



NCERT

National Council of Educational Research and Training

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Art & Culture



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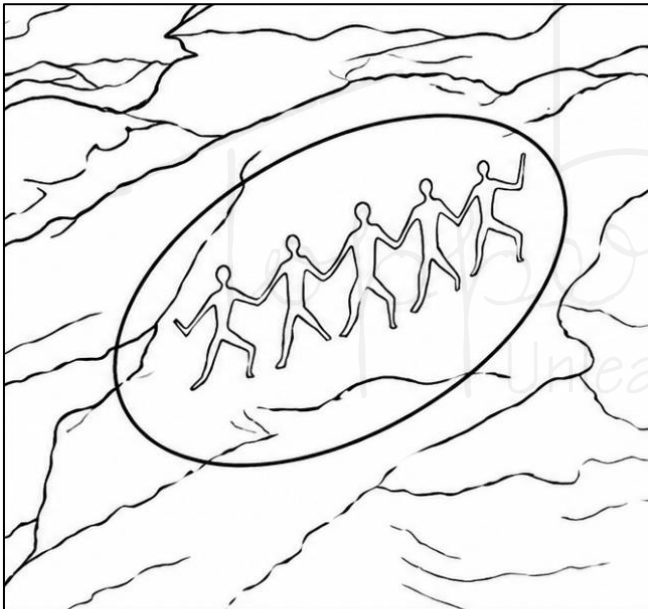
CHAPTER

Introduction to Indian Art

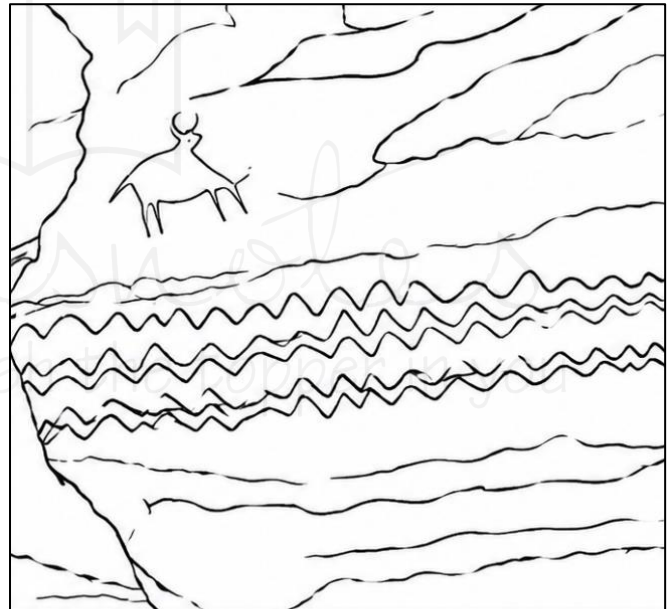
Prehistoric Rock Paintings

Introduction to Prehistory

The term **prehistory** refers to the vast period in human history before the invention of writing, paper, or recorded documents. Because there are no written accounts, our understanding of this era is entirely dependent on **archaeology**. By excavating sites—finding tools, pottery, habitats, animal and human bones, and cave paintings - scholars have reconstructed the lives of early humans.



Hand-linked dancing figures, Lakhudiyar, Uttarakhand



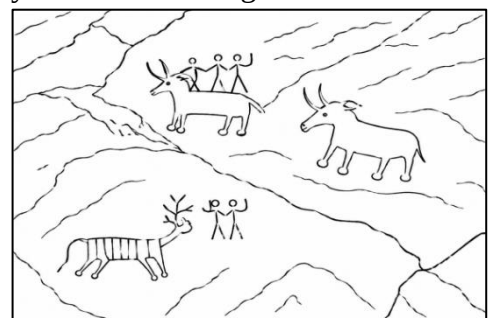
Wavy lines, Lakhudiyar, Uttarakhand

Once humans satisfied their fundamental needs for food, water, clothing, and shelter, they developed the impulse to express themselves. **Painting and drawing** on cave walls became the earliest art forms, acting as a visual diary of their existence or simply a way to beautify their surroundings.

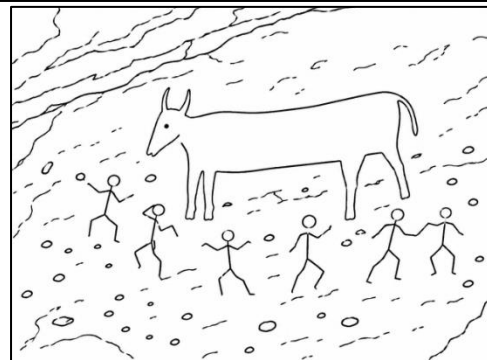
Chronological Framework

The early development of human beings is categorized into ages based on tool technology and lifestyle:

- **Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age):** The earliest period. While it is debated if Lower Palaeolithic humans produced art, there is a clear **proliferation of artistic activity** by the Upper Palaeolithic period, marked by finely carved and painted animals.



- **Mesolithic Period:** Follows the Palaeolithic; it marks the peak of artistic volume and variety.
- **Chalcolithic Period:** Characterized by the interaction between cave dwellers and settled agricultural communities (e.g., of the Malwa plains).



Major Archaeological Discoveries in India

India is home to significant prehistoric rock art, with discoveries occurring even before European sites like Altamira (Spain).

- **Discovery Timeline:** The first discovery of rock paintings in India occurred in **1867–68** by **Archibold Carlleyle**. Later, archaeologists like Cockburn, Anderson, Mitra, and Ghosh identified numerous sites.
- **Geographical Distribution:**
 - **Uttarakhand:** Located at **Lakhudiyar** (meaning "one lakh caves") on the banks of the River **Suyal**.
 - **Central and Peninsular India:** Found across districts in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Bihar.
 - **Kashmir:** Two slabs with engravings have been reported here.
 - **Neolithic Sites:** Notable sites include **Kupgallu, Piklihal, and Tekkalkota** (Karnataka/Andhra Pradesh).

Regional Art Styles and Motifs

1. Lakhudiyar (Uttarakhand)

- **Categories:** Paintings are divided into three groups: **man, animal, and geometric patterns**.
- **Colors:** Utilized **white, black, and red ochre**.
- **Superimposition:** A unique feature where new paintings were made over old ones. The chronological sequence of color usage was: **Black (earliest) → Red Ochre → White (latest)**.
- **Motifs:** Humans are drawn in "stick-like" forms. Animal motifs include a long-snouted animal, a fox, and a multiple-legged lizard. A notable scene includes **hand-linked dancing figures**.

2. Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh

- **Canvas:** These regions provided **granite rocks** for Neolithic artists.
- **Themes:** Subjects include bulls, elephants, sambhars, gazelles, sheep, goats, horses, stylised humans, and tridents. Vegetal motifs are rarely found.

Bhimbetka: The Epicenter of Indian Rock Art

The most spectacular and extensive repository of prehistoric art in India is the **Bhimbetka** rock shelter complex, located in the **Vindhya hills** of Madhya Pradesh, approximately 45 kilometers south of Bhopal.

- **Discovery:** Discovered in **1957–58** by the eminent archaeologist **V.S. Wakankar**, this site spans an area of ten square kilometers and contains about **eight hundred rock shelters**, five hundred of which feature paintings.
- **Significance:** The site serves as a perfect habitat for Stone Age humans due to its abundance of forests, wild plants, fruits, streams, and creeks. The rock art here has been classified into seven historical periods, with the first three (Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, and Chalcolithic) representing the core phases of prehistoric creative evolution.

Artistic Phases at Bhimbetka

1. Upper Palaeolithic Period (Period I):

- **Style:** Characterized by **linear representations**.
- **Technique:** Primarily wash paintings or filled with geometric patterns.

-
- **Themes:** Huge animal figures (bison, elephant, tiger, rhino, boar) and **stick-like human figures**.
 - **Color Palette:** Green (usually depicting dancers) and dark red (usually depicting hunters).

2. Mesolithic Period (Period II):

- **Significance:** This period boasts the **largest number of paintings**.
- **Evolution:** While themes multiplied, the painting size decreased.
- **Themes:** Hunting scenes predominate, showing groups armed with barbed spears, pointed sticks, arrows, and bows. Evidence of traps and snares suggests advanced hunting strategies.
- **Human/Animal Interaction:** The artists showed a dual perspective: fear of predators versus a sense of **tenderness and love** for animals.
- **Lifestyle:** Scenes include family life, community dances, gathering fruit/honey, and women grinding food. Humans are depicted in stylized manners, while animals are naturalistic.

3. Chalcolithic Period (Period III):

- **Interaction:** Paintings reflect the contact and exchange of goods between cave dwellers and the **settled agricultural communities** of the Malwa plains.
- **Common Motifs:** Ceramics and rock paintings share motifs like **cross-hatched squares and lattices**.
- **Shift in Style:** While pottery and metal tools appear, the vividness and vitality characteristic of earlier periods began to decline.

