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Itihaaskar JRF

UGC NET History (Code 06)



Indian Architecture — Cave, Stupa, Temple, Mosque

Stone, brick, and wood · Prehistoric to Mughal · How every dynasty built its idea of the cosmos

● **HIGH — 6–9 PYQS (LAST DECADE) — THE MOST CONSISTENTLY TESTED ART TOPIC ACROSS ALL UGC NET CYCLES; TESTED THROUGH: SPECIFIC MONUMENT-DYNASTY ATTRIBUTION; STYLISTIC FEATURES DISTINGUISHING NAGARA FROM DRAVIDA FROM VESARA; SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE STUPA (ANDA, HARMIKA, TORANA, PRADAKSHINAPATHA); THE KAILASANATHA ELLORA VS. KAILASANATHA KANCHIPURAM DISTINCTION; INDO-ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS (IWÂN, SQUINCH, PENDENTIVE, ARABESQUE, PIETRA DURA); SPECIFIC MUGHAL MONUMENTS AND THEIR PATRONS.**

WHY THIS TOPIC MATTERS

- **PYQ pattern:** Monument-to-dynasty attribution (most tested); specific architectural terms (*shikhara*, *vimana*, *gopura*, *mandapa*, *garbhagriha*, *torana*, *chhatra*, *pishtaq*); the three temple styles compared; Mauryan pillar features; stupa components; distinguishing characteristics of Mughal vs. Sultanate vs. Rajput architecture; UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India
- **Recent trend (2023–2026):** Analytical questions — "trace the evolution of the stupa from Mauryan to Gupta period"; "compare the Nagara and Dravida styles systematically"; questions specifically on the features of individual monuments (the Qutb Minar's inscriptions; the Taj Mahal's *pietra dura* and symmetry); questions on the *charbagh* (four-part garden) layout
- **Biggest traps:**
 1. Kailasanatha Ellora (Cave 16) = Rashtrakuta (Krishna I) vs. Kailasanatha Kanchipuram = Pallava (Narasimhavarman II) — most commonly confused monument pair in all of UGC NET
 2. Brihadeshvara Temple Thanjavur = Rajaraja Chola I vs. Gangaikondacholapuram = Rajendra Chola I — second most commonly confused pair
 3. The Qutb Minar was begun by Qutbuddin Aibak but completed by Iltutmish — NOT a single-patron monument
 4. Humayun's Tomb is the first fully developed Mughal garden-tomb — NOT the Taj Mahal (the Taj Mahal is the perfection of the form, not its beginning)
 5. The *shikhara* is the north Indian (Nagara) tower; the *vimana* is the south Indian (Dravida) tower — these are not interchangeable
- **Strategy:** Learn monuments as patron-style-feature triplets; master the three temple styles as a systematic comparison table; know every major monument's UNESCO World Heritage Site status; understand the evolution from wood to stone to brick across periods

CHRONOLOGICAL ANCHOR — INDIAN ARCHITECTURE

- **c. 3000–1500 BCE — Harappan urban architecture:** fired brick; grid-plan cities; covered drains; granaries; the Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro
- **c. 3rd century BCE — Mauryan architecture:** Ashokan pillars; *sanchi stupa* (original hemispherical mound); *lomas rishi* cave (earliest rock-cut architecture); monolithic lion capitals
- **c. 2nd–1st century BCE — Shunga period:** the *toranas* (gateways) of Sanchi Stupa added; *vedika* (railings) carved in great detail
- **c. 1st–3rd century CE — Post-Mauryan Buddhist architecture:** Amaravati stupa (Satavahana); Nagarjunakonda (Ikshvaku); Karle and Bhaja chaitya halls (rock-cut)

