

Understanding The Enigmatic Aura Of Lotus In Gandhara Art: A Semiotic Analysis

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Introduction

The eastern part of Afghanistan and northwestern parts of Pakistan including Peshawar, Charsadda, and Mardan were once a center of a flourishing civilization called Gandhara civilization and its magnificent art. Earlier the term Greater¹ Gandhāra was used for the larger cultural boundary that included parts of Afghanistan i.e., Lamgham and Jalalabad, Kashmir, the valleys of Swat and Buner and the Peshawar basin (Behrendt 2004: 2). The celebrated Chinese monk, Xuanzang has recorded Gandhāra as Kien-t'o-lo with its capital as Po-lu-sha-pu-lo identified with the present-day Peshawar (Beal 2004: 97-98). Gandhāra had the privilege to be amongst 16 Mahajanapadas (Great Kingdoms) of North India thrived at the beginning of the sixth century BCE in India (Majumdar 1960: 2). According to Warraich (2015: 18,19), the Aryans (authors of Rigveda) named this country Gandhara after 'observing its most striking physical, topographical as well as geographical feature i.e., Gand or Kand or Kund, means pond, or water reservoir... Gandhara or Kandhar or Kundhara—the land marked by reservoir'. This whole region was a renowned and busy center of Buddhist missionary as well as artistic activities.

Gandhara art developed during 1st century BCE and the 7th century CE. It fused together Indian and Greco-Roman artistic traditions because this region was conquered by Alexander the Great and with him came Greek and later Roman soldiers, merchants and settlers who greatly influenced the life and arts of this region. Apart from the Hellenistic and Roman influences, Persian and Central Asian artistic traits can also be clearly observed in the art and architecture of Gandhāra (Voegtle 2020). The key features of this art consist of sculptures, draperies, clothing, lotus motif, stupas, narrative panels etc. The workmanship of the sculptors of Gandhāra reached its zenith during the rule of the Kushans (c.1st-4th century CE). The Gandhara art specially and specifically glorified the life story of Buddha and associated events. It is primarily, Buddhist sacred art and was designed to illuminate the Buddhist faith and its founder (Warraich, 2015).

Gandharan artists used to make artifacts with clay, bluish stone or schist and stucco. At some places, wood was also used to make artwork. Mostly, the stone was brought from the hills of Swat and Buner. With these materials the sculptors would represent the events from the life of the Buddha and his earlier births as Bodhisattva (i.e. Buddha-to-be) in different postures e.g. sitting as well as standing positions (Warraich, 2015). The initial representations of Buddha were symbolic and not physical. They included carvings of Buddha's turban upon stupas encircled by railing, Buddha pada, bodhi tree, etc. (Huntington, 2006).

It is not just Peshawar Valley that kept hidden in its womb the Buddhist artifacts but a much vast area kept safe the ancient gems. Starting from the Ghorband and Panjshir valleys in Afghanistan to the northern sites of the Qunduz valley, and from the Peshawar valley to Swat, Dir and Bajaur, and towards east till Taxila, and in the south till Rakhri near Mianwali, the marks of Buddhist civilization have been found including sculptures, relief panels, stupas, monasteries and other Buddhist monuments. Excavations were also successful in Tapa Sardar near Ghazni Afghanistan and Kohat district in Pakistan. This all makes a pretty vast and rich province of Gandhara art and culture. Its artistic richness can be seen in three major categories of sculptures i.e. independent cult images, relief panels and Non-Buddhist deities (Warraich, 2015).

The cult images consist of sculptures of Buddha and Bodhisattva. In these sculptures mostly Buddha has seated or standing positions. In seated positions, mostly he is shown sitting cross-legged engrossed in meditation on a Lotus flower. These representations reflect the spiritual and cosmic character of Buddha. Some sculptures represent him as a towering personality among his associates and followers. In some Bodhisattva images, he is holding a lotus in hand. Even Non-Buddhist deities also hold Lotus flowers in hand in many of their sculptures. It testifies to the ubiquitous use and belief in the significance of the lotus plant. Hundreds of relief panels have Lotus patterns that enhance the beauty and spiritual touch of these artifacts.

