

NEXT IAS

ART & CULTURE

**CIVIL SERVICES
EXAMINATION 2025**

Published by





MADE EASY Publications Pvt. Ltd.

Corporate Office: 44-A/4, Kalu Sarai
(Near Hauz Khas Metro Station), New Delhi-110016

Contact: 011-45124660, 8860378007

E-mail: infomep@madeeasy.in

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Art & Culture

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First Edition: 2017

Second Edition: 2018

Third Edition: 2019

Revised & Updated: 2020

Fourth Edition: 2021

Fifth Edition: 2022

Sixth Edition: 2023

Seventh Edition: Nov. 2023

Contents

Art & Culture

Unit – A: Visual Arts

Chapter-1

Indian Architecture.....	2
1.1 Indian Architecture in Ancient India.....	2
Indus Valley Civilisation Architecture	2
1.2 Mauryan Architecture.....	4
Pillars.....	4
Stupas.....	5
Caves.....	6
Palaces and residential buildings	6
1.3 Post-Mauryan Architecture	6
1.4 Sangam Architecture	7
1.5 Architecture in Gupta Age	7
1.6 Gupta Cave Shrines.....	7
Ajanta Caves.....	7
Ellora Caves.....	8
Bagh Caves	8
Junagadh Caves.....	8
Nashik Caves	8
Montperir Caves/Mandapeshwar	9
Karle Cave	9
Kanheri Cave	9
Cave Architecture in Eastern India	9
1.7 Temple Architecture	10
Features of Gupta Temple Architecture	10
Dashavatara Temple at Deogarh	10
Bhitargaon Temple.....	10
1.8 Evolution of Temple Architecture in Gupta Period.....	11
Stage 1	11
Stage 2	11
Stage 3	11
Stage 4	11
Stage 5	11
1.9 Different Styles of Temple Architecture	12
Nagara Style	12
Khajuraho Style.....	12
Three Subtypes of Nagara Temple Depending upon the Shape of Shikhara.....	13
Temple Architecture in South India	14
Dravidian Style.....	14

Vesara style	15
Vijayanagara Style of Architecture	16
Hoysala Style	18
Nayaka Style.....	18
1.10 Indian Architecture in Medieval Times	18
Indo-Islamic Architecture	18
Tomb Architecture.....	19
Arabesque Designs	19
1.11 Prominent Indo-Islamic Architectural Styles.....	19
Delhi Sultanate (Imperial Style) Architecture.....	19
1.12 Provincial School of Architecture	21
Bengal School of Architecture	21
Malwa School of Architecture (MP & Rajasthan).....	21
Jaunpur School of Architecture (UP).....	21
1.13 Mughal Architecture.....	21
Sher Shah Suri	22
Humayun	22
Akbar	22
Jahangir.....	24
Shah Jahan	25
Aurangzeb	26
1.14 Early Modern Indian Architecture	26
Sikh Architecture.....	26
1.15 Colonial Architecture.....	26
British.....	26
Indo-Gothic Style	27
Neo-Roman Style	27
French.....	27
Portuguese	28

Chapter-2

Indian Sculpture	31
2.1 Features of Indian Sculpture	31
2.2 Indus Civilization Sculptures.....	31
Metal Sculptures of Indus Valley Civilization	31
Stone Sculptures of Indus Valley Civilization	32
Terracotta Sculpture of Indus Valley Civilization	32
2.3 Mauryan Empire Sculptures.....	33
Foreign Influence on Mauryan Sculpture	33
Stupa Sculpture of Mauryan Empire	33

Pillar Sculptures of Mauryan Empire	33	Tyeb Mehta (1925-2009)	54
Figurine Sculptures of Mauryan Empire	34	Satish Gujral	54
2.4 Post Mauryan Empire Sculptures	34	3.9 Folk Paintings in India	54
Sculptures of Kushana Empire	34	Madhubani Paintings	54
Sculptures of Gandhara School	34	Pattachitra Paintings	54
Sculptures of Mathura School of Art	35	Kalighat Paintings	54
Sculptures of Amaravati School of Art	36	Warli Paintings	55
Sculptures of Gupta Empire	36	Paitkar Paintings	55
Sculptures of Pala School	37	Kohvar and Sohrai Paintings	55
Sculptures of Chalukyas	37	Kalamkari Paintings	55
Badami Chalukya Sculptures	37	Phad Paintings	56
Western Chalukyan Sculptures	38	Manjusha Paintings	56
Eastern Chalukyan Sculptures	38	Thangka Paintings	56
Rashtrakuta Sculptures	38	Patua Art Paintings	57
Sculptures of Hoysalas	39	Pithoro Paintings	57
Sculptures of Vijaynagara Empire	39	Pichchavi Paintings (Nathdwara Paintings)	57
Sculptures of Chola Empire	40	Cheriyal scroll painting	57
Sculptures of Pallava Empire	40	Kalamezhuthu	58
2.5 Sculptures of Medieval India	41	Geographical Indication (GI) protected Paintings of India	58
Delhi Sultanate Sculptures	41		
Mughal Sculptures	41		
Modern Indian Sculptures	42		

Chapter-3

Indian Paintings	43
3.1 Principles of Painting	43
3.2 Pre-Historic Paintings	43
Upper Paleolithic Period	43
Mesolithic period	43
Chalcolithic Period Art	44
3.3 Classification of Indian Paintings	44
Mural Paintings	44
Miniature Paintings	47
Rajput Paintings	49
3.4 Pahari Style	50
3.5 Miniatures in South India	51
Tanjore Paintings	51
Mysore Paintings	52
3.6 Modern Paintings	52
Company Paintings	52
Bazaar Paintings	52
3.7 Cubist Style of Painting	53
3.8 Famous Indian Painters	53
Raja Ravi Varma	53
Amrita Shergill	53
M. F. Hussain	53
Abinandranath Tagore (1871-1951)	54

Chapter-4

Indian Handicraft	59
4.1 Textiles	59
Jamdani	59
Ikat (Ikkat)	59
4.2 Surface Decoration of Textiles	60
Textile Printing	60
Kalamkari	60
Tie and Dye	60
Batik	60
Applique Work	61
4.3 Embroidery of India	61
Phulkari	61
Zardozi	61
Aari	62
Banjara Embroidery	62
Chikankari	62
Crewel	62
Gota Work	62
Kantha	62
Karchobi	62
Kashidakari	62
Kasuti	62
Kathi (Rabari Art)	63
Patti Ka Kaam	63
Pichwai	63

Shamilami	63
Toda Embroidery	63
4.4 Ivory Crafting	63
4.5 Wooden Work	64
Wood Carving	64
Wood Inlay/Marquetry	64
Wood (Turning and Lacquerware)	64
4.6 Clay and Pottery Work	64
4.7 Metal Crafts	65
4.8 Leather Products	65
4.9 Evolution of Pottery	66
4.10 Neolithic Age	66
Features	66
4.11 Chalcolithic Age	66
4.12 Harappan Civilization	67
Polished Ware Pottery with rough surface	67
4.13 Vedic Era–PGW	67
4.14 Later Vedic Era–NBPW	68
4.15 End of Later Vedic Era–NBPW	68
4.16 Megalithic Era	70

