

Quadrant II – Notes

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Module No: 04

The Buddhist Architecture began with the development of various symbols, representing aspects of the Buddha's life (563BCE- 483BCE). Indian Emperor Ashoka, not only established Buddhism as the state religion of his large Magadha Empire, but also opted for the Architectural monuments to spread Buddhism in different places. The major features of this style are Stupas, Chaityas, Viharas.

Beginning of Buddhist architecture in India

Buddhist religious architecture developed in the Indian Subcontinent in the 3rd century BCE. Three types of structures are associated with the religious architecture of early Buddhism: monasteries (Viharas), places to venerate relics (stupas), and shrines or prayer halls (chaityas also called chaitya grihas), which later came to be called temples in some places. This religion initially did not involve making of figures or idols but gradually the followers started making sculptural representations of Buddha. There are 2 phases of Buddhism: 1. Hinayana- 2nd Century BC- 2nd Century AD 2. Mahayana- 3rd Century AD – 7th Century AD

Stupas (domes)

It is a dome-shaped structure used to house sacred relics of the monks and hence also known as “Relic-shrines”. Construction Materials: Earth materials covered with stones or bricks. The plan, elevation and the basic structure all derived from the circle.

Features

Anda- is the hemishperical dome

Harmika- top of the dome is harmika, square balcony in decorative form enclosing a pedestal.

Chattra- a 3 tiered stone/ wooden umbrella chhatrayastri raised over pedestal which was te vedic alter of sacrifice and represented the village shrine.

Vedica- stupa is enclosed with wooden/stone railing called vedica

Toranas- they were cermonial gateways placed at cardial point similar to Aryan Village gates.

Medhi- for devotees to wave in homage to stupa

Sanchi Stupa

Sanchi Stupa is located 40 km north east of Bhopal, and 10 km from Besnagar and Vidisha in the central part of the state of Madhya Pradesh. It was built by Ashoka (273-236 B.C.) It is located on the top of the Sanchi hill, which raise about 100M high above the plain. The 'Great Stupa' at Sanchi is the oldest stone structure in India

The Amravati Stupa is a famous specimen of the Buddhist art and architecture of ancient India. It is located at Amravati in Andhra Pradesh, which is around 65 kms from the city of Vijayawada. Amravati Stupa is visited by hundreds of tourists and pilgrims. The Great Stupa at Amravati was a large Buddhist monument built in south- eastern India between the second century B.C. and the third century A.D. It was a centre for religious activity and worship for hundreds of years.

Bharhut is a village located in the Satna district of Madhya Pradesh, central India. It consists of a hemispherical dome of brick surrounded with a shaft and umbrella which represents spiritual sovereignty of Buddhism. It is surrounded by a railing made of red stone.

The sculpture relief on the gateways, pillars, upright and cross bars on the railings gives beautiful pictorial representations of nature. The style of the carving reveals crude workmanship.

Chaityas

It is a Buddhist shrine or prayer hall with stupa at one end. Chaitya is made for large gatherings of devotees. It is made in rock cut due to permanency of structure. Chaityas were influenced by acetic lifestyles of Vedic period. It is a large vaulted hall with apsidal end. The Aisles and apsidal end is for circumambulation and nave for congregational service. The Stupa evolved from a mound carrying ashes to an object of worship. A building was needed to accommodate and provide shelter for devotees. As Idol worship evolved, temples to house deities were required. To house a Stupa and to provide for circumambulation it was circular in plan and had a domed roof. Chaitya halls at Bhaja, Kondane, Pitalkhora, 9th and 10th caves at Ajanta, Bedsa, Nasik and Karle are some of the famous ones.

Temple Architecture

The development of temples in different styles was due to various features-geographical, climatic, ethnic, racial, historical and linguistic diversities. Ancient Indian temples are classified in three broad types. Decoration was an important part. The garbha-griha was provided with a circumambulation passage.

Basic features of Indian Temples

Garbhagriha: Womb-house.

Mandapa: The entrance.

Shikhara: Mountain-like spire on top.

Amalaka: Stone-like disc

Kalasha: Topmost part of the temple.

Antarala: Vestibule between the Garbhagriha and the Mandapa.

Jagati: Raised platform where devotees can sit and pray.

Vahana: Vehicle of the main deity along with the standard pillar

Indian temples can be classified into three broad orders as Nagara (in North India), Dravida (in South India) and the Vesara style.

The Nagara or North Indian Temple Architecture

Nagara is the style of temple architecture which became popular in Northern India. It is common here to build an entire temple on a stone platform with steps leading up to it. Unlike in south India, it doesn't usually have elaborate boundary walls or gateways. The three main distinctive features of Nagar style is Shikhara (Curvilinear tower), Garbhagriha (Sanctum Sanctorum), Mandapa (Entrance Hall) Earliest temples had only one shikhara (tower), but in the later periods, multiple shikharas came. The garbhagriha is always located directly under the tallest tower.

1. Latina/ Rekha-Prasada:

It is the simple and most common type of shikhara. It is square at the base and the walls curve or slopes inwards to a point on top. Latina types are mainly used for housing the garbhagriha. Later on, the Latina buildings grew complex, and instead of appearing like a single tower, the temple began to support many small towers, which were clustered together like rising mountain type with the tallest one being in the centre, and this was the one which was always above the garbhagriha.

2. Phamsana type shikhara:

They are broader and shorter than Latina type. Their roof is composed of several slabs that gently rise to a single point over the centre of the building, unlike the Latina ones which look like sharply rising towers. Phamsana roofs do not curve inwards; instead, they slope upward on a straight incline. In many north Indian temples, the phamsana type is used for mandapas while the main garbhagriha is housed in a Latina building.

3. Valabhi type shikhara:

These are rectangular buildings with a roof that rises into a vaulted chamber. The edge of the vaulted chamber is round, like the bamboo or wooden wagons that would have been drawn by bullocks in ancient times. The form of this temple is influenced by ancient building forms that were already in existence.

Dravida Style

Dravida style of temple architecture became popular in South India. Dravida style of temples was developed dynastically, however the major features of these temples remained common across the dynasties.

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 is like a stepped pyramid that rises up geometrically rather than the curving shikhara of North India. In the South Indian temples, the word Shikhara is used only for the crowning element at the top of the temple which is equivalent to the amalaka and kalasha of North Indian temples. In the Dravida style temples, one will 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. Unlike Nagara style, at some of the most sacred temples in South India, the main temple in which the garbhagriha is situated has, in fact, one of the smallest towers. Examples - Shore temple (Mahabalipuram), Brihadesvara temple (Thanjavur), Meenakshi Temple (Madurai)

The Vesara or the Deccan Temple Architecture

The buildings in the Deccan region are hybridized style, which contains both elements from Nagara and Dravida architectural styles and is known in some ancient texts as the Vesara style (not all temples of Deccan are the vesara type). The vesara style became popular after the mid 7th century. Vesara is a distinct stylistic tradition of Indian Hindu temple architecture primarily used in the Deccan and Central India, between the Vindhya and the river Krishna