UNIT 7 DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL CULTURAL TRADITIONS

Structure

7.0 Objectives
7.1 Introduction
7.2 Temple Architecture
  7.2.1 Major Styles
  7.2.2 Presiding Deities
  7.2.3 Shapes, Plans and Language of Temples
  7.2.4 Ecological Setting, Raw Materials and Regionalisation
  7.2.5 Role of Decorative Elements
7.3 Organisation of Building Programme
7.4 Chronological and Geographical Spread of Indian Temples
7.5 Temples and Indian Cultural Ethos
7.6 Sculptures: Stone and Metal Images
7.7 Paintings, Terracottas and the "Medieval Factor"
7.8 Education and Learning
7.9 Local Chronicles and Eras
7.10 The New Religious Trends
7.11 Let Us Sum Up
7.12 Key Words
7.13 Answers To Check Your Progress Exercises

7.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit aims at acquainting you with the development of regional cultural traditions and after reading it, you should be able to understand the:

- emergence of regional cultural units,
- manifestations of regionalisation in various spheres of peoples' activities in the realms of arts, literature, education, learning and religion,
- development of architectural styles and basis of classifying various temples,
- terminology used in the descriptions of architectural features,
- relationship between the ecological setting and temple constructions.
- impact of the availability of raw materials on the construction of temples,
- role of temples in the overall cultural ethos,
- emergence of localised schools of sculptures in stone and metal,
- regionalisation of languages, scripts, chronicles and eras, and
- linkages between the essence of the "medieval factor" — the spread of feudal ethos and the cultural manifestations.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The centuries between the eighth and the thirteenth stand out rather prominently from the point of view of the making of cultural traditions in India. The most arresting feature of these traditions is **regionalism**, which gets reflected in every sphere, whether it be the formation of political power or the development of arts or the transformations in languages and literature or even religious manifestations. In very general terms, the emergence of regional cultural units such as Andhra, Assam, Bengal, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, etc. was the outcome of significant material changes. As already delineated (Block 1), the pace of agrarian changes and the developments in the non-agrarian sector were setting the tone of feudal socio-economic formation (see also Unit 5 in this Block).
As we shall see in Block 3, nor could the political structure remain unaffected by these developments.

It should, not, therefore, surprise us if the cultural ethos too got permeated by similar strains. The Mudrakshasa, a play written in Sanskrit by Vishakhadatta and generally ascribed to the fifth century, speaks of different regions whose inhabitants differ in customs, clothing and language. The identity of some kind of subnational groups is recognized by the Chinese pilgrim Hsuan-Tsang who visited India in the first half of the seventh century and mentions several nationalities. The Kuvalayamala, a Jain text of the eighth century and largely concerned with western India, notes the existence of 18 major nationalities and describes the anthropological character of sixteen peoples, pointing out their psychological features and citing the examples of their language. The Brahmandaivata Purana, ascribed to the thirteenth century Bengal explicates deshabheda — differences based on regions/territories.

7.2 TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Indian temples have symbolised the very ethos of life-style of people through the millennia. The panorama of Indian temple architecture may be seen across at extremely wide chronological and geographical horizon. From the simple beginnings at Sanchi in the fifth century of the Christian era to the great edifices at Kanchi, Jhanjavur and Madurai is a story of more than a millennium.

The prominent Shilpashastras that deal with the subject of temple architecture are:

Mayamata, Manasara, Shilparatna, Kamikagama, Kashyapashilpa and Ishanagurudevapaddhati.

In the majority of these works the subject is dealt with under the three heads of:

- the geographical distribution
- their differentiation from the point of view of shapes, and
- their presiding deities and castes.

All these topics, however, are not mentioned in all these works. Some later texts as the Kamikagama and Kashyapashilpa show that the nature of ornamentation, number of storeys, the size of prasadas etc. also constituted bases of differentiation.

7.2.1 Major Styles

The ancient texts on Indian temple architecture broadly classify them into three orders. The terms Nagara, Dravida and Vesara indicate a tendency to highlight typological features of temples and their geographical distribution. These terms describe respectively temples that primarily employ square, octagonal and apsidal ground plans which also regulate the vertical profile of the structure. Nagara and Dravida temples are generally identified with the northern and southern temple styles respectively. All of northern India, from the foothills of the Himalayas to the central plateau of the Deccan is furnished with temples in the northern style (See Illus. 1). There are, of course, certain regional variations in the great expanse of this area. A work entitled Aparajitapriccha confines the Nagari (Nagara) style to the Madhyadesha (roughly the Ganga-Yamuna plains) and further mentions Lati and Vainati (Gujarat and Rajasthan respectively) as separate styles. The local manuscripts of Orissa recognise four main types of Orissa style temples, viz., the Rehka, Bhadra, Khakhara and Gaudiya.

The Dravida or southern style, comparatively speaking, followed a more consistent development track and was confined to the most southerly, portions of the sub-continent, specially between the Krishna river and Kanyakumari. The term Vesara is not free from vagueness. Some of the texts ascribe the Vesara style to the country between the Vindhyas and the river Krishna but there are texts placing it between the Vindhyas and the Agastya, the location of which is uncertain. Since the temples of the Nagara type are found as far south as Dharwad (in Karnataka) and those of the Dravidian type as far north as Ellora (in Maharashtra), a narrow and compartmentalised geographical classification is misleading. At certain periods there
occurred striking overlapping of major styles as influences from different regions confronted each other, e.g., the temples of the early Chalukyas whose kingdom was strategically positioned in the middle of the peninsula in the seventh and eighth centuries. The Kandariya Mahadeva temple in Khajuraho is another striking example where the various architectural elements combined into an integrated whole. Similarly, the Kerala temples display variety in their plan types. Square, circular or apsidal-ended buildings are utilized. The earliest examples in Kerala go back to the twelfth century.

