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Chapter 1

Buddhism in India and Abroad

Buddhist religion was a driving force behind the evolution of what is commonly viewed as Buddhist art—architecture, sculpture and painting. While one may quibble about whether religion can stimulate art or art can be defined in religious terms, there is no denying the fact that much of Buddhist art, mainly sculpture, centres around Buddha, his life before birth, after nirvana and the religion he founded.

Buddhism originated in India in the fifth or sixth century BC. Hinduism was the prevailing religion at that time which believed in sacrificial rituals, transmigration of soul and karmas.

Gautama Siddhartha, later Lord Buddha, was the founder of Buddhism. He was born in around 563 BC in a southern clan of Sakyas in Nepal, bordering India. He came from a wealthy family and grew up in the midst of comforts of life. Since his childhood, Gautama was known to be contemplative. A Brahmin predicted that he would become a saint by renouncing the world. Therefore, his father was particularly keen to keep his son away from any discomforts. He was married at the age of sixteen and was blessed with a son, Rahula.

Gautama was disillusioned with family and social life, and soon decided to abandon it. At the age of twenty-nine, he left his home, wife and son. He rode away on his horse, Kanthaka, accompanied by his charioteer, Channa. This event is known as the Great Departure. He was deeply influenced by the sight of misery of a decrepit man, a sick man and a dead man.

Buddha learned Yoga, a meditative discipline, and practised it while searching for the Truth. He attained enlightenment (or *bodhi)* under a pipal tree in Gaya (later called Bodhgaya, see Chapter 3) in Bihar in about 525 BC.

Birth, Principles and Types of Buddhism

Buddhism originated in the northeast of India, bordering UP and Bihar, what is now Nepal, as a reaction to Hindu idol worship, rituals and caste hierarchy.

During Buddha's life time (approximately 563–480 BC), India was replete with small religious movements centred around a few well-known and charismatic yogis. People were increasingly dissatisfied with the Hindu practices of rituals and sacrifices. This is when *tri-ratna* (three jewels) emerged involving Buddha, Dharma (the doctrine) and Sangha (the community). Buddha himself spent the first seven years as a yogi. But at the end of this period, he realised that this was not the right path to salvation. This is when he adopted the middle path between self-indulgence and self-mortification.

The Middle Path and Four Noble Truths

Buddha decided to teach Dharma to others for their salvation. He delivered the first sermon in Sarnath (see Chapter 4) which is called 'setting the Wheel of Law in motion'. It enunciated Four Noble Truths about:

- Suffering (*dukkha*)
- The cause of suffering (*samudaya*) which originates within us from the craving for pleasure.
- The removal of the cause of suffering (*nirodha*), and
- The path leading to the removal of the cause of suffering (*marga*).

Suffering can be eliminated by following a middle path, defined as the Eightfold Path for the attainment of salvation or release from rebirths (nirvana).

The purification of the soul and the elimination of suffering and misery requires:

- Continual meditation
- Right mode of seeing things
- Right thinking
- Right speech
- Right action
- Right mode of living
- Right effort in every mode of being
- Right mindfulness

The adoption of the Eightfold Path involved the creation of such institutions as the Buddhist Order or sangha, Buddhist councils and monasteries. The sangha was created with the core membership of the first five disciples of Buddha. It soon accepted others in its fold, for example, Yasa, the son of a wealthy banker from Varanasi, his parents and lay devotees.

The sangha rapidly grew due to the simplicity of local dialects in which the Buddhist message of equality and charity was preached. A number of rules governing the new Order were introduced.

Initially, only monks were accepted by the Order. However, nuns were also admitted in due course. It was possible for women to be ordained if they agreed to follow stringent rules.

In the early days of Buddhism, those who gave up family life started wandering and living on alms as mendicants. They adopted a guru and started wandering with him. During the rainy season (*vassa)* from July through August, they stayed at fixed retreats in villages. After Buddha's death, rain retreats were replaced by more permanent monasteries called viharas.

Different Types of Buddhism

Buddha died at the age of eighty. After his death, Buddhism and his doctrine developed in three different directions—Theravada, and Tantra. About 100 years after Buddha's death, divisions began to appear in the Buddhist Sangha (Council). It was perhaps a consequence of a rapid growth of the Order from a rather small number of monks to a large community. In this context, the Third Buddhist Council at Pataliputra (present-day Patna) in c250 BC was quite significant. At this conference, the Theravada Buddhists attempted to exclude dissidents from the Buddhist Order. It was also at this Council that the Buddhist canon (*Tripitaka*) was completed and it was decided to send missionaries to Southeast Asian countries. At this stage, there were two main schools (1) A conservative group which adhered strictly to the original principles and practices of Buddhism and (2) a more liberal school which offered greater freedom. Subsequently, the liberal form of Buddhism started incorporating Hindu Tantric rituals which may have eventually led to its decline.

The three types of Buddhism are briefly discussed below.

1. *Theravada Buddhism* (Hinayana or Lesser Vehicle): It is the oldest and original form of Buddhism that adhered to the teachings of Buddha. It had three main elements:
   - The 'sphere of desire' (*kamadhatu*).
   - The 'sphere of material form' (*rupadhatu*); animals, demons, ghosts and goods.
   - The 'fear of the formless' (*arupadhatu).*

At the Third Council, a controversy arose between the reformists and the early Theravidans over the reality of states of consciousness (*cittas*). The former group believed that these states actually existed whereas the latter condemned this view. The former sect at this stage decided to leave the Ganges Valley and move to Madhura in the northwest. It is in Madhura that a more reformed school of Buddhism or Greater Vehicle developed.

Theravada believes that an ideal form of Buddhism is reached when an ascetic attains nirvana through his own efforts. It lays greater emphasis on his Dharma than on Buddha himself. It also believes that an ascetic and a layman have very different roles to play in religion as well as society.

2. *Buddhism*: This adaptation of the original form of Buddhism was presumably meant to bring a larger number of followers within its fold. It spread to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Southeast Asia after the gradual disappearance of Buddhism in India. It believes in Buddha as a transcendent being who multiplies himself. In several temples in and outside India, a large number of Buddha statues are found in different forms, especially in Southeast Asian countries which adopted the form of Buddhism.

Unlike the Theravada form of Buddhism, focuses more on Buddha and Bodhisattvas (Buddhas-to-be) than on Buddha's doctrine (Dharma). This is evidenced by the existence of a large number of Bodhisattva images, for example in Ajanta in India and Angkor Thom in Cambodia (see Chapters 6 and 7) as well as in China. Figure 1 of Bodhisattvas Lokesvara and Manjushri date back to the Jin or Yuan dynasties of the thirteenth century. There was also a practice in China of carving them in stone. Often Bodhisattvas are adorned with garments and jewels unlike Buddha images which are invariably very simple.

Fig. 1 Bodhisattvas Lokesvara and Manjushri, China

Under Buddhism, Buddha is seen as one of many Buddhas who appeared in different universes. While Theravada Buddhists believe that a Buddhist can achieve salvation on his own by following the Eightfold Path, the followers believe in turning to Bodhisattvas.

3. *Tantrism* (or Vajrayana): This form of Buddhism is associated with deities, for example, the goddess of fertility, magical rites, geometrical symbols, formulae and diagrams and even sexual freedom (sexual orgies are known to have been allowed). In early stages, Tantrism appeared in both Hinduism and Buddhism. The objective of this form of esoteric belief and practice was to attain a state of mystical union of a deity with his consort. Hence the symbolism of sexual union was a way of realising an ultimate mystical experience. Morals, celibacy and asceticism were rejected in favour of indulgence of the senses. This form of Buddhism became open to abuse and misinterpretation of the true tenets of Buddhism. That is why it is considered by some critics as a degeneration of true Buddhism. It spread to Ceylon, India, Nepal and Tibet.

This form of Buddhism is said to be a simplification of the Hindu Vedic cults. It accepts spouses of male Bodhisattvas as Taras or Saviouresses (Thapar, 1990:261-2). Revered as a goddess, Tara was the female equivalent of the Boddhisattva Avalokitesvara who became important in Tibet. In sixth-century Indian art, Tara first appears along with Avalokitesvara as the Mother of all Buddhas. The mother image was respected, as a woman is the source of all creation. The fifth century witnessed the emergence of a new cult worshipping female deities such as the goddess of fertility. This may have been the precursor of Tantrism, which developed in the sixth century and centred on magical formulae and symbols as well as worship of a mother image as the source of all creation.

Spread of Buddhism in India

Several factors account for the rapid spread of Buddhism and its doctrine. This religion was open to all and did not recognise caste differences (an important feature of the Indian society at that time). The only differences recognised by Buddha were those that derived from diverse moral maturity of individuals. However, this could not have been the only reason for a new religion to survive Hindu critics and prosper. Royal patronage of the Mauryan, Gupta and Sunga kings as well as financial support from the mercantile community must have also played an important part in the propagation of the new religion.

The rapid spread of Buddhism in India is associated with the conversion of Mauryan King Ashoka to the Buddhist doctrine and principles after the battle of Kalinga (in present-day Orissa) in 260 BC. The battle for the supremacy of the trade routes to South India involved a lot of bloodshed, the deaths of a large number of people and the displacement of those who survived. The king felt permanent remorse and horror after the bloody battle. He decided to adopt Buddhism because it preached peace and non-violence.

