MUSLIM ARCHITECTURE

Domes

* Soon after the time of Prophet Muhammad, Islamic architecture took on various Byzantine traits. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem which closes resembles the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, shows strong Byzantine influence. For example, both domes feature tiles laid against a gold background, vaulted interior spaces, decorative arabesque patterns and a circular dome. Other examples of this characteristic of Islamic architecture were in the desert palaces built in Jordan and Syria.

Minarets

* The minaret, or tower, is an Islamic architectural feature that comprises a tall spire with a conical crown. These towers are free standing or can be attached to a support structure, in which case they can be very tall. The basic minaret structure includes a base, shaft and gallery. The minaret serves the purpose of providing a visual focal point from which the call to prayer is made. The Great Mosque of Kairouan in Tunisa is one of the oldest standing examples of the minaret. It is an imposing structure that was completed in the 8th century and has gone on to serve as the prototype for the minarets construct in the western Islamic world. Minaret architectural styles vary according to the time period and the region they are constructed in. For example, under Turkish influence (11th century), the minarets were slim and circular and a mosque could have as many as six. Under Syrian influence (13th century), the minarets were square in shape, low to the ground, and were positioned at the four corners of a mosque.
* Arab-Plan or Hypostyle
* The hypostyle used in Islamic Architecture was one of the earliest styles pioneered under the Umayyad Dynasty. The mosques were characterized by square or rectangular plans that included a covered prayer hall and enclosed courtyard. The flat roofs of the prayer halls featured in this style required the construction of many columns and supports. The hypostyle Islamic architectural style can be seen in the example of the Mezquita in Cordoba, Spain. The building has over 850 columns made of granite, jasper, onyx and marble. The stones were taken from the Roman temple that originally occupied the site. The building's double arches were a new introduction to the architectural style and needed to support the great weight of the high ceilings. The design style also frequently included outer arcades to provide shade.

Sehan (Courtyard)

* The Sehan is a typical Islamic architectural characteristic featured in almost every mosque. It is also seen in traditionally constructed buildings and residences in the Arab world. The sehan is a courtyard surrounded by rooms on all sides and occasionally by an arcade. Some of the more fancy structures may include a centrally positioned howz, or pool. The sehan in a home may serve as a kind of indoor garden where the women of the house can move freely without having to dress in traditional Islamic outfits normally worn outside the house. When the courtyard is attached to a mosque it is used for the performing of ablutions prior to entering the mosque.

Early medieval could be understood as the period between ancient and medieval. This era like its predecessorand successor has a personality of its own. It's not merely a time span between 4th-5th century and 12thcentury. The early medieval period shows transition, changes, and developments taking place in society,economy, polity and agriculture. The early medieval period was marked by remarkable developments in thespheres of art and architecture. Distinct regional architectural styles emerged in different areas of northernand southern India. In peninsular India, major edifices were built through the patronage of the Rashtrakutas,early Western Chalukyas, Pallavas, Hoysalas and Cholas. In contrast to previous centuries, when a greatproportion of the major architectural remains were Buddhist, in this period, the remains are dominated byHindu Temples.A number of architectural texts known as the Shilpashastras were written in early medieval times. Theserefer to three major styles of temple architecture, Nagara, Dravida, and Vesara. The Nagara style is associated with the land between the Himalayas and Vindhyas, the Dravida style with the land between the Krishna andKaveri rivers, while the Vesara style is sometimes associated with the area between the Vindhyas and theKrishna river. Temple styles are actually best studied on the basis of extant temple remains. According tofamous architectural historian

Adam Hardy ‚naga

ra and dravida should be understood as architecturallanguages, in the sense that they provide a vocabulary, a range of elements, and a family of forms which can

be put together in different ways.‛ He also suggests that the term ‘Karnata

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Dravida’ is a

better term than

‘Vesara’ for the Chalukya temples of the Deccan.

According to Prof. J.C. Harle in his book, The Art and architecture of Indian Subcontinent, ‚The real

transition of temple building can be seen in the Pallava Period. First types of temples

 were the ‘rock

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cut’

temples built on the hills of the peninsular part of India, for example Ellora is a rock cut temple. After that

came ‘monolithic structure’ known as ‘single rock’ temples. And finally the ‘multilithic temples’ like

 Jagannatha Temple of

Orrisa, and in this phase temple making leaped to a modern architecture.‛

 Originally in nagara style temple architecture there were no pillars.The basic plan of the Nagara temple issquare, with a number of projections in the middle of each side, giving it a cruciform shape. When there is

one projection on each side, it is called ‘triratha’, two projections –

‘pancharatha’, three projections –

‘saptharatha’ and four projections –

‘navaratha’. These projections can occur throughout the height of the

structure.

The temples elevation is marked by a conical or convex ‘Shikhara’ or temple tower, consisting of several layeres of carved courses, usually crowned by an ‘Amalaka’ or notched ring stone.

These two features

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the cruciform plan and curvilinear shikhara

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are visible in northern Indian temples from the 6

th

century

CE i.e., from ‘late gupta’ period’, for example the ‘Dashavatara’ temple at Deogarh. The beginning of the

typical Nagara shikhara can be seen in the Mahadeva temple of 7

th

century at Nachna Kuthara. The fullydeveloped Nagara style is evident by the 8

th

century.



