

# The Powers of Art

## Patronage in Indian Culture

Edited by  
Barbara Stoler Miller

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## CHAPTER 2

# The Collective and Popular Basis of Early Buddhist Patronage: Sacred Monuments, 100 BC–AD 250

VIDYA DEHEJIA

The history of the art of India abounds in patrons who were great monarchs like Rajaraja Chola, Yasovarman Chandella, Lalitaditya of Kashmir, Bhoja of Dhara, all of whom constructed entire monumental structures to collect both fame and religious merit for themselves. In a world of gold coins and glittering courts, aristocracy and courtly romance, the patron never renounced his ego or forsook his identity. By contrast, the early Buddhist period brings us in contact with the mundane world of the housewife and householder, fisherman and gardener, merchant and banker. The theme I shall explore in this chapter is collective and popular patronage, in the century immediately before and after Christ, when Buddhist sacred monuments were constructed on a hitherto unprecedented scale. These monuments and the circumstances that led to their construction are specially significant because, for the very first time in India's artistic history, the age-old practice of working in brick and plaster, wood and bamboo was abandoned, and monuments were erected in the permanent and lasting medium of stone. This major innovation was not, as one might have expected, the result of any royal decree. Instead we discover that the Buddhist stupas of the century before Christ and the early Buddhist cave monasteries were constructed through the generosity of the common man, by a process of collective donation that is attested to by masses of inscripational material.

The early Buddhist period in India abounds in instances in which gifts were made of single railing pillars, cross-bars and paving slabs for stupas; similarly individual cells in residential caves and sculptures in a cave veranda were considered sufficient in themselves to bring religious merit to the donor. Such gifts, which frequently came from a blacksmith, an ironmonger or a jeweller, are referred to in inscriptions as *dāna* or gift, and in several instances as *deya dhamma* or a donation for the sake of acquiring merit. Such merit, of course, would serve the donor not merely in this birth, but also in his future rebirth upon this earth. Between 100 BC and AD 100, and in fact up to AD 250, it would appear that sacred monuments were erected through voluntary contributions from simple townsfolk who held no high office, nor had any elevated social status.

In this chapter, I propose to briefly highlight three sets of early Buddhist monuments which were constructed on such collective bases through numerous small individual contributions—the Sanchi stupa, the monastic rock-cut chapel at Karle, and the structural monasteries of Mathura. While discussing the art-historical problems involved in collective patronage, it is inevitable that one should be drawn into a consideration of the social basis and economic milieu of this early art. In conclusion I would like to speculate on possible reasons for the non-recurrence of a similar situation, on any appreciable scale, in the entire later history of Indian art.

To demonstrate on what a major scale the idea of collective patronage existed in early Buddhist art, we may look first at the rebuilding in stone of the Buddhist stupa at Sanchi in the century before Christ. The original Sanchi stupa was erected around 250 BC by the Emperor Asoka; the solid earthen mound was encased with burnt bricks and probably surrounded by a wooden railing. For over 2000 years, builders and artists in India had worked in the perishable mediums of brick and wood; in the century before Christ, however, the momentous decision was taken to work, on an extensive scale, in the permanent medium of stone. With this decision, a number of Asokan brick stupas were encased with stone slabs and their wooden enclosures were replaced with stone railings and gateways. At Sanchi the Asokan stupa was enlarged to twice its original size (120 feet in diameter) and then covered with hammer-dressed stones cut from the Sanchi hill. The broad circumambulatory path was paved with immense single slabs of stone 9 ft. 6 ins. long, which stretched across the entire passage. This passage was enclosed by a massive stone railing, with pillars 8 ft. 4 ins. high, connected by three cross-bars, and topped with a coping 2 ft. 3 ins. broad. At a height of 15 ft. from the ground was added a second circumambulatory path with a stone railing of smaller dimensions. Access to this upper path was from two sets of balustraded steps at the southern entrance. At the same time, a small *harmika* railing was laid at the top of the stupa, with a stone mast and stone parasols marking the spot deep within the mound where the relic casket lay. Finally, four elaborately sculpted stone gateways were added to the monument. This ambitious project, in which stone was used for the first time on a really large scale, was not the result of the patronage of royalty or the nobility. On the contrary, the monument was raised through numerous small donations from a multitude of persons of diverse vocations and from various towns.