Chapter-5

UNESCO Tangible World Heritage Sites	71
5.1 Criteria for Selection	71
5.2 Legal Status of Designated Sites	71
5.3 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India	71
Cultural Sites (34)	72
Natural Sites (7)	80
Mixed Site (1)	80

Unit – B: Performing Arts

Chapter-6

Indian Music	83
6.1 Origin And History Of Indian Music	84
6.2 Pillars of Indian Music	84
Swara	84
Raga	84
Tala	85
6.3 Classification of Indian Music	85
Classical Music	85
Carnatic Music	89
6.4 Indian Folk Music	89
Some of the famous folk music traditions are:	90
6.5 Fusion of Classical and Folk Music	92
Sugam Sangeet	92
Rabindra Sangeet	93

Haveli Sangeet	93
Gana Sangeet	93
6.6 Modern Music	93
Rock	93
Jazz	93
Psychedelic Trance	93
Pop Music	93
6.7 Musical Instruments	93
Tata Vadya	93
Sushira Vadya	93
Awanad/Avanaddha Vadya (Percussion Instruments)	93
Ghana Vadya (Idiophones)	94

Chapter-7

Dances of India	95
7.1 Introduction	95
7.2 Aspects & Elements of Various Dances	95
7.3 Indian Classical Dance Forms	96
Bharatnatyam	96
Kuchipudi	97
Kathakali	98
Mohiniattam	99
Odissi	100
Manipuri	101
Kathak	101
Sattriya	103
7.4 Folk Dances of India	103
Folk Dances of Uttar Pradesh	104
Folk Dances of Rajasthan	105
Folk Dances of Kashmir	106
Folk Dances of Punjab	106
Folk Dances of Arunachal Pradesh	107
Folk Dances of Haryana	107
Folk Dances of Maharashtra	107
Folk Dances of Gujarat	108
Folk Dances of Odisha	108
Folk Dances of Madhya Pradesh	109
Folk Dances of Manipur	109
Folk Dances of Mizoram	110
Other Folk Dances of North Eastern States	110
Other Folk Dances	110
Martial Dances of India	111

Chapter-8

Indian Theatre	114
8.1 Classical Sanskrit Theatre	114
8.2 Famous Sanskrit Playwrights	114
Types of Sanskrit Plays	115

Elements of Sanskrit Play.....	115
Decline of Sanskrit Theatre.....	115
8.3 Indian Folk Theatre.....	115
Theatres of Northern India.....	116
Theatres of Eastern India.....	117
Theatres of Western India.....	119
Theatres of Southern India.....	119

Chapter-9

Indian Puppetry	122
9.1 History associated with Puppetry in India.....	122
9.2 Types of Puppetry.....	122
Glove Puppets.....	122
String Puppets.....	123
Rod puppets.....	124
Shadow Puppets.....	125
9.3 Other Related Information.....	126
Union Internationale de la Marionnette (UNIMA).....	126
Digital puppetry.....	126

Chapter-10

UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage	127
10.1 Intangible cultural heritage.....	127
10.2 Kutiyattam (Sanskrit theatre).....	128
10.3 The Tradition of Vedic Chanting.....	128
10.4 Ramlila - the Traditional Performance of the Ramayana.....	128
10.5 Novruz.....	128
10.6 Ramman.....	129
10.7 Chhau Dance.....	129
10.8 Kalbelia folk songs and dances of Rajasthan.....	129
10.9 Mudiyyettu.....	130
10.10 Buddhist Chanting of Ladakh.....	130
10.11 Sankirtana of Manipur.....	130
10.12 Brass and Copper Utensil (Thatheras).....	130
10.13 Yoga.....	131
10.14 Kumbh Mela.....	131

Unit – C: Culture of India

Chapter-11

National Symbols of India.....	133
---------------------------------------	------------

Chapter-12

Religions in India.....	136
12.1 Hinduism.....	136
Evolution.....	136
Vaishnavism.....	136

Shaivism.....	137
Shaktism.....	137
Smartism.....	137
Varnas.....	137
Ashramas.....	137
Hindu texts.....	137
Hindu Pilgrimage.....	138
Shramana Traditions.....	138
Philosophy of Shramana Tradition.....	138
12.2 Jainism.....	138
Principles.....	138
Tirthankara.....	139
Jain Sects.....	139
Jaina Literature.....	139
Jain Rituals.....	139
12.3 Buddhism.....	140
Gautama Buddha.....	140
Principles.....	141
Branches of Buddhism.....	141
The Four Noble Truths.....	141
Noble Eightfold Path.....	141
Practices.....	142
Dharmachakra.....	142
Tibetan Buddhism.....	142
12.4 Sikhism.....	144
Principles of Sikhism.....	144
The Khalsa and five K's.....	144
Sri Guru Granth Sahib.....	144
12.5 Islam.....	144
Principles of Islam.....	144
Basic Islamic Beliefs are:.....	144
Main Sects of Islam.....	144
Khalifah.....	145
Prophets of Islam.....	145
Prophet Muhammad.....	145
Islam in India.....	145
12.6 Sufism.....	145
The Origin.....	145
Fundamental principles.....	146
Sama.....	146
12.7 Dawoodi Bohras.....	146
12.8 Christianity.....	146
Origin.....	147
Fundamental principles of Christianity.....	147
Bible.....	147
Christian sects.....	147
Christianity in India.....	147

12.9	Judaism	147
	History	148
	Beliefs and practices	148
	Jewish sects	148
	Judaism in India.....	148
12.10	Zoroastrianism	148
	Practices.....	149
	Religious Scriptures	149
	Sects.....	149
	Zoroastrians of India	149
12.11	Bahai Faith.....	149
	Beliefs and practices	149
	The Lotus Temple.....	149
12.12	Religious Pilgrimages of India	150
	Amarnath Yatra	150
	Hajj	150
	Kumbh Mela.....	150
	Ayyappa Temple	151
	Pushkar Mela	151
	Urs of Khwaja Moin-Ud-Din Chishti.....	151

Chapter-13

Languages in India		153
13.1	Classification of Indian Languages.....	153
	Languages Vs. Dialects	153
13.2	Indo-Aryan Group of Languages	153
	Old Indo-Aryan Group (1500–300 BCE)	153
	Middle Indo-Aryan Languages	153
	Modern Indo-Aryan Languages	154
13.3	Dravidian Group	154
13.4	Sino-Tibetan Group.....	154
	Tibeto-Burman	154
	Siamese-Chinese	154
13.5	Austic Group.....	154
13.6	Others	155
13.7	Official Languages of India.....	155
	Official Languages in States	155
	Language of communication between Union and States	155
	Language of courts.....	155
	Special directive for promotion of Hindi.....	155
	First Official Language Commission	155
13.8	Scheduled languages.....	155
13.9	Status of Classical Language	156
	Calls for Classical Languages	156
	Criteria for Classical Languages in India	156
	Current Classical Languages	156
	Benefits of the Status	156

