

General Knowledge Today



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Indian Culture-5: Indian Architecture- Ancient and Early Medieval

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Model Questions

Prelims MCQs

Please check Prelims Model Questions at the end of this module.

Mains Model Questions

1. Discuss the salient features of the town planning in Indus Valley Civilization.
2. To what extent has the urban planning and culture of the Indus Valley Civilization provided inputs to the present day urbanization?
3. "The topography of the Western Ghats along with the political patronage suited to the development of Buddhist Caves in many of the hills, ravines and cliffs of the Sahayadris." Discuss giving salient examples.
4. "The sculpture at Ajanta Caves despite being among the finest ever created in India, has often not given the attention it deserves." Evaluate.
5. In what way, the sculptures at Sanchi Stupa were different from Bharhut?
6. Sanchi stupa represents a testimony to the Maurya, Sunga as well as Saatavahana art in India. Examine.
7. Differentiate between the Sandhara, Nirandhara and Sarvatobhadra Temples.
8. Discuss the Basic Structure of a Hindu Temple outlining the key differences between Nagara, Dravida, Vesra, Gadag and Kalinga style of temple architecture.
9. Discuss the salient Features of Gupta Architecture.
10. Discuss the salient Features of the Temple Architecture of Badami Chalukyas and Western Chalukyas
11. Mention the distinctive features of Dravida style and discuss how it developed under the Pallavas and Cholas describing the architecture of one temple of each dynasty.
12. Mention the distinctive features of Vesara style and discuss how it developed under the Chalukyas and the Hoysals describing the architecture of one temple of each dynasty.
13. Discuss critically the development of rock-cut architecture under the Pallavas.
14. Discuss the salient features of the Chola Architecture.
15. Discuss the salient features of the Kalinga School of Architecture. How it is different from the Nagara style?
16. What could be the possible reasons of sculpting the erotic images at Khajauraho?



Architecture of Indus Valley

There was a sophisticated concept of town planning in the Indus Valley Civilization. From the excavated remains, it is clear that it possessed a flourishing urban architecture. There were well-planned grids with broad main roads and smaller lanes intersecting at right angles. There were large networks of hundreds of wells, which supplied water to the residents. A sophisticated drainage system was in existence and even the smallest houses were connected to it. Houses were made of bricks. The standardised dimensions of these bricks, found in the many cities across this civilization, are remarkable. The houses had several storeys.

Salient Features of Indus Valley Town Planning

Grid Pattern

Harappa and Mohen-Jo Dero were laid out on a grid pattern and had provisions for an advanced drainage system. Streets were oriented east to west. Each street was having a well organized drainage system.

City Walls

Each city in the Indus Valley was surrounded by massive walls and gateways. The walls were built to control trade and also to stop the city from being flooded.

Each part of the city was made up of walled sections. Each section included different buildings such as: Public buildings, houses, markets, craft workshops, etc.

The acropolis and the lower cities

A typical city would be divided into two sections, each fortified separately.

- One section was located on an artificially raised mound (sometimes called *acropolis*) while the other level was on level ground.
- The acropolis contained the important buildings of the city, like the assembly halls, religious structures, granaries and in the great bath in case of Mohenjo-Daro.
- The lower section of the city was where the housing for the inhabitants was located. It was here where some truly amazing features have been discovered. The city was well connected with broad roads about 30 meters long which met at right angles. The houses were located in the rectangular squares thus formed.

The Residential Buildings

The residential buildings, which were serviceable enough, were **mainly made up of brick** and consisted of an open terrace flanked by rooms. These houses were made of standardized baked bricks (which had a ratio of length to width to thickness at 4:2:1) as well as sun dried bricks. Some houses even had multiple stories and paved floors.



Indus Valley Architecture



Granary



The Great Bath

In-house wells

Almost every house had its own wells, drains and bathrooms. The in-house well is a common and recognizable feature of the Indus Valley Civilization.

Drainage System

Each house was connected directly to an excellent drainage system, which indicates a highly developed municipal life.

Granaries

The largest building found at Mohenjo-Daro is a granary, running 150 feet long, 75 feet wide and 15 feet high.

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The granary was divided into 27 compartments in three rows.

It was well ventilated and it was possible to fill grain in from outside. The large size of the granary probably indicates a highly developed agricultural civilization.

Great Bath

The Great bath at Mohenjo-Daro is about 179 feet long and 107 feet wide.

The complex has a large quadrangle in the center with galleries and rooms on all sides. In the center of this quadrangle there is a large swimming enclosure that is 39 feet long, 23 feet wide and 8 feet deep.

The entire complex is connected to an elaborate water supply and sewer system. The Great Bath was probably used for religious or ritualistic purposes.

No Temples

There are no traces of temple architecture or other religious places, yet the people practiced religion. The great bath has been linked to some religious practice.

No weaponry / warfare monuments

Excavations across this culture have not revealed evidence of military forces or weaponry for warfare. While the art of other civilisations has many images of prisoners, monuments to war victories and of other activities related to warfare, the art of the Indus Valley has not a single such depiction. The archaeological evidence points to the fact that the early river valley civilisation in



India was remarkable in being a cooperative culture without the rule of kings. The emphasis appears to have been on peaceful trade and not on the development of military might.

Town Planning at Lothal

A different kind of town planning we found at Lothal, in present-day Gujarat, on the western coast of India. This city was divided into six sections and each section had a wide platform of earthen bricks. Lothal is different from other sites of Indus Valley Civilization in terms of town planning that it has entry to the houses on the main street while in other sites have shown lateral entry.

Lothal Dockyard

Lothal has a large structure that has been identified as a tidal dock for sea-faring ships. There is a great deal of evidence that Indus Valley cities traded extensively with other civilisations of that period. Mesopotamian records mention trade with cities here, and objects from the Indus region have been found in West Asian cities. Lothal's dock—the world's earliest known, connected the city to an ancient course of the Sabarmati river on the trade route between Harappan cities in Sindh and the peninsula of Saurashtra when the surrounding Kutch desert of today was a part of the Arabian Sea. It was a vital and thriving trade centre in ancient times, with its trade of beads, gems and valuable ornaments reaching the far corners of West Asia and Africa.

Lessons of Urban planning from Indus Valley Civilization

The Indus Valley Civilization displayed remarkable planning in its urban towns, especially in the area of sanitation and drainage. To a great extent, it can provide inputs to the present day urbanization. One of the major challenges of urban planning, in India, has been dealing with the haphazard construction of buildings. In the IVC, the streets were built on grid-like patterns, which allowed for methodical and planned growth. In modern times, Le Corbusier's plans for Chandigarh provided for a rectangular shape with grid iron pattern, which enabled fast movement of traffic and reduced the area. In the IVC, the town was also demarcated clearly between residential areas and common/public areas. The granaries of IVC are also an example of intelligent design, with their strategically placed air ducts and the platforms being divided into units. The houses in the IVC were constructed in such a manner that it didn't disturb the layout of the roads in any way. The houses had doors that opened out into the lanes instead of the roads. The warehouse in Lothal is an exemplary instance of designing with precision. The drains in the IVC connected each and every house, and enabled them to dump their waste directly. These drains were covered, and they directly connected to the larger sewerage outlets. There were inspection holes on the drains for maintenance purposes and there were manholes on the streets. Thus, urban planning of the IVC has extensively helped us learn from it.



Ancient Rock-cut Architecture

India has more than 1,500 rock cut structures most of which are religious. They belong to the ancient and medieval era, and are considered to be the amazing achievements of structural engineering and craftsmanship of Indian sculptors, monks and general public.

Maurya Rock-cut Architecture: Barabar Caves

Between second century BC and first millennium AD, Rock-cut architecture had become the key feature of Indian architecture. The roots of this architecture are found in Maurya era. The Mauryan caves were made for *Ajivika, Buddhists, Jains as well as the Hindu religions.*

The first example of rock-cut architecture seems to be a small cave called **Son Bhandar** at Rajgir. This is considered to be the site of first Buddhist council and therefore may be from Pre-Mauryan times. This cave has an oblong chamber with a crudely vaulted roof and square undecorated doorway.

Barabar Caves

The oldest examples of Mauryan rock-cut architecture in India are the Barabar caves, located in the Barabar hills, in Jehanabad District of Bihar. There are four caves in Barabar dating back to reign of Asoka (273-232 BC) and his grandson Dasaratha, initially for the Ajeevika sect.



Four Caves at Barabar are as follows:

Lomas Rishi cave

This is the most popular Barabar cave. The decorative arch above the entrance (facade) of Lomas Rishi Cave was made in imitation of the wooden architecture of the time. This became a constant feature in the later Chaityas and is known as the Chaitya Arch. It also continued as a decorative motif in later temples.

Sudama cave

This cave known for the bow shaped arches and has Asokan inscriptions.

Karan Chaupar



It has a single rectangular room with polished surfaces, contains inscription dating back to Maurya era.

Visva Zopri

There are two rectangular caves over there.

Another group of caves is in the nearby **Nagarjuni hills**, and these bear inscriptions of king Dasaratha, the grandson of Asoka. Like the Barabar caves these appear to have been dedicated to the Ajivika sect.

