The Body Adorned

Dissolving Boundaries Between Sacred and Profane in India's Art

Vidya Dehejia

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2. THE IDEALIZED BODY AND ORNAMENT

An initial encounter with the vibrant figure sculptures of India—associated with temples, monastic centers, and other structures like stepwells—has occasionally led viewers to the unwarranted assumption that the sensuous stone and bronze images are naked.[1] With the exception of certain manuscripts dealing with erotica, the human body of the Indian artistic tradition is neither naked nor nude; it is invariably the body adorned.[2] *Alankara* (ornament) always includes clothing, as indeed does *shringara*, a word that means "adornment" in addition to being the term for the erotic *rasa*. The perfectly formed body of the Indian tradition, whether male or female, is decorated with fine fabrics, jeweled ornaments, and flowers. It is further adorned with an entire range of conventions that may be subsumed under the term "body culture," coined by Daud Ali.[3] Body culture includes elaborate hairstyling; the heightening of the body's beauty by anointing it with oils, pastes, cosmetics, and fragrances; and a range of other refinements, such as elegance of gait, gesture, and posture.

During the twentieth century, specially in the West, the word "ornamentation" had negative overtones when applied, for instance, to architecture, in which smooth, unadorned planes were considered eminently desirable. In like manner, with the female body, the ruffled and crinolined dresses of the past yielded place to the elegant lines of a black sheath. But the situation in the premodern context was quite different. As early as 1939, in response to criticism that regarded ornament as excess, A. K. Coomaraswamy explored the etymology of both Sanskrit and Latin words for ornament, and pointed out that decoration was considered an essential ingredient for a good work of art.[4] The Sanskrit term *alankara* derives from the literal meaning "to make sufficient or strengthen, to make adequate," and suggests enhancement in the efficacy of the thing or person thus adorned. So, too, the primary meaning of the Latin word *ornare* is "to fit out, furnish, provide with necessaries," and only secondarily "to embellish."[5] Ornament was thus viewed as a prerequisite that added to the body's elegance and gave it the final touches that were considered indispensable.[6] Coomaraswamy critiqued, as a later denigration of meaning, the modern tendency to consider ornament as a superfluous addition.

Yet another Sanskrit word for ornament, *abharanam*, is etymologically revealing since it means "to bring near, or attract (through magical power)," and suggests the potency of ornament.[7] While Coomaraswamy emphasized that ornamentation of Indian women was "not a matter of mere vanity, but rather one of propriety," it is, in actuality, much more.[8] Ornament is auspicious; ornament is protective; ornament makes the body complete, whole, beautiful, and desirable. To be without ornament is to provoke the forces of inauspiciousness, to expose oneself to danger, even to court

danger. I give here just one preliminary example. When innocent, young Shakuntala, untutored in the ways of the world, prepares to leave the forest hermitage to join her husband, Dushyanta, playwright Kalidasa (ca. 400) has her companions adorn their pregnant friend with auspicious unguents (Prakrit, *mangala-samalahan*) in an attempt to provide her with protection.[9] In the context of India, the significance of ornament cannot be overstated.

This chapter is devoted to the characterization of the idealized human body and the importance of *alankara* to complete, beautify, and protect the body, as expressed in both the visual and the literary traditions. I focus first on the female body and then on the male, and within each gender category, I also highlight the special importance given to the royal body. I conclude with a study of the king and queen as a beautiful, devoted, and amorous couple and the significance of such an ideal for their citizens. As a coda, I briefly discuss the significance of *alankara* in architecture and poetry.

The Female Form

The Idealized Body

One of the earliest and most sensational stone sculptures in India is a life-size image of a woman, carved from sandstone and polished to a glossy tan finish (figure 3). She stands in perfect poise, a voluptuous figure with sloping shoulders, substantial breasts, a narrow waist, a rounded stomach with lightly incised folds, wide hips, and strong tapering thighs. Viewed from the rear, her erect stance is even more striking, revealing the spinal column held inward and shoulder blades lowered (figure 4). She wears a long skirt, held by a jeweled hip-belt (*mekhala*), and its inner folds fall in a series of looped folds between her legs, while the heavily pleated outer end drapes across her back and over her right arm, from which it hangs all the way to the ground. The artist has carved this sari-like drapery to bypass the figure's torso and allow a clear view of her breasts. She is adorned with a jeweled tiara, gem-set hair ornaments, heavy earrings, a choker, a long necklace that meets to slither between her breasts only to open out below with a dangling pendant, rows of bangles, armlets, and heavy, chunky anklets. The 5 foot, 2¼–inch scale of the image suggests her importance.

Who is this strong, erect woman who holds herself so proudly and gazes directly at the viewer? She provides a total contrast, for instance, to the roughly contemporaneous and celebrated images of Greek Aphrodite, whose slight stoop and inwardly curved body suggests vulnerability, who avoids eye contact with the viewer, and who uses her hands to cover her genitals and breasts.[10] Like the Greek deity, this figure is the product of a strongly patriarchal society; yet she seems neither humble nor humiliated by her sexuality, which she proudly exhibits. She was found accidentally in 1917 along the banks of the Ganges in the Bihar village of Didarganj adjoining Patna, the capital city of

Figure 3. *Chowri*-bearer (*front view*), sandstone, Didarganj, ca. second century.

Figure 4. *Chowri*-bearer (*rear view*), sandstone, Didarganj, ca. second century.

the ancient Mauryan monarchs (320–180 B.C.E.).[11] The stunning Didarganj image has been assigned to the third century B.C.E., partly on the basis of her find-spot and partly because of the so-called Mauryan polish she shares with a range of columns erected by Emperor Ashoka and his predecessors. Her original context is unknown, and we have no clues as to whether she once stood in a palace complex, a Buddhist or Jain establishment, or a Hindu sacred space. One thing is certain: despite the scale of the sculpture, she is no divinity, since she holds an attendant's fly whisk (*chowri*) in one hand and could never have occupied the central place in any conceivable tableau. Additionally, since the Indian system of artistic proportions dictates that a female figure, whether attendant or consort, be of significantly lesser height than the central image, the group of which she was once part must have been of truly monumental proportions. Could she be one of two flanking royal attendants, such as we encounter in later groupings? If indeed she stood alone, she must have held a very special status within the courtly milieu to have

merited so major an individual "portrait." The possibility must be raised that she was a *ganika*, a highly placed royal courtesan of great talent and enviable accomplishments, whose prerogative it was to stand by the monarch at court and hold the fly whisk.[12] Kautilya's *Artha-shastra*, a text on government, speaks of the *ganika* as being assigned this precise privileged role.[13]

A substantial body of evidence suggests that the Didarganj *chowri*-bearer may have been dated too early and that she may have to be relocated to the second century C.E.[14] In whatever manner this evidence may ultimately play out, she is certainly the largest and most significant stone image, male or female, from early India. Her sensuous monumentality is not only breathtaking, but also a sure indication of the importance assigned to the body adorned—in this instance, the female body adorned—in the artistic milieu of ancient India.

The Didarganj image makes it evident that the sculpted human form owes little to the artist's observation of life and reality. Veracity was never the aim of the sculptor who, instead, produced an idealized form that incorporated the very specific concept of beauty prevalent in premodern India. Every feature of the body was visualized as perfect, and a favorite poetic mode of describing woman was to compare each feature of her physical makeup to an element of the natural world. Poets likened her face to the moon or lotus flower, eyes to the lotus petal or a carp and their pupils to bees, ears to tender furled leaves, breasts to mountain peaks or golden pots of holy water, arms to the pliant vine or bamboo, waist to a creeper, thighs to the smooth swelling stem of plantain trees or the elephant's trunk, and the mound of Venus to the soft, curved, spreading hood of the cobra. And yet, in poetry, everything in nature had to bow to a superior double in the feminine form. In his Sanskrit poem *Naishadhiya-charita* (*Life of Nala of Nishadha*), written toward the end of the twelfth century, the poet Shriharsha devotes over a hundred verses to the mental picture that Prince Nala conjures up of his beloved Damayanti, in the head-to-toe fashion mentioned in chapter 1. Here I give the briefest extracts that will illustrate how the human form is envisioned in terms of the beauties of nature (which it often surpasses):

> the lock of her hair that surpasses the peacock's train . . .
>
> It is the darkness in the front and on either side, dispelled
> by the moon of her face, that is tied behind her in the
> guise of her clearly undulating hair.
>
> did the gazelles ever borrow from her the beauty of her eyes . . .
> the outline of her lower lip . . . resembling the bandhuka
> flower by the beauty of its crimson hue . . .

> . . . her face excelling the moon . . .
>
> "The making of lotus blossoms is my sketching practice for
> the making of thy hand"—did the Creator announce to
> the deer-eyed damsel . . .
>
> are these creeper-like arms lotus-stalks visible on both sides . . .
>
> the palm fruit would be able to imitate her breasts, happy in
> their ascent, if it did not at times fall to the ground . . .
>
> the two stems of the damsel's thighs surpassed the
> elephant's trunk[15]

Women in Indic poetry, as in sculpture and painting, are invariably young and beautiful. "Not to be both is impossible, inconceivable," David Smith says of the women in Ratnakara's Sanskrit epic, the *Hara-vijaya* (*Victory of Hara* [*Shiva*]), which belongs around the year 1000. "They are a good thing; indeed they are a good thing, and one cannot have too much of them," he remarks of the women who, with the exception of the heroine and her immediate companions, have so little individuality that the text does not even give them names.[16] The very same could be said of the majority of women in sculpture and painting who are treated alike as generic entities. The numerous figures of women carved on the walls of any one of the temples at Khajuraho in central India, for instance, demonstrate clearly that female visual imagery, like the verbal, is generically idealized, stereotyped, predictable, and repetitive. And so it is with the female forms adorning the walls of a range of other monuments, from the richly sculpted "queen's stepwell" at Patan in Gujarat, to the Lingaraj temple in eastern Orissa, and the Hoysala temples of southern Karnataka. Poetry read aloud in courts, dramas performed for select audiences, and art admired by an elite audience all transported one into an idealized world where women and men, queens and kings, goddesses and gods were all beautiful, young, and nubile. Youth, beauty, and the ability to attract others translated into power and authority, whether in the earthly or the divine sphere.

India possesses a range of *silpa shastras* (art texts) that are often phrased to read as instructions for sculptors, painters, and architects; among the earliest extant is the "Chitra-sutra" section of the sixth-century *Vishnu-dharmottara-purana*. It is certainly a matter for debate whether the texts or the art came first; quite likely the texts drew on the artistic corpus. Yet some of them must have served as artists' manuals, particularly in the hereditary guild and workshop tradition in which craftsmen took up sculpture or painting, not because they had a particular talent in that direction, but because it was the tra-

ditional family profession. The art texts seemingly parallel the poetic tropes in proposing models for sculptors to follow in their creation of the human physique. One model for woman's torso was the *damaru* drum (Tamil, *tuti*), which is held at its waist and flares out above and below. That this continued to be the literary trope into the eighteenth century is seen from Indira Peterson's translation of the Tamil *Kuttralak Kuravanji* (*The Fortune-teller Play of Kuttralam*):

> One hand could encircle
> her waist, tapered like the tuti drum[17]

A second model for the female torso is the *vajra* (double-headed thunderbolt), which is likewise held at its center.[18] Either model automatically results in the traditional, although currently unfashionable, hourglass figure evident in the Didarganj image.[19]

The Indian artistic tradition laid considerable emphasis on ample breasts. As is evident from the Didarganj figure, artists sculpted women with full breasts placed high and touching each other, forcing the long necklaces they wore to snake their way between. This was a concept matched by the poet's fancy, and he repeatedly used the favorite trope of the difficulty of extricating one's gaze from the tight space between a woman's breasts:

> A young man, seeing the breasts of a pretty girl,
> shakes his head.
> Is it admiration,
> or is it to extricate his glance from the narrow interval?[20]

Sanskrit verses describing the breasts of the goddess or of a beautiful woman extol their weight, which causes her to bend forward; the embarrassed laugh evoked in contemporary society by such a description confirms the cultural and time-bound specificity of concepts of beauty and their expression in art and literature. The rounded figure of woman, not one overly slender, was most admired, as seen in this lover's description of his beloved, which cannot but remind us again of the Didarganj image:

> My eyes with difficulty pass her thighs
> to wander long in the land about her hips,
> then at her waist, uneven with triple fold,
> become quite powerless to move.
> But now at last, like travelers parched by thirst
> they've climbed the mountains of her breasts
> and see at last what they had hoped,
> their counterparts, her eyes, that flow with tears.[21]

The well-turned ankle, much admired in the Western world, has never appealed to India's imagination, literary or artistic. By contrast, the smooth shoulder and slender arm received much attention, and routine comparisons for a woman's gracefully elongated arms were the vine-like creeper or, in southern India, the pliant green bamboo shoot. The almond eyes of Western imagination are replaced in India by eyes shaped like a lotus petal or a fish, considered the height of beauty. To have eyes like the fish referred also to the darting quality of the eyes, likened to a darting silvery fish.[22] One of India's most renowned forms of the goddess Parvati, as she abides in the temple at Madurai, is hailed as Minakshi (fish-eyed one). Concepts of beauty are indeed specific to both place and time. As John Hay points out, for instance, the very same Chinese pictures of the human body that appear to Western eyes as "meager, schematic and inadequate" evoked from Chinese authors the most erotic of literary passages.[23] The unique idealized concept of the body in premodern India, so evident in its poetry, finds its corresponding echo in stone and paint.

A ninth-century Tamil poem, the *Tirukkailaya-nana-ula* (*Procession of the Lord of Kailasa*), recently translated by Blake Wentworth, provides this description of a beautiful mature woman known as the *perilampen*. Like his Sanskrit counterpart, the Tamil poet provides an entire list of comparisons with nature—mound of Venus like a snake's hood, waist like rattan, arms like bamboo, hands like the lily, eyes like the carp:

> Her soft fingers have fine burnished nails
> shining like mirrored spheres,
> her pubic delta flares like the hood of a frightened serpent
> her slight waist trembles like choice rattan,
> like two auspicious water pots made of everlasting gold
> crowned with gems, verdant, uplifted, proportioned,
> spread with pale streaks and beauty marks,
> arising as the ambrosia which torments all who see,
> her breasts rub against each other in rhythm.
> She is the best of women
> a beauty without peer among beauties;
> her lissome arms are like young bamboo
> with her lovely hands she shames the family of the glory lily
> she is the passion of Kamavel
> her breast shines like sandalwood.
> Sumptuous, balanced, rounded and full,
> both corners upturned, glossy, trembling, red as coral,
> bearing honey and glittering pearls,

her crimson mouth demands tribute even from the
thoughts of hermits.
Streaked with even lines, accented with kohl,
shaped like gems at their center,
the semblance of the cool fringed carp and the mythic
conch,
her piercing eyes are like the gleaming sea.[24]

As late as the eighteenth century, in a Tamil play written for a Maravar chieftain in the Tirunelveli region of Tamil Nadu, the same principles governed poetic expression. Peterson's translation of the *Kuttralak Kuravanji*, already encountered, indicates that the beauty of the young heroine, Vasantavalli, continues to be compared to elements of nature:

Her lips are the delicate buds of the murukku flower,
Her forehead is a bent bow, the crescent moon.
Her eyebrows surpass the rainbow's curve . . .
The beauty of the moon finds
its permanent home in her face.
Adorned by bright jewels, her neck
surpasses the beauty of the areca tree
entwined by betel vines . . .
Her thighs are banana-trees
planted at the gate of the rogue love-god's palace[25]

Unique to the visual artist was the problem of how to capture the rhythmic and graceful movement of the body—the elegant bearing, stride, posture, and carriage and the sense of playfulness that were considered signs of tasteful refinement.[26] Poets spoke often of beauty of movement: a graceful young male is described as "a moving *tamala* tree in the mountains";[27] a heroine's "gait is more graceful than the walk of the wild goose";[28] a prince has "this stance erect and motionless / left arm akimbo";[29] and the goddess's "flawless gait / mocks the peacock's grace."[30] The sculptor opted to freeze the moving body in the *tri-bhanga* (triple-bent) posture, which captures the essence of movement. Both male and female figures are portrayed with the head, and the limbs below the hips, poised at the same angle, while the torso in between moves in the opposite direction. It is indeed a stylized pose, but the sculptors were pleased with it, and it became the standard way to express poise and grace of movement. A few deities, primarily Vishnu and the Jinas, are portrayed in the erect standing posture of *sama-bhanga*; in the

case of the Jinas, the posture additionally includes downward-stretched arms and makes reference to the *kayotsarga* pose of penance.

