

Ancient Architecture in India



Mouryan period(322 BCE to 187 BCE)was an important phase for Indian Architecture.

Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador described Chandra Gupta Mourya's wooden carved palace as an excellent architectural achievement.

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In the Ashoka's reign (c. 268BC – 232 BC), Mauryan art and architecture imbibed the influence of the Persians and the Greeks, many monolithic stone pillars were erected on which teachings of 'Dhamma' were inscribed. The highly-polished pillars were decorated with animal figures at the top are unique and remarkable. The lion capital of the Sarnath Pillar has been accepted as the emblem of the Indian Republic. Each pillar weighs about 50 tonnes and is about 50 feet high.

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- The combining of Greek and Indian art subsequently led to the development of **Gandhara art**. The other schools of art and architecture were Mathura school and Amaravati school. A large number of statues of the Buddha were built by the of theses schools, especially after the first century AD, under the influence of the Kushanas. Under the Gandhara school of art, life-like statues of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas were made in the likeness of Greek gods the ideas, inspirations and subjects were all Indian. Rich ornaments, costumes and drapery were used to impart physical beauty. The sculptures were in stone, terracotta, cement-like material and clay. The figures of the Mathura school were made of spotted red stone.

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- The Amaravati school developed under the patronage of the Satavahanas of the Andhra region. A great stupa was built at Amaravati in the Lower Godavari region. The walls of the stupa were adorned with bas-relief; these had a carved medallion and decorative panels. Nagarjunakonda is another place that famous for its Buddhist architecture.



Cave Architecture

- Cave architecture is an important phase in the history of Indian architecture. More than a thousand caves have been excavated where archaeologists have discovered sculptures that were created in the second century BC and AD tenth century. Famous among these were the Ajanta and Ellora Caves of Maharashtra, and the Udayagiri Caves of Odisha. These caves hold Buddhist viharas, chaityas as well as mandapas and pillared-temples of Hindu gods and goddesses.
- **Rock-cut temples**
Temples were carved out of huge rocks. The earliest rock-cut temples were built in the western Deccan in the early years of the Christian era. The chaitya at the Karle Caves with fine high halls and a polished decorative wall is a remarkable example of rock-cut architecture. The Kailash temple at Ellora built by the Rashtrakutas and the ratha temples of Mahabalipuram built by the Pallavas are other examples of rock-cut

Free Standing Temples

The temple-building activities that began during the Gupta rule continued to flourish in later periods. In southern India, the Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyan, Hoysalas and later, the rulers of the Vijaya nagara kingdom were great builders of temples. The Pallava rulers built the shore temple at Mahabalipuram. The Pallavas also built other structural temples like the Kailasanathar temple and the Vaikunta Perumal temples at Kanchipuram. The Cholas built many temples, the most famous being the Brihadeshwara temple at Thanjavur. The Cholas developed a typical style of temple architecture of South India called the Dravida style, complete with vimana or shikhara, high walls and the gateway topped by a gopuram. Magnificent temples were built at Belur and Halebidu, where the stone engravings reached even greater heights. In northern and eastern India magnificent temples were constructed as well, in what is now referred to as the Nagara style. Most of them consisted of the shikara (spiral roof), the garbha griha

Free Standing Temples

- Odisha has some of the most beautiful temples such as the Lingaraja Temple which was built by the Somavamsi kings, with additions by the Ganga rulers, the Mukteshvara Temple in Bhubaneswar and the Jagannath Temple in Puri are also instances of exemplary temple art. The Sun Temple in Konark was built in the thirteenth century by the Eastern Ganga ruler Narasimhadeva. The temple is dedicated to Surya (the Sun God) and has been designed as a twelve-wheeled chariot.
- The temple complex at Khajuraho was built by the Chandela rulers between the tenth and eleventh centuries in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh. Most important among them is the Kandariya Mahadeva Temple. Under the Solanki rulers Mount Abu in Rajasthan is known for the Dilwara temples dedicated to Jain Tirthankaras. These were built white marble and adorned with exquisite sculptures were built