

The Nineteenth Century Discourse on Indian Architecture

by  
Sonit Bafna  
Graduate Diploma in Architecture  
Center for Environmental Planning and Technology  
Ahmedabad, India  
March 1990

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE  
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### ABSTRACT

The thesis deals with the subject of the marginalization of Indian architecture. The particular issue that it takes up is the tendency in the current criticism to attribute this marginalization to the "Orientalist " biases of the scholars who first attempted to study it. Key amongst these is James Fergusson, whose *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, written in 1876 was the pioneering text on the subject. His character as it emerges from these critical revisions is that of a haughty, supercilious imperialist, who despite liking Indian architecture, could not appreciate it whole-heartedly and therefore ended up marginalizing it.

Taking a stand against this interpretation, the thesis demonstrates that Fergusson's character was much more complex than it is made out to be and his appreciation of Indian architecture was genuine. He admired not just historical buildings but also contemporary practices in India, considering them as exemplary for European architects. The argument made is that his contribution to the marginalization of the Indian architecture therefore, resulted not from intention but, paradoxically, from his very efforts to promote its study. The point illustrated here is that the impact of the individual scholars on the consequent interpretation of their work is not deterministic and the causes for marginalization cannot be found in their cultural biases and aesthetic preferences alone. Instead, tracing the changing nature of the discourse on Indian architecture through the nineteenth century, the thesis suggests that the origins of the marginalization lie in the conditions under which the scholarship on it emerged. A fruitful reappraisal of such a scholarship thus calls for an analysis not just of particular texts or scholars, but the discursive practice that defines the subject.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **The Tree of Architecture**

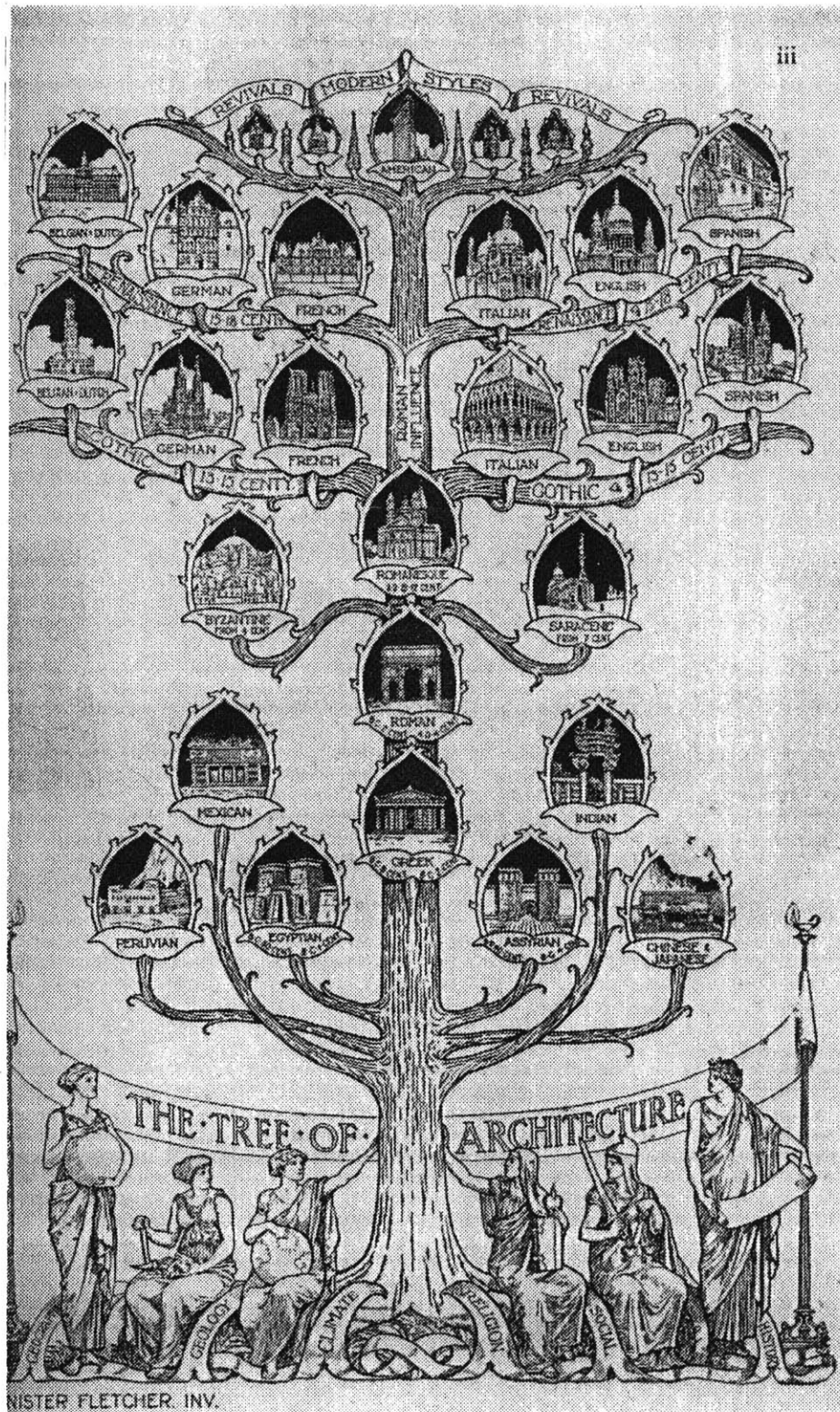
The well known frontispiece to Sir Banister Fletcher's *History of Architecture*<sup>1</sup> is not just a pictorial representation of the general subject matter of the book; it stands as an iconic summary of the nineteenth century understanding of Architecture, carrying along with it all its ideological implications and betraying its latent biases and shortcomings [fig. 1].

The picture is a representation of a tree, the leaves, branches and the trunk of which are tagged with the names of various architectural styles. On the ground, at the roots of the tree are arranged six female figures, each representing a particular influence upon architecture. As the caption below explains, the tree is a representation of the evolution of architecture through the ages and locates the different stylistic categories into which architecture is divided within a broad historical framework. The older styles are shown at the trunk and the lower branches and the more recent ones at the higher branches and the leaves.

Explicitly, the tree reads as a metaphor for the idea that all styles are related in having emerged from a common ancestry; it follows that not only can recent styles be understood with reference to earlier ones but also that all styles of architecture are ultimately comparable and can be analyzed with reference to a common methodological table. This is clarified right in the beginning of the preface when Fletcher states, "This History of Architecture on the Comparative Method", of which the short title is "Comparative Architecture" aims at displaying clearly the characteristic features of the architecture of each country by comparing the buildings of each period... The analytical and comparative method adopted enables the essentials of individual styles to be easily grasped; thus the character of Gothic is emphasized by comparison with Classic and

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<sup>1</sup> Banister Fletcher. *The History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*. London, 1896. (first edition)



1. The Tree of Architecture  
Frontispice to Banister Fletcher *The History of Architecture on the Comparative Method* 1892.

Renaissance architecture, a similar treatment being followed throughout the book."<sup>2</sup> In other words, the implied idea is that all styles are different manifestations of one Architecture<sup>3</sup> that has developed through the ages in different countries.

Closer examination, however, brings to light certain inherent distortions or misrepresentations. A look, for instance, at the distribution of the styles shows how lopsided it is. The main stem and most of the branches are occupied by the western (mostly European) styles, while the non-western styles occupy the side-branches. Not only that, the western styles are treated in much greater depth and detail than comparative non-western architecture. For example, the whole of Islamic architecture, including architecture from countries as far apart and as rich in historic monuments as Egypt, Iran and India, covering approximately a period of at least 800 to 1000 years, is treated under a single category of Saracenic architecture, while European architecture of the same period is not only divided into stylistic categories such as Renaissance, Gothic, Baroque and so on, but each of these is further classified into nationalistic categories like English, French, Gothic, Italian and Germanic.

This difference is also evident in the actual amount of space given to each of the styles in the book. As can be seen in the contents list, the western styles occupy about four-fifth of the book, the rest being given to non-western architecture. This can be seen at one level as reflecting the context in which the book appeared. Written by an Englishman primarily for western audiences, the book naturally reflects a preference for western architecture. As a matter of fact, even within the overall treatment of western architecture, the book betrays a certain degree of Anglocentric bias. There is a detailed treatment of topics such as the comparison of English and French Gothic, the cathedral of St. Paul's and even the domestic medieval architecture of Britain; overall, the treatment of British architecture is given much more space than any comparable one. But the difference between the treatment of western and non-western architecture in the book is not simply in the

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<sup>2</sup> Fletcher. *op.cit.* p i.

<sup>3</sup> It is pertinent to note the distinction between Fletcher's use of 'architecture' as in "characteristic features of the architecture of each country" and 'Architecture' which is "essentially a human art as well as an affair of material". *ibid.* Preface.

amount of space given to each, nor in the depth of treatment that each style gets. Rather, it is established through another idea that is implicit in the tree metaphor - the idea of 'progress' or more accurately 'progressive architecture'; an architecture that, like a tree, is a growing entity, passing from one style to another as it develops.

The distribution of styles on the tree with the western architectural styles indicated at the center of the composition, shows them as part of an architecture that is evolving gradually. On the other hand, the non-western styles are shown on the side branches that represent the dead-ends of the Evolutionary Tree. These styles are therefore seen not only as outside the main development of Architecture, but also as static in their evolution and therefore not of much consequence for it. Given the evolutionary definition of architecture that is tacit within the Tree, it is clear that an architecture that is held to be static will be less important than one that is evolving over time. This is made evident in the organization of the contents of the book where the development of western architecture is put under the category of historical architecture and the rest of the styles are discussed as non-historical. Fletcher himself makes this explicit in his introduction to the section on non-historical styles, where he says, "These non-historical styles can scarcely be as interesting from an architect's point of view as those of Europe, which have progressed by the successive solution of constructive problems resolutely met and overcome".<sup>4</sup>

In this context, the picture that emerges from the frontispiece is that of a History of Architecture, particularly biased in favor of European styles - not just because of the huge discrepancy between the treatment of western and non-western architecture, but because of the very definition of architecture latent in the metaphor that privileges western styles over the non-western ones.

The "History of Architecture" was written primarily for "students, craftsmen and amateurs" and was intended to be used as a quick but comprehensive reference. It became extremely popular as a text-book, particularly in the English speaking world and is still in publication, though in a considerably revised format. The book was not

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<sup>4</sup> Fletcher. *op.cit.* p 888.



intended as a primary source for scholars or active researchers and did not contain much original work; rather it appears to have been conceived as a secondary source-book - a compendium of the contemporary knowledge of architectural history, methodically arranged and compressed into a single handy volume. The book therefore can be seen as a resume of the nineteenth century perception of Architecture and the frontispiece a visual metaphor for the historical narrative suggested by it.

This historical narrative, gave an undoubtedly inferior role to most non-western architecture. The non-western styles were 'marginalized' by being seen as "non-historic" or static within the overall narrative of stylistic progression so that, firstly, not having had any influence on the later architecture, they were removed from the main narrative of the history of architecture and secondly, they were given a summary treatment, in the selection and detail of them material presented and the space allocated to them in comparison to the western styles. The interesting question is to understand how development of such an idea came about. How did the non-western architecture came to be seen and accepted as being static and relatively undeveloped? Was it because of the moral and aesthetical values promoted by the prominent architectural critics of the time - especially English writers like Ruskin, Pugin and Cole? Or was there a significant political dimension to the issue that would create conditions for such an interpretation of architecture? Was this a consequence of a western "colonial enterprise" aimed at methodically and systematically gaining knowledge of the east? In this thesis, these questions are addressed in the specific context of Indian architecture.

### **The marginalization of Indian Architecture**

The marginalization of Indian architecture, to reiterate, manifests itself in two aspects in Fletcher's History: First, the location of Indian architecture on a side branch of the tree of architecture and second, the cursory treatment given to it in the terms of its classification, the representative examples chosen and the detail of the discussion. These issues can, at first glance, be explained as having emerged as side-effects of the construction of the history of world architecture. Given the teleological nature of the history of architecture that was accepted at the time, it seems natural that any historical narrative of architecture

that was proposed then would be justified through its success in explaining the present state of the profession. The narrative trend of history that was constructed would be contingent upon the description of the contemporary state of architecture. For the western scholars who were responsible for the construction of the first historical narratives of architecture, the present state of architecture was naturally defined in terms of the styles of architecture current at the time and a history of architecture meaningful to them would therefore be one that led to an understanding of it. Fletcher's tree illustrates this very clearly by locating the latest styles such as Gothic and Renaissance and Classical revivals that were in vogue at that time, at the top. While this appears to be true to an extent, in itself it is not an adequate characterization of "marginalization" of Indian architecture. This seems to imply that the marginalization was nothing more than a consequence of the fact that the first historical narratives were the work of European scholars and reflected their personal biases; and that a non-western point of view would have led to an entirely different treatment.

In any case, the issue is best debated within the general context of the historical narratives of world architecture being discussed during the later half of the nineteenth century. It calls for a study of the theories of architecture, particularly those offering an interpretation of the historical architecture just coming to the attention of scholars during this period, along with the philosophical debates on the ideas of the evolution of the arts, their origin and meaning; all of which would take it outside the scope of this thesis.

This thesis is specifically interested in the implied understanding which seems to have been crucial to the characterization of Indian architecture as a non-historic, static tradition, incapable of evolving and therefore of progress. This would be investigated through looking at the development of scholarship on Indian architecture, particularly at the time when the discipline was just being constituted.

## CHAPTER I

### Reappraisals of the Historiography of Indian Architecture

Before going into an examination of the historiography of Indian architecture, it would be pertinent to look at previous critical studies of the subject. The body of literature on the subject is rather limited but those reappraisals that do exist present us with rather diverse view points. Important amongst these is *Much Maligned Monsters* by Partha Mitter<sup>5</sup> which is a comprehensive and thorough historical account of western reaction to Indian art. Working largely within a disciplinary paradigm, Mitter elaborates on the struggles of the West to come to terms with the alien imagery of Hindu art, placing this struggle in the context of the European art historical and intellectual tradition. A shorter and more direct account of Metcalf, in *The Imperial Vision* whose argument raises extra-disciplinary issues of the political implications of the scholarships<sup>6</sup> In apparent contrast to both these, though intellectually also a part of the traditional art historical tradition, is Pramod Chandra's concise and clear essay *On the Study of Indian Art*, which pushes for a more sympathetic view of the British scholars, particularly Fergusson.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Mitter and the history of the European attitude to Indian art**

Studies of this kind, however, have not been directly concerned with the issue of marginalization, although a criticism of the western reaction to the Indian art has always been a central theme for them. Mitter takes up a very similar issue as his central agenda in *Much Maligned Monsters* - "the western appreciation of Indian art" or rather the

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<sup>5</sup> Partha Mitter. *Much Maligned Monsters*. Oxford, 1977.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Metcalf. *An Imperial Vision*. Los Angeles, 1989.

<sup>7</sup> Pramod Chandra. *On the Study of Indian Art*. Cambridge MA. 1983

"non-appreciation" of it. As he puts it, "Since the end of the middle ages people from the West had been visiting Indian temples, which they seldom failed to scrutinize with great care because of a certain curiosity value attached to them. But, both European visitors to India and those who remained behind were generally agreed on one thing: the great difficulty of coming to terms with Hindu art. Why did Hindu art, and the treatment of Hindu figure sculpture and iconography in particular, present such problems of assimilation?"<sup>8</sup>

Seeking to find an explanation for this, Mitter goes through the entire history of European reactions to the Indian art<sup>9</sup>, beginning from the "Middle Ages, because in essence, that was when attitudes were formed and the germs of later reactions firmly planted."<sup>10</sup> The book is an historical account of the successive phases that the European attitude towards Hindu art passed through. Initially, according to him, the Europeans possessed very little knowledge of Hindu art or iconography and with an imagination colored by the Christian attitudes towards pagan religions, classical histories, and myths and the western imagery of devils and hell, construed Indian art, particularly Indian deities, as diabolic multi-limbed monsters. Gradually, as European contact with India grew, the Western knowledge of Indian art became more reliable. With the increasing familiarity, there was a shift in perception towards an appreciation of it. Distinction began to appear between Hindu and Islamic art and art-pieces began to find a place in several collections in Europe. Yet, Mitter claims, while Islamic art in the form of Mughal paintings and descriptions of Mughal architecture, was acceptable to the Europeans and even found admirers Hindu art still presented problems of accommodation within the Western aesthetical tradition.

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<sup>8</sup> Mitter. *op.cit.* p 1.

<sup>9</sup> Actually Hindu art. Mitter appears to use the term Indian interchangeably with Hindu. In the book though, he deals specifically with Hindu art only.

<sup>10</sup> Mitter. *op. cit.* p1.

