



General Studies Manual for UPSC and State Public Services Examinations 2014

Salient Features of Indian Culture
Module-4: Ancient Indian Architecture

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Contents

Chapter 1. Architecture of Indus Valley Civilization.....	2
Salient Features of the Architecture in Indus Valley Civilization.....	3
Town Planning.....	3
Town Planning at Lothal	4
Chapter 2. Rock Cut Architecture.....	5
Barabar Caves	5
The Decorated Facades at Barabar - Significance.....	5
Kanheri Caves	6
Significances of Kanheri Caves in Indian Architecture	6
Bhaja and Karla Caves	7
Bedse Caves	7
Ajanta Caves.....	7
Ellora Caves	10
The Carpenter's Cave / Vishvakarma Cave at Ellora	11
Kailasnath Temple, Ellora	11
Indra Sabha (Jaina).....	12
Monuments at Mahabalipuram	12
Chapter 3. Buddhist Architecture – Stupas.....	13
The Bharhut Stupa	13
The architectural significance:	13
Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi	14
Dhamekha Stupa	16
Chapter 4. Early Temple Architecture.....	17
Basics of Temple Architecture.....	17
The Sandhara, Nirandhara and Sarvabhadra Temples	17
Basic Structure of a Hindu Temple	17
Different Temple Architecture Styles	17
Temple Architecture of Guptas	18
Temple Architecture of Chalukyas of Badami.....	18
Temple architecture of Rashtrakutas	20
Temple Architecture of Western Chalukyas	20
Temple Architecture of Hoysalas.....	22
Temple Architecture of the Pallavas	23
Temple Architecture of Cholas.....	25
Brihadeeswarar Temple of Tanjore	26

Chapter 1. Architecture of Indus Valley Civilization**Salient Features of the Architecture in Indus Valley Civilization**

There was a sophisticated concept of town planning in the Indus Valley Civilization. From the excavated remains, it is clear that it possessed a flourishing urban architecture. There were well-planned grids with broad main roads and smaller lanes intersecting at right angles. There were large networks of hundreds of wells, which supplied water to the residents. A sophisticated drainage system was in existence and even the smallest houses were connected to it. Houses were made of bricks. The standardised dimensions of these bricks, found in the many cities across this civilisation, are remarkable. The houses had several storeys.

Town Planning**Grid Pattern**

- Harappa and Mohen-Jo Dero were laid out on a **grid pattern** and had provisions for an advanced **drainage system**. Streets were oriented east to west. Each street was having a well organized drainage system.

City Walls

- Each city in the Indus Valley was surrounded by massive walls and gateways. The walls were built to control trade and also to stop the city from being flooded.
- Each part of the city was made up of walled sections. Each section included different buildings such as: Public buildings, houses, markets, craft workshops, etc.

The acropolis and the lower cities

- A typical city would be divided into two sections, each fortified separately.
- One section was located on an artificially raised mound (sometimes called *acropolis*) while the other level was on level ground.
- The acropolis contained the important buildings of the city, like the assembly halls, religious structures, granaries and in the great bath in case of Mohenjo-Daro.
- The lower section of the city was where the housing for the inhabitants was located. It was here where some truly amazing features have been discovered. The city was well connected with broad roads about 30 meters long which met at right angles. The houses were located in the rectangular squares thus formed.

The Residential Buildings

- The residential buildings, which were serviceable enough, were **mainly made up of brick** and consisted of on open terrace flanked by rooms.
- These houses were made of standardized baked bricks (which had a ratio of length to width to thickness at 4:2:1) as well as sun dried bricks.
- Some houses even had multiple stories and paved floors.

In-house wells

- Almost every house had its own wells, drains and bathrooms. The in-house well is a common and recognizable feature of the Indus Valley Civilization.

Drainage System

- Each house was connected directly to an excellent drainage system, which indicates a highly developed municipal life.

Granaries

- The largest building found at Mohenjo-Daro is a granary, running 150 feet long, 75 feet wide and 15 feet high.
- The granary was divided into 27 compartments in three rows.
- It was well ventilated and it was possible to fill grain in from outside. The large size of the granary probably indicates a highly developed agricultural civilization.

**Great Bath**

- The Great bath at Mohenjo-Daro is about 179 feet long and 107 feet wide.
- The complex has a large quadrangle in the center with galleries and rooms on all sides. In the center of this quadrangle there is a large swimming enclosure that is 39 feet long, 23 feet wide and 8 feet deep.
- The entire complex is connected to an elaborate water supply and sewer system. The Great Bath was probably used for religious or ritualistic purposes.

**No Temples**

- There are no traces of temple architecture or other religious places, yet the people practiced religion. The great bath has been linked to some religious practice.

No weaponry / warfare monuments

- Excavations across this culture have not revealed evidence of military forces or weaponry for warfare. While the art of other civilisations has many images of prisoners, monuments to war victories and of other activities related to warfare, the art of the Indus Valley has not a single such depiction.
- The archaeological evidence points to the fact that the early river valley civilisation in India was remarkable in being a cooperative culture without the rule of kings. The emphasis appears to have been on peaceful trade and not on the development of military might.

Town Planning at Lothal

A different kind of town planning we found at Lothal, in present-day Gujarat, on the western coast of India.

- This city was divided into **6 sections** and each section had a wide platform of earthen bricks.
- Lothal is different from other sites of Indus Valley Civilization in terms of town planning that it has entry to the houses on the main street while in other sites have shown lateral entry.



Lothal Dock

Lothal Dockyard

Lothal has a large structure that has been identified as a tidal dock for sea-faring ships. There is a great deal of evidence that Indus Valley cities traded extensively with other civilisations of that period. Mesopotamian records mention trade with cities here, and objects from the Indus region have been found in West Asian cities. Lothal's dock—the world's earliest known, connected the city to an ancient course of the Sabarmati river on the trade route between Harappan cities in Sindh and the peninsula of Saurashtra when the surrounding Kutch desert of today was a part of the Arabian Sea. It was a vital and thriving trade centre in ancient times, with its trade of beads, gems and valuable ornaments reaching the far corners of West Asia and Africa.

Chapter 2. Rock Cut Architecture

India has more than 1,500 rock cut structures most of which are religious. They belong to the ancient and medieval era, and are considered to be the amazing achievements of structural engineering and craftsmanship of Indian sculptors, monks and general public.

Barabar Caves

The oldest examples of rock-cut architecture in India are the Barabar caves, located in the Barabar hills, in Jehanabad District of Bihar. There are four caves in Barabar. These caves date back to reign of Asoka (273-232 BC) and his grandson Dasaratha, initially for the Ajivika sect.

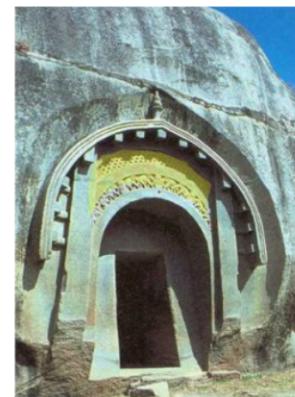
Hundreds of rock-cut caves were made later for the Buddhist, Jaina and Brahmanical traditions. Thus, the *Barabar caves associated with Ajivika, Buddhists, Jains as well as the Hindu religions*.