13.10	National Translation Mission.....	156
13.11	Linguistic Diversity Index.....	157

Chapter-14

Fairs and Festivals of India		158
14.1	Harvest Festivals.....	158
14.2	Sankranti.....	158
	Uttar Pradesh.....	158
	Bengal	158
	Tamil Nadu.....	158
	Andhra Pradesh.....	159
	Maharashtra.....	159
	Gujarat	159
	Punjab.....	159
	Bundelkhand.....	159
	Tribals of Odisha.....	159
	Kerala	159
	Assam.....	159
14.3	New Year festivals.....	159
	Ugadi.....	159
	Gudi Padwa	160
	Puthandu	160
	Vishu.....	160
	Navreh	160
	Maha Vishuva Sankranti.....	160
	Bestu Varas.....	160
	Chaitti and Basoa	161
	Baisakhi	161
	Nowruz.....	161
14.4	Other important festivals.....	161
	Me-Dam-Me-Phi festival.....	161
	Khajuraho Dance Festival	161
	Surajkund Crafts Mela.....	161
	Lathmaar holi of Barsana in Mathura	162
	Sarhul.....	162
14.5	Indian Fairs or Melas	162
	Kumbh Mela.....	162
	Baneshwar Fair, Rajasthan.....	162
	Gangaur Festival, Rajasthan.....	163
	Desert Festival, Rajasthan	163
	Garib Nawaz Urs, Rajasthan.....	163
	Pushkar Fair, Rajasthan	163
	Karni Mata Fair, Bikaner, Rajasthan	163
	The Tarnetar Fair, Gujarat.....	163
	Gangasagar Mela	163
14.6	Festivals of the North-East India	163
	Losar Festival, Arunachal Pradesh	163
	Torgya Festival, Arunachal Pradesh.....	164

Saga Dawa, Buddhist Festival of Sikkim.....	164
Losoong Festival, Sikkim.....	164
Bihu Festival	164
Hornbill Festival, Nagaland.....	164
Kharchi Festival, Tripura	164
Cheiraoba Festival, Manipur	165
Wangala Festival.....	165
Kang Chingba Festival.....	165
Ambubachi Mela, Assam.....	165
Majuli Festival, Assam	165
Sekreyni Festival.....	166
Dree Festival.....	166
Murung Festival	166

Chapter-15

Tribes in India 167

15.1 The Origin of Races In India	167
Negritos	167
Pro-Australoids or Austrics	167
Mongoloids	167
Mediterranean or Dravidian	167
Western Brachycephals.....	167
Nordics	167
15.2 Scheduled Tribes Definition	167
15.3 State-wise Arrangement of Major Tribes	177
Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)	178
Introduction.....	180

Chapter-16

Schools of Philosophy..... 180

16.1 Indian Philosophy	180
16.2 The Schools of Indian Philosophy.....	180
Orthodox Systems	180
Heterodox Systems.....	180
16.3 Major sub-schools of the Orthodox School.....	180
Samkhya	180
Yoga School.....	181
Vaisheshika School	182
Nyaya School.....	182
Mimamsa School	182
Vedanta School.....	183
16.4 Three Sub-schools under the Heterodox school.....	183
Buddhist Philosophy	183
Jaina Philosophy.....	184
Carvaka School or Lokayata Philosophy.....	185

Chapter-17

Science and Technology through the Ages..... 186

17.1 Developments In Ancient India.....	186
Fields of Mathematics & Astronomy.....	186
Field of Science	187
Field Of Medical Science (Ayurveda & Yoga).....	187
17.2 Developments in Medieval India.....	188
Field of Mathematics.....	188
Field of Biology	188
Field of Chemistry.....	188
Field of Astronomy	188
Field of Medicine	188
Field of Agriculture.....	189
17.3 Developments & Scientists in Modern India	189
Srinivas Ramanujan (1887-1920).....	189
Chandrasekhara V. Raman (1888-1970).....	189
Jagdish Chandra Bose 1858-1937	190
Homi Jehangir Bhabha (1909-1966).....	190
Dr. Vikram Ambalal Sarabhai (1919-1970).....	190
Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.....	191

Chapter-18

Indian Circus..... 193

18.1 A Marginal Industry.....	193
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Unit – D: Miscellaneous

Chapter-19

Indian Cinema..... 194

19.1 Central Board of Film Certification	194
19.2 National Film Development Corporation Limited (NFDC).....	194
19.3 Directorate of Film Festivals.....	195
19.4 National Film Archive of India	195
19.5 Children's Film Society, India (CFSI).....	195

Chapter-20

Coinage in India..... 196

Chapter-21

Indian Calendar..... 198

Chapter-22

Cultural Institutions..... 199

22.1 National Mission for Manuscripts.....	199
22.2 INTACH.....	199

Chapter-23

Literature200

Chapter-24

Martial Arts201

Chapter-25

Ports of Ancient India203

Chapter-26

Travellers205

Chapter-27

Indian Bronze Sculpture207

27.1 North India207

27.2 South India207

27.3 Nataraja208

Chapter-28

Miscellaneous209

28.1 Indian Architecture209

28.2 Indian Handicraft213

28.3 Indian Music213

28.4 Dances of India214

28.5 Religions in India214

28.6 Languages in India214

28.7 Fairs and Festivals of India216

28.8 Tribes in India218

28.9 Schemes218



A

Section

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NEXT
IAS

Visual Arts

Indian architecture, an expression over space and time, has evolved through centuries. It is closely associated with its history, religion, culture, geography and socio-economic conditions. As India hosts diversity in the before mentioned respects, Indian architectural styles also shows diversities. In this chapter, this evolution will be discussed in details beginning from ancient Indian architecture to modern times.

The whole chapter is divided into three sections:

- Indian architecture in Ancient India
- Indian architecture in medieval times
- Modern Indian architecture

1.1 Indian Architecture in Ancient India

Although art forms like pottery, sculpture etc., had taken shape in prehistoric period, yet architecture in its present forms has its roots in Indus valley civilization in the form of town planning.

Indus Valley Civilisation Architecture

- This period extending from 2600 BCE to 1900 BCE witnessed the development of some of the earliest big buildings in India. There are various important sites of Indus valley civilization each with its unique architectural features along with similarities. These sites possessed a flourishing urban architecture.

Some unique features of its urban architecture are:



Figure: Citadel of Indus Valley Civilisation

- In most sites, cities were divided into 2 parts:
 - ♦ **Citadel:** It is smaller and higher (standing some 40 to 50 feet above) than the rest of the area and situated on the western side of the town.
 - ♦ **Lower town:** It occupies much larger area as compared to citadel but is on a lower plain than citadel. It is situated on the eastern side. It is divided into wards like chess board
- Cities are in parallelogramic form laid out in a regular grid pattern.
- There were large-scale use of burnt bricks of standard dimensions (4×2×1) for purpose of construction and thus there was marked difference from expectations as there was absence of stone buildings:
 - ♦ These bricks were coated with plaster and also made water tight with natural tar or gypsum.
 - ♦ In Houses, kutcha bricks were used while in bathrooms and drains pucca bricks were used which were made waterproof by using gypsum.
- The cities comprised of well-planned and thought out architectural features:
 - ♦ Underground drainage with inspection holes – Drainage system has been the most striking feature of this civilization. Small drains ran from each house and were connected to drains running along the main roads. The inspection hole, where top cover was loosely attached, was mainly to allow regular cleaning and maintenance. The picture below depicts the drainage and houses.
 - ♦ The streets were all aligned from east to west or from north to south.