The eighteenth century, he continues, brought about a fundamental change in the European outlook towards Indian art, not only because of its awareness of the classical art of Greece and Rome heightened by the development of disciplines such as archaeology and the development of aesthetic and intellectual movements such as Romanticism, but also because of the European discovery of the literary and philosophical heritage of India through the translation of the major Sanskrit treatises. In Mitter's own words, "These developments were of a great significance for the reception of Indian art in that they marked the beginnings of a systematic approach to the collecting and recording of facts relating to Indian art and architecture and their dissemination mainly through widely read journals."<sup>11</sup> However, even within the scene of this dramatic change in Western understanding of Indian art, there was still a hesitation in accepting certain aspects of it, particularly Hindu iconography and the profuse ornamental sculpture of South Indian Temples. Mitter traces this attitude to a fundamental Classical bias within the western art historical tradition, introduced at its very beginnings by writers such as Winckelmann. According to him, the nineteenth century western depreciation of Hindu art, particularly the South Indian temple architecture, was a parallel of the Classical criticism of the Rococo style. Both were, he claims, criticised on the same grounds of being unreservedly flagrant and decadent<sup>12</sup>.

Ironically, according to Mitter, the classical bias began to be evident in the European opinion on Indian art right from the time that serious scholarship on the Indian architectural monuments began to emerge. The nineteenth century saw the emergence of the discipline of archaeology based on a "scientific" approach to the study of ancient or historical monuments. During the first half of the century, the archaeological investigations tended to be loose and unmethodical, being carried out by amateurs working on their own. But with the formation of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1864, the whole process was institutionalized. This resulted was in a methodical program of survey and documentation covering the entire sub-continent. Under the charge of General Cunningham, the first director of the ASI and James Burgess, his assistant and

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<sup>11</sup> Mitter *op. cit.* p105.

<sup>12</sup> Mitter. 'Western Bias in the Study of Indian Art'. *South Asian Review*. Vol. 6, 1973. makes this very explicit.

successor, the program was carried out so successfully that in a matter of a couple of decades, almost all monuments that were known to exist had been thoroughly surveyed, documented and dated.

The credit of taking this immense amount of data and ordering it into a comprehensive history of Indian architecture, goes to James Fergusson. In 1874, while re-editing the 1866 edition of his *History of Architecture of the World*, he made use of the mass of information on Indian architecture available to him and removing the already large section on Indian architecture from the previous edition, he put it into a separate volume of its own. This volume, *The History of Indian and Far Eastern Architecture*, was the first of its kind in any language.

What Mitter claims is that it was the classical bias inherent in the work of people like Cunningham and Fergusson, and their insistence on evaluating Indian art and architecture based on the standards and aesthetic theories evolved in the west that was fundamentally responsible for the subsequent inability of the western art criticism to appreciate it. Since Fergusson was an accepted authority on the subject of Indian architecture and his book the most pervasive influence in the field for a number of years, his classical bias is seen by Mitter to have introduced some fundamental distortions into the study of Indian architecture. Seeing, for example, that "early Buddhist architecture represented a certain simple treatment of form, which was very different from later architecture, especially of the Hindu period", Fergusson appears to have connected it to Winckelmann's theory of the teleological progress of art from simple to complex.<sup>13</sup> Yet, says Mitter, instead of talking about the evolution of the Indian architecture, Fergusson "asserted that the development from Buddhist to Hindu art, showed a clear case of decline in architecture. [His] notion of 'decadence' was simply an elaborate scaffolding to justify his dislike of Hindu architecture."<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Mitter adds, "Fergusson's inability to appreciate anything beyond early Buddhist art posed serious problems for his history of architecture covering the period down to the present day. Not only did he present an

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<sup>13</sup> Mitter. *op. cit.* p263.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.* p264.

essentially distorted picture of the development of Indian art and architecture, but he seriously underestimated the Gupta period, the whole development of the later Buddhist and Hindu art. And he was especially severe to South Indian architecture."<sup>15</sup>

The next phase in the western understanding of Indian art was shaped by two persons, relates Mitter. Ernest Havell, an English artist and the principal of the Calcutta School of Art, having developed an acute sympathy for the Indian art was the first to go against the accepted canon of criticism of Indian art that had been set up by Fergusson and the ASI. His ideas were expressed first in two publications: *Indian Art and Sculpture* (1908) and then in *Ideals of Indian Art* (1910). As Mitter puts it, "He was perceptive enough to see that it was vital to judge the works of Indian art on the basis of standards of art criticism evolved within the Indian tradition instead of employing European standards which were extraneous to that tradition. As he emphasized, the Indian sculptors and painters responsible for these works of art must have been influenced by the aesthetic conventions prevailing in the period and society."<sup>16</sup> Working to find a way to conceptualize the aesthetic conventions that Indian art answered to, Havell came up with the category of the "spiritual" element in art. This was made possible by seeking the origins of art not just in the fragments of evidence, the buildings or artifacts that have come down through centuries, but in the "thought" which created them all. Thus, Indian art was best understood as a visual embodiment of Indian philosophy.

This idea that Indian art could be appreciated only if understood in terms of its own philosophy was taken up by Ananda K Coomarswamy. An eminent art historian of German-Ceylonese origin, Coomarswamy can be credited with having singlehandedly developed the discipline of Indian art history in the West, particularly through two books, *The Dance of Siva* (1924) and *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (1934). His scholarship was primarily concerned with developing a formal basis for interpreting Indian art history on its own terms, and his contribution lay in the construction of a

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* p 265.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* p 271.

philosophy of art, based on the idea of artistic production as spiritual activity. Defining Indian art as essentially being "idealistic" and different from the "materialist" (sic) post-medieval Western art, he sought to show that even though Indian art was as concerned with the representation of nature as the Western, it was based on a fundamentally different interpretation of it. While Western art leaned towards a description of the physical world, Indian art was concerned with the description of a "metaphysical" world present in the artist's mind. Like Havell, even Coomarswamy, in seeking to interpret Indian art through its own standards of judgement, was forced to create the idea of a "transcendental" world to which the art responded.

The work of both Havell and Coomarswamy, therefore, has grave limitations according to Mitter, in that neither of the two could get away from using European standards for evaluating Indian art. In Coomarswamy's case, Indian art was shown to be capable of appreciation, because like medieval art which was then beginning to be seriously looked at in Europe, it could also be shown to be non-representational in character. While in the case of Havell, the beauty of Indian art was shown to lie, not in its "wonderful life-affirming vitality" of the medieval tradition, but rather its distance from the physical world - thus giving it a mystical aura and negative connotation in comparison with the Western art.

In summary, the history of Western apprehension of Indian art, as constructed by Mitter, is a story of successive problems that the West had in accepting or appreciating it. In the beginning, it was the religious and moral attitudes combined with a fanciful and inaccurate knowledge that prevented Indian art from being appreciated. Later, when serious studies on Indian art and architecture began to emerge, the devaluation of Indian art resulted from the use of Classical norms of judgement and an aesthetic taste based on the ideals of simplicity and restraint. Finally, even when a scholarship based on evaluative categories intrinsic to Indian art developed, it became the victim of the tendency of comparison with Europe, acquiring value in having a transcendental nature that Classical European art lacked, or being mystified and considered ineffable for the western mind.



Mitter's own reaction to this is to promote a study of Indian art grounded in categories derived from its own context. As he concludes: "I would suggest that a more effective and fruitful way of studying the nature and quality of Indian art and the entire relations between art and religion would be in concrete and human terms and not by presenting collective notions or metaphysical generalizations. This may be done by seeking to restore the religious, cultural and social contexts of Indian art. In this process, we shall have to make a conscious effort to learn what actual standards of art criticisms were in operation among those Indians who had created these works and among those Indians for whom they were created, and not continue to depend upon the classical tradition whether to affirm or to deny them."<sup>17</sup>

The troublesome point in Mitter's account is the implication that the 'marginalization' of Indian (or rather, Hindu) art is a consequence of the European inability to ever develop a liking or admiration for it. From the beginning of the book, Mitter seems to treat the marginalization and aesthetic disapproval of Indian art and architecture as being unquestionably related. Quoting Raymond Schawb, he says, "Virtually none of the Romantic admiration for all the different facets of Indian culture had ever included an aesthetic admiration for the Indian arts", and then follows it with the claim that, "...the problem is with us today. In spite of the existence of important collections of Indian art in museums all over Europe it is still a neglected subject".<sup>18</sup>

That the connection between an aesthetic appreciation of a style and its constitution as an important object of study cannot be so easily taken for granted, is borne out through Fletcher's own introduction to the non-historical styles, in the *History of Architecture*. "Eastern art," he cautions, "presents many features to which the Europeans are unaccustomed, and which therefore often strike them as being displeasing or bizarre; but it must be remembered that use is second nature, and, in considering the many forms which to us verge on the grotesque we must make allowance for that essential difference between East and West which is further accentuated in purely Eastern architecture by the religious observances and social customs of which, in accordance with our usual custom, we shall take due cognizance."<sup>19</sup> There appears here a sense of a self-conscious

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* p286.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* p1.

objectivity, which makes it difficult to attribute the relative disinterest of the west in Indian art entirely to an aesthetic dislike.

This is not to admit that the aesthetic disapproval of Indian architecture had no appreciable effect on its marginalization at all. Mitter appears to be essentially right when he argues that the classical bias of what he calls the "archaeological" scholars - Cole and most importantly Fergusson - led them to an appreciation of the simple and relatively austere Buddhist architectural ruins in comparison to the lavishly carved and colorful Hindu temples of later periods. From this came the theory of a retrograde evolution of Indian art and architecture; it being seen as having declined through the ages and reduced to the contemporary state of decadence. The idea of a gradual decline of Indian architecture is remarkably similar to Fletcher's statement of the non-historical nature of most non-western architecture, which we have seen earlier was crucial to its marginalization. Can it be concluded then that the views of the archaeologists and most important, of Fergusson, were instrumental in the process of marginalization of Indian architecture?

This seems to be plausible enough at first glance, and as Mitter proves, there is enough evidence in the writings of Fergusson to claim an aesthetic bias to which many distortions of the historiography on Indian architecture can be attributed. Yet a closer investigation of this argument reveals certain shortcomings of this argument. It does not acknowledge the complexities of Fergusson's position although there can be found several comments of his on the decadence of present architecture, it is rather difficult to find an explicit statement anywhere within the corpus of his writings that makes a case for a generalized theory of decline of Indian architecture. Rather, there can be found quite a few statements that praise the Indian architecture as a living and growing tradition. For instance he writes, "But architecture in India is still a living art, practiced on the principles which caused its wonderful development in Europe in the 12th and the 13th centuries; and there consequently, and there alone, the student of architecture has the chance of seeing the real principles of art in action." And continuing further, "Those who have an opportunity of seeing what perfect buildings the ignorant uneducated

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<sup>19</sup> Fletcher. *op.cit.* p 888.

natives of India are now producing, will easily understand how success may be achieved, while those who observe what failures the best educated and most talented architects in Europe are constantly perpetrating, may, by a study of Indian models, easily see why this must inevitably be the result."<sup>20</sup> From Mitter's point of view then, Fergusson's work seems to involve seemingly contradictory notions; he is seen on the one hand as criticizing contemporary Indian architecture in having declined to a decadent present while on the other he writes of it as a craft that is not only evolving but also thriving and worthy of emulation.

Moreover, Mitter is not able to give a very convincing reason why the classical bias of Fergusson and the archaeologists and their classification of later Hindu architecture as decadent should inevitably lead them to construct a theory of continuous decline of Indian architecture. Contemporary criticism of Baroque architecture and its labelling as a decadent style, for instance, did not lead automatically to the idea that Western architecture had declined. In order to substantiate his claim that Fergusson deliberately chose to construct a theory of decline as an "elaborate scaffolding to justify his dislike of Hindu architecture" Mitter quotes Fergusson on the progress of Indian art: "Sculpture in India,..... is also interesting in having that curious Indian peculiarity of being written in decay. The story that Cicognara tells us is one of a steady forward progress towards higher aims and better execution. The Indian story is that of backward decline, from the sculptures of Bharhut and Amravati to the illustrations of Coleman's Hindu mythology."<sup>21</sup>

It is important to see, however, that the above statement deals exclusively with Hindu architecture, which is what Mitter is specifically interested in, and not Indian architecture as a whole. Just as the decadence of Baroque architecture did not imply that western architecture had continuously declined, Fergusson's classification of Hindu architecture as decadent does not mean that he held the entire Indian architecture as having regressed towards decline. Despite his dislike of Hindu temple architecture, Fergusson was able to find much to appreciate in contemporary Indian architecture - not only amongst

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<sup>20</sup> James Fergusson. *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*. London, 1876. p5.

<sup>21</sup> Mitter. *op.cit.* p264

monuments and masterpieces but also in the tradition of building itself. His history of Indian architecture reads, not as a story of a continuous decline, but as a story of the rise and fall of different architectural periods. In other words, despite Fergusson's biases, it cannot be said, as Mitter does, that he put all Indian architecture into a decadent category.

### **Metcalf's criticism of Fergusson and the ASI**

The question of the relationship between the aesthetical biases and the subsequent distortions of the Indian architectural history, particularly the theory of decline, is offered another interpretation by Thomas Metcalf. In a chapter entitled "The Mastery of the Past" in *The Imperial Vision*, Metcalf addresses this issue from a political perspective. According to him, the shift in the nature of scholarship (and the subsequent understanding) of Indian architecture that was brought about in the nineteenth century, can be understood as a part of a general "imperialist enterprise", aimed at systematically knowing, ordering and therefore controlling the East. He sees the formal study of the architectural remains, that was undertaken by the ASI, and the work of scholars such as Fergusson, as informed by this political consciousness and contributing to it. All the distortions that these scholars are seen as having introduced to the historiography of Indian architecture take on a political significance. In Metcalf's words, "Inevitably, therefore, European appreciation of India's past - its culture and its architecture alike - was always qualified and linked directly to the notion of a subsequent decline. Indeed, one might argue, the theory of decline in India complemented, and was a product of, the concept of progress which, from the Enlightenment onward, dominated Europe's perception of its own past. Such a theory made it easier too, of course, for the British to justify themselves their rule over India".<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, in comparison to Mitter's account, which is restricted to the British interpretation of Hindu architecture, Metcalf demonstrates how the British representation of even the Islamic architecture of later Mughal period and that of Oudh of the mid-nineteenth century was perceived as a decadent art. "Fergusson," he says, "was fully aware that the kingdom of Oudh, though a

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<sup>22</sup> Metcalf. *op.cit.* pp 26-27.

product of the collapse of Mughal power, owed its continued existence after 1765 to the support of the British East India Company. It was "one of our creations" and so the British had to bear some of the responsibility for the "debauchery and corruption" of its rulers and for their architectural "abominations". As "things went on from bad to worse," the "nuisance became intolerable," so that in the end it was necessary to put an end to the kingdom. Clearly, the perception of the eighteenth century as an era of "utter degradation" helped justify, where it did not itself fuel, the British conquest of India."<sup>23</sup>

Another misrepresentation of Indian architecture that had political connotations according to Metcalf, was its categorization into communal styles, principally Hindu and Muslim. "For the British," he explains, "the use of these communal categories advanced important political objectives. Convinced that religious affiliation provided the key to understanding the people of India, they had, almost of necessity, to impose communal labels upon India's historic architecture. If all buildings and all stylistic elements could be seen as either "Hindu" or as "Muslim", then where the elements were "mixed", as at Fatehpur Sikri, the result could be described as a "blended" style that brought formerly antagonistic communities together to live in amity under the direction of a wise ruler. Furthermore, if all architectural elements were defined as "Hindu" or "Muslim", nothing remained unknown. Everything - the arch, the dome, the bracket capital, the decorative motif - had its place in a comprehensive system. What the colonial ruler had explained, he of course controlled; and so the British could act with a confident sense of mastery as they sought, or rather as they conceived Akbar had done, to shape an Indic architecture of their own".<sup>24</sup>

Once again the interpretation is problematic in that it attributes to the British scholars, an unsubstantiated intentionality regarding their interpretation of Indian architecture. While Metcalf's reading that the distortions introduced into the historiography of Indian architecture served to further "important political objectives" is generally convincing, as also the idea that the most scholars shared aesthetic biases, resulting from their common colonialist or imperialist background, the assertions he makes seem to be based on an

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<sup>23</sup> Metcalf. *op.cit.* p 49.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* p 52.

apparent reversal of the argument. As he says himself, while concluding his chapter, "Fergusson.... was fully aware of the importance of regional styles. Yet, trapped by the assumptions that undergirded the communal categories, he was disabled from following through their fuller implications. In similar fashion, Victorian critics such as Alexander Cunningham used this mode of analysis to challenge that based on continuities of style within religious communities. Part of this reluctance doubtless arose from a realization that to talk of the "taste of the times" would reduce the opportunity to link architecture directly to politics."<sup>25</sup> In other words, the misrepresentations of Indian architecture by Fergusson and Cunningham are shown to be the consequence of an intention to mold their scholarship to serve political ends, or at least of their inability to escape from such an intentionality.

