Chapter - IV

STYLE AND TECHNIQUE OF THE SCULPTURES

Like other art sculptures is an important part of Indian temple architecture. The sculptures helps us to know about various development of human life through their artistic skill. In the ancient time, man used rock, metal, clay, wood etc for to make sculptures. According to A. J. Allen, "these works of sculptures can be some of the noblest and finest work of art that human beings are capable to produce."\(^1\)

The art took its form after man became civilized. But during the last century, lots of surprising things have been discovered about men who lived in very distant parts. One of the most amazing things is that, prehistoric men lived in caves also knew the technique of art. They painted pictures on cave-walls. Ivory and bones were carved into sculpture, as well as, clay was also used. But the stone sculpture in India did not come in to being before the 2nd century B.C. It is connected with the rise of Mauryan imperialism, having been influenced by the Persians and the Greco-Romans.\(^2\) The excellence of Aśokan art was the result of the tradition of high workmanship of

\(^2\) Mazumder, R. C., (Ed) *The Age of Imperial Unity*, 4th Edn., pp. 568-70
the Indian people in wood. Undoubtedly, the Greco-Roman art bears resemblance of the stone carvings from the ancient Egyptians, as is evidenced by the sculptural remains of ancient Greece of about 7th century B.C.

Some western scholars propounded a theory that every aspect of Indian culture belonged originally to the western world. Smith was of that opinion. It is nothing but merely a view of the imperialists, which was even being shaped into a theory during the last two centuries of colonial rule. Even the ancient democratic way of functioning in India is older than that of Greece, and has survived among the tribal people. The Lichchhavis of Vaiśāli gave the world a powerful and healthy democratic tradition. D. D. Kausambi finds no western influence in literature and Science.  

From the view point of art and architecture, the Indus valley is one of the oldest civilizations of the world. According to Coomaraswami, ‘India in centuries and perhaps millennium B.C., was an integral part of an ‘Ancient east’ that extended from the Mediterranean to the Ganges valley.” In this ancient world there prevailed a common type of culture, which may well have had continuous history extending upwards from the Stone Age.

4. Coomarswami A. K., History of Indian and Indonesian Art., p. 13
Numbers of images have been discovered from excavated sites such as Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Chanhoodaro, and also in many places of Baluchisthan. The female figures were perhaps mother goddesses and many of the images are seen with trees issuing forth from their genitals and were worshipped as objects of fertility rites. The worship of the mother goddess is deep-rooted in India from the days of Indus civilization, which represents the nature and the śakti. In the Indus cities many yonis and liṅgas are found. The people of the Rgveda hated the worship of liṅga representing Śiva (śiśnadeva). However, in course of time, the liṅga came to be an object of worship. Thus, like Śāktism, Śaivism also continued from pre-Vedic period. The Vedic people did not worship any idol. They paid their homage to different deities, symbolizing different aspects of nature through sacrifices (yājanas) in which Agnī (god of fire) was the medium.

As regards the idea of images, we first notice in the Aśtādhyāyī of Pāṇini, where he refers to the images of Vāsudeva and Arjuna. Patañjali refers to the devotee of Śiva. The Brhat-Saṁhitā of Varāhamihira refers to wooden images. The Harivaṁśa refers to stone images, but no stone image earlier than the Mauryan period is found.

Principles of Indian art:

5. Banerjea, J. N., op-cit. p. 76
6. ibid
7. Coomaraswami, A. K., History of Indian and Indonesian Art, p.42.
8. Agrawala, V. S., The Heritage of Indian Art, pp. 10-12
In India art constitutes a unique chapter in the history of human endeavour. It reveals the deepest recesses of human mind and offers a universe to the Indian soul. The spiritual and religious concept of Indian creative genius has found full and perfect expression in her aesthetic creations.

The essential quality of Indian art is its preoccupation with matters of the spirit. The approach is not material, but spiritual. Art in India did not aim an objective presentation of the human or social facets of life. It was primarily the fruit of the artists' creative meditation and effort to project symbols of divine reality as conceived and understood by the collective consciousness of the people as a whole. The civilization of India depicts the different forms of gods and goddesses, which the devotees worshipped.

