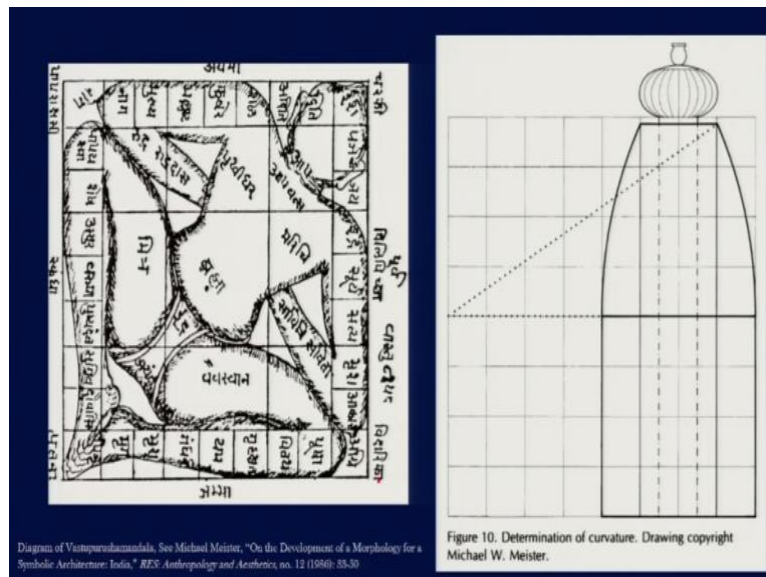


**Indian Art: Materials, Techniques and Artistic Practices**  
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**Lecture – 17**

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Hello everyone. We will be continuing on our discussion on the Hinduism and temple building and architecture. And we have ended our discussion in the ground plan for the garbhagrihas. Now, the other thing about the ground plan here is that there are the cardinal directions; for example, north, east, south and west. They play a very important part of this ground plan. And then of course, there are also the other four directions like north east and southwest and so on.

So, altogether there are 8 directions those we find to be very important in this ground plan as well as in the Hindu idea of the universe. So, in other words, this entire ground plan actually comes to represent or to be a metaphor of the Hindu cosmos. So, in a way that even though it is a small square structure in which the deity figure is installed at the centre of it, but this small structure is actually a metaphor of the entire universe in the Hindu belief.

So, that is the reason this particular ground plan that we find to be prevalent in many Hindu temples of course in the north and in the western part and in the eastern part of India, but also in the south. But this is something that we find to be central part of how the garbhagrihas or the sanctum sanctorum is constructed. Now, if we see the elevation, there are two important things that that comes here.

So, one is this axis mundi or this particular vertical growth that we find and that starts from this particular area what we understand as this place which is dedicated to Brahma. So, this is the place from which the axis mundi rises and that actually goes on the top of the temple tower. So, there is a temple tower as we know in all the Hindu temples, and in the temple tower we do not really see there is a particular pillar which is rising at the centre of it, but this is more like abstracted or a metaphorical axis mundi.

So, axis mundi is something that also is there if we remember that this particular idea was also there in the Buddhist stupas in which there were those three umbrellas on the top of the stupa, which also suggests this axis mundi which relates to relic of Buddha. And here what we find that there is this symbolic axis mundi which relates to the image of the deity which is constructed here and with which it also connects to the shikhara or the apex of the temple structure on the top of it.

Now, what is important here is also that in one hand this is this axis mundi, the symbolic axis mundi and the only tangible part or only the material part of this axis mundi is this particular corbel stone that is placed on the top of the shikara or the top of this superstructure. So, this is the temple structure or this sanctum sanctorum that I have already mentioned. So, this is the vertical elevation. So, as you can see this is square and this is also square.

The ground plan as well as the vertical elevation both are square, and then on the top of it is the equal length or like the equal dimension we can find that is used here as part of the superstructure on the top of it which is called the shikhara. Now, on the top of the shikhara, we have this corbel stone that is called the amalaka and amalaka is this corbel stone which marks the space of this axis mundi and on the top of that we usually find there is a kalasa or this finial.

