

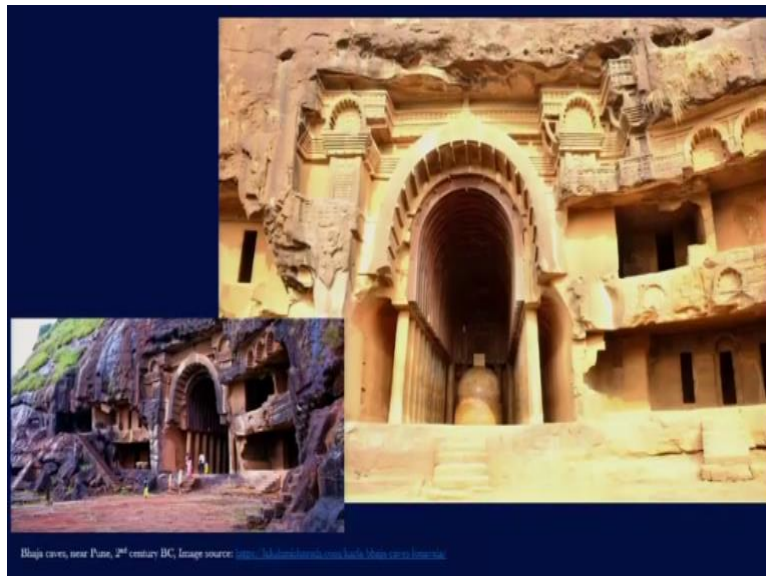
Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices
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Lecture – 7

Hello everyone, we will be continuing on our lecture on the basics of Buddhist and Jain architecture. So, the place where we left in the last lecture, that is about the use of the trefoil arch and how that also accommodates this new projection on the top of Buddha's head and that is how this arch-like form that came into prominence in the Buddhist context.

So, those arch-like forms we find to be not only used in the Lomas Rishi cave or in some of the sites in Bihar or in Uttar Pradesh in today's states, but also in southern parts of India, in the Deccan India and so on. So, it is believed that Buddha had also travelled to some of the sides of the Deccan and that is how some of the early viharas and chaityas were created in those places.

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So, for example, here on screen we have images from the Bhaja caves and those are today in the state of Maharashtra. And those were made in the second century BC. Now, if you see them these two images that tell us very clearly that how these caves were excavated from the living rock structures. So, something that was also in principle of the Buddhist architecture that how to make use of these living rock structures so that no other materials are utilized for erecting a house from the scratch.

However, we also find that there is a contradiction in this basic idea. In one hand, when we find that Buddha has advocated for simplistic means of living and simplistic ways of building structures, in other hand when we see the scale of the structures, for example the Bhaja caves, then we will also see the Karla caves and so on the structure, the size, the scale, and the precision as well as the details and everything else they do not really seem simplistic, but they are pretty much done with much more care.

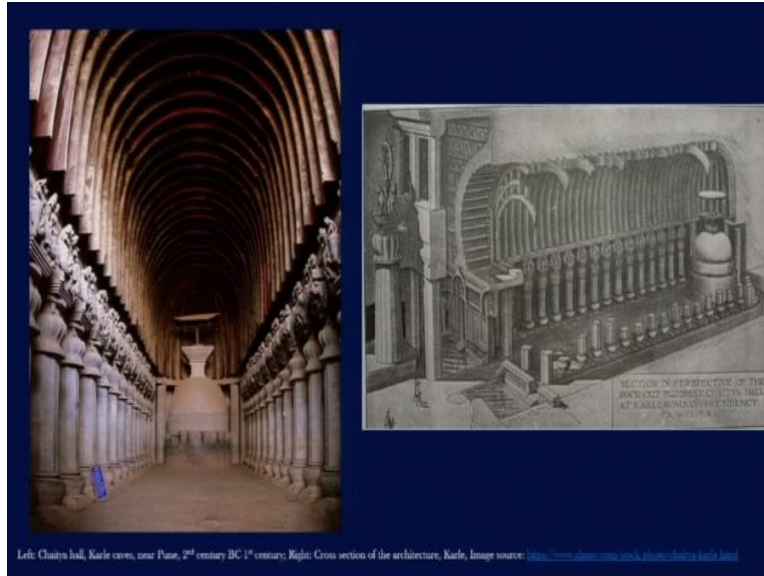
And this is something that we can think that how did this kind of development happen? The first thing first that all the structures even though they are grand structures in their scale and their proportion, but they are not really meant for kings or the royals, but these are meant for worshipping. These are meant for monks and nuns to stay there or gather there during worshipping, during meditation, during education.

