CHAPTER X

MYTHOLOGY AND SYMBOLISM
I - MYTHOLOGY

(a) Nature and Importance:

Indian myths are tales or narratives of unaccountable antiquity, woven round Indian deities and their incarnations. They are allegorical in character, edifying in nature and philosophic in significance. Presenting a strange and supernatural world, peopled by supra-human personalities, drawn as well from animal as human species, Indian mythology is still a living legend of the land amply illustrated in the extant sculptural carvings of ancient India. Commenting on the character of Indian myths, Zimmer says, "Appealing directly to intuition and imagination, they are accessible to all as an interpretation of existence. They are not explicitly commented upon and elucidated. The dialogues and the speeches of the principal figures contain moments of philosophical exposition and interpretation. Yet the story itself is never explained.... The tale goes straight to the listener through an appeal to his intuition, to his creative imagination. It stirs and feeds the unconscious. By an eloquence rather than of incident than of word, the mythology of India serves its function as the popular vehicle of the esoteric wisdom of Yoga experience and of orthodox religion."¹

Rich, as is Indian mythology and innumerable, as are Indian symbols, these together lend a mysterious character to Indian art with hardly a parallel in the world. No wonder, therefore, that it contains 'an ocean of story of absorbing interest' for those who honestly study it. Benjamin Rowland rightly remarked, "Greek sculpture with its finite perfection of form, expresses a clear external fact; Hindu sculpture transforms solid rock into the substance of dreams and defies explanation by either intellectualistic or the usual rigor of aesthetic analysis."²

¹ Zimmer, H. J. Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, P. 40.
(3) The Myth of the Mountain:

To start with, a mention needs to be made of those myths that have grown round the body of Ñandâlkhand, touching, as they do, the very flesh and bone of the region.

Foremost among them is a narrative associated with the Vindhya Mountain. It is related that once upon a time, Vindhya, the deity of the Vindhya Mountain, became jealous of the powers of the Himalayas as personified in Himavâna and demanded of the Sun that he should revolve round him just as he did round the Mount Meru (Himavâna). The demand was refused by the Sun. Enraged at this, Vindhya began to rise with a view to towering above Himavâna and hiding him from the Sun. Alarmed by the probable consequences of his action, the gods requested the sage Agastya, Vindhya's preceptor, to use his influence and dissuade Vindhya from his ambitious ascent. Complying with their request, Agastya asked Vindhya to bow down so that he could cross over to the south and be back. Vindhya obeyed his teacher and has been waiting till now for him to return as per his words.

We have already noted that the Vindhyas constitute the chief mountain range of the region. It should not be surprising, therefore, that a number of inscriptions in Ñandâlkhand contain a reference to the Vindhyâyan myth mentioned above. Knajurâno stone inscription of Yaśovarman says that Kâlânjjar mountain, the dwelling place of Śiva, is so high that it impedes the progress of the Sun at mid-day. Gwalior stone inscription of the year V.S.933 refers to the rising of the Vindhyas. Kâlânjjar stone inscription of the year V.S. 1250 mentions that Agastya made low the mountain (Vindhya).
Varānamihiha has also narrated the story in his Arhatasamhitā. But astonishing, indeed, is the fact that we nowhere meet with the representation of this myth or any of its episodes in the art of Bundelkhand.

(C) The Myth of Mahiṣāsura:

The myth of Mahiṣāsura is also associated with the Vindhyā region. Durgā is believed to have killed him here and note may be taken that one of the names of Devī is Vindhyavāsini. We possess numerous carvings in which the destruction of the demon has found representation. One such panel is available to us in Sir H.S. Gaur Archaeological Museum, Sagar (No. 60-42) in which the four-armed goddess is seen piercing the body of Mahiṣāsura with her triśūla and holding his head in one of her hands.

(D) Vaiṣṇava Mythology:

Outstanding among the myths associated with the para aspect of Viṣṇu is Karivarada or 'the Deliverance of the elephant' of which a beautiful representation is available to us in one of the panelled niches of the Gupta temple at Deogarh. The myth, also known as Gajendra-mokṣa is related in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. According to Winter, "In the fourth mahavantara of the present Varāha Kalpa, Viṣṇu rescued a great elephant king from a sea-monster." A lithic representation of this myth is lying among the ruins of Varāha temple, Deogarh, and another is included in the collection of Jhansi Archaeological Museum.

Noteworthy next is the myth of Nara and Nārāyaṇa of whom we possess an artistic representation from the Gupta temple and the Varāha temple at Deogarh. The myth has been narrated in the great epic the Mahābhārata. Commenting on the symbolic significance of this cosmologic myth Veronica Ions says, "The Greater was Nārāyaṇa.

2. Mātṛya-Purāṇa, XIII, 39. चित्रमृत्त तथा शीता विन्ध्ये विन्ध्यशास्त्री.
who in some versions appears to be an aspect of Brahmā and in others, an aspect of Visnu. Nārāyaṇa lay for long ages on the Primeval Waters-Nara, floating on a banyan leaf while sucking his toe - a position symbolising eternity. After this self-communion the universe was formed by his will to create.¹

A second version of the story is given in the following words, "He wished to create all the living things from his own body so he first created the waters - Nara, and threw a seed into them. From the seed grew a golden egg. The self-existent Spirit who became known as Nārāyaṇa after Nara - his first dwelling place, - developed within the egg, as Brahmā, sometimes also called Puruṣa, the Male."²

The myth relating to the Vaikunṭha aspect of Visnu has already been noted and narrated while describing the Vaikunṭha image of the Laksmana temple, Khajurāho.³

Turning now to the myths associated with the incarnary aspect of Visnu, we find that very few representations are available to us of his first two incarnations - Fish and Tortoise. The few that we possess come from Khajurāho. The Kūrmāvatāra of Visnu was assumed at the time of ocean-churning. An indirect reference to this event is contained in the Khajurāho stone inscription of Yaśovarman ⁴ and Mahoba stone inscription.⁵

At Khajurāho we meet with two types representing these incarnations. The first type shows Yogasana-Visnu with his usual ornaments and emblems. Only the figure of fish or tortoise shown below his feet indicates the incarnation for which the panel stands. In the second type we have fully theriomorphic and

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1. Ions, V. Indian Mythology, P. 28.  
2. Ibid., F. 30.  
5. Ibid., No. XXVII.
independent representations of the Fish and Tortoise incarnations. It is interesting to note that the figure of fish has been shown accompanied by four human faces standing for four Vedas which were rescued by Visnu during his Fish-incarnation. In the second type of Kūmla Kārmāvatāra representation we see a figure of tortoise amid the scene of ocean-churning signifying the central event of the myth.

To the Varāṇavatāra we shall turn now. It is related that during the first Manu-interval of the present Varāṇa Kalpa, Visnu descended as a boar to rescue the freshly-created earth from the bottom of the sea which she had been ravished by a demon of the abyss.¹ There are two main versions of the story. First of them derived from a Brahmā myth claims that Brahmā and Visnu were one, who took the form of a boar, a water-loving creature, in order to create the world out of cosmic waters. The boar having observed a lotus leaf thought that the stem must be resting on something. So he swam down the depths of the ocean, found the earth below and brought a piece of it to the surface.² According to second version of the myth, Hiraṇyākṣa, a demon, had been granted a boon of invulnerability by Brahmā. Under cover of this boon he began to persecute men and gods and even stole the Vedas from Brahmā. He dragged the earth down to his dark abode under the waters. But he had forgotten to mention the boar while reciting the names of gods, men and animals from whose attacks he wished to be immune. Visnu, therefore took the form of a boar, forty miles wide and four thousand miles tall, dark in colour and with a voice like the roar of a thunder. Descending thereafter to the watery depths and killing the demon, he recovered the Vedas and released the earth so that it once more floated on the surface.³

3. Ibid.
The myth is briefly mentioned in one of the epigraphical records of our area. The Āraṇ stone boar inscription of Toramāṇa says, "Victorious is the god Viṣṇu who has the form of a boar; who in the act of lifting up the earth out of the waters caused the mountains to tremble with the ex crescences of his hard snout and who is the pillar for the support of the great house which is the three worlds." Appropriately enough the inscription is engraved on the neck of a colossal image of Śrī-varāṇa (Plate No. VI Fig. No. 3) whose body is covered with carvings of innumerable figures representing Navagranas, aṣṭa-dikpālas, Saptamātrkās, aṣṭa-vasus, nāgas, devotees etc., who thus stand for the three worlds and are supported by the Varāṇa. The goddess earth may be seen as hanging from his snout. The Varāṇa temple of Khajurāho enshrines a similar image. The myth is illustrated in Śrī-varāṇa representations also, we have described numerous Śrī-varāṇa icons available to us from Khajurāho, Āraṇ and Deogarh.

Śrīsimha is the fourth incarnation of Viṣṇu, which he assumed to kill Āraṇyakaśyapa. The demon, like his brother Āraṇyakṣa, had obtained from Brahmā, a boon of immunity from attacks by man, beast and god. Becoming bold by this boon he forbade the worship of all gods. Brahmāţa, his son, was a devotee of Viṣṇu and so, was subjected to terrible persecution. Viṣṇu, therefore, assumed the form of man-lion and made short-work of Āraṇyakaśyapa. Numerous representations of Śrīsimha are available to us but few of them illustrate the central act of the myth. Note may be taken here that almost all the Viṣṇu icons, that contain his incarnations in the prabhāvalī, represent Śrīsimha as ripping open the belly of the demon by his nails. In Khajurāho museum is housed an icon of Śrīsimha.