- **c. 5th century CE — Gupta period:** first freestanding stone temples; Dashavatara Temple Deogarh; Vishnu Temple Tigawa; the Nagara *shikhara* prototype
- **c. 6th–7th century CE — Pallava:** rock-cut mandapas at Mamallapuram; Pancha Pandava Rathas; Arjuna's Penance relief
- **c. 7th–8th century CE — Chalukya of Badami:** Badami caves; Pattadakal temples; Aihole; the Nagara-Dravida synthesis zone
- **c. 700–728 CE — Pallava structural temples:** Kailasanatha Kanchipuram; Shore Temple Mamallapuram
- **c. 757–773 CE — Rashtrakuta:** Kailasanatha Ellora Cave 16 (the most spectacular rock-cut monument in India)
- **c. 1010 CE — Chola:** Brihadeshvara Temple Thanjavur (Rajaraja I); 66-metre vimana
- **c. 950–1050 CE — Chandella:** Khajuraho temple complex; the mature Nagara style at its peak
- **c. 11th–13th century CE — Hoysala:** Belur, Halebid; Vesara star-plan
- **c. 1193 CE — Delhi Sultanate begins:** Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque; Qutb Minar begun (Aibak) completed (Iltutmish)
- **c. 13th–15th century CE — Provincial Sultanate styles:** Tughlaq fortress architecture; Lodhi garden tombs; Bengal, Jaunpur, Malwa, Gujarat regional styles
- **c. 1526–1707 CE — Mughal architecture:** Babur → Akbar (Fatehpur Sikri) → Jahangir → Shah Jahan (Taj Mahal, Red Fort) → Aurangzeb (Badshahi Mosque)
- **c. 18th–19th century CE — Colonial and Indo-Saracenic:** British Gothic; Indo-Saracenic hybrid (Bombay, Madras, Calcutta)

1. PRE-HISTORIC AND HARAPPAN ARCHITECTURE

1.1 Harappan Urban Planning

The **Harappan civilisation** (c. 2600–1900 BCE) produced the earliest urban architecture in South Asia — remarkable for its **rational planning, standardisation, and sanitary engineering**:

City layout:

- The **grid-plan layout**: streets ran in approximate north-south and east-west orientations, dividing the city into rectangular blocks; this is the earliest large-scale example of town planning in the world
- The **citadel and lower city** division: most major Harappan sites show a raised western mound (*citadel* — possibly a civic or administrative centre) and a larger eastern *lower city* (residential and commercial); whether these represented a political hierarchy of rulers and ruled is debated

Specific monuments:

The Great Bath, Mohenjo-daro:

- Dimensions: approximately **12 metres long, 7 metres wide, 2.4 metres deep**; sunk into a raised brick platform; surrounded by a colonnaded walkway
- Construction: the floor and walls lined with **fired bricks** set in **bitumen** (a natural asphalt sealant) to make it watertight — the first known use of bitumen as a sealant in construction
- Its function: most scholars interpret it as a place of **ritual bathing** — its careful waterproofing suggests water was contained for a purpose; whether this was religious (purification) or civic (public bathing) remains debated; John Marshall first proposed a ritual interpretation
- The absence of any clear drainage channel combined with evidence of a freshwater well filling it suggests it was emptied and refilled periodically

The Granary, Mohenjo-daro:

- A large podium structure with ventilation channels beneath the floor — consistent with grain storage above the ground (to prevent moisture damage); approximately *50 metres long, 27 metres wide
- Whether it was a **state granary** (suggesting centralised surplus management) or a merchant warehouse or a civic warehouse is debated; the fact that it is on the citadel mound suggests an administrative connection

The Granary, Harappa (on the riverbank):

- A different structure from Mohenjo-daro's; rows of working platforms (*work floors*) nearby with evidence of grain processing; together they suggest the Harappan economy had a centralised grain processing and storage infrastructure

Building materials and technology:

- **Standardised fired bricks** in the ratio **1:2:4** (height:width:length) across all major Harappan sites — from Harappa to Mohenjo-daro to Lothal (over 1,500 km apart); this standardisation implies either a single polity issuing standards or a very effective pan-regional building convention
- The use of **fired brick** (as opposed to the sun-dried mud brick typical of Mesopotamia) reflects Harappan technological sophistication and the availability of fuel for the kilns
- **Covered drainage system:** the most impressive infrastructural achievement; drains ran below the streets under removable covers (for cleaning); wastewater from individual houses connected to the street drains; some drains were large enough for a person to enter for maintenance — the most advanced drainage system in the ancient world