Ashoka, the grandson of Chandragupta, founder of the Mauryan dynasty in India (322 BC to 185 BC), is known to be the earliest and most well-known of the patrons of Buddhism in India and the rest of Asia. He was a Hindu when he ascended the throne and was converted to Buddhism much later, after the battle of Kalinga, as noted above. One scholar (for example, Thapar, 1963) believes that Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism was a way to attract support from non-orthodox elements. Apparently, his rise to power was not without difficulties. He did not receive whole-hearted support from the orthodox Brahmanic elements.

The Sunga kings took over after the fall of the Mauryan Empire. In 185 BC, Pushyamitra murdered the last Maurya king and established the Sunga dynasty (185-72 BC). Although the first Sunga king is said to have persecuted Buddhists, the kings who followed him either tolerated or actually promoted Buddhism. Controversy surrounds the belief that the first Sunga king actively persecuted Buddhism. It is known that he was a Brahmin and as such may not have been enthusiastic about Buddhism. But both religions were practised during the Sunga dynasty.

There is some historical evidence to suggest that the orthodox Sunga kings were tolerant of Buddhism and that this religion prospered during the Sunga Empire. The following two inscriptions found at the Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya suggest royal support:

- 'The gift of Nagadevi, the wife of King Brahmamitra'.
- 'The gift of Kurangi, the mother of living sons and the wife of King Indragnimitra, son of Kosiki. The gift also of Srima of the royal palace shrine' (Barua, 1934).

The Gupta period (fourth to seventh century), the golden age of India as it is sometimes called, saw Buddhism flourish further. The two Chinese pilgrims, Fa Hsien[1] and Hsuan Tsang[2], who visited India in the fifth and seventh century respectively, testified that both Hinayana and forms of Buddhism had prospered in the Gupta Empire.

During the Gupta period, Buddhism had spread beyond India, into China, Southeast Asia and Central Asia. Buddhism drove out the more orthodox Hinayana form. This period also witnessed the development of Tantrism. It is also during this period that the King of Ceylon sought permission from King Samudragupta to build a Buddhist monastery in Gaya. As discussed in chapter 6 on Ajanta and Ellora, this period also witnessed the construction of rock-cut Buddhist shrines and temples in the Deccan. The literature of this period frequently mentions the Buddhist wall paintings of Ajanta cave temples.

To conclude, the royal court continued to accept both Hinduism and Buddhism. Even when some kings practised Hinduism (they were Brahmins) they did not oppose Buddhism and the construction of its temples and monasteries.

Even before the advent of the Mauryan dynasty, Hinduism (or more appropriately, Brahmanism) had developed a complex system of rituals and caste beliefs. It had become a religion of the high-caste princes and priests, and possibly wealthier members of the commercial class. The lower castes were either marginalised or excluded. The merchant class (vaishyas) became economically and financially prosperous with the opening of trade to Southeast Asia and West Asia. Building of the road infrastructure by Ashoka must have helped such trade. In the north, Indo-Greek and later Indo-Roman connections opened the trade route with West Asia and the Mediterranean. Settlement of Indian traders in Cambodia and Thailand must also have encouraged the expansion of trade with that part of Asia. It is logical that the merchant class would be attracted to Buddhism which did not recognise the caste system and thus offered social mobility to anyone who adopted it. Adoption of Buddhism by this class may have been a kind of resentment against the caste-ridden Hindu orthodoxy. Buddhism may have also been more popular with the Greeks and Romans due to its egalitarian principles and greater degree of openness.

Decline of Buddhism in India

During the Gupta Empire both Buddhism and Hinduism prospered at the same time. Buddhism, a more recent religion than Hinduism, did not believe in the traditional Hindu thought of ‘ultimate reality in things’. Buddha believed in the impermanency of everything. Unlike Hindus, Buddhists do not believe in soul or atman. They argue that nothing within us is metaphysically real. They believe in the theory of the non-existence of an eternal I, or atman (*anatta*). Buddhism does not recognise caste, social class or ethnic origin. But caste is the cornerstone of Hindu religion. Buddhism preaches celibacy for monks and nuns. Were these differences not strong enough for Buddhism to hold its own ground? What accounts for the decline of Buddhism in India and its spread in the rest of Asia?

Scholars and historians do not agree on the contributing factors. A popular belief is that Buddhism became so tolerant of other faiths that it was reabsorbed by the Hindu tradition. In respect of both worship and rituals, it ‘had compromised with the brahmanical religion to such an extent that it could almost have been regarded as a sect of the latter’ (Thapar, 1990:159). This argument does not seem to be all that convincing considering that Hinduism and Buddhism happily coexisted for several centuries. Many Hindu kings who practised Hinduism continued to patronise Buddhist art and architecture not only in India but also in Southeast Asia, particularly in Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand.

Why would the two religions prosper side by side in Southeast Asia but not in India? Indeed, Hinduism was strong in Cambodia before King Suryavarma VII adopted Buddhism. This is amply visible in Angkor Wat bas-reliefs of scenes from Ramayana and Mahabharata, not to speak of the celestial Hindu deities, devatas and apsaras. Perhaps the roots of Hinduism were not as strong abroad to dominate Buddhism? In both India and Southeast Asia, Buddhism went through different adaptations and phases which must have weakened it vis-à-vis Hinduism.

Buddhism lasted as long as it received royal patronage during the reign of Ashoka and his successors. It was also popular among the mercantile community which provided financial support to the Buddhist temples and monasteries (see Chapter 2). The decline of this community may have lowered the status of Buddhism. A lack of resources to sustain this young religion may have contributed to its downfall in India. The arrival of Islam in India in the thirteenth century was perhaps the final blow to Buddhism. Muslim invaders destroyed the Buddhist monasteries in many parts of India, which may have led to the exodus of Buddhists from eastern India to Southeast Asia. However, Muslim invasions cannot be a primary explanation for the decline of Buddhism in India. After all, both Hinduism and Jainism survived the Muslim onslaught.

Another explanation may be that Tantric Buddhism was regarded by many true Buddhists and non-Buddhists as a degenerate form which brought a bad name to Buddhism. Internal causes of the decline of Buddhism were perhaps as important as the external ones. Buddhism relied too heavily on costly monastic institutions enjoying royal patronage but not popular support. Buddhist monasteries remained isolated from the surrounding village communities (The Encyclopaedia of Religion, 1987:380).

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[1] Fa Hsien is a title. His real name was Gong.

[2] Hsuan Tsang is a title. His real name was Chen.

Hindu Brahmin priests had a strong hold on kings who were generally very religious at that time. The kings turned to royal priests for ceremonies, rituals and good omens. With the spread of Buddhism, the royal priests lost their power and influence and must have resented this situation. They would make every effort to ensure that Hinduism and its ritual practices were reinstated.

Spread of Buddhism to Asia

The Mauryan kings, especially Ashoka, were largely responsible for the spread of Buddhism in South Asia (Burma, Ceylon and Nepal) and Southeast Asia (Cambodia and Thailand).

In the third century BC, Ashoka sent missionaries to Ceylon and Southeast Asia. There is historical evidence (chronicles of Ceylon) of close relations between the Mauryan kingdom and the kingdom of King Tissa of Ceylon. The chronicles note that Ashoka sent to the Ceylon king a branch of the original Bodhi tree (pipal) under which Buddha attained enlightenment. The tree is known to have survived in Ceylon although it was cut in India by an anti-Buddhist fanatic (Thapar, 1990:75).

Theravada Buddhism, which spread to Southeast Asia in the early eleventh century, also took roots in Ceylon. In the beginning, it had to struggle against entrenched Hinduism, Tantrism and various forms of practised there at that time. Although rather conservative, Theravada Buddhism of Ceylon was flexible and accommodating. It accepted the worship of Hindu gods as well as local spirits. The Tamil kings may have been partly responsible for this flexibility.

Missionaries played an important role in the spread of Buddhism outside India, which took hold in Ceylon with the arrival of King Ashoka's son, Mahinda and his companions. The king sent them there as missionaries to propagate Buddhism. Mahinda and his companions were successful in converting King Tissa and many nobles to Buddhism. Many monasteries were built during the king's reign. After King Tissa's death in around 207 BC, the country was taken over by a Tamil king from South India (Elara) who was a Hindu. He was opposed to Buddhism and threatened to absorb the new religion into Hinduism. It is only when Dutthagamani, a descendant of King Tissa, overthrew the Tamil king that Buddhism was revived in Ceylon.

In Burma, Buddhism was established by the fifth century. It was spread by the Ceylonese missionaries. Both Theravada and forms were practised. Theravada was popular in the north and in the south.

During the reign of King Anawrahta (1044-77) the north and south of Burma were united. Theravada Buddhism received royal patronage during this period and remained popular until Burma's independence in 1948. The tradition of the councils was preserved. In 1961, Buddhism became the state religion. However, religion lost its political influence soon after General Ne Win took over the country. The Army's programme of modernisation and a political framework of moderate socialism weakened the religious influence on the affairs of the state.

The Mon in the south of Burma, the first to be influenced by Buddhism, were influential in converting the Burmese people to Theravada form of Buddhism. Tantrism flourished in upper Burma at this time. However, controversy arose about ordination when Upper and Lower Burma were united during the reign of King Anawrahta. One school believed that the ordination dating back to Ashoka's missionaries in the second century BC was still valid. Another believed in the ordination in the line of succession established by the Sinhalese monastery of Mahavihara. Finally, King Dhammazedi (1472-92) decided in favour of the latter.

