# Art & Culture · GS - I

**“Though the great Cholas are no more yet their name is still remembered with great pride because of their highest achievements in the domain of art and architecture.” Comment.**

| EXAM YEAR | PAPER | SUBJECT |
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| MARKS | WORD LIMIT |
|---|---|
| 15 | ~250 words |

## Answer Hint

**Chola architecture, Dravidian style, Brihadisvara Temple, Gangaikondacholapuram, Airavatesvara Temple, temple sculpture, Chola bronzes, Nataraja, UNESCO heritage, cultural legacy**

## Model Answer

### Introduction

The Cholas (c. 9th–13th century CE) created a distinctive phase in South Indian art and architecture. Their temples combined monumental architecture, sophisticated sculpture, engineering excellence and religious symbolism, leaving a lasting cultural legacy.

### Architectural Achievements

1. **Monumental temple architecture:** Rajaraja I's Brihadisvara Temple at Thanjavur represents the mature Dravidian style, with its towering vimana, massive proportions and elaborate sculptural decoration.
2. **Architectural evolution:** The temples at Gangaikondacholapuram and Darasuram demonstrate increasing refinement in proportion, ornamentation, mandapas and sculptural detailing.
3. **Temple-centred institutions:** Chola temples were not merely religious structures. They functioned as centres of education, cultural activity, economic exchange, land management and social organisation.

4. **Engineering excellence:** The construction of enormous stone structures, particularly the towering vimanas, demonstrates advanced knowledge of planning, construction and material handling.

## Sculptural Excellence

Chola bronze sculpture represents one of the finest achievements of Indian metal art. The **Nataraja** image is particularly significant for its dynamic representation of Shiva's cosmic dance. The lost-wax technique enabled exceptional anatomical detail and expressive movement.

## Conclusion

The Cholas transformed temples into enduring symbols of religious devotion, artistic excellence and state patronage. Their architectural and sculptural traditions continued to influence later South Indian temple culture, making their legacy significant even after the political power of the Cholas disappeared.

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