The Decorated Facades at Barabar - Significance

The marvellous tradition of hundreds of rock-cut caves in India was initiated at Barabar.

It must be noted that the decorative arch above the entrance (facade) of one of these caves (Lomas Rishi Cave) was made in imitation of the wooden architecture of the time. This became a constant feature in the later Chaityas and is known as the Chaitya Arch. It also continued as a decorative motif in later temples.



Lomas Rishi Cave at Barabar
(The Facade is highlighted)

Four Caves at Barabar are as follows:

- **Lomas Rishi cave:** Known for the horse shoe fashion decorated facade (highlighted in the adjacent image) that imitates the contemporary timber architecture. This later became a constant feature in Chaityas of India.
- **Sudama cave:** They are known for the bow shaped arches. Sudama and Lomas Rishi Caves are the earliest examples of rock-cut architecture in India,
- **Karan Chaupar:** It has a single rectangular room with polished surfaces, contains inscription dating back to Maurya era.

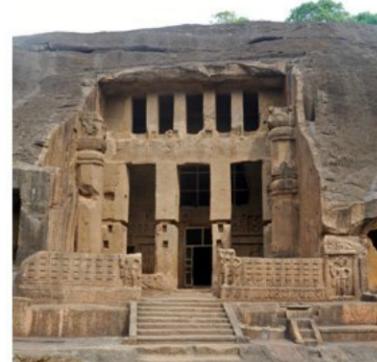
- **Visva Zopri:** There are two rectangular caves over there.

Kanheri Caves

The topography of the Western Ghats along with the political patronage suited to the development of Buddhist Caves in many of the hills, ravines and cliffs of the Sahayadris. The earliest example of excellent rock cut architecture in Western Ghats are Kanheri (Krishnagiri originally) Caves (109 in number) which are located north of Borivali in Mumbai within the Sanjay Gandhi National Park.

The earliest caves were excavated in the 1st and 2nd century BC. These caves were continuously occupied by the *Buddhist monks as well as inland traders as stop overs till 7th century AD.* With the increase in the royal patronage and mercantile sponsorships, the interiors of these caves were made more and more decorated.

At Kanheri, we find *both the Chaityas and Viharas.* While creating them, the elements of wooden construction have been retained.



Entrance at a Kanheri Cave

Significances of Kanheri Caves in Indian Architecture

Amidst the natural surroundings, which have been well preserved by the national park administration, this site provides a view of developments in Buddhist art for a thousand years, from the 1st century A.D. onwards. Its proximity to the sea and thriving ports would have ensured its continual patronage by the mercantile class.

- **Expressions of rock-cut art in Western India**

The caves at Kanheri present the last expressions of the early rock-cut tradition of western India. Simultaneously, this site heralds developments in iconography of the Buddhist art of the later period.

- **Beginning of the traditions of Colossal Buddha Figures**

The Kanheri Caves are home to a colossal Buddha statue (22 ft in height) which was created in 5th or 6th century. This image *marks the beginning of a long tradition of colossal Buddhas,* which became a popular representation across the Tibetan plateau and Central Asia, in later times.

- **Influence**

In the Mithuna couples of Kanheri, we find the influence of the Kushana and later, these caves were influenced by Gupta art also. At the same time, Kanheri influenced Elephanta Caves, being earlier than the later.



The 22ft Colossal Buddha
Kanheri Caves

Bhaja and Karla Caves

Karla is a town located between Mumbai and Pune. It is located on an ancient major trade route that ran from the Arabian Sea eastward, into the Deccan. It is the location of the famous Karle Caves and Bhaja Caves.

Karla or Karle Caves are located near Lonavala in Maharashtra. The shrines were developed over two periods – from the 2nd century BC to the 2nd century AD, and from the 5th century AD to the 10th century.

Akin to Kanheri, the Karle caves were also located near a major ancient trade route, running eastward from the Arabian Sea into the Deccan. These caves provide lodging houses for travelling traders and thus ensured continued patronage.

It is thought that the Karle Caves were associated with the Mahāsāṃghika sect of Buddhism. The main cave features a large, intricately carved chaitya, dating back to the 1st or 2nd century BC. This is among the largest rock-cut chaityas in India, measuring 45 metres (148 ft) long and up to 14 metres (46 ft) high. The hall features Mithuna sculptures as well as animals such as lions and elephants.

Mithuna at Karle and Kanheri



Mithuna at Kanheri

Karle along with the Kanheri and other sites are one of the earliest examples of use of Mithunas or the loving couples in architecture and sculpture.

The façade and veranda of the chaitya-griha at Karle as well as Kanheri have many Mithuna couples, filled with robust vitality. These are the “yakshas” and “yakshis” of early times, who are now seen together as loving couples.



Karle



At Karle is one of the greatest rock-cut chaitya-grihas. This is of the 1st to 2nd century A.D. and is one of the largest to have ever been carved out of rock.

Bedsa Caves

Bedsa Caves or Bedse Caves are located in the Pune District. This is known for a Chaitya and Vihara of first century BC. In ancient India, in the search for the truth, the emphasis was always on the effort that one had to make to gain knowledge. As at Bedsa, the Chaitya is partly hidden from the profane world outside. The belief was that one could learn truly or deeply only when one made a special effort for that purpose.



A Chaitya at Bedsa

Ajanta Caves

Ajanta is located about a hundred kilometres from Aurangabad, in the horse shoe shaped gorge of the Waghora River in the Sahyadri. The paintings of Ajanta are known to be the **fountainhead of all the classic paintings of Asia.**



The Ajanta caves are divided into 2 groups, which we can call Saatavahana phase and Vakataka Phase for our convenience.

Out of the 31 rock cut cave monuments at Ajanta, five are Chaityas viz. cave 9, 10, 19, 26 and 29. Cave 26, 27 and 29 are most important as far as development in the Buddhist art is concerned. Cave 26 is a Chaitya which is perhaps the last excavation. It is an elaborate cave. The grandest depiction in all Buddha arts is Mahaparinirvana of Buddha (22 ft).

Saatavahana Phase

The first group of caves which were great shrines and monasteries was carved out in the second century BC, under the patronage of Saatavahana Kings. This phase is often called the Hinayāna phase, as Buddha was revered symbolically. Thus, the first Satavahana period caves lacked figurative sculpture, emphasizing the stupa instead.

Vakataka Phase

The second group of caves was created in 5th and 6th century AD during Gupta and Post Gupta periods under the rule of the Vakataka Kings, with a renewed activity that was richer and more ample. It is called Mahayana Phase because Buddha has been depicted as a human. The caves of the second period the overwhelming majority of images represent the Buddha alone, or narrative scenes of his lives. The Buddha was represented in Human and these representations are found both on the facades and in the interior. Finally, the wall painting, profuse and sensitive, constitutes, no doubt, the most striking artistic achievement of Ajanta.



