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Temple architecture in India (Outline map not to scale)

TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE AND SCULPTURE

Today when we say 'temple' in English we generally mean a devalaya, devkula mandir, kovil, deol, devasthanam or prasada depending on which part of India we are in.



Most of the art and architectural remains that survive from Ancient and Medieval India are religious in nature. That does not mean that people did not have art in their homes at those times, but domestic dwellings and the things in them were mostly made from materials like wood and clay which have perished, or were made of metal (like iron, bronze, silver and even gold) which was melted down and reused from time to time. This chapter

introduces us to many types of temples from India. Although we have focussed mostly on Hindu temples, at the end of the chapter you will find some information on major Buddhist and Jain temples too. However, at all times, we must keep in mind that religious shrines were also made for many local cults in villages and forest areas, but again, not being of stone the ancient or medieval shrines in those areas have also vanished.

THE BASIC FORM OF THE HINDU TEMPLE

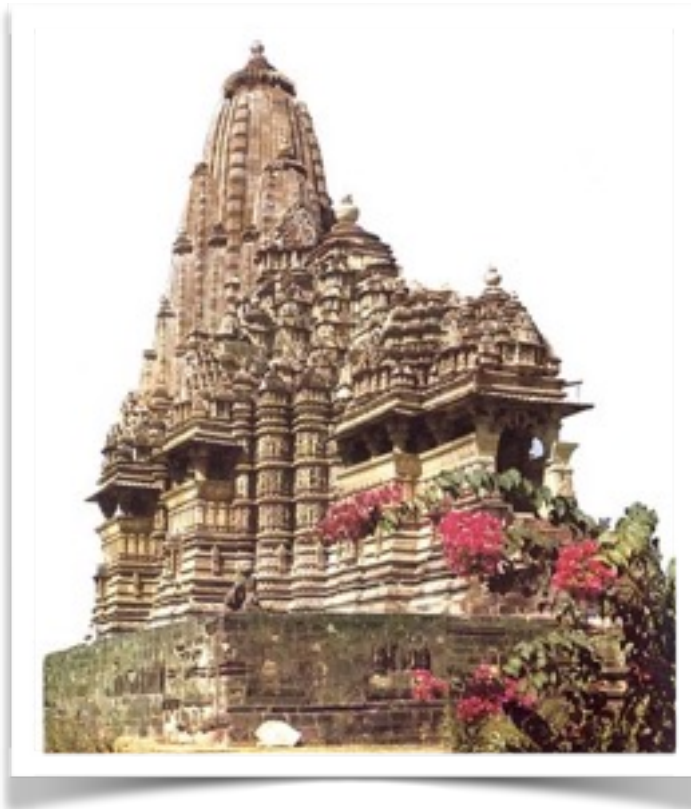
The basic form of the Hindu temple comprises the following:

- (i) **Garbhagriha**: a cave-like sanctum (*garbhagriha* literally ‘womb-house’), which, in the early temples, was a small cubicle with a single entrance and grew into a larger chamber in time. The *garbhagriha* is made to house the main icon which is itself the focus of much ritual attention.
- (ii) **Mandapa**: the **entrance** to the temple which may be a **portico or colonnaded hall** that incorporates space for a large number of worshippers and is known as a *mandapa*;
- (iii) **Shikhar/ Vimana**: from the fifth century CE onwards, freestanding temples tend to have a **mountain- like spire**, which can take the shape of a curving *shikhar* in North India and a pyramidal tower, called a *vimana*, in South India;
- (iv) **Vahan**, : the mount or vehicle of the temple’s main deity along with a standard pillar or *dhvaj* is placed axially before the sanctum.

Two broad orders of temples in the country are known— **Nagara in the north** and **Dravida in the south**.

At times, the **Vesar style of temples** as an independent style created through the selective mixing of the Nagara and Dravida orders is mentioned by some scholars. Elaborate studies are available on the various sub-styles within these orders.

As temples grew more complex, more surfaces were created for sculpture through additive geometry, i.e., by adding more and more rhythmically projecting, symmetrical walls and niches, without breaking away from the fundamental plan of the shrine.



SCULPTURE, ICONOGRAPHY AND ORNAMENTATION

The **study of images of deities** falls within a branch of art history called '**iconography**', which consists of identification of images based on certain symbols and mythologies associated with them. And very often, while the fundamental myth and meaning of the deity may remain the same for

centuries, its specific usage at a spot can be a response to its local or immediate social, political or geographical context.

Every region and period produced its own distinct style of images with its regional variations in iconography. The temple is covered with elaborate sculpture and ornament that form a fundamental part of its conception.

The placement of an image in a temple is carefully planned:

- for instance, river goddesses (Ganga and Yamuna) are usually found at the entrance of a *garbhagriha* in a *Nagara* temple,
- *dvarapalas* (doorkeepers) are usually found on the gateways or *gopurams* of *Dravida* temples,
- similarly, ***mithunas*** (erotic images), ***navagrahas*** (the nine auspicious planets) and ***yakshas*** are also placed at entrances to guard them.
- Various forms or aspects of the main divinity are to be found on the outer walls of the sanctum.
- The deities of directions, i.e., the ***ashtadikpalas*** face the eight key directions on the outer walls of the sanctum and/or on the outer walls of a temple.
- Subsidiary shrines around the main temple are dedicated to the family or incarnations of the main deity.
- Finally, various elements of ornamentation such as *gavaksha*, *vyala/yali*, *kalpa-lata*, *amalaka*, *kalasha*, etc. are used in distinct ways and places in a temple.

Evidence of the earliest known structural temples has been recovered through excavations.

Bairat, Jaipur

A circular brick and timber shrine of the Mauryan period of 3rd century B.C., was excavated at Bairat District of Jaipur, Rajasthan.

- The shrine measures 23 meters in diameter and was made of **lime-plastered brick work**, alternating with 26 octagonal pillars, of wood. It was entered from the east through a small portico, supported by two wooden pillars and was surrounded by a seven feet wide ambulatory.



Temple 40, Sanchi

A second example of a Maurya temple uncovered by excavations, **Temple 40' at Sanchi**, has a similar plan, it was a stone temple on an apsidal plan enclosed by an ambulatory, and raised



on a high, rectangular scale, approached by two flights of steps from diagonally opposite sides. The super-structure was possibly built of wood, and has disappeared.

In the following centuries the temple underwent a series of changes making it difficult to recognise from the original plan.

Temple 18, Sanchi

Temple 18 at Sanchi also was an apsidal stone temple probably with a timber superstructure, originally dating from the 2nd century B.C. The present remains of the **apsidal temple with its stately pillars and pilaster** dates from about the 7th century A.D. though the temple remained in use till the medieval period.



Aihole, Karnataka

Perhaps the earliest structural temple still standing in its original condition is the one constructed at **Aihole in Karnataka**. This is a little structure built of huge almost boulder-like blocks of stones. The temple consists of a simple square cell the garbhagriha or sanctum sanctorum, in front of which there is a covered verandah, a portico, which consists of four heavy pillars supporting a stone roof. The pillars as well as the entire structure is as simple as can be, except for a small frieze-like motif on the small parapet that runs on two sides of the ground length of the portico.

It is interesting to observe that the architect who built this edifice had not yet discovered that the two pillars nearest the cell need not have been built standing clear away from the wall but that they could easily have been pilasters, half pillars, half jutting out of the back wall of the verandah. Nor had he taken the climate into consideration and did not provide gargoyles to allow the rain water to run off the roof. The entire structure is heavy, bulky and clumsy. Probably, this was constructed near about 300 to 350 A.D.

Temple 17 , Sanchi

Temple No. 17, at Sanchi is a small temple built about 400 A.D. and everything attempted earlier, is done much better here. The stones are smaller and laid out in regular neat rows; the roof has been separated so that the portico has a slightly less prominent height - the Sanctum-Sanctorum being the



main house of the God. Gargoyles have been thoughtfully provided to drain off rain water and the four back pillars are more slender and beautifully carved. This temple truly belongs to the Classical Period and is marked by elegance, harmony, balance and dignity. Decoration is minimal and is only used where one structural form joins another.

An inverted lotus is placed where the top of the shaft joins. The capital and little lions, seated back to back, act as support where the roof rests on top of the pillar. The entire structure is simple, with no complication.

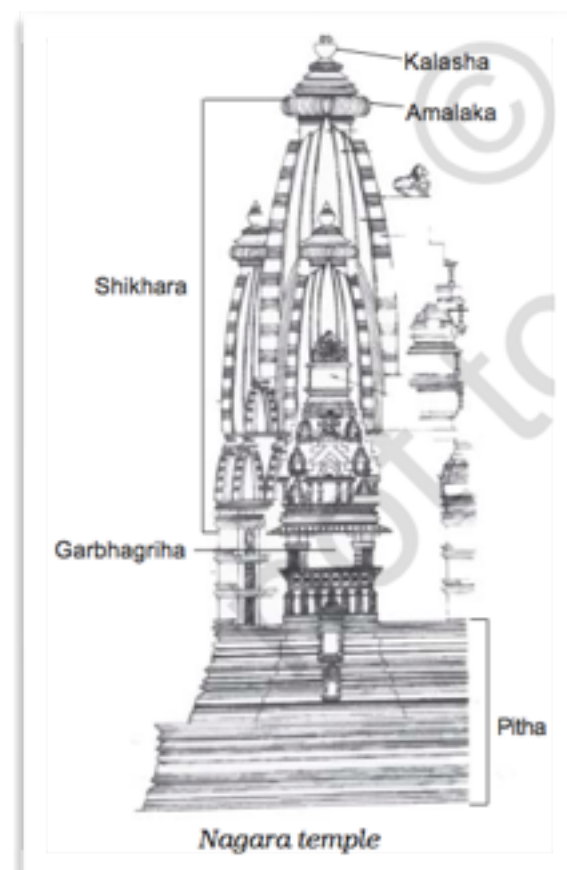
However, in the course of time the extremely plain and simple temple architecture becomes increasingly complicated, from a simple quadrangle it evolves into salient and re-entering angles, protrusions are added, making the outline more and more involved, till eventually it becomes almost like a star with more than a hundred little corners on the ground level.

THE NAGARA OR NORTH INDIAN TEMPLE STYLE

The style of temple architecture that became popular in northern India is known as *nagara*.

1. In North India it is common for an entire temple to be built on **a stone platform with steps** leading up to it.
2. Further, unlike in South India **it does not usually have elaborate boundary walls or gateways**.
3. While the earliest temples had just one tower, or *shikhara*, later temples had several.
4. The *garbhagriha* is always located directly under the tallest tower.

There are many subdivisions of *nagara* temples depending on the shape of the *shikhara*.



There are different names for the various parts of the temple in different parts of India;

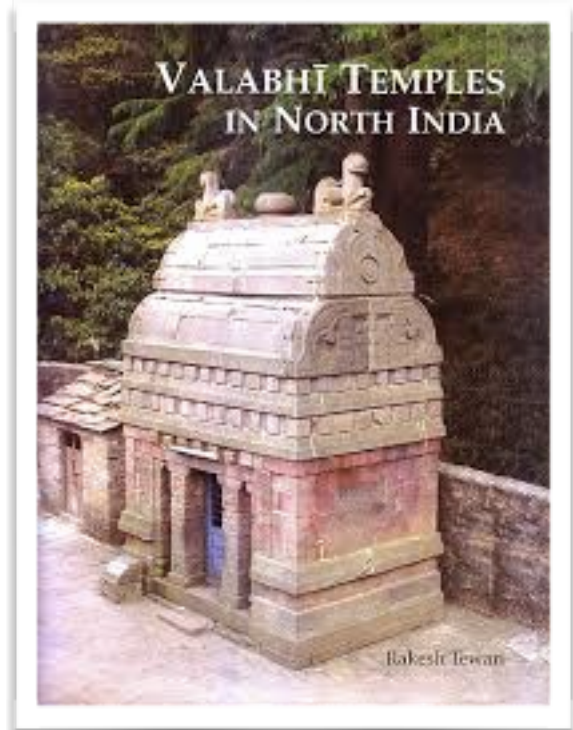
1. The most common name for the simple shikhara which is square at the base and whose walls curve or slope inward to a point on top is called the '**latina**' or the ***rekha-prasada* type of shikara**.
2. The second major type of architectural form in the *nagara* order is the ***phamsana***. *Phamsana* buildings tend to be broader and shorter than latina ones. **Their roofs are composed of several slabs that gently rise to a single point over the centre of the building, unlike the latina ones which look like sharply rising tall towers.** Phamsana roofs do not curve inward, instead they slope upwards on a straight incline.

