## INDIAN ART FROM INDUS VALLEY TO INDIA TODAY

Talk 2a
Evolution of art in India
From archaic, to classical, to baroque



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## Evolution of art in India

From archaic, to classical, to baroque



Art manifests itself in any creative expression, and every epoch has its own imprint on the contemporary art.

One can see in this a change in taste, in manner and in style.

Following this could be quite fascinating.

Thus, for example, when you go to a temple, you would not only be interested in what an image represents, but also about how the present one came to be conceived.

In fact, after some initiation,
you would be able to identify a sculpture
as to its period and
its geographical location
with certain amount of confidence.

In the early phase when the artists are yet to master the material, the making, including the conventions and internalising the subject matter the execution could be far from perfect.

This can be called archaic phase.

Yaksha from Parkahm, 3<sup>rd</sup> c BCE



This belong to the earliest period, namely, that of Asoka.

The body is well proportioned, has a strong chest and masculine trunk, and wide, powerful shoulders; a solid figure, but it is stiff, rigid, lifeless and faces you frontally, absolutely symmetrical, with no movement.

It looks almost like a soldier standing at attention.

Yaksha from Parkahm, 3<sup>rd</sup> c BCE



Obviously while attempting to duplicate a wooden statue, the sculptor has concentrated on mastering the medium, and artistic expression yet to mature. In this period there had been a number sculptures of narrating a story, like this Buddhist Jataka with a moral, an incident from the life of compassionate Bodhisattva.

Ruru Jataka, Bharhut, 1st c. BCE



Born as a golden deer, Bodhisattva rescues a drowning man, and the ungrateful man reveals the deer to the king who wanted take it to his wife.

Bodhisattava admonishes the ungrateful person and gives a sermon to the king.

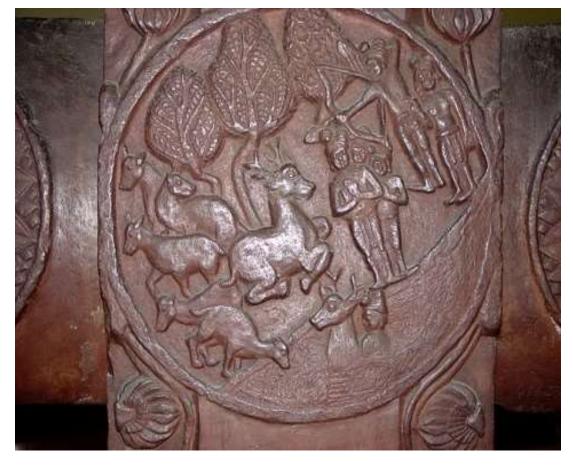
Ruru Jataka , Bharhut, 1st c. BCE



Telling such a story within a round frame calls for imagination and technique.

There is river where the deer is seen rescuing in the fore ground, hunters on the banks and in background are trees.

Ruru Jataka , Bharhut, 1st c. BCE



Though all important characters are shown in their actions, a technique to show all these artistically, is yet to be developed.

Further, though the animals are almost natural, the human figures are not; they are frontal, rigid and lifeless.

Ruru Jataka, Bharhut, 1st c. BCE



## Over a period of time the sculptor has more refined taste and also mastered the medium. Now we can see sophistication in his work.



Naga royal couple, Ajanta, 5th c. CE

The king is majestic and dignified and the lovely queen leans lovingly against his shoulder.

That he is a Naga king is shown by the hood above him and by a single attendant standing behind unobtrusively.



Naga royal couple, Ajanta, 5th c. CE

Everyone is informal and comfortable. All the ornamentation is moderate and there is plenty of vacant space around.



Naga royal couple, Ajanta, 5th c. CE

## Here is classic idealization, love of beauty, simplicity and dignity.



Naga royal couple, Ajanta, 5th c. CE

Here again is another example of classic idealization, the love of beauty, simplicity and dignity.



Two women, Mallai, 7<sup>th</sup> c. CE

"The two lovely ladies, with slender, elegant bodies, seem in rest contentedly in their niches. . . ..

Both stand in elegant, aristocratic poses of great beauty, attractive, gently curving shapes, legs elongated and their lovely faces seen in two different inclinations.

Their grace and dignified charm make them exquisite examples of feminine attractiveness..."

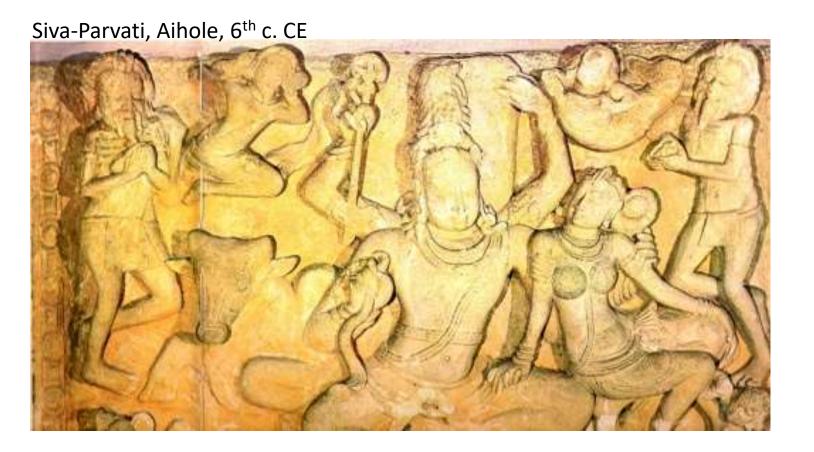
- Charles Fabri



Two women, Mallai, 7<sup>th</sup> c. CE

Departure from classicism can be seen in this wonderful panel depicting Siva and Parvati in their heavenly abode.

The divine couple is excellently modelled, exuding a benedictory grace.



But what disturb are the figures around, filling all the space: above float vidyadharas,

two ascetics on the sides and a few more camping below.

The sculptors were proficient in modelling, not in composing.

The tranquil beauty is absent here.

This is an example of baroque profusion.



The craving for ornamentation has possessed the sculptor fully.

That the apasaras is plump can be attributed to the contemporary taste



Apasaras, Belur, 12th c. CE

But the profusion of ornamentation, rich and lace-like jewellery covering almost her entire body, and the foliage of the tree behind occupying all the space around and forming the background is fanciful, and exhibits the craft of the artist, but hardly it is a piece of art. This is advanced state of ornamentation.



Apasaras, Belur, 12th c. CE



Studying art according to styles could be very rewarding.

But, it may be kept in mind that these were not created as art objects, but as focus for spiritual meditation.

Then we may be looking at from the wrong side of telescope!