

## 11. MEANING IN STONE

The Indian people have chiselled their religion and history in stone. They had paid little regard to history, considering it as most evanescent, and they had, therefore, concentrated on the enduring fable as its substitute. History has wrought its revenge by inscribing its spirit on stone, the most lasting of materials. In like manner, their religion, as it soared higher, become more ethereal and an emptiness of contemplation. The more of nothing their religious contemplation turned into, the more did it tend to condense itself into one of the heaviest of materials, which is stone. No other people has as well turned into beautiful stone the history of its spirit as much as the spirit of its history. At one end is the nothingness of history and religious contemplation and at the other, such breathtaking and almost everlasting beauty of religious as also historical imagery.

Whatever Buddha and Mahavir may have looked like, the sculptor, who started working on them more than three hundred years after their death, has made their statues alive with the essence of their teaching. Of these statues, there are manifold poses, those of contemplation, of compassion, the gift unto others of fearlessness, of victory over passions and many others. The Indian sculptor was not tied down to a single pose such as Christ on the cross. What the European painter possessed but the European sculptor did not, a complete freedom to present his god in any manner he liked, was owned by the Indian sculptor. And yet, behind all this variety, was a single spirit or style which any one sculptor no matter how great could hardly have evolved and which generations must have achieved through continued work, so that a Buddha and a Mahavir can rarely be mistaken for each other.

Buddha is relaxed. Mahavir is taut. Both show that they have achieved victory, the greatest that is open to man. Buddha is a relaxed victor. Mahavir is a tense victor. What tomes of the masters' own teachings and the theological dissertations thereafter have presumably aimed at but been unable to bring out so briefly and clearly has been caught by the sculptor in the unique bodily existence of the teacher.

The great Buddha at Sarnath, Mathura, Aurangabad and also at Nalanda, whom people's worship is still greasing and colouring with their love's offerings, not to talk of the equally great Buddhas at Ajanta and Ellora and elsewhere of one's unique choice, are all so various and yet one, in that they are each the relaxed victor.

Mahavir's greatest statue, not exactly his but that of another in his line of faith, still stands at Shravanbelgola, the world's biggest monolith, in all its tense victory. It awes. It almost frightens. It seems to say that victory over the self is never finally achieved; one can never let go the bull after one has mastered it. The Jain faith and its rigours, particularly those of its monks, are a testimony to its tense and eternal vigilance. Not so the Buddha. He holds out the promise that we can take it easy after we have won. The issue here is not, who is right, for both faiths degenerated, nor even who is more right than the other, for Buddha appears to be more humanly right, while Mahavir more logically right. The point is that the sculptor has expressed their teachings so nobly through their figure and face.

I am reminded of the great monoliths that America has made of four of its statesmen. I asked my pilot to fly past them a second time, so that, with luck I could catch their essence. They are probably better statues, in a realistic sense, worthy successors of the Greek and Roman tradition. I do not know if they have a message to give other than to recall beautifully a noble story, which indeed is a great message in itself. They are only heads, but, even if they had their bodies attached to them. They could at best evoke the magic that Lincoln or

Washington was just stepping out. It is possible that I did not fully catch their meanings, for great things do not reveal their secrets to those who are in a hurry. But I liked them, more than I like those of my own cultural complex, in their genius for beauty and superb craftsmanship. Indian statues do not probably possess such beauty or craftsmanship. But they are different. They portray not so much the subject as his life and its meaning, no single mood not event nor even the totality of moods but that vaporous something on which all else stood, which gave the subject and now his statue being, whose condensation in stone drives the spectator to conversion or philandering.

It would be astonishing if the two sects of Buddhism and Jainism had so overwhelmed the sculptor that he had no taste left for the main bulk of the Hindu faith. Siva has aroused his passion more than any other. If Buddha is relaxed and Mahavir taut, Siva of the tranquil action has presented the sculptor richer possibilities of art as unto the philosopher a more complex vein of thought. When Siva sits with his left arm around Parvati and his hand under her breast and Parvati is herself seated on his left thigh, whether in Ellora of the seventh century and after or Khajuraho of the twelfth century and after, the sculptor shows their limbs in a state of complete contentment. Time seems to stand still. There is no urge to command its passage. The moment is the eternity. The present does not yearn to be followed by a future, as it does not seem to be weighted by a past. The immediate act is complete in itself and is its own justification. It is a tranquil act, the act of an unmoved mover. Whether such a theory of immediacy is at all possible to man in his own actions, the sculptor's myth of Siva beckons him to it. Even if he may not completely cease to yearn for the next moment he may engross himself in the present as nearly wholly as possible and seek to dig out of it its maximum treasures.

