

INDIAN ART

FROM INDUS VALLEY TO INDIA TODAY

Talk 7

Art in the southern region during medieval period



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The beginning of the beginning

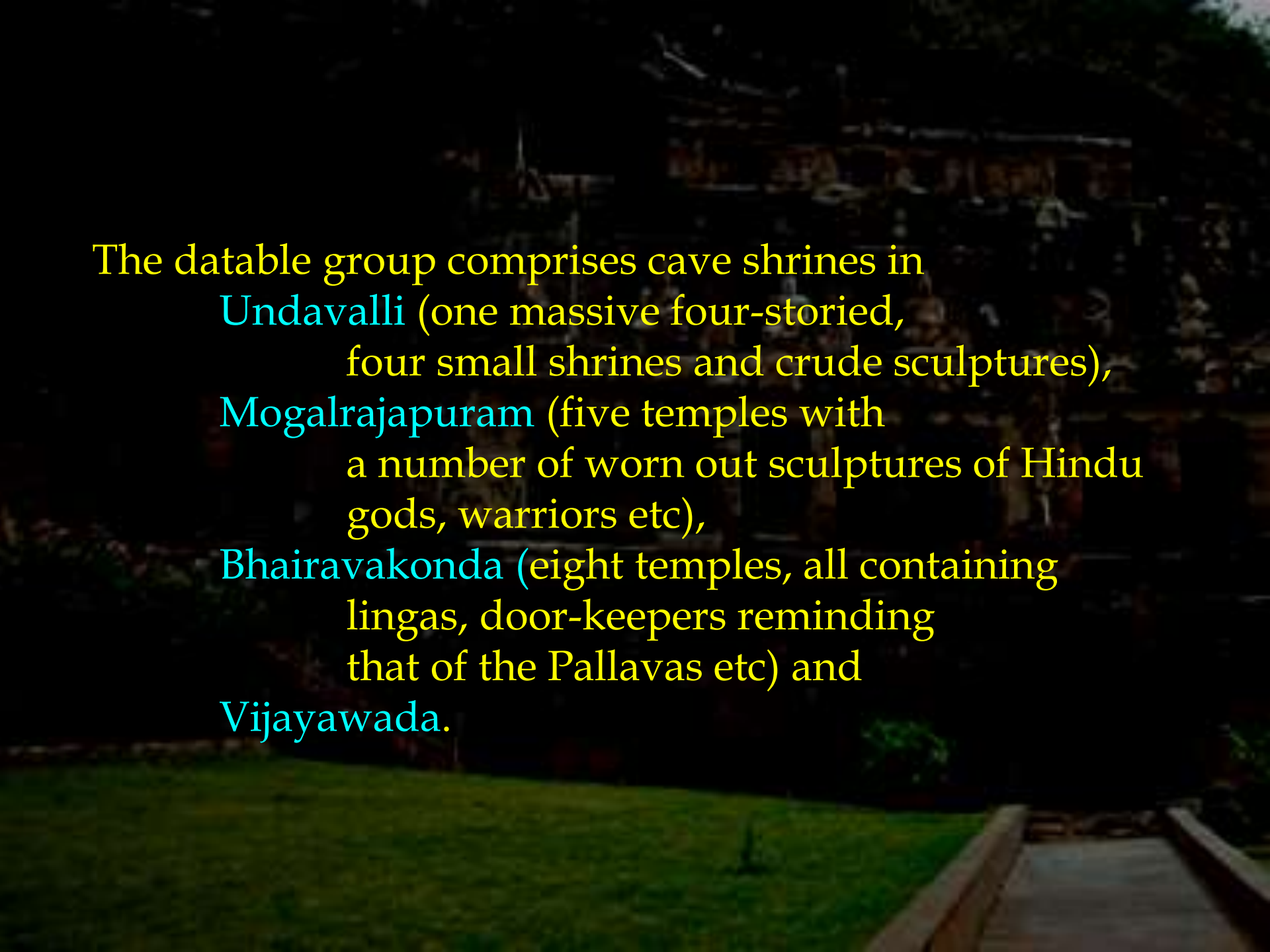
In around Vijayawada are locations
where are found excavated shrines,
which can be considered
to be the earliest temples of the south.

Perhaps these are tell-tale aftermath of
the magnificent Amaravati nor far away.

