Twin Temple of Gandharadi

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Introduction

Etymologically, the word “Temple” is derived from the Latin word “Templum”, which means an open or consecrated space or a building inaugurated by an augur. It is generally conceived as a building used for the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses. In its primitive sense, this word corresponds to a place marked as sacred to a God, in which the house of God may be erected. In its usage, it is rather employed in a restricted sense to denote various religious affiliations except Christianity and Islam. The Twin Temple of Gandharadi is situated close to the right bank of Mahanadi at a distance of 13 Kms from Boudh towards Sonepur and can be reached from the State Highway by a road of about 3 Kms. In the Bhanja copper plate charters of 9th-10th centuries, Gandharadi has been mentioned as Gandhata, Gandhatapati and Gandharadi. It flourished as a Centre of Religion and culture under the rule of the Bhanjas of Khinjali Mandala. The twin identical temples dedicated to Siddhesvara (Siva) and Nilamadhava (Vishnu) erected on one stone platform of low height bear witness to the contribution of the Bhanjas to the temple architecture of Orissa. They fluctuate from each other in their respective ayudhas, as one is dedicated to Vishnu and other to Siva. T. E. Donaldson has examined that the temples were surrounded at the four corners of the platform by small shrines so that as a unit the temples formed the Central shrine of a panchayatan plan. R.D.
Banerjee also declares that there were foundations of smaller temples upon the platform. But unfortunately these are no longer in evidence nor are there any symbol of the collection of the loose and broken images of Durga, Yamana, Matsya, Kurma and Varaha that he mentions. The only image intact are two large standing images of Vishnu, carved of fine grained chlorite and placed inside the Nilamadhav temple one within the shrine and the other in a corner of the mukhasala. A Siva Linga is worshipped as Paschima Somanath, few yards away from the temples. Whatever now remarkable is that two identical beautiful temples are standing on a common raised pedestal on the vast plain area of the village Gandharadi.

Every testimonial of the temple architectures in Orissa and central India corresponds to a regional manifestation of the nagara temple style and has certain common features, being derived from the same arch type. The entire body of those temples acquire curvilinear spires and square plans with projected angles of sikhara type or Rekha order and it ultimately became the dominant form of temple architecture in Orissa. The earliest temples now extent represents the natural products of that category. But the Orissan temple architecture by reason of its own distinct individualities and long history of evolution soon came to acquire for itself a distinct nomenclature i.e. the Kalinga style. Prof. R.D. Banerjee has drawn our concentration to an inscription of the pre-Muslim period in the temple of Amriteswara at Holal in the Ballary district, in which mention has been made of four classes of temple Nagara, Kalinga, Dravida and Vesara. Prof. Banerjee observation has further been supported by another scholar, Mr. D.P.Ghosh who has shown that certain well-marked peculiarities distinguish the Orissan group of temples from the sikhara temples of North India, Central provinces, Rajputana, and Gujarat. The temple of Gandharadi, about which we have discussed their architectural features and decorative motifs as well as the iconography of the images available there certainly played an important role in the evolution of Kalinga temples. Each of these temples possess the common features of indigenous sub-styles of temple architecture of Central India and Orissa and pave the technique for full-fledged Kalinga style which is marked entirely in the Lingaraj temple of Bhubaneswar.

The ideal specimens can be exploited as a source of historical knowledge, unless they are placed in their proper sequential positions. On the other hand there is no epigraphic source available for the determination of the dates of these temples Gandharadi. However these temples can be co-related on the basis of their architectural features, decorative motifs, sculptures and iconography of the images to one or other of the monuments of which the chronology is known as analytical study of the dated and datable temples and cumulative consequences. When applied to study these undated temples to bring out this correlation in an emphatic manner, it is possible to divide again the undated temples as cognates of one or other of the dated and datable temples. We may not be able to find out the exact date of their construction but we can place them to particular times as cognates of the particular temple of which the date is known. Such a chronology, though approximate is borne out by the logic of the evolutionary process experienced by the architectural movement, through different epochs of Orissan history.

