

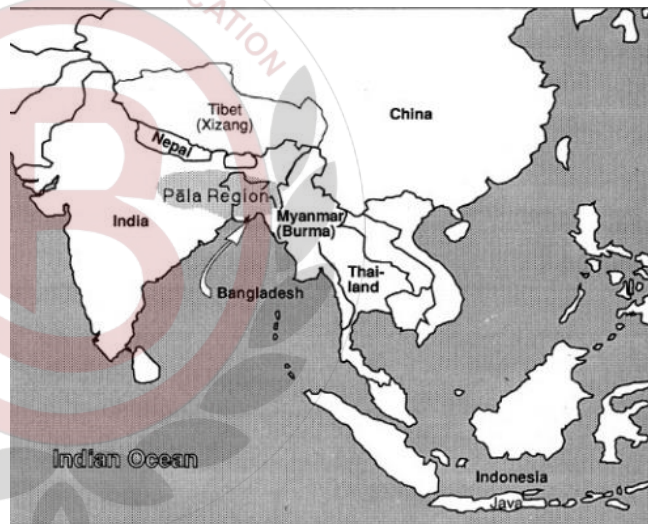


Pala Art

70th BPSC Class Notes



In India, during the Pala Empire there was an artistic development in art and architecture of Bengal and Bihar. Pala Empire has known because of their political life and the tripartite struggle (Pala, Parthihar and Rashtrakuta) for Kannauj but there interest in field of art and architecture made a distinctive style of art in Bengal region. Different fields of art were manifest in Pala period, which were arts, architectures, terracotta, Sculpture and paintings.



Earlier it believed that architectural practice in Bengal notable from Mughal period or Pre-Mughal period (sultanate period) but with careful study of Bengal history of Pala dynasty, we came to conclusion that art and architecture have bloomed due to father-son duo artisanship in Bengal and Bihar. This article focuses to address Pala Sculpture and architecture as integrated part of practice, professional and connotation. Evidence related Pala art, architecture known through different archaeological sources and many literary works have known through different texts. The most distinctive achievements of Pala ruler have made in field of art were Sculptures.

In this paper, Pala period was marked as upsurge to perfect carving and Bronze Sculpture. The art of painting also excelled during Pala period. This article deals with components of artistic activities that determine about the excellence of particular architectural practice during Pala Empire. In ancient times, History of Bengal had closely linked to Bihar, more precisely with Magadh. With the end of Gupta Empire, there was political anarchy in the land, which ended with rule of Gopala.

Pala Empire was build probably around 750 AD when notable men of the Bengal region elected there ruler Gopala (founder of the Pala Empire). The dynasty named after the rulers name

ended with suffix of 'Pala'. They became a regal power of early medieval period. The Pala Empire ruled in Bengal, Bihar and some part of Bangladesh. The main center of Pala art were Nalanda, kurkihara, Fatehpur(Ganga distt.) and Alura(Dhanabad Distt.). Other than these places, there were various many places brought light to artistic excellence. The major cities in their region were Vikrampura, Pataliputra, gauda, Monghyur, Somapura, Ramvati(Varendura), Tamralipti and Jaggadala.

Art and architecture boom during imperial Gupta period goes on until 12th Century A.D. The Pala dynasty rule was important as they promoted Indian Philosophy, literature, painting and Sculpture. Pala empire was at apex when Dharmapala and Devpala as they have contributed in Pala School of art. The Pala's legacy of art and architecture has known through Tibetan Buddhism works. The glorious achievement founded in field of different parts of arts, architectures, terracotta, sculpture and painting. The unmatched instances of Pala art and architecture significance have been display in the Museums of Bengal and Bangladesh. As mention in the Tibetan Lama Taranath, during the region of Devpala there was a duo of father-son artists Dhinman and his son Bitopal they have presented outstanding works in Sculpture and Painting. They have given uplift to various Arts School that work simultaneously in the other region. Pala dynasty has function simultaneously at different region.