In many North Indian temples you will notice that the phamsana design is used for the mandapas while the main garbhagriha is housed in a latina building.

Later on, the latina buildings grew complex, and instead of appearing like a single tall tower, the temple began to support many smaller towers, which were clustered together like rising mountain-peaks with the tallest one being in the centre, and this was the one which was always above the *garbhagriha*.

3. The third main sub-type of the *nagara* building is what is generally called the "***valabhi* type**". These are rectangular buildings with a roof that rises into a vaulted chamber.

The edge of this vaulted chamber is rounded, like the bamboo or wooden wagons that would have been drawn by bullocks in ancient times. They are usually called '**wagon- vaulted buildings**'. As mentioned above, the form of the temple is influenced by ancient building forms that were already in existence before the fifth century CE. The *valabhi* type of building was one of them. For instance, if you study the ground-plan of many of the Buddhist rock-cut *chaitya* caves, you will notice that they are shaped as long halls which end in a curved back. From the inside, the roof of this portion also looks like a wagon-vaulted roof.



Central India

Ancient temples of **Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan** share many traits.

1. The most visible is that they are made of **sandstone**.
2. Some of the oldest surviving structural temples from the Gupta Period are in Madhya Pradesh.
3. These are relatively modest-looking shrines **each having four pillars** that support a **small *mandapa*** which looks like a simple square porch-like extension before an equally small room that served as the ***garbhagriha***.
4. Importantly, of the two such temples that survive, one is at **Udaigiri**, which is on the outskirts of Vidisha and is part of a larger Hindu complex of cave shrines, while the other one is at **Sanchi**, which was a Buddhist site. **This means that similar developments were being incorporated in the architecture of temples of both the religions.**

Dashavatara Temple, Deogarh

The patrons and donors of the temple at Deogarh (in Lalitpur District, Uttar Pradesh) are unknown; however on the basis of both architecture and imagery, it is established that this **temple was built in the early sixth century CE**. That is, about a hundred years or so after the small temples we just learnt about in Sanchi and Udaigiri. This makes it a classic example of a **late Gupta Period type of temple**.

1. This temple is in the ***panchayatana* style of architecture** where the main shrine is built on a **rectangular plinth with four smaller subsidiary shrines at the four corners** (making it a total number of five shrines, hence the name, *panchayatana*).



2. The tall and curvilinear *shikhara* also corroborates this date.

3. The presence of this **curving latina or rekha-prasada type of shikhara** also makes it clear that this is an early example of a classic *nagara* style of temple.

4. This **west-facing temple** has a grand doorway with **standing sculptures of female figures representing the Ganga on the left side and the Yamuna on the right side**. The temple is west-facing, which is less common, as most temples are east- or north-facing.

5. The temple depicts Vishnu in various forms, due to which it was assumed that the four subsidiary shrines must also have housed Vishnu's *avatars* and the temple was mistaken for a *dasavatara* temple. In fact, **it is not actually known to whom the four subsidiary shrines were originally dedicated**.

6. There are three main reliefs of Vishnu on the temple walls:

- ***Sheshashayana*** on the south,
- ***Nara- Narayan*** on the east
- ***Gajendramoksha*** on the west.

Sheshashayana is the form of Vishnu where he is shown reclining on the *sheshanaga* called **Ananta**.



Nara-Narayan shows the discussion between the human soul and the eternal divine.



Gajendramoksha is the story of achieving *moksha*, symbolically communicated by Vishnu's suppression of an *asura* who had taken the form of an elephant.



Numerous temples of smaller dimensions have been constructed over a period of time. **By contrast, if we study the temples of Khajuraho made in**

the tenth century, i.e., about four hundred years after the temple at Deogarh, we can see how dramatically the shape and style of the *nagara* temple architecture had developed.

Temples at Khajuraho

Khajuraho, twenty five miles North of Panna and twenty seven miles of Chhatarpur in Madhya Pradesh is an important place because of the exquisite temples built there by the Chandellas.

1. The Khajuraho temples are **cruciform in plan** with the **long axis from East to West**.
2. Built of **buff sandstone** from the quarries of Panna, these temples have a **soft texture and a most pleasing colour**.
3. The temples have usually been made on **high terraces**.
4. Almost all the temples have an inner shrine, an assembly hall or mandapa, and an entrance portico.
5. The temples at Khajuraho have a **circumambulatory passage** also.
6. Some of the temples at Khajuraho are a **cluster of five shrines** - the main temple surrounded by four others at each corner. In architecture, these types of temples are known as **Panchayatana** - a temple that has a central shrine surrounded by four other shrines.

The Kandariya Temple, the Mahadeva Temple, the Devi Jagadamba Temple, the Chitragupta Temple, the Vishwanatha Temple, the Parvati Temple, the Lakshamana or Chaturbhuj Temple; the Varaha Temple; the Chaunsat Yogini Temple (the only temple made entirely of granite and dedicated to sixty four yoginis) are some of the very famous and worth studying from the art and architectural point of view.

These temples were built **between tenth to late twelfth centuries**. The South-East of Khajuraho is famous for Jain Temples.



The Parsvanatha Temple is most important one whereas the Ghantai Temple is named because of the bell and chain ornaments at its pillars.

Lakshmana temple

1. Dedicated to **Vishnu** is the grandest temple of Khajuraho, built in 954 by the **Chandela king, Dhanga**.
2. A *nagara* temple, it is placed on a high platform accessed by stairs.
3. There are **four smaller temples in the corners**, and all the towers or *shikharas* rise high, upward in a **curved pyramidal fashion**, emphasising the temple's vertical thrust **ending in a horizontal fluted disc called an amalak topped with a kalash or vase**.
4. The crowning elements: ***amalak* and *kalash***, are to be found on all *nagara* temples of this period.



5. The temple also has projecting balconies and verandahs, thus very different from Deogarh.

Mithun Sculptures

Khajuraho's temples are also known for their extensive erotic sculptures;

1. the erotic expression is given equal importance in human experience as spiritual pursuit, and it is seen as part of a larger cosmic whole.
2. Many Hindu temples therefore feature ***mithun* (embracing couple) sculptures**, considered auspicious.
3. Usually, they are placed at the entrance of the temple or on an exterior wall or they may also be placed on the walls between the mandapa and the main shrine.
4. **Khajuraho's sculptures are highly stylised with typical features:** they are in almost full relief, cut away from the surrounding stone, with sharp noses, prominent chins, long slanting eyes and eyebrows.
5. The other notable example at Khajuraho is **Kandariya Mahadeo temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.**

There are many temples at Khajuraho, most of them devoted to Hindu gods.

There are some **Jain temples** as well as a **Chausanth Yogini temple**, which is of interest. Predating the tenth century, this is a temple of small, square shrines of roughly-hewn **granite blocks**, each dedicated to esoteric *devis* or

goddesses associated with the rise of *Tantric* worship after the seventh century. Several such temples were dedicated to the cult of the *yoginis* across Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and even as far south as Tamil Nadu. They were built between the seventh and tenth centuries, but few have survived.



West India

The temples in the north-western parts of India including **Gujarat and Rajasthan**, and stylistically extendable, at times, to western Madhya Pradesh are too numerous to include here in any comprehensive way.

1. The stone used to build the temples ranges in colour and type. While **sandstone** is the commonest, a **grey to black basalt** can be seen in some of the tenth to twelfth century temple sculptures. The most exuberant and famed is the **manipulatable soft white marble** which is also seen in some of the tenth to twelfth century **Jain temples in Mount Abu and the fifteenth century temple at Ranakpur**.

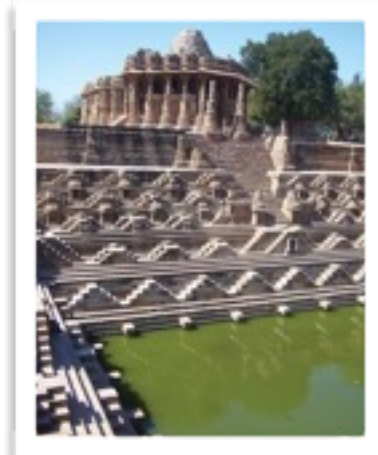
2. Among the most important art-historical sites in the region is **Samlaji in Gujarat** which shows how earlier artistic traditions of the region mixed with a post-Gupta style and gave rise to a distinct style of sculpture. A large number of sculptures made of **grey schist** have been found in this region which can be dated between the sixth and eighth centuries CE. While the patronage of these is debated, the date is established on the basis of the style.

Sun temple, Modhera, Gujarat

The **Sun temple at Modhera** dates back to early eleventh century and was built by **Raja Bhimdev I of the Solanki Dynasty in 1026.**

The Solankis were a branch of the later Chalukyas.

1. There is a massive rectangular stepped tank called the ***surya kund*** in front of it. Proximity of sacred architecture to a water body such as a tank, a river or a pond has been noticed right from the earliest times.



2. By the early eleventh century they had become a part of many temples. This hundred-square-metre rectangular pond is perhaps the grandest temple tank in India.

3. A **hundred and eight miniature shrines** are carved in between the steps inside the tank.
4. A huge ornamental **arch-torana leads one to the *sabha mandapa*** (the assembly hall) which is open on all sides, as was the fashion of the times in western and central Indian temples.
5. The influence of the **woodcarving tradition of Gujarat** is evident in the lavish carving and sculpture work. However, **the walls of the central small shrine are devoid of carving and are left plain** as the temple faces the east and, every year, at the time of the equinoxes, the sun shines directly into this central shrine.

Nilakantha or Udayesvara Temple, Udaipur

Udaipur, about 40 miles from Bhilsa in Madhya Pradesh, is yet another ancient and remarkable site. The finest and best preserved temple is the Nilakantha or Udayesvara at Udaipur, built by Udayaditya Paramara between 1059 and 1080.

1. It has a covered porch, a pyramidal roof and a tower or Shikhara ornamented by four narrow flat bands running from base to summit, the intervening spaces being occupied with repeated ornaments consisting of reduplication in miniature of the main tower.
2. The whole is carved with particular precision and delicacy, and both tower and mandapa are in perfect preservation, the former surmounted by an amalasila or a vase.

Virupaksha Temple, Pattadakal

The most important of the temples at Pattadakal date from the first half of the 8th century and show the strongest possible evidences of **Pallava influence**. The great Virupaksha temple, dedicated to **Siva as Lokesavara**, by the **queen of Vikramaditya II datable to 740 A.D.**, was most likely built by workmen brought from Kanchipuram, and in **direct imitation of the Kailasanath at Kanchipuram**.

1. The main shrine is distinct from the Mandapam, but has a pradakshana passage, the pillared mandapam has solid walls, with pierced stone windows.
2. The square shikhara consists of clearly defined storeys each of considerable elevation.
3. Chaitya window motifs are much used and there are many sculptured lintels, slabs and monolithic pillars.
4. It is built of very large, closely-jointed blocks of stone without mortar, in keeping with early Dravidian temple building practices. One of the noblest structures in India, this is the only ancient temple at Pattadakal still in use.

East India

Eastern Indian temples include those found in the **North- East, Bengal and Odisha**. Each of these three areas produced distinct types of temples.

The history of architecture in the North-East and Bengal is hard to study because a number of ancient buildings in those regions were renovated, and what survives now are later brick or concrete temples at those sites.

It appears that **terracotta was the main medium of construction**, and also for **moulding plaques** which depicted Buddhist and Hindu deities in Bengal until the seventh century. A large number of sculptures have been found in

Assam and Bengal which shows the development of important regional schools in those regions.

Assam

An old sixth-century sculpted door frame from DaParvatia near Tezpur and another few stray sculptures from Rangagora Tea Estate near Tinsukia in Assam bear witness to the import of the Gupta idiom in that region. This post-Gupta style continued in the region well into the tenth century. However, by the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, a distinct regional style developed in Assam.

The style that came with the migration of the Tais from Upper Burma mixed with the dominant Pala style of Bengal and led to the creation of what was later known as the **Ahom style** in and around Guwahati.

Kamakhya temple, a *Shakti Peeth*, is dedicated to Goddess Kamakhya and was built in the seventeenth century.



Bengal

The style of the sculptures during the period between the **ninth and eleventh centuries in Bengal (including Bangladesh) and Bihar** is known as the **Pala style**, named after the ruling dynasty at the time, while the style of those of the mid-eleventh to mid-thirteenth centuries is named after the **Sena kings**.

PALA AND SENA KINGS

From the eighth to twelfth centuries, the eastern portion of India was host to a florescence of artistic activity. Under the Pala dynasty, which ruled large portions of Eastern-South Asia for nearly four hundred years span, many centres of Buddhism and Hinduism flourished.