2. Ion's, V.: Ibid., PP. 50-51.
showing him seizing the hair of the demon with one hand and ripping open his belly with the other.

In his fifth incarnation, Visnu assumed the form of a pigmy boy of whom not only we get numerous sculptural representations but dedication of temples to him as well, indicating the popularity of this incarnation. The myth of his Vāmana incarnation is related thus: Visnu was supplicated by the gods in Treta-yuga to incarnate himself as the Pigmy son of Aditi and Kaśyapa in order to regain the kingdom of Heaven from a mighty king Bāli. The pigmy boy went to Bāli who had completed some sacrifice and asked for the gift of as much land as covered by his three paces. The gift having been granted, he grew to enormous size and covered all earth and heavens in two paces only. With the last pace he sent King Bāli into the nether region planting his foot on his head.1

A brief reference to this myth has been made in the Khajurāho stone inscription of Yāsovarman in which the king claims that his fame "proceeded to regions which even the sin-destroying Vāmana did not reach, when he rapidly crossed over the earth on the occasion of cheating the guileless-minded Bāli".2 We possess few carvings that depict the chief event of the myth. One such representation is studded into the wall of a Kadirpanthi temple at Mahendra (Dist. Fanna) in which Vāmana in his Prakārama form is seen planting his foot on the head of Bāli, thus typifying the final act of this myth.

Paraśurāma, the sixth incarnation, was assumed by Visnu to free the earth from the tyranny of Kṣatriya class and mainly to restore the power of the priestly class. It is regarded as partial incarnation. No scene associated with the myth of Paraśurāma has found representation in the art of Bundelkhand.

1. Ions, V. I. Ibid., p. 31.
In his seventh and eighth incarnations Visnu appeared on earth as Rama and Krsna respectively. Too well-known are stories of these incarnations to need narration here and too long to be properly abridged. Fortunately Bundelnand is rich in representation of scenes from the Ramayana and the life of Krsna. Among these are included Ananyā-Udānara; Vanagaman of Rama, Sītā and Laksmana; their visit to the hermitage of sage Atri; Laksmana deforming Surpanakha; Laksmana garlanding Surīva; and Hanumana carrying the hill with Sańjīvani, from the Ramayana and Devakī handing over the child Krsna to Vasudeva; Krsna hurling a butter-cart; Nanda and Yasoda fondling Krsna and Baladeva; Krsna welcoming Sudāma; Dhenukāsura-vadna; Kamāsa-vadna; from Krsna-līlā. All these panels were recovered from the Gupta temple at Deogarh. Sculptural carvings of scenes from the Ramayana were found at Nachna also. The Laksmana and the Pārvanātha temples of Kharurāno possess some beautiful panels on their Jaṅghā depicting scenes from Krsna’s life. Of note among them are Surya-vadna, Saṅkata-bhanga, Arīsaṭāsura-vadna, Yamalārjuna, Vatsāsura-vadna, Taṁvarta-vadna, Kāliya-damanā, Putana-vadna, Kubjānugrana, duel with Sańgha and Sa-La and the killing of Śūta-Lomahārṣana by Balarāma .......verily a rich and rare gallery of panels vivifying all the feats that Krsna performed and liberated the earth from the tyranny of the demons.

A rare panel representing Govinda-adhānūri Kṛṣṇa (Plate No.II.Fig.No.1) has been accommodated in a corner niche of the Viṣṇu temple at Bhenswāhā (Dist. Sagar). The panel beautifully represents his feat of lifting the mountain Govindanā. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa is considered as a great deity in his own right and Baladeva is taken to be eighth incarnation. Dr. Janāriana Mīrasa is of the view that Salarāma should be placed in

1. M.L.A.S.I., No.70, Plate Nos. XV to XIX.
place of Buddha as ninth incarnation of Viṣṇu. But Balarāma has
rightly been regarded as a human embodiment and partial incarnation
of Śeṣa. Particularly important and interesting in this regard is
the end of his life. He is described to be lying beneath a tree on
the shore of the ocean, lost in thought; whereupon a large snake
crawls out of his mouth, leaving the human body of the hero saviour
inanimate.

Intriguing and astonishing indeed is the fact that
Viṣṇu in his ninth incarnation, that of Buddha, was not the
'straightforward heroic upholder of virtue' but rather the 'devious
devil's advocate' who propagated ideas which would lead to wickedness
and weaken the opponents of the gods, causing them ultimately either
to be destroyed or to reaffirm, for their salvation, faith in the
traditional gods.

Kalki, the tenth and the last incarnation of Viṣṇu,
is yet to take place at the end of Kaliyuga, when degradation and
degeneration will grip the world and life on it in all its forms.
Viṣṇu will appear on earth riding on a white horse and with one of
his arms holding high blazing a drawn sword, blazing like a comet.

Mention may be made here that we do not possess even a single
independent representation of Buddha and Kalki incarnations. Some
Viṣṇu icons containing carvings of incarnations in the prabhāvalī,
however, include representations of Buddha and Kalki also.

Worthy of note here is the view of Dr. Ramasraya
Awasthi who believes that the incarnations of Viṣṇu actually conceal
the story of evolution of the world. Of them the first four concern
the development of life on earth. Water being the first element

1. पिछ, जनादेव : नारायण विद्वानोपनिषत, पू. १५.
2. Ions, V. : Ibid., P.89.
3. Ibid., P.72.
4. भागवत, रामायण : पू. ५०-५१.
characterising the earth, fish represented the only life on it. The mountains slowly reared their heads which is symbolised by the Kurma-vatara. The churning of the ocean symbolises the event when land manifested itself out of water. Finally Varaha-vatara stands for the appearance of land from water. The Vrsimha incarnation shows the evolution of man from animal. The Vamana incarnation stands for the early man of pigmy size.

(3) Saiva Mythology :-

Into the mythology associated with Siva, we shall enter now. Well-known and widely used form of this deity is an aniconic symbol called linga. The origins of linga are shrouded beneath a thick veil of mythology and its form is surcharged with sublime symbolism.

As regards its origin, Siva is said to have appeared in the form of a blazing pillar of immeasurable size to quell the pride of Brahma and Vishnu.¹ The story aims at suggesting the supremacy of Siva and seems to have been inspired by sectarian feelings. No sculpture is available to us in illustration of the myth.

Another myth relating to the origin of Siva-linga is as following. Once upon a time, mark, a sage, was sent by other sages to test and ascertain, who was greatest among the orthodox Brahmanic triad. When he reached the abode of Siva, the latter did not welcome the sage as he was engaged with his wife and would not suffer interruption. Enraged at this the sage cursed Siva to be worshipped as the lingam.² No carving we possess representing any of the events from this myth.

Most of the anthropomorphic representations of Siva are carved in illustration of certain myths.

² Ions, V. : Ibid., P.44.
Popular among them is one relating to Andhakāsura-vadna. Andhaka was the son of Hiranyakṣa. Śiva killed him with the help of Saptā-mātrkās. According to Shri Copinath Rao the tale of Andhakāsura-vadha is an allegory; it represents ṛtmavidyā or spiritual wisdom as warring against andhakāsura, the darkness of ignorance. The spirit of Vidyā represented by Śiva fights with andhakāsura, the darkness of avidyā. The more this is attempted to be attacked by Vidyā, the more does it tend to increase for a time. This fact is represented by the multiplication of the figures of Andhakāsura. Unless the eight evil qualities of Kāma, Krodha etc. are completely brought under control of Vidyā and kept under restraint, it can never succeed in putting down Andhakāsura. A panel depicting Andhakāsura-sāmbhara is included in the collection of Khajurāho museum. The Viśvanātha and the Kandariyā temples at the same place contain an icon of Andhakāntaka-Śiva in one of their bhadra niches.

Tripurāntaka-murti of Śiva is carved in illustration of another myth, narrated thus. At one time the asuras had obtained a boon from Brahma which consisted of the possession of three castles which could only be conquered by a deity, and then only, if he could destroy them with a single arrow. From these castles the asuras made war on the gods, none of whom was strong enough to shoot the fatal shaft. Indra asked Śiva for help, who transferred half his strength to the gods. Failing again the gods lent half of their strength to Śiva who conquered the demons but instead of returning the gods' strength thereafter, he kept it for himself and ever after was the greatest of the gods. Representation of the myth is available at Khajurāho. In one of the bhadra niches of the Viśvanātha and the Kandariyā, a Tripurāntakā-murti has been accommodated. Interpreting

\[2\] Ions, V. : Ibid., P. 42.
the deep symbolism underlying this form of Śiva, Śrīmadvīgavata\(^1\) says, "Dharma became his chariot; knowledge charioteer; renunciation banner; wealth horses; penances bow; vidyā armour; action arrow and many more such powers, converted to weapons."

Śiva is credited with having killed another demon known as Gajāsura,\(^2\) an elephant-demon, who used to disturb sacrifices of the Brāhmaṇas. Śiva killed him at Kāsī and danced thereafter donning his skin. Finest among the sculptures carved in illustration of this myth is the one located at Mahoba (Plate No.VIII.Fig.No.3).