2. MAURYAN ARCHITECTURE (C. 322–185 BCE)

2.1 The Ashokan Pillars

The **Ashokan pillars** are the most distinctive and technically accomplished monuments of the Mauryan period:

Physical description:

- Monolithic columns of **Chunar sandstone** (quarried near Varanasi and transported across the empire); the stone has a characteristic fine-grained, cream-to-buff colour with a distinctive lustrous polish
- Height: typically **12–15 metres** above ground; total weight 40–50 tonnes; erected on a buried foundation
- **The Mauryan polish:** the most remarkable technical feature; the surface of every Ashokan pillar and many Mauryan sculptures is polished to a **mirror-like lustre** — a technique that modern stone-workers have been unable to fully replicate; the polish is achieved through successive application of increasingly fine abrasives; the Mauryan craftsmen (possibly from northwest India with Persian-influenced traditions) achieved this with tools no more sophisticated than hand tools and sand

Capital types — the Sarnath Lion Capital (top to bottom):

The Sarnath capital reads from top to bottom: ❁ **Dharma Chakra** (originally crowning the capital; now lost; its design appears on the Indian national flag) → **Four Lions back-to-back** (mouths open; royal roar in all four directions; adopted as National Emblem of India 1950) → **Abacus** (circular disc;

four animals — Lion, Horse, Bull, Elephant — alternating with four *dharma chakras*) → **Inverted Bell-Lotus** (*padma*; shows Achaemenid Persian influence) → **Chunar sandstone shaft** (12–15 metres tall; 40–50 tonnes; Mauryan mirror-polish surface).

- **Rampurwa Bull Capital**: single bull on abacus; Achaemenid Persian bell-lotus influence clearly visible
- **Vaishali Lion Capital**: single lion; simplest form

Location and purpose:

- Pillars were erected at **Buddhist pilgrimage sites** (*Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Lumbini, Kushinagar*), at provincial capitals, and along major roads
- They bore **Ashokan edicts** — the *Dhamma* inscriptions in *Brahmi* script (most pillars) and in *Kharoshthi* (northwest); the pillar's combination of physical monumentality and inscribed text made it simultaneously a political statement and a religious document
- Some pillars were moved by later rulers: the **Allahabad Pillar** was moved from Kausambi to Allahabad by **Akbar** (16th century CE); it bears Ashokan edicts, a *prashasti* of Samudragupta (Harishena), and a record of Jahangir's victories — three historical periods on a single monument

2.2 The Stupa — Origins and Development

The **stupa** (from Sanskrit *stupa* = "heap/mound"; Pali *thupa*) is the primary Buddhist commemorative monument — originally a burial mound (*tumulus*) adapted to house the Buddha's relics:

Origins:

- After the Buddha's *Parinirvana* (c. 483 BCE), his ashes were divided among eight clans; each built a *stupa* over their share; these original eight stupas were subsequently opened by Ashoka who divided the relics into 84,000 portions, each enshrined in a new stupa — a number symbolic of the Buddha's teachings
- Pre-Buddhist burial mound tradition (*vedic tumuli*) was the physical antecedent; the stupa form adapted and transformed this tradition for Buddhist purposes

Structural components — Sanchi Stupa No. 1 (bottom to top):

- **Anda** ("egg"): hemispherical dome; represents Mount Meru or the burial mound; filled with earth/rubble
- **Medhi** (drum): raised cylindrical base; enables circumambulation at height
- **Harmika**: square railing atop the *anda*; "throne" of the absent Buddha; represents the gods' abode
- **Chatravali**: three umbrella discs on the *yashti* mast; Three Jewels — Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha; **number three is fixed**
- **Vedika**: stone railing encircling the stupa base; originally imitated wooden railings; carved with Buddhist narrative sculpture
- **Pradakshinapatha**: circumambulatory path walked clockwise; some stupas have two levels
- **Torana**: carved stone gateways at four cardinal points; two *stambha* posts + three *vyala* crossbars; most sculptural element

