

Post-Mauryan Trends In Indian Art & Architecture

- From the second century BCE onwards, various rulers established their control over the vast Mauryan Empire:
- The Shungas, Kanvas, Kushanas and Guptas in the north and parts of central India; the Satvahanas, Ikshavakus, Abhiras, Vakataks in southern and western India.
- The prominent examples of the finest sculpture are found at Vidisha, Bharhut (Madhya Pradesh), Bodhgaya (Bihar), Jaggayyapeta (Andhra Pradesh), Mathura (Uttar Pradesh), Khandagiri-Udaigiri (Odisha), Bhaja near Pune and Pavani near Nagpur (Maharashtra).

Bharhut

- Sculptures are tall like the images of Yakshaan Yakhshini in the Mauryan period, modelling of the sculptural volume is in low relief maintaining linearity.
- Images stick to the picture plane.
- Narrative panels are shown with few characters but as the time progresses, apart from the main character in the story, others also start appearing in the picture space.
- At times more than one even a geographical place is clubbed in the picture space or only a single main event is depicted in the pictorial space.
- Sculptures at Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Sanchi Stupa-2, and Jagayyapetta are good examples.
- Narrative reliefs at Bharhut show how artisans used the pictorial language very effectively to communicate stories.
- In one such narrative, showing Queen Mayadevi's (mother of Siddhartha Gautam) dream, a descending elephant is shown.
- The queen is shown reclining on the bed whereas an elephant is shown on the top leading towards the womb of Queen Mayadevi.
- Ruruk where the Bodhisattva deer is rescuing a man on his back.
- Interestingly, with the rise in the construction of stupas in various parts of the country regional stylistic variations also began to emerge.
- One main characteristic in all the male images of first–second centuries BCE is the knotted headgear.
- Found at Bharhut are displayed in Indian Museum, Kolkata.

Sanchi

- The next phase of sculptural development at Sanchi Stupa-1, Mathura, and Vengi in Andhra Pradesh (Guntur District) is noteworthy in the stylistic progression.

- Stupa-1 at Sanchi has upper as well as lower pradakshina patha or circumambulatory path.
 - It has four beautifully decorated toranas depicting various events from the life of the Buddha and the Jatakas. Figure compositions are in high relief, filling up the entire space.
 - Depiction of posture gets naturalistic and there is no stiffness in the body. Symbols continue to be used representing the Buddha and the Manushi Buddhas or the past Buddhas (according to the textual tradition, there are twenty-four Buddhas but only the first one, Dipankar, and the last six are pictorially represented).
 - At Sanchi Stupa-1, narratives get more elaborated; however, the depiction of the dream episode remains very simple showing the reclining image of the queen and the elephant at the top.
 - The historical narratives such as the siege of Kushinara, Buddha's visit to Kapilavastu, visit of Ashoka to the Ramagrama Stupa are carved with considerable details.
 - In Mathura, images of this period bear the same quality but are different in the depiction of physiognomic details. Mathura, Varanasi and Gandhara Schools.
 - The first century CE onwards, Gandhara (now in Pakistan), Mathura in northern India and Vengi in Andhra Pradesh emerged as important centres of art production.
 - Buddha in the symbolic form goes to a human form in Mathura and Gandhara.
- RAJESH NAYAK
- The sculptural tradition in Gandhara had the confluence of Bactria, Parthia and the local Gandhara tradition
 - The local sculptural tradition at Mathura became so strong that the tradition spread to other parts of northern India.
 - The best example in this regard is the stupa sculptures found at Sanghol in the Punjab.
 - The Buddha image in Mathura is modelled on the lines of earlier Yakshas whereas in Gandhara it has Hellenistic features.
 - Images of Vaishnava (mainly Vishnu and his various forms) and Shaiva (mainly the lingas and mukhalingas) faiths are also found at Mathura but Buddhist images are found in large numbers.
 - The images of Vishnu and Shiva are represented by their ayudhas (weapons)
 - The ornaments of the body are clearly visible and they cover the left shoulder.
 - Images of the Buddha, Yakshas, Yakshinis, Shaivite and Vaishnavite deities and portrait statues are profusely sculpted.
 - In the second century CE, images in Mathura get sensual, rotundity increases, they become fleshier.