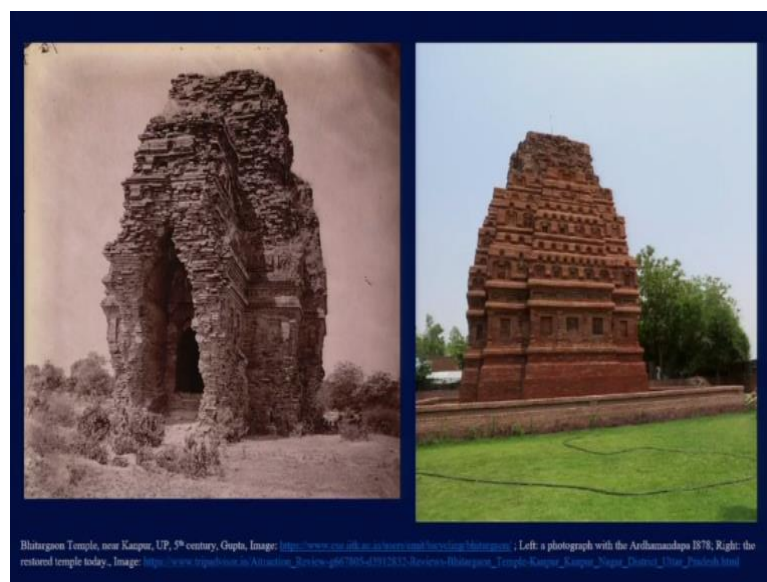
The kalasa is something that is also a marker of life and that is the reason the idea of creation that starts with this God figures or the Goddess figures and they being the centre of the universe, they are related to creation and everything else. And then it also relates to this particular kalasa or this kalasa which is used in most of the Hindu ritual starting with the rituals for birth to marriage to death and everything else.

So, that is something we find that how all these symbols are brought together to suggest that what all are important in the Hindu belief system. Now the other the thing that we can think about in terms of the superstructure and how the superstructure also relates to something else in nature and that is the mountain forms. So, there is this vertical growth of the superstructure and if we can think about it, they also relate to the triangular mountains.

For example, Himalaya or Kailasa as those mountains are believed to be the abode of the gods. And then there is also in the Hindu belief it has been considered that there is Mount Meru, this is another symbolic mountain which is not there only in Hindu belief, but also there in the Jain belief as well. And so the Mount Meru is also considered to be the centre of the universe which is the tallest mountain of all.

So, the temples which are also considered to be the abode of Gods, the elevation of the temples are also something they are compared to Mount Meru. So, that is the reason the temple structures we usually see in central as well as in the northern India that they usually rise from the base to the amalaka. So, this vertical growth in one hand it has to do with this axis mundi and on the other hand it also has to do with how Mount Meru is symbolized by this.

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So, from there if we see that how this temple building practices, they have been manifested in some of these early sites, then this is one of the places in which we find. This is the Bhitargaon temple and this is near the city of Kanpur and it comes from fifth century in Uttar Pradesh. And here this is also a temple which is built during the Gupta period like the one we have seen in the cave temple at Udayagiri in Madhya Pradesh.

Now, unlike the cave temple or the one which is made from the living rock structures, what we see here different is the entire temple is built out of bricks. So, from there what we see that this is this is a place in Uttar Pradesh, we know that these are the plains the Gangetic plains where we do not really have that kind of rock structures, but there is plain land in abundance. And then there is also the river clay which can be utilized for making bricks.

That is the reason we also have seen as we have already discussed in the week on the Harappan cities, the Indus valley sites and so on how the river, the areas around the river that practiced and they sort of mastered the skill of making bricks. So, this particular practice of making bricks in the fifth century should not come as a surprise that how it can also be seen as some ways a continuation of some of the practices those were prevalent in the Indus valley times.