Ajanta Caves in Horse Shoe Shaped Gorge

Notable paintings and Sculptures at Ajanta

Ajanta's paintings occupy the pre-eminent position in the mural traditions of Asia. However, its sculpture, among the finest ever created in India, is often not given the attention it deserves.

- **Cave 1:** This is most famous cave. Seated Buddha in Dharmachakrapravartana mudra is notable sculpture while the notable paintings include Padmapani and Vajrapani.
- **Cave 2:** Sculpture of Yaksha figures (Sankhanidhi and Padmanidhi) to the left and Hariti and her consort Pancika to the right
- **Cave 16:** Largest and certainly the finest and most interesting monastery (Vihara) of Ajanta from the perspective of art and architecture. Its colossal hall, ornate doors and windows, beautifully painted galleries, sculptures, ornamented pillars, cistern was the gift of Varahadeva a minister of Vakataka King Harisena (475-500 A.D.) A central hall is surrounded by 14 cells on three sides, and sanctum housing Buddha image is shown seated in ***pralambapadasana***. The sanctum of this cave is devoid of doorway and antarala. Originally

the entire cave was beautifully painted but now very little of the painting now remain. Several interesting scenes from the life of Buddha.

- **Cave 19:** Chaitya. It is in excellent state of preservation and is considered as one of the most perfect specimens of the Buddhist art in India, datable to 5th century A.D. Total 17 pillars and at the centre of the Chaitya stands a globular stupa. This cave has only one entrance door. A sculptural form of Buddha offering begging bowl to his son Rahula and sculpture representing a Nagaraja and his wife, and the opposite site of this image, a porch which probably was place of rest for pilgrims.
- **Cave 26:** Mahaparinirvana of Buddha on the right aisle wall and the assault of Mara during Buddha's penance adorns the same wall.
- One of the most prominent and outstanding figures are of humanized serpents, a Nagaraja and Nagini with an attendant figure as finest sculptures in human forms.
- The Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha, when he finally achieves release from the mortal world, is a profoundly moving scene.

Description of Ajanta Caves- Numberwise (don't mug, reference only)

- **Cave 1:** This is most famous cave. Seated Buddha in Dharmachakrapravartana mudra is notable sculpture while the notable paintings include Padmapani and Vajrapani
- **Cave 2:** Sculpture of Yaksha figures (Sankhanidhi and Padmanidhi) to the left and Hariti and her consort Pancika to the right
- **Cave 3:** Unfinished Vihara=
- **Cave 4:** Largest Vihara at Ajanta. The door is exquisitely sculpted flanking to the right is carved Bodhisattva as reliever of Eight Great Perils. The ceiling of the hall preserves a unique geological feature of lava flow.
- **Cave 5:** Unfinished Vihara
- **Cave 6:** Paintings: Depiction of Miracle of Sravasti and Temptation of Mara
- **Cave 7:** Sculptures Miracle of Sravasti, seated Buddha under the protection of Nagamuchalinda
- **Cave 8:** Unfinished Vihara
- **Cave 9:** One of the oldest chaitya belonging to Hinayana faith of Buddhism dated to 1st century B.C
- **Cave 10:** It was this cave, which was accidentally discovered in April 1819 by John Smith, a British Army Officer, which ultimately led to rediscovery of the Ajanta Caves. Cave 10 is the earliest Chaitya at Ajanta. Its facade has a Brahmi inscription dated to the 2nd century B.C. reads '*Vasithiputa Katahadī*'. Whole of this cave has been painted with Jataka Tales.
- **Cave 11:** It's a Vihara. The whole cave was painted. Especially hall is painted mostly with figures of Buddha and ceiling with painted motifs including varied flora, beast and geometric designs

- **Cave 12:** It records that this cave was gift of by one merchant Ghanamadada
- **Cave 13:** Small cave served as dormitories
- **Cave 14:** Unfinished Vihara
- **Cave 15:** Buddha Paintings
- **Cave 15A:** Smallest of all Ajanta Caves
- **Cave 16:** Largest and certainly the finest and most interesting monastery (Vihara) of Ajanta from the perspective of art and architecture. Its colossal hall, ornate doors and windows, beautifully painted galleries, sculptures, ornamented pillars, cistern was the gift of Varahadeva a minister of Vakataka King Harisena (475-500 A.D.) A central hall is surrounded by 14 cells on three sides, and sanctum housing Buddha image is shown seated in *pralambapadasana*. The sanctum of this cave is devoid of doorway and antarala. Originally the entire cave was beautifully painted but now very little of the painting now remain. Several interesting scenes from the life of Buddha.
- **Cave 17:** A beautifully painted Vihara donated by a feudatory prince Upendragupta under Vakataka king Harishena as recoded in a Brahmi inscription. Mostly paintings of Buddha's life.
- **Cave 18:** Its a porch to proceed to next cave
- **Cave 19:** Chaitya. It is in excellent state of preservation and is considered as one of the most perfect specimens of the Buddhist art in India, datable to 5th century A.D. Total 17 pillars and at the centre of the Chaitya stands a globular stupa. This cave has only one entrance door. A sculptural form of Buddha offering begging bowl to his son Rahula and sculpture representing a Nagaraja and his wife, and the opposite site of this image, a porch which probably was place of rest for pilgrims.
- **Cave 20:** Buddha's accompanied by attendants is notable sculptural panel.
- **Cave 21:** Buddha in preaching attitude
- **Cave 22:** Buddha in *pralamba-padasana* (sitting with legs pendant also known as English Chair posture)
- **Cave 23:** Unfinished Vihara
- Cave 24: Unfinished Vihara
- Cave 25: Unfinished Vihara
- Cave 26: Mahaparinirvana of Buddha on the right aisle wall and the assault of Mara during Buddha's penance adorns the same wall.
- Cave 27-28: Buddha in teaching attitudes
- Cave 29: Unfinished Chaitya
- Cave 30: Small Vihara

Ellora Caves

Ellora caves located near Aurangabad in Maharashtra were initially built by the Rashtrakutas. The



caves belonging to the 6th to 10th century AD represent the epitome of the Indian Rock Cut architecture and are one of the World Heritage sites. The **Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jaina** caves of Ellora were made on the *trade route from nearby Paithan to Ujjain* in central India. There are 34 caves carved out of the Charanandri hills. Out of them, 12 are Buddhist Caves, 17 Hindu Caves and 5 Jaina Caves. Oldest caves are Hindu Caves.



Ellora Caves

The caves of the three faiths were made in overlapping periods, and as everywhere in ancient India, this demonstrates the generous attitude of rulers towards the worship of all divinities.

The Carpenter's Cave / Vishvakarma Cave at Ellora

All except one of the Buddhist Caves at Ellora are Viharas. The sculptures include those of the Gautama Buddha, bodhisattvas and saints. In many of these caves, sculptors have endeavoured to give the stone the look of wood. The Cave number 10 also known as *Vishwakarma Cave* is the only chaitya.

