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INDIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE WITH SPECIAL REFERANCE TO SHIRDI SAI BABA TEMPLE OF MAHARASHTRA

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Abstract:

The great cultural legacy of India, which comes from the Indus Valley civilization, is diverse and extremely rich. The building maintains the social, cultural, and economic wealth as well as the religious customs of earlier times. An important aspect of the temples in ancient India's decoration. It is reflected in both the various figurative sculptured embellishments and the structural elements. The garbha-griha, sometimes referred to as the womb chamber or the goddess of the temple, was an important component in Indian temples. The garbha-griha has a corridor for circumambulation. However, because they are more prevalent there, the South Indian temple has many more auxiliary shrines.

Shirdi is unquestionably on the list of locations to visit if one wants to properly appreciate the majesty of India's temple architecture, it goes without saying. One of the holiest places in India, Shirdi Sai Baba Temple, has a simple architectural design that best embodies the sacredness of complete simplicity. The Sai Baba Samadhi Shrine is a beautiful sight. The Shree Sai Baba Mandir is composed of stone, as opposed to the Samadhi Mandir, which is made of white marble and has lovely artistic ornamentation.

The samadhi is surrounded by a fence constructed of white marble that is entirely adorned with ornamental patterns. Two silver pillars that are adorned with exquisite patterns stand in the



middle of the samadhi. Its back is occupied by a sizable figure of Sai Baba seated on a throne. It is built of Italian marble and was designed by the late Shri Balaji Vasant.

Key words: Gopurams, Garva - griha, Sikhara, Puranas, Dharma, Vastu, Mandala .

Introduction:

Ancient India witnessed; temple buildings of a high caliber emerged in practically all locations. Geographical, climatic, ethnic, racial, historical, and linguistic diversity all contributed to the distinctive architectural styles used in the construction of temples in various regions.

India's vast cultural inheritance, which derives from the Indus Valley civilization, is varied and culturally rich. The architecture preserves the social and cultural norms, economic prosperity, and religious practices of previous eras. The decorating of the ancient Indian temples was a significant component. Both the numerous figurative sculptural details and the architectural components reflect it. The garbha-griha, also known as the womb chamber or temple's goddess, was a significant part of Indian temples. There is a circumambulation passage around the garbha-griha. The South Indian temple, however, has many more subsidiary shrines since they are more common there.

In the early phases of its development, some distinguishing characteristics, such as sikhara and doorways, were used to differentiate between the temples in North and South India. The sikhara continued to be the most noticeable element of north Indian temples, whereas the entryway was typically understated. The Gopurams (massive entrances) and the enclosures surrounding the temples were the two most noticeable characteristics of South Indian temples. The devotees were guided into the holy courtyard by the Gopurams. The Northern and Southern styles shared a lot of characteristics. These included the layout of the building, the placement of the stone-carved deities both inside and outside, and the variety of decorative features. (Hardy,2013)

The belief that all things are one and connected is thought to have contributed to the development of a Hindu temple in its fundamental essence. According to Indian philosophy, the pursuit of artha, or riches and success, kama, or sexual pleasure, dharma, or moral life and values, and moksha, or self-knowledge and realization, are the four fundamental and significant concepts that are also the goals of human life. Hindu temples' mathematically organized interiors, elaborate decorations, and carved, painted, and decorated pillars and statues serve as examples of and tributes to these ideas. The Purusha or Purusa, also known as the Universal

Principle, Consciousness, the cosmic man or self, or the self without any form but omnipresent and associated with all things, is a hollow space without any decorations that is usually below the deity but may also be at the side or above the deity, and it is located in the center of the temple. This space symbolizes the complex idea of the Purusha or Purusa. Hindu temples encourage contemplation, deeper mental purification, and self-realization in their visitors; nevertheless, the selected method is left to the preference of each devotee. (Guy, 2007)

Hindu temple locations often have large grounds and many of them are located in the midst of nature, close to water sources. This is likely due to the fact that, in accordance with ancient Sanskrit literature, the best location for a Hindu temple known as a "Mandir" is next to gardens and water features where flowers bloom, birdsong, the sounds of ducks and swans, and animals sleeping fearlessly may all be heard. Hindu temples should be built in these peaceful, serene locations, according to the texts, which also explain that Gods live there. Despite the fact that renowned Hindu temples are advised to be located close to natural water bodies such lakes, rivers, seashores, and confluences of rivers, the 'Puranas' and the 'Bharat Samhita', Mandirs can even be built in locations without access to natural water sources. The construction of a pond with water gardens in front of the "Mandir" or to the left is one of these recommendations, though. Water is often present during the consecration of the deity or the Mandir, even in the absence of both natural and man-made water sources. The Hindu classic *Vishnudharmottara Purana's* Part III of Chapter 93 advises the construction of temples inside caverns and chiseled-out stones, atop hills with breathtaking vistas, inside hermitages and forests, next to gardens, and at the top of a street in a town.