Systems of bodily proportion seem to have varied across time and in differing regions and political units of India. This becomes evident by merely comparing two sets of roughly contemporaneous images from adjoining areas of southern India: late Chola and Hoysala images, the first tall and slender, and the second shorter and sturdier.[31] One system found in southern India and compiled by Ganapati Sthapati for use by today's traditional artists is based on the *tala* (span), measured either as the reach from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger or, alternately, as the upward-pointing hand in the gesture of protection, from wrist joint to tip of middle finger.[32] Either way, the result is roughly a 9-inch unit. Each *tala* is further subdivided into the *uttama* (highest order), the *madhyama* (middle order), and the *adhama* (lower order). The entire world is then calibrated according to the *tala*. Thus, for instance, the height of a major god must be 10 *talas* of the highest order inclusive of his crown; major goddesses, 10 *talas* of the middle order; and lesser gods and saints, 10 *talas* of the lower order. The size of 9 *talas* is reserved for a variety of semidivine beings, with 8 and 7 *talas* being the height for humans. The classification continues all the way down to 5 *talas* for Ganesha and the child Krishna, and 1 *tala* for the tortoise and fish avatar of Vishnu. Additionally, detailed measurements for the width of various parts of the body are provided down a central plumb line so that newly apprenticed sculptors may more easily learn their craft. However, the comparison makes it clear that this is only one of several systems used by the sculptors; while Chola sculptors appear to have subscribed to its use, their Hoysala counterparts apparently followed a different scheme. Recent scholarly attempts to come up with, say, a Gupta system of proportions, after a detailed and painstaking exercise of measuring a large corpus of images, have failed to yield definitive results.[33] Computer simulation, thus far attempted only with bronze images, may yield more rapid results, but this too appears to have been abandoned for now. A quick solution does not seem to be on the horizon, and the art historian's eye remains the best gauge.

Although idealized, the sculpted Indian physique incorporated the essential elements of the yogic body. The rear view of sculpted images, both male and female, reveals a spine held noticeably inward, with the shoulder blades drawn back and down. The abdominal muscles are released rather than being held in or tightened, so that one may visualize breath flowing through the body. In addition, many of the pirouetting bodies seen on temples should be reassessed in terms of yogic postures that feature bodily twists. It might be well to remember the artists' familiarity with yogic *asanas* in the Indian milieu in which the human body in a variety of yogic poses would have been readily visible.[34]

Alankara of the Female Form

Drapery is an integral part of *alankara* (ornament), and the female body, whether sculpted or painted, is invariably a body adorned with fine, often translucent clothing. Indeed, what makes Indian sculpted imagery so very sensuous is the tantalizing reference to clothing; as Anne Hollander remarks in her study of the subject, an erotic awareness of the body invariably contains an awareness of clothing.[35] Sculptors in India depicted their figures seemingly bare, but a close observation will reveal—at ankles, waist, neck, and arms—hints of the delicate folds of fine drapery. Long skirts, consisting of a few yards of unsewn fabric, were pleated into folds at both ends and knotted together to create a variety of elaborate looped arrangements. Sculptors depicted these skirt folds quite prominently and with considerable attention, but they rarely allowed the folds to obstruct the view of the limbs, placing them so that they swing away from the body. Frequently, the lower limbs are so clearly visible that viewers assume they are unclothed; but once the eye is trained to notice the skirt folds, they seem to appear everywhere, so that one wonders how they could possibly have been missed. No doubt, the adroit positioning of the fabric pleats indicates the artists' intention to emphasize the sensuous bodies of the figures unencumbered by details of drapery. This same desire on the part of the artists explains why sculpted women appear so uniformly bare-breasted. A close scrutiny of these figures will generally reveal traces of a scarf-like garment (*dupatta*, *odhni*, *davani*) intended to cover the breasts, but sculptors took the artistic liberty of moving the fabric aside in one manner or another. The fine, pleated scarf of the dancer from Jamsot (see figure 2), for instance, is displaced by her pirouetting movement and swings out behind her; the sari of the Didarganj *ganika* (see figures 3 and 4), which should indeed have covered her torso completely, is treated as a heavy, pleated swath of fabric that has slipped off to rest in the crook of her arm; the pleated translucency of the fine, scarf-like wraps of the women on the walls of the Vamana temple in Khajuraho (figure 5), seen clearly in rear view, do little to cover their torsos, sliding down instead to afford a view of their breasts. With the warm Indian climate encouraging fine muslin clothing, the artists' response was invariably to resort to translucent drapery. On occasion, the artist dispensed with the pretense altogether, portraying his women freely without need for the artifice of clothing that has slipped to reveal their breasts.

It is important that we do not assume that the sculpted and painted images are an accurate reflection of prevalent practices and thence proceed to infer that partial nudity was the accepted norm in the ancient Indian milieu. Indeed, it has been stressed in a variety of artistic contexts that "what images tell us is how rarely they directly reflect institutions and behavior."[36] As scholars around the world agree, the human body of any tradition of sculpture and painting—be it Greek, Roman, or Renaissance—is a social construct and not a reflection of life as it was actually lived. Greek sculpture and vase paintings depict

Figure 5. Women, sandstone, Vamana temple, Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, ca. 1000.

nude males, tall and muscular, fighting, competing in sports, and taking part in city processions. But as Andrew Stewart points out, "Not only did Greeks not fight or go about the city naked, they did not look like their marbles and bronzes either."[37]

Confirmation of the use of drapery in India, often fine and diaphanous drapery, may be found in a wide range of literary sources. The first-century poet Ashvaghosha, author of the *Buddha-charita*, a Sanskrit poem on the life of the Buddha that we encountered briefly in chapter 1, often makes passing reference to women's clothing. One such passage occurs when King Suddhodana, realizing that his son Siddhartha is bent on leaving the palace in search of enlightenment, sends a messenger to the women of the palace urging them to use their utmost powers of seduction to lure the prince back to a life of pleasure: "Exert yourselves boldly, so that the good fortune of the king's family may not turn away from here."[38] The poet's many verses on the responses of the women include the following two:

> Another repeatedly let her blue garments slip down under the pretext of intoxication, and with her girdle partly seen she seemed like the night with the lightning flashing.
>
> Some walked up and down so as to make their golden zones tinkle and displayed to him their hips veiled by diaphanous robes.[39]

The plays of Kalidasa contain frequent allusions to women's clothing. Shakuntala, who lives in a forest hermitage, wears a bark dress that quite clearly covers her body from the breasts down. When she complains that her friend has fastened the garment too tightly, it is loosened, and she is teased and told that her swelling breasts, not her friend, are to blame.[40] In another play by Kalidasa, King Agnimitra describes Malavika as wearing "dazzling silks that drape discreetly."[41] And in the poem *Kumara-sambhava* (*Birth of Kumara*), Kalidasa describes Parvati, while tending to the god Shiva's needs, as wearing a dress "the color of the young sun," which she abandons for rough bark garments when she resorts to penance to win the god as husband.[42] When Parvati succeeds in her mission, the poet speaks of the dress she wears to take a premarital oil bath, followed by the white silks she dons for the wedding ceremony itself. In the poem *Megha-duta* (*Cloud Messenger*), Kalidasa describes the pleasures of Alaka, the city of the *yakshas*:

> Where the linen garments of women with lips like bimba fruit are loosened by the unbinding of the cloth ties of their undergarments which are removed by lovers with hands emboldened by lust.[43]

The Tamil poetry of southern India, too, clarifies that drapery is an integral part of *alankara*. For instance, we read of the young woman whose "swaying loins are draped in brightly dyed cloth";[44] a second who "puts on shimmering garments to enhance her radiance";[45] a third who "wrapped herself in an elegant gown";[46] and a fourth who "clothes herself in silk / crimson like the shining red water lily."[47] Certainly the word "naked" should have no place in the Indian artistic vocabulary, although one may indeed speak of the seemingly nude figures adorning the monuments of India.

Apart from silks and translucent fabrics, *alankara* implied the expected elements of abundant jewelry, blossoms wreathed into plaited braids, an elaborate system of hairstyling, and flower garlands. But it included much more in the form of cosmetics and unguents, including kohl, sandal-paste, perfumes, fragrant oils, and body paint or tattoos, as seen on the cheeks of the moon *yakshi* carved on a railing pillar surrounding the Buddhist stupa at Bharhut (figure 6). Hennaed designs on hands and feet still survive in India, but other types of body paint, clearly attested in both visual and literary texts, seem to have been abandoned, unless we view the modern *bindi* on women's foreheads as a surviving relic. When the *Gita-govinda*'s Radha, triumphant in her control over Krishna, commands him, "Paint a leaf design here with deer musk on Love's ritual vessel!" this was no mere poet's fancy, but a reflection of the reality of body paint.[48] Daud Ali points out that the seventh-century poet Bana describes in his *Kadambari* how Queen Vilasavati refrains from adornment in her grief over her failure to bear King Tarapida a child. The king questions

Figure 6. Chanda *yakshi*, sandstone, Bharhut stupa, Uttar Pradesh, ca. 100 B.C.E.

her thus: "Why haven't you put *alaktaka* dye on your feet . . . why is the ornamental design . . . not painted on your expansive breasts . . . why have the line decorations on your cheeks been washed off by your tears . . . why is your forehead without a *tilaka* mark . . . and your hair unbound?[49]

The *Tirukkailaya-nana-ula* gives us an interesting glimpse into the way that women of seven different age groups (a trope unique to Tamil poetics) dress and adorn themselves preparatory to encountering public gaze. Among them are the *petumpai* (a young girl eight to eleven years of age), the *mankai* (a nubile girl twelve to thirteen years old), the *matantai* (an ingénue fourteen to nineteen years of age), and the *arivai* (a lovely woman twenty to twenty-four years old).

The *petumpai*:

> She puts on a necklace of impeccable jewels
> and places rings on her delicate fingers
> while jeweled armlets glitter on her arms.[50]

The *mankai*:

> Beautified by the chain around her neck
> she puts on a lush garland teeming with lively bees;
> hoops decorate her ears

a sumptuous girdle enhances her
and the exquisite designs traced on her body gleam.[51]

The *matantai*:

A necklace of burnished pearls adorns her neck
and myriad gems crowd together
ringing out in clamor.
She deftly scents herself with flower essences, musk and salves
to achieve perfection within and without,
she puts on shimmering garments to increase her radiance
and places a circlet set with a crest jewel upon her forehead;
Taking up cooling sandalwood
she spreads it on her arms,
the bright sandal lending her its color.[52]

The *arivai*:

She adorns her feet with a pair of anklets
and stacks her wrists with heavy bangles
thick with encrusted gems.
She decks her hair with an impeccable garland
strung with a golden thread
and enlivens her shapely neck with jewels,
she is a match for Shri herself.[53]

In India, and especially in a public milieu, the body elegantly adorned is both appropriate and aesthetically appealing, while the unornamented form is unworthy of attention. In his *Kavi-priya* (*Poets' Delight*) of 1601, written in Braj, the major northern dialect of literary, precolonial India, the poet Keshavdas makes this quite clear:

A woman may be noble, she may have good features. She may have a nice complexion, be filled with love, be shapely. But without ornaments, my friend, she is not beautiful. The same goes for poetry.[54]

To be unornamented implies grief, and to this day, in the more traditional segments of society, the absence of ornament implies mourning and a death in the family. An inscription of a Shilahara king (other examples abound) testifies to the women of his defeated rival abandoning adornment:

(He) caused the ladies in the harems of his enemies, slain
by his sharp sword drawn out (of its scabbard), to have

dangling (unbraided) hair, to discard necklaces from their
pitcher-like breasts, and to have eyes without collyrium.[55]

Belief in the necessity of ornamentation is the one aspect of Indian culture that many in the diaspora have the greatest difficulty setting aside in order to fit into the social pattern, the environment, in which they have chosen to live. To this day, Indian women of a certain generation, whether in India or overseas, wear a necklace, bangles, and earrings into a swimming pool or on a beach. The roots of such a practice date back over a thousand years. As David Smith points out in his study of the tenth-century *Hara-vijaya*, women take off their clothes to bathe but retain their ornaments, a practice that has nothing to do with worry about the safety of the jewels.[56] In a similar vein, a magnificent illustrated *Amaru-shataka* (*Hundred Verses on Amaru*) palm-leaf manuscript from Orissa, perhaps of the seventeenth century, depicts couples making love, having discarded their clothes but retained all their jeweled ornaments.[57]

An important function of ornament, explicitly affirmed by the *Tirukkailaya-nana-ula*, is to protect and safeguard its wearer—in this case, the women of the poem. Its phraseology is noteworthy: metaphorically speaking, the sound of her anklets keeps undesirables away, her bodice locks away her breast, armlets protect her arms, necklaces screen her neck, and earrings shelter her ears. Here is the poem's description of the *terivai* (a woman twenty-five to thirty years of age), as she adorns herself:

Anklets are like drums, proclaiming
"refined men may stay, but those who aren't must go!"
knowing this, she puts them on her splendid feet.
Knowing that there must be no unguarded movements to her loins
she girds them with a fine dress and girdle,
knowing that her charming breasts bewitch young men
she quickly locks them away in an elegant bodice.
With golden armlets she protects her bamboo-like arms,
she screens her lovely neck with a fine necklace
and gleaming earrings shelter her ears,
as though cooling the passion of her lily-dark eyes
she quells them with highlights of kohl.
Her beauty torments everyone
she bears the hallmarks of the goose's stride and the cuckoo's call.
Carefully tied, raven hued,
a crore of flowers worked into the plaits,
no longer veiled within her dress
falling low, free to cast its scent

her black braid exudes its misted nectars
She clothes herself in silk
crimson like the shining red waterlily
and paints a beautiful lily of saffron on her brow.[58]

Blake Wentworth suggests that apart from making a woman more attractive and providing her with protection, ornament contains, limits, and perhaps restricts the awesome power of women's fertility and eroticism, rendering those around them safe.[59] In the *Maha-bharata* story of Draupadi's vow to avenge her humiliation at the hands of the Kauravas, it is made clear that when a woman, here Draupadi, no longer oils and braids her hair, ornamenting it with blossoms, but instead chooses to let it loose and unadorned, she becomes dangerous.[60] The multiple ways in which ornament worked—its role in enhancing beauty, ensuring protection, and providing containment—are all brought home graphically by this ninth-century Tamil poem. It is in this context that we must consider the extravagantly adorned images featured on the walls of Indian monuments. To ornament or not to ornament was not the sculptor's option; it was mandated by its underlying significance. It may be useful, too, to note the dangerous ornaments, such as garlands of skulls and earrings of human corpses, worn by fearsome, powerful, yet dangerous goddesses like Kali.

