



## 2

# Art from Maurya to Gupta Period (4th C.B.C to 6th C.A.D)

### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

Chandragupta Maurya established an empire in India in the 4th C.B.C. For the first time, large portions of the subcontinent were unified politically. Chandragupta's grandson Ashoka was the most powerful and popular emperor of this dynasty. He was a great lover of art and architecture. Out of his contribution to art, few pillars or Sthambhas and sculptures remain. These are found throughout his vast empire, particularly in and around Magadha.

After the decline of the Maurya dynasty, the Sungas were the rulers of this empire. The Sunga and Satvahana period, that followed, contributed both in the field of Architecture and Sculpture. Most of these were related to Buddhism. The finest examples are the *Stupas* of Bharhut and Sanchi. The Kushanas arrived from the north western part of China and built an empire in the Northern part of India. Gandhara was the region situated on the western bank of the Indus river. The most important contribution of this school was the creation of the Buddha image. Buddha image appeared simultaneously in Gandhara and Mathura.

When the Gupta dynasty took over power from the Kusanas, it turned into a golden age for art and architecture. Artists of this age obtained great refinement in every form of art. Few artworks have been selected for study to estimate the contribution of the Mauryas to the Guptas.

### 2.1 OBJECTIVES

After studying the lessons the learner will be able to:

- evaluate the artworks from Maurya to Gupta period;
- describe the size, style and place of these enlisted artworks;
- explain the characteristic features of these artworks;
- differentiate the evolution of style from period to period.





*Lion Capital of Sarnath*



## 2.2 LION CAPITAL OF SARNATH

<i>Title</i>	–	<i>Lion Capital</i>
<i>Medium</i>	–	<i>Sand stone</i>
<i>Date</i>	–	<i>circa 3rd C.B.C</i>
<i>Finding site</i>	–	<i>Sarnath</i>
<i>Size</i>	–	<i>Height - 213.5 cm.</i>
<i>Artist</i>	–	<i>Unknown</i>
<i>Collection</i>	–	<i>Sarnath Site Museum</i>

### General Description

The sculpture of four lions grouped together, is the capital (Top part of a pillar) of the Sthambha of Sarnath's Deer park, which was created during the time of Ashoka. It is believed that it was at this site, Buddha preached his first sermon, thereby "turning the wheel of the law". It was excavated in 1905. The Chinese traveler Hsuan - Tsang mentioned of a seventy-foot high pillar with shining polish standing at the same site.

This composite sculpture shows a highly advanced form of art. This sculpture has been adopted as the emblem of Govt. of India

### INTEXT QUESTIONS (2.2)

Choose the right answer:-

- (a) Lion capital of Sarnath is made of
  - (i) clay
  - (ii) marble
  - (iii) sand stone
- (b) The Sthambha was erected during the time of
  - (i) Chandragupta
  - (ii) Asoka
  - (iii) Akbar
- (c) The sculpture has been adopted as the emblem of
  - (i) Door darshan
  - (ii) Delhi Govt
  - (iii) Govt of India



*Chawri Bearer*



### 2.3 CHAURI BEARER

<i>Title</i>	–	<i>Chauri Bearer (yakshini)</i>
<i>Medium</i>	–	<i>Sand stone</i>
<i>Date</i>	–	<i>Circa 3rd C.B.C</i>
<i>Finding site</i>	–	<i>Didarganj, Patna</i>
<i>Size</i>	–	<i>Height 162.5 cm.</i>
<i>Artist</i>	–	<i>Unknown</i>
<i>Collection</i>	–	<i>Patna Museum, Patna</i>

#### General Description

Because of the technique, surface refinement and high polish, scholars think that the beautiful life-sized sculpture belongs to the Maurya phase. This female figure is also identified as a Yakshini and is often mentioned as the “Mona Lisa” of Indian Art. The figure is carved in the round with the perfect modeling of a female body.

There are very few sculptures in Indian art that surpass its beauty.

#### INTEXT QUESTION (2.3)

Fill up the blanks

- The Chauri bearer was found at “.....”.
- It belongs to Maurya period because it has “.....”.
- The Chauri bearer is mentioned as the Indian “.....”.



*Stupa-I at Sanchi*





**2.4 STUPA-I AT SANCHI**

<i>Title</i>	–	<i>The great Stupa of Sanchi</i>
<i>Medium</i>	–	<i>Sand stone</i>
<i>Date</i>	–	<i>circa 3rd C.B.C through 1st C.A.D</i>
<i>Finding site</i>	–	<i>Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh</i>
<i>Size</i>	–	<i>Diameter - 36 meters</i>
<i>Artist</i>	–	<i>Unknown</i>

**General Description**

Stupa I is the largest Stupa at Sanchi. It is known as Mahastupa. It was built during the time of Asoka, and was enlarged to the present size by the Sungas. Probably a portion of the relics of Sakyamuni (Buddha) was kept inside the Stupa. During the second half of first century B.C. the Satavahanas erected the four beautifully carved toranas or Gateways.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS (2.4)**

Fill up the blanks

- The relics of ..... was kept inside the great Stupa.
- The largest Stupa of Sanchi is known as .....
- The four *Toranas* were erected by the ..... Dynasty.





*Jain Tirthankar*



## 2.5 JAIN TIRTHANKAR

<i>Title</i>	–	<i>Jain Tirthankar</i>
<i>Date</i>	–	<i>Gupta period 5th C.A.D.</i>
<i>Finding site</i>	–	<i>Mathura</i>
<i>Size</i>	–	<i>95x60 cm</i>
<i>Artist</i>	–	<i>Unknown</i>
<i>Collection</i>	–	<i>State Museum, Lucknow, U.P.</i>

### General Description

Many Jain images were found near Vidisa, which belonged to the early Gupta period. This image is of a Jain Tirthankar, seated on a square pedestal in *Vajraparyankasana mudra*. This image of Mahavira Swamy, the 24th Tirthankar, is made in the typical Buddhist and Jain style of the Kusana period.

