

## Temple Architecture and Sculpture

### The basic form of the Hindu temples

The basic form of the Hindu temple comprises the following:

- i. A cave-like sanctum (*garbhagriha* literally ‘womb-house’), which, in the early temples, was a small cubicle with a single entrance and grew into a larger chamber in time. The garbhagriha is made to house the main icon which is itself the focus of much ritual attention.
- ii. The entrance to the temple which may be a portico or colonnaded hall that incorporates space for a large number of worshippers and is known as a *mandapa*.
- iii. From the fifth century CE onwards, freestanding temples tend to have a mountain like spire, which can take the shape of a curving *shikhar* in North India and a pyramidal tower, called a *vimana*, in South India.
- iv. The *vahan*, i.e., the mount or vehicle of the temple’s main deity along with a standard pillar or *dhvaj* is placed axially before the sanctum.

Two broad orders of temples in the country are known— *Nagara* in the north and *Dravida* in the south.

At times, the *Vesar* style of temples as an independent style created through the selective mixing of the Nagara and Dravida orders is mentioned by some scholars.

### Sculpture, Iconography and Ornamentation

- The study of images of deities falls within a branch of art history called ‘*iconography*’, which consists of identification of images based on certain symbols and mythologies associated with them.
- Every region and period produced its own distinct style of images with its regional variations in iconography.
- The temple is covered with elaborate sculpture and ornament that form a fundamental part of its conception.
- The placement of an image in a temple is carefully planned: for instance, river goddesses (*Ganga* and *Yamuna*) are usually found at the entrance of a garbhagriha in a *Nagara* temple.
- *Dvarapalas* (doorkeepers) are usually found on the gateways or *gopurams* of *Dravida* temples.

- Similarly, *mithunas* (erotic images), *navagrahas* (the nine auspicious planets) and *yakshas* are also placed at entrances to guard them.
- Various forms or aspects of the main divinity are to be found on the outer walls of the sanctum. The deities of directions, i.e., the *ashtadikpalas* face the eight key directions on the outer walls of the sanctum and/or on the outer walls of a temple.
- *Subsidiary* shrines around the main temple are dedicated to the family or incarnations of the main deity.
- Finally, various elements of ornamentation such as gavaksha, vyala/yali, kalpa-lata, amalaka, kalasha, etc. are used in distinct ways and places in a temple.

### The Nagara Temple Style

- The style of temple architecture that became popular in northern India is known as *nagara*.
- In North India it is common for an entire temple to be built on a stone platform with steps leading up to it.
- Further, unlike in South India it does not usually have elaborate boundary walls or gateways.
- The garbhagriha is always located directly under the tallest tower.
- There are many subdivisions of nagara temples depending on the shape of the *shikhara*. There are different names for the various parts of the temple in different parts of India;
- The most common name for the simple shikhara which is square at the base and whose walls curve or slope inward to a point on top is called the '*latina*' or the *rekha-prasada* type of shikara.
- The second major type of architectural form in the nagara order is the *phamsana*. *Phamsana* buildings tend to be broader and shorter than latina ones. Their roofs are composed of several slabs that gently rise to a single point over the centre of the building. *Phamsana* roofs do not curve inward, instead they slope upwards on a straight incline.
- Mostly the *phamsana* design is used for the mandapas while the main garbhagriha is housed in a latina building.
- The third main sub-type of the nagara building is what is generally called the *valabhi* type. These are rectangular buildings with a roof that rises into a vaulted chamber.

**Central India**

- Ancient temples of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan share many traits.
- The most visible is that they are made of sandstone.
- Some of the oldest surviving structural temples from the Gupta Period are in Madhya Pradesh.
- These are relatively modest-looking shrines each having four pillars that support a small mandapa which looks like a simple square porch-like extension before an equally small room that served as the garbhagriha. Examples include the temples at **Udaigiri**, which is on the outskirts of Vidisha and is part of a larger Hindu complex of cave shrines, while the other one is at **Sanchi**, which was a Buddhist site. This means that similar developments were being incorporated in the architecture of temples of both the religions.

