

South and Southeast Asian Art before 1200

The Indian Subcontinent

- India, southeastern Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka
- Natural divisions in land in India create differences in climate, language, and terrain (Vindhya Hills separate North India from South India)
 - Regional and cultural characteristics and artistic traditions
- Common traits in Indian art:
 - Sense of beauty (voluptuous forms, ornament, texture, color); reflect belief in generosity, favor of gods
 - Symbolism (intellectual, emotional)
 - Capturing quality of world influenced by divine
 - Gods & humans given tangible and gratifying forms that are radiant with inner spirit

Buddhist Philosophy and Art

- Buddhism: spiritual force; teaches followers how to cope in a world full of misery
- Central figure, Buddha (563-483 BCE), rejected worldly concerns of life at a royal court
- Life is full of suffering; endless cycle of birth and rebirth
- Aim of Buddhists is to end cycle and achieve oneness with the supreme spirit (involves putting an end to the soul) through their devotion to good work

Common Buddhist Symbols

- **Lion:** symbol of Buddha's royalty
- **Wheel:** Buddha's law
- **Lotus:** Buddha's pure nature; lotus grows in swamps, but mud slides off its surface
- **Columns surrounded by a wheel:** Buddha's teaching
- **Empty Throne:** Buddha, or a reminder of Buddha's presence

Buddhist Painting and Sculpture

- Buddhas typically have a compact pose with little negative space
- Often seated (sometimes standing, lying down)
- When seated: usually posed in lotus position with balls of feet turned straight up
- Frontal, symmetrical, nimbus (halo) around their heads
- Bodhisattvas (helpers) are usually near the Buddha
- Mood is usually detached; suggests meditation
- *Mudras*: hand gestures that reveal actions and feelings
- Yakshas (males) and yakshis (females): nature spirits
 - females: stand in elaborate dancelike poses
 - males: powerful shoulders and arms

Indus Valley Civilization 2600-1900 BCE

- Also known as the Harappan civilization
- Approximately the same time as Egyptian Old Kingdom
- Little is known about the civilization; what we do know is derived from some artworks



- Indus Valley Civilization
- c. 2000-1900 BCE
- 17.5 cm
- May represent leader/ancestor figure
- Low forehead, broad nose, thick lips, long slit eyes indicate its origins
- Trefoil motif
- Commanding human presence
- Originally painted
- Arm + head bands may indicate rank

TORSO OF A "PRIEST-KING"



- Indus Valley civilization
- Mohenjo-Daro (best preserved site)
- c. 2600-1900 BCE
- Fired brick
- Public or ritual bathing area
- Located in elevated citadel area

LARGE WATER TANK

The Vedic Period

- 2000 BCE: Aryans replace indigenous population in India
- Sacred writings: Vedas ("Vedic" Period)
- Formation of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism (3 out of 4 major religions)
- 800 BCE: Upanishads composed
 - metaphysical texts that analyze the meanings of Vedic hymns
 - relationship between individual soul (*atman*) and universal soul (Brahman)
 - humans are caught in *samsara* (relentless cycle of birth, life, death, rebirth)
- India's literature: written in Sanskrit (musical & complex)
- 400 BCE: 18-volume *Mahabharata* (longest epic in world literature); *Ramayana* (most popular religious epic in India, Southeast Asia)
 - relate histories of gods and humans with ideas of Vedas
- Shakyamuni Buddha (500 BCE): influential teacher; "enlightened one"; formed basis of Buddhism
- Mahavira founded Jain religion
- Jainism is an ancient religion from India that teaches that the way to liberation and bliss is to live a life of harmlessness and renunciation.
- The aim of Jain life is to achieve liberation of the soul.
- Buddhism and Jainism were available to all people
- Buddhism influenced many pieces of art during 3rd-5th centuries BCE

The Maurya Period (4th to 2nd century BCE)

- India's first empire (ruled by Mauryan dynasty)
- Transition in Indian art from use of wood to stone
- Refinement in pottery
- Ashoka (273–232 BC): third Mauryan emperor
 - Conversion and support of Buddhism
 - 254 BC: Ashoka had huge edicts on Buddhism carved into rocks and caves
 - 267 BC: 7 edicts carved into sandstone pillars
 - Built 84,000 stupas to enshrine the relics of the Buddha and commemorate main events Siddhartha Guatama's life (founder of Buddhism)