The real significance of Indian art should be prepared patiently to go the whole length and drink at the deep symbolic meanings that make up a world of their own. V. S. Agrawal had mentioned three important features of Indian art, viz —

(i) Truth (satyam).
(ii) The auspiciousness (śivam)
(iii) Beauty (sundaram).

First the 'Truth' of the divine essence or reality, call it by any name, you will. The essential truth of Indian literature and art is the
homage to the abstract and unmanifest power behind the material world, which is the primeval source of all things. The second is the truth behind the entire range of our artistic heritage, the conflict between good and evil wages incessantly. The created world presents a diversity where force meets force for fulfillment of the higher purpose of life. This is known as daivāsuras in Vedic term. This is the conflict between two powers of the devas and asuras, the forces of light and darkness, which are symbolized as the garuḍa and nāga in Indian art. The vast canvas of Indian art, whether it is sculpture or painting, offered a commentary on this essential aspect of struggle through which peace has to be won as the ultimate prize. When this symbolism has been properly grasped, the theme of Indian art becomes meaningful and source of inspiration and gay. The third feature of Indian art is the place of human life in the divine scheme of things. Man here serves an essential purpose. He is placed at the center of things. All the symbols of art and religion primarily portray his inner images. It is for him that they exist. They explain his emotional life in terms of raging conflict, the ultimate consumption of which is peace and self-fulfilment. Art thus forges the closest link with man and the manifold aspects of his life.

Style of Indian sculpture:

The art of sculpture was practised by the people of India from very ancient times. Many specimens of different kinds of figures,
both animals and human, belonging to proto-historic and post-historic ages, have been found in various parts of the country. The materials used at first were generally impermanent things, like wood and clay, and later durable materials like bronze and stone for longevity. Numerous terracotta figures and a few stone and bronze figures of early Indus valley sites testify the efficiency of the Indian sculptors and the advancing skill of those days. Their knowledge of animal anatomy is also fully borne out by the highly realistic modelling of bulls and other animals carved on terracotta, faience and steatite seals. The style of sculptural remains of Harappa belonging to the second half of the third millennium B.C. shows that plastic art was practised by the people of the adjacent region. The next group of extant sculptures belongs to the Mauryan period. During that period both stone and metal were used. Sculptural motives of the Mauryan age was fully developed. These were primarily based on Indian religious character. Besides animal figures on the capital of Aśoka’s edicts, and on the pillars, there were figures in high and low relief, resting on the abacus. In the succeeding phases, there occurs bass relief carving on section of the railing and gateways of the Buddhist stūpa, which are found at Bharhūt and Sāñci. The façade and interior design of the rock cut cave temple are mostly found in eastern and western India, in Udaigiri, Bhūj, Karle etc. The bull capitals, visible
at Rāmpūrvā column, show a highly developed tectonic quality reminiscent of the modelling of the animal figurines of the Mauryan period. There is some similarity between Indian and Persian or Perso-Hellenic art forms. This can be explained by the fact that as a unit in the west Asian cultural complex, Indian sculpture inherited the artistic tradition from west Asia.

The practice of making images of various deities for worship does not seem to have been in vogue among the higher orders of the Indo-Aryans of the early Vedic period. But it is highly probable that the image worship was current among the lower order of the people, including the pre-Aryan settlers.

The rise of Buddhism as a monotheistic movement gave a gigantic expression to the Indian sculpture. The life of the Buddha and his worship in human form, with every myth of his life began to be represented in plastic art. In the early days, the stūpa (symbolising the Buddha himself) was worshipped. Most of the Aśoka’s monuments are found in places with which Buddha was associated. The animals of Aśokān pillars are also connected with religion. With the passage of time, after the nirvāṇa of the Buddha, changes in Buddhism gradually started. Various stories of the past life of Buddha from the Jātakas were carved on the surface of the stūpas. The development of Mahāyānism established the Buddha as a god and, henceforth, he
was represented anthropo-morphically. Various vihāras and caityas were carriers of sculptural representation. Image making became a popular art with Buddhist India and abroad.