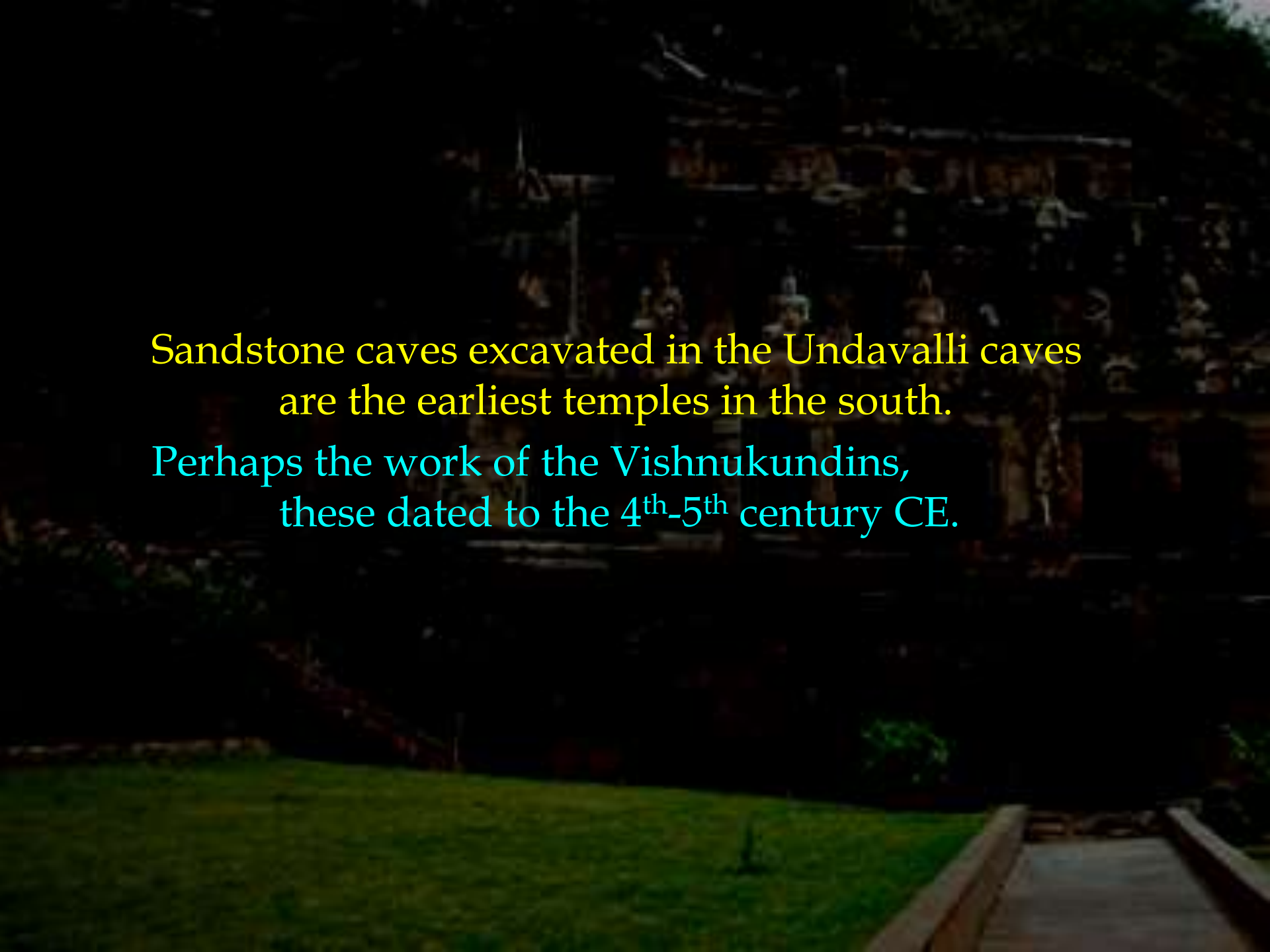
The crude excavation called Akkanna Madanna Caves may be the earliest.

Its date is uncertain as it is incomplete and devoid of any sculptures





The datable group comprises cave shrines in
Undavalli (one massive four-storied,
four small shrines and crude sculptures),
Mogalrajapuram (five temples with
a number of worn out sculptures of Hindu
gods, warriors etc),
Bhairavakonda (eight temples, all containing
lingas, door-keepers reminding
that of the Pallavas etc) and
Vijayawada.



Sandstone caves excavated in the Undavalli caves
are the earliest temples in the south.

Perhaps the work of the Vishnukundins,
these dated to the 4th-5th century CE.

The most important among them is a four storied cave,
which is surprising, for its enterprise.

Even more surprising is that the original shrine
was a Jaina one, whose relics can be seen even now,
has many Buddhist features, and
presently contain a gigantic *paLLi-koNDa-perumAL*.



The lowest is unfinished.

The second level is a triple-celled temple and reminds the Lalitankura-Pallava-Griham of Tiruchirappalli Rock-fort and contains reclining Vishnu, a forerunner to all such images in the south.

The upper ones are incomplete.





Ananata-sayana Vishnu with adoring celestials







Some views of the caves



Around this, a few unfinished temples that have resemblance to reliefs in front of Ramanuja cave shrine of Mallai cannot be accidental.