Rāvana, the demon king of Lāṅkā, was a great devotee of Śiva. Out of arrogance, he attempted to lift the mountain Kailāsa, the abode of Śiva.\(^3\) Such was the might of Śiva that by gently pressing one of his feet, he thwarted the attempt bringing him to his senses. The myth has found some fine lithic representations in the art of Bundelkhand. A couple of Rāvāṇānugraha-mūrtis of Śiva are included in the collection of Jhansi Archaeological Museum.

The marriage of Śiva with Pārvatī\(^4\) has also been a favourite subject of the artist of Bundelkhand. Panels representing it are known as Kalyāṇasundara-mūrtis of Śiva. One such panel is included in the collection of Bundelkhand Chhatrasala Museum, Banda.

Interesting, again, is the myth relating to the Ardhanārisvara aspect of Śiva. It is taken to be a syncretic icon, aimed at synthesising the cults of Śiva and Śakti and the myth also represents the same idea. According to Viṣṇu-Purāṇa,\(^5\) Rudra who

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\(^1\) विधानः दमनस्वरूप । यह् दमनयुक्तम् ।

\(^2\) ऐसा विशेष यह दमन यो तस्माद जीर्ति खर्चितः

\(^3\) वदाह त्वम् दुष्कर्माभ्रोऽहृदयं गिनितवर्तूणि

\(^4\) नवीनात्मकः प्रचन्दासारम्

\(^5\) श्रीगुरुम् गुरुपालोऽपि ज्ञातम्
emerged out of the red-hot forehead of Brahmā had a half-male and half-female body. Another version of the myth occurs in the Śrimadbhāgavata, in which it is said that Śiva offered his half body to Pārvati out of love.\textsuperscript{1} Sir H.S. Gaur Archaeological Museum, Sagar contains a fine icon of Ardhanārīśvara.

Harihara icons are also syncretic in character and are carved in illustration of the myth that attests to the amity between the cults of Śiva and Viṣṇu. In Viṣṇu-Purāṇa Śiva affirms that he is half-portion of Viṣṇu and has no personality of his own beyond that of Viṣṇu. Words of Kṛṣṇa addressed to Śiva after protecting Bāṇāsura in the same work are also to the same purpose.\textsuperscript{2} Śrimadbhāgavata contains an interesting myth relating to this form. Śiva wanted to see the Mohini form of Viṣṇu who immediately complied with his desire by assuming the Mohini form. Such was the overpowering charm of Mohini that Śiva could not forbear embracing her. Presently Viṣṇu changed over to his original form. A fine icon of Harihara is included in the collection of Papat Museum, Kundaśvara.

II - Symbolism

(A) Nature and Importance:

The origin of the word 'symbol' has been traced to the Greek term 'symbolon' meaning a sign. To take a larger view of the word, concepts and words are as much symbols as visions, rituals and images are. Further more, manners and customs also come under the word. Transforming abstract ideas into visuals and reflecting the 'Radiance of Reality', they simplify and vivify philosophical ideas for the common, unlettered masses. To quote Zimmer, "Symbols hold the mind to truth but are not themselves the truth, hence it is

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\item \textsuperscript{1} 4.4.3. - प्रेमःसत्त्वाना याकृशेषदल्स्तको प्रियः.
\item \textsuperscript{2} 5.6.11-13.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Viṣṇu-Purāṇa, - 5.33.47-48.
\item \textsuperscript{4} 8.12.1-2,18-29.
\end{itemize}
dilusory to borrow them. Each civilization, every age must bring forth its own."¹

India gave birth to her own symbols, charged with her age-old wisdom, unique traditions and profound philosophy. Destitute of the elements of mythology and symbolism, Indian art is unthinkable. The spiritual and cultural unity of India is aptly and amply attested to by the uniformity of the myths and symbols current from Kashmir to Cape Comprin and Kathiawar to Kāmrūpa. Bundelkhand being the heart of India, partakes of these essential elements of Indian art. The art relics of the region indubitably reveal that the artist of Bundelkhand had acquired a deep knowledge of Indian symbolism and mythology to which he gave appropriate expression in his work, using them for adorning temples and edifying peoples.

(B) Religious Symbols on Pottery, Coins and in Rock-Paintings :-

Religion, in its earliest manifestation, appears to have been only the worship of symbols. Theriomorphic and anthropomorphic forms of the deities must have been preceded by their symbolic representation. It is not without significance that the religious symbols on coins were later on displaced by anthropomorphic forms of gods and goddesses.

The earliest representation of symbols in the area of our study is available from the painted rock-shelters and pottery to be dated in pre-Christian centuries. Of the two, painted rock-shelters are richer in religious symbolism. Belonging to the people of distant and prehistoric past, they signify beyond any doubt that a symbolic language in art had already been invented by the time of Buddha and Mahāvīra and man was on his march to philosophic goals. It goes without saying that some of the symbols, that originated in distant past, are still held in high esteem.

As a matter of fact, symbols have possessed double meaning - one appealing to the primitive and popular mind and the other taken by the enlightened and the philosopher. To the people in general they were representations of supernatural beings but philosophers interpreted the deeper significance underlying them. Thus it is just likely that these symbols might have originally carried one meaning to the primitive man (that attributed sexual significance to most of the phenomena in Nature being perhaps, utterly mystified by the facts relating to life and death and especially to sex) and might have carried in some cases an absolutely different meaning to his descendant some thousand years later - a meaning altogether divested of its sexual attribution. 1

Religious symbols present in the rock-paintings of Bundelkhand include cross, trident, Kalpavrka, Svastika, Surya, Čandra, tree with Sun and star and hand-palm. A fertility symbol is also available (Plate No. VIII, Fig. 8) a double-headed human figure is also worthy of mention.

The Chalcolithic pottery recovered from Bren excavations bore certain symbols which must have carried religious connotation. The painted designs occurring on the Fine Red ware consist of among other subjects, cross, stars, sigmas, plants, animals, circle, Sun and Manḍipāda. Devices appearing on coins collected from Bren include various symbols such as Sun, hill, tree-in-railing, Indra-dhvaja, Ujjain symbol, Sadara-čakra, taurine, Caduceus, semi-circle, crescent, svastika and čakra. 2 In addition to the above, depiction of elephant, bull, horse and river with fish has also been made on these coins. Cunningham 3 was of the view that semi-circle occurring on these coins represented the shape of the old town and

2. I.H.S., PP.6-7.
3. Ibid.
river symbol stood for the river Binā (ancient Vanvā) on which the town is situated.

Of supreme importance for us is the view of some numismatists that the earliest coins were actually struck within the precincts of the temples and under direct auspices of the priests. It follows therefore, that originally they must have been invested with religious significance.

Svastika seems to have evolved out of the cross but its independent origin can not be ruled out. One view takes it to be a symbol of generation, of female principle, of conception and birth. It has also been thought to be a combination of two serpents representing the male and female principles in nature. A passage in Harivamsa regards a serpent to be half a Svastika. On philosophical plane, it has been taken to be representation of the four-armed pattern of the Cosmos spreading in four directions. From it originated the cult of the Four-Regions and antiquity of the doctrine goes back to the Rgvedic times when its followers were known as Diśā Vratikas.

The Svastika is the symbol par-excellence of the four-fold divine principle of which another significant form is four-faced Brahmā in art and mythology, the tetradic Deity of the four basic types of manifestation.

Saḍaradakra has been taken to represent the solar disc. The six spokes stand for six ṛtus (seasons). Representation of the Sun as a Ḍakra is not altogether impossible. Nāchma Ki Talai stone inscription of Mahārāja Prthuśena bears a sculpture of a wheel which may be taken for Sun-symbol. In mythology the disc of Sun has been regarded as the remaining wheel of the Sun-god’s chariot.

2. Ibid., P.27.
of Sun is enshrined in the Sun-temple at Unao (Dist. Datia). Meriting mention, again is an aniconic-cum-iconic representation of Uṣā included in the collection of Dhubela museum.

In the Ujjain-Symbol, the cross is taken to mean the union or unification of male and female principles of Nature; the balls, standing for the female principle may therefore only serve to indicate the predominance of the goddess.\(^1\) The mountain symbol has been regarded in the tantras, as identical with the mother-goddess.\(^2\)

The worship of tree has also been an article of faith since time immemorial. The idea of Kalpavṛkṣa is a unique contribution of Indian thinkers. Supposed to have been churned out of ocean, the wish-fulfilling tree is taken to mean Mind or Life or Home wherefrom one gets satisfaction of one's wishes.\(^3\) Notice may be taken here of a fertility symbol available from the rock-paintings of Abchand.\(^{\text{Sketch No.6, Fig.No.H}}\) The idea of fertility is depicted by the female organs from which emerge a number branches with flowers at the end. Worthy of note is the fact that triangles decorate the main part of the body, three of them facing upwards and the remaining two downwards. An unmistakable influence of Tantrika cult can be discerned in this decoration, as the triangles facing upwards represent the male while the opposite ones stand for the female.

(6) Symbols in Sculptural Art :-

According to Dr. V. S. Agrawal, Lotus is the highest Indian symbol in art, religion and cosmology, of the life floating on the Creative Waters.\(^4\) It also symbolises the principle of growth, rising from the Mavel of Viṣṇu or the cosmic deity whose awakening throws up the lotus as the seat of Brahma, the genius of emanation.

