

**Prof. Madhusudan Amilal Dhaky**  
**A Scholar of Indology and Jaina Art**  
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**Maruti Nandan Pd. Tiwari**



Prof. M. A. Dhaky with the author

**P**rof. M. A. Dhaky was born on 31st July 1927 in Dhank village of Porbandar, Gujarat in the Śvetāmbara Jaina family. His father Shri Amilala Jivanbhai

Dhaky was a horticulture officer. He received his surname Dhaky from his native village Dhank. After completing primary and secondary education in 1948 at Porbandar, Prof. Dhaky graduated in Geology and Chemistry from Ferguson College, Pune, affiliated to University of Bombay. It is rather surprising that Prof. M. A. Dhaky being a science graduate, cultivated special interest in the field of Indological studies, specially Archaeology, Art History and Prakrit language. In demise of Prof. M. A. Dhaky we have lost one of the Greatest Scholars of Indology in the world who was loved and respected both by senior and young scholars in India and different parts of the world.

Although he was not having Post-Graduate and Ph.D. degrees, yet the L.D. Institute of Ahmedabad on the basis of his scholarship appointed him as Professor of Indian Art and Archaeology in 1996 and thereafter 'Professor' was added with his name. His scholarship was recognized globally. As a consequence he became supervisor at National Museum Institute, New Delhi for Ph.D. theses dealing with Indian Art and Architecture. Further, as an external examiner he evaluated Ph.D. theses of Universities of Mysore, Pune, Vadodara and Gujarat. He was also the advisor for the Doctoral theses concerning Indian Art and Architecture in the Universities of London and Berlin. In the words of Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan (writing in admiration of Prof. Dhaky in *Prāsādanidhi* - Felicitation Volume of Prof. M. A. Dhaky, Delhi, 2016, back cover) "Prof. Dhaky scaled the mountains and touched the depth of ocean in his writings, not only with his scholarship but also bringing to it a rare humility."

In 1951 he established Archaeology Research Group in Porbandar and started writing in early days on the basis of his survey particularly on Solaṅkī art and architecture. He joined services in Bank and Agriculture department but due to his interest and inclination towards art heritage and its study, left these jobs and finally joined Junagarh Museum of Gujarat as curator and archaeological officer. During this period he met his mentor Prof. B. Subbarao and joined him in his excavations of Patan in Gujarat. This was the key point of his change to new areas of work and contribution. After stepping in the field of Indian Architecture, Art History and

Nirgrantha (Jaina) studies, he followed the path shown by three great scholars of Indic studies (mostly contributing to the field of interpretive study of Indian sculpture, architecture and painting), namely, Prof. V. S. Agrawala, Dr. C. Sivaramamurti and Dr. Motichandra. Dr. Motichandra somehow was aware of the academic potentials of young Prof. Dhaky and he brought him to American Academy of Banaras. The writings of Dr. Motichandra on Indian Art and Culture, particularly *Kāśī Kā Itihāsa* (in Hindi), inspired him to make a comprehensive and holistic study of Indian art. On the other hand, the writings of Dr. C. Sivaramamurti inspired him to make full use of original texts in the study of Indian Art and its appreciation. Being in Varanasi, he was privileged to remain in touch with Prof. V. S. Agrawala. Prof. Dhaky was greatly influenced by multiplicity of the writings of Prof. V. S. Agrawala, ranging from Vaidik-Purāṇic to other texts (*Matsya Purāṇa*, *Harṣacarita*) for the study of cultural and Art related data therein to make a corroborative study of art remains and textual reference. The conceptual framework of the sculptures and images in the backdrop of the writings of Prof. V. S. Agrawala greatly influenced Prof. Dhaky. Under his influence and guidance Prof. Dhaky wrote his book titled *The Vyāla Figures on the Mediaeval Temples of India* in 1965, foreword to which was written by Prof. V. S. Agrawala.

Prof. Dhaky contributed immensely on different aspects of Indian art and architecture including Jainism and Jaina art. For his long and invaluable contributions to Indian Art and Culture and Jaina studies, he was awarded the prestigious National Award *Padmabhushan* by the President of India in 2010. Prof. Dhaky was recipient of several gold and silver medals, some of which include *Campbell Memorial Gold Medal* of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai and *R.C. Parikh Gold Medal* of the Gujarat Itihas Parishad, Ahmedabad and *Hemacandrācārya Award* from Jaswanta Dharmarth, Delhi (1997). Prof. Dhaky was a multi-talented genius with deep understanding of aesthetics, Jaina Philosophy and Metaphysics, Prakrit Language, Jaina Hymnology, Indian Classical Music, both North Indian and Karnatic, Horticulture, Gemology and Embroidery (see his book - *The*