No less than 631 donative inscriptions, representing some thousand individual patrons, are to be found at Sanchi; each is engraved on the particular paving stone, cross-bar, railing pillar, coping or piece of sculpture gifted by the donor.<sup>1</sup> Only three of these more than 600 inscriptions mention royalty; one speaks of the gift of a royal scribe (*rājalipikāra*) of an unspecified ruler, the second records the gift of the foreman of the artisans (*āvesanin*) of King Sri Satakarni (of the Satavahana kingdom), and the third speaks of a gift of queen Vakula of an unidentified dynasty. The largest single group of donors, two



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hundred in all, were monks (*bhikkhu*) and nuns (*bhikkhuni*), and their gifts of cross-bars, railing pillars, and pavement slabs frequently mention the town from which they hailed. Such individual gifts indicate that it was not necessary to renounce all one's wealth upon entering the brotherhood of monks as one might have assumed; apparently money could be retained for use in worthy purposes. Several other inscriptions record gifts from persons who had clearly risen high within the brotherhood. We have, for instance, a cross-bar from the monk Devagiri who was versed in the Five Nikayas (*pañcanekāyikās*), a balustrade piece from a Reciter of the texts (*bhānaka*), gifts from those titled Noble Master (*aya*), Venerable (*thēra*), and Saint (*sapurisa*). In addition, an entire series of inscriptions speak of gifts from the pupils of specific teachers, while another group of donations came from those who referred to themselves as lay worshippers (*upāsakas* and *upāsikās*).

The remaining inscriptions, numbering around 300, record donations from diverse donors, among whom the largest single group are the ordinary householder (*gahapati*) and the housewife (*ghārini*). Nineteen donations are from bankers (*sethi*) and five from merchants (*vāṇija*), while other occupations include troopers (*asavārika*), weavers (*sotika*), cloak-sellers (*pāvārika*), writers (*lekhaika*), and those connected with the building craft including surveyors (*rajuka*), artisans (*kamika*) and stone masons (*vaḍhaki*). Gifts were often made jointly by the members of a family, a sect or a guild. Thus a rail pillar was donated by all the relatives of Thera Nagila, while several gifts came from the Tapasiyas or Vakiliyas or Dharmakas of Ujjain. A gift of a single railing pillar came from the Buddhist assembly (*Bodha-gothi*) of the town of Dharmavardhana, while another such gift came from the assembly (*gothi*) of the Barulamisas of Vidisa.

A study of the inscriptions *in situ* reveals that a number of successive pavement slabs or a series of consecutive pieces of the railing were usually gifted by members of the same family, or by persons from the same town. One instance, among many such, is evidenced by the records inscribed on five adjoining cross-bars; three are gifts of the householder Patithiya from Tubavana (Tumain in Gwalior state), a fourth cross-bar was the gift of Patithiya's daughter-in-law, while the fifth was a gift from Patithiya's brother's wife. Similarly, an entire series of slabs paving the *pradakṣina patha* were donated by the residents of Nadinagara, and a second more extensive set by inhabitants of Kurara. Many of the towns mentioned in the Sanchi inscriptions remain unidentified, including Kurara which produced the largest number of donors and was presumably located somewhere in the vicinity. The town of Ujjain produced the next largest group of donors, while gifts came from as far distant as Abu (Aboda) and Pushkara (Pokhra) in Rajasthan, and from Paithan (Patithana) in Maharashtra. While the occupations of donors frequently remain unspecified, their home town is always stated.

