



NORTH INDIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Indian temple architecture is one of the India's greatest architectural traditions which is related with Hinduism, a religion that focuses on the worship of powerful gods and goddesses. These deities are represented by sculpted images and emblems housed in temple areas. Hindu temple architecture material is in brick and stone begins only in the fourth-fifth centuries AD, but has developed more or less continuously down to the present day.

The temple architecture of India is classified into two broad categories: Nagara, or the North Indian temple style, and Dravida, the South Indian style.

The North India is the place of loads of temples, which are unique in style and mark its establishment. The temples of North India are with the heavenly and peaceful atmosphere. Its architectural value is very high at its influence the mind of the devotees and made them devotional.

After seeing these interesting temples the souls develops a spiritual melody as these always leave a mark on the body as well as mind. The temples of North India are in the typical Nagara style. In this style, the structure consists of two buildings, the main place of worship should be taller and with the next shorter mandapa.

Depending on the form and shape of the Shikhara and also the distinctiveness of its decoration, temple architecture in India is divided into two styles. The



Shikhara of the temples in North India resembles an upturned cone that is decorated with miniature conical Shikharas. Some temples developed their own local flavor apart from carrying out their basic local style.

Nagara or the 'Northern Style'

The characteristic temple plan of the northern India was developed in the 5th century under the rule of Hindu dynasty. These temple consist of all the basic elements; the garbhagriha surrounded by a circle-ambulatory path, an outer entry with columns in front and a flat roof of stone. The temples constructed during this period were simply in comparison to the temple constructed during the 10th -13th century temples.

Some of the examples from this period are temples at Sanchi, Tigawa and Deogarh. The development of sikhara started at the temple of Deogarh in Madhya Pradesh under gupta period.

The temples constructed in the 8th century had smaller shrines and the sikhara became the crowning feature of the temples. The addition of mandapa (the pillared hall) to the temple started during this same period. The other distinct character of this period was the rectangular wall around the temple and additional shrines at each corner. The most common examples of this period are the temples at Osian Rajasthan and the cluster of Jain



temples built between 8 th -12 th century in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

North Indian, nagara style temple architecture

The *Nagara* style's primary feature is a central tower (*shikhara*) whose highest point is directly over the temple's primary deity. This is often surrounded by smaller, additional towers (*urushringa*) and midway towers; these naturally draw the eye up to the highest point, like a series of hills leading to a distant peak. Setting the temple on a raised base (*adhithana*) also shifts the eye upward, and promotes this vertical quality.

These are the basic elements constructed under the north Indian style.

Amalaka: a stone disk, usually with ridges on the rim, that sits atop the temple's main tower. According to one interpretation, the amalaka represents a lotus, and thus the symbolic seat for the deity below. Another interpretation is that it symbolizes the sun, and is thus the gateway to the heavenly world. The amalaka itself is crowned with a **kalasha** (finial), from which a temple flag is often hung.

Entrance Porch (*Ardhamandapa*): The entrance porch formed a transitional area between the outside world and the *mandapa* or hall. Most temple buildings have some sort of middle space between the central shrine (*garbhagrha*) and the outside world, but only the largest, most developed temples will have all of these elements.



Hall (*Mandapa*): A hall in the temple, forming a transitional space between the *ardhamandapa* and *mahamandapa*. In smaller or less architecturally developed temples, this was usually omitted.

Great Hall (*Mahamandapa*): The temple's main entrance-hall, separated from the central shrine (*garbhagrha*), by a short entrance hall named the *antarala*. Just about every temple has some sort of entrance-hall between the central shrine (*garbhagrha*) and the outside world, but only the largest and most developed temples have all of the midway members.

At Khajuraho, a mahamandapa is often distinguished by transepts (bumped-out portions upright to the temple's main axis).

Vestibule , or entrance hall (*Antarala*): a middle space between a temple's main hall and the inner sanctum (*garbhagrha*) where the image of the temple's primary deity would be housed. The *antarala* was found only in the largest temples, and in many smaller ones was absent totally.

This architectural element marks the less space between the exterior world and the divine world, and at Khajuraho the exterior panels on these elements are the primary sites for large panels with figurative distribution, and decoration.

Inner Sanctum (*Garbhagrha*): The temple's inner sanctum, containing the image of the temple's primary deity. The basic function of a Hindu temple is to serve as the deity's living-place (the most common word for



temple, *mandir*, simply means "house"), and devotees come there to interact with and worship the resident deity (often in family groups).

The word *garbha* can mean either "womb" or "embryo;" both meanings signify potentiality, hiddenness, and a sense of development.

The garbhagrha was located directly below the summit of the highest tower, with the primary deity directly under the highest point. Smaller temples may only have a small shrine room at the back end of the temple, but larger temples often also have a walking pathway ("ambulatory") around the central shrine, through which devotees can circle around the deity (always clockwise) as a gesture of respect and worship.