➤ **Dashavatara Temple**

- ❖ The **Dashavatara** temple at Deogarh (in Lalitpur District, Uttar Pradesh) is in the **panchayatana** style of architecture where the main shrine is built on a rectangular plinth with four smaller subsidiary shrines at the four corners (making it a total number of five shrines, hence the name, panchayatana).
- ❖ The prominent sculptures in this temple include the **Sheshashayana**, **Nara-Narayan** and **Gajendramoksha**.
- ❖ **Sheshashayana** is the form of Vishnu where he is shown reclining on the sheshanaga called Ananta.
- ❖ **Nara-Narayan** shows the discussion between the human soul and the eternal divine.
- ❖ **Gajendramoksha** is the story of achieving moksha, symbolically communicated by Vishnu's suppression of an asura who had taken the form of an elephant.
- ❖ This west-facing temple has a grand doorway with standing sculptures of female figures representing the Ganga on the left side and the Yamuna on the right side.
- ❖ The temple is west-facing, which is less common, as most temples are east-or north-facing.

- By contrast, if we study the temples of *Khajuraho* made in the tenth century, i.e., about four hundred years after the temple at Deogarh, we can see how dramatically the shape and style of the nagara temple architecture had developed.
- The *Lakshmana* temple dedicated to Vishnu is the grandest temple of Khajuraho, built in 954 by the *Chandela* king, *Dhanga*.
- A nagara temple, it is placed on a high platform accessed by stairs. There are four smaller temples in the corners, and all the towers or shikharas rise high, upward in a curved pyramidal fashion, emphasising the temple's vertical thrust ending in a horizontal fluted disc called an *amalaka* topped with a kalash or vase.
- The crowning elements: *amalaka* and *kalasha*, are to be found on all nagara temples of this period.
- The temple also has projecting balconies and verandahs, thus very different from Deogarh.
- Lakshmana Temple in Khajuraho
  - ❖ The temples at *Khajuraho* are all made of *sandstone*. They were patronised by the Chandella dynasty.
  - ❖ The Lakshmana temple represents the full-fledged, developed style of temple architecture during the time of the Chandellas. Its construction was completed by 954, the year as per the inscription found at the base of the temple, by *Yashovarman*, the seventh ruler of the *Chandella* dynasty.
  - ❖ The temple plan is of a panchayana type.
  - ❖ The temple is constructed on a heavy plinth. It consists of an *ardhamandapa* (porch), *mandapa* (porch), the *maha mandapa* (greater hall) and the *garbhagriha* with *vimana*.
  - ❖ Many erotic sculptures are carved on the plinth wall. Some erotic sculptures are carved on the actual wall of the temple.
  - ❖ An image of *Chaturmukha Vishnu* is in the garbhagriha.
  - ❖ There are four shrines in each corner of the temple. There are images of Vishnu in three shrines and Surya in one, which can be identified by the central image on the lintel of the shrine-doors.

- Khajuraho's temples are also known for their extensive erotic sculptures; the erotic expression is given equal importance in human experience as spiritual pursuit, and it is seen as part of a larger cosmic whole.
- Many Hindu temples therefore feature *mithun* (embracing couple) sculptures, considered auspicious.
- Usually, they are placed at the entrance of the temple or on an exterior wall or they may also be placed on the walls between the mandapa and the main shrine.
- The other notable example at Khajuraho is *Kandariya Mahadeo* temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.
- There are many temples at Khajuraho, most of them devoted to Hindu gods.
- There are some Jain temples as well as a *Chausanth Yogini* temple, which is of interest. Predating the tenth century, this is a temple of small, square shrines of roughly-hewn granite blocks, each dedicated to esoteric deities or goddesses associated with the rise of *Tantric* worship after the seventh century.
- Several such temples were dedicated to the cult of the *yoginis* across Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Tamil Nadu.

### West India

- Sandstone is the commonest building material.
- Among the most important art-historical sites in the region is *Samlaji* in Gujarat which shows how earlier artistic traditions of the region mixed with a post-Gupta style and gave rise to a distinct style of sculpture.
- Sun Temple, Modhera
  - ❖ The *Sun temple* at *Modhera* dates back to early eleventh century and was built by Raja Bhimdev I of the Solanki Dynasty in 1026. (The Solankis were a branch of the later Chalukyas.)
  - ❖ There is a massive rectangular stepped tank called the *surya kund* in front of it.
  - ❖ Proximity of sacred architecture to a water body such as a tank, a river or a pond has been noticed right from the earliest times. By the early eleventh century they had become a part of many temples.
  - ❖ A hundred and eight miniature shrines are carved in between the steps inside the tank.