Nagara style can be found mostly in Orissa, Rajasthan and Gujarat. According to Prof. Hardy the temples of Orissa are the ones which can be described as the typical Nagara style. Also these temples escaped thedestruction due to invasions, as well as the literature laying down the rules and mode of construction havebeen well preserved in Orissa.In Nagara style temples, the structure consists of two buildings, the main shrine taller and an adjoiningshorter mandapa. The main difference between these two is the shape of the shikhara. In the main shrine, abell shaped structure further adds to the height. In this style, the temples mainly are formed of four

chambers, first the ‘Garbhagriha’, then second Jagmohan’, third ‘Natyamandir’ and fourth chamber the‘Bhogamandir’.

 The Lingaraja temple, dating from the 11th century, is one of the grandest and is regarded as a gem of Nagara architectural style. This temple consists of the sanctum, a closed hall, a dancing hall and a hall of offerings. The sanctum is Pancharatha on plan. The lower register of the wall is decorated with Khakhara-Mundis and the upper with Pidhamundis. The Khakhara Mundis contains on the corner Rathas figures of eight Regents and on the flanking Rathas miscellaneous friezes. The Pidhamundis are inset with images of  various Brahmanical gods and goddesses. The famous temple of Jagannatha at Puri is roughlycontemporaneous with the Lingaraja. It shows the same mature plan as the latter, but is even loftier and isnearly 56.70 m high.The Dravida Architectural style is associated with the temples of southern India or Deccan. According to R.Champakalakshmi, The earliest traces of Dravida architectural features go back to Gupta period and are notrestricted to the far south i.e. in Gupta period these traces occur in northern and central India along withDeccan, like in the Parvati temple at Lad Khan, Kont Gudi and Meguti temples at Aihole.The two most important characteristics of

Dravida temple architecture is that the temples of this style hasmore than 4 sides in the sanctum and, the tower or Vimana of these temples are pyramidal. It consisted of multiplication of storey after storey. Each of these is a replica of the sanctum cella and slightly reduced inextent than the one below, ending in a domical member. Technically this is known as the

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stupi

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or

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stupika

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 as the crowing element. Pillars and pilasters are vastly used in this architectural style. Dravida style south

Indian temples are marked by huge gateways known as ‘gopurams’. At times these gateways are taller and

more decorative than the main temple. Further they have vast pillared halls and corridors. They have one

‘garbhagriha’ and one big ‘mandapa’.

In different temples ‘dedicated pavilions’ can be seen like Shiva templeshave dedicated mandapa of ‘nandi’ the bull or Vishnu temples have ‘garuda mandapa’. Bounda

ry walls insouth Indian temples were built in early medieal period where north Indian temples were not walled. Intemples built in the Dravida style, the square inner sanctum is set within a large covered enclosure. Theexternal walls are divided into niches by pilasters.The Kailasanatha temple is a major example of the Dravida Architecture. The Kailasanatha temple complex issituated at Kanchi as a joint venture of Rajasimha or Narasimhavarman II and his son Mahendra III. Themain Vimana facing east is four storeyed, and is essentially a square structure up to the giva. This is placedabove the sikhara and is usually octagonal. The main sanctum has a large fluted, sixteen-faced, polished,basalt linga with an immense circular linga-pitha occupying almost the entire floor of the sanctum. There is

a detached multi pillared oblong mandapa in front. This is longer on its north-south axis and with itscontaining pilasters Vyala based while in the west these are of the plainer type. The whole is surrounded bya prakara with a gap in the middle of its east side and enclosing an open court all round.According to Prof. Hardy, in the composition of the Kailasanatha temple it can be seen that this is the firstexample of the unified design of a temple complex with many associates that characterized the full fledgedDravida temple architecture. Apart from the Vimana, the pillared hall or Mandapa, an invariableaccompaniment of the Dravida temple, is placed in front of the sanctum. Originally it was as a separatebuilding but later joined together by an intermediate hall forming the antarala.The third type of architectural style which emerged during early medieval period is Vesara style of templearchitecture. The Vesara style is a hybrid style that borrowed from the northern and southern styles. So, it isa mixture of both Nagara and Dravida styles of temple architecture. According to R. Champakalakshmi, thisarchitectural style is difficult to define, as the mixture of northern and southern elements may vary. Templesbuilt in the Deccan under the later Chalukyas of Kalyani and Hoysalas are considered examples of this style.According to J.C. Harle, looking at the Vesara temple architecture of Deccan simply as a combination of northern and southern elements means missing out on its distinctiveness and variations.Dr. George Michell in his book, Architecture and Art of Southern India, said that the Vesara style reducesthe height of the temple towers even though the numbers of tiers are retained. This is accomplished byreducing the height of individual tiers. The semi circular structures of the Buddhist chaityas are alsoborrowed in this style, as in the Durga temple of Aihole. Many temples in Central India and Deccan haveused the Vesara style with regional modifications. The Papanatha temple (680 AD) in particular and someother temples

to a lesser extent located at Pattadakal demonstrate panache for this stylistic overlap‛.

 This trend of merging two styles was started by the Chalukyas of Badami (500-735 AD) who built temples ina style that was essentially a mixture of the Nagara and Dravida styles, further refined by the Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta (750-983 AD) in Ellora, Chalukyas of Kalyani (983-1195 AD) in Lakkundi, Dambal, Gadag etc.and epitomized by the Hoysalas (1000-1330 AD). Most of the temples built in Halebid, Belur andSomanathapura are classified under this style. Further according to

N. Shashtri, ‚The surfaces in the Hoysala

temples are carved in high-relief with detailed repeating patterns of miniature shrine models, distinguishingthem also from contemporary temples in other parts of India that have an elaborate use of human and

animal figures on their decorative exterior.‛

 Therefore, we can say

that ‘Early Medieval Period’ was the phase

of transition and development of differentArchitectural Styles in India. And temple architecture is a major key feature of this period.