Appropriate "ornament" went beyond what has been discussed thus far; it involved a range of courtly conventions that included gait and posture, graceful sitting, appropriate gestures, and a general protocol of body language. A woman's walk and stance was as much feted in literature, and translated into sculpture and painting, as her eyes and eyebrows. Ideas of ornament were also extended to relations between people so that, as Ali succinctly phrases it in his study of courtly culture, ornamentation is "a cultural figuration of practices and ideas so vast and significant as to subsume within it both anatomical and gestural beauty."[61]

Queens and Princesses

What applies to elite town and city women applies doubly to the beauty, charms, and accomplishments of women at the court, whether the queen herself or the wife of a general or chief minister. Standing in dignified elegance in a niche on the southern wall of the Nageshvara temple in Kumbakonam is the gorgeous figure of an unidentified queen, perhaps a member of the Chola royal family, which seems to have been responsible for building the temple (figure 7). Exceedingly slender, with a small, narrow waist and luscious breasts, she is carved so deeply that she seems about to step out of her niche. One hand rests by her side, while the other holds up a lotus bud. Her long skirt, slung way below her navel and held in place by hip-bands, clings to her limbs in gentle folds with

Figure 7. Queen, granite, Nageshvara temple, Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu, ninth century.

its pleated ends rippling downward. She has an exquisite oval face with full lips, delicate nose, and elongated eyes that glance downward. Her hair is styled in an amazing, blossom-studded arrangement on the top of her head, and completing her adornment are a forehead band, large earrings, necklaces, wide armlets, a stack of bangles, and rings on all ten fingers. It has been suggested by one scholar that she might represent Queen Kaushalya, mother of Rama.[62] Whether she represents a mythical queen or a queen contemporary with the temple's construction around the end of the ninth century, she presents a sensuous portrait of royalty that was clearly in the approved mode.

It is rare to find portrait sculptures of specific queens. An inscription speaks of a bronze image of the Chola queen Sembiyan Mahadevi, installed in the Kailasanatha Shiva temple in the town of Sembiyan Mahadevi (named after the queen). The re-

cord makes monetary provisions to ensure that on the queen's birthday, the image would be taken on a processional tour of the town and that Brahmins and townsfolk would be invited to a lavish celebratory feast. In premodern times, royal portraiture was invariably stylized, usually modeled to closely resemble divine figures, and it incorporated little in the way of specificity or verisimilitude. Devotees would likely have "recognized" the bronze as Sembiyan Mahadevi only because it was brought out in procession on the specific occasion of the queen's birthday honors. We know from inscriptions that Rajaraja's great temple at Tanjavur contained bronze "portraits" of Rajaraja himself and his chief queen, Lokamahadevi, as well as of his parents, King Sundara Chola and Queen Vanavan Mahadevi. Unfortunately, none of these images appears to have survived.[63]

I have suggested elsewhere the possibility that a bronze image in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., that has generally been taken to represent the goddess Uma may in fact be a "portrait" of Queen Sembiyan Mahadevi.[64] The argument on the interchangeable nature of divine and royal portraiture gains strength from Bhasa's fifth-century(?) drama *Pratima-lakshana* (*Cognizances of an Image*).[65] The story narrates that Prince Bharata, of *Ramayana* fame, returned to Ayodhya, unaware that his father had died in the interim. He enters a newly built pavilion containing four beautiful sculpted images, ponders their identity, and, concluding that they must represent the gods, prepares to worship them. At that moment, the keeper of the pavilion arrives, recognizes Prince Bharata, and identifies the first three images as those of Bharata's great-great-grandfather Dilipa, great-grandfather Raghu, and grandfather Aja. Bharata, inferring that the fourth image could only be that of his own father, who must hence be dead, breaks down and weeps. If the audience watching the drama did not find anything strange in Bharata failing to recognize his own father, it could only be because the stylization of royal portraits, modeled on divine images, was an accepted norm. We shall see later that only inscribed labels, or prior knowledge that a structure was a dynastic shrine, would yield clues to the identity of royal portraits.

Imagery chosen for Maya—a very special queen, wife of the chieftain Suddhodhana and mother of Siddhartha, who later became the Buddha—reveals the same persisting characteristic of idealized representation. Painted in a mural on the walls of the rock-cut Buddhist monastery of Ajanta is a slender, curvaceous figure, adorned with exquisite jewels and clad in an apparently translucent garment (figure 8). Standing in a pillared pavilion, leaning languorously against one of its columns as though pondering some deep secret, she looks like any gorgeous princess or queen. In the mode typical of continuous narrative, we see her a second time, to the left of the first scene, seated with Suddhodhana as they confer with courtiers. Few viewers unfamiliar with the art of India would visualize this gorgeous female as having any connection with the sacred. But she has, for she is Maya, the lovely young mother of

Figure 8. Queen Maya, painted mural, Vihara 2, Ajanta caves, Maharashtra, fifth century.

the Buddha. Standing Maya is seen in a reverie, obviously pondering the meaning of her dream of the night before, in which she saw a white elephant entering her womb. To the left, soothsayers at the court interpret her dream, telling her that she will give birth to a son who will be a universal conqueror. But they added a caveat. Either he would conquer the territories of this earth, or he would conquer the minds of men; if the latter, he would do so after renouncing the world. This painted mural, which emphasizes the aspect of Maya as the sensuously beautiful queen and downplays her role as the "sacred" mother of the Buddha-to-be, adorns the walls of a monastic residential *vihara* at Ajanta. The fifth-century artist of this mural saw nothing incongruous in his depiction of Maya as a sensuous beauty; neither did the monks who prayed and meditated within the painted *vihara*. Both artists and monks were part and parcel of a cultural milieu, to be explored more fully in chapter 4, in which bodily beauty was viewed as inseparable from innate spiritual beauty. In the context of sacred imagery, we shall see, the two were intertwined and inextricably linked.

When we turn to the literary material contained in inscriptions, we find a resounding reinforcement of the idea that the queen or elite female patron is always a woman of enthralling beauty. To demonstrate how female physical allure is applauded as publicly as female piety, I shall present three examples: one from a Jain dedication, the second from a Buddhist donor, and the third from a Hindu milieu. Two of the inscriptions are in Kannada, and the third is in Sanskrit.

During the twelfth century, Mailama, wife of Prince Beta, who was a feudatory of the Chalukyan monarch Vikramaditya VI, built a temple for the Jain goddess Kadalalaya at Hanumkonda near Warangal in southern Karnataka. The Kannada inscription that records her construction of the temple and her gift of land to provide for sustained worship dates to the reign of her son, and is inscribed on a granite pillar that stands in front of the temple. In applauding her gift, the epigraph praises the beauty of her body as fully as her devotion to the Jain faith:

> Mailama, whose face was (as pleasant as) the moon (and) whose lips were (red like) the bimba (fruit), the colour of whose body was praised as being fair and her full breasts as being golden pots, (who was) the veritable lady Bharati, a Sasanadevi (par excellence) acceptable to the doctrines of the Jain religion (and) decidedly (the goddess) Lakshmi (but) without (the latter's) fickleness.
>
> (verse 6)

> Who, who in this world does not extol Mailama saying: "The lotus-born (Brahma) having produced, out of the five gems (such) as best suited the portion of the body (under creation), the (several) limbs with (their) adjuncts from the feet right up to those tremulous curls, (and) having filled (them) with happiness, grace, joy (and) beauty (which he) culled from among the celestial nymphs—(he) loved (to see) this gem of womankind (—his own creation)."
>
> (verse 7)

> The whole, whole world praise deservedly the wife of the minister Beta saying: "She possesses praiseworthy beauty; she is full of luster; (she) is a Rati in dalliance; (she) is the lady Sri (Lakshmi); (she) is the lady Ghantaki [a Jain reference]; (she) is the lady Vani (Sarasvati)."[66]
>
> (verse 8)

In similar vein, when Kumaradevi, wife of King Govindachandra of Kanauj, gifted a Buddhist *vihara* at Sarnath, both her physical beauty and her devotion to the Buddha were acclaimed in a set of Sanskrit verses of the twelfth century inscribed on a stone slab. The poet uses the idea that Brahma was filled with wonder at the excellence of his own creation, a conceit frequently encountered in Indian literature:

> After having created her, Brahma was filled with pride at his own cleverness in applying his art; excelled by her face the moon, being ashamed, remains in the air, rises at night, becomes impure and subsequently full of spots; how can this, her marvelous beauty, be described by people like us?[67]

The verse that follows elaborates on her beauty, which, according to the poet, outdoes that of the goddess Parvati, and he then devotes the next verse to her devotion to the Buddha: "Her mind was set on religion [*dharma*] alone; her desire was bent on virtues [*guna*]; she had undertaken to lay in a store of merit [*punya*]; she found a noble satisfaction in bestowing gifts [*dana*]." But the poet is unable to get away from her physical beauty. He continues: "[H]er gait was that of an elephant [a reference to a woman's full hips, which slow her down];[68] her appearance charming to the eye."

The Hindu context is no different. The Kadamba queen Mailaladevi donated a town and garden as an endowment to support a Shiva temple near Dharwar in the year 1125, and a Kannada inscription records her beauty in fulsome terms as being greater than that of Rambha and Tilottama (celestial nymphs of ravishing beauty):

> The beauty of this Mailaladevi surpasses (that of) Rambha and Tilottama, much more so (that of) mortal women; it is charming, look you, verily a hundred times.
>
> (verse 31)

> "This is a sea of the nectar of loveliness that has been beheld; this grace is the play of the Moon's brows; a regular expansion of beauty . . . verily, look you, a wealth of jasmine; this is Sarasvati's natal place": in these words people (extol) the abundance of the greatness of Mailaladevi's beauty that has arisen in this world.[69]

The inscription moves into the mode of high hyperbole (Sanskrit, *atishayokti*), an approved mode of poetic embellishment, in specifying that the queen's grace is twice that of Parvati and her virtue twelve times that of Sita!

These three examples from an entire range of similarly constructed public poems, composed as official poetry to applaud the patron who constructed a temple or *vihara* or who made a generous donation to an already existing shrine, are instructive. Some of the donations were made by queen mothers during the reign of their sons; while they were certainly not in their prime, it is clear that physical beauty was an expected adjunct to piety. The multiple instances that one might cite of the use of similar tropes indicate

this to be the official stance! In addition, as we shall see shortly, queens were supposed to be well versed in the ways of sexual pleasure, and numerous epigraphs evoke Rati, the celebrated consort of Kama, god of love, applauding queens as "a Rati in dalliance."[70]

Each of these women was, of course, a mother whose womb had borne a princely hero, and an allusion to this role frequently follows the fulsome description of her beauty. The following verse from a lengthy Sanskrit stone inscription at Khajuraho describes the glory of the Chandella queen Kanchuka, wife of King Dhanga and mother of King Yashovarman, who built the Lakshmana temple:

> As her complexion was of golden hue, the pair of eyes like sapphire and the moonstone, her hands and feet having the luster of ruby, the lips like coral and the mind pure like the pearl just released from its parent shell, this lady of unique constancy became a jewel among women and a matchless ornament of the world.
>
> From her was born his son Yasovarmadeva[71]

We may note here that the queen herself is seen as an ornament for this world, and we shall see that the monarch, too, was often extolled with similar phraseology. We cannot help but note the linkage of beauty with fertility, as well as virtue, and perhaps even with eugenics in producing a perfect heir to the kingdom.

The Male Form

The Idealized Body and *Alankara*

The male figure portrayed on the temples, stupas, and caves of India is smooth, slender, and pliant, with body hair noticeably absent, and displays an idealized gender portrayal characteristic of the Indian tradition. It is a far cry from the musculature of Greek and Roman statues poised in action and, in this respect, bears a closer resemblance to the traditions of China, Korea, and Japan. The term "beautiful" may be applied to the portrayal in art of the Indian male physique, with its gentle oval face, elongated eyes, and full lips, set off by long hair pulled back into an elegant knot. It bears repetition here that the literature of India employed equally for men and women many of the words that connote beauty, such as *sundara*, *charu*, and *kanta* as well as terms with the prefix *su*. Men frequently shared with women a set of established poetic tropes, such as faces that put the moon to shame, eyes that outdo the lotus, arched eyebrows, feet and hands like lotuses, full red lips, and gleaming toenails.[72] Like women, men adorned themselves with appropriate ornament (*alankara*). In this context, we may recall the legendary ease with

Figure 9. Future Buddha Maitreya, copper alloy with gilding and color, Nepal, ninth to tenth century.

which Krishna, on many an occasion, disguised himself as a woman to get access to his beloved Radha. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century painted manuscripts all emphasize this artistic ideal, whether they portray Krishna in the guise of a female bangle-seller, as a participant in the all-women's Holi celebrations, or as a beautiful male figure bathing with the *gopis* in the waters of the Jamuna.

It is perhaps not really surprising that nine out of ten people unfamiliar with South Asian art are likely to use the pronoun "she" when exclaiming over the beauty of a sensuous Nepalese image of the future Buddha Maitreya (figure 9). Wearing a patterned dhoti with a slanting hip-band, Maitreya is depicted as a beautiful figure, swaying gently as he stands, with a slender torso; sloping shoulders; long, pliant arms of which one holds his attribute, the water vessel; smooth, tapering thighs; and neat ankles. His exquisite face has perfectly arched eyebrows, elongated eyes, full lips, and hair piled up in elaborate curled locks. A range of jewelry adorns him, from his crown, necklace, sacred thread, and earrings, to armlets, bracelets, and anklets. With the exception of images of the renunciant

Figure 10. *Dvarapala*, sandstone, north gateway, Sanchi stupa, Madhya Pradesh, first century B.C.E.

Jinas, artists generally avoided the issue of the portrayal of the male sexual organs by the strategic placement of the hip-belt or the drapery folds. However, rare instances do occur in which an artist created a molded curve. The portrayal of the outline of the scrotum occurs, for instance, on the slender, sensuous figure of a *dvarapala* (guardian warrior), clad in a transparent dhoti, carved against a pillar of the northern gateway of the Buddhist stupa at Sanchi during the first century B.C.E. (figure 10).[73] The artists of the *dvarapalas* on the other three gateways avoided this issue by resorting to the central placement of the dhoti folds.

Gender similarity is further encountered in the elaborately styled, long hair that male figures sported in premodern times, as well as the rich jewelry they wore. Embracing couples on the walls of the Khajuraho temples of central India have in common long hair, often pulled back into similarly elaborate knots; jeweled forehead bands; and large earrings (figure 11). The abundant jewelry worn by the men includes rows of necklaces short and long, armlets, bangles, anklets, and rings; male beauty, too, was considered enhanced by rich and varied jewelry. And like the women, the men are clad in fine, translucent drapery. It is worth noting the emphasis placed on adornment in Vatsyayana's *Kama-sutra* (*Text on Erotic Love*), a text that probably dates to the third century. In its list of the sixty-four arts that every cultivated man-about-town (*nagaraka*) should master, as many as fifteen relate to adornment: nine deal with the ornamentation of the body, and six concern the adornment of one's surroundings.[74]

Figure 11. Embracing couple, sandstone, Lakshmana temple, Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, ca. 954.

