

ANCIENT INDIAN TEMPLE STRUCTURE: SHIKHARA

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Abstract

In temple architecture, three main types of Shikhara (temple's upper portion) are available. They are known as Nagara, Dravida, and Versara. Each has its own significant Shikhara style. In this context, the researcher has used a secondary research technique to identify the differences between Shikhara types and find out their details. All of these types have been explored and tried to comprehend both sides as religious and architectural. All of these styles contain different shapes and meanings.

Keywords: shikhara, vimana, gopuram, dravida, nagara, versara.

Introduction

As the title of the paper states, it is about the "shikhara" (the upper part of the temple). Shikhara is one of the most important features of the temple. Based on the top of the temple, viewers can easily identify which category it belongs to. "Shikhara" is a Sanskrit word that means "summit" or "top of a mountain." These are the most notable features in the temple. There are three main types of temple styles. And the name of Shikara is also known there. Example: Nagara, Dravida, Versara.

Temple- a concept

The word "temple" is derived from the Latin word "templum," which refers to a "holy precinct" that is set apart for religious or spiritual activity, such as prayer and sacrifice, or similar ceremonies (Fletcher, 1961).

Normally, Temples are built as places of "God or Goddess" devotion, however, many

experts argue that this is not entirely accurate. The temple is one of the earliest existing structures depicting our ancestors' actions. The best examples of contemporary architecture are seen in temples. We are using the word "modern" since we were unable to identify any updated elements used in the construction of ancient temples. The architectural ceremonies in Indian temples are based on their mythology. Indian religious texts include guiding ideas, and international architectural agreements contain structural regulations. Primitive building techniques have given their shapes to the temple's structure, which is founded on Vedic heritage (Kramrisch, 2015).

Temple development in India

In the very beginning, people used to worship direct nature. They then improvise in a wooden temple. The transition from wooden-style temples to cut-stone buildings that followed was significant.

Temple buildings with a structural foundation date to the Gupta era. There was experimentation with a variety of forms and designs, as seen by the remaining monuments, and from these two important temple styles one in the north and the other emerged. One may recognize the following clearly defined types: 1) A square temple with a short-pillared portico and a flat roof. 2) Flat Roofed, a square temple with a covered ambulatory surrounding the sanctum and a pillared portico in front, perhaps with an upper level. 3. A square temple with a low, hunched Sikhara (Tower) above. 4) A rectangular temple with an upward-curving barrel-vaulted ceiling and an apsidal rear. 5) Circular temple with shallow rectangular protrusions at each of the four cardinal directions. Both the fourth and fifth types don't seem to have a noticeable impact on the development that comes after. The first three forms, however, are said to have inspired later Indian temple designs. Kankali Devi Temple in Tigawa and Vishnu and Varaha Temple at Eran, both in Madhya Pradesh, are good illustrations of the first. The Parvati Temple at Nachna Kuthara and the Siva Temple at Bhumara, both in Madhya Pradesh, exhibit the second form. The use of a third type of temple building, as an illustration, is debatable. The second and third forms of Gupta temples were referred to as "Vimana" (storeyed) and "Sikhara" (cruciform) varieties. These two forms allegedly underwent more development in the succeeding centuries and solidified into two unique temple styles in the South and North, respectively (Acharjee, 2017).

The emergence of temple Styles (Nagara, Dravida, and Vesara)

The "Vastu Shasta" texts list and describe the three main temple architecture types as Nagara, Dravida, and Vesara, with the Nagara of North India holding the top spot as the reading style. The Dravida in South India is the next crucial. The Nagara style was common between the Himalayas and the Vindhya Mountains, according to all the currently available text. The Dravida country is well-known, and the texts appropriately limit the Dravida style to that portion of the nation located between the river Krishna and Cape Kanyakumari; whereas, the Vesara style is occasionally connected to the region between the Vindhyas and Krishna Rivers. As Hardy notes, architectural languages like Nagara and Dravida should be understood (Singh, 2008, p. 625).

Each type of temple style has its own identity and design. The easiest way to categorize these temples is by their upper part (Shikhar/Vimana). From north to south temple structure has changed multiple times as well as their upper part.

