

The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

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Dear Friends:

We had a quiet time at Headquarters during the Christmas Season. Early in December Dr. Framrose Bode, and his wife Homai, returned to India for an indefinite stay. Both were sentimental over their departure and expressed the hope that they might return, at least as visitors, some day in the future. The Bodes have been in the United States for fifteen years and have a deep appreciation for the country, and have done all they could to improve relationships between the United States and Eastern nations.

A long time has passed since I visited Maharashtra State (India). It is reached now by the main line of the Secunderabad-Bombay Railroad. The trip then was not exceptionally pleasant and every traveller had to have a native boy to carry his bedding, which was not provided by the train. The lad always referred to you as "sahib" and tried to take care of your needs and desires, but he was seldom completely successful, however. Leaving the train at Daulatabad, one reached the village of Ellora by any means possible. It was best, however, to avoid walking, as the six-mile hike was only enjoyed by British Military personnel. Ellora was then only a village with a few hundred inhabitants. Those who came were drawn by the romance of the great caves which are located just to the southwest of the community. Extending along the scarp of a low hill, these rock hewn temples are identified by the numbers one to thirty-four. Naturally such structures were of religious use and in the case of Ellora they divide into three groups: Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain. It is believed that the Buddhist were the earliest and were excavated in the 6th or 7th Century A.D. It seems to me that these dates must sometime be revised and that the work was done at an earlier date than modern authorities are willing to accept. The Brahmanical or Hindu caves are said to belong to the 10th or 12th Century, while those of the Jains followed closely after the Hindu work.

The excavation of chapels or sanctuaries was not unusual in ancient times. We find buildings in many parts of the world which are extended by excavation into the walls of cliffs, or provided with subterranean rooms. At Ellora the Buddhist caves belong to the class of Vihara, that is, residences for monks during the rainy season, or for retirement from worldly attachments. Each of the groups of Ellora caves is elaborately decorated with appropriate symbols associated with the faiths of the builders.



The most remarkable building at Ellora is not actually a cave. The Kailasanath temple is a complete free-standing structure, extremely complicated and most ornate. The rock has been completely cut away, both externally and internally, and the temple now stands in a three-sided depression left from the isolation of the sanctuary. Every part of the building is still part of the living rock. Its columns, spans and towers may be described as all of one piece. Something of the wonder of this rock-cut temple can be gathered from a sketch made by James Fergusson about 1880.

According to scholars with an architectural orientation, the Kailasa temple was commenced by cutting down three huge trenches in the solid rock. The side trenches were about 90 yards in length, and the third trench which connected their inner ends was 50 yards in length and 107 feet high. After the trenches had been finished, a huge mass of rock stood isolated from the hill to which it belonged. The great court of the temple is about 276 feet in length, with an average breadth of 154 feet. In the front part of the court is a shrine of the sacred bull Nandi. The walls and all of the available exterior surfaces are decorated with figures of the Hindu pantheon and scenes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Some areas have been plastered over and painted, but much of the plastering has disappeared. The principal interior part of the Kailasa is a hall 57 feet wide and 55 feet deep, supported at each corner by massive square columns, which help to bear the weight of the roof. The shrine is at the east end of this apartment and is a plain room 15 feet square, from which the original objects of worship have been removed, probably by the Moslems.

These caves are a wonderful testimony to the skill and patience of master artisans and dedicated priests. Perhaps in no other place in India is it possible to trace so clearly the sequence of religious symbols and architectural forms from Buddhism through Hinduism to the religion of the Jains. A visit to Ellora is both rewarding and orienting, and even the increasing stream of tourists cannot diminish the wonders of this remote place.

We occasionally refer to that philosophical sect that came into prominence in the 2nd and 3rd Centuries of the Christian era under the name Neo-Pythagoreanism. The principal exponents of this system were Moderatus of Gades, Apollonius of Tyana, Nicomachus of Gerasa, Numenius and Philostratus. The basic purpose of the Neo-Pythagorean Society was the restoration of the religious-ethical teachings of Pythagoras of Samos, who flourished in the 5th Century B.C. No actual descent of the original Pythagorean School is recorded and the later revival is separated from the original by over 600 years.

The principal teachings of the Neo-Pythagoreans stress the worship of a purely spiritual deity, the practice of meditative and contemplative exercises, and personal asceticism.

The Neo-Pythagoreans, like most of the later pagan sects, have been frequently maligned. They certainly believed that truth was brought to the world by godly men who revealed the laws of human regeneration to mankind. There were also benevolent spirits, like the angels and archangels of Christendom, who guided and protected mortals. Such beliefs, though present in all religious systems, caused the Neo-Pythagoreans to be accused of magic and sorcery, as in the case of Apollonius of Tyana. Fabulous histories were compiled and the more noble aspects of the original teachings were intentionally disregarded. Most of the groups that functioned in the transition period between the fall of Greek philosophy and the rise of Patristic philosophy, which developed from the teachings of St. Augustine, were subject to abuse and persecution. It is due to this intolerance that esoteric religious disciplines were lost to Western civilization for nearly fifteen centuries.



A tragic by-product of religious intolerance was the rise of an orthodoxy that required literal acceptance of sectarian dogmas. Men ceased to search beneath the surface of their creeds and this in turn deprived the truth seeker of the keys to an enlightened way of life. Both Pythagoras and Apollonius of Tyana visited India, and it is quite possible that they brought back to Europe much Eastern wisdom, including the esoteric disciplines of meditation and contemplation. Had these been accepted by Western nations, most religious intolerance could have been avoided.

At this time I want to especially thank the many kind and thoughtful friends who remembered me this Christmas. The beautiful cards they have sent and the messages of encouragement enclosed have been a real source of comfort and inspiration. I am also most appreciative of gifts I have received, and wish that it was possible to answer every greeting in person. As I cannot, may I take this opportunity to express my gratitude and to wish all of you a very happy and meaningful New Year.

Always most sincerely,

Manly P. Hall

SPECIAL NOTICE
FROM OUR BOOK DEPARTMENT

A number of important and scholarly volumes in our fields of interest are now available in attractive and accurate reprints. Most of those listed here are included in Mr. Hall's list of recommended reading and have long been rare and out of print. To these have been added selected works by outstanding modern authors. The Contributors' Bulletin will list additional works in future issues. Be sure to read this page carefully:

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