To use an observation of the political implications of the misrepresentation of Indian architecture to conclude that this misrepresentation happened as a result of a need to serve political ends is problematic to say the least, but even more problematic are the implications of this intentionality ascribed to the British scholars. On one hand, it leads to a simplistic reading of these scholars and precludes any attempt to account for the internal contradictions of their work. And on the other, it implies looking at the development of this discipline as a 'history of ideas' constituted almost entirely through the personal contributions of these scholars and thus focuses upon their personal biases and shortcomings as central to the issue of the misrepresentation of architectural history.

For instance, Metcalf's criticism of Fergusson is focused on the fact that he was not able to rise above his own biases and thus severely compromised the history of Indian architecture by clinging to the ideas of a religious basis for the architectural periods and a theory of continuous decline of Indian architecture.<sup>26</sup> His strategy is based on the argument, unlike Mitter who equated Fergusson's theory of decline of Hindu architecture with the theory of decadence of Indian architecture in general, that Fergusson also saw the Saracenic architecture as having declined, particularly after the sixteenth century.

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<sup>25</sup> Metcalf. *op cit.* p54.

<sup>26</sup> See the sub-section on 'Buddhist and Hindu architecture' (pp28-35) in *The Imperial Vision* for Metcalf's discussion on Fergusson's theory of decline.

"Few things in the history of the style", he quotes Fergusson as saying, "were "more startling" than "the rapid decline that set in with Aurangzeb's reign. Nor was this "degradation of style" confined to the later Mughal themselves."<sup>27</sup> The surprising conclusion that seems to be implicit here is that since Fergusson (as well as many other English scholars) held that both Hindu and Mughal architecture had declined, it follows that he believed in an overall decline of Indian architecture. It is true, of course, that a reading that Fergusson saw both Hindu and Islamic architecture in India to be decadent, leads to the conclusion that he disparaged all contemporary architecture in India. But even this is difficult to assert without any qualifications; as we have seen, there is evidence to show that Fergusson thought quite highly, not only of several ancient monuments, but also of contemporary practices in India. One finds therefore, that like Mitter, Metcalf's position is also based on a narrow and selective reading of the British scholars - particularly Fergusson.

### **Pramod Chandra's opinion of Fergusson**

A much more accommodating reading of Fergusson is found in Pramod Chandra's *On the Study of Indian Art*. Although acknowledging the various shortcomings and biases in the work of Fergusson, he is far more positive about the significance of his contributions. "My first surprise", he comments, "was that where I had expected to find a European scholar applying to India principles developed in Europe I discovered the opposite, for what Fergusson was boldly doing was applying to European architecture, or for that matter world architecture, principles he had developed through a vigorous and direct study of the architecture of India."<sup>28</sup> .

What is particularly interesting, however, is his reaction to Fergusson's misinterpretations of Indian architectural history, which as we have seen were the focus of Metcalf's and Mitter's reappraisals. "Perhaps because of the general brilliance of his scheme", he writes, "it is a matter of some puzzlement to me why Fergusson so blithely,

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<sup>27</sup> Metcalf. *op.cit.* p48.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* p12

and with uncharacteristic thoughtfulness, classified the works of Indian architecture on a denominational basis: 'Buddhist', 'Hindu', 'Jaina' and "Muhammedan"..... but one cannot blame him too much for this. This easy communalistic classification, honored by time if nothing else, still survives, being freely and loosely used both in scholarship and in common parlance without much thought to its implications."<sup>29</sup> He elaborates on this, when he says, "It is heartening, thus, that he speaks in terms of regional categories as well, though in the guise of a racial nomenclature: thus the Dravidian, by which he meant the style of south India, the Indo-Aryan or Northern style, and even a Himalayan style. He also used a dynastic name but was unhappy with it, characterizing it as a temporary appellation for a regional style.... . Fergusson, thus contrary to appearances was not entirely unmindful of a suitable classificatory system, turning over in his mind the implications of racial, religious, regional and dynastic groupings, all of which have been used till the present day."<sup>30</sup> The suggestion here seems to be that even though there were unverified assumptions in the work of Fergusson and biases deriving from his background, he was quite aware of them. If therefore, he chose to ignore them knowingly, then it can be assumed that these biases were not as crucial in terms of their implications to the characterization of Indian architecture, as their persistence seems to suggest. Rather, it appears from Chandra's writing that their very persistence in the face of contrary evidence implies that their consequences were not so debilitating to the historiography of Indian architecture.

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* pp17-18.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* pp 17-18.



### Comment on the reappraisals of British historiography

Our interest in Mitter's criticism lies in his assertion that it was Fergusson and the archaeologists such as Cunningham and Burgess, who introduced basic distortions in the historiography of Indian architecture from its inception - the idea of classificatory categories determined by religious attributes and of the continuous decline of Indian architecture. These distortions, according to Mitter, were the product of a 'classical bias' which prejudiced their judgment in favor of earlier styles of Indian architecture that were simpler and more austere in comparison with later ones, which were seen as more effusive and decadent. For Metcalf, the distortions were not merely due to the inherited biases, but were politically significant. In other words, these distortions should be seen not just in the context of the particular discipline, but in the larger socio-cultural and political context in which the studies were made. He argues that the reason that these distortions were accepted and even promoted in face of contrary evidence by scholars such as Fergusson and Cunningham, was because it was politically expedient for them to do so; it served important ethical and political causes by contributing directly to their efforts of justifying their own rule.

The problem in both these criticisms is the simplified and unidimensional characterizations of the key figures in the argument, which do not stand up to a very critical examination. As we have seen in Fergusson's case, he was far more sympathetic to the cause of Indian architecture, than is generally believed. His support for contemporary Indian architecture in relation to the contemporary western architecture was well known. His *History*.. is much more complex than is admitted by either argument, and in spite of the occasional flashes of a haughty racism, it is difficult to find direct evidence of an overall theory of decline in his book. It is true of course, that certain simplifications such as the idea of racial and religious basis of architecture and the consequent forced classifications such as the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Saracenic do occur in his book. But, as Chandra's reading shows, it is possible to argue that the distortions that actually do manifest themselves have not had any significant consequences for the discipline itself; that they are only signs of historical biases and misrepresentations that would be expected in the course of the development of any discipline.

## The Thesis

The particular interest in examining the reappraisals of the historiography of Indian architecture is in determining if any clue can be found regarding the problem of how the late nineteenth century architectural knowledge developed the idea of a non-progressive and stagnant Indian architecture. Though none of the accounts above deal directly with the issue, the implied idea in all of them seems to be that the misrepresentations of Indian architecture resulted from the fact that the studies in Indian architecture were done by European historians. Given the fact that these historians were in most cases trained in a Western tradition and had imbibed all its biases, and given the imperialist background of the scholars, most of whom were British and very conscious of the superior status of their culture, the claim is that, even if the scholars were sympathetic to the Indian subject, it was not possible for them to escape the fundamental biases of their training nor ignore the larger political context of their scholarship.

The apparent problem with the reasoning above is that it hinges on the ideas and prejudices that can be traced to particular persons. As has been shown above, it suffers from a lack of direct historical evidence when faced with the issue of justifying the political awareness of people like Cunningham, Burgess and so on; and it runs into trouble when it comes across a figure such as Fergusson, who was not only sympathetic to the Indian architectural tradition but also apparently conscious of the pitfalls of misrepresentation arising from a biased background. These problems obviously arise from a need to find in the work of the various scholars, sources for the misrepresentations of architectural history.

The thesis argues that the misrepresentation of Indian architecture, particularly its characterization as a non-historical, stagnant style cannot be explained through the personal prejudices of the scholars involved, even if those were shared. Instead, the misrepresentation was inherent in the very discipline itself, particularly the way in which 'Architecture' was defined. The idea of stagnancy of Indian architecture could be meaningful only in the context of a general definition of architecture as an essentially evolving process. Even more, the very fact of attributing a stagnant, non-historical nature to Indian architecture would depend on the conditions under which the progress or

the evolution of architecture was defined.

The premise underlying the thesis, therefore, is that instead of looking for reasons to explain why particular scholars misrepresented architectural history, it would be more meaningful to show what conditions made the misrepresentations significant to the subsequent development of the scholarship and how did they arise. It is argued that the discourse on Indian architecture changed during the course of the nineteenth century shifting from a textual one to one based on the stylistic description of the buildings. The simplifications and distortions of architectural history that were already evident from the beginning, became significant for the marginalization of India architecture, ironically, in the context of the very historicist paradigm that Fergusson introduced to the architectural discourse in his efforts to promote its study.

## CHAPTER II

### The Beginnings of the scholarship on Indian Architecture

"I should like to know whether the subjects responsible for scientific discourse are not determined in their situation, their function, their perceptive capacity, and their practical possibilities by conditions that dominate and even overwhelm them. In short, I tried to explore scientific discourse not from the point of view of the individuals who are speaking, nor from the point of view of the formal structures of what they are saying, but from the point of view of the rules that come into existence of such a discourse."<sup>31</sup>

-Michel Foucault. *The Order of Things*.

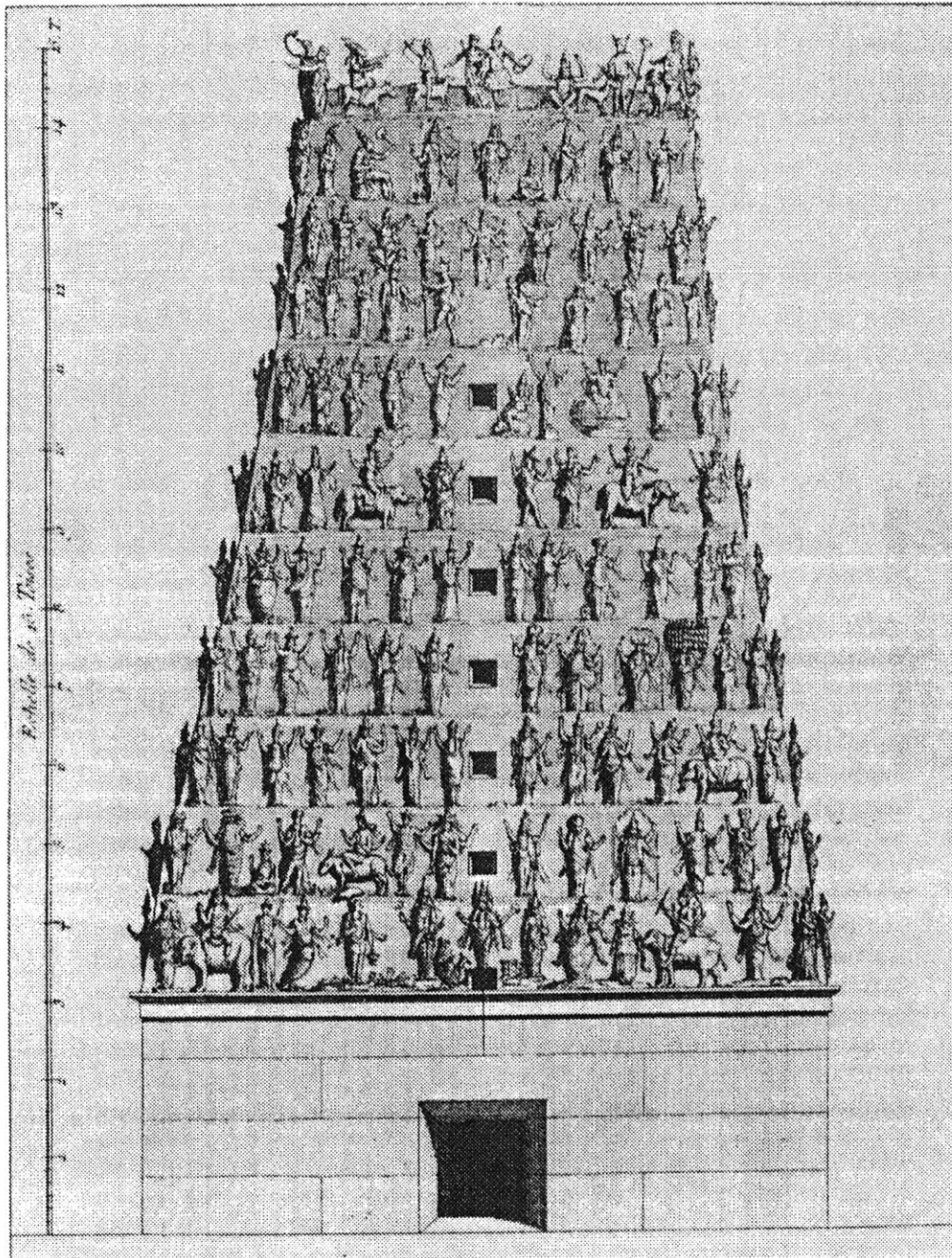
#### The first reports on Indian monuments

Western interest in Indian architecture, as we have seen earlier from Mitter, began to formalize towards the end of the eighteenth century. There was a sudden change in the nature of reports about it, as the reliability of the information on it became a central concern. The accounts of the Danish traveller Carsten Niebuhr, a member of a Royal Danish expedition to the East, published in 1778,<sup>32</sup> contain an elaborate description of the caves of Elephanta and even accurate measured drawings of the plan and details. Similarly the French traveller G. J. le Gentil de la Galasiere, who spent eight years travelling in India from 1760 onwards, made a detailed study of the Hindu temples at Vilmour and Chicanol near Pondicherry which included a carefully done measured drawing of the 'gopuras' [fig. 2]. And the British artist, William Hodges, who followed a couple of decades late, included amongst the several picturesque aquatints which were to make him so famous, carefully done drawings of details such as columns and decorative motifs.

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<sup>31</sup> Michel Foucault. *The Order of Things*. New York, 1973. p xiv.

<sup>32</sup> The account was published as *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und Andern umliegenden Landern* in 2 vols. from Copenhagen in 1778.



2. Measured drawing of the *Gopuram* of the Vlnour temple  
From *La Gentil Voyage dans les mers de l'Inde* 1779-81.

The point to note about the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century European interest in monuments of the sub-continent is that the study of these monuments was not as yet equated with the study of Indian architecture. This phase of Western response to Indian monuments corresponded with the 'enlightenment' in Europe and was part of the intellectual fervour that was characteristic of it. Post-Renaissance Europe had made a rediscovery of the richness of other cultures, particularly the antiquity of the Eastern ones and a general intellectual enterprise of investigating these, especially their historical development, was in the making. Western study of Indian monuments was a part of this enterprise. The first travellers who began to look at the Indian monuments, as a matter of fact, did not just concentrate on these alone. Niebuhr, for instance, was a scientist and as a member of a Royal Danish Exploratory Mission to the East was chiefly employed in collecting specimens for the study of natural history. Le Gentil too was a scientist and a member of the French Academy of Sciences. He had been sent to India primarily to observe natural phenomena such as the passage of Venus and besides his work on this he also wrote commentaries on the Hindu zodiac and astronomical systems and religious habits of the inhabitants of the Coromandel coast. Even British artists like Hodges and the Daniells were interested in the monuments generally for the picturesque quality of the landscape and for the ornamental details.

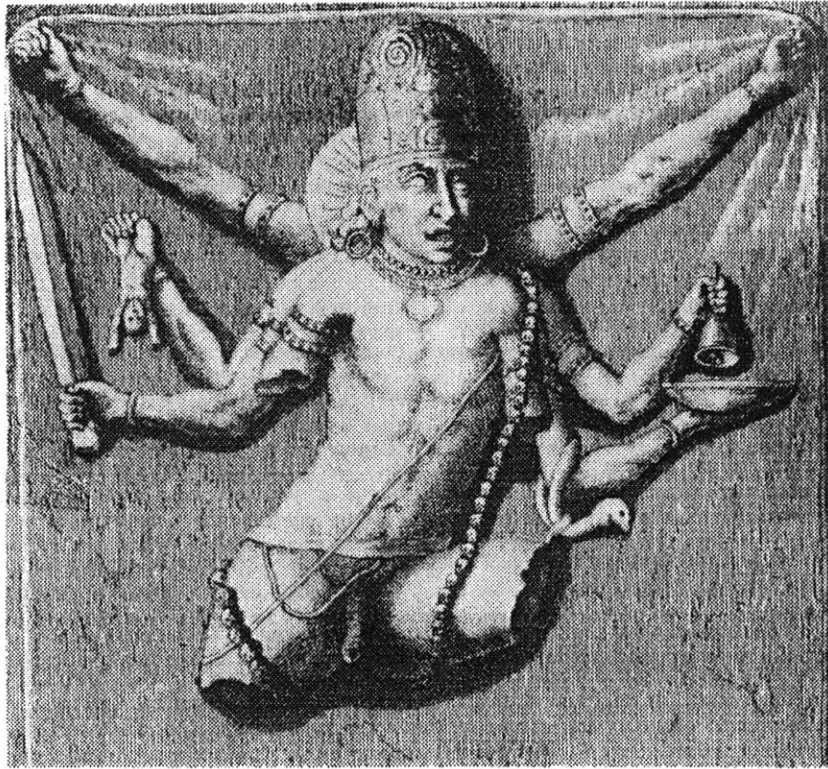
The study of Indian monuments and historic sites was therefore one aspect of a general interest in the Indian sub-continent itself and the discourse on them a part of the larger discourse on India that was in the process of being formulated. In other words, the monuments were in the process of being examined, not so much for what they had to reveal about the 'architecture' of the region, but to discover what light they cast on different aspects of Indian culture. This is clearly reflected in the texts that came out of the early explorations, specifically in the descriptions of the monuments. While there was often a painstaking description of the monuments, it did not limit itself to the architectural features of the buildings. For people like Anquetil-Duperron, who was a keen student of Sanskrit and Hindu religion, the most interesting aspect of the Hindu monuments was their iconographical content. They were seen, in the words of Arthur Waley, "as a repository of Hindu Mythology". The accounts of these travellers therefore reflect a concern with accurate descriptions of the sculptures and paintings, identification of the deities and their correlation with other representations in the newly interpreted

Sanskrit texts, paintings and collections back in Europe.