The Pala dynasty came to power around 750 A.D. The Pala school of art first flourished in the Magadha region of Southern Bihar, the homeland of Buddhist religion. Not surprisingly, the majority of early Pala-period remains are Buddhist. Due to intense religious activity during Pala Sena period, many religious structures were built or renovated. Most of these buildings have vanished leaving no extant architecture from this period and making it very difficult to reconstruct a systematic overview of the architectural development. In spite of non-availability of any building, a huge corpus of sculpture and a few paintings survive from this period.

During the Pala-period, a number of monasteries and religious sites that had been founded in earlier periods grew into prominence. The large cruciform stupa at Paharpur (ancient Somapura) in Bengal (now Bangladesh), for example, measures more than one hundred meters from North to South. It was built around the late eighth or early ninth century. The walls of the courtyard contain 177 individual cells that served as shrines.

Although the first two hundred or so years of Pala-period art were dominated by Buddhist art, the Hindu remains also exist in some quantities in that phase and clearly dominate in the last two hundred years of the Pala-period.

The remains, though damaged, suggest that Bengali architecture styles in particular shared many features with other northern schools especially that of Orissa. The surviving examples from Bengal later than Pala-Sena period especially from the sixteenth century and later show greater Islamic influence. Thus, for an understanding of the Hindu artistic development from the eighth to twelfth centuries, the greater attention must be placed on the surviving sculptures.

While the Palas are celebrated as patrons of many Buddhist monastic sites, the temples from that region are known to express the **local Vanga style**.

The ninth century **Siddheshvara Mahadeva temple in Barakar in Burdwan District**, for example, shows a tall curving *shikhara* crowned by a large *amalaka* and is an example of the early Pala style. It is similar to contemporaneous temples of Odisha. This basic form grows loftier with the passing of centuries.

Many of the temples from the ninth to the twelfth century were located at **Telkupi in Purulia District**. They were submerged when dams were built in the region. These were amongst the important examples of architectural styles prevalent in the region which showed an awareness



of all the known *nagara* sub-types that were prevalent in the rest of North India. However, several temples still survive in Purulia District which can be dated to this period.

The black to grey basalt and chlorite stone pillars and arched niches of these temples heavily influenced the earliest Bengal sultanate buildings at Gaur and Pandua.

Many local vernacular building traditions of Bengal also influenced the style of temples in that region. Most prominent of these was the **shape of the curving or sloping side of the bamboo roof of a Bengali hut**. This feature was eventually even adopted in Mughal buildings, and is known across North India as the **Bangla roof**.

In the Mughal period and later, scores of **terracotta brick temples** were built across Bengal and Bangladesh in a unique style that had elements of local building techniques seen in bamboo huts which were combined with older forms reminiscent of the Pala period and with the forms of arches and domes that were taken from Islamic architecture. These can be widely found in and around Vishnupur, Bankura, Burdwan and Birbhum and are dated mostly to the seventeenth century.

Odisha

The main architectural features of Odisha temples are classified in three orders, i.e., **rekhapida**, **pidhadeul** and **khakra**.

Most of the main temple sites are located in ancient Kalinga—modern Puri District, including Bhubaneswar or ancient Tribhuvaneshvara, Puri and Konark.

The temples of Odisha constitute a distinct sub-style within the nagara order.

1. In general, here the **shikhara**, called **deul** in Odisha, is vertical almost until the top when it suddenly curves sharply inwards.
2. *Deuls* are preceded, as usual, by **mandapas** called **jagamohana** in Odisha.
3. The ground plan of the main temple is **almost always square**, which, in the upper reaches of its superstructure becomes circular in the crowning **mastaka**. This makes the **spire nearly cylindrical in appearance** in its length.
4. Compartments and niches are generally square, **the exterior of the temples are lavishly carved, their interiors generally quite bare.**
5. Odisha temples usually **have boundary walls.**

Parasurameshvara temple , Bhubaneswar

The early Indian temple was provided with a flat roof and there was a problem of letting out accumulated rain water. In the Aihole temples of Ladkhan and Durga, the roof slabs have been given a slant and these slabs of large stones which were used in the early Orissan temples datable to about the mid 7th century, namely the **Parasurameshvara temple at Bhubaneswar.**



1. In this case there are two roofs of slanting slabs, one above the other, providing in between, small skylights allowing light to penetrate inside the shrine.
2. Gradually these slanting slab-roofs begin to increase from one to two and from two to three and gradually by multiplying these roofs, a pyramidal roof results over the shrine, called Jagamohana in Orissa, which precedes the main shrine.

Rajarani Temple

A masterpiece of Indian architecture is the **Rajarani temple of Bhubaneswar**, a work of exquisite grace in which the masses of the Jagamohana and the Vimana are admirably combined to express perfection.

1. There is a very lovely beehive shaped tower rising from the ground with a **gentle curvature over the sanctum sanctorum.**



2. **Shikhara on Shikhara**, miniature temple towers, one on top of the other, mount higher and higher to ever loftier heights like the great Mount Everest surrounded by smaller crags.
3. It is possible that the architect conceived the idea of the ever rising succession of these miniature Shikharas and was inspired by the great mountain range and the highest peak in the Himalayas which is surrounded by lesser peaks and might well symbolise the aspirations of the human soul to reach up till it merges and mixes with the Eternal and the Almighty Spirit.
4. The Orissan temple stands as a great monument to the infinite patience and loving care and perseverance that moves these architects and the kings who carved ornaments and distinct from the severely simple pyramidal roof of modest height over Jagamohana or the mandapa.
5. The multiplication of the slanting slabs has been carried to 13 horizontal elements, diminishing as they reach towards the pinnacle on the top of the pyramid.
6. But even this pinnacle is dwarfed by the importance of the lovely round stone, the amlaka, the chhatra or the crown on top of the spire or tower.
7. The Jagamohana and the Vimana are connected by means of miniature spires emerging from the pyramidal roof of the Jagmohana towards the

Shikhara of the sanctum sanctorum, making a transition a kind of step that leads the eye towards the height of the tower.

We have seen that the evolution of temple architecture in Orissa is towards the greater elaboration of the plan and pronounced ornamentation over the outside of the walls, with decorative elements, including human figures, gods and goddesses, flora and fauna. Early temples of modest size and somewhat smaller shikharas such as the Parasurameswara temple at Bhubaneswar datable to the middle of the 7th century, with a squat and heavy shikhara over the sanctum sanctorum and a low flat roofed mandapa, embellished with a relief of dancers and musicians of great charm, gradually matures into an elaborate structure of towering height, embellished with sculptural decorations.

Vaitala Deul



Then comes the Vaitala Deul which is known for its **sculpture grace and exuberance of decoration**, with a **rectangular sanctum** with **wagon-vault**

roof similar to that of the Parasurameswara temple, and is datable on the basis of its decorative motifs and designs, which are mature, expressive and dynamic, to the close of the 8th century.

Mukateswara temple



Then comes the Mukateswara temple regarded as a gem of Orissan architecture.



Brahmeshwar Temple

The Brahmesvara temple is a **panchayatana temple** securely dated by an inscription, to about 1060 A.D. This is a temple in which the central shrine is surrounded by four small shrines in the four corners of the compound. Though a very beautiful shrine, the spire or shikhara appears to be curving rather abruptly under the amlaka, unlike the spire of the Rajarani which is perfect and admirable for its style and decoration. The Jagamohana has a rather top heavy pyramidal roof, unlike the Rajarani which is of modest height and much simpler.

Lingaraja Temple

The Lingaraja temple, datable to about **1000 A.D.**, is perhaps the most marvellous temple ever erected in this century, the grandest and the loftiest (above 36.50 m. high) marking the culmination of the architectural activities at Bhubaneswar.

1. This temple consists of the sanctum sanctorum, a closed hall, a dancing hall and a hall of offerings, the last two being later additions.
2. The Lingaraja is surrounded by a large number of additional shrines which clutters up the entire compound.
3. **The enormous height of the spire, 5 times the height of the Rajarani**, dominates the entire surroundings by its soaring loftiness and volume,



emphasised by the deeply incised vertical lines of the rathas, a pair of which flanking the central ratha, carry four diminishing replicas of the spire itself as a decorative pattern.

4. The Jagamohana and the spire match each other splendidly and both express the greatness of the Lord.
5. The **nine lower roof and seven upper roofs of the Jagamohana** are exquisitely adorned with friezes representing a procession of infantry, cavalry, elephants and miscellaneous other scenes that break the monotony of the rising pyramid and a great shikhara surface too is elegantly varied by the introduction of corner miniature shikharas and flying lions.
6. The elegant and lovely female figures, loving couples in embrace, and other gods and goddesses decorating the surface are all carved with sensuous charm, beauty and delight in fine form.
7. The mature planning of the whole structure, the proportionate distribution of its part, the graceful curve of its shikhara and its elegant architectural and plastic decoration, together with its impressive dimensions make the Lingaraja, at Bhubaneswar, one of the greatest creations of Indian architecture. Technically speaking it is a marvellous architectural feat to build a tower and a shrine of such enormous size, of the fashioned stone.

It may be mentioned at this juncture, that in the later temples of Orissa, including the Lingaraja, there are two additional shrines attached along one axis - **in front of the Jagamohana, a natamandapa, or a hall of dance and music, and a bhogmandapa, a hall of offerings**. As a matter of fact, the temple was a total work of art in which we have not only sculptures and painting, but music, dancing and theatrical performance, making it a true civic centre for artistic and cultural activities, somewhat like the modern community

halls, which are places for social and cultural gatherings. In the olden days the temple performed this task and was truly the hub around which all civic and religious life of the community revolved.

Ananta Vasudeva temple

Among the later shrines of Bhubaneswar the Ananta Vasudeva temple, founded in 1278, is remarkable in more ways than one.



1. It is the only temple dedicated to Vaishnava worship at this predominantly Shiva site and stands on an ornate platform terrace.
2. It continues with the developed plan and decorative scheme of Lingaraja, but the grouping of the roofs over the four compartments in a gradual ascent is more spectacular here.
3. Further, the walls of the sanctum and the Jagamohana display images of the **Regents as well as those of their consorts.**

Sun Temple, Konark

The last great temple, the grandest achievement of the artistic and architectural genius of Orissa is the Sun temple at Konark which was constructed by the eastern Ganga ruler **Narasimha Varmana, about 1250 A.D.**

At Konark, on the shores of the Bay of Bengal, lie the majestic ruins of the Surya or Sun temple built in stone around 1240. Its *shikhara* was a colossal creation said to have reached 70m, which, proving too heavy for its site, fell in the nineteenth century.



1. The vast complex is **within a quadrilateral precinct** of which the *jagamohana* or the dance-pavillion (*mandapa*) has survived, which though no longer accessible is said to be the **largest enclosed space in Hindu architecture.**
2. It is a vast and wonderful structure, magnificently conceived as a gigantic chariot with 12 pairs of ornamental wheels, pulled by seven rearing horses. The Sun temple is set on a high base, its walls covered in extensive, detailed ornamental carving. These include **twelve pairs of enormous wheels sculpted with spokes and hubs, representing the**

chariot wheels of the Sun god who, in mythology, rides a chariot driven by eight horses, sculpted here at the entrance staircase. The whole temple thus comes to resemble a **colossal processional chariot**.

3. The colossal temple originally consisted of a sanctum sanctorum, with a lofty curvilinear shikhara, a Jagamohana and a dancing hall, built on the same axis, and an extensive compound wall with three entrance gateways.
4. The sanctum sanctorum and the dancing hall have lost their roofs and it is **only the Jagamohana which has remained intact with its roof**.
5. The sanctum sanctorum and the Jagamohana together stand on a lofty platform, richly ornamented by friezes of elephants, decorative ornaments interspersed with figures sculptures, often of a highly sensuous character.
6. Over the stupendous roof of the Jagamohana consisting of horizontal tiers, grouped in three stages, stand life size female sculptures of great charm, dancers, cymbal players and others adorning each stage.
7. The whole structure of the Jagamohana unparalleled for its grandeur and structural propriety, is surmounted by an effective contrast of light and shade.
8. On the southern wall is a **massive sculpture of surya** carved out of **green stone**. It is said that there were three such images, each carved out of a different stone placed on the three temple walls, each facing different directions. The fourth wall had the doorway into the temple from where the actual rays of the sun would enter the *garbhagriha*.

