

## UPSC Civil Services Examination

### UPSC Notes [GS-I]

#### Topic: Temple Architecture in India- Part IV [Art and Culture Notes for UPSC]

##### Buddhist architecture

- Along with Hindu art and architecture, Buddhist temple building and artwork also went on along with other religions.
- Ellora has Buddhist, Jain and Hindu monuments.
- **Bodh Gaya** (or Bodhgaya)
  - Most important Buddhist site because Prince Siddhartha achieved enlightenment here to become Gautama Buddha.
  - The Bodhi Tree is important.
  - The **Mahabodhi Temple** at Bodhgaya:



- The first shrine situated at the base of the Bodhi tree was probably built by Emperor Ashoka.
- The vedika around the shrine is post-Mauryan built during 100 BC.
- Many sculptures in the niches in the temple belong to the Pala Period (8th century CE).
- The temple itself was constructed during the colonial period.
- It is a 7th century design. It is neither nagara nor Dravida in style.

- Nalanda University
  - It was a monastic university.
  - It is a Mahavihara since it is a complex of many monasteries.
  - Only a small portion of the place has been studied as most of it lies buried under present civilisation and impossible to excavate.
  - The records of the Chinese traveller Xuan Zang (Hsuan-tsang) gives a huge amount of information about Nalanda.
  - As per the records, the foundation of the learning centre was laid down by Kumaragupta I, the Gupta king in the 5th century CE. Later kings added to the original centre.
  - Evidence for all three Buddhist doctrines of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana taught here.
  - Monks came from China, Tibet and Central Asia in the north; and from Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and other countries in Southeast Asia.
  - Nalanda was a centre for art production and Buddhist sculptures and manuscripts were taken from here by monks to their countries. So, art in Nalanda had a profound impact on art in all the Buddhist countries.
  - The Nalanda School of sculpture was influenced by Buddhist Gupta art of Sarnath, the local Bihar tradition and Central India. This synthesis emerged during the 9th century.
  - Features of **Nalanda School of sculpture**:
    - Sculptures have an ordered appearance with little effect of crowding.
    - They are depicted in three-dimensional forms.
    - Delicate ornamentations.
    - Back slabs of the sculptures are detailed.
    - Nalanda bronzes: dating from 7th and 8th centuries to the 12th century; outnumber the metal images from entire eastern India.
    - Initially depict Mahayana Buddhist deities like standing Buddhas, bodhisattvas like Manjusri Kumara, Naga-Nagarjuna and Avalokiteshvara seated on a lotus.
    - In the late 11th and 12th centuries, Nalanda became an important tantric centre. Then, Vajrayana deities dominated such Vajrashastra (a form of Saraswati), Avalokiteshvara, Khasarpana, etc.
    - Many Brahmanical images have also been found at Nalanda. Many such images are still worshipped at nearby villages.
- Buddhist sites: Sirpur in Chhattisgarh (550 – 800 CE); Lalitagiri, Vajragiri and Ratnagiri in Odisha.
- Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu was also a Buddhist centre until the Chola Period. A reason could be that it was a port-town and there were trade activities with Sri Lanka which was and continues to be predominantly Buddhist.

## Jain architecture

- Jain temples are found all over India except in the hills.
- Oldest Jain pilgrimage sites are in Bihar.
- In the Deccan: Ellora and Aihole.
- In central India: Khajuraho, Deogarh, Chanderi and Gwalior.
- Karnataka has many Jain shrines.
  - Statue of Gomateshwara: Granite statue of Lord Bahubali commissioned by Camundaraya, the prime minister of the Ganga kings; located at Sravana Belagola; 18m or 57 feet high; world's tallest monolithic free-standing structure.
- Gujarat and Rajasthan have a rich Jain heritage continuing to this day.
- Jain bronze images found from Akola (near Baroda) belong to the late 5th – late 7th century CE; made using the lost-wax process; the images have been inlaid with silver and copper for embellishments.
- Jain bronze sculptures also found from Chausa (Bihar), Hansi (Haryana) and many places in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- Jain Temples at Mount Abu, Rajasthan
  - Constructed by Vimal Shah.
  - Also called Dilwara temples. Built between the 11th and 13th centuries.
- Every ceiling has unique patterns. Richly sculptured on white marble. The exteriors are simple but the interiors are finely carved and exquisitely decorated.