Dravidian Style of Architecture

Dravida or South Indian Style

- The temple is enclosed within a compound wall.
- Gopuram: The entrance gateway in the centre of the front wall.
- Vimana: The shape of the main temple tower. It is a stepped pyramid that rises up geometrically (unlike the Nagara style Shikhara that is curving).
- In the Dravida style, shikhara is the word used for the crowning element at the top of the temple (which is shaped like a stupika or octagonal cupola).
- At the entrance to the garbhagriha, there would be sculptures of fierce dvarapalas guarding the temple.
- Generally, there is a temple tank within the compound.
- Subsidiary shrines could be found wither within the main tower or beside the main tower.
- In many temples, the garbhagriha is located in the smallest tower. It is also the oldest. With the passage of time and the rise of the population of the temple-town, additional boundary walls were added. The newest structure would mostly have the tallest gopuram.
- Example in the Sriranganathar Temple at Srirangam, Tiruchirappally, there are 7 concentric rectangular enclosure walls each having gopurams. The tower at the centre has the garbhagriha.
- Famous temple towns of Tamil Nadu: Kanchipuram, Thanjavur (Tanjore), Madurai and Kumbakonam.
In the 8th to 12th centuries – temples were not confined to being religious centres but became administrative centres as well with large swathes of land.

**Subdivisions of Dravida Style**

1. Kuta or Caturasra: square-shaped
2. Shala or Ayatasra: rectangular-shaped
3. Gaja-prishta or vrittayata or elephant-backed: elliptical
4. Vritta: circular
5. Ashtasra: octagonal

**Pallava architecture**

- The Pallava dynasty was ruling in the Andhra region from the 2nd century AD onwards. They then moved southwards to Tamil Nadu.
- They built many monuments and temples during the 6th to the 8th centuries.
- Although they were mostly Shaivite, some Vaishnava monuments are also seen. Their architecture was also influenced by the Buddhist heritage of the Deccan.
- Their early buildings were rock-cut whereas the later were structural.
- The early buildings were built during the reign of Mahendravarman I, a contemporary of the Chalukya king Pulakeshin II of Karnataka.
- His son **Narasimhavarman I**, also known as Mamalla, was a great patron of the arts. Most buildings in Mahabalipuram (also called Mamallapuram in his honour) are attributed to him.
- In Mahabalipuram, there are exquisite monolithic rathas and mandapas. The five rathas are known as Panchapandava Rathas.

**Shore Temple, Mahabalipuram**

- Built during the reign of Pallava king Narasimhavarman II, also known as Rajasimha (700 – 728 AD).
It has three shrines – one Shiva shrine facing east, one Shiva shrine facing west, a middle shrine to Vishnu in Anantashayana pose. The presence of three main shrines is unique.

It is probable that the shrines were not all built at the same time but were added later.

There is evidence of a water reservoir and a gopuram.

There are sculptures of Nandi the bull (Shiva’s mount) along the walls of the temple. There are several carvings as well.

Brihadiswara Temple, Tanjore

- Shiva temple, also called Rajarajeswara Temple.
- Completed around 1009 AD. Built by Rajaraja Chola.
- It is the largest and tallest of all Indian temples. This Chola temple is bigger than any of the previous Pallava, Chalukya or Pandya structures.
- More than 100 temples of the Chola Period are preserved. A lot of temples were constructed during the Chola period.
- Its pyramidal multi-storied vimana is almost 70 metres high.
- There is a monolithic shikhara atop the vimana.
- The shikhara is a dome-shaped octagonal stupika. It has two large elaborately sculptured gopuras. On the shikhara, there are large Nandi images.
- The kalasha on top of the shikhara is 3m and 8cm tall.
- There are hundreds of stucco figures on the vimana. Many might have been added later on in the Maratha period.
- The main deity of Shiva is portrayed as a huge lingam set in a double-storied sanctum.
- The surrounding walls of the sanctum are adorned with painted murals and sculptures of mythological stories.
Architecture in the Deccan

- A hybridised style mixing elements from both Nagara and Dravida styles emerge as a distinct style during the middle of the 7th century in regions like Karnataka.
- This is referred to as Vesara in some ancient texts.
- Some of the temples are either completely nagara or dravida. Not all temples in the Deccan are in vesara style.
- **Kailashnath Temple, Ellora**
  - Completely in Dravida style.
  - Main deity is Lord Shiva.
  - There is also a Nandi shrine.
  - Vimana rises 30 m.
  - This temple was carved out of a portion of a hill.
  - The temple is grand and imposing.
  - Built during the Rashtrakuta phase at Ellora.

Chalukya Architecture

- Western Chalukya kingdom was established by Pulakesin I when he took control of the land around Badami in 543 AD.
- Early western Chalukyas ruled the region till around the mid-8th century.
- Early activities are rock-cut caves while structural temples were built later on.
- **Ravana Phadi cave** at Aihole
  - Important structure at this site: Nataraja
  - This image is surrounded on the right by four large saptamatrikas and on the left by three large ones.
The figures have slim, graceful bodies. They have long oval faces. They wear short pleated dhotis and tall cylindrical crowns.

Distinct feature of Chalukya architecture: mixing and incorporation of several styles.

Temples at Pattadakkal, Karnataka

- Pattadakkal is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- There are 10 temples. Four are in Dravida style, four are in Nagara style, one (Papanatha Temple) is a fusion of both and one is a Jain temple.
- Jain Narayana temple – built by Rashtrakutas in the 9th century.
- Virupaksha Temple – built by the chief queen of Chalukya king Vikramaditya II (733 – 44), Loka Mahadevi. Best example of Dravida style.

Durga Temple, Aihole

- Apsidal shrine resembling a Buddhist Chaitya hall.
- Surrounded by a veranda.
- Shikhara is like a nagara one.

The Lad Khan temple at Aihole

- Inspired by the wooden-roofed temples of the hills, but is made out of stone.
- Built in the Panchayatana style.
So named because a person named Lad Khan had used it as his residence for some time.

**Hoysalas**

- Hoysalas grew into prominence in South India after the Chola and the Pandya power declined.
- Centred at Mysore.
- Chief temples are at Belur, Somnathapuram and Halebid.
- These temples have a plan called the **stellate plan**. This is because the plan which emerged from being a straightforward square to a complex one with many projecting angles began to resemble a star.
- The star-like ground plan is a distinct feature of Hoysala architecture.
- Style is Vesara.
- Made of soapstone which is relatively soft. This enabled artists to carve intricate details like jewellery.
- Hoysaleshvara Temple, Halebid

**Hoysaleshvara Temple, Halebid**

- Made of dark schist stone in 1150.
- Dedicated to Nataraja (Shiva).
- It is a double building with a large hall for the mandapa.
- A Nandi pavilion is in front of each building.
- The temple's tower fell a long time back. The structure of the temple is evident from the detailed miniature ones at the temple's entrance.
- Very intricate and detailed carvings.
Vijayanagara Architecture

- City of Vijayanagara (City of victory) founded in 1336.
- Visited by international travellers like Niccolo di Conti, Domingo Paes, Duarte Barbosa, Abd, al-Razzaq, etc. who have given vivid accounts of the place.
- Synthesizes the Dravida style with Islamic styles of the neighbouring sultanates.
- The sculpture tries to recreate the Chola tradition but the foreign influence is also seen.