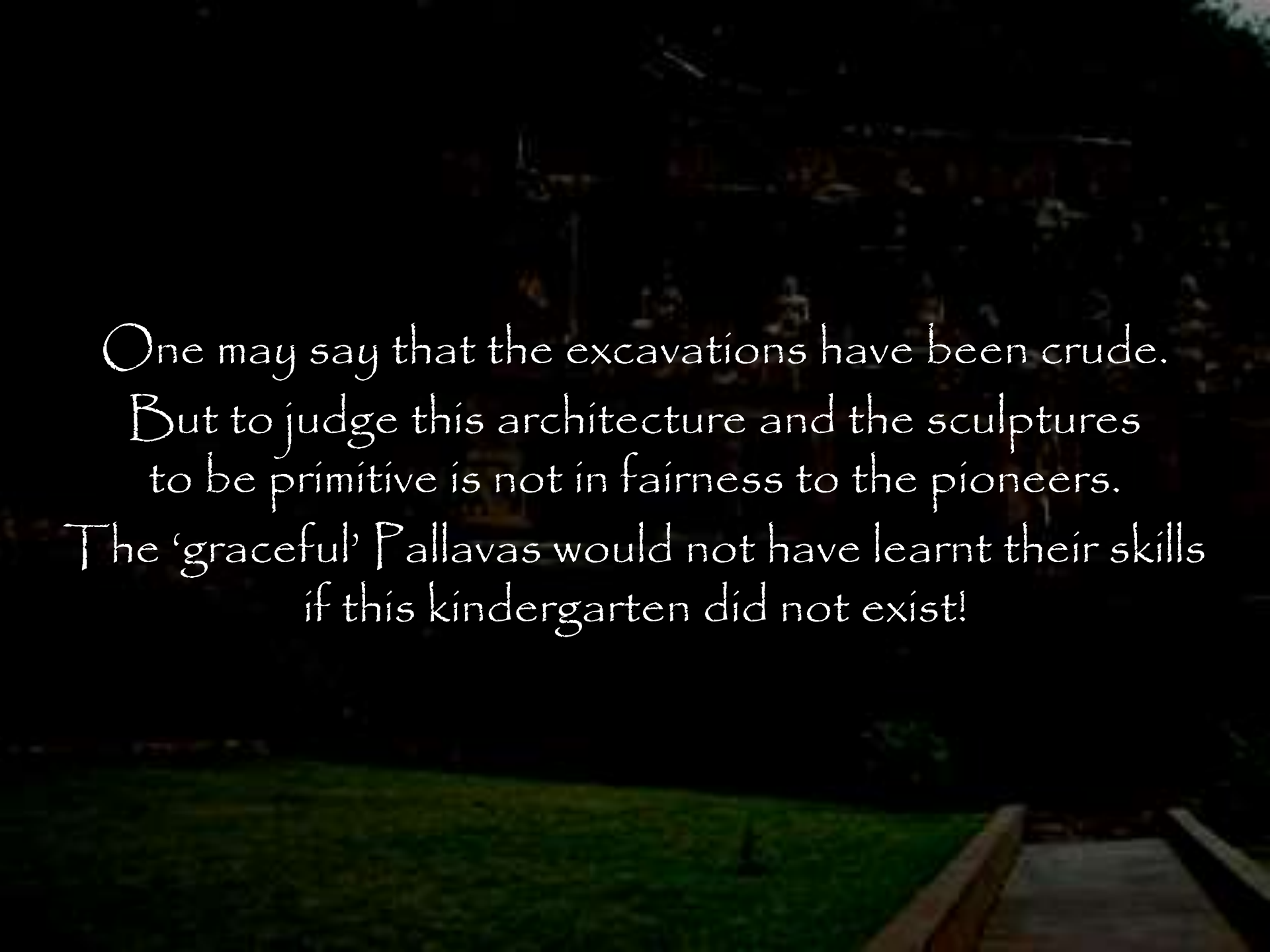


Ramanuha cave
of Mallai





Many architectural features provided a model for the later Pallava creations in this region.



One may say that the excavations have been crude.
But to judge this architecture and the sculptures
to be primitive is not in fairness to the pioneers.
The 'graceful' Pallavas would not have learnt their skills
if this kindergarten did not exist!



The actual beginning
Aihole-Badami



The southern chapter of post-Gupta art starts
around 600 CE with the Early Chalukyas of Badami.

Their early creativity is seen
in caves of Badami and structural temples
in Aihole and Mahakuteswara.

A panoramic view of the Badami complex



Badami caves



Cave 1



Siva with eighteen arms frozen while dancing is flanked by Nandi and Ganesha and an animated drummer

Harihara and



Cave 1

Ardhanarisva



are two important reliefs

Trivikrama and



Varaha adorn Cave 2

Pillars, bracket and ceiling decoration

The ceiling of this cave is executed with no less dexterity



Cave 3 is the most important of the cave group.

Here there are imposing panels of Vishnu, Trivikrama and Narasimha



arrest attention.

There are equally beautiful groups of figures against the capitals of the pillars which are as significant as they are aesthetically attractive.



Aihole group of temples

If there was one laboratory for experimenting with temple architecture, it was Aihole.

Within the ancient fortifications there are fifty temples and fifty more outside, all synthesis of the north and the south idioms.

Apsidal, curvilinear shikhara, varanda and sloping roof (Durga Temple)
rectangular fronted by mandapas (Lad Khan)
are some of the main features.

Sculptured profusely, the iconography is similar to those in the Badami caves.

The apsidal Durga temple with nagara vimana has some excellent sculptures



The pillars also have some very fine carvings.

It has some of the finest panels like

Durga ,

Siva and

Varaha,



embellish the apse which encloses the central shrine.

Lad Khan Temple



Brahma the lord of creation, is shown receiving the worship offered by the celestial and terrestrial sages above the clouds and on the ground below.

The reverential look of even the swan, Brahma's mount and the source of sacred.

