



INDIAN SCHOOL MUSCAT
SENIOR SECTION
DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS



CLASS: XI
PAINTING (049) & SCULPTURE (051)
WORKSHEET No. 10

Unit – III (A) Artistic Aspects of Indian Temple Sculptures

A sculpture is a three-dimensional form of visual art. It includes the art of carving, constructing, casting or moulding in stone, wood, metal, fibre etc.

Introduction

In India, we find a great number of architectures, which have religious as well as historical importance. A building with religious importance cannot be perfect until its interior (walls, pillars and ceilings) and exterior part would be painted or engraved with prominent features and images related to the particular religion.

Gods and Goddesses and other related themes, stories or tales prevalent in that particular religion is designed at the time of construction of the building. The other reason to engrave images on different part of the building is to attract the people. This tradition still continues since ancient times.

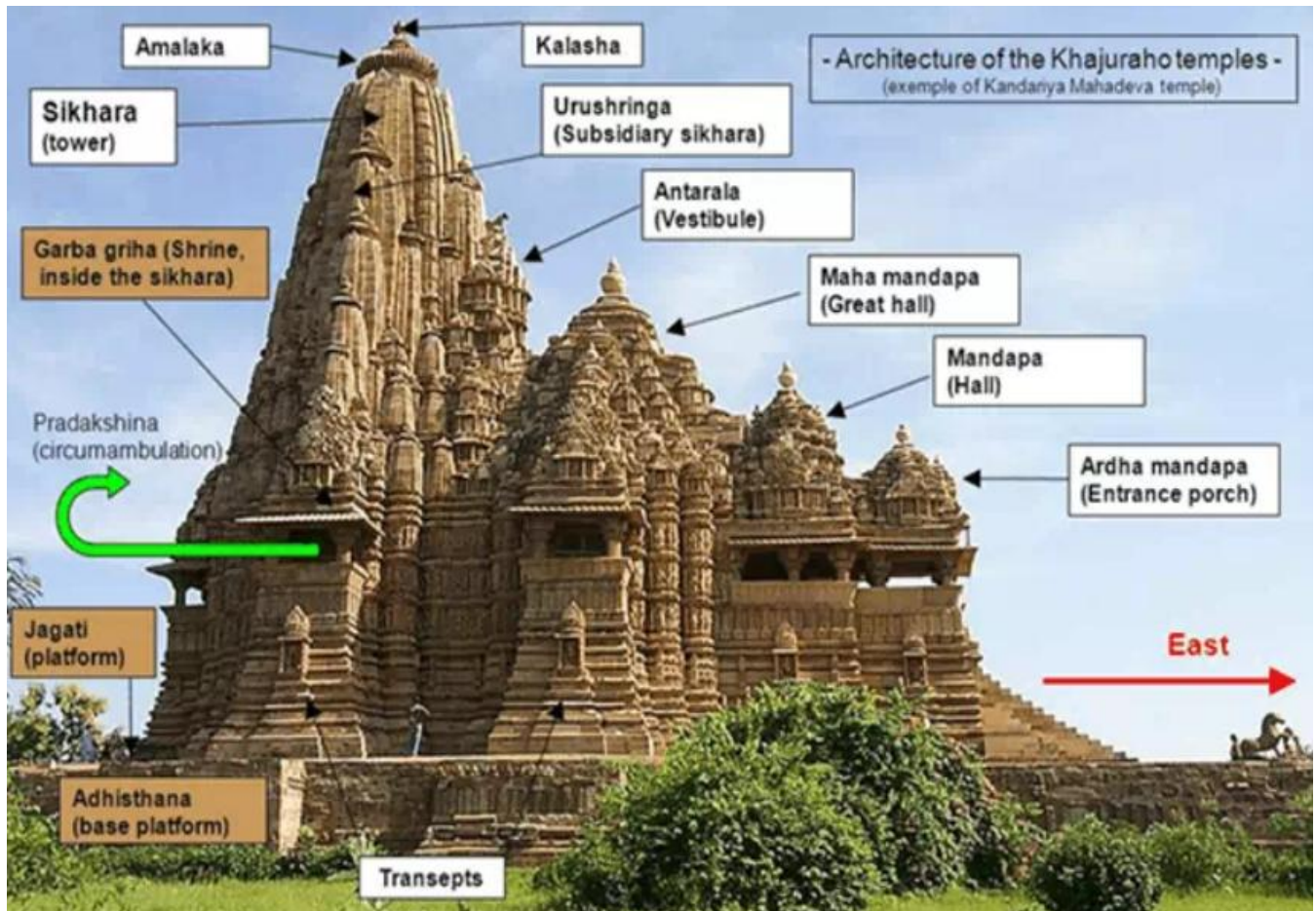
A large number of temples and historical buildings were built during 6th century A.D. to 13th century A.D. in entire India. All those have their architectural characteristics and features.

