

## Evolution of Temple Architecture in Orissa

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Etymologically the term temple is derived from the Latin word '*Tempulum*' which in its original sense means a square or a rectangular place marked out by the augur for the purpose of worship. In its primitive sense this word corresponds to a place marked off as sacred to a God, in which the house of God may be erected. The shrine or the abode of the God has different nomenclatures. In ancient Sastras or literature the temple is referred as *Devagriha*, *Devalay*, *Devakula* etc. In the *Vastusastra* the North Indian temples are known as *Prasada* while as the Southern Indian temples are known as *Vimana*, *Harmya* and occasionally as *Prasada*. The term *mandira* for the first time occurs in Banabhatta's *Kadambari*, a text of 7th century AD.

The temple architecture in India had its humble beginning right from the Mauryan period i.e 3rd century BC as evident from the archaeological excavation at Sanchi (Madhy Pradesh, temple no.40 and 18) and Bairat (Rajasthan). However, it gained momentum in the Gupta period. The temple no.17 at Sanchi, temple no.1 at Udayagiri near Vidisa were the earliest example of temple architecture, which blossomed during the Gupta period.

The Indian *Silpasastras* recognize three main types of temples known as the *Nagara*, *Dravida* and *Vesara*. *Nagara* temple belongs to the country from the Himalay to the Vindhya, *Vesara* from the Vindhya to the Krishna and the *Dravida* from the Krishna to the Cape Camorin. However, an inscription of 1235 AD in the mukhamandapa of the Amritesvara temple at Holal in Bellary district of Karnatak speaks of a fourth style i.e Kalinga in addition to the above three. Pratistha Lakshyanasara Samuchaya by Vaivochana a silpa text of 11th-12th century AD mentions Kalinga temples as of rekha order. Indigenous texts like *Bhubana Pradip*, *Silpa Prakasa*, *Silpa Ratnakosha* etc. deals exclusively with the Kalingan style of architecture. These silpa text of Orissa mentions three types of temples, *rekhadeul*, *pidhadeul* and *khakaradeul*. The rekha and pidha form two component parts of one architectural scheme, the former is represented by a sanctum with its curvilinear spire and the latter by the frontal porch having pyramidal roof of receding tiers known as *pidhas*. In the earlier phase, there was no *pidha deul* and the *Jagamohan* or the frontal hall had a by a flat roof. In course of time to meet the growing need of the rituals two more structures were added

namely *natamandapa* (dancing hall) and *bhogamandapa* (offering hall) during the Ganga period (12th century). All the four components are arranged in one axial alignment and often the temple complex is enclosed by prakara (boundary) wall. The khakara order is noted by a semi-cylindrical vaulted that looks like a inverted boat (boita) or a pumpkin gourd roof. The temples of this order are usually meant for sakti worship.

Orissan temples constituted a sub-style of the Nagara style of north Indian temples. The building activity of this sub-regional style continued for nearly one thousand years from the 6th- 7th century to the 15th-16th century AD in unbroken continuity. Bhubaneswar, the ancient Ekamra Khetra served as the experimental ground of these temple building activities without being distracted by the change of ruling dynasties or their cult affiliation. As a result the temples are identified with the land Kalinga rather than the royal families such as Pallava art, Rastrakuta art, Chandella art, Chalukyan art etc. It is worth while to mention here that temple building activities, of another tradition, was prevalent in ancient Orissa as attested by epigraphic evidences. Hathigumpha inscription (line-17) of the 1st century BC, described Kharavela as the "repairer of all shrines of Gods" (*sava-devayatana-sankara-karako*). From the village of Asanpat in Keonjhar district, a stone inscription records the construction of a temple by Maharaja Satrubhanja, who is ascribed to 3rd-4th century AD.

The Orissan temple is remarkable for its plan and elevation. The interior ground plan of the temple is square as a rule. Rarely, however the temple has star shaped layout (as noticed at

Boudh) or circular plan (Ranipur-Jharial & Hirapur) to conform to the nature of rituals. Generally speaking the Orissan temples are distinguished by vertical offset projections called *rathas* (on plan) or *pagas* (on elevation). Depending on the number *pagas*, the temples are classified into *triratha*, *pancharatha*, *saptaratha* and *navaratha*. The earlier temples are characterized by *triratha* plan.