Kings and Princes

The importance accorded in eulogistic inscriptions and literary texts to the monarch's valor in battle, his piety and righteousness, and his *dakshinya* (gracious courtesy and gentility) is always accompanied by an emphasis on his physical beauty, sexual attraction, and mastery of the erotic arts. The art-historical material, however, is regrettably

meager, and the few stone images of kings and monarchs that survive are badly damaged. The earliest known set of royal portraits is sculpted in bas-relief into the rock face of a cave at Naneghat, cut into the walls of a mountain pass on a trade route that led through the Western Ghats to ports along the west coast of India. These images are totally destroyed, leaving intact only their inscribed labels. Carved at the behest of Queen Nayanika, the images commence with the founder of the Satavahana dynasty, followed by Queen Nayanika herself and her husband, Satakarni (the third dynastic monarch), three princes, and a general. While the destruction of what seem to be the earliest full-size Indian royal portraits—they may date to around 70 B.C.E.—is deeply regrettable, it is almost certain that the figures were stylized images, identifiable by their labels rather than by physical resemblance. We have seen from Bhasa's *Pratima-lakshana* that verisimilitude was never the favored ideal. Additionally, Bhavabhuti's eighth-century play *Uttara-rama-charita* (*Rama's Last Act*), which commences with Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana viewing a set of painted murals of their life, depicts them recognizing episodes due to the unique setting, with nothing to suggest recognition of their own "portraits" because of any actual resemblance.[75]

The Kushan rulers of the first century C.E. erected royal shrines, one of which was located at Mat, just outside the town of Mathura. Remains of only three royal images survive, one sitting and two standing, all unfortunately damaged and lacking their heads, but identified by inscriptions along the body of each image itself. Emperor Kanishka is portrayed as an imperious figure, wearing a heavy woolen military mantle and padded boots and leaning lightly on his sword, which rests within its scabbard. His body beneath is totally concealed, and the emphasis is on the hierarchic authority conveyed by the silhouette of the cloak. The official Kushan costume of the Central Asian steppes could hardly have been worn on a regular basis in the heat of the plains of Mathura. It was chosen for the portraits in the royal shrine presumably because, as "foreigners" ruling India, the Kushans sought to convey authority and assert their legitimate right to rule. Kushan coins likewise portray hierarchic images of royalty, clad in the official military-style mantle, boots, and tall conical headdress, all of which speak emphatically of authority and power.

By contrast, Gupta gold coins portray sinuous images of the monarchs, tall and slender, and swaying gently as they stand, all with haloes to emphasize their royal status. Although the coins are worn out through circulation, one can decipher sufficient details on them to permit the use of the term "royal portraiture" (figure 12). On one coin, Samudragupta (r. ca. 335–376) stands frontally, although with his face in profile, wearing a short tunic over a short dhoti and holding the typical, double-curved Indian bow in his left hand. Beside him is a pedestal topped with an owl, and beneath the upraised arm that holds the bow are the three letters *sa mu dra*, clearly engraved from top to bottom. That valor was a vital quality of a monarch is seen in a coin on which the ruler is portrayed as the beautiful hero battling a lion

Figure 12. Portrait coins of Samudragupta, gold, ca. 355–376.

that rears at him from the left edge of the coin. The broad-chested, narrow-waisted monarch with muscular thighs stands with his right foot planted on the ground and his left foot raised on a rock or mound. With his left hand, he reaches into the quiver slung on his back to pull out an arrow, while his outstretched right hand holds the bow. The range of coin imagery makes it evident that there is more to monarchy than battle-worthiness; mastery of the sixty-four arts was an expected accomplishment. One coin portrays Samudragupta as a musician playing the lyre, seated elegantly on a low couch with his right leg bent and placed on the seat and his left leg resting on the ground. Yet another gold coin depicts him as the beautiful monarch accompanied by his beloved queen. Wearing a tunic over a long dhoti, Samudragupta holds a staff in his left hand and with his right hand he raises the queen's chin in an intimate gesture of love. The queen is portrayed with voluptuous breasts, a slender waist, long limbs, and translucent, flowing drapery that reveals her limbs. Only gold coins have been considered here because they were not part of everyday exchange, and as a result their imagery is better preserved than that on the copper coins of daily use, which are badly abraded. It should not surprise us to find sensuous imagery on Gupta coinage. After all, the poet Kalidasa, probably writing at a Gupta court soon after these coins were minted, laid great emphasis on the beauty of the monarch. In his *Raghu-vamsha* (*Family of Raghu*), he describes Dilipa, founder of the Raghu dynasty, as "a king refreshing, cool and like the moon, the purest of great Manu's line . . . broad-chested, tall, with shoulders like the bull's, with rounded arms and body strong befitting well his royal duties high."[76]

At the Pallava port town of Mamallapuram, the Adi-varaha cave of the seventh century, dedicated to Vishnu in his avatar of the great boar Varaha, carries two royal portrait groups along the side walls where they meet the rear wall. The right wall features a monarch, with broad shoulders and exceedingly narrow torso, standing in frontal view but pointing with his right hand toward the shrine at the center of the rear wall. With his left hand, he grasps the wrist of his chief queen, who stands demurely behind him, followed by a second queen. Both queens are strikingly sensuous figures with high, rounded breasts, tiny waists, and limbs revealed by translucent drapery. The inscribed label above the panel reads "Pallava king Mahendra." The opposite wall features a seated monarch with similar broad shoulders and narrow torso, with his left leg folded on the seat and his right leg pendant. He is flanked by standing queens of the same sensuous characterization as those just encountered. The label above reads "Pallava king Simhavishnu." It is most likely that the seated monarch is Simhavishnu (r. ca. 555–590) and the standing figure is his son and successor, Mahendra I (r. ca. 590–630).[77] Without the labels, however, it would have been impossible to identify the monarchs, both of whom are generic in portrayal, with bare torso and a long lower garment.

Analogous in their nonspecific portrayal of the Pallava monarchs are the bas-reliefs that lay out the genealogy of the Pallavas along the walls of the pillared cloister enclosing the Vaikuntha Perumal temple in Kanchipuram.[78] Built in the eighth century by

the later Pallava king, Nandivarman Pallavamalla, the reliefs are carved in two horizontal levels, separated by a narrow band intended to carry inscriptions; however, it is only in the final third of the reliefs, devoted to Pallavamalla himself, that these inscriptions have been added. Identification of the earlier monarchs remains sheer guesswork, since all are similarly portrayed, wearing identical garments and crowns, with generalized, nonspecific faces. Such tentative identifications as are possible are largely the result of moving from one coronation lustration scene to the next and generally working backward from Pallavamalla. And even then, the coronation of Simhavishnu looks exactly like the coronation of Pallavamalla.[79]

Among the few identifiable royal portraits from premodern India are images of King Narasimhadeva of the Ganga dynasty (r. 1238–1264), who was responsible for the construction of the imposing sun temple at Konarak. A set of four damaged panels, cut in deep relief in a fine-grained chlorite, depict the king, accompanied by members of his court, engaging in a series of activities that may perhaps be read to indicate his observance of the four goals of life. This must remain a mere suggestion, since we cannot be sure if other panels, lost today, once existed. A panel portraying the seated monarch holding a manuscript in one hand and perhaps dispensing justice and attending to affairs of the court could be read as representing *dharma*. *Artha* is perhaps suggested by his portrayal as an archer, a professional status for some. *Kama* is indicated by Narasimhadeva sitting on a swing in the women's quarters with queens and female attendants. *Moksha* may be implied by the portrayal of the king receiving blessings from his guru in front of three images: a Shiva linga, the Jagannatha image of Vishnu, and Devi killing the buffalo-demon. These panels once adorned the 6-foot-high pedestal of the monumental image of the Sun God enshrined within the Konarak sanctum.

Narasimhadeva is portrayed from one panel to the next as a mustached male, wearing a tiara on his long hair, which is pulled to the right side of his face to form a magnificent chignon studded with jewels. His face is moon-shaped, with strongly arched eyebrows, elongated eyes, a sharp nose, and a pert chin. His vigorous body displays broad shoulders, a full chest, a narrow waist, and sturdy thighs and calves. He wears a short dhoti with an elaborately worked border that is held in place by a jeweled belt; the edge of his dhoti spreads out, fan-shaped, in pleated folds, and his upper cloth is seen behind him as a scarf-like throw. Elaborate earrings, rows of necklaces, a sacred thread, rich armlets, anklets, and rings on all his toes complete his adornment. In the archery panel, he stands poised for action, with feet planted widely apart; attendants stand behind him, and a series of onlookers face him with hands in the *anjali* gesture of adoration. Today, both the bow and the arrow are broken away (figure 13). When Narasimhadeva sits on the swing, a wooden plank suspended by chains, his left leg is bent on the seat and his right is pendant. Apart from two small males depicted behind him (perhaps the eunuchs who guard

Figure 13. King Narasimhadeva as an archer, chlorite, Konarak temple, Orissa.

Figure 14. King Narasimhadeva on a swing, chlorite, Konarak temple, Orissa.

the women's quarters of a palace), all the other figures, whether standing beside the swing or sitting at his feet, are female and hold either fly whisks or musical instruments (figure 14). Although his body and its ornament follow established poetic and artistic tropes, Narasimhadeva is recognizable from one portrait to the next by his mustached visage. Yet, as a precautionary note, we must keep in mind that he is the only Ganga ruler of whom we have a portrait. Perhaps if similarly stylized images of his various predecessors had survived, we would have complained of the difficulty of distinguishing one ruler from the next.

As we turn from the visual to the verbal, a point to be emphasized is the homology, even identity, that Hindu monarchs claimed with the god Vishnu, together with his consorts Lakshmi (Shri), goddess of fortune, and Bhu, earth goddess. The rescue of Bhu by Vishnu's Varaha avatar lent itself perfectly to an aspiring *chakravartin*'s territorial claims. Monarch after monarch claimed Vishnu-like status by proclaiming that they, too, had rescued the earth (*bhu*) and that they, too, were the abode of the goddess of fortune (*shri*). In fact, one scholar has pointed to the need to reexamine the very large number of imposing sculptures of Vishnu Varaha—both in anthropomorphic form with a boar head and in purely theriomorphic form as a giant boar, holding up the earth goddess, whom he has rescued from the cosmic waters—that exist at sites of the Gupta period.[80] This homology was proudly adopted even by those monarchs who were staunch Shaiv-

ites, as seen in the invariable preamble to all inscriptions of Rajaraja Chola (r. 985–1014). To identify a record as belonging to Rajaraja I, all we need is its opening: "one who took as wife the goddess earth just as he had already taken the goddess of wealth."[81] When the seventh-century Chalukyan monarch Pulakesin II wished to make this homology evident, his inscription states that the sandal oil smeared on his body "is rubbed off by [the clinging of] the bulky breasts of the goddess of fortune who practices [toward him] the vow of treating a husband like a god."[82] The similarity of phraseology between this record and one we shall encounter in chapter 4 that speaks of the lines of color being rubbed off Lakshmi's breasts and onto Vishnu's chest is striking confirmation of the intention.[83] One further example serves to make the point: concerning the Paramara prince Madanadeva, a Sanskrit inscription of the year 1080 states, with considerable audacity, that the goddess Sri (Lakshmi) was more attracted to the prince than to Vishnu himself: "Finding him arisen in his career, broad of breast, charming, Sri, as I imagine, held no [more] amorous commerce with her ancient husband [Vishnu]."[84]

Both literary texts and eulogistic inscriptions present a similar, repeated emphasis on the monarch's physical attractiveness and beauty, which are accorded importance as indispensable attributes, side by side with his valor, gentility, and piety. On earth, the king was the supreme ruler who ensured the felicity of his subjects. Beauty was listed among the *gunas* (virtues), and the beautiful monarch's power to captivate the hearts of his subjects and, in particular, the magnetic power of his personality over the hearts of women were hailed as vital royal attributes.[85] His physical beauty, enhanced with scintillating ornament, and his consequent splendor were given a status equal to the excellence of his attainments, character, integrity, and munificence. In the seventh-century prose biography of the historical king Harsha of Kanauj, the beauty of the king's body, appropriately adorned, is described in great detail by his court poet Bana:

> His two thighs were like ruby pillars . . . like two sandal
> trees . . . like two streams from the ocean of beauty . . .
> like two huge tusks . . .
>
> He shone with his broad chest . . .
>
> His neck was encircled by a necklace of pearls . . .
>
> His breast was wrapped in a fold of rays from the pearls in
> his necklace . . .
>
> . . . the redness of his lip . . .
>
> . . . the gleaming flashes of his teeth . . .

> . . . the perfume of his breath . . .
>
> . . . the brightness of his milk-white eye
>
> . . . broad forehead
>
> . . . his locks encircled by a wreath of white jasmine flowers
> . . .
>
> He was consecrated by the light of the pearls in his top-knot and the dark rays of emeralds, as they crossed in their intermingling, as if the braid-like streams of the united Yamuna and Ganges had come of their own accord from Prayaga.[86]

The panegyric inscriptions of the various monarchs of India, irrespective of chronology or topography, sound remarkably similar. The monarch Sundara Chola (r. 957–969) was one "who quite surpassed Cupid in beauty,"[87] while the Chola emperor Rajaraja I (r. 985–1014) "had a body as beautiful as Cupid, and handsome lotus eyes."[88] Chalukya king Pulakesin II (r. 610–642) was "the sole aim of the arrows which are the eyes of nice young women,"[89] and Chalukya Vikramaditya's son was one "who to womankind was like the god of love."[90] A Rashtrakuta copper-plate inscription of the year 915, whose specific purpose was to record the gift of certain villages, describes King Jagattunga as one "who surpassed the beauty of Madana" and was "the ravisher of the hearts of beautiful women [*sundari-chitta-hari*]";[91] his son Indraraja (r. 915–927) "dwelt in the hearts of beautiful women";[92] and Rashtrakuta Krishna III's (r. 939–966) body "had a dark glossy colour, long arms, and a broad massive chest."[93] An inscription of the twelfth century from Huli in the Belgaum district, written in old Kannada, speaks thus of the chieftain Malapayya: "The souls of choice damsels became a place for the shafts of the god of the flower arrows . . . through the lord Malapayya, by reason of the perfection of his grace of form."[94] Being an adept in the art of love was another trait that was much hailed; accordingly, the Chandella king Paramarddi (r. 1166–1202) is described as "a guide in the mysteries of amorous and heroic sentiments [*shringara-vira-vratacharya*]."[95] These concepts of male physical beauty and sexual attractiveness, considered in their entirety, are like a resounding echo of the point made by Irene Winter in the context of ancient Mesopotamia: that sexuality was linked to potency, in turn to male vigor, in turn to authority and dominance, and hence to the right to rule.[96]

The symbolism attached to the human body in Hindu ritual, mentioned in chapter 1, is emphasized and intensified in the royal *abhisheka* (bathing ceremonial of coronation), which invests the king with extraordinary powers. As Ronald Inden has pointed out, such bathing was no mere purification but an act by which the king's body was imbued with divine energy. Inden maintains that an elaborate bathing ceremony was part of every major ritual connected with the establishment or reaffirmation of kingship and authority.[97] One especially relevant part of the coronation bathing ceremony involved daubing the different parts of the king's body with soil brought from various parts of the kingdom to symbolize "a kind of extraordinary marriage of the king and the earth, his bride"—a clear reference to his dominion over the earth conferred through symbolic ritual.[98] Its importance in this context is its emphasis on the centrality of the human body, here that of the monarch. Royal power and the authority to rule were vested in the dynamic and beautiful body of the king.

