The Mahavir temple of Siruli is an important Hanuman shrine of Orissa. It is situated about 27 kms on the north east of Puri town. The shrine is also exactly located at a distance of 12 kms from the Chandanpur Chhak of the main road, which lies between Puri and Bhubaneswar. It is a small temple, which dedicated to Lord Mahavir Hanumava. This temple consists of four structures such as vimana, jagamohana, natamandapa and bhogamandapa. It is built in both laterite and sand stones, which locally called as mankada and kanda patharas respectively. A tank has also been excavated in the eastern side of the temple complex. The temple faces to south. A modest attempt has been made in this article to highlight the detailed art and architecture of the temple.

Art & Architecture of the temple

Vimana

The vimana of the temple is a pidha deula and its height is about 25 feet from the surface of the temple complex. The base of the vimana is square of 20 feet. It is erected on the platform of 2 feet high. The bada of the vimana is panchangha type i.e. having five fold divisions such as pabhaga, tala jangha, bandhana, upper jangha and baranda. All the component parts of the bada are mostly undecorated. The niches of outer walls of the main deula or vimana contain crude figures of Hanumana, Ganesha, Uma Mahesvara, Mahisamardini Durga, Kshetrapala, Siva Linga and bull. All these deities possess as usual attributes in their hands. The baranda of the bada is relieved with standing female figures, scroll works, lotus petalled designs etc. A few standing female figures are decorated in all sides of the baranda. They are decorated on the pedestals which designed with buffalo head, head of sheep and lotus petalled devices.

The bada of the vimana is surmounted by the pyramidal superstructure and it consists of three flat shaped pidhas. The centre of the lower pidha is decorated with head of Rahus in three sides. The intervening recesses or kanthsi between the pidhas are filled with crude figures of Hanumana, Risis, erotic scenes, Lakhmi figure Asta mallas, Hanumana figures etc. Small dopichha lions are fixed on the corners of the recess. Dopichha lions are fixed on the top of the kanika pagas of e gandi. Garuda figures are inserted in the four cardinal directions of the beki above rahas. They are acting as the supporting elements of the amalaka sila of the mastaka.

The mastaka of the vimana consists of beki, ghanta (bell shaped member) above which there is another beki, amalaka sila, khapuri, kalasa, ayudha (chakra) and dhvaja.
A huge Mahavira image is enshrined in the sanctum as the presiding deity of the temple. In size this image appears to be next to the Hanumana image found on the southern side of the Jagannatha temple of Puri. The image is carved in standing posture on a single piece of stone. He holds gandha mardana parvata (a huge rock) in right hand and katuri or short dagger in left hand. He wears a garland of jewels (Vaijantimala) in his body. The lower part of the image is firmly embedded to the floor of the sanctum. The image of Hanumana has been designed in the attitude of trampling over Murasura. Anjana, the mother of Mahavir Hanumana is carved to the right of the pedestal. The presiding deity is decorated with ornaments of heavy kundalas for the ears and jewel studed hara for the neck. The locket fitted to the necklace is said to contain figures of Rama and Sita. According to tradition, his left side eye is set towards Lord Jagannatha temple of Puri and the right eye is set to the southern direction towards Lanka, the native place of Ravana. The image is made of black chlorite and its height is about 10 feet. The presiding deity exhibits Lord Rama and Sita in his tearing heart. Above the head of presiding deity (Hanumana) is decorated with Sivalingam, which canopied by seven hooded serpent.

The sanctum has one doorway towards the jagamohana. The doorjambs are devoid of decorative ornamentations. Navagrahas are carved on the architrave above the doorway lintel. They are depicted in Padmasana posture with usual attributes in hands. The Sandhithala wall between the vimana and jagamohana is decorated with erotic figures.

Jagamohana:

The jagamohana of the temple is a pidha deula and its height is about 20 feet from the surface of the temple complex. The base of the jagamohana is rectangular and it measures 20 feet in length and 10 feet in width respectively. The structure of the jagamohana is also erected on the platform of 2 feet high. The bada of the jagamohana is panchanga type i.e. having five fold divisions such as pabhaga, tala jangha, bandhana, upper jangha and baranda. All the component parts of the bada are completely undecorated.

