

**Introduction to Indian Art – An Appreciation**  
**Prof. Soumik Nandy Majumdar**  
**Department of History of Art**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur**

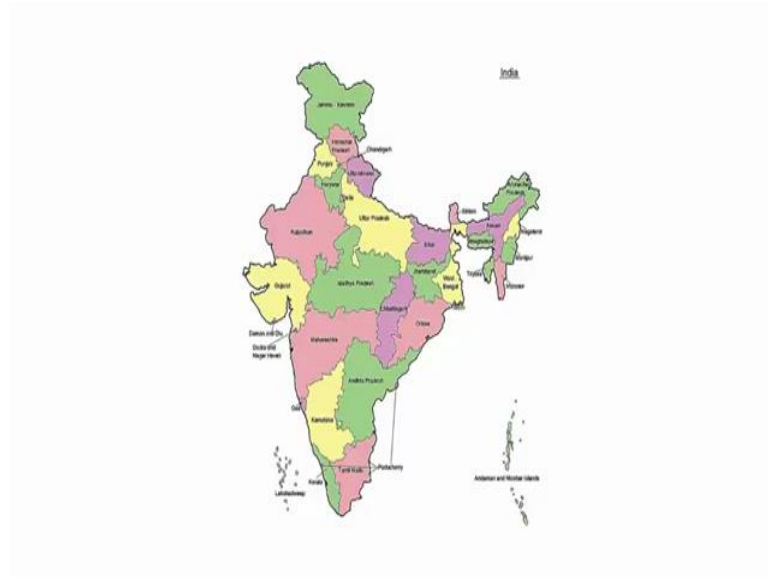
**Module – 01**  
**Geographical Expanse**  
**Lecture: W1 – L1**

Welcome viewers to the MOOCs online course on, Introduction to Indian Art and Appreciation. This is the first module of the first section, entitled as introducing Indian art. Now this first section introducing Indian art has as you all know 5 modules, and the last 3 modules would be on more specifically on 3 different most visible forms of Indian art; namely architecture, sculpture and painting.

The first modules today and next day would be on two very important context of studying Indian art that is, Geography and Chronology. Today we are going to look at the implication of the geography of India and how it played a very significant role in shaping Indian art.

Now, by Geography we of course, mean the geographical expanse of India and as you all know, it was definitely very different from what it is now today. At the same time, the other implication of geographical expanse in the context of Indian art is the nature, the Geographical environment and we would be looking at this very interesting fact that how geographical environment also played a very significant role in shaping Indian art in various ways and particularly in terms of material.

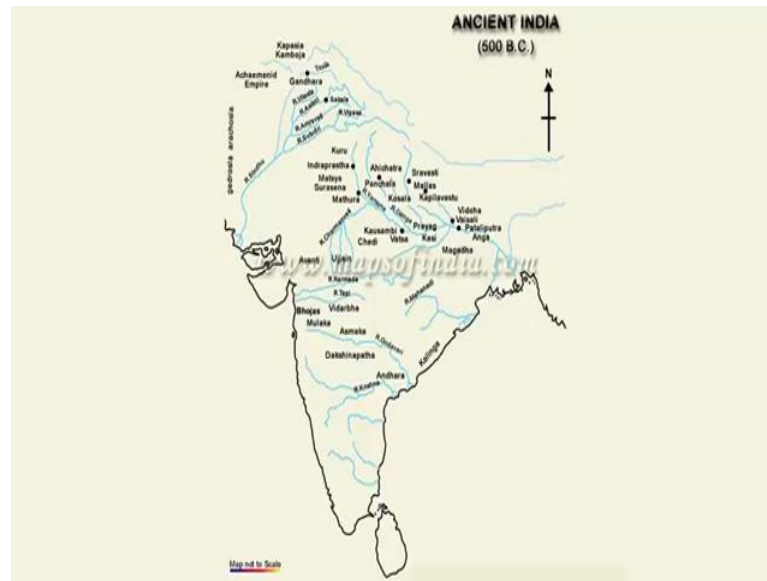
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Now let us look at, the present day Indian map. We are very familiar with this map, as it is a clearly divided Indian map with a very clear, well defined border, but this India came into being only from 1947 to be more specific. But before partition in 1947 India was more understood as an Indian subcontinent and that included Pakistan, India, Bangladesh today these three nations are three independent countries.

Now, this Indian subcontinent that we are talking about, has a history of some 5 millennium years and was spread over the area of 1 and a half millions of square miles, if not more the region is rich in natural as well as physical beauty. It has mountains, planes, forests, desserts, lakes, hills, rivers with all kinds of climatic conditions and seasons throughout the year. Now interestingly this rich diversity of the geography of India almost corresponds to the rich diversity of Indian art.

