

# Rajput Temples in Bundelkhand Region

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## Abstract

Hindu temple is a symbol or rather a synthesis of various symbols. It is conceived in terms of the human organism which is the most evolved living form. The names of the various limbs of the human body from the foot to the hair on the crown of the head are applied in the architectural texts to different parts of the temple structure. <sup>1</sup>Through out the greater part of the country, the sanctuary as a whole is known as the vimana, of which the upper pyramidal or tapering portion is called the shikhara, meaning tower or spire. The garbha Grah or womb-house for the reception of the divine symbol was a dark chamber which was entered by a doorway on its inner, and usually eastern side. In front of the Garbha graham was a pillared hall or mandapa for the assembly of those paying their devotions to the divine symbol. From about the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the sanctum was roofed by a tall, curvilinear spire (Shikhar) which constituted the most striking cognizance of the Northern Temple. The spire was initially of three vertical projections which gradually increased to five and occasionally seven. All these projections are covered with a mesh of Chaitya- dormers and the corner ones display in addition a series of small amalakas at the angles to demarcate the division of the spire into compressed storeys. The spire terminates in a neck like constriction (griva) which is surmounted by a large ribbed, circular member called amalsarika, crowned by a Kalasha, the pitcher finial. In the elevation of the temple, the platform is an optional member, but every temple customarily has a socle consisting of moulded courses. The ceilings of the early shrines were supported by three vertical stone slabs. It was nothing but a flat stone of modest size kept on the top. The vertical slabs on three sides served as the walls for the narrow sanctum. It might be for the first time when the ceiling slab was carved with a big lotus design to present it the form of a shrine.

**Keywords:** Panchayatan Temple, Shikhar, Garbha Griha, Mandapa, Chaitya, Kalasha, Jagati, Peetha-seat of Shakti

## Introduction

There are large number of temples which were built by the Rajput rulers. They are the marvels of architecture and sculptural art. In central India especially in Bundelkhand region there are many traces of Rajput temples which are still surviving in very good conditions. The Kandariya Mahadev temple of Khajuraho is renowned for its lofty spire, beautiful sculptures and other decorations. After the Imperial Guptas Bundelkhand was ruled by Pratiharas, Kachhapghatas, Chandellas, Bundellas and other smaller Rajput families. The principal towns of these Rajput families were Mahoba, Kalinjar, Khajuraho, Panna, Chhatarpur, Shivpuri and Gwalior. The Chandellas had close relations - dynastic and Political- with their southern neighbours, the Kalchuri of Chedi. Most of the temples found in Bundelkhand region are of Pratiharas, Chandellas, Kachhapghatas and Bundellas. The activity of temple art began in Bundelkhand region with the Gupta rulers and the first and foremost was the Dasavtara temple of Devgarh =, Lalitpur District which belong to 6th century A.D. The temples built in Bundelkhand are excessively carved with beautiful spires and mandapa halls. The temple building activity continued till the rule of Bundellas in Bundelkhand Region.

## Aim of the Study

The temple sites are with in the Vindhyan mountain ranges in central India majority of the Bundelkhand temples are either on the river side or beautified by artificial ponds or lakes. The kirat sagar lake in Mahoba is famous for Shiva Mahadev temple. Similarly all the temples of Khajuraho are clustered near water. The current water bodies include sib sagar, Khajur sagar, ninnoratal and rivers. Fifty six water bodies have been identified at Khajuraho by the archaeologists. The aim of study is to identify the types of temples and their specifications as mentioned in the Sanskrit literature and the Puranas.

Bundelkhand was a land where a number of Rajput dynasties flourished. Each dynasty provided a good architectural design in the region of Bundelkhand. These temples are of unique characteristics which distinguish them from the other part of Indian architectural designs. The base of every Hindu temple is made up of a symbolic pattern usually a panchayatana type. Hindu temple is a symbol or rather a synthesis of various symbols. It is conceived in terms of the human organism which is the most evolved living form. The names of the various limbs of the human body from the foot to the hair on the crown of the head are applied in the architectural texts to different parts of the temple structure.<sup>1</sup> Through out the greater part of the country, the sanctuary as a whole is known as the vimana, of which the upper pyramidal or tapering portion is called the shikhara, meaning tower or spire. The garbha Grah or womb-house for the reception of the divine symbol was a dark chamber which was entered by a doorway on its inner, and usually eastern side. In front of the Garbha graham was a pillared hall or mandapa for the assembly of those paying their devotions to the divine symbol.

The Prasada is piled up with the logic inherent in fundamental form; cube and pyramid for example yield the meaning of their coordinated shape along with vertical axis. A detailed analysis of the temple structure will show much of its architectonic character was obtained by the surfaces being treated as if they were an organism of repeating cells. This particularly applies to the tower or shikhara which is often built up of repetitions of the same architectural motif, converted into an element of decoration. The various compartments comprising the general arrangements of the temple are usually coordinated axially, being all built on one alignment running east and west, with the entrance to the east.