Gandhāra, the crossroads of religions and civilizations, also served as a furnace for the alchemical transmutation of symbols, those age-old containers of the collective unconscious, giving them fresh life and significance. The artistry and symbolic profundity of Gandhāra art reached its pinnacle during the Kushan era. Here, the archetypal forms carried by the winds of the Hellenistic, Roman, Persian, and Central Asian civilizations came into conversation with the native visual language of the area. The Gandhāra artists condensed their distinctive style—which skillfully combined a multitude of influences—into an expression that spoke to the innermost recesses of the mind—in this holy alchemy. As a result, Gandhāra's art and architecture are timeless symbols that represent a synthesis that speaks to humanity as a whole and transcends the individual. This is evidence of the interconnectedness and universality of the archetypal images that have inspired admiration throughout history and space (Voegtle, 2020).

One important symbol extensively used in Gandharan art, which draws inspiration from both Indian and Greco-Roman traditions and which introduced to the world the unique Gandhara art style of representation is the Lotus flower or plant. It is a multipurpose symbol that, depending on where it is placed and how it is portrayed, can symbolize many things spiritually and culturally. From the foundational parts to the ornamental finials, this sacred symbol is painstakingly carved and used in a variety of decorative functions throughout Gandhara. This study is delimited to exploring this beautiful symbol in Gandhara artifacts.

Aims and Objectives

An important sign or symbol in Gandhara art is Lotus and it carries immense symbolic significance. It has been used and represented in scores of artworks by the Gandhara artists. The objective of the study is to understand the ways the enigmatic aura of Lotus had impacted the life and cultures in the old Gandhara world and what significance still it has for the lovers of art and culture. The cultural identity that the “lotus” has assumed in the indigenous art and architecture of Gandhāra behooves us to understand and explore its widespread impact on life. A semiotic study of the flower par excellence in Gandhāra shall provide a theoretical framework,

- To conduct a semiotic analysis of the lotus symbol in Gandhāra art by applying Carl Jung's theories of the collective unconscious and archetypes, examining its significance as a symbol of psychological completeness and spiritual development.
- To determine and analyze how the lotus in Gandhāra symbolizes universal themes of purity, rebirth, and the path to enlightenment, and to interpret the lotus's archetypal imagery.
- To examine the spiritual and psychological significance of the lotus emblem for the Gandhāra community, taking into account the potential effects on their collective identity and mental health.

Keeping in view the above objectives this study will try to answer the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. What was the significance of Lotus flower as a symbol of psychological completeness and spiritual development in the Gandhara world?
2. Was Lotus an archetypal image/symbol of universal themes of purity, rebirth, and the path to enlightenment? And why was it a permanent motif in Gandhara art and architecture?
3. What was the spiritual and psychological significance of the lotus for Gandharans as a community and for their identity and mental wellness?

Literature Review

‘Lotus also called water lily, is one of the earliest plants discovered in the world, and one of the representative survival plants on earth before the ice age’ (Shi, 2015). The botanical names of lotus are *Nelumbo nucifera* (Indian lotus), *Nymphaea* lotus, and *Nenuphar* (Egyptian lotus). Its Persian name is Nilufar, and in Hindi, it is called Padma, kamal, and Kanwal in the vernacular (Amir and Malik, 2017).

Dokras (2020) states that the lotus flower is regarded as the ‘most popular metaphor’ and ‘a benchmark for beauty’ in various cultures and regions of the world for example India, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Egypt, and Mexico, and its references are also found out in multiple religions for example, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Christianity. The lotus plant is an important element of human sustenance, dreams, desires, and beliefs, for example, the people of the Indo-Malaysian zone regard it simultaneously as a source of ‘food, medicine, a flower of dreams and of the law’, according to Vilayleck (n.d). He further says that, it is also a symbol of life, fertility, and fecundity. ‘In Egyptian iconography, the sun bursts from the open blossom. It is the archetypal vulva’ (Vilayleck, n.d.). In different cultures, e.g. Hinduism and in Buddhism, the lotus plant is connected with the birth of divine beings. Indians consider it as symbol of spiritual accomplishment as suggested by its multiple petals. It not only carries an ornamental value but also an ecological value, and it greatly contributes to the health of aquatic habitats (Jin et al. 2017). Due to its diverse ecological advantages, it has acquired the position of a focal point in aquatic flora studies (Liu et al., 2020).

