



find that there is a map that shows the extent of emperor Ashoka's kingdom and that shows something about how far his political boundaries.

And the reach of his preaching of dharma went up to and that is something that happened during the second century in the third century BC and almost the entire Indian subcontinent we can say that came under one particular person's rule and that was being made possible by emperor Ashoka. And this kind of advancement in terms of bringing all the different territories of South Asia under one person's rule was not possible until the Mughal rule in the 16th and 17th century.

So, we are talking about the third century BCE and that was a time when almost the entire Indian subcontinent came under one person's rule and that is emperor Ashoka. So, emperor Ashoka had a really interesting trajectory of his career. So, he started his career as a warlord and we see that how he had also extended the boundary of his kingdom further and further by warfare and so on.

And after this famed war of Kalinga, he had renounced this and then he embraced Buddhism after looking at the disasters caused by war and that is the time we find that when Ashoka was became an important figure in the spread of Buddhism as well as following the path of the Buddha. So, if this is one of the things that we find that had happened, but also interestingly that with Ashoka's announcing of this political warfare and so on.

We do not really see that he had given up on his kingdom or we do not see that he had given up on the army or the people who are very much required for running an entire state. So, what we see that came up as a very interesting part of this new idea of dhamma vijaya or this victory with religion or it is not a victory which is associated with warfare, but with the help of spreading Buddhism.

So, what happened for that we find that in the various parts of his kingdom, he had started installing different edicts and the edicts were made on the stone surfaces in different places and wherever the stones were not available, we find that he had installed these capitals or the pillars and these pillars what we find today and which are famously known as the Ashokan pillars. So, those pillars became synonymous with Ashoka's embracing of Buddhism and spreading the path of righteousness which was preached by Gautama Buddha.

So, if we see the map in the left side of our screen, we find that there are many of the sites where the Ashoka rock pillars and edicts those are actually found. So, one can imagine that those are around the borders or different important parts of his kingdom. So, as I have said that he did not really renounce everything and became a monk like Buddha himself, but he was very much the emperor, but he did not go for the warfare to extend his kingdom.

Instead, he opted for this new way of having his control over the entire territory and that is by preaching the different lessons from Buddhism. And for that reason, what we find that there are many of the important Buddhist site as well as the different trade sites and the frontiers of his kingdom where we find there are those Ashoka edicts and Ashokan pillars. So, for example if we see some of the pillars and the pillars are carved out of this Chunar sandstone.

And Chunar being today as we can see that Chunar is part of Eastern Uttar Pradesh which is not that far from the city of Pataliputra or Patna and that is also a place which has historically been known for its sandstones. So, we find that in various sites, Ashoka had commissioned this Ashokan pillar, these mighty Ashokan pillars which are made from this Chunar sandstones.

So, what we find in this these pillars which are installed in the various places, one of the pillars we have in the right side of our screen and in here what we find that the pillars are vertical, they are symmetrical and the cylindrical pillars they are slightly tapered and then the entire shaft which we can see here is made from one piece of stone and on the top of that there is this capital. So, the capital has abacus where we find that there is an inverted lotus.

And then on the top of that there is a circular base and on the top of that we usually see there are some of the animal motifs which are found. So, we are looking at a pillar that is from the Lauria Nandangarh in Bihar. And this of course this comes from third century BC. And in this one, what we find the animal which is carved on the top of this pillar that is a highly in naturalistic way and it is also believed that on the top of that perhaps there was a wheel.