- ❖ A huge ornamental arch-torana leads one to the sabha mandapa (the assembly hall) which is open on all sides.
- ❖ The influence of the woodcarving tradition of Gujarat is evident in the lavish carving and sculpture work.
- ❖ Every year, at the time of the equinoxes, the sun shines directly into this central shrine.

### East India

- Eastern Indian temples include those found in the North-East, Bengal and Odisha. Each of these three areas produced distinct types of temples.
- A large number of sculptures have been found in Assam and Bengal which shows the development of important regional schools in those regions.
- **Assam:**
  - ❖ An old sixth-century sculpted door frame from *DaParvatia* near *Tezpur* and another few stray sculptures from Rangagora Tea Estate near Tinsukia in Assam bear witness to the import of the Gupta idiom in that region.
  - ❖ By the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, a distinct regional style developed in Assam. The style that came with the migration of the *Tais* from Upper Burma mixed with the dominant *Pala* style of Bengal and led to the creation of what was later known as the *Ahom* style in and around Guwahati.
  - ❖ Kamakhya temple, a Shakti Peeth, is dedicated to Goddess Kamakhya.
- **Bengal**
  - ❖ The style of the sculptures during the period between the ninth and eleventh centuries in Bengal (including Bangladesh) and Bihar is known as the *Pala* style, named after the ruling dynasty at the time, while the style of those of the mid-eleventh to mid-thirteenth centuries is named after the Sena kings.
  - ❖ While the Palas are celebrated as patrons of many Buddhist monastic sites, the temples from that region are known to express the local *Vanga* style.
  - ❖ The ninth century *Siddheshvara Mahadeva* temple in *Barakar* in Burdwan District, for example, shows a tall curving shikhara crowned by a large amalaka and is an example of the early Pala style.
  - ❖ Many local vernacular building traditions of Bengal also influenced the style

of temples in that region. Most prominent of these was the shape of the curving or sloping side of the bamboo roof of a Bengali hut. This feature was eventually even adopted in Mughal buildings, and is known across North India as the **Bangla** roof.

- ❖ In the Mughal period and later, scores of terracotta brick temples were built across Bengal and Bangladesh in a unique style that had elements of local building techniques seen in bamboo huts which were combined with older forms reminiscent of the Pala period and with the forms of arches and domes that were taken from Islamic architecture.
- ❖ These can be widely found in and around **Vishnupur, Bankura, Burdwan** and **Birbhum**.

➤ **Odisha**

- ❖ The main architectural features of Odisha temples are classified in three orders, i.e., **rekhapida, pidhadeul** and **khakra**.
- ❖ Most of the main temple sites are located in ancient Kalinga—modern Puri District, including Bhubaneswar or ancient Tribhuvaneshvara, Puri and Konark.
- ❖ The temples of Odisha constitute a distinct substyle within the nagara order.
- ❖ In general, here the shikhara, called **deul** in Odisha, is vertical almost until the top when it suddenly curves sharply inwards. Deuls are preceded, as usual, by mandapas called **jagamohana** in Odisha.
- ❖ The exterior of the temples are lavishly carved, their interiors generally quite bare.
- ❖ Odisha temples usually have boundary walls.

### Sun Temple, Konark

- ✓ At **Konark**, on the shores of the Bay of Bengal, lie the majestic ruins of the **Surya** temple built in stone around 1240.
- ✓ Its shikhara was a colossal creation said to have reached 70m, which, proving too heavy for its site, fell in the nineteenth century.
- ✓ The vast complex is within a quadrilateral precinct of which the **jagamohana** or the dance-pavillion (mandapa) has survived.
- ✓ The Sun temple is set on a high base, its walls covered in extensive,

detailed ornamental carving.

- ✓ These include twelve pairs of enormous wheels sculpted with spokes and hubs, representing the chariot wheels of the Sun god who, in mythology, rides a chariot driven by eight horses, sculpted here at the entrance staircase.
- ✓ The whole temple thus comes to resemble a colossal processional chariot.
- ✓ On the southern wall is a massive sculpture of surya carved out of green stone.

