

## **POST-MAURYAN TRENDS IN INDIAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE 2**

### **POST - MAURYAN CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS 3**

#### **Art and Sculpture 4**

##### **Deccan and South India 4**

Kharavela of Kalinga 4

##### **South India 5**

Sources 5

Cholas 5

Pandays 5

Life and Culture 5

Society 6

##### **The Age of Harshvardhana 6**

Harsha's religious activities 6

##### **Kingdoms of the Deccan and the South 6**

##### **Sungas 7**

Chulakoka Devta 8

Yaksha , Pitalkhora caves 9

Bharhut 11

##### **Satvahnas 14**

Sanchi 15

Shalbhanjikas 18

##### **Mathura, Sarnath and Gandhara Schools 19**

##### **Gandhara School of Art 22**

Great Departure 24

Standing Bodhisattava, Gandhara 24

BUDDHA HEAD, TAXILA 25

##### **Mathura School of Art 27**

SEATED BUDDHA, KATRA MOUND, MATHURA 30

SEATED BUDDHA, SARNATH 32

##### **Early Temples 34**

##### **Buddhist Monuments of South India 35**

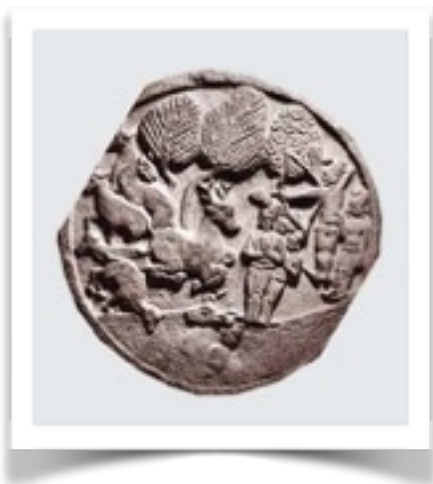
Amravati 35

Nagarjunakonda and Goli 39

Other sites 40

##### **Cave Tradition in Western India 41**

<b>Karla</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Kanheri cave No. 3</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Viharas</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Site of caves in west India</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Ajanta</b>	<b>45</b>
Chaitya Caves	46
Vihara-Chaitya caves	46
Patrons of Ajanta	46
Paintings in Ajanta Caves	47
Themes of Paintings	50
<b>Ellora</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Elephanta Caves and Other Sites</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Other sites</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Cave Tradition in Eastern India</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Odisha</b>	<b>56</b>
PADMAPANI BODDHISATTVA AJANTA CAVE NO. 1	58
MARA VIJAYA, AJANTA CAVE NO. 26	60
MAHESHMURTI, ELEPHANTA	62



## **POST-MAURYAN TRENDS IN INDIAN ART AND 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, Ikshvakus, Abhiras, Vakataks in southern and western India. Incidentally, the period of the second century BCE also marked the rise of the main Brahmanical sects such as the Vaishnavas and the Shaivas. There are numerous sites dating back to the second century BCE in India.

## POST - MAURYAN CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

Although the Greeks, Shakas, Parthians, and Kushanas were foreigners, they were slowly absorbed into the local population. Since they were warriors, the law givers assigned them the status of Kshatriyas. It should be noted that such a large scale assimilation of foreigners into the Indian society took place only in the post-Mauryan times. We can say roughly from about 200 BC to about 3rd century A.D. profound changes took place in the economic and political life and vital developments in different aspects of cultural life of our country i.e. religion, art and science as well as technology. There was a significant advancement in foreign trade both by land and by sea, besides emergence of various crafts.

### **Many foreign rulers adopted Vaishnavism.**

- In the Besnagar Pillar inscription, Heliodorus (the Greek ambassador of the Indo-Greek king Antialkidas) describes himself as a Bhagavata i.e. worshipper of Vishnu.

Similarly some coins of Kanishka also show the figure of Siva on them. You will recall that one of the Kushan rulers was called Vasudeva, clearly indicating his vaishnava faith. Do you know the importance attached to the year of Kanishka's accession i.e. 78 A.D.. Well, it marks the beginning of the Saka era.

The interaction among different foreign ethnic groups and the Indians played an important role in their choice of one or the other Indian religions. Some foreign rulers also turned to Buddhism, as this did not create the problems of fitting into the caste system.

**Menander converted to Buddhism. Kanishka too is remembered for his services to this religion.**

However this increasing popularity of Buddhism brought about a major change in the religion. Buddhism in its original form was too abstract for the foreigners. They therefore advocated a simpler form through which they could satisfy their religious cravings. Around the same time Buddhism split into two schools: the Mahayana or the Great Wheel and the Hinayana or the Small Wheel. The former believed in image worship, rituals and Bodhisattvas, (incarnations of Buddha) while the latter continued the practices of the earlier Buddhism.

The Mahayana received royal patronage from Kanishka, who convened the **fourth Buddhist Council to finalise its teachings**. He also set up many stupas in memory of the Buddha.

## **Art and Sculpture**

### **Deccan and South India**

#### **Kharavela of Kalinga**

Kingdom which rose to a position of importance after the Mauryas was Kalinga. Kalinga included modern Orissa and parts of Northern Andhra. Its most important ruler was Kharavela.

The **Hathigumpha Inscription** in a **Jain cave at Udaigiri hills** would give us a detailed account of his reign, but unfortunately it is not easily decipherable. It is definitely known that he was a great administrator as well as a brave warrior. He carried out works of piety and public utility, like building roads and gardens.

## **South India**

The area which lies to the south of the river Krishna and Tungabhadra is called South India. It was the region of the **Cholas, Cheras and the Pandyas** who were constantly at war with each other.

### **Sources**

The main source of information about these kingdoms and the life of the people is the **Sangam literature**. That is why this period from the beginning of the 1st century B.C. to the end of 2nd century A.D. is called the Sangam period of the history of South India.

### **Cholas**

**Karikala** was the most important ruler of this kingdom. He defeated the combined forces of the Cheras and the Pandays. He succeeded in pushing back an invasion from Ceylon. Karikala has been credited with many welfare activities. He got many canals dug so that water from the river Cauvery could be used for irrigation purposes. Karikala patronised works of literature and art. He was a follower of the Vedic religion.

### **Pandays**

The Pandyan empire was founded by a woman king. She maintained a huge army. She also encouraged trade and patronised art as well as literature.

### **Life and Culture**

The people during this period lived a simple life. They were fond of music, dancing and poetry. Many musical instruments like drums, flutes, pipes, etc. were popular.

Most of the people lived in valleys and a majority of them were farmers. Others were herdsmen. There were artisans and craftsmen also who mainly lived in towns. There were merchants specially in the coastal areas and trade was carried on by sea.

## Society

The Greeks, Kushanas, Shakas and Parthians were called **Yavanas**. They soon merged with the Indian society and adopted Indian names and inter-married. Even their coins started carrying the images of Indian gods like Vishnu, Ganesha and Mahesha. The fact that they had adapted to the Indian society easily may explain why foreign rulers patronised Buddhism.

## The Age of Harshvardhana

King Harshvardhana decided that he must subdue the petty warring rulers and bring them under his domain. He devoted six important years of his life to do so. Hiuen Tsang, a Chinese traveller and Bana Bhat, his court poet, have given detailed accounts of Harsha's reign. According to Hiuen Tang, King Harshvardhana had an efficient government. He further tells us that families were not registered and there was no forced labour,

### Harsha's religious activities

- Do you know that Harsha built many hospitals and rest houses? He also gave grants to many religions especially Buddhism and Hindu Religion. Later in his life Harsha became more inclined towards Buddhism.
- Harsha's literary activities had some important plays e.g. Nagananda Ratnavali and Priyadarsita. He collected learned men around him as is evident from the report of Hiuen Tsang and Bana Bhat.
- Bana wrote Harsha's famous biography, Harshcharita as well as the literary piece Kadambari.

## Kingdoms of the Deccan and the South

You have read about the Satavahanas who controlled the Deccan for a long time. After their decline, many small kingdoms came up in the Deccan. The first one among them was that of the **Vakatakas**, who tried to build a strong state, but they did not last long.

After the Vakatakas came the **Chalukyas of Vatapi and Kalyani**. **Pulakesin** was a powerful ruler of the Chalukya dynasty. The Chalukyas kept fighting with the Rashtrakutas (towards the north) and the Pallavas (towards the south). The Chalukya rule came to an end in 753 A.D. when the Rashtrakutas defeated them.

The capital city of Vatapi was a prosperous one. There were trade relations with Arabia, Iran and the Red Sea port to the west, as well as with South-East Asia. Pulakesin II sent an ambassador to king Khusrao II of Persia. The Chalukyas patronised art as well as religion. They build temples and cave shrines in the deccan hills. Many of the sculptures of the Ellora caves were created at this time under the patronage of the Chalukyas and the Rashtrakutas.

