art can be more directly studied in their earlier manifestations before they were conventionalized in Medieval patterns. This chapter deals with the historical development of sexual representation and its functions in ancient Indian art.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section begins with the study of sex in its early representations in terracottas and other objects and helps us to see the connection of the sexual theme with religion before it had received sophisticated treatment. The second section, which examines erotic representations on early stone monuments, reveals the auspicious function of such representations. This auspicious function is retained while the motifs gradually become more secular and sensual in character. This suggests the hypothesis that processes of secularization and sensualization transform the original ritual and cultic depictions.

SECTION 1. TERRACOTTAS AND OTHER OBJECTS

The material dealt with in this section does not belong to a consciously organized art movement but centres mainly around fetishistic beliefs and fertility cults. It refers to popular aspects of art and religion and preserves for us ample data on culture and religion of the people.

Archaeological material from the Indus civilization and its extensions in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Punjab points to the existence of fertility cults in India in the protohistoric period. The numerous phallic stones and ring-stones, the figures of the male ithyphallic horned god in association with animals (*pasus*) who is probably the prototype of Śiva, and the figures of Mother goddesses indicate the prevalence of their cults.¹ The plant-bearing female figure on a seal² seems to represent a vegeta-

tion goddess and reminds one of the Paurāṇic goddess Śākambharī,³ though there may not have been any direct connection between them as they are separated by a vast stretch of time. Tree spirits of indeterminate sex, with a tiger or other animal, and occasionally with worshippers, is seen on several seals.⁴ However, no representation of the sexual act is seen in the art and ritual objects of the Indus civilization.

The earliest depiction of the sexual act among the objects excavated so far in India is found on a pot of the Chalcolithic period, phase III, at Daimabad⁵ in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. The human figures are not portrayed naturalistically but are conveyed through stylized, linear rendering (fig. I). The phallus and the breasts of the figures are clearly shown in the painting. The nature of the portrayal indicates that it was neither carried out for artistic or decorative purpose

nor out of any sensual intention, but could have been cultic in significance. Similar symbolism is seen on a Neolithic pot from Italy, but in absence of evidence on cultural contacts, no link can be established between the two representations. As M. K. Dhavalikar⁶ says, it may at best suggest the possibility of the migration of the idea of a fertility motif. It is also interesting to note that H. D. Sankalia⁷ has compared the Chalcolithic painting with the male and female symbols carved on a pillar of a dormitory at Raiusu by the Bhuiya and Muria Gonds, where a man is shown as a tortoise descending upon a woman.

Another early representation of sex is seen in the Kupgallu cave in Mysore. D. H. Gordon⁸ says, "Depictions of men and women engaged in some form of sexual intercourse are not only rare but wholly non-existent at any of the known sites where rock-paintings and engravings have been found. At Kupgallu, how-

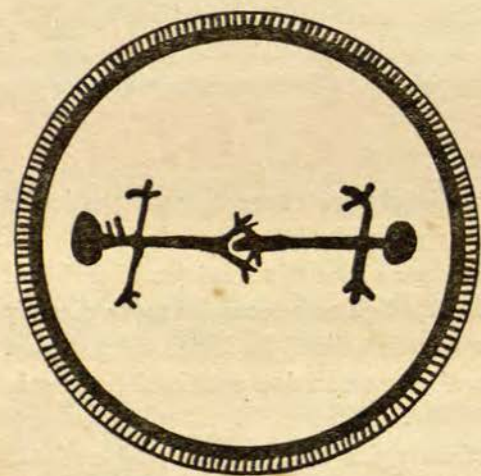


FIG. I—Representation of a male and female;
pot, Daimabad

ever, five such engravings are noticeable on the photographs taken on behalf of Bruce Foote, and in view of the vast number of drawings there may well be many more." One of the drawings shows a man, in a state of sexual excitement, chasing a woman. It is doubtful whether these drawings can be dated earlier than *cir.* 700 B.C.⁹

Significant material on the possible connection of the depiction of erotic couples with fertility cults is available in the historical period. Among the numerous types of goddesses whose cults were prevalent in Ancient India, there are three types which directly concern us. These are: (i) the "opulent" goddess, (ii) the "personified yoni" type of goddess, (iii) the "*pañchachūḍā*"* type of goddess.

The "opulent" female having broad hips and exposing her sexual triangle, who is portrayed in a frontal pose on the pre-Aśokan gold plaque of Lauriya¹⁰ in Champaran district, points to the existence of her cult and the fetishistic beliefs associated with it (fig. II). Her image was probably worn as an ornament or was associated with the burial ground; in either case, its function seems to be magico-religious. Another depiction of the same Mother goddess is seen in a gold relief from

*The word denotes head ornaments, five in number. We have used the word to group together female deities who wear head ornaments, three, five or more in number.

Piprahwa¹¹ in U.P. The same female deity is seen on the ring-stones which have been excavated at numerous sites from the North-West to the Eastern parts of India, viz. at Rupar, Taxila, Purana Qila (Indraprastha), Bhita, Kara, Kauśāmbī, Jhusi, Rajghat, Mathura, Saṅkiśā, Vaiśālī and Patna.¹² These stones belong to the Maurya-Śuṅga period. They can be divided into two groups.¹³ The first group is of precise workmanship and usually has a circular opening sunk through the centre. The inner sides portray figures of the Mother goddess alternating with a palm tree or a honeysuckle motif. In the second group, the lotus takes the place of the honeysuckle. The central perforation is absent.

The disc at Rupar (ph. 1), though only a fragment of it is remaining, is of special importance as it represents the "opulent" Mother goddess in her typical *samabhaṅga* posture along with her male partner. He is shown fully clad and offering what is probably a cup to the female deity. In the light of James Frazer's theory¹⁴ of the fertile Mother goddess and her priest, the surrogate of the



FIG. II—"Opulent" Mother goddess on a gold plaque, Lauriya



FIG. III—Ring-stone representing "opulent" Mother goddess, Murtaziganj, Patna

divine bridegroom, with whom the goddess or her human surrogate, the temple prostitute or *devadāsī*, mates annually in the cults of fertility for promoting the fruitfulness of earth, corn, mankind, it is possible that the male figure represents the priest or the male partner of the goddess (see Chapter VI). Moreover, a small leaf-structure or a "shrine"¹⁵ is represented on the right of the Mother goddess. Could it be the earliest pictorial representation of the shrine in India? On the right side of the "shrine" there is another male figure who offers a round object to a fully clad female. Her hair is arranged in one plait. Can it be presumed that she was the human surrogate of the Mother goddess, i.e. a *devadāsī* or a prototype of the *devadāsī*? *Devadāsīs* were known to Kauṭilya¹⁶ in the Maurya period. A *devadāsī* is referred to in the 2nd century B.C. inscription of the Jogimara cave in Central India.¹⁷

The ring-stones of Taxila, Purana Qila, Kauśāmbī, Saṅkiśā and Patna represent only the female deity and not her partner. In connection with the ring-stone of Taxila, Marshall¹⁸ reminds us of those of the Indus Valley culture, which, according to him, were probably used as votive offerings to the Mother goddess. He doubts the utilitarian purpose of the discs and also says that they

were not suitable as personal ornaments. Again, the fact that from Murtaziganj, Patna, twenty-one discs¹⁹ have been unearthed shows the spread of the cult represented by them in this capital city of Magadha. Out of these twenty-one discs, five portray figures of the "opulent" goddess along with motifs of vegetation, a crescent moon, deer, lions, horses, elephants and birds, and a lotus design in the centre (fig. III), and the remaining ones portray the same themes and geometrical designs without the figure of the female deity. The palm tree near the Mother goddess in several discs suggests West Asiatic influence. Probably this female deity with her association with wild beasts and the crescent moon could be related to the Anāhitā-Nana-Artemis-Diana group of fertility goddesses.²⁰

In connection with the theme of the goddess and her male partner, important evidence has been furnished in a steatite plaque from Rajgir near Patna belonging to *cir.* 245-105 B.C.²¹ The plaque (ph. 2) is divided into three compartments of which the lower one depicts a female in the typical standing pose of the Mother goddess and "propitiated" by the male partner, who is also

nude. He offers her a cup, probably containing wine. The other two panels show the couple fully clothed. In one panel, the male partner tries to please the female by offering her a cup. A jar can be seen nearby. In the other panel, the female is in a dancing pose while the male plays a musical instrument.

At Kauśāmbī also, where the cult of the goddess of the ring-stones was prevalent, we see her represented with her consort on a stone plaque.²² That they were the divine couple is known from the pedestal of the male figure; the portion below the hips of the goddess is unfortunately missing.

Figures representing another variety of the goddess, called by M. Murray²³ the "Baubo" or "the personified yoni" type or by H. D. Sankalia²⁴ the "Nude goddess" or "Shameless Woman," have been seen in the early centuries of the Christian era at Bhita, Jhusi and Kau-



FIG. IV—Headless Nude goddess;
terracotta, Bhita

śāmbī in Uttar Pradesh, Ter and Nevasa in Maharashtra and Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh. The peculiar mode of the portrayal of the Nude goddess is ascribed by Sankalia to Roman-Egyptian inspirations. The goddess is completely nude, sits in a frog or "Baubo" style with legs apart, *uttānapad*, and displays her yoni (fig. IV). Often, the figures are headless and in place of the head, a lotus is represented. It is significant that one of the sculptures of Nagarjunakonda depicting the Nude goddess bears an inscription mentioning a queen as *a-vidhvā*, one with her husband alive, and as *jivaputā*, one with her child alive. The image seems to have been dedicated by the queen as an offering for the fulfilment of certain desires.²⁵ Even today women worship such figures of the goddess and apply butter and *kumkuma* on the yoni for begetting children.²⁶ Thus, the fertility aspect of this goddess can be established beyond doubt.

Recent finds of a headless female figure from Inamgaon,²⁷ on the Ghod river, fifty-three miles east of Poona, assigned to *cir.* 1200 B.C., is very important as she is found in a clay box and was meant for worship. Her association with a bull as *vāhana*, as shown by Sankalia, reminds us of the images of the Nude goddess with a bull at Vadgaon²⁸ in Maharashtra and Bhinmal²⁹ in Southern Rajasthan in the historical period.

The cult of the *pañchachūdā* deity having five or three *āyudhas* (weapons) as ornaments in her elaborate head-dress was prevalent in the Śuṅga period in various parts of India from Punjab to Bengal, viz. at Rupar, Saṅkiśā, Ahichchhatrā, Angaikheda, Mathura, Kauśāmbī, Rajghat, Tamluk, Chandraketugarh, Harinarayanpur and numerous other sites.³⁰ Her sexual parts are generally revealed through her transparent apparel. In some of the terracottas from Chandraketugarh,³¹ these female figures are provided with a parasol, which is a clear mark of divinity. At Rupar,³² a similar female figure of the Śuṅga period makes the gesture of touching her earring, which is a special feature of the Strī-ratna,³³ the auspicious female figure associated with the Chakravartin monarch, and originally connected with Śrī, the goddess of prosperity and abundance. Again, she stands amidst rich foliage, which shows her association with vegetation. In the terracotta of Tamluk (ph. 3), one of the most beautiful of the lot, it is possible to see the female wearing four amulets on her shoulder band. These are: a pair of fish, a sleeping doe, a bird and a *makara*.³⁴ The figure bears the five sacred symbols on the right side of the head-dress.

Numerous suggestions have been made to identify the *pañchachūdā* goddess. J. N. Banerjea³⁵ places her in the Yakṣī type. Stella Kramrisch³⁶ suggests her identity with the Apasaras called *Pañchachūdā*. E. Johnstone³⁷ has drawn attention to the goddess Māyādevī mentioned in the *Saundarānanda* (ii, 47), and to the goddess "Maiā" of India in the Oxyrhynchos Papyrus belonging to the 3rd century A.D. A line in this papyrus indicates that Māyā was worshipped in the Gangetic Valley as a Mother goddess specially associated with fertility. Moti Chandra³⁸ suggests that there may be an identification of Māyā and Śrī, and that Māyā and Sirimā of Bharhut are one and the same. Foucher³⁹ has also observed that Śrī-Lakṣmī in Sanchi sculpture symbolizes Māyā by the transference of ideas. Coomaraswamy,⁴⁰ referring to the female figures from Pāṭaliputra to Taxila, says that they "may have been votive tablets or auspicious representations of Mother goddess and bestowers of fertility and prototypes of Māyādevī and Lakṣmī."

In this connection it is interesting to note that the archaeological excavations at Kauśāmbī have revealed the image of the female with head ornaments from a *balivedī* (sacrificial site). G. R. Sharma,⁴¹ who excavated the site, identifies the female figure as goddess Sinīvālī, who was a Vedic goddess of fertility connected with the moon and vegetation and was worshipped for begetting children.⁴² The making of her images is enjoined in the texts dealing with *Puruṣamedha* (human sacrifice).⁴³ It is significant that Sinīvālī is described as *sukapardā* (with fair braids), *sukurirā* (with beauteous crest) and *svaupasā* (with lovely locks).⁴⁴

Whatever may be her identity, the divine status of the *pañchachūdā* female is beyond doubt. It is of special importance for us that this female deity is represented along with her consort in the plaques from Ahichchhatrā and Chandraketugarh. In the plaques from Ahichchhatrā,⁴⁵ the female divinity, having three *āyudhas* in her head-dress, touches the lower garment of her partner who is standing with a musical instrument in his right hand (ph. 4). In a similar plaque from Chandraketugarh,⁴⁶ the female divinity with an elaborate coiffure puts her hand around the shoulder of her partner. The plaques bearing these couples, then, represent the female divinity and her male partner, who played an essential role in the rites of fertility. V. S. Agrawala⁴⁷ says that association with an original cult of fertility may be inferred from the presence of sacred symbols on the head-dress and the necklace and also, in one instance, from the indication of nudity.

It should be noted that both the female goddesses—that of "opulent" and *pañchachūdā* types—are represented with their male partners.

A possible interpretation of the depiction of couples is that they were substitutes used in fertility rites which at one time involved actual sex-play. On certain seasonal and agricultural festivals, the performance of the sexual act was considered necessary for rejuvenating the forces of nature, vegetation, soil, animals and men, as we will see in Chapter VI. It is likely that with the change in social organization, the actual performance was substituted by the visual depiction of it. For instance, in the Vedic Mahāvratā rite, sexual union of a stranger with a prostitute was performed in the altar for "fertility purposes." Substitutes might have been devised for the performance of the sexual act in the rite when in the 5th century B.C., texts like the *Śāṅkhāyana Śrautasūtra* called it *utsanna*, an ancient custom, not meant to be executed.⁴⁸

Crudely made terracotta couples found from various sites, such as Taxila, Basarh, Bhita, Chandraketurgarh, Nagarjunakonda,⁴⁹ etc., suggest extra-artistic and non-sensuous purpose. There was no dearth of technical skill in these places as is evidenced from finds of artistic images. Marshall⁵⁰ has rightly suggested the votive function of terracotta *mithunas* of Taxila. D. H. Gordon⁵¹ also suggests that terracottas were used as votive offerings to the Mother goddess and her partner. Thus, it seems that depicted pairs were symbolic or votive in function. Instead of the actual performance of the sexual act such images were probably used in rituals. The performance of the act was transmuted into a visual depiction of it. We will come to this point in Chapter VI.

Significant light has been shed on the association of the goddess of fruitfulness with *mithunas* by a terracotta plaque from Awra in Mandasaur district of Madhya Pradesh (ph. 13). It belongs to the period *cir.* 100 B.C.–A.D. 300.⁵² It depicts a female deity, identified as Śrī,⁵³ who touches her right earring and stands on a lotus. Her yoni can be seen despite the heavy girdle. She stands between two tusks alongside which are jewels and sheaves of corn. Two *mithunas*, "engaged in what appears to be sexual union," are shown on either side of the goddess. The pitchers in the foreground might have contained wine. On the reverse of the plaque is shown a twelve-petalled lotus. Moti Chandra points out the evidence of a developed form of the Śrī cult in this plaque. He says, "The ritual coitus in which her devotees indulge, and the presence of wine in the pitchers draw our attention to the sacred orgies of the later Tantras." He gives an evidence from the early Buddhist literature to support the existence of the Śrī cult and its esoteric nature.⁵⁴ The depiction of *mithunas* flanking the goddess of fruitfulness and abundance reminds us of the performance of the sexual act in the sanctuary of goddesses for the purposes of fertility as known from the study of Comparative Religion.

The depiction of coital couples and orgies is seen in terracottas of Chandraketurgarh and Tamluk dating from *cir.* 2nd century B.C. onwards and in those of Kauśāmbī and Bhita of the 2nd–1st century B.C. These terracottas, some with elaborate postures of congress, date before the period of the full-fledged Tāntric movement and disprove the belief that *maithuna*-couples and orgiastic groups occur only in the art of Medieval temples.

At Chandraketurgarh, the various poses of sexual congress include frontal congress, oral congress of fellatio type, congress from rear (*vyānata*), head-down pose, sitting pose, standing pose and sleeping congress on bed.⁵⁵ There are scenes showing erotic group activity. One of the plaques of the Śuṅga period depicts a complex erotic group (ph. 7), where the central figures are shown in an act of *maithuna*. The woman is sitting in *uttānapad* pose with her legs outstretched. She is having relations with a man who is in a head-down pose as at Khajuraho and Padhavli. The male figure is helped to stay in the position by two female attendants, both sitting with outstretched legs and with their

hands in *añjali mudrā*. The central woman also seems to be having fellatio with a figure on her left. There are two other female figures standing with upraised hands on the top portion of the scene. It is difficult to suggest the exact significance of this orgy. Does it represent a fertility rite? Or does it indicate the practice known to Vātsyāyana⁵⁶ in which women dissatisfied with their polygamous husband smuggled men into the harem? But in the case of the latter hypothesis the portrayal of the two women with legs outstretched and in *añjali mudrā* cannot be explained. These gestures are ritualistic in significance. Moreover, the central *maithuna* scene in the plaque is primitive in conception. Another plaque assigned to *cir.* 1st–3rd century A.D.⁵⁷ represents *saṅghāṭaka* of type II–B similar in theme to the Medieval sculptures at Modhera and Motap in Gujarat.⁵⁸ The plaque depicts a woman in a clumsy pose bent from her waist backwards. She is involved in fellatio with the man on the left who has raised his left hand making some gesture, and in a frontal congress with the man on the right. A third plaque represents an erotic group of type III–B (ph. 8) where an attendant stands near a copulating couple. In many terracotta plaques from this site, the female partner is shown in *uttānapad* pose resembling the “personified yoni” type of goddess. This is the case even in scenes showing standing couples (ph. 10). There is a plaque with a depiction of a woman sitting in *uttānapad* pose and inserting some arrow-like object into her yoni (ph. 9).

In contrast to the primitive conception of some of the terracottas of Chandraketugarh, the Tamluk terracotta (ph. 11), which shows an aristocratic couple in a state of sitting coital union on a chair, reflects an urban approach to the sexual theme. The treatment is sensual.

Several terracottas of Kauśāmbī show sexual themes. In one terracotta, the upper part of which is lost, the couple is involved in a sleeping coital posture on a bed. Near the bed, a hunch-backed dwarfish attendant is holding a mirror-like object.⁵⁹ In another moulded plaque, a female is reclining with legs outstretched and a male, in a state of tumescence, is standing nearby. A similar type of scene was found at Bhita in the neighbourhood of Kauśāmbī.⁶⁰ These scenes seem to represent Kāmaśāstriya *bandhas*. We may note that in pre-Vātsyāyana times, the neighbouring region of Pañchāla in northern U.P. and Pāṭaliputra in Bihar were associated with Bābhavya and Dattaka respectively, both of them authorities on Kāmaśāstra.⁶¹

A terracotta from Kauśāmbī shows a richly dressed couple sitting on a chair in an intimate pose (ph. 12). It manifests urban tastes and vision in its depiction and seems to be associated with the sophisticated *nāgaraka* (citizen) class. The ritual significance is retained by showing the woman touching her own earring, which is a symbolic gesture associated with fertility goddesses like Śrī, *pañchachūḍa*, etc.

Thus, we see that whereas some of the terracottas of Chandraketugarh and Kauśāmbī indicate the ritual significance of sexual practices, others at the same places and Tamluk suggest sensual treatment and Kāmaśāstriya influences. But we do not know whether these terracottas of the latter group represent the original ritual themes transformed by sensual and secular interests or whether they are purely secular in purpose.

On the issue of secularization of ritual themes, V. S. Agrawala's study of terracottas of Ahichchhatrā and Mathura becomes helpful. On the basis of stylistic and stratigraphical analysis of the terracotta plaques from Ahichchhatrā, he distinguishes two types:⁶² (i) an earlier sub-type which he calls *mithuna*, representing the female divinity (of the “*pañchachūḍa*” type) and her partner (ph. 4) belonging to the Śuṅga period 200–100 B.C. and extending to the Pañchāla period 100 B.C.–A.D. 100, where the male is shown on the left side of the plaque; (ii) *dampatī* or husband and wife sub-type

(ph. 5) in which the male and female figures show affinities with the stone figures of early Indian art. The subject is voluptuous. The male occupies the right side of the plaque. The decoration of the female is not very elaborate like that of the divine female. This type is assigned to *cir.* 100 B.C.–A.D. 100. According to Agrawala, it is possible that “amongst the figures of couples, the Mithuna type came first and the Dampatī type followed as a derivative with its own special features.”⁶³

The terracottas of Mathura show affinities with figures on stone monuments from the Śuṅga period onwards, though no comparisons are possible in the earlier period. “The change is probably due to artistic rather than religious development, conceptions originally religious being adopted almost unconsciously for ordinary figures of daily life.”⁶⁴ The secular subjects drawn from everyday life are introduced in the terracotta art from the Śuṅga period. Among terracottas of Mathura illustrating the social and secular aspect of life may be mentioned the figures of a female elegantly dressed, a lady feeding a parrot perched on her hand, a female with elaborate coiffure and ornaments who holds a fan in her right hand, a fashionable lady seated on a settee in profile who holds a mirror in her right hand and adjusts her head-gear with the left, etc.⁶⁵

It seems that from the later part of the Śuṅga period secular *śṛīṅgāra* (eroticism) was gradually introduced in the art of terracottas and, as we shall see, also in that of the stone monuments. The originally religious or cultic theme also gradually received an artistic treatment, with the result that it became an art motif.

The process of secularization and sensualization of originally ritual or cultic objects is clearly noticeable in the case of figures of Śrī found at Pompeii and Ter. An Indian ivory statuette of goddess Śrī,⁶⁶ belonging to the latter half of the 1st century B.C., has been found at Pompeii in Italy, which was famous for its erotic painted frescos on the houses of aristocrats. The fertility aspects are present in her depiction: she is heavily loaded with ornaments but care is taken to reveal the pudenda; she touches her left earring; she has a horn-like projection on her head, similar to the bone female figure from Chaurasi at Mathura belonging to the 1st century B.C. The horn or *śṛīṅga* was considered to be an auspicious symbol of fertility and plenty.⁶⁷ This statuette representing the fertility divinity was used as a mirror handle,⁶⁸ an article of daily use. It is an example of a sacred symbol being used decoratively, though at the same time retaining its auspicious aspects.

A similar fusion of the sacred and the secular is also seen in the Ter⁶⁹ ivory figure of Śrī belonging to the 2nd century A.D. It was also used as a mirror handle or was fixed to a toilet box. Like the *Strī-ratna* motif, the Ter image makes the gesture of touching her earring.

We may mention here that Bāṇa⁷⁰ in the 7th century A.D. gives another example of the decorative use of a sacred figure. A female, compared by Bāṇa with goddess Lakṣmī, was used as a handle of the golden box which was put in the *ratimandira* (love-chamber).

But it should be noted here that even when the sacred symbol is used sensuously or decoratively, it need not lose its original magico-religious function. It may continue as an *alaṅkāra* with all its auspicious aspects (see Chapter VI, Section 6).

Thus, terracottas and allied objects of the Ancient period offer two types of sexual representations: (i) cultic and ritual, as in the examples of the female divinity and her male partner and crudely carved plaques bearing sexual and orgiastic themes; (ii) secular, with poetic and *nāgaraka* touches, fulfilling the demands of the sensuous public, as in the examples of terracottas with secular subjects from Mathura, Rajghat, Ahichchhatrā, Chandraketurgarh and numerous excavated sites

of the historical period. The female figures of Pompeii and Ter clearly represent the amalgamation of magico-religious and secular inspirations.

It is significant that all these terracottas and similar objects representing sex have been collected from urban sites. Tamluk or Tāmralipti⁷¹ in Bengal was a sea-port where trading vessels from China, Java, Ceylon and of the Yavanas from the West halted for rest. It is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, and was known to Kālidāsa, Varāhamihira and Daṇḍin and the Chinese travellers Fa-Hien, Hiuen Tsang and Itsing. Rouletted ware showing Roman contacts has been discovered from Tamluk and Chandraketurgarh.⁷² Chandraketurgarh was a fortified city where excavations have revealed an almost continuous sequence of occupations from the pre-Maurya to Pāla times. Ahichhatra⁷³ in Bareilly district was the capital of the north Pañchāla according to the *Mahābhārata*. Bābhavya, a pre-Vātsyāyana authority on Kāmasāstra, hailed from Pañchāla. Mathura,⁷⁴ one of the biggest urban centres on trade routes, was a great centre of religion, commerce and art. Taxila⁷⁵ was a famous market town on the three routes linking India with Asia and Hellenistic countries. Kauśāmbī,⁷⁶ near Allahabad, where remains of a stone palace of about the 5th century B.C. have been excavated, was a rich commercial city and the capital of the Vatsa dynasty, whose King Udayana figures so prominently in the *Bṛhatkathā* and the *Kathāsaritsāgara*. According to the *Sutta Nipāta*, it was the most important entrepôt for both goods and passengers coming to Kośala and Magadha. Rajghat⁷⁷ or the ancient town of Vārāṇasī was a religious and commercial city situated on the famous highway of trade known as the Uttarapatha which was once the artery of communication between centres like Pāṭaliputra in the east and Silk-route towns like Kapiśa and Bālīhika in the north-west. Pāṭaliputra or Patna was the capital of Magadha from about the 5th century B.C.⁷⁸ and was a prominent centre of trade. There was considerable interest in the art of sex in this city. This can be inferred from the fact that Dattaka, who lived before Vātsyāyana's time, wrote a Kāmasāstra as a guide to courtesans of Pāṭaliputra. Rajgir⁷⁹ or Rājagṛīha near Patna was the capital of Magadha until the 5th century B.C. Awra,⁸⁰ on the Chambal river in Madhya Pradesh, was in contact with the Roman world as indicated by the presence of fragments of Roman pottery and its imitations there. Similarly, Nagarjunakonda⁸¹ in Andhra Pradesh was a rich mercantile centre flourishing on Roman trade. Ter⁸² or Tagara in the Osmanabad district lay on the trade-route which connected it with Masulipatam in the east and Junnar and Broach in the west. The possibility of a Roman colony at Ter has been suggested on evidence of Roman objects and influences in this place.

It is, perhaps, because of their urban background that the terracottas could receive sophisticated and *nāgaraka* touches in their artistic presentation and technique. Some of the terracottas represent the tastes of the *nāgarakas* and their *nāyikās*—the courtesans—who were well-versed in fine arts. The *nāgarakas* made use of toys of clay, ivory, horn, wax, thread and wood to win over young girls. They showed their beloved human and animal *mithuna* figures made of wood.⁸³ Terracottas with secular themes have been excavated from many city-sites. For instance, a terracotta from Rajghat⁸⁴ depicts sports which were favourite pastimes of the *nāgarakas* and the royal class, viz. *kukkuṭayuddha*, elephant circus and *mauṣṭa* (wrestling). Wine jars are also portrayed in this scene. The *goṣṭhi* or cultural meeting of *nāgarakas* and their *nāyikās* is portrayed on a terracotta from Kauśāmbī. Pleasures in the garden (*upavana*) are depicted on numerous terracottas of Northern India. Such terracottas, no doubt, reflect the tastes of the cultured elite. But besides these secular terracottas, there were large numbers of unrefined terracottas which were devoid of artistic quality and as such they hardly could have catered to the aesthetic sensibility of the sophisticated people. In all probability these

unartistic objects represented cultic and ritualistic significance to them. We know from Bhāsa's play that the *nāgaraka* Chārudatta had faith in offerings to the Mātṛis,⁸⁵ which possibly indicates the practice of popular religion among *nāgarakas*. As seen earlier, the Nagarjunakonda plaque of the "personified yoni" type of goddess was dedicated by a queen. These terracottas, then, seem to represent aspects of popular (*laukika*) religion in urban conditions. They indicate the continuation of archaic cultural elements under urban social organization.

SECTION 2. EROTIC MOTIFS IN STONE SCULPTURE

Second-First Century B.C.

The earliest depiction of *mithunas* in stone art is seen on the 2nd century B.C. monuments of Sanchi (Stūpa II) and Bharhut in Central India. That these monuments were affiliated to Buddhism need not mean that the depiction of *mithunas* on their *vedikās* (railings) was in any way connected with the teachings and philosophy of the Buddha. Sculptors of Sanchi and Bharhut had adapted *mithunas* and other life-symbols from the cultural tradition and decorative repertory prevalent in their times. Coomaraswamy⁸⁶ has rightly observed in connection with the art of Sanchi that it is not created or inspired by Buddhism, "but is early Indian art adapted to edifying ends, and therewith retaining its own intrinsic qualities." The early Buddhist art was the popular animistic art of the day modified to suit Buddhist requirements.

The art of the early stone monuments of Sanchi and Bharhut represents the revival of the primitive and popular traditions which were inhibited in the court art of Aśoka Maurya.⁸⁷ The breakdown of the imperial structure and the political disintegration, following the death of Puṣya-mitra Śuṅga in the middle of the 2nd century B.C., gave rise to smaller local states. The popular trends in art and religion got scope for expression under these conditions. Inscriptions of both Bharhut and Sanchi reveal the collective effort and interest of several donors of all strata—monks, nuns, bankers, merchants, local queens and kings, householders, artisans, royal scribes, masons, weavers, potters, families and villages collectively, etc.⁸⁸ The proper names of some of these donors reveal their association with the cults of Nāgas, Yakṣas, goddess Śrī, etc. These deities find an important place in the religious pantheon and art of the period. Buddhist literature and the narrative reliefs of the early monuments further substantiate that Buddhism had adopted many elements of popular cults. The art of the narrative reliefs, as Niharranjan Ray has pointed out, bears the character of popular art, which was prevalent in the form of *charaṇa chitras*, the prototypes of *paṭa chitras*.⁸⁹ Such *chitras* in the form of scroll paintings were displayed in the shrines of the Yakṣas.⁹⁰ It is against this cultural background that we must view the depiction of *mithunas* in early art.

Cults of fertility, specially the cult of goddess Śrī, have a direct bearing on the depiction of *mithunas* in religious art. Śrī was the goddess of abundance, fertility, blissful prosperity, luck and beauty and was known since the later Vedic times. Her fertility aspects are clearly revealed in the *Śrī-Sūkta*, a Khila of the *Rig Veda*, where she is called *ārdṛā* (moist), green as a plant, alive, etc. She was a guardian deity of farmers.⁹¹ Coomaraswamy⁹² has drawn attention to her role as a goddess of fertility and love on evidence of the *Śāṅkhāyana Gṛihyasūtra* of the 5th century B.C. which mentions offerings made to Śrī at the head of the bed (*śayyāyām śirasī*). Śrī became a popular goddess in the

Sūtra literature of the pre-Christian era. She was gradually associated with numerous goddesses such as Lakṣmī, Pṛthivī (Earth), Saṣṭhī, Sinīvālī, Rākā, Jayā, Śachi⁹³ and had similarities with foreign goddesses such as Anāhitā, Nana, Artemis, Diana, Ardoxscho, etc.⁹⁴

The esoteric cult of Śrī has been mentioned in Buddhist literature. Sirī (Śrī) was offered a new bed (*śayana*) by Bodhisattva as mentioned in the *Sirikālakaṇṇi Jātaka*⁹⁵ which suggests the acceptance of her cult by Buddhists who had earlier scoffed at it. Śrī was called Devakumārikā of the northern region. Her complete acceptance by the Buddhists is evidenced in the numerous images of her at Sanchi, Bharhut, Bodh Gaya, Kauśāmbī, Pitalkhora, etc. The most common form of representation is Śrī flanked by two elephants (*nāgas*) who keep her *ārdrā* (moist) by pouring water on her. This symbolizes "the fertilizing of a female being representing, or connected with, the earth or the fields by rain clouds; clouds were often represented by elephants, the word *nāga* having both meanings."⁹⁶ At Bharhut (ph. 15) the fertile Śrī stands on a lotus growing out of a *bhadra-ghaṭa* (auspicious pot), holds a lotus in her left hand and touches with her right hand her own breast, which is a gesture symbolizing abundance and bounty. Her head-dress reminds us of that of the "opulent" goddess (phs. 1, 2). The association of Śrī with *mithunas* is seen on railing pillars of Sanchi Stūpa II. The most significant of these is a railing pillar which represents on its east face (ph. 14) the goddess Śrī, in *añjali mudrā*, standing on a lotus and surrounded by two elephants who pour water on her. Below the goddess stands an auspicious pair. The man holds a lotus and the woman holds a cup. Near their feet are *ghaṭas* (pots), symbols of auspiciousness (*māṅgalya*). Below the whole group are pairs of lion and deer on a lotus plant which, in turn, is supported on a tortoise, and associated with water that sustains life. On the northern face of the same pillar,⁹⁷ there is a representation of a sitting female figure with outstretched legs. Lotus plants are seen growing out of the navel of this figure. Thus, the portrayal of this couple, though non-erotic, is related in association with the life-symbols to abundance and fertility. Its auspicious (*maṅgala*) aspects are clear.

This is not an isolated instance. There are other pillars at Sanchi⁹⁸ where couples with *padma* (lotus) in hand stand near goddess Śrī. This reminds us of the association of *mithunas* with Śrī on the terracotta plaque from Awra (ph. 13), also situated in the same cultural area (see Section 1). We may note here that at Vidiśā in the neighbourhood of Sanchi Śrī-Lakṣmī was associated with an esoteric Pañcharātra cult.⁹⁹

At Bharhut, the couple (ph. 16) on the *vedikā* stands with *pūjā* offerings in their hands. The female has tattoo marks on her cheeks symbolizing the moon and the sun, which are also seen on the cheeks of Chandrā Yakṣī who stands in an attitude fertilizing a tree. The female partner of the couple on the Gateway pillar¹⁰⁰ of Bharhut makes a gesture of *tarjanī mudrā* which is also made by Sudarśanā Yakṣī. Moreover, the same pillar also bears on its other compartment a figure of a *śālabhañjikā* fertilizing a tree.

The *mithuna* depictions of both these early monuments—Bharhut and Sanchi Stūpa II—are only mildly amorous and in some examples even bereft of erotic suggestions. Stylistically they are simple and artless, unlike the later *mithunas* at Mathura, Nagarjunakonda, etc.

At Bodh Gaya in Bihar, we get simple depictions of *mithunas* amidst auspicious motifs on the railings belonging to 100–50 B.C. carved in low reliefs and archaic style. From the latter half of the 1st century B.C.,¹⁰¹ we see the beginning of the sensualization of *mithuna*, though at the same time its ritual and auspicious association is retained. This later group of pillars have a variety of *mithunas*, from the non-erotic worshipping pair in *añjali mudrā* to couples in precoital action. Couples are

depicted near Śrī-Lakṣmī, *kumbha* and similar auspicious symbols. On one pillar,¹⁰² the female partner holds a musical instrument, reminding us of the playing of music in shrines of *laukika* deities as noted by Patañjali¹⁰³ in the 2nd century B.C. An example reflecting sensualization of the theme can be seen in ph. 20, where the *nāyaka* (hero) pulls the garment of his bashful beloved, while a third figure, probably a *sakhī* (friend), peeps into the scene from above with a smiling face. The scene reminds us of the favourite imagery of later Sanskrit writers, specially Subandhu, who describe *sakhīs* as waiting near the *vāsakagriha* (bed-chamber) in order to get a sight of the loving couple.

A unique representation of *śālabhañjikā* or a woman performing a vegetation rite is seen on a railing pillar (ph. 19) of Bodh Gaya. The woman is helped in the performance of the rite by her male partner. Her right leg rests in his lap while the left leg touches the tree. The depiction reminds us of Kālidāsa's use of the word *upabhogakṣama*¹⁰⁴ (fit to be enjoyed). It applied both to the lover and the tree which in the play *Mālavikā* was supposed to fertilize by her touch. Both the Sanskrit writers, Kālidāsa and Subandhu, lived at least 300 years after the carving of the Bodh Gaya railings, but the poetic images embodied in their works seem to be at least as old as the 1st century B.C.

From the 1st century B.C. at Bodh Gaya,¹⁰⁵ Sanchi Stūpa I¹⁰⁶, and Bhita¹⁰⁷ near Allahabad we get the depiction of the erotic group of type I-A showing man as *dakṣiṇa-nāyaka*, affectionately standing with his two consorts.

On the northern and the western *torāṇas* of the Sanchi Stūpa I,¹⁰⁸ carved under the Āndhras, the Yakṣa *mithunas* are portrayed amidst gay pursuits of the Kāmāvacharadevaloka or the land of the Uttarakuru. These panels remind us of the *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa, where similar pleasures of the Yakṣaloka are poetically rendered.

An almost decorative use of the Yakṣa *mithuna* can be noticed on the eastern *torāṇa*.¹⁰⁹ This little *mithuna* "fills" in the space created between a decorative peacock pair (fig. V). An auspicious or sacred symbol used without an imperative convention becomes a mere *alaṅkāra* or ornament though it may carry with it its auspicious attributes. Such a decorative use of the *mithuna* motif is also seen on the ivory comb of cir. 50 B.C.¹¹⁰ which has been ascribed to the region of Malwa, where Sanchi is situated.



FIG. V—A decorative *mithuna*; East Gate, Sanchi Stūpa I

In the 2nd-1st century B.C., in the Western Deccan also, *mithunas* are portrayed in Buddhist caves of Kondane near Karjat and Pitalkhora near Chalisgaon. Both these places were situated on caravan routes. The cult of Yakṣa Śaṅkarin was prevalent at Pitalkhora.¹¹¹ Some of the Yakṣas portrayed at Pitalkhora and the one portrayed on the entrance of the *chaitya*-cave of Kondane have animal-like ears (*śaṅku karṇa*).¹¹² Gaja-Lakṣmī was represented on entrances at Pitalkhora.

At Kondane, the two panels on the front façade of the *chaitya*-cave show *mithunas* and a group consisting of a man with a bow and two women (ph. 23). The man caresses the chin of the woman on the right, while she touches his lower garment. The woman on the left touches the bow. Both the women touch their own *mekhalās* (girdles). In three out of the four *mithunas* depicted at Kondane, the female partners are shown touching their own *mekhalās*. This gesture reminds us of the depictions of the goddesses *pañchachūḍā*, Śrī, etc. in Śuṅga terracottas. The couples are gay and dynamic. The partners encircle each other, touch the lower garments or the head-dress, and are in semi-dancing poses. M. N. Deshpande has pointed out the similarity of one of the *mithunas* of Pitalkhora with that of Kondane.¹¹³

The *mithunas* of Pitalkhora are seen mainly on the pilasters and panels from the debris of Cave 4, a *vihāra*.¹¹⁴ They too are joyous couples. The male and the female stand with hands around each other, hold cups for *madhupāna*, carry (in one instance) a musical instrument, etc. Some of them are in semi-dancing poses. The interesting feature is the variety of hair-styles and costumes they portray and the ethnic types they represent. Some have features of the Yavanas who came to the Western Deccan for trade.

First Through Third Century A.D.

The nomadic movements of the Śakas, the Parthians and the Kuṣāṇas brought in many foreign elements in Indian art, religion and culture. Intermingling of populations resulted in the syncretic assimilation of religious cults. The Kuṣāṇas established a vast empire which stretched from the Ganga Valley to the Oasis of Central Asia. The geographical position of India and the trade-routes linking it with Rome, Iran and China made it an important centre of the civilized world in the first three centuries of the Christian era.¹¹⁵ It was an age of commercial and diplomatic contacts with the Roman Empire and Hellenistic countries. Trade expanded greatly, bringing into India large quantity of Roman coins of gold and silver. The prosperity of the mercantile community resulted directly in the flourishing of religious sects supported by it. Buddhist monuments were generally erected on the trade-routes and mercantile centres. In the North, Mathura was an important commercial and political city which also became a great centre of religion and art. Taxila in Gandhāra, now in Pakistan, was another important junction situated on the Silk-routes which connected it with the East and the West. In the Western Deccan, Buddhist cave shrines on the trade-route sites¹¹⁶ at Karle, Kanheri, Kuda, Junnar, Ajanta, Nasik, etc. received extensive donations. In the Andhra region, at Amravati, Nagarjunakonda, Jagayyapeta, Goli, etc. Buddhism was supported mainly by the mercantile community and ladies of royal families.

The depiction of the erotic motif was considerably influenced by the socio-cultural milieu of the period. Secular and sensual interests had largely affected its portrayal, though its auspicious aspects were retained.

As Gandhāra was the north-western gateway of India, many Hellenistic and Roman influences

penetrated through this region into Indian art. Purely secular interest behind the erotic depiction is clear in the circular trays discovered from Taxila of the period 2nd century B.C.—1st century A.D.¹¹⁷ These Hellenistic trays depict, among other themes, drinking parties and kissing and precoital pairs.

The artists of Gandhāra were so fond of Bacchanalian scenes and the plastic form of their portrayal that in the decoration of Buddhist monuments also they retained the same compositions with lotuses substituted for cups in the hands of figures. Appropriate labels from the life stories of Buddha were then invented for such transformed scenes.¹¹⁸

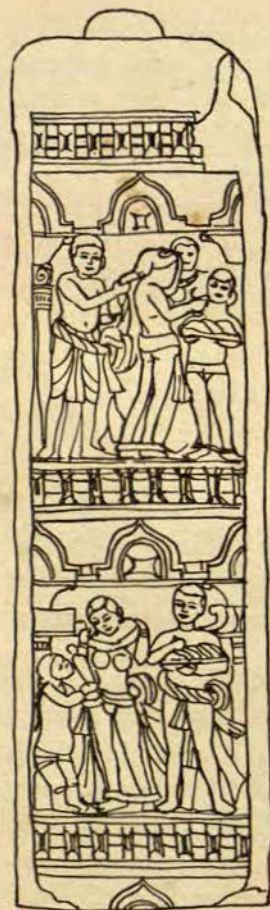


FIG. VI—Scenes from the *Saundarānanda Kāvya*; railing pillar, Mathura

The art of Mathura reflects the influence of the Kuṣāṇa royal court. During the Kuṣāṇa period, the already prevalent process of secularization was given further impetus. Erotic themes received more romantic touches in their depiction. In contrast to the simple pairs of Bharhut and Sanchi, the couples of Mathura represent a romantic, aristocratic pair in various amorous activities described poetically by Aśvaghoṣa in his *Saundarānanda* (fig. VI). A kissing couple and a couple involved in *kachagraha* (holding of hair) are also seen on the railing pillars.¹¹⁹ The polygamous *dakṣiṇānāyaka*, with his two wives on either side, is shown both in stone carving and terracotta plaque. A stone slab (ph. 21) shows a precoital scene similar in theme to the Bodhi Gaya sculpture (ph. 20). A *nāgaraka* pulls the lower garments of his buxom *nāyikā*, who stands with her hand over his shoulder. A girl attendant stands near the woman.

Bacchanalian (*madhupāna*) scenes became popular themes in Mathura school. One of the stone slabs unearthed in a Buddhist *vihāra* of Mathura shows on its obverse a scene from the *Chārudatta*, depicting the courtesan Vasantasenā fleeing from the villain Śākara.¹²⁰ The reverse side (ph. 22) depicts an intoxicated woman with a small girl who holds a wine cup. On her right is her husband or paramour, and on the left is probably a *kuṭṭānī* (old prostitute) or a eunuch attendant. The sculpture decorated an *āchamana-kumbhī* or bowl containing water for washing the hands of worshippers.¹²¹ A figure of Bodhisattva was unearthed only six feet away from this sculpture, indicating that both the sensual sculpture and a Buddhist religious idol were kept under one shelter. It reveals the state of Buddhism in this period.

The above Bacchanalian theme was so popular in the period that more or less similar plastic representations have been found at other sites of Mathura, at Saṅkiśā and Tusaran-Bihar.¹²² It is portrayed in terracottas of Kauśāmbī. The theme is also seen on the door-jamb of Nasik Cave III, which was a Buddhist *vihāra*.

There are two depictions of *maithuna*-couples in narrative Jātaka panels of the Buddhist railing pillars of Mathura.¹²³ The couples are shown in sitting and standing attitudes. These isolated examples of *maithuna* are the earliest representations of the theme in stone sculpture known to us. It is about 400 years after this that *maithuna* is more or less systematically depicted on religious buildings.

Sensual and worldly interests are clearly betrayed in the full-bodied and enticing Yakṣis or female figures on the *vedikās* of Mathura. Yakṣas and Yakṣis were the deities of fertility and vegetation cults worshipped for wealth, prosperity, children, etc. In the art of Bharhut, preceding that of Mathura by about 200 years, the Yakṣis represented cultic characteristics in their solemn poses and typical hand gestures like *tarjanī mudrā*. But the voluptuous female figures of Mathura are devoid of cultic significance and suggest secularization of the original divinities.

An important development of the 1st-3rd century A.D. is the representation of couples and other erotic themes on the doors or the entrances of monuments. The Kuṣāṇa door-jambs of Mathura¹²⁴ portray non-amorous couples standing in an attitude of adoration. On a stone panel, which probably formed a part of a jamb,¹²⁵ there is a depiction of a popularly known literary theme of the period, viz. the courtesan Vasantasenā running away from Śakāra. Another vertical panel,¹²⁶ which seems to be a part of a door-jamb, has portrayals of gay women of palace enjoying *madhupāna* and music, and involved in *prasādhana* (toilet).

In the Gandhāra art of the 2nd century A.D., amorous pairs are depicted on door-jambs in the inhabited medallion vine scrolls with themes of the Bacchus cult.¹²⁷ Similar ornamentation is also seen on the door-frame of the temple of Bacchus at Baalbek in Syria.¹²⁸ The stylistic conception and the design of the doors of Gandhāra and Baalbek are quite different from those of the doors of Mathura. But the point is that couples are portrayed on the doors of all these sites. This is significant in view of the tradition that developed regarding the carving of *mithunas* on doors which we will presently examine.

One of the earliest systematic depictions of erotic motifs on the door in Indian art is seen at Nasik Cave III¹²⁹ which has an inscription of Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi (A.D. 106-130). The door has lintels or cross-bars with voluted ends, similar to the *torāṇas* of Sanchi. The door-jambs are divided into five compartments (fig. VII). In one of the compartments, a man carries a woman. In another, a Bacchanalian scene, portraying a drunken woman supported by her lover, is depicted. This theme was popular at Mathura and other places in the same period. In one panel, a child is shown near an amorous couple. Couples depicted here are of mildly amorous type.

This cave of Nasik was a *vihāra*, where monks stayed after renouncing worldly pleasures. Apparently, there is a contradiction between the inscription on the entrance and the erotic depictions. The inscription states: "Renunciation of pleasure (*bhoga*) of all kinds."¹³⁰ How is this contradiction to be explained?

By the 2nd century A.D. *mithuna* was considered an auspicious motif and was therefore portrayed on the door which in the Indian cultural tradition is an important part of the building and is still decorated with flowers, *svastikas*, etc. on auspicious occasions. There are no Śilpaśāstras of the period concerned, but, fortunately, Jaina canonical literature,¹³¹ representing the data of the 1st-2nd century A.D., mentions auspicious *mithunas* decorating *torāṇas* of palaces along with other motifs such as *śālabhañjikās*, horses, elephants, *makaras*, *kimpuṣas*, Gandharvas and oxen. The eight auspicious symbols, viz. *svastika*, *śrīvatsa*, *nandīvāṛta*, *vardhamāna*, *bhadrāsana*, *kalaśa*, *matsya* and *darpaṇa*, were also portrayed on tops of decorative *thambas* (jambs) of the *torāṇas*.

The function of *mithuna* as an auspicious motif is also revealed in the later period by Varāhamihira in his *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*¹³² where he says: "The remaining part (of the door-jambs) should be decorated with auspicious birds, *svastika* designs, vessels, *mithunas*, leaves, creepers, etc." The verse which enjoins the carving of auspicious motifs including *mithuna*, though written in the 6th century

A.D., undoubtedly codifies earlier practices as he admits at the end of the chapter, "I have here told in short the features of a temple; all that was written by Garga is included herein. This subject was written by me with a full remembrance of what was written in detail by Manu and others."

In light of the auspicious function of the *mithuna* motif, its portrayal on the entrance of the *vihāra* of the Hīnayāna sect of Nasik need not necessarily indicate sexual laxity among monks. It may suggest that the convention was so firmly established that even the monks admitted it as an auspicious symbol on the entrance to their *vihāra*.

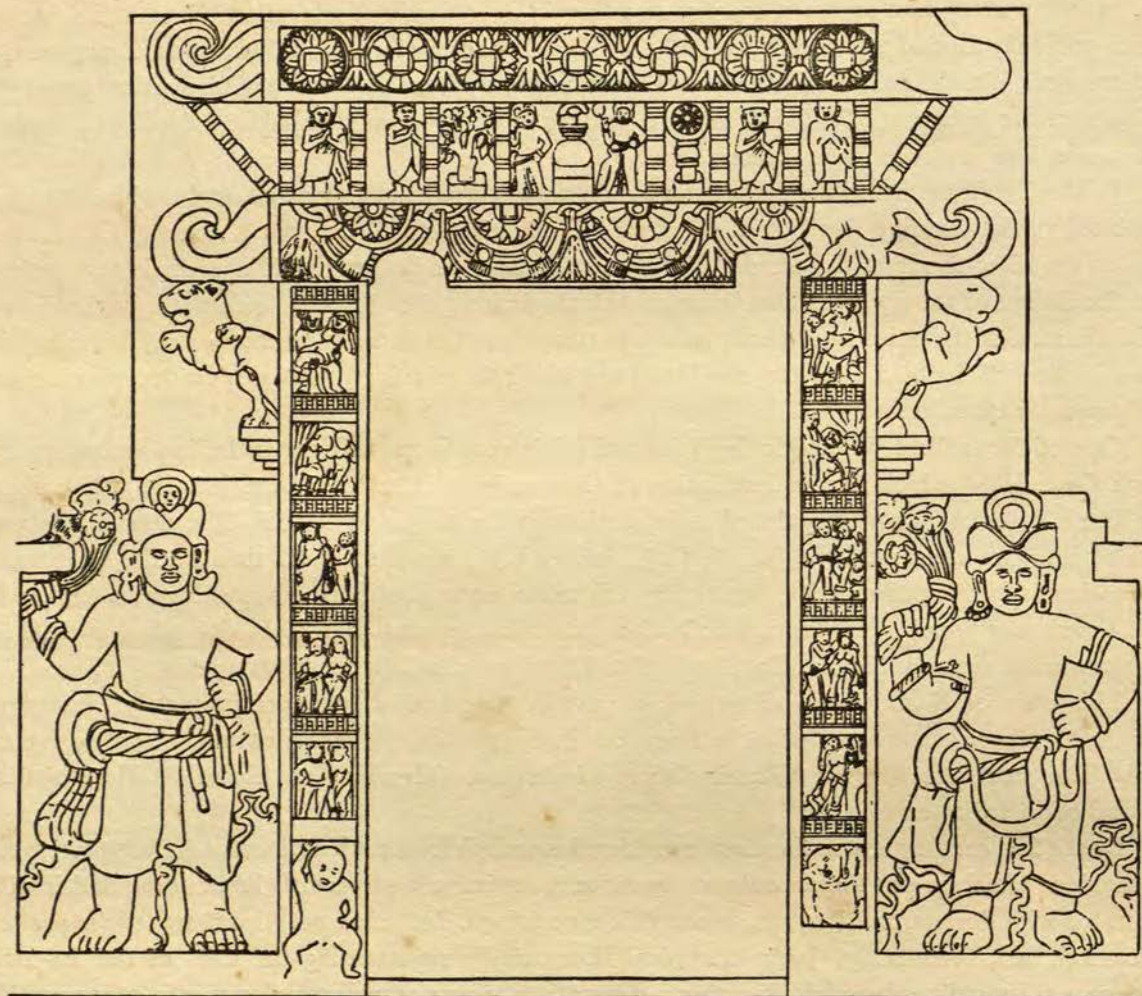


FIG. VII—Depictions of amorous themes on the door, Nasik Cave III

In view of this, we would like to suggest that the so-called donor couples on the entrances of the Buddhist caves of Karle (ph. 24) and Kanheri seem to be of the general type of auspicious *mithunas* which we find in the art of the period. Their placement near entrances of the caves indicate their auspicious function. Some of the ornaments and head-dresses of these figures may reveal

Śaka or Yavana influence. But this in itself does not indicate that sculptures represent donors, foreign or native, since sculptors in any case would tend to portray the current fashions of the elite. O. C. Gangoly¹³³ also suggests that these couples are *mithunas* of the general type and do not represent individual portraits. D. Barrett¹³⁴ also calls the Karle couples *mithunas*. The most significant information on this issue is available in the two identical inscriptions, Nos. 13 and 14 of Karle, which read: "*Bhadasamas bhikhusa mithuna*," or "gift of a *mithuna* by the *bhikshu* Bhadasama (Bhadraśarman)." ¹³⁵ Inscription No. 13 is seen over the *mithuna* figures in the extreme right of the veranda and inscription No. 14 is near the *mithuna* on the inside of the front-screen facing them. ¹³⁶ This is a clear and definite evidence of the fact that at least two *mithunas* of Karle were gifts of a *bhikshu*. Not only were the couples not representative of portraits of donors but were also recognized as *mithunas*.

The Buddhist community of Karle seems to have given great importance to *mithunas* in the decorative scheme of the *chaitya*-cave. Apart from the tall and graceful *mithunas* on the entrance-doors, gay and amorous couples and threesomes are shown as riders on the capitals of the pillars in the interior of the *chaitya*-cave (fig. VIII). *Mithunas* are also portrayed on the panels on either side at the bottom of the outer curve of the *chaitya*-arch.

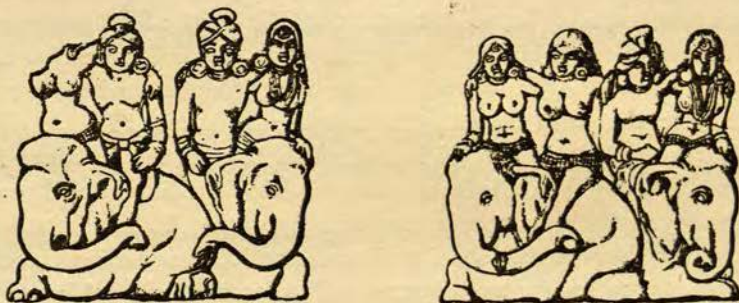


FIG. VIII—Males and Females on elephants; capitals of pillars, Chaitya-cave, Karle

At the same time when the Buddhists of the Western Deccan decorated their cave monuments, the Buddhist communities in the Eastern Coast of India, specially in the Krishna-Godavari delta at Amravati and Nagarjunakonda, embellished their monuments with highly sensuous and sophisticated art. Both these places belonged to the Chaitaka school of Buddhism, a sub-division of the Mahāsaṅghikas who were Hinayānists. There were also numerous other Buddhist sects staying at these places. Monks of different lands, such as Tamil Nadu, Vaṅga or Bengal, Orissa, Ceylon, Kashmir, Aparānta or Northern Konkan, Kirāta, Vanvāsī or North Kannada region, Gandhāra, Yavana or North-Western regions and China, came to the monastic establishments of Amravati and Nagarjunakonda. ¹³⁷ The region was thus culturally connected with different parts of the Indian mainland. It was also situated near the rich coastal ports some of which had Roman settlements. The flourishing state of Buddhism in the Andhra Valley was very largely due to the active Indo-Roman trade of the early Christian centuries. ¹³⁸ The Buddhists of the region were largely from the commercial classes. The art also reflects "the disposition and attitude of a mercantile social economy which manifests preference for transient pleasures and temporary values, exuberant expression of joy and passion, and courtly elegance and sophistication." ¹³⁹



Various reliefs adorning the Stūpas at Amravati and Nagarjunakonda depict Buddhist scenes. But unlike the Central Indian school, the Andhra school emphasizes the depiction of scenes in the life of the Buddha prior to the Enlightenment, specially his life before he abandoned *samsāra*, his stay in the harem, the luxuries of the court, etc. The depiction is more sensuous than religious. To quote Niharranjan Ray,¹⁴⁰ "... the art was hardly religious at all, far less Buddhist; it does not speak of nor aim at suggesting the Buddhist ideal of renunciation or *nirvāṇa*, or of discipline or strict ethical virtues including avoidance of women. Rather, it is frankly naturalistic and even sensuous."

The motif of *mithuna* is depicted on decorative *āyaka* platform to separate the panels of the Buddhist scenes.¹⁴¹ Sometimes other auspicious figures like Yakṣas and *śālabhañjikās* are portrayed instead of the *mithuna*. Their rendering is ornamental. Longhurst also says that all these figures are purely decorative and have no connection with the stories illustrated in the larger panels.

Mithuna figures of Amravati are mildly amorous whereas those at Nagarjunakonda are somewhat more erotic. At Nagarjunakonda, the couples are involved in varieties of love-play. In one panel, a couple is shown in a close embrace which reminds us of the description of *kaṇṭhāśleṣa* in the *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa.¹⁴² Some couples are involved in *madhupāna*.¹⁴³ Sculptors specially favoured scenes depicting the *nāyaka-nāyikā-bhāva* or the lover and the beloved in various emotional states¹⁴⁴ (ph. 26), which have found poetic rendering in the *Gāthāsaptasatī* of Hāla and the *Śataka* of Amaru. An imagery, which Amaru portrayed in one of his miniature verses (verse 15), finds an earlier expression in the plastic art at Nagarjunakonda. A young bride fills the beak of a parrot with her ear-jewel when it repeats before the elders the words uttered by the couple at night (ph. 25).

The treatment rendered to erotic motifs in Andhra art is, no doubt, artistic and poetic. But we must remember that these motifs are all placed just next to the Buddhist scenes. The above-described *mithuna* with a house-parrot is placed near the panel portraying Buddha in a preaching *mudrā*. Similarly, near the scene showing Buddha Dīpaṅkara's prediction regarding Gautama Buddha, a panel depicts a woman touching the lower garment of her partner, who holds a flower in his right hand and puts his left hand across her shoulder.¹⁴⁵

When we examine the motif of *mithuna* from its earliest available portrayal in stone monuments of the 2nd century B.C. up to those of the 3rd century A.D., we notice three major changes. First, there is a gradual sensualization of the motif and an increasing use of secular themes. For instance, instead of simple portrayals of couples holding hands or with *pūjā* offerings (ph. 16) which we see on early monuments, we come across varieties of *mithuna* motifs, shown in *nāyaka-nāyikā-bhāva* and as involved in kissing, embracing and other pre-coital activities, at Mathura, Nagarjunakonda, etc. (phs. 21, 25, 26). Secondly, there is a profuse use of the *mithuna* motif in art. This is evident in Mathura, Karle, Nagarjunakonda, etc. Thirdly, there is an increasing sense of depth in sculptures and an advance in the artist's conception of the human figure. For instance, the handsome, joyous pairs of Karle caves, carved larger than life-size, point to an advance in technique and artistic perception, compared to the figures of Kondane and Pitalkhora caves situated in the same region.

The last point can be partly accounted for by the progress in the craft of sculpture and the inner development of art. But the sensualization, the increasing cultivation of secular *śṛṅgāra* and the profuse use of the *mithuna* motif as a form of decoration point to other factors external to the sphere of the inner logic of art.¹⁴⁶ There must have been something in the social climate of the time that encouraged the use of the erotic motif as a form of embellishment in religious art.

Inscriptions reveal that donations for religious edifices were from the royal and merchant

classes, monks and nuns, and from the common people. One of the inscriptions of Karle, for instance, records a gift of the dealer in perfumes.¹⁴⁷ Yavana merchants appear as donors at Karle and Junnar. Śaka and Abhīra donors were known at Nasik and Junnar.¹⁴⁸ D. D. Kosambi¹⁴⁹ points out that the monks and nuns who also donated to the Buddhist establishments seem to have accumulated money as contrasted with the trifling possessions allowed to them by Vinaya rules. His observation about the Karle caves also applies to other fabulously decorated monuments of the period. He says: "the sculptures on the façade and those surmounting the pillars are remarkable as decorations for a monastic assembly hall for ascetics. . . The splendid, planned, co-operative achievement, the artistic success, must not blind us to the failure of the religion—a failure of the society too."

The names of donors were often inscribed on slabs and panels depicting *mithunas*. We have noted that at Karle the *bhikṣu* Bhadrāsarman was the donor of two *mithunas*. At Nagarjunakonda, an inscription of the *śreṣṭhin* Kumāranandin is seen on a slab depicting *mithunas* expressing *nāyika-nāyikā-bhāva*, along with legendary Buddhist scenes.¹⁵⁰ Similarly, ladies of the royal and noble families and nuns donated large sums to support religious monuments. When the names of the donors were inscribed on the panels which depicted erotic motifs, it must have been with their approval. This suggests that the *mithuna* motif was a socially acceptable form of decoration and was approved of by the donors. It points to the social climate of the time that nurtured the taste for sensuous decoration.

As a result of the active and thriving trade with the Roman Empire from the 1st century B.C., India had a favourable balance of trade. According to Pliny, India in the early centuries of the Christian era used to annually drain the Roman Empire of gold valued at fifty million "sesterces."¹⁵¹ From the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, written by an Egyptian-Greek merchant who visited India in the second half of the 1st century A.D., we come to know of a number of ports that grew all along the Indian coast-line. Numerous inland market towns also developed. Sanskrit and Buddhist literature of the 1st to the 3rd century A.D. and the Saṅgam literature of South India indicate the flourishing trade of the period.¹⁵² Different types of towns mentioned in early Jaina literature¹⁵³ show an increasing amount of specialization as well as urban growth. There were *nigamas* or towns inhabited by a class of merchants, *jalapaṭṭanas* or towns where goods were brought by boats, *sthalapaṭṭanas* where goods were brought by roads on bullock-carts, *droṇamukhas* where the goods were brought both by land and sea, *puṭabhedanas* or entrepôts and *rājadhānis* or the capital-towns.

Trade and the consequent urban development in the early centuries of the era created leisure and encouraged a taste for luxury. The *nāgaraka* or the cultured citizen represented an ideal to which people aspired. The luxurious life of *nāgarakas* and their cultivation of the arts were in a way the result of affluence. The abundant leisure in the life of the townsman gave him opportunities for various artistic pursuits. Love was also an "art" to be cultivated. Sex was studied. The Bhāṇa literature gives us a picture of the life of *nāgarakas* and *viṣas* (courtiers), who met for *goṣṭhis* or cultural discussions on particular days of the month when intricacies of love-relationship with courtesans were discussed amidst big gatherings. It is this social climate which encouraged Vātsyāyana to compile his *Kāmasūtra* for the guidance of cultured citizens in the methods and techniques of love. He advocated *goṣṭhis* in the house of a courtesan or *nāgaraka*, where topics dealing with poetry, drama and other arts were discussed. The story of *nāgaraka* Chārudatta and his *nāyikā* Vasantasenā, a courtesan, was a favourite theme as witnessed by the plays of Bhāsa and Śūdraka who flourished in this period.

Erotic depiction was permitted in religious art because it was considered auspicious (*maṅgala*). But its profuse use is to be accounted for by the social climate of the time. It is as a result of the love of *alaṅkāra* or ornamentation and the preoccupation with *śṛiṅgāra* or the erotic sentiment—both nurtured in the soil of leisure provided by affluence—that the excessive use of the erotic motif in art, both sculptural and literary, can be explained.



III. Sexual Representation in Art of the Period—A.D. 500-900

DURING THE PERIOD under review, there was a change in the socio-economic pattern towards the feudal-aristocratic way of life and a gradual decline in *nāgaraka* values and dominance in art. Feudal tendencies encouraged by political and administrative developments in the Gupta period gathered considerable momentum¹ (see Chapter VIII). *Sāmantas* (feudal chiefs) wielded great power and gradually weakened the central authority. The military and landed aristocracy of *sāmantas*, *bhāṭṭa-putras* and *rājaputras* assumed greater prominence than the *nāgaraka* (citizen) class in cultural life. This is reflected, for example, in the literary arts, in which, unlike the previous period, *nāgaraka* is not the hero of the play.

In the religious sphere, though Buddhism was patronized at various sites in the Western and Eastern India, it was the Brahmanical religion that got increasing support of the royalty and feudal chiefs. The Purāṇas were rewritten from the Gupta period onwards. Hindu religion was revived with great fervour after the death of the Hūṇa chief Mihirakula in the second quarter of the 6th century A.D., not only in the territories conquered by him in northern India but also in the south. Paurāṇic Hinduism was widely established. *Pūrtadharma*, which consisted in building of temples, tanks and charitable works, became an important part of religious life. *Dāna* (gifts) of land and money to temples became popular leading to the feudalization of the temple-institution and giving it an important place in the socio-economic structure (see Chapter VIII). Another significant development was the rise of Tāntrism. From the 5th century onwards we get inscriptional evidence of patronage by ministers and *sāmantas* to Tāntric worshippers (see Chapter VII). Magical beliefs and practices acquired a great importance under Tāntric cults. Beliefs in magic and the feudal way of life together became significant factors in influencing the erotic art of the period.

We have noted the gradual secularization of erotic motifs in the Ancient period. In the period under review, magico-religious elements seem to have reasserted themselves making for the appearance of ritualistic themes in art. Yet the profane and worldly tendencies are also present, leading to the depiction of the sensuous side of sex.



In the previous period, we have come across erotic depictions on Buddhist monuments and in popular cult objects. The early Hindu temples were built in impermanent and perishable materials, and as the structures do not exist there is no direct evidence of the presence of erotic figures in their art. Literary and epigraphical evidences do point to the existence of Brahmanical shrines as early as the 3rd century B.C.² It is possible that like the contemporary Buddhist monuments, their surfaces were also decorated with auspicious *alaṅkāras*. There is nothing specifically Buddhist about *alaṅkāras* like *śālabhañjikās*, *mithunas*, nude figures, etc. They belong to the sphere of pan-Indian culture, adopted by Buddhists and Hindus alike. Literary sources of the Ancient period indicate the depiction of auspicious Gaja-Lakṣmī and *śālabhañjikās* on palaces.³ *Mithunas* were depicted on walls of the *nātyagriha*⁴ and doors of palaces.⁵

Gupta and Post-Gupta Temples of Northern India

The earliest stone remains of Hindu temples belong to the 4th-5th century A.D.,⁶ but as there are not many examples, for convenience we have dealt with them in the present chapter along with post-Gupta shrines.

One of the earliest Hindu cave shrines, the Amrita Cave at Udayagiri near Bhopal, carved at the end of the 4th century A.D., portrays simple, non-erotic couples on its door.⁷

The Daśāvatāra temple at Deogarh, built in about A.D. 500, seems to adhere to the convention, laid down by Varāhamihira in his *Bṛhat-saṃhitā*,⁸ of decorating the door with *mithunas*, auspicious creepers, leaves and *gaṇas* (phs. 27, 28). Some other sites of the period like Sarnath near Banaras,⁹ Nachna¹⁰ in Panna district also portray the *mithuna* motif on their doors. However, in the Śiva temple at Bhumara¹¹ in Satna district, built towards the end of the 5th century, *mithunas* are portrayed not on door-frames but on the upper sides of the door. At all these places, the rendering of the *mithuna* motif on the door is of a mildly amorous type. Referring to some of the sites of the period, O. C. Gangoly¹² points out that "the motif has been accepted as a necessary device on the doorway of shrines."

Mithunas portrayed on the plinth¹³ of the Deogarh temple are highly amatory and represent pre-coital varieties (fig. IX). The *nāyaka-nāyikā* theme, as seen at Nagarjunakonda earlier, is also shown here.



FIG. IX—*Mithunas*; plinth, Deogarh



The figures of a solitary woman in the frieze of the plinth remind us of the earlier Yakṣīs or fertility figures and the *surasundarīs* of later temples. Groups of subdued amorous type I–A, representing a man with two women, in some cases involved in *madhupāna*, are seen on pilasters of the outer walls and the pillars in the compound.¹⁴ One of these pillars bears an inscription mentioning Govinda, a Bhāgavata devotee from Keśavapura. Such mild amorous groups were interchangeably depicted with scenes representing deities like Gaṇeśa and Gaja-Lakṣmī. This seems to suggest flexibility in the placement of erotic motifs.

Sixth–Ninth Century Art of the Deccan (Mysore, Maharashtra)

Some years later in the South Western Deccan (Mysore) the depiction of *maithuna* is seen for the first time in the temple art of Aihole, Badami and Mahākūṭeśvara. At Aihole, *maithuna* is seen on the door-frames of a Vaiṣṇava temple of the Kont-guḍi complex which belongs to about the middle of the 6th century A.D.¹⁵ On the right door-jamb (fig. X), the lower two couples are shown practising mouth-congress. The third couple shows a woman in an *uttānapad* pose and a man in a head-down pose, reminding us of the same theme in a Śuṅga terracotta of Chandraketugarh (ph. 7). The couple on the top is shown copulating in a sitting position. The portrayals are not sensuous and are primitive in conception and are untouched by sophistication we generally see in courtly art. Their presence on the door, conventionally associated with auspicious decoration, seems to suggest a magico-religious function of sexual motifs.

The Ladkhan temple of Aihole also belongs to the middle of the 6th century A.D.¹⁶ It was a Vaiṣṇava shrine like the temple of the Kont-guḍi group. This flat-roofed shrine of primitive appearance has depictions of large *mithuna* figures¹⁷ on the pillars of the outer porch. In one of the *mithuna* scenes, the woman coyly resists her partner who tries to reach her girdle (ph. 31), reminding us of the poetic imagery in the *Kumārasambhava* (VIII–4, 14).

Similar erotic couples, showing preliminaries to the sexual act, are depicted on the 6th–8th century temples at Aihole. Notable among these are the sculptures of the Durga¹⁸ temple (ph. 30), which was originally a Vaiṣṇava shrine, and on temples called Hachchhappaya-guḍi and Hachchhappaya Maṭha.¹⁹ The latter has a scene depicting lovers in a Kāmasāstriya pose of embrace, almost corresponding to *vṛikshādhirūḍhaka* of Vātsyāyana, and in *kachagraha* or holding of hair (ph. 32), which was a love-play fondly described by poets and Kāmasāstra writers.

These sculptures, carved in bold relief and in highly amorous poses, indicate that at an important religious centre like Aihole—having about seventy temples—sculptors, donors, temple-priests and worshippers did not object to the presence of large representations of erotic couples on their religious edifices. The erotic motif was favourably accepted by

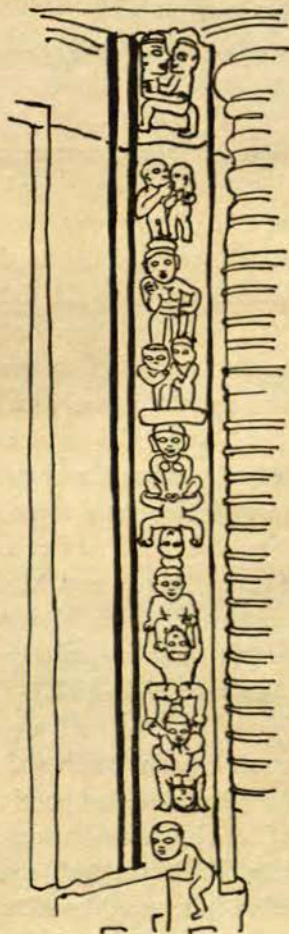


FIG. X—*Maithuna* depictions; door of the Vaiṣṇava temple of the Kont-guḍi group, Aihole

them to the extent that instead of using only other *alaṅkāras*, such as *gaṇas*, creepers, *svastikas*, they preferred to have huge *mithuna* figures on pillars. This indicates that this particular *alaṅkāra* fulfilled some definite functions—magico-religious certainly, but also sensuous. The sculptured *mithunas* are the counterpart of the literary *śṛiṅgāra* of the secular works of poets like Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, Amaru, etc. That the works of these poets were definitely popular in this region is attested by the Aihole inscription of A.D. 634–635, in which a Jaina *prastatikāra* (eulogy-writer) displays his knowledge of the works of Bhāravi and Kālidāsa.²⁰

By this time, the temple was an important socio-religious centre employing the services of different professions such as garland-makers, dancing girls, etc. An inscription of the time of King Maṅgaleśa mentions the garland-makers of the new stone temple and endowments in their favour.²¹ Another inscription of slightly later date mentions the rising popularity of a new work on dance following the precepts of Bharata which secured a decisive victory for the school of Bharata against the adherents of the rival school.²² Inscriptions record the observation of periodical festivals in the temple.²³ Besides providing opportunities for development of performing arts, the temple was the centre for the regular free-feeding of scholars and holy men.²⁴

This account of the socio-religious background of the temple directs our attention to the fact that erotic figures were carved on a social centre visited by many people.

Badami or ancient Vātāpī, which was an inland trade centre of Western India and a stronghold of Chālukya power, profusely displays erotic motifs in its art. These are seen on pillars, pilasters, lintels, ceilings, etc. in the *maṇḍapa* and the front veranda of the caves. Describing the pillars and pilasters of Cave III, dated A.D. 578 according to an inscription of Maṅgaleśa, R. D. Banerji notes: "There is a sunken panel with a bas-relief over all the pillars and pilasters in the rear wall of the verandah, as well as over the capitals of all pillars in the *maṇḍapa*. Most of them represent males and females in amorous postures."²⁵

The special feature of the erotic scenes in the caves of Badami is that along with the couple, attendants are also shown.²⁶ The lovers sit on a bed attended by females with lyres, fly-whisks, and jars of wine. In a scene in Cave I, a couple is shown in close embrace, while an attendant with a jar stands with her face averted. This scene has similarity in theme with later sculptures of Khajuraho, Sannar, Nagda and Modhera, where in some erotic scenes the attendants are shown with palms across their eyes. However, at Badami the attendants are not helping the couple in their sexual activity but are merely standing near them. We are reminded of Kālidāsa's description in the *Kumārasambhava* (VIII–17; IX–31) in which Śiva offers a cup of wine to Umā in the presence of her *sakhīs*. When Śiva was adorning Umā who was sitting on his lap, her *sakhīs*, Jayā and Vijayā, came into the room and helped him to decorate her.

Sensuous and poetic touches are clearly seen in the tall and graceful bracket figures of Cave III, of which a scene representing a woman reading a scroll or letter under a Kadamba tree is noteworthy. *Madhupāna*²⁷ scenes are widely depicted in all these caves. Scenes representing lovers are often influenced by *Kāmasāstras*.²⁸

Copulation is depicted on the lintel of Cave I,²⁹ which was a Śaiva shrine. Here, both the man and the woman sit on a stool in a frontal *Kāmasāstriya* pose. The depiction is clearly sensuous, whereas the carvings noted at the contemporary site of Aihole are non-sensuous and rendered in primitive and unrefined style. An interesting panel can be seen on the lintel of this cave, which depicts nine couples in various amorous attitudes.³⁰

Another site, Mahākuṭeśvara, which is about three miles from Badami, has a Chālukyan temple assigned to about the 6th–7th century A.D.³¹ On this temple are depicted couples in sitting and standing erotic poses.³² It is significant that the Nude goddess with lotus-head and holding lotuses in hands was worshipped at Mahākuṭeśvara in this period.³³

Erotic motifs can also be seen in the Buddhist caves at Ajanta, Ellora and Aurangabad which are almost contemporaneous with the Brahmanical caves of Badami. This shows that the depiction of erotic motifs was a convention independent of sectarian influences in this period.

Erotic motifs at these Buddhist caves are mainly confined to door-frames, lintels, pilasters, and the sunken panels on shafts and capitals of pillars. The *mithuna* motif is depicted on the door-jambs of Caves I (ph. 29), II, IV, V, XXIII and XXIV of Ajanta,³⁴ all carved in the period A.D. 550–642, and on Cave I of Aurangabad³⁵ in about the 7th century A.D. Gaṅgā, Yamunā, *nāgas* and *nāginīs* adorn doors of the Buddhist caves as they do in Hindu shrines. The *mithunas* are in various amorous attitudes as on the Deogarh door.

Like the Brahmanical caves of Badami, the Buddhist caves also have depictions of amorous groups of type III–A with attendants near royal lovers.³⁶ In Ajanta Cave XXI (A.D. 550–600), a panel on the lintel depicts a royal person with two partners, attended by four females. The adjacent panel depicts a couple along with an attendant. Cave I (A.D. 600–642) depicts couples with attendants in a frieze near the entablature. Cave V (A.D. 580–642) of Ellora shows the same theme in a roundel where a couple is seated on a decorated couch and attended by a servant. Prince Viśvāntara and his wife Mādrī of the Buddhist Jātaka are portrayed in an amorous pose in narrative frescos at Ajanta. She sits on the lap of the Prince, who offers her a cup of wine. Near the couple, attendants are present with jar, spitoon, etc. *Madhupāna* scenes are also favourite motifs of the Buddhist caves. A scene from the Mahājanaka Jātaka³⁷ depicting a royal couple seated on a bed and engaged in intimate conversation is seen in Cave I of Ajanta. The royal couple is surrounded by a host of female attendants and eunuchs. On the right side of the frieze, a fully clad woman is dancing to music played on flutes by two women. These frescos, thus, represent the harem life of the period vividly described in the contemporary writings of the court poet Bāṇa.

An ornamental function of the erotic motif is seen in Cave XVII (A.D. 470–480) where *mithunas* are depicted below a row of Buddhist figures.³⁸ Another instance of the ornamental use of the motif, which shows a bearded man and his female partner attended by musicians and cup-bearers, is seen at least four times on the decoratively painted ceiling of Cave I.³⁹ Floral and vegetal forms decoratively surround the figure-composition giving it an added ornamental look.

The ornamental use of the erotic motif is even more obvious in the painted ceiling (fig. XI) of Cave II (A.D. 600–642). The centre of the square ceiling is decorated with a circular design of flowers and scrolls. The triangles created by the circular pattern in the square space are filled in with Vidyādhara couples. This reminds us of a similar ornamental use of the *mithuna* motif on the sculptured ceiling (fig. XII) of Badami Cave II, which is slightly earlier than the Ajanta example. Here also Vidyādhara couples fill in the four corners of the ceiling. The central portion is decorated with a *svastika* design, which is considered to be auspicious.

Thus, in the almost contemporary caves of the Western and South Western Deccan belonging to different faiths the erotic motif received a similar ornamental treatment.

In the vicinity of Bombay there are three caves of the 7th–8th century at Maṇḍapeśvara (Borivali), Jogeśvarī and Elephanta.⁴⁰ These belonged to the Lakuliṣa-Pāśupata sect as evidenced

from their iconography. The Maṇḍapeśvara represents a beautiful panel of dancing Naṭarāja, who seems to be ithyphallic, along with *gaṇas*, singers, musicians, etc. The medallions on the pillars have amorous *mithunas* enjoying *madhupāna*. In several scenes, the woman sits on the lap of her partner as seen in the caves of Ajanta, Ellora, etc. Amorous groups of type III-A showing attendants near aristocratic couples are also seen on the pillars. Similarly, *mithunas* in *madhupāna* and in creeper-like poses are seen on the door and the lintel of the Jogeśvari cave, which has images of Lakuliśa, Kalyāṇasundaramūrti of Śiva, Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa, etc. *Maithuna* is not seen in the extant remains of these caves. Depictions of *mithuna* and of the group with attendants remind us of those at Ajanta, Ellora, Badami, etc. and are ornamental in function. At Elephanta, however, subdued couples are present as devotees of gods, but not in sensuous or decorative aspects.

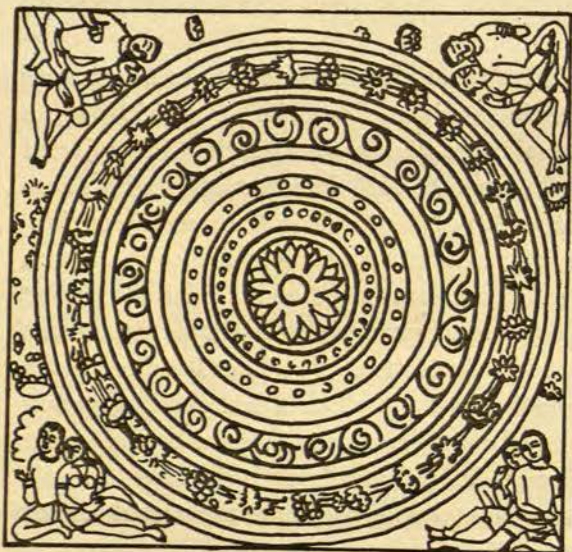


FIG. XI—Ornamental use of the *mithuna* motif on the ceiling, Ajanta Cave II

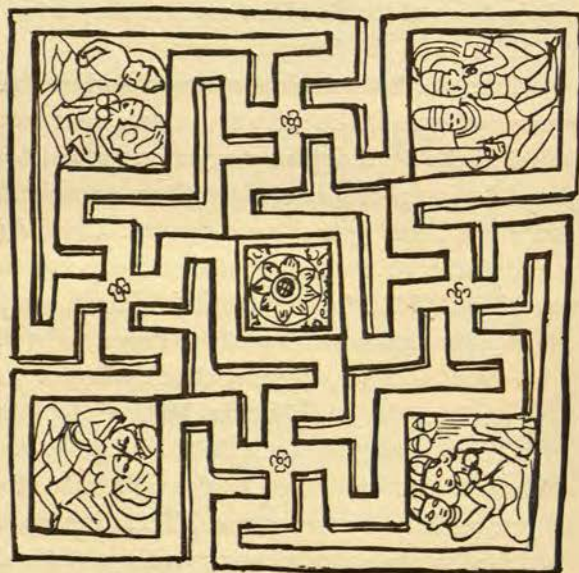


FIG. XII—Ornamental use of the *mithuna* motif on the ceiling, Badami Cave II

In the 7th–8th centuries, Pattadakal or Raktapuri, ten miles from Badami, which became an alternate capital of the Chālukyas, the other being Aihole, shows the continuation of the trend in erotic depiction. Here, the principal donors of the temples were the Chālukya kings and their queens and concubines.⁴¹ The chief erotic motif is the *mithuna*. The Pāpanātha temple of about A.D. 735 shows *mithunas* on each face of the pilaster in almost full relief (ph. 33). Large figures of amorous couples are prominently seen on the Virūpākṣa temple, built in the middle of the 8th century A.D. by Lokamahādevī, the chief queen of Vikramāditya II, to celebrate her husband's victories over the Pallava ruler.⁴² The Mallikārjuna temple built by Trailokyamahādevī, the younger queen of Vikramāditya II, also has *mithuna* depictions. Cousens⁴³ and Zimmer⁴⁴ believe that some of the sculptures of aristocratic lovers are portraits of the donors. But if this is the case one wonders why the donors are shown in loving poses and why there are so many portraits of them in one temple.

Couples enjoying *madhupāna*, and subdued amorous groups of type I-A are portrayed on

pillars. The ceiling panel of the Pāpanātha temple portrays Vidyādhara couples around a Gaja-Lakṣmī image, reminding one of the similar ornamental use of *mithunas* in the Badami and Ajanta caves described above. The sports of Śiva and Pārvaṭī are also depicted on the temples, bringing to mind Kālidāsa's descriptions in the *Kumārasambhava*. Specially noteworthy is a scene on the half-medallion of a pillar on the Virūpākṣa, where they are shown seated in an intimate pose on the Nandī.

Coital scenes do occur at Pattadakal, but as at Badami and Aihole, they are not shown prominently. On a pillar of the Mallikārjuna temple there is a depiction of, what looks like, a copulating couple along with two precoital couples (ph. 34).

An orgiastic group is seen on a pillar (fig. XIII) of the Yenī temple. Oral-genital congress, frontal congress and congress from rear (*vyānata*) are shown in a crudely carved relief of the pillar. Women are shown dancing in the same panel.



FIG. XIII—*Erotic scenes; pillar, Yenī temple, Pattadakal*

A rare scene, carved on the pillar of the Mallikārjuna temple, shows a liṅga-shrine flanked by two couples (ph. 137). The man carries the woman on his back, who in turn holds his hair, reminding us of hair-cutting scenes (phs. 134–136). The second couple is sitting in an amorous attitude. It

is difficult to make out the exact theme of the scene. But the portrayal of the Śiva shrine does suggest the ritualistic nature of the subject.

It should be noted here that images of Lakuliśa, associated with Pāśupata Śaivism, are seen at least on two temples at Pattadakal.⁴⁵ The adjoining site of Badami also has images of Lakuliśa.⁴⁶

At Ellora, the Kailāsanātha temple, the grand achievement of the middle of the 8th century A.D., has later additions of the Lañkeśvara cave and the side gallery surrounding the inner side of the court on the ground floor. J. Fergusson and J. Burgess⁴⁷ believe that the main temple and its adjuncts took about 80 to 100 years to be built. The additions were probably carried out in the time of Amoghavarsha (A.D. 814-878). R. Gupte⁴⁸ also says that the additions are of much later date and do not form part of the original scheme. The exact dating of these additions to the Kailāsa temple is important because if they belong to the 9th century, the portrayals of orgiastic groups in these places would be among the earliest portrayals of an orgy in Indian art.

Coital pairs and orgiastic groups are seen on the parapet walls and pillars of the Lañkeśvara cave and the pilasters in the gallery. Erotic groups are mainly of type III-C, where an attendant excites one of the partners,⁴⁹ and of type VI, involving many pairs.⁵⁰ The frontal standing pose is widely depicted and the sleeping coital pose is also seen. Congress from rear and oral congress are represented.⁵¹

Seventh-Eighth Century Temples of Bhubaneswar

From the shrines of the Deccan, let us now move to Orissa in Eastern India and examine the place of erotic motifs in art of the sacred city of Bhubaneswar. In this religious centre the architectural remains of Hindu temples date from about the 6th century A.D. to about the 15th century A.D.⁵² Its importance as a sacred place is attested by references in Medieval texts such as *Ekāmra Purāṇa*, *Ekāmra Chandrikā*, *Svarṇnādrī Mahodaya*, *Kaṭila Saṁhitā* and *Śiva Purāṇa* which call it Ekāmra-kṣetra and equate it with Vārāṇasī, one of the holiest centres of Hindu pilgrimage.

We shall describe here erotic motifs of the four main temples of the period, viz. the Paraśurāmeśvara, the Śatrugneśvara, the Vaitāl and the Śiśireśvara.

The Paraśurāmeśvara temple is ascribed to A.D. 650 on the basis of the palaeography of the inscribed labels above the eight *grahas* on the lintel of the sanctum door.⁵³ It was influenced by the Pāśupata branch of Śaivism.⁵⁴ Cultic images on the temple include: Lakuliśa and his disciples, Umā-Maheśamūrti in erotic aspects (ph. 110), Kalyāṇasundaramūrti and Rāvaṇānugrahamūrti of Śiva, Sapta Mātṛikās, etc. The portrayal of a fish held by Vārāhī of the Sapta Mātṛikā group indicates Tāntric influence, as fish or *matsya* was one of the *pañchamakāras*.⁵⁵

The *mithuna* is the main motif and is depicted on door-jamb, the outer walls flanking the niches containing the Pārśvadevatās, the recessed panel in the *kāñṭhi* of the *śikhara* immediately on the termination of the *bāḍa* or wall, and on the various recessed portions of the *śikhara*. Of these, a *mithuna* of precoital type which is depicted on the door-jamb of the inner sanctum is noteworthy. The woman coyly resists her lover who is trying to touch her private parts. It is similar in nature to the *mithuna* of the Ladkhan temple of Aihole recalling the imagery in Kālidāsa. There is only one *maithuna* depiction (ph. 35) on the temple. It is portrayed on the recessed part of the *śikhara*, where it would be difficult for devotees to notice. In the scene, a child is shown sucking the breast of a woman who is bending forward, and a man is having relations with her from behind. The imagery is linked up

with home and family life rather than with any Tāntric ritual. It should be noted that a late Medieval temple in Nepal also has a wooden sculpture showing a similar theme. Depictions of such non-Tāntric family scenes will help us later (see chapter VII) to corroborate our hypothesis that in truly Tāntric shrines sexual motifs could be depicted, but Tāntric sexual rites could not be represented as they were considered esoteric.

An exhibitionist male figure (ph. 36) is seen near this *maithuna* scene. In the adjacent panel a woman stands in the *śālabhañjikā* pose fertilizing a tree. The motif of a male exhibiting himself near a female is significant. We have examined it in the context of the *śṛṅgāraṇa vidhi* of Pāsupata Śaivas in Chapter VII. The exposing of the generative organ has also a fertility function.

It should be noted that a *gaṇa* of Śiva's troupe in the Rāvaṇānugraha-mūrti scene, portrayed on the *śikhara* of the temple, is shown with enlarged phallus which he holds in his hands (ph. 126). Such representations are seen at the contemporaneous site of Ellora,⁵⁶ as well as in the Śuṅga terracottas.⁵⁷ Essentially, they point to the magico-defensive function of genital organs (see Chapter VI).

Another temple of the 7th century A.D.,⁵⁸ viz. the Śatrugneśvara temple, also belonged to Pāsupata Śaivism, as it has the same iconographic features as the Paraśurāmeśvara temple. It has erotic figures on its *pābhāga* and the superstructure and has two types of erotic motifs, *mithunas* of love-making type and a *maithuna*-couple. The latter is in a sleeping *bandha*.

A stone slab⁵⁹ (ph. 37), which possibly belongs to the Śatrugneśvara group of temples, depicts four erotic couples, of which two are shown at a love-making stage and the other two are shown in coition (*vyānata-rata* and sitting-congress). The sculptures on this detached slab are carved in the same archaic style as those of the Śatrugneśvara and the Paraśurāmeśvara. The costumes and ornaments of the females also bear a close resemblance to those of the above-mentioned temples.

It is surprising that *maithuna*-couples of the 7th century temples of Bhubaneswar have escaped the scholarly observation of K. C. Panigrahi. According to him, copulating couples (or obscene or erotic couples as he calls them) first make their appearance on the 8th century temples of the Vaitāl and the Śiśireśvara.⁶⁰ But, as observed by us, the earliest extant temples of Bhubaneswar show copulating couples in their art. Though few in number, they indicate that a beginning had been made in representing *maithuna* in temple art of Bhubaneswar.

The Vaitāl and the Śiśireśvara continue to display the erotic motifs in the style of the 7th century temples of the place. These two temples, erected under the rule of the Bhauma-Karas, show a mixture of Pāsupata Śaivism, Tāntric Buddhism and Śākta cults in their iconography.⁶¹ The Vaitāl Deul enshrines a fierce form of Chāmūṇḍā, worshipped by the Śāktas; it has Śaiva images of Lakuliśa, Bhairava, Virabhadra, Gajāntakārīmūrti of Śiva, Hara-Pārvatī (ph. 39), ithyphallic Ardhanārīśvara, ithyphallic Naṭarāja (ph. 40) and Tāntric Buddhist images like Amoghasiddhi. Sūrya also is portrayed on the façade of the temple. The Śiśireśvara temple portrays Lakuliśa in the style of Buddha images in the *dharmachakrapravartana mudrā* with the Sāranātha-device below the pedestal.⁶² The temple also has images of Amoghasiddhi, Jambhala, ithyphallic Naṭarāja, etc., which indicate the amalgamation of Buddhism with Pāsupata Śaivism.

The *maithuna* scene of the Vaitāl temple represents a sleeping *bandha* on a bed, and is portrayed on the *gaṇḍī* of the temple (ph. 38). The Śiśireśvara temple has a bestiality scene—the first of its type noted in temple art—and a standing copulating pair.



Amorous *mithunas* of non-coital type are placed in prominent niches on the walls and on the façade of the Vaitāl temple (phs. 39, 40). They flank images of deities.

A group of I-A type (ph. 41) is seen below the image of Lakuliśa on the *śikhara* of the Śiśireśvara temple. A group, having many men and women with hands on shoulder and holding hands, is seen on the Vaitāl temple on the recessed panels of the *gaṇḍī*, immediately above the termination of *bāḍa* (wall). We have noted that on the Paraśurāmeśvara temple, built a century earlier, *mithunas* occupied this place. It seems that some convention did exist sanctioning the portrayal of erotic figures on this part of the Orissan temple. The *Śilpa Prakāśa*,⁶³ a Medieval text from Orissa, supports the above practice when it states that *mithuna bandhas* and *kumbhakas* should be carved on the roof in place of *vāyumārga* (air-passage).

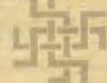
It should be noted that on all these four Early Medieval shrines of Bhubaneswar, influenced by Tāntrism, the *maithuna* figures are given only an inconspicuous place in the sculptural scheme, while the *mithuna* motifs get prominent places. Compared to the rich decoration of the temples the number of *maithuna*-couples is insignificant. Their size is small. It would seem that they were not meant to be seen or worshipped by devotees, but that their depiction was considered necessary for some purpose.

Towards the end of the period *maithuna*-couples were depicted on the Pāsupata shrine of Someśvara at Mukhalingam⁶⁴ in the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh, and the Baijanātha⁶⁵ temple in the Kangra valley of Punjab.

Reviewing the art of the period A.D. 500–900, we see that the *maithuna* is depicted for the first time on religious monuments, barring the narrative reliefs of the Mathura pillars of the Kuṣāṇa period. The Kont-guḍī temple at Aihole, which is one of the earliest shrines having portrayals of *maithuna*, is a Vaiṣṇava shrine. It may have been influenced by Tāntrism since we know that by the 6th century A.D. Vaiṣṇavism was influenced by Tāntric trends, specially in its Pañcharātra developments. A passage from the *Hayasirṣa Pañcharātra*, which is quoted in the *Agni Purāṇa*, states that *mithunas* should decorate the door.⁶⁶ The Badami Cave I, which has *maithuna* depictions, was a Śaiva shrine. The presence of Lakuliśa figures in the region attests the prevalence of the Lakuliśa-Pāsupata cult. In the 7th century, the Tāntric sect of Kāpālikas was able to receive a grant from the nephew of the Chālukya king of Badami.⁶⁷ The cult of the Sapta Mātṛikās was accepted by the royal family of the Chālukyas as is evidenced by the inscriptional account.⁶⁸ The cult of the Nude goddess with a lotus-head⁶⁹ was prevalent in the 6th–8th centuries at Mahākuṭeśvara and Alampur in the same cultural area. Other temples influenced by Tāntrism and having *maithuna* depictions are: the four Early Medieval temples of Bhubaneswar, the Someśvara temple of Mukhalingam and the Kailāsanātha cave (later additions) of Ellora.

The depiction of *maithuna* has not yet been accepted at all sites of the period. We should note here that some of the shrines associated with Tāntrism do not have any depiction of *maithuna* in their art. These are the Pāsupata caves of Elephanta, Maṇḍapeśvara and Jogeśvarī in Bombay, the Śākta temple of Chausath Yoginīs at Khajuraho and the Buddhist Tāntric caves of Ellora and Kanheri in Maharashtra.

But the depiction of *maithuna* at several important sites of the period does suggest a definite change in the conception of erotic figures. From the nature of *maithuna* depiction we can make the following observations:



- (i) It was not given an important place in the sculptural scheme of the temple, thereby suggesting its dubious recognition as a motif in the art-conventions of the period.
- (ii) It was more or less inconspicuously placed, not easily visible to the devotee, specially on the Bhubaneswar temples. This point helps us in the formulation of the hypothesis that *maithuna* depiction, unlike the *Yab-Yum* images of Tāntric Buddhism, was not meant for the enunciation of Tāntric or any philosophical doctrine. It was not meant for worship.
- (iii) Erotic depiction seems to have been influenced by magico-religious factors. This is borne out by the door-carvings at Aihole. The juxtaposition of a nudity-exposing figure and a *maithuna* scene in an inconspicuous part of the Paraśurāmeśvara temple of Bhubaneswar possibly points to its magico-religious function.
- (iv) The *maithuna* depictions of the period have not been undertaken with any sensuous intent. Though *maithuna* is depicted on the Śatruṅgeśvara and the Vaitāl in *bandhas* similar to those of Kāmaśāstras, it does not have the calculated erotic intention of the later *maithuna* depictions in the same religious city. The *maithuna*-couples of Badami and Pattadakal are not exaggerated in their sexual appeal.

The *mithuna* motif was recognized and venerated, as it were, in temple art. Its place on the door-jambs was continued at Deogarh, Nachna, Bhumara, Ajanta, Ellora, Aurangabad, Jogeśvari, Bhubaneswar (Paraśurāmeśvara), Mukhalingam, Rajim, Sirpur, Lalitagiri, Udayagiri, Baijanāth, etc. Its function as auspicious-cum-decorative *alaṅkāra* is particularly clear in its portrayals in the Western Deccan caves—Hindu and Buddhist. Here, its profuse use can be understood against the background of the aristocratic society and its cultivation of *śringāra*. The full-bodied *mithunas* of the temples of Aihole and Pattadakal, depicted with artistic and poetic touches, are further examples of extra-religious and sensuous interests. Their function is, no doubt, auspicious, but they also satisfy the sensuous tastes of the society or of the social group immediately in charge of their execution.

The magico-religious nature of the *mithuna* motif is seen in its venerable position in the sites of Eastern India. It is placed near the deities in important niches of the Vaitāl temple. It is depicted on lotus pedestals at Mukhalingam, Rajim and Paharpur. It is provided with halos at Sirpur.

The period reveals a clear contrast in the treatment of the *mithuna* and the *maithuna* themes, from which it is certain that while the former was accepted as a convention, the latter had yet to make its way into the *śilpa* rules. The period represents one of the significant phases in the history of sexual representation in religious art. It is an interim period and represents *maithuna* before it was conventionalized in temple art.

The impression of the feudal background is strong in the groups of type III-A, representing attendants near the love-making couple. These scenes were favourite motifs in the Western Deccan. We cannot definitely say whether these representations are precursors of the erotic groups of type III-C and D, carved at Khajuraho, Konarak, etc. In the latter types, apart from female attendants, Tāntric ascetics and male attendants are also seen helping the couple in the sexual act.

Orgiastic groups appear towards the end of the period at Pattadakal and in the later additions of the Kailāsa temple at Ellora.



IV. Sexual Representation in Art of the Period—A.D. 900-1400

THE RETICENT EXPRESSION of sex in the previous period bursts into an ostentatious display in the period following A.D. 900. Erotic motifs are boldly exhibited on the exteriors and interiors of religious buildings. The orgiastic theme is portrayed without much restraint.

Temple-building in this period was continuous and prolific. It was mainly the royal class and feudal chiefs who commissioned the temples and their tastes and outlook were reflected in temple art. Temples provided opportunities for the exhibition of artistic talents and the power of wealth. Keen competition among the upper classes to build larger and more magnificent temples led to an expansion in the size of temples and, thus, making available more space for decoration (see Chapter VIII).

Feudalism got crystallized in the period and pervaded social and cultural life.¹ Tendencies towards traditionalism and conservatism became stronger. Superstitiousness, irrationalism and beliefs in magic held sway over people. Regional outlook influenced cultural pursuits. Regionalism became a dominant trait of the period. The feudal socio-economic set-up and its consequences are reflected in the temple art of the period which clearly shows a gradual stiffening and ossification in expression according to local or regional patterns. From the 3rd century B.C. to about the 7th century A.D., Indian art has a common denominator, despite variations due to local tastes and visions.² But the regional spirit gradually asserts itself from the 7th-8th century A.D. However, the classical tradition of an all-India art still lingers on for about two centuries. From about the 10th century the regional spirit is very evident in all aspects of culture including the visual arts, scripts, dialects, costume, etc.³

In the treatment of erotic motifs also we see regional variations. The motifs, though influenced to a certain extent by the assimilation of extraneous trends, strongly express a pattern characteristic of the regional culture. We have seen in the earlier chapters that erotic motifs had auspicious attributes and had acquired a decorative function. They were *alaṅkāras*. In this period also the motifs continue to function as *alaṅkāras* but are further standardized and canonized according to



the characteristic pattern of each regional school. Their importance and place in temple decoration is determined by the *śilpa* canons of the regional school.⁴

Regional conventions and traditions condition the representation of erotic motifs mainly in two ways. Firstly, they influence the selection of the particular type of erotic motif. Thus, *saṅghāṭaka* of type II–A, in which a man has relations with two women, is a motif popularly accepted in the art of Central India at Khajuraho and Eastern India at Konarak, whereas the *saṅghāṭaka* of type II–B, in which a woman has relations with two men simultaneously, is widely prevalent in the art of Gujarat and Mysore. Secondly, they determine the assignment of the erotic motif in the architectural scheme of the temple. Thus, for example, canons of the Chandella and Orissan schools assign greater importance to the erotic motif by placing it on more visible and larger parts of the temple, while those of Gujarat confine them to unimportant places. The assignment of the motif in the temple-scheme, in turn, fixes its size, which is as important a factor as the type it represents. On Khajuraho and Orissan temples, as the erotic theme is placed on the *janghā*, it is larger in size than its representation on temples of other art-schools, where it is relegated to minor places and smaller space-compositions. As the attention of visitors or devotees is generally attracted by the size and placement of the sexual motif in the temple, the role of regional conditioning in this sphere becomes very significant. Even the most provocative theme placed on the Gujarat or Deccan temples attracts comparatively less attention than a similar or even a subdued theme depicted on Orissan and Khajuraho temples, because of the large space-composition and frank display permitted in the art-schools to which these latter temples belong.

The approach or attitude towards erotic depiction seems to be different in each region. Artist-guilds of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Mysore have treated the erotic theme in a cruder manner compared to the finely carved erotic figures of Khajuraho and Eastern India.

As it is not possible to understand the representation of sex on temples of Medieval India without taking into consideration the impact of regional conditioning, we shall deal with the theme region-wise instead of following a purely chronological order. We will study erotic representation in five regions: Orissa, Central India, Gujarat, the Deccan and Mysore.

SECTION 1. ORISSA

Bhubaneswar

Muktesvara temple. This temple built in the 10th century A.D.,⁵ in the early days of the Somavamśī or Keśarī dynasty, shows certain architectural innovations⁶ marking the break from the Early Medieval temples of Bhubaneswar built under the Bhauma-Karas. It is significant that while other decorative and fertility motifs like *śālabhañjikā*, “woman opening the door,” *nāginis*, etc. are retained as *alaṅkāras* on the temple, *maithuna* depictions are not found here.

The absence of the *maithuna* theme on the Muktesvara is even more significant, because this shrine represents in the iconography of its images the amalgamation of Pāśupata Śaivism, Śāktism and Buddhism.⁷ The Muktesvara also bears a resemblance in its architectural and sculptural peculiarities to the Tāntric shrines at Baudh⁸ situated in the upper Mahanadi Valley, which was the original seat of power of the Somavamśīs.

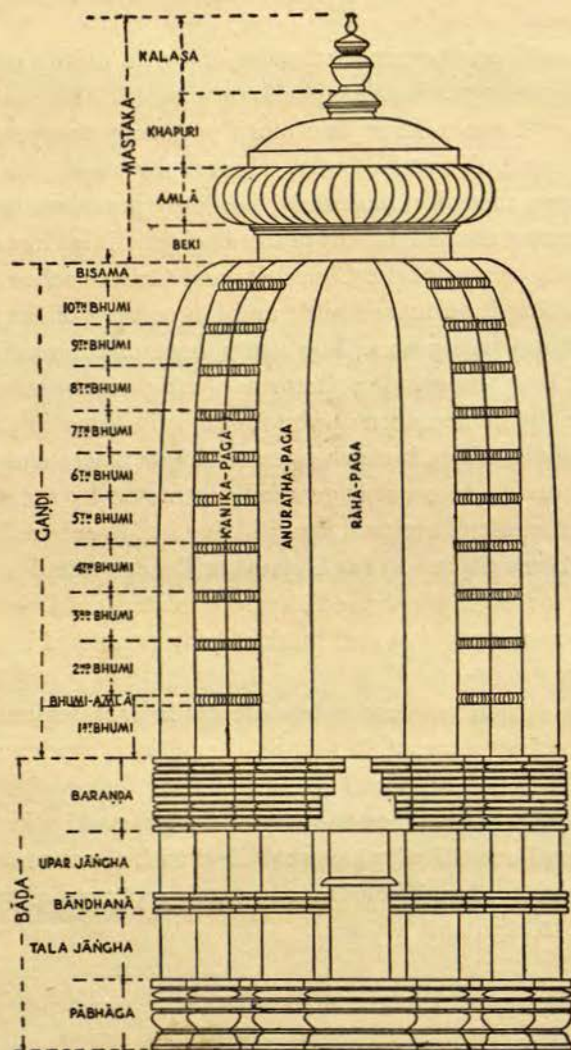


FIG. XIV—Architectural terms of the Orissan temple

Rājārāṇī temple. The Rājārāṇī, built before A.D. 1060⁹ in the prosperous days of the Somavamśī dynasty, is a Śaiva shrine with an image of Lakulīṣa, seated in the company of Pāsupata teachers, on the lintel of the *jagamohana*.

The Rājārāṇī temple depicts copulating couples and love-making *mithunas*. Unlike its contemporaries in Central and Western India it does not portray *maithuna* in acrobatic and clumsy poses. The lovers are aristocratic in appearance. They are placed on lotus pedestals like divine images. A noteworthy feature of some of these *maithuna* scenes is that the female partner makes with her right hand a gesture of *abhaya mudrā* (phs. 42, 43). The couples are about two feet in size which is quite large compared to the erotic figures of the 7th–8th century shrines of Bhubaneswar. But it seems that the *śilpī*-guild of the Rājārāṇī temple did not intend to expose the copulating couple boldly on the temple. The *śilpīns*

have judiciously put it in the inner recesses whereas on the outer projections of the wall, they have depicted gods, Dikpālas and female figures.

Brahmeśvara temple. The Brahmeśvara temple, built by Kolāvati, the mother of Uddyota Keśari, in A.D. 1060,¹⁰ is a *pañcāyatana* shrine. The main structure does not display *maithuna*, but shows *mithunas* of precoital type, with the genitals clearly exhibited. Such a stark exposure is not less erotic in nature than that of actual coition. *Mithunas* are portrayed in temple-shaped *munḍis* on the *anuratha pagas* of the *śikhara* (ph. 44).

The depiction of the sexual act is seen only at one place in the entire precincts of the temple,

viz. on the north-west subsidiary shrine. Next to it is an erotic group in which a dwarf or an attendant is exciting the female partner. Both these scenes (ph. 45) are placed in the *piḍhā muṇḍis* which are generally associated with Dikpālas and other deities.

Liṅgarāja temple. The *deul* and the *jagamohana* of the Liṅgarāja temple were built in about the same period as the Brahmeśvara, i.e. about A.D. 1060.¹¹ This majestic shrine represents the Orissan type of temple in its full maturity. It enshrines Śiva as Tribhuvaneśvara or Bhuvaneśvara from which the city has acquired its name. The temple as it stands at present consists of the four structures which comprise the fully developed Orissan temple, viz. the sanctum or *deul*, the pillared hall or *jagamohana*, the hall for dance or *nāṭamandira*, and the hall for offerings or *bhogamaṇḍapa* (fig. XV). But the latter two buildings were added in about the 13th–14th century when the worship of Tribhuvaneśvara was influenced by the Bhakti cult. For the present we shall be concerned only with the *deul* and the *jagamohana* which belong to the 11th century A.D.

The *upar-jaṅghā* of the *deul* of the Liṅgarāja, like that of the Jagannātha temple at Puri, does not portray erotic couples but shows female figures, thus indicating the prevalence of some *śilpa* convention in this region in respect of the upper part of the shrine wall. But the *bāndhanā* portion, joining the *upar* and *tala jaṅghā*, and *pābhāga* or base of the *deul* show depictions of *mithunas* and at one place a depiction of mouth-congress in a ritual hair-cutting scene (ph. 134). But importance is given to the depiction of erotic couples on the *upar jaṅghā* of the *jagamohana* (phs. 46, 47, 48). Like the couples of the Rājārāṇī temple, these also stand on lotus pedestals. They are not shown involved in actual copulation but in amorous and precoital poses.

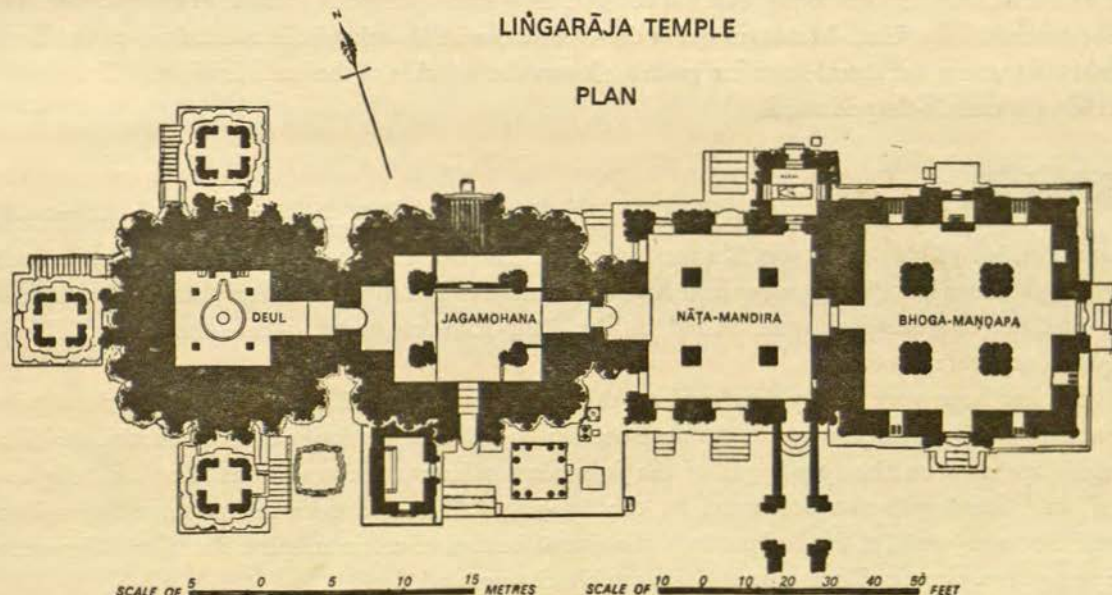


FIG. XV—Plan of the Liṅgarāja temple, Bhubaneswar



Two scenes on the *jagamohana* of the Liṅgarāja show erotic groups. One of the scenes represents *saṅghāṭaka* of type II-B where two men have relations with a woman. Another scene represents an erotic group of type III-C where a female servant excites the female partner. These two scenes along with the erotic group of the Brahmeśvara temple represent the earliest depictions of orgies at Bhubaneswar.

The twelfth-fourteenth century temples. These temples are less ambitious projects. Most of the temples built after the magnificent Liṅgarāja, and, as we shall see, those after the grand Kandariyā temple at Khajuraho also, show a lack of originality and a loss of artistic vision. Their sculptural treatment suffers from rigidity and conventionalization. No significant change in the depiction of erotic motifs is seen in them. The Kedāreśvara and the Rāmeśvara, which were built in the declining days of the Somavaṃśī dynasty, display couples in copulating poses, but the tender emotion of the earlier erotic figures is missing. On the Chitreśvara, Yameśvara, Sārīdeul, Ananta-Vāsudeva (A.D. 1278) and the *nāṭamandira* and the *bhogamaṇḍapa* of the Liṅgarāja temple, built in the 13th-14th century, the couples are stylized and rigid and lack the liveliness and grace of the earlier sculptures of the Rājārāṇī and the Liṅgarāja. They are represented in various sexual *bandhas* (phs. 49, 51). Erotic groups are few and represent the prevalent regional types II-A, II-B and III-C.