Hindu temple layouts follow a geometrical form known as *vastu-purusha-mandala*, which takes its name from the three key elements of the architecture: *Vastu*, which is Sanskrit for "place of dwelling," *Purusha*, which means "universal principle," and *Mandala*, which means circle. A mystical diagram known as a *Vastupurushamandala* is called a *Yantra* in Sanskrit. The core beliefs, traditions, mythologies, fundamentalism, and mathematical standards are used to create the symmetrical and self-repeating model of a Hindu temple that is displayed in the design.

Hindu philosophy interprets the pattern's vibrant saffron center and intersecting diagonals as a symbol of the Purusha. The four essentially important directions are used to establish the Mandir's axis, which results in the creation of a perfect square within the confines of the available area. This square, which is divided into exact square grids and encircled by the Mandala circle, is considered sacred. On the other hand, the circle is seen as human and earthly, such as the Sun, Moon, rainbow, horizon, or water drops, which can be seen or perceived in daily life. The circle and the square mutually support one another. The model is typically found in massive temples, while ceremonial temple superstructures have an 81 sub-square grid.

(Batham, 2018)

Each square in the central "Pada" square represents a particular element and may take the shape of a god, an apsara, or a spirit. In the 64-square grid form known as the Brahma Padas, the principal or innermost square or squares are devoted to Brahman. The primary god is housed in the Garbhagruha, or center of the home, which is located in the Brahma Padas. The Devika Padas, which represent the various faces of the Devas or Gods, are the outermost concentric layer of the Brahma Padas, and they are once more encircled by the Manusha Padas, which represent the humans. The final concentric square is formed by the Paishachika Padas, which represent the various faces of Asuras and evils. Devotees execute Parikrama around the Manusha Padas in a clockwise direction. The wall reliefs and images of various temples reflect legends from various Hindu Epics and Vedic stories, while the three outside Padas in larger temples typically decorate inspirational paintings, carvings, and images. The elaborate carvings and images covering the temple walls, ceiling, and pillars provide examples of artha, kama, dharma, and moksha. The major temples are decorated with Mandapa, pillared outdoor halls or pavilions used for public rites, with the ones in the east acting as a waiting area for pilgrims. The Mandir's spire is symmetrically aligned exactly above the Brahma Pada, or the central core of the building. It is typically a tapering conical or pyramidal superstructure with a dome constructed using the principles of concentric squares and circles. In North India, it is called Shikhaa, and in South India, it is called Vimana. Smaller temples and shrines that likewise adhere to the essential principles of grids, symmetry, and mathematical perfection are housed within complexes of several bigger temples. Hindu temple designs often feature fractal-like design structures that are repeated and mirrored. (Trivedi,1989)

Hindu temple layout guides explain plans with squares in the counts of 1, 4, 9, 16, and 25, totaling up to 1024. For example, in one pada plan, the pada is regarded as the seat for a devotee or hermit to practice yoga, meditate, or offer Vedic fire; in a four padas plan, which is also a meditative design, a core is represented; and in a nine padas layout, which typically forms a model of the smallest temples, the center is surrounded by the deity. There are some exceptions to the perfect square grid principle, including the Teli-ka-mandir, the Naresar, and the Nakti-Mata temples in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, respectively. This shows that Hinduism valued the flexibility, originality, and aesthetic independence of artists. (Meister, 1985)

The Gupta Period introduced a new stage in the development of temple architecture. The Shilpashastras are the early mediaeval books on architecture. These refer to three well known types of temple architecture. They are : Nagara, Dravida, Vesara. (Plate:1)

Nagara Style:

The region between the Himalayas and the vindhya mountains is where the Nagara style is thought to have evolved in the northern India.

The construction is made up of two buildings in this design: the main shrine, which is taller, and a nearby, shorter mandapa.

The shikhara's form is the main distinction between these two structures. A bell-shaped building is erected to the main temple. Four chambers make up the majority of the temple structures. They identify as: Garbhagriha, Jagmohan, Natyamandir and Bhogamandir.

The planning and elevation are two characteristics that set the Nagara style apart. A number of

progressive projections in the middle of each side of the square plan give it a cruciform shape. A tower, whose elevation gradually slopes upward in a convex curve.

The plan's projections are carried all the way to the top of the Shikhara. Originally, there were no pillars in the Nagara style. (Saraswati, 1941)

Dravida style: Between the 9th and 12th centuries AD, the dravida style developed in the South across the Chola

Empire. It can be found along the Krishna and Kaveri rivers. The two most significant features of the Dravida temple design are: The inner chamber of temples has more than four sides and Tower or Vimana are pyramidal.