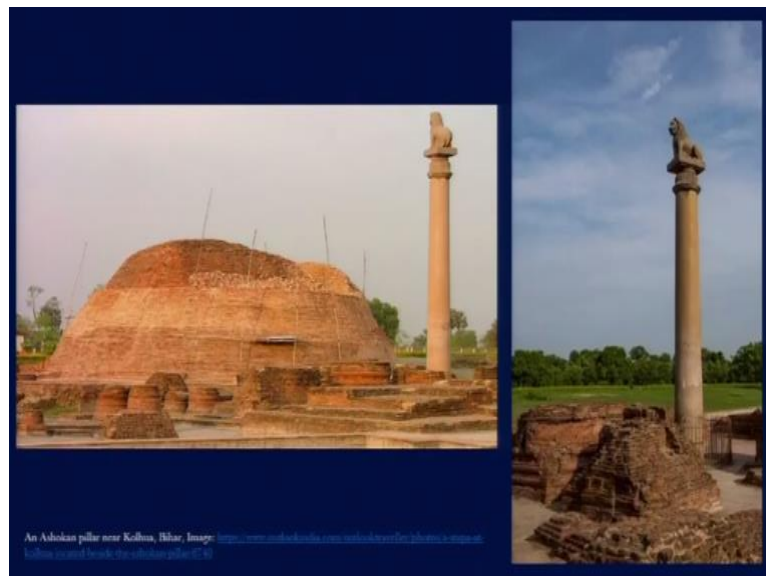
The wheel of law which was installed on the top of it so it is here. And that wheel which is also very much important in the idea of Buddhism because that is the Dharma Chakra or the Wheel of Law. And it is believed that Buddha had turned the wheel of law when he preached

for the first time in the site of Sarnath which is close to the city of Varanasi. So, that is the reason we find this particular wheel became a very important symbol in the Buddhist art and architecture.

And of course, Ashoka we find why he had created this wheel of law and that is because he had spoken about righteousness. And in his edicts as well as in his pillars we find there are inscriptions which speak about the righteous path for all the citizens and for the people who are inhabiting His kingdom, right. So for those reasons what we find there is that those script, the script which was comprehensible to the general audience such as Brahmi, Pali, Kharosthi.

Those were the ones which were opted for and the ideas about the righteous path as well as the importance of dhamma or the importance of Buddha's laws and preaching those were communicated by the script which was written on these pillars as well as by this chakra, which was installed perhaps on the top of this animal motifs which were placed at the capital part of these pillars.

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We also find that in this capital, how these pillars are not just there as separate entities in the middle of nowhere, but they have perhaps been associated with the other architectural elements as well. So in some cases, we find that those pillars and those edicts were installed at the major crossroads or the places which are important for the people in those neighbourhoods. And in other cases, we also find those pillars, they also marked a particular sacred territory.

So, for example, what we find here that there is this Ashokan pillar we have one seen and that is from Kolhua near Vaishali in Bihar and what we find here is that there is a stupa which we have already studied the significance of this hemispherical shape structure where the relics of Buddha or a symbolic relic of Buddha can be kept. So, we see there is this stupa which is there in Kolhua, near Vaishali and in front of that we have this lion pillar.

So, similar to the one we have seen in Lauria Nandangarh and some of the other places, what we find the pillars they usually follow of a kind of template, how the body of the pillar is constructed and then the lotus as a base for the animal motif that comes from the top of it and then like the execution of the animals. In some cases, we find that the animals are much more naturalistic, in some cases we find the animals are slightly more stylized.

So, this kind of variations we find, but those are definitely dependent on the context in which the pillars are erected and where these pillars are erected. So, this is what we find a very peculiar architectural characteristic that came up during Ashoka's time period. And also if I can go back in the previous lecture, we have also seen how the vajrasana which marked the place where Buddha attended enlightenment beneath the Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya.

So that was also another seat and perhaps another temple site which was erected by Ashoka there. So, those are some of the issues that we find that Ashoka had addressed and how all these different kinds of architecture building, making sculptures and pillars, those were part of his spreading of Buddhism. And in the later times, we also find that he had also sent ambassadors not only to different parts of the Indian subcontinent, but also to today's Sri Lanka and part of Pakistan, part of China.

Of course, Pakistan was part of the Indian subcontinent that time and then also to China, to Southeast Asia and so on. And that is how we find that this was also the time under Ashoka's supervision the saplings of the Bodhi tree from Bodh Gaya was transported to different sites and some of the very important Buddhist text for example Mahavamsa and so on from Sri Lanka today.