Robinson (2023), expounding the lifecycle of the lotus, comments on its symbolic value that as this miraculous flower submerges into water every night and re-emerges and re-blooms with same freshness every next morning, so it has been associated with rebirth and spirituality. She further states that its colors also carry symbolic significance for example white lotus flowers are a symbol of purity, while yellow lotus symbolizes spiritual elevation and ascension. Due to the immense significance of this flower, it even reflects morality as we see in this proverb from the very old Buddhist scripture Suttanipatta, quoted by Chalmers (1999),

“Like the lotus which attaches itself to neither the water nor the mud, the wise man attaches himself neither to sensual pleasures nor to the world”.

According to Ruan (2023), the lotus flower is not only a holy symbol in Eastern cultures but also stands for beauty, purity, dignity, and ‘untaintedness’. Ruan (2023) points out that the widespread use of lotus motifs in Chinese art, painting, and craftsmanship demonstrates not only the Chinese people's sense of veneration for the lotus flower but also their ‘awe of nature and the universe’. In the subcontinent region, the symbolic significance of lotus also went through a transition period. From the spiritual repertoire of Buddhism, it became a part of aesthetic lexicon of the Muslim art traditions by becoming a feature of arabesque patterns. This status sustained in the Mughal period amongst the aesthetes and nobles who viewed arabesque patterns as a symbol of divinity. However, for the general public, for the craftsmen, particularly by the end of Mughal period, lotus became a mere decorative motif in the design vocabulary.

How different symbols and signs communicate meanings and are used in a culture or society can be understood through semiotics. Semiotics is the “science of signs” (Saussure, 1959). The most important theoreticians of semiotics are Charles Sanders Peirce, Ferdinand de Saussure, Carl Gustav Jung, and Umberto Eco. These scholars presented the major semiotic models. Peirce’s first account on the triadic nature of signs appears in his 1867 paper *On a New List of Categories* (W2 .49–58), suggesting three elements of a sign: a sign-vehicle, an object, and an interpretant. Peirce approach was based on pragmatism and logic. In contrast to Peirce, Saussure had proposed a dyadic nature of signs that consists of only two elements that are signifier and signified, given in posthumously published lectures titled, *Course in General Linguistics* (1916). His theory became the basis of structuralism. These theories laid the foundation for further studies and understanding of signs, communication, meaning, psyche, myths, interpretation etc.

Italian semiotician Umberto Eco extending upon the ideas of Saussure and Peirce, proposed his theory of signs, codes and encyclopedia of knowledge. He also presented the concept of “unlimited semiosis” which means that interpretation of one sign gives birth to other signs that further need elaboration/interpretation and this endless process continues confirming the dynamic and evolutionary nature of meaning. Eco’s aesthetic sign comprises complex deeper layers of meaning that demand active engagement from the viewers or readers. For him, art is a complex communication system that is built upon networks of aesthetic signs and codes. Culture, history and social context influence and shape the artifacts and their use and interpretation. Umberto Eco (1980) in his article ‘Function and Sign: Semiotics of Architecture’ applied the semiotic theory to architecture and called attention to symbolism in archeology along with its functionality.

The 1960s marks the encounter of archeology and semiotics. French Scholars André Leroi-Gourhan (1965, 1968) and Annette Laming-Empèraire (1962) applied the semiotic model to Palaeolithic archaeology. James Deetz (1967) was among the first archaeologists to introduce a semiotic approach towards historical archaeology. It was not until the early 1980s that Ian Hodder reintroduced a recognizable linguistic structuralism in archeology.

The Lotus of the ancient world, one most important symbol in the world of art and architecture, is also well-explored by researchers and semioticians. Lotus plays an important role in the symbolic acceptance and spread in Gandhāra (Patrick 1978:18). In the Rig Veda, the lotus or its parts are mentioned eight times (RV. V.78.7., RV. X.107.10., RV. X.184.2., VII.33.11., RV. VI.16.13., RV. III.58.7, RV. VI.62.4., RV. VI.67.10.3). It appears also in the Nirukta (5.15) (Visigalli 2017) where it is a platform of existence, because it is explained as a

space where there is nourishment for beings. The Atharva Veda refers to heart as ‘lotus with nine gates’, an astonishing description of the heart as we know it today. The heart indeed looks like a lotus bud if held with its apex and medical scholars agree to the concept to certain extent (Rajgopal et al 2002).