Classification of Indian Temples

Indian Temple Architecture can be classified as follows:

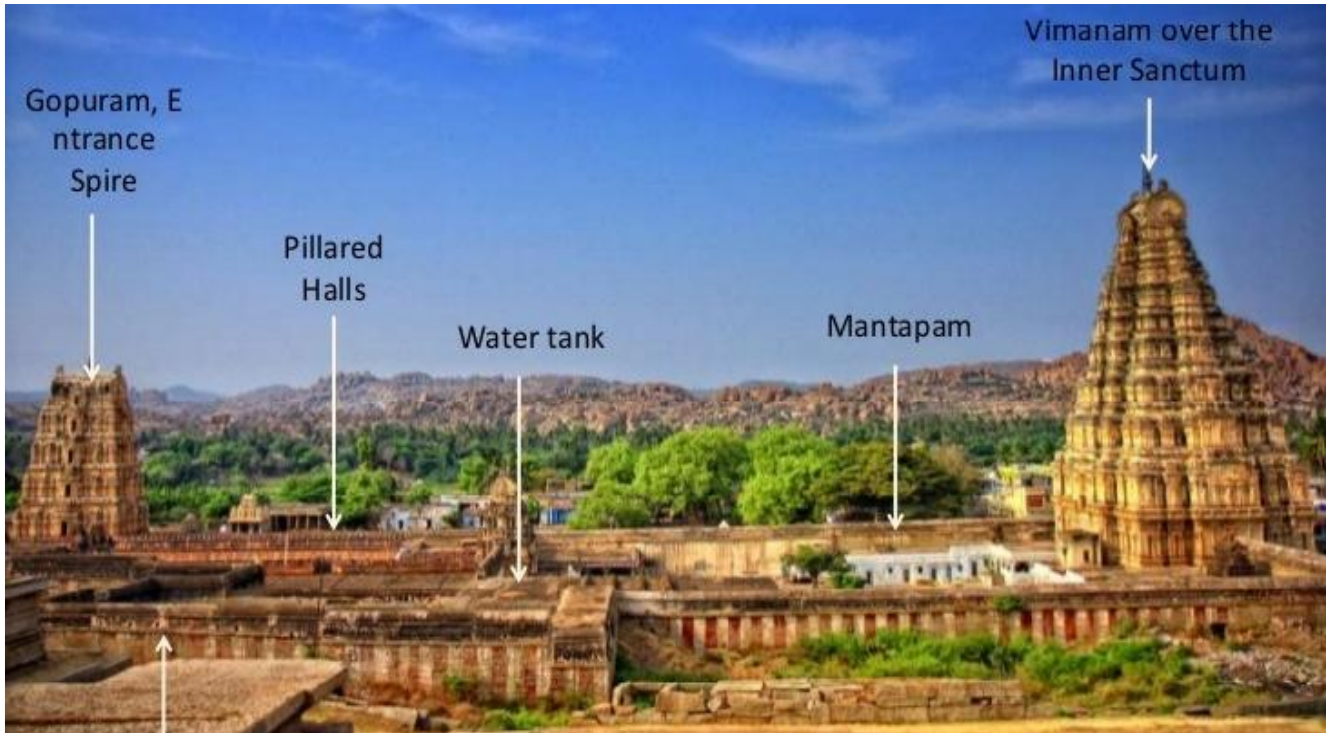
- a) **Nagara or North Indian Style**
- b) **Central Indian Style**
- c) **West Indian Style**
- d) **East Indian Style**
- e) **Dravida or South India Style**