The rise of Mahāyānism made Buddhism a popular cult with its much-expounded doctrines, such as the numerous Buddhas and Budhisattvas and worshipping of various gods and goddesses. It included Jatakas on the past life of the Buddha.

Stone images of the Buddha and Buddhist Jatakas are found at Gandhāra, while such images as well as other sculptures connected with the Brahmanical and Jain creeds have been discovered at Mathura. Both these groups can be collectively dated in the first two or three centuries of the Christian era. The fragmentary sculptures with the polish of Śuṅga period are found at Lumbinipur near Patna, which stand for Digambar Jains. One of the earliest images of the Brahmanical deity is that of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma discovered at Mathurā. These now belong to the collection of Lucknow Museum.

There was a phenomenal development in art during the Gupta age when sculptural representations of divinities were at their best. In this period many changes were introduced in the tenets of different cults and new varieties of icons were made. There was also an attempt to modify the canons followed by the artists. Some of the Purāṇas, the upa-purāṇas, Pañcatantras and Śaiva Āgamas, which appear to
have attained their present shape during the late Gupta period, contain sections dealing with characteristic signs of various kind of images.

The *Bṛhat-Saṁhitā* of Varāhamihira, generally assigned to the 6th century A.D., contains a chapter which deals with the essential details connected with the iconography of some principal Brahmanical deities as also that of the Buddhist and the Jaina. Sections of some of the *Mahā-purāṇas*, like the *Matsya* and *Agni*, a few of the *upa-Purāṇas*, like the *Viṣṇudhamottara* and the *Āgamas*, like the *Hayāśīra*, the *Paṅca-rātra*, the *Vaikāḷasāgama*, the *Suprabhedāgama* and the *Āṁśumad-bhedāgama* also contain important iconographic details. These books are useful principally for the identification and study of Brahmanical icons.

The youthful human form becomes the pivot of the Gupta sculptures. The sculptures of the age presented the human form in different attitudes, mostly standing and seated, in accordance with the nature of the divine type which it was meant to represent. The human figures were meant to represent various types of deities and their hands were shown in a variety of posses (*mudrās*), which were suggestive characteristics of their individual action.

The *āsamas* (sitting postures) and *sthānaka-bhaṅgas* (standing flexation of the body) also attained characteristic variations, which

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were plastically posed and spiritual elevation seldom attained in the later art of India.

The sculptures of the post-Gupta period, though retaining to some extent the classical idiom, came to be characterized by the regional variations which were ushering in the mediaeval school of sculptures associated with different parts of the Yamunā valley, Central India and the Deccan.

The artists of the north-eastern region also exhibited their artistic skill through the media of stone, bronze and clay.

Technique of the different sculptures of various period:

The history of sculptural art in India did not develop in a certain period. It took a long process to evolve this form of art.

To know the various stages of the development of sculptural art in India, it is essential to know with some amount of accuracy the various peculiarities of the earliest and later sculptures.

The earlier specimens of sculptures are generally free from the cramping influence of artificial rules, and are notably realistic; the desire on the part of the artist to copy nature as faithfully as possible is plainly visible in his work. In human studies, the bust, though fully formed, is not stiff and severe in its contours as in the later specimens. The chest does not end abruptly and abdomen begins making sharp angles with the former. There is a gentle merging of one into the
other without any marker line of demarcation between them. In the later sculptures, the outline of the body began to be the outline of the thistle flower. The lower circular portion represents the abdomen beginning sharply and with a severe and unpleasant angle at both sides where the thorax ends. In the earlier faces, the nose is rather short and the lips are somewhat thicker than in the later ones. The eyes are less artificial in that they are not disproportionately long. The face itself is noticeably round in outline in the earlier art, while it is oval in the later specimens of sculpture; and the chin is invariably shown somewhat prominently, although it is really smaller in proportion than what is demanded by accurate art. In the later sculpture, the nose is simply a long triangular pyramid attached by one of its sides to the face with the apex turned upwards.