Figure: Drainage at Mohenjo Daro

- Citadel comprised various buildings like Great bath, pillared assembly halls, granaries etc.



Figure: Great Bath, Mohenjo Daro

- ♦ **Great Bath:** Great bath, found at the site of Mohenjodaro, had an ingenious hydraulic system. It denotes the prevalence of public baths and thus importance of ritualistic cleansing in that era.
- ♦ The pool used to be in the centre of a large open quadrangle surrounded by rooms on all sides. It is connected to these rooms through a flight of steps at either end. The pool was fed by a well nearby and the dirty water was drained into the city's sewage system through a large corbelled drain.
- ♦ **Granaries:** The granaries were designed with strategic air ducts and raised platforms, giving us an idea of the intelligence behind its construction. The largest building in Mohenjodaro was granary. Some sites like Harappa had as many as six granaries.
- ♦ **Pillared Assembly Hall:** The pillared hall with twenty pillars arranged in rows of five probably carried a large roof supported on them. It might have served as the court of the city magistrate or as a secretariat of the State.



Figure: Pillared Assembly Hall

- Lower town had houses of various different sizes which, as some researchers believe that, showed people had different economic status. The class distinction between rich and poor existed where rich had private wells and toilets.
 - ♦ No house had windows opening up in the main street. Even entrance of the house was through sideways.
 - ♦ Most buildings were properly ventilated even as the constructions varied from a one-roomed building to even double-storied houses.
 - ♦ A house plan is shown in the given picture.

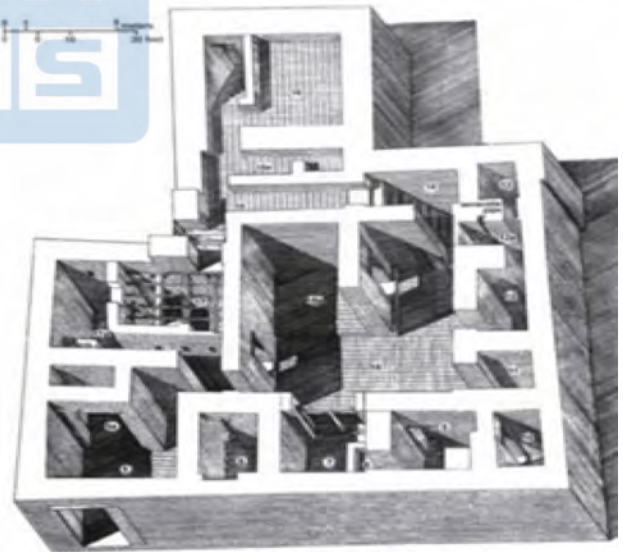


Figure: House Plan

Other important findings are:

- **Harappa**
 - ♦ Coffin burial.
 - ♦ Granary outside the fort.
 - ♦ Phallus worship.
 - ♦ Graveyard.
 - ♦ Mother goddess.

- **Mohenjo-Daro**
 - ♦ Prepared Garments.
 - ♦ Temple like Palace.
 - ♦ Pashupati seal.
 - ♦ Statue of a dancing girl.
 - ♦ Ivory weight balance.
 - ♦ The Great Bath.
 - ♦ The Great Granary.
 - ♦ Priest king statue.
- **Kalibangan**
 - ♦ Lower fortified town.
 - ♦ Fire Altar.
 - ♦ Boustrophedon style.
 - ♦ Wooden drainage.
 - ♦ Copper ox.
 - ♦ Evidence of earthquake.
 - ♦ Wooden plough.
 - ♦ Camel's bone.
- **Lothal**
 - ♦ Port Town.
 - ♦ Evidence of Rice.
 - ♦ Fire Altar.
 - ♦ Graveyard.
 - ♦ Ivory weight balance.
 - ♦ Copper dog.
- **Rangpur**
 - ♦ Evidence of Rice.
- **Surkotada**
 - ♦ Horse bone.
 - ♦ Stone covered grave.
- **Malavan**
 - ♦ Canals.
- **Chanhudaro**
 - ♦ Bangle factory.
 - ♦ Ink pot.
 - ♦ Only city without citadel.
 - ♦ Carts with seated driver.
- **Daimabad**
 - ♦ Bronze Buffalo.
- **Amri**
 - ♦ Actual remains of Rhinoceros.
- **Alamgirpur**
 - ♦ Impression of cloth on a trough.
- **Ropar**
 - ♦ Buildings made of stone and soil.
 - ♦ Dog buried with humans.
- ♦ One inscribed steatite seal with typical Indus pictographs.
- ♦ Oval pit burials.
- **Banawali**
 - ♦ Oval shaped settlement.
 - ♦ Only city with radial streets.
 - ♦ Toy plough.
 - ♦ Largest number of barley grains.
- **Dholavira**
 - ♦ Only site to be divided into three parts.
 - ♦ Giant water reservoir.
 - ♦ Unique water harnessing system.
 - ♦ Dams.
 - ♦ A stadium.

1.2 Mauryan Architecture

Mauryan empire which ruled over most of the Indian subcontinent from 321 BCE to 185 BCE contributed one of the earliest and greatest architectural marvels after Indus valley civilization. The architecture of this period comprised of pillars, stupas and caves which was built under the patronage of Mauryan rulers especially Ashoka. This period witnessed an important transition in Indian art from use of wood to stone. This is the reason perhaps no significant architectural remains are found corresponding to the period between Indus valley civilization and Mauryan period.

Pillars

It comprises the most striking monuments of Mauryan. These are referred at some places as Pillars of Dharma. Some pillars marked the stages of Asoka's pilgrimage to various centers of Buddhism. The major structural features of pillars of this period are:

- **Free Standing Columns:** It means they were not used as supports to any structure
- **Four Parts:**
 - ♦ The shaft is polished monolith column made from one piece of stone. The polish gave the pillar a metallic tinge in spite of being made in stone.
 - ♦ The capital is a stone carved in the shape of an inverted lotus (bell capital).
 - ♦ A cylindrical bolt joins the top of the shaft to the capital
 - ♦ On top of capital is the abacus (platform) which supports the crowning animal or animals. The abacus is square and plain in earlier pillars and circular and carved in later ones.

Other important features of pillar art are:

- They are made of Chunar sand stone.



Figure: Ashokan Pillar and lion Capital

- They are considered to be monoliths – Thus it is different from Archemian pillars which are constructed in pieces.
- They do not have a base and the plain smooth circular shaft tapers slightly to upwards.
- All part of the pillars are carved in the round which means they are meant to be viewed same from all the directions.
- These columns were erected by Ashoka all over his empire either to mark a sacred site associated with Buddha's life or to commemorate a great event. Various famous edicts of Ashoka have been inscribed on the pillars to propagate the Dhamma or the imperial sermons of Ashoka to his people. Some important information about these edicts is given in the box.