Buddhism also spread to the Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. Buddha was born in Lumbini in Nepal, but Buddhist religion developed there much later. The Indian form of Buddhism based on Sanskrit texts continues to be used in rituals in Nepal. Inscriptions provide evidence of the existence of Buddhist monasteries in the country during the fifth century. By the eighth century, Nepal had fallen under the Tibetan cultural influence which is visible even today in such symbols as prayer wheels. In Bhutan, a Tibetan Lama introduced Buddhism in the seventeenth century. Tibetans also introduced the religion in Sikkim which they usurped in the seventeenth century.

Buddhism spread to Central Asia through northern India. However, not much is known about who brought Buddhism to this region. Did King Kanishka's missionaries spread the religion there? A son of Ashoka is believed to have founded the kingdom of Khotan in around 240 BC and his grandson introduced Buddhism there. In around the first century BC, Buddhism was practised in Eastern Turkistan which had several Indian colonies. Buddhism must have declined in Central Asia after the spread of Islam in the seventh century.

Buddhism was brought to Tibet from India in the seventh century. So the Indian influence was to be expected. But the form of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan art were also influenced by China and Central Asia.

Buddhism in Tibet was 'a curious mixture of shamanism. Tantrism and Indian Madhyamika gradually became the core of what came to be known erroneously as Lamaism, the religion of the "superior ones" (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1981a:411).[3] It represented a synthesis of and Vajrayana types prevalent in the north of India during the seventh to eleventh century. While the former stressed a gradual process of understanding an established doctrine, the latter preached the use of mystical means to achieve quicker results. The Buddhist religion

[3] Barbara Lipton and Nima Dorjee Ragnubs (*Treasures of Tibetan Art*, Oxford, 1997), p.19, note that Lamaism is 'an anachronistic and pejorative term that mistakenly suggests that the religion of Tibet is not Buddhism'. Indeed, Tibetan Buddhism is a valid religious tradition whose influence extended well beyond the national boundary.

also adopted some practices of the Bon cult (which believes in local divinities and divine kingship) that prevailed at the time of the advent of Buddhism. The Bon cult favoured Tantric principles, performed rituals and sacrificed animals.

In the eighth century, Indian monks went to Tibet to preach Buddhism. Clearly, their major task was first to subdue the Bon spirits that were being practised. During the tenth and eleventh centuries, Indian monks went to Tibet to translate sacred Buddhist texts. Rivalry between different groups of monks following different masters developed in the seventeenth century. It was a case of gaining political power rather than religious supremacy.[4] The Theravada form of Buddhism in Cambodia was perhaps introduced there by Ceylonese monks. There is evidence of frequent contacts between Ceylon and Cambodia.[5] Chinese influence spread to North Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand through merchants and missionaries.

The Khmer kingdoms of Chenla (sixth century) and Angkor (ninth century) inherited many features of Buddhism from Funan. At the time of its arrival, Hinduism was the state religion. First, Shiva was worshipped and later Vishnu. Buddhism was practised at the same time. First, the Hinayana form was introduced. Later in the fifth century, under King Kamdinya Jayavarman, Hinduism and Buddhism began to be practised.

Shiva worship declined in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and Buddhism and Vaishnav Hinduism became stronger (the existence of Vaishnu temple at Angkor Wat bears testimony to this). Buddhism was declared the state religion under King Jayavarman VII (1181-1215) whose reign represents the heyday of the Khmer Empire.

However, when the Thai captured Angkor Wat in 1431, the Mon started spreading Theravada Buddhism (1200-1350). The Khmer conversion to Theravada Buddhism was completed by the time of the Thai capture of Angkor.

In Thailand, Theravada Buddhism is the state religion. During the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1873-1910), Buddhism was considered to be a peaceful religion good for the unity of the country. The Thai came into contact with the form in China in the ninth century. Later during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Thailand was swept by the reformed Sinhalese form of Theravada Buddhism which had been spreading fast through Southeast Asia. In the thirteenth century, two Thai kingdoms were established in Sukhotai and Chiengmai. A powerful Thai kingdom emerged in 1350 in Ayutthaya. By the sixteenth century, Chiengmai had become the leading centre of Theravada Buddhism. The Khmer people at this time followed Brahmanic Hindu tradition, some elements of which were absorbed by the Thai in Ayutthaya. King Rama I (1782-1809), who established the kingdom in Bangkok, also followed this tradition. The kingdom of Bangkok became the state of Thailand after Ayutthaya fell into the hands of the Burmese in 1769.

At present, there are two Buddhist sects in Thailand. First, a larger sect or Mahanikaya, and second, a sect of the followers of Dhamma (Dhammayuttika-Nikaya). The king names a patriarch who is accepted by the heads of the two sects. The sangha is state-directed and carries out such social functions as education, public works and the administration of religious property.

In Southeast Asia, Vietnam is the only country where both Theravada and (mainly Zen and Pure Land) forms of Buddhism continue to be practised side by side. In Laos, Buddhist statues of style date back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, suggesting that Buddhism arrived during this period under the Khmer influence. However, in the fourteenth century, Theravada form became more popular.

Different forms of Buddhism and Hinduism were found in Indonesia before the thirteenth century when Islam had established its roots there. As in Cambodia and Thailand, the Indian influence travelled to Indonesia through ‘Brahmins who were invited by Indonesian princes to dedicate temples and explain their beliefs’ (Fahr-Becker, vol. I, 1998:326). The Buddhist Srivijaya dynasty in Sumatra and the Shailendra dynasty in Java bear testimony to the Indian influence (also see Chapter 2). Hinduism continues to be practised on the Indonesian island of Bali today even though Indonesia is a predominantly Muslim country.

In China**,** historical records suggest that Buddhism was known and practised as far back as the third century BC when Ashoka ruled in India and promoted Buddhism far and wide. It seems to have become popular during the Han dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). There were close links between Taoism (which was then practised) and Buddhism. Taoism believed in magical practices and folk beliefs; it may have been influenced by Buddhism which preached nirvana through various ascetic practices.[6]

Buddhism prospered particularly well during the T’ang dynasty (618-907) whose emperors favoured the religion. They brought the Buddhist monasteries and the legal status of monks under government control. Buddhist temples and monasteries expanded rapidly. Many pilgrimages to India were organised; several foreign monks visited India in the seventh century and wrote about Bodhgaya and other Buddhist centres.

During the Sung dynasty (960-1279), Buddhism spread throughout China. It became popular because of its pragmatism and worldly outlook compared with Buddhism practised in India at that time. For example, monasteries

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[4] The head of one religious order – Dge-Lugs-Pa – known as the Dalai Lama, approached a Mongol chieftain, Güühri Khan, for help against a rival group— Karma Pa, a sect patronised by the rulers of Gtsang. When Khan defeated the Gtsang forces, he awarded Tibet to the Dalai Lama. Thus from 1642 till the Chinese Communist rule in 1951, the Dge-Lugs-Pa has been the dominant sect in Tibet (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, London, 1981a), p. 388.

[5] Prior to the arrival of Buddhism, Hinduism had spread to Cambodia. It had also spread to Indonesia and Thailand.

[6] Many Buddhist *sutras* were translated into Chinese during the Han dynasty.

owned and operated oil presses, lent money and maintained roads. The Indian-style sangha was reorganised from a democratic institution to one controlled by the state.

Buddhism was brought to Korea from China in the fourth century and it gradually spread to several kingdoms. The unification of different kingdoms into one country led to the adoption of the religion throughout the territory. Buddhism began to decline during the Koryo period (935-1392). The government gradually curtailed privileges offered to the monks. Confucianism replaced Buddhism as the state religion.

Korean refugees and craftsmen carried Buddhism to Japan in the sixth century. Its introduction was not without controversy. While the powerful Soga clan accepted it, others rejected it out of a sense of nationalism. They felt that the introduction of Buddha statues was an insult to local deities. The fortunes of Buddhism were revived by Prince Shotoku Taishi (573-621) who became regent in AD 593. He introduced a 'Seventeen Article Constitution' which attempted to harmonise Confucianism and Buddhism as a spiritual foundation of the state.

Shinto was the dominant religion in Japan when Buddhism arrived there. Those practising Shinto worshipped the gods of the sky and the sun. Buddhism had to overcome the scepticism of these followers. The spread of the new religion was facilitated by the conversion of Prince Shotoku to Buddhism as was the conversion of Emperor Ashoka in India much earlier.

Buddhism became the state religion during the Nara period (710-784). Nara, which is home to the Great Buddha Statue, *Daibutsu*, became an important Buddhist centre. Several Buddhist sects developed: Hinayana, Shingon and Pure Land. In the thirteenth century, Zen Buddhism (Chinese Ch'an) became popular, especially with the military.

Buddhism gradually incorporated some elements of Shinto and Confucianism. Local divinities worshipped under Shinto were accepted as incarnations of the Buddha. In turn, in AD 767 an imperial decree announced that *kami* (sacred objects and symbols of Shinto) were to guard the Law of the Buddha. Buddhist monks were also permitted to officiate in Shinto temples.

In the thirteenth century, Japan witnessed the emergence of its own Buddhist monk, Nichiren (1222-82), who was considered a prophet. He preached that salvation could be achieved by reciting the Lotus Sutra. During the later periods, Zen Buddhism became popular. Several schools of Zen thought and practice developed. During the Tokugawa period (1603-1867), Buddhism was promoted as the state religion. Temples were used to register population in order to prevent the spread of Christianity.[7]

The association of Buddhism with the Tokugawa regime made it unpopular during the Meiji period (1868-1912) particularly among the elite who wanted to bring back Shinto as the state religion. This led to the separation of two religions. Lands were confiscated from the Buddhist temples and many Buddhist priests were dismissed.