- In the third century CE, treatment of sculptural volume changes by reducing the extreme fleshiness, movement in the posture is shown by increasing distance between the two legs as well as by using bends in the body posture.
- Softness in the surface continues to get refined.
- The trend continues in the fourth century CE but in the late fourth century CE, the massiveness and fleshiness is reduced further and the flesh becomes more tightened, the volume of the drapery also gets reduced and in the fifth and sixth centuries CE, the drapery is integrated into the sculptural mass.
- Transparent quality in the robes of the Buddha images is evident in this period, two important schools of sculptures in northern India are worth noting.
- The traditional centre, Mathura, remained the main art production site whereas Sarnath and Kosambi also emerged as important centres of art production.
- Many Buddha images in Sarnath have plain transparent drapery covering both shoulders, and the halo around the head has very little ornamentation whereas the Mathura Buddha image continue to depict folds of the drapery in the Buddha images and the halo around the head is profusely decorated.
- Visit museums at Mathura, Sarnath, Varanasi, New Delhi, Chennai, Amaravati, etc. to study the features of early sculptures.
- **Early Temples-**
- The Puranas became a part of narrative representation of the Brahmanical religion.
- Each temple had a principal image of a god.
- The shrines of the temple were of three kinds—(i) sandharatype (without pradikshinapatha), (ii) prandharatype (with pradakshinapatha), and (iii) sarvatobhadra which can be accessed from all sides).
- The important temple sites of this period are Deogarh in Uttar Pradesh, Era-Nandana-Kuthara and Udaygiri near Vidisha in Madhya Pradesh.
- Simple structures consisting of a veranda, a hall and a shrine at the rear.
- The important stupa sites outside the Gangetic valley is Devnimori in Gujarat.
- Subsequent sculptures had little variations while slender images with transparent drapery remained a dominant aesthetic sensibility.
- Buddhist Monuments of South India Vengi in Andhra Pradesh has many stupa sites like Jagayyapetta, Amaravati, Bhattiprolu, Nagarjunkonda, Goli, etc.
- Amaravati has a mahachaitya and had many sculptures which are now preserved in Chennai Museum, Amaravati Stupa also has

pradakshinapatha enclosed within a vedikaon which many narrative sculptures are depicted.

- The domical stupa structure is covered with relief stupa sculptural slabs which is a unique feature.
- The torana of the Amaravati Stupa has disappeared over a period of time.
- Events from the life of the Buddha and the Jataka stories are depicted. Sculptural form in this area is characterised by intense emotions.
- Figures are slender, have a lot of movement, bodies are shown with three bents (i.e. tribhanga), and the sculptural composition is more complex than at Sanchi.
- Linearity becomes flexible, dynamic movement breaks the staticness of form.
- The idea of creating three-dimensional space in the relief sculpture is devised by using pronounced volume, angular bodies and complex overlapping.
- The animated movement in the figures gets reduced in the sculptures of Nagarjunkonda and Goli in the third century CE
- Independent Buddha images are also found at Amaravati, Nagarjunkonda and Guntapalle. Guntapalle is a rock cut cave site near Eluru.
- Important site where rock-cut stupas have been excavated is Anakapalle near Vishakhapatanam.
- In Karnataka, Sannati is the earliest stupa site excavated so far.
- Also has a stupa like the one in Amaravati decorated with sculptural relief.
- Along with the images of Buddha, other Buddhist images of Bodhisattvas like Avalokitesvara, Padmapani, Vajrapani, Amitabha, and Maitreya Buddha started getting sculpted.
- With the rise of Vajrayana Buddhism many Bodhisattva images were added as a part of the perfected representations of certain virtues or qualities as propagated by the Buddhist religious principles for the welfare of the masses

Cave Tradition in Western India-

- Mainly three architectural types were executed—(i) apsidal vault-roof chaitya halls (found at Ajanta, Pitalkhora, Bhaja); (ii) apsidal vault-roof pillarless hall (found at Thana-Nadsur); and (iii) flat-roofed quadrangular hall with a circular chamber at the back (found at Kondivite).
- The front of the chaitya hall is dominated by the motif of a semi-circular chaitya arch with an open front which has a wooden façade and, in some cases, there is no dominating chaitya arch window such as found at Kondivite.

