

# *Amravati*



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# AMARAVATI



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శ్రీమదామరావతి కుమారతీర్థ విగ్రహం

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# AMARAVATI

## 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

OF THE BUDDHIST SITES IN INDIA, AMARAVATI (LAT. 16° 34' N; long. 80° 17' E), on the right bank of the river Krishna, occupies a pre-eminent position in the history of Indian art. It is situated about 35 km to the north of the town of Guntur, which is the headquarters of the District of the same name, in Andhra Pradesh, besides being the nearest railway-station. Government transport buses ply regularly between Guntur and Amaravati. Moreover, during the rainy season and winter, Amaravati can be reached by launches from Vijayawada along the river Krishna.

The excavated *stūpa*-site and the Archaeological Museum are the main attractions here, the former being located close to the Archaeological Museum. The place is famous also as a pilgrims' centre on account of the location of the Amareśvara temple, which gives the present name to the locality. Its neighbouring village Dharanikota was the actual site of the ancient Dhānyakaṭaka, the capital of the later Sātavāhanas. Visitors who intend to have an overnight halt at the town may reserve accommodation by prior application, in the rest-house maintained by the District Public Relations Officer, Guntur.

## AMARAVATI

Guide-books and picture-postcards published by the Archaeological Survey of India are sold at the counter of the Museum which remains open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., while photographs of sites and exhibits can be had on payment from the Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, Janpath, New Delhi 110011.

## 2. DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATIONS

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SITE OF THE MAHĀ-CHAITYA AT Amaravati, known locally as Dīpāladinne ('Hill of Lamps'), was realized by Colonel Colin Mackenzie as early as 1797. A year earlier, a local landlord had changed his residence from Chintapalli to Amaravati, and laid the foundation of the modern township around the Amareśvara temple. Many people, at his invitation, settled in the area, and the building activity that ensued thereafter led to the spoliation of several mounds yielding large-sized bricks and limestone slabs. The Dīpāladinne did not escape the landlord's eyes: it was ransacked for suspected treasures and also perhaps for building material. At the time of the digging of the mound, some sculptured slabs came to light and the news reached Mackenzie, who at once paid a brief visit to the place. He correctly assessed at that time the potentiality of the mound of some 90 feet (27.43 m) in diameter and a height of about 20 feet (6.09 m). Mackenzie re-visited the place, in 1818, with a band of assistants for preparing detailed drawings of the site and the monument. A few sculptured pieces were also recovered by him.

After Mackenzie's discovery of the *mahā-chaitya* site, several European officials took interest in collecting sculptures from Amaravati. Some attempts were also made to excavate the *stūpa*: in 1845, Sir Walter Smith dug the south-west part of the mound and recovered

a few sculptured pieces. Towards the close of this century, scholars like Robert Sewell (in 1877), James Burgess (in 1881) and Alexander Rea (in 1888-89) made attempts to excavate and record the sculptured stones systematically. Rea conducted two more operations—one in 1905-6 and the other in 1908-9. The last operation introduced a new element in the history of the site by uncovering remains of megaliths ascribable to a period prior to the construction of the *mahā-chaitya*. Also, he laid bare a few minor *stūpas* and some bronze images. Yet the potentiality of the site, though considerably spoilt, was not exhausted. As a matter of fact, the recent operation, during the year 1958-59, under R. Subrahmanyam and K. Krishna Murthy of the Archaeological Survey, brought to view a large number of inscribed architectural pieces, sculptured fragments, reliquaries and other minor antiquities including sculptures and reliefs ascribable to the medieval times. Some more inscribed and sculptured slabs were exposed in an excavation carried out by I. K. Sarma in 1973-74 at a site close to the *mahā-chaitya*. The lowest stratum yielded both Black-and-red Ware and the Northern Black Polished Ware.

Dhānyakaṭaka, the fortified capital of the Sātavāhanas, was also excavated during the years 1962-65 by M. Venkataramayya and K. Raghavachary, and it revealed five periods of occupation of the site. On the basis of Radio-carbon dates, one may easily date the beginning of settlement there to the fifth century B.C.

Sculptures from the *mahā-chaitya* site are distributed over several museums, the bulk being housed in the

Madras Government Museum, Madras, and the British Museum, London. Originally, the collection, in the Amaravati Museum, comprised those left at the site by Burgess and Rea in a temporary sculpture-shed. It has now been augmented by the finds brought to light in the excavation carried out in 1958-59. In addition, there are a few antiquities from Alluru, Gummadidurru and Lingarajapalli (below, p. 24) as well.

### 3. EARLY REMAINS

THE ANTIQUITY OF AMARAVATI AND DHARANIKOTA DATES back to the prehistoric times when man was in the most primitive stage of his existence. Tools used by him then were made primarily of stone, and such Early Stone Age artefacts like handaxes, cleavers, discoids, scrapers and so on put to various practical uses, came from Dharanikota in the course of explorations. That the area attracted the neolithic people too is evident from stray discovery of polished stone-axes (below p. 30).

A few urn-burials of the megalithic culture referred to earlier (p. 4) were discovered by Rea below one of the smaller *stūpas*. In fact, in the region between Guntur and Amaravati, megalithic burials are noticed, specially near the foot of the hill-ranges at places like Lam, Motadaka, Nimalipuram etc. Significantly, the lowest levels of Dharanikota and the *mahā-chaitya* site yielded material belonging to the same megalithic culture. It may, therefore, reasonably be postulated that the megalith-builders forming a large community occupied an extensive area in the region before the introduction of Buddhism there.

### 4. THE MAHĀ-CHAITYA

#### A. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE RECORDED HISTORY OF AMARAVATI AND DHARANIKOTA, both the places forming parts of ancient Dhānyakataka, began certainly from the time of Aśoka, the great Maurya emperor. In the Thirteenth Rock-edict of Aśoka, the Āndhras are mentioned along with the Pulindas and other southern people. Amaravati itself has yielded a fragment of inscribed Aśokan pillar made out of local quartzite stone. There are reasons to believe that the Kalinga ruler Khāravēla of the Mahāmeghavāhana dynasty extended his sway over parts of Āndhra-deśa in the first century B.C. That the Mahāmeghavāhanas ruled over the West Godavari region is affirmed by the recent discovery of the inscription of one Sada, the Mahāmeghavāhana king and the lord of Kalinga, from the Buddhist site at Guntapalli. There might have been some local kings as well. Thus, the two inscriptions from the Bhattiprolu *stūpa*, in District Guntur, give the name of a king, Kubiraka, who might have reigned in the lower Krishna basin during the second-first century B.C. Several local kings, emulating Aśoka, are likely to have fostered Buddhism. Indeed, it was a period of great religious upsurge as evidenced by innumerable donative records from various *stūpa*-sites in Āndhra-deśa. Again, some minor dynasty like the Aira

kings—a record of these kings comes from Velpuru in District Guntur—might have ruled in the region in the first or second century A.D. The Airas were possibly the descendants of the Mahāmeghavāhanas, for Khāravela also claimed to be an Aira.

The history of the region becomes clearer from the second century when the later Sātavāhanas made Dhānyakaṭaka their capital. It is not known when the Sātavāhana power, whose early records are confined to western India alone, ruled in the Āndhra country, possibly by defeating the Airas. According to the Purāṇic list, no fewer than six kings, five of them known also from inscriptions, ruled after Vāsishṭhiputra Pulumāvi, the first Sātavāhana king to rule from Dhānyakaṭaka. Amaravati itself has produced inscriptions belonging to Vāsishṭhiputra Pulumāvi, Sivamaka Sada or Śivaskanda Śātakarṇi and Gautamiputra Yajña Śātakarṇi. Without any doubt, the Sātavāhana rule in the region must have continued till the first quarter of the third century. Shortly after, the Sātavāhanas were finally replaced by the Ikshvākus of Nagarjunakonda, who ruled for about a century or so. Amaravati was undoubtedly included in their kingdom, and in this period, as the art-style and the ornamental character of some inscriptions may show, some additions to the *mahā-chaitya* complex were also made.

