

## P R E F A C E

This work deals with the origin and development of the belief in future Buddha Maitreya and the gradual evolution of iconographical representations resulting in varied regional manifestation. Thus, primarily it is an iconological exploration into Indian Buddhist art in general, but it keeps the Bodhisattva concept and icons in focus with a specific concentration on the images of Maitreya. An iconological study is one in which works of art are analysed from a historical perspective, bringing out their changing symbolic meanings within the context of their religious, philosophical and social setting. A descriptive study of the iconographical features of each of the sculptures relevant in the study had become unavoidable, but further on these have lead us to bring out interpretative analysis of each of the symbols and attributes which ultimately has thrown light upon the differing meanings of the icons. One of the major aspects of this study is the insistance upon bringing out intra-regional differences and similarities and the changing meaning of the icons in relation to changing periods.

The primary source for the study is largely the vast fund of sculptural materials themselves. The insufficient textual sources, particularly while dealing with the ancient period has been acutely realized, which could be overcome

only by a comparative method, which meant a detailed and careful examination of various iconographical elements as manifested in different schools of sculpture. Such a comparing and contrasting has infact enabled to arrive at analytical insights. Most of the sculptures discussed in the work has been collected from actual field work, however, a lot many images used have also been from published sources.

I have tried within my limited means to refer to all the available books and published articles on the subject and these have immensely helped me in different ways, or at least have enabled me to start thinking. I take this opportunity to record my indebtedness to all the scholars whose researches have enlightened me from time to time.

I express my deep gratitude to Dr. Shivaji K. Panikkar who guided me throughout my study with his immeasurable care, personally as well as professionally. To Dr. Ajit Prasad, Lecturer, Dept. of Archaeology, M.S.U., Baroda, I would like to express my appreciation for him having found the time to go through the manuscript and for his friendly help in every need. I am also thankful to Dr. Parul Dave Mukherjee, Reader, Dept. of Art History and Aesthetics, M.S.U. Baroda, who helped me in reading Sanskrit texts. I am indebted to Shri. Sanjoy Mallik, J.R.F., Dept. of Art History and Aesthetics, M.S.U. Baroda, who had always been generous with his help.

I take pleasure in acknowledging the assistance of my