In the early sculptures, the arrangement of the drapery is very effective and natural. The folds and creases are delicately worked out and the dress is shown to flow freely down the sides and on the person of the figure, which it clothes. The conventional mode of formation and disposal of the folds in the specimens in later workmanship is very striking and artificial. In the later sculptures, the heavy central folds of the under-garment descend in a sharp conical form down to the ankles the lower part ending in a point, which protrudes somewhat forward.
There are four different schools representing four different regions of India. These groups of sculptures generally are the Mathura School, the sculptures of Badami and Chalukya-Haysala and the sculptures of Bengal, Assam and Orissa (East Indian school of mediaeval art).\textsuperscript{10}

The images of the temple, its position and proportion:

The Hindu temple is a monument, whose outer surface consists of sculptures. The temple has various parts like the \textit{mandapa, ardha-mandapa, antarāla} and \textit{garbhagrha} where the images have been installed. But, for the main or imageless symbol enshrined within the walls of the \textit{garbhagrha}, the rules are plain. Outside of the temple walls are displayed number of beautiful images and carvings. ‘The volume of the wall space of a Hindu temple forms a unity of relation in height, breadth and depth. In it are integrated space volumes. The texture of the walls is not only that of the stone of which they are built or of the plaster with which they may be overlaid. These lend particular quality of the surface only to the closely built texture of the buttresses and offsets and their intervals, which form space, volumes and rhythm of graded light and darkness.’ ‘In the texture, the carved figures belong to the body of the wall and also to the

\textsuperscript{10} Rao, Gapinath., \textit{Elements of Hindu Iconography}, Vol. 1, part 1, 1971, p. 33
spaces between, inasmuch as their own volume projects into the intervals, the carved figures, moreover, reach even further into space or else more deeply attached part of the wall than are the outer or main surfaces of any offset. Niches are sunk in the main buttresses, where the chief images are placed, the pārśvadevās, the main aspect of the divinity whose image or symbol is enshrined in the garbhagṛha placed within the body of the wall, within a niche or ‘massive’ doors (ghana-dvāra), as it is called, on the co-ordinates of the prāśāda these main images are nearer to the centre, which is also that of the entire monument, the temple. The surrounding images (āvargaṇadevā) are, however, more exposed, carved as they sometimes are, almost completely in round, they are yet of one piece of stone with the surfaces in ressault and remain connected with them by the strut-like extensions of their modelled limbs at angles not meant for view.’ (Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, Part II)

The images were set on the perpendicular wall faces. For each is complete in its particular meaning and its particular place. The main aspects, for example, of the god in the temple, such as certain avatāra in a Viṣṇu temple, or divinities most closely related to Śiva in a Śiva temple, or that of Devī if the temple is constructed for her, or the images of the three great gods, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, are placed in massive doors in the three of cardinal points, whereas the entrance
itself, generally facing east, frequently has small image of the main divinity carved at the centre of the lintel.

Apart from the main images in their niches, are indispensable to all temples the images of the aṣṭa-dikapālas, the guardians of the eight points of the space, each in its correct location. The multitude of divine figures stationed between these two kinds of essential images, each on a facet and having a console of its own are nāgas, sārdūlas, apsaras, sura-sundarīs, mithunas etc. and certain specific images of the lesser gods.

Nyāsa (placing, marking, consecrating, assignment) is the rituals touching of various parts of the body commencing with the place of the heart and ending with the hands (añganīṣa), while a mantra, a sacred rhythmic formula, is recited; it is thought of as being located in the heart, head, in the crown lock, three eyes, chest and in the hand. While the mūkamantra, the rhythmic formula of the main divinity, is recited, the devotee poses both his hands three or seven times over the whole body and its parts, the hand and the fingers, from the thumb to each of the fingers and also each of their phalanges are touched and quicked thereby as living seat of god. Various parts of the body are thus assigned to different divinities. ‘His’ body is made conscious to the devotee in ‘His’ daily rites as the seat and

place of god. This consciousness ‘He’ wins by the rite of touching it at sensitive and vital parts.