The Inscriptions on these edicts is deciphered by James Princep. Most edicts are in Pali language with Prakrit usage at some places

Script varies in different regions

- Northwest India : Kharoshti script
- West India : Geek and Aramaic
- Rest of India : Brahmi script

Some Asokan edicts in Kharoshti script shows the influence of Persian architecture. In fact, the very idea of issuing edicts is Iranian.

- The famous Sarnath pillar was built during this period which has a magnificent capital. It has been adopted as the emblem of the Modern Indian Republic. Its mains features are
 - ♦ The lowest part of the capitol is curved as an inverted lotus.

- ♦ Above it are four animals, an elephant, a horse, a bull and a lion. Each of these has a unique significance:
 - (a) **Lion:** The lion, unlike being a solar symbol in many ancient traditions, is a reference to the Buddha as he is referred to as Sakya Simha (lion among the sakyas)
 - (b) **Elephant:** It symbolises the birth of Buddha
 - (c) **Bull:** The bull is a symbol of fertility.
 - (d) **Spoked Wheel:** The wheels between the animal motifs almost appear to be pulling an invisible vehicle as if to perpetuate the wheel of Dhamma.
- Other important examples of pillar art of this period are - capitals of Vaishali, Lauriya Nandangarh, Rampurva pillars.

Stupas

- Inside the stupa, relics of Buddha were preserved in a casket in central hall. The stupa came to be accepted as a sort of architectural body representing the Buddha himself. The base of the stupa represents the crossed legs, the middle portion represents the body, and the top piece represents the head.

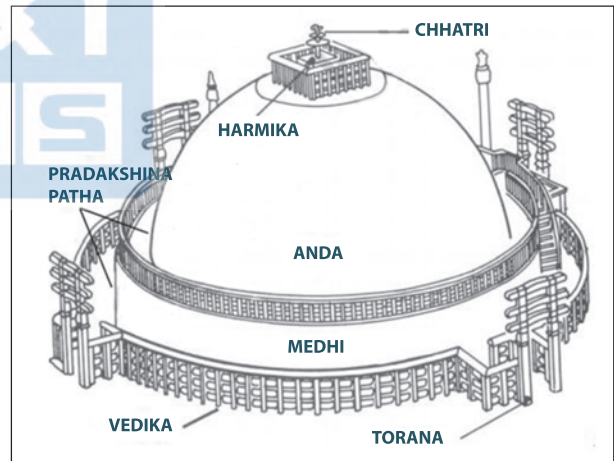


Figure: Stupa Architecture

- Stupas were a way used by King Ashoka to spread Buddhism. His dedication could be seen in building roughly 84,000 stupas across his empire. It was said that he divided the ashes of the Buddha's earthly body amongst them.

The most famous stupa of this time is Sanchi Stupa.

Its features are as follows:

- Hemispherical dome truncated near the top known as Anda.
- The top of the dome was decorated by a wooden or stone umbrella denoting universal supremacy of Dharma:

- ♦ It comprises of three chatras which represents triratnas of Buddhism: Buddha, Dhama and Sangha
- ♦ These three are connected with each other through Danda.
- The core of the stupa is made of unburnt brick and the outer face of burnt brick covered with a thick layer of plaster
- The stupa is encircled by a path for pradakshina.

Another examples of some important stupas of this period are – Amravati stupa, Barhut Stupa in Rajasthan, Gandhara Stupa, Piprawaha stupa in UP.

Caves

The caves, representing a wonderful specimen of Mauryan art, were constructed for the residence of monks. It represents the beginning of rock cut architecture. Their interior was polished like mirror.

Some examples of caves built in this period comprises - Barabar caves in the north of Gaya, Nagarjuni hill caves, Sudama caves, Gopi caves etc. The caves are simple in plan with plain but highly polished interiors. The only sculpture ornamentation is a relief carving on the doorway of a cave known as Lomas Rishi cave (same as barabar caves).



Figure: Lomas rishi cave, Barabar

The Barabar hill cave was donated by Asoka to Ajivika monks and some caves at Nagarjuni hills were donated by Dasharatha to them. The 4 caves in Barabar and 3 caves in Nagarjuni near Gaya in Bihar, together were known as 7 sisters.

Palaces and residential buildings

The architecture of Mauryan Palaces and Residential buildings was so magnificent and of such high standard that Fa-Hien remarked that “no human hands of this world could accomplish this.”

The gilded pillars of the Mauryan palace were adorned with golden vines and silver birds.

One good example of this is the royal assembly building, situated in Kumhrar, which is a hall with numerous pillars. Wood was the principle building material.

1.3 Post-Mauryan Architecture

Post-Mauryan period roughly corresponds to the period from 200 BCE to 300 CE where rulers like Sungas, Satvahanas, Indo-greeks, Sakas, Kushanas ruled.

Post-Mauryan art is generally associated with following broad characteristics:

- It is structural art which means it was originally part of architectural structures like the gateways, railings and facades of stupas, chaityas, viharas and temples.
- It narrates or describes scenes from myths and legends associated with divine and semi-divine beings.
- It also depicts signs and symbols.
- It is regarded as more popular art than Mauryan representing the folk spirit of commoners.

In this period, caves and stupas continued with little differences from the past. Stupas got enlarged, their height was raised and gateways & toranas were beautifully carved now. Caves were now used for two purposes unlike earlier.

Chaityas to be used by monks as a prayer hall like Karle Chaitya in Maharashtra. The ancient rock-cut Buddhist caves of Ajanta were built during this period. They started carving from top of the hill and reach the bottom. Ajanta Cave 10 is thought to have the oldest Chaitya hall at Ajanta.



Figure: Karle Cave

Viharas to be used by monks as rest place or residence like Nashik Vihar, Ajanta caves. It used to look like rooms are built along a straight line with front pillars.



Figure: Ajanta Caves

1.4 Sangam Architecture

Sangam period roughly corresponds from 300 BCE to 300 CE. The major kingdoms of this period were early Cholas, Cheras and the Pandyan.

Example of temples built in this period are, the Saluvannkuppan Murugan temple which consists of three layers, the Veetrirundha Perumal Temple at Veppathur dedicated to Lord Vishnu.



Figure: Remains of Saluvannkuppan Murugan temple

1.5 Architecture in Gupta Age

Gupta period extends from 320 CE to 600 CE. This period is considered a golden age of artistic accomplishment. The Guptas were the first architects of Hindu temples. The temple architecture evolved from the earlier tradition of rock-cut shrines to the ones adorned with towers and elaborate carvings.

The evolution of temple architecture in this phase is elaborately discussed in the coming section.

1.6 Gupta Cave Shrines

The Gupta emperors built prodigiously across their empire but the oldest examples of structures built with a distinct religious and philosophical affiliation are cave shrines.

Cave shrines are rooms carved into flat rock walls for religious ceremonies or worship. These are generally associated with Hinduism, although some are Buddhist.

Relying on the solid rock for structural support, these shrines introduced Indian builders to many concepts of architectural stability and provided a massive canvas for reliefs.