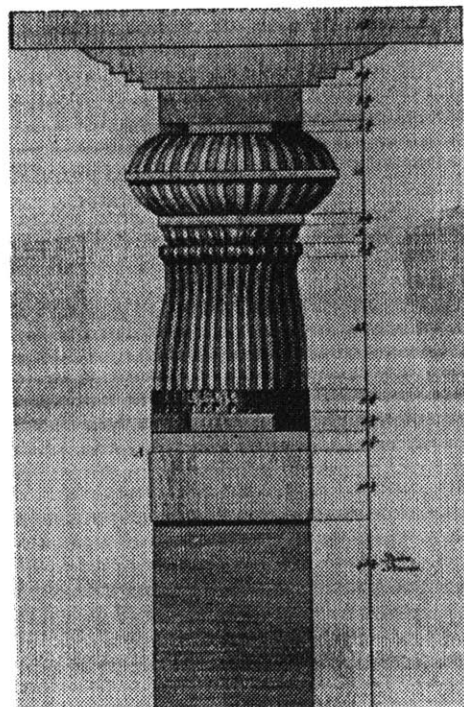
But more than the written descriptions, it is the accompanying drawings which show very clearly the actual interests of these travellers in the monuments. Although measured drawings had become a necessary element in the depiction of a site, in most cases they were restricted to either a plan and elevation or details of specific objects like columns. Most elaborate of the drawings were generally the renderings of the sculptures and carved reliefs found inside the caves and temples; a good example of these are Neibuhr's depictions of the Siva Maheshamurti and his sketch of the Andhakasura Siva figure in the Elephanta caves [fig. 3]. Even the architectural drawings such as plans and elevations indicate the iconographical preoccupations of these travellers. Le Gentil's carefully measured and drawn elevation of the *gopuram*<sup>33</sup> of the Vilmour temple [fig. 2], for instance, has a very detailed depiction of the numerous deities that might have adorned the temples. Although the range and variation of the figures seems to announce the entire Hindu pantheon, which is very unlikely to have been found on the facade of a 'gopuram', the figures themselves are drawn with a certain amount of credibility and attention has been paid to the attributes such as the number of limbs and heads and the mounts, all of which were being recognized as important for the identification of the deities. In contrast, the architectural sub-structure has been drawn very schematically. There are no details like the cornices, moldings and the surface articulations that generally animate the face of a building such as this. In fact, it appears to have been drawn entirely from memory, or even from imagination, supported with a little factual information about the location of the openings, number of floors and the scale of monument. Similarly, Anquetil-Duperron's drawing for the Excavations of the Kanheri Caves has a number of plans drawn apparently to scale. But all these are done very schematically in single line style, and serve to identify the locations of the various objects of interest rather than the spatial qualities of the caves.

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<sup>33</sup> Gopurams are the very tall entrance gateways to the precincts of the large temple complexes of South India.

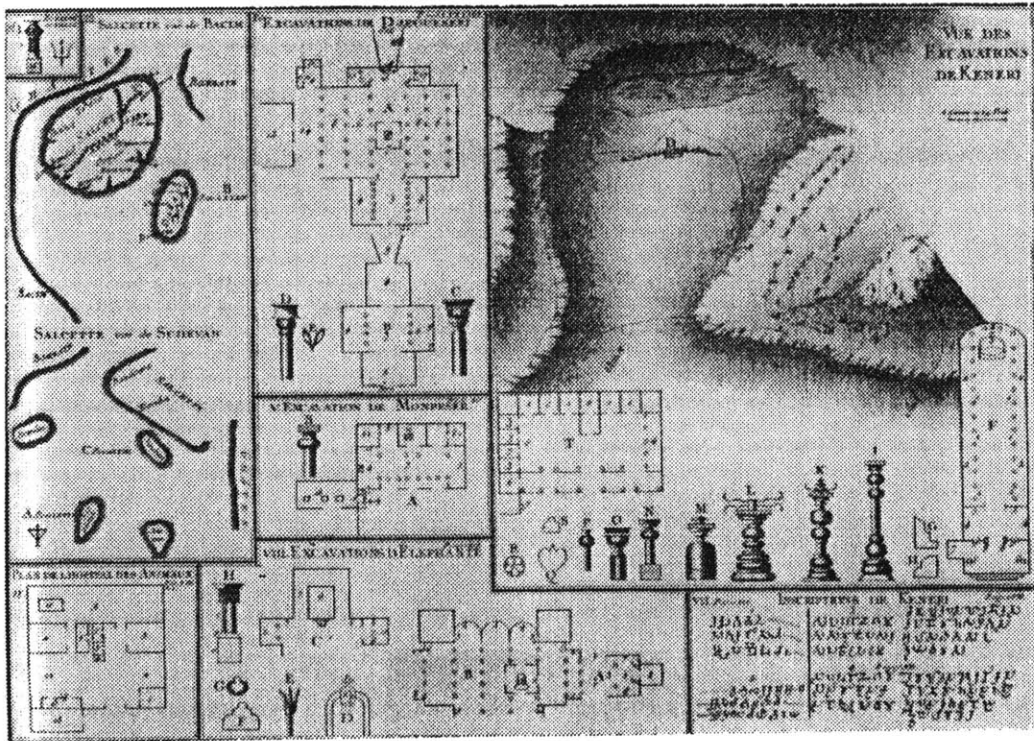


3. Drawing of the *Maheshamurti* in the Elephanta Caves  
From Neibuhr *Voyage en Arabie* 1779

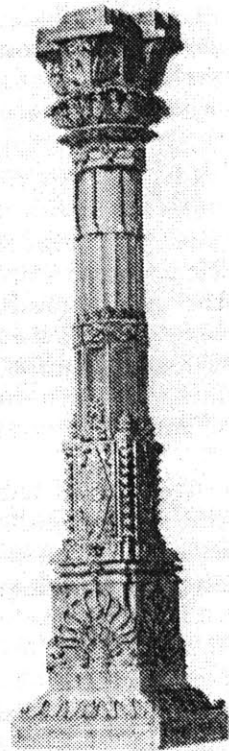


4. Detail of column from the Elephanta Caves  
From Neibuhr *Voyage en Arabie* 1779





5. Plans of the cave temples of Western India  
From Anquetil-Duperron *Zend-Avesta* 1771



6. Detail of Column  
From Hodges *Travels in India* 1793

However, all this is not to say that the architectural qualities of the monuments were totally ignored by the travellers. There are drawings of details such as the painstakingly rendered, measured elevation of a column by Neibuhr [fig. 4], a typological series of columns in Anquetil-Duperron's drawing of the Kanheri caves, with their locations carefully marked out on the plans [fig. 5] and an elaborate perspective of an isolated column by Hodges [fig. 6]. These details tend to be fragmentary however, and do not seem to build up a comprehensive idea of an Indian architecture. Rather they seem to be comments on selected architectural elements, intended to contribute to a general picture of an Indian cultural production of which architecture was a part. The general feeling that one gets from examining these accounts is that they were not explicitly concerned with the idea of an Indian architecture. But does this imply that a discourse on Indian architecture had not developed by then?

### **The initial discourse on Indian architecture**

A discourse on Indian architecture, as a matter of fact, was evident by the first quarter of the nineteenth century, though in a very tentative state; one that fell within the purview, not of the antiquarians examining remains of ancient monuments, but rather of the philologists engaged in deciphering the Indian texts. The attempts to decipher these Sanskrit texts whose existence had been suspected by the Europeans since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but never corroborated, are considered to have begun with the translations of the Upanishads by Anquetil-Duperron in 1771.<sup>34</sup> Even though he did not translate these from the original Sanskrit, but from their Persian translations, his work can be seen as not only having provided the necessary evidence for the existence of these texts but also having exposed their value as an invaluable source of information on the ancient Indian civilization. By the beginning of the next century, following the decipherment of Sanskrit and the subsequent translations of the Gita by Wilkins and that of Sakuntala by Jones, the study of these texts had become a major intellectual enterprise, giving rise to a new field of comparative philology.

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<sup>34</sup> Raymond Schwab. *The Oriental Renaissance*. (Tr. Patterson-Black and Reinking) New York. 1984. pp 24-33.

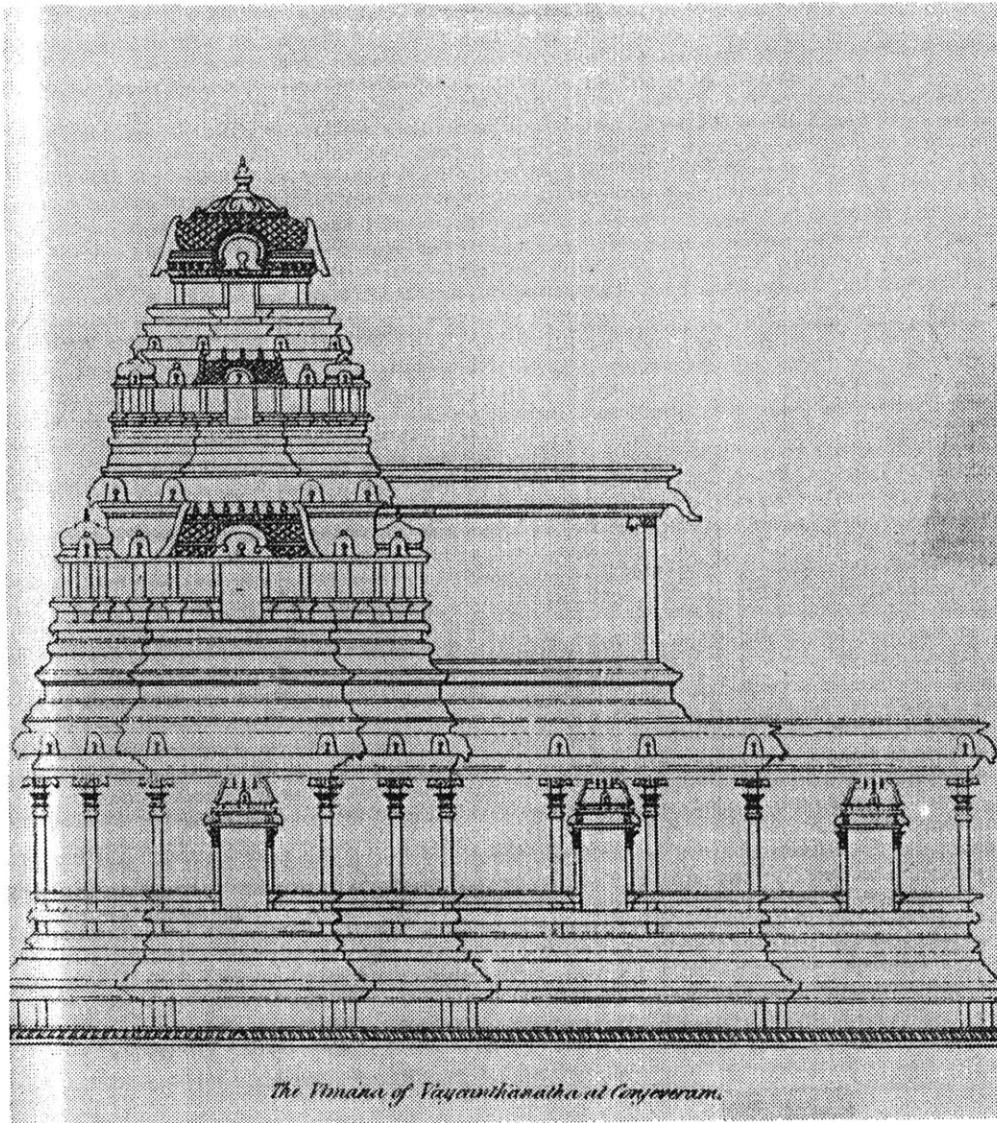
The problems that it tackled was not limited to merely translating the Sanskrit texts, establishing their validity, and correlating and dating them. It went further in trying to use the data made available through these textual sources in building up as factual a description of the Indian civilization and its Brahmanical antecedents as possible. It was from this discipline that the first European attempt to study Indian architecture was explicitly made. Sir William Jones who had come to dominate the field of the philological studies on Indian texts found evidence for a number of Sanskrit texts written on the subject of the making of artifacts - texts that were collectively known as the Silpa Sastras. Believing, largely from hearsay, that a good sixty-four of them had been written, each on a separate craft ranging from architecture to making of statues and gold-ornaments, he proposed that these be collected together, and compiled along with their translation. The idea of this was to learn the essential principles that architecture and the general crafts tradition of India was based on.

Interestingly, and perhaps as a unique historical case, this project was taken up by an Indian. Employed as a Judge and Magistrate in the service of the British East India company, this Indian, known as Ram Raz, had maintained an active interest in the philological activities of the Royal Asiatic Society. In 1827, on instigation from a British resident and a fellow-member of the Royal Society called Richard Clarke, he undertook to collect and collate as many of the Silpa Sastras as possible and translate them into English. As his work progressed, he realized that the texts made available to him were incomplete and fragmentary, and in the end he produced not a complete translation but a comparative commentary on them. This was published in 1834 from London in a book titled *An essay on the Architecture of the Hindus*.

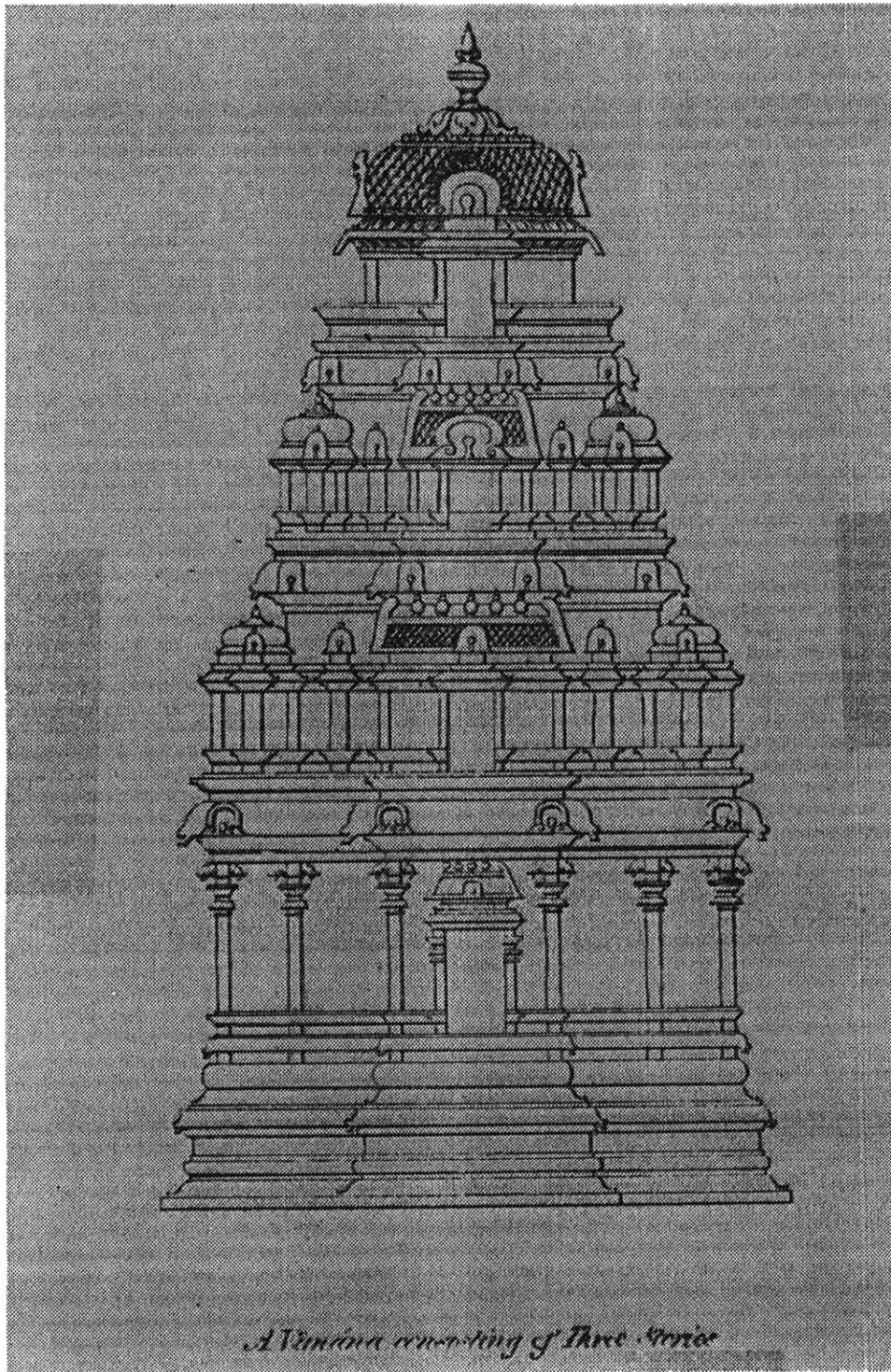
The book begins with a correction of Sir William Jones's position, first acknowledging that it was difficult to ascertain the actual number of Silpa Sastras written. A list of sixty-four treatises could be found in mnemonic verses preserved among the artists, according to Ram Raz, with thirty-two of these being principal and the rest subordinate, but only scattered remains of a few could be traced. But even with these, Ram Raz concludes, it is clear that they do not deal with sixty-four different crafts, but with more or less similar subject matter, principally architecture and sacred sculpture. He then goes on to list the few Sastras whose fragments he had been able to collect and discusses their

age and authenticity. The rest of the book is a systematic description of the different chapters in *Mansara*, one of the principal and most complete treatises available to him, with comments on the related chapters in other treatises. Significantly, appended to the book are a series of plates illustrating various details described in the texts ranging from proportions of columns and gateways to the different types of "vimanas" of the Hindu temples, which are listed in the *Mansara*; although some of these are direct representations of the descriptions given in the treatises, few of these are actual examples from existing Hindu temples. Plate XXX, for instance, shows the *Vimana* of the *Vaycunthanatha* temple at *Conjeveram* (modern *Kanchipuram*) [fig. 7].

