

# Indian Structural Designs and Museums

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*Architecture is the learned game, correct and magnificent, of forms assembled in the light –*

*Le Corbusier*

**Abstract-Indian architecture is rooted in its history, culture and religion. Among a number of architectural styles and traditions, the best-known include the many varieties of Hindu temple architecture, Indo-Islamic architecture, especially Mughal architecture, Rajput architecture and Indo-Saracenic architecture. As with the Mughals, under European colonial rule, architecture became an emblem of power, designed to endorse the occupying power. Numerous European countries invaded India and created architectural styles reflective of their ancestral and adopted homes. Some prominent examples of modernist architecture in India include IIM Ahmedabad by Louis Kahn (1961), IIT Delhi by Jugal Kishore Chodhury (1961), IIT Kanpur by Achyut Kanvinde (1963), IIM Bangalore by B. V. Doshi (1973), Lotus Temple by Fariborz Sahba (1986), and Jawahar Kala Kendra (1992) and Vidhan Bhawan Bhopal (1996) by Charles Correa. Indian Museum is one of the largest and oldest encyclopaedic museums in Asia. It has its origin linked to the Asiatic Society, founded by Sir William Jones in 1784 which later on emerged as a separate entity called the Imperial Museum. Later known as Indian Museum Calcutta it was established in the year 1814 under the stewardship of a Danish botanist named Nathaniel Wallich. Presently, it is a museum of national importance under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. Initially the museum was incepted as "an institution for the reception of all articles that might be sent to illustrate Orient manners and history," over a period of time it has widened its scope and avenue by becoming a modern museum with a vast repository of indigenous and international exhibits that are spread across six sections such as art, archaeology, anthropology, zoology, geology and botany. Apart from these sections, there are other units to help the museums, viz., library, publication, modelling, presentation, photography, conservation unit. There has been a paradigm shift in the concept of museums across the world and the Indian Museum is no exception.**

**Keywords: temples, museums, architecture, designs, structures.**

## INTRODUCTION

It is not wrong if I say that Indian architecture is as old as the history of civilization. The Great Baths of Mohenjo-Daro are good examples of ancient Indian architecture. Later, the vedic period was marked by anonymous pastoral settlements of timber, mud and bamboo in the Valley of Ganga. We can see different kind of architecture for different structures. We can identify them with their architecture only. We can find temples in a typical shape and architecture, rock cut architecture at other places, the stupa in a different architecture etc.

## THE HINDU TEMPLES

The Hindu temples are most common with their special characteristic shape i.e., a typical pyramidal spire. Many temples are ancient monument but they can be recognized by their architecture. These temples dominate with their presence particularly in the South. There are only a few remaining famous temples in the north. These temples were built in the cities which were places of pilgrimage near a river or lake because water was needed for worshippers. In South India, we find famous temples of Kanchipuram, Madurai, Rameshwaram, and Srirangam. A few temples of North can rival these temples. Varanasi is the famous and holiest city of the Hindus. But it has hardly any monument that can lay claim to antiquity. The famous Hindu temples in India are in Khajuraho, Bhubaneswar and Konark. Actually, many famous Hindu temples were destroyed in the North by the Muslim invaders.

## CAVE ARCHITECTURE OF BUDDHISTS AND HINDUS

Cave architecture can be best found in the hills of western coast. Here the quality of the rocks has made it suitable to have cave architecture and excavation. This art was best elaborated during the Buddhist period in 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. These caves contained monastic establishments with rooms for monks and the temples where Lord Buddha was worshipped. The great cave temples at Badami, Elephanta near Mumbai, Ellora Aurangabad, and Maharashtra are remarkable examples of Cave architecture. In Elephanta, there is a large Mahesh-Murti (Lord Shiva) which depicts its three aspects of Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. This is the finest single piece of Indian sculpture. The great Hindu, Buddhist and Jain rock temples of Ellora are remarkable examples of this art in splendour and size. Here the Kailasa temple is entirely hewn out of a rock and has the appearance of man-made mountain.

#### ROCK CUT ARCHITECTURE

In many states, we can find rock cut architecture. Many Buddhist monuments were built in this art such as in Bihar and Maharashtra. In old times many Buddhist monks transformed the natural caves and grottos in the hills into large praying halls of monasteries. They excavated and cut rocks and the elevation of these caves resemble to brick and wood building. They carved the caves in such a way that caves looked like huge buildings having windows, doors, balconies and arch shaped entrances. This art is so finely created that there is no parallel to this work of art.

#### THE STUPA

In ancient times, when Buddhism was the dominant religion of India, stone was introduced in Indian art and architecture. The finest example of stupa sculpture is at Sanchi, dating from 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. Parts from Buddha's life are depicted here. Many other deities of folk religion are also included in the Stupa sculpture. These deities were absorbed by Buddhism. The Buddhist stupas are mound-shaped, having a symbolic meaning like temple; Stupa is a place of worship.

#### MAURYAN ARCHITECTURE

The best specimen of Mauryan stone sculpture can be seen in the country's many museums. It was exquisitely finished and characterized by a bright polish that has not lost its brightness and luster even today. Lion capital has been adopted as the State seal of the country. This is actually in Sarnath Museum and Mauryan Architecture.

