

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

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I.1

INTRODUCTION

A rigorous training in the twin disciplines of Bharatanatyam and History of Art opened my vision to the vast areas of learning still neglected and lacking in scholarly rigour. Having settled upon a field-based research I found Gujarat the best region to begin with. Under the DSA project of the Department of Art History & Aesthetics I could visit a number of sites in Gujarat and Rajasthan to make first hand observations on the sites. On repeated visits to Ramnagar, Varanasi, at the American Institute of Indian Studies, I could gather further ideas and widen the horizons of my research to include adjoining areas of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The thesis which originally grew out of my post graduation days' concern with a triangular comparison of a dance text, its representation by an artist in painting or sculpture and its recreation in dance by a performer, concerned itself with Gujarat and Orissa, while the textual references were based on nrittahastas, sthanakas and charis.

The present research is an outcome of the above concentration on the sculptures of the 'surasundari', 'apsara', 'alaskanya' figures which gradually appeared to be the most engaging, intriguing and challenging subject of study. The more I saw them the more illusive they became. The concern is not essentially a postural analysis of their dance-like stances, but a holistic analysis of their imagery, their evolution on various Indian monuments and the cultural connotations associated with their placement and meaning. In doing so one is focusing mainly on the 'content' analysis as Panofsky has demonstrated, without over-looking formal and stylistic analysis of the sculptural form. The period in chronological terms was chosen from the 8th to 12th centuries AD., since the major efflorescence of devangana

imagery appears on the temple architecture between these four centuries.

The term 'devangana' has been chosen by me for referring to the so called 'surasundari', 'apsara', 'alaskanya' figures, because this term was originally used in Vrksarnava, an architectural text from Gujarat and it is the only term in my view which is without any tags. It denotes divine (bodies) beauty. The surasundari, apsara madanika, alaskanya, etc. refer to their amorphous and amorous character, which is created and dissolved at will to allure the mankind with the power of their beauty. Some are often spoken of as the dancers of Indra's court, while some bear the connotation of divine courtesans and prostitutes. The nati, nartaki or nayika, imply them to be as dancers or characters of a play. In the light of the present research the shringaric connotation has been consciously underplayed to explore more dynamic meanings in the light of human cultural consciousness, 'the power of the female', which is not necessarily religious.

The following is an attempt to enumerate a critique of the writings of significant scholars on the topic of salabhanjika, surasundari, alaskanya etc. to prepare a ground for my work. The approach selected by me to analyse the research material and various methodologies of Western and Indian scholars such as Vogel, Coomaraswamy, Stella Kramrisch, V.S.Agrawala, Motichandra, C.Sivaramamurti, M.A.Dhaky, Kapila Vatsyayan, Ratan Parimoo and others will be summarised here. The theories of 'Iconology' and 'Semiotics' of Erwin Panofsky and Roland Barthes along with psychoanalytic approach of Freud and Jung have also lent insight into the 'contextual' interpretation of a work of art. I have tried to absorb some relevant concepts from their theoretical writings to analyse the devangana imageries in the context of the architecture on

which they appear and the evolution of their imagery from the earlier forms of primordial mother goddess figurines, salabhanjika - vrksaka - yaksi, rivergoddess - nadidevatas to devanganas.

1.2

CRITIQUE OF EARLIER WRITINGS -

The concept of the feminine energy personified in various ways in Indian culture, thought, art and literature, embody in entirety the irrevocability of the woman from every sphere of life in Indian psyche. In the course of the present research I found that the representation of the female, other than the Goddesses perse, contains shades of beauty, fertility, alluring and austere aspects, which can be broadly classified as 'material' versus 'spiritual'. In the process of collecting the observations and interpretations of earlier scholars I found that the subject of salabhanjika or apsara has engaged the interest of many earlier scholars but their probing and interpretation has curiously remained unidirectional. Vogel proposed the concept of salabhanjika in literature and art to understand the evolution of this woman and tree motif, from a seasonal festival to an allegory of fertility and the standardization of its posture, which is shared by Mayadevi in the birth-giving process on Buddhist monuments. He also notes down the continuation of this motif from a social festival to an architectural motif wherein any type of imagery could be classified under the term salabhanjika. Thus the term continues but its imagery is left fluid. Vogel¹ also enumerates a lot of literary data from Sanskrit texts, prose and verse literature like Natyasastra, Mahavamsa, Buddhacarita and Simhasanabattisi. Vogel's interpretation has been repeated by Coomaraswamy, B.M. Barua and R.N. Misra in their researches on Yaksha cult and Barhut sculptures. Since the

scope of their research does not allow them to delve deeper into the wider connotation of the salabhanjika motif and its related imageries and its continuation in later architecture, their observations have remained restricted.

But Coomaraswamy² during the thirties rightly observed that the yaksis (found on Barhut, Sanchi, Mathura etc.) give rise to three iconographically similar motifs, differently interpreted : the Buddha's nativity', 'the asoka dohada motif in classical literature', and the 'river goddesses of medieval shrines'. He also distinguished between the gandharvis, apsaras etc. and pointed out that it was incorrect to call them merely dancing girls. Probably the first ever hinting at the continuation of yaksi-salabhanjika imagery in later sculptures of surasundari etc. on temple architecture, was done by Coomaraswamy indirectly. Continuation or recalling of similar motifs on different monuments after a long lapse of time does not mean that these had been erased from memory of the artists' ^{the} visual vocabulary of motifs and images.

