

B. Architecture
Lecture - 2
History of Architecture and Culture II
Unit – II
Buddhist Architecture

Evolution of Buddhism :

Let us start by seeing how Buddhism evolved and originated. Before understanding the Buddhist architecture, it is important to know the Buddhism as a religion and also a philosophy. Buddhism was not only religion; it actually began more as a philosophy and the way of life.

Why is it important to understand the Buddhist philosophy in order to understand architecture because any architecture reflects the lifestyle and the belief and culture of a particular set of people.

So the Buddhist architecture reflects the philosophy and the religious principle that is adopted in Buddhism. Which is why will see the various philosophies of Buddhism through which we will understand the architectural style better.

So Buddhism originated mainly because of this one-man call Siddhartha Gautama. He was responsible for the origin of Buddhism. This came into being roughly around the 5th century, as mention in a previous lecture.

During the decline of the Vedic Civilization due to the very strict class system that existed in the society. There was a need to question the existing class system especially the ruling class. So as a counter to those class system the different schools of thoughts and philosophy came into existence and one of the most important of them was Buddhism. The base of Buddhism actually questioned the idea of God and having a mediator between God and man. So Buddhism actually question the need of the particular mediator that existed between god and man.

According to Buddhism, "the soul of the human mind the soul, itself was a metaphysical form of God. So Buddhism insist that god existed within the human himself."

If you say the Buddhist philosophy and thought, it consists of four noble truths and eightfold path.

So they suggest the four noble truths as the following.

1. Life is suffering
2. The cause of suffering is Desire.
3. The cure for suffering is to remove desire.
4. To remove desire, one has to follow the eightfold path.

And what is eightfold part right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

So this is the basic underlying philosophy with which Buddhism started its base. As you can see the philosophy and the principles of Buddhism is very simple, which is also reflected in the architectural style.

Buddhism encourages oneself to look within himself, to look within a person again this can be implemented in the more physical form that is in the built form which is again result as an architectural style.

So it is always important to understand the belief and faith that exist in a particular culture, to understand its architecture better that is why you have different styles of architecture for various religions. If you take Islam, you have a different style of architecture. If you take Christianity, you have different type of architecture again Hinduism has a different style of architecture.

Why is there a variation between these three styles?

Which is again a reflection of the religious beliefs of those religions?

So it is important to understand the underline concept and beliefs and philosophy particular religion preachers. So how Buddhism originated and spread throughout Asia.

As you can see in the maps, the Buddhism originated in India and slowly it spread through various parts of Asia as far as Japan here to the east and here Indonesia in the southeast.

The Sri Lanka also was a major country in which Buddhism evolves greatly but interesting fact is that though Buddhism originate in India, it flourished in various parts of Asia better than in India, it was mainly due to two reasons one was that the Muslim invasion happened and because of which the Buddhism started to decline and also the advancement of Hinduism.

So it started shadowing Buddhism and Buddha was in fact considered as one of the Hindu Gods and it was shadowed by the advancement of Hinduism, which is why though Buddhism originated in India it slowly

diminished after a period of time were as other parts of Asia it was flourishing well.

To understand Buddhism again it is important to know two schools of thought of Buddhism. There are two schools of thought they are the Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism. The Hinayana was the earlier form of Buddhism and Mahayana form of Buddhism was the one which is evolves at later stage.

The Hinayana is also known as the lower vehicle or the modest vehicle, it existed between 300 to 100 BC, it is a more modest form of Buddhism in which they considered Buddha more as a human being than the God. They worship just the belongings of Buddha rather than the Buddha himself and Buddhism was in fact considered more as a philosophy rather than a religion.

This is how Buddhism actually started it was more as philosophy rather than religion and the Buddha was considered one among the common man.

He was considered more as a human than God. Whereas in the Mahayana form of Buddhism, Mahayana is also called as a great vehicle. They started worshipping Buddha as a God and there were Statues of Buddha created and they started worshipping the statue rather than his belongings and in contrast to the Hinayana of school of thought Buddha was not considered as a human but as a metaphysical form of three bodies that they preach. That is they called as three kayas as you can see, it is called Nirmanakaya the Mind, Sambhogakaya the Speech, Dharmakaya the Body.