The non-dimensional myth of Siva permits the sculptor to condense Hindu religious contemplation at its best and

richest. Of Siva with three heads, Dhyana, that is, contemplation, Rudra, that is, creative destruction, Lasya, that is, relaxed happiness the richest images have been chiselled at Dharapuri of eighth century and Chittaur of the ninth as well as the sixteenth centuries. No mode has been left unexplored. Siva dances the great Tandav in Tanjai, tranquil in his action and active in his tranquillity. What reason may not grasp, the laying together of lamb with lion, is made possible through the contemplation of an image, although for an instant when all else has proved to be not fully convincing, the Ardhnarishwar, the God who is half female, half male, half Parvati and half Siva composes all differences into a supreme and active harmony.

Vishnu has not moved the sculptor as deeply or variously as Siva has, nonetheless, he is there in his distinct style. I have always felt that Vishnu is hiding something within the folds of his garments, indeed, a benign concealment so as to limit claims and be universally protective. Vishnu is also the completely relaxed, who has gone beyond the frontiers of victory and defeat and who, in his eternal sleep, regulates a merciful order. But the Udaigiri Vishnu I have liked most, where he becomes a boar in order to rescue a maiden than whom there is none more comely. Earth herself, whose robes are the seas and breasts mountains, so says a hymn, and who is the wife of Vishnu. It is somewhat surprising that the sculptor has not been moved by Ram at all and Krishna very little, unless a lot of the past has been destroyed or lies buried. The boy Krishna of the living temple of Dwaraka is very pert, complete in all moods and satisfying unless of course the changing devotion of an eight-time daily worship and not the image does the trick.

While I searched for beauty in these stones, the spirit of Indian history seemed increasingly and hauntingly resident there. Any old stones or bricks or metals, specially with inscriptions, are history, so are the pillars of the Colosseum of Roma and the pyramids or the Sphinx of Kahira and its

museum. But they are all direct history.

Furthermore, they are collected in a few central places and museums. They are so to say illustrations of a text found elsewhere. India also boasts of such stones and metals, particularly in the shape of the seven or eight stage Delhi. All these seven Delhis lie in a compact area, their style and their period is neatly ordered, a few easily defined features mark off one epoch from another, but most of it is alike, there are four objects of outstanding beauty, but rather recent history, and all of it is so to say a series of lantern slides on a lecture one had heard before, although these illustrative aids do produce an impression of their own, of man's evanescence and Indian's impotence in the past thousand years. Some destiny has kept me away from Athena, to the point of cancelled flights. I thought I had prepared myself in Greek lore at least so as to deserve seeing Athena, but evidently destiny has not considered this preparation adequate. I imagine, however, that the ruins of Athena are an illustration of Athenian and Greek history. Not so with the real ruins of India. India's history is an illustration of these ruins.

Chronicles in other lands are profuser than their ruins and ancient art. Ancient art and ruins of India are perhaps profuser than its chronicles. It may also be that the effort of the Indian artists to liberate themselves from evanescent history, to express themselves in the more enduring language of religion woman's beauty and the frolic of all things has made them still greater vehicle history. Through them talks not the record of history, but its spirit, which assumes differing forms as the epochs change. The trouble with Indian art and ruins is that they are too many and, if emeralds were as plentiful as water, their value would be similar. What an entire country like Italy or Egypt possesses by way of sculptural art is held in a single complex like Khajuraho, Bhuvaneshvar, Konark or the Dharwar region not to talk of Ajanta-Ellora or Chittaur.