As the temple building began to take form, it becomes evident that it obtained some of its architectural character from the older productions of the Buddhists. Such borrowings are readily identified in the decorative treatment, as for instance the introduction of Chatya arch, now reduced to a mere ornamental motif, and other similar elements, but the Brahmanical temple builders also brought not only ornamental forms but some portions of the Buddhist architecture itself into their Hindu conceptions. Vaulted roof occasionally survives in the Hindu temples, as for instance Teli Ka Mandir (11<sup>th</sup> century) at Gwalior.<sup>2</sup>

From about the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the sanctum was roofed by a tall, curvilinear spire (Shikhar) which constituted the most striking cognizance of the Northern Temple. The spire was initially of three vertical projections which gradually increased to five and occasionally seven. All these projections are covered with a mesh of Chaitya-dormers and the corner ones display in addition a series of small amalakas at the angles to demarcate the division of the spire into compressed storeys. The spire terminates in a neck like constriction (griva) which is surmounted by a large ribbed, circular member called amalsarika, crowned by a Kalasha, the

pitcher finial. In the elevation of the temple, the platform is an optional member, but every temple customarily has a socle consisting of moulded courses. The socle supports the wall which may be plain or embellished with figure sculptures on one or all the offsets. The carved frieze on the wall is surmounted by an eave-cornice or a series of it that separates the wall from the spire, While the sanctum is roofed by a tall curvilinear spire, the mandapa (hall) carries a lower pyramidal roof of horizontal tiers.

The main compartments of the temple are axially articulated and have their independent ceilings. Since the construction is based on the trabeate principle, the ceilings are supported either on walls and pilasters or on pillars with their architraves. The vaulted or domical ceilings are built on the principle of corbelling, sometimes aided by inner locking flanges. On the stone temples, well dressed and finally- jointed ashlar were used for the face stones and rough dressed or coarse stones for the hearting. The stone courses are laid dry one upon the other and kept in position by their weight and balance, sometimes with the aid of iron clamps and dowels. In the internal construction of tall spires, the weight was reduced by building a series of superposed hollow chambers, held together by the device of tying opposite walls by beams at frequent intervals.

The ceilings of the early shrines were supported by three vertical stone slabs. It was nothing but a flat stone of modest size kept on the top. The vertical slabs on three sides served as the walls for the narrow sanctum. It might be for the first time when the ceiling slab was carved with a big lotus design to present it the form of a shrine.



The earliest surviving example of the temple construction – Bhadona group of ancient temples, near Talbehat lalitpur. The architectural principles of Hindu temples in India are described in Shilpa shastras and Vastu Shastras.<sup>3</sup>



Later on the ceilings were supported by pillars with their architraves. The dynamic and zealous Gupta rulers caused to raise the Hindu shrines in a large number as proved by the epigraphic records. A good number of temples are still in – situ at the sites, like Sanchi, Udaigiri, Eran, Pathari, Devgarh, Bhumra, Shankergarh, Nachna, Tigawa, Kunda, Khoh, Mandsaur, Udaipur, Mahua, Sirpur, and Pawaya.

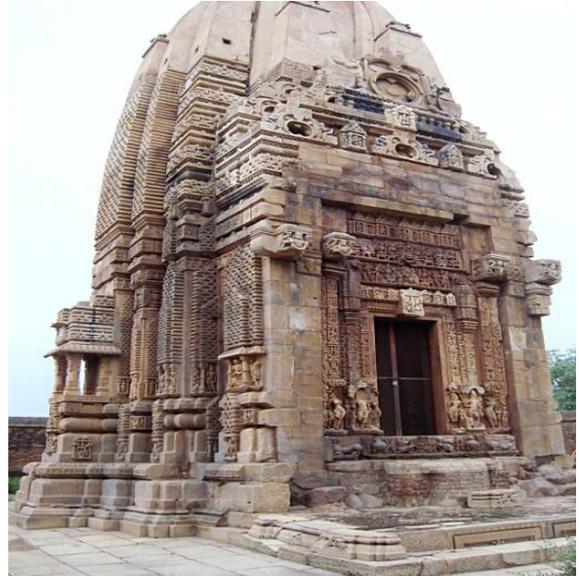
The first appearance of the Shikhara in the temple of North India is seen in Dasavatara temple at Devgarh (dist-Lalitpur) and the Gupta Temple at Bhitargaon (Kanpur) which are assigned to 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.



This temple is built in Panchayatana style and is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. This was the first surviving example of Shikhar temple in Bundelkhand and is built in Gupta period. The condition of the temple is very fine and it has an elaborately carved entrance which is in very good condition.

