



HISTORY AND CULTURE OF INDIAN TEMPLES:AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The artistic techniques and architectural patterns of the Shaiva temples of coastal belt of Odisha are the important parts of the Hindu temple art of Odisha in Eastern India. The earlier art historians and senior scholars had outlined the art and architecture of some notable temples of Eastern Odisha like Sun temple, Sovanesvara temple, Jagannatha temple, Lingaraj temple, Muktesvara temple, Madhavananda temple, Mangala temple, Varahi temple, etc. The extant temples of Eastern Odisha possess the features of Kalinga style of temple architecture of Odisha. Really, some Shaiva temples of the eastern part of Odisha have to be discussed here are very important considering their religious significance and artistic techniques. In fact, the artistic features and architectural patterns of the five Shaiva temples of Eastern Odisha draw the attention of scholars, art historians and archaeologists to commence the research work. The five Shaiva temples taken here for discussion are such as 1. Trilochaneshvara Temple at Sadansa, 2. Brahmeshvara temple at Brahmana-sailo, 3. Bateshvara temple at Khandala, 4. Balunkeshvara temple at Orei, and 5. Dakshineshvara temple at Kunja. The aim of this article is to focus on artistic techniques / designs, architectural features along with the religious significance of the above five Shaiva temples of Eastern Odisha. Methodologically, both the primary and secondary sources have been used for the writing of the present article.

Keywords: Indian, art, architecture

Introduction

The region of Eastern part of Odisha is an important place of Hindu monuments in India. The temples taken here for discussion are located in the different sites of the Puri and Cuttack districts of Odisha. In the past, Shaivism was the principal religion in the coastal-belt of Odisha from the 6th- 7th centuries onwards and it was reached the peak of its glory during the Somavamsi period in the 10th- 11th century A.D. (Behera & Donaldson, 1998, pp.29-31). There are numerous Siva temples noticed in Odisha and almost every village of Eastern Odisha has a Siva temple of its own (Behera & Donaldson, 1998, p.31). Odisha is famous as the land of temples and the Odishan builders have developed not only a special nomenclature of their own but a distinct style of building art known as the 'Kalinga style' (Das, 1958, p.9). The extant Shaiva temples of Eastern Odisha including the Prachi Valley area suggest that the region was popular as a place of Shaivism in the medieval period. Some of the Shiva temples have been erected in the modern period. All the ancient dilapidated Shiva temples of Eastern Odisha have been repaired in the last quarter of the 20th century and a few in the first decade of the twenty-first century. A large number of Shaiva temples are found existed in different parts of the coastal-belt of Odisha and they represent the Kalinga style of temple architecture of Odisha. The temples of Odisha form a class by themselves and these Hindu monuments can be conveniently labelled as "Kalinga style" (Behera, 1993, p.1). In fact, Odisha is famous for its large numbers of temples for the purpose of worship of various deities of different sects of Hinduism. Indian Shilpashastras recognize 3 major styles of temples such as Nagara, Dravida and Veshara (Ishana Shiva Gurudeva Paddhati and other Texts). Odishan temples architecture is appropriately named as Kalinga Style after its ancient name 'Kalinga'

Of temples is existed with other three major styles viz. Nagara, Dravida and Veshara as fourth category temple style of India (M. E. Report, 1914-15, p.90 and Kramisch, 1946, pp.286-295). The Kalinga Style of temple architecture is



divided into four types such as rekha, pidha (bhadrā), khakhara and Gauriya (Bose, 1931, p.78). All the five Shaiva temples of Eastern Odisha discussed here represent the pidha type of the Kalinga Style temple architecture. In Odishan temple architecture, each temple type / order and its individual part has been given a distinctive name (Mohapatra, 1982, p.14). All the temples of coastal belt of Odisha possess the Kalinga style of temple architecture, which is an offshoot of the Nagara Style temple architecture of India (Mohapatra, 2007, p.25). In fact, Odishan temples practice the most compacted and standardised architectural set in India (Fergusson, 1875, p.414). The Odishan temple architecture with its uniqueness and distinct nomenclature was included in the other types of temples of India such as Nagara, Dravida and Veshararaising their number to four i.e. the Kalinga style (Panigrahi, 1985, p.371). The Kalinga style temples of Odisha are certainly noteworthy for the profusion of sculptures. In this connection, Stella Kramrisch aptly comments that “Architecture in Odishan temples is but sculptures on a gigantic scale” (Kramrisch, Vol.1, 1946, p.218). The sculptures of the Odishan temples occupy a dominating place among the artistic achievements of Odishan sculptors. Some of the extant Shaiva temples of Eastern Odisha have not been covered by the earlier art historians and scholars. Hence the present article attempts to focus on artistic designs and architectural features along with religious significance of five Shaiva temples of Eastern Odisha. Out of five Shaiva temples, four are completely new for the present scholarly work.