#### GUPTA PERIOD ARCHITECTURE

It was around AD 320-495 when in Gupta period Temple sculpture reached near perfection. It may be called the golden age of Indian art. The figures of Gods and Goddesses carved during this period have grace and full of spiritual feeling. In the Dasavatara temple of Deogarh. Hindu iconography was given such a form that it possesses even today. Fine idols of Jain, Buddhist and Hindu deities of this period are found in the country's museums.

#### MEDIEVAL TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

The architecture of ancient Hindu temples, which consisted a pyramidal spine, was developed in the post Gupta period. In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century architecture developed in a fast way. New great temples were built. The temple at Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh, Bhubaneswar in Orissa and Mount Abu in Rajasthan are great examples of this period architecture. The temples of this period are most lavishly decorated with sculptural work. There is elaborate texture found on the walls. Here we can find the different images of deities in numerous delicate poses and attitudes. Animals like lion, elephant, and birds are common motifs. There are sculptures depicting soldiers, army, hunting etc. It can be said that there is no need to explain these expressions of sculptures. It is the union of man and God, full of joy and bliss.

#### SOUTH INDIA'S TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Building activity accelerated in South India from 7<sup>th</sup> century. Rock cut temple architecture was developed in 7<sup>th</sup> century with the temple of Mahabalipuram. The later Pallava temple at Kanchipuram represented the same style. Then the Chola architecture developed. Thanjavur temple was built at Gangai Konda Cholapuram by Rajendra in 11<sup>th</sup> century. Konark

temple in South India is a masterpiece of Hindu temple architecture and sculpture. It is conceived in the form of the Chariot of Sun God. The temples Halebid, Belur, Somanthpur which are in Karnataka are remarkable examples of rich carving. The quality of stone is very soft and designs are easily carved.

### MUSLIM ARCHITECTURE

Muslim architecture is very different and distinct in its character and finds its traces to the history of First Turkish invasions. The Islamic architectural examples can be found in Delhi easily. Early Islamic architecture can be seen in Jama Masjid. Other examples are visible near Qutb Minar, which built by Qutb-ud-din Aibek. During 15<sup>th</sup> century, many sultanates of Gujarat, Malwa and Jaunpur developed and they marked the emergence of provincial style with great beauty. This style assimilated Hindu architecture and decorative motifs. Mughal emperors did a splendid work of architecture in 16<sup>th</sup> century. Agra fort and Fatehpur sikri are great examples of great vision and architectural Sikandara the mausoleum of Akbar was conceived by the emperor in his lifetime but was completed by his son Jahangir. Taj Mahal is the main attraction of every Indian and International tourist in Agra. It is a tribute of Emperor Shah Jahan to his beloved queen Mumtaz Mahal. It is complete built in beautiful white marble. Its gardens and fountains make its surrounding so beautiful that everyone is pleased to come here. Shah Jahan had a passion for architecture and build magnificent building. He built Jama Masjid and Red Fort in Delhi. Although he could not complete Red Fort as he was dethroned by his own son Aurangzeb and moved to the Fort of Agra, He had to live there for about a decade gazing vacantly at the monument of his love Taj Mahal, which he had built for his beloved wife. Aurangzeb had no interest in architecture. He was always busy with wars and fights. He initiated the Taj Mahal and built a building called Bibi ka Makbara at Aurangabad (Maharashtra), which is a poor copy of Taj Mahal and commemoration of his wife. The rulers of Bijapur, Adil Shahi sultanate built several buildings in the Deccan. The tomb of Ibrahim Adil Shah II, Gol Gumbaz, the tomb of Mohammad are the most outstanding examples of Muslim architecture.

### HINDU KINGS ARCHITECTURE

When Muslim emperors continued to build, Hindu rulers were also not behind. They also built the palace of Raja Mann Singh Tomar at Gwalior, which is a magnificent achievement of civil architecture. The fort, the palace of Amber near Jaipur and other Rajput citadels of this period are good examples of art and architecture. During 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Hindu princess of India built the Ghats of Varanasi. They are the example of Architecture.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUMS AND ART GALLERIES

The visitors who are interested in the history, archaeology and art can entertain themselves by visiting the superb museum of India. There are large museums in major cities in India but small ones can be seen at the archaeological sites. From these museums, a tourist can find lot of information and can understand the ancient monument of different architectures in India.

Generally, all the museums remain open from 10a.m to 5 p.m for all the six days in a week except Monday. Generally Monday is a holiday at the museums Government of India want to encourage the visitors and tourists to see these museums so the entry fee at these places is very nominal. There may be charges for taking photographs. Generally all the temples have no entry fee. But tourist can donate any amount of money according to their wish. Some archaeological museums have nominal entry fee like Red fort, museums in Delhi, Tajmahal in Agra. There are about 250 museums in India, where tourist can enjoy according to their schedule and visit to the city. If any city happens to be in your itinerary where there is museum, try not to miss it out.