Cave 10 or the **Vishvakarma cave** or **Carpenter's Cave** is the most famous Buddhist Cave at Ellora. This cave has a pillared *verandah* whose columns have massive squarish shafts and *ghata-pallava* (vase and foliage) capitals. The main hall is apsidal on plan and is divided into a central nave and side aisles by 28 octagonal columns with plain bracket capitals. In the apsidal end of the chaitya hall is a stupa on the face of which a colossal 3.30 m high seated Buddha in *vyakhyana mudra* (teaching posture) is carved.

Ribbed Ceilings
Vishvakarma Cave, Ellora

The ceilings of this Chaitya hall has been sculpted in such a way that it appears having wooden ribs.

Kailasnath Temple, Ellora

The grand climax of rock-cut architecture in India was the making of Kailashnath Temple at Ellora. It is a vast multi-storey structure, carved inside and outside, made out of the heart of a rock. This temple is a remarkable example of the *Dravidian architecture with Pallava influence*. It was designed to recall Mount Kailas and was carved out of one single rock. It was built in the 8th century by the Rashtrakuta king Krishna I.



Kailashnath Temple, Ellora

Vertical Excavation

The Kailashnath Temple has been carved

via the vertical excavation in which the carvers started at the top of the original rock, and excavated downward. The temple has been adorned with pillars, windows, inner and outer rooms, gathering halls, and an enormous stone lingam at its heart. The sculptures include the niches, plasters, windows as well as images of deities, mithunas and other figures. The deities belong to both the Shaivite as well as Vaishanv faith. The grand sculpture of Ravana attempting to lift Mount Kailasa, the abode of Lord Shiva, with his full might is a landmark in Indian art.



Ravana Shaking Mt. Kailasa
Kailashnath Temple, Ellora

Indra Sabha (Jaina)

The five Jain caves at Ellora belong to the Digambara sect. These caves show dimensions of Jain philosophy and tradition and reflect a strict sense of asceticism. They are known for detailed work in sculpture. The notable Jaina caves are *Chhota Kailash*, *Indra Sabha* and *Jagannath Sabha*. Out of them, the Indra Sabha is a two storeyed cave with one more monolithic shrine in its court. It has a very fine carving of the lotus flower on the ceiling. Its name is a misnomer and derives from the sculpture of a Yaksha Matanga on the elephant, which was mistaken for Indra. It possesses an imposing image of Ambika, the yakshini of Neminath, seated on her lion under a mango tree, laden with fruits.

Monuments at Mahabalipuram

Mahabalipuram is known for its world heritage site complex of **Group of monuments** of the **Pallava Period**. Most of the monuments at Mahabalipuram are rock cut and monolithic. They denote the early Dravidian architecture and have inculcated in themselves the Buddhist elements of architecture.

The monuments at Mahabalipuram include the following:

1. **Thirukadalmallai:** This is first and foremost of Mahabalipuram sculptures. It is one of the 108 Divya desam. This temple, dedicated to Lord Vishnu, was built by Pallavas to safeguard the sculptures from the ocean. It is told that after building this temple, the remaining architecture was preserved and was not corroded by sea. It's not a rock cut temple but was built as free standing temple.
2. **Descent of the Ganges or Bhagiratha's Penance:** This is a giant open-air bas relief. It depicts Bhagiratha bringing down the Ganges to earth. It is world's largest open air bass relief.
3. **Varaha Cave Temple – Varaha Cave Temple or the Adivaraha Cave**
Temple is a rock-cut cave temple located at Mahabalipuram. This rock cut temple dates back to 7th century and is considered to be one of the finest testimonial to the ancient Vishwakarma Sthapathis. The most prominent sculpture in the cave is that of Lord Vishnu in the incarnated form of a Varaha or boar lifting Bhudevi, the mother earth goddess from the sea.



4. Shore Temple – Shore Temple is granite made temple at Mahabalipuram built during the rein of Narsimhavarman. This group of temples is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is oldest strucutral temple (in contrast with rock cut temples) in India. Its a beautiful 5 storied temple, which is a combined complex of 3 shrines; 2 dedicated to Shiva and one to Vishnu.

Importance of Shore Temple: The Shore Temple marks the culmination of the architectural efforts that began with the *cave temples and monolithic rathas*.

5. Pancha Rathas (Five Chariots) – five monolithic pyramidal structures named after the Pandavas (*Arjuna, Bhima, Yudhishtira, Nakula and Sahadeva*) and Draupadi. An interesting aspect of the rathas is that, despite their sizes they are not assembled – each of these is carved from one single large piece of stone. The close examination of the rathas at Mahabalipuram reveals that there used to be a school for young sculptors. For example, each of the different Rathas has been carved in a different style.

Chapter 3. Buddhist Architecture - Stupas

Architectural remains of the Maurya period are scant, particularly due to the fact that wood was a major architectural input in those times. Remains of a hypostyle building with about 80 columns of a height of about 10 meters have been found in **Kumhrar**, near Patna, and are one of the very few sites that have been connected to the rule of the Mauryas. The style is said to be a reminiscent of Persian Achaemenid architecture. Apart from that the Maurya era is known for:

- **Barabar Caves:** which we have discussed in above pages
- **Rock Cut Elephant at Dhauli**, which we studied in previous modules
- **Chaityas and Viharas**, most of which are not extant now.
- **Stupas at Sanchi and Barhut**, which were originally built by Mauryas but were later renovated and reconstructed for many times. We are discussing these here.
- **Asoka's Rock Edicts and Pillar Edicts.**

The Bharhut Stupa

Around 100 B.C., a great *stupa* was made at Bharhut, in the eastern part of present-day Madhya Pradesh (in Satna District). Bharhut stupa was initially built by Asoka and was later improvised by the Sungas.

The railings of the *stupa* and its one surviving gate are at the Indian Museum in Kolkata. This is the earliest stupa railing to have survived.



The architectural significance:

- Unlike the imperial art of the Mauryas, the inscriptions on railings of Bharhut stupa show that the reliefs and figures were donated by lay people, monks and nuns. Thus, it is one of the earliest examples of Maurya popular art.