Exploring the literature of ancient Egypt, we come across chapter l. xxxi of the Ritual (Book of the Dead), called ‘Transformation into the Lotus’ a head emerging from this flower speaks of glory of being birthed out of a lotus (Budge 1904: 23, 472-73, 521-22). It is mentioned in chapter 15 ‘The Golden Lotus’ where Ra, the king of gods, comes forth from a lotus. In chapter 18, the desire of the deceased to come forth as a sacred lotus is expressed (Faulkner 1972). Isis, the goddess titled with ten thousand names, has “lotus bearing” as one of her attributes. Linda Iies, in her work *Isis, the Lady of the Lotus* (2010), has elaborated the sacredness of the Egyptian lotus. She also interpreted the map of Egypt as a giant lotus. Sir Banister Fletcher (1950) has presented clear illustrations of lotus in Egyptian columns. McDonald (2018) has highlighted the use of lotus in Egyptian religious practices (Hart 2005: 99). The Mahabharata presents Padmavyuha (lotus formation) as a military formation used to surround enemies. It reflects a labyrinth of multiple defensive walls. It is a multi-tiered defensive formation that looks like a blooming lotus when viewed from above. The warriors at each level would be in an increasingly strong position to fight against (Gopal 1990: 81).

In Indian cosmogony, the lotus flower is a symbol of the world where the floral receptacle drops in line to Mount Meru (which according to Indian mythology is in the centre of the world and symbolizes the axis mundi), the continents are imagined to be along the petals (Jones 2007: 472). A lot of information about the role of the lotus flower in Indian cosmogony can be found in the Puranas. The Matsya Purana (Ch. 164–171) establishes a connection of the origin of the world from a lotus flower (Rocher 1986: 97). However, the world as a lotus flower can be found in the Bhagavata Purana (Babkiewicz 2012). According to Padma Purana, the world was born through the ‘Golden Lotus’. In Bhagavad Gita (Ch 5. 10), the lotus represents those who perform their duties without getting distracted by the worldly pleasures, and (Ch 5.26, Ch 10. 9) as a comparative term to the Lotus Feet (of the Supreme Being). The Mukhya Upanishad (Principal Upanishads), Taittiriya Upanishad and Chandogya Upanishad have mention of the lotus. It is also mentioned in the Maha Narayana Upanishad.

The primary reference to a ‘Lotus of the Lotophages’ appears in Homer’s *Odyssey* (Ciani, 2001). The Buddhist Jatakas has lotus as one of its primary subjects in Paduma Jataka, Dipamkara Jataka, Bhisra Jataka (The Lotus Stalk, Vishvantara Jataka as well as other Jatakas (Varma 2018). Lotus has been discussed for its importance in mythology by Converse (1879) and Reznia (2011). The botanical value of lotus is universally accepted and an interesting subject for researchers across the globe discussed by Weinder (1985), Wu et al. (2003) and Zickrick (2010).

The most recent and detailed discussion on the significance of lotus can be seen in the work of Dokras (2020). However, it is said to be used as an umbrella term used for a variety of aquatic plants discussed by Ward (1952), Hanneder (2002), Garzelli (2003), Cielas (2013) and Kintaert (2014). The significance and depiction of lotus in Gandhara has been discussed by Siddiqui (2020). These studies have been done in their specified contexts through the art history. There remains the gap in studying lotus in Gandhara art from the Jungian perspective as an archetype. This study delves into the semiotic significance of the Lotus and tries to unravel its enigma in Gandhara art and architecture through the Jungian semiotic framework.

Method

This study examines the symbol of Lotus in Gandhara art and for this purpose the artefacts from different museums are accessed through authentic museum databases, also physical and virtual tours. Video documentaries are consulted for sites and images that cannot be accessed otherwise. The proposed study shall also utilize the ancient sacred literature to identify the origin and spread of the lotus as a motif, a subject of paintings and sculptures, as an architectural decoration and as attribute of gods and goddesses. Efforts shall be made in order to identify all the possible variations of motifs termed as the Lotus. All the possible interpretations of the comprehensive term 'Lotus' shall be consulted as a secondary source. The verbal traditions, tales, and fables associated with the lotus will be accessed. The religious and secular festivities linked to it shall be studied through video documentaries. The utility of the lotus and its parts would be explored which might be the reason for the appreciation the lotus has received.

