Subject: History

Lesson: Cultural development

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NOTE:

The dates in modern historical writings are generally given according to the Christian calendar. In recent years, the use of AD (Anno Domini) and BC (Before Christ) has to some extent been replaced by BCE (Before Common Era) and CE (Common Era). Both usages are acceptable, and both sets of abbreviations have been used in these e-lessons.

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10.1: Literature: Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit and Tamil

Sanskrit literature

Early India was rich in the production of creative literature. Much of this was in Sanskrit, the oldest language in the Indian subcontinent and the one best associated with ancient times. Creative literature was composed in classical Sanskrit, different from old Vedic Sanskrit, which was systematized by Panini, the great grammarian, in *circa* 5th century BCE. The two epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, are early examples of creative and narrative literature in this language, but the phenomenon properly starts in the 1st century CE with a new genre that quickly became very popular.

This was ***kavya*** which means literature as a form of art, as distinct from scripture (*agama*), history (*itihasa*) and technical treatise (*shastra*). *Kavya* includes not only poetry (*sargabandha* or *mahakavya*) but drama (*natya*), tale (*katha*) and biography (*akhyayika/charita*). *Kavya* composition took the cultivation of language and theme to new heights. Its distinguishing features were *alamkara* or figures of speech, which embellished the language, and *rasa* or aesthetic experience, which governed the meaning. There were two kinds of *alamkara*: *shabdalamkara* that would play with the form (like *yamaka* or rhyme and *anuprasa* or alliteration) and *arthalamkara* that would bring out meaning(s) (like *shlesha* or pun, *rupaka* or metaphor and *atishayokti* or exaggeration). Many *alamkara*s could serve both functions. *Rasa* literally means 'flavour'. It represents the essence of the experience of emotions (*bhava*), like desire, fear, anger, compassion, humour, etc. that *kavya* invokes in the audience. *Kavya* was intended to 'imitate the world' (*lokasya anukarana*) and to entertain and produce delight (*priti, harsha, vinoda*). Theoretically it was meant for all classes and castes, but some of the poetry and prose was too dense and rich to be understood by any but the educated and refined.

The earliest *kavyakara*s were Ashvaghosha and Bhasa, dated between the 1st and 3rd centuries CE. The former wrote the *Buddhacharita* and the *Saundarananda*, two epic poems inspired by the Buddha's life and episodes to do with it. Bhasa was a great playwright who is believed to have written a large number and variety of plays that dealt with gods and mythological characters on the one hand and with princes and princesses and merchants and other commoners, on the other. These include the *Svapnavasavadatta, Karnabhara, Daridracharudatta* and *Avimaraka*.

From the 3rd to 5th centuries CE come the works of two great playwrights and poets. Shudraka's *Mrichchhakatika* is a brilliant comic-romantic play in ten acts about the love between a poor merchant and a talented **courtesan**. It displays all the nine *rasa*s. Kalidasa, the world famous poet, wrote a total of seven works: three plays (*Abhijnanashakuntala, Malavikagnimitra* and *Vikramorvashiya*) and four poems (*Meghaduta, Ritusamhara, Kumarasambhava and Raghuvamsha*). These drew on mythological or royal stories, infusing them with humour and critical comments, and specialized in the development of emotions and in beautiful lyricism.

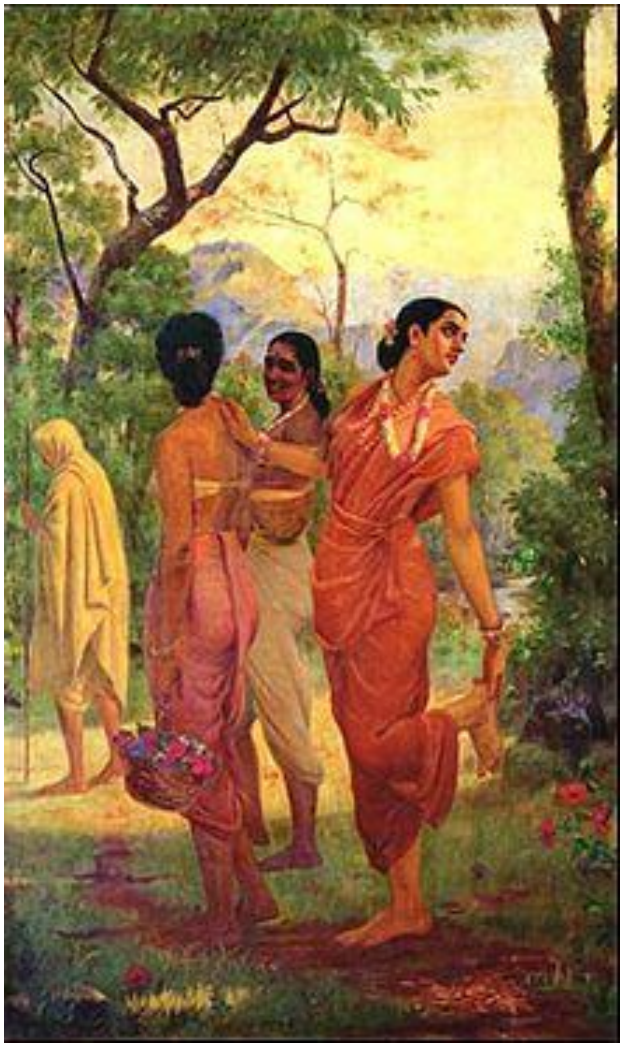


Figure 10.1.1: Celebrated 19th century painter Raja Ravi Varma's *Sakuntala*
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shakuntala

A plethora of greats occurred after Kalidasa up to the 8th century: Vishakhadatta (*Mudrarakshasa*), Subandhu (*Vasavadatta*), Bana (*Harshacharita and Kadambari*), Dandin (*Dashakumaracharita*), Magha (*Shishupalavadha*), Bharavi (*Kiratarjuniya*), Bhartrihari (*Shatakatrayam : Shringarashataka, Nitishataka, Vairagyashataka*), Bhavabhuti (*Uttararamacharita and Malatimadhava*) and others. A particular form of *kavya* that is of special interest for historians is the *charita* or the royal biographies that were composed by court poets; from our time period Bana's biography of king Harsha is the major example. The early medieval period saw the composition of several important *charita*s, like Bilhana's *Vikramankadevacharita*, Hemchandra's *Kumarapalacharita* (in Prakrit), and Sandhyakara Nandi's *Ramacharita* (all from the 11th and 12th centuries). Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* (12th century), though not a *charita*, should also be mentioned here: it is the earliest political history of Kashmir written as a *kavya*. It traces royal dynasty after dynasty from the earliest times, and uses older texts and inscriptions and monumental remains to authentically put together this chronicle of the region. This aspect of the text, together with its close attention to dates, has led scholars to celebrate the *Rajatarangini* as a 'genuine' work of history.

We should note that a large number of literary compositions have been lost through the centuries after they were written. This is obvious from references to these works and their authors in surviving texts. This is also apparent from anthologies like the 11th century *Subhashitaratnakosha* of Vidyakara that compiles verses extracted from numerous works which we do not know of otherwise. It is believed that this anthology was put together by the author, a Buddhist monk, by drawing on the collection of a large library in the Jagaddala monastery. Libraries were storehouses of knowledge and certainly existed in early India.

Kavya literature from the classical period was, for the most part, urban literature, that is, composed and set in cities. Scholars believe it was courtly in nature, that is, it catered to the king and upper classes and reflected their lives and ideology. While this is true to an extent, we should not lose sight of the fact that several of the *kavya*s, especially the plays, are polyphonic, that is, bearing the voices of different social groups and reflecting concerns that are not restricted to those of the elite. These works also do not always simply endorse/ support power structures and hierarchies determined by caste, wealth, priestly authority and monarchy, but instead critique them a good bit with the use of humour and satire.

Value addition: what the sources say

Charudatta's lament

Scholars used to believe that *kavya* literature was elitist and did not engage with social issues. What greater social issue is there than poverty? Witness here the insightful commentary on poverty in the *Mrichchhakatika*. Thus Charudatta, a once-rich merchant who has now lost all his wealth, says:

"… When a man is reduced to penury after he has known luxury, he is dead, living only in body. … Between poverty and death, I prefer death. (For) death causes short-lived pain but poverty is unending misery.

… My misery is not due to (my loss of) money. This alone burns me that guests avoid my house because it has lost its riches, just as bees desert the elephant's cheek when the season has passed and the rut has dried. … I am not really anxious at the loss of my fortune, for riches come and go, following the turn of fortune's wheel. But this consumes me that people become remiss in their affection towards a person who has lost the support of wealth.

… If a man be poor his kinsmen will not abide by his words, … and the lustre of the moon of character fades away….Nobody keeps company with him or talks respectfully to him. If he goes to the mansions of the rich on festive occasions, he is looked at with contempt. Scantily clad, in shame, he keeps at a distance from the exalted ....

…Poverty is for a man the abode of anxiety, the highest insult, a state of antagonism, the exciter of disgust among friends and hatred among kinsmen and the general public. There develops a desire to retire to the forest. There is humiliation even from one's wife. Poverty is the fire of grief that dwells in the heart; it does not (actually) burn but inflames continually."

There is also a critique of wealth elsewhere in the play. For example, this verse: "Virtues and riches are seldom found together. Water is most plentiful in pools that are unfit to drink from." Or this one: "Thorny trees thrive better on good soil."
Source: Kale, M. R. 1962. *Mrcchakatika of Sudraka* (text and translation). Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. Act I, 23-25; Act II, p.91; Act VIII, 283.

Prakrit, Pali and Tamil Literature

Prakrit is the name given to a group of dialects, like Ardhamagadhi, Maharashtri, Shauraseni etc. The earliest evidence of writing we have from the historical period -- Ashoka's edicts -- is in Prakrit. But far fewer works of creative literature have survived in this language and in Pali compared to Sanskrit. This is not because Prakrit was a spoken tongue while Sanskrit was the language of learning, as some scholars believe. Indeed we know that *kavya*s *were* composed in Prakrit, since the works of Sanskrit literary theory mention Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabhramsha as the three languages for *kavya* composition. An example is Hala's *Gathasattasai*, a collection of **erotic** short poems from the 1st – 3rd centuries CE, and Vakpatiraja's *Gaudavaha*, a royal biography from the 8th century. Sanskrit plays also have, as a rule, dialogues spoken by certain characters, like women, children, and the *vidushaka* or jester, in Prakrits of various kinds. The *Mrichchhakatika* is an excellent example where a variety of Prakrits is used.

For the most part, however, Prakrit and Pali literature consists of the early Buddhist and Jaina canonical and non-canonical literature. For example, the *Milindapanho* (1st century BCE-CE), the *Nidanakatha* (1st century CE), and the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa* (4th-6th centuries CE) are in Pali. The last two contain a historical-cum-mythical account of the life of the Buddha, the spread of Buddhism, as also of the Sri Lankan kingdom where these texts were complied. As the Mahayana school became dominant within Buddhism, texts came to be composed in mixed Prakrit and Sanskrit, which has been described as Buddhist Sanskrit or hybrid Sanskrit. For example, the *Mahavastu* (1st century CE) and the *Lalitavistara* (1st-2nd centuries CE), both of which are **hagiographies**. (Other Buddhist texts were entirely in Sanskrit, like the *Divyavadana* and *Ashokavadana*, which contain stories about the life and teachings of the Buddha and king Ashoka and his patronage of the Buddhist faith and efforts to spread it beyond the borders of the Indian subcontinent. This is why any simple equation between a religion and a language - Buddhism and Pali/Prakrit or Brahmanism and Sanskrit - is misleading.) Late Jaina hagiographical works like the *Harivamshapurana* (8th century CE, the Jaina version of the Mahabharata story), the *Adipurana* (9th century CE), and the *Trishashtilakshanapurusha* (12th century CE) were composed in mixed Prakrit and Sanskrit.

Tamil is an ancient language that belongs to the Dravidian family of languages, rather than to the Indo-Aryan family to which Sankrit, Prakrit, and north Indian languages belong. The earliest extant literature in Tamil is, however, from no earlier than a little before the beginning of the first millennium CE. This is what is known as Sangam literature, since according to legend it was composed at three great (mythical) *sangam*s or poetic assemblies held over thousands of years, the first and last of these said to be at Madurai. Some of the kings and poets associated with the third assembly are historical figures, and so the legend of the *sangam*s may refer to some real literary gathering.

Sangam literature, also known as early classical Tamil literature, consists of poetry of two kinds: *puram* or the 'exterior' poems that deal with war, community and kingship, and *akam* or 'interior' poems that revolve around the theme of love and longing. They are found as a part of two anthologies: the *Ettutokai* (The Eight Collections) and the *Pattuppattu* (The Ten Songs). The earliest parts of the first two books of a work on grammar and language, the *Tolkappiyam*, are also a part of Sangam literature. These anthologies were compiled around the 12th-13th centuries CE while the Sangam poems that figure in them were composed probably between the 3rd century BCE and 3rd century CE.

Sangam poets came from urban as well as rural backgrounds and included an array of royal figures but mostly commoners like teachers, merchants, soldiers, carpenters, etc. These two aspects are rather different from the Sanskrit literature we have from early India. Apart from Sangam literature, the early Tamil corpus includes a **didactic** work, Tiruvalluvar's *Tirukkural* (5th-6th centuries CE), on ethics and polity. The two most celebrated writings, however, are the twin epics, the *Shilappadikaram* and the *Manimekhalai*, from the same period as the *Tirukkural*. Ilango Adigal's *Shilappadikaram* (The Song of the Anklet) is the tale of the chaste and devoted Kannaki and her husband Kovalan of the city of Puhar, who is unfaithful to her. They lose nearly everything and move to Madurai. While in Madurai, Kovalan is arrested and executed for a crime he has not committed, and Kannaki's wrath at the injustice reduces to ashes the city where he was executed. Kannaki comes to be worshipped as the ideal wife. Sattanar's *Manimekhalai* (The Jewel Belt) is the story of the adventures of a young girl called Manimekhalai who tries to escape the romantic attentions of a prince because she wants to renounce the world, become a nun and serve the needy. Both stories have magical elements. While the *Shilappadikaram* has Jaina leanings, the *Manimekhalai* is Buddhistic. In the period starting after the epics, Tamil literature comes to be dominated by stirring *bhakti* poetry of the great Shaiva (Nayanar) and Vaishnava (Alvar) saints, which included famous women saints. Some of the major collections of their poetry that were compiled in the 10th century and after are the *Divyaprabandham* and the *Tevaram.*

Value addition: what the sources say

The city of Puhar

Here is a vibrant extract from the *Shilappadikaram* that describes the city of Puhar or Kaveripattinam, an early historic port. There is a lyrical simplicity to it even as it gives a sense of great variety and activity in the urban space.

"The sunshine lighted up the open terraces, the harbor docks, the towers with their loopholes like the eyes of deer. In various quarters of the city the homes of various Greeks were seen. Near the harbor seamen from far off lands appeared at home.
In the streets hawkers were selling unguents, bath powders, cooling oils, flowers, perfumes, incense. Weavers brought their fine silks and all kinds of fabrics made of wool or cotton. There were special streets for merchants of coral, sandalwood, myrrh, jewelry, faultless pearls, pure gold, and precious gems.

In another quarter lived grain merchants, their stocks piled up in mounds. Washermen, bakers, vintners, fishermen, and dealers in salt crowded the shops,

where they bought betel nuts, perfume, sheep, oil, meat, and bronzes. One could see coppersmiths, carpenters, goldsmiths, tailors, shoemakers, and clever craftsmen making toys out of cork or rags, and musicians, expert in each branch of the art …. Workmen displayed their skills in hundreds of small crafts. Each trade had its own street in the workers' quarter of the city.

At the centre of the city were the wide royal street, the street of temple cars, the bazaar and the main street, where rich merchants had their mansions with high towers. There was a street for priests, one for doctors, one for astrologers, one for peasants. … In another quarter lived the coachmen, bards, dancers, astronomers, clowns, prostitutes, actresses, florists, betel sellers, servants, drummers, jugglers, and acrobats."

Source: Danielou, Alain. 1993. *The Shilappadikaram* (translation). New Delhi: Penguin Books, 18-19.

Figure 10.1.2: Modern-day Puhar
Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/7/71/Puhar-Beach.jpg

Literature - whether in Sanskrit, Prakrit or Tamil, or any language for that matter - is a complex phenomenon. It is tied to the wider social, economic and political world. There are many questions that can be asked about any piece of literature: who were the authors and what was their social background; who were the patrons and why did they sponsor and support the composition of these texts; what are the social, moral and political values the texts promote or attack, and what does this reflect about the historical milieu in which they were produced. These enquiries can reveal a great deal about the political configurations, social processes and ideological trends that prevailed

in the past. Apart from all this, of course, these texts are beautiful works to be enjoyed for their sheer aesthetic and literary merit.

10.2: Scientific and technical treatises

Early India is mind-boggling for the volume, calibre and variety of knowledge it produced. Early Indians seem to have been so fond of and so good at systematizing and detailing and thinking through all they knew, they composed treatises and manuals, known as *shastra*s, on virtually every branch of human knowledge possible: astronomy, logic, mathematics, grammar, **phonetics**, painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, drama, philosophy, statecraft, medicine, erotics, and so on. In this lesson let us survey in chronological sequence some of the literature of this kind. The dates for these texts are uncertain and broad, as with much of early Indian literature. But the point to note is that technical treatises record theory and practices that must have been developing for at least a couple of centuries before they could reach the stage where they were codified or written down. The period to which the ideas or practices belong is therefore still larger than the centuries to which the composition of the treatises is attributed.

Among the earliest *shastra*s from the early historic period were works of **linguistics**. Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* (Of Eight Chapters), from *circa* 5th century BCE, is a founding work of Sanskrit grammar (*vyakarana*) that systematized the language into the form that can be described as classical Sanskrit, which was very different from the **archaic** Vedic Sanskrit. All the literature, creative as well as scientific, that was composed after Panini uses this language based on his grammar. A number of important commentaries were written on the *Ashtadhyayi* which explained and expanded its rules, for instance, Patanjali's *Mahabhashya* of the 2nd century BCE. The *Nighantu* and Yaska's *Nirukta*, probably from the 5th century BCE, are the earliest **extant** texts on **etymology** and phonetics.

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* was believed to belong to the Mauryan period, since its author was likely to have been the same as Kautilya Chanakya, the prime minister of Chandragupta Maurya. But textual analysis has established that the famous treatise on statecraft in fifteen volumes came together gradually between the 3rd century BCE and 3rd century CE. It details in a **prescriptive** manner aspects of running a kingdom like duties of the king, qualities in a minister, taxes to be levied, forts and cities to be built and how to safeguard these, an espionage or spy system to keep a check on threats to the regime, and dealing with other states, friendly as well as hostile, i.e., diplomacy or foreign policy.

Value addition: voices from the past

The daily routine of the king

The *Arthashastra* paints a portrait of the king as despot, that is, a ruler with absolute power. Such a figure has to lead a vigorous and cautious life. This is what the text advises him to do:

"Only if a king is himself energetically active, do his officers follow him energetically. If he is sluggish, … they eat up his efforts. He is thereby easily

overpowered by his enemies. Therefore he should ever dedicate himself to energetic activity.

He should divide the day and the night into eight parts …. During the first one-eighth part of the day he should listen to reports on the organization of law and order and income and expenditure. During the second, he should attend to the affairs of the urban and the rural population. During the third he should take his bath and meal and devote himself to study. During the fourth he should receive gold and the departmental heads. During the fifth he should hold consultations with the ministers … and also keep informed of the secret reports brought by spies. During the sixth he should devote himself freely to amusement …. During the seventh he should inspect the military formations …. During the eighth he along with the commander in chief should make plans for campaigns of conquest. When the day has come to an end he should offer evening prayers.

[In the various parts of the night he should] meet the officers of the secret service … take his bath and meals … sleep … waking up at the sound of the trumpets, ponder over the teachings of the sciences … send out secret service officers on their operations … accompanied by priests and preceptors, receive benedictions … have interviews with the physician, kitchen superintendent and astrologer ….

A king should attend to all urgent business, he should not put it off ….

… The vow of the king is energetic activity …. In the happiness of the subjects lies the happiness of the king; in their welfare his own welfare.…"

Source: *Arthashastra* I.19. See Embree, Ainslie T. ed. 1988. *Sources of Indian Tradition*, Vol. 1. New York: Columbia University Press, 242-244.

Composed between the 2nd century BCE and 5th century CE, the *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita* represent the earliest Indian school of medicine, Ayurveda (literally 'knowledge of long life'), which flourishes to this day. They lay down with an astonishing degree of expertise and accuracy a comprehensive approach to human and even animal physiology, disease and treatment. The texts detail a variety of diseases, their causes, symptoms, diagnosis, cures including medication and surgery. They discuss anatomy, including processes like digestion and blood circulation, nutrition, epidemics, doctors and hospitals. Surgical procedures like stitches, removal of cataract and bladder stone, and even plastic surgery are described! The two *Samhita*s were translated early into Arabic, Persian and Tibetan, and Ayurveda thereby travelled to East and West Asia and farther to Europe.

From the 2nd century BCE onwards, the treatises laying down the fundamentals of the six great schools of Indian philosophy (*shad-darshana*s) were composed. Each of these texts provides a rigorous investigation of various philosophical positions and a thorough statement and defence of the position it espouses. Jaimini's *Mimamsasutra* (Mimamsa school) of the 2nd century BCE emphasized Vedic ritual as the embodiment of *dharma* and the means to salvation. Badarayana wrote the *Brahmasutra* (Vedanta school) at about the same time. It is a key text of the early school of Vedanta which aimed at enquiring into the nature of *brahman* (the universal spirit) and *atman* (the individual soul). Kanada's *Vaisheshikasutra* (Vaisheshika school), written between the 2nd century

BCE and 1st century CE, is an exposition on pluralistic realism which means that it aimed at classifying and explaining the special (*vishesha*) features of the multiple things that exist in the world. This school enunciated a theory of atoms that is familiar fro

m modern physics today! Gotama's *Nyayasutra* (Nyaya school) of the 1st century CE laid down the parameters of a formal, step-by-step method of logic and reasoning. The *Samkhyakarika* of Ishvarakrishna (Samkhya school) belongs to the 4^{th}-5^{th} centuries CE; the philosophy is much older, though, and revolves around the concepts of *purusha* (soul) and *prakriti* (matter) out of the union of which the universe comes into being and through the rupture between which liberation of the soul can be attained. Finally, the *Yogasutras* (Yoga school), ascribed to Patanjali, are a manual of yogic thought and practice. They prescribe a series of exercises, physical and mental, to achieve cessation of the activities of the mind (*chitta-vritti-nirodha*) whereby tranquility and liberation can be achieved.

Dealing with a theme altogether different, the *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana was composed around the 3^{rd} or 4^{th} century CE. It is a widely celebrated and the earliest known treatise on sexual pleasure (***kama***), but in fact belongs to a much older tradition of erotics. Vatsyayana himself cites a series of other authorities on the topic who preceded him and who he often disagrees with; their works have not survived. The *Kamasutra* does discuss sex but not in isolation; it treats *kama* as one of the three goals of human life (*purushartha*), just as the *Arthashastra* and the *Dharmashastra* deal with the other two goals. It presents the pursuit of sex not as a natural instinct but as a part of a sophisticated urban culture where sexual expertise is an art.

Value addition: voices from the past

The hero of the *Kamasutra*

The main protagonist of the *Kamasutra* is the *nagaraka*, or the man-about-town, who the text addresses and attempts to guide in his pursuit of culture and refinement. This is how the text describes his daily timetable. It is a picture of leisure and sophistication. Compare it with the schedule the *Arthashastra* (above) prescribes for the king!

"He gets up in the morning, relieves himself, cleans his teeth, applies fragrant oils in small quantities, as well as incense, beeswax and red lac, looks at his face in a mirror, takes some mouthwash and betel, and attends to the things that need to be done. He bathes every day, has his limbs rubbed with oil every second day, a foam bath every third day, his face shaved every fourth day, and his body hair removed every fifth or tenth day. All of this is done without fail. And he continually cleans the sweat from his armpits.

In the morning and afternoon he eats.… After eating he passes the time teaching his parrots and mynah birds to speak; he goes to quail-fights, cock-fights, and ram-fights; engages in various arts and games; and passes the time with his libertine (*pithamarda*), pander (*vita*) and clown (*vidushaka*). And he takes a nap. In the late afternoon, he gets dressed up and goes to salons (***goshthi***) to amuse himself.

And in the evening, there is music and singing. After that, on a bed in a bedroom

carefully decorated and perfumed by sweet-smelling incense, he and his friends await the women who are slipping out for a rendezvous with them …. And when the women arrive, he and his friends greet them with gentle conversation and courtesies that charm the mind and heart. If rain has soaked the clothing of women who have slipped out for a rendezvous in bad weather, he changes their clothes himself, or gets some of his friends to serve them. This is what he does by day and night.

He amuses himself by going to festivals, salons, drinking parties, picnics and group games .... A salon takes place when people of similar knowledge, intelligence, character, wealth, and age sit together in the house of a courtesan, or in a place of assembly, or in the dwelling place of some man, and engage in appropriate conversation with courtesans. There they exchange thoughts about poems or works of art, and in the course of that they praise brilliant women whom everyone likes …. They have drinking parties in one another's houses ....**"**

Source: Doniger, Wendy and Sudhir Kakar. 2002. *Kamasutra* (translation). Delhi: Oxford University Press. I.4.5-24, 17-21.

At about the same time, works of Sanskrit poetics (the study of poetry) and dramaturgy (the study of theatre) began to be written. Bharata's *Natyashastra*, from around the 2nd century CE, is the earliest and a very influential work on the theory of drama (***natya***). Over more than two dozen chapters, it details topics like the origins of drama, its aims, its characters, costumes, dialects to be used for dialogues, the range of emotional experiences to be conveyed (the *rasa*s like *shringara* for love, *raudra* for anger, *hasya* for humour, *karuna* for compassion, etc.), the locales for the staging of plays, etc. The *Natyashastra* shows that plays involved dancing and mime together with acting, and were most often enacted on festive occasions in public gatherings like at the temple or at street crossings or in clubhouses (known as *goshthi*s).

Bhamaha's *Kavyalamkara* (5th century CE) is the earliest extant work on *kavya* composition, followed by several other major ones like those by Dandin (*Kavyadarsha*), Vamana, and Udbhatta, all from the 8th century CE, and later Rudrata (*Kavyalamkara*) and Ananadavardhana (*Dhvanyaloka)*, both from the 9th century, and still later, Dhananjaya (*Dasharupaka*) and Abhinavagupta (both 10th century), and Bhoja (*Saraswatikanthabharana* and *Shringaraprakasha*, 12th century), among many others. They discuss the main features of different kinds of *kavya*s, the conventions to be followed by poets when creating a *kavya*, and the large number of figures of speech (like pun, alliteration, simile, imagery) to be employed to make the language of poetry and prose rich in meaning and beautiful in form and sound. The art and craft of *kavya* composition evolved and grew over the first millennium CE, reaching its peak in the first half of the second millennium.

It is well known that India was among the leaders in early times in scientific and mathematical thought. While the beginnings of geometry and astronomy can be traced to post-Vedic Vedanga texts, like the *Shulvasutra*s and the works on *jyotisha*, the earliest historical astronomer and mathematician known is Aryabhata I. His *Aryabhatiya* and the *Aryabhata Siddhanta* (the latter text has not survived except in references to it in other works) belong to *circa* 5th century CE. These works were the first to give a scientific and correct explanation of solar and lunar eclipses, to discover that the earth rotated on its axis, to calculate the orbit of a planet and the length of a year (an

extremely accurate 365.2586805 days). They also contain important mathematical discoveries: deriving of square roots and cubes (which shows knowledge of the decimal system), calculating accurately the value of pi, working out the sine functions and tables (modern trigonometry), and solving complex simultaneous equations (algebra). Later texts like Brahmagupta's *Brahmasputasiddhanta* (7th century CE) contain a detailed discussion of astronomical instruments and methods, while Varahamihira's *Panchasiddhantika* (6th century CE) summarizes five schools of astronomical thought of the time as well as gives us the earliest datable reference to zero as a number (it had already been introduced as a symbol/concept, but not a number, in a work on metrics of the post-Mauryan period). Varahamihira's *Brihatsamhita*, among other things, explained the seasons and meteorological phenomena like clouds, winds and volume of rainfall.

A less known text, the *Yavanajataka* of the 3rd century CE, is the first known to mention the decimal system of notation that revolutionized mathematical calculation and is India's contribution to the world of science; and the *Shulvasutra*s, mentioned earlier, contain the principle of what later came to be known as the Pythagoras Theorem. The works of later scholars like Bhaskara I (early 7th century) and Bhaskara II (12th century) made further contributions, including the concept of calculus.

Many of these works were translated into Arabic which resulted in their spread to the whole world via the Arabs. Hence some things like the system of numeral notation used globally today (1,2,3,4 …) came to be named after the Arabs rather than the Indians who invented it! The same holds true for the decimal system.

India also produced literature on the arts of painting, sculpture and architecture that flourished from the earliest times. The *Chitrasutra* is a detailed manual on the style of painting best represented in the cave frescoes of Ajanta of *circa* 5th century CE; it prescribes techniques, colours and the ways to create them from natural sources, as well as themes and their meaning. A class of texts called *Shilpashastra*s developed from the middle of the first millennium CE; they were treatises on architectural planning and construction of not only buildings like palaces and temples but entire cities and forts. Texts like the *Samaranganasutradhara* and *Aparajitaprichchha* are examples of this genre while the *Mayamata and Manasara* from the early second millennium CE are full-fledged texts of the kind. Certain Puranas like the *Vishnudharmottara* and the *Yuga Purana* also devoted sections to explaining principles of art and architecture. Texts that spoke of architecture also often spoke of painting and sculpture since these were an integral part of structural constructions, decorating them as well as representing philosophical concepts to which the construction, like stupas and temples, may have been devoted.

Click on these links for photographs of the gateway of Stupa 1 at Sanchi, *circa* 3rd century – 1st century BCE, showing how sculpture was an integral part of stupa design and architecture (http://www.asi.nic.in/images/wh_sanchi/pages/027.html), the Kailashanatha Temple at Ellora, *circa* 8th century CE, making the same point vis-a-vis temple construction (www.columbia.edu/.../berger/berger.html) and similarly the Sun Temple of Konark, *circa* 13th century (commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wheel_of_Kona...).

10.3: Understanding Indian art: changing perspectives

The aesthetic quality, historicity and validity of ancient Indian art are well-accepted today. Yet, this was not always so and during the late medieval times, the artistic heritage of India had been lost in the mists of time and seemed too remote to comprehend. Its forms, meanings, materials, techniques and methods barely survived in pockets of traditional knowledge. For the rest, it was either misunderstood or ignored. Gradually, the myriad forms, styles, meanings, methods, and processes of ancient Indian art and its many perceptions and interpretations have become intelligible to us in the modern times.

Perceptions of art in colonial India

The rediscovery of the ancient and rich artistic tradition of India began only in the late 18th and 19th centuries, during the period of British colonial rule in India. It is then that the process of retrieving, conserving and understanding the nuances of the culture of the colonized people - their scripts, languages, religions, texts, art and archaeological remains - commenced in earnest. But it was to be a long and arduous journey before Indian art and architecture came to be understood and appreciated on its own terms.

Individual and institutional initiatives

The establishment of institutions such as the Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784) and the Archaeological Survey of India (1871), alongside individual initiatives, resulted in the shared scientific beginnings of the modern disciplines of Indian Archaeology and the History of Indian Art. These were exciting times. Extensive survey and documentation efforts by the likes of Colin MacKenzie (1753-1821), and the decipherment of the Brahmi script by James Prinsep (1838), had given a boost to Indological studies. After several missed opportunities, Harappa was finally unearthed and Marshall's announcement in 1924 pushed back the antiquity of the Indian civilization to the third millennium BCE. This singular discovery gained respect for India as a country with a rich past (Lahiri 2005, xvi).

Value addition: interesting details
The establishment of the Archaeological Survey of India
Memorandum submitted by Alexander Cunningham to Lord Canning in 1861, urging the need for the establishment of the Archaeological Survey of India: "During the one hundred years of British dominion in India, the Government has done little or nothing towards the preservation of its ancient monuments, which, in the almost total absence of any written history, form the only reliable sources of information as to the early condition of the country. Some of these monuments have already endured for ages, and are likely to last for ages still to come; but there are many others that are daily suffering from the effects of time and which must soon disappear altogether, unless preserved by the accurate drawings and

faithful descriptions of the archaeologist." The Archaeological Survey of India was formally established in 1871.
Source: Singh, Upinder. 2004. *The Discovery of Ancient India: Early Archaeologists and Beginnings of Archaeology*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 57-58.

Alexander Cunningham (1814-1893), who became the first Director of ASI, and James Fergusson (1808-1886), who had surveyed the ancient and medieval Indian monuments extensively, represented distinct approaches to the study of India's past. Though both approached the past of the colonized through the biased lens of the colonizer and asserted the supremacy of the "Anglo-Saxon" over the "Asian", Cunningham largely followed the archaeologist's approach whereas Fergusson's enquiries were those of an architectural historian, more concerned with the principles of beauty, style and form that the monuments revealed to him. James Burgess, Henry Cousens, Alexander Rea and others took the survey and documentation work further.

Value addition: did you know?
James Fergusson's views on Indian architecture
On architecture as a **source** of history: "[The architecture of India is] a great stone book, in which each tribe and race has written its annals and recorded its faith." (Fig. 2) On the theory of **progressive decay** of Indian art: "I know of no one characteristic that can be predicated with perfect certainty of all the styles of architecture in Hindostan except the melancholy one that their **history is written in decay**; for whenever we meet with ….. two specimens of any sort in the whole country between Cape Comorin and the Himalayas, if one is more perfect… than the other, we may at once feel certain that it is also the more ancient of the two; and it only requires sufficient familiarity with the rate of downward progress to be enabled to use it as a graduated scale by which to measure the time that must have elapsed before the more perfect could have sunk into the more debased specimen. And I fear the characteristic is no less applicable to all the institutions, both moral and political, of the people than to their arts."
Source: Fergusson, James. 1848. *Picturesque Illustrations of Ancient Architecture from Hindostan*. London, 11-13.

Seminal progress was made during this period in the discovery, documentation and decipherment of India's art and architecture. Some specific art historical concerns were also addressed, such as the beginnings of the study of form and style, notably by Fergusson, and initial attempts at understanding traditional texts and the indigenous cultural basis of Indian monuments and other forms by Ram Raz, Rajendralala Mitra and a few others. Yet, the many-headed and multi-armed gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon often appeared ridiculous and monster-like to European eyes, trained in the realism of Greco-Roman art (Mitter, 1977). To them, these (Indian) "grotesque forms" revealed a "decadent" and "uncivilized culture" in need of reform, which was the moral responsibility of the colonizer (Fig. 1).

Value addition: did you know?

European reactions to Indian sculpture

This is what George Birdwood had to say about the ancient religious sculptures of India, in 1880:
"The monstrous shapes of the Puranic deities are unsuitable for the higher forms of artistic expression and this is possibly why sculpture and painting are unknown, as fine arts, in India."

While the imaginary hybrid forms in art that combined human, animal and plant forms (i.e. the grotesque) in European Gothic art was justified as the ability of superior races to combine intellect with imagination, the grotesque in Indian art was linked to "evil idolatry".

These are the views of John Ruskin on representations of the 'grotesque' in Indian sculpture:

"The reader who has not before turned his attention to this subject may, however, at first have some difficulty in distinguishing between the noble grotesque of these great nations, and the barbarous grotesque of mere savageness, as seen in the work of the Hindoo and other Indian nations..."

Source: Birdwood, Goerge. 1880. *Industrial Arts of India*. London, 125; Ruskin, John. 1904. *Stones of Venice*, III.

Figure 10.3.1: Ganesha – multi-armed and elephant headed god, Hoysaleshvara temple, Halebidu. Such images were described as "monstrous" by the Europeans.
Source: Chedha Tingsanchali

Figure 10.3.2: The Sun temple at Modhera, c. 1075 CE; Indian temple walls are replete with iconic, narrative and grotesque imagery
that lend themselves to being "read" for the purposes of historical reconstruction and cultural interpretation.
Source: Parul Pandya Dhar

The nationalist response

The defence against the alleged superiority of western art propounded by colonial and Orientalist interpretations was sought in an intense, inward-looking, and 'nationalistic' approach that delved into the vast resources of the traditional texts on *vastu,* ***shilpa****, chitra,* the religious canonical literature and non-canonical sources to arrive at the purpose and meaning of Indian art, to extol its virtues and to underline its unique and distinct contributions. Not all western scholars were biased against Indian art, though, and it must be said that Indologists such as E.B. Havell, Heinrich Zimmer and Stella Kramrisch contributed significantly towards an understanding of the inherent symbolism and aesthetic merit of Indian art and architecture.

Origins, meanings and theories of art

At the forefront of investigations on the purpose, meaning and symbolism of Indian art were the works of Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) and Stella Kramrisch. Coomaraswamy delved into primary source material – canonical and non-canonical texts, visual sources as well as other historical sources in a spirited defence of the origins, rationale and antiquity of Indian art and architecture. The origins of the Buddha image in Indian art (Figs. 3 and 4), the symbolism of the *stupa*, the layered meanings and historicity of figures and motifs seen in Indian art, interpretations of the (textual) ***shadanga*** or six traditional limbs of Indian painting (Fig. 6), and the early beginnings of Indian architecture are only a few samplers of the magnitude and intensity of enquiry that was embarked upon by him. Stella Kramrisch's inquiries about Indian art were of a

more philosophical nature. Trained in the Vienna school of art history, she became a devout researcher of the metaphysical underpinnings of Indian art, her most famous works being the voluminous study of *The Hindu Temple* and the *Presence of Siva.*

Figure 10.3.3: Gandhara Buddha, Tokyo National Museum
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_art

Figure 10.3.4: Mathura Buddha, Govindanagar, Mathura Museum
Source: American Institute of Indian Studies, Gurgaon

Value addition: interesting details

The debate relating to the origin of the Buddha image

A. Foucher had derived the origins of the Buddha image in Gandhara art as a derivative of Western Classical prototypes. Coomaraswamy convincingly demonstrated the simultaneous development of the anthropomorphic representation of Buddha in the Mathura school of art, through the prototype of Yaksha images.

Source: Original

Value addition: what the sources say

The six limbs of traditional Indian painting

Ancient Indian texts such as the *Vishnudharmottara Purana* mention six essential limbs of Indian painting. The *Jayamangala-tika* by Yashodhara is a later commentary on the *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana, which mentions the six limbs of Indian painting in verse-form:

Rupabhedah pramanani bhava lavanyayojanam/
Sadrishyam varnikabhangam iti chitra shadangakam

Tr. Differentiation of forms, correctness of proportions, emotional content, gracefulness in composition, similitude or likeness (to nature: in spirit or in form), and differentiation of colours and tones – These are the six limbs of painting (see

Fig. 6).
Source: *Visnudharmottara Purana, Third Khanda,* Vols. I and II, ed. Priyabala Shah, Gaekwad, Oriental Series no. 137, Baroda: Oriental Institute; and Yashodhara's Commentary on the Kamasutra of Vatsyayan.

