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THE INFLUENCE OF JAINISM AND BUDDHISM ON EARLY INDIAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract

The Jainism and Buddhism, two significant religious and philosophical traditions that emerged in ancient India during the 6th century BC, profoundly influenced the development of early Indian art and architecture. Both traditions emphasized non-violence, asceticism, and spiritual enlightenment, which were reflected in the aesthetics and symbolism of their artistic and architectural creations. These influences marked a departure from the ritualistic Vedic traditions and laid the foundation for a distinct cultural and artistic identity in early Indian history. Buddhism's contribution to Indian art is particularly evident in the construction of stupas, chaityas, and viharas, which served as places of worship and monastic dwellings. The Great Stupa at Sanchi, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is a prime example of Buddhist architectural innovation. Stupas were designed as hemispherical mounds containing relics of the Buddha, symbolizing the universe and enlightenment. Buddhist art also excelled in narrative reliefs, as seen in the gateways of Sanchi and the sculptures of Bharhut and Amaravati, which depict episodes from the Jataka tales and the life of the Buddha with intricate detail and storytelling. Similarly, Jainism left a lasting imprint on Indian art and architecture through the construction of temples and cave complexes. Jain temples, such as those at Mount Abu and Shravanabelagola, are renowned for their intricate carvings, symmetrical designs, and serene depictions of Tirthankaras (spiritual teachers). Jain cave complexes, such as those at Udayagiri and Ellora, demonstrate the integration of religious symbolism with natural rock-cut techniques. Jain art emphasized minimalism and purity, aligning with its core tenet of austerity, while simultaneously showcasing a mastery of intricate craftsmanship. Both traditions heavily influenced the early rock-cut architecture of India, as seen in the caves at Ajanta, Ellora, and Karla. These sites demonstrate a synthesis of artistic and functional elements, blending the spiritual goals of these religions with their architectural forms. The mural paintings at

Ajanta caves, depicting scenes from Buddhist and Jain texts, highlight a shared emphasis on moral values, compassion, and spiritual progress.

Introduction

Buddhist philosophy was based on the ideas of compassion and non-violence. A deep respect for life was fostered by the practice of ahimsa, or non-violence, which extended beyond human interactions to all living beings. The establishment of Buddhist monastic groups, or sanghas, as hubs for education and spiritual practice was essential to the preservation and propagation of the Buddha's teachings. By advancing moral principles and education, these monastic establishments also influenced ancient India's social and cultural life. Buddhism had a particularly significant impact on Indian art and architecture. The artistic and architectural genius of the era was represented in the building of stupas, monasteries, and rock-cut caverns embellished with elaborate carvings and paintings.

The stupas, like the Great Stupa at Sanchi, represented the Buddha's enlightened intellect and functioned as places of meditation and reliquaries. Buddhism's moral and ethical precepts are illustrated by the beautiful murals in the Ajanta and Ellora caves, which portray scenes from the life of the Buddha and stories from the Jataka. The 24th Tirthankara, Mahavira, founded Jainism, which also became a potent spiritual force. Ahimsa, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy, and non-possessiveness were all stressed in Mahavira's teachings. Jainism promoted rigorous self-discipline and asceticism as ways to achieve emancipation and soul purification. Fasting, meditation, and letting go of material attachments were all part of the strict Jain road to redemption.

Even stricter than Buddhism, the Jain concept of ahimsa gave rise to customs like vegetarianism and cautious movement to prevent hurting even the tiniest living things. This strong dedication to nonviolence has a profound effect on Indian civilisation, encouraging a compassionate and tolerant culture. By promoting intellectual flexibility and openness, Jainism also made contributions to Indian philosophy through its teachings of syadvada (the doctrine of conditional assertions) and anekantavada (the idea of many views). In tandem with its spiritual teachings, Jain art and architecture thrived. The precise artistry and dedication of Jain patrons were demonstrated via the construction of beautiful temples, including those at Mount Abu and Shravanabelagola. The Jain ideals of cleanliness and spiritual elevation were represented in these temples, which were frequently embellished with intricate carvings and sculptures.

Jainism and Buddhism, two of the most significant spiritual movements in ancient India, profoundly shaped Indian art and architecture from the 6th century BCE onward. Emerging as reformist ideologies amidst the dominance of Vedic rituals and Brahmanical orthodoxy, these religions promoted principles of non-violence, simplicity, and meditation. These ideals found expression in the remarkable art and architectural achievements that flourished under their influence.