The contribution of V.S.Agrawala³ to the study of yaksi-salabhanjika-vrksaka motif in the light of the Sanskrit literary data is not only commendable but extremely insightful. ^{In} the work begun in the 1940s on Mathura sculptures, he identified the imagery of ^{a number of} the female sculptures such as sukasarika, kesanistoyakarini, veniprasadhana, asokadohada, putravallabha, kandukakrida, padmini and so on. He also brought to light numerous references from Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit sources, parallel motifs or imageries of nayikas as described by the poets and dramatists like Kalidasa, Bana, Asvaghosa, Rajasekhara, Bhoja and others. A whole range of kridas such as udyanakridas, jalakridas etc. are mentioned by him as supportive literature to show the cultural context from which the imagery

of women on the Mathura pillars was derived. He has given only stray references to alaskanya and other imagery types on later temple architecture, but there is no systematic approach or the slightest suggestion of observing the parallels or evolution in ^{any single} imagery type eg., kesanistoyakarini, through the thousand years, from stupa architecture to temple architecture. The book on 'Indian Art' published in 1965 has excellent line drawings of the yaksis and as a final culmination of his research on early Indian art before the Gupta period, of which one section of Kushana art is on salabhanjika.

C. Sivaramamurti⁴ in his enormous study on Amaravati sculptures in the 1940s, brought to light a number of references to yaksi in architectural contexts from Ramayana, Mahabharata, Mahabhashya and Raghuvamasa. He also noticed the overlapping meanings shared by the imageries of yaksi, Sri and nadi devatas i.e. bestowing prosperity and abundance. In his subsequent book, Sanskrit literature and Art: Mirror of Indian Culture⁵, he devoted one section to salabhanjika and stambha puttalika, which are very brief and do not give much insight.

In the light of our subject, the apsaras too are very significant and hence the writings of indologists and iconographers also become indispensable. Vedic Mythology of A.A. Macdonell⁶ and A.B. Keith⁷ have provided much of the data in Vedic and Puranic sources for the apsaras. An extensive study of iconography and a parallel illustration and discussion on sculptures of different deities of different monuments done by T.A. Gopinath Rao⁸ and J.N. Banerjea⁹, have brought to light one significant observation on the association of Barhut apsaras Misakosi, Alambusa etc., with the sculptures of latter day Ganga and Yamuna. Banerjea calls justifiably be traced to these proto types (apsaras) though they are not

depicted in the dancing postures. Thus the 'continuity' of imagery and form ^{from} yaksi-apsara to nadi devatas was hinted at by Banerjea in 1941 in his 'Development of Hindu Iconography', but a systematic study was still wanting. Strangely for Banerjea, the identification of dance postures had to wait for Kapila Vatsyayan's¹⁰ research on 'Classical Dance in Literature and the Art s', which was conducted during the 1950s. Now we know that every sculpture, standing or seated, of human figures, could be identified as a sthanaka or a chari conforming to the Natyasastra. The above book has moulded my thought process and analytical approach to the study of sculpture and literature and the inseparable, almost 'symbiotic' relationship, shared by the visual, literary and performing classical arts in India. A number of sculptures of apsaras, yaksis, devanganas and surasundaris, have been discussed by her in the context of their dance postures.

The apsara, salabhanjika in literature and art, have been dealt with independently by two scholars, namely Projesh Banerjee¹¹ and U.N.Roy¹², whose approach is a continuation of the earlier scholars. These are recent researches of the 1970s but need to be mentioned because of their specialized nature and a larger compilation of sources from Vedic, Puranic and classical Sanskrit sources. Projesh Banerjee also brings in devadasis as the 'daughters of the celestial apsaras' and extends the interpretation to temple ritual, but fails to project any formidable conclusions. U.N.Roy in his study on salabhanjika refers to Kushana period mainly, and rounds off Gupta period cursarily. Although he mentions the continuation of this motif in 'river goddess', he has made no efforts at elaboration. Motichandra¹³, in his book 'The World of Courtesans' also refers to apsaras as courtesans and reduces them to the level of divine prostitution

and misses the ^{point} absolutely. The book is also accompanied with photographs of devanganas interpreted as courtesans. Despite its rich data the interpretation is a bit over stretched in the case of apsaras as they are represented in sculpture. The time has come to ask what the apsaras and devanganas are doing on a temple? What role do they play in the architectural and sculptural programming of the temple? What is the meaning of their actions?

By far the most brilliant interpretation of surasundari and apsara sculptures in conjunction with the temple architecture and their interpretation in the larger context of the temple programming, has been attempted by Stella Kramrisch way back in the 1940s followed by Alice Boner, in the 1950s, M.A.Dhaky in the 1960s and Ratan Parimoo in the 1980s. In my assimilation, the earlier group of studies by Coomaraswamy, Sivaramamurti and V.S.Agrawala; and the later group listed above, when bridged together, give rise to the scope of the proposed thesis. It is the 'continuity' and 'constancy' in imagery and form of the entire corpus of the devangana imagery in totality, which is the focus of the present thesis.