‘Nyāsa’ is not only performed to the living body of man but also to that of the images of divinities made of stone, wood etc. (Mahānirvāṇa-tantra, XIII, 289-97). The constituent elements of the world and its principles are assigned to it from the feet to the place of the heart etc. Thus, by touching it ritually, it is felt alive with the breath of the cosmos. (The Hindu Temple, page-305).

The smooth limbs of the images of the gods are always 16 year old; they are vibrant with life and breath. These make them not only smooth and supple but also weightless in appearance despite their ample curves. They are also particularly fit not only for dancing but also for flying the many ganas, vidyādharas etc, although they never have wings. The ends of garment flutter to enhance their movements and be a foil to their rhythms, whereas folded scarves clasp their fullness and are crafted as if they wear special type of jewellery accentuating through the contrast of their own shape and texture of that of the modelled body.

Garments, jewellery and coiffure of the images are a selection and enhancement of those worn in the respective country where the temple was built. The preference of the sculptor, however, is for the bare body and he makes only sparing use of garments, worn in the
shape of a ‘dhoti’, the cloth clings to the body and is recognizable, as a rule, only by such patterns as are engraved on the modelled shape of the limbs and by carving the hem of the cloth petal like or as if it were one more ornament of the smooth limbs. Thus, all forms of apparel accentuate and accompany smooth roundness of the figures and their movement, only the headgear and coiffure are additional volumes of supernatural consequence; the high crowns (mukuta) of the greater gods, add height to the image whereas the chignons which the lesser gods and goddesses wear at the back of their globular or horn shaped bulges as required in each particular instance to the balance or the linear composition of the images.

The single figures are always in ‘movement’ even when they appear standing still. As part of the dynamic mass of the wall they share in its impact and appear to be driven forward; even when they are almost completely carved in the round, they are steeped in the drive from the centre of the temple. It carries them, sustains them in the most exacting contortion, bears them aloft when they are represented as flying and adds power, breath and dignity to their stance when they stand firmly planted on both feet (sampāda-sthānaka). This erect stance, with the weight of the body evenly distributed right and left, is classified as ‘samabhargī’ or the even bend. It is the first variety in the classification of stances, which are the even bend,
the slight bend \((abhaṅga)\), the triple bend \((tribhaṅga)\) and the excessive bend \((atibhaṅga)\). Even the strictly motionless stance is understood as a particular phase of movement; it balances the body, which remains in tension. This classification leaves out of account the writing in space of the sculptures from around its axis. The third kind of movement is that of the arms and hands, their gestures. These belong throughout the class of ‘\textit{sehmatā}’ the gestures expressing permanent states pertaining to the nature of divinity, which assures fearlessness and grants boons.

The gods represented by Indian sculptures belong to definite types, for they are body-forth definite aspects of divine being, the peaceful \((śānta)\), the terrific \((ugra)\) etc. The iconographical physiognomy of the face is also that of the body; the body of the terrific images, for example, is inflated with divine fury as are the bulging eyes etc.

The position of sculptures in Hindu temple:

1. Symbols of entry and exit:

   The door and its images:

   Through the entrance of the temple we have to cross the doorways. There is distance between the door and images. The theme and the subjects are generally carved on the lintels, jambs and doorways. The several parts of the doorways, as given in the \textit{Bṛhat-Saṁhitā}, form a geometrical progression,—the width of the threshold
being equal to that of the doorjambs; the width of the doorways or
entrance is double of each; and its height is twice the width. Similarly
also are the parts of the doorway’s proportion, assigned as they are to
various images and carvings. At the bottom are the large figures of
the guardian divinities of the door etc.; they occupied \( \frac{1}{4} \) of the height
of the door.