The Sanchi Stupa — the complete analysis:

Stupa No. 1 at Sanchi (near Vidisha, MP) is the most complete and best-preserved stupa complex in India:

- **Original core** (Ashoka period, c. 250 BCE): a relatively small brick hemispherical mound; Ashoka is said to have personally installed relics of the Buddha's disciples Sariputra and Maudgalyayana here
- **Shunga expansion** (c. 2nd–1st century BCE): the original mound was enlarged to its present scale — approximately **36.5 metres in diameter** and **16.5 metres high**; the entire original brick structure was cased in sandstone; the *vedika* (railing) was added in stone
- **The four toranas** (c. 1st century BCE): added during the Shunga-Satavahana period; the **South Torana** (oldest), **North Torana**, **East Torana**, and **West Torana**; each is a masterwork of narrative sculpture:
 - The **South Torana** bears an inscription of **Satavahana King Satakarni** — confirming Satavahana patronage; also bears a depiction of the **Maya dream** (the Buddha's mother's dream before his birth — the white elephant)
 - The **East Torana** shows the **Great Departure** (the Buddha leaving his palace on horseback) and the **Temptation by Mara**; the **West Torana** (the most damaged) shows the **Seven Buddhas** of Buddhist cosmology
 - Crucially: the **Buddha is never depicted in human form** in Sanchi's Shunga-Satavahana period sculpture; he is represented by **symbols** — a footprint, an empty throne, a parasol, a *Bodhi* tree, a *dharma chakra*; this **aniconic tradition** is characteristic of early Buddhist art before the Kushana period when the human Buddha image first appeared
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site** (1989)

Amaravati Stupa (Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, c. 2nd century BCE–3rd century CE):

- The most elaborate stupa of the post-Mauryan period; built under Satavahana patronage
- Now largely dismantled (materials were used for a nearby village's construction in the 19th century before archaeological intervention); surviving sculptures are in the Government Museum Chennai and the British Museum (London)
- **Distinctive features**: the *ayaka* pillars (five pillars projecting from the *medhi* at each of the four cardinal points); the "narrative frieze" style of its sculptural panels (densely packed scenes with multiple figures overlapping); the white marble (*dolomite*) used rather than sandstone; the Buddha begins to be shown in **human form** in the later Amaravati phases — one of the transitions from aniconic to iconic representation

Nagarjunakonda (Guntur district, AP, c. 3rd century CE):

- Built under **Ikshvaku dynasty** patronage; now submerged under the Nagarjunasagar Reservoir; the Archaeological Survey of India removed key sculptures and monuments before the reservoir was filled
- Important for: the first large-scale Buddha images in south India; the *ayaka*-pillar tradition; evidence of diverse Buddhist schools (Mahayana, Hinayana, Theravada) coexisting

2.3 Rock-Cut Architecture — The Lomas Rishi Tradition

The **Lomas Rishi Cave** (Barabar Hills, Bihar, Mauryan period, c. 3rd century BCE):

- The **earliest surviving rock-cut architecture** in India; cut from granite by Ashokan craftsmen for the **Ajivika** sect (not Buddhist — the Ajivikas were a heterodox sect who believed in absolute determinism)

- The façade is carved to **imitate a wooden building** — the rounded arch of the doorway with a horseshoe (*chaitya*) arch design, with carved timber crossbeams in stone; this "imitation of wood in stone" is a defining feature of early Indian rock-cut architecture and reveals that earlier monumental architecture was in wood (now lost)
- The interior is barrel-vaulted and polished to the same mirror-lustre as the Ashokan pillars

The Buddhist Chaitya halls (c. 1st century BCE–3rd century CE):

Rock-cut halls of worship (*chaitya* = "holy" or "mound"; here used for the prayer hall with a stupa inside).

The Buddhist Chaitya halls (c. 1st century BCE–3rd century CE):

Rock-cut halls of worship (*chaitya* = "holy" or "mound"); the prayer hall has a stupa at the apsidal far end.