The Hills

A unique form of architecture developed in the hills of **Kumaon, Garhwal, Himachal and Kashmir.**

Kashmir's proximity to prominent Gandhara sites (such as Taxila, Peshawar and the northwest frontier) lent the region a strong Gandhara influence by the fifth century CE. This began to mix with the Gupta and post-Gupta traditions that were brought to it from Sarnath, Mathura and even centres in Gujarat and Bengal. Brahmin *pundits* and Buddhist monks frequently travelled



between Kashmir, Garhwal, Kumaon and religious centres in the plains like Banaras, Nalanda and even as far south as Kanchipuram. As a result both Buddhist and Hindu traditions began to intermingle and spread in the hills. The hills also had their own tradition of **wooden buildings with pitched roofs.**

At several places in the hills, therefore, you will find that while the **main garbhagriha and shikhara are made in a rekha-prasada or latina style, the mandapa is of an older form of wooden architecture.** Sometimes, the temple itself takes on a **pagoda shape.**

Pandrethan

The **Karkota period of Kashmir** is the most significant in terms of architecture. One of the most important temples is **Pandrethan**, built during the eighth and ninth centuries.

In keeping with the tradition of a water tank attached to the shrine, **this temple is built on a plinth built in the middle of a tank.**

Although there are evidences of both Hindu and Buddhist followings in Kashmir, **this temple is a Hindu one, possibly dedicated to Shiva.** The architecture of this temple is in

keeping with the age-old Kashmiri tradition of wooden buildings. Due to the snowy

conditions in Kashmir, the roof is peaked and slants slowly outward. The temple is moderately ornamented, moving away from the post-Gupta aesthetics of heavy carving. A row of elephants at the base and a decorated doorway are the only embellishments on the shrine.

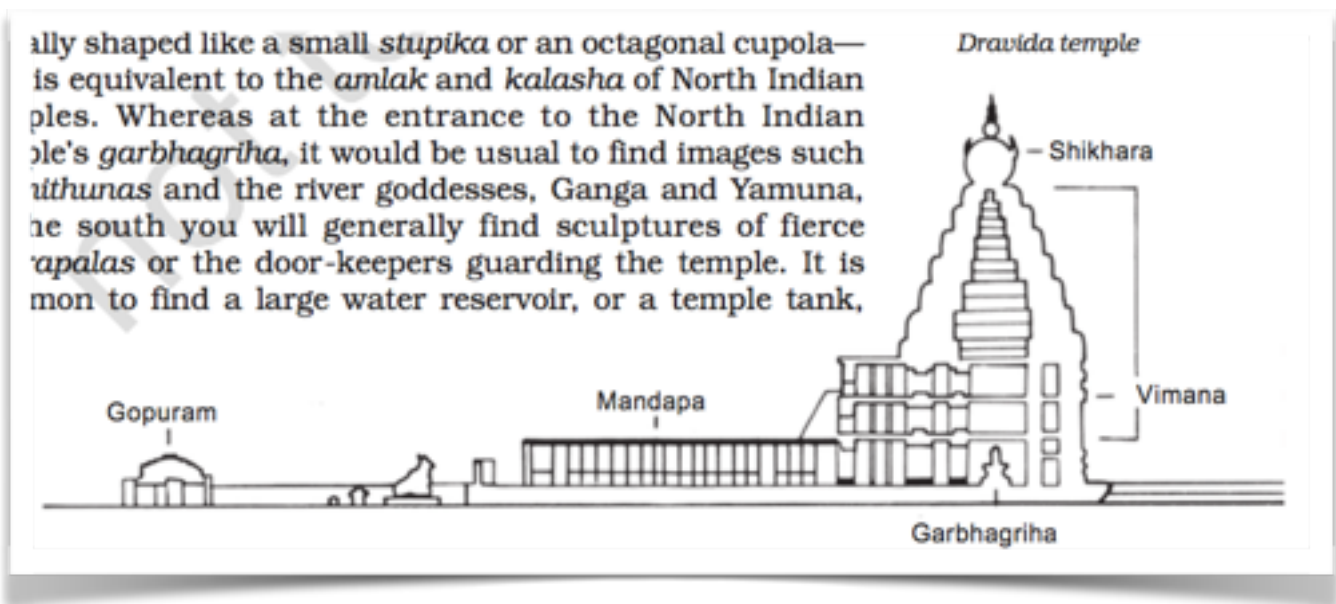


Like the findings at Samlaji, the sculptures at Chamba also show an amalgamation of local traditions with a post- Gupta style. The images of ***Mahishasuramardini* and *Narasimha* at the *Laksna-Devi Mandir*** are evidences of the influence of the post-Gupta tradition. Both the images show the influence of the metal sculpture tradition of Kashmir. The yellow colour of the images is possibly due to an alloy of zinc and copper which were popularly used to make images in Kashmir. This temple bears an inscription that states that it was built during the reign of Meruvarman who lived in the seventh century.

Of the temples in Kumaon, the ones at Jageshwar near Almora, and Champavat near Pithoragarh, are classic examples of *nagara* architecture in the region.

THE DRAVIDA OR SOUTH INDIAN TEMPLE STYLE

1. Unlike *the nagara* temple, the *dravida* temple is **enclosed within a compound wall.**
2. The front wall has an **entrance gateway** in its centre, which is known as a ***gopuram***.
3. The shape of the main temple tower known as ***vimana*** in Tamil Nadu is like a **stepped pyramid** that rises up geometrically rather than the curving *shikhara* of North India.



4. In the South Indian temple, the word '***shikhara***' is used only for the **crowning element at the top** of the temple which is usually shaped like a small *stupika* or an octagonal cupola— **this is equivalent to the *amlak* and *kalasha* of North Indian temples.**

5. Whereas at the entrance to the North Indian temple's *garbhagriha*, it would be usual to find images such as *mithunas* and the river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna, **in the south you will generally find sculptures of fierce *dvarapalas* or the door-keepers** guarding the temple.
6. It is common to find a **large water reservoir, or a temple tank**, enclosed within the complex.
7. Subsidiary shrines are either incorporated within the main temple tower, or located as distinct, separate small shrines beside the main temple.
8. The **North Indian idea of multiple *shikharas* rising together as a cluster was not popular in South India**. 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. This is because it is usually the oldest part of the temple. With the passage of time, the population and size of the town associated with that temple would have increased, and it would have become necessary to make a new boundary wall around the temple. This would have been taller than the last one, and its *gopurams* would have been even loftier. **So, for instance, the Srirangam temple in Tiruchirapally has as many as seven 'concentric' rectangular enclosure walls, each with gopurams. The outermost is the newest, while the tower right in the centre housing the garbhagriha is the oldest.**

Temples thus started becoming the focus of urban architecture.

Kanchipuram, Thanjavur or Tanjore, Madurai and Kumbakonam are the most famous temple towns of Tamil Nadu, where, during the eighth to twelfth

centuries, the role of the temple was not limited to religious matters alone. Temples became rich administrative centres, controlling vast areas of land.

Just as there are many subdivisions of the main types of *nagara* temples, there are subdivisions also of *dravida* temples.

These are basically of five different shapes:

1. square, usually called *kuta*, and also *caturasra*;
2. rectangular or *shala* or *ayatasra*;
3. elliptical, called *gaja-prishta* or elephant-backed, or also called *vrittayata*, deriving from wagon-vaulted shapes of apsidal *chaityas* with a horse-shoe shaped entrance facade usually called a *nasi*;
4. circular or *vritta*; and
5. octagonal or *ashtasra*.

Generally speaking, the plan of the temple and the shape of the vimana were conditioned by the iconographic nature of the consecrated deity, so it was appropriate to build specific types of temples for specific types of icons. It must, however, be remembered that this is a simplistic differentiation of the subdivisions. Several different shapes may be combined in specific periods and places to create their own unique style.

Let us turn our attention once again towards the South of India, where the Dravidian style of temple architecture flourished roughly from the 8th century to about the 13-14 century A.D. Unlike the North, the South is literally dotted with thousands of temples, having been relatively free from repeated foreign invasions to which the North was subject. Behind the architectural

achievements of the country, lay the urge of the Hindu mind to give vent to its religious and spiritual hopes and aspirations, and the construction and maintenance of a temple became an act of merit or Dharma both here and in the hereafter for all - Kings, nobles and laymen alike. It was the centre of all cultural and social life, the hub around which all activities revolved. Its influence extended beyond the purely religious and spiritual realms and made the temple an important centre. The temple was a leading landowner, thanks to the frequent donations from kings, nobles and lay-devotees. The construction of a temple usually took many years and it gave employment to hundreds of artists and engineers. The finest craftsmen from neighbouring provinces found employment and a whole generation of talented sculptors were trained by them during its construction. The daily routine gave assured employment to a large number of people, priests, musicians, dancing girls, teachers, florist, tailors, etc. In course of time the simple unostentatious temple became a vast conglomeration of structures, consisting of subsidiary shrines, Natamandaps and Bhogamandapas, or a dance hall and hall of offerings. Poet pavillions, confectioners and others were allowed to become part of temple complex.

In other words the temple almost embraced and enveloped the town or the town embraced and enveloped the temple. With the increase in all these additional structures, more compounds were added to the original temple compound, one inside the other, like Chinese boxes.

The present South Indian temple, therefore, consists of walls, quadrangles, one within the other. The inner most wall in the area contains the temple proper, a much smaller and unpretentious structure than the other larger

gateways which now began to attract the attention of architects, sculptors and carvers.

The Brihadesvara temple which was erected about 1000 A.D. is a contemporary of the Rajarani temple of Bhubaneswar. The temple is a magnificent and dignified edifice consisting of a pyramidal spire, made up of ever diminishing tiers, regularly tapering towards the top surmounted by a domical pinnacle. In many respects this shrine resembles the Shore Temple at Mahabalipuram. The domical pinnacle, however, is different in conception and execution from the amlaka of the Orissan Shrine. The highest shikhara rises straight over the garbha griha from the sanctum sanctorum. The structure is adorned with beautiful sculpture and paintings; inside as well as outside. The Brihadesvara Temple, dedicated to Shiva, stands in a courtyard 500 ft. by 200 ft. and consists of the sanctum sanctorum, large hall a pillared hall and a Nandimandapa arranged on the same axis. The pyramidal vimana is about 190 ft. high consisting of 13 zones in diminishing order and has been so conceived that at no time during the day does the shadow of its pinnacle fall anywhere outside the temple base.

THE PALLAVAS AND THE CHOLAS

Any account of ancient India is incomplete without referring to the two dynasties of South India i.e. the Pallavas and the Cholas and their contribution to art, architecture, administration and conquests.

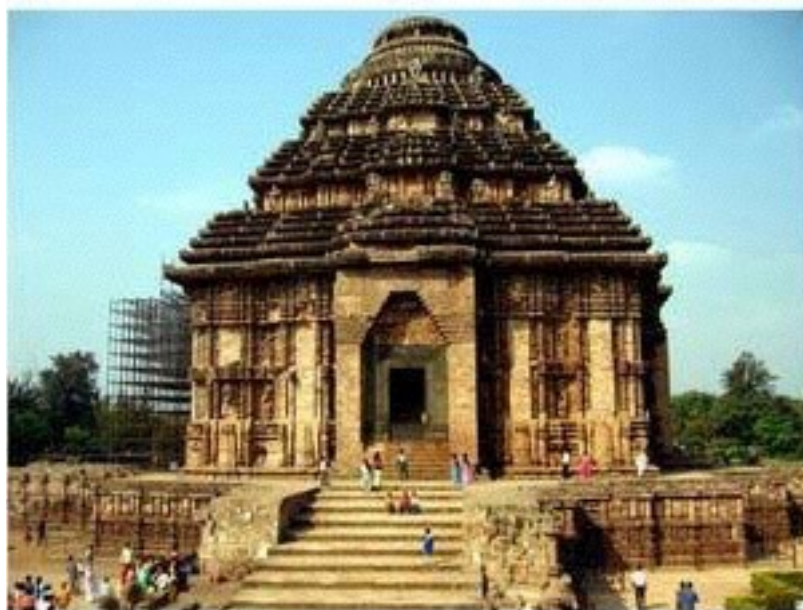
Quite a few dynasties rose in the South from the early centuries of the Christian era. Among them the Pallavas were great patrons of art and architecture.

The 'ratha' at Mahabalipuram style of temples built by them were fine examples of rock-cut temples.

The Pallavas also built structural temples like the Kailashanath and Vaikunthperumal temples at Kanchipuram.

The Kailashanath temple is a huge structure with thousands of images and is said to be the "largest single work of art ever undertaken in India". There is also a set of bas reliefs found at Mahabalipuram (Mamallapuram) which is attributed to the pallava period. The Group of monuments at Mahabalipuram near Chennai

Pagodas built at Mahabalipuram go back to the first century AD.