- In all the chaityacaves a stupa at the back is common. Rectangular like at Ajanta Cave No. 9.
- Found at Bedsa, Nashik, Karla and Kanheri.
- Many cave sites have the standard first type of chaitya halls in the subsequent period.
- In Karla, the biggest rock-cut chaitya hall was excavated. Karla chaityahall is decorated with human and animal figures.
- The Karla chaityahall plan is observed at Kanheri Cave No.3.
- Though the cave's interior was not fully finished, it shows how the carving progressed from time to time.
- Subsequently, the quadrangular flat-roofed variety became the most preferred design and is extensively found at many places.
- The viharas are excavated in all the cave sites.
- The plan of the viharas consists of a veranda, a hall and cells around the walls of the hall.
- Some of the important vihara caves are Ajanta Cave No. 12, Bedsa Cave No. 11, Nashik Cave Nos. 3, 10 and 17.
- Many of the early viharacaves are carved with interior decorative motifs like chaityaarches and the vedicades gns ov r the ell doors of the cave.
- Facade design in Nashik Cave Nos 3, 10, and 17 became a distinct achievement.
- The viharacaves at Nashik w r excav ed with front pillars carved with ghata-base and ghata-capital w h human figures.
- One such vihara cave w lso ex avated at Junnar which is popularly known as Ganesh ni ecaus an image of Ganesha belonging to a later period was installed it.
- Later, a stupa wa added at the back of the hall of the viharaand it became a chaitya-viha a.
- The stupas in the fourt and fifth centuries CE have Buddha images attached
- Junnar as the la t cave excavations— more than two hundred caves around e hills of the town— hereas Kanheri in Mumbai has a hundred and eight excavated c ves.
- The most important sites are Ajanta, Pitalkhora, Ellora, Nashik, Bhaja, Junna Karla, Kanheri.
- Ajanta, E ora, and Kanheri continue to flourish.
- Because f the absence of the Buddha image, the caves were considered belonging to the orthodox faith of Buddhism, i.e., the Thervadins, but with the discovery of the Konkan Maurya inscription mentioning the Sakaera 322, i.e., 400 CE, it is now satisfactorily proved that the cave activity in western Deccan was an ongoing process and many caves had been carved with Buddha images where the image does not exist anymore.

- Many caves are converted into modern Hindu shrines and have become popular worshipping sites.

Ajanta-

- The most famous cave site is Ajanta.
- It is located in Aurangabad District of Maharashtra State.
- Ajanta has twenty-nine caves.
- It has four chaitya caves datable to the earlier phase, i.e., the second and the first century BCE (Cave Nos. 10 and 9) and the later phase, i.e., the fifth century CE (Cave Nos. 19 and 26).
- It has large chaityaviharas and is decorated with sculptures and paintings.
- Ajanta is the only surviving example of painting of the first century BCE and the fifth century CE.
- The caves at Ajanta as well as in western Deccan in general have no precise chronology because of the lack of known dated inscriptions.
- Cave Nos. 10, 9, 12 and 13 belong to the early phase, Caves Nos. 11, 15 and 6 upper and lower, and Cave No. 18 belong to the phase earlier than late fifth century CE.
- The rest of the caves belong to the fifth century CE to early sixth century CE.
- The chaitya Cave Nos. 19 and 26 are elaborately carved.
- Their facade is decorated with Buddha and, Bodhisattva images.
- They are of the apsidal vaulted variety. Cave No. 26 is very big and the entire interior hall is carved with a variety of Buddha images, the biggest one being the Mahaparinirvana image.
- The rest of the caves are vihara-chaitya caves.
- They consist of a pillared veranda, a pillared hall and cells along the walls. The back wall was the main Buddha shrine.
- Shrine images at Ajanta are grand in size.
- Some of the viharacaves are unfinished such as Cave Nos. 5, 14, 23, 24, 28 and 29.
- Among the important patrons at Ajanta were Varahadeva (patron of Cave No. 6), the prime minister of the Vakataka king, Harishena; Upendragupta (patron of Cave Nos. 17–20) the local king of the region and feudatory of the Vakataka king, Harishena; Buddhahadra (patron of Cave No. 26); and Mathuradasa (patron of Cave No. 4). Many paintings have survived in Cave Nos. 1, 2, 16 and 17.
- various skin colours are used in the paintings such as brown, yellowish brown, greenish, yellow ochre, etc. which represent a multi coloured population.
- Brown thick dark lines are used as contours.

- Lines are forceful and full of energy.
- Also made to give highlights in the figural compositions.
- The themes of the paintings are the events from the life of the Buddha, the Jatakas and the Avadanas. Paintings such as Simhala Avadana, Mahajanaka Jataka and Vidharpundita Jatakacover the entire wall of the cave.
- Chaddanta Jatakahas been painted in the early Cave No. 10 with many details and events grouped according to their geographical locations.
- Events that happened in the jungle and events that happened in the palace are separated by their locations.
- In Cave No. 10 Chaddanta faithfully follows the Pali text whereas the one painted in Cave No. 17 is very different.
- In one of the events, the Boddhisattva, Chaddanta, is shown moving his own tusk and giving it to the hunter, Sonuttar.
- The other important paintings are the famous Padmapani and Vajrapani in Cave No. 1.
- The images of Padmapani and Vajrapani are very common in Ajanta but the best preserved paintings are in Cave No. 1.
- Some figures in Cave No. 2 have affiliation with the Vengi sculptures and at the same time, the influence of the Vidarbha sculptural tradition is also observed in the delineation of some sculptures.