Pala dynasty have ruled for four hundred years in which they have patronize Buddhism various Viharas and new Buddhist centre opened in Bengal and Bihar. The architectural flourished during Pala period have influenced their neighboring countries like Myanmar and Indonesia (central shine crucified plan especially). Some of the architectural evidence during Pala period, Somapura Mahavihara at Paharpur built in the region of Dharmapala one of the finest example of Pala architectural. It was one of the largest Vihara in India. It was also mention in Nalanda Inscription of Vipulasrimitra described as "Jagatam Netraikavishram Bhu" (pleasing to the eyes of the world). Around 13th and 14th centuries, few Buddhist buildings have followed Paharpur example. Among others important Viharas of Pala period were- Vikramshia, Pandita, Fullabadi and Jagaddala Viharas. Hence, it has been concluded that the glory of Pala architecture spread in the Buddhist world for the growth of Buddhism. People around the world came to visit these Buddhist centre. Nalanda Vihara was building in the region of Pala rulers. Devapala donated five villages to Java King Sailendra for the scholars of that country. These Viharas of Pala Empire played important role in the propagation of Buddhism to neighbor countries like Nepal, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Myanmar. Bengali Buddhist has contributed in the spread of Buddhism, among them ATISH DIPANKAR SHIJIAN stands out prominently. About Hindu temple there, were no remains



yet had not been discovered. Nevertheless, doorframes and pillars have been founded and some sculptural represents the replica of temples. Hence, it should have said that temples architecture developed in this period.

In all type of arts, sculptures have known for the phenomenal development. Sculptures have also known as an integral part of architecture of Greek, Roman, and Indian also during Renaissance period not only because of religion but also as perceptible functions. The sculptures had known for the perfect balance with time and space. After decline of Gupta Empire Pala Empire Sculpture reached at new height and developed a “Pala School of Sculptural Art”. Pala sculptures were originating from late Gupta style but later on develop on its own.

In Bangladesh Museum, there are innumerable beautiful sculptures of Rajmahal Black Basalt Stone. The sculptural art incorporated with local characteristic of Bengal and Bangladesh during Pala period continued until 12th century CE. Bengal sculptural art have made remarked in Indian Sculptural art. Sculptural Art of Bengal bloomed during this period. A Pala sculpture had carved beautifully showing the mastery of Pala period. This period has remarked for an upsurge of perfect carving and bronze sculpture. The basic feature of Pala Sculpture had taken from the Gupta period but it was slimmer, longer and rounded.



In 11th century, sculptors have made lifeless sculpture figure alive on stone. Most of the sculptures were for religious purpose. Black fine stone used for sculptures. It flourished from 10th century CE to 12th century CE. However, difference between Pala and Gupta period sculpture was facial characteristic. It was due to people nature as they are physically strong and emotionally weak. The face was oval, with sharp acqulian nose, strongly defined lips, eyebrows, and half-brooding eyes. Bengali type sculpture have soft, halftmid, sharp, amiable features bloomed during twelfth century CE. These features show detailed masterpieces and the main sculptor accompany with short dhoti. The figure accompany with the separate lotus as divinity accompanying lotus. Bronze sculptures

during Pala period have influenced the art of South-East Asian countries. Pala period Bronze figure made up of Lost-wax technique with an alloy of eight metals. Bronze sculptures of Pala period were symbol of divinity and its size was small maybe used for individual worship purpose. As a matter of style, they have continued the practice of Gupta school of Art. It was different from contemporary stone sculpture as it suppresses the detailed emphasis on jewelers and elegant virtuosity.

Moreover, the stone sculptures were fully flamed and stylized. These flames were small, narrow towards the inner ring to which they attached, and if they were joint image the then the difference of flames was little just its tip separated it. In Pala Sculptures there was unique feature seen as pedestal and lotus base in it. The most common pedestal was Pancharatna or five-projection face and other pedestal was Triratna or three-projection face representing the Vahan of deity. Above the pedestal, the lotus seat carved for seated or standing figure. Costume and accessories in Pala sculpture were one of its features. These statues have scanty in clothing. The upper part was barely clothing but it was cover either with jewels that adorned for personally convention jewelry. The bottom part always covered with short dhoti. The female sculptures always have been in Saree. Pala sculpture Sarees were different from modern time saree. Jewelry was typical Bengali style like necklace and both male and female wore amulets.