The Context of Jainism and Buddhism

Both Jainism and Buddhism arose as spiritual responses to the complexities of Vedic society. Jainism, founded by Mahavira (599–527 BC), emphasizes asceticism, non-violence (ahimsa), and the path to spiritual liberation through self-discipline and meditation. Buddhism, founded by Siddhartha Gautama (563–483 BC), known as the Buddha, advocates the Middle Path, detachment, and the pursuit of enlightenment. Rejecting the Vedic sacrificial rituals, both religions found broad appeal among the masses, including merchants, artisans, and rulers, who played a significant role in patronizing their artistic and architectural endeavors.

Influence on Early Indian Architecture

Stupas

Stupas are among the most iconic contributions of Buddhism to Indian architecture. Initially constructed to enshrine the relics of the Buddha, stupas became centers of worship and meditation. The Great Stupa at Sanchi, built during the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka's reign (3rd century BCE), is one of the earliest and most significant examples of Buddhist architecture. Its massive hemispherical dome symbolizes the universe, while the harmika and chatra represent spiritual elevation. The elaborate toranas (gateways) at Sanchi, adorned with intricate carvings of Jataka tales, highlight the Buddhist emphasis on storytelling and the didactic role of art. Stupas inspired later architectural forms, such as the chaityas and pagodas, influencing Buddhist architecture across Asia.

Chaityas and Viharas

Chaityas (prayer halls) and viharas (monasteries) are other significant architectural contributions. Rock-cut caves like those at Ajanta, Karla, and Ellora (dating from 2nd century BCE to 7th century CE) served as places of worship and monastic dwellings. The chaitya halls at Karla feature grand entrances, vaulted roofs, and stone ribbing mimicking wooden architecture. The central nave often houses a stupa, emphasizing the meditative function of the space. Viharas, such as those at Ajanta, provided accommodations for monks and were adorned with murals and sculptures reflecting Buddhist teachings. Their layout of cells around a central courtyard influenced later Indian temple architecture.

Jain Temples

Jainism's architectural contributions, though distinct, paralleled the developments in Buddhist structures. Early Jain temples, such as those at Mathura, were simple, reflecting the austere values of the religion. Over time, they evolved into elaborate complexes. The temples at Mount Abu (Dilwara Temples, 11th–13th centuries CE) are renowned for their intricate marble carvings and reflect Jainism's focus on precision and detail. The Shatrunjaya Hill temples in Gujarat, a cluster of exquisitely carved shrines, symbolize the Jain pursuit of spiritual ascension. These temples emphasize symmetry and geometrical precision, hallmarks of Jain architectural aesthetics.

Influence on Sculpture and Iconography

Buddhist Art

Buddhism played a pioneering role in developing Indian sculptural traditions. Early Buddhist art was aniconic, using symbols such as the Bodhi tree, the Wheel of Dharma, and the footprints of the Buddha to convey spiritual themes. This reflects the early reluctance to depict the Buddha in human form. From the 1st century CE onward, the Gandhara and Mathura schools of art marked the transition to iconic representations of the Buddha. The Gandhara school, influenced by Greco-Roman traditions, produced sculptures characterized by realistic drapery, wavy hair, and serene expressions. The Mathura school, rooted in Indian traditions, emphasized spiritual vitality and symbolic gestures (mudras). Narrative art in Buddhist sculpture is exemplified by the reliefs on stupas, such as those at Bharhut and Amaravati. These carvings illustrate the Jataka tales and events from the Buddha's life, emphasizing moral lessons and inspiring devotion.

Jain Sculpture

Jain sculptural art focused on the Tirthankaras, the enlightened beings who guide others toward liberation. Early Jain sculptures, such as those at Mathura, depict the Tirthankaras in meditative postures, emphasizing tranquillity and detachment. The figures are often portrayed with minimal ornamentation, reflecting Jainism's ascetic ideals. Later Jain art, however, became more ornate, as seen in the intricate carvings of temple interiors. The richly adorned figures and detailed narratives of Jain cosmology reflect the religion's philosophical complexity and its patrons' artistic ambitions.

Influence on Painting

Buddhist and Jain traditions also contributed significantly to Indian painting, particularly in the form of murals and manuscript illustrations.

Buddhist Murals

The murals at Ajanta, dating from the 2nd century BCE to 6th century CE, are among the most celebrated examples of ancient Indian painting. These frescoes depict scenes from the Jataka tales, the Buddha's life, and various celestial beings, blending narrative and spiritual themes. The Ajanta murals are notable for their use of natural pigments, sophisticated shading, and attention to human emotion. The graceful figures and dynamic compositions reflect the Buddhist emphasis on compassion and enlightenment.