So, those are the reasons these structures are erected. On the other hand, what we also find that during the times like the Satavahana rulers or the other rulers they have contributed profusely to making this Buddhist prayer halls as well as the places where the monks and nuns could stay. So, they have profusely donated to these places for attending spiritual merit. So, this also prompted them to make these grand structures which were not really encouraged initially in the Buddhist thoughts.

However, those were encouraged further by the royals and wealthy individuals and groups in the societies. So, even here if we see them that have been what kind of structures those are being implemented, there is this large arched gateway and this arch gateway again is this trefoil arch and the same kind of structure that we have seen in the Lomas Rishi cave in Bihar and this is the structure we are seeing in the state of Maharashtra.

So, here we also have this excavated structure, rock cut structure that is this trefoil arch and it also has those wooden supports, the support like forms that we have in these areas we can find how those wooden supports are there, as if they are made of wood, but they are actually made of stone. So, they only serve the purpose of ornamentation or a reminder of how this architecture were actually inspired by wooden structures. Apart from that, they do not really give any kind of integrity or strength to the stone structures.

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So, if this is one of the examples that we found and then the other example will be the Karla caves. So, in both cases we find the Chaitya halls or the halls where people have gathered for worshipping, for meditation as well as there might have also been educational purposes. So, there are some of the cells which will be situated by those Chaitya halls, very simple and basic those are the ones which are used by the monks and the nuns for staying there.

And apart from that all of them would gather in this large Chaitya halls and for this idea of gathering what we find that I mean this Chaitya halls are they are large in their proportion. So, what all we see in these Chaitya halls? So, for example if we take this example here in the Karla caves, again in Maharashtra, and that was made some time between like second century and first century BC and the second century BC to first century AD.

And then there we find that how some of those ideas about this trefoil architecture also had prompted them to make much more complexity within these build structures. So, in the cross section of the Karla caves that we find on the right side of the image what we see is the trefoil arch that is the entrance to this entire cave or this Chaitya hall and then in the inside there are rows of columns.

Those columns are also carved from the stone from the living rock structures and the columns also had this vault like structure on the top of them. So, in a way that the arch-like structure had its reputation all along in this hallway. And then at the end of the hallway, we find there is this structure that we understand as a stupa. And this stupa is something that is also very

much important in terms of the Buddhist idea of an architecture or the Buddhist idea of the universe.

So, how this idea of the stupa that came into being and also it is something that we see, stupa it basically means a piled up form and then piled up form is something that can be as simple as many stones piled up into a particular form and that can be considered as a stupa. In that respect, we can also think how the dolmens or the megaliths that we have seen in the southern Indian context when we looked into the Indus valley burial practices.

Then there also there was this idea of putting the stones together for making a memorial form. So, we can imagine that that kind of memorial practices or funerary practices might have also inspired making stupa which is also a memorial form. Now, how this idea of stupa came into existence? It is believed that when Buddha, he was in Kushinagar and he predicted his death. Then, after his death his disciple Ananda had erected the stupa at the site of his cremation.

So, Buddha also apparently suggested to make a simple stupa at the site where he was cremated as a reminder of this particular event. And then this stupa was also become very much important because his bodily remains like his tooth, his remains of the bones and then his ashes and then of course the objects which were used by him, those were distributed to people. So, that is the reason this idea of the stupa became very much important as like a repository of Buddha's remains within.

So, either the stupa became a repository of this bodily remains of Buddha or the stupa also were erected as a memorial stupa to commemorate Buddha's life and his parinirvana which is like leaving his earthly body. So, those are the reasons why we find that this stupa structure had always been very much important in the Buddhist philosophy as well as in the Buddhist art and so on.

So, that also relates us to understanding that what all different ways in which Buddhism was perceived and what kind of debates and what kind of divisions were there in the Buddhist belief. So, in the representation of Buddha's body, we find that there were different means in which Buddha's body was depicted. And some of the early historians and art historians have suggested that until the first century AD, there was no representation of Buddha himself.

