

INDIA

A SUBCONTINENT OF TOLERANCE AND NON-VIOLENCE

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From October 16th to November 1st, 2000, two delegates from the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, Dr. Fawzi Zayadine and Mr. Khaled Al-Jibour were invited to visit India under the Indo-Jordanian Cultural Programme. The two delegates left 'Ammān by Royal Jordanian at 8p.m. to arrive at Delhi the next day at 6.30a.m. local time. They were received at the airport by a welcoming committee from the Archaeological Survey of India who accompanied them to their hotel. On the afternoon of the same day, they were guided on a tour to visit the city.

Delhi is the federal capital of India, which has an area of 3,026,800km², and a population of around one billion (Fig. 1). The city itself, we were told, has around four million inhabitants and com-

prises the ancient site which includes seven urban agglomerations and was founded by the Muslims in 1193, on the remains of a Hindu settlement.

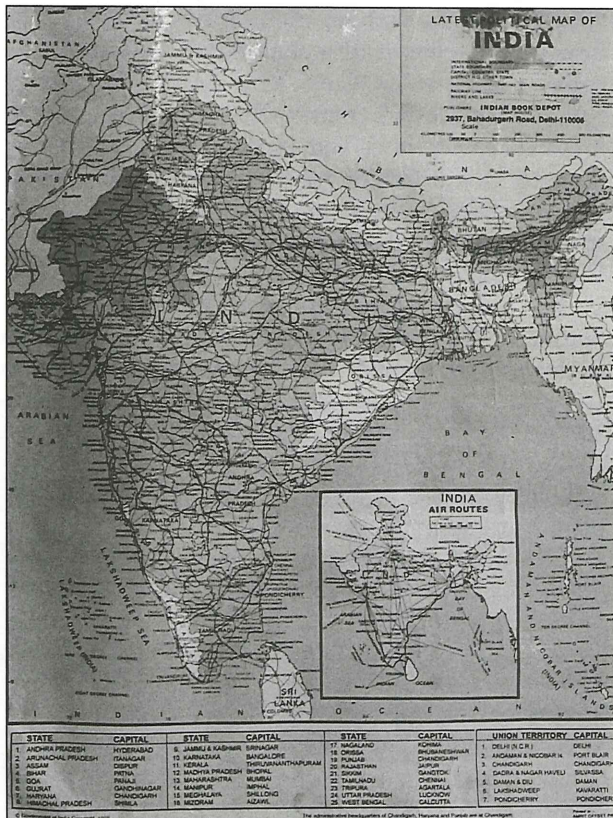
For the first day, we contended ourselves with the visit to Sultan Hamayun mausoleum, built by his wife in AD 1555. The monument is impressive, constructed with brick and consisting of two stories, the upper one covered by a majestic dome. This was a garden tomb enclosed within a large park (Fig. 2).

On the 17th, the two delegates were received by Mr. Dhanpat Rai, Director (Archaeology) of the Archaeological Survey of India. His reception was warm and he presented us with books on the "Story of Indian Archaeology", an excellent monograph on the beginning of archaeological research in the country from 1784 to 1947.

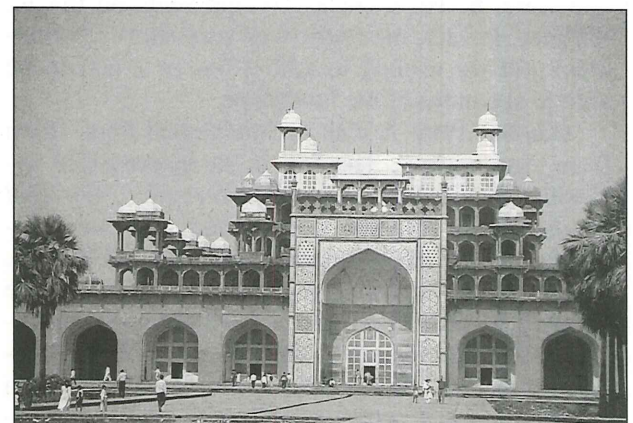
October 18th: Arrival at Mumbai and a visit to the Elephanta Caves. The archaeological site is an island, 9km from the Apollo Bunder (port), where the massive Gate of India stands (Fig. 3).