## **Sungas**

1. After the decline of the Mauryan empire, the Sungas succeeded to power in circa 185 B.C. They ruled the **central and eastern parts of Northern India**.
2. Their native style, distinguished by its **simplicity and folk appeal** is best represented in
  - i) monolithic free standing sculptures of Yakshas and Yakshis, discovered from Gwalior and Mathura;
  - ii) **fragments of the beautifully carved gate and railings of the Buddhist stupa at Bharhut**, now preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.
3. The **narrative art of Bharhut**, depicting Jatakas of Buddha's previous birth in sculptures, the **decorative art of Sanchi** and the **Jain Stupa of Mathura** belong to the same tradition. They all have an **echo of wood construction** and the style of the sculptures seems related to **carving in**

wood or ivory, basically the exploitation and elaboration of a **flat surface**, governed by the **law of frontality as distinct from 'perspective' presentation.**

4. Whether it is the representation of Buddha by his lotus feet, an empty throne, a pair of fly whisks or the triratna symbol, or the nativity of Maya Devi by the two elephants elegantly giving an Abhisheka or bath to the new born, pouring water from the kalasha or jars, **the language employed by the artist is that of symbols.**
5. When the artist visualises a **Yakshi, the nature spirit**, or the **fertility symbol Sura-Sundari**, the Celestial beauty,
  - (i) her eye-brows are like the arch of the bow,
  - (ii) her eyes a curved fish,
  - (iii) her lips a lotus petal,
  - (iv) her arms an elegant creeper,
  - (v) her legs tapering like the trunk of an elephant or a plantain tree.

The **allegiance of the artists is to what he considers reality in a dream or a poetic metaphor.** And it is this visualised, idealised image that he hopes and strives to present most faithfully, among the several deities of fertility and other scenes sculptured on the railing pillars of Bharhut.

## **Chulakoka Devta**

The figure of **Chulakoka Devta** is a notable specimen of Sunga art representing its indigenous character and folk quality.



1. She stands gracefully on an elephant with her arms and one leg entwined around a flowering tree, as she is a **tree goddess**.
2. The profuse jewellery and the mode of wearing the under garment and the head-dress demonstrate the feminine fashion of the period.
3. The figure suggests a **certain elegance** which we find with greater exuberance in the later Kushan sculpture.
4. The inscribed label at her right side, gives us the names of the **Yakshi** and also states that this pillar was the gift of “**Arya Panthka**.”



There are several interesting **Jataka stories**, and Bharhut forms a treasure house of fables, visually represented.

In this medallion the gift of the Jetavana park by Anantha Pindika, by covering the ground with golden coins before it was presented by the merchant prince, is most graphically represented.

### **Yaksha , Pitalkhora caves**

Another good example of Sunga art of the second century B.C. is the jovial figures, **the dwarfish Yaksha from the Pitalkhora caves** in Central India, carrying a **bowl of abundance** on his head.

1. The care-free broad smile on his face and his rotund



belly indicate that **he is fully satisfied** in all respects.

2. The **two amulets strung on his necklace ward off evil spirits** from his devotees.
3. The back of his right hand bears an inscription giving the **name of the sculptor as Krishnadasa** who was a goldsmith by profession.
4. Generally speaking Indian art is an anonymous art, as the sculptor or the artist never sought to glorify himself. He always gave of his best as a humble offering to God or to his patron, the king, who was an image of God.

Though it may seem strange, Buddha is never represented in human form in Buddhist art before the Christian era, as his spirituality was considered too abstract for the purpose. The adherents of the Buddhist faith followed the Hinayana path as a means of attaining salvation. **Buddha's presence in early Indian art is, therefore, suggested by symbols** like the Bodhi tree under which he attained enlightenment, the wheel of law, his foot prints, the royal umbrella, the stupa and an empty throne, etc.

The **relief-medallion from the fragment of a railing pillar of the stupa at Bharhut** datable to the 2nd Century B.C., shows the **worship of the Bodhi tree by four figures.** Buddha had attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya. Here the tree symbolizes the presence of Buddha.



In the fragment of an architrave from the gateway of the stupa at Bharhut; we can observe the great love, understanding and affection that the early Indian artist had for animals and plants which he took pains to study in great detail.

**On either side of this architrave, are men and elephants in action, skillfully shown, paying homage to the Buddha, represented by the Bodhi tree shown in the centre.**

Some of 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**

Bharhut sculptures are **tall** like the images of *Yaksha* and *Yakhshini* in the Mauryan period, modelling of the **sculptural volume is in low relief maintaining linearity**.

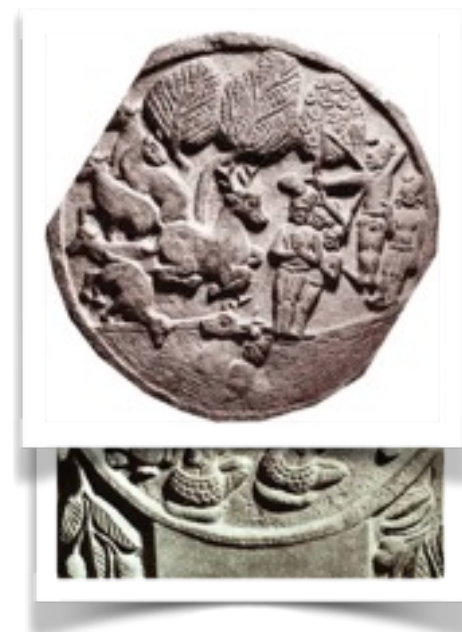
1. Images stick to the picture plane.
2. In the relief panels depicting narratives, **illusion of three-dimensionality** is shown with tilted perspective.
3. Clarity in the **narrative** is enhanced by selecting main events.
4. At Bharhut, narrative panels are shown with fewer characters but as the time progresses, apart from the main character in the story, others also start appearing in the picture space.
5. At times more than one event at one geographical place is clubbed in the picture space or only a single main event is depicted in the pictorial space.

6. Availability of the space is utilised to the maximum by the sculptors.
7. Folded hands in the narratives as well as single figures of the *Yakhshas* and *Yakshinis* are **shown flat clinging to the chest**.
8. But in some cases, especially in later times, the hands are shown with the natural projection against the chest. Such examples show how artisans who were working at a collective level had to understand the method of carving.
9. Initially, dressing the surface of stone slabs appears as the main concern. Later the human body and other forms were sculpted.
10. Due to shallow carving of the picture surface, projection of hands and feet was not possible, hence, the folded hands and awkward position of the feet.
11. There is a general stiffness in the body and arms.
12. But gradually, such visual appearance was modified by making images with deep carvings, pronounced volume and a very naturalistic representation of human and animal bodies.
13. 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 heading towards the womb of Queen Mayadevi.

On the other hand, **the depiction of a *Jataka* story is very simple**—narrated by clubbing the events according to the geographical location of the story like the depiction of **Ruru *Jataka*** where the Bodhisattva deer is rescuing a man on his back.



The other event in the same picture frame depicts the King standing with his army and about to shoot an arrow at the deer, and the man who was rescued by the deer is also shown along with the king pointing a finger at the deer. According to the story, the man promised the deer after his rescue that he would not disclose his identity to anybody. But when the king makes a proclamation of reward for disclosing the identity of the deer, he turns hostile and takes the king to the same jungle where he had seen the deer.

Such *Jataka* stories became part of *stupa* decoration. 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**. In many sculptures it is very consistent. Some of the sculptures found at Bharhut are displayed in Indian Museum, Kolkata.

## **Satvahnas**

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

The Satavahanas in the Deccan held an important position under the Mauryas. **After the death of Ashoka, they assumed total independence.** They became very powerful and made their capital at **Paithan or Pratisthan on the river Godavari.** The Satavahanas soon entered into conflict with the foreign satraps, especially the Shakas. It was under **Gautamiputra** and his son **Vasishthiputra Satkarni** that the Satavahanas became very powerful. They extended their kingdom, cleared forests, made roads and administered their State well. New towns came up and trade was carried on with far off countries like Persia, Iraq and Combodia.

The powerful **Satavahana Kings of South India** were great builders and from the 2nd century B.C. to 2nd century A.D. they studded their empire with several splendid monuments which were richly embellished. They excavated **cave temples and monasteries along the Western Coast of India and erected several Buddhist stupas.**

1. The **lavish carvings on the Sanchi stupa gateway** which were also executed during their reign, proclaim the high skill and technical proficiency of the Satavahana sculptors.
2. Stupa worship was an ancient form of honouring the great dead.
3. Stupas were built not only to enshrine relics of Buddha and Buddhist saints, but also to commemorate events of religious significance.





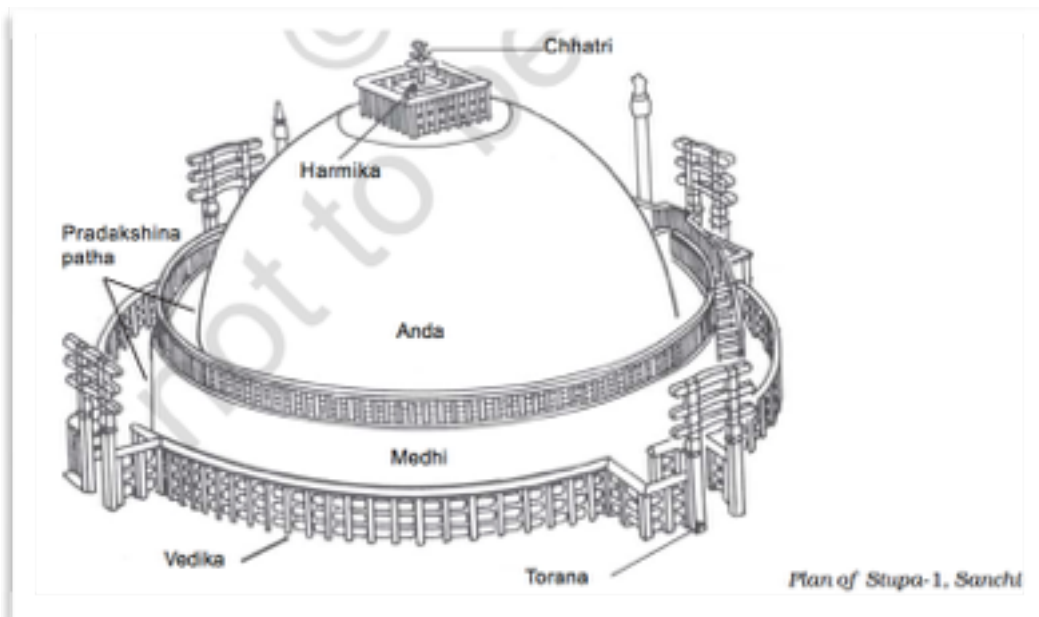
## Sanchi

Sanchi, about 50 km from Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, is a **world heritage site**. Along with other relatively small *stupas*, **there are three main stupas at Sanchi**.

