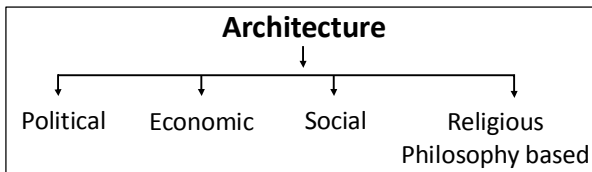


Art in ancient India boasts a rich and diverse history encompassing architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and dance.

When examining the realm of architecture, we discover a fascinating evolution influenced by numerous factors.



- **Political Factors:** Architectural construction has often been influenced by political factors, as described below:

1. On numerous occasions, kings or rulers sought to establish their presence in remote areas through architecture, with the boundaries of their states being determined by these structures.
2. The construction of temples served as a means for rulers to display their royal pride. For instance, the Brihadisvara temple built by the Chola ruler Rajaraja-I and the Gangaikondacholapuram temple commissioned by Rajendra-I symbolize their political victories.
3. Starting from the second century, various dynasties developed the concept of Kuladevata, with deities such as Vishnu, Shiva, Surya, and Durga holding significant importance. Temples were erected as a means of paying homage to these deities.

- **Economic Factors:** During periods of economic growth, there was a notable emphasis on artistic endeavors. For instance, in the post-Mauryan era, the expansion of Roman trade stimulated economic prosperity, resulting in the construction of numerous chaityas, stupas, and viharas. Similarly, the Gupta period witnessed continued economic growth, which led to the construction of a significant number of temples.

- **Social Factors:** Communities would often build temples as a means of establishing their identity. Additionally, temples were erected to pay homage to ancestors. Furthermore, temples were constructed as memorials to honor the passing of influential individuals.

- **Religion and Philosophy:** The construction of temples has always been closely intertwined with religion and philosophy. People from different religious sects would build temples to show reverence to their preferred deities.

In terms of philosophy, the Stupa or temple symbolically encompasses the entire world within itself. For example, the dome-like structure of the stupa represents Mount Meru, believed to be situated at the center of the world. The pillar erected atop it symbolizes the division between the heavens and the earthly realm.

Similarly, the sanctum-sanctorum of the temple is believed to symbolize Mount Meru, which is located at the center of the world. The circular path around the sanctum, known as the circumambulatory path, signifies the passage of time. Moreover, the towering sikhara (spire) of the temple represents the earthly realm, while the idols placed atop the sikhara (spire) serve as abodes for various celestial beings.

Mauryan Architecture

It has a profound connection with Ashoka the Great and possesses two main characteristics. Firstly, it was inspired by Buddhist concepts, and secondly, it flourished under state patronage. The various forms associated with it are as follows:

1. **Pillars of Ashoka:** The Pillars of Ashoka are crafted from Chunar (lime) stone and are monolithic, meaning each pillar is made from a single stone. These pillars consist of two parts: the Yashti (Pillar) and the Gavdum Lat (Capital or Head). At the top of the Yashti, there is an inverted lotus upon which a chowki (Base) is

constructed. In some instances, rows of swans are depicted on the base. The Ashoka Chakra is inscribed on the abacus at Sarnath. Animal figures were also carved on the pillar, typically representing elephants, horses, bulls, and lions. However, at Sarnath, four lions are depicted sitting back-to-back.



2. Stupa- An example of Ashoka's architectural legacy is the construction of stupas. One notable stupa from his era is the exquisite stupa at Sanchi, which exemplifies the early stage of stupa construction. Generally, a stupa was a semi-circular structure. Initially, the stupa was built using bricks, with its upper part being flat and featuring a chamber called the harmika. This chamber served as a burial place for the relics of Buddha or other revered saints. A wooden pillar used to be erected atop the harmika, although it has since deteriorated over time. Additionally, the stupa was enclosed by a small boundary wall.



