



Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the role of Mauryan art and architecture in propagating Buddhist ideals across the Indian subcontinent. (150 words)

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Approach

- Introduce the answer by quoting Mauryan empire and its link with Buddhism
- Give role of Mauryan art and architecture in propagating Buddhist ideals
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

The **Mauryan Empire (322-185 BCE)** played a crucial role in the spread of Buddhism across the Indian subcontinent. Mauryan art and architecture, particularly under **Emperor Ashoka**, became powerful tools for **propagating Buddhist ideals and philosophy**.

Body

Role of Mauryan Art and Architecture in Propagating Buddhist Ideals:

- **Pillars and Edicts:** Served as **symbols of state authority** and vehicles for Buddhist teachings
 - The most celebrated of the Ashokan pillars is the one erected at **Sarnath**, the site of **Buddha's First Sermon** where he shared the **Four Noble Truths**
- **Rock and Pillar Edicts:** Conveyed Buddhist principles and Ashoka's dhamma
 - The **Girnar Rock Edict in Gujarat**, which promotes non-violence and respect for all living beings
- **Stupas and Spiritual Architecture:** Stupas served as reliquaries and centers of Buddhist worship
 - The **Great Stupa at Sanchi**, originally commissioned by Ashoka, became a model for future Buddhist architectural developments
- **Cave Architecture:** Rock-cut caves for Buddhist monks and as worship centers
 - **Barabar Caves in Bihar** are renowned as the place of origin of the **Ajivika sect** of Buddhism.
- **Symbolic Imagery:** Use of symbols like the **Dharma Chakra, Bodhi tree, and lotus** to represent Buddhist concepts.
- **Narrative Reliefs:** Depictions of Buddhist stories and **Jataka tales**
 - Among the Jataka stories that are frequently depicted are **Chhadanta Jataka, Vidurpundita Jataka, Ruru Jataka**.

Conclusion

Mauryan art and architecture served as a **powerful medium for propagating Buddhist ideals across the Indian subcontinent**. The synthesis of **imperial grandeur, spiritual symbolism, and technological innovation in Mauryan Buddhist art** created a lasting impact on the religious and

cultural fabric of the subcontinent.

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