Temple building activity flourished in India from the 5th century AD onwards. While the North Indian temples were built in the Nagara style consisted of the shikaras (spiral roofs), the garbhagriha (sanctum) and the mandap (pillared hall), the temples in the South were built in the Dravida style completed with vimana or shikhara, high walls and the gateway topped by gopuram. After the

Pallavas (6th to 8th century AD) the tradition of building temples was further developed by the Cholas (10th – 12th century AD) in the south.

Do you know that the temple was the central place in the village? It was the gathering place for the villagers who would come here everyday and exchange ideas and discuss all matters of common interests. It served as a school too. During festival days dances and dramas were also performed in the temple courtyard.

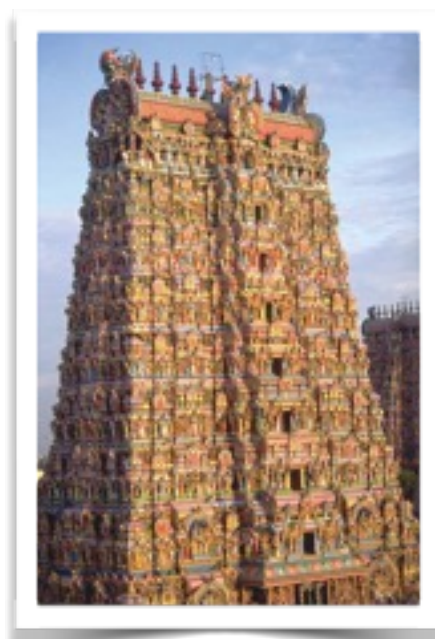
The achievements of the Cholas also lie in their conquests across the seas and developing democratic institutions for governance at the village level. The village panchayat called **sahha or ur** had extensive powers. It had control over finances too. This body included several committees which looked after various aspects of village administration. A very detailed account of the functioning of the sabhas is available from one of the Chola inscriptions. The Chola rulers were also great builders. The Dravida style of temple architecture reached its zenith under the Chola rulers. One of the finest example of this style is the **Rajarajeshwar or Brihadeshwara temple**. During this period one also notices **great achievements in the field of sculpture.**

Great progress was made in **literature both religious and secular**. Sanskrit also became the language of the courts in many parts of the country. Tamil literatures also made great progress. The **Alvars and the Nayanars**, the **Vaishnavite and Shaivite** saints made lasting contributions to it. In spite of the dominant position of Sanskrit in most parts of the country, this period marks the beginning of many Indian languages as well as distinct scripts in different parts of the country. In short, we can say that by the time, the ancient period

of Indian history came to an end, India had developed a culture which was marked by features that have characterized it ever since.

Pallavas

1. The **Pallavas** were one of the ancient South Indian dynasties that were active in the Andhra region from the second century CE onwards and moved south to settle in Tamil Nadu.
2. Their history is better documented from the **sixth to the eighth** century, when they left many inscriptions in stone and several monuments.
3. Their powerful kings spread their empire to various parts of the subcontinent, at times reaching the borders of Odisha, and their links with South–East Asia were also strong.
4. Although they were mostly **Shaivite**, several **Vaishnava shrines** also survived from their reign, and there is no doubt that they were influenced by the long Buddhist history of the Deccan.



5. Their early buildings, it is generally assumed, were **rock-cut, while the later ones were structural**. However, there is reason to believe that structural buildings were well known even when rock-cut ones were being excavated.
6. The early buildings are generally attributed to the reign of **Mahendravarman I**, a contemporary of the Chalukyan king, Pulakesin II of Karnataka.
7. **Narasimhavarman I, also known as Mamalla**, who acceded the Pallava throne around 640 CE, is celebrated for the expansion of the empire, avenging the defeat his father had suffered at the hands of Pulakesin II, and inaugurating most of the building works at Mahabalipuram which is known after him as Mamallapuram.

Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram

1. The shore temple at Mahabalipuram was built later, probably in the reign of **Narasimhavarman II**, also known as **Rajasimha** who reigned from 700 to 728 CE.
2. Now it is oriented to the east facing the ocean, but if you study it closely, you will find that it actually houses **three shrines, two to Shiva, one facing east and the other west, and a middle one to Vishnu who is shown as Anantashayana**. This is



unusual, because temples generally have a single main shrine and not three areas of worship. This shows that it was probably not originally conceived like this and different shrines may have been added at different times, modified perhaps with the change of patrons.

3. In the compound there is evidence of a **water tank**, an early example of a *gopuram*, and several other images.
4. Sculptures of the **bull, Nandi, Shiva's mount, line the temple walls**, and these, along with the carvings on the temple's lower walls have suffered severe disfiguration due to erosion by salt-water laden air over the centuries.



The Shore temple at Mahabalipuram datable to late 7th century is specially known because of its location on the sea-shore. This temple though very similar stylistically to the Dharmaraja ratha, differs from it in an important respect that it is a structural temple and not a rock-cut one. It is about 3 to 4 times the size of the Dharmaraja ratha and is made a triple structure by adding a shrine at the back and slightly jutting out in the front. There are two spires, much loftier than in the case of the previous temples, the higher spire has more storeys than the Dharmaraja ratha and the pinnacle is higher and pointed. It is much more complicated, enlarged and enriched. The shrine is enclosed by a massive wall, having the typical Pallava rampart lion pilasters at regular intervals. On its outer side, the wall is surmounted by seated bull figures.

The Kailasanath temple , Kanchipuram



1. The Kailasanath temple at Kanchipuram was built by **Raja Simha** shortly after the Shore temple in the 8th century A.D., and compared to the latter, is **larger in dimensions and more majestic in appearance**.
2. The Kailashnath temple is situated in a rectangular courtyard surrounded by a peristyle composed of a continuous series of cells resembling rathas.
3. But there the Pallava style is further evolved and more elaborate.
4. It consists of the sanctum (garbha griha), a pillared hall (mandapa), the ambulatory, the vestibule in the shape of a hall.
5. The flat roofed pillared mandapa, which was a separate building originally, was connected with the sanctum by a vestibule.
6. An interesting feature of this temple is that on the three sides of the garbha griha, there are nine shrines.

7. The pyramidal tower, having graceful contours, is a storeyed elevation, each having heavy cornices and stupikas.
8. The shikhara is well-proportioned, substantial, yet at the same time rhythmic in its mass and elegant in its outlines.

Rajarajeshwara or Brihadiswara Temple, Thanjavur

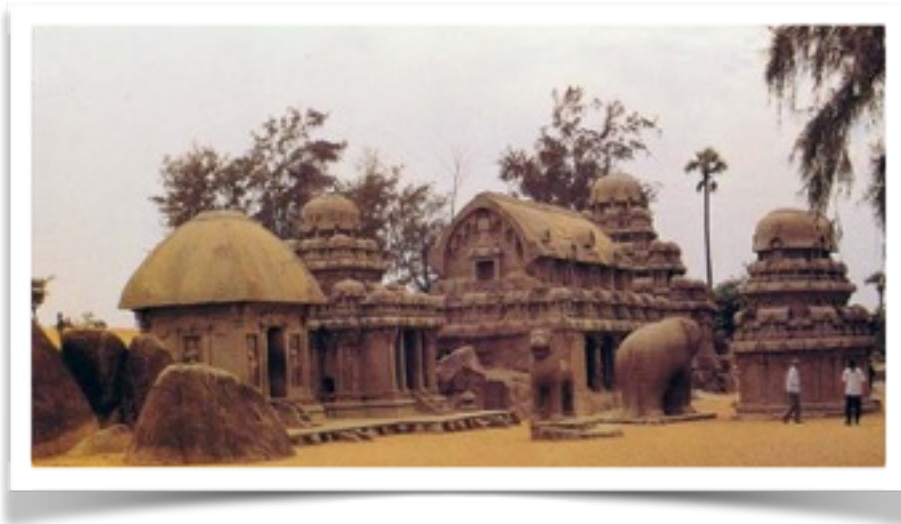


1. The magnificent **Shiva temple of Thanjavur**, called the **Rajarajeshwara or Brihadiswara temple**, was completed around **1009** by **Rajaraja Chola 1**, and is the largest and tallest of all Indian temples.
2. Temple building was prolific at this time, and over a hundred important temples of the Chola period are in a good state of preservation, and many more are still active shrines.
3. The entire temple structure is made **out of granite**.

4. Bigger in scale than anything built by their predecessors, the Pallavas, Chalukyas or Pandyas, this Chola temple's pyramidal multi-storeyed vimana rises a massive seventy metres (approximately two hundred feet), topped by a monolithic *shikhara* which is an octagonal dome-shaped *stupika*.
5. It is in this temple that one notices for the first time **two large gopuras (gateway towers)** with an elaborate sculptural programme which was conceived along with the temple.
6. **Huge Nandi-figures dot the corners of the shikhara**, and the *kalasha* on top by itself is about three metres and eight centimetres in height.
7. **Hundreds of stucco figures decorate the vimana**, although it is possible that some of these may have been added on during the Maratha Period and did not always belong to the Chola Period.
8. The main deity of the temple is **Shiva**, who is shown as a **huge lingam set in a two storeyed sanctum**. The walls surrounding the sanctum have extended mythological narratives which are depicted through painted murals and sculptures.

Pancha Ratha or Pandava Ratha, Mahabalipuram

Apart from structural temples the other variety of **temples are rock cut**, found at Mahabalipuram, about 38 miles down south of Madras on the sea shore, datable to the 5th century A.D.



In local parlance they are known as **Ratha or chariots** and are named after the **five Pandava brothers and Draupadi** but they neither have anything to do with chariots nor probably with the Pandavas and these associations are purely of a local character.

The great **Pallava rulers of Kanchipuram**, were great builders and the Pallava craftsmen, seized upon the long outcrop or rocks and boulders available on the sea shore, carved them and gave to them the shape of temples (monolithic) as well as colossal statues of lions, elephants and bulls, etc. carved out of smaller boulders.

One of these rock cut temples is known as the **Draupadi Ratha**.

1. It is a rock cut imitation of a mud hut, supported by wooden posts, crowned by an imitation of a thatched roof.
2. The Draupadi Ratha consists of a square cell, with not even a portico, surmounted by a hanging roof suggestive in its shape of a Bengali hut.
3. There is every reason to believe that this, like so many other forms of



structural Indian architecture is an imitation of a proto-type construction of bamboo and thatch.

4. Two lovely girls adorn the entrance, each carved in a small niche provided for the purpose on either side of the entrance.
5. A floral decoration runs along the edge of the roof which, according to some, is nothing but a rock cut representation of the original brass or copper edging over the thatching to keep it in position.



In shape and appearance the rest of the rathas seems to have evolved out of a building composed of cells arranged round a square courtyard. As the community of monks occupying the monastery increased another storey was added, and then another and still another, the whole structure eventually being topped with a domical roof. These are square in plan and are surmounted by a pyramidal tower such as Arjuna's ratha and the Dharmaraja ratha.

There is another type of the Ratha which has a **longitudinal and barrel vaulted roof, i.e., they have a roof of the so called elephant-back type (Gajapristhakara)**. The Durga temple at Aihole, and the Vaital deul at

Bhubaneswar are examples. The roof, in the case of the square shrines consists of a simple multiplication of hut roofs, very much the way we can see them in Buddhist monuments and other little huts. Though these are carved in rock they show a so-called Buddhist chaitya window with a little Buddha head. In the case of Arjuna's ratha and Dharmaraja ratha, their wonderful proportions, magnificent disposition of mass of light and shade reveal their classic character. The simple upright posts imitations, of wooden pillars support brackets and the pilasters have small animal bases. **Whereas earlier at Sanchi the animals were used for the capital, here they are used as a base.**



A temple, named after the twin heroes, Nakula and Sahadeva, is an **apsidal one**, with ornamental features as in the Dharmaraja, Arjuna and other rathas. There is a slight forward extension of the roof to form a porch supported by two lion pillars. There are no figure-carvings on this temple. Close to this is a monolithic elephant suggesting the Gajapristhakara (elephant back) shape of the apsidal temple.

The Ganesh-rath is one of the finest monolithic temples at Mahabalipuram. Though three-storeyed and of better workmanship, it resembles the Bhima-ratha in roof form. The gable-ends of the wagon-roof have a finial showing a human head decorated by a trident shaped head-gear, the slide prongs suggesting the usual horns in the dvarpala-figures and the central one long and narrow crown. This motif is repeated in the finials of the



decorative gables along the wagon-roof. There is, as usual, the pavilion and Kudu ornamentation. The elaborately worked roof has nine vase-shaped finials and is the precursor of the later gopuram. A row of pilasters decorates the sides and the back, while the main opening is to the west. Between the dvarapalas at either end are two lion pillars in the centre and two pilasters.