- **Karle Chaitya** (Maharashtra, c. 1st CE, Satavahana): the largest and most complete; nave-and-aisle plan; wooden ribs original (still present); *mithuna* couples on facade
- **Bhaja Chaitya** (Maharashtra, c. 2nd BCE): earliest datable chaitya hall; carved wooden ribs; critical for evolutionary study
- **Ajanta Cave 26** (c. 5th–6th CE, Vakataka): most elaborate facade; *Parinirvana* panel (reclining Buddha) — largest rock-cut reclining Buddha in India
- **Nasik Chaitya** (c. 1st CE): important Satavahana/Shaka donor inscriptions; Gautami Balashri's record

Buddhist Vihara caves (c. 1st century BCE–7th century CE):

- Residential rock-cut monasteries (*vihara* = "dwelling place"); rectangular halls with individual monks' cells cut from the walls; typically a small shrine at the back
- **Ajanta Vihara Caves** (Phase 2, c. 460–480 CE, Vakataka period): Caves 1, 2, 4, 6, 16, 17; combining vihara residence with elaborate painted programmes (discussed in Ch 03); the most celebrated examples of the combined vihara-painting tradition

3. TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE — THE COMPLETE TYPOLOGY

3.1 The Hindu Temple — Conceptual Framework

The **Hindu temple** is not simply a house of worship — it is a cosmological model:

- The temple represents **Mount Meru** (the cosmic mountain at the centre of the universe) in stone; the *shikhara* or *vimana* (tower) is Meru's peak; the *garbhagriha* (womb-chamber) at the base is the cave at the mountain's heart where the deity dwells
- The deity in the *garbhagriha* is not a symbol but the actual divine presence (*murti* = form; the god/goddess is believed to be genuinely present in the consecrated image); temple rituals treat the deity as a living royal person — awakened, bathed, fed, dressed, entertained with music and dance, and put to sleep according to a daily schedule (*nitya puja*)

The **temple complex** evolved from a simple shrine into an elaborate institution: *garbhagriha* (sanctum) → *antarala* (vestibule) → *mandapa* (pillared hall) → *artha-mandapa* (half-hall) → *maha-mandapa* (great hall) → *gopura* (gateway tower) → *prakaras* (enclosure walls). Each addition reflects greater patronal wealth and elaboration of the ritual programme. In mature Chola temples,

the *gopura* (gateway) is taller than the *vimana* (main tower) — a paradox that marks the Dravida tradition's unique logic.

3.2 The Three Temple Styles — Full Systematic Analysis

The canonical classification of Indian temple architecture into three styles is the most heavily tested topic in this chapter:

The Nagara Style (North Indian):

Geography: north of the Vindhyas — Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Gujarat; the style does not occur naturally south of the Krishna River

Defining feature: the **shikhara** (tower) over the *garbhagriha* has a **curvilinear (rekha) profile** — the tower curves gently inward as it rises, like a compressed banana or a corn cob; when viewed in elevation, the curve is convex (not concave or stepped)

Sub-types of the Nagara shikhara:

- **Latina:** the simplest and earliest form; a single unbroken curvilinear *shikhara* from base to top; used over the main *garbhagriha*; the Gupta-period temples and most Orissan temples use this form
- **Sekhari:** a more complex form in which subsidiary *shikharas* (*urushringas*) cluster around the main shaft, making the profile more elaborate; the Khajuraho temples use this form
- **Bhumija:** primarily found in Rajasthan and western Madhya Pradesh; a grid pattern of miniature *shikharas* covering the entire tower surface in horizontal and vertical rows; associated with Paramara-period architecture

Top elements: the **amalaka** (a large ribbed stone disc resembling a myrobalan/amalaki fruit) sits on top of the *shikhara*; above the *amalaka* is the **kalasha** (a water-pot finial)

Plan: a **square (chaturasra)** plan for the main body; in the *Sekhari* and *Bhumija* forms the plan becomes a **star (stellate)** or **cruciform** as the subsidiary projections are added