Now, what we see here is this particular temple, the garbhagriha of this temple, it definitely has also this particular Vastu Purusha mandala ground plan in which this square ground plan is considered. And then on the top of that we also have this, this is the base and then we have the superstructure on the top of it. So, as it had started being built, sometimes we find that the superstructure actually goes much beyond than the base.

And that started happening in the times when the terminologies, the ideas and the materials, elements those are used in that temple architecture got more and more complex. Now, the other thing that we also find here to be very interesting are the repetition of certain motifs. So for example, if we see there the particular shikara and of course we see that in the base as well, but I will just give an example of the shikara that how there are those cells or the niche like this small, small shells.

Which are the cells which are repeated all along in this shikara and the entire shikara is divided into this horizontal registers. So, this particular ways in which these parallel lines they sort of made this repetitive gesture on these architectural structures. And if this is the parallel lines, and then in each register we have the repetition of this niche like features, right. And in some cases, we find that there are the small replicas of the entire temple or like the entire shikara those are also placed here as part of this in this horizontal panels.

So why this particular kind of repetition that takes place in the structures? So, in one hand we find that how this also adds to the way in which we have considered, this is a palace like structure, so the palace cannot be unadorned. So, the kind of ornamentation those are associated with beautifying a particular structure that is something that is here. But more importantly what we also find here is that all these particular motifs or this units of ornamentation, they are not really out of context.

So, what I tried to say with that is that how these particular units, they actually resemble the entire temple and they multiply in the horizontal plane as well as in the vertical plane. So, in other words this is a kind of growth that is symbolized in these structures which is also discussed in the Hindu philosophy that how everything comes from this one particular unit, and then like the multiplicity that sort of like it gets into the multiple forms and the multiplicity is practice through that.

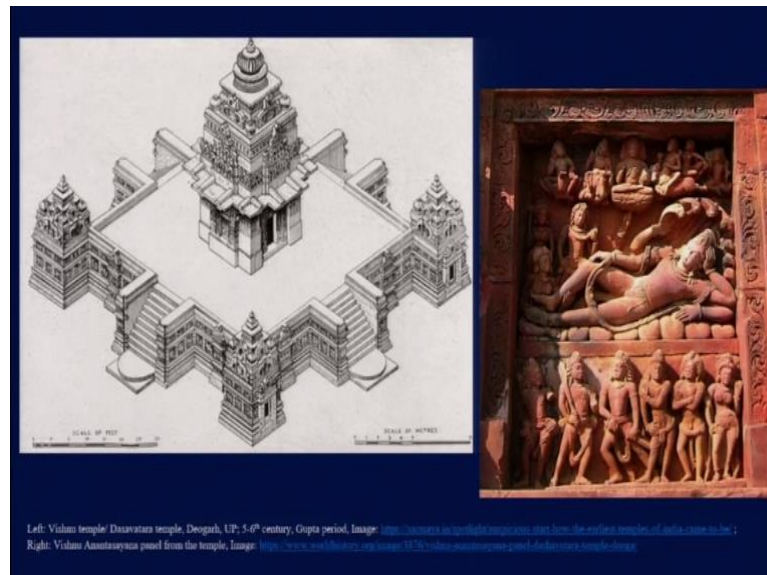
And then at the same time it has this exponential growth, how these units can replicate and they can have this exponential growth. But at the same time, all these growths are sort of like, they come back to this one particular structure that is the temple or all of them this they sort of come back to the creator. And that is the reason all this growth and everything they are also limited to the structure of the temple.

So, in one way this is the unity, on the other hand this is also this exponential replication of the forms. Both these opposing ideas are brought together in these temple structures. Now, with time we also find that there have been projections and additions in the temple structures, for example if we see this particular area, so this is an image of the Bhitargaon temple from the late 19th century 1878 and which shows the earliest structure.

And this is the structure which is renovated by ASI and now the temple looks like this. And so here what we find that there is this projection, which marks the entrance porch. So, entrance porch is the area through which the devotees will go inside the temple and that is a reason there is a projection to attract the attention of the devotees at the same time if the devotees are waiting at this entrance porch and then they go inside it.