Figure 10.3.6: Bodhisattva Padmapani, Ajanta, Cave 1, c. fifth century CE.
The Ajanta paintings are fine representatives of *shadanga* or the six limbs of Indian painting.
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ajanta_Padmapani.jpg

The manner of rendition of Indian art also received due attention from some western Indologists such as Stella Kramrisch and Heinrich Zimmer. Thus, it was established that ancient Indian art followed norms and conventions which were vastly different from those of the Greco-Roman world. It was then felt that the norms of realism or naturalism of Classical western art could not be applied to an appreciation of Indian art, which was more conceptual in nature. The ways in which time and space were understood by tradition and its bearing on perspective, proportion, and composition in Indian sculpture were deliberated upon at length. Thus, for example, there was no single photographic perspective from which Indian narrative sculpture could be viewed, nor was there a sequential arrangement of events taking place at different points in time (Fig. 7). The interdependence of traditional art forms with each other and with the basic notions of space, time and other key concepts contained in the philosophical and aesthetic traditions of India, found emphasis in the writings of Kapila Vatsyayan (1968, 1991, 1996). Theories and canons of Indian art as mentioned in ancient texts, were also brought to the fore and analyzed.

Image and text: terminology, form, style, and iconography

The study of ancient and medieval treatises on art and architecture and the relationship of text to practice that had earlier begun in the works of Ram Raz and others, gained momentum with the writings of P. K. Acharya (1927), Manmohan Ganguli, N. K. Bose, Gopinath Rao, Ganapati Sastri and others. Studies in the form, style, and nomenclature of temple art and architecture received a fresh boost in the succeeding phase, with the encyclopaedic efforts of scholars like M. A. Dhaky, Krishna Deva, K. V. Soundararajan, K. Srinivasan, and M. W. Meister. Seminal work was done to arrive at the Indian terms employed to identify elements of art and architecture in their specific cultural contexts – regional as well as national. The technical treatises and their relationship to practice, and the evolution as well as elaborations of forms and regional styles were a chief area of focus. Dictionaries and encyclopedias of art and architecture, researched and published through the marathon efforts of these scholars, have today become standard reference works for the study of the subject.

Other than the technical treatises, the literary flavour of Indian art and the relevance of regional language texts to art and allied cultural practices were also explored by some leading scholars. C. Sivaramamurti's works, for example, emphasized the relationship of art forms to contemporaneous literature – prose as well as poetry.

Value addition: did you know?
Methods of sculpting: 'low relief', 'high relief' and 'in the round'
Sculpture can be carved on a supporting matrix of stone or another material in a manner that: 1. the work of art is only slightly elevated from the surface upon which it is carved. This is called sculpture in 'low relief'. 2. The main body of work is considerably more elevated than the surface upon which it is carved. This is called sculpture in 'high relief'. 3. The final work of art is totally liberated from the surrounding matrix of stone or such material from which it is made. This is called sculpture 'in the round'.
Source: Original

Figure 10.3.7: Maya's Dream, sculpture in 'low relief', Bharhut, c. second century BCE, now in Indian Museum Kolkata;
Note also the different spatial perspectives incorporated within a single medallion: bird's eye view for
the reclining lady (Maya), profile for the elephant, and rear view for the seated women.
Source: American Institute of Indian Studies, Gurgaon

Figure 10.3.8: Didarganj Yakshi, Sculpture in very high relief – almost in the round, c. third century BCE, now in Patna Museum.
The figure is almost completely free of the matrix of stone upon which it has been carved.
Only the rear portion of this sculpture seems to hold on to the stone frame and maintains a somewhat flat surface.
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Didarganj_Yakshi

Art versus craft

The appreciation of Indian art had by now come a long way from the days of colonial biases and prejudices. The metaphysical underpinnings and the conceptual and terminological basis of Indian art had been explored, giving Indian art a kind of exalted and 'other-worldly' status. But the more humanistic, day-to-day, and socio-cultural issues pertaining to Indian art had not been adequately addressed. Scholars such as Niharranjan Ray brought such concerns to the fore. The relationship of craft and art in

the traditional context, their gradual differentiation, and other such aspects were emphasized by him and some others.

Value addition: did you know?

Art and craft: how different were they in ancient India?

The distinction between 'art' and 'craft' was not clearly marked in ancient India. Early textual sources indicate that all products of the human hand which involved skill in their making were called *shilpa*. Vedic literature indicates an awareness of several skills, and the *Mahabharata* and *Jatakas* speak of the 18 traditional *shilpas*. The *Aitareya Brahmana* (VI.5.1) postulates two conditions for a work of art: that (a) it must be a work of skill, and (b) it must be ***chhandomaya***, i.e. endowed with rhythm, balance, proportion, etc. According to this denominator, any work of human skill conforming to the laws of rhythm, balance, proportions, harmony, etc. was *shilpa* (even if it did not involve conscious activity of the mind and produced no appreciable response in the senses and imagination of the viewer).

Yet, many of the ancient literary and visual traditions reflect the highest in human imagination and spirit. The *Aranyakas* and *Upanishads* indicate that there was a great deal of speculation about the nature of visual images, form and formlessness (*rupa, arupa*), form and matter, subject and object, etc. Some of the images and similes in these speculations are drawn from art. From the available artistic works and texts such as the *Natyashastra*, it appears that by the early centuries CE, some *shilpas* such as poetry, drama, dance, music, painting and sculpture had come to be recognized as more significant than those that were products of mere skill and *chhanda*. These arts involved an activity of the mind besides skill and *chhanda*, communicated certain emotions to the observer and generated a unique experience, which was later termed as *rasa* (aesthetic experience).

The term ***kala*** is met later than *shilpa* in texts. In a verse extolling the virtues of theatre, the author of the *Natyashastra* employs *kala* and *shilpa* simultaneously in one verse (see Primary Sources – 2). This suggests that the terms were understood differently. Speculations on the nature of art (aesthetics) are embedded in the tradition of poetics or *alamkara-shastras*, particularly the Navina School represented by Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta (c. ninth century CE onwards). From the early medieval period, the principles governing the art forms were codified in a number of texts devoted to *shilpa* (sculpture) *vastu* (architecture), and *sangita* (music and dance).

Source: Ray, Niharranjan. 1984. *An Approach to Indian Art.* Chandigarh (Reprint), 33-63; Author's personal notes.

Value addition: what the sources say

Reference to art and craft and the scope of theatre, in the Natyashastra of Bharatamuni.

Na tajgnyanam na tatshilpam na sa vidya na sa kala
Na sau yogo na tatkarma natyesmin yanna drishyate

Tr. The Natyashastra mentions that there is no knowledge (gnyana), craft (shilpa), science (vidya), art (kala), yoga, or action (karma) that cannot be depicted in theatre. The usage of *kala* and *shilpa* simultaneously in one verse indicates that the terms were differently understood by this time.

Source: Ghosh, Manmohan ed. *The Natyasastra of Bharatamuni* (second revised edition), Baroda: Gaekwad Oriental Series.

Artists and patrons

The human processes of art production – the makers and benefactors of art - received attention relatively late. The issues of authorship and agency in art were addressed in the works of S. Settar, R. N. Misra (architecture and sculpture) and B. N. Goswamy (medieval painting). The common misconception that all traditional art was anonymous was questioned. The signatures of artists, mason's marks, itinerary and social status of artists, their collectives and organizations, as also the nature of art patronage were sourced in inscriptions, texts and field surveys.

Value addition: common misconceptions

Who were the artists? How were they organized? Who were the patrons?

Although the authorship of a substantial portion of traditional Indian art is unknown, some artisans and artists have indeed left their signatures on their creations. From the Ashokan times, there is evidence that artisans travelled across vast regions that were under Mauryan control, to inscribe the edicts. It has also been established that some Kharoshthi artisans travelled from the north-western regions to as far as the Deccan and at least one of them, Chapada, is known to have left his signature on the edicts.

In ancient and early medieval India, patronage to the arts came from many agencies: the lay community, monks and nuns, royalty, and the rich and elite social groups. It appears that although the occupational groups of potters, weavers, etc. were organized in ***shrenis*** (guilds), the collectives of sculptors and architects were more loosely structured in ***gharanas*** (clans or families) or hierarchical cadres comprising the ***sutradhara, vijnanika, shilpi, rupakara,*** etc. with possibilities of upward mobility in status. Some were conferred high titles which indicated their status and levels of patronage. Although the distinction between the artist and the craftsman remained blurred, the differences between a master-artist and apprentices did exist. Inscriptional notices also point to instances where an artist not only mentions his name but also records his allegiance to a master-artist. There are several inscriptions in which artists extol their merits even as they run down rivals. Often, the artists moved from place to place, in search of newer patrons and assignments.

Source: Misra, R. N. 1975. *Ancient Indian Artists and Art Activity,* Simla;

Settar, S. 1992. "Artists and Craftsmen: their social and economic life" and "Peregrinations of Artists" in S. Settar, *The Hoysala Temples,* Vol. I, Bangalore: Kala Yatra Publications, 83-122; Setter, S. 2003. *Footprints of Artisans in History: Some Reflections on Early Artisans of India*. Mysore: General President's Address, 64th Session of the Indian History Congress.

Recent trends

Interdisciplinary research in art and art history, allied to disciplines such as history, museology, gender studies and anthropology has increased in recent decades. Understanding art as a function of its particular historical circumstance and employing art as a source of history are complementary concerns that continue to engage the historian of art. Understanding specific processes of artistic creation and reception are continuing areas of interest and research.

10.4: Art and architecture: patronage

Inroduction

Patronage can be defined as a multi-dimensional, sometimes loosely codified network of exchanges involving not only the production of art and literature, but also its performance, transmission, reinterpretation and preservation. The giving and receiving may take place between individuals, groups or institutions. The groups are often specialized communities of craftsmen, ritualists or scholars. Exchanges usually involve relations of social disparity which manifest in the exchange of material wealth for a tangible product or an intangible process. Such exchanges bestow status on both the giver and the receiver. Religious benefaction, like gift-giving, characteristically binds relationship with obligation, in contrast with more impersonal market exchanges, where there is no obligation of immediate return. The objects produced in patronage often have limits of formal exchange. Patronage recreates the ideological context of contemporary society and projects the individual or group into posterity; it inevitably involves both fulfilment of wish and self-announcement. Thus *dana* was a gift made by one person to another in a personal capacity or on behalf of the household as in Vedic times.

Patronage networks lie embedded in particular socio-political systems which in turn rest in deeply pervasive and culturally patterned conceptions of power and authority. Patronage in ancient India could take the form of patronage by an individual ruler, by a dynasty, or collective patronage. Religious ideologies were also expressed through forms of patronage. The concept of patronage was earlier usually restricted to the relationship between the patron, often visualized as the king, and the artist who worked for him. Newer studies on different types of patronage demonstrate that this was not the only form of patronage. What is important is that the act of patronage was initially an exchange. Both the categories of persons involved in this exchange and the objects may change. Often, the exchanges involved intangible aspects such as status and legitimation or the acquisition of merit in return for tangible wealth. Patronage can be seen as a

deliberate act of choice when an individual or community decides to donate wealth and/or labour towards the building of a monument.

The first evidence of patronage can be seen from the Vedic period in the form of the ***dana-stuti*** hymns where the bard composed eulogies on the prowess of the ***raja*** in his cattle-raids and skirmishes with the other tribal chiefs. In return, the bard was rewarded with cattle, chariots, etc. In this, the patron was the *raja*, the recipient was the bard or the *brahmana* and the object was the gift given by the *raja.* The purpose of this exchange was the eulogizing of the *raja* which acted as a form of validation and historical memory (Thapar 1992, 19-34). The second type of patronage witnessed during the Vedic times was of the ***yajamana*** on a ritual occasion. The seasonal rituals held in households were essentially domestic, where the ***grhapati*** was the patron and the *brahmana* who performed the ritual was the recipient. The object of the ritual was the well-being of the *grhapati* and his family, though it could also be a sign of social status. An important aspect to be noted here is that the gift made was not personalized as the benefit was for the entire family. There is also evidence of royal rituals, where the *raja* was the patron and the priests were the recipients of wealth, for ensuring the well-being of the clan and the power of the *raja*. It was a means of redistributing some of the wealth acquired by the *raja* and it may also have been a way of legitimizing the political authority of the king.

Like the Vedic hymns, the Sangam poems were also oral, bardic compositions. They were divided into the *akam* and *puram* poems which are said to be love and war poems respectively. The *Velir*/ chiefs/ heroes who are the subject of many *puram* poems were probably chiefs of hill tribes. Interestingly, these poems display a preoccupation with elite concerns or at least a conscious disengagement with mundane subjects like toil and hardships (Mahalakshmi 2009, 38). Resources were primarily for non-regenerative consumption by the ruling elite/ families, and the bards they patronized (Mahalakshmi 2009, 32).

In the post- Vedic period, we witness a change in the forms of patronage. The pillars of the Mauryan ruler, Ashoka, are examples of patronage by the court unlike what we will find in Gupta times. When we look at Mauryan art, what strikes us are the independent pillars which stood freely in space. Even the animals like the lion or elephant that were sculpted on the capitals of the pillars were majestic and compact. This indicates the individualistic taste of the court. The art of the Mauryas did not represent the collective social will as would be the case in later times. According to Ray (1975), the function of Mauryan art was to impress and overawe the populace with the power and majesty of the ruler. The material used for making the pillars was Chunnar sandstone which had to be transported from Benares to Pataliputra and this must have been arranged by the court. This could not have been easy considering that these pillars are monolithic, i.e., made out of a single block of stone. Thus, patronage during the time of the Mauryas had a different purpose altogether from either the Vedic or later times. In a sense, this kind of patronage is an isolated phenomenon as the most common purpose of patronage was gaining merit for the next world rather than impressing the populace.

Figure 10.4.1: Photograph of the pillar from Sarnath
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion_Capital_of_Asoka

Collective patronage

The monumental art of the post-Mauryan period comprises ***stupas***, monasteries, *viharas,* statues, rock-cut caves etc. Interestingly, these were not the work of any royal household or of individuals holding high political or administrative positions. Instead, people from different walks of life came together to get these constructed. Thus, community patronage was *dana* given by a group of people who came together primarily because of a shared religious identity. One can say that community patronage was a cultural and social innovation of this period as religion seems to be the most tangible bond.

There were vital differences between the *dana* made during post-Mauryan times and Vedic times. In the Vedic period, the gift was made on behalf of the entire family or clan but in the post- Mauryan period, it was made by an individual for his/her spiritual benefit etc. Secondly, gifts given were not destroyed in rituals nor did they increase the personal wealth of the *brahmana* or bard. Thirdly, in the earlier system, the patron and the recipient were in a condition of reciprocal dependence and the objects exchanged tended to be inalienable (Gregory 1982). Unlike earlier times, gifts during the Christian era were in the form of money, labour, or construction of single railings of *stupas*, coping stones, cross-bars, pillars, gateways, cells, etc.

In some unique cases, the craftsmen who actually worked on the object of patronage were themselves the patrons, as in the case of the ivory carvers guild from Vidisha who sculpted a part of the gateway at Sanchi. This kind of patronage is important as it reflects the respect meted out to the artisans and other professional classes who could make donations and get it recorded irrespective of their caste. This was not possible

according to the brahmanical *dharmashastra* norms. Thus, the Sanchi evidence indicates that religious identity rather than caste could be the most important binding factor.

Patronage can be studied from the votive inscriptions which identify the donor and his/ her gift. Donations could be made individually, or collectively by a family or a guild. We find monks, nuns, men and women making donations at Sanchi, Bharhut, in the Western Ghats etc. The act of giving that we witness at these sites shows the faith that was reposed in the *sangha* unlike in earlier times when gifts were given to monks in the form of food, clothing, medicine etc., for their maintenance. Since most of the monuments built during this time were large-scale, they required planning and the collection of contribution in money or kind which were done by the monks.

Figure 10.4.2: Photograph of the gateway of Sanchi Stupa 1
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sanchi.jpg

Dana is considered a highly meritorious act and as being particularly so when given to a monk or the *sangha*. Thus, the intention of the donor was clear: acquisition of merit in

return for *dana*. This was at times expressed, but was mostly an unsaid communication. These donations could also be seen as a way of announcing social or economic status, or of trying to preserve the donor's name for posterity. A striking feature of this time is the number of donations made by women who were either queens or ordinary women whose occupation, caste etc. are not mentioned. Many of these gifts also give a distinct sense of history, as patrons at Mathura mention the date, month and year of the Kushana ruler in whose reign the gift was made. One needs to clarify here that the gifts were not made by the royal household. A ***devakula*** has been found at Mat near Mathura. It is believed that deified dead kings were worshipped in the *devakula.* Agarwal (2003, 127) suggested that the Mat shrine was a Shiva temple. But in case it was a temple built by the kings for themselves, this was a unique style of legitimizing their position. The gifts at the *devakula* were made mainly by court officials and not by ordinary/ common people. It may have been a way of showing their faith in the king or a means of maintaining the *devakula.*

Dynastic patronage

The sculpting of images and the building of temples initiated a new pattern of patronage. Gradually, the donation came to include not only the concept of *dana* or gift offered to the deity through an intermediary but also that of *bhakti* or devotion to a deity. Of the several forms of artistic production that received patronage in Gupta times, such as poetry, drama etc, only art will be dealt with here.

Coins

The coins of the Gupta rulers show an extraordinary use of limited space to create an abbreviated narrative. Each coin serves as a statement of some aspect of the ruler's total power. The coins bear intricate symbols of the moral-cosmological continuum, as well as metrical inscriptions that identify the king's deeds on earth and his relation to Indra in heaven (Miiller 1992, 56). The Gupta gold coins are distinctive not only for their visual sophistication but also for the complexity of their inscriptions. The royal die-makers drew on a reservoir of ancient motifs that they appropriated as imperial symbols of power and royal ideals. Thus, the patrons of the coinage, i.e., the kings, were able to impress on the populace their power and royalty.

Figure 10.4.3: Photograph of a Gupta coin
Source: www.prakritigallery.com/.../coins

Figure 10.4.4: Photograph of another Gupta coin
Source: www.prakritigallery.com/.../coins

Temples

When we look at the numerous temples built during this time, we are impressed by the scale and plan of some of the temples as this kind of architecture was in the formative stage. What we need to realize is that these were sponsored by rulers who were keen both to legitimize their position and to earn the merit that is said to accrue from gift-giving. For example, the Deogarh temple refers to the ten incarnations of Vishnu, and we know that the Gupta rulers believed in Vaishnavism. The concept of *bhakti* (devotion) is clearly evident in a sculptural panel which denotes that the devotee needs to take refuge in Vishnu. It is possible that the patron was trying to draw a parallel symbolism.

Figure 10.4.5: Photograph of Deogarh temple
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Deogarh01.jpg

Statues

There are a number of larger than life-size statues, of Tirthankaras, the Buddha, Varaha, a horse, etc., and all of them were erected by people in power unlike in the preceding period. For example, a statue of a horse was built to represent the *ashvamedha* sacrifice that was performed by Samudragupta. The Varaha image is interesting as there are various interpretations of this sculpture. A Varaha sculpture is found in the Udayagiri caves.

Value addition: did you know?
Who is Varaha?
Varaha is seen as the boar incarnation of Vishnu, with the body of a man and the head of a boar. He lifts the earth (personified as a goddess, Prithvi), with his tusk to save her from submersion under the ocean. Varaha wears the *vanamala* characteristic of Vishnu and a lotus appears on his head. The river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna are depicted on both sides of the walls.
Source: Huntington, S. 1985. *The Art of Ancient India-Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina*. New York: Weather Hill, 192-3.

Since Varaha is represented with Ganga and Yamuna with their respective vehicles in this sculpture, it has been suggested that it could be a reference to the region of Madhyadesh, the heartland of the Gupta empire through which the two rivers flowed, and to the similarity between the Gupta king and Varaha who rescues the earth. It is

possible that the Varaha image represented Chandragupta. Thus, we see that art was both a means to impress the populace and to immortalize the patron's religious beliefs. Rich merchants or officials gifted some of the caves with statues for gaining spiritual merit.

Figure 10.4.6: Photograph of Varaha from Udaygiri
Source*:* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Udayagiri_Caves

Pillars

The pillars constructed during this time also reiterated the religious beliefs of the rulers/patrons. For example, Garuda *stambhas* could be erected independently, but were also commonly placed before the Vaishnavite temples at Eran.

Ajanta caves

The Vakataka rulers patronised the excavation and painting of the Ajanta caves. It has been pointed out that it was the combined effort of a high-powered, court-connected 'organizing-committee' whose members took a keen interest in the project for reasons of pride and politics as much as piety (Spink 1992, 65-75). The Ajanta frescos depict

narrative scenes from the Jatakas and those connected with the Buddha and *bodhisattvas*.

Figure 10.4.7: Photograph of Ajanta caves
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ajanta_Caves

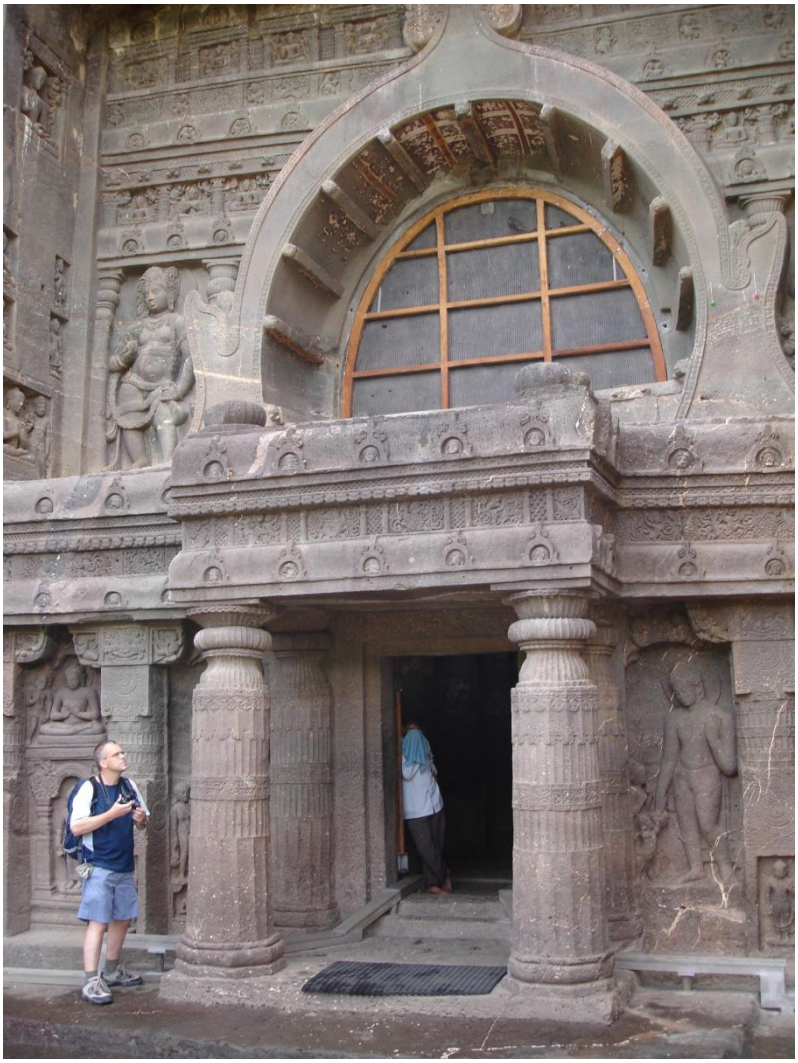


Figure 10.4.8: Photograph of Ajanta caves
Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Aurangabad - Ajant

Explicit patronage by kings

A different style of patronage is seen in the context of the Pallavas and Chalukyas. The Pallava ruler, Mahendravarman I, had the cave temple at Mandagappattu named after him. The temple was called Laksitayatana, i.e., temple of Laksita; Laksita was the epithet used for Mahendravarman I. This cave temple was dedicated to the brahmanical trinity. Free-standing structural temples give us similar evidence. For example, the Kailashanatha temple at Kanchipuram was also called Rajasimheshvara, and was built by Nrsimhavarman II Rajasimha as the name suggests. This temple complex is lavishly decorated and has lions as part of the façade decoration. The Rajasimheshvara temple displays many of the essential characteristics of the evolving southern architectural style such as the storied pyramidal form of the tower above the shrine, the use of rectangular enclosure walls with *gopuras* etc.

Figure 10.4.9: Photograph of Rajasimheshvara or Kailashanatha temple at Kanchipuram
Source: http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3377/3636945999_1d86e826ec.jpg

When we examine the temples constructed by the Chalukyas, the most striking in terms of patronage is the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal. This temple was built in the reign of Vikramaditya by his chief-queen, Loka-mahadevi, and is dedicated to Shiva-Lokeshvara. This temple is also richly decorated. This seems to be the only temple built by a Chalukyan queen during this period of time.

Figure 10.4.10: Photograph of the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virupaksha_Temple

Value addition: did you know?
Importance of the symbolism of water in Pallava

iconography
Temples south India are usually associated with tanks/reservoirs. Water symbolism in general seems to have played an important role in Pallava iconography. One example is from the Varaha *mandapa* at Mamallapuram where a tank extended across the entire front of the cave so that when it was full of water, the devotee would have had to cross the water to reach the cave. It also indicates the practical aspect of kingship, i.e., the need to provide public irrigation facilities.
Source: Huntington, S. 1985. *The Art of Ancient India-Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina*. New York: Weather Hill, 292-310.

Most of the temples built by the Pallavas, Chalukyas or Pandyas were the product of royal patronage. It does seem logical also as the construction of these temples needed a lot of resources which common people could not have harnessed. Secondly, patronage to these temples ensured that they were remembered for posterity. Thirdly, these temples structures inspired awe, and finally, the rulers demonstrated their dynastic religious preference.

Thus, in the post- Kushana and Satavahana period, we do not find collective patronage, perhaps because, apart from the pride in his achievement as builder of a temple or *stupa*, the patron-monarch's prime concern was to ensure that the religious merit of construction accrued to him alone (Dehejia 1992, 44). In fact, in later times, the rulers also tried to buttress their authority by extending patronage to major pilgrimage places (Singh 2008, 622).

10.4: The Mauryan phase: monumental architecture, stone sculptures and terracottas

Introduction

Mauryan art marks the first phase of Indian art wherein patronage by the rulers is evident. Courtly Mauryan art is most notably represented through such monumental architecture as rock-cut caves, palatial buildings, *stupas*, and pillar edicts. On the other hand, evidence of sculptural art and other crafts utilizing wood, stone, and terracotta points to the existence of popular art. Thus, social and political distinctions are evident in the way the art forms evolved. For instance, the capitals surmounting the stone pillars that carried the royal edicts of Asoka had animal motifs which seem to combine both a Buddhist and an imperial ideology. In contrast, the extensive occurrence of terracotta figures and figurines of animals and humans are suggestive of a more popular art form serving religious, decorative, and recreational functions.

The beginnings of Mauryan art can be traced to the time of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya. We learn from the account of the Greek ambassador, Megasthenes, that the capital city of Pataliputra was surrounded by a moat. The ramparts of the fortified city are said to have had 64 gates and some 570 towers. As this ancient city is now densely

populated, only some portions could be verified by archaeological excavations. Many of the buildings and structures were of wood, and were naturally susceptible to damage by fire, floods etc. Next to the palace was a hall, at the site of Kumrahar, designated by archaeologists as an audience hall. This may have belonged to the time of Chandragupta Maurya. We can only visualize the grandeur and scale of this hall from the remains of eighty stone columns. It is believed that these columns were ten metres in height and were set apart by five metres. Thus, the extant remains of the palace and of the audience hall give us a glimpse into the architectural skills of the Mauryan period.

Are pillar-capitals court art?

Some of the art remains of Emperor Ashoka's time were found on pillars in association with inscriptions and seem to be indicators of the imperial style. Examination of the surviving pillars, their technique, polish (or lack of polish), proportions, and treatment etc., reveals that Ashoka did not invent the practice of erecting pillars, although he may have modified them and also been a pioneer in having them inscribed. One can say that his use of pillars represents the culmination of a period of development probably having origins in traditions of erecting wooden/stone commemorative or memorial pillars. The erection of a pillar (as an independent architectural element or as a component) in commemoration or memory of an event can be traced back to prehistoric times. Those commemorative or memorial pillars were regarded as sacred, and sometimes were worshipped as iconic representations of the *linga*. It is likely that un-inscribed pillars served a ritualistic purpose.

Most of the seemingly monolithic, highly-polished, sandstone pillars (with royal edicts engraved on their surface) of Ashoka's time were surmounted with a finely sculpted animal capital. These pillar edicts were generally confined to the Gangetic plains, probably because the pillars were transported by river. The sandstone was quarried from sites like Chunar near Varanasi and would have involved much technological expertise in cutting, polishing, and engraving. More importantly, the area falls within the heartland of the empire which would have been under the greatest central control. It is likely that the Kautilyan administrative system was most effective in this region, which has been aptly designated by historians as the metropolitan state, and was the pivot of the empire (Thapar 2002, 196).

Pillars had certain obvious advantages over natural rock as bearers of royal edicts. They allowed flexibility in the choice of site of the royal edicts. In terms of architectural monumentality, the tall, slightly tapering, polished pillar, (especially the pillar with capital), its height compelling attention from a distance, definitely scored over stark rugged rock (Singh 1996, 4). These inscribed stone pillars have been termed epigraph-monuments by Singh (1996). The idea of inscribing imperial edicts and decrees in stone was modelled after Achaemenid practice, according to Huntington (1985, 44), although the thoughts in the edicts reflect the spirit, tolerance, and benevolence of the Mauryan ruler.

However, contrary to Huntington's view, not all Mauryan pillars bear Ashokan inscriptions, and some that do were probably erected prior to Ashoka's reign. Ashoka's own words confirm the pre-existence of some pillars for, in one of his edicts, he records

that he had erected "Pillars of Law" (*dhamma-thambani*) to propagate his message, and requested that his words also be inscribed on existing stone pillars (Dehejia 1997).

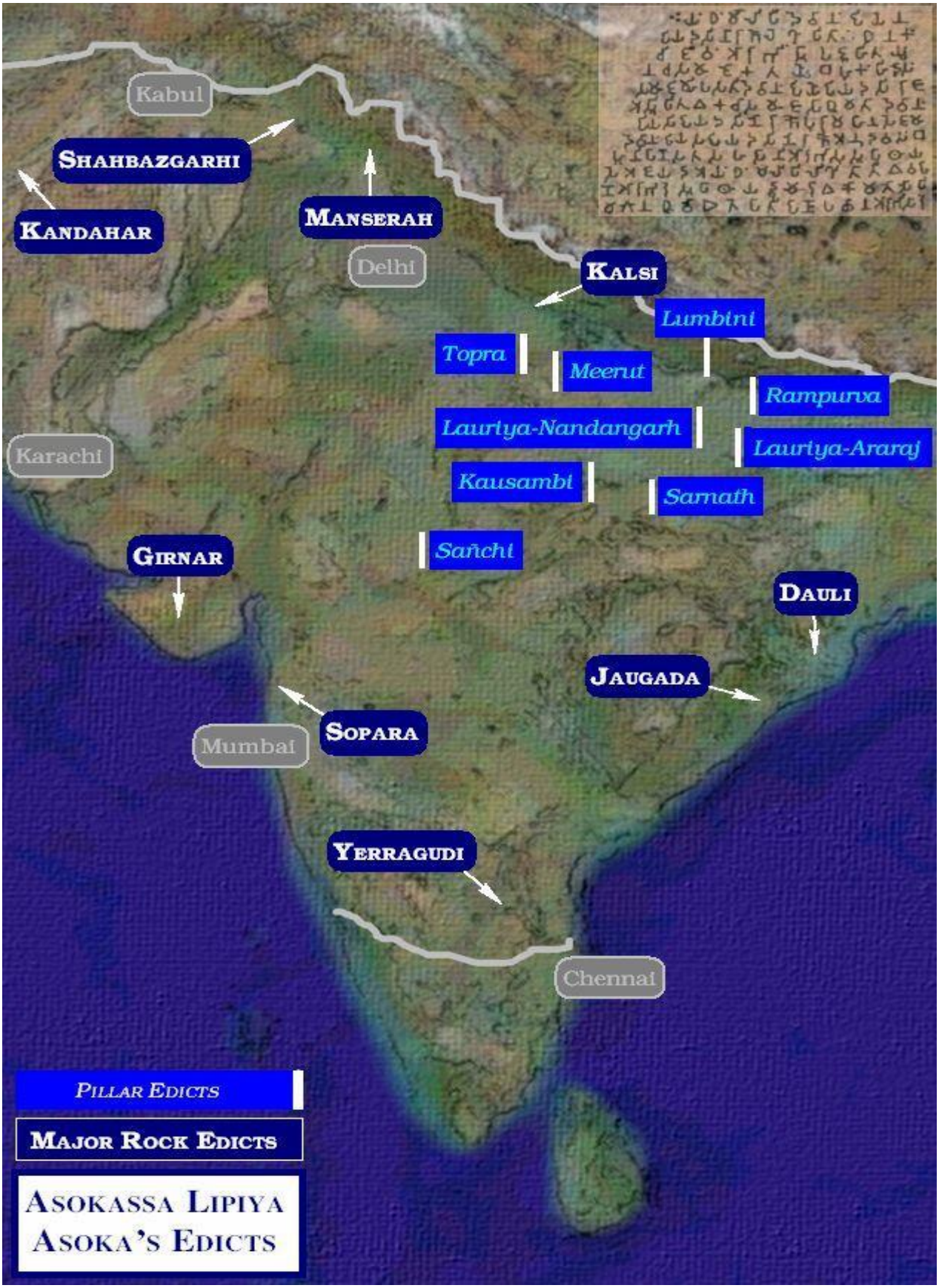


Figure 10.5.1: Map of find spots of pillars

Source: www.mukha.sulekha.com

Description of some of the pillars

Each seemingly monolithic pillar consisted of a long tapering shaft usually made by joining together several cylindrical roundels, the heaviest and, certainly the most difficult portion to quarry and erect. The pillar had a capital, generally in the form of an animal. Both the shaft and the capital were normally carved out of single blocks of stone. The top of the shaft and the base of the capital were joined by a carved inverted lotus or an inverted bell, also of stone, and fastened with the help of a bolt. On top of the inverted lotus is the abacus (platform) which supported the capital or the crowning animal. The abacus was square and plain in the earlier pillars, and circular and carved in the later ones. The pillars were made of two types of stone. Some were of the spotted red-and-white sandstone from the Mathura region, while the others were of the buff coloured, fine-grained, hard sandstone, usually with small black spots, quarried from Chunar, near Varanasi. There was uniformity in the style of pillar capitals which may suggest that they were all sculpted by craftsmen from the same region.

When we examine the symbolism of the pillars and their capitals, we find that the pillars represent the world axis which was thought to separate heaven and earth during the creation of the universe. The earliest record of such a belief occurs in the *Rig Veda*, where it was revealed that Indra slew a demon, thus releasing the cosmic ocean and causing the separation of heaven and earth. The pillar, thus, conceptually rises from the cosmic ocean, emerges from the navel of the earth and reaches towards heaven where it is touched by the sun. It is interesting to note that the extant pillars appear to rise directly from the earth's core, as they do not have platforms at ground level. As a probable allusion to their conceptual source in the cosmic ocean, some of the pillars reached below the earth to the water level (Huntington 1985, 45).

Inherent to the world-axis symbolism is a model for earthly kingship. Indra's heroic actions earned him the position of king of all the gods. He then sanctioned the first terrestrial king by giving him a portable pole to worship. It is possible that Ashoka and his predecessors, who had erected pillars, whether of wood or stone, were symbolically re-enacting Indra's primordial deed. In this way, they may have secured their own kingship by harmonizing it with the cosmic order.

The bull-capital found at Rampurva may have belonged to one of the pre-Ashokan stone pillars. The manner of carving is naturalistic and reminds us of the depiction of such animal motifs on the seals of the Harappan civilization. The proportions of the bull and its physical characteristics have been very well rendered by the sculptor. Below the majestically standing bull is a round drum and then an inverted lotus, or what some authors regard as a bell. It has been opined by a few historians that the bell was a West Asiatic motif which was used by Ashoka in his pillars. It is important to remember that there was continuous contact with the West Asiatic world and there must have been exchange of cultural ideas as also of artisans, and this would have been a two-way process. The so-called bell seems more probably a lotus, regarded from times immemorial as a symbol of purity and fertility in the Indian tradition. The motif has been

associated very closely with the culture of the land and the way the ends fold seems to resemble a lotus rather than a bell.

Value addition: did you know?
Purnaghata* or *mangala kalasha
The idea of *purnaghata* or *mangala kalasha* with overflowing inverted lotus petals (known commonly as 'vase of plenty') has been central to Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. It is a symbol of auspiciousness that developed within the Indian tradition. It is also found as a common art motif at Sanchi, Bharhut etc.
Source: Agrawala, V. S. 2003. *Indian Art*. Varanasi: Prithivi Prakashan, 99-100.

Figure 10.5.2: Photographs of the Rampurva pillar
Source: http://www.stolaf.edu/courses/2002sem2/Art_and_Art_History/265/images2.html

The pillar at Lauriya-Nandangarh, a site on the *uttarapatha* trade route, bears six of Emperor Ashoka's edicts. It extends 12 metres above the ground and its shaft continues below to a depth of about three metres. The whole rests on a square stone platform measuring more than two metres on each side. The addition of such a stone foundation may have been an innovation of Ashoka's reign. The earlier stone pillars were not placed on platforms (following the older practice of erecting wooden pillars). As the stone pillars became grandeur in style and dimensions (some weighed as much as 36,000 kg), it may have become essential to give them basal support. It is possible that the absence of a platform may have caused the earlier pillars to sink or fall (due to imbalance or lack of support) and thus, this innovation might have come about. The pillar is free-standing and not part of any architectural scheme as found in the Achaemenid tradition. The pillar also does not have a fluted shaft as in the Achaemenid style. The Persian pillars stand on bases, either shaped like a bell (that is, inverted lotus), or on a plain rectangular or circular block. The Mauryan pillars, on the other hand, have the lotus on top of the shaft (Ray 1975, 24-28). There may be some similarities between the Persian and Mauryan pillars but their effect was very different. Secondly, we find that the Mauryan type of

abacus and the placing of independently sculpted animal motifs on the top of pillars was absent in the Persian context. Thirdly, some of the motifs used were also different. For example, the motif of geese depicted in a clockwise direction was used to portray movement around the axis of the pillar on the drum. This was a symbolic portrayal of the link between the heavenly and earthly spheres on the pillar of Lauriya-Nandangarh.