Two scenes are noteworthy in the later art of the Liṅgarāja as they resemble cultic images. The sitting coital pose presented on the northern wall (ph. 50) resembles the *Yab-Yum* pose of Tāntric Buddhism, where the god Vajrasattva sits in close frontal embrace with his Śakti Tārā. The couple is placed on a lotus pedestal. The male seems to have Mongolian features. The face of the woman is disfigured. The scroll pattern in the background also gives an exotic look to the sculpture. Another scene depicts a woman sitting on the left side of a man's lap with his left hand encircling her and touching her breast (fig. XXVI, p. 141). The man is shown in a state of tumescence. This scene resembles the Umā-Maheśamūrti of the Orissan and Pāla schools. It reminds us of the Kaula sexual rites where the female partner (*mudrā*) sits on the left side of the male initiate.¹² The scene is placed in a temple-shaped *muṇḍi*.

Jagannātha Puri

The Jagannātha temple at Puri, the ancient Puruṣottama-kṣetra, about fifty miles from Bhubaneswar, consists of four structures like the Liṅgarāja. The *deul* and the *jagamohana* were built under the Gaṅga Kings Choḍagaṅgadeva and Anaṅgabhīmadeva I in the 12th century A.D.¹³ The *nāṭamandira* and the *bhogamaṇḍapa* were added in the 13th-15th centuries, when the cult of Bhakti required separate structures.

Sex has been very boldly displayed on this holy temple visited by millions of Hindu pilgrims for at least 800 years. *Śilpa*-conventions have been followed in the depiction of erotic motifs. *Maithuna*-couples are seen on the *upar-jaṅghā* of the *jagamohana* whereas the traditional lion and elephant motif and *alasakanyās* are portrayed on the *tala-jaṅghā*. The *deul* does not portray the *maithuna* motif. The *upar-jaṅghā* of the *deul* portrays *alasakanyās* instead of erotic couples. But these idle women are suggestively erotic. Their sexual parts are clearly exposed.

Of the *maithuna* poses mouth-congress and standing frontal congress are favourite among the Puri artists. Mouth-congress is shown in two varieties, fellatio and *kākila*—the types also seen later at Konarak. Erotic figures at Puri like those at Bhubaneswar and Konarak are portrayed on lotus

pedestals. The sculptural art of the Jagannātha temple continues the conventional erotic representation which was prevalent in the region.

No orgiastic scene is, however, portrayed on the *jagamohana* and the *deul*, though quite a few are depicted on the later *bhogamaṇḍapa*. Erotic groups of types II-B and III-C, the types commonly prevalent in the region, are seen on the *bhogamaṇḍapa*. Some of these groups show ascetics and aristocrats.

It may be noted that the Jagannātha temple, which gives so much importance to the depiction of sex, was one of the most venerated *tirthas* of India, visited by great religious teachers.¹⁴ Śaṅkarāchārya in the 8th century chose Puri as one of the four holy centres and established a *maṭha* called Bhogavardhana. Rāmānuja came to Puri some time between A.D. 1122–1137. In the same century, Jayadeva of Gītagovinda fame spent the greater part of his life at Puri. Perhaps the *jagamohana* of the present temple was being built when Jayadeva was in Puri. King Kapilendradeva (A.D. 1435–1466) introduced the practice of reciting the *Gītagovinda* in the Jagannātha temple. When in the 16th century Chaitanya visited Puri, the cult of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa was very popular in Orissa. However, no erotic depiction of Kṛṣṇa's sports with Rādhā is seen anywhere in the sculptures of the temple.

Konarak

The Orissan school reaches its acme in the monumental and magnificent temple (ph. 52) at Konarak in the vicinity of Bhubaneswar and Puri. King Narasimha I (A.D. 1238–64) of the Gaṅga dynasty decided to build a temple which would surpass the rest in magnificence in commemoration of his victory over the Yavanas (Muslims). His ambition materialized in the construction of the Sūrya temple at Konarak, the renowned Arkakṣetra of Orissa, mentioned in Medieval texts such as the *Brahma Purāṇa*, *Sāmba Purāṇa*, *Kapila Saṁhitā* and the *Tīrthachintāmaṇi* of Vāchaspati Miśra. The King was so enamoured by his desire to build a temple of unsurpassable magnificence that the cost of the construction drained away his entire revenue of twelve years. When it was complete, it must have surely dimmed the glory of even the Līngarāja and Jagannātha temples.

At present, the *deul* is in complete ruins, only the *jagamohana* and the *nāṭamandira* remain, reminding one of the past splendour of the place that must once have been a busy religious centre of Sūrya worship. In the south-west of the compound is a small shrine, said to be dedicated to *Māyādevī*, which also has erotic figures. The large enclosure also contains remains of numerous small buildings which were necessary in the daily worship of the deity like the cooking hall or refectory. The worship of Sūrya at Konarak was associated with Bhakti and Smārta-Tāntric religion, as we will see in Chapter VII.

The visitor to Konarak will not fail to notice that in the entire temple complex there are very few images of deities, whereas erotic figures are numerous and cover more or less all the parts of the temple. No other Medieval temple has such prolific erotic representation.¹⁵

The major types of erotic motifs at Konarak are: (1) *mithunas*, human and of *nāgas* (phs. 57, 58); (2) *maithuna*-couples in various poses (phs. 54, 59), sexually excited couples (phs. 60, 61); (3) erotic groups of types I–A of subdued nature (ph. 56–top row), II–A or *saṅghāṭaka* of one man and two women, II–B or *saṅghāṭaka* of one woman and two men, III–B showing an attendant near the couple (ph. 54), III–C showing an attendant helping the lovers in the sexual act (ph. 56–bottom row), IV–A or *goyūthika* showing one man amidst several women (ph. 53), V showing two men and

two women or more people simultaneously taking part in the sexual act; (4) bestiality (ph. 131); (5) *śālabhañjikās*, *alaskanyās* and nudity-exposing females.

The temple represents all varieties of congress—frontal, *vyānata* and oral and in standing, sitting and sleeping attitudes. Oral congress is depicted in all varieties, *kākila*, cunnilingus and fellatio. Majority of the figures are of aristocratic appearance. Ascetics are also shown in sexual scenes, but seldom together with royal persons as at Khajuraho, Halebid, etc.

There are some scenes representing ritualistic themes. There is a scene depicting a hair-cutting rite along with sexual practice (ph. 135), which we will examine in the context of its Tāntric content in Chapter VII. Scenes depicting nude females and males standing with outstretched legs over a phallus-like object are noteworthy (ph. 122).

Fertility symbolism can be seen in *nāga-mithunas*, female figures touching their own breasts, and women in *śālabhañjikā* pose standing along with their lovers. We may note here that the motif of *nāga-mithuna* was recognized as a fertility symbol in West Asiatic and Greek culture and was associated with healing and medicine.¹⁶ In the Medieval Orissan treatise, *Śilpa Prakāśa*,¹⁷ *nāginī* was believed to be the giver of corn, wealth and good fortune and was thus considered to be a fertility goddess. This text enjoins depiction of *nāga-mithunas* on the door. The door of the Konarak temple (*jagamohana*) has on one of its *śākhās*, the depiction of the entwined tails of a *nāga* pair. It is appropriate that *nāga-mithunas* occur profusely in the art of the Konarak temple dedicated to the Sun god who is believed to be a great healer of diseases in Paurāṇic mythology.

The general effect of the temple-complex at Konarak is that of the expression of the joy of life in its various phases and moments. The delight of existence is reflected on the faces of the figures. All varieties of erotic motifs have been depicted on lotus pedestals and amidst luxuriant foliage. Sculptors seem to have been totally indifferent to the nature of erotic suggestiveness evoked by different types of erotic motifs. Next to *maithuna*-couples stand *nāgas*, *nāginīs*, *śālabhañjikās*, etc. It is only on the *nāṭamandira* facing the main temple that very few coital couples are depicted. Here, the emphasis is on representation of beautiful women in various dancing poses.

SECTION 2. CENTRAL INDIA

In Central India temples were built by the four principal dynasties, viz. the Chandellas of Jejakabhukti, the Kalachuris of Dāhala, the Kachchhapaghātas of Gwalior and the Paramāras of Malwa, who ruled over the central, eastern, northern and western parts of Central India, respectively.¹⁸ These temples have many common elements of plan, design and decorative scheme. However, they also show certain divergences due to dynastic or local factors.

A. Khajuraho (Jejakabhukti)

Khajuraho in the Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh attained great religious and political importance under the rulers of the Chandella dynasty. The place was certainly a centre of Śākta religion in the 9th century as evidenced by the ruins of the Chausath-Yoginī temple. It is from the middle of the 10th century A.D. that a fully developed Nāgara style of temple architecture emerges

at Khajuraho. From about A.D. 950 to 1150,¹⁹ there was considerable temple-building activity at Khajuraho. The tradition records 85 temples out of which about 20 remain to proclaim the past glory and importance of the place. The temples of Khajuraho represent one of the most refined and complete manifestations of Indian architecture in the Nāgara style. They are noted for their "elegant proportions, graceful contours and rich surface treatment."²⁰ The erotic motif has been given great importance in the sculptural scheme of the Khajuraho temples.

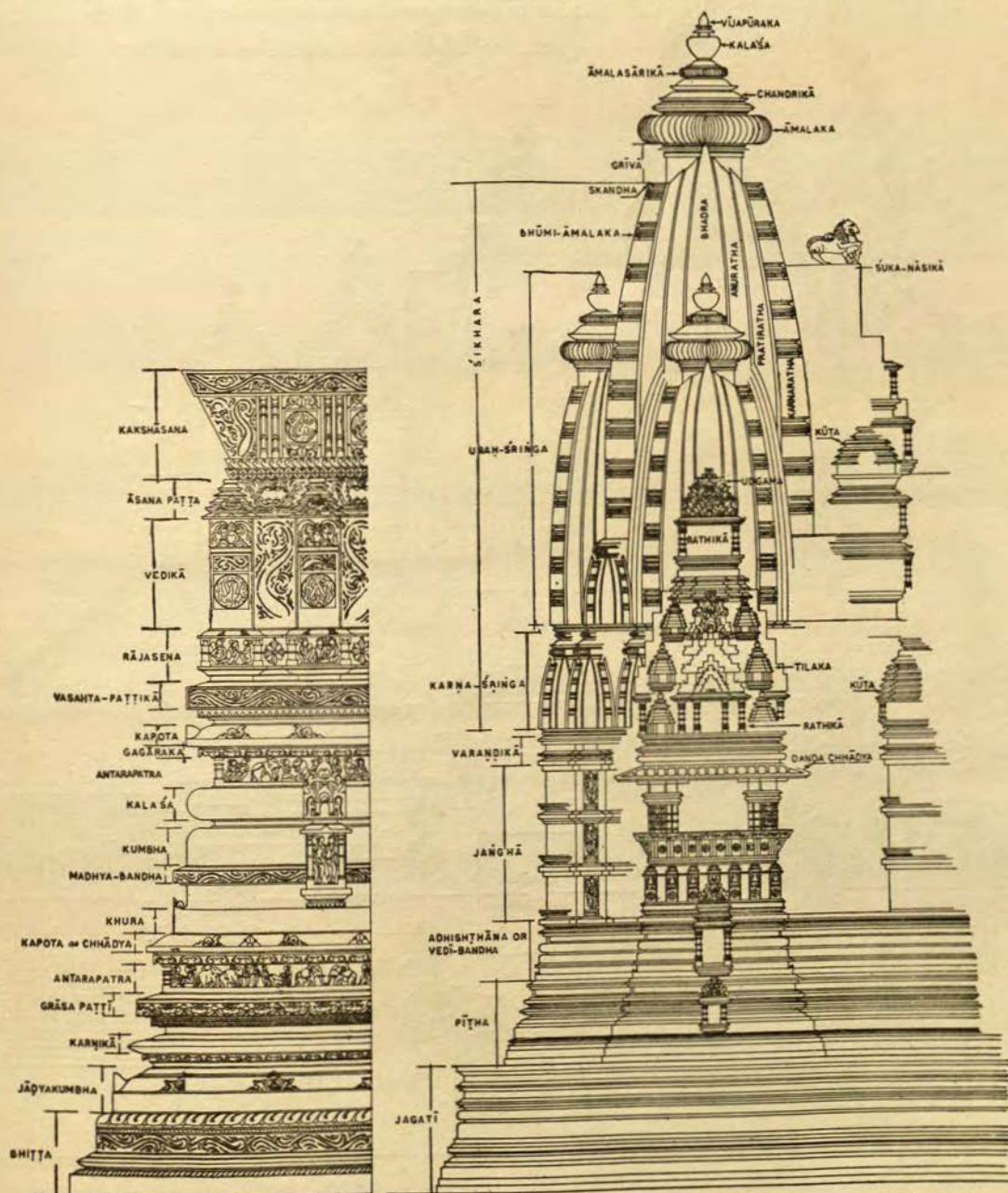


FIG. XVI—Architectural terms of the Nāgara temple



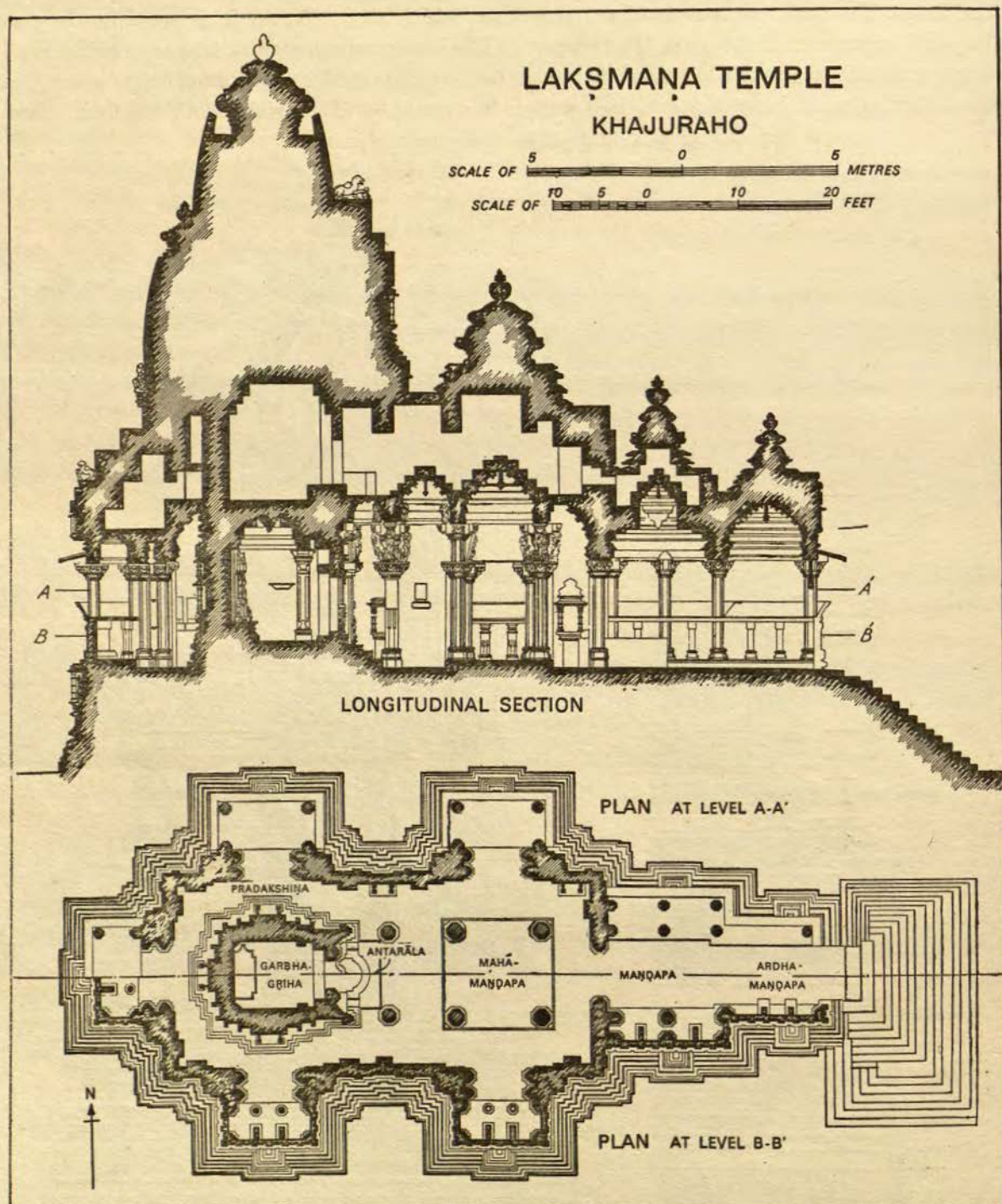


FIG. XVII—Plan and section of the Lakṣmaṇa temple, Khajuraho

We have divided the temples of Khajuraho into two broad groups according to the treatment of erotic motifs in their art. The first group comprises the shrines built in the period A.D. 950–1050, viz. the Lakṣmaṇa, the Pārśvanātha, the Viśvanātha, the Devī Jagdambā, the Chitrāgupta and the Kandariyā. The second group, erected in the period A.D. 1050–1150, includes the Vāmana, the Ādinātha, the Javāri, the Chaturbhuja and the Dulādeva. We will see that the temples of the first group, built in the palmy days of the Chandella dynasty when Khajuraho was a capital city, display sex profusely, whereas the shrines erected in the decadent phase of the Chandella school are less inclined to sexual representation.

The First Group

Lakṣmaṇa temple. One of the earliest developed temples of Khajuraho in Nāgara style is a Vaiṣṇava shrine, called Lakṣmaṇa, dedicated to Vaiṣṇu, the composite image of Viṣṇu, Varāha and Narasiṃha. The inscription²¹ of A.D. 954, placed on the *ardhamandapa* of the temple, records its erection under the Chandella ruler Yaśovarman and its consecration under his son Dhaṅgadeva.

Different varieties of erotic motifs are seen on the Lakṣmaṇa temple, e.g. precoital and coital couples and erotic groups of type III–D, V and VI. The *maithuna* motif occupies a place of immense importance. It is present in its manifold forms on the prominent as well as the recessed parts of the temple, e.g. on the exterior of the temple on its *jaṅghā*, *adhiṣṭhāna*, *śikhara*, and in the interior of the temple on its pillars, lintels, door-jambs, cornices, *garbhagriha* wall, etc. It varies in size from about 6 inches on the interior cornices to about 1 foot on the platform friezes and 2.5 feet on the *jaṅghā*.

Erotic groups are placed on the walls corresponding to *antarāla* of the temple. There is a definite indication that the *śilpīns* were governed by canons in depicting erotic groups on the *antarāla* wall. As we shall see, the same tradition has been carried out on the Viśvanātha and the Kandariyā temples also.

The upper tiers of the *antarāla* of both southern and northern walls of the Lakṣmaṇa temple have depictions of a divine couple, attended by musicians. The lower tiers depict orgiastic scenes on the southern and northern walls respectively (ph. 64). Both the scenes involve royal persons, ascetics, and female attendants who are touching their own private parts. Ascetics in an ecstasy of dance are also portrayed on another part of the *jaṅghā*.

One of the most frantic orgiastic scenes in Indian art is seen on the south-eastern side of the *jagatī* of the Lakṣmaṇa temple. A long frieze about one foot in height depicts numerous couples involved in a wild orgy (phs. 65, 142). Amidst these highly involved couples there are three persons pounding something in a special type of vessel (ph. 141). According to Hermann Goetz,²² this part of the scene represents the preparation of an elixir, “for a sort of hormone treatment and which as far as the informations are available seem to have been quite effective.”

Pārśvanātha temple. Another temple at Khajuraho, erected almost after the Lakṣmaṇa in A.D. 955 or v.s. 1011, is the Jaina temple called Pārśvanātha, originally dedicated to the first Tirthāṅkara, Rīṣabhanātha or Ādinātha. The inscription²³ on the temple mentions one Pāhila of the Jaina community who was highly honoured by King Dhaṅga. Pāhila made gifts and endowments to the temple.

It is significant that even this Jain sanctuary has love-making and copulating couples. But

orgiastic representation is totally absent on it even when its contemporary, the Lakṣmaṇa temple, displays it blatantly. There are depictions of *maithuna* on the *garbhagriha* wall (ph. 66) in the interior of the temple. Erotic figures on the Jaina temple are significant, as the Jainas are known for their puritanical attitude to sex. Their religion advocates inhibition of instincts. But Jaina religion in the Medieval period had undergone a transformation and was influenced by the Tantras.²⁴ In the *Prabodhachandrodaya*, written by the Chandella court poet, a Jaina Digambara is shown succumbing to hedonistic practices of the Kāpālikas. The question arises whether erotic representation on the Jaina shrine at Khajuraho was the result of the change in religious ideology or whether the guild of artists, which was probably common to both the Hindu and Jaina shrines, introduced the motif familiar to it in the decorative scheme of the Jaina temple. The similarity in the architectural features of the Jaina and Hindu shrines of Khajuraho has been noted both by James Fergusson and Percy Brown.²⁵ The iconographic features of the divine images also indicate the presence of a typical Khajuraho pattern. Like the Lakṣmaṇa temple, the Pārśvanātha also depicts Kṛṣṇalīlā scenes. It portrays *daivī mīthunas* (divine pairs), e.g. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Balarāma-Revatī, Śiva-Pārvatī, etc. Each god stands on the right of his consort, encircling her with his arm and touching her left breast.

It seems likely, as will be seen in Chapter VI, that magico-defensive and auspicious functions were attributed to erotic motifs which were also accepted as *alaṅkāra* in the art-conventions of Medieval temples. The presence of erotic motifs was not necessarily connected with the sectarian affiliation of the temples. However, the sectarian affiliation did influence the extent to which this form of decoration was permitted and in this sense acted as a conditioning factor in the representation of erotic motifs.

The eleventh century temples: Viśvanātha, Chitragupta, Devī Jagdambā, Kandariyā. Among the early 11th century temples, the Viśvanātha comes chronologically first, followed by the Chitragupta, the Devī Jagdambā and the Kandariyā. The Viśvanātha was a Śaiva shrine erected in v.s. 1059 or A.D. 1002–3 by Dhaṅga, the powerful ruler of the Chandella dynasty, in whose reign the earlier Lakṣmaṇa temple also was consecrated. Like the latter, the Viśvanātha is a *pañchāyatana* shrine; but of the four subsidiary shrines only two are preserved. One of these enshrines a Chaturmukhī līṅga while the other contains an image of Durgā. Though the central temple of the Viśvanātha enshrines a stone līṅga, the inscription²⁶ also records the dedication by King Dhaṅga of an emerald līṅga in the form of Śambhu Markateśvara.

The Kandariyā Mahādeva is the largest and the most beautiful temple on the site. It represents one of the most complete expressions of the Central Indian type of temple. It is a Śaiva shrine and it has a marble līṅga of four feet in circumference. According to Krishna Deva, the temple falls in the latter part of the reign of King Vidyādhara, about A.D. 1025–1050.²⁷ This period marks the rise of the Chandellas after they had successfully defended the fort of Kālañjara against the invasions of Mahmud of Gazni in A.D. 1019 and 1022.²⁸

The Devī Jagdambā temple, standing on the same platform occupied by the Kandariyā, was originally a Vaiṣṇava shrine, as evidenced by the image of Viṣṇu represented on the centre of the lintel above the door of the *garbhagriha*.

The Chitragupta temple to the north of the Devī Jagdambā is the only Saura shrine on the site. It enshrines an image of Sūrya about five feet in height.

The lay-out and plans of the Devī Jagdambā and the Chitragupta are very similar. They are

simpler structures compared to the Kandariyā and the Viśvanātha. Unlike the latter temples, they do not have the *pradakṣiṇā-patha* around the sanctum. On the basis of architectural and sculptural style, they are assigned to the period A.D. 1000–1025,²⁹ which is before the erection of the grand Kandariyā.

Although all these four temples of the first half of the 11th century present more or less the same type of erotic motifs, the treatment given to erotic motifs on the *sāndhāra prāsādas* having *pradakṣiṇā-patha*, viz. the Viśvanātha and the Kandariyā, differs from that given on the *nirandhāra prāsādas* which do not have *pradakṣiṇā-patha*, viz. the Devī Jagdambā and the Chitragupta.

The presentation of erotic motifs seems to depend, to some extent, upon the architectural plans of the temples. The famous *antarāla* groups are present only on the Hindu *sāndhāra prāsādas* of Khajuraho which have balconied openings on the *garbhagriha* wall.³⁰ The three important temples of Khajuraho, viz. the Lakṣmaṇa, the Viśvanātha and the Kandariyā, present erotic groups on the wall corresponding to the *antarāla* which lies between the balconies of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* and the *garbhagriha*. We have already described the *antarāla* group of the Lakṣmaṇa. The exterior walls of the Viśvanātha and the Kandariyā are divided in their elevation into three sculptural zones (ph. 67), giving the artists six compartments for decoration on the *antarāla* walls, one on each side of the temple. In case of the Viśvanātha temple, the lower compartments of the north and south *antarāla* walls are filled by divine groups, each consisting of a god flanked by two consorts, whereas in case of the Kandariyā temple, built twenty-five years later, even the lower compartments of the *antarāla* walls are filled by orgiastic groups in place of the divine groups. Perhaps the erotic group, being popular and alluring, held greater attraction to the builders than the divine group which was chaste and sober. The space provided by the compartments on the *antarāla* walls not only made it necessary for the artists to portray a group of figures but that in course of time there also appeared to be a tendency to replace the deities by the erotic figures. This shift from religious to erotic themes would perhaps suggest an increase in sensuality in the period. It could be argued that the obsession for symmetry, evident in other parts of the Kandariyā, required that the figures portrayed in all three panels in each *antarāla* wall be similar in nature. If this is the case, it could equally well have led to the replacement of orgiastic groups by divine groups. The fact that the replacement worked the other way round suggests that the hypothesis about the increase in sensuality put forward above is not unreasonable.

The theme represented in the *antarāla* panels of the Viśvanātha and the Kandariyā is an orgy of type II–D, where attendants while helping the central couple are themselves in an excited state. On the northern side of the Viśvanātha, the central register depicts two ascetics with gourd pots participating in an orgiastic scene (ph. 143). The top register depicts an orgy of type III–D where a man is having relations with a woman in the *vṛikṣāsana* pose. The same theme, with the man performing the *śīrṣāsana* pose, is seen on the southern wall of the Kandariyā temple (ph. 68). Both these poses involve yogic practice of standing on the head. The central couple, in all the erotic scenes of the *antarāla* walls of the Kandariyā, represents aristocratic lovers. Except in one scene, both male and female attendants are shown.

It is certain that the lovers portrayed in these erotic groups represent rich, high society persons. The question arises whether these erotic scenes on the Khajuraho temples represent *antahpura* (harem) scenes where the royal couple takes the help of attendants or whether they represent some religious ritual in which royal personages participate. It would be difficult to account for the presence of the male attendant in the *antahpura* scene, as we know from literary evidence³¹ that only female

attendants and eunuchs were admitted into the *antahpura*. Moreover, the presence of ascetics in the erotic scenes, specially of the Lakṣmaṇa and the Viśvanātha temples, makes it less likely that these scenes represent harem orgies which, as described by Vātsyāyana, were undertaken purely with a view to sexual indulgence. The Khajuraho *antarāla* groups probably represent religious rituals in which royal families and Tāntric ascetics participated, accounts of which are given in the literature of the period. We shall have occasion to deal with this point later in the book.

The erotic groups of the two *nirandhāra prāsādas* of the early 11th century, viz. the Devī Jagdambā and the Chitragupta, are not as prominently placed as the *antarāla* groups of the Kandariyā and the Viśvanātha. Here, mainly, orgies of types II-A and III-C are portrayed on the upper third row of the *jaṅghā*, which is smaller in size than the two lower rows. Cunningham's observation of the Chitragupta temple applies equally to its neighbour, the Devī Jagdambā. He says, "There are, however, no large obscene subjects as on the others, but many of the smaller figures are very indelicate."³² However, large *maithuna*-couples are seen on the *jaṅghā* of these temples. The *maithuna*-couples, specially of the Devī Jagdambā temple, have been highly praised by connoisseurs of Indian art.³³

Other scenes on the plinth of the Khajuraho temples show warring armies, hunting parties, sculptors at work, dancing and music parties, etc. A scene, which is of special interest, represents a guru attended by female and male disciples. It occurs on the plinth, *jaṅghā*, and panels of the balcony. This motif was popular in the region and its adjoining area as is evidenced by its occurrence on the Nīlakaṇṭheśvara temple at Udayapur erected in the latter half of the 11th century A.D.

The Second Group

The post-Kandariyā temples at Khajuraho. The temples built at Khajuraho between A.D. 1050–1150 or in the post-Kandariyā period, viz. the Javārī, Vāmana, Ādinātha, Jatkārī or Chaturbhuja and the Dulādeva, show a different treatment of erotic motifs. This change coincides with the political decline of the Chandellas from about A.D. 1050, owing to the invasions by their neighbours, the Kalachuris. In about A.D. 1065–70, when Kīrtivarman Chandella regained power, Mahoba or Mahotsavanagara was made the capital.³⁴ The glory of Khajuraho also declined with these political changes. However, temples continued to be built at Khajuraho up to A.D. 1150. Architecturally these temples are no match to the splendour that is seen in the 10th and early 11th century temples.

Of the temples of this period, three belong to the Vaiṣṇava faith, viz. the Javārī, the Vāmana and the Chaturbhuja, one is Śaiva, viz. the Dulādeva, and one is Jaina, viz. the Ādinātha. The Jaina sanctuary of the period, unlike that of the 10th century Pārśvanātha temple, does not portray *maithuna* scenes. The Śaiva Dulādeva portrays on its *jaṅghā* numerous copulating couples, some in fantastic gymnastic poses (ph. 144). The Vaiṣṇava shrines provide interesting material. The Vāmana temple built between A.D. 1050–1075³⁵ has only some examples of couples in coital attitudes. The Javārī assigned to A.D. 1075–1100,³⁶ has quite a few copulating couples. But the Chaturbhuja or Jatkārī, assigned to A.D. 1100,³⁷ does not portray coital postures at all. Thus, the shrines belonging to the same faith, situated on the same site and erected within fifty years of each other, give different treatment to erotic motifs. We may remind the reader that the Vaiṣṇava shrines of the previous period, viz. the Lakṣmaṇa and the Devī Jagdambā, boldly represent sex in its manifold variations.

It is not insignificant that at Khajuraho the art of the most beautiful and magnificent temples, built in the prosperous days of the dynasty and praised for their soul-lifting quality, is ostentatious

in its display of sex, whereas the art in its decadent stage corresponding to the gradual political decline of Khajuraho is less erotically oriented.

Can we infer from this that the temples supported by the wealthy and prosperous patrons are more liable to erotic display? Or, can this post-Kandariyā period at Khajuraho with its lesser emphasis on sex be in some way connected with the protest against sex so pronouncedly expressed in the work of the court dramatist Kṛiṣṇa Miśra? His play *Prabodhachandrodaya* with Advaita Vaiṣṇava leanings was staged before the royal and military aristocracy at Mahoba.³⁸ One of these factors, the decline in affluence or the reaction against sex, or very probably the combination of both these factors was responsible for the comparatively less erotic display in the post-Kandariyā period. It would seem, therefore, that social forces rather than the optical laws of the inner development of art account for the decline in the frequency and the intensity of erotic sculptural depictions.

B. The Dāhala Region

While the Chandella religious city was an active workshop of artisans, the Dāhala or Chedi region (the modern district of Jabalpur) also witnessed the erection of a number of temples, specially at Baijanātha, Amarkantak, Gurgi, Chandrehe, Sohagpur, etc. The inspiration behind the temples in the Chedi territory came mainly from the Āchāryas of the Mattamayūra sect of Śaivism, who were patronized by the Kalachuri rulers.³⁹

Erotic figures are represented at Sohagpur, Baijanātha and Gurgi (Rewa *torāṇa*), whereas they are not represented at Amarkantak, a centre of the Matsyendranātha cult, or at Chandrehe which was closely associated with the gurus of the Mattamayūra sect.⁴⁰

Sohagpur

Erotic figures are represented on the Virāṭeśvara temple at Sohagpur, two miles from Shahdol. The temple is attributable to the 11th century and bears a partial resemblance to the temples of Khajuraho.⁴¹ Describing the sculptural decoration of the Sohagpur temple, Beglar says, "The sculpture is much in the style of the Khajuraho sculptures; there are very gross obscenities, but they are placed in retired corners—the figures of women purposely exposing themselves are, however, very numerous."⁴² R. D. Banerji also notes, "The temple at Sohagpur is profusely ornamented with indecent figures like some of the Khajuraho temples."⁴³ On the Sohagpur temple and in its vicinity at Shahdol there are found many images of esoteric goddesses like Śrī Taralā, Śrī Tārāṇi, Bhā-Navā, Kapālīnī with Vaiṣṇava attributes, Kṛiṣṇa Bhagavatī, Bāṇa Prabhā, etc., which, according to S. K. Dikshit,⁴⁴ were the creations of learned priests like Iśānaśiva of the Golaki-maṭha (Gurgi) school of the Mattamayūras.

Gurgi

The *torāṇa* at Rewa, originally belonging to Gurgi and assigned to the latter half of the 10th century, has erotic figures on the shafts. R. D. Banerji describing the *torāṇa* says: "The figures ... are three in number and in majority of cases they are females. There are one or two males in certain cases and they appear to illustrate the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana, though many, which are now visible, are not obscene."⁴⁵ It is likely that the *torāṇa* formed a decorative entrance to the Śiva temple which enshrined a colossal image of Umā-Maheśa.⁴⁶ Conventional *mithuna* figures are seen

on the doorways of Gurgi assigned to the 12th century and now preserved in the Allahabad Museum.⁴⁷

Baijanātha

Baijanātha, nine miles from Rewa, had five or six temples according to Cunningham,⁴⁸ but only one was extant when he visited it. It is identified by Banerji with the temple of Vaidyanātha Mahādeva, which was given to Hṛdayaśiva of the Mattamayūra sect, as mentioned in the Bilhari inscription.⁴⁹ Amorous couples are seen on the vertical band of the door-jamb of the temple.⁵⁰ On the lintel is the figure of Lakuliśa in *dharmachakra mudrā*.

C. Gwalior Region

Padhavli

Orgiastic groups and *maithuna*-couples have been depicted at Padhavli near Gwalior in Morena district. Here there is a ruined temple of the Kachchhapaghāta period⁵¹ in the gaḍhī or fort. The main image in the shrine is missing but from the prominence given to the images of Śiva among the

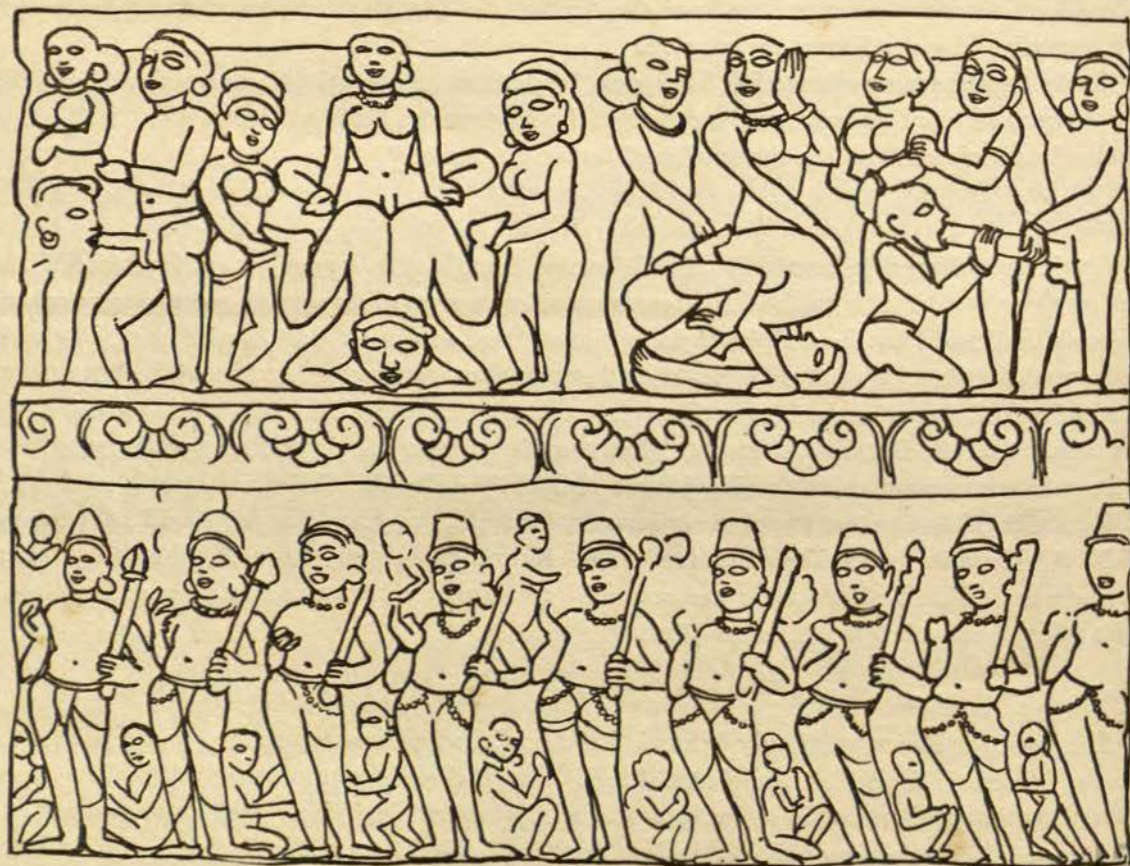


FIG. XVIII—*Erotic figures and navagrahas; maṇḍapa, Padhavli*

sculptures, Garde⁵² believes that the temple was Śaiva. On the architraves and friezes of the interior *daiṇī mithunas* of Śiva and Pārvatī, Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, Brahmā and consort, and Gaṇeśa and consort are depicted. Numerous human figures are shown attending upon these divine couples. At one place in the interior, Gaṇeśa sits with his Śakti. Next to them is a scene representing sleeping copulation (fig. XXIV, p. 139). Another architrave depicts *navagrahas* attended by devotees. Near them is a panel representing orgiastic scenes (fig. XVIII). A woman is shown in a head-down pose. She is held in this pose by two female attendants. This scene in the interior of the Padhavli temple resembles in theme, though not in style, the scene on the exterior of the *antarāla* wall of the Viśvanātha temple at Khajuraho. Near it are shown three couples in different poses of mouth-congress.

It is highly significant that at Padhavli sexual scenes are depicted near divine images. All the major gods of the Hindu pantheon with their consorts (ph. 62) are present in the temple, indicating the Smārta form of worship as influenced by Tāntrism.

Kadwaha

The *maithuna* theme was not equally accepted by artists at all places in Central India. The temples of Kadwaha, in Guna district of Madhya Pradesh and situated some 200 miles from Khajuraho, do not show any orgiastic scenes. In the 10th–11th centuries Kadwaha was an important religious centre under the Kachchhapaghātas,⁵³ who were originally feudatories of the Chandellas. According to Mirashi,⁵⁴ Kadwaha might be a Mattamayūra centre, since it is not far from Terahi, Ranod and Mahua, where inscriptions, temples and monasteries of this Śaiva clan have been found. At Kadwaha there are ruins of about 14 temples. According to M. Garde,⁵⁵ "Such a large group of old temples is found at no other single place in the Gwalior State. Kadwaha thus deserves to be styled the Khajuraho or Bhubaneswar of Gwalior."

Erotic motifs on the temples of Kadwaha generally represent non-coital couples. They stand on the projections and recesses of the walls amidst the divine couples, *śālabhañjikās*, *nara-sārdulas*, etc. Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā are represented with consorts on their laps. Images of Bhairava, Kapālinī, Naṭarāja, etc. are also seen in the temples of Kadwaha. But we should note that this centre of the Mattamayūra sect does not have orgiastic scenes on its temples.

D. Malwa Region

Sanchi, Temple No. 45

On the hill of ancient fame at Sanchi in Malwa, milder version of *saṅghātaka* scenes are portrayed on the door-jambs of temple No. 45,⁵⁶ belonging to the 10th–11th century A.D. The temple stands to the east of the Great Stūpa. Its religious affiliation is Buddhist.

One may ask whether the *saṅghātaka* depiction of the Sanchi temple was due to some further development in Tāntric Buddhist doctrine, or whether it was depicted to represent the *śilpa* canons of the region, which were followed by all sects in a similar manner. It is significant that Marshall⁵⁷ noted the sculptures of the Buddhist temple No. 45 to be "characteristically Hindu". He says, "Just a thousand years earlier the sculptors of the Early School had adapted the mundane art of the day to the needs of Buddhism, so now they were adapting the current art of Hinduism, and this art being essentially religious in character they found it necessary to introduce in it even fewer changes than they had previously done." It seems very likely that art motifs current

in the decoration of religious buildings of the same period and region were also depicted at Sanchi.

Kakpur

The above point is further substantiated. Not far from Sanchi, on the road from Vidisha to Pachar, is a small village of Kakpur, where there is a 10th century⁵⁸ temple of Devī. Its door-jambs show in the same style of sculptural depiction three or four persons in erotic play.

Badoh

The Gadarmal temple at Badoh in Vidisha district also displays *saṅghāṭaka* scenes on its door-jambs. M. Garde⁵⁹ believes that the temple was dedicated to Devī as an image of the goddess is carved on the dedicatory block of the door-lintel and several images of goddesses were found lying in the debris inside the shrine.

Thus, the three temples—the temple No. 45 at Sanchi, the Devī temple at Kakpur, and Gadarmal temple at Badoh—all from the same area and belonging to the same period show close affinity in the portrayal of erotic motifs on their door-jambs. They belong to two different religious sects, viz. Buddhist and Śākta, yet use common motifs in the decoration of their door-jambs.

It should be noted that erotic groups have been introduced on these Medieval Central Indian shrines on the door which is traditionally associated with the motif of *mithuna* or couple. Varāhamihira's pronouncement on the carving of auspicious motifs including *mithuna* on the door-jamb is well-known. We also know that sculptors at Nasik, Deogarh, Udayagiri (Bhilsa), Ajanta, etc. decorated the entrances with the *mithuna* motif. The *mithuna* here was of the non-coital type. Udayagiri is in the same area and Deogarh is not very far from these places. But the lapse of four centuries between the shrines of Udayagiri, Deogarh, and the temples of Sanchi, Badoh and Kakpur makes a difference in the representation of the erotic motif on the door-jamb.

Udayapur

Malwa has a beautiful and elegant temple built in A.D. 1059–1080 at Udayapur in Vidisha district. It belongs to the Bhūmija mode of architecture which originated in Malwa in the 10th century and spread to the upper Deccan and parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan.⁶⁰ The mode of representation of erotic figures in the Medieval period is to a large extent related to the art-style of the temple. This has been substantiated in the case of the Udayeśvara temple, which in common with the Bhūmija temples of the Deccan, makes restrained use of erotic figures in its sculptural decoration. Scenes depicting couples in intimate creeper-like poses are shown on the pillars of the dark part of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* and the *antarāla*. Their small size, low relief, and the intense darkness in the temple almost hide them from the sight of the devotee. They are not meant to be seen. Again, the Udayeśvara in common with the Gondeśvara and the Ambernath, does not display on its *jaṅghā* erotic motifs, but represents there images of deities, ascetics, *surasundarīs*, etc. Beautiful *surasundarīs* also decorate the projections of the balcony as on the Gondeśvara. However, there is one notable point of difference from the Deccan temples. The Udayeśvara does not represent erotic figures flanking the niched deities on the *kumbha* as is done in many of the temples of the Deccan. Here it seems that the Bhūmija style of Malwa has its own local variations and its own conventions, differing from the Bhūmija mode in other regions. The temples of Un in Malwa region also do not have erotic figures on the *kumbha*.

Omākāreśvara

Near Maheswar or ancient Mahiṣmatī, on the bank of the Narmada, is the Medieval temple of Omākāreśvara. One of the scenes here represents an ascetic having relations with a woman with big *kuṇḍalas* in her ears. An orgiastic representation of type II-B, with all the three participants standing, is seen on the temple. This is a favourite motif in art of Gujarat. The geographical contiguity of the Omākāreśvara temple with Gujarat could have been responsible for the choice of this theme. But the placing of erotic motifs on the *jaṅghā* of the temple indicates its affinity with the Madhyadeśa school.

SECTION 3. GUJARAT

Medieval Gujarat in the times of the Solankīs and the Vāghelas sees highly ornate and sculptural architecture. On the Gujarat temple erotic motifs receive a treatment which is peculiar to the regions of Gujarat and southern Rajasthan.⁶¹ A close study of the architectural pattern of the temples of Gujarat by M. Dhaky shows that the moulding of *narathara* on the plinth and the decoration of the *kumbha* with a motif of the seated niched deity appear for the first time on the temples of the period of Bhīmadeva I in the early part of the 11th century.⁶² It seems that in this period major changes took place in the architectural conventions of Gujarat and erotic motifs were introduced on the *narathara* row, on the *kumbha* flanking the niched deities, and on other parts such as *kakshāsana* or projections of the balcony, and in the interior of the temple on the pillars, lintels and cornices. Unlike the Khajuraho and Orissan shrines, the temples of Gujarat do not have sexual figures on their *jaṅghā*, except for the stray example of the pre-Bhīmadeva period shrine at Padan in Banaskantha district.⁶³

The *śilpi*-guilds of Gujarat have not given aesthetic treatment to sexual motifs as they have to figures of deities and *surasundaris*. The depiction of sexual figures on the temple seems to have been a strict convention in Gujarat, as they are found most ceremoniously depicted on a majority of Medieval shrines. But they are portrayed on non-prominent parts of the temple and in crude and unpolished style. The themes represent blatant sex devoid of warmth and love. The participants are not lovers, but partners in some ritual. The obscene element in the portrayal suggests some ritualistic significance (see Chapter VI) of erotic motifs in the cultural pattern of Gujarat.

Modhera

The Sun temple of Modhera in Mehsana district is a complete expression of the Gujarati version of the developed Nāgara style. It consists of a *garbhagriha*, *gūḍhamandapa* or hall and a separate pillared hall called *raṅgamaṇḍapa*, facing the main temple, and a *kirtitorana*. The entire complex stands on the banks of a well-built *kuṇḍa* (tank) which adds to its beauty. M. Dhaky⁶⁴ suggests on the basis of architectural style that the main shrine and the *kuṇḍa* appear to belong to A.D. 1027, whereas the *raṅgamaṇḍapa* and the *torana* are later and belong to the early years of Karnaḍeva (A.D. 1064–94).

This beautiful temple represents the erotic motif in its obscene and crude aspect, as distinct from the refined and sophisticated expression of it on the temples of Khajuraho, Bhubaneswar and Konarak. The erotic group is the prominent theme and its frequent representations are of type

V (phs. 74, 75), IV-B (ph. 73—scene on the left), II-B (ph. 73—scene in the centre), VI, I-A (ph. 145) and III-B. Coitus is represented in all poses. Bestiality is depicted on the *narathara* of the plinth adjacent to a scene showing a birth-giving woman (ph. 129). Ascetics, musicians and dancers participate in erotic scenes. Warriors are shown near love-making couples (ph. 76).

This temple of Sūrya follows the pattern of its region in the depiction of erotic motifs and has more in common with the Śaiva and Śākta temples of its own region than with the Saura shrines of Khajuraho (Chitragupta) and Konarak (see below, Chapter V). In accordance with the architectural conventions of Gujarat region, erotic motifs are placed on the *narathara* row of the plinth, *kumbha*, shafts of pillars, lintels, and the *kakshāsana* of the *raṅgamaṇḍapa*.

Sunak

The Nilakanṭheśvara temple of Sunak, assigned to the 11th century,⁶⁵ is the best preserved of the Solankī temples. On this elegant temple, erotic motifs are crudely portrayed. The *kumbha* portion, though weatherworn, shows coital couples flanking images of deities. These are not more than 9 inches in height. Orgiastic scenes are represented on the *narathara* frieze about 6 inches in height. In one of these there are seven participants. The three figures on the right are sitting with raised hands probably chanting *mantras*. On the left is a *saṅghāṭaka* scene where two men are having relations with a woman. A figure in the background seems to support the woman in her quadrupedal pose. The *jaṅghā* does not have any erotic depiction except that of *surasundarīs* in self-erotic poses.

Roda

The blatant display of sex is also seen at Roda near Himmatnagar in the old Idar State. A pillar from Roda, now in the Museum at Baroda, is assigned to the 11th century A.D.⁶⁶ On the eight compartments on the shaft of this pillar, there are three erotic groups, two scenes of bestiality, two erotic couples and a scene of *liṅga-pūjā*.

In one of the erotic groups of a *saṅghāṭaka* type, a woman with an elaborate head-dress is shown in a head-down pose and an ascetic is depicted with a typical gesture of hand (ph. 146) the like of which is also seen at Modhera (ph. 147). One of the bestiality scenes seems to depict a ritual in which a donkey-like creature is forced by a stout woman to mate with another woman (ph. 130), who is bent in a quadrupedal pose with the support of a round pot. The Modhera bestiality scene (ph. 129) also shows a woman in a similar pose and a pot nearby. The second scene of bestiality on the Roda pillar consists of three men with an animal. The theme is seen with some variation on the 10th century Lakṣmaṇa temple of Khajuraho and the 12th century temple of Belgamve in Mysore.

Motap

The temple at Motap, about eleven miles from Mehsana and in the vicinity of Modhera, belongs to the 11th century.⁶⁷ The temple is in a dilapidated condition, only parts of the *garbhagriha* wall are extant (ph. 78). The shrine faces east and from the iconography⁶⁸ of the images on the walls it seems to have belonged to the Śaiva or the Śākta cult. Locally, it is known as the Jakrad Vira temple.

It is certain, even from the ruins, that the sexual motif was of great significance to the builder of the temple. It is exhibited on the *narathara* and the *kumbha*. The *jaṅghā*, like other temples of Gujarat, has portrayals of deities and *surasundarīs*.

In the sculptures that are preserved, there is only one example of an orgy (ph. 118). It re-

presents the *goyūthika* (IV-B) type which is a favourite motif of the Modhera sculptors. The figures are very crudely carved, but the *kuṇḍala* in the right ear of the woman is clearly seen. This orgiastic scene is placed next to the figure of Chāmuṇḍā in her aspect as Danturā, seated in the *uttānapad* pose and attended on either side by three female figures in dancing attitude. On the other side of the Chāmuṇḍā image, there is a frieze depicting musicians. The juxtaposition of the sexual orgy, Chāmuṇḍā as the Nude goddess, the dancing female figures attending her and the music scene, probably points to the ritual function of the sexual act of propitiating the goddess to enhance the fruitfulness of nature, earth and man (see Chapter VI). The Motap temple, which retains folk elements in its art, represents sex in its elementary role in religion. Here, the erotic motif is not ornamental or decorative in function. It seems to be of ritual significance.

This is also clear in the depiction of numerous copulating couples and dancing figures flanking deities on the *kumbha* of the temple (phs. 78, 118). At one place two kneeling figures are placed below the seated deity and the erotic figures.

Siddhapur

At Siddhapur, ancient Śrīsthala also known as Mātṛigayā, Siddharāja Jayasīṃha built a Śaiva shrine called Rudramahālaya on the site of the old dilapidated shrine built in the 10th century by Mūlarāja Solaṅkī.⁶⁹ At present only some of the pillars and architraves of this great Śaiva shrine remain. Merutuṅga in the 14th century notes the glory of the Rudramahālaya. The main temple was surrounded by eleven shrines dedicated to Rudras. Of what little remains of the shrine, the inner side of the porches show copulating couples. One of the couples is shown in mutual mouth-congress, similar in pose to that seen on the *narathara* of the Modhera temple built a century earlier.

Kheda-Brahma

The rare temple of Brahmā at Kheda-Brahma, sixteen miles from Idar, also has portrayals of copulating couples on the *narathara* and the *kumbha* of its *garbhagriha*. The *garbhagriha* of this temple belongs to the latter part of the 11th century A.D.⁷⁰ Sexual couples flank images of deities as on the other temples of Gujarat. According to Cousens,⁷¹ one of the first things that strikes one on inspecting these old shrine walls is the number of female images upon them.

Galtesvara

The Galtesvara temple at Sarnal in Kaira district belonging to the 12th century⁷² displays erotic motifs in the typical Gujarat pattern on the *narathara* and the *kumbha*. Copulating couples flank seated deities on the *kumbha*. Orgiastic groups represent mainly type VI which shows many couples simultaneously copulating (ph. 77). Although the couples are crudely carved and are now weather-worn, coital poses are distinctly visible. Warriors are shown near erotic scenes. Nudity-exposing *surasundarīs* and ascetics are portrayed on the *jaṅghā* (ph. 127). A birth-giving woman is seen on the *narathara*.

Sejakkpur and Ghumli

Erotic figures are seen on the Navalakha temples at Sejakkpur in Surendranagar district and Ghumli in Jamnagar district in the 12th–13th centuries.⁷³ In accordance with the Gujarat pattern, erotic motifs are depicted on the *kakshāsana* and *kumbha* of the temples.⁷⁴



Bavka

Bavka,⁷⁵ eight miles from Dohad in Panchamahar district, preserves the ruins of a late 12th century or early 13th century⁷⁶ *pañchāyatana* temple, belonging to the Śaiva faith. The temple enshrines a Śiva-liṅga and has an image of Umā-āliṅgamūrti of Śiva in the interior of the shrine. A *liṅga-pūjā* scene and an image of Lakuliṣa are depicted on the plinth. There is so blatant a display of sex on this temple that the nearby Bhil village has acquired the name of Jesāvāḍa or Veśāvāḍa, the village of *veśyās*. A local legend associates the temple with *veśyās*.

Sex is portrayed on the *narathara* (ph. 83), *kumbha* (phs. 80, 81, 82) and on the friezes near the entrance (phs. Frontispiece, 84, 119). On the *narathara*, the sexual depiction follows the typical Gujarat pattern of representing sexual behaviour along with other pursuits of life. Couples and erotic groups are shown near images of deities on the *kumbha*. Men and women, dancing and playing music, are depicted near deities. This is the only temple seen by me where sexual motifs literally cover all the space available for sculptural decoration. If the space available is narrow, a couple or an erotic group of three persons is represented. Wherever the space widens, an orgy of as many as fifteen persons is depicted. The prominent types of erotic groups are V (phs. 80, 81), VI (ph. 84), II-B, and II-A.

Dabhoi

The Hira gate and the fort at Dabhoi near Baroda were built in the time of Siddharāja Jayasimha in the 12th century and extensively renovated in the time of the Vāghela King Viśāladeva (A.D. 1244–61).⁷⁷ The art at Dabhoi is of special significance to us for two reasons. First, the sculptural decoration of the building meant for civil defence illustrates the excessive love of ornamentation as the most important trait of the Hindu pattern of culture. Secondly, the erotic motif is depicted only on that part of the fort which contains the temples—the Kālikā Mātā Mandira and the Vaidyanātha Mandira.

The fort wall, both on its interior (the side facing the town) and on its exterior, is decorated with figures of deities, dance and music scenes, rows of animals, scenes from mythology, etc. In representing erotic motifs, the artists have made a sharp distinction between the *kumbha* row of the fort wall corresponding to the temple and that of the fort wall not connected with the temple. The entire *kumbha* row represents deities in niches. But only the deities on the temple wall are flanked by erotic figures (ph. 86) whereas those on the rest of the fort wall are flanked by dancing figures. This seems to indicate that erotic representation was conventionally associated with religious monuments in Gujarat.

The nature of the portrayal further suggests that sex was represented at Dabhoi in allegiance to a convention rather than out of any sensuous or lustful motive. The figures stand in stiff, uniform attitudes, almost stylized in form. In their depiction, sex is not emphasized as in the temples of Orissa. Their poses are not acrobatic. The types of the erotic motif prevalent at Dabhoi are: non-coital couple, copulating couple always in a stylized standing pose, and groups of types II-A and II-B (ph. 85). Both these groups are soberly presented.

Other Sites

Besides the above-described temples, erotic motifs are known to have been portrayed on the 12th century Hingalāja Mātā shrine at Khandoran in Visnagar taluka of Mehsana district.⁷⁸

Erotic figures are present on the basement mouldings of the temples at Ruhavi and Gorad near Mehsana which are assigned to the same class as that of Motap by Sankalia.⁷⁹ B. J. Sandesara⁸⁰ notes quite a few places in Gujarat having erotic figures in *bhogāsana*. These are found on the Sūrya-mandira at Prabhasa Patan, the Limbojī Mātā shrine at Delmala near Chansama, the Śiva temple at Bhutiyavasana near Patan, a temple dedicated to Brāhmaṇī Mātā at Kambal near Siddhapur, the Śiva temple at Mandropur near Kheralu, the Hātakesvara temple at Vadnagar, the Sun temple at Nugor, on the remains at Kocharb near Ahmedabad, and the Rukminī and the Trikamji temples at Dwarka. He has not mentioned the exact architectural portions of temples on which erotic motifs are depicted, but it seems certain that like the temples described above they also followed the regional pattern characteristic of Gujarat. The Rukminī temple of Dwarka⁸¹ has erotic figures around the seated deities on the *kumbha*. The Delmal temple assigned to the 11th century shows, according to Dhaky,⁸² resemblance with the *raṅgamaṇḍapa* of Modhera in the portrayal of erotic figures on the *kakshāsana*.

Thus, erotic motifs are seen on the Medieval temples of Gujarat at Dwarka, Ghumli, Prabhas Patan, Sejakpur in the west, at Modhera, Motap, Siddhapur, Patan, Kambal, Gorad, Ruhavi, Delmal, Sunak, Khandoran, Vadnagar, Roda, Kheda-Brahma in the north, at Bavka in the east and at Dabhoi and Galtesvara in the south.

SECTION 4. THE DECCAN (MAHARASHTRA)

Temples of the upper Deccan are constructed in the Bhūmija style that originated in Malwa.⁸³ Although the temples at Un and Udayapur in Malwa do not have erotic figures on the *kumbha* around niched seated deities, this convention, so widespread in Gujarat region, is also prevalent in the upper Deccan. It is specially noticeable on the temples of Ambernath, Balsane and Devlana. Erotic representation on *kakshāsana* panels, which we find in the temples of Gujarat and Mysore, is seen in several temples of the Deccan. Erotic figures are also seen on the pillars of the temples at Ambernath and Sinnar. The *jaṅghā* of the Deccan temples does not show erotic figures, but has deities, ascetics, *surasundarīs*, and exhibitionistic female figures.

Ambernath

The Śiva temple of Ambernath near Bombay bears an inscription of A.D. 1060⁸⁴ of the time of the Śilāhāra dynasty. The study of its iconography indicates the prevalence of the Smārta religion under the influence of Tāntrism. The five deities depicted at Ambernath are Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Devī, Viṣṇu and Brahmā. Gaṇeśa, Śiva and Brahmā are portrayed with their consorts on their laps. Harihara (combining Viṣṇu and Śiva), Narasimha, Mahiṣāsūramardini, Chāmuṇḍā, Naṭarāja, Liṅgodbhavamūrti of Śiva, etc. are seen on the *jaṅghā*. Ascetics with *jaṭā* are portrayed on the *jaṅghā* and in the erotic scenes flanking seated deities on the *kumbha*.

Erotic scenes are confined to the *kumbha* moulding, pillars of the *maṇḍapa* and *ardhamaṇḍapa*, and balcony-like panels of the superstructure. The size of the figures is restricted by the architectural areas to which they are confined. But the themes are as highly sexual as those on the temples of Khajuraho

and Modhera, though because of the small size and weather-worn condition, they would hardly attract the notice of visitors.

Erotic motifs represent couples, mainly in oral congress (fellatio, *kābila*, cunnilingus) and in creeper-like standing poses. Erotic groups of *saṅghātaka* types II-A and II-B and of types V and VI are prominent. The guild that worked at Ambernath seems to have been more interested in showing ritualistic sexual practices than purely Kāmasāstriya poses. This provides us with an interesting record of contemporary religious practices. Most of the erotic scenes have ascetics as main participants. In one scene on the *kumbha* moulding, an *āchārya* holds the phallus of the younger ascetic who stands on his left. On his right stands a female. The scene seems to portray an initiation rite. Another scene on the *kumbha* of the south-east corner represents a bearded *āchārya* sitting confidently and flanked on the left by a female attendant with a pot and on the right by a seated lady in aristocratic dress. Next to the aristocratic lady there is a man holding his phallus in his hand. On the left of this panel is an orgiastic scene (ph. 90), involving two ascetics with a woman bending down. The role of the smaller figure placed on the back of the woman is not understood, but the theme reminds us of a *kakshāsana* panel of Modhera (ph. 72). Another orgiastic scene (phs. 87, 88) also shows ascetics with gourd pots. A seated woman indulges in fellatio with one of the ascetics. A man stands nearby with hands folded in *añjali mudrā*. Dancing men and women are also shown near the erotic scenes. On the southern side, on the left of the niched seated Śiva, a man in self-fellation, an erotic couple, and a woman with out-stretched legs (ph. 89) are seen. In a recess of the superstructure on the north-east corner, a woman is shown exposing her sexual parts (ph. 121). Nudity-exposing men and women are seen in quite a few sculptures in this temple. On a pillar in the northern portico, a seated goddess is flanked by men with their erect phalli in their hands (ph. 120), reminding us of the Tāntric practice of making erotic gestures and uttering words about sex organs near the goddess.⁸⁵ A pillar in the *maṇḍapa* portrays a scene of bestiality where a donkey-like animal is made to have relations with a woman bending down supporting herself on a pot (fig. XXI, p. 93). Another figure of indistinct sex supports the animal. The scene is very similar in theme and composition to the one depicted on the pillar of Roda of the same period (ph. 130). Women in birth-giving position are portrayed in many examples on the Ambernath temple (ph. 132).

Lonad

The Rāmeśvara temple at Lonad, five miles to the north of Kalyan near Bombay, most probably belongs to the same period as the temple at Ambernath and like the latter, it has a small sunken shrine in the *garbhagriha*. When Cousens visited the site he saw some "obscene representations" in sculptures lying around the temple.⁸⁶ He also mentions that the number 700 was inscribed on the basement mouldings of the hall, along with the name of Yogī Magaradhvaja. According to him, similar occurrences at places like Markanda, Bilhari, Amarkantak, Chandrehe, Khurda, Khajuraho, Chitor in Bihar, could be associated with Gorakhanātha and his seven hundred disciples.

Sinnar

Percy Brown⁸⁷ notes erotic figures representing *maithuna*-ritual on the Aśvara temple at Sinnar near Nasik, built in the 11th century A.D. But the sculptures are so weather-worn that despite close observation I could not see anything erotic in them. However, erotic figures are seen on another

temple at Sinnar, viz. the Gondeśvara, belonging to the 12th century. Apparently, Percy Brown has made some confusion in the name of the temple.

The Gondeśvara temple at Sinnar, erected by the Yādava chief Govindeśvara,⁸⁸ is considered to be the most complete and the best preserved of the Deccan series. It is a *pañchāyatana* complex, having four subsidiary shrines attached to the main temple. The entire complex, though today in a ruined condition, suggests that it was a busy and rich religious centre in the Medieval period.

Sex is sparingly represented on this temple. On the main temple, only a small compartment on the shaft of a pillar has an erotic scene. It represents four figures in an erotic group of type III-B (fig. XIX). The theme reminds us of the erotic groups of the 11th century temples of Khajuraho,

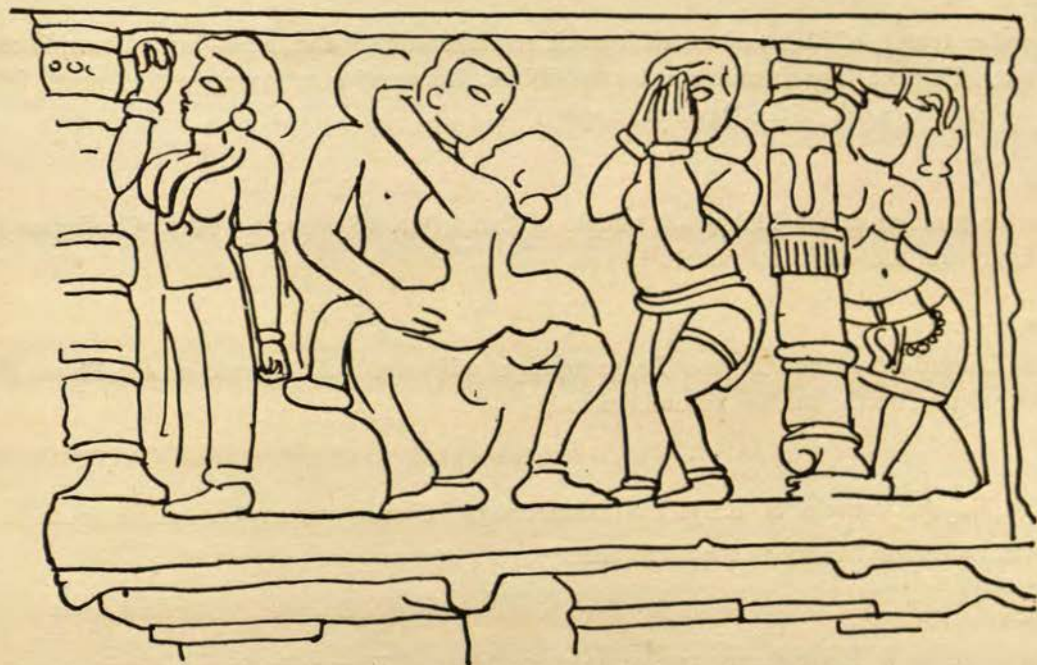


FIG. XIX—An erotic group; pillar of the *maṇḍapa*, Sinnar

specially of the central scene of the south *antarāla* wall of the Viśvanātha. As at Khajuraho, the couple is in a creeper-like embrace and involved in frontal standing copulation. The female is quite small compared to her partner. Flanking the couple on either side stands a female attendant. The one on the right has her eyes closed, while that on the left has turned away from the couple. The glaring stylistic differences of the two compositions need not be mentioned here. But it is relevant to note that the Khajuraho artist has portrayed the erotic group in a panel about 2.5 feet in height, on a prominent part of the temple, whereas the Sinnar artist has placed it in a small compartment, hardly 10 inches in height on a pillar in the dark *sabhāmaṇḍapa*, and on the side which does not face devotees when they enter the temple. The erotic depiction at Sinnar would go unnoticed, unless devotees circumambulated the pillar, which is not required in the temple rites.

Apart from the above noted erotic motif, there are representations of copulating couples—not

more than twelve in number—on the subsidiary shrines and the Nandī pavilion facing the main temple. Oral congress and creeper-like poses are the main themes.

Balsane

Erotic figures are noted by Cousens⁸⁹ at Balsane near Dhulia in Khandesh. He says: "There are usual indecent figures on the temple but they are confined to the smaller images of the bands." Erotic figures flank seated deities on the *kumbha* row.

Balsane seems to have been a place of great religious significance in the 11th and 12th centuries as there are ruins of nine temples and a *maṭha*—all erected within 150 years.

Devlana

Another temple of Maharashtra with erotic representation is the triple-shrined temple called Jageśvara at Devlana, fifty-six miles north east of Nasik. Cousens⁹⁰ mentions very "indecent" figures on the *kakshāsana* panels of the Devlana temple.

Patna

In the same area, the Maheśvara temple of Patna, ten miles south-west of Chalisgaon, has erotic figures on the *kakshāsana* panels.⁹¹

Pedgaon

The Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa temple at Pedgaon, eight miles south of Srigunda on the Bhima river, has erotic figures on the *kumbha*, around deities.⁹²

Karjat

The Nagoba temple at Karjat in Ahmednagar district, twenty-one miles southeast of Srigunda, has erotic figures on the *kakshāsana*.⁹³

Katarkhatav

On a temple at Katarkhatav, twelve miles southeast of Khatav in Satara district, there are erotic figures on the panels of the *kakshāsana*.⁹⁴

Gursala

The Rāmalinga temple at Gursala in Satara district, in the southwest of Katarkhatav, has "a row of the usual grossly indecent figures" on the *kakshāsana*.⁹⁵ One of the panels represents a woman with pendant breasts exposing herself. This motif is seen on the Central Indian shrines of Chhapri.⁹⁶

Thus, the Deccan has quite a few Medieval temples representing erotic figures. These are at Ambernath and Lonad in Thana district, Sinnar, Devlana, Patna and Balsane in the Nasik-Khandesh area, Pedgaon and Karjat in Ahmednagar district, and Katarkhatav and Gursala in Satara district.



SECTION 5. MYSORE

Under the Hoysalas

The temples of the Mysore region of the time of the Hoysalas in the 12th–13th centuries present a distinct mode of architecture where great importance is given to sculptural decoration. Delicate carving almost similar to an ivory carver's or jeweller's work was possible here because of the availability of the dense and fine-grained chloritic schist. Erotic motifs lose their individuality among the thousands of ornamental figures that adorn the Hoysala temples. The motifs are few in number, minute in size and are placed on insignificant parts of the temple. Devotees who are lost in admiration of the intricate figure sculptures hardly notice the presence of sexual figures.

Belur

The group of temples at Belur in Hassan district represents an important example of the Hoysala religious art of the first half of the 12th century A.D. The Keśava temple, the main among the Belur temples, was erected by King Viṣṇuvardhana in A.D. 1117 to commemorate his victory over the Cholas.⁹⁷

Sexual figures presented in the congested sculptural scheme of this temple lose their individuality. There are not more than a dozen coital scenes on the structures belonging to the 12th century.⁹⁸ Their size is about 1.5 inches to 3.5 inches in diameter. On the one foot high *kakshāsana* railings, subdued amorous couples representing a warrior with a woman (ph. 91) are depicted. The artist guild who worked at Belur has thus made a distinction between the presentation of the motif of the subdued amorous type and of the sexual type. By confining the latter in the diminutive scroll bands (ph. 92) the *śilpīns* have depicted sex in a restrained manner. However, they have displayed their knowledge of Kāmaśāstras in presenting some of the coital couples.

Depictions are seen of a woman sitting with outstretched legs and exposing herself (ph. 125) and of a man in a pose of self-fellation, where he is shown with an enlarged member brought up to his mouth (ph. 93). This motif is also found at Bagali in Bellary district which indicates the prevalence of the motif in the cultural area.

The Belur temple was built under the influence of Rāmānuja, the advocate of Dvaitavāda.⁹⁹ The temple is dedicated to Kṛṣṇa in the form of Vijaya-Nārāyaṇa, popularly called Keśava. On outer walls, Kṛṣṇa is shown as Veṇugopāla with small figures of *gopīs* listening to his flute. There is not the slightest trace of eroticism in the depiction. Even the Keśava temple at Somanāthapur, built in the second half of the 13th century A.D., which portrays numerous scenes from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, does not have a single erotic scene depicting Kṛṣṇa and *gopīs* or Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. This suggests that the Kṛṣṇa cult in Mysore, at least up to the 13th century, was not directly associated with erotic portrayal in sculpture. But the portrayal of gods along with consorts in their lap, as mentioned in the Tāntric *dhyāna* formulae and the iconographic canons of Medieval India,¹⁰⁰ finds its expression in these temples (ph. 113).

Halebid

At Halebid, about nine miles to the northeast of Belur, stands an elegant double-shrined temple, dedicated to Śiva, known as the Hoysalesvara and built under the reign of King Narasiṃha

(A.D. 1141–82).¹⁰¹ Halebid, which is a small village today, flourished under the name of Dvārasamudra and for three centuries was the capital of the Hoysala empire.

The temple presents a few erotic figures but amidst the wide galaxy of sculptures, they lose their importance. Most of the sculptured figures of the temple represent divine figures, *surasundarīs*, *madanikās*, legendary episodes, dancing scenes, etc. These are carved skilfully and laboriously and seem to be the work of good craftsmen. But the *maithuna* theme has not received any special aesthetic treatment which is in accordance with the general pattern of the Hoysala school.

Erotic motifs are portrayed on the basement row and on the panels of the *kakshāsana*. Coital couples are represented in Kāmaśāstriya poses. There are only three representations of erotic groups all of which are *saṅghāṭaka* of type II–B. One of these scenes represents two ascetics with a woman (ph. 148).

The couples are shown in mouth-congress mainly of the fellatio type. In the scene representing mutual mouth-congress or *kākila*, the woman is held upside down by the man. Sleeping coital pose is represented on the bed in a Kāmaśāstriya style (ph. 94).

Besides the depictions of coital poses there are scenes of men and women exposing themselves (ph. 95). A female figure with snakes and with her pudenda exposed is depicted on two places of the *jaṅghā*. The theme reminds us of the female figure of Ambernath. It should be noted that the male figures exposing themselves do not represent Pāsupata ascetics with *jaṭā*, as referred to by T.A.G. Rao¹⁰² in connection with the sculptures of South India.

Not all the panels of the *kakshāsana* have erotic motifs. Along with erotic themes, there are scenes representing deities, warriors with weapons, dancing women, etc. This indicates that the erotic theme was not the only subject conventionally permitted on the *kakshāsana*. But the *śilpīns* have represented erotic motifs on quite a few panels of the *kakshāsana*. It should be noted that the Hoysaleśvara artists have shown Kāmaśāstriya poses on the *kakshāsana* while their predecessors at Belur have restricted these depictions to diminutive scrolls on the plinth.

Thus, we come to a contradictory situation. The artist guild of the Hoysaleśvara did not give importance to the erotic motif in the sculptural scheme of the temple and executed it in crude workmanship. Yet, even when two or three erotic scenes would have served the *śilpa* convention, the sculptors portrayed many more scenes, quite a few of them in Kāmaśāstriya poses.

Art of the Time of Ballāla II at Halebid and Belur

There was a progressive increase in the depiction of sex from the middle of the 12th century up to the reign of Ballāla II (A.D. 1173–1220). The Raṅganātha temple in the Halebid village, about a mile to the north of the famous Hoysaleśvara temple, is now in a highly dilapidated condition. Among the ruins I could see two *kakshāsana* panels, having altogether eight erotic scenes. One panel formed part of the temple while the other (ph. 97) was buried in the ground and was dug out by us.* Of these eight, four represent copulating couples and four represent erotic groups in *saṅghāṭaka* relationship of type II–B.

In two of the *saṅghāṭaka* scenes mentioned above (ph. 97—second and third from left) the men are carrying umbrellas above the head of their female partner. In one scene the men are completely nude and without any ornaments, and seem to represent Buddhist or Jaina Digambara monks. In

* I am informed that it is now in the open-air museum near the Hoysaleśvara temple.

the other scene a monk protects the head of the female partner, while a man having long hair holds an umbrella over his own head. Next to the erotic scenes a warrior with weapons is shown. It is difficult to see the significance of a warrior near the erotic scenes, but he is represented even at Bhubaneswar and Mukhalingam in the 8th–9th centuries.

Of the remains of the time of Ballāla II at Belur, there is a stone slab depicting two erotic scenes (ph. 99). It is similar in design to the *kakshāsana* panels of the Raṅganātha temple at Halebid described above. One scene represents a *saṅghātaka* of type II–B, where one of the men has raised his left hand in a typical gesture. All the three figures have elaborate hair-styles and wear big *kuṇḍalas* in their ears. In the next panel is a scene showing a couple in precoital love-play.

Thus, the flagrant display of sex on these architectural remains at Belur and Halebid indicates an increase in permissiveness in sexual depictions from the time of King Viṣṇuvardhana (A.D. 1106–1152 or 56) to the time of his grandson King Ballāla II (A.D. 1173–1220).

Somanāthapur

The Hoysala school presented in A.D. 1278 a beautiful example of its art at Somanāthapur (ph. 96), about thirty miles from Mysore. This is the “most typical and complete” example “illustrating the style in its late maturity”.¹⁰³ It is a *trikūṭāchala* having triple *vimānas* enshrining three aspects of Kṛiṣṇa, viz. Veṇugopāla, Keśava and Janārdana. The temple gives importance to the iconography of Viṣṇu in his different aspects such as Narasiṃha, Varāha, Hayagrīva, Veṇugopāla, Paravāsudeva, etc.¹⁰⁴ The frieze on the basement depicts scenes from the *Bhāgavata*, *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*. But the erotic aspect of Kṛiṣṇa-līlā is not depicted anywhere on this 13th century temple.

Erotic motifs are seen only on the nine panels of the *kakshāsana* of the southern side. Display of Kāmasāstriya knowledge and preference for aristocratic lovers are noticeable. Compared to the elaborately carved exterior of the temple, the number of erotic figures is negligible. Again, they seem to have been executed by sculptors of inferior skill. In order to see this one has merely to compare the figures of deities on the *jaṅghā* or even small figures on the basement with the erotic figures.

Under the Later Chālukyas

Bagali

At Bagali, eight miles from Harpanhalli in Bellary district, stands a triple-shrined temple. According to Rea,¹⁰⁵ it appears to have been begun by the Cholas and completed by the Chālukyas, not before the 12th century A.D. but earlier than A.D. 1189. The temples of Bagali and the adjacent area “might best be described as an embodiment of Chālukyan details engraved on a Dravidian building.” Bagali was the residence of Ballāla II according to an inscription.¹⁰⁶

The Bagali temple is dedicated to Śiva, Sūrya and Narasiṃha. Sculptures are preserved on the western shrine which is dedicated to Śiva. It displays varieties of sexual scenes. Numerous copulating couples and orgiastic scenes have been carved in a crude manner on the *baraṇḍa* or portion of the wall that terminates below the *śikhara* (ph. 101–104). The door-jambes also depict love-making and copulating couples (ph. 105).

There are four erotic groups, two representing type II–B and the other two type III–C. The former is expressed in the same way as at Halebid of the same period, though there are differences

in the styles of portrayal. The woman indulges in fellatio with one man while the other man mates with her from behind. Bestiality is represented in two scenes.

Among the noteworthy scenes are: depiction of simultaneous hair-cutting and copulation (ph. 136) and depiction of a man standing in *añjali mudrā* and having an elongated phallus, which is held by a woman with her hands (ph. 102—scene on top). Both these scenes seem to represent sexual rituals. Woman sitting in *uttānapāda* pose and exposing herself (ph. 104), man in self-fellation (ph. 103), and the phallus-man (ph. 124), the widely prevalent motifs of the Mysore region, seen by us at Belur, are boldly represented at Bagali.

The style of Bagali sculptures is nearer folk than classical. The artists have caricatured the figures by shortening or lengthening the limbs. Sexual scenes are portrayed in a crude and gross manner and their ritualistic content is well preserved.

Belgamve

The Tripurāntaka temple of Belgamve in Dharwar district portrays erotic figures.¹⁰⁷ In accordance with the architectural conventions of the Mysore region, these figures are confined to the panels of the *kakshāsana* and are not shown in large size. They consist of all varieties: amorous couples, copulating couples, orgiastic groups and a bestiality scene. The last theme involves a donkey and men who, from their ornaments, appear to be of upper class. Orgiastic scenes represent *saṅghāṭaka* of type II in the usual Mysore idiom, and orgy of type V. A scene depicting *puruṣāyita* in which the woman acts the role of a man is noteworthy (ph. 100). This is a rare sculptural depiction of the theme, despite its frequent and fond descriptions by Sanskrit poets and Kāmaśāstra writers (see chapters V and X).

Hangal

The Tārakeśvara temple at Hangal, not far from Bagali, in the southwest part of Dharwar district, also shows sexual representation in its bold aspect, placed near depictions of mythological scenes.¹⁰⁸ According to Cousens,¹⁰⁹ it is a complete temple of Chālukyan style.

Both Hangal and Belgamve were under the influence of the Hoysalas. A group of sculptures depicting a Hoysala chief or ruler overcoming a lion, which is represented on the entrance of the Belur temple, is seen at both these sites.

Under the Vijayanagara School*

After the 13th century, the main architectural activity of the Mysore region takes place under the rulers of Vijayanagara. Their empire extended from the Krishna to Cape Comorin and their capital Vijayanagara on the Tungabhadra river in Bellary district was one of the foremost cities in Asia. The accounts of travellers like Barbosa, Nicolo Conti, Abdur Razzak, Nuniz and Paes, who visited the Kingdom, testify to the splendour of Vijayanagara from the 14th to the 16th centuries.¹¹⁰

We will be concerned here with the sexual expression on the structures built under this dynasty at Vijayanagara and Belur.

Maithuna depiction is very rarely seen among the elaborate structures of the Vijayanagara

* The temples of this Drāviḍa school belong mainly to the 16th century. We have dealt with them as examples representing erotic motifs in later art.

period. Wherever it occurs, it is almost surreptitious and placed in dark corners and unfrequented parts. In the large area occupied by the Viṭṭhala temple and the subsidiary structures used for ritual purposes, erected by Kṛṣṇa Deva Rāya (A.D. 1509-1530) and completed by his successor Achyuta Deva Rāya, the coital scene is depicted only on a pilaster in a dark corner of the Hundred Pillared Hall (ph. 106). The *kalyāṇa maṇḍapa* where the annual marriage celebration of the deity takes place and which is "not infrequently the most ornate structure of the entire group,"¹¹¹ has a coital scene representing monkeys on a staircase, in a place where the pilgrims could hardly notice it. Similarly, the large compound of Achyuta Rāya's temple has only two sexual scenes, which are portrayed on pillars of a subsidiary structure. One of these represents a couple in bed in a Kāma-śāstrīya pose, and the other represents an erotic group of type III-C (ph. 107) where a dwarf attendant excites the female partner.

Besides these, sex is represented on the tall *gopurams* of the Pampāpathi temple and the Kṛṣṇa temple. In one scene, on the *gopuram* of the Pampāpathi temple, some sexual ritual is depicted. A woman stands with legs wide apart and with her own hands placed in a manner so as to stretch her yoni. She is flanked by a man and a woman.

At Belur, the *gopuram* of the Keśava temple was erected under the rule of Vijayanagara dynasty. Here also, large-sized *maithuna* scenes are depicted, some of which are acrobatic and involving *śīrṣāsana* or head-down pose. However, the *gopuram* being tall, devotees hardly notice the sculptures on them unless these are pointed out. Only when one climbs on the roof of a near-by building, which no worshipper would do, does their erotic nature become clear.

Some new additions in the thematic content of the *mithuna* motif are noticed in the Vijayanagara period. The Rāmāyaṇa characters, Sugrīva and his wife, and Kṛṣṇa-*gopī* themes become favourite subjects of the sculptors in this period. The motif of Sugrīva and his wife in a tender scene is depicted on the *kalyāṇa maṇḍapa* of the Viṭṭhala temple and on the Ammān shrine of the Hazāra Rāma temple. This motif is also seen at Vellore, another important site of the period. The Kṛṣṇa-*gopī* theme which was treated with sobriety up to the 13th century in the Mysore region gets sensualized. The *vastrā-haraṇa* story in which Kṛṣṇa steals the clothes of bathing *gopīs* becomes a favourite theme of the Vijayanagara sculptors and is represented with the emphasis on nudity.

Another motif, the depiction of which we see in the cultural area in the Hoysala period, viz. the nude female figure in *uttānapad* pose, continues to be represented in the Vijayanagara period. One such figure in the Hundred Pillared Hall of the Viṭṭhala temple bears marks of incense-burning on the pudenda which suggests its sacredness and reveals its association with fertility beliefs.

Thus, the sexual outburst of the previous centuries had subsided in the Vijayanagara period. It seems that the period of about two hundred years between the Hoysala and Chālukya to Vijayanagara sculptures represents a change in the approach to sexual depiction on temples. The pre-Vijayanagara sculptures, now preserved in the site-museum, show that erotic motifs were carved on the *kakshāsana* railings. The Portuguese traveller Domingos Paes (A.D. 1520-22) mentions temples of Krishnapura near Vijayanagara as having "many figures of men and women, all in lascivious attitudes."¹¹² But the present remains of the Vijayanagara period clearly show that there had been a considerable diminution in sexual representation on temples in the course of two hundred years. Erotic motifs were depicted only in unfrequented parts of the temple, e.g. on pillars and on tall *gopurams*. They were few and far between and were always placed in a manner so as to remain hidden

from the sight of the public. They were probably considered to be magico-defensive in function and were therefore not entirely eliminated from the sculptural scheme of the temple.

To sum up, our study of the large number of Medieval temples from the five different regions shows us that in the period under review the treatment of erotic motifs is in accordance with the conventions and traditions of the regional schools of art. Each region has a distinctive approach towards sexual motifs which is reflected in the place and size assigned to them in the architectural scheme of the temple and in the choice of their thematic content.

Orissan and Chandella schools have paid a homage, as it were, to erotic motifs by placing them in the prominent architectural parts of the temple and by devoting artistic care in their execution. In the Early Medieval temples of Bhubaneswar, distinction was made between non-coital and coital scenes, and the latter were relegated to hidden corners. But from the latter part of the 11th century at Bhubaneswar and specially in the 13th century Konarak temple, both these varieties were placed on lotus pedestals and in temple-shaped *munḍis*. In the Chandella temples, erotic motifs were carved near figures of deities on the *jaṅghā* and on numerous other parts including the *garbhagriha* wall in the interior. The entire surface of the "house and body of god" vibrates with sculptural decoration in which erotic motifs preponderate. Khajuraho represents a beautiful and highly aesthetic conception of erotic sculpture. The other three schools of Central India show a varied treatment. In Dāhala, the temple of Sohagpur has erotic figures on the *jaṅghā* as at Khajuraho. In the Kachchhapaghāta region, Padhavli has erotic scenes including orgies near divine images. Kadwaha temples have mainly portrayals of amorous couples. In Malwa, the Udayapur temple registers a similar approach to erotic motifs which is seen in the temples of the same architectural style in the Northern Deccan, though however there are minor differences perhaps due to the fact that the temples are situated in different geographical areas.

The study of the temples of Gujarat, the Deccan and Mysore has shown that art-conventions were rigorous and inviolable, so much so that the *śilpīns* who were accustomed to accord refined and elegant treatment to *śurasundarīs* and divine images were unable to do so in case of sexual figures. They could not display erotic motifs in large size and on the *jaṅghā* or prominent parts of the temple, but had to assign to these figures small spaces and relegate them to recessed and unimportant parts in accordance with the canons of the art-schools which prevailed in their respective regions. As a result of this conditioning, erotic sculptures in these regions were almost devoid of artistic and sophisticated treatment.

Thus, we would like to draw the attention of the reader to the role that regionalism and conventionalism play in determining the way sex was depicted on Medieval temples. These tendencies are ultimately the outcome of social forces and conditions of the period, the study of which is made in Chapter VIII.



V. Sexual Representation in Art

—An Analysis

THE CHAPTER PRESENTS an analytical exposition of certain data given in the earlier chapters which are useful in the formulation of our hypothesis. It juxtaposes and summarizes certain elements in a cross-section and puts the picture analytically before the reader. It attempts to clarify certain misconceptions regarding erotic depictions that have cropped up due to the idealistic biases of some writers on the subject. For instance, it is generally believed that erotic motifs are placed only on the exterior walls and never on the *garbhagriha*, because they represent worldly life which has to be renounced. Again, it is believed that figures in sexual act are involved in yogic *āsanas* and exemplify the Non-dual state of the Highest Reality or *Ānanda*, the Supreme Bliss. We have made an attempt to place the data regarding sexual depiction before the reader to enable him to see for himself that the problem is a bit too complex to be amenable to idealistic or *a priori* speculations.

The history of sexual representation in the religious art of India is divided into three major periods, each with its own characteristic pattern. First is the period up to A.D. 500, when *maithuna* is not yet depicted on religious monuments, though it is seen in terracottas and similar objects. Only precoital couples are depicted in stone sculptures of this period. The second period, from A.D. 500 to 900, marks an important stage. During this period, representation of *maithuna* is seen for the first time in official stone art but is still not established in the sculptural scheme of the temple. Erotic groups also appear in temple art towards the end of the period. In the third period, from A.D. 900 to 1400, representation of *maithuna* and orgies is seen on most of the temples and its expression is largely determined according to regional schools of art. Temples of the same region, even when affiliated to different religious sects, register a similar approach towards the representation of erotic motifs and show also a closer similarity in erotic representation than contemporaries which belong to different regions.

Distribution of Erotic Motifs

Let us examine the distribution of *maithuna*-couples, erotic groups, and scenes of bestiality.



The *maithuna*-couple is found in all regions gradually after A.D. 500, its first occurrence being noted in the South Western Deccan and Eastern India.¹

A beginning in the portrayal of orgiastic groups was made towards the end of the 8th century at Pattadakal and in about the middle of the 9th century or later in the Lañkeśvara cave of Ellora. In Central India, erotic groups are found in the 10th century at Padhavli, Badoh and Khajuraho and in their milder version at Sanchi and Kakpur. In Gujarat, they are seen on the 11th–13th century temples of Modhera, Sunak, Delmal, Motap, Bavka, Galteśvara, Kheda-Brahma, Dabhoi, etc. In Maharashtra, erotic groups are seen on the 11th century temple at Ambernath and the 12th century temple at Sinnar. The 12th century Hoysala and Chālukya temples in Mysore have representations of orgies. In Orissa, where *maithuna* depiction is present on temples since the 7th century A.D., orgiastic groups do not appear until the 11th century A.D. The first representation of an orgy in Orissan art is at Khiching and Bhubaneswar in the 11th century. But these are scattered examples. Orgiastic depiction is fully recognized in Orissa only on the Konarak temple. The meagre representation of orgies in Orissa till as late as the 13th century is highly significant, because in the Deccan, Central India and Gujarat the representations of orgies had already begun and because there were important Tāntric *piṭhas* in Orissa.

Non-Orgiastic Groups

Type I-A. This sober group representing a man with two partners is depicted in the Ancient period at Sanchi (Stūpa I), Bodh Gaya, Kondane (ph. 23), Mathura, Taxila, etc. In the Early Medieval period, it is seen at Deogarh, Ajanta, Pattadakal, Sirpur, Bhubaneswar and Osia. On the Vaitāl temple of Bhubaneswar its depiction is a precursor of the orgiastic group. Many men and women are shown in the sunken panel in the *ganḍi* standing close to one another, holding hands or putting hands on shoulder. This depiction differs from others of its type in having many people in the group. It indicates promiscuous relations among the participants, but the artist has not represented this relation in a sexual orgy. The subdued amorous group continues to be represented in the period from A.D. 900–1400 on the temples of Khajuraho, Modhera, Bavka, Dabhoi, Nagda, Badoh, Sanchi, Kakpur, Udayapur, Bhubaneswar, Konarak (ph. 56–top row), etc.

The members of this group are usually aristocratic persons. Sometimes a bearded ascetic is shown with two women in mildly amorous play, e.g. at Modhera (ph. 145), Udayapur and Khajuraho (Chitragupta). This seems to represent an *āchārya* with two female disciples or *devadāsīs* (see below, Chapter VIII).

Type I-B. This group consists of two men with one woman in subdued relationship. It is portrayed at Survaya, Nagda, Dabhoi, Motap, etc. It is less frequent than type I-A.

Types III-A and B. In the former, attendants are present near an amorous, non-coital couple (ph. 21). It has been depicted at Mathura in the 2nd century A.D., at Badami, Aihole, Ajanta and Ellora in the 6th–7th centuries, at Pattadakal, Mukhalingam and Abaneri in the 8th–9th centuries. Type III-B represents a group where attendants stand near a copulating couple, without themselves being involved in the amatory act (phs. 8, 54; fig. XIX, p. 63). It is found at Modhera, Delmal, Nemavar, Ramgarh, Sinnar, Halebid, Konarak, etc. in the Medieval period.

Orgiastic Groups

Type II-A. This group, representing a man and two women in sexual relationship, called by

Vātsyāyana *saṅghāṭaka*, is depicted from the 10th century. Its early occurrences, noted by us at Sanchi (Temple No. 45), Kakpur and Badoh in Malwa, are soberly presented. It occurs in the 11th century at Khajuraho and Ambernath, in the 12th century at Bavka and in the 13th century at Konarak, but it is not found in temples of Mysore.

Type II-B. This group representing two men having sexual relations with one woman (phs. 99, 146, 149), also called *saṅghāṭaka* by Vātsyāyana, is seen in some terracottas of Chandraketurgh. In temple art, it is seen from the latter part of the 10th century A.D. It is found in the 11th century temple of Ambernath, in most of the temples of Gujarat of the 11th–13th centuries, those of Mysore in the 12th–13th centuries and of Orissa in the 11th–15th centuries.

Type III-C. This group representing a copulating couple being helped in the sexual act by attendants (phs. 56–lower row, 107) is the most favoured motif of Central India and Orissa. It is seen at Khajuraho, Kakpur, Padhavli, Bhubaneswar, Konarak, Puri (*bhogamaṇḍapa*), Bagali, Vijayanagara and in the Lañkeśvara cave of Ellora.

Type III-D. It is found at Khajuraho in sculptures of the 10th and the first half of the 11th century (phs. 67, 68). One of the partners while copulating also touches the sexual parts of the attendants as on the *antarāla* walls of the Kandariyā and the Viśvanātha. The attendants, both male and female, are also shown in excited conditions, with their own hands on their sexual parts.

Type IV-A. This group, called *goyūthika* by Vātsyāyana, represents a man in company of many women (ph. 53). It is associated mainly with harem life, but is not much prevalent in sculptural depiction. Out of three examples which I have come across, two are seen on the Konarak temple and one on the late Medieval temple of Tiruvatakudi near Karikal. At Konarak, one scene represents a harem type, while the other shows an ascetic in the company of three women.

Type IV-B. This group, also called *goyūthika* by Vātsyāyana, represents many men in sexual relationship with one woman (phs. 73—scene on the left, 118). It is depicted in the temple art of Gujarat at Modhera and Motap, and of Rajasthan at Nagda and Ramgarh. None of the Mysore temples visited by me represent this type. At Konarak also it is rare. One instance of this motif at Konarak consists of three ascetics, with *jaṭā* and beard, who are having relations with a woman. She is held in a very clumsy pose. An ascetic with his hand raised in a typical gesture and who seems to be uttering *mantras* (ph. 147) is also seen in one of the *goyūthika* scenes at Modhera.

Type V. It represents many men and women in a promiscuous orgy. It is seen in the Śuṅga terracottas of Chandraketurgh (ph. 7). One of the earliest occurrences of this group in temple art is seen on the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho in the 10th century. In the 11th century, it occurs at Khajuraho (Viśvanātha temple), Khiching, Modhera, Delmal and Ambernath. At Modhera, there is an example of a chain orgy, where one man excites a woman who mates with another man and he, in turn, excites another woman, and so on (ph. 75). Among the 12th century temples, it is seen at Belgamve, Kiradu, Dwarka and Bavka. At Bavka about fifteen people participate in the orgy (ph. 81).

Type VI. This group represents a number of couples simultaneously involved in sexual relations (phs. 65, 77, 84). It is seen in the sculptures of Pattadakal and Ellora of the 8th and 9th centuries respectively, of Khajuraho and Padhavli of the 10th century, of Modhera and Ambernath of the 11th century, of Bavka and Galteśvara of the 12th century. It is hardly seen in Orissa and in the Hoysala temples of Mysore.

Thus, the most prevalent types of erotic groups are: I-A, II-A, II-B, III-B and III-C. The

portrayals of types IV-B, III-D, V and VI depend upon the peculiarity of the region. Type IV-B is peculiar to Gujarat and Rajasthan. Type V is mainly restricted to Gujarat, Maharashtra and Central India, except for rare depictions at Konarak, Khiching and Belgamve. Type VI is represented mainly in the Western Deccan, Gujarat and Central India. Type III-D is depicted at Khajuraho. Type IV-A is very rare.

Region-wise Spread of Erotic Groups

Central India represents all the types of erotic groups, but *goyūthika* of type IV-A is rare. Gujarat represents I-A, I-B, II-A, II-B, III-B, IV-B, V and VI. The Deccan represents types I-A, II-A, II-B, III-B, III-C, V and VI. Mysore is restrictive in its choice of erotic groups. The most popular type in the Mysore region is *saṅghāṭaka* of type II-B. Only one example of type V (at Belgamve) and two examples each of type III-B and III-C have been recorded by me in Mysore sculpture. Orissa also does not represent all types of erotic groups. The prominent representations are the *saṅghāṭaka* relationships of both types and type III-C. Types IV-A, IV-B and V are quite infrequent.

Bestiality

It is seen first on the 8th century Śiśireśvara temple of Bhubaneswar. It is portrayed in the 10th century at Badoh and Khajuraho (Lakṣmaṇa), in the 11th century at Khajuraho (Viśvanātha), Nagda, Modhera, Roda and Ambernath, in the 12th century at Menal, Ramgarh, Bagali and Belgamve, in the 13th century at Bhubaneswar (later additions of the Liṅgarāja) and Konarak. Thus, the representation of bestiality is seen in all regions. But wherever it is present, only one or two examples of it are shown on the entire surface of the temple.

Representations of bestiality are of three types: (A) man mates with animal; (B) animal mates with man; (C) animal mates with woman.

Types A and C are common, while I have seen only one example of type B on the Chālukya temple of Bagali (ph. 102). Type A represents generally men of aristocratic appearance having relations with a horse, donkey, deer or dog. Type C generally represents a donkey having relations with a woman. Sometimes (as at Ramgarh and Khajuraho) a boar-like creature has relations with a woman. At Konarak, a dog or a deer, and at Belgamve, a rodent, lick the sexual parts of a woman. It is significant that the bestiality scenes of Gujarat (Roda and Modhera) are placed near the *liṅga-pūjā* scenes. At Modhera, a child-bearing woman is shown in the adjacent panel (ph. 129). The Roda panel (ph. 130) seems to represent some ritual practice where a woman is made to have relations with an animal. The animal is forced to act so by a stout woman. The same theme is also seen at Ambernath (fig. XXI, p. 93).

Coital Poses

Preponderance of Standing Poses

The Hindu temple aspires towards the heavens. The upward surge of the building has always to be emphasized. The artist has to take care that no sculptural design conflicts with the verticality of the temple. The poses and attitudes in which the sexual act is represented depend, to a certain extent, on the space allotted to erotic motifs in the sculptural scheme of the temple. This, to a large extent, is regionally determined. Central India and Orissa represent erotic motifs on the main part

of the *jaṅghā* as well as on the plinth or platform and niches in the superstructure. The Hoysala school permits its expression on the basement and the *kakshāsana* railings. The Solāṅki school allows it on the plinth, *kumbha*, *kakshāsana*, pillars, architraves, etc. Now, in Orissan and Khajuraho temples, erotic motifs, being on the *jaṅghā*, vary in height from two and a half to five feet, whereas in other regions, they are very small, rarely more than one foot in height. The composition-space allotted to erotic motifs determines, to a certain extent, the poses in which they are represented. The artists of Khajuraho and Orissa had to be careful in the selection of poses in representing sex. The standing pose was the most suitable as it would not conflict with the rising surge of the temple. But the artists had more freedom in the smaller space available on the plinth or the base of the temple. Similarly, in Gujarat and Rajasthan the standing pose is more suitable on the *kumbha* of the *vedibandha* above the plinth. The standing attitude is thus widely prevalent in representing erotic motifs on the temple.

Puruṣāyita or Viparītarata

A pose called *puruṣāyita* or *viparītarata*, in which woman acts the role of man, was the most favourite of Sanskrit poets and Kāmaśāstra writers.² According to S. C. Upadhyaya,³ "Sculptors and painters have not lagged behind poets and dramatists. In some panels at Bhubaneswar, Konarak, Khajuraho, etc. there are representations of the astride posture."

This pose is, no doubt, seen in court paintings and described in belletristic literature. In Tāntric literature⁴ also, in the *dhyāna mantra* of goddess Chhinnamastā, there is a description of Rati and Kāma practising *viparītarata* near the goddess. This *dhyāna mantra* has been portrayed in a Rajasthan painting of the 18th century.⁵ But among the temples mentioned by Upadhyaya, I have come across only one example of *puruṣāyita* in sleeping pose which is on the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho. Other examples, which are not mentioned by him, are seen at Belgamve (ph. 100) and Kiradu. Upadhyaya has illustrated photographs of standing lovers in his translation of Vātsyāyana's chapter on *puruṣāyita*. It is clear that in the standing pose the lady has to be shown in front of her lover, as otherwise the larger male body would almost hide her. So when sculptors have shown the woman in the foreground in a vertical pose of union, it need not be representative of the *puruṣāyita*. In temple sculpture, the sleeping pose usually represents the woman supine and the man astride (phs. 77, 79, 83, 94).

Oral Congress

Oral congress, which is an extra-vaginal and *vimārga* (artificial) coitus and condemned in the moral codes of India, and looked down upon by Kāmaśāstra writers,⁶ is seen in sculpture of all regions. Three varieties of this relationship are represented in sculptural art: (i) woman performs the act, called fellation or fellatio, (ii) man performs the act, called cunnilingus, (iii) mutually done, called *kākila*⁷ in Sanskrit.

Fellatio was represented in art since at least the 2nd century B.C., as for example, on terracottas from Chandraketurgarh in Bengal. In the latter half of the 9th century, fellatio was portrayed at Ellora (Laṅkeśvara Cave) and at Mukhalingam. It was represented at Khiching in the 11th century, at Konarak in the 13th and at Puri in the 12th–15th centuries. In Central India, Rajasthan, Gujarat and the Deccan, it occurs in the 10th–12th century at Padhavli (fig. XVIII, p. 54), Khajuraho, Ramgarh, Sunak, Modhera (ph. 72), Motap, Galteśvara, Ambernath (phs. 88, 90), Sinnar, etc. In the

Mysore region, fellatio is depicted at Belur, Halebid, Somanāthapur, Bagali and Belgamve (phs. 93, 95, 103). In sculptures of Khajuraho, Modhera, Roda, Galteśvara, Ambernath, Halebid, etc. an ascetic is being excited by the woman (phs. 88, 90, 142, 146-149).

Cunnilingus is less common than fellatio. But it is seen in one of the earliest representations of coitus in temple art, viz. that of Aihole (fig. X, p. 31) in the 6th century A.D. It is portrayed in the later additions of the Kailāsa temple at Ellora and on the temples of Ambernath, Bagali, the Rājārāṇī and the Liṅgarāja of Bhubaneswar, and of Konarak. Significantly, in the scene of the Rājārāṇī temple, the woman's right hand is shown in *abhaya mudrā*, and on the Liṅgarāja temple, the woman is cutting the hair of her partner (phs. 42, 134). In the representation of cunnilingus on the Bagali temple, the woman sits in the *uttānapad* pose. This type of oral congress is also seen on the *goṣuram* of the Belur temple built in the Vijayanagara period.

Kākila is seen in the 10th-12th century temple art of Central India and Rajasthan at Padhavli, Badoh, Khajuraho, Ramgarh, Kiradu and Osia. It occurs in the 11th-12th centuries in Gujarat at Modhera (ph. 76), Siddhapur, Galteśvara and Bavka, and in Maharashtra at Ambernath and Sinnar. In the 12th-13th centuries, it was depicted at Bagali and Somanāthapur in Mysore. *Kākila* was a favourite motif in Orissa from the 12th century A.D. At Puri, Bhubaneswar and Konarak, it is expressed in a variety of *bandhas* (phs. 51, 54), including a gymnastic pose in which the man holds the woman who is in a head-down position. Similar gymnastic representations of *kākila* relationship are also found at Badoh, Galteśvara and Khajuraho. At Khajuraho and Bagali, ascetics participate in *kākila* (phs. 144, 150).

Auto-Erotism

Depictions of males and females in what seems to be an auto-erotic act are seen in terracottas (ph. 9) of the Ancient period and in temple art of the Medieval period. Self-fellation scenes of Bagali, Belur and Ambernath (phs. 103, 93, 89) are indicative of phantasied auto-erotic act. At Konarak, a man is shown involved in what seems to be an auto-erotic act with the help of some stringed device. In another scene of Konarak, a woman is shown in an auto-erotic act (ph. 128). At Khajuraho, men and women attending the copulating couple are shown touching their own sexual parts (phs. 64, 67).

Nudity-exposing Figures

Figures of males and females exposing their genital organs are seen in temples of all the five regions of our survey. The degree of exhibitionism may vary from the depictions of a female with her lower garments falling down or purposely exposing her yoni (phs. 66, 123) to those of a female distinctly displaying herself by stretching out her legs and touching her own yoni, as at Ambernath (ph. 121), Konarak (ph. 122), Bhubaneswar, Sonepur, Chhapri,⁸ etc. Male exhibitionistic figures are seen in temples of Bhubaneswar (ph. 36), Konarak, Halebid, Belur, Bagali (ph. 104), Khajuraho, Chhapri, Ambernath, Galteśvara, Delmal, etc. Ascetics are very often shown holding their own genital organs in their hand. It is difficult sometimes to interpret whether the figures of males holding their genital organs are indicative of exhibitionism, auto-erotism or simply expressing their state of desire. We may mention here that the Pāśupata Śaiva initiates were advised to practise

a rite of *śṛīṅgāraṇa* in which they were supposed to exhibit themselves and act lustfully at the sight of a beautiful girl.⁹ So some figures of ascetics portrayed as making exhibitionistic gestures may be placed in this category (ph. 151). Since the displaying of sexual organs is also considered to be an act of defence to turn aside evils in magico-religious beliefs and practices, as we shall have occasion to see in Chapter VI, some figures may be representative of a defensive gesture rather than that of an exhibitionistic, auto-erotic or a playful act.

Are there Sexo-Yogic Poses?

It is held by some writers that the coital postures in which the lovers are shown on the Medieval temples are sexo-yogic.¹⁰ Let us see how far this is true.

The Medieval Kāmaśāstras, written with a purely secular purpose, give a list of elaborate coital postures involving yogic techniques. As Alex Comfort¹¹ says: "One complete sequence of bandhas, from Vātsyāyana on, appears to derive directly from yogic exercises, and this sequence becomes longer and more complicated in the later erotic treatises, until it includes really exorbitant tours de force, such as coition with the woman head-down in *śīrṣāsana* or the *phaṇipāśa* and *kukkuṭa* bandhas. . . . One object of these postures is, precisely, to delay ejaculation."

In sculptural art, there are some postures which do involve Haṭha Yoga techniques. These are seen in the head-down poses (ph. 68; fig. XVIII, p. 54) of Khajuraho, Padhavli, Belur (*goṇuram*), etc. Haṭha Yogic techniques can also be seen in some of the intricate sitting and sleeping poses of Bhubaneswar (later additions to the *Līṅgarāja*) and Konarak.¹²

But what is important for us to find out is whether the inspiration behind the sculptural postures is purely Kāmaśāstriya, meant for play, novelty and pleasure, or whether the object is mystico-religious for attaining the Non-dual state. The Tāntric *sādhana* aiming at the regression of the semen to the highest *chakra* involves the stabilization or the immobilization of the three "jewels" (*triratna*) of thought, breath and semen. The most ideal pose exemplifying this state is seen in the *Yab-Yum* image of Tāntric Buddhism.¹³ If the purpose was delayed ejaculation or *coitus reservatus* (see below, Chapter VII) we naturally would expect the male partner to perform the yogic *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*. But very few poses involve males practising Haṭha Yoga. The gymnastic poses representing mutual mouth-congress on the temples of Khajuraho (Dulādeva), Gaiteśvara, Puri and Konarak involve women in athletic feats. Again, most of the postures in which coition is depicted on temples represent frontal standing poses, *vyānata ratas* (copulation from rear) and varieties of oral congress which are not associated with yogic techniques or aims.

Even ascetics, who are depicted in the sexual scenes, are not shown in yogic poses. Far from this, they are sometimes also shown with protruding stomachs which cannot possibly be associated with yogis. But it is women who are often shown with a slim physique and performing gymnastic feats. They might represent women who were often presented to kings for the magico-medical purpose of *kāyasādhana* or physical culture and to provide novel stimulations.¹⁴

Portrayal of Ascetics in Erotic Scenes

The portrayal of ascetics in erotic scenes is an important feature of Medieval art. There is hardly any depiction of ascetics in *maithuna* scenes prior to A.D. 900. At Aihole, in the 6th–8th centuries, ascetics are shown with women but in non-coital poses.

Ascetics with matted hair and *danḍa* are shown dancing, performing *liṅga-pūjā* and in company of women on a lintel of the Athakhamba at Gyrapur belonging to early 10th century A.D. (ph. 53).

One of the first portrayals of ascetics in sexual activity occurs on the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho erected in A.D. 954. On the southern *jaṅghā* of this Vaiṣṇava temple, a clean-shaven ascetic with *danḍa* stands in an auto-erotic state near an aristocratic couple. Ascetics, both bearded and clean-shaven, are also seen in the orgiastic scenes on the *jagatī* of this temple (phs. 65, 142). The 11th century Viśvanātha temple of Khajuraho has representations of two ascetics with gourd-pots tied to their waist participating in an orgiastic scene (ph. 143). The Vaiṣṇava temple of Devī Jagdambā has portrayals of ascetics, who seem to be Buddhists or Kāpālikas, in the company of women. The Śaiva Dulādeva temple in the 12th century portrays an ascetic, with *rudrākṣa* beads on his arms, in *kākila* relationship with a woman who also wears *rudrākṣa* (ph. 144). Both of them wear big *kuṇḍalas* in their ears.

A scene from Khajuraho shows a bearded guru who holds the phallus of a clean-shaven *śiṣya* (who was probably shaven on initiation). The latter is in *añjali mudrā*. It is doubtful whether it could be interpreted as an act of homosexuality. It could represent a rite of initiation. A similar theme with two ascetics is also present on the *kumbha* of the 11th century Ambernath temple where in addition a female figure stands nearby. She seems to be the *mudrā* or the female partner in Tāntric rites.

In the orgiastic scenes of the 11th century temples of Modhera and Roda, and of the 12th century temple of Gaṭeśvara, ascetics are portrayed making peculiar hand-gestures, as if reciting *mantras* (phs. 146, 147). In a *liṅga-pūjā* scene (ph. 138), portrayed on the *narathara* row of the Modhera temple, ascetics are shown with exactly the same gesture. On the pillar of the same temple, a bearded ascetic stands in an amorous pose with two women.

The Brahmeśvara temple of Bhubaneswar, erected in the 11th century A.D. and dedicated to Śiva, portrays a Buddhist monk in precoital play with a woman. The 13th century Konarak temple shows an ascetic with matted hair and a gourd-pot making love to a coy woman. At Konarak there are also orgiastic scenes of *goyūthika* type IV-A and B, where bearded ascetics are portrayed.

The 12th century Hoysalesvara temple at Halebid shows a bearded ascetic with a *danḍa* and a clean-shaven Jaina or Buddhist monk, both having relations with one woman. While the latter mates with her in a *vyānata rata*, the former is involved in fellatio. Jaina or Buddhist monks also appear in the remnants from Ballāla II's time at Halebid. They are portrayed as participating in a *saṅghāṭaka* relationship. But the peculiarity of the depiction is that the monks hold an umbrella shading the woman (phs. 97, 149). The Chālukyan temple at Bagali shows an ascetic in a ridiculous position. A horse mates with a bearded ascetic with *jaṭā* who is bent down (ph. 102). Another ascetic with similar characteristics is shown indulging in *kākila* (ph. 150).