With the fall of the Ikshvākus there was a marked decline in the active patronage to Buddhism in the Āndhra country. The Early Pallavas—whose earliest record, belonging to one Simhavarman, comes from Manchikallu, near Nagarjunakonda—were not known to be

great patrons of Buddhism. One of the Pallava kings Mahārājādhirāja Śivaskandavarman had his headquarters at Dhānyakaṭaka. The Pallava rule was supplanted in this region by the later Śālanākāyanas who subsequently yielded place to the Vishṇukuṇḍins. But no record of these dynasties has so far been discovered from Amaravati region though the Vishṇukuṇḍins also claim Amaravati (Indrapāla-nagara) as their capital. An inscription on a boulder at Dharanikota mentioning the name of one Vishṇuvardhana-mahārāja may be attributed to the Chālukyas of Veṅgi, who succeeded the Vishṇukuṇḍins in the Āndhra country. During the twelfth-thirteenth centuries the Koṭa chiefs ruled from Dharanikota itself. They were followed successively by the Redḍi kings of Koṇḍaviḍu and the Vijayanagara rulers.

Despite all these political vicissitudes, the *mahā-chaitya* complex survived till about the fourteenth century. Some inscriptions from the Amareśvara temple which include records of the Koṭa chiefs of Dharanikota, the Redḍi kings of Koṇḍaviḍu and the Vijayanagara rulers, clearly indicate the continuity of the Buddhist establishment there. Actually, the Koṭa chiefs themselves were responsible for more than one donation to the *mahā-chaitya*—their inscriptions in the Amareśvara temple belonging largely to the twelfth-thirteenth centuries. That the *mahā-chaitya* continued as a centre of Buddhism even in the fourteenth century is evident from the inscription of Dharmakīrtti at Gadaladeniya, District Kandy, Sri Lanka, dated to A.D. 134-4: it states of some repairs carried out to the two-storeyed image-shrine at the *mahā-chaitya* site.



## B. THE DESCRIPTION

The *stūpa* at Amaravati, the biggest in the Āndhra country, has invariably been mentioned in inscriptions as *mahā-chaitya*. Its extant remains (pl. II), shorn of all its aura and grandeur, just consist of the drum of the brick-built *stūpa*, the paved *pradakshinā-patha* ('circumambulatory path') and the circular alignment of the railing, represented by an array of heterogeneous uprights and pillars. Originally, mounted on a circular drum, was the dome or the hemispherical superstructure, crowned by a railed *harmikā* and a *chhatra*. The dome, now missing, appears to have been built solidly of large-sized bricks measuring  $57 \times 28 \times 7.6$  cm. At present it has a height of about 1.55 m and a diameter of 49.30 m.

The *mahā-chaitya* has had the vestiges of characteristic *āyaka*-platforms projecting out of the drum at cardinal directions. These platforms, a feature quite common in the *stūpa*-architecture of the Āndhra country, carried originally five *āyaka* pillars, representing symbolically the five important episodes of Buddha's life, viz., Birth, Great Renunciation, Enlightenment, First Sermon and Extinction. Both drum and *āyaka*-platforms, the latter measuring  $7.20 \times 2.10$  m, were covered with sculptured slabs, the eastern *āyaka*-platform still retaining a large slab of limestone carved with simple pilaster motifs. Five crystal relic-caskets containing bones and gold flowers were discovered from slots made in the bottom-slab of the *āyaka*-pillars which surmounted the southern platform. The dome, estimated to have a diameter of 42 m rested over the rim of the drum leaving all round

a batter of about 7.1 m; its height might have been at least half its diameter. Tall dome-slabs measuring about 2.32 m and carved with *triratna* and *pūrṇa-kumbhas* covered the lower part of the dome, above which probably came the decorations in stucco.

The railing, the *vetikā* or *vedikā* of the inscriptions, measured about 54 m in diameter, pierced on all the four sides by gateways. It consisted of upright pillars (*thabho* or *stambha*) set in a foundation of brick. Old granite uprights might have been used, at one stage, as buttresses to the railing. Three cross-bars (*sūchi*), fixed into mortises, connected each pair of uprights which too had tenon on top for fixing coping-stones (*unhisa* or *ushnisha*), with rounded top. According to Barrett, 'The complete rail would have required about eight hundred feet of coping resting on one hundred and thirty-six pillars and three hundred and forty-eight cross-bars.' He states further that 'at each of the four cardinal points the arms of the rail, leaving an opening of twenty-six feet, turned out radially for a distance of sixteen feet, then, having turned inwards at right-angles for a distance of six and a half feet, projected, again at right angles, a further eight feet.' This is possibly the picture of the railing in its most evolved phase.

Between the drum of the *stūpa* and the railing is the paved circumambulatory path (*pradakshinā-patha*), having a width, varying from 3.70 to 4.0 m (excluding the rail). There are number of circular post-holes, 0.50 m in diameter, along the *pradakshinā-patha*. In certain cases, the bigger ones are found associated with small circular post-holes. Maybe, these were meant to take

pillars surmounted variously by *chaityas*, lions, *chakras* and so on.

At the site, are to be seen fragments of granite and limestone uprights, some of them inscribed, and a massive limestone pillar (*chaitya-stambha*) near the southern *āyaka*-platform, also with an inscription. Vestiges of monastic complexes of later dates are also seen on all the sides.

### C. THE PHASES

The history of the *mahā-chaitya* extends over a period of about a millennium and a half. It is, therefore, certain that the *stūpa*-complex there must have undergone several major renovations and additions from time to time. This time-span, broadly speaking, may be divided into the following five major divisions.

#### (i) *First phase: Aśokan*

Both tradition and archaeological evidence show that the nucleus of the *mahā-chaitya* came into existence some time in the second half of the third century B.C., when the Maurya emperor Aśoka launched upon a career of propagating the Buddhist ideals. It is said that one Mahādeva, who was sent to this part of the country as a missionary, laid the foundation of the complex which in fulness of time grew into a monument of stupendous dimensions and vitality. Of the archaeological evidence, the most important is the discovery of a fragment of a polished quartzite pillar bearing an Aśokan edict (below, p. 42). It may be noted here

that the Aśokan columns practically went side by side with some holy structures, particularly *stūpa*, the pillar and the *stūpa* thus constituting one architectural pattern.

The *stūpa* here, during the time of Aśoka, must have been of modest proportions. Besides being associated with an inscribed column, it had a railing, possibly made of granite inasmuch as a few inscriptions incised on granite uprights may be attributed to the third century B.C. on palaeographical grounds. Some of these granite pillars—the inscriptions call them *thabho* or *stambha*—bear fine polish reminiscent of the Maurya tradition; in one case, a *triratna*, in bold relief is found engraved with a one-line inscription. Originally, they had a height of about 2·3 m with three lenticular mortises for holding the tenons of the cross-bars. In some instances, the tenon on top of uprights for holding the coping, is also extant. There are, however, four examples where these mortises occur on only one side, thereby indicating their use in the gateway. Evidently the granite rail had at least two gateways.

#### (ii) *Second phase: post-Aśokan*

The post-Aśokan phase extending for two or three centuries witnessed a phenomenal growth of monastic institutions in Āndhra-deśa. At Amāravati, the phase is represented by a large number of inscribed architectural pieces and sculptured fragments. Whether the *stūpa* was enlarged in this period is not known, but it is fairly certain that the granite rail was replaced by a limestone one. It had plain uprights with three lenticular

mortises, suggesting the presence of a three-barred rail. The total height of the pillar, with a rectangular cross-section, is 1.9 m; evidently, this type of uprights is smaller in dimensions than the granite ones. In all likelihood, such uprights were associated with plain cross-bars and copings. In fact, the excavations at Amaravati have revealed a large number of plain but inscribed cross-bars varying in length from 46 to 57 cm. All of them have lenticular tenon, with an average height of 35 cm, width being 9 cm. Many of these cross-bars bear donative inscriptions of the second century B.C.

An idea of the layout and the form of the *stūpa*-complex during the second century B.C. can be gathered from its representation incised on one such inscribed cross-bar (pp. 20 and 36). It depicts a *stūpa* enclosed by a circular five-barred rail having six uprights crowned by plain copings. The view of the drum is obstructed by the railing but the base of the dome has some wavy decorations. Undoubtedly, the *stūpa* was surmounted by a *harmikā*, whose railing can still be seen in the mutilated part of the slab. In front of the *stūpa* stands a foliated *Bodhi*-tree surrounded by a four-barred rail.