1. Stupa-1 is presumed to have the **relics of the Buddha**.
2. Stupa-2, the relics of **ten less famous arhats** belonging to three different generations. Their names are found on the relic casket.
3. Stupa-3 has the relics of **Sariputta** and **Mahamougalayana**.

**Stupa-1, known for the carvings on its gateways is one of the finest examples of stupa architecture.**

- Stupa-1 at Sanchi has upper as well as lower ***pradakshinapatha*** or **circumambulatory path**.
- It has four beautifully decorated ***toranas*** depicting various events from the life of the Buddha and the *Jatakas*.



1. The outstanding example of an early Buddhist stupa built **during the 3rd and 1st century B.C.** is preserved at Sanchi in Central India.
2. It is a **solid structural dome raised on a terrace** and surmounted by a railed pavilion from which rises the shaft of the crowning umbrella.
3. The stupa was **originally a mud funerary** mound enshrining in its core the sacred relics of the Buddha or his disciples, such as hair, bits of bones, etc. Originally the **stupa was a small brick structure** which expanded over a period and was covered with stone, *vedika* and the *torana* (gateways).
4. The present stupa at Sanchi was **originally constructed during Ashoka's reign** but was considerably enlarged and the circum-ambulatory enclosure as well as the outer enclosures was added in the 1st century B.C.
5. The **Ashokan lion-capital pillar with an inscription** is found on the **southern side** of the *stupa*, indicating how Sanchi became a centre of monastic and artistic activities.
6. The *pradakshinapath* around the *stupa* is covered with the **vedika**.



7. There is also the **upper *pradakshinapath*** which is unique to this site.

8. *Toranas* are constructed in all four directions. Their **stylistic differences** indicate their possible chronology from the first century BCE onwards.

9. The south gateway was made first followed by the others.

10. Each *torana* consists of **two vertical pillars** and **three horizontal bars** on the top. Each horizontal bar is decorated with different sculptural themes on the front as well as at the back.

11. Supporting the extensions of the lowermost horizontal bar from below are the images of ***shalbhanjikas***.

12. There are guardian images on pillars and the ***shalbhanjika* (i.e., lady holding the branch of a tree)** sculptures are remarkable in their treatment of volume.

13. The four gateways are decorated profusely with **sculptures**.

i. Figure compositions are in **high relief**, filling up the entire space i.e, crowded.

ii. Depiction of posture gets naturalistic and there is **no stiffness in the body**.

iii. Heads have considerable projection in the picture space.

iv. **Rigidity** in the contours gets **reduced** and images are given



**movement.**

v. Carving techniques appear more advanced than Bharhut.

14. **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). Buddha is shown symbolically as an empty throne, feet, *chhatra*, *stupas*, etc.

15. Though Stupa-1 is the oldest *stupa*, the carving of images on the vedica of Stupa-2 are earlier than those on Stupa-1.

16. *Jatakas* also become an important part of the narratives in *stupas*. Narration gets elaborated.

17. The figures at Sanchi, despite being small in dimension, show **considerable mastery of sculpting**. Their **physiognomic treatment of the body shows both depth and dimension which are very naturalistic.**



## **Shalbhanjikas**

Sanchi Stupa No.1, Yakshi,  
Madhya Pradesh

1. In a part of the Eastern Gate of the Sanchi stupa there is a scene depicting a bracket figure of a **Vrikshika or wood nymph**.

2. In this we can see that the sculptor has advanced a great deal since he had carved the frontal, though to a certain extent rigid, human figures, in the 3rd-2nd century B.C.



3. The sculptor has succeeded in truly portraying her as a **tree goddess hanging** as it were from the branches of her tree, with nudity clearly shown suggesting that **she is a fertility goddess**.
4. He has also succeeded in giving it a **three dimensional effect**, i.e. length, breadth, and depth by ridding himself of the back-slab and by **evolving a tribhanga posture (thrice-flexed)** to bring out the contours and the beauty of the female figure.

The historical narratives such as the siege of Kushinara, Buddha's visit to Kapilavastu, visit of Ashoka to the Ramgrama 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, Sarnath 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.

1. Buddha in the symbolic form got a **human form in Mathura and Gandhara**.

2. The sculptural tradition in Gandhara had the confluence of **Bactria, Parthia and the local Gandhara tradition.**
3. 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.
4. The Buddha image at Mathura is modelled on the lines of earlier Yaksha images whereas in Gandhara it has Hellenistic features.
5. 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. It may be noted that the images of Vishnu and Shiva are represented by their *ayudhas* (weapons).
6. There is **boldness in carving the large images**, the **volume of the images is projected out of the picture plane**, the faces are round and smiling, **heaviness in the sculptural volume is reduced to relaxed flesh.**
7. The **garments of the body are clearly visible** and they cover the **left shoulder.**
8. 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,

- **reducing the extreme fleshiness,**
- **movement** in the posture is shown by **increasing distance between the two legs as well as by using bents 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,

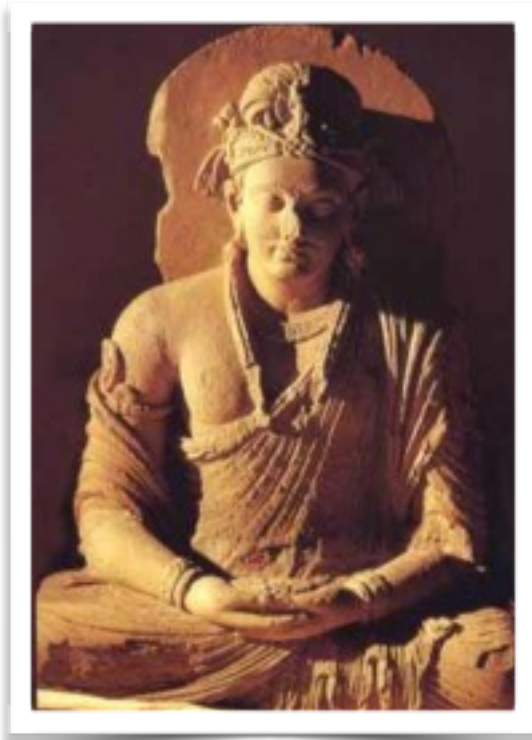
- the massiveness and fleshiness is **reduced further** and the flesh becomes more tightened,
- the volume of the drapery also gets reduced and in the fifth and sixth centuries CE, the drapery is integrated into the sculptural mass.
- **Transparent quality in the robes** of the Buddha images is evident.

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
- Mathura Buddha images continue to depict folds of the drapery in the Buddha images and the **halo around the head is profusely decorated.**

One can visit museums at Mathura, Sarnath, Varanasi, New Delhi, Chennai, Amaravati, etc. to study the features of early sculptures.





## **Gandhara School of Art**

After Alexander's invasion of India in 326 B.C., the Indo-Greek, Indo Scythian and Kushan kings ruled over its north-western territories and under their patronage emerged a distinct style of sculpture, popularly known as the Greco-Roman, Buddhist or Gandhara art. It was a product of the combination of Hellenistic, West Asiatic and native elements.

Greek and Roman techniques, modified according to Indian requirements, were employed in fashioning the Gandhara sculpture which truly represents Indian culture in a Western garb. The subject-matter treated is predominantly Buddhist. Its area extended from Takshila in India to the Swat Valley in Pakistan and northwards to areas in Afghanistan.

The first century of the Christian era's revolutionary change, had far-reaching effects, not only on the art of India, but also on the artistic development of Buddhist countries of Asia.

1. This school borrowed features from both the Greek and Roman art forms.
2. Many images of the Buddha from the Kushan period have **Apollonian faces**,
3. their **hair is in the Graeco-Roman style** and
4. their draperies arranged in the style of a **Roman toga**.
5. This assimilation of artistic features was probably because many artisans from different countries trained in different schools came together under the Kushan rule.
6. influenced by **Mahayana buddhism**
7. Early phase used **blue grey schist stone**, later on, apart from **mud and lime plaster**, **stucco was used** i.e. a type of plaster used for covering and decorating walls.
8. It exhibits **minimum ornamentation with focus on symmetry**.
9. Buddha who was hitherto designated only by a symbol, was conceived in human form.
10. His person was given some of the **32 suspicious bodily signs** associated with the **Mahapurushalakshana**, such as the protuberance of the skull, the hair-knot, bindi between the eyebrows and elongated ears.
11. This change came about as a result of the new changes that had crept into the religious outlook of Buddhism **due to the influence of the Devotional School of Hindu Philosophy**, requiring the worship of **personal gods**. It must have exercised profound influence on the religious approach of the masses towards Buddhism. The image becomes henceforth the main element of sculpture and worship.
12. Possibly, the emergence of the image of Buddha in Gandhara and in Mathura was a parallel development. In each case, it was produced by the local artist craftsmen working in the local tradition.

