

Ancient Indian Architecture

Indus Valley Civilization

It is also called as a Bronze Age Civilization. It flourished in the time period of Second half of the third millennium BCE on the banks of Indus river. It spreads along with Northwestern India and various pieces of art are showcased in the forms of seals, sculpture, potteries, jewellery etc. Following are some important sites excavated during archaeological findings:

- Harappa: It is situated on Ravi river in present-day Pakistan. Six granaries, symbols of Lingam and Yoni, mother goddess figure, dice, copper scale and mirror were found. Red sandstone male torso and sculpture of dog chasing a deer have also been found.
- Mohenjodaro: It is situated on Indus river in present-day Pakistan. Citadel, the great bath, the great granary, sculpture of bearded priest, post-cremation burial, the bronze statue of a dancing girl and Pashupati seal have been found.
- Dholavira: It is in Gujrat. Giant water reservoir, stadium, unique water harnessing system, and dams have been found.
- Lothal: It is in Gujrat. The site had Dockyard, terracotta figures of horse and ship, measurement instruments, the burial of cremated remains.
- Rakhilgarhi: it is in Haryana. It is the largest site of Indus Valley Civilisation. Granary, cemetery, drains and terracotta bricks have been found.
- Ropar: It is located in Punjab (India). The dog buried with human oval pit has been found.

Other Indus Valley Civilisation sites are Balathal and Kalibangan in Rajasthan, Surkotda in Gujrat, Banawali in Haryana, Alamgirpur in UP.

The architecture of Harappan Civilisation:

Two major sites Harappa and Mohenjodaro are the earliest and finest example of urban civic planning. There exists a planned network of roads, houses and drainage system. The towns were designed in a rectangular grid pattern. They cut each other at right angles. Three types of buildings have been found: dwelling houses, public buildings and public baths. For the purpose of construction, burnt mud bricks of standard size have been used. The city was divided into 2 parts: Upraised citadel and lower part of the city. Upraised citadel is in the western part. Mostly it was used for the construction of buildings with large dimensions like pillared halls, administrative buildings, the residence of

rulers and aristocrats, courtyards. Granaries were also constructed for storage of grains having features like strategic air ducts and a raised platform.

Another important feature was the prevalence of 'Public baths'. It shows the importance of ritualistic cleansing. 'Great Bath' excavated at Mohenjodaro had galleries and rooms surrounding it. There were no cracks or leaks in the structure.

The Lower part of the city had small one-roomed houses used as a quarter by working-class people. The remains of stairs indicate the presence of double storied houses. Most buildings had properly ventilated bathrooms and private wells.

The most outstanding feature was an advanced drainage system. Small drains from every house connected to a large house. For regular cleaning and maintenance drains were covered loosely.

Sculpture of Harappan civilisation:

- **Seals:**

They were of different size and shapes. In river beds steatite, a soft stone was used. The most common material used for seals were agate, chert, copper, faience and terracotta. Seals made up of copper, gold and ivory have also been found. The seals have an inscription in a pictographic script. Animal impression was also there. common animal motifs were a unicorn, rhinoceros, humped bull, tiger, elephant etc. They were mainly used as a unit of trade and commerce, as an amulet and as an educational tool. Example: Pashupati Seal and Unicorn Seal.

- **Bronze figures:**

Bronze casting was widely practised in Indus Valley Civilisation. They were made using 'lost wax technique' or 'Cire Perdue'. Dancing girl found at Mohenjodaro is the world's oldest bronze sculpture. She stands in 'tribhanga' posture. Another example is the bronze bull of Kalibangan.

- **Terracotta Figures:**

It used fire-baked clay, made using the pinching method. These are less in number and crude in shape and form. Most sites are found in Gujrat and Kalibangan. They were generally used to make toys, animal figures, miniature carts and wheels etc. Example: Mother Goddess.