3. Cave Architecture- The construction of caves began with the carving of mountains during Ashoka's time. The earliest caves were built in the Barabar Hills in Gaya and were generously donated to the Ajivikas. Similarly, Ashoka's grandson, Dasaratha, constructed

some caves in the Nagarjuna Hills, which were also bestowed upon the Ajivikas. Initially, these caves were of a simple and conventional design, but over time, they evolved into more intricate structures.

The construction of the early caves followed a straightforward approach. The cave facades were cut in rectangular shapes, creating living spaces within. The roofs of these dwellings and their rectangular entrances were coated with black paste. This architectural style introduced by Ashoka later progressed into Buddhist temples and eventually transformed into Hindu temples under the rule of the Pallava dynasty.



Post Mauryan Architecture

During this period, Buddhism remained the primary source of artistic inspiration. However, the social support for art expanded significantly. In contrast to the Mauryan era, where art thrived exclusively under state patronage, during this period, art gained support from not only the ruling class but also from nobles, merchants, monks, and Bhikshuni (female monks).

■ **Stupa**- Various forms of architecture emerged, with the Stupa experiencing notable artistic development in the post-Mauryan period. The Stupa displayed the following artistic features, as outlined -

1. It possessed a semicircular shape and was primarily constructed using bricks, while stones were used for the upper section.
2. The upper part of the Stupa was flat and contained a chamber called the Harmika, where the relics of revered individuals were enshrined.
3. Atop the Harmika, a stone pillar was erected, adorned with three umbrellas symbolizing compassion, tolerance, and generosity.
4. A Vedika, or railing, surrounded the Stupa, serving as a path for circumambulation.
5. The Stupa was enclosed by a four-sided wall, featuring magnificent entrances on each side, adorned with idols depicting humans and animals.



An intriguing aspect of the Stupa is its representation of popular Buddhist traditions. Folk stories and incidents related to everyday life were assimilated into Stupa art, transforming them into Buddhist ideals.

In essence, the concept of the Stupa draws from tribal elements. It originated from the practice of constructing mounds over the tombs of tribal leaders. The Buddhist sect adopted this practice, shaping it into the Stupa. The semi-circular architectural form of the Stupa, along with the placement of the remains of the deceased in its central chamber, symbolizes the significance of a mausoleum.

The animal and human idols found at the entrances of the Stupa also have connections to folk life and stories. For instance, the elephant, horse, tiger, monkey, and others are associated with folk tales. However, these forms were embraced by the Buddhist tradition, attributing them with idealized symbolism. The elephant became a symbol of the Buddha's entry into his mother's womb, the bull represented his youth, and the horse symbolized renunciation.

Given the prominence of Yaksha-Yakshini as folk deities during this period, their idols were also incorporated at the entrances of the Stupa, assimilated into Buddhist ideals. Similarly, serpents (Nag-Nagin) held significance as deities, and their idols were included as well. Notably, the 'Shalabhanjika' enjoyed popularity in folk stories, symbolizing prosperity and good fortune. It was believed that merely touching the leaves of the tree she stood beside would transform them into flowers. At the entrance of the Stupa in Sanchi, one can observe an idol of Shalabhanjika hanging from a tree branch.

Hence, it is evident that the Buddhist sect transformed popular stories into Buddhist ideals to uphold its popularity, incorporating them into Stupa art.

Question: "Early Buddhist Stupa-Art while depicting folk motifs and narratives successfully expounds Buddhist ideals." Elucidate. [UPSC-2016]

Answer: A significant aspect of Buddhism is their connection with the common people and their widespread acceptance among them. On one hand, Buddhism adopted the folk language Pali, while on the other hand, it embraced popular cultural symbols.

