



Mains Marathon

Day 32: The contribution of Pallava and Chola was immense in the Dravidian style of temple architecture. Do you Agree? (150 Words)

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Approach / Explanation / Answer

Approach

- Introduce briefly about Pallavas and cholas empire.
- Discuss the contribution of Pallavas and cholas to temple architecture in the south with their uniqueness.
- Conclude suitably.

Answer

Pallavas and cholas both own the unique place for their contribution to the temple architecture in south India. The Dravidian style of temple architecture flourished in south India which was originated by the Pallava rulers and reached its zenith under the rule of cholas.

The Pallavas (275 CE to 897 CE) command more importance in temple history because their temple style was adopted and advanced by several successive rulers like Vijayanagar (14c to 16c AD), Hoysala (1006 to 1346 CE) and cholas.

Contribution of Pallava to Dravidian Temple architecture:

- The Pallavas patronised learning art and temple building both cave temples and structural temples including monolithic rathas and stone carvings of mythological scenes in Mahabalipuram. The Pallavas who laid the foundation of this style were responsible for two of its forms, the rock-cut and the structural.
- Pallavas temple constructions were quite new in their style from that of the temples existing prior to Pallavas. The stone inscriptions in Mahabalipuram and Kanchipuram name the Pallava rules, recounting their great deeds.
- The pallava period was the transitional period of the temples in the south from cave temples to the structural temples. This transition was done under several pallava rulers:
 - Temples made under the **Mahendra group** were **rock-cut temples** and **known as mandapa**. This was the first stage of the temple.
 - In the second stage the **rock-cut temples** were decorated **with intricate sculptures** and mandapas were now divided into separate rathas. The biggest ratha was called as

Dharmaraja rathas. The **dravidian style** of temple was the successor of dharmaraja rathas. This stage was called the **Narasimha group**.

- The third stage was called the **Rajshima group** and a **real structural temple** was started.
- The last and 4th stage is called the Nandiverman group. Here real and small dravida style temples were erected.
- Apart from the development of temples Pallava also erected various rock-cut caves, open air Rock reliefs (Descendant of Ganga), shore temple complex (Dedicated to shiva).

The vital artistic style of the Pallava period passed into history in a process of absorption that censured the continuity of Tamil cultural tradition.

The seventh century Pallava sites at ancient port city of Mamallapuram have been declared as UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984 by the name "Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram", showing the marvellous architecture of pallavas.

Contribution of cholas to the temple architecture:

- Chola adopted and promoted the style of Dharmaraja Ratha like temples and developed them into **Dravidian Style of Temple Architecture**.
- **Some unique features of the Dravidian style or chola style are:**
 - The high boundary walls around the temples,
 - The front wall with a high entrance gateway known as the gopuram
 - The Panchayatana style temple premises with a principal temple and four subsidiary shrines.
 - The spire is in the form of a stepped pyramid that rises up linearly rather than curved and is called a vimana.
 - The crowning element is shaped in the form of an octagon and is known as shikhara. It is similar to the kalash of the Nagara temple, but not spherical.
 - There is only one vimana in the Dravidian architecture on top of the main temple. The subsidiary shrines do not have vimanas, unlike in Nagara architecture.
 - The assembly hall was connected to the garbhagriha by a vestibular tunnel known as antarala.
 - The entrance of the garbhagriha had sculptures of Dwaarpal, mithun and yakshas.
 - The presence of a water tank inside the temple enclosure was a unique feature of the Dravidian style.
 - Example: Brihadeswara temple at Tanjore (built by Raja Raja I in 1011 A.D.), Gangaikondacholapuram temple (built by Rajendra I to commemorate his victory in the Gangetic delta), etc.
- Due to their contributions to temple architecture, the Pallavas and the Cholas transformed south India's megalithic land into a land of temples. Their contribution to architecture is acknowledged on a global scale by the inclusion of several temple structures on the list of India's World Heritage Sites by UNESCO.

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