Art & Culture · GS - I

Estimate the contribution of Pallavas of Kanchi for the development of art and literature of South India.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2024	GS - I	Art & Culture

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Kanchipuram, temple architecture, rock-cut architecture, structural temples, Mahabalipuram, Pancha Rathas, Shore Temple, Dravidian style, Sanskrit literature, Tamil literature, Bhakti tradition

Model Answer

Introduction

The Pallavas of Kanchi played a foundational role in shaping the architectural and literary traditions of South India, particularly between the 6th and 9th centuries CE.

Contribution to Art and Architecture

1. **Rock-cut architecture:** Under Mahendravarman I, cave temples at places such as Mandagapattu marked important experimentation in South Indian temple architecture.
2. **Monolithic architecture:** Narasimhavarman I promoted the famous Pancha Rathas at Mahabalipuram, demonstrating advanced stone craftsmanship.
3. **Structural temples:** The Shore Temple at Mahabalipuram and Kailasanatha Temple at Kanchipuram represent the maturation of the early Dravidian architectural tradition.
4. **Sculpture:** Mahabalipuram's reliefs, including the celebrated “Descent of the Ganga”, display sophisticated narrative sculpture.

Contribution to Literature

Pallava rulers patronised **Sanskrit and Tamil** literary traditions. Mahendravarman I himself was associated with Sanskrit literary culture. The Pallava period also witnessed the growth of the Bhakti tradition through the devotional compositions of **Alvars and Nayanars**.

Conclusion

The Pallavas provided an important bridge between early rock-cut experimentation and mature Dravidian temple architecture. Their patronage of Sanskrit, Tamil and Bhakti traditions significantly enriched the cultural foundations of South India.

BECOME
IAS
AI POWERED UPSC PREP