Lad Khan Temple



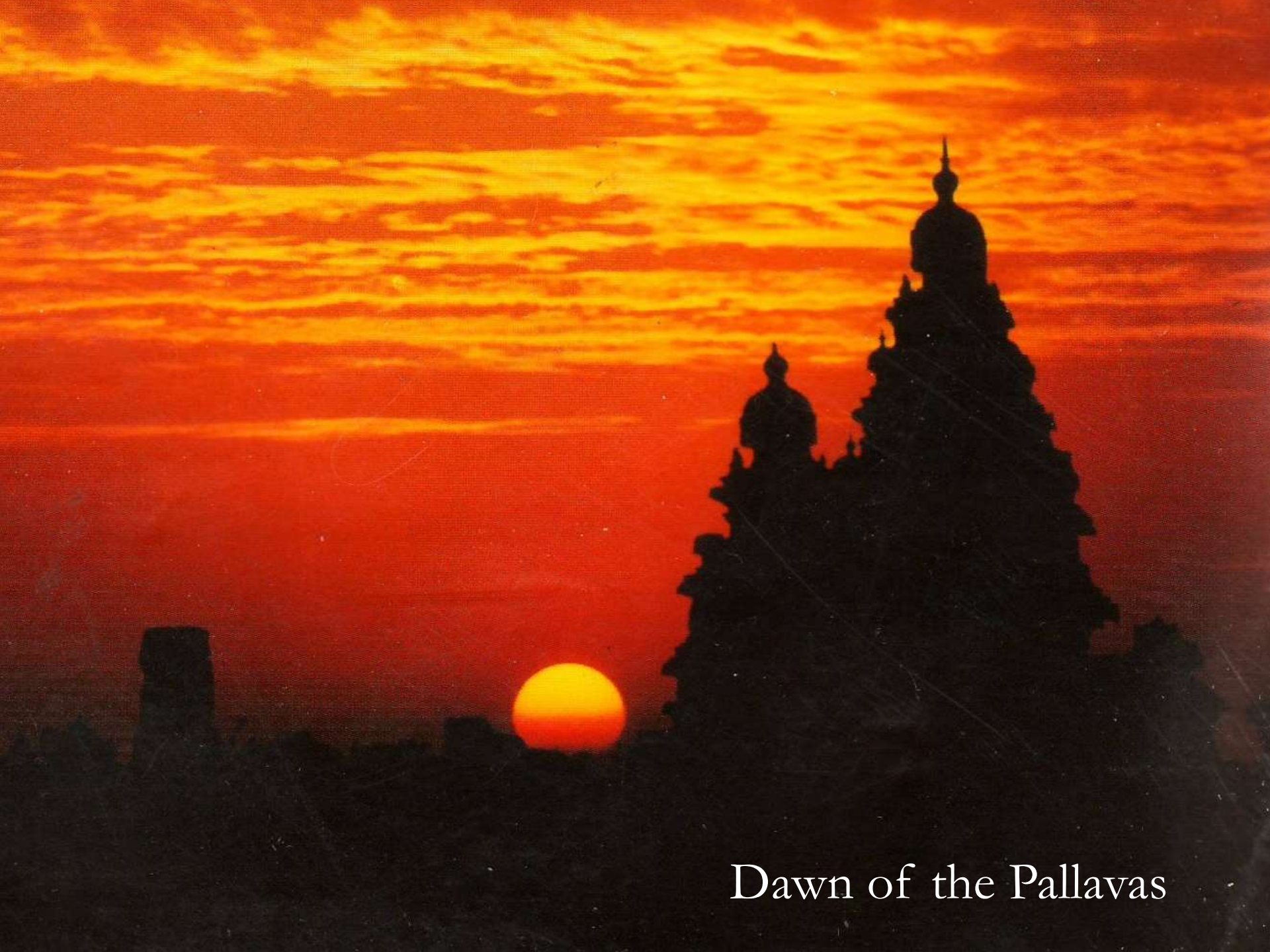
This is a simple but effective portrayal of Siva with Uma, looking longingly toward her spouse, with the sons Ganesa and Skanda, the prancing ganas, and adoring sages.



This theme of Vidyadhara is a great favorite from the early centuries of the Common Era, but the perfected figures occur in Gupta-Vakataka and Chalukya-Pallava carvings.

The swift but soft movement of the loving celestial couple is indicated by the lines of their body contours, their fluttering garments, and the clouds.

Here is a short Pallava break before the Pattadakkal phase



Dawn of the Pallavas



The great art-minded king Mahendravarman, a contemporary of the Western Chalukyas was versatile and always curious to create new forms of art and architecture.

For the first time in his kingdom, he experimented with excavating temples in the living rock, as can be seen in his Mandagappattu inscription.





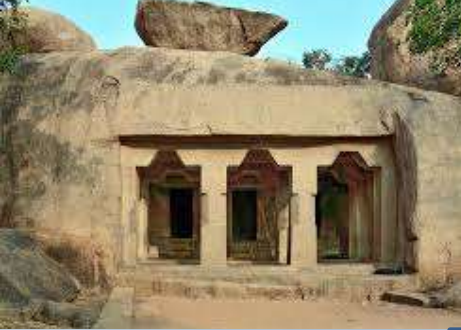
A triple-cell shrine for the Trinity is an inspiration that Mahendravarman drew from his maternal grandfather, of the Vishnukundin family.

The dvarapala's drapery, posture, gestures and yajnopavita are special characteristics of the period.



Mahendravarman's cave in Tiruchirapalli has a magnificent Gangadhara, one of the finest creations of early Pallava sculptors.





Narasimha and his descendents made Mamallapuram one-stop shop for temple architecture.

Mind-boggling temples - cave, monolith and structural – dot this shore town.

Relief panels – in-door and open air – are a special treat .



Both the Varaha caves have some excellent panels.



Adivaraha cave, Narasimha has made the finest portrait of his father and grand-father with great affection, and



for himself only a comparatively unimportant lone portrait figure on the Dharmaraja ratha.