So, the way the practices around the temple started getting more and more complex, we see the architecture and the sculpture they also started getting more and more complex with time. And this is an example of that.

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Another example of this multiplication we can see that will be from another temple which is also one of the early temples and that is the Dasavatara temple from Deogarh in UP in up which is again in the Gangetic plain. In Dasavatara temple we can see that there is use of the local sandstone something that we have on and on sort of stressed on how there are those locally available resources, and they have been a utilized by the artisans, sculptors, architects and so on for making these magnificent structures.

So, along with the Dasavatara temple in the Deogarh, the Bhitargaon temple is considered to be some of the earliest surviving Hindu temples in the Indian subcontinent and especially the Bhitargaon temple being perhaps the earliest surviving brick temple in the Indian subcontinent. Now, what we find here, this idea of the replication and this idea of the cardinal directions and everything else, they come alive in this, the temple of Deogarh.

So, what we have here there is this square sanctum sanctorum or the garbhagriha and on the top of that we have the shikara. And then of course, we have the amalaka and the finial or this kalasa. All those structures or all those characteristic features that we have explained so far all of them are present in this temple in in Deogarh. Now, the other thing that we also find the temple is situated on a high platform and it is really high.

So, this particular high platform or jagati that is something that we have already discussed in the Buddhist context, in the Jaina context in which we have seen that how the sacred structures are not really placed on the regular ground with all of us. But they are usually placed on a higher platform to show their divine connections. So, here we see that there is this high platform, which also has a square ground plan and in this square ground plan we also have the stairways, which marks each cardinal direction.

So this idea of the cardinal direction which is also ingrained in this architecture building in the Hindu context, as well as we can also say the same thing about the Buddhist and the Jain context as well. Now we see that this cardinal direction and all the other details of this the ground plan and the elevation of the temple, all of them they come together here. Now, the other thing that we also see that how this; that the complexity of the temples that that grew further and further.

So, here in the cardinal direction we have the staircases and in each of the corners like the north, east, south, west and so on in those ones, what we find how there are four subsidiary shrines which are added to there. And if we see the shrines very closely, they are actually miniature replicas of the one that is there at the centre. So how this particular idea of replication that is not something just for ornamentation, of course ornamentation is never out of context.

But how this particular way in which we see that the main temple had almost like replicated itself in the other four directions that is something that talks about this idea of Hindu cosmos that from the creator, how there are multiple units that sort of in spring out. So, these are some of the ways in which we find how these complex philosophical thoughts and this abstracted ideas, they were actually materialized by the use of stone and brick and of course with this very intricate carving.

Now talking about the carving, we cannot ignore that some of the carvings that that is featured in this Dasavatara temple. So, the name Dasavatara comes from Lord Vishnu avatars or the 10 avatars or incarnations of Lord Vishnu. And here we find that there is this monumental image of Lord Vishnu that is there in the exterior walls of this temple complex, Dasavatara temple complex and in which we find this carved image from sandstone.

In this one we find there is a law register, in which there is a dispute between the gods perhaps with auras that takes place and perhaps it has its reference towards the churning of the ocean

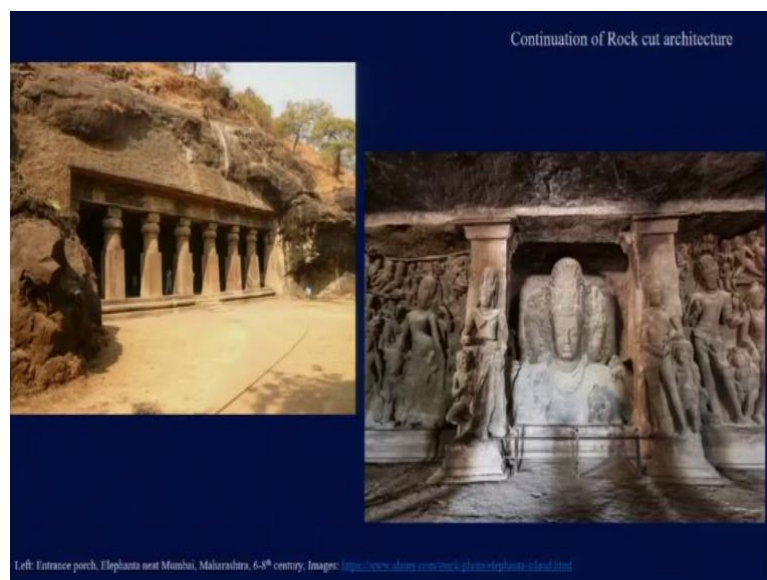
or the Samudra Manthana. And then on the top register, we find that Vishnu he is shown here on the coils of the Shesha or the Shesha shayana so that is particularly important here what we see.