The boat dropped us at the northwest corner of the island and we reached the caves by an easy stairway. The main cave is carved in the rock and is about 130 sq. feet. The roof is supported by a row of massive pillars, crowned with mushroom-shaped capitals (Fig. 4).

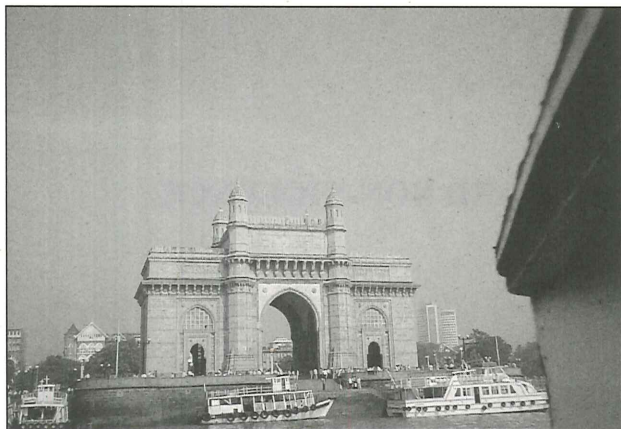
Once in the gloomy temple, sculptured panels



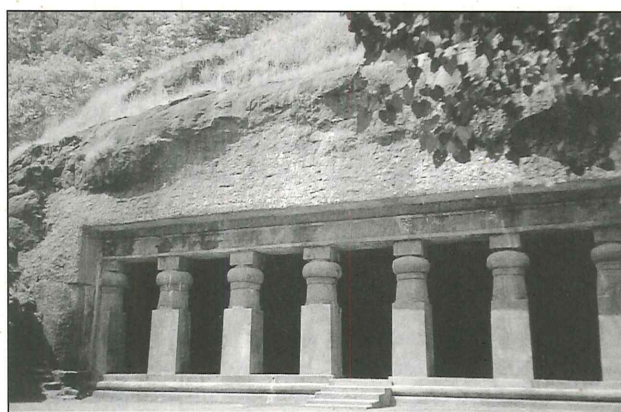
1. Map of India.



2. Delhi, Sultan Hamayun garden tomb.



3. Mumbai, the Gate of India.



4. Elephanta main cave.

to the left and right attract the visitor, depicting "Shiva" as the lord of Yogis and the "Lord of Dancers". The relief is unfortunately damaged but the figure is still recognizable. Above, are relieves of flying gods and goddesses: Brahma on the swan and Indra on the elephant; Vishnu rides Garuda. The whole cave is a museum, which gathers the most important pantheon of the Hindu religion.

When we left back to Mumbai, traffic was so jammed that we missed our flight to Aurangabad. We were, however, lucky to find seats on the Jet Airliner. In fact, the flight was very short (25 minutes) and we wished to take a bus or a taxi to be able to see more of the landscape.

October 19th: A visit to Daulatabad Fort, 15km from Aurangabad. The fort is an inaccessible pyramidal rock, which was called *Deogiri*: "The Hill of the Gods". It was constructed, we were informed, in the twelfth century by Raja Bhillamraj, of the Yadav Dynasty, and was the capital of the Hindu Kingdom in the Deccan. Although it was renowned as impregnable, the Sultans of Delhi captured it in 1308. Nevertheless, the citadel enjoyed a period of glory when Mohammed Tughlak designated it as the capital of India. Delhi's entire pop-

ulation was transplanted to the new capital. Nobody was exempted from the harsh exile, and many perished on the road. The sultan, however, changed his mind and ordered the population to move back to Delhi. But the city grew to be the rival of Delhi and became independent of the capital. The steep rock cliff impresses the visitor, it averages 76m in height, and was protected by a moat 12m deep. The citadel of 'Ajlun, built by a general of Saladin in the same period can be compared to Daulatabad, but cannot rival it in fortification.

