

Study Material for M.A. 4th Semester, A.I.H.C and Archaeology

Course No. 403 (Indian Temple Architecture)

Unit-3: Eastern Ganga Architecture (Lecture 1)

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1. Ganga was a ruling dynasty of Orissa in ancient times. Orissa was extended from the border districts of Bihar and Bengal to Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh. Ganga dynasty ruled the eastern part of India from the first quarter of 11th century A.D. up to 15th century A.D. Some epigraphical evidences indicate that they emerged as a ruling dynasty in about 9th century A.D. in about Karnata region with their headquarters at Mysore and later migrated to Orissa in 11th century A.D. and became popular as the Eastern Ganga dynasty. They ruled specially over the land, drained by Damodar, Vaitarni, Languliya, Godavari and the Mahanadi rivers in Orissa.
2. The North Indian Gupta temple architecture was already developed in Orissa from about 7th century up to 10th century A.D. under the patronage of Sailodbhava, Bhaumakara, Somavasima and the Bhanja dynasties and emerged as a distinguished temple style known as the Orissan style. The early Orissan style of temples pertain to three orders (types), locally known as **rekha-duel**, **pidha-duel** and **khakhara duel**. The temple is called as duel in local language.
3. The sanctum (garbhagriha) with the curvilinear super structure (shikhara) consists of three vertical latas (bands) is called the rekha-duel. The hall (mandapa) with a pyramidal roof of horizontal tiers (pidhas) is known as pidha-duel. This hall is also known as the jagamohana. The temple raised on an oblong plan (rectangular) with a wagon-vault roof or a roof shaped like elephant back is known as the khakhara-duel. This is a familiar shape of South India, probably derived from the Buddhist Chaitya halls. The Khakhara is a regional version of a pumpkin. Thus, Orissa developed a distinctive regional school of temple style and traditional architectural nomenclature in the Oriya version.

These three temple types of Orissan style originated during the 7th century, the earlier group of which is still intact at Bhubaneshwar with about a hundred temples, Kualo and Mukhalingam etc. Bhubaneshwar was a pre-eminent centre of this style. The Oriya nomenclature of the different component parts like Vedibandha, Jangha, Varandika, Rathas, Greeva, Amalaka, Kalasa and the Mandapas and also the decorative motives are described in the ancient Orissan canons of architecture (Vastu Shastras) titled the Silpa Prakash, Bhuvana Pradeep and the Madala Panji, which were composed between the 12th and 13th century respectively.
4. The earlier examples of the Orissan style of temples are mainly represented by the Parasurameshvara temple, Svarnajalesvara temple, Lakshmaneshvara, Bharateshvara and the Shatrughnesvara temple at Bhubaneshwar (mid-7th century to the mid-9th

century). The temple known as the Vetala-temple is of Khakhara type. The Khakhara type of temples are rare, only six examples being known from Bhubaneswar.

5. According to some archaeological evidences the Gangas might have migrated to Orissa and occupied Kalinga in about 9th century. The period when the Gangas emerged as a sovereign power in Eastern India is obscure but one of the kings of this dynasty named Vajrahasta 5th hold the reins of government of ancient Orissa in 11th cent. A.D. As per archaeological evidences his coronation took place in 1038 A.D. and he achieved epithets of the **Anantavarman** and the **Trikalingadhipati**. He was the pioneer of the cultural movement in Orissa and patronised all the aspects of art and literature and also the artisans of Orissa.
6. In a typical Orissan temple the sanctum, sikhara and jagamohana form the component parts of a single architectural scheme on ground plan before 11th cent. A.D. In the latter Orissan temples two more component parts known as the nata-mandapa (dancing hall) and bhoga-mandapa (hall of offerings) were added in the same axis. Thus the eastern Ganga architecture appeared with four main component parts in ground plan (bhujyogana), viz garbhagriha, jagamohana, nata-mandapa and the bhoga-mandapa.
7. The Gangas made several modifications over the early Orissan temple style which is called as the eastern Ganga architecture which was patronised by the former ruling dynasties mentioned above. Some of the modifications are following: (a) The size of temples was increased and thus the huge and magnificent temples appeared, for example- Lingaraj temple Bhubanesvara, Sun temple Konoark and the Jagannath temple Puri. (b) Nata-mandapa and Bhoga-mandapa were added in the ground plan. Temples were secured with the higher enclosure wall embellished with sculptured niches and a huge **Gopuram** (the main entrance gate). (c) Temples were raised as per textual prescriptions. (d) Each and every space of the inner and outer walls was embellished with the Saiva, Vaisnava and the Sakta deities. Secular scenes like the episodes from Ramayana and the Mahabharata were also installed in the temples. (e) The roof of earlier Khakhara temples (valabhi or wagon-vault roof) underwent to a miniature form known as **Khakhara-mundi** and was commonly used as a decorative architectural motif. (f) The Vedibandha (plinth) of temples introduce some new design like diamond bands, Vasantapattika and leaf shaped motifs. (g) Three mouldings of vedibandha named Khura, Kumbha, Kalasa are separated with deep curves known as **antarpattika** and the upper member (kalasa) is surmounted with a **Kapotapali**. (h) The jangha also introduces naga/nagi pilasters, charming nayikas and occasionally erotic couples. It is divided into two to three registers and their projecting rathas are adorned with the miniature khakhara and the pitha mundis. (i) The sikhara fronton is provided with a bigger sukanasa under a grassmukha, flanked by a pair of grinning dwarfs. (j) The recess dividing the jangha from the sikhara called Varandika is also highly ornamented. (k) The rekha sikharas locally known as **gandi**, have a sudden curve only near the top.

Almost all the features mentioned here are shown in the lingaraj temple Bhubanesvara which is the grandest and loftiest temple of the Ganga period.