The fact that the only scholarly work that dealt explicitly with Indian architecture till the first few decades of the nineteenth century was a commentary on the ancient treatises of the Hindus gives an indication of the nature of discourse on Indian architecture at that time. The impulse to know Indian architecture, to find out its basic principles and to understand it was a part of the general European enterprise of getting to know India as a whole. This enterprise, as we have seen, involved looking at a range of evidence, from the ancient monuments, artifacts and art objects to studying the ancient texts in which the secrets of the Hindus were supposed to be contained. The method of comparative philology that shaped the early research in this field called for a comparative study with corroboration of evidence from various sources. Thus most of the scholars were not restricted to data from one kind of source for analysis. *Anquetil-Duperron*, for instance, was a linguist and the first translator of the 'Zend-Avesta' into a modern European language, but he also made substantial contributions to the pre-archaeological research in India. His reports on his travels to *Elephanta* and *Kanheri* caves were well received and were very influential. Yet, as we have seen earlier, he did not seem to be concerned with 'architecture' as such in his reports on the various monuments. And so is the case with other scholars; it appears that the idea that architecture could be studied directly by examining the buildings themselves was not a commonly accepted one. Buildings, in other words, did not constitute an independent and valid object of investigation into architecture.



7. 'The Vimana of Vaicunthanatha at Conjeevram' (Kanchipuram)  
From Ram Raz *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus* 1834

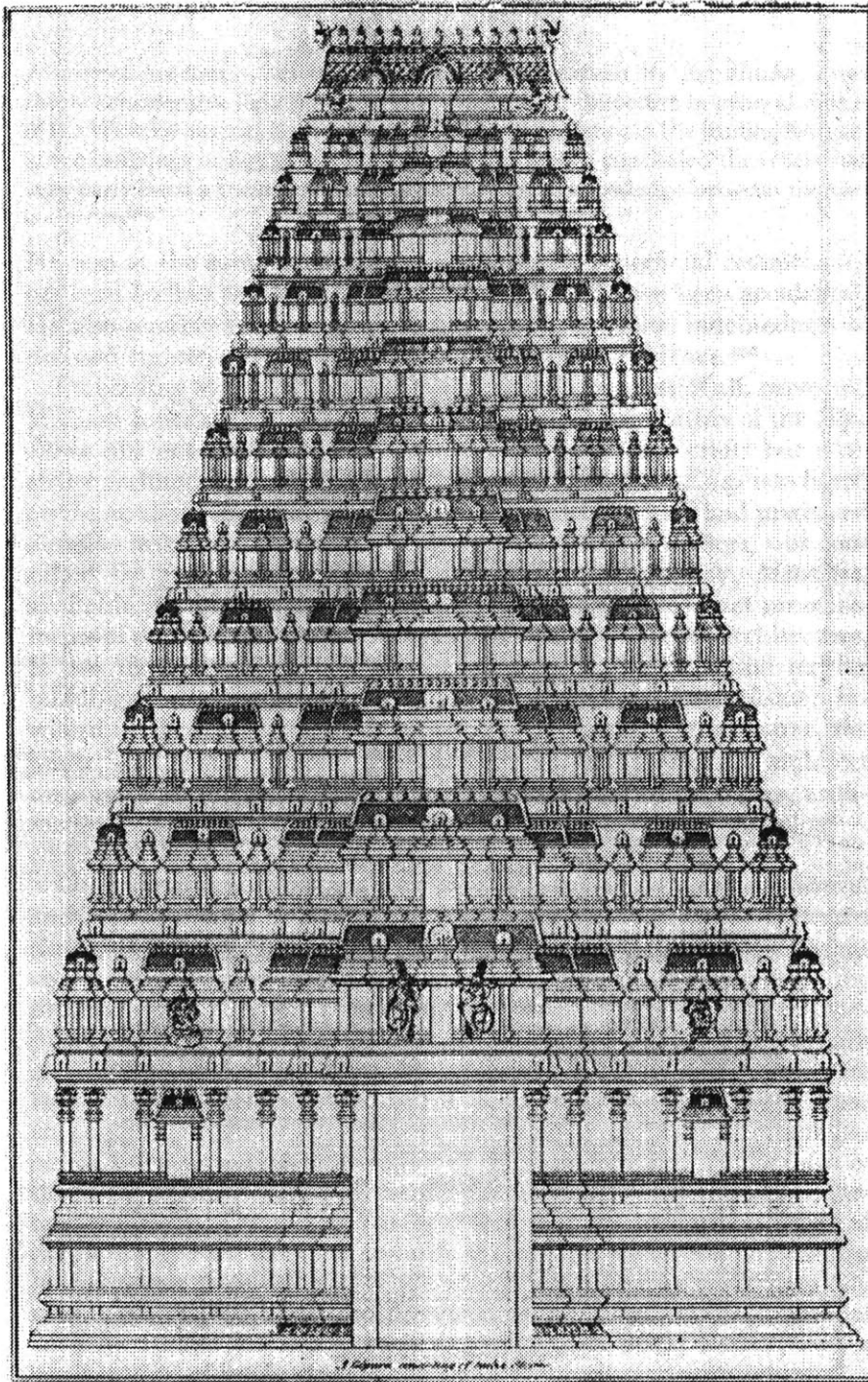


*A Vimana consisting of Three Stories*

8. 'A Vimana consisting of Three Stories'  
From Ram Raz *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus* 1834

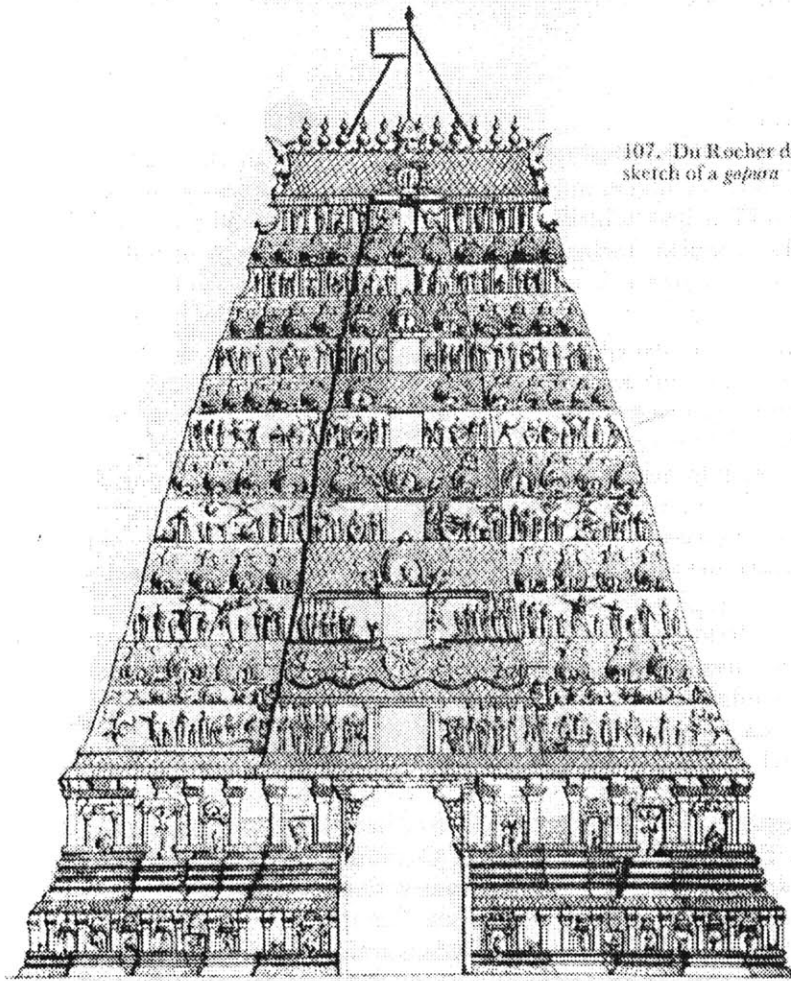
Instead, as the writings of Ram Raz and his contemporaries indicate, architecture was seen as a 'science', a codified set of rules about dimensions and combinations to be applied to a given set of elements; an architecture that was seen, in other words, as a canonical body of knowledge comparable to the disciplines of grammar, anatomy, medicine and law and defined through treatises and texts. For such a definition of architecture, actual buildings were of secondary importance, being seen as deviations of the ideal norms set down in the texts. In Ram Raz's work, there are few references to existing buildings except in the plates at the end. And even there, the illustrations of the buildings are supplemented by designs constructed in accordance with the textual readings. For instance, the temple of Vaicunthanatha at Canchipuram, which he uses as an example of a *vimana* with three stories, is accompanied by a design made in accordance with the measurements specified in the *Mansara* [fig 8]. Moreover, this canonical view of architecture naturally implied that only buildings whose designs were based on the texts would qualify as examples of architecture. In the case of Hindu architecture, therefore, the discussion of actual examples was naturally limited to the types listed in the treatises, which meant, in effect, temples and some larger buildings such as palaces.

The difference between this discourse on architecture and the point of view of the early eighteenth century antiquarians investigating actual buildings is made visually evident in the comparison of two measured elevations of South Indian temple gopurams- one by Ram Raz [fig. 9] and the other by Le Gentil [fig. 2]. While Le Gentil's drawing, as has already been pointed out before, stresses the decoration and the carved figures on the facade and leaves the actual building and its architectural details in the background, Ram Raz's illustration shows very little of the sculpted figures that adorn the facade of the temple. Instead, there is a careful delineation of details of the facades including the mouldings, the attached columns, roof-forms carved in relief and the cornices. Clearly, Le Gentil saw the Indian monuments as a repository of clues regarding Indian mythology and was more interested in the iconographical aspects of these buildings. For Ram Raz, the building was important only as an illustration of a particular set of rules or a typology defined in the *Silpa Sastras*.



9. 'A Gopuram consisting of Twelve Stories'  
From Ram Raz *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus* 1834





107. Du Rocher de la Périgne's sketch of a *gopura*

10. Du Rocher de la Périgne's sketch of a *Gopuram*  
From *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 1761-3

It is even more interesting to compare these two depictions of the gopuram with a earlier one done around the mid-eighteenth century [fig. 10]. Done by Du Rocher de la Perigne, a French engineer employed by the French East India Company, this depiction illustrates one of the rare occasions when buildings in the sub-continent were studied and documented with an architectural concern. The drawing was evidently done to illustrate the over-all pyramidal form of the superstructure, and at first glance seems to be a remarkably faithful reproduction of the original. But a closer investigation reveals that most of the details were imperfectly understood and were fudged. Unlike the Le Gentil drawing, the figural representation here is very sketchy and inaccurate. There appear unlikely figures of prancing devils, such as one at the end of the lowermost frieze; the poses of the figures seem to be closer to those on European cathedrals rather than Hindu temples and there are intriguing details like the two half-moon faces on the pediments of the roof. But, compared to Ram Raz's depiction, the structural or constructional details of the structure are only vaguely suggested. The vertical layering of the facade, expressed as alternate bands of shaded and blank areas, has no relation to reality and most of the relief details such as the columns, roof forms and moldings are missing from the facades.<sup>35</sup> Clearly, the preoccupation here was with the overall form and appearance, related to the idea that the similarity between the pyramids and the gopuram would imply a connection between the architecture of two antique cultures.

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<sup>35</sup>The drawing was actually used by the famous Orientalist scholar le Comte de Caylus to argue for the idea of an Indian influence on Egyptian and Babylonian architecture. claiming that the pyramids, as also the ancient temples of Belus and Ecbatana, described by Herodotus were related to the pagodas (i.e. the gopurams) of the Indian temples. see Mitter. *op.cit.* pp 192-197.

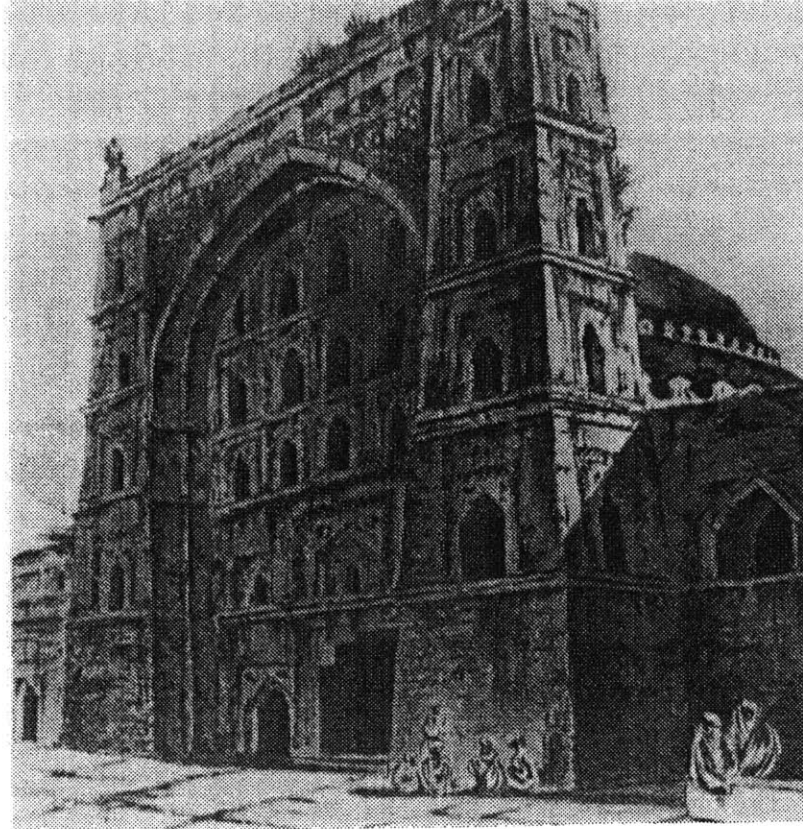
### **The Saracenic monuments in the initial architectural discourse**

An important group of buildings that did not find their way into this Orientalist discourse, although many were very well known and very popular with travellers, were those constructed under the patronage of the Muslim rulers of India. Once the distinction between the "Saracenic" and "Indian" architecture was made the Saracenic buildings naturally ceased to be of immediate interest to the Orientalists engaged in deciphering the remains of the ancient civilization of India<sup>36</sup>. However, many of them, exotically ornamented, partly ruined and set in evocative, dramatic landscapes caught the imagination of several European travellers. The discovery, in the Enlightenment Europe, of the ancient monuments not only of the Classical world, but also of those of the European middle ages and the realization of the charm of the evocative and sombre settings of these ruins had led to a reappraisal of the current standards of 'beauty' and the consequent birth of several aesthetic theories. In particular, Edmund Burke's theory of the "sublime" and Uvedale Price's discussion of the "picturesque" had given rise to two categories of taste as an alternative to the classical definition of 'beauty'.