Stupa art, the renowned architectural style of Buddhism, derived inspiration from folk life and evolved gradually. In tribal societies, it was customary to create small mounds after the cremation of a chief or chieftain. The Buddhist sect adopted this tradition, incorporating it into their practices. Additionally, non-Aryan sects had

a profound influence on the common people. One such example was the worship of Yaksha and Yakshini. Even during the Mauryan period, idols of Yaksha-Yakshini were created in the style of folk art. These elements were later incorporated into Stupa art by the Buddhist cult. Similarly, the worship of snakes, animals, and trees was prevalent among the common people, and these aspects gradually found their place in Stupa art.

During the Mauryan period, Stupa art thrived under state patronage. However, in the early centuries AD, its social base expanded widely. Ashoka, in his efforts to propagate Buddhism, discouraged certain folk festivals, social ceremonies, and other practices. However, after the decline of the Mauryan empire, the influence of these elements resurfaced and left their impact on both contemporary religion and art.

The Stupa itself was a semi-circular dome resembling the funeral mounds of tribal communities. The harmika, located at its center, housed the remains of the deceased. Surrounding the Stupa, a Vedika (altar) and entrance gates were constructed. Numerous sculptures depicting various animals, snakes, and aspects of folk life adorned the Vedika and entrances. Over time, the Buddhist sect assimilated these elements into their religious practices.

Thus, it is evident that the primary style of Buddhist architecture was intricately linked with folk life and gradually developed by incorporating popular elements.

■ **The Chaitya-** The Chaitya was a place of worship for Buddhists and was predominantly constructed by excavating mountains. These structures were evolved forms of Mauryan cave architecture. Typically, the Chaitya had a rectangular shape with a semicircular rear end. A stupa was placed at its center, serving as the focal point for worship. Additionally, a human statue was often included alongside the stupa. The roof of the stupa was designed in a horseshoe shape, allowing light to illuminate the stupa through an opening known as the Chaitya window (Chaitya khidki). This technological development held significant importance.

Under the Satavahanas, numerous stupas were constructed by cutting mountains in western India. Prominent examples include Nashik, Bhaja, Kanheri, Karle, and Pitalkhora.



■ **Vihara** – The Chaitya served as the place of worship for Buddhists, while the Vihara served as the dwelling place for monks. Whenever Chaityas were constructed, Viharas were also built as residential structures. Viharas were crafted by excavating stones and exhibited a higher level of sophistication compared to Mauryan cave architecture. In addition to the verandahs (Porch), these Viharas encompassed multiple rooms within their premises.



Gupta Architecture

During the Gupta period, art and literature established classical norms, earning the era the epithet of the 'Golden Age' due to its exceptional aesthetic sense. Gupta art drew inspiration primarily from the Brahmin cult, while also incorporating influences from other sects.

- **Religious Architecture:** During this period, religious architecture is visible in two forms: (a) Cave Temples (b) Independent Temples.
- **Cave Temples:** The cave architecture of this period is predominantly characterized as Buddhist architecture, with only a few exceptions. One such exception is a Brahmanical cave at Udayagiri, which bears

an inscription dating back to the reign of Chandragupta II. Notably, the Varaha statue of Vishnu in this cave stands as an exceptional creation, exemplifying the concept of Avatarism. In addition to Vishnu, there are also caves associated with Shaivism and Jainism. Udayagiri marks a transitional stage between cave temples and Independent temples. Furthermore, the caves of Ajanta and Bagh, renowned for their association with Buddhism, can be considered among the most famous examples from this period.

- **Independent Temple:** The Gupta period holds immense significance in Indian temple architecture. It marks a crucial phase of evolution, despite being in its early stages. The Sanchi temple number 17 stands as the earliest example from this period. Alongside, we find prominent temples like the Vishnu temple of Tigawa, the Shiva temples of Bhumra and Khoh, the Parvati temple of Nachna Kuthara, the Dah Parvatiya temple in Assam, and the Dashavatara temple of Deogarh. Notably, the Dashavatara temple of Deogarh is the oldest example of the Panchayatana style. These temples are primarily crafted from stone. Additionally, a significant number of brick temples were constructed during this era. Noteworthy examples include the temples in Bhitargaon (Kanpur), Paharpur (Bangladesh), and Sirpur (Chhattisgarh).