7.2.2 Presiding Deities

Temples were dedicated not only to two great gods of the Brahmanical pantheon, viz., Shiva and Vishnu but to the Great Mother Goddess as well. In fact, consecration and depiction of divinities big and small, benevolent and malevolent, celestial and terrestrial, atmospheric and heavenly, devas and asuras and countless folk deities such as vakshas, vakshis, apsaras and kinnaras represent a world of their own. It is indeed fascinating to see that even animal or bird 'vehicles' (vahanas) of these divinities shed their muteness and become eloquent carriers of meaningful symbolism. Thus, Nandi, the agricultural bull of Shiva is fully expressive of the god's sexuality (See Illustration No. 2); tiger, the mount of Durga embodies her fierce strength and aggressiveness. The river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna are identified by their vahanas, viz., crocodile and tortoise respectively. Lakshmi's association with elephants, lotus flowers and water not only symbolise her popularity as the goddess of fortune but more importantly as a divinity conveying the magical power of agricultural fertility — an aspect that goes back to the days of the Rigveda. Swan carrying Saraswati typified not only her grace and elegance but classic Kshira-nira viveka — the tremendous intellectual discerning capacity which is an integral element of this goddess of learning. The Kashyapashilpa has a chapter on the deities to be enshrined in the principal styles mentioned above. Thus, the Shantamurtis (peaceful, calm and serene deities) are to be installed in Nagara; couples or moving deities in vesara shrines; and heroic, dancing or enjoying deities in the Dravida structures. However, these injunctions about presiding deities, like the basic styles, ought not to be taken in a compartmentalised sense. Similarly, textual prescriptions about the Nagara, Dravida and Vesara styles being associated with brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishya varnas respectively cannot be taken literally.

Check Your Progress 1

1) How do we come to know about regional cultural units?

2) List six major works which deal with the subject of temple architecture.
   1)  
   2)  
   3)  
   4)  
   5)  
   6)  

3) List the three major temple styles with their geographical distribution.

4) List the main deities placed in different styles of temples.
7.2.3 Shapes, Plans and Language of Temples

Each temple style has its own distinctive technical language, though some terms are common but applied to different parts of the building in each style. The sanctuary, which is the main part is called the vimana where the garbhagriha or the inner sanctum containing the main presiding deity is located. The part surmounting the vimana is known as the shikhara. The other elements of ground plan are: mandapa or pavilion for the assembly of devotees; antarala, which is a vestibule connecting the vimana and mandapa and the pradakshinapath, i.e. circumambulatory passage surrounding these. The natmandir or dance hall and bhogamandapa were evolved subsequently in the Orissan temples such as the famous Sun temple at Konarka, to add to the dignity and magnificence of the deities who were honoured in them. The exterior of the Nagara type is characterized by horizontal tiers, as in the jagamohan or porch in front of the sanctum of the Lingaraj temple at Bhubaneswar, and the vimana is usually circular in plan. Fundamentally, there is no structural similarity between the Brahmanical and the Jain temples in the North except that the need for housing the various Tirthankaras dominates the disposition of space in the latter.

The Dravida style has a polygonal, often octagonal shikhara and a pyramidal vimana, which is rectangular in plan. A temple of the Dravida type is also notable for the towering gopurams or gate-towers of the additional mandapas. From the days of Ganesh ratha of the Pallava times (seventh century) at Mahabalipuram (near Madras) to the gigantic Brihadishvara temple (c.985-1012 A.D.) of the Cholas at Thanjavur, the Dravida style took many strides. (For various Temple plans see illustration Nos. 3 to 8.)

7.2.4 Ecological Setting, Raw Materials and Regionalisation

The stylistic evolution of temples was also rooted in ecological setting which gave them specific regional identity. In the relatively heavy rainfall areas of the western coast of India and Bengal, temples have sloping tiled roofs, giving rise to timber gables. To overcome the hazards of snow and hail, wooden sloped roofs are also employed in the temples of the Himalayan belt. In general, the hotter and drier the climate, the flatter the roof; open porches provide shaded seating, and pierced stone screens are utilised to filter the light. Some such features which are noticeable in the famous Ladhkan temple of the Chalukyas at Ahole (north Karnataka) are direct adaptations of thatch and timber village and community halls. The distribution of space in Jain shrines was affected by their placements on high hills. These structures are characterized by an air of seclusion and aloofness. Some such typical examples can be seen at the Shatrunjaya and Palitana hills in Gujarat or the Dilwara temples at Mount Abu in southern Rajasthan.

Apart from the ecological influences, the availability of raw materials also affected styles of craftsmanship. While the transition from wood to stone attributed to the Mauryas of the third century B.C. was in itself a great step forward, local raw materials played a dominant role in techniques of construction and carving. No wonder, the Pallava King Mahendravarman (early seventh century) is called vichitra-chitta (curious minded) because he discarded conventional perishable materials such as brick, timber and mortar and used the hardest rock surface (granite) for his cave temples at Mahabalipuram. Hard and crystalline rocks prevented detailed carving, whereas soft and sedimentary stone permitted great precision. Friable and schistlike stones, such as those by the Hoyshal architects and craftsmen at Belur and Halebid (Karnataka) in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries promoted the carving of mouldings created by sharp and angled incisions. Brick building traditions continued to survive where there was an absence of good stone and techniques of moulding and carving bricks doubtless influenced the style of temples in these areas, e.g. the temples at Bishnupur in Bengal. The influence of timber and bamboo techniques of construction represent a unique architectural development in north eastern state of Assam. Almost no stone temples are found in the Himalayan valleys of Kulu, Kangra and Chamba. It is obvious that timber and brick building traditions dominate temple forms in these areas. The sloping and gabled roofs which are preserved only in stone in the temples of Kashmir can be seen in these areas in pure wooden context. In the ninth century or so, a remarkable multi-towered temple was excavated into a natural escarpment at Masrur in Kangra.
7.2.5 Role of Decorative Elements