Jain Manuscripts

Jain contributions to painting are evident in illuminated manuscripts, such as the Kalpasutra and the Kalakacharya Katha, created between the 12th and 16th centuries CE. These manuscripts, often illustrated on palm leaves or paper, feature vibrant colors, meticulous details, and geometric patterns. Jain paintings focus on religious themes, including the lives of the Tirthankaras, cosmological diagrams, and scenes of devotion. The style emphasizes clarity, symmetry, and precision, mirroring Jain philosophical ideals.

Patronage and Cultural Impact

The patronage of rulers, merchants, and monastic communities played a crucial role in the development of Buddhist and Jain art and architecture. The Mauryan Emperor Ashoka was a pivotal figure in spreading Buddhism, commissioning stupas, pillars, and rock edicts. The Kushan and Gupta dynasties further supported Buddhist art, resulting in a synthesis of regional and foreign influences. Similarly, Jain art and architecture flourished under the patronage of merchant communities and rulers, particularly in regions like Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Karnataka. Their contributions ensured the preservation of Jain philosophical and artistic traditions over centuries. The cultural impact of Buddhist and Jain art extended beyond India, influencing the artistic traditions of Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and East Asia. The spread of Buddhism to countries like Sri Lanka, China, and Japan carried Indian architectural forms, such as stupas and chaityas, to new contexts.

Jainism and Buddhism, two prominent religions that emerged in ancient India during the 6th century BCE, profoundly influenced the country's art and architecture. Their emphasis on non-violence, spirituality, and introspection shaped cultural expressions that continue to inspire to this day. This conclusion examines how these religions contributed to the development of Indian art and architecture and the lasting impact of their shared values on cultural heritage.

Artistic Evolution Inspired by Spirituality

Both Jainism and Buddhism rejected the material excesses and elaborate rituals associated with Vedic traditions, which fostered a distinct artistic language rooted in simplicity and spiritual depth. Buddhist art, particularly through the medium of stupas, such as the iconic Great Stupa at Sanchi, encapsulates the teachings of the Buddha. These structures became focal points for meditation and communal worship. Similarly, Jain art introduced stunning depictions of Tirthankaras, such as the colossal Gomateshwara statue in Shravanabelagola, emphasizing inner purity and self-realization. Murals and sculptures also played a crucial role in disseminating these religions' philosophies. The frescoes of Ajanta caves, influenced primarily by Buddhist themes, depict the Jataka tales with incredible artistry, while Jain rock-cut caves in Ellora exhibit intricate carvings that symbolize the path of spiritual liberation. The artistic expression in both traditions prioritized storytelling and moral lessons, transcending mere aesthetic appeal to become tools of enlightenment.

Architectural Innovations

The architectural legacy of Jainism and Buddhism is equally remarkable. Buddhism introduced monumental structures like stupas, chaityas (prayer halls), and viharas (monasteries), which not only served religious purposes but also influenced subsequent architectural styles. Rock-cut cave complexes like Ajanta, Ellora, and Karla illustrate the ingenuity of ancient artisans, blending functionality with devotion. These spaces provided ascetics with serene environments conducive to meditation and learning. Jainism, with its emphasis on asceticism and cosmic order, gave rise to temples that were marvels of symmetry and intricate detailing. The Dilwara Temples on Mount Abu stand as a testament to Jain architectural brilliance, featuring

exquisitely carved marble interiors that evoke a sense of divine tranquility. Unlike grand palatial temples, Jain architecture emphasizes harmony and meticulous craftsmanship, reflecting its philosophical underpinnings.

Shared Philosophical Influence

Despite their differences, Jainism and Buddhism share a commitment to non-violence, detachment, and self-discipline, values that resonate in their artistic and architectural contributions. These shared principles fostered an aesthetic marked by a balance between austerity and grandeur, avoiding ostentation while creating spaces and artworks that inspire reflection and serenity.

Enduring Legacy

The influence of Jainism and Buddhism on early Indian art and architecture extends beyond their religious contexts. Their creations provided a foundation for India's diverse cultural landscape, inspiring later Hindu, Islamic, and modern architectural endeavors. The universal themes of compassion, morality, and self-awareness embedded in their art resonate with contemporary audiences, transcending time and geography. The contributions of Jainism and Buddhism to Indian art and architecture are monumental, embodying a unique synthesis of spiritual ideals and artistic innovation. Their legacy serves as a timeless reminder of humanity's quest for meaning, and their impact remains integral to understanding the cultural and philosophical heritage of India.