Architecture in the Deccan

Many different styles of temple architecture influenced by both North and South Indian temples were used in regions like Karnataka. While some scholars consider the buildings in this region as being distinctly either *nagara* or *dravida*, a hybridised style that seems to have become popular after the mid-seventh century, is known in some ancient texts as **vesara**.

Rashtrakutas

By the late seventh or the early eighth century, the ambitious projects at Ellora became even grander. By about 750 CE, the early western Chalukya control of the Deccan was taken by the **Rashtrakutas**.

Kailashnath Temple, Ellora

1. This temple was constructed during the reign of the Rashtrakuta King Krishna and belongs to the middle of the 8th century A.D.
2. The famous Kailasa temple at Ellora is in a class by itself because it is a rock-cut temple complex, which in many respects resembles the various rathas at Mahabalipuram
3. The carvers at Ellora cut three trenches down into the rock and then began to carve the rock from the top downwards.

4. Even though it is carved on the model of a structural temple, the **Kailashnath temple is a rock-cut shrine within a rectangular court.**



5. The different parts of the temple are the **entrance portico, the vimana and the mandapa as well as a pillared shrine for Shiva's bull, Nandi.**

6. Both inside as well as outside the temple, there are beautiful, graceful and dignified sculptural decorations, largely pertaining to the theme of Shiva and Parvati, Sita's abduction and Ravana shaking the mountain.

7. It is a complete *dravida* building with a **Nandi shrine**—since the temple is dedicated to Shiva—a ***gopuram*-like gateway**, surrounding cloisters, subsidiary shrines, staircases and an imposing tower or *vimana* rising to thirty metres.

8. Importantly, all of this is carved out of living rock. One portion of the monolithic hill was carved patiently to build the Kailashnath temple.

9. The sculpture of the Rashtrakuta phase at Ellora is dynamic, the figures often larger than life-size, infused with unparalleled grandeur and the most overwhelming energy.

Gopurams

1. The gopuram, is the tower, an oblong quadrangle, sometimes a square, with a passage through the centre and is situated on the entrance gateway unlike in the north, or even at the Brihadesvara temple in Tanjore, where the tower-like structure was on the top of the sanctum sanctorum or garbha-griha.
2. In many ways the gopuram could have descended from the Buddhist gateway such as we have already seen at Sanchi and Bharhut, etc.
3. It is crowned by a **barrel-vault roof** over which a large number of pinnacles rise which remind us once again of a barrel roof on a longitudinal hut which used to be made of timber.
4. As stated earlier these gopurams are **towering structures, some having 9 storeys, others even 11.**
5. The gopuram provided an excellent opportunity to the sculptor to practice his craft and contain some of the finest sculptures produced in the country.
6. The gopuram at Chidambaram has a series of sculptures showing dance poses of Bharatanatyam.
7. At night time, lights used to be lit in each storey of the gopuram tower and these acted as a sure guide to the nocturnal traveller, acting like a light house or beacon.
8. As a rule the highest gopuram tower was the latest, the earliest being the least high size as in the gopuram of the Meenakshi temple at Madurai.
9. Visitors can climb into these towers to appreciate the carvings at close quarters and incidentally get a marvellous view of the temple complex.

10. South Indian temples of this period are remarkable for the great size of their structures, mandapas and gopurams.
11. In addition elaborate mandapas of hundred pillared type are also constructed during the period of late Vijaynagar and the period of the Nayakas in the 16th century A.D.
12. This is an interesting departure from the evolution of the temple from early times. These pillared halls now become more and more elaborate with pillars showing donor couples, kings, queen, mythical animals with fantastic shapes and size. The paintings over these as well as over the pillars and ceiling are very colourful.

In some temples there are tanks surrounded by elegant pillared halls which are functionally and architecturally admirable structures. The temples built in the 12-13th centuries under the patronage of the Hoysalas of Mysore, are at Somnathpur, Belur and Halebid.

The well-known Kesava temple at Somnathpur, and the Hoysala temple at Halebid and Belur are veritable treasure houses of ornamental and decorative elements, carved in niches, and intricate vegetal and floral carvings. The vimana is of a **star shaped plan** with salients and reentering angles with mouldings, multiplication and over-decoration. Not an inch of space is left uncarved and there are animals and other denizens of the forest shown on the lower most three or four mouldings, interspersed with floral and creeper designs and, above them all, in more than life size, are shown huge sculptural representations of gods and goddesses, completely covered with by lavish decorations and rich ornaments.

Chalukyas

In the southern part of the Deccan, i.e., in the region of Karnataka is where some of the most experimental hybrid styles of ***vesara*** architecture are to be found.



Pulakesin I established the early western Chalukya kingdom when he secured the land around **Badami in 543**. The early western Chalukyas ruled most of the Deccan till the mid-eighth century when they were superseded by the Rashtrakutas.

Early Chalukyan activity also takes the form of rock-cut caves while later activity is of structural temples.

Ravan Phadi , Aihole

The earliest is probably the **Ravana Phadi cave at Aihole** which is known for its distinctive **sculptural style**.

1. One of the most important sculptures at the site is of **Nataraja**, surrounded by larger-than-life-size depictions of the **saptamatrikas**: three to Shiva's left and four to his right.
2. The figures are characterised by **graceful, slim bodies**, long, oval faces topped with extremely **tall cylindrical crowns** and shown to wear **short dhotis** marked by fine incised striations indicating pleating.
3. They are distinctly different from contemporary western Deccan or Vakataka styles seen at places such as Paunur and Ramtek.



The hybridisation and incorporation of several styles was the hallmark of Chalukyan buildings.

The most elaborate of all Chalukyan temples at Pattadakal made in the reign of **Vikramaditya II (733-44)** by his chief queen **Loka Mahadevi**, for instance, shows complete knowledge of Pallava buildings at Kanchipuram and as a corollary, Mahabalipuram. The temple is one of the best early examples of the *dravida* tradition.



By contrast other eastern Chalukyan temples, like the **Mahakuta**, five kilometres from Badami, and the **Swarga Brahma temple at Alampur** show a greater assimilation of northern styles from Odisha and Rajasthan.

Durga Temple ,Aihole

At the same time the **Durga temple at Aihole** is unique having an even earlier style of an **apsidal shrine which is reminiscent of Buddhist *chaitya*** halls and is surrounded by a veranda of a later kind, with a ***shikhara*** that is **stylistically like a *nagara* one.**



1. The Durga temple at Aihole is an **apsidal temple** of about 550 A.D. in which the architect has made immense improvements upon his previous attempts.
2. This temple is provided with a high pedestal, **an open pillared verandah serving as pradakshanapatha**, in place of a dark, ambulatory passage as in the case of the Ladkhan temple.
3. Instead of perforated jallies is a pillared verandah running round the shrine, open, well ventilated and well lit.
4. There is a high entrance with steps leading up to a tall base; the roof is almost double in height and in this particular case the turret is beginning to take the shape of a little spire, which, during the course of the next centuries; evolved into a towering Shikhara.
5. The pillars would have looked very dull had they not provided an opportunity to the sculptors to carve with beautiful figures. Carving is also done under the row of pillars and for the first time we come across brackets supporting the beam of the roof across the wide opening of the temple. This again reminds us of the practice followed by the architect

working in wood, who wanted to make either a house or a shrine by putting up pillars or posts of bamboo or wood on top of which he put horizontal beams so as to hold the roof. To make this construction doubly strong, he hit upon the 'idea of making brackets, an essential element in Hindu and Buddhist architecture in India and used much earlier in China; a slanting piece of stone emerging as it were from the pillars or posts, reaching out like an arm to hold the lintel or beam steadily. This kind of construction is known by the architectural term, trabeate, as distinct from accurate which was later made use of by the Muslims.

Lad Khan Temple, Aihole

Finally, mention must be made of the **Lad Khan temple at Aihole**. This seems to be inspired by the **wooden-roofed temples of the hills, except that it is constructed out of stone**.

The Ladkhan temple of Aihole belongs to about 5th century A.D. Here the architect has tried to give attention to the circumambulation path which is enclosed by means of a wall allowing devotees to have pradakshana or cirumambulatory of the holy of holies. Obviously when a large number of people would be going round in a dark gallery the consideration of light and ventilation would naturally arise and for that purpose the architect has provided perforated jallies. The entrance portico is in this particular case kept relatively small and not too much stress is laid on it. After all, it is only the entrance gateway. The structure still



reminds us of a wooden prototype with stone walls, supporting a slanting roof made of large boulders of stone slabs. Cleverly enough the roof has been given a slant and provided with gargoyles to allow rain water to run off and on the sanctum sanctorum proper the roof is a little higher, and very rightly so, for that is the, abode of the God. On the top of the structure is the very first attempt to raise a turret, a precursor to the future loftier spire, the Shikhara. The idea behind it must have been that, a temple being the home of the God must be seen from far and near, from different parts of the village or town so it must be tall and higher than the surrounding buildings.

How then shall we understand these different styles at one place? As curiosities or as innovations?

- Undoubtedly, they are dynamic expressions of a creative set of architects who were competing with their peers in the rest of India. Whatever one's explanation is, these buildings remain of great art-historical interest.

Hoyasalas

With the waning of Chola and Pandya power, the **Hoyasalas of Karnataka** grew to prominence in South India and became the most important patrons centred at **Mysore**. The remains of around hundred temples have been found in southern Deccan, though it is only three of them that are most frequently discussed: the temples at **Belur, Halebid and Somnathpuram**.

Perhaps the most characteristic feature of these temples is that they grow extremely complex with so many projecting angles emerging from the previously straightforward square temple, that the plan of



these temples starts looking **like a star**, and is thus known as a **stellate-plan**.

Since they are made out of **soapstone** which is a relatively soft stone, the artists were able to carve their sculptures intricately. This can be seen particularly in the jewellery of the gods that adorn their temple walls.

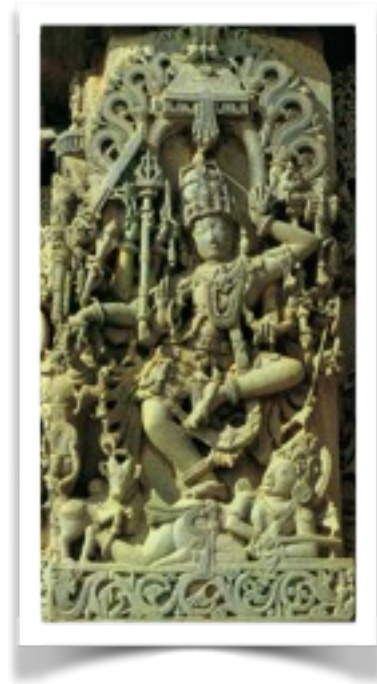
Hoysaleshvara temple



1. The **Hoysaleshvara temple (Lord of the Hoysalas)** at Halebidu in Karnataka was built in **dark schist stone** by the Hoysala king in 1150.
2. Hoysala temples are sometimes called **hybrid or vesara** as their unique style seems neither completely *dravida* nor *nagara*, but somewhere in

between. They are easily distinguishable from other medieval temples by their highly original star-like ground-plans and a profusion of decorative carvings.

3. Dedicated to Shiva as **Nataraja**, the Halebid temple is a **double building** with a large hall for the *mandapa* to facilitate music and dance.
4. A Nandi pavilion precedes each building.
5. The **tower of the temple here and at nearby Belur fell long ago**, and an idea of the temples' appearance can now only be gleaned from their detailed miniature versions flanking the entrances.
6. From the central square plan cut- out, angular projections create the star effect decorated with the most profuse carvings of animals and deities. So intricate is the carving that it is said, for instance, in the bottom-most frieze featuring a continuous procession of hundreds of elephants with their mahouts, no two elephants are in the same pose.



Vijayanagara

1. Founded in 1336, Vijayanagara, literally 'city of victory', attracted a number of international travellers such as the Italian, Niccolo di Conti, the

Portuguese Domingo Paes, Fernao Nuniz and Duarte Barbosa and the Afghan Abd, al- Razzaq, who have left vivid accounts of the city.

2. In addition, various Sanskrit and Telugu works document the vibrant literary tradition of this kingdom.
3. Architecturally, Vijayanagara synthesises the centuries-old dravida temple architecture with Islamic styles demonstrated by the neighbouring sultanates.
4. Their sculpture too, although fundamentally derived from, and consciously seeking to recreate Chola ideals, occasionally shows the presence of foreigners.
5. Their eclectic ruins from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries preserve a fascinating time in history, an age of wealth, exploration and cultural fusion.