Belonging more or less to this period or slightly later are a few pillar-fragments with labelled sculptures. One such stele depicts scenes variously of Vaiśālī (pl. III A), Śrāvastī (pl. III B), Dhānyakaṭaka and Kuśinagara, each with an appropriate label (below, pp. 40-41). Moreover, there is also a pillar, in the Government Museum, Madras, containing scenes of the Great Departure and an episode that took place on the bank of the Neranjara river at Bodh-Gaya. Both the pillars possibly

formed part of a gateway, carved with reliefs portraying important episodes of Buddha's life. Similarly-carved architectural members like copings, rail-plinths and other fragments, now in the Government Museum, Madras, may also belong to this sub-phase. It is worth noting that it was primarily the rail and its gateways that underwent renovation in the first few phases of the history of the site, while the *stūpa* remained an unostentatious monument, with little or no embellishments. In the later sub-phase of this period, however, as it appears from a few extant examples, some of which were reused even in later times, the drum was encased with sculptured slabs.

(iii) *Third phase: Sātavāhana*

In this period the western Indian art-tradition made a deep impact on the sculptural and architectural forms of the region. And this trend perhaps arrived at Dhānyakaṭaka even before it was made the royal seat of the Sātavāhanas. It did not take much time for the local artists to outgrow the original forms and conventions. Soon there ushered in a new form of artistic expression rich in technical skill and plastic beauty. This was indeed a period of great artistic efflorescence that gave the *mahā-chaitya* here the most impressive form unsurpassed in the history of *stūpa*-architecture in the south. The brick *stūpa* had certainly a veneer of sculptured slabs depicting *stūpas* and other reliefs, and the rail was replaced by a highly ornamental one, carved with beautiful reliefs and elegant designs. It is this phase

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that has produced a large number of sculptured objects belonging both to the *stūpa* and the railing. If the bas-reliefs of *stūpas* on early drum-slabs be a true guide to the actual monument, even the *āyaka*-platforms might have come into existence in this period itself.

But this period of ascendancy in the art of the lower Krishna valley might not have been a long one, although it must have had more than one sub-phase. Also, there are three clear landmarks represented by inscriptions, the earliest of which refers to the gift of Wheel of Law (*Dharma-chakra*) at the western gate of the *mahā-chaitya* during the time of Vāsishṭhiputra Pulumāvi (A.D. 130-59). Further, the railing, at least some part of it, was replaced or renovated in the time of Siri Sivamaka Sada, generally identified with Śiva-Śrī (A.D. 159-66) or Śivaskanda Śātakarṇi (A.D. 167-74) of the *Purāṇic* list; his inscription is engraved on a coping of the rail of the mature phase. Even the dome-part of the *stūpa*, which rises above the drum, was covered with sculptured slabs. One such dome-slab, about 2.39 m in height, now in the reserve collection, bears an inscription of Yajña Śātakarṇi (c. A.D. 174-203). But the carvings on them lack artistic quality characteristic of the evolved phase.

(iv) *Fourth phase : Ikshvāku*

Truly speaking, there is hardly any dividing line between this phase and the preceding one. Yet some additions and alterations must have been made to the *mahā-chaitya* during the prosperous rule of the Ikshvāku kings. The drum-slabs showing a representation of

*stūpa* with minute carvings belonged to this period when a number of smaller *stūpas*, perhaps votive in character, also came into existence. Significantly, the *stūpa*-reliefs of this period show generally four cross-bars. So far, however, no upright with four mortises has been discovered. It is also clear from different heights of the drum-slabs that they were used not only in the *mahā-chaitya* but also in smaller *stūpas*. Further, that the smaller *stūpas* and the *harmikās* had railings around them is evident from small-sized uprights and cross-bars available in the reserve collection of the Museum.

(v) *Fifth phase: Early Pallava to Late Medieval*

The phase spans a period of about a millennium beginning from the fourth to the fourteenth centuries. Without any doubt, the *mahā-chaitya* had remained a centre of Buddhism throughout this long passage of time but its importance showed gradual signs of decline. But there is not much evidence to reconstruct the story of its rise and fall during the period. None the less the post-Ikshvāku period is not entirely barren, for there are sculptures and metal images that may be ascribed to this phase. Datable to the fourth to the sixth centuries A.D. are a few bronze images of standing Buddha, now in the Government Museum, Madras. Soon there ensued a period of full-fledged Mahāyānaism as is evident from the limestone sculptures of Tārā and other deities.

Though no early monastery or image-shrine has so far been discovered, their existence has to be taken for granted. Several images of Buddha have come to light,

and it is difficult to imagine a figure of Buddha without a shrine. Even there must have been several early monasteries; in fact, the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang who visited Dhānyakaṭaka in the second quarter of the seventh century saw 'a crowd of Buddhist monasteries but most of them were deserted'.

There are evidences to show that the *mahā-chaitya* complex survived even after the seventh century. On the basis of sculptures alone it is possible to establish clearly that it continued as a centre of Buddhism till about the tenth century A.D. These are medieval sculptures of Mahāyāna affiliation and include images made both in limestone and granite. Of the granite sculptures, mention may be made of the occurrence of Buddha in *bhūmiśparśa-mudrā*, Simhanāda Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśhoṣa, now exhibited in the Government Museum, Madras. Moreover, the inscriptions of the Koṭa chiefs from the Amareśvara temple refer to some donations to the *mahā-chaitya* during the eleventh and twelfth centuries A.D. For instance, an inscription dated to A.D. 1182 describes the *mahā-chaitya* as a very lofty *stūpa*, finely decorated with sculptures (*chaityam-atyunnatam yatra nānā-chitra-suchitritam*). Again, an inscription of Dharmakīrti, dated to A.D. 1344, alludes to the repairs to the double-storeyed image-house at Amaravati; the record, however, comes from Gadaladeniya, in District Kandy, Sri Lanka. All these may show that the *mahā-chaitya*, with its towering dome, survived almost intact till about the fourteenth century though virtually as a forlorn monument bereft of much of its splendour and pulsating spirit.

## D. SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM AT AMARAVATI

The Mahāsāṅghikas and their offshoots held the control of the *mahā-chaitya*, possibly all through its history in spite of the fact that ideological differences, from time to time, led to the rise of various sects and sub-sects. After the Second Buddhist Council at Vaiśālī, the Mahāsāṅghikas branched off from the orthodox Theravādins, and the influence of the former school of Buddhism spread to Āndhra-deśa probably during the Maurya occupation of the region.

Of the offshoots of the Mahāsāṅghikas, the Chaityakas undoubtedly held their supremacy in the Amaravati region during the second century A.D., because the inscription of Vāsishṭhiputra Pulumāvi clearly refers to their settlement here. The Chaityakas gave special prominence to the worship of the *chaitya* or *stūpa*: one could acquire merit by the erection, decoration and circumambulation of the *chaitya* and by offerings of flowers, garlands and the like to it. It is this ideology that was possibly responsible for so many donative records from the *mahā-chaitya*. At the same time, it explains the presence of flower-sellers near the *stūpa*-gate in the carvings of the later phases. As the image of Buddha is found carved on the casing slabs of the second century A.D., the possibility of their accepting the idea of representing the Master in anthropomorphic form cannot be ruled out.

Another inscription from Amaravati refers to a sect called the Mahāvāna-seliyas, whose western or the other branch, known as Aparā-mahāvīna-seliyas had

their stronghold at Nagarjunakonda. Another sect, the Pūrva-śailiyas, had their settlement at Dhānyakaṭaka as is evident from a pillar-inscription at Amaravati (below, p. 43). When Hiuen Tsang visited the place there were monasteries for Aparā-śailas and Pūrva-śailas, near Dhānyakaṭaka, and it is fairly certain that the Pūrva-śailiyas of the early inscriptions could be equated with the Pūrva-śailas of Hiuen Tsang.

No other name of any Buddhist sect is known from Amaravati, yet the discovery of images of Tārā ascribable to the fifth-sixth century may tend to show the arrival of full-fledged Mahāyānaism during that period. Hiuen Tsang describes the majority of the followers of Buddhism here as adherents of the Mahāsāṅghika system, although the narration of the Chinese pilgrim leaves no doubt about the prevalence of certain Vajrayānic practices. Above all, there are a few Tantric icons also, ascribable on stylistic grounds, to the ninth-tenth century (above, p. 18).