So Buddha was given more metaphysical form, He was considered more as a godly person than common man. So during this stage of history one of the most important period of time occurred in the history of Indian architectural that was the interaction between Greek and Indian architectural styles. So this happened because as you can see in this map, Alexander the Great started is invasion from central Asia and travels in to India. So during this stage there was an interaction between the Hellenistic Greece and the Buddhist philosophy.

Why is this important because even now, you can see the direct influences of Greek styles in various inscription and Carvings that are found in monuments in India. In fact in stupas and Jhansi you can even find inscriptions that are written in Greek. So this is one most interesting and important period in the history of Indian architecture. So during this period of time, the Greek actually ruled a part of Northern India and they were known as the Indo-Greeks but it is also interesting that did not want to abolish Buddhism they in fact protected the Buddhism as a philosophy

and religion. So during the Greek invasion, the Indo-Greek Kings actually protected and patronized the Buddhism and they wanted to develop it further and evolved the Buddhist religion.

As you can see in this image, you see a sculpture of Buddha, this is called a Protector of Buddha called vajrapani but if you see these appearances, the appearances very Greek in nature, the sculpture very looks in nature. You can see the direct influences of how Buddhism and Greek interaction would have taken place at that time. Again in this sculpture you can see the lifestyle of Greek people being depicted.

It's a kind of a Greek banquet taking place with the music, wine. You can see people playing musical instruments, to see Indo Greek people in the culture. So these example suggest that a very good interaction was existing during that time between the Greeks and the Indians and also they supported and evolved Buddhism as a religion until this point. In time of history Buddha did not have a definite statue or Buddha. They did not have an aniconic figure to worship but it is assumed that it was during this period that for the first time Buddha was given a statue. Anthropomorphic representation of Buddha began during this time.

Why is it considered that this was the period, when the first statue of Buddha was created is that if you can see this image is one of the very early and ancient statue of Buddha. If you see it robes, the kind of folds that are created in the sculpture, the way is Hair is curly. It is all very Greek in nature, if you see the ancient Greek sculptures, Hellenistic sculptures these are very distinctive characteristic features of Greek cultures. The way the folds are made in the statues especially in standing posture of Buddha. Suggest that it was probably during this time that the first standing sculpture or Statue of Buddha was actually created. During the later stages of the Buddhist evolution various Empire ruled in northern parts of India. Chandragupta Maurya, the Bindusara and Ashok Maurya as you can see in the map you can see the extent of these Empires.

The extend as far as southern India they were very powerful dynasty but out of all the kings and Empires that rule. One of the most important kings that contributed to Buddhist architecture was Ashoka Maurya also known as Ashoka the Great. Till then Buddhism was not pronounced as a popular or a common religion but it was during Ashoka reign that he proclaim Buddhism as a state religion it became more common he started spreading the ideas and philosophies of Buddhism into various parts of the world. He travel to different places, he establish Buddhist Stupa monasteries and soon Buddhism began to emerge as a very powerful religion in the Northern part of India.

So during this period that is during ashoka reign, when Buddhist architecture started evolving is it was the peak of evolution of Buddhist architecture.

Evolution of Building Typologies:

So in order to understand the various architectural features. We have to see the four main features that this the

- Stambhas (Pillars).
- Stupas.
- Chaitayas.
- Viharas

These are the four main architectural characters of Buddhist architecture. So now we have slowly moved from how Buddhism as a philosophy evolved and how would transformed itself into a religion and how is started influencing the architecture of the place.

Now let us see what is Stambhas. The Stambhas is also called a pillar, usually Indian architecture has this feature has a very common feature usually in all style of Indian architecture, pillars are very common features.

Similarly in Buddhism architecture also we have this Stambhas, all the licks. So what was the characteristic features of a Buddhist pillar. So there are two types of Buddhist Stambhas. The one was called the persepolitian type and other graeco-roman type.

So the persepolitian type was octagon pillar with the bell shaped capital with supported and animal sculpture. The shaft was highly polished and base was vase shaped and other hand the Graeco-roman type of a pillar was rectangular with shallow flutes, it was less ornamental in nature and more tall and Slender, they were so tall that the height was almost 6 to 8 times the size of lower diameter and at the top of the capital there was just a fluted vase Motif.