The comparison of a monarch's territorial conquests to his conquest over the body of a woman is an accepted trope in the Indian poetic tradition.[99] Ronald Davidson has pointed to another well-attested phenomenon in which "war became depicted as a facet of the erotic play of the king," suggesting that "the eroticization of warfare served the purpose of belligerence."[100] Allison Busch draws attention to an example of such eroticization, through an unusual use of the *nakh-sikh* (toenail-to-head) convention of beauty, contained in the Braj poet Keshavdas's 1607 poem on his patron, Bir Singh Deo of Orchha. He constructs the army contingents of the enemy in terms of a sexualized woman whom Bir Singh confronts as bridegroom. The following two verses give an idea of such a construct:

> 18. The Kanaujiyas were her beautiful bodice; think of the Karachulis as her firm breasts. The supremely clever Pavaiyas were her hands; the lion-like kings her freshly manicured fingernails.
>
> 19. The Kosala kings were her waist; the Yadavas her two thighs. The Kaikeyas were said to be her shoot-like feet. The Tomars were love, and the Pariharas her heart. The Rathores were her garment, and the Pamars her beauty.[101]

Equally remarkable is the manner in which the Rashtrakuta king Dantidurga's many territorial conquests are described in the specific terms of human lovemaking. The inscription seems to suggest that the authority to rule and the manner of a monarch's dominance lie in his ability to conquer territories, not by wresting them violently and making them submit by force, but by tactfully coaxing them into a willing surrender. His strategy of territorial conquest, juxtaposed with love-play with his beloved, is brought out in graphic detail:

> The hand [that is, prowess] of this (prince) matchless in battle, having (first) established itself on the beautiful lowermost region of the earth, and having again overcome in a gentle manner at its own will the central region (Madhyadesha), again established itself in the province of Kanchi, just as the hand (of a lover), after (first) establishing itself on the hips of a woman, attractive to the heart [*hridaya hari*], and pressing again gently at her will (her) waist, again establishes itself on the region (below the waist) where the girdle (is worn).[102]

Kanchi, in this inscription, is a word with *shlesha* (double meaning); it makes reference both to the town of Kanchipuram, over which the monarch has triumphed, and to the hip-girdle (*kanchi*) on the body of a woman whom he has similarly conquered.

The importance of ornament for a *kshatriya* monarch or chieftain is emphasized in a number of textual sources, including the Jain *Kalpa-sutra*, which narrates the lives of the Jain liberators, the Jinas. The adornment of *kshatriya* Siddhartha, whose wife Trishala was chosen to bear in her womb the Jina Mahavira, is described in extraordinary detail:

> He dressed in precious and best of robes,
> had his body rubbed with soft and scented *gosirsa* and sandal pastes,
> after this were celebrated and performed hundreds of after-bath pleasant, blissful and blest ceremonies,
> then were placed on him a wreath of flowers purified by the spray of sandal paste and a gold necklace set with pearls,
> a three-fold necklace of pearls, with a pearl pendant dangling therefrom,
> a golden zone at the waist, a collar round his neck, rings on his tender fingers, bangles and bracelets adorning the arms, ear-rings brightening the face, and a shining crown
> —all these imparting extra grace to his charming person
> . . . well-dressed and well-decorated, he looked like the *kalpa* tree, the leader of men.[103]

Bodily beauty and adornment of a monarch were considered important, regardless of his connection with a faith that stressed the primacy of renunciation and penance in the context of advanced spirituality.

The *Ula* (processional) genre of Tamil poetry, encountered earlier with the god as the protagonist, was utilized equally to celebrate the earthly monarch. Ottukutar, court poet to two successive Chola monarchs—Kulottunga I (r. 1070–1125) and Vikrama Chola (r. ca. 1120–1135)—wrote *Ula* poems that focused on them. He describes the *alankara* of the monarchs, indicating its crucial importance to kingship and state welfare. *Alankara* increased the beauty of the king, and the monarch's attractiveness was one vital feature in ensuring the prosperity, fame, and welfare of the kingdom. The excerpt that follows is from Daud Ali's translation of the *Vikrama-chola-ula* (*Procession of Vikrama Chola*):

> On his face, which was like a bloomed flower around which bees thronged, where the Goddess of Eloquence resided, Sarasvati, glittered makara earrings.
> On his shoulders, where the broad-breasted Goddess of the Earth, stayed, were epaulets brilliant with gems.
> On his hand, where the unsteady Goddess of Fame was fixed, sparkled a bracelet of gems.
> On his chest, where the Goddess of Fortune lovingly embraced him, shone with increasing splendour a jewel from the sea.
> On his hip, where the beautiful Goddess of Victory, free of distress, resided, was a beautiful sword.
> Having put on numerous rare ornaments of suitably lofty beauty, he obtained matchless elegance and grace such that it seemed as if Siva had bestowed on him, while he was bowing with the crest of his crown, the beauty he had once attained as "respect" from Kama's bow.
> The king then departed from the palace . . .[104]

Several scholars have made the point that in these *Ula* poems, the king (or the god) remains distant and detached and apparently oblivious to the impassioned responses of the women of various ages who "swoon, collectively and individually, at this unbearably alluring vision."[105] Yet this display of the king's beauty, virility, and power, with its accompanying display of passion by the lovesick, distraught women, was considered necessary for the self-construction of monarchy. Through this ritual, the king "symbolizes and focuses the fertile and auspicious forces necessary for the kingdom's growth."[106] The king displayed publicly his handsome, virile, sexually attractive, and sumptuously adorned person, giving *darshana* (transferring grace to the viewer) similar to that of the temple deity, and thereby bestowing fortune on his audience. *Darshana* of the king was auspicious.

Alankara of the monarch, and the ritual display of his person in processions and at court *darbars*, retained its importance throughout India's history. Joanne Waghorne's study of the Pudukkottai rajas during the period of British rule brings this home in many ways. Her pithy observation that "the act of getting dressed and of dressing others was the primary ritual act at court in Pudukkottai" is deeply insightful and certainly parallels the situation highlighted in Ali's study of premodern India.[107] The raja displayed himself in *darbar* (in all his ornamented glory), and Waghorne points out that "the word used for the king seated in state, *samalankara*, quite literally means fully ornamented."[108] The "dressing others" refers largely, although not exclusively, to the raja's bestowing forms of clothing and ornaments as honors upon his officers; this was a custom initiated by monarchs from very early times, and continued throughout Mughal and Rajput rule into the British period. We may note, too, that the famed maharajas of the colonial period often commissioned the most dramatic and extravagant jewelry for themselves, the monarchs, and not for their wives or daughters. It was the royal body for which such sumptuous display was deemed necessary. A case in point is the maharaja of Patiala's magnificent diamond, emerald, and pearl necklace, which covered his chest from neck to navel and which he commissioned in 1928 from Cartier in Paris. With its centerpiece a pale yellow diamond, the size of a golf ball and weighing 234 carats, the extraordinary necklace, strung on five rows of platinum chains, contained 2,930 diamonds weighing just under 1,000 carats. After the necklace was rediscovered in 1998, damaged and missing its major gemstones, Cartier repaired and re-created the piece and placed it on display in 2002 in the firm's New York showroom, where it stunned viewers.[109]

Chakravartin Buddha

The images of Siddhartha, who became the Buddha, constitute a unique instance of a being born into a royal lineage but later considered divine. Siddhartha is said to have exhibited all thirty-two signs of a *chakravartin* (universal emperor). During the second and first centuries B.C.E., when the story of the Buddha first began to be told in art, only signs were used to indicate his presence, perhaps because the artists found it an impossible task to express in bodily form the grandeur of one who had escaped the cycle of rebirth after some five hundred births on earth.[110] The very first anthropomorphic images of the Buddha, produced around the turn of the current era, appear to display characteristics of royal imagery, making it appropriate to consider them in the context of this chapter.

From an early date, and certainly from the time of the composition of the *Ashokavadana* (*Legend of Ashoka*) in the second century, emphasis was laid on the bodily appearance of the Buddha.[111] As John Strong points out in his analysis of the text, while Emperor Ashoka makes a pilgrimage to the various sites associated with events in the life of the Buddha, it is a description of the Buddha himself that interests

him. At Lumbini, where the Buddha was born, Ashoka speaks to a tree spirit of the body of the Master:

> You witnessed his birth and saw
> his body adorned with the marks!
> You gazed upon his large lotus-like eyes![112]

Seeking out the *naga* king Kalika, who saw the Buddha before his enlightenment, Ashoka asks him to recount the glory of the Buddha's body:

> You saw my peerless Master
> his complexion like blazing gold
> and his face like the autumn moon.
> Recount for me some of the Buddha's qualities;
> tell me what it was like—
> the splendor of the Sugata.[113]

Early literary texts also stress the physical beauty of Suddhodhana, father of Siddhartha, the Buddha-to-be. In his *Buddha-charita*, the poet Ashvagosha says of the Buddha's father: "By his beauty he attracted, like the moon, the gaze of his subjects." Siddhartha, too, was "radiant with wondrous beauty." Once he leaves the palace in his quest of enlightenment, young Siddhartha (not yet the enlightened Buddha) is lamented thus:

> Have those hairs of his which are worthy of being encircled by a royal diadem, been cast to the ground, hairs which were soft, black and glossy, in great locks and curling upwards with each hair growing separately from its own orifice?
>
> His arms are long, his gait that of the king of beasts, his eyes like a mighty bull's, his chest broad, his voice like the drum of the gods, and he shines with the brilliance of gold. Ought such a one to live in a hermitage?
>
> His feet are soft with a beautiful network spread over the toes, tender as the fibre of a lotus or a flower, with the ankle-bones concealed and wheels in the middle of the soles. Shall they tread on the hard ground of the jungle?
>
> He is ennobled by race [*kula*], goodness, strength, beauty, learning, majesty and youth, and so fitted to give, not to ask. Is he to practice begging alms from others?[114]

The mood and mode of the lament are very likely modeled on the parallel lament in the *Ramayana* over Prince Rama, accustomed to palace luxury, being forced to live in forest exile.[115] It is also analogous to the lament over the exile of the Pandava princes, whether detailed in the *Maha-bharata* epic itself or in *kavyas* like Bharavi's seventh-century *Kiratarjuniya* (*The Hunter and Arjuna*).[116]

The thirty-two marks (*lakshanas*) of the Buddha's superhuman perfection listed in the *Digha Nikaya*, a Pali text translated into English under the title *Dialogues of the Buddha*, constitute, in fact, the thirty-two marks of a *chakravartin* (literally, "wheel-turning monarch").[117] Although the *Digha Nikaya* text was committed to writing only during the third or fourth century, a widely known oral version must have existed at a much earlier date, since the *Buddha-charita* of the first century C.E. displays knowledge of these thirty-two signs. In the verses that lament the departure of Siddhartha, the description of the Buddha is not mere poetic fancy, but deliberately includes either the exact *lakshanas* attributed to the Buddha as *chakravartin* or closely parallel *lakshanas*. His hair grows from separate pores (*lakshana* 13) and is black and curly (*lakshana* 14), his complexion is the color of gold (*lakshana* 11), his gait is that of a lion (*lakshana* 17), his arms are long (*lakshana* 4), his voice is that of the drum of the gods (*lakshana* 29: voice is of a *karavika* bird), and his eyes are like those of a bull (*lakshana* 29: eyes are intensely blue). The description of his feet incorporates a further four *lakshanas*: they are soft and tender (*lakshana* 5), with ankles like rounded shells (*lakshana* 3), with wheels on his soles (*lakshana* 2), and with toes joined by a network (*lakshana* 6). This last mentioned *lakshana* extends also to the fingers of the Buddha's hand, which are said to be webbed or joined by a network. These *lakshanas*, so closely linked with the Buddha through Buddhistic studies of the twentieth century, were associated in ancient times with all royal *chakravartins*. This is clearly evident from the reference to the webbed hand in Kalidasa's drama *Shakuntala*. When King Dushyanta unknowingly encounters his own son in Maricha's hermitage and sees him reach out to grab a tiger cub, he is deeply attracted to the child and ponders:

> Why does he bear the mark of a king who turns the
> wheel of empire?
> A hand with fine ribs connecting the fingers
> opens as he reaches for the object greedily,
> like a single lotus with faint open petals
> spread open in the red glow of early dawn.[118]

Images of the Buddha were modeled so as to display the thirty-two *lakshanas*, or at any rate those that are clearly recognizable, such as the webbed hand, the *ushnisha* (interpreted by artists as a cranial protuberance disguised with his hair), and the *urna*

Figure 15. Future Buddha Maitreya, sandstone, Ahicchhattra, Uttar Pradesh, first century.

dot between the eyebrows, to constitute what one scholar has described as "canonical adornment."[119]

It is intriguing to note that when the Buddha began to be sculpted in bodily form in the region of Mathura during the first century C.E., his sexual virility was emphasized.[120] This emphasis on sexuality is shared by a group of more-than-life-size standing images created at the behest of prominent monks and nuns. These comprise a 10-foot-high Buddha image at Sarnath and an 11-foot-high image at Sravasti, both commissioned by monk Bala; an equally monumental image at Kaushambi donated by nun Buddhamitra; and a somewhat smaller, uninscribed image of the future Buddha Maitreya from Ahicchattra, now in the National Museum in New Delhi (figure 15). The artist portraying Maitreya with his typical attribute, the water vessel, gave him a sturdy bare torso, massive shoulders, and strong chest. He clad him in a transparent dhoti whose knot is moved to one side to delineate the prominent curve of his barely concealed male sexual organs. His upper wrap hangs down his left shoulder, crosses his back, and emerges to be held in front across his left arm.

The original Pali phrase (*kosohita-vattha-guhyo*)[121] that refers to the Buddha's sexuality is open to varying interpretations.[122] One possible translation reads: "[H]is

male organs are concealed in a sheath."[123] The early artists of the Mathura region may have understood the phrase to mean that the sexual organs of the virile *chakravartin*-Buddha were to be depicted as though covered by a codpiece. Artists of later images, which emphasize the Buddha's divinity and show not a trace of his sexuality, may have interpreted the phrase to suggest that the sheathed sexual organs were subsumed, at will, into his body. One may recall that it was predicted that the Buddha would definitely be a *chakravartin*; the only open question was whether he would conquer the territories of the earth, or renounce the world to conquer the minds of men. Either way, evidence of his virility and sexuality—essential qualities in any monarch, and even more so in a *chakravartin*—seems to have been considered important enough in the first and second centuries to be specifically portrayed. While the Buddha had renounced the world, he remained a *chakravartin*, a wheel-turner of the Buddhist doctrine, whose virility and potency had been transmuted into spiritual power over the minds of men. The depiction of the Buddha's sexuality in sculptural imagery seems to have been one way of stressing his imperial identity; in those very early days, his *chakravartin* qualities may even have helped the Buddhist undertaking to sway the minds of men to the path the Buddha had founded.[124] One point may be stated with some certainty: this early portrayal of the Buddha's sexuality was considered entirely appropriate by the monks and nuns who commissioned these monumental images for prominent display in their monasteries.[125]

In his article on the origin of the Buddha image, A. K. Coomaraswamy indicated that the visual prototype used to create the first anthropomorphic Buddha images in the region of Mathura was in all likelihood the semidivine *yaksha* or *deva* (god).[126] He also pointed to the Pali *Nidana Katha* (*Story of the Recent Epoch*) for textual confirmation that during his lifetime the Buddha had been mistaken for a *yaksha-deva*. The text speaks of a woman named Sujata from the town of Uruvela who had vowed to make an offering of milk-rice to the *deva* of the *nigrodha* (ficus) tree; accordingly, she sent her maid Punna to keep watch by the tree: "And Punna coming there saw the Bodhisat sitting at the foot of the tree and lighting up all the region of the East; and she saw the whole tree in colour like gold from the rays issuing from his body. And she thought: 'Today our deva, descending from the tree, is seated to receive our offering in his own hand.'"[127] The earliest *deva* or *yaksha* figures, from Patna, Parkham, and Vidisha, were powerfully modeled with broad shoulders, an ample torso, and sturdy thighs and legs, but with sexual organs hidden beneath the knotted folds of their dhotis. Contrasting with them are the first Buddha images, in which a clear protrusion of the sexual organs is depicted to emphasize, we suggest, his innate royal status as a *chakravartin*. However, the emphasis on the male virility of the Buddha/*chakravartin* was soon abandoned, being replaced by the smooth, uninterrupted flow of the monastic robe; thenceforth, the spiritual and divine status of the Buddha was to dominate his visual portrayal.[128]

Bodily Beauty and Moral Perfections

The link between beauty, on the one hand, and morality or the perfection of character induced by a totally dharmic way of life, on the other, is perhaps most clearly spelled out in the Buddhist *Lakkhana-suttanta* (*Text on Perfections*).[129] The word *lakkhana* (Sanskrit, *lakshana*) is used in the text to describe the bodily marks of perfection that distinguish a great soul (*maha-purusha*) who has only two avenues open to him: that of a *chakravartin* or of a fully enlightened Buddha who has sway over the minds of men. Later, *lakshana* came to be used as a synonym for "beauty" and, in fact, continues to be used to speak of a person with a well-proportioned body that is also well clothed and well adorned. The *Lakkhana-suttanta* makes it clear that each of the thirty-two bodily marks and perfections is the outcome of moral actions, the result of "performing that *kamma*, heaping it up, lavishly and abundantly"; the *lakkhanas* are thus signs of moral worth.[130] The text specifies that each bodily mark is the outcome of a particular good action in a previous birth and is accompanied by specific enjoyments in this life. Thus the webbed hand of *lakkhana* 6 is attributed to a constantly giving nature and helpfulness:

> Through giving, and through helpful acts,
> Pleasing speech and evenness
> of mind, of benefit to all[131]

Lakkhana 17 specifies that a leonine gait is due to constant wishes for the goodness and prosperity of others:

> Faith, morality, learning, wisdom,
> Restraint and justice, much good else,
> Wealth, possessions, wives and sons,
> Flocks, kin, friends, colleagues,
> Strength, good looks and happiness:
> These things he wished for others
> That they might keep and never lose[132]

The text also makes it clear that the thirty-two *lakkhanas* were signs of beauty. In its verses devoted to the various *lakkhanas*, the phrases used to describe the *maha-purusha*'s body include "fair to see, and shapely-limbed / his fingers tender, soft and long"; "well-formed above, and beautiful"; "graceful and fair his limbs will be"; and "like fine-wrought gold / his body is, more fair than all / the gods he seems, great Indra's like."[133] A well-formed and healthy body, adorned with a variety of pastes, unguents, and colors, and ornamented with silks, jewels, and flowers, is both a sign of moral perfection and a result of moral perfection. Although the text that spells

this out is Buddhist, the *lakshanas* are associated with *chakravartins*, Buddhist, Hindu, or Jain; clearly, the linkage between beauty and morality is one that cuts across religious boundaries. It is perhaps in this context that we should try to assess and review the closely similar tropes of adornment used to describe evolved humans as well as divinities—the simple Shakuntala reared by *maha-rishi* Kanva as well as the supreme goddess Uma.