Secondary Tower (*Urushringa*): smaller towers on the temple's exterior to lead the eye up to the highest point. Their shape often replicates that of the tallest central tower, and serves to draw the eye upward and toward it.

Base Platform (*Adhishsthana*): The raised base on which a temple was built. These are particularly high in the temples at Khajuraho, and by their height accentuate these temple's upward thrust.

So lets travel through the 1st structural hindu temple surviving from central india.

Dashavatara Temple, from Deogarh

Vishnu Temple named Dashavatara Temple at Deogarh in Central India built in c. 500 AD. The temple is one of the earliest Hindu stone temples to still survive today.



Built in the Gupta Period (320 to c. 600 AD), Vishnu Temple shows the elaborate and beauty seen in Gupta style architecture. This temple is also a good resource for study Gupta style sculptures and art.

Many of these early Hindu stone temples were dedicated to a single Hindu deity. The temple at Deogarh is dedicated to the Vishnu. These temples made in the early part of the 6th century of the Gupta Period housed images and symbols of Hindu gods.

These temples allowed people to make contact with the gods they were worshiping. The Temple was built out of stone and brick consisting of a single cubical sanctum (garbha-griha) that protected the images within.

Statues of the Vishnu were both sculpted in the interior and exterior walls of the temple. The temple's relationship with the deity Vishnu can be seen by looking at the sculpture of the deity seated on a coiled serpent seat that decorates the carved doorway into the temple.

There are also many sculpted panels showing the stories connected with Vishnu. Vishnu Temple is a great example of early Gupta architecture. The style and organization of the structure was the method for the decoration of many Hindu temples seen around India at the time..

The temple faces west, with slight movement away to the south that enables the setting sun's rays to fall on the main idol in the temple.

The base measures 55.5 feet (16.9 m), about 9 feet (2.7 m) above the bottom step. In the nine squares



layout, the Vishnu temple is in the middle square. Four stairways outside the platform provide admission to the temple.

Khajuraho Temples - The Finest Sculpture and architecture in The World

The great works done by the architects of ancient India , still remains beautiful and different. One thousand years ago, under the sponsorship of the Chandela Rajput kings of Central India, 85 temples, wonderful in form and richly carved, were built near the village of Khajuraho.

In the period of 100 years from 950 AD – 1050 AD, all the temples were completed. Today, of the original 85, only 22 have survived, these remains show the joy of creativity, the ultimate fusion of man with his creator (God).

Their tall shikhara and walls are covered with horizontal bands of the most impressive fusion of carved figures, animals, trees chariots- sculpted with perfection.

The complex consists of so many temples, chausath yogini, lakshmana, kandariya mahadeo, vamana, varaha, brahma, parsvanath, vishvanath, devi jagadamba, chaturbhuja, dulhadeo, ghantai, chitragupta, lalgun mahadeo.

Lakshmana Temple, Khajuraho

A trip to Khajuraho can never be complete without a visit to the Lakshmana temple. Located in western side of the khajuraho complex, the Lakshmana temple is the



second largest temple in Khajuraho. Dedicated to Lord Vaikuntha-Vishnu the temple was built during 930-950 A.D. Built by Chandela king Yashovarman, the Lakshmana temple is one of the most beautiful and neatly carved structures at Khajuraho.

Architecture - Lakshmana temple

Like several other temples, the Lakshmana temple too boasts of typical medieval Indian architecture and is made of sandstone. The temple is built on a raised platform and consists of a covered entrance (ardh mandapa), Mandapa (a large hall built for performing rituals), Maha Mandapa, Antrala and Garbhagriha (the inner most sanctum where god lives).

A unique feature of the Lakshmana temple is that its sanctum is in the form of a chariot also referred to as the Pancharatha. The temple walls are sculpted with beautiful idols and images of as many as 600 Hindu Gods, animals and design patterns.

Inside the Lakshman Temple

The main doorway of the temple has seven vertical panels. The central panel has fine carvings of Lord Vishnu and his incarnations or 'avatars' like Varaha, Narasimha and Vamana. The beam is decorated with goddess Lakshmi in the center flanked by Brahma and Vishnu on either side. The sanctum also consists of a sculpture depicting Devi Durga killing the demon Mahishasur.



The main idol in the temple is that of Lord Vishnu also known as the Vaikuntha Vishnu. This beautiful stone-carved idol has three heads and four arms. The central head is human, while the right is of Narsimha or lion and the left head is that of a boar or Varaha. The idol is embedded in columns of fine carvings depicting divine figures.

Additional Attractions

The Lakshmana temple is filled with stone idols and sculptures inside as well as on the outer walls and shikharas or spire. The main shrine facing east is flanked by four smaller shrines located at four corners of the temple complex. At the base of the raised platform there is a series of murals depicting elaborate scenes of battle, hunting and processions.