In the picture you see persepolitian type of pillar with the bell shaped capital and vase base and animal sculpture on the top and out of all the pillars that existed during this Buddhist period one of the most important pillars that existed during reign of Ashoka was the one that he himself created at Sarnath called Ashoka Pillar.

As you can see in the image, the capital itself very extensively done in the pillar and the entirely pillar itself is more than 15 metres high. This also has the bell shaped capital with an Abacus on top and on top of the Abacus you have four lions facing on four Corner directions. Initially the lions supported and iron wheel with 24 spokes called the Wheels of the law. The capital itself is more than 2 metre height.

In this picture you can see an enlarged image of the capital, this is the capital, this is the abacus it has curved rounded edges with animals sculpture and a wheel in the Center, on top of this you have four lions facing on different directions.

In this image you can see the scale of the pillar as compared to human scale you can see how massive the pillar was directed during those days, these pillars were usually elected as a symbol of victory or to commemorate a particular event.

Now will see about a stupa.

What is a stupa?

The Stupa is nothing but mound like structure which usually contains the relics of Buddha usually belongings of Buddha which Buddhist people worshipped. There is actually a philosophy behind the structure of Stupa and how particular structure of stupid evolved. As you can see in the image, this denotes the cycle of life and death and the top most point zenith or a peak.

So this circular structure is the basic ideology from which the architectural form of the Stupa was derived. So based on this philosophy, the Stupa was constructed as a circular dome kind of a structure with a Zenith marked by a peak structure.

So usually this Stupa was built with earth and covered with stone or brick. This is an example of a stupa, as you can see the semi-circular mound like structure covered with bricks, staircases leading. So basically it is circular in plan, you have entrance, gateway or Tournais leading to the stupa. This is another stupa.

We will see the examples in detail in our next lecture right now we are just seeking the overview of what is the various architectural features.

Next we will see what is Chaitayas. The Chaitayas or Chaitya halls, so now that Buddha has been given of form or a Statue aniconic figure. They need to worship and a place to worship began to arise.

So when a deity is placed in a structure then needs a space in which people come assembles and congregate to worship.

So this was again principle of Buddhism in which people gathered and worship the Buddha statue. This led to the creation of these halls called the Chaitya halls. You see a typical plan of Chaitya halls on your screen, as you can see this is a small opening through which people enter, which lead into a long rectangular vaulted hall with apsidal end. You have colonnades on both sides with two aisles and nave in the centre and has Stupas in the center.

The stupa also has space around it for circumambulatory passage. These Chaitya halls were carved in natural stone. They were usually constructed with stone and these colonnades pillars were elaborately integrated with detailing.

You can see in the picture detail look of the interior of Chaitya halls this is long vaulted roof, you notice the roof which is semi-circular in pattern again you can see the influence of Vedic Civilization you can see in this Buddhist architecture.

The vaulted shaped roof originated during the Vedic civilizations which has now evolved into something like this but the thing is now it is constructed with stone. You have colonnades on both ends with the stupa in the center. This were people gathered and worship the stupa, you can see the bell shaped capital and the vase shaped base, animal sculptures on top typical Buddhist Stambhas and you have the vaulted roof sealing.

Next we see about Viharas or monasteries. The Viharas or monasteries when nothing but the residential places in which Buddhist priests. You see the plan the entrance leads to a large hall around which various missions were created for meditation. These mishes were carved into the rocks they were called cells. There were also main shrine in which people worship. They are also assembly halls, dining halls. The assembly hall again surrounded by pillars many such examples can be seen in the Ajanta, Ellora caves. We have different styles Viharas that Ajanta and Ellora caves in which will be studying in detail in next lecture. This is how interior of our Viharas looks. These are the various mishes in Buddhist priest, meditate. The wall of the interior were also Adour with the sculpture. They usually represent stories and life of Buddha his travel and his various in incidence of his life or depilated along the walls of Viharas. These are the Viharas shows the different level as you can see all carved in the rock itself and done in stones.