Ellora caves are at 28km from Aurangabad. They belong to three religious confessions: Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanism. Caves 1-21 are Buddhist and date to AD 500-700. Sixteen caves are Brahmanist and 30 to 34 are of the Jain confession. There are impressive rock-carved sculptures of numerous gods and goddesses. Cave 1 is a *vihara* or monastery with eight cells. It is remarkable that the Indian monks lived a very ascetic religious style, without any of the accommodation of the Christian monasteries.

Twelve massive columns support Cave 2 and the throne protects the huge Buddha relief. Friezes of *budisattvas* envelop both sides of the cave.

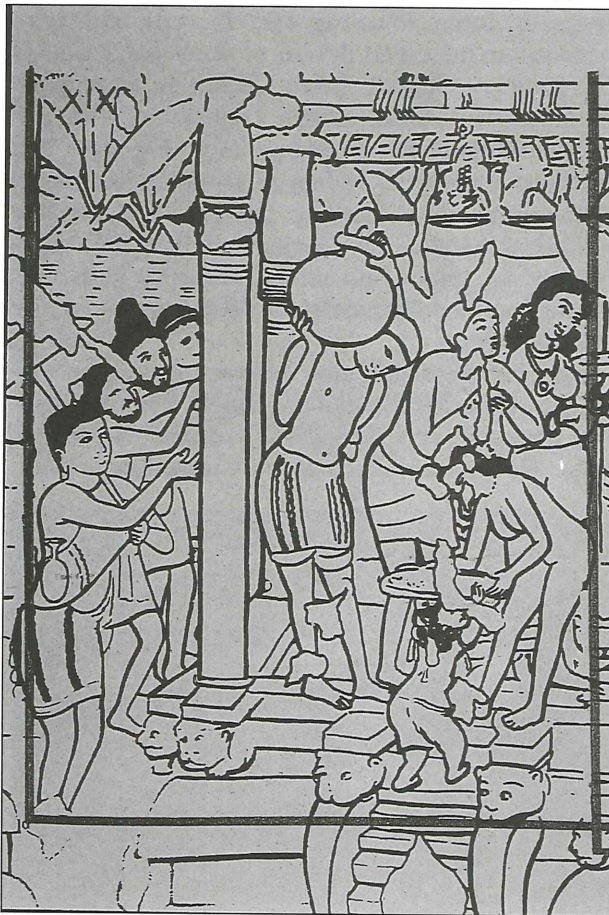
Ajanta caves are about 10km from Aurangabad (Fig. 5). The site is in a canyon, which was not known until 1819. There are thirty caves: five are temples and the rest are monasteries (*vihara*). The monasteries consist of a central hall with monastic cells on three sides. Cave 10 is the earliest, dating back to the second century BC. The caves are famous for the delicate and expressive murals, dating back to two different periods: The earliest paintings are dated to the second-first centuries BC. Unfortunately, the examples that have survived in Caves 9 and 10 are scanty.

The second period started in the Gupta imperial period, in the fourth-fifth century and continued up to the seventh century AD. It is not my intention to