Ellora

- Important cave site located in Aurangabad District is Ellora.
- It is located a hundred kilometre from Ajanta and has thirty-two Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain caves.
- A unique art-historical site in the country as it has monasteries associated with the three religions dating from the fifth century CE onwards to the eleventh century CE.
- Also unique in terms of stylistic eclecticism, i.e., confluence of many styles at one place.
- The caves of Ellora and Aurangabad show the ongoing differences between the two religions— Buddhism and Brahmanical.
- There are twelve Buddhist caves having many images belonging to Vajrayana Buddhism like Tara, Mahamayuri, Akshobhya, Avalokiteshwara, Maitrya, Mitabha, etc.
- Buddhist caves are big in size and are of single, double and triple storeys.
- Ajanta also has excavated double-storeyed caves but at Ellora, the triple storey is a unique achievement.
- All the caves were plastered and painted but nothing visible is left.
- The shrine Buddha images are big in size; they are generally guarded by the images of Padmapani and Vajrapani.

- Cave No. 12, which is a triple-storey excavation, has images of Tara, Avalokiteshwara, Manushi Buddhas and the images of Vairochana, Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, Amoghsiddhi, Vajrasatva and Vajraraja.
- The only double-storey cave of the Brahmanical faith is Cave No. 14.
- Pillar designs grow from the Buddhist caves and when they reach the Jain caves belonging to the ninth century CE, they become very ornate and the decorative forms gain heavy protrusion.
- The Brahmanical cave Nos. 13–28 have many sculptures.
- Many caves are dedicated to Shaivism, but the images of both Shiva and Vishnu and their various forms. Among the Shaivite themes, Ravana attacking Mount Kailash, Andhakasurvadha, Kalyanasundara are prominently depicted whereas among the Vaishnavite themes, the different incarnations of Vishnu are depicted.
- The sculptures at Ellora are monumental, and have a protruding volume that create deep recession in the picture space.
- Various guilds at Ellora came from different places like Vidarbha, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and carved the sculptures.
- The most diverse site in India in terms of the sculptural styles.
- Cave No. 16 is known as Kailash temple.
- A rock-cut temple has been carved out of a single rock, a unique achievement of the artisans, which will be discussed in the next chapter.
- Among the important Shaivite caves are Cave No. 29 and Cave No. 21.
- The plan of Cave No. 29 is almost like that of the main cave at Elephanta.
- The sculptural quality of Cave Nos. 2, 21, 17, 14 and 16 is amazing for its monumentality and various movements in the picture space.

Elephanta Caves and Other Sites

- Located near Mumbai, were originally a Buddhist site which was later dominated by the Shaivite faith.
- It is contemporary with Ellora, and its sculptures show slenderness in the body, with stark light and dark effects.
- The other noteworthy cave site is Bagh located near Indore in Madhya Pradesh.
- The tradition of rock-cut caves continued in the Deccan and they are found not only in Maharashtra but also in Karnataka, mainly at Badami and Aiholi, executed under the patronage of the Chalukyas; in Andhra Pradesh in the area of Vijayawada; and in Tamil Nadu, mainly at Mahabalipuram, under the patronage of the Pallavas. The post-sixth-century development of art

history in the country depended more on political patronage than the collective public patronage of the early historic periods.

- Mention may also be made of the terracotta figurines that are found at many places all over the country.
- show a parallel tradition with the religious lithic sculptures as well as the independent local tradition.
- Many terracotta figures of various sizes are found which show their popularity.
- They are toys, religious figurines as well as figurines made for healing purposes as part of the belief systems.

Cave Tradition in Eastern India

- Like in western India, Buddhist caves have also been excavated in eastern India, mainly in the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh and in Odisha.
- One of the main sites in Andhra Pradesh is Guntapalle in Eluru district.
- The caves have been excavated in the hills along with the structured monasteries.
- Very unique sites where the structured stupas, viharas and the caves are excavated at one place.
- The Guntapalle chaitya cave is circular with a stupa in the circular hall and a chaitya arch carved at the entrance.
- Relatively small when compared to the caves in western India.
- A number of viharas have been excavated.
- The main vihara cave, despite the small dimensions, have been decorated with chaitya arches on the exterior.
- They are rectangular with vaulted roof and are carved single-storeyed or double storeyed without a large central hall.
- These excavations date back to the second century BCE.
- There are some excavations which were added in the subsequent centuries but all are of the viharas type.
- Apart from Guntapalle, the other important cave site is Rampaerrampallam which has very moderate small excavations but there are rock-cut stupas on the hillock.
- At Anapalli near Vishakhapatnam, caves were excavated and a huge rock-cut stupa was carved out of the hillock during the fourth–fifth centuries CE.
- A unique site as it has the biggest rock-cut stupas in the country.
- Many votive rock-cut stupas all around the hillock have also been excavated.
- The rock-cut cave tradition also existed in Odisha.

