

# Ganga Temple Architecture: A Study on Ananta Vasudev Temple in Bhubaneswar

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**B**hubaneswar, the capital of Odisha is associated with a cluster of magnificent temples. Its proud sculptural and architectural heritage coupled with its sanctity as Ekamra Kshetra, one of the 5 great religious centers in Odisha since early medieval days attracts thousands of visitors from all corners of the world throughout the year. It is important Saiva kshetra of India, its sacredness has been described in the medieval texts like Ekamra Chandrika, Kapila Samhita and Swarnadri-mahodaya. Bhubaneswar is easily accessible, which is 438 K.M from south west of Kolkata and on the main railway line to Chennai. The airport was also situated in this town through which international contact could be possible. Tourist bungalow, hotels; dharmasalas provide accommodation to the visitors. Here we



find early 6-7th century temples to later 13-14<sup>th</sup> century temple. The building activity was in full swing under the Ganga. During this period one important Vishnu temple named Ananta Vasudev temple was built.

Features of Ganga temple: The temples of this period contain four features-

- Main temple
- Mukhasala
- Natamandap
- Bhoga mandapa

Main temple or the sanctuary is meant for a glimpse of the deity and ritual worship. Generally the sanctuary is the rekha deula. Rekha deula has its four features-

- Pista
- Bada
- Gandi
- Mastaka

### **Pista**

It is not found before the Ganga period. It became prominent in the Ganga period. Sometimes it became terraced platform.

### **Bada**

Bada consists of Pabhaga, jungha and baranda. But it is developed into 5 divisions in

this period. Jungha is subdivided into two is called as lower jungha and upper jungha. Among the two junghas there is a set of moldings known as bandhana. Pabhaga is divided into 5 where it in incase of the early temple those are the khura, kumbha, pata, kani and basanta. Gandi has its seven divisions known as sapta ratha temple. Those divisions are the rekha paga 1, Anurekha paga 2, and anuratha paga 2, and Konia paga 2, these pagas terminated at bisamas. The portion which is in the top of the bisama is called as mastaka. The cylindrical portion above the bisamas is termed as beki or neck. Above the beki, there is a huge piece of stone called as Amalaka. The roof of the amalaka is covered by slightly curved stone slab called khapuri.

Besides the vimana structures the other structures are the mukhasala, Bhogamandapa and natamandapa is called as pidha deula. Externally the pidha deula possesses divisions similar to that of rekha. That is the pista, bada, gandi and mastaka. Pista is regular in this period. Bada is exactly same as to the vimana. Some exceptions are found in few temples. Gandi of the pidha deula differs from the rekha deula. It consists of a number of pidhas. The pidhas are arranged in diminishing order as they go up by which of tillers or pidhas. The pidhas diminish in such a proportion that the size of the topmost pidha became exactly the half of the size of the lower pidha. In case of increase in the number, the pidhas are arranged in groups called potalas. The potalas are separated from one another by recessed kanthis. The mastaka of full fledged pidha deul consists of beki, ghanta again beki, amalaka and khapuri.

The important temple of the Ganga period is the Sun temple at Konark, Jagannatha temple at Puri and the Ananta Basudev temple in Bhubaneswar.<sup>1</sup>

### **Ananta Basudev temple**

**Time scale :** According to a commemorative inscription, originally attached to the temple, now in the Royal Asiatic Society at London, it was built in A.D 1278 by Chandrika, daughter of Anangabhima- III, during the reign of her nephew Bhanudev –I (A.D 1264 -1279) for Ananta Vasudev.<sup>2</sup>

The temple is situated within a walled compound along with numerous other structures which consists of a deula, jagamohan, natamandapa and bhogamandapa and the later two being added devoid of sculptural decoration. Both the bhogamandapa and natamandapa are pidha structures and their pyramidal roofs along with the roof of the jagamohan, present ascending peaks culminating in the mastaka of the deul a more effectively arrangement where the natamandapa appears squeeze between the jagamohan and bhogamanapa and has a relatively flat roof, which suggests that these two front structures were added at the same time. Affixed to the western compound wall are two inscribed slabs, one being a commemorative inscription belonging to the Meghesvara temple and other a prasasta of bhatra bhavadeva of Bengal bada decoration.

### **Bada decoration:**

The temple faces to west is built in a ornamentally carved pitha. The walls of the pitha are decorated with pabhaga of 3 mouldings. The jungha has khakra mundis flanked by nagastambas, alaskanyas or stambas relived with scroll work on each side and virala motifs.

The bada is sapta ratha in plan. The bada is divided by a madhya bandhana of three mouldings. The facets of the rathas are richly carved with fine scroll work and flower shaped

motifs. The central facets of the corner ratha having female figures and the khakra mundis on the intermediary ratha of the lower jungha contain the eight dikpalas, seated on their respective mounts, while the corresponding spaces on their respectively mounts upper jungha have their female counter parts.