On elevation, the temples show interesting features. Both sanctum and the porch can be divided into three parts along the vertical plane viz. *bada*, *gandi* and *mastaka*. From bottom to top or final, each part of the temple has a special name corresponding to that of limbs of human body standing on a pista or the platform on which the temple stands (which is not a compulsory element in early temples and is generally found in later temples). The *bada* or the vertical wall portion of the temple is divisible into pabhaga, jangha and baranda. This type of three fold division of Triangabada is found in early temples and in later temples, bada has five elements namely pabhaga (or the foot portion is composed of five mouldings called *khura*, *kumbha*, *patta*, *kani* and *basanta*), *tala jangha* (lower thigh), *bandhana* (mouldings joining the two thigh), *upara jangha* (upper thigh) and *baranda* (the waist portion). The *baranda*, forming the top most part of the *bada* has a set of mouldings, starting with one moulding in the early phase progressing into seven and ten mouldings in the later and last phases of the classical tradition.

The *gandi* (or the torso) of *deul* has a curvilinear super structure; in the temples of early phase *gandi* is devoid of any sculptural embellishment. Fully developed temples have

ornamental bhumis, chaity motifs and angasikharas (miniature shrines). The *gandi* of *jagamohana* is of pyramidal shape (designed with receding tiers in a sequence so as to reduce the top most tier to the half of the lower tier). The *mastaka* (the head) consisted of the *beki* (neck) or recessed cylindrical portion above *gandi*, *amalaka* (ribbed circular stone, resembling the amla fruit), *khapuri* (skull), *kalasa* (auspicious pot) and the *ayudha* (weapon of the enshrined deity) in succession. The *mastaka* of the *pidha deul* has the same features except for the addition of *ghanta* (bell).

The horizontal cross-section of the *bada* and *gandi* in both the *rekha* and the *pidha deul* are square, while the *mastaka* is circular. The ground plan of *khakhara deul* is oblong. The temples are remarkable for abundance of sculptures. Stella Kramarisch has aptly remarked, "Architecture in Orissa is but sculpture on a gigantic scale". The sculptural repertory consists of human figures, *kanyas*, erotic motifs, cult icons, animal figures including mythical and composite figures, decorative designs like variety of scrolls and architectural motifs like *pidha mundi*, *khakhara mundi*, *vajra mundi* etc.

The temple style was in full vigour in the wake of vast religious and cultural resurgence that took place when the Sailodbhavas ruled from the middle of 6th century A.D till the first quarter of 8th century A.D. The temple building activities gained momentum under the Bhaumakaras (736-950 A.D) and the Somavamsis (950-1112 A.D) and reached the climax during the Ganga period (1112-1435 A.D). The activities however continued even under the Suryavamsi-Gajapatis (1435-1542 A.D) though on a very small and impoverished scale.

To a keen observer, the temples of Orissa portray a picture of organic evolution from Parasuramesvara to Lingaraja through Muktesvara and Vaital, which ultimately culminated in Puri and the gigantic Konark. The evolution can be seen through four distinctive phases of temple building; viz. i) Formative phase, ii) Transitional phase, iii) Mature phase, iv) Phase of decadence.

### Formative Phase:

The period in between the 6th century AD to the first half of the 9th century AD is considered as the formative phase that synchronized with the rule of the Sailodbhavas and early phase of Bhauma-karas. The representative temples are Lakshmaneswar, Bharateswar, Satruganeswar, Swarnajaleswar, Parsurameswar, Mohini and Kapalini. Of these, Parsurameswar assigned to the 7th cent. is the best preserved specimen of the early phase. Its *triratha vimana* has a *rekha sikhara*. The *jagamohana* is a rectangular pillared hall with a terraced roof sloping in two tiers. The *graha* architrave has eight *grahas* with the absence of Ketu. Temples of this period are *triratha* on plan with a central *graha* offset and two corner projections. On elevation Bada is *triangle*, with three divisions i.e. *Pabhaga*, *jangha*, and *baranda*. *Pabhaga* or the foot portion consists of three mouldings of *khura*, *kumbha* and *pata*. *Gandi* became a gradual curvature and started from of the *sikhara* unburdened by any *angasikhara*. The temples are of small and moderate height. *Baranda* is terminating in a recessed *kanthi*. Absence of *dopicha simha* in the *beki*, below the *amlaka*, absence of *Dikpalas*, absence of *baby* on the lap of *Matrikas*. The sculptures are in low relief,

flattish and entrusted on the surface of the stone. Beginning with disproportioned and rigid limbs assumed flexibility and proportion during the Bhauma-kara period.