In his teachings Mahavir Swamy laid emphasis on freeing the human being from the cycle of birth and death, which can be achieved by practicing Tri Ratna (three gems of action) like faith, righteous work and truthful words. The artist tried to express the Triratna in this image.

### INTEXT QUESTIONS (2.5)

Choose the right answer

- (a) The Jain Tirthankar Statue is now in
  - (i) National Museum, N.Delhi
  - (ii) Indian Museum, Kolkata
  - (iii) State Museum, Lucknow
- (b) The statue is in
  - (i) Abhaya Mudra
  - (ii) Bhumisparsha Mudra
  - (iii) Vajraparyankasana Mudra
- (c) The image is of
  - (i) Buddha
  - (ii) Mahavira
  - (iii) Parsvanath.



*Seated Buddha*





## 2.6 SEATED BUDDHA

<i>Title</i>	-	<i>Sarnath Buddha</i>
<i>Medium</i>	-	<i>Buff Sand stone.</i>
<i>Date</i>	-	<i>Gupta period, 5 century A.D.</i>
<i>Finding Site</i>	-	<i>Sarnath, U.P.</i>
<i>Size</i>	-	<i>Height - 160 cm.</i>
<i>Artist</i>	-	<i>Unknown</i>
<i>Collection</i>	-	<i>Sarnath Site Museum, Sarnath</i>

### General Description

The beautiful figure is seated in Padmasan, with upturned soles. His hands are held in *Dharmachakramudra*. The ear lobes are long and the eyes are half-closed. The face is calm and has a spiritual expression. Behind the head is a huge halo covered with a beautiful floral decoration.

This sculpture is one of the best examples of Gupta art. The matured simplicity and rational use of ornamentation prove the greatness of the artist.

### INTEXT QUESTIONS (2.6)

Fill up the blanks -

- The beautiful figure is seated in ..... Pose.
- Sarnath Buddha belongs ..... Period.
- Hands of Sarnath Buddha are held in ..... Mudra.





*Seated Buddha (Gandhara Style)*



**2.7 SEATED BUDDHA (GANDHARA STYLE)**

<i>Title</i>	-	<i>Seated Buddha</i>
<i>Medium</i>	-	<i>Red Sand Stone</i>
<i>Date</i>	-	<i>Kusana period</i>
<i>Finding site</i>	-	<i>Katra-Tila, Mathura, U.P.</i>
<i>Size</i>	-	<i>Height - 75 cm.</i>
<i>Artist</i>	-	<i>Unknown</i>
<i>Collection</i>	-	<i>Government Museum, Mathura, U.P.</i>

**General description**

Gandhara is the old name of the territory on the western bank of the Indus river. The early school flourished during the first and second century A.D. came to its maturity during the time of the Kusanas. These sculptures were found from Taxila in the west to Sarnath in the east. The most important contribution of the Gandhara school was the creation of the Buddha image. This image shows realistic rendering of drapery and a tuft-like hair style on top of the head. One arm of this statue is missing, which probably was in *Abhaya Mudra*.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS (2.7)**

Fill up the blanks

- The seated Buddha belongs to the ..... style.
- This statue is made of ..... stone.
- The most important contribution of Gandhara school was the creation of ..... image.

**2.8 SUMMARY**

The contribution of the period from 4th C.B.C to 6th C.A.D towards art and culture of India is most important. The art and culture of this period was influenced by varied religious beliefs like Hindu, Jain and Buddhist. All these religions were patronized by the ruler of different faiths and they were treated equally. Though Buddhists art spread all over India, the other religious arts also flourished in the same way. Buddha images were made for the first time by Gandhara and Mathura artists. Stupas were built with equal enthusiasm both in the Northern and Southern parts of India.



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## 2.9 ANSWERS OF INTEXT QUESTIONS

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- |     |                        |     |                              |
|-----|------------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| 2.2 | (a) Sand stone         | 2.3 | (a) Didarganj                |
|     | (b) Ashoka             |     | (b) High polish              |
|     | (c) Govt. of India     |     | (c) Mona-Lisa                |
| 2.4 | (a) Sakyamuni          | 2.5 | (a) State museum of Lucknow  |
|     | (b) Mahastupa          |     | (b) Vajra Paryankasana Mudra |
|     | (c) Satavahanas.       |     | (c) Mahavira                 |
| 2.6 | (a) Padmasana          | 2.7 | (a) Gandhara style           |
|     | (b) Gupta period       |     | (b) Red sand stone           |
|     | (c) Dharmachakra mudra |     | (c) Buddha                   |

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## 2.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

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1. What are the major contributions of the Mauryan to Buddhist art?
  2. Discuss the style of Gandhara Buddhist sculpture.
  3. Write the main features of the statue of Jain Tirthankara.
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## 2.11 GLOSSARY

Hsuan Tsang	-	Chinese traveller
Composite Sculpture	-	combined forms in one sculpture
Emblem	-	symbol of a state
Mona Lisa	-	Famous painting of Leonardo-da-Vinci
Modeling	-	brings illusion of volume
Relics	-	remains of a deceased person.
Tirthankar	-	One who has attained perfect knowledge
Mudra	-	Symbolic hand gesture
Spiritual	-	conscious thought and emotion
Drapery	-	clothes with folds
Tuft	-	bunch or cluster