



But we find that during this time even though the sites of Mathura and Gandhara these places were developing simultaneously, but there was a tremendous amount of diversity in terms of how material was used and how the Buddhist images and the architecture was constructed. So, we will start the discussion with the images that we find in that Gandharan region.

So, Gandharan region as we know for its geographical location as well as for the political relations with the Greeks who were active there and then with also with its proximity to the Silk Road, this historic Silk Road which connected China and northern part of India to Europe. So for these things, we find very specific kind of image making practice that came into prominence in the Gandharan region.

And some of the examples will be the ones we have on screen. So for example, we find that in the region of Gandhara it started being developed from the second century BC and then it was developed further until fifth century AD. So, it was a long time period in which we find that this place was active. Now, we do not really have the Kushanas ruling these places between like second century BC and fifth century AD, they were active in the second and first century BC.

However, this image making practices and different kinds of sculpture and architecture making practices they persisted in this region and they flourished with time. Now, if we see some of the characteristic feature of the Gandharan sculptures, the one we have on screen on the left side, we have an image of bodhisattva. Now what is a bodhisattva? We have already looked into the idea of Buddha who is this enlightened one.

And who was a human being who was a prince from the site of Kapilavastu and then he embraced the path of asceticism and then attended enlightenment at the site of Bodh Gaya. Now, the bodhisattvas as Buddha had already said he is not the only person who had attended enlightenment, there had been many other people who had been Buddhists in the past and there will be people in the future who will also be Buddhas.

So, he did not make his position as an exclusive one. And he also made a claim that all the people around us everyone who are on the path to self-discovery can be understood as Bodhisattva. So, Buddha's previous births are considered to be that how he was born as

bodhisattvas and he followed the righteous path. So, those are the ones which we also find in the Jataka stories, which have been very popular in the Buddhist context.

Now, the bodhisattva was in the Buddhist context even though Buddha had considered everyone who is in the path of self-discovery can be considered as bodhisattva, however as the bodhisattva as a Buddhist deity, when we see in the in this context, mostly in the Mahayana context, we find that bodhisattvas are considered to be the ones who had the knowledge of enlightenment.

But still they did not leave the earth and only to help the people who are around us to attain enlightenment, to be conscious and to be liberated. So, this is the reason what we find that the bodhisattvas are considered to be the ones who are the compassionate ones, who are the ones who have compassion towards all the living beings in the earth and they help everyone for attending enlightenment or being on the righteous path.

So, this is the reason what we find that the bodhisattva figures they are considered to be this compassionate ones and this empathy in their face and their bodily gestures are also something that is portrayed in the sculptures. The other feature that we also find in the bodhisattva sculptures is that the bodhisattva sculptures are usually been shown as royal figures as opposed to the monk like figure of Buddha that is also a major distinction that we can make between the bodhisattvas and Buddha.

Now, here what we find is that there is a high degree of naturalism something that we have already seen in the Mauryan time but that had also been developed further, but in this case what we find that the naturalism what is evident here is slightly different from the ones which we have perhaps been existing in the Indian subcontinent. But this high degree of naturalism also comes from the study of anatomy from the European context.

And from the Greco Roman context because of their relationship with the Greeks in this region of Gandhara and that is the reason what we find that the proportion of the body and all the features of the eyes, the nose, lips and so on, all those ones are done not only by looking into the beauty standards of this time or like the iconographic features of this time, but also how it can respond to the conventional sense of anatomy in the Greco Roman context.

So, that is a reason what we find that these figures they look very close to the ones which are created in the Greco Roman context in Europe. And also the details that we have in their body, for example how the drapery or that fabric that flows in from the shoulder to their waist and so on. So, those are the ones which are done with utmost care, which is not stylized at all, and they are very much naturalistic the way we find them in our surrounding.

So something that we can closely associate with the Greco Roman sculptures during the same time. What else we also find there are those physical features which also looked like they are from the particular region, which is this bordering region between South Asia, Central Asia and a part of the Middle East. So, that is the reason we find them in the physical features and so on and the facial features they also respond to this region.