The linkage among beauty, health, adornment, and morality allows for a considerable degree of variation, however. For instance, a later Buddhist text, the Sanskrit *Lalita-vistara*, tells us that the Buddha's body is so resplendent from the light of his accumulated merit that he has no need of gemstones for further adornment; indeed, next to his radiance, gold appears like ink.[134] We are here presented with a critique of external ornament as against internal moral adornment. A variation on this is seen in the poetic statement that gemstones longed to be placed on the god Vishnu's body in order to enhance their own luster.[135]

The Aristocratic and Royal Couple

The married couple as the ideal initiators of religious and social rites is a long-standing convention in India—so much so that a widower may often hand over the rituals of a daughter's marriage to a younger brother and his wife. The same ideal apparently existed in the case of donors commissioning sacred works; when artists created donor portraits, they most often portrayed husband and wife together, as is clearly evident in the few donor portraits, mostly Jain, so identified by inscription. The value accorded to an idealized and sensuous form of physical beauty, and its accompanying ornamentation, is seen in a deeply cut relief slab featuring Minister Tejahpala and his wife, Anupamadevi, carved from marble and placed within their commission, the Luna Vasahi temple at Dilwara on Mount Abu (figure 16).[136] Another such slab of a similarly portrayed aristocratic donor couple, cemented today into the premises of the same temple, follows these accepted conventions; their well-formed, sensuous bodies, richly ornamented and clad in translucent clothing that reveals the form beneath, embody the overall aesthetic norms prevalent at the time.[137]

When we turn to the king and queen, it appears that throughout history their mutual love and total absorption in each other was among the factors considered to be of critical significance for the stability, prosperity, and ongoing success of a kingdom. The coin struck by Samudragupta in which he is portrayed as the beloved monarch who turns his queen's face toward him (see figure 12d) is a proclamation of this ethos. In Kalidasa's *Raghu-vamsha*, the beauty of King Dilipa, considered earlier, is closely followed by a verse extolling the intimacy of the love between him and his queen. The couple is compared to the legendary *chakravaka* birds, which were unable to live without each other:

Figure 16. Donor couple (probably minister Tejahpala and his wife), marble, Luna Vasahi temple, Mount Abu, thirteenth century.

> Like *chakravaka* birds united close
> the royal couple linked in heart by love
> and mutual charm released a part of love
> for their dear child, an only son, but yet
> they found their love not diminished, but yet
> enhanced[138]

One of the few surviving portrait sculptures of a king and queen, clearly identified by inscription, comes from the collection of the National Museum in New Delhi and portrays King Prithivideva and Queen Kelachchadevi, of the Gahadvala dynasty, carved in deep relief so as to stand out from the background of the marble stele to which they are attached.[139] The inscription provides a date (1183) and speaks of the queen being widowed, persuaded not to perform *sati*, and instead constructing a Shiva temple and commissioning the portrait image, which is like a vehicle that will

Figure 17. King Prithivideva and Queen Kelachchadevi, marble, Rajasthan, 1183.

provide him/them with the divine nectar of immortality (*devamrita-syandinim*).[140] In his study of portraiture in western India, Jack Laughlin emphasizes the merit-making potential of the portrait.[141] Of relevance here is the bodily beauty and intimacy of the couple (figure 17). The beautiful, bearded king is broad-shouldered and smooth-bodied; he wears a lower garment and ample jewels, and holds a lotus flower

in one hand. The queen, poised to stand close to her husband so that her right breast brushes his arm, is an exquisite figure with a lovely face, high breasts, a narrow waist, and slender limbs and torso; richly adorned and wearing a skirt, she holds a water vessel in one hand. Considering that the queen commissioned the portraits after the death of her husband, we may indeed assume that the sensuous bodies with which the couple have been endowed reflect an accepted ideal. A rayed halo is intended for both figures, and a male and a female attendant are carved along the stele's lower portion.

The world of Rajput miniature painting took pride in lauding the role of the monarch as lover. Mewar Rana Ari Singh (r. 1761–1773), for instance, seems to have relished himself in this role, commissioning many portraits of himself holding his beloved, a queen or perhaps a favorite concubine (*paswan*), in his lap.[142] Portrayed in a golden pavilion on a terrace, or within idyllic garden surroundings, the monarch as lover holds center stage with female attendants arrayed on either side. Other Rajput monarchs had themselves similarly portrayed.

Inscriptions, too, take delight in declaring, in no uncertain terms, the conjugal intimacy of king and queen. I shall provide examples from varying regions of India in an attempt to demonstrate the overall applicability of this unusual, but clearly significant, concept. The pleasure that the Chalukya queen Lakshmadevi and king Vikramaditya VI took in each other, apparently regarded as an asset by their subjects, is candidly detailed in a Kannada inscription of the year 1084 in the southern state of Karnataka. Carved on a gateway in the town of Sudi, the inscription records the queen's gift of the village of Pongari to a certain Someshvara *pandit* for sustained worship at the Amareshvara Shiva temple at Sudi:

> She who is his soul's darling [*tan-mano-vallabhe*] hail!—who shares in the enjoyment of the fruits of thousands of issues of unceasing supreme felicity; who revels [*bhogini*] in possession of fortune's choicest in mortal life; a manifest Lakshmi resting on the broad bosom of that Narayana among kings; a goddess of spring in the gladdening park of youth [*yauvana-nandana-vana*]; she who sports in mastery over the series of all the arts; a mistress of the arts of pleasure [vilasa- vidy-adhare]; delighting king Vikramaditya's soul [*vikramaditya-deva-mano- ranjani*].[143]

From northeastern India, a Sanskrit copper-plate inscription of the year 1185 likewise celebrates the loving relationship of Queen Ahiavadevi and King Nihshankasimha. The inscription, from the site of Tezpur in Assam, belongs to the reign of their son Vallabhadeva, and records a gift of a major almshouse and seven villages for its support:

> King Nihshankasimha had a queen, dear to him as life, who bore the name Ahiavadevi.
>
> A swan in that Manasa lake which was the heart of king Nihshankasimha; for every kind of amorous dalliance [*shringara-keli*] what the moon in loveliness is to the waterlily, glorious as the lotus in that lake which is the quintessence of mundane existence [*samsara-sara-sarasi-sarasiruha*], she stood manifested as the one dwelling-place of exquisite beauty[144]

From Bhubaneshvar in eastern India, a Sanskrit inscription speaks of the beauty of the Eastern Ganga princess Chandradevi and records her marriage to the Haihaiya prince Paramarddi. It continues:

> After he had practiced with this wife diverse kinds of pleasures, in which delight was attendant upon amorous passions, the valiant Paramardi-deva went [into battle].[145]

The purpose of this Sanskrit epigraph is to record the queen's construction of a Vishnu temple at Bhubaneshvar.

From Dewal in the North-West Provinces comes a Sanskrit inscription that speaks of a chieftain Lalla and his wife whose "pleasing mutual affection is even as high grown as that of Hara [Shiva] and the Daughter of the Mountain [Parvati]."[146] And from the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, a Sanskrit inscription dated to 1634 describes Queen Bangaramamba as one whose "heavenly form [*divya-murti*] is the abode of the kingdom of love [*shringara-rajya*]."[147]

The affluence and welfare of a kingdom depended, of course, on a variety of practical factors, such as possessing a strong army, providing irrigation to ensure good harvests, and maintaining a strong trading network. However, this brief selection of verses from across India that celebrate royal intimacy indicates that in the milieu of premodern India, in addition to practical matters, one significant factor contributing to the ruler's authority was the personality of a handsome monarch and his beautiful queen, as well as their conjugal felicity and erotic enjoyment. The frank expression of this idea is yet another example of cultural specificity.[148] In chapter 4, we shall encounter this same, much-celebrated attribute of beauty and mutual attraction applied in equal measure to the supreme divine couples: Shiva and Parvati, and Vishnu and Lakshmi. Their divine love was ecstatically extolled in an even more heroic manner in art, literature, and inscriptions.

Alankara in Architecture, *Kavya*, and the Body

Ornament (*alankara*) that plays so crucial a role in the adornment of women and men is critical also for the beautification, completion, and protection of architecture, whether temple or palace. The adornment of temples with miniature architectural forms is not random additional ornament. Adam Hardy's writings have clearly illustrated that what might appear to be superficial external decoration actually represents the surfaces of aedicular structures that are conceived as embedded shrines.[149] Such architectural units are part of the structural formulation of a temple and not mere excess.

Whether a structure was sacred or mundane, the quality of excellence of its elegant pinnacles, towers, and gateways had to be enhanced by the addition to the monument of scintillating shapes and arrangements. Doubtless, Heinrich Zimmer was partially correct when he remarked, in *The Art of Indian Asia*, that "the Indian ideal is that only things covered with ornaments are beautiful."[150] Temples are indeed covered with profuse ornamentation that is largely figural and in which images of the deities and figures of women and couples predominate; in addition, an almost equal amount of vegetal and foliate motifs occupies the multiple vertical and horizontal bands that crisscross the walls (figure 18). Frequently, barely an inch of plain space remains visible, so that this tendency toward overflowing ornamentation has been termed "horror vacui." But the underlying idea is not so simplistic: *alankara* is much more than a mere dislike or abhorrence of plain surfaces. The ornamentation of buildings in premodern India is not "mere" ornament; *alankara* had a symbolic content of auspiciousness, protection, and apotropaism. For instance, images of happy couples, symbolizing marital bliss, had a connotation of stability and long-lasting prosperity in the context of both town and court, of commoners and kings. India is not isolated in assigning symbolic meaning to ornament; Irene Winter stresses the need to view the repetitive vegetal ornament in Assyrian palace decoration as a reiterated symbol of the ruler's promise of agrarian abundance.[151]

The term *alankara* is frequently used in inscriptions on temples and monasteries. Varahadeva, minister to the Vakataka king Harisena and patron of the richly sculpted and lavishly painted Buddhist *vihara* 16 at Ajanta, speaks proudly in his donatory inscription of the magnificence of the cave, "adorned [*alankrita*] with windows, doors, beautiful picture-galleries, ledges, statues of the nymphs of Indra, and the like, which is ornamented [*bhushita*] with beautiful pillars and stairs and has a temple of the Buddha inside."[152] The impulse to adorn was certainly no mere whim of the architects of India. In addition to enhancing and affording auspiciousness and protection to both sacred and secular spaces, *alankara* held the deeper artistic significance of captivating the viewer's mind and creating a heightened awareness, while fulfilling a sacred purpose. Thus the *shilpa-shastras*, texts that often provide

Figure 18. Wall of Lingaraja temple, sandstone, Bhubaneshvar, Orissa, eleventh century.

instructions for architects and sculptors, contain entire chapters dealing in minute and specific detail with the ornamentation of architectural structures. The Orissan *Shilpa-prakasha* (*Light on Art*) specifies:

> Without making ornamental work [*alankara*] the temple will remain mediocre [*madhyama*].
>
> That temple, in which every part is covered with decorations [*bhushana*], is always called the highest [*uttama*] type.

> The temple shorn of any decorations [*bhushana*] is definitely the lowest [*adhama*] type.[153]

It is true that temples in certain parts of India, such as the Hemadpanti temples of the Yadavas of the western Deccan or some of the temples in Himachal Pradesh, place less emphasis on abundant *alankara*.[154] To eyes used to the richness of ornament on the temples of Orissa, Khajuraho, and Mount Abu and in Hoysala territory, the temples at Jageshvar in the Kumaon hills may have a relatively lesser impact. However, even here, architectural units themselves are finished with crisply delineated, horizontal *pidha* levels of the superstructure and well-outlined decorative arches above doorways and deity-niches. *Alankara* is present but not in the abundance seen elsewhere.

Ornament is, of course, an essential and exuberant feature of Sanskrit poetry, the very heart and soul of its vitality; in fact, as Jan Gonda emphasizes, poetic *alankara* is "an ornamentation of the sense or the sound."[155] He points to a commentary on Visvanatha's *Sahitya-darpana* (*Mirror on Literature*) that specifies: "[A]s bracelets and the like resound to the man's advantage by adding to his beauty, so alliteration, simile, and so on, by promoting the beauty of word and sense and the *rasa*, etc, are (called) *alankara*."[156] *Alankara* constitutes an entire section of poetics, where it refers, as indicated, to such elements as figures of speech, double meaning (*shlesha*), similes, metaphors, puns, and the like that adorn verse and prose. *Alankara-shastra* is the general term applied to the science of poetics. If poetry may be thought of as verbal sound, expressiveness, and beauty that serves to induce a state of heightened awareness, *alankara* adds significance to the description of the human form by importing similes and metaphors from nature, with the spontaneity of its flowing beauty, movement, and vibrancy. Ornament is as essential to *kavya* as *alankara* is to the female form or to the walls of temples and monasteries. The seventh-century court poet Bana, writing his *Harsha-charita*, compared the appropriate presentation of plays (he refers to his predecessor Bhasa) to the construction of a temple, richly and appropriately ornamented:

> Bhasa gained as much splendour by his plays with introductions spoken by the manager, full of various characters, and furnished with startling episodes, as he would have done by the erection of temples, created by architects, adorned with several stories, and decorated with banners.[157]

Such comparisons between artfully constructed plays and poems, on the one hand, and finely constructed temples, on the other, are fairly widespread. Equally pertinent

is the comparison made by Bhoja, an eleventh-century monarch of literary renown, between poetic ornamentation and bodily adornment—a comparison that is repeated by several other writers. Sheldon Pollock draws attention to Bhoja's text on literary aesthetics, the *Sarasvati-kanthabharana* (*Adornment of Sarasvati's Neck*), which postulates the threefold nature of poetic ornamentation as external, internal, and external-internal.[158] With analogies to bodily ornament, Bhoja specifies external *alankara* as both poetic ornamentation and its equivalent in clothing and jewelry; internal as literary description and exemplification corresponding to perfect teeth or manicured nails; and external-internal *alankara* as similes and *shlesha* comparable to perfumes and creams.