- Maurya Period
- Didarganj, India
- c. 250 BCE
- Polished sandstone
- 5' 4.25"
- Represents *yakshi* (a spirit associated with productive forces of nature)
- Large breasts and pelvis symbolize association of female beauty with procreative abundance, bounty
 - these qualities reflect generosity of gods, *dharma*
- *Dharma*: divinely ordained moral law that kept the universe from falling into chaos
- Authority shown through frontal rigidity of pose, massive size, and strong, linear patterning of ornaments and clothing
- Soft, youthful face and definition of stomach muscles alleviate stiffness
- Shiny polish on flesh softens figure (characteristic of Mauryan sculpture)

YAKSHI HOLDING A FLY-WHISK



- Maurya Period
- Sarnath
- c. 250 BCE
- Polished sandstone; 7'
- On column erected along pilgrimage route to see holy sites connected w/ life of Buddha
- Lowest portion represents down-turned petals of lotus blossom
- Lotus flowers emerging clean from dirty water symbolizes presence of divine purity in imperfect world
- *Abacus* (slab forming top of a capital) decorated with 4 wheels (Buddha's law)
- Animals symbolize 4 great rivers of world
- 4 lions = 4 cardinal directions; symbolize universal nature of Buddhism
- Lion's roar = Buddha's speech
- Formal, heraldic pose; stylized faces
- Patterning of realistic elements

LION CAPITAL

Stupas: What are they?

- Religious monuments enclosing a relic chambers
- Fundamental to Buddhism
- Plan is a carefully calculated mandala (diagram of the cosmos as envisioned by Buddhism)
- Open to all for private worship
- First stupas built to house Buddha's remains after his cremation
- Eight portions of the relics were divided into 8 reliquaries
- Each reliquary placed in its own burial mound = stupa
- His body - his enlightenment - attainment of nirvana
- The method of veneration is to walk around the stupa in a clockwise direction



- Madhya Pradesh, India
- c. 150-50 BCE
- Built by King Ashoka; enlarged; elaborate gateways added
- Buddhist shrine
- Dome built from rubble/dirt, faced with dressed stone, covered with shining white plaster; replication of dome of heaven
- Mast at very top bears 3 stone disks/"umbrellas"
- Umbrellas: Buddha, Buddha's Law, Monastic Orders
- Mast itself is an axis mundi (connects Cosmic Waters below earth with celestial realm above it to anchor everything in proper place)

GREAT STUPA, SANCHI



- Forming a bracket between each capital and the lowest crossbar (of torana/gateway) is a sculpture of a yakshi
- Leans daringly into space with casual abandon
- Appears almost nude (emphasizing her form)
- Band across her abdomen accentuates her supple flesh
- Swelling/arching curves of body evoke the deity's procreative/bountiful essence
- Personification of the waters - she is the source of life
- Designs, symbols, scenes, & figures carved all over the gateways of the Great Stupa relate the history/lore of Buddhism

YAKSHI BRACKET FIGURE

The Emergence of Buddhist Rock-Cut Halls

- 2nd century BCE: Buddhist monks begin to carve caves for own use from stone plateaus in south-central India
- Exteriors & interiors carved with great attention to detail
- Sacred space
- Two types of rock-cut halls:
 - *vihara*: used for monks' living quarters
 - *chaitya*: "sanctuary"; usually enshrined a stupa



- 1st century BCE-1st century CE
- 123 ft long, 46 ft high
- Largest, most developed chaitya hall
- Arched windows (imitating facade of multistoried palace)
- Chaitya window/sun window provides light
- Panels of *mithuna* couples flank entrances (male and female figures that evoke harmony, fertility)
- Barrel vault ceiling
- Wide central aisle, two narrow side aisles lead to stupa in apse
- Stupa placed at end with ambulatory that allows for ritual circumambulation
- Basilican form with long nave defined by colonnade
- Bell-shaped capitals on columns

SECTION OF THE CHAITYA HALL AT KARLA

The Kushan Period & Later Andhra Periods

- ca. 2nd century B.C.-3rd century A.D.
- Trade was strong along China's Silk Road
- People under this rule had learned to use a form of the Greek alphabet
- First Indian ruler to strike gold coins in imitation of the Roman aureus
- Under Kanishka's (third Kushan emperor) rule, Kushan controlled a large territory ranging from the Aral Sea through present-day Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan into northern India
- As far east as Benares and as far south as Sanchi



STANDING BUDDHA

Gandhara School and the Standing Buddha

- 3rd century CE; schist (fine-grained dark stone)
- Combines Hellenistic, Persian & native styles
- Buddha seen as superhuman figure; stronger, more heroic than normal human
- Body: broad, massive; heavy shoulders, well-defined torso
- Left knee bent (somewhat relaxed)
- Robe: tight, riblike folds alternate with delicate creases
 - pattern of heavy and shallow lines
 - tension of folds suggests life and power
 - resembles togas on Roman statues