### The Hills

- A unique form of architecture developed in the hills of **Kumaon**, **Garhwal**, Himachal and Kashmir.
- Kashmir's proximity to prominent **Gandhara** sites (such as **Taxila**, **Peshawar** and the northwest frontier) lent the region a strong Gandhara influence.
- This began to mix with the Gupta and post-Gupta traditions that were brought to it from Sarnath, Mathura and even centres in Gujarat and Bengal.
- Brahmin pundits and Buddhist monks frequently travelled between Kashmir, Garhwal, Kumaon and religious centres in the plains like Banaras, Nalanda and even as far south as Kanchipuram.
- As a result both Buddhist and Hindu traditions began to intermingle and spread in the hills.
- The hills also had their own tradition of wooden buildings with pitched roofs. At several places in the hills, therefore, we find that while the main garbhagriha and shikhara are made in a rekha-prasada or latina style, the mandapa is of an older form of wooden architecture. Sometimes, the temple itself takes on a pagoda shape.
- One of the most important temples in Kashmir is **Pandrethan**, built during the eighth and ninth centuries.
- In keeping with the tradition of a water tank attached to the shrine, this temple is built on a plinth built in the middle of a tank.
- The architecture of this temple is in keeping with the age-old Kashmiri tradition of wooden buildings. Due to the snowy conditions in Kashmir, the roof is peaked and slants slowly outward.

- Like the findings at Samlaji, the sculptures at **Chamba** also show an amalgamation of local traditions with a post Gupta style.
- The images of **Mahishasuramardini** and Narasimha at the Laksna-Devi Mandir are evidences of the influence of the post-Gupta tradition. Both the images show the influence of the metal sculpture tradition of Kashmir.
- Of the temples in Kumaon, the ones at **Jageshwar** near Almora, and **Champavat** near Pithoragarh, are classic examples of nagara architecture in the region.

### The Dravida Temple style

- Unlike the nagara temple, the dravida temple is enclosed within a compound wall.
- The front wall has an entrance gateway in its centre, which is known as a **gopuram**.
- The shape of the main temple tower known as **vimana** in Tamil Nadu is like a stepped pyramid that rises up geometrically rather than the curving shikhara of North India.
- In the South Indian temple, the word '**shikhara**' is used only for the crowning element at the top of the temple which is usually shaped like a small **stupika** or an **octagonal cupola**—this is equivalent to the **amlak** and **kalasha** of North Indian temples.
- Whereas at the entrance to the North Indian temple's garbhagriha, it would be usual to find images such as mithunas and the river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna, in the south we generally find sculptures of fierce dvarapalas or the door-keepers guarding the temple.
- It is common to find a large water reservoir, or a **temple tank**, enclosed within the complex.
- Subsidiary shrines are either incorporated within the main temple tower, or located as distinct, separate small shrines beside the main temple.
- The North Indian idea of multiple shikharas rising together as a cluster was not popular in South India.
- Temples started becoming the focus of urban architecture.
- **Kanchipuram, Thanjavur or Tanjore, Madurai** and **Kumbakonam** are the most famous temple towns of Tamil Nadu, where, during the eighth to twelfth centuries, the role of the temple was not limited to religious matters alone. Temples became rich administrative centres, controlling vast areas of land.

- There are subdivisions also of dravida temples. These are basically of five different shapes:
  - ❖ Square, usually called *kuta*, and also *caturasra*;
  - ❖ Rectangular or *shala* or *ayatasra*;
  - ❖ Elliptical, called *gaja-prishtha* or elephantbacked, or also called *vrittayata*
  - ❖ Circular or *vritta*; and
  - ❖ Octagonal or *ashtasra*.
  
- The Pallavas were one of the ancient South Indian dynasties that were active in the Andhra region from the second century CE onwards and moved south to settle in Tamil Nadu.
  
- They left many inscriptions in stone and several monuments.
  
- Their powerful kings spread their empire to various parts of the subcontinent, at times reaching the borders of Odisha, and their links with South–East Asia were also strong.
  
- Although they were mostly Shaivite, several Vaishnava shrines also survived from their reign, and there is no doubt that they were influenced by the long Buddhist history of the Deccan.
  
- The early buildings are generally attributed to the reign of *Mahendravarman I*, a contemporary of the *Chalukyan* king, *Pulakesin II* of Karnataka.
  