The great book on 'Hindu Temple' by Kramrisch¹⁴ is encyclopedic in scope and on every topic she writes with equal clarity, depth and vision. In the last section dealing with Shakti, she has given a chapter on 'Feminine Power', the most suitable nomenclature for denoting the world of apsaras, surasundaris and yaksinis, who are the protective energies of the ultimate Sakti and share a portion of each of her spirit. They are an exposition of the meaning of the 'prasada'¹⁵. Mostly formulating her views on the basis of Agamic and Tantric sources, she explains the

vyala and devangana juxtaposition on the temple architecture as an illustration of Sakti infusing 'contemplative and passive' natured shardula to activate the power of 'brahmana'¹⁶. She compares the temple draped with images of dikpalas, devanganas, vyalas and the deities with a yantra of Sri, on which yoginis are placed at various positions. Their energies proceed inward to the Maha Sakti placed in the Garbhagriha or the centre. They are the paricharikas or 'dutis' of the transcendental power. They carry mudra, raiment, mirror and various vessels¹⁷. The celestial beauties on the walls of the temple, serve man, the devotee, they satisfy his response to them so that increased in power, released from their attractions and transformed, he proceeds in his devotion towards God in the innermost sanctuary, of heart and in the temple. They help man towards reintegration. Such a didactic explanation may be altered now, since the apsaras are not completely religious in that rigorous sense. Hence the interpretation could be left open ended. Apsaras and yaksinis are the dik nayikas or avarana devatas and they embody movement : apsara is the movement in the atmosphere, yaksini is the movement in vegetation and natakā in the body of the man, as is shown as a dancer.¹⁸ Thus Kramrisch zooms in on the philosophical meaning supposedly implied by these images, which encompass the 'ahamkara'-ego, and suggests her own reading of it through the seemingly, superficially beautiful images of the sarasundaris etc.

Alice Boner¹⁹ in the 'introduction' to her joint research with Sadashivrath Sharma on Silpa Prakasa, the medieval Orissan Sanskrit text on Temple Architecture, observes sixteen types of alaskanya which she contends pay-homage to the femininity of the Sakti, that is lavishly decorated with tender voluptuous female figures. They represent in their

playful liveliness nothing less than liveliness. With their different attitudes, gestures and expressions they are all composed on one and the same yantra²⁰ (I.391-480). As a house without a wife, as frolic without a woman, thus without female figures the monument will be of inferior quality and bear no fruit²¹, (I.392-393) claims the text. She illustrates each of the kanyas with their description and supportive drawings.

M.A.Dhaky²² in his book on Vyalas has effectively demonstrated 'genre' based research, picking up motifs, tracing back their origin and marking their evolution over a considerable time frame and analogous regions. It is this kind of art historical writing that is very much wanting in India. Thus the cutting across from site to site and period to period brings forth syncretic and multilayered conclusions. For the research on vyalas, identification of their imagery type from architectural texts like Samarangana Sutradhara and Aparajita Precha and a stylistic analysis of their form, stance and organic structure and the larger context of these motifs on temple architecture have been put together by him. A similar approach can be seen in ^{his} ^{of Vitana} study which deals with the ceiling types from Gujarat temples. He has for the first time brought to light architectural textual data and identified it on actual temple parts.

Parimoo²³ has followed up the study of the decorative repertoire of the temple wall with its distinct architectural components and the transmission and dissemination of decorative motifs in Gujarat. His study of Chandella sculptures : Their sources and characteristics, is methodologically an insightful paper. He has evolved an approach of writing on Art Historical problems which is different from the usual.

The significant role of the artist as the observer and creator of form is highlighted. The monograph on 'Sculptures of Sesasayi Visnu' is more relevant to mention here since it is a study on one imagery type, its literary references, regional distribution of its manifestations in sculpture and painting and the various modes of representation. It has a humanistic extensive ^{ness} rather than mere iconographical compilation. In a way the present work is an extension of the same methodology discussed here with reference to Vyala, Vitana or Sesasayi Visnu.

It was interesting to observe how monographs on temple sites surveying their history, architectural structure and style, sculptures and iconography etc. have dealt with the imagery of the devangana. The attention given to them is only periferal and mostly limited to description or an appreciation of their erotic gestures. Wibke Lobo²⁴ in her book on Modhera temple, discribes the entire temple and its sculptures, unit by unit. She even tabulates the iconography of Dvadasagauri based on Aparajita Precha and as programmed on Modhera madovara devakoshthas. But such a specialised study on the devangana/apsara imagery is refrained from. The same can be observed of Kirit Mankodi's impressive and extensively produced book on 'The Queen's Stepwell at Patan.'²⁵ It is an enormously descriptive book which hardly discusses the imagery of the devanganas in totality, just as he does that of Visnu's Dasavataras or the Dikpalas etc. Under the photographs the captions refer to apsara, alasakanya, yogini and so on but the term devangana has not been used. Even the dance-like postures have not been identified as depicting some classical karanas. Hence the author opts for a clinical approach to enumerate the iconographies but does not enter into any specialized handling of the ^{devangana} iconographical forms.