The noteworthy feature is that sometimes ascetics of rival sects are represented in erotic scenes of temples.¹⁵ The Vaiṣṇava temples of Khajuraho represent Kāpālikas and Buddhist or Jaina monks. The Śaiva temples of Bhubaneswar and Halebid represent Buddhist and Jaina monks respectively. Erotic scenes at the Sūrya temples of Modhera and Konarak represent ascetics with *jaṭā* and beard, who look similar to the Śaiva ascetics portrayed in *liṅga-pūjā* scenes at Modhera itself and at Bhubaneswar and Halebid.

Another significant fact is that we rarely come across ascetics practising Haṭha Yoga in temple sculpture. The yogic pose, it is claimed, changes the subtle centres of the body and helps in the

attainment of harmony. Some of the later works like *Tattvaṇṇakāśa* and *Prāṇatoṣaṇi* are said to prescribe sexual exercises as a means of the redemption for the yogīs and the attainment of Divine bi-unity and Supreme knowledge.¹⁶ The Tāntrikas are said to have made use of Haṭha Yoga techniques in their *maithuna* rituals. However, instead of the portrayals of ascetics in sexo-yogic poses, the main poses in which they are portrayed on temples are: (i) *dhenuka* or *vyānata rata* (congress from rear) seen at Khajuraho (the Viśvanātha temple), Ambernath and Halebid; (ii) fellatio seen at Modhera, Galteśvara, Roda, Ambernath and Halebid; (iii) *kākila* seen at Khajuraho, Bagali, etc. Ascetics are depicted in precoital standing poses at Konarak, Bhubaneswar, Ambernath, Modhera, Dabhoi, etc. Even auto-erotism and exhibitionism are widely associated with the sculptural depiction of ascetics. Sexually excited ascetics are portrayed at Khajuraho, Bhubaneswar, Bavka, Delmal, Galteśvara and Ambernath.

Thus, far from representing ascetics in the disciplinary poses of Haṭha Yoga, they are even shown in socially condemned practices like fellatio, *kākila*, auto-erotism and bestiality.

The depiction of ascetics, either with women or alone, became so popular a feature of the Medieval art that from the 11th century most of the temples of Gujarat and Rajasthan started depicting ascetics in place of the *vyāla* motif.¹⁷

Portrayal of Royal and Aristocratic Persons in Erotic Art

Royal and aristocratic persons are portrayed in erotic scenes since at least the 2nd century B.C. Portrayals of *mithunas* and mildly amorous groups on early Buddhist sites show richly dressed persons. One of the earliest coital scenes depicted on the terracotta of Tamluk represents a rich couple (ph. 11).

Although the *maithuna* scenes of the 6th–8th century temples of Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal and Bhubaneswar do not seem to represent royal persons, the portrayals of *mithuna* and mildly amorous groups (I-A and III-A) at these places are representatives of royal and aristocratic lovers.

From A.D. 900 royal and aristocratic persons frequently figure in *maithuna* depictions of temples. Specially noteworthy is the scene on the *antarāla* wall of the Kandariyā, where an aristocratic person is seen in the head-down pose (ph. 68). In numerous scenes at Konarak (phs. 58, 60), the male lover wears a head-dress similar to that worn by King Narasimhadeva who is represented in panels of the temple (ph. 154). Most of the erotic scenes of 11th–13th century temples at Bhubaneswar represent aristocratic and royal persons or ascetics. Aristocratic lovers are represented in Kāmaśāstrīya *bandhas* at Halebid, Somanathapur and Belgamve (phs. 94, 96, 149). Richly dressed persons take part in the bestiality scenes of Khajuraho and Belgamve.

The depiction of aristocratic and royal persons on temples was accepted in art-canons of Medieval Orissa. The *Śilpa Prakāśa*,¹⁸ ascribed to the period between the 9th and the 12th centuries A.D., prescribes the provision of *rājabandha* on the roof. It declares: "The pleasure-giving (images) of the King, the Princes, the Ministers and the Priests should be carved there in form of a frieze in life-like manner." "The King surrounded by his forces, the lover in company of his beloved, the Minister surrounded by friends, the Court with its spies..." "The Śilpin can carve these images according to his imagination, unlike other images on temples which are according to the rules of the śāstras."

Thus, by A.D. 800–1200, the *śilpa*-conventions—as seen from the actual depictions on temples and from the canons noted in the Orissan text—have recognized the carving of royal and aristocratic figures on the temple. It is also seen that their love-sports could be depicted in the *rājabandha*.

Warriors and Hunting Parties in Association with Erotic Scenes

Warriors and hunting parties are sometimes associated with erotic scenes in Medieval temple sculpture. Warriors are portrayed along with women at Belur, Halebid (phs. 91, 94) and Khajuraho.¹⁹ At Modhera and Galtésvara, warriors are shown near erotic scenes (ph. 76). At Bavka, erotic couples and hunting scenes are carved in the same panel of the *narathara* (ph. 83). At Halebid, Bhubaneswar and Mukhalingam, a warrior or guardsman with weapons is seen near couples.

Dancers and Musicians near Erotic Scenes

As is well known, dance and music have an important place in religious orgies. We know that at least from Patañjali's time music was played in temples. The couples, probably of ritual significance, carrying musical instruments are depicted on terracottas (ph. 4). In the Medieval period, almost all temples that have sculptural embellishment represent scenes of dance and music. In the temples of Orissa and Mysore, dance and music scenes occupy separate panels near erotic scenes. There are some temples, e.g. the Mukteśvara at Bhubaneswar and the Harihareśvara at Harihara, as well as the Jaina temples of Abu, where dancers and musicians are shown, but not the erotic figures.

But the significant point is that on the temples of Central India, Rajasthan and Gujarat, especially at Khajuraho, Padhavli, Ramgarh, Kiradu, Modhera, Motap, Bavka and Dabhoi, dancers and musicians are placed near couples and erotic groups. They also become part of the erotic scene turning it into revelry. For instance, at Motap, on the left side of the Nude goddess Chāmuṇḍā, there is an orgiastic scene while on the right side, there are musicians and dancers (phs. 78, 118). At Modhera, musicians and dancers are depicted near orgiastic groups. *Maithuna*, music-playing and dancing are shown near goddesses on the temple at Bavka (Frontispiece). At Padhavli (fig. XXIV, p. 139), near Gaṇeśa and his consort, there is a coital couple on one side and musicians on the other side. The Viśvanātha temple at Khajuraho depicts a man having relations with a woman, who seems to have been forced into the sexual act by another man. Next to them are musicians. The Ambernath temple also has scenes of dance and music amidst erotic representations.

Placement of Erotic Motifs on Lotus Pedestals and in Temple-shaped Niches

Couples and orgiastic groups like other motifs are placed on lotus pedestals (phs. 42, 43, 46, 48, 50, 60) in the temples of Eastern India at Bhubaneswar, Puri and Konarak and of Rajasthan at Nagda.

This is significant because the lotus is not just a decorative motif, but an important sacred

symbol in Indian art and mythology. This flower is the birth place of Śrī, the goddess of fruitfulness, and of the Creator-god Brahmā himself. It thus acts as the womb of creation, the womb of the Universe.²⁰ It is the support of the Universe. The lotus also belongs to the eight *maṅgalas* or signs of good luck.²¹ According to Stella Kramrisch,²² the *yāntric* character of the lotus pedestal is pronounced by the *Viṣṇudharmottara*, which states “that god only and no other should be worshipped on lotus by contemplating whom in mind it was set up.”

In Orissa, the erotic motif is also placed in temple-shaped niches called *muṇḍis* (phs. 44, 45, 51). *Muṇḍis* have depictions of deities also.

The sacred aspect of the lotus pedestal and the temple-shaped *muṇḍi* has to be borne in mind for understanding the rationale of erotic representation.

Sexual Figures Flanking Deities

An important aspect of sexual depiction is revealed in its association with deities (Frontispiece). Sexual figures flank deities in temples of Gujarat, Rajasthan and the Deccan. This could not have been a mere decorative device, but seems to have been a symbolic expression of the belief that sexual practices near deities promote fertility and fruitfulness and drive away evils and misfortune. In Tāntric rites *maithuna* is a *makāra* which is offered to deities. More direct and spontaneous expression of this belief is seen at Motap, where Chāmuṇḍā sits in *uttānapad* pose, exposing her yoni and is attended by female followers. On her left is an orgiastic scene (ph. 118). Again, the same temple and numerous other temples of Gujarat, specially at Bavka, Sunak, Galteśvara, and Dwarka, represent sexual figures flanking niched deities on the *kumbha* (phs. 79, 80). This mode of depiction is so much widespread and associated with religious art in the Gujarat pattern of culture that at Dabhoi, the two temples in the fort have depictions of erotic figures near deities on the *kumbha* row, whereas the rest of the wall of the fort depicts dancing figures flanking the images of deities. Several temples of the Deccan like Ambernath, Balsane, Devlana show erotic figures around niched deities on the *kumbha* (ph. 89). A pillar in the northern porch of the Ambernath temple has a depiction of two men with their excited phalli in their hand, flanking a seated goddess (ph. 120), reminding us of the Tāntric practice of offering semen to the goddess or of pleasing the goddess by sexual gestures, mimicry, etc. (see Chapter VII).

Some Typical Scenes

Some of the typical scenes noted by me in connection with the erotic theme are those depicting hair-cutting, child-birth, female partner in *abhaya mudrā*, and in *uttānapad* pose resembling that of the “personified yoni” type of goddess.

Hair-cutting and sexual relations are simultaneously represented in sculptures of Orissa at Ratnagiri (fig. XXV, p. 140), Bhubaneswar and Konarak, and in Mysore at Bagali (phs. 134-136). The peculiarity of these four sculptures is that they depict the cutting of a man's hair while he has relations with a woman. In the sculptures of Bhubaneswar and Bagali, the man has relations with the same woman who cuts his hair, while in those of Konarak and Ratnagiri, another person cuts the hair of the man. The sculpture of Bhubaneswar represents cunnilingus, while those of the other three temples represent the actual sexual act. But the common point in all these scenes is that it is

the man whose hair is cut and that hair-cutting is shown along with the practice of the sexual act or love-making. This motif provides us with interesting material of a cultic character which is examined in Chapter VII. A ritualistic scene at Pattadakal is also probably connected with hair-cutting. The females hold some object in one hand and pull the hair of their partners with the other hand (ph. 137).

Child-birth scenes are seen mainly on temples of Gujarat, Rajasthan (Ranakpur), Central India, Maharashtra and late Medieval temples and *rathas* of the Mysore region. The most typical among these are scenes at Bavka depicting a woman giving birth to a child, while in the background stands a copulating couple (ph. 133). This theme is represented on two sides of a deity. At Modhera and at Galtesvara, the child-bearing woman is shown in a pose which resembles the "Nude goddess." At both these places the scenes are represented near bestiality themes (ph. 129).

The scenes depicting a woman in *abhaya mudrā* while a man has sexual relations with her are depicted on the Rājārāṇī temple of Bhubaneswar (phs. 42, 43).

In several *maithuna* representations in the Śuṅga-Kuṣāṇa terracottas of Chandraketurah (phs. 7, 10), the female partner is shown in an *uttānapāda* pose which resembles that of the "personified yoni" type of goddess described in Chapter II. In temple sculpture also, we find the representation of the female partner in this pose at Aihole (fig. X, p. 31), Bagali (ph. 102), Chhapri,²³ Gandikota,²⁴ etc.

Erotic Representation in the Interior of the Temple and on the Garbhagriha

It is generally believed that erotic scenes are confined to the exterior of the temple and also that they do not occur on the wall of the *garbhagriha*. Let us verify this belief. The erotic motif is represented both on the exterior and the interior of the Central Indian, Gujarat and Maharashtra temples, whereas in Orissa and Mysore it is confined mainly to the exteriors. In Orissa, there is only one exception, viz. the *bhogamaṇḍapa* of the Liṅgarāja temple, which represents erotic motifs on the pillars of the interior. Similarly, the Hoysala shrines in the Mysore region do not represent the erotic theme in their interiors. But the early Chālukyan shrines at Aihole and Pattadakal and the late Medieval temples of the Vijayanagara period depict erotic motifs in the interiors.

The representation of erotic motifs on the exterior wall of the *garbhagriha* is generally seen on temples of Orissa, Central India and Gujarat, while rarely on the Hoysala temples of Mysore. There are only three small erotic representations on the *garbhagriha* of the Hoysalesvara temple at Halebid, while there are none on those of the Belur and Somanāthapur temples. But the Chālukyan temple at Bagali represents erotic motifs on the *garbhagriha* profusely.

Sectarian Affiliation of Temples Not Relevant to Erotic Representation

If temples of different regions but of the same religious sect show basic similarities in their erotic representation, then we can legitimately draw a conclusion that these motifs are subject to sectarian determination. But, instead of similarities, if they show wide disparities, then we would be right in concluding that factors other than the religious affiliation of temples influenced the

nature of erotic motifs. When we study and compare erotic motifs of the Saura²⁵ shrines of three different regions, viz. the 11th century temple at Modhera in Gujarat, its contemporary, the Chitragupta temple at Khajuraho in Central India, and the 13th century Konarak temple in Orissa, we can see that though the erotic motif is profusely depicted on these three temples, there is hardly any similarity in the nature of depiction and in the thematic content of the motifs. The Modhera temple, in common with the cultural pattern of Gujarat, does not assign as significant a place to erotic motifs in its sculptural scheme as it assigns to the divine figures and *surasundarīs*. Sexual representation is dealt with in a crude manner and is relegated to unimportant places. The Khajuraho Sūrya temple represents erotic motifs on the *jaṅghā* along with the figures of deities and *surasundarīs*, and also on the plinth, superstructure, cornices, etc. The portrayal is refined and elegant, and contrasts sharply with that of the Modhera temple. At Konarak, the erotic motif is ubiquitous and is seen on all major parts of the temple. It is placed on the lotus pedestals and in temple-shaped *muṇḍīs* and thus venerated by the builders of the temple. Here the Sūrya temple of Konarak has great similarity with its neighbours, the Śaiva temple of Liṅgarāja and the Vaiṣṇava temple at Puri. Thus, the place allotted to the erotic motifs on the temples is in accordance with the architectural canons of the region. The sectarian affiliation of the temple is not the determining factor in the treatment of erotic motifs on the temple.

Coomaraswamy,²⁶ while referring to the erotic representation on the Sūrya temple at Konarak, says, "The rich external decoration reflects the life of the world and the energizing power of the Sun." But, as we have seen, there are differences in the erotic representation in the shrines belonging to the Sūrya cult. Moreover, not all temples of the Sun god represent sex in their sculptural scheme. As B. J. Sandesara²⁷ reports, there are no erotic figures on the Sūrya temples at Than and Srinagar near Porbander in Saurashtra. Even the famous Mārtaṇḍa temple of Kashmir, built by King Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa in the 8th century, does not show any orgiastic group.

Fergusson²⁸ believed that obscenity was a very common characteristic of Vaiṣṇava temples all over India, but was not frequent in Śaiva temples. But sexual representation is seen on Hindu temples of all sects, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Śākta, Saura. Even the rare example of the shrine dedicated to Brahmā at Khed-Brahma in Gujarat has representations of coital couples on the plinth and the *kumbha*. The Jaina and Buddhist shrines of the Medieval period are also not free from erotic display. The Pārśvanātha temple of Khajuraho, the Bhāṇḍa deval at Arang in Raipur district, and the 15th century temple of Ranakpur are Jaina shrines which have portrayals of *maithuna*. Ratnagiri in Orissa is among the few Tāntric Buddhist shrines depicting sexual scenes.

Thus, it can be said in general that sexual representation is not determined to any significant extent either in theme or in form by the particular religious sect to which the temple belonged. There is nothing Śaiva or Śākta or Vaiṣṇava in the treatment accorded to the erotic motif on the temple. It was an auspicious and magico-defensive *alaṅkāra* accepted in art of the period. We know that from A.D. 900 temples of an art-region, irrespective of their religious affiliations, show a common pattern of sexual representations. In Gujarat, for example, Medieval temples which have erotic representations reveal a common pattern of treatment to the motifs which is crude in character, and a common way of placing them around the deities on the *kumbha*, *narathara*, *kakshāsana*, cornices, pillars, etc. That the choice of the theme was also subject to regional determination can be seen from the fact that Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples of Mysore depict *saṅghāṭaka* of type II-B, whereas the Śaiva (Liṅgarāja), Vaiṣṇava (Jagannātha) and Saura (Konarak) temples of Orissa give im-

portance to type III-C. It can, therefore, be seen that temples of all religious sects followed the regional style in their portrayal of erotic motifs.

Erotic motifs appear also in secular public art. As residential and public buildings were built in wood and perishable material, there are few remains of secular architecture. But literary evidence²⁹ provides us with data on the portrayal of *mithuna* figures on palaces, *nātyagriha*, etc. as early as the 1st-2nd century A.D. Some of the late Medieval buildings of Gujarat represent one or two copulating couples in the corners³⁰ where they are not meant to be seen. Their presence, nevertheless, seems to fulfil some particular function. They probably suggest the prevalence of some strong belief, not necessarily connected with any religious sect in particular, but associated with a magico-religious substratum common to all religions.

We have placed the factual data about erotic sculpture before the reader. These will remain valid notwithstanding the controversies regarding their explanation or interpretation.

Inadequacy of Certain Hypotheses

Let us now examine some of the explanations given to account for the existence of sexual motifs on temples and see whether these explanations are consistent with the tenor and extent of sexual representation as it exists.

There is an explanation, based primarily on the philosophical concepts of the Upaniṣads, according to which the function of erotic motifs on the temple would be to convey the phenomenal aspect of the Non-dual state of the Highest Reality.³¹ Ānanda or divine bliss is believed to be expressed through the state of human sexual union. The erotic figures are symbolic representations of the union of Ātman and Brahman or of Puruṣa and Prakṛiti or the Male and Female principles of the universe. But this explanation is inadequate³² in so far as it fails to account for the existence of numerous sculptures depicting gross sexuality, orgies, bestiality, etc. Further, auto-erotic poses of ascetics and *śurasundarīs* and nudity-exposing figures not only do not support this view but actually invalidate it. There are also sculptures of forced sexual unions (p. 98, 148). The innumerable crude portrayals of the theme on temples of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Mysore are by no means representations of the union of Ātman and Brahman or of Ānanda.

Another idealistic interpretation consists in considering erotic figures as expression of Kāma,³³ the third *puruṣārtha*, which includes instinctive and emotional life of man and his aesthetic urges. But Kāma is only one aim of life and is subservient to Dharma. It is not an end in itself. Unrestrained gratification of sexual urges was never prescribed in the *śāstras*. But the sexual depictions on temples include numerous orgiastic scenes which cannot be in accordance with Dharma or moral codes. Kāma as *puruṣārtha* can admit only lawful and socially recognized forms of sexual relationships. If so, the portrayal of oral congress which is a socially prohibited pose ought not to have been on temples. Further, it is also maintained that other *puruṣārthas*, viz. Dharma and Artha, are portrayed on temples.³⁴ Dharma is seen on the higher parts of the temple, Artha on the middle and Kāma on the lower portions. But no such scheme is observed on the temples. Again, Dharma is believed to have been represented in the portrayal of ascetics. But we know that very often even ascetics are shown in sexual scenes. To represent Artha, there should be scenes of hunting and war, agricultural and pastoral life, trading and shipping activities, etc. We do find the sculptures of the first two varieties in insignificant parts of the temple, but rarely of the last category.

Another version of the idealistic view holds that sexual desires and appetite have to be conquered by one who wants to attain the Divine. Erotic figures are, therefore, put on the external walls of the temples,³⁵ thereby suggesting that they have to be left behind in the attainment of Mokṣa. It rests on the idea that freedom from sex is a condition necessary for reaching the Highest Reality. This is just the opposite of the above-mentioned view that sexual act symbolizes the union of Ātman and Brahman. But, as we have seen, erotic figures are depicted both on the exterior and the interior of the shrine and also on the *garbhagriha* wall.

An alternative view suggests that devotees who pass sexually unperturbed at the sight of erotic figures can attain the Divine. Sexual figures are tests of devotees' spiritual strength.³⁶ But, as U. P. Shah and K. K. Pillay have pointed out, this view is not tenable, as all people and not *sādhus* alone were allowed to enter the shrine.³⁷ Even today, pilgrims of Jagannātha and Liṅgarāja temples are not supposed to, and as a matter of fact do not, consider the erotic figures as tests to measure their spiritual progress. Further, the fact that in some temples erotic figures have been specifically placed in hidden corners cannot be explained by this hypothesis.

Another popular explanation, which regards the erotic figures as meant for sex education,³⁸ hardly requires any comment as it is not based on a careful study of the sculptures. The depiction of orgies, bestiality scenes and auto-erotic poses cannot, by any stretch of imagination, have the purpose of educating the public.

General Observations

Now we will examine the salient points emerging from the actual representation of erotic sculpture.

(1) We have seen in Chapter II that the depictions of couples on terracottas and similar objects are representative of ritualistic pairs in fertility rites. The portrayal of couples on early stone monuments also indicates that they had an auspicious function. In the Early Medieval period, the depictions of coital pairs seem to be magico-religious in function, e.g. on the door of the Aihole temple and the *sikhara* of Bhubaneswar temples. In the period after A.D. 900, the acceptance of sexual motifs in one form or other by all the regional schools suggests the prevalence of some strong beliefs in connection with the depiction of sex. The depiction of sex around deities on the *kumbha* of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Deccan temples is probably suggestive of its association with beliefs and practices of fertility cults in general and Tāntrism in particular. The confinement of erotic figures to the unfrequented corners of some of the temples of the Deccan and Vijayanagara suggests the belief in efficacy of sex depiction in averting evils and securing the safety of the temple. Some of the sculptures seem to represent magico-religious themes, e.g. bestiality scenes where an animal is having contact with a woman, hair-cutting rite along with copulation, a child-bearing woman near erotic couples, erotic motifs placed on lotus pedestals and in temple-shaped niches, *nāga-mithunas*, nudity-exposing males and females, etc. The magico-religious beliefs and practices associated with the above themes will be examined in Chapters VI and VII.

(2) The portrayal of ascetics in sexual scenes, a noteworthy feature of Medieval temples, offers a glaring contradiction to the avowed Hindu cultural goal of Mokṣa through renunciatory means. The ascetics, who seem to be far from the yogic ideal of *kṛṣakāya* (lean body), are not practising any philosophico-yogic exercises for attaining *sahaja*, but are shown in all sorts of socially

condemned poses including oral congress and bestiality. These ascetics in sexual scenes are undoubtedly Tāntrikas. But the public display of Tāntrikas and their practices contradicts the basic tenets of Tāntrism which was esoteric and highly secretive in nature. Moreover, we have seen that sexual figures come to be depicted at different times in different regions. The late portrayal of orgiastic groups in Orissa, which came under strong Tāntric influence earlier, compared to Central India, Gujarat and the Deccan, suggests that the depiction of orgies was not functionally related to Tāntrism. Further, Tāntric orgies of Chakrapūjā would very probably correspond to what we designate as erotic group of type VI, where many pairs participate in a simultaneous orgy. This group is shown mainly in Gujarat, the Deccan and Central India and rarely in Orissa which was a more important Tāntric centre. We have dealt with these problems in the chapter on Tāntrism.

(3) The influence of secular and playful aspects of sex is also manifest since the Ancient period, as evidenced by the relics of Bodh Gaya, Mathura, the trade-route sites of the Western Deccan, Amravati, Nagarjunakonda, etc. In the Early Medieval period, feudal tastes are visible in erotic groups of type III in the Deccan caves. Participants in the subdued erotic groups represented at Deogarh, Ajanta, Pattadakal, etc. are aristocratic in appearance. Royal and wealthy persons are portrayed in erotic scenes of Medieval temples all over India. Their participation along with ascetics in orgiastic scenes is specially noteworthy at Khajuraho. Poses indicative of harem sexual practices as depicted in later paintings patronized by provincial courts, having a king or a nobleman amidst numerous women, are rare, but those showing kings along with Tāntric ascetics in sexual orgies are numerous, reminding us of the accounts of Kṣemendra, Kalhaṇa and other Medieval writers. The representations of a decorated bed in Mysore sculptures suggest sex in the *ratimandira* (love-chamber). The warriors in erotic scenes remind us of the contemporary literary descriptions of sex life on war fronts.

The ostentatious tastes and display characteristic of affluence are reflected in temple art in its magnificent, ever-expanding architectural space and the splendour of its sculpture. Hunting scenes, armies preparing for war, kings in court, are some of the typical scenes recalling a feudal background. The general sensuousness of the public is mirrored in the lusty, sometimes inviting and alluring forms of female figures. The profusion of erotic motifs indicate the enormous pre-occupation with sex, which is also manifest in secular art objects and literature.

(4) In the period after A.D. 900, there can be noticed a distinct influence of regional schools of art in the treatment of erotic motifs, specially in respect of their placement in the sculptural scheme of the temple and thereby in their size and in their thematic content or types of representation. This indicates the role of regional conventions in the treatment of erotic representation of Medieval temples.

Thus, the basic undercurrents behind sexual depictions are:

- (i) magico-religious beliefs and practices associated with sex, as seen in fertility rites in general and Tāntrism in particular,
- (ii) interest in secular aspects of sex, the impress of the aristocratic class and its association with Tāntrikas,
- (iii) the role of conventionalism and regionalism, specially after A.D. 900.



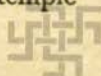
VI. Sex in Religion: Magico-Religious Beliefs and Practices

THE PORTRAYAL OF sex on religious buildings in any civilized society would pose problems, and more so in the case of Indian society whose culture emphasizes *tapas* (austerity), *vairāgya* (detachment) and *sannyāsa* (renunciation) for the attainment of Mokṣa. The resolution of this paradoxical situation depends on our recognition of the fact that along with these ideals, Hinduism also retains beliefs and practices connected with fertility and vegetation cults.

We have seen that erotic sculptures are influenced not by any philosophical symbolism of highly evolved thought systems, but by those religious beliefs and practices which reflect the primal connection between sex and religion. An attempt has been made in this chapter to study the relationship between sex and religion in general and its manifestation in the Hindu temple in particular. Our approach is anthropological as well as socio-historical.

Hinduism encompasses higher religious ideals, spiritualism, mysticism and asceticism on the one hand and magical beliefs, superstitions and rituals which constitute the popular religion on the other. As M. N. Srinivas¹ says: "While the intellectual has all along concentrated on the Upanishads, Bhagvat Gītā and the philosophical systems, to the ordinary Hindu, the innumerable feasts, fasts, *vratas*, pilgrimages and occasional visits to nearby temples constitute the stuff of religious life." Moti Chandra² also says that Hindu religion is rightly termed as a conglomeration of beliefs ranging from the monotheism of Vedānta to the animistic beliefs of primitive tribes. He points out that "so far as ancient Indian art is concerned it shows the survival of popular religions, beliefs, symbols and iconography, which, in spite of a thin veneer of spirituality, belong to a world which is not concerned with abstract spirituality and metaphysical speculations but to a world in which Yakshas, Nāgas, Śiva, tree spirits and animals play an important part."

Hinduism is such a vast array of ideas, beliefs and practices that it is pertinent to inquire as to which aspects of Hinduism have a bearing on the temple. The religious setting of the temple involves the "behavioural," "practical" or actual side of religion which is represented in ceremonies, worship, celebrations of festivals, etc., rather than idealistic philosophies.³ The very concept of the temple



implies a concrete image of the deity who is worshipped and in respect of whom rituals and ceremonies are performed either by individuals or by a regulated system of *pūjā* (worship) as obtained in the present-day temples of Bhubaneswar, Puri, Dwarka, Rameswar and a host of minor shrines.⁴ The deities who are enshrined in Medieval temples, viz. Śiva, Devī, Gaṇeśa, Viṣṇu, Sūrya and the subsidiary divinities, reflect their association with cults of fertility. We will see in this chapter that festivals, some of which are celebrated within precincts of the temple, reveal traces of fertility magic. Likewise, the rites associated with the construction of the temple, the *pūjā* and *vidhis* performed in the temple and the *devadāsī* institution betray unmistakable traits of fertility magic.

When studying the religion of Ancient India, we are dealing with a religion of an evolved and complex civilization. However, archaic cultural elements which characterize early social organizations continued to be present in religious practices. The prevalence of sex in temple art can be accounted for by the central role that sex plays in early religion.

SECTION 1. ROLE OF SEX IN RELIGION

The intimate connection between sex and religion is predominant in primitive societies as well as in those civilized societies which preserve elements of primitive culture in their religion. James Frazer⁵ in his classical work, *The Golden Bough*, has shown the essential role of sex in religious rituals and beliefs of early civilizations and non-literate cultures. Robert Briffault⁶ also emphasizes in this connection: "Although the erotic character of religious symbolism and ritual tends in general to become restrained in the highest phases of culture, it is displayed in the fullest manner in those cultural stages that have immediately preceded them and is conspicuous in the ancient religions of the most advanced and highly civilized peoples."

The central conception of ancient religion has been clearly stated by Jane Harrison⁷ in her famous study of Greek religion. According to her, the religious impulse is directed "primarily to one end and one only, the *conservation and promotion of life*. This end is served in two ways, one negative, one positive, by the riddance of whatever is conceived to be hostile and by the enhancement of whatever is conceived of as favourable to life. Religious rites are primarily of two kinds and two only, of expulsion and impulsion." The dual task before primitive man is to get rid of evil—hunger and barrenness—and to secure good—"food and fertility." We will presently see that sex is attributed with magical power and is employed as a means to achieve these two basic magico-defensive and magico-propitiatory purposes.

Archaeological evidence from as early as the Palaeolithic period⁸ shows that a magico-religious cultus had developed around the primary existential needs of man. Evidence of graves, burial rituals and funeral offerings points to deep preoccupation with and concern for death. Cave paintings and figural art of this period, again, show application of magic for food gathering and hunting.

Before we proceed to show the role of sex in magico-religious rites we shall briefly mention the principles on which magic is based. Magic consists of a variety of ritual methods whereby events are believed to be automatically influenced by supernatural means.⁹ Frazer's distinction between "imitative" and "contagious" magic is well-known.¹⁰ The first is based on the concept that like produces like or that an effect resembles its cause; and the second, on the concept that

things which have been once in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed. From the first of these principles the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires by imitating it. From the second he infers that whatever he does to a material object will also happen to the person with whom the object was once in contact, whether it formed part of his body or not.

It is important to clarify the interrelationship between magic and religion. We have accepted Frazer's explication of magic and its role in fertility rites, but we do not agree with his view that magic is a pre-religious stage in mankind's progress. The two fields—magic and religion—merge and are not sharply distinguishable in actual practice.¹¹ Even in the religions of advanced civilizations magical elements appear side by side with worship and supplication. In India also the division between magic and religion is tenuous.¹² The propitiation of deities is often through magical means. Techniques implying magic such as *mantra*, *yantra*, etc. are accepted in the religious practices of Tāntrism. Vedic religion included magical techniques of *yajñas*, *mantras*, etc.

Unlike the evolutionary school of anthropologists we do not use the word "magic" in a derogatory sense. It is considered a technique, accessory to religious practices and even to yogic and spiritual disciplines. Frazer's conceptual distinction between magic and religion has been "revived, refined and amplified" in recent times by E. Norbeck¹³ and W. Goode.¹⁴ As the latter says: "Magic and religion are not a dichotomy but represent a continuum and are distinguished only ideal-typically." The term "magico-religious," therefore, is useful in describing phenomena which fall within this continuum and have both magical and religious characteristics in varying proportions.

Sex has been attributed with magical power and is one of the principal components of magico-religious rites. The idea behind it seems to be that sex, which generates life, can, on the principle of imitative magic, rejuvenate natural forces. It is conceived of as a creative force which has power to revivify things. It is used for fertility purposes. We have used the word "fertility" in a broader sense to include both its primary purposes of multiplication and revitalization of animals, vegetation, earth and human beings and also its wider connotations, viz. the aversion of evil, death, misfortune and promotion of life, happiness, prosperity, well-being, abundance and auspiciousness. For instance, fertility charms and amulets ward off the evil eye and facilitate safe delivery, promote fertility of the wearer, etc. Briffault¹⁵ also says that sexual rites of early religion are not confined to promoting the fertility of women, of the soil and of livestock. "The utilitarian effects of sexual activity extend, in early ritual, to practices intended to promote the general welfare of the community and to avert danger and misfortune." J. Gonda¹⁶ has also used the word "fertility" in its wider application.

The magical power of sex is manifest both in actual practices and symbolic representation in religious rituals. The former includes the performance of the sexual act, the celebration of the marriage and union of deities representing female and male principles of nature by their human surrogates, and the exposing of female and male generative organs in religious rituals. The latter includes the oral expression, mimicry and visual depiction of sexual practices. Both actual and symbolic elements are, however, often merged in rituals. We have examined below four major ways in which sex is employed for fertility purposes:

- (i) ritual copulation and celebration of marriage of deities,
- (ii) exposing of nudity and worship of female and male organs,

- (iii) speaking obscene language and making indecent gestures,
- (iv) depiction of sex.

Among non-sexual magical acts for fertility may be mentioned offering of hair,¹⁷ swaying on swings,¹⁸ *aṅkurārpaṇa*¹⁹ or ritual planting of seeds, the use of red²⁰ colour, the use of *nidhiśṛṅga*²¹ or horn, etc.

Ritual Copulation and Marriage of Gods

The ritual act of copulation has been credited with magical power. As E. O. James says: "So intimate appeared to be the relation between the processes of birth and generation and those of fertility in general that the two aspects of the same "mystery" found very similar modes of ritual expression under pre-historic conditions."²² It is believed that coition which ensures fertility of human beings would magically enhance the fertility of the earth, vegetation, animals, etc. It was considered also as a magico-protective device against calamities.²³ Ritual prostitution also served the purpose of removing calamities, epidemics, etc. We shall deal with sacred prostitution later in the chapter.

The magical connection between human copulation and the planting of seed in earth among primitive people and the peasant population of Europe is noted by Briffault. He says that the peasants in Holland and Germany copulate with their wives in the fields after they have been sown. He gives evidence to show that "agricultural festivals and more especially those connected with the planting of the seed and the gathering of the harvest, present in every region of the world and in every age the most conspicuous examples of general sexual licence."²⁴

Frazer²⁵ says that on the Spring and Summer festivals of Europe the powers of vegetation were personified as male and female, and that on the principle of homeopathic or imitative magic, the King and Queen of May represented the marriage of sylvan deities for the purposes of fertility. It was believed that the more closely the mock marriage aped the real marriage of the woodland spirits, the more effective would be the charm. He points out, "the profligacy which notoriously attended these ceremonies was at one time not an accidental excess but an essential part of the rites," and "in the opinion of those who performed them, trees and plants could not be fertile without the real union of the human sexes."

Similarly, in accordance with the belief that the goddess of fertility must herself be fertile, she was provided with a male partner. The aim of the union was to promote fruitfulness of the earth, of animals and of mankind. It was believed that this object would be surely attained if the sacred marriage was celebrated every year, the parts of the divine bride and the bridegroom being played either by their images or by living persons.²⁶

Sacred marriages of gods or their human surrogates were celebrated in many parts of the world, survivals of which are seen in the May Day, Whitsuntide and Midsummer celebrations of Europe, marriage celebrations of Hindu deities in temples and folk ceremonies such as *Tulasī-vivāha* (marriage of basil plant with Viṣṇu). Divine marriages were also celebrated in Babylonia, Egypt and Greece. The union of the sky-god Zeus and the corn-goddess Demeter took place at Eleusis.²⁷ The hierophant and the priestess of Demeter acted the parts of the god and the goddess. The sacred union was undertaken for the purpose of agricultural fertility.

In ancient India, *Prithivī* (Earth) and *Dyauh* (Heaven) were regarded as a pair and their

cosmic intercourse has been expressed in the *Rigveda*.²⁸ From the *Gṛhya Sūtras*²⁹ we know that a *balī* was offered to *Prithivī* and *Dyauh* before the ploughing of the earth began at the advent of first rains. The Earth was also known as *Sītā* and was the wife of *Indra*, the god of rains. Keith suggested that the union of the Earth with the Sun was symbolized in the Vedic *Mahāvratā* rite.³⁰

Even today the belief is prevalent in many regions that the fertility of the soil depends upon the periodic marriage of the Mother Earth with her male consort.³¹ The marriage of the Earth with the Sun god is celebrated annually by present-day tribals, notably the Oraons of Bengal when the *Śāla* tree is in blossom. The concept of the marriage of the Sun and the Earth being too abstract for the primitive mind, the mystic union is dramatically represented in public by a priest and his wife who take the role of divinities amidst merry-making. "They dance and sing obscene songs and finally indulge in the vilest orgies." This divine marriage is celebrated "as a charm to ensure the fertility of the ground."³²

The myth of the *Dulhādeva*, the young bridegroom who is wedded and slain in the midst of marriage rites, reminds us of the sacrifice of the corn spirit and also reflects the same ritualistic purpose. The worship of *Dulhādeva* is met with in the complex of religious beliefs and practices of Central India and the southern part of Uttar Pradesh.³³ It is very popular among the *Śābara* tribe of Bundelkhand. That the myth and rituals of *Dulhādeva* were popular in *Khajuraho* is attested by the fact that a 12th century *Śaiva* temple of the place is locally known as *Dulhādeva* (*Dulādeva*).

Fertility purposes of the sacred union are specifically stated in the *Vaikhānasas* of the *Taittirīya* branch of the *Black Yajurveda*.³⁴ The union of *Viṣṇu* with his female partners is considered in these ancient texts as auspicious. "If the ritual wedding of the god and his two consorts is celebrated with due solemnity, then the women of the village will have sons and grandsons; they will enjoy all possible happiness and felicity."

In Hindu temples the periodic marriage of deities is celebrated with much pomp. At *Jejuri* near *Poona*, the marriage of *Khaṇḍobā* and *Mhālsā* is celebrated annually.³⁵ Now *Khaṇḍobā* or *Khaṇḍaka* was originally the patron *Yakṣa* of *Pratiṣṭhāna* (*Paithan*) and was known well before the 4th century A.D. in the Buddhist text *Mahāmayūri*.³⁶ It is then significant that the marriage of the *Yakṣa*, a deity of fertility, is annually celebrated and that sacred prostitution, which had an important place in cults of fertility, has, until recently, been associated with this temple.

The god of the famous *Līṅgarāja* temple of *Bhubaneswar* is married to the deity in the *Gaurī* temple on *Śitalāṣaṣṭhī* day every year. On that day the proxy of the god visits the *Gaurī* temple where the marriage is celebrated.³⁷

Jagannātha of the *Puri* shrine is married to *Rukmiṇī* on *Rukmiṇī-haraṇa Ekādaśī* every year. The proxy of *Jagannātha* goes to the neighbouring garden to abduct *Rukmiṇī* at night and marries her under the *Bo* tree.³⁸

At *Kanchipuram* in South India, in the temple of *Ekāmbareśvara*, the marriage of *Devī* in her aspect as *Kāmākṣī amman* is celebrated every year, the festivities lasting for thirteen days, attended, even today, by 10,000 devotees. The temple has portrayals of the marriage of *Devī* with *Śiva* and of *Devī* embracing the *Śivaliṅgam*.³⁹

The addition of the *kalyāṇa maṇḍapa*, the hall for marriage of deities, to the main shrine in South India in the *Vijayanagara* period, reveals the great importance of the concept of the marriage of deities in the Hindu religion of that period.

In the famous temple of *Kāmākhyā* at *Kāmarūpa* (*Assam*), the goddess was married to *bhogīs*

who were surrogates of Śiva, the husband of Devī Kāmākhyā. Before the annual festival when they were sacrificed to the goddess, they were treated as sacred and everything was put at their disposal.⁴⁰

In Medieval religious cults influenced by Tāntrism, specially in Tibet and Mongolia, every god was given a female partner, Prajñā or Śakti, who was represented with him sitting face to face in his lap in the *Yab-Yum* attitude. It was believed that the god was more disposed to grant requests if worshipped in company of his female partner.⁴¹ The worship of *Yab-Yum* and Prajñopāya was supposed to give great benefit. It was significantly called *samantobhadra* or wholly auspicious.⁴²

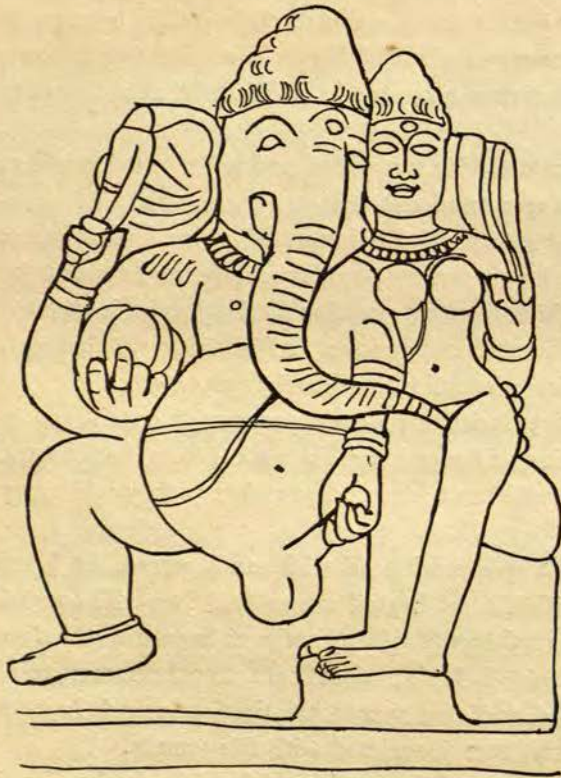


FIG. XX—Gaṇeśa and Śakti; Kumbhakonam

Tāntric literature and beliefs gave impetus to the worship of gods with their consorts which is also reflected in Medieval iconography. Temples of Bhubaneswar, Khajuraho, Kadwaha, Padhavli, Nagda, Bagali, Belur, Halebid, Somanathapur, Ambarnath, to mention just a few, have representations of deities in pairs and in amorous attitudes (phs. 110-113). Gaṇeśa, along with his Śakti, in his ithyphallic aspect and touching the yoni of his consort, is still worshipped in the Nāgeśvara temple of the late Chola period at Kumbhakonam in South India (fig. XX). Ithyphallic Śiva is shown in erotic play with Umā in numerous places of Eastern India, notably at Bhubaneswar (ph. 110) and in the Pāla school of art. *Dhyāna* (meditation) of Viṣṇu as Puruṣottama in his erotic aspect, as united with his consort and looking at her with a smile, is mentioned in the *Śāradātilaka Tantra* (XVII-30). Kṛiṣṇa Mīśra, the court poet of the Chandellas, shows even the righteous King Viveka, the great foe of Mahāmoha or Passion, praying to Viṣṇu who has "the marks of leaves impressed by the swelling breasts of Lakṣmī."⁴³

Sacred Union of Woman with God

The sacred union of a virgin with god was believed to enhance the fertility of the former and this belief has given rise to certain practices. To quote Briffault:⁴⁴ "Marriage is often preceded in the usages of primitive and ancient cultures by observances intended to bring about the union of the woman with the powers which are held to be the sources of fertility. This is sometimes effected directly by copulation with the image of god." In India, the girl before the union with her mortal husband was believed to belong to the three gods, Soma, Gandharva and Agni.⁴⁵ The practice of defloration of girls by means of the liṅgam was also prevalent.⁴⁶ Similar customs were known in other cultures also. For instance, it was obligatory for the Roman brides before their marriage to sit upon the statue of the phallic god Mutunus Tutunus.⁴⁷ In Babylonia, every woman was obliged

before her marriage to offer herself to a stranger who was considered god in disguise. Their union took place in the temple of Mylitta.⁴⁸

In this connection some scenes representing animal-woman relationships carved on Medieval Hindu temples may be mentioned. We have noted such scenes at various sites in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Central India, Maharashtra, Orissa and Mysore where a boar, a dog, a rodent or a donkey is generally involved in relation with a woman. The most significant of these scenes are on the 11th century pillar of Roda in Gujarat (now in the Baroda Museum) and on the pillar in the *maṇḍapa* of the Ambernath temple in Maharashtra. Both the scenes are almost identical and seem to represent a ritual in which a donkey-like creature is made to have sexual relations with a woman who is bent from her waist, while another stout figure holds the animal to keep it in a semi-standing position (ph. 130; fig. XXI). We do not have any literary evidence on such rituals.⁴⁹ Research on folklore may throw further light on the subject. But we must note that similar rites involving sexual practices, actual or symbolic, are known in ancient times in Egypt, Italy and other Mediterranean countries, up to the Tudor times in England, and among present-day tribes of Africa.⁵⁰ In ancient Rome, women practised ritual congress with the sacred ass, the representative of the god Pales. Herodotus has noted that among the Egyptians of Mendes, a woman's fertility was insured by her simulating union with the sacred goat, regarded as the representative of a god. Havelock Ellis explains the idea behind this rite thus: "the representative or even mere image of the deity is able, through a real or simulated act of intercourse to confer on the worshipper a portion of its exalted generative activity." According to him, "the figures of human beings and animals in conjunction carved on temples in India, also seem to indicate the religious significance which this phenomena sometimes prescribed."⁵¹

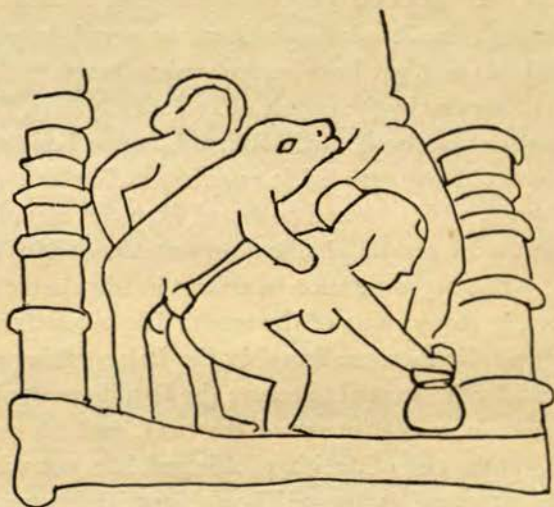


FIG. XXI—A bestiality scene; on a pillar of the *maṇḍapa*; Ambernath

Exposing of Nudity and Worship of Generative Organs

In certain magic rites nakedness was considered necessary. Some of the Vedic love charms and magic rites were to be performed naked.⁵² Nakedness was an important condition in the Tāntric rites of the *Ḍākinīs*. The *Kathāsaritsāgara* of the 10th century describes a queen performing these esoteric rites while standing naked in a *maṇḍala* (magic circle).⁵³ In the *kalaśa* ceremony of the temple nakedness was an essential feature.⁵⁴ Nudity rites were performed by women in rain-making ceremonies in many parts of the world.⁵⁵ They were known to have been performed by women until recently in the Khajuraho region for the purpose of bringing rain.⁵⁶

Magico-religious significance has been attributed to generative organs all over the world since early times.⁵⁷ Female and male genitals, known as *yoni* and *liṅgam* in India, are worshipped

and also considered to be endowed with magical power—both auspicious and defensive.

Genitalia have an apotropaic significance and are used for defensive purposes to turn aside evil.⁵⁸ The depiction of *ganās* with enlarged phalli in their hands, in the scene of Rāvaṇanugraha-mūrti of Śiva at Ellora and Bhuvaneswar (ph. 126) in the 7th–8th centuries, probably indicates the defensive function of the generative organ. Enemies are believed to be rendered helpless by the exposing of sexual organs. It has been suggested from the observation of agricultural customs in Egypt that the god Min, who holds his phallus in his hand, is to be understood as making a defensive gesture rather than an auto-erotic one.⁵⁹ The use of the procreative organ as an amulet to ward off the evil eye is widespread. Among the Romans, the phallus was deified in the form of god Priapus. The practice of carrying priapic figures, as amulets against the evil eye and bad luck, was prevalent amongst the Romans as well as the people of other European countries even in the Middle Ages, and has not yet been entirely abandoned.⁶⁰ Phallic emblems as protectives were displayed on their persons by the people of India, Babylonia, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Russia, the countries in Eastern Europe, England, etc.⁶¹ Richard Payne Knight,⁶² an eminent antiquarian of the 18th century, has noted various phallic practices in England during his time. Among the several amulets and charms, which he had collected from the city of London and bequeathed to the British Museum, there were certain phallic representations which continued to be in use in his time.

The representation of deities in ithyphallic state is one of the features of fertility cults and is seen in many parts of the world. Ithyphallicism is symbolic of virility and potency. Sketches of ithyphallic men are found in the Palaeolithic period.⁶³ In ancient Rome, ithyphallic deities were considered essential to secure the fertility of the fields. At Lavinium, the ithyphallic god Liber was driven in a chariot round the land, and his enormous member was crowned with flowers.⁶⁴ In Egypt the cult of the ithyphallic god Min was widespread. His statues were taken out in processions amidst sexual excesses.⁶⁵ The deities of virility and generation being taken out in the chariot reminds us of the Rathayātrā of gods in India.

The earliest example of ithyphallicism in India seems to be represented on the famous Indus Valley seal of the horned deity surrounded by animals (*paśus*).⁶⁶ In the historical period, Śiva and, sometimes, Gaṇeśa are represented ithyphallic and their worship in this aspect is considered to be beneficial. Śiva as Lakulīśa, with whom the Pāśupata cult is associated, is generally portrayed ithyphallic. The Eastern Indian shrines, specially at Bhuvaneswar, Khiching and Mukhalingam, have ithyphallic images of Śiva in his various aspects as Umā-āliṅgam-mūrti, Naṭarāja (phs. 39, 40) and Ardhanārīśvara.

Images of the headless “Nude goddess” in birth-giving position with sexual parts emphasized are found as early as 4000 B.C. in the Chalcolithic mound ten miles from Nineveh in northern Iraq.⁶⁷ Some of these statues are perforated, suggesting that they had been worn as amulets. Sometimes they were so badly modelled, showing only the generative organs that their extra-artistic intent is clear. They were possibly employed as charms or amulets to enhance fruitfulness and facilitate delivery of offspring. H. D. Sankalia⁶⁸ has shown the widespread prevalence of the figures of the Nude goddess in European, West Asian, Egyptian and South East Asian monuments. The nude female figures called “Sheila-na-gig” are seen on the Medieval churches of Europe. Noting the occurrence M. Murray⁶⁹ says, “The Christian Church was forced to allow them to be placed in conspicuous positions in and on the sacred edifices.”

The figures of the headless Nude goddess, with the sexual triangle emphasized, were found

in various Indian sites in the 1st-2nd century A.D. as noted in Chapter II. In the Early Medieval period the Nude goddess was worshipped at Alampur (ph. 114), Mahākuṭeśvara, Aihole, Bhinmal, etc. Some of the Medieval images of goddess Chāmuṇḍā represent her with outstretched legs in *uttānapad* pose (ph. 118). Nude female figures in *uttānapad* pose displaying their yoni are seen on pillars of the temples of the Vijayanagara period (ph. 117). Another type of female figure who stands exposing her yoni is seen on many Medieval temples, notably at Konarak (ph. 122), Bhubaneswar, Sonapur, Chhapri and Ambernath (ph. 121).

As generative organs are symbols of rejuvenation, their magical use in connection with death and burial customs is noticed all over the world. Cowries representing vulva are seen in large numbers in Palaeolithic burial sites most of which are miles away from the sea.⁷⁰ Numerous wooden phalli have been found in Egyptian tombs. The Greeks and the Etruscans placed the phallic emblem on graves as a token of resurrection.⁷¹ In India, the Pāśupatas enshrined *liṅgas* to commemorate the name of dead teachers.⁷² Many such *liṅgas* are preserved in the Bhāratīmaṭha of the Pāśupatas at Bhubaneswar. The Nāthapanthīs, who buried their dead instead of following the common Hindu practice of cremation, represented the symbol of yoni-liṅga on their graves. However, the custom has been philosophically explained. It is believed that the body of a yogī or *sannyāsin* who has attained liberation is identified with Śiva and hence the symbol of the latter is represented on his grave.⁷³

Magical Power of Obscene Language and Gesture

Obscenity and indecency of language and gesture are also believed to avert evil, danger and misfortune and promote fruitfulness. As Briffault says: "The operation of the divine generative power which brings about the fertility of nature, of animals, of women, is believed to be stimulated not only by sexual intercourse, but also by any act or speech of a lascivious and sensual character. In the primitive rites of fertility we do not come upon free love and promiscuity only; even where that is absent, even where the rites are carried out by women alone, and men are, as is so often the case, excluded, those rites are invariably characterized by what to us is indecency and obscenity."⁷⁴ Like ritual copulation, obscenity is believed to stimulate the generative powers of nature.

J. Gonda⁷⁵ has pointed out the ritual function of abuse and contumelious speech in Vedic culture. It averts misfortune and evil powers or leads them astray. It "purifies." For instance, in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (XIII, 5.2.9), scoffing, vilifying and derisive discourses are for "the attainment of all (things desired)." The *Kātyāyana Śrautasūtra* (XX, 6.21) also repeats the same idea. The use of obscene language in some of the important Vedic rites will soon be noted.

Obscene words and abusive language are believed to bring rain. This belief is recorded by W. Crooke as prevalent in Northern India.⁷⁶ Women of South India also sang obscene songs for bringing rain.⁷⁷ We will see that in the Devayātrā, or the festive procession of god, one of the features is singing of obscene songs along with the making of indecent gestures by the dancing girls of the temple. The purpose is to enhance fertility in general.

Obscene (*aślīla*) words and jokes are spoken on seasonal festivals such as Holī, Vasantotsava and Madanamahotsava and festivals in honour of deities. One of the chief features of Holī is the speaking of abusive jokes known as *bhāṇḍabadhāi*.⁷⁸ The word *bhāṇḍa* (Hindi) used as an adjective means shameless, abusive, obscene or indecent. In the festival of Gaṇeśachaturthī, there is a

practice of uttering abusive words at one's neighbour, who reciprocates. It is believed that the mutual abuse will remove the sin of seeing the moon on this day.⁷⁹ Obscene expressions are a main constituent of the celebrations of Śābarotsava on the tenth day of Durgāpūjā.⁸⁰ Jīmūtavāhana in his *Kālaviveka* (p. 514) notes that a person who does not participate in words, songs and acts (*kriyā*) relating to sex organs (*bhaga-līṅga*) incurs the wrath of the goddess. The practice is still associated with the worship of Durgā in rural Bengal. The worship of Mother goddess Jayā Durgā is also attended with vulgar acts like naked dances, speaking ill words about the deity herself and threatening her if she does not accept the worship.⁸¹ In Gujarat, the folk drama called Bhavāi, performed in honour of the goddess Ambā, involves obscene elements.⁸²

Magical Power of Depicted Sex

Like the ritual practice of sexual intercourse and the use of lascivious words, the depiction of sex is also a powerful magical charm. The magico-sexual themes represented in art include male and female figures exposing generative organs (phs. 121, 122, 124, 125, 127), the performance of the coital act (figs. I, X; phs. 7, 13, etc.) and also the refined versions of these in the form of *surasundarīs* with exposed pudenda (ph. 123), love-making couples (ph. 69), etc.

Magico-sexual depictions have been prevalent since the Palaeolithic period.⁸³ Female figurines or "Venuses" with exaggerated sexual parts were connected with hunting magic. As Annemarie Malefijt⁸⁴ says: "The main purpose of these art objects seems to be promotion and conservation of life in and through the outward signs of female fecundity. Frazer's principle of homeopathic magic —'like produces like' may well be applied here."

We have seen that sacred marriages of deities, often represented by their votaries or surrogates, were celebrated in many parts of the world, including India. Symbolic representations of this sacred pair are seen in art. One of the earliest depicted pairs in union, interpreted as representing sacred marriage, has been excavated at Catal Hüyük, a Neolithic site of Turkey, from shrine VI-A 30, belonging to about the 7th millennium B.C.⁸⁵ The "divine procreation," which was actually enacted by the Queen of Egypt sleeping in the temple of god Ammon, is carved and painted in great detail on the walls of the two of the oldest temples in Egypt—Deir el Bahari and Luxor.⁸⁶ Again, a 7th century B.C. Greek sculpture from Samos shows Zeus and Hera in an amorous pose⁸⁷ and represents the sacred pair or its human counterparts whose marriage was celebrated annually for fertility.

The depictions of goddesses of the "opulent" and the *pañchachūdā* types along with their male partners (phs. 1, 2, 4), which are found in ancient historical sites of India, described in Chapter II, presumably represent the sacred or ritual couples so essential in rites of fertility.

But why is the ritual pair portrayed in art? What is the significance of the depiction of this pair as distinct from the actual practice of the rite?

Jane Harrison⁸⁸ has pointed out the close connection between ritual and art in ancient religions. Ritual practices are often translated into art. Both ritual and art, according to her, start from the same impulse. Ritual recreates an emotion, art imitates it. For instance, the common source of the art and ritual of Osiris is the intense world-wide desire that the life of Nature which seemed dead should live again. This common emotional factor makes art and ritual in their beginning almost indistinguishable. Both, to begin with, copy an act, but not at first for the sake of copying.

Only when the emotion dies down and is forgotten does the copy become an end itself, a mere mimicry. From "representation repeated," there grows up a kind of "abstraction," which helps the transition from ritual to art.

Another possible interpretation, as pointed out in Chapter II, seems to be that the depiction of pairs was used as a substitute or surrogate for the actual performance of the rite. It possibly represented the transmutation of the actual love-making or sexual act to the symbolic depiction of it when the actual performance was considered objectionable with the change in social organization. The use of surrogates is known the world over in various rituals when certain elements in their practices become socially unacceptable or objectionable but the need for the rituals still persists, owing perhaps to cultural lag or inertia. In such a situation the surrogates are devised in the form of either visual depiction or verbal description and chanting to mimic or imitate the actual physical practice. Mock-practices and figural representations in sacrificial rites often serve the function of human and animal victims in many cultures. In the Vedic rite of Agnichayana, involving sacrifice of human beings, clay and gold surrogates were devised by the Sūtras of the Śukla Yajurveda.⁸⁹ Similarly, in rites like the Mahāvratā, substitutes might have been devised for the actual performance of copulation when in the 5th century B.C., texts like the *Śāṅkhāyana Śrautasūtra* objected to its execution.⁹⁰

Mircea Eliade's interpretation of sacred couples throws further light on depiction of erotic couples in religious art. According to him, "the couple personifying the power or genie of vegetation are in themselves a centre of energy, and able to increase the forces of power they represent. The magic force of vegetation is being increased by the very fact of being 'represented,' personified, we might say, by a young couple with the richest erotic *capabilities*, if not actual realizations. This couple, the 'bridegroom' and the 'bride,' are nothing more than an allegorical reflection of what once took place in very fact: they are repeating the primeval action of the sacred marriage."⁹¹ The represented couple has a magico-religious function. It is considered to be a centre of sacred energy.

Sexual depiction is also undertaken for protective purposes with a view to avoiding the evil eye. The belief in the evil eye was one of the most powerful superstitions in India and is mentioned by Pliny,⁹² the Roman historian of the 1st century A.D. The effects of an evil glance are believed to be neutralized or avoided by putting some blot or imperfection on the victim of the glance. Lamp-black is applied on the eyes and the face or an amulet is tied on the neck or arm. Some of the devices for protecting buildings, as mentioned by Thurston,⁹³ are the making of a wooden figure of a monkey with pendulous testicles, a figure of a Malayali woman with protuberant breasts and suspending these figures on buildings. Gardens and fields are protected by a straw figure, covered with black cloth and placed on a long pole. If the figure represents a male, it has pendent testicles, and if a female, well-developed breasts. Sometimes male and female figures are placed together in an embracing position. It is probably with the idea of protecting the building against the evil eye that obscene figures are placed in Jaina temples.⁹⁴

Obscene display is believed to scare away evil spirits. The spirits are said to dread the male and female principles. It is believed that thunder and lightning are demons and that they can be avoided by obscene depiction on buildings.⁹⁵ Such beliefs were prevalent in Orissa and Nepal in relation to erotic sculpture.⁹⁶ The depiction of one or two sexual scenes in public buildings of Gujarat⁹⁷ probably suggests its defensive role.

The belief that obscene depiction turns aside evil and sin is found in folklore and rituals. The legend, associated with the famous temples of Khajuraho as given in the Mahobākhaṇḍa of the *Prithvīrājarāso*, rests on this conception. The temples, replete with sexual motifs, are believed in the legend to be built for removing the sins of extramarital love committed by Hemāvati, the mother of the first Chandella king. Her son, the king, was supposed to perform a ceremony called Bhāṇḍa Yajña, a part of which consisted in erecting pillars covered with obscene sculptures.⁹⁸ A similar legend is associated with the last Chandella king and erection of pillars by him covered with obscene sculpture, one each at Mahoba, Kālāñjar, Bangarh and Khajuraho.⁹⁹ The ritual, involving obscenity, for removing sin of extramarital love is significantly called Bhāṇḍa Yajña. The word *bhāṇḍa*, as noted earlier, means obscene, indecent, etc. A temple at Arang having erotic sculpture is also known as Bhāṇḍa deval.

Sexual depiction is also seen in amulets and charms where it functions both "positively by imparting fertility and protectively by warding off injurious influences."¹⁰⁰ We have already noted the use of phallic amulets in many parts of the civilized as well as the primitive world.

Some Śilpaśāstras and other authoritative works have implicitly or explicitly recognized both the auspicious and protective aspects of erotic depiction. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the auspicious (*māṅgalya*) aspect of *mithunas* is clear in the 6th century work *Bṛhatsamhitā*. The *Hayaśīrṣa Pañcharātra* and its later version in the *Agni Purāṇa* mention that *mithunas* should decorate (*vibhūshayet*) the door.¹⁰¹ Decoration, *alaṅkāra*, as we shall see, has a magical function. The *Matsya Purāṇa*¹⁰² mentions carving of Gandharva *mithunas* along with other auspicious motifs such as *patrāvalī*, *kalpalatā*, *simha-vyāla*, Vidyādhara, etc. on the *prabhāvalī* of Viṣṇu images. The use of the expression *vāraṇārtham* (warding away) in connection with sexual depictions in the Utkalakhāṇḍa of the *Skanda Purāṇa*¹⁰³ suggests the defensive function of such depictions. The magico-protective and propitiatory aspects of sexual symbolism are explicitly mentioned in the Medieval Orissan text, the *Śilpa Prakāśa*. The Kāmakaḷā *yantra*, on which erotic figures are portrayed, is to be offered *pūjā* for *siddhi* (success) in *Śaktisādhana*. All obstacles and fears are believed to be destroyed through this portrayal. "Ghosts (*bhūtas*), departed spirits (*pretas*), goblins (*piśāchas*), demons (*kaṇṇapas*) and other hideous creatures will flee far away at mere sight of the *yantra*." "This *yantra* is giver of power and bestower of all *siddhis*."¹⁰⁴ The auspicious and protective aspects of sexual depiction are also evidenced in literary accounts of secular and residential architecture. *Mithunas*, along with other auspicious ornaments, decorated *toranas* of palaces.¹⁰⁵ The motif of *śālabhañjikā*, woman "fertilizing" the tree by her magical touch, was seen on the *toranas* of city ramparts and the pillars of the palaces and *nātyagrihas*.¹⁰⁶

Role of Woman in Magico-Sexual Rites

Woman plays an important role in the magico-sexual rites which are performed with a view to increasing the fertility of the soil and vegetation, to bringing rain and, in general, to assuring agricultural fruitfulness. Cultivation of the soil is believed to be magically dependent for success on woman and is connected with her child-bearing function. Beliefs in the homeopathic influence of woman on vegetation and vice versa are widely prevalent.¹⁰⁷ A pregnant woman is believed to communicate her fertility to plants and soil. For this reason, in Greece and Italy, pregnant women were sacrificed to the goddesses of corn and of the earth to promote fertility.¹⁰⁸ The function

of numerous clay sculptures in ancient civilizations representing female forms with accentuated sexual and maternal attributes could well be explained against this background. A clay figure of a birth-giving goddess found in a grain-bin at the Neolithic site of Catal Hüyük is very significant.¹⁰⁹

Numerous examples have been noted in India of the role of woman in rain-making rites. The common features in these rites are: secrecy attached to the function, exclusion of men, exposure of pudenda, singing of obscene songs and growing of barley (*yavānkura*). For instance, at Chhatarpur near Khajuraho, on the advent of rain, woman and her husband's sister used to take off their clothes and drop seven cakes of cowdung into a mud reservoir for storing grains.¹¹⁰ During the Gorakhpur famine of 1873-74, women invoked the rain-god stripping themselves naked and dragging the plough over the fields.¹¹¹ In South India also, the rain-making ritual is generally performed by women. When rain is needed, women make a small clay figure of a man, set it on a palanquin and carry it from house to house singing obscene songs and then place it in a field.¹¹² The famous Devī festival of Western India known as Gaṇagaura, which is celebrated in the month of Chaitra, is based on agricultural magic and is specially associated with women.¹¹³ According to ancient tradition, death was the penalty to any male intruding on the secret rites. Al Beruni and Gardizi in the Medieval period have also observed the exclusive participation of females in the Devī festival held on the Gaurīṭṭiyā of Vaiśākha.¹¹⁴

The secret character of agricultural rites in India reminds us of the Greek ceremonies of Dionysus, of Demeter Mysia and of Thesmophoria and of Egyptian rites in honour of Baubo where women were the sole participants.¹¹⁵

Śālabhañjikā

The role of woman in vegetation rites has been poetically expressed in the motif of *śālabhañjikā* or "woman and tree," which is depicted in Indian art from at least the 2nd century B.C. at Bharhut, Sanchi and Bodhi Gaya (pls. 18, 19), and which is a favourite motif of the Medieval sculptors. Vogel,¹¹⁶ who has studied the origin and development of this motif, shows that it has its roots in a flower festival customary in ancient India.

It is believed that a young woman can revitalize a tree and make it blossom by her touch. This belief is poetically expressed through the imagery of *dohada* or longing of a pregnant woman which is fulfilled by her husband. The tree is conceived of as having *dohada* for the company of a young woman. Different trees have different types of longings. The Āśoka tree desires the "kick" of a woman with jingling anklets, the Bakula tree the wine from her mouth, the Tilaka tree her glance, the Kuravaka tree her embrace, while the Nameru blossoms at her music, the Karṇikāra at her dancing, the Priyaṅgu creeper at her touch, the Mandāra tree by jokes cracked by her, and the Champaka tree by her sweet smile.¹¹⁷ Kālidāsa, who flourished in the 4th-5th century A.D., has described the rite of *śālabhañjikā* as practised by the elite of his time. In the rite, a young girl wore *nūpurayugala* (anklets) and "kicked" the tree with her left foot.¹¹⁸

The relationship between the woman and the tree was believed to be reciprocal. Just as the woman could "fertilize" the tree, the tree could also impart "fertility" to her. Beliefs in trees bestowing children are found in the *Mahābhārata*.¹¹⁹ The idea that the Śāla tree helps a woman in delivery is preserved in the Pāli Jātaka in connection with the legend of the Buddha's birth in the grove of Śāla trees at Lumbini.

Woman as Auspicious

Young women are not only believed to fertilize vegetation but they are also considered auspicious. As early as the 5th century B.C., the *Śāṅkhāyana Gṛihyasūtra*¹²⁰ has reference to four or eight women performing a dance four times at the ceremony of the bride's going to the bridegroom's house. Similarly, the bridegroom after a bath is escorted by happy young women to the girl's house. In the *Mahābhārata* it is considered lucky to see a woman. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* eight girls are named as important "objects of good luck" on the occasion of the preparations for consecrating Rāma as crown-prince.¹²¹ The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (XCIX, 14) also states that in the body of the married and the unmarried girls alike there dwells Śrī, the goddess of fruitfulness and beauty. Varāhamihira¹²² in the 6th century ordains the king to have *puṣhyasnāna* or auspicious royal bath, to ensure wealth, health and fame and to be "free from all evils." One of the places for the bath could be a human dwelling rendered happy by the presence of a beautiful girl.

The Chakravartin monarch is associated in literature and art with *strīratna* (jewel among women) whose characteristics are similar to goddess Śrī, the goddess of prosperity and beauty.¹²³ The belief that marriage with a beautiful young maiden can make the king victorious is present in Medieval court plays such as the *Ratnāvalī*, *Priyadarśikā*, *Viddhaśālabhaṅjikā*, *Karpūramañjarī*, and the play inscribed in the Dhāra Praśasti¹²⁴ of Arjunadeva in the 13th century.

Courtesans were believed to have auspicious influence. Their luck-bringing aspect was recognized in Paurāṇic literature.¹²⁵ The earth dug out from the house of a courtesan was supposed to have acquired her potency and the body of the king was rubbed with it on the day of consecration.¹²⁶ Their sight was considered *subha* (beneficial). The *Viṣṇusmṛiti*¹²⁷ mentions that on undertaking a journey auspicious things should be seen, among which are water pitchers, fire and courtesans. In the epics,¹²⁸ the victorious hero was greeted by young women and a beautifully adorned *ganikā*. It is possibly because of their auspicious influence that the 7th century *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*¹²⁹ enjoined that *veśyās* were to be depicted on temples. As we shall see, presence of courtesans was necessary on festive occasions such as Madanamahotsava and Kaumudimahotsava.

SECTION 2. SEX IN VEDIC RELIGION

The magical aspect of sex plays a very important role in Vedic religion, some of the important rites of which are mentioned here.

Aśvamedha

The Aśvamedha rite which lasted for one year was performed by the king to establish suzerainty over his neighbours. Ritual copulation, accompanied by sexual dialogues, was an important element in this rite. The four wives of the king were to participate in the ceremony which included the chief queen's lying with the horse and the use of abusive language by the other queens.¹³⁰ D. Chattopadhyaya¹³¹ points out that throughout the dialogue between the Vedic priests, Adhvaryu, Udgata, Brahmā, and their female partners, Kumārī, Vavatā and Mahiṣī, which contains lurid

details of the sexual act, "there runs the refrain of an obviously agricultural theme." For example, "Raise her up as you carry a load on the mountains, then let her middle region be expanded. As the (grain) is dried in cold wind."

The conception of acquiring magical power through sexual restraint was implicit in one of the rites of the *Aśvamedha* where the king was to lie between the legs of his favourite wife, behind the *gārhapatya* hearth, without enjoying her.¹³²

Mahāvratā

The Mahāvratā ritual, which involved the sacrifice of Soma to Prajāpati, presents many interesting features.¹³³ During the ritual a *puṃśchalī* (prostitute) and a *brahmachārī* (celibate) abused each other on the northern side of the altar. The mutual insults were offered "for fertility purposes."¹³⁴ On the southern side, behind a screen, a man of Magadha and a prostitute had sexual intercourse. It should be noted that the participants in the ritual sexual act were strangers and not the priests themselves. Pointing to the role of strangers in fertility rites and sacred prostitution, Gonda¹³⁵ says that they were looked upon as ritually impure and as bearers of unknown power. Some texts like the *Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā* (XXXIV-5) and the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* (V. 1.5) mention that many pairs were involved in ritual copulation (*bhūtānām cha maithunam*). According to one of the sources, the purport of the sexual act in the Mahāvratā is to secure the procreative force of the year.¹³⁶ It is also significant that a part of the ritual involved a mock-fight between a Śūdra and a Brāhman for the possession of a white, round skin, which symbolized the Sun. Further, during the ritual, the Hotra priest sat on a swing which indicates the similarity of the Mahāvratā with other fertility rites.¹³⁷ The swing was brought near the ground with the words, "The Great has united with the Great," which probably indicates the union of the Sun with the Earth.¹³⁸

Vāmadevya Upāsanā

The liturgical chant of Vāmadevya in the *Chhāndogya* and *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads* and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* mentions promiscuous relations with women.¹³⁹

One summons—that is Hīnkāra,
He makes request—that is Prastāva,
Together with the woman he lies down—that is an Udgītha,
He lies upon the woman—that is a Pratihāra
He comes to the end—that is a Nidhana,
He comes to the finish—that is a Nidhana,
This is the Vāmadevya Sāman as woven upon copulation.
He who knows thus this Vāmadevya Sāman as woven upon copulation
comes to copulation, procreates himself
from every copulation... One should never
abstain from any woman. That is his rule. (*Chhānd. Up.*, II. 13, 1-2)

The Practice of Paśuvāt

It seems that in the Vedic times a section of ascetics followed practices which were considered

repellent by others. Among these there was a practice known as *paśuvat* or "custom of the animals," which involved public copulation.¹⁴⁰ It is said to have been practised by Dīrghatamas who learnt it from Saurabheya. It is for this reason that the Munis thought that Dīrghatamas had broken the moral rule and therefore was not fit to live in the hermitage.

Sexual Symbolism in Vedic Ritual

Sexual symbolism permeates Vedic sacrificial ritual (*yajña*). "The very images with which *yajña* was understood and examined were often the images of the sexual union."¹⁴¹ The construction of the sacrificial altar (*vedi*) is described in terms of the union of a woman with a man. *Vedi* is conceived of as female and fire (*agni*) as male. The kindling of the sacrificial fire is mentioned as coition of two friction-sticks.¹⁴² The ritual is explained in sexual terms. "If, in the course of a recitation, the priest separates the first two quarters of a verse and brings the other two close together, this is because the woman separates her thighs and the man presses them during pairing; the priest thus represents pairing, so that the sacrifice will give a numerous progeny" (*Ait. Brah.*, X, 3, 2-4). The *Kauṣītaka Brāhmaṇa* also repeats the same idea. According to Coomaraswamy,¹⁴³ it would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that the whole ontology of the Vedic tradition in the *Saṁhitās*, the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads* is expressed rather typically than incidentally in terms of sexual symbolism.

There are numerous instances of ritual and symbolic pairing in the religion of the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Āraṇyakas*.¹⁴⁴ The sacrifice could not be considered complete without pairing. The sacrificer (*yajamāna*) was not considered complete without his wife and therefore performed the sacrifice along with her. Not only human pairing but also symbolic pairing of various substances, conceived of as male and female, is mentioned in the texts. For example, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, (II. 5, 2, 16) states, "The priests prepare a ram and ewe made of barley. So ram and barley form a pair. So the creatures are delivered from Varuṇa's noose through the conjugal union." The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* suggests a ritual mixing of ghee with rice grain. This process was symbolic of copulation; the ghee representing female blood and the rice grains representing semen. The pairing was supposed to give progeny and cattle to the sacrificer.

Sexual Abstinence for Magical Power

If the sexual act and its symbolism played an important role in magico-religious rites of Vedic culture, sexual abstinence¹⁴⁵ and chastity were also believed to give magical power to the practitioner. The sages, because of their conservation of sexual energy (*vīrya*), were considered to be the most potent. Gonda¹⁴⁶ says that by their very chastity they accumulated in themselves sexual power, and that they made themselves, so to say, reservoirs of the most important energy which in case of need could be discharged suddenly and completely so as to produce quite uncommon results. In the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* it is said, "they who keep the vow of chastity accomplish their wishes merely by conceiving them, for instance (the desire to produce) rain, to bestow children..."¹⁴⁷ The belief in the power of the chaste person to bring rain is seen in the later mythology of the epics also. The example of Rishyaśṛṅga is quite well-known. We have also mentioned the belief in the magical power of sexual abstinence in one of the rites of the *Aśvamedha*.

SECTION 3. FERTILITY FESTIVALS

Festivals connected with seasonal celebrations of agricultural life retain many features of sexual magic to stimulate powers of fertility. The chief features in the celebration of these festivals are merry-making and revelry, relaxation of sexual moral codes, decoration of houses and the wearing of rich garments and ornaments. Sexual licence could involve actual copulation or obscene and lascivious speech and gesture. The important festivals of Ancient and Medieval India were Vasantotsava, Madanamahotsava, Holī, and Kaumudimahotsava. Besides these there were other festivals which involved fertility rites, viz. Dolayātrā, Aśokāṣṭamī, Yakṣarātri, Damanakachaturdaśī, Ambubāchī, Nāgapañchamī, Mitrasaptamī, Rathasaptamī, Udakasevāmahotsava, Śābarotsava, etc.

The use of obscene (*aślīla*) words (*bhāṇḍabadhāi* in Hindi) and gestures is one of the essential features of most of these festivals. Subandhu refers to *aślīla* words spoken during the Holī festival. In the legend and folklore current at least since the time of Chānd Bardai in the 12th century and repeated with slight difference in the time of Hemādri in the 13th century, it was believed that obscenity on the day of Holī would help to avoid the notice of a demoness called Dhoṇḍā or Holikā and be useful in destroying her.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, on the Madanamahotsava, falling in the month of Chaitra, even married women of good families (*kulavadhūs*) forgot their socially cultivated shyness and indulged in obscenity. Dāmodaragupta in the 8th century and Jīmūtavāhana in the 12th century note the use of obscene language (*aślīlokti* and *juguṣitokti*) on this day.¹⁴⁹ The Madanabhañjikā festival was celebrated at Konarak.¹⁵⁰ Obscene words and songs featured in the Udakamahotsava in the month of Aśvin as noted by Lakṣmīdhara.¹⁵¹

Men and women could freely meet and have sexual liberty on the festivals of Madanamahotsava, Vasantotsava and Kaumudimahotsava. This is evidenced in the stories of Upakoṣā and Unmādamatī in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*.¹⁵² Lakṣmīdhara's¹⁵³ account also corroborates that gay dancing and singing were part of the celebrations of Kaumudimahotsava. Udakamahotsava also included indulgence in sex, obscene language and wine.

The participation of courtesans in festive gaiety was considered auspicious. The king used to convene an *utsavasamāja* (festive gathering) in the city garden on the Madanamahotsava where courtesans were specially invited.¹⁵⁴ It is on this day that the courtesan Vasantasenā saw the *nāgaraka* Chārudatta. King Harṣa's descriptions in the 7th century of this festival include free mixing of courtesans and citizens in streets, dancing, sprinkling water and coloured powder, drinking, etc. Similar descriptions of the celebration of Kaumudimahotsava are seen in the 8th century play *Mudrārākṣasa* (III-10).

Another important feature of festivals was the attention paid to *alaṅkāra* or ornamentation of houses and streets, and to the wearing of rich dresses and ornaments. *Alaṅkāra*, as we shall soon see, is associated with auspiciousness and magical defence. From the works of Viśākhadatta, Somadeva and Lakṣmīdhara we can see that decoration of houses and streets and one's own person were important features of Kaumudimahotsava. Similarly, we know from the *Vikramacharita*, a Medieval work, that on the Vasantotsava the king went to the city garden along with women adorned with lovely dresses, flowers and ornaments.

Swinging (*dola*) was also practised on festive occasions. We note here Frazer's observations on the ritual significance of swinging when associated with festivals. He says, "we may suspect that

whenever swinging is practised as a ceremony at harvest, the pastime is not so much a mere popular recreation as a magical rite designed to promote the growth of crops.¹⁵⁵ In the Gaurīṭṭiyā festival in honour of the Mother goddess, in which only women participated, the use of swing was one of the rites.¹⁵⁶ Śiva and Gaurī were placed on a swing on the bright 14th of Chaitra amidst a big gathering in the Somanātha temple of Gujarat.¹⁵⁷ In the Dolayātrā festival on the day of Holī Vaiṣṇava deities are also placed on a swing in the temple.¹⁵⁸ On the Hindolīchaitra, Vāsudeva was placed on a swing in temples and his devotees swayed on swings in their homes. The use of swings by the upper class on Kaumudīmahotsava has been noted by Vātsyāyana and in the season of spring by Kālidāsa. It was accompanied by amorous behaviour. Queen Irāvati in the *Mālavikāgnimitram* sends the message for the celebration of Dolotsava to the king along with auspicious red *aśoka* flowers and comes prepared for amorous pleasures, having taken wine.

Dyūta (dice) was played and *jāgarāṇa* (keeping awake throughout night) was practised on the Kaumudīmahotsava and Yakṣarātri.¹⁵⁹ Commenting on *dyūta*, Gonda¹⁶⁰ says that it is not only auspicious but also a magical means of securing one's luck for the coming year. Ritual gambling was practised in royal consecration, divinatory and propitiatory rites and is still observed as a rite in wedding ceremonies.

Vegetation rites were performed on the Aśokabhāñjikā and Damanakachaturdaśī. During an agricultural festival on the 5th day of the dark half of Chaitra mentioned by Lakṣmīdhara, the Earth was believed to menstruate and the digging and ploughing of soil was forbidden. The festival preceded the sowing ceremony.¹⁶¹

The Śābarotsava was a festival connected with the worship of Mother goddess Durgā and mainly celebrated in the eastern parts of India. Durgā was to be propitiated on the tenth day of Durgāpūjā by aboriginal rites of Śābaras. The celebrations included songs about the sex organs, sexual intercourse and erotic mimicry.¹⁶² The participants covered their bodies with leaves like the Śābaras. The festival was known to Jimūtavāhana. The *Kālikā Purāṇa*¹⁶³ mentions that licentious ritual songs, erotic gestures and possibly also orgies featured in the Śābarotsava. Abstention from these practices was believed to incur wrath of the goddess. Chaṇḍeśvara¹⁶⁴ in the 14th century quotes *Devī Purāṇa* to stress the need of these licentious practices to avoid the displeasure of the goddess. The *Bṛīhaddharma Purāṇa*,¹⁶⁵ a late Medieval Bengali work of about the 17th century, states that on this festival words representing the generative organs must be spoken only before the initiates, but adds that the goddess delights in hearing obscene words.

The celebration of festivals was believed to bring luck and avert evil in general and stimulate agricultural fertility in particular. In the *Vikramacharita*, the minister asks the king to celebrate Vasantotsava for general welfare. He says, "If you pay honour to spring, all the seasons will be made well-disposed to you, and prosperity will come to all people, and there will be an end of all misery."¹⁶⁶ Similarly, Lakṣmīdhara in his Rājadharmakāṇḍa of the *Kṛityakalpataru* mentions Kaumudīmahotsava as one of the seven ceremonies to be performed by the king for prevention of drought, famine, pestilences and other calamities, and promotion of prosperity, wealth, victory and sovereignty. In prescribing the celebration of Udaḥamahotsava, Lakṣmīdhara cites the authority of the *Skanda Purāṇa* and the *Brahma Purāṇa* and notes that if anybody refuses to participate in this festival, he will incur the wrath of ghosts and goblins.

Thus, we see that there was a considerable relaxation of social restraint in respect of the mixing of men and women on festivals, so much so that sexual licence prevailed on those days. With the

passage of time and the gradual change in the social organization with which the festivals were connected, it would not be surprising if there was degeneration in their celebration. Not that their religious and ritual significance would not be retained but that with the possible intrusion of motives of pleasure and gaiety, they would tend to become "mimicry."¹⁶⁷ It could be inferred from the evidence of Vātsyāyana¹⁶⁸ that such a change was actually taking place. In his time the urban people treated the vegetation festivals as *kriḍās* or games. The religious sanctity of the ancient festivals was fused with the non-religious motives of the gratification of sensual urges, specially where sex was involved. We shall deal with the degeneration of fertility festivals in Chapter IX.

SECTION 4. DEVAYĀTRĀ AND RATHAYĀTRĀ

Devayātrā is a festive procession of temple idols, either in a palanquin or in a *ratha*, through the main streets of the town or to a particular sacred spot near the temple. When the *ratha* is used it is commonly called Rathayātrā. These festive processions (*yātrās*) of gods seem to be closely connected with fertility cults. Similar practices, often accompanied by indecent behaviour and revelries, were widely prevalent in the Mediterranean and the West Asiatic countries.¹⁶⁹

Devayātrā and Rathayātrā of the Liṅgarāja temple¹⁷⁰ at Bhubaneswar take place on festivals which are associated with fertility rites. Devayātrā is celebrated on Prathamāṣṭamī, Māghasaptamī, Akṣayaṭritīyā, Damanabhañjikā, Yamadvitīyā, Vasantotsava, Bhaimīkēkaśī, Dolayātrā and Śitalāṣṭhī. Rathayātrā is celebrated on the Aśokāṣṭamī day which falls on the dark 8th of Chaitra. On this day, the proxy of Tribhuvaneśvara called Chandrasekhara is taken in the *ratha* to the temple of Rāmeśvara. R. L. Mitra¹⁷¹ gives us the significant information that the area round the Rāmeśvara temple was known as Aśokavana or the forest of Aśoka. So the phallic god Liṅgarāja visits the forest of Aśoka trees on the day of Aśokāṣṭamī, which was a vegetation festival.

It is no wonder, then, that the *rathas* which are taken out on the days of fertility festivals are decorated with obscene sculpture. As we have seen, obscenity and indecency are believed to "stimulate the generative powers of nature." They also drive away all evils and promote auspiciousness and well-being. Obscene display on *rathas* serves the same function as the similar display and lascivious behaviour serve on the days of seasonal festivals like Holī, Vasantotsava, Madanamahotsava, etc. E. Hawkins¹⁷² pointed out the similarity between obscene behaviour on festivals and that depicted on temples. Thurston¹⁷³ suggested that indecent figures on *rathas* are believed to avert the evil eye which, as we know, is also one of the functions of fertility charms and amulets.

Dancing girls played an important part in these *yātrās* of gods. Abbe Dubois,¹⁷⁴ who travelled in South India in the latter half of the 18th century, noted that Devayātrā on the day Makarsamkrānti involved the presence of dancing girls who delighted the spectators "with their lascivious dances and obscene songs." Similarly, the Rathayātrā of Jagannātha at Puri used to be attended by one hundred and twenty *devadāsīs* who danced in honour of the god.¹⁷⁵

Devayātrā seems to be an ancient practice which was known to Kautīlya. The *Arthaśāstra* (II, 25, 36) grants freedom for manufacture and sale of liquor for four days of this festival, which suggests that there was wine-drinking on this occasion. Devayātrā was known in Gujarat in Kumāragupta's time in A.D. 436-7.¹⁷⁶ The *Atri Samhitā* and the *Kaśyapa Samhitā* elaborately describe the

procession *utsavas* of three varieties: the *utsava* celebrated at a fixed time, say, of the year or the month, the *utsava* celebrated as an act of faith (*bhakti*), and the *utsava* celebrated as a *nimitta* in order to pacify (*śānti*) inauspicious events (*aśubha*) such as drought, famine, etc. To quote the *Atri Samhitā* (54-2): "They consider the processional festival as causing appeasement (*śānti*) and prosperity (*puṣṭi*) for all beings. It is an act of worship (*yajña*) eminent above all acts of worship."¹⁷⁷ Similarly in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*,¹⁷⁸ written in about the 7th century, Devayātrā is connected with the function of promoting prosperity and averting evils. It is mentioned: "The merit of one who performs such *yātrās* regularly every year gets all his desires fulfilled in this world and goes to the abode of Viṣṇu. The performance of the *yātrā* is beneficial to the king and the citizens. It is supposed to remove all evils." "The man who witnesses this great festival undoubtedly attains prosperity (*kalyāṇa*)." Further, the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* (I, 93, 54) says that those who attend the Rathayātrā of Sūrya attain Sūrya-loka. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (X, 86, 9) mentions celebrations of Devayātrā amidst which Arjuna carried away Subhadra. Plays were staged in the Medieval period on the days on which Devayātrā was celebrated. In the 8th century, Bhavabhūti refers to the staging of his plays on the *yātrā* of *Kālapriyānātha* at Ujjayinī, and in the 9th or 10th century, Murāri mentions the performance of his *Anaṅga Rāghava* in the *yātrā* of Puruṣottama on the sea-shore. In the 12th century, Śrī-Harṣa mentions in his *Naiṣadhacharita* (XV-89) the Rathayātrā festival of Jagannātha Puri on the full moon of Jyeṣṭha and also the merit acquired from witnessing this great festival. The Devayātrā was such an important festival that Lakṣmīdhara¹⁷⁹ has mentioned it among the seven religious ceremonies to be performed by the king for magico-protective and magico-propitiatory purposes.

R. L. Mitra¹⁸⁰ compares the Rathayātrā of Jagannātha Puri with the Buddhist festival of Khotan described by Fa-Hien in the 4th century A.D. However, it will be clear from our account that there is nothing Buddhist about these festivals. We know that the religion of the Buddha as preached by him did not consist of any rituals and magical practices. Folk and tribal magico-religious practices later penetrated the religion of the Buddha who himself was averse to such practices. The fertility festival of Rathayātrā also seems to have been accepted by the Buddhists when their religion concentrated less on the spiritual teachings of the Master and more on the practices of the masses. It can be said that Rathayātrā, whether celebrated in Khotan, Puri or in South Indian shrines, has nothing to do with Buddhism, but is a fertility festival of "pagan" culture accepted by Buddhists and Hindus alike. Relics indicating the tribal origin of Rathayātrā are still found in the special services rendered during this festival by Śābaras and Pariahs, or low caste people, in Orissa and South India.¹⁸¹

SECTION 5. THE DEVADĀSĪ INSTITUTION AND THE HINDU TEMPLE

The Hindu temple has a definite association with cults of fertility in the institution of the *devadāsī* or sacred prostitution. We know from the study of comparative religion that sacred prostitution was widely prevalent in many parts of the civilized world such as India, Egypt, Babylonia, other regions of Western Asia, the islands of the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus, Greece, Persia, Rome, North Africa, etc.¹⁸² The essential idea behind the performance of the sexual act in or around

the holy shrine is that it promotes all natural fruitfulness and the general welfare of the community. It seems that ritual copulation was regarded as obligatory for every woman, at least once in her lifetime, in the interest of the community. However, with the social controls and restraints over sexuality associated with civilization, it was delegated to the specially anointed women, priestesses, who performed this sacred task in the sanctuary.¹⁸³

In the temple of a god, the priestess was married to the god and, as the wife of the god, had relations with strangers and priests who were believed to be surrogates of the god. In the temple of Baal in Babylon and in Egypt the woman was often a princess of royal blood and possibly the Queen herself. In the temple of a goddess, the sacred prostitutes were concerned specially with "the rites of fruitfulness by which the fertilizing powers of the world are invited to fecundate the female principle of Nature." It was considered necessary to celebrate the union of the goddess, the personification of reproductive energies of Nature, with her male partner for the sake of fertility and abundance.¹⁸⁴ The role of the goddess was performed by specially consecrated women, the priestesses, or by girls for whom, in certain cultures, pre-nuptial temporary prostitution was obligatory.¹⁸⁵ Referring to sacred prostitution in general, Briffault says, "Originally however, it was an essential part of the functions of priestesses, whether serving a god or goddess, to promote the fertility of Nature and the prosperity of mankind by union with generative powers represented by the god under any human disguise which he might assume in the freedom of sacred promiscuity."¹⁸⁶

In India women dedicated to the temple are called *devadāsīs* or "servants of god." The earliest inscription bearing the name *devadāsī* occurs in Central India at Jogimara cave in the Ramgarh hill and is assigned to the 2nd century B.C.¹⁸⁷ She is mentioned here in connection with a *rūpadakṣa*—a banker or sculptor—who loved her. Kauṭilya in his *Arthaśāstra* (2.23.2) mentions *devadāsīs* and says that when their service at the temple is at an end, they may take to spinning. Kālidāsa in his *Meghadūta* (I, 34-35) refers to the *veśyās* at the temple of Mahākāla, whose hands ached through holding *chāmara* and who would soothe their "nail-marks" with the first rains. Kālidāsa's reference may or may not be about *devadāsīs* specially attached to the temple. They might be *veśyās* performing dances in the temple on certain occasions. In the Bhāṇa literature of the Gupta period also we get a reference to the *saṅgītaka* called Madanārādhana performed in the temple of Nārāyaṇa where *gaṇikā* (and not *devadāsī*) Madanasenā took part.¹⁸⁸ From Hiuen Tsang's¹⁸⁹ account in the 7th century A.D. of the Sūrya temple at Multan, we know that girls regularly performed dances and played music. This account tallies with the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* (I, 93, 97) which advocates the dedication of beautiful girls to the Sūrya temple for attaining Sūrya-loka. The *Kuṭṭanīmatam* (verse 743) of the 8th century refers to *devadāsīs* in the Gambhīreśvara temple at Vārāṇasī. Kalhaṇa¹⁹⁰ in the 12th century refers to a *devadāsī* in the Kārttikeya temple where dances according to the tradition of Bharata were performed. He also mentions a place in Kashmir where two beautiful dancing girls danced on the site of an ancient dilapidated temple. This indicates that the two girls continued the tradition of their family and performed their duty to the god even after his shrine ceased to exist.

There are numerous references to *devadāsīs* in Medieval inscriptions which we have mentioned in Chapter VIII. These indicate the widespread recognition of this institution all over India—in Tamil Nadu, Mysore, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, etc. *Devadāsīs* were an essential part of temple organization in the Medieval period. A 12th century inscription from Ittagi¹⁹¹ near Dharwar proudly mentions the establishment of a suburb for *devadāsīs* by a chieftain who built a temple in honour of his parents. Significantly, the inscription also declares that the temple enclosure

was "not fit for Kali to enter from any side," which indicates that the presence of *devadāsīs* in the temple was in no way considered immoral.

The importance of the services of the dancing girls in the temple grew to such an extent in the Medieval period that, in Orissa, a special structure called *nāṭamandira* was added to the originally existing *vimāna* and *jagamohana*. The *nāṭamandira* of the Sūrya temple at Konarak is replete with sculptures depicting dancing women amidst such fertility motifs as *śalabhañjikās*, *nāginīs*, etc.

The sacredness associated with the institution is evident from the fact that, until recently, the *devadāsī* was married to the god or his symbol in the temple amidst festivities. The elaborate ceremony of tying the *tālī* or *maṅgalasūtra*, which only a married woman or *saubhāgyavatī* wears in India, was observed.¹⁹² As the "wife of god," the *devadāsī's* main role in the temple consisted in dancing and singing before the "divine bridegroom." Apart from this, she participated in the important *utsavas* or festivals of the temple, such as Dolotsava, Vasantotsava, Makarasankranti, Aśokāṣṭamī, Damanabhañjikā, etc., during which Devayātrā and Rathayātrā were also often celebrated. In the processions of Orissan and South Indian shrines, the *devadāsīs* danced and sang obscene songs. The presence of the "wife of god" was certainly necessary in festivals for attaining prosperity and happiness and averting evils and calamities. Numerous functions of the *devadāsīs*, as mentioned in the records of the Suchindram temple¹⁹³ in Tamil Nadu, indicate that the *devadāsī* was an important functionary of the Hindu temple. Domingos Paes,¹⁹⁴ the Portuguese traveller who visited the Vijayanagara Kingdom in the 16th century, has noted that *devadāsīs* were very much esteemed and honoured in high society. They could meet the wives of the king and could eat betel with them, which was a privilege denied even to persons of high rank.

Thus, the *devadāsī* institution, the origin of which was necessarily connected with the early cults of fertility, was a recognized part of the cultus of the Hindu temple. Its place in the "ascetic" and "spiritual" culture of India is a pointer to the connection of Hinduism with fertility cults. Interestingly, a sculptured relief of Halebid (fig. XXII) portrays both a dancing girl and ascetics in a Śaiva shrine.



FIG. XXII—A dancing girl and ascetics worshipping Śiva; plinth, Halebid

SECTION 6. THE HINDU TEMPLE—MAGICAL CONCEPTS IN ITS CONSTRUCTION AND ORNAMENTATION

Magical Concepts in the Construction of the Temple

The temple is built according to the rules and regulations laid down in tradition. As Stella Kramrisch¹⁹⁵ says: "The Hindu temple is the sum total of architectural rites performed on the basis of its myth. The myth covers the ground and is the plan on which the structure is raised."

Some of the rites for temple construction rest on the principles of sympathetic magic. When the site is chosen the numerous spirits of the place are asked to leave with rhythmic *mantras*, so that the site belongs to the deity whose presence is invoked in the temple. The fitness of the soil on which the house of god is to be built is ascertained by several tests. It is interesting to note that the quality of the soil, on which a temple is to be built and which is not meant for cultivation, is tested by the germination of seeds sown in it. The purification of the soil is complete when the ground has been repeatedly ploughed, watered, sown, planted with all kinds of grain and when these have flowered and ripened.¹⁹⁶ The purpose behind this elaborate procedure is made clear in the *Śilpaśāstras*. The *Mānasāra* (V-10, 37) says: "The ground like all productive cow should be selected in order to secure (all) prosperity (out of it)." The text advocates that cows, oxen and calves be brought on this soil. Such soil is chosen as would ensure prosperity. This is significant in that the fertility of the soil is of no consequence to the erection of a building.

Ankurārpaṇa or the "rite of the seeds and their germination" is held at the beginning of the various phases in the construction and consecration of the temple.¹⁹⁷ This rite is observed on the following occasions: before the building of the temple, before the last brick or stone is put into the superstructure, prior to the installation of the main image, before the rite of opening its eyes and also prior to the consecration of the sacrificial vessels. On certain days preceding these rites, seeds of different varieties of rice, kidney bean, pulse, sesame, mustard, etc. are placed in a copper vessel in front of Soma, the moon, who presides over them.

Before the temple, "in the likeness of the *Puruṣa*," is constructed, the rite of *garbhādhāna* or impregnation is performed on the earth. She receives the seed (*bīja*) of the building and gives substance (*prakṛiti*) to the germ.¹⁹⁸ The priest acts as the generator who deposits *garbha* on behalf of the donor.

The temple site was generally associated with fertile surroundings. The *Matsya Purāṇa* (270, 28–29) states: "To the east of the *maṇḍapa* of a temple, fruit-bearing trees should be planted, to the south trees that contain milky sap, to the west a reservoir of water with lotuses to be constructed, to the north a flower garden and Sarala and Tāla trees." The *Bṛhatsamhitā* (56, 3) declares: "places where there are waters and gardens, whether natural or artificial, are inhabited by the Devas."

In the ceremony of placing *kalāśa* or sacred pot on the *śikhara* of the temple, the rule of complete nudity is observed by the person involved in the ritual. As we have seen earlier, nudity is an important feature of fertility rites. The folklore about the nudity rite is noted by Cunningham.¹⁹⁹ At Arang and the neighbouring village of Deobalada in Raipur district of Madhya Pradesh, when the two temples were completed and the *kalāśa* had to be put on, the architect and his sister agreed

to place them simultaneously at an auspicious moment. The two, stripping themselves naked, "according to custom on such occasions," climbed to the top. As they got to the top each could see the other and each through shame jumped down into the tanks close to the temples.

Magical Concepts in Ornamentation

Ornamentation (*alaṅkāra*) on the house of god and also on the houses of men is believed to be auspicious and to promote prosperity. *Alaṅkāra* conveys *māṅgalya* or auspiciousness in the pattern of Indian culture. J. Gonda²⁰⁰ has discussed the semantical development of words *alaṅkāra*, *ābharaṇa* and *bhūṣaṇa*, and from numerous examples of the use of the words in Sanskrit literature he demonstrates that decoration is associated with luck and prosperity. In the *Rigveda*, *ā-bhar* means to "bring near," especially things that are desired or that have a strengthening or invigorating power. In the *Atharvaveda* the word is used by preference in connection with words denoting magical power or a thing that possesses such power. The words *alaṅkṛita* and *alaṅkāra* not only denote the idea of "adorn, beautify, ornament, add grace or beauty" but also of "provide, make ready and fit for a purpose, prepare, etc." Gonda gives an instance of "the magico-religious use of ointment for the eyes and for the feet" from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (13, 8, 4, 7). "Such are human *alaṅkāra* and therefore they keep off death from themselves." A similar concept is also conveyed in a passage from the *Sāṅkhya-yana Āraṇyaka* (19, 3, 4). In the path after Death, 500 *apsaras* came towards the dead man, 100 with fruit in their hands, 100 with unguents, 100 with garlands, 100 with garments, 100 with aromatic powders. "Him they adorn with the ornaments of Brahman. He, adorned with the ornaments of Brahman, knowing Brahman, advances to Brahman." Thus, *alaṅkāra* and *ābharaṇa* do not only have aesthetic functions but also represent magical power.

The adornment of the body, the use of ornaments, etc. are often magical practices. They put the wearer in a "sacred" state. They serve as amulets against illness, sorcery or other misfortunes or as talismans to bring good luck or enhance the wearer's power, success or invincibility.²⁰¹ Fertility charms and amulets protect the wearer against injurious influences. Ornaments, because of their protective influence, were worn by warriors. In the *Rigveda* (I. 33.8) it is said that the Dasyus were "adorned with *maṇis*" and in spite of that ornament, i.e. magical assistance, they were vanquished by Indra. *Rathas* were also adorned with golden ornaments, mirrors, tiger's skin, etc. or *sarvābharaṇāni* having magical value.²⁰²

Alaṅkāra and *ābharaṇa* are so much connected with *māṅgalya* or auspiciousness that a young woman is supposed to be adorned with ornaments like *maṅgalasūtra*, bangles, ear-rings, etc., not only to enhance her beauty but also because the ornaments are auspicious. This idea still prevalent in Indian society is voiced by Kālidāsa in the 4th-5th century A.D. The bride Umā in her marriage dress is described as *maṅgalālaṅkṛitā* (decorated with auspicious clothes). Collyrium was put in her eyes not with the purpose of enhancing the lustre of the eyes but because it was considered to be *maṅgala* (Kum., VI-87, VII-20). The dress of the bridegroom is called *maṅgalamaṇḍanaśrī*. The coronation garments were called *maṅgala*.²⁰³ On festive occasions men and women were supposed to wear rich dresses and ornaments to promote auspiciousness and avert bad luck.

Similarly, houses were decorated to convey the mood of gaiety and auspiciousness on festivals like Kaumudīmahotsava which were celebrated for general well-being and appeasement of evil. The word *maṅgalyālekhyam* is used by Bāṇa in the 7th century when describing the decoration of

houses with paintings on festive occasions.²⁰⁴ During festivals like Divālī and occasions of marriage, houses are still decorated with *raṅgoli* or coloured designs to convey *māṅgalya*.

The rendering of *alaṅkāra* on buildings is auspicious. The Śilpaśāstras and the Purāṇas emphasize the importance of *alaṅkāra* on the houses of gods and men and point out that it leads to prosperity. The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (III, 43-15, 24) prescribes auspicious depictions on houses of men. It states that by good depictions carried out according to the knowledge of Śāstras, Śrī (prosperity, fortune, etc.) is invited and *alakṣmī* (bad luck, poverty, etc.) is averted (*apakarṣati*). The *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra* (XXXIV, 28-29) speaks of *aṣṭamaṅgalas* (eight auspicious objects) on the door. The auspicious Śrī is to be carved on the entrance. Describing the door of the buildings of all castes and gods, the *Mānasāra* (XXXIX, lines 78, 82-83, 156-61) lays down: "It should be adorned with all ornaments and decorated with creepers and leaves (*sarvālaṅkārasanyuktam patra-valayādivibhūṣitam*). At the bottom it should be decorated with pitchers full of water (*pūrṇakumbha*) and with mirrors." "This should be always made for the sake of security and as a source of prosperity (*kuryādevam tu rakṣārtham sampadāmāṣpadam sadā*)." It also reiterates: "The ancient teachers said that those (members of the door) should be adorned with all ornaments (*sarvālaṅkāra*); if the reverse be done through ignorance, it would ruin all prosperity." The Orissan *Śilpa Prakāśa* (I, 331-32) declares, "without ornamental work the temple will remain mediocre. That temple, where every part is covered with decorations, is always called the highest type, and the temple shorn of decoration is definitely the lowest." Again, as Zimmer²⁰⁵ says: "Decoration (*alaṅkāra*) is obligatory, the model for what is lovely being the ornamentation of the human body with jewellery. . . . A temple is to be fashioned as a richly decorated living form."

Thus, the rendering of *alaṅkāras* on temples was of magical significance. *Alaṅkāras*, in general, were supposed to promote auspiciousness, prosperity, well-being, etc. and to avert bad luck, poverty, calamities, evil spirits, etc. Erotic motifs were also *alaṅkāras* along with other motifs such as *pūrṇakumbha*, *nāgas*, *patralatā*, etc. The rationale of the depiction of erotic motifs on the temple consists in their function as *alaṅkāra*. Their depiction was auspicious (*maṅgala*, *śubha*) and magico-protective (*rakṣārtham*, *vāraṇārtham*). They had greater efficacy than other *alaṅkāras* in serving this dual magical function because of the deep-rooted belief in the magical power of sex manifest in Indian culture in its religious rituals and myths, agricultural and vegetation festivals, the *devadāsī* institution, etc.



VII. Tāntrism and Erotic Sculpture

UNDER TĀNTRIC INFLUENCE from about the 5th century A.D., beliefs in the magical efficacy of sex got a wider recognition in Indian culture. Tāntrism was a powerful religious movement which emerged out of the coalescence between primitive magic and highly evolved spiritual ideals. It incorporated folk and tribal magico-religious beliefs and rites at an organized level. It exercised considerable influence over all major religions of India—Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina—through their rituals, worship and iconography.

It is important to clarify different aspects of Tāntrism and see which among these could be relevant to erotic depictions. We will examine two broad aspects of it: (i) its spiritual goal of *advaya*, *sahaja*, non-duality, (ii) its practice of *maithuna* as a *makāra* to be offered to the deity. We have to ascertain the extent to which these have a bearing on Medieval sexual depictions.

As Tāntrism is treated in Tāntric texts as an esoteric religion, meant only for the initiated, questions certainly arise as to how its tenets and practices could have been exposed to the general public. What can be the relationship between the “depiction” of sex and Tāntrism? Was the “depiction” of sex functionally related to and an integral part of Tāntric *sādhana* (discipline)?

It is possible to distinguish Tāntrism at three levels: (i) “genuine” or “ideal” Tāntrism with its ritualistic rigour and esoterism, (ii) Tāntrism at a “popular” level, as associated with some of the Medieval Tāntric sects and their aristocratic patrons, (iii) the influence of Tāntrism in general in various areas of Indian culture through the fusion of some of the Tāntric magical elements and beliefs in Purāṇas, Nibandhas, etc.

Let us give here a brief sketch of the rise of Tāntrism. Tāntric practices are certainly older than the written texts on the subject. Their systematic organization and introduction into Hinduism and Buddhism took place in about the 5th century A.D.¹ The problem which troubled the historians of religion, viz. whether Tāntrism developed out of Mahāyāna Buddhism or Śākta cults, is now believed to be based on wrong assumptions. As S. B. Dasgupta² puts it: “Side by side with the commonly known theological speculations and religious practices there has been flowing in India an important religious undercurrent of esoteric yogic practices from a pretty old time; these esoteric



practices, when associated with the theological speculations of the Śaivas and the Śāktas, have given rise to Śaiva and Śākta Tāntricism; when associated with the Buddhistic speculations, have given rise to the composite religious system of Buddhist Tāntricism; and again, when associated with the speculations of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, the same esoteric practices have been responsible for the growth of the esoteric Vaiṣṇavite cult, known as the Vaiṣṇava Sahajīyā movement." Similarly, we have Saura and Gāṇapatya Tantras³ associated with the worship of Sūrya and Gaṇapati. The Tāntric mode of worship and practices are also associated with Jainism.⁴

The word *tantra* as a doctrinal theory or a system set forth in a literary work is not found in the dictionary compiled by Amara, known as *Amarakośa*, ascribed to the 5th century A.D. But the Gangdhar inscription of Central India, belonging to the first quarter of the 5th century A.D., mentions the word *tantra* and the rites associated with Dākinīs in the temple of the Divine Mothers.⁵ Tāntric elements are seen in the Pañcharātra Saṁhitās of the 4th–5th century A.D. and the Nārāyaṇīya section of the *Mahābhārata*.⁶ In the 6th century, Varāhamihira's reference to persons in charge of *maṇḍalakrama* in connection with the installation of the Divine Mothers might be connected with Tāntric Śakti worshippers.⁷ The Early Kadamba and Chālukya rulers of the Deccan were worshippers of the Divine Mothers.

The prevalence of Tāntric practices and beliefs in the upper strata of society in the 7th century is evidenced in the works of Bāṇa.⁸ Queen Vilāsavati, desirous of a son, slept in the shrine of Chaṇḍikā, had auspicious baths on the nights of the dark 14th in public squares where magic circles had been drawn, visited temples of Mātṛikās and wore amulets inscribed with yellow pigment. In the *Harṣa-charita* there is a reference to a Bhairavāchārya who came to meet King Pushpabhūti, Harṣa's forefather. This Tāntric teacher knew all the Śaiva Saṁhitās by heart and performed the *japa* of a *mahāmantra* called *Mahākālāhṛidaya* a crore times in the cremation ground. Again, a Draviḍa devotee of the Chaṇḍikā temple near Ujjayinī had collected palm-leaf manuscripts containing magical spells, mystical formulae and incantations. Śaṅkarāchārya in the 8th century mentions 64 Tantras⁹ which suggests that by this time Tāntrism was a developed religious system. P. V. Kane¹⁰ rightly notes that the period from the 7th to 12th centuries can be called the peak period of Tāntric works and cults, both Hindu and Buddhist.

It seems that there was opposition from orthodox Brahmanism in the early stages of Tāntrism. But from about the 8th–9th century A.D. some of the Tāntric magical elements penetrated Paurāṇic Hinduism which influenced the *pūjā* (worship) and *vidhis* (rites) of the Hindu temple. We shall come to this point later in the chapter.

There is a controversy about the region where Tāntrism originated as a religious system. But almost all writers agree that it developed in the border areas of India, either in the North East or the North West. M. Eliade points out that "Tāntrism developed in provinces that had been but little Hinduized, where the spiritual counter-offensive of the aboriginal inhabitants was in full force."¹¹ Scholars generally suggest the border regions of Kāmarūpa (Assam), Bengal, and Oḍiyāna (either Swat Valley in the North West or Orissa) as the original centres of Tāntrism.¹² Some other scholars believe that Tāntrism came to India from foreign regions on the North East and the North West of India, viz. China, Mahāchīna (Tibet or Mongolia), Turkey and Persia.¹³ But even if Tāntrism, as an organized cult involving principles of magic in its rituals including that of sexual union, originated in a foreign country, its widespread prevalence in India suggests that Indian

conditions were ripe for the acceptance of these exotic practices. Diffusion of a trait or a cultural item is possible only when there is a soil ready to receive it. We have examined the widespread prevalence of Tāntrism in Section 3.

SECTION 1. ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF TĀNTRISM

Goal of Non-Duality

The aim of Tāntric *sādhānā* is the realization of the identity of the worshipper and the worshipped, the individual soul and the supreme soul. Here it does not differ in its philosophy from non-Tāntric Hindu or Buddhist philosophies, but is distinct from them in its methods.¹⁴ Tantras point to a short-cut to *Mokṣa* or liberation. Instead of the laborious path of asceticism, moral discipline and mortification, they make use of magical and psychological aids which help the *sādhaka* (aspirant) to achieve quickly the goal of self-realization. These include *mantras* (incantations), *yantras* (mystic diagrams), *maṇḍalas* (circles), *kavachas* (amulets) and *mudrās* (gestures). By the practice of *nyāsa* the *sādhaka* identifies each part of his body with that of the deity. Identifying his body with the deity, he becomes the deity. What is speculatively conceived of in the religious systems of the Vedānta is actually put into practice in Tāntric *sādhānā*.

The Ultimate Reality or noumenon is visualized as supreme Non-Duality. In its phenomenalization, or in the process of becoming, it manifests two aspects, conceived of as the negative and the positive, the static and the dynamic, rest and activity. The two polar aspects of reality are represented in the Hindu Tantras as Śiva and Śakti and in the Buddhist Tantras as Upāya (Method) and Prajñā (Knowledge). All schools of Tāntrism hold that these two polar metaphysical principles are manifested in the material world in the form of the male and the female, and that the ultimate goal of all esoteric disciplines is to destroy all principles of dualism and to attain the final state of non-duality or "a return to a primordial state of non-differentiation."¹⁵ In different esoteric systems, this state of non-duality is variously called the state of *advaya*, *maithuna*, *yuganaddha*, *kula*, *yāmala*, *samarasa*, *yugala* or the *sahajasamādhi* or simply the state of *samādhi*.¹⁶ It is conceived of as *Ānanda* or Bliss. The *sādhānā* to reach the Ultimate Reality consists of the union of the male and the female which gives bliss.