The meaning of door and images is connected with the divinity
to whom the temple is dedicated. The principal image or symbol
which is in the garbhagrha, is also carved on a small scale on the
centre of the lintel. He presides over the entrance, and his gatekeepers
are stationed below, to his right and left at the door jambs.\(^{12}\) These
guardians of the threshold flank the gods and symbols of the entrance.
On the centre of the threshold is carved a full-blown lotus, which
means the symbol of the universe. The other meaning is of the state
of dispassion of the ‘bhakta’ in which the divinity is revealed to him.
In this respect, the door is ‘god’ through whom men enter into the
presence of the supreme principle, which the established in the
garbhagrha and has its seat in the consecrated image. To be able to
enter into the supreme presence, man has to undergo a transmutation,
for, only when he has acquired a celestial body himself, is qualified

\(^{12}\) The dvārapālas bear the weapons, etc. by which they are recognized as
belonging to a particular god, —they are Śiva’s dvārapālas, or those of
Brahmā, of Viṣṇu etc. —Rupamandana, II, pp. 13-17
to pars the company of the gods and confront the supreme presence which is beyond form, and dwells into the image of the divinity of the temple. The transformation or regeneration which man has to undergo is promoted by the divinities carved on the door-jambs. The presence of the river purified the devotee from all taints of his human state. It is equivalent to a bath taken in the sacred waters. The entrance to the garbhapagha is the sculptural metamorphosis of the natural 'tirtha'. The doorway is an iconostasis of the descent of the rivers, of sakti and of the essence of life competing for its heavenly origin in the creepers ambling upwards on the 'branches' (śākha) of the frame, in the multiform concatenations within their stalks and on each single śākha, in the sequence of lovers (mithuna), prancing chimaeræ (śārdula) and jubilant spirits (gānas). All these have their support (dhr) on these waters, are borne by it. Thus, it illustrates the knowledge that the waters are dharma (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, XI, 16, 24, 2.16.24), the support of life and generation of a new birth and transformed body.

The rivers have their sources and origin in heaven. Thence they descend to earth. On the entrance of the early temple, the image of the main divinity of the temple, and to either side of it, those of other

15. ibid, Part II, p. 314.
great gods are carved. This is the celestial region whence the rivers have descended,— the Gaṅgā, the most sacred of all, the celestial Mandākinī, and also the Yamuna. From heaven they have come to earth. In the later temples their images are stationed on either side. At the bottom of the door the current and ripples of the flowing waters are in their swing stances. To look at them is equal in effect to the ritual bath in their waters, especially in most sacred waters of the Gaṅgā. The presence of the rivers purified the devotee from all traits of his human state. The entrance to the garbhagṛha is the sculptural metamorphosis of the natural tīrtha. The doorways are an iconostasis of the descent of the rivers, of Śakti, and of the ascent of life.

The door, however, in its original function and open, is at the same time the place of the thresholds and entry or initiation. The iconography of the river goddesses is effective in their function where the door has structural equivalent of a tīrtha. The one or the other aspect prevails in the carving of the entrance.

Facing the entrance outside the prāśāda, in the open or in the mandapa is the image of the vāhana. The vehicle of the divinity, which is enshrined in the temple, carved in the round, self-contained as form and symbol; the vāhana 'conveys' the deity. To their multiple images, the vāhana, it appears, as ancient as any temple of ancient India. Its position is outside the entrance, it confronts the temple or
the image in the garbhagṛha. The vāhana is a counterpart of the image enshrined in the prāśāda and framed by the doorway. It leads to the entrance of the temple.

The Face of Glory: the Kṛtimukha:

Doors, niche and window are the architectural symbols of the passage for the man to the god and of the nearness of divinity. These are the places of initiation and manifestation. To them adornments are added which enrich and illustrates their meaning. Generally, some important figures like images, animals, birds etc. are carved and placed them in the door, the niche and the window etc. Pre-eminent amongst them is ‘the face of glory’, the kṛtimukha. Its essential place is at the apex of the gavākṣa. These figures are most prominently found at the gavākṣa of the Nāgara temples. The kṛtimukha is a mask made of the face of the lion (simbhamukha), of death’s head (kāla) and the dragon’s head (Rāhu, tamas). The lion, a solemn animal, the splendour (yaśas, teja) on the flag of the Sun, the symbol of justice and power is the destroyer of the foes. The mantra, the magic formula, on giving a lion to Mahādevī, the Great Goddess, is: Do thou destroy my enemies (Mahānirvāṇatantra, xiii, 257). It is similar to the mantra of Rāhu, “enemy of Soma, the moon, destroy my enemies (ibid. xiii, iii). The lion as destroyer, is an embodiment of bent one