However, both are produced using the diminishing squares principle. The general shape of the Sikhara appears to be one of the two styles' defining characteristics, according to "Manasara-Silpasastra" (Acharya, 1996, p. 48).

Shikhara / Vimana

The upper portion of a temple (Shikhara/Vimana) is one of its most distinctive features. In India, there are still

many different kinds of historic temples. The upper portion of those is the simplest way to classify them. Temples in North India contain Shikhara, while those in South India contain Vimana. Shikhara is shaped like a curve, while vimana is built like a pyramid. The term "Versara" refers to a different variety of "Shikhara". It combines "Vimana" from the South and "Sikhara" from the North.

Evolution of the Nagara Shikhara

The word "Nagara," which comes from the word "Nagarara," a city, means "Relating to a city or town." This definition is widely accepted (Ibid, p. 287.). But according to other sources, the meaning of Nagara is "Universe (Visva)". In Nagara, the temple resembles the universe (Ibid, p. 288.).

Regardless of location or age, every temple in north India exhibits two distinctive characteristics: I) in planning; and II) in elevation. A North Indian temple is always square in plan with a variety of graduated projections on the exterior. When viewed from above, it has a tower (Sikhara) with several layers of convex curves that gradually incline inward and are typically topped by an "Amalaka". These two characteristics: 1. The cruciform ground plan and curvilinear Sikhara. 2. It should be regarded as the distinguishing characteristics of Nagara Temple. The third (Sikhara) type of Gupta temple, which supposedly exhibits these characteristics more or less at a primitive stage, can be seen as the archetypes of the Nagara temple in those regards (Singh, 2008).

Meaning of Shikhara

The nagara shikhara is the tower or spire that rises above the sanctum sanctorum, or inner chamber, of a nagara temple. The shikhara is a symbol of Mount Meru, the sacred mountain of Hinduism. Mount Meru is believed to be the center of the universe, and the nagara shikhara is a representation of this (Meister, 2001).

The nagara shikhara is divided into many layers, each of which represents a different level of reality. The lowest layer represents the physical world, the next layer represents the astral world, and the top layer represents the spiritual world. The upward thrust of the shikhara is a reminder of the soul's journey to moksha, or liberation (Meister, 2001).

The Nagara shikhara is a beautiful and intricate piece of architecture. It is a symbol of the Hindu faith and its belief in the interconnectedness of all things (Meister, 2001).

Making of Shikhara

The vertical component of the temple, known as the shikhara, rises from the cella (Garbha griha) roof and ends in a finial. The shikhara is typically made of stone or brick and is divided into several receding stages, each of which is smaller than the one below it. The stages of the shikhara are frequently embellished with intricate carvings, which may show religious figures, animals, or other themes. An amalaka, a tiny, round stone disk, and a kalasha, a finial in the form of a vase, are frequently used to top off shikharas. The

shikhara's shape varies depending on the area it is found in. The shikhara is typically tall and slender in northern India while shorter and wider in southern India. Mount Meru, the holy mountain of Hinduism, is symbolized by the shikhara. It is thought to be a passageway to heaven (Chintan, 2020). The Latina shikhara, which is square at the base and gradually curves inward to a point, is the most typical type of Nagara shikhara. Other varieties of Nagara Shikharas include the Phamsana shikhara, which has a base that is wider and more bulbous in shape, and the Valabhi shikhara, which has a rectangular base and is topped by a dome.

Among the most well-known examples of Nagara shikhara are the Lingaraj Temple in Bhubaneswar, the Sun Temple in Konark, and the Lakshmana Temple in Khajuraho (Chintan, 2020).

Here are some of the key features of Nagara shikhara:

- Shikhara's base is usually square or rectangular.
- Shikhara's walls are often decorated with pilasters, which gives a sense of strength and stability.
- The stages where Shikhara is separated horizontally might be decorated with moldings.
- There is a small circular stone disk placed on top of the Shikhara named "Amalaka". It is believed to represent the sun.

- On the top of Ambalaka there is a Kalash (pot) located and that represents the universe.