Orissa appears to have pursued the construction of stone temples on a large scale, starting approximately 600 A.D. till the end of the Hindu supremacy. The number and design of
the mouldings in the *pabhaga* change during the long evolution of the Orissan temple. On the earliest surviving temple *pabhaga* consists of three mouldings, which partakes of the *bada* division. In addition to this on those early temples, the number of *pabhaga* moldings used to differ on *Jagamohana* from that of the shrine. Among the temples of Bhubaneswar, which are dated by K.C. Panigrahi in his work “Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswar” are Markandesvvara (Early 8th A.D.) Vaital (775 A.D.) and Sisiresvara (800 A.D.) ³, which are built under Bhauumakara rules have the latest surviving examples of this type of base mouldings. As a contrast to this base moulding of shrine and *Jagamohana* are four at the twin temple of Gandharadi. In this respect we hardly agree with K.C. Panigrahi that Gandharadi was a contemporary of Sisiresvara, Rather we may safely assume that these twin temple must have been built in a later date to the above temples of 8th Century A.D. Mukteswar (950 A.D.) and Gouri, dated to 10th century A.D. are the earliest examples of having five mouldings on *pabhaga* at Bhubaneswar.

By the side of Gandharadi, a *kumbha* is virtually found in between first two moulding i.e. *khura* and *patta*. T.E. Donaldson marked that *kumbha* as an ornamental detail of the temple are not a part of the standard repertory of the Orissan *Silpin*, it is apparently that this design is the outgrowth of outside influence⁵. The most obvious source is Chhattisgarh temples, where free standing *kumbha*-*stambhas* form part of this architectural idiom. In the Lakshmana temple of Sirpur, we can mark the *kumbha*, as a part of the *pabhaga* moulding. The *champaka* leaf of the *pabhaga* already appears on the Lakshmana temple of Sirpur datable to the late 7th Century and most likely filters into Orissa from Chhattisgarh towards the end of the 9th century along with Somavamsi. Kesharis⁶ *Champaka* leaf is used as one of the decorative motifs of *pabhaga* moulding at Gandharadi. According to the above observation of Donaldson these twin temples should be dated to the end of the 9th Century. Tirthesvara temple of Bhubaneswar, acquires the same base moulding as at Gandharadi and Churasi. Vidya Dehejia indicates that these three temples should be place in an equal cognate of transitional phase¹⁰, and constructed just earlier than Muktesvara of 10th century A.D.

**Pista**

The high *pista* of Gandharadi contributes another peculiar feature for the determination of its age. *Pista* on the earliest Orissan temples is generally small and devoid of decoration. On the Sisiresvara and Vaital *Deula*, it is seen only 8-9 inches above the ground, but follows the basic plan of the *deula*. On the other hand it is observed that the architectural tradition in Chattisgarh encouraged the high *pista* as on the brick Indralath temple and Sirpur though devoid of decoration. Gandharadi infatuated a decorated high *pista* combining the Orissan pattern with Chattisgarh. It offered the most basic example where the *pista* is high enough to duplicate the programme of the shrine but devoid of figure motifs. The *pista* of Boudh is higher then Gandharadi, with a plenty of figure motifs, for which Boudh temple is considered to be built later than Gandharadi. A similar type of *pista* is repeated at Ganeswarpur in Eastern Orissa with the sides being decorated with Krishnalila themes and erotic images. Vidya Dehejia places Ganeswarpur and Boudh along with Muktesvara as the products of the culminating phase¹¹ in the development of Orissan temples

**Bada**

The *bada* of the most primitive surviving Orissan temple is *tri-ratha* in plan as a contrast to the *Pancharatha* plan of the *gandi*. These temples were built mostly in Bhauumakara period
and in ancient Kalinga region. Most significant among them are Satrughnesvar, (575AD), Parasuramesvar(650AD) group of temples and Mukhalingam. It is in those temples, only the rahapaga continues vertically from pabhaga to the bisama of the gandi, but the other pagas of the bada ends beneath the baranda giving way to the independent Pancharatha design to the gandi above it. Consequently there was no decorative relation existing between the bada and gandi. For which, they are regarded by Dehejia as the temples of formative phase in the long evolution of Orissan temples. In such temples the side pagas on the bada are not well projected and appear more like a window due to there small size in length and width. It is for the first time on the long west side of the bada of the Vaital deul (775A.D.) that pagas alignments became different. Five independent vertical segments projected from the wall each with a niche which begins above the pabhaga mouldings. They are all of the similar size, however, are conceived as engaged pilaster rather than true pagas, filled in with stone work. In the next phase, this arrangement is further developed in Sisiresvara(800A.D) where five pilasters but less projected appear on each side of the bada. This indigenous style of Bhauma period mingled with pillared mandapa as appears at Rajim in South Kosai, gave rise to the well projected five Pagas on the bada. This process appears to be first experimented at Gandharadi. There are five well-projected pagas on each side of the bada co-relating the pancharatha plan of the gandi. The kanikas on the bada is completely integrated to that of the gandi. In this respect it is assumed to be built later than Sisiresvara. There are also good deal of dissimilarities appearing between Gandharadi and Sisiresvara as far as the images of the paga niches are concerned. A noteworthy feature of the images enshrined in niches on the bada of the Sisiresvara is that they have all been made of two or three blocks of stone contained in two or three courses of the walls. Consequently, they have been made part of the walls with the result that more of the side deities are missing from the Sisiresvara and its cognate members. This design is not followed at Gandharadi as an effect of which the niches are seen without deities. In this respect it will be difficult to assume Gandharadi to be included as the cognate member of Sisiresvara Group.