*Embroidery and Bead work of Kutch and Saurashtra - 1966).*

Prof. Dhaky was Director Emeritus of the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS), Gurgaon (Haryana). He joined AIIS in 1966 and became its Director (1976) - Research. He retired in 1996 from AIIS but continued working as Director (Emeritus) in Gurgaon from 1996 to 2005. Since 2005 he was living in Ahmedabad. Dr. Vandana Sinha (present Director of AIIS) recalls about his valuable contributions during his stay at AIIS in the following words: "*The Encyclopedia of Indian Temple Architecture* is a unique research and publication project initiated almost five decades ago by the Center for Art and Archaeology of the American Institute of Indian Studies, under the direction of noted scholar of architecture and literature, Prof. M. A. Dhaky. The project was formulated with the view of consolidating and bringing together at one place all essential historical and technical information relating to the Indian temples in their many regional and period styles. While the technical terms, mainly in Sanskrit, were extracted from the many published and unpublished textual sources, their manifestations in ancient temples along with regional and temporal variations were to be produced for comparison with their citations from ancient and medieval Sanskrit works. In pursuit of this, the AIIS Center for Art and Archaeology photo documented several thousands of temples, ancient sites and monuments in the country largely in the supervision of Prof. M. A. Dhaky. The project resulted in publication of fourteen volumes of *Encyclopedia of Indian Temple Architecture* out of which Prof. Dhaky edited four, coordinating one and authored one full volume on South Indian Temples. Before his month long illness and demise, he was giving finishing touches to the glossary volume of *Encyclopedia of Indian Temple Architecture - South India*."

Prof. Dhaky on the basis of his visit and study of countless temples could enter into the concept and formation of Indian temples in different perspectives. In addition to editing four of the volumes and writing several chapters on architecture in the Encyclopedia, his publications include 11 books and more than 300 research articles. In his writings on Indian monuments textual scholarship

combined with the knowledge of actual architectural and sculptural material, the clarity, accuracy and perfection of Prof. Dhaky make him truly the *Vāstu-Puruṣa* (embodiment of god of architecture). His books on *The Indian Temple Forms in Karṇāṭa Inscriptions and Architecture*, *The Indian Temple Traceries* (2005), *The Vyāla Figures on the Mediaeval Temples of India* (1965), *The Temples of Kumbhāriyā* (2001), *Chronology of Solankī Temples of Gujarat* (1961) and *Studies in Nirgrantha Art and Architecture* (2012) not only inspire scholars of Indian art but set the models for the study of Indian Temples in architectural frame and symbolic, religious, aesthetic and social contexts. An important monograph of Prof. Dhaky jointly authored with Prabhashankara Om Sompura is on the subject of Indian Forts giving a complete account of building of forts. Prof. Dhaky extensively surveyed and had taken pains to collect sizable literature both published and unpublished pertaining to forts [*Bhāratīya Durga-Vidhāna* (Joint), Bombay, 1971].

The list of Seminars and Conferences which he attended and presided is vast. Besides organizing several seminars and chairing the seminar sessions Prof. Dhaky was the General President of the 9<sup>th</sup> Session of the Indian Art History Congress held at Hyderabad in 2001. One such International Symposium was on *Discourses of Śiva* held in Philadelphia (USA) in 1981 which was convened by Prof. Michael Meister whereat Prof. Dhaky presented paper on *Bhūtas and Bhūtanāyakas* in which he had given his core concept of Indian temples in following words: "From among the many millions of pilgrims, hundreds of priests, and scores of the devout who went to the temples to make their ritual offerings and to submit their prayers, a few at least seem to have halted in the temple's precincts to contemplate the meaning of the building itself. Some among them seem to have been struck by what they saw. It was an awesome, staggering, incredible cognition, which some later tried to convey in texts through metaphors... The particular aspect each author sensed depended upon his standpoint. Those who saw the temple from a distance consensually perceived it as a Single Entity, the *Puruṣa* or Universal Self... Those who viewed the temple at close quarters saw in its organization and

stratified divisions, its details, voids, and masses, the embodiments of *Prakṛti* or Nature - Cosmos, Creation, Manifest or Empirical Reality - with its interminable, though coherent amalgam of tangible and intangible, seen and unseen, sensed and unsensed varieties" (M. A. Dhaky, 1984, 'Bhūtas and Bhūtanāyakas: Elements and Their Captains', *Discourses of Śiva*, Ed. Michael W. Meister, Bombay, Vakils, Feffer & Simons Ltd., pp.242-43).