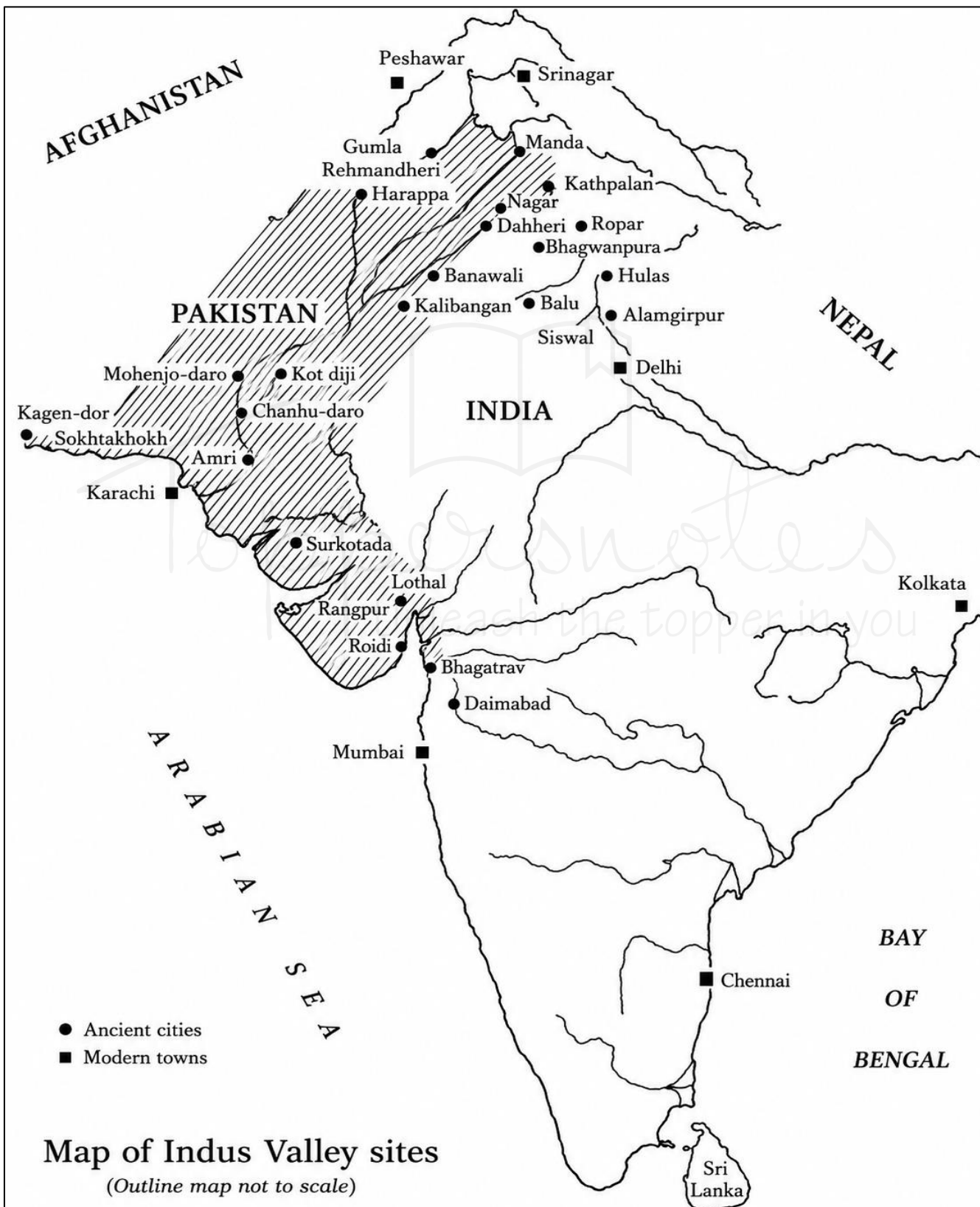
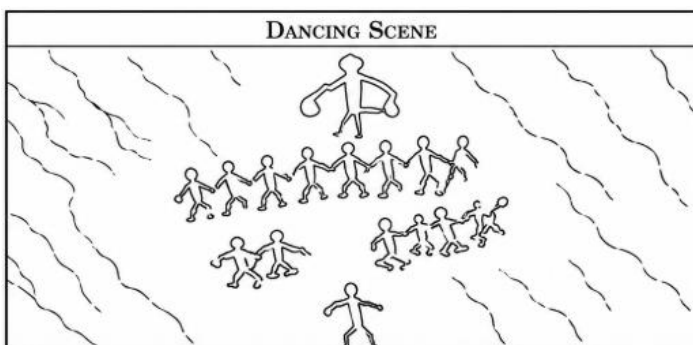
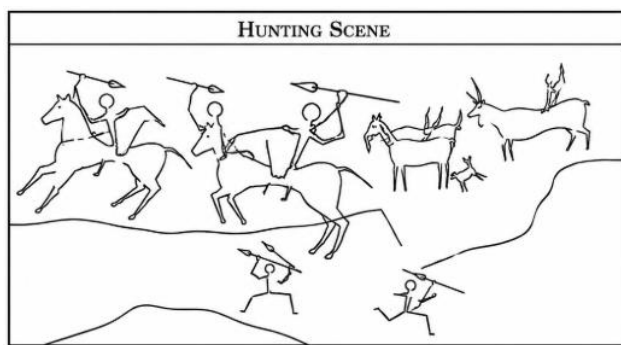
Techniques, Materials, and Aesthetic Philosophy

- **Color Composition:** The artists ground various rocks and minerals into powder, mixing them with water and a **binding agent** (animal fat, plant gum, or resin).
 - **Red:** Derived from **haematite** (*geru*).
 - **Green:** From **chalcedony** (a green variety of stone).
 - **White:** Likely from limestone.
- **Durability:** The remarkable survival of these colors for thousands of years is attributed to the **chemical reaction of the oxide** present on the rock surfaces.
- **Tools:** Brushes were fashioned from **plant fibers**.
- **Placement:** Paintings were executed on walls and ceilings of shelters. Some are found in high, inaccessible areas, suggesting that these specific spots may have held **religious or sacred importance** rather than being mere living quarters.

Analytical Observations

- **Superimposition:** It is common to find one painting on top of another—at Bhimbetka, up to **20 layers** exist. This may indicate:
 1. The artist was dissatisfied with their previous work.
 2. Certain sites were considered **sacred**.
 3. Different generations utilized the same space over millennia.
- **Artistic Intent:** Beyond aesthetic beautification, these paintings acted as a visual record of life and potentially served as **ritualistic tools**. Dramatic scenes—such as animals in the agony of death while hunters dance—suggest a desire to gain **power over nature** or success in the hunt.
- **Comparative Insight:** The "hand-linked dancing figures" at Bhimbetka mirror similar motifs found in the **Lakhudiyar** paintings of Uttarakhand, suggesting a shared cultural vocabulary among prehistoric groups across the Indian subcontinent.

These rock paintings represent the greatest wealth left behind by primitive humans, offering an unparalleled window into their food habits, daily activities, social structure, and the **evolution of the human mind**.



Arts of the Indus Valley Civilisation

The Indus Valley Civilisation, emerging in the **second half of the third millennium BCE**, represents one of the earliest urban cultures in human history. Its art reflects a society with fine artistic sensibilities, a vivid imagination, and a high degree of technical skill.

1. Urban Planning and Civic Life

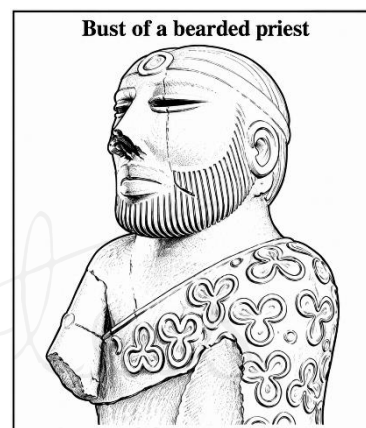
The civilisation was defined by sophisticated city planning, particularly in the two major cities: **Harappa** (north) and **Mohenjodaro** (south).

- **Grid System:** Cities were organised in a grid-like pattern, featuring houses, markets, storage facilities, offices, and public baths.
- **Drainage:** They possessed a highly developed, advanced drainage system.
- **Geographical Spread:** While Harappa and Mohenjodaro are in Pakistan, major excavated sites in India include **Lothal and Dholavira** (Gujarat), **Rakhigarhi** (Haryana), **Ropar** (Punjab), and **Kalibangan and Balathal** (Rajasthan).
- **Fashion and Lifestyle:** The people were fashion-conscious, using different hairstyles, beards, and cosmetics like **cinnabar**, lipstick, and collyrium (eyeliner). They wore attire similar to the modern dhoti and shawl. Excavations of spindles and whorls (made of expensive faience or cheap pottery/shell) indicate that **spinning cotton and wool** was a common practice across all social strata.

2. Stone Statuary: Mastery of Form

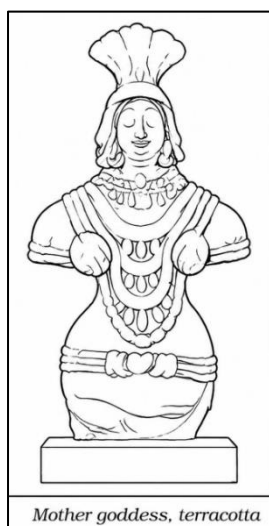
Stone sculptures were not abundant, but they exhibit a refined ability to handle **three-dimensional volumes**.

- **Male Torso:** A figure in **red sandstone** found at Harappa. It features socket holes in the neck and shoulders for the attachment of the head and arms, suggesting a sophisticated assembly technique. The posture is frontal, with well-baked shoulders and a slightly prominent abdomen.
- **Bust of a Bearded Man:** Found at Mohenjodaro and interpreted as a **priest**.
 - **Features:** He is draped in a shawl with **trefoil patterns** covering the left shoulder. He has half-closed, meditative eyes, a well-formed nose, a close-cut moustache, and a short beard.
 - **Details:** His ears resemble double shells, and his hair is parted in the middle with a plain woven fillet. An armlet and holes for a necklace suggest adornment.



3. Bronze Casting: The 'Lost Wax' Tradition

Bronze casting was widely practised and indicates a continuous metallurgical tradition that persists in India today.



Mother goddess, terracotta

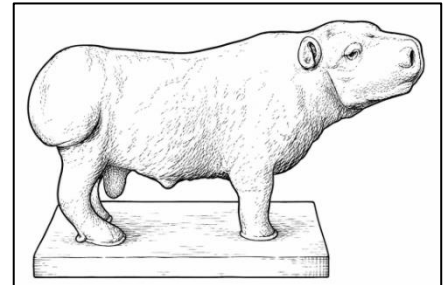
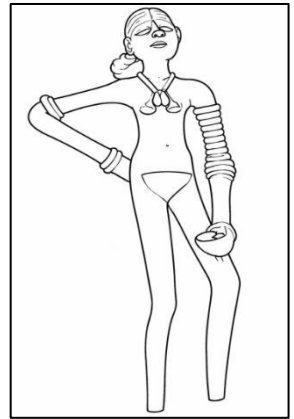


A terracotta figurine

- **Technique:** They used the '**lost wax**' technique. A wax figure was coated in clay and dried; the wax was then melted and drained through a hole. The resulting hollow clay mould was filled with molten metal. Once cooled, the clay was removed.

- **Key Artefacts:**

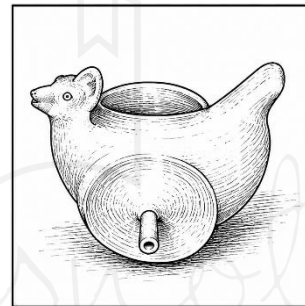
- **Dancing Girl:** Found at Mohenjodaro, this 4-inch copper figure is highly expressive. Her left arm is covered in bangles; her right arm holds a bracelet/amulet. Her hand is on her hip, and her posture reflects a traditional dance gesture.
- **Bull:** Also from Mohenjodaro, this figure captures the massiveness and fury of a charging animal.
- **Regional Diversity:** Other notable metal figures include the copper dog and bird from **Lothal**, the bull from **Kalibangan**, and excellent cast sculptures from late Harappan/Chalcolithic sites like **Daimabad** (Maharashtra).



