**Indian Architecture – Types & Details**

Cave Architecture

Cave architecture is one of the **earliest forms of Indian architecture**. These were **man-made caves**, carefully carved into hills and mountains for **religious purposes**. Most caves were used by **Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu monks** for worship, meditation, and living.

 **Rock-cut Architecture**:

* Caves were **not built with bricks or wood** but **cut directly into solid rock** using simple tools like chisels and hammers.

 **Used for Religious Practices**:

* Caves had **shrines, halls, and idols**.
* Monks stayed here during **rainy seasons** (called “vassa” in Buddhism).
* They meditated, studied scriptures, and taught students.

 **Two Main Parts**:

* **Chaitya**: Prayer hall with a stupa.
* **Vihara**: Monastery or living quarters with cells for monks.

**Decorated with Carvings**:

* Beautiful **carvings and paintings** on walls and ceilings.
* Scenes from the **life of Buddha**, **gods**, and **mythological stories**.

**Natural Light and Acoustics**:

* + Architects used techniques to bring **light** inside and **echo** for chants.

### Fun Fact:

Most cave temples were **carved from top to bottom**, not bottom to top — to avoid damage and ensure balance!

Famous Examples of Cave Architecture:

#### 1. **Ajanta Caves (Maharashtra) – Buddhist**

* 30 caves carved between 2nd century BCE to 6th century CE.
* Famous for **beautiful paintings** of Jataka tales (stories of Buddha’s past lives).
* Both **Chaityas** and **Viharas** are present.

#### 2. **Ellora Caves (Maharashtra) – Buddhist, Hindu & Jain**

* 34 caves carved between 6th to 9th century CE.
* Shows **religious harmony** – All three religions side by side.
* Cave 16: **Kailash Temple** – Entire temple carved from **a single rock**!

#### 3. **Elephanta Caves (Maharashtra) – Hindu**

* Dedicated to **Lord Shiva**.
* Famous sculpture: **Trimurti** (Three-faced Shiva).

#### 4. **Badami Caves (Karnataka) – Hindu & Jain**

* 4 main caves with **sculptures of Shiva, Vishnu**, and Jain tirthankaras.

#### 🔸 5. **Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves (Odisha) – Jain**

* Oldest Jain caves,
* Used for **Jain monks’ meditation**.

### Importance of Cave Architecture:

* Shows the **skills of ancient Indian artisans**.
* Gave shelter and sacred spaces for monks and devotees.
* Preserved **religious art and stories** through sculptures and paintings.

### 2. 🌀 **Stupa Architecture**

#### 🔸 Features:

* **Dome-shaped structures** built over Buddha’s relics.
* Symbol of enlightenment and peace.
* Surrounded by a path (Pradakshina patha) for walking around.

#### 🔸 Famous Stupas:

* **Sanchi Stupa (Madhya Pradesh)** – Built by Ashoka.
* **Amaravati Stupa** – Andhra Pradesh.

Temple Architecture

Basic Elements of a Hindu Temple

### **Garbhagriha (Sanctum Sanctorum)**

* Small, dark inner chamber.
* The **main idol (deity)** is placed here.
* Only priests enter this area.
* Word means **“womb house”**—symbol of creation.

### 2. **Shikhara / Vimana (Temple Tower)**

* The tall **spire or tower** above the Garbhagriha.
* **Shikhara** – used in **North India**.
* **Vimana** – used in **South India**.
* Symbolizes **mountain or heavenly height**.

### **Mandapa (Pillared Hall)**

* A **hall with pillars** for devotees to gather and pray.
* Some temples have multiple mandapas.
* Used for **ceremonies, chanting, and rituals**.

### . **Antarala (Vestibule)**

* A small passage between the **Mandapa** and **Garbhagriha**.
* Acts as a **connector** or doorway.

### **Ardhamandapa (Entrance Porch)**

* A small porch or **entrance hall** before the main mandapa.
* Often **beautifully carved**.

### **Pradakshina Patha (Circumambulation Path)**

* A path around the Garbhagriha.
* Devotees walk around the deity in a **clockwise** direction.

### **Amalaka (Ribbed Stone Disk)**

* A **circular stone** at the top of the Shikhara.
* Often topped with a **Kalasha (pot-like structure)**.
* Found mostly in **North Indian temples**.

### **Dwara (Gate or Archway)**

* The **entrance gate**, sometimes large and decorative.
* very tall gateway in **South Indian temples**.

Top: Amalaka & Kalasha

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Shikara

|

Garbhagriha (Inner shrine)

|

Pradakshina

|

Antarala (Connector)

|

Mandapa (Prayer hall)

|

Ardhamandapa (Porch)

|

Torana / Gopuram (Gate)

#### Examples:

* **Dashavatara Temple (Deogarh)** – Nagara style.
* **Lad Khan Temple (Aihole)** – Early Dravidian example.
* **Mahabalipuram Temples** – Rock-cut and structural.

### **Pillar Architecture**

#### 🔸 Features:

* Mostly from the **Mauryan period**, especially by **Emperor Ashoka**.
* Made of **polished sandstone**,
* **inscriptions**
* **animal capitals** (top part).
* Used to spread Buddhist teachings.

#### 🔸 Famous Pillars:

* **Sarnath Lion Capital** – National Emblem of India.

**Indo-Islamic Architecture**

Though not "ancient," early Indo-Islamic architecture began around the **12th century**.

**Arches**, **domes**, **minarets**,

 **Qutub Minar** – Tallest brick minaret (Delhi).

 **Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque** – First mosque in India (Delhi).

 **Adhai Din Ka Jhopra** (Ajmer) – Built on Jain remains.