We also find the lion motif depicted on pillar capitals. In fact, the use of the lion capital was popularized by Ashoka in the Mauryan sculptural program. According to Huntington (1985, 46), the symbol of lion was borrowed from West Asia along with the development of the idea of kingship. Secondly, she says that the lions depicted in the capitals were stiff unlike the naturalistic renderings seen earlier, which shows that this was a foreign source. If the Ashokan pillars cannot in their entirety be attributed to Persian influence, there must have been a long tradition of wooden carving. Probably the transition from wood to stone was made in one magnificent leap, no doubt spurred by the imperial tastes and ambitions of the Mauryan rulers (Singh 2008, 361).

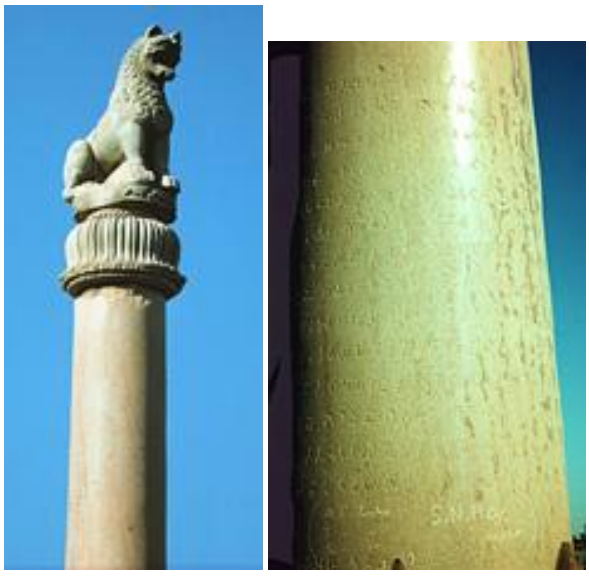


Figure 10.5.3: Photographs of the Lauriya-Nandangarh pillar
Source: http://www.stolaf.edu/courses/2002sem2/Art_and_Art_History/265/images2.html

The lion capital of the Sarnath pillar has been adopted in the 20th century as a symbol of the Indian nation-state. It consists of an inverted lotus or bell base surmounted by a sculpted drum, above which are four addorsed lions. Precious gems may have been placed in the eye balls of the four lions. Atop the lions rested a spoked wheel which has now been lost, and which may have been capped by copper or another metal. The wheel is a well-known solar symbol and its placement at the top was a sign of the pillar's upward thrust. The *chakra* is also an important symbol of the cosmic order in Upanishadic thought. It could also be a symbolic representation of the first sermon of the Buddha which was delivered at Sarnath. The *chakra* is also associated with sovereignty and is mentioned as one of the seven treasures of the ***chakravarti*** king in the *Mahasudassana Sutta* (Singh 2008, 359).

Figure 10.5.4: Sarnath pillar
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sarnath_Lion_Capital_of_Ashoka.jpg

Value addition: common misconception
Sarnath pillar
It has been suggested that the Sarnath pillar was built by foreign artists as, when an attempt was made to replicate this at Sanchi, the attempt failed. Hence, it was opined that the local artisans could not produce such works. What needs to be highlighted is that the Sarnath pillar contained an imperial message and therefore required a mood of isolation and majesty. The sculpture at Sanchi represents a completely different idea and also is of a different genre. It is the expression of a community wishing to revere a monument that it regarded as sacred.
Source: Thapar, Romila. 1997. *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 269

The incorporation of the lion motif here was also important from the Buddhist point of view. As lions symbolised royalty, they could signify both Ashoka and the Buddha's clan, the Shakyas, whose clan totem was the lion. Thus, one can assume that the four lions with their open mouths could have served a dual purpose, and could be connected with both Ashoka whose words were inscribed on the pillar and the Buddha whose teachings were first revealed here.

We also find four animals proceeding in a clockwise direction on the drum; in between the four animals are *chakras*. The four animals are horse, lion, bull, and elephant.

Figure 10.5.5: Picture showing the four animals on the Sarnath pillar
Source: http://www.stolaf.edu/courses/2002sem2/Art_and_Art_History/265/images2.html

Value addition: did you know?
Symbolism of the four animals
In the Buddhist conception of the *Anavatapta* lake, the four animals, namely the elephant, bull, lion, and horse, are the guardians of four outlets which are the source of four great rivers. On the other hand, the Valmiki *Ramayana* includes them amongst auspicious objects assembled for the coronation of Rama and placed them at the four portals of the palace.
Source: Agrawala, V. S. 2003. *Indian Art*. Varanasi: Prithivi Prakashan, 100-101.

The symbolism of the four animals could also possibly be that they were seen as guardians of the four directions of earth. Foucher connected them with the four great events of Buddha's life. According to him, the bull may have symbolized his birth, the elephant his conception (as queen Maya had dreamt of a white elephant), the horse his renunciation, and the lion the Buddha himself. The *chakras* placed below the lions may have referred to the wheel of law or, as Agrawala suggests, could be symbolic of the revolving wheel of time (Agrawala 2003, 101). Taken together, all the symbols associated with the Ashokan pillars had a special Buddhist significance, but they also blended into a wider fabric of cultural meaning. The carving, the polish, and the high-quality craftsmanship visible in this work make it one of the greatest achievements of Mauryan art. The crowning lions are more stylized in comparison to the animals depicted on the drum whose naturalism suggests the contemporary cultural sensitivity towards these animals. This was noticed earlier too, on the Harappan seals, especially in the case of the bull (Huntington 1985, 48).

Beginnings of rock-cut cave and *stupa* architecture

Rock-cut cave architecture was the result of indigenous developments from the practices of the mendicants and ascetics who used natural caves as shelters. Man-made excavations may have been the next logical step that had beginnings in the Gangetic

region. Later, during post-Mauryan times, we find a number of rock-cut caves in the Western Ghats.

Seven rock-cut caves were excavated during the Mauryan period in the Barabar and Nagarjuni hills near Gaya in Bihar. (Gaya is close to Pataliputra, the imperial capital of the Mauryas). Out of the four rock-cut caves in the Barabar hills, three were dedicated by Ashoka. The fourth, the Lomas Rsi cave, does not contain any Mauryan inscriptions. On the basis of its association with the other three rock-cut caves, especially the Sudama cave, (with which it is identical in form except for the façade), it must be considered a monument of Ashoka's time. The Lomas Rsi cave, modelled after wooden architecture, is a good example of the execution of that technique in stone. We find good examples of modelled wooden beams rendered in stone here. We also find at the entrance, a rounded arch which unified the sides of the doorway within which it recessed, to make the actual door to the cave a modest rectangular opening. Within the arched forms above the door were two separate registers. The upper band was carved in imitation of wooden lattice work, meant originally in wooden architecture to admit light and air. The trellis pattern of obliquely laid holes created by inter-crossing bars and crossbars appears from the neolithic period onwards and suggests continuity of the design. Below the trellis is a frieze depicting elephants proceeding in pairs towards '*stupa*-like' spindles that linked arches together. At the extreme ends of the register are noticed *makaras* (crocodile), a primogeneric source and symbol of auspiciousness.

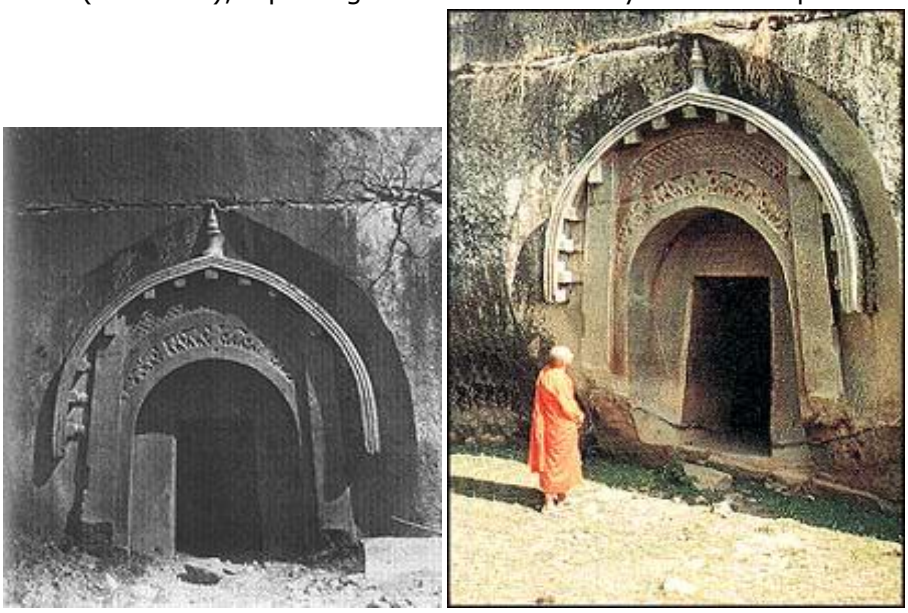


Figure 10.5.6: Photographs of the exterior of the Lomas Rsi cave.
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:CunninghamMauryan.jpg

and www.buddha.net

The interior of the rock-cut Lomas Rsi cave consisted of two connected chambers: a long rectangular hall leading to a small circular room that recreates in stone the form of a thatched hut. While the interior of this was not finished, that of the Sudama cave was completed. From the similarities of these two caves, it can be assumed that the walls of the Lomas Rsi cave were intended to be polished like those in the Sudama cave. Besides, the wall surface of the interior circular room of the Lomas Rsi cave has chisel markings testifying to the incomplete and unfinished nature of the work.

Figure 10.5.7: Photograph of the interior of the Lomas Rsi cave
Source: www.indiastudychannel.com

The three rock-cut caves in the Nagarjuni hills bear the inscriptions of Dasharatha, the grandson of Ashoka. The inscriptions state that these caves were donated to the Ajivikas so that they had a place to stay during the rainy season. This clearly indicates that these caves which began as a temporary place to stay for the monks soon became a permanent place of stay for the religious sects as we would witness in the Western Ghats in the post –Mauryan period.

Stupa: A *stupa* (funerary mound) was erected at Sanchi during the time of Ashoka. Even though Sanchi was not associated with the Buddha, a *stupa* was probably erected there because of Ashoka's close relationship with Vidisha. This *stupa* at Sanchi is supposed to have contained the relics of the Buddha. In later times, the *stupa* became a place of veneration and worship. During the Mauryan period, the *stupa* was made of mud bricks and was surrounded by a wooden railing. It had four entrances said to be aligned with the four cardinal points. The importance of the four cardinal points was that irrespective of from which point one entered, one could circumambulate the *stupa* and the *anda* (dome) would always be to one's right. It is said that the *stupa*-monastery complex located at Taxila also dates to Ashokan times. While the tradition of making *stupas* (originally funerary mounds) may be pre-Buddhist, from Ashoka's time onwards, the concept certainly gained momentum as an important part of Buddhist architecture.

Value addition: did you know?
Deurkothar or Deorkothar - Indian Buddhist site in Madhya Pradesh

Deorkothar in Madhya Pradesh is one of the newly excavated sites. It is situated on the ancient *dakshinapatha* (southern trade route), and lies between Sarnath and Sanchi. The Deorkothar complex boasts four brick *stupas*, the most ever found at a site of this period. The varying sizes of bricks used in construction point to an early date. Motifs such as twirling lotus, conical lotus bud, and a simple flowerpot on a three-tiered pedestal foreshadow early Buddhist art, which can be seen on the railing posts of the largest brick *stupa*. Simple ornamentation and the paucity of human and animal figures suggest these are early attempts at stone railing art. The site also comprises monasteries, a water channel system, and an ancient pathway, many of which contained sherds of high quality northern black polished ware, the pottery of everyday use between 700 and 300 BCE. Such sherds are absent from Sanchi, further indicating that Deorkothar predates Sanchi. There are 63 rock-shelters, many with art dating to the first century BCE, that were likely used by monks for meditation. One painting depicts a *stupa* and a tree surrounded by a railing. Others show social or hunting scenes; men, women, and animals; weapons; and designs.

Source: www.flickr.com/photos

Figure 10.5.8: Deorkothar – a Buddhist site
Source: www.flickr.com/photos

Figure 9: Deorkothar – a Buddhist site
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deur_Kothar

Sculpture

The stone elephant emerging out of the rock at Dhauli is of rougher workmanship than the animal capitals and does not appear to belong to the same tradition as the latter. It was probably carved by local craftsmen and not by the special craftsmen who were responsible for the animal capitals. Nonetheless, the image of the elephant emerging from the rock is impressive and its purpose was probably to draw attention to the inscription nearby which enlists it in the art patronized by the rulers.

Figure 10.5.10: Photograph of the Dhauli elephant
Source: www.art-and-archaelogy.com

Popular art

Sculpture: We know that the art of stone-cutting and carving acquired significant dimensions, both in the assertion of a distinct aesthetic quality and in the techniques of polishing after it had been carved. Stone was a preferred medium for producing large images such as of *yakshas*, *yakshis*, demi-gods as well as other attendant figures, displaying the same perfection in polish as noticed in the pillar capitals. Stone sculpture was evidently the preferred medium of the wealthy and powerful, and is a contrast to the more humble terracotta images (Thapar 2002: 190).

The work of local sculptors illustrates popular art. The patrons of popular art may have been the local governors or the well-to-do people of that area. Several stone sculptures are ascribed to the Mauryan period. Although most of these sculptures do not bear any inscriptions, on the basis of their style, polish and other associated features, we can say that they belong to the Mauryan period. Many of these sculptures are impressive in scale and size (as can be noticed in the life-size images of *yakshas*, *yakshis*, and attendant figures) suggesting that monumental art was produced under the Mauryas. Some of the features noticed on these sculptures were also used in the art of the later period: for example costumes, attributes held in the hands, and the treatment of the body.

A torso of a nude male was found at Lohanipur in Patna. It was made of Chunar sandstone (material similar to that of the Mauryan pillars). Each side of the sculpture has been carefully rendered so that it is a convincing entity from every angle. Its glossy polish is comparable to the Mauryan pillars. Huntington (1985, 52) is of the opinion that it represents a member of the Digambara sect of the Jains who were sky-clad. One cannot agree with this statement as there was no difference between the images of the Shvetambara and the Digambara sects of Jainism in respect of drapery and nudity even during the Kushana period. According to Dundas (1992: 42-3), it was not until the fifth century CE that there was an image of Rsabha wearing a lower garment. What is important is that we find the same naturalism and sensitivity in rendering both human and animal forms with equal ease by the Mauryan artists (Huntington 1985, 52).

Figure 10.5.11: Photograph of the Male torso
Source: www.elportaldelaindia.com

A well-preserved, life-size statue of a female *chauri* (fly-whisk) bearer was found from Didarganj (Bihar). On the basis of technique, polish, and surface adornment, this image seems to belong to the Mauryan period. Some historians think that the voluptuous form of the body, the distinctive clump of hair in the centre of the forehead and heavy anklets relate the image to a later period, that of the Kushanas. However, the Mauryan features of this image override the other considerations. The figure, with a bare torso, wears a hip-hugging garment and is heavily bejewelled. This type of feminine drapery along with abundant jewellery became a common feature in later times. The technique beautifully demonstrates how stone has been used to outline bodily features as well as depict the heavy folds of the drapery falling between the legs. Since the figure holds a *chauri* in her right hand, it may be the depiction of an attendant at court or to important people of that time.

Figure 12: Yakshi from Patna
Source: www.stolaf.edu

Two male images have also been found at Patna. They characteristically share many similar features in their rendering with that of female *chauri*-bearer from Didarganj. Like the *chauri*-bearer, stone matrix is most noticeable in the lower part of the body. The drapery over their lower garments resembles that from Didarganj. Here again, the size and volume are important as they create an imposing and powerful effect like that of the Didarganj *yakshi/ chauri*-bearer. The stone used for these statues was brownish-red-sandstone, unlike others where Chunar sandstone was used. The corpulence of the figure has led to the assumption that he was a *yaksha* or male spirit, but the *chauri* in his right hand indicates that he was an attendant like the Didarganj female statue.

Figure 10.5.13: Headless and with head *yaksha* from Patna
Source: www.stolaf.edu

Also found are large figures of *yakshas* and *yakshis* who were part of a distinct plastic tradition and cannot be connected with the court art. These figures are colossal and massively built and were earthy in form. The drapery consisted of a turban on the head, a scarf thrown on the shoulders and arms, and a *dhoti*. Some of the figures are heavily ornamented. The beginning of these cult figures can be noticed from the Mauryan period. A number of such figures belonging to a later date are also found at places like Sanchi and Mathura. It may be surmised that they were earlier modelled in clay or wood and now stone was being used.

Figure 10.5.14: Photograph of the Didarganj Yakshi
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Didarganj_Yakshi

Terracotta: Objects for use by ordinary people were made in more perishable material, unlike the stone pillars and capitals which were artistic statements of the royal court meant to draw attention to the message engraved on the pillars. Terracotta figures and figurines, both human and animal, appear to have been popular and can be contrasted stylistically with the far more sophisticated pillar capitals of stone. Terracotta moulds have been found in large numbers and the repertoire included forms that were linked to fertility cults. Terracotta as a medium was used for sculpture, pottery, ornaments and toys. Both hand-modelling and moulding techniques were used simultaneously. As these objects were fragile, preservation must have been a problem. Few of the terracotta objects were inscribed and we do not find major changes in their technology. The site of Taxila has yielded terracotta objects such as primitive idols, votive reliefs, toys, dice, ornaments, and beads. Toys were mostly wheeled animals and amongst the ornaments

were round medallions, similar to the *bullae* worn by Roman boys, which were meant to act as a protection against the 'evil eye' (Thapar 1997, 270).

Of the terracotta figurines excavated at Bulandibagh in Patna (ancient Pataliputra), a number of female statues are outstanding. One of the female statues was garbed in an elaborate dress and headdress. The figure wore a full skirt, which bulges at the hips as if supported by hoops, and her head is adorned with a complicated headdress with two lobes jutting out from two sides just like the skirt below. The drapery noticed here is very different from that on the Didarganj *cauri*-bearer. Moreover, the vitality and naturalism of this specimen, especially the facial expression, a slight turn of the head, and its naturalistic pose can rank it amongst the finest in ancient Indian terracotta figurines. And, such art works enlighten us about the variety and different accomplishments of the Mauryan art.

10.6: The early stupa: Sanchi, Bharhut, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda

During the period c. 200 BC to AD 300, there was increasing institutionalization of religious activity. Different religions were **patronized** by different sections of society and this led to the beginnings of more permanent and elaborate religious structures. Most of the surviving sculpture and architecture of this period is religious in nature. This lesson will focus on four prominent sites to understand some aspects of early religious architecture — the Buddhist monastic sites of Sanchi and Bharhut in central India, and Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh.

One of the most significant features of this period is the expansion and proliferation of Buddhist stupa complexes in the subcontinent. This was made possible through the patronage of wealthy merchants, guilds and some royal donations. Interestingly, this is also the period for the evolution of the temple, which housed Vaishnava and Shaiva images. Early examples can be traced to Sanchi and Nagarjunakonda, among other sites.

Buddhist religious architecture consisted of *viharas* (residences of monks), stupas (repositories of remains or relics) and *chaityas* (places of worship), some free-standing and some cut into rock at hillsides. The term *chaitya*, derived from *chita* (funeral fire/ charred remains), means a sacred space but is more specifically used to refer to Buddhist shrines. Many of the early Buddhist cave shrines contained a stupa (heap, mound or tumulus) as the object of **veneration** and large, independent stupas gradually came to form an **integral** part of Buddhist monasteries. The stupa represented many things in Buddhist tradition.

Value addition: did you know?
Stupas in Buddhist tradition
A stupa, originally a funerary mound, stood for the centre of the universe in Buddhist tradition. It symbolized the *parinibbana* of the Buddha, it was a place for storing relics of the Buddha and other monks, and it was a place of veneration, worship and pilgrimage for monks and lay people.
Source: Original

The tradition of making stupas was pre-Buddhist. The funerary association, though, goes back to the Vedic period as mounds were raised on ashes or charred remains.

Value addition: what the sources say
Stupas in literature
There are no references to the practice of making stupas in Vedic literature. The earliest surviving stupas are, in fact, associated with Buddhism, as, for instance, the mud stupas at Piprahwa and Vaishali. The *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* tells us that eight stupas were built over the cremated remains of the Buddha, and two more over the cremation vessel and embers of the funeral pyre.
Source: Singh, Upinder. 2008. *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*. New Delhi: Pearson Education.

Initially, relics of the Buddha were enshrined in the solid core of stupas but, thereafter, relics of the Buddha's disciples and famous monks were similarly enshrined. Veneration and worship were transferred from the relics to the stupa itself, whether or not it contained relics.

The stupa quickly became an emblem of the Buddha's *dhamma* and an important part of Buddhist monasteries. The Mauryan king, Ashoka, played a pivotal role in popularizing the stupa and, according to the *Avadana* texts, is supposed to have redistributed the Buddha's relics among prominent towns in the land and ordered the construction of stupas over them.

The stupa itself is a hemispherical mound with a barrel-vaulted roof built over a sacred relic either of the Buddha or of a sanctified monk or saint. The relic was generally kept in a casket, which was placed in a smaller chamber in the centre of the stupa. There were four types of stupas in all—*saririka*, *paribhogika*, *uddesika* and **votive**.

Value addition: did you know?
Stupas vs. Vedic sacred enclosures
In many ways, the stupa was a complete contrast to the Vedic sacred enclosure. The latter required temporary sanctification of an area for the sacrifice, while the stupa was a permanently demarcated sacred place. The burial and worship of bodily relics went against the pollution rules of Brahmanism, which preferred to dispose of cremated remains. The relics in the stupa, however, symbolized the presence of the Buddha or the person being venerated, and the stupa became an object of worship.
Source: Thapar, Romila. 2002. *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

Bas-reliefs carved on the railings and gateways of the stupa show scenes from daily life. They also depict scenes from the *Jataka* stories or tales associated with the previous lives of the Buddha. At each of the four cardinal points in the stupa, there was a break in the railing for a large gateway. This gave the sculptors further scope to show their skill.

Location of stupas

The stupa-monastery complexes were usually located near urban centres, and along major trade and pilgrimage routes. Some marked places connected with important events in the life of the Buddha. Most of the major stupa-monastery complexes were located on the outskirts of great cities of the time—Sanchi outside Vidisha, Amaravati outside Dharanikota (the Satavahana capital) and Nagarjunakonda outside Vijayapuri (the Ikshvaku capital). Bharhut was also clearly located on the outskirts of a city, which has not been identified so far.

The idea of having a distinctive building to identify a religious location was relatively new. It was prompted partly to distinguish these buildings from domestic architecture. Votive inscriptions also had to be clearly displayed, narratives in the life of the Buddha made accessible together with the message they carried, and the occasional congregations for worship on particular days had to be accommodated. All these considerations required the structure to be impressively large. In addition, size was also a pointer to power and prestige and this is demonstrated in the increasing size of the stupa. The free-standing complex had early beginnings at Sanchi and Bharhut, and also Kaushambi. However, with the spread of Buddhism, monastic complexes became more elaborate.

Cave monasteries probably grew out of the initial attempt at seeking isolation but the system soon outgrew this need. When the monastery was located on a trade route in a hilly area, the rock-cut complex was natural, particularly in the western Deccan where the volcanic rock was layered and, therefore, easy to excavate. The ground-plan of the *vihara* or monastery was based on its being the residence for a group of monks and, hence, evolved from domestic architecture. A large courtyard was surrounded by rows of small rooms, which were the cells for the monks. The courtyard sometimes had a votive stupa used for the **convocation** of monks. Small votive stupas near the larger ones contained the funerary remains of devout members of the laity. Information on these and other mortuary practices of the early Buddhists is derived almost entirely from archaeology and inscriptions.

Sanchi

An important stupa site that can be dated to Ashoka's time is at Sanchi in Raisen district, Madhya Pradesh. This was situated on the outskirts of ancient Vidisha (present Besnagar), one of the prominent cities of Ashoka's empire and also, according to Buddhist legend, the birthplace of his wife, Devi. Sanchi is referred to as Kakanava or Kakanaya in early Brahmi inscriptions found at the site. In the 4th century AD, it was known as Kakanadabota, while an inscription of the late 7th century refers to it as Bota-Shriparvata. The site is not associated with any event in the Buddha's life. The monumental remains on the Sanchi hillside include stupas, pillars, shrines and sculptures ranging from the 3rd century BC to the 12th century AD. These provide a remarkable history of Buddhism in stone, spanning around 15 centuries.

Value addition: interesting details

John Marshall and Sanchi

Around 1919, noted archaeologist John Marshall completed an extraordinary campaign of excavation and architectural restoration at Sanchi, which was made possible by the patronage and support of the Bhopal *darbar*. He also tried to make the collection of the Sanchi museum as complete as possible by bringing back some of its antiquities, as, for instance, the capital of a *torana* (gateway) pillar, which had earlier been presented to the Central Museum at Lahore. Even today, Marshall's stamp is evident in Sanchi—on its monuments that he carefully uncovered and restored, on the *khirni* trees that he planted around them and even on the house where he frequently stayed which is locally called 'Marshall house'.

Source: Lahiri, Nayanjot. 2005. *Finding Forgotten Cities: How the Indus Civilization was Discovered*. Delhi: Permanent Black.

There are several stupas at Sanchi. The brick core of the largest stupa (also called Stupa no. 1 or the Great Stupa) was built in Ashoka's time and this is known from the fact that it springs from the same floor level as the pillar that bears Ashoka's schism edict. Many of the sculptural panels represent important events in the life of the Buddha. For example, the Buddha's enlightenment is represented by the Bodhi tree with an umbrella over it or a railing around it. The first sermon at Sarnath is represented by the wheel, while the stupa symbolized the Buddha's death.

Value addition: interesting details
Buddhist Sanchi sculptures with Hindu motifs
At Sanchi, the birth of the Buddha is usually represented by his mother, Maya, seated on a lotus. The most developed form shows Maya flanked by two elephants holding round pitchers in their trunks. Interestingly, this is very similar to the Hindu Gaja-Lakshmi motif and, therefore, it is likely that the Buddhists appropriated and adapted this motif, and gave it a new meaning. Also, many of the relief carvings at Sanchi (and, in fact, other early Buddhist sites) represented symbols and ornamentation that had nothing specifically Buddhist about them. For instance, Sanchi sculptures represented *yakshas*, *yakshis*, *nagas* and *nagis*.
Source: Original

Figure 10.6.1: View of stupas at Sanchi

Source: Personal

Figure 10.6.2: The Great Stupa, Sanchi

Source: Personal

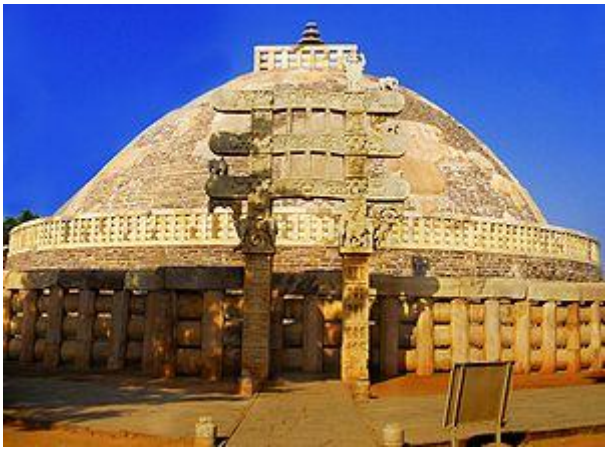


Figure 10.6.3: The Great Stupa railings, Sanchi

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanchi

Many other stupas, shrines and monasteries were built at Sanchi over the following centuries. Renovation and enlargement also took place, largely due to the initiative of traders, artisans, cultivators and members of royal families from the Deccan and central India. The stupas followed a fixed style—they had a stone **circumambulatory** path (*pradakshina-patha*), two flights of stairs (*sopanas*) at the base, stone railings (*vedikas*) at the ground and a stone umbrella (*chhatra*) at the very top. Stone railings and four gateways (*toranas*) at the cardinal points enclosed the entire sacred space.

While Stupa no.1 did not yield any relics, Stupa no. 2 contained a relic box with bone fragments of ten Buddhist monks. Stupa no. 3 had the relics (bone fragments and beads) of the Buddhist monks Sariputta and Mahamogalana. Coins and semi-precious stones have been discovered from under the floors of the monastic cells. Other structural remains at Sanchi belonging to c.200 BC-AD200 include pillars, a pillared hall and shrines, including an apsidal one. Recent excavations at Sanchi have revealed ancient mud dams for storing rainwater. Hence, the monks were obviously involved in water harvesting, not just for providing drinking water but also for irrigating the surrounding fields.

Over 800 inscriptions have been found at Sanchi, the vast majority being votive inscriptions of the 2nd century BC-2nd century AD. Although the Sanchi monastery was established in Ashoka's time, royal patronage did not play a very important role in its later growth. Interestingly, there were a near-equal number of female and male donors at Sanchi, most of them coming from central India, but some from Rajasthan, Maharashtra and other parts of north India as well.

Bharhut

The Bharhut stupa has been completely destroyed over time and its parts are scattered over different museums, particularly in the Indian Museum at Kolkota. The sculptures range from the 3rd century BC to the end of the 2nd century AD, while its inscriptions have been dated to the 2nd-1st centuries BC. One of the most striking panels at Bharhut belonging to the railing pillars of the western gateway depicts the Magadhan ruler Ajatashatru's visit to the Buddha, considered an important event in Buddhist tradition. The panel is divided into four scenes, the last one showing the king performing obeisance to the footprint-bearing throne symbolizing the Buddha. A Prakrit inscription on the side reads *Ajatasatu Bhagavato vandate* or 'Ajatashatru worships the Lord (Buddha)'. This panel shows that royal patronage was an important source of prestige for ancient religious sects.

Figure 10.6.4: Ajatashatru's visit to the Buddha

Source: ASI

Another railing medallion from Bharhut depicts a huge sea monster on the verge of swallowing a boat and its crew. An inscription suggests that this was a scene depicting the *Jataka* story of a merchant, Vasugupta, who was saved from this disaster by meditating on the Buddha. Though this particular sculpture depicts seafaring merchants, other merchants also appear as donors at religious establishments.

Figure 10.6.5: Bharhut railing medallion

Source: Personal collection, Upinder Singh

There was a close connection between an increase in the riches of religious institutions and their institutionalization and organization. By patronizing such institutions and extending financial support, one could express devotion/ piety and also improve one's social status. The Bharhut inscriptions mention monks, nuns, laywomen and laymen as donors. They came from places ranging from Pataliputra in the east to Nasik in the west, indicating that Bharhut attracted pilgrims and patrons, not only from central India but from further away as well.

Nagarjunakonda

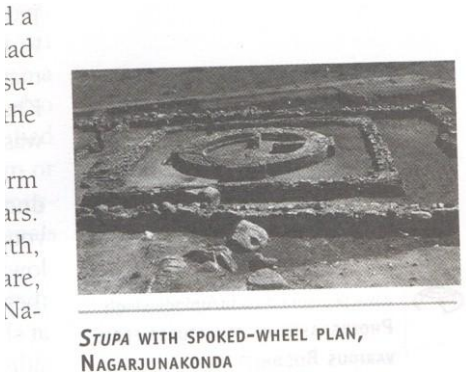
Nagarjunakonda in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, at the eastern edge of the Deccan plateau, is one of the most important sites. This site represents the ancient site of Vijayapuri, capital of the Ikshvaku dynasty (c. AD 225-325). Here, in a valley surrounded by ranges of the Nallamalai hills and the river Krishna, was a magnificent royal city with royal residences, bathing *ghats*, tanks, memorial stones, Hindu temples, Buddhist stupas, shrines and monasteries. Most of these structures were, however, destroyed when the site was submerged due to the construction of the Nagarjunasagar dam.

The site contained over 30 Buddhist establishments belonging to around four sects in the 3^{rd}-4^{th} centuries AD.

Value addition: interesting details
Importance of Buddhist establishments at Nagarjunakonda
The Buddhist establishments at Nagarjunakonda are important to our understanding of Buddhist art as well as changes within the Buddhist religion in the 3rd century AD. This is one of the few places in south Asia where epigraphic and archaeological evidence collaborate in defining the various sectors of this religion at the time. The inscriptions mention at least four Buddhist sects—the Mahaviharavasin, Mahishasaka, Bahushrutiya and Aparamahavinaseliya, of which the last is frequently mentioned.
Source: Huntington, Susan. 1985. *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*. New York and Tokyo: John Weatherhill Inc.

There is great variety in the architecture and arrangement of the Buddhist complexes here. Some of them consisted of a stupa, monastery and *chaitya*, and others of a monastery and *chaitya*. There are several isolated stupas and also small votive stupas. It has been estimated, from the size and number of dwelling spaces, that the monastic community of Nagarjunakonda may have numbered about 450.

The body of the stupas at Nagarjunakonda often consisted of a spoked-wheel plan made of bricks, the spaces in between filled with mud. This spoked-wheel plan translated a key Buddhist symbol—the *chakra*—into an architectural feature, also endowing the structure with greater strength.



STUPA WITH SPOKED-WHEEL PLAN, NAGARJUNAKONDA

Figure 10.6.6: Stupa with spoked-wheel plan, Nagarjunakonda

Source: ASI

Another notable feature of these stupas were the five free-standing pillars or *ayaka* pillars that were raised on a platform at the four cardinal points. They were supposed to represent five important events in the Buddha's life—his birth, renunciation, enlightenment, first sermon and death.

NAGARJUNAKONDA: BUDDHA IMAGE; REMAINS OF *STUPA* WITH *AYAKA* PILLARS; STADIUM

Figure 10.6.7: Buddha image, Nagarjunakonda

Source: Personal collection, Upinder Singh

core. The Bhattiprolu *stup*

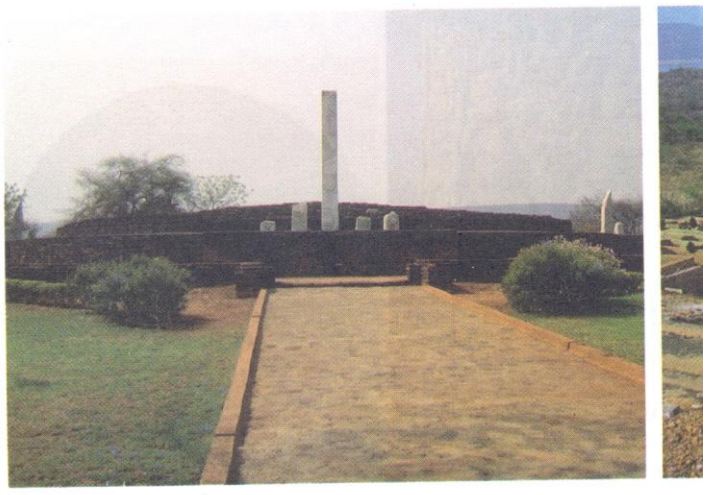


Figure 10.6.8: Remains of stupa with *ayaka* pillars

Source: Personal collection, Upinder Singh

Most of the published information about Nagarjunakonda concerns the various Buddhist stupas, shrines and monasteries found scattered over the site. However, the remains of nine Hindu temples were also identified near the citadel, and ten were located further upstream along the banks of the Krishna. Inscriptions associated with these temples have helped identify their dates and religious affiliations. Five of these temples were dedicated to Shiva, Karttikeya or Devasena (Karttikeya's consort), and one to Vishnu. A large temple complex was dedicated to Sarvadeva or to all the gods. The remains of

what may be a goddess shrine were also identified. In addition, a four-tiered stepped tank, close to the western gateway of the fortified citadel on the Peddakundelagutta hill, has been labelled an *ashvamedha* tank due to the discovery of bones, perhaps of a horse and goat, found outside it.

The temple complexes at Nagarjunakonda did not have a uniform architectural plan. Some consisted of a single shrine, others had more than one—each with a *mandapa* (pillared hall). Most of the temples had their entrance to the east. The temples were mainly built of brick, while stone was used for the pillared *mandapas*. However, one of the temples showed the use of wood. As very few sculpted architectural fragments have been found in the temple areas, one can conclude that the walls of the temples were relatively plain.

Another significant discovery is of 22 *chaya stambhas*. These were memorial pillars, most of them carved with scenes from the life of the deceased person. One of these pillars commemorated the Ikshvaku king, Chantamula, and was set up by 30 women members of his family. Apart from rulers and nobles, these pillars also commemorated dead soldiers, a military commander, an artisan and religious people.

An interesting discovery in a monastery at Nagarjunakonda was that of lead coins, along with the earthenware die for making such coins. Hence, monks were evidently making coins, although Buddhist texts tell us that members of the *sangha* were not supposed to handle money.

It is also important to note that the Nagarjunakonda inscriptions record gifts made by Ikshvaku royalty to Hindu temples and Buddhist monks, thereby showing the close relationship between the Ikshvaku kings and religious establishments.

Amaravati

Amaravati is another major site in the Andhra region and is supposed to mark the site of ancient Dhanyakataka, an important town in the Deccan and capital of the later Satavahanas. The large stupa-monastery complex located here is close to an impressive megalithic burial. A fragment of what may be an Ashokan inscription suggests the possibility that this complex dates to Ashoka's time, with six occupational periods ranging from the 2nd century BC to the 2nd/ 3rd century AD.

The Amaravati stupa was the largest in the Andhra country and is referred to in ancient inscriptions as a *mahachaitya*. However, due to indiscriminate excavation and removal of sculpted stones from the site from the late 18th century onwards, the drum of the brick stupa, the circumambulatory path and a few railing uprights are all that survive here.

While the spoked-wheel plan appears at many sites like Nagarjunakonda, the Amaravati stupa had a solid brick core. There is another interesting contrast between the stupas of Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. While the dome, railings and gateways of the Amaravati stupa were profusely ornamented with beautiful relief carvings, the railing fragments from Nagarjunakonda are all plain and uninscribed.

In addition, the sculptures at Amaravati are more mature than those at the central Indian sites of Sanchi and Bharhut, as the relief scenes are less crowded and the figures are more natural and graceful. While these sites offer the earliest sculptural representations of important episodes in the Buddha's life and of the *Jataka* stories, a common link between the *Jataka* scenes at Bharhut and Amaravati is that they are labelled, which is of great help in identifying the sculptures.

Nearly 200 inscriptions were discovered at the site of Amaravati and 108 of these provide data on patronage. Monks and nuns form the largest category of donors, followed by women and trading groups. It is evident that the site of Amaravati had great sanctity, thereby explaining the prominent part played by monks and nuns in sponsoring religious architecture at the site.

Value addition: did you know?
Images of the Buddha in Andhra
The Andhra Buddha images have massive bodies and wear robes with distinct folds. The representation of the Buddha in anthropomorphic form did not, however, completely replace the older convention of depicting him in symbolic form. At Nagarjunakonda, for instance, relief panels depicting the Buddha in symbolic and anthropomorphic form occur side by side.
Source: Singh, Upinder. 2008. *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*. New Delhi: Pearson Education.

One can also make note of the Buddhist monastic complex at Sannathi located south of Gulbarga in Karnataka, which dates from the 3rd/ 4th century BC to the 4th century AD. In the absence of a detailed excavation report, it is difficult to compare its resource base and patronage patterns with those of Amaravati. However, it shared several features of the latter in terms of style and themes represented on the stupa. The stupa itself seems to have served as the focus of a large mortuary landscape as is clear from the various

memorial slabs to the dead that have been uncovered here. In this way, it was different from the *mahachaitya* at Amaravati.