- The railings contain numerous birth stories of the Buddha's previous lives, or Jataka tales.
- The Bharhut stupa represents the aniconic phase of Buddhist art. Buddha has been represented in the form of symbols.
- The style is generally flat, with low bass relief, and all characters are depicted wearing the Indian dhoti, *except for one foreigner, thought to be an Indo-Greek soldier*, with **Buddhist symbolism**.
- The Bharhut stupa railings have numerous images of the yakshas and yakshis, which have been part of India's society from time immemorial. At Bharhut, we find the earliest images of the Yakshas and Yakshis which later become the part of later art. These embody the spirit of nature and serve to remind us of the divinity that underlies all that is around us. The Yakshas and Yakshis represent the protection of nature and its great fertility, which ensures the continuance of life.
- The north gateway of the Vedika at Bharhut shows Kubera whom the Yaksha and Yakshis attend. We find the images of Yakshi Chandra and Vrikshika, the one who is shown intertwined with a tree. One more Yakshi called *AsokaDohada*, the one who hold an Asoka Tree leave in her hand and also a child in her womb (two hearts) and intertwines with the tree like a creeper, representing the fertility. One of the sculptures is of Laksmi on the railing of the Bharhut, which is earliest image of this diety.
- The carvings on the Bharhut railings are in low relief and not yet as deep as can be seen in later Indic art.
- A pillar of the vedika has a depiction of a Greek warrior. He wears boots and a tunic and has short hair and a headband.
- On another railing, there is a Nagaraja, the serpent king, who is in human form but has a serpent hood. Like yakshas and yakshis, Naga deities serve to keep us conscious of the power, the protection and the fertility of nature.
- Queen Maya's dream, preceding the birth of the Buddha, is also a major theme on the railing of the Bharhut "stupa". In the early art of Buddhism, the figure of the Buddha was never represented. Instead, there were symbols of him, such as a seat, footprints, the Bodhi tree, the wheel and the "stupa". The sculptural reliefs of the railings are a virtual library of early Buddhist iconographic motifs.

Greek soldier
Bharhut StupaQueen Maya's dream
Bharhut

Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi

Sanchi is located in the Raisen District of Madhya Pradesh. Here, we find the monuments inscriptions from Maurya, Sunga, Saatavahana, Kushana as well as Gupta period. Sanchi is generally known for its three stupas out of which the first and the oldest Great Stupa was originally

commissioned by Asoka. There are two more stupas there. Apart from that, there are some temples, Pillar Edicts and Monasteries. In 1960s, a [Chetiyagiri Vihara](#) has been also built there to celebrate the 2500th year of Buddha's Parinirvana. This modern temple houses the remains of Sariputta and Mogglayan.

The Great Stupa at Sanchi

The 'Great Stupa' at Sanchi is the [oldest stone structure of India](#) and was originally commissioned by the Ashoka in the 3rd century BC, vandalized by Pushyamitra Sunga and rebuilt by his son Agnimitra and again improvised by Saatavahana. Thus, this stupa represents a testimony to the Maurya, Sunga as well as Saatavahana art in India.

Its nucleus was a hemispherical brick structure built over the relics of the Buddha. It has upper as well as lower *pradakshinapatha* or circumambulatory path. It has four beautifully decorated toranas depicting various events from the life of the Buddha and the Jatakas. Figure compositions are in high relief, filling up the entire space, thus showing remarkable improvement from the Bharhut.

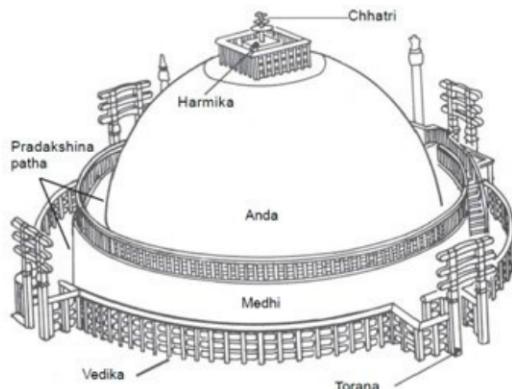
The narration in the inscriptions which was concise in the Bharhut has got elaborated at Sanchi. However, the Symbols continue to be used representing the Buddha. The historical narratives such as the siege of Kushinagara, Buddha's visit to Kapilavastu, visit of Ashoka to the Ramgrama Stupa are carved with great details.

Toranas at Sanchi Stupa:

Toranas surround the Stupa and they each represent love, peace, trust, and courage. These are the best examples of the Sunga art in India. The railings or vedika were made around the stupa around 200 B.C (Sunga period). By the end of the 1st century B.C., the Satavahanas extended their rule to central India. They worshipped Hindu deities but major stone renovations carried out in their time made this stupa one of the most significant of all Buddhist monuments. Four gloriously carved stone gates, or toranas, 34 feet (10.4 metres) high, were made during the Satavahana period. They were completed in the 1st century A.D. The traditions of art



Sanchi, Google Maps



Structure outline of great stupa of Sanchi



North Torana of Great Stupa at Sanchi

established in the time of the Sungas achieved greater sophistication in these magnificent toranas.

Here are some notable points:

- There are more than 600 inscriptions on the Toranas which show that the carvings were the donations of the people of Vidisha. The art was created by common people such as gardeners, fishermen, housewives, householders, nuns and monks.
- The toranas have two upright pillars, which support three horizontal bars. Between the pillars and the architraves, on the east and on the north, are superbly made elephants. The western gateway has *ganas*. The one in the south has lions. Ganas or the dwarfs can be identified by their vast bellies. Ganas later became the important motifs in Shiva temples.
- The traditions of carving out Yakshis in Bharhut continued here in Sanchi also. Twenty-four beautiful women figures were made as bracket figures on the gateways. The best-known sculpture of the Sanchi stupa is this exquisite "**shalabhanjika**", who depicts the fertility and abundance of the world of nature. On the eastern torana, she has been carved showing that she holds a branch of the mango tree above her. Though she is physically attached to the matrix, she is treated as though fully in the round: all the details have been carefully articulated on the rear too.
- The reliefs on the toranas bring us the Jatakas of the Buddha's previous lives as well as events from the life of Gautama Buddha. The setting of the stories richly reflects the life in the towns and villages at the time when the art was created. The Sanchi reliefs are the most important visual record of the architecture and lifestyles of the period.
- The "Buddhahood" is still represented by symbols. The wheel represents the first teaching of the Buddhist dharma, the Bodhi tree represents Enlightenment, while footprints and an umbrella over a vacant space proclaim the presence of the Enlightened One.



Ganas supporting horizontal bars
Sanchi Stupa



Shalabhanjika Yakshi
Sanchi Stupa

Dhamekha Stupa

- The Dhamekha stupa is located at Sarnath, 13 km away from Varanasi. It marks the deer park or *Rishipattana* where Buddha gave his first sermon. As per an inscription dated 1026 AD, recovered from the site, its older name is Dharmachakra Stupa. Archeologist, Alexander Cunningham in search of a relic casket bored a vertical shaft through it center down to the foundation and at a depth of around 91 centimeter he found a slab with an inscription.....*Ye Dharma Hetu Prabhava Hetu*.....written in Brahmi script. This inscription is of 6th or 7th century. Below this, one more stupa made of mauryan bricks has been found which gives an indication that Asoka might have commissioned it.

Chapter 4. Early Temple Architecture**Basics of Temple Architecture****The Sandhara, Nirandhara and Sarvatobhadra Temples**

With the construction of the Stupas, the construction of the Hindu temples also started as free standing structures. The subject matter of the deities in the Hindu temples were the mythical stories narrated in the Puranas. There were three kinds of the temples on the basis of access and the circumambulatory path built in it.

1. **Sandhara** Type: This type of temples did not include the Pradakshinapatha

2. **Nirandhara** Type: This type of temples included the Pradakshinapathas

3. **Sarvatobhadra** temples: These types of temples could be accessed from all sides.

