

Temple Architecture and Sculpture – Hindu, Buddhist and Jain (Indian Culture Series – NCERT)

In this mega-article, we shall discuss about the Indian temple architecture and sculpture in detail. This post is a part of the Indian Culture compilation based on the NCERT text book 'An Introduction to Indian Art' – Part 1. In the previous articles we have discussed about the Later Mural Traditions, Post Mauryan Trends in Indian Art and Architecture, Arts of the Mauryan Period, Arts of Indus Valley Civilization, etc. In this post we deal with major topics like Nagara Temple Architectural Style, Dravida Temple Architectural Style, Vesara Temple Architectural Style, etc. and the sculptures associated with them. We will also see Buddhist and Jain architecture.

Basic form of a Hindu temple

When you browse our earlier articles on Hindu Temple Architecture, you would realize one thing. It was a gradual evolution starting from the **rock cut- cave temples** to **monolithic rathas** which finally culminated in **structural temples**. The basic form of a Hindu structural temple consists of the following.

1. Garbhagriha:

- It literally means 'womb-house' and is a cave like a sanctum.
- In the earliest temples, it was a small cubical structure with a single entrance.
- Later it grew into a larger complex.
- The Garbhagriha is made to house the main icon (main deity) which is itself the focus of much ritual attention.

2. Mandapa:

- It is the entrance to the temple.
- It may be a portico or colonnaded (series of columns placed at regular intervals) hall that incorporates space for a large number of worshippers. Dances and such other entertainments are practiced here.
- Some temples have multiple mandapas in different sizes named as Ardhmandapa, Mandapa, and Mahamandapa.

3. Shikhara or Vimana:

- They are mountain like the spire of a free-standing temple.
- Shikhara is found in North Indian temples and Vimana is found in South Indian temples.
- Shikhara has a curving shape while vimana has a pyramidal-like structure.

4. Amalaka:

It is a stone disc like structure at the top of the temple and they are common in North Indian temples.

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5. Kalasha:

- It is the topmost point of the temple and commonly seen in North Indian temples.

6. Antarala (vestibule):

- Antarala is a transition area between the Garbhagriha and the temple's main hall (mandapa).

7. Jagati:

- It is a raised platform for sitting and praying and is common in North Indian temples.

8. Vahana:

- It is the mount or vehicle of the temple's main deity along with a standard pillar or **Dhvaj** which is placed axially before the sanctum.

Classification of Indian Temples

Indian temples can be classified into two broad orders as

- **Nagara (in North India)**
- **Dravida (in South India)**
- At times, the **Vesara style** of temples as an independent style created through the mixing of Nagara and Dravida orders.

Sculptures, Iconography, and Ornamentation

- **Iconography** is a branch of art history which studies **the images of deities**.
- It consists of identification of image based on certain symbols and mythology associated with them.
- Even though 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 produce its own distinct style of images with its regional variations in iconography.
- The temple is covered with elaborate sculptures 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 visually found at the entrances in a Nagara temple, Dwarapalas are usually found on the gateway or gopurams of Dravida temples**, similarly **mithunas (erotic images)**, navagrahas (the 9 auspicious planets) and Yakshas are also placed at the entrances to guard them.
- Various forms or aspects of the main divinity are to be found on the outer walls of the sanctum.

- The ashtadikpalas (deities of direction) face eight key directions on the outer walls of the sanctum and/or on the outer walls of the temple.
- Subsidiary shrines around the main temple are dedicated to the family or incarnations of the main deity.
- The various elements of ornamentation are gavaksha, vyala/ yali, kalpalata, amalaka, kalasha, etc.

The Nagara or North Indian Temple Architecture

- Nagara is the style of temple architecture which became popular in Northern India. It is common here to build an entire temple on a stone platform with steps leading up to it.
- Unlike in south India, it doesn't usually have elaborate boundary walls or gateways.
- Earliest temples had only one shikhara (tower), but in the later periods, multiple shikharas came.
- The garbhagriha is always located directly under the tallest tower.

Nagara temples can be subdivided mainly into three – based on the shikhara type.

1. Latina/ Rekha-Prasada:

- It is the **simple and most common** type of shikhara.
- It is **square at the base and the walls curve or slopes inwards to a point on top.**
- Latina types are mainly used for housing the garbhagriha.
- Later on, the Latina buildings grew complex, and instead of appearing like a single tower, the temple began to support many small towers, which were clustered together like rising mountain type with the tallest one being in the centre, and this was the one which was always above the garbhagriha.