But the sexual union ordinarily performed gives only temporary pleasure. So, in the Tāntric *sādhānā* it is converted into a ritual. Man and woman copulate as god and goddess—Śiva and Śakti or Upāya and Prajñā or any divine pair according to the affiliation of the *sādhaka*. The *Gandharva Tantra* says *devam bhūtvā devam yajet* (one should worship god after becoming god oneself). Thinking of himself as God and his *mudrā* (female partner) representing the Goddess, the *sādhaka* performs the sexual act. It is considered to be a sacred act.

Yogic Practices

In Buddhist Tāntrism and some schools of Hindu Tāntrism (Nātha sect and Sahajiyā sect), the semen, called *bodhichitta*¹⁷ or *bija*, is not to be cast. The fall of the semen is considered a great sin. The semen must not be emitted; otherwise the yogin falls under the law of time and death, like any

other common libertine.¹⁸ For checking the flow of semen, the *sādhaka* practises *coitus reservatus* by taking recourse to Haṭha-yogic or psycho-physical techniques.¹⁹ The semen instead of flowing downwards is led by Yoga to the highest centre of the body or the Ushṇīsha Kamala of Buddhist Tantras or the Sahasrāra Chakra of Hindu Tantras.

Haṭha-yogic processes of *mudrā*, *bandha*, *āsana* and *prāṇayāma* are resorted to in arresting the flow of the semen. We mention here the names of these psycho-physical techniques undertaken for the above-mentioned purpose so as to help us in verifying the relationship, if any, of the sexual poses carved on the temples with these yogic poses. Instead of giving a description of these poses, which is beyond the scope of this work, we have given references to photographs published in books on Yoga so that the reader may compare the yogic poses with the sexual depiction on temples and verify for himself the statement that very rarely do erotic temple sculptures represent sexo-yogic poses (see Chapter V).

The important *mudrās* or postures for arresting the flow of semen are Vajrolī, Sahajolī and Amarolī. These are described in the Tāntric-yogic work *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, attributable to about the 15th century A.D. but based on earlier works. The text declares: "Two things are necessary (for Vajrolī) and these are difficult to get for the ordinary people: milk and a woman behaving as desired."²⁰ Amarolī and Sahajolī are described as variations of Vajrolī. The *Gheraṇḍa Saṁhitā* (III, 45-48), however, does not directly mention any presence of woman. It gives the description of it as follows: "Place the two palms on the ground, raise the legs in the air upward, the head not touching the earth. This awakens the Śakti, causes long life." It also mentions that by the practice of Vajrolī, *bindu-siddhi* is obtained and the person, though immersed in manifold pleasures, attains perfection. Other *mudrās* for the purpose are Khecharī Mudrā, Mahā Mudrā, Aśvinī Mudrā and Yoni Mudrā.²¹

The *bandhas* are the contraction and tying up, as it were, of many muscles and nerves. For the purpose of arresting the semen, Uḍḍiyāna Bandha, Jālandhara Bandha, Mūla Bandha, Mahā Bandha and Mahā Vedha are said to be effective.²² These *bandhas* as well as the *mudrās* essentially involve the control of some of the muscles and nerves associated with the root of the penis and the control of the breath (*prāṇa*).²³

Tāntrism conceives the human body as an epitome of the universe. All truth is contained within the body. So the two polar aspects of the Ultimate Reality, viz. Śiva and Śakti or the male and the female, are stationed within the body. Every man has in him a feminine element, just as every woman has in her a masculine element. The aim is to join in union the two polar aspects in the human body. Śiva resides in "the lotus of the head" or the Sahasrāra or the Ushṇīsha Kamala as the principle of pure consciousness. Śakti called Kuṇḍalinī, as the principle of world force, lies coiled like a serpent in the lower pole called Mūlādhāra Chakra which is at the base of the spinal cord.²⁴ The sleeping Śakti is awakened by means of Haṭha-yogic exercise and transversed through the Suṣūmnā in the spinal cord to the Sahasrāra, where she unites with Śiva. The union of Śiva and Śakti produces the state of Absolute Bliss. The awakening of Kuṇḍalinī Śakti is done by Haṭha-yogic practices as *kumbhaka* or arresting of respiration, *āsanas* and *mudrās*. The most frequently used method is Khecharī Mudrā which involves the obstruction of the cavum by introverting the tongue and inserting its tip into the throat. Some Tāntric schools combined *mudrās* with sexual practices to hasten the ascent of Kuṇḍalinī. The underlying idea, as Eliade puts it, was the necessity of achieving simultaneous immobility of breath, thought and semen.²⁵

Kuṇḍalinī Yoga is seen in its rudimentary stage in the Upaniṣads, but it was further developed in the Tāntric age. Suṣumnā, the central *nāḍi* (duct), is indirectly referred to in the *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad* (VI-16). The term yoga in its technical sense first occurs in the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* (II-4) and the *Kāṭha Upaniṣad* (II-12).²⁶

Yoga is given great importance in early Tāntric literature. The *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (Ch. XVIII, pp. 162-63), which is attributed by scholars to Asaṅga who lived in about the 4th century A.D., mentions the six parts of Yoga, or *ṣaṣṭāṅga* Yoga, which consist of *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. It should be noted that the two other elements of Yoga, viz. *yama* or restraint and *niyama* or discipline, mentioned by Patañjali in the 2nd century B.C., are omitted by this Tantra. The *Hevajra Tantra*,²⁷ assigned to the 8th century A.D., mentions *chakras* and the female deities associated with them and calls Kuṇḍalinī Śakti by the name of Chaṇḍālī. It describes the process of producing the gross *bodhicitta* and its transformation through yogic techniques. The two important *nāḍis*, Idā and Piṅgalā, are known to the writer of the *Sammoha Tantra*, written long before A.D. 1052.²⁸ These *nāḍis* are also mentioned in the *Hevajra Tantra*, *Heruka Tantra* and the *Sādhanaṁālā* as Lalanā and Rasanā.²⁹ In the 8th century, when the Buddhist Tāntric teachers Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra went to China, certain Yoga Tantras were translated into Chinese.³⁰ By this time certain sexo-yogic practices, which included simultaneous respiratory and sexual practices, reached China from India³¹ and were possibly assimilated into similar techniques of the control of the semen, *huan ching* or *coitus reservatus*, which were practised by the Taoists as early as the 2nd century A.D.³²

Maithuna and Other Makāras

In Hindu Tāntrism, the fifth *makāra*, the *maithuna*, is offered to the goddess as are wine, fish, rice and meat. The Tāntric *sādhaka* emits semen with the following formula: "Om with light and ether as my two hands, I, the exulting one, relying on the ladle, I who take *dharma* and non-*dharma* as his sacrificial ingredients, offer (this oblation) lovingly into the fire, *svāhā*."³³ The *Karpūradīśtotram* (10, 15), a Medieval Tāntric work, declares: "If by night, Thy (Devī's) devotee, unclothed, with dishevelled hair, recites whilst meditating on Thee, Thy *mantra*, when united with his Śakti, youthful, full-breasted, and heavy-hipped, such a one makes all powers subject to him, and dwells on the earth ever a seer." "He, O Mahākālī, who in the cremation ground, naked and with dishevelled hair, intently meditates upon Thee and recites Thy *mantra*, and with each recitation makes offering to Thee of a thousand Akanda (sunflowers) with seed (*nijagalitaviryēṇa*) becomes without any effort." The *Tārā-Bhakti-Sudhārṇava Tantra* says that the fifth *tattva* or *maithuna* is not the ordinarily performed sexual act but the ritual process involving *nyāsa*, *mantras*, etc; the entire operation is to be carried out as an offering to the Goddess or Brahman in its collective female aspect.³⁴ The *Kālikulasarvasva* declares: "By doing *japa* of *mantra* and by adoration of Bhagavatī, the consort of Śiva, at the time of sexual union, a man becomes like Śuka, free from all sins."

Mantras and *dhyāna* (meditation formula) of several Tāntric goddesses contain descriptions of a couple in sexual union near the goddess. For instance, Chhinamastā, a fierce goddess, has to be visualized, according to the *Mahākālasamhitā* (248th *Paṭala*, p. 116), with Ḍākinī and Varṇinī on either side and Rati and Kāma involved in *vīparitarata* at her feet.

That the sacrifice of semen (*bija* or *reta*) to the deity is an important ritual in the Hindu Tantras

is made clear by the fact that the formal aspect of this ritual is maintained even by the Dakṣiṇāchārī or right-handed Tāntrikas. Instead of the semen they substitute cheese and for the particular posture of the sexual intercourse, the offering of particular flowers is made.³⁵ By putting a Karavīra flower, which represents the liṅga, into the Aparājītā flower, which is shaped like the female organ, *mithuna-tattva* is performed. The two are offered as *arghya* (offering).³⁶

As seen in the last chapter, actions imitating the sexual act and vulgar gestures are performed on the tenth day of the Durgā Pūjā in the festival called Śābarotsava. The idea behind this is that Devī is pleased by such actions. The *Devī Purāṇa*, as quoted by a 14th century writer, emphasizes the performance of these practices to avoid the displeasure of the goddess.³⁷ The *Nandikeśvara Purāṇa*, which is dated not later than A.D. 1100 and was probably composed between A.D. 850–950, mentions the use of abusive words on the tenth day of Durgā worship.³⁸ Jimūtavāhana in the 12th century clearly states (*Kālaviveka*, p. 514) that the goddess gets angry with the person who does not participate in actions, words and songs about the female and male genital organs (*bhaga-liṅga*). The *Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa*,³⁹ a late Medieval work of Bengal, says that a person worthy of worshipping the Mother goddess should utter indecent expressions with a view to pleasing her. Thus, the sexual act and its substitutes are performed in order to please or propitiate the deity.

Both among Hindu and Buddhist Tāntric sects, *maithuna* is supposed to be a ritual and is not to be performed with any hedonistic motive. It is not an amorous but a sacred act and is performed under controlled conditions.⁴⁰ The basic requirement for the act is a guru or teacher who initiates the disciple into Tāntric *sādhana*. The *maithuna* rite is performed only after the initiation. The Tāntric rites are to be kept secret and are not to be practised openly. The Tantras divide human beings into three classes, Paśu or animal, Vīra or hero and Divya or divine, corresponding to the *tāmasika*, *rājasika* and *sāttvika* nature of man. *Sādhana* is ascribed to each practitioner according to his own capacity or *adhikārabheda*, which is not determined by birth or status but by a close study of one's *saṁskāras* and the nature formed by them. The ritual of *maithuna* and other *makāras* is performed in its literal sense only by Viras. Paśus, who cannot understand the real import of things, are supposed to practise the *pañchatattvas* through substitutes only.

Besides *maithuna* other *makāras* for the propitiation of the divinity are: *madya* or wine, *mina* or fish, *māṁsa* or meat, and *mudrā* which can be interpreted as (i) fried rice, (ii) hand-gestures, (iii) particular posture of sexual union, (iv) the female partner. The name *makāra* is applied to a list of these five elements because all of them start with the letter M. Worship with these five *makāras*, or *pañchatattvas* as they are also called, forms such an important part of Tāntric *sādhana* that some Tantras expressly declare that there cannot be any worship without them. The *Kulārṇava Tantra* (V, 69, 76), the most important Śākta work, states that for the worship of Śakti the five *tattvas* are absolutely necessary. The *Kaulāvalīnirṇaya* (IV) says that *pañchamakāras* please deities (*makāra-pañchakam devī devatāpṛitidāyakam*).

Yet the practice of *pañchamakāras* was considered difficult even for Viras who alone could perform them in their literal sense. The *Kulārṇava Tantra* (II, 117–118, 122, 129) makes it clear that it is more difficult than walking on blades of swords, catching hold of the neck of a tiger and holding a snake. The rites were not allowed to be performed in public but took place in secret. The Tantra further states that it should not be supposed that religion consists in a mere enjoyment of these things, for then drunkards and meat-eaters would all be regarded as highly religious personages. Heated wine is to be poured into the mouth of one who drank it for the sake of pleasure in order

that his mouth might be purified. The *Gandharva Tantra* and *Tantrasāra* say that persons using these things for secular purposes were doomed to eternal damnation.⁴¹ The *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* devotes one chapter (XI) dealing with punishment to miscreants.

But the question still arises, what was the great significance of these rites that in spite of knowing the possibility of degeneration, the compilers of Tantras had to retain them? The *Kaulāvalinirṇaya* (IV, 20) states the importance of the practice of the *pañchatattvas* and emphasizes the value of the fifth *tattva*, viz. *maithuna*. By this fifth *tattva* alone the *sādhaka* acquires all *siddhis*. Even so late a work as the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* (V, 22-24; VII, 37, 96 ff), which presented a very modified version of Tāntric practices, says that *mantras* do not confer *siddhi* or power unless the Kulāchāra way is followed, i.e. the five *tattvas* are offered. Without the *pañchatattvas* in one form or other Śakti-pūjā cannot be performed. Worship of Kālī with *pañchamakāras* on the dark night of Tuesday brings many *siddhis*, including *aṇiman* and others.

The *pañchatattvas* were so immensely important in the Tāntric *sādhanā* that Agheyananda Bharati⁴² says he has not found any Tāntric text which would deny the *pañchatattva-sādhanā* an important place in hierarchy of rituals. Kane⁴³ also says that *makāras* are included in almost all the Tantras.

Tāntrism and Fertility Cults

The significant place assigned to the *pañchamakāras* in Tāntrism clearly associates it with primitive and folk religion. The propitiation of Vināyakas, according to the *Mānava Gṛihyasūtra* (II, 28) of the pre-Christian period, included *bali* or offering of *mudrā*, *māṃsa*, *mīna*, *surā* or wine in a basket which was put at the meeting place of four roads. These four objects are the *makāras* in Tāntric religion. The Mother goddesses were also propitiated by similar means in the popular religion practised in the 2nd century A.D.⁴⁴ The primitive worship of the Mother goddess with meat and wine, two of the Tāntric *makāras*, is seen in the Āryāstava in the *Harivaṃśa*, and is also mentioned in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (V, 2.84). The utmost importance given to *maithuna* as a *makāra* in Tāntrism, either in its actual or symbolic performance, reveals its closeness to cults of fertility in which, as we have seen in Chapter VI, ritual copulation is performed for the attainment of general welfare and the riddance of all evils.

Chakrapūjā or worship in a circle seems to be an example of the survival of fertility rites in Tāntrism. It is an orgiastic festival conducted under the leadership of a guru. The *Hevajra Tantra* (VII, 5-7) of about the 8th century says that *feasting in a circle* fulfils the substance of all desires. One should set about this feasting in a cremation ground or a mountain cave in a deserted town or in some lonely place. As described in the Tāntric work *Kaulāvalinirṇaya* (VIII, 56 ff), an equal number of men and women, without distinctions of caste and blood relationships, secretly meet at night and sit in a circle. The goddess is represented by a *yantra* or mystic diagram. Women cast their bodices in a receptacle which is taken by men in turn. The woman whose bodice is received by the man becomes his partner in the sexual ritual. The sexual ritual is preceded by a long sequence of *pūjās* and *vratas* to propitiate the deity. In present-day Rajasthan, the religious cults which practise these secret esoteric rites are known by the generic title of Lāja-Dharma of which Kāñchli-pantha and Kundā-pantha are the variants.⁴⁵ In the Himalayan region the cult is called Cholimārg.⁴⁶ We may note that similar mass sexual rituals were also practised by the Chinese Tāntrikas and Taoists.⁴⁷

Significantly, Tāntrikas practised seasonal orgies on Vasantotsava in Spring and Kaumudīmahotsava in Autumn,⁴⁸ the two important fertility festivals of Medieval India.

Kumārīpūjā or worship of a young girl is an important Tāntric ritual, mentioned even by an orthodox Tantra like the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* (VII, 16). This ritual also reveals elements of fertility rites. W. Ward,⁴⁹ in 1822, describes the practice of Kumārīpūjā which, according to him, is too abominable to enter the ears of man. A maiden of any caste, below 16 years of age, is worshipped sometimes amidst an orgiastic ritual. She is offered liquor which is later partaken of as *prasāda* by the worshippers. "The priest, then, in the presence of all behaves towards this female in a manner which decency forbids to be mentioned; after which the persons present repeat many times the name of some god, performing actions unutterably abominable. . . ." In the Tāntric rite called Dūtīyāga any woman is worshipped as the Mother goddess in the midst of secret ritualistic orgies.⁵⁰

Among other points which indicate the close connection of Tāntrism with cults of fertility is the importance of menstrual blood called *khaṇḍa* in their *sandhyābhāṣā* or mystic language. The blood of different types of women is classified and given names.⁵¹ What is significant is that in primitive thought menstrual blood is associated with rejuvenation and human productivity. It is considered the blood of life. Vermilion, which stands for menstrual blood, is smeared on a stone to infuse productive energy into the field.⁵² In Devī temples like those at Travancore and Kāmākhyā in Assam, the periodic ceremony of menstruation of the goddess is celebrated. The cloth which is coloured with red spots passes as a holy relic.⁵³ It may be pointed out that Kāmākhyā was the most important Tāntric *pīṭha* in the Medieval period.

The importance of *mantras* in Tāntrism is clearly seen in the table given by Agheyananda Bharati⁵⁴ of various themes in Tantras, taking twenty-five Hindu and ten Buddhist Tantras of medium length of six hundred verses. He found that of these 60 per cent consists of *mantra* notation and *mantra* instruction, whereas 10 per cent of maṇḍala construction and use, 10 per cent of *dhyānas* for various deities, 5 per cent for preparation of ritualistic ingredients, 3 per cent of amulets and charms, and 7 per cent of the Mokṣa complex proper. The rest are Tāntric miscellanies: astrological indications, *phalaśrutis*, accounts of gains with various *sādhana*s, etc.

The presence of rites like *ṣaṭkarmas*⁵⁵ in the Tantras further brings out the association of Tāntrism with primitive magic. The *ṣaṭkarmas*, or six cruel acts as they are called, are *māraṇa* or destruction, *uchchāṭana* or driving away, *vaśikaraṇa* or bringing under control, e.g. through hypnotism, *stambhana* or arresting, e.g. staying a storm, striking a man dumb, *vidveṣaṇa* or causing antagonism between two persons, *svastyayana* or rites performed with a view to attaining welfare in cases of calamities, disease, etc.

The importance of magical rites in Tāntrism is obvious to one who looks at the contents of the Tantras. In the *Hevajra Tantra* (I, p. 57) the Lord himself declares the proficiency of the Tantra: "It teaches the gazes, how to conjure forth and the language of secret signs, how to petrify, how to drive away, how to bewitch an army into rigidity." This Tantra also contains description of the rain-producing ritual, the cloud rendering ritual, the burning of enemy ritual, the ritual of gaining mastery over a young woman, the ritual of holding the sun and the moon, etc. The formulae for the rituals have nothing to do with spiritualism. They are based on factors which seem irrational, yet on close examination they are found to have been based on principles of magic and to be connected with fertility rites. For instance, mastery over a woman is believed to be gained by going on the Aśokāṣṭamī to the foot of an Aśoka tree, wearing a red garment, eating *madana* fruit and reciting *mantras* ten

thousand times. As we have seen in the previous chapter, on the *Aśokāṣṭamī*, a "fertile" woman imparts fertility to the *Aśoka* tree, which is believed to bloom at her touch. By the same logic, the *Aśoka* tree also makes human beings "fruitful." So the man, who wants to win over a woman, is asked to go near the *Aśoka* tree wearing a red garment. The colour red, associated with the blood of life, is conducive to "fruitfulness." The entire procedure, in each detail, rests on sympathetic magic. Even a comparatively sober work like the *Śāradātilaka Tantra* contains *mantras* for magical purposes including those for bringing women under control, for paralysing an enemy, etc.⁵⁶

Most of the Tantras are full of magical formulae and the spiritual element seems to be superimposed. As Giuseppe Tucci⁵⁷ says: "Though many Tantras have a high mystical meaning, many others can be forced back to such a purity and depth only by a conscious effort of a prejudiced mind. Many remain nothing more than formularies of magic, collections of recipes tending to promote the devotee's prosperity and to harm his enemies: digests of the six *karma*, viz. six magical actions, having nothing in common with the subtleties of gnosis or with soteriological practices. Such, for instance, is largely the *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra*, in which the Buddha descends to the level of a witch doctor revealing *Vidyā* by which any miracle, and even any crime, can be performed. . . All the Tantras, both Shivaite and Buddhist, are invaded by these ideas. . ."

Practices of non-Aryan groups such as Śabara, Pulinda, Kirāta, Ābhira, Kuntala, etc. were incorporated into Tāntrism. The performance of the rites of Śabarās in worshipping Durgā is one instance. Deities like Mahākālā, Heruka, Hevajra, Ḍākinī, Yakṣiṇī, Śabarī, Parnaśabarī, Vindhya-vāsini, Chuṇḍā, Ḍombī, etc. were accepted into the Tāntric pantheon. They were inserted into the *maṇḍalas* or mystic circles and turned into attendants of the chief gods or accepted as secret symbols.

SECTION 2. MEDIEVAL SECTS ASSOCIATED WITH TĀNTRISM

Some of the important Tāntric sects are: the Pāśupata, Kāpālīka, Kālamukha, Kaula, Nāthapanthī, Sahajīyā and the Gāṇapatya. The Śaiva-Siddhāntin sect, though not an extreme Tāntric but an orthodox Śaiva sect, wielded considerable influence on temples and monasteries of many parts of India and is hence dealt with here. The importance of these sects lies in that they spread Tāntric practices among the aristocracy and the royal class who were responsible for the building of temples. The peak period of their activity was from the 7th to the 12th centuries.

All these sects had one common goal, viz. the attainment of non-duality or *advaya* also called *sahaja* or *kula*, the state in which all dualistic knowledge disappears and the *sādhaka* becomes identical with the object of his devotion. For attaining this aim different sects advocated different means ranging from the sexo-yogic techniques of arousing Kuṇḍalinī to *aghorī* or horrible practices such as eating food out of *kapāla* (skull), sacrifice of human beings to the goddess, etc. The use of psychological and magical aids like *mantras*, *yantras*, *maṇḍalas* were common to all these sects except the Sahajīyās who were opposed to rituals.⁵⁸ The Sahajīyās, both Buddhist and Vaiṣṇava, were averse to the method of knowing truth through discursive reason and were not in favour of meditation and *mantras*. They protested against the formalities of life and religion and accepted human nature as the best help for realizing the truth. The Kāpālīkas, the Kaulas, the Pāśupatas, and the Nātha

Siddhas were specially adept in magical practices. They feature in literature as magicians conducting supernatural feats. The Nātha Siddhas, who were followers of Gorakhanātha, believed in the attainment of immortality through Haṭha Yoga and Rasāyana (alchemy).⁵⁹ These two techniques were considerably developed by them.

Sexual orgies were practised by the Kaulas, the Kāpālikas, and the Gāṇapatyas, as known from literary accounts. The Kāpālikas' ideal of salvation was to become like Śiva and enjoy the pleasures of love with a consort as beautiful as Pārvatī. Their aim, as declared in the *Bṛihaspatīsūtra* (II, 6), was *Kāmasādhana*.⁶⁰ They moved about with their female companions, called Kāpālīnīs, as seen in the plays, the *Mattavilāsaprahasanam*, the *Mālatī-Mādhava* and the *Prabodhachandrodaya*. Kaulas believed in *trikamata* which consists in indulgence in drink and meat, and worship of Śiva with wine in the company of a female partner sitting on the left during the rites. The Kaula worshipper played the role of Śiva as united with Pārvatī and exhibited the Yoni Mudrā. Somadeva in his *Yaśastilaka* and Yaśaḥpāla in his *Moharājaparājaya* describe the free practices of Kaulāchāryas.⁶¹ Kṣemendra⁶² in the 11th century caricatures a Kaula guru who indulges in sexual practices with a Kāyastha housewife amidst a midnight orgy consisting of strange characters. The Gāṇapatya sect, which in about the 10th century A.D. had set up the cult of five Śakti-Gaṇapatis, also indulged in wine and sex as noted by Ānandagiri.⁶³

The Nāthapanthīs, the Sahajīyās and the Buddhist Tāntrikas believed in the *bindusiddhi* or the yogic control of the semen during the sexual act.⁶⁴ *Kāyasādhana*, physical culture through yogic and alchemic means, was given great importance. The Nātha Siddhas practised sexo-yogic processes of Vajrolī, Amarolī and Sahajolī. S. B. Dasgupta⁶⁵ points out that these yogic practices were pure and simple and did not philosophize or idealize women. However, Briggs,⁶⁶ reporting on the Kānpaṭās or the present day followers of the Nāthapantha, says that they worship liṅga and yoni and hold that the restraint of passion is unnecessary for the attainment of *samādhi*. Consequently, much attention is given to the Vāmāchāra rites including Chakrapūjā, the worship of a living beautiful woman and the practice of secret forms of intercourse where there is no distinction of caste.

The Śaiva Siddhāntins who were the followers of orthodox Śaivism seem to have mastered yogic practices.⁶⁷ From their inscriptions it seems that the *āchāryas* of these schools practised severe austerities and avoided the company of women.⁶⁸

The Pāśupata was the oldest school of Śaivism mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* and associated with Lakulīśa, a guru from Gujarat of the 2nd century A.D. In its Medieval development the Pāśupata became an important Tāntric school which influenced even the *aghorī* sects like the Kāpālikas and the Kālamukhas.⁶⁹ In about the 10th century, Utpala, the commentator of the *Bṛihasamhitā*, knew the Pāśupataśāstra as *Vātulantra*.⁷⁰ In the inscription of v.s. 1030 of Vighrapāla Chāhamāna, we get reference to one Viśvarūpa of the Pañchārtha school of Lakulīśa who was a master of Uttara Tantras.⁷¹

The "objectionable" *vidhis* or rites of the Lakulīśa-Pāśupatas are of particular importance to us. The followers of the sect were supposed to perform these acts to bring upon themselves social disapproval and ridicule. Some of the erotic scenes on temple walls may have been illustrations of the absurd *vidhis* of the Lakulīśa-Pāśupatas. We have dealt with this point in Section 5.

The practices and tenets of some of these sects were so much alike that they were often mixed up by their contemporaries. The Kāpālikas and the Kālamukhas, for example, were so similar

that, as R. G. Bhandarkar⁷² says, ordinarily people do not seem to have made a clear distinction between them. In the *Nāṭikā* by Rājaśekhara in the 10th century, the Bhairavāchārya calls himself a Kaula Siddha and a Soma Siddhāntin, thus mixing the Kaula and the Kāpālīka sects. Further, the Kaulas, the followers of the Kula path, are divided into various sub-sects such as Pūrvakaulas, Uttarakaulas, Kāpālīkas, Digambaras and Kṣapaṇakas. Lakṣmīdhara of the 12th century, while commenting on the *Saundaryalaharī*, says that the Pūrvakaulas resort to symbolic representation, while the Uttarakaulas, the Digambaras and the Kṣapaṇakas participate in a crude worship of the sex organ.⁷³ Again, the Nātha gurus, Gorakhanātha and Matsyendranātha, had affiliations with other sects. The former belonged to the Pāśupata sect,⁷⁴ while the latter was credited with the *Kaulajñāna Nirṇaya*, a work of the Yoginī-Kaula school. The Kālamukhas, also called Kālānanas, are classed among the Pāśupata order of Lakulīśa.⁷⁵ While commenting on the sects of Medieval India, D. R. Shastri⁷⁶ says: "It appears that the Lokāyatikas, the Vāmādevas, the Śīśnadevas, the Kāpālīkas, the Kālamukhas, the Aghorīs, the Vāmāchārins, the Sahajiyās and the Tāntrikas—all walk along the same track with slight difference."

Visual Characteristics

Some of these extreme sects are described picturesquely in literature. We mention here these descriptions as they are helpful to some extent in identifying ascetics carved on temples.

The Pāśupatas are described as ash-besmeared by Varāhamihira in the 6th century and Hiuen Tsang in the 7th century. The latter says that they went naked and tied their hair in knots. The ascetics of the Kuśika lineage of Pāśupatas were known to besmear their bodies with ashes, wear bark and have matted hair.⁷⁷

The Kāpālīkas are described as having matted hair, using tiger skins as garments and beds, besmearing their bodies with the ashes of burnt corpses, wearing a necklace of skulls and carrying a *kapāla* or skull as a vessel in which they gathered their beggings. Bāṇa describes Bhairavāchārya as seated on a tiger skin, wrapped in a black woollen cloak, having a white loin cloth, along with a white *paryāṅka* band, with hair knotted at the top and a long beard which "dangling upon his breast and somewhat tawny at the end, was like a broom sweeping away all the dust of passions therein contained," with crystal earrings and an iron bracelet on his forearm.⁷⁸ In Kṣemīśvara's *Chandakauśika*, composed in the 10th century, a Kāpālīka armed with a club, carries a skull in his hand and is bedecked with ashes and human bones. According to the *Āgamaprāmāṇya* of Yamunāchārya of the 11th century, Kāpālīkas also wore a sacred thread, a crest jewel and various ornaments of the ear and the neck.⁷⁹ In the *Prabodhachandrodaya* (III) the Kāpālīka wears necklace and ornaments of human bones (*narāsthimundamālā*) and carries a *khaṇḍa* (lance). His abusing the Jaina Digambara by calling him *muṇḍitāmūṇḍa*, *chūḍālakeśa* and *keśaluñchaka* shows that the Jaina ascetics removed the hair of their head and body, and also that the Kāpālīkas themselves did not follow this practice. The Buddhist Tāntrikas also pulled out their hair from their head and body.

Tāntrikas in Society

It is likely that the theory of *sahaja* and *kula* and the practice of *pañchamakāras*, if wrongly interpreted and misused, might lead to a general degeneration in morals. The degraded Tāntric practices

are depicted in literature of the period. The Kāpālika of the 7th century play, *Mattavilāsaprahasanam* (I, 7), believes that Mokṣa can be attained through wine and women. In the *Karpūramañjarī* (I, 24) of the 10th century, the Bhairavāchārya is audacious enough to declare his ignorance of *mantras*, *tantras* and meditation. The *kula* is attained only through wine and women. In the *Prabodha-chandrodaya*, the Soma Siddhāntin Kāpālika allures the Digambara Jaina ascetic and the Buddhist monk by offering wine and women. In the *Daśavatāracharita* of Kṣemendra, Tāntric gurus declare that liberation follows from the drinking of wine out of the same goblet by washermen, weavers, Kāpālikas, etc. during Chakrapūjā, from free dalliance with women and from a life of festivity.⁸⁰ Thus it seems that the serious intent in the rigorous path of Tāntric *sādhana* was lost, leaving behind the belief that only the pursuit of pleasure can lead to Mokṣa.

The Vajrayāna Buddhists who, on the one hand, emphasized Tāntric-Yogic practices and discipline declared, on the other hand, in their texts that there cannot be any evil for the Vajrayānists—no act not to be done, no food not to be taken, no woman not to be enjoyed, etc. It is often declared that a Vajrayānist should steal the property of others, always tell lies, kill all beings, etc.⁸¹ Such practices were likely to degenerate into licentiousness. The Buddhist ascetic of the *Prabodha-chandrodaya* (III, 9; pp. 43-44) says: "Existence is transitory, the soul is not permanent, and so do not be jealous when mendicants desire to have your wives." He praises the Buddhist religion which grants both happiness (*saukhya*) and Mokṣa. "It permits us to inhabit elegant houses and to enjoy wives of merchants (*vaṇiknārya*) obedient to our wills; it removes the restrictions as to time of eating; it allows us to recline on soft beds, and to pass the shining moon-light nights in amorous play with young girls who have sprinkled themselves with powders and who serve us with faith (in Buddhism)." This statement, though put in the mouth of the Buddhist monk by the poet of an opponent group, seems to reflect hedonistic trends in the Buddhist religion of the period.

The Kāpālikas and the Kālamukhas, by their extreme beliefs and practices, were bound to be unpopular among the masses. Their crude practice of eating out of human skulls—that too, preferably of Brāhmins, in a society which venerated Brāhmins—their search for beautiful women in order to sacrifice them to the fierce goddess Chāmuṇḍā, their association with the cremation ground, etc. were repulsive practices which brought them ridicule and the contempt of the masses. The very fact that in the 7th century the king of Kāñchi wrote a *prahasanam* (skit) centring around a Kāpālika and that in the 11th century Kṛṣṇa Miśra, a Chandella court poet, put him in the enemy camp suggests that the sect was being openly ridiculed for its outlandish and crude practices. Śaṅkarāchārya's polemics with the Pāsupatas and the Kāpālikas are well-known. The description of Tāntric sects in the literature of the Medieval period suggests that they were not held in much esteem and were feared by the people for their magical powers. The Kāpālikas and the Pāsupatas are often spoken of in condemnatory tones. In the *Daśakumāracharita*, *Mālatī-Mādhava*, *Kathāsaritsāgara*, and the Jaina works *Mallināthacharita* and *Pārśvanāthacharita*, there are stories of Kāpālikas who tried to kidnap beautiful young women for sacrificing them to the goddess Chāmuṇḍā. The legends of Vikramāditya often repeat the theme of a Kāpālika who kidnaps a wife of another man by a spell but who is defeated in the purpose by this heroic king.⁸² The *Rājataranginī* (VIII, 995) connects Kāpālikas with cremation grounds and dead bodies. The *Pārśvanāthacharita* (p. 191) in the 13th century shows them as wicked mendicants, practising magic and who as a rule come to grief in the end.

As is natural, the orthodox Brahmanic or Vedic orders opposed the tenets of the Āgamic and

Tāntric religion. Thus, even the *Kūrma Purāṇa*,⁸³ which has Tāntric passages, condemns the Śāstras that are opposed to the Vedas and Smṛitis and based on *tamas* (ignorance, darkness), viz. Kāpāla, Bhairava, Yāmala, Vāma, Arhata (Jaina), etc. Among the Śāstras meant to delude the people are Kāpāla, Nakula (of Lakuliṣa), Vāma, Bhairava, Pañcharātra, Pāśupata and others. Again, it is said, one should not honour the Pañcharātras and Pāśupatas who are heretics engaged in prohibited avocations and who follow left-handed Śākta practices.⁸⁴ In Brahmanical literature it is ordained that one should bathe with his clothes on after touching Śaivas, Pāśupatas, Lokāyatikas and others.⁸⁵ Even folk literature as represented in the *Vaitāla Pañchaviṃśati* of Somadeva shows that Brāhmins did not eat from the hands of Pāśupata ascetics. In the *Mālātī-Mādhava*, the Kāpālīka Aghoraghaṇṭa and his female disciple Kapālakuṇḍalā are called Chaṇḍālas which reflects the attitude of the court writer towards this sect.

There is another side to the picture. In the same play, Mādhava, the son of a minister, who condemns the Kāpālīkas, himself goes to the cremation ground for offering his own flesh. This is a practice known specially to the Śākta worshippers.⁸⁶ Again, Saudāminī, a friend of the Buddhist nun who helps to rescue Mālātī, is described as observing the vows of a Kāpālīka on the Śrīparvata.

Tāntrikas were granted an audience by King Harṣa in the 7th century, according to the testimony of Bāṇa. King Puṣpabhūti, Harṣa's forefather, is said to have visited a cremation ground with Bhairavāchārya. Puṣpabhūti even offered to place himself, his harem, his court and his treasury at the ascetic's disposal. The comparison of Harṣa with the *siddhi*-giving Śrīparvata is also significant.⁸⁷ The court poet Bāṇa was thereby showing his veneration for this centre of Tāntric *sādhana*. In Orissa, the royal dynasties of the Bhauma-Karas, the Keśarīs and the Gaṅgas are said to have had as their religious preceptors the Tāntric Śākta Brāhmins of Vatsa-gotra, hailing from Virajā-kṣetra (Jajpur). The *Bhaktibhāgavata* of Jivadeva (early 16th century) relates how these Tāntric Brāhmins got associated with the royal house.⁸⁸ Mrityuñjaya of Vatsa-gotra revived the dead son of a king of the Bhauma family and as a result of the miracle, the Tāntric Brāhman was made the preceptor of the king.

The association of Tāntrikas with royal harems and wives of the wealthy is portrayed in literature of the period. Rājasekhara in his play *Karpūramañjarī* (Act I, p. 235) shows the Kāpālīka-Kulāchārya being invited to perform acts of jugglery and magic in the royal court. This Tāntric practitioner was looked after by the chief queen and her attendants. He built a temple of Chāmūṇḍā, the main deity of the Kāpālīkas, in the compound of the queen's palace. These references, though fictional in character, point to the possibility of the Tāntrikas' close association with the royal court and the ladies of the harem. The *Kathāsaritsāgara* (Ch. 20, Vol. II, pp. 103-4) relates a story of a queen who participated in nudity rites conducted by Kālārātri, described as a Dākinī (witch), who was probably a woman Tāntric leader. Kṣemendra's descriptions of orgiastic ceremonies conducted by a Kaula guru to exorcise a neo-rich Kāyastha's wife indicates the close association of the Tāntric practitioners with the officer class. From the statement of the Buddhist monk in the *Prabodhachandrodaya*, it seems that the monks had, or it was believed by their opponents that they had, relations with wives of merchants, who were among the main donors of the Buddhist community. House-wives seem to have participated in the Tāntric rites of *gurudīkṣā* (initiation) as can be inferred from the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* (VI, 12; VII, 278).

Kalhaṇa describes Tāntric practices that were prevalent in the royal circles of Kashmir (VII, 1129-35). King Harṣa (11th century) was presented with slave-girls whom he considered as

goddesses. "As he was anxious to live for a very long time, they granted him, when in his foolishness he asked for a long life, hundreds of years to live. When he desired to give magic perfection to his body (*piṇḍasiddhi*) some Ḍomba made him swallow a drink which he pretended was an elixir having that power." Kalhaṇa asks, "What respectable man could relate the other even more shameful practices of his which he followed to obtain strength and beauty?"

From the above description of Kalhaṇa one significant point emerges. The king was interested in longevity, strength and beauty, for which he had relations with women. This refers to the belief that long life and beauty are obtained through sexual relations. Alex Comfort⁸⁹ interprets the Harṣa story of Kalhaṇa as pointing to a practice based on gerocomy—the idea that man absorbs virtue and youth from woman—which, according to him, perpetually recurs in human belief about the ageing process.

Tāntrikas were interested in longevity and *kāyasādhana* (physical culture), and were credited with making discoveries in Rasāyana (alchemy). The science of Rasāyana is known to have existed in Patañjali's time in the 2nd century B.C., but further researches were made by Tāntrikas in the physico-chemical processes for transmuting and "immortalizing" the body.⁹⁰

Tāntrikas also influenced Kāmaśāstras. Medieval erotica show the influence of Tāntric magic. In the 10th century, Padmaśrī, a Buddhist Tāntric monk, wrote a work on erotics called *Nāgara-sarvasvam*.⁹¹ It is in a form of a Tantra of the left-hand class. Among his authorities are *Siddhyaika Virāma Tantra* and Śaṅkara's *Kāma Tantra*. It is significant that this Kāmaśāstra by a Tāntrika mentions sexual characteristics of women of regions associated with Tāntrism such as Jālandhara, Nepal, Kāmarūpa and China⁹² which have not been mentioned in Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra*. Kokkoka's *Ratirahasya* (Ch. XIV) also reveals Tāntric elements. It contains a chapter on Tāntric *mantras* for mastery over women. In the chapter on *vaśikaraṇa* (winning over a person) and on devices for making oneself attractive, Kokkoka refers to Tāntric *mantras* from works like the *Śabdārṇava*, *Uddiṣa Tantra*, *Haramekhalā* (A.D. 831), Yogāvalis (8th century), and various types of Śaivāgamas.⁹³

It seems that their knowledge of Rasāyana, *vājikaraṇa* (aphrodisiacs) and *vaśikaraṇa* added greatly to the prestige of Tāntric gurus in the feudal aristocracy and royal society. Kalhaṇa's comment on King Harṣa's attitude to *piṇḍasiddhi* is one of the examples. In Kṣemendra's *Samayamātrikā* (II, 103), we read that *ihakkuras* (feudal princelings) worshipped a fake woman religious teacher who claimed knowledge of *dhātuvāda* (science of metals) and *kāmatattva*, (*maithuna-tattva*) and who said she had lived a long life, thereby indicating her knowledge about the process of longevity. It is significant that when the Arab traveller, Ibn Battuta visited Khajuraho in the 14th century, he saw yellow-skinned ascetics "who made pills for increasing sexual desire."⁹⁴ In this context we may refer to H. Goetz's⁹⁵ identification of an elixir-preparation scene amidst the orgiastic panel on the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho (ph. 141).

In fact, the spread of religious movements among the Medieval aristocracy often rested on factors which helped them in their polygynous and womanizing activities. The success of Chinese Taoism, the counterpart of Indian Tāntrism, depended to a great extent on their developing sciences which helped their patrons—through suggestion or otherwise—in acquiring sexual vigour and restoring youth. Both Taoism and Tāntrism developed alchemy and practices of breath-control, mental concentration, hygiene, etc.⁹⁶

The reputation of the sects among the royal and aristocratic class becomes evident from epigraphical accounts. The Pāsupatas, the Kālamukhas and the Śaiva-Siddhāntins were given the

highest positions in the temple-organization in many places of India. They were also Rājagurus to the kings. Their spread in different regions will be noted in the next section.

SECTION 3. SPREAD OF TĀNTRISM

Tāntrism, which emerged in the border areas on the North East or North West of India, spread like a wild fire in all the regions of India. The Tantras themselves mention four places as important Tāntric *piṭhas* (centres), which must have been original seats of the Tāntric cult. The *Hevajra Tantra* (I, vii, 12) of the 8th century mentions the following *piṭhas*: (i) Jālandhara, (ii) Oḍiyāna, (iii) Pūrṇagiri, (iv) Kāmarūpa. The *Kālikā Purāṇa* gives the same list but substitutes Odra (Orissa) for Oḍiyāna.⁹⁷ D. C. Sircar,⁹⁸ who has examined various Tāntric texts, says that from the accounts of the *piṭhas*, two things are apparent. First, in all the lists Kāmarūpa has a prominent place. Secondly, in the North West of India, Jālandhara, Oḍiyāna (which he identifies with the Swat Valley), Gandhāra and Kashmir are important centres. He suggests that Pūrṇagiri could be the Tuljā Bhavānī centre near Bijapur in the Deccan.

The original list of the four *piṭhas* gradually increases to seven, then ten, then eighteen and ultimately fifty-one *piṭhas*, perhaps indicating the spread of Tāntrism to many parts of India. The *Rudra Yāmala*,⁹⁹ which seems to have been composed considerably earlier than A.D. 1052, mentions ten holy places including the original four centres. The centres are (i) Kāmarūpa, (ii) Jālandhara, (iii) Pūrṇagiri, (iv) Oḍiyāna, (v) Vārāṇasī, (vi) Jvalantī, (vii) Māyāvati near Hardwar, (viii) Madhupurī (Mathura), (ix) Ayodhyā, (x) Kāñchī. Other lists are reproduced by D. C. Sircar from the *Jñānārṇava*, *Kubjikā Tantra*, *Piṭha Nirṇaya* which has been quoted in the *Prāṇatoṣaṇi Tantra*, *Śiva Saṁhitā*, etc.¹⁰⁰

It is significant that most of the places having temples with erotic sculpture are not mentioned in the lists of the Tāntric texts. Khajurāho, Khajurāha, Kharjuravāhaka or Jejākabhukti are not seen in any of the lists reproduced by D. C. Sircar. Similarly, Modhera, Sunak, Motap, Bavka, Galteśvara, Dabhoi (Darbhāvati), Belur, Halebid (Dvārasamudra), Somanāthapur, Bagali are not mentioned. Even the famous Sūrya-kṣetra of Konarak is not listed in the Tāntric texts.

Of the places mentioned as *piṭhas*, the following are known to have erotic figures on their temples:

Ekāmra (Bhubaneswar) and Puruṣottama (Puri) in Orissa,
Ellāpura (Ellora) in the Deccan,
Prabhāsa, Dvāravati (Dwarka) and Siddhapura in Gujarat,
Maheśvarapura in Malwa,
Vārāṇasī, Kāñchī, and Naipāla (Nepal).¹⁰¹

Some Tāntric texts mention numerous regions following the Kāḍī and Hāḍī modes of Tāntrism.¹⁰² Kāḍī *mantras* and their use as a part of the ritualistic method were aimed at securing worldly or magical success, while Hāḍī *mantras* were said to help towards the achievement of Mokṣa or Nirvāṇa. It may be noted that in the list of the regions following these two modes given in the *Sammoha Tantra*,

Madhyadeśa, the centre of orthodox Brahmanism, is practically excluded except for the doubtful reference to Kaura and Kośala.¹⁰³ But the *Rudra Yāmala* (dated before A.D. 1052), quoted in the *Kulārṇava Tantra*, mentions Antarvedi (Ganga-Jamuna Doab) as a *piṭha*.¹⁰⁴ Some Tāntric texts also divide the Tāntric areas into three *krāntās* or circles of worship. These are Viṣṇukrāntā, comprising the region from the Vidhya to Chaṭṭala (Chittagong), Aśvakrāntā comprising the region from the Vidhya to Mahāchīna including Nepal, and Rathakrāntā comprising the region from Vindhya to the great Ocean including Khamboja and Java.¹⁰⁵ All this seems to indicate that the teaching of Tantras was widely spread in India and even to foreign lands.

We have given below the region-wise spread of Tāntrism based on epigraphical, literary and iconographical data.

Eastern India

The Śākta Tāntric cult was well-established in Assam, Bengal and Orissa. Kāmarūpa, as we know, was one of the four important Tāntric centres. The Kaula Tantras are said to have come from Kāmarūpa according to a verse quoted by Jayadratha (12th century) in his commentary on the *Tantrāloka* of Abhinavagupta.¹⁰⁶ Kāmākhyā in Assam was the most important centre of Devī worship. The Aghorīs, who were closely associated with the Kānpaṭā Yogīs, served in the Kāmākhyā temple.¹⁰⁷ The cult of Durgā-Kāmākhyā is described in the important Tāntric works, viz. *Kālikā Purāṇa*, *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* and the *Yoni Tantra*. Several places of Bengal are mentioned as Śākta *piṭhas* in Tāntric works. Among these are: Chaṭṭala (Chittagong), Kālighāt, Tāmralipti, Vibhāsa, Pundravardhana (Mahāsthān), Japyeśvara (probably Jalpaigiri). In Orissa, Virajā (Jajpur) was an important centre of Devī worship. Śākta Tāntric Brāhmins of Jajpur were Rājagurus of the Orissan kings in the Medieval period.

The Pāśupata Śaivism was strong in Bhubaneswar as is evidenced in the iconography of the temples of the 7th–11th centuries. Ithyphallic Lakulīśa, sometimes accompanied by his disciples, is seen in the sculptural depictions of these temples (pls. 39, 41). The Pāśupata practice of installing liṅgas to commemorate their dead teachers was also observed at Bhubaneswar.¹⁰⁸ The *pūjā-vidhis* to be performed in the temples which are Paurāṇic-Tāntric refer to Pāśupata-vrata.¹⁰⁹ As we shall see in Section 6, Vaiṣṇavism as fused with Tāntric elements is noticeable in the Puri temple and its *pūjā-vidhis*, and the Saura cult with Tāntric influence is seen at Konarak. The Smārta-Tāntric cult recognizing the five deities of the Hindu pentad is evidenced in the tradition of assigning one centre to each deity. Thus, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Saura, Śākta and Gāṇapatya centres of worship in Orissa are Ekāmra-kṣetra (Bhubaneswar), Puruṣottama-kṣetra (Puri), Arka-kṣetra (Konarak), Virajā-kṣetra (Jajpur) and Gaṇapati-kṣetra (Mahāvināyaka Parvata near Kapilas Road Station) respectively.¹¹⁰

In Orissa and Bengal, the Buddhist Sahajiyā cult was prevalent from about the 8th century and the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā cult with emphasis on the philosophy of ideal love through *parakiyā ratī* (extramarital love) became popular from about the 11th century.¹¹¹

Buddhist Tāntrism was prevalent in Orissa, Bengal and Bihar. In the 8th century, a king of Orissa sent Buddhist monks to China with manuscripts.¹¹² The Hindu shrines of Bhubaneswar, the Vaitāl, the Śiśireśvara and the Mukteśvara, show the amalgamation of Pāśupata, Śākta and Buddhist Tāntric influences in their iconography. Images of the time of the Pāla dynasty show

Tāntric influence. The monasteries of Nalanda, Somapuri (Paharpur), and Ratnagiri (Cuttack district) were centres of Buddhist Tāntrism. Tibetan accounts record that the Tāntric teachers, Bodhiśīrī, Bitoba, Abodhutipa and Nāropa, practised Yoga at Ratnagiri. This centre was associated with Kālachakrayāna in the 10th century.¹¹³

Northern India

In Punjab, Jālandhara (Jvālāmukhī) was an original *pīṭha*, mentioned in several Tantras. Hiuen Tsang saw Pāśupatas at this place. Tāntric influence is noticeable at Nirmand where a temple of Tripurāntaka Śiva was built under the name of Kapāleśvara, and another, called Mihir-eśvara, was erected by the mother of a *mahāsāmanta* (feudal chief).¹¹⁴ The Śaiva Siddhānta sect influenced the Varman dynasty of the Punjab in about the 10th century A.D.¹¹⁵

The Kashmir region is mentioned as a *pīṭha* in the *Jñānārṇava Tantra*, *Pīṭhanirṇaya*, *Nāmastot-taraśata*, etc. The Śārādā *maṭha* on the borders of Kashmir is mentioned in the *Śaktisaṅgama Tantra* and some other works.¹¹⁶ The worship of the Vāikuṇṭha aspect of Viṣṇu took place according to the Pañcharātric mode of the Kaśmirāgama or Tantrāntara school.¹¹⁷ An extreme Buddhist sect called Kālachakrayāna was prevalent in the 10th century A.D. in Kashmir and other places in North India and Nepal.¹¹⁸ The prevalence of Pāśupata Śaivism in Kashmir is reported by Kalhaṇa in his *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* (V, 404; I, 122, 347-48). He says that a king of Kashmir named Chakravarman, who can be ascribed to the 10th century, constructed a monastery called Chakramaṭha for the Pāśupatas. Influence of Tāntrism among the aristocracy is further evidenced by Kalhaṇa's mention of Queen Iśānadevī placing "circles sacred to the Mothers which were distinguished by their spiritual power" at gates and other places. Again, King Narendrāditya consecrated shrines to Śiva Bhūteśvara and founded a permanent endowment for the feeding of Brāhmins. His guru was reported to have constructed a shrine of Śiva and a circle of the Mothers.

In the north-west of India, the Swat Valley (probably Oḍiyāna) and Bhīmāsthāna in Gandhāra were important Tāntric centres. Hīṅgalāj in Baluchistan was a Śākta centre of great renown, where the goddess is locally called Bibi Nānā.¹¹⁹ The Kānpaṭās made pilgrimage to this place.

The Himalayan region and Uttarakuru were recognized as Tāntric by several texts, notably the *Jñānārṇava Tantra* and the *Bṛīhan-Nīla Tantra*. Nepal was a Tāntric region according to several Tāntric texts. The Nātha cult was popular in Nepal, where Matsyendranātha was identified with Avalokiteśvara and became the tutelary deity of Nepal.¹²⁰ A Rathayātrā festival was celebrated in his honour.

In the U.P. region, many places are listed as *pīṭhas*, among which are Mathurā, Vṛindāvana, Vārāṇasī, Prayāga, Hastināpura, Kānyakubja, Kurukṣetra, Lalitapura, Baijanātha (near Almora), Haridwāra, Hṛīṣīkeśha, Badrinātha, and Kedāreśvara. The Pāśupatas were seen by Hiuen Tsang at Vārāṇasī and Ahichchhatrā. Mathurā was their stronghold since the early centuries of the Christian era. Wema Kadphises of the Kuṣāṇa race styled himself as a devotee of Maheśvara and was probably initiated into the Pāśupata-vrata.¹²¹ An inscription from Mathurā of A.D. 380-81 of Uditāchārya mentions the installation of two liṅgas in the name of Pāśupata teachers.¹²²

Central India

As early as the 5th century A.D., Tāntric rites involving Dākinīs were practised in a temple at



Gangdhar in Malwa.¹²³ In the 7th century, Hiuen Tsang mentioned Pāsupatas as flourishing in Maheśvarapura in Malwa. This place is also listed as a Tāntric *pīṭha*. In the 8th century, Śaṅkarāchārya is said to have engaged in polemical debates with a Pāsupatāchārya of Ujjayinī. During the same century, Bhavabhūti's play *Mālātī-Mādhava*, which had amongst its characters a Kāpālika and his female disciple, was staged in honour of Kālapriyanātha of Ujjayinī. Ujjayinī is listed as a *pīṭha*. The Kāpālikas are mentioned by Kṛṣṇa Miśra in the 11th century court play which was staged at Mahoba near Khajuraho. Here Vārāṇasī is described as their stronghold until they were driven out from there by the "Forces of Reason" to Malwa, Pañchāla, Āvarta and Abhīra in West India. It should be noted that the Kāpālikas are condemned by both these Central Indian court poets, Bhavabhūti and Kṛṣṇa Miśra.

The Śaiva-siddhāntin sect of the orthodox Āgamic school was very influential in temple-organization in central India as well as in north and south India from about the 10th century A.D. Its centre was at Mattamayūra which, according to V. V. Mirashi,¹²⁴ may be identified with Kadwaha in the Guna district, where there are about fourteen temples. In central India, this sect influenced the royal families of Kalachuri Chedis, Chanderi Pratihāras and Paramāras.¹²⁵ The ascetics of this lineage were so powerful that King Yuvarājadeva of Kalachuri dynasty gave three lakh villages in Dāhala Maṇḍala to Sadbhāvaśambhu, who founded a monastery known as Golaki Maṭha at Bheraghat near Jabalpur. V. V. Mirashi says that, if the above information is correct, it would mean that the king assigned to him one-third of the total revenue of his home province of Dāhala.

Even royal ladies and queens took a keen interest in the religious activities of the Mattamayūra sect. Queen Nohalā, wife of Yuvarāja I, invited several *āchāryas* to the Chedi country.¹²⁶ Many places in the Chedi country are associated with the *āchāryas* of the Mattamayūra clan—among these are Gurgi, Chandrehe, Bilhari, Masaun and Bheraghat.¹²⁷ The first three places have inscriptions mentioning the sect and its activities. In the 10th century, the *āchāryas* of the Śaiva-Siddhānta school of Madhyadeśa were so renowned that the Chola king invited Sarvaśiva of this lineage to his country.

The Pāsupata *āchāryas* of Gujarat supervised *maṭhas* and temples of Malwa, Kanauj and the Chedi area near Jabalpur in the 11th–13th centuries. The Nāthas were powerful near the mouth of the Narmada at Amarkantak where a temple named after Matsyendranātha exists. Amarkantak was a Tāntric *pīṭha*.

The Vindhya region was considered as a *pīṭha* in the *Kubjikā Tantra*. This reference, as D. C. Sircar says, points to the resort of the celebrated non-Aryan goddess Vindhyavāsini whose temple stands near Mirzapur in U.P.¹²⁸

The cult of the Chausath Yoginīs was prevalent at Khajuraho and Bheraghat (Jabalpur) in about the 9th–10th century A.D. However, there is no evidence in inscriptions of the presence of the outlandish sects at Khajuraho. It has not been listed in Tāntric texts as a *pīṭha*. Kālāñjara, the famous fortified town of the Chandellas, about fifty miles from Khajuraho, is mentioned as a *pīṭha* in Tāntric texts.

Western India

Near Igatpuri in Maharashtra in A.D. 634, the Kāpālikas called "Mahāvratins" received grants from a nephew of King Pulakeśin for their maintenance and for the worship of god Kapāleśvara.¹²⁹ In the 7th century, again, the Buddhist Tāntric teacher Saraha is said to have visited Ellora¹³⁰ which

was a Tāntric *pīṭha*. The iconography of Elephanta, Ellora, Maṇḍapeśvara (Borivali) and Jogeśvari caves, belonging to about the 7th–8th centuries, reveals Lakuliśa-Pāśupata influence. The 11th century temple at Ambarnath reveals in its iconography the impress of the Smārta-Tāntric religion (see Chapter IV).

Tāntric texts note several places of Maharashtra as *pīṭhas*, among which are Bijapur (Tuljā Bhavānī), Kolhapur (Mahālakṣmī) and Janasthan, Pañchavaṭī and Govardhana in the Nasik region.

Gujarat was the stronghold of the Pāśupata sect. One of its teachers, viz. Lakuliśa of the 2nd century A.D., is associated with Karvan near Baroda. In the Medieval period, Somanātha was a centre of Pāśupatas. Inscriptions mention Pāśupata teachers Bhāva Bṛihaspati and Tripurāntaka who belonged to the Gārgeya sect of Lakuliśa-Pāśupata system.¹³¹ The former was responsible for the restoration of the Somanātha temple through the patronage of King Kumārapala. Bhāva Bṛihaspati is also known to have practised austerities in Malwa and Kanauj and was in charge of *maṭhas*. Inscriptional accounts¹³² also corroborate that the Pāśupata *āchāryas* of Lāṭa in Gujarat were in charge of the temple and *maṭha* in the Kalachuri kingdom. The Pāśupata ascetic Rudraśiva of Lāṭa lineage was in charge of the Śaiva temple built by Queen Alhaṇadevī at Bheraghat near Jabalpur.¹³³ This points to the network of Pāśupatas in different territories.

Lakuliśa images have been found in many places of Rajasthan such as Jhalawar, Atru, Kotah, Udaipur, Mandalgaḍh, Nana, Belar, Chohtan, Bijolia, Kayadra, Achaleśvara at Abu, etc.¹³⁴

Tāntric texts mention Siddhapur, Prabhāsa or Someśvara, Dvāravati (Dwarka), Vāmanasthali (Banthli near Junagadh), Piṇḍaraka, etc. in Gujarat and Arbuda (Abu), Jayapura, Śākambharīpura (Sambhara), etc. in Rajasthan as *pīṭhas*.

Southern India

Śrīparvata (Śrī-śaila) in the Kurnool district,¹³⁵ Kāñchī, Balipura (probably Mahabalipuram) and Setubandha (Rāmeśvara) are some of the *pīṭhas* listed in the Tāntric texts. Śrīparvata is referred to in the *Mahābhārata* (Vanaparvan) as a holy place of Śiva and Devī. It is noted in the Buddhist Tāntric work *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* of about the 5th century A.D.¹³⁶ The Viṣṇukunḍins of the Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts described themselves as meditating at the feet of the holy lord of Śrīparvata.¹³⁷ It was known to Bāṇa in the 7th century as a place for achieving *siddhis*. According to Bhavabhūti in the 8th century the Kāpālikas practised vows to attain *siddhis* at this place. This Tāntric centre was a place of pilgrimage in the 13th century when Tripurāntaka, the Pāśupata *āchārya* from Gujarat, visited it.¹³⁸

The Kālamukhas, Pāśupatas and possibly the Kāpālikas were powerful in Tamil Nadu. In the 8th century, the Kālamukhas were influential in Kadu Mulalur as evidenced from the inscription of Vikramakeśarī.¹³⁹ In the second half of the 10th century A.D. there is a reference to a *maṭha* of “Mahāvratins”—either Kāpālikas or Kālamukhas—in an inscription of the reign of Vīra Pāṇḍya from the Ramnad district.¹⁴⁰ In the same region and period, the Kālamukha sect also got donations for a big *maṭha* from a chieftain who was a contemporary of Vīra Pāṇḍya.¹⁴¹ Pāśupatas were seen in the Chola territory in the 10th century.¹⁴²

The Śaiva Siddhāntin system was also influential in the Kākatīya and Chola kingdoms, and the Cuddappah, Kurnool, Guntur and North Arcot districts.¹⁴³ Sarvaśiva of this sect was invited as the chief priest of the Rājaraṅgeśvara temple at Tanjore.

The Kālamukha-Pāśupatas were Rājagurus of the Eastern Chālukyas of Mysore. They are mentioned in an inscription at Belgamve as upholders of the *Lakulāgamasamaya*.¹⁴⁴ T. A. Gopinatha Rao and R. G. Bhandarkar agree that the Kālamukhas are here identified with Lakulīsa Pāśupatas.¹⁴⁵ K. Handiqui¹⁴⁶ points out that the technical expression *kālam karcehi* (loving the feet) used in Kannada inscriptions on the occasion of making a gift to the teachers of this sect is an indication of high respect shown to them. He believes that these Kālamukha-Pāśupatas were certainly not identical with the Kālamukhas mentioned by Yamunāmuni and Rāmānuja as the Kālamukhas described by them are no better than Kāpālikas. The Lakulīsa-Pāśupata system was very popular in Mysore after it was revived there by Chilluka, who is mentioned in an inscription dated A.D. 943.¹⁴⁷

SECTION 4. TĀNTRIC ELEMENTS IN PAURĀṆIC RELIGION

Tāntric elements were gradually assimilated by the Purāṇas which from about A.D. 300 onwards had become the dominating religious texts, guiding the *pūjā*, *vidhis* and ceremonies of the Hindu temple and also rites pertaining to its construction. J. N. Banerjea¹⁴⁸ says that in the course of progress and systematization, early Paurāṇic religions attained a Tāntric form and some of the texts dealing with their respective ideologies were described as Tantras. R. C. Hazra¹⁴⁹ points out that before A.D. 800 there is a strained relationship between the Purāṇas and the Tantras, and the Paurāṇic chapters on vows and worship are almost totally free from Tāntric influence. But a few Tāntric elements are found in some Purāṇas. These consist of *mantra-nyāsa*, the occasional use of Tāntric *mantras* for *abhichāra*, the drawing of coloured lotuses, circles or *maṇḍalas* during worship, in vows, consecration, etc. and the worship of virgin girls in the Vīra-vrata. Hazra adds: "The retention of these few Tāntric traces show how greatly the mystic rites and practices of the Tantras influenced the minds of the Brāhmins, who seem to have such a firm belief in their unfailing efficacy, that in spite of all their antagonistic attitude towards the Tantras, they could not free themselves totally from the influence of these works." According to him, from about the end of the 8th or the beginning of the 9th century A.D., some of the Purāṇas began to recognize the Tantras as one of the authorities on religious matters. P. V. Kane¹⁵⁰ has also noted the influence of Tāntrism on the Purāṇas and its penetration directly through the Purāṇas into Hindu religious ritual and practices of the Medieval period. He says that from about the 6th or the 7th century A.D. the Purāṇas began to incorporate the special characteristics of the Śāktas and the Tāntrikas.

Tāntric influence is clearly seen in the *Agni Purāṇa*, *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, *Līṅga Purāṇa*, *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, *Brahma Purāṇa*, *Kūrma Purāṇa*, *Padma Purāṇa*, *Saura Purāṇa*, *Sāmba Purāṇa*, etc.¹⁵¹ The *Agni Purāṇa* mentions twenty-five Tantras for the consecration of the images of Viṣṇu, Tāntric ceremonies in *maṇḍalas* for the building of a temple, the *dhvajārohana* or hoisting of a flag with Pāśupata *mantras*, the renovation of old Śivaliṅgas with Pāśupata *mantras*, etc. The Vināyaka-pūjā mentioned in this Purāṇa contains Tāntric rites of *nyāsa*, *mantra*, etc. It recognizes Tāntric Śrīparvata among the places of pilgrimage. The *Garuḍa Purāṇa* mentions the practice of *nyāsa* and *mantras* in the ceremonies for installing the image, Vāstuyāga and temple-building. The Sun worship mentioned in the *Garuḍa* and *Sāmba Purāṇas* is influenced by Tāntrism. The six acts, viz. *vaśikaraṇa*, *ākaraṇa*, *māraṇa*, *uchchāṭana*, *vidveṣaṇa* and *stambhana*, are given in the *Sāmba Purāṇa*. The worship of Śiva in the *Saura*

Purāṇa includes Tāntric *nyāsa*, *maṇḍala* and *mantras*. The *Liṅga Purāṇa* gives a long dissertation on the mystic meaning of the word *Om*, and the *Kūrma Purāṇa* enumerates Tāntric works and recommends worship of Śakti. The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* is Tāntric in character according to Hazra. The *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* and the *Devī Purāṇa* were excluded in the 12th century by Ballāla Sena, the King of Bengal, from his *Dānasāgara*, because, according to him, they were tainted with the doctrines of Tāntric sects.¹⁵² Tāntric influence was gradually felt on the Medieval Nibandhas which deal with religious, social and domestic rites and ceremonies. Hazra has shown Tāntric elements in the *Tattvas* of Raghu-nandana of the 16th century A.D. He says that the method of worship in the *Tattvas* is highly coloured by Tāntric rites and practices but Paurāṇic material is also drawn upon.¹⁵³

Three modes of *dharma*, viz. Vaidika, Tāntrika and Miśra, are recognized in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (XI, 27.7) written before A.D. 900. It is stated that one may worship god Viṣṇu in any one of the three ways. The *Padma Purāṇa* also recognizes these three modes for the worship of Viṣṇu.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, the *Kūrma Purāṇa* recognizes the three modes for the worship of Śiva.¹⁵⁵ The above classification is important. It points to the existence of a mixed religion—Miśra—which combined characteristics of both Vedic and Tāntric orders. The emergence of the Miśra religion in the Medieval period is significant for understanding the role of Paurāṇic-Tāntric background of the Hindu temple.

Tāntrism was originally non-Vedic in character and paid no respect to the *varṇāśramadharmā* (caste order). In its ritual practices the services of the traditional priest class had no place. It therefore indirectly affected the position of the Brahmanic priest class, which in that period consisted of the Smārta Brāhmins, the followers of the Smṛiti, and undermined its economic position.¹⁵⁶ We may note here that the Smṛiti material was being incorporated into the Purāṇas from about the 3rd century onwards.¹⁵⁷ In the early stages the Smārta-Paurāṇic religion was free from Tāntric traces, but from about the 9th century A.D., as Hazra has shown, the Purāṇas began to accept Tāntric elements. The Smārta followers of the Medieval period accepted the Tāntric mode of worshipping deities, but retained at the same time their veneration of the Vedas and the *varṇāśramadharmā*.¹⁵⁸ The Miśra cult of the Smārtas was thus within the Brahmanic fold and accepted Tāntric elements. The Smārtas were also influenced by the syncretistic tendencies and recognized *pañcāyatana pūjā* which involved the worship of five deities, generally Viṣṇu, Śiva, Devī, Sūrya and Gaṇeśa. One of these deities is considered the main divinity for worship and the rest are enshrined in minor shrines at the four corners or in the niches of the temple. Sometimes Brahmā or minor deities are substituted for any one of these deities. It is believed that Śaṅkarāchārya popularized the *pañcāyatana pūjā* along with his philosophy of Advaita.¹⁵⁹ But V. S. Pathak suggests that the Smārta cult of the pentad was initiated by the Āgamikas—Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas—and that it took a definite shape towards the 11th century A.D.¹⁶⁰ The Paurāṇic literature has descriptions of the Smārta worship of five gods, e.g. the Uttara-khaṇḍa (90, 63; 233, 41) of the *Padma Purāṇa* mentions the Smārta *pañcāyatana pūjā* among the daily duties of the people. Hazra shows that the Smārta worship of the five gods which is mentioned in the Purāṇas is influenced by Tāntrism.¹⁶¹ The *Kūrma Purāṇa*, for instance, gives the name Miśra Pāsupata to the worship of five deities. (*Raviṃ Sambhum tathā Śaktim Vigneśam cha Janārdanam yajanti samabhāven Miśrapāsupatam hi tat.*)¹⁶²

The Miśra Smārta cult seems to have influenced the iconography of some of the Medieval temples. According to V. S. Pathak,¹⁶³ the iconography of the temples of Khajuraho, Kālaṅjar, Bhubaneswar, etc. indicate their affiliation with the Smārta cult of the Miśra school. We may also

add to these the temples of Padhavli and Ambernath on the basis of their iconography (see Chapter IV).

SECTION 5. RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF TEMPLES WITH EROTIC SCULPTURE

We have examined below the religious setting of some of the important Medieval temples having erotic sculpture. The study reveals that Tāntric elements had fused with Paurāṇic material. The magico-religious devices such as *mantras*, *maṇḍalas*, *yantra*, *nyāsa*, which were developed by the Tantras had penetrated into the religious practices (*vidhis*) of the temples. Their religion was Smārta-Paurāṇic as influenced by Tāntrism.

Konarak

In the temple of Konarak in Orissa, the rituals involved Tāntric magical devices along with Paurāṇic and Vedic practices. The *Brahma Purāṇa* (XXVIII, lines 17, 26, 29, 37), parts of which belong to the 10th to 12th centuries A.D., mentions Konarak (Koṇārka) as a *tīrtha* holy to Sūrya by pilgrimage to which one attains both enjoyment and freedom from bondage (*bhuktimukti*). All the four castes, including Śūdras, and women could participate in worship. The *vidhis* included both Tāntric and Vedic *mantras*, *nyāsa* and *mudrās*. The *Sāmba Purāṇa* also deals with the Sūrya-kṣetra of Orissa in the second group of its chapters which were added between A.D. 950 and 1500.¹⁶⁴ The part dealing with Konarak is full of Tāntric elements, as fused with Paurāṇic-Vedic material. *Mantras* with Tāntric symbolism are employed; methods for drawing *maṇḍalas* and performing various types of *mudrās* are given; the necessity of performing *nyāsas* and *mudrās* in worship is emphasized; the formation and importance of *bijas* used in *mantras* is explained; and the method of practising yoga is given.¹⁶⁵

The *Tīrthachintāmaṇi* (p. 187) of the 15th century, which relies on the description of rituals in the *Brahma Purāṇa*, also states that at Konarak one could worship with Tāntric and Vedic *mantras* and Bhakti (*Tāntrikairvoidikairmantrairbhaktyā Koṇārkaṁ archayet*).

The Smārta practice of *pañchāyatana pūjā* is suggested in scenes of the sculptured panels of Konarak (one kept in the Site Museum, Konarak, and the other in the National Museum, New Delhi) in which the king is shown a worshipper of three deities, viz. Jagannātha, Śiva-liṅga and Devī (ph. 154). Sūrya was worshipped in the temple itself. The sculptural evidence is supported by epigraphical accounts. In inscriptions King Narasimha I is called Parama-Maheśvara, Durgā-putra and Puruṣottama-putra.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, remains of a Vaiṣṇava temple are found within the same enclosure of the Sūrya temple of Konarak. It may be noted that one of the Viṣṇu images from this Vaiṣṇava temple conforms to the Janārdana form of Viṣṇu as prescribed in the *Agni Purāṇa* and *Chaturvarga-Chintāmaṇi* and to Vāsudeva according to the *Padma Purāṇa*.¹⁶⁷

Bhubaneswar

Bhubaneswar or Ekāmra has been mentioned as a Tāntric *piṭha* in the 8th century work called

Niśvāsātattva Saṁhitā, one of the oldest Tāntric texts catalogued in the Nepal Durbar Library, and in the *Jñānārṇava Tantra*, the *Nāmastottaraśata* and the *Bṛīhan-Nīla Tantra*.¹⁶⁸ Bhubaneswar is mentioned and described in the Paurāṇic works like the *Brahma Purāṇa*, the *Śiva Purāṇa* and the *Ekāmra Purāṇa*.¹⁶⁹ A bath in the Bindusarovara is enjoined and some *vidhis* are suggested for pleasing (*tarpaṇa*) the gods, ascetics and forefathers. All these *vidhis* on the Bindusarovara are believed, according to the *Brahma Purāṇa* (XLI, lines 53-57), to give merit equal to that accruing from the performance of the Aśvamedha Yajña. In the worship of Śiva in the temple the devotee is asked to bathe the liṅga with ghee, milk, etc., to apply *chandana* and *kumkuma*, to offer flowers, Bilva, *naivedya*, *dhūpa*, *dīpa*, etc., to sing and dance before the god, and chant *mantras* which are both Āgamic and Vedic (lines 61-67). The fruits of this worship are worldly gains, beauty, youth, freedom from all sins, saving twenty-one generations of forefathers, etc., and going to Śiva-loka and being received by Apsaras and Gandharvas. These are the aims not of a Tāntric Yogī but of a worldly man. But the *Purāṇa* also adds that after he has enjoyed the pleasures of the Śiva-loka, he comes back to earth as a Yogī and having achieved Pāśupata Yoga attains Mokṣa.

As seen in Chapters III and IV, the iconography of the temples at Bhubaneswar shows Pāśupata, Śākta and Tāntric Buddhist cultic images (phs. 39-41). The Pāśupata influence is further evidenced by the existence of the Pāśupata *maṭha* called Bhāratī-*maṭha*. Again, a Śākta-Tāntric Brāhman called Bhāvadeva, belonging to Vatsa-gotra, who was the religious preceptor of King Udyotakeśarī, is said to have written a Tāntric text entitled *Tantrārṇava* and to have installed many deities at Kṛttivāsakṣetra (Bhubaneswar).¹⁷⁰

Thus, there are many indications to show that Bhubaneswar was influenced by Tāntrism, which, it seems, from the texts dealing with the rituals practised in the temples, was not Tāntrism of the extreme sects, esoteric in nature, but Tāntrism as accepted in Paurāṇic practices.

Puri

Puri or Puruṣottama-kṣetra has also been noted as a Tāntric centre in the list of Śākta *piṭhas*.¹⁷¹ The temple rituals are a mixture of Tāntric and Paurāṇic elements, along with Bhakti. Jagannātha Puri was so famous and was considered so sacred that distinguished religious teachers of the Medieval period like Śaṅkarācārya (9th century), Rāmānuja and Jayadeva (12th century), Narasimha Muni, Narahari Tīrtha, Jagannātha Tīrtha (13th century), Narasimha Bhāratī, Vāsudeva Bhāratī, Rāghava of Madhvācārya school (14th century), and Chaitanya (early 16th century) visited it. This possibly indicates that it was not an abode of extreme Tāntric sects.

The cult of Jagannātha has been originally connected with the tribal Śabaras in a legendary tradition noted in the Utkala Khaṇḍa (Puruṣottama Māhātmya) of the *Skanda Purāṇa*, the *Brahma Purāṇa*, the *Nārada Purāṇa*, the *Padma Purāṇa*, the *Kapila Saṁhitā*, the *Nīlādri Mahodaya* and other Medieval works in Oriya, Bengali and Telugu. The legend says that Jagannātha was worshipped by Śabara Viśvvasu originally and that King Indradyumna installed the god in a temple.¹⁷² The tribal influence still survives in the Jagannātha temple in connection with the *mahāprasāda*, the food offered to the god, which is prepared by the Śabaras, and in the celebration of the Rathayātrā, when the images are brought to the *ratha* by a special class of functionaries known as *daityas* who are tribals and who claim to be the descendants of the Śabara Viśvvasu.

King Indradyumna, who is credited with having first built the temple of god Jagannātha at

Puri, is said to have consulted all the Śāstras, including Tantras, Āgamas, Itihāsa, Purāṇas, Vedāṅgas, etc. according to the *Brahma Purāṇa* (XLIV, line 10). Choḍagaṅgadeva, the builder of the present temple in the 12th century, is described in the *Mādalā Pāñji*, the chronicles of the temple, as well-versed in *mantras* and *yantras*.¹⁷³ The *Bhaktibhāgavata* of Jivadeva (early 16th century) states that King Choḍagaṅga's preceptor Gauriguru was a Brāhman of Vatsa-gotra. The Vatsa-gotra Brāhmins of Jajpur were Tāntric Śakti worshippers.¹⁷⁴

In the chapter on Pūjāvidhikathanam, the *Brahma Purāṇa* (LXI, lines 3, 17, 46-50) states that after satisfying the gods and one's forefathers, one should worship Jagannātha by drawing a *maṇḍala*, chanting an eight-lettered *mantra*, and by *nyāsa* (*Viṣṇumayo bhūtvā yathā dehe tathā deve sarvatattvāni yojayet*). It says that one should worship Janārdana in the *maṇḍala* by Tāntric *mantras* and by Bhakti. The *Purāṇa* also mentions the giving of *dāna* and the offering of *piṇḍa* to the Pitris or forefathers (LXII, lines 1, 11-12).

In the present day rituals of the Puri temple, the concept of Tāntric *pañchatattvas* is retained, but the original *tattvas* are replaced. Fish is substituted by green vegetables mixed with Hingu, meat by ginger, wine by green-cocconut water, *mudrā* by *kānti*, a preparation of flour and sugar, and *maithuna* by the dance of *devadāsīs* and the offering of the Aparājita flower.¹⁷⁵

There is a definite Śākta influence in the cult of Jagannātha. Goddess Subhadrā-Ekānamśā, who is worshipped in the temple along with Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, is one of the aspects of Devī. She is considered as both wife and sister of Jagannātha in the Utkala Khaṇḍa of the *Skanda Purāṇa*. Here she is believed to be the embodiment of Lakṣmī. Jagannātha is known as Kātyāyanī Jagannātha in Tāntric works like *Kālikā Purāṇa*, *Brahma Yāmala*, *Tantra Yāmala*, which were written by the end of the 10th century A.D.¹⁷⁶ He is also called Bhairava.¹⁷⁷ In a 16th century work he is described as attended upon by 64 Yoginīs, Kātyāyanī, Sapta Mātṛikās, Vimalā and Virajā.¹⁷⁸

Khajuraho

Surprisingly, this temple-town credited by tradition to have had at one time eighty-five temples is not mentioned in any text as a *tīrtha* or pilgrimage centre. The Tāntric texts, Purāṇas, and special manuals on *tīrthas* like the *Tīrthakāṇḍa* of Lakṣmīdhara of Kanauj in the 12th century and the *Tīrthachintāmaṇi* of the 15th century are silent about Khajuraho. Even the extensive list of *tīrthas* produced by Kane¹⁷⁹ from various Medieval works does not mention Khajuraho or any of its ancient names.

There is no inscriptional evidence on the patronage of Tāntric sects by the Chandella rulers. However, the profusion of erotic figures, many of which portray ascetics and royal personages participating in orgiastic groups, does at least suggest that the theme of Tāntric sexual practices was popular among the sculptors and the patrons. Whether such rites were actually practised by the Chandella royal society or whether these were popular themes and motifs known and favoured by sculptors and builders of the temples is difficult to say. Pramod Chandra¹⁸⁰ has drawn attention to the possibility of the Kaula-Kāpālīka sects at Khajuraho from the fact that such sects who believed in sexual practice as a means of attaining deliverance were known in many regions of India, including the neighbouring Kalachuri region. The literary material dealt with in his article applies to religious conditions prevailing all over India in general rather than to those of the temple-town of Khajuraho in particular. The completely shaven (*muṇḍitāmūṇḍa*) or bearded and long-haired (*jaṭā*) ascetics portrayed in Khajuraho sculptures are, without doubt, Tāntrikas, but whether they are Tāntrikas

of the Kaula-Kāpālika variety is difficult to say. Ascetics with similar characteristics have also been found at Bhubaneswar, Modhera, Halebid, Ambernath, etc.

The Kaulas and the Kāpālikas might have lived at Khajuraho. One can associate with the Kāpālikas the Chausath Yoginī temple slightly away from the main complex of Khajuraho. However, it should be borne in mind that there is no ornamentation on this Śākta shrine. The "depiction" of sex, as distinct from actual practices, was probably not a functional necessity to the believers of the cult of the Chausath Yoginīs. Again, the Pañchāyatana Vaiṣṇava shrine of Vaiṣṇuṭha (Lakṣmaṇa), which could not have been associated with the Kāpālikas, is chronologically the first to show erotic figures among the temples extant at Khajuraho. So it seems that even if the crude sects like the Kaulas and Kāpālikas lived at Khajuraho, as they did in many places of Medieval India (see Section 3), their existence alone cannot be responsible for the profuse display of erotic figures on these magnificent temples.

J. N. Banerjea¹⁸¹ in his posthumous publication has rightly criticized the fantastic suggestion of H. Goetz¹⁸² that religious teachers of the Mattamayūra clan were sent by the hostile Kalachuri rulers to the Chandella court in order to undermine their morale and equity. Banerjea categorically states that "whatever might have been the real reason behind the carving of these extremely sensual but artistic reliefs, the Mattamayūras had nothing to do with them. There is no shred of clear and unequivocal literary and archaeological evidence which would justify anybody in associating the moderate Śaiva order with this feature of some of the Brahmanical temples of Khajuraho." He also says that the Mattamayūras differ from the *atimārgī* Śaiva section of the Kaula-Kāpālika, "who might or might not have been responsible for the aforesaid temple-reliefs."

There are some clues to suggest Tāntric influence at Khajuraho. The Lakṣmaṇa temple enshrines an image of Viṣṇu in his aspect as Vaiṣṇuṭha, having three faces of Viṣṇu, Varāha and Narasiṃha. Vaiṣṇuṭha had assumed a very important place in the Pañcharātric pantheon of the Tantrāntara or the Kāśmīrāgama school. The *Padma Tantra* and the *Īśvara Saṃhitā* mention the Tantrāntara school which worships Viṣṇu as Vaiṣṇuṭha.¹⁸³ The Vaiṣṇuṭha image enshrined in the Lakṣmaṇa temple must have been held in such high respect and importance that the inscription-writer goes into detail to show how and from where the image had been obtained by the patron-king. We know from this inscription that the image came originally from Kailāsa, the Himalayan region through the Bhoṭas or Tibetans.¹⁸⁴ Kailāsa and Bhoṭa (Tibet) are mentioned as *pīṭhas* in the list of Tāntric texts.¹⁸⁵ The worship (*pūjā*) of the Pañcharātric image of Viṣṇu obtained from Tāntric regions possibly implies Tāntric rituals.

Secondly, Gaṇḍa and Vidyādhara, the names of the two rulers during whose reign the Devī Jagdambā and the Kandariyā Mahādeva temples were built, seem to be Tāntric appellations. "Gaṇḍa" is a designation of the Gārgēya sect of Pāsupata ascetics.¹⁸⁶ Now Pāsupata influence is seen at Kālāñjara, the famous fort of Chandellas, which is situated about fifty miles from Khajuraho. It is a well-known *tīrtha* since the time of the *Mahābhārata* and is mentioned in the *Niśvāsataṭṭva Saṃhitā* of the 8th century A.D.¹⁸⁷ The *Matsya Purāṇa* (XIII, 32) refers to Kālī on the Kālāñjara mountain. Again, the Vaidyanātha temple inscription¹⁸⁸ of Khajuraho begins with an adoration to the coil of the matted hair carried by Vaidyanātha, which is similar to the Pāsupata description of god. "Vidyādhara" is an appellation given in Tāntric Buddhism¹⁸⁹ and also Tāntric Hinduism. The *Harṣacharita* (III, pp. 90-97) mentions a Bhairavāchārya who performs Vetālasādhana at the cremation ground, uttering *mantras* of Mahākālāhṛidaya for becoming a Vidyādhara.

Inscriptions reveal Paurāṇic influence in religious practices. As S. K. Mitra¹⁹⁰ says: "A study of the Chandella inscriptions reveals that Brahmanical theism in its different aspects beginning from the *trayī-dharma* (the three Vedas) to the Purāṇic conception of cult divinities was prevalent among the rulers and their subjects. The records are mostly concerned with Brahmanical sects. Invocations are offered to different gods at the beginning and at the end of these records."

In the Khajuraho inscription of v.s. 1011, the king is said to protect the laws of the three Vedas. The prosperity of the Brāhmins in particular is considered important. "But undoubtedly the utmost prominence was enjoyed by the Purāṇic religion with its idea of Trinity (Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva) as well as its innumerable myths and legends connected with different gods and goddesses." Religious sacrifices are also mentioned in a Chandella record.¹⁹¹ *Dāna* or gift-making and *pūrtā-dharma*, which consisted in building of tanks, temples, etc. were given an important place in religious life.

Thus, on data available at present it can be said that the religion of Khajuraho shows both Paurāṇic and Tāntric elements. The iconographical material, as pointed out by Pathak, suggests the prevalence of the Mīśra school of Smārta worship. Also the fact that the shrines were dedicated to Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Saura and Śākta deities, all erected close to one another, supports the Smārta *pañchopāsana* form of worship.

SECTION 6. RELEVANCE OF TĀNTRISM TO EROTIC ART

We have seen that it is in the 6th century A.D. that *maithuna* appears on stone monuments marking a turning point in the representation of erotic motifs. Now, Tāntric literature dates from about the 5th century A.D. So the period when the Tantras came to be accepted by the literate class coincides more or less with the period when the representation of the sexual act began to appear on temples.

The two chief aspects of Tāntrism in connection with sex, as mentioned before, are the non-dual or *sahaja* goal of Tāntric *sādhana* and the practice of *maithuna* as a *makāra*. Another factor, viz. the *vidhis* of Lakuliśa-Pāśupatas, is also worth examining in relation to erotic art.

How far is the goal of non-duality relevant in understanding Medieval sexual representations? As seen in Section 1, the Tāntrikas believed that the state of *advaya*, *sahaja* or non-duality could be attained through the union of the male and female principles represented either within one's body as Śiva in the Sahasrāra and Śakti in the Mūlādhāra Chakra or in the external world as the man and the woman. The former aspect may be represented in art as Kuṇḍalinī Śakti, coiled like a snake, traversing through the six *chakras* to the Sahasrāra of the yogin's body. It may also be represented in the symbolic form of *yantra* (fig. XXIII), the simplest example of which is two triangles with a *bindu* in the centre. Such representations are seen in the pictorial art of the Tāntrikas.¹⁹² They are cultic in function. It is significant that in the Chausath Yoginī temple of Bheraghat near Jabalpur there are representations on the pedestals, on which the images of goddesses are carved, of a *yantra* of double triangles and of a triangle, shaped in the form of the yoni, which is being worshipped by ascetics (ph. 115). Also equally significant is the fact that this was a truly Tāntric shrine and that it represents not erotic couples but Tāntric symbols.

Do erotic figures on temples represent Tāntric *sādhakas* in the Non-Dual state of Divine Bliss?



We know that this *sādhana* was not meant for pleasure but was undertaken as a ritual involving the use of *mantras*, *nyāsa*, etc. Among some Tāntric sects who believed in *bindusiddhi*, the semen was to

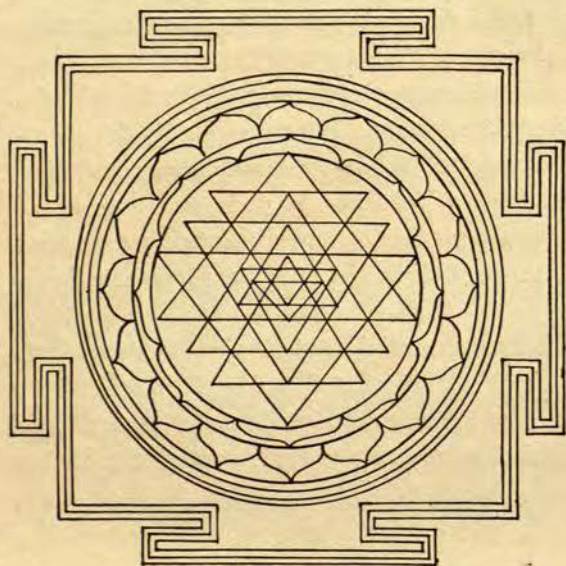


FIG. XXIII—A Tāntric yantra

be preserved by the practice of Haṭha-yogic poses. But we have seen in Chapter V that very few sculptures show the male lovers in Haṭha-yogic discipline. The gymnastic poses might well be interpreted as variations of Kāmasāstra *bandhas*.¹⁹³ For, the Medieval Kāmasāstras had adopted some of the yogic *āsanas* to enable participants with different sized sex organs to have pleasurable union. Moreover, the male lovers are often shown with protruding stomachs and disproportionate bodies which indicate that they were not adepts in Haṭha Yoga.

Ānanda or Eternal Bliss of Non-Dual state is rarely reflected in sculptural depictions. Hardly any sculpture of Gujarat and Mysore represents the divine joy of two lovers. Only some sculptures of Orissa and Khajuraho present lovers in a state of bliss. But even the famous scene of Konarak showing an affection-

ate couple, the photographs of which are represented in art books and tourist publications, apparently suggesting the concept of *advaya*, turns out on visiting the site to be an erotic group having a third figure, a female attendant, who sits below to titillate the male.

But the second aspect of Tāntrism, viz. the practice of *maithuna* as a *makāra*, is based essentially on the concept of magical power of sex and sheds significant light on the problem of sexual depictions. The *pañchamakāras*, as we have seen, are the offerings to the deity and form the most essential part of Tāntrism. Without their practice no Tāntric *sādhana* is considered fulfilled. Even in the Dakṣiṇā-*chāra* which does not have gross practices, the offering of *pañchamakāras* is necessary, but the "objectionable" things are substituted by milk, fruit, cheese, Aparājita and Karavīra flowers, etc. Can the representation of *maithuna* on the temple walls be taken as an offering of the fifth *makāra* to the deity? Plausible support to this hypothesis is given by Medieval sculptures of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and some of the central Indian shrines. Depiction of *maithuna* scenes at Padhavli in Central India is shown near deities (fig. XXIV; ph. 62). Temples of Gujarat and Rajasthan have representations of sexual couples flanking the deities on the *kumbha* (phs. 78, 79, 80, 82). These scenes have been noted by us at Bavka, Motap, Sunak, Galteśvara, Dabhoi, Eklingji, Nagda, etc. The temple at Motap has a significant scene where the goddess Chāmuṇḍā in her aspect of Danturā sits in the pose of the Nude goddess, and is flanked on one side by an orgiastic scene and on the other by musicians and dancers (phs. 78, 118). At Bavka (Frontispiece) and Ambernath the goddess is flanked by sexual couples and musical and dancing parties. Though small, a scene on the pillar of the Ambernath temple is of great significance. It represents two men holding their own phalli on either side of the goddess (ph. 120). It reminds us of the practice of pleasing the goddess on her festival by the *bhaga-līnga-kriyā* or actions involving sexual organs mentioned in several Tāntric and

Paurāṇic works and the *Kālaviveka* (p. 514) of Jīmūtavāhana. Couples portrayed in a *liṅga-pūjā* scene of Pattadakal also seem to indicate some ritualistic purpose (ph. 137). The prototype of erotic depiction near deities is seen in a plaque from Awra in Mandasaur district of Madhya Pradesh belonging to *circa* 100 B.C.–300 A.D. (ph. 13). It portrays two *maithuna* couples on either side of Śrī, the goddess of fruitfulness and abundance (see Chapter II).

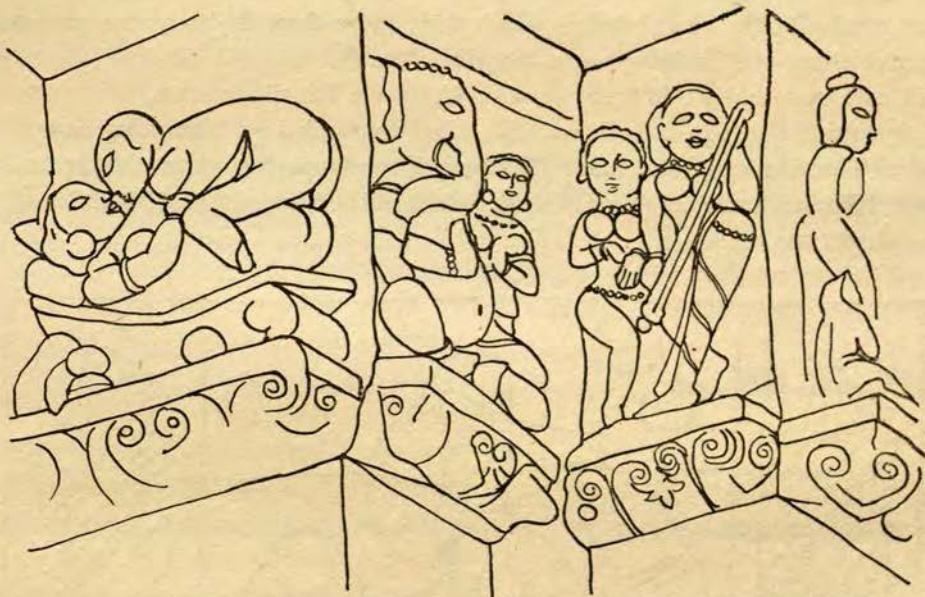


FIG. XXIV—*Maithuna near Gaṇeśa and Śakti; Padhavli*

The sculptural depiction of couples near deities may represent the offering of *maithuna* for the propitiation of deities and for fertility purposes. We have seen how this conception of the offering of *maithuna* to the deity is connected with the cults of fertility. The fertility deity needs to be refreshed by sexual acts in the sanctuary. This conception is also seen in the origin of the *devadāsī* institution. The sexual act creates power for auspicious and defensive purposes. It gives *siddhis*.

The esoteric *vidhis* (rites) of the Pāśupatas, who influenced many *aghorī* Tāntric sects, were considered relevant in explaining some of the erotic depictions on the temple by the famous iconographer T. A. Gopinatha Rao¹⁹⁴ as early as 1916. These objectionable *vidhis* were deliberately performed by members of the sect to bring ridicule and abuse upon themselves. They consist of *avitatkarāṇa* or acting absurdly without any sense of propriety, *avitatbhāṣaṇa* or talking contradictory nonsense, *śṛṅgāraṇa* or exhibiting signs of lust at the sight of youthful women, and similar absurd and ridiculous practices.¹⁹⁵ Some of the sculptures examined by us lend support to the hypothesis of Rao. He says, "in the majority of cases such sculptures consist of the figure of a stark naked male with his *membrum virile* erect, standing with his legs kept separated from each other and with his hands held in the *añjali* pose over his head and his head always covered with long *jaṭās*, coming down on other side. In front of this figure is its counterpart, a female one, whose clothing is represented as slipping down the waist, thereby leaving the *pudendum* exposed." Similar sculptures have been seen by us at

Bhubaneswar, Ambernath, Halebid, Belur, Bagali and Kanchipuram (phs. 36, 102—scene on top left, 125, 151). But it should be noted that in these sculptures, barring those at Ambernath and Kanchipuram, the male figures do not have *jaṭās*.

We must point out in this connection that the exhibitionist poses can also be explained under the general concept of "fertility." As noted in Chapter VI, the exposing of the generative organ is a device for magico-propitiatory and magico-defensive purposes. For instance, ascetics in sexually excited poses symbolize the virile potency which they, more than anybody else, possess by virtue of their practice either of *brahmacharya* or of ritualistic sex.¹⁹⁶

We will now examine certain erotic scenes which have Tāntric content.

The hair-cutting ritual in association with copulation offers an interesting clue to the coalescence between Tāntrism and fertility cults.¹⁹⁷ The sculptural representations of this ritual are seen at Bhubaneswar, Konarak and Ratnagiri in Orissa and Bagali in Mysore (phs. 134–136 and fig. XXV). All the cases depict the cutting of a man's hair, while he has sexual relations with a woman.

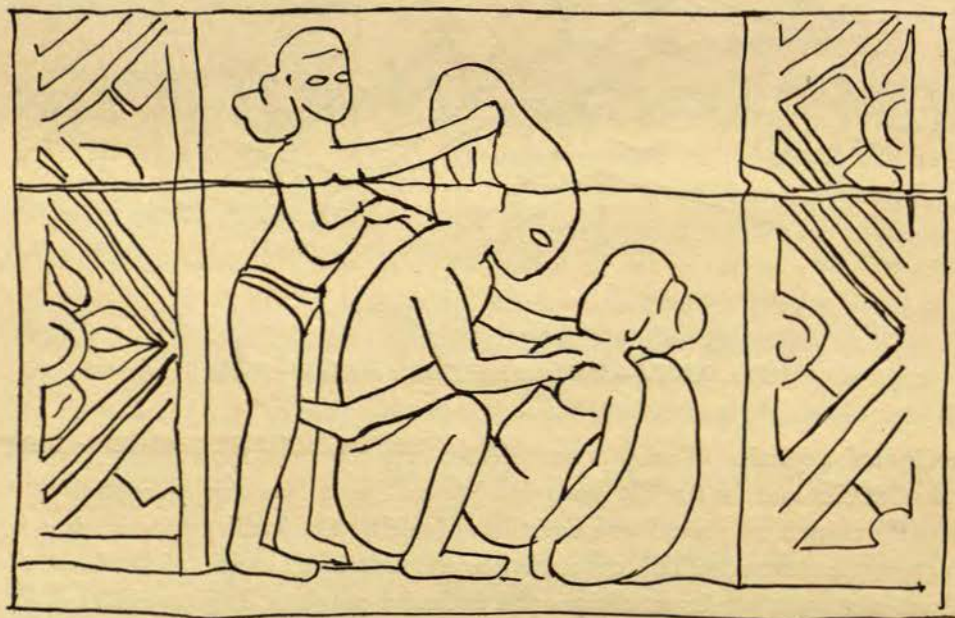


FIG. XXV—Hair-cutting along with maithuna; Ratnagiri

These scenes remind us of hair-offering which takes place during the initiation and propitiation rites of fertility cults in general and the Tāntric cults in particular. From the study of comparative religion it can be seen that hair is attributed with magical power in early civilizations and primitive cultures.¹⁹⁸ In India the cutting of hair was practised in the Vedic rites such as Chāturmāsya, Agniṣṭoma, the royal consecration ceremony, etc.¹⁹⁹ Medieval Paurāṇic literature prescribes tonsure of heads in temples and *tīrthas* to please gods and *pitṛis* and as a purificatory measure.²⁰⁰

Hair-offering has an important place in the worship of the Mother goddess. The 7th century reliefs of Mahabalipuram seem to depict hair-offering to Devī by a male devotee.²⁰¹ Vākpati, the 8th century court poet of Kanauj, refers in his *Gauḍavaho* (317) to the hair offered in the shrine of

goddess Vindhyaśinī. Offering of the *śikhā* (tuft of hair) in the fire by the *sādhaka* is mentioned in the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* (VIII, 257 ff). G. W. Briggs²⁰² noted that the Nāthapanthī initiate, after his tonsure, allowed his hair or *śikhā* to grow until he paid a visit to some shrine. Here he got it cut and offered it to the deity along with food.

An important evidence of hair-offering and *maithuna* is obtained in the Tāntric work *Karpūrā-distotram* (16 and commentary) addressed to Kālī. Here, in the description of the Vīrasādhana rites, it is mentioned that the *sādhaka*, who offers his hair with root (*samūlam chikuram*) and semen (*vīryam*) to the goddess on Tuesday night in the cremation ground, achieves worldly happiness. A similar reference is seen in another Tāntric work *Kakārakūṭarahasyam*²⁰³ where the offering of hair, semen and nail is mentioned. Although these references from the Tāntric works do not exactly tally with the representations in sculptures, they do throw light on the belief in the magical potency of hair which the Tāntrikas had in common with fertility cults. The sculptural scenes seem to represent a Tāntric rite in which the *sādhaka* offers to the deity both hair and *maithuna*, the fifth *makāra*.

The Tāntric content is present in the scene depicting a woman with her right hand in *abhaya-mudrā* while a man has sexual relations with her. It is seen at Bhubaneswar in the 11th century Rājārāṇī temple (phs. 42, 43), and also probably on a 7th century sculpture (ph. 37). The scenes seem to represent the female partner as Śakti or goddess. Similarly, the couple carved in the later additions of the Liṅgarāja temple, which represents the woman partner sitting on the left side of the man's lap (fig. XXVI), reminds us of the Kaula rites described in the *Yasastilaka*²⁰⁴ and the Sahajīyā practices mentioned in the *Nāyikā-sādhana-tīkā*.²⁰⁵

The presence of male attendants in the erotic groups (ph. 67) suggests that these scenes were not representative of the secular sex of the harem. Male attendants never formed a part of the Indian harem which, according to Bāṇa, included only dwarfs, female servants, etc. No men were permitted to enter the women's quarters. Although Vātsyāyana, Kalhaṇa and others mention extra-marital relations of women of the harem, it can be said that the lovers were not a regular feature of the harem. They were surreptitiously brought into the women's quarters during the absence of the king. The sculptured panels which depict males attending on the persons with royal insignia represent not simple harem scenes but religious or, to be more specific, Tāntric rituals in which the royal families participated.

A considerable number of erotic scenes on temples represent oral-genital congress known in

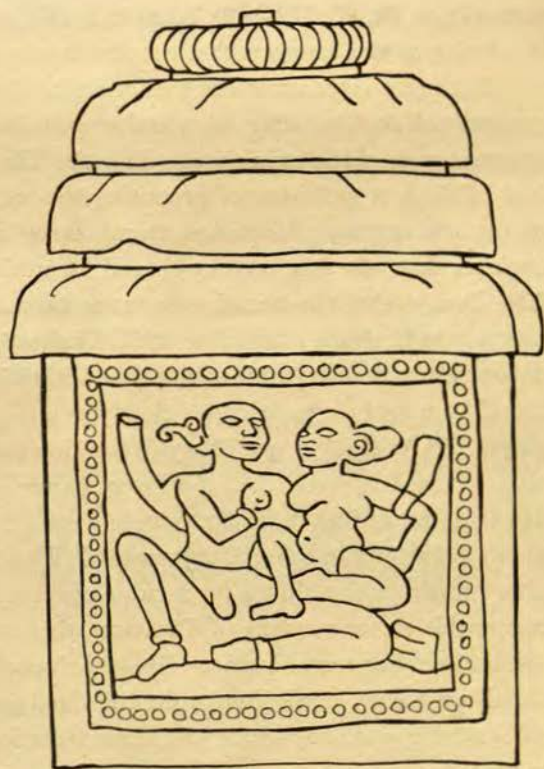


FIG. XXVI—A couple in a *muṇḍi*; Liṅgarāja temple, Bhubaneswar

the *Kāmasūtra* as *aupariṣṭaka*. This mode of congress is condemned in the Śāstras. The *Mahābhārata* declares that sex act in the mouth is a crime.²⁰⁶ Vātsyāyana (*K. S.*, II, ix, 22) was aware of this disapproval by the holy texts. He is quite reserved in his remarks on oral congress. According to him, eunuchs and low class people practise this act. Wise men, learned Brāhmins and government officials should not indulge in it. Kokkoka (*R. R.*, X, 66) in the Medieval period has totally avoided the description of oral congress.

The representation of this much-criticized practice on the temples of the period is an indication that it was depicted for a different public. A significant clue in understanding the depiction of oral congress has come from a Tāntric text *Kaulachūdāmaṇi*²⁰⁷ which mentions the *rajaḥpāna* or drinking of *rajas*, the female discharge, as one of the *Aṣṭakāmakalāprayoga* or the eight modes of love of the Tāntrikas. This, however, would be helpful in explaining the depiction of cunnilingus where the oral act is performed by the male (phs. 42, 134). In the explanation of fellatio which is performed by the female partner (phs. 88, 90, 103, 142, 146-149), it can be said that, as Tāntrikas admitted in their rituals low-class women who were not debarred by the Śāstras from performing this act, these scenes also could represent Tāntric sexual practices.

Ascetics of various sects, some with *jaṭās*, beard, and some cleanly shaven, are shown in erotic scenes (phs. 88, 90, 141-149). Ascetics indulging in sex and sometimes making peculiar gestures, as if uttering *mantras*, suggest that the scenes represent Tāntric rituals.

But there is an inner contradiction involved in exposing the Tāntric esoteric doctrines to the general public. One may ask whether genuine Tāntrikas could ever expose their practices to the ignorant eyes of the uninitiated. Only the Tāntrikas, and that too of the Vīra type and not Paśus, had *adhikāra* or privilege of practising the ritual of sex. Indrabhūti in his *Jñānasiddhi*, assignable to the 8th century, advocates strict secrecy of the practices.²⁰⁸ The *Kulārṇava Tantra* (III, 4-6) declares that absolute secrecy should be maintained in these matters. The *Kulachūdāmaṇi Tantra* (Ch. I) says that the doctrine is not to be communicated to any uninitiated person, not even to Viṣṇu or to Brahmā. According to the *Kaulāvali*, the Vīrasādhana with *pañchatattoas* should take place only at night. Avalon adds to this that Vīrāchāra cannot be understood by the common people and therefore must be concealed, as closely as a man should conceal his own mother's sin, "*gopayet mātṛjāravat*."²⁰⁹ As Chakravarti²¹⁰ says, "the rites pertaining to this form of worship were not allowed to be performed in public but they were carefully kept secret so that the common people might not feel tempted to imitate them. Severe were the penances prescribed for persons who took to these things only for the sake of enjoyment." The *Gandharva Tantra* (XXXVII, 14-15) maintains that persons using these things for secular purposes were doomed to eternal damnation. Moreover, to ensure this esoteric nature of Tāntrism, their texts were also written in what is called *sandhyābhāṣā*—intentional or secret language²¹¹—which could only be understood on interpretation by a guru.

Even today, according to G. M. Carstairs,²¹² Tāntric rituals are carried out secretly in the villages of Rajasthan, where outsiders are strictly prohibited and only the initiated are permitted to participate.

The Tāntrikas of China were also averse to public display or advertisement of their doctrines. Shan Wu-Wei (Śubhākarasimha), a Tāntric Buddhist monk who went to China in about A.D. 716, approved of the statues showing sexual union, but warned that they were not to be placed in the public halls of temples.²¹³

Thus, it is difficult to reconcile the Tāntric theory of secrecy with the bold exposition of *maithuna*

ritual, where ascetics themselves are shown in the sexual act. The question definitely arises whether this blatant display could be the work of (i) "genuine" Tāntrikas, (ii) Tāntrikas in the decadent phase, (iii) followers of the Mīśra school influenced by Tantras, (iv) non-Tāntrika artists who documented or caricatured the religious life of the period.

In this context, it is interesting to note the two Medieval works dealing with rules of *śilpa*, viz. *Śilparatnam* (46, 9–10) and *Mayamatam* (18, 3) which enjoin: "On the habitations of human beings should not be figured the scenes of wars, death or sorrow or legends about gods and Asuras or nude figures and the *līlā* or amorous sports of the ascetics. On other buildings made for other purposes, whatever is desired may be done." A similar passage from the *Suprabhedāgama* (30th *paṭala*) says, "Particularly (one should make) the figures of Śiva's sport (Śivakrīḍā), of Hari's sport (Harikrīḍā) and sport of the ascetics (Tapakrīḍā)." Tarapada Bhattacharya²¹⁴ suggests from these *śilpa* conventions that on temples there could be depicted figures on the above subjects.

We have here a complicated situation. The Tāntric texts very strongly declare that their doctrines should be kept utterly secret, while texts from South India dealing with *śilpa*, one of which is definitely Tāntric,²¹⁵ say that ascetics should be shown in amorous play on temples. How can we resolve this apparent contradiction?

Let us try to understand the situation. We have seen in Chapter VI that sex was attributed with magical power in fertility rites. In the Tāntric age, the belief in the magical efficacy of sex was reinstalled along with other magical devices. The practice of *maithuna* and other *makāras* was believed to give *siddhis*. Now, the magical power of the motif of "ascetic and woman" was considered important for "fertility" purposes in ancient thought and rites. J. Gonda²¹⁶ gives many instances of this belief. It was recognized in the Vedic rite of Mahāvratā where a *brahmachārīn*, who was "powerful" on account of his preservation of semen, copulated with a prostitute. Their relationship was believed to promote fertility and was magico-defensive. The same belief underlies the story of Ṛishi Śrīṅgi in the *Mahābhārata*. It is likely that when magico-sexual depictions were accepted in temple art, one of the themes was the motif of "ascetic and woman" which was considered to be auspicious. The *śilpa* texts with Tāntric leanings seem to mention the motif not with the intention of exposing Tāntric doctrines and practices but possibly because of their acceptance of the motif as a powerful charm.

The second possible step seems to be that the artists, after the recognition in *śilpa*-canons of the "ascetic and woman" motif, tried to caricature or depict the sexual life of Tāntric gurus, as did their counterparts in literary arts, viz. Kṣemendra, Somadeva, Kṛṣṇa Mīśra, Kalhaṇa, etc.

We will remind the reader of the observation in Chapter V of the portrayal on temples of ascetics of rival sects. Thus, Vaiṣṇava temples portray Tāntric Buddhist or Jaina monks and Śaiva ascetics, e.g., the Devī Jagdambā and the Lakṣmaṇa at Khajuraho (phs. 64, 142). Śaiva temples depict Buddhist and Jaina monks, e.g., the Brahmeśvara temple at Bhubaneswar, and the temple near that of the Raṅganātha at Halebid (phs. 97, 149), etc. Does this suggest that after the acceptance of the sexual theme in about A.D. 900 the artists utilized the *maithuna* motif as a vehicle to express their sense of humour? This would probably explain why the ascetics, instead of being shown in Haṭha-yogic postures, are shown in Kāmaśāstrīya or simply in standing postures. The ridicule is carried to an extreme by the artists of Bagali in Mysore, who even show a horse mating with a bent-down ascetic (ph. 102).

Recognition of the magical power of sexual depiction was explicitly made by the *Śilpa Prakāśa*,

which was an Orissan Śilpa text of Kaulāchāras written in the period between the 9th and the 12th centuries A.D.²¹⁷ As expected, it mentions the symbolic representation of sex in the form of the Kāmakaleśvara Yantra for magico-propitiatory and magico-defensive purposes. The text declares: "This *yantra* should never be given to anyone who is not a Kaulāchāra." "This most secret *yantra* is best for giving protection to all. It is an evident giver of power and the manifest bestower of all perfections (*siddhis*). "In the best temples dedicated to Śakti and to Rudra, this *yantra* must certainly be placed. Then the monument will stand unmoved forever." "This *yantra* is utterly secret, it should not be shown to everyone. For this reason a love-scene (*mithunamūrti*) has to be carved on the lines of the *yantra*. In the opinion of the Kaulāchāras it should be made on the lovely *jaṅghā* in the upper part of the wall. The *Kāmabandha* is placed there to give delight to people." (S. P., p. 106).

Thus, the portrayal of human sexual poses, *Kāmabandhas*, according to this Tāntric Śilpāśāstra, is for the "delight of the people," from whom the actual Tāntric *yantra* symbolizing the sexual act has to be hidden.

The depiction of scenes representing Tāntric rituals could not, theoretically, have been the work of "genuine" Tāntrikas. It is much more likely that the Tāntrikas expressed sex in symbolic forms or in *Yab-Yum* images of Tibet representing the cultic union of the female and the male principles or in non-Tāntric love-play. The true Tāntric art is functionally related to *upāsana* and *sādhana* to attain the non-dual *sahaja*. Its significant elements are the *maṇḍalas* or mystic circles, *yantras* or mystic diagrams which aid the *sādhaka* in his spiritual aim. It can be regarded as a form of yoga. Such art is not essentially expressive or decorative as it is cultic.

The original Tāntric *piṭhas* in the borderland of India, in Assam, Bengal and the North West of India are not associated with erotic display. Śrīparvata in the Kurnool district is also not known to have prominent erotic figures in its temple art. The Chausath Yoginī temples in Central India and Orissa are without any erotic figures. All this indicates that the Tāntric shrine need not necessarily have erotic depictions. Some of the temple sites noted as *piṭhas* which do have erotic figures, e.g. Bhubaneswar, Puri, Siddhapur, Prabhāsa, Dwarka, etc. do show the influence of the regional art style in their portrayal of erotic motifs.