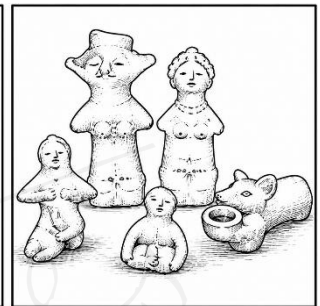
4. Terracotta Art: Folk Traditions

Compared to the sophisticated stone and bronze work, terracotta representations of the human form in the Indus Valley are generally **crude**. However, they provide deep insights into the religious and daily life of the common people.

- **Realistic Tendencies:** While often stylised, terracotta modelling of animal figures was done with extreme care. Human forms are more realistic at sites in **Gujarat** and **Kalibangan**.
- **Mother Goddess:** These are the most important terracotta figures-typically standing, adorned with necklaces, wearing a loincloth and girdle. They feature a distinct **fan-shaped head-dress** with a cup-like projection on each side, pellet eyes, a beaked nose, and a slit for the mouth.
- **Other Figurines:**
 - **Bearded Males:** Figurines with coiled hair, standing in a rigid, upright position with legs slightly apart and arms parallel to the body. The repetition of this specific posture suggests he was a **deity**.
 - **Masks:** A terracotta mask of a **horned deity** has been discovered.
 - **Daily Life/Toys:** The tradition included toy carts with wheels, whistles, rattles, birds, animals, gamesmen, and discs.



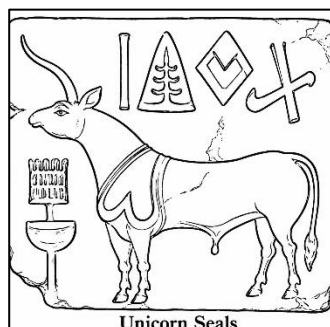
Soak



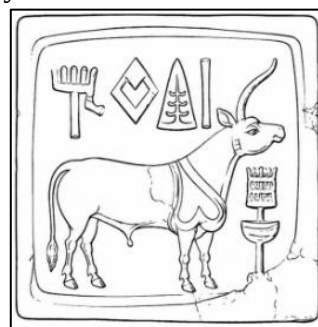
Terracotta

5. Seals: The Commercial and Amulet Significance

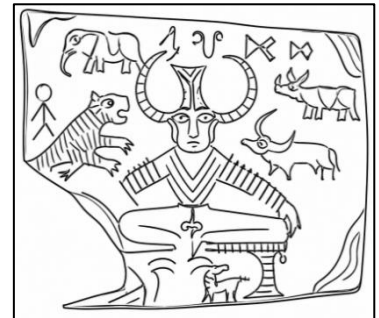
Archaeologists have discovered thousands of seals, primarily used for **commercial purposes**, though they likely also served as amulets or identity cards for their owners.



Unicorn Seals



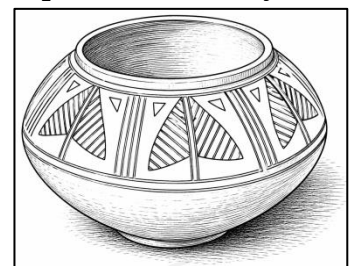
- **Material and Form:** The standard Harappan seal was a **2×2 square inch** plaque, usually made of soft river stone, **steatite**. Other materials included agate, chert, copper, faience, terracotta, gold, and ivory.
- **Artistic Rendering:** Animals are carved in **intaglio** (sunken relief) with remarkable realism. Motifs include the unicorn bull, rhinoceros, tiger, elephant, bison, goat, buffalo, and various monsters.
- **The Pashupati Seal:** The **most** iconic seal, featuring a human figure seated cross-legged in the centre.
 - **Composition:** An elephant and tiger are on the right; a rhinoceros and buffalo on the left; two antelopes are depicted below the seat. Some scholars identify this as **Pashupati**, while others identify it as a **female deity**.
- **Copper Tablets:** These were square or rectangular tablets with an animal or human figure on one side and an inscription on the other (or both). These appear to have been **amulets**; unlike the varied inscriptions on seals, inscriptions on copper tablets seem linked to the specific animal portrayed.
- **Script:** Every seal features a **pictographic script**, which remains **undeciphered** to this day.



6. Pottery: Evolution of Design

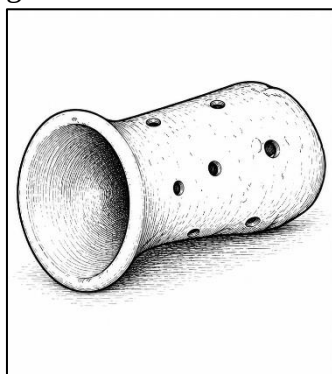
The abundance of pottery provides evidence of a highly developed craft and evolving design sensibilities.

- **Production:** Pottery was predominantly **wheel-made**, with very few instances of hand-made wares.
- **Types:**
 - **Plain Pottery:** The most common variety, usually of red clay, sometimes with a red or grey slip. Includes **knobbed ware** (ornamented with rows of knobs).
 - **Black Painted Ware:** Features a fine red slip with geometric and animal designs executed in **glossy black paint**.
 - **Polychrome Pottery:** Rare; small vases decorated in red, black, and green (rarely white & yellow).
 - **Incised Ware:** Rare; decoration confined to the bases of pans (inside) and dishes of offering stands.
 - **Perforated Pottery:** Features a large hole at the bottom and small holes on the walls, likely used for **straining liquor**.
- **Design Characteristics:** Graceful curves were the standard, with straight and angular shapes being exceptions. Miniature vessels, some less than half an inch high, demonstrate immense technical skill. A famous example is the **Painted Earthen Jar** from Mohenjodaro, which uses vegetal and geometric motifs with a tendency toward abstraction.

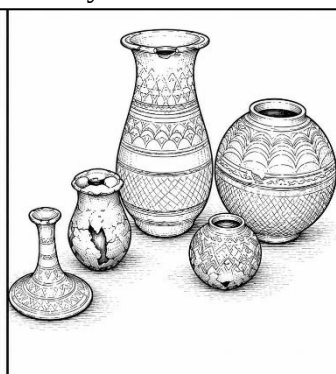


7. Beads and Ornaments: Craftsmanship and Adornment

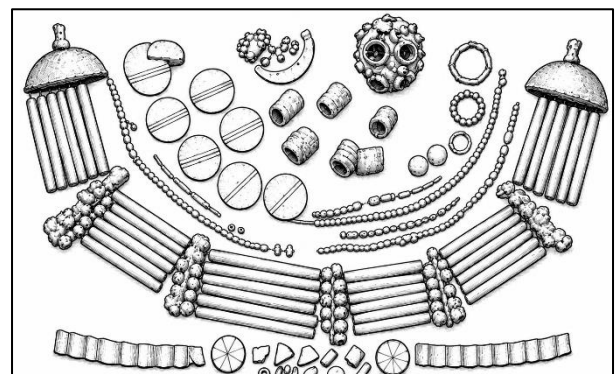
The Harappans were meticulous about self-decoration, using everything from precious metals and gemstones to bone and baked clay.