Various forms of Barabar Caves

The Barabar caves have several forms. While the Lomas Rishi Cave has an oblong vaulted room, others contain circular domed shrines, with elements of timber structure represented in stone. The interiors of several of the caves bear the high polish generally called the 'Mauryan polish'.

Importance of Barabar Caves

No other rock-cut caves in any part of India can claim equal antiquity, and those of the succeeding centuries witness to the steady growth of technical skill and design on the part of their craftsmen. For this reason it can be concluded that Barabar caves represent the beginnings of the tradition of rock-cut architecture in India.

Satavahana / Vakataka Rock-cut Architecture: Ajanta Caves

Ajanta is located about a hundred kilometers from Aurangabad, in the horse shoe shaped gorge of the Waghora River in the Sahyadari. The Ajanta caves are divided into 2 groups, which we can call Saatavahana phase and Vakataka Phase for our convenience.

Saatavahana Phase

The first group of caves which were great shrines and monasteries was carved out in the second century BC, under the patronage of Saatavahana Kings. This phase is often called the Hinayāna phase, as Buddha was revered symbolically. Thus, the first Satavahana period caves lacked figurative sculpture, emphasizing the stupa instead.

Vakataka Phase

The second group of caves was created in 5th and 6th century AD during Gupta and Post Gupta periods under the rule of the Vaktaka Kings, with a renewed activity that was richer and more ample. It is called Mahayana Phase because Buddha has been depicted as a human. The caves of the second period the overwhelming majority of images represent the Buddha alone, or narrative scenes of his lives. The Buddha was represented in Human and these representations are found both on the facades and in the interior. Finally, the wall painting, profuse and sensitive, constitutes, no doubt, the most striking artistic achievement of Ajanta.

Notable paintings and Sculptures at Ajanta

The paintings of Ajanta are known to be the fountainhead of all the classic paintings of Asia. Ajanta's



paintings occupy the pre-eminent position in the mural traditions of Asia. However, its sculpture, among the finest ever created in India, is often not given the attention it deserves.

Cave 1: This is most famous cave. Seated Buddha in Dharmachakrapravartana mudra is notable sculpture while the notable paintings include Padmapani and Vajrapani.

Cave 2: Sculpture of Yaksha figures (Sankhanidhi and Padmanidhi) to the left and Hariti and her consort Pancika to the right

Cave 16: Largest and certainly the finest and most interesting monastery (Vihara) of Ajanta from the perspective of art and architecture. Its colossal hall, ornate doors and windows, beautifully painted galleries, sculptures, ornamented pillars, cistern was the gift of Varahadeva a minister of Vakataka King Harisena (475-500 A.D.) A central hall is surrounded by 14 cells on three sides, and sanctum housing Buddha image is shown seated in *pralambapadasana*. The sanctum of this cave is devoid of doorway and antarala. Originally the entire cave was beautifully painted but now very little of the painting now remain. Several interesting scenes from the life of Buddha.

Cave 19: Chaitya. It is in excellent state of preservation and is considered as one of the most perfect specimens of the Buddhist art in India, datable to 5th century A.D. Total 17 pillars and at the centre of the Chaitya stands a globular stupa. This cave has only one entrance door. A sculptural form of Buddha offering begging bowl to his son Rahula and sculpture representing a Nagaraja and his wife, and the opposite site of this image, a porch which probably was place of rest for pilgrims.

Cave 26: Mahaparinirvana of Buddha on the right aisle wall and the assault of Mara during Buddha's penance adorns the same wall.

One of the most prominent and outstanding figures are of humanized serpents, a Nagaraja and Nagini with an attendant figure as finest sculptures in human forms. The Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha, when he finally achieves release from the mortal world, is a profoundly moving scene.

Ellora Caves

Ellora caves located near Aurangabad in Maharashtra were initially built by the Rashtrakutas. The caves belonging to the 6th to 10th century AD represent the epitome of the Indian Rock Cut architecture and are one of the World Heritage sites. The **Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jaina** caves of Ellora were made on the *trade route from nearby Paithan to Ujjain* in central India. There are 34 caves carved out of the Charanandri hills. Out of them, 12 are Buddhist Caves, 17 Hindu Caves and 5 Jaina Caves. Oldest caves are Hindu Caves.

The caves of the three faiths were made in overlapping periods, and as everywhere in ancient India, this demonstrates the generous attitude of rulers towards the worship of all divinities.

The Carpenter's Cave / Vishvakarma Cave at Ellora

All except one of the Buddhist Caves at Ellora are Viharas. The sculptures include those of the



Gautama Buddha, bodhisattvas and saints. In many of these caves, sculptors have endeavoured to give the stone the look of wood. The Cave number 10 also known as *Vishwakarma Cave* is the only chaitya.

Cave 10 or the **Vishvakarma cave** or **Carpenter's Cave** is the most famous Buddhist Cave at Ellora. This cave has a pillared *verandah* whose columns have massive squarish shafts and *ghata-pallava* (vase and foliage) capitals. The main hall is apsidal on plan and is divided into a central nave and side aisles by 28 octagonal columns with plain bracket capitals. In the apsidal end of the chaitya hall is a stupa on the face of which a colossal 3.30 m high seated Buddha in *vyakhyana mudra* (teaching posture) is carved. The ceilings of this Chaitya hall has been sculpted in such a way that it appears having wooden ribs.

Kailasnath Temple, Ellora

The grand climax of rock-cut architecture in India was the making of Kailashnath Temple at Ellora. It is a vast multi-storey structure, carved inside and outside, made out of the heart of a rock. This temple is a remarkable example of the *Dravidian architecture with Pallava influence*. It was designed to recall Mount Kailas and was carved out of one single rock. It was built in the 8th century by the Rashtrakuta king Krishna I.

Vertical Excavation

The Kailashnath Temple has been carved via the vertical excavation in which the carvers started at the top of the original rock, and excavated downward. The temple has been adorned with pillars, windows, inner and outer rooms, gathering halls, and an enormous stone lingam at its heart. The sculptures include the niches, plasters, windows as well as images of deities, mithunas and other figures. The deities belong to both the Shaivite as well as Vaishnav faith. The grand sculpture of Ravana attempting to lift Mount Kailasa, the abode of Lord Shiva, with his full might is a landmark in Indian art.



Ravana Shaking Mt. Kailasa
Kailashnath Temple, Ellora



Ribbed Ceilings
Vishwakarma Cave, Ellora



Kailashnath Temple, Ellora



Indra Sabha (Jaina)

The five Jain caves at Ellora belong to the Digambara sect. These caves show dimensions of Jain philosophy and tradition and reflect a strict sense of asceticism. They are known for detailed work in sculpture. The notable Jaina caves are *Chhota Kailash*, *Indra Sabha* and *Jagannath Sabha*. Out of them, the Indra Sabha is a two storeyed cave with one more monolithic shrine in its court. It has a very fine carving of the lotus flower on the ceiling. Its name is a misnomer and derives from the sculpture of a Yaksha Matanga on the elephant, which was mistaken for Indra. It possesses an imposing image of Ambika, the yakshini of Neminath, seated on her lion under a mango tree, laden with fruits.

Kanheri Caves

The topography of the Western Ghats along with the political patronage suited to the development of Buddhist Caves in many of the hills, ravines and cliffs of the Sahayadris. The earliest example of excellent rock cut architecture in Western Ghats are Kanheri (Krishnagiri originally) Caves (109 in number) which are located north of Borivali in Mumbai within the Sanjay Gandhi National Park.

The earliest caves were excavated in the 1st and 2nd century BC. These caves were continuously occupied by the Buddhist monks as well as inland traders as stopovers till 7th century AD. With the increase in the royal patronage and mercantile sponsorships, the interiors of these caves were made more and more decorated.

At Kanheri, we find both the Chaityas and Viharas. While creating them, the elements of wooden construction have been retained.



Entrance at a Kanheri Cave



The 22ft Colossal Buddha
Kanheri Caves



Significances of Kanheri Caves in Indian Architecture

Amidst the natural surroundings, which have been well preserved by the national park administration, this site provides a view of developments in Buddhist art for a thousand years, from the 1st century A.D. onwards. Its proximity to the sea and thriving ports would have ensured its continual patronage by the mercantile class.

Expressions of rock-cut art in Western India

The caves at Kanheri present the last expressions of the early rock-cut tradition of western India. Simultaneously, this site heralds developments in iconography of the Buddhist art of the later period.

Beginning of the traditions of Colossal Buddha Figures

The Kanheri Caves are home to a colossal Buddha statue (22 ft in height) which was created in 5th or 6th century. This image *marks the beginning of a long tradition of colossal Buddhas*, which became a popular representation across the Tibetan plateau and Central Asia, in later times.

Influence

In the Mithuna couples of Kanheri, we find the influence of the Kushana and later, these caves were influenced by Gupta art also. At the same time, Kanheri influenced Elephanta Caves, being earlier than the later.

Bhaja and Karla Caves

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The Pallavas bridged the transition from rock-cut architecture to structural stone temples. Mahendra Varman I gloried in the construction of temple without the use of bricks, timber, metal or mortar. He built a number of rock-cut mandapas. They were simple pillared halls. The main feature of the front facade is a row of pillars each 7 feet high, the shaft being square in section with a 2 foot side above and below and the corners chamfered in the middle third to give an octagonal section. A heavy bracket provides the capital. In the earliest examples at Mandagappatu and Trichinopoly, there is no cornice above the pillars, but later roll moulding was added as at Pallavaram.