The Nagara shikhara is a distinctive and iconic feature of Hindu temple architecture. It is a testament to the skill and artistry of Indian builders and sculptors (Chintan, 2020).

Symbolizing Nagara Shikhara

Hindu temples follow specific rules and proportions for the comfort of society and geometrical coherence with the cosmos, so the repetition of towers is not random. Its proportions are deeply significant because only when the temple is built correctly in accordance with the mathematical system can it operate in harmony with the mathematical underpinnings of the universe (Md Rian I, et. al., 2007). These distinctive fractal characters on the body of the shikhara above the sanctuary of Kandariya Mahadev Temple are generated iteratively from a single central tower, known as unipratiti (Md Rian I, et. al., 2007). The Kandariya Mahadev temple's fractal design, replicas of its intricate towers, and the rhythmic growth of its horizontal friezes combine to create a harmony of fractal characters throughout the entire complex (Md Rian I, et. al., 2007). Because there is a general program of proportional relationships that is independent of absolute size, the same processes can be repeated in progressively smaller grids with gradually decreasing sizes, theoretically up to infinity (Trivedi, 1993). The continuous blending of forms is preferred to abrupt discrete

transitions. Perhaps the reason for their preference is that these angular, fractalized shapes give the overall form of the temple a dynamic, vibrant visual quality that suggests an expansion outward (Trivedi, 1993). All of these processes work together to produce the complete temple form, which is brimming with intricate detail and is also vibrant, dynamic, and self-similar to the cosmos it is meant to symbolize (Trivedi, 1993). The bold curvilinear spire with ribbed "Amalaka" (Notched ring stone) - the fruit of Vishnu's blue lotus - that caps the tower and carries the Kalash, symbolizing the Jar of Nectar, distinguishes the Northern (Nagara) type (Kramrisch, 2015).



Nagara style shikhara

Evolution of the Dravida Shikhara

Southern India, also known as the land of the Dravidian-speaking people, has a rich and diverse cultural heritage. The ancient kingdom of Dravidadesa, which roughly corresponds to the present day states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala, shared a common cultural heritage until the mid-10th century AD. This common heritage is evident in the arts, architecture, and iconography of these regions (Dhaky, 1999). The south also has some of its own Shikhara style, similar to northern-style temple buildings. "Vimana" addresses the top of the south temple. It is a unique kind of shikhara. But due to its shape, it requires effort. The "Gopuram or Gopra" at the Dravida temple has another kind of importance. It is a wall with a large doorway surrounding it. "Goperam" calls out to the gate.

The Chola dynasty ruled over much of southern India from the 9th to the 13th centuries AD. They were prolific temple builders, and many of their temples are considered masterpieces of South Indian architecture. The first Chola king to build a temple was Vijayalaya Chola, who founded the dynasty in 848 AD. His grandson, Rajaraja Chola I, built the Brihadeeswarar temple in Thanjavur, which is one of the largest and most impressive temples in India. Rajaraja Chola's son, Rajendra Chola I, built the Brihadeeswarar temple in Gangaikonda Cholapuram, which is even larger than the temple in Thanjavur (Edith, 1968). The Pallava dynasty continued the practice of constructing temples as a

consequence of being influenced by the Amaravathi School of Architecture (Gangoly, 1954).

There is another significance of the Dravidian temple that no one can overlook and that is "Gopuram" or "Gopra". "Gopuram" is a gateway surrounded by the main temple but it is an undetectable part of the Dravidian temple.

Meaning of Vimana

The word "vimana" means chariot or a flying machine. It contains many other meanings but these are most acceptable. In the Dravidian temple style shikhara are addressed by "Vimana". Basically "Vimana" and "Shikhara" are the same concepts. The word "vimana" does not have a specific meaning in the South Indian temple style (Meister, 2001).

The meaning of the word "vimana" can vary depending on the context in which it is used. In Hindu temple architecture, the word "vimana" typically refers to the tower that rises above the cella (garbhagriha), the temple's inner sanctum. However, the word can also be used to refer to a chariot, a palace, or a flying machine. Regarding the term "vimana," there are several points of view.