13. **At Mathura it clearly emerges from the Yaksha tradition.**

14. The Gandhara image might seem to resemble Apollo in some extraneous forms and does look characteristically Greco-Roman in drapery, but even there most of the images represent Buddha as seated in the typically **Indian Yogic posture**, a feature completely unknown to the Hellenistic tradition of art.

## Great Departure

The relief panel showing Buddha's Great Departure is a **fine example of Gandhara art** of the 2nd century A.D. Forsaking his wife, child and future kingdom in the quest of eternal bliss,

1. Prince Siddhartha is shown riding away on his favourite horse, **Kanthaka**, whose hoofs are lifted by two Yakshas to prevent the sound being heard by his family.
2. His groom **Chhandala**, holds the royal umbrella over his head.
3. Mara, the Evil one, along with a couple of his soldiers and the city goddess are urging the Prince to abandon his pious intention. This incident, which was a turning point in the life of Gautama, is effectively portrayed.



## Standing Bodhisattava, Gandhara



Another typical example of Gandhara art of 3rd century A.D. is the figure of a standing Bodhisattava.

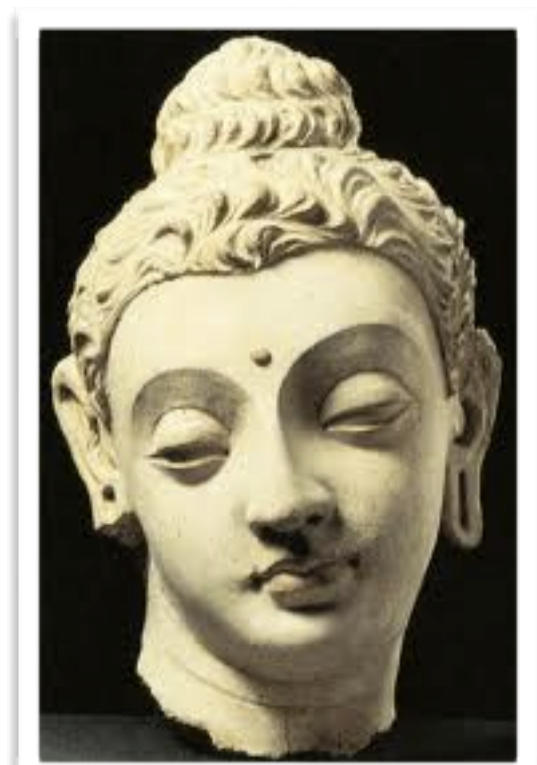
1. His right hand is shown in the **gesture of protection**.
2. He is wearing a rich turban, a string of amulets across his body, and strapped sandals on his feet.
3. The pedestal contains a pair of **Corinthian pillars**.
4. The athletic figure wearing a moustache, the heavy drapery folds of the garments and the strapped sandal all reveal the Greco-Roman influence.



## **BUDDHA HEAD, TAXILA**

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**. The image shows **hybridised pictorial conventions** that developed during the Gandhara period.

1. It has **Greco-Roman elements** in the treatment of sculpture.
2. The Buddha head has **typical Hellenistic elements** that have grown over a period of time.
3. The **curly hair** of the Buddha is thick having a covered layer of sharp and linear strokes over



the head.

4. The forehead plane is large having **protruding eyeballs**, the eyes are half-closed and the **face and cheeks are not round** like the images found in other parts of India.
5. There is a certain amount of **heaviness** in the figures of the Gandhara region.
6. The **ears are elongated** especially the earlobes.
7. The treatment of the form bears **linearity** and the **outlines are sharp**.
8. The surface is smooth. The image is very expressive.
9. The **interplay of light and dark** is given considerable attention by using the curving and protruding planes of the eye-socket and the planes of the nose.
10. **The expression of calmness is the centre point of attraction.** Modelling of the face enhances the naturalism of three-dimensionality.
11. Assimilating various traits of **Acamenian, Parthian and Bactrian** traditions into the local tradition is a hallmark of the Gandhara style.
12. The Gandhara images have physiognomic features of the Greco-Roman tradition but they display a very distinct way of treating physiognomic details that are not completely Greco-Roman. The source of development of Buddha images as well as others has its genesis in its peculiar geo-political conditions. It may also be observed that the north-western part of India, which is now Pakistan, always had continuous habitation from proto- historic times. It continued in the historical period as well. A large number of images have been found in the Gandhara region. They consist

of narratives of the life of the Buddha, narrations from the *Jataka* stories, and Buddha and Bodhisattva images.

## **Mathura School of Art**

The **Kushans**, who came from Central Asia, ruled over vast territories of the north from the 1st to the 3rd century A.D. During their regime, Mathura, just 80 miles away from Delhi, was throbbing with great artistic activity, and its workshops even catered to the outside demands for sculpture. Now icons of Brahmanical gods and goddesses and Buddhist and Jain divinities, which characterized the subsequent evolution of Indian art were produced experimentally. Some magnificent portrait studies of the Kushan emperors, together with several noblemen and women were executed during the period in the characteristic **red and red-speckled sandstone of Mathura i.e. Buff coloured sandstone.**

1. The representations of the Buddha in Mathura, in central northern India, are generally dated slightly later than those of Gandhara, although not without debate, and are also much less numerous.
2. The Buddhist religion greatly flourished under the patronage of Kushan emperors, and **several images of the Buddha and Bodhisattavas were produced after the earlier Yaksha types.** Here, we may point out the difference between a Buddha and Bodhisattava. Buddha is one who has attained the enlightenment of supreme knowledge, while the Bodhisattava is still a candidate for it.
3. Up to that point, **Indian Buddhist art had essentially been aniconic,** avoiding representation of the Buddha, except for his symbols, such as the wheel or the Bodhi tree, although some archaic Mathuran sculptural

representation of Yaksas (earth divinities) have been dated to the 1st century BC. Even these Yaksas indicate some Hellenistic influence, possibly dating back to the occupation of Mathura by the Indo-Greeks during the 2nd century BC.

4. While the earlier Buddhists had used only symbols to depict the Buddha, the Mathura school became the first to make faces and figures of the Buddha.
5. Specific Mathuran adaptations tend to reflect warmer climatic conditions, as they consist in a higher fluidity of the clothing, which progressively tend to cover only one shoulder instead of both.
6. Also, facial types also tend to become more Indianized.
7. Buddha shown in **Abhayadan mudra** and **Bhumisparsh Mudra**.
8. Incidentally, Hindu art started to develop from the 1st to the 2nd century AD and found its first inspiration in the Buddhist art of Mathura. It progressively incorporated a profusion of original Hindu stylistic and symbolic elements however, in contrast with the general balance and simplicity of Buddhist art.
9. The art of Mathura features frequent sexual imagery. Female images with bare breasts, nude below the waist, displaying labia and female genitalia are common. These images are more sexually explicit than those of earlier or later periods
10. Folklores such as the Jatakas were drawn out in long panels on rock faces.

11. Besides the images of Buddha, which were made in large numbers, statues of Mahavira were also produced.

**Mathura, which was the centre of the indigenous school of art, was also influenced by the invasions.**

1. A number of images from here of terracotta and red sandstone, which have definite Saka-Kushan influence, have survived. The most famous is the headless statue of Kanishka from Mathura.



2. The Mathura sculptures incorporate many Hellenistic elements, such as the general idealistic realism, and key design elements such as the curly hair, and folded garment.

3. The influence of Greek art can be felt beyond Mathura, as far as Amaravati on the East coast of India, as shown by the usage of Greek scrolls in combination with Indian deities. Other motifs such as Greek chariots pulled by four horses can also be found in the same area.

Fair maidens, in gracefully flexed postures engaged in making their toilet or in dance and music, or in garden sports and other pastimes, created by the master craftsmen of Mathura, are a glowing tribute to their high artistic skill and ingenuity in the portrayal of feminine beauty in all its sensuous charm.

Among the several beautifully carved railing pillars, which once adorned a stupa at Mathura, these three are the most famous ones.