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan (Foreword to *Prāsādanidhi*, New Delhi, 2016, pp.vi-vii) calls the books on *The Indian Temple Traceries* (AIIS and D.K. Printworld, New Delhi, 2005) and *The Ceilings in the Temples of Gujarat* (1963) by Prof. Dhaky as rare ones as these are penetrating in their analysis of traceries and ceilings and their roles in Indian architecture. The book on *Indian Temple Traceries* was the best of his publications, according to Prof. Dhaky himself. To my mind for the first time this monograph extensively treats the subject of Indian temple traceries (*jālas* or grilles) together with an in-depth discussion in the light of relevant medieval *Vāstuśāstra* passages in Sanskrit. Besides identification, classification and description of the different grille types as well as their forms, features and ornaments, it investigates their purpose and relationship with the environment as well as their functional engagement with the building of which each example is an integral part. It likewise traces the origin with its earliest incidences together with the development, of the Indian grilles. While maintaining the thrust of writing towards the ancient and medieval Indian grilles, it presents the Islamic screens and the Gothic traceries for comparing and contrasting their characteristics with the earlier Indian examples. In this process thus the monograph makes a holistic and analytical study of concept, form, function, and above all, aesthetics. Prof. Dhaky has distinctly underlined how the visual appearance of the traceries developed in each of these three architectural systems and how these considerably vary owing to the environmental, creedal, cultural and hence stylistic differences.

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan also refers to two very significant articles of Prof. Dhaky on *Concepts of Space* and *Concepts of Time* in reference to Indian temple architecture.

Prof. M. A. Dhaky has always evinced deep admiration for the aesthetic quality of ancient and mediaeval South and South-East Asian monuments. Some of his writings bring the South-East Asian regions in dialogue with Indian expressions.

Besides archaeological and art historical themes, he also wrote on the History and Chronology of ancient and medieval Jaina literature (including the *Āgamas*, their commentaries and ancient and medieval hymns) as well as determined the dates of the famous authors of *Nirgrantha* texts. He was erudite scholar of Prākṛt literature, for which *Prākṛt Jñānabhāratī Award* of Bangalore was given to him in 1993. Some of his contributions pertain to Jaina Ācārya Bhadrabāhu, Umāsvāti, Kundkundācāya.

Prof. Dhaky's works on architecture saw early-medieval and medieval Indian temple architecture from a unique lens because he brought fresh methodologies to analyze them. For instance, he categorized Western Indian Temple Architecture into *Mahā-Māru*, *Mahā-Gurjara* and *Mārugurjara*, the latter being an amalgamation of the former two schools. More importantly, he tried to bring to the study of architecture an approach that was not connected to dynastic histories. He saw architecture from an aesthetic view point as well.

Prof. Dhaky's relations with his wife Smt. Gītāben were exemplary who was in true sense best friend to him. I have seen how she was concerned and caring about Dhaky *Sāheb* which looked like 'Motherly'. After the death of Gītāben about 5 years back he was broken which I have seen in personal meeting with him in 2015. I met him at his residence in Ahmedabad when he, despite all his odds of personal life, discussed several academic issues to guide me which he was doing for last 40 years. He was very particular about use of technical terms and referring to precise time based on evidence.

Prof. M. A. Dhaky of delicate physic was a combination of profound scholarship and human qualities with fine sense of humour. *Prāsādanidhi* - the Felicitation Volume of Prof. M. A. Dhaky (Editors - Prof. Parul Pandya Dhar and

Prof. Gerd J. R. Mevissen) published in 2016 (by Aryan Books International, New Delhi) containing the contributions of all the known foreign scholars of Indian Art including Prof. Walter M. Spink, Prof. Michael W. Meister along with Indian scholars reveals that how dear he was to the scholar world of Art History. The point of satisfaction is that Felicitation Volume could be published in his life-time and he could see his *Prabhāmaṇḍala* (halo) of scholarship.

He was simple and unassuming but in academic matters he was firm and clear. Prof. Dhaky will always live with us in his *Yaśah Śarīra* (body of glory). He was a man of commitment and knew how to nurture and educate a young scholar. He used to give hours and hours to discuss the academic issues and in editing the research papers of upcoming scholars. This is my personal experience. He was Jaina by faith but free from all the narrow sectarian prejudices. In his writings we can see a personality of a true Art-Historian.

I, as usual the other scholars were doing, used the terms *Kalyāṇasundara* and *Mahiṣamardinī*, but it was Prof. Dhaky who corrected me on the basis of the texts and told nowhere the term *Kalyāṇasundara* is found, instead such images showing the marriage of Śiva-Pārvatī should be called *Pārvatī-Prīṇaya* on the strength of *Kumārasambhava* of Kālidāsa. Likewise, the *Mahiṣamardinī* images should be called *Durgā-Mahiṣamardinī*. While discussing *Tīrthaṅkara* images of Kuṣāṇa period, he questioned if Mathurā inscription call them *Arhat*, what right do we have to use *Tīrthaṅkara* or *Jīna* for the Kuṣāṇa images. For Jainism he preferred to use *Nirgrantha*, the earliest term found in inscriptions and texts. These are merely few examples. Prof. Dhaky stressed on using standard technical vocabulary in Sanskrit and also what we find in inscriptions.

He wrote in English, Gujarati and Hindi with equal command and fluency. Prof. Dhaky who immortalized Indian temple architecture, passed away after brief illness at his residence in Ahmedabad on 29 July 2016. I offer my respectful obeisance to the memory of the Great Soul.