- Pottery:

They can be broadly classified into- plain pottery and painted pottery. Painted pottery is also called as Red and Black pottery. Most of the pottery is very fine wheel-made wares, few are hand-made. They were mainly used for household purposes, decoration and as perforated pottery.

- Beads and Ornaments:

It used materials like precious metals, gemstones, bone and baked clay. Both males and females wore ornaments like necklaces, armlets and finger rings. While girdles, earrings and anklets were worn only by women.

The bead industry has also been well developed. It is evident from the factories at Chanhudaro and Lothal. The material used consists of cornelian, amethyst, steatite, etc.

MAURYAN ARCHITECTURE:

Mauryas established their power by the 4th century BCE. The architecture and sculpture developed under state patronage were completely demarcated from individual initiatives. Mauryan architecture can be classified into two parts- **Court Art and Popular Art**. Court art consists of palaces, pillars and stupas. Popular art consists of caves, pottery and sculpture.

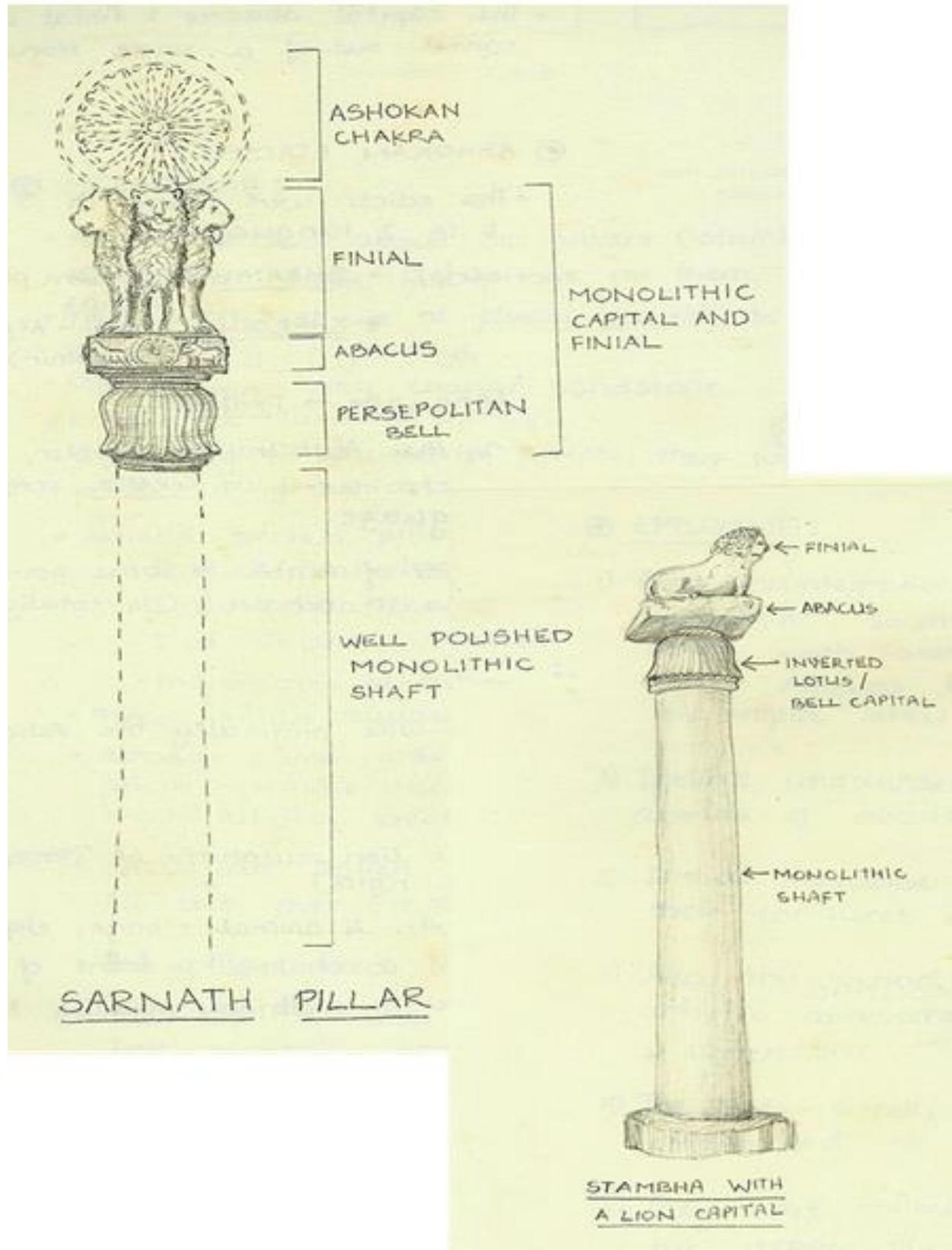
Court Art:-

- Palaces:

Mauryan empire had a palace at Kumrahar. Chandragupta Maurya's palace was inspired by Achaemenid palaces in Iran. Principle material used was wood. Ashoka's palace at Kumrahar was also massive. It had a three-storey wooden structure. These were decorated with sculptures and carvings.

- **Pillars:**

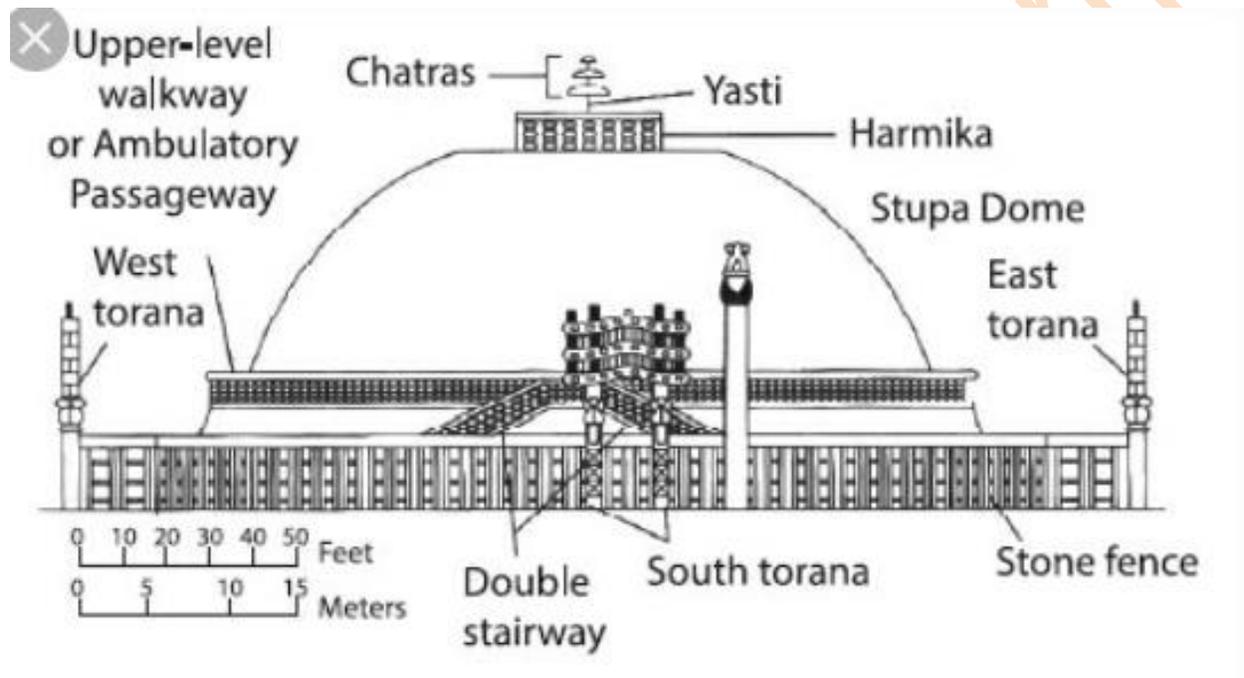
Pillar inscription was a symbol of state or to commemorate battle victories. It used to propagate sermons also. The average height of the pillar is 40 feet. It is made up of chunar sandstone. It has four parts. A single piece of stone or monolith is used. Its structure is as shown in the figure:



Example: Lauria Nandangarh pillar at Champaran, Sarnath pillar

- **Stupa:**

In the Buddhist tradition, after the death of Buddha originally the nine stupas were built. Eight of them had relics of Buddha at their Medhi and the ninth had a pot in which the relics were originally deposited. The structure of the stupa is as shown in the figure:



Example: Sanchi stupa in Madhya Pradesh, Piprahwa stupa in UP is the oldest.

Popular Art:-

- **Cave Architecture:**

During the Mauryan period, rock-cut cave architecture emerged. They were generally used as viharas by Jainas and Buddhist monks. These caves were marked by the highly polished finish of interior walls and decorative gateways.

Example: Barabar and Nagarjuna caves in Bihar formed by Dasharatha king.

- **Sculpture:**

These were mainly used for the decoration of stupas in Torana and Medhi. The famous sculpture of the Maurya period is Yaksha and Yakshi. Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism used them as an object of worship. Monumental images have a standing position and a polished surface. Example: Didargunj Yakshini

- **Pottery:**

Northern Black polished ware (NBPW) was generally used. They were made of fine alluvial clay. They had peculiar lustre and brilliance which distinguished them from other polished wares. Black painted lustrous were luxury items for use.

POST- MAURYAN

After the fall of Mauryas in the second century BC, other dynasties sprang up. They were Shungas, Kanvas, and Guptas in the North and parts of central. In southern and western India, the Satavahanas, Ikshavakus, Abhiras, Vakataks took over control. There was an emergence of Brahmanical sects such as the Vaishnavas and the Shaivas in this period. The art of sculpture reached its climax in this period.

- **Rock-cut caves:**

Two types of rock caves developed – Chaitya and Vihara.

Viharas consist of a veranda, a hall and cells around the walls of the halls.

Chaitya halls were mainly used as prayer halls. Its features are:

- a. Quadrangular chambers
- b. Flat roofs
- c. Open courtyards
- d. Stone screen walls decorated with human and animal figures

Example: Karle Chaitya hall, Ajanta caves, Udayagiri and Khadagiri caves in Odisha

- **Stupa:**

Stupas became larger and more decorative as all four gateways were carved with beautiful sculptures. Instead of wood and brick, stones were used. Shunga's introduced beautiful decorative gateways also called Torans. They were evident in Hellenistic influence.

Example: Bharhut stupa in Madhya Pradesh, torans at Sanchi stupa

- **Sculpture:**

Three prominent schools were developed: Gandhara, Mathura and Amaravati school.

- Gandhara School:** It developed in western frontiers of Punjab, near Peshawar and Afghanistan. The local tradition was influenced by Greek and Roman sculpture. It is also known as 'Greco-Indian School of art'. It flourished in two stages differentiated by the use of bluish-grey sandstone and the use of mud and stucco for making sculpture.
- Mathura School:** It developed during period 1st and 3rd centuries BC on the banks of the Yamuna river. It was influenced by all three religions- Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Its characteristic feature is the use of symbolism in the images.
- Amaravati School:** It flourished on the banks of the Krishna river. Satvahana rulers gave patronage to this tradition. Its characteristic feature is the use of dynamic images or narrative art and the use of Tribhanga posture.