Mahendra I also built a rock-cut temple of Anantasayana at Undavalli (Guntur district) and the series at Bhairavakonda (North Arcot District) towards the end of his reign. In these temples at Undavalli, Mahendra attempted to copy a Buddhist vihara. It consists of four storeys of pillared mandapas set one above the other and rising to a height of 50 feet. His successor Narsimha Varman I (Mahamalla) built the rock-cut mandapas at Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram).

Narsimha Varman also built monolithic *rathas* popularly called the seven pagodas.

Group of monuments at Mahabalipuram

Mahabalipuram is known for its world heritage site complex of **Group of monuments** of the **Pallava Period**. Most of the monuments at Mahabalipuram are rock cut and monolithic. They denote the early Dravidian architecture and have inculcated in themselves the Buddhist elements of architecture.



The monuments at Mahabalipuram include the following:

Thirukadalmallai

This is first and foremost of Mahabalipuram sculptures. It is one of the 108 Divya desam. This temple, dedicated to Lord Vishnu, was built by Pallavas to safeguard the sculptures from the ocean. It is told that after building this temple, the remaining architecture was preserved and was not corroded by sea. It's not a rock cut temple but was built as free standing temple.

Descent of the Ganges or Bhagiratha's Penance

This is a giant open-air bas relief. It depicts Bhagiratha bringing down the Ganges to earth. It is world's largest open air bas relief.

Varaha Cave Temple

Varaha Cave Temple or the Adivaraha Cave Temple is a rock-cut cave temple located at Mahabalipuram. This rock cut temple dates back to 7th century and is considered to be one of the finest testimonial to the ancient Vishwakarma Sthapathis. The most prominent sculpture in the cave is that of Lord Vishnu in the incarnated form of a Varaha or boar lifting Bhudevi, the mother earth goddess from the sea.

Shore Temple

Shore Temple is granite made temple at Mahabalipuram built during the reign of Narsimhavarman. This group of temples is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is oldest structural temple (in contrast with rock cut temples) in India. Its a beautiful 5 storied temple, which is a combined complex of 3 shrines; 2 dedicated to Shiva and one to Vishnu.

Importance of Shore Temple

The Shore Temple marks the culmination of the architectural efforts that began with the *cave temples and monolithic rathas*. **Pancha Rathas** (Five Chariots) – five monolithic pyramidal structures named after the Pandavas (*Arjuna, Bhima, Yudhishtira, Nakula and Sahadeva*) and Draupadi. An interesting aspect of the rathas is that, despite their sizes they are not assembled – each of these is carved from one single large piece of stone. The close examination of the rathas at Mahabalipuram reveals that



there used to be a school for young sculptors. For example, each of the different Rathas has been carved in a different style.

Buddhist Architecture

The three key elements of Buddhist architecture are Stupas, Viharas and Chaityas.

Stupas

A stupa refers to a mound-like structure that contains some relic of Buddha or Buddhist monks. The origin of Stupas is considered to be from the Shramana tradition in which the Shramana monks were buried in seated position. When Buddha died, his remains were cremated and the ashes were divided and buried in eight mounds.

The foundation of Buddhist stupas was mainly laid by Asoka. He is said to have built over 84,000 stupas, most of which are not extant today. The earliest and largest stupa found in Sanchi is ascribed to Asoka.

The best examples of Buddhist stupas are found at Amaravati, Sanchi, Barhut and Gaya.

Three Types of Stupas

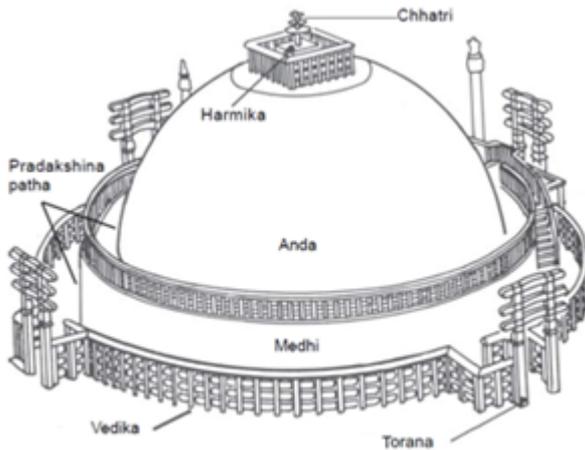
The Saririka Stupa, Paribhogika stupa and Uddeshika stupa were three Major types of Buddhist stupas. Out of them, the Saririka Stupa contained the buried bodily remains of the Buddha, while Paribhogika stupa contained buried belongings of Buddha. The Uddeshika Stupa were created as memorials.

The Bharhut Stupa

Around 100 B.C., a great *stupa* was made at Bharhut, in the eastern part of present-day Madhya Pradesh (in Satna District). Bharhut stupa was initially built by Asoka and was later improvised by the Sungas. The railings of the *stupa* and its one surviving gate are at the Indian Museum in Kolkata. This is the *earliest stupa railing to have survived*. Unlike the imperial art of the Mauryas, the inscriptions on railings of Bharhut stupa show that the reliefs and figures were donated by lay people, monks and nuns. Thus, it is one of the earliest examples of Maurya popular art. The railings contain numerous birth stories of the Buddha's previous lives, or Jataka tales. The Bharhut stupa represents the aniconic phase of Buddhist art. Buddha has been represented in the form of symbols.

Sanchi Stupa

Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh is a site of three stupas out of which the first and the oldest Great Stupa was originally commissioned by Asoka. The 'Great Stupa' at Sanchi is the **oldest stone structure of India** and was originally commissioned by the Ashoka in the 3rd century BC, vandalized by Pushyamitra Sunga and rebuilt by his son Agnimitra and again improvised by Saatavahana kings. Thus, this stupa represents a testimony to the Maurya, Sunga as well as Saatavahana art in India.



Structure outline of great stupa of Sanchi

Its nucleus was a hemispherical brick structure built over the relics of the Buddha. It has upper as well as lower *pradakshinapatha* or circumambulatory path. It has four beautifully decorated toranas depicting various events from the life of the Buddha and the Jatakas. Figure compositions are in high relief, filling up the entire space, thus showing remarkable improvement from the Bharhut.

The narration in the inscriptions which was concise in the Bharhut has got elaborated at Sanchi. However, the Symbols continue to be used representing the Buddha. The historical narratives such as the siege of Kushinagara, Buddha's visit to Kapilavastu, visit of Ashoka to the Ramgrama Stupa are carved with great details.

Dhamekha Stupa

The Dhamekha stupa is located at Sarnath, 13 km away from Varanasi. It marks the deer park or *Rishipattana* where Buddha gave his first sermon. As per an inscription dated 1026 AD, recovered from the site, its older name is Dharmachakra Stupa. Archeologist, Alexander Cunningham in search of a relic casket bored a vertical shaft through its center down to the foundation and at a depth of around 91 centimeter he found a slab with an inscription.....*Ye Dharma Hetu Prabhava Hetu*.....written in Brahmi script. This inscription is of 6th or 7th century. Below this, one more stupa made of Mauryan bricks has been found which gives an indication that Asoka might have commissioned it.

Chaityas and Viharas

Both early Chaityas and Viharas were made by woods and later stone cut Chaityas and Viharas were made. A Chaitya was a rectangular prayer hall with a stupa placed in the centre, the purpose was prayer. The Chaitya was divided into three parts, and had an apsidal ending i.e. a semicircular rear end, the central part of the hall (also called the nave) was separated from the two aisles by two rows of pillars, Chaityas also had polished interior walls, semicircular roofs and horse-shoe shaped

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windows called the Chaitya windows. Viharas were the residences of the monks.

Temple Architecture

The Sandhara, Nirandhara and Sarvatobhadra Temples

With the construction of the Stupas, the construction of the Hindu temples also started as free standing structures. The subject matter of the deities in the Hindu temples were the mythical stories narrated in the Puranas. There were three kinds of the temples on the basis of access and the circumambulatory path built in it.

- **Sandhara:** These types of the temples have a square sanctum enclosed by a gallery of pillars meant for Pradakshina. Thus, the Sandhara temples have a Pradakshinapatha.
- **Nirandhara:** This type of temples do NOT have Pradakshinapathas
- **Sarvatobhadra:** These types of the temples have four functional doors on cardinal direction and also a Pradakshinapatha with a row of 12 pillars around the santum sanctorum. These types of temples could be accessed from all sides.

The earliest temples of India include the Dasavatar temple at Deogarh, in Uttar Pradesh, Nachna-Kuthara and Udaygiri near Vidisha in Madhya Pradesh. All of these temples are simple structures consisting of a veranda, a hall and a shrine at the rear.

Basic Structure of a Hindu Temple

A simple Hindu temple comprises the following the following parts essentially:

- **Garbhagriha:** It is a cave-like sanctum. In the earliest temples, it was a small cubicle with a single entrance and grew into a larger chamber in time. The garbhagriha is made to establish the main diety. The establishment of the deity itself is a great ritual practice called Prana Pratishtha.
- **Mandapa:** Mandapa is the entrance of the temple which may be a portico or colonnaded hall that incorporates space for a large number of worshippers.
- **Shikhara / Vimana:** From the fifth century AD, the free standing temples started getting a tower which is called Shikhar in north India and Vimana in southern India.
- **Vahana:** This refers to the mount or vehicle of the temple's main deity along with a standard pillar or dhvaj is placed axially before the sanctum.

