

9th SEPT :

Q) Brief out the salient features of the religious dev. in the Post Mauryan period. How was contemporary Art influenced by it? (30M).

Ans) The Post Mauryan period started with end of Mauryan dynasty of Magadha and roughly corresponds to the period between 3rd 2nd centuries BCE - 2nd-3rd centuries AD. The period witnessed great change in the Indian society, as its contacts with Central Asian Kingdoms strengthened and many of these dynasties came to rule over India and enrich our culture.

RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS:

- The period witnessed rapid economic expansion, rise of secondary economic activities, coming of new royal classes etc. It all needed religious sanctions to legitimise their position in society.

- Brahmanical religion accepted the new royal groups as 'fallen Kshatriyas' (Manusmriti) and constituted Vratya Stoma sacrifice to include them in the Varna fold. The rise of Shudras with secondary economic activities was abhorred by religious texts on laws and social rigidities increased.

- Period also witnessed rise of Bhagvatism or Vaishnavism, which started to gradually absorb the Brahmanical religions. It focused

on Nishkama Karma or sense of duties without attachments.

The emphasis was on devotion to God or Bhakti, rather than the priestly domination.

- In the heterodox sects, Mahayana emerged in Buddhism, and separated itself from Hinayana/Theravada. The 4th Buddhist Council of Kanishka resulted in its emergence, which focused on seeing Buddha as god and the concept of Bodhisattvas for the enlightenment of all.

- Other sects such as Shaivism, Jainism, ~~Shakti worship~~ etc. also started to emerge with royal patronage. Jainism was already an established faith which also got patronage.

INFLUENCE ON CONTEMPORARY ART:

The period witnessed the blossoming of religious architecture in form of temples, stupas, caves etc. In Art forms, the religious developments greatly influenced the Sculptures of the period.

MATHURA SCHOOL:

- It was the earliest school of sculpture and emerged during 2nd cent. BC. Initially it was patronised by local rulers and focused on Brahmanical and folk deities such as Yaksha, Yakshini^{etc}
- It used the stone from Mathura region itself, and its influence can be seen in Mathura, Jamnagar village etc.

- It focused on both religious and secular ~~sculptures~~ sculptures. Eg: Buddhist and headless Kanishka respectively.
- later on, the school got influenced by the Gandhara school of sculptures in Buddhist motives.
- The focus of Mathura school in Buddhist sculpture was mainly on his facial expressions and spiritualistic aura. His face is shown in a calm and content mood, enjoying the bliss of Nirvana.

GANDHARA SCHOOL:

- It emerged in 1st cent. BC and its influence can be seen in sculptures of Gandhara, Taxila, Jalalabad, Hadde, Banijan etc.
- It was influenced by the Mathura school.
- Patronised by Sakas and Kushanas.
- Mainly religious sculptures related to Buddhism.
- Focus of sculptures were on bodily features of Buddha such as curly hairs, tied in Ushnisha, muscular body, transparent drapery, halo encircling head etc. Buddha is shown in various poses or Mudras such as Abhaya Mudra, Dharmachakra-paripalana etc.

AMRAVATI SCHOOL:

- It emerged during 1st cent. BC under patronage of Satavahans, Ikshavakus and Vakatakas.

- Remained mainly indigenous in nature.
- Religious or Buddhist art was main focus.
- White marble was used for sculptures.
- Its main centres were Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Guntur, Ghantasala etc.
- Focus of sculptures was on physical beauty. The ^{emotions} ~~expressions~~ are shown with expressions and feminine beauty in various poses was used to make the sculptures sensuous and erotic.

~~That~~ Besides sculptural forms, the paintings in the Ajanta caves also started during this period and mainly focused on the Buddhist images.

Thus, the major religious groups of the period made an everlasting impact on the arts and architecture of the period, which are a form of beauty and aesthetics till the present times.