

PREFACE

History of Ancient India has not come down to us as a consolidated whole. It had 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 extant Sanskrit literature on the subject, but also their originality in venturing upon variations from the texts 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 13th 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 Ozian and Kiradu are very difficult to reach, still other isolated temples like Pachauli, Naresar, Suhānī and Burhi Chanderi in Madhya Pradesh and Rāgar, Mainal and Bījolī in Rajasthan could not be visited, the former being in dense forest areas or in dacoit infested regions and the latter due to difficult bus routes involving many practical difficulties. Yet I tried my level best to visit personally a large number of temples, monuments and museums in northern India.

Starting from the main religious features forms of worship, intersect relations and religious toleration, the chapters deal with the Pānchadevas individually. Viṣṇu, Śiva and Śakti each in their various forms of depiction have been elaborately dealt with. Śūrya and Ganeśa have fewer varieties to offer, hence some other deities - the Dīkṣālas and the Navagrahas have been incorporated in this chapter. Then follow the other deities of the Hindu pantheon, which are well known through mythological stories but which have a less important place. The Demi-gods and miscellaneous deities have also been taken up. The Jaina iconography includes the Tīrthaṅkaras, the Yakhas, Yakṣis and minor deities. In the chapter dealing with the Buddhist icons, the figures of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have been incorporated.

The following chapter deals with the various aspects of Social Life and the four āśramas, which were the pivot of social organisation. This is followed by the details of their dresses.
cosmetics, coiffures and ornaments, hobbies and recreations. Various occupations, means of transport, food and drinks, buildings cities towns and villages fall under the purview of the chapter dealing with the economic life of the people. Similarly scenes depicting kings and queens, administering justice, hunting, fighting, performing the Asvamedha sacrifice, army and its equipment, etc, have been discussed in the chapter on the Political life and war. In the end comes the detailed chapter on the art and architecture of the temples. The general features and sonal differences have been dealt with and some light is thrown on the depiction of erotic scenes on the temple-walls.

The study spreading over the whole of North India, proves to be too vast a field for detailed minute study of the slightest regional variations. Although sincere efforts have been made to bring out the salient features of distinctions based on the ayudhas and vahanas, yet various modes of depictions like the Natarāja in Ānanda, Chatura and Lalita Tāndava; Nrīsimha in the forms of Sthānaka, Kevala, Yoga and Lakshmi, Nrīsimha; and Śeṣaśāyi Viṣṇu in the Yoga, Bhoga, Viṣṇa or Abhichāripaka Sayana xūrtis can be studied. These details, if studied would bring out the regional and chronological variations in depictions of the icons and would help in greater and deeper understanding of the socioreligious beliefs of the time.

I entertain my fond 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. I must also add here that due to the lack of proper facilities for photography and a professional photographer some of the photographs incorporated are not very good.

I am highly indebted to Shri C. Sivaramamurti, Director, National Museum, New Delhi, to late Dr. Motichand, Ex-Director Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay and to late Dr. V. S. Agrawal, Prof. of Art and Architecture, Benaras Hindu University for inspiring me to undertake such a stupendous work. I also owe my thanks to Dr. K. R. M. Acharya, Retd. Prof. Ancient Indian History and Archaeology and Dean of Arts Faculty for his valuable suggestions. I am highly indebted to Prof. K. D. Bajpai, Tagore Professor and Head of the Department of Ancient Indian History, Sagar University for his valuable help and inspiring guidance. My sincere thanks are also due to Sarvashri Krishna Deva, Ex-Director, School of Archaeology, New Delhi, Jaipur R. C. Agrawal, Director, Museums, Rajasthan and Shri N. P. Joshi, Director, State Museum, Lucknow, for their valuable help in the venture.

I am also grateful to the University Grants Commission for sanctioning me a sum of Rs. 500.00 under Financial Assistance to teachers for undertaking research work, and to the authorities of various museums visited for extending me all help and for allowing me to take the photographs of the sculptures or for supplying me with the picture post cards at their disposal. My sincerest thanks are due to my husband Dr. A. P. Agarwal, Prof. of Chemistry, Maulana Azad College of Technology, Bhopal for taking all the photos for me and for accompanying me to various temple sites and museums.

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