However, that site we also find that certain kinds of iconographical traits, so for example the urna or this particular mark on the forehead of Buddha and the bodhisattva that is present here and then something that is there as a halo behind his head which marks his divine presence. So, those are the other features that we also find here. And then what else we also find are those very important hand gestures.

So, as we have started to address that there are some of the hand gestures or mudras, so for example the Bhumisparsha mudra in which we find that Buddha had touched the earth for bearing the evidence of his enlightenment. The other one will be the dharmachakrapravartana mudra which we have here featured in these bodhisattva sculpture as well. And then the other mudras we also find those we can perhaps continue to talk about in the mudran context.

Now, so if these are kind of like sculptures that we find, they are the ones which are made from this local schist stone. So that is a big difference in terms of how we have studied mostly the sandstone sculptures from the northern India and this one for its geographical difference. So, we find that schist stone is used which is a little more easier to carve I would say from sandstone and that also gives us this liberty of implementing more details there.

And then it is believed that in some cases the schist sculptures were covered with stucco like layers and the stucco layer is made of lime, plaster and hay and some kind of gum or additive material and so on and that became a smooth paste which was applied on the top of the

sculptures and for having much more clear details and the intricacy that cannot be achieved on stone. And then those sculptures were painted.

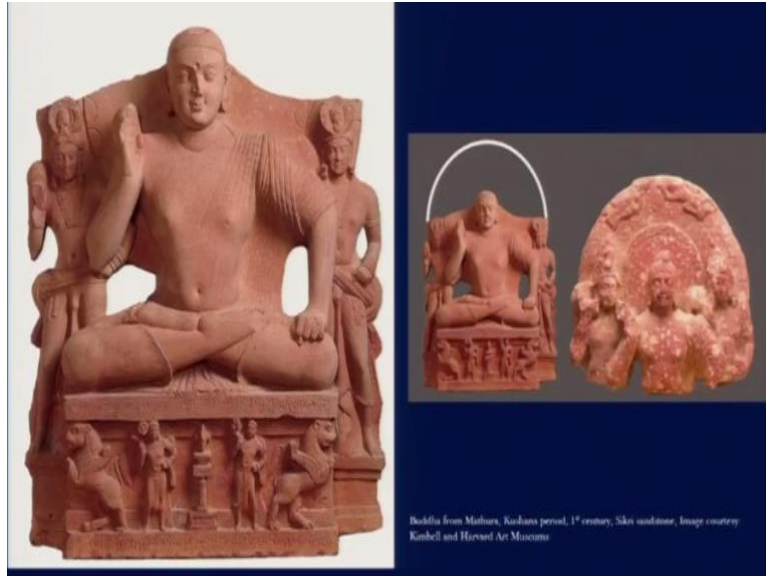
So, in some of the sculptures, we do have marks of this stucco and for its material character, in some cases, we do not have the stucco that is existing anymore, but in some cases, we do find the marks of the stucco, the remnants of those materials as well as we also have marks of the paint from which we can imagine that all the sculptures that we see them or the ones that we have on screen. They were initially had been covered with this lime plaster and then they were painted to have this very life-like appearance.

Now, the other sculpture that we have on screen and that is a stair riser. So that we can imagine that this is a stair riser that comes from first century AD and from the Gandharan region in northern Pakistan. And this was perhaps been part of a stupa. So, even though we are seeing it as a relief or a panel like a sculpture, but it was initially been part of architecture and that would be a stupa. So, here this stair riser is basically like how there are the stairs if there is a particular platform on the top of that there is a stupa.

So, the visitors or the devotees will require the stairs to climb back to this platform and circumambulate the stupa. So, for those places, we find that the in the stair riser this kind of sculptures were there and it was found in fragments, so we do not know the scale of the stupa or this particular site from which it was found. However, if we see some of the details those have been added to this particular panel in the stair riser.

We find there are the river gods which are like; they either look like boat men or they are the river gods and this particular way of depiction of the figures, their muscles and their anatomy and so on all these are very much a clear evidence of how the Greco Roman sculptures and the Greco Roman visual culture and art that made a huge deal of influence in the sculpture and architecture making in the Gandharan region and again this is made from schist stone, which is again it is difference from how we have studied the ones in northern India.