5. Ajanta caves, general view.

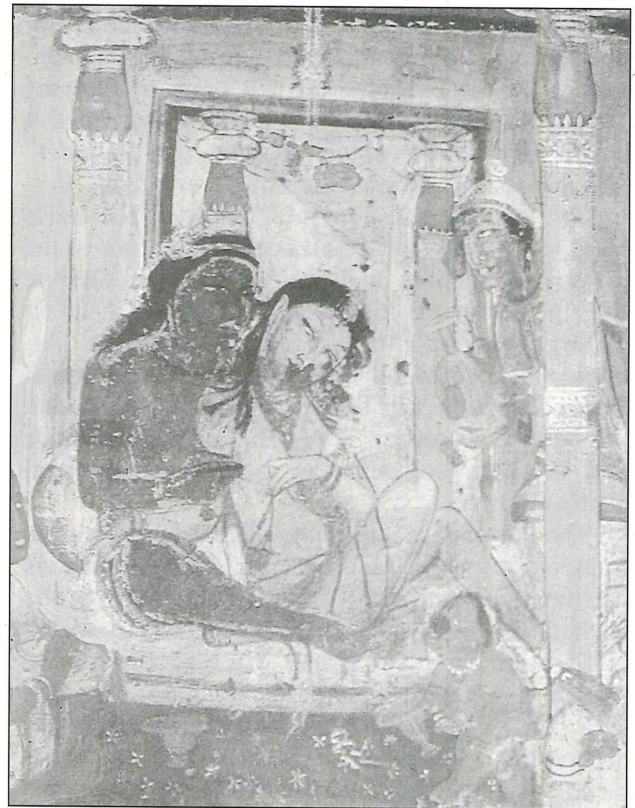
give a complete description of the paintings, and only Cave 1 and 17 are of interest because of their affinity with the murals of the Umayyad Quṣayr 'Amra in the Jordanian steppe. I am not the first archaeologist to point out the link between the two works of art, as this has been done by several authors: In fact, the resemblance consists of several themes: Palace scenes of ladies with attendants engaged in their toiletting (Cave 17) (**Fig. 6**) can be paralleled with the bathing lady on the west wall of Quṣayr 'Amra or with the nymphs bathing a child in the tepid room (**Fig. 7**). The prince in the same cave caressing his wife before his banishment (**Fig. 8**) is similar to the love scenes in the middle vault of Quṣayr 'Amra (**Fig. 9**). The two musicians, male and female in Cave 1 at Ajanta, playing a lute and cymbals resemble the musicians, male and female, on the central vault of the audience hall of 'Amra. The vegetal decoration is also strongly similar in both monuments. But all these similarities are probably fortuitous, because at both sites the artists were under the influence of the Graeco-Roman art. On the other hand, the 'Amra murals celebrate the aristocratic sport of hunting in the desert and the



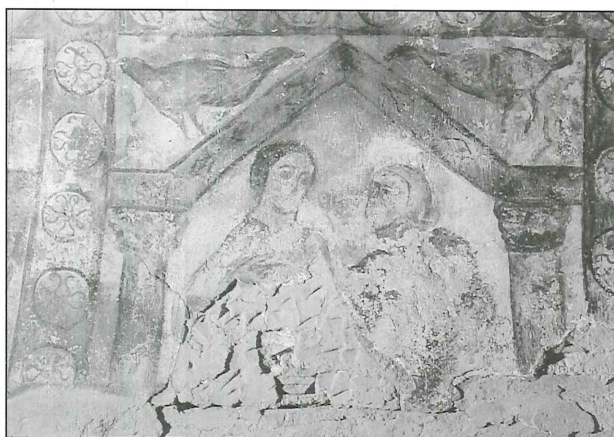
6. Ajanta, ladies with attendants bathing a prince.



7. Quṣayr 'Amra, nymphs bathing a child.



8. Ajanta, prince Padmapani caressing his wife before his banishment.



9. Quşayr 'Amra, love scene (photo J.-L. Nou).

prince on the throne, while famous kings are presenting their homage to him. In contrast, the Ajanta paintings are religious in essence: Scenes of the birth of Buddha (Cave 2) or his worship (Cave 17).

We have to admit that in Jordan, we do not have the equivalent of the Islamic cities of Fateh Pur Sikri in Agra or the unique funeral shrine of Taj Mahal, nor do we possess monuments similar to the famous churches of Goa, or to the Red Fort and Kutub Minar in Delhi.

Moving on to Old Goa: The early history of the city starts in the third century BC, when it was part of the Mauryan Empire, and was ruled by the Satavahanas of Kolhapur dynasty. In the second century AD, the Alexandrine geographer Ptolemy called Old Goa "Kouba" while the Arabs called it

In the early fourth century AD, the city "Sindbur" was ruled by several dynasties, until the Portuguese occupied it after the landing of the sailor Vasco Da Gama in 1498. It became a harbor of the European colonists and their emporium. Despite the opposition of the Mamluk Sultan Qansw al-Ghawri, and of 'Adil Shah, Alfonso de Albuquerque controlled this strategic port of India. This occupation was disastrous, because after that period, the European countries, England, France and Holland, competed in creating commercial centres in India.

