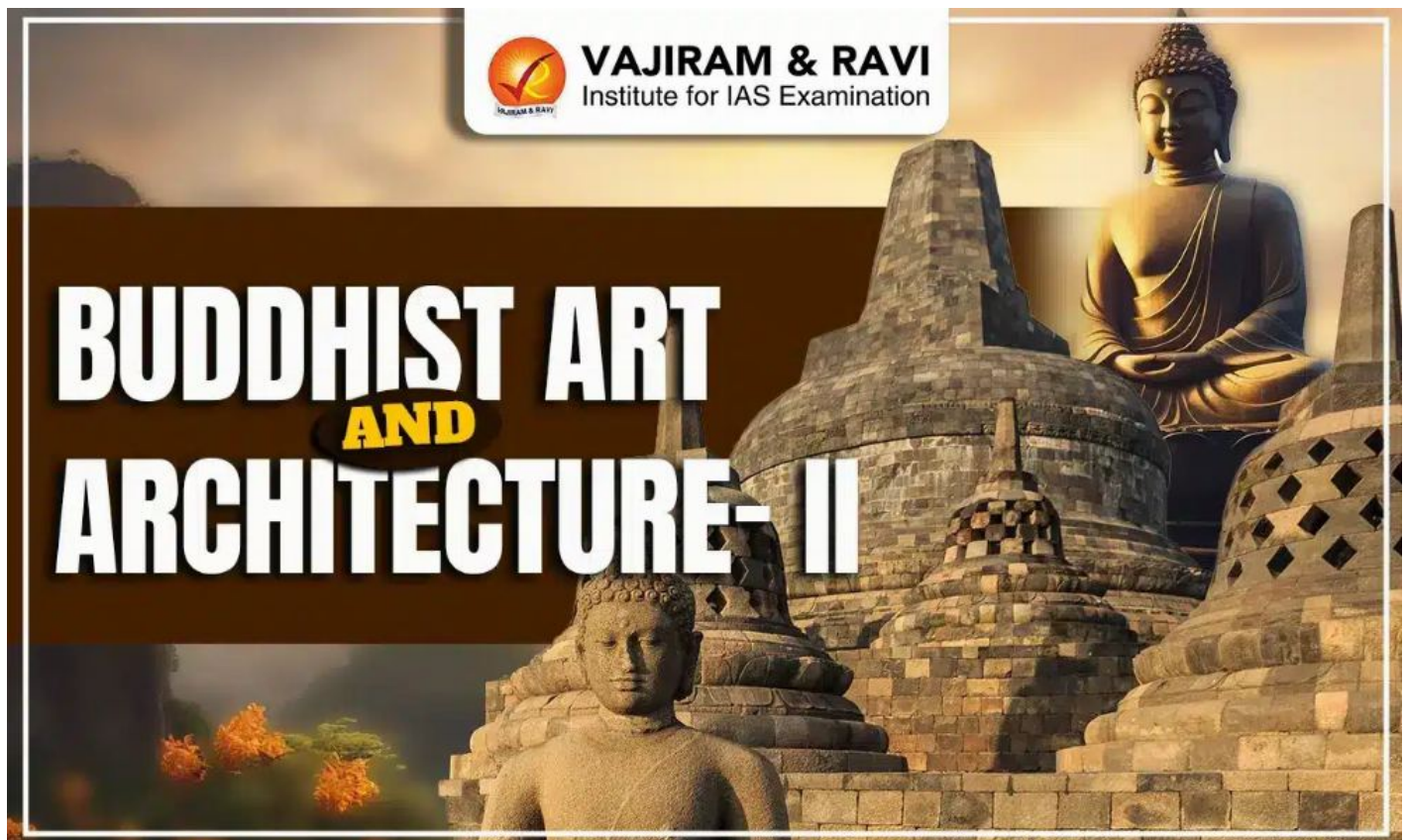


Buddhist Art and Architecture- II

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Rock-Cut Caves, Chaityas, Viharas

Both the Buddhists and the Jainas built Chaityas and Viharas as places of worship. **Vihars** were primarily cut out of rocks for the residence of monks.

Mauryan period

These caves were constructed by cutting into solid rock and used for various purposes, including as dwelling places for monks, meditation halls, and places of worship.