A detailed metaphysical doctrine of the Bhāgavatas explains the birth

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2. Ibid., P. 217.
4. Ibid.
of the cosmos from a lotus in contradistinction to the other belief of the origin of the world from the Golden Egg. Lotus has been a favourite symbol of the artist of Bundelkhand. Usually, the ceiling of the Chandella temples can be seen containing a carving of huge lotus.

**Purna-kumbha** is yet another symbol that has been profusely used in the art of Bundelkhand. The water in the jar is the sap of humidas radicle (salilam Ṛtam Āpāh) and the overflowing leaves and flowers typify life itself with its manifold blessings and joys. The human body is **pūrna-ghāta** and so is the created cosmos. In the art of Bundelkhand **pūrna-ghāta** has often been used to ornament the pillars in temples.

No less important is the symbol of **Kirti-mukha** or the ‘Face of Glory’ which is supposed to have its origin in the myth of king Jalandhara who sent Rāhu to challenge and humble Śiva. Rāhu managed to have a sip of Amṛta but was beheaded by Viṣṇu immediately. The sip having passed through his mouth and neck these were rendered immortal whereas the body succumbed to the forces of decay. The head ravenous for another taste has been chasing the cup of elixir, the Moon, ever since. Eclipses come when he catches and swallows it, but the Moon only passes through the mouth and neck (there being no stomach to retain it) and reappears whereupon the chase is immediately resumed. We have numerous representations of **Kirti-mukha** in the art of Bundelkhand. A beautiful carving of the symbol is available from Rahilya (Sketch No.6)

Representation of various birds and beasts has also taken place in the art of Bundelkhand. Painted rock-shelters also provide us with figures of numerous beasts. They are thought to be associated with the mother-goddess ‘who essentially remains the mistress of all beasts and birds, both in India and abroad.” In the

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2. Ibid., p.53.
Atharvaveda, the Goddess as the mother of Indra, is represented as residing in the lion, the tiger, the elephant, the serpent and the cows, as also in the lustre, the fire, the Sun, a Brāhmaṇa, men, and gold.\footnote{The Harivamśa-Purāṇa associates the Goddess with cocks, goats, ewes, lions, tigers etc.} The sculptural art of Bundelkhand is thickly populated with the figures of these birds and beasts.

(D) Buddhist Symbolism:

Few, indeed, are the remains of Buddhism that have survived. No Buddhist stūpa of ancient times now exists in our area but we do possess evidence attesting to their existence at Chhoti Badoni in Datia district. Clay-sealings found here with representation of a miniature stūpa on them are available from the place. The stūpa in fact is a mound in form and sepulchral monument in concept, made of earth on the site of the funeral pyre owing to which it was known as Čaitya. Dr.V.S. Agrawal has traced its origin to the Rgveda where the flaming pile of agni’s light is spoken of as stūpa. The pre-Buddhist tradition regarded it as a monument associated with the life of a Mabhā-purusa who symbolised a Mound of Gold or Pile of Light.

Dharmačakra is another Buddhist symbol. It stands for the teachings of Buddha that he gave to the world after attaining enlightenment. In the collection of sculptures at Datia we have a fine representation of Dharmačakra flanked by two deers (only one of them survives) and a lion as well as a lady on one side. The icons of Buddha from our area contain representation of the symbol on the pedestal.

From the rock-paintings in Sagar district we have the depiction of Nandipada symbolising the holy supreme Buddha

(Sketch No. 8 Fig.F.)

1. A.V., VI, 38, 1-2. – तिनें व्याप्र जलया गूढ़ाती तिरितिरिरयो ब्र्यण यो याहुर्मया या देती सुना कराया। या न लू नवेिा संविदा या हथिनि श्रीपिनि यो व्यरण िरितियपु गौणया या परशृंखु हन्त्या या देती

2. Vide- Dixit, S.K. : Ibid., P.212

3. Agrawal, V.S. : Ibid., P.120.
The bhūsparśa-mudrā of Buddha signifies the event when he invoked the Earth to bear witness to his right to sit on the Vajrāsana, which had been questioned by Mara, the Evil one. Two of the Buddha icons, that have been found in the area of our study represent the Master in bhūsparśa-mudrā. One of them is now in Lucknow Museum and the other in Khajurāho Museum.

The Dharmadakrā-mudrā of Buddha stands for his Preaching of the First Sermon, in Mrgadāva of Sarnāth after obtaining Enlightenment. An icon of Buddha depicting him in such mudrā has been found at Bāhī Tārkhānā in Damch district.

(E) Jaina Symbolism

In clear contrast to the poor output of Jaina mythology, that of Jaina symbolism is fairly rich in the art of Bundelkhand.

Jaina remains of our area possess innumerable Jina icons. About 1000 of them exist at Deogarh alone. We should note here that a Jina image is not carved in biological likeness of the Mahāpuruṣa glorified but stands as his symbol to inspire good qualities in the devotees. In the words of Dr. U. F. Shah, "The worship of the Jina image is said to be adoration of the aggregate of qualities which the pious worshipper strives to acquire himself."¹

Pratimā-savatobhadrikās of Jaina art are, in fact, based upon the ancient Jaina tradition of Samavasaranaṇas which were square or circular assemblies erected by gośis for the Sāras of the Jinas. Māṇa-stambhas are Indra-divajas in concept and are planted near a Jaina shrine.

Mention has been made above that the sixteen suspicious dreams, seen by Tīrthaṅkarās mother have, found representation on the door-lintel of Jaina temples at Khajurāho and Budhāhī. They are

profoundly symbolic in character. King Siddhārtha, the father of Mahāvira, explained their significance to his wife Trisāla in the following words, "The sight of Elephant signifies that your son will become a Tirthaṅkara and that of the Bull indicates that he will turn the Wheel of Law. Seeing of Lion shows that your brave son will destroy the elephants of Karmas and the Lustration of the Goddess Padmā indicates that he will be similarly bathed by Indra and other gods on the Jumeru mountain. The pair of Garlands stands for his possessing a perfumed body and profound knowledge. The Full Moon signifies that he will shower the nectar of Dharma thereby gladdening the hearts of the pious. The Rising Sun shows that he will destroy the darkness of

1. Quoted and translated from the Vardhamana Purana of Navala Saha (a word written about 1768 a.d.) published in -

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कहानी धर्मवीर बीर उम्मी तथा बीरी, पु, 363-64,
प्राणहिन गच सम्नार फस दु रुप, लीलादिर बुभु बुभु बुभु बुभु
है गुणगि तरू फस दुधु खान का ज्वेल कर राह प्राप्त है नगर पैर 1 1 1 1
जब पिंड एका का कुंभा का हूँ है अन्न से दीर्घ हुआ है जन्म राखी
लक्ष्मीमिर्ज़ै फस मेल सी, अँगलकार बार है जन्म एस 1 1 1 1
बाहु पुरुष पान फस दुहु तेह जव दुहु है रक्षा दुन्या के देह
शिशु खुदा देवीं तुम विकाश गा भरे गुण वाणी रखात 1 1 1 1
रथ दुन्य सम्नार फल हिंद प्राप्त जान मकान मनारा
कुं दुन तरू फस है विगत, तो जान खान वृत्त राखात 1 1 1 1
कुं मन्त्र दुन्य फस हिंद प्राप्त, रामरूप दुन्या मनाता
परम्य पश्चिम फस दुहु वाण क्राय व्यक्त्र जव तन मनाग 1 1 1 1
है रितिया दुन्य का फस गदा, दुन श्रावण प्राप्त प्रापता
रितिया फस हिंद क्राय बाबा राय का जात राय के सीं दुधु 1 1 1 1
का परु विकाश फस मुख्यायु दुलाल हौड़ गर्न जाता
नागन्ध्यायन फस तही जाता, वह माह कुंड काधिक प्राप्त माहा 1 1 1 1
दुन राप नृता के बी विकाश, फस देन जान चरित मात
का जविन शिखा फस दुनु एह, वह कीर्त तिप पर वहीं 1 1 1 1
ignorance and will be as much brilliant as the Sun. The water-filled pitchers stand for his lordship of the treasures. He will be a pitcher containing the nectar of knowledge and meditation. The Pair of Fish stands for his benevolence for all and his highest happiness. The Celestial Lake means that he will have a body adorned with all the beautiful and auspicious shapes and properties or qualities. The Agitated Ocean signifies that he will attain nine spiritual powers and be omniscient. Seeing of the Lion Throne shows that he will be Lord of the world which itself is equivalent to the word Lord (Maharaja) and the Celestial Car stands for his incarnating himself from the heaven. The sight of Nagendra Shavan shows that he would possess periodical knowledge and the Heap of Jewels indicates his possession of right knowledge, right thought and right conduct. In the end the Smokeless Fire signifies that he will burn the karmas. It may be noted here that Svetambara tradition believes in fourteen dreams only some of which are different from those described here. But the Jaina remains of Bundelkhand mostly belong to the sect of Digambaras, and so in Jaina art of our area we meet with sixteen dreams mentioned and explained above.

The significance of the Srivatsa symbol found on the chest of the Jina figures is explained as the highest knowledge which manifested itself from the heart of a Jina in this form. The Ājīta-maṅgulas of the Digambara sect include Āmrīgāra, Kalaśa, Darpana, Āmara, Dhvaja, Vyāñjana, Chatra, Supratisthā. Some of these have found representation in the parikara of a Jina icons of Bundelkhand. Needless to add that most of these objects are indicative of the royalty or Ākāra-āvarti status which is associated with the concept of a Jina.