One can but speculate on the actual process by which the Sanchi stupa was raised. It would appear that when the community of monks at Kākānava (the ancient name for Sanchi) decided to enlarge their stupa, face it with stone and



further enhance its surroundings by adding stone railings, sculptured gateways and a stone-pillared assembly hall (temple 40),<sup>2</sup> one of their most important tasks was fund-raising. Monks presumably travelled to numerous towns and villages collecting subscriptions. When the inhabitants of a particular township, for instance Nadinagara or Madhuvana, gave money for a series of coping stones or for slabs to pave the *pradaksina patha*, the Construction Supervisor ensured that their names were engraved on their gifts. There was, however, no random cutting of stones, and donors could not gift finished pieces from their local workshop. Rather, it was necessary to adhere to the clear-cut plan of the Sanchi architect. All paving stones were cut from the purplish-grey sandstone of the Sanchi hill itself; this stone which was easy to hammer-dress and had the durability required for the purpose, was however brittle and difficult to chisel. For the pillars, cross-bars and coping stones of the various railings, which required more precise cutting, the masons used the greyish-white sandstone from the neighbouring Nagouri hill, which was of softer texture and more tractable to the chisel. Considering the nature of the procedure involved in collective subscription, one may assume that a period of ten to fifteen years was required for the completion of the various railings and the *pradaksina patha*. It is only logical, in such circumstances, to assume that the gateways would have comprised the final phase of work. While the railings involved the employment of stone masons alone, the gateways, for which skilled sculptors were required, was clearly a more expensive undertaking. Subscriptions for the gateways would probably have been forthcoming only when the donors could see the near-completion of the rest of the work. For the rich and intricate carving planned for the gateways, it was necessary to locate a stone of finer texture, free from faults and blemishes, and also one which could be quarried in sufficiently large blocks to provide an entire architrave which measured twenty feet in length and was some two feet thick. The stone cutters found their answer in the tan sandstone of the Udayagiri hill, located four miles from Sanchi.

It is curious that of the 631 inscriptions at Sanchi, the gateways contain a mere eleven donative records. In a context in which over 600 donors proudly engraved their names on simple cross-bars and paving slabs, one would assume that the individuals responsible for the richly carved architraves and the equally detailed panels of the gateway pillars, would have ensured that their names were prominently displayed. Certainly, the foreman of the artisans (*āvesanin*) of king Sri Satakarni was proud of his donation (perhaps also his handiwork) and engraved his name at the very centre of the gateway architrave he donated. Similarly, the ivory-workers of Vidisa who themselves carved the gateway panel that they gifted (*Vedisakehi damtakārehi rupakammam katam*), left their signature on display. One possible explanation for the relative paucity of inscriptions on the gateways may lie in the fact that money for their construction had already accumulated in the coffers of the Sanchi brotherhood during the decade devoted to construction of the railings and circumambulatory path. Inscriptions on the railing pieces occasionally speak of the gift of entire villages

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(Veja, Asavati and others) to the Sanchi monks; the services and produce from such land, collected by the brotherhood, may well have paid for the bulk of the work of the sculptors.

Contrary to the general assumption, a study of the inscriptions reveals, as I have demonstrated elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> that it is not possible to assume an appreciable lapse of time between the construction of each of the four gateways at Sanchi. The south gateway, generally assumed to have been the first to be erected since it stands at the stairway leading to the upper *pradakṣina patha*, is closely linked to the west gateway, since both contain inscribed donations from Balamitra, pupil of the Venerable (*Aya*) Cuda. In turn the west and east gateways are linked by inscribed gifts from Nagapiya of Kurara, banker of Acavada. It also appears that there was no appreciable lapse in time between the earlier stupa 2 constructed half-way up the Sanchi hillside and the main stupa we have been considering that stands on top of the hill. Undoubtedly stupa 2 is the earlier monument, and this is clearly evident from the hesitant and tentative nature of its relief carvings. But a study of the inscriptions indicates the impossibility of separating the two stupas by 130 to 140 years, as has been done so frequently, even in the most recent survey of Indian art.<sup>4</sup> The same Nagapiya, banker of Acavada who gifted a panel to the east and west gateways of the main stupa, also gifted a railing pillar to stupa 2.<sup>5</sup> The inescapable conclusion is that while stupa 2 presents us with the very first attempts at stone carving, the artists rapidly gained mastery over their material, and the main stupa belongs a mere thirty to forty years later.