We can distinguish two categories of art in relation to Tāntrism: (i) "genuine" Tāntric art, consisting of *maṇḍalas*, *yantras*, symbolic union of male and female principles, divine couples, etc. which is functionally related to Tāntric *sādhana*; (ii) art influenced by Tāntrism, without being functionally related to it. The depiction of human couples and orgies is not functionally related to Tāntric *sādhana*. But the belief in the magical efficacy of sex, which is emphasized in the Tāntric period, may lead to sexual depiction in art of both Tāntric and non-Tāntric temples. The genuine Tāntrikas would tend to restrain themselves in exhibiting their own esoteric practices, but may show erotic themes of non-Tāntric nature, depending upon the regional art style to which their temple belongs. The Tāntrikas in their decadent phase and the followers of the Mīśra school of Paurāṇic-Tāntric religion could display ascetics and Tāntric practices. Such scenes would be one subject among the others in the depiction of sexual motifs.

As the depiction of erotic motifs is within the sphere of art, which in India was influenced by traditions and conventions, the relationship of Tāntrism and sexual depiction has to be viewed in the historical situation. We have seen that *mithuna* or the amorous couple has been traditionally accepted in Indian art since at least the time of the earliest sculptures found in the historical period. We have shown that originally *mithuna* was an auspicious symbol which turned gradually into a decorative

motif. Thus, in the 6th century, Varāhamihira, who was familiar with the Tāntric rite of *maṇḍala krama*, recognized the auspiciousness (*māṅgalya*) of *mithuna* as well its decorative aspects (in the word *upāsobhayet*). In the same century, we also see a transformation taking place in the representation of erotic motifs. The depiction of copulation is seen for the first time on some temples of this period. Instead of non-coital *mithunas* of early art, *maithuna* scenes are seen on the door of the Aihole temple. At Bhubaneswar also *maithuna*-couples are depicted though only on insignificant parts of the temple. This depiction is not obtrusive in the beginning. But from A.D. 900 onwards *maithuna* becomes a prominent theme in temple art all over India.

Tāntrism was one of the major factors in bringing about the transformation in depiction from *mithuna* to *maithuna* and orgies. The change in the depiction and the profusion of sexual motifs rests on two consequences of Tāntrism: first, the popularity of magic, and second, social permissiveness in sexual depictions. The latter was incidental to Tāntrism. We have seen that Tāntric gurus spread their doctrines among the aristocracy. Ritualistic sex gradually acquired a hedonistic tinge. The already prevalent glorification of sensuousness and *śṛīṅgāra* in Indian cultural tradition got a wider scope in its expression. Sexual display became a fashion. The degraded practices of the Tāntrikas, specially Kaulas, Kāpālikas, Pāśupatas and Buddhists, became the target of the writers of the period and captured the imagination of sculptors. The subject received a sophisticated and artistic treatment at the hands of sculptors, specially at Khajuraho, Konarak and Bhubaneswar.

The magical aspect was basic to Tāntrism. Magic was one of the essential elements of Tāntrism. Magical techniques of fertility rites were revalorized in Tāntric rituals for acquiring *siddhis*. The Tāntric concept of *maithuna* as *makāra*, as seen by us, also rests on the magical use of sex for the propitiation of deities and for achieving *siddhis*. Tāntrism developed and flourished in a society that could embody magic in its religious behaviour and belief system. The religion of the Medieval period evolved ways and means for easily gaining Mokṣa and *siddhis*. As we shall see in the next chapter, giving *dāna*, visiting places of pilgrimage, building temples, etc. were cited in Medieval texts as the means for easily attaining Mokṣa, instead of the rigorous path of asceticism. Tāntrism was one answer to this short-cut to Mokṣa. The magical techniques evolved by it were accepted by all religious systems—Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina. Sexual depictions, which were already recognized as conducive to fertility purposes and were believed to be auspicious and luck-bringing, were given a great impetus in the atmosphere in which Tāntric magic flourished. The rationale of sexual representations in religious art lies in the idea, which is ancient and seen the world over in fertility rites and which was emphasized by Tāntrikas, that sex brings power. Sexual motifs were believed to be endowed with magical power for prosperity, well-being, and auspiciousness and for appeasement of evil spirits and calamities.

Once it was accepted in the sculptural scheme of the temple and had been established in *śilpa*-canons, it became a *motif-by-itself* exercising power. The factors which helped its acceptance as a motif in the canons of temple art need not be present after its recognition as an art motif. Temples built after about A.D. 900, whether they were directly influenced by Tāntrism or not, were bound to have depiction of sex in their art if the regional schools recognized the motif. Its mode of presentation was conditioned thereafter by the *śilpa*-canons of the regional school. But the extent of its depiction in the sculptural scheme depends upon socio-cultural factors, which among other things include the social consequences of Tāntrism, viz. the attitude of permissiveness towards sexual motifs as a result of the spread of Tāntrism among the pleasure-loving high society.

VIII. The Hindu Temple in its Social Setting

IN THIS CHAPTER we will examine the social factors responsible for the profuse display of sexual motifs in temple art. Some significant questions arise in relation to Medieval temples. Why was there a hectic temple-building activity in the Medieval period? In what socio-economic configuration did the building of temples acquire social importance? What social environment brought about the profusion in the erotic depiction on temples? The chapter is an attempt towards the understanding of these questions.

We have divided the chapter into three sections. The first gives a general idea of the feudal economic structure of Medieval Indian society; the second deals with the relevant social aspects of feudalism which were responsible for the development of *pūrtadharma* and large-scale temple-building activity; the third deals with the effects of *dāna* to temples, which converted them into landlords and led to the degeneration of their functions and created around them the sensual atmosphere which nourished erotic depiction.

SECTION 1

The socio-economic pattern from about A.D. 500 shows marked changes, when secular grants to military and administrative officers and religious grants to temples and Brāhmans gradually paved the way for feudalization. There is a controversy over the use of the word feudalism in the Indian context. Scholars like D. C. Sircar¹ say that it is a misnomer in the Indian situation and believe that it is confused with landlordism. A. L. Basham,² followed by S. K. Maity,³ suggests the term "quasi-feudalism" for the Indian system. But D. D. Kosambi, R. S. Sharma, Niharranjan Ray, Buddha Prakash, B. P. Mazumdar, L. Gopal, B. N. S. Yadava, H. C. Neogi and many others have broadly accepted the term feudalism for the socio-economic situation of the Indian Medieval period.



Romila Thapar⁴ says: "Indian feudalism did not emphasize the economic contract to the same degree as certain types of European feudalism, but the difference is not so significant as to preclude the use of the term feudalism for conditions prevailing in India during this period." The term feudalism has been broadly used in the context of other cultures also having certain characteristics in their politico-economic systems.⁵

The essential conditions of feudalism were present in India since at least the Gupta period, when certain political and administrative developments tended to feudalize the state apparatus.⁶ There developed a politico-economic system based chiefly on land. The Gupta rulers did not directly administer their territories. Under them were feudal chiefs (*sāmantas* and *mahāsāmantas*) who assumed the title of *mahārāja*.⁷ In the 6th–7th centuries we have records from Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar, Central India, Punjab, etc.⁸ mentioning *sāmantas* and *mahāsāmantas* who issued their own grants. The tendency to grant land in lieu of cash salaries intensified the feudal process. Land used to be distributed by the king among the officials.⁹ In the time of Yājñavalkya and Bṛhaspati there were *kṣetrasvāmīs* (landowners) who formed a class of intermediaries between the king and the cultivator (*karṣaka*).¹⁰ The village administration was also getting feudalized from the Gupta period onwards. Instead of the State Superintendent of the Maurya period, the village headman (*grāma-adhipati-āyuktaka*) supervised agricultural pursuits. He lived upon a share of the agricultural produce of the village people and also imposed forced labour on the peasant population for his own interests, and not for the sake of the central authority as was done in the earlier period.¹¹ The role of the village headman in the feudal economy is clearly brought out in the 12th century by Hemachandramuni of Gujarat. In the *Dvyaśrayakāvya* he states that the *grāmapatis* took their share from *karṣakas* (cultivators), "for it is they who have a claim upon the cultivators," and the *ṛīpa* (king) took his share from these *grāmapatis*, because "the king's claim is upon the village-lords."¹²

War was one of the chief features of the Medieval politico-economic structure. Different states were constantly at war with one another on minor provocations. For feudatories it was a means of expanding power and wealth. After conquest the land was often put under the charge of the near kinsmen of the defeated king or the military chiefs who were made feudatories and who paid their share of revenue and military dues to the ruling king. This practice gave rise to further wars as the vassal and his successor were on the constant lookout for opportunities to extend their power under a weak ruler. The feudatories became independent during the declining days of the Gupta empire under Buddha Gupta (A.D. 476–496) and did not refer to their overlord in their inscriptions. Similarly, in the 10th century when the Gurjara-Pratihāra empire was on the decline, their feudatories, the Chandellas of Jejakabhukti, the Kalachuris of Tripuri and of Satyapura, the Guhilas and Chāhamānas, asserted their independence and began incessant wars with one another for supremacy.¹³

Under war conditions the strength of feudatories and minor military chiefs increased further. The military class obtained a dominant position in socio-economic as well as political life. The king was dependent upon the army of feudatories. His authority was further undermined by the loss of monopoly over the possession of horses and elephants. The chiefs and princes were entitled to have elephants and horses according to their status. King Harṣa in the 7th century had a feudal militia which can be contrasted with the imperial army of the Mauryas.¹⁴ Armies of important Medieval dynasties like the Pratihāras and the Rāshtrakūṭas were organized on the feudal principle.¹⁵ The *Mānasollāsa* and the *Śukranītisāra* record that the feudal chiefs and princes who supplied the army to the king were also appeased on the day preceding the date of the war expedition.¹⁶ The large-scale

raids by kings like Rājendra Chola, Kalachuri Yaśakarna, Anantavarman Chodagaṅga, Govindachandra Gāhaḍavāla, etc. increased the number of feudal chiefs. By these raids vast areas of the country passed rapidly from one dynasty to another and made important the position of smaller feudal chiefs who transferred their loyalties to the winning party.¹⁷ It was not possible for the invading king to directly rule the conquered territory without the help of persons who were influential in the local community. The administration required the help of feudal intermediaries.

In the period after A.D. 600 almost all the ruling dynasties had a number of feudatories.¹⁸ For example, King Harṣa, his contemporary Śaśāṅka, the pre-Pāla and Pāla rulers of Bengal, the Bhauma Karas and the Somavaṁśis of Orissa, the Gurjara-Pratihāras, the Rāshtrakūṭas, etc. had a number of feudatories under them. These in turn had their own feudatories, giving rise to what is called sub-infeudation. The system created a pyramidal structure of relationships with a number of smaller feudal chiefs and vassals at the bottom and the king at the top. Bāṇa was aware of the well-developed *sāmanta* system. He mentions: *sāmanta*, *mahāsāmanta*, *āptasāmanta*, *pradhānasāmanta*, *śaṭrumahāsāmanta*, and *pratisāmanta*.¹⁹ The Medieval work *Aparājita-prichchhā*²⁰ has classified the feudatories in descending order on the basis of the number of villages held by them. These are *mahāmaṇḍaleśvaras*, *māṇḍalikas*, *mahāsāmantas*, *sāmantas*, *laghusāmantas* and *chaturāṁśikas*. At the bottom of the structure were the *rājaputras* and *ṭhakkuras* who held only a few villages. The *Mānasara* (6, 125; 49, 12-26) gives the number of horses, elephants, female servants and queens for the different grades of feudal rulers. The lowest in rank among these, the *aṣṭagrahi*, was entitled to have 500 horses, 500 elephants, 50,000 soldiers, 500 women attendants and one queen.²¹ Again, this work on art mentions different types of diadems and hair ornaments of feudal chiefs according to their grade by which the door-keeper led them to their respective *āsanas* or seats in the court. The feudal atmosphere has been well represented in a scene on the 12th century Belur temple where King Viṣṇuvardhana is shown in his court, sitting with his Queen, female attendants, feudal chiefs, etc. (ph. 155).

The feudal structure led to centrifugal tendencies and to the fall of the central ruling authority. The position of the king grew weaker. The territory directly administered by him became limited. The real authority was tending to be local. The kingdom was "a loose superstructure characterized by a network of loyalty in which a large number of chiefs and feudatory rulers of different gradations owed allegiance to the monarch."²² The feudal chiefs amassed large areas of land and property and often rivalled the king in wealth and power. The use of separate words like *svabhoga* and *svabhujyamāna* in the Chandella and Chālukya records suggests the necessity of distinctly mentioning the king's land.²³ The power of the land-holding *ḍāmaras* in Medieval Kashmir has been noted by Kalhaṇa. They acquired great political and military influence and indulged in incessant wars among themselves and with the king and became a menace to the people.

The feudatory chiefs of North India gained considerable power specially in the declining days of the Pratihāra dynasty of Kanauj. For instance, the Chandellas of Khajuraho, who had gained a high political status in A.D. 914 when their chief Harṣa helped their political overlord, the Pratihāra Mahipāla I, to recover the throne of Kanauj from the Rāshtrakūṭa King, enhanced their power under Harṣa's son Yaśovarman. The latter conquered the fort of Kālāñjara and extended his territory up to the banks of the Yamuna. Yaśovarman's obtaining the famous Viṣṇu image from Devapāla Pratihāra is further evidence of the latter's weak position. The inscription which records this fact also brings out the power politics of the north Indian principalities. It states that the Viṣṇu image came from the lord of the Bhoṭas who had obtained it from the Kailāsa. "From the lord of the

Bhoṭas, Sāhi King of Kira obtained it as a token of friendship; from him afterwards Herambapāla obtained it in exchange of a force of elephants and horses and Yaśovarman himself received it from Devapāla, the son of Herambapāla."²⁴ The rich splendour of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho indicates the wealth of this Chandella ruler under whom its construction began. Yaśovarman's son Dhaṅga, who apparently recognized the Pratihāras as his overlord up to at least A.D. 954, bore the title of *mahārājādhirāja* and became the first independent king of the Chandella dynasty. Similarly, the Kachchhapaghātas of Gwalior, who were originally sub-feudatories under the Chandellas, who in turn were the feudatories of the Pratihāras, became free in the latter half of the 10th century and their ruler Vajradāman declared himself *mahārājādhirāja*.²⁵ The beautiful temples of Kadwaha and Padhavli which were built under them testify to their wealth.

The power of feudatories further increased during the period between the Muslim inroads. The period A.D. 1030-1194, or the period between the invasions of Mahmud of Gazni and Mahmud of Ghor, may be regarded as the hey-day of feudal anarchy.²⁶ Feudal chiefs acquired so much power that it became necessary for the king to watch their movement and conduct.

SECTION 2

The study of the social aspects of this politico-economic structure throws some light on the extravagant temple-building activity and the profusion of sexual depiction on temples in the Medieval period.

Feudal elements gradually brought in a new type of production-relation in land. Feudal lords ousted a large number of free peasants. Peasants and labourers became weaker and poorer. More taxes and impositions were levied on the peasants with the rise in the number of intermediaries. They had to perform *viṣṭi*²⁷ or forced labour for the king and feudal chiefs, and to serve the needs of the army when it passed through their villages in times of war, which were frequent. Not only kings and military chiefs but even religious donees could demand forced labour.

There was pressure on land²⁸ in the post-Gupta period caused by a combination of factors like increase in population due perhaps to the prosperous rule of the Guptas, numerous land-grants leading sometimes to fragmentation of land, and large-scale war activities which made land the dominant form of wealth and the chief instrument of economic power. Income from land was considered secure. *Dāna* of land was glorified as the best form of charity in the Medieval period.²⁹

Another development from the Gupta period was the rise of localized units of production.³⁰ The beneficiaries of land-grants were entitled to all kinds of local dues. These rights minimized the economic ties between the central authority and the donated areas. For the continuity and development of their economy they were more dependent on the local artisans and cultivators than on the officials of the central government. The result was the growth of independent, self-sufficient economic units. Another factor that undermined the influence of the central power in the countryside was the fact that irrigation became a local responsibility. The development towards localized units of production can also be inferred from the paucity of coins of common use, specially from the time of Harṣa.³¹ This paucity of coins also indicates that trade suffered a decline in this period. The slackening of trade was caused by factors like the growth of localized productive systems, the pressure on

land, the atmosphere of war, the growth of centrifugal tendencies created by feudalism, the multiplicity of weights and measures, etc.

The rich trade with Rome had stopped after the barbarian invasions of the Hūṇas and the fall of the Roman empire, its place being taken by trade with the Byzantine empire and with the Arabs and the Chinese. But it was considerably less in volume compared to that of the Ancient period. This trade was largely in the hands of the Arabs and the Chinese who pushed Indians into the background. The actual participation of Indians in foreign trade was, in all probability, much reduced.³²

The social position of the mercantile community was not as high as in the Ancient period. The new military feudal class commanded wealth and land and acquired a respectable position in administrative posts. Buddha Prakash³³ has drawn attention to the weakened position of the *nāgaraka* class from the evidence of the Faridpur copper-plate inscription of the 6th century which refers to the viceroy and district magistrate or *viṣayapati* without any mention of urban bourgeoisie. He says that instead of the board of *nagaraśreṣṭhin*, *sārthavāha* and *prathamakulika*, some other persons, possibly from the land-holding class, were nominated to assist the *viṣayapati* in his administrative work. R. S. Sharma³⁴ also shows from inscriptional accounts that aristocratic elements occupied a fairly important position in local government, which were being gradually monopolized by limited family circles. The high social position of the feudal class in comparison with *nāgarakas* is also clear from literary evidence. *Nāgarakas* were often made the heroes of the plays in the Ancient period, but hardly so in the Medieval period. Vātsyāyana in his *Kāmasūtra* directs his instructions mainly to *nāgarakas*, whereas Kokkoka in the Medieval period addresses his *Ratirahasya* to a king. Damodara-gupta in his *Kuṭṭanīmatam* shows *bhaṭṭaputras* (officer's sons), *rājasutas* (feudal princes) and religious *āchāryas* as paramours of courtesans.

The merchant class also tried to acquire land. It seems that they were not satisfied with moveable property alone but sought security in possession of land. There is inscriptional evidence to show that merchants became proprietors of land on a feudal basis.³⁵ The guilds of merchants under the Chālukya and the Rashtrakūṭa kings were invested with umbrellas, *chāmāras*, and royal charters. Like feudal vassals, the guilds were obliged to supply soldiers to their ruler.³⁶ Literary evidence also indicates that merchants in Bengal, Gujarat and Kashmir joined the feudal order.³⁷

The rise of the Rajput chiefs tracing their descent from the dynasties of the Epic and Paurāṇic tradition can be well understood in the Medieval politico-economic structure. Vincent Smith³⁸ says: "The dominance of the Rajput clans is at first sight the conspicuous fact differentiating the medieval from the ancient period in the history of Northern India. . . ." The military aspect of feudal relationship and the granting of land and titles to chieftains were among the factors responsible for the rise of the Rajput clans.³⁹ Heroism and gallantry became the recognized social values. From childhood, the idea of conquering many lands was inculcated in them. The slightest heroic deed was glorified in bardic poems. Minor provocations gave rise to major conflicts. For instance, the Solāṅkī king Mūlarāja (10th century) is said to have waged war on Lāṭa because its feudatory had sent a present which included an elephant with the dog-like tail. This characteristic in elephants was considered to be a bad sign.⁴⁰ Incessant war was the dominant aspect of the Medieval political structure. Dying on the battle-front was looked upon as the highest duty ever since the days of the *Mahābhārata* and more so in the Medieval feudal ages. Military expeditions were glorified and were called *Vijaya Yātrās*, victory pilgrimages. *Pāliyās* (war-memorials) were erected in the memory of dead warrior-

heroes, depicting them as being received by the *apsarās* of heaven. Even a Jaina scholar of the calibre of Hemachandra, while praising the war expeditions of the Solanki kings, uses Kāmasāstriya terminology to describe the *apsarās* who received the dead heroes "through passionate embraces, through hair-pulling, through kissing the lotus face, and through inflicting the wounds by nails."⁴¹

Rajput dynasties were probably of mixed origin. They are believed to be either Hinduized foreigners—Hūnas and Scythians—or Hinduized tribals—Gonds, Bhars, Kharvars, Bhils, etc.⁴² The Gurjara-Pratihāra, one of the most important dynasties of North India, is said to have originated from the Gurjaras, who may have been a foreign tribe. Their social origin is also uncertain. It is believed that they were *pratihāras* or door-keepers. Other Rajput dynasties are also believed to have risen up in the social hierarchy from a low origin. The Chandellas of Khajuraho are said to have been associated with the Gonds and Bhars.⁴³ They worshipped Maniyādevī, a tribal deity of the aboriginal people of the area.

Although the mixed or tribal origin of the Rajputs has not yet been conclusively proved, one thing is certain that Rajput kings and feudal chiefs made great efforts to glorify their families and the origin of their dynasties. Their descent was traced to the Sun or the Moon or Agni. The famous bardic legend shows the four important Rajput clans—the Pratihāras, the Paramāras, the Chāhamānas and the Chaulukyas—as being Agnikula or fire-born, originating from the sacrificial fire-pit of Abu.⁴⁴ Even if this legend originated as late as the 11th century A.D., it reveals that, at least in this period, Rajputs attached a great importance to their family origin. The Chandella records also show that the kings were equated with gods and legendary heroes. They were placed on an equal footing with Brahmā, Indra, Dharma, Kāla, Kubera and were compared with Yudhiṣṭhira, Arjuna, Karṇa, Rāma, Bṛihaspati and Śakra. Kings depended on Brāhmins for the recognition of their social status and tried to win their support by expressing their loyalty to *dharma* and their fear in violating it. The Chandella kings are described as *bhīrudharmāparādhe*, who are afraid of consequences resulting from the violation of sacred law, and as *janānandasundaraḥ*, who please the people.⁴⁵ The preoccupation of royal families and feudal chiefs with maintenance of a high social status in Hindu caste hierarchy resulted in the practice of *dānas* and in temple-building activity. It was an important factor in the development and popularity of *pūrtadharma*, which will soon be dealt with.

The upper classes, who are associated with temple-building, believed in magic and supernaturalism. Feudatory chiefs and local princes coming from non-Hindu, tribal or low origin, when accepted in the Hindu social hierarchy, brought with them their religious beliefs and rites. Innumerable fertility and vegetation rites were reinforced under Paurāṇic and Tāntric religion. As seen in Chapter VII, inscriptional accounts testify to the patronage to Tāntric sects by kings, ministers, *sāmāntas* and *mahāsāmāntas*. The earliest inscription, bearing the word *tantra* and the reference to Dākinīś, mentions the building of a temple of the Divine Mothers by a minister. We also know that in the 7th century feudal officials built temples of Kapāleśvara at Nirmand in Punjab and Igaṭpuri in Maharashtra. Bāna's picturesque descriptions have provided us with glimpses of magico-religious beliefs and practices in high society in the 7th century. A reference in the *Kuṭṭanimatam* (verse 740) in the 8th century indicates the importance of magic for a feudal prince. Instead of *keyūra*, he wore on his hand an ornament inlaid with a magical *mantra*. In Kṣemendra's *Narmamālā* of the 11th century a Kāyastha official's camp-luggage consists, among other things, of a spell-book, an almanac, a red blanket, sacred threads, amulets, a *yogaṭaṭṭa* and Gaṅgā-dust. Works of Bhavabhūti, Rājaśekhara, Somadeva, Kalhaṇa, etc. further testify to the importance of magic among feudal officials.

and kings. In Bhavabhūti's play, Saudāminī, who performed Kāpālikavrata on the Śrīparvata, could fly in the sky. Rājaśekhara's Kaulāchārya had magical power to bring a bathing princess before his patron king. Such examples can be multiplied. The *Mānasollāsa*, written in the 12th century by the Chālukya King Someśvara III, reveals the superstitious mentality of the high society. In the same century, the *Kṛityakalpataru*, a gigantic work written by Lakṣmīdhara, the minister of war and peace of Kanauj, also reveals the importance of *dāna*, *tīrtha*, *vratas*, various purificatory (*suddhi*) rites, etc. We have seen in Chapter VI that the celebration of festivals such as Kaumudimahotsava, Devayātrā, Durgāpūjā was specially recommended to the king by this Medieval commentator for general welfare and avoidance of calamities.

Magic was resorted to in sex and war, the two central interests of aristocracy. Medieval Kāmaśāstras incorporated magical *mantras* and astrology (see Chapter VII). In war activities also magical and astrological considerations played an important part. In the *Samayamātrikā* (II, 96), a woman religious teacher who claimed to have power of *stambhana* over the enemy's army was highly respected by a king. Astrologers were respected and granted land as is evidenced from inscriptions of the Somavamsīs, Gāhaḍavālas, Senas and Bhañjas.⁴⁶ The *Dvyāśrayakāvya* (pp. 75, 111, 266) describes the part that astrological and magical considerations played in the war preparations of the Solankī ruler Mūlarāja. The march of the army commenced on an auspicious hour; women were adorned with their best ornaments and clothes to avoid evil omens; the street was strewn with auspicious *kumkuma*; a *pūrnakumbha* was the first thing shown to the king before he started on the march. While describing the attack of King Jayasīṃha on Malwa, Hemachandra says that the King encountered Yoginīs in the *devasthāna* of the Śīprā who tried to kill him by their *mantras*, but Jayasīṃha won them over. Similar examples of the credulous mentality can be cited from the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, *Prabandhachintāmaṇi*, *Vikramacharita*, not to mention the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* where Kalhaṇa himself succumbs to superstitions. Thus the literature of the elite class—court poets and scholars, ministers, and kings—is replete with superstitious beliefs. It was the ripe atmosphere for the acceptance and conventionalization of magico-sexual motifs in the canons of temple-*śilpa*.

Feudal tendencies in general brought the "Medieval" factor into Indian culture. Fractioning of political power and the rise of self-sufficient economic units of production were the important factors which led to regionalism. The outlook tended to be regional and local. In the absence of a central authority, the feelings concentrated upon immediate local interests and resources. The proliferation of *sāmantas*, *mahāsāmantas*, local rulers and kings led to fissiparous tendencies.⁴⁷

Regional consciousness was not limited to political and economic aspects of life. It pervaded the social outlook, which tended to be governed by narrow interests. Narrowness of vision and a non-expansive outlook are noticeable on the eve of the Muslim invasions. Al Biruni, who came to India in the first half of the 11th century, has pointedly mentioned the narrow-mindedness of the Hindus. He attributes this outlook to their lack of travel. He says, "If they travelled and mixed with other nations, they would soon change their mind, for their ancestors were not as narrow-minded as is the present generation."⁴⁸

Gradually from about the 10th century A.D. regional tendencies are reflected in many spheres of culture such as language, script, visual arts, costume, etc.⁴⁹ We have seen in Chapters IV and V that regional influences dominate temple arts from about A.D. 900. The portrayal of erotic motifs also reflects regional conditioning from this period onwards. The study of erotic sculpture of the five different regions shows regional peculiarities in the choice of themes and the treatment of erotic motifs.

The feudal atmosphere also encouraged traditionalism and conventionalism. The old values were preserved or revived and held sacrosanct. Instead of creative writings, Nibandhas and Commentaries were written to incorporate and explain the old writings. It was "an age of scholastic elaboration and systematic analysis, of technical skill and learning, of commentaries and sub-commentaries, and of manuals and sub-manuals."⁵⁰ Changes and innovations, which might have disturbed the prevailing state of affairs, were minimized. Canons of *śilpa* and painting were written down in textual form from the late Gupta period onwards. The Purāṇas such as the *Viṣṇudharmottara*, *Agni*, *Matsya*, etc. also have chapters on *vāstu* and *śilpa*. Injunctions were laid down for artisans on the details of choosing the site, laying out the plan, constructing the shrine, carving the images, etc. The temple-design was to follow strict canonical dictates.

Medieval art, both literary and visual, reflects to a large extent ossification of form and spirit. Canonization brings in rigidity and undermines the spirit of free expression. In the literary field, though there is a Bhavabhūti or a Jayadeva, the tendency is towards decadence of taste. From Daṇḍin and Bāṇa onwards we see the emphasis on complexity of style and literary gimmicks. In the sphere of temple arts, iconographic rules and mathematical proportions fixed the form of images. As the demands for sculptural decoration increased with the large-scale temple-building activity, the quality was bound to suffer. Referring to the cult images of the Medieval period, Niharranjan Ray⁵¹ writes: "A procession of endless monotony of form, uninformed by any inner experience and without any registration of individual creative genius, meets the eye. It is only in rare instances that images were expressions of the artist's creative genius and attained high artistic standards. But such examples are few and far between." He further says, "Everywhere the art moves within the limits of established practice and within canonical injunctions, and within each art-province it moves forward along the arrow line of time in more or less uniform space."

Feudal-aristocratic patronage of the arts encouraged ostentation and display which resulted in architectural magnificence and sculptural profusion. There was a greater emphasis on *alankāra*, both in sculptural and literary arts.

It was an obsession among aristocrats and royal families to create an atmosphere of self-praise and live in the world of built-in greatness and exalted titles. It was a period of local annals. Bards and court poets sang the invented glory of their patrons in bombastic words, describing the king as the ideal hero. *Vikramāṅkadevacharita* is an example of this tendency. It was written in the 11th century by the Kashmiri poet Bilhaṇa when he stayed in the court of the Chālukya ruler of Kalyāṇi. The same poet, when he was in the court of the Gujarat ruler, wrote a play called *Karṇasundarī* to please his patron. Inscriptions of kings and their chieftains invariably refer to their invented heroic deeds and conquests as also to their capacity to make love to women from different parts of India. Medieval grants of chiefs, *sāmantas* and *mahāsāmantas* mention them as excellent warriors who had fought many battles and who, like Smāra or the God of Love, attracted and loved many women.⁵² War and love were the two main themes on which the emotions of the Medieval high society were concentrated—rather to express it in Ruth Benedict's⁵³ language—they were capitalized as goals towards which their behaviour was directed and which their institutions furthered.

Temple-building activity was one of the means of satisfying their self-created image of greatness. It gave emotional expression to their culturally encouraged needs of fame and glory which were satisfied also by bardic eulogies in another form. Temple-building was recognized in literature and inscriptions as the means of gaining fame as well as *punya* or merit. In a story noted by Merutunga,

King Kumārapāla (12th century) is said to have asked the Jaina scholar Hemachandra about the way of immortalizing himself. The latter advised him that he should pay off the debt of his subjects as King Vikramāditya had done, or should have a new stone temple built in the place of the dilapidated wooden temple of Somanātha.⁵⁴ The story reveals the attitude prevalent towards the building of temples in that period.

There was a competitive spirit among aristocrats and royal families for building large and magnificent temples. Every king or chieftain wanted to surpass his ancestor or his neighbour in building temples. Thus, it is recorded that the Gaṅga King Narasimhadeva I, who built the majestic temple of Konarak, aimed at building a temple which would outdo in height the great temple at Puri. He spent twelve years' revenue in the construction. The inscriptions of the period, which are meant to serve as records, speak bombastically about the great height of temples. The Khajuraho inscription of the Lakṣmaṇa temple⁵⁵ built in A.D. 954 says that Yaśovarman Chandella (who was then a feudatory of the Pratihāras) "erected this charming splendid home (of Viṣṇu) . . . which rivals the peaks of the mountains of snow, the golden pinnacles of which illumine the sky." The Gurgi inscription⁵⁶ from the Chedi territory notes the erection of a Śiva temple "which aspired to be as high as the peak of the Sumeru mountain, was famous on the earth, caused wonder in the three worlds and acted like a stair-case to his fame marching towards heaven." The Dohad inscription⁵⁷ of the middle of 12th century pays a glowing tribute to Anhilapāṭaka as a city where "the temples of gods are so high as to obstruct the path of the horse of the Sun." The Ittagi inscription⁵⁸ of the 12th century notes the building of a temple which was the *chakravartin* among temples, thus indicating that a competitive spirit prevailed in the construction of temples. The art of the temple, which is a sacred place, became an exhibition of the charity of the donor and the skill of the artist. The temple, "the house and body of god," became a piece of art influenced by the atmosphere of the court.

What were the socio-economic factors that helped "institutionalize" temple-building activity on such a tremendously large scale? This is the only period in Indian history when temples were built on a mass scale.

As there were obstructions to trade, the surplus wealth of feudatories and kings was not invested as much in craft-production or trade as spent in conspicuous consumption⁵⁹—in decorating their palaces and erecting bigger and bigger temples which would proclaim their glory. Feudal conditions had given rise to proliferation of *sāmantas*, *mahāsāmantas*, princes, kings, etc., all of whom possessed land. Even royal ladies owned lands. All of them wanted to acquire *punya* and fame by building temples and donating land and villages for their upkeep. As R. S. Sharma says, "There was no dearth of donations because not only the kings and queens but also the princes and chiefs possessed their own villages and village folk whom they could dispose of freely."⁶⁰ We have many instances of the building of temples by queens. Those built at Pattadakal (Virūpākṣa, Mallikārjuna), Bhubaneswar (Brahmeśvara, Ananta-Vāsudeva), Bheraghat, Bilhari and at Bayana are well-known examples. The junior members of the ruling dynasty also disposed of land freely. For instance, King Siṃharāja of Chāhamāna dynasty, his two brothers, his two sons and his distant kinsmen, each gave to a Śaiva temple villages and hamlets out of their personal property.⁶¹ The temples at Harihara and Somanāthapur were built by ministers and feudal officers of the Hoysala kings. Numerous instances of religious grants by feudatories have been recorded.⁶² The proliferation of land-owning and wealthy aristocrats led to an increase in the incidence of charity. Temple-building activity increased greatly. A Chinese account of A.D. 732 throws light on this issue and is quoted here: "According to the law of the Five

Indies, from the king, the royal consort and the princes down to the chiefs and their wives all build monasteries separately in accordance with their respective capacities and abilities. Each of them builds his own temple, but does not construct it jointly. They say when each person has one's own meritorious virtues, what is the necessity of joint effort?"⁶³

There is an indication that the temple institution helped the economy of the State in several ways. The temple attracted a large number of pilgrims who brought prosperity to the town. The Muslim historians have noted the economic benefits of the Sun image at Multan which fetched a big sum from the pilgrims.⁶⁴ A colony grew up around the large temples providing employment to many people among whom were priests, musicians, dancers, garland-makers, *devadāsīs* and barbers. For instance, the Somanātha temple had 500 *devadāsīs*, 300 barbers and a large number of priests on day and night duties.⁶⁵ The grants and *balis* to temple institution by donors provided a permanent basis of employment. Even as late as the 15th century Abdur-r-Razzak reports the splendour of a temple in the vicinity of Vijayanagara, where day and night they played musical instruments, enjoyed concerts, and gave feasts. He points out that "all the people of the village enjoy pensions and allowances from that building for offerings and presented to it from distant cities."⁶⁶ Often the temple maintained schools. *Agrahāras* and *maṭhas* near the temple provided residential arrangement for teachers and students. Temples were also considered safe places for purposes of keeping permanent deposits. They sometimes served the purpose of banks by receiving deposits of donations and endowments which they held as trust funds.⁶⁷

The king obtained money from the pilgrim-tax. The *Prabandhachintāmaṇi* (pp. 83-84) informs us that King Siddharāja of Gujarat (A.D. 1094-1143) collected tax from pilgrims visiting Somanātha. The tax amounted to 72 lakhs of "rupees" a year. There was a tax on barbers (*nāvida-vāriyam*) as mentioned in an inscription of Bagali belonging to A.D. 1078.⁶⁸ We do not have information of other temple-sites, but if, as at Bagali, the barbers were taxed in big temples like Somanātha, the amount would be large.

The account of the 9th century Arab traveller Abu Zaid⁶⁹ suggests that the earnings of the *devadāsīs* attached to the temple went into the hands of the priests and other authorities for maintaining the temple. But it seems from Al Biruni's statement in the 11th century that the king used the income derived from temple prostitution for maintaining the army.⁷⁰ The influence of the king on the *devadāsī* institution is suggested in two inscriptions of identical character dated A.D. 1090 from temples of Sadadi and Nadol in Rajasthan which record a decree of King Jojalladeva.⁷¹ They state that on the occasion of the *yātrā* (procession festival) of a particular temple the dancing girls of all other temples in the city must attend with their best clothes and ornaments and participate in music and dancing. They explicitly mention that his descendants should see to it that this arrangement continues in future even if objections are raised against it by ascetics, old men and learned scholars. The inscriptions end with a curse on those princes who will not maintain this practice.

At the ideological level, the emphasis on *pūrtadharma* gave a great impetus to temple-building activity in the Medieval period. Ways and means for easily gaining Mokṣa were instituted in Medieval religion. P. V. Kane⁷² points out that the most characteristic thought and keynote of the Purāṇas, the main religious books of the period, is to declare how great were the rewards that could be secured with little effort. Local observances, *vratas* (vows), agricultural *utsavas* and rites were revived under the Paurāṇic religion. Altekar⁷³ has noted that out of the 113 *vratas* mentioned in the *Vratārka* of Śaṅkarabhaṭṭa, 110 *vratas* are based on the authority of the Purāṇas. *Pūrtadharma*, which involves

the building of temples, tanks, gardens and charitable works, was emphasized in the Purāṇas. It is important to note that though *pūrta* was mentioned in earlier works, it was not given the same importance as in the Paurāṇic age. In the Upaniṣads, for example, *pūrta* is meant for fools who go to the lower worlds,⁷⁴ whereas *tapas* was the highest virtue. In the Paurāṇic literature the merit accruing through temple-building is considered to be greater than that accruing through the performance of the Aśvamedha and other Vedic sacrifices.⁷⁵ Influenced by Paurāṇic ideals, an Orissan Vāstusāstra states that the merit acquired by performing the Aśvamedha a hundred thousand times is equal to the merit acquired by performing the Bājapeya sacrifice a hundred times. The same is the merit acquired by building a temple, that of the former may even be less.⁷⁶ The Pañchamahāyajñas of the Smṛitis were substituted for the Vedic sacrifices. A vast majority of the Brāhman donees of the period are described as performers of these Smārta rites.⁷⁷ Śrauta sacrifices were replaced by Smārta Paurāṇic religion.

It is significant that from the 6th century onwards new topics were added to the Purāṇas. According to R. C. Hazra,⁷⁸ who has analysed the contents of the Purāṇas, these topics relate mainly to various kinds of gifts, initiation ceremony, sacrifices to the planets and their pacification, *homa*, consecration of images, *sandhyā*, glorification of Brāhmins and their worship, glorification of holy places, *tithis*, *utsarga*, *vrata* and *pūjā*. "These topics are found neither in the works of Manu and Yājñavalkya nor in the Purāṇas or thereoff, which were written earlier than about the beginning of the 6th century A.D."

Giving *dāna* to Brāhmins, though prevalent in earlier times and mentioned in the Anuśāsana-parvan of the *Mahābhārata*, became very popular and widespread in the Medieval period. Hazra says that there is no evidence to show that any vigorous propaganda was carried out by the Brāhmins earlier than the time of the *Yājñavalkyasmṛiti* to popularize the idea of acquiring merit by *dāna*. The Purāṇas added many new types of gifts like the offering of artificial cows, Kalpalatā, Kāmadhenu, etc. Hiranyagarbhadāna, involving the ceremony of a new birth of the donor from a gold womb, became popular among rulers and chiefs.⁷⁹ The Purāṇas preached that *dāna* was an important way to piety in the Kali age. Numerous verses were added on *dāna* in the Purāṇas, specially the *Matsya*, *Agni* and *Varāha*. Besides these there were many Digests specially devoted to the topic of *dāna*, the important ones among these being the *Dānakhaṇḍa* of Hemādri, the *Dānakriyākaumudī* of Govindānanda, the *Dānamayūkha* of Nilakaṇṭha, the *Dānavākyāvalī* of Vidyāpati, the *Dānasāgara* of Ballāla-sena and the *Dānaprakāśa* of Mitramiśra. The number of works on *dāna* indicate the important place it had acquired in the religion of Medieval India.

Tīrthayātrā became one of the central aspects of Medieval religious behaviour. *Dāna* given at the place of pilgrimage was supposed to increase its merit. This has been mentioned by Hemādri in the 13th century on the authority of the *Skanda Purāṇa*. *Tīrthas* were dealt with unsystematically in the Epic literature and were hardly mentioned in the Law books. But in the Purāṇas they are treated with importance and in the Nibandhas of the later period they are more explicitly dealt with. Lakṣmīdhara in his *Kṛityakalpataru* has assigned a special volume called *Tīrthavivechanakāṇḍa* to *tīrthayātrā*. The inscriptions also contain ample information regarding various *tīrthas* where the gifts were offered.⁸⁰ Al Biruni⁸¹ in the 11th century also observed that kings visited *tīrthas* and gave *dāna* to Brāhmins. Vāchaspatimiśra in his *Tīrthachintāmaṇi* (p. 176), while describing the *tīrthayātrā* of Bhubaneswar, says: "Bathing in the Bindusarovara and the worship of Kṛittivāsa (of the Liṅgarāja temple) gives *puṇya* equal to the Aśvamedha."

The glorification of *pūrtadharmā* in the religious texts of the period finds concrete support in the existing historical situation. The Pallava King Narasimhavarman II is said to have devoted his whole life to temple-building and bestowing gifts upon Brāhmins.⁸² In Medieval Gujarat, kings, feudatories and citizens erected temples to further their own spiritual merit or that of their relatives.⁸³ All the copper-plates discovered on the Chandella territory show that grants were made on auspicious days,⁸⁴ which indicates that they were made to acquire *punya* or merit. Most of the occasions on which the Rāshtrakūṭas gave grants were those which have been regarded as particularly sacred by the Smṛitis and the Purāṇa literature of the period. Altekar⁸⁵ shows that the persons who drafted these epigraphical charters of the period seem to have been students of the Purāṇas and the Smṛitis, as inscriptions contain verses similar to those given in these religious texts. He cites verses of the *Bṛihaspatismṛiti* which correspond to those in the epigraphs of the period. P. V. Kane⁸⁶ has collected many verses pertaining to Medieval land-grants which were made to gain merit, heaven, etc. In the 11th century Al Utbi writes: "The kings of Hind, the chiefs of that country and rich devotees, used to amass their treasures and precious jewels, and send them time after time to be presented to the large idol that they might receive a reward for their good deeds and draw near to their god."⁸⁷

Dharmaśāstra writers have divided religious grants into three classes: (i) *nitya* or regular, (ii) *naimittika* or relating to particular occasions and (iii) *kāmya* or that which is donated out of desire for securing progeny, merit, prosperity or heaven. V. Upadhyaya⁸⁸ points out that the gifts mentioned in the official documents may be classified as *naimittika* and *kāmya* but most of the *agrahāra* grants are of the latter type. They correspond to the *pūrtadharmā* of the Smṛiti writers.

It should be clear from this account that Medieval Hindu religion did not emphasize ascetic ideals but advocated popular and easy means of getting rewards. The Smṛitikāras were conscious of the fact that the religious duties of their times—the Kali age—were different from those of the previous epochs. The *Bṛihaspatismṛiti* and the *Parāśarasamṛiti* repeat Manu's dictum that the *dharma* in the Kṛita, Treta, Dvāpara and Kali ages consists respectively of austerities, knowledge, sacrifice and gifts (*dāna*).⁸⁹ It is interesting to see that the *pūjāvidhis* and *tīrthayātrā* of Bhubaneswar are believed in the Paurāṇic literature (see Chapter VII, Section 5) to be rewarded with heavenly pleasures; it is only after one has enjoyed these *bhogas* (pleasures) that one comes back to the earth and performs Pāsupatayoga to finally attain Mokṣa (liberation). *Bhoga* is one of the main fruits of *Pūrtadharmā*.

SECTION 3

In the above socio-religious atmosphere, with the importance of *pūrtā* in religion and the glorification of donors in social circles, unprecedented and vigorous temple-building and *dāna*-giving activities took place. Land grants with fiscal immunities became frequent in Central and Northern India from the 5th century A.D. onwards.⁹⁰ Donations of villages for religious and charitable purposes are mentioned in inscriptions of the Gupta and post-Gupta times.⁹¹ The significant features of such religious grants were the transfer of all sources of revenue and the surrender of police and administrative functions. The land granted to temples and Brāhmins could not be entered by royal troops, or interfered with by government officials or the district police. Inscriptions show that in land-grants the donor had to give up all his rights to the donee. Often the power to deal with cases involving "the ten offences"

was granted to the donee. However, there was the possibility of confiscation of the land by future kings. It is for this reason that imprecatory verses were written on the records of the grant to instil a fear of hell in the minds of the rulers. For instance, the *gardabha*-stones, having the depiction of a donkey or some other animal with a woman along with the inscription of a curse, are found from about the 10th century in many parts of India.⁹²

R. S. Sharma⁹³ points out that of the seven organs of the state-power mentioned in literary and epigraphic sources, the taxation system and the coercive power based on the army are regarded as the two vital elements. If they are abandoned, the state power disintegrates. This is the position created by the Brāhmins and the temples. S. K. Maity⁹⁴ says: "From a careful survey of the Gupta (A.D. 300-550) inscriptions we arrive at the conclusion that a vast area of land was given away either to individual priests or to religious institutions." In most cases land was given free of all royal dues. So the state treasury must have suffered considerable losses from the piety of kings, officers and individual citizens. The land grants created intermediaries wielding considerable economic and political power.

Land-grants converted the temple into a powerful and rich organization in the Medieval period. As Buddha Prakash⁹⁵ says, "In this period the religious institutions, *purohitas*, *paṇḍitas*, saints, ascetics and astrologers had also become landlords. Sometimes these grantees made sub-grants of lands. ... Both religion and government had become feudal in character." The Hindu temple of the Medieval period was no more a purely religious centre where people congregated for worship; it was also a social institution with feudal characteristics. R. S. Sharma⁹⁶ says that the period between the 5th and 7th centuries A.D. witnessed the rise of land-owning temples, the prototype of later *maṭhas*. As a result of land-grants, these temples developed as semi-independent areas, enjoying immunities on religious grounds, and were rich enough to tempt the Muslim invaders.

The large amount of wealth amassed in the Hindu temples of the Medieval period can be estimated from the accounts furnished by the Muslim travellers at Somanātha, Multan and Mathura. The Somanātha temple was endowed with 10,000 villages. Five hundred dancing girls were dedicated to the temple. One thousand Brāhmins performed the worship of the deity and introduced the visitor. Inside the temple a golden chain, weighing two hundred maunds, with bells attached to it was hung. The *maṇḍapa* was supported by fifty-six pillars inlaid with jewels. It is believed that the sum which the Sultan obtained from the Somanātha temple was more than twenty million *dinars*.⁹⁷ In the same period Multan was also a rich pilgrimage centre. Al Biruni and Al Idrisi note that the wealth of the city could be accounted for by the idol of the Sun-god that attracted pilgrims. The main temple of Mathura was so rich that Sultan Mahmud noted, "If any should wish to construct a building equal to this he would not be able to do it without expending a hundred thousand red *dinars* and it would occupy two hundred years, even though the most experienced and able workmen were employed." Mahmud found five icons of gold, each 15 feet high. There were at least 200 icons of silver. So heavy were they that they could not be weighed without breaking them to pieces.⁹⁸

Kings, feudatories and rich persons all over India donated wealth and land to temples and the spiritual preceptors in charge of them. Al Utbi states that the kings of Hind donated so much wealth to temples that the Sultan tried to get this "crow's fruit, this accumulation of years which had attained such an amount that the backs of camels would not carry it, nor vessels contain it, nor writers' hands record it nor the imagination of an arithmetician conceive it."⁹⁹ The Chedi ruler

Yuvarājadeva II gave three lakh villages in Dāhala Maṇḍala to the Mattamayūra ascetic Sadbhāvaśambhu or Prabhāvaśiva, who founded a monastery known as Golaki Maṭha.¹⁰⁰ In v.s. 1012 a queen of northern Rajasthan built a temple of Viṣṇu and donated two villages and fields to the deity.¹⁰¹ The Rāshtrakūṭa ruler Govinda IV is known to have given altogether four hundred villages and thirty-two lakh coins to a number of temples on the occasion of his coronation.¹⁰² King Jayasīṃha of Gujarat in the 12th century spent ten million coins every year on grants for religious purposes according to the account of Merutuṅga. The same writer of Gujarat also notes that King Yaśovarman of Malwa, who was a contemporary of the Solankī King Jayasīṃha, believed that his territory belonged to god Mahākāla and that his defeat at the hand of the Solankī king was due to his not having incurred the necessary expenditures on the god.¹⁰³ At Khajuraho, King Dhaṅga is said to have dedicated an emerald liṅga to a Śaiva temple in A.D. 1002.¹⁰⁴ It is known of the kings of Orissa that they dedicated their kingdom to Lord Jagannātha and ruled only as feudatories of the god. Anaṅga Bhīma III's kingdom is referred to in one of his inscriptions at Bhubaneswar as Puruṣottama Sāmrājya.¹⁰⁵ According to the temple accounts of Puri, the construction of the Jagannātha temple cost five lakh tolas of gold and the value of ornaments dedicated to the deities was a quarter of one lakh tolas of gold.¹⁰⁶ King Narasiṃhadeva I, the builder of the Konarak temple, is represented in a sculptured panel (now in the site Museum) as offering *dāna* to the priests of the three different deities—Jagannātha, Śiva and Devī. This is one of the most significant sculptures representing the socio-religious milieu of the Medieval temple.

The most complete account of the Medieval Hindu temple as a wealthy institution is given in the inscriptions of the Great Temple of Tanjore built by Rājārāja Chola. Rājārāja gave large endowments to the temple. The gold presented to the temple amounted to over 415,000 *kalañjus* (a *kalañju* equal to about 70 grams) or about 500 lbs. troy. The value of jewels presented was about 10,200 *kāṣus*, equal to half as many *kalañjus* in gold. Of silver he gave 50,650 *kalañjus*, over 600 lbs. troy. He set apart lands in several villages yielding an annual income of 116,000 *kalams* of paddy. Four hundred *devadāsīs* were presented for the services of the temple, each having been assigned a certain portion of land yielding 100 *kalams* of paddy annually. Two hundred and twelve men-servants, comprising dance-masters, musicians, drummers, tailors, goldsmiths, etc. were also maintained by fixed shares. Besides the king, queens, high officials, soldiers, etc. donated generously to the temple. With this wealth, the temple acquired a tremendously important position in the socio-economic life of the period. It acted as landholder, employer, consumer of goods and services, bank, school, museum, hospital and theatre.¹⁰⁷

Medieval temples were granted portions of *śulka* or tolls and transit dues. For instance, King Kumārāpāla of Gujarat granted one *dramma* per day out of the *śulka-maṇḍapikā* or custom house of Nadol in favour of a temple in v.s. 1212. His feudatory Pratāpasīṃha also donated a *rūpaka* per day from the *maṇḍapikā* at Nadol in favour of some Jaina temples in v.s. 1213.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, grants for religious purposes from *śulka* collections have been noted in an inscription of Chāhamāna Alhaṇadeva and in those of Bayana, Baijanatha and Somanātha.¹⁰⁹ Special taxes were collected for religious purposes. Temples benefited by way of taxes on the sale in the market of elephants, horses, fruits, salt, nuts, oil, agricultural products, cloth, etc. Oil, flowers, corn, etc. were regularly provided to temples.¹¹⁰ Temples owned houses, house-sites and shops, from which they could collect rent. The *goṣṭhī*, the managing council of the temple, purchased building-sites on behalf of the temple. Sometimes income from shops was allotted to the temple.¹¹¹

The transfer of royal income from trade and commerce to the religious beneficiaries was a new development in the period. In post-Maurya and Gupta times the religious bodies were paid out of the interest accruing from cash deposits made to the guilds. They did not enjoy any control over the management of the donated amount. But as Sharma points out, with the practice of collecting tolls levied on sale of commodities or on shops by the temples, "the temples came to wield some control over the economic activities of the artisans and merchants which they could regulate in their narrow interests."¹¹²

The temples had amassed so much wealth in the Medieval period that King Harṣa of Kashmir, who was "addicted to extravagant expenditure upon various corps of his army," plundered from the temples the treasures bestowed upon them by former kings. Harṣa appointed a special officer for the purpose of collecting wealth and golden statues from the temples. Harṣa's father, King Kalaśa, is also said to have confiscated villages which belonged to temples (*Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, VII, 750, 1087-95).

The management in the temple organization was not unaffected by riches and power. We have a few literary and inscriptional accounts to illustrate this. We hear from the Veraval Praśasti of Bhāva Brīhaspati of Somanātha that the temple was ruined by many evil-disposed Gaṇḍas (Pāśupata priests) and by "numerous bad servants of the king" who had succumbed to the greed of money.¹¹³ Of Gujarat, again, a 14th century writer Merutuṅga (*Prabandhachintāmaṇi*, p. 26) notes a story of the Solankī King Mūlarāja (10th century) who was in search of a fit *tapasvin* for the Tripuruṣa temple built by him at Anhilwad Patan, the then capital of Gujarat. The ascetic called Kanthaḍi, whom he approached, refused to accept the office but one of his *śiṣyas* agreed to become the head of the temple on the condition that Mūlarāja supplied him daily with eight *palas* of genuine saffron, four *palas* of musk and one *pala* of camphor for massaging his body, thirty-two women or *vārāṅganā*, a white umbrella and a grant of land. All these requirements by the head of the temple indicate the luxurious life lived by him and the power amassed by him. The political power wielded by the temple *purohitas* (priests) has been noted in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* (V, 465; VII, 13). They were organized into *pariśads* (corporations) at the important shrines and pilgrimage places and had large endowments; they often played an important part in the internal politics of the country. To achieve their political object, they performed *prāyopavesha* or voluntary starvation.

The Pāśupata and Kālamukha sects, as seen in the last chapter, had acquired the position of chief priests in many Medieval temples, specially of Gujarat, Mysore, Dāhala and Kashmir. Their philosophy of sex in its decadent state, when combined with the power and wealth of the temple-head, was likely to corrupt them and their subordinates. The atmosphere of the Medieval temple was a breeding ground for luxurious living and degenerate sexual practices. The institution of *devadāsī* also vitiated the atmosphere of the temple. In the 8th century work, *Kuṭṭanīmatam* (verses 538, 735, 752), there is a mention of a Pāśupata *āchārya* of Vārāṇasī, who built for a courtesan a *dhalagriha*, a special type of palatial mansion, which must have been so magnificent that it was considered an "ornament of the entire city." The construction of such a palace must have cost a huge sum of money indicating thereby the large amount of wealth amassed by the Pāśupata *āchārya*. Another reference in the same work shows a paramour telling a *veśyā* that she has become *āchāryāṇī* by relations with a Pāśupata *āchārya*. Mañjarī, a courtesan of Vārāṇasī, is also shown as the daughter of an *āchārya*. It seems that the heads and officials of *maṭhas* and temples had relations with courtesans and *devadāsīs*. Kṣemendra was fully aware of such possibilities as we get many such instances in his works. In the *Samayamātrikā* (II, 19) we read about a temple official (*prāsādapāla*) who had relations with a *veśyā*

in the *garbhagriha* of a temple of Gaurī. The same work (VI, 9) refers to a *jaṭādhārī* (with matted hair) Līlāśiva who visited *veśa* at night and in the morning avoided the main street to reach the *maṭha*. This work also relates how a *veśyā* under the garb of a woman of *vaṇik* (merchant) class entered a Śākta *maṭha*, dyed her gray hair and attracted many men around her (II, 43-47). Kṣemendra's description in the *Narmamālā* (II, 47-54) of the affair of a *maṭha-daiśika* with the wife of a Kāyastha officer also suggests that heads of *maṭhas* could get involved with married women.

There are sculptures representing religious teachers with women. A scene on the 10th century Lakṣmaṇa temple of Khajuraho vividly portrays a dancing girl (ph. 152) near a pot-bellied, bearded figure wearing *rudrākṣa* on arms, sitting on a *gāḍī* under a canopy. He seems to be a religious *āchārya*. Disciples, both male and female, are shown attending on him. The Chitragupta temple of Khajuraho and the Nilkaṇṭheśvara temple of Udayapur have scenes showing an *āchārya* attended by two female disciples. The temple at Modhera has a scene representing an ascetic in company of two women (ph. 145). Ascetics with women have been represented on numerous temples of the period as mentioned in the previous chapters.

The *devadāsī* institution, the origin of which we have shown to be associated with fertility purposes, lost its original meaning and became a means of pleasure garbed in the form of worship. We have seen the existence of this institution in the Ancient period, at least as early as the time of Kauṭilya. In the Medieval period with great donations to the temple which converted it into a feudal organization, the number of *devadāsīs* dedicated to the temple increased. The Purāṇas advocated offerings of girls to the temple. For instance, the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* (I, 98, 67) recommends the purchase of beautiful girls for dedication to temples to achieve the Sūrya-loka. Medieval kings and chieftains dedicated women in large numbers to the temple. Even the priests demanded that donors dedicate *devadāsīs* to the temple. Merutuṅga's story of King Mūlarāja's search for the head of the temple makes this quite clear. *Devadāsīs* were donated even to those temples which were founded by ascetics. Thus, Īśānaśiva arranged for *devadāsīs* in a Śaiva temple in northern India.¹¹⁴ The *Rājataranṅinī* (I, 151) records the story of a king of Kashmir who built a temple of Śiva and offered to the temple out of joy "a hundred among the ladies of seraglio who had risen to dance (in honour of god) at the time fixed for dancing and singing." In the 10th century the Chola ruler Rājārāja dedicated four hundred *devadāsīs* to the temple of Tanjore.¹¹⁵ The chief of the Chālukya ruler, who built a temple at Ittagi in A.D. 1112 in memory of his parents, added a residence of public women to it. It is described as a "crown of Kāma" and the ladies were called "the very descendants of King Kāma and Rati and Rambhā."¹¹⁶ The inscription of A.D. 1018 at Bagali, whose erotic sculpture is surveyed by us, notes a grant for the maintenance of twelve courtesans in the temple.¹¹⁷ A 13th century traveller Chau Ju Kua estimated that in Gujarat there were twenty thousand girls singing, serving and offering flowers to the deity.¹¹⁸ Dancing girls were attached to the temples of the Chandellas as is evidenced by the reference to Mahānāchanī Padmāvatī in the inscription of the Nilakaṇṭheśvara temple at Kālāñjara,¹¹⁹ about fifty miles from Khajuraho. At Bayana, in the region north of Khajuraho, an inscription of v.s. 1012 refers to *devadāsīs* offered by a queen to the temple of Viṣṇu.¹²⁰ The inscription of the Brahmeśvara temple at Bhubaneswar mentions the appointment of dancing girls in the temple by Kolāvatī, the mother of King Udyota Keśarī.¹²¹ The system of *devadāsī* has also been referred to in the inscriptions of the Megheśvara and the Svapneśvara temples of Bhubaneswar.¹²² The sensual attitude towards the *devadāsī* is clearly reflected in one of the inscriptions of Bhubaneswar: "By him were offered to Śiva beautiful damsels like the fairies of heaven, in whose eyes was Cupid, in whose

mouth and waist and other parts of the body were *stambhana* and *mohana* and other charms and whose persons were decorated with ornaments."¹²³

The *devadāsīs* were granted land by donors. The above-noted reference to the 10th century Tanjore temple mentions allotment of land to *devadāsīs*. Another 10th century temple at Hebbal in Dharwar district had five dancing girls, each one of whom was provided four *mattars* of land for her maintenance.¹²⁴ In the 12th century the *devadāsī* Karpūraśrī was granted a village by the Somavarma King Karṇa of Eastern India.¹²⁵ That *devadāsīs* used to have personal property, at least in the Western Deccan, is indicated by donations made to the temple of Queen Lokamahādevī by a dancing girl in the 8th century.¹²⁶

The services of *devadāsīs* became popular in the religious life of the Medieval period. Special architectural arrangements were made for dance and drama performances in Medieval temples. In Orissa a *nāṭamandira* was added to the shrine. The *nāṭamandira* of the Konarak temple is adorned with sculptures of beautiful women, dancing and playing music. At Modhera in Gujarat a separate *sabhāmaṇḍapa* or *raṅgamaṇḍapa* is constructed in front of the shrine and *maṇḍapa*. From Medieval inscriptions of Gujarat¹²⁷ it is learnt that there were arrangements for drama performances both in Hindu and Jaina temples. The *Prabandhachintāmaṇi* (pp. 106-7) refers to a play performed in the temple of Karṇameru which was attended by the Solaṅkī King Siddharāja (11th-12th century). On this occasion merchants and ordinary traders were also present and shared betel with the King (who was in disguise). At Mugud, in the Eastern Chālukya territory, a *nāṭakaśālā* was constructed in the precincts of a Jaina temple in A.D. 1045.¹²⁸ An inscription of A.D. 1049 from Shirur in Bijapur district mentions provisions for regular performances of *gītanṛityopahāra*, the offering of music and dance to the deity.¹²⁹ The special arrangement for constructing *nāṭyaśālās* near temples is also recorded in the Paurāṇic literature of the period.¹³⁰

The performances of dance, music and drama in the temple were likely to be influenced by secular *śṛiṅgāra*. We know that these activities were associated with the temple since the ancient times; music in temples is referred to by Patañjali, Kālidāsa, Daṇḍin, etc. From the Bhāṇa literature of the Gupta period we can see that love-intrigues took place during performances of *saṅgītaka* or musical dance-dramas in the temple. The Bhāṇa *Ubhayābhisārikā* mentions a *saṅgītaka* in the temple of Nārāyaṇa. On this occasion a merchant's son Kuberadatta praised so much the courtesan Madanasenā while she was dancing that his mistress Nārāyaṇadattā was angry.¹³¹ From Vātsyāyana (*K.S.*, I, iv, 27-33) we know that fortnightly drama functions in the temple were organized and supervised by the cultured *nāgarakas* who were well-versed in the sixty-four arts. Their influence might have accelerated the process of secularization and sensualization of the cultural pursuits.

The secular aspect in temple celebrations is clearly seen in the 8th century when Bhavabhūti's *Mālati-Mādhava* was staged in the *yātrā* of *Kālapriyanātha*. In the same century, Dāmodaragupta in his *Kuṭṭanīmatam* (754 ff.) describes the performance of Harṣa's sensuous play *Ratnāvalī* in the precincts of the Śiva temple of Vārāṇasī. The purpose of this performance was to lure a feudal prince of Maharashtra, who was on pilgrimage to the city, to Mañjarī, a courtesan. There was no religious intention whatever behind the performance. The poet gives a graphic description of the temple, its surroundings and the dance performance. After the prince had finished his *pūjā* of Śiva in the temple, he came and sat in the *maṇḍapa*. Facing him sat dancers, flute-players, singers, *veśyās*, citizens and traders amidst flowers and sweet-smelling objects. He was offered betel. Then the Vaitālīka sang the eulogy of the prince in the bardic style, praising his heroism in battles, his popularity among

women and his religious and charitable attitude in life. Then the Nṛityāchārya presented the dance-drama *Ratnāvalī* where courtesan Mañjarī played the part of the heroine. She won over the prince by her sensuous acting. The fact that citizens were present in the performances of these two plays—Bhavabhūti's and that mentioned by Dāmodaragupta—in the temple indicates that public opinion was not against presentation of secular *śrīngāra* in the holy precincts. The Bayana inscription referred to above records the arrangement by the donor queen for *prekṣaṇakam* (show) which was staged by *devadāsīs*, "whose eyes were like the petals of lotus flowers, whose hips were heavy and whose faces were like the moon."¹³² The description betrays sensual interests. It is not unlikely that the *nāyikās* in the performances wore diaphanous costume as seen in Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitram* (Act I, p. 32).

Dāmodaragupta in his *Kuṭṭanīmatam* (742-51) has given a vivid dialogue of *viṭas* and *veśyās* in the vicinity of the Vārāṇasī temple. From these dialogues we get a clear picture of the Medieval temple and its association with sex. The temple was visited by *veśyās*, their paramours, and pilgrims who were interested in women. Dāmodaragupta refers to fake *sādhus* who came on the pretext of worshipping Śiva but who secretly looked at women. The *veśyās* talked among themselves about the men who came to the temple, and imputed to them the motive of desiring relations with women.

Thus, by at least the 8th century, the Hindu temple not only was a place of religious worship but it was also a centre of socio-cultural activities. It also became a place for men to gratify their sexual urges.

Bilhaṇa, the Kashmiri poet of the 11th century, associates the temple with beautiful women who acted coquettishly. He mentions a temple of Kṣemagaurīśvara in Kashmir having a dancing hall, where *devadāsīs*, "acting beautifully in the performance caused horripilation to the body of those who were absorbed in meditation." Being himself a member of the society whose values glorified sex, he proudly describes the crooked glances of women in the vicinity of the Bhaṭṭāraka temple at Pravarapura, his native town (*Vikramāṅkadevacharita*, XVIII, 23 and 11).

From the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* (IV, 36) it becomes clear that when a king wanted to enjoy a *kulanārī* or a married woman, which he could not do without incurring social disapproval, the husband of the woman—if he did not mind—could offer the wife to the temple as a *devadāsī*. The king could, then, easily have her without attracting any social disapproval. One can well imagine the degeneration that had set in the *devadāsī* institution. The king had a command over the "women of god" who theoretically belonged to the temple. Kalhaṇa informs us that King Harṣa of Kashmir saw a beautiful dancing girl of the temple and took her as a concubine into the royal seraglio (VII, 858).

Not only the Hindu temples but also the Buddhist temples of the period, specially in Eastern India, had *devadāsīs*. The Ratnagiri copper-plate inscription of the Somavarṁśī King Karṇa, who flourished in the early 12th century, records a grant to Karpūraśrī, who was a *devadāsī* and who was "hailing from the great Buddhist monastery at Salompura."¹³³ Another instance of a *devadāsī* from a Buddhist shrine is seen in an inscription of Gaya.¹³⁴ The inscription mentions Rambhā-like *bhāvinīs* and *cheṭīs* as dancing and singing in the temple. From Chau Ju Kua's testimony in the 13th century we know that dancing girls were also attached to Cambodian Buddhist temples. They offered food to the Buddha and danced before Him.¹³⁵ This was far away from the teachings of the Buddha. He was even against admitting female monks in the monastery.

The temple was a chief resting place for travellers, as is observed in the *Kuṭṭanīmatam* (223). Abu Zaid refers to inns attached to temples for travellers.¹³⁶ His account has been corroborated by

epigraphical evidence of temples specially of Mysore region, viz. those at Kolagallu, Managoli, Nilgund, Hesarge, Bagewadi, Belgamve, Dambal, Gadag, Behatti, and Kharepatan in Konkan.¹³⁷ It was possible for travellers and pilgrims to easily avail themselves of the company of *devadāsīs*. In the Medieval work *Vikramacharita* (I, p. 212), we read that when King Vikrama was travelling anonymously, he halted at a temple where he saw "a man of princely appearance, his body annointed with sandal wood, mixed with various perfumes, such as camphor, saffron, aloe, musk and the like and attended by harlots. And after amusing himself in company with them with various love-tales, eulogistic odes and such pastimes, he went out again in their company." This description in the Medieval tale indicates that the temple, apart from being a place of worship, was also a place where people could amuse themselves with *devadāsīs* or dancing girls.

The *Brahma Purāṇa* (Chapters 43-47), which describes *tīrthas*, their temples and *pūjāvidhis* or rituals of worship, brings alive the atmosphere around the Hindu temple of the Medieval period. In describing the *tīrtha*, it begins with a sketch of the rich architecture of *prāsādas* (palaces), etc., then deals with roads and trees and finally dwells at length on the characteristics of women, *vāramukhyās* (chief courtesans) and *panyastrīs* (prostitutes).

The Paurāṇic literature is not alone in depicting this *śṛīṅgāra*-studded atmosphere of the Hindu temple. Even the very inscriptions, which are meant to be records of donations, are full of amorous descriptions. These are placed on the walls of the temple. The descriptions do not befit a religious institution but are representative of the court atmosphere. A verse in the inscription at Bilhari near Jabalpur, describing the forefathers of the donor king, reads: "From him was born that Keyūra-varṣa, who was guided by polity, who fulfilled the ardent desires of the minds of women of Gauḍa, who sported on the breasts of ladies of Karṇāṭa even as a deer does on a pleasure-hill, who applied the ornamental mark to the forehead of the women of Lāṭa, who enjoyed the pleasures of love with the women of Kashmira, and was fond of excellent songs of the women of Kalinga."¹³⁸ Of the Kalachuri King Yuvarāja II who offered one-third of his kingdom to the Śaiva *āchārya*, it is said in the inscription, "he delighted the eyes of women as a new god of love," and "when young women for their usual bath plunged into the water of the Revā, which was clear, but bitter, being mixed with the rutting juice which flowed into it at the bathing of his huge and excellent elephants, they innocently became perfumed with the strong fragrance of copulation as the multitude of waves, dashing against their thighs and hips, surged up and down."¹³⁹

The point is that, in describing the power and might of the monarch, who conquered many regions and who had many elephants at his command, the writer of the inscription, who is obviously the court poet—the name Rājasekhara is mentioned at the end of the inscription—does not restrain himself from his usual habit of indulging in sensuous descriptions even on monastic buildings and temples.

Examples of such descriptions of the donor's erotic activities are numerous. We shall give instances of only two other places, the temple at Kālāñjara near Khajuraho and the Ananta-Vāsudeva temple at Bhuvaneshwar, so as to point out that the court influence and its sensual atmosphere are stamped, rather inscribed, on the walls of the temples. The inscription of the Nilakanṭheśvara temple at Kālāñjara begins with the praise of the might and power of the Chandella King Parmardideva and then, as usual in the court style, describes the amorous activities of the king "who like the wind of the Malaya mountain kisses sportively the lips of the maidens, red like the pomegranate, seizes them by their beautiful tresses, removes the garments that shine brightly on the

high bosoms of the maidens, and easily dries the perspiration occasioned by sport from the brows of the fair." "By whom was not King Paramardideva esteemed? He was the god with the uneven arrows upon the earth, like a spiritual guide in the mysteries of love. Hundreds of maidens who approached his bed, and hundreds of foes who fell at his feet, were rejected by him."¹⁴⁰ Within a few months of this bombastic claim the king was defeated in a war.

The *prastāsti-kāras* of the temple did not spare descriptions of erotic activities of queens and princesses. The inscription of the Ananta-Vāsudeva temple, erected by Chandrādevī in A.D. 1278, mentions her husband who had practised with her "diverse kinds of pleasure, in which delight was attendant upon amorous pleasures."¹⁴¹

Thus, the big donations to the temple converted it into a feudal organization having large properties and led to decadence in its functions. Its precincts were not necessarily used solely for religious purposes. It incorporated more and more sensuous and secular aspects in its activities. The priests, pilgrims and heads of the wealthy temples, were not free from the sensual atmosphere around them which was heightened by dedications of the increasing number of *devadāsīs*.

Another consequence of the big donations to the temple and its subsequent establishment as an important socio-economic institution was the rapid increase in its size. The high social values ascribed to temple-building activity led to a competitive spirit among feudal chiefs and kings, and made the temple larger in size. The Deogarh and the Nachna Kuthara temples of Central India of the post-Gupta period are quite small compared to the 10th-11th century structures at Khajuraho, Nagda, Udayapur, etc. Similarly, at Bhubaneswar there is a difference in the size of the 7th century Paraśurāmeśvara temple and that of the 11th century Liṅgarāja temple. The latter was further extended, because of certain socio-religious requirements, by the addition of the *bhogamaṇḍapa* and the *nāṭamandira*. There is an almost constant progressive increase in the size of the temples of the Medieval period, the Konarak temple representing the climax of North Indian architecture in the 13th century.

The extension in the size of the temple afforded more space to the sculptor for exhibiting his art. As we have seen in Chapter VI, *alaṅkāra* (ornamentation) was a convention in Indian religious art. It was considered to be auspicious. The larger size of the temple gave greater opportunity to the sculptor to fill in the architectural space with *alaṅkāra*. The architraves of different sizes in the temple gave him an opportunity to exhibit varieties of design. As far as the erotic motif was concerned, the artist had different types of spaces before him to display his knowledge of Kāmasāstras. For instance, the Konarak temple afforded him round spaces in the spokes of the wheel, squarish and rectangular niches on the plinth, large spaces about five feet in height on the *jaṅghā* of the *jagamohana*, etc. This is an advance on the simple Deogarh temple where external decoration was restricted to the door, the three niches and pilasters in the wall and panels on the plinth.

Ornamentation also suited the tastes and wealth of the aristocratic donors. It provided an opportunity for conspicuous consumption. Feudal society encourages ostentation, pomp and display. The already accepted sexual motifs also received a welcome treatment in the sensuous atmosphere that was prevalent in and around the temple. As we have seen in the earlier chapters, sexual depiction in art has a "fertility" function. It is magico-defensive and magico-propitiatory. But in the atmosphere of the Medieval temple and the social values of the class immediately associated with it, the sexual motif became a preoccupation of art. Its profusion and studied poses have nothing to do with any religious function. The Medieval temple is to be viewed against this aristocratic, affluent background—far from the ideals of Upaniṣadic asceticism.

IX. Sex in Society

THE ARCHITECTURAL grandeur and sculptural splendour of Hindu temples and Buddhist monuments rest on the moneyed class that commissioned them, the class representing kings, royal relatives, ministers, merchants, feudal lords and chieftains. As art is influenced by tastes and interests of its patrons and public, we have attempted to give in this chapter a general picture of the sexual mores of the upper levels of society. We have presented their attitudes towards sex as reflected in the meticulous cultivation and study of the art of sex and have examined their sexual behaviour in the context of polygamy, concubinage, prostitution, extra-marital relations, etc. We have also described their behaviour on festivals, showing the worldly and sensual aspects in the celebrations which were originally meant for fertility purposes. Their non-religious art is examined to show that, in this sphere too, sensualism is the keynote. The predominance of the *bhoga* (pleasure) element in the life of the wealthy tended to bring in worldly sensualism and material exuberance in the depiction of auspicious erotic *alankāras* on religious monuments patronized by them.

Sex as Art

Sex was not only uninhibited but was cultivated as an art, the knowledge of which brought prestige among the cultured citizens and aristocrats. Vātsyāyana advocates the study of his *Kāmasūtra* to princesses, daughters of ministers, courtesans and to married women with the permission of their husbands. He places such importance on the study of sex as to consider that "a person who is not conversant with the sixty-four arts of the science of love will never be respected among learned men, never be able to fulfil the three aims of life, though he may be quite competent to explain the theory and application of other sciences. On the other hand, simply by a thorough knowledge of these sixty-four arts, a man commands a leading position among men and women in the *gaṇthīs* or assemblies, although he may be ignorant of other sciences." (*K.S.*, II, x, 50-51)

Knowledge of Kāmasāstra was an important qualification for the cultured class. Both Vātsyāyana (*K.S.*, I, i, 3) and Kokkoka (*R.R.*, I, 5) call the writers specializing in this art by the words *āchārya* and *muni*, which are respectable denominations. In the 7th century Daṇḍin in the *Daśaku-*

māracharita (p. 154) considers the knowledge of the theory and practice of the sixty-four accomplishments as a qualification of a learned man. It is amusing to see that with this background, Bāṇa in his prose romance *Kādambarī* (p. 14) shows even the parrot Vaishampāyana proficient in the art of calming a maiden angered in love's quarrel and also conversant with characteristics of elephants, horses, men and women. In the 8th century Bhavabhūti in the *Mālātī-Mādhava* (II, 5, VII, 1) shows both a maiden of aristocratic family and a Buddhist nun as proficient in love and makes them entertain the audience with a narration of the aftermath of love-pangs of sex gratification in dream. In the 12th century Śrī-Harṣa in the *Naiṣadhacharita* (XI, 122) boldly shows one of the kings in Damayanti's *svayamvara* as well-versed in a hundred treatises on art of love, and as one who would adorn Damayanti's breasts with nail-marks.

Even Jainas, whose religious tenets prohibited sex, accepted knowledge of Kāmaśāstra as essential learning. An 11th century inscription from Bagali¹ in Mysore, where a temple with erotic sculpture has been surveyed by us, mentions a Jaina teacher Anantavīryamuni as having mastered "Vātsyāyana" or works on erotics, along with works on other disciplines. Vastupāla, the Jaina minister of Gujarat who built the famous temple at Abu, wrote a Mahākāvya devoting a whole canto to "what may appropriately be called a poetic commentary on certain portions of Vātsyāyana's text."² Hemachandra, the reputed Jaina scholar of the 12th century, uses Kāmaśāstriya terminology to describe the amorous welcome by *apsaras* of heaven to the dead heroes of war.

Discussions on the Art of Sex

The themes of love and sex were considered so important that discussions were held on them among prominent citizens in *goṣṭhis* or cultural assemblies. The Bhāṇa *Dhūrtaviṭa saṁvāda* describes in detail such a meeting of cultured citizens which was also attended by courtesans. In one of the *goṣṭhis* described in this play there is a discussion on several points of *kāmatantra*.³ Vātsyāyana has given great importance to *goṣṭhi* for the cultured men of the town and has described it as an assembly of citizens of similar age and wealth, learning, intelligence and character who meet either in the house of a courtesan or a *nāgaraka* and engage in agreeable discussions on topics dealing with poetry, drama and other arts (*K.S.*, I, iv, 34-36). Scenes of *goṣṭhi* are represented in plastic arts of the early centuries at Kauśāmbī near Allahabad.⁴ *Vasudevahinḍī*, a Jaina work of about the 5th century A.D., mentions a rich father sending his son to a *goṣṭhi* for acquiring knowledge of *kāmakalā* and other arts. The term *lalitagoṣṭhi* is also used in this work.⁵ The court poet Bāṇa also mentions his attending *goṣṭhis*. Membership of *goṣṭhi* was considered a cultural qualification. In the 11th century Bilhaṇa in his *Vikramāṅkadevacharita* (IX, 82) mentions it as one of the achievements of a king trying to sue the hand of the Silahara princess in her *svayamvara*.

The *viṭasamāja*, where discussions on Kāmaśāstra took place, is vividly described in the Bhāṇa *Pādatāḍitaka*⁶ which gives us an idea of affluent society and its preoccupation with the art of sex. The *viṭasamāja* was held at a rich *śreṣṭhin's* place where, near the *torāṇa*, a servant stood with silver vessels for washing feet. The atmosphere was richly scented with *dhūpa*, flowers, garlands, lamps, etc. The vehicles in which the *viṭas* came to this place were parked in an open space in front of the house. *Gaṇikās* shared half-seats with *śrīmantas* and participated in the intelligent talk.

The knowledge of *kāmakalā* was considered so important that the kings are described in eulogies and inscriptions as great lovers. Bilhaṇa proudly presents the love-life of his patron King Vikram-

āditya VI of Kalyāṇī. Similarly, King Narasimhadeva I of the Konarak fame is shown proficient in love-making in the *Ekāvalī*, a eulogy written by his court poet.⁷ We have seen in the previous chapter that the amorous life of the donors was exalted in temple inscriptions. All this points to the explicit recognition and glorification of *kāma* in high society.

Kāmasāstra Literature

The importance of the art of sex among the cultured and the rich led to the writing of many Kāmasāstras. Hindu tradition had since the ancient times recognized the science of sex. The ancient treatises on the subject have been lost but their existence is noted by the writer of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (XXIV, 149-150) and by Vātsyāyana. The latter, writing before the 4th century A.D., notes as many as ten authorities on the subject, who had specialized in one or other aspect of sexual practice. His *Kāmasūtra* is the first systematic work on erotics and is the basis of all later Kāmasāstras. It was considered a subject of learning and was studied by poets and dramatists to guide them in their descriptions of love-scenes.⁸

In the Medieval period not only were commentaries written on Vātsyāyana's work, but new books based on his work were written in large numbers.⁹ In about the 10th century Padmaśrī, a Mahayāna Buddhist, wrote *Nāgarasarvasvam* which includes magical prescriptions to stimulate different veins. In almost the same period Kokkoka wrote *Ratirahasya* which came to be regarded as second only to Vātsyāyana's work. A Jaina writer Jyotīśvara wrote in the late 13th or early 14th century a work called *Pañchasāyaka*. In the 15th century Jayadeva wrote *Ratimañjarī* summarizing the science of erotics in sixty verses. In the 16th century Kalyāṇamalla wrote *Anaṅgaraṅga* for pleasing Ladkhan of the Lodi dynasty. Virabhadradeva wrote *Kandarpachūdāmaṇi* in the late 16th century. Besides these there are minor works on erotics. The court physicians of the Medieval period are said to have composed work on erotics to guide their polygamous patrons; e.g. in A.D. 1457 Ananta, who was proficient in medicine, wrote a work called *Kāmasamūha*.¹⁰

These books on erotics deal with the typology of women and men, their sexual characteristics, the way of pleasing women according to their physical types, coital postures, love-dalliance, techniques of making aphrodisiacs, ways of beautifying oneself and attracting women, etc. *Kuṭṭhanimalam* (580) in the 8th century refers to certain types of *ālīṅgana* (embrace) which have not been mentioned in Vātsyāyana's work. This indicates that the theme was being further explored in the Medieval period. Techniques of coital postures became more varied and different names were coined for them from time to time. Tāntric magic and astrology which were absent in Vātsyāyana's work were introduced in later works on erotics.¹¹ We have mentioned in Chapter VII the influence of Tāntrism on the Kāmasāstra works of Padmaśrī and Kokkoka. Knowledge of alchemy from Nāgārjuna's work is also evidenced in Kokkoka's work.¹² The theory of Chandrakalā, Kāmassthānas and Anaṅga-sthiti, connected with the astrological determination of the woman's erogenous zones, is also explored by Kokkoka and the subsequent writers. The subject of *vaśikaraṇa* got further importance. Tāntric *mantras* like Kāmeśvara, Kuṇḍalinī, Saptākṣara, Hṛillekha, Kṛiṣṇākṣī were employed for the purpose of purely secular sex in the *Ratirahasya* (XIV). Methods for delayed ejaculation are given in this work (XIV, 19-27) which obviously had no mystical purpose.

All this literature on erotics was written for the wealthy. Vātsyāyana's *nāgaraka* was a man of leisure, living in abundant luxury, watching bird-fights, attending music performances, keeping the

company of courtesans. Kokkoka, Jyotiśvara and Kalyāṇamalla wrote for kings. Virabhadraśrī was a king who probably commissioned a court poet to write for him. Jyotiśvara wrote for King Arasiṃha who fought Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq. Padmaśrī was interested in writing on jewels as well as women.¹³

Availability of Women

Polygamy

The interest in erotics of the upper classes was intensified by the social opportunity that they had of being able to afford the company of many women. Polygamy was recognized in Hindu culture since ancient times—Kṛiṣṇa's example in the *Harivaṃśa* is well-known—and its practice continued in the Medieval period. Kings, noblemen and the wealthy had as many wives as they could afford and according to their social status. The *Mānasāra* (VI, 125) in the Medieval period mentions the number of queens, women, horses, elephants, soldiers which the kings of different classes in feudal hierarchy were entitled to have. Marco Polo in the 13th century speaks of the five hundred wives of the kings of Malabar and the three hundred wives of the king of Coil in South India.¹⁴ Sex was not a novelty and there was no sexual starvation. Rather, the problem was one of too much sex for the aristocrats. This problem is vividly brought out by Sanskrit poets. Thus, Viśvanātha, quoting an earlier work, writes in his *Sāhityadarpaṇa* (III, 71), "The daughter of the king of Kuntala stands awaiting you, having bathed, the turn is of the sister of the king of Aṅga, but the night has been won by Kamalā with the dice, and her majesty the Chief Queen too is to be reconciled tonight." The King, having been informed respecting the fair ones of the harem, in the foregoing terms, by me the chief eunuch who had ascertained these matters, stood for three hours with mind perplexed by indignation." Feudal chiefs and princes enjoyed recitation of such verses as is indicated in the *Kuṭṭanīmatam* (788-791). Here, the prince makes a special request to the bard to recite verses on the predicament of the polygamous man.

The Kāmaśāstras were of great help to such polygamous men. These books contained instructions on the ways of making *apadravya* (artificial penis), recipes for aphrodisiacs (*vājīkaraṇa*) and tonic medicines, and methods for delayed ejaculation. Even works dealing chiefly with astrology such as Varāhamihira's *Bṛīhatsaṃhitā* (chapter 76) included a topic on the preparation of aphrodisiacs. Tāntric ascetics, supposed to be well-versed in magical lore, Rasāyana and *vājīkaraṇa* also became popular with aristocrats.

Relations with Maid-Servants

The term *dāsyāhputra*,¹⁵ so commonly used as an abuse in Sanskrit literature, indicates relationship with maid-servants. Women were often captured during war and presented to the queen or the wife of a minister to attend upon them. Mālavikā was sent as a present to Queen Dhārīṇī by her brother in Kālidāsa's play. Affairs of kings with maid-servants are referred to in Sanskrit literature. In the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (XXIV-204) it is mentioned that kings could secretly have affairs with maids so as not to disturb the feelings of queens. In Bhāsa's *Svapnavāsavadattā* (Act V) there is a reference to Queen Vāsavadattā's displeasure at King Udayana's having an affair with maid-servant Virachitā. Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitram* and Harṣa's two nāṭikās *Priyadarśikā* and *Ratnāvalī* depict affairs of the King with girls who lived as attendants of the Queen.

From Bāṇa we know that maids attended kings and princes in their personal services, including bathing and shampooing of feet. In the *Harṣacharita* (Chapter II, p. 63) he vividly describes King Harṣa in the assembly, who "languidly struck on the head with a bow of a lute, the shampooing attendant as the lotus feet dropped from her spray-like hands which were trembling with perspiring emotion." In the *Kādambarī* (pp. 19, 173) the king goes to the hall of audience leaning on the arm of a portress. Maid-servants of Princess Kādambarī amused Prince Chandrāpīḍa on the *kriḍāpavarta* with music, painting, playing on dice, etc.

The courtiers and feudal chieftains also had relations with maid-servants of the royal harem. In the *Nāgānandam* (Act III, p. 53) of Harṣa in the 7th century A.D., a *viṭa* is shown in a drunken state waiting for maid-servant Navamālikā in the Kusumākara garden. Śrī-Harṣa in the 12th century in his *Mahākāvya Naiṣadhacharita* devotes one chapter to the description of the affairs and pranks of courtiers and maids and depicts them in frank and often vulgar language (XVI, 49-112). On marriage occasions the maids of the bride's party entertained courtiers and noblemen of the bridegroom's party.

The Courtesan

Besides the availability of so many women to the aristocrats, Indian society also recognized the courtesan or *gaṇikā* as an important part of cultural life. As the cultured woman of town she was known as *nāgarikā*,¹⁶ an epithet of honour in ancient India. She was proficient in all the sixty-four arts which Vātsyāyana has mentioned as a prerequisite of the cultured citizen. She was present in *goṣṭhis* of *nāgarakas* and participated in discussions. The aristocrats invited her to *nagaropavana*. In the *Meghadūta* (I, 25), Kālidāsa refers to the caves of Nīchaigiri near Vidiśā as becoming fragrant with the anointed bodies of *veśyās*, which indicates that the rich citizens of Vidiśā invited these ladies to picnics to the caves of Nīchaigiri. Vātsyāyana (*K.S.*, I, iv, 37-38, 42-43) says that social parties were organized in the houses of citizens where courtesans were also invited. They also took part in various games and festivities like *Kaumudī-jāgara*, spring festivities dedicated to the God of Love and such *kriḍās* like *damanabhāṇjikā*, *sahakārabhāṇjikā*, *navapatrikā*, etc. which were originally the festivals associated with vegetation cults (see Chapter VI, Section 3).

Veśyās also danced in public. The themes of both song and dance were erotic. In the *Mṛichchhikaṭikam* (Act IV, p. 73) daughters of courtesans were taught *saśringāram nāṭyam* or erotic acting. In the *Daśakumāracharita* (VII, p. 87) *gaṇikā* Rāgamañjarī gave a performance in public where she made amorous gestures to prince Apahāravarman. In the *Kuṭṭanīmatam* (800ff) courtesan Mañjarī gave a performance of a dance-drama in the temple of Vārāṇasī before a distinguished gathering and tried to seduce a prince.

The *gaṇikā*, the best class of *veśyā*, was a rich woman. The splendour of her wealth and her refined tastes are reflected in Śūdraka's descriptions of the eight courtyards of *gaṇikā* Vasantasenā's palace. The palace was decorated with paintings. Flowers were hung on walls and the *torana* was inlaid with ivory.

It is known from the Bāṇa literature that all sorts of people in high posts visited *veśa* or courtesan's locality. These included princes, kings, their brothers-in-law, ministers, officers, painters, *vaidyas*, *śreṣṭhins*, grammarians, *viṭas*, dancing teachers and even a Buddhist *sādhu* and a Vaiṣṇava devotee.¹⁷ In the 11th century, Kṣemendra, the Kashmir writer, in his *Kalāvīlāsa* (IV, 14) ridicules the artists for spending their time with courtesans and places them with low-ranked horse-riders.

But the artists, specially of the Mysore region, probably had a different value system. A sculptor named Balkoja of this region had acquired the title "Gallant of the Harlots" and he was proud of it.¹⁸

The importance of secular prostitution in Indian society is attested by books devoted to the subject. Dattaka, who lived before Vātsyāyana, wrote a special guide for courtesans. Vātsyāyana has devoted the seventh part of his work to courtesans and their art. The two plays—by Bhāsa and Śūdraka—have as their heroine the courtesan Vasantasenā who is shown to be in love with a cultured citizen. The Bhāsa plays had *veśa* as their background. Special works dealing with stories of courtesans were written by Dāmodaragupta, the minister of Kashmir in the 8th century, and by Kṣemendra, the court poet, also of the same place, in the 11th century.

Concubines

Aristocrats also had concubines or *vāravilāsijana* who were women proficient in the art of love, residing at the palace. The *Arthaśāstra* (XX, 41) calls them *rūpajivā* and recognizes their place in the harem. In the *Mahābhārata* (XV, 22, 21) we read that when the Pāṇḍavas visited their old mother in the penance grove, they were accompanied by courtesans.¹⁹ The 2nd century poet Aśvaghoṣa shows in his *Buddhacharita* (IV, I, 9-13) *vilāsini*s accompanying Prince Siddhārtha to the *nagaropavana* (city-garden). They were well-versed in Kāmaśāstras and tried to seduce the prince by numerous artful devices. King Harṣa in the 7th century describes in his *Priyadarśikā* (I, 11) *vāravilāsijanas* of the palace enjoying their bath. His court poet Bāṇa mentions them as participating in the amorous activities of the palace and residing there. He describes the king's palace as being crowded with *vāravilāsijanas* with gold-handed chowries placed across their shoulders. They poured water on the king when he was at his bath. It seems that the *vāravilāsini*s of the palace also entertained guests of the king. The *sāmantas* of King Tārāpiḍa's palace are described as engaged in dialogues with numerous *vāravilāsijanas*.²⁰ Bhavabhūti in his *Mālātī-Mādhava* (Act I, p. 24) mentions a *vārayoṣit* as the *sakhī* of Mālātī, the daughter of a minister. The *Mānasāra* (XL, 108) provides for the quarters of *vāravilāsini*s in the palace of the king. The *vilāsini*s accompanied the king on hunting expeditions, picnics to gardens, *jalavihāra*, water-sports, summer resorts and also to battles.

Women of different parts of the country and even foreign lands were seen in the *veśa* and in the palaces of kings. As early as the 1st century A.D., *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* records among other things imported at the port of Broach in Gujarat, foreign maids and youths knowing music.²¹ Women from Barbara, East Africa, Arabia, etc. were seen in the *veśa*.²² Besides them, women of many parts of India were also known to be in the *veśa* and in royal service. Sanskrit poets and Kāmaśāstra writers take delight in describing the peculiarities of the amorous pleasures of women of different regions. There was a regular traffic of girls from all parts of India in the harems of kings and aristocrats. The *Mānasollāsa*, a work by a 12th century Chālukya king, mentions women of various regions such as Kuntala, Draviḍa, Mahārāshtra, Āndhra and Gurjara in the royal court.²³ Inscriptions boast about sports of kings and feudatories with women of various provinces. An 11th century inscription of Dhara in central India elaborately describes the harem of a nobleman.²⁴ Records of Mysore note the case of Narasimha I (1143-1173 A.D.) who like "a royal swan" was sporting with 384 women and who died of the sport. Women of different regions are reported in the harem of his feudatory, Somanātha Biṭṭimayya of Huliya.²⁵ King Paramardīn of Kuntala is said to have witnessed a dance by a naked woman in his court (*Prabandhachintāmaṇi*, p. 186). Gifts of girls were made to

kings. In A.D. 1180 the Kalachuri king was sent young girls from Lāṭa.²⁶ King Harṣa of Kashmir was presented with slave-girls (*Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, VII, 1129-35). In A.D. 1225 the traveller Chau Ju Kua noted of the Chola king that for his table and escort he employed "fully a myriad dancing girls, three thousand of whom are in attendance daily in rotation." The king of Malabar, according to him, was attended by a body-guard of five hundred foreign women.²⁷

The practice of taking courtesans along with the army was prevalent since at least the days of the Epics. Courtesans accompanied the army of Jayasīṃha of Gujarat when he attacked Yaśovarman of Malwa.²⁸ The army of the king of Vijayanagara in the 16th century was accompanied by no less than twenty thousand courtesans in a war expedition to Raichur.²⁹ Dancing girls are depicted with soldiers at Khajuraho.³⁰ The 12th century Belur and Halebid temples have scenes where warriors are shown in amorous relations with women (phs. 91, 94). The 12th century Gujarati writer Hemachandra describes the Chālukya camp at Jāmbavatī as follows: "The camp, in which people slept with a longing of auspicious dreams, in which men, in whom sex-passion was instantly aroused, were keeping vigils, in which the loins were fatigued by excessive sexual intercourse and their eyes were sunk by the exertion caused thereby, in which women caused an atmosphere of beauty by their sports, in which markets were open, in which warriors were free from the considerations of good and bad sleeps, was pleasant like the city of the Gandharvas."³¹ It is believed that at the time of war with Mahmud of Ghor, Prithvīrāja Chauhan gave himself to excessive indulgence in the company of his newly married wife Sanyogitā. The *Prithvīrāja Rāso* and *Prabandhachintāmaṇi* attribute his defeat at Taraori to his fatigue, lethargy and drowsiness.³² The *Hammīra-mahākāvya* notes that Harirāja, the Chāhamāna king of Ajmer, spent his revenues on dancing girls and women, and when he was attacked by the generals of Mahmud of Ghor, he had no option but to die on the funeral pyre.³³

The practice of prostitution was so firmly grounded in Indian social structure that the 12th century Chālukya king Kumārāpāla of Gujarat is represented in the allegorical drama *Moharāja-paraṅjaya* as saying, "Banish from the town, whenever apprehended, the four vices: gambling, flesh eating, drinking and slaughter. Theft and adultery have already been banished. Prostitution, not being a matter of great moment, can be ignored; nor does it matter if it (prostitution) remains or goes."³⁴ From the *Prākṛit Dvayāśrayakāvya* (VI, 52) of Hemachandra we know that Kumārāpāla sat in his court surrounded by a few dancing girls. The Sanskrit commentator uses the word *vāra-vanīlā* for these girls.

Degenerate Practices in the Harem

The harem or *antaḥpura* was also called *suddhānta*.³⁵ This word means pure and sinless. No men except the old *kañchukin* (door-keeper), the king and sometimes princes were supposed to enter the harem. All the services were performed by maid-servants, *vāmanas* (dwarfs), *vāmanikās* and eunuchs. This tallies with Bāṇa's description of the harem. That this was a practice till late is evidenced by the accounts of travellers to the Vijayanagara kingdom in the late Medieval period.³⁶

However, so many malpractices appear to have been common in the harems that the word *suddhānta* seems to be a misnomer. Vātsyāyana is quite realistic about the situation of women in the harem when he says: "Since the women of the harem are not allowed to other men, being very well-guarded, and since they have only one husband common to all of them, they are physically dissatisfied, and they therefore give pleasure to each other in various ways." *Apadravyas* (artificial penis) were

used by these women. One of the maid-servants or daughters of *dhātṛi* (nurse) was dressed in man's clothing. Kings also satisfied their wives after their passion had abated by recourse to *apadravya* (*K.S.*, V, vi, 1-4). Sometimes the unsatisfied women of the harem smuggled a *nāgaraka* with the help of maid-servants and guards. Vātsyāyana gives the following examples of practices known to him in harems of different parts of India. In the Aparānta province, where harems were not properly guarded, men were smuggled into the harem. The women of the harem of the king of Ābhīra had relations with the Kṣatriya guards of the palace. In the Vatsagulma province men got into the precincts of the harem in the disguise of maid-servants. In Vidarbha the princes had access to the harems and mated with all wives of their father except their own mother. In the Sindhu region queens united with servants, door-keepers and such menials who had easy access to harems. In the Himalayan region men bribed the guards to enter the harems. In the Baṅga, Aṅga and Kāliṅga provinces educated Brāhmins obtained royal permission to enter the harem with the excuse of offering flowers. In the Eastern provinces the women in the harem concealed one virile man between every group of nine or ten women (*K.S.*, V, vi, 6ff, 33-42).

These allusions by Vātsyāyana might be just hearsay, but they definitely indicate that the harem was not *suddhānta* in the right sense; on the contrary, extra-marital affairs of queens were common. Describing the *goyūthika* type of congress, where one woman has relations with many men, Vātsyāyana says that it can be practised when one queen is enjoyed by several noblemen (*K.S.*, II, vi, 45). Daṇḍin in the 7th century in his *Daśakumāracharita* relates the story of a queen having relations with a travelling prince. The prince's access to the harem and also of the way in which he conducted his affair are related at length. Another prince of Daṇḍin's tale entered the harem dressed as a woman and had an affair with a princess, while still another prince had access to the harem by a tunnel.

The poem *Chaurapañchāsikā*, generally attributed to Bilhaṇa, describes the clandestine love of the poet with the princess and indicates indirect access to the harem. The *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* refers to the lawlessness in the harems of the kings of Kashmir. There was no need for king's favourites to reach the harem in a secret manner. They had direct access to it. A flute-player, who became King Kalaśa's close friend and procured women for him and who received the title of *thakkura*, could enjoy the King's sister and her daughter. Even the old King Ananta and his wife Sūryamatī could do nothing about the matter (VII, 285-93). King Harṣa (11th century) was so degenerate in his later life that he had sexual relations with his father's wives, "who had brought him up on their arms." He had relations with his sisters also (VII, 1147-48). His own women also indulged in malpractices. Kalhaṇa notes that once there was a serious misconduct in the seraglio of Harṣa which foreboded the fall of the king. The lovers of the harem women conspired to kill him. When Harṣa came to know about it, in a fit of anger, he had some women executed along with their lovers, and had others expelled from his seraglio (VII, 1142-44).

Extra-marital Relations with Kulanārīs

There was a moral injunction not to look at another's wife as mentioned by Kālidāsa's kings—Duṣyanta and Kuśa.³⁷ Bāṇa in his characteristic style says in the *Harṣacharita* (p. 63) that the wives of other men thought that King Harṣa was impotent because he avoided them. In the Dharmaśāstra literature, though the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* (II, i, 12) regards adultery as an *upapātaka*,

minor sin, which could be redeemed by penance, the *Manu Smṛiti* (VIII, 359) vehemently declares that non-Brāhman offenders were to be put to death. For the Brāhman offender tonsure of head was ordained. According to the *Yājñavalkya Smṛiti* (285, 286), in case of the relations with the higher caste woman, death was the penalty for the man and the lopping off the ears for the woman. It also mentions that the conversing with another man's wife is adulterous and suggests fines both for the woman and the man. We need not go into the views and injunctions of different Dharmaśāstra writers. Our point is merely to indicate that extra-marital love was not regarded lightly in Hindu moral codes.

But in actual life it is very likely that kings, princes and men in power had affairs with *parakīyā* (wife of another). Goṇikāputra, an authority on Kāmaśāstra mentioned by Vātsyāyana, devoted a special work on the methods of winning wives of other men. Both Vātsyāyana and Kokkoka have also mentioned the possible ways of having extra-marital relations, the places and occasions for the lovers to meet, the *dūtis* (messengers) appropriate for the occasion, the ways of wooing a *parakīyā*, the presents to be given to her, etc. Village women were easy to win with the assistance of the headman of the village or revenue officers. City women were approached with some tact. On the days of *jāgara* and Suvasantaka (spring festival) when they came to play with the queens, the confidential female attendant of the king approached one of them and, on the pretext of showing her the palace, informed her of the king's intention. Sometimes, even wives of the king helped him in his affairs. Vātsyāyana records that in the Vatsagulma province the women in the harems of ministers made it a practice to go to the king at night and attend to his comforts. In the Vidarbha province the women in the royal harem allowed the beautiful village women to enter and stay with them for a fortnight or a month. In the Aparānta province beautiful wives were actually presented to the king and ministers. In Saurāshtra the women, whether they belonged to villages or towns, visited the royal harem for the king's pleasure, either separately or in groups (*K.S.*, V, v). From the *Daśakumāracharita* (XIII, p. 211) we know that it was possible in high society to have *sajāyāpānagoṣṭhi* (drinking party along with wives) where the king and feudal chiefs could take liberty with wives of subordinates.

In the 8th century King Durlabha of Kashmir fell in love with a merchant's wife, Narendra-prabhā and married her. Her son Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa became the famous king of Kashmir, with whom is associated the building of the Sun temple at Martand. Kalhaṇa comments that the sin of marriage with another's wife was removed by the erection of shrines (*Rājatarāṅginī*, IV, 16, 38, 43). This reminds us of the famous temples of Khajuraho which were believed, according to a legend, to have been built for expiating the sin of extra-marital love of Hemāvati, the mother of the first Chandella king.³⁸ The *Prabandhachintāmaṇi* (p. 184) relates a story of King Jayachandra of the Gāhaḍavāla dynasty, who married a common man's wife and made her the chief queen. This work (p. 154) also records an example of adultery among the common people. Madanarajanī, who was a married woman, left her husband and stayed with another man and had two sons by him. Wives of the neo-rich official class whose husbands were constantly on travel had opportunities to have extra-marital affairs. Kṣemendra in the 11th century has described a wife of a Kāyastha officer who always prayed for her husband's being away on travel. One of her admirers was a *maṭha-daiśika* (head of the monastery). A Buddhist female-mendicant acted as the go-between.³⁹

Arguments in defence of *parakīyā* love are put forward in the *Kuṭṭanimatam* (verses 811ff) written in the 8th century by a minister of Kashmir. Gradually, with Vaiṣṇava ideology of *prema-*

lakṣaṇā bhakti, as represented by the *parakīyā* love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, extra-marital love with a married woman was considered the highest experience in life.⁴⁰

Drinking of Wine by Women

Despite the strict rules against the drinking of wine by women in the *Smṛitis*,⁴¹ there is literary and sculptural evidence to show that they took wine. Lovers enjoyed *madhupāna* in each other's company. Kālidāsa has described it in his poems and sculptors have depicted it in the caves of Badami, Ajanta, Ellora, etc. Queen Irāvati in the *Mālavikāgnimitram* comes to see the king having drunk wine, which was believed to give her added beauty. Vātsyāyana mentions that city women and queens had drinks in the palace on days of festivals like Suvasantaka (*K.S.*, V, v, 12). From the story by Daṇḍin it seems that city women and wives of chiefs took drinks in the company of men and mixed freely with them on the occasion of parties called *sajyāpānagoṣṭhi* arranged by the king. According to the *Ratirahasya* (XIII, 93), *pānayātrās* gave opportunities for extra-marital affairs. The *Vikramāṅkadevacharita* (XI, 44-68) of the 11th century gives evidence about the free drinking of wine by harem women. The *Mānasollāsa* (III, 1329) of the 12th century states that the king could entertain his wives with wine on occasions of marriage. The fact that in the 12th century *Dvayāśrayakāvyā* (XI, 14) Minaladevī, a queen of Gujarat, was advised to refrain from taking wine when she was pregnant suggests that married ladies of the upper class were in the habit of taking wine.

Tāntrikas and Aristocrats

We have noted in Chapter VII the vast spread of Tāntrism and have also shown the place of Tāntrikas in society. Here we will confine ourselves to the association of Tāntrikas and the pleasure-loving aristocrats. In its very essentials, Tāntrism is an esoteric religion involving ritualistic sexual practices, not for pleasure, but for the spiritual attainment of the non-dual *sahaja*. But if sex becomes a mere end in itself, as evidenced from the declared goal of the Kāpālīka in the *Mattavilāsaṣaṭpādaśāstra* and the *Karpūramāñjarī*, it then means a distortion of the central purpose and principle of Tāntrism. We know that in course of time many hedonistic aspects crept into Tāntric sexual rites and practices. The sensitive writers of the period like Kṣemendra, Kṛṣṇa Miśra, Somadeva and Kalhaṇa had ventilated their grievances against Tāntric *āchāryas*. Was it not likely then that the royal and aristocratic circles which were patrons of the Tāntrikas could be influenced by the decadent Tāntric practices? Some evidence to this is seen in Kalhaṇa's descriptions of the lives of the Kashmir kings. King Kalaśa in the 11th century became a pupil of PramadaKaṇṭha under whose instructions he practised even incest with his own daughter (*Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, VII, 278). His son, King Harṣa, in his later life seems to have been fascinated by the practice of *kāyasādhana*. He was presented with slave-girls. He considered them *devīs* and believed that they granted him longevity. He also kept the company of a Ḍomba who gave him an elixir preparation for *piṇḍasiddhi* (VII, 1129-35). Ḍomba is a low caste specially associated with Tāntrikas. Another king of Kashmir married a Ḍombī and made her the chief queen. The historian says that the ministers of the court even went to the extent of wearing her menstruation clothes (V, 392). The Bengal King Lakṣmaṇa Sena was in love with a Chāṇḍālā woman, as known from the accounts of Umāpatidhara and Merutuṅga.⁴² These illustra-

tions indicate that the royal society was in touch with lower caste women who were usually recruited by Tāntrikas. The depiction on temples of the much-criticized oral-genital relations, which had become the favourite pose of sculptors, can possibly be explained in this light. For, this was a pose practised by lower caste women and eunuchs according to the *Kāmasūtra* (II, ix, 22).

Tāntrikas had access to the upper class because of their knowledge of alchemy, aphrodisiacs and of magical *mantras* for mastery over women. They also influenced Kāmasāstras. As in the writing of handbooks of love, in matter of actual instructions also their help could have been sought. We know from Rājaśekhara's play that there was a possibility of the Tāntrikas' staying in the royal palace. There are examples in literature of experts on *vājīkaraṇa* (aphrodisiacs) becoming favourites of kings.⁴³ Tāntrikas, qualified with the additional knowledge of *mantras* and *vaśīkaraṇa* had therefore more chance of being patronized by kings and feudal chiefs. Even as late as the 14th century when Ibn Battuta visited Khajuraho, the yellow-skinned ascetics prepared aphrodisiacs for the ruling king.⁴⁴ In war activities in which astrological considerations and beliefs in superstitions played an important role, as known from Hemachandra's *Dvyāśrayakāvya*, the magical *mantras* and *śaṭkarmas* of Tāntrikas were likely to be resorted to by the military aristocracy. The *Samayamātrikā* (II, 96) refers to a king giving money to a fake religious woman who claimed knowledge of *stambhana* (arresting) of the enemy's army.

The sculptured reliefs of Khajuraho, Halebid, Modhera, etc. show ascetics participating in sexual orgies in which royal persons are also shown. They may indicate possible situations known or imagined by the artists. Kṣemendra's description of the *ratichakramahotsava* or midnight orgy around Chakra, participated by all sorts of off-beat characters and the Kāyastha officer and his wife, points to the possibility of participation by the official class in Tāntric sexual practices.

Revelry on Festive Occasions

Festivals (*utsavas*) provided opportunities to gay rulers and their subjects to indulge in pleasurable activities. The traditional social restraints were forgotten and the people could take freedom, not otherwise socially permissible. As seen in Chapter VI, the celebration of festivals was believed to stimulate agricultural fertility in particular and promote welfare, auspiciousness and prosperity in general. The Purāṇas and Nibandhas of the Medieval period laid great emphasis on the celebration of festivals. B. P. Mazumdar has pointed out that in the 11th and 12th centuries there were at least 128 days in a year spent in celebration of one festival or other.⁴⁵ If so, festivals had an important place in Medieval social life.

Sanskrit writers portray a picture of complete abandon on festive occasions. In the *Harṣacharita* (IV, pp. 111 ff), Bāṇa describes the festival on the occasion of the birth of a son in the king's family: "...drunken slave-women (*śūdradāsī*) allured the favourites (*rājavallabha*) of the king, while the monarch himself looked on with a secret smile. In one place, respectable old feudatories (*vriddha-sāmanta*) were much to the king's amusement clasping the neck of the intoxicated bawds (*kuṭṭanī*) of the capital in a furious dance. In another place, haughty slave-boys, set on by a glance from the sovereign, betrayed in songs the secret amours of the ministers of state. Elsewhere wanton water-girls raised a laugh by embracing aged ascetics. Elsewhere, again in the eagerness of ardent rivalry throngs of slaves carried on war of foul language. In another place, chamberlains, knowing nothing of dancing, were, to the entertainment of the maids, violently forced to dance by the king's women."

Prostitutes danced to the accompaniment of instrumental music and sang vulgar songs. The king's wives also danced amidst the white parasols held above them. Bāṇa says: "All womankind thus set-a-dancing... their round gleaming bosoms made the festival like a mask of auspicious pitchers; ... even the hermits' hearts were all agog for a dance."

King Harṣa (*Nāgānandam*, III) describing the *vivāhamahotsava* (the great festival of marriage) mentions people from the bride's and the bridegroom's parties indulging in wine and uttering "jokes fit for a relative." Śrī-Harṣa (*Naiṣadhacharita*, XVI), the 12th century court poet of Kanauj, also describes various pranks and vulgar jokes of maid-servants of the bride's party with courtiers of the bridegroom's party.

Much freedom was taken on the Madanamahotsava, Vasantotsava, Kaumudimahotsava and Udakamahotsava. Courtesans openly sported with *nāgarakas* on these occasions. *Kulanāris* (married women of good families) also could meet strangers and had opportunities for free sexual behaviour on these days. The use of obscene (*aślila*) words and gestures, the free mixing of men and women, their dancing, singing and drinking abundantly, the participation of courtesans in merry-making were some of the main features in the celebration of festivals, as seen in Chapter VI. These features, originally connected with fertility functions, could degenerate into sensuality in actual practice. The use of the word *kriḍā* by Vātsyāyana (*K.S.*, I, iv, 42) in connection with fertility festivals such as Sahakārabhañjikā, Navapatrikā, Ekaśālmali suggests the loss of ritual significance of festivals. He also says that occasions of festivals, marriage ceremonies, sacrificial rites, gatherings in honour of deities, etc. should be taken advantage of by men desirous of having relations with a *parakīyā* (*K.S.*, V, iv, 41; V, v, 11 ff). The participation of *devadāsīs* in temple festivals including Rathayātrā and Devayātrā and in plays staged during celebrations was bound to bring sensual elements in the celebrations. In fact, as seen in Chapter VIII, their sensual charms have been specially described by Medieval inscription-writers and poets. That the sexual excesses in the celebration of festivals did lead to the defeat of kings has been a theme known to Sanskrit writers. Daṇḍin has vividly described in his *Daśakumāracharita* (XII, pp. 189-90) the festive sports of kings with numerous harem women and courtesans in city gardens for days together on the occasion of Madanamahotsava which led to their defeat on sudden attacks by enemy kings.

Art and Architecture of Aristocratic Society

The art and architecture of the pleasure-loving aristocratic society were bound to have been affected by opulence and eroticism. As Herbert Read⁴⁶ says: "The elite accumulates power and wealth and leisure. It demands outward symbols of its positions, and above all those which reflect its pomp and glory. The art of architecture especially is in requisition, and most of the other arts follow in its wake." Now, in India, palaces and love-resorts of the wealthy were built of impermanent material like wood and they have not survived the ravages of time. But literary data help us to visualize the secular arts of the period. Moreover, some scattered objects of ivory, bone and steatite survive to give an idea of this aristocratic society's luxurious living and preoccupation with *śringāra*.