Notable examples are found at Udayagiri in Madhya Pradesh. Here, in one shrine is one of the finest examples of Gupta art, the celebrated relief showing Vishnu in his incarnation as the boar-headed Varaha.



Figure: Udayagiri caves

The caves of the Buddhist and Hindus sects denote the architectural pattern of the Guptas.

Some features of the important caves developed during this period is given in the subsequent paragraphs

Ajanta Caves

There are a total of 29 caves of which 25 were used as Viharas while 4 were used as Chaityas. Dating from the 2nd century BCE to 7th century CE, they contain some of the earliest and finest examples of Indian wall-painting. The subject matter is largely scenes from the life of Buddha. Cave 1 contains some the Bhodisattva Padampani and Vajrapani paintings.

Cave 19 was built in the 5th century CE and has a Gupta-style chaitya (shrine) facade with columned porch and large, almost semi-circular aperture above. The whole facade is covered in rich carvings and relief panels showing scenes from Buddhist lore.



Figure: Ajanta Caves

- Ajanta Caves are located in the Aurangabad District of Maharashtra.
- The caves are built on perpendicular cliff, unlike Ellora (sloping sides). Since the caves are on perpendicular side there are not many chaityas.
- Fresco was another art technique which was prevalent in Gupta Architecture seen in the Ajanta Caves.
 - ♦ It first has a layer of clay mixed with cow dung and rice husk paste spread on rough surface.
 - ♦ It is followed by a coating of lime plaster.
 - ♦ Finally the surface is kept moist till the painting is done.
- Outlines for the same are in red and other colours. Blue is not seen in Ajanta.
- The theme for such art is usually Jataka which are tales regarding the previous births of Gautama Buddha.
- Fahein and Hiuen tsang are mentioned in Ajanta.
- Five caves are of Hinayana Buddhism and rest depict Mahayana Buddhism.
- Cave 16 is the most elegant of all. Famous paintings include – Dying Princess, Flying Apsara and Preaching Buddha.
- The interiors are covered with painted murals that feature superb figures drawn with a gracefully winding line.
- Large stone figures, stone and terra-cotta relief and large and small bronze statuettes are made in the refined Gupta style.
- The level of production is uniformly high.

Ellora Caves

- Three religions are depicted in each of the 34 caves (17 Hinduism + 12 Buddhism + 5 Jainism).
- It is on the sloping side of the hill
- Contribution by Rashtrakuta is seen in these caves
- Cave 10 is a Chaitya for Lord Vishwakarma, Cave 14 depicts Ravana ki Khai, Cave 15 the Dashavatara Cave and Cave 16, the Kailasha Temple.
- Three storeyed caves are also present in Ellora.
- Two famous Jain caves are Indra Sabha and Jagannath Sabha.



Figure: Kailash Temple, Ellora

Bagh Caves

- Located on the bank of the Bagh river in Madhya Pradesh.
- Group of 9 Buddhist caves developed around 6th century CE which are architecturally very similar to the Ajanta caves.



Junagadh Caves

- These caves are found in Gujarat and are of Buddhist religion.
- They contain Uparkots which are 30-50ft high artificial platforms connected by a staircase to the hall.



Nashik Caves

- There are 25 Buddhist Caves belonging to Hinayana
- They date back to First Century CE
- It is also called Pandava Leni.
- The spiritual presence of Buddha is denoted by a Throne and footprints.
- Most of the caves are Viharas except for the 18th cave which is a Chaitya.



Montperir Caves/Mandapeshwar

- These caves are located near Mount Poinsur in Borivali, and were originally on the banks of River Dhaisa.
- An Eighth Century cut rock, dedicated to Shiva can be found in these caves.
- There is an open ground in front of the caves which is used as a playground and parking area by slum-dwellers from the slum in front of it.
- This was converted into a Christian Cave by the Portuguese.



Karle Cave

- Carved from the living rock
- Columns are strong and bulky, surmounted by sculptured capitals
- A stupa with a wooden umbrella on top unharmed to this date
- Largest Chaitya-Griha among all Buddhist monuments in India
- Has a huge lion pillars in front of Chaitya-Griha (only two caves have this design- Karla and Kanheri)



Kanheri Cave

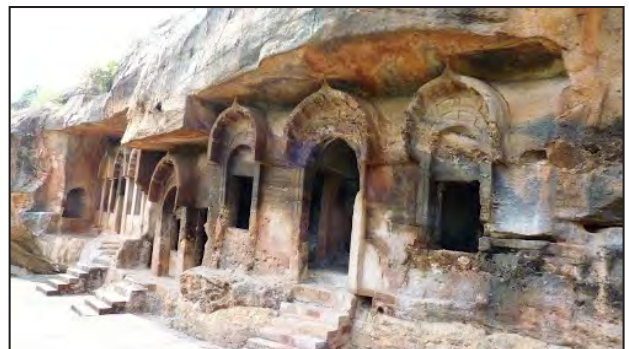
- Second largest Chaitya-Griha in India, after Karle caves.
- Lion Pillars at the Entrance. (Just like Karle caves)
- Podhis: water cisterns for rainwater harvesting
- Images of both Standing Buddha and sitting Buddha flanked by Bodhisattvas
- Famous Satvahan king Gautamiputra Satakarni's name mentioned in the inscriptions here



Cave Architecture in Eastern India

Guntapalle in Andhra Pradesh

The cave is relatively small when compared to the caves of Western India. Perhaps it is among the very unique sites where the structured Stupas, Viharas and the caves are excavated at one place.



1.7 Temple Architecture

The Gupta Age, being an age of intense religion interests, saw the construction of many temples and religious architectures dedicated to various Hindu Gods such as Shiva, Vishnu, Surya, Kartikeya etc. Unfortunately, the Huna invaders destroyed most of those works and many disappeared under the ravages of time as well.

It is perhaps important to note here that Hindu temples were not designed for congregations but rather as the dwelling place of a deity. This decorated palace allowed priests to give offerings to the gods. Individuals could also offer prayers, flowers, and food (puja) to a sacred relic or statue representing a particular god. Believers would also walk around the temple in a ritual act of worship.

Features of Gupta Temple Architecture

- The Gupta monuments were built under the Puranic religious concepts.
- They represented both balance and beauty.
- They maintained external decorations of a higher order both in brick temples and stone.
- The Gupta style was influenced by Kusana, Mathura, and Gandhara and borrowed the common features of T-shaped doorways, decorated door jambs, sculpted panels with high-relief figures, and laurel-wreath and acanthus motifs.
- In Gupta architecture the square was considered the most perfect form and temples were designed to be appreciated from all sides.
- They were constructed using sandstone, granite, and brick.

A few notable examples of Gupta architecture worth mentioning are elaborated below:

Dashavatara Temple at Deogarh

- It is considered the best because of its beautiful sculpture with many figures.
- At Deogarh the platform had reliefs running around it depicting scenes from the Ramayana epic poem.
- In the centre of the jagati stood the principle shrine, which was without windows and accessed by a flight of steps on all four sides. This is known as Panchayatana style.