In the Indian context, an appreciation of ornament, or *alankara*, is never complete without this symbolic content as its recurring melodic theme. The deep-rooted "impulse to adorn" has a richer significance, an undertone deeper than sheer love of decoration.[159] Its unseen presence in the portrayal of the bodies of man and woman, king and queen, god and goddess is equally important whether the context is human or divine. Yes, adornment enhances, completes, delights; but it also makes the wearer invincible, courts the favors of fortune, and so becomes auspicious. *Alankara* is a vital component of the visual and verbal arts of India.[160]

62. *A Bouquet of Rasa (The Rasamanjari of Bhanudatta)*, trans. Sheldon Pollock, Clay Sanskrit Library (New York: New York University Press and JJC Foundation, 2009).
63. A. K. Ramanujan, trans., *The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967).
64. Selby, *Grow Long, Blessed Night*, 36.
65. Ibid., 35.
66. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 14.
67. Ibid., 10 (italics in the original).
68. Ibid., 22.
69. Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of India* (New York: Phaidon, 1954), 10.
70. Alka Patel, *Building Communities in Gujarat: Architecture and Society During the Twelfth Through Fourteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
71. I am grateful to Sheldon Pollock for his insights on this issue.
72. Jitendra Mohanty, presentation on the Navya-Nyaya school of Indian logic, given at Columbia University, December 2006.
73. A large number of picture books capitalizing on the sensational character of the erotic sculptures exist. For a serious scholarly treatment of the erotic art of India, see Devangana Desai, *Erotic Sculpture of India: A Socio-cultural Study* (New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill, 1975), and *Religious Imagery of Khajuraho* (Mumbai: Franco-Indian Research, 1996).
74. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, trans., *The Rig Veda: An Anthology: One Hundred and Eight Hymns* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 29–32. This hymn, a late addition to the *Rig-veda*, speaks also of the four *varnas* (castes) and tells us that the Brahmins emerged from Purusha's mouth, *kshatriyas* from his arms, *vaishyas* from his thighs, and *shudras* from his feet.
75. Kramrisch, *Art of India*, 9.
76. Patrick Olivelle, *The Asrama System: The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 27, 30, and in various other places.
77. Ibid., 132. For Kalidasa and inscriptions, see also 203–5.
78. For a fine discussion of the four goals of man, accompanied by quotations from ancient texts, see V. Raghavan and R. N. Dandekar, "Part III: The Hindu Way of Life," in *Sources of Indian Tradition*, vol. 1, *From the Beginning to 1800*, 2nd ed., ed. Ainslie T. Embree (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 201–341.
79. *Nayanar* is the singular; *nayanmar* is the plural.
80. Sambandar 3:24.1, *mannil nalla vannam varalam*, in *Tevaram: Hymnes Sivaites du pays Tamoul*, ed. T. V. Gopal Iyer and François Gros (Pondicherry: Institut Français d'Indologie, 1985), 1:303.
81. The contrary view of the body as necessarily decaying and putrefying, while contained in religious texts, only rarely enters the purview of the visual arts. Occasionally, although not often, the poetic corpus, too, introduces us to this idea. One example is the fourth-century poet Bhartrihari, who wrote a hundred verses titled "Passion" and another hundred titled "Disenchantment." One such verse reads:

> Her breasts, really protuberances of flesh
> Measured against golden jars.
> Her face, just a receptacle of phlegm
> Weighed against the moon.
> Her thigh, wet with flowing urine,
> Rivals the cheek of a majestic elephant.
> But look, her despicable body
> Is made highly prized by distinguished poets.

See Greg Bailey and Richard Gombrich, ed. and trans., *Love Lyrics by Amaru and Bhartrhari, and by Bilhana*, Clay Sanskrit Library (New York: New York University Press and JJC Foundation, 2005), 149.
82. Michael V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 236.
83. Diana Eck, *Darsan* (Chambersburg, Pa.: Anima Books, 1981).
84. C. J. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), especially chap. 3, "Worship."
85. John E. Cort, *Jains in the World: Religious Values and Ideology in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
86. See, for instance, Finbarr Barry Flood, "Refiguring Iconoclasm in the Early Indian Mosque," in *Negating the Image: Case Studies in Iconoclasm*, ed. Anne McClanan and Jeff Johnson (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2005), 15–40, and Patel, *Building Communities in Gujarat*. Patel points out that early "Islamic" architecture in Gujarat is, in fact, an adaptation of the "Hindu" Maru-Gujara style of the region—which, after all, is natural given that the builders were local. She also points to a fifteenth-century architectural text, the *Vrksarnava*, that incorporates the mosque into its architectural categories under the title *rahamana-prasada*, a word that is both "Muslim" (*rahman* [Arabic, "merciful"]) and "Hindu" (*prasada* [Sanskrit, "mansion"]) (10–11).

2. The Idealized Body and Ornament

1. Julian Raby, foreword to *The Sensuous and the Sacred: Chola Bronzes from South India*, by Vidya Dehejia (New York: American Federation of the Arts, 2002), 7.
2. On Kenneth Clark's definition of "the naked" as inferior and "the nude" as superior, and John Berger's seeming inversion of those categories, with "the naked" human as being oneself (that is, natural) and "the nude" as subject to artistic conventions, see Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity, and Sexuality* (New York:

Routledge, 199), 2. There is an element of truth in both distinctions.

3. Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 167. In this work of great significance for an understanding of premodern India's courtly life and values, Ali points out that beauty and refinement include physiology and dress, but also bearing, speech, and the person's environment (143).

4. A. K. Coomaraswamy, "Ornament," *Art Bulletin* 21 (1939): 375–82, in *Coomaraswamy*, vol. 1, *Selected Papers: Traditional Art and Symbolism*, ed. Roger Lipsey (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977). Page numbers in the notes refer to this edition.

5. Ibid., 250.

6. Jan Gonda, "The Meaning of the Word *Alamkara*," in *Selected Studies*, vol. 2, *Sanskrit Word Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 257–74. An alternative word for ornamentation, *bhushana*, derives directly from the verb *bhush* (to adorn, to deck, to decorate).

7. Jan Gonda, "Abharana," in *Selected Studies*, vol. 2, *Sanskrit Word Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 171–77; Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, 163.

8. Coomaraswamy, "Ornament," 249.

9. Kalidasa, *The Recognition of Shakuntala*, trans. Vasudeva Somadeva, Clay Sanskrit Library (New York: New York University Press and JJC Foundation, 2006), 188.

10. Nanette Salomon, "Making a World of Difference: Gender, Asymmetry, and the Greek Nude," in *Naked Truths: Women, Sexuality, and Gender in Classical Art and Archaeology*, ed. Ann Olga Kolowski-Ostrow and Claire L. Lyons (New York: Routledge, 1997), 197–219.

11. D. B. Spooner, "The Didarganj Image Now in the Patna Museum," *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* 5 (1919): 102–13.

12. For the elevated position assigned to the *ganika*, see Doris Srinivasan, "Royalty's Courtesans and God's Mortal Wives: Keepers of Culture in Pre-Colonial India," in *The Courtesan's Arts*, ed. Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 161–81. Srinivasan has quite independently come to the same conclusion on the Didarganj figure, in "The Mauryan *Ganika* from Didarganj (Pataliputra)," *East and West* 55 (2005): 345–62.

13. R. P. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthasastra* (Bombay: University of Bombay, 1969), bk. 2, chap. 27, "The Superintendent of Courtesans," 81–82 (Sanskrit text), 158–62 (English translation).

14. Frederick Asher and Walter Spink, "Maurya Figural Sculpture Reconsidered," *Ars Orientalis* 19 (1989): 1–25.

15. Deven Patel, unpublished translation. See also *Naisadhacarita of Sriharsa*, trans. K. K. Handiqui (Poona: Deccan College, 1965), 90–104.

16. David Smith, *Ratnakara's Haravijaya: An Introduction to the Sanskrit Court Epic* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 179–224.

17. Indira Peterson, *Kuttralak Kuravanji (The Fortune-teller Play of Kuttralam)* (forthcoming).

18. V. Ganapati Sthapati, *Indian Sculpture and Iconography: Forms and Measurements* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Society, 2002), 290.

19. Of relevance in this context are the results of anthropological field studies of women's waist-to-hip ratio conducted in the United States. Such studies confirm that the hourglass figure was, in fact, the one most admired until very recent times, denoting as it did health and ease in childbearing, both considered to be highly desirable attributes in a woman. The currently admired, more athletic figure continues to be related to health and childbearing, reflecting changing models, shifting health standards, and new norms for ideal and desirable physiques. See Devendra Singh, "Adaptive Significance of Female Physical Attractiveness: Role of Waist-to-Hip Ratio," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 65, no. 2 (1993): 293–307.

20. Daniel H. H. Ingalls, trans., *Sanskrit Poetry from Vidyakara's Treasury* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 135.

21. Ibid., 140.

22. I am grateful to Allison Busch for pointing me in the direction of Keshavdas's *Kavi-priya*.

23. Mark Elvin, quoted in John Hay, "The Body Invisible in Chinese Art?" in *Body, Subject, and Power in China*, ed. Angela Zito and Tani E. Barlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 46.

24. Blake Wentworth, "Women's Bodies, Earthly Kingdom: Mapping the Presence of God in the *Tirukayilaya Nana Ula*" (manuscript, Divinity School, University of Chicago, 2003). I am grateful to Wentworth for his generosity in permitting my use of this material, which is yet to be presented in his doctoral dissertation.

25. Peterson, *Kuttralak Kuravanji*.

26. Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, 148–62.

27. Robert A. Hueckstedt, *The Style of Bana: An Introduction to Sanskrit Prose* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985), 111.

28. Peterson, *Kuttralak Kuravanji*.

29. Edwin Gerow, trans., *Malavika and Agnimitra*, in *Theater of Memory: The Plays of Kalidasa*, ed. Barbara Stoler Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 270.

30. Vidya Dehejia, *Slaves of the Lord: The Path of the Tamil Saints* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1988), 44.

31. A good example is provided by comparing figs. 206 and 207 with figs. 254 and 255 in J. C. Harle, *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 19.

32. Sthapati, *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, chap. 24, "Talamanam—Rhythmic Measure."

33. John E. Mosteller, *The Measure of Form: A New Approach for the Study of Indian Sculpture* (New Delhi: Abhinav, 1991).

34. Vidya Dehejia and Daryl Harnisch, "Yoga as a Key to Understanding Indian Art," in *Representing the Body: Gender Issues in Indian Art*, ed. Vidya Dehejia (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1997).
35. Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1975), 88.
36. Natalie Kampen, "Epilogue: Gender and Desire," in *Naked Truths: Women, Sexuality, and Gender in Classical Art and Archaeology*, ed. Ann Olga Kolowski-Ostrow and Claire L. Lyons (New York: Routledge, 1997), 267.
37. Andrew Stewart, *Art, Desire, and the Body in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 12. Stewart proceeds to inform us that the ancient Greeks were, in actuality, thickset and sturdy, with relatively short lower limbs, judging from the osteoarchaeological material, which in no way coincides with the idealized representation of the human body in Greek sculpture, or indeed with the idealized form of the literary sources.
38. Ashvaghosa, *The Buddhacarita, or Acts of the Buddha*, trans. E. H. Johnston (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, for University of the Panjab, 1936; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), 47.
39. Ibid., 49.
40. Barbara Stoler Miller, trans., *Sakuntala and the Ring of Recognition*, in *Theater of Memory: The Plays of Kalidasa*, ed. Barbara Stoler Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 94.
41. Kalidasa, *Malavika and Agnimitra*, trans. Gerow, 304.
42. *The Origin of the Young God: Kalidasa's Kumarasambhava*, trans. Hank Heifetz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 53.
43. Gail Sutherland, *Disguises of the Demon* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 152.
44. Wentworth, "Women's Bodies, Earthly Kingdom," 59.
45. Ibid., 62.
46. Ibid., 64.
47. Ibid., 66.
48. *Love Song of the Dark Lord: Jayadeva's Gitagovinda*, trans. Barbara Stoler Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 124.
49. Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, 166n.65.
50. Wentworth "Women's Bodies, Earthly Kingdom," 59.
51. Ibid., 60.
52. Ibid., 62.
53. Ibid., 63–64.
54. I am indebted to Allison Busch for this citation. She further points out that this verse is based on an earlier verse of the seventh-century poet Dandin.
55. This was a verse repeatedly used by the Silahara rulers and was clearly a popular poetic trope. For one example, see "The Thana Plates of Mummunirja. Saka 970 [1048 C.E.]," in V. V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Silaharas*, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum 6 (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1977), 93.
56. Smith, *Ratnakara's Haravijaya, sarga* 18, 212.
57. This manuscript is in the collection of the Rietberg Museum, Zurich.
58. Wentworth, "Women's Bodies, Earthly Kingdom," 65–66.
59. Ibid., 28, 36.
60. When Sonia Gandhi visited southern India in her earlier days as a young wife, with her shoulder-length hair arranged gracefully loose, traditional society maintained that someone should tell her that this was inauspicious. Her hair is always tied back these days.
61. Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, 162–63.
62. David Sanford, "Ramayana Portraits on the Nageshvara Temple at Kumbakonam," in *The Legend of Rama: Artistic Visions*, ed. Vidya Dehejia (Bombay: Marg, 1994), 43–60.
63. Some believe that an image in the Sarabhai collection is of Rajaraja.
64. Vidya Dehejia, "The Very Idea of a Portrait," *Ars Orientalis* 28 (1998): 41–50.
65. *Thirteen Plays of Bhasa*, trans. A. C. Woolner and Lakshman Sarup (London: Published for the University of the Panjab, 1930; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985), 172–76.
66. H. Krishna Sastri, "Anmakonda Inscription of Prola, Chalukya-Vikrama Year 42," *Epigraphia Indica* 9 (1907–1908): 266.
67. Sten Konow, "Sarnath Inscription of Kumaradevi," *Epigraphia Indica* 9 (1907–1908): 327.
68. The comparison is used even in modern times, as in M. F. Husain's film *Gaja-gamini* (*She with the Elephant's Gait*), starring his favorite model, Madhuri Dixit.
69. Lionel D. Barnett, "Inscription at Narendra," *Epigraphia Indica* 13 (1915–1916): 312.
70. For instance, Lady Olajale was *ratiyamnalu rupim* in old Kannada: Lionel D. Barnett, "Inscriptions of Huli," *Epigraphia Indica* 18 (1925–1926): 170–218; Mailama is "a *rati* in dalliance": H. Krishna Sastri, "Kuniyur Plates of the Time of Venkata II: Saka Samvat 1556," *Epigraphia Indica* 3 (1894–1895): 236–58.
71. Krishna Deva, *Temples of Khajuraho* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1990), 1:366.
72. Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, 147.
73. Carolyn Woodford Schmidt suggests that these gateway figures represent donors, in "Aristocratic Devotees in Early Buddhist Art from Greater Gandhara: Characteristics, Chronology, and Symbolism," *South Asian Studies* 21 (2005): 25–45.
74. Daud Ali, "Technologies of the Self: Courtly Artifice and Monastic Discipline in Early India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41 (1998): 168–69.
75. Bhavabhuti, *Rama's Last Act (The Uttararamacarita)*, trans. Sheldon Pollock, Clay Sanskrit Library (New York: New York University Press and JJC Foundation, 2007).
76. *Raghuvamsam of Kalidasa*, trans. K. N.