In conclusion, one can make a brief mention of the stupa-monasteries of the north-west. Takht-i-Bahi in Pakistan and Guldara in Afghanistan are two important sites. The former had a large monastic complex that included several connected clusters of cells arranged around courtyards, stupas and sculptures. Early Buddhist shrines and stupas existed in Taxila as well. The city of Sirkap, that was founded by the Indo-Greeks and later occupied during Shaka and Parthian rule, revealed a ruined Buddhist apsidal temple of the 1st century AD that was flanked by stupas. Stupas were built by the Kushanas as well. The one built by Kanishka at Purushapura to enshrine the Buddha's relics became the centre of a major monastery.

Several stupa-monastery complexes outside Taxila, like the Dharmarajika (which was surrounded by a ring of miniature stupas), belong to the early centuries AD. In contrast to the stupas of central India, those of the north-west had a tower-like appearance with sculptural decoration on the base and dome. Although there was a significant expansion of Buddhist monasteries in Gandhara and northern Afghanistan in the early centuries AD, very little remains of their original structures. One should note, in conclusion, that the establishment of Buddhist stupas did not come to an end but declined.

It is clear, therefore, that permanent religious structures, of the sort that have been discussed in this lesson, reflected the increasing institutionalization of religious sects. Furthermore, the emergence of refined sculptural and architectural styles connected with these religious structures reflected the rich cultural vitality of this period. Patronage, in turn, came from varied layers of society—royal and non-royal—who had financial resources and wanted a validation of their social or political status.

10.7: The rock-cut caves: Western Ghats, Udayagiri and Khandagiri

The rock-cut caves of western and eastern India

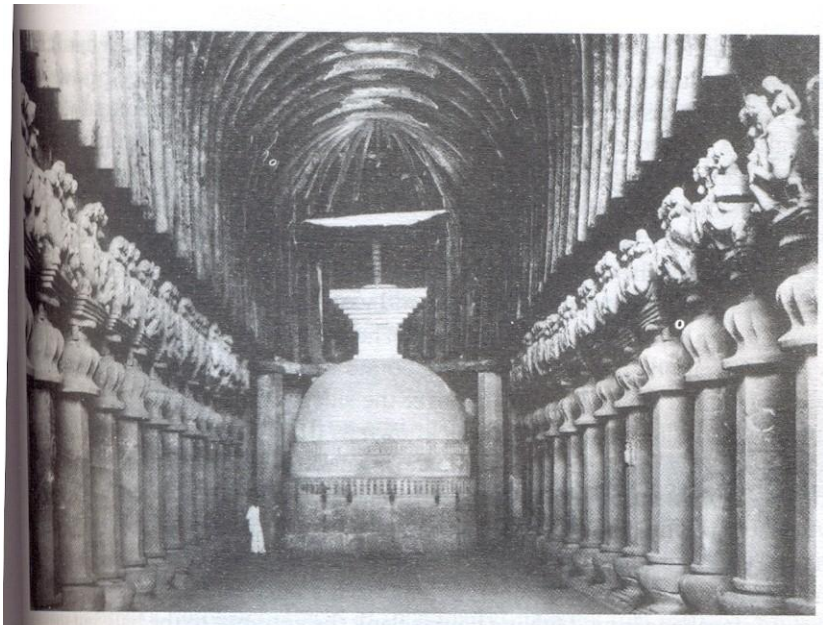
The period c. 200 BC-AD 300 saw an expansion in the number and scale of Buddhist monastic complexes, which included *viharas* (residences of monks, monasteries), stupas

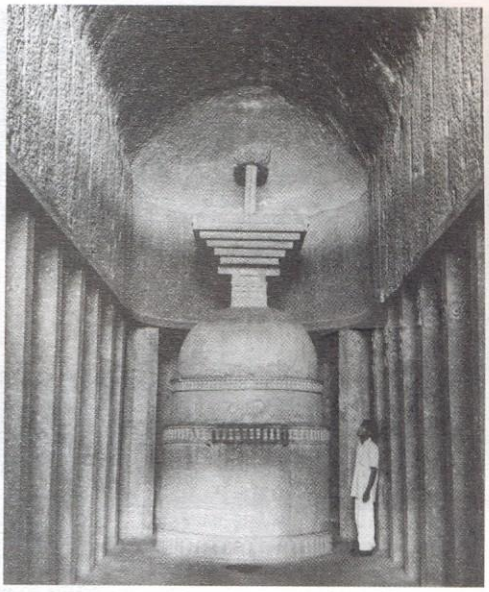
(repositories of remains or relics) and *chaityas* (places of worship). The term *chaitya* means a sacred space but is more specifically used to refer to Buddhist shrines. Many of the early Buddhist cave shrines contained a stupa as the object of veneration and large, independent stupas soon came to form an integral part of Buddhist monasteries.

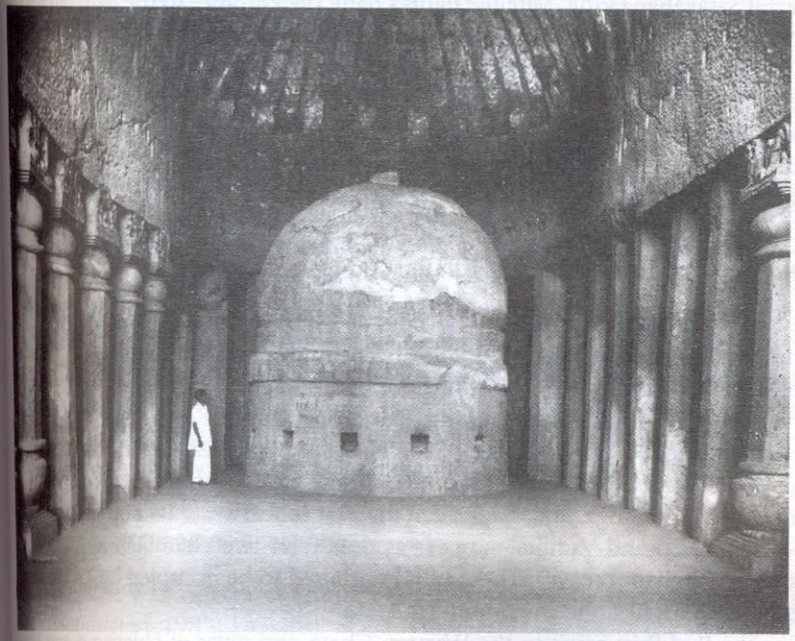
The beginning of cave architecture can be traced to the Maurya period, specifically to the Lomash Rishi and Sudama caves in the Barabar hills to the north of Bodhgaya. These caves were modelled on wooden architectural **prototypes**. They were simple in plan, with plain but highly polished interiors. The longer sides of the caves run parallel to the rock face. The *chaitya* was cut parallel to this and consisted of a rectangular chamber leading into a small circular room.

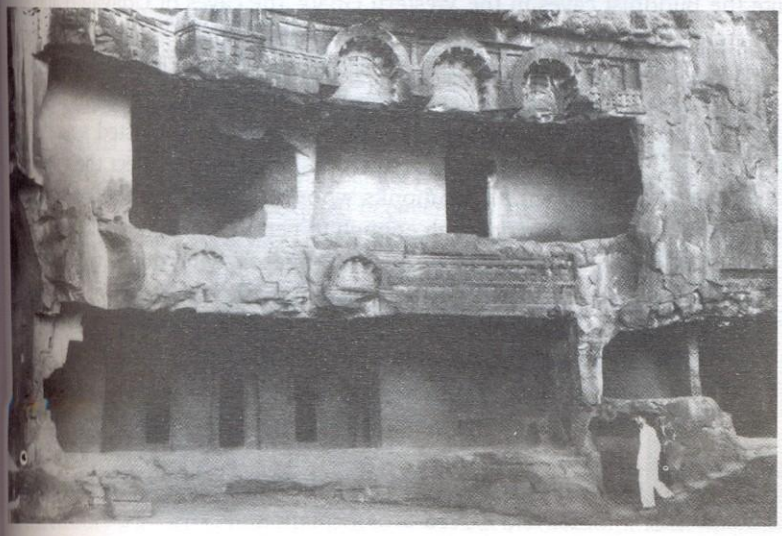
Buddhist caves of western India (Western Ghats)

The rock-cut caves of western India can be dated to between c. 100 BC and AD 200. Two distinct phases of architectural development have been identified with regard to these caves. The first phase belongs to c. 100 BC-20 BC and is represented at sites such as Ajanta, Nasik, Kondivte, Bedsa, Bhaja and Pitalkhora. The second phase belongs to c. AD 50-200 and is represented by additions made at Nasik and Junnar, and fresh excavations at Karle and Kanheri.









Chaitya halls: Karle; Bedsa (top); Kanheri (middle left); Bhaja *chaitya* hall entrance (middle right); view of Bhaja caves (bottom)

Figure 10.7.1: *Chaitya* halls: Karle; Bedsa (top); Kanheri (middle left); Bhaja *Chaitya* hall entrance (middle right); view of Bhaja caves (bottom)

Source: ASI

The Kondivte cave (c. 100 BC) in the Western Ghats represents the next stage from the early cave examples in the Barabar hills. Here, a rectangular hall led into a round stupa chamber with a narrow circumambulatory path around the stupa.

Value addition: interesting details
The Kondivte cave interior
The difference in stages represented by the Kondivte cave lies in the fact that the *chaitya* is laid perpendicular to the entrance. Thus, worshipers could face the object of worship as they entered the *chaitya*. The light from outside would also illuminate the entire chamber, including the stupa.
Source: Original

A subsequent stage in the development of Buddhist cave architecture is marked by the introduction of two rows of pillars. This created a path for walking down the aisle, circumambulating the stupa through the **apse** and walking back through the other aisle. This is the typical rock-cut Buddhist *chaitya* of western India and an example of this is the large *chaitya* hall at Bhaja (100-70 BC) with its impressive horseshoe-shaped entrance arch. Cave 3 at Pitalkhora is another example of a typical *chaitya* of western India. At Bedsa, apart from an **apsidal** *chaitya* with pillars, there is an apsidal structure without pillars that connects into cells on three sides, which were apparently living quarters for monks.

Value addition: interesting details
The *vihara* cave at Bedsa
The so-called *vihara* cave at Bedsa is unique among surviving examples of rock-cut architecture. It is possible that the central apsidal hall began as a *chaitya* and was converted later into a *vihara*. It is also possible that the cave was an experiment in form.
Source: Huntington, Susan. 1985. *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain.* New York and Tokyo: John Weatherhill Inc.

The early *viharas* in western India were made on a simple plan. They usually consisted of cells arranged round a central hall with open verandahs. Each cell contained a rock-cut bed and sometimes a rock-cut pillow. In addition, small **niches** that were created in the walls might have been used for placing lamps. Some of the caves are richly carved, as, for instance, the verandah and entrance of *Vihara* 19 at Bhaja. Some relief panels represent *Jataka* stories while the gods Surya and Indra flank the entrance to the central chamber. The *viharas* at Pitalkhora also have impressive relief sculptures.

The second major phase of Buddhist cave architecture in this area belongs to the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. Some caves are directly associated with the Satavahana and Kshatrapa kings and their patronage. An example of this is the *chaitya* hall at Karle that has an inscription mentioning the Kshaharata ruler, Nahapana, and has been dated to c. AD 120 on this basis. The architectural features are more or less the same as in earlier caves but the scale of construction is increased. There is also greater sculptural ornamentation of the outer walls. Among the sculptures there is a variety of *mithuna* couples (a male and female who represent auspiciousness). The interior of the *chaitya* has a stupa as the object of veneration. The pillars bear elaborate capitals.

Vihara 3 at Nasik belongs to a slightly later period. It is also called the 'Gautamiputra Cave' as it has inscriptions belonging to this Satavahana king's time. It consists of a central hall surrounded by monastic cells. The outer walls and doorway are profusely decorated with sculptures. Another interesting feature of this cave is that the back wall of the central hall bears a relief of a stupa flanked by two female worshippers and two celestial beings.

Other notable rock-cut caves include Kanheri, the largest cave site in India. Here, Avalokiteshvara is depicted in Cave 90, which also has a Buddha *mandala* (an arrangement of Buddhas associated with the various directions) carved on one of the walls. A smaller *chaitya* hall belongs to the reign of Yajnashri Satakarni, the last powerful Satavahana king. *Mithuna* figures flank the entrance to the hall but they are not as graceful as the ones at Karle.

The earliest Ajanta **murals** in *Chaityas* 9 and 10 also belong to this period. The mural in *Chaitya* 10 shows a king accompanied by his retinue venerating the Bodhi tree and a stupa, and then passing through a gateway. There are paintings from the *Jatakas* as well. There are two sets of early paintings in *Chaitya* 9—one represents herdsmen and animals, while the other depicts *nagas* approaching a stupa.

Rock-cut caves of eastern India (Udaygiri and Khandgiri)

The Udayagiri and Khandagiri hills in Puri district, Orissa, are located about 6 km west of Bhubaneswar, near the ancient site of Shishupalgarh. These hills house the oldest Jaina rock-cut caves in the country and continue to be occupied by Jaina ascetics to the present day. This chain of hills is made up of sandstone rock, which is easy to excavate but not very suitable for intricate carving. In addition, the stone is brittle and the caves have been considerably damaged due to weathering.

The Hathigumpha inscription, carved over an overhanging rock in front of Cave 14 (or the Elephant Cave), connects these caves with the Mahameghavahana or Chedi dynasty of Kalinga, and dates them to c. 1st century BC to Kharavela's reign. Two other kings of this dynasty, Kudepasiri and Vaduka, appear as donors of two chambers in Cave 9 or the Manchapuri Cave.

Unlike the Buddhist caves in western India, the caves at Udayagiri and Khandagiri do not have congregation halls or shrine chambers. Over time, however, some of the cells were enlarged and converted into shrines. The cells were excavated wherever the rock permitted and were not laid out to any plan. These cells were connected to each other by rock-cut steps.

Value addition: interesting details
Monastic cells at Udayagiri and Khandagiri
Almost all the cells at Udayagiri and Khandagiri are so small that they are not high enough for a man to stand straight. Besides, they are not wide enough to stretch out fully. The doorways are very low and the monks had to bend low to enter. All these aspects point to the hard life led by the ascetics who occupied these caves. Another interesting feature is basic shelves cut into the walls that might have been used to store things. Most of the cells have an upward slope. This may have served the purpose of a pillow or been geared towards preventing the accumulation of water in the cell.
Source: Singh, Upinder. 2008. *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*. New Delhi: Pearson Education.

The interior of the cells was bare and plain while the outer walls and brackets were sometimes ornamented.

There are two main types of caves in the Udayagiri and Khandagiri hills—those with and without pillared verandahs. In the verandahs where pillars were absent, cells were cut along one or more of their sides. The pillars are generally square in shape. Some caves

are two-storeyed, as, for instance, the Ranigumpha (or Queen's Cave), which is the largest and best preserved. It consists of a large rectangular courtyard with cells on three sides. A small chamber, flanked by the relief sculpture of guardian figures and rich sculptural decoration on the outer walls, projects into the courtyard on either side.

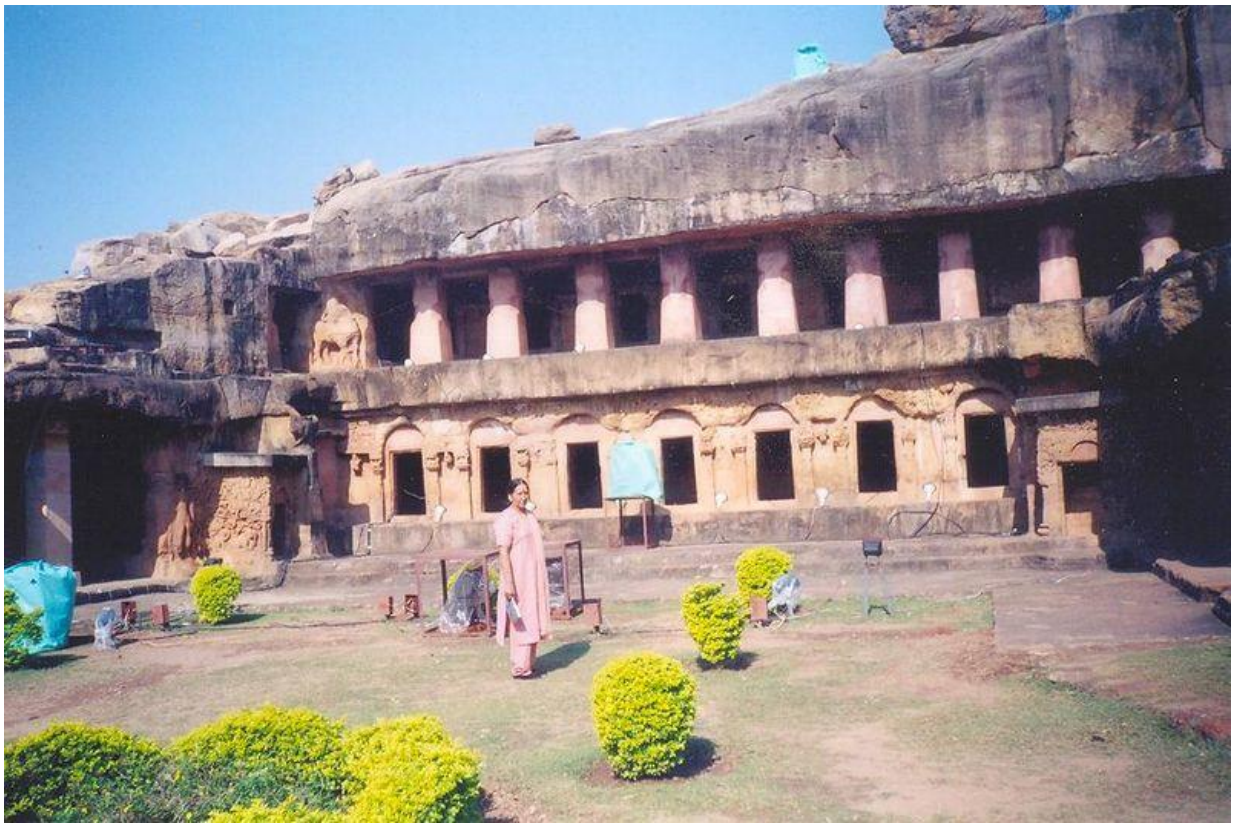


Figure 10.7.2: Ranigumpha/Queen's cave

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ranigumpha_(cave_no-1),_Udayagiri.jpg

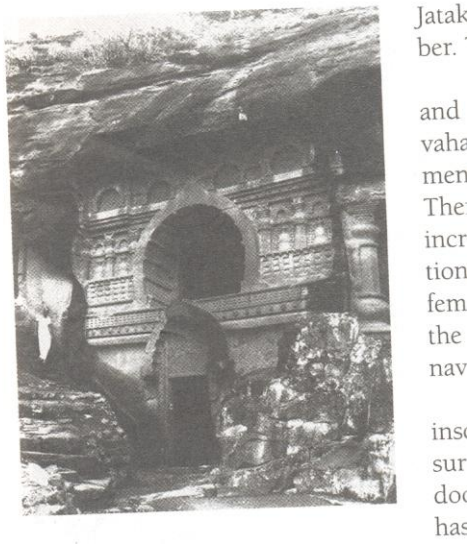


Figure 10.7.3: Nashik cave 18

Source: ASI

Traces of lime plaster on the cave walls indicate that they were once plastered. Reservoirs (sometimes stepped ones) cut into the rock-bed would have stored rainwater for the monks.

Value addition: new leads
Similarities between cave ceilings and mud hut ceilings in eastern India
Interesting similarities have been noticed between the arched ceilings of the rock-cut caves and the ceilings of mud huts in eastern India. The verandah roofs rested on pillars like the bamboo or wooden posts of a hut. The roofs also project outwards in a manner similar to that found in thatched or tiled huts to break the flow of rainwater.
Source: Singh, Upinder. 2008. *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*. New Delhi: Pearson Education.

There is an apsidal structural temple made out of large laterite blocks on the top of the Udayagiri hill. This is one of the oldest apsidal structures found in eastern India.

The sculptures in the Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves are somewhat similar to the sculptural ornamentation at early Buddhist sites. Some of the shared symbols include the honeysuckle design and winged animals. Other commonly occurring symbols are the

nandipada, *srivatsa*, *svastika*, trees, lotuses and snakes. Animals like the horse, lion, elephant and bull also occur.

Value addition: did you know?
Religious or other affiliation of relief sculptures
Interestingly, none of the relief sculptures can be identified as clearly depicting scenes from the lives of the *tirthankaras* or from Jaina mythology. The walls of the verandah at the Ranigumpha bear some relief scenes that seem to be connected with royalty. One of these appears to represent the march of a victorious king who might, in fact, be Kharavela. A relief scene in the Manchapuri Cave seems to represent a group of devotees, while another depicts a group of four people arriving on an elephant and then standing with folded hands.
Source: Original

One should note, in conclusion, that the eastern Deccan has early Buddhist rock-cut architecture, too. A rock–cut *sangharama* and a rock-cut circular *chaityalaya* have been discovered in Guntupalli and are dated to the 2nd and 1st century BC, respectively. On the whole, the expansion in Buddhist monastic complexes was accompanied by increasing sculptural and architectural experimentation. This is an indicator of the cultural vitality and versatility of the period.

10.8: Sculptural styles (up to *circa* 300 CE): Gandhara, Mathura and Amaravati

During the Kushana period (late 1st century-3rd century AD), the Afghanistan-Gandhara region and Mathura emerged as two major centres of artistic activity. Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh also developed its own distinct style of art. These three prominent regional styles of art are the focus of this lesson.

Gandhara school

The Gandhara school of art surfaced in present-day Afghanistan and north-west India and flourished between the 1st and 5th centuries AD. However, it continued till the 7th century in parts of Kashmir and Afghanistan. Although its beginning goes back to the Indo-Bactrian period, its peak is seen in the first two centuries AD. Most of the Gandhara sculptures are made of stone. The sculptors initially used blue **schist** and green phyllite.

However, **stucco** or lime plaster began to be used in the 1st century AD and it almost completely replaced stone by the 3rd century.

Value addition: interesting details
Stucco as an artistic medium
There are several reasons for the replacement of stone by stucco in architecture and sculpture in the early centuries AD. The inexpensiveness of stucco could have been one of the factors behind its popularity. However, the greater flexibility and freedom that it allowed the artist was another factor in its replacement of stone.
Source: Huntington, Susan. 1985. *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*. New York and Tokyo: John Weatherhill Inc.

North-west India was an area of cultural confluence and it witnessed an intermixture of art forms. Thus, Gandhara art evolved as a mixture of styles, one of which was the Graeco-Roman form of Alexandria. From here, sculpture in bronze and stucco travelled along the west Asian trade routes to influence **Hellenistic** and Indian artists. The themes of the Gandhara school were Indian but its style Graeco-Roman. The emergence of Gandhara art coincided with the expansion of Buddhist **theology**, which accommodated multiple divinities. These, therefore, were ideal themes for sculpture and painting.

As a result, images of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* were popular themes of this school of art, hence it is sometimes referred to as Graeco-Buddhist art.

Figure 10.8.1: Gandhara style Buddha

Source:
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/3/3c/SeatedBuddhaGandhara2ndCenturyOstasiatischeMuseum.jpg/467px-SeatedBuddhaGandhara2ndCenturyOstasiatischeMuseum.jpg

The facial features and curly/ wavy hair, muscular body, and finely delineated folds and pleats of robes are the major elements of the Graeco-Roman influence. Standing Buddha images are very common.

Value addition: interesting details

Features of the Gandhara standing Buddha images
Most of the standing Buddha images of the Gandhara school have the following features: the Buddha is barefoot and his robe covers both shoulders; his left hand seems to be holding his robe; his right hand is raised in the protection-granting gesture or *abhaya mudra*; his curly hair is piled on top of his head in a knot or *ushnisha*; a halo encircles his head; and his elongated earlobes recall his early life as a prince, when they were weighed down by ear ornaments.
Source: Singh, Upinder. 2008. *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*. New Delhi: Pearson Education.

In addition to these, there are also seated Buddha images. The gestures or *mudras* of these figures include the *dharmachakra mudra* or teaching posture and the *dhyana mudra* or meditative pose. Some of the Buddha images have a moustache. Interestingly, in this school of art, Greek gods are shown paying obeisance to the Buddha. Another fascinating, unique example of Gandharan art is the image of the emaciated Buddha.

Value addition: did you know?
The fasting Siddhartha (Buddha) image
The image of the fasting Siddhartha is one of the most dramatic visual contributions of the Gandhara school to Buddhist art. It depicts Siddhartha during a period of extreme asceticism prior to his enlightenment, which led him to espouse the 'middle way'—a path between luxurious indulgence and extreme renunciation. According to Buddhist texts, Siddhartha ate only one grain of rice a day during this phase.
Source: Huntington, Susan. 1985. *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*. New York and Tokyo: John Weatherhill Inc.

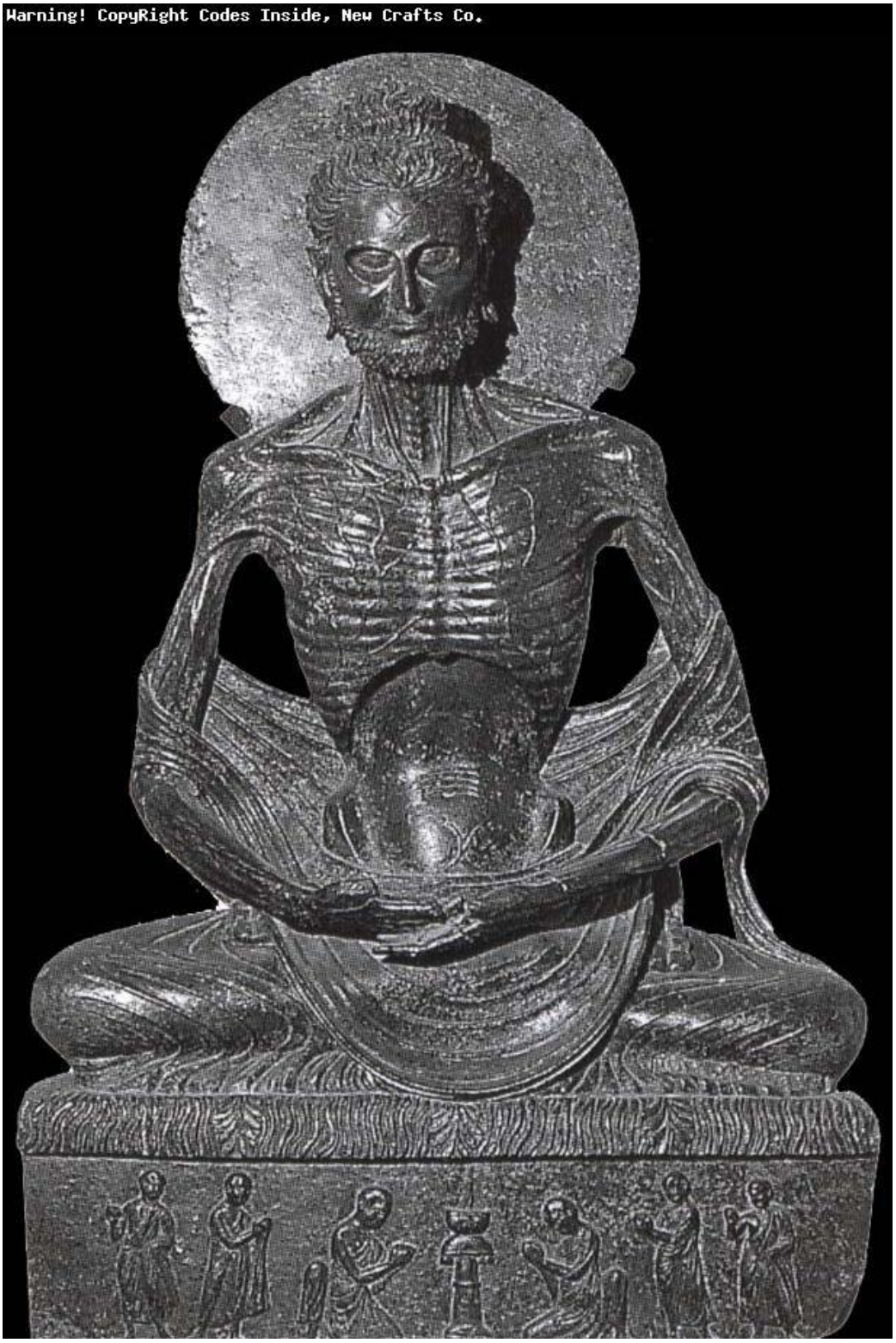


Figure 10.8.2: Fasting Siddhartha

Source: http://www.oilpainting-frame.com/china/oil-painting-picture-42547-Fasting%20Siddhartha,%20end%20borrow%20century%20v.Chr-2e%20century%20n.%20Chr-unknow%20artist.htm

Apart from Buddha figures, the Gandhara school also produced *bodhisattva* images. The figure of Maitreya with a vase in his left hand seems to have been a popular theme and so was Avalokiteshvara or Padmapani who holds a lotus. The *bodhisattva* figures, unlike the Buddha images, were usually heavily ornamented and had elaborate hairstyles and/ or turbans. Some of them wear sandals and sport moustaches.

The Gandhara artists depicted incidents connected with the present and past lives of the Buddha in their sculptures and relief panels. However, they handled the themes differently from the artists of the early Buddhist sites of central India and Andhra. Thus, for example, in the Gandhara reliefs, the Buddha's birth is represented by his mother, Maya, grasping the boughs of a *sal* tree, with the child emerging from her right side or standing near her foot. Indra is shown receiving the baby with his attendants.

Value addition: interesting details
Other sculptural themes of the Gandhara school
Other popular themes of the Gandhara sculptures and relief panels are the *yaksha* king, Panchika, and his consort, Hariti. Panchika was associated with wealth and Hariti, according to Buddhist tradition, was a *yakshi* who was transformed from a child devourer to a protectress of children by the Buddha's intervention.
Source: Original

A range of commoners is also depicted in Gandhara sculptures and reliefs. They are shown in a distinct Graeco-Roman style.

The Gandhara school also produced metal sculptures. These include a metal **reliquary** found in a large, destroyed stupa at Shah-ji-ki-dheri near Peshawar, the site of the Kushana king Kanishka's capital, Kanishkapura.

Value addition: what the sources say
The Gandhara metal reliquary
The lid of the Gandhara metal reliquary box bears three figures—a Buddha sitting on a lotus, with Indra and Brahma on either side. The casket has images of seated Buddhas, similarly flanked, and a standing figure that may represent Kanishka. Kanishka's name is inscribed on it and it is likely that this casket was once enshrined in a magnificent stupa located in the capital during this king's reign.
Source: Original

Some art historians believe that the Gandhara school registered very little stylistic change over time. However, it is possible that such changes did occur but have not been properly identified. It has also been pointed out that Gandhara art should not be taken as a uniform style due to the diverse influences affecting it and that it should be analysed keeping this in mind.

Mathura school

Mathura emerged as a major centre of artistic activity during the Kushana period. It was one of the prominent cities of north India, being the southern capital of the Kushanas and an important centre of crafts, trade, religious activity and artistic production. The Mathura school set the pace for much of the artistic style in north India and images made here were exported to other cities like Kaushambi, Ahichchhatra, and Sarnath, and even up to Mahasthangarh in the east. The sculptors of this school used red sandstone quarried at Sikri.

There are stylistic similarities as well as variations between the Gandhara and Mathura schools of art. The sculptures share iconographic similarities but the style is different in that the Mathura school is wholly indigenous and shows no trace of foreign influence. It can, in fact, be seen as a furtherance of the sculptural traditions of Besnagar, Sanchi and Bharhut. Moreover, the craftsmen of Mathura were particularly skilled at free-standing sculptures.

The themes of the Mathura school of art are varied, including *yakshas*, *yakshis*, *nagas*, *nagis*, Buddhas, *bodhisattvas*, Jaina *tirthankaras* and Hindu deities.

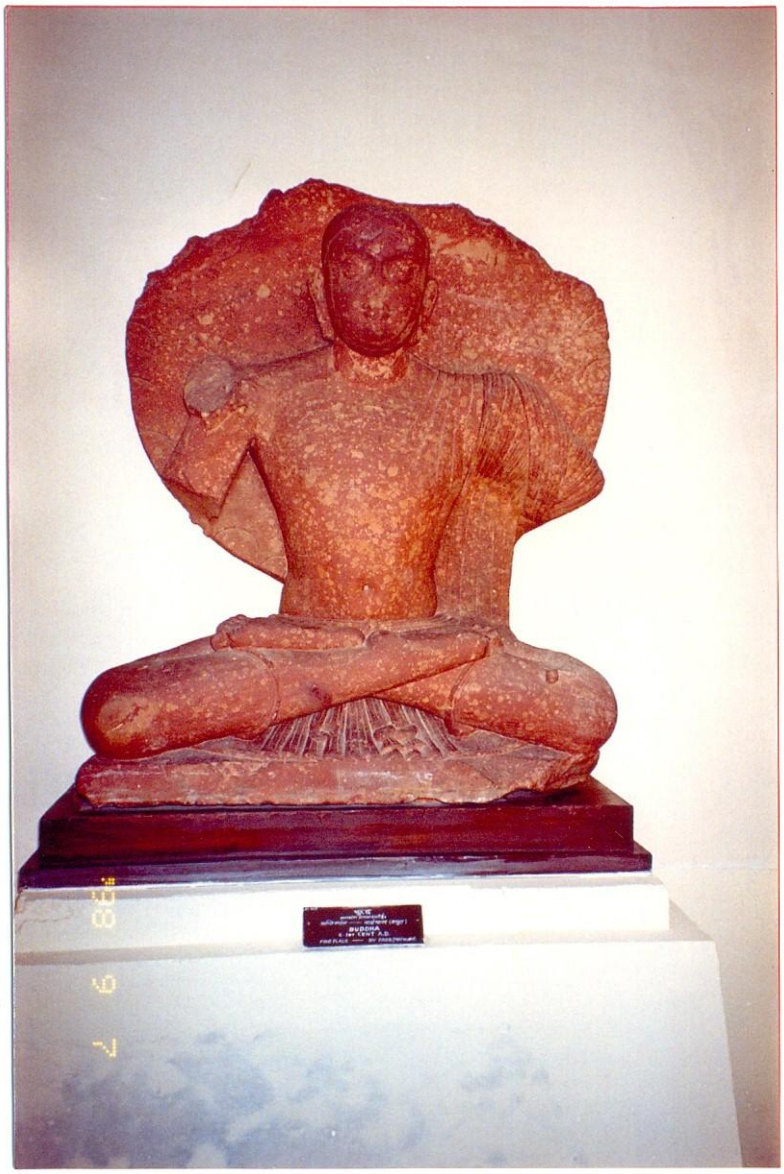


Figure 10.8.3: Buddha circa 1st century AD

Source: Personal

Figure 10.8.4: Naga in anthropomorphic form

Source: Personal

There are several seated Buddha images. The Buddha is usually cross-legged on a throne, with his right hand raised in the *abhaya mudra*.

Value addition: interesting details
Features of the Mathura seated Buddha images

The seated Buddha image of the Mathura school has the following features—his head is either shaved or adorned with curly hair, and he has a coiled *ushnisha*, which resembles a seashell. He wears a transparent *dhoti*, one end of which is draped across his chest and left shoulder. His head is surrounded by a halo, above which is the carving of a *pipal* tree. He is flanked either by two small *bodhisattvas* or by Indra and Brahma. One should note here that despite obvious stylistic differences between different schools of art, a broadly standardized account of the appearance of the Buddha seems to have been in effect.
Source: Original

A massive image of the Buddha found at Sarnath is considered to be typical of the Mathura style. There are, in addition, separate images of the *bodhisattvas*, especially Maitreya, Vajrapani and Avalokiteshvara. The Mathura school also produced narratives from the Buddha's life.

The Mathura school also produced a large number of Jaina images that were found at Kankali Tila. These include a pillar fragment with four standing *tirthankaras* carved on its sides. In addition, there is a seated *tirthankara* image with its head broken. There is some similarity between the *tirthankara* images and those of the Buddha. Both sets have long earlobes and some of them share an auspicious mark called *urna* between the brows. The differences lie in their nudity, the emblems on their chests, and their postures, gestures and attributes.

Figure 10.8.5: Canopied head of Parshvanatha, Kankali Tila

Source: Personal

Along with Buddhist and Jaina images, the Mathura school also established the iconographic traits of the images of Hindu deities in the early centuries AD. Stone sculptures of Shiva, Vishnu, Surya, Durga and Lakshmi have been discovered in Mathura. A seated Surya image from Kankali Tila shows West Asian influence in his moustache, tunic, boots and ringed crown.

Shaiva images represent the god either in **anthropomorphic** or in aniconic (*linga*) form, as well as in *mukha-lingas* and *vigraha-lingas*. An architectural fragment found at Bhuteshvara near Mathura shows a Shiva *linga* under a tree, surrounded by a railing and worshipped by winged creatures.

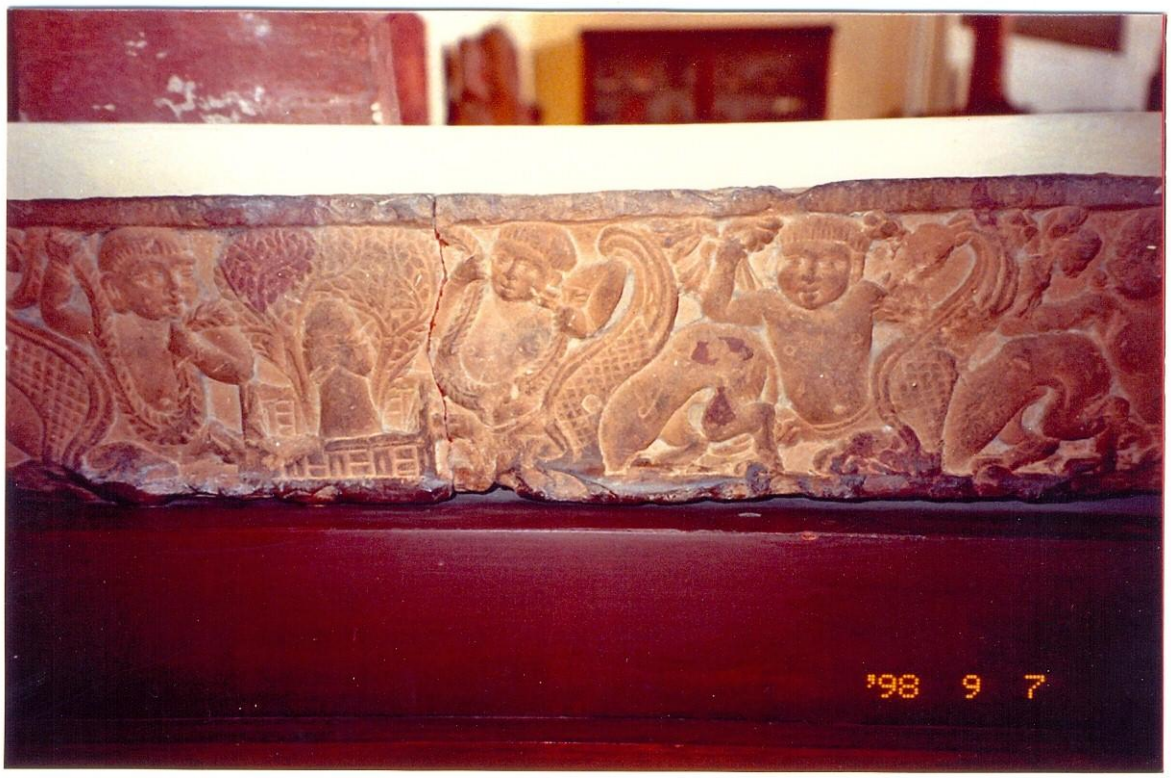


Figure 10.8.6: Shiva linga worshipped by Gandharvas, Bhuteshvara, Mathura

Source: Personal

Other early Shiva images from this area show him alone or with the Nandi bull or, alternatively, with his consort Parvati. Shiva is also represented in different forms such

as the Chaturvyuha Shiva (Shiva with his three **emanations**), Ardhanarishvara (the god who is half woman) and Harihara (a combination of Vishnu and Shiva).