Mandapa development: the north Indian temple typically has: *garbhagriha* → *antarala* → *mandapa* (sometimes with a *mukhamandapa* or entrance porch); the *mandapa* is typically **flat-roofed or pyramidal-roofed** (not a *shikhara*)

Regional variants of the Nagara style:

- **Orissan (Kalinga) sub-style:** the most distinctive regional variant; characterised by extremely tall, steep *latina* *shikharas* with very limited curvature (*deul* = the Orissan term for *shikhara*); the *jagamohana* (the Orissan equivalent of *mandapa*) has a distinctive **pyramidal (pidha)** roof of horizontal stages; the wall surface covered in dense sculptural bands; key examples — **Lingaraja Temple Bhubaneswar** (c. 11th century CE, 55 metres; the most complete Orissan temple); **Sun Temple Konark** (*Surya Deula*, c. 1250 CE, Gajapati patronage; now partially collapsed but the largest Orissan temple originally; the entire structure conceived as the Sun God's chariot with 24 wheels)
- **Rajasthan and Gujarat sub-style:** typically using white marble; elaborate interior pillared halls (*mandapas*) with delicate filigree-like carvings; key example — **Dilwara Temples, Mount Abu** (11th–13th century CE, Solanki/Chaulukya patronage; dedicated to Jain Tirthankaras; the **Vimala Vasahi** (1031 CE) and **Luna Vasahi** (1230 CE) have the finest marble interior carving in India)
- **Central India (Chandella) sub-style:** the *Sekhari* variant at its most elaborate; key example — **Khajuraho** (discussed below)

The Khajuraho Temples (Madhya Pradesh, c. 950–1050 CE, Chandella dynasty):

- Approximately **85 temples** originally; approximately **20 survive** in good condition; **UNESCO World Heritage Site** (1986)
- **The Kandariya Mahadeva Temple** (c. 1030 CE): the largest and finest; height approximately **31 metres**; dedicated to Shiva; the most elaborate *Sekhara* shikhara in India — subsidiary shikharas (*urushringas*) cluster around the main shaft in a soaring cascade; the plan is an elongated cross (*pancharatha* — five projections per side)
- **The erotic sculpture (*mithuna*)**: Khajuraho is famous worldwide for its explicit erotic carvings on the outer walls; they occupy a specific zone (the *antarala* or vestibule zone) and represent approximately **10%** of the total sculpture programme; several interpretations exist:
 - **Ritualist-tantric**: the erotic imagery protects the temple from malevolent forces (*drshti-dosha* — the evil eye); sexuality placed at the threshold between the outer (worldly) and inner (sacred) keeps evil spirits from entering
 - **Didactic**: the imagery represents the cycle of *kama* (desire) that the devotee should transcend; entering the temple means moving from sensual attachment (outer walls) to devotional liberation (inner sanctum)
 - **Astronomical/astrological**: some scholars (Devangana Desai) have identified astronomical alignments and zodiacal associations in the sculptural programme
 - The **scholarly consensus**: multiple meanings operated simultaneously; the erotic imagery is one element of a comprehensive cosmological programme, not the defining feature it appears to be to modern viewers

The Dravida Style (South Indian):

Geography: south of the Vindhyas — Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala; the style occurs naturally in all peninsular India below the Deccan

Defining feature: the tower over the *garbhagriha* is the ***vimana*** — a **pyramidal** structure composed of multiple **horizontal tiers (*talas*)** diminishing in size as they rise; each *tala* has a miniature wall with miniature pilasters, windows (*kuda*), and decorative elements; the overall profile is a stepped pyramid, NOT a curvilinear form

Top element: the ***stupi*** (hemispherical or cylindrical finial); often the *stupi* is a plain rounded stone or is decorated with a *kalasha*