The earliest temples of India include the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh, in Uttar Pradesh, Nachna-Kuthara and Udaygiri near Vidisha in Madhya Pradesh. All of these temples are simple structures consisting of a veranda, a hall and a shrine at the rear.

Basic Structure of a Hindu Temple

A simple Hindu temple comprises the following the following parts essentially:

- **Garbhagriha:** It is a cave-like sanctum. In the earliest temples, it was a small cubicle with a single entrance and grew into a larger chamber in time. The garbhagriha is made to establish the main deity. The establishment of the deity itself is a great ritual practice called Prana Pratishtha.
- **Mandapa:** Mandapa is the entrance of the temple which may be a portico or colonnaded hall that incorporates space for a large number of worshippers.
- **Shikhara / Vimana:** From the fifth century AD, the free standing temples started getting a tower which is called Shikhar in north India and Vimana in southern India.
- **Vahana:** This refers to the mount or vehicle of the temple's main deity along with a standard pillar or dhvaj is placed axially before the sanctum.

Different Temple Architecture Styles

The temples can be distinguished with the Shikhara or Vimana. On this basis, there are two types of temple viz. **Nagara** which is North Indian and **Dravida**, which is South India.

- The northern-style (Nagara), Shikhara is shaped like a beehive and is made up of layer upon layer of architectural elements called kapotas and gavakshas. The temple also has a very unusual, open ambulatory around the sanctum, with pillars and no wall on the outside.
- In Dravida style, tower consists of progressively smaller storeys of pavilions.
- The **Vesara style** has characters of both Nagara and Dravida.
- The **Gadag style** is a feature of the Western Chalukya temples and it is characterized by ornate columns.

- The **Kalinga architecture** is has Rekha Deula,Pidha Deula and Khakhara Deula types of temples. Out of them the Khakhara Deula is essentially of a female deity such as Durga or Chamunda. Konark Sun temple is a Pidha Deula.

Temple Architecture of Guptas

The rock cut architecture reached its zenith in the Gupta Era and this era marked the **beginning of the Free Standing temple Architecture.** Most of the temples built in the Gupta era were carved with representation of Gods (mainly avatars of Vishnu and Lingams) and Goddesses. The most important temple of Gupta era is **Dasavatara Temple of Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh.**

Following is a brief description of the temples & Stupas of the Gupta Era:

Dasavatara temple, Deogarh Uttar Pradesh

- Dasavatara temple is located in Deogarh Village in Lalitpur town in Uttar Pradesh. The temple was discovered by Captain Charles Strahan and was named so by Alexander Cunningham.
- This temple is in the *panchayatana* style of architecture. This means that the main shrine is built on a rectangular plinth with four smaller subsidiary shrines at the four corners (hence the name, panchayatana).
- 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. However, it was actually not known to whom the four subsidiary shrines were originally dedicated. We find three main reliefs of Vishnu on the temple walls: *Sheshashayana* on the south, *Naranarayan* on the east and *Gajendramoksha* on the west.
- The temple is west-facing, which is less common, as most modern temples are east- or north-facing. This temple is a "Sarvatomahadra temple".

Bhitargaon Temple

- Bhitargaon Temple is located in Kanpur District of Uttar Pradesh. It is the oldest remaining Hindu temple, and was built in the Gupta Era in 6th century.

Temple Architecture of Chalukyas of Badami

The Badami Chalukya era (7th and 8th century) was an important period in the development of South Indian architecture. Their style of architecture is called "Chalukyan architecture" or "Karnata Dravida architecture". Nearly a hundred monuments built by them, rock cut (cave) as well as structural, and are found in the Malaprabha river basin in modern Bagalkot district of northern Karnataka. The building material they used was reddish-golden Sandstone found locally. Though they ruled a vast empire, the Chalukyan workshops concentrated most of their temple building activity in a relatively small area within the Chalukyan heartland – Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal and Mahakuta in modern Karnataka state.

Salient Features of the Temple Architecture of Badami Chalukyas:

- These temples are a **mixture of Northern and Dravida style of temple** architecture and represent a transition as well as experimentation in the temple architecture.
- The temples are located on the banks of River Tungabhadra and Malprabaha in Karnataka and Alampur in Andhra Pradesh , which is near Kurnool.
- The largest temple of Chalukyas of Badami is **Virupaksha Temple**, whose complex encloses 30 sub shrines and a large Nadi mandapa. This was also earliest example of Shiva temples, which have a Nandi pavilion in front of the temple.

Ravana Phadi Cave

The earliest monument of Chalukyas of Badami is the **Ravana Phadi Cave** at Aihole, not far from Badami. It was probably made around A.D. 550 and is dedicated to Siva. Ravana Phadi Cave is one of the Earliest Rock Cut Temple located at Aihole, the first capital of the early Chalukyas. At Aihole, they built more than 70 Hindu Temples later.



Badami Cave Temples:

Badami cave temples are located at Badami. The red sandstone cliffs of Badami offered a spectacular setting for the excavation of four caves, **three Brahmanical and one Jaina (Parshwanath)**. The largest and most impressive of these is Cave 3, dedicated to Vishnu. An inscription next to a Varaha depiction states that Mangalesa, a brother of King Kirtivarman, dedicated the cave in A.D. 578. Members of the royal family of Chalukyas patronized many Chalukyan monuments. All of them were created in sixth and 7th century. **The architecture is a mixture of the Nagara style and Dravida style**. Apart from the above four, there is a fifth natural Buddhist cave in Badami.

Virupaksha Temple, Hampi

Virupaksha Temple is located in Hampi in Karnataka on the banks of the Tungabhadra river. Virupaksha Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and was created by the Chalukyas of Badami initially in 8th century. The temple was improvised in Vijaynagar Empire. It is in the Virupaksha temple at Hampi that full glory of the Early Chalukyan art can be seen. This temple was built in 735 AD by a queen of Vikramaditya II to celebrate the victory over the Pallavas of Kanchipuram.



Ladkhan Temple, Aihole

The Ladkhan temple is the earliest temple of Aihole, which dates back to 5th century AD. An inscription on this temple says that it was dedicated to Durga. There is a Shiva ling out there. The temple is known as Lad Khan after its owner (in most recent times) at a place used as cattle sheds or houses. This temple has a large porch and is made in a Panchayat hall kind of design with 12 pillars. This was earliest experiment for a pillar based structures in the temple architecture.



Navbhramha Group of Temples, Alampur

The **Navabrahma Group of temples** is located at Alampur in Andhra Pradesh. There are total 9 temples and present a marvelous piece of art of the Chalukyas of Badami outside Karnataka. These temple are based upon the Nagara style and do not reflect the Dravidian style of temple architecture (8 out of 9 are clearly Nagara style). The Alampur temples are the finest example of the Chalukyas of Badami Art. The Nava Bhramma temples are Taraka Bhramma, Swarga Bhramma, Padma Bhramma, Bala Bhramma, Garuda Bhramma, Kumara Bhramma, Arka Bhramma, Vira Bhramma and the Vishwa Bhramma. These temples are all enclosed in a courtyard on the left bank of the river Tungabhadra.