When one turns to Vaishnava images, there is a tremendous increase in the number and variety produced in the Mathura area in this period. In fact, Mathura was the most important centre of Vaishnava art. There are many independent images of Vasudeva Krishna and of Vishnu—four-armed, on *garuda* and in boar incarnation form. Besides these, there are kinship **triads** of Vasudeva Krishna with his brother, Baladeva, and their sister, Ekanamsha. The idea of the *chaturvyuha* (the four emanations of Vishnu) crystallized in the late Kushana period. A colossal Narayana image found at Mathura deserves to be noted here specially.

Goddesses, too, form an important part of the Hindu pantheon in the Mathura school. Apart from nameless female deities, Matrikas and *yakshis*, there are images of Lakshmi and Durga. Among the notable figures is a beautiful image, identified as Shri-Lakshmi, which stands on two lotus buds that emerge out of a jar of plenty (*purna ghata*).

Mathura was also the centre of exquisite terracottas in the period c. 200 BC-AD 300. These pieces of art display a great variety of decorative motifs.

Figure 10.8.7: Surya, Mathura

Source: Personal

Figure 10.8.8: Female terracotta, Mathura

Source: Personal

Another fascinating element of Mathura art is the Kushana portrait sculpture. The Kushanas controlled Mathura for at least a hundred years, if not more, and their most impressive monument is the sanctuary at Mat, situated 9 miles north of Mathura. Here, colossal royal images predominate and the three kings represented are Vima Kadphises, Kanishka and Huvishka.

Figure 9: Headless statue of Kanishka, Mat, Mathura

Source: Personal

On the supposed temple site, the lower half of a colossal statue of Vima Kadphises seated on his throne was discovered.

Figure 10.8.10: Vima Kadphises, Mat, Mathura

Source: Personal

It is unclear whether these massive portrait sculptures were a part of an attempt at royal deification or a political strategy.

Amaravati

Amaravati is a major Buddhist site in the Andhra region and is identified with ancient Dhanyakataka, an important town in the Deccan and capital of the later Satavahanas. The early centuries of the Christian era saw much artistic activity at Amaravati. Here, both the stone and the style change to incorporate the local material.

The dome, railings and gateways of the Amaravati stupa are profusely ornamented with beautiful relief carvings. This forms a contrast with Nagarjunakonda, for instance, where the railing fragments are all plain and uninscribed. The sculptural style at Amaravati is more mature than those at the central Indian sites of Sanchi and Bharhut, as the relief panels are less crowded, and the figures are more natural and graceful. While these sites offer the earliest sculptural representations of important episodes in the Buddha's life and of the *Jataka* stories, a common element found in most of the *Jataka* scenes at Bharhut and Amaravati is that they are labelled, which is of great help in identifying the sculptures.

The Buddhist *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* refers to many *chetiyas* (*chaityas*) in the city of Vaishali. In this context, two interesting fragmentary columns from Amaravati deserve to be noticed. One of them has a carving of a tree enclosed by a railing bearing a Brahmi inscription of the 2nd century BC, which states that it was a representation of the Bahuputta *chetiya*. The second shows the worship of a tree and the Buddha's footprints, the inscription below identifying this as the Chapala *chetiya*.

Value addition: did you know?
Representation of the Buddha in early stupa sculptures
It is important to note that there is no image of the Buddha in early stupas, his presence being indicated by symbols such as a wheel to represent his first sermon, a tree to symbolize his enlightenment, a horse to indicate his renunciation, or a stupa to evoke his death and *nirvana*. When the image came to be established as a part of worship, it took on local styles, such as in the portrait statues of the Buddha from Gandhara, Mathura and Amaravati.
Source: Thapar, Romila. 2002. *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

As is clear from a survey of the Gandhara, Mathura and Amaravati schools of art in the early centuries AD, sculptural ornamentation cut across religious and sectarian boundaries. Although most of the surviving sculpture is religious in nature, there are several specimens of a secular nature as well. It is important to appreciate the sophisticated beauty and deeper spiritual, symbolic aspects of Indian artistic creativity, which reflects the cultural vitality of this period.

10.9: Rock-cut caves: architecture, sculpture and painting

Sanctuaries in stone

The geography of peninsular India gave rise to a distinctive religious landscape, particularly in the period between 300-750 AD. Spread across western Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, northern Karnataka and the east coast in Tamil Nadu, these religious sites were in the form of rock-cut monasteries and temples, mainly of Buddhist and Hindu persuasion. Rock-cut monasteries and temples refer to architectural space intentionally created by excavating the natural rock. The rock surfaces, both exterior and interior, were often decorated with ornate architectural components and relief-sculptures displaying tremendous exuberance and energy. Some of the rock-cut caves were also painted with murals. These rock-cut monuments had early beginnings and antecedents, dating back to around 260 BC, in the Barabar hills in eastern India. From about 100 BC onwards, the Buddhists enthusiastically pursued this genre of rock architecture. From then onwards, several ***chaityas*** (places of worship) and ***viharas*** (monasteries) were built in the hilly ranges along the coast of western India. These Buddhist sanctuaries helped in many ways to strengthen and expand their religious and social base. This architectural practice of scooping out the natural rock in hill/mountainside for designing places of worship was adopted by worshippers of brahmanical deities. These monuments are commonly termed as Hindu rock-cut caves. The followers of Jainism did not take up this architectural practice in a large way; hence not many rock-cut caves of Jaina affiliation are noticed. Available technology and close cultural interface generated broadly similar floor plans in the Buddhist, Hindu and Jaina rock-cut monuments, although they did not share the same philosophical and religious beliefs.

Value addition: delving deeper

How were the rock-cut caves excavated?

The unfinished caves at Ajanta furnish a very good idea of the method of excavation. After the outline had been marked, excavation started from the ceiling, which was finished first. The work then continued downwards till the floor was reached. Cutting was probably done by using heavy instruments like the crowbar, pickaxe etc. The finishing and carving was entirely done by hammer and chisel. Most likely, the work of quarrying, dressing and finishing went hand in hand. From the fact that even unfinished caves bear traces of paintings, it seems that chisel-work and brush-work proceeded simultaneously.

In 1987, Carmel Berkson studied contemporary techniques of rock excavation at the site of Halebid, Karnataka. She used this data to understand the process of excavation at Ellora. Berkson concluded that at any one time at Ellora, there would have been thousands of rock carvers, blacksmiths, and unskilled workers along with hundreds of sculptors and architects. The key feature would have been the coordination and cooperation of the workers.

Sources: Berkson, Carmel. 1992. *Ellora: Concept and Style*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications and IGNCA, 355-56 and Mitra, Debala. 2004. *World Heritage Series: Ajanta*. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 14.

For the first five hundred years in the history of Buddhist rock-cut monuments, patronage came from a cross-section of common people. However, the nature of

patronage underwent a significant change in the middle of the 5th century AD, the reasons for which are not clear. In the following period, the available evidence indicates that patronage and sponsorship came largely from the ruling elites, which introduced a lavish ornamentation in the rock-cut monuments.

Value addition: did you know?

Who patronized the rock-cut caves?

Inscriptions found at rock-cut cave sites are the main source for identifying the patrons who sponsored those monuments. At times, they also tell us what these rock-cut monuments meant to the patrons. For instance, at Bagh's Cave 2, an inscription of *maharaja* Subandhu calls the monastery "*kalayana"* or abode of art. Mahendravarman I, also known as Lakshita, named the Lakshitayatana (temple of Lakshita) at Mandagappattu after his epithet. He indicated a new trend in temple-building by calling it "a brickless, timberless, metalless and mortarless mansion." In the absence of inscriptions, stylistic features provide helpful clues.

SITE	PATRON	PERIOD
Udayagiri	Chandragupta II, king of the Gupta dynasty, and his minister	*Circa* 380-414 AD
Ajanta	Harishena, king of the Vakataka dynasty, and princes, ministers, officials at his court	*Circa* 462-81 AD
Bagh	Vakataka dynasty and another unknown dynasty	*Circa* 470-480 AD, during the reigns of Harishena's son and *maharaja* Subandhu
Kanheri	Traikutaka dynasty	Towards the end of the 5th century AD
Aurangabad caves	Kalachuri dynasty	5th and 6th centuries AD
Ellora Buddhist caves	Early Western Chalukya dynasty	7th and 8th centuries AD
Aihole and Badami	Early Western Chalukya dynasty	7th and 8th centuries AD
Elephanta caves	Possibly Krishnaraja I of the early Kalachuri dynasty	*Circa* 550-575 AD
Ellora Hindu caves		Mid-6th century AD

Mandagappattu, Tiruchirappalli and Mamallapuram	Mahendravarman I, Narasimhavarman I of the Pallava dynasty	*Circa* 600-700 AD

Sources: Huntington, Susan. 1985. *The Art of Ancient India.* New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill; Dehejia, Vidya. *Indian Art*. 1997. London: Phaidon Press Limited.

For spiritual merit: Buddhist rock-cut caves

Mahayana Buddhism

Mahayana Buddhism emerged in the period between *circa* 200 BC and 300 AD. Mahayana philosophy believed that the highest goal was following the path of a Bodhisattva (Enlightenment Being) in attaining Buddhahood. In other words, a Bodhisattva is a being capable of attaining Buddhahood, who serves as a guide to others on the Buddhist path, and who deliberately delays his enlightenment so that he can help others achieve this goal. Great devotion was attached to the worship of many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas such as Maitreya, Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri and also Tara. The most direct impact of Mahayana philosophy on art was the worship of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the form of images in shrines. It is in this context that the *chaityas* and *viharas* of the Mahayana sect were built, between the 5th and 8th centuries AD, in its second phase of development.

Ajanta

Undoubtedly, the Ajanta complex is the most magnificent example of the Gupta period rock-cut architecture. This Buddhist site comprises a series of almost 30 caves, excavated ingeniously into the horseshoe-shaped mountain wall of the Sahyadris, overlooking the Waghora river. The rock-cut caves were built in two phases. The second phase, being dealt with here, saw the construction of the majority of caves, built on both sides of the early core. Of these, two rock-cut caves namely No.9 and No.26 are finished *chaityas* while the rest are *viharas*.

The basic architectural plan of the *chaityas*, which had evolved in western India was followed at the Ajanta cave complex. The floor plan roughly consisted of an apsidal, pillared hall with a *stupa* at its far end. The colonnade of pillars created a space for circumambulation of the *stupa*, which was the main object of worship. However, a new element was introduced at this time, of a seated or standing Buddha figure, on the front of the *stupa*. A prominent architectural feature that was added in this period was the ***gavaksha*** (also known as *chaitya-gavaksha* or *chandrashala*), in order to illuminate the dim cave interiors. The barrel-vaulted and ribbed ceiling was modelled after earlier wooden architecture.

The sumptuousness of design is seen in the intricately carved facades and interior wall surfaces with Buddha figures, attendants, and ornamental motifs. The interior walls were beautifully painted with murals. Over the years, the decoration of these caves became

even more elaborate. This is particularly noticeable in Cave 26. This cave depicts, among other scenes, a narrative of Buddha's *mahaparinibbana* (the final passing away of Shakyamuni Buddha) with a seven-metre long, reclining figure of Buddha as the centre of focus. In keeping with the rich ornamental style evolved at Ajanta, the doorways and columns used diverse designs. Fluted columns were used for the first time.

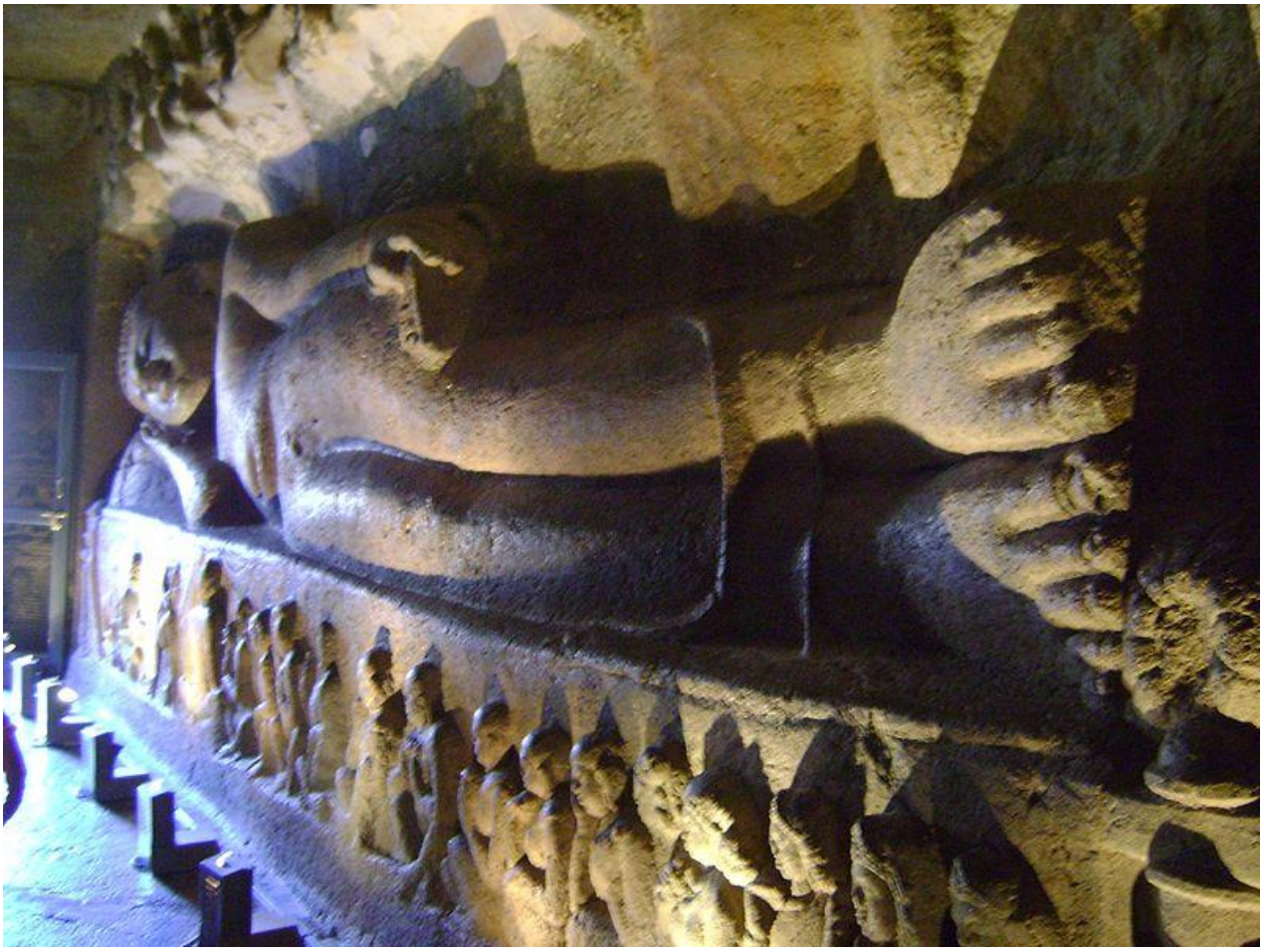


Figure 10.9.1: Scene depicting Buddha's *mahaparinibbana*, Cave 26, Ajanta
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ParNir.jpg

Compared to the changes in the *chaityas*, the stylistic transformation in the *viharas* was more pronounced. The basic floor plan of a *vihara* continued to be made up of a central hall with cells on three sides, serving as the dwelling quarters for the monks. The most radical change occurred with the introduction of a shrine-chamber on the rear wall of a *vihara*, containing a colossal image of the Buddha. Sometimes, subsidiary shrines were excavated along the side walls too. The introduction of these *viharas* altered the character of the *vihara* from a functional place of residence to a sacred space. The approach to the *vihara* shrine was marked by three stages:

a) a pillared porch with three entrance doors
b) the porch leading into a square, pillared hall
c) the hall connecting to an ante-chamber with a pillared portico

The uniqueness of Ajanta was that its creators conceptualized an elaborate and integrated visual programme using sculpture, painting and architectural elements. The

mural paintings of the Ajanta cave complex, noticed on the walls, ceilings, door frames and pillars are a landmark in the development of Indian aesthetics. For the first time in the history of Indian painting, the Ajanta murals used a narrative mode of depiction, employing multiple perspectives on the same plane. The passage of time has irrevocably damaged, and in some cases effaced the paintings that existed in most of the caves. Fortunately, in at least four of the second phase caves (Cave nos. 1, 2, 16 and 17) those murals have survived.

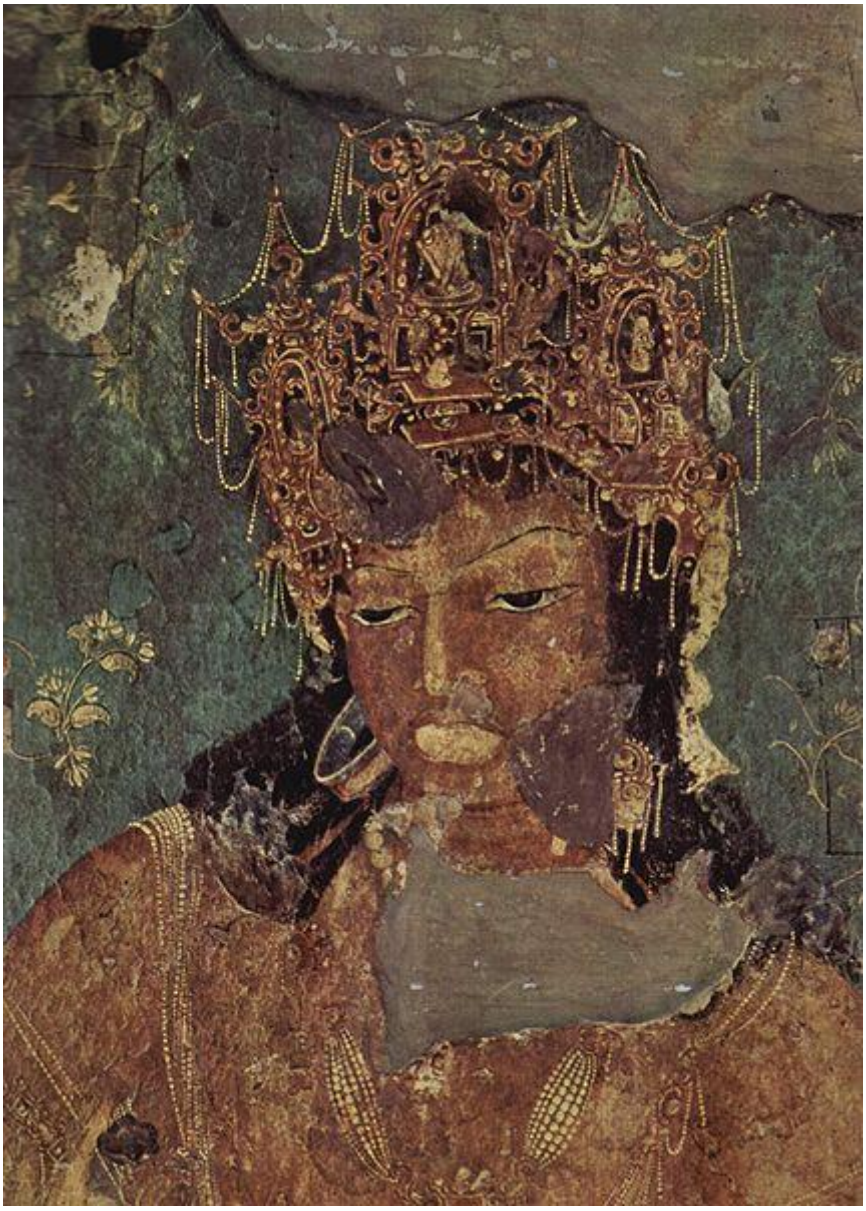


Figure 10.9.2: Avalokiteshvara, cave 1 at Ajanta
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Indischer_Maler_des_7._Jahrhunderts_001.jpg

Indian art has always explored, absorbed, and vividly expressed a gamut of experiences from the material to the spiritual. The theme of the paintings on the walls is deeply religious, revolving around the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Different episodes from the life of Shakyamuni Buddha as well as the ***Jataka*** tales bring these walls alive. Although narrated in an exceedingly religious tone, particularly in the context of the Buddha's

lives, the artists brought in different facets of daily life as also many representative aspects of nature in the form of semi-divine beings like *yakshas*, *kinnaras*, *gandharvas* and ***apsaras***. This shows that the artists had their finger on the pulse of everyday life and expressed action, drama, and rich emotions. The human figures are sensuously drawn and well-proportioned. Their faces are marked by half-closed, elongated eyes and highly arched eyebrows. There is a fascinating range of hairstyles, costumes, jewellery, and accessories. The paintings on the ceiling, on the other hand, are essentially decorative in character. The grand project of the Ajanta murals, spread over a large area, involved a collaborative undertaking. In all likelihood, different workshops of artisans were employed to paint a mural. As a result, there were often breaks in continuity. Unfinished painting work (noticed in several caves) as also, in some cases, the pristine condition of initial layering only of the murals may indicate that the work stopped abruptly.

Value addition: common misconceptions
Why is it incorrect to refer to the Ajanta paintings as 'frescoes'?
In the fresco technique, pigments are mixed with water without any binding medium and applied on a fresh wet lime-plaster. However, in the Ajanta caves, this technique was not followed. At Ajanta, the rock surface was first prepared with a layer of ferruginous earth, mixed with organic material (such as vegetal waste) and rock-grit. A second coat was applied with a mixture of mud along with a finer version of the material used in the base coat. The surface was finally finished with a thin coat of limewash, on which the paint brush could move easily. On this prepared surface, outlines of the forms were drawn boldly and then filled in with colours. The colours were made from a limited range of earth and mineral pigments -- white made from lime, kaolin, and gypsum; red and yellow from ochre; lamp-black from soot; green from ***terre verte*** and blue from lapis lazuli. Except lapis lazuli, which was imported from Afghanistan, all the colours were locally available. In order to make the colours hold firmly to the surface, the pigments were mixed with a binder, which was usually some kind of gum.
Source: Mitra, Debala. 2004. *World Heritage Series: Ajanta*. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 19.

Bagh

At the site of Bagh, about 150 miles north-west of Ajanta, there are nine Buddhist rock-cut caves. These were shaped by cutting into sandstone rock and are dated to the 6th century AD. Although, in the overall plan, these rock-cut caves of Bagh are similar to those of Ajanta, there are some differences between the two. Most notable among the differences are: the Bagh rock-cut caves are plain and much simpler. Second, in place of the Buddha image at the end of the hall, there is a *stupa*. Third, some of these caves are provided with additional columns in the central hall to support the roof. Unlike the other pillars, these central pillars are round and have spiralled fluting. Besides, stylistically too, the images of Bagh differ from their Ajanta counterparts. The Bagh caves had mural paintings, but on account of both the local environmental factors and structural deficiencies, much of its original splendour has hardly remained. And, whatever little has

survived, indicates that the style and mood are quite different from that of Ajanta. Here, the colours in the paintings are more muted. And the fluidity of lines in the modelling of figures is not as obvious as in Ajanta.

Kanheri

As was the case in Ajanta, Kanheri too had a second phase of artistic activity, which began during the late 5th and early 6th centuries AD. With this renewed burst of activity, more than one hundred rock-cut caves were made at the site. Kanheri became the largest rock-cut cave site complex in India. However, unlike Ajanta, here the older caves were modified. This is seen, for example, in the 2nd century AD *chaitya* hall. During the late 5th century AD, a pair of colossal Buddhas, more than seven metres in height, was excavated here, one at either end of its verandah. In their architectural style, many of the new caves at Kanheri (such as Cave no. 90) were rather plain, yet the interiors were lavishly carved. This cave has a unique representation of Avalokiteshvara (depicted as protector of the faithful) as well as a beautiful **Buddha *mandala***. These figural compositions are important not only for their artistic merit, but also help us to know how the creators of these iconographic programmes tried to assist the Buddhist followers to understand the underlying philosophical concepts.

Figure 10.9.3: Exterior of the 2nd century AD *chaitya* hall at Kanheri

Source: http://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/Asia/India/Kanheri-1095845/Things_To_Do-Kanheri-TG-C-1.html

Aurangabad

Two caves (1 and 3) at Aurangabad were excavated around the same time as the second phase at Ajanta. The influence of Ajanta art can be seen in the plan of Cave 3, in particular, and the carvings of the pillars in general. The second group (Caves 2,5,6,7,8 and 9) was built slightly later. It consists of a sanctum in the centre of the hall with cells cut into the side and back walls. The verandah of Cave 6 has an impressive relief carving of Avalokiteshvara. And Cave 7 contains a beautiful depiction of Tara.

Ellora

The last phase of Buddhist rock-cut architecture in western India is seen at Ellora, a site near Ajanta and Aurangabad. The rock-cut caves that were excavated here during the 7^{th}-8^{th} centuries AD were inspired by Ajanta and Bagh. This can be observed in the pillars with their cushion capitals. Ellora, notably, evolved a more elaborate style. In rock-cut caves here, the size of the subsidiary side-shrines was increased. Sculptures became larger and more ornate. Cave 5, the earliest Buddhist cave, is a good example to illustrate this point. It has a large rectangular hall, about 35 metres long, with surrounding small cells. The main shrine is in the centre of the rear wall and two other large cell-shrines were provided in the middle of the side walls. On account of these features, the main hall became elongated.

The grand conceptualization of later Buddhist caves at Ellora is exemplified in the Cave 12 complex. It is excavated in three consecutive levels and hence the name, Tin Thal. What is unique in Tin Thal is that for the first time, successive storeys were conceived as an organic whole. The introduction of a double row of stone benches, extending almost the full length of the hall, marks another distinctive development. Susan Huntington argues that this three-storeyed architecture may be related to Buddhist practices in which three stages can be identified. One may be related to an initiation or introductory phase, the second to a more advanced practice, and then the third and final stage, for the true ***acharyas*** or highly developed spiritual masters (Huntington 1985, 273).

Figure 10.9.4: Tin Thal, Ellora
Source: http://worldvisitguide.com/salle/photo_ME0000123517.html

For royal glory: Hindu rock-cut caves

Hindu rock-cut architecture, although inspired by the Buddhist architectural vocabulary, developed its own idiom, from the simple beginnings at Udayagiri in Madhya Pradesh. Unlike Buddhist sites, the Hindu rock-cut caves were not used for residential purposes. The basic layout of a Hindu rock-cut cave shrine contained a small sanctum in the centre with a *pradakshinapatha* surrounding it. The sanctum housed either an icon or an aniconic object of worship. A pillared entrance hall is a common feature at many sites. The cave temples had elaborate iconographic programmes, illustrating myths from the Puranas. The emergence of Puranic Hinduism between 200 BC and 300 AD and its increasing popularity during the period 300-600 AD had a direct impact on the creation of Hindu rock-cut caves. Puranic Hinduism especially involved the worship of three important deities namely Vishnu, Shiva, and Shakti, whose images came to be enshrined in structural temples as well as rock-cut temples. The religious beliefs of powerful ruling families were an important factor in the rise of Hindu rock-cut architecture between the 4^{th} and 8^{th} centuries AD. For instance, the Pallava ruler Mahendravarman was originally a Jaina but later became a devotee of Shiva. Hence, many of the rock-cut caves built by him were dedicated to Shiva. In Cave 1 at Elephanta, there is a depiction of Lakulisha (the founder teacher of the Pashupata Shaiva cult) because, as we know, this cult was favoured by the early Kalachuri patrons. These wonderful rock-cut temples also represented a statement of power. This is seen in some of the features which convey a double meaning, referring both to the deities represented as well as to the achievements of the king. The symbol of **Varaha**, in particular, was imbued with political meaning. Some art historians have interpreted the presence of water bodies near Pallava cave

shrines as denoting the king's role in constructing public irrigation systems as a welfare measure. There was a significant shift in the patronage of Hindu rock-cut architecture from around the late 8th century AD. It is noticed that from that time onwards, patronage to structural temples gained momentum. It is in this cusp that the exquisite Kailashanatha temple complex was built at Ellora, after the middle of the 8th century. Although rock-cut, it is conceived as a structural temple.

Udayagiri

Udayagiri in Madhya Pradesh has 20 rock-cut caves belonging to the Gupta period. Caves 5, 6 and 7 form a cluster. All these are at ground level. Except one cave which is of Jaina affiliation, the rest are all Hindu. The Udayagiri caves are unique because they have preserved a variety of Hindu themes of the Gupta period in their original context. The architecture of the caves is not of great importance. The most elaborate one consists of a small chamber preceded by a rock-cut verandah. Only one cave has internal columns. The exterior walls are comparatively unadorned while the interiors are richly carved with mythological stories and powerfully rendered icons. These icons became prototypes for images elsewhere. Cave 5, for example, contains a massive figure of Varaha, the boar form of Vishnu, lifting the earth with his tusks. It depicts the episode of Varaha saving the earth from submersion under the ocean. The back and side walls continue the story. The façade of Cave 6 contains rock-cut images of Vishnu, Durga as Mahishasuramardini, Ganesha, Kumara etcetera. Typical of the Gupta period are ***dvarapalas*** at the door entrances, wearing transparent garments and sporting elaborate hairstyles. The iconography at Udayagiri is something of a trendsetter for subsequent Hindu rock-cut caves. Prototypes of the two important river goddesses, namely the Ganga and Yamuna, standing atop their respective *vahanas* (that is, the crocodile and tortoise respectively) are noticed for the first time. The practice of setting each figure into a sunken recess, as found in Cave 6, later developed into the placement of major icons in niches on the exterior of temples.

Figure 10.9.5: Durga as Mahishasuramardini, Cave 6, Udayagiri
Source: personal.carthage.edu/.../udayagiri.html

Elephanta

Elephanta is a small island off the coast of Mumbai (Bombay). The main cave (Cave 1) is dedicated to Shiva. The pillared cruciform cave measures roughly 40 metres from north to south and from east to west. The exterior is very simple but the interior is majestic, with gigantic reliefs and pillars with cushion capitals. What is unique to this cave is its dual focus. First is the square chamber shrine containing a ***linga*** which is placed off centre, towards the west entrance. The shrine has four doorways, each flanked by two colossal *dvarapalas*. The space surrounding the shrine was meant for circumambulation. Of primary focus is a monumental relief carving of Shiva with three faces (*Trimurti*),

against the rear wall of the cave. The *linga* shrine was pushed out from its central position so that a devotee could get a complete view of this spectacular carving. Shiva's faces in the centre and to the right have a tranquil expression, while the one on the left is ferocious, with bulging eyes. Some scholars suggest that a fourth (at the back) and perhaps even a fifth (on top, facing the ceiling) face are implied. This is because the *Vishnudharmottara Purana* describes the five faces of Shiva. All along the walls of the cave, there are eight monumental sculpted panels that expand on the legend of Shiva and aspects of Shaivite ideology. These include Shiva as Ardhanari (half-woman), Shiva as Gangadhara (one who brought to earth the heavenly Ganga), and Lakulisha.

Figure 10.9.6: *Trimurti*, Elephanta caves
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Elephanta_Caves_Trimurti.jpg

Ellora

By the time the last Buddhist rock-cut caves were built, Ellora had already become an important Hindu centre. One of the early rock-cut caves, of Hindu affiliation, is the Rameshvara cave. It is dated to around the mid-6th century AD. This cave has a well-balanced plan with details like a large inner sanctum and a circumambulatory passage. Similar to a structural temple, this cave has a **Nandi** on a high plinth, facing the entrance hall. The relief-compositions of episodes pertaining to the principal deity Shiva are very lively and striking. Some of the other notable sculptures are the life-sized relief figures of river goddesses, *matrikas* and *dvarapalas*.

Aihole and Badami

In the Deccan, major examples of early medieval rock-cut shrines are found in Karnataka. The early architectural phase (6th-early 8th century AD) is represented at Badami and at Aihole, both in Karnataka. There are two notable rock-cut cave shrines at Aihole, one Shaiva and the other Jaina, both with heavily ornamented interiors. The Shaiva rock-cut cave, known as Ravanaphadi cave, consists of a central hall, two side shrine sections and a *garbhagriha* with a *linga* at the back. The sanctum is large and beautifully decorated. The walls and part of the ceiling are decorated with sculptures such as those of Shiva as Nataraja. At Aihole, the figures are slender and have tall crowns.

The rock-cut caves at Badami are carved into the red sandstone hillside overlooking a tank. Although small and simple in plan, the Badami caves give an impression of richness due to the fine carving. Of the three major caves, the largest one is Vaishnava, while the others are Jaina and Shaiva in affiliation. The caves have a simple plan, consisting of a verandah and a pillared hall leading into a small square sanctum in the back wall. Like the Aihole caves, the walls and ceilings have carvings. Cave 3 has huge relief sculptures, depicting the different incarnations of Vishnu. There are very fine ***mithunas***, as bracket figures, in Cave 3.

Mandagappattu, Tiruchirappalli and Mamallapuram

While rock cutting was a long-established tradition in western India, it was adopted as late as the 7th century AD in south India. Two phases can be identified in the early history of these rock-cut cave shrines. In plan, the earliest cave shrines are smaller and simpler than those at Ajanta and Ellora. The cave facade is unadorned, except for two *dvarapalas* (standing in different postures), guarding the entrance. The major source of ornamentation in the interiors is the carved pillars. In the early caves, the pillars were massive. They had octagonal shafts with square base and capital. Some examples of the early rock-cut caves are the Lakshitayatana temple at Mandagappattu and Lalitankura's cave at Tiruchirappalli.

The rock-cut caves at Mamallapuram (also known as Mahabalipuram), such as the Varaha, Trimurti, Mahishasuramardini and Yali caves constitute the later phase. In these shrines, the pillars were comparatively slender, either fluted or round. The capitals are cushion-shaped while seated lions are found at the base. These lion-based pillars became models for the later columnar or compound animal pillars of south Indian temples. The larger rock-cut caves have a pillared hall in the interior, which leads into a sanctum guarded by *dvarapalas* and *dvarapalikas*. The sanctum contains either a *linga* or images of Shiva, Vishnu, or Brahma. In these rock-cut cave temples, the *linga* was not excavated from the same rock as the shrine, but was added separately. A ritual water tank became a typical feature of the cave temples of the later phase. Originally some of these rock-cut caves had paintings.

There are stylistic differences between the Pallava caves and the ones in the Deccan. The manner of carving in the Pallava caves is shallower and in low relief. The figures are slender with tapering limbs and do not wear jewels. The practice of carving the rear wall of the shrine is typical of Pallava monuments.

Figure 10.9.7: Exterior of Varaha cave, Mamallapuram
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Varaha_Cave_Temple

10.10: Temple architecture, c. 300 - 750 CE

Significant stage in temple architecture

The temple is the most visible site of Hindu worship. The earliest Hindu temples in the Indian subcontinent appear in the late centuries B.C. and are known from the remains of their foundations. Some of these include the 3rd century B.C. Vishnu temple at Vidisha (Madhya Pradesh), Shiva and Vishnu temples at Dangwada (Maharashtra) and 2nd century B.C. Shiva temple at Gudimallam (Andhra Pradesh). The period between 300 and 600 A.D. (coinciding with the Gupta dynasty) is a significant stage in the architecture of Hindu temples since the surviving shrines are relatively complete, with several of them having been identified in central and north India. To begin with, the temple was a relatively simple structure. It comprised a square ***garbhagriha*** for the deity and a ***mandapa*** for sheltering the devotee. The plans of temples built in the post-Gupta period (circa 600–750 A.D.) became extremely elaborate. This phase inaugurated three distinct temple building styles: *Nagara*, Dravida and *Vesara*. The variations in temple styles evolved in the context of geography and chronology, not on the basis of religious affiliations. The temple walls too came to be richly ornamented with reliefs depicting deities and mythological scenes.

Value addition: did you know?

Of the north, the south and a fusion

Ancient texts on architecture describe three major styles of temple architecture--*Nagara*, *Dravida* and *Vesara. Nagara*, which literally means "pertaining to the city", is associated with temple styles found throughout northern India, that is the land between the Himalayas and the Vindhyas. The *Nagara* temple is square in plan, with a number of projections in the middle of each side, giving it a cruciform shape. The temple's elevation is marked by a conical or curvilinear ***shikhara***. The *shikhara* is made up of several layers of motifs such as the ***gavaksha***, usually crowned by an ***amlaka***. The extant temple remains indicate that although individual elements of the *Nagara* style are visible from the 6th century A.D., the style fully evolved by the 8th century.

Dravida, as the name implies, refers to the southern or Dravidian style. It is particularly associated with the land between the Krishna and Kaveri rivers. The *Dravida* ***vimana*** has a pyramidal tower, made up of progressively smaller stories, culminating in a slender pinnacle, which is finally surmounted by a small dome-like *stupika*/*shikhara*. The *garbhagriha* is square and set within a covered *mandapa*. Large ***gopura****s* provide access to the *Dravida* temple complex.

Vesara literally means mule and by implication a hybrid style, which combines elements from the *Nagara* and *Dravida* styles. The style is associated with the area between the Vindhyas and the Krishna river. Unlike those of *Nagara* and *Dravida* styles, clear examples of the *Vesara* style emerged in the post 750 A.D. period. Prior to that, since the time of the Early Western Chalukyas (who we will discuss below), monuments in purely northern and southern styles were built in the Deccan. In addition, many temples were built that bore features of both northern and southern types at once along with characteristics that defy traditional classification. These temples therefore belong to a broadly based "Deccan style". It is likely that the Deccan style encompasses the *Vesara* form described in texts.

Source: Singh, Upinder. 2008. *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*. New Delhi: Pearson Longman, 624–25; Huntington, Susan. 1985. *The Art of Ancient India*. New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 540.