India is after all a big country and there are over sixty such complexes. With the rest of the world on one side and India on

the other of man's sculptural and architectural past, I do not know which way the balance would tip. It is true that these ruins are not on the usual beat of the tourist; most of them, not even near the larger towns. Mahabalipuram is about forty miles away from Madras, and so is Dharapuri about an hour's sea-run from Bombay. Khajuraho, Ajanta and Konark are each around forty miles away from the nearest railway station. This is as it ought to be. The spirit of India's history is a delicate and oftbruised beauty, she hides in desolate or distant places away from incidental eyes.

I have seen her at Bhojpuri, around thirty miles from Bhopal, a place not yet mentioned in textbooks of art or history, where she is shrunk and delicately beautiful after the knell had sounded at Somnath and probably also at Taraori. She is vainly trying to become solid and indestructible. The pillars and the Lingam of Siva temple, believed to be a miniature replica of western Somnath in central India, are uniquely massive. I have seen her at Chittaur, battling with her bare nails and teeth, foolish woman, but never giving in, that one of proud beauty. At Somnath and Mathura, she is distraught, in tatters, blood oozing out of all her limbs and preparing to run away. Her unfading beauty impels her lovers to everlasting devotion, but is often unable to awaken them to wise bravery.

Hardly has she rested in Ajmer or Warangal, where she heals her wounds, she receives deep scars again. She was not always so ill-protected; her lovers were as wise and brave as they were passionate in more ancient times. At Mahabalipuram, Ajanta-Ellora, Halebid and Kalagumalai, she looks a chaste virgin of shapely limbs, not with the rural innocence of Sanchi, after her urbanised lovers have given her a thorough training in dance and gymnastics and taught her to look eternally virginal even while she loves. She is exuberant and accentuated in her limbs and styles, perhaps a last breath-taking fling at beauty, at Konark and Khajuraho.

I have sought her out in all her moods of joy and distress, a

weak and unwise lover begotten out of ancestors, who were themselves very weak and unwise, when I sat on the top flight of the tower of Fatehpur-Sikri, which a foreign conqueror trying to turn native built, so that his Muslim wife could see the glory of the moon on such days and his Hindu wife on such other days as their faiths demanded. Behind me lay this, perhaps, the most beautiful product of Indo-saracenic art, the Moghul township of Sikri, the pretty native progeny of a rape, to which our ancestors were party and whose result are we ourselves, and in front lay the plains of Kanva where the keepers of the Indian spirit were somewhat brave but very unwise and who sang praises of the wounds they received in their defeat. I who do not cry almost shed a tear.

Sanchi, Ajanta-Ellora, Nalanda and Chittaur are four great complexes of art and ruins and the longevity of their institutions is amazing. Each one of them lived for the long period of around 900 years and Nalanda is perhaps longer. There are longer-lived objects like cities all over the world and the oldest of them, Banaras, we have in our midst. A city, however, is not a single institution. It is an assembly of manifold institutions. Some of which may be dying precisely at the moment when others are freshly born.

Sanchi was born as a place of worship in the third century before the Christian era and, no matter what changes or adjustments of faith and style took place, continued as such, with increasing monasteries and perhaps scholarship, over a period of 900 years. Its centre is, as it was perhaps always, the great Stupa of massive simplicity, whose ambulatory balustrades curve stone as though it were clay. The upper ambulatory is also a fine retreat, Ajanta-Ellora started a little later and finished up a little later. When I was young, I had called them the history of the Indian mind in stone. Buddha, Mahavir and Siva have lived here cheek by jowl, in colours and in stone, one age after another, and also simultaneously, apparently without quarrelling. I have visited the famous young lady of unsurpassable sophistication on the outside of

the sixteenth cave in Ajanta over half a dozen times and of course, Avalokiteshwar Padmapani, lotus-bearing Buddha and few other damsels of private choice, and, before I have done with this existence, I hope to be able to do so that many times more.

Kailas of Ellora, that massif bigger and more intricate, need I say anything of its rich beauty, than the Dom at Koln or Notre Dame, has started impressing me again, as it did when I first saw it. The last two times I saw it from the top, when I have been dividing my love between the circling lions on the lower roof and the circling bulls on the higher, with a slight preference for the latter, and the victory tower looks nobler from the height. Being slow to understand great things of beauty and needing to see them often, I intend to go back again to detail after I am saturated with the total view.

