

PLATE XXIV
PAINTING FROM BEZEKLIK

Bez. x. K-O

FROM the south-west corner of the shrine. Although large portions are missing and the remainder has suffered badly from the depredations of white ants, there still survive interesting details of this elaborate composition. The general ravaged condition makes elucidation very difficult even with the original before one's eyes. Still more difficult does it become in the monochrome reproduction; but with the guidance of the following descriptive notes it may be possible to distinguish much that at first sight seems hopelessly obscure.

The whole appears to present a celestial vision or phantasy in which gods and demons participate amidst rolling streams of cloud. Drawn to various scales, according to their importance, *Lokapālas*, *Dharmapālas*, devils, imps, and human beings play their parts, and, as seen in the foreground, the bird Garuḍa, *vāhana* of Vishnu.

In the upper part there was a row of deities, the first on the left being Kārttikeya, riding on his *vāhana*, the *sīmurgh* or phoenix in the *lalitāsana* pose, that is, with one leg hanging down and the other folded in front. His expression is fierce, with knitted brow and wide-open, glaring eyes. On his shaven head black tufts of hair have been reserved; that over the forehead, tied tightly by a ligature near the roots, spreads, brush-like, in a fringe above his eyebrows. His visible ear is pointed at the top. In each of his six hands is a symbol; the red sun in the upraised upper right hand and the white moon in the left. The next pair carry, in the right, two arrows, and in the left, a bow of Persian type. Of the third pair, the right hand is broken away leaving only two short red stems projecting below. The left rests on the hip and carries a long wand, perhaps the shaft of a lance or pole-axe. Excepting three stoles, respectively red, white, and green, the upper part of the body is nude. On the arms were gilded armlets with bunches of coloured beads. His loin-cloth (*dhotī*) is pink, girdled with a white *kamarband*, and his feet are shod with sandals. The phoenix, with long snaky neck, strides towards the left but turns his head, and with open beak seems to be protesting as he looks upward towards his rider. The wavy line of breast and neck is emphasized by imbricated, scale-like feathers. Claws and head are well drawn, although the left leg shows a joint or angle where none should be.