



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** “Gandhara and Mathura schools of art represent two distinct yet interconnected artistic traditions of ancient India”. How did these schools contribute to the evolution of Indian sculptural art? **(150 words)**

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### Approach

- Introduce the answer by briefing about Gandhara and Mathura schools of art
- Give Key Differences in Gandhara and Mathura Schools of Art in table format
- Highlight their Contribution to Indian Sculptural Art
- Conclude suitably.

### Introduction

The **Gandhara and Mathura schools of art** were two prominent sculptural traditions that flourished in ancient India between the **1st century BCE and the 5th century CE**. While both were deeply influenced by **Buddhism**, they evolved in distinct cultural and geographical contexts.

### Body

**Comparison of Gandhara and Mathura Schools of Art:**

Feature	Gandhara School of Art	Mathura School of Art
<b>Location</b>	Northwest India (Taxila, Peshawar, Bamiyan)	Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
<b>Period</b>	1st century BCE to 4th century CE	1st century BCE to 5th century CE
<b>Cultural Influence</b>	Strong <b>Greco-Roman</b> and <b>Persian</b> influence	Purely <b>indigenous Indian</b> tradition
<b>Material Used</b>	Grey sandstone, bluish-grey schist, stucco	Red-spotted sandstone
<b>Religious Influence</b>	Primarily <b>Buddhism</b> (Mahayana)	<b>Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism</b>
<b>Depiction of Buddha</b>	Realistic, <b>Hellenistic style</b> – wavy hair, forehead lines, well-defined musculature	Iconic <b>Indian style</b> – broad shoulders, smiling expression, seated in <b>Padmasana</b>

Despite their distinct features, the **Gandhara and Mathura schools remained interconnected**, as both were deeply influenced by **Buddhist patronage, artistic exchanges, and shared motifs in stupas and monasteries**.

# Contribution of Gandhara and Mathura Schools to Indian Sculptural Art

## ▪ Gandhara School of Art

- Introduction of Buddha's Iconic Form: Before Gandhara art, Buddha was depicted using symbols (e.g., footprints, Bodhi tree).
  - **Gandhara sculptors** created the first **human-like** representation of Buddha.
- **Fusion of Indian and Greco-Roman Styles:** The **realistic portrayal** of the human figure, draped garments, and deep carving techniques were borrowed from **Greek and Roman styles**.
  - Features like **the halo, wavy hair, muscular body, and detailed drapery** became defining elements.
- **Refinement of Stupa and Monastery Architecture:** Gandhara art contributed to the **development of stupas and rock-cut monasteries**, influencing Buddhist architecture in India and beyond.
  - **Notable examples: Bamiyan Buddha (Afghanistan), Taxila sculptures.**
- **Spread of Buddhist Art to Central Asia and China:** The Gandhara style was crucial in transmitting **Buddhist art** along the **Silk Route**, influencing **Chinese, Japanese, and Central Asian Buddhist sculptures**.

## ▪ Mathura School of Art

- **Indigenous Development of Indian Sculptural Traditions:** Unlike Gandhara, Mathura art was purely **Indian in origin and style**.
  - It laid the foundation for **Indian temple architecture** and Hindu iconography.
- **Humanized Depiction of Deities:** The Mathura school introduced **sculptures of Hindu gods and goddesses** like **Vishnu, Shiva, and Yakshas**.
  - It was also **instrumental in developing Jain sculptures**.
- **Bold and Energetic Forms:** The figures had **broad shoulders, strong torsos, and powerful expressions**, reflecting a **spiritual yet energetic presence**.
  - The "**delighted Buddha**" in Mathura art emphasized divine joy over the **serene or sad expressions** of Gandhara art.
- **Influence on Later Indian Art:** The **Gupta period (4th-6th century CE)** refined Mathura art, leading to the classical style that influenced later **Chola, Pallava, and Rajput sculptures**.
  - Notable examples: **Sarnath Buddha, Katra Keshav Dev Temple sculptures.**

## Conclusion

Gandhara art brought a **realistic and external influence**, while Mathura art shaped an **indigenous and symbolic aesthetic**. Together, they played a crucial role in **shaping Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain iconography**, leaving a lasting impact on Indian and global art traditions.