2. Phamsana type shikhara:

- They are broader and shorter than Latina type. Their **roof is 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 towers.

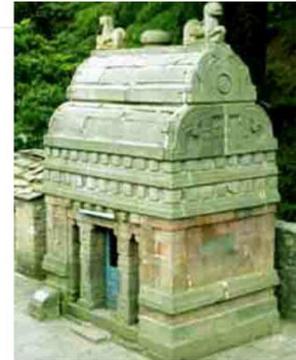


- Phamsana roofs do not curve inwards; instead, they slope upward on a straight incline.
- In many north Indian temples, the phamsana type is

used for mandapas while the main garbhagriha is housed in a Latina building.

3. Valabhi type shikhara:

- These are **rectangular buildings with a roof that rises into a vaulted chamber**.
- The edge of the vaulted chamber is round, like the bamboo or wooden wagons that would have been drawn by bullocks in ancient times.
- The form of this temple is influenced by ancient building forms that were already in existence.



We can also classify the Nagara Temples on the basis of region as follows:

Central India

- In the later periods, the temples grew from simple four pillared structures to a large complex.
- This means that similar developments were incorporated in the architecture of temples of both the religions.
- Two such temples that survive are; **temple at Udaygiri** which is on the outskirts of Vidisha (it is a part of a large Hindu temple complex) and a **temple at Sanchi**, which was a Buddhist site.
- The early temples were modest looking shrines each have four pillars that support a small mandapa before an equally small room that served as garbhagriha.
- Some of the oldest surviving structural temples of Gupta period are in Madhya Pradesh.
- The ancient temple in UP, MP and Rajasthan share many traits and the most visible is that they are made of **Sandstone**.

1. Dashavatara Vishnu Temple, Deogarh, UP:

- Even though the patrons and donors of the temple are unknown, it is believed that this temple was built in the early 6th century CE.
- This is a classical example of the late Gupta period.
- This temple is in the **Panchayatana** style of architecture. [Panchayatana is an architectural style where the main shrine is built on a rectangular plinth with four smaller subsidiary shrines at the four corners and making it a total of five shrines – i.e., Pancha]
- There are 3 main reliefs of Vishnu on the temple walls.
- In fact, it is not actually known to whom the four subsidiary shrines were originally dedicated.
- The temple depicts Vishnu in various forms due to which it was assumed that the four subsidiary shrines must also house Vishnu's avatars and the temple was mistaken for a dashavatara temple.
- The grand doorway of the west facing temple (west facing is less common) has the sculptures of Ganga on the left and Yamuna on the right side.

- The shikhara is in latina/ prasada style which makes it clear that this is an early example of a classical nagara style of the temple.
- **Sheshayana** – on the south (Vishnu reclining on the sheshanaga called Ananta)
- **Nara-Narayana** – on the east (discussion between human soul and the eternal divine)
- **Gajendramoksha** – on the west (story of achieving moksha , symbolically communicated by Vishnu’s suppression of an asura who had taken the form of an elephant)
- The temple is west facing, which is less common, as most of the temples are east or north facing.

Also read: Ancient India: Gupta and Post-Gupta (NCERT)

2. Temples at Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh:

- The temples at Khajuraho were made in the 10th century, about 400 years after the temple at Deogarh and the complex is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The temples were patronized by Chandela kings.
- We can see how dramatically the shape and style of the nagara temple architecture had developed.
- The temples at Khajuraho are **all made of Sandstone**.
- The largest temple at Khajuraho is the Kandariya Mahadeva temple which is attributed to king Ganda.
- The Lakshmana temple dedicated to Vishnu was built in 954 by Chandela king, Dhanga.
- All the towers or shikhara of the temple rise high, upward in a curved pyramidal fashion, emphasizing the temple’s vertical thrust ending in a horizontal fluted disc called an Amalaka topped with a Kalasha or a vase. The crowning element Kalasha and Amalaka are to be found on all nagara temples of this period.
- The Khajuraho temples are also known for their extensive erotic sculptures (about 10% of total sculptures); the erotic expression gives equal importance in human experience as a spiritual pursuit, and it is seen as a part of the larger cosmic whole. Many Hindu temples, therefore feature Mithuns (embracing couples-erotic sculptures) sculptures, considered auspicious.
- Khajuraho sculptures are highly stylized with typical features.
- There are many temples at Khajuraho, most of them dedicated to Hindu gods.
- **There are some Jain temples as well as a Chausanth Yogini temple.**
- Chausanth Yogini is a temple of small square shrines dedicated to esoteric deities or goddesses associated with the rise of **Tantric worship after the 7th**
- [Khajuraho dance festival is organized by MP Kalaparishad and is one week long (first week of February) festival of classical dances celebrated annually against the spectacular backdrop of Khajuraho]

