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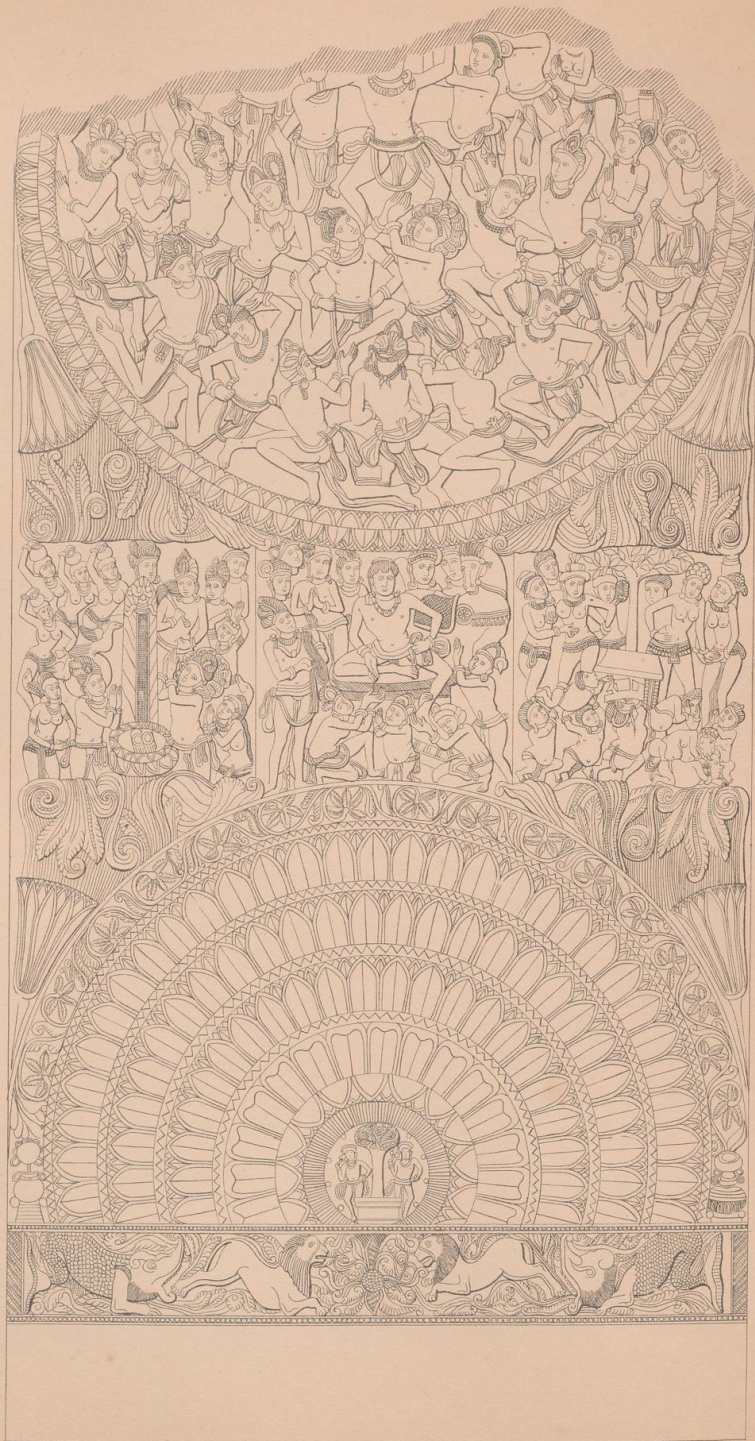
Tree and serpent worship

Fergusson, James

London, 1868

Plate LXVII. To LXX. - Elevations Of Internal Face Of A Pillar Of Outer Enclosure. - Lithographed from a Drawing in the Mackenzie Collection