In the period under review, the arduous rock-cut technique of creating sacred spaces was slowly being replaced by building structural temples. Therefore, Buddhist and Jaina worship, which had hitherto been exclusively centred in rock-cut caves (see chapter), was extended to structural temples. Similar to developments in Puranic Hinduism, the concept of *bhakti* or personal devotion to a god led to the construction of temples or shrines dedicated to the Buddha and the Jaina *tirthankaras*. The earliest extant Buddhist and Jaina structural temples belong to the period between 400 and 650 A.D. but compared to Hindu temples, their number is far limited. The transition from the rock-cut medium to structural shrines is best reflected in two Hindu temple complexes—the

Kailashha temple at Ellora and the ***ratha**s* at Mamallapuram)—which are rock-cut imitations of structural temples.

Factors facilitating the growth of temples

The spurt in temple-building activities came about because of the philosophical and religious climate during 300–600 A.D. It was the development of Puranic Hinduism, which enjoined the installation and worship of deities in temples. The proliferation of Hindu temples is particularly connected to the consolidation of the theistic cults of Vishnu, Shiva and Shakti. The establishment of Jaina and Buddhist structural temples was a response to the increasing emphasis on the worship of the *tirthankaras* in Jainism and a pantheon of countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in Buddhism respectively.

Value addition: delving deeper

The mode of worship in temples

As many of the early temples are either in ruins or are no longer used for daily worship, it is difficult to imagine the modes of ancient worship. In order to reconstruct some of these practices, one can turn to donative inscriptions of the Gupta period which refer to donors making monetary provisions for items required for daily worship of enshrined deities. These included the supply of incense, flowers, lamps and sandalwood. The archaeological evidence of ancient mode of Hindu worship has come from the temple areas of Bhitari, in Uttar Pradesh (c.450–550 A.D.) in the form of large terracotta bowls which were probably used to offer food either to the deity or for the ritual feeding of large groups of worshippers or pilgrims. In addition, sprinklers which priests probably used for sprinkling water while performing worship have also been found.

Interestingly, as in Hindu shrines, at Buddhist and Jaina *viharas*, donations were made for identical paraphernalia of worship. The 5th and 6th century inscriptions from Bengal for example bear this out.

Source: Lahiri, Nayanjot and Elisabeth A. Bacus. Exploring the Archaeology of Hinduism. *The Archaeology of Hinduism: World Archaeology* 36 (September 2004) (3): 313–325; Basak, Radhagovinda. 1931-32. 'Baigram Copper-Plate Inscription of the [Gupta]-Year 128'. *Epigraphia Indica XXI*, 78-83 and 1919-20. 'The Five Damodarpur Copper-Plate Inscriptions of the Gupta Period', *Epigraphia Indica XV*, 113-145; Dikshit, K. N. 1929-30. 1929-30. 'Paharpur copper-plate grant of the [Gupta] year 159', *Epigraphia Indica XX*, 59-63.

Yet another factor responsible for the proliferation of temples was their appropriation by kings as symbols of temporal power.

Value addition: common misconceptions

Only kings and queens built temples

While the bulk of patronage did come from royalty in the period between 300–750 A.D., inscriptions indicate that individual merchants as well as professional guilds were involved in financing temples. The Mandasor inscription from Malwa records that in the early 5th century, a guild of silk weavers who had migrated from Lata in Gujarat to the town of Dashapura in central India, sponsored the building of a temple dedicated to Surya. Around the same time, in north Bengal, a city merchant donated land to construct two temples and two storerooms for gods Shvetavarahasvamin and Kokamukhasvamin, possibly two forms of Vishnu.

That such patrons were concerned about the maintenance of the temples they built is very clear. This could either take the form of making monetary provisions for future repairs to the structure or by directly financing a restoration project. When the Surya temple at Dashapura was damaged after being struck by lightning, a little less than forty years after its establishment, the guild of silk weavers funded its repair. On the other hand, the mid 5th century Baigram copperplate inscription from north Bengal records that two *kutumbin (*agriculturalist householders) brothers who donated land to the temple of Govindasvamin (Vishnu) founded by their father, made provisions for occasional repairs. In ancient and early medieval India, the repair of temples was considered a meritorious act.

Sources: Basak, Radhagovinda. 1931–32. 'Baigram Copper-Plate Inscription of the [Gupta]-Year 128'. *Epigraphia Indica XXI*, 78–83 and 1919–20. 'The Five Damodarpur Copper-Plate Inscriptions of the Gupta Period'. *Epigraphia Indica XV*, 113–145; Singh, Upinder. 2008. *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*. New Delhi: Pearson Longman, 473.

Dynastic labels

Since kings had a proactive role in building temples, there is some justification in using dynastic labels (such as Gupta temples, Pallava temples) to refer to sacred monuments made during the reign of a major ruling family. Such dynastic labels can also be applied because non-royal patrons inscribed time of construction by the regnal year of the current monarch. However, one must exercise caution in using dynastic reference. This is because one, styles of art and architecture did not neatly coincide with dynastic periods. Two, the absence of powerful royal patronage did not spell an artistic void.

Nevertheless, a dynasty did promote a broad stylistic unity over a wide area. This is particularly true of temple architecture that developed within the domain of the Gupta dynasty. The broad unity of style extended even beyond the Gupta realm, for example to the Deccan Plateau, where the Vakataka dynasty ruled as contemporaries of the Guptas. The immediate post-Gupta period marked the establishment of regional dynasties in different parts of the country. This generated the beginning of regional architectural styles. The geographical focus of temples now shifted from the erstwhile Gupta heartland to Tamil Nadu, Orissa and Saurashtra. This is clearly evident in south India and Deccan where the first stone monuments were built under the Pallava and Chalukya dynasties.

Temples in the Gupta realm

At its peak in the 5th century, the Gupta empire extended from the Arabian Sea in the west to the Bay of Bengal in the east, from the Himalayan foothills in the north to the Deccan Plateau in the south. Within this vast area, encompassing many cultural zones, there developed a broadly unified genre of temples, which is conveniently labeled the "Gupta style". To what extent was the style a product of direct Gupta patronage is difficult to say, since an overwhelming majority of surviving structural temples cannot be connected to any king of the dynasty. What is notable however is the gradual evolution of this genre, both over time and across geographical space.

Most of the extant temples of the Gupta period are damaged and located in the hilly areas of Madhya Pradesh. Gupta temples are made of brick or stone, with brick having taken a lead by the end of the Gupta period. Stone temples are extensively decorated with relief sculptures. All brick temples in the northern belt of Gupta influence are elaborately decorated with carved bricks and terracotta plaques. Originally these surfaces were plastered over and painted in bright colours. In eastern India temples were initially decorated with **stucco**, which was later replaced by terracotta.

Value addition: delving deeper

Tales in terracotta

Before the Gupta period, the medium of terracotta or fired clay was largely used for making small sacred images and toys. In the Gupta period, terracotta was reinvented as decorative and narrative plaques for the embellishment of the outer walls of Buddhist and brahmanical temples. Temple terracottas were made in a folk style, with highly simplified treatment of forms. While Buddhist centres such as Sanchi and Bharhut were already skilled in engraving stories in stone (from the life of the Buddha and *Jataka* tales), Hindu temples in northern and eastern India now began to use terracotta to portray narratives from Hindu mythology. Vishnu temples were adorned with episodes from the lives of Rama and Krishna, two *avataras* of Vishnu. In Ahichchhhatra, series of large plaques, have been found, representing a variety of scenes from Shaiva mythology.

The most intriguing fact about these terracotta panels is that their layout had been planned meticulously by artisans who developed a code for themselves. The code took the form of inscribing a series of numbers along the lower border of tiles. For example, the two sets of terracotta plaques from the brick platform at Shravasti, narrating stories of Rama and Krishna were sequentially numbered. Similarly, at the Buddhist brick temple of Harwan, in Kashmir, each tile was inscribed with numerals in Kharoshti.

Source: Dehejia, Vidya. 1986. Brick Temples: Origins and Development. In *From Indian Art: 4000 Years of Terracotta Art*, edited by Amy G Poster. New York: The Brooklyn Museum. 1986, 43-56.

Blossoming of the Gupta style

The earliest Gupta temples are modest in size. The basic plan consists of a square *garbhagriha* (about 10 feet x 10 feet) preceded by a flat-roofed, small portico. Temple walls are generally plain but the doorways are intricately carved with auspicious symbols such as conch and lotus. In addition, there are sensitively modeled figures of river-goddesses on ***makaras***. Temples of the late 5th and early 6th centuries which continue to follow the basic plan, have two new features: a raised plinth and a *shikhara*. The pillars have capitals in the form of ***purna-kalasha****s*.

Early 5th century stone temples include Temple 17 at Sanchi and Kankali Devi temple at Tigowa. The small and unpretentious Temple 17 at Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh rests on a low plinth. The structure consists of two units: a *mandapa* with a set of four pillars and a small, cubical *garbhagriha*. Several features of the structure reveal that this was a product of the earliest stage of temple building in stone. It totally lacks foundations (which resulted in the buckling of the walls and partial collapse of the roof), the walls are not very solid since they are made of rubble and stone and, what is most conspicuous is that the *mandapa* and *garbhagriha* do not blend seamlessly. Sculptural ornamentation is confined to the doorway and pillars.

Figure 10.10.1: Sanchi temple
Source: http://worldvisitguide.com/salle/photo_ME0000122622.html

The second phase of the Gupta temple, assignable to the second half of the 5th century is characterized by a ***jagati*** and an elaboration of the superstructure, particularly a roofed ***pradakshina*** around the *garbhagriha*. Sulptures or friezes were added on the facades.

Two specimens of this phase are the so-called Parvati temple at Nachna Kuthara and the Shiva temple at Bhumara. The Parvati temple in Madhya Pradesh is the earliest surviving example of a ***sandhara*** temple. It is a double-storied structure resting on a plinth. The door of the shrine, which is oriented to the west, is among the finest examples of Gupta embellishment.

Figure 10.10.2: Parvati temple at Nachna Kuthara
Source:
http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_0NEAUIS8c7M/SsmIQ7h1sGI/AAAAAAAAADo/I_fnlIqOKcU/s1600-h/DSC09089.JPG

The third stage of Gupta temple architecture is distinguished by the presence of a towering *shikhara* over the *garbhagriha*. Temples of this phase are very large, with superstructures sometimes rising as high as 50 feet. This is seen for example in the mid 5th century brick temple at Bhitargaon and the late 5th century stone temple at Deogarh. The Bhitargaon temple in Uttar Pradesh is special on a number of counts. It contains the earliest version of the true arch in India. Its *shikhara*, of a ***triratha*** plan, is one of the earliest examples of the *Nagara* style. In a *triratha* plan, the *shikhara* is divided into three vertical sections with the central section jutting forward, flanked by two receding sections. The temple also marks the culmination of the practice of embellishing temple walls with terracotta plaques.

The Vishnu temple at Deogarh, in Madhya Pradesh, which is commonly called the Dashavatara temple, is one of the earliest ***panchayatana*** temples. The 40 feet high,

curvililinear *shikhara* of the extant central shrine anticipates the development of the typical *Nagara shikhara*. The central shrine has an elaborately carved doorway on the west and projections on the other three sides.

Temples in the realm of the Vakatakas

Remains of temples built in the realm of the Vakataka dynasty have been found at Mandhal, Ramtek, Paunar and Nagra in Maharashtra. Temple remains at Mandhal, which have been dated on the basis of stratigraphical evidence to 300–600 A.D., represent the earliest examples of Vakataka architecture. These shrines mark the transitional period from the use of brick to stone. Hence, brick surfaces are offset by partial use of stone for pillars and walls. The walls are often decorated with pilasters and shallow niches. While the common feature of all Mandhal temples is that they rest on a platform with simple mouldings, there are two distinct kinds of superstructures. One type consists of a *garbhagriha* and a *mandapa*, sometimes preceded by a flight of steps. Another type consists of a shrine on an oblong platform, approached by flights of steps from lateral sides. This was often accompanied by an ablution tank.

Specimens of structural stone temples have been discovered only at Ramtek and reveal a variety of forms. The characteristic feature of these temples is the use of two types of stone. While the plinth and walls are made of a local variety of sandstone, the main load-bearing pillars supporting the roof are made of basalt. The pillars are often adorned with full or half lotus-medallions. Another noteworthy architectural feature is the tentative demarcation between the *garbhagriha* and *mandapa*, marked by a pair of pillars and pilasters. A few examples of Ramtek temples include the **zoomorphic** *Varaha* housed in an open pavilion; two *Narasimhas* enshrined in temples consisting of a closed, *mandapa* and a *garbhagriha*; and a ***trivikrama*** shrine with an open *mandapa*.

Temples built in the period between 600 and 750 A.D.

In the period between the end of the Gupta dynasty and efflorescence of the Pallavas as builders of large structural temples, temple building programme was actively taken up by regional dynasties such as the Maitrakas in Gujarat, Panduvamshis in Chattisgarh and Rashtrakutas in the Deccan.

Buddhist temples of eastern India

Compared to Hindu temples, extant Buddhist structural temples from the 600 to 750 A.D. period are few. The Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya, Bihar had been built to enshrine the Bodhi tree under which the Buddha had attained enlightenment. From a modest *bodhighara*, the temple was modified several times. A major restoration occurred sometime during the $6^{th}/7^{th}$ century when the old sandstone railing enclosing the temple precinct was enlarged, adding upright granite railings. These posts were carved with medallions depicting floral motifs and faces. The original polished sandstone surface of the platform was provided with a new brick base, decorated with stucco images of pot-bellied dwarfs and lions.

The Buddhist site in eastern India which superseded building activity at Bodh Gaya in this period was Nalanda, also in Bihar. The cumulative evidence of the accounts of two Chinese pilgrims, Faxian and Xuan Zang along with excavated seals and sealings point to the sustained patronage by the late Gupta kings and thereafter Harshavardhana of the Vardhana dynasty. Although its history is older, the Nalanda *mahavihara* reached its high point in the 7th century when two of its most notable monuments were built. One was the *jagati* (known as Patthar Ghatti) of the temple at Site 12. It served as the foundation for a large stone temple whose sanctum measured about 52 feet square. Around the perimeter of the plinth are 220 panels, depicting decorative motifs, brahmanical deities Kubera and Gajalakshmi and scenes from the *Ramayana*. The absence of any Buddhist deity on the panels has complicated the identification of the sectarian affiliation of the shrine as Buddhist.

Old temple at Gop

The oldest surviving structural temple in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat is the so-called Old Temple at Gop. This was built in the late 6th or early 7th century, during the reign of the Maitraka dynasty. The architecture of this rather stark temple is an unusual variation on the *Nagara* style. The temple is classified as a "Gandharic" type since it preserves a number of elements from the northwestern tradition of the Kushana period. The most obvious of these is the so-called '**penthouse-type'** roof. Like the Gupta prototypes, the Gop temple stands on a high, square *jagati* which has a projection on the east. In comparison to Gupta temples, the plinth is much higher. The use of large, heavy blocks of stone in the construction is not merely a Gupta legacy but a characteristic regional form. The temple was originally *sandhara*.

Lakshmana temple at Sirpur

The Panduvamshis or Somavamshis, ruling during the 6th-7th centuries, had their capital in Sirpur, in present day Chattisagarh. The best preserved Panduvamshi temple is the Vishnu temple at Sirpur, now known as the Lakshmana temple, which was built by the mother of the last king. This brick temple stands on a large stone platform, accessible by steps at both ends of the eastern side. The temple plan consists of a shrine and a now-ruined *mandapa* with stone pillars arranged in rows. The sanctum of the temple is entered through a large stone doorway, decorated with panels of *mithunas*, and ***vrikshadevata****s*. Across the centre of the **lintel** is a representation of Vishnu reclining on the snake Sesha. The *shikhara* of the Lakshmana temple is specially noteworthy because of its curvilinear and almost cylindrical form. The shape of the *shikhara* and its clear division into ***bhumi****s* or horizontal stories became typical of the early Orissan temple style, which is discussed below. The exterior of the *shikhara* and shrine is extensively decorated with ***chandrashalas*** and different types of mouldings.

Kailasha temple at Ellora

The colossal and richly carved Kailasha temple complex at Ellora was constructed during the reign of Krishna I (757–83 CE) of the Rashtrakuta dynasty. This is the largest rock-cut monument in India and marks the culmination of rock architecture in South Asia. The temple is unique in that it is a rock-cut imitation of the structural temple. In plan, the complex has three separate units—a cruciform Dravida temple, a gatehouse and a pavilion. Two rock-cut bridges connect the three components but each can also be accessed independently.

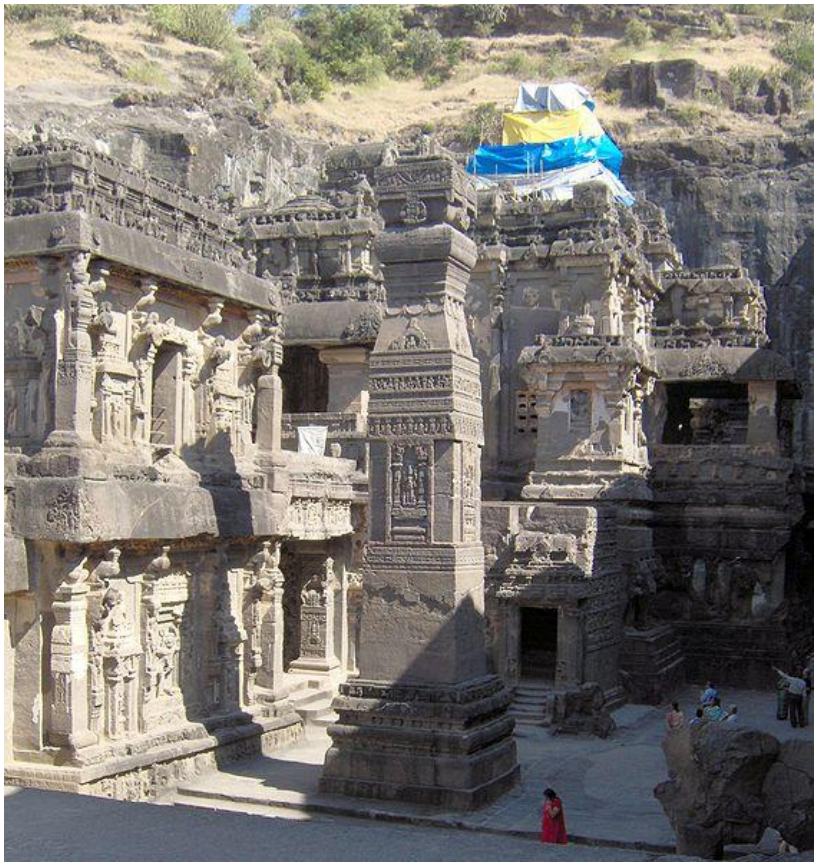


Figure 10.10.3: Kailasha temple, Ellora
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ellora_Kailash_temple_overview.jpg

The main temple contains a flat-roofed *mandapa* leading to a shrine containing a ***linga***. The shrine has a pyramidal *shikhara* which rises 29 metres above the courtyard floor. Around the temple, there are five miniature shrines surrounding the temple; free-standing, life-sized rock-cut elephants and two monumental rock-cut columns. Inside the pavilion is a sculpture of the *Nandi*. The Kailasha temple stands out among other rock-cut shrines, particularly because of the magnificent carvings on its exterior walls. Pilasters have divided the exterior surface into niches, which contain individual sculptures of deities and vibrant mythological scenes depicting the legend of Shiva. Originally both exterior and interior were painted over a thin layer of plaster.

Pallava temple

The Pallava dynasty held sway over Andhra Pradesh and northern Tamil Nadu between the 6th and 9th centuries A.D. At Mamallapuram, a pre-eminent Pallava cultural centre in Tamil Nadu, there are granite monuments of four distinct types, of which two are

relevant to our discussion. First, rock-cut monolithic shrines created out of single boulders of granite and second, structural temples built by piling stone upon stone.

Rathas at Mamallapuram

A group of five rock-cut shrines are located at the southern end of Mamallapuram. They are now known as *rathas* and four of them are named after the five Pandava heroes of the *Mahabharata*. Four of the five represent differing architectural styles. The Arjuna *ratha* is the earliest example of a large Dravida temple. Its *shikhara* is crowned by a rounded unit known as *stupi* or *stupika*. Miniature versions of *stupis* are repeated at the corners of its lower level. It is believed to be a Shaiva shrine because there is a large, rock-cut bull located close behind it. The Dharmaraja *ratha* is a taller and more impressive version of the Dravida temple than the Arjuna *ratha*. The Bhima *ratha* is a barrel-vaulted structure incomplete in its lower level. The Nakula Sahadeva *ratha* is apsidal and has an elephant carved besides it. The shrine may have been dedicated to either Indra or Aiyanar, both of whom ride an elephant. The Draupadi *ratha* is modelled after a wooden hut with a thatched roof. It was originally dedicated to goddess Durga since her image is carved on the rear wall and her female attendants flank the entrance. Her lion mount is carved in front of the shrine.

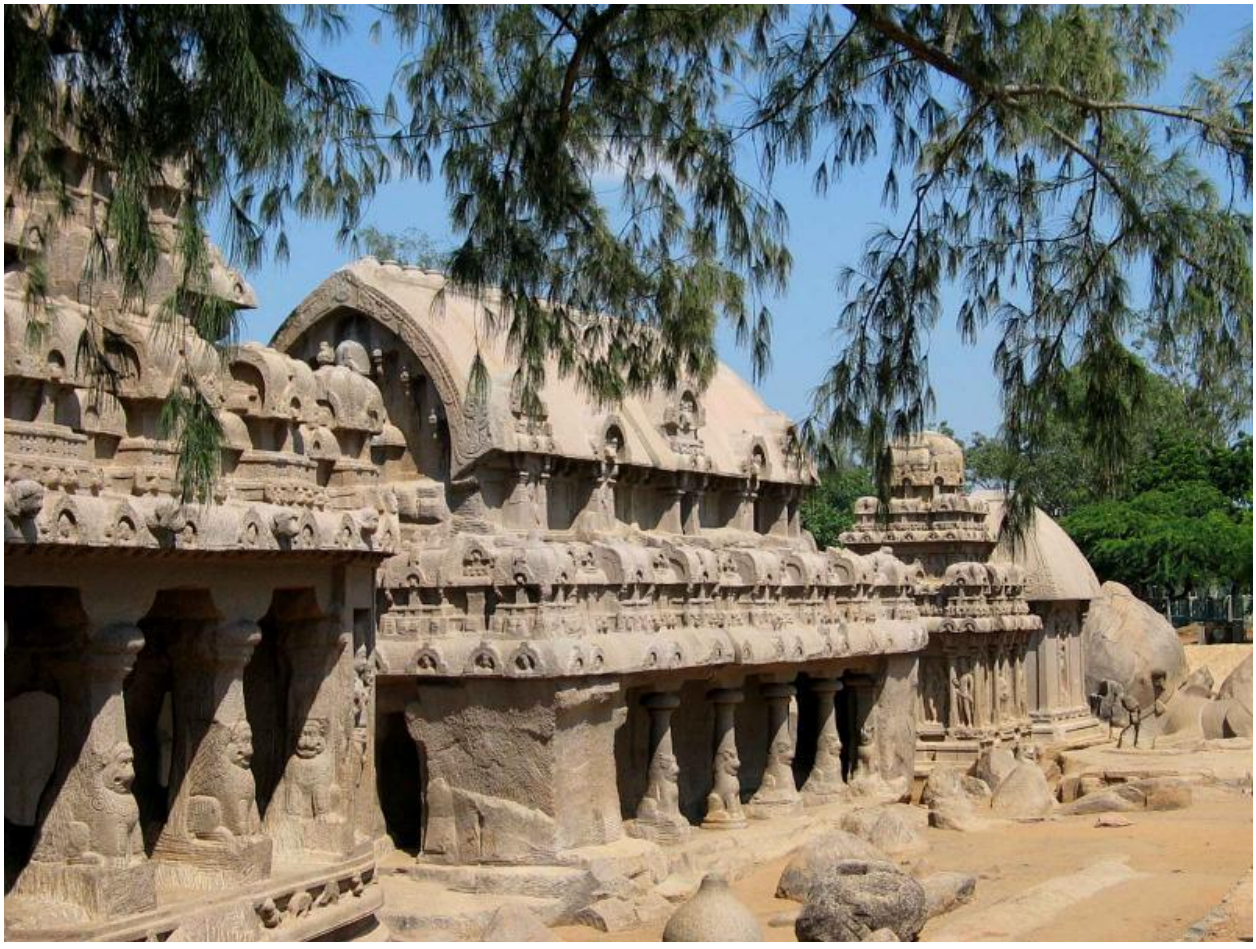


Figure 10.10.4: *Rathas* at Mamallapuram
Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mamallapuram_Five_Rathas.jpg

Who built these *rathas* and were these originally intended for worship? The title 'Mamalla' prominently engraved on the Dharmaraja *ratha* indicates that these *rathas* were commissioned by the Pallava king, Narasimha Mamalla, after whom the city of Mamallapuram is named. Vidya Dehejia argues that the *rathas* are more in the nature of a workshop rather than shrines since the lion, bull and elephant sculptures associated with the Durga, Arjuna and Nakula-Sahadeva *rathas* respectively are not placed in their correct ritual positions (Dehejia 1997:193).

Shore Temple at Mamallapuram and Kailashanatha temple at Kanchipuram

Two of the most impressive structural temples attributed to the Pallavas was built by the last great ruler of this dynasty, Narasimhavarman II. These are the Shore Temple at Mamallapuram and Kailashanatha temple at Kanchipuram, 72 kilometres from Mamallapuram. The Shore Temple has an unusual plan. It consists of three separate worship areas, which do not appear to relate to a unified scheme. The main temple, dedicated to Shiva contains a *linga* and a relief of Somaskanda in the central shrine. There is a circumambulatory passage around the shrine. There is a small square Shiva shrine on the western side of the central temple. A third shrine, dedicated to Vishnu as Anantashayana, spans the two Shiva temples forming a connecting link. Yet another peculiar feature is that while the main entrance to the complex faces west, there is another, in the sanctum, facing east.

Figure 10.10.5: Shore temple at Mamallapuram
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shore_Temple

The most impressive building of Narasimhavarman II's reign is the Shiva temple known as Kailashanatha, built in his capital Kanchipuram. Enclosed within a rectangular courtyard wall, the complex consists of the main temple and a series of miniature shrines. The main sandstone shrine with a detached hall and a pyramidal *shikhara* is a full-fledged Dravida temple. The shrine contains a 2.5 metres high Shiva *linga*. A Somaskanda relief is carved against its back wall. Seven sub-shrines are attached to the exterior of the main shrine contain huge images of Shiva dancing, receiving the Ganga and in the form of a mendicant. At quite a distance from the shrine is a pavilion with a seated Nandi, facing Shiva. Within the courtyard of this Shaivite shrine, Vishnu appears in a range of forms that include Narasimha and Trivikrama.

Figure 10.10.6: Kailashanath temple, Kanchipuram
Source: http://leonstein.blogspot.com/2009/01/kailasnath.html

Vattuvankovil temple at Kalugumalai

Strikingly similar to the Kailashanatha in form and the way it was built is the 8th century Vattuvankovil temple at Kalugumalai in Tamil Nadu. Although unfinished, it is the most impressive monument of the Early Pandyas. The east-facing Shiva temple consists of a *mandapa* and a *garbhagriha*. The *garbhagriha* is surmounted by a storied, elaborately decorated, southern style superstructure, topped by an octagonal *shikhara*.

Temples of Western Chalukyas

There is great diversity among the structural temple forms of the Chalukyas. What is common to most of them is that they are created by piling large blocks of stone. The joints between different units of a structure are clearly visible. In proportion, most of the temples emphasize length rather than height. The interiors of *mandapas* are frequently carved with rich ceiling panels. Walls of larger temples are embellished with ***vyala*** motifs and sometimes other floral and figural motifs. The Chalukyan pillars are square and heavy, without a base. They are decorated with *mithunas*, *yakshinis* and river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna. On the whole, sculptural decoration plays a much greater role in carrying out the programme of the temple than it did in the Gupta and immediately post-Gupta monuments. The chief temple centres were Aihole and Pattadakal in

Karnataka. The Aihole-Pattadakal complex is interesting because it has temples in all three styles.

Meguti temple at Aihole

Meguti is a Jaina structural temple which was dedicated in circa 634 A.D. during the reign of king Pulakeshin II. In plan, the temple is of the *sandhara* type. The austerity of the temple's exterior stands out among other Western Chalukyan examples which are lavishly carved. Panels of dwarves and animals are the only elements of decoration, located at the base of the structure. There are pilasters on the exterior wall but they do not house figurative sculptures. Perhaps the temple originally had a southern style superstructure.

Durga temple at Aihole

The apsidal Durga temple at Aihole is one of the most enigmatic temples of the Chalukyan style. It was built around 725–30 A.D. during the reign of the Chalukyan king Vijayaditya. It is one of the earliest examples of the *Vesara* style. In plan, it is a fusion between the Dravida *mandapa* and the Nagara *shikhara*. The temple has a distinctive pillared *pradakshinapatha* running all around the shrine. The variety of Hindu sculptures depicted in wall niches along the *pradakshina patha* makes it difficult to identify the cultic affiliations of the temple. Probably this was an Aditya temple since there is an image of this deity above the entrance. A gateway inscription also refers to it as temple of Aditya.

Figure 10.10.7: Durga temple at Aihole

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Durga_Temple_(Aihole,_Karnataka,_India).JPG

Lad Khan temple at Aihole

Another unique Chalukyan monument is the Lad Khan temple, probably created in the late 7th or early 8th century. A pillared porch precedes the large, square *mandapa*. The small shrine at the rear seems to have been added as an afterthought. A small second storey shrine is placed above the centre of the *mandapa*. The exterior walls of the temple are striking for their plainness. They are relieved only by the impressive lattice windows and thick pilaster-like forms. Another notable feature is the use of large stone slabs on the roof that resemble wood planks and half timbers.

Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal

The most fully developed Dravida temple built by the Western Chalukyas is the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal, which was dedicated to Shiva. It was constructed during the reign of Vikramaditya II, by his chief queen Loka Mahadevi. The temple complex is set within a rectangular walled enclosure in which a series of shrines were built. A large *gopura* on the east is balanced by a smaller one on the west. Between the eastern *gopura* and temple proper is a square shrine containing a sculpture of Nandi.

The main temple consists of a large pillared *mandapa* and a smaller *vimana*. The *vimana* in turn consists of an antechamber and shrine with an enclosed circumambulatory passage, the whole topped by a southern style superstructure. Porches project from the *mandapa*, to admit more light into the interior. On the exterior, deep niches created by pilasters contain dynamic depictions of various aspects of Shiva. The interior of the temple, specially the pillars, ceilings and lintels too are richly adorned. There are two small shrines, one on either side of the antechamber to the main shrine. The doorway to the main shrine (which houses a Shiva *linga*) is much more elaborate than Gupta temple doors. Outside the framework of the door, there are pilasters, *a* ***torana***, architectural niches, multiple side figures and sizeable *dvarapalas*.

The early Orissan style: Parashurameshvara temple at Bhubneshvar

In the 7th century A.D., Orissa emerged as a major centre of art and architecture, giving rise to a distinct regional style. The style was inspired by the Early Western Chalukyan temple architecture and that of Sirpur, which we discussed above. The temple forms as known from existing monuments seem to closely follow the textual precepts. This is not always the case in other parts of the country.

The best preserved specimen of the temple building tradition inaugurated by the Shailodbhava dynasty is the 7th century Parashurameshvara temple at Bhubaneshvar. Inscriptional evidence shows that the temple was dedicated to an *acharya* of the Shaiva Pashupata sect. Enclosed within a rectangular compound wall, the Parashurameshvara temple consists of two parts: a *triratha* ***rekha deul*** and a *jagamohana* preceding it. In the vocabulary of Orissan temple architecture, the *shikhara* is commonly called a *deul*

while the *mandapa* is called a *jagamohana*. The *deul*, which is characteristically curvilinear in Orissan temples is called the *rekha deul*. The *shikhara* is topped by a large *amalaka*. The basic profile of the Parashurameshvara *deul* became typical of the Orissan temple style.

Figure 10.10.8: Parashurameshvara temple, Bhuvaneshvar
Source: http://www.art-and-archaeology.com/india/bhubaneshwar/pr01.html

The rectangular *jagamohana* with its double-storied roof, pillars and *jalis* recalls the Early Western Chalukya *mandapas*. Yet, the double roof also anticipates the ***pidhas*** found in more evolved Orissan temples. A peculiarity of the *jagamohana* is that it can be entered through doorways on both the west and the south. The interior of the *jagamohana* is starkly simple, which is a characteristic feature of Orissan temple architecture. In contrast to the interior, the exteriors of both the *jagamohana* and *rekha deul* are lavishly embellished with architectural and decorative designs, such as the *chandrshala* and the *amalaka*. However, in spite of all the surface elaboration, the large blocks of stone used in construction are clearly visible, specially on the *jagamohana*.

10.11: Ancient Indian sculpture, c. 300 – 700 CE

Evolution of sculptural styles

Factors facilitating the growth of sculptures

Sculptural style established a new benchmark in beauty and elegance in the period between c.300 and 750 A.D. The expression of a sublime artistic vision during this period was the result of several factors. The development of the Smarta-Puranic religion in the Gupta period (c.400–600 A.D.) led to the emergence of the Hindu structural temples in great numbers. This in turn gave a spurt to the embellishment of the temples. The architectural idiom therefore became more sophisticated with the use of features such as elaborate doorways and **pilaster**s. By the Gupta period, rules of **iconography** pertaining to every type of deity had begun to be crystallized. The ***Purana**s* which were

compiled in the Gupta period provided the basis for the depiction of complex scenes from the lives of gods. The mythic vision enshrined in the *Puranas* found translation in art. Parallel to the strengthening of Hindu ritual norms, increased devotional practices in Buddhism and Jainism were responsible for the multiplication of Buddhist *stupas* and Jaina and Buddhist structural temples. The sculptors of this time were highly skilled in the versatile use of architectural space. Temple decoration was not merely an aesthetic enhancement but was a vehicle for communicating multiple layers of meanings, relating to themes such as the rescue of earth from evil forces, attainment of ***moksha***, as well as metaphors of temporal politics.

In this chapter, focus will be on sculptures found only in structural temples, as sculptural embellishments of rock-cut caves have been discussed in chapter 10.9. Additionally, one will discuss sculptures which have been recovered in the course of archaeological explorations and excavations but have been divorced from their original contexts.

Value addition: delving deeper

Text and the image

The aesthetic norms of the Gupta period reveal a close relationship between literature and art. While the dramatic scenes of the Deogarh panels were conceptualized from the narratives of the Vishnu and Bhagavata *Puranas*, the mythology of Vishnu rescuing the earth in his ***Varaha*** *avatara* was derived from the *Vishnu Purana*.

The iconographic rules prescribed in the texts used nature as the model for representation of figures: the face was to have the smooth shape of an egg, the forehead that of a bow and the eyes that of a lotus petal. For male figures, the nose was to resemble the beak of a parrot, the lips like the red *bimba* fruit, the shoulders an elephant's head while the arms and thighs were to look like the trunk of a young plantain tree.

The richness of cosmopolitan, urban life too is seen in one of the Deogarh temple panels portraying dancers with musicians wherein the figure in the middle is distinctly a foreigner in Scythian costume. The sensuousness of the Gupta figures was inspired by the poets of the period, particularly the *kavyas* of the greatest Gupta period poet Kalidasa.

In the context of Pallava bronze images of the dancing Shiva, one finds repeated literary references to the idea of Shiva performing the cosmic dance. While the 7th century Tamil Shaiva saint Appar described Shiva Nataraja as the 'holder of secret knowledge', two centuries later, another Shaiva poet, Manikkavachakar, described with wonder, the ***ananda tandava***.

Source: Pal, Pratapaditya. The Divine Image and Poetic Imagery in Gupta India. *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 10: 296–309; Srinivasan, Sharada. 2004. 'Shiva as Cosmic "Dancer": On Pallava Origins for the Nataraja Bronze' In *The Archaeology of Hinduism*: *World Archaeology,* edited by Elizabeth A. Bacus and Nayanjot Lahiri, 36 (3): 432–50.

Dynastic labels

Sculptural styles are often named after the dynastic patrons such as Guptas, Pallavas and Western Chalukyas. Sculptures found within the territorial limits of major dynasties may or may not share a unique stylistic identity. In the case of the Gupta dynasty, their empire extended over a large geographic terrain in the 4th and 5th centuries. Following the breakup of the centralized Gupta empire, regional variations in style became more noticeable. In the post-Gupta period, styles came to be identified by their regional source. Occasionally, a site acquired such overarching importance that its sculptural style came to be known by the name of the site itself. The Kailashanatha temple at Ellora and the monastic complex at Nalanda are two such examples.

The classical Gupta style in multiple media

The sculptural style that developed in the Gupta period is often described as "classical". This is because the Gupta style marked the culmination of earlier sculptural styles and some of the finest sculptures were produced in this phase. In addition, the Gupta style came to determine the standards of form and taste in the subsequent course of art. The unique feature of Gupta art was that while most of its elements were carryovers from earlier art traditions such as Kushana Mathura (among several others), they were blended together and imbued with unmatched elegance and spiritual content. Considering that the Guptas reigned for 300 years, it is to be expected that the style did not remain static. In the later Gupta period, the figures became slender.

Gupta artists used diverse materials such as stone, stucco, terracotta and metal. The extant Gupta sculptures in stone consist of a large number of individual images, Buddhist, Jain and Hindu, originally installed in shrines or placed in niches. Large sculptural compositions in stone, a typical feature of Indian art, which were initiated in the Mauryan period, continued to be seen in the Gupta period. Sculpture in terracotta provided for images and architectural ornamentation for the brick temples. The use of stucco as a decorative medium was short lived. Bronze images were also made but do not seem to have had a major presence in Gupta art.

Value addition: did you know?
Portraits from the past
While temples largely carried representations of deities, it is on coins that one finds portraiture of royalty. Gold coins of the Gupta kings depict a portrait of the king on the obverse and a deity on the reverse. The figures of kings are idealized portraits. Each royal portrait type (such as 'king and Lakshmi type', '*ashvamedha* type', '***chakravikrama***' type, 'lyrist' type, 'king and queen type', 'archer type', 'battleaxe type', horseman type') tries to communicate an ideal king's virtues. These derive from the ***chakravartin***, who expands his realm by conquest of the four quarters, who is closely associated with *Shri* and one who is a pious devotee and performs sacrifices for the gods.
Source: Raven, Ellen M. 1994. "Invention and Innovation: Royal Gupta Gold Coins." In *A Treasury of Indian Coins, edited by* Martha L.

Carter. Bombay: Marg Publications, 39-56.

Gupta sculptures in stone

Hindu sculptures

The early 5th century rock-cut sculptures of the Udayagiri caves constitute an early corpus of Gupta sculptures. The iconography of Hindu deities at the site—Vishnu, Shiva and Durga Mahishasuramardini — was carried forward in the subsequent Gupta period figures.

Vaishnava sculptures

In Gupta art, Vishnu could be represented in multiple forms: in his human form; in his *avataras*, particularly the *Varaha* form; and as Krishna-Gopala.