R. Nath²⁶, Handa²⁷ and R.N.Misra²⁸ in their independent monographs on 'Khajuraho', 'Osian' and 'Sculptures of Dahala and Daksina Kosala' respectively, have attempted explaining the range of devangana imagery, their textual references and functions. In their analysis of the devangana imagery which are often referred to as nayika, surasundari, salabhanjika, alaskanya etc., the allusion to the texts like Silpa Prakasa or Ksirarnava, attempts to distinguish their iconography one from the other, are discernible. But, as the scope of such books does not allow them to explore the devangana imagery and its development any further, their discourse is very *limited.*

It is quite alarming to note the authors like Kanwarlal²⁹ write on Khajuraho *temples* and try to create an impression that *they* represent epicurian, materialist, sensualist society of India. The apsaras were either portrayed as 'seductresses' or as objects for deriving pleasure and titillation.

1.3

METHODOLOGY :

The exploration of the devangana/surasundari motif in Indian sculpture and architecture of western India brings into focus the myriad iconographies and sculptural styles or 'schools' which bear the stamp of Gupta classicism. The devangana sculptures along with the vyalas and a host of other decorative motifs, open up a new range of architectural problems which throw light on the development in post-Gupta temple forms. The immediate development has been broadly classified as 'Gurjara Pratihara', followed by the so called 'Maru Gurjara' (Dhaky *and* U.P.Shah etc.) which correspond to the 8th-9th and the 11th *century,* respectively. What happened to the temple form in the 8th *century* is a

problem not only for architecture alone, but from now onwards there is a confluence of sculpture with architecture. *To put it simply,* architecture expands and complicates, in order to fill the spaces of the complex planes of the mandovara walls and other spaces, sculpture had to be devised to fit into niches, projections and recessions of the walls. This aesthetic need was creatively explored and got formulated into a whole range of female figures in various postures, states of mind and activities. In the 9th *century* a new fascination with beautiful woman began, and the female figure emerged as a separate decorative element. As this fascination with the female figure gathers momentum and eventually became an obsession, sensuously modelled forms appeared in increasing numbers on the walls of temples. Since these voluptuous females were in themselves a part of the stylistic development of the region, it seems only proper that they be used to illustrate both the individual innovations and the threads that link the various western Indian sites into a homogenous unit.³⁰ The various female forms primarily comprise of the goddesses in niches, river goddesses on the doorways and the devanganas on the mandovara.

Tracing the origin, evolution and transmission of the devangana motif by factual observation of the actual specimens, one finds that mandovara development is not the triggering factor for the arrival of devanganas on the architectural fabric. The Roda temple 6 and Osia, Surya temple, examples bring to light a range of devangana types that are placed on the pillar capitals and door jambs, respectively, rather than on the mandovara, where they later on fit permanently. This sudden revival of the devangana iconography at Roda after a long gap, since Mathura railing pillar yaksis, hints at the survival of this iconography

and its sudden recall when architecture of the temple demanded its necessity. What happened to it in the intermediary period is a matter of speculation alone, but its revival suggests an oral tradition or a wooden architectural tradition in which it remained fused. Salabhanjikas on the supporting brackets are the foremost among them and so are certain others which are found in the vitanas etc. Their reference under a generic term 'salabhanjika' comes in Samarangana Sutradhara also, which is an architectural text written by Bhoja in 11th Century. It is at this stage that udyana kridas and other such sports from literary sources help us to surmise the probable sources that the artists may have leaned on.

The early medieval and post-Gupta literature in Sanskrit and Prakrit have been examined to evoke a feel of the contemporary themes and the images of women. Echoing the aesthetic tradition of the times the indulgence in the theme of shringara manifests itself in art, literature and the religion also. The creative and critical writings of Rajasekhara, Anandavardhana, Mammata and of course, Kalidasa, evoke the aesthetic outlook of the medieval age and the need for embellishment as the aesthetic paradigm of the various arts. Is it difficult to discern the parallelism between the psychology of ornamentation in poetry and temple architecture? In Sanskrit poetry the word-play, 'alliteration' and 'assonance', form a kind of rhyming from which emerges an intricate vertical and horizontal design which unified the entire poem and centralized its movement. This sensuous surface of verbal ornamentation suggests a comparison with the sculptured surfaces of the medieval Hindu Temples.³¹ Stella Kramrisch in Hindu Temple describes the rhythmic nature of the temple form. "In the rhythmic disposition of a basic ground

plan and the super imposition of repetitive shapes along a vertical axis, each temple moves to a point of intense concentration, where it simultaneously plunges into the womb house of the deity and transcends itself". Thus common concerns were shared by the contemporary fields of the sister arts and parallel techniques were employed by them.

The medieval form in architecture as well as sculpture of western and central India are highly textured, multidirectional, activated, dynamic and verging on decorativeness. Kramrisch³² observes "In the western-most branch a strained motion (instead of the easy and swaying state of poise in which the classical reliefs had dwelt) in its nervy elegance overstresses the curves, so that they have a tendency to become angular. Limbs and body are bent with the tension of a bow from which the arrow is just to fly off. The curves of limbs and body frequently deflect from the convex into the concave, and this the more the later the date of relief". She further notices that the slender and rounded limbs are bent in sharp angles and seem to split the linear composition into many fragments. Their joints act at the same time as so many centres where nervous energy is bundled up and from where it radiates to its next station.

As one can discern from above, the medieval form in sculpture and architecture of western and central India, is the concern of this thesis from the point of view of their formal and stylistic aesthetics juxtaposed with parallel features in literature like alankara, dhvani etc. which subscribe to form as well as meaning aspects in a work of art.