- **Barabar Caves:** They are located in Bihar and are some of the oldest rock-cut caves in India. They were built during the reign of Emperor **Ashoka** in the 3rd century BCE.
- **Nagarjuni Caves:** They were named after the Buddhist scholar Nagarjuna, who was believed to have meditated in these caves. They are located in Bihar.
- **Guntupalli Caves:** They are located in Andhra Pradesh.
- **Udayagiri Caves:** Madhya Pradesh
 - The caves are carved out of a **sandstone hill**.

- The caves are decorated with intricate carvings of **Hindu and Jain deities**.

- **The Nashik Caves:** It is also known as **Pandavleni Caves**. They are a group of ancient rock-cut caves located in the Nashik district of Maharashtra, India. The caves date back to the 2nd century BCE and were excavated by the **Hinayana** Buddhist monks.

- The Nashik Caves consist of a group of 24 caves, which were built during the reign of the Satavahana dynasty.

Post-Mauryan period

They demonstrate the high level of craftsmanship and engineering skill that was present during this time, and it also provides insights into the religious practices and beliefs of the people. Notably, during this phase, Vihars were residential places, and Chaityas were used as prayer halls.

Ajanta Caves



Period

2nd century BCE and the 6th century CE 200 BC to 650 AD)

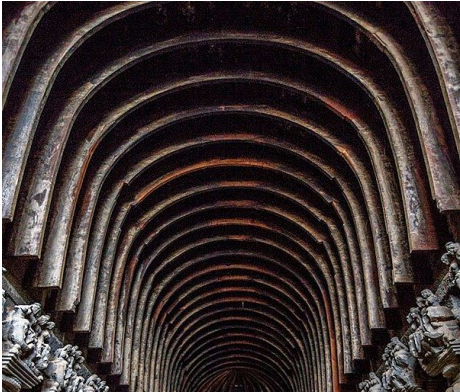
Patronage

Vakataka ruler - **Harishena**

- Ajanta is a series of rock-cut caves in the Sahyadri ranges on the Waghora River in Maharashtra.

- These caves are famous for their intricate **frescoes** and sculptures depicting Buddha's life.

- They comprise 29 rock-cut caves, including prayer halls, monastic chambers, and worship areas. They all belong to

Ellora Caves 	Period	They were built between the 6th and 10th centuries CE .
	Patronage	Vakataka and Rashtrakuta dynasties
	Features	• These caves include Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain temples and are famous for their intricate sculptures and carvings. • It is a group of 34 caves – 17 Brahmanical, 12 Buddhist and 5 Jain. • These Caves is a UNESCO World Heritage site located near Aurangabad in Maharashtra. • The Ellora Caves feature a collection of 34 monasteries and temples carved out of basalt rock. • The Kailasa Temple (Cave 16), dedicated to Lord Shiva, is the most iconic and largest monolithic structure in the complex, showcasing remarkable architectural expertise.
Kanheri Caves 	Period	1st century BCE and the 10th century CE .
	Patronage	Satavahana dynasty, Vakataka and Rashtrakuta dynasties.
	Features	• Buddhist monks used these caves as dwelling places, and they contain inscriptions and sculptures that depict the life of the Buddha.
Karla Caves 	Period	2nd century BCE and the 5th century CE .

Patronage	Satavahana dynasty, Vakataka and Chalukyas
Features	• These caves are famous for their intricate chaitya halls and stupas, and they contain sculptures and inscriptions depicting Buddha's life.

Nalanda

- A **Mahavihara**, or a collection of multiple monasteries of varied sizes, is the monastic university of Nalanda.
- The majority of the knowledge about Nalanda comes from the writings of "**Hsuan-Tsang**," which claim that **Kumaragupta I** placed the cornerstone for a monastery in the 5th century CE.
- There is convincing evidence that **all three schools of Buddhism**—Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana—**were taught here**, and monks travelled from various regions of India and abroad.

Chaityas

- A chaitya is a shrine cell with a **votive Stupa** placed in the centre.
- They are characterised by their horseshoe-shaped apses or aisles and their central nave or path, which leads to a stupa or image of the Buddha.
- Chaityas were used for **religious ceremonies, chanting, and meditation**, and they were often decorated with sculptures and paintings that depicted the life of the Buddha and other important figures in Buddhism.