- *Narasimhavarman I*, also known as *Mamalla*, who acceded the Pallava throne around 640 CE, is celebrated for the expansion of the empire, avenging the defeat his father had suffered at the hands of *Pulakesin II*, and inaugurating most of the building works at *Mahabalipuram* which is known after him as *Mamallapuram*.
  
- The shore temple at Mahabalipuram was built later, probably in the reign of Narasimhavarman II, also known as *Rajasimha* who reigned from 700 to 728 CE.
  
- Shore temple houses three shrines, two to Shiva, one facing east and the other west, and a middle one to Vishnu who is shown as *Anantashayana*. This is unusual, because temples generally have a single main shrine and not three areas of worship.
  
- Sculptures of the bull, Nandi, Shiva's mount, line the temple walls, and these, along with the carvings on the temple's lower walls have suffered severe disfiguration due to erosion by salt-water laden air over the centuries.

➤ Mahabalipuram

- ❖ Mahabalipuram is an important coastal town from the period of the Pallavas. It is dotted with several important rock-cut and free-standing structural temples mostly made in the seventh and eighth centuries.
  - ❖ Scholars have interpreted the story depicted on the panel differently. While some believe that it is the story of the descent of the Ganga from heaven to earth, others believe that the main story is of *Kiratarjuniya* or *Arjuna's penance*, a poetic work by *Bharvi* which is known to have been popular in the Pallava court.
  - ❖ Other scholars have interpreted the symbolism behind the sculptures to show that the whole tableau was created to be a *prashasti*, or something to praise the Pallava king.
  - ❖ A temple has been given prominence in the relief. Ascetics and worshippers sit before it. Above it is an emaciated bearded figure standing in penance on one leg, his arms raised above his head. He has been identified by some as *Bhagirath* and by others as *Arjuna*.
  - ❖ Arjuna's penance was to obtain the *pashupata* weapon from Shiva, whereas *Bhagirath* prayed to have *Ganga* brought to earth.
  - ❖ Next to this figure stands Shiva who has one hand in the boon bestowing gesture or *varada mudra*.
  - ❖ The small gana or dwarf who stands below this hand may be a personification of the powerful *pashupata* weapon.
  - ❖ Particularly noteworthy are the extraordinarily well-modelled, and life-like elephants, and the pair of deer who are under the shrine.
  - ❖ The most humorous, however, is a cat who has been shown standing on his hind legs, with his hands raised, imitating *Bhagirath* or *Arjuna*. This cat is, in fact, a symbolic device. He is surrounded by rats, which are unable to disturb him from his penance. Perhaps this is a metaphor used by the artist to show how strong *Arjuna's* or *Bhagirath's* penance was, who is also standing still, undisturbed by his surroundings.
- The magnificent *Shiva temple of Thanjavur*, called the *Rajarajeswara* or *Brihadiswara* temple, was completed around 1009 by *Rajaraja Chola*, and is the largest and tallest of all Indian temples.

- Temple building was prolific at this time, and over a hundred important temples of the Chola period are in a good state of preservation, and many more are still active shrines.
- Bigger in scale than anything built by their predecessors, the Pallavas, Chalukyas or Pandyas, this Chola temple's pyramidal multi-storeyed vimana rises a massive seventy metres, topped by a monolithic *shikhara* which is an octagonal dome-shaped *stupika*.
- It is in this temple that one notices for the first time two large *gopuras* (gateway towers) with an elaborate sculptural programme which was conceived along with the temple.
- Huge *Nandi*-figures dot the corners of the shikhara.
- Hundreds of stucco figures decorate the vimana
- The main deity of the temple is Shiva, who is shown as a huge lingam set in a two storeyed sanctum.
- The walls surrounding the sanctum have extended mythological narratives which are depicted through painted murals and sculptures.

### Architecture in the Deccan

- Many different styles of temple architecture influenced by both North and South Indian temples were used in regions like Karnataka.
- By about 750 CE, the early western Chalukya control of the Deccan was taken by the Rashtrakutas.
- Their greatest achievement in architecture is the *Kailashnath* temple at *Ellora*, a culmination of at least a millennium-long tradition in rock-cut architecture in India.
- It is a complete dravida building with a Nandi shrine—since the temple is dedicated to Shiva.
- Importantly, this is carved out of living rock.
- The sculpture of the Rashtrakuta phase at Ellora is dynamic, the figures often larger than life-size, infused with unparalleled grandeur and the most overwhelming energy.