The evolution of various styles in terms of decorations, ornamentations and other embellishments is a natural phenomenon. However, it needs to be stressed that these elements did not affect the basic structure of temples already outlined above. Amongst conspicuous decorative elements one can mention growth of pillars from simple oblong shafts in early Pallava structures to extremely finely chiselled (almost giving the impression of lathe work) columns in Hoyshala temples. Later still, the temples of Madurai and Rameshvaram give extraordinary place to long corridors studded with animals based caryatids. The niches, pavilions and horse shoe-shaped windows (kudus) (See Illustration No. 9), among others, are also important decorative motifs which help in the delineation of stages of evolution. In general, the tendency is to make constant increase in embellishments. To illustrate, the kudus which at the Mahabalipuram monuments has a plain shovel-headed frial, develops a lion head in the Chola monuments. The process of excessive ornamentation is noticeable in North India too. Shikhara, ceilings and other walls receive great attention of artisans and craftsmen. Extremely exquisite carvings in marble in the ceilings at Dilwara Jain temples at Mt. Abu do not serve any structural purpose and are purely decorative.

Sometimes it is argued that multiplication of roofs constitutes a distinctive feature of temples of Malabar, Bengal and the eastern and western Himalayas. In a west coast or Malabar temple the walls resemble a wooden railing in structure and were made of wood, though stone copies from about the fourteenth century also exist. Such temples (for example, the Vadakkunath temple at Trichur — 15th-16th century) may have either a simple pitched roof of overlapping slabs, or they may have a series of pitched roofs one above another, which bear an obvious resemblance to the multiple pitched roofs of Chinese and Nepalese temples.

In the Kashmir Valley of the western Himalayas, temples bear two or three roofs which were also copied from the usual wooden roofs. In the wooden examples the interval between the two roofs seems to have been left open for light and air; in the stone buildings it is closed with ornaments. Besides this, all these roofs are relieved by types of windows comparable to those found in medieval buildings in Europe. Example of such roofs in Kashmir may be seen in Shiva temple at Pandrethan and Sun temple at Martand. In Bengal, temples have been identified which have been borrowed from leaf-huts that are very common in the region. In this form of temple with curved caves we also find the same tendency to a multiplication of roofs one above another. The temples at Bishnuvir such as the famous Kesht Raya (17th century) are built with a variety of roofs forms on square and rectangular plans. Even contemporary Mughal architecture makes use of this so-called “Bengal roof” in sandstone or marble. (For various types of roofs see Illustration Nos. 10 to 15 for pillars No 16 and niches No. 17).

7.3 ORGANISATION OF BUILDING PROGRAMME

In the erection of the structural temple an organised building programme was followed. Bricks were baked either on or near the site and stone was mostly quarried locally. From reliefs carved on temples and from a palm-leaf manuscript (See Illustration No. 18) that has been discovered about the building operations carried out at the world famous thirteenth century Sun temple at Konarka, (See Illustration Nos. 19, 20) it is learnt that stone from quarries was sometimes transported to the building site on wooden rollers drawn by elephants or floated on barges along rivers and canals. At the site the masons roughly shaped the stone blocks which were then hoisted into position by rope pulleys on scaffolding. Ramps were also constructed of timber and sand to facilitate the placing of extremely heavy stone pieces in place. A classic example of this is the stone constituting the huge shikhara of the Brihadishvar temple at Thanjavur. This shikhara weighing about 80 tonnes is popularly believed to have been raised to its present height of about 200 feet by being dragged on an inclined plane, which had its base about seven kilometres, away at Sarapallan (literally, meaning ‘elevation from depression’). Occasionally, as in Konarka, iron beams (For iron beams see Illustration No. 21) were used in the sanctuary and hall.

The architects, artisans and workmen engaged in the various activities associated with the building of a temple were organised into groups which functioned as guilds. The
above-mentioned Konarka temple manuscript lists the workmen, their salaries and rules of conduct and provides an account over several years of the various building operations. Quite often, these get reflected in stone as well, e.g., an eleventh century panel from Khajuraho shows cuttings, chiselling and transporting stone for temples.

Check Your Progress 2
1) What are the main parts in a temple plan?

2) How did the ecological setting and raw material decide the shape of the roof of the temples?

3) In which areas multiplication of roofs was used for temple decoration?

7.4 CHRONOLOGICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF INDIAN TEMPLES

In this section we mention some of the prominent temples according to their chronology and geographical spread.

THE NORTHERN STYLE
Northern, Central and Western India (Fifth—seventh centuries)
The Parvati temple at Nachna (South-east of Khajuraho, M.P.); the Dashavatara temple at Degas (Jhansi District, U.P.); the brick temple at Bhitaragon (Kanpur District, U.P.); the Vishnu temple at Gop (Gujarat); Mundeshwari temple (an unusual example of octagonal plan) at Ramgarh (Bihar) and temples at Sanchi and Jigawa (both in Madhya Pradesh).

The Deccan and Central India (Sixth—eighth centuries)
Cave temples at Ellora (near Aurangabad in Maharashtra, see Illustration No. 22), Elephanta (near Bombay) and Badami (north Karnataka; Early Chalukyan temples) in north Karnataka at Badami, Aihole (Ladkhan temples), and Pattadakal (Papanatha and Galganatha temples).