Exploring the range of meaning, Erwin Panofsky's³³ formulation in 'Studies in Iconology' published in 1939 paved the way for content

analysis in visual arts in the larger context of history, period, class, religion and culture. Between this book and the 'Meaning in Visual Arts' which appeared in 1955, Panofsky has demonstrated for Renaissance Art, that study of content is not a mere description or an aesthetic appreciation of a work of art. He evolved the theory of iconology which is a method of interpretation which arises from synthesis rather than analysis. The iconological method operates on three levels - (i) pre-iconographical description (ii) iconographical analysis (iii) iconological interpretation..

In the case of the above categories Panofsky gives a further explanation with the help of a tabulated chart how the above process is indivisible and an organic one.

I. OBJECT OF INTERPRETATION

- (i) Primary or natural subject matter, factual and expressional which constitute the world of artistic motifs.
- (ii) Secondary or conventional subject matter, constituting the world of images, stories and allegories.
- (iii) Intrinsic meaning or content, constituting the world of 'symbolical' values.

II. ACT OF INTERPRETATION

- (i) Pre-Iconographical description (pseudo-formal analysis)
- (ii) Iconographical Analysis
- (iii) Iconological interpretation

III. EQUIPMENT FOR INTERPRETATION

- (i) Practical Experience (familiarity with objects and events)
- (ii) Knowledge of literary sources (familiarity with specific themes and concepts)
- (iii) Synthetic Intuition (familiarity with the essential tendencies of the human mind) conditioned by personal psychology and 'weltanschauung' i.e. - 'spirit of the age'.

IV. CORRECTIVE PRINCIPLE OF INTERPRETATION

(History of Tradition)

- (i) History of style (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, objects and events were expressed by forms).
- (ii) History of types (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, specific themes or concepts were expressed by objects and events).
- (iii) History of Cultural Symptoms or 'symbols' in general (insight into the manner in which under varying historical conditions essential tendencies of the human mind were expressed by specific themes and concepts).

The methodology adopted for the analysis of devangana form and imagery, an attempt has been made to conform to the above theory. The chapter on literary sources conforms with 'knowledge of literary sources', the mothergoddess, vrksaka, salabhanjika, yaksi antecedants conform to the 'history of cultural symptoms' or 'symbols', extensive analysis of the devangana imagery follows the 'history of types' and so on to arrive

at 'intrinsic content' and the iconological interpretation. Interestingly there is a convergence of intentions between Panofsky's 'iconological' analyses and the approach to reaching the heart of 'meaning' in Anandavardhana's 'Dhvani' theory.

The concept of dhvani put forward by Anandavardhana, encompassing the earlier theories of 'sphota' to explain the power of the linguistic symbol enriched the potential of poetic language to convey meaning. Pondering deeply on the imagery of the devangana sculptures individually and in totality as the representation of the feminine power within the physical and experiential space of a temple, one feels tempted to apply the dhvani concept to unravel meaning in visual language. The poetic language has double potential : literal (vacya) and implied (pratiyamana). Such a poetry in which the words and their literal meanings occupy a subordinate position and suggest some charming sense (an idea, a figure of speech or an emotion) is called dhvani³⁴ (yatrarthah sabdo vatam artham upsarjani krtasvarthau Vyanktah kavyavisesah a dhvanir iti suribhih kathitah)

The poet^u word has three powers : denotative (abhidha), indicative (laksana) and suggestive (vyanjana). Anandavardhana's basic postulate is that utterances possess a literal meaning, and can also convey a further meaning - the social-cultural meaning. This includes everything other than the literal meaning (the primary and the metaphorical senses). Anandavardhana 'did not confine to the words and sentences as indicators of meaning, he included all the contextual factors, the intonation. The social cultural meanings which fall within the domain of intonation is the power of vyanjana³⁵.

In my view devangana imagery is the linguistic symbol which denote on primary level an image of a beautiful woman engaged in activities of different kinds e.g., playing with a ball, looking into the mirror, touching her own breast, or discarding a scorpion from her lower garment. But on indicative or laksana level some of the devanganas reveal metaphorical meanings which invite the spectator to transcend beyond their physical form and actions to the conceptual, philosophical, biological, erotic, poetic, ritualistic, escoteric etc. meanings generated by their presence on the mandovara, pillar, brackcet etc. on the body of the temple. Their placement is not a decorative appendage to the body of the temple but organically integral to the physical, ritualistic and philosophical function of a place of worship.

The meaning of the action and attribute of individual or a group of devanganas will emerge slowly by examining their imagery from temple to temple of a given geographical region, over a period of time to notice the continuity of a motif and its placement on the mandovara or vitana. This impression left by repeated examination and previous study urges an aesthete's mind to discern the implied meaning behind the charming alluring physical beauty of the female form, which is a potent metaphorical symbol suggesting a higher, transcendental organic phenomenon or truth of life.