Some claim that it alludes to the Sikhara and the sanctum sanctorum's superstructure. Others disagree but appear to agree that it refers to the complete building, from the foundation to the top (Sarkar, 1974).

Another interpretation of the word "shikhara" is that it refers to the rising tower

of a temple in the Northern Indian architectural style. It is the most prominent and visible feature of the temple. In Northern texts, the shikhara is also called "Prasada". However, in Southern texts, the shikhara is called "vimana". The vimana is pyramid-like in shape, while the prasada is curvilinear (Dokras, 2021).

Making of Vimana

Vimanas is an important part of Dravidian temple architecture. The Vimana is a structure seen in temple architecture that is made up of six distinct components: the base (Adhithana), the wall (bhitti), the roof cornice (prastara), the neck (griva), the crown (shikhara), and the final (stupid). Upapits are an optional seventh component (Nagaswamy, 1973). According to the sorts of Vimanas, one with a hexagonal or octagonal shikhara is known as a Dravida. The one with a round shikharais on all four sides (Srinivasan, 1971).

The Dravida style of temple architecture is characterized by its use of a combination of alpa vimana (a small vimana that is found on the side walls of the temple), kuta (a square or rectangular projection from the wall of a temple), shala (a small shrine that is found on the wall of a temple), and panjara (a latticework panel that is found on the wall of a temple) elements. These elements are arranged from top to bottom on an increasing scale, creating a stepped pyramid-like superstructure. Each tier of the superstructure is decorated with a combination of alpa vimana, kuta, shala, and panjara elements, which helps to distinguish

the different tiers. The walls of Dravida temples are also characterized by pillar couplets at intervals. However, this rule is not always followed, and sometimes niches or aedicules are carved in between the coupled pillars to house sculptures (Dokras, 2021).

Early vimanas in the south were circular and ended in a point at the top, like the vimanam of Kadambar koil. In some cases, the flat roof of the sanctum, on which the tower rests, is overlaid by a single square stone slab known as the "brahma-ranhra-sila" or "stone denoting the upper passage of life." In other structures, slabs are placed one above the other in decreasing size, with the final slab crowned by a perforated stone ring (amalaka), giving the structure a pyramid shape (Dokras, 2021).

In later times, the vimana became more complex and multi-layered, rising up in several stages (talas). Each stage of the sikhara contained several layers of mouldings depicting traditional motifs. The layers in a tala are called vargas, and the sadvarga (six modules) is considered the classic version. The development of the vimana into a more complex and multi-layered structure is a reflection of the changing religious and cultural beliefs of the people who built it. The different layers of the vimana can be seen as representing different levels of reality, with the topmost layer representing the realm of the gods (Dokras, 2021).

Here are some of the key features of Dravida Vimana:

- Vimana is commonly a pyramidal-shaped Shikhara and each tier smaller than the one below it.
- Vimana is often divided into various layers, each of which is decorated with different patterns. They possibly represent the different stages of reality and the top realm of the god.
- Vimana is often decorated with gods, goddesses, and other religious symbols. It is believed to help to protect the temple and devotees.
- Mostly Vimana seems painted with vibrant colors.

Dravidian temples are likely well-known for their religious purpose but their dynamic architecture should be highlighted.

Symbolizing Dravida Vimana

To understand the Mandala configuration of the Vimana, take an aerial view from above. The entire structure of the Vimana, resting on a square base and rising into the air in diminishing tiers, resembles a Chakra Mandala. The sanctum with its Vimana represents the worshipful form of the deity. The different deities associated with the mula-bhera (root sound or basic sound) are aligned along the four sides of the Vimana, according to their importance, starting with the grosser ones on the outer periphery. The sthupi, the central point of the Vimana, is the bindu of its Mandala configuration. The vimana is organized vertically by pilasters

that break up the facade of the base, creating niches and windows in between. However, the temple departs from the Southern Indian convention in one significant way: the vimana is taller than the gopuras (gateways). Normally, the gopuras are taller than the vimana (Dokras, 2021).