Western and Central India (Eighth—thirteenth centuries)
Harshara and other temples at Osian (North of Jodhpur, Rajasthan); Jelika Mandir (Gwalior); Chandella temples at Khajuraho (specially, Lakshman, Kandariya Mahadev and Vishvanatha); temples at Roda (North of Modhera in Gujarat); Sun temple at Modhera (Gujarat) and Marble temples of the Jains at Mt. Abu (Rajasthan).
Eastern India (Eighth — thirteenth centuries)
Parashurameshvar Vaital Deul, Mukteshvar, Lingaraj and Rajarani temples (all at Bhubaneswar); Sun temple at Konarka (Orissa) and the Jagannatha temple at Puri (Orissa).

The Himalayan belt (Eighth century onwards)
Sun temple at Martand; Shiva temple at Pandrahan and Vishnu temple at Aventesvamin (all in Kashmir); temple at Masur (Kangara, Himachal Pradesh) and brahmanical temples in Nepal (Kathmandu, Patan and Bhadgaon).

THE SOUTHERN STYLE

The Deccan and Tamil Nadu (Sixth—tenth centuries)
Cave temples, the Rathaas and the ‘Shore’ temple of the Pallavas at Mahabalipuram (near Madras); (See Illustration No. 23) the Vaikunthaperumal and Kailasanatha temples at Kanchipuram (also near Madras); Chalukyan structures at Aihole (Meguti temple), Badami (Malgitti Shiva temple) and Pattadakal (Virupaksha temple) and the Kailas temple at Ellora carved out under the patronage of the Rashtrakutas.

Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala (Tenth—seventeenth centuries)
Brihadishvar temples of the Cholas at Chidambaram and GangaiKondacholapuram; Hoysal temples at Belur, Halebid and Somnathpur (all in Karnataka); later Chalukya temples in Karnataka (at Lakkundi and Gadag); the Pampati temple of the Pandyas at Vijaynagar; the Shrirangam (near Trichinopoly, Tamil Nadu) and Minakshi temples (Madurai, Tamil Nadu, See Illustration Nos. 24, 25); the Kattilmadam (at Chalapuram, District Palghat, Kerala) temple and Parashuram temple at Tiruvallam (near Trivandrum).

THE VESARA STYLE

The Buddhist Chaitya halls of the early centuries of the Christian era and situated in the western ghats in the modern state of Maharashtra may be said to be prototypes of this style. Its most conspicuous feature is the apsidal ground plan. As already mentioned, there is certain vagueness about its essential components and geographical distribution. Amongst the early examples (seventh—tenth centuries) can be cited the structures at Chezarla (Andhra Pradesh), Aihole (Durga temple), Mahabalipuram (Saheb and Draupali rathas) and Kerala (Shiva temples at Trikkanidiyur and Tiruvannur). The classic post-tenth century examples include the Nataraja shrine at Chidambaram (Tamil Nadu) and the Vamana temple at Kizhavellur (District Kottayam, Kerala).

7.5 TEMPLES AND INDIAN CULTURAL ETHOS

Indian temples symbolised the very mundane urges of humans and were for varied activities of the community as a whole.

To begin with, general education within the temple was of great importance. Many endowments to temples were specifically made for establishment of colleges which were incorporated into temple complexes. Teaching of such subjects as grammar and astrology as well as recital and teaching of texts such as the Vedas, the Epics Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the Puranas were encouraged. Music and dance generally formed part of the daily ritual of the temples and during special celebrations and annual festivals these played a particularly dominant role. Large temples would maintain their own musicians — both vocal and instrumental, together with dancers, actors and teachers of performing arts. The life-size delineations of such musicians in a tenth-century temple at Khajuraho (See Illustration No. 26) as well as in the Sun temple at Konarka and nata mandir (dancing hall) forming an absolutely integral element in the Orissan and other temples also provide eloquent testimonies to that effect. And, of course, who can forget the performance of the great cosmic-dance of the Mahadeva Shiva himself at the Chidambaram temple. No less important was the institution of devadasis. These temple maidens played a significant role in dancing as well as in singing of devotional hymns by which the temple god was entertained. The fact that the Chola emperor Rajaraja I (985-1012) constructed two long streets for the accommodation of four hundred dancing women attached to the Brihadishvar temple (Thanjavur), gives us an idea of the lavish scale
Main Brahmanical temple sites
on which he endowed the temple and its functions. Many temples had regular festivals which provided opportunities for mingling of mythology and folklore, as for instance, the annual _rathayatra_ of the Jagannatha temple at Puri. The undertaking of pilgrimage (_tirthayatra_) is yet another mechanism through which the participation of the community in temple activities was facilitated.

As temples provided work and the means of livelihood for a large number of persons, they were able to exert great influence upon the economic life of people. Even small temples needed the services of priests, garland-makers and suppliers of clarified butter, milk and oil. One of the most detailed accounts that have been preserved of the number of people who were supported by a temple and the wages they received is that given in an inscription on the above-mentioned Thanjavur temple, and dated 1011 A.D. The list includes cooks, gardeners, dance-masters, garland-makers, musicians, wood-carvers, painters, choir-groups for singing hymns in Sanskrit and Tamil, accountants, watchmen and a host of other officials and servants of temples, totalling more than six hundred persons (See also Units 6.5 and 11.5).