The Nagara or North Indian Temple Architecture

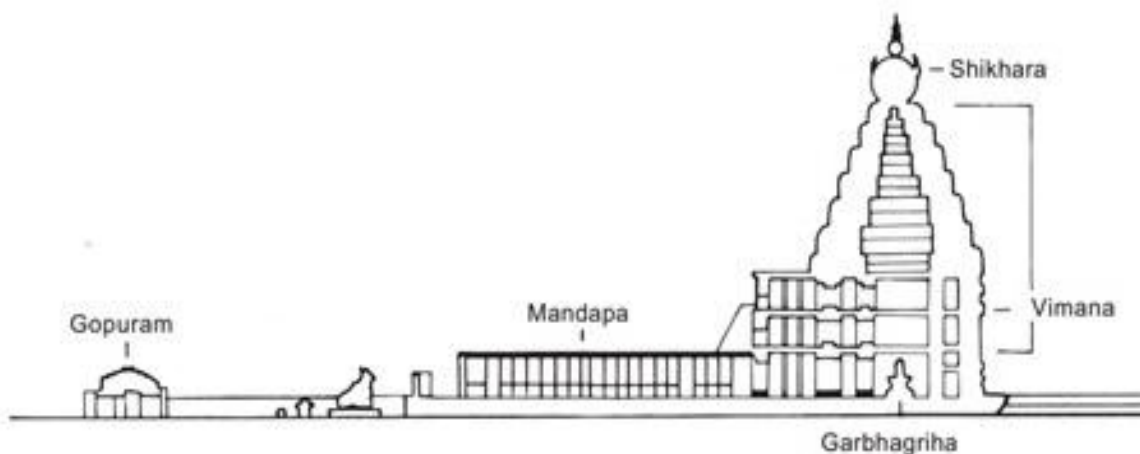


- Popular in Northern India.
- It doesn't have elaborate boundary walls or gateways.
- Earliest temples had only one shikhara (tower), but in the later periods, multiple shikharas came.
- The Garbhagriha is always located directly under the tallest tower.

Dravida or South Indian Temple Architecture



- Dravida temple is enclosed within a compound wall.
- The front wall has an entrance gateway in its centre, which is known as **Gopura/ Gopuram**.
- The shape of the main temple tower is known as Vimana (shikhara in Dravida style).
- Shikhara is used only for the crowning element at the top of the temple.



Sculpture, Iconography, and Ornamentation

- **Iconography** is a branch of art history which studies **the images of deities**.
- It consists of identification of image based on certain symbols and mythology associated with them.
- Even though the fundamental myth and meaning of the deity may remain the same for centuries, its specific usage at a spot can be a response to its local or immediate social, political or geographical context.
- Every region and period produce its own distinct style of images with its regional variations in iconography.
- The temple is covered with elaborate sculptures 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 visually found at the entrances in a Nagara temple, Dwarapalas are usually found on the gateway or gopurams of Dravida temples**, similarly **mithunas (erotic images), Navagrahas** (the 9 auspicious planets) and **Yakshas** are also placed at the entrances to guard them.
- Various forms or aspects of the main divinity are to be found on the outer walls of the sanctum.
- The **Ashtadikpalas** (deities of direction) face eight key directions on the outer walls of the sanctum and/or on the outer walls of the temple.
- **Subsidiary shrines** around the main temple are dedicated to the family or incarnations of the main deity.
- The various elements of ornamentation are **gavaksha, vyala/ yali, kalpa-lata, amalaka, kalasha**, etc.

Study of Temple-Sculptures

1	Descent of Ganga (Pallava Period)	Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu
2.	Ravana shaking Mount Kailash (Rashtrakuta Period)	Ellora, Maharashtra
3	The Trimurti (Maheshmurti)	Elephant Cave, Maharashtra
4	Lakshmi Narayan (Kandariya Mahadeva Temple)	Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh
5	Cymbal Player, Sun Temple (Ganga Dynasty)	Konark, Odisha
6	Mother and Child, Vimal Shah Temple (Solanki Dynasty)	Dilwara, Mount Abu, Rajasthan

1. Descent of Ganga (Pallava Period)

Medium: Granite Rock | Place: Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu | Date- Circa 7th Century A.D.



General Description:

- Descent of Ganga is the most remarkable sculptural composition at Mahabalipuram. It is one of the largest and oldest sculptural panels known in the world.
- In this famous relief, the story of the Descent of Ganga has been carved out on the two larger boulder-type granite rocks. In between them, there is a narrow fissure in which the Nagaraj and Nagakanya (the god and goddess) have been carved out.
- On this relief panel, the sculptor had carved out celestials like Sun, Moon and Earth, Water and Rumpus. Among the numerous humans, animals, and deities and other creatures.
- A prominent bearded figure is identified as Bhagirath, who is standing on one leg and stretching his arms upwards to pray Lord Shiva to release one stream of the Ganga from his hair locks and flew her down on the earth of the sake of the human being.
- Two well modelled and life-like elephants along with one cat balancing on her two rear legs, a deer lion and ducks have also been carved.
- It is also known as the ‘Arjuna’s Penance’.