16. The Vedic mantra of Rāhu is given in the RV., IV. 31. 1.
side of power, the solar animal is power altogether. In Vedānta, it is said that the supreme Lord (paramēśvara) is a lion. The supreme spirit (paramātman) is the lion (simha), in the Narasimha āvatāra of Viṣṇu and the Nara is creator speaks of Nārāyaṇa. Nārāyaṇa is the simha, or the lion part of the Narasimha āvatāra.

The windows:

Being thus enshrined is a rectangular frame, the image is signed out, its importance being increased in that it appears manifested straight from the centre. Across the massive door, its presence shines forth. The ghanā-dvāras possess this primary symbolic function by virtue of their original positions as doors in the cardinal points.

In the relatively most ancient gavākṣas of temples, the face of a celestial look-out (gandharvamukha), or a lion is framed by its arch as on the śilkhara of the Paraśurāmeśvara temple, Bhubneswara, forming part of an almost pictographic language, for the lion is the solar animal. Celestials or lions (gavākṣa), symbolically the close body of the temple is full of openings. As a rule there is only one opening, the entrance. The symbol (window) is found at the cardinal points as a massive door (ghanā-dvāra) or a rectangular niche; there are many niches of varying sizes in the wall-side and superstructure of the temple. The major niches hold images, which directly looks out from

the temple towards the devotee on whom the light is shed from its
dark source within, across its massive walls and closed windows
connected with the main divinity of the temples, the smaller ones
which occupy less important position on the side in any direction;
housing lesser divinities in the walls of the temple are transmuted
into carvings and images. These are as \textit{aṣṭadikpālas, parivāras, apsarās}
and other lesser goddesses, \textit{mithuna groups, śārdūlas}, and there are
further exponents of the \textit{prāśāda} unfound on the peripheral shapes of
the wall. Each small shrine, pillared and having frequently a
superstructure and roof of their own divinities, are sheltered. Each
niche being paradoxical massive door in which is beheld an aspect of
the divinity of the temple.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Gavākṣa} is usually rendered as 'round window' or gable window.
But '\textit{gava}' (plural of '\textit{gauḥ}') are the rays of the Sun.\textsuperscript{19} The first part
(\textit{gava}) of the term 'gavākṣa' means the sun or ray, and the second
part (\textit{akṣa}) means an axle, the pivot, wheel, carved and eye. 'Ray-
wheel' or 'Sun-arch' would be the appropriate translation expressive
of the symbolic function of the \textit{gavākṣa} on the Hindu temple. It does
not admit the rays of the sun into the temple, for the 'windows' are
closed and as solid a part of the wall as are the massive and

\textsuperscript{18} Kramrisch, Stella, \textit{The Temples of India}, Part II., p. 320
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Raghuvarṇaśa}, I. 84-15. The ray is also called '\textit{gauḥ}';
\textit{Śāma-Veda}, I. 2. 33. 4; \textit{Nirukta}, IV. 25.
impenetrable doors. They are not meant to conduct the light of the sun to the image within the dark garbhagrha. On the contrary, their original function as window of the house of man is negative on the Hindu temple, the house and seat of god. 'He' is the light as 'He' is the door.

The deity looks out from the innumerable windows of the temple. These symbolic wheels and arche-shapes are frequently carved which further illustrate their meaning.

Ämalaka:

The ämalaka is the crown of a Nāgara temple. Above the truncated body of its śikhara it clasps the shaft and is surmounted by the finale with the vase as its most conspicuous part. The ämalaka has a caged rim. Its solid shape is that of a ring stone; the ämalaka is not only the crown of the main śikhara that bears against or is arranged on its body, its shape is furthermore the basis of the finial above the superstructure of the mandapa; it may, moreover, be doubly present, having its larger and main shape surmounted by yet another smaller shape. There is no ämalaka on the superstructures of south Indian Drāviḍa temples.