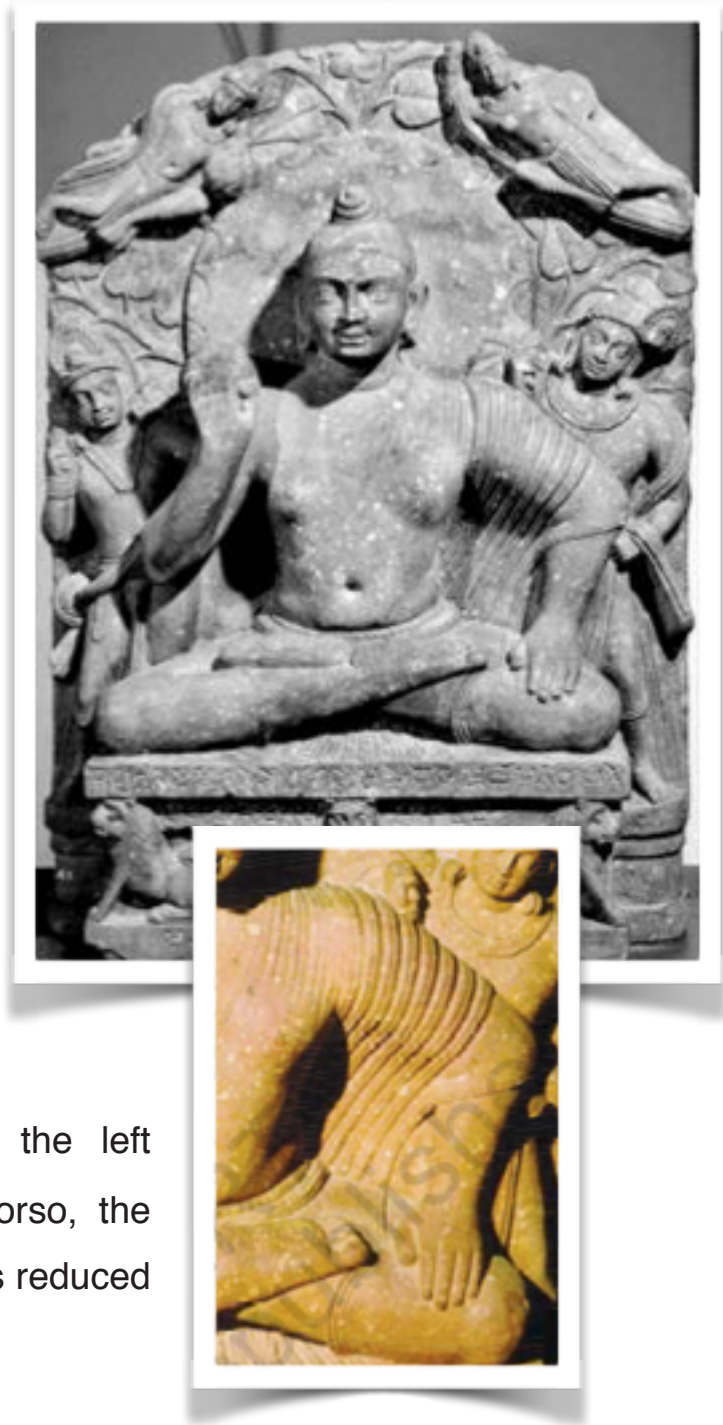
The one on the right shows a lovely damsel holding a bird cage in her right hand, from which she has let loose a parrot who has perched on her shoulder. The parrot is narrating to her the sweet and loving words, which her lover spoke the night before, and listening to them, she is feeling amused. In the center is a charming lady, standing gracefully with her left leg crossed in front, settling her heavy necklace with her right hand. The lady on the left holds a bunch of grapes in her left hand. She has plucked a grape and is holding it in her right hand, luring the parrot, perches on her right shoulder to repeat to her the words of her lover. In the balconies above, from the left it can be seen, a lover offering a cup of wine to his lady love, the second is offering a flower and the one on the right holding the toilet tray is assisting his beloved in her make-up. These figures, though appearing nude, are draped in diaphanous lower garments. They stand on crouching dwarfs, probably symbolising the miseries of the world, which are stamped out by the charm of a fair maiden.

### **SEATED BUDDHA, KATRA MOUND, MATHURA**

A large number of images dating back to the **Kushana Period** is from **Mathura**.

1. It belongs to the **second century CE**.
2. It represents the Buddha with two Bodhisattva attendants identified as **Padmapani** and **Vajrapani** as one holds a lotus and the other a vajra (thunderbolt). They wear crowns and are on either side of the Buddha.

3. The Buddha is seated in ***padmasana*** (cross-folded legs) and the right hand is in the ***abhayamudra***, raised a little above the shoulder level whereas the left hand is placed on the left thigh.
4. The ***ushanisha***, i.e., **hair knot**, is shown with a vertically raised projection.
5. Mathura sculptures from this period are made with **light volume having fleshy body**.
6. The shoulders are broad.
7. The **sanghati (garment)** covers only one 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.
8. The Buddha is seated on a **lion throne**.
9. The halo around the head of the Buddha is **very large and is decorated with simple geometric motifs**.
10. There are **two flying figures placed diagonally** above the halo.
11. They bear a **lot of movement** in the picture space. **Flexibility** replaces the earlier rigidity in the images giving them a more earthy look. Curves of





the body are as delicately carved. The upright posture of the Buddha image creates movement in space. The face is round with fleshy cheeks. The bulge of the belly is sculpted with controlled musculature.

12. It may be noted that there are numerous examples of sculptures from the Kushana Period at Mathura, but this image is representative and is important for the understanding of the development of the Buddha image in the subsequent periods.

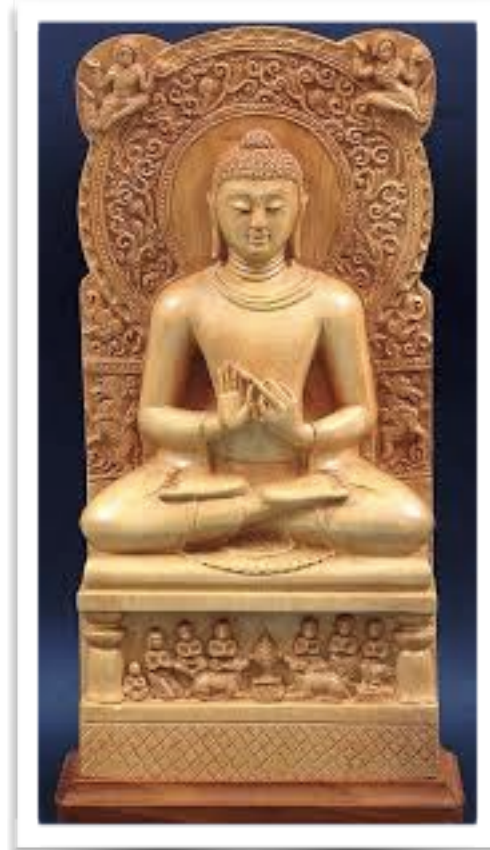
## **SEATED BUDDHA, SARNATH**

This image of the Buddha from Sarnath belonging to the **late fifth century CE** is housed in the site museum at Sarnath. This Buddha image is a fine example of the **Sarnath school of sculpture**.

1. It has been made in **Chunar sandstone**.
2. The Buddha is shown seated on a throne in the *padmasana*.
3. It represents **dhammachakrapravartana** as can be seen from the figures on the throne.
4. The panel below the throne depicts a **chakra (wheel) in the centre and a deer on either side with his disciples**.
5. The body is slender and well-proportioned but slightly elongated.
6. The outlines are delicate, very rhythmic.



7. **Folded legs are expanded** in order to create a visual balance in the picture space.
8. **Drapery clings to the body** and is **transparent** to create the effect of integrated volume.
9. The **face is round, the eyes are half-closed, the lower lip is protruding, and the roundness of the cheeks has reduced** as compared to the earlier images from the Kushana Period at Mathura.
10. The hands are shown in **dhammachakrapravartana mudra** placed just below the chest.
11. the **neck is slightly elongated** with two incised lines indicating folds.
12. The **ushanisha** has circular curled hairs.
13. The **back of the throne is profusely decorated** with different motifs of flowers and creepers placed in a concentric circle. The central part of the halo is plain without any decoration. It makes the halo visually impressive. Decoration in halo and the back of the throne indicates the artisan's sensitivity.
14. Sarnath Buddha images of this period show considerable softness in the treatment of the surface and volume.
15. **Transparent drapery becomes part of the physical body.** Such refinement comes over a period of time and these features continued in subsequent periods.
16. The aim of the sculptors in ancient India had always been to represent the Buddha as a great human being who achieved *nibbana* (i.e., cessation of anger and hate).



There are many other Buddha images in the standing position from Sarnath having features like transparent drapery, subtle movement, carved separately and placed about the memorial stupas around the Dharmarajika Stupa. These images are now preserved in the Sarnath Museum. They are either single or with the attendant figures of Bodhisattvas, Padmapani and Vajrapani.



## Early Temples

While construction of *stupas* continued, Brahmanical temples and images of gods also started getting constructed.

1. Often temples were decorated with the images of gods.
2. Myths mentioned in the *Puranas* became part of narrative representation of the Brahmanical religion.
3. Each temple had a principal image of a god.
4. The shrines of the temples were of three kinds—
  - (i) **sandhara type** (without *pradikshinapatha*),
  - (ii) **nirandhara type** (with *pradakshinapatha*),
  - (iii) **sarvatobhadra** (which can be accessed from all sides).
5. Some of the important temple sites of this period are **Deogarh** in Uttar Pradesh, **Eran, Nachna-Kuthara and Udaygiri** near Vidisha in Madhya Pradesh.
6. These temples are simple structures consisting of a veranda, a hall and a shrine at the rear. They will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.



Among the important *stupa* sites outside the Gangetic valley is **Devnimori in Gujarat**.

In the subsequent centuries sculptures had little variations while slender images with transparent drapery remained a dominant aesthetic sensibility.