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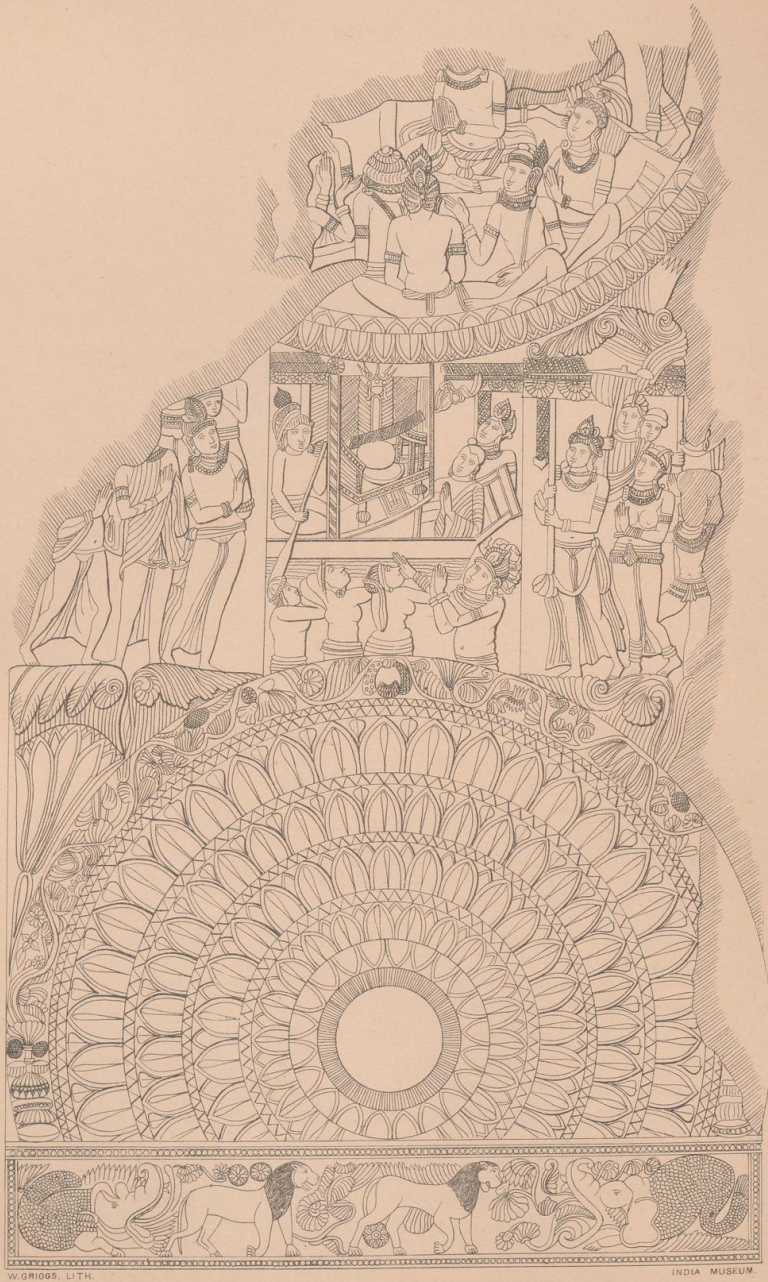
5 FEET 10 INCHES

W. GRIGIS, LITH.

3 FEET 1 INCH

INDIA MUSEUM.

ELEVATION OF INTERNAL FACE OF A PILLAR OF OUTER ENCLOSURE.



4 FEET 7.5 INCHES

2 FEET 8.9 INCHES.

ELEVATION OF INTERNAL FACE OF A PILLAR OF OUTER ENCLOSURE.

PLATES LXVI., LXVII., AND LXVIII.

PLATE LXVI.

THIS Plate, lithographed from a drawing in the Mackenzie Collection, represents one of the angle pillars of the great Rail. The tall pillar, with three full and two half circles, is introduced as an angle piece terminating the curved part, and commencing the straight projection of one of the Gateways.*

The subject of the central circle, though much broken, is apparently a Buddhist preacher addressing men and women in the foreground, who listen in attitudes of adoration; and higher up floating figures, Devas or Devatās, attend and bring offerings.

The three bas-reliefs in the octagon part below are similar in subject to those described above in speaking of Plate LVIII. On the left a chief, seated on a throne, is listening to the animated eloquence of a warrior, who seems addressing a youth seated cross-legged on the ground. The result of this speech is seen in the central compartment. The King, with the umbrella of state, sallies forth on his elephant, but unarmed, and accompanied by two of his women. His army accompany him in the foreground, and a floating figure above offers a wreath. In the third compartment the enemy fly, apparently without striking a blow!