Mathura School

- Evolved from representation of *yakshas* (indigenous male nature deities)
- Buddha sits in yogic posture in stele
- Right hand raised: "have no fear"
- Powerful impression of Buddha (like Gandhara)
- Outward gaze, alert posture suggest more intense, concentrated energy
- Robe pulled tightly
- Pleats of robe shown abstractly
- Abstraction also in face (geometric shapes)
- Torso very naturalistic



Buddha and Attendants
c. late 1st-early 2nd c. CE

Amaravati School

- Figures more fluid than those of Gandhara, Mathura
- Figures are curvy and mobile (even when resting)
- Varied postures create interest in activities of each individual.
- Light & joyous effect



Siddhartha in the Palace
c. 3rd century CE

The Gupta Period and the Standing Buddha

- Gupta power: 320-486 CE
- Buddhism reached its greatest influence in India
- Two schools: Mathura & Sarnath
- **Standing Buddha** embodies Sarnath style
- Mildly relaxed pose
- Plain robe (unlike Kushan images); distinctive of Sarnath style
- Focuses attention on perfection of body
- Body: graceful, slight
- Downcast eyes: otherworldly introspection; gentle, open posture relates to humans
- NOT represented as superhuman
- Fully enlightened AND fully human



474 CE
Sandstone; 6'4"



- Detail of a cave wall painting, Gupta period, c. 475 CE
- Bodhisattvas are enlightened beings who postpone nirvana and buddhahood to help others achieve enlightenment
- Distinguished from buddhas in art by their princely garments
- Graceful bending posture and serene gaze impart a sympathetic attitude
- The naturalistic style balances outline and softly graded color tones
- Sophisticated, realistic detail is balanced by the languorous human form

BODHISATTVA

The Post-Gupta Period

- Hinduism begins to dominate Indian religious life
- Hinduism: infinite variety of the divine (expressed in gods, nature, other human beings)
- Orthodox Hindus accept Vedic texts as divine in origin; maintain aspects of Vedic social hierarchy
- Every Hindu is to lead a good life through prayer, good deeds (break cycle of reincarnation)
- Shiva: one of the main Hindu deities
 - periodically dances the world to destruction & rebirth
- Other deities:
 - Brahma: creator god
 - Vishnu: preserver gods

Characteristics of Hindu Architecture

- Temple is a residence of a god
- Solidly built with small interior rooms
- Center: tiny interior cella called "Womb of the World", contains sacred statue of main deity
- Thick walls protect deity from outside forces
- Two types of temples: northern & southern
- Northern:
 - *shikhara*: rises as a solid mass above the flat stone ceiling and windowless walls of the sanctum (garbhagriha)
- All temples built on mystical plan (*mandala*): schematic design of a sacred realm or space



- 530 CE
- Northern-style
- Massive, solid structure, like mountain
- Entrance is elaborate, meaningful
- "Windows" on exterior function symbolically to let light of deity out of the temple to be seen by people outside
- Panels on outside symbolize Vishnu's transition from Brahman into our physical world

VISHNU TEMPLE AT DEOGARH



- Entrance takes worshiper from mundane world into sacred
- Two river goddesses (upper corner of lintel) symbolize purifying waters over entrance
- Male, female guardians flank doorway
- Center, above door: image of Vishnu (to whom temple is dedicated)

DOORWAY OF THE VISHNU TEMPLE



- Vishnu dreams the universe into existence
- First being created: Brahma (central, 4-headed figure)
- Vishnu: large, four arms (omnipotent)
- Smooth, perfected shape of body (Gupta style)
- 4 figures on right frieze below personify Vishnu's powers; ready to fight evil (2 demons)
- Panel portrays birth of universe and appearance of evil
- Depicted as drama acted out by gods in superhuman form