The University of Nalanda, which began about the first century after Christ and lasted until the thirteenth, is a colossus, which makes one enquire why it did not continue longer and sad at the dust of decay that falls on India's institutions not because of voluntary desertion but outside pressures. Chittaur, starting in the sixth century and lasting into the sixteenth, is at once the glory and the shame of mediaeval India. Chittaur never accepted defeat, but it was almost always defeated; it was brave but not wise against foes of greater social cohesion and organisation. Its temples to Sun and Siva, the Samadhiishwar, whose sculptures derive from the age of chaste than accentuated beauty, were built earlier, than was hitherto imagined, one probably in the eighth and the other around the eleventh.

Its Vijaya-Stambha, victory tower, is its fatal charm, built in the fifteenth century, sandwiched between an earlier and a later century of defeat, so as to spread the illusion of victory through the proclamation of beauty.

This tower is as wide at the top as it is at the base, about a hundred feet tall, littered with rich sculptures and jutting balconies on the fourth or the fifth storey, which make it look

unreal for a tall tower cannot be wide like a woman at the bust. The Kutub Minar of Delhi built or remodelled in the thirteenth century is a taller tower, has a stately grace of simple lines and, like the verses of the Quran inscribed on it, possesses an uncomplex loveliness and power. The answer to the Chittaur tower is made up to a point by the Buland Darwaza, the great gate of Sikri, built in the sixteenth century to commemorate the humbling precisely of the Chittaur rulers, a triumphal arch of magnificent beauty, which is however indicating the desolation and impotence soon to come and which, as a token of fighting the curse that descends early on all ruling classes of this country, it might be worthwhile to transplant in Delhi.

The little tower at Daulatabad has always awakened in me a regretful smirk, that a high aim and a small endeavour very naturally does, for Daulatabad was for a few bloody days the capital of India. The pillar of Heliodoros near Bhilsa or Vidisha of former times causes a slight revulsion, for why should it receive unflinching mention in all books, except that the story of India is more often than any other the story of the foreigner and the native has frequently been an elegant eunuch or a rustic fool.

As a girdle of power and good humour around the country, the Asokan pillar built in the third century before Christ in far places like Sanchi but more specially in the northern domains of Lumbini, Kushinagar, Loria and Vaishali speak of a simple and reassured beauty whether with the lion capital or the bull capital, but why should power ever have made this vulgar and futile exhibition of driving stone or iron columns into soft and unfirm soil.

Between history and art, there is in India a deep alliance, where history goes, there art proceeds or follows. Whenever there is premonition of impending dissolution consequent upon stagnation and decay or actual disintegration caused by violent defeat, the artist prepares to wander. Art is the herald of history in this country, or its chronicler and seal-keeper.

Direct chronicles are easy to read. The Indian historian of the past fifteen centuries was probably a little too ashamed of his history to preserve it directly. It has, therefore, been preserved through indirect chronicles, where the spirit of history calls unto the spirit of art and both murmur tender secrets to each other. Without the sympathy that binds all pain, these secrets cannot be deciphered.

It has struck me now for a long number of years that a chart of Indian art and monuments prepared according to latitude and longitude would reveal many secrets. I have finally done it. If I had been better versed in the exact dating of each monument as well as in a position to fix more correctly its location, my conclusions would have had greater verification. In particular, I would like the dating to be done century-wise as also period-wise, for instance, the period of sophisticatedly chaste art that extends from the sixth to the tenth century of the Christian era. But this rough and first chart is presumably more enlightening in respect of my hypothesis about the migrations of Indian artists, both outward and inward, in synchrony with the vicissitudes of political fortunes.

All India is one, more one than foolish history would let a scholar imagine in respect of migrations of the Indian artist, who has covered the whole country in his leaps, without any trace of local patriotism, ever since the time of the most rugged sculptural and architectural evidence. Mahabalipuram in the far south and Dharwar as well, and Ajanta-Ellora or Sanchi in the middle and Mathura and Saranath of that period are impossible to distinguish in the sculptural styles of the sophisticatedly chaste sixth and seventh centuries. I wish to linger a while over Mahabalipuram. When I first saw this rock-cut relief, my heart felt like leaping out towards its milk-maids, calf and deer, as they seemed to be leaping towards me. If ever there was a wonder, I beheld it. The second time I saw it, the disappointment was so cruel that I ruminated some years on what was right and what was wrong, before I saw it a third time to receive the truth. I believe that there is an almost

imperceptible rise on the groin of a maiden, who is turning her posture, not a fold or a crease that can be seen anywhere, but a bare impression of a rise, and how much these sculptors must have loved their maidens. The first time I saw them was in the twilight, when day meets night, and the second time in full glare of a strong sun.