As the head of the principal figure in the centre is broken off, we cannot feel sure that it represents Buddha himself. If it is he, this bas-relief ought to refer to some legend of his youth. If it is one of the Bodhisattwas, which is possible, it is to him that the event depicted must be referred.

PLATE LXVII.

It will not be necessary to say anything here about the mutilated circle in this Plate, as another representation of the same subject will be found further on in Plate LXXIII., where it occurs on an intermediate Rail.

In the lower bas-relief we have in the centre a Saint or Bodhisattwa seated expounding. From his being accompanied by a horse, it probably may be Avalokiteśwara. One man is embracing his foot, but the principal personage is presenting a cloth.

On the left we have the worship of an emblem, which I have already suggested may mean Buddha himself, though in what combination is by no means clear. It

* Compare it with woodcut No. 19, page 168.

recurs frequently further on, so we shall have to refer to it again and again. Here the Trisul emblem is placed on a tall pillar, from each side of which issues what may be taken for flames. At the bottom are the sacred feet on the Lotus. To the right of the pillar is the Naga Raja with his wife. On the left a saint with a glory round his head, and a bird hovers over him—it looks like a pigeon (?) Behind him is a Naga woman, and above them four women bearing pots on their heads.

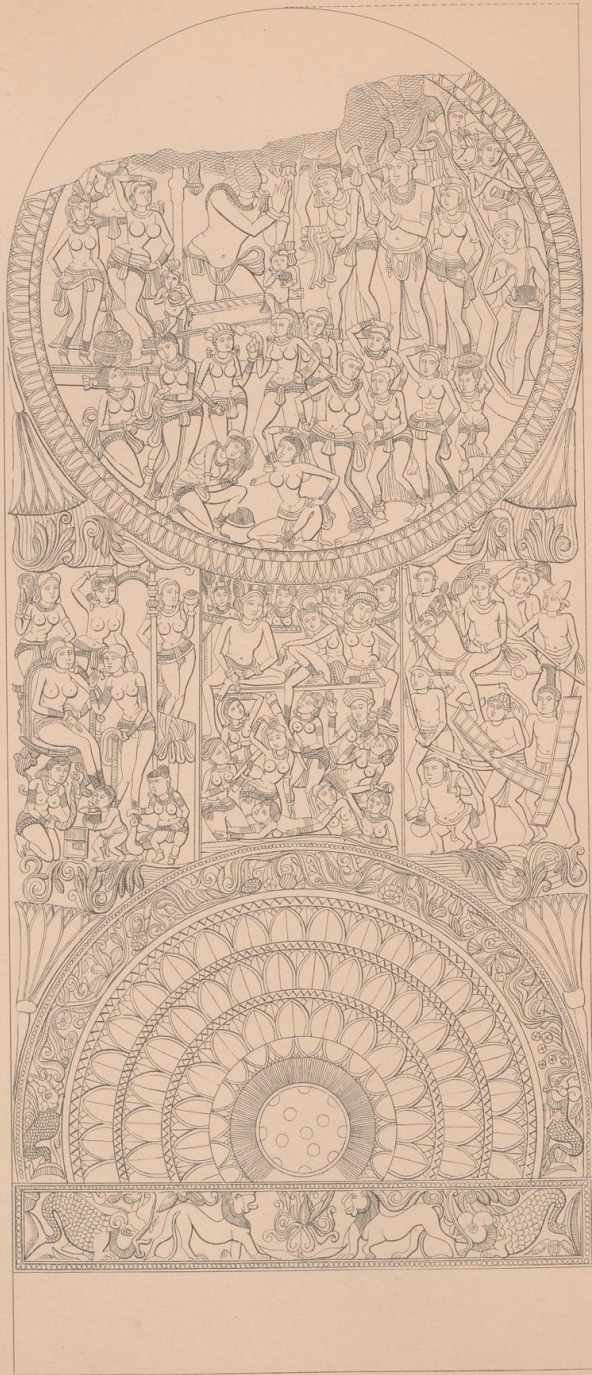
On the right-hand side are seven women, looking at the gambols of dwarfs and grotesque figures in front of the Sacred Tree.

PLATE LXVIII.

