

Hindu Temple Architecture : Chalukyas

In the last article, we have seen the broad outline of temple architecture styles in India (Nagara, Dravida and Vesara) and Chola architecture in particular. Under Dravidian architecture, we have also seen the comparison between Pallava and Chola architecture. In this post, let us see the Chalukya architecture in detail. Chalukyan architecture is a combination of Nagara and Dravida and hence a perfect example for Vesara architecture. The Chalukya temples stand in South India with its gorgeous beauty. Some features of Chalukya architecture are mentioned below.

Noticeable features of Chalukya temples

When we talk about Chalukyas, remember that there are at-least two Chalukyas. Chalukayas of Badami (Vatapi) ruled Karnataka region around 7th century AD. They were followed by Western Chalukyas (Kalyani Chalukyas) by around 11th century AD.

The Chalukya temples are noticeable for three basic plans. They are :

1. Design of the floor
2. Projection of architectural articulation
3. Sculpture.

Design of the floor

It indicates the plan of sala, subsidiary shrines, their plan, design of pradakshina path. The structure and architecture of a temple depends on these plans.

Architectural design

Various designs like miniature towers, projection of pilasters come under this head. The temple surfaces follow a distinctive architectural design with projections and recesses. The walls portrays frequent projections and recesses that reflect a very magical beauty in the eyes of the viewers. The articulation of pillars and mantapas are beyond description.

The noticeable aspect is that though ornamentation of Chalukya temples bears elements of Nagara and Dravidian tradition but they have combined the elements in so prudent way that they become unique and distinctive feature of their own.

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Nagara



Dravida



Vesara



Different Styles of Temple Architecture

Vesara style

The Vesara style also called the Chalukyan type possessed the Dravidian vimana and the Nagara- type faceted walls.

Influence of Nagara tradition

1. The plan of shrine, subsidiary shrine, panchayatana style bears similarity to Nagara school.
2. The plan of vestibule joining the sanctum to mantapa bears resemblance to orissan temples.
3. The most of the temple pillars in Karnataka region bears similarity to sekhari and bhumiya type of pillars in northern india.
4. The stepped diamond plan that is a plan of design arrangement as seen in Chalukya temples is from northern region.
5. The most of the temples in kalyani portrays Nagara articulation projecting stepped diamond or stellate plan.

Influence of Dravida tradition

The Dravida influence is mainly visible in vimana of the Chalukya temples in first part of the Chalukya rule.

Combination of Nagara and Dravida style

1. **Vesara sikhara or kadamba sikhara:** It is a shikhara of Chalukya temple showing northern shikhara and southern vimana features.
2. **Ornamentation:** Miniature decorative towers and ornamentation of walls in Chalukya temples show combination of both Nagara and Dravida style.

Special departure from Nagara and Dravida tradition

In case of entrance hall to shrine Chalukya temple bears special uniqueness. It has two or more than two entrances while

- There is a small closed mantapa to the shrine in Nagara temples.
- There is an enlarged, open and closed mantapa in Dravida temples.

Own distinctive features

Ornamentation : In case of ornamentation of temple walls and pillars, Chalukya temple shows indigenous quality.

Transformation of Dravida tower : The Chalukya builders modified the Dravida towers by minimizing the height of each storey and arranging them in descending order of height from base to top with much ornamentation in each storey.

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Transformation of Nagara tower : Instead of inclined storey here modification is seen in the vertical shape of the tower.

Two special features of Chalukya temples – Mantapa and Pillars :

Mantapa : The mantapa has two types of roof – domical ceilings (the dome like ceilings standing on four pillars are very attractive) or Square ceilings (these are vigorously ornamented with mythological pictures).

Pillars : As mentioned earlier, the miniature decorative pillars of Chalukya temples stands with its own artistic value.

Characteristics of temple architecture of Chalukya

1. The pillars of Chalukya temple are monolithic shaft whose height determines the height of mantapa and temples.
2. Chalukya architects did not use mortar. It allows ventilation of light to the innermost part of the temples.
3. The vestibules were ornamented with artificial lights which eliminated darkness as well as added some kind of mystic feelings.
4. The doorway panels of Chalukya temples are highly decorated that consist of pilaster, moulded lintel, cornice top.
5. Arabesque is a muslim art design bearing linear artistic decoration with pattern of flower, leaves, branches or twisted branches. This design is seen in triangular spaces of domicile ceilings.
6. Chhajja, a double curved projective eave, is generally seen in Chalukyan temples. Muktesvara temple is an example of it.
7. Cornice is used in Chalukya temple for downward movement of rainwater or to save from scorching heat.
8. Use of soapstone for projection in walls carvings is common feature in Chalukya temples.
9. The Chalukya temples are mainly dedicated to different hindu deities like durga,

shiva, vishnu etc.

10. Chalukya architecture has both cave temples design and structured temple design.
11. Chalukya architects used stellate plan or northern stepped diamond plan for architectural design.
12. The decorative pillars with its intricate design of western Chalukya architecture is also known to gadag style of architecture.
13. The Karnata Dravida tradition of architecture initiated by Chalukya of Badami get matured under the hand of Hoysala. The broken ornamentation of walls with projection and recesses was followed by Hoysala artist. Chalukya architecture is also called the precursor of Hoysala art.

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Questions to try :

1. Narrate the influence of Muslim art in Chalukya temple architecture. (100 words)
2. Write a short note on the decoration of Chalukya architecture. (150 words)
3. Chalukya temples are perfect Vesara style but with its uniqueness. Narrate.
4. Write short note – (a) gadag style (b) karnata Dravida tradition
5. Chalukya architecture is the precursor of Hoysala art– narrate.