➤ Raavana Shaking Mount Kailasha

- ❖ The theme of Ravana shaking Mount Kailasha has been depicted several times in the caves of Ellora. But the most noteworthy of all is the one depicted on the left wall of Kailashnath temple (Cave No.16) at Ellora.
  - ❖ It depicts the episode of **Ravana** shaking **Mount Kailasha** when **Lord Shiva** along with **Parvati** and others were on the mountain.
  - ❖ The composition is divided into several tiers. The lower tier depicts Ravana, multi-faced and multiarmed shaking the mount with ease.
  - ❖ The upper half is divided into three frames. The centre occupied by the image of Shiva and Parvati.
  - ❖ Parvati is shown moving close to Shiva scared by the commotion on the hill.
  - ❖ The gana (dwarf) figures are shown in action, involved in their activities. The celestial beings above Shiva and Parvati witnessing the event are shown in frozen movement.
- In the southern part of the Deccan, i.e., in the region of Karnataka is where some of the most experimental hybrid styles of **vesara** architecture are to be found.
- Pulakesin I established the early western Chalukya kingdom when he secured the land around Badami in 543.
- The early western Chalukyas ruled most of the Deccan till the mid-eighth century when they were superseded by the Rashtrakutas.
- Chalukyans built both rock-cut caves and structural temples. The earliest is probably the **Ravana Phadi** cave at **Aihole** which is known for its distinctive sculptural style.
- One of the most important sculptures at the site is of **Nataraja**, surrounded by larger-than-life-size depictions of the **saptamatrikas**: three to Shiva's left and four to his right.
- The hybridisation and incorporation of several styles was the hallmark of Chalukyan buildings.

➤ Hoysala Temples

- ❖ With the waning of Chola and Pandya power, the Hoysalas of Karnataka grew to prominence in South India and became the most important patrons centred at Mysore.
- ❖ The remains of around hundred temples have been found in southern Deccan, though it is only three of them that are most frequently discussed: the temples at **Belur**, **Halebid** and **Somnathpuram**.
- ❖ The most characteristic feature of these temples is that they grow extremely complex with so many projecting angles emerging from the previously straightforward square temple, that the plan of these temples starts looking like a star, and is thus known as a **stellateplan**.
- ❖ Since they are made out of soapstone which is a relatively soft stone, the artists were able to carve their sculptures intricately. This can be seen particularly in the jewellery of the gods that adorn their temple walls.
- ❖ The **Hoysaleshvara** temple at **Halebid** in Karnataka was built in dark schist stone by the Hoysala king in 1150.
- ❖ Hoysala temples are sometimes called hybrid or **vesara** as their unique style seems neither completely dravida nor nagara, but somewhere in between.
- ❖ They are easily distinguishable from other medieval temples by their highly original star-like ground-plans and a profusion of decorative carvings.
- ❖ Dedicated to Shiva as Nataraja, the Halebid temple is a double building with a large hall for the mandapa to facilitate music and dance.
- ❖ From the central square plan cut-out angular projections create the star effect decorated with the most profuse carvings of animals and deities.

➤ Vijayanagara temples

- ❖ Founded in 1336, Vijayanagara, literally ‘city of victory’, attracted a number of international travellers such as the Italian, **Niccolo di Conti**, the Portuguese **Domingo Paes**, **Fernao Nuniz** and **Duarte Barbosa** and the Afghan **Abd, al Razzaq**, who have left vivid accounts of the city.
- ❖ Architecturally, Vijayanagara synthesises the centuries-old dravida temple architecture with Islamic styles demonstrated by the neighbouring sultanates.

- ❖ Their sculpture too occasionally shows the presence of foreigners.
- ❖ Their eclectic ruins from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries preserve a fascinating time in history, an age of wealth, exploration and cultural fusion.