Ancient Temple of Sanchi



Dashavatara Temple of Deogarh

- **Stupas, Chaityas and Viharas** - Apart from temples, the Gupta period also witnessed the construction of stupas, chaityas, and viharas. These Buddhist structures were built in various places, with notable examples found in Jauliya, Charsadda, and Taxila of Gandhara. An elaboration of this period can be seen in the Dhamekh Stupa located in Sarnath, eastern India, which is in a drum-shaped form.

Early Medieval Architecture

The early medieval period witnessed significant developments in the fields of art and architecture. During this time, distinct regional styles of architecture and sculpture emerged in North India, including Kashmir, Rajasthan, and Odisha. Additionally, large-scale temple construction was undertaken in peninsular India under the Rashtrakutas, Chalukyas, Pallavas, and Cholas.

Until the early medieval period, India recognized three independent styles of temple architecture: Nagara, Dravida, and Vesara. The Nagara style spanned from Kashmir to the Vindhyas. The Dravidian style flourished in the region between the Krishna and Kaveri rivers. The Vesara style, on the other hand, encompassed the area between the Vindhya and Krishna rivers. Each style possessed unique characteristics as follows-

Nagara Style	Dravida Style	Vesara Style
1. The Nagara style of temple architecture is characterized by a foundational plan that is square in shape. These temples were constructed on elevated platforms.	1. The prominent feature of the Dravidian style temple is its pyramidal shikhara. The shikhara gradually ascends in the form of smaller stories.	1. The Vesara style is a hybrid style, with its literal meaning incorporates features from both the northern & southern architectural elements.
2. The elevation of the temple is marked by its convex shikhara.	2. A Stupika is placed on the top of the shikhara.	2. The temple features an open circumambulatory path.
3. Amlaka is placed on top of the shikhara.	3. A gopuram has been constructed in the middle of the outer wall that surrounds the temple.	3. The temple walls are adorned with carvings of Rathas (chariots).
4. In developed temples, secondary shikhara, known as Urushringa, were constructed alongside the main shikhara	4. Multiple mandapas (pavilions) were built within the temple premises.	4. The temples incorporated elements of both Nagara and Dravida styles for decorative purposes.



Lingraj Temple, Bhubneswar

- **Rashtrakuta Period Architecture:** - The Rashtrakuta rulers were devout followers of Shaivism, which resulted in the construction of numerous Shiva temples and idols during their reign. Centers such as Ellora, Elephanta, Jageshwari, and Mandapeshwar gained fame for their remarkable architectural prowess. Among these centers, Ellora and Elephanta stand prominent.
- **Ellora:** The architecture of Ellora encompasses the three major religions of Brahmin, Jain, and Buddhist. It is renowned for its impressive Buddhist and Jain caves, as well as the magnificent Kailashnath temple. The Kailashnath temple at Ellora features intricate iconography, including depictions of Shiva, Shiva-Parvati, Ravana shaking Mount Kailasha, Durga, Vishnu, Saptamatrikas, Ganga, Ganesh, Yamuna, and Saraswati goddesses. This temple is

considered the pinnacle of cave architecture in the Indian subcontinent.



Kailash Temple, Ellora

- **Elephanta:** The most beautiful statue in Elephanta cave is of Mahesha (God Shiva).
- **Chalukya Architecture:** In the Deccan region, there are numerous examples of early medieval temple cave architecture and independent architecture, particularly in Karnataka. The towns of Badami and Aihole showcase the architectural style of the early period, spanning from the 6th to the early 8th century AD. The second phase of architectural development, which is more grand in nature, is evident in the temples constructed at Pattadakal during the 8th century. The Chalukya dynasty's temple architecture exhibits a blend of architectural characteristics from both the northern and southern regions. However, during this time, the Deccan region's architecture also established its own unique identity.