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Now, from there if we move back to Northern India to the site of Mathura where we see that there was also a flourishing Centre during the Kushana period. And this is another sculpture that we find that that comes from first century as I have said these are the sites of Gandhara and sites of Mathura they had been developing simultaneously. So here what we have there is this very different form of Buddha.

And this Buddha figure is made in high relief in which we see that the figures are almost round, they are almost freestanding, but they are still attached to a background and the background we can see that there had been a huge halo behind their head which also makes it a kind of back support. So, it is not just a halo for the religious purpose, but it is also for giving the sculpture stability. And this is made from Sikri sandstone.

Sikri sandstone or the Mathura sandstone that we have there slightly the reddish one or the Mathura maybe we have either the reddish sandstone we find or the grey or the slightly yellowish one we find. So, those are the different kinds of sandstone we find. And what we have here in Mathura the making of the sculpture of Buddha even though we are dealing with the same deity, even though we are dealing with the same iconographic conventions.

But we find that the regional standards of beauty perhaps as well as, how figures, how human beings, how deities were perceived by the artisans in Mathura was quite different from the way we see in the Gandharan context. So here what we have that Buddha is this majestic figure who sits on the simhasana or this lion throne and Buddha has been considered to be the Shakyasimha or the lion of the Shakya clan.

So, that is the reason in many representations we find that Buddha is represented on Simhasana or the lion throne. So in this lion throne, we also have script which perhaps describes it further about its dedication as well as the details of the people who have commissioned it and so on. And what the other things that we find here is the depiction of the eyes, the depiction of the facial features and so on, they are somewhere in between the naturalistic depiction as well as the idealistic one.

So, for example the Lotus like eyes, the eyebrows which are joined as a bow and then all those different features that we find to be part of the iconographical convention, they have been implemented here in a different way from the ones we have studied in the Gandharan context. Now, we also have there are two other figures who are the attendant figures by the two sides of Buddha, and Buddha has his right hand raised in the posture of this abhayamudra or the posture of reassurance.

So when the palm is raised like this, this is considered to be the abhayamudra, which is also considered the fear not gesture in which the deity assures the devotees that whatever happens, the deity will be there to protect the devotees and that is something that we also find to be represented in many of the Buddha's sculptures. So, here we find the Buddha's figure to be almost like a majestic ruler as opposed to the empathetic one that we have seen in the Gandharan context.

It is not the case for all the sculptures that we find in the Mathura region. However, this is one of the significant ones that we find that how this really well built and majestic ruler like figure that is Buddha who is represented in this form. Now, the other thing we also find to be this flowing drapery which almost disappears in the body and that is something that we find it also responds to the geographical region that Northern India is in because of its summer and this high heat.

We also need the clothes which will be lightweight and which will not be heavy as the one that we perhaps see in the Gandharan context. And that is the reason there are these certain features or these peculiarities that we find they were prevalent in part of the mainland India which will perhaps talk about the geographical and the climactic condition in these regions as well.

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So, from there we also find that how this particular way of image making had also made a huge deal of impact on the making of the stupas. So, we have already spoken about the Sanchi stupa. But before that there was also this other stupa which is again in Madhya Pradesh, Bharhut and in Bharhut what we find that there was this ingenious way of making these massive architectural structures and those relied on the use of the lintel and the pillars.

So we have the bars, the horizontal bars and the vertical columns and how they were brought together in the railings that we have. So, these massive railings which were made from granite stone which is another very hard stone as opposed to the one we have in sandstone. So in Sanchi, we have the sandstone sculptures. And then what we have how this stone also makes a difference in terms of how the sculptures are produced on the top of them.

Now for both Bharhut and Sanchi, we also find how these places perhaps that there are some of the inscriptions that suggest that the Sanchi stupa was originally erected by emperor Ashoka, but it was later renovated. So during the Shunga period, we also find that the Sanchi stupa was rebuilt. And during this time, it was not just one person who contributed to making the stupa, but it was a group of people.

