

**Save Ancient Studies Alliance**

**January 2024 Texts-in-Translation Master Class**

# **The Sculptures of Ancient India**

**Lead by Pratishtha Mukherjee**

The sculptures of ancient India span a rich tapestry of artistic expression, reflecting the country's diverse cultural and religious history over the millennia. From the enigmatic artifacts of the Indus Valley Civilization to the flourishing artistic achievements of the Gupta Empire, these sculptures embody a continuum of creativity. The art and sculpture of India are not only for aesthetic purposes but contain deep philosophical and symbolic connotations hence the sculpture.

The Mauryan period (322–185 BCE) it marked the advent of monumental stone sculpture, with the Lion Capital of Ashoka as a standout example. This era laid the groundwork for the Gupta Empire's Golden Age (4th–6th centuries CE), characterized by idealized depictions in the classical Sarnath's Buddha sculptures.

The post-Gupta period witnessed regional variations and innovations, evident in the rock-cut sculptures of Ellora and Elephanta. The Chola Dynasty (9th–13th centuries CE) in South India produced exquisite bronze sculptures, notably the Nataraja at the Brihadeswara Temple. In just a few hundred words, it's challenging to capture the full breadth of ancient Indian sculpture. However, this brief overview highlights the evolution of styles, materials, and influences, showcasing the artistic brilliance that has endured through centuries and continues to captivate audiences worldwide.

The participants can expect to gain a deep and nuanced understanding of the rich artistic tradition that has shaped the cultural and historical landscape of the Indian subcontinent. The participants will get a historical context for the evolution of Indian sculpture, starting from the Indus Valley Civilization to the medieval period; gain insights into the cultural, religious, and regional influences that have shaped the diverse styles and themes in ancient Indian sculpture, develop an appreciation for the various artistic styles manifested in different periods, familiarize themselves with key artifacts and masterpieces, an explore the lasting legacy of ancient Indian sculpture and its impact on contemporary art and culture.

**Your SASA Educational Ambassador:**



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Early historic archaeology, ancient Indian art and architecture, sculpture and iconography - The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Gujarat, India

### **Links to Readings**

Coomaraswamy 1927- Coomaraswamy, Ananda. History of Indian and Indonesian Art. New York, 1927 - <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.107347/page/n9/mode/1up?view=theater> page 9-15.

Outline:

I. Introduction

A. Significance of Ancient Indian Sculptures

B. Overview of the Master Class Structure

I. Early Periods of Indian Sculpture

II. Indus Valley Civilization (3300–1300 BCE)

A. Terracotta Figurines and Seals

B. The "Dancing Girl" and Other Notable Artifacts

C. Maurya Empire (322–185 BCE)

III. Development of Monumental Stone Sculpture

A. The Lion Capital of Ashoka

B. Gupta Empire - The Golden Age

IV. Classical Indian Sculpture (4th–6th centuries CE)

A. idealized and Sensuous Depictions

B. Standing Buddha Statues at Sarnath

C. Post-Gupta and Regional Variations