#### E. SCULPTURAL ART

The sculptural art of Amaravati began after one or more phases of purely architectural development of the *mahā-chaitya*. Only two examples, prior to the flowering of the sculptural art, are known: the earliest of the two is the design of *triratna* on a granite upright, and next comes the outline of the *stūpa* and *vriksha-chaitya* on an inscribed cross-bar (p. 14). The latter is more an example of graphic art than sculptural, yet the delineation of *torāna* and supposed umbrella in the

composition may tend to show artist's inaptitude in depicting different planes. No human figure has been portrayed in it.

The earliest sculptural phase of Amaravati, so to say, is a manifestation of the central Indian art-tradition represented by Bharhut and the early phase of Sanchi. These are relief-sculptures with emphasis on landscape and animal motifs. There are a few *yaksha* and *yakshī* figures also (pl. IV) but they reflect certain advancements over Bharhut. For, whereas the figures have been modelled in rounded contours, the lines are not rigid, and frontality appears less pronounced. In the depiction of imagined landscapes, as the titled reliefs in the stele (pl. III) show, there is a deliberate attempt not to crowd the scenes with men and women. Indeed, the human figures remain all along subordinate not only to the main theme of a unilocal narration but also to the landscape marked by trees, rivers, animals and buildings.

The mature Amaravati phase of the lower Krishna valley art, a period of great sculptural exuberance, must have started with the shifting of the Sātavāhana capital in the first half of the second century A.D. By no means should it be considered as a sudden outburst, for several trends and influences from different directions might have converged to give rise to this evolved style, mature in form, content and technique. More often than not scenes have been carved inside medallions (pl. VIII B) and discs of uprights, whereas the wavy scrolls with intricate pattern adorn the copings. Their neat and subtle workmanship may well be compared with goldsmith's

## AMARAVATI

or ivory-carver's crafts, which too had reached their high watermarks in this period. Figures of men and women of charming suppleness have been modelled in varied and difficult movements with great skill and imagination. Enough technical advancements can be noticed in the depiction of varied scenes. Lines, masses and surfaces have been manipulated in favour of distributed balance, abandoning rigid symmetry. Consequently, slim but elegant figures in crowded scenes cohere in pleasing harmony although in several instances the main actors are lost amidst the multitudes of lines and concentric arrangements of figures and objects. Yet all the lines, curves and contours have their rhythm and the carvings vibrate, as it were, with life and spirit, reflecting gay sobriety and restrained sensuousness. Outwardly the themes are no doubt religious pertaining to Buddha's life and previous births but the spirit that they exhale are earthly and realistic, portraying a society rich in life and vitality. As artists by then had mastered the technique of depicting different planes, the narration has also become vivid, effective and instinctively appealing. Above all, the inner feelings of an individual actor or a collective group have been given the finest expression that stirs even the onlooker's thoughts.

The mature phase, in all probability, lasted till about the third quarter of the second century. During the time of Yajña Śātakarṇi certain exhaustion in the art-tradition might have set in resulting in the creation of several dome-slabs of indifferent style and workmanship. These carvings (pl. VII A) are marked by symmetrical balance and rigid portrayal of human



*Image of Buddha. See p- 23*



*Mahā-chaitya : general view. See p. 10*



*A. Inscribed stele : scenes from Vaiśālī. See p. 14*



*B. Inscribed stele : scenes from Śrāvastī. See p. 14*



PLATE IV



*Relief of Yakshī. See p. 21*

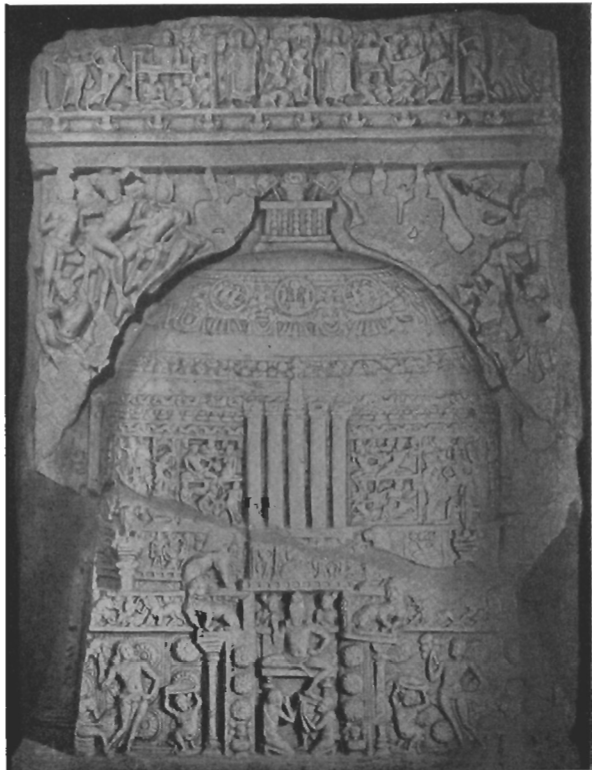
PLATE V



*Bodhisattva Padmapāni. See p. 23*



A. Drum-slab : relief of a developed stūpa. See p. 26



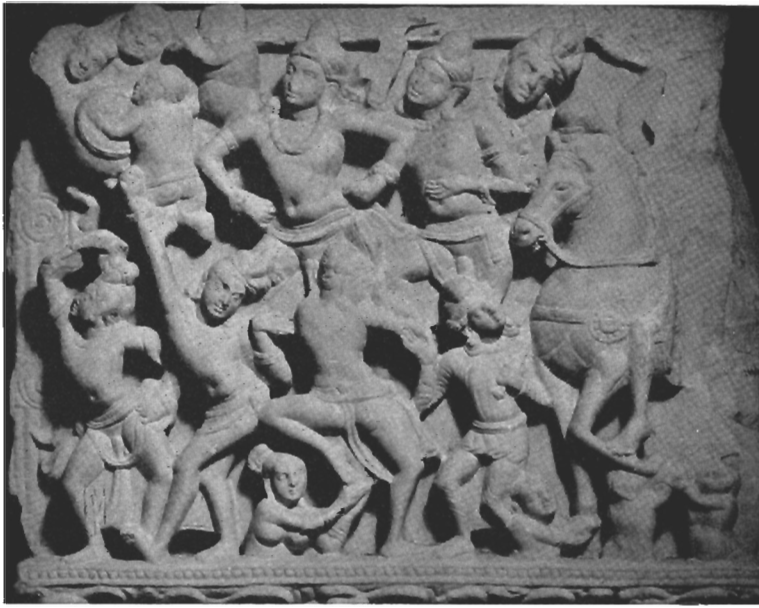
B. Drum-slab from Gummadiurru : relief of a developed stūpa. See p. 32



A. Dome-slab : symbolic representations of Buddha. See p. 22



B. Dome-slab : pūrṇa-kumbha. See p. 25



A. Drum-frieze: Great Renunciation. See p. 36



B. Cross-bar: presentation of Rāhula before Buddha. See p. 34

#### THE MAHĀ-CHAITYA

figures, now considerably elongated and somewhat stylized. The depiction of human figures, besides the shapes and arrangements of certain motifs like *triratna* and friezes of running lions, connect them more with the succeeding phase. It is worth-noting that the Nagarjunakonda phase of the lower Krishna valley art started in a low key with stylized representation of *stūpas* and votaries, all arranged in symmetrical balance. As a matter of fact, the art of Nagarjunakonda reached its apogee only during the time of Ehuvala Chāntamūla some time in the last quarter of the third century. It is quite spectacular as the mature phase of Amaravati and certainly represents another peak in the development of the art of the lower Krishna valley. Amaravati's contribution to this phase is equally impressive. A large number of drum-slabs with bas-reliefs of *stūpa* belonging to this time have been discovered from the *mahā-chaitya* site. They bear minute ornamentations of a very high order, besides miniature compositions depicting scenes from the *Jātaka* tales and Buddha's life. Most of the Buddha-images and other figures like Padmapāṇi in the round (pls. I and V) are products of this phase. These statues, still retaining the influence of Mathura, or according to some Sri Lanka, do not have a slender body so common in the reliefs. They breathe an air of quiet aloofness and sublime grandeur.

With the fall of the Ikshvākus and the rise of developed Mahāyānaism, the glorious phase of the lower Krishna valley art passed into insignificance. From the fifth century onwards the art-style became engrossed mainly in the production of hieratic images in *alto-relievo*.