### 7.6 SCULPTURES: STONE AND METAL IMAGES

The regional spirit asserting itself is seen in sculptural arts as well. Stylistically, schools of artistic depictions of the human form developed in eastern, western, central and northern India. Distinctive contribution also emerged in the Himalayan regions, the Deccan and the far South. A great majority of these regions produced works of art that were characterized by what has been described as the "medieval factor" by the great art historian and critic Nihar Ranjan Rai. This "medieval factor" was marked by a certain amount of slenderness and an accent on sharp angles and lines. The roundness of bodily form acquires flatness. The curves lose their convexity and turn into the concave. Western and Central Indian sculptures, Eastern Indian and Himalayan metal images, Gujarati and Rajasthani book and textile illustrations, Bengal terracottas and wood carvings and certain Deccan and Orissa miniatures registered this new conception of form through the post-tenth centuries.

The pivot of the early medieval sculpture is the human figure, both male and female, in the form of gods and goddesses and their attendants. Since these cult images rest on the assured foundations of a regulated structure of form, it maintains a more or less uniform standard of quality in all art-regions of India. Curiously, the creative climax of each art-region is not reached at one and the same time all over India. In Bihar and Bengal it is reached in the ninth and tenth centuries; in Orissa in the twelfth and thirteenth; in Central India in the tenth and eleventh; in Rajasthan in the tenth; in Gujarat in the eleventh; and in the far south in the tenth-eleventh centuries. It is in the Deccan alone that the story is of increasing torpor and petrification — indeed, Deccan ceases to be a sculptural province after the eighth century.

It is not only the cult images but non-ironic figure sculptures too which conform to more or less standardised types within each art-province and hardly reveal any personal attitude or experience of the artist. The multitude of figures related themselves to a large variety of motifs and subjects. These include: narrative reliefs, historical or semi-historical scenes; music and dance scenes, _mithuna_ couples in a variety of poses and attitudes, arrays of warriors and animals and _shalabhanjikas_ (women and the tree) (See Illustration No. 24).

Metal images cast in brass and oct-alloy (_asthata-dhata_), copper and bronze emerge in profusion in eastern India (Bihar, Bengal and Assam), Himalayan kingdoms (specially Nepal and Kashmir) and more particularly in the south. The North Indian images largely portray Brahmanic and Buddhist deities permeated with tantrik influences. The main types represented in the remarkable galaxy of South Indian metal images are the various forms of Shiva, especially the Nataraja, Parvati; the _Shaiva_ saints such as Appar, Sambaudar and Saudarar; Vaishnav saints called _Alvars_ and figures of royal donors.

All over the country, the post-Gupta iconography prominently displays a divine hierarchy which reflects the pyramidal ranks in feudal society. Vishnu, Shiva and
Durga appear as supreme deities lording over many other divinities of unequal sizes and placed in lower positions as retainers and attendants. The supreme Mother Goddess is clearly established as an independent divinity in iconography from this time and is represented in a dominating posture in relation to several minor deities. Even hitherto a puritanical religion like Jainism could not resist the pressure of incorporating the Mother Goddess in its fold, which is fully reflected in the famous Dilwara temples at Mt. Abu in Rajasthan. The pantheons do not so much reflect syncretism as forcible. In the rock-cut sculptures of Ellora one can feel the fighting mood of the divinities engaged in violent struggles against their enemies. The reality of unequal ranks appear in the Shaivite, Jain and Buddhists monastic organisations. The ceremonies recommended for the consecration of the acharya, the highest in rank, are practically the same as those for the coronation of the prince.

Check Your Progress 3
1) List two main temples each of the five categories listed under Northern style.

2) List four temples of the Southern and Vesara styles each.

3) Which were the main groups of people associated with various activities in temples?

4) What are the peculiar features of sculptures described by art historians as "medieval factor"?
The medieval tradition in paintings has the following traits:

- sharp, jerky and pointed angles, e.g., at the elbow and the shoulders,
- sensuous facial features — sharp and peaked nose, long wide swollen eyes projected sharply and crescent lips,
- richness of variegated patterns, motifs etc. gathered and adapted to the grip of sharp curves, and
- an intense preference for geometric and abstract patterns of decoration.

The manifestations of these traits can be seen in the paintings on the walls of the Kailas temple (eighth century) of Ellora; the Jain shrine at Sittanavasal (ninth century) and the Brihadishvar temple at Thanjavur (eleventh century), both in Tamil Nadu. However, these traits are still more pronounced in the well-known manuscript-illustrations of Bihar and Bengal, Nepal and Tibet in the post-tenth centuries. Textiles surfaces also offered a very rich field for the development of this tradition. At least from the thirteenth century onwards West Indian textile designs, and later, those of the Deccan, South, Orissa and Bengal also register their impact in unmistakable terms.

The feudal ethos of the post-Gupta economy, society and polity is also noticeable in the terracotta art. The change is noticeable in the patrons and content of depictions. Art activity, as a whole, was being feudalised. The pre-Gupta art at Bharhut, Sanchi, Karle, Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, etc. was patronised mainly by the mercantile and commercial class, artisans and craft-guilds as well as royal families. Art in the Gupta period (fourth—sixth centuries), when feudal tendencies had just begun to appear, reflects that vitality and zest of renewed brahmanism — for the first time brahmanical temples were constructed in permanent material, i.e. stone. The art of the post-Gupta centuries (650-1300 A.D.) was supported mainly by kings of different principalities, feudatories, military chiefs, etc. who alone could patronise large-scale art activities. The terracotta art, which had once symbolised the creative urges of commonman, ceased to be so and instead, became a tool in the hands of resourceful patrons. The output of miniature portable terracottas made for the urban market dwindled in the post-Gupta period. Though some of the old urban centres such as Varanasi, Ahichchatra and Kannauj survived and some new ones like Tattandapur (near Bulandshahr in U.P.) emerged in the early medieval period, very few of them have yielded terracottas. Instead of producing for the market, the clay modeller (piñatakara) become subservient to the architect and now produced for big landlords, brahmanical temples and non-brahmanical monasteries. Terracotta acquired the character of an elite art and was preserved in feudal headquarters and religious centres such as Paharpur, Rajbadidanga (Bengal), Vikramashila (Bihar), Akhnur and Ushkar (Kashmir). Terracottas in the post-Gupta centuries were used by landed aristocrats and kings to decorate religious buildings and their own places on auspicious occasions such as marriages as recorded by Bana in the Harshacharita.