After the fall of the Guptas and the death of Harsha, there was a great upheaval in the North Indian Politics. The scene was occupied by so many ruling houses like Pratiharas, The Kalachuris, the Parmaras, The Chandelas, The Kachhapghatas etc. With the introduction of textual prescriptions in 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D, the artisans started following the general rules of the Brahatsamhita, Vishnudharmottar purana etc for raising monuments. The Brahatsamhita of Varahmihira mentions a list of twenty temple style<sup>4</sup>, while the Samrangansutrachhara has a list of eight temples<sup>5</sup>

The Gurjara pratiharas (8<sup>th</sup> century A.D) continued the legacy of temple construction and raised their lofty temples in central India, U.P and Rajasthan. The temples of this period are still in-situ at Jhansi, Gwalior, Morena, Guna, Shivpuri and Vidisa.



**Jarai Math- Barwasagar**

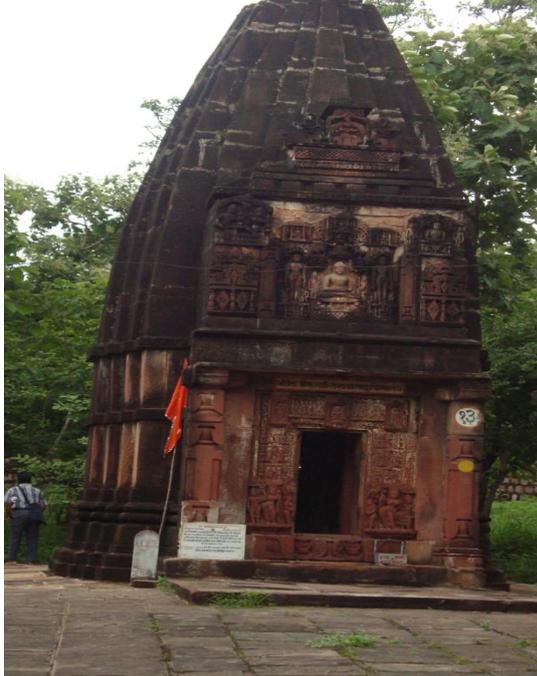


**Kachhapaghata Temple at –Terahi (Shivpuri)**

The Pratihara temples of Central India are characterized by a low socle, a simple and relatively stunted spire, a wall decorated with a single band of sculptured niches crowned by tall pediments and an unpretentious plan, generally consisting of only the sanctum and vestibule which in cases is preceded by a porch.

The rich traditions of Gupta art and architecture were kept up by the Pratiharas. Between 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries the Kalachuris kept the torch burning in the eastern part of central India, The Chandelas in the Central part, the Parmaras largely in

the western parts and Kachhapghatas mainly in the Northern part.



The Chandella group of temples can be seen in the world heritage site of Khajuraho and in Devgarh dist Lalitpur. These temples are architectural marvel of Indian temple art. The construction of these temples as remarked by stella Kramrisch<sup>6</sup> are at appropriate places. She on the basis of sanskrit texts says that- The appropriate site for a mandir is near water abd gardens where lotus and flowers bloom, where swan ducks and other birds are heard, where animals rest without fear of injury and harm. North

Indian temples are referred to as Nagara style of temple architecture.<sup>7</sup>

Brahat Samhita and Puranas suggested that<sup>8</sup> temples may also be built where a natural resource of waters is not present. Here too they recommend that a pond be built preferably in front or to the left of the temple with water gardens. No doubt in the temples of Rajput age all the temples follow the procedure laid down for them in the sanskrit texts.

Thus Bundelkhand temples are built in simple plans with a jagati, peetha and deol. the temples were mostly dedicated to Surya, Vishnu Shiva and goddesses. The Yakshini temples are also found at Terahi. The Jarai ka math temple is also dedicated to some Yakshini deity. The best apt of Rajput architecture is their tremendous door carvings with five, seven or sometimes nine shakhas. The Ganga and Yamuna figures are always depicted on the entrance doorways. Thus Bundelkhand region has produced some of the finest examples of north Indian temple architecture.

#### Conclusion

The art work of the temple of Bundelkhand symbolises the four goals of life which are also been called four Purusharthas- Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Majority of the temples are dedicated to Surya, Vishnu, Shiva and Devi (goddess). Many Yakshini temples and 64 Yogini temple has also been identified at Khajuraho. This region is also known for Mattamayur sect of Shaivism which was clearly mentioned in Rannod inscription. The five major seats of this sect have been identified form Surwaya, Rannod, Mahua, Tehrai and Kadvaaha. The Yakshini temple is found at Baruasagar and Terahi (Terambi). Thus the Rajput temples of this region are having typical Nagar style of architecture which is found in northern India.

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