- **Aihole:** Aihole has two remarkable cave temples, one dedicated to Jainism and the other to Shaivism. Both caves feature intricately adorned inner walls.
- **Badami:** The caves of Badami are carved out of red sandstone. Among the three major caves, one is dedicated to Vaishnavism, another to Shaivism, and the third one for Jainism.
- **Pattadakal:** Pattadakal is home to ten temples, with the Virupaksha Temple being the most exquisite and captivating. Dedicated to Shiva, it was constructed by Lokmahadevi.
- **Hoysala Architecture:** The Hoysala dynasty, ruling from Dwarasamudra in southern Karnataka, witnessed the second significant phase of temple architecture. Prominent temples from this period can be found in Halebid, Belur, and Somnathpur. The Hoysaleswara Temple in Halebid, dating back to the 12th century, is the grandest, while the Kesava Temple in Belur consists of pavilions(Mandapa) within a spacious courtyard. The Keshava Temple in Somnathpur, constructed in the 13th century, is regarded as the pinnacle of Hoysala temple architecture and sculpture.
- **Pallava Architecture:-** Stone architecture in South India emerged during the 7th century with the rise of Bhakti. The Pallava architecture laid the foundation for the Dravidian style. It gave birth to three major components: pavilion (Mandapa), chariot (Rathas), and grand temple . Percy Brown, a renowned architect, divided the development of Pallava architecture into four styles.
- **Mahendravarman Style:** The Mahendravarman style predominantly features mandapas, pillared halls where music, dance, and rituals were performed.
- **Mamalla Style:** Developed during the reign of Narasimhavarman I 'Mahamalla', this style includes both mandapas and monolithic temples (raths). Mamallapuram is renowned for its monuments, including ten pavilions(Mandapa) on the main mountain, such as Adivaraha pavilion, Mahishamardini pavilion, and Ramanuja pavilion. The Mamalla style also incorporates monolithic temples designed to resemble wooden chariots, with Mahabalipuram having a total eight chariots, including the largest, the Yudhishtira chariot, and the smallest, the Draupadi chariot.
- **Rajsingh Style:** Mountain-carving techniques were employed during this period, exemplified by the Kailasanatha temple in Kanchipuram. The Shore Temple in Mahabalipuram is considered the first independent temple built in this style. It showcases several features of Dravidian architectural style, including pillar and pavilion(Mandapa) construction, segmented shikhara, and stupa elements.



Virupaksha and Papnath Temple, Pattadakal



**Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram and
Yudhishtira Ratha**

- **Nandivarman Style:** The Nandivarman style focuses on relatively smaller temples. Examples include the Mukteshwar and Matangeshwar temples in Kanchi and the Parasurameswara temple in Gudimallam. Dharmaraja temple appears to imitate the chariot style.
- **Chola Architecture:** During the reign of the Chola dynasty, the rulers displayed great enthusiasm for construction, leading to significant advancements in art and architecture. This era, known as the Chola period, is considered the golden age of South Indian art. The evolution of Chola architecture can be divided into three distinct phases: the early period (850-985 AD), the middle period (985-1070 AD), and the later period (1070-1270 AD).
- The earliest phase of Chola architecture is exemplified by the Shiva temple at Narattamalai. Another significant temple from this period is the Balasubramanya Temple in Kannur, built by Aditya I. Additionally, the Nageshwar temple in Kumbakonam is another notable temple belonging to this era.
- The second phase of Chola temple architecture can be attributed to the reign

of Aditya I and Parantaka I. The Koranganatha temple is Srinivasanallur, constructed during the rule of Parantaka I, stands as a prime example of this phase.

- The third phase of Chola temple architecture corresponds to the early period of Sembiyan Madevi and Rajaraja-I's reign. The Brihadisvara temple in Tanjore exemplifies the pinnacle of Chola architecture during this phase. With its 60-meter-long vimana and impressive Sikhara (pinnacles), this Shiva temple is considered the grandest of its time.
- In the later phase of Chola temple architecture, Gopurams (grand gateways) gained more prominence compared to the vimanas. This transition is evident in the Shiva temple at Chidambaram.