BUDDHIST AND JAIN ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

So far, although we have focused on the nature of developments in Hindu architecture from the fifth to fourteenth centuries, it must constantly be kept in mind that this was also the very period when Buddhist and Jain developments were equally vibrant, and often went hand- in-glove with Hindu ones.

Sites such as **Ellora have Buddhist, Hindu and Jain monuments**; however, Badami, Khajuraho and Kannauj have the remains of any two of the religions right next to each other.

When the Gupta empire crumbled in the sixth century CE, this eastern region of Bihar and Bengal, historically known as Magadha, appears to have remained unified whilst numerous small Rajput principalities sprang up to the west.

In the eighth century, the Palas came to power in the region. The second Pala ruler, **Dharmapala**, became immensely powerful and established an empire by defeating the powerful Rajput Pratiharas. Dharmapala consolidated an empire whose wealth lay in a combination of agriculture along the fertile Ganges plain and international trade.

NALANDA'S EMERGENCE AS A GREAT CENTRE OF LEARNING

Nalanda became a great centre of learning during **Harsha's reign**. Students from different parts of the world came here to imbibe learning. Although all the remains mounds of Nalanda have not yet been excavated, yet the evidence of a huge complex of buildings has been uncovered. Some of these were as many as four storey high. According to Hiuen Tsang, Nalanda housed as many as 10,000 students. It was supported by the revenues of 200 villages.

Although this huge monastic-educational establishment was primarily a centre for **learning of Mahayana Buddhism**, yet the curriculum included secular subjects as well. Grammar, logic, epistemology and sciences were taught here. Students were encouraged to develop a spirit of enquiry and reasoning. Active discussions and debates were taking place. Harsha is said

to have invited a thousand learned monks of Nalanda to take part in the philosophical assembly at Kanauj. In his account, Hieun-Tsang has given a detailed account of Nalanda.

Thus university continued to be the centre of intellectual activity till the twelfth century.

The pre-eminent Buddhist site is, of course, Bodhgaya. Bodhgaya is a pilgrimage site since Siddhartha achieved enlightenment here and became Gautama Buddha. While the *bodhi* tree is of immense importance, the **Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya is an important reminder of the brickwork of that time.**



The first shrine here, located at the base of the Bodhi tree, is said to have been constructed by King Ashoka; the *vedika* around it is said to be post-Mauryan, of about 100 BCE; many of the sculptures in the niches in the temple are dated to the eighth century Pala Period, while the actual Mahabodhi temple itself as it stands now is largely a Colonial Period reconstruction of the old seventh century design.

The design of the temple is unusual. It is, strictly speaking, neither dravida or nagara. It is narrow like a nagara temple, but it rises without curving, like a dravida one.

The monastic university of Nalanda is a *mahavihara* as it is a complex of several monasteries of various sizes. Till date, only a small portion of this ancient learning centre has been excavated as most of it lies buried under

contemporary civilisation, making further excavations almost impossible.

Most of the information about Nalanda is based on the records of **Xuan Zang**—previously spelt as ‘Hsuan-tsang’—which states that the foundation of a monastery was laid by **Kumargupta I in the fifth century CE**; and this was carried forward by the later monarchs who built up a fantastic university here.



There is evidence that **all three Buddhist doctrines**— Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana—were taught here and monks made their way to Nalanda and its neighbouring sites of Bodh Gaya and Kurkihar from China, Tibet and Central Asia in the north, and Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma and various other countries from the south-eastern parts of Asia. Monks and pilgrims would take back small sculptures and illustrated manuscripts from

here to their own countries. Buddhist monasteries like Nalanda, thus, were prolific centres of art production that had a decisive impact on the arts of all Buddhist countries in Asia.

The sculptural art of Nalanda, in **stucco, stone and bronze**, developed out of a heavy dependence on the Buddhist Gupta art of Sarnath. By the ninth century a synthesis occurred between the Sarnath Gupta idiom, the local Bihar tradition, and that of central India, leading to the formation of the **Nalanda school of sculpture** characterised by distinctive facial features, body forms and treatment of clothing and jewellery. The characteristic features of Nalanda art, distinguished by its consistently high quality of workmanship, are that the precisely executed sculptures have an **ordered appearance with little effect of crowding**. Sculptures are also usually **not flat in relief but are depicted in three-dimensional forms**. The back slabs of the sculptures are detailed and the ornamentations delicate. The Nalanda bronzes, dating between the seventh and eighth centuries to approximately the twelfth century outnumber the discovery of metal images from all other sites of eastern India and constitute a large body of Pala Period metal sculptures. Like their stone counterparts, the bronzes initially relied heavily on Sarnath and Mathura Gupta traditions. The Nalanda sculptures initially depict Buddhist deities of the Mahayana pantheon such as standing Buddhas, *bodhisattvas* such as Manjusri Kumara, Avalokiteshvara seated on a lotus and Naga-Nagarjuna.



During the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, when Nalanda emerged as an important tantric centre, the repertoire came to be dominated by Vajrayana

deities such as Vajrashaṛada (a form of Saraswati) Khasarpana, Avalokiteśvara, etc.

Depictions of crowned Buddhas occur commonly only after the tenth century. Interestingly, various brahmanical images not conforming to the Sarnath style have also been found at Nalanda, many of which are still worshipped in small temples in villages around the site.

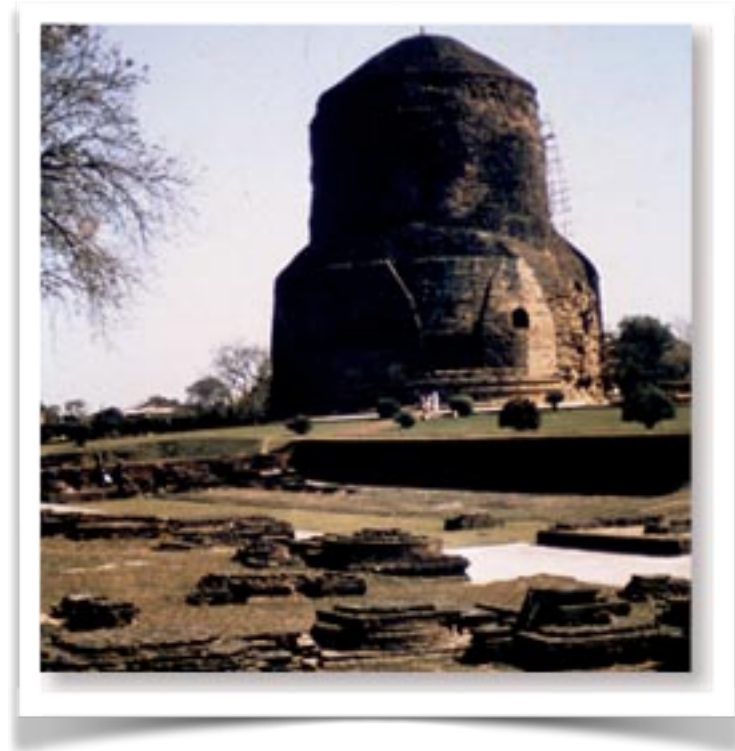
Sirpur in Chhattisgarh is an early-Odisha-style site belonging to the period between of 550–800, with **both Hindu and Buddhist shrines**. In many ways the iconographic and stylistic elements of the Buddhist sculptures here are similar to that of Nalanda. Later other major Buddhist monasteries developed in Odisha. Lalitagiri, Vajragiri and Ratnagiri are the most famous of them.



The port-town of **Nagapattinam** was also a major Buddhist centre right until the Chola Period. One of the reasons for this must have been its importance in trade with Sri Lanka where large numbers of Buddhists still live. Bronze and stone sculptures in Chola style have come to light at Nagapattinam and generally date back to the tenth century.

The Dhamekh stupa at Sarnath is an imposing cylindrical structure (ht. 43.5 m., dia at base 28.3 m.) of the Gupta age, partly built of stone and partly of brick. Its stone basement has eight projecting faces with large niches for

statuary and is further adorned with delicately-carved floral and geometrical patterns. Making the holy spot of the enlightenment of the Master, this site is looked upon with, greatest sanctity and became a flourishing Buddhist establishment with numerous temples, stupas and monasteries. According to tradition a large number of shrines and memorials were created at the site to commemorate the incidents before and after enlightenment.



The main brick built shrine known as the Mahabodhi temple which appears to have been originally erected in circa 2nd century A.D. is encumbered with heavy renovation, the four corner-towers being an arbitrary addition of circa 14th century A.D. Its central tower, standing on a high plinth, is about 55m. high and is a straight-edged pyramid of seven storeys, by pilasters and chaitya niches.

According to literary tradition, Nalanda, 10 kilometres north of Rajgir and a suburb of the ancient city, was visited by Buddha and Mahavira. Ashoka is said to have worshipped at the chaitya-niches of Sariputra, Buddha's disciple, and erected a temple. By the time of Harsha A.D. 606-648, Nalanda had become the principal centre of Mahayana learning and a famed University town with numerous shrines and monasteries which attracted scholars from

far and near. The Chinese Pilgrims Huien Tsang and Fa-hien studied at Nalanda and have left account of the settlement and its life.

Temple 3 was more than 31 m. high and consisted of seven successive accumulations of which the two latest belonged to the 11th and 12th centuries and the fifth one, dating from circa 6th century, was notable for its sculptural wealth. The monasteries were imposing rectangular buildings, each with an open courtyard, enclosed by a covered verandah which leads into cells, arranged on the four sides. The cell facing the entrance served as a shrine. Nalanda was an important centre of Pala sculptures and bronzes and has also yielded seals and sealings of great historical significance.

Jain Temples

Jains were prolific temple builders like the Hindus, and their sacred shrines and pilgrimage spots are to be found across the length and breadth of India except in the hills. The oldest Jain pilgrimage sites are to be found in Bihar. Many of these sites are famous for early Buddhist shrines. In the Deccan, some of the most architecturally important Jain sites can be found in Ellora and Aihole. In central India, Deogarh, Khajuraho, Chanderi and Gwalior have some excellent examples of Jain temples. Karnataka has a rich heritage of Jain shrines and at Sravana Belagola the famous statue of Gomateshwara, the granite statue of Lord Bahubali which stands eighteen metres or fifty-seven feet high, is the world's tallest monolithic free-standing structure. It was commissioned by Camundaraya, the General-in-Chief and Prime Minister of the Ganga Kings of Mysore.

Gujarat and Rajasthan have been strongholds of Jainism since early times.

A famous hoard of Jain bronzes was found at **Akota**, on the outskirts of Baroda, dated between the end of the fifth and the end of the seventh century CE. Finely cast through the lost-wax process, these bronzes were often subsequently inlaid with silver and copper to bring out the eyes, crowns and details of the textiles on which the figures were seated. Many famous Jain bronzes from Chausa in Bihar are now kept in the Patna Museum. Many Jain bronzes from Hansi in Haryana and from various sites in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are kept in various museums in India.

The Jain temples at Mount Abu were constructed by **Vimal Shah**. Notable for a **simplistic exterior** in contrast with the **exuberant marble interiors**, their rich sculptural decoration with deep undercutting creates a lace-like appearance. The temple is famous for its unique patterns on every ceiling, and the graceful bracket figures along the domed ceilings. The great Jain pilgrimage site in the Shatrunjay hills near Palitana in Kathiawar, Gujarat, is imposing with scores of temples clustered together.

In this chapter we have read about the prolific sculptural and architectural remains in different types of stone, terracotta and bronze from the fifth to the fourteenth centuries. Undoubtedly there would have been sculptures made of other media like silver and gold, but these would have been melted down and reused. Many sculptures would also have been made of wood and ivory, but these have perished because of their fragility. Often sculptures would have been painted, but again, pigments cannot always survive hundreds of years, especially if the sculptures were exposed to the elements. There was also a rich tradition of painting at this time, but the only examples that survive from this period are murals in a few religious buildings. A large number of bronze sculptures have been found in the country which shall be discussed in the next chapter.

We have focussed on the dominant art styles and some of the most famous monuments from different parts of India in the medieval period. It is important to realise that the enormous artistic achievements that we have studied here would never have been possible if artists worked alone. These large projects would have brought architects, builders, sculptors and painters together.

Above all, by studying these artworks, we are able to learn much about the kind of society that made these objects. Through them we can surmise what their buildings were like, what types of clothes they wore and above all we can use the art material to reconstruct the history of their religions. These religions, as we have seen were many and diverse and constantly changing. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism each have a plethora of gods and goddesses, and this was the period when *bhakti* and *tantra* — two major developments, affected them. Temples also became a space for many other art forms: such as music and dance and, from the tenth century onward, temples became large landowners and performed an administrative role as well.