This art is replete with sensuousness. Houses of the wealthy were well-furnished with luxurious objects. Vātsyāyana has described in great detail the love-chamber in the outer quadrangle of the house of the *nāgaraka* where the mistresses and courtesans were invited (*K.S.*, I, iv, 10). The love-chamber displayed prominently the "cultural" objects such as *viñā*, materials for painting and sketch-

ing and books which the *nāgaraka* was supposedly reading. It is very likely that amorous sculptures were placed in the house of the *nāgaraka*, especially in the outer quadrangle where he received his mistresses. H. Chakladar⁴⁷ says that representations in wood and stone of human beings, both male and female (*puruṣapratimā* and *stripratimā*), were used by the class for whom Vātsyāyana wrote, for decoration and as appurtenances of love. Stands for placing images are mentioned by Vātsyāyana. He says that men often gave an indication of their passion for a lady by shyly kissing or embracing a statue in her presence. He also mentions figures of a man and a woman or of a ram and a goat, united and carved from one wooden piece, which were used by a suitor to win over a girl (*K.S.*, III, iii, 14).

Bāṇa, describing the love-chamber of a newly married royal couple, mentions the erotic paintings, presumably meant to be seen by the shy bride. On the doors of this chamber were portrayed the goddesses Rati and Priti, the consorts of Kāmadeva. One of the paintings on the wall depicted the God of Love aiming his shaft near a red Aśoka tree (*Harṣacharita*, IV, p. 131).

Sanskrit poets, specially from the time of Kālidāsa, have given great importance to the pleasures of lovers in different seasons. The architecture of the aristocrats was specially designed to follow this pattern. Palaces for different seasons are mentioned in the Medieval work *Mānasollāsa*.⁴⁸ The *Vikramāṅkadevacharita* (XII, 50-54) mentions a *dhārāgriha* having crystal flooring where the king and his women took shelter in summer. This reminds us of Kālidāsa's reference to *gūḍhamohanagriha* which was a secret subterranean chamber constructed at the level of water in a well and meant for amorous sports (*kāmabhoga*). In the time of commentator Hemādri in the 13th century *gūḍhamohanagriha* is equated with *suratabhavana*.⁴⁹

Special arrangements were made for *jalakriḍā* (water-sport) which was a favourite pastime. The Buddhist work *Dīgha Nikāya* has a description of an open-air bathing tank with flights of steps leading to it, faced entirely with stone and ornamented both with flowers and carvings.⁵⁰ Arrangements for water-sports were often made in the garden. Vātsyāyana advises *nāgarakas* to have a *dirghikā* or *vāpi* (well) in the centre of their garden for water-sports in summer (I, iv, 41; IV, i, 8). *Kriḍākāśāra*, *dirghikā*, *payahkeli* are known to Sanskrit poets.⁵¹ An inscription from Khajuraho mentions a *kelisaras* (pond for love-sports).⁵² Kāmasāstra writers recognize a special mode of congress in water called *vārikriḍitaka*. Incidentally, Vātsyāyana was not much in favour of this pose as it was condemned by learned and cultured sages (II, vi, 42, 43).

Gardens, both private (attached to one's own house) and public (called *nagaropavana*), were favourite resorts of lovers. In the *Mṛichchhakatikam* we read that *nāgaraka* Chārudatta and *gaṇikā* Vasantasenā plan to meet in the *nagaropavana*. In the *Raghuvamśa* (VIII, 51), Aja and Indumatī, the royal couple, made love in the garden outside the city. Special *maṇḍapas* were prepared for amorous sports. Bhāsa in the 2nd century mentions a couch prepared for love-making in the inner bower of Princess Kuraṅgī's palace. In the *Svapnavāsavadattā* (Act IV), we read that a wooden pavilion with paintings of birds and bees was erected in the garden. King Agnivarṇa of the *Raghuvamśa* (XIX, 23) had sexual pleasures with the female attendants in the bowers of creepers. Sometimes houses of plantain leaves were made for the lovers. In the *Ratnāvalī* (Act III), lovers are shown meeting in a bower of creepers in a garden. The *Daśakumāracharita* (VIII, pp. 116-17) describes a *saṁketagriha* (rendezvous) in the garden which was a thick-set *maṇḍapa* of creepers having a door made of red Aśoka branches. In this *maṇḍapa* there were placed aphrodisiacs, an ivory-handled fan, a vase with scented water, etc.

An exclusive room called *dolagriha* was allotted for the popular sport of swinging. *Dolādhirohaṇa* was a special festive occasion in Kālidāsa's time. In the 11th century Bilhaṇa describes in many verses the sport of swinging practised by the harem ladies of King Vikramāṅka (VII, 15 ff).

Caves often served as abodes of dancing girls and their lovers. That caves were specially excavated to make pleasure-resorts is evidenced from the inscriptions of the 2nd century B.C. at the Sitabenga and Jogimara caves in the Ramgarh hill of Madhya Pradesh. The plan of the Sitabenga cave indicates that it was a theatre and "evidently was not the abode of pious ascetics void of all worldly attachments, but was a place where poetry was recited, love songs were sung and theatrical performances acted."⁵³ An inscription in the cave in praise of poetry substantiates the above statement. The Jogimara cave inscription mentions a *devadāsī* called Sutanukā, who was loved by one Devadinnā, who was a *rūpadakṣa*—i.e. either a banker, dealing with *rūpa* or money, or a painter.⁵⁴ Here we may note that Lüders has drawn attention to the word *lonasobhikā* in a Mathura inscription, which, according to him, means a cave actress.⁵⁵

Inscriptions from the Central Indian caves of Silhara further substantiate the fact that caves were used as pleasure-resorts. These caves were excavated in the 1st century A.D. by one minister Maudgaliputra Mūladeva for sportive and merry-making purposes.⁵⁶ The Durvāsā Cave of this series records that the cave was an *ārāmaṇṇpavate* (a pleasure-house on the hill). Pleasurable activities were carried on for at least a century more at this place as is evidenced by some other inscriptions of the 2nd century A.D. In this connection we are reminded of Kālidāsa's description of the caves of Nīchāgiri near Vidiśā which were visited by *veśyās* (*Meghadūta*, I, 25).

A *kriḍāparvata* or a hill for sports is mentioned as being near the palaces of aristocrats. The Yakṣa of the *Meghadūta* (II, 17) had a *kriḍāśaila* near his house planted with beautiful trees and creepers. Artificially made hills are also mentioned in the *Raghuvamśa* (XIX, 37). We know from Bāṇa's descriptions that the *kriḍāparvata* had a mansion bedecked with mirrors. Prince Chandrāpīḍa stayed as a guest of princess Kādambarī on the *kriḍāparvata*. He performed all his daily duties, including eating meals, on this mountain. This indicates that the *kriḍāparvata* attached to royal mansions occupied a large area. The *Daśakumāracharita* (VIII, p. 114) mentions a jewelled bench for love-making on the *kriḍāparvata*. In the 10th century, Rājasekhara in his *Viddhaśālābhañjikā* (I, p. 20) refers to a pleasure-mount with a crystal pavilion, where the walls of the interior chamber were beautifully painted, built by a minister. *Kriḍāgiri* is mentioned in the 10th century inscription of Khajuraho.⁵⁷

The palaces and mansions of the aristocrats had rich decorations. Bāṇa mentions the private room of the royal palace having columns inlaid with rich ivory.⁵⁸ The courtesan's palace, as described by Śūdraka in the 5th century, had an ivory *toraṇa*. It is quite possible that like the ivory decorations of Begram near Kabul this ivory ornamentation on the palaces of kings and courtesans had sensuous themes. The *Mānasollāsa*, in the 12th century, contains accounts of entablatures in king's palaces with a rich display of ivory, having pillars of gold or sandalwood, pavements of glass, crystals, etc., and walls either made of crystal slabs looking like mirrors or made beautiful with wonderful pictures.⁵⁹

We know from early literature that the *veśa* or courtesan's dwelling had paintings. *Gaṇikā* Āmrāpālī who is said to have lived in the time of King Bimbisāra had a special art gallery in her mansions where paintings of the best artists of the time were hung.⁶⁰ From the reference in the Bhāṇa literature it is known that the *veśa* had a *chitraśālā*.⁶¹ King's palaces and houses of the rich also

had *chitraśālās*.⁶² The *Bhūpāla Maṇḍana*, a treatise attributed to Nārada, states that a king shall have in his palace a *raṅgaśālā* or theatre and a *chitraśālā*.⁶³ The *Nārada Śilpaśāstra* also mentions a *chitraśālā* in the middle of the city for public entertainment. It also enjoins that the *chitraśālā* walls should be decorated with figures or paintings of *devas*, *gandharvas* and *kinnaras* engaged in sports (*vihāra*) in various styles or postures.⁶⁴ That the *chitraśālās* contained amorous paintings of *nāgara* type is indicated by the fact that in the Buddha's time nuns were prohibited from seeing them.

Erotic themes seem to have been represented on *ākhyānakapaṭas* or textile scrolls depicting tales, at least since the time of Vātsyāyana. He refers to the use of these *paṭas* by female messengers for enticing women to extra-marital affairs. He also says that the *dūtis* should tell the women well-known love-stories such as those of Ahalyā, Avimāraka, Śakuntalā and those relating to men and women who had extra-marital affairs (*K.S.*, V, iv, 2, 14 and commentary). These themes could have been represented on the *paṭas*. The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* mentions a class of painting known as *vainika* or lyrical, which, according to Moti Chandra, might have represented love-lyrics.⁶⁵ Works of Amaru and Hāla with their miniature verses on love could have provided good material for such depictions. Kings and wealthy people also commissioned artists for preparing illustrated series on erotics and love-lyrics. Manuscripts of the *Ratirahasya*, *Amaruśataka*, *Chaurapañchāśikā*, *Vasantavilāsa*, and those dealing with *Rāgamālā*, *Nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda*, etc. have been found from various regions, though none much earlier than the 15th century,⁶⁶ presumably because of the fragile nature of the material.

From the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (II, 76-80, 90-95) of about the 2nd century A.D. we know that the walls of the *nāṭyagriha* or theatre-hall were decorated with amorous paintings and its pillars were ornamented with figures of *śālabhañjikā*. The Jaina canonical literature of about the 1st-2nd century A.D. mentions figures of *śālabhañjikās* in playful attitudes and those of Vidyādhara couples on the pillars of the palaces. The *toraṇa* of the palace was decorated with auspicious motifs. It had decorative jambs (*thamba*), the tops of which supported eight auspicious symbols. Some of the compartments of the *torāṇa* were provided with figures of *śālabhañjikā* in sportive attitudes. These were painted. The *torāṇa* was also decorated with rosettes, horses, elephants, *makaras*, *kimpuruṣas*, Gandharvas, oxen and *mithuna* figures. The gateways of the city ramparts were decorated with *śālabhañjikā* figures.⁶⁷

Thus, if religious art of the contemporary period at Bodh Gaya, Mathura, Karle, etc. displayed sensuous-cum-auspicious motifs for decoration, the art of the residential and domestic structures also had depictions of similar themes.

In the 11th century, King Bhoja of Malwa in his *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra* (XXXIV, 33-34 and 20) mentions specifically that monuments should be adorned with women bent on amorous sports (*ratikriḍā*) and *nāyaka* or hero desirous of sex play. This prescription is meant for houses of householders (*grihamedhinām griheṣu*), as well as *devagrihas*. He also mentions the portrayal of *mithunas* of monkeys and of elephants in water-sports on *dhārāgrihas* or chambers with an arrangement for water. *Dhārāgrihas* were also adorned with figures of Vidyādharas, Siddhas, Nāgas, Kinnaras, etc. Beautiful *śālabhañjikās* were also depicted on them (XXXI, 126-34). Thus, the purely secular buildings like *dhārāgriha* were also decorated with auspicious figures of demi-gods, fertility females, *mithunas*, etc.

In the 12th century Śrī-Harṣa (*Naiṣadha-charita*, I, 38; XVIII, 18 ff) gives a vivid description of the royal palace which had erotic depictions. The recreation hall of the princess's palace, at her father's place where she stayed before her marriage, had depictions of a pair of lovers. In the inner apartment of the main palace there were idols of Kāmadeva and Rati. On the walls of the palace

were depicted amorous paintings and sculptures with themes taken from mythology. The adulterous frolic of Indra with Gautama's wife was engraved on the walls. At another place Kāmadeva laughed at Brahmā's rash passion for his own daughter. In the courtyard of the palace were seen the Moon god's wantonness with Bṛihaspati's wife. At one place ascetics were shown as "supporting themselves on the pitcher-like breasts of nymphs." This depiction of ascetics in sport or *tapasvililā* is prohibited on the houses of men in the Medieval Śilpaśāstras, viz. the *Mayamatam* and the *Śilparatnam*.⁶⁸ Thus, Śrī-Harṣa's description of the *tapasvililā* on the palace walls is contrary to the convention embodied in the Śilpaśāstras of South India.

The Śāstras dealing with *vāstu* and *śilpa* ordain the depiction of auspicious motifs on secular buildings. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, only auspicious objects could be portrayed on residential architecture. Pictures embellishing homes should represent *śṛṅgāra*, *hāsyā* and *sānta rasas*.⁶⁹ The *Pramāṇamañjarī* (verses 237, 244, 249, 309), a Śilpaśāstra from Western India, dated not earlier than the 13th century, which concerns itself mainly with domestic architecture, prescribes depiction of *alaṅkāras* on "houses of men." It is enjoined there that the pillars should be decorated with figures in dance-poses. The threshold should be decorated with flowers and leaves. The house built according to the text would lead to happiness and would give wealth and success. Thus auspicious themes which include *mithunas* and *śālabhañjikās* were to be portrayed on residential buildings also. But in the hands of the *śṛṅgāra*-loving aristocratic society the method of treatment belonged to the sphere of secular erotics.

Art remains and literary evidence indicate that objects of daily use were adorned with erotic motifs. Combs were decorated with amorous themes. An ivory comb, originally belonging to Malwa, depicts an amorous couple which has close affinity with the couple carved on the Eastern Gateway of Sanchi.⁷⁰ Another comb from Sirkap, Taxila, of the 1st century A.D., depicts a woman reclining on a bed attended by a dwarfish figure carrying wine. The other side of the comb bears auspicious symbols.⁷¹

The sensuous charms of Śrī or Lakṣmī, the goddess of prosperity and fertility, whose sexual characteristics are emphasized in her early iconography (ph. 15), made her popular with artists. Like the fertile *śālabhañjikā*, the auspicious Śrī was also depicted on residential buildings and objects. Rāvaṇa's palace had depictions of the auspicious Gaja-Lakṣmī.⁷² Śrī is figured on the handles of boxes and mirrors. Bāṇa, while describing objects placed in the love-chamber, mentions a golden image, comparable to goddess Lakṣmī, holding an ivory box.⁷³ The *Mānasāra* (L, 119) states that mirrors should be decorated with figures of Lakṣmī and other female deities and also with creepers. Figures of Śrī found from Ter in the Deccan and Pompeii in Italy were probably used as mirror-handles (see Chapter II). Such decorative use of the auspicious goddess served to satisfy sensuous tastes of the society. The motive behind this art is not purely religious. It can be said that it is an example of art illustrating the fusion of the sacred and the secular aspects of eroticism.

Trays of steatite found from Taxila in the North-West of India, belonging to the period from the 2nd century B.C. to the 1st century A.D., also depict amorous scenes.⁷⁴ Drinking bouts and kissing couples are portrayed on these plates, once again, to serve the sensuous tastes of the aristocrats.

To recapitulate, we have attempted to examine the actual behaviour of the upper classes of Indian society in matters of sex and love. The cultural ideals as exemplified in the religious texts and law-books consist in restraint of sex rather than indulgence in it. However, by a study of the

actual behaviour of the aristocrats as manifest in literature, it becomes clear that *bhoga* was explicitly recognized and glorified in the high society.

Sex was not inhibited. It was openly cultivated as an art. The various texts on the study of sex, as embodied in the literature called *Kāmaśāstra*, are proof of this excessive love of sex for its own sake. If Indian culture emphasized the ascetico-religious ideal, it none the less permitted and popularized the study of sex as an art. The variety of *Kāmaśāstrīya* treatises is testimony to this aspect of Indian culture.

Aristocrats were not only unrestrained in sexual behaviour, but, still remaining unsatisfied with their polygamous married life, they had relations with maid-servants, *vilāsini*s, courtesans, etc. Examples of kings who had relations with *parakīyā* are also not wanting in Indian history. Harem women and wives of merchants and feudal chiefs were known to have extra-marital relations. Sex was glorified and indulgence in sex was not uncommon even on war-fronts. Festivals became occasions for great revelries and merry-making. Tāntric practitioners, who were supposed to have mastered the techniques of *Rasāyana*, *vājīkaraṇa* and *vaśīkaraṇa*, became popular with kings and feudal chiefs and were invited to stay in palaces. The distorted version of their philosophy was bound to affect libidinous kings and their amorous followers.

The art of this sensuous society was suffused with eroticism. Special types of buildings, pleasure-hills, lakes, etc. were built to facilitate sexual gratification. Palaces, houses, theatre-halls, etc. were decorated with auspicious figures treated sensuously. The walls of palaces and *chitraśālās* bore on them erotic paintings with adulterous love as the theme. Articles of daily use and furniture were decorated with *alaṅkāra* which very likely included *mīthuna alaṅkāra*. Combs were decorated with *mīthuna* motifs. Mirror-handles were ornamented with figures of auspicious goddesses with their sexual characteristics emphasised. Thus, the depiction of erotic motifs was not restricted to temple art. The art meant for residential architecture and household objects also included the depiction of (auspicious) erotic motifs.

In the next chapter we will examine erotic expression in another sphere of secular court art, viz., belletristic Sanskrit literature, and see to what extent it is similar to erotic depiction in temple art.



X. Expression of Sex in Literary Art

SANSKRIT LITERATURE provides a further glimpse into the culture that had glorified *bhoga* and *śṛiṅgāra*. Overt expression of voluptuous sensuality is seen in court literature as well as in temple art. It would therefore be useful to examine the thematic content of eroticism in literary art and to compare certain common images of love and sex in literary and visual arts. The study would also give us an idea of the extent of permissiveness that prevailed in the expression of sex in literary art. The depiction of sex in literature is not studied here to throw light on some causal relationship, if any exists, with erotic sculpture, but is considered as one of the aspects of the same cultural phenomenon which manifests itself in sexual representation of temples as well. The glorification of *śṛiṅgāra* (erotic sentiment), *alaṅkāra* (embellishment) and preoccupation with the studied sex of Kāmaśāstras are some of the common characteristics of Indian cultural pattern which find expression in literature and sculpture. But there are certain obvious differences in the erotic elements in them. These differences arise from the fact that the temple is essentially a religious institution and that the functions performed by sexual depiction in temple art and court literature are different.

Like temple art, belletristic literature also was cultivated by the royal court and the aristocracy. Aśvaghoṣa, Kālidāsa, Bāṇa, Mayūra, Bhavabhūti, Murāri, Rājaśekhara, Bilhaṇa, Kṛṣṇa Miśra, Śrī-Harṣa, Jayadeva, Govardhana were all court poets. Literature had its cultured public in the *nāgaraka*, and the *rasikajana*, the man of taste.¹ We know that writers like Bāṇa mention their participation in *goṣṭhis* or cultural meetings. In the 10th century, Rājaśekhara's well-known description of life of the poet resembles that of the sophisticated *nāgaraka* of Vātsyāyana. The house of the poet was also supposed to have refined and aristocratic surroundings with tanks and ponds, trees, garden-houses, creeper-bowers, *kriḍāparvata* for sporting, etc.²

The aristocratic surroundings and patronage of the Sanskrit poets no doubt had a marked influence on the content, style and general outlook of their writing. S. K. De has rightly noted: "The Kāvya literature appears to have been aristocratic from the beginning, fostered under the patronage of the wealthy or in the courts of the princes... the court influence undoubtedly went a long way, not only in fostering a certain languor and luxuriance of style, but also in encouraging a marked preference of what catches the eye to what touches the heart." Both literature

and sculpture reflect the taste that preferred "the fantastic and elaborate to the fervid and the spontaneous."³

It should be noted that literature in India is not an individualized expression of the poet. The spontaneity of expression of the poet is restricted by literary conventions, normative doctrines of techniques and prescribed modes of expression.⁴ Descriptions of female beauty and love-dalliance are conventionally accepted as standardized modes of poetic expressions. Indian works on aesthetics give great importance to a peculiar condition of artistic enjoyment known as *rasa*. *Rasa* is defined as "a reflex of the sentiment which has been suggested in the poem, in the mind of the appreciator, as a relishable condition of impersonal enjoyment resulting from the idealised creation of poetry."⁵ The evoking of *rasa* along with the display of virtuosity is considered to be the vital function of a literary piece. Of the eight *rasas* that have been recognized since the time of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, only two *rasas*, viz. *śṛṅgāra* (erotic) and *vīra* (heroic), are considered important. Thus, Dhanañjaya of the 10th century, in his work on dramaturgy called *Daśarūpa*, which stands second only to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata, declares (3, 38): "One sentiment, either the heroic or erotic, is to be made the principal sentiment. All other sentiments (should be made) subordinate." But even amongst these two sentiments, *śṛṅgāra* is considered to be predominant. Dhanañjaya devotes twenty-three verses on the erotic sentiment and only one verse each on the other sentiments.

The over-emphasis on *rasa*, which is an impersonalized poetic sentiment and its idealized enjoyment, tends to encourage grace, polish and fastidious technical finish. It leads to ornateness and refinement rather than to the realization of the "integrity and sincerity of primal sensations." Love is not experienced as emotion but as "pure artistic sentiment of blissful relish evoked by the idealized poetic creations."⁶ The sentiment of *śṛṅgāra* is expressed through the study and technical knowledge of poetry and the art of love. The poet underwent an elaborate training in the technical devices of poetry, rhetorics, erotics, logic, grammar, etc. Rājaśekhara attaches considerable importance to the "education" of the poet. Literature is a learned pursuit which required a study of *kavi-samayās* or conventions of the manuals of poetics and proficiency in a long list of sciences and arts. Winternitz calls the Indian Kāvya literature "ornate poetry," because it emphasizes "polished expression" and attaches greater importance to form rather than subject-matter. The science of poetics is called *Alaṅkāraśāstra* or "the science of embellishment."⁷ Expression of *śṛṅgāra*, specially in the later decadent Kāvya literature, takes the form not of the expression of the feelings of tenderness and love, but of an exhibition of the poet's knowledge of *Alaṅkāraśāstra* and *Kāmaśāstra*.

We will now examine (i) the treatment of sex in literature, (ii) the thematic content and images of sex in literature.

SECTION 1. TREATMENT OF SEX IN LITERATURE

Śṛṅgāra was a predominant theme in Indian literature. There were works specially and exclusively dealing with *śṛṅgāra*. Of these Hāla's *Gāthā Saptasatī* in Prākṛit, a compilation belonging to about the 3rd century A.D.,⁸ and Amaru's *Śataka*, in about the 7th century A.D., deserve attention, as they present miniature pictures of emotional states of *nāyaka* and *nāyikā* in "solitary self-standing verse," and could have easily lent themselves to the sculptor's rendering of the *mithuna* motifs. In fact, a

couple from Nagarjunakonda (ph. 25) represents in plastic form a popular poetic image which Amaru renders in verse (15): "The house-parrot overheard at night the words that were murmured in confidence by the young pair; in the morning it began to repeat them loudly before their elders. Embarrassed with shame, the young wife stays his speech by placing before his beak a piece of ruby from her ear-rings on the pretext of giving him seeds of the pomegranate." The theme was so popular that even Subandhu in the 7th century mentions it in his *Vāsavadattā* (p. 57). In the 11th century, Vidyākara collected four different verses on the same theme in his anthology called *Subhāṣitaratna-kośa*.⁹

Rendering of erotic pictures in solitary verses was so popular that it was followed by Govardhana, a court poet contemporary of Jayadeva, in his *Āryāṣaṭpaśatī* based more or less on Hāla's verses.¹⁰ Utpreksavallabha, who lived before the 14th century, eulogized the beauty of the female form in the *Sundarīśataka*, written at the request of his patron king Madanadeva.¹¹ Numerous anthologies which were compiled from the 10th century onwards include erotic themes among other subjects. While referring to Vidyākara's anthology, Kosambi says that every portion of it is permeated by the theme of sex. Even in dealing with the gods, it is their life at night which is most often liberally and at times exclusively treated.¹²

Most of the poems centred around erotic themes. The *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa, the *Ṛitusamhāra* usually attributed to Kālidāsa, Mayūra's *Aṣṭakam*, and the *Chaurapañchāśikā* attributed to Bilhaṇa of the 11th century are some of the well-known examples. Love-dalliance is described frankly and without inhibition in all these Kāvya. The *Meghadūta* lyrically presents the message of a love-lorn Yakṣa to his beloved through a rain-cloud (*megha*). Along with detailed descriptions of sexual dalliance, the poem also presents luscious pictures of the women and different lands that the *megha* would see on its journey from the Ramagiri hill to the abode of Yakṣas in the north. The *Meghadūta* was so popular that about 50 *Dūta-Kāvya*s were written during the Medieval period.¹³ The atmosphere of the *Ṛitusamhāra* is also highly sensual. It deals with the pleasures of sex in different seasons, a favourite subject of Sanskrit writers and their aristocratic patrons.

Mayūrāṣṭakam is an example of frankly erotic literature on *sambhoga śṛiṅgāra* (love-in-enjoyment). In these eight verses Mayūra describes the licentious charms of a young girl who is coming out of *guhyaśālā* (secret chamber). The flowers from her hair have fallen, the cord of her girdle has slipped down, her face is blooming, indicating thereby her pleasures with her lover. She longs for breeze because of perspiration due to *surataśrama*. Mayūra avails himself of puns to suggest sexual references and displays his accurate knowledge of Kāmaśāstra in his allusions to *sambhogachihñāni*.

The *Chaurapañchāśikā* depicts in fifty verses the secret amours of the poet giving minute details of physical love. As the theme suggests, the poet is about to be executed and remembers his beloved on the imminence of death. But, instead of the tender feelings and pathos of separation which would be expected in such a situation, the poet, conditioned by the literary conventions of his time, displays his knowledge of Kāmaśāstra and Alaṅkāraśāstra in the treatment of love. He remembers his beloved in various love-sports, the descriptions of which involve physical sensations. For instance, she has got up from sleep and her body shows keen desire affected by passion (verse 1). He too wants to pacify his own limbs that are tormented by passion (verse 2). He desires her in the close limb-to-limb embrace (verse 6). He remembers her during *vīparītarata* (verse 12) and other positions of union (verse 48) when her eyes were closed in the ecstasy of climax, etc.

Not only the purely erotic poems, but even poems and Mahākāvya dealing with themes from

the Epics or Purāṇas give great importance to sexual depictions. Some of the examples are: Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* and *Kumārasambhava*, Māgha's *Śiṣupālavadha*, Śrī-Harṣa's *Naiṣadhacharita*.

Kālidāsa in his *Raghuvamśa* presents the moral ideal of the kings "who mated only for progeny" (I, 7) and "who kept away from wives of other men" (XVI, 8). But in the 19th canto he describes in great detail the amorous life of King Agnivarṇa who was no credit to the race of Raghu. In the *Kumārasambhava*, Kālidāsa takes such liberty in describing the love-dalliance of the newly wedded Śiva and Umā that this unrestrained and vivid description invites criticism not only from modern critics but also from Sanskrit theoreticians of the Medieval period on the ground of *auchitya* (propriety) and for overstepping the bounds of decorum.¹⁴

The *Śiṣupālavadha* of Māgha deals with a theme from the *Mahābhārata*. But, as Winternitz points out, "the poet is not at all particular about the legend. The chief thing for him is the descriptions and scenes, which move preferably in the realm of erotics, though the theme itself does not give the slightest occasion for erotics."¹⁵ While describing the army on the march and the events of war, Māgha often digresses to describe wearied women lying in tents, courtesans preparing themselves to receive men, women having a bath, etc. The Yādavas, instead of going to the battle-field, walk about with lovely women in the forest and bathe with them in the pond.¹⁶

The writing of erotic poetry was not associated with a sense of moral guilt or a feeling of deviation from the puritanical and ascetic way of life.¹⁷ Śrī-Harṣa, who had written *Khaṇḍana-Khaṇḍa-Khāḍya*, a treatise on Vedānta, gives in his *Naiṣadhacharita* elaborate descriptions of Nala's pleasures with Damayantī as *mugdā nāyikā*. It is a mere rationalization when he says (XVIII, 2), "A knower of the Self, he (Nala) acquired no sin, though he enjoyed pleasure with her day and night. An artificial devotion to pleasure taints not one whose mind is purified with knowledge." Śrī-Harṣa also took delight in devoting one complete canto to the vulgar pranks of maid-servants with the courtiers on the marriage feast. Some of the verses are so obscene that a twentieth century translator had to leave them untranslated.

Even Jaina poets wrote erotic verses. While mentioning a long list of Kāvya by Jaina writers S. K. De points out, "all these Jaina productions include the regular Kāvya topics and digressive descriptions of the seasons, battles and erotic sports, the last topic being treated with equal zest by the Jaina monks including the pious Hemachandra."¹⁸ Vastupāla of Abu fame has in his *Mahākāvya* devoted a whole canto to erotic descriptions.

The cultural pattern glorified *śṛiṅgāra* to such an extent that the *charitas* (biographical accounts) and *praśastis* (eulogies) portrayed the sex life of patron kings with great enthusiasm. Bilhaṇa in the *Vikramāṅkadevacharita* proudly presents the amorous pleasures of King Vikramāditya of Kalyāṇī. He relates a romantic story of Vikrama with Chandaladevī, one of his wives, describing their love in the style and mould of the Kāvya literature. He also gives vivid descriptions of Vikrama's love-sports with the women of his harem in pleasure-gardens, *kṛidāsaras*, and of pleasures of *madhupāna* (wine drinking), *dola* (swing), etc. He gives long descriptions of the pleasures of the King in different seasons. For example, almost the entire 16th canto of the *Charita* is devoted to the description of the aristocratic pleasures of hunting and thereafter enjoying women in *vilāsagriha* in winter. The seasonal pleasures of love were considered so important that the poet regrets that the King could not enjoy the pleasures of Śarad, as he was involved in political work. The glorification of *śṛiṅgāra* is complete.

The description of sex-life of patron kings was a popular theme in *praśastis* and donation records inscribed on temples and monastic buildings (see Chapter VIII). Inscription-writers, who

were mostly court poets, record with great pride the love-sports of their patron kings with women of different lands. The same attitude is reflected in the *praśasti*, composed by Mayūra, meant to be read aloud in the court of King Harṣa in the 7th century. Instead of directly stating that the King had conquered so many regions, the Sanskrit poet puts it ornately: "Yet we regard you, Your Highness alone, indeed as the real husband of the earth, for having touched her person (*aṅga*) and caressed her hair (*kuntala*) and thrown aside her long robe (*chola*) and taken possession of the central region (*madhyadeśa*), your hand is now laid on her girdle (*kāñchī*)."¹⁹

Even works dealing with themes of religion and renunciation are endowed with worldly sensuousness. The poems of Aśvaghoṣa in the 2nd century, of Bhartṛihari in the 7th century and of Jayadeva in the 12th century are examples.

Aśvaghoṣa, one of the earliest court poets who wrote in the Kāvya style, does not refrain from sexual depictions in his Buddhist Kāvyas, the *Saundarānanda* and the *Buddhacharita*, which were meant for religious edification. The *Buddhacharita* was recited for gaining merit even in the time of the Chinese pilgrim I-tsing in the 7th century.²⁰ In this work the poet describes at length the artful coquetties of harem girls who try to win over Prince Siddhārtha (IV, 29, 34). "Some ladies roamed displaying the hips covered with thin garments." "Feigning to be under the influence of intoxication some ladies touched him with their fat and fully developed breasts, charming through fruition." "Other women clasped the blossoming twig of a fragrant mango and bent on that, displaying their breasts as lovely as golden jars." These literary depictions are the counterpart of the voluptuous and charming females of the contemporary Mathura sculptures patronized by the royal court. Aśvaghoṣa's sensuous descriptions of the sleeping women of the harem seem to find an echo in the contemporary panels at Amravati in the 2nd century A.D. "Someone lay there resting her cheek and her hand after abandoning lute on her lap. Another lay there with her white garment dropped from her breasts and her hands clinging to the flute; another rested there embracing her tambourine with its beautiful string dropped down from the shoulder, like husband wearied after sport..."²¹

Amorous depictions of the *Saundarānanda* also found plastic rendering in Mathura art (fig. VI, p. 22). In the poem, Sundarī is shown as an *ākrañtā nāyikā*²² who commands her husband to dress her, to hold a mirror for her, etc. Aśvaghoṣa was certainly aware of the contradiction involved in presenting sensuous descriptions in Buddhist poems. But he justifies them by declaring (XVIII, 63): "This subject dealing with salvation has been written in the Kāvya style not to give pleasure but to further the attainment of tranquillity and with the intention of capturing hearers devoted to other things. For that I have handled other subjects in it besides salvation is in accordance with the laws of Kāvya poetry to make it more palatable as sweet is put into a bitter medicine to make it drinkable."

Bhartṛihari is a true representative of Indian culture in his extreme views on sex and renunciation. His description of renunciation is not free from the imagery of physical sensation. He says in the *Vairāgyaśataka* (verse 79): "The earth an attractive bed, his arm an ample pillow, the sky a canopy, the breeze a serviceable fan, the moon for a bright lamp, detachment his mistress, the peaceful ash-besmeared ascetic sleeps as happy as a king." He oscillates between the ideas of renunciation and sensual delights. In his *Śṛīṅgāraśataka* (verse 19) he says: "In the worthless and changeable world, learned men should either pass their days in drinking the nectar of spiritual knowledge or devote themselves to the pleasant enjoyment of women, whose breasts and buttocks are both hard and thick set and whose hips and loins are fully developed and extended." He overtly expresses his intense pleasure of sex with women "whose eyes are partly closed on account of the intensity of passion,"

“who have line of hair above the navel,” “who are lying on their breasts after *surata*,” etc. (verses 27, 15, 26). The poet considers the sensual pleasures as the ultimate end of heaven which is reserved for the fortunate few (verse 57).

Passionate sensuality and worldly lavishness are the characteristics of Jayadeva's religious poem, the *Gīta-Govinda*. It is the literary counterpart of the Sena sculptures and reflects the same voluptuous sensuousness and material exuberance. As Niharranjan Ray puts it: “In its origin it had no doubt a religious inspiration, but there is also no doubt that what was basically a spiritual experience came to be overshadowed by a worldly trend developed in the Sena court.”²³

The poem deals with the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. But god Kṛṣṇa is humanized to the extent of being treated as a *nāyaka* of Sanskrit literature. He is a courtly lover fully cognizant of the Kāmaśāstrīya techniques. The expression of sex in the *Gīta-Govinda* is not different from that present in the purely secular works of Amaru and Kālidāsa. Jayadeva gives minute details of physical love. Rādhā says to the Sakhī (II, 6, 3): “As in love's melting bliss, I lay on the tender couch of sprouts, long did he recline pillowed on my bosom. As thus he lay, how madly did I clasp him and drink deep of his nectar lips; and as if not to be outdone by me, madly did he drink off my lips, gathering me to his bosom in a crushing embrace.” When Kṛṣṇa does not turn up at the appointed hour, Rādhā moans her wasted youth (VII, 13, 1): “Alas, of what avail now are my youth and surpassing beauty of my form with him not here to delight in them?”

There is no attempt to cloud erotic descriptions with philosophical explanations. The poet, in fact, refers to *ratikalā* which would interest *rasikajana* (IX, 19, 8; X, 8). He says in the end of the poem that it would delight the musical minded, the Vaiṣṇava devotee and those interested in *śṛṅgāra* (XII, 24, 90).

There are also poems where deities are depicted in an erotic aspect. The example of the *Kumāra-sambhava* has already been noted. Individual stanzas expressing a prayer to god along with his consort are quite often erotic. Even Kṛṣṇa Miśra, the 11th century court poet of the Chandellas, who has written an anti-sex play called *Prabodhachandrodaya*, refers in a prayer addressed by the righteous King Viveka to Viṣṇu who has “the marks of leaves impressed by the swelling breasts of Lakṣmī” (IV, p. 71). It seems that Tāntric influence had penetrated court poetry. The climax of erotic-religious expression is seen in the late Medieval work called *Chandīkūcha-pañchāśikā* of Lakṣmaṇa Āchārya which describes in 50 verses the beauty of goddess Chandī's breasts.²⁴

Thus, even while dealing with religious themes, the court poets show the same worldly attitude which is found in secular Kāvya. The contemporary sculptural arts of the period also reflect secular and sensual tendencies.

Sanskrit drama, which was a part of the Kāvya literature and meant to be as ornate as poetry, also centres mainly around the erotic sentiment and its embellished expression. Not that other sentiments are not present but they are not prominent. An erotic underplot is often introduced even in the plays with heroic or lofty subjects.²⁵

Some of the early plays like *Chārudatta*, *Mṛichhakaṭikam* and a play ascribed to Aśvaghoṣa have a courtesan as the heroine. Special monologue plays called Bhāṇas which dealt with courtesans, gambling, discussions on erotics, etc. were written.

Harem intrigues became one of the favourite themes of court plays. Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitram*, Harṣa's *Ratnāvalī* and *Priyadarśikā*, Rājasekhara's *Karpūramāñjarī* (Prākṛit) and *Viddhaśālā-bhañjikā* are based on the story of the fresh love affair of the polygamous king with a young girl.

Bilhaṇa's *Karṇasundarī* is also a drama of court life, written to please King Karṇa of Gujarat. Such plays were so popular that in the 13th century King Arjunadeva of Malwa had a Nāṭikā, called *Pārijātaṃjārī*, inscribed on stone.²⁶ It was written by his preceptor Madana and was staged on the Spring festival at Dhāra. In these plays sex is a playful pastime and is treated in a light and frivolous manner. The following verse from the *Karpūramañjarī* (IV, 4) sums up their outlook on life: "At midday the touch of sandal paste, until twilight moistened garments, play in the bathing pools until nightfall, in the evening cool liquor, and love's embraces in the last watch of a summer-night."

Some of these plays were highly erotic. The *Ratnāvalī* of Harṣa is referred to in the *Kuṭṭanīmatam* (verses 754 ff) as staged by the courtesan Mañjarī for soliciting a prince. This indicates its highly sensual appeal. The *Mālavikāgnimitram* of the Gupta period provides an opportunity for exhibiting the female contours through diaphanous dress. So also does the *Karpūramañjarī*, in the 10th century, where a bathing beauty is produced on the stage by a Tāntric magician. These instances are pointers to the standards of permissiveness in Indian drama.

Bhavabhūti, one of the greatest dramatists of India, gives in the *Mālātī-Mādhava* minute word-pictures of physical sensations during the imagined sexual gratification of two girls of noble families.²⁷ We know that the play was performed before "the assembly of learned men" during the *yātrā* of Kālapriyanātha, the holy deity of Ujjayinī. It seems that none of these learned men of the 8th century had raised any objection to the descriptions. No doubt, learned men of the period were conversant with the frank and lascivious descriptions in the Bhāṇas depicting mainly the activities in the *veśa*. But in a highly conventional Hindu society it is one thing to describe the sex-life of a courtesan, while it is quite different to describe before the audience the physiological symptoms of a virgin belonging to an aristocratic family.

The prose-romances of Subandhu and Daṇḍin of the 7th century are remarkable for the display of their knowledge of Alaṅkāraśāstra and Kāmaśāstra. Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā*, which was prized highly by Bāṇa as a work which "melted away the pride of the poets," is preoccupied with displaying virtuosity in language. He writes in the *Gauḍī-rīti*, a Kāvya style overburdened with long compounds, accumulated puns, antithesis, hyperboles, ornate similes and all other possible figures of speech.²⁸ Sex is depicted through ornate play of language and is at times rather unconnected with the central theme of the story. Sexual allusions are made in sentences which have double meanings. Resorting to the pun Subandhu writes (*Vāsavadattā*, p. 105): "Holding the thighs, hands and hair (of his beloved), he obtains an excellent position of his body uniting at the supreme moment." The line may also be translated as: "Holding a massy broad sword and suddenly assailing the foe, he obtains a great glory through the conflict." Numerous erotic allusions along with a reference to Mallanāga's *Kāmasūtra* "which contains the delight and enjoyment of mistresses" (p. 69, line 90) indicates Subandhu's close knowledge of the *Kāmasūtra*.

Like Subandhu, Daṇḍin also makes use of the Kāvya style for the exposition of his knowledge of Kāmaśāstras. Daṇḍin believed that a poet should be a *vidagdha* or artful and learned.²⁹ Even if a person lacked natural powers, he could become a poet by *vidagdhyam*. Greater importance was attached to learning and virtuosity than the natural spontaneity of poetic genius. Daṇḍin's display of Alaṅkāraśāstra and Kāmaśāstra is seen in the seventh chapter of the *Daśakumāracharita* where he has not used any labial letters, because its narrator Mantragupta's lips twitched with the soreness left by the kisses of the beloved. Daṇḍin's close study of Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra*, specially its fifth *adhikaraṇa* on *pāradārikam* (relations with wives of other men), is clear in his detailed description of

the extra-marital love-affair. It includes the description of the site of rendezvous, the method of seduction, love-dalliance including coition and the sexual state of the woman in the final union (*Daśakumāracharita*, pp. 116-19).

There was, as it were, a competitive spirit among Sanskrit writers to display their knowledge of *Alaṅkāraśāstra* and *Kāmaśāstra*. Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya*, in about the 6th century, displays skill in handling of the language. There are verses in which only certain consonants occur, verses in which the two halves of the verse have the same syllables but a different meaning, or in which every quarter of a verse reads the same backwards.³⁰ Māgha, who lived before the 9th century, tries to outdo Bhāravi. Instead of 19 metres used by Bhāravi, Māgha uses 23. In his description of a fight, he writes verses which, when read backwards, give a second meaning, whose syllables can be read in various directions to form all manner of figures (a zigzag, a circle, etc.), and verses in which only two or three definite consonants occur.³¹ Bhaṭṭi in the 7th century boasts that his *Kāvya* is not intelligible without explanation.³² There are no less than 13 commentaries on the *Kāvya*. To quote S. K. De, "The involved construction, recondite vocabulary, laboured embellishment, strained expression, and constant search after conceits, double meanings and metaphors undoubtedly justify their boasting, but evince an exuberance of fancy and erudition rather than taste, judgement and real feeling. This tendency is more and more encouraged by the elaborate rules and definitions of rhetoric, until inborn poetic fervour is entirely obscured by technicalities of expression."³³ Some authors were so preoccupied with literary gimmicks that their works were obscure to ordinary readers. They had to write commentaries on their own works to make them intelligible. Ānandavardhana, who lived before A.D. 900, deprecates such tricks in his theoretical work but is himself not free from them in his *Devī-sataka*.³⁴

The ostentatious display of virtuosity and learned ingenuity are prominent in later *Kāvyas*. Hemachandra's *Dvyāśrayakāvya* in the 12th century is one of the examples of erudite learning where each verse is written to serve the two purposes of teaching grammar and narrating a history of the Solaṅkī rulers. The number of such works which deal with double themes is not small in this period. There are works which deal at the same time with the stories of Rāghava and the Pāṇḍavas, of Rāghava and Nala, etc. A 12th century work, probably from the court of the Chālukyas of Kalyāṇa, treats the marriages of Pārvatī and Rukmiṇī at the same time. This sort of virtuosity is cultivated to its extreme in the poem of the Vijayanagara period where the stanzas are so worded as to describe at the same time the stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhāgavata*.³⁵

Sociologically, it is significant that various manuals of poetics were written in increasing numbers from about the 6th century onwards. Bhāmaha's *Kāvyaśālākāra*, Bhaṭṭi's illustrations of *alaṅkāras* in his *Rāvaṇavadha*, Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaadarśa* are some of the early works on poetics. It is also from this time that Subandhu, Daṇḍin, Bhāravi, Bhaṭṭi, Mayūra, Bāṇa, etc. show great interest in ornate writing, to be followed later by decadent verbal jugglery. We know that it is about this time that the impact of feudal tendencies was being felt in the social and cultural spheres. Ornamentation and ostentation were specially cultivated under feudal conditions. Feudal courts are generally known to encourage luxury, pomp, grandeur and sensualism. Rulers of numerous principalities vied with one another in displaying the art and learning of their artists and scholars. For example, a story recorded by Bühler³⁶ relates that Jayasimha was jealous of Bhoja of Malwa who wrote extensively on architecture, etymology, etc. The learned men of the Chālukya court suggested Hemachandra's preparing a text on grammar to match the scholarly treatises of the Malwa ruler. We also know that poets were

invited from different places to "embellish" the royal courts. In the 11th century, the Kashmiri poet Bilhaṇa visited the courts of Gujarat, Dāhala and Kalyāṇa in southern India.³⁷ In this background literary art tended to be more and more ornate and ostentatious. Sexual themes also became a matter of display and erudition.

SECTION 2. SEXUAL CONTENT IN LITERATURE

Let us here examine certain erotic images in Sanskrit literature.

Elaborate descriptions of woman's beauty find a prominent place in Sanskrit literature. All the physical charms of women including sexual attractiveness are depicted by the poets. Kālidāsa's description of the Yakṣa's wife in the *Meghadūta* (II, 21) represents the ideal of female beauty: "The fair one, who may be there, possessed of a slender form, of pointed teeth, of a lower lip as red as a ripe *bimba* fruit, of a slight and slender waist, of eyes like those of a frightened fawn, of a deep navel, of an idly graceful movement through the weight of her hips, and slightly bent down on account of her breasts as if she were the Creator's first effort in the way of making a woman." In describing the beauty of Umā in the *Kumārasambhava* (I, 39) Kālidāsa mentions the three lines on the waist which are considered marks of beauty in Indian culture and are also represented by sculptors, noteworthy examples being female figures from Mathura and Ajanta. In Harṣa's *Ratnāvalī* (II, ii) also, when King Udayana sees the picture of Sāgarikā, "his sight having travelled beyond her pair of thighs with great difficulty and wandered for a long time over expansive hips remained fixed on her middle, uneven with her three wave-like folds and now having eagerly mounted her lofty breasts, it has been wistfully looking again at her eyes..." Rājaśekhara in the *Karpūramañjarī* (II, 19) mentions five marks of a beautiful woman: lovely form, eyes that reach the ears, ample breasts, the waist with three folds and yet so thin as could be grasped by the hand, and wheel-like buttocks. The scenes of bathing beauties, both in the *Karpūramañjarī* (I, 28, 34) and the *Viddhaśālabañjikā* (I, 14) give the poet an opportunity to describe each part of a woman's body shorn of ornaments. Of course, the *nāyakas* of Sanskrit literature did not require to see an actual woman to describe her beauty. The description of the female having large breasts and hips, slender waist with triple folds, etc. was conventionally accepted by Sanskrit poets and their counterparts in the sculptural arts.

The conventionally acclaimed ideal of female beauty among the Sanskrit poets reminds us of the full-bodied, thin-waisted Yakṣis and *surasundarīs* carved on the religious monuments. As Zimmer says: "The contrast of the extremely slender mid-portion of the woman's body with the richness and exuberance of the masses above and below—the great breasts and the fully rounded thighs, which latter, according to the Indian poets, should resemble, in their roundness, firmness and resiliency, the trunk of an elephant—has had for a Hindu mind a never-ending fascination."³⁸

The description of beautiful females reaches to its pedantic height in the works of Medieval poets. Bilhaṇa, in the 11th century, writes about 89 verses on the beauty of the wife of King Vikrama of Kalyāṇi, and Śrī-Harṣa, in the 12th century, writes over 100 verses on the physical charm of Damayantī.

In the treatment of love, Sanskrit writers are mainly concerned with sensual aspects. The hero falls in love on beholding a beautiful girl. In the *Śākuntalam*, Duṣyanta sees lovely Śākuntalā at

Kaṇva's hermitage and falls in love at the very first sight. She, too, on seeing him, "gets emotions for him which are opposed to the penance grove." In Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitram* and Harṣa's *Ratnāvalī*, the king falls in love on seeing a portrait of a beautiful woman. In Rājaśekhara's *nāṭikās*, the king falls in love when he sees the girls while they were bathing.

With falling in love comes love-sickness which is described by the poets in conventional images current since the time of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. In Bhāsa's *Avimāraka*, princess Kuraṅgī cares nothing for jasmine paste, has no appetite for food, no pleasure in conversing with her friends, she sighs deeply, talks disconnectedly, laughs to herself, weeps in solitude, pretends illness and grows thinner and paler. To Kālidāsa's Duṣyanta, the moon discharges fire. Bāṇa's Puṇḍarika reaches the last stage of love and dies. The conception of the ten stages of love-sickness is known to Vātsyāyana (*K.S.*, V, i, 4-5) in the 4th century A.D. Death is considered to be the last stage of love-sickness. Even treatises like the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (III, 30, 20) mention the ten stages of love.

Bhavabhūti makes use of the extreme degree of permissiveness granted to the dramatist, when he describes Mālātī in her love-stricken condition as experiencing sexual climax. The Buddhist nun Kāmandakī describes the symptoms as: loosening of the tie of the lower garment, throbbing of the lower lip, the drooping of the arms, perspiration, eyes being glossy and attractive, and slightly contracted, stiffness of limbs, continuous tremor of the breasts, mass of hair standing on end of the broad cheeks, stupor and unconsciousness (*Mālātī-Mādhava*, II, 5).

Love-dalliance is described in minute physical detail by Sanskrit writers. *Ālīngana* (embracing), *chumbana* (kissing), *nakha-chchhedya* and *danta-chchhedya* (making of nail and teeth marks), *surata* (copulation) and *surataśrama* (exhaustion due to *surata*) have been described vividly in Sanskrit poems and dramas.

Ālīngana is mentioned by Aśvaghoṣa, the earliest court poet of India. He describes Sundarī in a close embrace with Nanda. At the thought of even a short separation from Nanda, she "clasped him trembling as a creeper stirred by the wind clasps a Śāla tree" (*Saundarānanda*, IV, 33). In the Buddhist monastery the blossoming of the Atimuktā creeper growing up and clinging to the mango tree reminded Nanda of the embraces of Sundarī (VII, 8). This idea of the creeper clasping the tree is a favourite image with the Sanskrit writers. In the *Mālavikāgnimitram* (IV, 13), the king tells Mālavikā to act like an Atimuktā creeper towards him who is like a Sahakāra or mango tree. In the 8th century Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa in his *Veṇiśaṁhāra* (II, 9) mentions *bhujalatāpāśa* and *bāhulatāparibandhana*. In the 12th century *Naiṣadhacharita* (XVIII, 83, 86) also we come across the same imagery of the creeper clasping the tree.

The sculptors were fond of depicting lovers in creeper-like embrace (p. 32, 66, 69). The *Kāmasūtra* (II, ii, 16-17) also mentions two varieties of this *ālīngana*, called *latāveṣṭitakam* and *vṛkṣādhirūḍhakam*.

Sanskrit writers mention *kaṇṭhāsleṣa* or "embrace by neck" which is indicative of tenderness. The Yakṣa of the *Meghadūta* (I, 3; II, 37) pines for an embrace where creeper-like arms are tied around the neck of the lover. Sivaramamurti³⁹ gives an illustration of a painting from Ajanta which represents this tender embrace of lovers.

Chumbana was a favourite theme both of Sanskrit writers and of the sculptors of the Ancient and Medieval periods. In the *Raghuvamśa* (XIX, 15, 29), King Agnivarṇa drinks the lovely faces of the dancers at the close of the dance. His mistresses request him for a kiss when separating at the close of the night. In the *Abhijñāna-Śākuntalam* (III, 23), Duṣyanta compares himself with a bee who wants

to drink the juice of the lower lip of the beloved. Bilhaṇa also uses similar imagery when he says in his *Chaurapañchāsikā* (verse 4) that he wants to drink from the mouth of his beloved like a bee drinking from a lotus. The *Gīta-Govinda* (II, 6, 3) refers to the passionate kisses of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Sanskrit writers give great importance to *sambhogachihnnāni*. In the *Kumārasambhava* (VIII, 18) Umā soothes the painful sensations of Śiva's toothbites on her red lips by the cool rays of the crescent on Śiva's head. In the *Ṛitusamhāra* (V, 15) young girls, in the early mornings of the winter, examine their limbs for scars and nail-marks and observe their nipples marked by nails. *Sambhogachihnnāni* were considered as beauty-aids. Women became happy on seeing "marks of love." In the *Meghadūta* (II, 36) the Yakṣa remembers the nail-marks on the left thigh of his beloved. Bilhaṇa in his *Chaurapañchāsikā* (verses 46, 15, 35) says that after sleep when his beloved got up, her body looked adorned with variegated ornaments or *sambhogachihnnāni*. In the *Naiṣadhacharita* (IX, 117) Śrī-Harṣa exhibits his knowledge of the *Kāmasūtra* (II, iv, 4-5) by referring to nail-marks in the design of a crescent moon on the breasts of the beloved.

The sculptors of the time did not, however, portray this amorous sport frequently. Among the few examples of the sport found in the plastic arts is the woman from a Central Indian temple having nail-marks on the *bāhumūla*.⁴⁰

Sanskrit poets as well as the sculptors enjoy depicting the acts of removing the *mekhalā* (girdle) and of loosening the *nīvī* (top-knot of a woman's lower garment).⁴¹ Unclasping of the *mekhalā* and loosening of the *nīvī* occur as preliminaries to *surata*. Describing the amorous play of the newly married Umā and Śiva, Kālidāsa says, "Umā stopped Śiva's hand proceeding towards her navel." Mallinātha, the commentator, interprets the action as undertaken to loosen the *nīvī* (*Kumārasambhava*, VIII, 4). Amaru is quite fond of referring to the pre-coital play of lovers (*Śataka*, 63, 90, 97). In the *Naiṣadhacharita* (XVIII, 51) we read of the newly married Damayantī, "When in the morning, she asked her friends, who helped her to dress, to tighten the knot of her skirt, they guessed with a smile, 'Here took place some frivolous act of her consort's hand'."

In sculptural art, the pre-coital theme is shown as early as the 1st century B.C. on the Buddhist railing pillar of Bodhi Gaya (ph. 20). The Lādḡhan temple of Aihole of the 6th century A.D. has a beautiful sculpture (ph. 31), probably showing Śiva touching the girdle of his consort who shyly resists the action. This reminds us of Kālidāsa's similar description from the *Kumārasambhava* referred to above. Some of the sculptures from Bhuvanēswar, Konarak and Somanāthapur (phs. 46, 58) represent lovers in pre-coital poses. But there are other sculptures (phs. 48, 60, 61) where lovers are shown almost nude, exposing their organs. These have no poetic counterpart.

Sanskrit writers also mention the sexual act. Kālidāsa frankly mentions *surata*, *surataśrama* and refers to a variety of *suratabandhas* (coital postures). In the *Kumārasambhava* (VIII, 19, 89) he indirectly refers to *suratabandhas*. "The bed of Śiva was marked with colour from Pārvatī's feet and *kumkuma* fell in his eyes," which according to the commentator suggests *puruṣāyītabandha*. In the *Raghuvamśa* (XIX, 25 and commentary), Kālidāsa refers to *dhenukabandha*. In the *Meghadūta* (II, 37 and commentary), the Yakṣa describes the *svapnasamāgama* of his wife with him which lasts for a period of *yāma*. Kālidāsa's descriptions of *surata* are based on his accurate knowledge of Kāmasāstra.

Subandhu gives detailed descriptions of *surata*, resorting to puns (*Vāsavadattā*, tr. p. 105). Bhartṛhari refers to *puruṣāyīta* or the inverse form of union (*Śṛiṅgāra Śataka*, 26 and commentary): "The pleasure of kissing the beloved wives who are lying on their breasts immediately after coition is reserved for the fortunate few." Amaru (verse 3) also says in the same tone that if the face of the

beloved in the inverse position during *surata* would bring the desired good, where was the need of involving Hari, Hara and Brahmā. He describes *puruṣāyita* in the words of a *nāyikā* (verse 36): “‘Mark, oh thou so delicate of limb, this bed is now hard on account of the accumulation of heaps of sandal dust fallen because of deep embraces’, so saying he put me on his breast, and urged by passionate desire as he firmly bit my lip, he pulled away my garment with toes of his feet as with a pair of tongs and started doing what for the rogue was the proper thing to do.” Amaru indirectly refers to other poses such as *mārjārikam*, *karipadabandhaviṣeṣa*, *dhenukabandha*.⁴²

Bilhaṇa writes elaborately on the love-dalliance with a maiden and refers to *bandhopabandha* or varieties and subvarieties of coital poses. He is also fond of describing *puruṣāyita*, “in which the face of the beloved looks dense with big drops of perspiration, caused by the swinging of the body” (*Chaurapañchāśikā*, 12, 22). Śrī-Harṣa also refers to varieties of poses practised by Nala and Damayantī (*Naiṣadhacharita*, XVIII, 15). Jayadeva describes the *puruṣāyita* as practised by Rādhā and Kṛiṣṇa (*Gīta-Govinda*, II, 6, 6). He says, “At the height of the exciting sport, Rādhā’s anklets tinkled ceaselessly and melodiously and the bells in her girdle clattered till they were scattered in all parts of the couch.” According to his commentator Śaṅkara Miśra, the description is indicative of *viparitarata* or *puruṣāyita*.

Thus, Sanskrit writers have shown great interest in describing amorous dalliance, including *surata* and its varieties. Love is treated in a frank manner. The physical aspect of love is emphasized in their descriptions. As S. K. De puts it, “love is conceived not in its infinite depth or poignancy nor its ideal beauty but in its playful moods of vivid enjoyment breaking forth into delicate blossoms of fancy.”⁴³ It should also be noted that there is nothing “spiritual” about the lovers in both the literary and sculptural arts; at least, their expression does not reveal any spiritual association.

Some points of disparity between erotic images in literary and sculptural arts should be noted.

Surata is depicted in temple art in the 6th century A.D. But its occurrence is sporadic up to A.D. 900, after which date it features regularly in religious art. In the literary arts, on the other hand, the depiction of *surata* is present since at least the time of Kālidāsa in the 4th–5th century A.D. and was continued in the works of the later writers. Subandhu, Amaru, Bhartṛihari, Bhāravi, Daṇḍin, Māgha, etc., who proudly present embellished descriptions of *surata*, lived in the period A.D. 500–900. In the sculptural arts of this period, coition is represented in an insignificant and often surreptitious manner.

In the choice of poses, the poets are specially fond of depicting the *puruṣāyita*, while the sculptors are more inclined to show the male partner in the active role in their depiction of the sleeping coital scenes (phs. 77, 79, 83, 94). The sculptors are fond of depicting oral-genital congress (phs. 42, 54, 72, 93, 103, 134, 142, 144, 146–150); no description of this pose is seen in court literature.

Orgy, which is a regular feature of temple sculpture from A.D. 900 and which is also described in Kāmaśāstras, is not portrayed in belletristic literature, except for a few references to love-sports of polygamous kings with harem ladies in the garden or during *jalavihāra* (water-sports) and allusions to Kṛiṣṇa’s sports with *gopīs* in the *Gīta-Govinda*. In our classification of erotic groups, this type of relationship would fall into erotic group of type IV-A or *goyūthika*. In sculptural art this type of relationship (ph. 53) is rare. Other types of erotic groups, which are so blatantly displayed in temple art, are entirely absent in literature.

Scenes showing attendants near the couple are depicted in both the arts. The representations of these scenes in the art of the Western Deccan remind us of descriptions in the *Kumārasambhava*

(VIII, 17; IX, 31) of Śiva being helped by Umā's *sakhīs* while decorating his bride who was sitting on his lap and Śiva's offering of wine to Umā in the presence of the *sakhīs*. In the *Vāsavadattā* (p. 57) there is a reference to *sakhijana* near the *ratimandira* who got glimpses of the couple. This theme reminds us of a scene from *Bodh Gaya* (ph. 20). But nowhere in literature do we get depictions of the couple being helped in the act of copulation, as we do in sculptural art, specially at Khajuraho and Orissa (phs. 56-lower row, 67, 68).

Besides these, there are numerous scenes in temple art which by their very nature have no literary counterparts. Bestiality, hair-cutting rite along with the sexual act, defloration, child-birth scene, etc. are some of the examples.

To conclude, we have examined the expression of sex in literary art as a counterpart to erotic depictions in sculpture. The central point of our thesis is that both magico-religious and secular aspects of sex were operative behind erotic depiction in temples. This chapter, along with chapters VIII and IX, provides us with a glimpse into the worldly interest in sex, which was cultivated for its own sake rather than for its magico-religious purposes. The study of literature affords us an insight into the imagery and themes which held sway over the minds of its patrons, kings and aristocrats, who also patronized temples. It is seen that sex was a prominent theme in literary works. *Śṛīṅgāra* and its embellished expression, *alaṅkāra*, were highly glorified. Even poems dealing with religious themes were endowed with the voluptuous sensuality and worldly consciousness which one finds in sculptural art. There was a competitive spirit among Sanskrit writers to display their knowledge of *Alaṅkāraśāstra* and *Kāmaśāstra*. The same tendency has been noted by us in the sphere of temple-building, where donors almost competed with one another in respect of the size and grandeur of temples and the ornateness of their sculptures. Expression of sex was not only uninhibited but it was a matter of pride and display.

On examining the thematic content of eroticism one finds that both literary and sculptural arts have a similar conception of feminine beauty. In both the arts, the depiction of pre-coital love-play is executed without restraint. But in the depiction of coition, the poets have been frank at least since the 4th-5th century A.D., whereas temple artists only show it in an insignificant manner during the period A.D. 500-900. But from the 10th century onwards, sculptors are preoccupied with various orgiastic scenes, which obviously could not be popular themes in literature. The depiction of sexual orgy and bestiality in temple-sculpture was the outcome of factors that do not seem to have had any connection with literary *śṛīṅgāra*.



XI. Conclusion

IN THE COURSE of our analysis we have reached certain conclusions. We have seen that two basic factors in Indian culture are germane to the portrayal of sex in art. These are the magico-religious aspect of sex, which is the *raison d'être* for the existence of sexual depiction in religious art, and the worldly interest in sex, which leads to the secularization and sensualization of the originally sacred nature of sexual depiction. We have seen the fusion of these two factors in the actual portrayal of erotic motifs.

The apparent contradiction of temple art with Hindu cultural goals is resolved when we see that along with the lofty ideals of *tapas* (austerity), *vairāgya* (detachment) and *sannyāsa* (renunciation), Hinduism also retains beliefs and practices connected with fertility and vegetation cults. Sexual depiction in religious art derives its inspiration not from the philosophical symbolism of highly evolved thought systems, but from those religious beliefs and practices which reveal the primal connection between sex and religion. This basic connection is reflected in the religious setting of the Hindu temple, specially in its rites and festivals and in the *devadāsī* institution. The deities enshrined in the temple are themselves associated with fertility cults. It is the "behavioural" or actual living aspect of religion, rather than its philosophical or rationalistic aspect, that forms the proper setting of the Hindu temple. We do not deny the role of Indian thought and philosophy in "the history of universal spirituality." But its philosophical tradition is, here, beside the point.

The depiction of sex is one of the devices employed for fertility purposes. Like the performance of the ritual sexual act, the depiction of sex is also magico-propitiatory and magico-defensive. The words *alaṅkāra*, *ābharaṇa* and *bhūṣaṇa*, which mean decoration, are associated with luck and prosperity.¹ Decoration was considered auspicious and evil-removing. The *Śilpaśāstras*, while recording the use of *alaṅkāra* in art and architecture, specifically mention their auspicious properties. The *Mānasāra* (Ch. XXXIX), for example, enjoins the use of *sarvālaṅkāra*, or all ornaments, on the door, both in religious and secular architecture. It says positively, "This should be always made for the sake of security and as a source of prosperity." Some of the *Śilpaśāstras*, the *Purāṇas* and other authoritative texts have implicitly or explicitly recognized both the auspicious (*maṅgala*, *śubha*) and protective-defensive (*rakṣārtham-vāraṇārtham*) aspects of erotic depictions. These

depictions were for *puṣṭi* (prosperity, happiness, etc.) and *śānti* (pacification of evils, calamities, etc.). The *Agni Purāṇa* and the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* prescribe *mithunas* and other auspicious *alaṅkāras* to decorate (*vibhūṣayet*) the door. The *Śilpa Prakāśa* of Orissa explicitly mentions the magico-defensive and magico-propitiatory functions of the *Kāmakalā yantra*. The *Skanda Purāṇa* indicates the function of sexual depiction in the use of the word *vāraṇārtham* (warding away) in connection with lightning and other dangers.

But besides magico-religious purposes, sexual depiction was also influenced by worldly interest in sex. Hindu society was not puritanical. The explicit recognition of the *bhoga* (pleasure) aspect of sex in Hindu culture is attested to by the fact that sex was openly cultivated as an art. Numerous *Kāmasāstras* were written, dealing not only with marital sex, but also with pre-marital and extra-marital sex and relations with courtesans. Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra* was immensely popular and was considered an essential part of education even 800 years after him. Techniques for making aphrodisiacs were given extensive treatment not only in the *Kāmasāstras* but also in medical and astronomical treatises. Varieties of *āliṅgas*, kisses and coital postures were invented and commented upon.

Poets and dramatists were expected to exhibit their knowledge of *Kāmasāstras* in their works. Not only *kāvya*s but also *charitas* (biographical accounts), *praśastis* (eulogies) and inscriptions on temples recording religious grants were suffused with sexual expressions. The cultural pattern gave free scope to the uninhibited expression of sex in the arts. It was a fashion among the elite to display knowledge of the art of sex. Even Jaina *āchāryas* were not free from this cultural conditioning.

The secular plastic arts also are replete with sensuousness. Erotic depiction is seen on combs, toilet-trays, furniture and similar articles of daily use. Walls of palaces and *nātyaśālās* were decorated with erotic motifs, often depicting adulterous themes. Special architecture was designed for sexual gratification. All this indicates the explicit interest in and encouragement of the *bhoga* aspect of sex in Hindu culture, in contrast to its ideals of chastity and asceticism.

The study of the history of sexual representation reveals the constant intermingling and fusion of the magico-religious and worldly aspects of sex. We recapitulate below the nature of erotic depiction and its socio-cultural setting in the three main periods of our study.

The earliest portrayal of sex on terracottas and similar cultural objects, which centre around fetishistic beliefs and fertility cults, reflects the primal connection of sex with religion. From about the Maurya period, we come across a full-fledged cult of a fertility goddess of the "opulent" type at various sites forming a belt from the north-western to the eastern parts of India. Her association with a male partner at Rupar, Rajgir, Patna and Kausambi, and the depiction of music-playing, dancing and drinking (phs. 1, 2) introduce us to the rituals developed around this goddess who seems to be similar to West Asiatic goddesses of fertility. The depictions of the "*pañchachūdā*" goddess and her partner, seen at Ahichchhatrā (ph. 4), Chandraketugarh, etc. are representative of ritual couples. These objects suggest that the "depiction" of the sexual act may have been substituted for its actual performance in fertility rituals. The crudely carved terracotta plaques from Taxila, Bhita, Chandraketugarh, Nagarjunakonda, etc. indicate a cultic or votive function. The *mithuna*-couples and orgiastic themes of terracottas from Chandraketugarh (phs. 7, 8, 10) and the couple near Śrī, the goddess of fruitfulness and abundance, on the plaque from Awra (ph. 13) are precursors to the magical use of sex in Tāntrism. We have also noted artistically and sensuously portrayed terracottas used by the cultural elite of the period.

When we examine early stone sculpture, we find that the *mithuna* motif had a tendency to gradually detach itself from a magico-religious function and serve as an art motif. No doubt, its portrayal on religious monuments was due to its original function as a symbol of fertility. The earliest known depictions of couples are near goddess Śrī (ph. 14). *Mithunas* are shown near *kalaśas* (pots), creepers, etc. which are believed to be conducive to prosperity and auspiciousness. The monuments of the 1st–3rd centuries A.D. show the *mithuna* motif on the door-jamb, thus associating it with an auspicious function. *Śālabhañjikās* fertilizing the tree were believed to be auspicious and fruitful and have been depicted on *torāṇas* in early architecture.

The portrayal of *mithunas* gradually acquires artistic and sensuous touches. These are more obvious from the latter part of the 1st century B.C. onwards at Bodh Gaya, Mathura, etc. where poetic imagery is infused in the *mithuna* motif (phs. 20, 21; fig. VI). The Mathura Yakṣī figures are objects of art satisfying the tastes of the sensuous public. However, the attributes of prosperity, fruitfulness and fertility are still associated with erotic motifs though influenced by artistic renderings. In the Andhra Valley art, *mithunas*, *śālabhañjikās* and Yakṣīs interchanged positions on the *āyaka* stones. Their artistic function is to separate two Buddhist scenes (ph. 26). Their sensuous themes akin to the *nāyaka-nāyikā-bhāva* of Sanskrit and Prākṛit poetry fulfilled the demands of the cultured *nāgarakas* and *nāyikās*, thus indicating their social function. In the Western Deccan cave temples, specially at Karle, erotic motifs, oblivious of their Buddhist surroundings, represent merry-making and care-free couples (ph. 24). Their portrayal on the entrances of the caves certainly fulfils an auspicious function while their gay looks and abandon reflect the tastes of the sensuous public.

The background to the secularization and sensualization of erotic motifs is the development of trade and the consequent urban growth in the period. Beliefs and cults, which were characteristic of the pastoral-agricultural pattern, continued even in the urban situation. But in their new environment, these cultural structures lost much of their original purpose and were reinterpreted according to the social needs of the time and place. Auspicious erotic depictions became vehicles for the articulation of the sensuous tastes of the cultured elite. The cultic function was superseded by the aesthetic and the sensual.

But when we come to the period A.D. 500–900, there is a reassertion of the magical aspects of sex, though the depiction lends itself to the prevailing sensualism characteristic of aristocratic society. From about A.D. 500, changes are noticed in the socio-economic pattern. Feudal chiefs and landed aristocrats with a rural background assumed important social positions. The Rajputs emerged in this period as the main military class. The histories of the major dynasties of the period show that from the humble position of local chiefs, often of tribal origins, they had risen to power by subjugating weak rulers. They spared no efforts to glorify their family origins. Rulers depended upon the Brāhmanas for the recognition of their social status and they expressed their loyalty to *dharma*. *Pūrta-dharma*, which consisted in building of temples, tanks and charitable works, became an important constituent of religious life. *Dāna* and temple-building activity were the central aspects of religious behaviour in the period A.D. 500 to 1400.

Feudal social conditions were the right soil for the nourishment and development of Paurāṇic and Tāntric religions. Under these religions a host of fertility and vegetation rites, agricultural *utsavas*, purificatory (*suddhi*) rites and local *vratas* were reinstated. Short-cut devices to Mokṣa, in contrast to the rigorous path of asceticism, were advocated and their virtues extolled. The feudal atmosphere fostered interest in magic, superstitions and supernatural beliefs. Belief in the magical

power of sex was reinforced in this atmosphere. In Tāntrism the practice of *maithuna* was considered as a *makāra* which was offered to the deity for gaining *siddhis*. *Maithuna* and other *makāras* were believed to please deities. The ruling class and feudal aristocracy resorted to magical techniques. Inscriptional and literary accounts testify to their patronage to Tāntric *āchāryas*.

In this socio-cultural setting, the treatment of erotic motifs received special attention. The manner of rendering *mithuna* in some of the religious centres of Eastern India reflects the reverential attitude towards it. It is placed near deities and on lotus pedestals. It is found in its auspicious aspects on the door-frames of Deogarh, Ajanta, Ellora, Aurangabad, Bhubaneswar, Mukhalingam, Rajim, Sirpur, Lalitagiri, Udayagiri, Baijanatha, etc. (phs. 27-29). Its ornamental nature is revealed in the art of the Western Deccan caves, both Hindu and Buddhist (figs. XI, XII, p. 34). It was accepted as an auspicious *alaṅkāra* in the art of all religions and was not functionally related to doctrines of any particular sect. Extra-religious and sensuous tendencies are reflected in the huge aristocratic couples of Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal (phs. 30-33). The profuse depiction of *mithuna* at these places can be understood if it is viewed against the background of aristocratic society and its cultivation of *śṛṅgāra*. The popularity of the erotic group of type III-A, depicting attendants near lovers, suggests the aristocratic background as is also reflected in the works of Sanskrit poets like Kālidāsa, Subandhu, Bāṇa, Harṣa, and others.

Maithuna too is represented on some of the monuments of the period, but unlike the *mithuna* motif, it was not yet established in the canons of temple art. It was depicted unobtrusively in corners and inconspicuously in places unexposed to the devotee. This suggests that it was not meant for the enunciation of Tāntric doctrine or philosophy. Further, many Tāntric centres do not have *maithuna* sculptures. This, of course, is in conformity with the fact that Tāntrikas were not supposed to expose their sexual practices to the public. It is also evident that the *maithuna*-couples do not represent any sexo-yogic poses. Their depiction was non-sensuous in appeal and therefore could not have been meant to cater to the tastes of wealthy patrons. Their depiction at Aihole (fig. X) is stylistically and thematically akin to primitive art and is bereft of sensuous suggestions. Their auspicious function can be inferred from the fact that they were portrayed on the door which by this period was associated with auspicious (*maṅgala*) motifs. The *maithuna* scene of the 7th century Bhubaneswar temple is significantly placed near scenes of nudity-exposure and *śālabhañjikā* (phs. 35, 36), which are themes representative of fertility rites. Thus, the early representations of *maithuna* seem to be magico-religious in function.

It is from A.D. 900 onwards that there is an outburst of profuse and blatant depiction of *maithuna* and orgies in temple art. All over India temples are replete with sexual motifs. Scenes representing Tāntric themes (phs. 64, 65, 88, 90, 141-150) are frankly displayed. Naturally, such a movement of prolific sexual depiction would require a suitable climate to sustain it. Tāntric elements had begun to penetrate insidiously into Paurāṇic Hinduism more pronouncedly from the 8th-9th centuries A.D. Tāntrism soon became a pan-Indian movement influencing all major religions. It is mainly the rapid spread of Tāntric elements and the crystallization of feudal tendencies that provided a suitable soil for this outburst.

As Tāntrism was an esoteric religion, genuine Tāntrikas would be secretive about their practices and doctrines. They could represent sex for its magical function but would not depict Tāntric sexual scenes. We know that the *Śilpa Prakāśa*, the Tāntric Śilpaśāstra from Orissa belonging to the period between the 9th and the 12th centuries A.D., mentions that the Kāmakaḷā *yantra* or the symbolic

representation of sex should be camouflaged by the portrayal of erotic figures on it. Generally speaking, the true Tāntric art is functionally related to *upāsana* and *sādhana* to attain the non-dual *sahaja* state. Its main themes are *maṇḍala*, *yantra* (fig. XXIII, p. 138) and other symbolic forms and the visual depiction of *dhyāna-mantras* of deities which aid the *sādhaka* in his spiritual purpose. It can be regarded as a part of Yoga. Such art is not as expressive or decorative as it is cultic. We come across Tāntric art in pictorial depictions of the post-14th century period. These paintings are not publicly displayed but are meant for *sādhakas* and patrons for private practices though elements of degeneration in their actual use cannot be ruled out. But it is difficult to interpret the publicly displayed erotic figures on temples as part of Tāntric art, meant for the purpose of Tāntric *sādhana* and for enunciating Tāntric doctrines. We have seen that erotic figures do not represent Ānanda or the Eternal Bliss of non-dual *sahaja* state. Very few of them are in *sexo-yogic* poses. Even these poses could have been undertaken for the purpose of enhancing sexual enjoyment rather than for spiritual purpose. Medieval Kāmaśāstras had recommended yogic poses as well as magical spells for worldly aims and interests.

The erotic temple sculptures belong to another category of art, which is not Tāntric art, but art as influenced by Tāntrism without being functionally related to Tāntric *sādhana*. In the Tāntric atmosphere of the period, the belief in the magical efficacy of sexual symbols and in their auspicious and luck-bringing power was reinforced. The already prevalent depiction of erotic motifs in temple art got further impetus. Both Tāntric and non-Tāntric temples could have sexual depictions in their art according to the regional *śilpa*-canons which were getting conventionalized during this period. As already pointed out, genuine Tāntrikas would not expose their own esoteric practices but would portray sex in symbolic form or in non-Tāntric sexual scenes. But the Tāntrikas in their decadent phase and the followers of the Mīśra school of Paurāṇic-Tāntric religion, who were not esoteric, could display Tāntric practices including ascetics in sex-play.

Under the influence of magical beliefs, certain themes associated with fertility were brought into the depiction of erotic motifs. We have seen in Chapter VI that obscenity (*asliṭa*) is used as a device for stimulating generative powers. Obscene themes including orgies and bestiality became widespread from about A.D. 900. Other fertility themes like birth-giving woman, defloration and hair-cutting rites also made their appearance. Scenes of nudity-exposure which were seen in the previous period appeared more frequently. Some of these scenes (ph. 120) remind us of the *bhaga-līnga-kriyā* (actions involving sexual organs) performed by devotees of Devī on her festival in order to please her.

A further consequence of Tāntrism was the general attitude of permissiveness towards sex and the recognition accorded to love and care of the body (*deha*). Tāntrism advocated the adoption of sexual devices for the attainment of non-duality as against the age-old idea of renunciation of sex. This led to the veneration of sex in religious life in contrast to the condemnatory attitude of orthodox Hindu and early Buddhist traditions. The permissive attitude was further strengthened by the association of Tāntrikas with pleasure-loving aristocrats. The cultic sex of extreme Tāntrism gave place to hedonistic practices. We learn of degenerate Tāntric practices from the contemporary works of Rājaśekhara, Kṛṣṇa Mīśra, Somadeva, Kṣemendra, Kalhaṇa, etc. The theory of *sahaja* and the practice of *pañcamakāras* were likely to be misused, particularly when *sādhakas* were not serious. In all probability, most of the kings and feudal chiefs who courted Tāntrism were hardly *sādhakas*. Their interests centred around Rasāyana, *vājikaraṇa* and *vaśikaraṇa*. There was also a possi-

bility of socially deviant characters posing as Tāntric teachers and making use of Tāntric practices to gain for themselves riches and power by fooling the credulous and superstitious upper class of the period as shown by Kṣemendra in his *Samayamāṭṛikā* and *Narmamālā*. The serious intent of the rigorous Tāntric practices was lost and religious practices were reduced to pleasurable activities. The already prevalent glorification of sensuousness and *śṛiṅgāra* in Indian cultural tradition got a wider scope in its expression.

Besides Tāntrism, there were other socio-cultural forces which contributed to the flagrant and prolific depiction of sexual motifs on temples. The popularity of *pūrtadharma* and the belief in *punya* or merit accruing through it gave great impetus to the building of temples. The feudal socio-economic pattern had led to a proliferation of feudal chiefs, *sāmantas*, military officers and royal dignitaries, all of whom possessed adequate land and wealth to build temples. They desired to acquire *punya* by building temples. Apart from religious merit, the construction of temples also conferred fame and renown on builders as is evidenced by literary and epigraphic sources. This led to competition among the feudal chiefs and rulers of numerous regional states to embark upon the construction of larger and more magnificent temples and to decorate them with ornate sculptures. In no other period of Indian history were religious buildings so lavishly ornate. They rivalled the splendid palaces of their donors, descriptions of which are given in the *Mānasāra*, *Mānasollāsa*, *Vikramāṅkadeva-charita* and the accounts of travellers. Temple art acquired some of the character of court art and reflected the ostentatious tastes of its aristocratic patrons. There was thus a greater emphasis on *alaukāra*.

Large donations of land and wealth converted the temple itself into a feudal organization. Land-grants to temples were exempt from fiscal dues and were free from interference by royal troops and officials. As a result, temples developed as semi-independent areas and became powerful. Literary and epigraphical evidence indicates that temple priests and functionaries were not free from corrupt and degenerative effects of wealth and power.

Another development was the recognition of the services of *devadāsīs* in the religious practices of the period. The Purāṇas advocated the dedication of young girls to temples for acquiring *punya*. The prevalence of *devadāsīs* is recorded in all the regions of our survey. We have noted the originally sacred functions of this institution, which owes its existence to the belief in the magical efficacy of performing the sexual act near the deity. But under the Medieval social conditions, it was exploited for sexual gratification. We have described in Chapter VIII the sensual atmosphere around the temple as reflected in the works of Dāmodaragupta, Bilhaṇa, Kṣemendra, Kalhaṇa, etc. The staging of *prekṣaṇakams* or shows by voluptuous *devadāsīs* was likely to lead to sexual excesses. Even the writers of inscriptions indulged in descriptions of their sensual charms.

The Medieval temple was not just a religious institution or a place of worship. It was also a socio-cultural institution with royal-aristocratic patronage and influence. Photographs 153-155 help us to visualize this background. We have also seen that the descriptions of *tīrthas* and temples in the *Brahma Purāṇa* bring to life the Medieval temple with its sensual environment and popular religious practices. In the socio-religious environment of the Medieval temple and the values of the class immediately associated with it, the sexual motif became a major preoccupation of art.

Two important Medieval cultural traits further influenced the nature of erotic depiction. These were regionalism and conventionalism which were the outcome of the social forces of the period. Feudal tendencies in general had given rise to self-sufficient economic units and fragmentation of

political power strengthening local interests and regional consciousness. From about the 10th century, regional attitudes were dominant in many spheres of culture, including language, script, costume and temple art. Our study of the five different regions shows a regional conditioning in the manner of representing erotic motifs. Conventionalism was also strengthened in the feudal atmosphere. Old values were preserved and held sacrosanct. Both sculptural and literary arts were governed by canons. Stern conservatism pervaded all cultural pursuits. Superstition and irrationalism held sway over the major activities of Medieval life including love, business and war. Not only the observations of Al Biruni and other foreigners, but also the indigenous texts of the period like the *Mānasollāsa*, *Kṛtyakalpataru*, written by ministers, and works by scholars like Hemachandra, Kalhaṇa, etc. illustrate the superstitious mentality of the elite class of the period.

It was the proper atmosphere for the conventionalization of the already prevalent magico-sexual motifs. The *maithuna* theme, which appeared rather infrequently in the period A.D. 500-900, was accepted in the sculptural scheme of temples by about A.D. 900 and was conventionalized thereafter. Its depiction was in accordance with the canons and traditions of the regional schools of art. Each region had a distinctive local approach towards erotic motifs which is reflected in their size and the place assigned to them in the sculptural scheme of the temple and also in their thematic content and nature of depiction. We have seen that sexual depiction was an *alaṅkāra* and was magical in function. In the previous periods erotic motifs were treated as auspicious decoration. In this period also they continued to function as *alaṅkāras*, but they were further standardized and canonized according to the characteristic patterns of regional schools of art.

Once it was established in *śilpa*-canons, it became a motif-by-itself exercising magical power. Artists and patrons need not have remained aware of the original purpose of the motif. They followed art-canons without question. It is possible that gradually the original function and meaning of the motif were forgotten and a new meaning or justification attributed to it. This reminds us of Briffault's statement: "The supernatural means employed to promote fertility have commonly become subject to new interpretations which have veiled their original intention."² This does seem to have happened as diverse legends exist to "explain" sexual motifs on temples of different regions. It is significant that all these legends and beliefs implicitly recognize the magical power of sexual motifs for averting evils and promoting auspiciousness. According to a legend, popular in connection with the temples of Khajuraho and attributed to Chand Bardai, these temples were built to ward off the consequences of the extra-marital love of Hemāvati, the mother of the first Chandella king. In Gujarat, placing an erotic figure on buildings is believed to confer on them a magico-defensive virtue. Jaina temples are said to have such depiction for protective purposes. In the South, erotic figures are believed to protect buildings from the evil eye. The priests of the Jagannātha temple at Puri believe that erotic sculptures scare away the demons of lightning. In Nepal too the same function has been attributed to erotic motifs. This belief has also been recorded in the Utkalakhanda of the *Skanda Purāṇa*. The *Śilpa Prakāśa* of Orissa, as noted earlier, mentions the magico-propitiatory and magico-defensive purposes of the symbolic or *yāntric* representation of sex.

In the period A.D. 900-1400, each region has interpreted the erotic motif according to its own cultural beliefs and patterns, as evidenced from the sculptural data described in Chapter IV.

The regional schools of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Mysore recognized the necessity of the depiction of sexual motifs, presumably for their magical functions, but they do not glorify the motifs and relegate them to insignificant places in the sculptural scheme of the temple. Because of the small size

of the space available for the motifs, it was not possible to treat them aesthetically. The canons of these regional schools did not permit the portrayal of sexual motifs on the *jañghā* or the main part of the wall, where beautiful and elegant forms of *surasundarīs* and deities testify to the skill and aesthetic sensibility of the artists. Thus, although there was no dearth of artistic talent in these regions, erotic motifs received insignificant and, often, crude treatment on the temples, indicating the rigidity of conventions. The crude portrayal and obscene themes also possibly suggest the prevalence of beliefs in the magical efficacy of obscenity (*āstīla*) in removing evils. The depiction of *maithuna*-couples and orgies flanking images of deities in the temples of Gujarat and Maharashtra reminds us of the original function of the sexual act near fertility deities (phs. frontispiece, 78, 79, 80, 85, 89). It probably symbolizes the concept of *maithuna* as a *makāra* to be offered to the deity.

In the art of the Chandella and Orissan schools we see a sophisticated, elegant and frank approach to erotic motifs. Here the *maithuna* and orgiastic themes are assigned important places in the sculptural scheme of the temple and their size is large enough to attract the attention of pilgrims. In the Khajuraho temples they are also carved on the inner wall of the *garbhagriha* and can be seen by devotees while circumambulating the shrine. Even the orgiastic themes of Khajuraho show artistic excellence. In the Orissan school, the placement of erotic motifs on lotus pedestals and in temple-shaped niches indicates the attitude of veneration towards them. The climax of Orissan art is seen at Konarak where erotic figures pulsate with the joy of life. The portrayal of stark sexuality is also treated lyrically. The entire surface of the temple vibrates with life-force.

To sum up, sexual depiction in some form or other is prevalent in Indian art from ancient times. Its expression depends upon the socio-cultural conditions of the period concerned. Sexual representation of the Medieval temples is the result of the configuration of several factors in the course of history. The already established art-tradition of decorating monuments with auspicious *mithuna* motifs facilitated the development of Medieval sexual expression. The prevalence of sexual motifs in religious art before the documented Tāntric period shows that the factors responsible for their existence were deeply ingrained in Indian culture and were brought to the fore by the influence of Tāntrism. The widespread use of magic in the Tāntric age reaffirmed the traditional depiction of auspicious motifs and made possible the depiction of *maithuna* and orgies. Further impetus to the portrayal of sexual themes was given by the sensual atmosphere of the Medieval temple; this was the outcome of a number of factors such as the glorification of *pūrtadharma*, the proliferation of land-owning feudal chiefs and rulers, their extravagant expenditure on temple-building, their love of display expressed through building of large temples adorned with intricate *alañkāras*, the amassing of wealth by temples, the widespread prevalence of the *devadāsī* institution, etc. Conventionalism and regionalism also played an important role in determining the manifestation of sexual motifs.

Our study of sexual representation in Indian culture convinces us that there is no philosophical or rational motivation behind it. Its presence in religious art is a pointer to the continuity and persistence of primitive and popular cultural elements in a civilized society. Far from being an anomaly in Hindu culture, erotic motifs were in harmony with the religious environment to which they belonged and with the majestic, courtly and artistic temples they decorated. They were *alañkāras*.



Abbreviations

<i>A.B.O.R.I.</i>	<i>Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona</i>
<i>Act. Or.</i>	<i>Acta Orientalia, Leiden.</i>
<i>A.L.B.</i>	<i>Adyar Library Bulletin, Adyar.</i>
<i>Arch. Remains . . .</i>	<i>Archaeological Remains, Monuments and Museums.</i>
<i>Art. As.</i>	<i>Artibus Asiae, Hellerau-Dresden.</i>
<i>A.S.I.</i>	<i>Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi.</i>
<i>A.S.I., A.R.</i>	<i>Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report.</i>
<i>A. S. Reports.</i>	<i>Archaeological Survey of India Reports under Cunningham.</i>
<i>Bib. Ind.</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta.</i>
<i>B.M.G.M.</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum, Madras.</i>
<i>B.M.P.G.B.</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Museum and Picture Gallery, Baroda.</i>
<i>B.O.R.I.</i>	<i>Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona.</i>
<i>B.P.W.M.</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.</i>
<i>B.S.S.</i>	<i>Bombay Sanskrit Series, Bombay.</i>
<i>Ch. S. S.</i>	<i>Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, Varanasi.</i>
<i>C.I.I.</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum.</i>
<i>Ency. Br.</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Britannica (1960 ed.).</i>
<i>Ency. R.E.</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (1918), 3rd impression, 1952.</i>
<i>Ency. Sex Beh.</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Sexual Behaviour, ed. by A. Ellis and A. Abarbanel, New York, 1961.</i>
<i>Ency. Soc. Sc.</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences (1934), 13th printing, 1959.</i>
<i>Ency. W. Art.</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of World Art, 1959-67.</i>
<i>Ep. Ind.</i>	<i>Epigraphia Indica.</i>
<i>Ep. Carn.</i>	<i>Epigraphia Carnatica.</i>
<i>G.K.A.G.</i>	<i>Gopinath Kaviraj Abhinandan Granth, Lucknow.</i>
<i>G.O.S.</i>	<i>Gaekwad's Oriental Series, Baroda.</i>
<i>H.C.I.P.</i>	<i>History and Culture of the Indian People, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Series, Bombay.</i>
<i>I.A.—A Review</i>	<i>Indian Archaeology—A Review, New Delhi.</i>
<i>I.H.Q.</i>	<i>Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta.</i>
<i>Ind. Ant.</i>	<i>Indian Antiquary, Bombay.</i>



<i>Int. Ency. Soc. Sc.</i>	<i>International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences</i> , 1968.
<i>J.A.O.S.</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> , New Haven.
<i>J.A.S.B.</i>	<i>Journal of the Asiatic Society</i> (New Series), Calcutta.
<i>J.B.B.R.A.S.</i>	<i>Journal of the Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society</i> .
<i>J.B.H.U.</i>	<i>Journal of the Banaras Hindu University</i> , Varanasi.
<i>J.B.O.R.S.</i>	<i>Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society</i> .
<i>J.B.R.S.</i>	<i>Journal of the Bihar Research Society</i> , Patna.
<i>J.G.R.S.</i>	<i>Journal of the Gujarat Research Society</i> , Bombay.
<i>J.I.S.O.A.</i>	<i>Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art</i> , Calcutta.
<i>J.M.P.I.P.</i>	<i>Journal of the Madhya Pradesh Itihasa Parishad</i> .
<i>J.O.I.</i>	<i>Journal of the Oriental Institute</i> , Baroda.
<i>J.O.R.</i>	<i>Journal of the Oriental Research</i> .
<i>J.R.A.I.</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute</i> .
<i>J.R.A.S.</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i> , Great Britain.
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<i>N.S.P.</i>	Nirnaya Sagara Press, Bombay.
<i>O.H.R.J.</i>	<i>The Orissa Historical Research Journal</i> .
<i>P.I.H.C</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Indian Historical Congress</i> .
<i>S.B.E.</i>	Sacred Books of the East Series.
<i>S.C.T.</i>	<i>The Śakti Cult and Tārā</i> (ed. by D. C. Sircar).
<i>S.F.G.S.T.</i>	<i>Sri Forbes Gujarati Sabha Traimasik</i> (Guj.), Bombay.
<i>T.A.S.S.I.</i>	<i>Transactions of the Archaeological Survey of South India</i> .



Notes

Chapter I Introduction

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- 128 Ibid., fig. 2.
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The inscription reads: "Savajātabhoganirāṭhi," and belongs to the 19th year of Śrī Pulumāvi Vāsiṣṭhiputra. Burgess, however, translates it as "The abandonment of all enjoyments accruing (to us of this village has been decreed)." *Buddhist Cave Temples and their Inscriptions*, p. 110. But even if Burgess's rendering is correct, our main argument holds good. The portrayal of *mithunas* on habitations of Buddhist monks, who were supposed to have renounced *saṃsāra*, requires explanation.
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- 153 Moti Chandra, *J.B.B.R.A.S.*, Vol. 26, p. 172.

Chapter III Sexual Representation in Art of the Period—A.D. 500-900

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See D. R. Bhandarkar, *M.A.S.I.*, No. 4.
J. Fleet, *J.R.A.S.*, 1909, pp. 1087-92.
J. N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 338.
The *Arthaśāstra*, II, 4, 56, refers to temples of Brahmanical deities. The *Manusmṛiti*, IV, 39, IX, 285, mentions image worship. Bhāsa in the 2nd century A.D. refers to a temple of Kāmadeva.
- 3 *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sundarakāṇḍa, V, 7-14; V, 9, 10-18.
See Chapter IX.
- 4 *Nāṭyaśāstra*, II, 76-80, 90-95.
- 5 Moti Chandra, *J.B.B.R.A.S.*, Vol. 26, pp. 179-81.
- 6 Remains of brick temples dedicated to the Brahmanical gods are seen at Nagarjunakonda in the 3rd-4th century A.D. *Arch. Remains . . .*, Part II, p. 191. The potentiality of dressed stone was for the first time appreciated during the Gupta period. *Ibid.*, part I, p. 158.
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Patil is, however, of the opinion that the figures do not represent a pair of man and woman but two women. Also see *Annual Report of the Archaeological Department Gwalior State*, 1928-29, pl. V.
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R. D. Banerji, *The Age of the Imperial Guptas*, pl. III.
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R. D. Banerji, "The Śiva Temple at Bhumara," *M.A.S.I.*, No. 16, pl. III.
- 12 O. C. Gangoly, "The Mithuna in Indian Art," *Rūpam*, 1925, p. 57.
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Arch. Remains . . ., p. 193.
Percy Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
R. S. Gupte (*The Art and Architecture of Aihole*, pp. 12, 45) believes, on the evidence of the ground plans and the general architectural design, that the Kont-guḍi group is earlier than the Ladkhan. For the date of the Ladkhan see note 16.
- 16 The date of the Ladkhan temple is a matter of controversy. H. Cousens suggested (*op. cit.*, p. 32) that it belonged to *circa*. A.D. 450. Coomaraswamy (*op. cit.*, p. 79) and Percy Brown (*op. cit.*, p. 60) have accepted this date. According to R. D. Banerji (*The Age of the Imperial Guptas*, p. 139), the Ladkhan could be ascribed to the first half of the 6th century A.D., in the reign of Kirtivarman I of Badami. S. R. Balasubramaniam ("The Date of the Ladkhan (Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa) Temple at Aihole," *Lalit Kalā*, No. 10, Oct. 1961) has shown, on evidence of certain common motifs of Cave II of Badami, which is earlier than the dated Cave III of the same place, that the cave-like Ladkhan temple is the contemporary of Cave II of Badami. The latter belongs to the middle of the 6th century A.D. Kumud Chitalia in her Thesis, *The Chālukya-Kūla* (University of Bombay, 1964, pp. 509-10), also accepts the date suggested by S. R. Balasubramaniam. The extension to a still further date is suggested by K. R. Srinivasan in a publication of the Archaeological Survey of India, *Arch. Remains . . .*, p. 194. He puts it in the early 7th century on the evidence of certain types of sculpture and statuary, the designs of the perforated windows and the inter-columnar *kakshāsana* of the *ardha-maṇḍapa*.
- 17 H. Cousens, *op. cit.*, p. vii.
R. S. Gupte, *op. cit.*, pls. 69, 70.
Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, pl. 114.
- 18 H. Cousens, *op. cit.*, pls. IX, X.



- Zimmer, op. cit., pls. 120, 121.
 R. S. Gupte, op. cit., pls. 98, 99, 102, 103, 106, 108.
 For the date of the Durga temple, *I.A. 1960-61—A Review*, p. 76. Also *Arch. Remains...*, pp. 195-96.
- 19 H. Cousens, op. cit., pls. XV, XXI, p. 42.
 R. S. Gupte, op. cit., pls. 90-94, pp. 88-89.
 - 20 K. Nilakanta Sastri in *The Early History of the Deccan*, Vol. I., Part III, p. 244.
 - 21 Ibid., p. 242; *Ind. Ant.*, X, p. 60.
 - 22 Ibid., p. 167.
 - 23 *J.B.B.R.A.S.*, XVI, pp. 233-35.
 - 24 K. Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit., pp. 241-42.
 - 25 R. D. Banerji, "Bas-Reliefs from Badami," *M.A.S.I.*, No. 25, 1928, pp. 54, 55.
 - 26 Ibid., pp. 8, 15, 16, 35, pl. XXI b.
 - 27 Ibid., pp. 8, 35.
 - 28 Ibid., pp. 32-34.
 - 29 Ibid., pl. IV e.
 O. C. Gangoly ("The Mithuna in Indian Art," *Rūpam*, 1925, p. 58) also refers to a scene in the Cave I of Badami which is "inspired by a strong sexual idea." K. Pillay ("The Mithuna in Indian Art," *T.A.S.S.I.*, Vol. II, 1956-7) also mentions coital scenes at Badami.
 - 30 R. D. Banerji, op. cit., pp. 12-13, pl. IV b.
 - 31 Cousens, op. cit., pp. 51-52.
 The Archaeological Survey of India assigns it to the 7th century. *Arch. Remains...*, Part II, p. 199.
 - 32 The photographic albums of the A.S.I., Nos. 574, 578, 599/65.
 - 33 S. Kramrisch, *Art. As.*, XIX, p. 260, fig. 3.
 - 34 Fergusson and Burgess, *The Cave Temples of India*, pls. XLII, XLV, XLVII.
 J. Burgess, *Report on the Buddhist Cave Temples and their Inscriptions*, pls. XIX, XXV, XXXII-2, XXXV.
 R. S. Gupte and Mahajan, op. cit., pl. 22.
 H. Zimmer, op. cit., Vol. II, pls. 156, 161.
 P. Brown, op. cit., Appendix, p. 240.
 - 35 Amita Ray in *Mārg* on Aurangabad, p. 40.
 - 36 Fergusson and Burgess, op. cit., pls. XLI, XLIX.
 Gupte and Mahajan, op. cit., pls. LIII, XXXIX.
 - 37 *Ajanta Paintings*, published by the Lalit Kalā Akademi, 1957, pl. XVII.
 - 38 Ibid., pl. X; also Gupte and Mahajan, op. cit., p. XXXIII.
 - 39 B. Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India, Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*, p. 140, pl. 91A.
 - 40 J. Fergusson and J. Burgess, op. cit., pp. 465 ff, 467 f.n. 2, 476, 481-82.
 - 41 *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. X, pp. 164 ff.
 H. Cousens, op. cit., pp. 59-61, 66.
 K. Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit., pp. 234-35.
 - 42 *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. X, p. 164.
 - 43 H. Cousens, op. cit., p. 66, fig. 18.
 - 44 H. Zimmer, op. cit., pls. 300, 301.
 - 45 H. Cousens, op. cit., pp. 63-64; pl. XXXIX.
 - 46 K. Chitalia, op. cit., p. 487.
 - 47 J. Fergusson and J. Burgess, op. cit., p. 462.
 - 48 R. Gupte and Mahajan, op. cit., pp. 144, 210, 251.
 - 49 Ibid., pl. CVIII-A, B.
 - 50 Ibid., pl. CVII.
 - 51 Ibid., pls. CVIII, CX.
 - 52 K. C. Panigrahi, *The Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar*, p. 3.
 - 53 Ibid., pp. 28-29, 54.
J.R.A.S.B., XV, 1949, pp. 109 ff.
 Debala Mitra, *Bhubaneswar*, p. 23.
 - 54 The original designation of the temple seems to be "Parāśaśvara," after Parāśara, a disciple of Kuśika who was a successor of Lakuliśa.
 A. Ghosh, *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 126 ff.
 K. C. Panigrahi, op. cit., p. 225.
 - 55 J. N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 506.
 - 56 H. Zimmer, op. cit., pl. 239.
 R. S. Gupte and Mahajan, op. cit., p. cxxxii.
 - 57 A. K. Coomaraswamy, "Archaic Indian Terracottas," *Mārg*, Vol. 6, No. 2, fig. 44.
 - 58 K. C. Panigrahi, op. cit., p. 148. He calls this temple Bharateśvara.
 - 59 When I visited Bhubaneswar in February, 1964, a detached stone slab was lying near the Śatrugneśvara temple. I was informed that this stone slab was brought there by the Department of Archaeology from the Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, to be fixed on the temple, as it bears similarity to the style of sculpture of the temple.
 - 60 K. C. Panigrahi, op. cit., p. 104.
 - 61 Ibid., pp. 231-32.
 - 62 Ibid., pp. 134-35.



- 63 *Śilpa Prakāśa*, pp. 56-57.
- 64 *I.A. 1961-62—A Review*, p. 112.
The photograph in the albums of the Archaeological Survey of India, No. 1492/62.
D. Barrett in *Temples at Mukhalingam, Sirpur and Rajim*, p. 11.
- 65 The photograph in the albums of the A.S.I., No. 984/62.
- 66 T. Bhattacharya, *The Canons of Indian Art*, pp. 228-29.
- 67 R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, p. 168.
J.B.B.R.A.S., Vol. 14, p. 26.
- 68 *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. VI, p. 76.
- 69 S. Kramrisch, *Art. As.*, XIX, pp. 259-70, figs. 1-2.

Chapter IV Sexual Representation in Art of the Period—A. D. 900-1400

- 1 R. S. Sharma, *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy*, p. 150.
Romila Thapar, *A History of India*, pp. 241, 251 ff.
Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization*, pp. 223 ff.
- 2 N. R. Ray in *H.C.I.P.*, Vol. V, pp. 640-41.
- 3 Stella Kramrisch (*The Art of India*, p. 44) refers to regional schools of the 9th to the 13th centuries. A. Coomaraswamy (*History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 107) emphasizes that the only adequate classification of temples is geographical, and begins his account of Medieval temples from A.D. 900. Percy Brown (*Indian Architecture*, p. 65) points to strong conventionalism in art from the middle of the first millennium. Also see R. Thapar, op. cit., p. 258.
Krishna Deva in *Arch. Remains...*, Part I, p. 164, while referring to North Indian temples, says that regional variations became established by the 9th-10th centuries and attained full development during the 11th century. Umakant Shah says that the provincial styles attained a certain definite individuality from the end of the 10th century and the beginning of the 11th century. *J.I.S.O.A.*, 1965-66, pp. 65 ff.

- 4 Invariable patterns noticed in the sculptural depiction of the temples of the same regional school leave no doubt as to their having been standardized by art-canon—written or otherwise—and rigidly adhered to by sculptors.
The Orissan *Śilpa Prakāśa* (A.D. 900-1200) is one of the important texts which furnishes us with detailed conventions on erotic depiction, specially its place in the sculptural scheme of the temple.
- 5 K. C. Panigrahi, *Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar*, pp. 157 ff.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 91-93.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 158.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 42.
J.R.A.S.B., Vol. XIII, p. 70.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- 12 Somadeva, *Moharājaparājaya*, IV.
K. K. Handiqui, *Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture*, p. 204.
- 13 R. D. Banerji, *History of Orissa*, II, pp. 369-70.
H. Mahtab, *History of Orissa*, I, pp. 203-20.
- 14 H. Mahtab, op. cit., II, p. 511.
- 15 Vidya Prakash, *Khajuraho*, p. 175, says: "In fact, the erotic sculptures of Konarak alone may outnumber such compositions in all temples of Khajuraho taken together."
- 16 *Ency. W. Art.* Vol. XII, p. 898.
H. Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, I, p. 53.
- 17 *Śilpa Prakāśa*, pp. 32, 29.
- 18 K. Deva in *Arch. Remains...*, Part I, p. 172.
S. K. Saraswati, op. cit., p. 557.
- 19 K. Deva, "Temples of Khajuraho," *Ancient India*, No. 15, 1959.
S. K. Saraswati, op. cit., pp. 564-65.
- 20 P. Brown, op. cit., p. 110.
- 21 *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. I, p. 130.
- 22 H. Goetz, "The Historical Background of the Temples of Khajuraho," *Roopalekha*, 1961, Vol. XXXII, No. 2, p. 67.
- 23 *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. I, pp. 135 ff.
- 24 M. B. Jhaveri, *Comparative and Critical Study of Mantra Sastra (with special treatment of Jaina Mantra Sastra)*, pp. 149, 173.
See below, Chapter VII.
- 25 J. Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, Vol. II, p. 246.
P. Brown, op. cit., p. 113.

- 26 *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. I, pp. 147-52.
- 27 K. Deva, op. cit., p. 57.
- 28 H. C. Ray, *The Dynastic History of Northern India*, Vol. II, pp. 886-87.
- 29 K. Deva, op. cit., p. 56.
- 30 The Jaina temple of Pārśvanātha which is also a *sāndhāra prāsāda* does not have balconied openings unlike the Hindu *sāndhāra prāsādas*.
- 31 In the *Kādambarī*, Bāṇa describes the eunuchs and dwarfs attending the royal household. That such was the case as late as the 16th century is also evidenced by the account of the travellers of Vijayanagara. See R. Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire*, p. 240. Again, from the *Kāmasūtra*, V, vi, we learn that as there were no men in the harem, the ladies unsatisfied by their polygynous husband, the king, could smuggle in strangers and *nāgarakas*. In the Sanskrit plays, we see that no males were allowed in the harems except for the Kanchukin and the Vidūṣaka.
- 32 A. Cunningham, *A. S. Reports*, Vol. II, p. 422.
- 33 Stella Kramrisch, op. cit., p. 385; pl. XXX-XXXI.
- 34 S. K. Mitra, *The Early Rulers of Khajuraho*, pp. 95-100.
N. S. Bose, *History of the Chandellas of the Jejakabhukti*, pp. 77-78.
J. Auboyer in *Khajuraho*, pp. 41, 66.
- 35 K. Deva, op. cit., p. 58.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid., p. 59.
- 38 S. K. Mitra, op. cit., pp. 95-96.
- 39 V. V. Mirashi, *C.I.I.*, Vol. IV, Part I, Introduction, pp. clviii ff.
V. S. Pathak, *History of Saiva Cults in North India*, pp. 35-37.
See below, Chapter VII.
- 40 I have not personally visited the temples of the Dāhala region, but I rely on the evidence gathered by Sri Krishna Deva of the Archaeological Survey of India and on the archaeological reports of the antiquarians like Beglar, Rai Bahadur Hiralal and Rakhal Das Banerji. Beglar in Cunningham's *A. S. Reports*, Vol. XIII, pp. 7-8.
Raibahadur Hiralal, *Descriptive Lists of Ancient Monuments in the C.P. and Berar*, p. 112.
R. D. Banerji, *M.A.S.I.*, No. 23, pp. 42, 54.
- 41 K. Deva in *Arch. Remains . . .*, Part I, p. 173.
S. K. Saraswati in *H.C.I.P.*, Vol. V, p. 564.
Beglar in Cunningham's *A. S. Reports*, Vol. VII, pp. 240-46.
- 42 *A. S. Reports*, VII, p. 242.
- 43 R. D. Banerji, op. cit., p. 31.
- 44 S. K. Dikshit, *A Guide to the State Museum Dhubela, Vindhya Pradesh*, pp. 22-25.
- 45 R. D. Banerji, op. cit., pp. 72-73.
- 46 K. Deva, *Temples of North India*, pp. 51-52.
- 47 Pramod Chandra, *Stone Sculpture in the Allahabad Museum*, pp. 117, 118, figs. 295, 296, 300.
- 48 A. Cunningham, *A. S. Reports*, Vol. XXI.
- 49 R. D. Banerji, op. cit., p. 46.
According to S. K. Saraswati (op. cit., Vol. V, pp. 558-59), however, there is no definite evidence to identify the temple at Baijanātha with the one given to the Śaiva ascetic Hṛidayaśiva of the Bilhari inscription.
- 50 R. D. Banerji, op. cit., p. 61.
- 51 *I.A. 1961-62—A Review*, p. 112, pl. CLXII.
- 52 M. Garde, op. cit., p. 110.
- 53 *Arch. Remains . . .*, Part I, p. 174.
- 54 V. V. Mirashi, *C.I.I.*, Vol. IV, Introduction, p. civ.
- 55 M. Garde, op. cit., p. 95.
- 56 J. Marshall and A. Foucher, *The Monuments of Sanchi*, Vol. III, pls. CXVIII-A, B; CXX-B; Vol. I, p. 71.
- 57 Ibid., Vol. III, p. facing pl. CXVIII-B.
- 58 *Annual Report of the Archaeological Department Gwalior State*, 1931-32, p. 7, pl. I.
- 59 M. Garde, *Archaeology in Gwalior State*, p. 54.
- 60 K. Deva in *Arch. Remains . . .*, Part I, pp. 174-75; his *Temples of North India*, pp. 65-66.
G. S. Ghurye, *Rajput Architecture*, pp. 45, 120-23, pls. 62-78.
- 61 On evidence of photographs in the albums of of the *A.S.I.*, Nos. 1164/65 and 2250/62 of Eklingji, and 2187, 2197, 2198/62 of Nagda. The types and nature of sexual portrayal is the same. Erotic figures are, again, shown near deities.
- 62 M. Dhaky, *J.M.P.I.P.*, 1961, No. 3, pp. 24-25.
- 63 Gaudani and Dhaky, *J.O.I.*, XVII, No. 2, p. 152.
- 64 M. Dhaky, *J.M.P.I.P.*, 1961, No. 3., pp. 74, 77.
- 65 H. D. Sankalia, op. cit., p. 74.