The Kalash is a latecomer in the development of Indian temples. The early Kalashes were probably made of stone blocks, round or ribbed. They may have been used as capstones to structurally support the tall and tapering vimana, as in North Indian temples. Copper and brass vases seem to have been later innovations, and the Agama texts favor the use of copper vases. The Kalasha has several parts, such as the "foothold" (padagrahi), which is its base, the "egg" (anda) or belly, the "neck" (griva), the "lotus band" (padma-pashika), the "rim" (karnika), and the "bud" (bija-pura). The shape of this unit can resemble a bell, flower bud, lump, coconut, altar, or pot. All of these shapes symbolize the potential and possibilities of life (Dokras, 2021).

The Kalash on top of the Vimana is not embedded into the structure by packing it with mortar or cement. Instead, it is placed in position by a hollow rod that juts out of the center of the tower and runs through the vase. This tube is used to introduce lanchana, or tokens (cereals and precious stones (Dokras, 2021).

One explanation for this is that the hollow tube represents the central channel of energy, the Sushumna, which connects to the

Sahasrara, the seat of consciousness, through the Brahma randhra. This completes the analogy of the temple to the purusha, or the human form (Dokras, 2021).



Vimana or Dravidian shikhara

Gopuram or Gopura

The Gopuram's origins can be traced back to early structures of the Tamil kings Pallavas; and by the twelfth century, under the Pandya rulers, these gateways became a dominant feature of a temple's outer appearance, eventually overshadowing the inner sanctuary which became obscured from view by the Gopuram's colossal size. It also dominated the inner sanctum in the amount of ornamentation. Often a shrine has more than one Gopuram. All Indian temples from the 12th century onwards were surrounded by concentric protective walls called prakaras. Gopuras or Gopurams, which are towers erected over the entrance gateways of these walls, can be over 50 meters tall (Dokras, 2022)

Gopuras are generally built with a massive stone base and a superstructure of brick and pilasters. They are rectangular in plan and topped by a barrel-vaulted roof with a row

of finials. Unlike the vimana over the central shrine, gopuras do not need to be square-based. (Dokras, 2022).

When viewed from the top, the Gopura too resembles a Mandala; with sculptures and carvings of Yalis and mythical animals located in the outer enclosure. Humans and divine beings are in the inner enclosures. The peak of the Gopura, the Kalasha, is at the center of the Mandala (Dokras, 2022).

Meaning of Gopuram

Gopuram is basically a huge gate with a boundary surrounded by the main temple. This makes the South Indian temple an exception. On the "Gopuram or Gopura", there will be small statues of the deity inside the temple or small statues that represent some kind of mythological story.

Making of Gopuram or Gopura

The Tamil words "ko" and "koil" both mean "king" or "god". This has led some people to wonder if the word "gopuram" was originally pronounced as "kopuram" but was later changed to "gopuram" as it came to be associated with the temple gopuram in Sanskrit. In early works, "koil" was used to refer to the king's palace. It was only later that it came to be used to refer to temples. This suggests that "kopuram" may have originally referred to the outer portion of the king's or god's dwelling (Dokras, 2022).

In ancient India, temples had separate quarters inside the temple complex to house many cow sheds. These cow sheds were often built adjacent to the temple tower (as

can be seen even today in the Kanchi Varadaraja temple). This is why the temple tower is uniquely named "gopuram", which means "residence of cows". The cow is considered a sacred animal in Hinduism, and it is believed that cows are embodiments of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. Therefore, it is considered auspicious to have a cow shed in a temple complex. The cow sheds in ancient temples were not just for housing cows. They were also used for other purposes, such as providing milk and other dairy products to the temple community. Additionally, the cow sheds were often used as places of worship, and they were believed to be sacred spaces. The tradition of having cow sheds in temples has declined in recent centuries. However, there are still some temples in India that maintain cow sheds. These temples continue to uphold the ancient tradition of honoring the cow and its sacred significance.