How Vishnu is with all his iconographical attributes we find that how he has been shown here on the coils of this Shesha Naga. And then we also see that there are references about how from Vishnu's navel a lotus came out and from which Brahma came into being. So, here we see the image of Brahma and then of course the figure who is riding an elephant will be Indra and then the other prime figures, we will find them to be around this area.

Now, the very interesting part of Hinduism is as we have already indicated that whoever believes in one particular God or goddess, they will consider how all the other gods and goddesses will be bowing to them or how all the other gods and goddesses will accept the supremacy of this particular figure. So, if we see in this particular case how the image of Vishnu has given such priority.

Then in the other depictions, we find that how Shiva has given such kind of treatment. Now, what happened to the continuation of this rock cut structures that if we think that with the construction of such kind of temples like the ones which are created from the blocks of sandstone or with the bricks, if this is a new kind of practice if we think and that is how the rock structures were abandoned that will perhaps not be true to say because during this time period and even later, we find that there have been other constructions.

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For example, we have this Elephanta caves near Mumbai where we have this living rock cut structures and for example here on the left side of the screen we have this mighty entrance porch towards this cave temple of Elephanta and that is something that also reminds us of the Karla and Bhaja caves in Maharashtra as well. And then as we have already discussed making of this kind of cave temples or this rock cut architecture continued at least until 10th or 11th century given the geographical locations, for example in Ellora and so on.

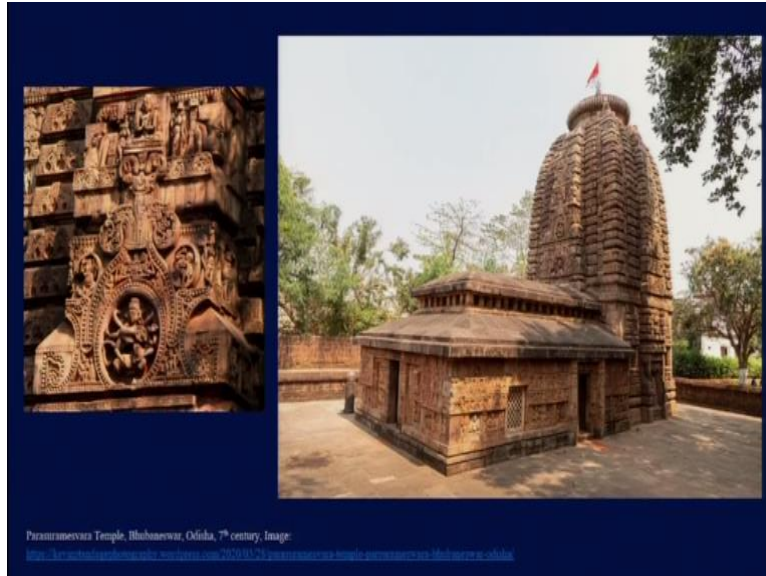
So, the places which are mostly in the plains and in the river and land and so on, perhaps there are more of these practices of making temples with brick or individual stone blocks, whereas the places where we find this living rocks are there, so there was already this tendency of making the rock cut structures. And in the interior of this rock cut temple of Elephanta or this rock cut cave temple we find that there are a number of sculptures.