- Four lesser shrines stand at each corner of the complex.
- The doorway to the square sanctuary tower of the Dashavatara temple is a fine example and carries sculpture of Vishnu, Brahma, Indra, Ganga, and Yamuna, as well as attendants and mithuna couples.
- The temple also carries one of the most famous sculptural panels from ancient India, the Vishnu Anantasayana panel (shown in image below).
- The scene contains many gods but is dominated by a sleeping Vishnu who rests on the multi-headed serpent Ananta and floats on the waters of oblivion whilst from his navel sprouts a lotus leaf on which sits Brahma, the god of creation.
- Besides the structures in stones, the Gupta temple-architecture was also erected in brick. Among the brick temples, the most famous one is the temple at Bhitargaon in Kanpur district of Uttar Pradesh.

Bhitargaon Temple

The temple at Bhitargaon in Uttar Pradesh is one of the most complete surviving Gupta temples. It is a rare early example of a Hindu temple constructed entirely of brick, dating to the late 5th century CE. Although damaged in its upper portion, the four-sided and curved shikhara tower of the temple maintains its gavaksha niches and shallow pilasters which diminish in size as the tower rises to a pinnacle. These and the decorated capitals create frames in which were once set terracotta panels.



Few panels survive intact but examples from other sites demonstrate that they would have once shown lively scenes from mythology, in particular figures of river goddesses.

1.8 Evolution of Temple Architecture in Gupta Period

Stage 1

- Square building with flat roof and shallow pillared porch
- The nucleus of a temple - the sanctum or cella (garbagriha) with a single entrance and a porch (mandapa) appears for the first time here.
- **Example:** The Kankali Devi temple at Tigawa and the Vishnu and Varaha temples at Eran.



Figure: Varaha Temple, Eran

Stage 2

- In the Second stage Flat Roof and square temple continued and so did the pillar approach except it wasn't shallow.
- An elaboration of the first type with the addition of an ambulatory (pradakshina) around the sanctum and sometimes a second storey
- The temples now were on an upraised platform
- **Examples:** The Shiva temple at Bhumara (Madhya Pradesh).



Figure: Ladkhan Temple, Aihole

Stage 3

- Square temple with a low and squat tower (shikhara) above.
- The Panchayatana Style was introduced along with the concept of subsidiary shrines.
- **Examples:** The Dasavatara temple (built in stone at Deogarh, Jhansi district) and the brick temple at Bhitargaon (Kanpur district).
- A high platform at the base and the tower add to the elevation of the composition.
- The second and third types storeyed and Shikara underwent further developments to crystallise into two distinctive styles in the south and the north namely Nagara style and Dravida style respectively.



Figure: Dasavatara Temple

Stage 4

- Rectangular temple with an apsidal back and barrel-vaulted roof above
- **Example:** Ter temple at Sholapur (as shown in below figure).



Stage 5

- Circular temple with shallow rectangular projections at the four cardinal faces

- *Example:* The Maniyar Matha shrine at Rajgir, Bihar (as shown in below figure).
- The fourth and fifth types appear to be survivals/adaptations of the earlier forms and do not appear to have much influenced subsequent development.

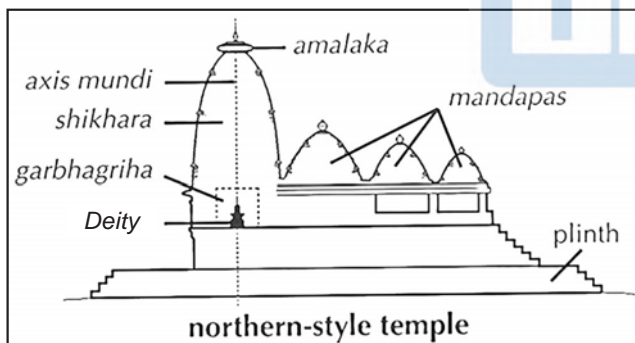


1.9 Different Styles of Temple Architecture

Nagara Style

The Nagara style is a successor of the third stage of temple making.

- The Nagara Style of Temple architecture saw the absence of tank in the temples.
- The temple walls were divided into three vertical planes or 'Rathas'.



- Sculptures were made in these three rathas -Trirathas. Later Pancharatha, Saptaratha and even Navaratha emerged.
- A tower (Shikara) gradually curving inwards and capped by a spheroid slab with ribs around the edge (Amalaka) give the elevation.
- To major characteristics of this style are:
 - ♦ Cruciform ground plan
 - ♦ Curvilinear tower
- This style was prominent in northern and central India but not in the Peninsular.
- Three sub schools developed in Nagara Style: Odisha School, Khajuraho School and Solanki School.

Khajuraho Style

- This style was developed by Chandela Rulers (10th –11th Century). Both the interior and the exterior of the temple are lavishly decorated with intricate carvings. Sculptures based on erotic themes seen on the temples.
- Temples lacked boundary walls. Shikaras were seen even on the subsidiary shrines and such style had temples on high platforms. There are three key elements seen in this style: Garbha Griha, Assembly Hall and Portico (Veranda surrounded by pillars).



Figure: Vishvanatha Temple, Khajuraho

Solanki School

- This school was based in Gujarat under the Solanki Rulers (11th – 30th Century). Temples were constructed on the steps of massive rectangular stepped tank. The wall of the central shrine is devoid of carvings and the temple faces east. Hence every year on Equinox sun shines directly onto the Central Shrine.
- The central projections of the west, north and south faces are occupied by matching balconies with purna-kalasha columns and a deep porch frames. The entrance to the temple is in the east.



Figure: The Sun Temple at Modhera

Odisha School

- Most of the main temple sites are located in ancient Puri and Konark.
- Here the shikhara, called deul in Odisha, is vertical almost until the top when it suddenly curves sharply inwards.
- Deuls are preceded, as usual, by mandapas called jagamohana in Odisha.
- The ground plan of the main temple is square, which, in the upper reaches of its superstructure becomes circular in the crowning mastaka.
- The exterior of the temples are lavishly carved, their interiors generally quite bare.
- Odisha temples usually have boundary walls.
- Example: Konark Temple, Jagannath temple, Lingaraj temple.



Figure: Konark Sun Temple

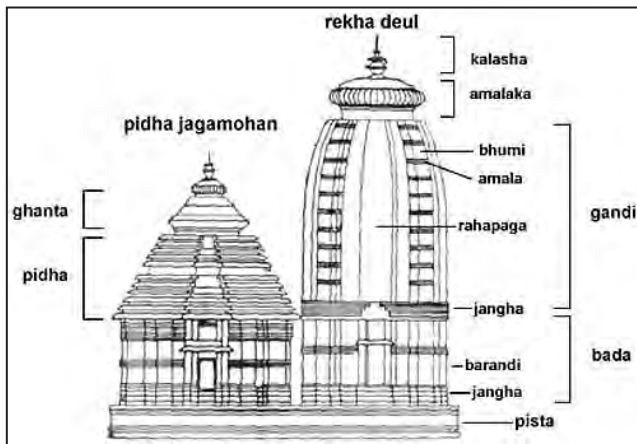


Figure: Jagannath Temple Architecture

Three Subtypes of Nagara Temple Depending upon the Shape of Shikhara

Rekha Prasad/Latina

- Simple Shikhara Square at the base and the walls curve inward to a point on the top.

