

Temples and Religious Architecture

Chapter 8: How the Land Becomes Sacred · Topic 2

Key Concept

Temple architecture in India developed along distinct regional lines, including the Nagara style in the north, with its curved tower (shikhara), and the Dravidian style in the south, with its tall gateway towers (gopurams).

Temples were often built with great care and symbolism, with the design representing sacred geometry and cosmic order, believed to connect the earthly and divine realms.

Beyond worship, temples historically served as centres for education, art, and community gathering, with many housing sculptures, paintings, and inscriptions that record history.

Many ancient temples, like those at Khajuraho, Konark, and Thanjavur, remain celebrated today as masterpieces of architecture and important heritage sites.

Quick Revision Notes

- Temple architecture varies by region.
- The Nagara style (north) has curved towers (shikharas).
- The Dravidian style (south) has tall gateway towers (gopurams).
- Temple designs often represent sacred geometry.
- Temples were believed to connect earthly and divine realms.
- Temples served as centres for education, art and gathering.
- Many temples have sculptures, paintings and inscriptions.
- Khajuraho, Konark and Thanjavur are famous temple sites.

Practice Questions

- 1 Research one temple mentioned in this lesson.
- 2 Compare the Nagara and Dravidian temple styles.
- 3 Discuss why temples were built with sacred geometry.
- 4 Explain what roles temples served besides worship.
- 5 Find an inscription or sculpture from an ancient temple.
- 6 Create a simple drawing comparing shikhara and gopuram towers.