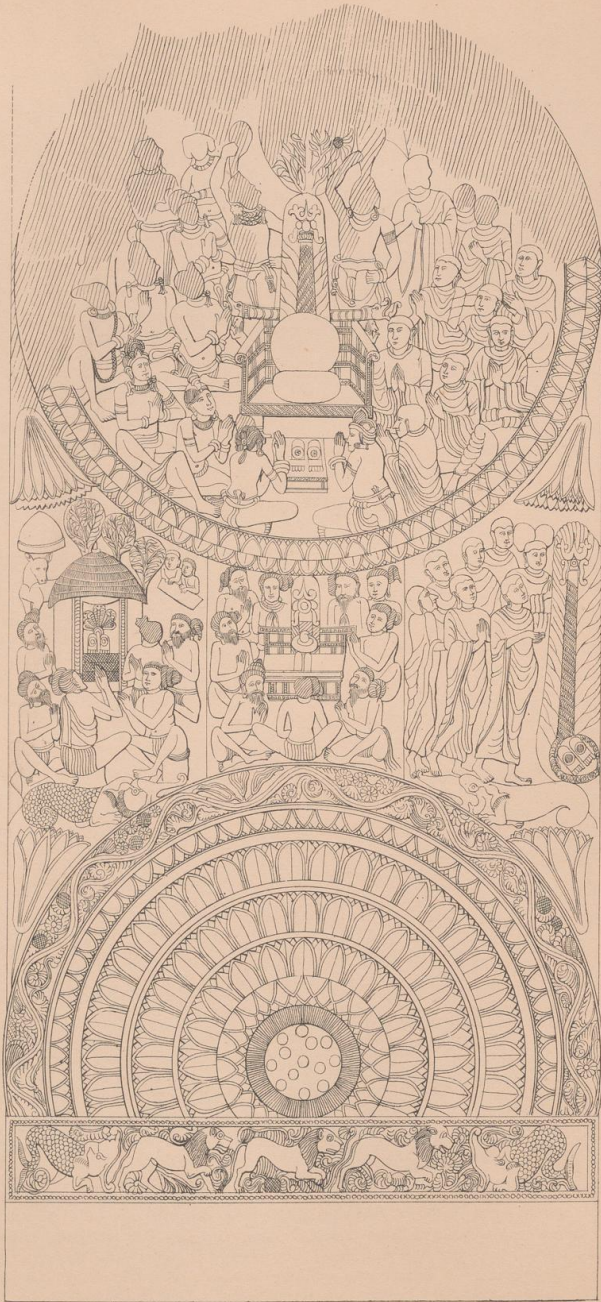
This pillar, though very much dilapidated, is of considerable interest, first, as a means of comparison with Plate XXXI., representing a similar scene at Sanchi, and secondly, because it may possibly represent the arrival of the relics, in charge of Danta Kumāra, from Ceylon. The upper circle is too much mutilated to be deciphered; but in the centre of the lower compartment we have a boat or ship, in which is one man paddling. In front a man in the garb of a priest, with his hands joined, worshipping a relic or rather two relic bundles or Dropas, placed on a throne, below which the sacred feet are seen. Above these is the same Trisul emblem as was seen in the last Plate. If I am correct in my conjecture, this would simply mean relics of Buddha, whether or not they were coming from Ceylon.

Below, the Naga Raja is welcoming the arrival, accompanied apparently by two women and a man. In the right-hand compartment a chief bears himself the canopy of state, evidently in honour of the relics, and his wife stands behind in the act of worshipping.

That these represent relics arriving by water at Amravati seems quite clear, but whether those mentioned at page 160 or some others, must for the present I fear be matter for conjecture. My own impressions are in favour of the Ceylonese relics being those here depicted, but the destruction of the upper part of the pillar and the fracture of the sides deprives us of the means of determining the point. I may also add that, notwithstanding the general fidelity of the drawings made for Colonel Mackenzie, it would be satisfactory, in a difficult and important case like this, to see the slab itself.



ELEVATION OF INTERNAL FACE OF A PILLAR OF OUTER ENCLOSURE.



W. RIDGES. LITH.

INDIA MUSEUM.

ELEVATION OF INTERNAL FACE OF A PILLAR OF OUTER ENCLOSURE.

PLATES LXIX. AND LXX.

