



Srimandir and Its Architectural Features

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Srikshetra - Jagannath Puri, the soul of Odisha, has been identified as the most sacred place in the map of India's east coast. It is surrounded by the Bay of Bengal in the east and is considered as the summer capital of Odisha. The great temple of Lord Jagannath at Puri is a living vibrant temple. It attracts religious preachers, propagators, saints, devotees, pilgrims and tourists from all corners of India, so also from abroad. Odisha is known as the land of Jagannath. The word Jagannath literally means 'The Lord of the Universe.' For the Hindus, it is one of the four major 'Dhams' of India. It is known as Srikshetra, Nilachal, Niladri, Purusottama Kshetra, Sankha Kshetra and in many other names. Jagannath chetana is a compendium of all cultural, spiritual philosophies and human experiences. Jagannath is the symbol of universal love and brotherhood. Construction of the present temple was initiated by king Anantabharman Chodaganga Dev in the middle of the eleventh century and completed during the period of King Anangabhima Dev III in the initial part of twelfth century. The Chaturdha Murti in the present shape were established on the high platform inside the inner sanctum of the temple during 1305 AD.

The temple of Jagannath is one of the greatest religious monuments of India. The art and architecture of the temple has been developed with royal patronage. The architecture is a combination of Dravida (South Indian) and Nagara (North Indian) style. During 6th and 7th century the tri-ratha type of temple building was

in vogue, with the passage of time the tri-ratha type gave way to pancha-ratha type, of which Jagannath temple is the finest example. The pancha-ratha consists of 2 Anu-rathas, 2 Konakas and one Raha. The deities have been considered as head of the state and therefore provided with all royal facilities such as - Jagamohana (audience hall), Nata Mandapa (dancing hall) and Bhoga Mandapa (dining hall). Over and above that, the principal deities have been provided with sufficient gold ornaments, valuable dresses, elephants, horses and a magnificent abode i.e. Viman for their comfortable residence.

The base of the Viman is of square size. The erected part of the Viman is circular up to the top (Sikhara) of the temple. The Jagamohan is like a pyramid; the base is square in size and step-by-step up-wards. The Viman has got the following 5 parts: Bhumi, Bada, Gandi, Mastak and Dhawaja. It is a Rekha Deula with a curvilinear super structure. Bada has five sub-divisions, such as Pabhaga, Tala Jangha, Bandhana, Upar Jangha and Baranda. The Pabhaga contains all its normal five sub-divisions such as khura, kumbha, pata, kani and basanta with reference to the then architectural system. On the top, the great Amalakasila and Kalasa are placed to maintain the structure properly balanced.

Different portions of the temple resemble with that of different parts of the human body. The feet with fingers, knee, upper part of the knee, waist, belly, heart and lungs, shoulders, neck, mouth, skull, upper part of the head, and brain of



a human being can be compared correspondingly with that of padapitha, bandhan, upar jangha, basant, garbha griha, raha, visama, kantha, amalaka, khapuri, kalasa and ayudha of the temple. In other words temple is a model of the human body, a man finds God within the temple so also within himself in his Anahata Mahacakra.

After de-plastering of the Sikhara, 24 angasikharas are now visible, Ganesh is found on the topmost angasikhara and the other deities seen there are - Brahma, Goddess Kali, Nataraja, Surya and Siva, the remaining niches are mostly occupied by Vishnu. There are 3 Nisa temples in shape of covered halls with sikharas, in 3 outer sides of the Viman in its bottom, with 3 Parsva Devatas, Varaha in south, Nrusimha in west and Trivikrama in the north. The images of 24 forms of Vishnu have been carved on the front walls of these 3 temples i.e. 8 images in front of each temple.

Garbhagriha or Manikota is the main inner part of the Viman or main temple. Sri Jagannath, Sri Balabhadra, Sri Subhadra, Sri Surdashan, Sri Madhab, Sridevi and Bhudevi are placed on a raised platform known as Ratnavedi or Mahavedi, its size being 16 ft long, 13 ft wide and 4 ft high. Devotees move around the Ratnavedi, if they so like. The door of Garvagriha is Kalahat Dwar.

Jagamohana or Mukhasala is also a pidha deula; it stands on four squared pillars. This is the main portico before the innermost apartment. People get the darshan from this part. It has two gates, one towards the Mukti Mandap and the other towards the Natamandir. The door towards Natamandir is known as Jaya Bijaya dwar, the dwarfalas being Jaya and Bijaya.

In Natamandap (Dancing Hall) the Devadasis used to perform their daily dancing. The mandap stands on 16 pillars in four rows. In its eastern side there is the famous Garuda Pillar with the image of Garuda on the top. Darshan of Chaturdha Murti from the backside of Garud

Stambha is the colloquial ethical procedure followed in Srimandir. Garuda's bath water (Garuda paduka) is not only pure, but has much medicinal value; people use it to get rid of many diseases. On the wall of the Natamandap behind the Garud Pillar, Brahma and Siva are found standing and offering prayer to God with folded hands. Ten incarnations of Vishnu are seen in south-east corner of the mandap. Nata Mandap has two main gates, one towards the south and the other towards the north and four another subsidiary small gates. The south main gate is known as Panda-dwara. There are seven steps in north main gate, popularly known as Sata Pahacha. The deities go to Car festival and Snana mandap through these steps. The mandap contains many pattachitras wherein pictures of series of Gods and Goddesses have been painted.

