

UNIT 33 – UPSC - Hindu Temple Architecture - Hoysala

In our article series on Indian culture, we have so far seen the temple architecture peculiarities of Chola and Chalukya Dynasty. In this post, we shall see the temple architecture features of Hoysala dynasty. The Karnata Dravidian tradition developed in the 7th century under the patronage of Badami Chalukya got matured under Western Chalukya (Kalyani Chalukya) in the 11th century. The Chalukya style got perfection as an independent style under Hoysala rule in the 13th century.

Noticeable features of Hoysala art



- **Makartorana** - It leads to the mantapa of the temples. It is made with sculpted images of makara in lintel form that overhead one to the temple.
- **Mantapa** - Hoysala temples have features of both open (outer mantapa) and closed mantapa (inner mantapa). The ceilings of the mantapa are highly ornate bearing mythological figures and floral design.
- **Pillars** - The mantapas of Hoysala temples have circular pillars. Each pillar bears four brackets in the top with sculpted figures.
- **Cella (vimana)** - The characteristic feature of vimana in Hoysala temples is that they are plain inside while outside is profusely elaborated.

- **Shrine** - The Hoysala temples generally bears one or more shrines. The temples are classified as ekakuta (one shrine), dvikuta (two shrines) etc relating to the number of shrines.
- **Development of kalasa** - The Hoysala temples bear a very nice vase shaped water pot that stands on the top most portion of the temple tower.
- **Salabhanjika** - It is the peculiar feature of Hoysala sculpture. The origin of this mythical woman figure trace back its origin from the Buddhist sculpture. Salabhanjika or madanika is a mythical women figure with stylized feminine characters who stands near a tree or grasping a branch of a tree. Sometimes, they are portrayed engaging in artistic activities like music, dance etc.

These sculpted figures are seen in each four bracket that places in the top of pillars of Hoysala temples. Besides this, each side of the makartorana is heavily sculpted with figures of salabhanjika.

- **Kirtimukh** - The figure of kirtimukhh ornates the vimana of some Hoysala temples.
- **Mythical presentation** - No other dynasty had been able to present Hindu mythology in sculpted and architectural form than the Hoysala dynasty. The pictures from Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas are very vigorously decorated in the walls of the Hoysala temples. At the entrance of the makartorana, various scenes are depicted from the Hindu mythology in sequential manner in clockwise direction.
- **General decoration** - Besides mythical presentation, the walls of Hoysala temples are decorated with live panels of musicians, dancers, animals etc.
- **Artistic plan** - The shrine of the Hoysala temples are generally seen in stellate shaped though sometimes staggered square plan is visible.
- **Erotica** - In some temples of Hoysala dynasty erotic sculptures are seen swayed by sakta tradition prevailing that time.

Influence of Chola and Chalukya art

The decoration of the Western Chalukyas (Kalyani) influenced the Hoysala decoration. The pillar image called “Sthambha buttalikas” seen in Hoysala art bears evidence of Chola and Chalukya art. In Chennakeshava temple, the image of Mohini seen in one of the pillars in the mantapa bears the fine example of Chola art in Hoysala art.

A special difference between Hoysala and Chalukya art

The Hoysala artists ornamented both top and surface of the pillars while Chalukya artists left the top plain and decorated only the surface.

Questions to try (100 words)

1. The Hindu temple architecture under Hoysalas is marked by the influence of Buddhist art too. Comment.
2. What is makara? Narrate its importance in Indian architecture in its zoomorphic form.
3. Write a short note on the decoration of Hoysala temples.
4. What is Salabhanjika? Explain its relevance in Hindu temple architecture.
5. Influence of Chola and Chalukya in Hoysala art
6. Short note on - Makartorana
7. Short note on - Sthambha buttalika
8. Short note on - Stellate plan
9. Short note on - Mohini in Indian sculpture