### Transitional Phase:

The temple activities entered into a transitional period in the second half of the 9th century that continued up to the first quarter of the 11th century under the rule of the later Bhauma-karas and the first half of the rule of the Somavamsis (Kesharis). The temples of this period are Vaital (khakhra deula), Sisireswar, and Markandeswar in Bhubaneswar and Bringesvara at Bajarkot (Dist. Angul), Swapaneswar at Kualo (Dist. Dhenkanal), Siva temple at Badgaon, Simhanatha temple in an island of Mahanadi river at Gopinathpur (Dist. Cuttack), twin Hari-Hara temple at Gandharadi Dist. Baud, Varahi temple (*khakhara deul*) at Churasi (Dist. Cuttack). The notable feature of the period was the introduction of rampant erotic sculptures due to the influence of Vajrayana philosophy. Mukteswar at Bhubaneswar which is considered as the gem of Orissan architecture was the last monument of the period. The notable features of the period were the introduction of erotic sculptures. Mukhasala or the jagamohana became an inseparable element with a perfect and natural joining of the vimana with jagamohana without the crude overlapping of the sanctum decoration as seen in the formative phase. Both the structures were conceived as a uniform complex in the original plan. Towards the end, the plan and elevation of the *mukhasala* transformed from a rectangular flat roof to a square hall with a pyramidal superstructure. Pabhaga had four mouldings. Introduction of *naga-nagi* pilasters and *chaitya*

medallions as decorative motifs, introduction of the *vyala* and *jagrata* motifs in the *jangha* portion, *baranda* recess is carved with base-reliefs, *kanika* is divided into five horizontal *bhumis* (storey) by *bhumiamlas*. *Parsvadevata* images are carved of separate single stone unlike the earlier tradition of blocks of stones that constitute a part of the temple wall. Sculptural treatment of the interior part (particularly the ceiling) which is characteristics feature of the Somavamsis period and not noticed in the earlier or the later temples, *Matrikas* carry babies on their lap. Finally *Ketu* was added to the list of planets, which became a permanent feature of the *graha* panel in the temples of the subsequent period.

### Mature Phase:

The building activity attended its maturity towards the middle of the 11th century (Somavamsis) that continued till the 13th century (Gangas). The temple architecture developed further under the Somavamsis, which can be traced through a series of temples like Rajarani, Brahmeswar, and finally the Lingaraj that presents the Orissan temple style at its best. The building tradition was continued by the Gangas who are credited with the construction of the great Jagannath temple at Puri, Chateswar temple at Kakudia (Dist. Cuttack), Sobhaneswar temple at Niali dist Cuttack, Drakshaprajapati at Banapur, few shrines at Bhubaneswar, the magnificent Konark temple (Dist. Puri), marks the grand climax of the Orissan style. The features are quite discernible as given in the discussion. *Bada* is divided into five segments, i.e. *pabhaga*, *talajangha*, *bandana*, *upara jangha* and *baranda*. Pabhaga has five mouldings (*khura*, *kumbha*, *pata*, *kani* and *basanta*). *Gandi* is

embellished with angasikharas (miniature temples) of diminishing size as they rise upwards. The pagas projections are fully developed and prominently articulated. *Amlaka sila* is supported by deulacharinis or seated divinities and dopicha simhas being set in the beki. Introduction of structural motifs like *pidhamundi*, *khakharamundi* and *vajramundi* in the *jangha* portion. The sculptures of this period are excellent in their plasticity and modeling include non iconic female figures, these are more proportionate, elongated and in alto-relievo. In the iconography of the cult deities new elements were introduced with profusion female figures, Ketu in a serpent body and Hanuman head in latter phase, Projected lion (udyota simha) on the Rahapaga. Pista and platform became a regular feature. *Natamandap* and *Bhogamandap* were added to the *Jagamohan*. Introduction of Subsidiary shrines in front of the *parvadevata* niche. Introduced of *vahanastambha* in front of the temple. Appearance of the female counter parts of the *dikpalas* on the *uparjangha*.

#### **Phase of decadence :**

After the Gangas during the 14th to 16th century AD under the Suryavamsi-Gajapatis, the temple building activities entered into a phase of decadence. The great period of Orissan temple architecture came to halt with the crowning achievement at Konark. The Suryavamsis, who succeeded the Gangas remained preoccupied with political problems and could not given much time for temple building. Of the few temples, the temples at Kapilesvara at Bhubaneswar belonged

to this period. Towards the later part of the 15th century AD impoverishment was noticed. *Pidha deul* became the choice for both *vimana* and the *jagamohana*. the building materials are mostly laterite. The walls of the temple are devoid of sculptural embellishment and decoration. Such insolvency was also noticed in the decoration of *doorjambs*, which also largely remained plain.

Thus the temple building activities that started during the 6th century AD reached its climax during the Ganga Period started declining during the Gajapati. The most important factors for the declines of temple building activities are, lack of royal patronage and decline of Hindu power. Whatever it may be till recent Orissa has possessed the rich Temple heritage, which are the imprints of our ancestor, still existing with the ravage of time. These are the pride of Orissan people in particular and that of Indian in general. These are most compact and Homogenous architectural group in India.

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