Collective patronage, once again, was the basis for the construction of the Buddhist caves of western India. These extensive rock-cut monasteries, each consisting of one or more chaityas for worship and a series of residential viharas for monks, were excavated largely from gifts made by goldsmiths, jewellers and ironmongers, by bankers, merchants and physicians, by gardeners and fishermen, and as at Sanchi, also by monks and nuns.<sup>6</sup> Royal donations for construction are in evidence only at one site, at Nasik, and there too in just two caves. In general, each cave (*lena*) was the gift of a separate individual, and donations were thus more substantial than they were at the Sanchi stupa. At Kanheri, for instance, a cave was the gift of a merchant (*nēgama*) from Kalyan, a second was donated by a jeweller from Sopara, a water cistern (*pāṇiya pōdhi*) was gifted by a goldsmith (*suvarṇakāra*) from Kalyan, while a cave and water cistern were donated by a nun from Dhenukakata.

Joint donations are much in evidence, an instance being recorded of the donation of a seven-celled cave at Junnar by a guild of corn dealers, and of a chaitya hall at Junnar from the householders (*gahapatis*) of the village of Virasenaka. Donations for the Junnar caves include a cistern gifted by a goldsmith from Kalyan and a cave gifted by a resident of Broach, indicating the geographically widespread nature of collective patronage.

At the monastic caves of Kuda, individual viharas were donated by a writer (*lekha*), a physician (*vēja*), gardeners (*mālākāra*), an ironmonger (*lohavāṇiya*)



from Karhad, and by monks and nuns. It is interesting to note that a chaitya hall at Kuda was gifted by a brahmin woman described as a family woman (*kutumbini*) married to a devout brahmin; it is apparent that it was not necessary to be a Buddhist in order to earn religious merit by donations to a Buddhist monastery. This fact is further emphasized by the royal Buddhist viharas at Nasik, where the Hindu Satavahana rulers responsible for the construction of cave 3 are compared to the Hindu gods, and described as upholding the twice-born and preventing the mixing of the castes, while the Kshatrapa rulers who constructed cave 10 proclaim that they annually fed 100,000 brahmins and bathed in the holy tirtha of Pushkara.

In order to study the process of collective patronage in the Buddhist monastic caves of western India, I have chosen to consider in detail the cutting of the great chaitya hall at Karle, the largest and most spectacular of the chaityas of this period. This chapel was excavated, as I have demonstrated elsewhere,<sup>7</sup> in the period between AD 50-70. The apsidal cave extends 124 feet into the mountainside and its barrel-vaulted roof rises majestically to a height of 46 feet. A row of octagonal pillars, rising out of pot-shaped bases and terminating in animal-and-rider capitals, follow the apsidal shape of the cave and divide the chaitya into a broad central nave and two narrow side aisles. Three doorways lead into the chaitya, the central door giving access to the nave and two side doors to the aisles. The frontage of the cave is richly carved and the sculptures in the veranda are carefully placed. Undoubtedly, the cave was the result of a unified plan and was conceived by a single master architect. Yet, the chaitya contains no less than 27 individual inscribed gifts<sup>8</sup> from people of diverse vocations hailing largely from the yet unidentified but obviously nearby township of Dhenukakata, as also from the towns of Vejayanti, Soparaka, Umehanakata, Gonekaka and Chulapetu.