West India

- There are too numerous temples in the northwestern parts of India, including Gujarat and Rajasthan, and stylistically extendable, at times, to western Madhya Pradesh. The stones to build temples ranges in colour and type.
- While **sandstone is the commonest**, a grey to black basalt can be seen in some of the 10th to 12th-century temple sculptures.
- The most exuberant and famed are the manipulatable soft white marble which is also seen in some of the 10th to 12th-century Jain temples in Mount Abu and the 15th-century temple at Ranatpur.
- Among the most important art, historical sites in the region are **Samlaji in Gujarat**. It 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.

1. Sun temple, Modhera, Gujarat:

- The temple dates back to the early 11th century and was built by **Raja Bhimdev I** of the **Solanki dynasty**.
- The Solanks were a branch off later Chalukyas.
- There is a massive rectangular stepped tank called **Surya Kund** in front of it.
- The hundred square metre rectangular pond is perhaps the grandest temple tank in India.
A hundred and eight miniature shrines are carved in between the steps inside the tank.
- 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 India temples.

East India

- East Indian temples include those found in the North-East, Bengal, and Odisha and each of these three areas produces a distinct type of temple.
- The history of architecture in the northeast and Bengal is hard to study because a number of ancient buildings in those regions were renovated, and what survives now is later brick or concrete temples at those sites.
- It appears that terracotta was the main medium of construction.
- 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 6th 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.
- The post-Gupta style continued in the region well in the 10th century. However, by the 12th to 14th 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 17th century.

Bengal:

- The style of sculptures during the period **between the 9th and 11th centuries in Bengal (including Bangladesh) and Bihar is known as the Pala style**, named after the ruling dynasty at that time.
- That **style in the mid 11th and mid 13th centuries is named after the Sena kings**.
- While the Palas are celebrated as patrons of Buddhist monastic sites, the temple of the region is known to express the **Vanga style**.
- The **Siddheswara Mahadeva temple in Burdwan, W.B**, built in the 9th century, shows a tall curving shikhara crowned by a large amalaka, **is an example of early Pala style**.
- Many of the temples from 9th to 12th centuries were located at **Telkupi** in Puruta district, W.B.
- They were submerged when dams were constructed in the region.
- The architecture of these temples heavily influenced the earliest Bengal Sultanate buildings at Gaur and Pandya.
- Many local vernacular building traditions of Bengal also influenced the style of the temple in that region.
- The most prominent of these was the shape of the **sloping or curving side of the bamboo roof of a Bengali hut**.
- This feature was eventually even adopted in Mughal buildings and is known as across India as the **Bangla Roof** (word Bungalow derived from this).

Odisha (Kalingia Architecture):

The main architectural features of Odisha temples are classified in three orders:

a. Rekhapida/ Rekha deula/ rathaka deula:

Rekha means line and it is a tall straight building with a shape of a sugar loaf. It covers the garbhagriha.

b. Pidhadeula:

It is a square building with a pyramid shaped roof and is mainly found for **housing the outer dancing and offering halls**.

c. Khakradeula:

It is a rectangular building with a truncated pyramid shaped roof. Temples of the **female deities** are usually in this form (garbhagriha usually) and will have a resemblance with Dravidian temples of the south.



- Most of the ancient temples are located in ancient Kalinga – modern Puri district, including Bhuvaneswar or ancient Tribhuvaneshwar, Puri, and Konark.
- The temples of Odisha constitute a distinct sub-style within nagara order.
- In general, **here the Shikhara called Deul in Odisha is vertical almost until the top** when it suddenly curves sharply inwards. **Mandapas in Odisha are called Jagamohanas.**
- The ground plan of the main temple is almost always square, which, in the upper reaches of its superstructure becomes circular in the crowning
- The exterior of the temple is lavishly curved while their interiors are generally quite bare.
- **Odisha temples usually have outer walls.**



1. Sun temple, Konark, Odisha:

- It is built around 1240 on the shores of the Bay of Bengal.
- The temple is set on a high base, its walls covered in extensive, detailed ornamental carving.
- These include **12 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 8 horses, sculpted here at the entrance staircase.
- The whole temple thus comes to resemble a colossal processional chariot.
- On the southern wall is a massive sculpture of Surya carved out of green stones.
- It is said that there were 3 such images, 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.