Vishnu

One of the finest Vaishnava sculptures of the Gupta period is the broken, red sandstone Vishnu from Mathura, dated to the mid 5th century. The deity has a powerful chest and shoulders. He is wearing a lot of jewellery, of which the crown and armlets are notable. A new development in the Gupta Vishnu image is the personification of his attributes in the form of ***ayudhapurusha****s*. The *gada and* ***chakra***, for example, were personified as *gadadevi* and *cakrapurusha*.

Vishnu was also portrayed in mythic narratives. The stone panels on the 6th century Deogarh temple, Madhya Pradesh, use Vishnu's forms to depict the stories relating to his powers as creator, preserver and destroyer. The panel on the south wall which represents the creative aspect is majestic. It shows Vishnu reclining on the serpent *Sesha* or *Ananta*, whose multiple hoods shelter him. In the ancient cosmic myth, the moment of creation is witnessed by Brahma seated on his lotus that emerges from Vishnu's navel. In the top register, the cosmic act of creation is witnessed by Shiva and Parvati who ride on the bull, *Nandi*, Karttikeya seated on a peacock and Indra on his elephant. Vishnu has broad shoulders and a powerful chest. His face is remarkably similar to the Mathura Vishnu, discussed earlier. This manifestation of Vishnu became an important iconographic model. In the period under study, it is again encountered at the 8th century Pallava site of Mamallapuram, where *Ananatashayi* Vishnu is carved in *situ* from a living rock, within the Bhima *ratha*.

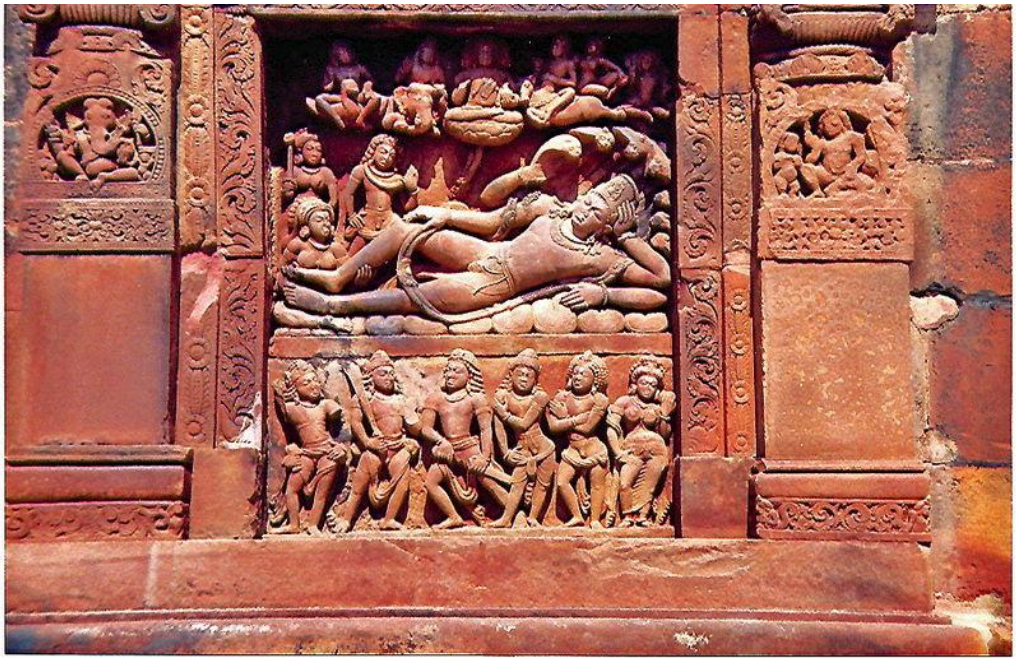


Figure 10.11.1: Stone panel from the Deogarh temple depicting ***Anantashayana*** Vishnu
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Anantasayi_Vishnu_Deogarh.jpg.jpg

Varaha avatara

Vishnu in his *Varaha avatara* could be depicted in two versions: either in the animal form or in the human-animal combination where the human body is topped by a boar's head (known as *Nri-Varaha*). The popularity of the *Varaha* image was largely because of its political symbolism. Like the *Varaha* who rescued the earth from the deluge in Puranic mythology, the Gupta kings too wanted to project themselves as protectors of the earth. Two sandstone images of *Varahas* have been found from Eran in Madhya Pradesh, which was once an important centre of the Guptas. One is a superb *Varaha* in the human-animal combination, of the kind first found at Udayagiri. The power of the deity is expressed in his heavy body and the confident pose in which he stands, with his left hand on his upheld knee and the right hand at the hip. The earth goddess, Bhudevi dangles from his tusk. The second sculpture is that of a giant boar, over 3 metres high. Its body is covered with successive rows of miniature human figures, representing *rishis* who took refuge in the boar's bristles. The position of Bhudevi is the same as in the human-animal version. This type continued to be popular in the post-Gupta period. It is dated to the late 5^{th} or early 6^{th} century on the basis of an inscription, which refers to the Huna king Toramana.

Figure 10.11.2: The *Nri-Varaha* form of Vishnu from Eran
Source: http://www.thehindu.com/fline/fl2422/stories/20071116504306400.htm

Garuda pillar

Apart from the *Varahas*, Eran has also yielded a monumental pillar surmounted by Vishnu's *chakra* and two standing figures of *Garuda*. An inscription on the pillar records its dedication in 485 A.D. by a local king and his younger brother.

Krishna-Govardhana

The finest Krishna sculpture of the Gupta workshop is a 2 metres high Chunar sandstone image of Krishna lifting the Govardhana mountain, from Varanasi. This is the largest free-standing stone image of the Gupta period. Krishna is shown as a young prince, wearing a crown and a typical tiger claw necklace. The lower torso and the stomach is modeled very sensitively.

Buddha figures

The classic Buddha images of the Gupta period are characterized by grace and dignity. Both seated and standing figures have half closed, downward-looking eyes and snail-shell curls on the head. The greatest legacy of Gupta Buddhist art is that the Buddha figure became the source of inspiration not only for stone and bronze images created in eastern India between the 8^{th} to 12^{th} centuries but for the Buddhist world at large, including Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia. The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang, who had visited India in the early 7^{th} century, carried back Gupta period bronze Buddhas with him.

What was the inspiration behind the unique Gupta Buddha? It was a combination of elements from the Kushan period Buddhist art workshops at Gandhara and Mathura. These aesthetic ideals of Indian art advocated serene, inward-looking, and meditative forms for the gods and goddesses. Over the years, the Buddha's body became very slim and elegant. Ultimately, two major workshops of Buddhist art emerged in the Gupta empire: at Mathura and at Sarnath, both in Uttar Pradesh.

Mathura Buddha

The most impressive achievement of the Mathura school are the standing Buddhas, nearly 2 metres tall. They are made of the local red spotted sandstone. Buddha's left hand holds one end of the *sanghati* while the right hand is usually in the *abhaya mudra*. The transparent *sanghati* with fine lines suggestive of the fall of the robe clings to the body of the Buddha. The head is framed by an exquisite halo decorated with concentric bands. Certain stylistic features such as the heavy, broad shoulders and the rather flat scrollwork on the halo are characteristic of the early Mathura Buddha sculptures.

Figure 10.11.3: Left: Seated Buddha in stone from Sarnath.
Source: http://www.sbcc.edu/art/website/gallery2/main.php?g2_itemId=528

Figure 10.11.4: Right: Standing Buddha in stone from Mathura.
Source:
http://cwx.prenhall.com/bookbind/pubbooks/stokstad3/chapter9/custom4/deluxe-content.html

Sarnath Buddha

The Buddha figures from the Sarnath atelier are made of buff sandstone obtained from Chunar. The historic association of this site with the Buddha's first sermon is highlighted in the best product of the school. Buddha is seated cross-legged in the posture of meditation, with his hands in the ***dharmachakrapravartana mudra***. The presence of a deer on the pedestal of the image indicates the sermon's setting in the deer park. Unlike the Mathura Buddha, the Sarnath Buddha wears a totally transparent robe without even the gentle lines of the drapery which characterize the robe of the Mathura Buddha.

Other Buddhas: Sanchi and Bamiyan

Buddha images were also made at some other centres, apart from the two major workshops at Mathura and Sarnath. At Sanchi, four large seated Buddhas were placed at the four entrances along the ***pradakshinapatha*** of the Great *Stupa* at a later date. In the 5th century, at Bamiyan in Afghanistan, the face of an enormous cliff was carved with a colossal, standing Buddha nearly 55 metres tall. A large niche served as a halo around the head and body of the Buddha. Such enormous figures, which sought to emphasize the spiritual stature of the Buddha are taken by some to be the representations of Vairochana, the Buddha in whom the totality of the universe is personified. A few years back, this superb statue dominating the landscape was blown up by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Jaina sculptures in stone

Vidisha *Jinas*

Three almost identical seated Jaina figures have been found near Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh, which are dated to c. 380 A.D. on the basis of inscriptions referring to the reign of a Gupta king, Ramagupta. These represent a transition between the Kushana Mathura style and the mature Gupta idiom. The best preserved figure is seated in ***vajraparyankasana*** with his hands in ***dhyana mudra***, attended by two ***chauri*** bearers. The halo is sumptuously carved. The pedestal includes a wheel in the centre and lions at the corners.

Mathura *Jina*

A seated stone image of a *Jina* from Mathura has been dated to 432-33 A.D. on the basis of an inscription on its pedestal. The long and narrow pedestal has a *chakra* in the centre, flanked on either side by a kneeling devotee, with hands in the ***anjali mudra***. There are lions at the extreme ends. The Jina who is seated cross-legged, is wide-hipped and high-waisted.

Figure 10.11.5: Seated stone image of *Jina* from Mathura
Source: www.cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/jainhlinks.html

Gupta style Jaina metal images

A hoard of metal images found at Chausa, Bihar contained examples that clearly seem to be of the Gupta period. A standing image of Rishabhanatha revealed the form, grace and naturalism associated with Gupta art.

Terracottas

Some of the finest terracottas, both in size and technique were produced during this period. These terracottas furthered the religious programme as solitary images, images placed in niches; those used for relief decoration on plaques or shaped into ornamental moulded bricks. Some of the best Gupta terracottas have come from Bhitargaon, Kaushambi, Bhita and Ahichchhatra. Compared to stone sculptures, terracottas tended to be more intimately connected with the daily life of people and more playful in mood. A plaque on the Bhitargaon temple in Uttar Pradesh, for example, shows a family scene of Shiva and Parvati.

Hindu temple terracottas

Terracotta plaques from Hindu temples often depict scenes from the two epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, whose themes had been known for several centuries now. While *Ramayana* scenes have been found from Shravasti and Chausa, *Mahabharata* themes (as also episodes from Shaivite mythology) are identified at Ahichchatra.

Ahichchhatra in Uttar Pradesh has yielded the most impressive free-standing terracottas of the Gupta period. They are nearly human-size representations of the river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna, dating from the late 5^{th} or early 6^{th} century. Each goddess stands on her respective *vahana*, the ***makara*** and the ***kurma***, holding a water vessel and attended by a diminutive figure. Originally, the two river goddesses must have flanked the entrance to the Shiva temple that once stood at the site.

Figure 10.11.6: Terracotta sculptures of Ganga and Yamuna from Ahichchhatra
Source:
http://www.shunya.net/Pictures/NorthIndia/Delhi/Museum/NationalMuseum.htm

Terracottas on Buddhist structures

The lower portion of the brick *stupa* of Devnimori, Gujarat was originally decorated with a number of terracotta plaques depicting seated Buddhas, which have been dated to the late 4th century. The Devnimori Buddhas are endowed with a spiritual quality, typical of the Gupta period. Decorative motifs typical of the period are also encountered for the first time in Devnimori terracottas, such as the vegetal scrollwork and grotesque decorative heads.

Value addition: common misconceptions
Terracottas were only made for temples
While many surviving terracotta sculptures of the Gupta period are indeed religious in origin, Devangana Desai has pointed to a genre of secular terracottas which were probably made for the urban class or *nagarakas*. These included miniature figures and small plaques, which were made sensitively and in large numbers. The themes they depict are mostly secular: heads of artistocratic men and women with a variety of fashions and coiffures, ***mithuna*** couples, erotic scenes, mother and child scenes, ***shalabhanjika****s* and horse riders have been

found from several sites. Most of these terracottas have been found from north and east Indian sites such as Akhnur, Vaishali, Rajghat, Bhitari, Bhita, Kaushambi, Shravasti, Ahichchhattra, Mathura, Chandraketugarh and Panna. At Bhita, marks of terracotta paint are still visible, suggesting that they may often have been painted.

In the period after 600 A.D., the large scale output of miniature terracottas was reduced. The themes too were limited. The 7th century court poet, Bana, attached to the Vardhan king Harsha, described the use of terracottas in palace decorations during weddings.

Source: Desai, Devangana. 1986. The Social Milieu of Ancient Indian Terracottas 600 B.C.–600 A.D. In *From Indian Art: 4000 Years of Terracotta Art, edited by* Amy G Poster. New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 43-56.

Regional contributions

Stuccos

A highly fragile material, stucco was used in both the western and eastern outreaches of the erstwhile Gupta empire in the immediate post-Gupta period. While sites in the northwest such as Hadda in Afghanistan had a long tradition of stucco sculptures, in eastern India, stucco began to be used from this period to adorn brick monuments, both Buddhist and Hindu.

Eastern India

Clear traces of the Sarnath style were preserved in eastern India long after they had disappeared from the Gupta atelier. Frederick Asher argues that this influence is the result of eastward migration of artists from the Sarnath workshop during the late 5th century, probably attracted by the burgeoning Buddhist complex at Nalanda (Asher 1980:26). The Sarnath influence is obvious in the 6th century stuccos from Maniyar Math and the 7th century ones from Nalanda, both in Bihar. Like the Sarnath models, these figures have slender bodies and wear transparent garments. The faces, however, are longer.

At Maniyar Math, stucco images of Vishnu, Ganesha, Shiva-Nataraja, *nagas* and *nagis* are located in niches on the brick-made ***panchayatana linga***. The presence of *naga* deities has to be correlated with the antiquity of the *Naga* cult in the contiguous Rajgir area. At Nalanda *mahavihara*, the 7th century stucco sculptures include seated and standing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas such as Lokanatha and Manjushri, all of whom are placed within individual niches. The Nalanda stuccos became the prototypes for 8th century stone and bronze images from eastern India.

Figure 10.11.7: Stucco panel depicting an image of Buddha from Nalanda
Source: http://home.earthlink.net/~brelief2/bud_pil.html

At Aphsad, the plinth of a ruined Vishnu temple yielded stucco panels narrating episodes from the *Ramayana*. Most probably this Vishnu temple was built in the late 7th century by the Late Gupta king of Magadha, Adityasena, as is suggested by an inscription found at the site. The style of the panels is similar to the Gupta terracottas such as at Ahichchhatra.

Value addition: common misconceptions
Stucco was imported from the north west and used only in Buddhist centres
Stucco or lime plaster as an artistic medium was in use in eastern India from around the 5th–6th centuries A.D. There are two common misconceptions associated with its employment in eastern India. First, its origin is falsely linked to the diffusion from the stucco tradition in Gandhara. Second, it is assumed to be exclusively associated with Buddhist centres. Stucco tradition developed independently in eastern India. Within the time-frame discussed above, about 12 sites between Rajgir, Bihar in the west to Paharpur, Bangladesh in the east have yielded stuccos. Stylistically, two distinct facial types can be identified: those where the faces are characterized by individualized features and second, those which are grotesque. Frederick Asher has suggested that perhaps stucco sculptures provided the model for the very few but refined sculptures that have been found from Bengal in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. Since stucco is a very fragile material, it became difficult to continue its use in embellishing temple facades. So around the 8th century in Bengal, it was replaced by the more durable material, terracotta. In addition, stucco was unsuitable in Bengal's damp climate.

Source: Asher, Frederick M. 1980. *The Art of Eastern India, 300–800*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 63; Sengupta, Gautam. 1991. Stucco Statuary in Eastern India. In *Aksayanivi*: *Essays presented to Dr. Debala Mitra in admiration of her scholarly contributions.* Edited by Gouriswar Bhattacharya. Delhi: Satguru Publications, 287-97.

Stone sculpture

Nalanda panels

Like the stuccos, 220 stone panels along the plinth of the temple at Site 12, Nalanda also belong to the 7th century. These panels depict decorative motifs, Brahmanical deities such as Kubera, Gajalakshmi and scenes from the *Ramayana*. The absence of any Buddhist deity on the panels has complicated the identification of the temple as Buddhist. Unlike the stuccos, these stone panels are modelled on sculptures from Ajanta, Badami and the Shiva temple at Bhumara.

Vaishnava sculptures from Aphsad

A number of stone sculptures belonging to the late 7th century have been found from Aphsad in Bihar. One of the most beautiful images is a standing Vishnu carved of local black stone. Vishnu's gentle appearance and delicate details are in the "classical" mould but he also reflects a trend towards increasing ornamentation.

A replication of the Eran *varaha*, which we discussed earlier, has been found at Aphsad. Each minute detail has been taken from the Eran model. The only difference is that it is finer in form.

Metal sculpture

Sultanganj Buddha

A very small group of late and post-Gupta bronze Buddhas have been found from Bihar. They are simple in conception but their modeling is very strong and sensitive. The images do not have halos or attendant figures. The well-known Sultanganj Buddha of the early or mid 7th century belongs to this group. More than 2 metres high, it is the largest known Indian metal sculpture.

Figure 10.11.8: Bronze sculpture of Buddha from Sultanganj
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sultanganj_budda1.jpg

Western Indian stone sculptures

A distinctive regional sculptural style developed in Rajasthan and northern Gujarat in the immediate post-Gupta period. This style combined elements of Bactro-Gandharan style with the Gupta art of north-central India. The sculptures are made in a local greenish-blue slate, known locally as *pareva*. They are small in size, sophisticated in composition and have elaborate crowns or hairdos. There is a debate on their date since none of the specimens carry dated inscriptions. They cannot be associated with any dated monument either.

Tanesara-Mahadeva

Several female figures at Tanesara-Mahadeva in Rajasthan have been identified as *matrika* figures, which were originally either part of a ***saptamatrika*** group or constituted six *Skandamatas* or foster mothers of the deity Karttikeya.

Shamalaji

The most important sculptures from Shamalaji in Gujarat include a number of standing Shivas. Other sculptures include *matrikas* (of which the best-preserved is a four-armed Chamunda), a standing Skanda and a Vishnu as ***Vishvarupa***. These have been dated to the 6th century on the basis of style.

Pallava sculpture

Pallava stone sculpture

In south India, the use of stone for sculpture and temple building was adopted by the Pallavas during the 7th century. The southern style of temple sculpture was inspired by the earlier art of the Deccan, developed under the Satavahanas and Ikshvakus. A special feature of the Pallava sculptures is that they simultaneously convey multiple meanings. The political symbolism is particularly notable.

Narrative sculpture at Mamallapuram

The multivalent significance is best reflected in the famous sculpted rock at the port of Mamallapuram in Tamil Nadu, which has been alternatively identified as the Descent of the Ganga (a component of Shiva's mythology) or Arjuna's Penance (an episode from the *Mahabharata*). Measuring nearly 30 metres in length and approximately 15 metres in height, the relief is filled with life-size carvings of animals, human beings and celestial beings. A natural cleft in the rock has been ingeniously woven into the narrative. The narrative is so cleverly depicted that possibly both stories could have been simultaneously intended. Both the Ganga and Arjuna could be equated with the Pallavas: like the Ganga, they claimed to have purified their domain and like Arjuna, they sought victory against their competitors, the Western Chalukyas. Arjuna's story refers to the penances he performed for obtaining weapons from Shiva, in order to defeat the Kurus in the *Mahabharata* war.

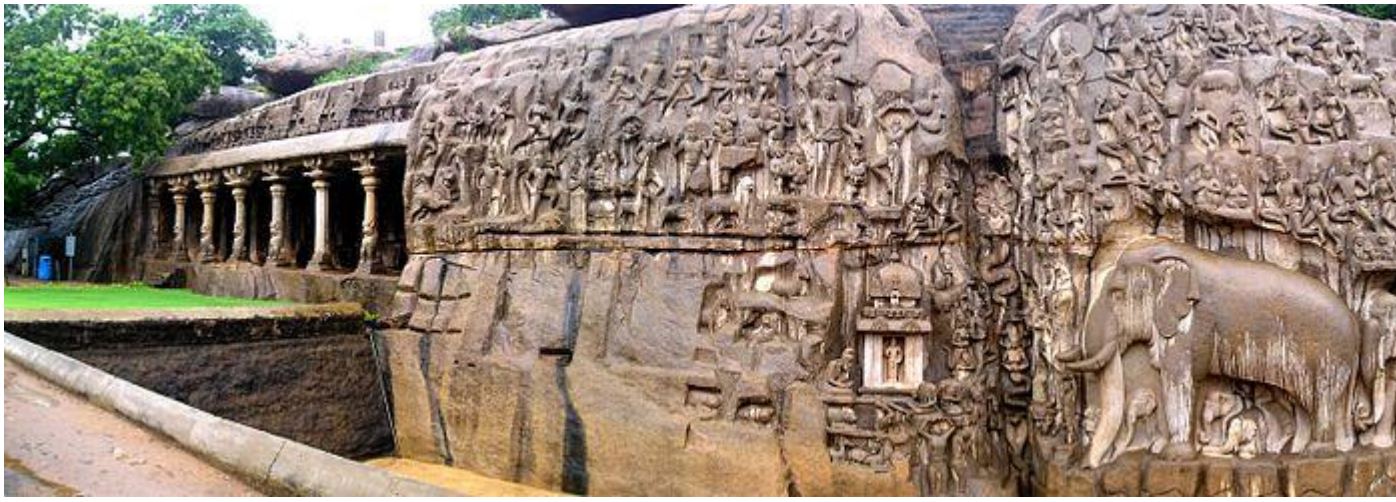


Figure 10.11.9: Stone relief of Arjuna's Penance/ Descent of the Ganga at Mamallapuram
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mahabalipuram_pano2.jpg

Vidya Dehejia suggests two additional readings of the sculpted relief. One could be a possible depiction of evolving *karma* by portraying a hierarchy of beings—from the lower level of elephants, monkeys and other animals, through a level of human experience to an upper level occupied by heavenly beings. The second could be the visualization of the rock as the site of a "sound and light show". On ceremonial occasions, water would be let out from a storage tank on top and made to flow down the cleft, recreating a flowing river (Dehejia 1997: 192).

Structural temples

Pallava sculptures adorn temples at Mamallapuram and Kanchipuram (the Pallava capital). The *rathas* (monolith sculpted temples in this case) at Mamallapuram have few significant sculptures. As the *rathas* have limited (and often nil) sculptural depiction in the interior, their original religious affiliations have been deduced from the sculptures on the exterior as well as the *vahanas* placed near the shrines. The rock-cut bull in front of the Arjuna *ratha* suggests it was a Shiva shrine while the lion placed before the Draupadi *ratha* indicates a dedication to Durga. The Draupadi *ratha* is sculpted with images of Durga Mahishasuramardini on its exterior walls. Pilasters are used to demarcate niches for sculptures. The Dharmaraja *ratha* contains the earliest depiction of a Somakanda relief—Shiva with his wife, Uma and their son Skanda. The motif was used as a metaphor for the Pallava royal family and is repeated in the Shore Temple at Mamallapuram and the Kailashanatha temple at Kanchipuram. The significance of the metaphor is clearly stated in an inscription found in the lavishly decorated Kailashanatha temple which equates Parameshvara I and son Rajasimha to Shiva and his offspring. Narasimhavarman II Rajasimha, who built the Kailashanatha temple as his personal shrine, popularized the motif. Another motif popularized by Rajasimha was the rampant lion, which is a play on his name. The king-lion synonymity however was not a Pallava innovation.

Apart from symbolism, there was also direct portrayal of Pallava royalty. On the south wall of the Dharmaraja *ratha*, which we discussed earlier, king Narasimhavarman is shown standing rigidly like the deities. Susan Huntington has interpreted from this

depiction that the *ratha* is a funerary monument (Huntington 1984:310). Her reasons: placement of the image in the direction of death (south) and the example of Chola memorials, which came later. It is clear from this that sculpture was not merely an object of devotion or of decoration but was also used to commemorate the patron.

Figure 10.11.10: Sculpture of Pallava king, Narasimhavarman I on the south face of the Dharmaraja *ratha*
Source: The Huntington Archives

Pallava bronzes

In 2004, Sharada Srinivasan's analysis of the **archaeometric**, iconographic and literary evidence showed that bronze representations of Shiva's *ananda tandava* appeared in the

Pallava period between the 7th and mid 9th centuries A.D. The earliest Pallava bronze representations of Nataraja are metal translations of wooden images. In Pallava examples, Shiva's limbs, the sash tied around his waist and the rim of fire within which he is dancing are very different from the later Chola examples.

Stone sculptures in the early Western Chalukyan style

One of the best examples of the Western Chalukyan style (late 6th and late 8th centuries) is seen in the Virupaksha temple in Pattadakal, Karnataka. Both outside and inside, the temple is richly carved. The presiding deity of the temple is Shiva and so he has been frequently depicted in dynamic forms on the deep niches of the outer walls. In the interior, the ceiling and pillars are elaborately carved.

That considerable thought went into the placement of images is clear from the sculpture of Durga Mahishasuramardini that is housed next to the main shrine, at the end point of the *pradakshinapatha*. The goddess' victory over the *Mahishasura* symbolized the *moksha* of the worshipper. The treatment of the Durga figure is very special in the history of Indian art because of its realism and unique modelling, which can be seen from all sides. In this example, *Mahishasura* is not a composite figure of beast-man but a human with buffalo horns.

The Early Western Chalukyan temples are embellished with motifs such as *dikpalas* and *mithunas* and niche images of Hari Hara (the combined form of Shiva and Vishnu) and *Ardhanarishvara* (the combined form of Shiva and Parvati).

Stone sculpture in the Kailasha temple, Ellora

One of the most magnificent sites for Indian sculpture is the mid 8th century Kailasha temple complex at Ellora, Maharashtra. The dramatic effect of the temple is as much because of its unique structure (see lesson 10.10) as its dynamic carvings. Long, slender bodies and piled up hair styles of the Ellora images have a kinship with the Early Western Chalukyan styles. However, the carvings are far richer in execution. One can also find references to sturdy figures of Ajanta and the Western Deccan.

The Ellora carvings are distinguished by huge, dramatic scenes that enact myths relating to Shiva, the deity to which the complex is dedicated. For instance, the large panel showing an angry, ten armed Shiva destroying the demon Andhakasura. He is accompanied by his consort, Parvati. That this is a depiction of a Puranic story is clear from the presence of small *saptamatrika* figures that form an integral part of the story. The use of the *saptamatrikas* found here and elsewhere in the temple complex, in life-size depictions reflect the growing importance of the female principle in attaining *moksha*.

Another huge relief shows the multiarmed, multiheaded demon Ravana shaking mount Kailasha, the sacred abode of Shiva and Parvati. The geographical setting of the myth is replicated by locating Ravana beneath mountains, on which are seated Shiva, his consort, attendant *ganas* and animals. The approximately human-size figures and three-

dimensionally carved details are noteworthy. The hilly terrain of Ellora was particularly suited for the myth of the mountains. The myth is not bound down by its geographical context alone. It communicates the sublime message that the power of Shiva, who stands for goodness, subdues all evil.

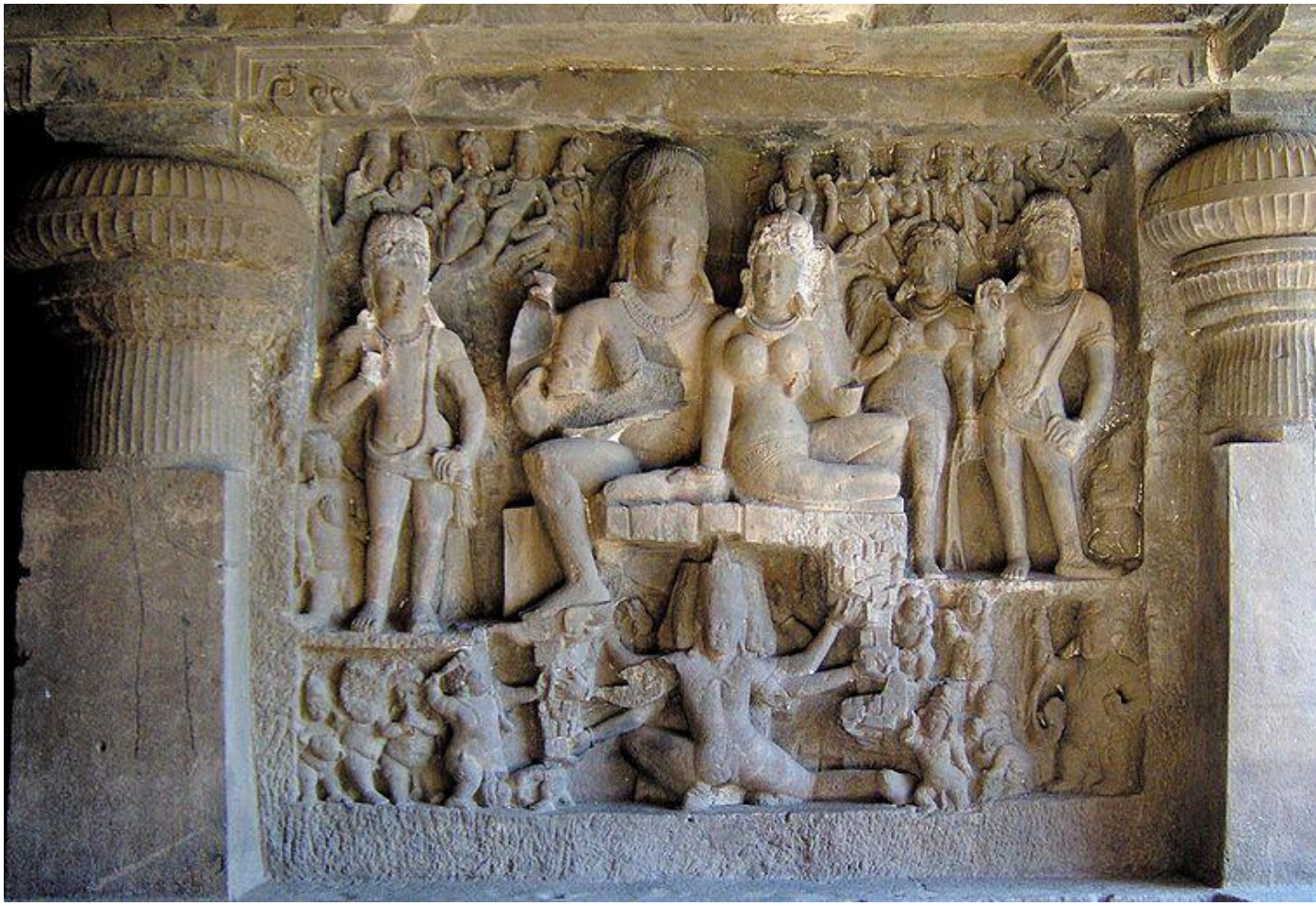


Figure 10.11.11: Scene depicting Ravana shaking mount Kailasha, Ellora
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ellora_cave29_Shiva-Parvati-Ravana.jpg

10.1 Summary

- Early India was prolific in the production of creative literature, broadly called *kavya*, or plays, poems, tales and biographies, mainly in Sanskrit and Prakrit. When interpreted with strategies sensitive to literary representation, these texts are a rich and sophisticated source of history.
- Leading *kavyakara*s in Sanskrit from the 1st millennium CE were Bhasa, Kalidasa, Shudraka, Vishakhadatta, Dandin, Banabhatta and Bhavabhuti.
- The main works of Prakrit and Pali literature are Buddhistic and Jaina. Major examples include the *Milindapanho*, *Nidanakatha*, *Dipavamsa*, *Mahavamsa* and *Trishashtilakshanapurusha*.

- Early Tamil literature comprised Sangam poetry of the *akam* and *puram* types, or poems dealing with love and war respectively. Sangam poets came from urban as well as rural backgrounds and included an array of royal figures and commoners. Other classical Tamil texts were the *Tolkappiyam* on grammar and the twin epics, the *Shilappadikaram* and the *Manimekhalai.*

- Literature in any language is a complex phenomenon, tied to the wider social, economic and political world. It can reveal a great deal about the political configurations, social processes and ideological trends that prevailed in the past. Of course, works of literature are also beautiful texts to be enjoyed for their sheer aesthetic and literary merit.

10.2 Summary

- Early India produced treatises and manuals, known as *shastras*, on virtually every branch of human knowledge possible: astronomy, logic, mathematics, grammar, phonetics, painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, drama, philosophy, statecraft, medicine, erotics, and so on.

- Some of the major works composed are: *Ashtadhyayi* and *Mahabhashya* (grammar), *Arthashastra* (statecraft), *Kamasutra* (erotics), *Natyashastra* (dramaturgy), *Kavyalamkara* (poetics), *Mayamata* (architecture), *Aryabhatiya* and *Brihatsamhita* (astronomy and mathematics), *Charaka* and *Sushruta Samhita* (medicine).

10.3 Summary

- India's cultural past was rediscovered during British colonial times, when the modern disciplines of Indian archaeology and art history were institutionalized.

- The colonial and Orientalist understanding of art was biased in favour of the assumed superiority of the colonizer.

- These biases generated a nationalist response to the understanding of Indian art that delved into its indigenous and culture-specific basis.

- Texts – technical, canonical as well as non-canonical - and other historical records were studied in relation to art.

- The distinction between art and craft was not a clearly marked one in ancient and medieval India.

- The principles of art had begun to be crystallized and codified by the seventh century CE.

- The more humanistic and social aspects of Indian art were studied subsequent to its metaphysical and religious aspects.

- Researches indicate that all traditional Indian art is not anonymous and individual artists are known from the early historic period.

- Art was patronized by the lay community, monks and nuns, royalty, and elite groups of society.

- More recent attempts to understand Indian art have focused on its relationship to society, contemporary readings of ancient art, museum studies, anthropology and other such aspects.

10.4 Summary

- Patronage can be seen in different forms at different times.

- In the Vedic period, patronage was seen in the form of rituals for tangible gains.

- In the Mauryan age, we witness patronage by the court to establish its authority and to overawe the population.

- In post-Mauryan times, patronage was by the common people for gaining spiritual merit.

- In the Gupta times, patronage was given by the dynasty; temples, statues, caves with paintings were created to earn merit and to legitimize their position.

- The Pallavas, Pandyas and Chalukyas built temples to show their religious preference, legitimize their positions and create awe in the populace

10.5 Summary

- The Mauryan period marks the beginning of a cautious traceable history of art in stone.

- The art in stone during this time was due to royal patronage. Though it would continue in later times because of collective patronage, we find narration in stone being developed.

- This period marked the transition from wood to stone.

- A new feature was witnessed during this time with the coming in of the epigraph-monuments/ pillar capitals.

- Ashoka transformed the pillars into monuments by having inscriptions with messages of *dhamma* engraved on them, which indeed is unique in history.

- Technically, the stone sculptures made by local sculptors were fashioned with less skill than the pillar capitals. They express a considerable earthiness and physical vitality.

- From the time of Ashoka, the concept of making *stupas* gained momentum as an important part of Buddhist architecture.

- It was during this time that we have first evidence of cave architecture.

- There is evidence of both court and folk art being present in Mauryan times.

10.6 Summary

- During the period c.200 BC to AD 300, there was increasing institutionalization of religious activity.

- One of the most significant features of the period between c. 200 BC and AD 300 is that it witnessed an expansion in Buddhist stupa-monastery complexes in various parts of the subcontinent.

- This is also the period for the evolution of the temple, which housed Vaishnava and Shaiva images.

- The stupa became an emblem of the Buddha's *dhamma* and an important part of Buddhist monasteries.

- As the stupa was an object of worship maintained by a monastery, its location was generally at places were people collected.

- An important stupa site that can be dated to Ashoka's time is at Sanchi in Raisen district, Madhya Pradesh.

- There are several stupas at Sanchi. The brick core of the largest stupa (also called Stupa no. 1 or the Great Stupa) was built in Ashoka's time.

- The Bharhut stupa has been completely destroyed over time and its parts are scattered over different museums.

- Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh contained over 30 Buddhist establishments belonging to the 3^{rd}-4^{th} centuries AD.

- The remains of nine Hindu temples were also identified in Nagarjunakonda near the citadel, and ten were located further upstream.

- The large stupa-monastery complex at Amaravati is located close to an impressive megalithic burial.

- Patronage of all these religious structures came from varied layers of society—royal and non-royal—who had financial resources and wanted a validation of their social or political status.

10.7 Summary

- The period c. 200 BC-AD 300 saw an expansion in the number and scale of Buddhist monastic complexes, which included dwellings for monks, stupas and *chaityas*.

- The beginning of early cave architecture can be traced to the Maurya period, specifically to the Lomash Rishi and Sudama caves in the Barabar hills to the north of Bodhgaya.

- The rock-cut caves in western India are dated to between c. 100 BC and AD 200. Two distinct phases of architectural development have been identified with regard to these caves.

- The early *viharas* in the Western Ghats were simple and usually consisted of cells arranged around a central hall with an open verandah in front.

- Cave 3 at Pitalkhora is an example of a typical *chaitya* of western India. Other notable rock-cut caves include Kanheri, the largest excavated cave site in India.

- The Udayagiri and Khandagiri hills in Puri district, Orissa, bear the oldest groups of Jaina rock-cut caves.

- Unlike the Buddhist caves in the Western Ghats, the caves of Udayagiri and Khandagiri have no congregation halls or rock-cut shrines. Later, however, some of the cells were enlarged and converted into shrines.

- There are two main types of caves in the Udayagiri and Khandagiri hills—those with and without pillared verandahs. The Ranigumpha or Queen's Cave is the largest and the best preserved of them.

- The sculptures in the Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves are somewhat similar to those in the early Buddhist sites.

10.8 Summary

- During the Kushana period (late 1st century-3rd century AD), the Afghanistan-Gandhara region and the Mathura area emerged as major centres of artistic activity. Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh also developed a distinct style of art during this period under the Satavahanas.

- The Gandhara school of art flourished between the 1st and 5th centuries AD in Afghanistan and north-west India.

- Gandhara art comprised a mixture of styles. The themes of this school were Indian but its style Graeco-Roman. Images of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* became popular in this school of art, hence it is also referred to as Graeco-Buddhist art.

- There are stylistic similarities as well as differences between the Gandhara and Mathura schools of art. The sculptures share iconographic similarities but the Mathura school is wholly indigenous and shows no trace of foreign influence.

- The Mathura school of art dealt with the Buddhist, Jaina and Hindu pantheon, as well as minor deities such as *yakshas*, *nagas* and others.

- Mathura was the most important centre from where the spread of Vaishnava art took place.

- The early centuries of the Christian era saw much artistic activity at Amaravati in the Deccan. Here, both the stone and the style change to incorporate the local material.