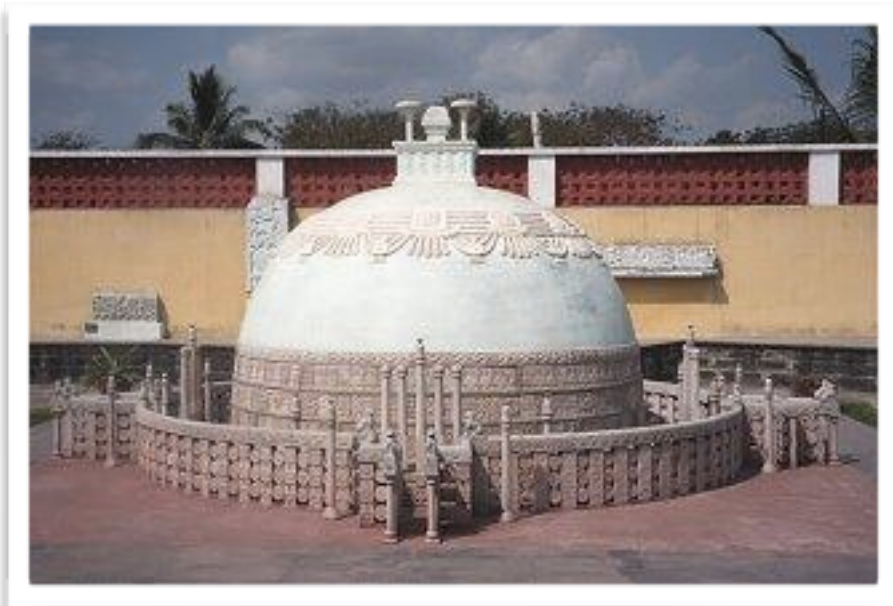
## Buddhist Monuments of South India

**Vengi in Andhra Pradesh** has many *stupa* sites like Jagayyapetta, Amaravati, Bhattiprolu, Nagarjunkonda, Goli, etc.

### Amravati

Amaravati has a ***mahachaitya*** and had many sculptures which are now preserved in Chennai Museum, Amaravati Site Museum, National Museum, New Delhi and the British Museum, London.

1. Like the Sanchi Stupa, the Amaravati Stupa also has pradakshinapatha enclosed within a vedika on which many narrative sculptures are depicted.
2. The domical *stupa* structure is covered with **relief stupa sculptural slabs** which is a unique feature.
3. 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.



4. Though in the Amaravati Stupa there is evidence of construction activity in the third century BCE, it was best developed in the first and second centuries CE.
5. Like Sanchi, the early phase is devoid of Buddha images but during the later phase, in the second and third centuries CE, the Buddha images are carved on the drum slabs and at many other places.
6. Interior space in the composition is created by different postures of the figures such as semi-back, back, profile, frontal, semi-frontal, side, etc.

**Sculptural form in this area is characterised by intense emotions.**

1. 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.
2. Linearity becomes flexible, **dynamic movement** breaks the staticness of form.

3. The idea of creating **three-dimensional space** in the relief sculpture is devised by using **pronounced volume, angular bodies and complex overlapping.**
4. However, absolute attention has been paid to the clarity of form despite its size and role in the narrative.
5. Narratives are profusely depicted which include events from the life of the Buddha and the *Jataka* stories. There are a number of *Jataka* scenes that have not been completely identified. In the depiction of the birth event, the queen is shown reclining on a bed surrounded by female attendants and a small-sized elephant is carved on the upper frame of the composition showing the dream of Queen Mayadevi. In another relief, four events related to the birth of the Buddha are shown. These represent varied ways of depicting the narratives.



A famous carving depicts the adoration of the feet of the Buddha by four women and belongs to the second century A.D. from Amravati. Here the composition and the disposition of the limbs delineating the beauty of the curvatures in form, the mood of intense devotion combined with bashfulness and humility so natural in women, mark it out as a great master-piece.



A relief medallion from Amravati belonging to the second century A.D. is a masterly representation of a scene showing the subjugation or taming of Nalagiri, a mad elephant let loose on the Buddha in the streets of Rajagriha by his wicked cousin, Devadatta. The great commotion and anxiety caused by the rush of the mad elephant at the Buddha is forcefully brought out and thereafter the furious animal is shown calm and kneeling at the feet of the Master.



Taming of Nalagiri Elephant, Amaravati, State Museum, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

There is a richly sculptured slab from the Buddhist stupa which once existed at Amravati. Another remarkable example of the elegant style of Amravati in the 2nd century A.D. is seen in the beautiful railing cross-bar. The subject, treated here is the presentation of Prince Rahul to his father, the Buddha, when the latter paid a visit to his family in his former palace. The presence of Buddha is here symbolised by the empty throne, his footprints, the wheel of the law and the triratna symbol. On the right are his followers clad in robes and on the left, the inmates of the palace. In the distance, behind the curtain, are seen an elephant, a horse, and attendants. The coyness of the young

Prince trying to hide his face behind the side of the throne and extending his folded hands in salutation, the delicate delineation of the difficult poses of the kneeling figures worshipping the Buddha, the magnificent execution of the crowded composition in three-dimension, all speak volumes for the sculptor who fashioned this masterpiece with a wonderful pictorial effect.

## **Nagarjunakonda and Goli**

The **Kishvakus** continued the great art traditions of the Satavahanas. They were responsible for building the stupas at Nagarjunikonda and their equally beautiful carvings.

The Vessantara Jataka from Goli, belongs to the 1st century A.D., in his previous birth Buddha was Prince Vessantara, who was never tired of giving away everything he had in charity. An elephant that assured prosperity to his realm, and was considered its most precious object, was presented by the Prince to the people of Kalinga who sought to make prosperous their land which had suffered from a drought. The infuriated people of his own kingdom insisted on the King, his father, banishing Vessantara to the forest with his wife and children. The story is a touching one recounting the Prince being put to severe tests but has a happy ending.

1. The **animated movement in the figures gets reduced** in the sculptures of Nagarjunkonda and Goli in the third century CE.
2. Even within the **relatively low relief volume** than in the Amaravati sculptures, artists at Nagarjunkonda and Goli



managed to create the effect of protruding surfaces of the body which is suggestive in nature and look very integral.

The Ayaka or cornice beam with a sequence of subjects is a typical example of the art from Nagarjunikonda. The qualities already seen at Amravati, as for example mentioned in the previous para, are to be found in abundance in this. The beam has been divided into rectangles displaying scenes from the Jataka tales interspersed with loving couples within small compartments made by the spacing pillars. There is a multitude of humanity represented, palace war and loving scenes representing both male and female figures in a variety of animated postures. The artist now displays complete mastery over the human form that he has achieved gradually over the centuries. The figures are full of life and movement executed with consummate skill based on observing life in reality.

### Other sites

Independent Buddha images are also found at Amaravati, Nagarjunkonda and Guntapalle.

1. **Guntapalle** is a rock-cut cave site near Eluru. Small apsidal and circular *chaitya* halls have been excavated belonging to the second century BCE.
2. The other important site where rock-cut *stupas* have been excavated is **Anakapalle** near Vishakhapatnam.



3. In Karnataka, **Sannati** is the largest *stupa* site excavated so far. It also has a *stupa* like the one in Amaravati decorated with sculptural relief.

**Construction of a large number of stupas does not mean that there were no structured temples or viharas or chaityas.**

- We do get evidences but no structured *chaitya* or *vihara* survived.
- Among the important structured *viharas*, mention may be made of the **Sanchi apsidal *chaitya* structure, i.e., temple 18**, which is a simple shrine temple having front pillars and a hall at the back.
- Similar structured temples at **Guntapalle** are also worth mentioning.

Along with the images of the Buddha, other Buddhist images of Bodhisattvas like Avalokiteshvara, Padmapani, Vajrapani, Amitabha, and Maitreya Buddha started getting sculpted.

However, with the rise of *Vajrayana* Buddhism many Bodhisattva images were added as a part of the personified representations of certain virtues or qualities as propagated by the Buddhist religious principles for the welfare of the masses.

## **Cave Tradition in Western India**

In western India, many Buddhist caves dating back to the **second century BCE onwards** have been excavated.

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);

(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 facade and, in some cases, there is no dominating chaitya arch window such as found at Kondivite. **In all the chaitya caves a stupa at the back is common.**

In the first century BCE some modifications were made to the standard plan of the apsidal vault-roof variety where the **hall becomes rectangular** like at Ajanta Cave No. 9 with a stone-screen wall as a facade.

It is also found at **Bedsa, Nashik, Karla and Kanheri.**

Many cave sites have the standard first type of *chaitya* halls in the subsequent period.

## **Karla**

**In Karla, the biggest rock-cut *chaitya* hall was excavated.** The cave consists of an open courtyard with two pillars, a stone screen wall to protect from rain, a veranda, a stone-screen wall as facade, an apsidal vault-roof *chaitya* hall with pillars, and a *stupa* at the back. Karla *chaitya* hall is

decorated with human and animal figures. They are heavy in their execution, and move in the picture space.

Of a later date, circa first century A.D. and more mature in skill, are the carvings from Karle. Noteworthy are the **Dampati and the Mithuna figures** as also the pairs riding the magnificent elephant crowning the pillars forming imposing colonnades. The figures are more than life size and are represented with powerful and muscular physique.

### **Kanheri cave No. 3**

Further elaboration over the Karla *chaitya* hall 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.



### **Viharas**

The *viharas* are excavated in all the cave sites.

1. The plan of the *viharas* consists of a **veranda, a hall and cells around the walls of the hall.**

2. Some of the important *vihara* caves are Ajanta Cave No. 12, Bedsa Cave No. 11, Nashik Cave Nos. 3, 10 and 17.

3. Many of the early *vihara* caves are carved with interior decorative motifs like *chaitya* arches and the *vedica* designs over the cell doors of the cave.



4. **Facade design** in Nashik Cave Nos. 3, 10, and 17 became a distinct achievement.

5. The *vihara* caves at Nashik were excavated with front pillars carved with *ghata*-base and *ghata*-capital with human figures.

6. One such *vihara* cave was also excavated at Junnar which is popularly known as **Ganeshleni** because an image of Ganesha belonging to a later period was installed in it.