Yet another major attraction of the Lakshmana temple is the ceiling of the main porch or ardha mandapa. The ceiling has been built in the form of a lotus with four concentric circles while the pillars have exceptionally carved apsaras or nymphs.

Kandariya Mahadeva temple,

Khajuraho Erected towards the middle of the eleventh century by one of the kings of the Chandella dynasty, this great Shiva temple represents the climax of the Nagara style.

The status of plate, time, age and height of mastery of architecture and sculpture confirm that this is one of the matchless achievements of Hindu art.



Taking its name from the word kandara, or cave, the Kandariya Mahadeva temple is the tallest monument at Khajuraho, its spire rising more than 30.5 metres above the lofty plinth on which the temple is elevated.

The temple faces east and extends some 30.5 metres in length and 20 metres in width. Like other fully developed Chandella temples at Khajuraho, it consists of a linear east-west sequence of access steps, entrance porch, columned hall with side balconies, and linga shrine with encircling passageway, off which open three additional balconies. These balconies bring porches.

The porches serve as balconies with high seating, bringing ventilation and light to the interior. What distinguishes the Kandariya Mahadeva temple from the other monuments at Khajuraho is its grand scale and elaboration of design and ornamentation.

Moreover, its concave plan with numerous projections and recesses create a visual rhythm, created by the bright sunshine and shadow, which is carried up into the elevation of the building.

Kandariya Mahadeva temple

Undoubtedly, the glory of the temple is its lofty curving tower, crowned by an amalaka, or ribbed circular motif, and pot finial, against which cluster miniature versions of itself to create a mountain-like profile.



The component towered elements of the Kandariya Mahadeva expand outwards from the core shaft to create a dramatic geometric massing that is unmatched in North Indian architecture. Equally significant in the overall conception of the temple is the sculptural treatment of its outer walls, which are covered with images of the god Shiva, to whom the monument is dedicated, in the company of consorts, attendants and lesser divinities.

Important among the images here are the non manifest-manifest aspect of the god, including those who subdues the blind demon, the cosmic dancer, and the destroyer of the triple demon cities.

The sculptures are arranged in three tiers on the outside, amounting to no less than 646 figures in all, not counting the 226 figures of the interior.

Among the other images are those of female deities, such as the seven mothers, let alone the countless apsaras, or heavenly maidens that attend on the gods, and who are shown in alluring postures that reveal the mastery of the Khajuraho artists in rendering female gestures with conscious style and lively grace.

Eastern Indian temple architecture

The design which flourished in eastern Indian state of Odisha is called Kalinga style of architecture. The style



consists of three distinct type of temples namely **Rekha Deula**, **Pidha Deula** and **Khakhara Deula**.

Deula means "Temple" in the local language. The former two are associated with Vishnu, Surya and Shiva temple while the third is mainly with Chamunda and Durga temples.

The Rekha deula and Khakhara deula houses the sanctum while the Pidha Deula also has outer dancing and offering halls.

The prominent examples of **the rekha deul** are Lingaraj Temple of Bhubaneswar and Jagannath Temple of Puri.

The Konarka temple of sun god is a living example of **Pidha Deula**.

A distinct architectural style developed in the temples of Orissa (7 th to 11th century). The curve of sikhara from the earlier periods were modified as a perpendicular running tower and converged near the peak.

For the first time in history special attention was given to the construction of mandapa ; the roof of the mandapa was now pyramidical with thinning at the top and lower than the sikhara .

The finest examples of this period are the Lingaraja temple, Bhubaneshwar, the Jaganath temple Puri and the Sun temple Konark with their sikhara height ranging from 43 m to 57 m high.



The temple building movement in Orissa, which reached its peak of excellence in the 10th and 11th centuries, stretches from roughly 650 AD to 1200AD and illustrates more coherently than any other similar movement the growth and development of the nagara style of architecture

In general all Orissan temples follow a common structural plan

A typical temple consists of two apartments.

The Deul corresponding to the southern vimana is the cubical inner apartment which enshrines the image and is surmounted by a tower

In front of this is the antarala or porch called the Jaganmohan which is usually square shaped and had a pyramidal roof

Occasionally one or two more mandapas such as the Natmandir and the bhogmandir can be found in front of the jaganmohan, but these where they exist are almost without exception were superimposed on top of the original plan.



Bhubaneshwar has the richest profusion of temples as is known as the temple town of Orissa, not only because of the large number of temples, but also because it is the home of the famous lingaraja temple.

The city of bhubaneshwar is believed to have been created by yayati, founder of the kesari dynasty of Orissa.

The striking concentration of temples in bhubaneswara is partly accounted for the fact that the city was the seat of powerful religions.