Many new religions emerged in Japan during the inter-war and post-war periods. This plurality of religions is rare if not unknown in other Buddhist countries.

Thus, it can be seen from the above brief account that Buddhism spread far and wide in South Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia despite its disappearance from India. But India continued to wield important influence in these regions especially in Southeast Asia.

Indian Influence in Southeast Asia

From the very beginning of Christian era, the Indian influence has been felt outside India particularly in Southeast Asia. Indian seafarers went out in search of trade and commerce despite Hindu strictures against travelling overseas. There was a continuation of earlier contacts between pre-Aryan India and Southeast and East Asia (Groslier and Arthaud, 1957). The Indian expansion to Southeast Asia was in sharp contrast to that of China southwards.[8] René Gousset considers 'Indian spiritual colonies of Borobodur and Angkor' constituting 'India's greatest title to fame, her contribution to mankind' (cited in ibid.:16).

There is no consensus on why Indians moved outwards in ancient times. No single explanation is satisfactory. The following are several plausible reasons.

- Internal population pressures in India.
- Expansionist policies of South Indian states.
- Political upheavals in northern India which may have triggered exodus from India.
- Emergence of Buddhism which was much more tolerant and egalitarian than Hinduism.
- Development of maritime technology and the building of large ships.
- Growth of trade and commerce. When trade with the Mediterranean reached its peak, Indians needed new sources of supply of spices, gold, precious stones and perfumes which might have led them to Southeast Asia in search of these goods. Combined with this was Ashoka's desire to spread the message of Buddhism.

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[7] Francis Xavier introduced Christianity to Japan in 1549.

[8] Bernard Philippe Groslier and Jacques Arthaud (*The Arts and Civilization of ANGKOR*, New York, 1957), p.15, note: 'The distinguishing mark of Indian expansion was that it was peaceful and at first almost unnoticed, in complete contrast with the contemporary southward drive of the Chinese which, at any rate in Indo-China, constituted a regular process of colonization on the Roman model'.

Buddhist sculpture, architecture and painting spread from India to the Southeast and East Asia along with the spread of Buddhist religion. Buddhist art is discussed in the following chapters with special reference to Indian (Buddhist and Hindu) influence on it. Chapter 2 discusses the subject in general in India and the rest of Asia. Chapters 3 to 9 are devoted to Buddhist sculpture, architecture and paintings, particularly to the places of importance to Buddhist religion.

Chapter 2

Buddhist Art in Asia

Indian art is often said to be religious in the sense that it represents a particular religion such as Hinduism or Buddhism by depicting its gods, temples and other places of worship. Some observers go even further and say that in India art is religion and religion is art. However, strictly speaking it may be more appropriate to speak of Indian art that represents Hindu or Buddhist themes. The art form is more a function of time and space than of religion per se. For example, whether a piece of art or sculpture represents a Hindu deity or Buddha does not change the form or type of sculpture. For purposes of exposition, the term 'Buddhist art and architecture' is often used, but one needs to bear in mind this caveat.

Any art is generally defined in terms of architecture, sculpture and painting. Buddhist architecture encompasses stupas, prayer halls and temples. Buddhist temples in the old Hindu tradition are rare in India. The two main examples of such temples are Temple 17 in Sanchi (see Chapter 5) and Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya (see Chapter 3). Simple prayer halls (chaityas) provided places of worship and monasteries (viharas) places of accommodation for monks. As discussed below, stupas were the most common form of Buddhist architecture in ancient India.

Temples, stupas and viharas were the main symbols of Buddhist art during the early period. For example, the Mahabodhi Temple, the Dhamekh Stupa (see Chapter 4) and the Great Stupa in Sanchi (see Chapter 5) are some of the earliest examples of Buddhist art and architecture which remain intact until today. The Buddhist cave temples of Ajanta and Ellora (see Chapter 6) dating back from the third century BC to the sixth century AD depict the art of mural painting, sculpture and stone carvings. Below we shall first discuss the royal and non-royal patronage of Buddhist art followed by its various aspects, namely, architecture, sculpture and paintings.

The earliest Hindu and Buddhist monuments used wood as the main building material which was later replaced by brick, clay, stone and metal. Since wood is perishable, very little of ancient structures remain in existence today. During later periods, the use of stone became particularly popular. Most buildings discussed in this book are of brick or stone. Artisans, who were familiar with wood and clay, continued to imitate wooden forms in stone, which is evident in many buildings that have survived.

Patronage of Buddhist Art

Early Buddhist art was promoted by kings (such as Ashoka) and rich merchants. A number of scholars (Dehejia and Zimmer, for example) cite inscriptional evidence showing that laymen and women also contributed to the building of Buddhist monuments. There is no doubt that religious devotion in a country such as India involved ordinary people contributing financially and/or materially to holy places. But lay sponsorship alone without any royal backing could not explain such magnificent buildings as Sanchi stupas, toranas and the Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya.

The three types of sponsorship by kings, merchants, laymen and women are discussed below.

Royal Patronage

Royal patronage was an important factor explaining the spread of Buddhist art in India and the rest of Asia. Table 2.1 describes the royal dynasties in India under which Buddhist art prospered. Royal members of some dynasties practised Hindu religion but tolerated Buddhism and promoted Buddhist art by building or renovating monuments. Perhaps royal patronage was motivated by the concern of the rulers 'for the fortunes of their empire' (Dehejia, 1997:112).

Table 2.1 Ancient Indian dynasties and patronage of Buddhist art

Dynasty	**Period of reign**	**Religion**	**Monuments supported**
Maurya	321-185 BC.		
Ashoka	274-237 BC.	Hinduism/Buddhism.	Sarnath,Bodhgaya, Amaravati, early stupas.
Sunga	185-72 BC.	Hinduism.	Sanchistupano.2, Sarnath railings.

Andhra (Satavahana)	220 BC-150 AD.	Hinduism.	Bodhgayarailing; Bharhut gateway and railing; Bhaja; renovation of Amaravati; decoration of the gateways in Sanchi.
Kushana	First-second century.	Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism.	Images of Buddha and Bodhisattva in Sarnath; expansion of Dharmajika stupa.
Gupta	Fourth to seventh century	Hinduism.	Sarnath, Ajanta.
Chalukya	Sixth to eighth century	Hinduism.	Ajanta wall paintings, Ellora.

Below we discuss the royal patronage of each dynasty.

Ashoka (Mauryan) Dynasty

Ashoka of the Mauryan dynasty was the first important patron of Buddhist art in India. According to legend, he built 84,000 Buddhist stupas in a single night (Rowland, 1953:40) which must be a gross exaggeration. A more realistic number seems to be a hundred or so. However, it is not unfair to say that he did more for Buddhist art and religion (not only in India but also in other parts of Asia and the Hellenistic kingdoms) than any other royal figure.

Ashoka provided support for the building of temples, stupas and monasteries. There is no trace of any stupas built during the pre-Mauryan period, which suggests that he was the first Mauryan emperor to have introduced them perhaps as a way of unifying the empire. Historical records show that he distributed the Buddha relics to a large number of stupas built by him in all the principal towns of the empire.

Historic monuments of such holy Buddhist places as Bodhgaya and Sarnath are associated with Ashoka's name. His stone and rock edicts are pieces of Buddhist art which also offer historians useful insight into his religious inclinations as well as economic and social life in his empire. The edict pillars have survived more than the Buddhist monuments (with the exception of stupas of Piprawa in Nepal and Sanchi in India) which are largely ruined.

It is suggested that Mauryan art was influenced by Persian and Hellenic art. The lion capitals on top of the Ashokan pillars reflected the ancient solar symbol in Persia, Mesopotamia and Egypt long before Buddhism was born. Rowland (Ibid.:43) concludes that 'the idea of such memorial columns is, of course, not Indian, but is yet another derivation from the civilization of ancient Mesopotamia'. Even if we accept the existence of foreign influence in the Ashoka pillars, they were intended to convey an entirely Indian Buddhist message of peace. However, Rowland may be right in stating that the primary function of any religious memorial built during Ashoka's reign 'was magical and auspicious', neither 'decorative' nor 'architectural' (p.45).

Of all the Buddhist monuments built by Ashoka, the following may be cited as the most important: the Sarnath stupa (Dhamekh); the Sanchi stupa I; and the Bodhgaya temple. These are discussed in subsequent chapters.

Sunga Dynasty

Would the Sunga Brahmins have promoted Buddhist art in the tradition of Ashoka? Historical accounts show that a good deal of it (for example, the Bharhut stupa, gateway and railing, the Sanchi gateways and the Amaravati stupa) belong to the early period of the Sungas. How does one reconcile this apparent paradox of Brahmins patronising Buddhist art? It is quite likely that the successors of Pushyamitra, though Hindus, were tolerant of Buddhism and contributed to the construction of Buddhist monuments. This view is supported by an inscription attributed to the Sungas found at the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhgaya (Barua, 1934).

Several Buddhist monuments were built, renovated or expanded during the Sanga dynasty, for example, Sanchi Stupa no. 2. These monuments are discussed in Chapter 5.

Satavahana (Andhra) Dynasty

The Satavahana rulers (also known as Andhras) who ruled in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh from 230 BC to AD 220, gave financial support for the building of Ajanta cave monasteries and temples. They are also known to have financed the four gateways to the Great Stupa in Sanchi. The Amaravati Stupa built during the Andhra dynasty north of Madras (Chennai) at the mouth of the river Krishna is one of the most important examples of Buddhist art in South India. This dynasty represents the 'golden age of Buddhist art' (Rowland, 1953:123).