The laksana or metaphor operates by transference of meaning from the symbol by tatsiddhi (accomplishment of purpose), jati (same origin) vaiparitya (contrareity), sarupya (similarity), prasamsa (praise), abhidheya - sambandha (relation with the literal meaning). These are the basic rules of interpretation explained by Mimamsakas to explain

Vedic passages with metaphorical transfer of meaning.³⁶

One more type of laksana has also been pointed out by Mimasaka Kumarila Bhatta and followed by Mammata, Visvanatha and Hemachandra, which is gauni vritti or qualitative transfer, if the relation between the referent and reference is that of similarity, but if it is based on cause and effect, part and whole, measure and measured then it is pure laksana.³⁷ It is this gauni vritti that applies to the metaphorical aspect of some devangana images, just like 'simho devadattah' (Devadatta is a lion) where the 'simhatya' the universal character of courage, etc. are present in Devadatta justifies calling him a lion. The svastanasparsa (my own nomenclature) asokadohada, type of imagery implies the gauni vritti, the quality of fertility invoking power. Thus the female form is a potent generative vessel which implies fertility, a character shared with nature.

Anandavardhana's division of laksana (avivaksitas vacya) are further divided into atyanta tiraskrita vacya (literal sense completely set aside) and arthantara samkramita vacya (literal meaning shifted, pregnant use of words). Under the former category we can put kanduka krida, but putravallabha holding mangoes under the latter category.

In case of vyanjana which lays stress on vyangya or suggestivity, the distinct categories are asamlaksyakarama vyangya (stages of knowing the suggested sense are imperceptible) samlaksyakrama vyangya (stages of knowing the suggested sense are perceptible). Devangana imagery under the first category are sarpadhari, vasanabhramsa, markatacesta, which have overtones, of erotic flavour while yaksi, vriksika, salabhanjika, alasa, nartaki refer to the second category.

The sphota or the concept of linguistic sign is found analogous to the terminology of Saussure : significant and signified, that which means and that which is meant, sabda and artha, form and content.³⁸ With this parallelism cited by Kunjuni Raja, our own attempt at a semiological analysis (introduced to me by my guide) of the devangana imagery as a social/cultural motif gets strengthened. Somiology is a theory of *linguistics* put forward by Saussure, Roland Barthes and others, which has been applied more significantly to literature. In Indian art, an attempt has been made so far only by Ratan Parimoo, at analysing Buddhist Jatakas, life of Buddha and the paintings of Bihari Satsai painted in Mewar style, to explain the narrative structure in art and the verse while at the same time to understand the import of the allegorical meaning hidden behind the seemingly simple narration³⁹. The interrelationship of the word and meaning is what is implied by 'sahitya' and the method of analysis attempted by semioticians. Taking the devangana sculpture as a semiotic unit, one begins to uncover the meaning signified by this potential signifier, whose realm pervades cultural, social and artistic traditions. Since structuralist analysis is heterogenous, one has to keep in view factors based on temporal and spatial contexts. This has been observed by researchers of living performing traditions such as Traditional Theatre and Devadasi Tradition in South India⁴⁰. One agrees that the myths, complex rituals, the colourful customs and festivals aim at a form of cultural transmission that is not based on analytical rationalism, but on imagination and poetic feeling. Hence a subject of inquiry such as the devangana sculptures need to be probed from multiple perspectives which satisfies cultural, ritualistic and aesthetic needs. On the historical or chronological axis this phenomenon

is supported by the sculptural evidence recurring on temples where as the synchronic axis supports its cultural relevance. The synchronic evidences encompass Vedic and Puranic literature, historical evidences through inscriptions, Sanskrit natya and kavya literature, temple ritual traditions, evidences of devadasi practice and vastusastra literature. (See Graph in *Chapt. VIII*)

The post-Formalism methodological stand-point developed by Panofsky viz. 'iconology' for visual arts and Saussure, Barthes and others of semiotics for literature and the human sciences, have paved the way for an indepth study of 'content' based on 'contextuality'. The world of 'meaning' and 'reading an image' have widened the range of subject-matter and the analytical study related with it. An extension of the content study in art and literature came about also with Sigmund Freud and C.J. Jung and their study related to psychoanalysis. More than Freud, it is Jung's work that is more applicable to art and it has been demonstrated with the help of application of concepts such as 'the collective unconscious' and the 'archetype' to prehistoric and early historic art by Eric Neumann⁴¹, and Seigfried Gidion.⁴²

The theories of 'iconology' and 'semiology' offer the method of applying analytical tools to arrive at an interpretation where as Neumann and Gidion have demonstrated it on such universal phenomena and art manifestations which have universal applicability.

Explaining the archetype, Neumann says it refers not to any concrete image existing in space and time, but to an inward image at work in the human psyche. The symbolic expression of this psychic phenomenon is to be found in the figure of the 'Great Goddess' represented in the

myths and artistic creations of mankind.⁴³ The effect of this archetype may be followed through the whole of history for we can demonstrate its workings in the rites, myths, symbols of early man and also in the dreams, fantasies and creative works of the sound as well as the sick man of our own day.