- Latina types are mainly used for housing the garbhagriha
- The top is called 'latina' or the rekha-Prasad type of Shikhara.



Phamsana

- Phamsana buildings tend to be broader and shorter than latina buildings.
- Their roofs are composed of several slabs that gently rise to a single point over the center of building, unlike the latina ones which look like sharply rising tall towers.
- They do not curve inwards, instead they slope upwards on a straight incline.
- In many North Indian temples Phamsana was used for mandapa and latina for Garbhagriha.



Valabhi

- Rectangular building with a roof that rises into a vaulted chamber.
- They are usually called as wagon vaulted buildings.
- Example Nandi Devi or Nav Durga temple Jogeshwar.



Temple Architecture in South India

Pallava Architecture

- This style was seen during the Pallava Period and can be divided into four stages.
- First stage, included the Mahendra Group, Rock Cut Arches and the word Mandapa was used.
- Second stage, included the Narasimha Group, decorations were done in rock cut cave structures and Mandap now became Rathas.

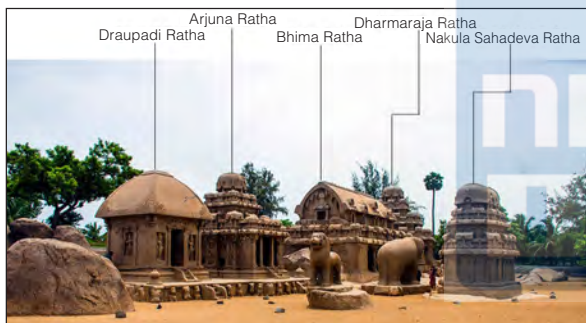


Figure: Ratha Temple, Mahabalipuram

- Third stage, Raja Simha Group, development of the real structural temples and the shore temple at Mahabalipuram and Kailasanatha Temple at Kanchipuram are attested to the third stage.
- Fourth stage, the Nandi Varman Group, development of Small temples and Dravidian style further continued into the fourth stage.



Figure: Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram

Dravidian Style

- Deployed for Hindu temples in Tamil Nadu from the 7th to 18th century, characterized by its pyramidal tower
- Unlike the nagara temple, the dravida temple is enclosed within a compound wall.
- The front wall has an entrance gateway in its centre, which is known as Gopura/ Gopuram
- Consists of a square-chambered sanctuary topped by a superstructure or tower (Vimana)
- Consists of an attached pillared porch or hall (Mandapa) which precede the door leading to the nucleus cell
- The vimana is like a stepped pyramid that rise up geometrically rather than the curving shikhara of north India.
- Each story is delineated by a parapet of miniature shrines, and barrel-vault roofs at the centre.
- The tower is topped by a dome-shaped cupola and a crowning pot and finial.
- A large water reservoir or a temple tank enclosed in the complex is general in south Indian temples.
- The north Indian idea of multiple shikharas rising together as a cluster was not popular in Dravida style.
- At some of the most sacred temples in south India, the main temple in which the garbhagriha is situated has, in fact, one of the smallest towers.



Figure: Dravidian Style of Temple Architecture

- This is because it is usually the oldest part of the temple.
- When the population and the size of the town associated with the temple increased, it would have become necessary to make a new boundary wall around the temple (and also associated structures).
- An example for this is the Srirangam temple at Thiruchirappally, which has as many as seven concentric rectangular enclosure walls, each with gopurams.
- The outermost is the oldest while the tower right in the centre housing the garbhagriha is the oldest.

- Just as the nagara architecture has subdivisions, dravida temples also have subdivisions. These are basically of five different shapes:

Kutina or caturasra – square

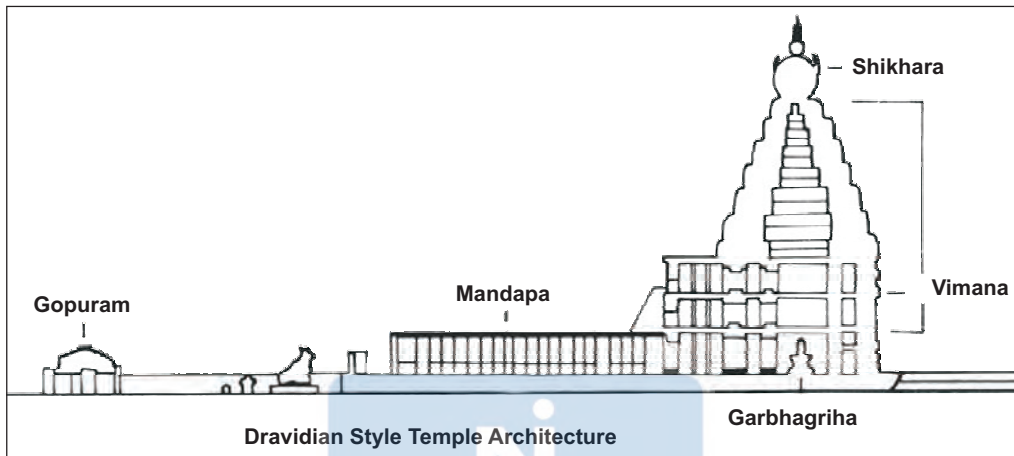
Shala or ayatasra – rectangular

Gaja-prishta or vrittayata (elephant backed) –elliptic

Vritta – circular

Ashtasra – octagonal

- Under Cholas, Dravidian style of architecture achieved perfection. Magnificent Shiva temples - Gangaikondacholapuram (by Rajendra), at Chidambaram, at Thanjavur (by Rajaraja) were built.
- Chola temples were endowed with land by rulers. They served as nuclei of settlements and centre of craft production. They were a place of worship as well as hub of soc-eco-cultural life, thus serving dual purpose.



Vesara style

It is a mix of both the Dravidian and the Nagara Style of the Temple Architecture. It is also called as Chalukyan Style. It consists of the Dravidian vimana and the Nagara type faceted walls among other features.

Influence of Nagara tradition: The plan of shrine, subsidiary shrine, panchayatan style etc. The plan of vestibule joining the sanctum to mantapa bears resemblance to Orissan temples.

Influence of Dravida tradition: The Dravida influence is mainly visible in vimana of the Chalukya temples.

Combination of Nagara and Dravida style: Vesara sikhar shows combination of northern shikhara and southern vimana features. Miniature decorative towers and ornamentation of walls in Chalukya temples show combination of both Nagara and Dravida style.

Departure from Nagara and Dravida tradition: It has two or more than two entrances while, there is a small closed mantapa to the shrine in Nagara temples and an enlarged, open and closed mantapa in Dravida temples.

Own distinctive features

- Two special features of Chalukya temples – Mantapa and Pillars:
 - Mantapa:** The mantapa has two types of roof – domical ceilings (the dome like ceilings standing on four pillars are very attractive) or Square ceilings (these are vigorously ornamented with mythological pictures).

- Pillars:** The miniature decorative pillars of Chalukya temples stands with its own artistic value.



Figure: Vesara Style of Temple Architecture