- K. Deva, *Temples of North India*, p. 46.
 M. Dhaky, op. cit., pp. 39-40.
- 66 The Baroda Museum open air No. 115 AC 2577.
 P. A. Inamdar, *Some Archaeological Finds in the Idar State*, pl. XII.
- 67 B. Sandesara, *Itihasani Kedi* (in Guj.), p. 88.
 The Motap temple has been assigned to the class of Ruhavi and Gorad temples in Mehsana district by Sankalia, op. cit., pp. 79, 121.
- 68 It shows Chāmunda as “Nude Goddess” and Sitalā devī, indicating its Śākta leanings. The *kumbha* portion has depictions of unidentified male gods flanked by erotic figures. Śiva and Umā are portrayed on the *jaṅghā* (pls. 78,79).
- 69 Sankalia (op. cit., p. 93 f.n. 3) says that from Mūlarāja’s Kadi grant (*Ind. Ant.*, VI, p. 101) the existence of the temple is clearly indicated.
- 70 M. Dhaky, op. cit., p. 77.
- 71 H. Cousens, “The Temple of Brahmā at Khed-Brahma” in *A.S.I.A.R.*, 1906-7, pp. 174 ff, pl. LXXIII, figs. 6 and 7.
- 72 M. Dhaky, op. cit., p. 61.
- 73 Krishna Deva, in *Arch. Remains . . .*, Part I, pp. 182-83, is inclined to place the Sejakpur temple in the early 12th century while that at Ghumli, according to him, belongs to early 13th century A.D.
 M. Dhaky places the Ghumli temple at the end of the 12th century. op. cit., pp. 64-65.
- 74 H. Cousens, *Somanatha and other Mediaeval Temples in Kathiawad*, pls. LXVI, XXV.
 Photographs in the albums of the Archaeological Survey of India, Nos. 799/61, 805-9/61, 334/62, 346/62.
- 75 *Bombay Gazetteer*, Kaira-Panchamahā, III, p. 303.
I.A. 1958-59—A Review, pl. CIII A, B, p. 113.
- 76 M. Dhaky, op. cit., p. 65.
- 77 Burgess and Cousens, *Antiquities of the Town of Dabhoi in Gujarat*, p. 2.
 Sankalia, op. cit., p. 67.
- 78 A. K. Majumdar, *Chalukyas of Gujarat*, p. 382.
- 79 Ibid., pp. 79, 121.
 Cousens and Burgess, *A.A. of N.G.*, pl. XCIII.
- 80 B. Sandesara, op. cit., p. 88.
- 81 The photographic albums of the A.S.I., Nos. 241/61, 249/61, 248/61.
- 82 M. Dhaky, op. cit., p. 32.
- 83 Krishna Deva, *Temples of North India*, p. 66.
Arch. Remains . . ., Part I, pp. 174-75.
 G. S. Ghurye, *Rajput Architecture*, pp. 45, 120-23.
- 84 P. Brown, op. cit., p. 126.
- 85 *Kālikā Purāṇa*, LXI, 21-22.
 M. Eliade, *Yoga*, pp. 342-43.
 See below, Chapter VI, p. 96, VII, pp. 116-17.
- 86 H. Cousens, *Mediaeval Temples of the Dakhan*, p. 22.
- 87 P. Brown op. cit., p. 108.
- 88 H. Cousens, op. cit., p. 36.
- 89 Ibid., p. 26; pl. XVII.
Architectural Antiquities of Western India, p. 56.
- 90 H. Cousens, *Mediaeval Temples of the Dakhan*, p. 47, pl. LXII.
- 91 Ibid., pl. XXX.
- 92 Ibid., pl. LXXVII.
- 93 Ibid., pl. LXXXV.
- 94 Ibid., pl. XC, p. 60.
- 95 Ibid., pl. XC, p. 61.
- 96 Curt Maury, *Folk Origins of Indian Art*, fig. 132, p. 125; fig. 190, p. 199.
- 97 *M.A.S.*, No. II, p. 2.
- 98 The *gopuram* which was added to the Belur temple in the Vijayanagara period has a few scenes depicting coitus.
- 99 *M.A.S.*, No. II, p. 2.
- 100 See below, Chapter VI, p. 92.
- 101 P. Brown, op. cit., p. 142.
- 102 T. A. Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. II, Part i, pp. 23-24 f.n.
- 103 P. Brown, op. cit., p. 141.
 S. K. Saraswati, op. cit., p. 632.
- 104 *M.A.S.*, No. I, p. 3.
- 105 A. Rea, *Chalukyan Architecture*, pp. 2, 1-6.
- 106 Sewell and Aiyangar, *The Historical Inscriptions of South India*, p. 125.
- 107 H. Cousens, *Chalukyan Architecture*, p. 105.
 The photographic albums of the A.S.I., Nos. 1730/63, 1745/63, 1747-1751/63, 1753/63, 1756/63.
- 108 Nos. 46/62, 49-52/62.
- 109 H. Cousens, op. cit., p. 91.
- 110 R. Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire*, pp. 228-376.
- 111 P. Brown, op. cit., p. 91.
- 112 R. Sewell, op. cit., p. 278.



Chapter V Sexual Representation in Art— An Analysis

Statements in this chapter are based mainly on my personal observations, most of which are stated in the previous chapters. Examples of Badoh, Nagda, Eklingji, Nemawar, Abaneri, Ramgarh, Kiradu, Survaya, Delmal, Khiching, Ratnagiri, Martand, etc., which are not referred to in the earlier chapters are stated on the basis of photographs of the albums of the Archaeological Survey of India or photographs received from other sources.

- 1 I have not visited the Early Medieval temples of central India and Rajasthan, but from a study of the photographs of the Archaeological Survey of India and of those received from other sources, it is seen that in these regions the *maithuna* theme appears later than in Orissa. In the 8th century, *maithuna* was depicted at Baijnath in Punjab.
- 2 Kālidāsa, *Kumārasambhava*, VIII, 19, 89 and commentary.
Bhartrihari, *Śṛīngārāṣataka*, verse 26 and commentary.
Amaruṣataka, verse 3.
Jayadeva, *Gīta-Govinda*, 6, 2-7; 12, 6-4; 14, 7-4; 22, 11-2; 23, 12-6; 24, 12-3; and King Kumbha's commentary on these verses.
See S. C. Upadhyaya's Introduction to *Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana*, p. 40.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 *Mahākālasamhitā*, 248th *paṭala*, p. 116.
- 5 A. Mookerji, *Tantra Asana*, pl. 47.
- 6 Vātsyāyana, who gives one chapter on oral congress, says that it was condemned in the Śāstras. "The learned Āchāryas advise men against this practice of oral congress, since the Holy texts forbid it and declare it as abhorred and detested by all good men." II, ix, 22. Kokkoka says in his *Ratirahasya*, VIII, 66, "Why should we concern ourselves about oral congress when Vātsyāyana has declared it as utterly detestable?" Yājñavalkya, verse 293, lays down punishment for a man having intercourse with a woman in an improper part. The *Mitākṣarā* interprets improper part as "mouth or any such part." Also see J. Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India*, Vol. I, p. 241.

- 7 *Kāmasūtra*, II, ix, 34.
- 8 Curt Maury, *Folk Origins of Indian Art*, figs. 132, 134, 180, 190.
- 9 *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, VI, 95 ff; p. 170 of the Sanskrit text.
Pāsupataśāstram with commentary of Kauṇḍinya, p. 25, III-12 ff.
- 10 A. Danielou, "An Approach to Hindu Erotic Sculpture", *Mārg*, II, p. 88.
Mulk Raj Anand, *Kāmakalā*, p. 38.
K. Lal, *The Cult of Desire*, p. 95, No. 37.
- 11 Alex Comfort, *The Koka Shastra Being the Ratirahasya of Kokkoka and Other Medieval Indian Writings on Love*, p. 65.
- 12 Ibid., p. 138, f.n. 1.
- 13 A. Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, p. 265.
M. Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 248.
- 14 Kalhaṇa, *Rājataranginī*, VII, 1129-1135.
See below, Chapter VII.
- 15 L. K. Tripathi, *Bharati*, No. 3, 1959-60, Banaras.
U. P. Shah in review of M. Foucher's book, *J.A.O.S.*, 1962, p. 101.
- 16 Leeson, *Kamasilpa*, p. 48.
K. K. Pillay, "The Mithuna in Indian Art," *T.A.S.S.I.*, 1956-57, p. 26.
See below, Chapter VII.
- 17 M. Dhaky, *The Vyala Figures on the Mediaeval Temples of India*, p. 13.
- 18 *Śilpa Prakāśa*, *Prakāśa* I, 507-520, p. 55.
- 19 Vidya Prakash, *Khajuraho*, p. 93.
- 20 J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Visnuism*, p. 104.
G. Tucci, *Painted Tibetan Scrolls*, I, p. 300.
- 21 Monier Williams, *Dictionary*.
- 22 Stella Kramrisch, Introduction to *Viṣṇu-dharmottara*, p. 67.
- 23 Curt Maury, op. cit., figs. 198, 199.
- 24 Ajit Mookerji, op. cit., pl. 70.
- 25 Ānandagiri in the 13th century refers to six classes of Sun-worshippers. It is possible that the three temples described here belong to different creeds of the Saura cult. But the different creeds had basic similarities in their philosophy and practices. They believed that the Sun was the Supreme Soul and cited textual authority both from the Śrutis and the Smṛitis. They bore red sandal paste on their forehead, wore garlands of red flowers and repeated the *Sūrya-gāyatrī* of eight syllables.

- J. N. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 430.
- 26 A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Introduction to Indian Art*, pp. 86-87.
 - 27 B. J. Sandesara, *Itihasani Kedi*, p. 90.
 - 28 J. Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, Vol. II, pp. 106, 141.
 - 29 See chapter IX.
Natyashastra (Nirnaya Sagara ed.) II, 76-80, 90-95; (Eng. tr.) II, 82-85.
Moti Chandra, *J.B.B.R.A.S.*, Vol. 26, 1951, pp. 179-81.
 - 30 B. J. Sandesara, op. cit., p. 92.
 - 31 Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, Vol. II, pp. 346-47.
A. Daniellou, op. cit., pp. 87-89.
Mulk Raj Anand, op. cit., pp. 16-20, 43.
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Chapter VI Sex in Religion: Magico-Religious Beliefs and Practices

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- 3 E. R. Leach (*Dialectic in Practical Religion*, Introduction, pp. 1-2) points out that in studies of Comparative Religion a failure to take into account this distinction between philosophical religion and practical religion has often led to grave misunderstanding. He uses the word "practical" here as having the same meaning as "sauvage" in Levi-Strauss's *Le Peuple Sauvage*. It is not concerned with the thought process of savages but with the ordering of categories in all unsophisticated forms of human thinking. Among civilized "practical" people the distinction between primitive and sophisticated largely disappears. Also see A. Malefijt, *Religion and Culture*, p. 11. It should be noted that we have distinguished between philosophical or ideological aspects of Hindu religion and the actual living aspect of it, which consists both of beliefs and practices—or the "belief system" and the "action system."
- 4 See G. S. Ghurye, *Religious Consciousness*, pp. 312 ff.
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- 9 W. A. Lessa and E. Z. Vagt (ed.), *Reader in Comparative Religion*, p. 298.
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- 10 J. Frazer, op. cit., (abridged), pp. 14 ff.
- 11 R. Marett and A. Goldenweiser have demonstrated that Frazer's separation of magic from religion has some merit, but it goes too far because it overlooks the vast areas in which the alleged differences actually overlap and because it tends to obscure the common supernatural basis for each. *Reader in Comparative Religion*, p. 300. Also see A. Malefijt, op. cit., pp. 12-15, 55.
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- 18 J. Frazer, *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, V, i, p. 107.
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- 19 S. Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, Vol. I, p. 15.
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Chapter VII Tāntrism and Erotic Sculpture

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 - 7 *Bṛhatsamhitā*, LX, 19.
J. N. Banerjee, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 494.
 - 8 *Kādambarī* (Kale's tr.), pp. 90-91, 288, Sk. text ed. by Kale, pp. 338-39.
Harṣacharita, III-90 (Nirnayasagara ed.); III p. 108 tr. Also see V, p. 135, Eng. tr.
 - 9 *Ānandalaharī*, verse 31.
C. Chakravarti, op. cit., p. 20.
P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, V, ii, p. 1049.
 - 10 *Ibid.*, p. 1073.
 - 11 M. Eliade, op. cit., p. 201.
 - 12 C. Chakravarti, op. cit., pp. 48-49.
H. P. Shastri and H. Mahtab identify Uḍḍiyāna or Oḍiyāna with Orissa.
B. Bhattacharya places it in Orissa or Assam. But S. Levi, G. Tucci, A. Cunningham, P. C. Bagchi and D. C. Sircar suggest that Uḍḍiyāna is in the Swat Valley.
 - 13 C. Chakravarti, op. cit., pp. 45-49.
The *Kālikā Tantra* (XII-7,10) mentions that Vāmāchāra and Kulāchāra have been imported from the Bhoṭas or Mahāchīna. The *Rudra Yāmala* and the *Brahma Yāmala* mention Buddha's going to Mahāchīna for instructions in Tantra worship. R. H. van Gulik believes that sexual practice of *coitus reservatus* was imported into India from China via Assam, and that the exotic Sun-cult reached India through the North-West regions of the Swat Valley and Kashmir. *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, pp. 351, 354-55.
 - 14 A. Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, pp. 15, 20, 31.
H. Guenther, *Yuganaddha—The Tantric View of Life*, Intro., p. ii.
 - 15 M. Eliade, op. cit., p. 270.
 - 16 S. B. Dasgupta, *O.R.C.*, p. xxxiv.
 - 17 The name *bodhichitta* given to semen implies the degeneration of the spiritual message of the Master, who was in favour of celibacy. It was also believed in the later stage of Buddhism that "Buddhahood lies in the female generative organ." (*Buddhatvamyosidyoniśamāśritam*). De La Valle Poussin, on "Buddhist Tantrism" in *Ency R. E.*, Vol. XII, p. 196.
 - 18 *Guṇavratānirdeśa* cited in *Subhāṣitasamgraha*, ed. by C. Bendall, IV, V-44.
Kāpha, *Dohakośa*, 14.
Hathayogapradīpikā, III, 88.
M. Eliade, op. cit., pp. 267-68.
Also see A. Bharati, op. cit., p. 265, who shows the difference between Hindu and Buddhist Tāntric practices regarding the retention of the semen.
 - 19 S. B. Dasgupta, *Introduction to Tantric Buddhism (ITB)*, pp. 158, 187.
G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, I, p. 242.
R. H. van Gulik, op. cit., pp. 341-42.
J. Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Vol. II, p. 428.
 - 20 The *Hathayogapradīpikā* describes the Vajrolī mudrā for the preservation of the semen thus: "By practising to draw in the *bindu* discharged during cohabitation, whether one be a man or woman, one obtains success in the practice of Vajrolī. By means of a pipe one should blow air slowly into the passage in the male-organ. By practice the discharged *bindu* is drawn out. One can draw back and preserve one's own discharged *bindu*. The yogī who can protect his *bindu* thus, overcomes death, because death comes by discharging *bindu* and life is prolonged by its preservation." (III, 83-87).
 - 21 *Gheraṇḍa Samhitā*, III, 24-44, 82.
For Mahā Mudrā see pl. VII of Theo Bernard, *Hathayoga*.
S. K. Majumdar, *Introduction to Yoga*, p. 160.
 - 22 Uḍḍiyāna Bandha: See T. Bernard, op. cit.,

- p. xxxiii, and S. K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 178. Jālandhara Bandha: See T. Bernard, op. cit., p. 71, and S. K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 174. Chinlock is performed in Padma or Siddha Āsana. Mūla Bandha is performed in Siddha Āsana. S. K. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 174.
- 23 S. B. Dasgupta, *I.T.B.*, p. 188 f.n. M. Eliade, op. cit., pp. 232-33, 406.
- 24 For detail of this psycho-physical "science," see *Ṣaṭchakranirūpaṇa*, edited by A. Avalon, and M. Eliade, op. cit. There are six *chakras* or centres in the human body. The names, from the base to the top, are Mūlādharā at the base of the spine, Svādhiṣṭhāna near the generative organ, Maṇipura near the navel, Anāhata near the heart, Viśuddha near the throat and Ājñā between the brows. Besides these six *chakras* there is the centre in the head called Brahmārandhra, figured as the pericarp of the Thousand Petalled Lotus within the crown of head.
- 25 M. Eliade, op. cit., p. 248.
- 26 M. Eliade, op. cit., pp. 117, 120. G. S. Ghurye, *Religious Consciousness*, pp. 150-51.
- 27 M. Eliade, op. cit., pp. 244-46. S. B. Dasgupta, op. cit., pp. 159, 166-67, f.n. 1 on p. 180.
- 28 P. C. Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantras*, pp. 6-7.
- 29 S. B. Dasgupta, op. cit., pp. 169 ff. M. Eliade, op. cit., p. 239.
- 30 G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, p. 224.
- 31 M. Eliade, op. cit., p. 61.
- 32 J. Needham, op. cit., II, pp. 148-50, 428-29.
- 33 *Vāmamārga* as quoted by A. Bharati, op. cit., pp. 265-66.
- 34 *Tārā-Bhakti-Sudhārṇava Tantra* (ed. by Avalon), p. 15.
- 35 C. Chakravarti, op. cit., p. 40.
- 36 A. Avalon, *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, p. 150, f.n. 6.
- 37 Chāṇḍeśvara, *Kṛityaratnākara*, p. 362, as mentioned by B. P. Mazumdar, *Socio-Economic History of Northern India*, p. 375.
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- 39 *Bṛihaddharma Purāṇa*, Bibliotheca Indica Series. H. P. Sastri, *Catalogue of Sanskrit MSS in the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. V, p. ccxiii. D. C. Sircar, op. cit., p. 106.
- 40 For ritualistic *maithuna* of the Tāntrikas, the reader may refer to descriptions by Agheyananda Bharati, op. cit., pp. 263-65, and by M. Eliade, op. cit., pp. 266-67. For procedure in Buddhist Tāntrism, see S. B. Dasgupta, op. cit., pp. 175-77.
- 41 C. Chakravarti, op. cit., p. 42. *Gandharva Tantra*, XXXVII, 14-15. *Tantrasāra* (P. Sastri's ed.), p. 649.
- 42 A. Bharati, op. cit., p. 232.
- 43 Kane, op. cit., V, ii, p. 1049.
- 44 *Chārudatta*, Act I.
- 45 G. M. Carstairs, *The Twice Born*, pp. 102-4.
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- 48 D. Shastri, *I.H.Q.*, VII, p. 135.
- 49 W. Ward, *The Hindoos*, pp. 194-95.
- 50 C. Chakravarti, op. cit., p. 81.
- 51 Noted by D. Chattopadhyaya, op. cit., p. 307, N. N. Bose, *Viśvakośa* (in Bengali), VII, p. 522.
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Chapter VIII The Hindu Temple in its Social Setting

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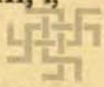
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- 74 J. Marshall, *Taxila*, Vol. II, pp. 493, 494, 495, 692; Vol. III, pl. 144.

Chapter X Expression of Sex in Literary Art

- 1 S. K. De, *Ancient Indian Erotics and Erotic Literature*, p. 21.
- 2 *H.C.I.P.*, Vol. IV, p. 383.
- 3 S. K. De, op. cit., p. 17, and in *History of Sanskrit Literature*, ed. by Dasgupta, p. 19.
- 4 S. K. De in *History of Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 27 ff.
For the recognized poetic standards and conventions De refers to Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa*, I, 14-19.
Viśvanātha's *Sāhitya-Darpaṇa*, VI, 315-25, VII, 23-24, etc.
Rājaśekhara's *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*, XIV.
- 5 S. K. De in *History of S.L.*, p. 25.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 7 M. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. III, part i, pp. 1, 4.
- 8 S. K. De, *Ancient Indian Erotics . . .*, p. 22.
- 9 Vidyākara, *Subhāṣitaratnakośa*, ed. by Kosambi and Gokhale, tr. by D. H. Ingalls, verses 616, 621, 622, 631.
- 10 S. K. De, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 370-71.
- 11 *H.C.I.P.*, Vol. V, p. 303.
- 12 D. D. Kosambi in Intro. to *Subhāṣitaratnakośa*, p. xlvii.
- 13 De in *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 372.
Winternitz, op. cit., Vol. III, i, p. 121 and f.n. 5.
- 14 C. Sivaramamurti, *M.A.S.I.*, No. 73, p. 17.
S. K. De, *Ancient Indian Erotics . . .*, p. 38.
- 15 Winternitz, op. cit., (Kohn's tr.) Vol. III, i, p. 53.



- 16 Ibid., pp. 54-55.
- 17 D. Kosambi, op. cit., p. xlvii.
- 18 S. K. De in *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 345.
- 19 G. Quackenbos, *The Sanskrit Poems of Mayura and Bana's Chandisataka*, p. 99, verse 3.
- 20 I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, tr. by J. Takakusu, p. 166.
- 21 *Buddhacharita*, V, 48-62.
D. Barrett, *Sculptures from Amaravati in the British Museum*, pl. XII.
- 22 C. Sivaramamurti, op. cit., p. 27, refers to a verse from the *Śṛiṅgāratilaka* quoted in the *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, 3.60.
- 23 N. R. Ray in *H.C.I.P.*, Vol. V, pp. 648-49.
- 24 S. K. De in *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 384.
- 25 Ibid., p. 62.
- 26 *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. VIII. Dhāra Praśasti of Arjunavarman. Only two acts of the play *Pārijāta-maṅjarī* have been found in the Praśasti.
- 27 *Mālatī-Mādhava*, II-5, pp. 43, 44, 65, VII-1, pp. 142-45.
- 28 M. Winternitz, op. cit., III, i, p. 395.
A. B. Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 309.
- 29 S. N. Dasgupta in *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. xx.
- 30 M. Winternitz, op. cit., III, i, p. 51.
- 31 Ibid., p. 52.
- 32 Ibid., p. 57.
Dasgupta, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. xvi.
Bhaṭṭi-Kāvya or *Rāvaṇa-Vadha*, XXII-34.
- 33 S. K. De, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 27-28.
- 34 Ibid., p. 27, fn. 2.
- 35 Ibid., p. 341.
- 36 Bühler, *The Life of Hemachandracharya*, p. 15.
- 37 S. K. De, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 350-51.
- 38 H. Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, Vol. I, pp. 75-76.
- 39 C. Sivaramamurti, op. cit., p. 17, fig. 3.
- 40 Ibid., pl. XIII, 41.
- 41 G. S. Ghurye, *Indian Costume*, pp. 275-79.
- 42 Amaru writes (verse 65): The condition of the bedsheet proclaims the enjoyment of the woman in various modes, for it is: (1) here dyed with betel juice, (2) there spoiled by the stains of black sandal paste, (3) here covered with the powder of camphor, and (4) there marked with foot-prints in lac-dye with extensive wavelike crumplings and flowers. According to Vemabhūpāla, the commentator, (1) is suggestive of *māṛjārikam*, (2) of *karipadabandhaviśeṣa*, (3) of *dhenuka* and (4) of *puruṣāyita*.
- 43 S. K. De, *Ancient Indian Erotics . . .*, p. 18.

Chapter XI Conclusion

- 1 J. Gonda, *New Indian Antiquary*, Vols. I, II.
- 2 R. Briffault, under "Fertility Rites," *Ency. R. E.*, VI, p. 192.



Glossary

Abhaya mudrā: Gesture of fearlessness and assurance, in which the hand is raised palm outward and fingers pointing upward.

Abhichāra: Use of magical devices for malevolent purposes.

Āchārya: A preceptor, religious teacher.

Advaya: Non-duality, specially of God and soul.

Aghorī: Terrifying, fearful.

Alaṅkāra: Decoration, ornamentation; when used in literature refers to a figure of speech.

Alaṅkāraśāstra: Science of rhetoric, poetics.

Alasakanyā: An "indolent" maiden; the word is used for female figures in Orissan art.

Ālīngana: An embrace.

Ānanda: Bliss.

Āñjali mudrā: A gesture of veneration and worship in which the palms are joined together.

Antahpura: Harem.

Antarāla: Vestibule in front of the *garbhagriha*.

Āpadraavya: The word used in Kāmasāstras for an artificial penis.

Apsaras: A heavenly damsel.

Ardhamandapa: The porch in front of the *mandapa*.

Artha: Wealth, prosperity. One of the four aims of life.

Āsana: A posture; a seat; a pedestal.

Āślīla: Obscene.

Āśoka: A tree with red flowers, *Saraca Indica*.

Ātimārgī: Follower of an extreme path.

Āyaka: Platform or pillar attached to *stūpa* in Andhra art.

Āyudha: A weapon.

Bāḍa: Wall, a cubical portion of a temple below the *śikhara* or *ganḍī*.

Bali: An oblation; a gift; an offering.

Bandha: A posture of sexual union.

Bāndhanā: Horizontal moulding between the rows of sculpture on the wall.

Baraṇḍa: A set of topmost mouldings of the *bāḍa*.

Bhaga: The pudendum; also good fortune, luck.

Bhaga-liṅga-kriyā: Actions involving female and male genital organs in Devī worship.

Bhakti: Devotion.

Bhāva: Sentiment.

Bhikshu: A monk.

Bhoga: Pleasure, sexual enjoyment; enjoyment of food, etc.

Bhogamandapa: In Orissan architecture a hall for offering food to the deity.

Bhaṭṭa: A Brāhman or prince holding a (feudal) title. *Bhaṭṭaputra* is a son of a *bhaṭṭa*.

Bīja: Seed, semen; the mystic letter forming the essence of the *mantra* of a deity.

Bindu: A point, a drop.

Brahmachārin: A celibate; a religious student who has taken a vow of celibacy.

Brahmacharya: Sexual abstinence, celibacy.

Brāhman: The first of the four castes of Hindu society.

Chaitya: A sanctuary, specially Buddhist.

Chakra: A circle in Tāntric rites; a subtle centre of energy in the human body.

Chakravartin: An emperor, universal monarch.

Chāmara: A fly-whisk.

Charita: A biographical account.

Chaurī: A fly-whisk.

Chitra: A picture, painting.

Chitrarata: Strange and novel poses of sexual congress.

Chitraśālā: An art gallery.

Chumbana: A kiss.

Daivī: Divine.

Dākinī: A Tāntric deity; a witch.

Dakṣina-nāyaka: A *nāyaka* who is courteous, polite.

- Dāmara*: A word used in Medieval Kashmir for feudal chiefs.
- Dāṃpatī*: Husband and wife, a married couple.
- Dāna*: Gift, donation.
- Daṇḍa*: A staff, club.
- Dāsī*: A female servant, maid.
- Deul*: Sanctuary, shrine.
- Devī*: A goddess; generally used for Umā, Śiva's wife.
- Devadāsī*: Literally, a servant of god; sacred prostitute serving in a temple.
- Dharma*: One of the four aims of life; duty; the prescribed mode of conduct; religion.
- Dhenukarata*: A posture of congress, described by Vātsyāyana, where the woman is in quadrupedal pose like a cow.
- Dhyāna*: Meditation.
- Dikpālas*: Guardians of the eight quarters.
- Dikṣā*: Initiation.
- Dīrghikā*: A long or oblong lake.
- Dohada*: The longing of a pregnant woman; also the longing of plants at budding time for the company of young girls.
- Dola*: A swing.
- Drāviḍa*: South Indian, Dravidian.
- Dūtī*: A female messenger.
- Dyūta*: Gambling.
- Gaṇa*: A demi-god, generally an attendant of Śiva.
- Gandharva*: A celestial musician.
- Gaṇḍī*: In Orissan architecture the curvilinear spire or pyramidal roof above the *bāḍa*.
- Gaṇikā*: A courtesan.
- Garbhagriha*: The sanctum of a temple enshrining an image or a symbol of the deity.
- Ghaṭa*: A pitcher, water-pot.
- Gopī*: A cowherd woman.
- Gopuram*: A gateway; in South Indian architecture a towered gate.
- Goṣṭhī*: An assembly, a (cultural) meeting for discussion; a management committee of a temple.
- Gotra*: Lineage.
- Goyūthika*: A promiscuous orgy described by Vātsyāyana.
- Guṇas*: Qualities, viz. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, which are manifest in all beings and substances.
- Guru*: A religious teacher, preceptor.
- Haṭha Yoga*: The corpus of psycho-physical techniques to attain mastery over the body and to gain *siddhis*.
- Jagamohana*: In Orissan architecture a hall attached to the sanctuary.
- Jāgaraṇa*: Keeping awake at night on certain festivals.
- Jagatī*: Masonry platform on which the temple is built.
- Jaṅghā*: Literally a thigh. In temple architecture, the wall of the temple.
- Japa*: Repetitive uttering of a *mantra* or name of a deity.
- Jaṭā*: Matted hair.
- Kachagraha*: Holding by the hair in love-making.
- Kākila*: The word used by Kāmasāstra writers for mutual oral-genital congress.
- Kakshāsana*: The sloping parapet of balcony forming the back of the seats inside.
- Kalaśa*: A pot; also the pot-shaped motif placed on the *śikhara* of the temple.
- Kalyāṇamaṇḍapa*: In South Indian architecture a hall for marriage of deities.
- Kāma*: One of the four aims of life; desire; desire of sexual enjoyment, love; name of the God of Love.
- Kāmakalā*: Art of sex, love.
- Kamaṇḍalu*: A vessel to hold water, generally with a spout.
- Kāmasāstra*: A treatise on the art of sex.
- Kaṇṭhāślesha*: Neck-embrace.
- Kapāla*: A skull.
- Kavacha*: An amulet, a charm.
- Kāvya*: A poetical composition; poetry.
- Kāyasādhanā*: Culture of the body.
- Kelī*: Amorous sport, play.
- Kelisaras*: A pond for amorous sports.
- Keyūra*: A bracelet worn on the upper arm, an armlet.
- Khākharā-muṇḍī*: A miniature representation of a temple with a roof of the *khākharā* (pumpkin-gourd) type.
- Kīmpuruṣa*: A mythical being with a human head and the body of a horse.
- Kīrtimukha*: A grotesque mask.
- Kriḍā*: A sport, pastime, play.
- Kriḍāparvata*: An artificial pleasure mount. Also called *kriḍāsaila*.
- Kulavadhū*: A married woman of a good family.
- Kumbha*: A water pot. In Nāgara architecture a moulding of the *vedibandha* above the plinth.
- Kumkuma*: Red powder considered to be auspicious, used in worship and applied on the forehead.

Kuṇḍala: An ear-ring.

Kuṇḍalinī: Energy or Śakti believed to be lying dormant in each individual in the Mūlādhāra Chakra at the base of the spine, which, when awakened and brought by the aspirant to the Sahasrāra Chakra in the head, leads to the state of Highest Bliss.

Kuṭṭanī: A bawd, an old prostitute.

Laukika: Of the people, popular.

Liṅga: The male genital organ; the phallic emblem of Śiva.

Liṅga-kriyā: Actions involving the male genital organ in Devī worship.

Liṅga-pūjā: Worship of the phallic emblem of Śiva.

Madanikā: In Hoysala art the name given to decorative female figures.

Madhupāna: Drinking of wine.

Madya: Spirituous liquor, wine.

Mahāmaṇḍapa: In Nāgara architecture a big hall between the *maṇḍapa* and *antarāla*.

Mahārājādhirāja: The King of kings.

Maithuna: Copulation, relating to copulation.

Makara: An aquatic animal, a kind of crocodile.

Makāra: In Tāntrism the use of five elements, *madya*, *māmsa*, *mīna*, *mudrā* and *maithuna*, starting with the letter m.

Māmsa: Flesh, meat.

Maṇḍala: A symbolic circle.

Maṇḍapa: A hall.

Māṅgala: Auspicious, lucky. Also used as a noun.

Māṅgalya: Auspiciousness, prosperity, luck.

Mantra: A formula sacred to a deity, incantation.

Maṭha: A monastery; a hospice and an educational centre attached to a temple.

Matsya: A fish.

Mekhalā: A girdle, a waist-band.

Mīna: A fish.

Mithuna: A pair, a couple.

Mokṣa: Liberation, the final aim of life.

Mudrā(s): Symbolic hand gestures; fried rice; a female partner in Tāntric rites; a particular posture of congress in Tāntric rites; attitudes or positions of the body in Haṭha Yoga through which the adept controls nerves and muscles of a particular region.

Muṇḍana: Tonsure of head.

Muṇḍī: A miniature temple design.

Muni: An ascetic, sage.

Nāḍī: A vein, artery.

Nāga: A snake, considered to be a deity. *Nāginī* is the female.

Nagara: A town, city.

Nāgara: The northern type of temple architecture.

Nāgaraka: A cultured citizen, town bred.

Nagaropavana: A city-garden.

Nakha-chhedyā: Nail-marks.

Narathara: A sculptured row on the plinth of the temple.

Nāṣamandira: In Orissan architecture a hall for dance.

Nāyaka: A hero of a literary composition.

Nāyikā: A heroine of a literary composition; a mistress.

Nidhi-śrīṅga: A cornucopia.

Nirandhāra prāsāda: A type of temple without a *pradakṣiṇā-patha* around the sanctum.

Nirvāṇa: In Buddhism complete extinction of individual or worldly existence.

Nyāsa: In Tāntrism a practice by which the aspirant identifies each part of his body with that of the deity.

Pābhāga: A set of lowermost mouldings at the base of the Orissan temple.

Padma: A lotus.

Pañchachūḍā: A goddess with five ornaments in her hair. We have used the word to group together such goddesses who wear hair ornaments, three, five or more.

Pañchamakāra: The five *makāras* of Tāntrism. Also called *pañchatattvas*.

Pañchāyatana: A temple with four subsidiary shrines.

Pañchopāsana: Worship of five deities by the Smārtas.

Parakīyā: The wife of another.

Paśu: An animal; in Tāntrism a disciple of lowest category.

Paṭa: A painting on cloth.

Piḍhā-muṇḍī: A miniature representation of a temple with a roof of *piḍhā* (wooden seat) type.

Piṇḍa: An offering to ancestors.

Pīṭha: A plinth; a pedestal; a seat; a seat of a deity, i.e., a centre or place of worship.

Pradakṣiṇā: Circumambulation in a clock-wise direction. *Pradakṣiṇā-patha* is a passage for circumambulation.

Prāṇāyāma: Yogic technique of breathing.

Prāsāda: A temple; a palace.

Praśasti: An eulogy, a panegyric.



Pūjā: Worship.

Pumśchalī: A prostitute.

Punya: Merit.

Pūrṇakumbha: A pitcher or pot full of water, considered to be an auspicious motif.

Purohita: A priest.

Pūrtadharma: Religious practice which involves charitable works, *dāna* to Brāhmins and building of temples, tanks, *maṭhas*, etc.

Puruṣārthas: Principal aims of human life which are Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa.

Puruṣāyita: A coital pose in which the woman plays the role of man. Also called *viparītarata*.

Puṣṭi: Welfare, prosperity.

Rajas: Female discharge; quality (*guṇa*) of motor energy and mental energy. *Rājasika* is adjective.

Rajopāna: Drinking of *rajas* in a Tāntric rite.

Rakṣā: Protection.

Raṅgamaṇḍapa: In Gujarat temples a hall for dance and drama.

Rasa: Sentiment suggested in a literary composition.

Rasikajana: A man of taste.

Rata: Sexual union.

Ratha: A chariot.

Rathayātrā: A festive procession of temple idols in a chariot.

Rati: Pleasure, love; wife of Kāmadeva.

Ratikriḍā: Love-play.

Ratimandira: A love-chamber, a pleasure-house.

Sādhaka: An aspirant, adept.

Sādhana: Spiritual discipline, worship.

Sādhu: A sage.

Sahaja: The natural state of pure spontaneity. The word is used for the state of non-duality which was the goal of the Sahajiyā sect.

Sajāyāpānagoṣṭhi: A meeting or party for drinks where wives are invited.

Śākhās: Jambs of a door.

Sakhī: A friend.

Śakti: Power, energy; the female personification of divine energy; the consort of a god in Tāntrism; the partner of the aspirant in Tāntric rites.

Śalabhañjikā: A word used for the woman and tree motif. Originally, a rite in which a young woman made the tree bloom by her touch, "kick," smile or similar gestures.

Samabhaṅga: A standing posture in which the figure is equipoised, firm and erect without any flexions

of the body and with the weight equally distributed on both the legs.

Samādhi: Perfect absorption of thought into the object of meditation.

Sāmanta: A feudatory, a vassal.

Sambhoga: Enjoyment; sexual union.

Sambhoga-chihnāni: Marks of love-making, *nakha-chhedyā*, *danta-chhedyā*, etc.

Samyiddhi: Prosperity, abundance, affluence.

Samsāra: Worldly existence.

Sāndhāra prāsāda: A type of temple with a *pradakṣiṇā-patha* around the sanctum.

Saṅghātaka: An erotic group, described by Vātsyāyana, consisting of two men and a woman or two women and a man.

Saṅgītaka: A performance of music and dance.

Sannyāsa: Renunciation.

Sannyāsi: A Hindu religious mendicant.

Śānti: Peace, pacification of evil spirits.

Śārdūla: A mythical animal with leonine features.

Śāstra: A treatise; any department of knowledge, science.

Sattva: Quality (*guṇa*) of intelligence, goodness, luminosity. *Sāttvika* is adjective.

Siddhi: Acquisition of superhuman or magical power; accomplishment.

Śikhā: A lock of hair on the crown of the head.

Śikhara: Spire of the temple.

Śilpa: Art.

Śilpaśāstra: A treatise on architecture, sculpture and allied arts.

Śilpin: An artist; a craftsman.

Simha: A lion.

Śīrṣāsana: A head-down posture in Haṭha Yoga.

Śiṣya: A disciple.

Śreṣṭhin: A merchant, a head of a mercantile guild.

Śṛiṅga: A horn.

Śṛiṅgāra: The erotic sentiment; eroticism.

Śṛiṅgāraṇa: A rite of the Pāśupata sect in which the aspirant makes amorous gestures on seeing a young girl.

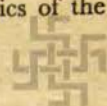
Stambhana: A magical act of arresting, obstructing, hindering.

Strī-ratna: A "jewel among women" who is one of the accompaniments of a Chakravartin monarch.

Stūpa: Originally a funeral tumulus; a Buddhist monument erected over the sacred relics of the Buddha.

Śubha: Auspicious.

Suddhi: Purification.



Sūdra: The lowest of the main four castes of Hindu society.

Śulka: Toll, tax.

Surasundarī: A heavenly damsel; generally used for the female figures adorning a temple.

Surata: Coition.

Surataśrama: Exhaustion due to *surata*.

Svastika: An auspicious symbol.

Svyaṁvara: A form of marriage where the girl chooses her husband out of a vast gathering of invitees.

Tala-jaṅghā: The lower portion of the wall between the *pābhāga* and *bāndhanā* mouldings.

Tamas: Quality (*guṇa*) of darkness, ignorance, inertia. *Tāmasika* is adjective.

Tapas: Austerity, penance.

Tapasvin: An ascetic, a person practising penance.

Tarjanī mudrā: A hand-gesture where the projected forefinger points upwards.

Thakkura: A princeling in feudal hierarchy.

Tīrtha: A place of pilgrimage.

Tīrthayātrā: Going on a pilgrimage.

Toraṇa: A gate.

Triratna: A trident symbol used in Buddhism to represent the Buddha, the Law and the Order.

Trisūla: A trident.

Upar-jaṅghā: The upper wall between the *bāndhanā* and *baraṇḍa* mouldings.

Upāsana: Worship, religious meditation.

Upavana: A garden.

Utsava: A festival.

Utsavasamāja: A festive gathering.

Utānapad: Term used for a pose in which the legs of the figure are stretched out or extended.

Vāhana: A conveyance; vehicle of gods.

Vairāgya: Detachment; indifference to worldly desires.

Vājīkaraṇa: Stimulation by aphrodisiacs.

Vāmana: A dwarf. *Vāmanikā* is a female dwarf.

Vaṇik: A merchant; a trader.

Vāraṇārtham: For the purpose of warding off, defending, resisting.

Varṇāśramadharmā: Duty of maintaining the order of the four castes.

Vaśīkaraṇa: A magical act of winning over, subjugating.

Vāstu: The site of a building.

Vārāṅganā: A prostitute. Also called *vāravilāsini*, *vārastrī*, *vārayoṣit*.

Vedī: An altar.

Vedibandha: The portion of the temple wall above the *pītha* generally consisting of four mouldings, viz. *khura*, *kumbha*, *kalaśa* and *kapotali*.

Vedikā: A railing.

Veśa: Residence or locality of prostitutes.

Veśyā: A prostitute.

Vidhi: A rite, practice.

Vidūṣaka: A jester in Sanskrit plays who is a companion of the hero.

Vidyādharma: A supernatural being who flies in the sky; an epithet meaning possessor of (esoteric) knowledge.

Vihāra: A Buddhist monastery.

Vilāsini: A coquettish woman; a harlot.

Vimāna: Sanctuary.

Viparīta rata: An inverse pose of sexual union in which the woman plays the role of man. Same as *puruṣāyita*.

Vīra: Hero; heroic; in Tāntrism a type of disciple who can actually perform the *pañcamakāras*.

Vīrya: Semen, sexual energy.

Vīṭa: A courtier.

Vyānata rata: Coital union from rear in which the woman is bent from the waist downward.

Vrata: A vow.

Vyāla: A mythical composite animal with leonine features.

Yāga: A religious ceremony.

Yajña: A sacrificial rite.

Yajamāna: A host, a patron who performs a sacrifice.

Yakṣa: A demi-god associated with the fertility of earth, vegetation, etc. *Yakṣī* is the female.

Yantra: A mystic diagram in Tāntrism. *Yāntric* is adjective.

Yātrā: A festive procession. Pilgrimage.

Yavāṅkura: A shoot of barley.

Yoga: A discipline involving psycho-physical practices with the aim of realizing the concentration of the mind, the knowledge of the different states of consciousness and the union with the Supreme Spirit.

Yogapaṭṭa: A cloth tied around the legs to enable one to sit with knees raised up in a meditation posture.

Yoni: The female organ of generation.



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Drawing of Awra plaque accompanying photograph 13. (Adapted from Dr H. V. Trivedi's article in *J.M.P.I.P.*, No. 4.)

List of Photographs (with notes)

Frontispiece

Maithuna, music-playing and dancing near goddesses; panel on the entrance of the temple, Bavka; about late 12th century A.D.

Ritual sex near the goddess was believed to be an essential part of fertility cults, and in Tāntric cults it was believed to be a *makāra* which was offered to the deity in order to propitiate her and to gain *siddhis*. *Makārapañchakam devī devatā-pritidāyakam*; *pañchamena bhavet bhogī sarvasiddhi-parāyaṇa*. *Kaulāvalī-nirṇaya*, IV.

Rupar Stone Disc

- 1 "Opulent" Mother goddess and her partner or priest; *cir.* 3rd century B.C.

On the right, the goddess, shown nude, stands equipoised in a *samabhaṅga* pose. A male stands on her left with some object, probably a cup, in his hand which he seems to be offering to her. To her right is a shrine of leaves probably indicating the folk or tribal origin of the cult. On the extreme left is a fully clad female, with hair arranged in a plait, probably a human representative of the goddess, who receives some object from the male sitting on her left. The inner zone repeats the figure of the goddess.

Rajgir Steatite Plaque

- 2 "Opulent" goddess and her partner or priest; *cir.* 245-105 B.C.

Another important piece of evidence on the cult of this goddess which represents music-playing, dancing and offering of a cup, probably containing wine. The role of the male partner in the cult of this goddess is noteworthy in this photograph and in photograph 1.

Tamluk Terracotta (now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.)

- 3 *Pañchachūdā* goddess; *cir.* 2nd century B.C.

A beautiful specimen representing the goddess with five *āyudhas* in her elaborate head-dress. Her hands touch the *mekhalā*, an act which is a common feature in representations of fertility goddesses.

Ahichchhatra Terracottas

- 4 *Pañchachūdā* goddess and her partner; *cir.* 200-100 B.C.

The goddess with three *āyudhas* in her head-dress touches the girdle of her partner. He puts his left hand around her back and holds in his right hand a lute, which possibly indicates that music was played in the rites of the goddess.

- 5 An amorous couple; *cir.* 100 B.C.-A.D. 100.

This plaque represents a human couple as distinct from the divine pairs of earlier photographs and has similarities with couples on contemporary stone monuments.

Mathura Terracotta (now in the Archaeological Museum, Mathura.)

- 6 An amorous couple; about 2nd-1st century B.C.

Chandraketugarh Terracottas (now in the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta.)

- 7 The orgiastic group; about 2nd-1st century B.C.

The *uttānapad* pose of the female partner of the central couple, the two female figures seated by the side of the couple in *uttānapad* pose and with hands in *añjali mudrā*, and the dancing figures on the top portion of the plaque are all indicative of ritual significance. The head-down pose in which the male partner is shown was

represented in art about 1100 years before the Khajuraho sculptures.

- 8 An erotic group representing a couple and an attendant.
- 9 A woman sitting in *uttānapad* pose with an arrow-like object in her right hand.
- 10 A *maithuna*-couple.

Though the couple is in a standing pose, the position of the legs of the female partner resembles that of the Nude goddess in *uttānapad* pose.

Tamluk Terracotta (now in the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta.)

- 11 A *maithuna*-couple on a chair; about 2nd-1st century B.C.

Kausambi Terracotta (now in the National Museum, New Delhi.)

- 12 An erotic couple on a chair; about 2nd-1st century B.C.

Ritualistic significance is indicated by the fact that the female is touching her own ear-ring and the male is touching the *mekhalā* of the female.

Awra Terracotta

- 13 Goddess Śrī and couples on either side; *cir.* 100 B.C.-A.D. 300. Photograph and drawing.

The plaque provides important evidence on the role of couples in the cult of Śrī, the goddess of fruitfulness, wealth and prosperity. The goddess touches her right ear-ring and stands on a lotus.

Sanchi Stūpa II

- 14 Goddess Śrī and a couple; railing, about 2nd century B.C.

Bharhut (now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.)

- 15 Goddess Śrī touching her own breast, medalion of railing pillar, 2nd century B.C.

This is a gesture of abundance and bounty. The elephants on either side keep her moist (*ārdra*) symbolizing the fertilizing of a female deity.

- 16 A couple; railing pillar, about 2nd century B.C.

- 17 Sudarśanā Yakṣī; railing pillar, about 2nd century B.C.

The Yakṣī stands on a *makara* with her right hand in *tarjanī mudrā*. Such divinities of popular religion were accepted in the Buddhist pantheon of the time.

Sanchi Stūpa I

- 18 *Śālabhañjikā*; East gate, 1st century B.C.

Above this figure an amorous pair is shown perched between two peacocks. Further above Gaja-Lakṣmī sits amidst luxuriant lotuses.

Bodh Gaya

- 19 Vegetation rite; railing pillar, 1st century B.C.
- 20 An amorous couple; railing pillar, 1st century B.C.

A peeping attendant reminds us of the favourite imagery of Sanskrit writers.

Mathura

- 21 An amorous couple and a female attendant; stone slab from Mathura 1st-2nd century A.D. (Now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.)
- 22 A drunken woman helped by her lover; on a stone bowl found from a Buddhist *vihāra*, Mathura, 1st-2nd century A.D. (Now in the National Museum, New Delhi.)

The motif was popular in the period and has been found in the art of Kausambi, Sankisa, Tusran-Bihar, Nasik Cave III (door-jamb), etc.

Kondane

- 23 Amorous figures; frieze on the front façade, *chaitya*-cave, *cir.* 2nd-1st century B.C.

Karle

- 24 A *mithuna* on the entrance; *chaitya*-cave, early 2nd century A.D.

The word *mithuna* is used in Karle inscriptions for such couples, two of which were gifts from a Buddhist *bhikṣu*.

Nagarjunakonda

- 25 A couple expressing poetic imagery; 3rd century A.D.

The *nāyikā* fills the beak of the parrot with her

ear-jewel so that it stops uttering before others the love-dialogues it had heard at night.

- 26 A slab depicting both Buddhist scenes and *mithunas*, Nagarjunakonda, 3rd century A.D.

The *mithunas* poetically express the various moods and sentiments (*bhāvas*) of the *nāyaka* and *nāyikā*. The motif has the decorative function of separating panels representing Buddhist scenes. It also satisfied the tastes of the city-bred patrons whose names are generally carved on such sculptured stones. This stone slab bears the name of Kumāranandin, a member of a trading community, who must have approved of his name being put on the slab depicting amorous figures near Buddhist scenes. In the value system of the patrons and the public there was no contradiction involved in placing together the *mithunas* and the Buddhist scenes.

Deogarh

- 27 Door, Vaiṣṇava temple, *cir.* early 6th century A.D.

The auspiciousness of *mithunas* is here recognized in their placement on the door along with other *maṅgala* motifs such as *gaṇas* and creepers, reminding us of the dictum in the contemporary treatise, the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, 56, 14-15.

- 28 Detail of the right door-jamb.

Ajanta

- 29 *Mithunas* on the door-jamb, Cave I, *cir.* A.D. 600.

Aihole

- 30 View of Durga temple showing *mithunas* on pillars, about 6th-7th century A.D.

- 31 An amorous *mithuna*; pillar, Ladkhan temple, about 6th-7th century A.D.

A shy *nāyikā* resists her lover.

- 32 An amorous *mithuna*; Huchchipaya Maṭha.

The woman is in a *vṛikṣādhiruḍhaka* pose. Both the partners are involved in *kachagraha*.

Pattadakal

- 33 A *mithuna*; Pāpanātha temple, 8th century A.D.

- 34 Erotic couples; on a pillar, Mallikārjuna temple, 8th century A.D.

Bhubaneswar

- 35 A *maithuna*-couple and a child; in a recessed

portion of the *gaṇḍi*, Paraśurāmeśvara temple, 7th century A.D.

This is one of the earliest depictions of *maithuna* in the temple art of Orissa. The presence of the child in the scene associates it with family surroundings rather than with a Tāntric rite. Its hidden position in the sculptural scheme indicates that it was not meant for the enunciation of Tāntric doctrines.

- 36 A male in exhibitionistic pose and a female in *śālabhañjikā* pose; in a recessed portion of the *gaṇḍi*, Paraśurāmeśvara temple, 7th century A.D.

This scene is placed near the *maithuna* depiction of photograph 35.

- 37 Erotic couples on a stone slab, 7th century A.D.

- 38 Erotic couples; on the *gaṇḍi*, Vaitāl temple, 8th century A.D.

- 39 Section of the *bāḍa* and *gaṇḍi*, Vaitāl temple, 8th century A.D.

Two *mithunas* flank a niched Devī on the *bāḍa*. Ithyphallic Śiva sits in the company of Umā in a niche above. Further above, ithyphallic Lakuliśa is seen in a roundel of the *chaitya*-design.

- 40 *Chaitya*-design showing ithyphallic Naṭarāja, Sūrya in his chariot, with couples on either side; *śikhara*, Vaitāl temple, 8th century A.D.

- 41 Lakuliśa in a *chaitya*-design and a man with two women in a niche below; *gaṇḍi*, Śīśireśvara temple, 8th century A.D.

- 42 A couple in a recessed portion of the *jaṅghā* and a *nāyikā* with child on the outer projection, Rājārāṇī temple, early 11th century A.D.

The female partner makes the hand gesture of *abhaya mudrā*.

- 43 An erotic couple; *jaṅghā*, Rājārāṇī temple, early 11th century A.D.

Here also the female puts forward her right hand in *abhaya mudrā*.

- 44 Couples in *muṇḍis* on *anuratha paṇas* of the *śikhara*, Brahmeśvara temple, A.D. 1060.

- 45 Erotic scenes in *pidhā muṇḍis*, north-western subsidiary shrine, Brahmeśvara temple.

- 46 An amorous couple on lotus pedestal; *uṇar jaṅghā*, jagamohana, Liṅgarāja temple, 11th century A.D.

- 47 Detail of photograph 46.
- 48 An erotic couple on lotus pedestal; *jagamohana*, Liṅgarāja temple, 11th century A.D.
- 49 A couple in a sitting *bandha*; *pābhāga*, Liṅgarāja temple.
- 50 A couple facing frontally, on the lotus pedestal; *bhogamaṇḍapa*, north wall, Liṅgarāja temple; about 13th–14th century A.D.
The pose reminds us of the *Tab-Tum* image of Tāntric Buddhism.
- 51 *Maithuna*-couples in *piḍhā* and *khākharā muṇḍis*; *nāṭamandira*, Liṅgarāja temple, about 13th–14th century A.D.

Konarak

- 52 *Jagamohana* of the Sūrya temple from east, 13th century A.D.
Life-size erotic couples on the *upar-jāṅghā* merge with other decorative elements.
- 53 Erotic group of type IV-A in the spoke of a wheel. Detail of photograph 55.
- 54 Oral-genital congress; in the spoke of another wheel.
- 55 Part of a wheel of Sūrya's chariot. Erotic motifs fill the rim and spokes of the wheel in several minute spaces.
- 56 Platform wall.
The upper row shows, in each of the two scenes, a *dakṣiṇa-nāyaka* with two partners, and *alasa-nyās*. The lower row shows an erotic group of type III-C, *alasa-nyās* and *nāginīs*.
- 57 A *nāga-mithuna*; platform wall.
- 58 An erotic couple; platform wall.
- 59 A *maithuna*-couple.
- 60 An erotic couple; platform wall.
- 61 An erotic couple; platform wall.
An example of erotic realism.

Padhavli

- 62 Sculptural decoration, in the interior of the *maṇḍapa*, 10th century A.D.
A *maithuna*-couple in bed is seen on the extreme left. Representation of different gods with consorts suggest Smārta-Tāntric affiliation.

Gyraspur

- 63 Aṭha Khambā, early 10th century A.D.
Among the sculptures on the lintel can be seen a man performing *liṅga-pūjā*, ascetics (with *jaṭā*) dancing and in the company of women.

Khajuraho

- 64 An orgiastic scene showing a royal person and a monk with women; northern *jaṅghā*, Lakṣmaṇa temple, 10th century A.D.
- 65 Part of an orgiastic scene; platform, Lakṣmaṇa temple, 10th century A.D.
- 66 Couples, one of them involved in *maithuna*, and an exhibitionistic female figure; wall of the *garbhagriha* facing *pradakṣiṇāpatha*, Pārśvanātha temple, 10th century.
- 67 Section of southern wall, Kandriyā Mahādeva, 11th century A.D.
- 68 An orgiastic group, detail of photograph 67.
An aristocratic person is practising the *śīrṣāsana* pose.
- 69 An intimate couple.
- 70 Couples, divine and human; Dulādeva temple, early 12th century A.D.

Modhera

- 71 Section of the *raṅgamaṇḍapa*, showing erotic motifs on the *kakshāsana*, *kumbha* and *narathara*, 11th century A.D.
- 72 *Kakshāsana* panels; detail of photograph 71.
- 73 Orgiastic groups; on *narathara*.
- 74 An orgiastic group; on a pillar of the *raṅgamaṇḍapa*.
- 75 An orgiastic group; on a pillar of the *raṅgamaṇḍapa*.
- 76 A *maithuna*-couple and warriors; on *narathara*.

Galtesvara

- 77 An erotic group; on *narathara*, 12th century A.D.

Motap

- 78 General view of the temple, Motap, about 11th century.
The *kumbha* row shows on the right side the goddess Chāmuṇḍā seated in the *uttānapad*

pose. Musicians and a female dancer are seen on her left, and an orgiastic group is seen on her right. The rest of the *kumbha* row shows couples flanking seated niched deities. The *narathara* row also has a few coital couples. The *jaṅghā* shows *surasundarīs*, deities and ascetics, but not erotic couples, which is in accordance with the *śilpa*-canons of the Gujarat region.

- 79 Erotic figures; on *kumbha* and *narathara*.

Bavka

- 80 A deity in a niche and erotic figures; on *kumbha*, about late 12th century.
81 An orgiastic group; on *kumbha*.
82 Music, dance and sex; on *kumbha*.
83 *Maithuna* and hunting scenes; on *narathara*.
84 Goddesses and couples; panel at the entrance.

Dabhoi

- 85 Goddess and erotic figures; *kumbha* of fort wall, 13th century A.D.
86 Section of the fort wall showing erotic figures on the *kumbha*.

Ambernath

- 87 An orgiastic group; on *kumbha* of the Śaiva temple, 11th century A.D.
88 Detail of photograph 87, showing ascetics in the scene.
89 Śiva in a niche, on the left a man involved in self-fellation, an erotic couple and an exhibitionistic female; *kumbha*.
90 An orgiastic scene showing ascetics; *kumbha*.

Belur

- 91 *Kakshāsana* panels showing warriors and women, Keśava temple, 12th century A.D.
92 Erotic scenes in a decorative scroll pattern, plinth.
93 Detail of photograph 92.
The theme of self-fellation was widely depicted in the Mysore region. See photograph 103 of Bagali.

Halebid

- 94 *Kakshāsana* panels showing warriors and women, Hoysalesvara temple, 12th century A.D.

From left to right a warrior with a woman, a *maithuna* couple, a military aristocrat, and warriors.

- 95 *Kakshāsana* panels showing sexual scenes, Hoysalesvara temple.

Somanathapur

- 96 External decoration showing erotic figures on the *kakshāsana*, Keśava temple, 13th century A.D.

Art Remains of Ballāla II's Time

- 97 A stone slab forming part of the *kakshāsana*, Raṅganātha temple, Halebid, 12th–13th century. Now in the site Museum, Halebid.
98 Detail of photograph 97.

This is an example illustrating the use of force in sexual relationship—far from representing Ānanda or Tāntric goal of non-duality.

- 99 A detached stone slab forming part of the *kakshāsana*, Belur, 12th–13th century.

Belgamve

- 100 *Puruṣāyita* union; panel, Tripurāntaka temple, about 12th century A.D.

The central couple is shown in *puruṣāyita* union. On the right Aśvamukhī Yakṣī stands with a partner. On the left is another couple.

Bagali

- 101 Sexual scenes on the wall below the *śikhara*, 12th century A.D.
102 Sexual scenes on the wall below the *śikhara*.
103 Fellatio and self-fellation; wall below the *śikhara*.
104 Sexual scenes on the wall below the *śikhara*.
105 A side door of the western shrine showing couples on the jambs and auspicious Gaja-Lakṣmī on the lintel.

Vijayanagara

- 106 *Maithuna*; on a pilaster, Hundred-pillared hall of the Viṭṭhala temple, 16th century.
107 An erotic group; on a pillar of a subsidiary structure, Achyutarāya's temple, 16th century.

Rathas

- 108 A Kāmaśāstriya pose; on a wooden *ratha*, Vijayanagara.

- 109 Mutual mouth-congress; on a wooden *ratha*, Nanjangud near Mysore.

Rathas are used for the processions of the temple celebrated on festivals originally connected with fertility rites which often involved *āstīla* (obscene) words and gestures and lascivious songs and dances by *devadāsīs*. Hence the depiction of erotic figures on *rathas*.

Divine Pairs

- 110 Umā-Maheśvara; on the *śikhara*, Paraśurāmeśvara temple, Bhubaneswar, 7th century A.D.
111 Umā-Maheśvara; Khajuraho, about 11th century A.D.

The representation of Brahmā and Viṣṇu on the top, along with Umā and Śiva, indicates syncretism in religious practices emphasized by the Smārtas, who worshipped five gods. The fifth god Gaṇeśa is shown on the bottom left.

- 112 Śakti-Gaṇeśa, Khajuraho.
113 Lakṣmī-Viṣṇu, Belur, 12th century.

Worship of Goddess

- 114 The Nude goddess with a lotus as the head and in *uttānapad* pose; Alampur, 8th century A.D.
115 Ascetics worshipping the goddess and her symbolic form; Chausath Yoginī temple, Bherāghat, 10th century A.D.
116 A female deity; on a pillar, Minākshī temple, Madura, about 17th century A.D.
117 A female sitting in *uttānapad* pose with marks of worship on her yoni; on a pillar, Hundred-pillared hall, Viṭhala temple, Vijayanagara, 16th century.
118 Goddess Chāmuṇḍā sitting in *uttānapad* pose, attended by female followers in semi-dancing poses, with an orgiastic group on her right; Motap, about 11th century A.D.
119 Goddesses and couples; Bavka, about late 12th century A.D.
120 Men propitiating the goddess by *liṅga-kriyā*; on a pillar, Ambernath, 11th century A.D.

The expression *bhaga-liṅga-kriyā* is used by Jīmūtavāhana in his *Kālavivēka* (p. 514) for actions involving female and male sex organs in the rites of Devī in order to propitiate her.

Exposing of Generative Organs

- 121 A woman exposing herself; recessed portion of *śikhara*, Ambernath, 11th century A.D.
122 A woman exposing herself near a phallus-like object; Konarak, 13th century.
This motif is also seen in the 12th-13th century temples of Bhubaneswar.
123 A woman exposing herself; Khajuraho, 10th century.
124 The "phallus-man"; Bagali, 12th century.
125 A woman exposing herself and a nude ascetic, Belur, 12th century.
126 A *gaṇa* exposing himself near Rāvaṇa; Paraśurāmeśvara temple, Bhubaneswar, 7th century A.D.
This act probably represents the apotropaic function of the genital organ.
127 An ascetic exposing himself; Galtessvara, 12th century.
Portion of a figure of female exposing herself can be seen on the extreme left.

Auto-Erotism

- 128 An auto-erotic female; Konarak.

Bestiality and Child-Birth

- 129 Bestiality and child-brith scene; *narathara*, Modhera, 11th century.

Bestiality

- 130 A bestiality scene; on a pillar, Roda, 11th century (now in the Museum, Baroda).
Compare text fig. XXI of Ambernath. The involvement of a second figure suggests that it was some sort of a ritual. Though there is no literary evidence on the subject, the study of Comparative Religion shows that beliefs in the sacred potency of animals considered to be representative of gods were widely recognized in many cultures and that women had actual or symbolic relations with animals for fertility purposes.
131 A bestiality scene; Konarak, 13th century.

Child-Birth

- 132 A woman giving birth; Ambernath, 11th century.

- 133 A child-birth and *maithuna* scene, Bavka, late 12th century.

The theme is depicted on either side of a goddess on the *kumbha* of the temple.

Hair-Cutting and Sex

- 134 A scene showing hair-cutting and cunnilingus; Bhubaneswar, 11th century.
- 135 A scene showing hair-cutting and *maithuna*; Konarak, 13th century.
- 136 A scene showing hair-cutting and *maithuna*; Bagali, 12th century.

Linga-Pūjā

- 137 Couples near Śiva-linga; on a pillar, Mallikārjuna temple, Pattadakal, 8th century.
- 138 A *linga-pūjā* scene; *narathara*, Modhera, 11th century.

Tāntrikas

- 139 Bhairava, Chāmunda and their followers; plinth, Hoysalesvara temple, Halebid, 12th century.
- 140 Kāpālīnī and followers; plinth, Hoysalesvara temple, Halebid, 12th century.
- 141 Preparation of aphrodisiac drugs or elixir amidst a scene of sexual orgy; on the platform, Lakṣmaṇa temple, Khajuraho, 10th century.
- 142 Ascetics in an orgiastic scene; on the platform, Lakṣmaṇa temple, Khajuraho.
- 143 Ascetics in an orgiastic scene; on the *jaṅghā*, Viśvanātha temple, Khajuraho, 11th century.
- 144 An ascetic with a woman in mutual mouth congress; Dulādeva temple, Khajuraho, 12th century.
- 145 An ascetic with women; on a pillar, *raṅgamaṇḍapa*, Modhera, 11th century.
- 146 An ascetic in a *saṅghāṭaka* scene; pillar, Roda (now in the Museum, Baroda), 11th century A.D.
- Compare the hand-pose of the ascetic with the hand-poses of worshippers in the *linga-pūjā* scene, photograph 138.
- 147 Ascetics in an orgiastic group; *narathara*, Modhera, 11th century A.D.

The ascetic on the left has raised his left hand like Śaiva worshippers in photograph 138 and the ascetic in photograph 146.

- 148 Ascetics in a *saṅghāṭaka* scene; *kakshāsana* panel, Hoysalesvara temple, Halebid, 12th century A.D.
- 149 An ascetic and an aristocrat in a *saṅghāṭaka* scene; *kakshāsana* panel of Ballāla II's time, Halebid.
- 150 An ascetic with a woman in mutual mouth congress; Bagali, 12th century A.D.
- 151 Pāsupata ascetics exhibiting themselves near a beautiful woman in *śṛiṅgāraṇa-vidhi*; on a pillar, Kanchipuram.

Scenes reflecting Society and Religion

- 152 A dancing girl near a religious *āchārya*; on a platform, Lakṣmaṇa temple, Khajuraho, 10th century A.D.

Literary and epigraphic accounts inform us that the religious heads of temples and *mathas* demanded the services of *devadāsīs* and *vārāṅganās*.

- 153 King Narasimhadeva discoursing with *śilpīns* and priests; Konarak (now in the National Museum, New Delhi), 13th century A.D.

The panel at the bottom seems to depict *dāna* (gift-making) of an elephant, a horse, etc.

- 154 King Narasimhadeva as worshipper of three deities, Devī-Mahiṣāsura-mardini, Jagannātha and Śiva; Konarak (now in the National Museum, New Delhi).

This is an important sculpture shedding light on the religious life of the period. The worship of the three deities and the building of the temple of Sūrya indicate the Smārta affiliation of the King. The lower panel seems to represent two temple-priests on the left and other temple functionaries or Brāhmins. A similar sculpture showing the King with three temple-priests standing near the three deities is in the site Museum, Konarak.

- 155 King Viṣṇuvardhana (?) of the Hoysala dynasty in his court; Keśava temple, Belur.



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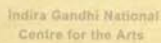


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INDIA
ANCIENT AND
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SWAT
TAXILA
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PAKISTAN
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GANGA
TIBET
NEPAL
PIPRAWA
BHU
SIKKIM
BHUTAN
KAMAKHYA
BRAHMAPUTRA
NAGDA
KIRADU
KHED-BRAHMA
SIDHAPUR
SUNAK
MODHERA
MOTAP
AHMEDABAD
GALTESVARA
BAVKA
DABHOI
SEJAKPUR
SOMANATH
WARKA
NARMADA
TAPI
BALSANE
PITALKHORA
AJANTA
NASHIK
SINNAR
ELLORA
AURANGABAD
AMBERNATH
KANHERI
BOMBAY
KONDANE
KARLE
POONA
SATARA
GODAVARI
NAGARJUNAKONDA
AMRAVATI
KISHNA
ALAMPUR
VIJAYANAGARA
BADAMI
PATTADAKAL
AIOLE
HANGAL
BAGALI
BELUR
HALEBID
MYSORE
SOMNATHAPUR
KAVERI
MADRAS
KANCHIPURAM
KUMBHAKONAM
MADURA
ARANG
SIRPUR
MANIKOTI
BHUBANESWAR
PURH
KONARAK
RATNAGIRI
TAMLUK
KHICHING
CHANDRAKETUGARH
CALCUTTA
PATNA
VARANASI
BOOH
GAYA
RAJGIR
PAHARPUR
BANGLADESH
BAY OF BENGAL
CEYLON





1 Stone disc depicting "opulent" goddess and her partner or priest; Rupar.



2 Steatite plaque depicting "opulent" goddess and her partner or priest; Rajgir.





3 *Pañchachūdā* goddess; terracotta, Tamluk.

4 *Pañchachūdā* goddess and her partner; terracotta, Ahichchhatra.





5 An amorous couple; terracotta, Ahichchhatra.



6 An amorous couple; terracotta, Mathura.





7 An orgiastic group; terracotta, Chandraketugarh.

8 An erotic group; terracotta, Chandraketugarh.



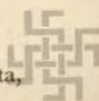
Left

9 A seated female with an arrow-like object in her right hand; terracotta, Chandraketugarh.



Right

10 A *maithuna* couple; terracotta, Chandraketugarh.





11 A *maithuna* couple on a chair; terracotta, Tamluk.

12 An erotic couple on a chair; terracotta, Kausambi.





13 *Photograph and drawing: Goddess Śrī and couples on either side; terracotta plaque, Awra.*



14 Goddess Śrī and a couple; railing, Sanchi Stūpa II.



15 Goddess Śrī touching her own breast;
medallion of railing pillar, Bharhut.

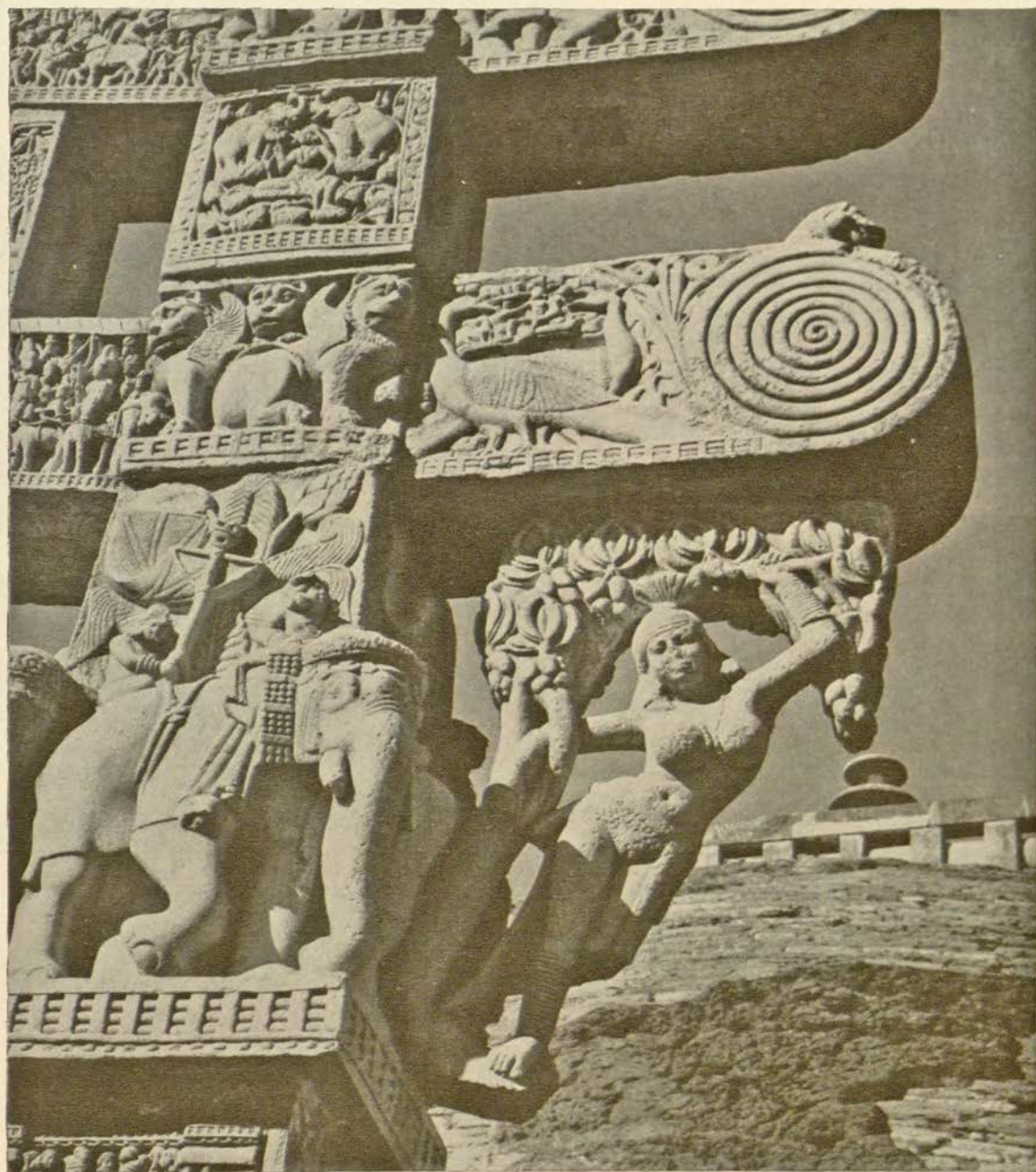




16 A couple; railing pillar, Bharhut.



17 Sudarśanā Yakṣī; railing pillar, Bharhut.



18 *Śālabhañjikā*; East gate, Sanchi Stūpa I.





20 An amorous couple; railing pillar, Bodh Gaya.

19 Vegetation rite; railing pillar, Bodh Gaya.



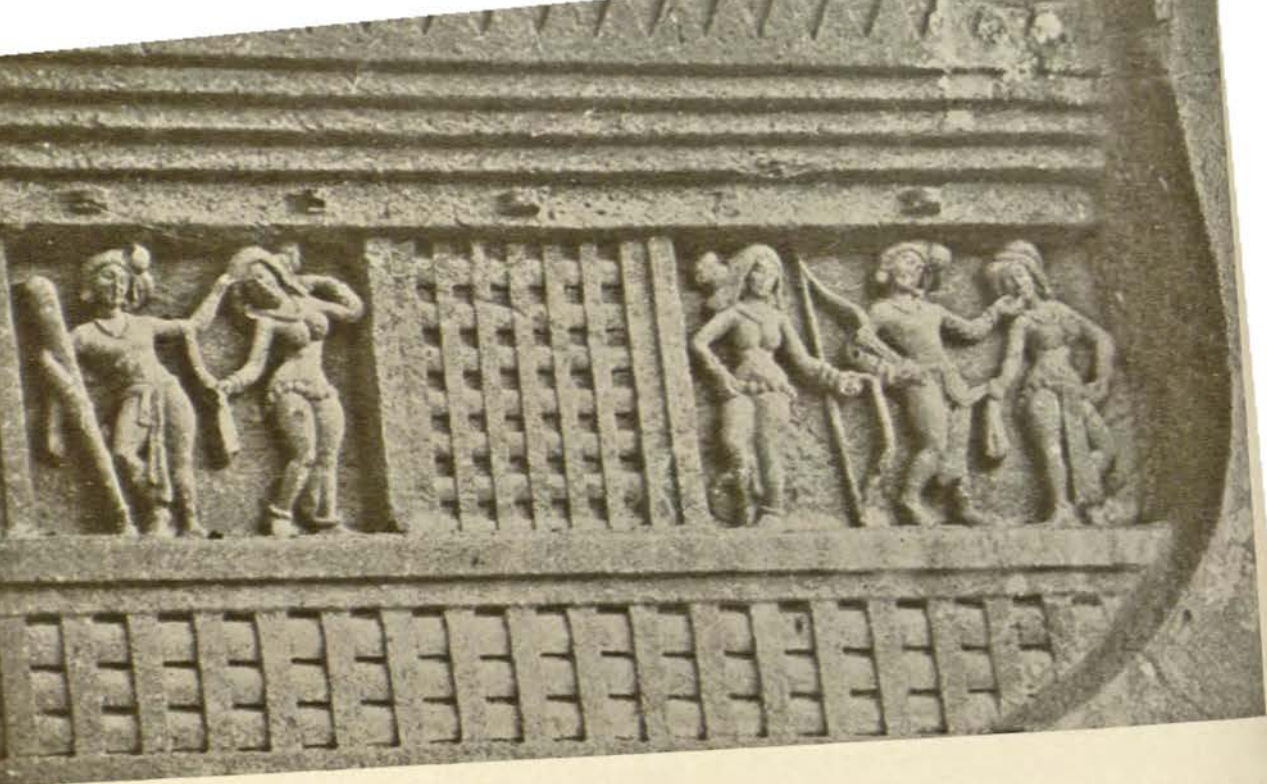


21 An amorous couple and an attendant; Mathura.



22 A drunken woman helped by her lover; Mathura.





23 Amorous figures; frieze on façade of chaitya-cave, Kondane.



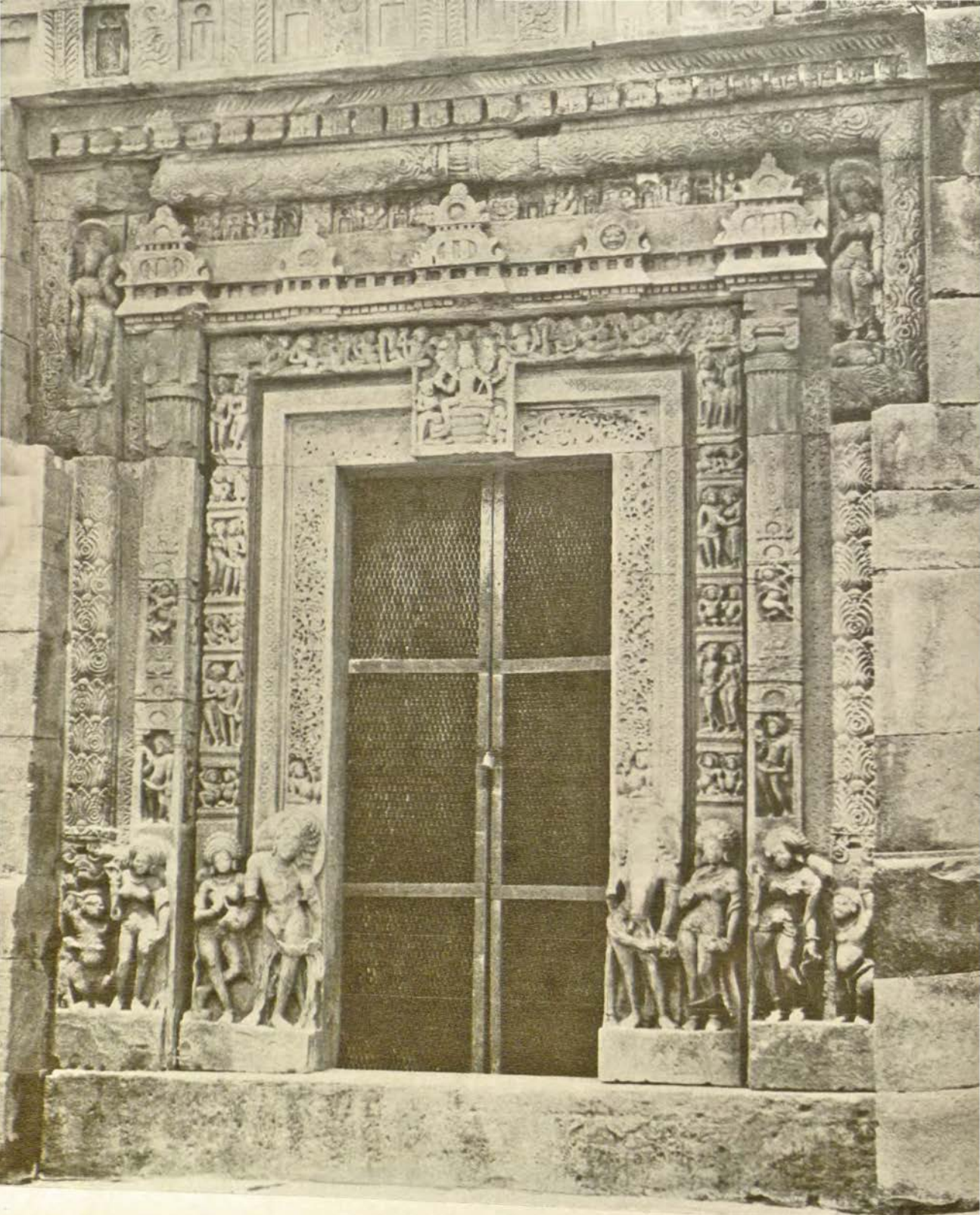
24 A mithuna; on entrance of chaitya-cave, Karle.

- 25 A *mithuna* expressing poetic imagery;
Nagarjunakonda.

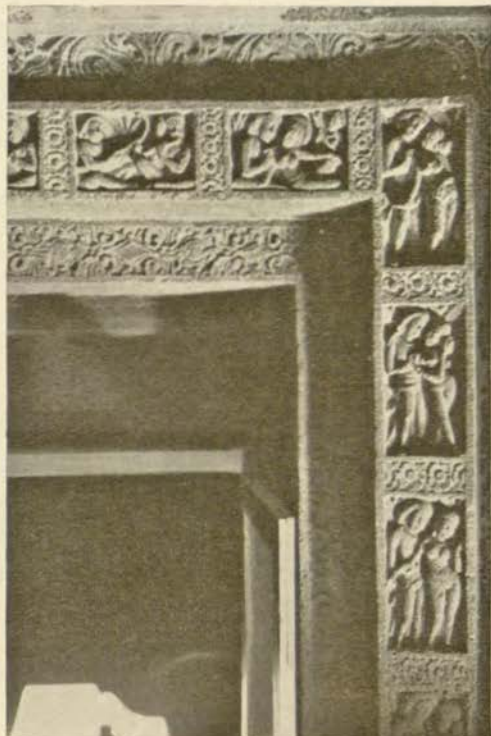
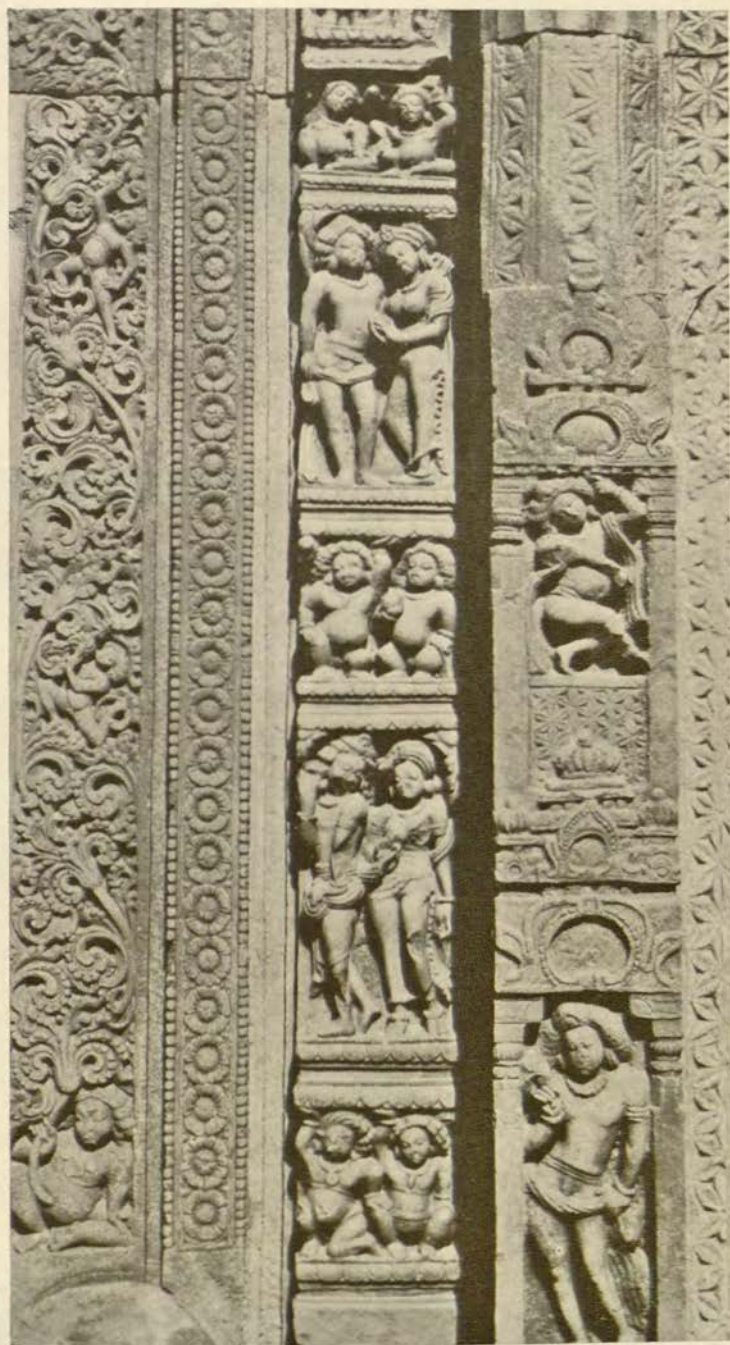


- 26 A stone slab depicting both *mithunas* and Buddhist
scenes; Nagarjunakonda.





28 Detail of the right door-jamb, Deogarh.



29 *Mithunas* on the door-jamb, Cave I, Ajanta.





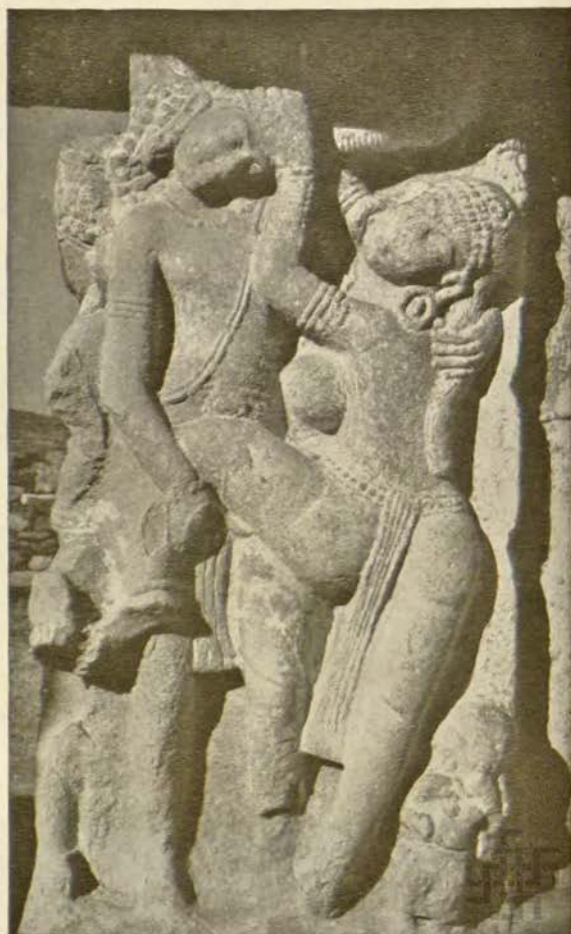
30 View of the Durga temple showing *mithunas* on pillars, Aihole.

Left

31 An amorous *mithuna*; pillar, Ladkhan temple, Aihole.

Right

32 An amorous *mithuna*; Huchchipaya Maṭha, Aihole.



33 A *mithuna*; Pāpanātha temple,
Pattadakal.

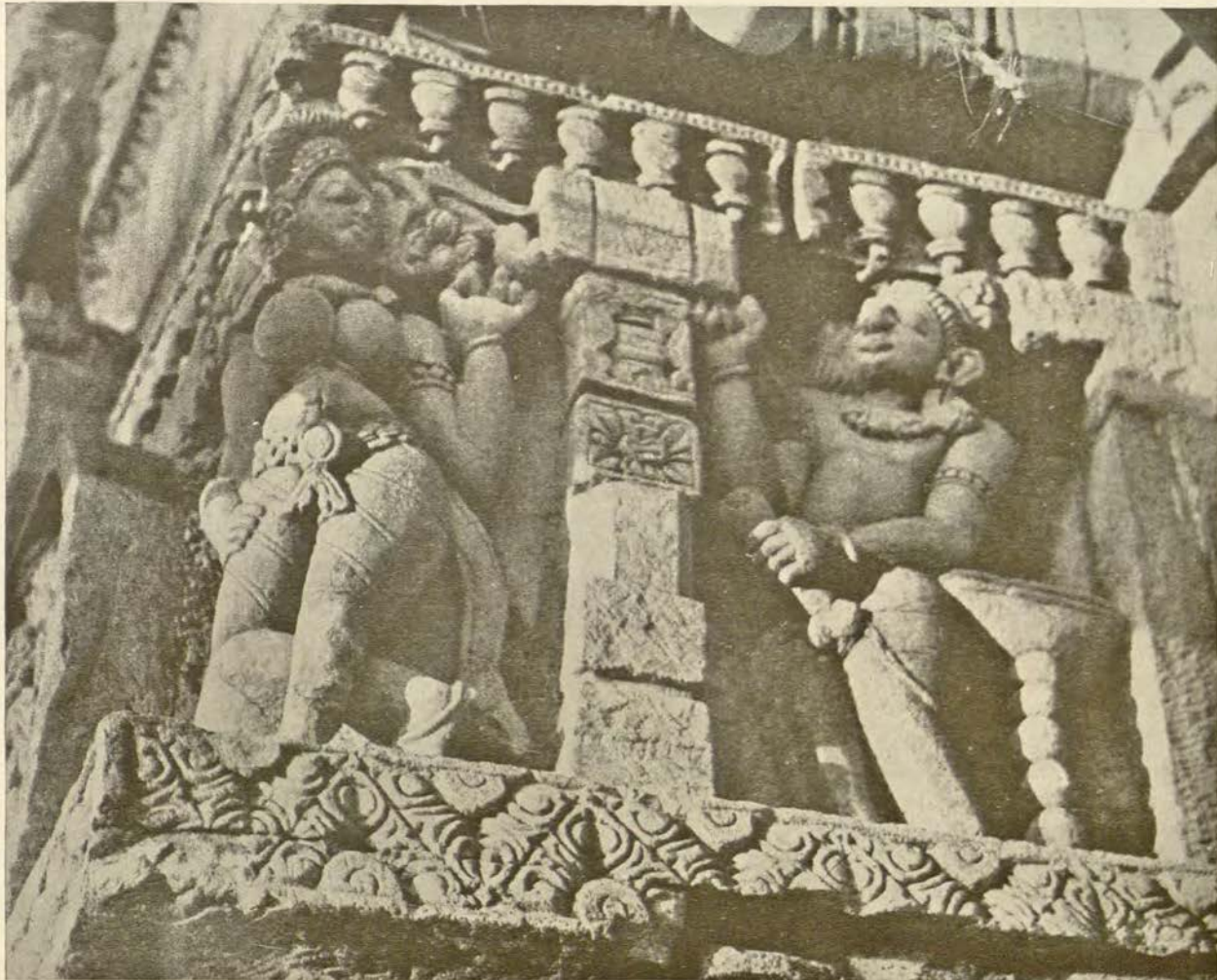


34 Erotic couples; on a pillar, Mallikārjuna temple, Pattadakal.



- 35 A *maithuna*-couple and a child; *gaṇḍi*,
Paraśurāmeśvara temple, Bhubaneswar.





36 A male in exhibitionist pose and a female in *śālabhañjikā* pose; *gaṇḍī*, Paraśurāmeśvara temple, Bhubaneswar.

37 Erotic couples on a stone slab, Bhubaneswar.





38 Erotic couples; *gaṇḍī*, Vaitāl temple, Bhubaneswar.

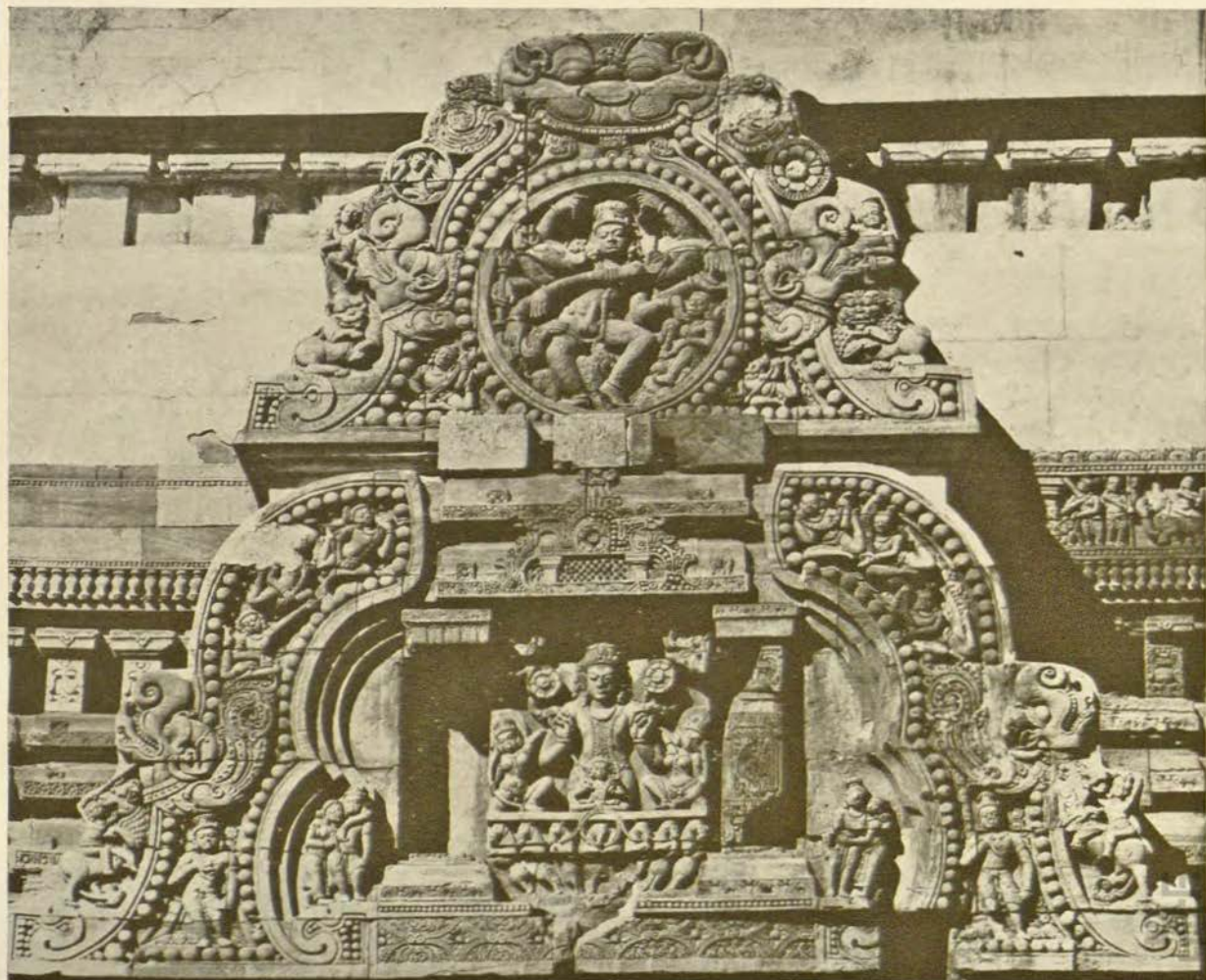
39 Section of the *bāḍa* and *gaṇḍī*, Vaitāl temple, Bhubaneswar.



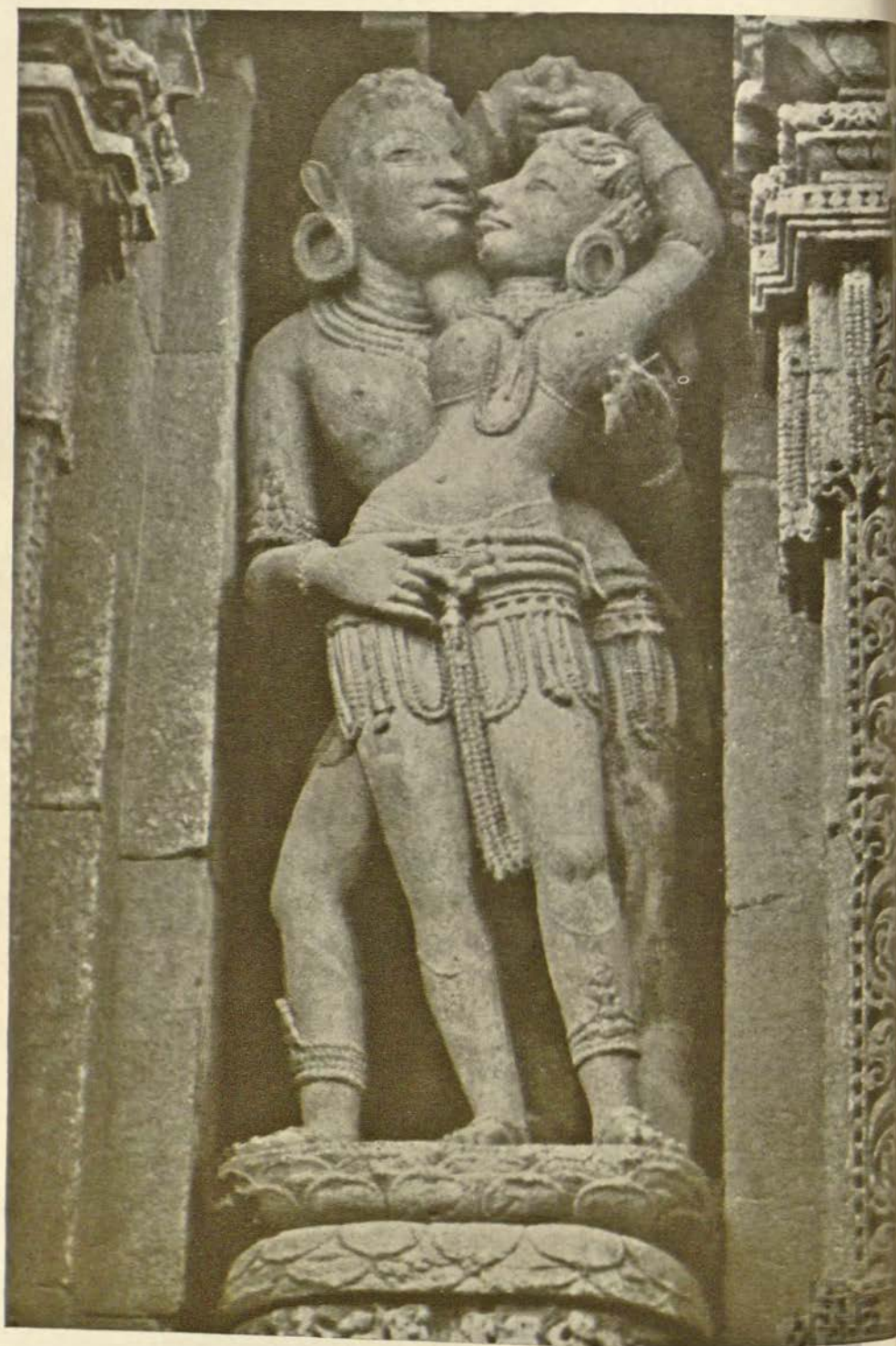
- 41 Lakuliṣa in a *chaitya*-design and a man with two women in a niche below, *gaṇḍi*, Śiṣīreśvara temple, Bhubaneswar.



- 40 *Chaitya*-design showing ithyphallic Naṭarāja, Sūrya, with *mithunas* on either side, *śikhara*, Vaitāl temple, Bhubaneswar.

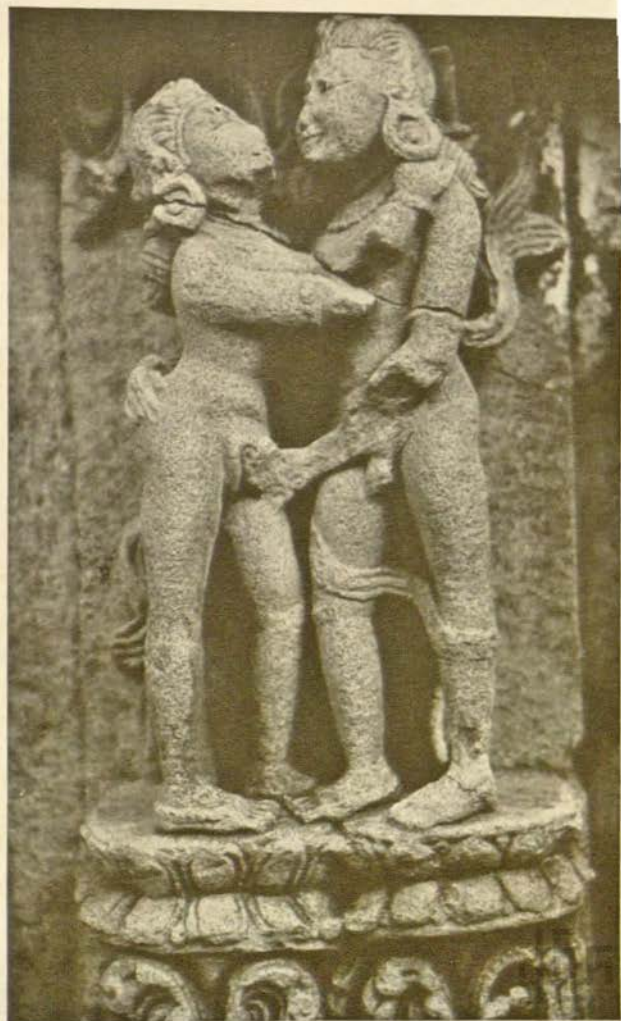


- 46 An amorous couple on lotus pedestal; *jagamohana*,
Liṅgarāja temple, Bhubaneswar.





47 Detail of ph. 46.



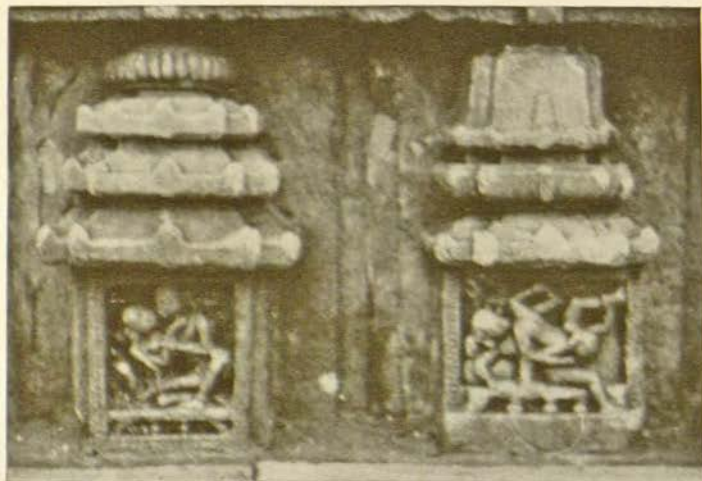
48 An erotic couple on lotus pedestal; *jagamohana*, Liṅgarāja temple, Bhubaneswar.



49 A couple in a sitting *bandha*; *pābhāga*,
Liṅgarāja temple, Bhubaneswar.



50 A couple facing frontally
on the lotus pedestal;
bhogamaṇḍapa, Liṅgarāja
temple, Bhubaneswar.



51 *Maithuna*-couples in *pīḍhā* and *khākharā-
muṇḍis*; *nāṭamandira*, Liṅgarāja temple,
Bhubaneswar.





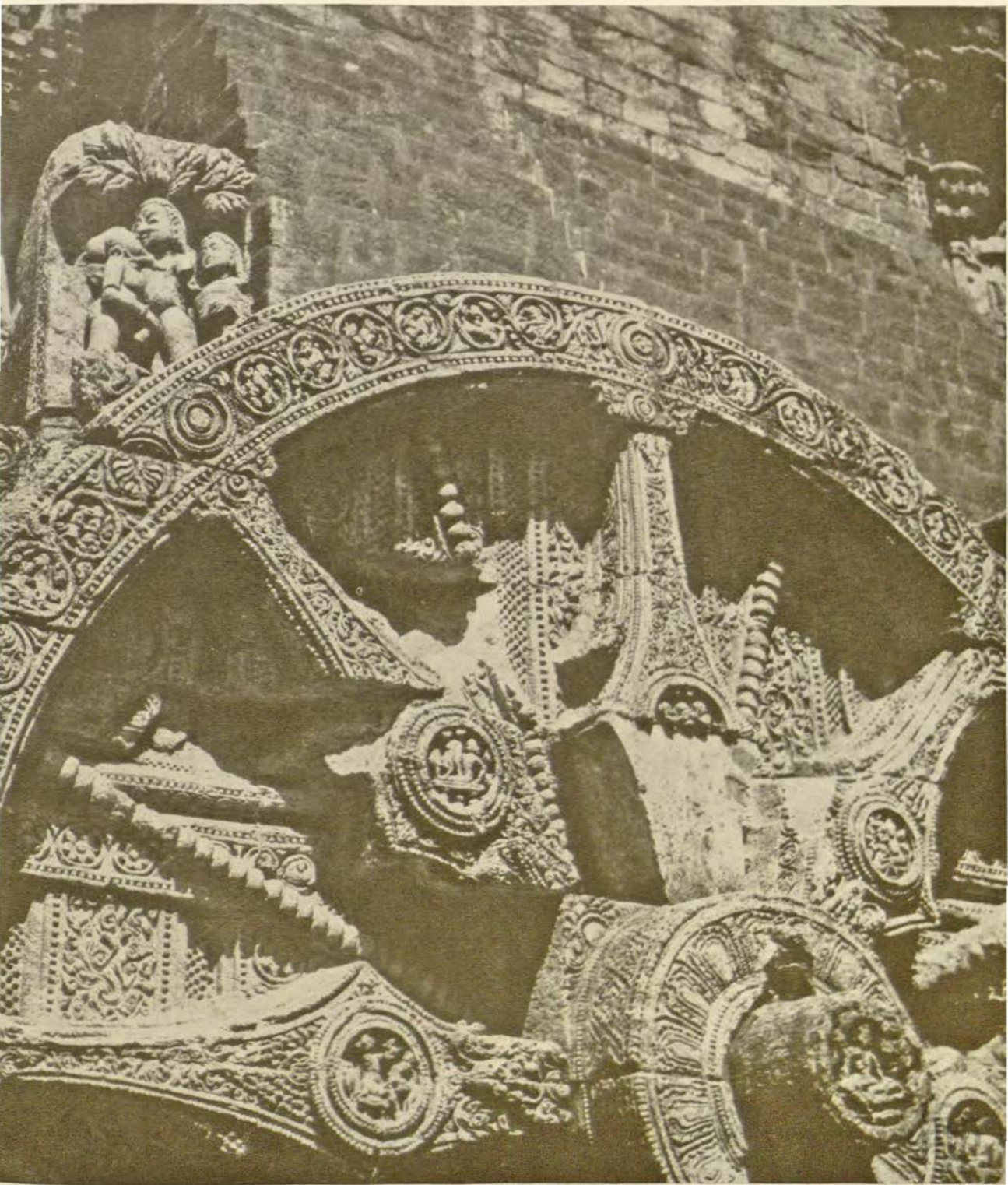
Top

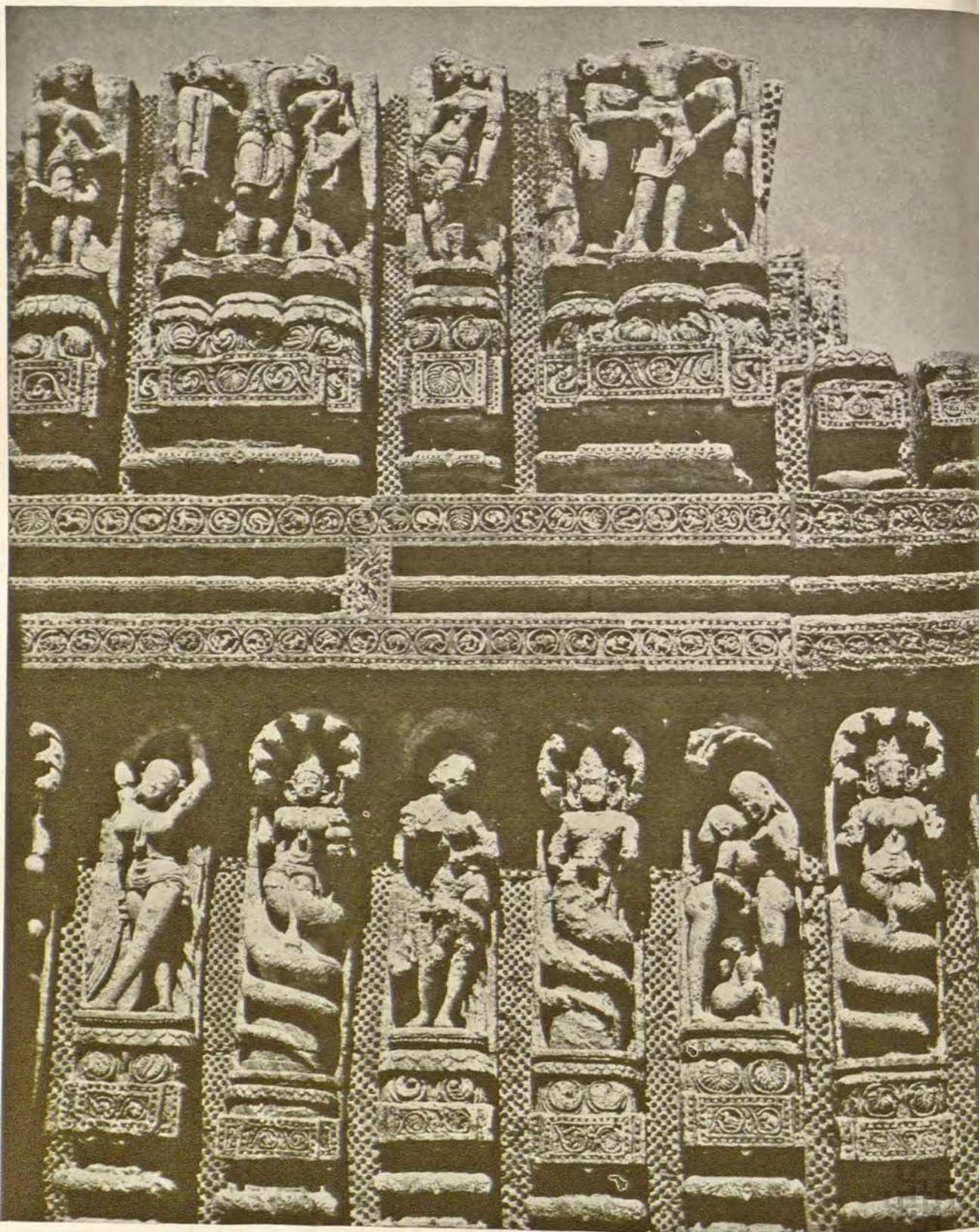
- 53 An erotic group of type IV-A; in the spoke of a wheel.
Detail of ph. 55.

Bottom

- 54 Oral-genital congress; in the spoke of another wheel.





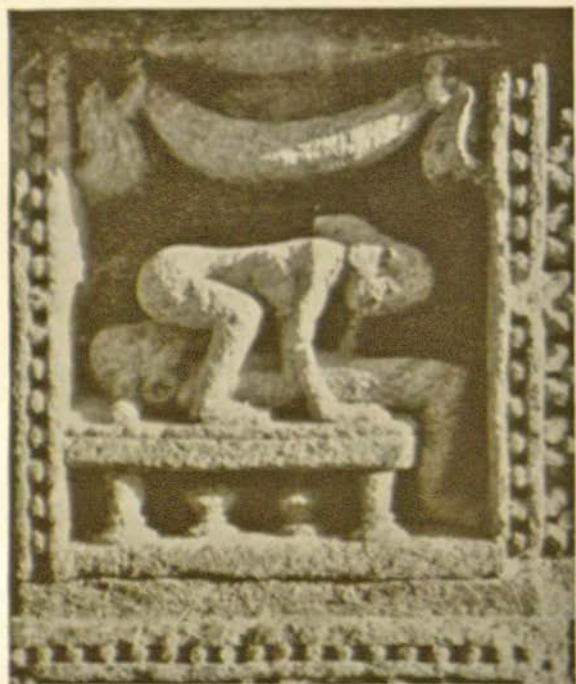


57 A *nāga-mithuna*; platform wall, Konarak.



58 An erotic couple; platform wall, Konarak.





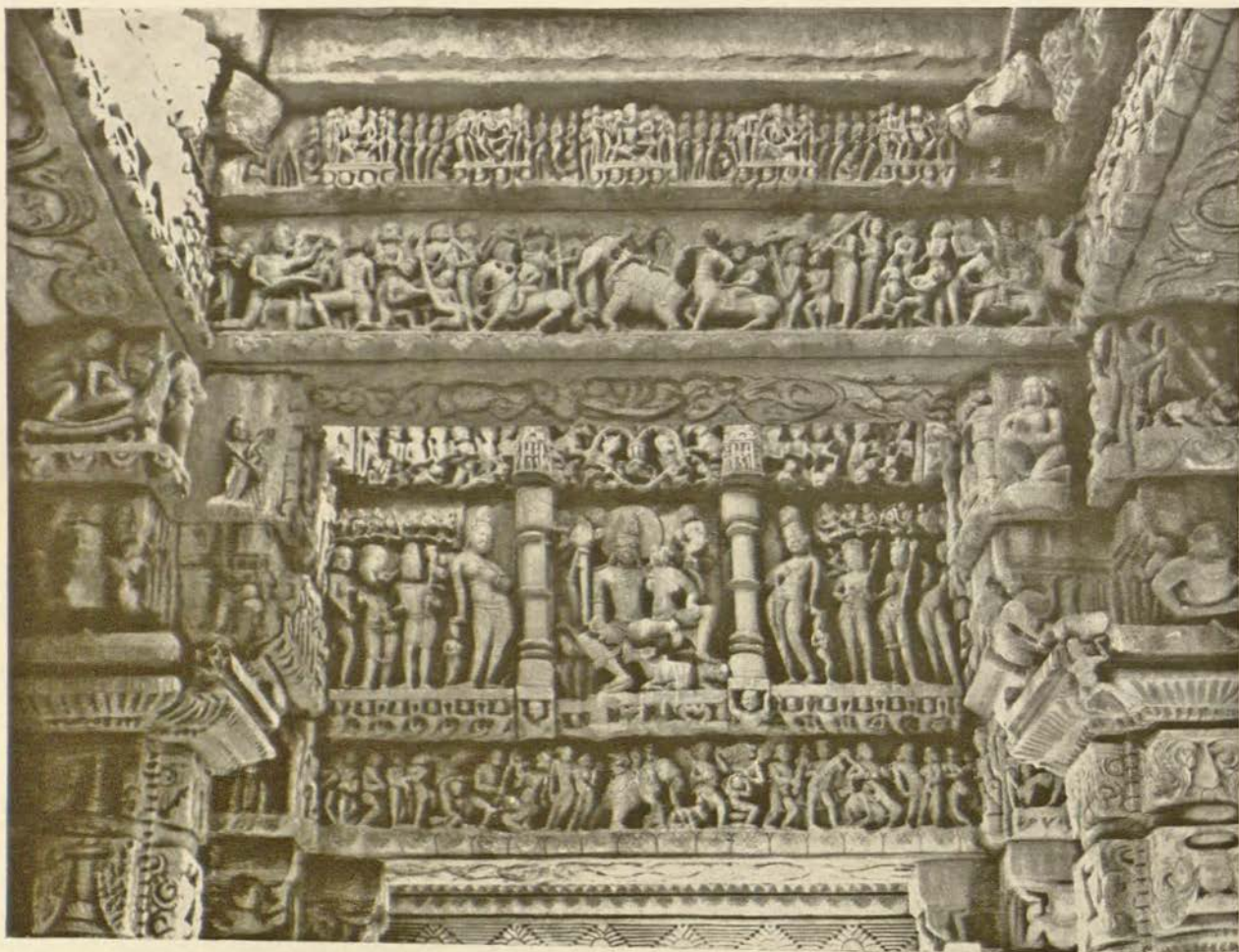
59 A *maithuna*-couple; platform wall, Konarak.