The gopura paradox: in mature Dravida temple complexes (post-12th century CE), the **gateway towers (*gopura*)** are often far **taller and more elaborate** than the main *vimana* over the *garbhagriha*; this reverses the logical hierarchy (the most sacred part, the *garbhagriha*, is crowned by the smaller tower; the threshold/entrance has the taller tower); the *gopura* towers in Tamil Nadu's great temples (*Madurai Meenakshi, Srirangam, Tiruvannamalai*) can exceed 60 metres

Plan: square or rectangular; multiple enclosure walls (*prakaras*) each with a *gopura*; large temple tanks (*pushkarini*) within the enclosure; the temple complex becomes a self-contained city

Mandapa system: the south Indian temple has an elaborate *mandapa* hierarchy — *maha-mandapa* (great hall), *mukhamandapa* (entrance hall), *artha-mandapa* (half-hall), *nandi-mandapa* (bull pavilion in Shaiva temples)

The Vesara Style (Hybrid/Deccan):

Geography: the Deccan — Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh primarily; the zone between north and south Indian styles

Definition: Vesara (literally "middle-born" or "mule") is a **hybrid** of Nagara and Dravida elements; it is NOT a fully independent style with its own logic but a zone of experimentation and synthesis

Key characteristics:

- The tower may be curvilinear (Nagara-derived) or stepped (Dravida-derived) or intermediate
- The plan tends toward the **star (stellate) shape** — the Hoysala temples' star-shaped plans are the most extreme example
- The **sculptural density** is typically higher than either pure Nagara or pure Dravida temples
- The **material** often differs from the north Indian sandstone or south Indian granite — the Hoysala soapstone (*chloritic schiste*), the Rashtrakuta basalt at Ellora

Key Vesara examples:

- Chalukya of Badami temples at Pattadakal (both Nagara and Dravida forms side by side — the transition zone made literal)
- Kailasanatha Ellora — Rashtrakuta (discussed below)
- Hoysala temples at Belur and Halebid (the fullest development of the star-plan)

The Three Styles — Feature Comparison:

- **Curvilinear tower curving inward** = **Nagara** (*shikhara*); topped by *amalaka* disc
- **Stepped pyramid tower with horizontal tiers** = **Dravida** (*vimana*); *gopura* often taller than *vimana*
- **Star-shaped plan + soapstone + sculptural density** = **Vesara/Hoysala**

3.3 Key Temple Monuments — The Complete Reference

Gupta period — the prototypes:

TEMPLE	LOCATION	DATE	PATRON	KEY FEATURE
Dashavatara Temple	Deogarh, UP	c. 5th CE	Gupta	Finest Gupta temple; Vishnu; three relief panels; best-carved doorway
Vishnu Temple	Tigawa, MP	c. 5th CE	Gupta	Intact porch; lion capitals
Parvati Temple	Nachna-Kuthara, MP	c. 5th CE	Gupta	Shaiva; ornate panels
Lakshman Temple	Sirpur, CG	c. 7th CE	Panduvamshi	Early post-Gupta; brick construction

Pallava monuments:

MONUMENT	LOCATION	DATE	RULER	TYPE	KEY FEATURE
Mahendra-type caves	Mamallapuram	c. 600–630	Mahendravarman I	Rock-cut	First Pallava rock-cut; flat roof; lion-base pillars

MONUMENT	LOCATION	DATE	RULER	TYPE	KEY FEATURE
Pancha Pandava Rathas	M amallapuram	c. 630–668	Narasimhavarman I	Rock-cut	5 monolithic rathas; never consecrated; experimental forms
Arjuna's Penance	M amallapuram	c. 630–668	Narasimhavarman I	Open-air relief	Largest open-air bas-relief in the world; 30×15 metres
Kailasanatha Temple	Kanchipuram	c. 700–728	Narasimhavarman II	Structural	First complete Dravida structural temple; finest Pallava monument
Shore Temple	M amallapuram	c. 700	Narasimhavarman II	Structural	Two conjoined shikharas; UNESCO; earliest structural south Indian temples
Vaikunta Perumal	Kanchipuram	c. 731–796	Nandivarman II	Structural	Three-level corridor; narrative relief panels of Pallava history

Chalukya of Badami monuments:

MONUMENT	LOCATION	DATE	RULER	KEY FEATURE
Badami Cave 1	Badami, Karnataka	c. 575	Mangalesa	Shiva; <i>Nataraja</i> panel with 18 arms
Badami Cave 2	Badami	c. 578	Kirtivarman I	Vishnu; <i>Trivikrama</i> and <i>Vamana</i> panels
Badami Cave 3	Badami	c. 578 (inscribed)	Kirtivarman I	Vishnu; finest execution; bilingual inscription
Badami Cave 4	Badami	c. 6th–7th CE	—	Jain; Mahavira image
Durga Temple	Aihole	c. 7th–8th CE	Chalukya	Apsidal plan; moated; modelled on Buddhist chaitya
Ladh Khan Temple	Aihole	c. 5th CE	early Chalukya	Flat-roofed; one of the earliest Hindu temples; Shiva
Virupaksha Temple	Pattadakal	c. 740	Vikramaditya II (queen Lokamahadevi)	Dravida style; commemorates Pallava victory; UNESCO

Rashtrakuta monument:

MONUMENT	LOCATION	DATE	RULER	KEY FEATURE
Kailasanatha Temple (Cave 16)	Ellora, Maharashtra	c. 757–773	Krishna I	Carved top-down from single basalt hill; 31m tall; 61m long; <i>Ravana shaking Kailasa</i> panel; most spectacular rock-cut monument in India

Note on Ellora overall: The Ellora complex has **34 rock-cut caves** spanning three religions: Buddhist (Caves 1–12, c. 5th–7th CE); Hindu (Caves 13–29, c. 6th–9th CE); Jain (Caves 30–34, c. 9th–

11th CE); all UNESCO World Heritage Site (1983)

Chola temples:

MONUMENT	LOCATION	DATE	RULER	KEY FEATURE
Brihadeshvara Temple (<i>Rajarajesvara</i>)	Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu	1003– 1010 CE	Rajaraja I	66-metre vimana; 80-tonne granite stupa; linga 3.7m; 250 fresco paintings; UNESCO
Gangaikondacholapuram Temple	Gangaikondacholapuram, TN	c. 1025– 1035	Rajendra I	55-metre vimana; finest interior sculpture; <i>Nataraja</i> panel
Airavatesvara Temple	Darasuram, TN	c. 12th CE	Rajaraja II	Miniature but finest sculptural detail; UNESCO

Chandella (Khajuraho):

- **Kandariya Mahadeva Temple:** c. 1030 CE; 31 metres; most elaborate *Sekhari shikhara*; UNESCO (1986)
- **Lakshmana Temple:** c. 954 CE; Vaishnava; one of the earliest and best-preserved

Hoysala temples:

MONUMENT	LOCATION	DATE	RULER	KEY FEATURE
Chennakeshava Temple	Belur, Karnataka	1117 CE	Vishnuvardhana	<i>Madanika</i> bracket figures; lathe-turned pillars; star plan
Hoysaleswara Temple	Halebid, Karnataka	c. 1121 CE	Veera Ballala I	Twin shrines; never completed; densest sculptural programme in India
Kesava Temple	Somanathapura	1268 CE	Somanatha (Hoysala general)	Most complete Hoysala temple; triple shrine (<i>trikuta</i>)

Kakatiya monument:

- **Ramappa Temple** (*Ramalingesvara*), Palampet, Telangana (c. 1213 CE, General Recherla Rudra under Ganapati); named after sculptor Ramappa; floating pumice brick superstructure; UNESCO (2021)

4. INDO-ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE (C. 1192–1526 CE)

4.1 The Architectural Synthesis

The Delhi Sultanate period (1206–1526 CE) produced a new architectural tradition that synthesised **Islamic architectural principles** with **Indian building materials, craftsmanship, and decorative traditions**:

Islamic architectural elements introduced:

- ***Iwan*** (Persian): a large vaulted hall open at one end; used as the dominant element of mosque and tomb facades; the Mughal *pishtaq* (arched portal) is a development of the *iwan*