The interior of the Karle chaitya contains fifteen carved columns on each side and seven simple octagonal shafts around the stupa. Ten pillars along the left row contain inscriptions recording their donation; four come from *yavanas*, one from a housewife and two from preachers (*bhānaka*) from Sopara, belonging to the sect of Dhammutariyas. Six pillar inscriptions along the right row reveal that they were donated by various individuals; three were from *yavanas* (Greeks) and one from a traders' association (*vāṇiṇi-gāma*). Possibly the monks inviting donations for the chaitya carried with them a plan of the cave, and donors were free to choose their individual dedications.

The richly carved veranda of the cave displays eight sets of magnificent *mithuna* couples, sculpted over life-size. We have not been given the names of the donors of each of these sculptures, but inscriptions inform us that the two couples flanking the right end wall are the gifts (*deya dhamma*) of a monk named Bhadasama. The suggestion that these figures may be donor couples is negated by the inscription which not only informs us that they were the donations of a monk, but further describes the figures as *mithunas* or loving couples. The bands of railing on either side of the central doorway were



donated by two different nuns. The nun Koti who gifted the railing (*veyika*) to the left of the door is referred to as the mother of Ghunika (*Ghunika-mātu*); clearly, she joined the fraternity of monks at a later stage in life, after having first been a *kuṭumbini*. Of the three doorways, only the right aisle door contains a donative inscription attributing it to Sihadata, a perfumer (*gandhika*) from Dhenukakata.

Above the couples is a large horseshoe shaped chaitya arch dominating the upper section of the front wall of the cave, and inscriptions reveal that the band of this large chaitya arch above the central doorway was the gift of the nun Asadhamita. The rest of the front wall is carved in relief to represent a many-storeyed mansion, while the two side walls continue the relief representation of a multi-storeyed building which is now supported on the backs of life-size rock elephants. The elephants, and the rail moulding above and below the elephants, were the gift of the Sthavira Thera Indradeva, his title clearly indicating that he was a venerable, revered church dignitary.

The spacious open courtyard in front of the chaitya contains a lion pillar (one assumes there were originally two), and the inscription on it states that it was the gift of a *maharathi* who must have been a highly placed official, if not a vassal chieftain. The outer facade of the veranda seems to have been completed with woodwork, evidence of which remains in the form of beam-holes of varying sizes cut into the face of the rock. An inscription confirms that a substantial amount of woodwork was added to complete the exterior facade of the chaitya, since we read that the facade was made by the carpenter (*vadhaki*) Sami, son of Venuvasa and native of Dhanukakata. Doubtless, carpenters were involved also in the interior construction of the cave, since the ribs in the barrel vaulted ceiling, as also the parasol above the rock-cut stupa, are all made of wood. These wooden additions contain no inscriptions, but radiocarbon dating indicates that they are contemporary with the cutting of the cave.<sup>9</sup>

In this context it is interesting to note that two donative inscriptions have been discovered on the wooden beams spanning the vault of the Bhaja chaitya.<sup>10</sup> These inscriptions, raised high above the eyes of worshippers, were obviously not intended for the purpose of proclaiming the names of the donors. The names must have been inscribed on the beams, soon after they were fashioned and prior to their being raised into position. Obviously, the donor considered it necessary to record the gift he had made whether or not it could be seen or read! The recording of the gift was perhaps all that was necessary for the donor to feel secure about receiving his religious merit.

At least eleven donors then, contributed towards the construction of the veranda and facade of the Karle chaitya, while some sixteen donors were responsible for sections of the interior. Taking into account this varied collective patronage, the claim of Bhutapala, the merchant (*sethi*) from Vejayanti, that he completed this stone mansion, the finest in all of India (*jambudīpamhi utamam selaghara parinithapitam*), is intriguing. He makes this claim in an inscription at the left end of the veranda. It is possible that he refers to the many-storeyed

mansion in relief on the walls of the veranda when he speaks of the finest *sela-ghara* in all of Jambudvīpa; on the other hand, the word *ghara* has clearly been used by the carpenter Sami to indicate the chaitya as a whole. If Bhutapala's claim relates to the chaitya itself, it is probable that he arrived on the scene at the critical period when the chaitya was in its finishing stages, and helped to complete it with numerous small donations. The construction of the Karle chaitya presents us with instances of the various aspects of collective patronage.