- The earliest chaityas were constructed during the Mauryan period (321-185 BCE), and they were carved out of natural rock formations.
 - These rock-cut chaityas, such as the ones at Bhaja, Karla, and Ajanta, are some of the most impressive examples of ancient Indian architecture and art.
- During the post-Mauryan period, chaityas were also constructed using brick, wood, and other materials.
 - The most famous brick chaityas are the ones at Sanchi, which were built during the reign of the Sunga dynasty (2nd century BCE - 1st century CE).
 - These chaityas are characterised by their large stupas and their intricately-carved gateways, known as toranas.
- **The general features of the Chaityas are:**
 - They have a long rectangular hall ending in a semi-circle at the rear end. This long hall is internally divided into a nave, an apse and two side aisles.
 - The aisles are separated from the nave by two rows of pillars.
 - The hall has a barrel-vaulted ceiling.
 - The doorway is usually placed facing the votive Stupa.
 - The facade has a horse-shoe-shaped window called the chaitya window.

Sculptures

Before the schools

The pre-Mauryan period in India saw the emergence of many regional kingdoms and cultures, each with its own distinctive styles of art and sculpture.

Some notable examples of pre-Mauryan sculpture include the Bharhut Stupa relief panels from the 2nd century BC, which depict scenes from the life of the Buddha, and the Yakshi sculptures from the 3rd century BCE, which are known for their sensual and voluptuous forms.

Schools

Buddhist architecture has been influenced by a variety of cultural and religious traditions, and as a result, several distinct schools of architecture developed over time in different regions of India.

Mathura

- It was the outcome of the religious **zeal of Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism**.
- It was also **influenced by Gandhara art** which was manifested in its sculptures.
- The sculptures of the Buddha, **as well as beautiful women**, were made in this school of art.
- Significantly, the **Buddha was given human form** and sculptured in stone under this school of art during the Kushan period.
- **Three-dimensional (3D) effects:**
 - The Art gave Buddha a three-dimensional effect and was carved in bold relief. Broad shoulders, masculine torso and right hand raised in Abhaya-mudra are some of the characteristics of Buddhist sculpture.

- The Mathura School of Art flourished further in the Gupta period when the Buddhist sculptures had sharp and beautiful features, graceful and slim bodies, with several folds of transparent drapery.

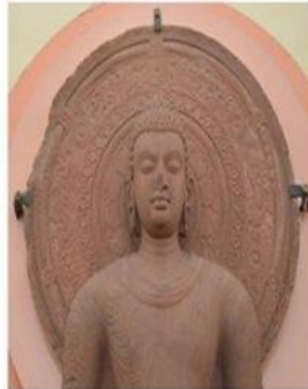
Mathura School of Art Examples



Kanishka



Vima Kadphises



Buddha



Sarvatobhadra



Standing Buddha

Image, examples of Mathura School of Art.

Gandhara

The style of art was closely associated with Mahayana Buddhism, and hence the main theme of this art was Lord Buddha and Bodhisattvas.

- **Influence:** Due to the large influence of Greek, It is also known as Indo-Greek/Hellenistic Art
- **Period:** A style of Buddhist visual art that developed between the 1st century BCE and the 7th century CE.
- **Region of development:** It mostly flourished in the areas of **Afghanistan** and present North-Western India. The prominent locations were **Taxila, Peshawar**, Begram and Bamiyan.
- **Patronage:** The style of Greco-Roman origin seems to have flourished largely during the Kushan dynasty and was contemporaneous with the Mathura school.
- **The culmination of Indian and foreign traditions:** Thus, Gandhara School of Art can be said as an influence and culmination of both Indian as well as foreign traditions due to its strategic location.
- **Unique features:**
 - A **very realistic and natural depiction** of features in perfection.
 - Eyes are half closed during meditation pose
 - Seated in Yogi position
- **The Greco-Roman Effect on Gandhara Art:**
 - Halo around the head of Buddha
 - Buddha's wavy hair
 - The forehead lines
 - Ornaments
 - Drape and style of the garments



Image, examples of Gandhara school of art.