Temples at Pattadakal

Numerous temples at Pattadakal on the bank of river Malprabha, some kilometers from Aihole mark the return of the Chalukya patronage to Karnataka after several years of activity in the Andhra Pradesh. The first temple is Galagnatha Temple which is in Nagara style similar to the Alampur temple.

Temple architecture of Rashtrakutas

The reign of Rastrakutas of Manyakheta was from 753 AD to 982 AD. The rastrakutas were great patrons of architecture. The Rastrakuta architecture was a splendid form of Rock cut architecture. Most of the shrines were Buddhist caves such as Ellora and Elephants at Maharastra. Notable example is the Kailashnath Temple at Ellora, which has been discussed above in this module.

Temple Architecture of Western Chalukyas

While the buildings of the Chalukyas of the Badami are centred in and around Pattadakal, Aihole, Badami & Alampur, the buildings of the Western Chalukyas are widely dispersed, which reflect the system of the local government and decentralization in the Western Chalukyan Administration.

The major improvement over the previous Badami Chalukya temple was the "Architectural Articulation" or **ornamentation on the outer walls of the shrine**. The presence of Figure sculpture such as Heroes of Ramayana and Mahabharata and loving couples (Mithuna) was additional structure of these temples at the earliest period. The Western Chalukyan Temples are either **Ekakuta** (one mandapa of one shrine) or **Dvikuta** (a common hall attached to two shrines). The style has characters of both the Northern as well as Dravidian temple architecture. This combination of **both of these styles is known as Vesara Style**, also Central Indian Style, which is represented by the Hoyasala Temples.

Most of the temples of the Western Chalukyas are dedicated to Shiva, some of them dedicated to Vishnu and Jain Tirthankars also. The Hoysalas architecture was clearly influenced by the Western Chalukyan Architecture.

Salient Features of the temple architecture of Western Chalukyas

- The western Chalukya temples show an improvement over the previous experiments. These temples are show a transition from the Nagara to Dravida style and create a new style *Karnatadravida*.
- The ornate columns are seen as one of the most important features and that is why some of the temples such as "Mahadeva Temple" are called finest in Karnataka after Halebid.
- The Temple plan in most of the plans is star shaped. Most temples are dedicated to Shiva and Nandi at the entrance of the shrine appears as a main feature.

Truketshwara Temple, Gadag

The Gadag Style, which can be recognized by the **ornate columns** in the temples, originated in the period of the Western Chalukya King Someshwara I. The finest example of Gadag style is **Trikuteshwara Temple** at Gadag.



This temple was created during the reign of Someshwara I in the 11th century. The temple is dedicated to Shiva and has three lingams mounted on a single stone. The ornate pillars are located in an exclusive Saraswati Shrine in the temple complex.

Temples of Lakkundi

Lakkundi is a tiny village in Gadag District of Karnataka. Here, we find 50 temples of the Western Chalukyan Empire, most important of which are **Mahadeva Temple and Kahi Visheveshwara Temple**. The place is also a source of around 30 inscriptions of the Chalukyas, Kalachuris, Seunas, Kadambas and Hoysalas.

Kasivisvesvara Temple, Lakkundi

Kasivisvesvara Temple, Lakkundi is one of the most ornate temples in Karnataka. This temple was initially built in the Western Chalukyan Empire and later additions were done by Verea Ballala II, the great Hoyasala King.



It's a Dvikuta Temple.

Mahadeva Temple, Itagi

About 20 kilometers from Nakkundi is located the Mahadeva Temple of Itagi. It was built by one of the **commanders of the Western Chalukya King Vikramaditya VI** in 1112 AD. This temple is one of the finest example of "Dravida Articulation" in Nagara style. This is evident from the picture of the Shikhara of the main shrine shown here.



Doddabasappa Temple, Dambal

Doddabasappa Temple located at Dambal in Karnataka is one more example of fine Western Chalukyan Art. This temple is a variant of **Dravida style** called the **karnatadravida Temple style**. The temple is built on uninterrupted 24 pointed star shaped floor plan, which is different from the pre existing 6-12 and 24 interrupted star shaped temples.



Other Western Chalukya Temples are located at Kuknur, Lakmeshwar, Bankarupa etc.

Temple Architecture of Hoysalas

By the 13th century, the power of the Cholas had declined. This was the time for a great and sophisticated culture when marvelous temples were built in Karnataka and parts of Tamil Nadu. Hoyasala influence was at its zenith during the 13th century and the artists of this empire freely borrowed from the Chalukya and Chola traditions and created a style unique in many ways. Hoyasala history is clear from the time of King Vishnuvardhana, who ruled from A.D. 1108 to A.D. 1142. Inscriptions show that the king, his wife and his ministers were generous patrons of temples.

Salient Features of the Hoyasala Temples

- The Hoyasala built around 1500 temples at 958 centers between 1000 AD to 1346 AD. The finest temples were commissioned during the times of Vishnuvardhana.
- He was a subordinate to the Western Chalukyas and probably after declaring independence wanted to excel in this art also. This is evident from one of his inscriptions which says "built it from the wealth which he amassed from the sword".
- The Hoyasala temple architecture was heavily influenced by the Western Chalukyas, Cholas as well as Pallavas, though there was a departure from the Chalukyan style.
- This is evident from the fact that in the beginning, the temples were not over decorated, but the later temples have this feature in almost of its totality.

Chennakesava Temple, Belur

Vishnuvardhana, who defeated the imperial Cholas in A.D. 1116, in the memory of establishment of his dynasty and this victory, built a temple for Kesava, or Chennakesava, at Belur, and named it the Vijayanarayana temple. The temple is a classic example of the ornate style of temple art under the Hoyasalas. They inherited a rich tradition of temple building from the Chalukyas and the Cholas.



Hoysaleshwar Temple, Halebid

Hoysaleshwar Temple was built between A.D. 1121 and A.D. 1160 in the area of Halebid, known then as Dorsamudra, which was the capital of the Hoyasalas. It was also built during the reign of Vishnuvardhana. The temple is Dvikuta, means two shrines which are called "Hoysaleswara" and "Shantaleswara". Shantala was queen of Vishnuvardhana. The temple is best known for sculptures on the outerwalls.



Chennakesava Temple, Somanathapura

Chennakesava Temple, Somanathapura was built by Soma, a commander of the Narsimha III. It is also one of the finest structures of the Hoyasala architecture.

Temple Architecture of the Pallavas

Under the ablest kings such as Mahendravarman, Pallavas extended their territories to the Tamil Nadu. From the time of great Mahendravarman, finest examples of Pallava art were created in

In the beginning of the medieval period, the Kings did not directly patronize the religious shrines and gave only indirect support. Most of the artworks were produced by the guilds of the artists who were actually funded by the villages, traders and monks. **The tradition of direct patronization of the temples began with the Pallavas.**

Tamil Nadu such as **Shore Temple** and **7 pagodas of Mahabalipuram**.