I have seen Ganga, the river of our love, in strong flood and it was at the same time silvery white under the sun and muddy yellow in the shade. The question as to which was the true colour has no meaning, for both colours are part of the truth and looked fine to me. The time and the angle at which one sees is part of seeing and it is only with luck and age that one can see a loved person or thing fully, when the appearance is dull or pocked or, to the uninitiated, angrily angular or when it glistens like ebony or ivory. With stone maidens as with living persons, beauty like love, its Siamese twin, grows.

By the time I saw the Mahabalipuram reliefs for the third time, their beauty had grown and so had my love for them, almost as deep, I hope, as their creators. But I have strayed far from my point, that these sculptures belong to a single style. In fact, my straying is an indirect proof, for these Mahabalipuram maidens and deer belong to the same family as Saranath's, only a little more arresting. Except for the Gandhara sculptures in the small space of the north-west and for a short while only, for they were soon absorbed, the art of India knows only one style, the Indian style and regional variations are only embellishments.

The scholar would perhaps mildly protest that I have cleverly selected my material and that all the pieces belong to what he calls the Aryan style. I will, therefore, go hundred and fifty miles further south to Tanjai or three hundred miles distant to Kalagumalai. Seeing the Tanjai bronzes of the eleventh century and the Nalanda ones of an earlier period, I saw no difference as would justify their being called Aryan or Dravidian. What appeared here involved was a migration, perhaps not once but twice, once from the Tanjai region to

Nalanda and back when the university started decaying. The Kalagumalai temples near the land's end are a greater demolition of the dividing nomenclature.

Three Surasundaris, divine beauties, come suddenly to my mind at Mathura of the fifth century, at Khajuraho of the twelfth and Kalagumalai of the ninth. They are sisters of a single style. Why does no one write an account of migrations of these Surasundaris in time and space, a history as much of these divine beauties as of the sculptors and their people who loved them, and I hope that the historian would tarry in his indecisions but would nevertheless look oftener at the Kalagumalai ones.

Again, why does no one write a history of Ganga on the crocodile and Jamuna on the tortoise, these two named beauties of Indian art. Goddesses and unnamed beauties there may be as are more entrancing, but, among women whose names and stories are known, these two have not been surpassed. At Ellora of the seventh or eighth century, at Chittaur of the ninth and Khajuraho of the twelfth, I have met them in all their glory, but the story is a continuous one. The somewhat matronly Ganga and the somewhat poignant Jamuna keep on accentuating their original mould, but these two sisters, whoever appear in company, perplex the beholder with the unchanging problem.

What is Aryan and what is Dravidian? The scholar would again point to the little decorative bulbous domes on the roof of western temples and flat or Vimana, airplane, roofs of the southern temples and the pitcher of the northern ones and use dividing names for these minor differences of detail. They are, at their sharpest, small expressions of change of locality and, if anything distinguishes them one from another, it is the artistic migration in time and space alongside of the wanderings of the spirits of the land.

European and missionary scholarship, to conceal its ignorance or to achieve a full purpose, used a divisive terminology for India's art. Greece and Rome of the classical period and

next-door neighbours and, similarly, France and Germany of the Gothic period differ far more in their art than any two ruins of India but nobody ever called them by a divisive nomenclature. Scholarship is conservative and repetitive and a great tragedy of mankind is the perpetuation by the native of the scholarship of the imperialist.

If India's scholarship in art and history were devoted and painstaking it would have tried long to peer into the secrets that parallels and longitudes may conceal, indeed, into the secret of migration but also apart from it. Like veins and seams in coal and gold mines, the parallels 13 and 17/18 and 20 and 25 and 27 and the longitudes 73 and 75/76 and 78/79 and 81/82 are the richest in India's art. I would pick out the 25th parallel as an exploratory illustration of my hypothesis. It is in this parallel of the Aravalis and the Vindhya that India's spirit has its could-not-care-less go at beauty. Konark and perhaps also Warangal are the only other examples of this exuberance.