Sanu Jaina Museum at Deogarh contains an icon of Bharata (No. 150), the son of Adinātasa, as a matter of fact, no where in the available iconographic texts we come across injunctions regarding
his icon. Accompanying the figure of Bharata have been shown nine pitchers indicating navanidhi associated with a ākavrarti king. And Bharata was a ākavrarti. Further we can also see other symbols of his ākavrarti status such as the queen, the minister, the horse etc. appropriately carved with him.

As all the Jina figures are identical in appearance, a symbol is carved on the pedestal to identify a Jina icon. Destitute of ayudhas and emblems, as a tīrthāṅkara is, he can be identified only on the basis of this lāṃchana. As these symbols are very well-known, appending their list here is superfluous. From the Gupta period onwards, the artist of Bundelkhand placed them on the pedestal of Jina icons failing only in few cases. At Deogarh some of these have been wrongly placed violating sastric injunctions. For example, an icon of Śumatinātha has a canopy of snake over head which is a distinct characteristic of Pārvavānātha. In temple No. 13 at the same place a Jina in kāyotsarga–mudrā has been shown with a figure of lion to the left and deer to the right. On the pedestal ordinarily a jina image contains two lions flanking the dharmākṣa. If the lion here be taken as representing the āśana of the jina and deer as symbol, the icon can be identified as that of Śāntinātha. Otherwise the composition may be interpreted as showing the strong impact of Tīrthāṅkara's teaching of non-violence on the animal world to such an extent as to subdue the ferocity of a lion.

A free-standing column containing 176 miniature Jina figures stands in the courtyard of temple No. 12 at Deogarh. We have no scriptural explanation of the symbolism underlying the representation.

Temple No. 7 of Deogarh has a slab with 4 pairs of foot-impressions, evidently standing for the 24 Jinas. The Sahasraṅkūṭa temples at Deogarh and Jampur contain a slab with carvings of 1008 Jina figures symbolising 1008 laksānas of a Tīrthāṅkara or 1008 names of a
Jina. The latter seems to be an echo of the thousand names of Siva and Visnu in Brahmanic texts.

The symbol of Dharmačakra is as much common to the Jainas as to the Buddhists. But note may be taken that only Jaina traditions speak of a dharmačakra having been set up by Bahubali, the son of Adinatha at Taxila. This symbol has been invariably carved in the Jina icons of our area on the pedestal.

Sthāpanā is another Jaina symbol. It is actually a crossed wooden-stand which can be easily folded and carried. It's a symbolic representation of an ācārya or teacher which a Jaina monk keeps in front while giving a discourse. As a matter of fact, it marks the presence of an elder, used as a corrective witness, a precaution against misinterpretation. Perhaps it's a mark of reverence to the teacher. Literally the word 'sthāpanā' means installation of the figure or symbol of the ācārya when he is not personally present. Image No. 82 (in temple No. 4) of Deogarh shows its representation. Many more can be cited from the same site.

The mukha-rattikā is actually a piece of cloth held in front of the mouth by a Jaina monk while speaking. It symbolises samyam or control of speech. It is also understood to have been prescribed for preventing insects from entering the mouth, and being killed consequently. Image No 27 of (temple No. 1) at Deogarh contains a representation of this symbol. Mukha-rattikā shows the emphasis on non-violence among the Jainas.

Alike is the aim of danda-pranchara. It is so called because it's a broom with a stick. It is also known as rajoharana as it is used to sweep dust particles and small living insects. Image No. 82 of Deogarh has several examples of this symbol.

(F) Brahmanic Symbolism:

In the foregoing chapters we have seen that the commonest form of Viṣṇu in his para aspect, of which we have numerous lithic representations, is his four-armed sthānaka-mūrti holding śaṅkha, ṣakra, gadā and padma. Sometimes he is accompanied by his consorts Lakṣmī and Brāḍevī, his vehicle Garuḍa and miniature figures of his ten incarnations. In order to study the deep symbolism underlying this aspect, let us take an example. An icon of Viṣṇu from Rahilya shows the rod standing in samapādashṭānaka pose on a saptaratha pedestal. (Plate No. VI. Fig. No. 1) The śrīvatsa mark of his chest is the Kaustubha containing the radiance of Sūrya, Agni, Vāk and Čandra. His four arms out of which two are mutilated stand for sattva, tama, rajas and ahamkāra. (These stand for four quarters also signifying that the deity’s power encompasses all the quarters). śaṅkha which is personified here and stands to the right of the deity symbolises five elements, and mind or Manas in its child form is ṣakra held by him in his upper right hand. Padma which is also personified here and stands to the left of the deity symbolises the universe, and gadā of the upper left hand stands here for ādi-vidyā. The keyūras adorning his hands convey Dharmārtha Kāma. The neck stands for the nirguṇa Brahma and wears the garland of ādi-māyā. The garland also stands for the stuti of Brahma and is taken to be so by the Mānasa-putras. Kirtī above his head symbolises sattva and the pair of kundalas stand for kṣara and aksāra.  

The symbolism of the vanamāla of Viṣṇu has been explained in the following words, "Viṣṇu’s necklace called vaijayantī is five-formed, as it consists of the five elements and therefore it is called elemental necklace."  

2. Viṣṇu-Purāṇa, 1.22.71-72.
Vedas on whom rides Brahma. Like the lion of Durga and the bull of Siva, he has been taken to stand for dharma also.

According to Visnu-darmottara, Visnu wears a kaustubha, unattached, unqualified, and unsullied soul, and the Prakrti he wears as the Srivatsa mark. His gadha symbolises Buddhi and Sanksa and inanus that he bears in his hands stand for the tamas and the rajas born respectively of the elements and the senses.

The symbolism underlying Sejasayi aspect of Visnu is also deep. In the northern niche of the Gupta temple at Deogarh we have a fine representation of Sejasayi-Viṣṇu (Plate No. VI. Fig. No. 4). Here the navel of Visnu is the place of sindu wherefrom expands the consciousness and the universe is created. It also stands for the ocean of milk containing amrta. His four weapons are symbolic of the four gunas. Sanksa conveying the concept of nida has the quality of rajas. Gadha destroys so contains tamas. Sakra is protector so possesses sattva guna, and padma is universe over which is seated four-headed Brahma representing nida-brahma. He carries Saba in the form of Veda and amrta in his kamandalu. Tracing a close parallel to this symbolism in the Siva-linga, Dr. Janardan Mishra remarks that on upturning a Siva-linga we find the circular upper section (audratha) standing for the navel of Visnu, the middle eight-faced section (Visnubhaga) standing for padma conveying asa-prakrti and the square four-faced section (dhrumabhaga) symbolising four-faced and four-armed Brahma. Further the standing figure of Garuda symbolises Veda or

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1. मिश्र, जनादेन: वही, पृ. ६५।
2. तही।
3. १९२१,५१-७० - आत्मा नन्दगुल्म कलां निर्मितारुप। स्विति वासुकिरण संहृतम काव्यन्नविरि। त्रिविद्यास्तर्चन चर्चनलोक समाजीलम। प्रशार्नु धुतिः प्रशार्नु गदाव्यास्तमाको। पूजनामिन्तयोगविधि च द्रियो चक्षुस्त्रे। सादृश्येण च शिवः च।
4. मिश्र, जनादेन: वही, पृ. ४४८।
Dhūrā. His vanamāla consists of the five elements of the universe or it can be taken as alphabetical order symbolising vāk or nāda. The Śeṣa is kula compelling everyone to move. Bhūdevi represents the sthiti-sakti.

The Western view on the symbolism of Śeṣāyī-Viṣṇu is quite different from the Indian as noted above. To quote Veronica Iona on the subject, "Viṣṇu is the cosmic ocean-Nara, which spread everywhere before the creation of the universe but is also called Nārāyaṇa—" moving in waters".... in this character he is represented in a human form sleeping on the coiled serpent Śeṣa or Ananta and floating on the waters." Identical are the opinions of Zimmer who says, "The anthropomorphic figure, the serpent coils that form his bed, and the water on which this serpent floats are triune manifestations of the single, divine, imperishable cosmic substance.... the energy underlying and inhabiting all forms of life." Of utmost importance again is the fact that the serpent and the eagle, the eternal antagonists, are present in this form. The former makes his couch and the latter serves as his vehicle. The Garuda denotes the free sway of the unbound spirit, freely roaming as a bird disentangled from the fetters of the earth. He symbolises a higher spiritual principle, liberation from the bondage of matter and soaring into the translucent ether mounting to its kinn, the stars, and even to the Almighty residing above them. On the other hand, Serpent is the life force in the sphere of matter, an earthbound crawling creature, devoid of the higher and spiritual ambitions as those of the Garuda. To quote Zimmer again, "Thus Viṣṇu is linked (like Nietzsche's Zarathustra) with both the eternal antagonists, Śeṣa, the Serpent Endless, representative of the cosmic waters, who is the source of all water-whatsoever, is his animal representative but, then, so too is Garuda,

1. निम्न(काली) : यजुर. प ६९५.
2. Iona, V. 1 : Ibid., P.46.
the conquering principle, the snake's opponent. This is a paradox
with reason; for Viṣṇu is the absolute, the all-containing Divine
Essence. He compromises all dichotomies."¹

The mythology and symbolism centering round
Vaikuṇṭha, Viśvarūpa and Ananta forms of Viṣṇu have been adequately
explained while describing the icons illustrating these forms.

