

## South Asian Art History and Theory 1

---

### **COURSE LEADER:**

Gautami Raju

### **COURSE CREDITS:**

4 Credits

### **COURSE LENGTH:**

15 Weeks

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The first semester of South Asian Art History and Theory I will introduce the students to historical developments in Indian art and architecture that are broadly categorised into ancient and medieval period. The following sessional breakdown is designed to provide an overview of Indian art history that begins with art of prehistoric and early civilization of the Indus Valley, journeys through Buddhist art and architecture and conclude with eleventh century temples of Khajuraho.

The course shall attempt to provide a social, religious and cultural context to how Indian art developed over time. We shall cover Buddhist art and architecture that birthed in India, its propagation, apogee and decline. Followed by the emergence of the Bhakti movement that initiated the worship of idols for personal salvation and the founding of the Gupta Empire that gave us the earliest surviving Hindu temples as well as a refinement in Indian sculpture not seen before. Gradually we will move on to the complex artistic and cultural developments in South, East and Central India which represents an assimilation of different cults and religions into the greater Hindu and Buddhist pantheons as well as the unique regional developments in style, technology and architecture.

An important question we will address is how Indian art differs from western art, dealing with assumptions that Indian art and architecture like western art should be judged by whether or not it embodies notions of progress. The students will be introduced to Buddhist, Jain and Hindu sculptures, iconography and architecture as well as indigenous art theories such as the Rasa Theory, Shilpa Shastras, Natyashastra and literary works by ancient Indian authors to understand the aesthetics and complexities of Indian art. The course will also introduce the students to temple architecture in terms of iconographical planning, mural painting traditions such as at Ajanta Caves and the impact of Bhakti tradition on literature and art.

### **SESSIONAL BREAKDOWN**

#### **Week 1: Introduction to the Semester; The Origins of Art**

- Pre-Historic Art - Cave Paintings and Engravings

#### **Art Theory: Notions of Beauty, Aesthetic Relish, and Taste**

- Aesthetics, its relation to philosophy, literature and art

- Readings: *A Very Short Introduction to Aesthetics* by Bence Nanay

### **Week 2: Indus Valley Civilisation (c.3000/2500-1800 B.C.E)**

- City Planning, Seals, Idols and Assumptions

#### **Art Theory:** Gender notions, feminist theory

- Readings: Anu Aneja, “Sculpting Gender and Sexuality by the Indus”, in *Feminist Theory and the Aesthetics Within: A Perspective from South Asia*, pp. 28-63.

### **Aniconism in Buddhist Art**

### **Week 3: Mauryan (322-185 B.C.E.)**

- Pre-Mauryan Mahajanapadas, Invasion of Alexander the Great
- Mauryan Rulers- Chandragupta Maurya, Bimbisara, and Asoka

### **Week 4: Shunga Art: (150 B.C.E- 500 C.E.)**

- Bharhut Stupa, Jataka Tales and Life of Buddha, Monumental Relics
- Introduction to rock cut architecture in western ghats

### **Week 5: Satavahana Dynasty (1st/3rd Century B.C.E-3rd Century C.E)**

- The Great Stupa of Sanchi, Buddhist Caves and Early Monasteries on the Western Ghats, Amravati Stupa
- Reading: Vidya Dehejia (ed.), *Unseen Presence: The Buddha and Sanchi*, Marg Publications. 1996, pp. 36-58.

### **Week 6: Kushana Empire (30 CE-375 C.E.)**

- Transition from Hinayana to Mahayana Buddhism, Aniconism to Iconism,
- Gandharan and Mathura Buddha, Belgram Ivories

Reading: Tapati Guha Thakurta, ‘The Museum in the Colony: Collecting, Conserving and Classifying’ in Monuments, Objects, Histories. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. 43-84.