### **Buddhist and Jain Architectural Developments**

- Sites such as Ellora have Buddhist, Hindu and Jain monuments; however, Badami, Khajuraho and Kannauj have the remains of any two of the religions right next to each other.
- When the Gupta empire crumbled in the sixth century CE, this eastern region of Bihar and Bengal, historically known as **Magadha**, appears to have remained unified whilst numerous small Rajput principalities sprang up to the west.
- In the eighth century, the Palas came to power in the region. The second Pala ruler, **Dharmapala**, became immensely powerful and established an empire by defeating the powerful Rajput Pratiharas.
- Dharmapala consolidated an empire whose wealth lay in a combination of agriculture along the fertile Ganges plain and international trade.
- The pre-eminent Buddhist site is **Bodhgaya**.
- **Bodhgaya** is a pilgrimage site since Siddhartha achieved enlightenment here and became Gautama Buddha.
- While the bodhi tree is of immense importance, the **Mahabodhi** Temple at Bodhgaya is an important reminder of the brickwork of that time.
- The design of the temple is unusual. It is, strictly speaking, neither dravida or nagara. It is narrow like a nagara temple, but it rises without curving, like a dravida one.
- The monastic university of Nalanda is a **mahavihara** as it is a complex of several monasteries of various sizes.
- Most of the information about Nalanda is based on the records of **Xuan Zang**—previously spelt as '**Hsuan-tsang**'— which states that the foundation of a monastery was laid by Kumargupta I in the fifth century CE; and this was carried forward by the later monarchs who built up a fantastic university here.
- All three Buddhist doctrines— Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana—were taught here.
- Buddhist monasteries like Nalanda, thus, were prolific centres of art production that

had a decisive impact on the arts of all Buddhist countries in Asia.

- The sculptural art of Nalanda, in stucco, stone and bronze, developed out of a heavy dependence on the Buddhist Gupta art of Sarnath.
- By the ninth century a synthesis occurred between the Sarnath Gupta idiom, the local Bihar tradition, and that of central India, leading to the formation of the *Nalanda school of sculpture* characterised by distinctive facial features, body forms and treatment of clothing and jewellery.
- The characteristic features of Nalanda art, distinguished by its consistently high quality of workmanship, are that the precisely executed sculptures have an ordered appearance with little effect of crowding. Sculptures are also usually not flat in relief but are depicted in three-dimensional forms.
- The back slabs of the sculptures are detailed and the ornamentations delicate.
- The Nalanda bronzes, dating between the seventh and eighth centuries to approximately the twelfth century outnumber the discovery of metal images from all other sites of eastern India and constitute a large body of Pala Period metal sculptures.
- Like their stone counterparts, the bronzes initially relied heavily on Sarnath and Mathura Gupta traditions.
- The Nalanda sculptures initially depict Buddhist deities of the Mahayana pantheon such as standing Buddhas, bodhisattvas such as *Manjusri Kumara*, *Avalokiteshvara* seated on a lotus and *Naga-Nagarjuna*.
- During the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, when Nalanda emerged as an important tantric centre, the repertoire came to be dominated by *Vajrayana* deities such as *Vajrasharada* (a form of Saraswati) *Khasarpana*, *Avalokiteshvara*, etc.
- The port-town of *Nagapattinam* was also a major Buddhist centre right until the Chola Period. One of the reasons for this must have been its importance in trade with Sri Lanka where large numbers of Buddhists still live.
- Jains were prolific temple builders like the Hindus, and their sacred shrines and pilgrimage spots are to be found across the length and breadth of India except in the hills.
- The oldest Jain pilgrimage sites are to be found in Bihar.
- In the Deccan, some of the most architecturally important Jain sites can be found in Ellora and Aihole.

- In central India, *Deogarh*, *Khajuraho*, *Chanderi* and *Gwalior* have some excellent examples of Jain temples.
- Karnataka has a rich heritage of Jain shrines and at *Sravana Belagola* the famous statue of *Gomateshwara*, the granite statue of *Lord Bahubali* is the world's tallest monolithic free-standing structure. It was commissioned by *Camundaraya*, the General-in-Chief and Prime Minister of the *Ganga Kings* of Mysore.
- The Jain temples at Mount Abu were constructed by Vimal Shah. Notable for a simplistic exterior in contrast with the exuberant marble interiors, their rich sculptural decoration with deep undercutting creates a lace-like appearance. The temple is famous for its unique patterns on every ceiling, and the graceful bracket figures along the domed ceilings.
- The great Jain pilgrimage site in the *Shatrunjay* hills near Palitana in Kathiawar, Gujarat, is imposing with scores of temples clustered together.