



# MAURYAN ART

**PRESENTED BY:**

**RUBIN**

**(ASSIST PROF.)**

**DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS**

**GKSM GOVERNMENT COLLEGE,**

**TANDA URMAR (HSP.)**

# INTRODUCTION

- The Great Mauryan ruler **Ashoka** embraced **Buddhism** (as a part of shraman tradition) and the immense Buddhist missionary activities that followed during his rule paved the way for the development of **Mauryan sculptural** and **architectural styles**.
- King Ashoka patronized the **shraman tradition** in the third century BCE
  - The shraman tradition refers to several Indian religious movements parallel to but separate from the historical vedic religion.
  - It includes **Jainism, Buddhism**, and others such as Ajivikas and **Carvakas**.

# BACKGROUND

- In 321 BC, Chandragupta Maurya, with the help of Chanakya (author of Arthashastra) founded the Mauryan dynasty after overthrowing Nanda Dynasty.
- The Mauryan Empire was the first most powerful Indian empire to bring the entire Indian subcontinent under a single rule.
- The Mauryan empire under Chandragupta Maurya spread its boundaries into Central Asia and Persia.
- Expansion of Mauryan Empire: Chandragupta Maurya was succeeded by his son Bindusara in 298 BC who expanded the kingdom over most of present-day India, except Kalinga.
- Mauryan Dynasty under Ashoka: Bindusara's kingdom was inherited by his son Ashoka the Great in 274 B.C.
- Kalinga Invasion: During the invasion of Kalinga, Ashoka renounced bloodshed and adopted the policy of Ahimsa and adopted Buddhism.

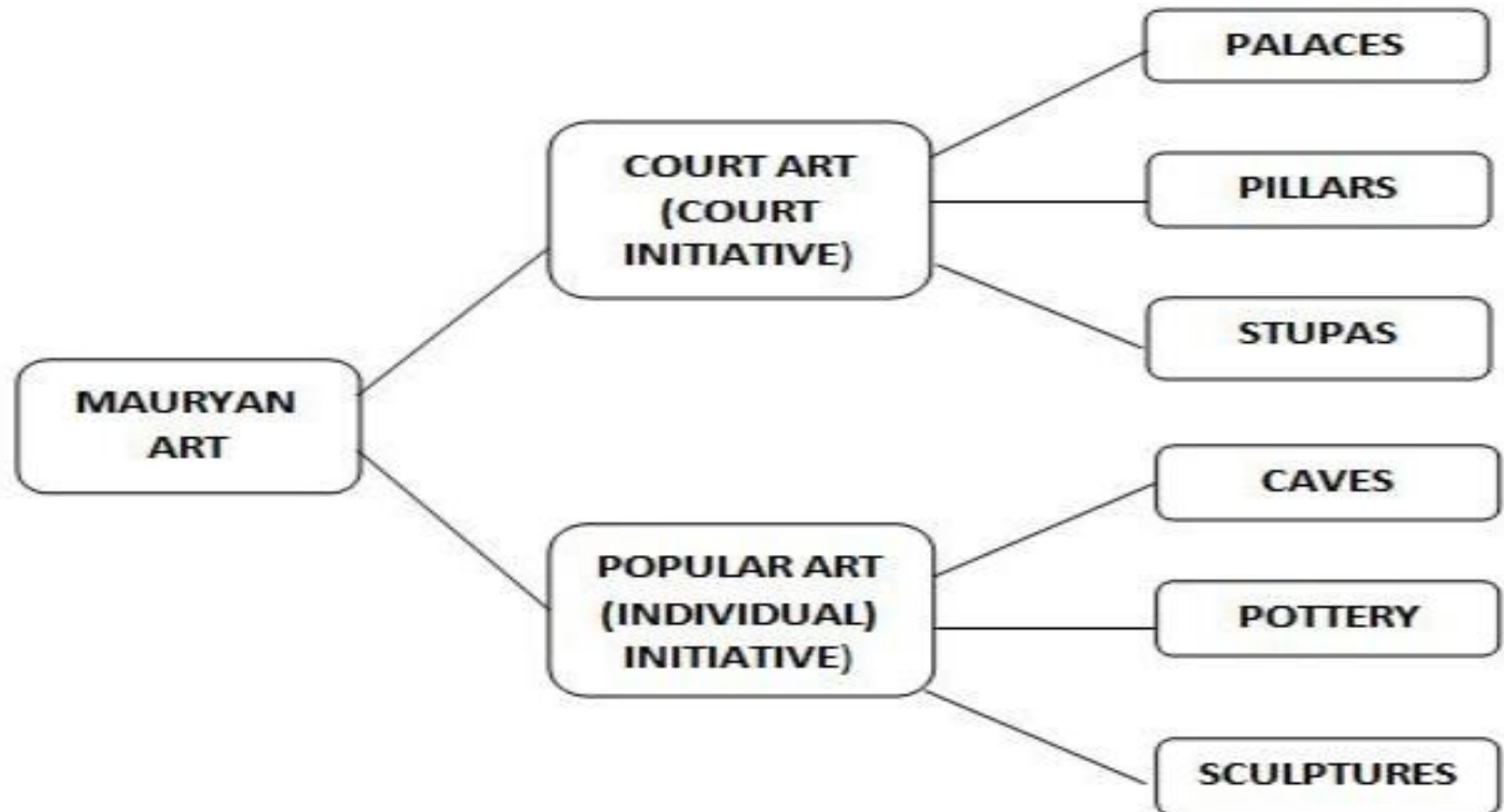
# WHAT IS MAURYAN ART?