Several Buddha statues of the Andhra period dating to the second and third centuries have been found in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Champa (modern Indo-China), which suggests that the Satavahana kingdom had commercial and religious contacts with neighbouring countries.

Kushana Dynasty

Images of Buddha and Bodhisattvas in Sarnath are associated with the Kushana kings such as Kanishka who made popular the human image of Buddha, replacing the earlier symbolic representation. Kushanas may have sponsored the production of the Mathura type of Buddha image. Mathura was almost the second capital of the Kushanas.

Gupta Dynasty

Buddhist art flourished further under the Gupta patronage which is reflected in the Buddha statues in Sarnath (see Chapter 4) and Buddhist rock-cut temples in Ajanta (for example, Cave no. 19, see Chapter 6). Thapar (1990:157-8) notes that the Buddha images discovered in Sarnath represented 'the highest achievement of classical sculpture. They reflect a serenity and contentment which have come to be associated with the religious atmosphere of the age'.

This period also witnessed the construction of rock-cut Buddhist shrines and temples in the Deccan.

Not many buildings of the Gupta period have survived. However, the following remain intact:

- *The Buddhist temples such as Temple 17* near the Great Stupa in Sanchi. It is a simple temple with a flat roof.
- *The Ajanta cave temples,* for example, cave no. 19, a Buddhist sanctuary (see Chapter 6) whose facade contains rich and decorative sculpture of Buddha and Bodhisattvas.
- *The Buddhist chaitya-hall in Karle* (Maharashtra), converted into a temple, represents Buddhist sculpture in Western India. It contains a statue of Buddha flanked by the Bodhisattvas Avalaokitesvara and Maitreya.
- *The Buddha images discovered in Sarnath,* for example, a statue of the preaching Buddha with ornamental halo around Buddha's head is its main feature.
- *Metal statues and statuettes of Buddha*, for example, the colossal copper image of Buddha from Sultanganj in the Birmingham Museum in the UK.
- *Mural paintings of Ajanta temples* (1, 2, 6, 17 and 19) (see Chapter 6), the Gupta caves of Badami and paintings of Bagh.

Gupta art, sculpture and paintings provided prototypes not only for India but also for Cambodia and Thailand where Buddha statues have also been discovered (see Chapters 7 to 9). The Chinese pilgrims to India during the Gupta period may have taken the Gupta style to China in the sixth and seventh centuries.

That Buddhist art developed during the Gupta period cannot be doubted. However, was it the result of an explicit royal patronage of the Gupta rulers? One cannot be entirely certain about this point. The promotion of art during the period may have resulted from a combination of royal patronage, patronage by wealthy merchants and by the ordinary devotees of Buddhism.

Subsequent Dynasties

Pala kings, who ruled eastern India (eighth to twelfth century), appeared to have continued promoting Buddhist art even when Buddhism was in decline in the north. Chandra kings of eastern Bengal (tenth to eleventh century) and Bhaumas of Orissa (eighth to tenth century) were devout Buddhists who patronised Buddhist monuments. However, Buddhist building art witnessed a marked decline from the twelfth century onwards in the wake of Muslim invasions.

In the Deccan, during the fifth and sixth centuries, the Chalukya and Vakataka kings patronised early mural paintings of Ajanta. They may have also supported the construction of Buddhist prayer halls in Ellora.

Patronage of the Merchant Class

Wealthy merchants provided strong financial support to the construction of monasteries, stupas and viharas. Inscriptions on ancient Buddhist monuments show that they offered individual and collective donations for the building of shrines.

What was the motivation behind the generosity of the merchant class? First, it is important to note that India at that time was quite prosperous which made philanthropy possible. Secondly, religious donations may have been made in the hope that donors would acquire better karmas in life after death. This may partly explain why many Hindus donated funds for Buddhist shrines even though they did not practise the religion.

Patronage of Ordinary People

Contributions of ordinary people, Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, are known to have been made for the building of Buddhist monuments in Amaravati, Sanchi and Bharhut. Inscriptions show that a large number of ordinary people

as well as monks and nuns gave donations for their construction. Dehejia (1992:67) notes that 'Sanchi brings us into contact with the everyday world of the housewife and householder, the fisherman and gardener, the merchant and banker, who left as many as 631 records of donations inscribed in stone'. Only three out of the 631 records mention royal patronage. She further adds: 'Nuns and lay-women were also significant donors with just under half the donations'. This is particularly true of the building of Amaravati stupa. Records of donations on inscriptions show that 'two-thirds of the gifts came from lay worshippers, of whom a large proportion were women' (Dehejia, 1997:75). The remaining one-third came from monks and nuns. It is surprising that there is hardly any mention of any royal patronage for the construction of either Sanchi stupa or Amaravati stupa.

Particularly problematic are the financial contributions of monks and nuns who were not supposed to indulge in material pursuits. They lived on alms which offered them a very simple and modest living. So when and how did they become wealthy enough to make donations, and where did their wealth come from? What was the motivation of ordinary men and women to finance art and sculpture? Religious devotion? Or expectation of better karmas in life after death? These questions deserve a systematic analysis.

The Buddhist religion must have become affluent to be able to afford well-equipped and spacious monasteries for monks and nuns who no longer lived on alms.[9] But does this development suggest that Buddhism moved away from the common people?

Having presented a general picture of the sponsorship of Buddhist art, below we discuss its different aspects: architecture, sculpture and painting.

Buddhist Art

Architecture

Buddhist architecture centres around stupas, monasteries and prayer halls which are discussed below.

Stupas: One of the most common Buddhist monuments is a commemorative mound which generally contains relics of Buddha or his disciples. Many stupas were built to commemorate Buddhist events.

A stupa consists of a hemispheric cupola/dome (or *anda*) on a base encircled by a balustrade that may be intersected by four gateways (toranas). A square rests on the cupola railing or a balcony-like structure (*harmika)* from which rises a shaft of metal or wood, supporting umbrellas (see Chapter 5).

The dome was intended to be a replica of the dome of heaven, and the *harmika* at the top of the stupa mound may typify the 'Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods' located at the summit of the cosmic peak. Thus, the stupa is seen as a cosmic diagram and perhaps also as representing the body of Buddha after the attainment of nirvana.

In India, stupas are defined in terms of four categories;

- *Sarrika*: stupas built on the relics of Buddha and his disciples and saints.
- *Paribhogika:* stupas containing objects (such as a begging bowl) used by Buddha.
- *Uddesika*: stupas commemorating the life of Buddha by narrating incidents.
- *Votive*: small stupas built by pilgrims to commemorate their visits to Buddhist holy shrines (see Mitra, 1971).

The reliquary and votive stupas are distinguished by size differences. The latter are generally small such as those at the Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya (see Chapter 3). The Indian stupas changed form over time and grew in size and height.

Some observers regard stupas as Buddhist tombs, but they were more like sanctuaries for storing Buddha relics and as places of worship for both kings and commoners.

Gateways to stupas and railings between them (see Chapter 5) are stone imitations of earlier wooden portals found at the entrances of old Indian towns. The panels and the posts in the form of bas-reliefs depict jatakas from Buddha's various lives.

The forms of stupas vary across Asian countries. For example, in India various shapes are found in Sarnath, Bodhgaya and elsewhere (Fig. 2). In Myanmar, the stupa is usually gilded and rests on a high base mounted by stairs. In Cambodia the cupola is generally bell-shaped. In Tibet, one finds stupas of many doors (*sgo-mang*) since they have many chapels attached to them with frescoes depicting various Tantric deities. The pagodas of China and Japan can be described as 'turreted stupas'. In China, various types of pagodas have been found: wooden and masonry pagodas, single-storeyed, multi-storeyed and multi-eaved pagodas. Although the stupa in its original Indian form was known in China, it was never transplanted there. It is unclear why. Fig. 3 shows the three quadrangular

[9] Romila Thapar (*History of India*, London, 1990), p.129, notes: 'Gone were the days when the Buddhist monks lived entirely on alms […] they ate regular meals in vast monastic refectories […]. Secluded monasteries were sufficiently well-endowed to enable the monks to live comfortably'. She argues that the 'Buddhist Order thus tended to move away from the common people and isolated itself, which in turn diminished much of its religious strength, a development which one suspects Buddha would not have found acceptable' (Ibid).

pagodas at the foot of Mount Gangshan in the northwest of Dali in Yunnan (China). The tallest of the three, Qianxun Pagoda, is nearly 70 metres high, has 16 storeys and a hollow brick structure of beautiful proportions. They were built in AD 836 during the Tang Dynasty. The complex was an important Buddhist centre for the Bai kingdom of Nanchao.

Fig. 2 Sarnath stupas, India

Fig. 3 San Fa Si pagodas, Dali, China

In Thailand, the stupas, generally guarded by demons, are highly decorated with blue ceramic tiles (Fig. 4). However, the earlier ones in Ayutthaya (see Chapter 8) are round at the bottom. They have a bell-shaped dome with a tapering onion-like finial and are closer to the original Indian form of votive stupas of Sarnath and Bodhgaya than the later pagodas of Wat Arun in Bangkok. They also resemble Burmese and Ceylonese pagodas. The Japanese pagodas usually contain three storeys or five storeys and resemble Chinese pagodas such as those in Dali. The pagoda at the NikkoToshogu Shrine is a UNESCO World Heritage Site (Fig. 5).