And one of the most important sculptures will perhaps be the manifestation of Shiva as which is also known Astamurti. But it is basically like how there are three forms of Shiva they are depicted in one form. So, what we have here in this bust form in this one as we can see at the centre of the image on right. So, there are three phases of Lord Shiva which are shown here. On the left side which will be on the right side of the screen there is Vamadeva or Parvati who shows the feminine side of Shiva and she is shown as graceful, she is smiling.

And this is also something that relates to this idea of Ardhanarishvara which we will address that later in this week. And then on the left side or on the in the right side of Shiva's this bust what we find there is a manifestation of Rudradeva or the fierce form of Shiva. So, he is shown here with this bulging eyes as well as his very expressive lips and perhaps with fangs as well, so it is sort of shows a very different aspect of Shiva. And between these two, the fierce form and the feminine form, we find there is the pacific form.

And who is considered to be the supreme, the form of a Yogi who is not bothered by any other events or anything which is happening on the outside world or the material world and he is depicted in the supreme state of meditation. So, something that we find that how these complex ideas which have been spoken about, which have been sort of like sang in the hands of Vedas and so on, they come alive in the way in which the stones are carved, they come alive in the hands of the artisans.

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Parsurameswara Temple, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, 7<sup>th</sup> century, Image: <http://www.bhubaneswar.gov.in/visit-us/2011/12/parsurameswara-temple-parsurameswara-bhubaneswar-odisha>

Now, from there if we go back a little bit on the ways in which the temples are constructed, then we see that at least from 6th century, from 7th century and so on Odisha actually became a very important site in which a number of temple building activities have taken place. And between 7th and 12th century we find there was a high degree of involvement at the same time advancement in making temples in various sites of Odisha.

Now, the Temple City or the old city of Bhubaneswar is one of the prime centres in which we find temples from different time periods. So, some of the early temples in Bhubaneswar like the one that we have on screen that is Parsurameswara temple and that comes from 7th century in Odisha, and this is also a sandstone structure that we find here. And what is very interesting is that we see there is of course this particular garbhagriha that we have here, how this structure with the squarish ground plan that houses the deity.

And on the top of that we have the superstructure. And then on the top of the superstructure, we have the amalaka and then the finial on the top of it. And of course, we see a flag on the top of the finial here as well. Now, apart from these elements, what we see here really interesting is this particular addition that there is an addition of a rectangular space or rectangular covered space that is now adjoined to this main sanctum sanctorum or the garbhagriha. So, what is this?

So, this is a space which is called mantapa or the ceremonial hall and the ceremonial hall is something which gives shelter to the devotees. So, as we have already discussed that with time when the practices became more and more complex in which we find that usually not all the devotees would be allowed to go inside the garbhagriha because garbhagriha is also something

that is considered to be an area which should not be disturbed all the time and that is the reason we find that there is a prevalence of the priest figures.

The priests are the ones they will be going in the garbhagriha and all the audience, the general audience, the devotees, they will stay in the outer areas of this garbhagriha. So for them to have a shelter and also to have like musical performances or different kinds of ceremonial rituals to take place at the site of the temple, we find that this new structure of mantapa that came into existence.

Of course, now when we see the temples, we see that this mantapa is there in most of the temples, but these are some of the early examples in which we know that how it started. Now, since this is almost a closed structure that we have only like three doors, which allows people to go inside this structure and then we have some of the areas for ventilation here as well as here so that there is ample amount of air that passes through these places so that people are not suffocated.

And this as I have already mentioned that there are decorations or ornamentations in the exterior walls of the temple complexes, and here again we can see how the entire shikara is divided into these horizontal registers. And then there are those vertical projections we see here as well. So, the registers are dividing the entire surface in these horizontal shapes or these lines and then there are the vertical projections which sort of come out of the main superstructure.

And these are some of the ways in which we find how the complexity in the rituals, complexity in the belief they are also expressed in the complexity of the form the structure and as I have already mentioned that how the idea of this replication, this infinite replication that appears to be at the centre of Hindu belief system. So those are the prime characteristic features that we find they came alive in the early stages of Hindu architecture.