The last site that I would like to examine in this chapter, in which collective and popular patronage of sacred monuments existed on a wide scale, is Buddhist and Jain Mathura, where images and religious structures were commissioned by a wide range of individuals. In the case of the Buddhist monasteries, we find several dedications from monks and their families; in the case of the Jain monasteries, we find an almost exclusive dedication by women.

Patrons at the Kushan centre of Mathura, between the first and third centuries AD, seem to have had a distinct sense of history; their inscriptions customarily state the day, month and year of the Kushan ruler in whose reign the gift was made.<sup>11</sup> This frequent mention of the monarchs tends to leave the false impression that Kushan art depended upon the patronage of either royalty or the aristocracy. In fact, not a single Mathura Buddha image discovered so far (whether located today in the museums at Mathura, Lucknow, Allahabad, Sarnath, Calcutta or Delhi) is a royal donation; nor is royalty connected with the contemporary Jain images recovered from the Kankali Tila at Mathura. Another distinguishing feature of the Kushan patrons is that they are not content with the simple statement that their gifts are *dānam* or *dēya dhamma*; instead their inscriptions enumerate the exact benefits they expect to derive from their donations. For instance, when the *bhikṣu* Buddhavarman gifted a standing image of the Buddha, he specified that it was for the acquisition of knowledge by his teacher Sanghadasa, for the future welfare of his mother and father, for the lessening of all the griefs of Buddhavarman himself, and for the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings. This feature, it has been pointed out, is characteristic of the Mahayana creed. The famous Katra Buddha, a masterpiece of Kushan art at Mathura, is one of the few images in which a historical date is absent. It was commissioned by Amoha-asi, mother of Buddharakhita, and was set up in her own (*svakē*) vihara, to ensure the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings. Buddharakhita's vocation is not specified, but judging from the many images dedicated by monks and lay worshippers, one may assume that Buddharakhita was either *bhikṣu* or *upāsaka*. Images of the Buddha were set up by a cosmopolitan group of donors. A seated image was installed in her own vihara by Nagapaya, the wife of a merchant (*vānika*), a second image was donated by the nun Buddhāmitra, a third by Yasa, the wife of a goldsmith and a fourth by the wife of a caravan merchant.

As at the other sites of this period, at Mathura too joint donations were frequent. Two Kshatriya brothers from Vilista 'versed in the scriptures and knowing the unreality of pleasure and the unsuitability of life', set up an image



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of the Buddha in the famous Jetavana of Sravasti, where in fact, the piece was excavated. The image was produced in a Mathura workshop, and the inscription actually states that it was made by Sivamitra, a sculptor from Mathura—one of those rare instances of an artist's name from ancient India. Another joint donation was the installation at Varanasi of a colossal standing image of the Buddha with a stone umbrella above him. This gift, in the third year of Kanishka, was made primarily by the *bhikṣu* Bala; joining him in his donation were his parents, masters, and teachers, followers and pupils, the nun Buddhāmītra, the *satraps* (rulers) Vanaspara and Kharapallanara, together with the four classes, monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. The list of donors recorded in the inscription as supporting Bala's donation sound somewhat exaggerated, but those specifically mentioned by name must certainly have contributed to the dedication of this monumental image.

Other Mathura images that are almost entirely intact are the Buddha from Ahichhatra dedicated in the year 32 by the *bhikṣu* Virana with his mother and father and his children for the benefit and happiness of all acharyas together with elderly *sramanas* and disciples, and the image of Maitreya, now in the National Museum, that was installed for the benefit and happiness of all beings (*sarveṣāṃ sukhārtha*).