Different Temple Architecture Styles

A simple Hindu temple comprises the following the following parts essentially:

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Mandapa

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Shikhara / Vimana

From the fifth century AD, the free standing temples started getting a tower which is called Shikhar in north India and Vimana in southern India. Vimana refers to the mount or vehicle of the temple's main deity along with a standard pillar or dhvaj is placed axially before the sanctum.

Different Temple Architecture Styles

The temples can be distinguished with the Shikhara or Vimana. On this basis, there are two types of temple viz. Nagara which is North Indian and Dravida, which is South India.

- The northern-style (Nagara), Shikhara is shaped like a beehive and is made up of layer upon layer of architectural elements called kapotas and gavakshas. The temple also has a very unusual, open ambulatory around the sanctum, with pillars and no wall on the outside.
- In Dravida style, tower consists of progressively smaller storeys of pavilions.
- The Vesara style has characters of both Nagara and Dravida.
- The Gadag style is a feature of the Western Chalukya temples and it is characterized by ornate columns.
- The Kalinga architecture is has Rekha Deula, Pidha Deula and Khakhara Deula types of temples. Out of them the Khakhara Deula is essentially of a female deity such as Durga or Chamunda. Konark Sun temple is a Pidha Deula.

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Architecture of Gupta Period

Gupta Period is called Golden or Classical age of India partially due to the unprecedented activities and development in the arts, architecture, sculpture, painting and literature. The rock cut architecture reached at its zenith in Gupta era and a new beginning of free standing temple architecture began.

Key examples

The key examples of Gupta architecture among temples are Dasavatara temple of Deogarh, Bhitargaon temple, Vishnu Temple of Tigawa Jabalpur, Shiva Temple of Bhumara, Parvati Temple of Nachria Kathura, Mukund Darra Temple of Kota, Lakshaman Temple of Raipur, Shiva Temple of Koh and Bhitari Temple at Ghazipur. Among stupas, the Dhamekh stupa is the most prominent masterpiece of Gupta architecture.

Gupta Temple Architecture

Most prominent architectural marvels of Gupta period are temples. Most of the temples built in the Gupta era were carved with representation of Gods (mainly avatara of Vishnu and Lingams) and Goddesses. The Shikhara was **not** much prominent in the early Gupta temples but was prominent in



later Gupta era. There was a single entrance or mandapa or Porch.

Gupta style temple was modelled on the architectural norms of the Mathura school. Sanchi temple at Tigwa has a flat roof. Dasavatar Temple at Deogarh , Bhitargaon temple and Mahadev Temple at Nachna Kuthar have a square tower of Shikhara. Manyar Math at Rajgriha is a circular temple of Gupta Era. Main style of temple architecture in Gupta period is Nagara style.

Dasavatara temple, Deogarh Uttar Pradesh

The most important temple of Gupta era is Dasavatar Temple of Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh. The temple was discovered by **Captain Charles Strahan** and was named so by Alexander Cunningham.

Comment on architecture of Dasavatara Temple

A transition to a new style had begun towards the end of the Gupta period in around 500 A.D. and it can be seen in the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh, which is first North Indian temple with a shikhara, though its shikhara is curtailed and part of it has disappeared. It is said that originally, its shikhara was of about 40 feet. Its stones were secured together by dowels and its four porches afforded relatively more space for the worshippers to congregate. The shikhara in this temple is in three tiers rising on the top of square cells, and embellished with an elegantly carved doorway on one side and three big panels placed outside the three walls. The sanctum of this temple stood on a raised plinth occupying the central square of the open terrace. suraj winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies The doorway leading to the sanctum was the chief centre of the attraction, serving as an elegant outer frame to set off the image installed in the cells.

The temple depicts the ten avatars of Vishnu. This temple has also been linked to the "Sarvatobhadra temple" mentioned in the Vishnudharmottara Purana by several scholars.



Dasavatara Temple, Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh

Bhitargaon Temple

Bhitargaon Temple is located in Kanpur District of Uttar Pradesh. It is the oldest remaining Hindu temple, and was built in the Gupta Era in 6th century. The special feature of this temple is that it is made entirely in bricks. It is conceived from top to bottom in terms of terracotta and bricks. It is beautified with several courses of well-preserved friezes and moulded bricks with designs exceedingly varied and beautiful. The temple has a pyramidal roof and its walls were decorated on the outside with terracotta panels, depicting scenes from Hindu mythology. Architecturally, the temple is important as it possesses the earliest true arch in India.



Bhitargaon Temple

Dhamekha Stupa

The Dhamekha stupa is located at Sarnath, 13 km away from Varanasi. It marks the deer park or Rishipattana where Buddha gave his first sermon. It was constructed by Asoka. It is cylindrical in shape and about 34 m high and 28.3 m in diameter. The lower portion of the Stupa is covered completely with beautifully carved stones. The borders of Dhamekh Stupa have delicately carved geometrical and floral designs and figures of humans and birds. The base of the Stupa is made of stone with the upper areas of brickwork which probably once had a carved stone fencing. It is believed that Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon at the Dhamekh Stupa. Dhamekh Stupa bears special significance at Sarnath as it signifies the “seat of the holy Buddha”, as he proclaimed his faith.

Temple Architecture of Chalukyas of Badami

The Badami Chalukya era (7th and 8th century) was an important period in the development of South Indian architecture. Their style of architecture is called “Chalukyan architecture” or “Karnata Dravida architecture”. Nearly a hundred monuments built by them, rock cut (cave) as well as structural, and are found in the Malaprabha river basin in modern Bagalkot district of northern Karnataka. The building material they used was reddish-golden Sandstone found locally. Though they ruled a vast empire, the Chalukyan workshops concentrated most of their temple building activity in a relatively small area within the Chalukyan heartland – Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal and Mahakuta in modern Karnataka state.

Salient Features

These temples are a **mixture of Northern and Dravida style of temple** architecture and represent a transition as well as experimentation in the temple architecture. The temples are located on the banks of River Tungabhadra and Malprabaha in Karnataka and Alampur in Andhra Pradesh, which is near Kurnool. The largest temple of Chalukyas of Badami is **Virupaksha Temple**, whose complex encloses 30 sub shrines and a large Nandi mandapa. This was also earliest example of Shiva temples, which have a Nandi pavilion in front of the temple.



Temple Architecture of Badami Chalukyas



Ravana Phadi Cave



Virupaksha Temple



Lad Khan Temple



Navabramha Group of Temples, Alampur

Examples

Ravana Phadi Cave

The earliest monument of Chalukyas of Badami is the **Ravana Phadi Cave** at Aihole, not far from Badami. It was probably made around A.D. 550 and is dedicated to Siva. Ravana Phadi Cave is one of the Earliest Rock Cut Temple located at Aihole, the first capital of the early Chalukyas. At Aihole, they built more than 70 Hindu Temples later.

Badami Cave Temples

Badami cave temples are located at Badami. The red sandstone cliffs of Badami offered a spectacular setting for the excavation of four caves, **three Brahmanical and one Jaina (Parshwanath)**.

The largest and most impressive of these is Cave 3, dedicated to Vishnu. An inscription next to a Varaha depiction states that Mangalesa, a brother of King Kirtivarman, dedicated the cave in A.D. 578. Members of the royal family of Chalukyas patronized many Chalukyan monuments. All of them were created in sixth and 7th century. **The architecture is a mixture of the Nagara style and Dravida style.** Apart from the above four, there is a fifth natural Buddhist cave in Badami.

Virupaksha Temple, Hampi

Virupaksha Temple is located in Hampi in Karnataka on the banks of the Tungabhadra river. Virupaksha Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and was created by the Chalukyas of Badami initially in 8th century. The temple was improvised in Vijaynagar Empire. It is in the Virupaksha temple at Hampi that full glory of the Early Chalukyan art can be seen. This temple was built in 735 AD by a queen of Vikramaditya II to celebrate the victory over the Pallavas of Kanchipuram.

Ladkhan Temple, Aihole

The Ladkhan temple is the earliest temple of Aihole, which dates back to 5th century AD. An inscription on this temple says that it was dedicated to Durga. There is a Shiva ling out there. The temple is known as Lad Khan after its owner (in most recent times) at a place used as cattle sheds or houses. This temple has a large porch and is made in a Panchayat hall kind of design with 12 pillars. This was earliest experiment for a pillar based structures in the temple architecture.

Navabramha Group of Temples, Alampur

The **Navabramha Group of temples** is located at Alampur in Andhra Pradesh. There are total 9 temples and present a marvelous piece of art of the Chalukyas of Badami outside Karnataka. These



temples are based upon the Nagara style and do not reflect the Dravidian style of temple architecture (8 out of 9 are clearly Nagara style). The Alampur temples are the finest example of the Chalukyas of Badami Art. The Nava Bhramma temples are Taraka Bhramma, Swarga Bhramma, Padma Bhramma, Bala Bhramma, Garuda Bhramma, Kumara Bhramma, Arka Bhramma, Vira Bhramma and the Vishwa Bhramma. These temples are all enclosed in a courtyard on the left bank of the river Tungabhadra.