7.8 EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Just as the Church was the principal organiser of education in Europe in the Medieval times, similarly the post-Gupta centuries saw the concentration of the centres of education in religious establishments, such as the Viharas, mathas and temples. Colleges also existed in some royal capitals such as Dhara, Ajmer, Anahilapura, etc. The fame of Mithila in North Bihar and Nadia in Bengal as centres of brahmanical learning increased in these centuries. Kashi (Varanasi) with its Shaiva monasteries was also a flourishing seat of brahmanical learning. Kashmendra tells us...
that students from such distant regions as Gauda (Bengal) travelled to Kashmir for study in the mathas. The evidence of Hemachandra reveals the existence of Vidya-mathas in Gujarat in the twelfth century. Numerous agraharas in the south were developing as educational centres. Amongst notable universities, one can mention Nalanda, Vikramashila and Odantapuri (all in Bihar), Valabhi (Gujarat), Jagadalla and Somapuri (in Bengal) and Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu.

The concept of temple libraries was evolved from the eighth century. The real ginnings in this sphere were laid by the Jainas. The long lists of their achers/preceptors — bhattarakas and shripujyas, and the place of honour given to them is symptomatic of this development. Their espousal of the cause of Shastradana (gift of religious texts/manuscripts) explains the great bhandaras (store houses) such as patan, Khambhat, Jainsalmer, etc., which became integral parts of Jain establishments in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Karnataka in particular. The trend was picked up by brahmanical mathas as well and we get a phenomenal proliferation of the manuscript tradition almost all over India.

That tantra and mantra became a favourite subject of study may be inferred from the fact that a full-fledged department of Tantra was run in the University of Vikramashila. The Tibetan traveller Taranatha, who came to India in the 17th century is very eloquent about tantrik curricula at Nalanda, Odantapuri and other prominent universities of Bihar and Bengal. The growth and popularity of occult sciences also constitute a significant feature of the post-eighth centuries. The list of subjects pursued by people in the thirteenth century has been given in Rajashekhara’s Prabandhakosha. It includes many occult sciences in the long list of more than 70 subjects.

Amongst the most notable phenomena in the sphere of learning may be recounted:

a) regionalisation of languages,
b) emergence of regional scripts, and
c) growing verbosity in literature.

The post-Gupta centuries are epoch-making in the history of language and literature. Although the large-scale dispersal of Sanskrit knowing brahmanas was resulting in the spread of that language in distant areas due to the landgrant phenomenon, the scope of Sanskrit was gradually getting confined. It was being used by the ruling class at the higher administrative levels. In the Naishadhiyacharita we find the dignitaries present in the svayamvara of Damyanti having the fear of not being understood and, as such, taking recourse to sanskrit.

According to Al-biruni, vernacular literature which was used by the common people was neglected by the upper and educated class. However, a development of undeniable significance is the differentiation of Apabhramshas into proto-Hindi, proto-Bengali, proto-Rajasthani, proto-Gujrati, proto-Marathi, proto-Maithili, etc. The Apabhramsha, which formed a link in our period between the Old-classical languages such as Sanskrit and Prakrit on the one hand and modern vernaculars on the other, originated much before our period. The Kuvalayamala, an eighth century work, enumerates as many as 18 Apabhramshas spoken in various regions of India, which turned into modern Indian languages later. In the list of Rajashekhara, Prakrit, Paishachika, Apabhramsha and Deshabhasha are mentioned alongwith Sanskrit as subjects to be studied by a prince. Vernaculars such as Avahatha, Magadhi, Shakari, Abhiri, Chandali, Savali, Draviti, etc. formed part of curriculum mentioned in the Varna Ratnakara. The pace of linguistic variations quickened in the country in the post-Gupta centuries mainly on account of lack of inter-regional communication and mobility. The migrating brahmanas enriched the vocabulary of regional languages. They also helped to develop and systematize local dialects into languages through the introduction of writing.

The emergence of regional scripts run parallel to the growth of regional languages. As there are numerous languages, so also there are quite a large number of scripts used to express these languages. From Maurya to Gupta times the script changed mainly as a result of the passage of time and anyone knowing the Brahmi script of the Gupta period could read inscriptions from any part of the country. This was not possible after the seventh century. From this period the regional variations become so
pronounced that one has to be well-versed in several scripts to be able to read. Obviously, the regional script was produced by regional insulaion and the availability of the locally educated scripts to meet the needs of local education and administration. Manuscripts, inscriptions and other written material use Devanagari, Assamese, Bengali, Oriya, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Sharada (in Kashmir) scripts. That the proliferation of scripts went beyond linguistic confines, is clear from the extremely verbose and ornate identity. The total sense. It is not necessary that economic, political, social and cultural decline run simultaneously. Also, the yardstick of writing of a brought to light many neglected poets but characterized it as a decadent poetry or writing of a decadent age. Sometimes we understand such phenomena in absolute or total sense. It is not necessary that economic, political, social and cultural decline run simultaneously. Also, the yardstick of “decadence” cannot be worked out in absolute terms. The decadent erotic sculptures of Khajuraho, Bhubaneswar, Konarka and Belur may appear to some to be products of a perverted mind but the same art pieces are taken by others to be manifestations of vital cultural ethos of people.