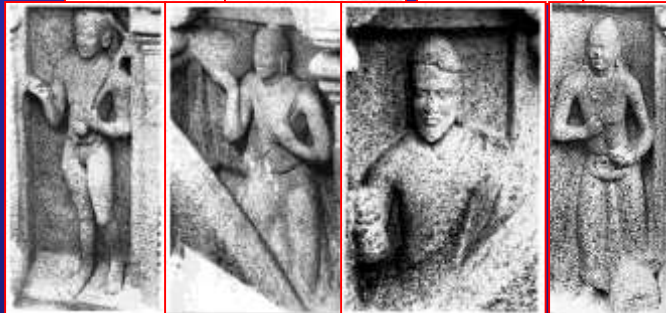
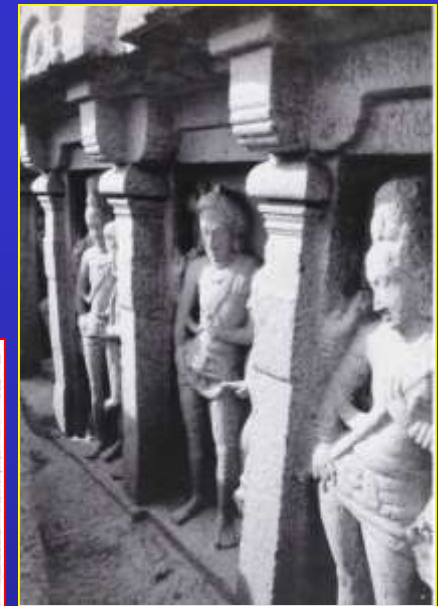
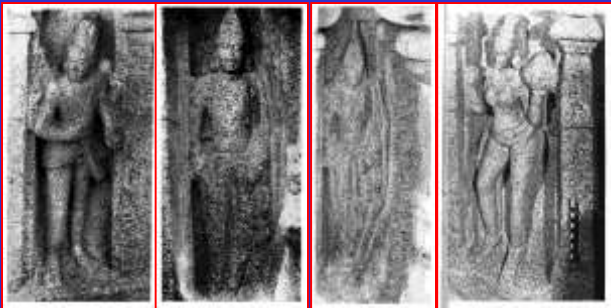




No one who has seen the Mahishamardini cave can forget either the Mahishamardini panel or the Seshasayi in front of it.

Among the various extant monolithic temples is the large and imposing Dharmaraja ratha





with a wealth of iconographic detail in the panels



Icons on the second level

the long barrel-roofed Bhima ratha,



the simple
leaf-roofed,
hut-shaped,
decorative
Draupadi ratha,



the apsidal
Nakulasahadeva ratha,



the Arjuna ratha is probably the most elegant and most tastefully decorated with carving.





Here, on one side, is a very lovely carving of Siva as Vrishabhantika, resting his hand on the bull and attended by a royal couple on either side, the Pallava kings dedicating themselves in that fashion eternally to the service of the deity whom they glorified.

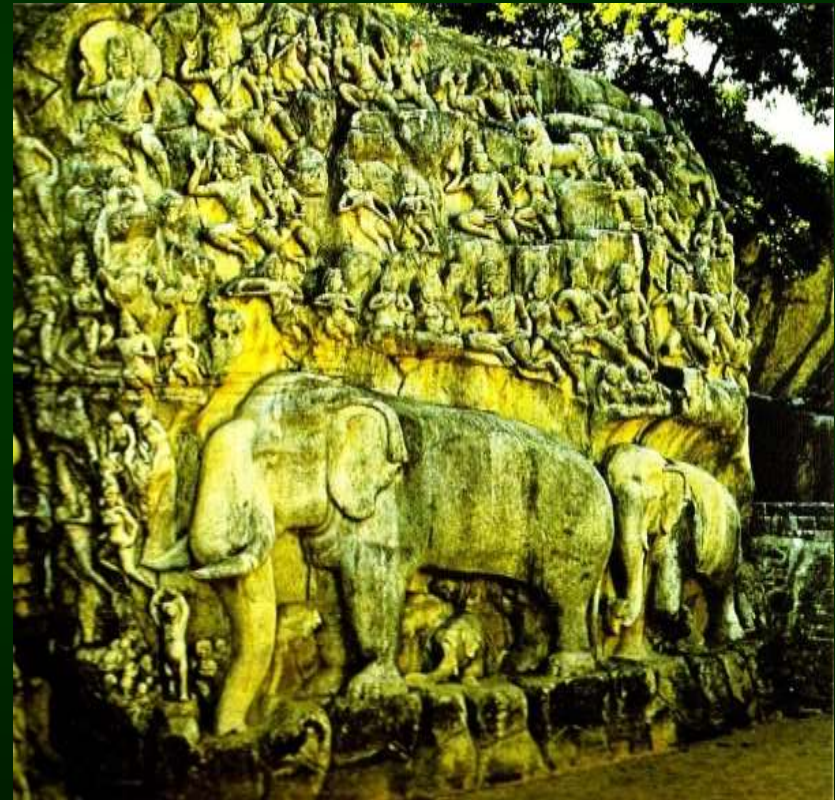
Among the structural temples here,
the Shore temple is the most important.

