

Orrisa Temple Architecture (Lingraja & Konark)

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Bhubaneswar is also called the 'City of Temples'. It boasted of more than 7000 temples located around Bindusagar tank in the old city. Only 500 of those temples survive today some of which are really magnificent. Orissa formed a part of the Kalinga Kingdom. In 260 BC, Emperor Ashoka defeated the King of Kalinga. But soon the bloody battle filled Ashoka with remorse and he renounced war and violence forever. He embraced Buddhism and followed the path of peace, pity, compassion and non-violence. Soon after Ashoka's death Buddhism in Orissa declined and Jainism had the sway under the mighty arm of Kharvela until Buddhism again became a popular faith in 2nd century B. C. Under Kharvela Orissa attained new heights in art, culture trade and commerce.

The coming of the Kesari and Ganga Kings marks the culmination of Orissa art and culture. These kings were very powerful and ambitious builders. They were followers of Shaiva and Vaishnava faith. The temples of Bhubaneswar, Puri and Konark were constructed during their reign (712-1200 AD). In 1568 AD, the last Hindu ruler of Orissa was over-thrown by a Muslim general and finally Orissa was annexed by Akbar in 1592 AD. The bigoted Muslim invaders destroyed hundreds of Hindu and Jain temples.

The location for the capital was selected because of its central location, high altitude, good communication, vast plateau like high uplands sloping to the sides, eco-friendly climate and above all deep-rooted historical significance with left out landmarks of architectures and sculptures. The capital was shifted from Cuttack to Bhubaneswar in 1948. Although the modern city of Bhubaneswar was formally established in 1948, the history of the areas in and around the present-day city can be traced to the 3rd century BCE and earlier. It is a confluence of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain heritage boasting of some of the finest Kalingan temples. With many 6th - 13th century CE Hindu temples, which span the entire spectrum of Kalinga architecture, Bhubaneswar is often referred to as a "Temple City of India". With Puri and Konark it forms the *Swarna Tribhuja* ("Golden Triangle"), one of eastern India's most visited destinations.

LINGARAJA TEMPLE: Lingaraja temple is the epitome of the Orissan temple architecture. It is one of the most beautiful temples in India. This temple represents magnificence and grace of the mature of and highly developed temple form of orissan style. The temple consists of four parts, the sanctum, with the high tower, the mandapa, nata mandapa, and the bhoga mandapa. The Lingaraja temple is the largest temple in Bhubaneswar. The central tower of the temple is 180 ft (55 m) tall. The temple represents the quintessence of the Kalinga architecture and culminating the medieval stages of the architectural tradition at Bhubaneswar. The temple is believed to be built by the kings from the Somavamsi dynasty, with later additions from the Ganga rulers. The temple is built in the Deula style that has four components namely, vimana (structure containing the sanctum), jagamohana (assembly hall), natamandira (festival hall) and bhoga-mandapa (hall of offerings), each increasing in the height to its predecessor. Bhubaneswar is called the Ekamra Kshetra as the deity of Lingaraja was originally under a mango tree (Ekamra) as noted in *Ekamra Purana*, a 13th-century Sanskrit treatise. The temple is active in worship practises, unlike most other temples in Bhubaneswar and Shiva is worshipped as Harihara, a combined form of Vishnu and Shiva.

The main deity of the temple is Hari-Hara that is half Shiva and half Vishnu. The deity is also referred to as "Tirubhuvaneshwar" meaning "Lord of the three worlds". Parts of this temple are over 1400 years old. But the present structure dates back from 1060 to 1104 A.D. The Lingaraja temple is the largest temple in Bhubaneswar. James Fergusson (1808–86), a noted critic and historian rated the temple as "one of the finest examples of purely Hindu temple in India". It is enshrined within a spacious compound wall of laterite measuring 520 ft (160 m) by 465 ft (142 m). The wall is 7.5 ft (2.3 m) thick and surmounted by a plain slant coping. Alongside the inner face of the boundary wall, there is a terrace to protect the compound wall against outside aggression. The tower is 45.11 m (148.0 ft) high and the complex has 150 smaller shrines in its spacious courtyard. Each inch of the 55 m (180 ft) tall tower is sculpted. The door in the gate of the entrance porch is made of sandalwood.