Buddhism and Jainism both argued for more egalitarian and moral ways of living, challenging the strict social structures. Their ideas inspired movements and intellectuals for centuries, and they had an impact on the evolution of Indian philosophy. Both faiths' focus on compassion, moral behaviour, and inner purity helped create a culture that was more thoughtful and compassionate. The cultural, ethical, and spiritual landscape of modern-day India is still shaped by the traditions of Buddhism and Jainism. Their teachings, which place a strong emphasis on compassion, non-violence, and peace, provide timeless knowledge that is still applicable in the modern world. A monument to the persistent pursuit of enlightenment and truth that has characterised India's vast and varied legacy is the complex tapestry of Indian spiritual thinking, which is interwoven with elements of Buddhism and Jainism.

- Buddhist Architecture
- Buddhist architecture has strong roots in Indian soil, which is where the Buddha's teachings were born.
- The development of numerous symbols symbolizing parts of the Buddha's life (563 BCE – 483 BCE) was the beginning of Buddhist architecture.
- For the first time, it was the Indian monarch Ashoka who not only made Buddhism the state religion of his vast Magadha kingdom, but also chose to disseminate Buddhism through architectural monuments.

- Buddhist architectural monuments and sculptures such as Stupas, Pagodas, monasteries, and caves, which have been mere observers of many centuries, communicate softly about the Buddhist stages.
- Buddhist temple construction and artwork, as well as other religions, coexisted with Hindu art and architecture.

Jain Architecture

- In India, Jain temples may be found in areas such as Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra.
- Mount Abu is regarded as one of the best examples of Jain architecture. Jain architecture has its own distinct style, which is more Turanian in nature.
- The horizontal archway is the most prominent characteristic of Jain structures.
- For the first time in Indian architecture, the bracket type of capital was also used in Jaina buildings.
- The ground plan of the Jain temples can be seen at the Aiwalli temple in Dharwar, Western India.
- The ground plan of the structural chaitya at Sanchi Stupa is identical to this.
- The chaitya's nave has evolved into a well-defined porch separate from the cell, and these two features are fundamental aspects of Jaina temple plans in following years.

Impact on Culture and Art

The immense influence that Buddhism and Jainism have had on forming the spiritual, intellectual, and aesthetic landscape of their respective nations is demonstrated by their effects on art and culture. Buddhism and Jainism left a lasting impact on architecture, sculpture, and other creative endeavours via their teachings and practices, inspiring artistic manifestations that cut beyond centuries. The development of stupas, monasteries, temples, and other religious buildings demonstrates the architectural contributions of Buddhism and Jainism. These structures reflected the followers' spiritual goals and functioned as places of prayer, education, and meditation.

- Buddhist Stupas: Stupas, monumental hemispherical structures, played a pivotal role in Buddhist architecture. The Great Stupa at Sanchi, adorned with intricate carvings and depictions of the life of the Buddha, is a prime example. Stupas served as relics of the Buddha and his teachings, attracting pilgrims and facilitating devotion.
- Monasteries: Buddhist monasteries, such as those at Nalanda and Taxila, became centers of learning and intellectual exchange. Monastic communities not only preserved scriptures and religious texts but also contributed to philosophical debates and scholarly pursuits.
- Jain Temples: Jain architecture is characterized by its intricate carvings and attention to detail. The Dilwara Temples in Mount Abu are celebrated for their exquisite marble carvings, depicting Jain cosmology, stories of Tirthankaras, and the pursuit of spiritual liberation. Sculpture: Both Buddhism and Jainism have made profound contributions to sculpture, using artistic expressions to convey spiritual concepts and teachings.

- **Buddhist Sculpture:** Buddhist sculptures often depict the Buddha in various postures (mudras), such as the Dharma Chakra Mudra (teaching gesture) and the Bhumisparsha Mudra (earth-touching gesture). Bodhisattvas, enlightened beings who vow to help others achieve enlightenment, are also prominently depicted.
- **Jain Sculpture:** Jain sculptures frequently feature images of Tirthankaras, spiritual teachers who have attained liberation. These sculptures are characterized by their serenity, symmetry, and attention to minute details. The sculptures often showcase the ethical principles of Jainism, such as non-violence and non-attachment.
- **Artistic Symbolism:** Buddhism and Jainism infused their art with symbolism that conveyed spiritual teachings and philosophical concepts.
- **Wheel of Dharma:** The Dharmachakra, or Wheel of Dharma, is a prominent Buddhist symbol that represents the Buddha's teachings. It is often depicted with eight spokes, symbolizing the Eightfold Path.
- **Lotus:** The lotus flower is a recurring motif in Buddhist and Jain art, symbolizing purity, spiritual enlightenment, and the emergence of the divine from the mundane.
- **Yakshas and Yakshinis:** In Jainism, sculptures of yakshas and yakshinis are often seen guarding temples and symbolizing protective deities.