(2) Śiva is

well-known and widely-worshipped form of Śiva is an
aniconic symbol called linga. It is not without significance that
though numerous anthropomorphic forms of the deity had already been
evolved and other cults had also began allied to the aniconic forms of
their deities, Saivism continued to accord the highest reverence to
the linga which received actual worship whereas the anthropomorphic
form of Śiva was used as a mere decorative motif on the walls of Śaiva
temples. Perhaps Saivism believed that the supreme Being is formless,
or at least should not be conceived in human likeness. Naturally,
therefore, the development from the aniconic to the iconic
representation did take place but the former never lost the ground.
Even today the linga is the commonest form of representing Śiva.

According to Śaṅkara \[v\] the whole world
is born out of the union of Śiva and Sakti. The Sakti emerges out of
linga and Śiva contains Sakti in Him. The world is born of the
cooperation of the two. Śiva is the linga and the Earth, Jagatīrika.

2. Śāntī-Śāntī
which is high is the **śiva** and the **earth**, its **ārgha**. **umā** is **pīthikā** and **śiva** is **śīna**. Again, at the time of destruction all the elements are dissolved in the **śīna** and when creation begins, they are liberated and attain their respective identities.  

Dr. Janardan Mishra points out that the word **śīna** does not necessarily mean the procreative organ only. It is used to denote an emblem, a conjecture, **prakṛti** of the Śāṅkhyā (philosophy), special icon of Śīna and male organ. It is a neuter word.

The Mukha-śīnas are known as **miśra-śīnas**. We possess several such sīnas in our area. A tāturmukha-śīna is enshrined in the Śīna temple at Nachnā. (Plate No. VII. Fig. No. 4) One more is lying in the courtyard of the Pārvati temple at the same place. (Plate No. VIII. Fig. No. 1) The four-faced śīna represents four aspects of Śīna, namely Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora and Tatpuruṣa. The fifth face Īsān has not been shown. The five faces of Śīna have been connected with the five formulas or mantras of Śaiva philosophy. They have also been identified with the five daksin elements. Thus Sadyojāta is the symbol of the earth, Vāmadeva of the water, Aghora of the light, Tatpuruṣa of the air and Īsāna of the ether.

Mention has been made of Śadāśīna and Mahāsadāśīna-mūrtis of Śīna that are available to us from Khajurāho.

Their iconography has been already described elsewhere. Here we will confine ourselves only to the symbolic meaning. The five heads (leaving the principal one) ten arms and the two legs hanging down onto

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1. मिश्र, हनुमति: प्रतिमा विज्ञान, पृ. २५२.
2. मिश्र, जनादेन: भारतीय प्रतिमा विज्ञान, पृ. २०३.
3. किरण, पुराण, वर्ष २.३.

the pedestal may be connected with the five mantras; the principal head, the remaining two hands and the two legs in padmasana then represent Śiva mantrasāvara while the linga at the top may be taken to represent the Maheśvara aspect of the deity. The linga on the two images may be taken as prasādalinga of the Viśālavesas. The five faces of Sadāśiva may stand for five Sadakhyas known as - Śiva Sadākhyas, Amūrta, Samūrta, Kartrī and Karma.

Eliciting admiration the world over and possessing rich symbolic element is the Natarāja aspect of Śiva. In the western bhadra niches of the Kandariyā and Duladev temples at Khajurāho, we possess icons of dancing Śiva. The dance of Śiva is identified with Pañcākṣara - the five syllables - which have a peculiar but special significance in Śaiva symbolism. To quote Shri Gopinath Rao, "The essential significance of Śiva's Dance is three-fold; First it is the image of his Rhythmic activity; as the source of all movement within the cosmos which is represented by the arch; Secondly the purpose of his dance is to Release the countless souls of men from the snare of illusion; Thirdly the place of dance, Chidambaram, the center of the Universe is within the Heart...... How amazing the range of thought and sympathy of those rsi artists who first conceived such a type as this affording an image of reality, a key to the complex issue of life, a theory of nature, not merely satisfactory to a single clique or race, nor acceptable to the thinkers of one century only but universal in its appeal to the philosopher, the Āhaka and the artist of all ages and all countries..... Again this Natarāja is not only truth but Love; for the purpose of his dance is to bestow Grace, the giving of freedom to countless souls."

Śiva icons of Bundelkhand are ordinarily four-armed bearing trisūla, damaru, nāga and kamandalu. The first symbolises the

three guṇas or triśakti, the damaru should be taken for śabda-Brahma, the nāga stands for kāla or Time and the water-vessel contains waters of immortality.

Symbolism underlying the form and concept of Gaṇeṣa should also be studied under Śaiva symbolism as he is held to be a parivāra-devata of Śiva. Gaṇeṣa is understood to be the child form of Śiva symbolising mind or intelligence. Skanda stands for his valour and prowess. Gaṇeṣa forges through obstacles as an elephant through the jungle, but the rat, too, is an overcomer of obstacles. Thus it is an appropriate vehicle of Gaṇeṣa even though physically incongruous mount for the gigantic pot-bellied divinity with elephant head. The two represent the power of this god to vanquish every obstacle of the way.

(3) Śakti :-

we have already seen that the first and the earliest deity to appear on the horizon of religion was the Great Mother. Originally she was a fertility deity and almost all the symbols found on ancient coins have been connected with her. Even the cults of the serpent and the tree are said to have been associated with her.¹ With the passage of time and dawn of history she came to be metamorphosed into Devī or Śakti. Indeed Lakṣmi, Sarasvati and Pārvatī are all identified with one Devī.² She is known as Durgā Mahiṣamardini also for having destroyed the demon Mahiṣāsura. The gods had given her their respective śaktis at that time. In illustration of this myth we find her to be holding weapons of other gods - particularly of Dikpālas. When ten-armed, she is shown with Indra's Vajra, Agni's śakti, Yama's danda, Nṛti's sword, Varuṇa's pāśa, Vāyu's akhuṣa, Kubera's gadā, Īśana's śūla, Viṣṇu's čakra and Brahma's padma. In twenty-armed mutilated icon

¹. Dikshit, S.K.: Ibid., P.
³. भिष्म, अज्ञानदिन: परहे, पृ. ३२२-३३.
of the goddess included in the collection of Sir A. S. Gaur
Archaeological Museum, Sagar (63.15 & 63.25) the goddess is holding
some of these weapons.

(4) Sūrya:—

We possess aniconic as well as iconic
representation of the Sun in the art of Śunielknand. The Sun-temple
of Markherā contains a beautiful icon of Sūrya. Riding a chariot
drawn by seven horses, he is adorned with usual ornaments and is clad
in Udiyavesa. The seven horses of his chariot stand for seven meters
namely, Cāyatī, Uṣṇīga, Anuṣṭupa, Brhatī, Paṅkti, Trisūṭp and Jagatī.
He bears the entire world in his hands in the form of beams. The
yāviyānga which he wears round his body indicates that he permeates
the whole world. His wives Rajī stands for the earth, Nikṣubha for
the sky, Chāyā for shadow and Suvarcāla for brilliance. ¹

(5) Brahmā:—

Brahmā symbolises the quality of rajas and so he is
shown sitting over the lotus ² as in the famous Śesāśāyī panel of the
Gupta temple at Deogarh. His four faces stand for four Vedas and his
four arms symbolise four quarters. The eastern face stands for the
Ṛgveda, the southern for the Yajurveda, the western for the Śāmaiveda,
and the northern for the Atharvaveda. He is the lord of the world
and hence holds waters symbolising the universe in his kamandalu. His
aṃśamālī is Kāla or Time. ⁴ All the medicinal herbs on this earth are

1. विभुद्राविक-पुराण, 83.12-14 - ग्रामाक्षरिणयानांदुप च विषेष विकारेष
   त्रिशुद्धुच च वर्ती सपनार्थस्याकारन्तु रस्वमयः। कार्त्तिकेन चार्चयत्विल्ले जगात्।

   राजस्त्वभायं जालस्य वेगां चार्चयितें तथा
   राजी में विनययुषां भाषा हृया-हृया प्रकृतिलो।
   प्रभा सुविस्त्तेन प्रकारस्तद वेगवस्य पत्लवः।

2. वही, 86.17

3. वही, 86.16-8 - राजेश: पूर्ववर्तन यज्ञिकदस्तु दिनक हाम्
   परित्वर्त सामस्रो: स्वादा चांचास्त्र्।

4. वही, 86.6-10.
his hair and his ornaments stand for the seats of learning that spread the light of knowledge.\(^1\)

(6) Yakṣa and Nāga :-

The word Yakṣa is appellative or honorific and in scriptural tradition yakṣa is virtually synonymous or rather coincident with Brahma, Mrtyu, Manas, Agni as also Atman, and Purusa and as such, it designates the single spiritual principle which assumes multiplicity and diversity of aspects by its immanence in all things being at the same time, always manifesting and, in this sense, recognisable.\(^2\) Kubera has been held as the lord of the Yakṣas. His costume is the symbol of gold which is the best of all riches. The śakti he holds symbolises strength and gada stands for the policy of punishment. The vessel with jewels in his hand indicates virtues.\(^3\) An icon of Kubera is included in the Papat Museum, Kundesāvara.