Fig. 4 A stupa, Wat Arun, Bangkok, Thailand

Fig. 5 A Japanese pagoda, Nikko Toshogu Shrine

How does one explain different architectural styles of the stupas? Does the stupa vary with the type of Buddhism: Hinayana, and Vajrayana? Do they represent different styles of architecture? It is plausible that the form of stupa is determined by the type of Buddhism it represents. However, it is equally likely that they also represent different functions and styles of architecture.

Viharas. Initially, viharas were simple monastic establishments for accommodating monks who were expected to live a celibate life. The first viharas were rectangular or square in shape, with cells built around a large courtyard. They were intended as temporary retreats for monks during the rainy season when it was not practical for them to wander around in the forests. Sometimes stupas were built in the centre of such a courtyard, serving as a place of worship. At other times, special units called dharamshalas were built for large assemblies of monks.

Indian viharas are examples of sculpture in stone more than those of architecture. Their interiors are generally very simple with two rows of columns dividing the sanctuary into one main aisle and two small aisles.

With the passage of time, the architectural forms of viharas underwent considerable changes depending on the climatic and other requirements and traditions. For example, viharas in Ajanta were cut into rocks which were generally cooler (see Chapter 6). However, they were rather small in size as the assemblies of monks at that time were still small. Their size grew with a rapid growth of the number of monks into large communities.

When the number of followers grew rapidly, a coherent organisation was required for them to worship and practise their faith as a community. The common folk started gifting land for the construction of viharas. The construction of large viharas (mahaviharas) received a major boost during the reign of Ashoka in around 250 BC. Until then, Buddhism had remained a parochial sect of monks living together.

Great monasteries grew in the fifth century AD when they served as universities (for example, Nalanda near Patna in Bihar), which attracted Buddhists from Tibet, China and elsewhere in Asia. Hinduism was resurgent at this time and these Buddhist institutions were open to its influence, which may partly explain a gradual weakening of Buddhist religion and its disappearance from India in the thirteenth century. Until then, the viharas continued to serve two important functions as centres of Buddhist learning, and as retreats for meditation.

Chaityas. Chaityas are Buddhist prayer halls and temples as in Ajanta. But they also refer to ‘sacred buildings or temples generally consisting of a hall containing a sacred object to be worshipped, such as a small stupa or a Buddha

image' (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1981a:396). A chaitya is generally an apsidal hall with a central nave flanked by aisles. The apse is usually covered by a half dome with rows of pillars on either side. A stupa in the middle was built for worship. The prayer halls are generally quite large to accommodate large congregations of worshippers. Apart from Ajanta, chaitya halls in India are found in Bhaja, Karla and Bedsa in Maharashtra. Outside India, they are found in Ceylon, Burma, Cambodia and Thailand. In Burma (for example in Pagan) their designs were inspired by the eleventh-century Indian design. The chaityas contained sculptures and paintings describing the earlier incarnations of Buddha (for example, in the Ananda temple in Pagan).

In the Ajanta chaitya halls, Buddha statues are found, which were missing in the earlier chaityas built during Ashoka's reign from the third to first century BC. This earlier period was one of conservative Buddhism (Hinayana or Theravada) which did not deify Buddha. Instead, Buddha was represented by symbols.

Temples. Not many Buddhist temples have survived the ravages of time. Many perished because they were made of wood. Only three temples are intact, namely, the Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya (see Chapter 3), the Mulaganluti Temple in Sarnath (see Chapter 4) and Temple no. 17 in Sanchi (see Chapter 5).

With the arrival of Buddha images grew the need to enshrine them in temples. There must have been many Buddhist temples in ancient times. Hsuan Tsang claims to have seen several temples in the seventh century when he visited India. Many archaeological inscriptions also provide evidence of their existence (Mitra, 1971:15).

Sculpture

Early Indian sculpture was invariably based on religious themes, expressing folk art and religious cults dedicated to the worship of supernatural powers. The fertility cults were very popular and sculpture concerned with it showed such male and female divinities as *yaksa*s and *yaksi*s (for example in Sanchi and Bharhut). Invariably, the images of female divinities (associated with fertility) showed big breasts and wide hips suggestive of both beauty and abundance.

In the early stages of Buddhism, Buddha's presence was illustrated by the following symbols:

Lotus represented Buddha's birth.
Footprints and an empty throne showed Buddha's presence.
Tree indicated Buddha's enlightenment.
The Wheel of Law symbolised Buddha's first sermon.
Stupa symbolised Buddha's nirvana or salvation.

Historical records do not explain why Buddha's body was never shown in a human form. Perhaps this approach was logical considering that Buddha had managed to shed his body when he achieved nirvana. So why show it (Dehejia, 1997:54). There may also be another reason. Buddha's personification could have been construed as idol worship similar to that under Hinduism against which early Buddhism had rebelled. Therefore, the early form of religion might have shied away from worshipping Buddha's image.

In Buddhist art, sculpture consisted mainly of Buddha statues, relief panels and medallions which are discussed below.

Buddha and Bodhisattva Statues

Coins dating back to King Kanishka's reign suggest the creation of human Buddha between AD 78 and AD 101 (Ibid.:81). Buddha images first appeared in the second century in Amaravati, a Buddhist centre in the Deccan.

Buddha images were also discovered in the Gandhara region (northwestern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan). The sculptors of this region depicted Buddha like a Greco-Roman deity, for example, with an Appollo-like face and Roman toga-like robe, broad forehead, slender nose and the loose knotted hair. A Gandhara statue of seated Buddha (Fig. 6) shows his emaciated body resulting from his long and unsuccessful ascetic experiences. On the other hand, Buddha statues found in Mathura (UP) show him as a *yaksa.*

Fig. 6 An emaciated Buddha, Gandhara, Pakistan

Why the Greco-Roman Buddha? The Kushana kings did not have any established artistic legacy in the Gandhara region which may suggest why they turned to Bactrian sculptors who were familiar only with the Greco-Roman style. The statues of Greek gods were well-known during this period. Secondly, India's trading relations with the Mediterranean basin in the first and second centuries may partly explain Western influences. A head of Buddha belonging to the second century Amaravati School shows some Roman features (stylised curls on the head) and some Dravidian Indian (for example, elongated face and long distended earlobes). Gousset (1971), a French Oriental Scholar, describes this Buddha head as a virtual 'Statue-Portrait of Ancient Rome'.

A large number of Buddha statues excavated in Sarnath belong to the Mathura School of art rather than the Gandhara School. One of the most well-preserved and beautiful images of Buddha displayed in the Sarnath Archaeological Museum shows him in a preaching position. A halo behind the Buddha is richly carved with beautiful floral patterns.

Buddha statues appeared in different forms and postures: seated and meditating, standing (Fig. 7) and reclining. The reclining posture (for example, in Thailand) symbolises the end of his journey on Earth. The standing posture may symbolise teaching or delivering sermons.

During the Gupta period workshops developed in Mathura and Sarnath to produce Buddha statues which showed him with a serene face and slightly smiling lips.

However, the earlier Buddha images pertaining to the first century AD were not what one would expect of 'the meditative and compassionate' Master. Instead, Buddha is presented as 'an energetic, earthy being radiating strength and power' (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1981b:184).

The facial features of Buddha vary from country to country as if the sculptors wanted to claim him as their own. Thus the Khmer Buddha in Angkor Thom has thick lips (Fig. 8) (also see Chapter 7). The thick and large lips, flat noses and square faces of the Khmer Buddha images are indigenous features, quite different from the finer Indian Buddha images. The four faces of Buddha on each of the towers of the Bayon in Cambodia clearly depict these features. Some scholars (for example, Bussagli, 1978c) believe that they represent divine royalty in the form of Bodhisattva Lokesvara, the symbol of universal compassion in Buddhist philosophy. The size and massiveness of the Buddha statues is intended to signify supreme power.

Fig. 7 A standing Buddha, Sarnath, India

Fig. 8 A Khmer Buddha, Angkor Thom, Cambodia

Thailand has a large number of Buddha statues ranging from miniatures to giant images in bronze, wood and stone. The Thai Buddha image has smooth rounded body and face. The seated cross-legged position of the Thai Buddha suggests the Indian Amaravati heritage and the later Indian Gupta art. Although the Thai model follows the Gupta idiom, it tends to be more simplified and less massive.

The Sukhotai model of Buddha tried to follow the early Ceylonese and Dvaravati tradition in sculpture. It may have also been influenced by the Khmer and Mon features. A more aesthetic Thai Buddha image is the U Thong model (originally built in Ayutthaya) based on the original Indian patterns.

From the thirteenth to seventeenth century, the Thai kings tried to go back to the original tenets of Theravada Buddhism by importing patterns of art from Ceylon. This was the period when Siamese artists adhered to the original principles without worrying about artistic considerations and development. A large number of small Buddha images were multiplied and stored in temples for worship (see Chapters 8 and 9).

Despite the mass production of Buddhas in Thailand, and a resulting lack of originality, one finds masterpieces of Buddha statues in the temples of Bangkok (for example, Figs. 54 and 55 of the reclining golden Buddha, Chapter 9).

Bodhisattva figures prominently in the Buddhist Jataka stories about the previous lives of Buddha. It is a divine being who has not yet attained nirvana and has postponed it to lead a worldly life of compassion and sympathy for the suffering human beings. He is not always presented in a human form. For example, he appeared as a Golden Duck in Ajanta Cave 17.

Buddha Footprints

Buddha footprints have been discovered in Bodhgaya and Amaravati (Fig. 9). Both footprints show the Wheel of Law (dharmachakra) at the centre of Buddha's feet. Other auspicious symbols also appear, namely, *tri-ratnas* (the Buddha, his teachings and the community of Buddhist monks), curling svastikas above the toes, and the lotus buds and flowers surrounding the footprints.