Crown, which was considering as a part of sculpture sometimes it, was huge that it has compared with the Shikhar of the temple. Dhinman and Bitopal duo artisanship on sculpture have added a new dimension to Pala art and architecture. Their partnership leads towards a new tradition of school of art known as Pala school of Sculptural art. The art of painting has not left behind. Any evidence related to Bengal paintings in pre-pala period has not known or founded yet. Taranath

have written about Dhinman and Bitopal partnership and masters in field of sculpture and paintings in the region of Dharmapala and Devpala.

Although there is no trace of Pala paintings, have known still many illustrations of Buddhist god and goddesses have known through the Vajrayan and Tantrayan Buddhist Manuscript. The palm leaf paintings of the Pala period were noteworthy. The palm leaf paintings determined through the size of book, which was approx. 2.5 or 3 inches. It has covering of wood and thread together leaves were coloured. The outline were first drawn in black or red then colours were filled in the flat areas- red, blue, green, yellow and touches of white. Pala art of painting were demonstrate around with 400 old paintings but only 24-painted manuscript have been found which were Pancharaksa, Astasaharika, Prajnaparamita, Panchavingshatisahasrika Prajanmitra and etc.

The art which are known belongs to developed stage of paintings of Pala period have influenced Eastern India, Tibet and Nepal paintings around 14th century CE. Other instance of Pala art has known through the brilliance of terracotta plaques. The evidence of terracotta plaques had discovered from Paharpura Vihar, which shows excellence of Pala art. In Bengal there was limited stone and metal objects needs much of excellence but people desire for art have lead them towards clay, which was available easily it does not have complex technique and money.

Terracotta plaques identified by art historians from ancient sites Bangarh and Mahasthan. However, the beauty of plaques has known through Paharpura. These plaques were either partly molded or partly handmolded. These plaques objective were decoration of wall and doorways. Moreover, these plaques also considered as a source of information as an instruction or recreation for the pilgrims. The subject for these plaques was not only divinity but also day-to-day life activities. The art of plaques and showing the common people have made it popular art of Bengal.

In Paharpur these plaques had used for surface and wall decoration to end plainness of the walls later on, it recognized as unique feature of Bengali artists. There was no doubt that terracotta art have marked its excellence in the Pala period. These plaques were not of same size and uniformly baked. These plaques have image of Buddha and Bodhisattava, Tara, Manjusri and Parna Sabari along with the Hindu gods and goddesses such as Shiva, Narada, Vishnu, Brahma, Ganesh etc.

Apart from the glorifying Political history of the Pala period, it also has a unique and excellence art history. The most distinctive feature of Pala were in the field of art and sculptures. Pala dynasty have ruled for long period in the history of Bengal around four centuries which has been given glorified Bengal art history of different human activities. These glories of Bengal art can be claimed to Pala rulers and their contribution towards art. The art and architecture of Pala period have influenced the Southeast Asian countries. Historian as advancement in the architectural history of India had remarked the architecture of Pala period. The unique feature of Pala art history was lot of local phenomena added in it.

The most exemplify instance of Pala architecture was during Dharmapala region Somapura Mahavihara at Paharpur. The architectural feature of Pala Period had influenced the whole country and other neighboring countries like SouthEastern Asia, China, Japan and Tibet. The sculptural art of Pala period is label for it excellence in the field of Indian art. The sculptors of Bengal have made advancement and reached to perfection during this period. Sculptural art of this period have continued the tradition of the late Gupta period and later on developed its own style. These sculptures later on developed it unique style and feature as 'Pala School of Sculptural Art'.

The sculptural art known from the Museum of Bangladesh and West Bengal famous unique feature and facial features continued until 12th century CE. However, art of paintings evidence are few in numbers. Still the palm-leaf paintings were famous during this period. The artwork of this

period is mention in some of the literary work. Moreover, the father-son duo Dhinman and Bitopal have uplifted the art if Pala period with their mastery in Sculpture and painting. The most famous art was terracotta plaques, during this period.

Through pre-historic time, art of terracotta was use but the Pala periods have given its unique feature and advancement. Terracotta art of Pala period reached at high water mark in Bengal region. The art history of Bengal made development in Pala period. These artistic styles have influenced many Southeast Asian countries. This advancement later on developed its own school. However, the political contribution in tripartite struggle has been important to Indian history but the art history of Pala period can't be neglected as it has been marked as arena to Indian subcontinent.