We possess some panels depicting Nāga -couplesthat were associated with the cult of Nāga. The nāga has been taken to be a water-deity and a living symbol of the power of Nature.\(^4\) People worshipped the snake as the moving spirit of the earth-goddess.\(^5\) According to Dr. Vogel the snake is supposed to reside in the tree and in all probability was originally conceived as its spirit.\(^6\)

(7) Temple :-

The Indian temple has been held to be the concrete symbol of reintegration. It coheres with the rhythm of thought imaged in its carvings and laid out in its proportions. Their perfection is a celebration of all the rites enacted during the building of the temple from the ground to its pinnacle. Stella Kramrisch says in her

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1. विष्णुप्रथमपुराण, ४६, २७-२८.
3. विष्णुप्रथमपुराण, ४३, २०-२०.
4. वर्मा, शांति प्रसाद : मध्यप्रदेश में नागकल का विज्ञान (लाइफ प्रेसन), सागर किस्तविलाल, 1962, पृ. २.
inimitable style, "The Hindu temple is the sumtotal 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."\(^1\) The Hindu temple is always built on the plan of Vāstupūrṇa-mandala.

Particular note should be taken that almost all the ancient temples of Bundelkhand have been erected at places selected according to the injunctions of Ārhat samhitā.\(^2\)

(C) Symbolism of the Erotic Art:

Intriguing indeed are the obscenities accommodated on the walls of Khajurāho Temples posing a puzzle alike for the art-critics, scholars and thinkers. Evoking universal interest and inviting a number of explanations as regards their aims and accommodation on holy sanctuaries, these 'postures of pleasure' constitute a mysterious chapter of Indian art, eluding agreement among scholars on their exact import."Love has a thousand postures" said Ovid,\(^3\) and at Khajurāho, you may discover as many." Indeed on the walls of Khajurāho sanctuaries there is 'eroticism galore.' what can be the meaning of this frank, vivid, uninhibited and unabashed display of 'things humanity hides away.'

Numerous explanations and justifications have been advanced. Not that any justification is indeeded for those, who put it on the temple walls, do not at all seem to be apologetic about what they carved so freely and uninhibitedly. Indeed one can not dismiss it all as the 'hurried and mischievous coat-and-chalk scribble of a school boy.' Much of the mitnuna carving is superb art, is such exquisite and delicious carving that there is hardly any trace of the consciousness that this has anything to do with sex. The spiritual

\(^{1}\) Kramrische, S.: The Hindu temple, P.1.
\(^{2}\) *3.S.*, LV.8.
\(^{3}\) Kanwarial: Immortal Khajurano, P.132.
bliss, the beatific expression, the joy of intermingling, of being one and not two, of reaching a stage where each is both — all that has been caught by the chisel with surpassing excellence and only the crudest mind will see in those representations anything but beauty, the evil would lie in the eye of such beholders themselves. ¹

Sex was never a taboo in Indian society though it is so now. Varāhamihira clearly states that the whole world right from Brahma to the minutest worm is based on the union of the male and female principles and illustrates it by telling us that the greed of having a look at woman made even Śiva assume four faces.² According to Dr. Vidya Prakash, "Indian Culture like its European counterpart did not attach a feeling of guilt to sex. Indian literature is full of sexual allusions and symbolism. Sexual desire was a positive religious duty and sexual symbolism had religious connotation. Sexuality and religion were closely interlinked."³

Yet we fail to understand why this veritable paradise of sexual poses and acts of love for the 'lust-ridden' was ever created on the sacred shrines while 'Kramodnandrodoya' of Śrīkṛṣṇa Miśra, an anti-sex and highly philosophical play, was being staged at Khajurāho barely 75 kms. away from Khajurāho? The question has been variously approached and answered.

According to Sir Henry Alliot, Pṛthvirāja Rāso mentions that Hemvati, mother of Čandravarman committed a little faux pas with the moon in human shape and as expiation for her indiscretion held a Brāndya sacrifice, part of which ceremony consists in sculpturing indecent representations on the walls of temples and holding up one's foibles to the disgust and ridicule of the world.⁴ The

2. B.S.74.20. — जेप्रेक्षितानि निबिं निश्चित पूज्यामृग्य जात लमस्याः।
प्रेतान्तात काद यय बुधुप्रथी जोरयिप लोपाद्य गामिनि दुःखत्या: II
explanation is weak insofar as it concerns only Khajurāho and leaves
erotic display in art elsewhere in India.

Havell is of the view that they were supposed to be
a protection against the evil eye. Dr. P. Thomas says, "They protected the places of worship from natural
calamities like lightning, thunder and cyclones which in ancient
belief were mischievous pranks of evilly disposed spirits." The
Samarāṅgaṇa Sūtradhāra, a medieval text on architecture, also enjoins
the placing of mithunas on temple facades. Mention may be made here
that Brhatasmhīṭa also prescribes carving of the mithunas on the
temple walls. Dr. O.C. Ganguly has also found a text containing
identical injunctions. It goes without saying that scriptural
injunctions partly explain 'the puzzle of the passions' present on
the temple walls. But to abide by the textual injunctions, even one
sculpture would have been sufficient. So other factors must also
have been at work for this 'riddle of romance;' so copiously writ
large on the Khajurāho temples. It should also be remembered that
barring Khajurāho, other temples (of Rundelkhand) are either devoid
of erotic sculptures or possess very few of them. Dr. K.M. Kunahi
pertinantly questions, "Is it not possible that these sculptures
possess a significance which has been lost to us?"

Drs. Eberhard and Phyllis Kronhausen draw a
distinction between pornography which they call 'hard core obscenity'
and 'erotic realism' which is an honest and frank expression of the
realities of life and behaviour. Somewhat identical are opinions of

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3. Ibid.
4. B.S.55.15.- शैवं पद्यतिथियों: शैवरचः चतविसं घरः ।
विहृन्द: पत्रसतीयिनि: प्रमाणे वाचार्योऽशी
5. The Art of the Candelmas, P.29.
Keyserling who writes, "The erotic images of India never belonged to pornography but to iconography..... in the lovely and passionate embraces of men and women at Khajurâho and Konârka, life has been seen in all sincerity as only the field and condition for the spirit to fulfil itself."\(^1\) Indeed, it is not a little surprising that ascetics strictly pledged to life-long celibacy and ardent reformers preaching high moral principles have never, in the past, protested against what is now termed as obscene representations. Truly speaking mithuna subjects have never been taboo in Indian art as also in literature. A healthy attitude to sex has always existed in Indian Society. But M.Pouche advocates for drawing a distinction between those reliefs where charm of form suggests the idea of release and others where it would be difficult, if not impossible, to see more than a representation of the most earthly pleasures.\(^2\) The Brhadâranyaka Upanisad says, "In the embrace of his beloved a man forgets the whole world- everything both within and without- in the very same way he, who embraces the self, knows neither within nor without."\(^3\) According to Sâri Mulkraj Anand, in this fusion of the individual into the universal soul lies the essence of the eternal supreme bliss. The Indian artist chose to give concrete expression to this through the most intense of pleasures known to man - the physical union of male and female.\(^4\)

The above explanation finds echo in the observations of A.K.Coomaraswamy, "There are two kinds of sex symbolism in Indian art and Philosophy, first, the longing of the individual soul to merge with God, the Atman with Brahma.... the second, the creation of world manifestation - Lîlā, as the fruit of the union of male and female cosmic principles - Purûsa and Prakrti."\(^5\) The weakness of this theory

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4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
lies in the fact that it does not explain how an ordinary and unlettered devotee was supposed to understand this deep philosophy writ large in erotica on temple walls. How a lay worshipper was expected to delve deep into the sex symbolism typifying the union of Purusa and Praartri? Secondly there is no dearth of symbols in Indian art. If, at all, the artist wanted to depict the longing of the individual soul to merge with the universal, he could have easily selected other symbols to be readily apprehended by the common devotee. It is a hard truth indeed that even today, majority of the visitors coming to Khajuraho want to feast sumptuously on the obscenities appearing on the temple exteriors and to take lessons for their forthcoming honeymoons rather than to seek blessings of the deity within or to appreciate the art and architecture of the temples that they little understand. Even the educated Indians little understand the symbolism of erotic sculpture described above. It does not stand to reason therefore that kings and carvers of Chandella times were naive enough to use sexual symbols for conveying deep philosophy.

It is interesting to note that some scholars regard the mitmuna manifestations only as advertisements to attract the people. Dr. A.L. Basham wonders, "Is it possible that actually the mitmunas were placed on the walls with the idea of attracting the people to visit the temple and eventually to worship within?" Another view, often aired, is that "the temple precincts were the teacher's class-room, the temple walls his black-board," meaning thereby that the erotic carvings were aimed at satisfying the curiosity of the people and teaching lessons in sex hygiene. One wonders if such were the aims of the Chandella artists why the temples of Ajaygarh Nohata, Manoba, Madanpur and Bampur were not rendered as attractive or educative as the Kandariya and the Viivanatna of Khajuraho?

1. Vide -Mental R.J. 1 Ibid., P. 30.
2. Ibid., P. 28.
matter of fact, most of the temples of Bundelkhand belonging to the Chandella period are either devoid of erotic element or contain very little, barring a few shrines at Khajuraho.