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Secondly when we look at ancient Indian map, let us look at something like this is how probably look like in terms of its map in 500 B.C. So, know nor than boundary, no clearly defined boundary because that kind of boundary did not exist, before 1947, hence a large part of that northern portion was open to the other places, the other regions, the neighboring countries and this makes it very interesting that when we talk about the first major civilization of Indian art, which is known as “Indus valley civilization” and which flourished in 3000 B.C, more specifically it flourish between 3000 to 1500 B.C and 2 very well known sites of Indian valley civilization are two very famous cities known as “Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro”.

Now, where are these two cities located today not in the present India, but in the present Pakistan So, a lot of locations many of the very famous artworks or monumental sites or art historical sites that, we studies today as a part of Indian art, are now presently located not within India, but outside India. Because at that point of time; India was a large Indian subcontinent.

So, this land because of its openness, at the same time definitely it has some natural barriers like the Himalaya and mountain range, but at the same time people found it their way to come to India, to reach India as invaders as traders as monks as travelers at various points of time in history and gradually enriched our culture in different ways. So, this land has been an object of innovation and also an object of spiritual journey, for the

religious pilgrims as well as travelers. So, they found their own roads of mountains or in the sea bringing with it the new masses, new ideas and assimilating and changing the culture of the people.

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Now, look at one map which suggests or which helps us to locate the Harappa civilization in the ancient India, now this particular map has the present day Indian boundary, which we can use as a reference. In order to understand, the major part of Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa civilization and where exactly it existed, during that point of time.

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Now, when you look at for example, brick temple like this, we can appreciate this temple, we can study this temple in terms of its religious context, in terms of its form, in term terms of its architectural marvel, but at the same time it is important for us to know the location of this temple.

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And the location of this temple is Birbhum at the Bengal, rather because Bengal is very well known for a 16 and 17 century Terracotta temples, but then we also have several

very interesting structural temples coming from northern India or from western India or from central India.

So, it is this very basic knowledge about the location of Indian art that makes it very important for us to have, a reasonably good knowledge of Indian map, Indian geography, India geographical conditions in order to study and appreciate Indian art.

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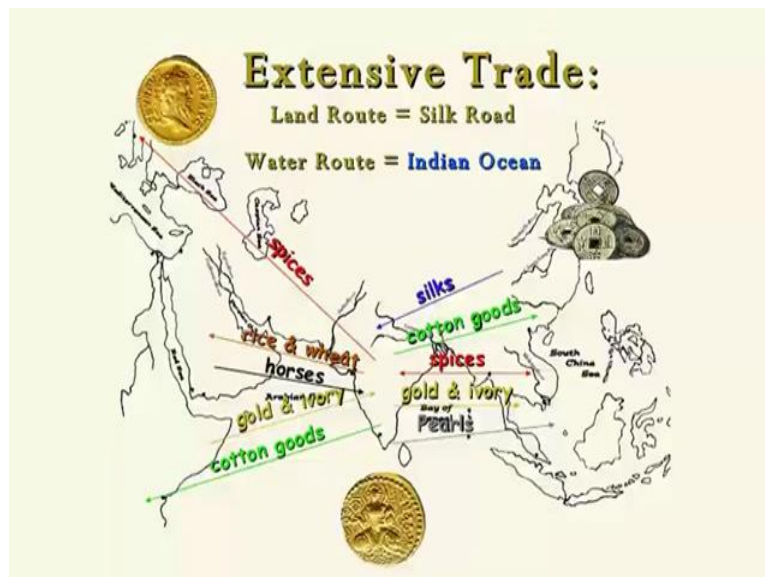
So, there are several such maps available in different books and online, where you can see not only a slightly different India, but you can also see different names. For example in this map, we come across names like Rastrakutas, Kalinga, Paramaras, Chandelas, then Patliputra, Nalanda, now the moment you hear all this names, they immediately ring a bell do not; they suggest that, we are talking about places and time of ancient India.

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Now, many of you might not know that the present day Patna was known as “Patliputra” in ancient times. So, it is very interesting to look at Indian map, in the context of ancient India; in order to relocate not only the monuments, but also the individual sculptures and paintings, in terms of their original destination, original location, where did all these things originate from.

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Now, another very significant implication of Indian geography and Indian geographical character is in its trade relationships with the rest of the world. Believe it or not in

ancient time and one can very convincingly proof that, right from the Indus valley civilization time; that means, we are talking about almost a time that is 5000 years ago from today. India had trade relation, trade contacts with places as far as Rome or Mesopotamia or western Asia.

So, the geographical location of India is such that, right from the very ancient times. These trade relationships; this various kinds of contacts mainly through trades and spiritual contacts and also travelers as I have already mentioned coming all the way from china, from various other places to India. This made India almost like melting pot a various cultures.