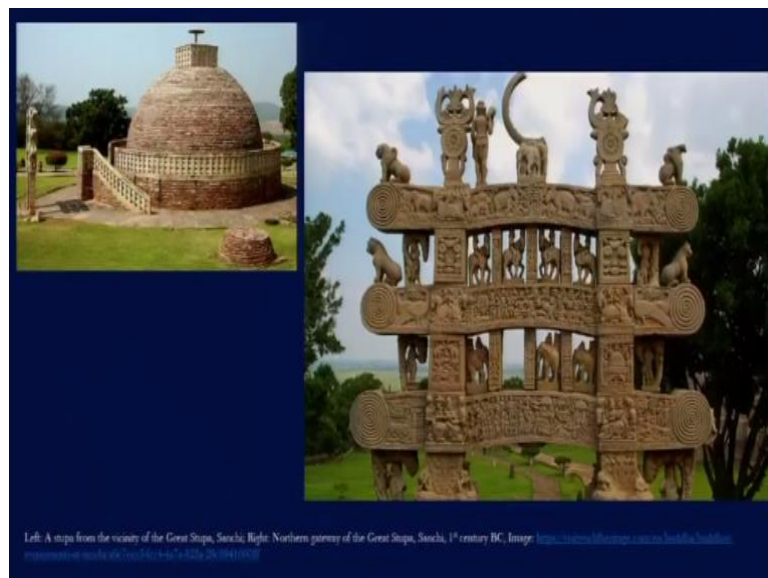
So, for example the royals, the merchants and so on. They will contribute to making the stupa, these elaborate gateways around them and so on. And that is the reason we find that in this stupa complexes have not been built at the same time, but they were periodically built, and the site of Sanchi we find that was active from the second century BC or first century BC to at least until 12th century AD.



So that was a long time in which we find the sites were very relevant. Now here we have not only an image of the railings from Bharhut, but we also have some of these really interesting medallions where there are those narrative scenes in which we find the worshipping of the dhammachakra or the worshipping of the capitals or the pillars. So, for example the one we have here.

This is clearly an Ashokan pillar with this lotus and then the animal and on the top of that there is this chakra and we have the devotees in both sides, how they are worshipping it. So, some of the things those are missing from the Ashokan pillars like for example this chakra that we can reconstruct their history by looking at this kind of sculptures.

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So from there if we come back to the Sanchi stupa, we find that as part of the Sanchi stupa since in the stupa there are no place for decoration, so that is something that had been because for the Sanchi stupa we find it was made with stone and brick and it was perhaps been plastered, however, there are no other sculptural elements those are added on the body of this hemispherical dome.

Now, since those things were not present, we find the need for narrating the stories from the Jataka or from Buddha's life those were being conveyed in this elaborately made gateways of Sanchi. And here we have the Northern Gateway of the Sanchi, the Great Stupa at Sanchi and that was made during the first century BC. Now another thing about Sanchi, it is a site which is around 30 kilometres from Bhopal.

As I have said earlier and this is a site where there were stupas, it is not just one stupa which had the relic of a Gautama Buddha, but there were many other stupas where perhaps some of the memorial stupas were there and some of the stupas might have contained relics of the important Buddhist monks and nuns. Now, those stupas were there and they were side by side with the monasteries and the places of learning and education.

So, life and death continued at the same place. There was not really a division between the place which were dedicated to the dead ones and the ones who are the living ones. And what happens in this Northern Gateway that we find here is there are tremendous amounts of details in which the narrations from Buddha's life and from the Jataka stories have been conveyed. So, there are those narrative panels which run horizontally and almost like in a way how the scrolls are being shown.

So like the painted scrolls how they are opened, they are unfolded and then they are folded again, so almost like that fashion is continued here how they also narrate the stories. And if we also pay attention to how the figures they are also being shown, so the central figures, for example here the figures of these mighty elephants, they come to the centre of this panel where there is this depiction of a tree which is perhaps the Bodhi tree.

And then there are also some of the other elements in which we find how the animals they are being shown, they always point to the centre and that is where the object of veneration the Bodhi tree or any other symbol of Buddha is there. Now apart from those things, we also find something ingenious and those are the brackets here. And these brackets are also called salabhanjika.

And salabhanjikas are the ones in which we find there is a woman she holds that a branch of the sala tree and she places one of her feet on the roots of the sala tree. And this is a sign which had been considered that it can be a symbol of queen Maya who was Buddha's mother and who also gave birth to Buddha in this particular posture, but it is also something that is considered to be a particular kind of ritual.