The bada of the jagamohana is surmounted by the pyramidal superstructure, which consists of three flat shaped pidhas. The centre of the middle pidha is projected with jhapasimhas in both eastern and western sides. The upper pidha of the gandi contains mastaka, which consists of khapuri, kalasa, ayudha (cakra) and dhvaja.

Inner walls of the jagamohana are devoid of decorative ornamentations. The jagamohana has two doorways; one on eastern side and another on the southern side. The figures of navagrahas are carved on the architrave above the doorway lintel of the eastern side. They are all in padmasana posture with usual attributes in hands. The doorjambs of the southern side (doorway) are decorated with scroll works.

Bhogamandapa:

The bhogamandapa of the temple is a pidha deula and its height is about 18 feet from the surface of the temple complex. The base of the structure is rectangular and it measures 40 feet in length and 20 feet in width respectively. The bada of the bhogamandapa is devoid of decorative ornamentations. The gandi or sikhara of the bhogamandapa is a pyramidal superstructure and it consists of three flat shaped pidhas. The upper pidha of the gandi contains a mastaka, which consists of khapuri, kalasa, ayudha and dhvaja. Two lions are installed on the both eastern and western sides of the kalasa respectively.
Inner walls of the bhogamandapa are mostly undecorated. Daru image of Lord Jagannatha is being worshipped in the northern side wall of the bhogamandapa. In the southern side wall of the bhogamandapa, an image of Surya devata is being worshipped. This image is installed on a pedestal of 2 feet high. The bhogamandapa has one doorway towards the southern side. The base of the doorjambs are designed with two foliated jars; one on each side. Two peacocks are carved in standing posture on the above the doorway lintel.

**Natamandapa:**

The natamandapa of the temple is a flat roof structure and it is constructed in modern period. The flat roof of the natamandapa is supported by 10 pillars. The temple complex of Siruli Mahavir is enclosed by a high masonry wall of 10 feet. It is built in both laterite and bricks. The boundary wall measures 140 feet in length on eastern and western sides and 80 feet in width on northern and southern sides respectively. It has three gates; one each on southern, northern and eastern sides. The entrance porch of the southern side gate is surrounded by the flat roof and its height of the entrance porch is about 18 feet from the road level. The upper portion of the porch hall in the inner side (towards the temple complex) is decorated with erotic figures, various scenes derived from Ramayana story i.e. birth of Lord Rama, Ravana baadh scene etc. These are executed in the modern period.

Figures of Nandi and Bhrungi are depicted on the both sides walls of the main entrance porch hall and they are acting as the gatekeepers of the temple. Two huge lions are installed on the both sides of the gateway and they are watching the entrance porch of the temple. The main entrance gateway is decorated with Chaitya shaped arch which is supported by two pillars. Torana figures are leaning on the both sides of the arch. Navagrasas are carved on the above the chaitya arch. They are all in padmasana posture with usual attributes in hands. The base of the doorjambs are also designed with foliated jars in both sides.

There is an old Peepul tree noticed in front of the temple, which indicates the shrine is an ancient cultural sites of Orissa.

**Date of the Temple:**

On the basis of the local tradition people say that the temple was built by Anangabhima Deva - III (1212 A.D. to 1236 A.D.), the Ganga ruler of Orissa. R.P. Mohapatra has referred that the Mahavir temple of Siruli was constructed during the late medieval period. On the basis of the architectural features, the construction period of the temple can be tentatively assigned to the 16th century A.D.

It is known from the above discussion that the architectural features of the temple is not so important like other notable temples of Orissa. But the temple is considered by devotees as one of the important Hanumana shrines of Puri. People of the neighbouring villages attend this deity in large numbers. Festivals like Makara Sankranti, Dasahera, Kumar Purnima, Ramanavami, Dola, Chandana Yatra and Gahma Purnima are regularly observed in this temple with great pomp and enthusiasm.

**References:**


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