7. Later, a stupa was added at the back of the hall of the *vihara* and it became a *chaitya-vihara*.

8. The stupas in the fourth and fifth centuries CE have Buddha images attached.

## **Site of caves in west India**

1. **Junnar** has the largest cave excavations—more than two hundred caves around the hills of the town—whereas **Kanheri in Mumbai** has a hundred and eight excavated caves.



2. The most important sites are Ajanta, Pitalkhora, Ellora, Nashik, Bhaja, Junnar, Karla, Kanheri.
3. **Ajanta, Ellora, and Kanheri** continue to flourish.

Earlier it was presumed that because of the **absence of the Buddha image**, the caves were considered belonging to the **orthodox faith of Buddhism, i.e., the Theravadins**, but with the discovery of the Konkan Maurya inscription mentioning the Saka era 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 any more. It may also be noted that many caves are converted into modern Hindu shrines and have become popular worshipping sites.

## **Ajanta**

The most famous cave site is Ajanta.

1. It is located in **Aurangabad District of Maharashtra State**.
2. Ajanta has **twenty-nine caves**.
3. 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).
4. It has large ***chaitya-viharas*** and is decorated with sculptures and paintings.



5. Ajanta is the only surviving example of painting of the first century BCE and the fifth century CE.
6. 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. 7 belong to the phase earlier than late fifth century CE. The rest of the caves belong to late fifth century CE to early sixth century CE.

### Chaitya Caves

1. The **chaitya Cave Nos. 19 and 26** are elaborately carved. Their facade is decorated with Buddha and, Bodhisattva images. They are of the **apsidal-vault-roof variety.**
2. **Cave No. 26** is very big and the entire interior hall is carved with a variety of Buddha images, the biggest one being the **Mahaparinibbana** image.

### Vihara-Chaitya caves

1. 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 has the main Buddha shrine. Shrine images at Ajanta are grand in size.
2. Some of the *vihara* caves are unfinished such as Cave Nos. 5, 14, 23 24, 28 and 29.

### Patrons of Ajanta

1. **Varahadeva** (patron of Cave No. 16),



2. the prime minister of the Vakataka king, Harishena; **Upendragupta** (patron of Cave Nos. 17–20)
3. the local king of the region and feudatory of the Vakataka king, Harishena; **Buddhabhadra** (patron of Cave No. 26); and
4. **Mathuradasa** (patron of Cave No. 4).

### Paintings in Ajanta Caves

1. Many paintings have survived in Cave Nos. 1, 2, 16 and 17.
2. Paintings have a **lot of typological variations**.
  - (i) Outward projections are used in the Ajanta paintings of the fifth century CE.
  - (ii) Lines are **clearly defined** and are very **rhythmic**.
  - (iii) Body colour gets merged with the outer line creating the effect of volume.
  - (iv) The figures are heavy like the sculptures of western India.
3. The caves of the early phase also have paintings especially Cave Nos. 9 and 10.
  - (i) Paintings in Cave No. 10 are an **afterthought** as is evident from the plastering over the early inscriptions inside the cave.
  - (ii) Paintings in Cave No. 9 are part of the **preplanning**. They belong to the first century BCE.





(iii) The figures are broad with heavy proportion and arranged in the picture space in a linear way. Lines are sharp. Colours are limited.



4. Figures in these caves are painted with **considerable naturalism and there is no over-stylisation.**

5. Events are grouped together according to geographical location. Separation of geographic location has been indicated by using outward architectural bands.

6. **Tiered, horizontally - arranged figures** appear as a convenient choice of the artisans.

7. Figures appear like the Sanchi sculptures which indicate how the lithic and painting traditions were progressing simultaneously.

8. The frontal knot of the headgear of the figures follows the same pattern as that of the sculptures. However, there are a few different patterns of headgear.

9. The second phase of paintings can be studied from the images of the Buddhas painted on the walls and pillars of Cave Nos. 10 and 9. These Buddha figures are different from the figures painted in the fifth century CE. Such developments in paintings need to be understood in the context of the religious requirement.



10. Cave excavation and painting were simultaneous processes and dating of the paintings follows the date of the cave excavations.

11. The next stage of development is observed mainly in the paintings of Cave Nos. 16, 17, 1, and 2. However, it does not mean that pictures had not been painted in other caves. Infact almost in all the finished excavations, pictures have been painted but very few have survived.



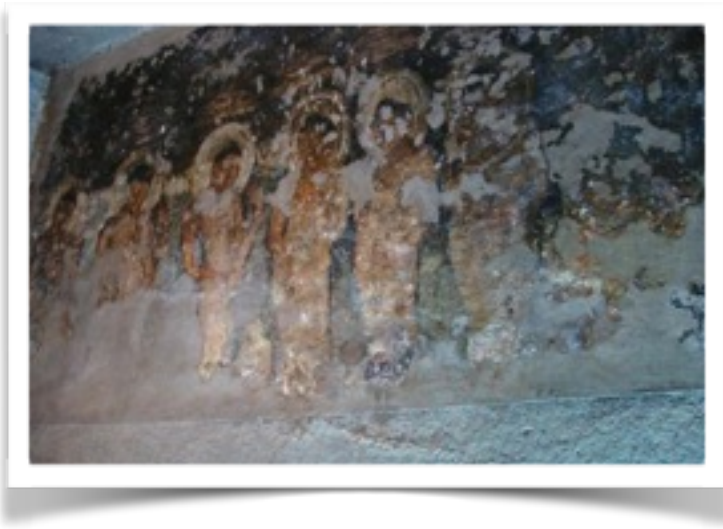
12. Paintings have **typological variations** in these caves. It may also be observed that **various skin colours are used in the paintings** such as brown, yellowish brown, greenish, yellow ochre, etc. which represent a **multicoloured population**.

13. Paintings of Cave Nos. 16 and 17 have precise and elegant painterly quality. They do not bear the ponderous volume of the sculptures in the caves. **Movements in the figures are very rhythmic**. Brown thick dark lines are used as contours. Lines are forceful and full of energy. Attempts are also made to give highlights in the figural compositions.

14. The paintings of Cave Nos. 1 and 2 are very orderly and naturalistic, well integrated with the sculptures in the caves. **Architectural setting is simple and the arrangement of figures is delineated in the circular form to create three- dimensionality and the special effects. Half-closed, elongated eyes are employed.**



15. Different guilds of artisans seem to have worked on the paintings of these caves which can be inferred from their typological and stylistic variations. **Naturalistic postures and unexaggerated facial features** are used as exceptional types.



### Themes of Paintings

1. The themes of the paintings are the events from the life of the Buddha, the Jatakas and the Avadanas.
2. Some paintings such as *Simhala Avadana*, *Mahajanaka Jataka* and *Vidharpundita Jataka* cover the entire wall of the cave.
3. It is worth noting that ***Chaddanta Jataka*** has been painted in the early Cave No. 10 with many details and events grouped according to their geographical locations.
4. Events that happened in the jungle and events that happened in the palace are separated by their locations.
5. 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

Bodhisattva, *Chaddanta*, is shown removing his own tusk and giving it to the hunter, Sonuttar.

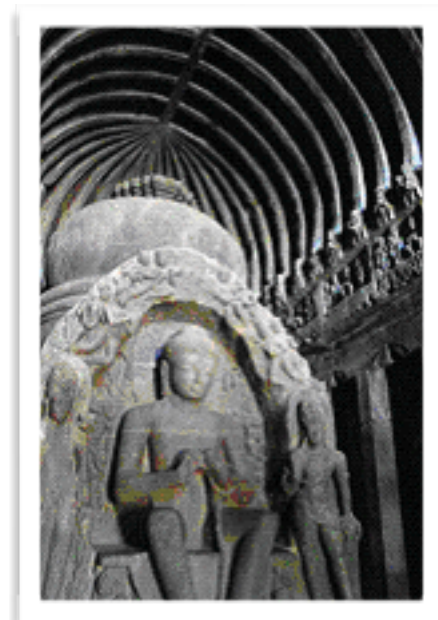
6. The other important paintings are the famous **Padmapani and Vajrapani** in Cave No. 1. However, it may be observed that the images of Padmapani and Vajrapani are very common in Ajanta but the best preserved paintings are in Cave No. 1.
7. Some figures in Cave No. 2 have affiliation with the Vengi sculptures and at the same time, the influence of the Vidarbha sculptural tradition is also observed in the delineation of some sculptures.

## **Ellora**

Another important cave site located in **Aurangabad District is Ellora**. It is located a hundred kilometres from Ajanta and has **32 Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain caves**. Ellora is an archaeological site 29 km north-west of the city of Aurangabad in the Indian state of Maharashtra, built by the **Rashtrakuta dynasty**. Well known for its monumental caves, Ellora is a **World Heritage Site**. Ellora represents the epitome of Indian rock-cut architecture. The 34 "caves" are actually structures excavated out of the vertical face of the **Charanandri hills**. Buddhist, Hindu and Jain rock-cut temples and viharas and mathas were built between the 5th century and 10th century.

The 12 Buddhist (caves 1–12), 17 Hindu (caves 13–29) and 5 Jain (caves 30–34) caves, built in proximity, demonstrate the religious harmony prevalent during this period of Indian history. It is a protected monument under the Archaeological Survey of India.

