

Gandhara School of Art

Gandhara school of art was one of the major schools of art in the history of ancient India. Although being an intricate part of Indian history, it is uniquely associated with the Greco-Roman style of art.

The combination of these Greco-Roman and Indian ideas along with the influence of other foreign traditions such as from China and Iran resulted in the formation of a distinct style known as the Gandhara School of art.

This style of art was closely associated with Mahayana Buddhism and hence the main theme of this art was Lord Buddha and Bodhisattvas. Thus, it can be conjectured that in idea and conception this style was Indian and in execution it was foreign. One example of the Gandhara style of art is the Bamiyan Buddha statues.

It mostly flourished in the areas of Afghanistan and present North-Western India. The prominent locations were Taxila, Peshawar, Begram and Bamiyan. The period around which the Gandhara school of art flourished could be said to be from 1st century BCE to 4th century CE.

There was extensive use of black stone and stucco. Stucco was a kind of plaster that was used for many structures including the freestanding ones under this style of art. The free-standing structures included many chaityas, Viharas and stupas.

The striking feature of Gandhara School of art shows a very realistic and natural depiction of features in perfection. Although it was dominated by the themes of Lord Buddha, however, there were images on other subjects also made such as the images of the Greek God Apollo and certain kings as well.

The Greco-Roman effect on Gandhara art can be traced through:

- Halo around the head of Lord Buddha
- Buddha's wavy hair
- The forehead lines
- Ornaments
- Drape and style of the garments

Thus, Gandhara School of Art can be said as an influence and culmination of both the Indian as well as foreign traditions due to its strategic location.



Mathura School of art

The Gandhara school of Art was based on Greco-Roman norms adopting foreign techniques while the *Mathura school of Art* was totally Indian. It was the outcome of the religious zeal of Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism. It was also influenced by Gandhara art which was manifested in its sculptures. The sculptures of the Buddha as well as beautiful women were made under this school of art. Significantly, the Buddha was given human form and sculptured in stone under this school of art during Kushan period.

The Art gave Buddha a three dimensional effect and carved in bold relief. *Broad shoulders, masculine torso and right hand raised in abhaya mudra* are some of the characteristics of the Buddhist sculpture. The Mathura School of Art flourished further in the Gupta period when the Buddhist sculptures had sharp and beautiful features, graceful and slim body, with several folds of transparent drapery.

Mathura School of Art Examples



Kanishka



Vima Kadphises



Buddha



Sarvatobhadra



Standing Buddha

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GANDHARA AND MATHURA SCHOOL OF ARTS

Areas of differences	Gandhara School of art	Mathura School of Art
Reign	Kushana Dynasty	Kushana Dynasty
Area	Northwest Frontier	Mathura
Outside influences	Greek influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purely indigenous • No foreign influence
Religious influence	Buddhism Hellenistic realism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hinduism • Buddhism • Jainism • Secularism
Material Used	Bluish- Grey sandstone Grey sandstone	Spotted red sandstone Delighted Buddha Less spiritual Shaven head and face
Features of Buddha sculptures	Spiritual Buddha Sad Buddha Bearded Buddha Less ornamentation Great detailing Buddha in Yogi postures Greek factors like wavy hair, large forehead, long ears	Muscularity Energetic Graceful posture of Buddha Seated in Padmasana Buddha surrounded by two monks: Padmapani (holding Lotus) and Vajrapani (Holding Vajra) Halo around the head of Buddha decorated with geometrical motifs The Standing Buddhas of the Sravasti, Sarnath, and Kausambhi Sarvatobhadrika image of 4 Jain Jinas
Various Mudras of Buddha in	Abhayamudra- Don't fear	

Gandhara Art

Bhumisparshamudra -
Touching the earth

Dhyana mudra- Meditation

Dharmachakramudra- A
preaching mudra