



* 41

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ACCOUNT OF THE CAVES IN SALSETTE,

ILLUSTRATED WITH DRAWINGS OF THE PRINCIPAL FIGURES AND CAVES.

By HENRY SALT, Esq. (now Consul-General in Egypt).

*Read 25th August 1806.**Suez, 13th February 1806.*

SIR,

I REQUEST that you will do me the honour of laying before the Society the accompanying account of the caves on the island of Salsette. I am extremely sorry that my journey into Abyssinia and other avocations have prevented the possibility of my completing it in the manner I could have wished: I could only have been induced to send it in its present state from the delay which would necessarily ensue before I could forward it by any conveyance from England.

I am indebted to Major Atkins, of the Bombay establishment, for the geometrical plan of the hill, and for the ground-plan and sections of the great cave at Kenery; the other drawings are from my own sketches on the spot, which I hope the Society will do me the honour of accepting.

I beg leave to repeat that I shall have great pleasure in executing in London any orders from the Society.

I am, Sir, your obedient humble servant,

(Signed) HENRY SALT.

An Account of the Caves on the Island of Salsette.

JOGHEYSEER CAVES.

About eight miles to the northward of Mahim † is the village of Ambollee, from whence the Jogheyseer Caves lie nearly two miles distant in a * north-easterly direction. Over the sloping path that leads to the western entrance

† A small town at the N.W. point of the island of Bombay, whence there is a ferry to the island of Salsette.



a natural arch formed by the branches of a banyan-tree which stretching across the path have taken root on the opposite side, giving a very picturesque appearance to the entrance: a descent of eight steps then conducts to a small anteroom (side A in the ground-plan), which is divided into three compartments by two pillars and two pilasters on each side;—the figures carved around the walls of this chamber have nearly disappeared from decay, but the frame and cornice of the door through which you pass from it to the great cave have still the appearance of having been once finished with a variety of sculpture neatly executed; and over the door are groups of small figures, amongst which may be observed two tolerably perfect, in the attitudes in which Ramah and Seta are often represented. The great cave into which you now enter is about one hundred and twenty feet square; at about eighteen feet inwards are twenty pillars of the same order as those at Elephanta, forming an inner square, within which again is a chamber about twenty-four feet square, with doors answering to each other on the four sides. This is evidently a temple dedicated to Mahadeo, as on a pedestal in the centre is the lingam, covered with holy red paint, and over it a small bell on a wooden frame decorated with flowers, to which our Gentoo attendants paid the customary homage. The walls of this temple were externally adorned with sculptured figures, the only vestiges of which remaining are on the eastern side, representing dwarfs, which from their situation seem to have supported larger figures, as at Elephanta. Though it is now usual to go in on the western side; yet it appears to me that the eastern was formerly the principal entrance, as greater attention seems to have been paid to the decorations of this side than of the other; and the various representations of the deity are such as were likely to impress his votaries with more suitable awe—a circumstance seldom unattended to by the Brahmins. The eastern side is more open to the air, to which may in some measure be attributed the better preservation of the figures, which I shall proceed to describe. Over the first doorway (marked in the ground-plan C) is a figure with five heads and twelve or more hands, supporting a throne on