Some scholars answer this 'erotic enigma' with different explanation. Shri Niran Chowdhari is of the view that there is no religious significance behind erotic carvings and so they should be taken as works of art for decoration and ornament. That there is no religious motif behind such erotica in stone is based on the fact that neither temple cult and nor image worship are known to Brahmanic Hinduism.¹ Needless to say that the views, quoted above, are not based on any honest research on the subject.

A medical explanation and interpretation has been given on the basis that the best aphrodisiac is a surfeit of undiluted sexuality. Medical books on marital hygiene mention that too much of conjugal love will often result in temporary impotence in the male. Is it likely that all aspects of the game of love to meet the desires of all types of devotees were purposely and conspicuously placed on the walls of the temples so as to produce a sense of satiety in the worshipper so that he could enter the presence of the presiding deity of the temple with a mind free of carnal thoughts and all desire of flesh?² Secondly if the worshipper be blinded by his carnal appetites in these outer courts he must return and compose his mind, for he is not worthy of the god. It is, of course, true that very few erotic figures have found place inside the temple and none within the sanctum but if the aim was to test worshipper it should have been employed in all the temples and in equal measure as well as identical manner.

A section of the scholars believes that Indian gods are never painted as detached from the material aspects of life. As a matter of fact, they are creation of human beings who reflect their

¹ Vide-Mehta, R.J.: Ibid., P.35.
² Ibid., P.36.
own behaviour in narrating their stories or portraying their images. According to Shri A.K. Coomaraswamy, "Erotic couples appear in Indian temple sculpture simply because voluptuous ecstasy has also its due place in life and those who interpreted life were artists."¹

To the above view, several objections may be raised. In the first place, Indian gods and goddesses, though modelled on and partaking of human life have always been conceived of as ideal personalities. Sex is presumed to be present in their existence but the erotic couples of Khajurāho temples can never be regarded as divine beings simply because no iconographic text contains an injunction with regard to the carving of gods in erotic play. Secondly, the artist was to subordinate himself to the ideals of the community and injunctions of iconography. The artist was not supposed to interpret life on the temple walls but to work as per the requirements of the texts and the community employing him.

It is also held that the amorous sculptural representations on temple walls, are sort of 'plates' illustrating the text of ancient Sanskrit sex manuals like Vatsyāyana's Kāmasūtra.² The same objection may be raised to this view as to the preceding one.

Yet another view holds them to be portraying the 'process of evolution'. We travel from the vegetation to animals and then to the higher animals and the lower humans indulging in low activity; then we rise to the more elegant mitmuna scenes of sculptured men and women; and then the semi-divine and divine beings and lovers adorn the temples, until we reach the super-god Parabrahma - represented in the form of the sikhara and the finial or, if we should conceive of Him that way, as pure abstraction.³ A variation of the same point from another angle is that by being placed on the exterior walls,

¹ Mide-Mehra, R.J.: Ibid., P.34.
² Ibid., PP.27-28.
³ Vide-Kanwarlal; Ibid., P.178.
and even there up to a certain height and not above that, they indicate that Kāma or sexual desire belongs to and fits into the scheme of life in its own right, but it has to be kept to its proper place as life has four aims - Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. Needless to add that this profound symbolism was beyond comprehension for the lay worshipper. The wealth of explanations, interpretations and justifications heaped on the erotic art forces us to conclude that "the sculpture of mating is a secret language, a kind of code in which messages of great worth and monument have been recorded and to those who understand this secret language, much is revealed."

Truly speaking the practice of placing erotic couples on temple façades seems to have originated out of a variety of factors acting conjointly and so this 'phenomenon in flesh' can not be studied in isolation merely on the basis of symbolism underlying it or treating it only a decorative motif. Among such factors, Tantrism is certainly one. Erotica in Indian art owes its origin to the Vajrayāna in which the monks made woman the centre of their yogic exercises, and as they came from the lower class of the society, they aimed at doing all which was opposed to the tenets of the orthodox Brahmanism. The excommunicated Brāhmaṇas formed sects like that of Kapālikas and started doing horrible and obscene exercises. Sūtris enjoined a limit to the enjoyment of all pleasures but these sects called it deceit and advocated full indulgence in earthly pleasures. To quote Dr. Bhagavat Sharan Upadhyaya, "what was dharma for the Brāhmaṇas, was adharmā for them and what was adharmā for the Brāhmaṇas, they thought dharma."

Now, though we do not possess any inscriptive evidence attesting to the patronage of Tantric sects by the Čandella.

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2. उपा याग, भक्तिवाण : "भारतीय मंदिरों पर गौर चिन्तन", नई दिल्ली, 28 अप्रैल 1978, प्र. 8.
rulers, the completely shaven or bearded and longhaired ascetics portrayed in the Khajurāho sculptures are without doubt Tantrics. We have noted from the Khajurāho stone inscription of Vaśovarman that the Vaikuntha image of the Laksmana temple was brought from the regions of Bhoṭa and Kailāśa. The worship of a Pāṇḍaratinic image brought from the Tantric regions implies Tantric rituals and the resulting influence of Tantrism at Khajurāho. Of note, again, are the names Cāṇḍa and Vidyādharā which appear to be Tantric appellations. Sway of Tantric sadhus at Khajurāho is reflected even in words of Ibn Batuta who says, "at this place resides a tribe of jogis with long and clotted hair.... many of the moslems of these parts attend on them and learn magic from them." Thus the hold of Tantrism at Khajurāho after 900 A.D. is adequately attested to. How this Tantric influence affected the art of Khajurāho has been best shown by Dr. Devangana Desai. Hers is the latest interpretation of the erotic sculpture of India and perhaps the most satisfactory. Of course, her approach to the subject is quite new and different from that of Dr. Bhagavat Sharan Upadhyay.

She is of the view that the practice of maithuna as a makāra is based essentially on the concept of magical power of sex. The paṇḍamakāras are actually offerings to the deity and form the most essential part of Tantrism. So the sculptural depiction of erotic couples near the deities may be taken as offering of maithuna for the propitiation and for fertility purposes. The fertility deity needs to be refreshed by sexual acts in the sanctuary. This conception is also seen in the origin of the Devadāsi institution. The sexual act creates the power for auspicious and defensive purposes. It gives Siddhis.

Recognition of the magical power of sexual depiction has been explicitly made in one of the Silpa texts known as

Silpa Prakṣa, which was an Orissan ēlīpa text of Kaula-Śaraswati between the 9th and the 12th centuries A.D. It mentions Kāmakalesvara Yantra which was a symbolic representation of sex for magico-propitiatory and magico-defensive purposes. The placing of this Yantra in the temples dedicated to Rudra and Śakti has been made mandatory. Then the monument will stand unmoved. This yantra is utterly secret and it must not be shown to everyone. For this reason it is enjoined that Kāmabandhas or erotic couples should be carved to delight the people from whom the actual Tantric Yantra symbolizing the sexual act has to be hidden.

So the 'riddle of romance' and 'maze of mystic matings' stands unravelled. Two basic factors in Indian culture are germane to the representation of sex in art. These are the magico-religious aspect of sex which is raison d'être for the existence of sexual depiction in religious art and the worldly interest in sex which leads to the secularization and sensualisation of the original sacred nature of sexual depiction. The apparent contradiction between this 'labyrinth of love' and lofty goals of Hinduism stands resolved when we see that along with the sublime ideals like Tapas, Vairāgya and Samnyāsa, Hinduism retains beliefs and practices connected with fertility and vegetation cults. So the sexual depiction in religious art derives its inspiration not from the philosophical symbolism of highly evolved thought systems, but from the religious beliefs and practices which reveal the primal connection between sex and religion.

No wonder, therefore, that writers like Śrīkṛṣṇa Miśra, Kaśemendra, Bhanu and Kalhana who have shed sufficient light on the social realities of their times are totally silent about this open display of obscenities in plastic art of their period. The carving of sex was so widely accepted in socio-cultural setting of that

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1. Desai, D. 1 Ibid., PP.143-44.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., P.196.
period that it did not appear to them as an contradiction. Our preachers now 'cry up the wares called soul and cry down the wares called flesh.' But such was not the situation in those times. A new cult of worship through the flesh and of the flesh was on. It is significant to note that this temple town of Khajurāho credited by tradition to have had at one time eighty five temples is not mentioned in any text as a Tirtha or pilgrimage center. The Tirthamāra of Lakūmādihara of Kanauj in the 12th century A.D. and the Tirthamāpam of the 15th century A.D. are silent about Khajurāho.¹

So the erotic sculptures belong to a category of art which is not Tantric but art as influenced by Tantrism without being functionally related to Tantric sādmā. The depiction of scenes containing Tantric rituals could not, theoretically, have been the work of genuine Tantrikas. The true Tantric art is functionally related to Upāsanā and sādmā. The original Tantric pīṭhas in the borderland of India are not associated with erotic display. The prevalence of sexual motifs in religious art before the documented Tantric period shows that factors responsible for their existence were deeply in-grained in Indian culture and were brought to the fore by the influence of Tantrism.

We may close the chapter with significant observations of Dr. Vidya Prakash," Perhaps the final word of explanation of the erotic sculptural of Khajurāho would be that they could not have been forced on an unwilling onlooker....They must have been required. The artist was bound to carve them. His age demanded it; his religion sanctioned it; he was equipped by the age old artistic tradition and he was inspired by the writings of Kāmasūtra."²

2. Vidya Prakash; Ibid., P.187.