Areas of differences	Gandhara School of Art	Mathura School of Art	Amaravati School of Art
Reign	Kushana Dynasty	Kushana Dynasty	Satavahana
Area	Northwest Frontier	Mathura	Krishna-Godavari lower valley, in and around Amaravati & Nagarjunakonda
Outside influences	Greek influence	Purely indigenous No foreign influence	Indigenously developed
Religious influence	• Buddhism • Hellenistic realism	• Hinduism • Buddhism - Jainism • Secularism	Mainly Buddhism
Material Used	• Bluish- Grey sandstone	• Spotted red sandstone	White marbles

Features of Buddha sculptures	• Less ornamentation • Great detailing • Buddha in Yogi postures • Greek factors like wavy hair, large forehead, long ears • Spiritual Buddha • Sad Buddha • Bearded Buddha	• Delighted Buddha • Less spiritual • Shaven head and face • Muscularity • Energetic Graceful posture of Buddha • Seated in Padmasana • Buddha surrounded by two monks: Padmapani and Vajrapani • The Halo around the head of Buddha is decorated with geometrical motifs • The Standing Buddhas of the Sravasti, Sarnath, and Kaushambi • Sarvatobhadra	• Generally part of narrative art, so there is less emphasis on the individual features of Buddha • Generally depict life stories of Buddha and the Jataka tales
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Table: Comparison of Arts schools

Stambhas (Pillars)

- Stambhas, or pillars, are tall structures that were used in ancient India for a variety of purposes, including religious and political functions.
- In Buddhism, stambhas were often used to mark important sites, such as pilgrimage routes, monasteries, and other sacred places.
- They were also used to commemorate important events or teachings related to the Buddha.
- **Sarnath pillar:**
 - This pillar was erected by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE, and it features a capital that is carved with four lions, which has become an important symbol of India.
 - The Ashoka Pillar at Sarnath is considered one of the finest examples of Indian art and architecture, and it is an important site of pilgrimage for Buddhists and other visitors.
- During the Gupta period (4th-6th century CE) and the Pala period (8th-12th century CE). stambhas were often decorated with intricate carvings and inscriptions that commemorated important events, such as the construction of monasteries or the granting of land to Buddhist institutions.

Paintings

- **Ajanta cave:**

- They are a group of **29 Buddhist rock-cut caves** located in the Aurangabad district of **Maharashtra**.
- The caves are first mentioned in the writings of the Chinese pilgrim **Hiuen Tsang** who visited India between A.D 629 and 645.
- The caves were excavated between the 2nd century BCE to the 6th century CE, during the period of the **Satavahana dynasty** to the **Vakataka dynasty**.
- The caves were rediscovered in 1819 by a British officer named John Smith, and they are now a **UNESCO** World Heritage Site.
- The caves include both chaitya halls (prayer halls) and viharas (monasteries).
- The paintings in the Ajanta Caves depict a range of themes, including scenes from the **Jataka tales**, **the life of the Buddha**, and the everyday lives of people during that time.
- The paintings are executed in a rich, vibrant style using natural pigments and are among the finest surviving examples of ancient Indian painting.
- **Other notable sites** with Buddhist cave paintings include the **Bagh** Caves in Madhya Pradesh, the **Ellora** Caves in Maharashtra, and the **Badami** Caves in Karnataka.

Buddhist temples



Mahabodhi temple

- **Location:** It is located in **Bodh Gaya**, Bihar..
- **Significance:** It is one of the most sacred places for Buddhists, as it is believed to be the site where the Buddha attained enlightenment (bodhi) under the Bodhi Tree.
- **Feature:** The temple complex includes the Bodhi Tree, the Vajrasana or the Diamond Throne. The temple has a tall pyramidal spire or shikhara, and its walls are adorned with intricate carvings and sculptures depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha and other Buddhist deities and figures.
- **Patronage:** The original temple structure was built by **Ashoka** in the 3rd century BCE, and it was later expanded and renovated by different rulers and donors over the centuries.
- The temple was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2002.

- **Mahaparinirvana Temple:**



Image of Mahaparinirvana Temple

- **Location:** It is located in **Kushinagar**, Uttar Pradesh.
- **Significance:** The temple marks the place where he attained Mahaparinirvana, or ultimate enlightenment, and **passed away**.
- **Feature:** The temple complex includes a reclining statue of Lord Buddha that is 20 feet long, made of red sandstone, and depicts him in his final moments of life.
- **Patronage:** It was built in the 5th century CE during the **Gupta period** and was later renovated by the **Pala kings of Bengal** in the 10th-11th century CE.

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