Section 1: Answer each question in about 500 words.

1. Discuss the growth of various styles of temple architecture during the early medieval period.

**Ans:** Temple architecture of high standard developed in almost all regions during ancient India. The distinct architectural style of temple construction in different parts was a result of geographical, climatic, ethnic, racial, historical and linguistic diversities. Ancient Indian temples are classified in three broad types. This classification is based on different architectural styles, employed in the construction of the temples. Three main style of temple architecture are the Nagara or the Northern style, the Dravida or the Southern style and the Vesara or Mixed style. But at the same time, there are also some regional styles of Bengal, Kerala and the Himalayan areas.

One important part of the ancient Indian temples was their decoration. It is reflected in the multitude details of figured sculpture as well as in the architectural elements. Another important component of Indian temples was the garbha-grhya or the womb chamber, housing the deity of the temple. The garbha-grhya was provided with a circumambulation passage around. However, there are also many subsidiary shrines within temple complexes, more common in the South Indian temple.

In the initial stages of its evolution, the temples of North and South India were distinguished on the basis of some specific features like sikhaara and gateways. In the north Indian temples, the sikhaara remained the most prominent component while the gateway was generally unassuming. The most prominent features of South Indian temples were enclosures around the temples and the Gopurams (huge gateways). The Gopurams led the devotees into the sacred courtyard. There were many common features in the Northern and the Southern styles. These included the ground plan, positioning of stone-carved deities on the outside walls and the interior, and the range of decorative elements.

**Design**

The very essence of a Hindu temple is believed to have developed from the ideology that all things are one and everything is associated. The four essential and significant principles which are also aims of human life according to Indian philosophy are the quests for artha - wealth and prosperity; kama - sex and pleasure; dharma - moral life and virtues; and moksha - self knowledge and realisation. The mathematically structured spaces, intricate artworks, decorated and carved pillars and statues of Hindu temples illustrate and revere such philosophies. A hollow space without any embellishments situated at the centre of the temple, usually below the deity, may also be at the side or above the deity symbolises the complex concept of Purusha or Purusa meaning the Universal principle. Consciousness, the cosmic man or self without any form, however, omnipresent and associates all things. The Hindu temples suggest contemplations, encouragement and further purification of mind and prompt the process of self-realisation in devotees; however the preferred process is left to the convention of individual devotees.

**Site**

The areas of Hindu temple sites are usually vast with many of them built near water bodies, in the lap of nature. This is probably because according to ancient Sanskrit texts the most suitable site for a Hindu temple referred as ‘Mandir’ is at close proximity to water bodies and gardens where flowers blossom, chirping of birds and sounds of ducks and swans can be heard and animals can rest without any fear. These places exhibiting peace and tranquility are recommended by the texts for building Hindu temples elucidating that Gods reside in such places. Although, leading Hindu temples are suggested near natural water bodies like confluence of rivers, river banks, seashores and lakes, according to the ‘Puranas’ and ‘Bharta Samhita’, Mandir can even be constructed in sites devoid of natural water bodies. However, such suggestions include building up of a pond with water gardens in front of the ‘Mandir’ or towards left. In the absence of both natural and man-made water bodies, water remains typically present during consecration of the deity or the Mandir. Part III of Chapter 93 of the Hindu text Vishnuadharottara Purana also recommends building of temples within caves and chiselled out stones; atop hills amidst spectacular and serene views; within hermitages and forests; beside gardens; and at the upper end of a street of a town.

**Layout**

Layout of a Hindu temple pursues a geometrical design known as vasta-purusha-mandala, the name of which is derived from the three vital components of the design namely Vastu meaning Vaas or a place of dwelling; Purusha, meaning the Universal principle; and Mandala meaning circle. Vastupurushamandala is a mystical diagram referred in Sanskrit as a Yantra. The symmetrical and self-repeating model of a Hindu temple demonstrated in the design is derived from the primary convictions, traditions, myths, fundamentalness and mathematical standards.

According to Vastupurushamandala, the most sacred and typical template for a Hindu temple is the 8x8 (64) grid Manduka Hindu Temple Floor Plan also referred as Bhekapada and Ajira. The layout displays a vivid saffron centre with intersecting diagonals which according to Hindu philosophy symbolises the Purusha. The axis of the Mandir is created with the aid of the four fundamentally significant directions and thus, a perfect square is created around the axis within the available space. This square which is circumscribed by the Mandala circle and divided into perfect square grids is held sacred. On the other hand, the circle is regarded as human and worldly that can be perceived or noticed in daily life such as the Sun, Moon, rainbow, horizon or water drops. Both the square and the circle support each other. The model is usually seen in large temples while an 81 sub-square grid is observed in ceremonial temple superstructures.

Each square within the main square referred as ‘Pada’ symbolise a specific element that can be in the form of a deity, an apsara or a spirit. The primary or the innermost square/s of the 64 grid model called Brahma Padas is dedicated to Brahman. The Garbhagruha or centre of the house situated in the Brahma Padas houses the main deity. The outer concentric layer to Brahma Padas is the Devika Padas signifying facets of Devas or Gods which is again surrounded by the next layer, the Manusha Padas, with the ambulatory. The