While editing a medieval Sanskrit text called Subhashita-Ratnakosha, D.D.Kosambi brought to light many neglected poets but characterized it as a decadent poetry or writing of a decadent age. Sometimes we understand such phenomena in absolute or total sense. It is not necessary that economic, political, social and cultural decline run simultaneously. Also, the yardstick of “decadence” cannot be worked out in absolute terms. The erotic sculptures of Krjajuraho, Konarka and Belur may appear to some to be products of a perverted mind but the same art pieces are taken by others to be manifestations of vital cultural ethos of people.

The post-eighth centuries saw prolific literary output in realms of philosophy, logic, legal texts, devotional poetry of the Alvars and the Shaiva Agamas, Kavyas, narratives, lyrics, historical biographies, scientific writings, shilpashastras, etc. Nonetheless, in keeping with the growing paraphernalia and personal vanity of the new landed classes, the language of most of these literary compositions became extremely verbose and ornate. This ornate style marked by pompous adjectives, adverbs and similies became the hallmark of literature as well as inscriptions. Although the prose style of Bana, which is known for highly complex and elaborate sentence constructions, was not exactly initiated, it did continue to serve as a model for the post-seventh century writings.

In the realm of poetry too, dvayashraya or Shlesha Kavyas were being produced consciously. These works contain verses conveying two different senses when read in different directions. The Ramacharita of Sandhyakara Nandi presents both the story of Rama and the life of King Ramapala of Bengal. The marriages of Shiva and Parvati and Krishna and Rukmani are described in a twelfth century work (Parvati Rukminiya) produced in the Chaulukya court. Hemachandra is credited with the composition of Saptasambhana having seven alternative interpretations. The tendency of working out the intricate pattern of double, triple or even more meanings reflects the artificiality of life.

7.9 LOCAL CHRONICLES AND ERAS

Hsian-tsang, the Chinese pilgrim of the seventh century writes that he learnt thoroughly the dialects in all the districts through which he journeyed. Further, writing general observations on languages, books, etc. he says: “with respect to the records of events each province has its own official for preserving them in writing. The record of these events in their full character is called Nilapita (blue deposit). In these records are mentioned good and evil events, with calamities and fortunate occurrences.”

The existence of historical chronicles in Kashmir (Rajatarangini), Gujarat (Rasmala, Prabandha, Chintamani, Vasanta Vilasa, etc.), Sind (Chachmama) and Nepal (Vanmshavalis) supports the presumption that the archives of different states, as a rule, contained such royal chronicles as stated by Hsian-tsang. These chronicles are further confirmation of the tendency of regionalisation noticeable in the overall cultural pattern and traditions.
An analogous development which further strengthened this tendency is visible in the rise of localised eras. In addition to the older Saka and Vikrama eras which had a vast and expansive usage up to the Gupta epoch and, to some extent even later; the post-Gupta centuries are marked by regional systems of time reckoning. Harsha himself founded an era in the early seventh century. His contemporary in Assam, i.e. Bhaskaravarman started Bhaskarabda, which is used in some manuscripts from that region. An era in Bengal also came into being. The Jains started using the Mahavira samvat. The great Vaishnava saint and teacher of Assam, viz., Shankaradeva is credited with the starting of Shankarabda — a reckoning after him.

7.10 THE NEW RELIGIOUS TRENDS

The religious rituals and practices underwent important changes during the centuries under discussion. In accordance with the growing practice of land grants along with the surrender of other property and service to the Lord and then receiving fiscal rights and protection as prasad or favour, there grew the puja system. The puja was interlinked with the doctrine of bhakti or complete self-surrender of the individual to his god (See also Unit 6.5.2).

Both puja and bhakti became integral ingredients of tantricism, which arose outside the Madhyadesha in the aboriginal, peripheral areas on account of the acculturation of the tribal people throughout large-scale religious land grants. Brahmanical land rights in the new territories could be maintained by adopting tribal rituals and deities, especially the Mother Goddess, which eventually produced the tantras (see also Unit 6.5). Tantricism permeated all religions in the post-seventh centuries—Jainism, Buddhism, Shaivism and Vaishnavism. If a thematic compilation of thousands of manuscripts is undertaken, it would be noticed that literature on pujas, vidhis, tantra and occult sciences is phenomenal. Even the jainas, who had been allergic to such practices gave birth to countless such manuscripts. The jaina Bhandaras are full of such manuscripts as Dharmachakrapuja, Dashalakshanapuja, etc. This is so, notwithstanding the original meaning of puja in the Jaina Anga literature, specially in the context of monks. In that context it is said to have symbolised “respect” shown to him and not the “worship” of limbs. It is unmistakable, however, that puja of idols of tirthankaras had the connotation with which we are concerned. According to R.C. Hazra, new topics in the Puranas, from the sixth century onwards, mainly relate to uana to the brahmanas and their worship, tirtha (pilgrimage), sacrifices to the planets and their pacification (installation of the images of naragrahah, becomes quite conspicuous in temple architecture), vrata (religions vows), puja etc. Puradharma which involved the building of temples, tanks and works of public utility, was emphasized as the highest mode of religion in the Puranas. Puradharma was the dominant ideology behind the large-scale building of temples in this period (See also Unit 6.5).

Check Your Progress 4

1) What are the four main characteristics of early medieval tradition in painting?

2) Discuss the scripts of Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas.
3) List four main systems of calculating time period (eras) in usage in post-Gupta period.