Difference:

Gandhara	Mathura	Amravati
1. High influence of helenistic and greek art features.	1. Indegenous in nature	1. Indegenous in nature
2. Grey-sandstone is used. (we also find images made of stucco with lime plaster)	2. Spotted red sandstone	2. White marble
3. Mainly Buddhist images are found	3. Buddhism, Jainism and hindu images are found.	3. Mainly Buddhism
4. Patron- kushana	4. Kushana	4. Shatavahanas
5. Found in north-west india	5. North india. Mainly region of Mathura	5. Deccan region near Krishna-godavari delta.
6. Spiritual Buddha images. Very stylish with wavy hair,	6. Delighted Buddha and not spiritual look	6. Mainly depicts stories of jatakas.
7. Has beard and moustache.	7. No beard and moustache	
8. Lean body.	8. Strong muscular feature	
9. Both seated and standing images are found.	9. Most of them are seated.	
10. Eyes are half closed and ears are large	10. Eyes are open with small Ears.	

GUPTA AGE

Gupta empire emerged in the 4th century AD. This period is characterised as 'Golden Period of Indian Architecture'. It was classic in sense of the degree of perfection. There were perfect balance and harmony of all elements in style and iconography. As Guptas belong to the Brahmanical religion, temple architecture reached its climax. Principle deities were: Vishnu in North and Central India, Shiva in Southern India and Shakti in the Eastern part as well as South-western part of India.

- **Caves:**

The use of mural paintings on walls of caves was a new feature. The finest example can be found in Ajanta and Ellora caves.

- **Ajanta Caves:** It developed during the period 200 BC to 650 AD. These are in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra. It has a total of 29 caves of which 25 are Viharas and 4 are Chaitya or prayer halls. Under Vakataka king Harishena caves were inscribed by Buddhist monks. Outline of

paintings was done in red colour and there is an absence of blue colour in the paintings. The theme of paintings is around Buddhism- the life of Buddha and Jataka stories. Prominent sculptures at Ajanta caves are:

- a. Cave no. 26: Mahaparinirvana of Buddha
 - b. Cave no. 19: Naga king and his consort
- **Ellora Caves:** It developed during the period 5th and 11th centuries AD. It has 34 caves- 17 Brahminical, 12 Buddhist and 5 Jain. It has diversity in terms of theme and architectural style. Prominent sculptures at Ellora caves are:
 - a. Cave no.10: Vishwakarma cave, Buddha seated in Vyakhyana Mudra and Bodhi tree carved at his back.
 - b. Cave no. 14: Ravan ki Khai
 - c. Cave no. 15: Dashavatar temple
 - d. Cave no. 16: Kailash temple
 - e. Cave no. 29: Dhumar Lena
 - f. Cave no. 21: Rameshwar temple
 - g. Cave no. 32: Indra Sabha
 - h. Cave no. 33- Jagannath Sabha
 - **Bagh caves:** It is developed around the 6th Century AD situated on the Bagh river in Madhya Pradesh. It has 9 Buddhist caves.
 - **Junagadh Caves:** It has a Buddhist cave. Three sites are found in Gujrat are Khapra Kodiya, Baba Pyare and Uparkot. Uparkot has a 30-50 ft high citadel in front of the prayer hall.
 - **Nashik Caves:** It is situated in the Trimbak range of hills. It has 24 Buddhist caves known as 'Pandav Leni'. During the 1st century AD, it belonged to Hinayana, later the Mahayana sect had influence. It is an excellent example of a system of water management.
 - **Mandapeshwar Caves:** It is located in Borivali, Mumbai. It is also known as Montperir caves. Brahmanical caves were later converted into Christian caves.

- **Stupa:**

There was a decline in the development of stupa during the Gupta period. Dhamek stupa at Sarnath is the finest example of this period.

- **Sculpture:**

The new school called Sarnath school developed during this period. Its characteristic features are:

- a. Use of cream-coloured sandstone
- b. Use of metal
- c. Absence of nakedness, sculptures were dressed
- d. Decorated halo around the head of Buddha

Example: Sultanganj Buddha of 7.5 feet in height.

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