Cultural Exchange and Legacy

Buddhism and Jainism have creative manifestations that were not limited to their own regions. These faiths' creative and architectural influences merged with regional customs as they expanded throughout Asia, creating distinctive artistic fusions and styles. Buddhist and Jain art and architecture have had an incalculable influence on aesthetics and culture. Their influence is still felt today, encouraging artists, academics, and fans to investigate the profound spirituality and complex beauty present in these works of art. The timeless appeal of Buddhist and Jain art emphasises how their teachings are applicable to all cultures and generations and how they may inspire awe and reflection.

Ethical Principles and Societal Influence

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The moral precepts of Buddhism and Jainism have shaped societal norms, attitudes, and actions in a significant way. These values, which have their roots in compassion, non-violence, honesty, and self-control, have influenced modern ethical discourse and helped to reshape ancient Indian cultures in addition to guiding individual behaviour.

Non-Violence (Ahimsa) In Buddhism and Jainism, ahimsa, or non-violence, is a fundamental value. This ethical principle includes mental and emotional non-violence in addition to abstaining from bodily damage. Ahimsa promotes empathy and a profound feeling of oneness by promoting compassion for all living things, regardless of their size or shape. Ahimsa has had a significant impact on society.

In addition to raising awareness of how animals are treated, it has caused many communities to embrace vegetarian and vegan diets. Since it promotes a respectful and peaceful coexistence with nature, the concept of nonviolence has impacted social justice movements and has consequences for environmental preservation. Honesty and truthfulness (Satya). Both Buddhism and Jainism place a strong emphasis on honesty and truthfulness in their ethical teachings. Practitioners are urged to maintain honesty in their dealings, speak the truth, and refrain from lying. This focus on telling the truth helps to promote open communication and trust in communities. The importance that society places on the truth has affected government, legal frameworks, and interpersonal interactions. Being truthful encourages responsibility and lessens the possibility of disputes brought on by dishonesty and false information. Both faiths' ethical systems place a strong emphasis on the concept of non-possessiveness, or aparigraha. This idea advises people to avoid having too many material belongings and to have as few material attachments as possible. Practitioners can transcend self-centredness and greed by developing detachment.

The encouragement of a more straightforward way of living that prioritises experiences over monetary prosperity is an example of how aparigraha has influenced society behaviour. This idea encourages giving and sharing with those in need, as well as sustainable living and ethical purchasing. Self-control and self-discipline, Buddhism and Jainism both stress the need of self-control and self-discipline in leading an ethical life. Mental, emotional, and bodily cravings are all subject to the practice of restraint. People can achieve more inner calm and clarity by controlling their urges. Social norms and behaviours pertaining to self-control, moderation, and emotional regulation have been impacted by this emphasis on self-discipline. It helps create a peaceful, well-balanced society that prioritises self-control above excess and decadence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Jainism and Buddhism were instrumental in shaping early Indian art and architecture. Their focus on spiritual values and ethical living translated into an artistic legacy characterized by harmony, symbolism, and devotion. These contributions not only enriched the cultural fabric of ancient India but also influenced art and architecture across Asia, leaving a timeless impact on global heritage. The eternal wisdom ingrained in these ancient religious traditions is highlighted by the significant influence that Buddhism and Jainism had on ancient Indian civilisation as well as its continued significance in the contemporary world. In the sixth century BCE, these two separate but related routes appeared, upending established conventions and bringing out ground-breaking philosophical concepts. From ethics and culture to art and philosophy, their influence has permanently impacted many facets of human civilisation. Buddhism provides a path to enlightenment and the reduction of suffering through its Eightfold Path and Four Noble Truths. The focus on ethical living, mindfulness, and compassion still serves as a roadmap for people's particular paths to wellbeing and inner development. Buddhism's contributions to intellectual interchange and its architectural wonders, including stupas and monasteries, have had a deep influence that transcends all cultures and eras. The ethical norms of Jainism, which are based on the precepts of non-violence, honesty, and non-

possessiveness, have impacted sustainable living, environmental ethics, and societal behaviour. A beautiful fusion of spirituality and beauty may be seen in the elaborate carvings seen in Jain temples and the austere devotion of its followers. Ancient India's philosophical environment was enhanced by the intellectual interchange between Buddhism, Jainism, and other schools. This tradition of discussion, plurality, and critical thought provides a template for polite participation in modern conversation.

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