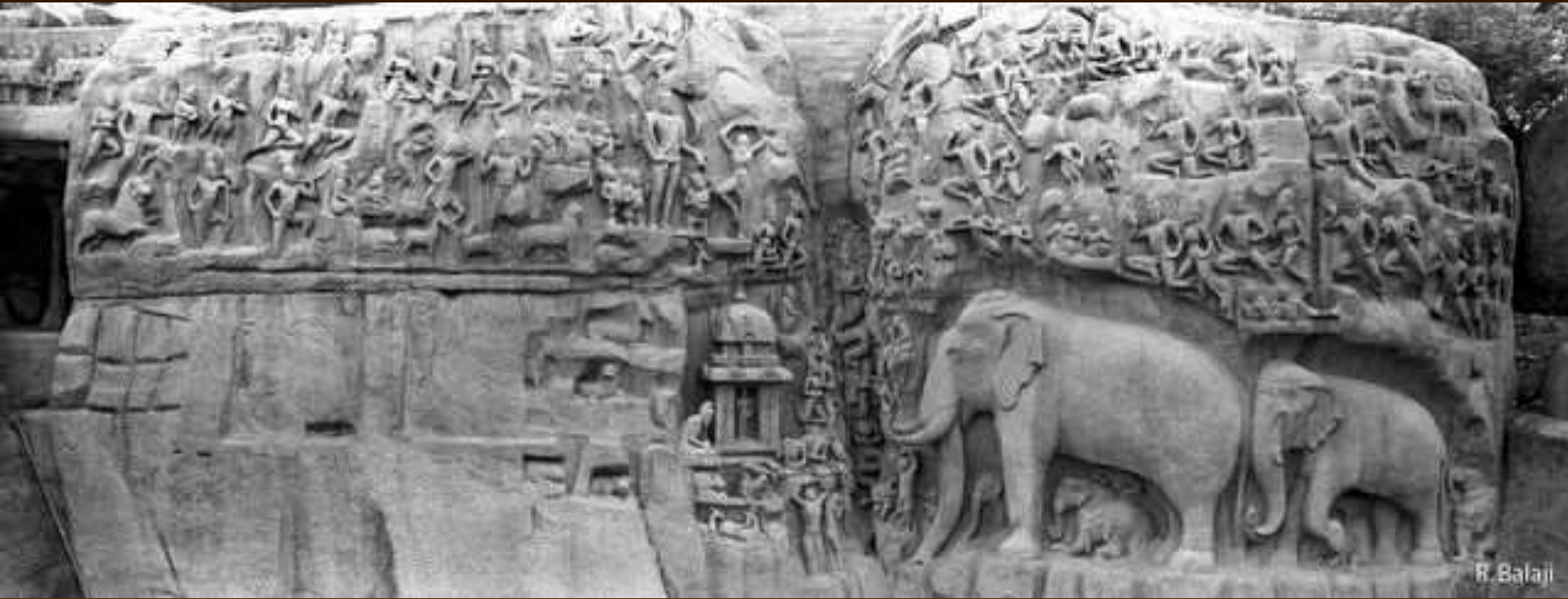


While the main shrine
is large and imposing,
the entrance tower is very small.



but more amazing is the creation, on a great boulder, of the gigantic group depicting Arjuna's penance.





R. Balaji

This is the most impressive massive composition at Mahabalipuram.

A crevice in the rock has been utilized to represent the river Ganga, on the banks of which Arjuna won, by austerities, the Pasupata weapon of Siva, which is the theme of this great artistic creation.

That the river Ganga flows through the celestial, terrestrial, and nether regions is indicated by the celestials above, the sages and hermit boys near a temple, and the elephants of the quarters, respectively, of these three regions.



The second most impressive massive composition at Mahabalipuram, representing a sculptor's dream of an ideal group of cowherds, milkmaids, and cattle for whom Krishna created a rock shelter.



The Somaskanda is one of the most elegant works of the Pallava period.

The unity of the Trinity in early sculpture is here indicated by the presence of Brahma and Vishnu in the background.

This, the most popular theme in Pallava art, is always found depicted in the central shrine.

A late Pallava representation of Dakshinamurti is important as showing how the Pallava sculptor continued until the end to create wonderful works of great aesthetic value.

The smile on the face and the hand in the chin-mudra, the gesture of explication of the Law, proclaim his mute eloquence.



Kailasanatha contains in embryo many of the features of the rapidly emerging South Indian style: gopuras, pilastered walls, a pyramidal shikhara, and a perimeter wall enclosing the complex.



The variety of composition on the outer walls and in the mini-shrines around are the best the Tamil country ever produced.



Siva as Bhikshatana, with sandals, unbound hair, and carrying his staff, is shown as a youthful ascetic, being worshiped by the wives he seduced.

A disenchanted husband raises his fist in the upper left corner.

The poise and gestural language of these figures lend vitality to the composition.

This is an extraordinary composition in the cramped space.

A relief showing the ornamentations around.





The Vaikunthaperumal temple, continues the Kailasanatha art, and additionally, rich in historical carvings depicting in successive panels all around the inner walls of the temple the origin and growth of Pallava sovereignty, a unique feature.

Let us get back to the Chalukyas, now in Pattadakal

By the 7th century the Chalukyas shifted their attention to Pattadakal, where is now found ten major shrines. The cosmopolitan spirit continued with a good mix of *nagara* and *dravida* styles.



Continuing the Chalukyan flavour of fluidity and movement, the sculptures some the best in the south.

The Virupaksha Temple is the grandest, has considerable resemblance with that of the Pallava-s in layout, elevation and sculptural expressions.

Close resemblance with the earlier Kailasanatha at Kanchi and the later at Ellora may not be sheer coincidence.





Exquisite panels on the epics
on pillars



amorous couples in various
intimate poses



Entertaining illusions



Remarkable trellis work

make this temple unique.