The use of Vajramundis and Khakhara mundis is considered as carry over from earlier temples. Among the temples of eastern Orissa, so for dated, it is on Suklesvar and at Bankada, where the pagas are designed first as Vajramundis rather than as flattened kumbha stambha as at the Sisiresvar and Vaital Deul. In the process of development and gradual transformation the previous Vajramundi took a new shape of elongated Khakhara mundi. Simhanatha temple situated near Gopinathapur of Cuttack district, datable to late 8th century A.D. was the earliest, which possess the elongated Khakhara mundis. In the twin temples of Gandharadi embracing the influence from South Kosal kanika are shaped as pilasters with miniature vajramundis at this base. While the anuratha is fashioned as an elongated khakhara mundi containing from the alignment of the pabhaga, which has a talagarbhika, inserted beneath the niche, crowned by a small vajramundi below baranda. The raha is also designed as a wide vajramundi with flanking offset rather than a truncated rekha as on early temples. The khakhara mundis of Gandharadi being crowned by vajramastaka is too developed to have its own tri-ratha plan. It is experimental that in Eastern Orissa, the use of vajramastaka became familiar in the temples of late 9th Century A.D. At Gandharadi, there are no stambhas inserted in the recess separating
each paga as a contrast to the Panduvamsi (Chhattisgarh) tradition where the raha is used to be flanked on each side by an engaged naga stambha. The jangha is single story as contrast to the two-story jangha in the temples of 11th century in Orissa.

Till the period of 8th century, the tala garvika moulding were not well developed in the raha and subsidry niches. In the temples of Markandeswar and Sisiresvar the talagarvika is like a baranda moulding of two fold division. The indentation beneath the raha is gradually filled with a series of moulding which develop into a miniature shrine or mundi as at Badagaon, Paikpada, Simhanatha, but without any figure motifs. It is at Gandharadi where a talagarbhika of elongated khakaramundi with figure motifs housed in a niche at the base of the raha and is inserted beneath the niche of the anuratha. At the same time a small urdha garbhika is added above the niche. But we know that with the development of the two storeys Jangha in the 11th century, the urdva garbhika is eliminated from the top of the niches.

On the earliest temples of Orissa, the baranda consist of two projecting mouldings separated by a recess. The projecting mouldings are shaped like a khura and duplicate the decorative programme of the first of the pabhaga moulding. The muhanti relieved with a crowd of scroll work, the sloping upper surface is decorated with spaced Chaitya design alternating with figure motifs where as the lower moulding caps the Jangha the upper moulding serves as the bottom for the first bhumi division of the gandi. Universally the baranda division on early temples evidently articulated though in 8th century at Bhubaneswar, due to innovative experiments with paga designs, its demarcating functions is partly obfuscated while towards the end of the 9th century, the upper moulding no longer serves as the bottom of the first bhumi in gandi. Similar to this with the development of a pancharatha plan for the bada, the baranda moulding at Gandharadi is a plan horizontal recess carved in region at top and devoid of decorations. In so many places these temples have Nayika figures contemporary to the females of Bhubaneswar, which were already dated to be constructed in the last part of the 9th century A.D.