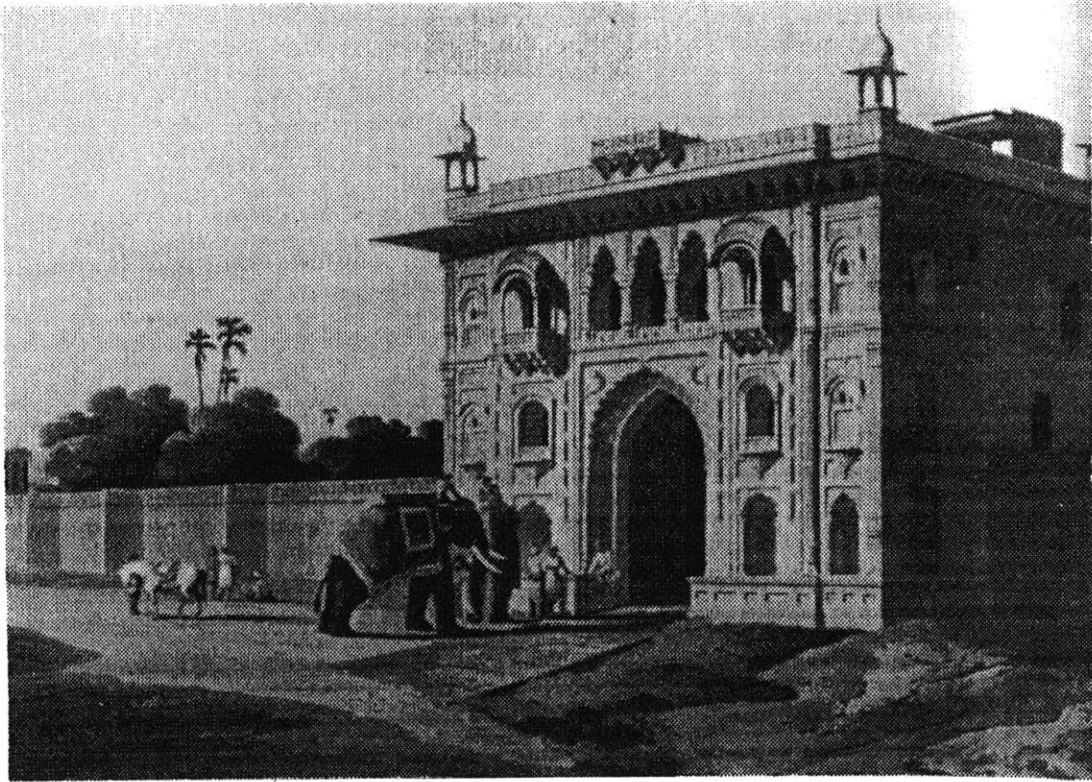
It was in the search of 'picturesque' and 'sublime' that many travellers came to India, among them the famous team of William and Thomas Daniell as well as William Hodges. Most of the Islamic monuments such as the Taj, the ruined city of Fatehpur Sikri, the Qutb Minar and the Old city of Delhi, as well as the tomb of Ahmed Shah in Bijapur were described and documented by these artists. Since the preoccupation of most of these artists was with the aesthetic qualities of the monuments, their descriptions tended to highlight aspects such as massing, composition and overall effect rather than details. [fig. 11. and 12] Even though these travellers did not restrict themselves to the Islamic monuments alone, the fact that these monuments ceased to be of much interest to the Orientalists and consequently became the part of a different discourse altogether introduced a fundamental analytical distinction between the studies of the two "types" of architecture; a distinction that still persists in the discipline in a rudimentary sense.

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<sup>36</sup> See Patrick Conner. *Oriental Architecture in the West*



11. 'View of the Masjid at Jionpoor'  
From Hodges *Select Views of India* 1785-88



12. 'Gate of Lahl Baug, Faizabad'  
From T & W Daniell *Oriental Scenery* 1795-1808

### The scholarship of the Antiquarians

Around the same time that Ram Raz was completing his book, an alternate discourse on Indian architecture was in the making, the antecedents of which lie in the discipline of scientific archaeology emerging at about the same time.<sup>37</sup> The early investigations of the European antiquarians and philologists led them increasingly towards the exploration of several ancient buildings and ruins which were being discovered in increasing abundance all over the place. The first accounts were descriptive and the elaborate carvings and the iconographic details elicited more response than the architectural elements or the spatial composition of the buildings. But slowly as the corpus of buildings examined became larger, a stylistic awareness could be discerned amongst the descriptions.

The initial descriptions of the Indian buildings were published in the transactions of the Society of Antiquaries, which had come into being in 1718 in response to a profoundly changing notion of the classical antiquity.<sup>38</sup> The reappraisal of ancient Greek and Roman antiquities, particularly the ruins, as well as the related development of the aesthetical theories of the 'sublime' and the 'picturesque' had opened up the way for an appreciation of non-classical architecture including the medieval, so far disparaged as Gothic.<sup>39</sup> In England the adulation of the Gothic and the attendant Romanticist movement was responsible for an active program of exploring and documenting the antiquities of various countries beginning from Greece and Italy to the Eastern lands such as Egypt, China and India where the British were beginning to establish a hold.

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<sup>37</sup> For a concise description of the development of archaeology from early antiquarian studies, see Glynn Daniels. 'Antiquaries and Archaeologists (1797-1867)' in *A Short History of Archaeology*. London, 1981. pp. 48-96.

<sup>38</sup> "The Society was formally constituted in 1718 and received its Royal Charter in 1751". Daniel. *A Short History of Archaeology*. London, 1981. p46.

<sup>39</sup> For a detailed account of the relation of the theories of beauty and the changing appreciation of architecture, see 'The Influence of the Picturesque' in Peter Collins. *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750-1950*. London 1965. pp 42-60.

Most of the British Orientalists who were involved with the initial explorations of the Indian antiquities were associated with the Society of Antiquaries and consequently the initial program of investigation of the Indian monuments was informed by the agenda of this Society. These early investigations were more concerned with the religious-mythological features and the iconographical elements rather than the architectural details of the buildings that they examined. At the same time however, the connection with the Society of Antiquarians also ensured that the methods of investigation and the development of techniques of documenting antiquities became a part of the Orientalists' repertoire, fundamentally influencing the nature of their work. Thus from the end of nineteenth century on, we find accurate ground plans, sections and details being faithfully recorded for any site, even though there was no immediate attempt to interpret them. This idea of separating the objective documentation of a building from its interpretation not only served to promote an idea of scientific objectivity in the investigations of the antiquarians, its stress on an accurate physical description of the building laid the foundation for a stylistic awareness of the buildings that were to inform the later architectural discourse on this topic.

### **The discourse of the Asiatic Societies**

In 1780, the formation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, largely through the efforts of Sir William Jones, presented the Orientalists specializing in India with a forum more tuned to their concerns. Most of these scholars were still amateurs technically, being either professional soldiers or officials in the service of the British East India company which was in the process of gaining control over large parts of the country. Stationed in far, outlying regions of the country or travelling there for reasons of administration or defence, most of these officials took the opportunity of investigating and documenting any interesting archaeological site that they came across. A military background which gave them basic training in surveying and familiarity with local languages, made them particularly suited to the investigations of these sites, in difficult conditions and sometimes hostile terrain. The result was a number of reports on hitherto unknown or unexplored sites which appeared in the first fifteen volumes of the *Asiatic Researches*, the journal of the Asiatic Society. Since there was no regular program of exploration and no

formally determined methodology, the quality and the nature of reports varied with author. Many of the sites were revisited by different scholars while several areas went unexplored. Of the sites investigated, the most popular were of course those around the three presidencies of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, particularly the last. Already from the mid-eighteenth century the caves of Elephanta and Kanheri had elicited a lot of interest from various travellers; by the nineteenth century several definitive reports on these had appeared in the *Asiatic Researches*. William Erskine's treatment of the Elephanta caves (1819), Sir Charles Malet's description of the Ellora caves (1801) and W.H. Sykes criticism of it (1820) as well as James Alexander's report on the discovery of the Ajanta caves (1830) all served to bring to light the fact that all the monuments were not just Hindu but also Buddhist and Jain<sup>40</sup>. The *Asiatic Researches* served as forum for several discussions on the controversial issue of attributing the different caves to different religions. Although, the grounds for attribution in most of the cases were those of iconographical analyses of the carved deities and sculpted decorations, it is possible to see an awareness of stylistic differences between the monuments belonging to different religions emerging at about this time. For example, Erskine's 1819 description of the cave temples of Elephanta contained this thumb-rule about the differences between the three types of cave temples in West India: "Any monster, any figure partly human partly brutal, any multiplicity of heads or hands in the object adored, indicate a Brahmanical place of worship..... The presence of umbrella-covered pyramids or semi globes, and of simple human figures sitting cross-legged or standing in a meditative posture, as certainly shows the excavation to be Bouddhist. The twenty-four saintly figures without the pyramid prove a temple to be Jaina."<sup>41</sup>

The gradually increasing awareness of the Hindu mythology and a better understanding of it also paved the way for the discovery of several ruined temple sites in the East. One of the first accounts, to appear in the *Asiatic Researches* was Sir William Chambers' description of the Hindu temple of Mamallapuram near Madras in 1788. In 1825, Stirling published his surveys of the historical temples of Orissa in the east including the

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<sup>40</sup> Mitter. *op.cit.* p150-170.

<sup>41</sup> W. Erskine., 'Account of the Cave-Temple of Elephanta'. *Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay*. vol. I, 1819, p 198. as quoted in Mitter. *op.cit.* p155.



famous Black Pagoda (the Sun Temple) of Konark and the temple of Jagannath at Puri in the fifteenth volume of the *Asiatic Researches*. By the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century the British antiquarians, although working with an ill-defined program, had not only established a distinction between the temples of the three different religious groups in India but had managed to identify the locations of the major ones and document many of them. These later reports indicate the beginnings of an understanding of stylistic distinctions not only amongst the buildings belonging to different religious canons but also amongst the temples of different regions.

The idea of the shift towards a heightened stylistic awareness amongst the reports presented to the Asiatic Society seems more convincing once it is realized that the Islamic monuments which had not interested the early Orientalists were now the subject of investigations themselves. However, given the fact that these monuments mostly did not sport any figural representation and that Islam as a religion was much better known to the British than Hinduism, it follows that there was not much of interest in the monuments for the scholars apart from their historical value. The reports on them tended to be limited to the description of their physical features along with some attempts to identify and date them. In other words, a stylistic awareness was inevitable with the number of monuments being explored. Naturally the first monuments to be described were those that were formally distinctive. The very first description as a matter of fact is that of the Qutub Minar, published as far back as in 1798.<sup>42</sup>

In 1823, the success of the Asiatic Society of Bengal led to the the direct patronage of King George IV and it was subsumed under the Royal Asiatic Society in London. The subsequent reports on the historical buildings of India therefore appeared in the Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of London. Ram Raz's book which came out in 1834 was actually published under the auspices of the Royal Asiatic Society from London. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Indian architecture had come into the picture of the European discourse on architecture in general, even though it was not taken very seriously and was known only for its exotic value.

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<sup>42</sup> James Blunt. 'A Description of the Cuttub Minar' in *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 4. London, 1798.

### The impact of the Orientalist scholarship

In summary, what has been shown above is that the first studies of Indian historical buildings were not concerned explicitly with architecture. Rather being a part of a general Orientalist discourse on India, these studies had more to do with the interests of the philologists, linguists and scholars involved in studying the Indian culture, languages, Hindu religion and its philosophy. To these scholars, the buildings were significant cultural artifacts and, like the Sanskrit texts that they were examining, were seen as repositories of information particularly about mythology and history of ancient India.

It is instructive to see that even at this early stage, when a formalized methodology for investigating the buildings was not described as yet and their documentation was entirely dependent on the particular interests of the travelers examining it, how closely the analyses of the buildings were related to the philological analyses that the Sanskrit texts were concurrently being subjected to. As most of the reports, debates and the controversies in the *Asiatic Researches* indicate, major concerns such as identification of the buildings and the sculptures in them, dating of the buildings and locating them within the nascent historical narrative of India were addressed through methods very close to those of comparative philology - careful examination of the sources such as inscriptions and historical accounts and their verification through mutual comparisons. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, this Orientalist scholarship had led to the discovery of the Buddhist and Jain religious canons and subsequently the fact that the ruins investigated could be distinguished according to the religion that they belonged to.

But for all that, there was no explicit effort as yet to read into the stylistic or formal qualities of the buildings, principles of an indigenous architecture. Rather it was believed that the knowledge of Indian architecture was to be found in the *Silpa Sastras*, a set of treatises on the art of building, written mostly in Sanskrit. As far as the early nineteenth century architectural discourse was concerned then, it took its definition from these treatises or rather from the description given of them by Ram Raz in his essay *On the Architecture of the Hindus*. It is obvious that this canonical understanding of architecture would then necessarily lead to a very restricted view of it. The only major monuments that could be found faithfully adhering to the classical Hindu canon were the

religious structures, mostly temples, and few buildings apart from these could find a place in the architectural discourse of the time.

### CHAPTER III

#### The emergence of a stylistic discourse

The need to establish distinctions between the three types of religious structures following the careful recording of the monuments led to the focusing of interest on the physical features of the buildings, its form, the decorative motifs used, and the iconography employed; in subsequent reports on the investigations of buildings published in the *Asiatic Researches* and the *Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay*, it is possible to detect the beginnings of a stylistic awareness. At the same time, theories of alternate aesthetics and ideas of the 'sublime' and the 'picturesque' in addition to 'beauty' were being developed in the West, to account for the strange, evocative, and unfamiliar charm of ruins that were being "discovered" all over the world. Indian monuments were seen as particularly good examples of these and attracted several European travellers and artists. To these artists, the asymmetrical compositions, massing, and overall forms of these places were the most interesting issues to be looked at along with the intricately carved, highly elaborate details and they produced several dramatic pictures highlighting these elements. Thus we see a gradual emergence of an awareness that the buildings could be investigated in their own right, in terms of their composition and style; buildings were beginning to be seen as significant objects of an architectural discourse.

The three decades following the publication of Ram Raz's Essay show very little activity regarding architectural research in India. With the merging of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta with the Royal Asiatic Society in 1823, the *Asiatic Researches* ceased publication. Apart from some reports published in the *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society*, notably Grindlay's reports on the Ellora caves and Alexander's account of the discovery of the Ajanta caves, both of which appeared in 1830, not much can be found regarding the exploration and documentation of historical monuments of India. It is

therefore not easy to assess the state of architectural discourse at this time in India, apart from reiterating that an increased stylistic awareness was evident in the reports on the monuments.

### **The mid-nineteenth century European knowledge of Indian architecture**

A good idea about the nature of discourse on Indian architecture at this time, particularly in reference to world architecture can be found in a book by A. Rosengarten published originally in German, around 1854,<sup>43</sup> called *A Handbook of Architectural Styles*. Like Fletcher's book, this was also a secondary source book intended as a reference text for the interested layman, rather than the professional scholar. It can therefore be seen as a reflection of the contemporary understanding of Architecture in Europe.

As the title itself indicates, the book was conceived of as a handbook. It lists and describes different styles of building both past and present, from all over the world. The styles, arranged in a loosely chronological order are divided into three broad groups - Ancient, which includes the Indian, Chinese and Egyptian styles, as well as the classical ones of Greece and Rome, the Romanesque, which includes the Early Christian and Islamic architecture and finally, Modern which consists of all European styles since the Renaissance [fig. 13]. The styles are discussed entirely in terms of representative buildings; the methodology for describing a particular style being that of constructing a typology of monuments, each type being illustrated by general stylistic characteristics and the buildings serving as particular examples. Also, the styles are discussed more or less independently of each other. Apart from a few comments about some common traits between two closely resembling styles, there is no attempt to relate them through a historical narrative.

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<sup>43</sup>The edition that has been consulted here is a 1977 reprint of the 1878 translation published in London. It does not give any date for the original German publication, but the description of the contemporary architecture in the last chapter helps date the book as written around 1854-55.

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As far as Indian architecture is concerned, the text is one of the earliest examples of an architectural discourse that is constructed entirely on built examples. Principles of architecture are discussed as stylistic tendencies among the built works, rather than as textual rules claimed from treatises like those of Ram Raz. The major monuments are treated within two categories - the Hindoo style which is part of the Ancient group of styles and the Islamic, treated as Arabic architecture in India, which is part of the Mohametan style. The divisions of the Hindoo style, namely rock-cut temples in which both Hindoo and Buddhist subterranean architecture is discussed, and the pagodas, which include various temples, clearly reflects the extent of monuments surveyed and reported in the journals of the Asiatic Societies. This is also true of the discussion of Islamic architecture; the typology involved is very general and includes primarily mosques, tombs and palaces. Stylistic variations are discussed through examples of regional categories. The list of monuments, in short, gives a very clear picture of the extent of knowledge and understanding of Indian architecture at the time.

