

"Eye Goddesses" in India and their West Asian Parallels

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The excavations that have so far been carried out during the last sixty years in northern and north-western India have yielded a considerable number of curious ivory objects. They are usually found in the N. B. P. levels which are ascribable to the 5th to 2nd cent. B. C. Being reported from most of the sites in this region they have acquired almost a datable value, so that the levels in which they are found can be considered, with a reasonable amount of certitude, as belonging to the early historical period. Furthermore, it needs a special mention that these objects, though of common occurrence in northern and north-western India, are lately found also in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat; they are, however, conspicuously absent in the region south of Narmada.

The shape of these objects is very curious and interesting. Among them three main types can be discerned. One (fig. 1) has triangular top and an oblong bottom with an elongated, parallel-sided stem that joins the top and the bottom¹.

The other type (fig. 2) is not far removed from the former and can only be said to have been evolved from it. The top and the bottom are similar; only the parallel-sided stem joining the two is replaced by one with sides tapering upwards. In addition, it also has a pair of outstretched arms².

The third type (fig. 3) can be said to be an elaborate form of the preceding. The figure approximates an almost anthropomorphic form. It has a triangular head, a pair of outstretched arms, broad, swelling hips possibly indicative of fertility and short, stumpy, out-turned feet³.

The figurines are decorated all over with the "dot-in-circle" and linear patterns. When studied carefully they lead one to identify them as being

¹ The figure illustrated is from Taxila. See JOHN MARSHALL, *Taxila*, (Cambridge, 1951), Vol. II, p. 654; Vol. III, Pl. 199, No. 12.

² The figure illustrated is from Nagda. See *IAR*, 1955-56, p. 14, Pl. XXIV, B.

³ The figure illustrated is from Prabhasa. See *IAR*, 1956-57, p. 17, Pl. XVIII, B, No. 5.