So, what do we see in this map, this map indicates that because of this trade relation; they were lot of movements of traders, to and flow getting silks, cotton goods, spices, gold and ivory, precious stones, even horses, which India receive from outside India, so on and so and so forth, but along with that, they also carried small art objects, textiles, various kinds of decorative art and in certain cases sometimes even the craftsmen, artesian, artists also accompanied, some of this traders, in the rest India; they settled in India and they never went back.

So, these kind of artistic confluences kept happening throughout the history of Indian art, and geography here plate a very important role in making this happen.

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Now, coming to art objects because it was a land, that have is already been and always been an object of invasion and for various other reasons people has always been coming to this place. So, we have different races, different people from different communities, people from different cultures also coming to India for example, we have Parthians, the Greeks, the sakes, the Kushanas, the humes, the Turks, the afghan, the Mongols not only they were simple travelers or traders many of them settled in India, they ruled India and many of them also created and gave birth to new cultural environments in India.

Now, for example, if you look at some random specimens, just in order to locate these specimens in the context of Indian geography; we begin with one very well known example from Indus valley civilization, the priest head as it is known. Now this priest head belongs to far northwest part of Indian subcontinent; where Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa are located today in present Pakistan followed by, let us say this particular site archeological site known as Mahabalipuram, located down south near Chennai belong to 7th A.D

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So, already we have covered from a northwest point to down south near Chennai Mahabalipuram, which was a very thriving and flourishing cultural center from 6th century A.D onwards.

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This is another image of a temple from Mahabalipuram; we can go up to the western India and take up this, very famous example known as Delaware temple located at Mount Abu in Rajasthan.

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One more example of Mount Abu, now you can always ask whether these locations have any important relationship with the artwork, often it has. For example, the Mahabalipuram, images that we saw; many of the example let us say most of this sculptures and temples are built of they are made of local granite stones; which are available around. So, the availability of the local stone, the geographical proximity of the material becomes very important role in deciding over the material that is to be used to make a certain temple.

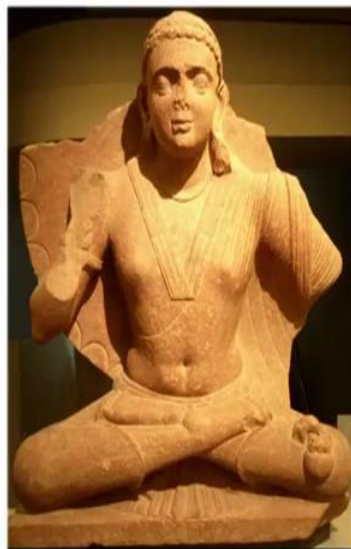
As far as this Delaware temple and Mount Abu is concerned this particular kind of marbles stone is available around that place. Hence the decision of using marble and this particular marble stone came from a regional culture. It was a regional decision and craftsmen who are very efficient in carving this stones were also available locally.

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Then this is again a very interesting example of Buddhist art, a very famous sculpture of Buddha Shakti from Kushanas period and it was found in a place called “Gandhara” which is again in present Pakistan and the location Gandhara is very important because this is one location, which at one point of time that is around 2nd 30 century AD, as completely influenced by Greco roman culture. Yes Greeks culture, Greeks sculptural skill and that is why we see a Buddha who almost looks like a Greek god; yet it is a part of Indian art history.

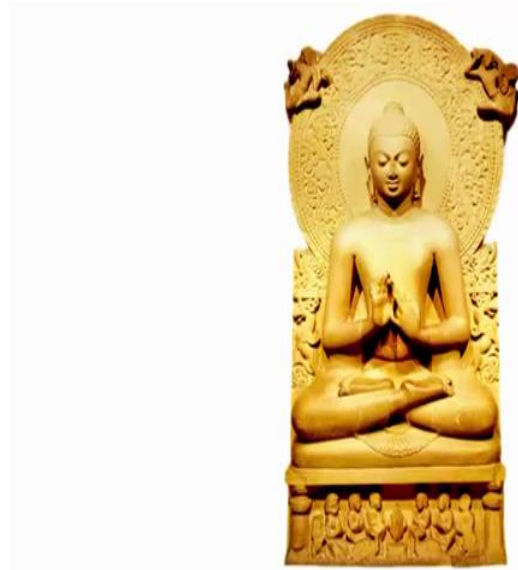
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As a contrast we can look at this particular sculpture of Buddha, made during the same time that is Kushana period when that earlier image was made, but this image was made in Mathura, at the heart of India and hence it has all the very north Indian Mathura characteristics features very different from the Gandhara sculpture. Now, this is a very interesting case for us the art historians, why because both this sculptures this one and the previous one, were made in the same period that is Kushana period.