Papanatha Temple



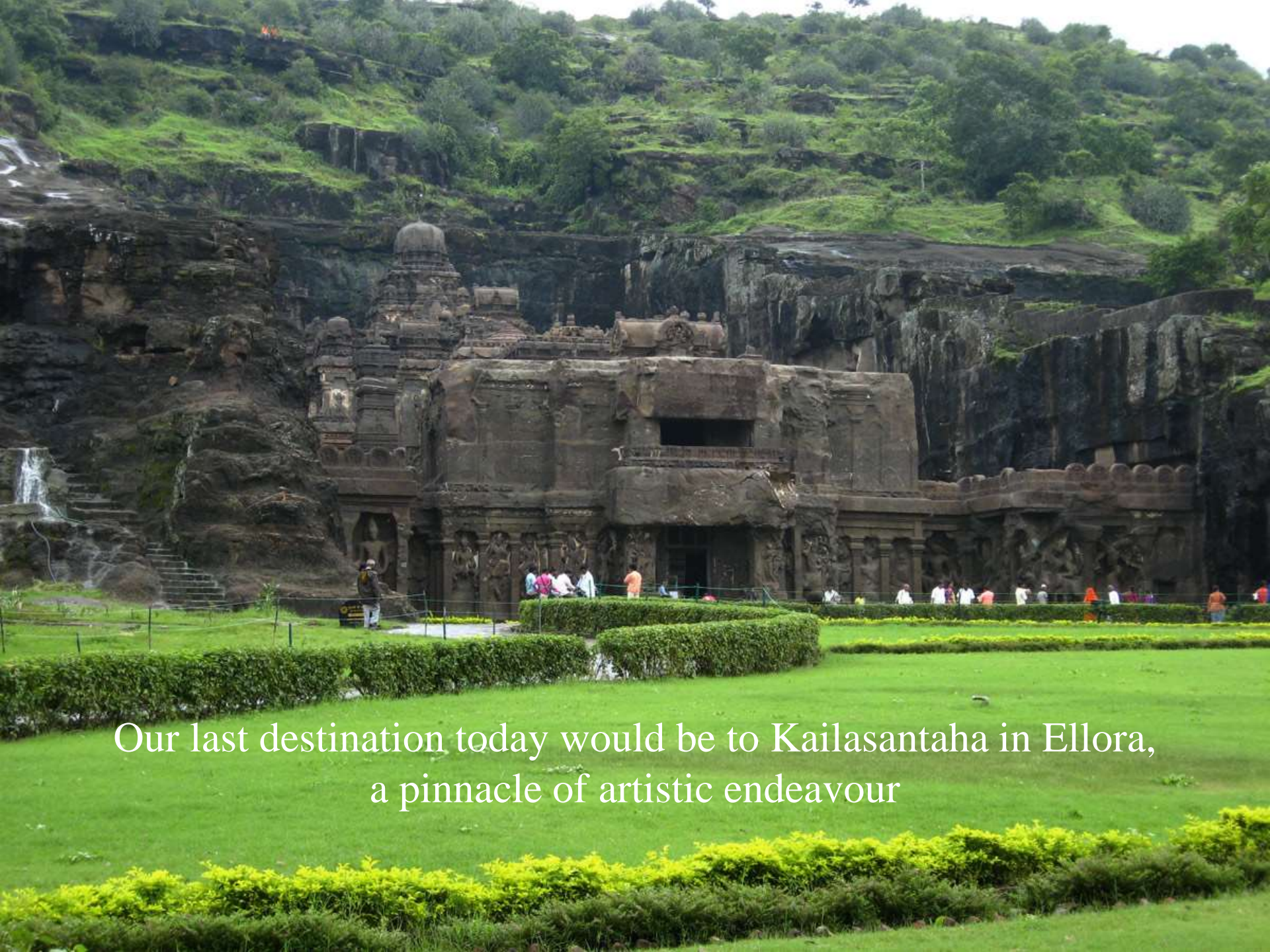
Built by the same sthapati architect this is in the *nagara* style, speaks of the all-round knowledge in temple architecture.

Special features like,

Imaginative ceiling sculptures, high relief on pillars,



make this another 'must'!



Our last destination today would be to Kailasantaha in Ellora,
a pinnacle of artistic endeavour



Ellora group: Unimaginable excavations numbering about 30, belonging to all three faiths, done contiguously in time and space, has the Kailasanatha Temple, a monolith, as the pinnacle of excellence, which represents the culmination of rock-cut architecture, heightening the overall symbolism of the temple as cosmic mountain and as the home of Shiva.