The Bhogamandap is also a Pancharatha pidha deula. It is made of yellowish sand stone rendered red by ochre painting. The entire structure rest on four pillars and it has four openings. At the time of offering of Bhog the connecting door to Natamandap remains open for a direct vision of God towards the offerings. Inside the Bhogamandap no paintings are there, but the outer walls have stone carvings depicting many mythological scenes such as - Siva on a bull, Krishna gazing cows and dancing with Gopies, Dola yatra, Rama Abhisek, king worshipping Jagannath, Siva Linga and Durga and marching of the royal army etc.

The height of the main temple is 65 meters (214 feet) and it appears like a temple on a descent hill. The area covered by the temple is 10.7 acres. The temple is surrounded by two rectangular walls, the outer enclosure is Meghanad Prachir, 200 meter x 192 meter (665 x 640 feet), the thickness of the wall is 'Chaturarsa' and its height varies from 6 to 7 meters (20 to 24 feet). The inner wall is Kurma Bedha, 126 meters x 95 meters (420 x 315 feet), its height is 6 meters (20 feet).



The construction of Meghanad wall was undertaken during the period of Suryavansi Gajapati Kapilendra Dev on the 15th year of his reign, as seen from the Madala Panji. There are 4 big doors in four sides of the wall. The main gate in the east is Lion's Gate (Mokhya Dwar), in the west Tiger Gate (Dharma Dwar), in the south Horse Gate (Karma Dwar) and in the north Elephant Gate (Artha Dwar). Another interpretation depicts the four doors as Dharma (lion), Vairagya (west), Jnana (south) and Aiswarya (north) gates.

Lion's Gate - the door is the entrance to a 'Gumuta', just a small temple. The door has got two parts, one is the big gate itself and the other one is a small gate fixed within the principal gate. The small one is for use of the servitors and the main one is for public use. Two big lions are sitting in both the sides of the door, on the frame of the door in both sides Jaya and Bijaya, two strong and stout 'dwarpals' have been placed, on the top there are images of ten Avatars and above them Mahalaxmi is seen. Lion is a symbol of victory, so the devotee going for darshan of Lord Jagannath through Lion's Gate is always victorious. Tiger Gate is the gate through which the saints and Tantrics enter into the temple. The tiger is of a tantric symbol, it always moves alone and not afraid of any one within the forest. Horse Gate - There are two horses in both sides of the gate and the warriors sitting on them are Jagannath and Balabhadra. This is a symbol of 'Kanchi Abhijan.' A great Hanuman image is there in the southern side of this gate. Elephant Gate - there are two elephants in both sides of the gate. It is told that this is an influence of Buddhism on Jagannath Chetana, because elephant is the symbol of Buddhism. Kurma Bedha - this is the inner compound wall, there are four parallel gates like that of Meghanad wall and two more additional gates. One extra gate in north-east (Aisanya) corner connects Pat Agana to Ananda Bazar and the other extra gate in east-south (Agneya) corner is the passage from temple kitchen to Bhoga Mandap.

On top of the temple 'Anlashri' there is a wheel made of an alloy of eight metals (astadhatu); it is Nilchakra or the Blue wheel, the flag on it, is Patitapaban Bana. The color of the flag is either red or yellow and it is triangular in size. In the middle part of the flag, there is the symbol of a moon and a star on it, painted in white color. According to Hindu mythology this is the emblem of 'Brahmabad' and 'Omkar'. Every day the flags are changed. On each Ekadashi an earthen lamp is lit on the top of the temple by the side of Nilachakra. The height of the Nilachakra is 3.5 meters (11.6 feet) with a circumference of about 11 meters (36 feet). It has 8 spokes, the length of each spoke is one feet ten inches, its weight is slightly more than one and half quintals. Chakra is the emblem of motion, its duty is to rotate and to slash. Nilachakra is the weapon of Lord Jagannath, it is nothing but the colloquial image of Sri Sudarshan Chakra.

The Kshetra is Purusottam Khetra, best out of all the Kshetras throughout the country, the deity is Bada Thakur, the chief of all the Gods; the temple is Bada Deula, the major temple of India; the sea by its side is Mahodadhi, the great ocean; the cremation ground is Swargadwar, the entrance gate to heaven; the main road to reach the Gods is Badadanda, a broad road, on which Gods go and come back during car festival; here prasad is Mahaprasad, the most tasty prasad cooked by Divine mother Laxmi which can be taken by Chandal and Brahman together in one plate.

The Jagannath Chetana preaches the philosophy of love, affection and peaceful co-existence among the entire human community. It has crossed all the limits of casteism and believes in humanism only. It proclaims the victory of human endeavour over all narrowness and establishes universal brotherhood.

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