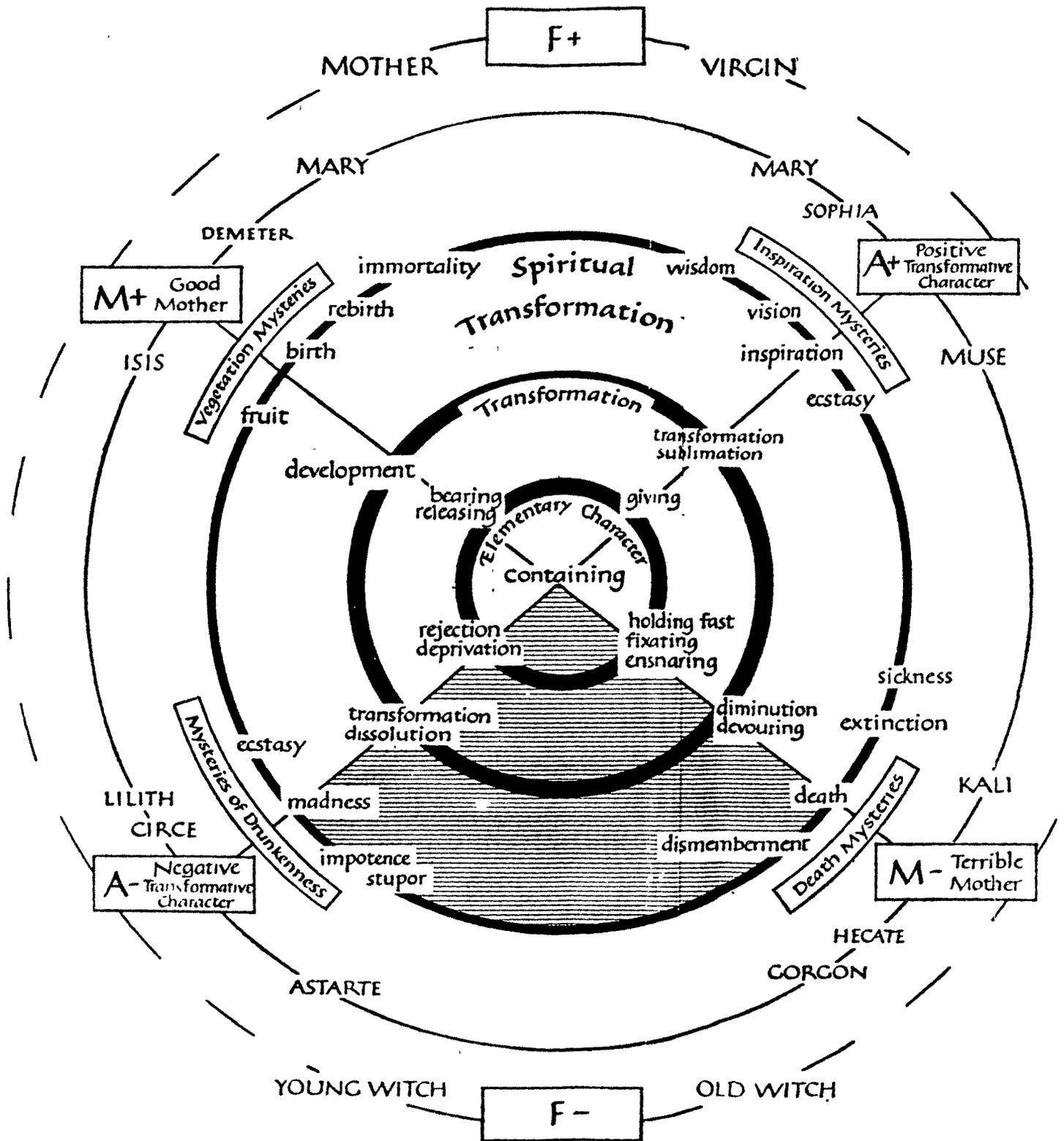
An archetype can have its emotional dynamic components, its symbolism, its material component and structure. The symbolism of the archetype is its manifestation in specific psychic images, which are perceived by consciousness and which are different for each archetype e.g., the terrible aspect and the life giving 'friendly' aspect of the female archetype. The structure of the archetype is the complex network of psychic organisation which includes dynamism, symbolism and sense content and whose centre and intangible unifier is the archetype itself.⁴⁴ The 'primordial archetype' according to Jung is a structural concept signifying 'eternal presence'.⁴⁵

The archetype of the 'great mother' e.g. has a vast number of forms, symbols, images, views, aspects and concepts which exclude one another and overlap, which complement one another and apparently emerge independently of one another, in that the 'eternal presence' of the archetype also has symbolic polyvalence. Gradually the innumerable symbols get linked with the figure of the 'great mother' as attributes and form the wreath of symbols that surrounds the archetypal figure and manifests itself in rite and myth. This wreath of symbolic images surrounds, not only one figure but a great number of figures, of 'great mother', who as goddesses and fairies, female demons and nymphs, friendly and unfriendly, manifest the one 'great unknown', the 'great

mother' as the central aspect of the 'archetypal feminine' in the rites and myths, the religions and legends of mankind. It is an essential feature of the primordial archetype that it combines positive and negative attributes and groups of attributes. This union of opposites in the primordial archetype, its ambivalence, is characteristic of the original situation of the unconscious which consciousness has not yet dissected into its antithesis. Early man experienced this paradoxical simultaneity of good and evil, friendly and terrible, in the godhead as a unity, while as consciousness developed, the 'good goddess' and the 'bad goddess,' usually came to be worshipped as different beings.⁴⁶ Neumann has demonstrated this by drawing a schema (Schema I) in a circular order assigning the lower zone to the negative and the upper one to the positive.