Perforated pot



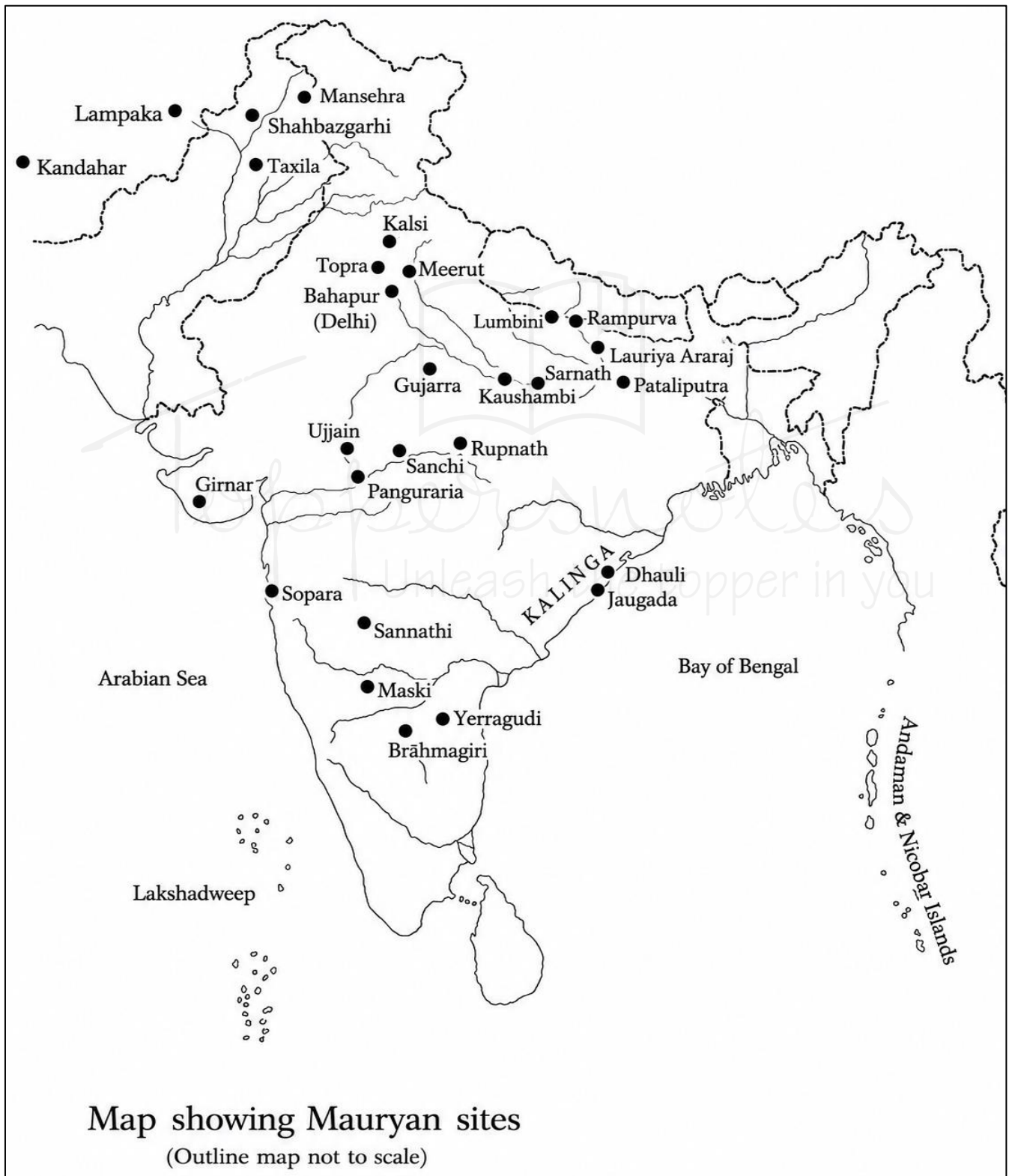
Pottery



Beadwork and jewellery items

- **Types of Ornaments:** Necklaces, fillets, armlets, and finger-rings were worn by both sexes, while women specifically wore girdles, earrings, and anklets.
- **The Bead Industry:** Centres of production were located at **Chanhudaro and Lothal**. Beads were fashioned from cornelian, amethyst, jasper, crystal, quartz, steatite, turquoise, and lapis lazuli.
 - **Technique:** Beads were disc-shaped, cylindrical, spherical, barrel-shaped, or segmented. Some were etched or painted, and some were made by cementing two or more stones together.
- **Naturalistic Models:** They created brilliant, naturalistic models of animals (like monkeys and squirrels) to serve as pin-heads and beads.

The artistic legacy of the Indus Valley reveals a highly organised society where functional utility—whether in civic planning, commercial seals, or daily household pottery—was seamlessly integrated with refined aesthetic expression.



Arts of the Mauryan Period

The Mauryan period serves as a foundational era in Indian art history, marking a transition toward monumental architecture and sophisticated sculpture, heavily influenced by the rise of the **Shraman tradition** (Buddhism and Jainism).

Socio-Religious Context

The **6th century BCE** heralded a transformative era in the Gangetic valley, characterized by the emergence of new religious and social movements.

- **Rise of Shraman Tradition:** Buddhism and Jainism gained popularity by opposing the rigid **varna** and **jati** systems of the contemporary Hindu religion.
- **Political Consolidation:** Magadha emerged as a dominant power, and by the **4th century BCE**, the Mauryas established a vast empire. By the **3rd century BCE**, a significant portion of the Indian subcontinent was under Mauryan control.
- **Ashokan Patronage:** Ashoka, the most powerful Mauryan king, became a major patron of the Shraman tradition during the 3rd century BCE.
- **Pluralistic Worship:** Despite the dominance of Buddhism, religious practices were diverse. **Yaksha** and mother goddess worship were prevalent, and the Yaksha cult was eventually assimilated into both Buddhist and Jaina traditions.

Pillar Architecture

The Mauryan period is celebrated for its stone pillars, which served as both religious monuments and symbols of imperial authority.

- **Distinctive Technique:** While pillar construction existed earlier (e.g., in the Achaemenian empire), Mauryan pillars were uniquely **rock-cut** (carved from a single piece of stone) by skilled artisans, whereas Achaemenian pillars were constructed in assembled pieces by masons.
- **Design Elements:** These pillars were distributed across the empire and featured **inscriptions** (edicts). The top usually consisted of a **capital figure** (lion, bull, elephant) standing on a circular or square **abacus**, which was frequently decorated with **stylized lotuses**.
- **Geographic Distribution:** Notable pillars have been found at sites like Basarah-Bakhira, Lauriya Nandangarh, Rampurva, Sankisa, and Sarnath.

Focus Feature: The Lion Capital at Sarnath

The **Lion Capital** is the finest example of Mauryan sculptural mastery and currently serves as the **National Emblem of India**.

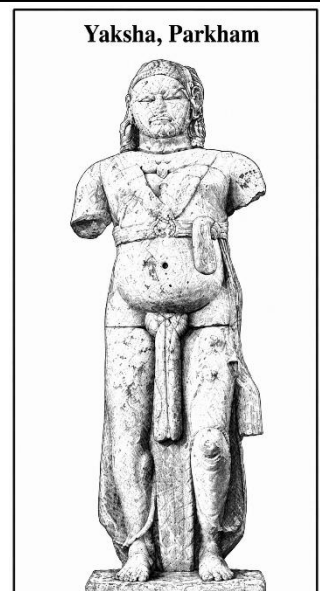
- **Symbolism:** It commemorates the **Dhammachakrapravartana** (the first sermon of the Buddha).
- **Components:** Originally comprised five parts: (1) a shaft, (2) a lotus bell base, (3) a drum with four animals in clockwise motion, (4) four addorsed lions, and (5) a crowning **Dharmachakra** (wheel).
- **Artistic Nuance:** The sculpture displays a highly **naturalistic depiction**, evident in the powerful facial musculature, sharp lines of the mane, and the projection of the lips. The lions appear "as if they have held their breath."
- **Technical Excellence:** The surface is heavily polished—a hallmark of Mauryan art. The abacus features a wheel (chakra) with 24 spokes, flanked by a horse, bull, lion, and elephant, all carved with high precision to convey movement in a confined space.

Sculpture and Statuary

Mauryan sculpture demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the human form, characterized by monumental size and a unique surface treatment.

- **Yaksha and Yakshini Images:** Monumental standing statues of Yakshas and Yakshinis have been discovered at sites like Patna, Vidisha, and Mathura.

- **Didargunj Yakshini:** A prime example of this tradition. It is a life-size, free-standing sculpture in sandstone featuring:
 - **Polished Surface:** A key distinguishing element of the era.
 - **Naturalism:** Sensitively rendered features such as fleshy cheeks, sharp facial details, and a well-proportioned, muscular body.
 - **Drapery:** The garment is carved with such care that it creates a transparent effect, with folds and ornaments rendered in high relief.
- **Animal Representation:** Examples like the monumental rock-cut elephant at **Dhauli** (Orissa) demonstrate the "modelling in round" technique, combining linear rhythm with the placement of an Ashokan rock-edict.



Stupa, Vihara, and Monastic Architecture

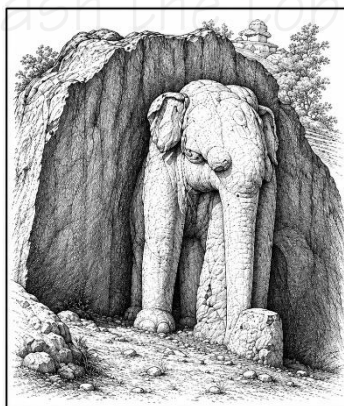
The construction of **stupas** and **viharas** became the hallmark of the Buddhist and Jaina monastic traditions during the Mauryan period, representing the physical manifestation of these religious movements.

- **Definition and Structure:** Stupas were built primarily over the physical relics of the Buddha. A standard stupa consists of a **cylindrical drum** and a **circular anda** (mound), topped with a **harmika** and **chhatra**. These structures were surrounded by a **circumambulatory path**.
- **Key Sites:** Notable early stupas existed at Rajagraha, Vaishali, Kapilavastu, Allakappa, Ramagrama, Vethadipa, Pava, Kushinagar, and Pippalvina. Textual evidence also suggests stupas existed in regions outside the Gangetic valley, such as Avanti and Gandhara.
- **Evolution of Architecture:**
 - Initially, as seen in the **Bairat (Rajasthan)** stupa, the design was simple and grand.
 - During the time of **Ashoka**, the Great Stupa at **Sanchi** was constructed with bricks.
 - By the **second century BCE**, these monuments underwent significant expansions. Additions included elaborate railings to enclose the circumambulatory path and the construction of ceremonial gateways (**torans**), providing ample space for sculptural decoration.

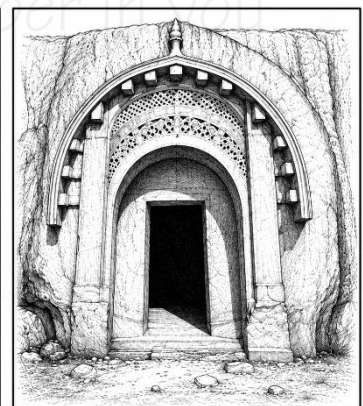
The Rock-Cut Tradition: Lomus Rishi Cave

While most structures were built, the Mauryan era also produced unique rock-cut architecture.

- **Lomus Rishi Cave:** Located at **Barabar hills** near Gaya, Bihar, this cave was patronized by Ashoka for the **Ajivika sect**.
- **Design:** It features a rectangular interior hall with a circular chamber at the back. The entrance is located on the side wall.
- **Architectural Detail:** The facade is decorated with a semicircular **chaitya arch**. An **elephant frieze** is carved in high relief on this arch, exhibiting remarkable movement. This cave serves as an isolated but foundational example of the rock-cut tradition that would be further developed in eastern and western India in subsequent periods.



Elephant, Dhauli



Lomus Rishi cave-entrance detail

Patronage and Social Dynamics

The development of Buddhist and Jaina art was not solely a royal endeavor; it was deeply rooted in a collective social movement.

- **Collective Patronage:** While kings like Ashoka provided early royal support, inscriptions from the second century BCE onwards reveal that patronage was highly **collective**.