THE central circle in Plate LXIX. represents the reception of a Princess and Prince by some one, very important from his size, who stands under a canopy with his hands joined. The Princess presents a piece of cloth, on which is the impression of two feet. If any dependence can be placed on the story in the Râja Taranginî,* this would indicate that the strangers came from Ceylon, and consequently they probably were Hemâchala and Danta Kumara. If the person receiving them were the Naga Raja, I should consider this as nearly certain. Unfortunately, his head is so defaced that it is impossible to be sure; but as none of his women have snakes at the back of their heads, it is most probable that he was not a Naga. It may, however, represent the reception of the same persons in Ceylon; and these peculiarities about the head-dresses of the women would lead to the belief that we have got among a new people.

The story of the lower bas-relief is not difficult to make out, though, without knowing who the principal person in the central bas-relief may be, it is not easy to give a name to the principal parties concerned. On the right "a gay and a gallant knight"—a Raja on horseback attended as his body-guard—comes to court a maiden, who sits in a tall round-backed chair on the left. Between the two in the centre sits the stern father with his two wives, with the ladies of his household disporting themselves in front and attending on him behind. One of the attendants of the expectant bride is getting a garland out of a box, and others are ready with refreshments; while the principal ladies-maid reports to her mistress the arrival of the Prince, and describes his person. The shields and helmets of the Prince's attendants are worthy of remark, as they are unlike any others we have hitherto met with in these sculptures.

PLATE LXX.

This is one of the most interesting, in a ritualistic point of view, of the whole series of pillars at Amravati. In the central circle we have a throne, on which are placed two objects I have ventured to call Dronas of relics. At the back is the Trisul emblem on a pillar beneath the sacred Tree, and the feet are in front. If the Trisul emblem is that of Buddha, the combination seems intelligible, but otherwise it seems difficult to suggest what it may in this instance mean.

* Mihira Kula, King of Cashmere, made war on Ceylon because the cloth of Sinhala was stamped with a golden foot as the seal of the monarch.* (It means evidently the feet of Buddha, as used everywhere.) His wife, wearing a jacket of Sinhala cloth, the impression came off on her bosom, and the king, indignant that the mark of anyone's foot should appear on the bosom of his wife, invaded Ceylon, and forced him in future to stamp his cloth with the golden Sun.—Asiatic Researches, XV. 28. Mihira Kula, it should, however, be observed, lived before the time of these events (his date was probably 200 A.D.), and cloths with the sacred feet stamped upon them are by no means uncommon in the Amravati sculptures, where no reference to Ceylon can be intended.

On the right-hand side is a group of shaven priests in the robes we usually see, even down to the present day, as the ordinary and distinctive dress of Buddhist priests. On the other side the figures appear to be all of the usual Hindu type; but the upper part of the group is so defaced that it is impossible to feel sure.

In the bas-relief below we have, on the left, our old friends the *Dasyus* or *Takshaks* worshipping the five-headed snake in a temple precisely as at Sanchi (Plate XXIV.). Their hair is dressed as in Plate XXXII. They are bearded as these, but as no other people are, either at Sanchi or at Amravati. We have also the deer, indicating a forest people, and a *Stûpa* without a Tee, as in the Plate last quoted.

In the central compartment the same people are worshipping the *Trisul* emblem on a throne; but in front of it they have placed an object which is identical with one which a figure, in Plate XXXII., on the left hand is roasting in the fire. I am quite unable to form an opinion as to what it may be intended to represent. On the right we have again the Buddhist priests worshipping the *Trisul* emblem, as in the central circle.

This and the corresponding bas-reliefs at Sanchi seem intended to show that these *Takshaks* or *Dasyus*, whoever they may be, were the original and real *Serpent Worshippers*. This Plate, however, represents the two religions as partly distinct, partly amalgamated. As the work progressed—indeed from the foundation of Sanchi to the destruction of Amravati—the *Naga* element seems to have become more and more important as years rolled on, and at last to have become predominant. But as both the *Topes* were built by Hindus, the poor *Dasyus* and their religion, in its purity, are forced to be content with the slight notice that is taken of it here and in the corresponding sculptures at Sanchi. The juxtaposition, however, of the two religions on one pillar, as is done here, is singularly interesting, especially as so much pains are taken at the same time to mark the antagonism that existed between them. At Sanchi the difference might have been assumed to be local or accidental; but when we find the same distinction maintained three centuries afterwards, in a distant locality, it must be admitted that they were permanent, and that the sculptors meant to mark the differences which characterized the two forms of faith.