## 5. THE MUSEUM

## A. SCOPE AND ARRANGEMENT

THE MUSEUM PRESENTS RELICS RECOVERED IN course of various operations primarily at the *mahā-chaitya* site. It includes some surface collections from the ancient mound at Dharanikota. A few antiquities from some other Buddhist sites in Andhra Pradesh, viz. Gummadidurru and Alluru, in District Krishna, and Lingarajapalli, District Vishakhapatnam, are also exhibited here. Chronologically, the museum collection, mostly in stone, covers largely a period from the third century B.C. to about the twelfth century A.D.

A good number of sculptured and architectural pieces, besides the reliquaries discovered from the *mahā-chaitya* and a gold necklace from Gummadidurru, are in the reserve collection. The relic-caskets (above, p. 10) are five in number—four in the shape of a *stūpa* and the other cylindrical. Inside the caskets were lodged bone-relics and gold flowers. The gold necklace from the *stūpa*-site at Gummadidurru, with 15 beads, including spacers, is a fine specimen of its class. Beads are hollow having been originally filled in with shellac.

The exhibits in the Museum are arranged in three different galleries, while the model of the reconstructed *mahā-chaitya*, in its most evolved stage, can be seen in the courtyard. Casts of a few sculptured panels, now in the Government Museum, Madras, are also on show here. Near the entrance, visitors may see, among other

things, the plan of the Museum indicating the arrangement of the exhibits in different galleries.

## B. KEY-GALLERY

The gallery displays some of the selected examples of the art-tradition of Amaravati, besides an inscribed relief of Buddha from Gummadidurru. The lotus-medallion (564),<sup>1</sup> carved on a cross-bar of a railing, is flanked on either side by a dome-slab depicting the *pūrṇa-kumbha* or 'ambrosial vase with overflowing foliage and flowers'. Carved on one face—the other face remains unfinished—the cross-bar, with practically undefined tenons, measures 1.03m in length and 0.77m in height. In its original position, it was fixed into lenticular mortises of an upright of a railing belonging to the second century A.D. In the art of the lower Krishna valley, the lotus medallion is an oft-repeated motif, appearing also on pillars and uprights. It is worth noting that in the Buddhist legend, lotus is a sacred flower, as Queen Māyā Devī, Buddha's mother, is said to have dreamt of a white elephant, with a lotus in its trunk, entering her womb.

Both the slabs (57 and 65) carved with *pūrṇa-kumbha* (pl. VII B) were used as veneer to the brick-built dome of the *stūpa*. It is an auspicious symbol expressing an idea of fulness and abundance.

The western wing of the gallery is formed by two drum-slabs, each of them showing the bas-relief of a *stūpa*. ~~Both~~ the slabs are broken on the top but have a

<sup>1</sup> Figures within brackets indicate Museum accession number.

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Compliments to

Professor M. C. Subramanyam

length of 1.3 m. One of them (182) is an example of minutely-carved *stūpa* (pl. VI A) with a few miniature reliefs portraying scenes from the *Jātaka* tales. The *stūpa* is shown encircled by a four-barred rail—cross-bars and fluted uprights showing lotus-medallions. Garlands issuing out of *makara's* mouth and garland-bearers carrying them are to be seen on copings. On either side of the gateway is a seated lion atop an octagonal pillar.

The ornate entrance to the *pradakṣhiṇā-patha* is marked by a moon-stone carved with a lotus-design having *pūrṇa-kumbha* on either side. The *stūpa* proper shows three out of the four *āyaka*-platforms, the front one surmounted by five pillars symbolizing five main events of Buddha's life (above, p. 10). However, the principal object of worship is a *chakra* on a throne, flanked by *chaurī* (flywhisk)-bearers and devotees.

On the dome of the same *stūpa*-relief are sculptured at least three *Jātaka* stories dealing with the previous births of Bodhisattva. The miniature relief to the right of the visitor relates to one of the two episodes of the *Śibi-Jātaka*. As its story goes, a pigeon, who is none else than the fire-god Agni in disguise is chased by a hunter, the God Śakra in disguise. King Śibi, noted for his great compassion and truthfulness, gives shelter to the pigeon. When the hunter asks for the return of the bird, the king agrees to offer, in exchange, his own flesh equal to the weight of the pigeon. But the king's flesh not being sufficient for the purpose, he himself sits on the pan of the balance. Then, Śakra and Agni appear in real forms and shower praise on the king. For delineating the story, the artist has devoted only two panels—one showing

the king giving the shelter to the bird and the other portraying the scene of King Śibi about to cut out the required flesh from his thigh by a sword, to be weighed by a man standing to his left, with a balance in his hand.

There are four panels devoted to the *Māndhātū-Jātaka*. The king Māndhātā waited upon by seven gems—a wheel, an elephant, a horse, a gem, a wife, a householder and a minister—intends to conquer the *Trayastrimśa* heaven. Soon he succeeds in sharing the throne with Śakra. But he fails to oust him, for his evil thought makes him fall down from the heaven in a park of his city. The miniature panels here show king Māndhātā, with seven jewels, the scene of trampling of Maṇikaṇṭha Nāga and also sharing of the throne with the Nāga king. Yet another scene depicts the miracle of showering of gold by just raising his right hand towards the sky.

In two panels are portrayed the story of the *Vessantara-Jātaka*. According to this story, prince Vessantara, known for his generosity and charity, is banished by his father for giving away the supernatural elephant gifted with the power of causing rain to the Brāhmaṇas of Kaliṅga. During his exile he agrees to part with his two sons as slaves to Brāhmaṇa Jūjaka who is no other than Śakra. Śakra thereafter asks for prince's wife and the prince grants this request as well. Pleased with prince's magnanimity, Śakra restores him his wife and children, and he is reunited with his father. In the relief, the prince is portrayed along with two sons, his wife and a servant, while the other one depicts the scene of giving away of the two sons to Jūjaka.

The other drum-slab (39) depicts a simple *stūpa*, with three-barred rail and *āyaka*-pillars. Buddha is here symbolized variously as a flaming pillar (*agniskandha*), and wheel surmounting a pillar, each one placed on a throne, flanked on either side by figures of devotees. There are also two representations of *Buddha-pāda* with umbrella on top. Figures and designs on this slab are carved in low relief and appear to be less evolved.

A relief of standing Buddha (D 36), in *varadamudrā*, occupies the eastern wing. Recovered from Gummadidurru, the image, in high relief, stands to a height of 0.96 m. A four-lined inscription, in Sanskrit, engraved on the pedestal is dated to the eighth century A.D. It speaks of three generations of Buddhist teachers starting from Āchārya Maugalyāyana, Āchārya Mādeva and Śramaṇa Rāhula, the last-mentioned disciple being responsible for the gift of the image. On either side of Buddha's feet is carved a deer symbolizing the Deer Park at Sarnath where Buddha preached his First Sermon. Above the head of the figure is the representation of a seated Buddha protected by a five-hooded Nāga Muchalinda. It is said that during his penances a rain-storm came at Uruvelā and it was the serpent-king Muchalinda who coiled round the body and protected him from rain and storm.

### C. GALLERY-1

#### (i) Contents

In Gallery-1 are displayed an imposing image of Buddha, some sculptured slabs and rail-fragments from

the *mahā-chaitya* site, besides a drum-slab from Gummadidurru. A few selected specimens of terracotta figurines, beads, coins, neoliths and pottery-fragments discovered either from Amaravati or nearby Dharanikota are exhibited in two show-cases.

#### (ii) The image of Buddha

A life-size standing image of Buddha (80) greets a visitor as soon as he steps into the gallery. Discovered from the *mahā-chaitya* site, the statue (p l. I) is a fine specimen of modelling in the round. With left shoulder and forearm draped in *saṅghāṭi*, his right hand, now missing, was probably in the *abhaya*, whereas his left hand holds the hem of the robe near his chest. A circular mark on the forehead, a mark of *mahāpurusha-lakṣhaṇa* ('sign of great man') is quite conspicuous. The top-knot and ring-like curls of the short hair, turned to the right (*dakṣiṇāvarta-keśa*), are suggestive of superhuman wisdom. Originally it was painted in red colour, some traces of which may still be seen. A piece of iron, perhaps the part of the original rock-formation, can also be noticed. The image stands gracefully to a height of about 2 m (excluding the pedestal) but unlike figures in relief-sculptures, it is far from slender (above, p. 23).