We find that there are the narratives that addresses this account when Ashoka and the other members of his family and the royal court, how they have facilitated the transportation of the sapling of this sacred Bodhi tree from Bodh Gaya to the island of Sri Lanka and that is how

the sacred sites in Anuradhapura and so on those places were established. So, this is one thing we find that how Ashoka had been proactive in terms of spreading the teaching of Buddhism.

And that is perhaps one of the reasons that we find why he had also been very important in terms of understanding the politics and the responsibilities of a successful ruler and responsible ruler.

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So, for those reasons, what we also find that there is this one particular capital that comes from the site of Sarnath, which we have already discussed that was the place where Gautama Buddha or the Shakyamuni he preached the law or his idea about this new religion for the first time which is very close to the city of Varanasi. So, that was the site in the Deer Park and it also to mark this very important site in the Buddhist history.

We find that emperor Ashoka had he had erected a stupa, this memorial stupa and of course there might have been more structures which were built by emperor Ashoka. Now, most significantly, I guess we can say there was this another pillar which was erected at the site and that is this Sarnath line capital what we find there today. So, of course that have been the way it had been found from the archaeological excavations in the 19th century.

We do see that the capital is found but it was not attached to the shaft which originally would have been attached to this particular capital. However, significantly what we find here in this particular capital is this there are the four lines and the four lines instead of one animal that we have seen in the other capitals, for example, the one near Vaishali or the one in Lauria

Nandangarh. What we find here there are four animals and all of them are stylized lions and those animals are they indicate to four directions.

And then what we find that they are standing on this elaborate pedestal and on this pedestal, there are four chakras and it is believed that those chakras would have been much smaller in scale in comparison to the chakra that would have been there on the top of the lions like for example here, if you can imagine there was a chakra. So, what we have here there are those four wills that we find each are also aligned with each of these lions.

And then there are those four animals that we have on this pedestal. So, for example there is a lion, there is this bull, there is a horse and an elephant and so on. So, it is believed that these animals they also have something to do with his political territory, how each of these directions or each of the areas under his kingdom would be identified with these animals. So, that is how it is believed that how he had perhaps thought about having this animal representations in the pedestal.

Now, if we see how the entire pedestal is carved, it is three dimensional, it is free standing in one way and then all the details are carved in high relief. So, for example, the lions are certainly carved out of the matrix, they are not being supported by anything else but the structures of the lions in all four sides. And in the pedestal, we find the images of the chakras, they are projecting out of the stone matrix.

And then there are the very naturalistic representations of all these animals which are there in the pedestal. So, for example if we have the bull and the horse, they have been represented there with all possible details and the anatomical proportions have been taken care of and with all the other details, for example the horn or like the horse's hair and all the swelling of the muscles, the different curves of the body and everything else.

So that is how we know how one animal is distinguished from the other and it also gives us a sense of the art history during this time period. And what are the other things that we find in this particular sculpture is that of course this stylized lions, and these lions that we find they are imagistic and their hair and everything those have been used almost as a pattern so that there is a difference between the plain skin that that is shown in terms of their legs, their paws and their face, and then how that is contrasted with the hair that we have here with the lion.

And also all the other details in their face as well as the expression and the eyes and everything, those have been done with utmost care and that is the reason why we find these lions almost come to life even though they are to some extent stylized. Now, this particular lion capital why it has such importance and that is because that it perhaps talks about these four directions and the spread of dhamma or the righteous path.

So, this message which is embedded in it is how a kingdom that the four directions of the kingdom or all sides of a kingdom or a country needs to have the rule righteousness for having a stable way of living. So, that is the message that we find to be part of this particular lion capital. And that is the reason we also find that why this particular motif or why this particular sculpture from Sarnath was elected as this new symbol of the Republic of India in the year 1950.