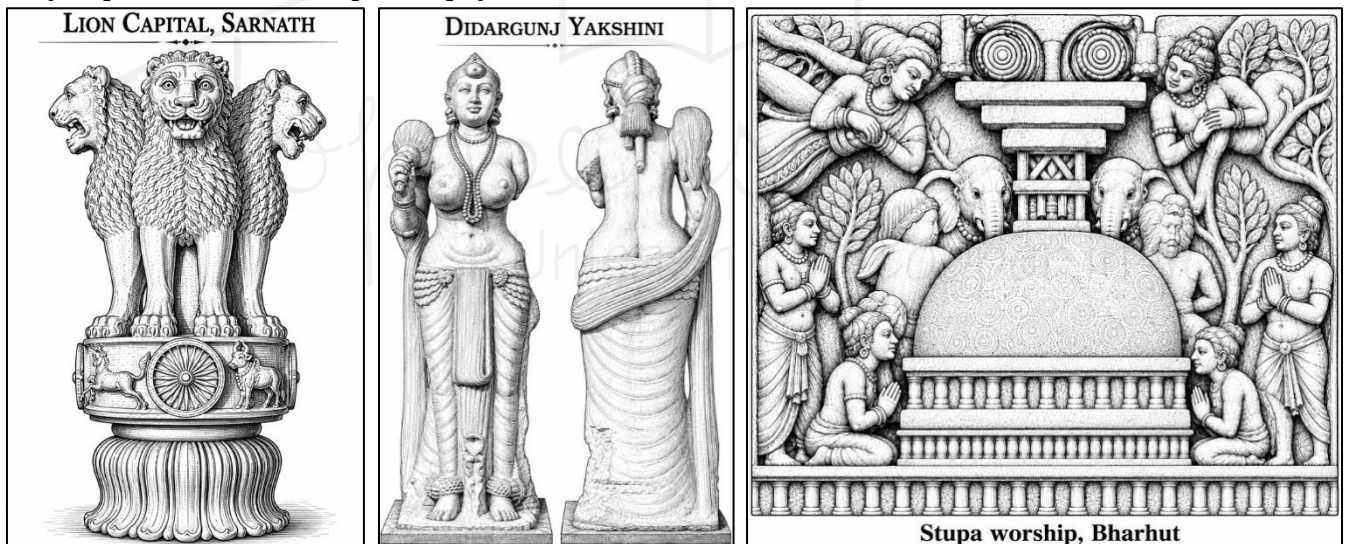
- **Diverse Donors:** Patrons ranged from lay devotees and **gahapatis** (householders) to guilds. Donors often recorded their professions and places of origin.
- **The Artisans:** Though less common, some inscriptions document the names of artisans, such as **Kanha** at Pitalkhora and his disciple **Balaka** at the Kondane caves. These records identify various categories of craftsmen, including stone carvers, goldsmiths, stone-polishers, and carpenters.

Evolution of Narrative and Iconography

In the early phase of Buddhism, the Buddha was never depicted in human form. Instead, he was represented **symbolically**.

- **Early Symbols:** Respect was paid through the worship of footprints, stupas, the lotus throne, and the chakra. These symbols indicated simple worship or the historicization of specific life events.
- **Development of Narratives:** Over time, storytelling became central to Buddhist art. Sculptors began depicting:
 1. **Events from the Life of the Buddha:** Specifically the Birth, Renunciation, Enlightenment, **Dhammachakrapravartana** (first sermon), and **Mahaparinibbana** (death).
 2. **Jataka Stories:** Tales of the Buddha's previous births, such as the *Chhadanta Jataka*, *Vidurpundita Jataka*, *Ruru Jataka*, *Sibi Jataka*, *Vessantara Jataka*, and *Shama Jataka*.
- **Narrative Techniques:** The pictorial tradition utilized three distinct styles:
 1. **Synoptic Narrative:** Summarizing the event.
 2. **Continuous Narrative:** Depicting multiple moments of a story in one composition.
 3. **Episodic Narrative:** Focusing on specific dramatic moments.

These narratives were carved onto the railings and gateways of stupas, transforming them into visual encyclopedias of Buddhist philosophy and lore.



Post-Mauryan Trends in Indian Art and Architecture (2nd Century BCE – 6th Century CE)

The post-Mauryan period represents a transformative era in Indian art. As the vast Mauryan Empire fragmented, power shifted to various regional dynasties, fostering a diverse artistic landscape. This period saw the simultaneous evolution of **Brahmanical sects** (Vaishnavism and Shaivism) and the continued flourishing of **Buddhism**, leading to the creation of iconic stupas, rock-cut caves, and the emergence of human-form idol worship.

1. Political Landscape and Regional Centers

Following the second century BCE, political control over North and Central India was held by the **Shungas, Kanvas, Kushanas, and Guptas**. Simultaneously, Southern and Western India saw the rise of the **Satvahanas, Ikshavakus, Abhiras, and Vakatakas**.

This decentralization led to prominent artistic centers emerging across the subcontinent, including:

- **Central/East:** Vidisha, Bharhut (MP), Bodhgaya (Bihar), Khandagiri-Udaigiri (Odisha).
- **North/West:** Mathura (UP), Bhaja, Pavani (Maharashtra).
- **South:** Jaggayyapeta (Andhra Pradesh).

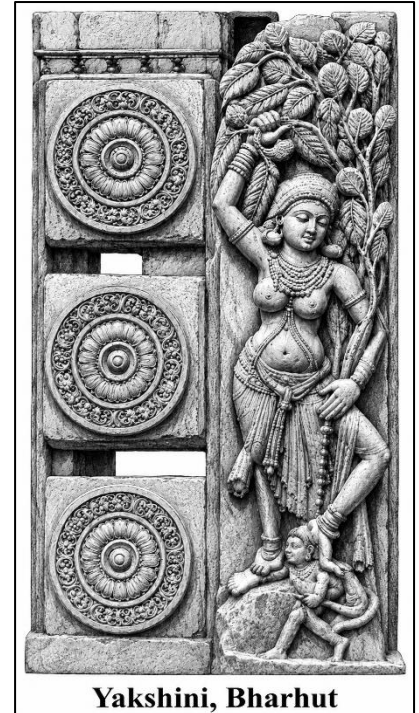
2. Evolution of Stupa Architecture

The Stupa remained the primary Buddhist monument, evolving from simple brick structures to elaborate stone-clad complexes.

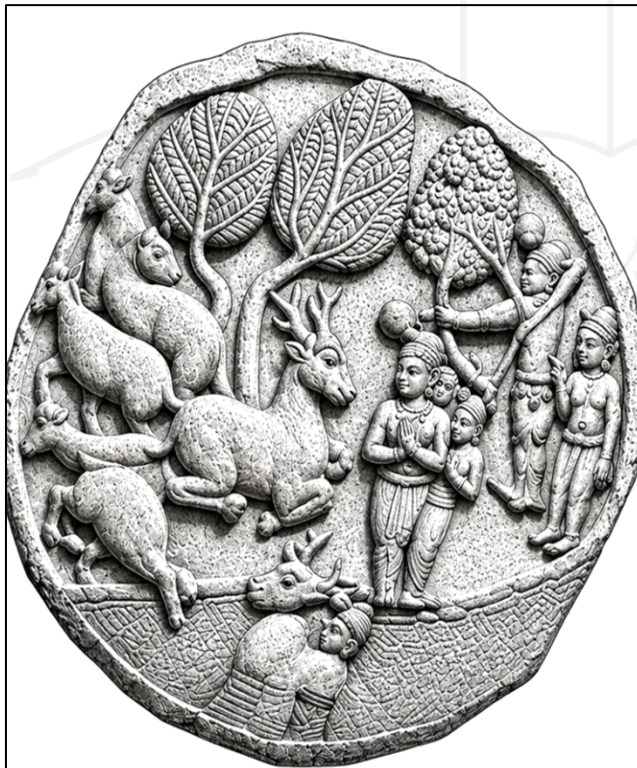
The Bharhut Stupa (Early Phase)

Bharhut represents the foundational transition from wooden to stone architecture.

- **Sculptural Features:** Initially, sculptures were tall and **low-relief**, emphasizing linearity. Images often appeared "flat" and stuck to the picture plane.
- **Narrative Technique:** Artisans used "tilted perspective" to create a 3D illusion. Stories (Jatakas) were communicated by clubbing multiple events within one frame based on their geographical location.



Yakshini, Bharhut



Jataka panel, Bharhut

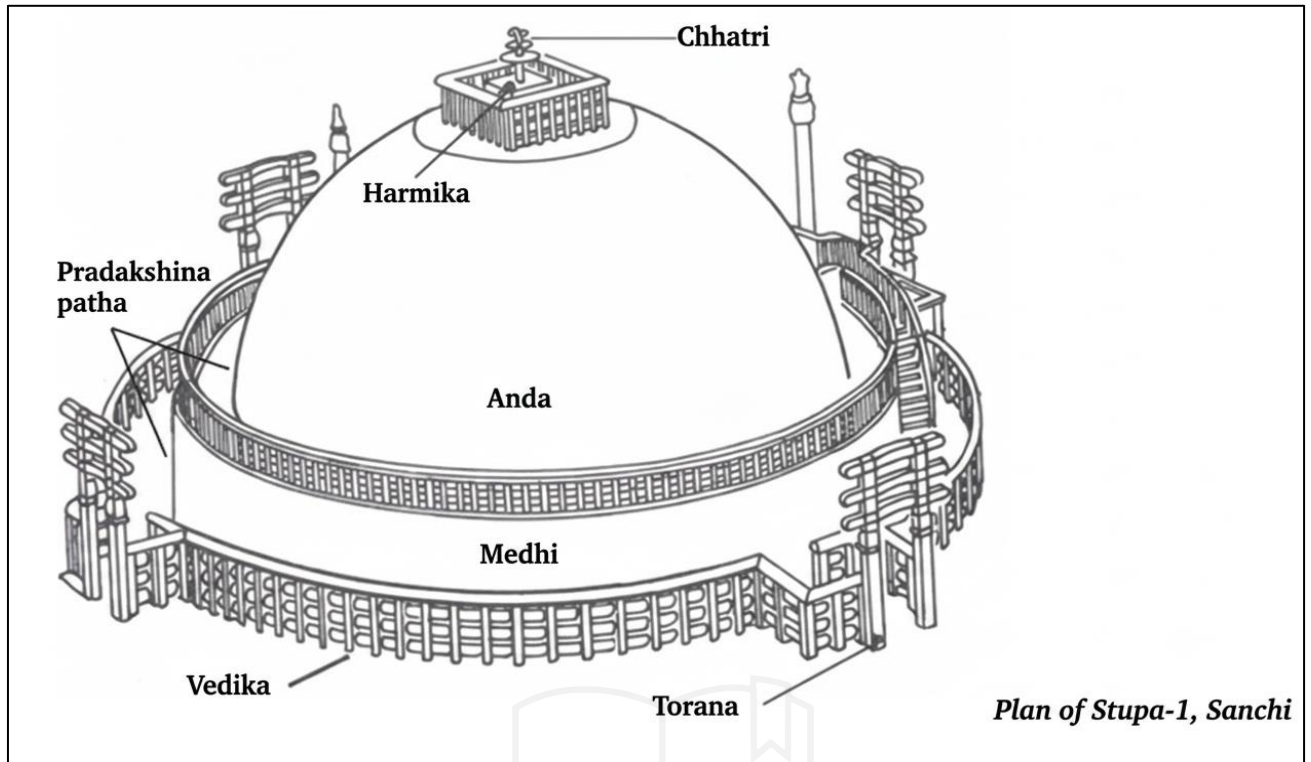


Queen Maya's dream, Bharhut

- **Stylistic Progression:** Early figures displayed stiffness and awkward limb positions due to shallow carving. Over time, techniques advanced toward **deep carving**, providing pronounced volume and naturalistic body forms.
- **Key Iconography:** Male figures typically wore a **knotted headgear**, a consistent stylistic marker of the 1st–2nd century BCE.