4) Briefly comment on the meaning of puja and Purtadharmma in new religious trends.

7.11 LET US SUM UP

This Unit has focussed on “regionalism” as the hallmark of the making of Indian cultural traditions in the centuries between the eighth and the thirteenth A.D. The manifestation of these include:

- the emergence of regional cultural units such as Andhra, Bengal, Gujarat, Karnataka, etc.
- development of architectural styles with broad regional specificities reflected in the three principal types Nagara, Dravida and Vesara,
- the bases of classifying temple styles in terms of geographical distribution, differentiation in ground plans and presiding deities,
- distinctive technical language used for describing architectural features,
- the impact of the ecological setting and the availability of raw materials on building activities,
- the evolutionary phases of decorations, ornamentations and other embellishments,
- the emergence of territorial schools in the making of sculptures in stone and metal,
- the role of the “medieval factor” in sculptures, terracottas and painting,
- the emergence of proto-types of modern Indian languages as a result of differentiation of Apabhramsha,
- the growth of regional scripts, chronicles and eras, and
- the permeation of feudal ethos in arts, literature, education learning and religion.

7.12 KEY WORDS

Antarala : vestibule, ante-room
Apsidal : building with a ground plan of semi-circular termination
Bhadra: flat face or facet of the Shikhara
Bhattaraka: Jain religious teacher/preceptor
Bhadra-deul: 'auspicious temple', it refers, however, to the jagamohana in front of the deul
Bhoga-mandapa: the reflectory hall of a temple
Caryatid: sculptured female/animal figures used as columns or supports
Deul: general name for a temple as a whole
Finial: finishing portion of a pinnacle
Garbha-griha: sanctum sanctorum, the most sacred part of a temple
Gopurum: monumental gateway
Jagamohana: hall in front of the sanctum
Kalasha: water-pot; pitcher-shaped element in the finial of a temple
Kudu: foliated arch on dravidian temple—ornamental motif derived from the Buddhist Chaitya arch
Mandapa: large open hall
Matha: monastery
Nata-mandir: dancing/festive hall, usually in front of the jagamohana
Irasada: palace/shrine; also used in the sense of favour by God/Lord
Pustakaraka: clay-modeller
Ratha: literally a temple chariot used on ceremonial occasions in South Indian temples; also applied incorrectly to the monolithic Pallava structures at Mahabalipuram
Rekha-deul: order of temple characterized by curvilinear shikhara
Shikhara: spire, tower
Torpor: inactiyeness
Vimana: towards sanctuary containing the cell in which the deity is enshrined.

7.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1
1) Texts like Mudrakshara, Kuvalyamala, Brahmavaivarta Purana and Hsiuan-tsang's work inform us about regional cultural units. See Sec. 7.1.
2) See Sec. 7.2.
3) The three main temple styles are nagara, dravida and vesara. See Sub-sec. 7.2.1.
4) Shiva, Durga, Saraswati and Ganga etc. are main deities. See Sub-sec. 7.2.2.

Check Your Progress 2
1) Garbha-griha, vimana, shikhara, mandapa and pradakshinapath are the main parts, See Sub-sec. 7.2.3.
2) The shape of the roof was most of the times decided by the climatic conditions and the raw material available. See Sub-sec. 7.2.4.
3) Malabar, Bengal and the eastern and western Himalayas were the main regions where this was popular. Sec. 7.2.5.
4) Stones were raised by rope pulleys on scaffolding and ramps were also used. See Sec. 7.3.

Check Your Progress 3
1) See Sec. 7.4 under northern style.
2) See Sec. 7.4 under the southern style and the Vesara style.
3) Musicians, garland-makers, painters, woodcarvers, accountants, devadasis, etc. were the main group of people. See Sec. 7.5.
4) The main feature is a certain amount of slenderness and an accent on sharp angles and lines. See Sec. 7.6.

Check Your Progress 4
1) See Sec. 7.7.
2) All the three had Tamil as their language but adopted three different scripts to maintain their identity.
3) There were Harshas system, Bhaskarabada, Shankarabda, Mahavir Samvat, See Sec. 7.9.
4) See Sec. 7.10.

SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS BLOCK

Sharma; R.S. *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*, New Delhi, 1983.
Sharma, R.S. *Urban Decay in India* 1987, New Delhi.
Sharma, R.S. *Material, Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*, New Delhi, 1983.

1. Temple Shikharas (Northern Style).

2. Shiva and Parvati seated on Nandi (Hinglajgarh 10th century).

3. Plan of Lakshmana Temple (Khajuraho, 10th century).

5. Plan (octagonal) of Mundeshvari Temple (Ramgarh, 7th century).

6. Plan (apsidal) of Vamana Temple (Kizhavelur, 11th century).

7. Plan of Vishnu Temple (Shrirangam).

The superstructure of Khunah in the superstructure of the Catechumenate Temple (6th-7th century).

16. Fan-shaped windows at the roof of the Vajra Temple (6th-7th century).

17. Fan-shaped Temple, Bengal.


15. Shiva Temple (Pandrethan, 9-10th century).

16. Pillars of Chola (a), Pallava (b)

17. Niches of Chola (a), Pallava (b) period.
18. A palm-leaf manuscript about temple construction showing the architect, calculations, height indications and plan.


20. Platform of deul and jagamohana, stone-wheel (Konarka).

22. Kailash Temple (Ellora, 8-9th century).
23. The Rathas at Mahabalipuram (7th century).

24. Minakshi Temple (Madurai).

25. Colonnade within Minakshi Temple.
26. Musicians on a temple pillar (Khajuraho, 10th century).

27. Carvings of mythical animals, warriors and foliage (Krishna temple, Somnathpur).