#### (iii) Minor antiquities

In show-case-1, to the south-eastern corner of the entrance to the gallery, are exhibited selected specimens of coins and beads from Dharanikota. Terracotta

figurines, pottery and a few miscellaneous objects are on view in show-case 2 in the central part of the gallery.

COINS.—A few selected examples of silver punch-marked coins, mostly of the oblong variety, are exhibited here. The period of circulation of these coins in India extends from the sixth century to the second century B.C. Symbols, generally five in number on the obverse and one on the reverse, have been punched on each piece. A few coins of the later Sātavāhana and Ikshvāku kings are also on view.

BEADS.—Beads, collected mostly from Dharanikota, are variously of stone, terracotta, ivory, shell and glass. Semi-precious stones like agate, beryl, carnelian, lapis-lazuli and jasper have been used for preparing beads for necklaces and other ornaments.

TERRACOTTAS.—Made generally of double-mould, with a hollow interior, these terracotta objects came primarily from the mounds at Dharanikota. Ascribable to the second-third centuries A.D., they were used as votive offerings and toy-objects. Of the animal figurines exhibited here, a few have been modelled without any mould and are rather crudely-finished.

NEOLITHS.—Three small neolithic axes, picked up from the surface, are on view here (above, p. 6). They were hafted and used as some cutting or scraping tools.

POTTERY.—The earliest ceramic industry both at the *māha-chaitya* site and Dharanikota is megalithic Black-and-red Ware (above, p. 6). Then comes the Northern Black Polished (usually abbreviated as N.B.P.) Ware which is generally dated from the sixth to the second centuries B.C. Among the sites in Andhra Pradesh

this characteristic pottery with a fine glazed surface is dated to the third-second centuries B.C. Both *māha-chaitya* and Dharanikota have yielded Northern Black Polished Ware. The association of this pottery with the *māha-chaitya* is significant as it clearly establishes the antiquity of the monument at least to the second century B.C., if not earlier. The next datable ceramic industry from the region is the Rouletted Ware, which was introduced into India in the wake of India's favourable balance of trade with the Roman world. Its use faded away by the first-second century A.D. In such pottery, which may be partly red and partly black, marks of rouletting is confined, as can be seen from an exhibited sherd, to the inner base alone. Some pot-sherds of the third-fourth centuries are also displayed: a fragment of such pottery shows a man with folded hands. A few miniature pots, one of them having two perforations, can also be seen. The *stūpa*-site also yielded fragments of Celadon ware, of Chinese origin, datable to the tenth to the thirteenth centuries A.D.

#### (iv) *Drum-slabs*

There are six drum-slabs in this gallery—five from the *māha-chaitya* and one from Gummadidurru. All of them are carved with the relief of a railed *stūpa*. The one (32) near the southern wing depicts, in the foreground, the scene of the worship of wheel. On the dome of the *stūpa*-relief are to be noticed examples of miniature compositions delineating scenes from the life of Gautama Buddha. These reliefs

include the scenes of the descent of Bodhisattva in the form of an elephant (*Śvetaketu*), Queen Māyādevī's dream of the elephant entering her womb, the interpretation of the dream by soothsayers, the birth of Siddhārtha and the presentation of the baby before *nagara-devatās*. In a running frieze below, occurs the story of the *Māndhātu-Jātaka* (above, p. 27) in four panels.

The drum-slab (D 15) from Gummadidurru (pl. VI B), next to the above-mentioned one, is an example of drum-slab combined with a horizontal frieze. Measuring 1.67m in extant height and 1.03m in length, it portrays the scene of worship of Bodhisattva. The stories of the *Māndhātu-* and *Śibi-Jātakas* (above, pp. 26-27) are depicted in miniature compositions on the dome part of the bas-relief. Above the dome are represented flying *devas* worshipping the *stūpa* to the accompaniment of dance and music. The frieze above the drum-slab proper shows three scenes from the life of Buddha, with amorous couples at extreme ends. Of the exhibits here, this slab alone provides a full view of a developed form of *stūpa* with a hemispherical dome, decorated variously with garlands, tassels and medallions, apart from the *harmikā* on the topmost part surrounded by an oblong four-barred railing. Here the *harmikā* is shown surmounted by umbrellas and banners as well.

The next drum-slab (31), from the *mahā-chaitya* site, depicts a *stūpa* encircled by a four-barred railing. Of the carvings, the most prominent is the scene of the worship of the Bodhi-tree, also symbolizing Buddha. The uppermost part of the extant relief, somewhat less

decorated, shows a frieze of garland-bearers; below is a row of *pūrṇa-kumbhas*. Further down, on the drum part of the *stūpa*, are a number of miniature reliefs showing *Jātaka* tales including the story of king Māndhātā (above, p. 27).

Two other drum-slabs (34 and 35), with an average length of less than a metre, are on view on the western wing. They bear a representation of *stūpa*, the central attraction being either the worship of *chakra* or wheel (34) or Nāga Muchalinda (35). These two slabs, along with a few other specimens, constitute a series ascribable to the third century A.D.

On the northern wing is displayed a large fragment of a slab (66), perhaps a part of the *āyaka-ṣaṭa* encasing the *āyaka*-platform. It depicts the feet of a couple, and the base of a pilaster showing *kari-makara*. The lady represented only by her feet, with heavy anklets, stands on the *makara* and may represent some prototype of a river-goddess.

#### (v) *Dome-slabs*

Both the dome-slabs (56 and 58), exhibited on the northern wing, are intact. They show, in three friezes from bottom upwards, the worship of the *stūpa*, a row of running lions and the Buddhist symbol *triratna* respectively. Each piece is separated by a band of incised decorations of flowing creepers. An interesting discovery is the remains of an iron-clamp fixed in each centre of the *triratna* of no. 58; it was perhaps intended to hold an oil-and-wick lamp on festive occasions.



(vi) *Pillars and rail-fragments*

Of this group, the most impressive piece is an ornate cross-bar (181) near show-case 2. Both its faces are carved: on the obverse is carved the lotus-medallion while the reverse shows the scene of the presentation of Buddha's son Rāhula by Yaśodharā (pl. VIII B). It is said that Buddha at the time of Great Renunciation could not have a look at his new-born child, for Yaśodharā had been sleeping with her hand resting on Rāhula. He resolved at that time to come to Kapilavastu after achieving his mission. After a lapse of time when he returned, Rāhula enquired of him about his inheritance but was eventually converted: thus he was made to succeed the spiritual kingdom, not the political power or worldly glory. In the scene carved within an outline of lotus-petals, Buddha has been represented symbolically by a throne, his *pādūkās* below the throne and a flaming pillar surmounted by the *triratna*. A crowd of monks, dressed in padded robes with stitched designs, is seen to the left of the throne, while on the right is a group of women from royal household. A princely figure is seen presenting Rāhula to Buddha. Behind him, in half-turned attitude, stands gracefully Yaśodharā pointing her hand at her son urging him to ask for his inheritance. Belonging to the mature phase of the Amaravati art, the medallion may claim to be one of the prize-pieces of the present collection.

To the north of the exhibit described above is a pillar (25) with a rectangular base carved with half-lotus, above which starts the octagonal shaft crowned by

a capital of addorsed winged lions and elephants. Below the capital, and separated from it by a chain of beads, is a plain inverted *kumbha*. The pillar, having a height of 1.96 m, bears an inscription—*āvesanino . . .* ('of artisans')—in the characters of the second century B.C. Two small pillar-fragments (37 and 38) are also displayed on either side of the statue of Buddha. Each of them has an octagonal shaft with winged lion as capital, originally crowned by a *dharma-chakra*. An upright-fragment (47), carved on one face with a half-lotus and buds, has one of its mortises still extant. It has its usual flutings.

(vii) *Miscellaneous sculptures*

Before entering the next gallery, on the wall behind the image of Buddha, may be seen a fine *śāla-bhañjikā* (485) standing in an elegant posture within a *chaitya*-window (*kūḍu*). It is not known whether the piece belonged to some shrine or to the railing around a *ṛiksha-chaitya*. The other piece (286) to its south represents a *yakshī* carved in low relief. The heavy ear-ornaments, the necklace and the hair-pendant on the forehead give distinction to this piece, ascribable to the second or the first century B.C.