The Sanchi Stupa-1 (Progressive Phase)

Sanchi represents a significant advancement in complexity and naturalism.



- **Architectural Layout:** It features upper and lower *pradakshinapatha* (circumambulatory paths) and four elaborately carved **toranas** (gateways).
- **Advancements:** Unlike Bharhut, Sanchi sculptures are in **high relief**. The figures are dynamic, bodies have movement, and heads possess projection, reducing the earlier rigidity.
- **Narrative Depth:** Historical narratives (e.g., Ashoka's visit to Ramgrama) and Buddhist legends are depicted with intricate detail, though the "Queen Maya's Dream" episode remains simple.
- **Symbolism:** The Buddha is represented purely through **aniconic symbols** (empty throne, feet, *chhatra*, or the Stupa itself).

3. The Three Great Schools: Mathura, Sarnath, and Gandhara

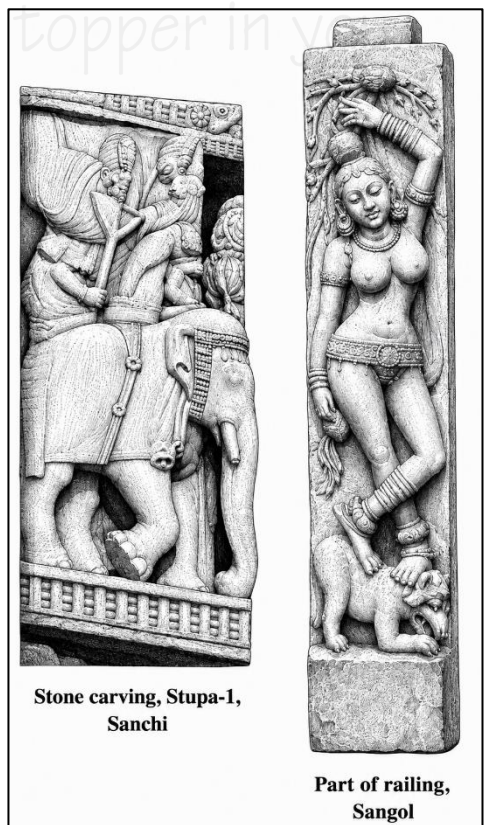
By the 1st century CE, the transition from symbolic representation to the **human form of the Buddha** occurred.

Mathura School (Northern India)

- **Origin:** Modeled on earlier *Yaksha* images.
- **Style:** Bold carving, round and smiling faces, and fleshy, sensuous bodies (rotundity).
- **Evolution:** In the 2nd century CE, figures became fleshier. By the 3rd century, the "extreme fleshiness" was reduced to show movement through bent postures. By the 5th–6th century, drapery became integrated into the body mass, achieving a **transparent quality**.
- **Features:** The halo around the Buddha's head was profusely decorated, and garments typically covered the left shoulder.

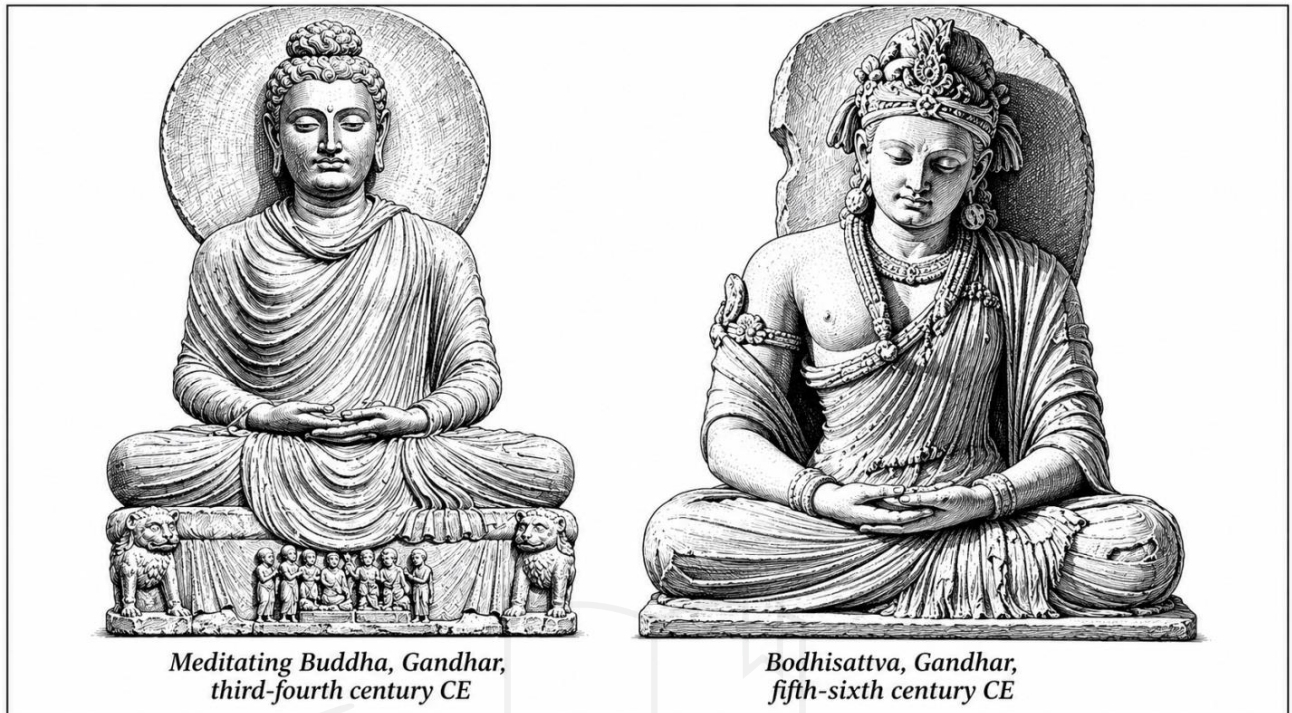
Gandhara School (North-West/Pakistan)

- **Influences:** A confluence of **Hellenistic (Greco-Roman)**, Bactrian, and Parthian traditions.



- **Features:** Naturalistic, expressive faces with half-closed eyes, wavy/curly hair, and heavy drapery folds. The focus was on "calmness" and three-dimensional realism through the play of light and shadow on facial planes.

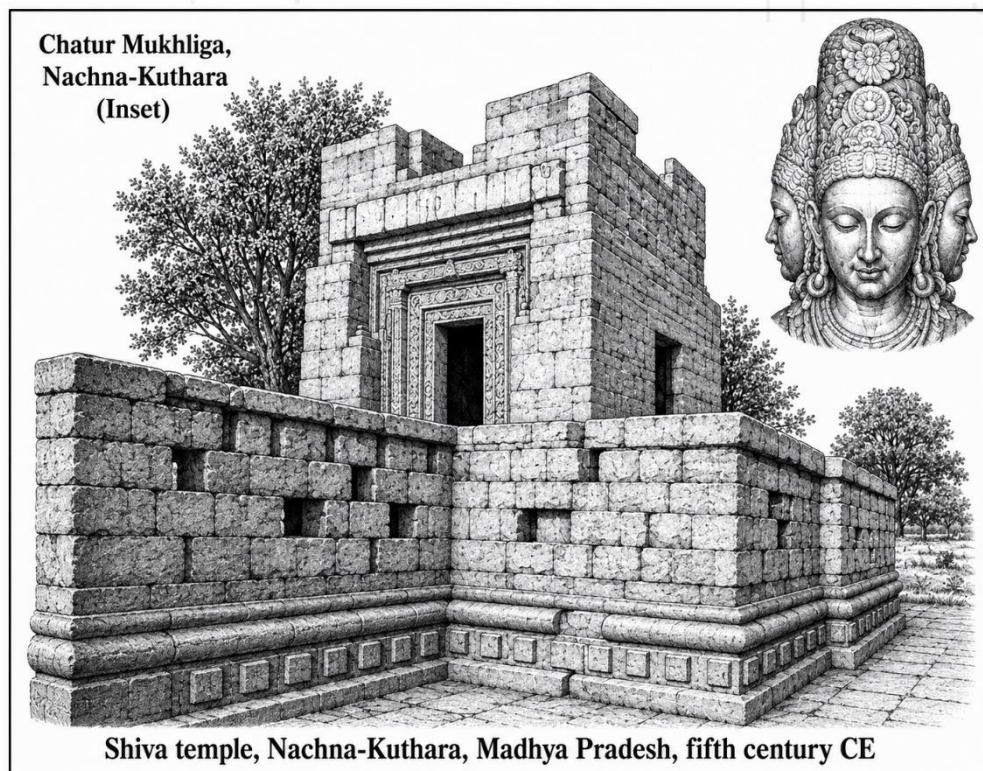
Sarnath School (Northern India)



- **Refinement:** Evolved in the late 5th century CE, known for extreme elegance and rhythmic, delicate outlines.
- **Distinctive Traits:** Drapery is **plain and transparent**, covering both shoulders. The halo is largely unadorned, contrasting with Mathura's ornate style. The body is slender and well-proportioned.

4. Brahmanical Temples and Iconography

As Brahmanical sects grew, the focus shifted toward temple construction to house deity images.



- **Temple Types:**
 1. **Sandhara:** Without *pradakshinapatha*.
 2. **Nirandhara:** With *pradakshinapatha*.
 3. **Sarvatobhadra:** Accessible from all four sides.
- **Structural Components:** Typically featured a veranda, a hall, and a rear shrine (e.g., Deogarh, Nachna-Kuthara, Udaygiri).
- **Iconography:** Gods were represented by their *ayudhas* (weapons) and specific forms. The **Chatur Mukhlinga** (four-faced Shiva) at Nachna-Kuthara is a prominent example of this era.