It is intriguing to find an almost exclusive female patronage of the many Jain images, sculpted slabs and gateways of the Kushan Jain monasteries at the Kankali Tila of Mathura.<sup>12</sup> An image of the Jina Vardhamana was gifted by the wife of a merchant, another by a *kutumbini*, a third by the daughter of a goldsmith (*hiranyaka*), and a fourth by Mitra who was the daughter-in-law of an ironmonger and the daughter of a jeweller (*manikāra*). A quadruple image of four standing Jinās was the gift of the first wife of a banker, while yet another four-fold image was gifted by the first wife of a village headman. More than one gateway fragment, recovered from excavations, contains similar inscriptions ascribing them to various laywomen.

Jain sculpted slabs, known as *āyāgapatas* (homage tablets), were donated almost exclusively by Jain women. One such slab was set up by Amohini, a woman disciple of the Jain ascetics (*sramanas*), together with her three sons. Another was donated by Sivayasa, wife of the dancer Phaguyasa, while several donations may be attributed to women described as *sadbhācharis*, or female converts. Perhaps the most intriguing feature of all these Jain donations is their inscribed statement that each gift was made at the request of a venerable Jain nun. For instance, Kumaramita, the first wife of a banker, dedicated her quadruple Jain image 'at the request of Arya Vasula, the female pupil of Arya Sanganuka who was the female pupil of Arya Jayabhūti', indicating an entire line of revered female nuns. The quadruple image commissioned by the village headman's wife was dedicated at the request of Akaka, the female pupil of Nanda, the *sadbhāchari* and female pupil of Dati. It would appear that the Jain fraternity had a great number of nuns and that the majority of the patrons who decorated these monasteries and gifted images were women. Quite a few of



them appear to have been recent converts to Jainism, and their husbands, who continued to be Hindus, appear nevertheless to have been content to permit their wives to patronize monuments of the Jain faith.

Despite the constant epigraphic references to the viharas and chaityas in which the many large images of the Buddha and the Jina were enshrined, very few architectural pieces have been recovered from Mathura. For instance, Buddhavarman's image, which was dedicated in the fifty-first year of the Kushan ruler Huvishka, was placed in a vihara that bore the emperor's name. Other viharas specifically mentioned in inscriptions include the Amoha-asi vihara, the Harusa vihara, the Nagapaya chaitya, the Pushyadata vihara, and the Suvarnakara (goldsmith's) vihara. In the absence of structural remains of these monasteries, one is forced to conclude that the many impressive images of the Buddha and the Jina, whether standing or seated, were enshrined in structures built of brick, with their gateways and railings occasionally cut from stone.

Collective patronage was a pan-Indian phenomenon during this early period, and this is evident from comparable inscriptional material at a host of other sites including Bharhut in Madhya Pradesh, Pauni in Maharashtra, and at several of the monastic establishments along the Krishna river. These monuments of the Buddhists and Jains, were constructed over a period of time during which various dynasties, the Sungas, Satavahanas, Ikshvakus and Kushans were in power. With a few exceptions, the artistic monuments produced in these kingdoms were not dependent on royal patronage. Stable political conditions apparently led to considerable economic prosperity, and surplus money seems to have accumulated in the hands of a wide section of the community. The patronage of religious art was not the prerogative of the merchant and the banker. Apparently, the wealth necessary to indulge in such a luxury belonged also to persons of humbler professions like the ironmonger and stone mason, the gardener and the fisherman.