Temples at Pattadakal

Numerous temples at Pattadakal on the bank of river Malprabha, some kilometers from Aihole mark the return of the Chalukya patronage to Karnataka after several years of activity in the Andhra Pradesh. The first temple is Galagnatha Temple which is in Nagara style similar to the Alampur temple.

Temple architecture of Rashtrakutas

The reign of Rastrakutas of Manyakheta was from 753 AD to 982 AD. The Rastrakutas were great patrons of architecture. The Rastrakuta architecture was a splendid form of Rock cut architecture. Most of the shrines were Buddhist caves such as Ellora and Elephanta at Maharashtra. Notable example is the Kailashnath Temple at Ellora, which has been discussed above in this module.

Temple Architecture of Western Chalukyas

While the buildings of the Chalukyas of the Badami are centred in and around Pattadakal, Aihole, Badami & Alampur, the buildings of the Western Chalukyas are widely dispersed, which reflect the system of the local government and decentralization in the Western Chalukyan Administration.

The major improvement over the previous Badami Chalukya temple was the “Architectural Articulation” or **ornamentation on the outer walls of the shrine**. The presence of Figure sculpture such as Heroes of Ramayana and Mahabharata and loving couples (Mithuna) was additional structure of these temples at the earliest period. The Western Chalukyan Temples are either **Ekakuta** (one mandapa of one shrine) or **Dvikuta** (a common hall attached to two shrines).

The style has characters of both the Northern as well as Dravidian temple architecture. This combination of **both of these styles is known as Vesara Style**, also **Central Indian Style**, which is represented by the Hoyasala Temples.

Most of the temples of the Western Chalukyas are dedicated to Shiva, some of them dedicated to Vishnu and Jain Tirthankars also. The Hoysalas architecture was clearly influenced by the Western Chalukyan Architecture.

Salient Features

The western Chalukya temples show an improvement over the previous experiments. These temples are show a transition from the Nagara to Dravida style and create a new style called *Karnatadravida*.



The ornate columns are seen as one of the most important features and that is why some of the temples such as “Mahadeva Temple” are called finest in Karnataka after Halebid. The Temple plan in most of the plans is star shaped. Most temples are dedicated to Shiva and Nandi at the entrance of the shrine appears as a main feature.

Examples

Truketshwara Temple, Gadag

The Gadag Style, which can be recognized by the **ornate columns** in the temples, originated in the period of the Western Chalukya King Someshwara I. The finest example of Gadag style is **Trikuteshwara Temple** at Gadag.

This temple was created during the reign of Someshwara I in the 11th century. The temple is dedicated to Shiva and has three lingams mounted on a single stone. The ornate pillars are located in an exclusive Saraswati Shrine in the temple complex.

Temples of Lakkundi

Lakkundi is a tiny village in Gadag District of Karnataka. Here, we find 50 temples of the Western Chalukyan Empire, most important of which are **Mahadeva Temple and Kahi Visheveswar Temple**. The place is also a source of around 30 inscriptions of the Chalukyas, Kalachuris, Seunas, Kadambas and Hoysalas.

Kasivisvesvara Temple, Lakkundi

Kasivisvesvara Temple, Lakkundi is one of the most ornate temples in Karnataka. This temple was initially built in the Western Chalukyan Empire and later additions were done by Verea Ballala II, the great Hoyasala King. It's a Dvikuta Temple.

Mahadeva Temple, Itagi

About 20 kilometers from Nakkundi is located the Mahadeva Temple of Itagi. It was built by one of the **commanders of the Western Chalukya King Vikramaditya VI** in 1112 AD. This temple is one of the finest example of “Dravida Articulation” in Nagara style.

Doddabasappa Temple, Dambal

Doddabasappa Temple located at Dambal in Karnataka is one more example of fine Western Chalukyan Art. This temple is a variant of **Dravida style** called the **karnatadravida Temple style**. The temple is built on uninterrupted 24 pointed star shaped floor plan, which is different from the pre existing 6-12 and 24 interrupted star shaped temples.

Other Western Chalukya Temples are located at Kuknur, Lakmeshwar, Bankarupa etc.

Temple Architecture of Hoysalas

By the 13th century, the power of the Cholas had declined. This was the time for a great and sophisticated culture when marvelous temples were built in Karnataka and parts of Tamil Nadu. Hoyasala influence was at its zenith during the 13th century and the artists of this empire freely



borrowed from the Chalukya and Chola traditions and created a style unique in many ways. Hoyasala history is clear from the time of King Vishnuvardhana, who ruled from A.D. 1108 to A.D. 1142. Inscriptions show that the king, his wife and his ministers were generous patrons of temples.

Salient Features of the Hoyasala Temples

- The Hoyasala built around 1500 temples at 958 centers between 1000 AD to 1346 AD. The finest temples were commissioned during the times of Vishnuvardhana.
- He was a subordinate to the Western Chalukyas and probably after declaring independence wanted to excel in this art also. This is evident from one of his inscriptions which says “built it from the wealth which he amassed from the sword”.
- The Hoyasala temple architecture was heavily influenced by the Western Chalukyas, Cholas as well as Pallavas, though there was a departure from the Chalukyan style.
- This is evident from the fact that in the beginning, the temples were not over decorated, but the later temples have this feature in almost of its totality.

Examples

Chennakesava Temple, Belur

Vishnuvardhana, who defeated the imperial Cholas in A.D. 1116, in the memory of establishment of his dynasty and this victory, built a temple for Kesava, or Chennakesava, at Belur, and named it the Vijayanarayana temple. The temple is a classic example of the ornate style of temple art under the Hoysalas. They inherited a rich tradition of temple building from the Chalukyas and the Cholas.

Hoysaleswara Temple, Halebid

Hoysaleswara Temple was built between A.D. 1121 and A.D. 1160 in the area of Halebid, known then as Dorsamudra, which was the capital of the Hoysalas. It was also built during the reign of Vishnuvardhana. The temple is Dvikuta, means two shrines which are called “Hoysaleswara” and “Shantaleswara”. Shantala was queen of Vishnuvardhana. The temple is best known for sculptures on the outerwalls.

Chennakesava Temple, Somanathapura

Chennakesava Temple, Somanathapura was built by Soma, a commander of the Narsimha III. It is also one of the finest structures of the Hoyasala architecture.

Temple Architecture of the Pallavas

In the beginning of the medieval period, the Kings did not directly patronize the religious shrines and gave only indirect support. Most of the artworks were produced by the guilds of the artists who were actually funded by the villages, traders and monks. **The tradition of direct patronization of the temples began with the Pallavas.**

Under the ablest kings such as Mahendravarman, Pallavas extended their territories to the Tamil Nadu. From the time of great Mahendravarman, finest examples of Pallava art were created in Tamil



Nadu such as **Shore Temple** and 7 **pagodas of Mahabalipuram**.

Today's Mahabalipuram was known as **Mamalai** (Green Hill) in ancient times. Pallava King Mahendravarman successor Narsimhamvarman was known as "**Mamalla**" or "The warrior". This port city was named "Mamallapuram" after Narsimhamvarman. This was one of the greatest ports of ancient times and here was a "cosmopolitan" culture where people rubbed their shoulders with the Romans. This is evident from the Roman coins found here and traces of a Roman colony located here.

Salient Features of the Pallava Architecture

- The Pallava architecture **shows the transition from** the Rock Cut Architecture to the Stone built temples.
- The earliest examples of the Pallava art are the rock cut temples of the 7th century AD, while the later examples are of structural temples built in 8th and 9th century.
- The rock cut reliefs of the Pallavas are the earliest surviving royal portraits after the Kushana images.

At the end of 6th century, King Harsha ruled in the North and he patronized the Buddhist Institutions. In South, Pallavas expanded themselves from the much of the Andhra Pradesh of today to much of Tamil Nadu. The Pallava Kings are known to be one of the greatest patrons of the art, music, architecture, dance and literature. King Mahendravarman was a poet and a playwright who wrote a satire on contemporary life titled "*Mattavilasa Prahasana*". Another King of Pallava Dynasty named Rajsimha (Narsimhamvarman) was such a great lover of art that he used the title "**Kalagamudra**" for himself.

Pallava Temples Examples

Pallava Architecture Examples



Mandagapattu rock cut temple



Kailasanathar Temple, Kanchipuram



Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram

Mandagapattu rock cut temple

The earliest monument of Mahendravarman was Mandagapattu rock cut temple which was a single rock cut temple built without any wood, brick or metal. It is located near Villupuram in Tamil Nadu. This temple has the icons of large *Dwarapalas* which later became a characteristic of almost all south Indian temples.



However, one of the most marvelous chapters opened with the reign of successor of Mahendravarman i.e. Narsimhavarman “Mamalla” or Rajsimha. During his reign at Mahabalipuram, massive boulders were transformed into a world of divine. These are earliest styles of temples in South India. Kanchipuram was the capital of the Pallavas from 4th to 9th century. Huen Tsang visited this city and wrote it a glorious city. Here, Buddhaghosa lived in 6th century.

