

**THE ROCK TEMPLES
OF ELURĀ
OR VERUL**

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JAMES BURGESS

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OR VERUL**

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ELURÁ OR VERUL.

BY

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Rock Temples	1
The Route to Elura	3
Buddhism	5
The Dhedwâdâ Caves, I. to IV.	10
Cave V.—Mahârwâdâ	19
Caves VI. to IX.	20
Cave X.—Viâvakarma or Sutâr-kâ-Jhoprâ	28
„ XI.—The Do Thâl	25
„ XII.—The Tin Thâl	27
The Brahmanical Caves	33
Cave XIV.—Râvapa-kâ-kai	33
„ XV.—The Dâs Âvatâra	37
„ XVI.—Kailâsa, or the Rang Mahâl	41
Small Caves above the scarp	55
Cave XVII.	56
„ XVIII.	57
„ XIX. and XX.	58
„ XXI.—Râmesvara	59
„ XXII.—Nîlakantha	62
„ XXIV.—Teli-ka-Gâpa	63
„ XXV.—Kumbhârwâdâ	63
„ XXVI. and XXVII.—Janwâsa, &c.	64
„ XXIX.—Sîtâ's Nâni, or Dumâr Lenâ	65
The Jaina Caves.—Chhotâ Kailâsa	68
Cave XXXII.—The Indra Sabhâ	69
Cave XXXIII.—Jagannâtha Sabhâ	73
„ XXXIV.	75
Parsvanâtha, &c.	76

PHOTOGRAPHS.

1.	Façade of Caves VIII. and IX....	to face page	21
2.	Front of Viśvakarma Cave		23
3.	Interior of Viśvakarma Cave		24
4.	Part of the front of the Tin Thāl		28
5.	Śiva and Pārvati, &c. in Rāvaṇa-kā-Kai		34
6.	Kailāsa from the south-west		43
7.	Mahābhairava in Kailāsa		45
8.	The Rāmāyaṇa sculpture in Kailāsa		46
9.	Part of the façade of Rāmeśvara		59
10.	Marriage of Śiva and Pārvati in Dumār Lenā		66
11.	Monolith, &c. in front of the Indra Sabhā		70
12.	Indra in the verandah of the Indra Sabhā		72

THE ROCK TEMPLES

OF

ELURÂ OR VERUL.

TEMPLES and monasteries fashioned out of the solid rock form a special feature among the early architectural remains of India. Of these there are probably forty or fifty groups in Western India, embracing as many as nine hundred or a thousand separate excavations. The majority of these rock-cut temples, as those at Ajanṭā, Kuda, Kārlē, Kaṇhari, Junnar, Nāsik, Bāgh in Mālvā, and Aurangābād, are of Buddhist origin, but numbers also have been cut by the Brāhmanical sects, both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava. Elephanta, in the Bombay harbour, is one of the best-known Śaiva caves, but there are others at Jogēvarī and Mandapésvara, in the island of Salsette; and at Bādāmi, in the Kalādgi Zillā, there is a group of three fine caves—one Śaiva and two Vaiṣṇava, with a small Jaina one. Jaina caves are few in number, but have been found also at Dhārāsīnva, in the south-west of the Nizām's territory.

But of all the groups none are so deserving of notice as the large one at Elurā (Lat. 20° 2' N., Long. 74° 15' E.), about fourteen miles north-west of Aurangābād, where are some of the largest and most elaborately carved specimens of the work of all three sects—Buddhists,

Bráhmans, and Jains. These temples have long been known to Europeans, and are frequently visited by travellers, as well worthy to rank with the most remarkable wonders in India, if not in the world.

Several attempts have been made to describe them, mostly, however, in the *Transactions* and *Journals* of the Asiatic Societies; and visitors must often be at a loss to make anything intelligible out of the ignorant Bráhmans of the neighbouring village who haunt his steps and officiously offer to guide him, in hopes of a small pecuniary *indm* or present.

As the caves of Elurá were entered in the programme of H. R. H. the Prince of Wales as one of the places to be visited on his tour in 1876, His Excellency Sir Sálár Jang, the prime minister or Diwán of Haidarábád, had most of the caves thoroughly cleaned out of the accumulated silt of ages,—in some cases six and eight feet deep, and in others twelve feet or even more, in the open courts. In the interiors also dirty *jogís* had for ages been in the habit of taking up their abodes, and keeping their cows and goats; so that, from the smoke of their fires and the litter of their animals, it was anything but an unmixed pleasure to examine some of these splendid caves. The cleaning has changed all this, and the spacious halls of these wonderful rock excavations are now kept clean, and may be visited with comfort and pleasure. The only fear is that the same wanton system of wilfully breaking the sculptures will go on as rapidly as ever,—that is, if there is scope for it, for there is scarcely a figure in the caves, within easy reach, of which the face has not been damaged by fanatical and ignorant Muham-

madans; while Hindus have besmeared them with red paint and other unseemly colours; and both Pârsis and Europeans have indulged in the vulgarity of scribbling their names on walls and sculptures. It is sincerely to be wished that all such practices may be summarily stopped, though the present guard is perfectly useless to care about preventing anything.

Being comparatively easily accessible also, they may well be expected to attract visitors, and, as I have been often appealed to for a short handy Guide to the caves, the present brochure is put forth to supply at least a part of the information most visitors will wish to have on the spot.

THE ROUTE.

The Elurâ caves are most easily accessible from the Nândgâum station of the N.E. (or Bombay and Jabalpur) section of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, from which they are distant 44 miles. This part of the journey may be accomplished in from six to eight hours in pony staging *tângâs*, which can be engaged from the mail contractor at the station. Travellers should give him a few days' notice, however. Bullock *dumnies* are also procurable, but, if more commodious, they are much slower.

From Nândgâum the road leads to the E.S.E., and between ten and eleven miles from the railway, a little beyond the village Kâsârî, it enters the Nizâm's territory; about three miles further is the village of Tharodâ, with a travellers' *banglâ*. It then runs up the valley of the Daiku rivulet, passing Loni and Tunki, and finally crosses the stream near Batâni, about thirteen miles from Tharodâ; three miles further is Gârai; and another four miles, crossing the Sivnâ

about midway, brings the traveller to Devagānw, where is a second *banglā*. From Devagānw to Pipalgānw is five miles, and there the road to Elurā leaves the Aurangābād road and turning to the left passes through Kāsabhedā, three miles; to Elurā or Verul, four miles, and the caves a mile more.

There is no travellers' *banglā* either at Verul, a little to the west of the caves, nor at Rozah, on the hill above to the south; this is a want that will be increasingly felt. The officers of the Haidarābād contingent troops stationed at Aurangābād, however, have an empty tomb fitted up, and, when not occupied by any of the officers or their families, it can usually be secured for a night by sending a request to that effect a day or two before to the Mess Secretary, Aurangābād. From the Mess *banglā* to the nearest caves is about three-quarters of a mile, down a steep ghāt.

THE CAVES.

The caves are excavated in the face of a hill, or rather the scarp of a large plateau, and run nearly north and south for about a mile and a quarter, the scarp at each end of this interval throwing out a horn towards the west. It is where the scarp at the south end begins to turn to the west that the earliest caves—a group of Buddha ones—are situated; and in the north horn is the Indra Sābhā or Jaina group, the other extremity of the series. The ascent of the ghāt passes up the south side of Kailāsa, the third of the Brāhmanical group, and over the roof of the Dās Avatāra, the second of them. Sixteen caves lie to the south of Kailāsa, and nearly as many to the north, but the latter are scattered over a greater distance.