Also read: Medieval India: Regional Cultures (NCERT)

2. Jagannatha temple, Puri, Odisha:

- It is also located on the eastern coast, at Puri, Odisha.
- The temple **is a part of Char Dham** (Badrinath, Dwaraka, Puri, Rameswaram) pilgrimages that a Hindu is expected to make in one's lifetime.
- When most of the deities in the temples of India are made of stone or metal, the **idol of Jagannatha is made of wood** which is ceremoniously replaced in every twelve or nineteen years by using sacred trees.
- The temple is believed to be constructed in the 12th century by King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty.
- The temple is famous for its **annual Ratha Yatra or Chariot festival**.

The Hills

- A unique form of architecture developed in the hills of Kumaon, Garhwal, Himachal and Kashmir.
- Kashmir's proximity to Gandhara site (such as Taxila, Peshawar and northwest frontier) left the region a strong Gandhara influence by the 5th century CE.

- This began to mix with the Gupta and post-Gupta traditions that brought to it from Sarnath, Mathura, and even centres in Gujarat and Bengal.
- Both Buddhist and Hindu traditions began to intermingle and spread in the hills.
- The hills also had their own tradition of wooden building with pitched roofs and as a result, while the main garbhagriha and shikhara are made in latina/rekha-prasada type, the mandapa is an older form of wooden architecture. Sometimes, the temple itself takes on a pagoda shape.
- The Karkota period of Kashmir is the most significant in terms of architecture.
- The most important temples of these regions are Pandrethan, Laksna-devi Mandir, Jageswar near Almora, Chambavat near Pithoragarh, etc.

The Dravida or South Indian Temple Architecture

- Unlike the nagara temple, the Dravida temple is enclosed within a compound wall.
- The front wall has an entrance gateway in its centre, which is known as **Gopura/ Gopuram**.
- The shape of the main temple tower is known as Vimana (shikhara in nagara style).
- The vimana is like a stepped pyramid that rises up geometrically rather than the curving shikhara of north India.
- In south India, 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 amalaka or kalasha of north Indian temples).
- In north Indian temples, we can see images such as Mithunas (erotic) and the river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna guarding the temple. But in the Dravida style of temple architecture, instead of these sculptures, we can see the sculptures of fierce dvarapalas or door keepers guarding the temple.
- A large water reservoir or a temple tank enclosed in the complex is general in south Indian temples.
- Subsidiary shrines are either incorporated within the main temple tower or located as a distinct, separate small shrine beside the main temple.
- The north Indian idea of multiple shikharas rising together as a cluster was not popular in Dravida style.
- At some of the most sacred temples in south India, the main temple in which the garbhagriha is situated has, in fact, one of the smallest towers. This is because it is usually the oldest part of the temple.
- When the population and the size of the town associated with the temple increased, it would have become necessary to make a new boundary wall around the temple (and also associated structures).
- An example for this is the Srirangam temple at Thiruchirapally, which has as many as seven concentric rectangular enclosure walls, each with gopurams.

- The outermost is the oldest while the tower right in the centre housing the garbhagriha is the oldest.
- Just as the nagara architecture has subdivisions, dravida temples also have subdivisions. These are basically of five different shapes:
 1. Kuta or caturasra – square
 2. Shala or ayatasra – rectangular
 3. Gaja-prishta or vrittayata (elephant backed) –elliptic
 4. Vritta – circular
 5. Ashtasra – octagonal

Pallavas:

- The Pallavas were one of the ancient south Indian dynasties that were active in Andhra region from the 2nd century onwards and moved south to settle in Tamil Nadu.
- Their history is better documented in the inscriptions in stone and several monuments.
- Although they were mostly Shaivites, several Vaishnava shrines also survived from the reign, and there is no doubt that they were influenced by the long Buddhist history of the Deccan.
- The early buildings of Pallavas were rock-cut; while the later ones were structural (structural buildings were well known to them when rock cut ones being excavated).
- The **early buildings are generally attributed to Mahendravarman I**, contemporary of Chalukya king, Pulikeshi II of Karnataka.
- **Narasimhavarman I, who was also known as Mamalla**, acceded the throne around 640 CE.
- He expanded the empire and also inaugurated most of the building work at Mahabalipuram which is known after him as Mamallapuram.