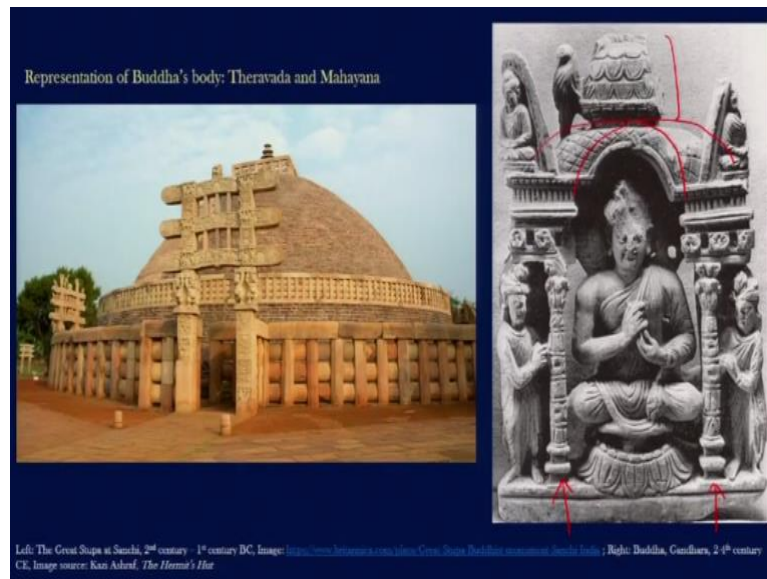
And then there were only symbolic representation of Buddha that is the reason there are many symbols which are depicted in the narrative forms and different other ways which had much significance in Buddha's life. For example, there is this; the night when Buddha left his royal palace in Kapilavastu and then his favourite horse Chandak, he took him to a river bank and from there he left his material life and embraced asceticism.

So, that is the reason why we find that the horse which came back from that particular place to the royal palace with no rider on the top of it, it became a sign of Buddha himself. As such like that the Bodhi tree itself also carried much significance and in many cases, we find that how Bodhi tree is itself is considered to be a symbolic representation of Buddha. So, in the early times the art historians and historians have suggested that there were only symbolic representation of Buddha and not a bodily representation.

However, this idea had also been challenged and we find that it is not entirely true, but there were different groups of people who had believed in different ways in which Buddha should be represented. Because in the Buddha's lifetime, we already see there are some of the events, for example the miracle of Sravasti in which Buddha performed a miracle and he manifested as thousand Buddhas in front of the king Prasenjit.

So, those are some of the tailings or the narratives which signify that perhaps making the images of Buddha was not really discouraged in the Buddhist thought, but those have perhaps been continued by one group of the disciples and the other disciples they stuck to the symbolic representation.

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So, based on this whether the symbolic representation or based on how Buddha is represented, we see that there were two dominant groups who made their presence in the Buddhist art and architecture. Those will be the Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism. So, it is not as simplistic as someone who just worships Buddha as a symbol and the other one who worships Buddha as a human being.

But it is the idea that in Theravada Buddhism the idea of Bodhi is much more important than the person himself who had attended Bodhi that is the reason they believe that Bodhi can be attended by anyone and of course that many other Buddhas have already arrived in the earth and there will be many other Buddhas after Buddha's life as well. So, that is the reason the idea of Bodhi, the symbol of Bodhi is much more important than the figure of Buddha itself.

That is a reason in the Theravada belief, we find mostly in the early development of Theravada, we find that there have been mostly this idea of the symbolic representation. But in the Mahayana belief, what became much more prominent in the first century and so on. During this time, what we find that the Buddha's body is represented, he was represented as a human figure.

So, in the Mahayana belief, we find that Buddha himself was considered as a deity that of course the idea of Bodhi becomes very much important there as well. But the Buddha himself, Gautama Buddha himself is also worshipped as a deity. So, this is the basic difference between the Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism and then the symbolism and then

the bodily representation of Buddha, these two things we also find to be continuing almost hand in hand.

So for example, we find some of the early structures for example we will be looking at the structure in Bharhut and in Sanchi. So here on the left side of the screen we have the Great Stupa of Sanchi. And so Great Stupa of Sanchi there have been a development from the second century BC and the development actually continued until 12th century AD. So it was a long time in which Buddhism was developed and flourished in this site of Sanchi, which is around 30 kilometres from the city of Bhopal.

And there what we find that this symbolic representation of Buddha's body is there as stupa in this early time when the Sanchi Stupa was first erected, so in the second century to first century BC. So in this time what we find to be very important there is that the entire stupa which basically is a hemispherical dome, it is a closed structure. So, it is a closed structure that means that no one can actually enter a stupa and that is the biggest or the prime difference between stupa and a temple.