## D. GALLERY-2

(i) *Contents*

The exhibits in the gallery comprise a few early reliefs of the second century B.C., inscribed pillars, copings, drum-slabs, dome-slabs, architectural and

sculptural fragments and some medieval sculptures. Apart from the sculptures in relief from Amaravati and Gummadiurru, there are two Buddha-images from Alluru and a stone-wheel from Lingarajapalli. The inscriptions in the gallery range in dates from the time of Aśoka to the twelfth century A.D.

(ii) *Sculptured fragments*

Some sculptured fragments may be seen in show-case 3 to the south of the entrance to the gallery. One such piece (142) depicts the scene of Great Departure or *Mahā-bhīṣhkramaṇa* (pl. VIII A), the sequel to Siddhārtha's decision to forego the princely pleasure and comfort for searching out a path for salvation of mankind. Also to be seen in the same show-case is a fragment (184) portraying a scene from the *Sibi-Jātaka* (above, p. 26) in which the king is shown in the pose of cutting out the flesh of his thigh with a sword. A figure of lion (492), in low relief, in front of a mutilated human figure, with a club in his hand is also exhibited here. The limestone cross-bar (150), with a height of 43 cm, depicts a railed *stūpa* fronted by a foliated Bodhi-tree, also surrounded by a rail (above, pp. 3 and 20). Inscription on it reads as *Koramuchakāna Nalarajabhasa*.

On the wall, to the right of the show-case, is displayed a *yakshi*-figure (506), and to its left is the *Mahāyānic* goddess Tārā (175). The standing *yakshi* figure (pl. IV), datable to the second century B.C., bears the influence of the central Indian tradition. A relatively greater ease of the figure, with rounded contours and

less rigid lines, makes it one of the finest specimens of the early phase of Amaravati.

(iii) *Buddha-images from Alluru*

Two Buddha-images (176 and 178) from Alluru, District Krishna, are displayed against the screen-wall facing the south. With an average height of only 1.10 m, these were possibly votive images. Unlike the Buddha-figure from Amaravati, exhibited here, they have slim and slender features, their left shoulders and forearms being draped.

(iv) *Rail-pieces and drum-slab*

Overlooking the two images of Buddha, on the southern wing, are a carved upright (21) and a dome-slab (215). The fragment of the upright, which may be attributed to the mature phase of Amaravati, was carved on both the faces. A scene of the *Champeyya-Jātaka*, which is better preserved, is on view. In the *Champeyya-Jātaka*, the Bodhisattva, who is born as a serpent-king, is taken by a snake-charmer to the king Ugrasena in Vārāṇasī. Sumanā, the wife of the serpent-king, appears in the king's court and seeks her husband's release. The snake, who amuses the king by showing various feats, feels ashamed in the presence of his wife. Released by the snake-charmer, the serpent-king joins his wife Sumanā. In the extant piece is delineated a scene in which the serpent-king is allowing himself to be caught, near an ant-hill, by a snake-charmer holding a basket in his hand.

On the southern wing, to the east of the fragment (21) containing scenes from the *Champeyya-Jātaka*, is a piece of drum-slab (215) representing, in low-relief, two pairs of devotees flanking Buddha represented symbolically by *Buddha-pāda* and *triratna*. It belongs to the earlier group of slabs encasing the drum.

Facing the entrance into the gallery is a cross-bar (64), with lotus-medallion on both the faces. It has an undefined lenticular tenon with a height of about 0.90 m, the length of the cross-bar being 1 m. A coping of the rail (269), perhaps belonging to the same phase as the cross-bar, is exhibited to the north of the latter. One side of the coping is carved with flowing garlands carried by garland-bearers, whereas the other face contains a narrative of historical interest.

(v) *Dome-slabs and friezes*

Slabs, carved with the scroll of garland and garland-bearers appear to have been used as friezes adorning dome-slabs. One such specimen (704) is exhibited near the eastern wing of the gallery; the one (705) to the north of the pilaster (200) also belongs to this category. Both the friezes show curvature necessary for veneering the curved part of the dome. Even the small slab (18), with rows of *triratna* and animals, the latter including lion, bull and horse, might have been used in the dome-part.

One big dome-slab (61) (pl. VIII A) is displayed in this gallery against the northern face of the screen-wall. The piece with curved profile stands to a height of

2.32 m and has three main compartments showing the worship of *Bodhi*-tree, *chakra* and *stūpa*, fringed on one side by fluted pilaster having lotus medallions. It has a donative Prakrit inscription, in three lines, at the base. The lowest register depicts the worship of *Bodhi*-tree by two pairs of couples and two flying *devas* on top. Separated by a row of miniature *stūpas*, the second one portrays the scene of worship of *chakra* by four male figures, two of which are seated with folded hands and the other two holding the fly-whisk. Two flying *devas* are also to be seen on either side at the top. The third, separated from the second by a row of lions, shows a *stūpa* with two worshippers and two flying *devas*. A similar slab, in the reserve collection, bears an inscription of the time of Yajña Śātakarṇi (above, p. 16).

(vi) *Sculptures in the round*

In the show-case no. 4, almost in the centre of the hall, are exhibited three standing male figures in the round (301, 305 and 484), the modelling reflecting maturity in form and workmanship. Of them, the one (301), with an extant height of 0.70m, appears to be Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi, as it carries in the right hand a bunch of lotuses. On this analogy the other two figures may be identified as Padmapāṇi.

(vii) *Carved and inscribed pillars*

Occupying the pride of place in the collection of early sculptures from Amaravati is a limestone stele (304)

with labelled bas-reliefs, of the second century B.C. Originally all the four faces were sculptured, but of these, one face is completely mutilated. A three-barred rail runs at the base all round while the sculptured part is framed by a double row of bead-and-reel border separated from each other by a plain strip.

The reliefs on the southern face contains six scenes pertaining to the last three months of the life of Buddha—from his stay at Vaiśālī (pl. III A) to the *parinirvāṇa* at Kuśinagara. On the left corner occurs the representation of the Bahuputa-*chaitya*, a favourite resort of Gautama Buddha. In these scenes *chaitya* has been represented as a tree-within-railing. The most prominent of the three trees is worshipped by two devotees, one of them with folded hands and the other holding a child in the outstretched left hand. It has an inscribed label giving the name *Bahuputa-chetiya*. To the right of the first scene is a kneeling figure with folded hands before a Buddha-*pāda*; the person has a somewhat grotesque face. The label calls it Chāpāla-*chaitya*, another favourite resort of Buddha at Vaiśālī. Over the human figure of the second scene is a vaulted structure with three pinnacles, and outside a Buddha-*pāda* under an umbrella. The inscription on the vault says 'The Lord dwells in the *kūṭāgāra*-cottage in Mahāvana at Vaiśālī.' It is said that Buddha went from Chāpāla-*chaitya* to Mahāvana-*kūṭāgāra* and from there, while bidding farewell to Vaiśālī, gazed at the city 'with an elephant's look': the actual inscription also states *nāgāpalogana*. The next scene is represented by a river with a handled bowl; beside it is an oblong seat below a tree. As the story goes, from Vaiśālī Buddha

and his disciples proceeded to Pāvā where he partook of the meals offered to him by the smṛth Chuṇḍa. It made him fall sick on his way to Kuśinagara. He sat under a tree and wanted to drink water from the adjoining streamlet. As the water was muddy, Ānanda, his favourite disciple, was hesitant but on Buddha's insistence he went to fetch water. To his surprise Ānanda saw that the streamlet had begun to flow clear. The river shown in the relief stands for this streamlet where miracle of clear water took place. Alternatively, the scene may also be interpreted as the river created by Buddha to prevent the Lichchhavis from following him on his journey to Kuśinagara. The bowl floating on the turbulent stream may be the alm-bowl which Buddha gave to the Lichchhavis as a memento. The label of this scene is missing. A fragment of the last scene, the *parinirvāṇa* at Kuśinagara, is only preserved but the label says 'The extinction of the Lord in the *śāla*-grove.'

The second face gives a few scenes from Śrāvastī (pl. III B), including the familiar scene of the purchase of Jetavana park by a wealthy merchant Anāthapiṇḍika from prince Jeta, all with appropriate labels. Anāthapiṇḍika purchased the park paying as many gold coins as would cover the ground. This very scene is portrayed in the relief here. Though no sculpture of the damaged upper part of the third phase survives, it is clear that the entire scene delineated here relates to Dhānyakaṭaka on the bank of the Krishna. It is interesting to note that the Krishna has been depicted here as if taking a turn, which is true even today. The part of the ancient city with buildings and *chaitya*-windows is also shown.