60 An erotic couple; platform wall, Konarak.

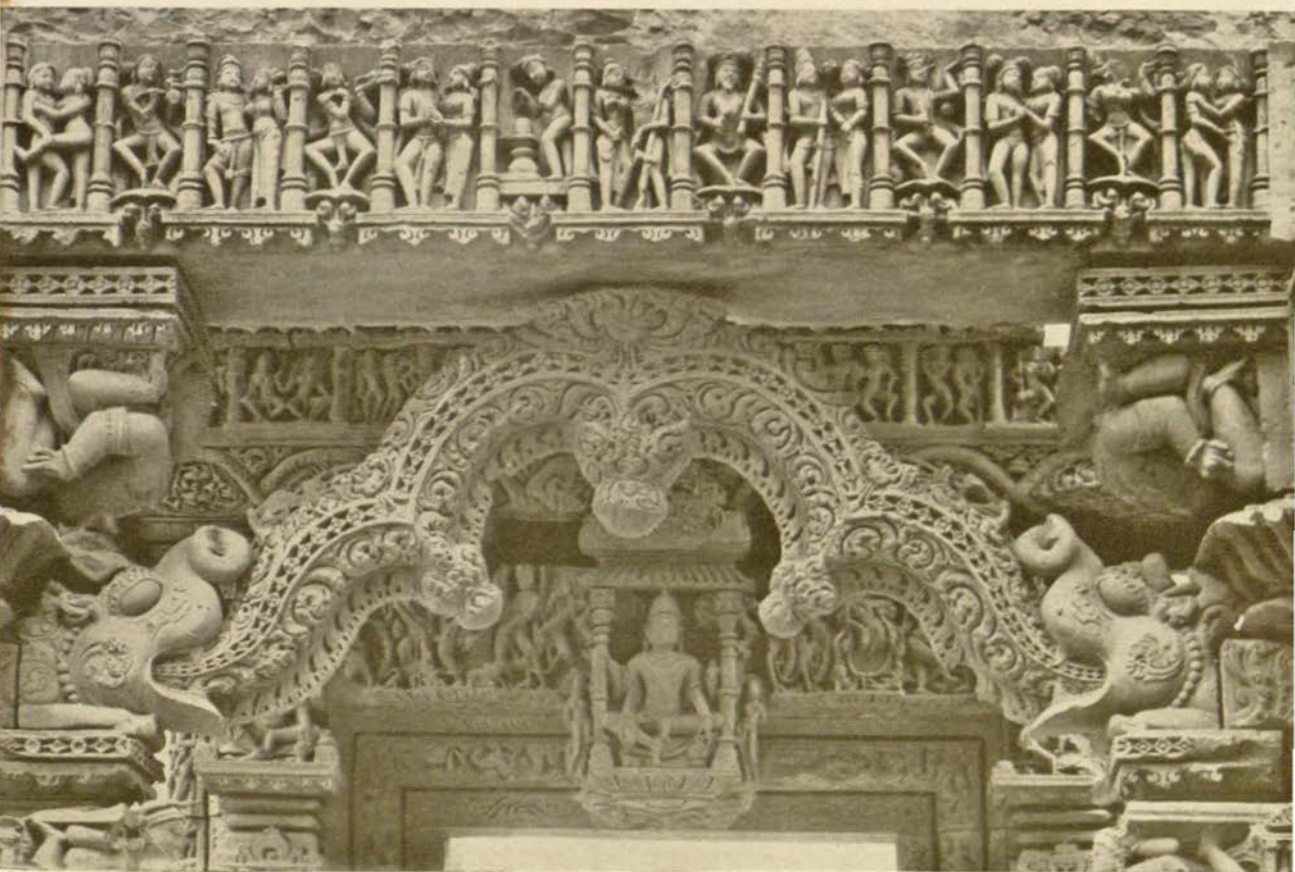


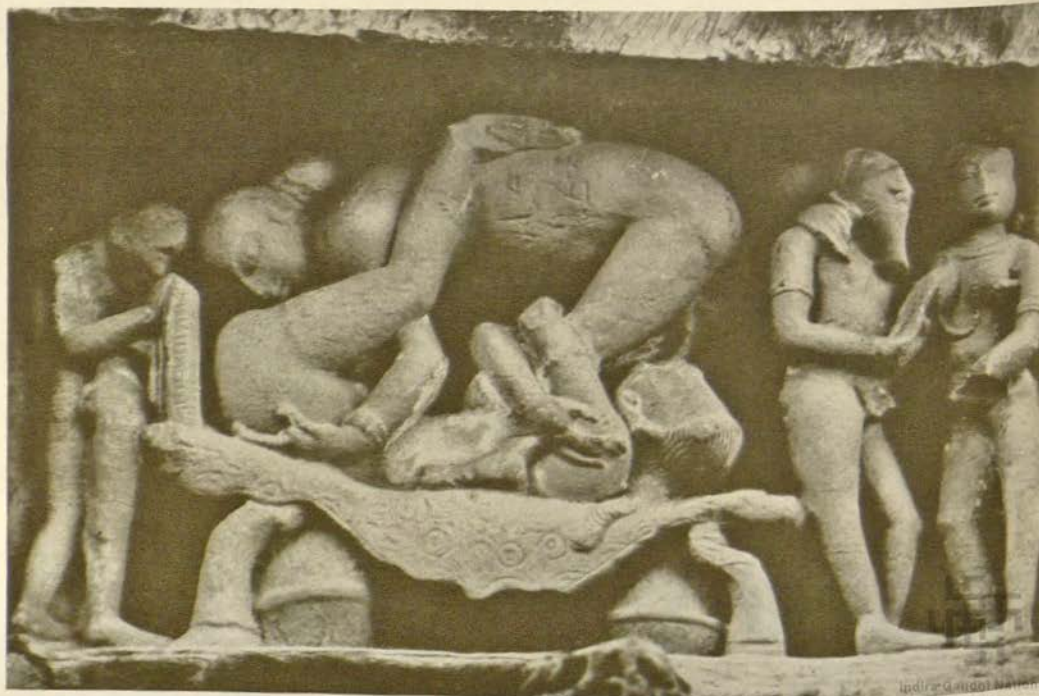
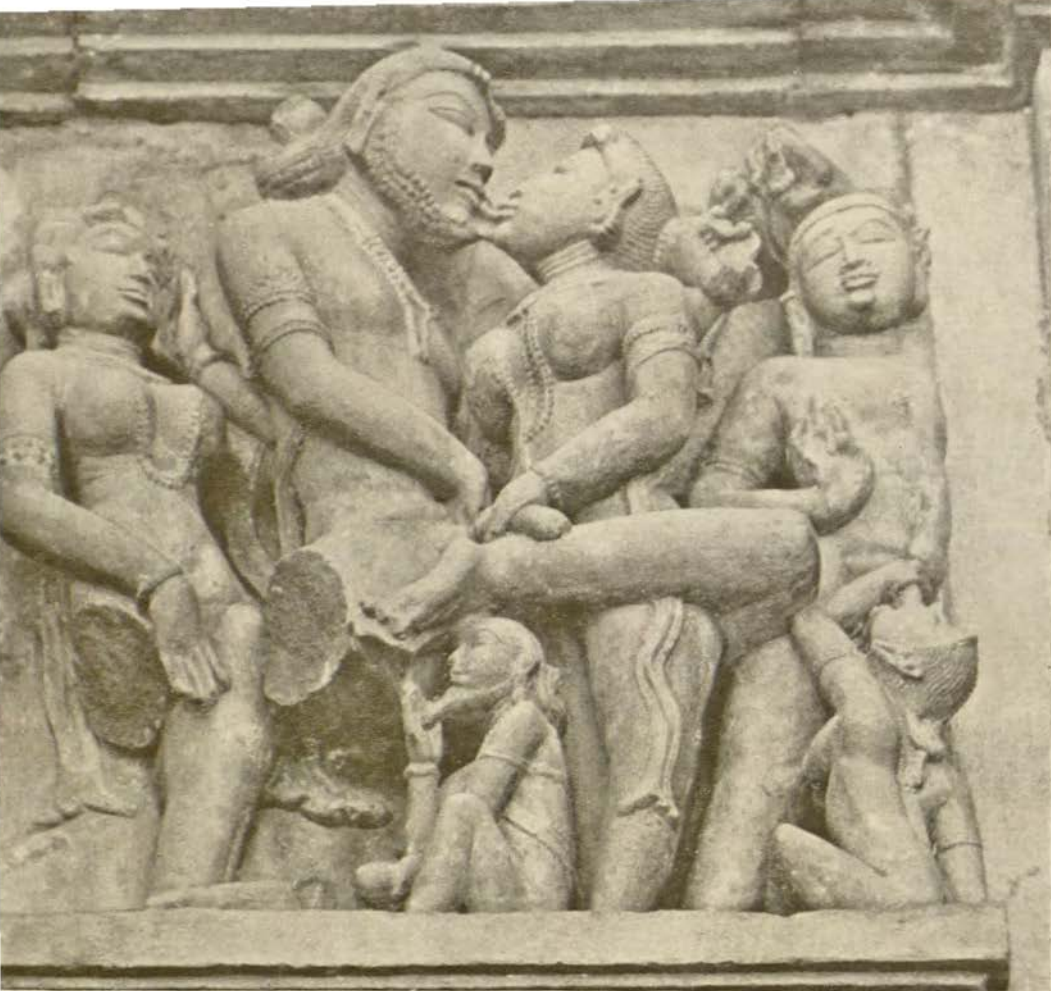




62 Sculptural decoration in the interior of the *maṇḍapa*, Padhavli.









66 Couples and an exhibitionistic female; wall of the *garbhagriha* facing *pradakṣiṇā-patha*, Pārśvanātha temple, Khajuraho.

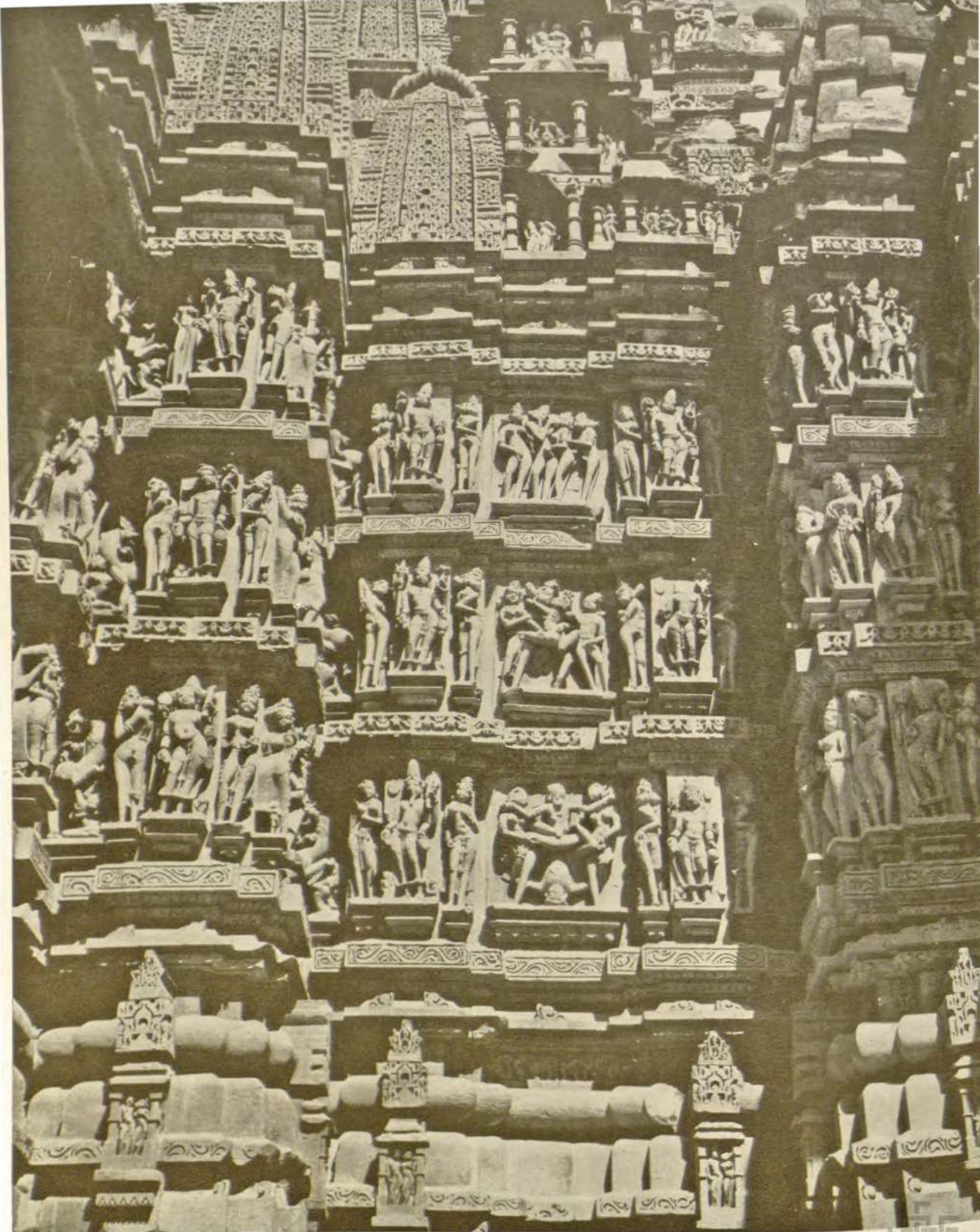
Opposite page

64 *Top*: An orgiastic scene; *jaṅghā*, Lakṣmaṇa temple, Khajuraho.

65 *Bottom*: Part of an orgiastic scene; platform, Lakṣmaṇa temple, Khajuraho.



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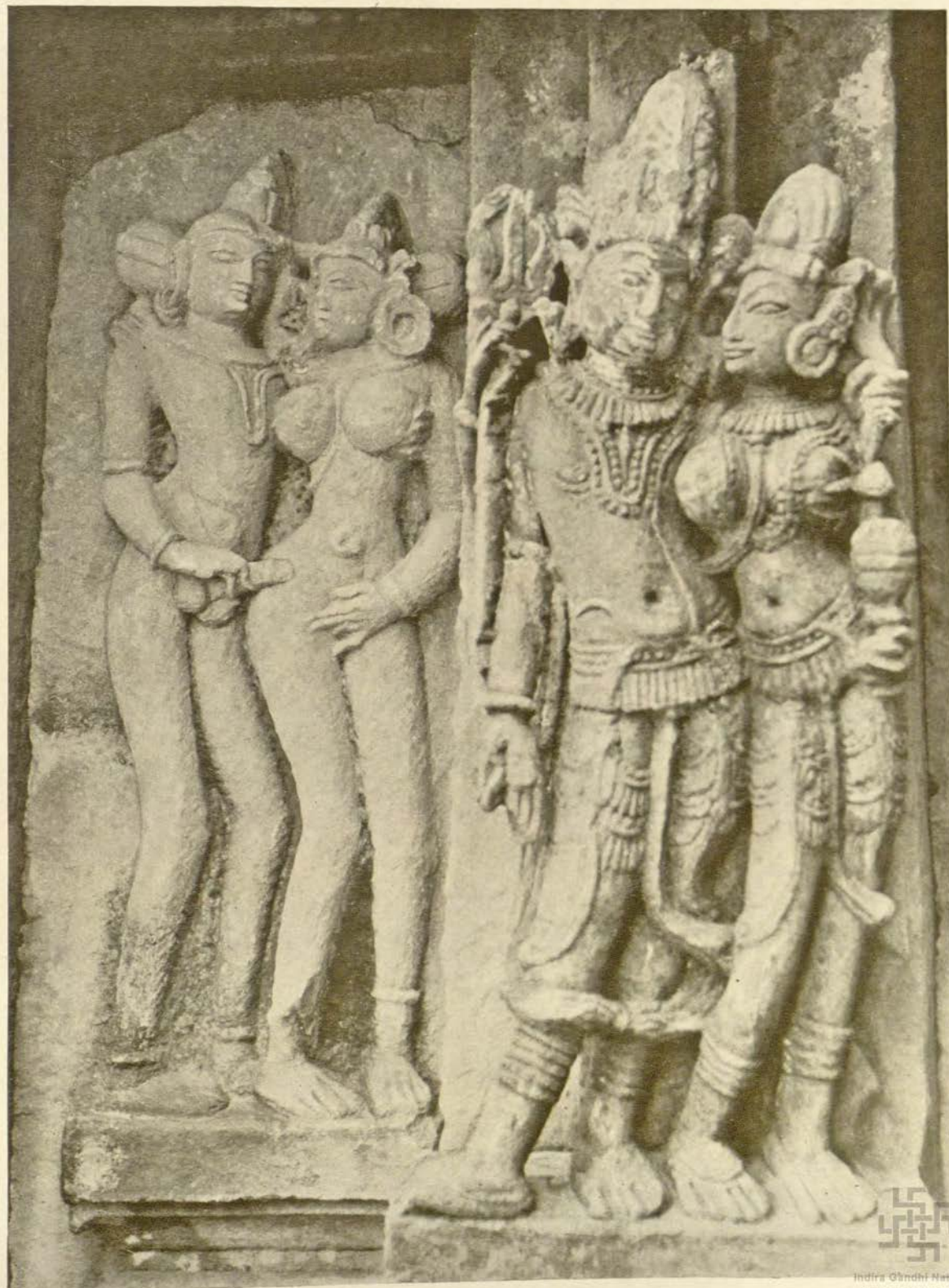
67 Section of southern wall, Kandariyā Mahādeva, Khajuraho.

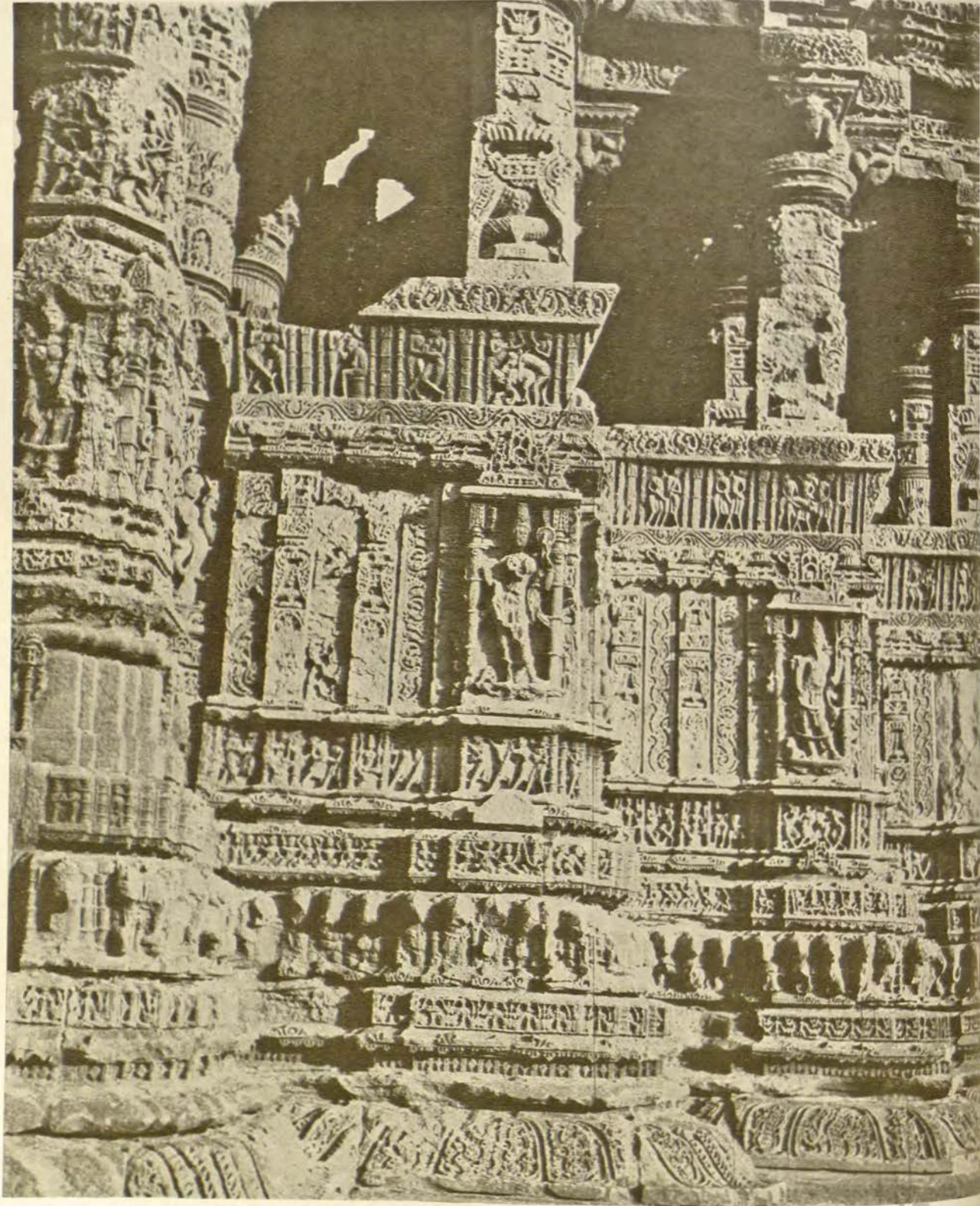




69 An intimate couple; Khajuraho.

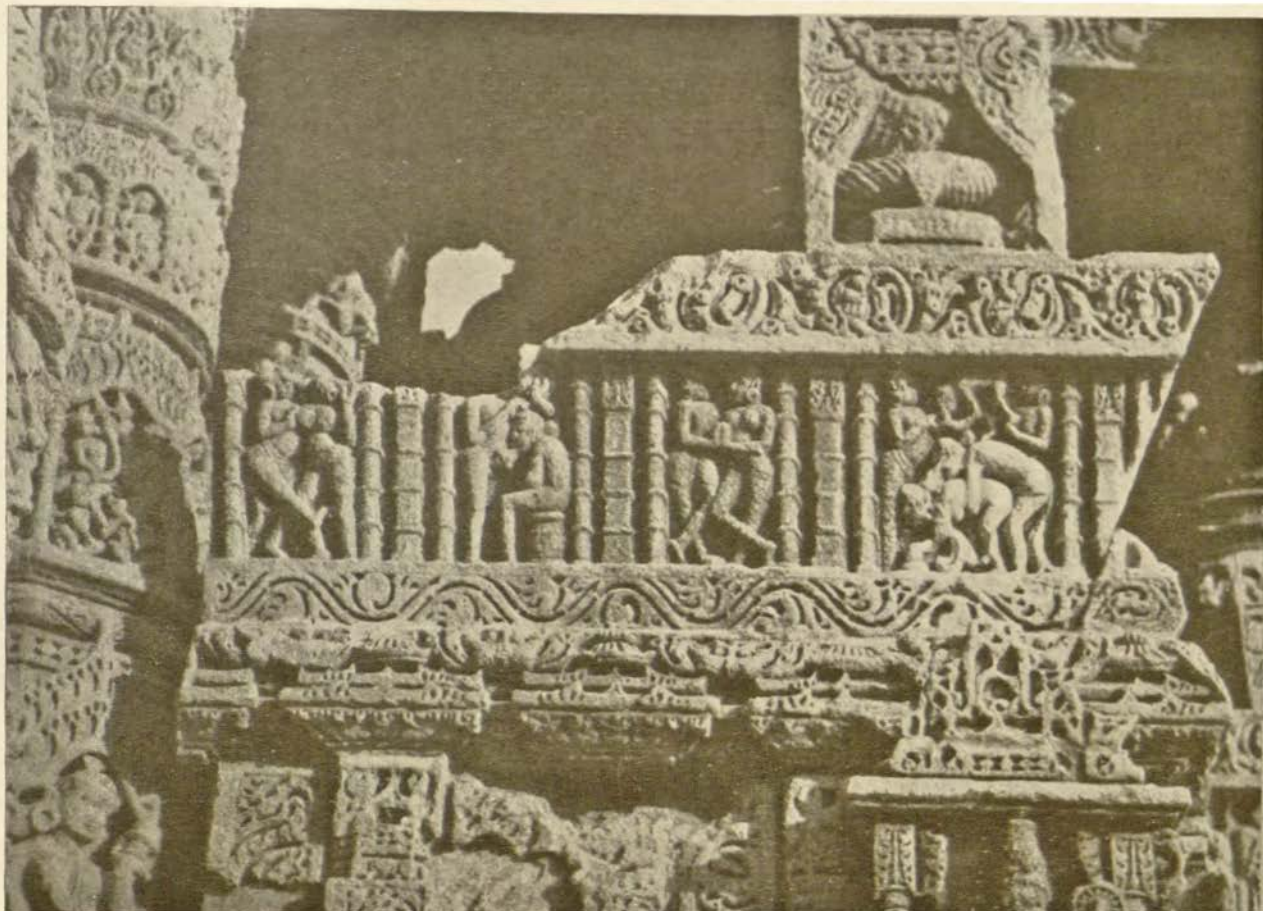






71 Section of the *raigamandapa* showing erotic motifs on the *kakshāsana*, *kumbha* and *narathara*, Modhera.





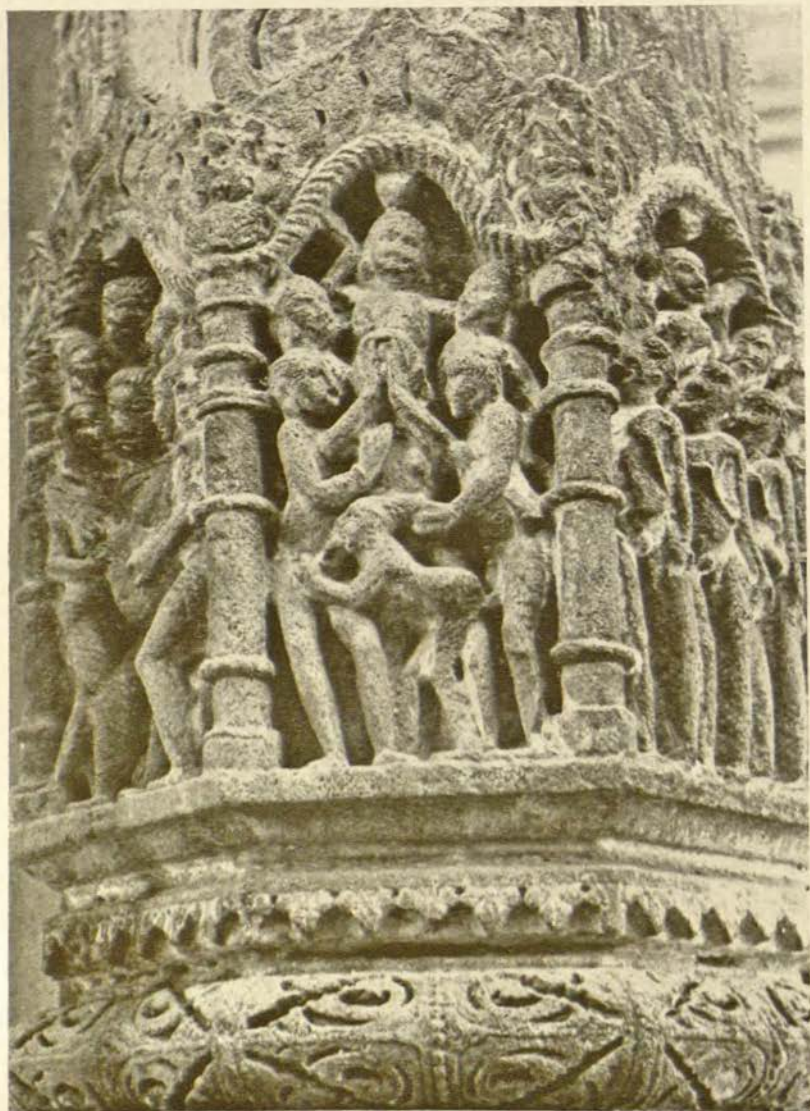
72 *Kakshāsana* panels; detail of ph. 71.



73 Orgiastic groups; on *narathara*, Modhera.

- 75 An orgiastic group; on a pillar of the *raṅgamaṇḍapa*, Modhera.

- 74 An orgiastic group; on a pillar of the *raṅgamaṇḍapa*, Modhera.

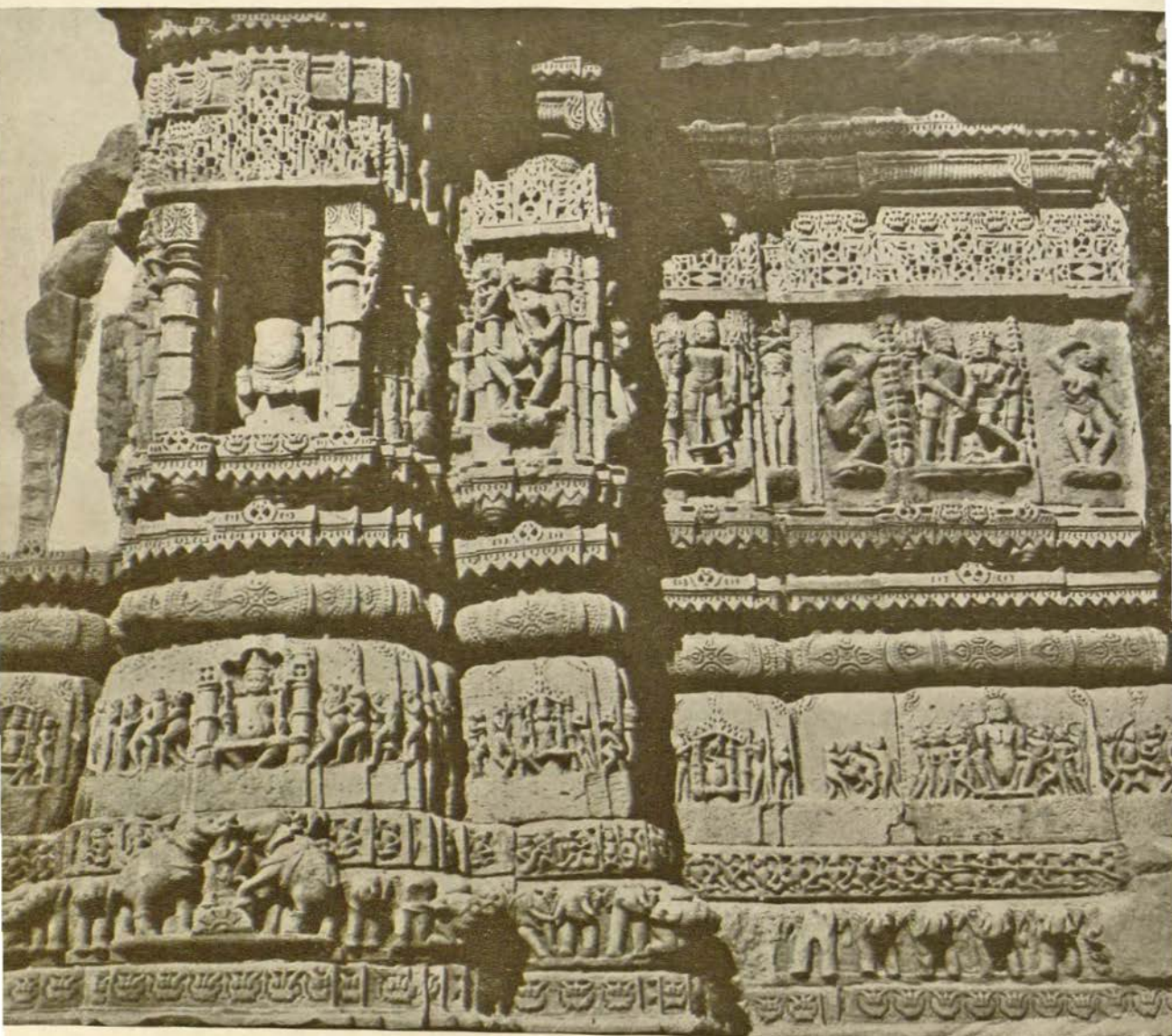




76 A *maithuna* couple and warriors; on *narathara*, Modhera.

77 An erotic group; on *narathara*, Galtresvara.



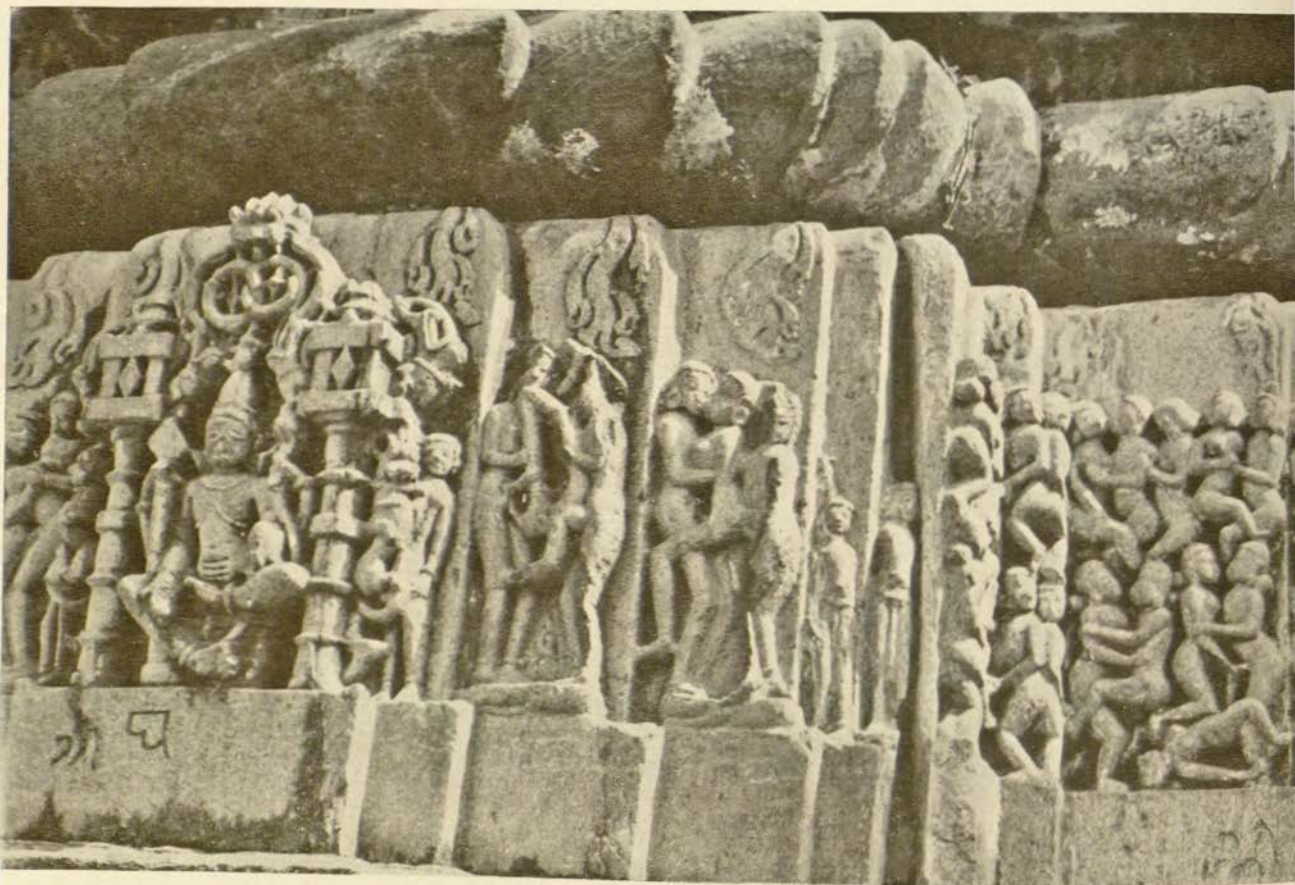


78 General view of the temple showing erotic figures on *kumbha* and *narathara*, Motap.



79 Erotic figures; on *kumbha* and *narathara*, Motap.





80 Erotic figures near a deity; on *kumbha*, Bavka.





81 An orgiastic group; on *kumbha*, Bavka.



82 Music, dance and sex; on *kumbha*, Bavka.

83 *Maithuna* and hunting scenes; on *narathara*, Bavka.





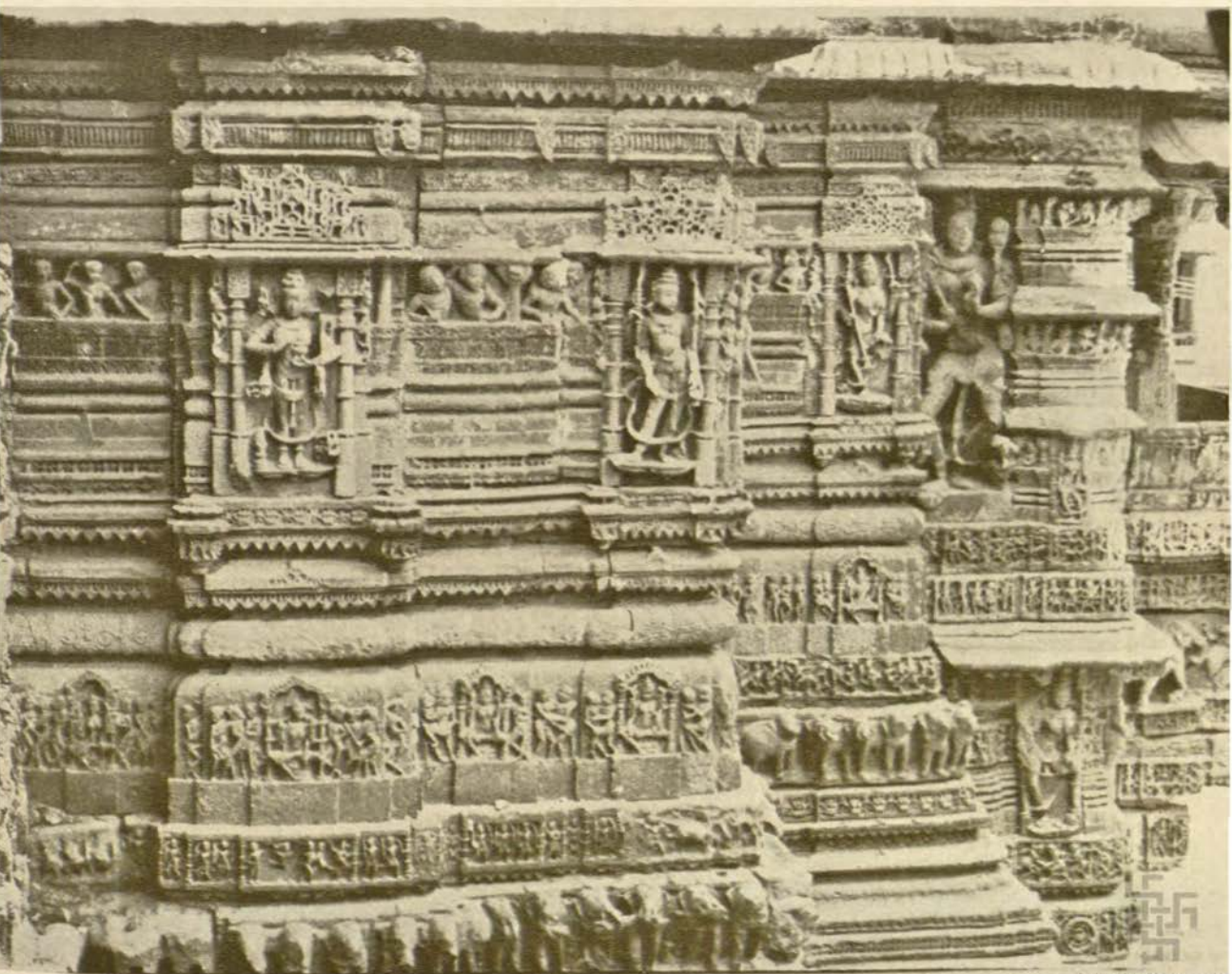
84 Goddesses and couples; panel at the entrance, Bavka.



85 Goddesses and erotic figures, on the *kumbha* of the fort wall, Dabhoi.

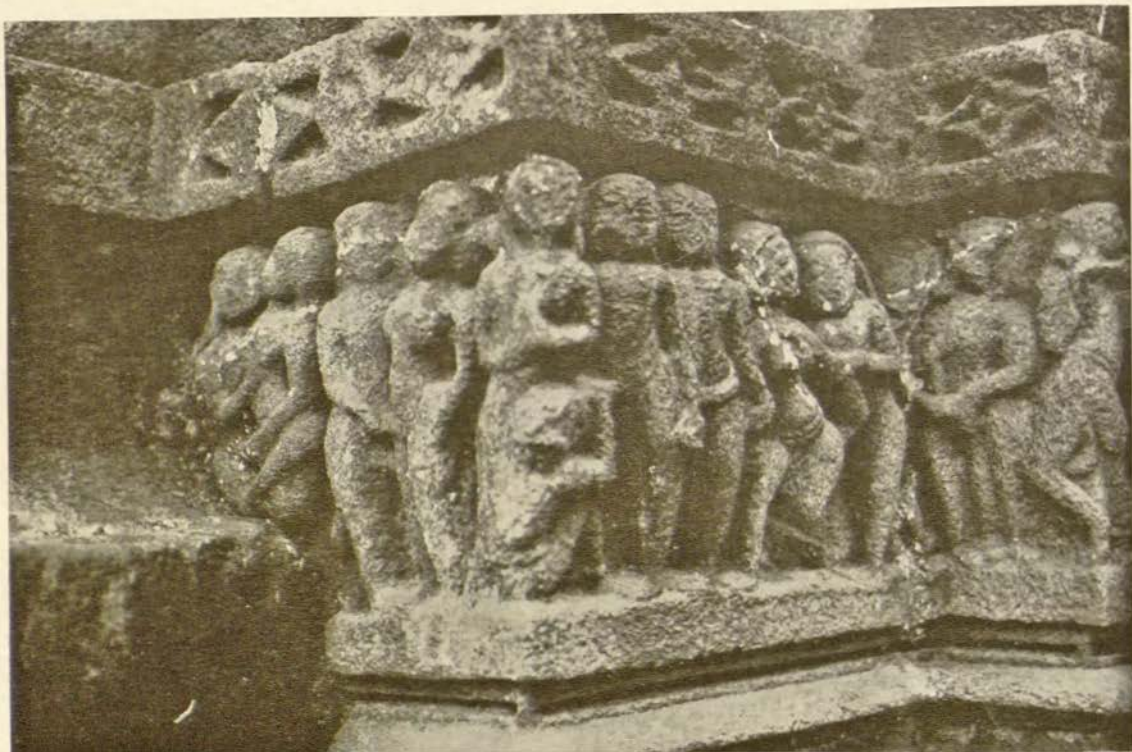


86 Section of the fort wall showing erotic figures on the *kumbha*, Dabhoi.

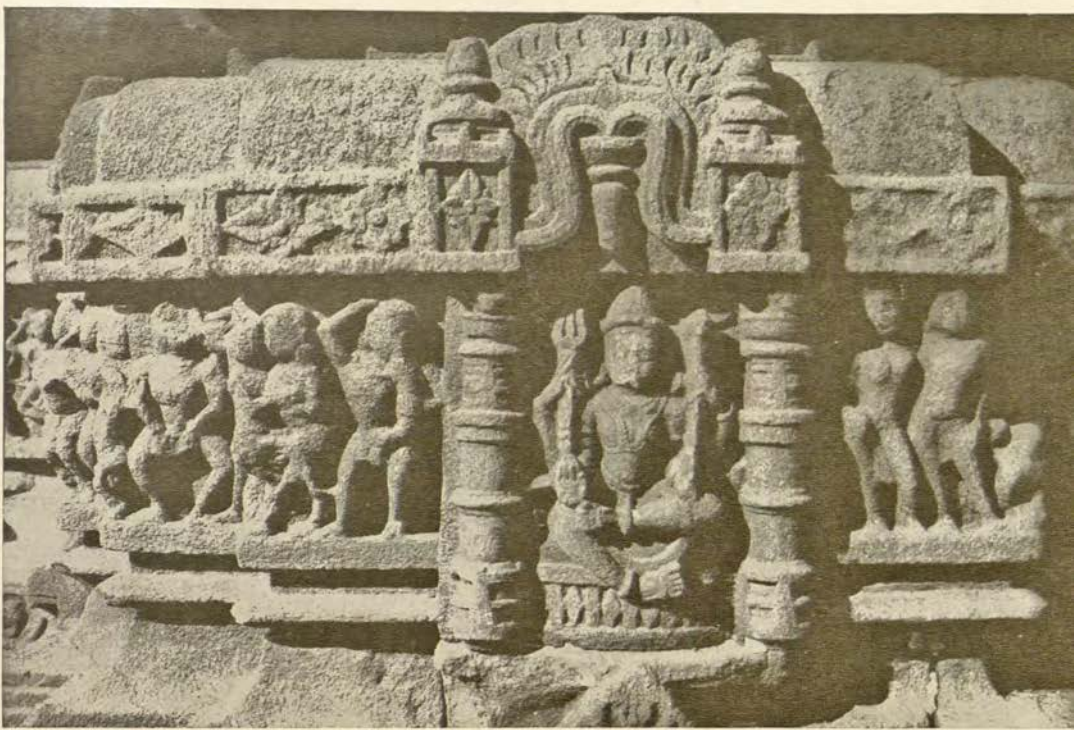


87 *Top:* An orgiastic group; on *kumbha*, Ambernath.

88 *Bottom:* Detail of ph. 87 showing ascetics.



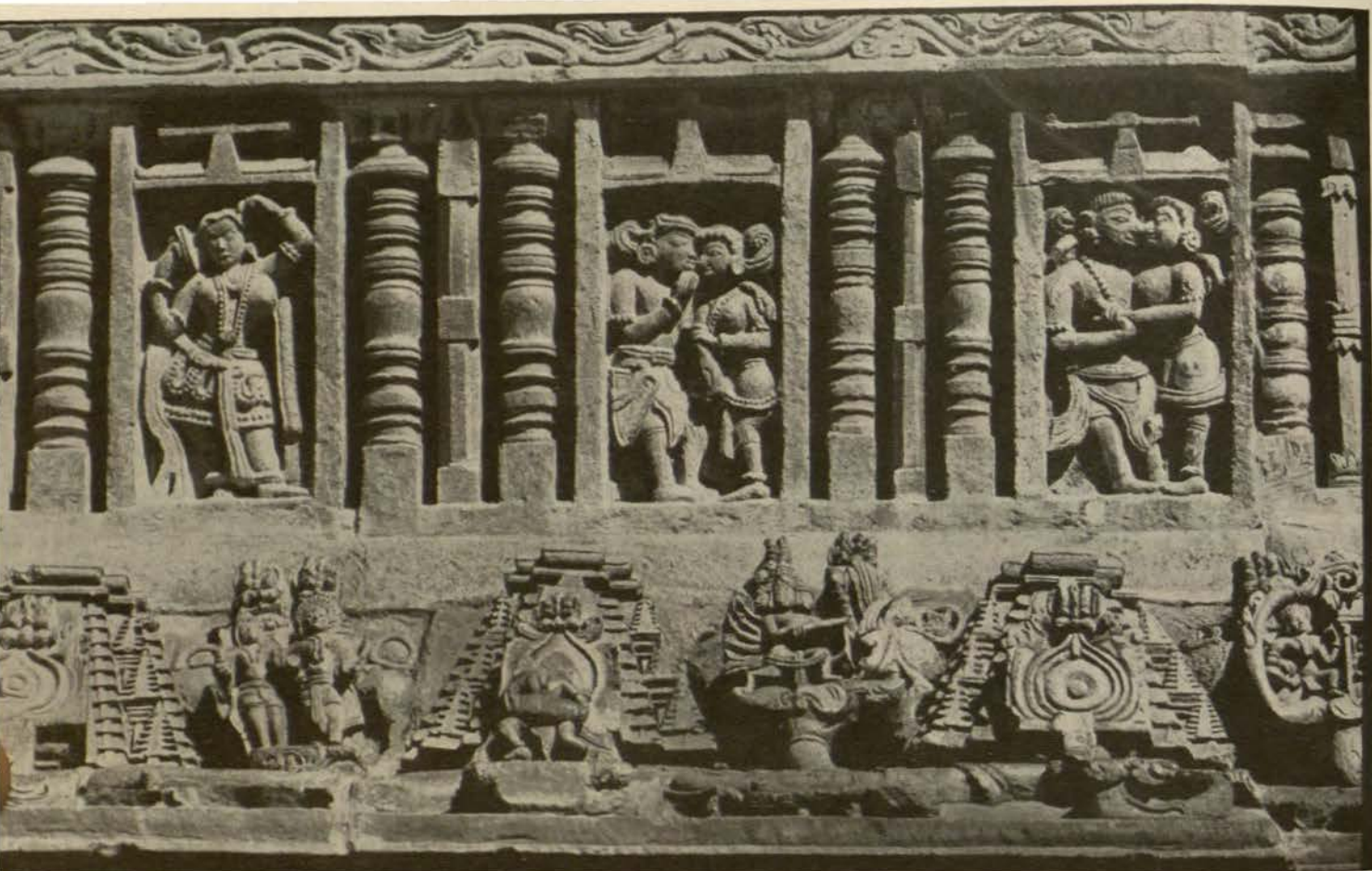
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89 Erotic figures near Śiva; on *kumbha*, Ambernath.

90 An orgiastic scene showing ascetics; Ambernath.



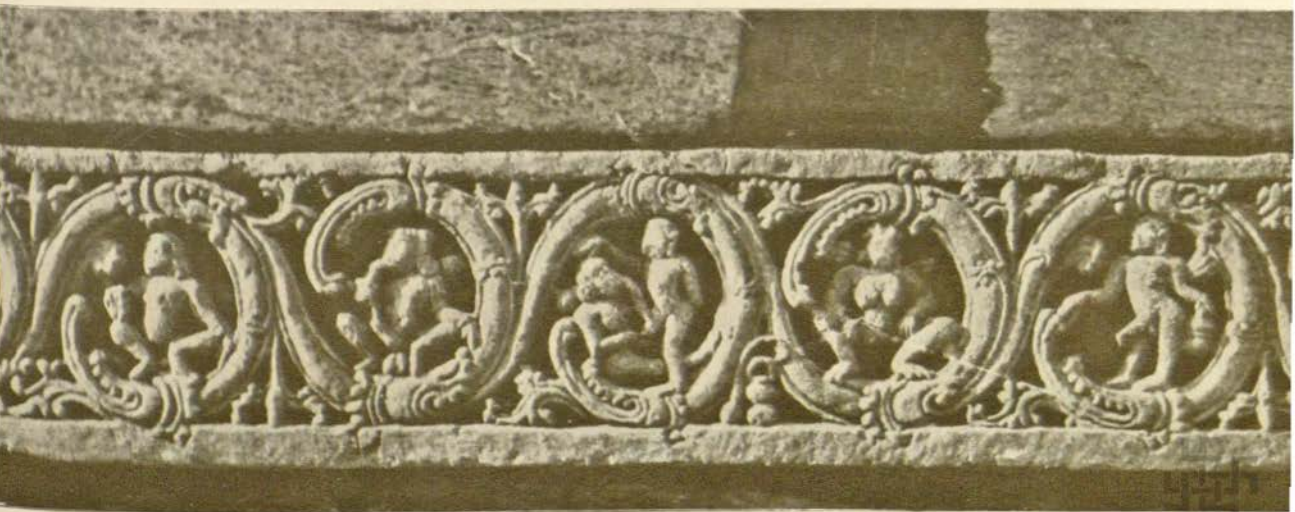


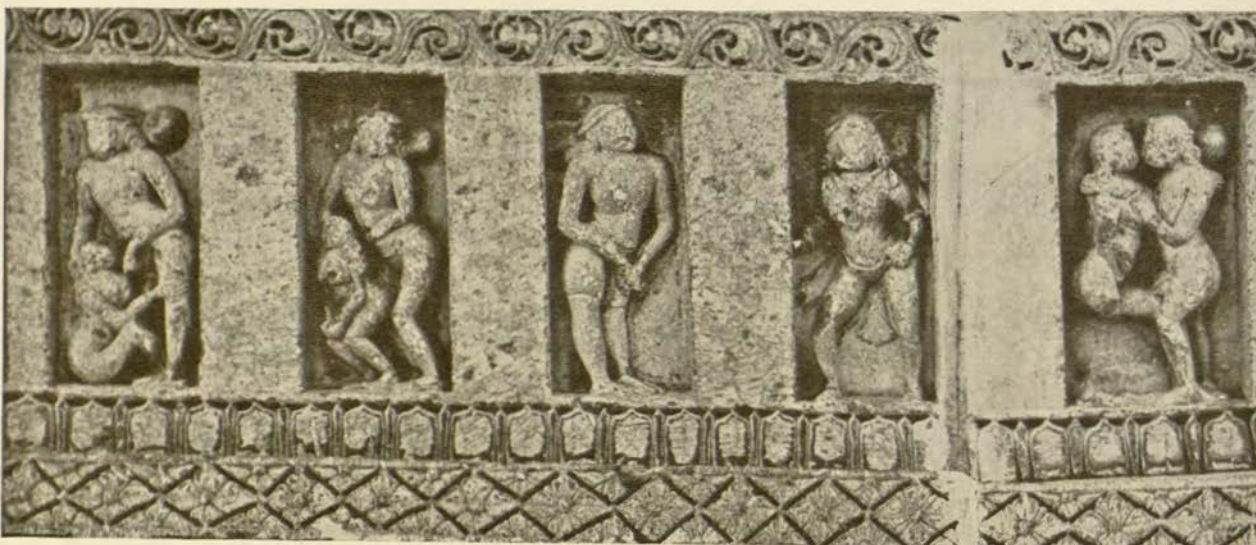
91 *Kakshāsana* panels showing warriors and women, Keśava temple, Belur.

92 Erotic scenes in a scroll pattern, plinth, Belur.



93 Details of ph. 92.



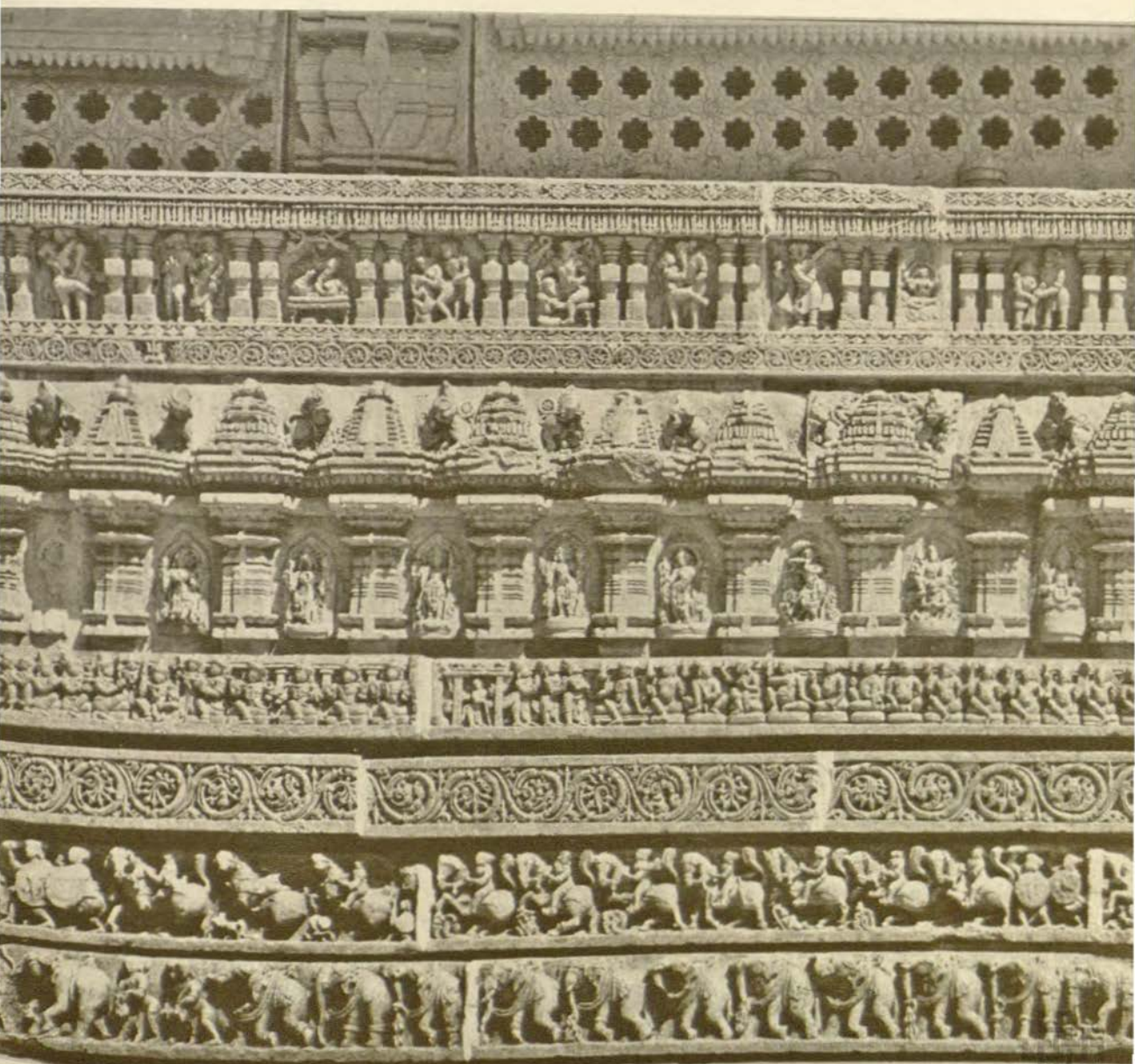


94 *Top:* *Kakshāsana* panels showing warriors and women, Halebid.

95 *Bottom:* *Kakshāsana* panels showing sexual scenes, Hoysaleswara temple, Halebid.



96 External decoration showing erotic figures on the *kakshāsana*, Keśava temple, Somanāthapur.





97 *Bottom*: A stone slab forming part of the *kakshāsana*, Raṅganātha temple, Halebid.

98 *Top*: Detail of ph. 97.

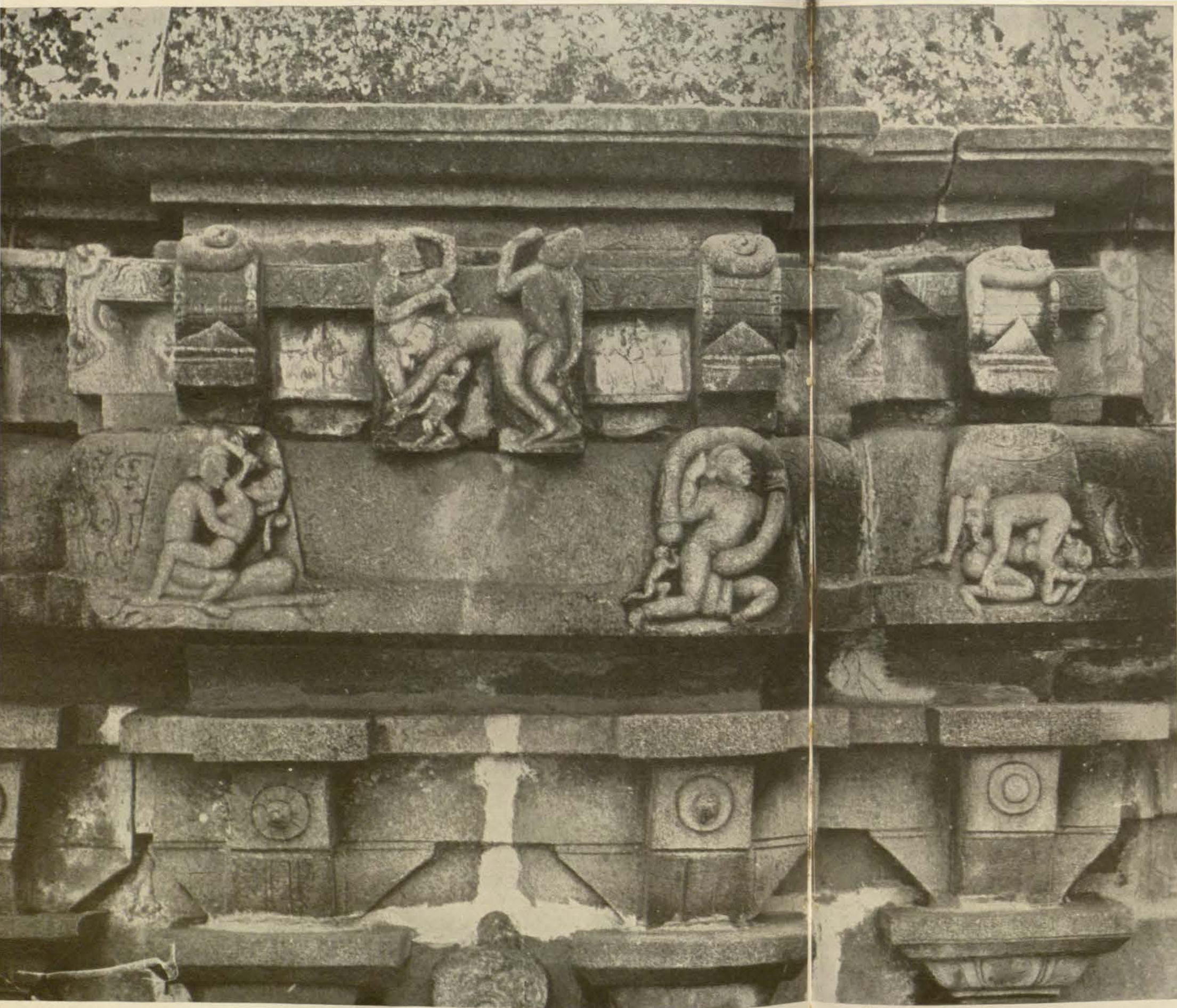




99 A detached stone slab forming part of the *kakshāsana*, Belur.

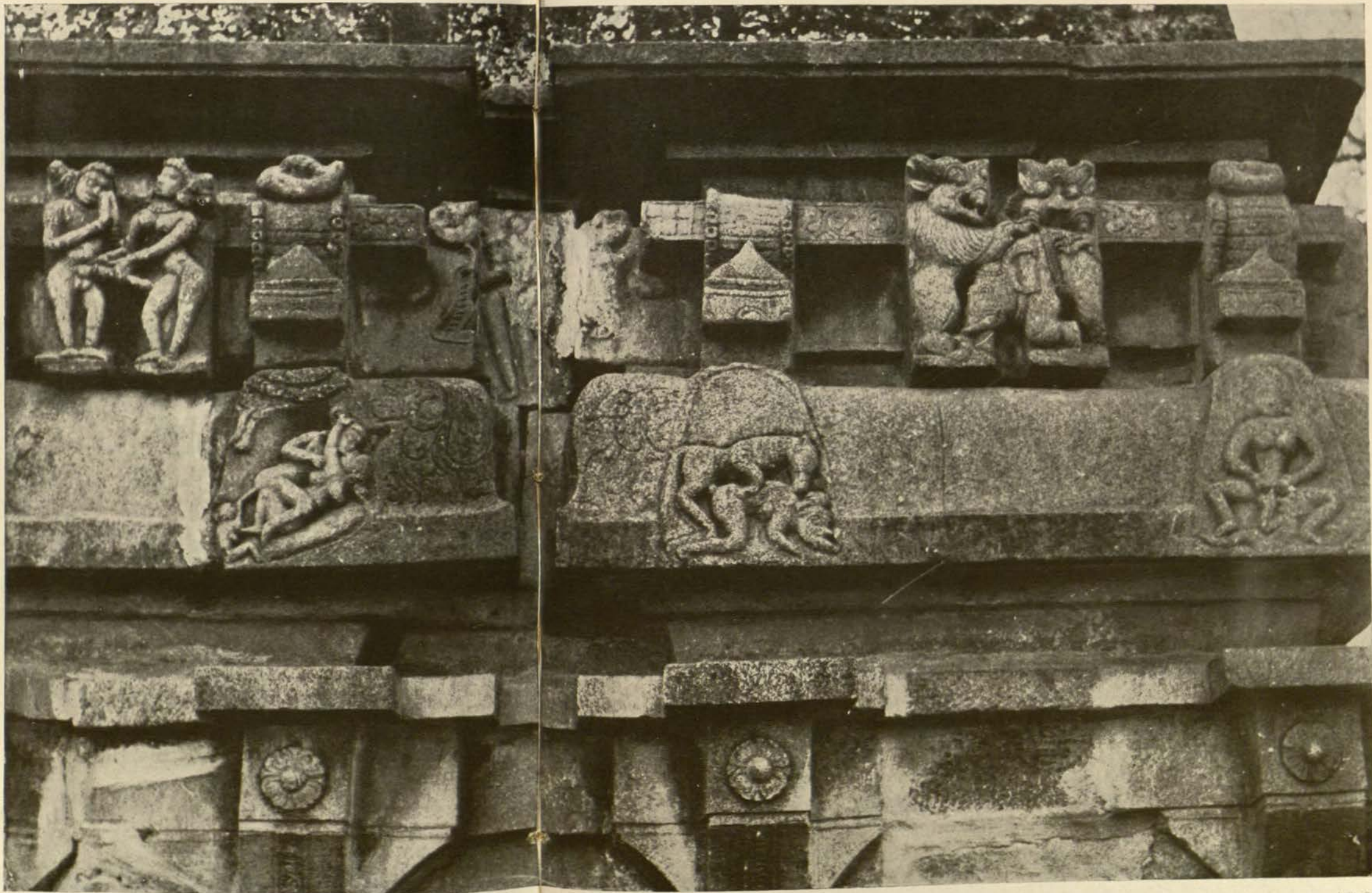
100 *Puruṣāyita* union; Tripurāntaka temple, Belgamve.





101 Sexual scenes on the wall
below the *śikhara*, Bagali.





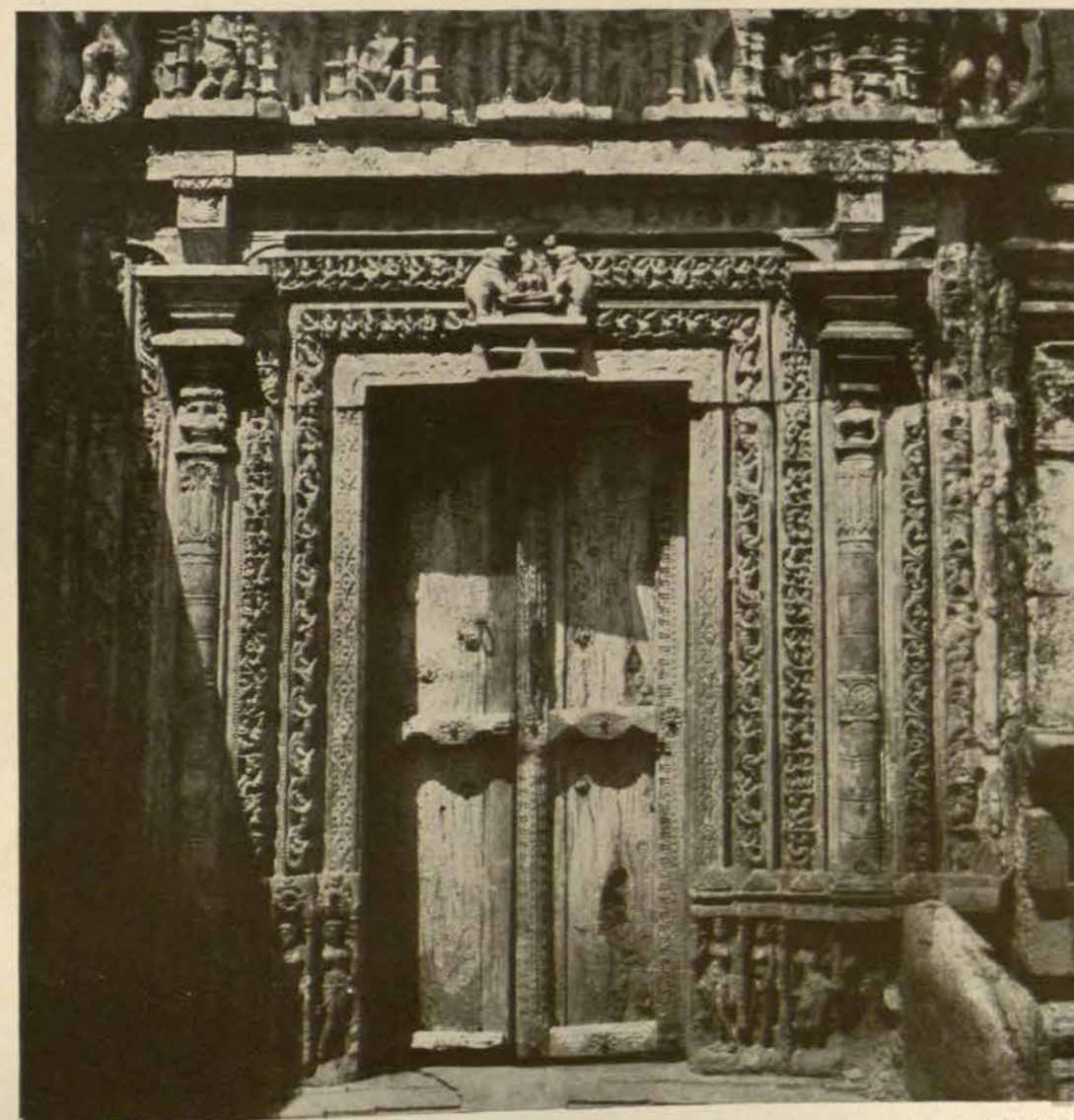
104 Sexual scenes on the wall
below the *sikhara*, Bagali.



103 Fellatio and self-fellation; on the
wall below the *sikhara*, Bagali.



105 Opposite page: A side door showing
couples on the jambs and auspicious
Gaja-Lakṣmī on the lintel, Bagali.





106 *Maithuna*; on a pilaster,
Hundred pillared hall of the
Viṭṭhala temple, Vijayanagara.

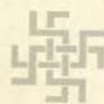
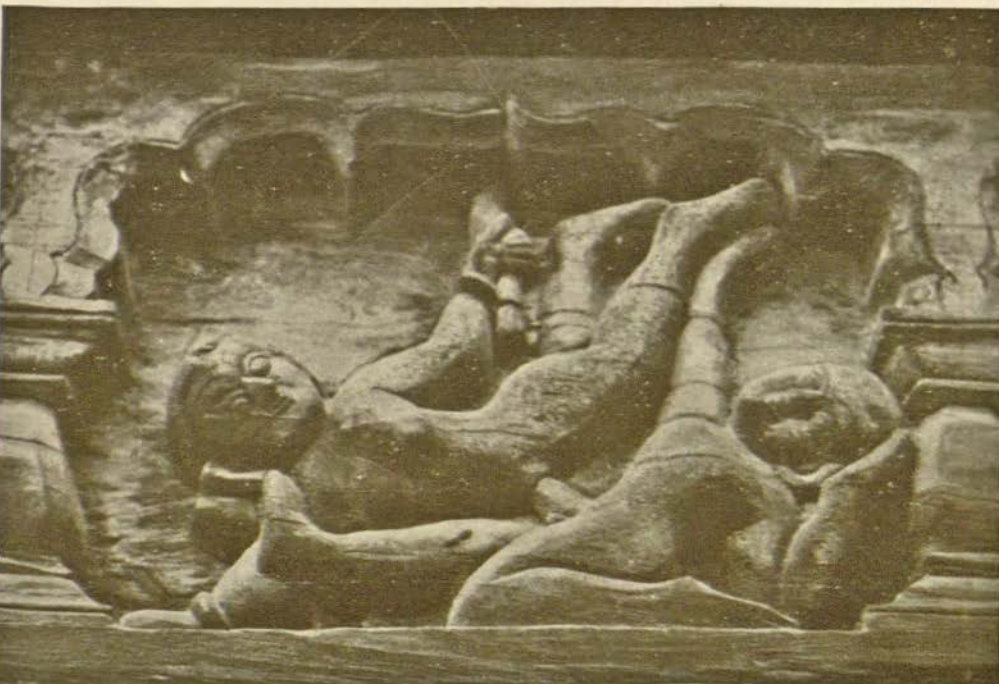


107 An erotic group; on a pillar of a
subsidiary structure, Achyutarāya's
temple, Vijayanagara.

109 Mutual mouth-congress,
ratha, Nanjangud.



108 A Kāmasāstriya pose; *ratha*, Vijayanagara.



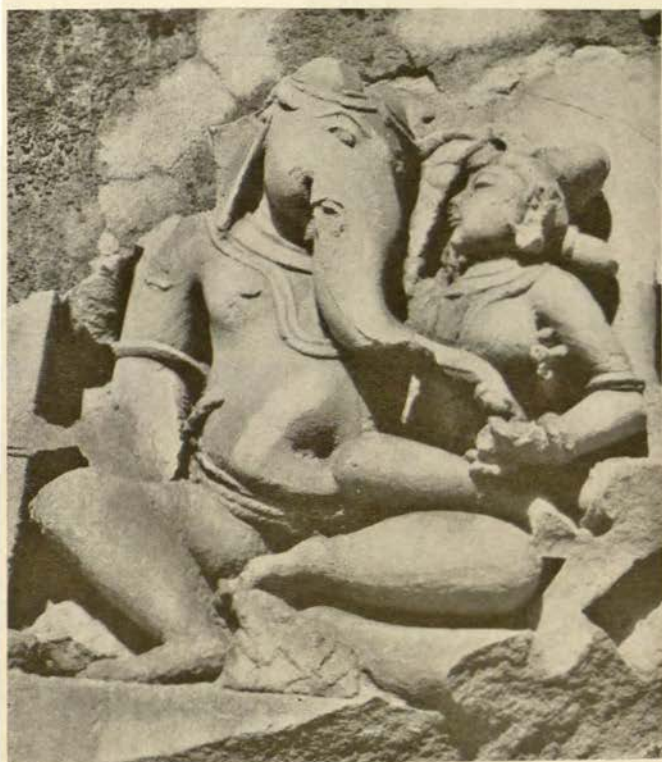


110 Umā-Maheśvara, Paraśurāmeśvara temple, Bhubaneswar.



111 Umā-Maheśvara, Khajuraho.





112 Śakti-Gaṇeśa, Khajuraho.



113 Lakṣmī-Viṣṇu, Belur.



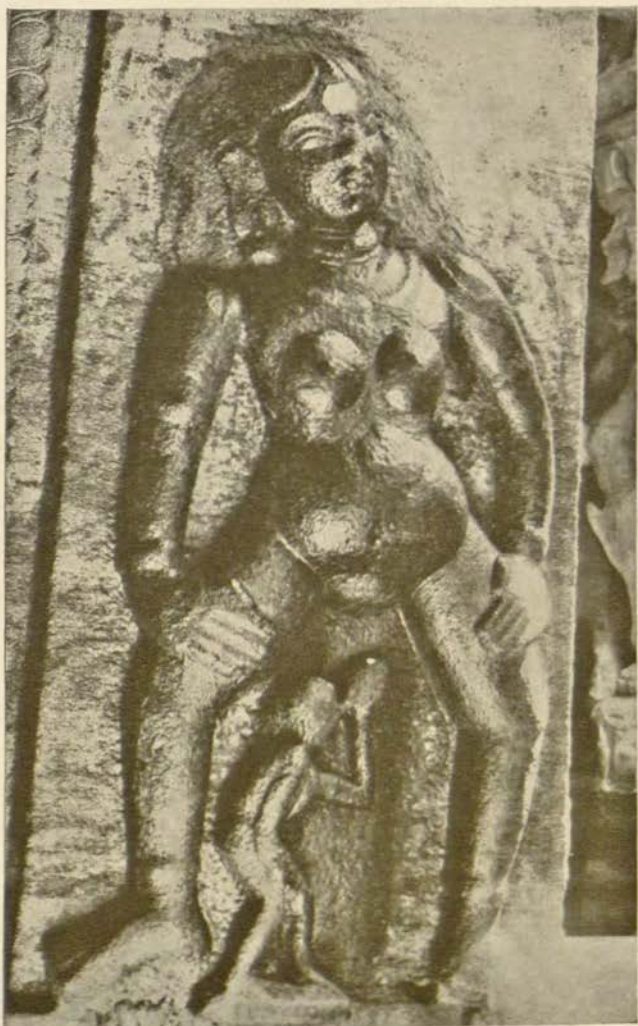


114 The Nude goddess in *uttānapāda* pose, Alampur.

115 Ascetics worshipping the goddess and her symbolic form;
Chausath Yoginī temple, Bherāghat.



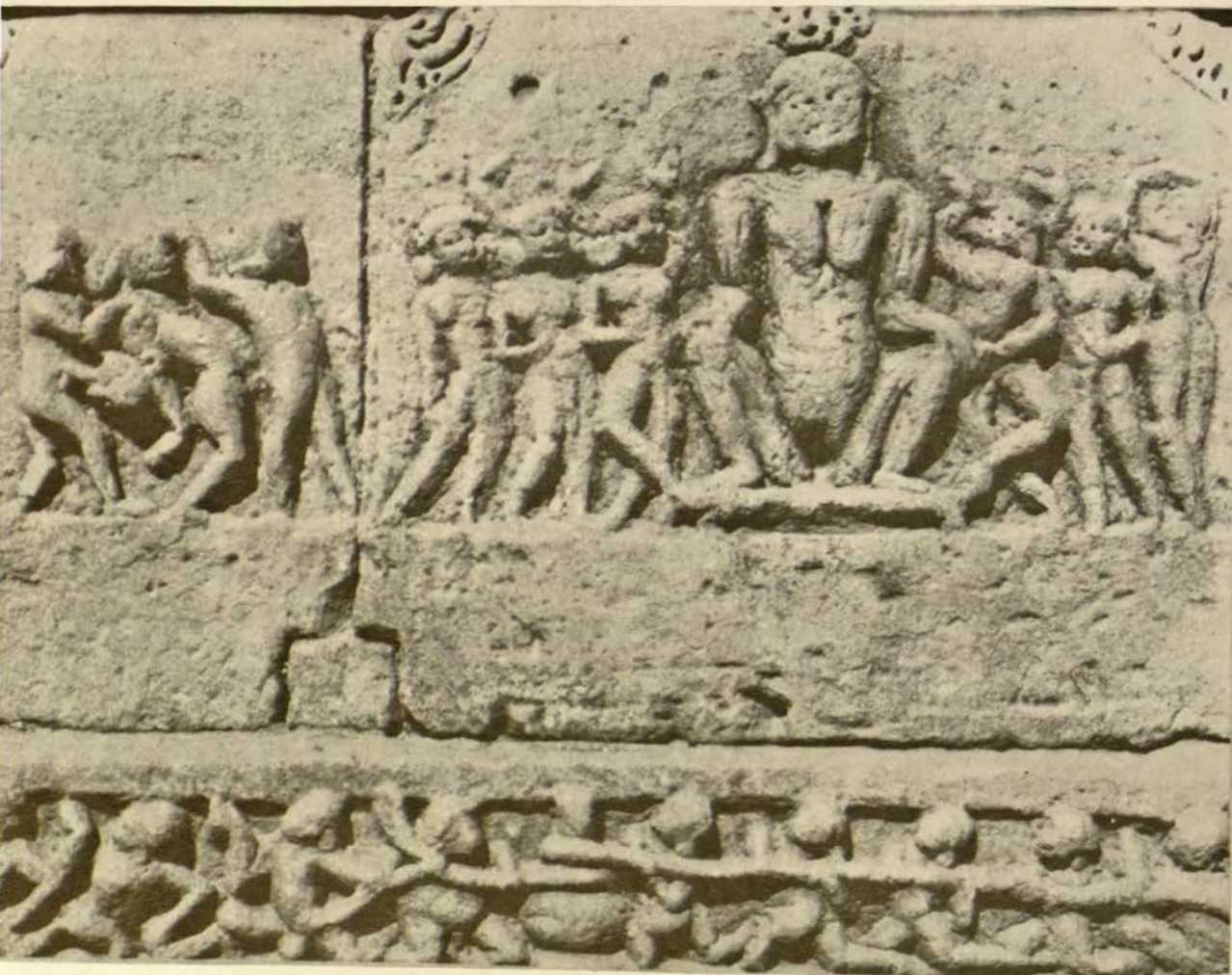
- 116 A female deity; on a pillar,
Minākshī temple, Madura.



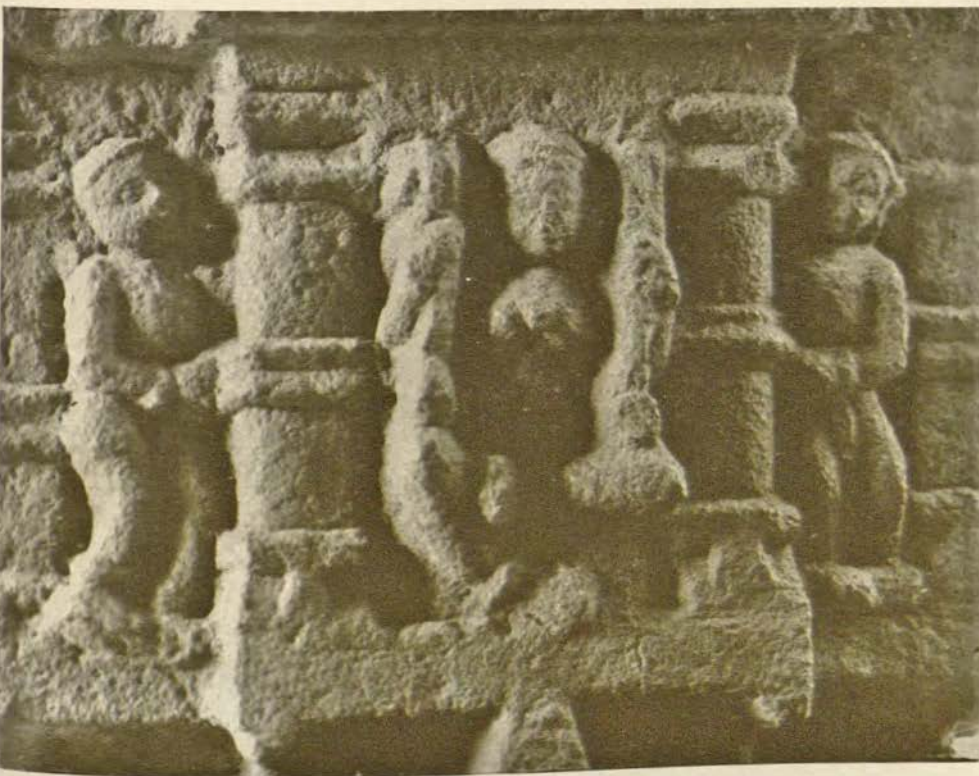
- 117 A female sitting in *uttānapad* pose with
marks of worship on her yoni; on a
pillar of the hall, Viṭṭhala temple,
Vijayanagara.



- 118 Goddess Chāmuṇḍā, female followers, and an orgiastic group, on *kumbha*, Motap.



- 120 *Opposite page, bottom: Men propitiating the goddess by līṅga-kriyā; on a pillar, Ambernath.*





121 A woman exposing herself; Ambarnath.



122 A woman exposing herself near a phallus-like object; Konarak.







124 The "phallus-man", Bagali.

125 A woman exposing herself
and a nude ascetic, Belur.

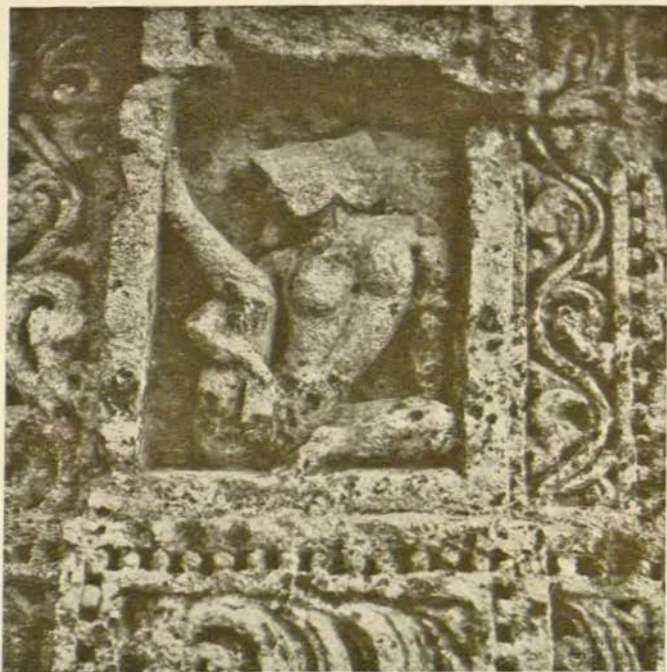




126 *Top left:* A *gana* exposing himself near Rāvaṇa; Paraśurāmeśvara temple, Bhubaneswar.

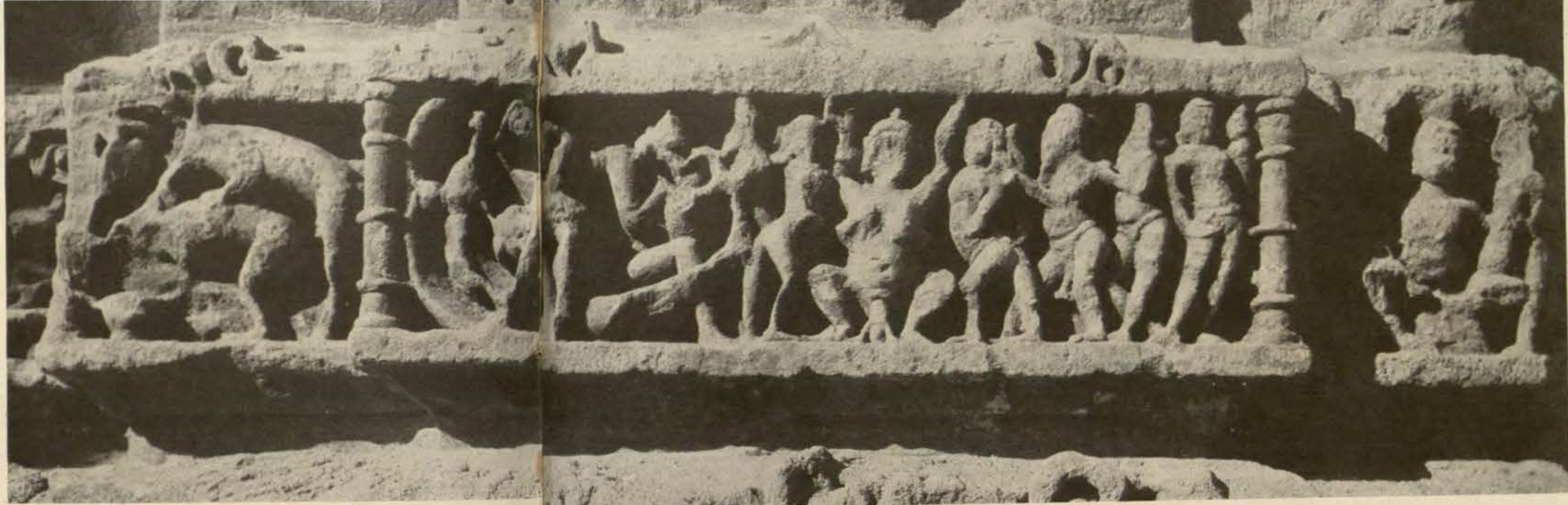
127 *Top right:* An ascetic exposing himself; Galtessvara.

128 *Bottom:* An auto-erotic female; Konarak.





130 A bestiality scene; on a pillar, Roda.



129 Bestiality and child-birth;
narathara, Modhera.



131 A bestiality scene, Konarak.



132 A birth-giving woman,
Ambernath.

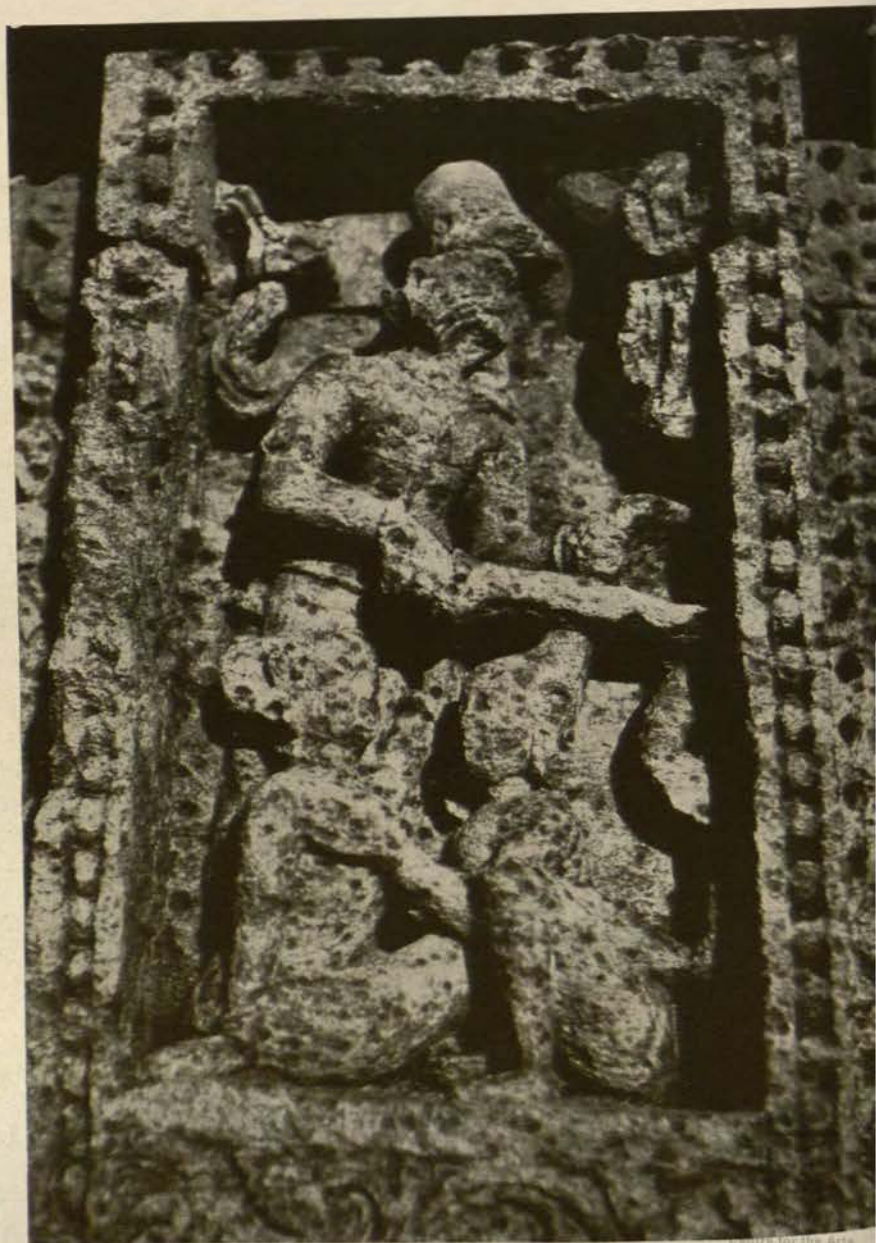


133 A birth-giving woman near a *maithuna*-couple, Bavka.



134 A scene showing hair-cutting and cunnilingus, Lingarāja temple, Bhubaneswar.

135 A scene showing hair-cutting and *maithuna*, Konarak.





136 A scene showing hair-cutting and *maithuna*, Bagali.

137 Couples near Śiva-liṅga; on a pillar, Mallikārjuna temple, Pattadakal.



138 A *liṅga-pūjā* scene; *narathara*, Modhera.

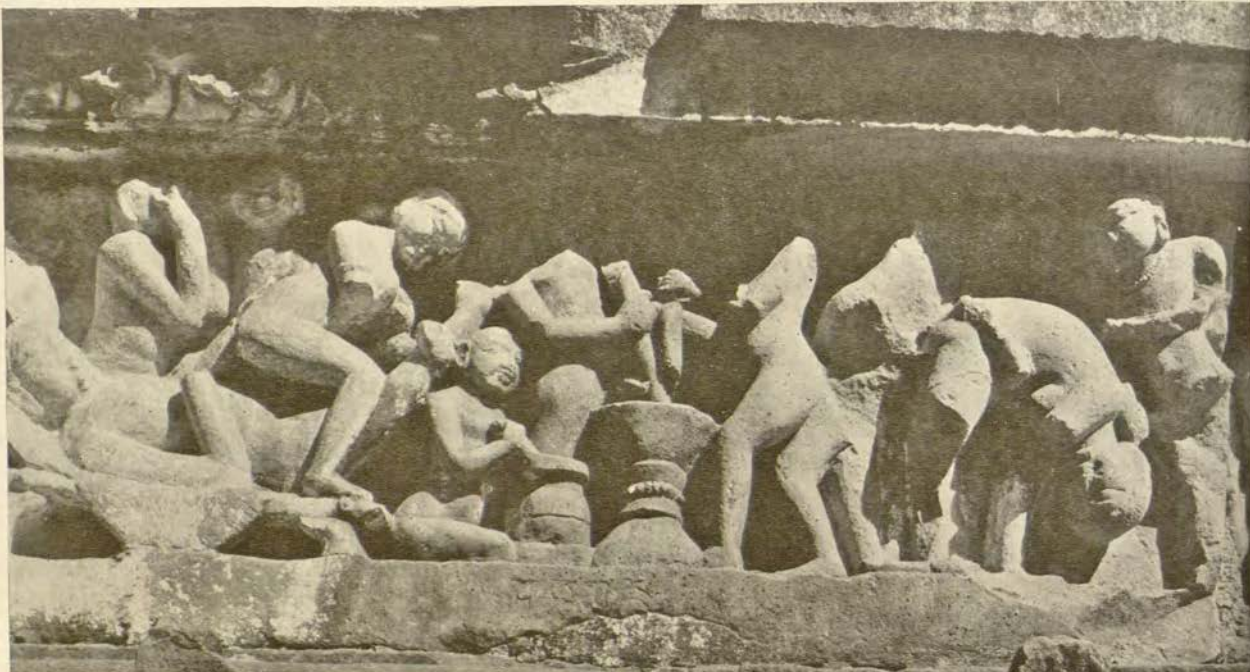
Opposite page

139 *Top*: Bhairava, Chāmuṇḍā and their followers; plinth, Hoysaleswara temple, Halebid.

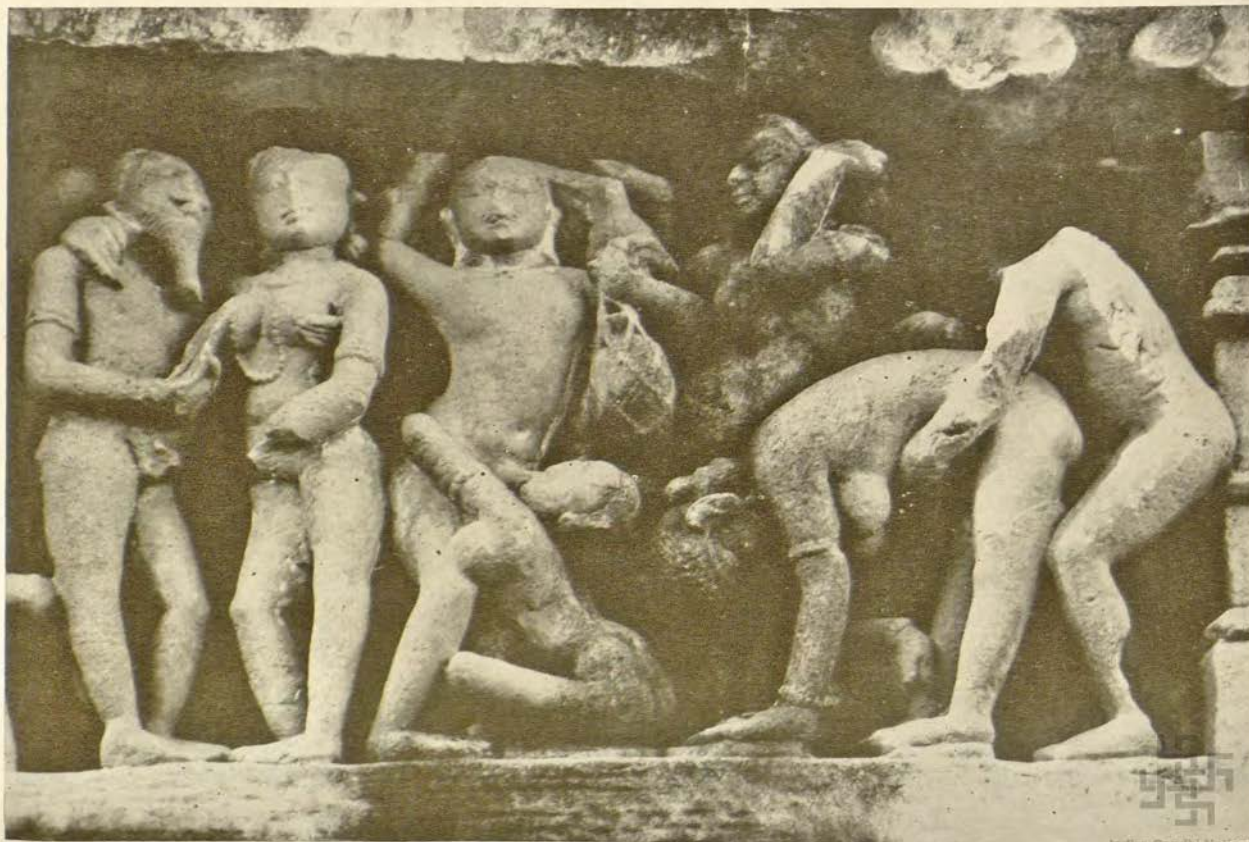
140 *Bottom*: Kāpālīnī and followers; plinth, Hoysaleswara temple, Halebid.



141 *Top*: Preparation of aphrodisiac drugs amidst a scene of sexual orgy; Lakṣmaṇa temple, Khajuraho.



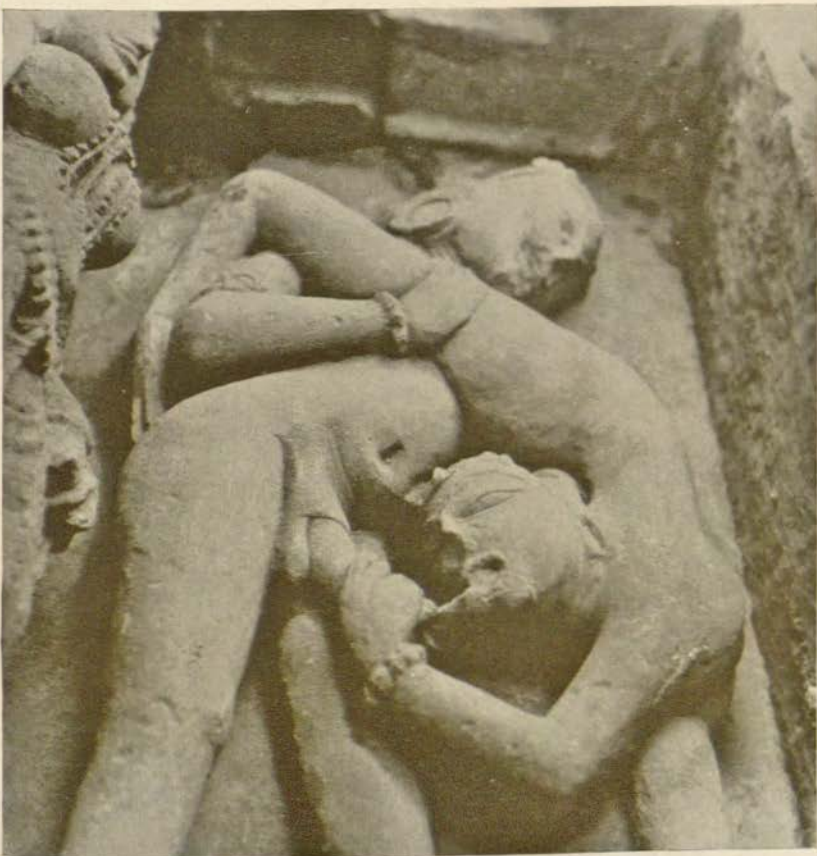
142 *Bottom*: Ascetics in an orgiastic scene; Lakṣmaṇa temple, Khajuraho.

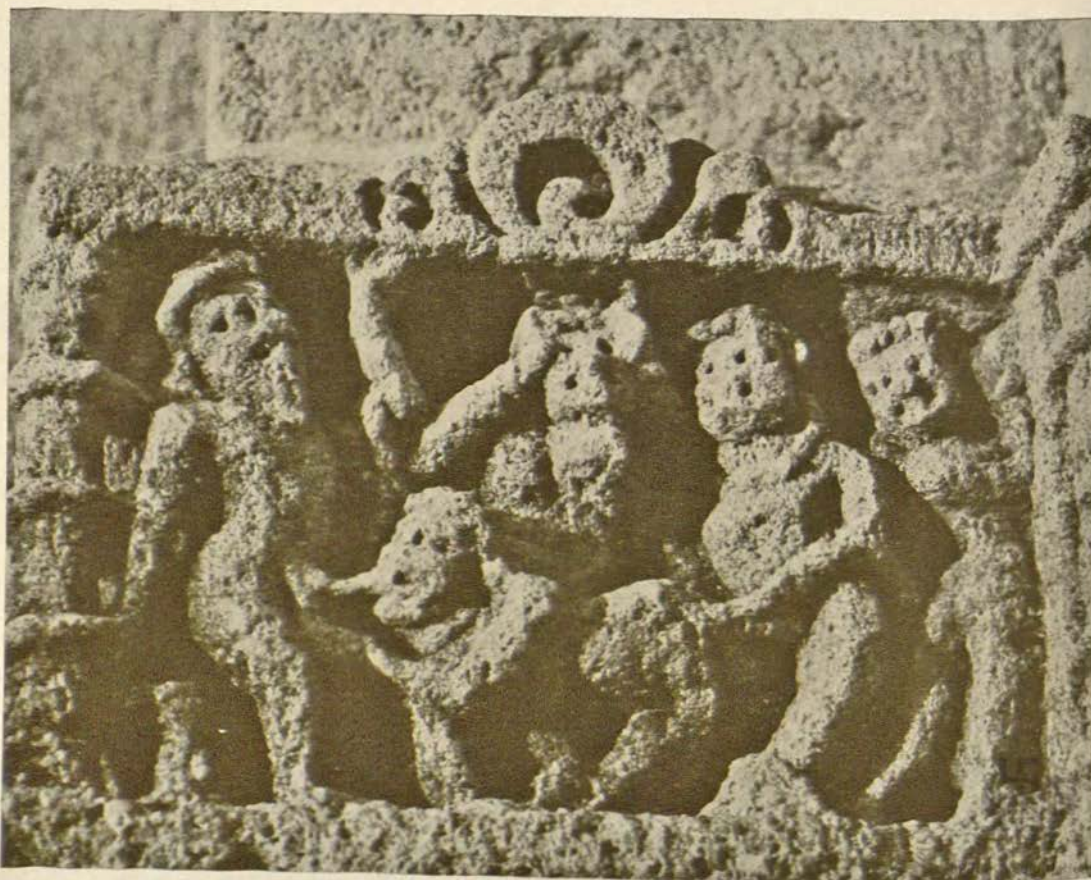




143 *Top:* Ascetics in an orgiastic scene;
Viśvanātha temple, Khajuraho.

144 *Left:* An ascetic with a woman
in mutual mouth congress;
Dulādeva temple, Khajuraho.







145 *Opposite page, top left:* An ascetic with women;
raṅgamaṇḍapa, Modhera.

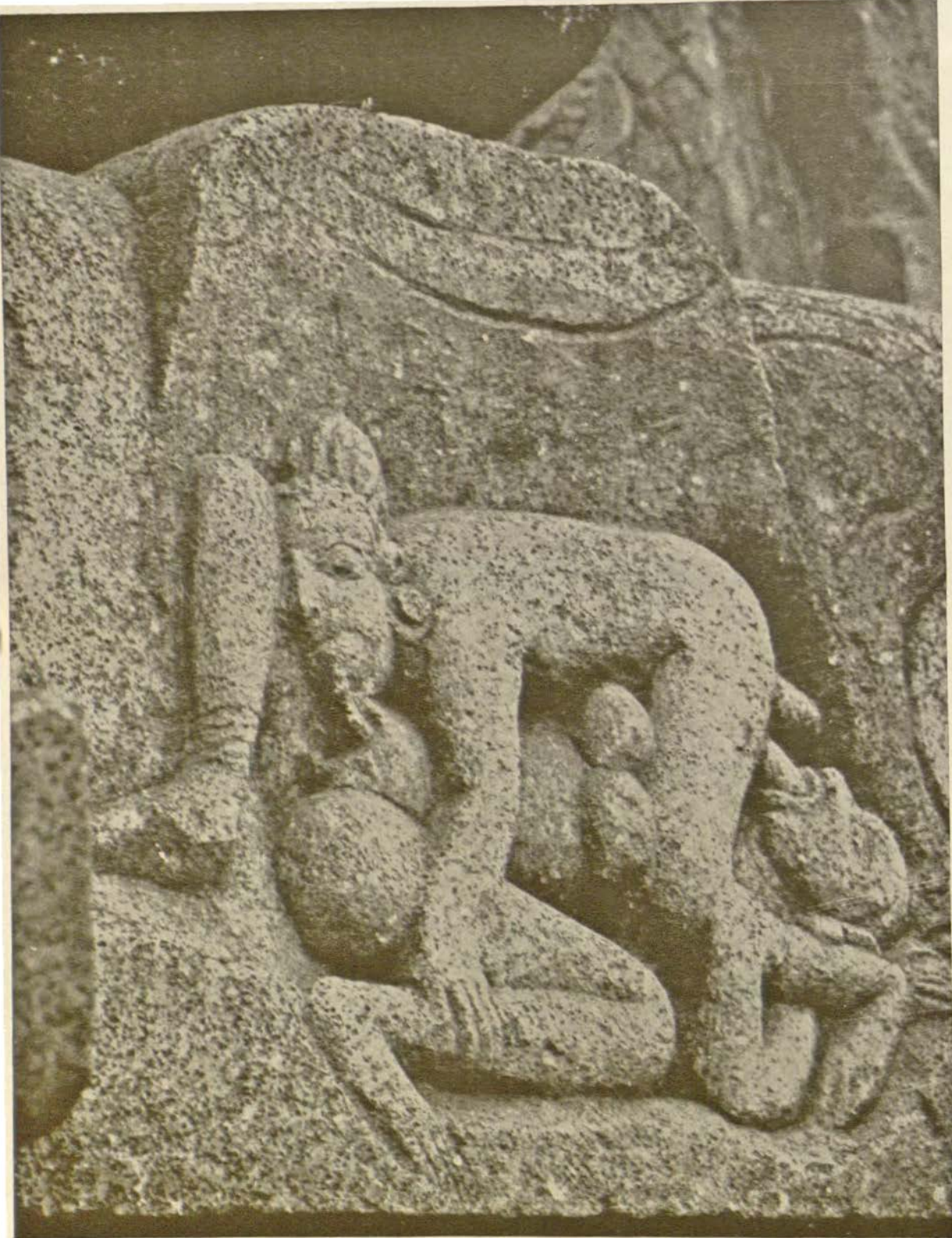
146 *Opposite page, top right:* An ascetic in a *saṅghāṭaka* scene; Roda.

147 *Opposite page, bottom:* Ascetics in an orgiastic group; Modhera.

148 *Left:* Ascetics in a *saṅghāṭaka* scene;
Hoysaleśvara temple, Halebid.

149 *Bottom:* An ascetic and an aristocrat with umbrellas,
in a *saṅghāṭaka* scene, Halebid.





150 An ascetic with a woman in mutual mouth congress; Bagali.

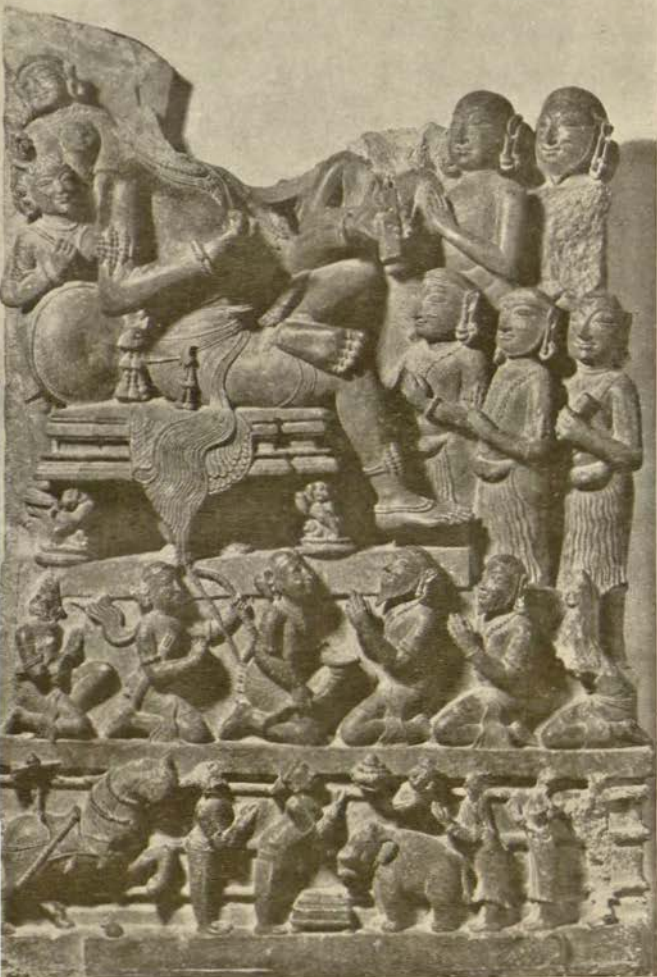


151 Pāśupata ascetics exhibiting themselves near a beautiful woman in *śṛṅgāraṇavidhi*; Kanchipuram.



- 152 A dancing girl near a religious *āchārya*,
Lakṣmaṇa temple, Khajuraho.





153 King Narasimhadeva discoursing with *śilpins* and priests; Konarak.



154 King Narasimhadeva as worshipper of three deities: Devī-Mahiṣāsuramardini, Jagannātha and Śiva; Konarak.