And what we find there is that how this closed hemispherical mount that actually came to represent the cosmos or the universe and as we know that both in the Hindu belief and in Buddhist belief that this idea of the Brahmanda or like this the cosmic egg that had already been there. So, this kind of ideas perhaps also prompted the making of this closed architectural form, which will be filled with soil or stone and so on.

And on the top of that, there will be stone or brick structures which are made to flatten this and making into a perfect hemispherical structure. So, this dome structure then we also find to be mounted on a higher platform. So, what we find in this particular image that this is the place which is mounted on a higher platform and the higher platform is something that we can also imagine, which signifies the importance of a site that we are.

If there is a spiritual being, there is someone who's of much higher importance than the regular human beings, we always put them on a higher platform from the ground and that is the reason the stupa is also situated on a higher platform of the ground. And so there are some of the terms, we will come to those terms and then on the top of that there is a railing and the

railing is erected there so that people could not really go inside the stupa but they can circumambulate.

So, circumambulation is a practice that we find to be prevalent in both Buddhism and in Hinduism where the right arm or the right shoulder is usually kept towards the temple or the stupa and then people circumambulate and this circumambulation is there for showing our respect or dedicating our best work to the deities and that is how this idea of the circumambulation became prominent in both these practices.

So, to accommodate this circumambulation, this protected pathway around the stupa was made on the top of this platform. So, those are some of the various aspects in which we find how the entire stupa became a symbolic representation of Buddha himself and then how it also became part of the Buddhist worship, which is very different from if we compare it to how we have seen in the Chaitya hall and so on.

Now, in the centre of the stupa, it is believed that there is a small casket or a small box in which relics of Buddha is kept and that is the reason on the top of this hemispherical mount, we find that there is a small area which is again fenced and then there is an area where we find that there are those umbrellas. So, the umbrellas are something that we find those are held on the top of the royals or important individuals.

So, there are three umbrellas, which signifies that the individual relics which are resting beneath this this particular structure that is no royal but when they are beyond the royals or the human beings. So that is what it signifies the divinity of this figure that means Gautama Buddha. So, these are some of the characteristic features of this build structures that we find in the Theravada context.

And in the Mahayana context, we also find that some of the structures that we have spoken about how that also relates to Buddha's body. So, if the stupa and this box of the reliquary they come to represent Buddha's body in a much more in a symbolic form, in Mahayana Buddhism what we find, for example the one we have on screen, this one comes from the north western frontier of the Indian subcontinent and that that comes in today's Pakistan in Gandhara region.

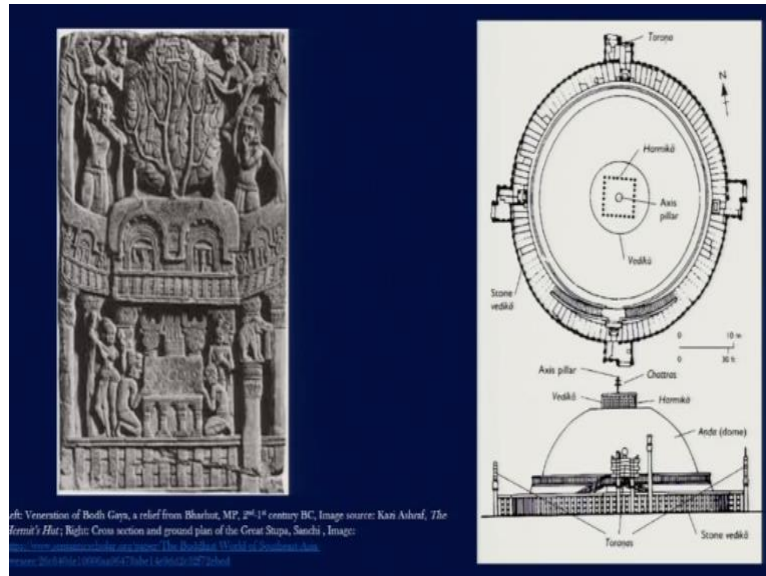
And this is a Gandhara Buddha that was made somewhere between fourth to second century BC and this one is made from second to fourth century AD. And in this one what we find is that how Buddha himself is represented, which is part of the Mahayana belief, but also we find that he is shown here within build structure and the build structure consists of pillars, which we find this very elaborately carved pillars that we have here.