The shore temple at Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu,

- It is a structural temple and was built during the reign of **Narasimhavarman II, also known as Rajasimha**.
- The temple is facing east towards the sea and has three shrines – east and west to Shiva and the middle for Vishnu (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 shrine may be added at different times.
- In the compound, there is an evidence of a water tank, an early example of a gopuram, and several other images.
- Sculpture of the bull, Nandi, Shiva's mount, lines the temple walls.
- The temple has suffered severe disfiguration due to erosion by salt water laden air over the centuries.

The Pallava temple architecture can be classified into four groups according to the rulers and the features of temples they constructed.

a. Mahendravarman Group:

- Early temples of the Pallavas belong to King Mahendravarman I (7th century).
- They were **rock-cut temples** (may be influenced by rock-cut architecture).
- g. Manddagapattu, Mahendravadi, Tircuchirapally, etc.

b. Narasimha/Mamalla Group:

- It is the second stage of Pallava architecture which started when Narasimhavarman I (Mamalla) came to the throne.
- The architecture is represented by **Monolithic rocks**.
- The monolithic rathas and mandapas of Mamallapuram are examples.
- The five rathas are popularly known as Panchapandava rathas.

c. Rajasimha Group:

- The group was under Narasimhavarman II who was also known as Rajasimha. He introduced the structural temples and Gopura style in Pallava architecture. The Kailasnath temple at Kanchi and the Shore temple at Mahabalipuram are examples.

d. Nandivaram Group:

- Architecture mainly under the Pallava king, Nandivaram Pallava.
- They also represented structural temples.
- The temples were generally small compared to the other groups.
- The Vaikundaperumal temple, Tirunelveli and Mukteswara temple are examples.

Cholas

- The best example of Chola temple architecture is the **Brihadeswara temple at Tanjore**.
- The temple is **also known as Rajarajeswara temple**.
- It was completed around 1009 by **Rajaraja Chola** and is the **largest and tallest of all Indian temples**.
- The temples pyramidal multi-storeyed Vimana rises a massive seventy metres, topped by a monolithic shikhara, and the kalasha on top by itself is about three metres and eight centimetres in height.
- The main deity of the temple is Shiva, who is shown as a huge lingam set in a two storeyed sanctum.
- **Painted Murals** and sculptures decorate the walls surrounding the sanctum.

The Vesara or the Deccan Temple Architecture

- The buildings in the Deccan region are hybridized style, which contains both elements from nagara and Dravida architectural styles and is known in some ancient texts as the Vesara style (not all temples of Deccan are the vesara type).
- The vesara style became popular after the mid 7th century.

Also read: First World War (1914-1918): Causes and Consequences

1. Ravan Phadi cave, Aihole, Karnataka:

- The Ravan Phadi cave at Aihole is an example of the early Chalukya style which is known for its distinct sculptural style.
- One of the most important sculptures at the site is of Nataraja, surrounded by a large depiction of saptamatrikas: three to Shiva's left and four to his right.

2. Lad Khan Temple at Aihole, Karnataka:

- The temple is dedicated to Shiva and is one of the oldest Hindu temples.
- Built in the 5th century by the Kings of the Chalukya Dynasty.
- It seems to be inspired by the wooden – roofed temples of the hills except that it is constructed out of stone.
- The temple is named after a person named Lad Khan, who turned this temple into his residence for a short period.

3. Durga Temple at Aihole, Karnataka:

- The temple is built in between 7th and 8th century.
- The architecture of the temple is predominantly Dravida with Nagara style also in certain areas.
- The temple is considered as a unique and magnificent temple of the Chalukya period.
- The Lad Khan Temple of Aihole is located to its South.

4. Temples at Pattadakal, Karnataka:

- There are ten temples at Pattadakal including a Jain temple and is a UNESCO world Heritage Site.
- A fusion of various architectural styles can be seen here.
- Out of ten temples, four are in Dravida style, four are in nagara style and one is a Jain temple, while the **Papanatha Temple** is built in a fusion of both nagara and Dravida styles.
- The Jain temple (Jain Narayana temple) was built by Rashtrakutas in the 9th The
- Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal is also known as Sri-Lokeswar-Maha-Sila-Prasad, was built by Loka Mahadevi, the Queen of the Chalukya king Vikramaditya II (733-44).
- It was probably built around 740 CE to commemorate her husband's victory over the Pallavas of Kanchipuram.
- It closely resembles the Kailasnath temple at Kanchipuram on plan and elevation.
- It represents a fully developed and perfect stage of the Dravida architecture.