The use of Lotus and its parts in paintings, sculptures and also as a prevalent motif in architectural decoration in Gandhāra and other art and architecture of Subcontinent will be analyzed through Carl Gustav Jung's Semiotic theory (1921, 1947). 'Semiotics offers a useful framework for understanding the role of the lotus in Gandhāran art and architecture, as it allows us to examine the ways in which symbols and signs are used to convey religious and cultural meanings' (Hegarty, 2012).

Jung (1921, 1947) tried to explain in his theory that symbols and myths leave solid impressions on conscious and subconscious levels of human mind. He was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who proposed the theory of Collective Unconscious that greatly impacted the field of psychology. His theory explains the nature of collective unconscious, archetypes and the psyche. According to Jung (1921, 1947), there are two elements or layers of human psyche i.e. the upper layer or Conscious and the deeper layer or Unconscious. The unconscious part of psyche is comprised of two parts: the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The personal unconscious consists of a person's personal experiences, emotions, beliefs, desires, and memories. On the other hand, the collective unconscious consists of archetypes that are innate, universal, and shared symbols, images, themes, or patterns irrespective of culture and era (time). Jung (1921, 1947) identified several archetypes for example anima/animus, persona, shadow, and the self. As far as persona is concerned, Jung says that humans present a self-image to the world which he names as 'persona' that is created from their shadow which consists of hidden thoughts, desires, and anxieties.

The archetypes are representative of human experience, and emotion for example the creator, the mother, the hero, or the trickster. These archetypes could help gain insight into one's own personality and the world. Being shared concepts, the archetypes appear as characters and themes in stories narrated by people in literature, paintings, films and also in their dreams. The collective unconscious also impacts the dreams, fantasies and creative expressions. Jung also focused on individuation which is a process that integrates the personal with the collective unconscious that paves the way for enhanced self-awareness and individual growth. Jung also admitted this fact that cultural variations could influence the understanding, interpretation and articulation of archetypes.

John Locke (1689, 1996) was an English philosopher, who thought that humans are born with a mind as a blank slate (*tabula rasa*) and a conscious mind is purely influenced by its surrounding environment. Unlike him, Carl Jung believed each individual holds a collective unconscious by birth. The collective unconscious is a reservoir of shared experiences and archetypal images that shape our understanding of the world and connect us to the tapestry of humanity's narrative.

Dreams, those enigmatic doorways to the unconscious, serve as portals to the realm of archetypes. Within dreams, the collective unconscious speaks in a language of symbols, inviting us to confront the suppressed aspects of our psyche. Just as ancient cultures adorned their temples with symbolic artwork, our dreams offer a canvas for the archetypal images to manifest and guide us on our quest for individuation—the integration of our conscious and unconscious selves.

The process of individuation, that transformative journey toward self-realization, requires us to confront the shadows that dwell within us. These shadows, symbolized by the archetype of the Shadow, embody the parts of ourselves that we repress and deny. To embark on the path of individuation is to embrace the wholeness of our being, to integrate the light and the darkness, and to transcend the limitations of the ego that leads us from unconsciousness to self-awareness, from fragmentation to unity. An example of Collective Unconscious are the ways different cultures have same legends featuring similar themes and characters, for instance the beginning of the universe.

Carl Jung (1921, 1947) believed that the Collective Unconscious is composed of archetypal personalities that are shared by all humans. These archetypes are universal symbols that represent common human experiences and emotions, as illustrated by the following figure:



Figure:1. Jungian Archetypes

According to Jung, collective unconscious holds many archetypes that everyone can identify. A model image of a role or person is called an archetype. For example, a mother archetype has behavior traits of being kind, compassionate, loving and caring. In almost all cultures, this same image of mother is prevalent and this the reason that even Nature has been compared with mother and therefore it is called 'mother nature.'

Archetypes are also shown and reflected as characters in films, novels and myths – for example, role of Leigh Anne (Big Mike's mother) in the film *Blind Side*, who is portrayed as a strong woman but is gentle by heart. Also, 'M' is depicted as the mother archetype in the James Bond spy series, whom the spy believes in and returns to. Another example of an archetypal personality is the Hero, who symbolizes achievements and capacity to overcome challenges. Another is the Wise Old Man, who represents wisdom and knowledge. These archetypes can be found in all kinds of stories, myths and legends from all lands and cultures around the world. Some other archetypes are as under:

The Innocent= Seeks safety and happiness, and desires to be free from harm and wrong-doing.