### **Week 7: Gupta Period Art (c. 320-467 C.E.) and Vakataka Dynasty (c. 250 C.E.-c. 500 C.E.)**

Gupta period Buddhist sculptures and Ajanta Cave Paintings, Buddhist Jataka Tales

#### **Art Theory:Art Theory:** The concept of Rasa: Bharata’s Natyashastra, Rasa sutra

- Readings: a) Introduction Rasa Theory, *Rasa Reader: Classical Indian Aesthetics* translated by edited by Sheldon Pollock, pg. 1-11
- b) Shyamala Gupta, Rasa Theory and Dhavni, Chapter 1 and 2 in *Art, Beauty and Creativity*, (1999).

### **Week 8: Gupta Period Art (c. 320-467 C.E.)**

- Earliest Hindu Temples- Udaygiri, Deogarh
- Introduction to Shaivism, Vaishnavism and the Shakta Cult
- Sanskrit Literature by Kalidasa, Vatsyana

- Readings: Michael Willis, *The Archaeology of Hindu Ritual: Temples and the Establishment of the Gods*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

**Art Theory:-** Post-Bharata Scholars (Bhamaha, Bhatta Lollata, Shankuka, Bhatta Nayaka) and Abhinavagupta's Rasa Siddhanta

- Transition from Rasa that is seen (*Drsyakavya*) to Rasa that is heard (*Srvyakavya*) and Alankara- the ornamentation of poetry/poetic speech.
- Reading: Shyamala Gupta, Rasa Theory and Dhavni, Chapter 2 in *Art, Beauty and Creativity*, (1999), pg. 44-58.

### **Week 9: Understanding Indian Temple Architecture, Design Plan and Iconographic Program.**

- Dynasties of South India : Western Chalukyas of Vatapi and Kalachuris
- Temples and Rock-cut architecture at Badami, Aihole and Pattadakal
- Readings: a) Michael Meister, 'Prasada as Palace: Kutina Origins of the Nagara Temple', *ArtibusAsiae*, 49 (1989), pg. 254-80.  
b) Alexander Lubotsky, 'The Iconography of the Visnu Temple at Deogarh and the Visnudharmottarapurana', *Ars Orientalis*, 16 (1996), 65-80.

### **Week 10: Ellora and Elephanta Caves (6<sup>th</sup> century C.E.)**

- Buddhist, Jain and Hindu Sculptures and Architecture
- Readings: Vidya Dehejia and Peter Rockwell. "A Flexible Concept of Finish: Rock-Cut Shrines in Premodern India." *Archives of Asian Art* 61 (2011): 61-89.

### **Week 11: Pallavas of Tamil Nadu (275 C.E. to 897 C.E.)**

- Temples of Kanchipuram, Mamallapuram

**Art Theory:**

- Readings: a) Hardy, Adam. "Form, Transformation and Meaning in Indian Temple Architecture." In *Paradigms of Indian Architecture: Space and Time in Representation and Design*, edited by G.H.R. Tillotson, 1998, 107-35.  
b) A.K. Coomaraswamy, "The Dance of Shiva".

### **Week 12: Cholas of Tamil Nadu (mid-9 to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E.)**

- Temples and Iconography- Brihadesvara and Tanjavur Temples,
- Iconography of Karanas (Classical Dance Poses based on Natyashastra) and Chola Bronzes
- Readings: a) Granoff, Phyllis. "Heaven on Earth: Temples and Temple Cities of Medieval India." In *India and Beyond*, edited by Dick van der Meij, 1997, 170-193.  
b) Kaimal, Padma. "Early Cola Kings and 'Early Cola Temples': Art and the Evolution of Kingship." *ArtibusAsiae* LVI, no. 1/2 (1996): 33-66.

### **Week 13: Pala Dynasty- Buddhist Revival (c.850-1161 C.E.)**

Bengal, Bihar and Orissa: Nalanda, Udaigiri, Khandagiri

- Readings: Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, Introduction to *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958.