Rashtrakutas

- By about 750 CE, the early western Chalukya control of the Deccan was taken by the Rashtrakutas.
- Their greatest achievement in architecture is the **Kailasnath Temple at Ellora**.
- The Jain temple at Pattadakal was also built by Rashtrakutas.

Hoyasalas

- With the waning Chola and Pandya power, the Hoyasalas of Karnataka grew into prominence in south India and became the most important patrons centred at Mysore.
- The three main temples of Hoyasala are the temples at Belur, Halebid and Somanathpuram.
- 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 so that **the plan of these temples starts looking like a star. As the plan**
- **looks like a star, it is known as stellate plan.**
- They are usually made out of **soapstone**.

Temples at Halebid, Karnataka:

- The temple is also known as Hoyasaleswara temple.
- Built in dark schist stone by the Hoyasala king Vishnuvardhan in 1150.
- Dedicated to Shiva as Nataraja and contains a large hall for the mandapa to facilitate music and dance.
- In the bottom frieze of the temple featuring a continuous procession of hundreds of elephants with their mahouts, no two elephants are in the same position.

Vijayanagara

- The Vijayanagara Empire, which was founded in the 14th century, attracted a number of international travelers such as the Italian, Nicoclo 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.
- Architecturally, Vijayanagara synthesizes the centuries old dravida temple architecture with Islamic styles demonstrated by the neighbouring Sultanates.
- Their sculptures too, which were consciously seeking to recreate Chola ideals, occasionally shows the presence of foreigners.

Buddhist and Jain Architectural Developments

The period of 5th to 14th centuries was not only the period of the development of Hindu temples but also were the equally vibrant period for the Buddhist and Jain architectures.

Buddhist Architecture

- When the Gupta empire crumbled in the 6th century CE, the 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 8th century, the Palas came to power in the region.
- The 2nd 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 consolidation of agriculture along the fertile Ganges plain and international trade.

Bodhgaya, Bihar:

- Bodhgaya became a pilgrimage site since Siddhartha achieved enlightenment here and became Gautama Buddha.
- 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 (fence) around it is said to be Post-Mauryan, of about 100 BCE.
- Many sculptures in the temple are dated to the 8th century Pala period.
- The actual Mahabodhi temple as it stands now is largely a colonial period reconstruction of the old 7th
- The design of the temple is unusual and is neither Dravida nor nagara style.

Nalanda, Bihar:

- The monastic University of Nalanda is a **Mahavihara** as it is a complex of several monasteries of various sizes.
- Only a small portion of this ancient learning centre has been excavated till date, as most of it lies buried under contemporary civilization, making further excavations almost impossible.
- Most of the information about Nalanda is based on the records of Xuan Zang/Hsuan Tsang (Chinese traveller).
- It states that the foundation of the monastery was laid by **Kumaragupta I** in the 5th century CE.
- All three Buddhist doctrines – Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana – were taught here.
- Monks came to here from the different regions of the world such as China, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, etc.
- Monks and pilgrims who came here take back small sculptures and illustrated manuscripts to their homeland, which resulted in a decisive impact on the arts of the Buddhist countries in Asia.
- The sculptural art of Nalanda was developed out of a heavy dependence on the Buddhist Gupta art of Sarnath.
- The Sculptures were mainly made in stucco, stone, and bronze.
- By the 9th century, Nalanda school of sculpture was formed which was characterized by distinctive facial features, body forms, and treatment of clothing and jewellery. The Nalanda sculptures initially depict Buddhist deities of the Mahayana tradition, such as standing Buddhas, bodhisattvas, etc.
- During the 11th and 12th centuries, Nalanda emerged as an important tantric centre and the sculptures during that period dominated by deities of Vajrayana tradition, such as Vajrashastra (a form of Saraswati), Khasarpana, Avalokitesvara, etc. Various
- Brahmanical images have also been found at Nalanda.

Jain Architecture

- Jains were also prolific temple builders like Hindus and their sacred shrines and

pilgrimage spots can be found across the country.

- **The oldest Jain pilgrimage sites are to be found in Bihar.**
- In the Deccan, some of the most architecturally important Jain sites can be found at Ellora and Aihole.
- **Karnataka has** a rich heritage of Jain shrines and the **Sravana Belagola**, the famous statue of the **Gomateswara, the granite statue of Lord Bahubali which stands eighteen metre, 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.
- The **Jain temples at Mount Abu (Dilwara Temples) were constructed by Vimal**
- **Shah.**
- One can see a complex of temples carved of **white marble**
The temples are famous for its unique patterns on very ceilings, and graceful bracket figs along the domed ceiling.