There are two figures which are flanked, the Buddha is flanked by these two figures on both sides and they are possibly Indra and Brahma who are believed to have come to greet Buddha after he had attended enlightenment. And then very interestingly on the top of that, there is again this structure which perhaps shows evidences of some of those early structures and on the top of that we also find there is a dome like form which represents this leaf patterns.

The another interesting part of this structure that we find here is this archway if you can see it here. There is this archway that is represented and this is the particular archway we find with the representation of Buddha, which was prime to the Mahayana belief that how Buddha's head was projected after his enlightenment and that is the reason there needed to be this space in the architecture to accommodate this newly formed body that is the reason there was a need for this archway.

So, here we have the figure of Buddha as well as the archway which came to represent this new development in Buddha's body after his enlightenment. These are some of the ways in which we find that Buddha's body is represented in the both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism and how these figurative narration as well as the symbolic representation, they became much more sort of complicated with time and with all these underlying ideas.

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So, from there I wanted to get a little more into the symbolic representation and that is what that what we find that on the left side of the image what we see that comes from another Great Stupa that is in Bharhut in Madhya Pradesh today and that was built between like first and second century BC. And in this one, what we find that there is a veneration of the Bodhi tree.

So, this particular structure that also shows that how the Bodhi tree that is considered to be of prime importance for the Buddhists that is worshipped here. And in this particular image, what we see there is this seat, there is a seat which perhaps also is the vajrasana, which we have already looked at. And this seat is situated at the centre of this image and then there are two devotees who are situated on both sides of these images and then there are also other attendants.

And there is a built structure, which is made on the top of this place, which perhaps shows an early form of the temple complex at Bodhi Gaya. However, the temple complex that we see there today is not the same as those early forms. And then what we see that there is this structure of the tree, the Bodhi tree, and that actually goes beyond the limits of this architecture to show its mighty presence in this particular relief.

And then there are other beings, for example there are other devotees that we see they are presented here and as well as their celestial beings, for example the kinnaras and gandharvas and all, the winged beings, the celestial beings, who came to worship the Bodhi tree, the

sacred Bodhi tree. So, all we can see here is that there are so many of the references to Buddha, but Buddha's body is not represented directly.

So that is something that we have also spoken about how the Theravada Buddhism that prioritized the symbolic representation of Buddha instead of representing Buddha as a human form. So, this is something that we find to be very much prevalent in the early development of Buddhism. Now, afterwards we also find that there are some of the things for example as we have spoken about in the stupa structure.

So if here we see the cross section as well as the ground plan of the stupa, some of the things that we have discussed already, those will be perhaps much more clearer. Now what we have here in the image that we see here is this raised platform and then which is called the stone vedika and the vedika that basically means a platform. And then on the top of that there is this anda or the dome. So, this is the hemispherical dome or the main part of the stupa.

On the top of that there is this other vedika and then there is harmika or this fencing and the fencing does not really do any other purpose apart from suggesting that there is someone who is very important resting within this structure. So, it is a very symbolic representation. And on the top of that there are those chhatras or the umbrellas. Now, we see there is also something very interesting that is this axis pillar.

So, the axis pillar is something that actually runs through this structure and this vertical pillar also is kind of like an axis mundi that suggests what is the centre of the universe. So, if we consider this hemispherical dome as a representation of the cosmos or the universe, then we know that the centre of the universe is the reliquary of Buddha himself or Buddha himself. So, in the Buddhist universe, the axis or the centre of the universe is Buddha himself.

So, these are some of the symbolic representations those are ingrained in the Theravada belief. And then what we also find to be interesting is this; the railings that is right outside of the stupa that is there for the circumambulation. And then slowly when the belief system and religion got more and more complicated, we find that extra railings were added around the stone vedika and that is how we find that there is another pathway that was created around the stupa.

And here what we see here, then four gateways were added to four cardinal directions. So, four cardinal directions, also how the direction, the axis mundi, then the idea of the cosmos, all of them they came to represent the Buddhist cosmology and in a way to locate ourselves in relation to the centre of the universe that is Buddha himself. So, these are some of the ways in which we find that the Theravada Buddhism had developed and they left their lasting impression on the making of the architecture.

So, we will be continuing on this theme and how Mahayana Buddhism and the other aspects, they have also been very much prevalent in architecture, in the next lectures. Thank you.