Fig. 9 Buddha footprints, Amaravati, India © Trustees of the British Museum, London

In India, the feet have long been the focus of respect. They represent the grounding of the transcendent. Even today, the lotus feet of gods and gurus continue to be revered.

Medallions

Medallions were a common form of sculpture in India, especially on the railings of stupas (for example, in Bharhut and Amaravati). As discussed in Chapter 5, many medallions are found on cross-bars of stupa railings. In the Bharhut stupa, they were generally round in the centre of the railing and crescent-shaped at the top and bottom. The subject-matter of medallions ranged from amorous couples to goddesses and many included lotus flowers and jataka scenes from Buddha's earlier incarnations. One Amaravati medallion depicts the Mandhata jataka about Buddha's previous life as a rich *chakravartin* (universal emperor) who reigned over heaven and earth for a thousand years (Fig. 10). He was still dissatisfied and continued to feel desire and craving. It shows a scene of his courtly life with

musicians and dancing women. He came back to earth from heaven and died. The medallion carries a message of Buddha's teaching that all desires lead to suffering and, therefore, need to be controlled.

Fig. 10 A medallion showing worship of Buddha relics, Amaravati, India © Trustees of the British Museum, London

Relief Panels

Relief panels were an important feature of the early and late Buddhist art in India. They are found in Sanchi, Bharhut, Amaravati, Sarnath and in Western India (Maharashtra, for example). A relief panel shows Buddha worshippers around an empty throne displaying Buddha's feet (Fig. 11). An important figure in the panel is that of a serpent king (*nagaraja*) standing just behind the relic. The bottom half shows several women who may belong to the legendary naga kingdom.

Fig. 11 A relief panel showing worshippers, an empty throne and Buddha's feet, Amaravati, India © Trustees of the British Museum, London

The rock-cut sculpture and relief panels of the West are much less profuse than those in the north. The bas reliefs of the Bhaja monastery are known to depict rain god Indra on an elephant and the sun god Surya on a chariot. Unlike the northern sculpture, they are not copies of wooden prototypes but instead, they reflect the terra-cotta tradition of clay.

Indian Buddhist architecture (more appropriately, sculpture) is said to be as 'conservative as the Indian social and spiritual tradition' (Zimmer, 1955:248). It evolved not by eliminating the old elements but instead, as a new superstructure on top of the old. This is shown in Sarnath, Bodhgaya and other places (see Chapters 3 to 6).

Painting

Buddhist art consisted of mural paintings; the earliest ones in India are associated with popular festivals during which houses were decorated with paintings and streets with painted banners. But much evidence of this art is now lost.

The surviving paintings are found in the Buddhist cave temples of Ajanta the walls and ceilings of which were covered with lavish painted decoration. Several painters and workshops must have been employed to undertake such a large-scale painting and decorative work.

The Ajanta murals were painted in tempera technique on smooth plastered surfaces. First, the painters applied clay mixed with rice husk and gum on the surfaces of walls and ceilings. Then they applied a coating of lime plaster

on these surfaces. Thirdly, the colours and designs were applied on the plaster. This technique of painting was well developed by the end of the second century AD.[10]

Outside India, paintings in Buddhist chaityas are found in Burma, Ceylon and Thailand. In Burma, the art of painting is not as sophisticated and exquisite as found in the rest of Southeast Asia. Paintings are not original and are confined mainly to the shrines in Pagan. Rather schematic, they are reminiscent of the eastern Indian Buddhist style. Some have a sensuous Indian charm suggesting that they might have been painted by Indian artists. Many older Burmese icons have been gilded and repainted which diminishes their vitality and exuberance.

A number of paintings have survived in Ceylon, particularly in the rock of Sigiriya (Fig. 12) which are reminiscent of the Ajanta murals in India. They date from the sixth century AD and consist mainly of apsaras showering flowers. More recent paintings of the twelfth or thirteenth century, found in Polonnaruva, were inspired by western Indian and southern Indian art.

Fig. 12 A rock painting from Sirigiya, Ceylon (Sri Lanka)

Not much is known about Buddhist paintings in Thailand. They have some resemblance with Burmese paintings found in Pagan. In these paintings one comes across Khmer and Chinese influences besides the Burmese. The Burmese influence is not surprising since Burma conquered Siam in the eighteenth century when Thailand might have adopted the Burmese ornamental style. Chinese influence on Thai painting may be attributed to a large Chinese expatriate community in Thailand (see Chapters 8 and 9).

There are several types of Thai painting of which murals in Buddhist temples and monasteries are the most interesting. The subjects of murals include jataka stories (for example, Fig. 49, Chapter 8, and Fig. 59, Chapter 9), temptation of Buddha by Mara and scenes of Hell. Other types include those painted on cloth banners and wood. A third type of Thai painting done on palm leaf generally illustrated sacred manuscripts. Traditional Thai painting died out in the middle of the nineteenth century when Western oil paintings were introduced.

Indian Influence on South and Southeast Asian Art

We discussed in Chapter 1 the spread of Buddhism from India to Ceylon, Burma, Tibet, Cambodia and Thailand. The Buddhist religion carried with it the knowledge and techniques of Indian art and architecture of that period, for example, fragments of Buddha statues of AD 300-400 based on Indian prototypes discovered in Burma, Cambodia and Thailand. Also in Java in the eighth century the central kingdom of Shailendra built the Buddhist () and Hindu monuments of Borobudur and Lara Jonggrang (Prambanam). Indian merchants, craftsmen and artists also travelled to Southeast Asia along with their works dealing, *inter alia*, with religious themes.

South Asia

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[10] In Europe, the technique of tempera painting was used from the twelfth to fifteenth century. Egg yolk was used instead of rice husk and gum. Painting was done usually on wood panels. Painters started using oil in the fifteenth century.

Nepal was perhaps one of the first countries outside India where Ashoka introduced Buddhism which survived there even after disappearing from India. But the form in which Buddhism was practised in Nepal, namely, Tantrism, is different from either Hinayana or (see Chapter 1). The three main types of Buddhist art in Nepal consist of: (a) Palm leaf painting resembling the Bengal school of painting during the Pala dynasty; (b) Hanging scrolls with magic diagrams and Buddhist gods and goddesses and (c) Bronze and copper sculpture borrowed from the Indian Pala dynasty. Nepal follows Tantrism which explains many female deities (such as Taras) and goddesses in its sculpture. This form of Buddhism represents a mixture of Hindu and Buddhist elements. Thus, statues of goddesses contain many arms showing extra power.

In *Ceylon*, Indian influence in the construction of Buddhist stupas and temples is documented in the Great Chronicle or *Mahavamsa*. Rowland (1953:209) notes that 'the inspiration for both sculpture and architecture came from India; especially […] from the later Andhra civilization of the eastern coast'. The ancient capital of Anuradhapura contains several different types and forms of Ceylonese dagobas: bell-shaped, lotus-shaped and bubble-shaped, which were originally surrounded by Indian-style wooden railings and toranas.

The earliest Ceylonese sculpture (found in the Kantaka Chaitya in Mihintale, for example) resembles the Indian sculpture of Sanchi and Amaravati. The seated Buddha statue discovered in Anuradhapura (the ancient capital of Ceylon) recalls the Indian Sarnath School of the fifth and sixth centuries in India. Also in Anuradhapura (fifth century), a Ceylonese replica has been discovered of the semi-circular stepping stone of the Amaravati stupa.

During the early period (the reign of Ashoka) Buddhist art in Ceylon was inspired by that in North India. However, in later centuries, South Indian dynasties and those of Bengal had close relations with Ceylon which may explain South Indian influence there. For example, in the Ruanweli dagoba the standing figures of Buddha or Bodhisattva (probably of the second century AD) are related to the Amaravati images of the Deccan discussed in Chapter 5.

In *Burma***,** Buddhist art was influenced by the Indian. There is evidence of Indians living in Burma from the first century onwards. In the tenth century, Hindu temples were built in Pagan such as Nat Hlaung Guyaung and Ngakye Nadaun. The construction of stupas was undertaken later when both Hinayana and Buddhism became popular. It is believed that no less than 5,000 stupas (pagodas) were built in Pagan during the reign of King Anawrahta and his successors. Close relations were maintained between the rulers of Burma and the Buddhist kingdoms of Bengal.

Chaityas similar to those found in Buddhist India are the main shrines of Theravada Buddhism in Burma. Burmese sculpture is also profoundly influenced by the Indian. However, 'the Burmese images have a grace not found in the Indian images' (Munsterberg, 1970:219).

Although inspired by the Indian model, the Burmese stupas are somewhat different. They are more slender than those found in India. Their tapering tops remind one of the shikaras of the ancient Hindu temples.

Several examples of the Indian influence on Burmese art are worth noting:

- A *copy of the Mahabodhi temple in Pagan*; it was dedicated in 1215.
- *The Schwesandaw Buddhist chaitya in Pagan* (eleventh century). It had Indian-style brick carvings which are now covered by white plaster.
- The *Ananda Temple in Pagan* which is believed to have been built byIndian Buddhists during the reign of King Kyanzittha (1084-1112). The reliefs in the temple depict the jataka scenes from Buddha's life.
- *Burmese paintings* of the early period were influenced by the Tantric paintings of Bengal, which is particularly true of the thirteenth-century wall paintings.

Connections between India and Burma may have been broken after the disappearance of Buddhism in India in the thirteenth century. This is the period when the Burmese style of art emerged. While it had remnants of Indian influence, it developed its own character of folk art which generally lacked in expression.