Kailasanathar Temple, Kanchipuram

Kailasanathar Temple is best building created during the reign of Pallava King Narsimhamvaraman. This temple is one of the most beautiful temples in India which has well balanced sculptures like a jewel box. This temple is important for historic point of view because:

- This temple inspired Rajraja Chola I to built another great beauty Brihadeshwar Temple at Tanjore.
- The direct & close intervention of the rulers started after creation of this temple.

Thus, the Kailasanathar temple began a new tradition in India where the kings took deep interest in building the temples with great structural design and antiquity. This temple has the **Lion Sculptures** everywhere. Lion was the insignia of the Pallavas.

Vaikuntha Perumal temple, Kanchipuram

Vaikuntha Perumal temple is located at Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu. It was built by Nandivarman. It is one of the 108 Divya Desams (108 holiest Shrines of Vishnu). The temple was named “Parameshwara Vishnugriham” after the original name Parmeshwara of Nandivarman.

Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram

Shore Temple is a granite made temple at Mahabalipuram built during the rein of Narsimhavarman. This group of temples is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is oldest strcutral temple (in contrast with rock cut temples) in India. Its a beautiful 5 storyed temple, which is a combined complex of 3 shrines; 2 dedicated to Shiva and one to Vishnu.

Importance of Shore Temple

The Shore Temple marks the culmination of the architectural efforts that began with the cave temples and monolithic rathas.

Shore Temple and the 7 Pagodas

7 Pagodas is a term associated with the Shore Temple of Mahabalipuram. It is said that 6 more temples were associated with it, all now submerged in water. The legend is that prior to Narsimhamvaraman, the construction of the cave temples had started in the time of Mahendravarman. But later the order for free standing strcutres was given and 7 rathas (free standing temples) were created. After the 2004 Tsunami, the sand deposits of around 500 meters from the Shore temples were gulped by the sea and a clear arrangement of manmade structures was



seen (TOI, February 26, 2005). The ASI started the excavations and it was said that sonar system indicated manmade structures under the sea.

Temple Architecture of Cholas

The Chola period saw the culmination of Dravida temple art resulting in the most sophisticated buildings of medieval India. The Tamil Nadu temples were fully evolved in their style and design by the 8th century.

Special Features of the Chola Architecture

- The *dvarapalas*, or guardian figures, at the entrance to the mandapa, or hall which started from the Palava period became a unique feature of the Chola Temples.
- The Dravidian Style got fully developed after a transition from the rock cut structures of the Pallava Period.
- Early Chola temples at the Bank of river Kaveri were smaller and brick made, in comparison to the colossus buildings of the Imperial Cholas.
- The temples of the Imperial Cholas are covered with exquisite well composed sculptures and frescoes.
- Largest and tallest of all Indian temples i.e. Siva Temple of Thanjore was built in Chola Period.
- Ganas, among the sculptures at the temple, are the most memorable figures made in Chola temples

Examples

Vijayalaya Cholisvara Temple, Thanjore

Under Pallavas, some of the finest temples had been created at Mahabalipuram and Kanchipuram. However, the largest and most impressive buildings were created under the Cholas post 850 AD, when Vijayalaya Chola took the control of Tanjore. The earliest Chola Temple we find at Narthamalai, where Vijayalaya Chola commissioned a temple named “**Vijayalaya Cholisvara**” temple, dedicated to lord Shiva.

Koranganatha Temple, Srinivasanallur

Koranganatha Temple is located at Srinivasanallur, in Tiruchirapalli District, on the banks of river Cauvery. This temple was built by Parantaka Chola -I . The base of this temple has the sculpted mythical animals ‘Yazhi’ . Yazhi is a recurring pattern and unique feature of Chola architecture.

Muvarkovil, Pudukkottai

“Muvarkovil” literally means temple of three. It was commissioned by Parantaka Chola -II or one of his feudatories. It has three shrines standing side by side, however, only two are extant now.

Tiruvallisvaram temple, Tiruneveli



Tiruvallisvaram temple is the first example where all features of the Chola temple architecture are seen. It is covered with well composed sculptures and friezes. Entire cornice of the temple has been ornated with creepers and foliage.

Brihadeeswarar Temple of Tanjore

Brihadeeswarar Temple or Peruvudaiyar Kovil or Rajrajeshwaram temple at Thanjavur is the world's first complete "granite" temple. It was built by Rajraja Chola-I and is a part of UNESCO's world Heritage sites. The Vimana or the temple tower (known as Raja Gopuram) is 216 Feet in height and is one of the tallest buildings of its kind. The Nandi is carved out of a single rock. This temple has completed 1 millennium in 2010. It was dictated by lord Shiva to Rajraja Chola I, when he triumphed **Ilam** (Sri Lanka) Island.

Brihadisvara temple, Gangaikondacholapuram

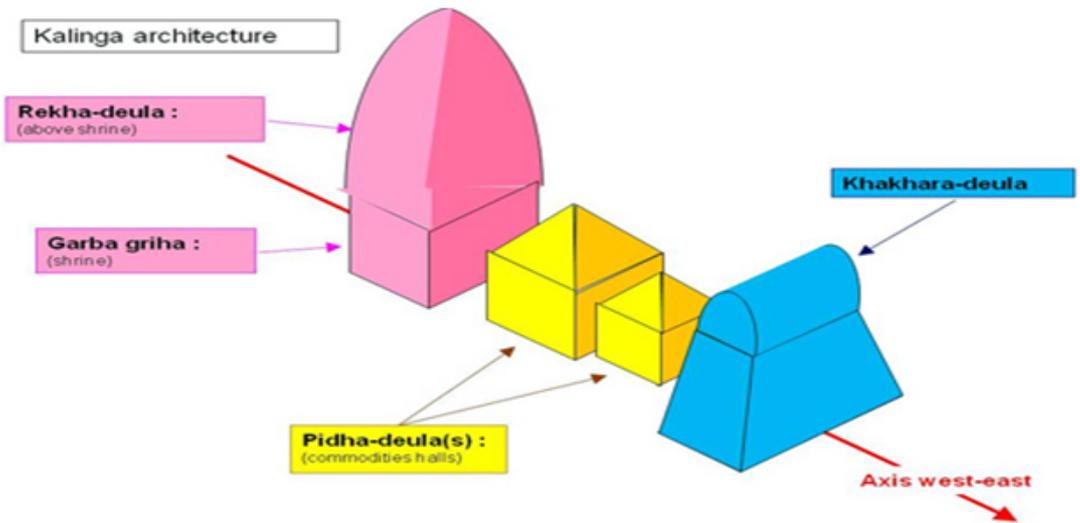
Brihadisvara temple at Gangaikondacholapuram was made by King Rajaraja's son Rajendra I, who assumed the title "Gangaikonda".

The Temples of Odisha

The Kalinga School of Architecture

The Indian temples are broadly divided into Nagara, Vesara, Dravida and Gadag styles of architecture. However, the temple architecture of Odisha corresponds to altogether a different category for their unique representations called **Kalinga style** of temple architecture. This style **broadly comes under the Nagara style**.

In Kalinga Architecture, basically a temple is made in two parts, **a tower and a hall**. The tower is called **deul** and the hall is called **jagmohan**. The walls of both the *deul* and the *jagmohan* are lavishly sculpted with architectural motifs and a profusion of figures. The most repeated form is the horseshoe shape, which has come from the earliest times, starting with the large windows of the *chaitya-grihas*. It is the *deul* or *deula* which makes three distinct types of temples in Kalinga Architecture.



The Deul or Deula

In Odia language a shrine is called **Deula**. Accordingly, the temples in Odisha are three types of Deula viz. *Rekha Deula*, *Pidha / Bhadra Deula* and *Khakra Deula*.

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Rekha Deula

Rekha Deula is a tall building with a sikhara. The most distinct example of Rekha Deula is the Lingraj Temple of Bhubneshwar. The Rekha Deula means a shrine with different parts in a line. The Lingraj Temple has a *vimana* (structure containing the sanctum), *jagamohana* (assembly hall), *natamandira* (festival hall) and *bhoga-mandapa* (hall of offerings), each increasing in the height to its predecessor.

Pidha Deula

Pidha Deula refers to the square building with a pyramid-shaped roof, like the vimanas. The assembly hall of the Konark Sun Temple is an example.

Khakhara Deula

The Khakhara Deula is altogether a different style of architecture closely appearing similar to the Dravidian Gopuran design. The word is derived from Khakharu (Pumpkin, gourd) as the crown looks like a barrel- vaulted elongated roof. It is a rectangular building with a truncated pyramid-shaped roof, like the *gopuras*. The temples of the feminine deities as Shakti are temple of that type. One example is the *Baitala Deula* of Bhubneshwar, dedicated to Chamunda. The Sakta temples are generally of Khakhara order. Brahmi temple of Chaurasi in Puri and Gouri temple of Bhubaneswar are two other glaring examples of Khakhara temple.

Sthapatis of Odisha

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Odisha is also a state where, among a few surviving families of *sthapatis*, or builders and artists, the traditions and canons have been passed on from father to son up to today.

Examples of Kalinga Architecture

Kalinga School of Architecture Examples



Lingraj Temple, Bhubhneswar



Baitala Deula of Chamunda Bhubhneswar



Bho in Shatrughaneshwara Temple



Lingraj Temple, Bhubhneswar



Konark Sun Temple at Front



Khichakeshwari Temple



Rajarani Temple, Bhubhneswar, Odisha

Shatruganeswara Temples

The area around Bhubaneswar was a great centre of spiritual activity from the Maurya Era. This region is best known for the Asoka's edicts of the 3rd century B.C. and Jaina caves of the 2nd century B.C. In this region, the **oldest surviving structural temples belong to the 6th of 7th Shatruganeswara group**. These temples are of the Pashupata sect and dedicated to Siva.