1. It is 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.
2. It is also unique in terms of **stylistic eclecticism**, i.e., **confluence of many styles at one place**.
3. The caves of Ellora and Aurangabad **show the ongoing differences between the two religions—Buddhism and Brahmanical**.
4. There are **12 Buddhist caves** having many images belonging to **Vajrayana Buddhism** like Tara, Mahamayuri, Akshobhya, Avalokiteshwara, Maitrya, Amitabha, etc.
5. Buddhist caves are **big in size and are of single, double and triple storeys**. Their pillars are massive. Ajanta also has excavated double-storeyed caves but at **Ellora, the triple storey is a unique achievement**.
6. All the **caves were plastered and painted but nothing visible is left**.
7. The shrine **Buddha images are big in size**; they are generally guarded by the images of Padmapani and Vajrapani.
8. **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.

9. On the other hand, **the only double-storey cave of the Brahmanical faith is Cave No. 14.**
10. **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.
11. 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 according to Puranic narrative are depicted.
12. Among the Shaivite themes, Ravana shaking Mount Kailash, Andhakasurvadha, Kalyanasundara are profusely depicted whereas among the Vaishnavite themes, the different *avatars* of Vishnu are depicted.
13. The sculptures at Ellora are **monumental, and have protruding volume that create deep recession in the picture space.** The images are heavy and show considerable sophistication in the handling of sculptural volume.
14. Various guilds at Ellora came from different places like Vidarbha, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and carved the sculptures. Thereby it is the **most diverse site in India in terms of the sculptural styles.**
15. **Cave No. 16 is known as Kailash leni or kailasnatha temple.**



16. A rock-cut temple has been carved out of a single rock, a unique achievement of the artisans.

17. 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. 29, 21, 17, 14 and 16 is amazing for its monumentality and vigorous movements in the picture space.

## Elephanta Caves and Other Sites

The Elephanta Caves 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.



## Other sites

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. They 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**.

### **Andhra Pradesh**

One of the main sites in Andhra Pradesh is **Guntapalle** in Eluru district.

1. The caves have been excavated in the hills along with the structured monasteries.

2. Perhaps it is among the very unique sites where the **structured stupas, viharas and the caves are excavated at one place.**
3. The Guntapalle *chaitya* cave is **circular with a stupa in the circular hall and a chaitya arch carved at the entrance.**
4. The cave is relatively **small** when compared to the caves in western India.
5. A number of **vihara caves** have been excavated. The main *vihara* caves, 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.
6. 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 *vihara* 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 **Anakapalli near Vishakhapatnam**, caves were excavated and a huge rock-cut stupa was carved out of the hillock during the fourth–fifth centuries CE. It is 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.

## **Odisha**

**The rock-cut cave tradition also existed in Odisha.**



1. The earliest examples are the **Udaigiri-Khandagiri caves** in the vicinity of Bhubaneswar. These caves are scattered and have inscriptions of **Kharavela kings**.
2. According to the inscriptions, **the caves were meant for Jain monks**.
3. There are numerous **single-cell excavations**.
4. Some have been carved in **huge independent boulders and given the shape of animals**.
5. 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.
6. The figures in this cave are voluminous, move freely in the picture space, and are an excellent example of qualitative carving.
7. Some caves in this complex were excavated later, some time in the eighth–ninth centuries CE.

## EXERCISE

1. Describe the physical and aesthetic features of Sanchi Stupa-I.
2. Analyse the stylistic trends of the sculptures in North India during the fifth and sixth centuries.
3. How did cave architecture develop in different parts of India, from cave shelters to the monolithic temple at Ellora?
4. Why are the mural paintings of Ajanta renowned?

## **PADMAPANI BODDHISATTVA AJANTA CAVE NO. 1**

This painting on the back wall of the interior hall before the shrine-antechamber in Cave No. 1 at Ajanta dates back to the **late fifth century CE**.

1. The Bodhisattva is holding a padma (lotus), has large shoulders, and has three bents in the body creating a movement in the picture space.
2. The modelling is soft. Outlines are merged with the body volume creating the effect of three-dimensionality.

3. The figure of the Bodhisattva is wearing a **big crown** in which detailed rendering is visible.
4. The head is slightly bent to the left.
5. The eyes are half-closed and are slightly elongated.
6. The nose is sharp and straight.
7. Light colour all over the projected planes of the face is aimed at creating an effect of three-dimensionality.
8. The beaded necklace too has similar features.
9. Broad and expanded shoulders create heaviness in the body.
10. The torso is relatively round.
11. Lines are delicate, rhythmic, and define the contours of the body.
12. The right hand is holding a lotus and the left hand is extended in the space.
13. The Bodhisattva is surrounded by small figures. The foreshortened right hand of the Bodhisattva makes the image more solid, and effectively dense. The thread over the torso is shown with fine spiral lines indicating its dimensions. Each and every part of the body is given equal attention.
14. Light red, brown, green and blue colours are used.
15. Nose projections, incised end of lips with lower lip projection and small chin contribute to the overall effect of solidity in the figure composition.
16. The paintings in Cave No.1 are of good quality and are better preserved. One can observe certain typological and stylistic variations in the paintings of Ajanta indicating different guilds of artisans working on the cave paintings at Ajanta over the centuries.



On the other side of the image **Vajrapani Bodhisattva** has been painted. He holds a *vajra* in 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.



### **MARA VIJAYA, AJANTA CAVE NO. 26**

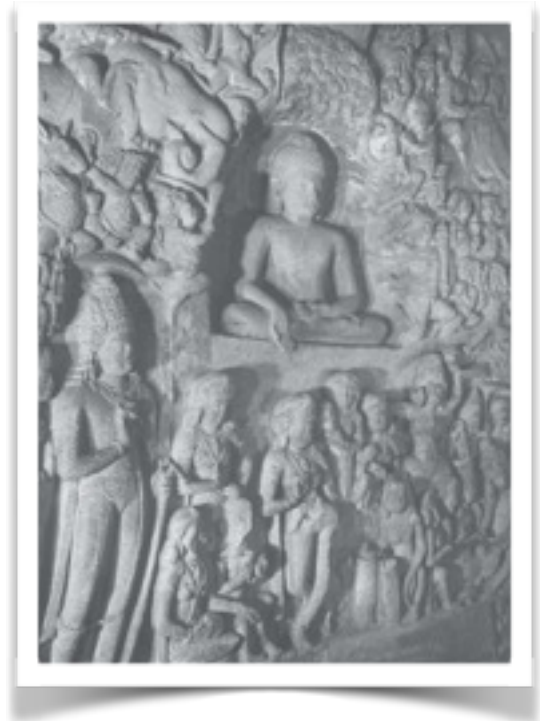
The theme of **Mara Vijaya** has been painted in the caves of Ajanta. This is the only sculptural representation sculpted on the right wall of Cave No. 26. It is sculpted near the colossal Buddha image of Mahaparinibbana.



1. The panel shows the image of the Buddha in the centre surrounded by Mara's army along with his daughter.

2. The event is part of the enlightenment.

3. It is a **personification of the commotion of mind** which the Buddha went through at the time of enlightenment. **Mara represents desire.** According to the narrative, there is a dialogue between the Buddha and Mara, and the Buddha is shown with his right hand indicating towards earth as a witness to his generosity.



4. This relief sculptural panel is highly animated and shows a very matured sculptural style at Ajanta.

5. The composition is very complex with highly voluminous images. Their complex arrangement in the picture space is highly dynamic and generates considerable movement.

6. The **figure on the right shows Mara** coming with his army consisting of various kinds of people including some with grotesque animal faces.

7. The **dancing figures at the lower base** with the musicians have forward bulging waist, and one of the dancing figures has expanded her hands in the dancing posture with an angular frontal look.





8. On the left lower end, the image of Mara is shown contemplating how to disturb Siddhartha, the name of the Buddha before enlightenment.
9. The army of Mara is shown marching towards the Buddha in the first half of the panel whereas the lower half of the panel shows the departing army of Mara giving him adorations.
10. The centrally placed Buddha is in **padmasana** and a tree at the back is shown by dense leaves.
11. Some of the facial features of the Mara army has tacit characters of the **sculptures from Vidarbha**. The artisans at Ajanta worked in guilds and their stylistic affiliations can be traced by identifying such stylistic features.
12. This is **the largest sculptural panel at Ajanta**. Though there are several big images in the caves of Ajanta and especially located in the shrine-antechamber as well as facade walls, such a complex arrangement of figures is unique.
13. On the other hand, painted panels exhibit such complexities in their arrangement. A similar kind of arrangement of dancing figures in a panel is also observed at the Aurangabad caves.



## **MAHESHMURTI, ELEPHANTA**

The 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.

1. The central head is the main **Shiva** figure whereas the other two visible heads are of **Bhairava** and **Uma**.
2. The central face is in high relief having a round face, thick lips and heavy eyelids.



3. The lower lip is prominently protruded showing a very different characteristic.
4. The all-inclusive aspect of Shiva is exhibited in this sculpture by soft-modelling, smooth surface and large face.
5. The face of Shiva-Bhairava is clearly shown in profile in anger with bulging eye and mustache.

6. The other face showing feminine characters is of Uma who is the consort of Shiva.



7. 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.
8. Each face has a **different crown** as per its iconographic prescription.
9. This sculpture has been sculpted on the south wall of the cave along with the sculpture of **Ardhanarishwara** and the **Gangadhara** panel.
10. Elephanta sculptures are known for their remarkable qualities of surface smoothness, elongation and rhythmic movement. Their composition is very complex. The iconographic arrangement of this cave is replicated in Cave No. 29 at Ellora.