Anantapadmanabhan (Madras: Ramayana, 1973), 3.
77. Since Indian portraiture is not veristic, and since names of kings are repeated (more than one Mahendra, and Simhavishnu vs. Narasimhavarman), there has been considerable discussion of the identity of these figures. The current solution rests partly on the notion that the seated figure must be the senior monarch and the standing one his successor.
78. C. Minakshi, *The Historical Sculptures of the Vaikunthaperumal Temple, Kanchi*, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India 63 (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1941).
79. Ibid.; compare, for instance, pl. IX, 3 (Simhavishnu) with pl. XVI, 2 (Pallavamalla).
80. Frederick Asher, "Historical and Political Allegory in Gupta Art," in *Essays on Gupta Culture*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Columbia, Mo.: South Asia Books, 1983), 53–66.
81. Dehejia, *Sensuous and the Sacred*, app. 2, 241.
82. J. F. Fleet, "Chiplun Plates of Pulakesin II," *Epigraphia Indica* 3 (1894–1895): 52.
83. See chap. 4, p. 153.
84. Lionel D. Barnett, "Arthuna Inscription of Paramara Chamundaraja. VS 1136," *Epigraphia Indica* 14 (1917–1918): 305.
85. Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, 144.
86. *The Harsa-Carita of Bana*, trans. E. B. Cowell and F. W. Thomas (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1897; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), 59–61.
87. T. A. Gopinatha Rao, "Anbil Plates of Sundara Chola: The 4th Year," *Epigraphia Indica* 15 (1919–1920): 69.
88. T. A. Gopinatha Rao, "Kanyakumari Inscription of Vira-Rajendra-Deva," *Epigraphia Indica* 18 (1925–1926): 44.
89. Fleet, "Chiplun Plates of Pulakesin II," 52.
90. F. Kielhorn, "Udayendiram Plates of the Bana King Vikramaditya II," *Epigraphia Indica* 3 (1894–1895): 78.
91. D. R. Bhandarkar, "Two Grants of Indraraja III; Saka Samvat 836," *Epigraphia Indica* 9 (1907–1908): 39.
92. Ibid., 40.
93. R. G. Bhandarkar, "Karhad Plates of Krishna III; Saka-Samvat 880," *Epigraphia Indica* 4 (1896–1897): 289.
94. Barnett, "Inscriptions of Huli," 217.
95. Pushpa Prasad, *Sanskrit Inscriptions of the Delhi Sultanate, 1191–1526* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 71.
96. Irene J. Winter, "Sex, Rhetoric, and the Public Monument: The Alluring Body of Naram-Sin of Agade," in *Sexuality in Ancient Art*, ed. Natalie Boymen Kampen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11–26, and "Defining 'Aesthetics' for Non-Western Studies: The Case of Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Art History, Aesthetics, and Visual Studies*, ed. Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey (Williamstown, Mass.: Clark Art Institute, 2002), 3–28.
97. Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990), sec. "Ceremonial Baths and Luminous Wills," 233–39.
98. Ronald Inden, "Ritual, Authority, and Cyclic Time in Hindu Kingship," in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, ed. J. F. Richards (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), 62.
99. Sheldon Pollock refers to it as "an ancient patriarchal trope" (*The Language of the Gods in the World of Men* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006], 419).
100. Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 68, 70.
101. In am grateful to Allison Busch for permitting me to use this unpublished material from Keshavdas's *Virsimhdevcarit*, made available to scholars as part of a *nakh-sikh* literary workshop held at Columbia University in the spring of 2006.
102. Bhandarkar, "Two Grants of Indraraja III," 38.
103. *Kalpasutra of Bhadrabahu Svami*, trans. K. C. Lalwani (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), 39–40.
104. Daud Ali, "The *Vikramacholanula*: A Chola Processional Poem," in *Art of the Chola Bronzes* (London: Royal Academy, 2006), app. A, 142–45.
105. David Dean Shulman, *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 314. Anne Monius made this point in "Being a King the Chola Way: Contested Models of the Dharmic Ruler in Tamil Literary Culture" (paper presented at the Chonadu conference, Berkeley, California, April 22, 2006).
106. Shulman, *King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry*, 339.
107. Joanne Punzo Waghorne, *The Raja's Magic Clothes: Re-Visioning Kingship and Divinity in England's India* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 226.
108. Ibid., 225. The importance that Waghorne assigns to decoration is perhaps best exemplified by her final chapter, "Ornament as Ontology: A Conclusion."
109. See, for instance, the report in the *Telegraph*, Calcutta, India, January 20, 2003, available at http://www.telegraphindia.com.
110. Vidya Dehejia, "Aniconism and the Multivalence of Emblems," *Ars Orientalis* 21 (1992): 45–66. It is interesting to speculate on whether the early need to negate the body was, in fact, triggered by its already high profile in images of *yakshas*, *yakshis*, *nagarajas*, and the like. Could this have been an early attempt, later abandoned, at setting the Buddha apart from such semi-divine beings?
111. John H. Strong, *The Legend of King Asoka: A Study and Translation of the Asokavadana* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 27.
112. Ibid., 246.
113. Ibid., 249.
114. Ashvaghosa, *Buddhacarita, or Acts of the Buddha*, 115–16.
115. Valmiki, *Ramayana: Book Two, Ayodhya*, trans. Sheldon Pollock, Clay Sanskrit Library (New York: New York University Press and JJC Foundation, 2005), 302–43.

116. Indira Peterson, *Design and Rhetoric in a Sanskrit Court Epic: The Kiratarjuniya of Bharavi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 59.
117. T. W. Rhys Davids and Caroline A. F. Rhys Davids, trans., *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 3 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1899–1921).
118. Kalidasa, *Sakuntala and the Ring of Recognition*, trans. Miller, 165.
119. Frederick Asher, personal communication.
120. Vishakha Desai, "Reflections on the History and Historiography of Male Sexuality in Early Indian Art," in *Representing the Body: Gender Issues in Indian Art*, ed. Vidya Dehejia (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1997), 42–55.
121. T. W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter, eds., *The Digha-nikaya* (London: Pali Text Society, 1911), 3:143.
122. I am grateful to Gregory Schopen for his note on the levels of meaning of this complicated Pali phrase. Abbreviating his input, we have *kosohita* (confined in a sheath) and *vattha-guhyo* (concealed by clothes). So the compound could be read as "that which should be covered by clothes is enclosed in a sheath" or "that part of the abdomen that should be covered in a sheath." Either way, Schopen writes, it is "an odd way to refer to the penis."
123. Robert L. Brown, "The Feminization of the Sarnath Gupta-Period Buddha Images," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 16 (2002): 166–67.
124. Davidson proposes that later Buddhism was hard-pressed to win royal support when Shiva, "represented as a killer deity with a permanent erection," was an alternative (*Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 90).
125. If the monk and nun patrons had not been satisfied, without rejecting the commission, they could easily have asked the sculptor to cut back the stone and smooth out the protrusion.
126. A. K. Coomaraswamy, "Origin of the Buddha Image," *Art Bulletin* 9 (1927): 300.
127. T. W. Rhys Davids, trans., *Buddhist Birth-Stories: The Commentarial Introduction Entitled Nidana Katha: The Story of the Lineage* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1880; repr., Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1973), 185–86.
128. Brown, "Feminization of the Sarnath Gupta-Period Buddha Images," 165–79.
129. I am grateful to Daud Ali for directing my attention to this text, which so clearly states the linkage between beauty and morality. See Maurice Walshe, trans., *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha* (London: Wisdom, 1995), 441–60.
130. Ibid., 442.
131. Ibid., 447.
132. Ibid., 453.
133. Ibid., 445, 448–50.
134. Gwendolyn Bays, trans., *The Lalitavistara Sutra: The Voice of the Buddha: The Beauty of Compassion* (Berkeley: Dharma, 1983), 182–83.
135. Steven Paul Hopkins, *Singing the Body of God: The Hymns of Vedantadesika in Their South Indian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 205.
136. Susan L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (New York: Weatherhill, 1985), pl. 20.58
137. Jack Laughlin suggests that this image may actually have been collected from a site in the vicinity and then brought to Dilwara for safekeeping. This, however, does not affect the thrust of my argument regarding the sensuous presentation of the figures.
138. *Raghuvamsam of Kalidasa*, trans. Anantapadmanabhan, 34.
139. I am grateful to Jack C. Laughlin for his photograph of this piece, which he discusses in *Aradhakamurti/Adhisthayakamurti: Popular Piety, Politics, and the Medieval Jain Temple Portrait* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), fig 1.
140. S. P. Tewari, "National Museum Inscription of Kelachchadevi, V.S. 1239," *Epigraphia Indica* 41 (1975–1976): 58–60.
141. Laughlin, *Aradhakamurti/Adhisthayakamurti*, 43.
142. Vishakha N. Desai, *Life at Court: Art for India's Rulers, 16th–19th Centuries* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1985), 93, pl. 74.
143. Lionel D. Barnett, "Inscriptions of Sudi," *Epigraphia Indica* 15 (1919–1920): 103.
144. F. Kielhorn, "Assam Plates of Vallabhadeva: Saka Samvat 1107," *Epigraphia Indica* 5 (1898–1899): 187.
145. Lionel D. Barnett, "Bhubaneswar Inscription in the Royal Asiatic Society," *Epigraphia Indica* 13 (1915–1916): 155.
146. G. Buhler, "The Dewal Prasasti of Lalla, the Chhidda," *Epigraphia Indica* 1 (1892): 75–85.
147. Krishna Sastri, "Kuniyur Plates of the Time of Venkata II," 253.
148. Such a sentiment is not restricted to premodern India. One might refer to the discomfort and disquiet caused some years back among the population of the United States (I do not refer here to the elite) by the revelation that all was not well between President Clinton and the First Lady!
149. Adam Hardy, *Indian Temple Architecture: Form and Transformation: The Karnata Dravida Tradition, 7th to 13th Centuries* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, 1995).
150. Heinrich Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia: Its Mythology and Transformations* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955), 1:236.
151. Irene J. Winter, "Ornament and the Rhetoric of Abundance in Assyria," *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies* 27 (2003): 252–64.
152. R. S. Gupte and B. D. Mahajan, *Ajanta, Ellora and Aurangabad Caves* (Bombay: Taraporevala, 1962), Cave 16 inscription, 254–56. The word *bhushitam* is not clearly readable, according to Richard S. Cohen, "Appendix: Ajanta's Inscriptions," in *Ajanta: History and Development*, vol. 2, *Arguments About Ajanta*, by Walter M. Spink (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 312–13.
153. Ramachandra Kaulacara, *Silpa Prakasa: Medieval Orissan Sanskrit Text on Temple Architecture*, trans. Alice Boner and Sasasiva Rath Sarma (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 41.

154. Alka Patel, *Building Communities in Gujarat: Architecture and Society During the Twelfth through Fourteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 28.
155. Gonda, "Meaning of the Word *Alamkara*," 257.
156. Ibid., 269.
157. Smith, *Ratnakara's Haravijaya*, 132.
158. Pollock, *Language of the Gods in the World of Men*, 109–10.
159. Jan Pieper and George Michell, eds., *The Impulse to Adorn: Studies in Traditional Indian Architecture* (Bombay: Marg, 1982).
160. It is not possible, however, to discover analogies, point by point, between the two.

3. The Sensuous Within Sacred Boundaries

1. Relics could be of three types: bodily (*sariraka*), associated with the Buddha (*paribhogika*), like his alms bowl or robe, or commemorative (*uddesika*) of the site of a major event. Bodily relics were occasionally those of the Buddha's immediate disciples or, later, of other venerated monks.
2. Gregory Schopen, "On Monks, Nuns, and Vulgar Practices: The Introduction of the Image Cult into Indian Buddhism," *Artibus Asiae* 49 (1988–1989): 153–68.
3. Apart from the brick cities of the Indus civilization and brick Vedic altars, excavated foundations of the Mauryan capital at Pataliputra, as well as early shrines such as the temple beside the Heliodorus column, indicate a combined brick-and-wood construction. We assume, too, that the vernacular and city architecture depicted in the bas-reliefs at the Sanchi stupa, none of which has survived, reflects such mixed construction.
4. I use the word "semidivine" to refer to a group of beings of lesser status than the major gods and goddesses, but who are divine. While a *vahana* is always assigned to a deity, it is often, although not invariably, seen with such semidivine beings as *nagas*, *yakshas* and *yakshis*, *gandharvas*, *vidyadharas*, and the like. At Bharhut, it appears that *devatas* (little *devas*) belong to the category of the semidivine.
5. Asvaghosa, *The Saundarananda: or, Nanda the Fair*, trans. E. H. Johnston (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1932), 20.
6. Ibid., 23–24.
7. Robert DeCaroli, *Haunting the Buddha: Indian Popular Religion and the Formation of Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 18, 72–73.
8. It seems likely that this gesture suggests the hierarchical importance of Ajakalaka in the *yaksha* community
9. DeCaroli, *Haunting the Buddha*, 17, 73.
10. Its outer face carries a central lotus medallion, with half-medallions above and below.
11. The outer face of the pillar has been sliced off.
12. A large consignment consisting of the railings and gateways of the Bharhut stupa were on their way to London in 1885 when the Peninsular and Oriental liner *Indus* sank in the waters off the coast of northern Sri Lanka, where they still languish. See a brief reference to this event in C. E. Godakumbura, "Education, Science and Art (G)," part 4 of *Report of the Arcaheological Survey of Ceylon for the Financial Year 1960–61* (Colombo: Government Press, 1962), G78. I am grateful to Robert DeCaroli for this reference.
13. Vidya Dehejia, *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art: Visual Narratives of India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1997), 83–84.
14. DeCaroli, *Haunting the Buddha*, 74.
15. A quick glimpse of these narratives may be obtained in Vidya Dehejia, ed., *Unseen Presence: The Buddha and Sanchi* (Bombay: Marg, 1996).
16. Ashvaghosa, *The Buddhacarita, or Acts of the Buddha*, trans. E. H. Johnston (Calcutta: Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, for University of the Panjab, 1936; repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), 71.
17. *Vinaya* 4.289, cited in A. K. Coomaraswamy, "One Hundred References to Indian Painting," *Artibus Asiae* 4 (1930–1932): 42.
18. A. C. Soper, "Early Buddhist Attitudes Toward the Art of Painting," *Art Bulletin* 32 (1950): 147.
19. *Ayaramga Sutta*, bk. 2, lecture 12, cited in Coomaraswamy, "One Hundred References to Indian Painting," 43.
20. For a summary of the oral transmission of the Pali canon, of which the *Theri-gatha* is a part, see Dehejia, *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art*, 60–65. For a detailed study, see K. R. Norman, *Pali Literature* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983).
21. Susan Murcott, *The First Buddhist Women: Translations and Commentary on the Therigatha* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1991), 131–34, verses 1, 13, 14.
22. It is true that the monks might have considered Ambapali's poem as an indictment of beauty; however, since I do not believe that the monks were the targeted audience for the sculptures, I wonder if it is relevant that they would have regarded the beautiful images with hermeneutic suspicion. I am skeptical of the idea that the Bharhut or Sanchi *yakshi* figures were there to make a point to monks about dangers to be avoided. Nor can they be seen as poised the way they are out of respect for the mother of the Buddha; we shall see that the first images of Maya and the birth postdate Bharhut and Sanchi, and that the influence seems to have been the other way around.
23. Vidya Dehejia, *Indian Art* (London: Phaidon, 1997), 48, fig. 32.
24. Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 148.
25. Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" and "So, Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture*, ed. Sherry Ortner (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 21–42, 173–80.

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