History of Ancient India has not come down to us as a consolidated whole. It has to be reconstructed bit by bit with the help of the vast literary, epigraphic numismatic and architectural material at our disposal. A major portion of the architectural wealth of our country consists of the temples. While other monuments supply information, primarily, regarding the engineering skill of the builders and their aesthetic sense in beautifying the buildings, as well as, corroborate certain historical facts; the temples supply us with a sort of picture gallery depicting the scenes from the lives of men in the past, their religious social, economic and political activities and their pleasures and pursuits. The scarcity of documentary evidence about the social life of the people of the time makes it essential to make a thorough study of these sculptural remains.

Depiction of icons, on the other hand, not only, reveals the complete mastery of the sculptors, of minute iconographic instructions laid down in the whole extent Sanskrit literature on the subject, but also their originality in venturing upon variations from the tests and the versatility of their art. Temple, the abode of gods, has ingeniously been used as a vehicle for propagating religious harmony and social amity.

An attempt has been made, in this thesis, to study the sculptural wealth of the North Indian temples of early medieval period (9th to 15th Cents.) and to glean from it such light as they throw on the iconographic and cultural life of the people. Although iconographic study of South Indian temples by Shri T.A. Gopinath Rao is available no such detailed study of North Indian temples has been made so far. The temple-sites lie scattered all over the North. Some are easily accessible while others like Osian and Kiradu are very difficult to reach, still other isolated temples like Pandhanoi, Naraser,
Sahania and Burhi Chanderi in Madhya Pradesh and Ramgarh, Mainal and Bijolia in Rajasthan could not be visited, the former being in dense forest areas or in locust infested regions and the latter due to difficult bus routes involving many practical difficulties. I tried my level best to visit personally a large number of temples, monuments and museums in northern India.

I entertain my fondest hope that this study would prove useful and helpful in filling up some gaps in the history of the early medieval period and would also stimulate studies of other art treasures of the country. I have tried my best to be analytical, explanatory and exact in the treatment of the subject.

A detailed study of Khajuraho, an important temple-site of the early medieval period, was done by me for my Ph.D. degree, hence it has not been incorporated. But some of the plates in line drawing have been taken from my book on Khajuraho as the details were found to be similar. A few photographs which are not very clear, had to be given in support of certain facts.

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