5. Buddhist Monuments of South India



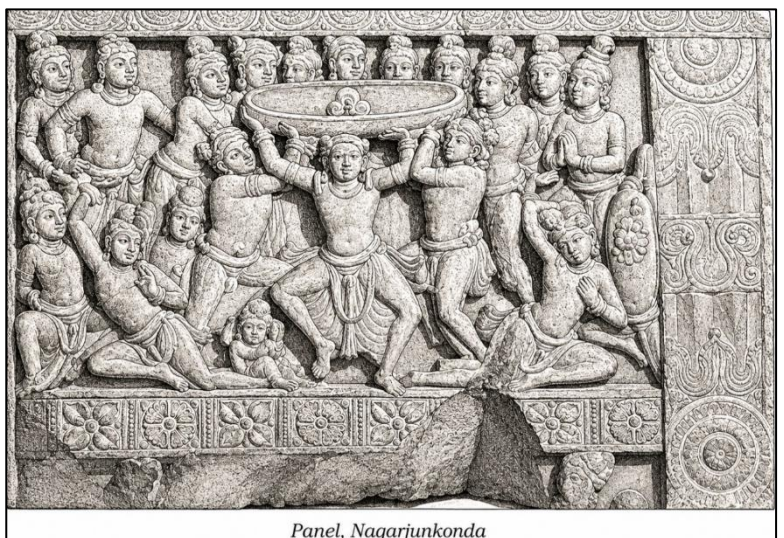
Carving on outer wall of Stupa, Amaravati



Stupa drum slab, Amaravati, second century CE

The Vengi region (Andhra Pradesh) became a powerhouse of artistic production, specifically at **Amaravati, Nagarjunkonda, Bhattiprolu, and Goli**.

- **The Amaravati Stupa:** Developing primarily between the 1st and 2nd centuries CE, it features a *mahachaitya* enclosed by a *vedika*.
 - **Unique Feature:** The domical structure is covered with **relief-sculpted drum slabs**.
 - **Stylistic Features:** Amaravati is defined by **intense emotions**, slender figures, and dynamic movement. Bodies are depicted with the **tribhanga** (three-bend) posture.
 - **3D Space:** Sculptors achieved depth through complex overlapping, angular bodies, and the use of various perspectives (semi-back, profile, frontal).

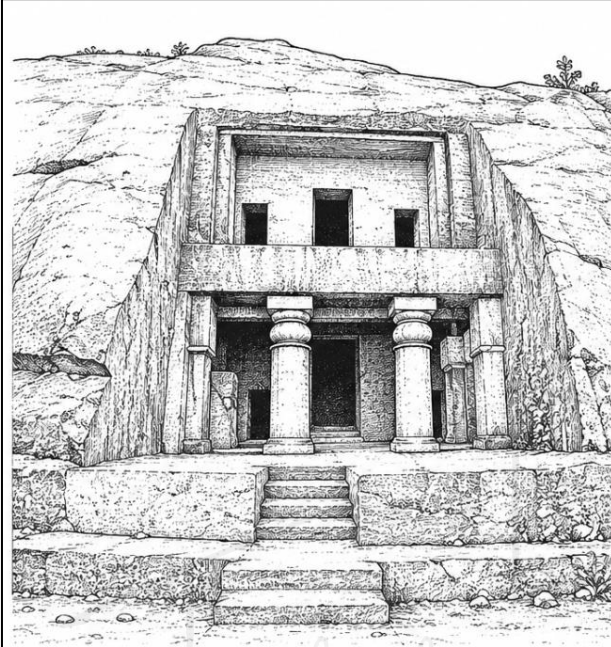


Panel, Nagarjunkonda

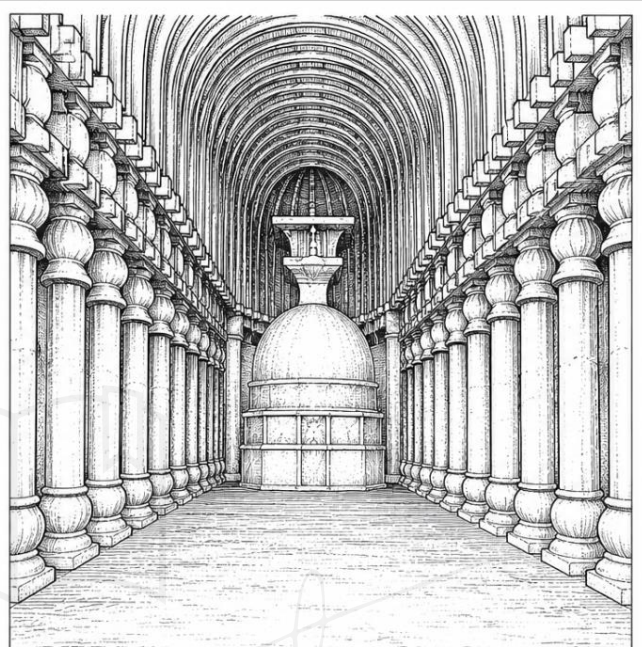
- **Later Developments:** At **Nagarjungkonda and Goli** (3rd century CE), the intense animation of Amaravati reduced. Sculptors favored a more "suggestive" and integrated nature of protruding volumes.
- **Other Sites:** **Guntapalle** (Eluru) is notable for early (2nd century BCE) rock-cut apsidal and circular *chaitya* halls. **Sannati** (Karnataka) remains the largest excavated stupa site in that region.

6. The Cave Tradition in Western India

Western India hosts a long-standing tradition of Buddhist rock-cut architecture, evolving from simple apsidal forms to complex, multi-storeyed structures.



Unfinished chaitya cave, Kanheri



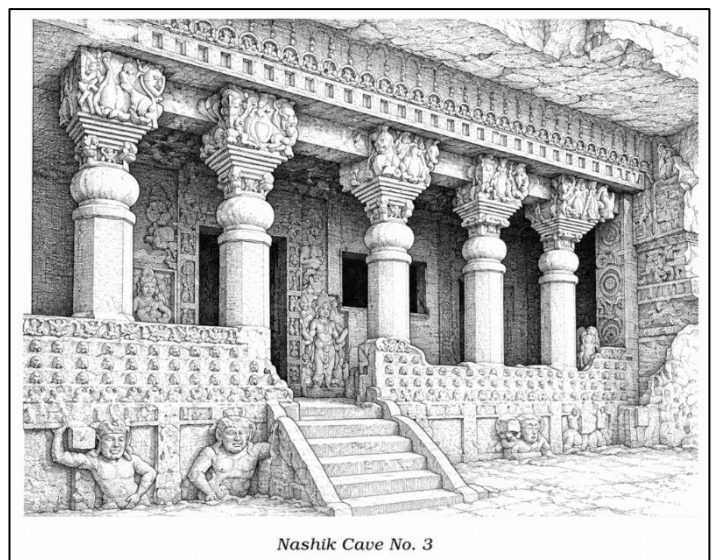
Chaitya hall, Karla

Architectural Types

1. **Apsidal Vault-Roof Chaitya Halls:** Found at Ajanta, Pitalkhora, and Bhaja.
2. **Apsidal Vault-Roof Pillarless Halls:** Found at Thana-Nadsur.
3. **Flat-Roofed Quadrangular Halls:** Found at Kondivite.

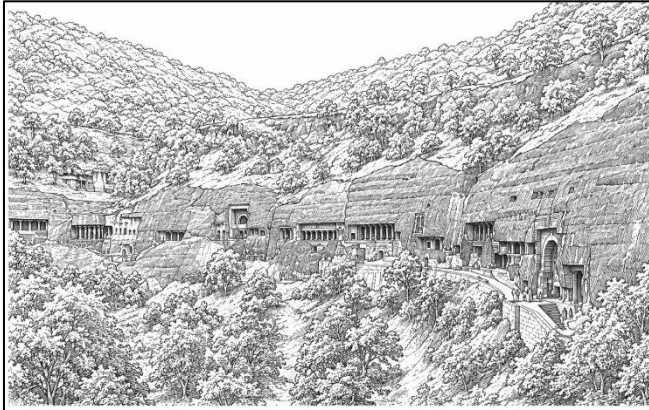
○ Evolution of Design:

- **Karla:** Houses the largest rock-cut *chaitya* hall, featuring an open courtyard, stone-screen facade, and heavy, powerful human and animal figures.
- **Viharas:** These consisted of a veranda, hall, and cells. Notable facades are found at **Nashik (Cave Nos. 3, 10, 17)**, featuring pillars with *ghata*-base and *ghata*-capital.
- **Transition:** Many early caves were associated with Theravada (aniconic) Buddhism, but inscriptions (like the Konkan Maurya inscription, 400 CE) confirm that many caves were later converted to include Buddha images as part of an ongoing process.

