

between probably because architecture and sculpture in this time was not primarily made of stone and hence were perishable. Probably, since Gangetic area was moist, mud brick and wooden structures that were made during Mauryan period and before didn't last. However, it cannot be said that there were not any stone buildings at all. According to Megasthenes, capital Patliputra was as magnificent as capital of Iran and in architecture, Mauryan introduced use of stone for the first time.

Chandragupta Maurya succeeded Nandas. Greek king Sikandar or Alexander had just departed India before Chandragupta ascended throne and Greeks became the first foreigner to invade India in 326 BCE. Writers who accompanied him left a vivid account of prosperity and social life during that times and arrival of Alexander in India is an important event which has helped in arranging historical records as well. The route that he followed was also used for cultural contacts as well.

It is a well-known fact that the first three Mauryan emperors, Chandragupta, Bindusara and Asoka, maintained friendly relations with the Hellenic West and this led to some foreign influence on Mauryan art.

Kharoshthi script from Iran was also brought which was later used by Ashoka on inscriptions as well. It was written from right to left. Iranian influence on Mauryan sculpture was also significant. The lotus motifs used by Ashoka is borrowed from Persian architecture. From Iran, Greeks also came to know about the riches of India and Greeks under Alexander planned invasion of India at a time when Iran and Greece were vying for world supremacy. Greeks under Alexander also destroyed Iranian civilization.

Achaemenid rulers of Persia had various areas under their control which were in close vicinity of Mauryan Empire. The Persian scribes brought into India a new style of writing called *kharoshthi* and it was used in many Mauryan inscriptions as well. Mauryan pillars were also influenced by Persian/Achaemenid art. The monolithic pillar edicts of Asoka with their bell-shaped capitals are somewhat like the victory pillars of the Achaemenid emperors which have been found in Persepolis.

Most of Ashoka's inscriptions were in *Prakrit* and were written in the **Brahmi** script and other local scripts like Kharoshthi. Most modern Indian scripts have developed from the Brahmi script over hundreds of years.

Many **pillars, capitals, rock cut caves** and monumental figures were also constructed. The **Yaksha** image from **Parkam** and **Yakshini** image from **Besnagar** are examples of **popular art**, while pillars and capitals are examples of **court art**.

Ashoka was greatly disturbed by the massacre of Kalinga war and he decided to relinquish violence and he instead went on path of '*Dhamma Vijay*' or victory through Dhamma which combined in itself the good points of all sects and was essentially a moral code. 'Dhamma' is the Prakrit word for the Sanskrit term 'Dharma'. Ashoka's dhamma did not involve worship of a god,