The Jangha is crowned by a broad moulding serving as a baranda. The interior walls at Gandharadi enclose four pilasters on each side, which help to create a modified cruciform plan similar to that of the Vaital deula, though it has been suggested that originally there may have been four pillars arranged in a square at the centre as in pillared mandapas. Above all, the exterior decoration at Gandharadi is quit equal with temples at Ganesvarpur and Chaurasi of eastern Orissa. But these two temples represent the end of an evolving tradition of the rectangular plan of the Jagamohana. The square ground plan of Jagamohana becomes familiar in later temples. Muktesvara, which is dated to late 10th century A.D. has a semi square ground plan with the long sides only three feet wider than the width so that it appear almost equal. Besides figure motifs are engraved on the lateral sides of Jagamohana, which is not present at Gandharadi.

Gandi

The Gandi of these twin temples is pancha ratha in design continuing the five-fold arrangement of the bada, so that the pagas extend up the height of the deula. The kanika pagas are divided into seven bhumis by amlas with each bhumi again subdivided into four-bhumi barandika. Raha paga is decorated with five-spaced chaitya motifs rather than three as on early Orissan temples. Anuraha is left plain. In the decoration of the gandi, it exactly equals with the Kapileswar temple at Charda.
**Mastaka**

The mastaka of Nilamadhava temple is crowned by an akasa chakra as is gradually used elsewhere. But the akasa Lingam crowning Siddhesvara is quite unusual. Parasuramesvara temple of Bhubaneswar exactly crowned by an akasa Lingam as on Siddhesvara at Gandharadi. According to Donaldson Lingam appears as the crowning member on some early as well as on later temples, most likely representing 8th head of Siva which points skyward. It is difficult to consider the age of the temples on the basis of the ayudhas. Jagamohana, the earliest surviving impages. Jagamohana is similar to that of the Parasuramesvar temple which is rectangular in plan. With terraced roof that slopes in two stages, Gandharadi is a near duplicate of Jagamohana of the Sisiresvar. On the Sisiresvar, the jagamohana is rectangular in shape with similar terraced roof. Having its own back wall and the interior walls are lined with spaced pilasters eliminating the pillars as noticed at Parasuramesvar. Each side of the bada is divided into three angas like Uttarewar and Mohini temples. The center anga is designed as a large niche which cut through the pabhaga moulding. The side angas are shaped as Vajramundis. The mundis are crowned by vajramastaka, which contain two superimposed chaitya medallions. The gavaksha projection of the centre of the bada of jagamohana was not well projected until 9th century for which there is no gavaksha projection at Sisiresvara.

Among the temples of Bhubaneswar, it is on the Simhanath temple where Gavaksha as a central Anga appeared for the first time though projected slightly. The terraced roof slopes in three stages, rather than two as on early temples. Gavaksha mandana is absent in Simhanath temple. But at Gandharadi the beautification is a step forward to Simhanath. The Jagamohana is rectangular in shape and has a roof sloped in two stages but with additional covering slab. The three stepped recess at Simhanath. The bada is trianga in plan with the well-projected Gavaksa and entrance portal being flanked on either side by naga / nagi stambhas. The gavaksa is decorated with framed window filled with bankajali on the lower half while the upper half has an alignment of three elongated Vajramundis separated from one another by a thin stambha. The pagas flanking the gavaksa are decorated with three elongated mundis separated from another by a thin stambha. This alignment of pilaster alternating with elongated mundis also appear on the deula, so that for the first time the decorative motifs of the Jagamohana duplicate those on the deula to crowns the niche of each mundi with an abbreviated urdhvagarbhika at the top. Above psychoanalysis shows that Gandharadi should be dated later to Sisiresvara and Simhanatha.

**Conclusion**

From the above discussion, it is clear that a comparative study of these twin temples also agrees to the above fact that, they were built in the 9th century A.D. It is the earliest temple of Orissa to assimilate the Central Indian tradition of the temple architecture with the indigenous Orissan style, with the innovations thus filtering from Central India brought a change in the overall design prevailing in the temples of Orissa. It led the Orissan temples to march towards perfection in height, components and decorations. The process culminated in the evolution of Kalinga temples under the patronage of the Somavamsis particularly at Bhubaneswar from the 10th century onwards. Thus the twin temples at Gandharadi play a valuable role in the evolution of Kalinga Style temples of Orissa by assimilating two original
and indigenous styles. Gandharadi bears all transitional characters of temple architectures. It possesses no similarity with earlier Orissan temples but creates a class of its own. The twin temples of Gandharadi definitely succeed Markandesvara, Vaital, Sisiresvara, Simhanath and preceeds temples of Boudh, Ganesvarpur and Muktesvar.

References


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