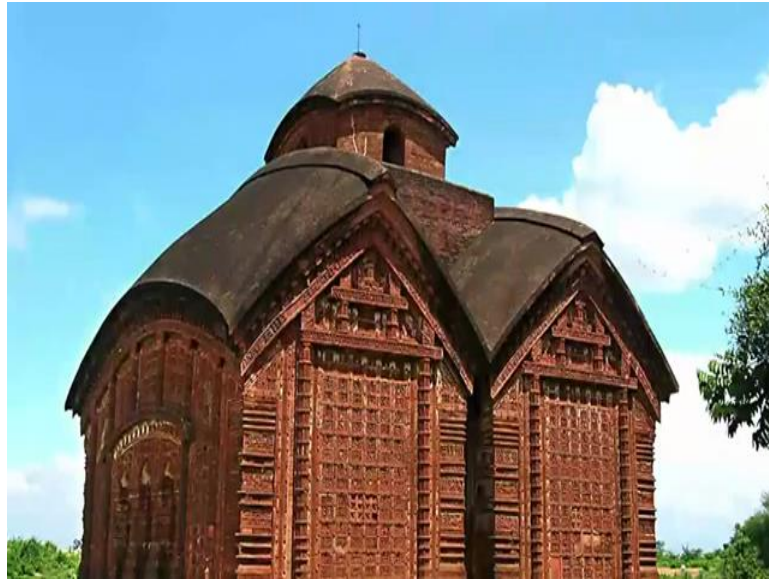
Under the patronage of the same dynasty that is Kushana dynasty, yet the striking dissimilarities between this sculpture and this one is only because they are made in two different locations and these two different locations are influenced by two different cultures. So, there are these kinds of instances which can be used to explain that, how location often in Indian art becomes a very important deciding factor not only in terms of material, but even in terms of its stylistic features that, how a figure would look like that gets decided by the location not just by the dynasty.

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Again we have another Buddha image from Gupta period, which is located in Sarnath in the UP. Slightly different location Gupta period, this particular sculpture is definitely very Indian terms of its ethos and the location is important again, because of the material stone which we shall discuss in some later modules.

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We come back to another image of terracotta temple from Bengal, this one is also another terracotta temple from Bengal; we go down to south, to Karnataka to a place famously known as humpy.

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And there you find these beautiful temples. In fact, an entire city full of reins, temples, palaces, secular structures so on and so forth, and it down south in Karnataka in humpy you get to see this flourishing at one point of time.

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This one is also from humpy, this of course, many of you would be able to recognize because this is from one of the most famous art historical sites in India that is Konark from the sun temple complex at Konark.

So, look already we have traverse not only many directions, but also many places across India from north west to down south, to Bengal to Orissa, to Orissa to UP, to UP to Karnataka and different locations of course, have different geographical conditions, but different locations also have different cultural situations, different religious contexts and very importantly different kinds of craftsmanship, different kinds of skills available from a particular region and these factors definitely influence the final art product. This is also another image from sun temple Konark.



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This is again from down south Kanchipuram near Chennai; Kanchipuram has some beautiful temples structures.

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And the location Kanchipuram is as important as Mahabalipuram which is also close by now to wind up today's lecture, I would like to draw your attention to few things. Number one a reasonably good knowledge about the geographical expanse of India, not only helps us to locate different Indian art objects and monuments properly in their exact locations, in their exact places or their place of origin, but it also helps us to connect

immediately with the local environment; not only geographical environment, but also the cultural environment and we can go one step further and say the political environment.

Though the political environment keeps changing, the cultural environment sometimes keeps changing and that is what we are going to discuss in your next module about chronology, that how chronological study actually helps us to understand the changes that keep happening in the cultural and political situations.

But at the same time, this is also true that India has managed to preserve its sculptural traditions through the ages, all the while absorbing customs traditions and ideas from both the immigrant's invaders trader's etcetera. So, many cultural practices languages customs and dances are example of this commingling over centuries and this commingling, this absorption, this assimilation could happen only because of the peculiar nature of the geography of India, the location of India. Look it is open to various places it is reachable from various corners through sea, through main, land through the Himalayan passes, it is not really an insular country, it is not really an isolated culture, and this what makes India and Indian culture a very interesting subject to study.

So, Indian culture as a result has become a composite mixture of varying styles and influences, it would not be an exaggeration really to note that all diverse in nature (Refer Slide Time: 23:26) to form the culture of India. In fact, very few countries in the world would have such an ancient and diverse culture as well, including the diversity of nature.

So, indies cultural history of several thousand years shows, that the there is a certain, but strong thread of unity which runs through the infinite multiplicity of a life it was not owned by stress or pressure of power groups, but it all happen very naturally. And it is at this point that geography played a very beneficial role.

Thank you.