

PLATE XVI  
PAINTINGS FROM BEZEKLIK

THE reproductions in this plate are from portions of the paintings recovered from the west wall of the corridor surrounding the cella of the shrine. They are good examples of the richness of colour used in these temple paintings. The designs follow a regular scheme of composition, varying in detail in accordance with the requirements of the incidents in the lives of successive Buddhas portrayed. The excellent condition of the surviving portions of the pictures, apart from that which appears to be due to wanton destruction or decay of the structure of the building, may be partly attributable to their immunity from misguided attempts at 'preservation'.

Bez. iii. N, O

The subject here is the meeting of the Dīpankara Buddha with the Brāhman Sumedhu, who, four *asankhyeyas* and a hundred thousand cycles ago (an incalculable period), lived in Amarāvati. He was of good family on both sides, and inherited great wealth from his parents; but deeming the possession of worldly riches an obstacle in his progress towards his earnestly desired goal of moral and spiritual perfection, he gave them all away; and seeking the solitude of the forest, near the city of Ramma, embraced the life of an ascetic.

At this time the Buddha, Dīpankara, appeared in the world and in his wanderings reached the city of Ramma, and took up residence in the neighbouring monastery of Sudassana. There the people of Ramma thronged to see and hear him, bearing garlands and many other offerings. After hearing him preach they invited him to visit the city. Their invitation being accepted, preparations were put in hand to render the road fit for the progress of the Buddha. Sumedhu, becoming aware of these unwonted activities, asked the reason, and upon being told requested that he might be given a section of the road to repair. The condition must have been deplorable, for before he could finish his task, even with the help given him by a hundred thousand miracle-working saints, Dīpankara came in sight. Whereupon Sumedhu decided that he could not allow the Buddha to walk on the unfinished part, and at the risk of sacrificing his life, he cast himself upon the miry ground and spreading his hermit's mantle and his roll of matted hair, formed a bridge for the Buddha and his following of four hundred thousand saints