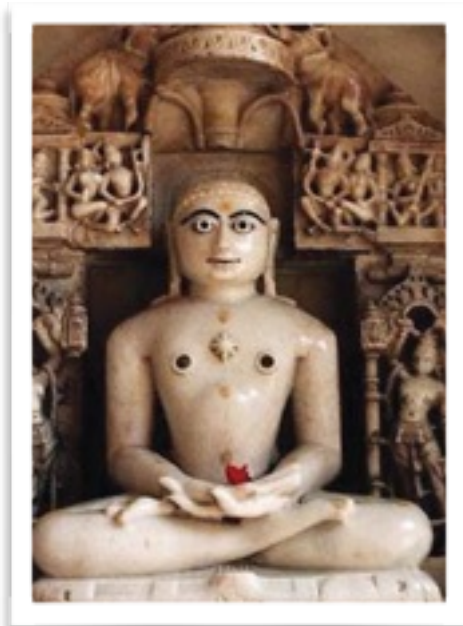
Project Work

Find any temple or monastery in or around your town and note down its important features such as different architectural features, sculptural style, identification of images, dynastic affiliation and patronage.

EXERCISE

1. Mark out all the places discussed in this chapter on a map of India.

2. What are the commonalities and differences between North Indian and South Indian temples? Make a diagram to supplement your answer.
3. Bring out the stylistic differences of any two sculptural traditions (such as Pala, Chola, Pallava, Chandella, etc.) using either drawing, painting or clay-modelling. Supplement your project with a written assignment that explains the salient features of the two styles you have chosen.
4. Compare any two temple styles in India; supplement with a line drawing.
5. Trace the development in Buddhist art.



MAHABALIPURAM



1. Mahabalipuram is an important coastal town from the period of the **Pallavas**.

2. It is dotted with several important **rock-cut and free-standing structural temples** mostly made in the seventh and eighth centuries.

3. This large sculptural panel, one of the largest and oldest known in the world, is nearly **thirty metres long and fifteen metres high**.

4. There is a natural cleft in the rock which has been cleverly used by its sculptors as a channel for water to flow down. This water collects in a massive tank in front of the sculpted wall.



5. Scholars have interpreted the story depicted on the panel differently.

- While some believe that it is the story of the descent of the Ganga from heaven to earth,
- the main story is of ***Kiratarjuniya* or Arjuna's penance**, a poetic work by **Bharvi** which is known to have been popular in the Pallava court.
- Other scholars have interpreted the symbolism behind the sculptures to show that the whole tableau was created to be a ***prashasti*, or something to praise the Pallava king**, who, they say, would have sat enthroned in the tank in front of this extraordinary backdrop.

6. A **temple has been given prominence in the relief**. Ascetics and worshippers sit before it.

7. Above it is an **emaciated bearded figure standing in penance on one leg**, his arms raised above his head. He has been identified by some as **Bhagirath** and by others as **Arjuna**.

8. Arjuna's penance was to obtain the *pashupata* weapon from Shiva, whereas Bhagirath prayed to have Ganga brought to earth.

9. Next to this figure stands Shiva who has one hand in the boon bestowing gesture or ***varada mudra***. The small ***gana* or dwarf** who stands below this hand may be a personification of the powerful *pashupata* weapon.



10. All the figures are shown with a **slender and linear quality** in an animated state of movement.

11. Apart from humans and flying celestials there are several naturalistically carved birds and animals as well. Particularly noteworthy are the extraordinarily well-modelled, and life-like **elephants**, and the **pair of deer** who are under the shrine.

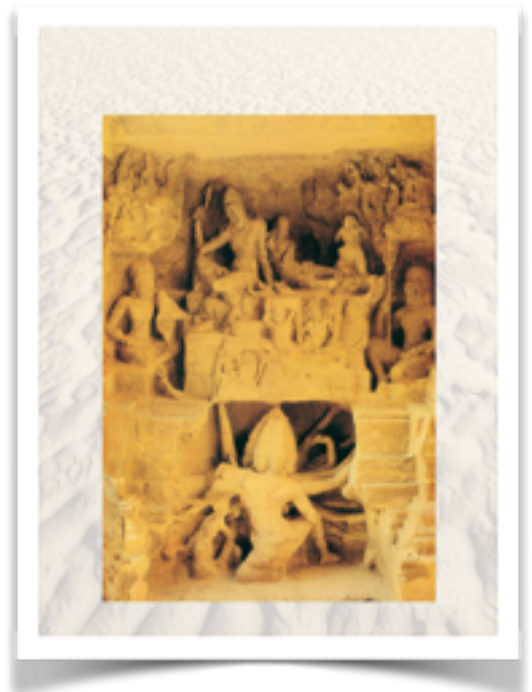
12. The most humorous, however, is a **cat** who has been shown standing on his hind legs, with his hands raised, imitating Bhagirath or Arjuna. Close examination, however, reveals that this **cat is, in fact, a symbolic device**. He is surrounded by rats, which are unable to disturb him from his penance. Perhaps this is a metaphor used by the artist to show how strong Arjuna's or Bhagirath's penance was, who is also standing still, undisturbed by his surroundings.

RAVANA SHAKING MOUNT KAILASHA

The theme of Ravana shaking Mount Kailasha has been depicted several times in the caves of Ellora. But the most noteworthy of all is the one depicted on the **left wall of Kailashnath temple (Cave No.16) at Ellora.**

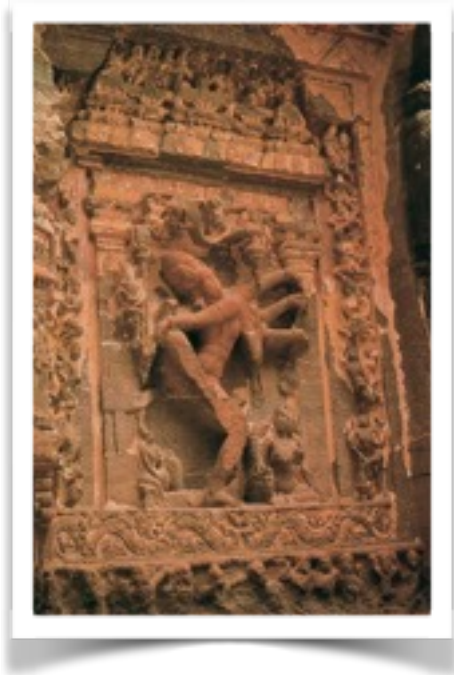
The image is dated to the eighth century CE. It is a colossal sculpture and is considered as one of the masterpieces of Indian sculpture.

1. It depicts the episode of Ravana shaking Mount Kailasha when Lord Shiva along with Parvati and others were on the mountain.
2. The composition is divided into several tiers.
3. The lower tier depicts Ravana, multi-faced and multi-armed shaking the mount with ease.
4. The depth of carvings of the multiple hands brings out the effect of three-dimensional space.
5. Ravana's body is angular pushing one leg inside. The hands are expanded on the sides of the inside chamber created by the image of Ravana.
6. The upper half is divided into three frames. The centre occupied by the image of Shiva and Parvati. Parvati is shown moving close to Shiva scared by the commotion on the hill. Her stretched legs and slightly



twisted body in the recessed space create a very dramatic effect of light and shade.

7. The volume of sculpture is very pronounced; the attendant figures are equally voluminous.
8. The *gana* (dwarf) figures are shown in action, involved in their activities.
9. The celestial beings above Shiva and Parvati witnessing the event are shown in frozen movement.
10. Protrusion of volume and recession in the space are important landmarks in the images of the Ellora caves.
11. Light and darkness has been exploited by creating the images in full round.
12. Their torsos are slender with heaviness in its surface treatment, arms are slim in full round.
13. Attendant figures on the two sides have angular frontality. Every image in the composition is beautifully interwoven structurally with each other.



LAKSHAMANA TEMPLE IN KHAJURAHO

1. The temples at Khajuraho are all made of **sandstone**.

2. They were patronised by the **Chandella dynasty**.
3. The Lakshamana temple represents the full- fledged, developed style of temple architecture during the time of the Chandellas.
4. Its construction was completed by 954, the year as per the inscription found at the base of the temple, by **Yashovarman**, the seventh ruler of the Chandella dynasty.
5. The temple plan is of a **panchayana type**.
6. The temple is constructed on a heavy plinth. It consists of an **ardhamandapa** (porch), **mandapa** (porch), the **maha mandapa** (greater hall) and the **garbhagriha with vimana**.
7. Each part has a separate roof rising backward.
8. All the halls have projected porches on their walls but are not accessible to visitors. Their use is functional, mainly for light and ventilation.
9. The outer walls of the **garbhagriha** and the outer and inner walls around the circumambulatory path are decorated with sculptures.
10. The **shikhara** on the **garbhagriha** is tall.



11. The Khajuraho temples are also known for their erotic sculptures. Many erotic sculptures are carved on the plinth wall. Some erotic sculptures are carved on the actual wall of the temple. Tier arrangements on the walls provide a very specific space for the placement of the images.
12. The interior halls are also decorated profusely.
13. The entrance to the *garbhagriha* is sculpted with heavy voluminous pillars and lintels carved with small images as part of the door decoration.
14. An image of **Chaturmukha Vishnu is in the *garbhagriha*.**
15. There are four shrines in each corner of the temple. There are **images of Vishnu in three shrines and Surya in one**, which can be identified by the central image on the lintel of the shrine-doors.
16. Drapery and ornaments are given a lot of attention.



CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT DURING THE GUPTA PERIOD

The last phase of ancient Indian history starts in early fourth century A.D. and ends in about the 8th A.D. The Guptas built a strong and powerful kingdom and under the political unity and state patronage that was provided by them, cultural activities increased manifold. You will recall that following the Greek invasion, various art forms in India had been markedly influenced by Graeco-Roman styles. This art mainly depicted the Buddha or Buddhist thought. But during the Gupta period art became more creative and Hindu gods and goddesses also came to be portrayed.

The artistic achievement of the age is exhibited in the delicate workmanship and the variety of designs shown in different kinds of Gupta coins.

The general scheme that was followed was to exhibit the portrait of the king on one side of the coin or an appropriate goddess with her associated symbols on the other side. The king is shown in many positions - shooting a tiger or a lion, playing a musical instrument seated on a high backed couch etc. On the reverse in most cases was Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and in some cases Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge and arts.

Besides coins, Gupta art found adequate expression in monuments and sculptures. The skilled artists of this age used their tools and skills to express the ideals and philosophical traditions of India through various art forms. They decorated even the niches and corners of religious places with statues of gods and goddesses. The images of gods were treated as symbols representing attributes associated with the gods. Hence the god were shown having four or eight arms in each carrying a symbol or an ayudha (weapon)

although they were depicted in human forms. Stone, terracotta, and other materials were used to construct the abodes of gods and goddesses.

Examples of the Gupta art can be seen at the **dashavatara temple at Deogarh** and the **cave temples in Udaigiri hills**. However, the most famous examples of Gupta art that still remain are the numerous seated and standing images of Buddha from Sarnath.

The school of art that thrived at Sarnath provides us with some of the most pleasing and graceful images of the Buddha. Besides stone, Gupta artists were also skilled in bronze. A two metre high bronze image of Buddha has been discovered at Sultanganj (near Bhagalpur in Bihar). Examples of sculptures in caves created during this period are traced to the famous Ellora Caves.

Architecture

The Gupta architecture has survived in a few shrines, rock cut caves (Ajanta) and temples, such as the Dashavatara temple at Deogarh. These structures were mainly made of stone and bricks. Some references in the works of Kalidasa give us a glimpse of Gupta architecture. The poet has given a vivid picture of a well-planned town with a network of roads, market places, big sky-touching palaces and mansions with terraces. The palaces had many inner apartments. They had court-yards, prisons, court-room and sabhagriha. Their verandahs opened on roofs lit with moon-beam at night. The pleasure garden which was attached to palace contained all sorts of seasonal flowers and trees.

Archaeological evidence about Gupta architecture is however poor. However, examples of Gupta shrines have been discovered in the jungles of Central India, especially in the Bundelkhand region. These include the one at Bhitargaon in Kanpur district.

Painting

Painting as an art form reached a high degree of perfection during the Gupta times. The wall frescoes at the Ajanta caves (Aurangabad) and the one at Bagh caves (near Gwalior) bear evidence of this. Although Ajanta paintings belong to the period between the first to the seventh century AD yet most of these were produced during the Gupta time. These paintings depict various scenes from the life of the Buddha. The skill with which the human, animal and plant figures have been drawn shows the refined and sensitive nature of Gupta art. The conception of beauty was a characteristic of Gupta art. Expression through art was given importance as it was regarded as a means for the attainment of spiritual joy.