The Caregiver = Aims to help and protect others, often putting others' needs before their own.

The Lover = Seeks intimacy and experiences that involve love, relationships, and personal satisfaction.

The Creator = Aims to create something of enduring value and give form to a vision, and values authenticity and imagination.

The Sage = Seeks truth and understanding, and values wisdom and intelligence.

In the same way there are also brand archetypes in the modern era too. A brand archetype indicates a brand in the same way as a writer presents a fictional character in a story. Brand archetypes demonstrate distinct messages, behaviours, values and symbology to show a brand story and persona, which is identifiable, and apparently relatable, to its target audience. Following are the brand archetypes:

The Innocent brands

Everyman brands

Keeping in view this semiotic approach of Carl Jung, this study analyzes all the multiple shapes, forms and uses of the symbol Lotus in Gandhara art and architecture because Lotus has reached the level of archetype due to its immense use and impact on life and cultures spanning thousands of years of world history. Its symbolic value, significance and representation will be examined to meet the objectives of the study.

Analysis and Discussion

In his theory, Jung emphasizes the universal and common human experiences, emotions, and elements, and there is no denying the fact that water constitutes the most fundamental and substantial element and part of human life. Water has a significant impact on the cosmological and existential narratives of ancient cultures, as evidenced by its deep integration into their mythical and symbolic frameworks (Rezania, 2011). The lotus is one of the many symbols found in aquatic surroundings; it is particularly well-known and has a complex symbolic meaning in ancient art, mythology, and architecture. Particularly, the lotus surpasses its function as a simple botanical component to become a potent semiotic symbol that, in many cultures, stands for spiritual purity, rebirth, and divine beauty (Converse, 1879). The plant's unusual life cycle, which involves it emerging from murky water's depths to blossom in the sunshine, is reminiscent of the transforming processes that are valued in long-standing spiritual and artistic traditions.

Lotus grows in mud and water, although it is unaffected by either. In a similar vein, people shouldn't relish executing evil deeds while they are still living. Even though a lotus is a single entity, its hundreds of petals represent thousands of different religious sects, castes, and sub-castes, languages, dialects, etc (Thiri 2008). Buddhism compares the Buddha, who is pure of mental impurities, to a lotus blossom, which is pure of "mud and water." Lotus flowers therefore also represent a pure person who is free from mental impurities.

The lotus flower is a symbol of purity and enlightenment in Buddhism. It represents the essence of the Buddha, who is free from the dirt of ignorance and defilement. The awakening of the Buddhas over time is compared to the lotus blossoming, with each flower signifying the emergence of a new enlightened being. The lotus represents the realization of spiritual perfections during a lifetime and has a strong connection to the Buddha's past and future

incarnations. The following figure illustrates this well. (Śrāvasti miracle: Muhammad Nari stele with seated Buddha and Bodhisattvas on lotus seats)



Figure:2. Buddha and Bodhisattvas on lotus

Lotus has such deep associations with the Bodhisattva, or the future Buddha, in Buddhism that to satisfy the requirements to become a Buddha, the Bodhisattva in the hermit Sumedha's life, along with the future Yasodhaya, sent lotus flowers to the Dipaṅkara Buddha. It is consequently acknowledged that lotus flowers sprouted beneath the feet of the newborn Bodhisattva when he took seven steps. Furthermore, the lotus symbolically blooms in mud shortly before the Buddha preached the Dharmachakra, and the Buddha himself was sitting on a lotus throne when he proclaimed the Dharma. Therefore, the infatuation towards the lotus is fundamental to Buddhism. The following figure is illustrative of this fact.



Figure: 3. (Abhaya mudra Buddha emerging from full-blown lotus flower calyx)

The lotus depicted in the various stages of blooming, revered in Buddhist tradition is a highly charged semiotic symbol of enlightenment and purity, it is integral to Buddhist architectural elements and iconography. It signifies a range of cultural and spiritual meanings through its representational placement. The lotus is a fundamental emblem that signifies transcendence and stability at the base of Gandharan stupas and monastic buildings. The following figures illustrate the use of lotus in stupas.



