# Comparing Sculptures of Ancient India and Greece

## Introduction

The ancient India and ancient Greece thrived in the rich custom of sculpting. Sculptures which were created in the two regions portrayed the influence of philosophical and religious interpretations that dominated in the ancient period. Therefore, sculptures were mainly used to express the ideologies and values of both the Greek and Indian societies. Even though similarities tend to unfold between the sculptures of ancient India and ancient Greece, various differences are also displayed in the artistic creations of the two regions. This paper, therefore, sheds light on the differences and similarities of sculptures within the ancient Indian and ancient Greek culture and how they accord to the religious and cultural background of both Indians and Greeks. Also, the paper presents modern instances of artistic expression which do or do not concur with the cultural values of both communities.

## Ways in which Gods and People were depicted in Sculptures

Greeks and Indians loved expressing gods and myths on sculptures. Even though they had different beliefs, they showed similarity in depicting similar topics such as myths, gods and goddesses, and people in their everyday day life. The sculptures of the two cultures portrayed gods as powerful and strong. For instance, the Indian artisan used hard and strong stones particularly granite to make their gods. The hard materials represented the strength and divinity of the gods. Similarly, in the Greek culture, the gods deserved the most exquisite appearance, and thus bronze was the main material that was used to them (Pomeroy et al. 2013).

Additionally, both the Indians and Greeks made their gods in the image of humans. For instance, the Greeks believed that their gods had many human qualities, and the Greek god of war, Ares, who represents the physical aspect of war looks like a fearless person. Similarly, the Indian gods were given characteristics that resemble those of humans. For example, the Indian gods were given human physical features such as hands, legs, and eyes. However, the Indian sculptures were different from those of Greeks as the gods were given more features from those of humans. For example, some the Indian gods were given numerous eyes, hands, and legs which symbolized that the gods were more superior to the humans (John, 2014). The gods in Greek sculptures, on the other hand, were not given excessive features from those of humans depicting that gods were exactly as humans.

Moreover, both the Indian and Greek sculptors displayed various aspects that surrounded people. Most of the artists were inspired by the male and human bodies. For instance, the naked bodies of Greek sculptures signify the strong connection between the human body, spirit, and immortality. Thus, a sporty and perfect body was significant for the Greeks, and a young athlete’s body was glorified. For example, the Victorious Youth statue displays how the artists used the principle of sporty bodies in their work. Similarly, in India, sculptures depicted topless women which according to the Indian culture symbolizes fertility (Indian Heritage Research Foundation, 2013). The sculptors aimed to depict human bodies in the most realistic manner.

Differences, however, exists in the manner in which people were depicted by the Greek and Indian sculptors. One of the differences is that the Greek sculptures focus on the perfection of man’s bodies while those of Indians focus on the connections between nature and humans. For example, some Indian sculptures showed people dancing.

## Cultural Values and Ideals Reflected in Sculpture Work

Arts reflect societies that make them. Through the sculptures, the Indians and Greeks incorporated fundamental principles of their culture. The ancient Greeks, for instance, emphasized the importance and accomplishment of human beings. Even though the majority of the Greek work focused on honoring the gods, the gods, however, were made with the image of likes. Thus seeing their gods as having human form, it can be said that the Greeks valued both sacred and secular lifestyles. The gods signify that the Greeks engaged in religious practices. Also, the ancient Greek sculptures reveal that the Greek culture is infused with the belief of equality between humans and gods. Gods and goddesses and humans were viewed as parties, and it is this reason that the Greek gods in the realm of sculptures were portrayed as human figures that did not have prominent features which could establish a sense of superiority over the humans. Besides, because some sculpture work represented athlete bodies and people engaging in sports, it can be said that the Greeks valued an athletic life. In particular, the sculptures stressed an understanding of the importance of sport to the Greeks. Similarly, the Indian sculpture work was used to make gods and goddesses that were placed in sacred places such as temples. The case symbolizes that the Indians practiced and valued religious beliefs. Additionally, since most of the Indian sculptors focused on the female body, this signifies respect for women transcends through the Indian culture.

## Modern Situation of Artistic Expression

The modern situation of artistic expression and cultural values that are of significance to be discussed is the art of ancient Africa. Similar to those of India and Greece, African art depicts social issues and life in general at various times. Moreover, different regions have unique paintings, figurines, and masks that differ regarding the political, economic, and religious contexts of the area. Furthermore, the ancient African art also depicts traditions and celebrations expressed through ceremonies and dances. The cultures also use rites of passage which have been passed down for decades by their ancestors. Nevertheless, there is more exclusivity in African art in that the African culture is depicted differently using the same forms of art. This is a case which the ancient Greece and Indian failed to adopt. In the modern society, African art still remains influential as it is portrayed in modern music, clothing, and dance.

## Conclusion

Although they based on different cultures and regions, the ancient India and Greece sculptures primarily based on similar beliefs. The beliefs centered on religion, the human body, and heroic expressions. The sculptures also differ in various ways. For instance, the Indian focused on worshiping religious symbols more than human forms. The Greeks, on the other hand, worshiped the realism of the human body. Also, the Indian sculptors focused more on female bodies while the Greeks focused on male athletic bodies. Noteworthy, in any culture, religion, beliefs, ideals, and teachings are always reflected in the culture’s art when culture is being expressed.

## References

Indian Heritage Research Foundation. (2013). Encyclopedia of Hinduism. California: Mandala Publishing.

John, G. (2014). Lost Kingdoms: Hindu-Buddhist Sculpture of Early Southeast Asia. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Pomeroy, S., Burstein, S., Donlan, W., Robberts, J. & Tandy, D. (2013). A Brief History of Ancient Greece. United States: Oxford University Press.