The Portuguese built several churches in the baroque Jesuit style. The most remarkable churches are those of St. Francis Assisi, built in 1510, the Cathedral (1562-1619) and St. Cajetan, modeled on St. Peter Church in Rome. We were lucky to be guided by a good specialist of the churches of Old Goa, Mr. V. Gopala Rao, the superintendent archaeologist of the city. He introduced us to the technicians working on the conservation of the church of Bom Jesu, who explained to us the use of special mortar and stucco for the restoration. We

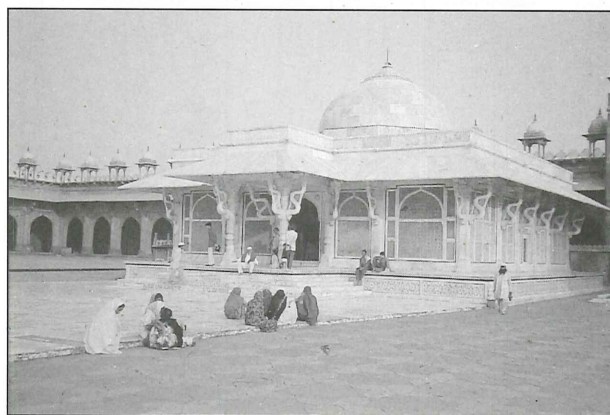
wished to have an exchange of experience with our Indian colleagues.

Mr. Rao was kind enough to invite us to his house and introduce us to his family. His wife prepared for us a delicious local meal.

On the 23rd of October, we visited the Fort Auguda, built in 1612 by the Portuguese to provide ships with water.

We reached the city of Agra on October 25th, after a long journey of two nights in the train, coming from Goa. Originally, Sikri, we were told, was a stronghold in the 12th century AD. In the early 13th century, it became a Turkish settlement and in 1527, Sultan Babar, after his victory over Sanga renamed the village "Shukri": Thanks to God. The Mughal Sultan Akbar built the city near the hermitage of a holy man, Sheikh Salim Chishti, that existed on the site. The Sultan asked him to pray for a son to inherit him. He was married to three wives: a Hindu, a Muslim and a Christian. He begot a child from his Hindu wife and called him Salim. He ordered palaces to be built in Sikri and moved his capital to the new city and held his court there from 1574 to 1586. The most remarkable monuments of the city are the Jami Masjid, the largest in India, towering over the city with harmonious architectural design of domes and vaults. The tomb of Sheikh Salim Chishti is an elegant monument in white marble, contrasting with the red sandstone of the other buildings (Fig. 10). We observed a group of Indian pilgrims congregating at the tomb and chanting prayers. The secular buildings include the Diwan-i-am and Diwan-i-khas, or the public and private audience halls, the treasury and the Haramsara of Akbar, the most impressive palace.

Our last days in Delhi were spent with an excellent guide, Mr. Sukhchain Singh, a knowledgeable man who accompanies the official visitors to India. He introduced us to two important monu-



10. Agra, tomb of Salim Chishti.

ments: The Red Fort and Kutub Minar.

The Red Fort, in the suburbs of Delhi, also called *Lal Qila*, is a walled city built by Shah Jahan in 1639. Splendid palaces are enclosed within the fortifications: The Diwan-i-am is the public audience hall, while at the Diwan-i-khas or private audience the golden peacock throne adorns a hall where the Mughal emperor held his court. The other remarkable buildings are the Pearl Mosque, shining in the sun, which was built in 1659/60 and the Rang Mahal, or Dance Palace. Water was running into the palace through the Asad Burg, or "Pavilion of the Lion". A museum of popular traditions is located in the Fort, but we were unable to see it.

