

CULTURE OF ODISHA

Architecture of Rajarani Temple

By **Brajabandhu Mahanta** • March 26, 2018 • 4 min read

The Rajarani temple in Bhubaneswar (A.D. 1000-1022) is a marvel of Odia architecture. According

Rajarani Temple, Bhubaneswar Credit: Amartya Bag

to some historians, it was called Indresvara or Indralingesvara after its builder, Indraratha, an illustrious somavamsi ruler. At the moment, this temple is without a presiding deity, and it is well-known as a temple without a deity.

The Rajarani temple is built on a three-moulded platform. There is a punchanga Bada at the temple. The temple's Vimana is in the Rekha style, clustered with miniature Sikharas. Its Jagamohana is a pyramidal-shaped Pidha deula. Pancharatha is the plan. A Kalasa crowns it. The Navagraha Panel appears on the lintels of both the porch and sanctum in the Rajarani temple. The Digpalas, Dvarapalas, and other decorative motifs adorn the temple's body. The temple's Vimana is adorned with a large number of its miniature prototypes known as Anger-sikharas. The images of lovely ladies, Dikpalas, and shall images in the vimana's alto-relievo add lustre to the temple. When viewed from all angles, the Rajarani temple exemplifies the Kalingan style of temple architecture to a tee.

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Architectural Specifications and Design Elements

Odisha's temples are divided into two sections: the sanctum (deul or vimana) and the area from which pilgrims view the sanctum (called jagamohana). As seen in some of the older temples in Bhubaneswar, the initial deul temples lacked the jagamohana, whereas the later temples included two additional structures: the nata-mandapa (festival hall) and the bhoga-mandapa (hall of offerings). The vimana is square in plan, with assaults dividing the walls (called rathas or pagas). Amalaka (alternatively spelled mastaka), a stone disc with ridges around the rim, is placed atop the temple's bada (tower). Rajarani Temple is elevated. The temple was built of a dull red and yellow sandstone known locally as "Rajarani."

Rajarani Temple Plan, Credit: James Fergusson

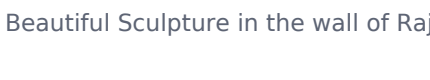
Vimana

It is pancharatha in plan, with an 18m (55 ft) tall curvilinear superstructure (rekha shikhara). The vimana (tower) is surrounded by a cluster of miniature towers with double crowning elements and appears round, in contrast to the other temples in Bhubaneswar, but similar to the Khajuraho temples' towers. The temple is supported by a plinth adorned with three mouldings. The bada is divided into five sections, rather than the three sections found in most other temples. From the basement, the vimana rises to a height of 17.98 metres (59.0 ft). From the inside, the vimana (sanctum) measures 10.25 ft (3.12 m) *10.25 ft (3.12 m), and from the outside, it measures 31 ft (9.4 m) 29 ft (8.8 m)*. Its spire is adorned with clusters of turrets (replications of the spire's ribs). The temple is divided into five sections, or panchanga bada, namely pabhaga, talajangha, bandhana, uparajangha, and baranda. The lower division, known as the pabhaga, features five decorative mouldings: the khura, the kumbha, the patta, the kani, and the basanta. The temple's superstructure (gandi) is adorned with numerous miniature turrets (angashikharas). The superstructure is crowned by a fluted disc-shaped architectural element known as an amalaka, which is surmounted by a vase (kalasa) as the crowning finial.

Jagamahona

While the jagamahona (porch) demonstrates a pyramidal structure, it has not yet attained the status of a self-contained structure. It bears evidence of the restoration work carried out in 1903 after it collapsed into ruins. On the inside, the jagamahona measures 17.83 ft (5.43 m) *17.83 ft (5.43 m) and on the outside, it measures 36 ft (11 m)* 36 ft (11 m). The three-tiered (pidha) jagamahona and interior are unadorned, possibly left unfinished. The jagamahona's plan is square in comparison to earlier temples' rectangular plans.

Sculptures

The sculptures possess a depth  Beautiful Sculpture in the wall of Rajarani temple, Credit: Bernard Gagnon that the Mukteswara Temple

sculptures lacked. The slightly protruding entrance is flanked on the left by round thick columns entwined with naga. Guardians of the eight directions project from the temple's base in eight directions, beginning at the gateway and continuing clockwise around the porch and deul to the torana (entrance). Other notable sculptures include the naga-nagi sthambha, saiva dwarapalas on the entrance doorjambs, and lakulisa on the entrance lintel, which is topped by the Navagrahas architrave. [Additional clarification required] The temple's best-preserved sculptures are the standing astadikpalas on the central façade of kanika, who appear dressed in diaphanous drapery on the jangha portion of the bada. Varuna's image is complete and noteworthy for its body ornamentation, coiffure, and facial expression. The temple's cult images depict scenes from Shiva's marriage to Nataraja and Parvati. The sanctum's walls are adorned with tall, slender, sophisticated nayikas depicted in a variety of roles and moods engaging in amorous dalliance with actions such as turning her head away from an emaciated ascetic, fondling her child, holding a branch of tree, attending to her toilet, looking into mirror, removing her anklet, caressing her pet bird, and playing instrument. Additionally, there are erotic (mithuna) figures carved in high relief on the uparajangha's projecting portions. Other decorative motifs include vyala, jagrata, and gajakranta. Scroll motifs depict foliage, creepers, and vines (vanalata), each of which contains lush foliage that is not attached to any stalk or vine.

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Source: <https://historyofodisha.in/architecture-of-rajarani-temple/>

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