On the western wing of the gallery are exhibited, in a row, four pillars and an inscribed frieze (470). To the right of the entrance to the gallery is displayed the fragment of an Aśokan pillar (524) with typical Maurya polish. However, unlike other Aśokan pillars, which are made of Chunar sandstone, it is made out of quartzite available in the Nallamalai range. Dated to the middle of the third century B.C., it represents the earliest epigraphical record from the region (above, p. 12).

The next exhibit (54), a green limestone pillar, bears a one-line inscription belonging to the second century B.C. Extant height of the finished upper part is 73 cm, while the unfinished lower part measures 28 cm. The octagonal shaft is shown embedded as it were inside a pot (*kumbha*). Though fragmentary, the inscription may be read as *Achinaka-putana Utarasa Khalatasa cha thabho*, i.e., 'the pillar is the gift of Utara and Khalata, the sons of Achinaka'.

The next pillar-fragment (52) contains a five-line inscription in the characters of the first-second century A.D. It was recovered in 1882 from a temple where it was being used as a threshold. According to the inscription, the pillar, which has a half-lotus carved on the top, is the gift of one Chula, a disciple of Bhūtarakshita and of nun Nadā. The pillar has a curved top but is rectangular in section.

A drum-frieze (470), containing a donative inscription, is divided into four vertical compartments by a rail design in the form of two fluted uprights with two half-lotus medallions and two cross-bars, also carved with lotus medallions. The panels depict the scenes from

Buddha's birth to *parinirvāṇa*. The first scene shows nothing but water indicated by wavy lines: the water here symbolizing Anotatta lake associated with Māyā's conception. Other three represent *Bodhi*-trees symbolizing Buddha's Enlightenment, worship of *dharma-chakra*, and *stūpa* with worshippers. A *nāga*-figure is represented on the front part of the *stūpa*. Friezes of garland-bearers on top and a procession of animals below are also carved as borders.

To the north of the above is the inscription on the octagonal pillar (51) which speaks of the installation of a *dharma-chakra* at the eastern side of the *mahā-chaitya* at Dhānyakataka for the Pūrva-śāliya monks (above, p. 20). A Telugu inscription of the twelfth century is engraved on the other side of the Brāhmī inscription.

(viii) *Sculptured slabs from Gumma didurru*

A drum-frieze (D 38) followed by a drum-slab (D 18), both from Gummadiurru, are exhibited at the end of the eastern wing. On the *chaitya*-slab are depicted the worship of *dharma-chakra* and scenes from the *Māndhātu-Jātaka* (above, p. 27). There are scenes also from *Chhaddanta-Jātaka*. The story of the last-mentioned *Jātaka* runs as follows: Bodhisattva, born as a Chhaddanta, a six-tusked elephant, lives near a lake in the Himalayan region along with his two wives, Mahāsubhaddā and Chullasubhaddā. The latter pines herself to death thinking that her husband loves her co-wife more. In the next birth she is born as the queen of Vārāṇasī. She then induces the king for bringing

the tusks of Chhaddanta as an act of retaliation against her former husband. Chhaddanta gets wounded yet he helps the hunter Sonuttara to saw off his own tusk. When it is produced before the queen, she dies out of remorse at the sight of the tusks. The slab depicts the last scene showing the hunter presenting the tusks to the queen who is about to swoon.

In the frieze (D 38) is narrated, in two parts, the story of king Kappina's conversion to Buddhism. Kappina, king of Kukkuṭavati, feels the urge to follow the path of *dharmā*. So he comes with his retinue at Śrāvastī to pay homage to the Lord. After this meeting he renounces the world to become a monk. Scenes of the royal procession and his meeting with Buddha, in human form, are shown on the slab in deep relief. Each scene is separated by an amorous couple. It also bears an inscription in the Ikshvāku characters of the third century A.D.

(ix) *Wheel from Lingarajapalli*

To the west of the above-mentioned frieze is a big sandstone wheel with a diameter of 1.10 m. Recovered in fragments, it has now been pieced together. It has a circular hub with twenty-eight spokes emanating from it. The outer periphery bears decoration of *triratnas*.

(x) *Medieval sculptures*

A few sculptures of the medieval period were recovered earlier from Amaravati (above, p. 18). Some

more images of the early of Mahāyāna phase came to light in the operation carried out in 1958-59. Of these, nine pieces, all being made of green limestone, are exhibited in show-cases 5 and 6. However, the earliest one in this series is the four-handed Tārā (175) displayed near the *yakshī*-figure of the second century B.C. Another image of a two-armed Tārā is on view in show-case 5 on the northern wing. Other deities displayed in the same show-case are seated Buddha along with Padmapāṇi, Heruka (?) in a dancing pose and a two-handed god, perhaps Lokeśvara, apart from a hero-stone. In show-case 6 are on view four medieval sculptures—the lowermost piece showing a seated Buddha image in *bhūmisparśa-mudrā* flanked on either side by Padmapāṇi. Above it, are on view two Buddha images, one of them in *bhūmisparśa-mudrā*. The uppermost exhibit represents the head of Padmapāṇi, a small *stūpa* crowning a lotus-bud in his left hand.

In between the two show-cases is the standing figure of a *tīrthaṅkara* (706), in black granite, from the Amaravati region. It clearly shows that the region also came under the influence of Jainism, though limitedly, for a brief spell of time.

E. COURTYARD

In the courtyard are to be seen, as stated above (p. 24), a model of the reconstructed *mahā-chaitya*, in its most evolved stage, the conjectural restoration of a part of the railing and a few sculptured panels, all in cement, originals being in Government Museum, Madras.



On the coping of the railing is shown the descent of Bodhisattva in the form of a white elephant and the procession of eight elephants, all of them carrying relic-caskets.

A replica of a sculptured slab showing the representation of a highly-evolved *stūpa* has been kept on the western side of the model of the *mahā-chaitya*. By its side are placed two more replicas—one of them depicting the figure of a royal personage accompanied by an attendant, and the other portrays a scene from the *Māndhātu-Jātaka*.

The theme of the subjugation of the mad elephant Nālāgiri, let loose by Devadatta, the cousin of Buddha, in order to kill him has been portrayed on a long frieze, which may be seen on the northern side of the courtyard. In the same frieze are depicted the scenes from the *Chhaddanta-Jātaka* (above, p. 43) and the *Vessantara-Jātaka* (p. 27). A cross-bar shows the episode of the carrying away the bowl of Buddha by gods. A coping nearby contains the representations of Gaṇeśa and Lakshmi, these being the earliest prototypes of the later iconographic forms of these two deities.

On the eastern side of the courtyard have been exhibited sculptures engraved with scenes from the story of Śakra and celestial nymph and the *Losaka-Jātaka*. In the scene of Śakra and celestial nymph, are portrayed four gods fighting for the nymph who is then shown seated by the side of Śakra. All the four gods, struck by her beauty, want to possess her. Eventually all of them go to Śakra to settle the dispute. As Śakra himself falls in love with her, she is presented to Śakra.

The *Losaka-Jātaka* is the story of Matta-vindaka who is born of beggarly parents in a village in Vārāṇasī. Soon after his birth ill-luck overtakes the family and he is driven out of the house. He comes to Vārāṇasī and becomes the disciple of a renowned teacher. There he quarrels with his fellow-students and finally runs away. After wandering here and there he comes to a border village and marries a poor woman. She gives birth to two children. After his coming to the village the king, out of vengeance, burns down the houses seven times and the water-tank also dries up seven times. The villagers put the blame on Matta-vindaka and drives him out. In the course of his wanderings in a forest a demon kills his wife and children. Matta-vindaka runs away from the forest and then begins a series of adventures. At last he returns to his teacher who is none else than the Bodhisattva. In the sculptured slab are shown Matta-vindaka with his wife and two babies. On the sinister of the panel are depicted the village and the *chaitya-vṛiksha*. The boys have grown and their mother is shown cooking food. Also portrayed in the panel are the horse-riders and elephants sent by the king to burn down the huts. The elephant's legs are stuck in the muddy water, thereby suggesting the drying up of the water tank. These sculptures belong to circa second century A.D.

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# SITE PLAN, AMARAVATI, DIST. GUNTUR (A.P.)