The positive zone contains, Isis, Mary, Sophia, Muse (Laksmi, Aditi, Sarasvati, Durga) where as the lower-negative zone contains Astarte, Lilith, Circe, Hecate, Gorgon (Kali and Chamunda). The same concept can be identified with the ambivalent imagery of the devanganas which combine the features of both the 'kindly' and the 'terrible'. Thus on a single monument some of the devanganas are 'shringara' type while some others are 'vira' type. No more are they symbolising the 'fertility' concept they originally signified. The signifier/signified relationship in the case of one yaksi - devangana motif is particular to general in symbolism, which implies the collective unconscious as its theoretical base while the presentation of this archetypal concept is like a figure of speech, according to Jung.

I have tried to develop upon the idea of 'primordial archetype' following the concepts of dynamic symbolism, symbolic polyvalence and



its combination of positive and negative attributes. The evolving 'concept of the feminine' is understood by me as a dynamic process of evolving imagery, evolving symbolism over a period of thousand years, which even in its changed form allude in some way to its original form and meaning. The evolving imagery has erotic and ascetic, creative and hostile overtones, which are not the same as positive - negative but opposite to each other. This allows one to juxtapose the two groups to observe how in the imagery of the 'feminine' there is an inherent ambivalence that goes back to the time of the formation of the architypal image. Under this schema I have tried to analyse the devangana imagery and plotted their attitudes according to their actions and characters.

Following the 'universality of the archetype', Giedion has suggested the concept of 'constancy and change' in the symbolism of the visual form and the function of the symbolism. He observes how constancy and change have seldom been so interwoven as in the sequence from fertility symbol to venerated animal and then to goddess. The different stages are so inter-mingled that one can scarcely be distinguished from another.⁴⁷

The only short-coming in the application of these theories to my material is that they refer to prehistoric and early historic art, while my subject matter ranges from Indus valley to medieval periods. Although the main concentration is only on the temple sculptures of four centuries (viz. 8th to 12th) I have to fall back upon the earlier sculptures in which imagery of devangana finds its origin. Thus one has almost excavated the imagery of mother goddess, yaksi, vrksaka, salabhanjika and the entire imagery of the yaksi to understand the meaning of devangana imagery.

Thus semiological analysis is like deconstruction or decoding of a history, philosophy, imagery motif, mythology, character or emotion, by which process an 'archaeological excavation' is attempted from the present through layers of the past to uncover various kinds of changes, interpretations and influences. The 'enunciative analysis' and structural interpretation of the present text (devangana imagery) is a process of reassessment of the entire 'oeuvre' of the 'feminine concept and form', dealt with at several levels of historic periods and in adjacent fields of Indian art, literature and thought. Such a discourse does not confine itself to Indian art alone but encompasses certain 'co-relative' and 'equivalent' concepts shared by the art of early west Asian and Occidental cultures. (This will be elaborated in the chapter on Sculpture, supra) The 'archaeology' of our 'discourse' deals with such documents which are not transparent but opaque, which have to be pierced to reach to the depth of the essential meaning, which are pregnant of metaphor and allegory.

The evolving 'concept of the 'feminine' can be described as a 'tree of enunciative derivation', at its base are the primordial concepts and forms of the 'feminine principle', that extend to its summit, and after a number of branchings are the statements of forms that put into operation the same regularity but one more delicately articulated, more clearly delimited and localised forms.'⁴⁸ This point can be illustrated with the help of the major devangana imagery which originates from the mother goddess figurines. The Indus Valley and west Asian examples denote fertility by holding breasts for nourishment. The same psychology continues in the Kushana Yaksi figures and the svastanasparsa devanganas from Jagat and Rani ki Vav.

The imagery evolves from direct allusion to fertility towards a more stylized representation continuing on the lines of fertility and nourishment tinged with erotic fervour. Thus the svastanasparsa devangana is an off shoot of the primordial mother goddess if the symbolism beneath is discerned.

Rightly observed by Foucault, the process vauches for the 'original' departures made in the order of the 'regular', which in turn expands the 'oeuvre' and the scope of the discourse itself. The discourse on the 'concept of feminine' by the virtue of its multiplicity in form and the homogeneity of its motif, through various fields of human expression, does not limit itself to art history or religion, strictly. In other words, the present attempt is to reassess certain artistic material (symbolic representation in sculptural form) of various historical periods in a new order, the 'psychohistorical' one, which refers to the various stages in the development of the human psyche. The Foucauldian approach to the excavation of knowledge perpetuated from the past centuries, but veiled and erased from the immediate memory, could be applied to uncover the various stages and layers in the development of the devangana imagery on medieval architecture.

But while recollecting the 'language', here 'text', that is, the symbols, will have to be peeled off from their various coverings and the probe will begin from the Jungian archetype. The effect of this archetype may be followed through the whole of history, for we can demonstrate its workings in the rites, myths and symbols of the early man. Analytical psychology has attempted a structural analysis of an archetype which has its inner growth and dynamism and it manifests

itself in the myths and symbols of mankind such as the (great mother). The symbolism of the archetype is its manifestation in specific psychic images, which are perceived by consciousness and which are different for each archetype e.g. the birth giving, kindly, motherly aspect of the female archetype, as well as the terrible, fearsome, devouring archetype. The 'primordial archetype' according to Jung, is a structural concept signifying the 'eternal presence', It is this concept that Neumann and Gidion have taken from Jung to explain the phenomena of the 'great mother' concept, of which the feminine is the part. The number of analogous concepts like water, vegetation, earth, air etc. form a wreath of symbolic images and surround the number of figures of the 'great mother'.

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