The Bho and Kirtimukha Motifs

The Shatruganeswara temple must be noted for the **Bho** feature in Indian temples. **Bho** refers to a temple feature that consists of a "chaitya" arch with a "kirtimukha" above it. The adjacent image shows the "bho" of the Shatruganeswara temple. The Bho and Kirtimukha represent the vital energy of nature and a profusion of mythical and worldly forms.

Mukteswara Temple, Bhubhneswar

The 10th century Mukteswara Temple in Bhubaneswar represents the full development of the Kalinga Architecture its "deul", or tower, and "jagmohan", or assembly hall.

Both structures as well as the "torana" entrance are profusely carved.

It is small, with a *deul* of less than 35 feet height. However, it is acclaimed as a gem of Kalinga architecture and is richly carved.

Nagas and Naginis can be seen here with their long serpent tails coiled around the pilasters on which



they are made. This was one of the favourite themes of Odiya sculptors and is rarely seen in any other part of India.

Rajarani temple, Bhubneshwar

The Rajarani temple was built around A.D. 1000 in Bhubneshwar. This temple is unique in Indian architecture, because it is believed that this temple led to development of the architecture of other temples of central India, particularly, *Khajuraho*. It is also known as “**love temple**” on account of the erotic carvings of maidens and mithunas in the temple. Its *jagmohan* has a *pidha* roof in many layers, in the established Kalinga style. However, the *deul* has many clusters of the tower shape built around it. This gives it the appearance of mountain peaks.

The entrance to the *jagmohan* has marvellous depictions of a Naga and a Nagini created around pilasters. Beautiful Yaksha and Yakshis have also been carved. These represent the abundance of as well as the protective forces of nature and are a theme seen in Indian art from the earliest times.

Lingaraj Temple, Bhubneshwar

The Lingaraj temple of the 12th century considered to be a high point in the tradition of temple building in Odisha.

It has a *deula* that rises to a height of about 150 feet. The balance and proportions of the various parts of the temple and the elegance of its surface treatment make it one of the crowning achievements of the Kalinga Style of Architecture.

The Lingaraja temple faces east and is built of sandstone and laterite. It is believed that the original deity of the Lingaraj temple was under a Mango tree (*Ekamra*) and that is why its location was called *Ekamra Khestra*. The presiding deity was a Linga (aniconic form of Shiva). The present temple was probably built by the rulers of the Somavamshi dynasty as a Shaiva temple but with the arrival of the Vaishnavite Ganga dynasty, the temple was remodelled and elements of Vaishnavism were inculcated in it. Thus, the temple deity came to be known of **Harihara** (Hari=Vishnu, Hara=Shiv), a mixed form of Shiva and Vishnu. The consort of *HariHara* is *Bhubneshari*.

The main entrance is located in the east, while there are small entrances in the north and south. The temple is built in the *Deula* style that has four components namely, *vimana* (structure containing the sanctum), *jagamohana* (assembly hall), *natamandira* (festival hall) and *bhoga-mandapa* (hall of offerings). The dance hall was associated with the raising prominence of the devadasi system that existed during those times. The various units from the Hall of offering to the tower of the sanctum increase in height.

Sun Temple Konark

Konark Sun ^(Kona=Angle, Arka=Sun) Temple or the **Black Pagoda** is a 13th century temple of Odisha, built by Narasimhadeva I of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty. It's a World Heritage Site.



This temple was made essentially according to the regional style, but with a dramatic difference. Its tower, or *deul*, and its hall, or *jagmohan*, were designed to be a giant chariot for god Surya. The belief is that Surya rides in his chariot, driven by Aruna, or the dawn, across the skies each day. The ratha has 24 large wheels, 12 on each side, representing the months of the year. It has seven horses at the front to pull it forward at a spirited gallop.

The *deul* of the Sun temple originally stood over 200 feet (60 metres) tall, higher than any other temple in India. The *jagmohan* still stands over 130 feet (39 m) tall. The temple is made of three types of stone.

- Chlorite, which endures very well, was used for the most important areas, including the doorways, the icons in the shrines and the wonderful musicians made high above.
- Laterite forms the unseen core of the platform and the foundation.
- The main structures are made of khondalite, which unfortunately weathers very easily. None of the stones is available in the area and must have been brought over long distances by rafts on the river.

Its soaring tower was lost; most probably by the attack of **Kala Pahad**, a Hindu convert general of Sulaiman Khan Karrani, the ruler of Bengal in circa. 1568. Even with its soaring tower lost, the Sun temple is still a picture of majesty and grandeur. The structures are perfectly proportioned and covered with an endless wealth of sculpture. Architecture and carvings are intrinsically linked in the scheme of an Indian temple.

Khichakeswari Temple

Kishakeshwari Temple of goddess Chamunda is a 7th or 8th century temple located in Khiching in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. It was built by a local Bhanja ruler, whose capital was Khiching.

This temple is one of the earliest temples of the Kalinga Architecture, though the temple is disproportionate in its structure.

But it is noted for its high quality of the sculpture, particularly that of its deity Chamunda and Durga, killing the Mahisasur. The structure is made of blue fine-grained chlorite, a stone that endures well and is conducive to fine carving.

Chandela School – Temples at Khajuraho

The history tells us that in the ancient India, the kings did not sponsor directly the making of rock-cut caves, *stupas* or temples. None of the *stupas* have sculptures of the Kings and rulers of those times. None of the Mathura school or Gandhara School has made many images of the kings of those times, except one statue of Kushana King Kanishka in the Mathura school. The kings provided **only indirect support** to monasteries and shrines of all faiths. But with the arrival of the medieval period, rulers began to **patronise personally** the making of temples. In fact many of the temples



were made to commemorate a victory or to fulfil the order of the deity which came in the dream of the King and asked him to make a temple for him or her.

The personal attention of the rulers led to the making of the larger temples, especially from the 10th or 11th century onwards, under the Cholas in South India. Similar changes were seen under the rule of the Chandelas in the central India.

About Chandela Dynasty

Bundelkhand was known as **Jejakabhukti**, which roughly corresponds to the old Mahajanapadas of Chedi. This region has a long history of temple building and art. It witnessed the making of the Bharhut *stupa*, with its sculpted railings; in the 2nd century B.C. Exquisite temples were made here at Deogarh and Nachna during the 6th century A.D. during the Gupta period.

In medieval period, these countries had two dynasties named Chandelas and Kalachuris. Both of them had marital relations and were constantly in touch with each other either as foes or as friends.

Chandela dynasty was well established and there was peace and prosperity in 10th and 11th century. Art and culture flourished there as the kings were great patrons of poetry and theatre. The culmination of their cultural achievements was at their capital city of Khajuraho (in present-day Madhya Pradesh), where, between the 10th and 12th centuries, one of the most splendid temple cities in the history of the world was created. There were originally 85 temples at Khajuraho, of which 25 remain today.

The first king who started construction in Khajuraho was **Harsha** who built the 64 Yogini Temples. The most notable prince of this dynasty was King **Dhanga** whose time is known for building the most beautiful Khajuraho Temples of Parsvanath and Vishwanath. His grandson Vidyadhara built the Kandariya Mahadev Temple.

Why all temples at a single place?

The group of temples at Khajuraho is a *strikingly homogenous group*. All the temples there were built within a *relatively short period*. The concerted effort of making numerous grand temples at a single place hints that the one place speaks of the dynasty's desire to create a grand centre of worship and learning at Khajuraho.

Important Temples at Khajuraho

Chausath Yogini Temple

It is dedicated to Goddess Durga, it is the first temple built at Khajuraho. In this temple, goddess Durga is shown attended by 64 yoginis or female mystics. The lava stone idols were plundered and disfigured by Muslim invaders.

Lakshman Temple

Lakshmana temple is dedicated to *Vaikuntha Vishnu*. It was built by the Chandela Ruler Yashovarman (*aka. Lakshavarman*) during c. 930-950 CE. This temple is made up in **Panchayatana style**. A temple



is a Panchayatana one when the main shrine is surrounded by four subsidiary shrines at four different corners.

Visitors enter the temple from the east, passing through an *ardha-mandapa* entranceway, followed by a *mandapa* and a larger *maha-mandapa en route* to the *Garbha-griha*. The *Garbha-griha* is surrounded by a *Pradakshinapatha*. Here, you must note that the *Lakshmana temple shows a distinction from the Panchayatana temples of Odisha because here, the Garbha-griha and the Maha-mandapa are fused together. In Odisha temples, and also other temples at Khajuraho such as Kandariya Mahadev Temple, there is a interregnum between the Garbha-griha and Maha-mandapa.* This is how a local style at Khajuraho is different form of the *Nagara Style, showing a departure from Kalinga Architecture.*

On the plinth of the Lakshmana temple is the victorious celebration of Yashovarman's powerful armies. An inscription reads: "*He easily conquered the Kalinjara mountain, the dwelling place of Siva, which is so high that it impedes the progress of the sun at midday.*"

The *apsaras* and *nayikas* depicted here have won universal admiration for their grace and charm.

