

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358165844>

# Architecture (Hinduism)

Chapter · January 2022

DOI: 10.1007/978-94-024-1188-1\_450

---

CITATIONS

0

READS

585

1 author:



**Amitabhvikram Dwivedi**

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University

250 PUBLICATIONS 92 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

# A

## Architecture (Hinduism)



Amitabh Vikram Dwivedi  
College of Humanities & Social Sciences –  
Languages & Literature, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi  
University, Katra, India

### Introduction

Evolution of Hindu architecture is similar to other religious buildings among civilizations around the world – it has been evolved from elemental rock-cut cave shrines to adorned and ornate buildings over the passage of time. In Hinduism, the present day temple architecture follows a similar canonical style that has been developed in the past 2000 years and which spread across the Indian subcontinent and the globe [1]. The precision and harmony in geometry is the basis of Hindu temple architecture which includes the elaborate decorated sculpture of gods, animals, flowers, worshippers, erotic scenes, and alike. Also, symmetry is maintained in four sides and above, high towers, grid ground lands, and the square form.

### Discussion

A noticeable change in the Hindu worship has been observed from the first century CE. The ancient Vedic gods, such as Indra, Varun, Sun,

Vayu, and others, were replaced by Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Krishna, and Durga as the Bhakti “devotional” Hinduism spread across the Indian subcontinent. The new gods gradually became the chief deities of Hinduism, and for them new places were required to worship and offer prayers. New religious buildings were built using the deities’ mythological adventures and tales or indicating a symbolic reference to a particular god [2]. These buildings were quite spacious so much so that they would provide space for performing rituals, such as singing prayers, bathing and cleaning, dancing by professional dancers, feasting, and alike. Affluent temple administration used to employ devadasi “female professional dancers” for performing dancing and singing while offering prayers to gods [1].

Each devalaya “temple” was considered to be a dwelling place of a specific god. Some established temples stood as tirtha “sacred palace or god’s home” where dedicated priests were appointed by the society who were like present day supervisors of a firm—the priests would take care of the prasada “temple palace” and perform other temple related services [1]. In Hindu temple, a special space was provided for walking around the temple interior aka Parikrama “circumambulation” in a clockwise direction, and after darshan “seeing god” walking around would complete and compliment the darshan. Gradually, temples became the first community centers where the followers used to offer food, flowers, and valuables so that the deity would bless them in return. In Hinduism,

puja is a reciprocal act the followers please gods so that their lives will be peaceful and fulfilling. The temples were built by kings, landlords, or big business families who would guarantee lands, grants, and endowments, as indicated by stone inscriptions and copper plates on numerous temples. This tradition is still followed with little deviation, for example, my father Shri Ganga Swarup Dwivedi has constructed a shivalaya “a Shiva temple” in our ancestral village and named it “Vikram Devalaya” after my middle name, which is inscribed on the entrance.

The earliest cave temples were similar to Buddhist stupa – simple in its structure with one entrance and window. The elaborated and complex temples were constructed with the arrival of Gupta architecture in the fourth and fifth century CE. The wood and terracotta were used in the initial structure for constructing towers and projecting niches [2]. Gradually, the architects started using stones and bricks, marble, schist, and granite. Also, we find finest cave temples at Udaigiri in Malwa dated the fifth century CE, and free-standing temples at Deogarh, including sixth-century CE Dasavatara temple of Lord Vishnu.

The Hindu architecture is based on the Vastu Shastras “architecture text,” where mandir “temple” is laid out following eight main directions, each one is guarded by a Dikpal “god” who is represented on the temple’s exterior. The chief deity aka ashisthata is placed in an elaborately carved platform [2]. The sacred mountains, i.e., Kailasa and Meru, work as a prototype for temples. Seen from a distance, temples with their high towers look like mountain mass. Since no mortar was used in the earliest religious architecture, much care had been taken while cutting the stones. The eleventh-century CE Kandariya Mahadeva temple at Khajuraho and twelfth-century CE Rajarani temple at Bhubaneswar are famous for their finest scriptural work.

## References

1. Meister MW, Dhaky MA (1999) Encyclopaedia of Indian temple architecture. Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi
2. Agrawala PK (1981) Gupta temple architecture. Prithivi Prakashan, Varanasi