We can conclude that by the middle of the nineteenth century, a stylistic understanding of Indian architecture had begun to develop. The interpretations, however, were limited by the fact that the corpus of buildings examined was small, and because the documentation of these buildings, in the survey reports that appeared in the *Asiatic Researches* or the *Transcations of the Royal Asiatic Society*, was not methodical or complete. But even at this early stage, the misrepresentations and distortions of the architectural historiography that were to characterize European attitude to Indian architecture can be detected. The most obvious is of course the separation between Hindoo and Islamic architecture. Though the obvious intent of such a division seems to be stylistic, it is important to remember that this distinction was not merely formal. From the beginning, the study of these buildings had been constituted along different lines with the Hindoo buildings first studied for their iconographical significance as against the Islamic ones which were examined stylistically from the beginning. In any case, the implication of this divide is that the Hindoo style was considered entirely Indian and in effect became synonymous with it, while the Islamic one was seen as a domestication of what was essentially a foreign style.



Even more interesting is the appearance in the beginning of the chapter on Indian styles, of the idea of the non-historical nature of Indian architecture. In Rosengarten's words, "Our investigations on this subject are favoured by the fact that the ancient Hindoo race has subsisted to our own day, and has erected its monuments in the same distinctive type, although many minor alterations have supervened with the lapse of time".<sup>44</sup> Given the fact that only a selected range of buildings was available to him for analysis and that their dates were, in any case, speculative at best, this view appears understandable.

However, our particular interest in the question is to understand if this view was related to any idea of marginalization or not. After all, what Mitter calls the classical bias is very apparent in Rosengarten. The editor of the English translation T Roger Smith is quite explicit in pointing it out: "Reverting to the point of view from which the subject has been looked at, it is essentially that of an academic and classical professor, and one brought up not only with the habit of mind which recurs to classical and especially to Greek originals, both as standards of taste and as models for the architectural treatment of modern works."<sup>45</sup> This bias is also very evident in Rosengarten's comments on the different architectural styles, particularly in the concluding summary on the nature of styles, where he characterizes the Indian style as having a Childlike Helplessness, and Chinese style as PUNCHINELLO in contrast with the Manly Vigour of the Roman style and the Stately Calm of the Greek.

In spite of all this, it is not possible to say that Indian architecture has been marginalized in the book. It occurs in its appropriate (according to the current state of knowledge) chronological niches. Even though the author makes no secret of his classical bias and discusses the Indian styles with disapproving epithets, all that this leads to is a negative evaluation in terms of its aesthetic qualities. There is no indication of Indian architecture being made to appear less important within the overall structure of the book. In other words, the view that Indian architecture had remained static through the centuries was in itself not enough to decrease its significance within the body of world architecture. Clearly, the idea of architecture as a progressive entity had not yet come to maturation.

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<sup>44</sup> A. Rosengarten. *A Handbook of Architectural Styles* (tr. by W. Collett-Sandars) Boston, 1977. p 1.

<sup>45</sup> Rosengarten. *op cit.* Editor's Preface.

We find therefore, in the mid-nineteenth century Europe, an idea of Indian architecture formed through a very limited range of buildings, most of which had initially attracted interest either because of the exoticism of their styles and the picturesqueness of their location or for their iconographical significance. Fundamental generalizations such as the difference between Hindu and Islamic styles and the idea that Indian architecture (typically Hindoo architecture) had remained a static entity, which would come to characterize subsequent views on Indian architecture, were already evident. However, there was no sense as yet of the marginalization of Indian architecture. It was seen as one style amongst many that Architecture could manifest itself in. Besides, there appears not to have been any idea of the relative significance of styles in general. The preference for a style was based entirely on personal aesthetic judgement, as in the case of Rosengarten whose classical bias is very evident in his treatment of different styles.

### **The Archaeological Survey of India**

By the 1860s the situation had begun to change noticeably. European perception of Indian architecture shifted following a dramatic increase in terms of the range and number of historical monuments known and documented. The major responsibility for this can be pinned on a single event that occurred in 1865 - the formation of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Following the Revolt of 1857, the administrative control of substantial parts of the sub-continent which were under the purview of the East India Company, transferred to the British Government. The ASI was formed as the official body of the British Government for completing the survey and documentation of the historical monuments of India. Prior to this, the work was the preserve of amateurs, mostly British army officers and Company officials. Finding an interesting site near the halts that they made while on business, they would seize the opportunity to conduct a quick survey accompanied by some drawings and a description of some interesting features. The resulting documentation was in general unsystematic and unorganized.

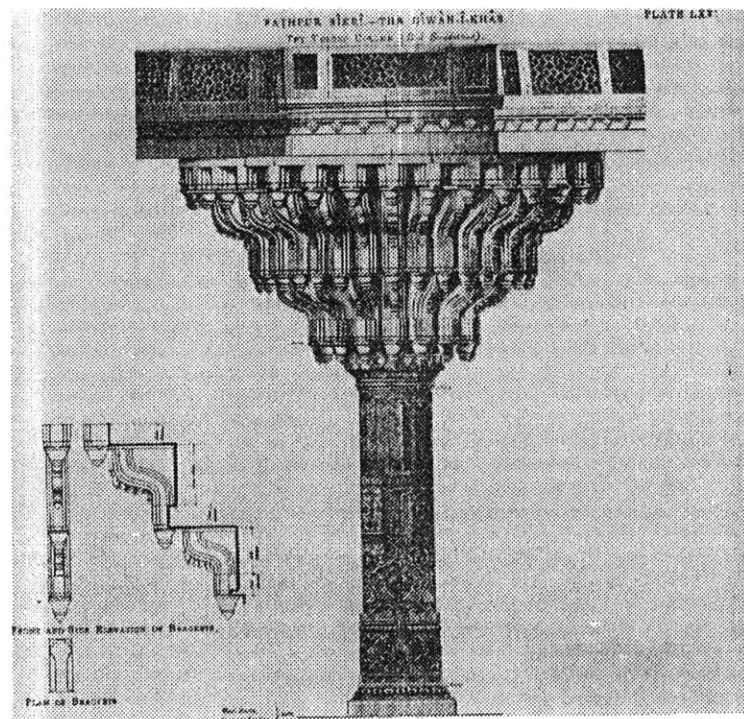
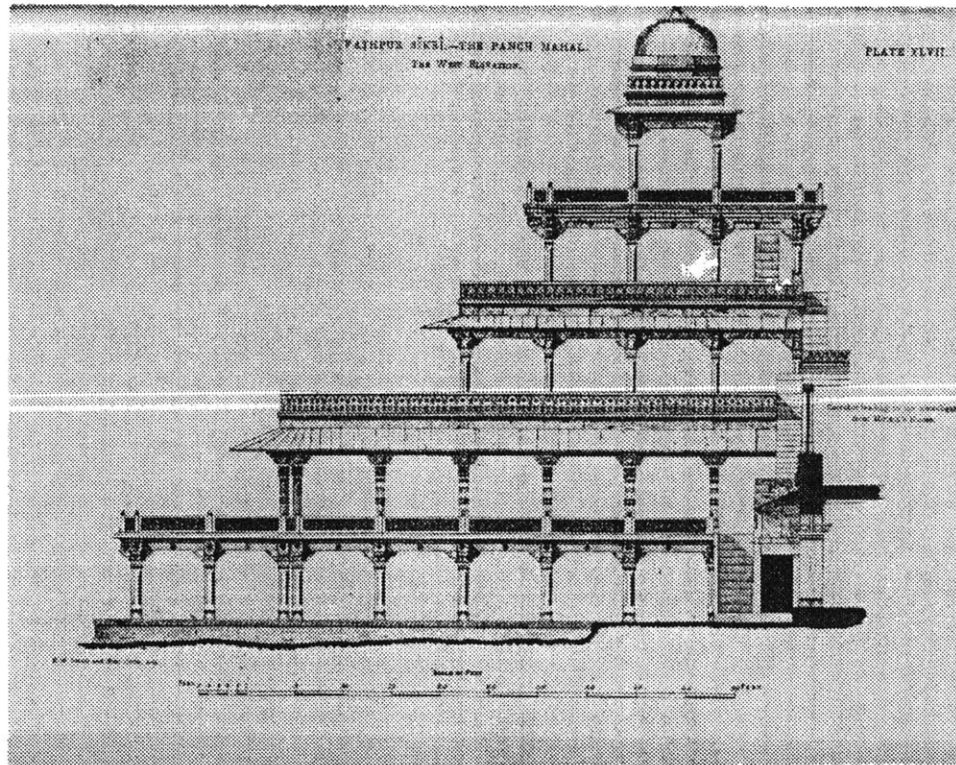
With the formation of the ASI, the whole operation got the advantage of an institutional umbrella; not only was much of India open to them, but the whole effort of documenting the scattered remains took on an organized character. Sir Alexander Cunningham, the

first director of the ASI and his successor James Burgess systematically divided the country into different regions. Exploratory parties were sent to different sites within these regions with instructions not only to complete the documentation of the major monuments but also to survey the surrounding area to locate any unknown ones. These surveys were published as a series of Reports of the ASI beginning in 1865 and continuing well into the twentieth century. The result was that by the end of the century, almost all of the country had been surveyed and most of the known monuments documented. Most important, almost all the monuments had been dated and it was established that none of them was older than two and a half centuries before Christ. The majority of this work was done within the first decade after the formation of the ASI.

As the Reports show, the survey had a well developed but flexible methodology. Developing from the tentative methods of the amateurs who had started the initial explorations, the documentation was primarily descriptive. Even though the descriptions were supported with elaborate drawings [fig. 14] the accompanying text tended to give an exhaustive description of the built form itself. There was an emphasis on details and stylistic motifs that would help classify the building. The formal description of the buildings was in most cases accompanied by an effort to set them in their historical and social contexts; most of the evidence for this was drawn from historical or literary accounts.

The treatment of this evidence, with the cross-checking of sources and verification of dates clearly shows the impact of the philological antecedents of the methodology employed here. It also illustrates the fact that the reports were part of an archaeological discourse and even though the buildings were being looked at stylistically, it was for the express purpose of classifying them. The main concern was to slot them within the recently constructed narrative of Indian history. The Reports represented a discourse on Indian monuments that was stylistically conscious but not yet architectural in nature. What this means is that the stylistic descriptions of the buildings were presented as isolated cases; there was no attempt at a comparative description and no generalised idea of an 'Architecture' that the building was supposed to illustrate. One of the most distinctive features of these reports was the attempt to distinguish the 'factual' or descriptive data from the interpreted one. In fact the basic aim in all the Reports was to

work towards as complete a factual description of the monuments as possible. Few conclusions were drawn from these Reports and those that were had to do with the dating of the buildings. And inspite of the enormous amount of documentation and the comprehensiveness of the Surveys, the knowledge of the monuments remained fragmentary and unconnected, with very little explicit effort towards an understanding of broader principles or ideas. Some general notions, however, were implicitly present within the descriptions in the Reports. All the Reports show a very clear categorization of styles on religious grounds; Hindu, Muslim, Jain and Buddhist architecure are always carefully distinguished and discussed separately within the Survey Reports



14. The Fatehpur Sikri Documentation  
From E. Smith *The Mughal Architecture of Fatehpur Sikri* 1892

## CHAPTER IV

### The Emergence of an Historicist Discourse

#### The scholarship of James Fergusson

At the time when James Fergusson was writing his *History of the Indian and Eastern Architecture*, in 1874, while many monuments were still in the process of being documented, the idea of a stylistically separate Hindu and Muslim architecture had already crystallized. The simplicity of this notion was first criticised by Fergusson himself in a lecture given to the Royal Society of Arts, *On the study of Indian Architecture*: "I learnt that there was not only one Hindu and one Mohammedan style in India, but several species of class; that these occupied well-defined local provinces, and belonged each to ascertained ethnological divisions of the people."<sup>46</sup> He accepted the basic categorization, although he qualified it by introducing several sub-categories, such as the northern and the southern styles Hindu temple architecture. His classification, consequently, was based on sub-dividing further the basic religious categories, particularly the Hindu which he classified into a Northern (Aryan), Southern (Dravidian) and Central Indian (Chalukyan) style [fig. 15]. A mix of appellations can be observed; the Northern, Southern and Central are obviously regional epithets, while the Aryan and Dravidian are racial and in contrast to these is the Chalukyan which refers to a ruling dynasty of medieval Central India. Similarly, within the sub-classifications of Saracenic architecture, regional appellations such as Bengal and Guzerat styles are interspersed with dynastic ones like the Mughal and Pathan styles, while a sub-section is identified simply as Wooden architecture.

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<sup>46</sup> James Fergusson. *On the Study of Indian Architecture*. Delhi. 1977. pp 5-6. reprinted from the original paper of 1866.

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This classification has been the main source of criticism on Fergusson since the beginning. As early as 1876, *The Builder*, published from London, carried a review of his book severely taking him to task for "his nomenclature (which was) composed on constantly varying principles.... Two divisions of the subject," they pointed out, "are headed respectively 'Buddhist' and 'Jain' architecture, which are divisions based upon creed; the next chapter, 'architecture in the Himalayas' implies a topographical division...".<sup>47</sup> In the beginning of the twentieth century this classification system was attacked once again, this time for its racial and religious connotations. In a series of articles and also in his book *Indian Architecture*, Ernest Havell wrote that the classification of styles in terms of dynasties, races or religion introduced artificial discontinuities into the narrative of the stylistic evolution and at the same time attributed all innovations in the Indian architecture to outside influences.<sup>48</sup> Instead, if the styles were seen as a product of a particular (mostly regional) crafts tradition, these discontinuities would disappear. And lately, as has been discussed earlier, the criticism has shifted to Fergusson's quiet acceptance of the simplistic Hindu-Muslim distinction between styles of architecture and his role in promoting them.

It should be remembered, however, that the epithets that Fergusson used so freely for his classifications were in themselves never very important to him. Rather, his concern was to establish a framework of classification which would enable him to identify each building, distinguish it from others, and also help locate it within the narrative of the history of the sub-continent. Such an exercise was not entirely without precedents. The initial surveys of amateur explorers and their tentative distinctions between Hindu and Buddhist monuments and the detailed stylistic descriptions in the ASI Reports had already brought in a strong stylistic awareness. By the time Fergusson began to write his *History of Indian Architecture*, buildings were already being looked at and understood in

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<sup>47</sup> *The Builder*. 10 Sept. 1876. p 273.

<sup>48</sup> see Ernest Havell. *Indian Architecture: Its Psychology, Structure and History from the First Muhamedan Invasion to the Present Day*. London, 1927. for Havell's theory of evolution of the Indian architecture.

stylistic terms, though the categories were still limited basically to Hindu and Muslim types. It was, in these circumstances, natural for Fergusson to take up this newly emerging stylistic consciousness and build upon it to arrive at an elaborate grouping of buildings that apparently fitted in with the known geographical, historical and ethnographic conditions in India. In his own words, from a lecture given in 1866, "When I was in India, between twenty and thirty years ago, the subject of Indian architecture had hardly been touched. ... At that time, thanks to the learning and enthusiasm of Mr. James Prinsep,<sup>49</sup> great progress was being made in the decipherment of Indian inscriptions, and the study of the antiquities of the country, and I determined to try if the architecture could not be brought under the domain of science. For several years I pursued the study almost unremittingly, and bit by bit the mystery unravelled itself. .. I found out, much to my disappointment, that the boasted primeval antiquity of the rock-cut temples was a myth; and that the whole could be arranged into consecutive series, with well-defined boundaries."<sup>50</sup> The names given to the groups of these buildings were therefore a matter of convenience and expediency.

### Fergusson's Histories of World Architecture

What makes Fergusson particularly interesting to us is the fact that he not only wrote the first history Indian architecture as we understand it now, but that he wrote the first comprehensive historical narrative of world architecture as well. Prior to this, the descriptions of world architecture had been in terms of a collection of styles, exemplified by the Handbook of Rosengarten. The crucial aspect of such a description was that the styles were discussed in an isolated manner, with no attempt to connect them apart from a loose chronological ordering. Fergusson's first popular book on the subject was a Handbook in this same tradition.<sup>51</sup> An earlier book based on his studies of the architecture of Asia, particularly India, published in 1842 as *The True Principles of*

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<sup>49</sup> Prinsep, master of the British Mint at Calcutta, is credited with having first deciphered the Brahmi script in 1834 and therefore led the way, not only for the translation of various ancient inscriptions, but also in construction of the first modern history of India.

<sup>50</sup> Fergusson. *op.cit.* 1977. pp 5-6.

<sup>51</sup> Fergusson, J. *The Illustrated Handbook of Architecture*. London, 1855.

*Beauty in Art* had failed to do well. Learning from this, as he explains in the preface to his *History*, he decided to put down his thoughts in a more popular form which was published as the *Handbook of Architecture*. This was written, according to what he identifies as a topographical scheme, in which the styles were listed roughly according to the regions or countries with which they were then identified.<sup>52</sup>

By 1861, when there arose a demand to publish a new edition, architectural knowledge had increased significantly. Fergusson was aware that the simplistic distribution in terms of regional styles was no longer valid and decided to switch the organization of the material from a topographical method to an historical one. He decided to rearrange the description of the entire architecture of the world into a historical narrative. That this task was inherently problematic can be concluded from Fergusson's own comments, "So long as the narrative is confined to individual countries or provinces, it may be perfectly consecutive and uninterrupted; but when two or three nations are grouped together, frequent interruptions and recapitulation become necessary; and when universal history is attempted, it seems impossible to arrange the narrative so as to prevent these from assuming very considerable importance."<sup>53</sup> In order to get over this, he proposed a broad division of all the styles into four groups Ancient or Heathen architecture, Christian architecture, Pagan architecture and Modern architecture. The assumption was that in each of the groups, the styles included would fall into a natural pattern of historical development. The pattern of evolution from Egyptian and Assyrian architecture to that of Greece and Rome was well established as far as the first group was concerned. Within the Christian group, the Romanesque could be seen as evolving into the Gothic and the Byzantine and the "false" styles of the Modern architecture also formed a naturally evolving group from the Renaissance to the Baroque to the later revivals.