The sacred lake of bhubaneshwara was once encircled by 7000 shrines, of which only 500 now survived in different stages of depleting areas.

Konark Sun Temple is a 13th century Sun Temple (also known as the **Black Pagoda**), at Konark, in Orissa. It was constructed from oxidized and weathered ferruginous sandstone by King Narasimhadeva I (1238-1250 CE) of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty. The temple is an example of Orissan architecture of Ganga dynasty .

The name Konark is derived from the Sanskrit word *Kona* (meaning *angle*) and word *Arka* (meaning *sun*) in reference to the temple which was dedicated to the Sun god Surya.

The entire complex was designed in the form of the God's huge chariot drawn by seven horses on twelve pairs of beautifully decorated wheels at its base. The huge wheels carved at the base of the temple are one of the major



attractions. The spokes of the wheels serve as sundials and the shadows cast by these can give the specific time of the day.

The entrance is guarded by two giant lions, which are each shown crushing a war elephant. Each elephant in turn lies on top of a human body. The temple symbolizes the majestic stride of the Sun God.

At the entrance of the temple is a **Nata mandir**. This is where the temple dancers used to perform dances in respect to the Sun God. All around the temple, there are various floral and geometric patterns.

Konark Sun Temple

The Sun Temple, built in the thirteenth century, was conceived as a huge chariot of the Sun God, with twelve pairs of gracefully ornamented wheels pulled by seven horses.

Royal in formation, this temple is one of the most sublime monuments of India, famous as much for its grand size and perfect proportions as for the musical integration of architectural greatness with plastic quality.

Every inch of the temple is covered with sculpture of a supreme beauty and grace, in panels and freestanding pieces ranging from the monumental to the miniature.

The subject matter is fascinating. Thousands of images include deities, celestial and human musicians, dancers,



lovers, and myriad scenes of courtly life, ranging from hunts and military battles to the pleasures of courtly relaxation. These are composed with birds, animals (close to two thousand charming and lively elephants march around the base of the main temple alone), mythological creatures, and a wealth of intricate floral and geometrical decorative designs. The famous jewel-like quality of Orissan art is evident throughout, as is a very human perspective which makes the sculpture extremely accessible.

Lingaraja temple

The great Lingaraja temple, believed to have been built around 1000 A.D.

It stands in a cluster of sixty-five smaller shrines in a spacious compound measuring 520 feet by 465 feet and its mighty tower (the vimana) dominates the landscape for miles around.

Constructed without mortar, this tower is 127 feet high and is divided into vertical sections.

The angles of the recesses are filled in which miniature vimanas and on the top, are figures representing a lion crushing an elephant.

Mukteshwara



This is a little architecture gem, with deul and jagamohana.

The length of the temple is 45 ft, width is 25 ft, shikhara is 35 ft height.

The temple is with heavy ornamentation and interesting carving.

The entrance torana is semicircular with 2 pillars decorated with flora and fauna motifs.

Jagannatha temple

The architecture of the temple follows the pattern of many Orissan temples of the classical period. The main shikhara, or tower, rises above the inner sanctum where the deities (shri hari jagannatha, devi subhadra and shri balarama) reside. Subsidiary shikharas rise above ante-halls.

The temple complex is surrounded by a wall, on each side of which is a gopura or gate, over which rises a pyramid-shaped roof. Being the largest temple in the state, it has a complex covering several square blocks with dozens of structures including a huge kitchen.

The main temple structure of this architectural and cultural wonder is 65m (214 feet) high and is built on elevated ground, making it look more impressive. Comprising an area of 10.7 acres, the temple complex is enclosed by two rectangular walls.



The outer enclosure is called Meghanada Prachira, 200m (665 ft) by 192m (640 ft). The inner wall is called Kurmabedha, 126m (420 ft) by 95m (315 ft). There are thirty-six traditional communities (Chatisha Niyaga) who render a specific traditional service to the deities. The temple has as many as 6,000 priests.

There is a wheel on top of the Jagannath Temple made of an alloy of eight metals (asta-dhatu). It is called the Nila Chakra (Blue Wheel), and is 3.5m (11 ft 8 in) high with a circumference of about 11m (36 ft). Every day, a different flag is tied to a pole attached to the Nila Chakra.

Every Ekadasi, a lamp is lit on top of the temple near the wheel. There are four gates: the eastern Singhadwara (Lion Gate), the southern Ashwadwara (Horse Gate), the western Vyaghradwara (Tiger Gate), and the northern Hastidwara (Elephant Gate).

There is a carving of each form by the entrance of each gate. The Lion Gate, which is the main gate, is located on Grand Road. Thirty different smaller temples surround the main temple. The Narasimha Temple, adjacent to the western side of the Mukti-mandapa, is said to have been constructed before this temple even.