And this idea of Ashoka's embracing of Buddhism and the righteous path and of course the spread of dhamma or the righteous path in all directions that made a huge impact in terms of how we understand the workings of a republic country such as India. So, that is a reason why we find that this particular capital which was made in the third century BC and that is around 2300 years from today that still holds much relevance in terms of our understanding of a nation, our understanding of the righteous path and behaviour.

That is the reason we also find that Ashoka's contribution to making these structures as well as Ashoka's contribution to the spread of Buddhism cannot be denied even today.

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So, from there I also wanted to address something else and that is this particular way of handling material that we find in the Mauryan context. So, here we have a particular figure which is either identified as a chauri bearer or yakshi and that was found from this area of the Didarganj near Patna and now this is kept in Patna in the government museum. So, this is a sculpture that we find it is a near life size sculpture of a woman.

And we find that she holds a fly whisk in her right hand in a way that it perhaps shows that she is serving either a royal or perhaps a deity and that is the reason her identity has been not very clear whether she is a yakshi figure who also make their frequent appearances in the Buddhist sculptures. They usually are placed in the both sides of the important figures like Buddha or the Bodhisattvas.

And they can also be part of the sculptures which are in the royal palace complex. Now, since we speak about the royal palace complex, it has also been believed that during this time period most of the royal palace complex and the important structures were made of wood. There are some of the accounts that we find from the Buddhist sources as well as from the traveller's account who had visited from China and so on.

And profusely they have written about how there are these wooden structures, these wooden platforms and wooden palaces, magnificent wooden palaces which were there in the city of Pataliputra and few other places. So, it is also believed that during natural disasters and of course if a fire breaks out, then the wooden structures have usually been damaged at the no

time and that is the reason we do not really have any of the remnants of those times of these wooden structures.

However, those accounts help us to know that there had been these kinds of structures in the past in these places and the Indian artisans they have mastered the craft of building with wood and making different kinds of decorations and different kinds of manipulations on wood. Now, coming back to this particular sculpture we also find that this is also made on sandstone like the other structures that we have studied so far like the lion capital and the capital in Sarnath and so on.

So, these are some of the ones that we find which are made from sandstone from the Chunar area and neighbouring areas. Now, something is really significant here is this particular kind of polish. So, this particular kind of polish that we find is typical to the Mauryan sculptures and the Mauryan pillars, which is not seen in the sculptures from the later times as well as the sculptures which were there before the Mauryan time.

So, this is very characteristic of the Mauryan time sculptures and so on. And what we find here is these sandstone sculptures are polished to such an extent that they become shiny as marble. So, these sculptures and these structures, whatever the remnants we have, lot of times they have been confused with whether they were made with marble or something else and later on it had been found out that of course these are made with sandstone.

But this polish has been extraordinary, something that we perhaps still do not understand today. And this kind of polish we do not really see being continued in the later time period. Now apart from the polish what else we find in this sculpture here is this life size or near life size sculpture of this woman whom we find who can be identified either as a yakshi or as an attendant figure.

She has been shown as almost like an ideal woman, which is described in the contemporary literary sources and so on. So, what we find here is that there is this soft and rounded modulation of the face and the skin of hers, which is contrasted by the way that the textiles have been produced. So, the softness of the skin is contrasted by the folds of the drapery that is there in the lower half of her body, especially this sash which we can see all the folds and how that flows from her waistline.

Also, in terms of the utilization of the ornaments and so on that there we find that the ornaments are also treated differently from the way the fabric is treated or like the way the polished skin is treated. So, these are the kinds of differences that we find being implemented in the sculptures and something that also gives us a sense of the high degree of details, high degree of observation as well as their implementation in the sculptures which the Mauryan artisans, the stone carvers had mastered.

And there are the views, the profile view, the back view and the frontal view of the sculpture here on screen just for us to have a sense of how the sculpture has been carved from all these different viewpoints and every possible detail has been added to them so that this is something that we can imagine that this is not a sculpture which was made as a relief sculpture which will be stuck to a wall, but it is a freestanding sculpture, something like the capitals we have studied so far.