Brihadisvara Temple, Tanjore

Question: Chola architecture represents a high watermark in the evolution of temple architecture. Discuss [UPSC-2013]

Answer: The foundation of Dravidian temple architecture was laid by the Pallava rulers, but its zenith was reached during the Chola period. Chola architecture witnessed the evolution of various architectural elements, including the mandapa, shikhara, vimana, and gopuram.

The mandapa, a pillared hall, served as a space for conducting rituals and ceremonies. The shikhara, a segmented tower, adorned the sanctum and gradually decreased in size as it ascended, culminating in a Stupika. These towering shikharas symbolized the magnificence of Chola kingship. The vertical structure

connecting the sanctum-sanctorum to the Stupika is known as the vimana.

During this era, temples underwent horizontal expansion, leading to the construction of magnificent entrances called gopurams. These majestic gateways added to the splendor of the temples. The Brihadeshwara temple, commissioned by Rajaraja I, and the temple at Gangaikondacholapuram, built by Rajendra I, epitomize the advanced stage of temple architecture during the Chola reign.

■ **The Vesara style** - The Vesara style of architecture developed during the Chalukya, Rashtrakuta, and Hoysala dynasties. It represents a fusion of the Nagara and Dravidian styles. The Vesara architecture primarily follows the Dravidian planning and layout, while incorporating decorative elements, symbolic representations, and structures influenced by the Nagara style.

The Vesara style showcases a blend of features, where the fundamental design principles are rooted in the Dravidian tradition, while the embellishments and artistic expressions bear the influence of the Nagara style.

- **The impact of Nagara Style-**

1. Construction of temples on elevated platforms.
2. Inclusion of an open-air circumambulation path.
3. Incorporation of chariot planning on the temple walls.

- **Impact of Dravidian style-** The Vesara style also draws inspiration from the Dravidian architectural tradition. The foundational structure of Vesara temples is based on the Dravidian style, including elements like the multiple Shikhara (tower) and Stupika (finial).

Question- Explain the role of political, economic, social and religious factors in motivating the development of architecture in ancient times.

Answer: In ancient times, architecture underwent multiple phases of development, eventually leading to its classification into three distinct styles based on geography: Nagara style, Dravidian style, and Vesara style. Temples were constructed abundantly in each of these styles.

Political factors

- Political factors played a significant role in motivating the development of ancient architecture. Many dynasties rose from lower segments of society, and to establish their dynasty's prestige, they would align themselves with Brahmins and support temple patronage. The religious beliefs of the ruling dynasty also influenced the construction of temples, as they sought to honor and worship their chosen deities.

Temples were often built to commemorate victorious events, symbolizing the power and influence of the ruling dynasty. For instance, Rajendra I constructed the Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple to celebrate his triumph. Rulers of the time sought to enhance their power and prestige by associating themselves closely with the deities worshiped in the temples. As a demonstration of their authority, Chola rulers even had their own images installed within the temple premises.

Economic Factors- Land grants gave rise to a class of landholders, alongside the establishment of regional dynasties. These dynasties, in turn, built temples. Similarly, a prosperous merchant class, fueled by commercial activities, constructed chaityas, viharas, and temples.

Social factor- In order to enhance their social standing, various emerging social classes took on the task of building temples. The Rajput dynasty, for example, embarked on ambitious temple construction projects on a grand scale.

Religious factor- Temples were built out of deep religious devotion, with the installation of deity idols aligned with specific beliefs. Notably, the

Chola rulers erected grand Shiva temples, while the Vijayanagara rulers focused on constructing magnificent Vaishnava temples.

Practice Questions:The rock-cut architecture represents one of the most important sources of our knowledge of early Indian art and history. Discuss [UPSC-2020, 150 words]