- The sculptures at Amaravati are more mature than those in the central Indian sites of Sanchi and Bharhut, as the relief panels are less crowded, and the figures are more natural and graceful.

- A common link between the *Jataka* scenes at Bharhut and Amaravati is that they are labelled, which is of great help in identifying the sculptures.

- Sculptural ornamentation cut across religious and sectarian boundaries in the early centuries AD.

10.9 Summary

- In the period between 300-750 AD, there was a vigorous development of Buddhist cave shrines. Hindu cave temples emerged during this time and they adopted many of the stylistic features of the Buddhist caves. Compared to Buddhist and Hindu rock-cut monuments, those of Jaina affiliation are very few.

- Buddhist and Hindu rock-cut architecture followed a common, basic plan. The religious differences can be noticed in the **iconography**. The major change in the

Buddhist shrine was the introduction of a seated or standing Buddha image on the front of the *stupa* located at the rear end of the cave. The introduction of subsidiary shrines and vertical extensions were the other important structural changes. New figurative elements were a rich cast of additional Buddhas, groups of Bodhisattvas, and feminine deities. After the Ajanta murals, it was sculpture that became the chief mode of artistic expression. The Hindu rock-cut architectural programme began with an inner sanctum (housing an iconic or aniconic object of worship) and a *pradakshinapatha* around it. Gradually, a pillared entrance hall and subsidiary shrines began to be added. And grand depictions of powerful icons as also narrative episodes (symbolically representing the tenets and mythologies of Hinduism) were employed to embellish the inner as well as outer parts of rock-cut cave shrines.

10.10 Summary

- With the strengthening of the Puranic Hinduism in the period between 300–750 A.D., distinctive iconographies of a number of deities evolved. This was manifested in the increasing number of temples within which they were enshrined. As the impact of *bhakti* filtered into Buddhism and Jainsim, it gave an impetus to the dedication of shrines to the images of the Buddha and the *tirthankaras*.

- The period witnessed the emergence of varying styles of temple structures. While the period between 300–600 A.D. was formative, it was in the 600–750 A.D. period that temple architecture crystallized into the *Nagara* style in the north and *Dravida* style in the south. A fusion between the *Nagara* and *Dravida* styles, which emerged in the Deccan, eventually matured into the *Vesara* style in the post 750 A.D. period.

- Temples used diverse material, such as brick, stone, terracotta and stucco, for structure and ornamentation. While in the earlier centuries, brick was widely used, it slowly gave way to stone. Problems of durability of brick may have been the trigger for the transition.

- A correlation between individual kings and temples has not been possible in the case of most Gupta period temples. In the period between 600–750 A.D., maximum number of temples was built by kings belonging to regional dynasties, such as the Pallavas and Chalukyas.

- The structural plan of the temple was modest to start with but became more complex and elaborate with the years. The profusion and sophistication of ornamentation became more pronounced as the styles matured. Versatile use of plaques and friezes portrayed the mythology of Vishnu, Shiva and Durga. The temple thus became the chief agency for popularization of religious cults.

10.11 Summary

- The period between 300 and 750 A.D. was a landmark in the history of Indian sculpture, marked by the development of the Gupta, Western Chalukyan and Pallavan sculptural styles.

- Sculptures were made in diverse materials such as stone, terracotta, stucco and bronze. The use of stone was most widespread.

- The period was significant for formulating the aesthetic norms for the depiction of a multitude of Hindu gods and goddesses. Puranic Hindu mythology and stories from the epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, came to be narrated.

- Vishnu was depicted in diverse forms—standing, reclining on the *Seshanaga*, in his animal and human-animal *Varaha avatara*, in the form of Krishna-Govardhana etc. The *Varaha* was used as a political symbol. Durga was mainly shown as *Mahishasuramardini*.

- Buddha images were produced at the two Buddhist workshops of Mathura and Sarnath. The standing Buddha from Mathura and the seated Buddha in the *dharmachakrapravartana mudra* from Sarnath were special. In addition, terracotta panels containing Buddha figures were used to decorate *stupas*.

- Very few Jaina images, in both stone and metal have been found. Stone images were mainly those of seated *tirthankaras*.

- The period also saw the flowering of decorative motifs such as the vegetal scroll and grotesque heads, which were often made in terracotta.

- The sculptural style was marked by the elegance of form and a moving, spiritual content. It heralded a "classical style" since it became the model for future innovations in Indian art.

- In the post-Gupta period (6^{th}–7^{th} centuries A.D.) the influence of the Sarnath style was most strongly felt on the stucco sculptures from eastern Indian sites such as Maniyar Math and Nalanda. Motifs from the stone art of Eran and terracotta art of Ahichchhatra were also replicated in eastern India.

- The post-Gupta sculptural style of western India was as much influenced by the Gupta style as the earlier Bactro-Gandhara style. Ateliers in Shamalaji and Tanesara-Mahadeva used a local greenish-blue slate, known locally as *pareva* to create images of Shiva and *Skandamatas*.

- The efflorescence of sculpture in the Deccan and South India during the 5^{th} to the 8^{th} centuries under the Vakatakas (discussed in chapter 10.9), Western Chalukyas and Pallavas is particularly noteworthy. In the Deccan, stone reliefs depicting mythological scenes from the *Puranas* and legends of Shiva, on the 8^{th} century Kailasha temple marked the apogee of narrative art.

- In Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, the foundations of a south Indian sculptural style was laid by the Pallava and Western Chalukyan dynasties during the 6^{th} to the 8^{th} centuries.

- The Pallava sculptures are notable for their multivalent significance. The political symbolism of the Arjuna's Penance/Descent of the Ganga and the Somaskanda relief are particularly significant.

10.1: Exercises

Essay questions

1) What is the significance of early Indian creative literature for a historian?

2) What are the main types and features of kavyas? Discuss some of their main themes with examples.

3) What were the main themes in early Tamil literature?

Objective questions

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
1	Match the following	1

Question

Match the following:

1) Kalidasa	a) *Shilappadikaram*
2) Shudraka	b) *Rajatarangini*
3) Ilango Adigal	c) *Subhashitaratnakosha*
4) Kalhana	d) *Mrichchhakatikam*
5) Vidyakara	e) *Raghuvamsham*

Correct Answer / Option(s)	1) and e), 2) and d), 3) and a), 4) and b), 5) and c)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The authors have been matched with their compositions or compilations.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

10.2: Exercises

Essay questions

1) What were the main treatises in arts and aesthetics that were composed in early India? What were the main principles they set forth?

2) What were the chief contributions/discoveries in mathematics and sciences in early
India?

Objective questions

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
1	True or False	2

Question

1) The *Ashtadhyayi* is a grammar of Vedic Sanskrit.
2) Aryabhata composed the *Brihat Samhita*.
3) The *Charaka Samhita* is a work on medicine.
4) The *Kamasutra* reflects urban culture.
5) Kautilya's *Arthashastra* describes the Mauryan state.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	1) False 2) False 3) True 4) True 5) False

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

1) The *Ashtadhyayi* by Panini is a grammar of classical Sanskrit, not Vedic Sanskrit which is more archaic and different from the former. Post-Vedic texts are in classical Sanskrit.

2) Varahamihira composed the *Brihat Samhita*. Aryabhata composed the *Aryabhatiya*.

3) The *Charaka Samhita* is one of the earliest surviving treatises on Ayurvedic medicine.

4) The *Kamasutra* talks about the lifestyle and activities of the *nagaraka* or sophisticated urban dwelling male.

5) The *Arthashastra* is a theoretical treatise laying down certain ideals of statecraft. It does not describe or ever refer to the Mauryas.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

10.3: Exercises

Essay questions

1. What were the chief concerns of the colonial scholars in attempting to understand Indian art? What biases did they suffer from?
2. How did the early nationalist scholars respond to the colonial and Orientalist understandings of Indian art?
3. What have been the significant advances in understanding the socio-cultural and other dimensions of Indian art in independent India?

Objective questions

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
1	True or False	1

Question

Which of the following statements in false regarding colonial understandings of ancient Indian art?

a) The colonial investigators assumed the superiority of the art and culture of the colonizer.

b) The idea and image of Indian religious sculpture was understood by the colonial scholars.

c) Traditional Indian architecture was attempted by some colonial scholars to be read as a book in stone.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	b)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The colonial scholars were unable to comprehend the religious and conceptual basis of ancient Indian sculpture and thought of the many-headed and multi-armed gods and goddesses as "monstrous".

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Early colonial enquiries about Indian art were based on antiquarian interests that assumed the supremacy of the art of the colonizer and attempted to "civilize" the colonized. However, it was in their interests to understand the culture and beliefs of the land they had colonized and therefore art and architecture offered them a visual means to do so.

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	**Type of question**	**LOD**
2	True or False	1

Question

Which of the following statements is true:

a) All traditional Indian art is anonymous.

b) The authorship of all ancient Indian art is now well-known.

c) Some artists of ancient India have left their signatures on their artistic creations.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	c)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

Recent research has shown that although the names of artists who made the ancient Indian masterpieces are not always known, in some cases they have indeed left their marks and signatures on their art works.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

It was believed for a long time that since traditional Indian art was in the service of gods and served transcendental purposes, the identity of its maker was not important. Recent research has disproved this as we do have several art works from ancient India which have been signed by their creators. Even so, not all ancient art works bear artists' signatures (indeed several don't).

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	**Type of question**	**LOD**
3	Multiple choice question	2

Question

The nationalist response to colonial understandings of Indian art:

a) Initially focused on the metaphysical and conceptual underpinnings of Indian art in a spirited defence of its indigenous origins and validity.

b) Were at first concerned with the social processes of art – its makers and benefactors.

c) Were interested in discussing the connections and inter-relatedness of Indian art and western art.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The nationalist scholars initially devoted most of their researches to disprove the assumed superiority of western art. They discussed Indian art in relation to ancient Indian texts and established its religious and conceptual basis.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

The social processes of Indian art received attention much later – only after the first flush of defence as regards its concepts and theories was established. The early nationalists were in fact trying to free the interpretation of Indian art from being weighed by Western scales and standards.

Reviewer's Comment:

10.4: Exercises

Essay questions

1) What do you mean by patronage? When do we get the first evidence of patronage and how?

2) Is there evidence of collective patronage? Give examples.

3) Is there difference between patronage by a ruler and patronage by an empire? Elucidate with examples.

Objective questions

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
1	True or False	1

Question

a) First evidence of patronage is from *dana-stuti*.

b) The Mauryan pillars were made of sandstone from Mathura.

c) Community patronage was when people of same village gave a gift together.

d) The only evidence of patronage is seen in the construction of temples.

e) Patronage to the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal was by the chief queen.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) True b) False c) False d) False e) True

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

a) The *dana-stuti* hymns in Vedic times were composed by the *brahmana* for the chief/*raja* and contained eulogies on the *raja* and his success in cattle-raids.
b) The Mauryan pillars were made of sandstone from Chunnar near Benaras and were transported to Pataliputra.
c) Community patronage was *dana* given by a group of people who came together primarily because of defined religious identity.
d) Patronage is seen in cave architecture, pillars, *stupas*, statues, cave paintings etc.
e) Loka-mahadevi, the chief queen of Vikramaditya had the Virupaksha temple constructed.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
2	Match the following	2

Question

Match the following:

a) Mauryan art	i) patronage by raja for legitimation
b) Sanchi and Bharhut	ii) capital pillars made to impress populace.
c) Vedic times	iii) represented collective patronage.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) and ii), b) and iii), c) and i)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

a) Mauryan art was individualistic and the monolithic pillars with their animal capitals overawed the populace.
b) The *stupas* at Sanchi and Bharhut were built with the donations made by people from different walks of life.
c) The *dana-stuti* was composed by bards/*brahmanas* to eulogise the prowess of the *raja* and to legitimise his position as the chief of the tribe.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
3	Multiple choice question	3

Question

The most likely reasons for the patronage was:

a) To legitimize position and to earn merit.
b) To spend resources of the empire.
c) Give employment to artisans, sculptors etc.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

One of the best methods to earn merit was by making *dana* to monks/ *brahmanas* or monasteries/ *sangha*. A gift to a *brahmana* was also seen as a method by which the brahmanas legitimised the position of the king. In the time of the Guptas, Pallavas and Chalukyas, it also became a method of announcing the religious preference of the rulers besides showing their devotion/ *bhakti* to their chosen deity by building a temple dedicated for that deity.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

10.5: Exercises

Essay questions

1) 'Mauryan Art was representation of court art alone'. Do you agree with the statement? Give reasons.

2) Do you think Mauryan art was inspired by Persian art? Give reasons for your answer.

3) Give brief answers:

   a) What do the animals on the Sarnath pillar represent?

   b) What is the importance of terracotta art?

   c) Point out the difference between an Ashokan pillar and a Persian pillar.

   d) Discuss cave architecture. Also mention the importance of this architecture in Mauryan art.

Objective questions

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
1	True or False	1

Question

a) The tradition of erecting pillars started with Ashoka. b) There are four animals on the Sarnath pillar. c) *Yaksha* and *yakshi* represent court art. d) There is a hall at Rajgriha which may belong to Chandragupta Maurya's time period.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) False b) True c) False d) False

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

a) The tradition of erecting pillars began prior to Ashoka as he records in one of his edicts that he had erected "Pillars of Law" (*dhamma-thambani*) to propagate his message and requested that his words also be inscribed on existing stone pillars.

b) The four animals depicted on the Sarnath pillar are horse, lion, bull, and elephant.

c) *Yaksha* and *yakshi* figures represent popular art and not court art.

d) There is a hall at the site of Kumrahar, designated by archaeologists as an audience hall.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
2	Match the following	2

Question

Match the following:

a) Cave Architecture	i) Sarnath
b) Rampurva	ii) Pillars
c) Lion Capital	iii) Lomas Rsi
d) Monolithic	iv) Bull

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) and iii), b) and iv), c) and i), d) and ii)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

a) Cave architecture is found in the Barabar caves of which Lomas Rsi is the name of one of the caves.

b) A bull capital was found at Rampurva.

c) The capital found at Sarnath has four addorsed lions back to back.

d) All the pillar capitals are monolithic.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
3	Multiple choice question	3

Question

Pillar capitals are court art because:

a) They are not made of terracotta.

b) They are found within the empire.

c) They are monolithic, few in number, made of Chunnar sandstone and have a message from the king.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	c)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The pillars were monolithic consisting of a long tapering shaft which must have been the heaviest and, certainly the most difficult portion to quarry and erect. The pillar had a capital generally in the form of an animal. Both the shaft and the capital were normally carved out of single blocks of stone. These pillars were made of buff coloured, fine-grained, hard sandstone usually with small black spots quarried from Chunar, near Varanasi. There was uniformity in the style and there are inscriptions on these pillars. All this would not have been possible without patronage from the ruler.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

10.6: Exercises

Essay question

1) Outline some of the main aspects of early religious architecture with special reference to Sanchi and Nagarjunakonda.

Objective questions

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
1	True or False	1

Question

The stupa-monastery complex at Amaravati is close to a megalithic burial.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	True

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The large stupa-monastery complex at Amaravati is located close to an impressive megalithic burial. Amaravati itself is in the Andhra region and is supposed to mark the site of ancient Dhanyakataka, an important town in the Deccan and capital of the later Satavahanas. A fragment of what may be an Ashokan inscription suggests the possibility that this complex dates to Ashoka's time, with six occupational periods ranging from the 2nd century BC to the 2nd/ 3rd century AD.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
2	Match the following	2

Question

Match the following:

a) Amaravati i) Vidisha

b) Sanchi	ii) Dharanikota
c) Nagarjunakonda	iii) Outskirts of an unidentified city
d) Bharhut	iv) Vijayapuri

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) and ii), b) and i), c) and iv), d) and iii)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

a) Amaravati is a major site in the Andhra region, which is supposed to mark the site of ancient Dhanyakataka, an important town in the Deccan and capital of the later Satavahanas.

b) Sanchi was situated on the outskirts of ancient Vidisha (present Besnagar), one of the prominent cities of Ashoka's empire and also, according to Buddhist legend, the birthplace of his wife, Devi.

c) Nagarjunakonda in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, at the eastern edge of the Deccan plateau, is one of the most important sites. It represents the ancient site of Vijayapuri, capital of the Ikshvaku dynasty (c. AD 225-325).

d) Bharhut was also clearly located on the outskirts of a city, which has not been identified so far.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Most of the major stupa-monastery complexes were located on the outskirts of great cities of the time - Sanchi outside Vidisha, Amaravati outside Dharanikota (the Satavahana capital) and Nagarjunakonda outside Vijayapuri (the Ikshvaku capital). Bharhut was also clearly located on the outskirts of a city, which has not been identified so far.

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
3	Multiple choice question	3

Question

The largest stupa at Sanchi is also called: a) the Great Stupa b) the Ashokan stupa c) the King's stupa

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The largest stupa at Sanchi is also called Stupa no. 1 or the Great Stupa. Its brick core was built in Ashoka's time. Many of the sculptural panels represent important events in the life of the Buddha.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

10.7: Exercises

Essay question

1) Discuss the Buddhist rock-cut caves of western India with reference to their two distinct phases of architectural development.

Objective questions

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
1	True or False	1

Question

The Udayagiri and Khandagiri hills in Orissa bear the oldest groups of Jaina rock-cut caves.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	True

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The Udayagiri and Khandagiri hills in Puri district, Orissa, located about 6 km west of Bhubaneswar near the ancient site of Shishupalgarh, house the oldest Jaina rock-cut caves in the country, which continue to be occupied by Jaina ascetics to the present day.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

The Udayagiri and Khandagiri hills in Puri district, Orissa, house the oldest Jaina rock-cut caves in the country, which continue to be occupied by Jaina ascetics to the present day.

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
2	Match the following	2

Question

Match the following:

a) Kanheri	i) typical chaitya of western India
b) Cave 3 at Pitalkhora	ii) largest cave site in India

c)Maurya period	iii) Ranigumpha or Queen's Cave
d)Udayagiri & Khandagiri hills	iv) Lomash Rishi and Sudama caves

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) and ii), b) and i), c) and iv), d) and iii)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

a) Kanheri is the largest excavated cave site in India.

b) Cave 3 at Pitalkhora is an example of a typical chaitya of western India.
The Ranigumpha or Queen's Cave is the largest and the best-preserved of the caves in the Udayagiri and Khandagiri hills.

c) The beginning of cave architecture can be traced to the Maurya period, specifically to the Lomash Rishi and Sudama caves in the Barabar hills to the north of Bodhgaya.

d) These caves were modeled on wooden architectural prototypes.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

a) Kanheri is the largest excavated cave site in India.

b) Cave 3 at Pitalkhora is an example of a typical chaitya of western India.

c) The Ranigumpha or Queen's Cave is the largest and the best-preserved of the caves in the Udayagiri and Khandagiri hills.

d) The beginning of cave architecture can be traced to the Maurya period, specifically to the Lomash Rishi and Sudama caves in the Barabar hills to the north of Bodhgaya.

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
3	Multiple choice question	3

Question

a) The Ranigumpha cave

b) The Gautamiputra cave

c) Kondivte cave

is the largest and best-preserved in the Udayagiri and Khandagiri cave complex.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

Of the caves in the Udayagiri and Khandagiri cave complex, some are two-storeyed. The Ranigumpha (or Queen's Cave) is the largest and best-preserved of them. It consists of a large rectangular courtyard with cells on three sides.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

b): Vihara 3 at Nasik belongs to a slightly later period. It is also called the 'Gautamiputra Cave' as it has inscriptions belonging to this Satavahana king's time.

c): The Kondivte cave (*c.* 100 BC) in the Western Ghats represents the next stage from the early cave examples in the Barabar hills.

Reviewer's Comment:

10.8: Exercises

Essay question

1) Compare and contrast the Gandhara and Mathura schools of art.

Objective questions

Question Number	**Type of question**	**LOD**
1	True or False	1

Question

Mathura was the most important centre of Vaishnava art.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	True

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

Mathura was the most important centre of Vaishnava art. There is a tremendous increase in the number and variety of Vaishnava images produced in the Mathura area in this period. There are many independent images of Vasudeva Krishna and of Vishnu—four-armed, on *garuda* and in boar incarnation form. Besides these, there are kinship triads of Vasudeva Krishna with his brother, Baladeva, and their sister, Ekanamsha. The idea of the *chaturvyuha* (the four emanations of Vishnu) crystallized in the late Kushana period. A colossal Narayana image found at Mathura deserves to be noted here specially.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	**Type of question**	**LOD**
2	Match the following	2

Question

Match the following: a) Gandhara school of art i) Ancient Dhanyakataka b) Mathura ii) Uninscribed railing fragments c) Amaravati iii) Red Sikri sandstone d) Nagarjunakonda iv) Afghanistan and north-west India

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) and iv), b) and iii), c) and i), d) and ii)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

a) The Gandhara school of art flourished between the 1st and 5th centuries AD in Afghanistan and north-west India. b) The sculptors of the Mathura school of art used red sandstone quarried at nearby

Sikri.

c) Amaravati is a major Buddhist site in the Andhra region and is identified with ancient Dhanyakataka, an important town in the Deccan and capital of the later Satavahanas.

d) At Nagarjunakonda, the railing fragments are plain and uninscribed, thus forming a contrast with the dome, railings and gateways of the Amaravati stupa, which are profusely ornamented with beautiful relief carvings.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
3	Multiple choice question	3

Question

The Mathura school of art produced a large number of Jaina images that were found at:
a) Kankali Tila

b) Bhuteshvara

c) Sarnath

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The Mathura school produced a large number of Jaina images that were found at Kankali Tila. These include a pillar fragment with four standing *tirthankaras* carved on its sides. In addition, there is a seated *tirthankara* image with its head broken.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

b) and c): The Mathura school produced a large number of Jaina images that were found at Kankali Tila. These include a pillar fragment with four standing *tirthankaras* carved on its sides.

Reviewer's Comment:

10.9: Exercises

Essay questions

1) Trace the evolution of architecture in the Buddhist rock-cut *chaityas* and *viharas* in the period between 300-750 AD.

2) Write an essay on the distinguishing features of Buddhist, Hindu and Jaina rock-cut caves.

3) What role did sculpture and paintings play in enhancing the sacred programme of rock-cut caves?

4) Account for the patronage given to rock-cut caves in the period between 300-750 AD.

5) In what ways were the rock-cut caves patronized by the Pallavas and Western Chalukyan rulers distinct from the western Indian rock-cut caves?

Objective questions

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
1	True or False	1

Question

Ajanta is the only site where murals have been used to decorate the interior of rock-cut caves.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	False

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The answer is false because originally the rock-cut caves at Bagh and those at Mamallapuram were also embellished with paintings.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
2	True or False	1

Question

The majority of rock-cut caves in the period between 300-750 AD were sponsored by royalty.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	True

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

This is true because almost all the caves were sponsored by a royal dynasty—Ajanta and Bagh by the Vakatakas; the Udayagiri caves by the Guptas (at least one of them); Kanheri by the Traikutakas; the Aurangabad and Elephanta caves by the Kalachuris; the Buddhist caves at Ellora by the early Western Chalukyas; and the Mandagappattu, Tiruchirappalli and Mamallapuram caves by the Pallavas.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
3	Match the following	2

Question

Match the following: a) Ajanta i) Varaha rescuing the earth b) Aurangabad ii) mural paintings c) Kanheri iii) rows of stone benches

d) Tin Thal, Ellora	iv) Shiva with three faces
e) Udayagiri	v) Tara
f) Elephanta	vi) Buddha *mandala*

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) and ii), b) and v), c) and vi), d) and iii), e) and i), f) and iv)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The column on the right mentions a distinctive feature of each of the six rock-cut cave sites: mural paintings at Ajanta; a sculpture of Tara in Cave 7, Aurangabad; the depiction of a Buddha *mandala* at Cave 90, Kanheri; a double row of stone benches at Cave 12, Ellora; a massive sculpture of Varaha lifting the earth with his tusks at Cave 5, Udayagiri and the relief carving of Shiva with three faces at Cave 1, Elephanta.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
4	Multiple choice question	3

Question

From the list given below, choose the rock-cut cave sites which had a history prior to the period between 300-750 AD:

a) Ajanta

b) Bagh

c) Kanheri

d) Badami

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) and c)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

At Ajanta and Kanheri, the second phase of art activity falls within the chronological span of this lesson.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
5	Multiple choice question	3

Question

Identify the feature which is common to the rock-cut cave sites of Aihole, Badami and Ellora:

a) Art activity was patronized by a common dynasty.

b) The rock-cut caves have identical plans.

c) The rock-cut caves are not associated with any single faith.

d) The rock-cut caves are embellished with life-size sculptures.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	c)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

At Aihole, there are two main caves—the Shaiva Ravanphadi cave and another Jaina cave. At Badami, the three largest caves are Vaishnava, Jaina and Shaiva respectively. Ellora has a Shaiva Rameshvara cave and the Buddhist caves include Cave 5 and the Cave 12 complex.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

10.10: Exercises

Essay questions

1) Why is the period between 300-750 A.D. a significant stage in the history of temple architecture?

2) To what extent can one use dynastic labels when discussing the evolution of temple architecture?

3) Write a short essay on the evolution of temple architecture in the period between 300-600 A.D.

4) Discuss the three major temple styles that emerged in the period under study.

5) In what ways are the *rathas* at Mamallapuram and the Kailasha temple at Ellora different from other structural temples discussed in this lesson?

Objective questions

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
1	True or False	1

Question

In the vocabulary of Orissan temple architecture, the term *rekha deul* refers to the *mandapa* while the term *jagamohana* refers to the *vimaana*.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	False

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

In Orissan temple architecture, *rekha deul* refers to the *vimana* while the *mandapa* is called *jagamohana*.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
2	Match the following	2

Question

Match the following:

a) Temple 17, Sanchi	i) *Sandhara*
b) Parvati temple, Nachna Kuthara	ii) *Panchayatana*
c) Bhitargaon temple	iii) No foundations
d) Deogarh	iv) True arch

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) and iii), b) and i), c) and iv), d) and ii)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The left hand side column lists some of the prominent temples of the Gupta period. The column on the right describes some of their most distinctive characteristics. The temple 17 at Sanchi totally lacks foundations; the Bhitargaon temple consists of the earliest version of the true arch in India; the Deogarh temple is one of the oldest extant *panchayatana* temples and the Parvati temple at Nachna Kuthara is one of the oldest extant *sandhara* temples.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
3	Match the following	2

Question

Match the following:	
1) *Nagara*	i) *vimana*, *gopura* and *mandapa*
2) *Dravida*	ii) hybrid style
3) *Vesara*	iii) conical or curvilinear *shikhara*

Correct Answer / Option(s)	1) and iii), 2) and ii), 3) and i)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The left hand column lists the three main temple styles. The column on the right gives the characteristic features of each of these temple styles.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	**Type of question**	**LOD**
4	Multiple choice question	3

Question

Which of the following statement(s) is (are) false regarding the *rathas* of Mamallapuram?

a) They are called *rathas* because they resemble chariots
b) They are rock-cut imitations of structural temples
c) They are named after the five Pandava heroes of the *Mahabharata*
d) All of them have an identical architectural style

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) and d)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

Four of the five *rathas* have different architectural styles. None of them resembles a chariot.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
5	Multiple choice question	3

Question

Which of the following features is not applicable to the Early Western Chalukyan temples?

a) In proportion, the temples emphasize height rather than length

b) The main temple centres are Sirpur, Mamallapuram and Gop

c) Temples were built in all the three styles

d) The Parashurameshvara temple at Bhubaneshvar has conceptual ties to the Early Western Chalukyan temples

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) and d)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

In proportion, the length of the Early Western Chalukyan temples is more than their height. Aihole and Pattadakal in Karnataka are the main centres of Early Western Chalukyan structural temples.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

10.11: Exercises

Essay questions

1) Highlight the characteristic features of the classical Gupta style. Why is the style called "classical"?

2) Elaborate on the distinctive regional sculptural styles that developed in western and eastern Indian in the post 600 A. D. period.

3) Write a short essay on some of the special features of Pallava sculptures.

4) How did the development of Smarta Puranic religion influence the embellishment of Hindu temples?

5) In the period between 300–750 A. D., what were the different media used for making sculptures?

Objective questions

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
1	True or False	1

Question

Terracotta was the only medium used for recounting narratives on temple walls.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	False

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The answer is false because stone and stucco were also used. For example, the stone panels on the Deogarh temple depict stories related to Vishnu as the creator, preserver and destroyer. At Ellora, two of the most dramatic scenes in stone that enact myths relating to Shiva are his destruction of Andhakasura and Ravana shaking mount Kailasha. Some of the stone panels along the plinth of the temple at Site 12, Nalanda portray scenes from the *Ramayana*. Stucco panels at the base of the Aphsad Vishnu temple depict episodes from the *Ramayana*.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD

2	True or False	1

Question

Stucco is a kind of stone.

Correct Answer / Option(s)	False

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

Stucco is lime plaster. Unlike stone, it is a highly fragile material.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
3	Match the following	2

Question

Match the following: a) Sarnath i) Metal b) Devnimori ii) Stucco c) Sultanganj iii) Red spotted sandstone d) Mathura iv) Terracotta e) Nalanda v) Buff sandstone from Chunar

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) and v), b) and iv), c) and i), d) and iii), e) and ii)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The column on the left mentions sites from where prominent sculptures of the Buddha have been found. The column on the right lists the material they were made of. The Sarnath Buddha is made of buff sandstone obtained from Chunar; the Devnimori plaques depicting seated Buddhas

are made of terracotta; the Sultanganj Buddha is the largest known Indian metal sculpture; the Mathura Buddha is made of local red spotted sandstone and the Nalanda seated and standing Buddhas, placed in niches, are made of sandstone.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
4	Multiple choice question	3

Question

Which of the following depiction(s) of Vishnu, in stone, have been encountered at more than one site?

a) As Anantashayana/Seshashayana

b) Standing, with his *chakrapurushas*

c) In his *Varaha avatara*

d) As Krishna Govardhana

e) As *Vishvarupa*

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) and c)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The depiction of Vishnu reclining on the serpent *Sesha* or *Ananta* has been found on the south wall of the Deogarh temple. It has also been carved from living rock at Mamallapuram. Vishnu has been carved in his *Varaha avatara* at Eran and at Aphsad.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

Question Number	Type of question	LOD
5	Multiple choice question	3

Question

Identify the temple(s) where royalty has used portrait sculptures or symbols to refer to itself.

a) Kailasha temple at Kanchipuram

b) Kailashanatha temple at Ellora

c) Dharmaraja *ratha* at Mamallapuram

d) Shore temple at Mamallapuram

Correct Answer / Option(s)	a) c) and d)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

These three temples have the Somaskanda relief which depicts Shiva with his wife, Uma and their son Skanda. This motif was used as a metaphor for the Pallava royal family. In addition, the south face of the Dharmaraja *ratha* has a portrait of Pallava king Narasimhavarman I.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Reviewer's Comment:

10.1 Glossary

Courtesan: a sophisticated prostitute trained in many arts and catering to the rich and powerful
Didactic: teaching morals and values
Erotic: dealing with love and sex

Hagiography: an idealizing, worshipful biography of a saint
Kavya: literature as a form of art; aesthetic and creative literature

10.2 Glossary

Archaic: belonging to a much earlier, often more primitive period
Etymology: the study of the origin of words
Extant: still to be found, surviving
Goshthi: literary or other cultural gatherings in early India
Linguistics: the scientific study of language
***Kama*:** pleasure, especially sexual pleasure
Natya: drama and dance
Phonetics: the study of speech sounds
Prescriptive: making or giving directions, laws or rules

10.3 Glossary

Chhandomaya: rhythmic, harmonious, and balanced
Gharana: clan or family practising a specific art form in the *guru-shishya* (teacher-student) *parampara* (tradition)
Kala: art
Rupakara: one who creates forms – sculptor, architect, painter
Shadanga: six limbs of traditional Indian painting
Shilpa: craft or art in a broader sense
Shilpi: craftsman or sculptor
Shreni: guild
Sutradhara: master-artist, lit. 'thread-bearer'
Vijnanika: one possessing knowledge of a particular science

10.4 Glossary

Dana-stuti: hymns sung in praise of gift
Devakula: temple
Grhapati: householder
Raja: king
Stupas: a funerary mound which sometimes contains relics of the Buddha or his disciples
Yajamana: the one for whom the sacrifice is performed

10.5 Glossary

Addorsed: set/turned back to back
Ajivikas: a heterodox sect of the time of Buddha. They were followers of a philosophy of predetermination
Chakravarti: a universal monarch
***Chauri*-bearer**: flywhisk bearer as attendant

Digambara: a sect of the Jaina faith
Megasthenes: an envoy of Greek king Seleucus
Monolithic: carved out of a single piece of stone
Stupa*:* a funerary mound
Uttarapatha*:* the major trans-regional trade route of northern India
Yakshas*:* male natural spirit associated with fertility, water etc. /a demi-god
Yakshis*:* female natural spirit associated with fertility, water etc. /a demi-goddess

10.6 Glossary

Bas-reliefs: sculpture in low relief (moulding or carving that stands out from surface)

Circumambulatory: (for) walking around or about

Convocation: calling together

Integra: necessary

Patronized: supported, encouraged

Veneration: respect, reverence

Votive: offering in fulfilment of a vow

10.7 Glossary

Apse: large semi-circular recess, especially at the rear of the sanctum

Apsidal: of the form of an apse, semi-circular—in the shape of an elephant's back

Murals: paintings on walls

Niches: shallow recesses in walls to contain statues, vases, etc.

Prototypes: preliminary versions

10.8 Glossary

Anthropomorphic: attributing human form/personality to a god, animal etc.
Emanations: things issuing from
Hellenistic: imitation of Greek character/culture
Reliquary: receptacle for relic(s)
Schist: metamorphic rock with layers of different minerals
Stucco: plaster or cement used for coating walls or moulding into architectural decorations
Theology: system of religion
Triad: group of three

10.9 Glossary

***acharya*:** a highly developed spiritual master
***apsara*:** a female minor divinity that inhabits the sky
Buddha *mandala*: an arrangement of Buddhas associated with different directions
***chaitya*:** a sacred spot, sometimes associated with a relic, funeral pyre or burial. A *stupa* may be a type of *chaitya*
***dvarapala*:** a guardian figure
***gavaksha*:** a window or niche in the shape of the *chaitya*-arch
iconography: illustration of subject by drawings or figures
***Jataka*:** birth stories, tales of many lives of Shakyamuni Buddha prior to his final life
***linga*:** phallic emblem of Shiva
***mithuna*:** a loving couple
Nandi: Shiva's bull vehicle
***terre verte*:** soft green earth used as pigment
Varaha*:* the boar form of Vishnu
***vihara*:** a monastery

10.10 Glossary

Antarala: literally any intermediate space. In a temple, the vestibule connecting the *garbhagriha* with the *mandapa*
Anthropomorphic: pertaining to human form
Amalaka: a fruit - a flattened, fluted round form used as a crowning member of the superstructure of northern style Hindu temples
Bhumis: earth, floor, foundation, level. The levels or stories of a building or superstructure
Chandrashala: see gavaksha
Garbhagriha: inner sanctum
Garuda: Vishnu's mount, represented as a composite half-man-half-bird
Gavaksha: great façade windows of the Buddhist chaitya halls. In Hindu temple architecture, miniature versions of the façade windows. Also known as gomukha or kuda
Gopura: a south Indian temple gateway
Jagati: platform of a temple
Linga: the phallic form (of Shiva)
Lintel: a horizontal beam or stone bridging an opening
Makara: a mythological, crocodile-like creature. A symbol of auspiciousness
Mandapa: an open or closed pillared hall
Panchayatana: in architecture, a central shrine that is surrounded by four others at the corners
'Penthouse-type' roof: a pyramidal roof rising from a square base
Pidhas: horizontal, platform-like divisions or courses of the superstructure over the jagamohana of an Orissan temple
Pradakshinapatha: a path or passage for going round a shrine from left to right.
Purna-kalasha: literally pot of plenty. Pot and foliage used as capital in north Indian temples
Ratha: chariot/temple.
Rekha deul: pyramidal roof of the jagamohana of an Orissan temple

Sandhara: temple with a circumambulatory passage
Shikhara: in north Indian architecture, the spire or the tower over the shrine
Stucco: plaster (usually lime)
Tri-ratha: literally three-rathas. A side of a pedestal or building that is offset so that its length is divided into three sections
Trivikrama: an epithet for Vamana, the dwarf, one of Vishnu's ten major incarnations
Vahana: vehicle - the mount or carrier of a god
Vimana: in Dravida style of temple architecture, the shrine portion of a temple and its superstructure
Vrikshadevatas: a tree goddess
Vyalas: composite fantastic animals
Zoomorphic: pertaining to animal form

10.11 Glossary

Ananda tandava: Shiva's dance of bliss
Anjali mudra: a gesture of respect and salutation in which the two hands are held together near the chest, palms touching
Ananatashayana: Vishnu as creator, reclining on the serpent Ananta. Also called Vishnu Seshashayana
Archaeometry: a range of scientific techniques and analyses involving the use of measurement to analyze ancient objects or materials
Ayudhapurushas: personifications of Vishnu's attributes
Chakra: wheel; discus; In Hinduism, a symbol (and weapon) of Vishnu. In Buddhism, the wheel of the law (dharmachakra) and sometimes refers to the Buddha's first sermon
Chakravartin: a universal monarch
Chakravikrama: a Gupta gold coin type that depicts a chakrapurusha and a chakravartin
Dhyana mudra: a meditation hand-pose. Both hands are placed in the lap of a seated figure, palms upward with the right hand atop the left
Chauri: fly-whisk; chowrie; also called chamara. Held by figures attending respected individuals
Dharmachakrapravartana mudra: the gesture of "setting the wheel of the law into motion". In this pose, both hands are held at about chest level and touch each other
Iconography: knowledge of the meanings to be attached to pictorial representations
Kurma: an avatara of Vishnu. The tortoise vehicle of the river goddess Yamuna
Makara: a mythological quasi-crocodilian creature that is a symbol of auspiciousness. The vahana of the river goddess Ganga
Moksha: release or liberation. The religious goal in Hinduism, whereby the individual realizes a state of oneness with the Universal
Mithuna: (also maithuna). a loving couple; the act of love. As symbols of union, they are considered fitting adornments to religious structures
Panchayatana linga: a vertical shaft (Shiva's linga) adorned with images of four Brahmanical deities facing the four directions
Pilaster: a shallow, rectangular column projecting only slightly from a wall
Pradakshinapatha: a path or passage for going round a shrine from left to right
Puranas: a genre of Sanskrit religious texts, many of which were composed between the 4^{th} and 6^{th} centuries A. D.

Saptamatrika: seven mothers who are seen as shaktis (energies) of several principal Hindu gods
Shalabhanjika: a tree goddess (vrikshadevata) who grasps a shala tree
Shri: in Hinduism, the goddess of good fortune and wealth
Vajraparyankasana: literally "vajra-throne sitting". A sitting posture in which both legs are crossed and each foot rests upon the thigh of the opposite leg
Varaha: the boar avatara of Vishnu
Vishvarupa: Vishnu having all forms. Vishnu as the Universal, in whom is embodied all things and from whom all things emanate

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