Figure: 4. Stupa model with lotus decoration on dome



Figure: 5. Voluted Chatiya arch with lotus flower decoration

The lotus, which is the foundation of these constructions, can be seen as a symbol of the Buddha's teachings becoming ingrained in the material world. Similarly, its presence as a lotus seat or pedestal serves as a metonymic symbol that links the transcendent character of Buddha and Bodhisattvas as celestial beings in the material world. It marks the line separating the domains of the pure and the impure, serving as a paradigmatic emblem. The lotus represents spiritual ascension—a manifestation of the sacred amid the profane—after emerging untarnished from the depths of dirt and water. With the use of this symbol, the Buddha and Bodhisattvas are represented as timeless archetypes of purity, transcending the impurities of the earthly plane and existing above and beyond it. As a result, the lotus pedestal serves as a powerful metaphor for the process of individuation, during which the spiritual self rises above the shadow of the material world and affirms the unity of the divine and the human.

Symbol of Transformation and Individuation: As an archetype, the lotus stands for individuation and metamorphosis. Similar to how a lotus starts its life in the mud and then rises through the water to bloom in the air, people go through a process of psychological development and self-realization. This path is similar to the idea of individuation as described by Jung, in which people integrate their unconscious and conscious selves to become whole. The lotus archetype challenges us to face our vulnerabilities, accept our shadow selves, and grow into more whole and genuine human beings.

The lotus, emerging pure from the dirt, came to represent the path taken by humans, which is to strive for enlightenment and purity while avoiding the impurities of the material world. The lotus's many petals symbolized the diversity of human experience, representing various castes, religions, and linguistic groups that are united in their pursuit of spirituality (Converse, 1879).

Integration of Opposites: One of the core ideas of Jung's analytical psychology is the integration of opposites. This concept is aptly embodied by the lotus, which skillfully blends two seemingly incompatible elements: the bright bloom and the deep depths of the water. This duality is a reflection of the psyche's combination of aware and unconscious elements.

Accepting the lotus archetype helps us to become more aware of and accept our inner contradictions, which results in a more cohesive and balanced version of ourselves.

Symbol of Rebirth and Renewal: The themes of rebirth and renewal are also embodied by the lotus archetype. During its life cycle, the lotus represents growth and fresh starts as it emerges from the shadows of the water. In a similar vein, the archetype represents the recurring patterns of life and death, individual development, and the rebirth of the human spirit. Across many cultures, myths, legends, and dreams contain this symbolism, which speaks to humanity's universal experience of transformation and rebirth.

Connection to the Transcendent: The lotus represents a bridge connecting the transcendent and the earthly realms, just as it rises over the water's surface to reach toward the sky. The lotus archetype acts as a link between the material and spiritual worlds in the collective unconscious. This relationship is reminiscent of the Jungian idea of the Self, an archetype that stands for the entirety of the psyche. The lotus archetype encourages people to delve deeper into their spiritual self and seek a closer relationship with both the universe and their inner selves.

Conclusion

As an archetype with deep roots in the collective psyche, the lotus represents the arduous process of spiritual transcendence, individuation, and transformation. Like the road of individuation that Jung articulated, the lotus emerges from the depths of dirt and water without tainting itself, reflecting the process of psychological development and self-realization. In order to become a more unified and balanced Self, this path entails integrating opposites: the conscious and unconscious, the pure and the impure. The lotus represents the universal rhythms of life, death, and spiritual regeneration. It also represents the never-ending cycles of rebirth and rejuvenation. Its climb out of the dark waters to blossom in the light is symbolic of the soul's journey toward development and enlightenment, which is reflected in stories, legends, and dreams from all around the world. The lotus serves as both an aesthetic component and a deep semiotic sign in Gandhāra art and architecture, embodying the spirit of spiritual elevation and the timeless ideal of purity. It draws lines separating the sacred from the profane and provides a potent metaphor for the individuation process. Thus, the lotus-seated Buddha and Bodhisattvas are depicted as ageless symbols of purity that transcend the limitations of the physical world and uphold the oneness of the divine and the human. The lotus symbolizes the ultimate path of the soul toward wholeness and enlightenment. The teachings of the Buddha are grounded in the material world but strive toward the transcendental.

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