2. Ravana shaking Mount Kailash (Rashtrakuta Period)

Medium: Stone, Rock Cut

Place: Ellora, Maharashtra

Date- Circa 8th Century A.D.



General Description:

- Ravana shaking Mount Kailash is the most popular theme in Ellora caves because it has been depicted several times in these caves. But the most remarkable of all is the one depicted on the left wall of Kailashnath Temple (Cave No. 16) at Ellora. It is a huge sculpture and is considered as one of the masterpieces of Indian sculpture depicted on the wall of a cave.
- In this sculpture, Ravana has been shown shaking the Mount Kailash when Lord Shiva along with Parvati and others were present on the mountain.
- The composition of the relief is divided into several tiers. The lower one has been depicted multi-faced and multi-armed Ravana shaking the Mount Kailash with ease. His hands have been expanded up to the chamber. The depth of carvings of the multiple hands brings out the effect of three-dimensional space. 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. Her stretched legs and slightly twisted body in the recessed space create a very dramatic effect of light and shade. The dwarf figures are shown in action.

3. The Trimurti (Maheshmurti)

Medium: Stone

Place: Cave No. 29, Ellora, Maharashtra

Date- Circa 9th Century A.D.



General Description: The Mahesha or Shiva Trimurti is a dramatic representation of the supreme form of Shiva as the central face, Shiva as a destroyer is on the left and on the right is the gracious feminine deity. The Gods who were most commonly represented in the Hindu pantheon were Shiva, the destroyer and Vishnu, the preserver while the third great God of the Hindu trinity was Brahma the creator.

One of the most powerful rendering of this multiple nature of the deity is seen at Elephanta, where Shiva is seen as the three headed Mahadeva. The heads represent three different aspects of the God, the center one is his creative self or Sadashiva, the left is his destructive nature or Aghora and the right is the gracious feminine manifestation of the beauty of nature or Vanadeva.

4. Lakshami Narayan (Kandariya Mahadeva Temple)

Medium: Stone, Rock Cut | Place: Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh | Date- Circa 10th Century A.D.



General Description: During the Chandela period, the sculptures made in Khajuraho temples have appeared in its most beautiful form. The walls of the temples, both internal and external are abundantly engraved on both sides. In them, besides dancing, playing on the musical instruments, looking themselves into mirrors, erotic women shapes are engraved.

There are many idols of loving couples of gods and goddesses. In some internal niches also are engraved the shapes of the mythological animals. In all, women and men shapes, the artists, to show the tenderness of organs, have displayed the garments and jewels in such a way that all the idols are more or less in free state.

5. Cymbal Player, Sun Temple (Ganga Dynasty)

Medium: Stone | Place: Konark, Odisha | Date- Circa 13th Century A.D.



General Description: This is a female statue which has been established outside the main shrine of the Sun Temple, Konark to welcome the people with playing instrument, Cymbal. So, this is in the gesture of the playing instrument forwarding both her hands. Her feet look as if she is dancing along with instrument. She is adorned with ornaments around her neck, arms, wrists, fingers, feet and on loin. The posture of the statue is very attractive, but this is in the ruined form.

This temple was built by Narasimhan-I of Ganga Dynasty during 1238-1258 A.D. This temple is dedicated to Lord Surya. This is also called 'Black Pagoda'. The salty air coming from the sea has affected the temple and the statues a lot. So many instrument players were also installed outside the main shrine.

6. Mother and Child, Vimal Shah Temple (Solanki Dynasty)

Medium: White marble | Place: Dilwara, Mount Abu, Rajasthan | Date- Circa 13th Century A.D.



General Description: In this statue, the sculptor has shown the motherhood as well loveliness between child and mother. The mother posture is slightly bent. The expressions of the face and rest of the body is full of motherly woman. She is holding her baby in her lap with arm support.

The ornaments and the garments are seen in the linear form with proper curvature. Half bent eyes of the mother and style of hair-bun is very attractive. The Vimal Shah Temple is fully decorated with sculpture of daily life and Jain Tirthankaras. Each part of the temple is extraordinarily engraved with geometrical patterns and the idol of Jain religion.