The Lingaraja temple faces east and is built of sandstone and laterite. The main entrance is located in the east, while there are small entrances in the north and south. The temple is built in the Deula style that has four components namely, vimana (structure containing the sanctum), jagamohana (assembly hall), natamandira (festival hall) and bhoga-mandapa (hall of offerings), with all four in axial alignment with descending height. The dance hall was associated with the raising prominence of the devadasi system that existed during the time. The various units from the Hall of offering to the tower of the sanctum increase in height.

The *bhogamandapa* (Hall of offering) measures 42 ft (13 m) x 42 ft (13 m) from the inside, 56.25 ft (17.15 m) x 56.25 ft (17.15 m) from the outside and has four doors in each of the sides. The exterior walls of the hall have decorative sculptures of men and beast. The hall has a pyramidal roof made of up several horizontal layers arranged in sets of two with intervening platform. It bears an inverted bell and a *kalasa* in the top. The *natamandira* (festival hall) measures 38 ft (12 m) x 38 ft (12 m) from the inside, 50 ft (15 m) x 50 ft (15 m) from the outside, has one main entrance and two side entrances. The side walls of the hall have decorative sculptures displaying women and couples. It has a flat roof sloping in stages. There are thick pylons inside the hall. The *jagamohana* (assembly hall) measures 35 ft (11 m) x 30 ft (9.1 m) from the inside, 55 ft (17 m) x 50 ft (15 m) from the outside, entrances from south and north and has a 30 metres (98 ft) tall roof. The hall has a pyramidal roof made of up several horizontal layers arranged in sets of two with intervening platform as in the Hall of offering. The facades to the entrances are decorated with perforated windows with lion sitting on hind legs. The inverted bell above second unit is adorned by *kalasa* and lions. The *rekha deula* has a 60 m (200 ft) tall pyramidal tower over the sanctum and measures 22 ft (6.7 m) x 22 ft (6.7 m) from the inside, 52 ft (16 m) x 52 ft (16 m) from the outside over the sanctum. It is covered with decorative design and seated lion projecting from the walls. The sanctum is square in shape from the inside. The tower walls are sculpted with female figures in different poses. The temple has a vast courtyard mired with hundreds of small shrines.

SUN TEMPLE, KONARK: The magnificent Sun Temple of Konark is the culmination of Orissan temple architecture, and one of the most stunning monuments of religious architecture in the world. Konark Sun temple has been declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO.

The massive structure, now in ruins, sits in solitary splendour surrounded by drifting sand. Today it is located two kilometers from the sea, but originally the ocean came almost up to its base. Until fairly recent times, in fact, the temple was close enough to the shore to be used as a navigational point by European sailors, who referred to it as the 'Black Pagoda'.

The Sun Temple of Konark Pagoda was constructed in mid thirteenth century by Raja Narasingsh Deva-I of the Ganga Dynasty. The temple is a brilliant chronicle in stone, with impressive sculptures. It took 16 years to complete. 1,200 artisans and 12,000 labourers were employed on the task. In its original form, the total height of the temple was 227 feet and the temple is set in the middle of a spacious compound which lies about 2m below the surrounding land. It is an ample testament to the artistic glory of the time. Conceived in form of a huge chariot

drawn by seven spirited horses on twelve pairs of exquisitely decorated wheels, after the mythical seven horse chariot of Sun God, the temple was a unique in its architecture and implementation. Intricate carvings on the walls of the main temple and the Natya Mandap (a separate structure just in front of the temple) are a sight to behold. It is often considered to be the most artistically superior among the other temples and that is saying something when you are talking about the golden triangle of Orissa which boast of Sri Jagannath temple and Lingraj Temple of Puri and Bhubaneswar .

The main tower, which is now collapsed, originally followed the same general form as the towers of the Lingaraja and Jagannath temples. Its height, however, exceeded both of them, soaring to 227 feet. The jagmohana (porch) structure itself exceeded 120 feet in height. Both tower and porch are built on high platforms, around which are the 24 giant stone wheels of the chariot. The wheels are exquisite, and in themselves provide eloquent testimony to the genius of Orissa's sculptural tradition.

At the base of the collapsed tower were three subsidiary shrines, which had steps leading to the Surya images. The third major component of the temple complex was the detached natyamandira (hall of dance), which remains in front of the temple. Of the 22 subsidiary temples which once stood within the enclosure, two remain (to the west of the tower): the Vaishnava Temple and the Mayadevi Temple. At either side of the main temple are colossal figures of royal elephants and royal horses.