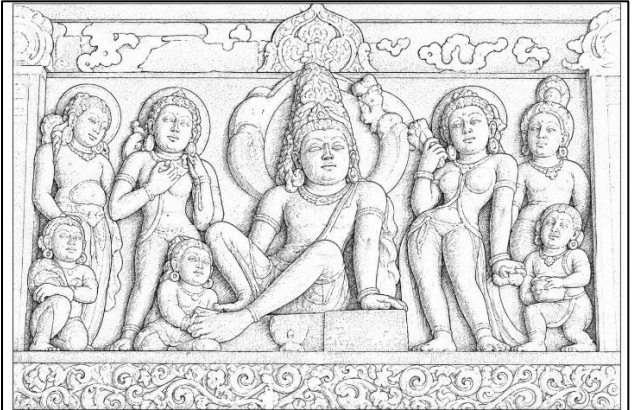


Nashik Cave No. 3

7. Ajanta: The Pinnacle of Painting and Sculpture

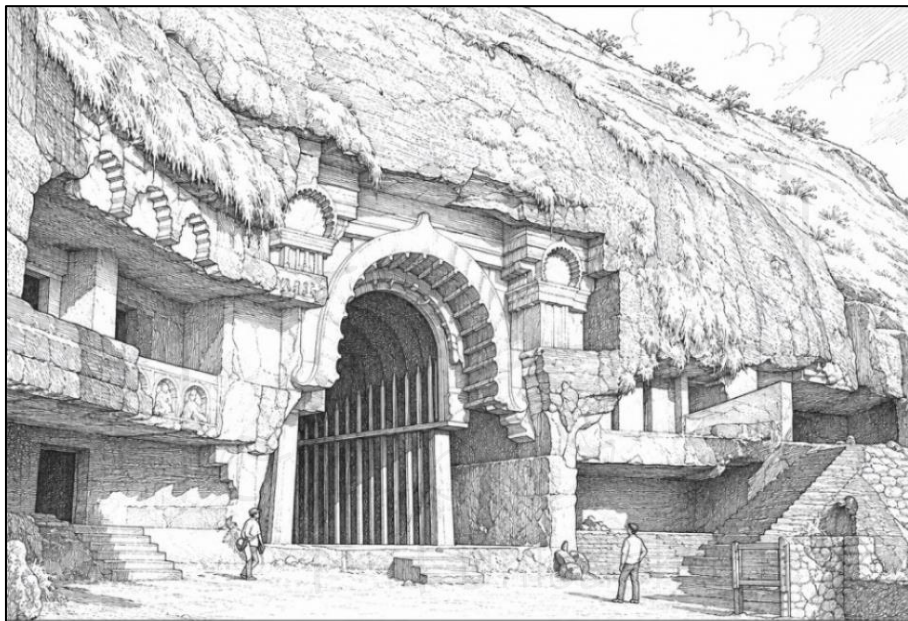


Ajanta Caves

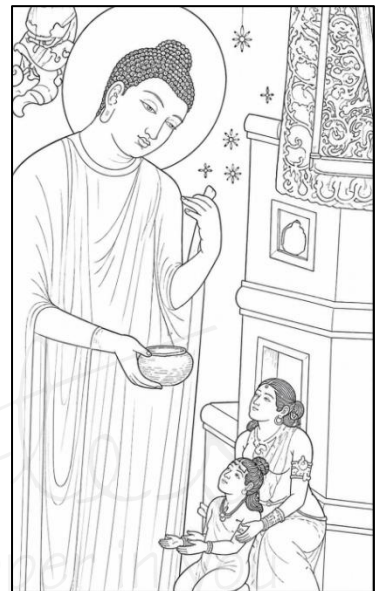


Sculptural panel in the veranda of Cave No. 2, Ajanta

Located in the Aurangabad district, Ajanta consists of 29 caves, divided into an early phase (2nd–1st century BCE) and a later phase (5th–6th century CE).



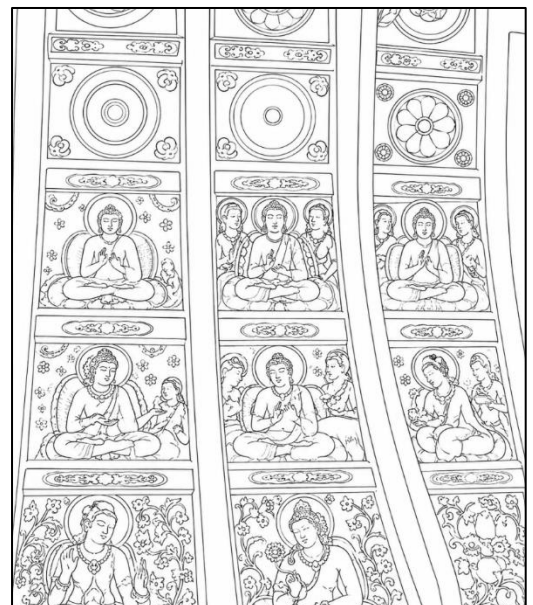
Chaitya, Cave No. 12, Bhaja



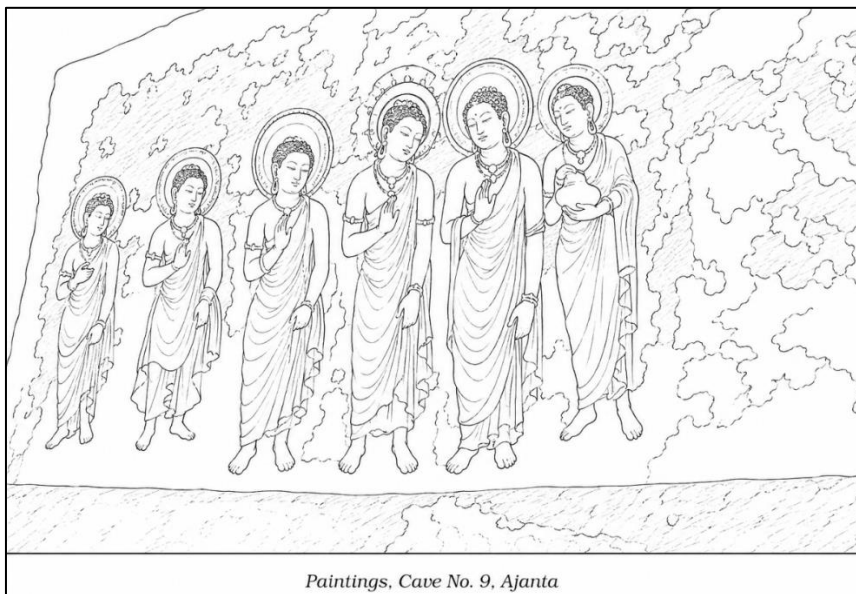
Painting of the Buddha, Yashodhara and Rahul, Cave No. 17, Ajanta



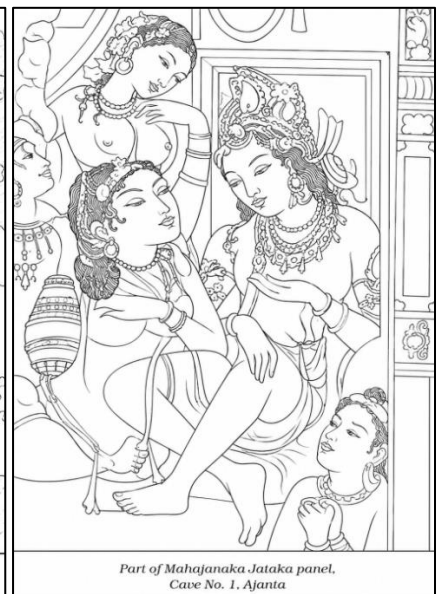
Apsara, Cave No. 17, Ajanta



Painted ceiling, Cave No. 10, Ajanta



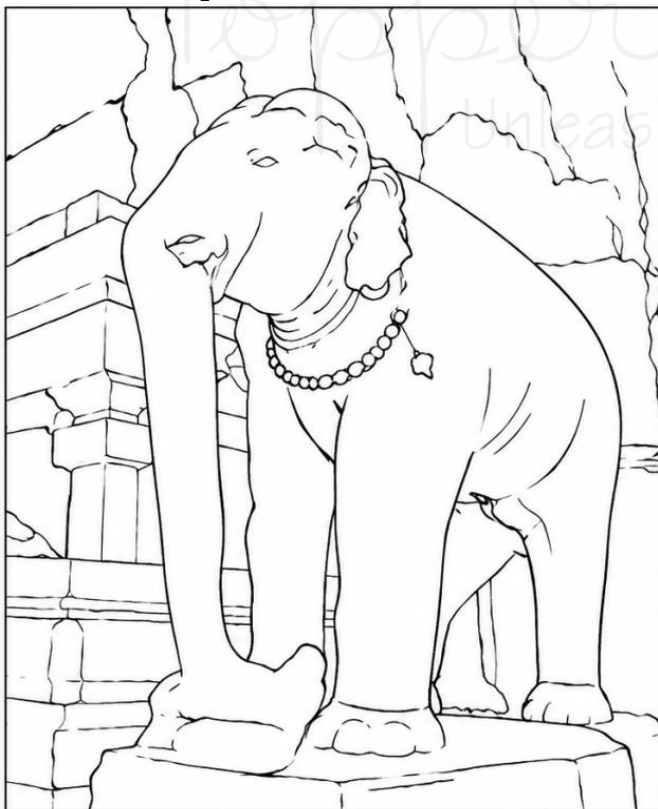
Paintings, Cave No. 9, Ajanta



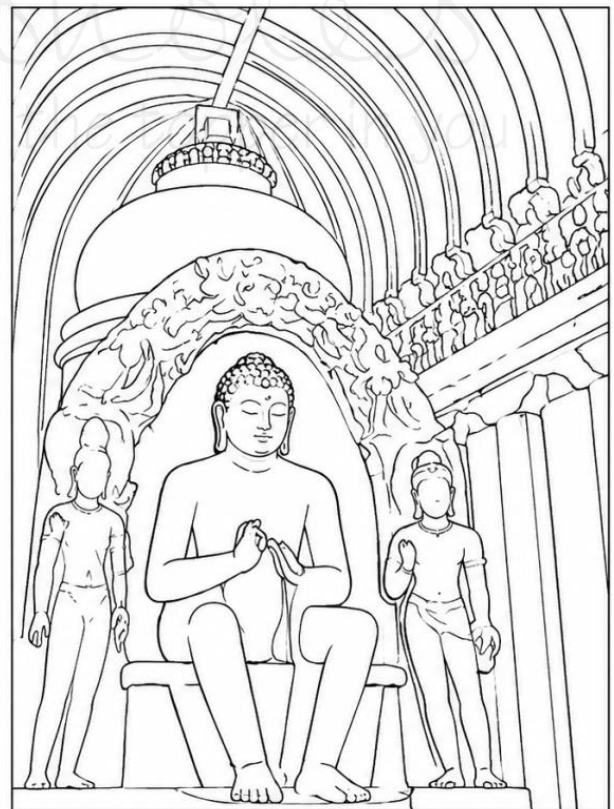
Part of Mahajanaka Jataka panel,
Cave No. 1, Ajanta

- **Early Phase (Caves 9, 10, 12, 13):** Paintings are linear with broad, heavy proportions and limited colors. Figures follow the "Sanchi" style.
- **Later Phase (5th–6th century CE):** This phase shows highly refined painterly qualities.
 - **Technique:** Use of rhythmic lines, brown/thick dark contours, and highlighting to create three-dimensionality.
 - **Themes:** Jataka tales (e.g., *Mahajanaka*, *Vidharpundita*, *Chaddanta*). The **Padmapani** and **Vajrapani** (Cave 1) are masterpieces of soft modeling and elegance.
- **Sculptural Grandeur:** Cave 26 features a massive *Mahaparinibbana* (reclining Buddha) and a complex **Mara Vijaya** panel—a dynamic, monumental representation of the Buddha's enlightenment struggle against desire.

8. Ellora and Elephanta



Courtyard, Kailash Temple,
Cave No. 16, Ellora



Seated Buddha, chaitya hall,
Cave No. 10, Ellora