- The earliest examples are the Udaigiri-Khandagiri caves in the vicinity of Bhubaneswar.
- These caves are scattered and have inscriptions of Kharavela kings.
- The caves were meant for Jain monks.
- There are numerous single-cell excavations.
- Some have been carved in huge independent boulders and given the shape of animals.
- The big caves include a cave with a pillared veranda with cells at the back.
- The upper part of the cells is decorated with a series of chaitya arches and narratives that still continue in the folklores of the region.
- The figures in this cave are voluminous, move freely in the picture space, and are an excellent example of qualitative carving.
- Some caves in this complex were excavated later, so time the eighth–ninth centuries CE.
- A large number of images dating back to the Kushana Period is from Mathura.
- The image of the Buddha from the Katra mould belong to the second century CE.
- It represents the Buddha with two Bodhisattva attendants.
- The sanghati (garment) covers only the shoulder and has been made prominently visible covering the left hand whereas while covering the torso, the independent volume of the garment is reduced to the body torso.
- The Buddha head from Taxila in the Gandhara region, now in Pakistan, dates back to the second century CE and belongs to the Kushana Period.
- It has Greco-Roman elements in the treatment of sculpture.
- The Buddha head has typical Hellenistic elements that have grown over a period of time. Assimilating various traits of Achaemenian, Parthian and Bactrian traditions into the local tradition is a hallmark of the Gandhara style.
- The Gandhara images have physiognomic features of the Greco-Roman tradition but they display a very distinct way of treating physiognomic detail that are not completely Greco-Roman.
- The Buddha from Sarnath belonging to the late fifth century CE is housed in the site museum at Sarnath which has been made in Chunar sandstone.
- The Buddha is shown seated on a throne in the padmasana.
- It represents dhammachakrapravartana as can be seen from the figures on the throne.
- The panel below the throne depicts a chakra (wheel) in the centre and a deer on either side with his disciples.
- The representation of the historical event of dhammachakrapravartana or the preaching of the dhamma.

- The image Vajrapani Bodhisattva has been painted, holds a vajrain his right hand and wears a crown.
- This image also bears the same pictorial qualities as the Padmapani.
- Cave No. 1 has many interesting paintings of Buddhist themes such as Mahajanak Jataka, Umag Jataka, etc.
- The Mahajanak Jataka is painted on the entire wall side and is the biggest narrative painting. It may be observed that the paintings of Padmapani and Vajrapani and the Bodhisattvas are painted as shrine guardians.
- Similar such iconographic arrangement is also observed in other caves of Ajanta.
- However Padmapani and Vajrapani in Cave No. 1 are among the best survived paintings of Ajanta.
- The theme of Mara Vijaya has been painted in the cave of Ajanta
- This is the only sculptural representation sculpted on the right wall of Cave No. 26.
- It is sculpted near the colossal Buddha image of Mahaparinibbana.
- Mara represents desire.
- Image of Maheshmurti at Elephanta dates back to the early sixth century CE.
- It is located in the main cave shrine in the tradition of western Deccan sculpting it is one of the best examples of qualitative achievement in sculpting images in rock cut caves.
- The image is large in size.
- The central head is the Shiv figure whereas the other two visible heads are of Bhairava and Uma.
- The central face is in high relief having a round face, thick lips and heavy eyelids.
- The lower lip is prominent protruded showing a very different characteristic
- The all-inclusive aspect of Shiva is exhibited in this sculpture by soft-modelling, smooth face and large face.
- The face of Shiva-Bhairava is clearly shown in profile in anger with bulging eye and mustache.
- The other face showing feminine characters is of Uma who is the consort of Shiva.
- One of the shilpa texts mentions five integrated faces of Shiva and this image, despite being shown with only three faces, is considered as of the same variety and the top and back faces are deemed as invisible.
- Each face has a different crown as per its iconographic prescription.
- This sculpture has been sculpted on the south wall of the cave along with the sculpture of Ardhanarishwara and the Gangadhara panel. Elephanta sculptures are known for their remarkable qualities of surface smoothness, elongation and rhythmic movement.

- Composition is very complex.
- The iconographic arrangement of this cave is replicated in Cave No. 29 at Ellora.

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