
CULTURE OF ODISHA

Types and Components of Temples of Odisha

By **Brajabandhu Mahanta** • March 22, 2018 • 4 min read

Table of Contents

01 Temple Architecture in Odisha	3
02 Components of Temples of Odisha	3

Temple Architecture in Odisha

Bhuvana Pradipa distinguishes three types of temples based on their architectural characteristics. These include Rekha (a curved superstructure), Bhadra or Pidha (a pyramidal-roofed monument), and Khakhara (oblong building with wagon-vault roof). The text discusses approximately 36 varieties of Rekha, five varieties of Bhadra, and three varieties of Khakhara, along with proportionate measurements for each part and its height.

The typical Odishan temple consists of two structures: the Rekha for the Deula (sanctum cella or garbha griha with the curvilinear superstructure known as sikhara or gandi) and the Bhadra for the pidha-deula, which serves as the audience hall (Jagamohana or mukhasala). A pyramidal roof of receding steps covers the pidha-deula, which was added to the front of the Rekhadeula. The lower Pidha-deula balances the taller Rekha-deula and “significantly enhances the grandeur of the soaring curvilinear spire.”

According to N.K. Bose, the axial arrangement of the Odishan temple’s Rekha and Bhadra components began with the sanctum, to which the porch was later added. Nata mandira (dance hall) and Bhoga mandapa (offering hall) were later added along the same axial line. Odishan temples typically have a curvilinear spire and a square sanctum. On the summit of the Mahendra and in Koraput, a few Pidha-style temples are constructed, as are two hypaethral (circular and open) Yogini temples at Ranipur-Jharial and Hirapur, the star-shaped Ones at Baudh, and a few Khakhar temples.

Components of Temples of Odisha

In terms of elevation, the Odishan temple is composed of four components: pista (platform or vedika), vada (vertical wall), gandi (trunk), and mastaka (head or crown).

Numerous temples lack the pista. The bada is divided into three sections: pabhaga (the foot or bottom section comprised of Khura, Kumbha, Patta, Kani, and Basanta), jangha (the thigh section), and baranda (moulding forming uppermost part of bada). The jangha is divided into two sections by a set of mouldings known as bandhana: tala janga (lower thigh) and upper

jangha (upper bond thigh). The main temple and the pidha are similar up to bada. The distinction begins with the gandi. Whereas the gandi of the Rekhadeula has a convex shape, i.e. a curvilinear outline, the gandi of Pidha has a pyramidal shape.

Rekhadeula's gandi is divided into several pagas (vertical projections). By miniature amlas, the corner pagas known as kanika-pagas are further subdivided into horizontal sections known as bhumi (ribbed disc resembling amla fruit). The central paga is referred to as Rahapaga, while the following two are referred to as kanika and anu-raha. The door or entrance is located on the raha paga, while niches are located on the remaining three raha-pagas that descend to the pa-bhaga. Thus, it conforms to the design of a four-door shrine. Between the raha and the corner, the subsidiary pagas are positioned. Temples are classified as triratha, pancha-ratha, saptaratha, or saptaratha based on the number of pagas (also called rathas). The apex of gandi is referred to as visama.

Above it is a mastaka (skull) composed of Veki (neck), amla, Khapuri (skull), Kalasa (Gar), and ayudha (attribute or symbol of the deity). The gandi in pidha deula is composed of a series of pidhas that gradually diminish in size toward the top, forming a pyramidal shape. The topmost pidha is about half the size of the lowest. Later temples grouped pidhas into tiers called potalas that are separated by recessed vertical walls called kanti. The hollow interior above the sanctum (garbha-griha) is concealed by a ceiling (garbhamuda) made of stone beams and rafters that serves to reinforce the structure by binding the walls together. Two or three ceilings (mudas) are found in larger temples, as in the case of Lingaraja. The chambers are accessed via an opening above the lintel of the sanctum's door.

The construction of such magnificent temples as Lingaraja and Jagannatha inspires awe and wonder in the onlooker regarding the construction technique. Indeed, corbelling was used. The sized-Khondalite stones are laid horizontally on top of one another in the majority of temples, "primarily by a system of counterpoise, with the weight of one stone acting against the pressure of another, with much of the stability being a matter of balance and equilibrium." There was no cementing mortar used, but iron cramps and dowels were used to secure the stone stabs in place.

Category: Culture of odisha, Temple Architecture of Odisha

Tag: Temple Architecture of Odisha

Source: <https://historyofodisha.in/types-and-components-of-temples-of-odisha/>

© History of Odisha · Generated on October 14, 2026