The deity here is the *Vishnu Chaturmurti*, which has four faces. Under a canopy in front of the temple stands a monolithic *Varaha*, an *avatara* of *Vishnu*. Exquisitely finished, the *Varaha* has 674 figures carved on its body.

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Kandariya Mahadev Temple

The largest and most ornate temple at Khajuraho is the *Kandariya Mahadeva*, dedicated to *Siva*. It was probably constructed by King *Vidyadhara* between A.D. 1017 and A.D. 1029. This temple is considered one of the best examples of temples preserved from the medieval period in India.

The towering *shikhara* and its subsidiary replicas, clustered at varying heights, present a grand analogy to *Mount Kailasa*, *Siva's* abode. The temple is over a hundred feet (30 metres) tall. Its monumentality is in keeping with the trend in all parts of India at this time.

The *Kandariya Mahadeva* temple is adorned on all sides with celestial nymphs, *mithunas* and many deities. Over 600 figures are carved on the exterior of the temple and more than 200 inside. It is built on *Panchayatana* style. In its layout plan, it is similar to the *Kalinga* architecture style.

Chaturbhuja Temple

This temple is located five kilometres from the village of *Khajuraho* is the southern group of temples. The temple is simple consisting of a *sanctum* without *pradakshinapatha*, *vestibule*, *mandapa* and an *ardhamandapa*. It is built on a modest platform.

The *Chaturbhuja* temple is a magnificent temple of the beginning of the 12th century. Its finely sculpted figures provide an ordered view of the world and transport one to a realm of grace.

Why erotic art at Khajuraho?

- By the time of prominence of *Chandelas*, the Indian temple form had fully developed. The



objective of the temple was that a devotee comes to it with the aspiration of the self-transcendence and to receive the grace of the deity in the *garbha-griha*.

- The devotee came to the temple to awaken the best of them within themselves and to realise the whole creation of the world is the manifestation of the deity in the *garbha-griha*. This was to realise the truth of the oneness of the whole creation.
- While visiting the temple, as the devotee circumambulated the temple, he / she would come across those worldly figures which were familiar to him. He came across all the manifestation of the divine reality. Each sculpture gives its own message and all of them together create a vision of the cosmos, whose everyone is a part.
- Thus, the temple at Khajuraho was a complex form in which the numerous parts were seen as the manifestation of the deity's creation. Every sculpture is beautiful in its own place, but every one has its related and own meaning in context with the deity within the *garbha-griha*.

At the same time, some believe that the erotic art suggest tantric sexual practices. It's worth note that only 10% of the carvings contain sexual themes and rest of the sculptures depict the everyday life of the common persons such as women putting on makeup, playing games, dancing, knotting and unknotting their girdles, and others themes such as musicians, potters, farmers etc. Thus, these massive platforms have ornately carved depictions of contemporary life. On the walls of the temples of Khajuraho, there is a profusion of depictions of women in every possible posture. As in ancient *stupa* railings and in later art, they portray the rich abundance of nature and the joy of life as *Yakshikas* and *Mithunas*; this depiction reaches at its climax at Khajuraho!

On the temple walls, one can see Siva, Vishnu, Brahma, Indra, Agni and their spouses. There are celestials around them bearing garlands and offerings. The multifaceted walls of the temple provide a vast canvas for the depiction of these innumerable manifestations of the divine.

Prelims Model Questions

1. With reference to temples at Khajuraho, consider the following statements:
 1. Kandariya Mahadev Temple is the largest and oldest among all temples at Khajuraho
 2. All temples of Khajuraho have presence of the erotic carvings that adorn their walls
 3. The Devi Jagdambi temple was originally a Vishnu temple but later converted to a different deity

Which among the above is / are correct statements?

- [A] Only 1 & 2
- [B] Only 2 & 3
- [C] 1, 2 & 3
- [D] Only 3



Answer: [D] Only 3

The first and second statements are not correct.

1. It is true that Kandariā Mahadevā Temple is the largest among all the temples in Khajuraho, but it is not the oldest. Oldest temple is Chausath Yogini temple, which is also oldest only one that is made of local granite. All the other temples are made up of sandstones.
 2. Not all temples have erotic carvings. For example, Chaturbhuj temple, dedicated to lord Vishnu and is the one (and only) temple that is devoid of any erotic art.
 3. Third statement is correct.
2. The temple architecture of which among the following has shown a transition from the Rock Cut Architecture to the Stone built temples?
- [A] Cholas
[B] Cheras
[C] Chalukyas
[D] Pallavas

Answer: [D] Pallavas

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Most important Features of the Pallava Architecture

§ The Pallava architecture shows the transition from the Rock Cut Architecture to the Stone built temples.

§ The earliest examples of the Pallava art are the rock cut temples of the 7th century AD, while the later examples are of structural temples built in 8th and 9th century.

§ The rock cut reliefs of the Pallavas are the earliest surviving royal portraits after the Kushana images.

§ At the end of 6th century, King Harsha ruled in the North and he patronized the Buddhist Institutions. In South, Pallavas expanded themselves from the much of the Andhra Pradesh of today to much of Tamil Nadu.

The Pallava Kings are known to be one of the greatest patrons of the art, music, architecture, dance and literature. King Mahendravarman was a poet and a playwright who wrote a satire on contemporary life titled “Mattavilasa Prahasana”. Another King of Pallava Dynasty named Rajsimha (Narsimhamvarman) was such a great lover of art that he used the title “Kalasamudra” for himself.

3. Which of the following Orissan temples has a khakhara type of Sikhara?
- [A] Jagannath Temple
[B] Lingaraja Temple
[C] Rajarani Temple
[D] Baital Deula Temple



Answer: [D] Baital Deula Temple

The Khakhara Deula is altogether a different style of architecture closely appearing similar to the Dravidian Gopuran design. The word is derived from Khakharu (Pumpkin, gourd) as the crown looks like a barrel- vaulted elongated roof. It is a rectangular building with a truncated pyramid-shaped roof, like the gopuras. The temples of the feminine deities as Shakti are temple of that type. One example is the Baitala Deula of Bhubneshwar, dedicated to Chamunda. The Sakta temples are generally of Khakhara order. Brahmi temple of Chaurasi in Puri and Gouri temple of Bhubaneswar are two other glaring examples of Khakhara temple.

4. The Vesara style of architecture:

1. has its roots in the Buddhist chaityas
2. is a midway between the Nagara towers and the Dravida tiers
3. was used prominently in western India and Deccan

Which among the above statements is / are correct ?

[A] Only 1 & 2

[B] Only 2 & 3

[C] Only 1 & 3 suraj_winner | rajawat.rs.surajsingh@gmail.com | www.gktoday.in/module/ias-general-studies

[D] 1, 2 & 3

Answer: [D] 1, 2 & 3

Hindu temple architecture in India has developed over time into several distinct, mature styles. The earliest phases are based on early Buddhist architectural forms, such as the rock-cut cave temple (chaitya) or enclosed courtyard (vihara). Some of these early Hindu rock-cut temples include those at Ellora and Elephanta; others are free-standing but based on this form, as at Aihole. Later Hindu architecture has three basic styles: Nagara, Dravida, and Veshara, of which the first two are the most important.

Each of these styles is found in a certain area of India: the Nagara in the north and east, the Dravida in the south, and the Veshara in the west and in Deccan. The basic differences between them can be simplified to the different styles of the temple towers. The Nagara style emphasizes verticality, with the whole temple building culminating in a single highest point. Different emphases in the ways of treating the tower led to different substyles: In the temples at Khajuraho, the entire structure gradually leads up to the central tower, whereas the Orissa style stresses a single enormous tower surrounded by much smaller subsidiary parts. In the Dravida style, the towers tend to be composed of horizontal tiers, with the visual emphasis on horizontal rather than vertical. In the later Dravida temples, the tallest structures are the gopurams, the central gateways in the walls enclosing the temples.



A Dravida-style temple may have a fairly modest tower over the central shrine, but the area covered by the temple is often enormous, and many of them are cities in their own right.

The Veshara style has a barrel roof over the sanctuary, an architectural feature with roots in the Buddhist chaityas (rock-cut cave temples). This architectural style is midway between the Nagara towers and the Dravida tiers.

5. The Badami Cave Temples of Karnataka include the temples dedicated to ___:

1. Hinduism
2. Jainism
3. Buddhism

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

- [A] Only 1 is correct
- [B] Only 1 & 2 are correct
- [C] Only 2 & 3 are correct
- [D] 1, 2 & 3 are correct

Answer: [B] Only 1 & 2 are correct

Badami cave temples are located at Badami. The red sandstone cliffs of Badami offered a spectacular setting for the excavation of four caves, three Brahmanical and one Jaina (Parshwanath). Largest Cave is dedicated to Vishnu.

6. The Ellora Caves, Mahabalipuram Caves and Khajuraho Temples are ascribed to respectively?

- [A] Rastrakuta, Pallava, Chandela
- [B] Rastrakuta, Chola, Chandela
- [C] Saatvahana, Pallava, Chandela
- [D] Saatvahana, Chola, Chandela

Answer: [A] Rastrakuta, Pallava, Chandela