PANEL OF VISHNU on VISHNU TEMPLE

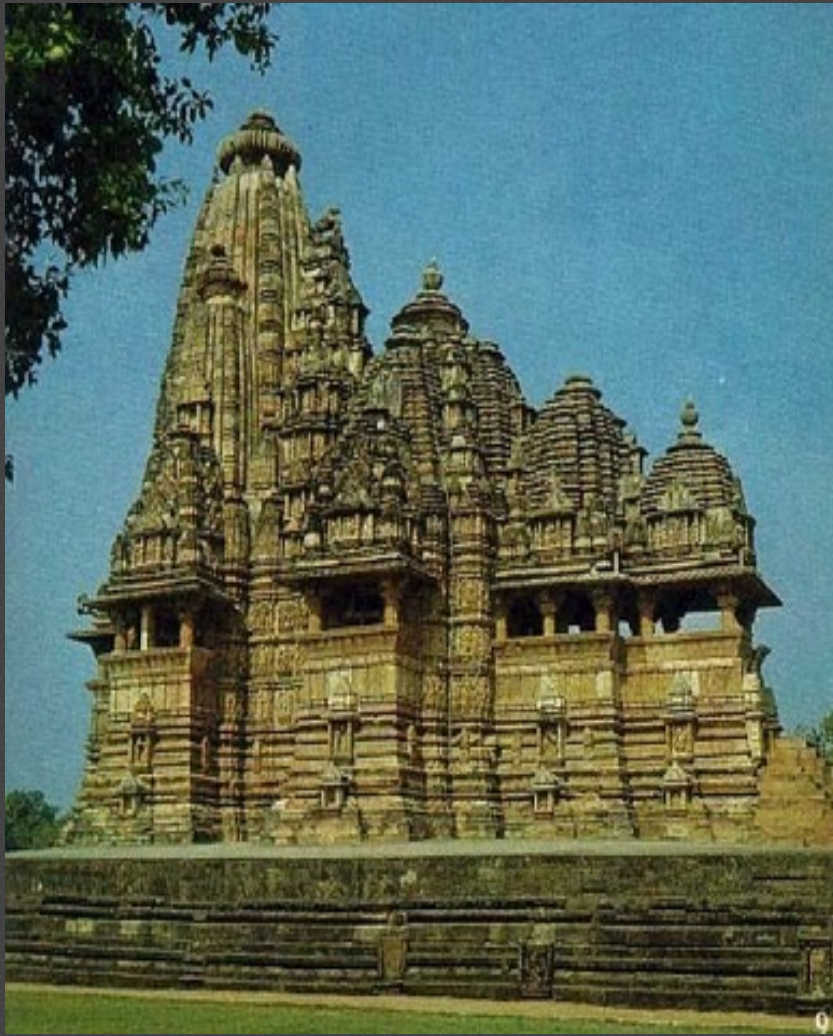


- 12th century CE
- Bronze, 32"
- Chola dynasty
- Vigorously dancing with one foot on a dwarf, who symbolizes "becoming"; Shiva controls it
- Four hands
- Shiva's left hand holds ball of fire
- Fire symbolizes destruction of physical universe
- Right hand holds a drum (beat represents rhythms of creation & destruction)
- Central axis maintains figure's equilibrium
- Limbs are asymmetrical
- Appears lordly & aloof but aware of good-naturedness
- Synthesis of godly & human

SHIVA NATARAJA

The 10th-14th Centuries

- Small kingdoms & dynasties flourish; give rise to regional styles
- Buddhism declined; Hindu gods grow even more popular
- Local kings rival each other; build temples dedicated to favorite deity
- Complicated/subtle variations of Hindu temple emerge



- c. mid-7th century CE
- Dedicated to Shiva
- Larger, more decorated, addition of halls & porches
- 3 halls serve as spaces for ritual
- Clear structure, unified composition
- Moldings, sculpture on lower portion create horizontal emphasis

Kandariya Mahadeva Temple

Bhakti Movement

- Bhakti: religious movement meaning "devotional"
- Revolves around ideal relationship between humans & deities
- Gods create *maya* (illusion) in which all people are trapped
- Stresses intimate, personal, loving relation with god; complete devotion to god
- Contrast of types (old, young; teacher, devotee; saint, king)
- Small flower offering: devotion to Shiva
- Line is essence of painting
- Less shading, fewer details



Rajaraja I and His Teacher
1010 CE

Art of Southeast Asia

- Trade & cultural exchange brought Buddhism, Hinduism to Southeast Asia

Thailand-Prakhon Chai Style

- Naturalism, lithe, youthful proportions
- Abbreviated clothing, loose arrangement of long hair
- Multiple forearms (Hindu sculpture, esoteric Buddhist art)



Buddha Maitreya
8th century



- Cambodia
- 12th century
- Crowning achievement of Khmer architecture (state temple built for Khmer kings)
- Dedicated to worship of Vishnu
- Array of structures is temple and symbolic cosmic mountain
- Stepped pyramid with 5 towers set in 4 enclosures of increasing perimeter

ANGKOR VAT