

THEME 4 THINKERS, BELIEFS AND BUILDINGS

Steps taken by the Begums of Bhopal

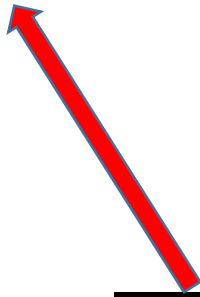
Shahjehan Begum and her successor Sultan Jehan Begum,



- *Provided **money** for the preservation
- *The Begum **funded** the **museum** that was built there as well as the **guesthouse** where John Marshall lived
- ***John Marshall dedicated** his important volumes on Sanchi to Sultan Jehan.
- * She also funded **the publication** of the volumes.

Nineteenth-century - Europeans interested in the stupa at Sanchi.

- * The French sought permission to take away the **eastern gateway**, to be displayed in a museum in France.
- *Englishmen also wanted to do the same



A GLIMPSE OF SANCHI ROLE OF BEGUMS OF BHOPAL IN PRESERVING THE MONUMENT



Both were satisfied with carefully prepared **plaster - cast copies** and the original remained at the site

The mid-first millennium BCE- turning point in world history: **Reasons**



- *Emergence of **thinkers** such as Zarathustra in Iran, Kong Zi in China, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in Greece, and Mahavira and Gautama Buddha, in India.
- *They tried to understand **the mysteries of existence** and the relationship between human beings and the cosmic order.
- * **New kingdoms** and cities were developing
- * **Social and economic life** was changing –in Ganga valley
- * These **thinkers** attempted to understand these developments as well.

The Background:
Sacrifices and Debates

There were several pre-existing traditions of thought, religious belief and practice –existing in India

- *Sacrifices were performed collectively.
- *More elaborate sacrifices, such as the rajasuya and ashvamedha – performed by kings

Debates and discussions

. Teachers travelled from place to place, trying to convince one another as well as laypersons, about the validity of their **philosophy – Buddha, Mahavira**

People were questioning:

- *the nature of the ultimate reality.
- *People also began speculating on the significance of the sacrificial tradition.
- * Question of birth and rebirth

According to Jaina tradition, Mahavira was **preceded** by 23 other teachers or **tirthankaras** - literally, those who guide men and women across the river of existence.

The entire world is **animated**: even stones, rocks and water have life.

The cycle of birth and rebirth is shaped through **karma**.

LORD MAHAVIRA AND HIS MESSAGE

The principle of **ahimsa**, was Central to Jaina philosophy.

Asceticism and penance are required to free oneself from the cycle of karma. This can be achieved only by **renouncing the world**; therefore, monastic existence is a necessary condition of salvation.

Jaina monks and nuns took **five vows**:

- to abstain from killing, stealing and lying;
- to observe celibacy; and
- to abstain from possessing property

The Buddha

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graph TD; Buddha[The Buddha] --> Sources[Sources for the teachings]; Buddha --> EarlyLife[Early life:]; Buddha --> Teachings[Teachings:]; Buddha --> Sangha[Buddhist Sangha];
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Sources for the teachings

- *Editing, translating and analysing the Buddhist texts
- * Reconstruct details of his life from hagiographies

Early life:

- *Son of a Sakaya chief
- *His first journey into the world outside was traumatic.
- *When he saw an old man, a sick man and a corpse.
- *He also saw a homeless mendicant

Teachings:

- ***Transient** (anicca) and constantly changing
- *It is also soulless (anatta) as there is **nothing permanent** or eternal in it.
- * Within this transient world , **sorrow** (dukkha) is **intrinsic** to human existence.
- * By following **the path of moderation**-human beings can rise above these worldly troubles
- ***Individual effort** was expected to transform social relations.
- *Emphasised individual agency and **righteous action** as the means to escape from the cycle of rebirth and attain self-realisation and **nibbana**.

Buddhist Sangha

- *An **organisation** of monks and nuns
- *Teachers of **dhamma**.
- *Within the sangha, all were regarded as **equal**,
- *The internal functioning -based **on consensus, by discussion**.
- *At times decisions put **to vote**

Why were they built ?

The structures where the **relics of the Buddha** such as his bodily remains or objects used by him were buried.

These were mounds known as stupas.

Structure of a stupa

*The stupa - a simple semi-circular mound of earth-called **anda**.

*Above the anda was the **harmika**, a balcony-like structure that represented the abode of the gods

*Arising from the harmika was a mast called the **yashti**,

* Surmounted by a **chhatra** or umbrella

*Around the mound was a **railing**, separating the sacred space from the secular world.

*The **gateways**, which were richly carved and installed at the four cardinal points.

STUPAS

How were they built?

Asoka distributed portions of the Buddha's relics to every important town and ordered the **construction of stupas over them.**

Examples

- Amravati
- Sanchi
- Bharhut

Symbols of worship (studied by art historians)

Buddha's presence shown through symbols:

*The **empty seat** - the **meditation** of the Buddha

*The **stupa**- was meant to represent the **mahaparinibbana**.

*The **wheel** - **first sermon** of the Buddha, delivered at Sarnath.

*The **tree** - **an event** in the life of the Buddha.

Other sculptures at Sanchi were perhaps not directly inspired by Buddhist ideas.

Shalabhanjika- beautiful women swinging from the edge of the gateway, holding onto a tree

An auspicious symbol and integrated into the decoration of the stupa.

Many people who turned to Buddhism enriched it with their own **pre-Buddhist** and **even non-Buddhist beliefs, practices and ideas**.

BUDDHISM AND SCULPTURE

There are other images as well.

*Some of the finest depictions **of animals** are found there e.g elephants, horses, monkeys and cattle.

*Animals were often used as **symbols of human attributes**. Elephants, for example, were depicted to signify strength and wisdom.

*Some motifs seem to be derived **from popular traditions**, which were not always recorded in texts e.g the serpent, which is found on several pillars

*It is likely that many of these animals were carved to **create lively scenes** to draw viewers e.g the Jatakas

The growth of Puranic Hinduism

These included **Vaishnavism** - Vishnu was worshipped as the principal deity

Shaivism - Shiva as a principal deity

Vaishnavism, cults developed around -- the **Various avatars** or incarnations of the deity

Ten avatars of Vishnu were recognized. The bond between the devotee and the god was visualised as one of love and devotion, or **bhakti**.

Different avatars were **popular** in different parts of the country.

Some of these forms were represented **in sculptures**, as were other deities.

These **representations depicted** -- a complex set of ideas about the deities and their attributes through **symbols** such as head-dresses, ornaments and **ayudhas** weapons or auspicious objects the deities hold in their hands - how they are seated, etc.

Temple architecture

*The early temple was a **small square room**, called the garbhagriha, with a **single doorway** for the worshipper to enter and offer worship to the image.

* A tall structure, known as the **shikhara**, was built over the central shrine.

*Temple **walls** were often decorated with sculpture.

* Later temples became far more **elaborate** - with assembly halls, huge walls and gateways, and arrangements for supplying water

Rock cut temples

These were **hollowed** out of huge rocks, as artificial caves.

Constructed in the third century BCE on **the orders of Asoka**

In the eighth century - in the carving out of an entire temple, that of Kailashnatha (a name of Shiva).