In which the women they would be associated with a flowering tree or a blossoming tree in which life prosperity and fertility are symbolized and they are implemented. And this is a

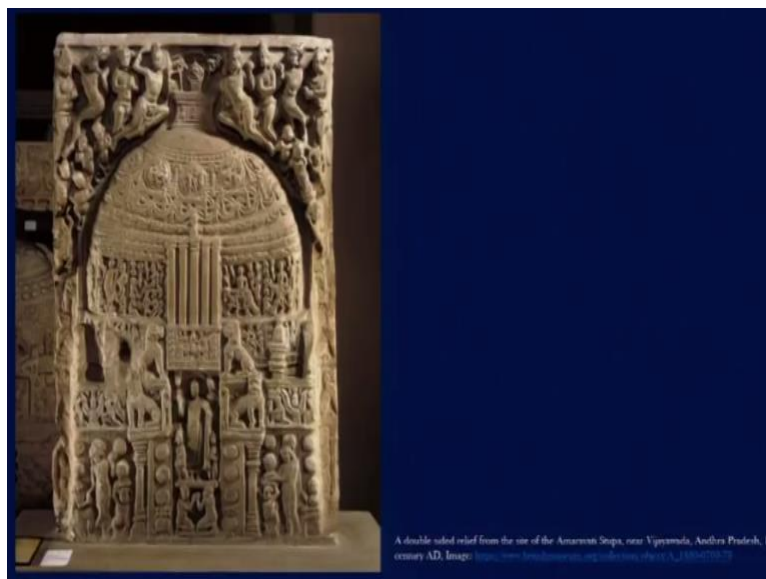
particular sculpture that we also find that this is very tactfully placed in this particular area to support the horizontal bars and this particular way in which the sculptures are made that makes the use of an architectural bracket, but it also serves as part of the sculptural need as part of it.

So, architecture, sculpture, narration, and their usability in the entire structure all these things we find them to be running together simultaneously. So, if the needs of the architecture is covered, it is not like the narrative needs are ignored. So, all those needs are taken care of by the artisans in Sanchi that is what we find and that is also something that we find to be that which contributed to the appreciation of these particular structures.

Now, the other thing that we also find that there are many different ways of narrations which are implemented in these structures. So, for example here we have how there are continuous narrations that the narration continues in these forms and even here like there is a journey of emperor Ashoka that we find that has been depicted here and how the figure of emperor Ashoka that not only appears once but multiple times in the same horizontal panel to show there is a progression of this narrative.

So, if there are these kinds of narratives, these continuous narratives that we find there and then there are also the other kinds of narratives, for example the image of the Buddha or the worshipping of this Ashokan pillar so that shows a very different kind of a single scene narrative. So, all these different strategies were also implemented as part of these structures.

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A double-sided relief from the site of the Amaravati Stupa, near Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, 1st century AD. Image: <https://www.britannica.com/photograph/Amravati-Stupa>

Now, at the end I also wanted to address that how the spread of Buddhism was not limited to part of central and northern India and then there was this very significant stupa that we find in the place Amaravati. So, Amaravati is today in the state of Andhra Pradesh and in that area we find that it was not just one site, but there were many sites which came into prominence. So, for example Amaravati, Ghantasala and then Phanigiri and Nagarjunakonda and so on.

And here what we find that they used limestone, white limestone which almost looks like marble and then those white lime stones were used for making this Great Stupa at Amravati. Now, this site had also been in the ruins and many of these artifacts had been collected either in the Government Museum, Chennai or mostly in the British Museum in London. So, some of the ones which we see them they are all in fragments.

And some of the fragments like the one we have on screen that sort of shows the amounts of details and the grandeur of this particular structure. So, going with the depiction that we have here, here the stupa structure is not just unadorned, but there are sculptures already on the body of the stupa and perhaps there is a sign that there was a long tall standing figure of Buddha that was also made part of this that was worshipped in this particular structure.

So, this kind of different ways in which we find that how Buddhist architecture had flourished in different parts of the Indian subcontinent, though there are some of the similarities, but there were also the regional additions which enriched the making and the flourishing of Buddhist art and architecture in the Indian subcontinent.