The very soil inside a temple is said to be supremely sacrosanct. We should ask ourselves why it is so. If there are indeed any "gO shAla-s" within a temple and the herds are often led about, here and there, within the precincts, then the soil they trample upon is said to become "gO dhULi" -- the dust thrown up by cow-hoofs. This fine dust blown off the hoofs of cows is held to be sacred since in the 'Krisha-avatar. Now, whenever a pilgrim in India enters into the portals or the "gOpuram" of any temple, he is expected to mentally re-live the scenes of the "krishnAvatAra" and imagine too, as well, the "gO dhULi" spread fine all across

the cowherd, Krishna's person. The tower that guards the sacred, "sAttvic" soil of "gO dhULi" strewn and spread all across the temple grounds, such a tower, quite appropriately, gets the name "gO puram"(Dokras, 2022).

Here are some of the key features of Gopuram or Gopura

- Gopurams are typically sky-scaping and eye-catching structures.
- Gopurams can go up to one to seven stories. Each of them represents different stages of spiritual enlightenment or levels of reality.
- Gopurams are also decorated with deities, mythological, and other religious figures.
- Gopuram is mainly a gateway of the temple complex although it serves as a visual remained of the temple's importance.
- Gopuram plays the lightning protector role. It is made of copper, which is a good conductor of electricity. The topmost cooper plate catches lightning and electricity is then conducted to the ground through the cooper rod.
- Gopuram is also believed as a connection creator between cosmic energy and the temple.
- The cooper plate on the top of Gopuram is also believed to absorb negative energy and produce positive energy.

Gopurams play an equal role in architecture and religious ways. They have deep symbolic meanings on it.

Symbolizing Gopuram or Gopura

The gopuram, that magnificent entrance to the temple, holds a profound symbolic significance. It is often regarded as the feet of the divine deity, inviting devotees into a world beyond everyday contradictions. As they bow in reverence at the Lord's feet adorning the entrance, they leave the worries and complexities of the outside world behind.

In the Sri Rangam temple, the seven concentric prakara walls are said to represent the seven layers of matter: earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, and intelligence. These layers envelop the consciousness of the living entities in the material world. The gopurams are symbolic of being liberated from the bondage of matter as one enters the temple and proceeds toward the central shrine (Dokras, 2022).

These are just some of the symbolic meanings of the gopuram. The meaning of the gopuram can vary depending on the specific temple and the beliefs of the people who worship there. However, the gopuram is always a powerful symbol of the Hindu faith and its rich mythology.



Gopuram or Gopura

Evolution of the Varsara Shikhara

Earlier texts on Hindu temple architecture categorized them into three styles: Nagara, Dravidian, and Vesara. Vesara is the least known of these styles, and its name does not appear in many early texts. This is because the name "Vesara" was sometimes used interchangeably with the name "Varata." The Samaranganasutradhara and the Isanasivagurudevapaddhati are two early texts that mention the three styles of Hindu temple architecture. The "Samaranganasutradhara" mentions the Nagara style frequently, but it does not mention the Vesara style. The "Isanasivagurudevapaddhati" mentions all three styles, but it does not explicitly define the Vesara style. It is possible that the Vesara style was not as well-developed or as widespread as the Nagara and Dravidian styles. It is also possible that the name "Vesara" was simply not used consistently in early texts. Whatever the reason, the Vesara style is a fascinating and important part of Hindu temple architecture. It is a style that is characterized by its elegant proportions and its use of both curvilinear and rectilinear forms. The Vesara style can be found in temples all over India, and it is a testament to the creativity and ingenuity of Hindu architects (Kramrisch, 2015).

Meaning of Versara

Vesara means "a mule," an admixture or amalgamation of heterogeneous parents, Nagara and Dravida. This style of temple architecture mainly evolved, practiced, and developed under the influence of the

Chalukyan kings of Deccan. This is why this type of temple architecture is also known as the Chalukyan style of temple architecture. The Vesara style is a hybrid of the Nagara and Dravidian styles. It combines the curvilinear forms of the Nagara style with the rectilinear forms of the Dravidian style. This gives the Vesara style a unique and elegant appearance. The Vesara style is found in temples all over India, but it is most common in the Deccan region. Some of the most famous examples of Vesara temples include the Kailasanatha temple at Ellora, the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal, and the Chennakesava temple at Belur. The Vesara style is a testament to the creativity and ingenuity of Indian architects. It is a beautiful and distinctive style that is still admired today (Ibid, p. 291).