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<sup>52</sup> Fergusson. *op.cit* 1867. p iv.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid* 1867. p 75.

The Pagan styles which "would comprise all those minor miscellaneous styles not included in the previous divisions," such as the Sassanian, the Saracenic, Hindoo, Buddhist and Chinese and so on, were, however, unique in that no consecutive arrangement could be formed for these. "Nor is it necessary", comments Fergusson, "they generally have little connexion with each other, and are so much less important than the others that their mode of treatment is of far less consequence, and in the present state of our knowledge regarding them, a slight degree of reiteration may be considered advantageous."<sup>54</sup>

Here is an explicit acknowledgment not only of the fact that these styles, which include the Indian ones, were considered minor but that they were not as important as the others. However, this did not imply that these styles were not important enough to be studied, but only that it did not matter if they could not be put into a chronological sequence. Which means that in spite of the fact that these styles were not seen as important enough in terms of their evolution, there was no attempt yet towards their marginalization. The definition of architecture had not yet come to imply a tradition necessarily evolving through a succession of styles.

In fact, a concern with accurate and unbiased representation is reflected in Fergusson's writings: "After all, the real difficulty lies not so much in arranging the materials as in weighing the relative importance to be assigned to each division. In wandering over so vast a field it is difficult to prevent personal predilection from interfering with purely logical criticism." The result of this concern is seen in the seriousness and detail with which even the "minor" styles are treated in the book. As he puts it himself, "It is so far as I know, the first attempt to write a universal history of architecture in which each style shall occupy exactly that amount of space which the extent of its buildings or their merit would appear to justify." Since in 1861, knowledge of the architecture of a large part of the world, including much of West Asia, India and Africa was still sketchy<sup>55</sup>, it seems more relevant to see the validity of his statement in relation to the next edition of his

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid.* p76.

<sup>55</sup> This was prior to the formation of the ASI in India. Areas like Western China, South-East Asia and Northern Africa were as yet not penetrated and the architecture of the Americas was just beginning to be explored.

book printed in four volumes from 1873 to 1876.

The intermediate decades had seen an unprecedented work in the surveying and documentation of architectural and archaeological remains in most areas of the world; the popularizing of photography as a medium of documentation had made a large amount of data available to a scholar like Fergusson. With the vast increase in research material available to him, he was forced to make fundamental changes in the relative composition of his book and it is here that we can see how closely he kept to his specification that each style be given the amount of space justified by the extent of its buildings. Since the major increase in the data between 1861 and 1874 was in non-European architecture, the increased space in the second edition was given entirely to non-western architecture. European styles which occupied roughly one and half of the two volumes in the first edition found almost similar amount of space in the next. Of the non-western styles, which had been limited to only half the second volume, the chapters dealing with Saracenic styles expanded to cover the entire half of the second volume. And, pertinent to this case, the part dealing with Indian architecture, along with a chapter on the monuments of China and the Far East, now appeared in a separate volume of its own, which was "The History of Indian and Eastern Architecture". This extra attention given to Indian architecture naturally indicates the bias of a scholar whose expertise was on this subject. Furthermore, the construction of the historical narrative for Indian architecture was in itself an effort that merited a book on its own. As Fergusson mentions, the book was intended to be used either separately as a primary reference on Indian architecture or as a part of the comprehensive survey of the architecture of the entire world.

### **The Principles of Architecture according to Fergusson**

The comparatively huge amount of space given to Indian architecture in his book also points to Fergusson's second specification that the space given to any style would be in relation to the intrinsic merit of its buildings. This rather subjective sounding criterion is better understood through an explanation in his own words: "...an attempt has been persevered in throughout the whole of this work to apply one law of criticism to all styles, ancient and modern, eastern and western. An endeavor has been made to explain

why one building has been successful or another failed, by a reference to those principles of design in architecture which seem to be universal, and, at all events, are easily understood, and consequently, if mistaken, the induction is from so wide a field that it will be easy to point out where the error lies."<sup>56</sup>

The principles that Fergusson refers to are described in detail in the introductory chapter of his *History* dealing with elements like mass, proportion, construction, material and so on. Underlying all these is the one principle that is specially pertinent to the argument here. In the words of Fergusson himself, "In the first period the art of architecture consisted in designing a building so as to be the most suitable and convenient for the purposes required, in arranging parts so as to produce the most stately and ornamental effect consistent with its uses.... Indeed it is almost impossible to indicate one single building in any part of the world, designed during the prevalence of this true form of art, which was not thought beautiful, not alone by those who erected it, or which does not remain a permanent object of admiration and of study for all future ages."<sup>57</sup>

This idea of an architecture deriving from a natural approach to solving problems of use and construction was what underlay Fergusson's appreciation of Indian architecture. According to him, the architecture in India was still a living art, practised as it was in the 12th and 13th centuries. In contrast with Europe, where architecture was essentially a copying art and therefore a failure, Fergusson wrote that in India it was successful because it was based on the right principles; the builder, though often uneducated and unaware, being concerned only with what he was doing and how best to produce the desired effect.<sup>58</sup> This appreciation of Indian architecture had an essentially medieval connotation. He believed that true architecture had ended in Europe with the Gothic style; however, in the way architecture was being practised in India, Fergusson saw a close similarity to European medieval tradition that he admired.

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<sup>56</sup> Fergusson. *History of Architecture*. vol.2. 1862. p vii.

<sup>57</sup> Fergusson. *History of Architecture*. vol.1. 1861. p 6.

<sup>58</sup> Fergusson. *History of Indian Architecture*. 1874. pp 5-6.

This linking of Indian architecture with the Gothic and its consequent appreciation was at least partly responsible for the fact that it was given so much attention in Fergusson's books. Paradoxically, it was this very idea of Indian architecture being a true and living art, still practised as it was centuries ago, that was crucial in its marginalization a few decades later. We have seen earlier that Fergusson had already classified Indian styles as not being part of the evolutionary sequence of world architecture and had declared them minor in this respect. However, Indian architecture treated as a live tradition, was still important enough for him not only to escape becoming a marginalized entity, but also to have been treated in extensive detail in the second edition.

As discussed earlier, the history of Indian architecture as constructed by Fergusson, was only quasi-historical in nature. Although there was a rough chronological sequence between the main divisions of Indian architecture, with the Buddhist period being followed by the Hindu and then by the Saracenic, Fergusson's detailed treatment had demonstrated that this was too simplistic and that there were long overlaps between these periods. The result can be seen in the structure of the book; it does not establish an evolutionary pattern for the entire architecture, in terms of one style following another [fig. 13]. Each of the major divisions, the Buddhist, the Jain, the Northern and Southern Hindoo and the Saracenic seem to follow their independent patterns of evolutions. As a matter of fact, even within these major categories the constituting styles are not shown to follow a sequential pattern of development, as for instance in the case of Saracenic architecture, where different regional styles appear to have flourished at almost the same time. The image of Indian architecture that comes through is that of a rich, extensive and varied range of styles, all based on a medieval crafts tradition - the true art, according to Fergusson.

### **Fletcher's History and the Marginalization of Indian Architecture**

In this context, it is easy to see how Indian architecture was marginalized, three decades later, when Fletcher's History was published. Unlike Fergusson's books, which have extensive discussions of his own ideas, predilections and preferences, the underlying themes in Fletcher's text are more implicit. However, the shift in preferences is amply



evident. The idea of architecture, evolving naturally as a crafts-based tradition that so persistently informed Fergusson's judgment is missing from Fletcher's History. Instead progress in architecture seems to be defined as the successions of styles each of which replaced the earlier one by addressing new concerns, necessitated by the changing social, and physical context, by generating new forms and above all by defining new kinds of issues to be addressed. In his own words, "The History of Architecture is a record of continuous evolution, beginning with the simple and constantly repeated forms of Egypt; followed by the more highly developed temple-building of Greece; passing through the complex types of the Imperial Rome ... and also through the ages of Christendom, when Medievalists reared cathedrals and castles, until the men of the Renaissance reverted to the Classical types."<sup>59</sup> It is not surprising that unlike Fergusson, for whom the progress in architecture ended with the Gothic style, Fletcher was able to include the Renaissance and later styles as a continuation of western architectural evolution.

At the same time, Indian architecture, was seen as consisting of several almost synchronous styles, characterized in general by a medieval crafts like practice. Following Fergusson, Fletcher divided Indian architecture into three styles - Buddhist, Hindu and Jain. However, the crucial step that he took was in reverting back to the tradition of removing Islamic architecture from the category of Indian architecture and placing it separately under the general category of Saracenic Architecture. No doubt this was the result of the belief that the Indian Saracenic had originated outside India and did not therefore belong to the domain of Indian architecture. The consequence of this was that any possibility of a continuous evolution of Indian architecture from the Hindu to the Saracenic ceased to be considered.

Given Fletcher's definition of progress in architecture, Indian architecture would necessarily be characterized as relatively static and non-progressive and consequently dealt with in a summary manner implying that not much of consequence could be learned from its history. The marginalization of Indian architecture was therefore inevitable.

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<sup>59</sup> Fletcher. *op.cit.* p 4.

## CONCLUSIONS

"Yet never has there been such a thing as a pure, or unconditional, Orient; similarly never has there been a nonmaterial form of Orientalism, much less anything so innocent as an "idea" of an Orient. In this underlying conviction and in its ensuing methodological consequences do I differ from scholars who study the history of ideas.... In other words, my hybrid perspective is broadly historical and "anthropological", given that I believe all texts to be worldly and circumstantial in ways that vary from genre to genre, and from historical period to historical period.

Yet, unlike Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted, I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism.... Foucault believes that in general the individual author counts for very little; empirically, in the case of Orientalism (and perhaps nowhere else) I find this not to be so. Accordingly my analyses employ close textual readings whose goal is to reveal the dialectic between individual text or writer and the complex collective formation to which his work is a contribution.

- Edward Said. Orientalism.

The earliest studies of Indian monuments were not concerned with their architectural character but with the light they cast on the cultural and historical understanding of India. Gradually, a stylistic awareness began to evolve amongst the people who were involved with their documentation and study. The limited range and typology of the buildings known during the early stages of the surveys led to very broad initial classifications, mostly in form of religious categories. A particular distinction that appeared very early was between Hindu and Islamic architecture; a distinction that led to a fundamental schism between Hindoo architecture, which consisted of all the styles that originated in India (and was thus characterized as Indian), and Saracenic or Islamic, which was understood to have originated outside. Also apparent was a general idea that Indian monuments were extremely ancient and that architecture in India was timeless and unchanging.

The first serious discourse on Indian architecture emerged in about the middle of the nineteenth century with the establishment of the Archaeological Survey of India, which was able to survey, document, date and classify almost all known Indian monuments within the space of a quarter century. At the same time, there was emerging in the west, a global awareness of architecture with a historicist, evolutionary definition of it. In an effort to promote the study of Indian architecture, Fergusson constructed its first history, classifying the entire corpus of buildings into elaborate stylistic groups and presented it as a living tradition, still practised as it was centuries ago. Ironically, within a few decades, the definition of progress in architecture changed to one of an intellectual discourse based on a succession of styles; a definition according to which the medievalist Indian architecture was inherently marginalized as is evident in the *Comparative History of Architecture* of Banister Fletcher.

In line with Said's argument above, this thesis attempts to get away from the construction of a 'history of ideas'. Recognizing that no research and scholarship is carried out in isolation, that it derives its meaning from the politics that constitutes its larger context and that, in effect, there is no scholarship that is politically innocent, it is seen that a study of the European conception of the Indian architecture based simply on the developing notions of styles and classifications and changing categories of taste is not sufficient to explain the development of the discipline. Consequently, the effort here is to construct an historical narrative, not on the basis of the ideas and "formal structures" that can be traced to one or more individuals, but on the basis of the changing nature of the very definitions that give meaning to the works of the various individuals involved with the subject.

The specific argument made here is that the biases and misconceptions that are generally seen as being central to marginalization of Indian architecture, such as the idea that it had declined from a golden age or that it was a non-progressive tradition, that can be detected in the work of its earliest historians, became crucial to its marginalization only in the context of a stylistic and historicist definition of architecture that emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century. Ironically, the very steps that eventually led to the marginalization of Indian architecture - its characterization as a medieval tradition and its categorization into a number of synchronic styles were taken by Fergusson for the very

purpose of promoting its study.

It is here that the thesis can be placed into the context of a larger debate; one centered around the issue of the relationship between the individual author and the "complex collective formation" of which his work is a part. Borrowing from Foucault the notion of a 'discursive formation' to describe Orientalism, Said intends to show the work of all writers who are part of this discursive practice as both shaping and being shaped by it. The argument that follows is that each of the authors whose work is a part of a discursive formation like Orientalism share cultural biases and preconceptions and that these are responsible for the many distortions and misrepresentations of scholarship, particularly of alternate cultures. For Said (and for a number of studies that follow this assertion such as that of Metcalf), the method of criticism of this scholarship therefore is to employ close textual readings to expose these biases and limitations in the work of each of these authors. However, the problem that this attitude leads to is that of an over-simplification of the characterization of these writers and scholars. It expressly cannot take into account the paradoxical situation of a Fergusson believing in the superiority of the western civilization and at the same time promoting the architectural practice in India as a true art and a model for European architects to follow.

This thesis has come about largely as a response to this issue. While, like Said, it has made an effort to "employ textual readings to reveal the dialectic between individual text or writer and the complex collective formation to which his work is a contribution", particularly in the case of Fergusson' unlike Said, the attempt has not been to discover in these readings his shared biases and cultural misconceptions. The effort has been to bring out the complexities and contradictions in his character and to show that the marginalization of Indian architecture occurred in spite of his sincere efforts to promote its studies. The point that is made here is that an individual has little influence over the interpretation and therefore the consequences of his work, and that those are defined by its discursive context.

However, the thesis does not argue against the idea of cultural hegemony or a political context as essential to the development of the discipline. Rather the argument is that this political context should not be seen as directly (and consequently, negatively) influencing

the work of particular scholars, as most of the readings tend to. Instead this political context, or the operation of a cultural hegemony, can be more fruitfully understood as influencing the very structure of the discursive context in which any scholar's work is interpreted or given meaning to.

Fletcher's interpretation of Fergusson's historical narrative of Indian architecture, thus should be seen as a consequence of the particular discursive practice that he was operating within. Fletcher borrowed the categorization of Indian architecture that Fergusson had constructed - the classification of styles in terms of racial and religious categories. For Fergusson the fact that these styles co-existed and had continued to exist through centuries was an important fact in favor of the argument that Indian architecture was a living tradition with the builders constantly pre-occupied with solving problems of design and construction and making 'natural' progress. Stylistic tendencies emerged as by-products of the process and not as conscious choices. Indian architecture, for Fergusson, was a living example of a 'true art' and a significant role model for Europe. In contrast, the architectural discourse, a quarter century later, within which Fletcher's history can be placed, acknowledged an evolution in terms of a diachronic sequence of styles that implied an intellectual progression. Naturally, the Indian styles, synchronic and representing a timeless, unchanging tradition were inherently underprivileged within such a definition of architecture. Also, this definition of architecture emerged within a European intellectual tradition or rather a discursive practice that was centered in Europe and that called for an evolutionary narrative that 'explained' the contemporary European styles. Styles that could not be shown as having influenced this narrative were obviously less important and marginalized. In other words, the historicist definition of architecture defined significance of styles as related to the role they played in the architectural narrative.

The important distinction which needs to be emphasized here is that it was not because Fletcher was an Englishman that his History marginalized Indian architecture but because he was operating within a discursive practice that was inherently biased towards a Western perspective; that a person with a different cultural background, but operating within the same discourse, would also have achieved a similar result. An important implication of this is a methodological one. Rather than employ close textual readings to

criticise the Orientalist interpretations and representations, as Said promotes, it would be more fruitful to analyze the conditions, or more specifically the discursive practices, in which such representations became possible and meaningful.

The thesis has attempted to demonstrate the significance of such a study by taking the development of scholarship on Indian architecture and its marginalization within the universal discourse on architecture as a case. To investigate the reasons why such a marginalization came about would call for a deeper and more extensive study than was possible given the limited scope and time in this case. Such a study would demand not only an analysis of the development of scholarship on India but also an analysis of the formation of the architectural discourse in Europe during the nineteenth century, not just in terms of the intellectual development but as a social and cultural practice.

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