Many explanations have been offered for this abandon and the religious rites of the Tantra may indeed be a minor motive behind some of it. The Delwara, Chittaur and Warangal temples are just as exuberant as any, but there the sexual exuberance of Khajuraho and Konark is lacking. To this sexual exuberance there might also be a sensual alongside of a religious explanation. The motif of embrace, goes back to the earliest origins of Indian art, for Indian sculptors and sages were well aware that beauty is allied to sexuality and the most beautiful thing on earth at least to the human male is woman's body. In the light embraces of various types, curves of beauty are already manifest, but there is no possible posture or convulsion of woman's body that the love acts of Khajuraho and Konark do not reveal. This may well have been an ultimate search for beauty.

Let it also not be forgotten that, after all this beauty and hectic activity of hunt or music or everyday life on the exterior of these temples, reflected in a subdued fashion also on the interior walls, there is total peace in the inner-most sanctum

and the image of the sun-god is the last word in chaste and straight lines and Siva is of course an abstracted symbol. I may mention in passing that, while there is nothing on earth like Khajuraho for accentuated beauty of woman's body, I have climbed once again, and this time against medical advice, to those music maidens of Konark softly to move my hands over their eyes and lips and curvaceous beauty and to discover that they are some vibrantly celestial forms frozen into stone. What is the true explanation for this exuberance between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries?

The bell had tolled at Somnath at the end of the tenth century, and it must have been heard all over the land. The death-knell was to sound two centuries later at Taraori. Image-breakers and strangers to accustomed ways of life were coming with force and successfully. Like frightened men in need of reassurance about their courage and destiny, our ancestors of the two intervening centuries between Somnath and Taraori must have lived in a state of premonition. They abandoned themselves to pursuits of outward beauty and inward peace with the hope that their exuberance would ward off evil.

When the premonition had become a certainty after Taraori, the last great effort at cocky vigour in the habitual ways took place at Konark and Warangal. The habit of reading history backwards from the viewpoint of the winner of the race distorts the vision, for the loser's last great efforts at Dilwara, Chittaur, Khajuraho, Konark and Warangal are just as much history, if not more, in time as well as in space. Some robber-baron of Datia, also on the 25th parallel, built an extraordinary palace called the finest specimen of India's architecture by a foreign critic, entirely in the shape of the Swastika, the Hindu cross, around the seventeenth century, which like some unusual achievement of children's art evokes a smile.

The dispersal of the Indian artist are plain enough on a deductive reading of the chart. What is not available in evidence can be imagined through the workings of the chart's logic. The dispersal from Somnath proceeded almost certainly

towards Dilwara and Chittaur, four parallels to the north, which would make it around 280 miles and one or two longitudes to the east, between round fifty and hundred miles. To the hypothesis that it could have proceeded towards Halebid and Belur, there are obvious and grave objections. The Halebid and Belur temples are a continuation into the eleventh century of the sophisticatedly chaste forms of Mahabalipuram, Ajanta-Ellora, Sanchi Mathura and Aihole, as though no ghastly experience of Somnath had befallen the artist. In fact Aihole is so near Halebid and both belong to the Dharwar region, that a simple and placid continuation may here be involved. Halebid and Belur are pretty and small, smaller they certainly are than the achievements of the sixth and seventh centuries and after, they are also prettier, at least, daintier.

One must not imagine that the entire flock disperses. Change to other trades, conversion to the conqueror's tastes, physical extermination may all have taken place. What also took place was the dispersal of some leading artists, with or without the entire body of their caste or clan, who gave the country unity in art, precisely when it disintegrated into politics.

One such dispersal from Kausambi, Sarnath and Pataliputra to Amravati and Vijayapuri, both on the Krishna, is plainly indicated. Some dispersals may also have taken place because of the prospect of bettering chances, as, for instance, the moving out from Vijayapuri to Bhuvaneshwar.