- **Mauryan art** is the art produced during the period of the Mauryan Empire, which was the first empire to rule over most of the Indian subcontinent, between 322 and 185 BCE. It represented an important transition in Indian art from use of wood to stone. It was a royal art patronized by Mauryan kings especially Ashoka. Pillars, Stupas, caves are the most prominent survivals.

# EXAMPLES OF MAURYAN ART

- The most important examples of Mauryan art include:
  - 1) Remains of the royal palace and the city of Pataliputra
  - 2) A monolithic railing at Sarnath
  - 3) The excavated chaitya halls or cave dwellings in the Barabar-Nagarjuni group of hills in Gaya.
  - 4) The non-edict bearing and edict bearing pillars with their capitals.
  - 5) The front half of an elephant carved in round from a live rock in Dhauli in Odisha.

# DIVISION OF MAURYAN ART



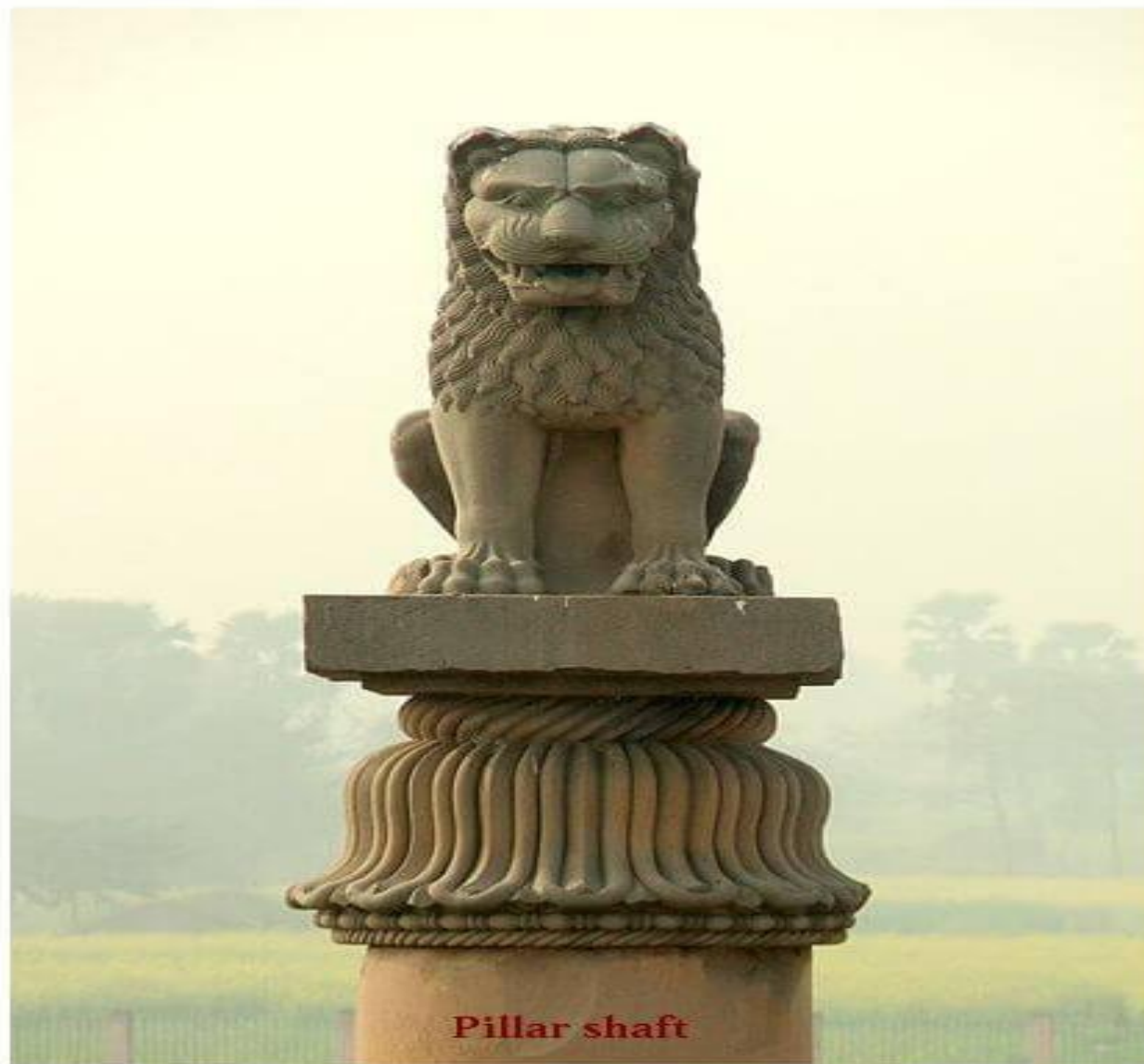
# Arts of Mauryan Period

- The sixth century BCE marks the beginning of new religious and social movements in the Gangetic Valley in the form of Buddhism and Jainism (Sramana/**Shraman Tradition**).
- Magadha emerged as a powerful kingdom and consolidated its control over the other religions.
- By the third century, a large part of India was under Maurya control.
- Ashoka emerged as the most powerful king of the Maurya dynasty.
- Religious practices had many dimensions during this period.
- Worship of Yakshas and Mother Goddess was prevalent during that time.
- Yaksha worship was very popular before and after the advent of Buddhism and it was assimilated in Buddhism and Jainism.
- The construction of stupas and viharas (dwelling places of monks) became part of the Buddhist tradition.
- However, in this period, apart from stupas and viharas, stone pillars, rock-cut caves, and monumental figure sculptures were carved in several places.

# PILLARS

- Even though constructing pillars is very old, Mauryan pillars are different from the pillars in other parts of the world (like Achaemenian pillars) as they are **rock-cut** pillars thus displaying the carver's skills.
- Stone pillars were erected all over the Mauryan Empire.
- The uppermost element of a pillar or column is known as capital.
- The top portion of the pillar was carved with figures like a bull, lion, elephant, etc.
- All the **capital** figures (usually animals) are vigorous and carved standing on a square or circular abacus.
- **Abacuses** are decorated with stylized lotuses.
- Mauryan pillar capital found at Sarnath popularly known as the Lion Capital is the finest example of Mauryan sculpture tradition.





**Animal**

**Abacus**

**Base**

(Inverted lotus)

**Pillar shaft**

**Figure: Representation of the capital above the pillar shaft**

# LION CAPITAL, SARNATH

- The Lion Capital discovered more than a hundred years ago at Sarnath, near Varanasi, is generally referred to as Sarnath Lion Capital.
- It is one of the finest examples of sculpture from the Mauryan period and was built by Ashoka in commemoration of 'Dhammachakrapravartana' or the first sermon of Buddha.

# CONTD.....

- Originally it consisted of five components:
  - I. The pillar shaft.