Today's Mahabalipuram was known as **Mamalai** (Green Hill) in ancient times. Pallava King Mahendravarman successor Narsimhamvaraman was known as "**Mamalla**" or "The warrior". This port city was named "Mamallapuram" after Narsimhamvaraman. This was one of the greatest ports of ancient times and here was a "cosmopolitan" culture where people rubbed their shoulders with the Romans. This is evident from the roman coins found here and traces of a roman colony located here.

Salient Features of the Pallava Architecture:

- The Pallava architecture **shows the transition from** the Rock Cut Architecture to the Stone built temples.
- The earliest examples of the Pallava art are the rock cut temples of the 7th century AD, while the later examples are of structural temples built in 8th and 9th century.
- The rock cut reliefs of the Pallavas are the earliest surviving royal portraits after the Kushana images.

At the end of 6th century, King Harsha ruled in the North and he patronized the Buddhist Institutions. In South, Pallavas expanded themselves from the much of the Andhra Pradesh of today to much of Tamil Nadu. The Pallava Kings are known to be one of the greatest patrons of the art, music, architecture, dance and literature. King Mahendravarman was a poet and a playwright who wrote a satire on contemporary life titled "Mattavilasa Prahasana". Another King of Pallava Dynasty named Rajsimha (Narsimhamvaraman) was such a great lover of art that he used the title "**Kalasamudra**" for himself.

Mandagapattu rock cut temple

The earliest monument of Mahendravarman was Mandagapattu rock cut temple which was a single rock cut temple built without any wood, brick or metal. It is located near Villupuram in Tamil Nadu. This temple has the icons of large *Dwarapalas* which later became a characteristic of almost all south Indian temples.



However, one of the most marvelous chapters opened with the reign of successor of Mahendravarman i.e. Narsimhavarman "Mamalla" or Rajsimha. During his reign at Mahabalipuram, massive boulders were transformed into a world of divine. These are earliest styles of temples in

South India. Kanchipuram was the capital of the Pallavas from 4th to 9th century. Huen Tsang visited this city and wrote it a glorious city. Here, Buddhaghosa lived in 6th century.

Kailasanathar Temple, Kanchipuram

Kailasanathar Temple is best building created during the reign of Pallava King Narsimhamvaraman. This temple is one of the most beautiful temples in India which has well balanced sculptures like a jewel box. This temple is important for historic point of view because:

This temple inspired Rajraja Chola I to built another great beauty Brihadeswar Temple at Tanjore.

The direct & close intervention of the rulers started after creation of this temple.

Thus, the Kailasanathar temple began a new tradition in India where the kings took deep interest in building the temples with great structural design and antiquity. This temple has the **Lion Sculptures** everywhere. Lion was the insignia of the Pallavas.



Vaikuntha Perumal temple, Kanchipuram

Vaikuntha Perumal temple is located at Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu. It was built by Nandivarman. It is one of the 108 Divya Desams (108 holiest Shrines of Vishnu). The temple was named "Parameshwara Vishnugriham" after the original name Parmeshwara of Nandivarman.

Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram

Shore Temple is a granite made temple at Mahabalipuram built during the rein of Narsimhavarman. This group of temples is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is oldest strucutral temple (in contrast with rock cut temples) in India. Its a beautiful 5 storyed temple, which is a combined complex of 3 shrines; 2 dedicated to Shiva and one to Vishnu.



Importance of Shore Temple: The Shore Temple marks the culmination of the architectural efforts that began with the cave temples and monolithic rathas.

Shore Temple and the 7 Pagodas

7 Pagodas is a term associated with the Shore Temple of Mahabalipuram. It is said that 6 more temples were associated with it, all now submerged in water. The legend is that prior to Narsimhamvaraman, the construction of the cave temples had started in the time of Mahendravarman. But later the order for free standing strucutres was given and 7 rathas (free standing temples) were created. After the 2004 Tsunami, the sand deposits of around 500 meters from the Shore temples were gulped by the sea and a clear arrangement of manmade structures was seen (TOI, February 26, 2005). The ASI started the excavations and it was said that sonar system indicated man made structures under the sea.

Temple Architecture of Cholas

The Chola period saw the culmination of this tradition, which resulted in the most sophisticated buildings of that era. The Tamil Nadu temples were fully evolved in their style and design by the 8th century.

Special Features of the Chola Architecture:

- The *dvarapalas*, or guardian figures, at the entrance to the mandapa, or hall which started from the Palava period became a unique feature of the Chola Temples.
- The Dravidian Style got fully developed after a transition from the rock cut structures of the Pallava Period.
- Early Chola temples at the Bank of river Kaveri were smaller and brick made, in comparison to the colossus buildings of the Imperial Cholas.
- The temples of the Imperial Cholas are covered with exquisite well composed sculptures and frescoes.
- Largest and tallest of all Indian temples i.e. Siva Temple of Thanjore was built in Chola Period.
- Ganas, among the sculptures at the temple, are the most memorable figures made in Chola temples

Vijayalaya Cholisvara Temple, Thanjore

Under Pallavas, some of the finest temples had been created at Mahabalipuram and Kanchipuram. However, the largest and most impressive buildings were created under the Cholas post 850 AD, when Vijayalaya Chola took the control of Tanjore. The earliest Chola Temple we find at Narthamalai, where Vijayalaya Chola commissioned a temple named "**Vijayalaya Cholisvara**" temple, dedicated to lord Shiva.



Koranganatha Temple, Srinivasanallur

Koranganatha Temple is located at Srinivasanallur, in Tiruchirappalli District, on the banks of river Cauvery. This temple was built by Parantaka Chola -I . The base of this temple has the sculpted mythical animals '*Yazhi*'. **Yazhi is a recurring pattern and unique feature of Chola architecture.**



Yazhi

Muvarkovil, Pudukkottai

"Muvarkovil" literally means temple of three. It was commissioned by Parantaka Chola -II or one of his feudatories. It has three shrines standing side by side, however, only two are extant now.



Tiruvalisvaram temple, Tirunelveli

Tiruvalisvaram temple is the first example where all features of the Chola temple architecture are seen. It is covered with well composed sculptures and friezes. Entire cornice of the temple has been ornated with creepers and foliage.

Brihadeeswarar Temple of Tanjore

Brihadeeswarar Temple or Peruvudaiyar Kovil or Rajrajeshwaram temple at Thanjavur is the world's first complete "granite" temple. It was built by Rajraja Chola-I and is a part of UNESCO's world Heritage sites. The Vimana or the temple tower (known as Raja Gopuram) is 216 Feet in height and is one of the tallest buildings of its kind. The Nandi is carved out of a single rock. This temple has completed 1 millennium in 2010. It was dictated by lord Shiva to Rajraja Chola I, when he triumphed Ilam (Sri Lanka) Island.

**Brihadisvara temple, Gangaikondacholapuram**

Brihadisvara temple at Gangaikondacholapuram was made by King Rajaraja's son Rajendra I, who assumed the title "Gangaikonda"