I have been unfortunate enough not to see the holies of very ancient art and architecture, for the north-west was a little forbidding to me in my youth, probably because most invaders came that way. My imagination is so dull that what I do not see does not rouse my passion nor full understanding. But Taxila, Harappa and Mohanjodaro are the unsurpassed ruins of India, although they are now administratively separated and the first two fall on the seventy-third longitude, which is the second most important seam for the country's art, longitudinally

speaking, the first being around the seventy fifth, which includes Chittaur, Ajanta-Ellora and the Dharwar region.

One reason why this, perhaps, the most ancient country of the world, is comparatively poor in ruins that go back to three thousand years and more is the Ganga-Jamuna plains. The Great Time resides here, although his temple is built on the Malwa plateau of Ujjain, where India's capital was also once housed. He destroys everything or buries it deep out of sight. North of the Jamuna and the Ganga nothing exists, at least on the surface, but it is here that our remotest ancestors likely to have left ruins of art lived. I have looked at some hopeful looking mounds in Ayodhya.

Among the latest excavations is Kausambi, familiar to lore of Buddhism as also romance, and parts of its unearthed fortifications, which appear to have been more gigantic than any, have been dated to a thousand years before Buddha, that is, over 3,500 years ago. If plain stone, which however glistens like brown jade or light ebony, were treated as part of history, which again is more myth than otherwise, Phatikshila, on the river Mandakini, is the rock on which Ram sat with Sita and Lakshman and wove a garland for her. The earliest creation of man that I have seen in our country is however Mirzapur cave drawings, which go back to over 10,000 years ago.

I have not written of drawings and paintings, except a little in connection with the Ajanta caves. Not distant from these, there were other caves in Bagh, where paintings of dance and music and gay abandon reached a higher excellence, as was only befitting of the Malwa plateau. Vandalism of the rustic fool has destroyed these paintings beyond repair. Nevertheless, India's painting is not of such high order as her architecture and sculpture, certainly not at the top of the world. One reason may be that India fell into decay and disintegration, precisely when the world started painting in a great way, and is but now coming out of that condition. My own arbitrary preference for the three-dimensional art in comparison to the two-dimensional painting may be another reason. I have

sometimes tried to espy through trees and distance and cast as many glances as possible at the 'Sikhara' of a dead temple, when the time to part came, as a young man would at his sweetheart. The dainty Moghul and Rajput paintings and their miniatures are of course interesting. Only once was I deeply moved by one of them, which was the bare and stark lines of a woman coming out of the bath, and it stood in my room, where I was staying unidentified and therefore mostly indoors, but I cannot say to which period it belonged.

Vandalism has indeed destroyed much, but it has also prevented the creation of that which the ages cherish. Aside from vandalism of the iconoclast, there is that of time and weather and the native fool. After a while, the iconoclast has gone native and built well, some of which have already been indicated and belong to the masterpieces of the country. I should like to mention in addition the paradise of pleasure and pavilions on the Mandav fort and the Tajmahal of Agra, out of deference as much to popular taste as its intrinsic beauty.

Three current vandalisms, I must also identify. First, India's ruins and sites of ancient art are being used as hoardings to advertise current achievements of education or organisation, for the hurrying foreigner gathers there in large numbers, but it must not be forgotten that some, both native and foreign, also go who seek communion with a vanished age. Secondly, many ruins and much ancient art, such as an exquisite temple of the eighteenth century in Banaras, to which accident took me recently and practically all of Somnath have not been taken care of, perhaps because of some squeamish feelings or lack of money. The hopeful looking mound of Ayodhya has been mentioned, and there is another at Katara Kesavdeo in Mathura, the city which was sacked eighteen times and probably holds the world's record. On Katara Kesavdeo stands a Muslim Idgah and a freshly built Krishna temple, both vandalisms, one of power and the other of ignorance, when the right thing to do would be to dig out the treasures of ancient art that are probably lying buried.

Thirdly, the advent of freedom and accumulation of individual wealth have given rise to much private temple-building also with its repetitive and imitation sculptures. Some public monuments are just as much fruits of hurry and bad taste. Rustic fools and elegant eunuchs have in the past been unable to save what our ancestors created; they are also unable to create anew. To create is to live in freedom and with vigour.