  - II. The lotus bell or base.
  - III. A drum on the bell base with four animals proceeding clockwise (abacus).
  - IV. The figure of four majestic addorsed (back to back) lions
  - V. The crowning element is Dharamchakra/Dharmachakra.



# CONTD.....

- ❑ Dharamchakra (the fifth component said above), a large wheel was also a part of this pillar. However, this wheel is lying in broken condition and is displayed in the site museum of **Sarnath**.
- ❑ The capital has four Asiatic lions seated back to back and their facial muscularity is very strong.
- ❑ They symbolize power, courage, pride, and confidence.
- ❑ The surface of the sculpture is heavily polished, which is typical of the Mauryan period.
- ❑ **The abacus (drum on the bell base)** has the depiction of a chakra (wheel) in all four directions and a bull, a horse, an elephant, and a lion between every chakra.
- ❑ Each chakra has **24 spokes** in it.

# CONTD.....

- ❑ This 24-spoke chakra is adapted to the National Flag of India.
- ❑ The circular abacus is supported by an inverted lotus capital.
- ❑ **The capital without the shaft, the lotus bell, and the crowning wheel have been adopted as the National Emblem of Independent India.**
- ❑ In the emblem adopted by **Madhav Sawnhey**, only three Lions are visible, the fourth being hidden from view. The abacus is also set in such a way that only one chakra can be seen in the middle, with the bull on the right and the horse on the left.
- ❑ A lion capital has also been found at **Sanchi** but is in a dilapidated condition.
- ❑ A pillar found at Vaishali is facing towards the north, which is the direction of Buddha's last voyage.

# DIDARGANJ YAKSHNI

- The life-size standing image of a Yakshi holding a chauri (flywhisk) from Didarganj near Patna is another good example of the sculpture tradition of the Mauryan period.
- It is a tall proportioned, free-standing sculpture in round made of sandstone with a polished surface.
- The chauri is held in the right hand, whereas the left hand is broken.
- The image shows sophistication in the treatment of form and medium.
- The sculpture's sensitivity towards the round muscular body is visible.
- The face is round, with fleshy cheeks, while the neck is relatively small in proportion; the eyes, nose, and lips are sharp.

# CONTD.....

- Folds of muscles are properly rendered.
- The necklace beads are in full round, hanging the belly.
- The tightening of garments around the belly is rendered with great care.



## CONTD.....

- Every fold of the garments on the legs is shown by protruding lines clinging to the legs, which also creates a somewhat transparent effect.
- Thick bell ornaments adorn the feet.
- Heaviness in the torso is depicted by heavy breasts.
- The hair is tied in a knot at the back and the back is clear.
- The flywhisk in the right hand is shown with incised lines continued on the back of the image.



# CONCLUSION

- The Maurya art is a continuation of a long movement in art. They were undoubtedly the result of a royal initiative. The columns, the caves, designs all represent the copying in stone of wooden prototypes.

**THANK YOU**