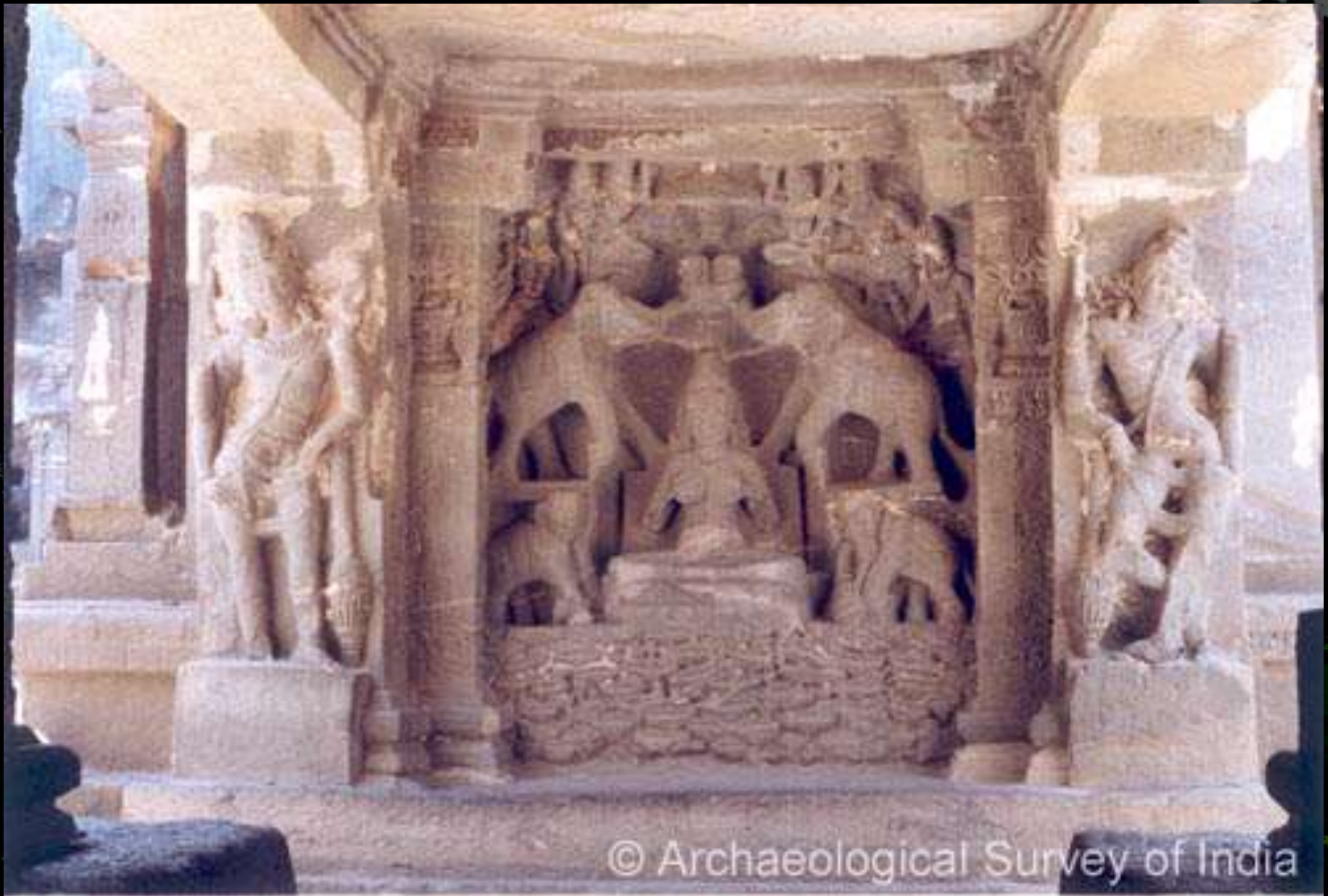




The beauty of the Kailasa temple is described
in an imaginary conversation of celestials,
who pause for a while, during their sojourn
in the clouds, to reflect on the nobility
of this rock-cut monument and
to wonder if anyone could create a temple so exquisite.



It is, however, a fact that the stupendous monolithic monument
was cut out of a hill
from the top downward to the base
by the architect, who,
with the entire plan in his mind,
carefully accomplished this almost impossible task,
creating an architectural wonder.



Dvarapalas and Gajalakshmi welcoming all

Rati & Manmata



Vishnu on Garuda

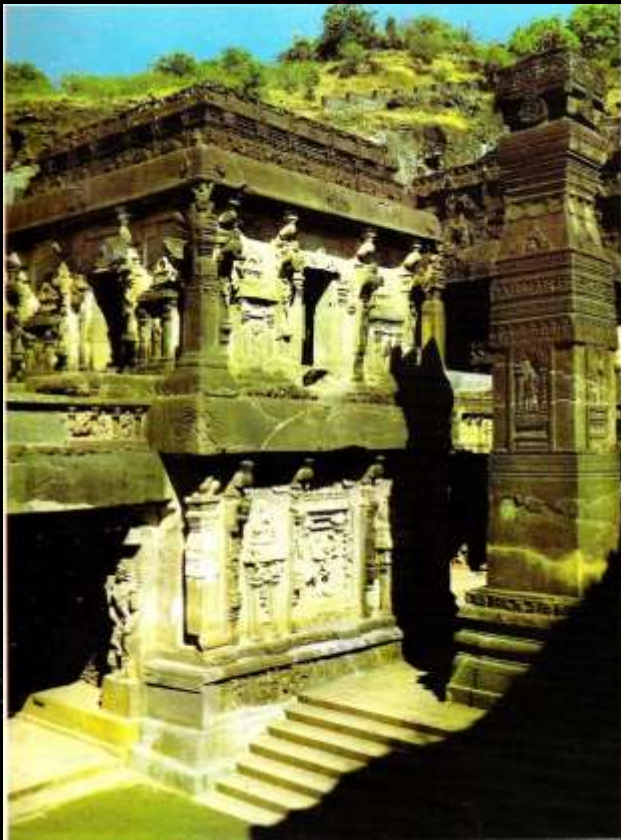
Jatayu attacking Ravana



© Archaeological Survey of India



Ramayana narrated



Front court



Lovers

Ravana shaking Kailasa



As some romanticise, was it built by the aliens?



Isn't it incredible?

*Yes, that was a glorious period in the south,
a worthy follow up of the Guptas*

Before concluding I would like to think aloud.

Firstly, was there a development
towards greater aesthetic sensitivity
till the Guptas in the North and
the Pallavas in the South?

Secondly, should we look for art
in our religious sculptures?

Some representations of Varaha chronologically.



Udayagirti



Badami



Mallai



Ellora

Can we see these in the light of earlier posers?

Considering host of temples
in very close proximity in most of these places,
Aihole, Mallai, Pattadakal and Ellora ,
were they meant for worship? By the royalty or the public?

நன்றி