### **Gandi decoration :**

The gandi decoration has a pancharatha plan rather than saptaratha. The kanika is divided into ten bhumis by bhumi-amalas within five barandis. In the raha paga there is the anga sikharas, where is also in the raha paga.

### **Jagamohana**

The jagamohana, measuring 278 inches square at the base has an expanded pancharatha plan whereby the anuratha recesses are splayed and filled with a triratha design with antermundi flanked by a stamba on each side while the kanika and anuratha are projecting multi faceted pilasters, there is a recess in the ratha design filled with virala in the lower storey and alasa-kanya or mithuna figure on the upper storey and in the area of Kanika. There is inserted a stamba relived with scroll work. The pabhaga is high consists of an elongated khakra mundi flanked by a naga nagi stamba on each side; the jungha is divided into two storeys by a madhyabandhana of three mouldings. The center position of kanika and anuratha is decorated with a khakra mundi and pidha mundi on the lower and upper storeys respectively the mundis carved with alaskanya or mithuna figure in high relief. The mundis of the first or outside anuraha recesses house the dikpalas and their Saktis where those of the inside recess house various Vaishnava deities, such as Gajalaxmi and varada including other cult images like Saraswati. The baranda is same height as the

pabhaga consists of 7 mouldings of various designs. The triratha design of the anuraha design recess extends through these moldings and consists of a large framed niche, housing various figure motifs or deities, flanked in each side by a narrow vajra mundis filled with standing female figures these designs beginning above the third and second moldings respectively. The window is filled with 5 balusters, each likewise crowned with a vajramastaka, carved with standing figures. On the north Rama, Laxman and Sita are flanked by a monkey on each side. According to T.E Donaldson one of the monkey among the two is probably Hanuman and another is Bibhisana.<sup>3</sup> On the south side the center three balusters, carved with Krishna and gopis, are detached and now inserted into a miniature shrine on the bank of the Bindusarobara. Outside balusters decorated with Gopis. The lintel above the balusters on each side is decorated with a freeze of trotting elephants. The lower storey is capped by a projecting pidha moulding relatively with warriors, burses, elephants which serves as the base for the upper storey. These are two pilasters on either side forming the upper niche. On both the north and south sides the figures seated on the low couch, with a large pillow behind her back and according to Donaldson's view is a female and probably represents the chandrika and attendants stand or kneel behind her with hands folded in anjali, the crowd represented in two rows. The figure in the lower row is seated on the floor while those in the back row are standing.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately both screens are badly damaged and the facial features mostly obliterated.

The pyramidal roof consists of two potalas of pidha mouldings of diminishing size, the lower tier having six moldings and upper tier having five. Entrance portal there is vajra mastaka panel crowning each potalas. Japha Singhs are

inserted into the beki to help support the ghanta of the mataka. In the beki beneath the annals however there is simply vertical status for support.

### **Cult images:**

Two of the parsadevatas are badly damaged, on the south the image is of Varaha while on the north it is Trivikrama, Varaha is depicted in alidha pose with image of adisesu. The arms are all broken off and the only weapon visible is the chakra, carved behind the head of varaha and originally holds in the upper right hand, the image of the eastern niche hidden by a nissa shrine is probably nrshima. The tribikrama image is also badly mutilated either only the torso proportions of the upper legs and the left arms remaining and the left arms remaining intact, the upper left hand holds a chakra or the lode left hand has a conch. He is flanked in the lower corners sarvasti standing on lotus cushion in front of khakra mundi. Beneath the uplifted left leg of Tribikrama is a diminutive scene of Vamana, receiving the gift from Bali. In the sanctum there is trinity of Baladeva, Subhadra and Krishna.

The dikpalas and their saktis are seated in lalitasana on their respective mounts on the customary names on both the deula and jagamohana with Kubera being seated above a row of jars andisana having four arms. Included among the deities housed in mundi niches of the splayed recesses are images of Vamana and Varaha conforms to conventional iconography where by he holds uplifted arm of pirthivi with his

lower right hand. The garuda stamba, originally placed in the open facing the jagamohana is now enclosed by the nata mandira added at the later images of Rama and Laxman on the baluster are badly mutilated.

### **Conclusion**

As the Vasudev temple is a late Ganga temple lacks, more and more fined sculpture than other Ganga temple like Konark and Puri, plays an important role in the religious life of the community due to the increased popularity of Vasudev cult in later periods.<sup>5</sup> It demands more packaging marketing strategies to enhance the contribution in the tourism field.

### **References:**

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