In the later history of the art of India we do not encounter evidence of comparable collective patronage on a pan-Indian basis. The only significant instance of collective patronage in later times occurs in the case of the bronze images of the gods and the saints that were gifted by various donors to the temples of south India; however, the temples themselves were invariably royal constructions. Are we to believe that a similar wave of prosperity never again arose among the people? Or were the monarchs so overwhelmingly status-conscious that it never occurred to them to ask the common man to contribute towards the monumental temples that they erected? One answer seems to lie in the fact that, apart from pride in his achievement as builder of a temple or stupa, the patron-monarch's prime concern was to ensure that the religious merit of construction accrued to him alone. Perhaps, the clearest statement of this sentiment is contained in the Sri Lankan chronicle, *The Mahāvamsa*, written in the fifth century AD, in its account of the construction of the great stupa in the second century BC by the monarch Duttha Gamini. We read that a monk who hoped to share in the meritorious act of building the stupa, made a

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brick himself and 'deceiving the king's work-people, he gave it to a workman',<sup>13</sup> and once it was laid in place it was impossible to recognize it from the others. The monarch commanded that generous payment be made to the monk in the form of a thousand pieces of money, a costly red coverlet, fragrant oil, sandals, sugar and other necessities, in order to ensure that the entire merit of construction was retained by him alone. The anonymity of the artist then, went hand in hand with the proclaimed glory of the patron, who certainly never renounced his ego or forsook his identity.

One answer then to the exclusively royal patronage that we find in the history of the later art of India lies in the dual ambition of the monarchs, both to acquire the degree of worldly prestige that would enable them to arrogate to themselves the title of 'Great Builder of Temples', and to amass religious merit that would be their mainstay in a future birth.

### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Sir John Marshall and Alfred Foucher, *The Monuments of Sanchi*, 3 volumes (Calcutta, 1940), lists all 631 inscriptions with a translation and a notation of the exact location of each.
2. An inscription on a pillar from temple 40 records a donation from a certain Data-Kalavada of Vidisa who also gifted three cross-bars to the main stupa confirming the rough contemporaneity in time of these two structures.
3. Vidya Dehejia, *Early Buddhist Rock Temples* (Cornell, 1972), Appendix 1, 'Sanchi Gateway Inscriptions', pp. 186-8.
4. Susan L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India* (New York, 1985), p. 62 and p. 93.
5. Marshall and Foucher, *The Monuments of Sanchi*, 3 volumes (Calcutta, 1940), Inscription no. 660, p. 366.
6. For an overview of cave inscription, see H. Lüders, 'A List of Brahmi Inscriptions from the earliest times to about AD 400 with the exception of those of Asoka'. Appendix to *Epigraphia Indica* X (1909-10).
7. Vidya Dehejia, *Early Buddhist Rock Temples* (Cornell, 1972), p. 178.
8. E. Senart, 'The Inscriptions in the Caves at Karle', *Epigraphia Indica* VII (1902-03), pp. 47-74. Also M. S. Vats, 'Unpublished Votive Inscriptions in the Chaitya Cave at Karle', *Epigraphia Indica* XVIII (1925-26), pp. 325-9.
9. Vidya Dehejia, *Early Buddhist Rock Temples* (Cornell, 1972), Appendix 2, 'Karle Radiocarbon Dates', pp. 189-90.
10. M. N. Deshpande, 'Important Epigraphical Records from the Chaitya Cave, Bhaja', *Lalit Kala* 6 (1959), pp. 30-32.
11. R. C. Sharma, *Buddhist Art of Mathura* (Delhi, 1984), Ch. 8, 'Chronology of the Buddhist Icons of the Mathura School', pp. 171-236, contains text and translations of all inscriptions on images.
12. G. Buhler, 'New Jaina Inscriptions from Mathura', *Epigraphia Indica* I (1892), pp. 371-93. Also G. Buhler, 'Further Jaina Inscriptions from Mathura', *Epigraphia Indica* II (1894), pp. 195-212. See also Vincent Smith, *Jain Stupa and other Antiquities from Mathura*, Archaeological Survey of India, New Imperial Series, XX (Allahabad, 1901).
13. W. Geiger, tr., *The Mahavamsa* (Colombo, 1950), p. 199.