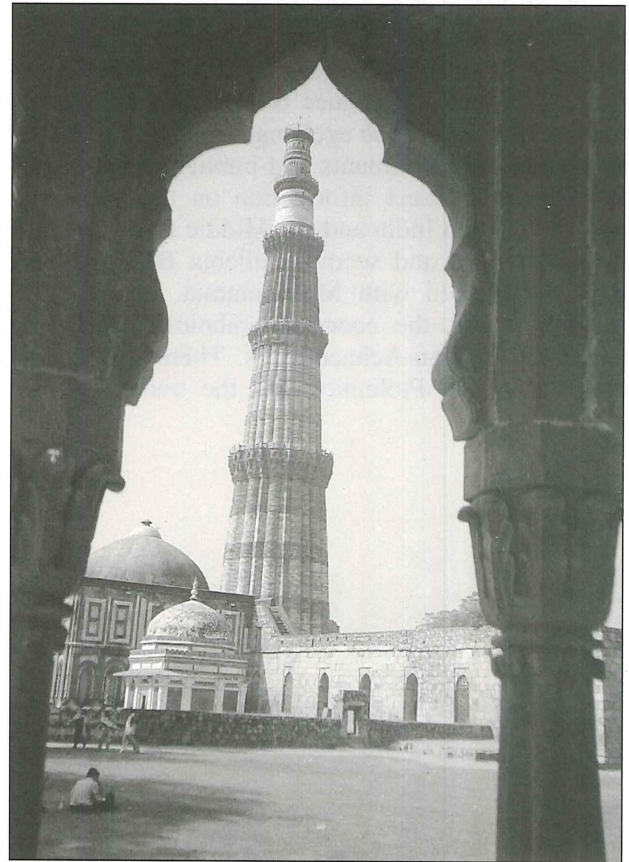
In the Kutub Minar, built by Qutub al-Din Aybak we spent a long time to be able to visit the entire monument in detail. The site was originally a Hindu settlement of the Gupta period (fourth-fifth centuries AD). Of that period the visitor can observe the remains of a temple where a bronze flag-pole is standing (Fig. 11). When emperor Qutub al-Din converted the temple into a mosque, the pole was preserved and the pagan sculptures were covered with stucco. Since this coating was removed by weathering, the relieves reappeared in their



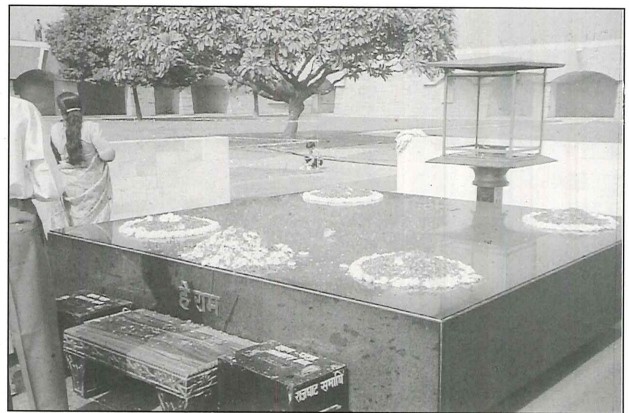
11. Delhi, Kutub Minar, the bronze pole.

original splendor. But the attraction of Kutub Minar is the impressive Victory Tower, 92.95m high, in five stories (Fig. 12). Emperor Tughlut added two stories in marble and the British general Smith placed an ugly cupola, which was fortunately removed. Our last visit was to the tomb of Mahatma Ghandi (1869-1948), the champion of non-violence who liberated India from British colonialism by non-violence and civil disobedience (Fig. 13).

India gained its independence in 1974 but the same year Pakistan separated from the sub-



12. Delhi, Kutub Minar.



13. Delhi, the tomb of Mahatma Ghandi.

continent under the leadership of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. On January 13th, 1948, Ghandi decided to fast until death to oblige India to pay 550 million rupies to the government of Pakistan, the fanatic Hindu assassinated him the same year because of so many concessions to the Muslims. I was surprised to read in the *Indian Express* Oct. 31st, 2000 that this wise man declared when he heard of the Balfour Declaration in 1917: "Palestine belongs to the Palestinians like England belongs to the English and France to the French") article by Mani Shankar Aiyar, Clueless in Ghaza).

In all, the visit to India of the two delegates of the Department of Antiquities proved to be rewarding, because it allowed them to establish contacts with their colleagues of the Archaeological Survey of India for the exchange of expertise in the restoration of monuments and publications. It also let them gain exact information on the trade relations between India and the Middle East: As early as the third and second millenia BC relations were established with Mesopotamia. In the first millenium BC, the economic relations increased under the Persian-Achaemenids. There was a decline under the Ptolemies, but the trade was re-

vived in the first century BC, because of the Roman and Nabataean control of the Red Sea and of the Arabian Gulf.

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