Buddhism also spread to *Afghanistan* (ancient Bactria north of Gandhara). Two sites of Buddhist sculpture there include (a) Bamiyan where two giant statues of Buddha in the rocks were destroyed by the Taliban several years ago and (b) Hadda (near modern Jalalabad) where Greco-Buddhist statues have been found. Unlike the Gandhara sculpture, that found in Hadda is closer to the Indian sculpture in its sensuousness.

From Afghanistan Buddhism spread to *Central Asia* and later to the *Far East*. Central Asia was an important trade route between China and the Roman Empire and between China, India and Iran, which may partly explain Greco-Roman and Persian influences on the Buddhist art and sculpture in India.

Rest of Asia

As discussed in Chapter 7 on Angkor, Indian architecture and mythology greatly influenced Khmer/Cambodian temple art and architecture. In *Cambodia***,** both Hindu and Buddhist influences on art are noticeable. Pre-Khmer art and architecture (fifth to seventh century) is Indian in origin. The Shiva temple of Bayang on a hilltop could pass for an Indian temple of Gupta or Pallava period. Other examples of the Indian derivation include the gestures and

postures of statues. The gods and demons, gandharvas, apsaras, nagas and asuras in Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom appear in almost the same forms as the Indian counterparts. The nagas and apsaras are based on the Hindu mythology (for more details see Chapter 7). While Hindus worshipped naga (serpent) gods, Buddhism did not particularly favour them.

The Khmer ruled Cambodia from the tenth to thirteenth century. Hindu and Buddhist carvings were produced in Cambodia even before the tenth century when Khmer kings came to power. Examples of these are to be found in such shrines as Banteay Srei of the eighth century (Figs. 13 and 14). The profuse sculpture of this shrine is a fine example of Hindu art outside India. Cambodian sculpture is not voluptuous like the Indian, although it was inspired by it. Apsaras and gods and goddesses found in Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom are of a cylindrical shape and more in keeping with the traditions of conservative Buddhism which did not appreciate sensuousness.

Fig. 13 Banteay Srei temple, Cambodia

Fig. 14 Stone carvings, Banteay Srei

While Angkor Wat sculpture is of a uniformly high quality (particularly the apsaras, gods and goddesses, royal processions and Khmer armies on the march, not to speak of the battle scenes from the Indian epics), those of Angkor Thom are not of consistently good quality. One reason may be that king Jayavarman VII built too many temples in a very short time. However, some art critics argue that 'the images at this site (Angkor Thom) are among the greatest of all Buddhist icons, equaling the finest statues found, either in India or in the Far East' (Ibid.:242). This statement probably refers to the images of the Bodhisattvas on the four sides of the Angkor Thom towers.

Although Cambodian sculpture is derived from the Indian, its style is distinctly indigenous. As discussed above, the features of Cambodian Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (thick lips and flat faces, for example) are clearly Khmer in style and character.

In Cambodia, there is hardly any difference between Hindu and Buddhist art. As Angkor Wat bears testimony, both religions existed side by side. The lack of any differences may be due to the fact that the same sculptors were involved in carvings for both religions.

Cambodian art declined in the thirteenth century when the Thai defeated the Khmer rulers.

The stupas of *Thailand* are quite different from those in India in both shape and decoration. But they have a lot in common with the Burmese and Ceylonese pagodas, especially the ones dating back to the Ayutthaya period. Therefore, one wonders whether their construction was inspired by Indian architecture**.**

A Thai scholar notes: 'A careful comparison of the Indian stupa and the Pra Chedi or Thai stupa leaves no doubt that the latter was considerably influenced by the style of the Indian stupa though the influence was indirect' (Jermsawatdi, 1979:108). The Thai stupa is based on the original Indian prototype of Sanchi and Bharhut. However, it did not imitate the Indian prototype in all respects, which may explain why it looks different.

In sculpture, the sixth-century Thai Buddha images resemble the prototypes of the Indian Gupta period (for example, Buddha statues found in Ayutthaya, see Chapter 8). Thai Buddha images also appear in simplified sheath-like robes which must have been inspired by the Gupta images of Buddha in Sarnath and Ajanta. However, the Indian system of proportions was not followed. The heads of the Thai Buddha images are too big in relation to the body.

The nature and extent of the Indian influence on Thai art and sculpture depends on the period considered. There are five distinct phases of this art:

- *Dvaravati Phase* (sixth to twelfth century): This was Mon art (inspired by the Gupta art in India) more than Thai. The Mon lived in Burma and Thailand (or Siam) before the Thai came from southwest China.

- *Lopburi Phase* (twelfth century): This phase relates to the Khmer conquest of Thailand. Although Indian principles were followed, this art was less sensuous than Indian. Lopburi statues of Buddha are broader, flatter and less pronounced in linear detail than the Dvaravati (Mon) statues.
- *Sukhotai Phase* (thirteenth century): This represents the first phase of true Thai art. Iconography of this phase is derived from Indian sources but the images are distinctly Thai. Their features are no longer like those of the Burmese (Mon) and the Khmer as during the earlier phases. The truly Thai forms are more elongated, elegant and sophisticated with protuberance on the top of the head. Their elegance and refinement is shown by delicate hands and slender arms (for example, Ayutthaya images, see Chapter 8).
- *Ayutthaya Phase* (fourteenth to eighteenth century): This phase represents the extension of national Thai art which began under the Sukhotai phase (see Chapter 8). During this phase, the painting of manuscripts suggests the Indian influence. The *Triphoum*, a manuscript devoted to Buddhist cosmology, contains scenes of jatakas in which the figures of gods and goddesses are similar in style to those in the Indian Ajanta paintings.
- *Bangkok Phase* (eighteenth to twentieth century): This phase relates to the Chakra dynasty and Rama kings (see Chapter 9). There is less Indian influence in this phase than during the earlier phases. The Thai style of painting during this period was influenced more by the Chinese and Western styles than the Indian. However, Thai Buddhist sculpture was inspired by the Gandhara School during this period especially during the reigns of Rama V and Rama VI. The Thai sculptors attempted to humanise the Buddha image.

Craftsmen may have been imported from India. Dvaravati sculpture of Thailand resembles such Indian styles as Amaravati and Gupta which flourished at the same time. This art centred on Theravada Buddhism. Excavations have shown assembly halls, bases of stupas, terra-cotta figures and fragments of decorative designs.

Indian art and culture of Dvaravati came to *Western Thailand* via Burma and the three Pagodas Pass during the eighth century when the Takuapa-Chaiya trans-peninsula route was opened. Three routes brought Indians to Thailand from: (1) the Amaravati region in South India, (2) the ancient port of Tamluk on the Hooghly River in Bengal, East India, and (3) the port of Kanchi (Tamil Nadu) during the Pallava rule. Jermasawatdi (1979:63) notes that:

The Thai workmanship was based on ‘the examples of the art of Amaravati from South India. But it was mainly indebted both in iconography and sculptural style to the Gupta and post-Gupta art of India as seen in the cave temples of Ajanta, Kanheri and Ellora.

Dvaravati was the kingdom of Mon people, which explains the Mon features of the Thai and the Khmer images of Buddha, for example, lips turned outwards, downward-curved eyelids marked by double channels. The Dvaravati images of Buddha may have provided prototypes/models for the later Khmer Buddhas in Cambodia.

In the eleventh century, the Indian influence may have waned when the Khmer captured Dvaravati. At this point, Khmer art may have replaced Indian. From the thirteenth to seventeenth century, the Siam city of Sukhotai was the main source and inspiration for Theravada Buddhist art and culture. The Thai kings turned to Ceylon for the supply of Buddhist monks and perhaps also craftsmen besides sculptors and architects.

In *Java* and other parts of present-day *Indonesia***,** old Buddhist and Hindu relics have been discovered which may belong to the ancient kingdoms of Srivijaya (Sumatra) and Shailendra (Java). The *tjandis* (religious structures) during this period (seventh to thirteenth century) were built on the basis of Indian prototypes. Borobudur is one of the most well-known examples of the Buddhist *tjandis*. Built around 800 by an Indian Shailendra king, it is a step-pyramid style Buddhist stupa with several square terraces. The top three terraces are circular and the summit has a bell-shaped circular stupa. Each terrace is lined with relief sculptures and the niches once contained Buddha statues.

Borobudur sculpture represents Indian Gupta art, which is not surprising since the Shailendra kings originated in India. But the statues found there have local Java features.[11] Besides, the building material used is a black volcanic stone not found in India. Furthermore, the forms of statues are also softer and gentler than those of the Gupta carvers.

In Borobudur many reliefs show figures of women (allowed by Buddhism) reflecting ordinary Javanese life of this period. These are very different from the Indian female forms which show exuberance, sensuousness and extravagance. The Javanese female figures are the ordinary Javanese women without any spiritual powers and symbolism.

Many cult images of Buddha and Buddhist deities have been discovered in Indonesia. These are close to the images of early Pala period in Bihar (India) which would suggest close relations between Java and northeastern India, the home of Buddhism.

Although inspired by Indian art, Javan art and sculpture is quite different. It deals with everyday life unlike Indian art which is shrouded in superhuman mystery.

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[11] On his visit to Indonesia, Tagore, the famous Indian poet and Nobel Laureate in Literature, noted: ‘I see India everywhere but I can’t recognize it any more’ (cited in Gabriele Fahr-Becker, editor, *The Art of East Asia*, Cologne, 1998, vol. I), p. 326.