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Temple Architecture Hills

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- A unique form of architecture developed in the hills of Kumaon, Garhwal, Himachal and Kashmir. Kashmir's proximity to prominent Gandhara sites (such as Taxila, Peshawar and the northwest frontier) lent the region a strong Gandhara influence by the fifth century CE.



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- This began to mix with the Gupta and post-Gupta traditions that were brought to it from Sarnath, Mathura and even centres in Gujarat and Bengal.
- Brahmin pundits and Buddhist monks frequently travelled between Kashmir, Garhwal, Kumaon and religious centres in the plains like Banaras, Nalanda and even as far south as Kanchipuram.

- As a result, both Buddhist and Hindu traditions began to intermingle and spread in the hills.
- The hills also had their own tradition of wooden buildings with pitched roofs.
- At several places in the hills, therefore, you will find that while the main garbhagriha and shikhara are made in a rekha-prasada or latina style, the mandapais of an older form of wooden architecture.
- Sometimes, the temple itself takes on a pagoda shape.
- The Karkota period of Kashmir is the most significant in terms of architecture.
- One of the most important temples is Pandrethan, built during the eighth and ninth centuries. In keeping with the tradition of a water tank attached to the shrine, this temple is built on a plinth built in the middle of a tank.
- Although there are evidences of both Hindu and Buddhist followings in Kashmir, this temple is a Hindu one, possibly dedicated to Shiva.
- The architecture of this temple is in keeping with the age-old Kashmiri tradition of wooden buildings.
- Due to the snowy conditions in Kashmir, the roof is peaked and slants slowly outward.
- The temple is moderately ornamented, moving away from the post-Gupta aesthetics of heavy carving.
- A row of elephants at the base and a decorated doorway are the only embellishments on the shrine.
- Like the findings at Samlaji, the sculptures at Chamba also show an amalgamation of local traditions with a post-Gupta style.
- The images of Mahishasuramardini and Narasimha at the Lakshna-Devi Mandir are evidences of the influence of the post-Gupta tradition. Both the images show the influence of the metal sculpture tradition of Kashmir.
- The yellow colour of the images is possibly due to an alloy of zinc and copper which were popularly used to make images in Kashmir.
- This temple bears an inscription that states that it was built during the reign of Meruvarman who lived in the seventh century.
- Of the temples in Kumaon, the ones at Jageshwar near Almora, and Champavat near Pithoragarh, are classic examples of nagara architecture in the region.