In the Vaśtu-śāstra, ämalaka, being with a long 'a', is the name of the fruit of the Emblic Myrobalan, whose shape it remotely recalls. Closer, however, than these two resemblances is its affinity with the circle of lotus filaments which are likened to rays.
Above the āmalaka is the 'stūpika', the finale, frequently made of gold or glided. Its most conspicuous part is the round body of the jar, the kalaśa. The golden kalaśa, a 'high seat' on the summit of the god's dwelling, looks as if it were sun's orb that had arisen.20

In the kalaśa-sun, all the gods are merged in the deathless. The āmalaka consequently is sacred not to one god only, but to three gods, viz. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. This is the meaning of the āmalaka as the fruit of the tree. The Emblic Myrobalan's legends are recounted in the Purāṇas. The tulsi is sacred to Viṣṇu, while the vilva is Śiva's tree. Once when all the gods and sages had assembled at the tīrtha of Prabhāsa, Devī, Śiva's sakti, wanted to worship Viṣṇu, and Lakṣmī, who is Viṣṇu-sakti, wanted to worship Śiva. Deeply touched, their eyes welled over with tears of joy and the place where the tears fell to the ground, āmalaka tree grew up. Since they were born from tears, all the gods and sages saw Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva in the āmalaka tree.21

The Skanda Purāṇa (Vaiṣṇva-khaṇḍa, XII. 4-23) describes the āmalaka (amardakti) tree. It is the first tree grown in the universe. Viṣṇu is seated at its bottom, Brahmā above and Śiva higher still. The sun is in its branches; the gods are in their ramification and are its leaves, flowers fruits. Thus āmalaka supports all gods. The āmalaka tree is the manifested deity, redeeming the supernatural, and has

contributed to the temple the image of its fruit. It is raised high on
the pillar, above the trunk of the prāśāda.

The Female power:

_Sura-sundarī_, which means 'celestial beauty',\(^\text{22}\) is but one of the
names and types in which the image of _śakti_ is carved on walls of the
temple. _Śakti_ is energy, the primeval power and substance of the
world. _Śakti_ is herself the ability to act. Her image is placed next to
that of any of the gods. By her activity she attracts and helps the
devotees; she is his guide and appeals to all.

The _śaktis_ are working energies subservient to the great _Śakti_.
On the walls of the temple they are figured in all directions as celestial
beauties. They perform this work by the side of the gods whose
activities their presence refer. Indian astrology knows the _yoginī_ as
cosmic power. It moves from day by day from one place to another,
in all directions. By the side of the eight regents of the eight directions
of space, by the side of each of the several groups of gods, the
celestial beauties are placed embodied in their archetypal forms. They
display themselves in rhythms and gestures.

_The visible world_, measurable in its form, belongs to Brahman,
as her image is placed next to that of any of the gods. By her activity
she attracts and helps the devotees, she is his guide and appeals to

\(^{22}\) _Samarāṇgaṇasūtradhāra_, L. VII. 645.
all. As everyone is not equipped for riding the śārdūla, he may be led by śakti and grasp the meaning of her hands (hasta) posture and action. The celestial beauties belong to the āvaraṇadevatās, ‘the surrounding divinities.’ Their number is large. Their figures are repeated on the temples all round the wall to either side of each god, as on the Kāndārīya and Devī-Jagadambā temples, have to be raised in all the three sets of sculpture.

Other name and forms, and the images of śakti are: apsārā, nāṭakā, yakṣīṇī and dig-devī. Being active power and casual stress, her image is an embodiment of movement; as apsārā she is the movement in the atmosphere; as yakṣīṇī she is the movement in vegetation; as nāṭakā she is the movement in the body of man shown as a dancer. Her iconography describes her various ‘places’. Her associates, such as boughs and trees (sālabhaṅjjikā) and flowering vines declares her images as yakṣīṇī.

24. *ibid*.
25. *ibid*, p. 25