**Week 14: Temples of Orissa (8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries):**

- Pasupata sect temples at Bhubaneshvar, Konark Sun Temple,
- Chausath Yogini temple at Hirapur
- Readings: Vidya Dehejia, 'The Yogini Temples of India', *Art International*, Vol. 25/3—4, March-April, 1982.

**Week 15: Khajuraho Group of Temples- (899 CE-1000 CE) b**

- Readings: Gregory D. Alles, "A Fitting Approach to God: On Entering the Western Temples at Khajuraho." *History of Religions* 33, no. 2 (1993): 161-186.

**GENERAL READINGS:**

- Ahuja, Naman. 2018. *Art and Archaeology of Ancient India: Earliest Times to the Sixth Century*,
- Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
- Brown, Percy. 1971. *Indian Architecture: Buddhist and Hindu Periods*, Bombay
- Chandra, Pramod. 1983. *On the Study of Indian Art*, Asian Society
- Dehejia, Vidya. 1997. *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art: Visual Narratives of India*, MunshiramManoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
- Dehejia, Vidya. 1996. *Unseen Presence: The Buddha and Sanchi*, Marg Publications
- Doniger, Wendy. 2009. *The Hindus: An Alternative History*, The Penguin Press
- Fairservis JR., Walter. 'Cattle and the Harappan Chiefdoms of the Indus Valley', *Expedition*, Vol. 28, No. 2
- Harle, J.C., 1994. *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent*, New Haven
- Huntington, Susan. 1989. *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*, Motilal Banarsiidas
- Mitter, Partha. 2001. *Indian Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Mitter, Partha. 1977. *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art*. University of Chicago Press
- Skelton, R.W. 1986. *Facets of Indian Art*, London
- Spink, Walter M. 1958. 'On the Development of Early Buddhist Art in India', *The Art Bulletin*, June 1958, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 95-104
- Tomory, Edith. 1989. *A History of Fine Arts in India and the West*, Orient Blackswan

**Field Visits/Visiting Speakers**

The course will include visits to museums and interaction with artists/art historians

\*A visit to the National Museum, New Delhi

**COURSE ASSESSMENT MODES:**

The students will be assessed according to their theoretical and practical skills.

Participation: 10%

Presentation: 10%

Annotated Bibliography: 15%

Assignment: 25%

Examination (During Examination period): 40%

### **LEARNING AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:**

The course has three major objectives:

- 1) To introduce the students to the history of Indian art from Pre-Historic to Medieval developments. The student should be able to analyse artworks and to recognize to which period or school they belong.
- 2) The students should be able to understand the philosophical and theoretical concept “behind” the artwork.
- 3) The students will analyse the visual “language” of the image.

### **A Note on Classroom Punctuality/Conduct:**

JSLH conducts all classes on a foundation of professionalism. It is expected that students should be present in class with a pen and notebook, and seated within five minutes of the class start time. Students arriving after a ten-minute window from the designated start time will be refused entry/attendance. Please show courtesy to your instructors and co-learners by observing punctuality. Please also note that the seminar room is a place for free expression and critical thinking and this comes with a responsibility on the part of students to respect opinions expressed and actively participate in the work of the classroom discussion. Laptops may be used in class only after prior permissions. Mobile phones are not to be used under any circumstance.

### **A Note on Plagiarism:**

In line with JGU policy, JSLH operates a zero tolerance approach to plagiarism. The unacknowledged use of material by others within your work is a violation of academic integrity and all reported cases will be investigated before potential disciplinary action. Instructors will address methods of citation and presentation within written work.

### **Disability Support and Accommodation Requirements:**

JGU endeavors to make all its courses accessible to students. All students with a known disability needing academic accommodations are required to register with the Disability Support Committee [dsc@jgu.edu.in](mailto:dsc@jgu.edu.in). The Committee has so far identified the following conditions that could possibly hinder student's overall well-being. These include: physical and mobility related difficulties; visual impairment; hearing impairment; medical conditions; specific learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia; mental health.