METHODOLOGY

Both the primary and secondary sources have been utilized in the writing of present article on five Shaiva temples of Eastern Odisha. The primary data have been collected through Gazetteers, Texts, unpublished thesis, the practical observation, public opinions, hearsay accounts and interview methods during the period of experimental field survey. The collected data with regard to the art, architecture and religious significance of the five Shaiva temples of Eastern Odisha is primarily based on practical observations made by the principal author of the article. The secondary data relating to the present piece of work are Books, Journals, Periodicals, Proceedings, Antiquities, Records, Reports, etc. The data collected from both the primary and secondary sources are critically analyzed and used in this article.

DISCUSSION AND RESULT ANALYSIS

Five Shaiva Temples of Eastern Odisha A large number of Shaiva temples are found erected in the different parts of the coastal belt of Odisha in Eastern India. Out of all the extant Shaiva temples of Eastern Odisha, five temples have been taken here for the subject of our discussion through the scholarly work. These five Shaiva temples are noticed in the different sites of the Cuttack and Puri districts of Odisha. The names and sites of these five Shiva temples are such as 1. Trilochaneshvara Temple at Sadansa, 2. Brahmeshvara temple at Brahmana-sailo, 3. Bateshvara temple at Khandala, 4. Balunkeshvara temple at Orei, and 5. Dakshineshvara temple at Kunja. The descriptions of different aspects like location, art, architecture, religious sanctity, etc. of the above five Shaiva temples of Eastern Odisha are briefly described below.

The Nagara or North Indian Temple Architecture

- Nagara is the style of temple architecture which became popular in Northern India.
- It is common here to build an entire temple on a stone platform with steps leading up to it.



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- Unlike in south India, it doesn't usually have elaborate boundary walls or gateways.
 - Earliest temples had only one shikhara (tower), but in the later periods, multiple shikharas came.

Latina/ Rekha-Prasada:

- It is the **simple and most common** type of shikhara.
- It is **square at the base and the walls curve or slopes inwards to a point on top**.
- Latina types are mainly used for housing the garbhagriha.
- Later on, the Latina buildings grew complex, and instead of appearing like a single tower, the temple began to support many small towers, which were clustered together like rising mountain type with the tallest one being in the centre, and this was the one which was always above the garbhagriha

Phamsana type shikhara:

- They are broader and shorter than Latina type.
- Their **roof is composed of several slabs** that **gently rise** to a single point over the centre of the building, unlike the Latina ones which look like sharply rising towers.
- Phamsana roofs do not curve inwards; instead, they slope upward on a straight incline.
- In many north Indian temples, the phamsana type is used for mandapas while the main garbhagriha is housed in a Latina building.

Valabhi type shikhara:

- These are **rectangular buildings with a roof that rises into a vaulted chamber**.
- The edge of the vaulted chamber is round, like the bamboo or wooden wagons that would have been drawn by bullocks in ancient times.
- The form of this temple is influenced by ancient building forms that were already in existence.

CENTRAL INDIA

- In the later periods, the temples grew from simple four pillared structures to a large complex.
- This means that similar developments were incorporated in the architecture of temples of both the religions.
- Two such temples that survive are; temple at Udaygiri which is on the outskirts of Vidisha (it is a part of a large Hindu temple complex) and a temple at Sanchi, which was a Buddhist site.
- The early temples were modest looking shrines each have four pillars that support a small mandapa before an equally small room that served as garbhagriha.
- Some of the oldest surviving structural temples of Gupta period are in Madhya Pradesh.
- The ancient temples in UP, MP and Rajasthan share many traits and the most visible is that they are made of Sandstone.

DASHAVATARA VISHNU TEMPLE, DEOGARH, UP:

- Even though the patrons and donors of the temple are unknown, it is believed that this temple was built in the early 6th century CE.



- This is a classical example of the late Gupta period.
- This temple is in the Panchayatana style of architecture. [Panchayatana is an architectural style where the main shrine is built on a rectangular plinth with four smaller subsidiary shrines at the four corners and making it a total of five shrines – i.e., Pancha]
- There are 3 main reliefs of Vishnu on the temple walls.
- In fact, it is not actually known to whom the four subsidiary shrines were originally dedicated.
- The temple depicts Vishnu in various forms due to which it was assumed that the four subsidiary shrines must also house Vishnu's avatars and the temple was mistaken for a dashavatara temple.
- The grand doorway of the west facing temple (west facing is less common) has the sculptures of Ganga on the left and Yamuna on the right side.
- The shikhara is in latina/ prasada style which makes it clear that this is an early example of a classical nagara style of the te
- Sheshayana – on the south (Vishnu reclining on the sheshanaga called Ananta)
- Nara-Narayana – on the east (discussion between human soul and the eternal divine)
- Gajendramoksha – on the west (story of achieving moksha , symbolically communicated by Vishnu's suppression o an asura who had taken the form of an elephant)

TEMPLES AT KHAJURAH, MADHYA PRADESH:

- The temples at Khajuraho were made in the 10th century, about 400 years after the temple at Deogarh and the complex is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- The temples were patronized by Chandela kings.
- We can see how dramatically the shape and style of the nagara temple architecture had developed.
- The temples at Khajuraho are all made of Sandstone.
- The largest temple at Khajuraho is the Kandariya Mahadeva temple which is attributed to king Ganda.
- The Lakshmana temple dedicated to Vishnu was built in 954 by Chandela king, Dhanga.
- All the towers or shikhara of the temple rise high, upward in a curved pyramidal fashion, emphasizing the temple's vertical thrust ending in a horizontal fluted disc called an Amalakatopped with a Kalasha or a vase.
- The crowning element Kalasha and Amalaka are to be found on all nagara temples of this period.
- The Khajuraho temples are also known for their extensive erotic sculptures (about 10% of total sculptures); the erotic expression gives equal importance in human experience as a spiritual pursuit, and it is seen as a part of the larger cosmic whole.
- Many Hindu temples, therefore feature Mithuns (embracing couples-erotic sculptures) sculptures, considered auspicious.
- Khajuraho sculptures are highly stylized with typical features.
- There are many temples at Khajuraho, most of them dedicated to Hindu gods.
- There are some Jain temples as well as a Chausanth Yogini temple.
- Chausanth Yogini is a temple of small square shrines dedicated to esoteric deities or goddesses associated with the rise of Tantric worship after the 7th

SUN TEMPLE, MODHERA, GUJARAT:

- The temple dates back to the early 11th century and was built by Raja Bhimdev I of the Solanki dynasty.
- The Solankis were a branch off later Chalukyas.
- There is a massive rectangular stepped tank called Surya Kund in front of it.
- The hundred square metre rectangular pond is perhaps the grandest temple tank in India.
- A hundred and eight miniature shrines are carved in between the steps inside the tank.
- A huge ornamental arch-torana leads one to the sabha mandapa (the assembly hall) which is open on all sides, as was the fashion of the times in western and central India temples.



EAST INDIA

- East Indian temples include those found in the North-East, Bengal, and Odisha and each of these three areas produces a distinct type of temple.
- The history of architecture in the northeast and Bengal is hard to study because a number of ancient buildings in those regions were renovated, and what survives now is later brick or concrete temples at those sites.
- It appears that terracotta was the main medium of construction.
- A large number of sculptures have been found in Assam and Bengal, which shows the development of important regional schools in those regions.

- In north Indian temples, we can see images such as Mithunas (erotic) and the river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna guarding the temple. But in the Dravida style of temple architecture, instead of these sculptures, we can see the sculptures of fierce dvarapalas or door keepers guarding the temple.
- A large water reservoir or a temple tank enclosed in the complex is general in south Indian temples.
- Subsidiary shrines are either incorporated within the main temple tower or located as a distinct, separate small shrine beside the main temple.
- The north Indian idea of multiple shikharas rising together as a cluster was not popular in Dravida style.
- At some of the most sacred temples in south India, the main temple in which the garbhagriha is situated has, in fact, one of the smallest towers.
- This is because it is usually the oldest part of the temple.
- When the population and the size of the town associated with the temple increased, it would have become necessary to make a new boundary wall around the temple (and also associated structures).

An example for this is the Srirangam temple at Thiruchirappally, which has as many as seven concentric rectangular enclosure walls, each with gopurams.

CONCLUSION

We come to know that the above six Shaiva temples of coastal belt of Odisha have been renovated in the twentieth century A.D. Some of the basic features and peculiarities are noticed in the said Shaiva temples as discussed in the fact. The Trilochaneshvara temple is a good representative of the Kalinga style architecture of Odisha. The back wall niche of the sanctum of the Trilochaneshvara temple houses the two stone sculptures; one of Varaha and another of a royal scene. The stone slab of the royal scene was possibly inserted in the gavaksamandana of the jagamohana. At the time of renovation, the stone slab has been preserved in the back wall niche of the sanctum. The jagamohana of the Trilochaneshvara temple is completely a renovated structure. According to the temple priest, it was rebuilt in 1952 by the villagers. The architectural pattern and sculptural features of the Trilochaneshvara temple indicate that the temple was possibly built in the Ganga period. The iconographic features of the parshvadevatas indicate that the Brahmeshvara temple of Brahmanasailo was possibly built in the 19th century A.D. The principal niches of the bada of Bateshvara temple of Khandala are accommodated with the parshvadevatas of Ganesha, Vishnu and Devi Parvati. Generally, in the Shiva temple, Kartikeya is the parshvadevata of the back side. But here the image of Lord Vishnu / Madhavananda is the parshvadevata of the western side. It is a peculiar feature of this temple. A small flat roof shed attached in the northern side badawall of the jagamohana of the Bateshvara temple, which preserves the images of Chandrashekhara and



Narasimha. The images of Vishnu and Narasimha in the temple site were possibly brought from any ruined Vaishnava shrine located nearby the site, which has not existed till now. The architectural features of the Bateshvara temple suggest that the temple might have built in the 18th century A.D.

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