Making of Varsara Shikhara

The history of the Vesara style began with the early Chalukyan rulers. The Chalukyans built hundreds of temples on three main sites: Badami, Pattadakal, and Aihole. These temples were a mix of the Dravidian and Nagara styles, and they are considered to be the earliest examples of the Vesara style. The Papanatha temple (680 CE) and Virupaksha temple (740 CE) at Pattadakal are considered to be masterpieces of the emerging Vesara style. These temples were built by Chalukyan artisans who successfully fused the Dravidian and Nagara styles to create a new, distinct, and popular style. The Vesara style is characterized by its use of both curvilinear and rectilinear forms. The temples are typically built on a rectangular plan, but they have a curvilinear shikhara, or

tower. The pillars are also curvilinear, and they are often decorated with intricate carvings (Acharjee, 2017).

The Vesara style of temple architecture reached its peak under the Hoysala dynasty (1000–1300 CE). The Hoysala builders mainly used a greenish or bluish black chloritic schist to create these remarkable temples. One of the notable temples in the Mysore region is the Kesava temple at Somnathpur (1268 CE). This temple architecturally borrowed all the characteristics of a hybrid style. The Kesava temple is unique in its stellar design on the outer projections, carvings from base to finial in a three-sectional elevation, treatment of the wall surfaces, the design or order of the pillars, and a triple shrine with a common "Navaranga" (assembly hall). The stellar design of the temple is evident in the shape of the shikhara, or tower. The shikhara is made up of a series of stars that gradually decrease in size as they go up. This gives the temple a distinctive and elegant appearance. The carvings on the temple are some of the finest examples of Hoysala art. They depict a variety of scenes from Hindu mythology, as well as flora and fauna. The carvings are found on all parts of the temple, from the base to the finial. The wall surfaces of the temple are treated with a variety of patterns and motifs. These patterns are made up of different shapes and sizes of stones. The patterns create a beautiful and intricate effect. The pillars of the temple are also beautifully carved. They are decorated with a variety of motifs, including animals, plants, and geometric shapes. The pillars

support the roof of the temple and add to its beauty. The Kesava temple is a masterpiece of Hoysala architecture. It is a fusion of the Dravidian and Nagara styles, and it is a testament to the creativity and ingenuity of Hoysala architects. The temple is still admired today for its beauty and its intricate carvings (Champakalakshmi, 2001).

Here are some of the key features of Versara Shikhara:

- The elaborate carving shape of the Shikharas is evidence of the dexterity and creativity of the monuments who made these.
- The combination of cervical and pyramidal shapes creates a unique pear-shaped shikhara.
- Versara Shikhara is made of stone and is a durable material, making it suitable for buildings intended for long-term use.
- On top of the Shikhara there is a decorative element often made of stone. It is believed to represent the bindu or point of creation.

Versara Shikhara has a unique shape that makes it so attractive.

Symbolizing Versara Shikhara

The Versara Shikhara, renowned among researchers, holds a deep-rooted significance. It is widely believed to be a powerful symbol of both protection and power. But it goes beyond just that. Legends speak of an absorbing attribute possessed by this mystical structure – the ability to

neutralize evil spirits and discuss blessings upon those who approach it.



Versara style shikhara

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the three main types of Shikhara: Nagara, Dravida, and Versara. These Shikharas have architectural meanings and shapes. The Nagara shikhara is the most commonly found in India. Especially on the northern side. Nagara Shikhara's shape is cylindrical and it has a kalash on the top. It represents "Mount

Meru" a mythical mountain. It is believed as the center of the universe.

Dravida vimana is a specialty of southern temples. Its pyramidal shape makes it more attractive and represents the different layers of life and its highest part end of life. Another significance of Dravidian temples would be "Gopuram". It's a gateway to protect the temple from every kind of outer attack. It also plays the role of a lightning arrester.

Last but not least, Versara Shikhara is also known as a hybrid Shikhara. Its pear-shaped makes it unique and it represents the power. All of these "Shikhara" have their qualities that make them all different. According to the shapes they have their own identity and meanings. We should pay a little bit more attention to Dravidia and Versara Shikhara. Just like Nagara, these two styles are equally important for temple structures.

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