

Lecture 16

Art in India

- sculpture, painting & architecture as evidence & beyond.

Indian art: art from the premodern
Indian sub-continent
(till 19th century)

- diversity in religion & thought process
⇒ diversity in artistic processes

- Indus Valley artifacts
(evidence from 3rd millennium
B.C.)

organized city planning into
grids & blocks in cities of
Mohenjodaro & Harappa.

extensive use of terracotta
material

↓
(good quality clay
is extensively
available in such
areas)

evidence ←

that people
knew how to
make use of
the local materials
available

good plans

(making bricks & terracotta from clay)

not many gigantic structures
in Indus valley like we found
in regions like Sumer — so no
evidence of a singular & prestigious
monarch.

Pashupati seal : (used for trading purposes)

all evidence we can get from this seal

person sitting in a yogic
posture wearing a
horned headrest & sitting on
something like a raised platform.

not really hard evidence

people assumed that it could be
evidence related to early traces
of religion

↓
slippery ground.

- Iconic & aniconic representation of Buddha's body: Theravada & Mahayana

Some of the early evidence we find are the Buddhist & the Jain artefacts/objects.
→ teachings of Siddhartha/Buddha

aniconic

→ not representing a particular person/figure but the ideology associated

egs. of aniconic structures are the stupas in Sanchi
↓ (paid homage to Buddha & associated ideology)
aniconic representation of Buddha

an icon would have certain iconographical qualities :

sign of enlightenment of Buddha

egs. of the structure of head in the sculptures of Buddha or Bodhisattva, long earlobes, sort of a unibrow, hand gesture of Buddha

∴ one idea represented in multiple forms (iconic & aniconic)

• Anatomy of a Hindu temple : microcosm of the Universe

- not a single figure like in Jainism & Buddhism to represent the entirety of Hinduism
- co-existence of many systems into a single belief system.
 - ↳ temples were constructed as microcosms of the universe.
- eg - ground plan of Bhutagaon temple (one of the oldest-surviving brick temples in

the entire Indian subcontinent)

- Paintings as representations?

evidences { synoptic narratives in paintings
associated with sculpture making
in the past -
kind of knowledge that people
had during that time

- Islam & the Garden of Paradise

- arrival of Islam in India as
early as 8th century A.D.

- monotheistic religion unlike
Hinduism

- idea of Paradise in Islam reflected
in Islamic architecture - in
the form of 4 part-square gardens
(eg. in Taj Mahal)