A temple built in the Dravida style is located inside an ambulatory hall. Overlooking the Garbha-griha is a multi-story structure named Vimana. This architectural style makes extensive use of pillars and pilasters. To allow worshippers to perform Pradakshina, there is a circular pathway around the garbha-griha. A pillared hall called "mandapa" has carved ornate pillars. A courtyard ringed by tall walls encircled the entire building. In this courtyard, the tall gates known as Gopurams allow visitors to pass through. A significant example of Dravida architecture is the Kailasanatha temple. (Tartakov, 1980)

Vesara Style :

Early medieval periods witnessed the emergence of the Vesara style in the area between the Krishna River and Vindhya. The Vesara style, with local modifications, has been employed in numerous temples in Central India and Deccan. It is an amalgam of the Dravida and Nagara styles of temple construction. The number of stages has not changed, but the height of the temple towers has. By lowering the height of each individual tier, this is achieved. In Vesara style has also witnessed the use to imitate of the semi-circular erections of Buddhist chaityas. Structures in this style are beautifully crafted, and figures are heavily ornamented and polished. (Sinha, 2000)

Temple Architecture of Shirdi Sai Baba

It goes without saying that Shirdi is undoubtedly on the list of places to visit if one wants to fully appreciate the magnificence of India's temple architecture.

Shirdi Sai Baba Temple, one of the holiest locations in India, has a straightforward architectural style that finest exudes the holiness of absolute simplicity.

How the Samadhi Mandir came to be-

The wada (huge private residence) that now serves as Baba's tomb was first built during the final years of Baba's physical life. It was constructed on a plot of ground that Baba had used for a garden. In his early years, Sai Baba cleared and leveled this terrain, which had been utilized as a dumping place since he seemed to enjoy growing plants. He planted it with marigolds and jasmine using seeds he had brought from Rahata. For around three years, Baba gave the plants daily

Waterings and gave the flowers to nearby shrines. Baba appears to be raising plants of a different sort and is still sowing seeds now that his tomb is here and he is attracting so many followers.

Sometimes, as Baba passed the location on his route to Lendi, he would make recommendations. While construction on the structure continued, Booty asked Baba whether he might include a temple with a statue of Murlidhar on the bottom floor (a form of Lord Krishna). When the temple is finished, we will live there and be happy forever,

Baba remarked. Baba gladly granted permission.

Shama then questioned Baba if it was a good time to begin the task, to which Baba responded that it was. The work was started right away when Shama went and smashed a coconut as a Mahurat

(good omen). The foundation was rapidly built, a pedestal was ready, and the idol was ordered. Unfortunately, it took a few years before the importance of Baba's remark was understood. (Rigopoulos, 1993)

The architecture of Shirdi Sai Baba Temple -

A sight to behold is the Sai Baba Samadhi Shrine. The samadhi mandir is made of white marble, with beautiful ornamental decorations whereas the Shree Sai Baba Mandir is made of stone. A fence made of white marble that is completely covered in patterned ornamentation encircles the samadhi. At the center of the samadhi are two pillars that are decorated with magnificent patterns.

An extensive statue of Sai Baba seated on a throne is located behind it. The sculpture was created by the late Shri Balaji Vasant and is made of Italian marble. To convey the simplicity adorned by the saint during this life, the temple's building has been kept knowingly simple. Moreover, a gold umbrella has been put in place to cover the idol. A 600-person capacity assem

by hall is located directly in front of the Shri Sai Baba Temple. Many items that were originally Utilized by the great saint are on display inside the hall. The temple was built by a follower by the name of Gopalrao Booty. There are many counters throughout the compound, including the "prasadalay," contribution counters, "darshan lane," and book stall. Northwest of the samadhi shrine is Lendi Baug, a floral garden. Sai Baba himself transformed the garden area from a wasteland into a floral paradise.

There is a big stone under a tree just close to the temple. Sai Baba allegedly used to sit on the stone to preach and meditate. On the stone is a sizable depiction of the saint.

Since the temple's construction, a modest lamp has been maintained blazing. Dwarkamayee Mosque or Dwarkamai is the name of this area. This is the unique place of worship where a mosque is housed inside a temple.

Around the stone that the saint used, there are other items to be found. The iron roof of this building. The Chavadi, a small platform beneath a neem tree, is another feature of the temple complex. While he was still alive, Sai Baba rested here.

The leaves of this tree are reported to taste pleasant.

The temple can be considered as a combination of Nagara and Vesara style of architecture. The Vimana of the temple is decorated with creeper-like motifs. (Plate:2) Amalaka, a stone disc-like structure at the top of the temple is ornamented with leaf motifs. Kalasha or capstone, the topmost point of the temple above Amalaka is also decorated with various creative patterns. The entire Vimana is surrounded by four square boxes-like pillars with small Kalash at the top of it. (Plate: 3) The garba griha of the temple is beautifully adorned with Shingasan made of gold along with lions on both sides of it, where the idol of Shri Sai Baba is placed. The Umbrella, pedestal even the walls are being decorated with attractive motifs of creepers, flowers, men, animals, and the faces of the Sun god is also visible. (Plate: 4) At the top corner of the wall there are two elephants, and the borders carry a suggestion of a peacock.

Conclusion:

The Indus Valley civilization left behind a vast and extraordinarily rich cultural legacy in India. The structure preserves the social, cultural, and economic prosperity as well as the pre-modern religious practices. A significant feature of the interior ornamentation of temples in ancient India. Both the structural components and the many figurative sculptured embellishments reflect it. An essential part of Indian temples was the garbha-griha, often known as the womb chamber or the goddess of the temple. There is a passageway around the garbha-griha for circumambulation. The South Indian temple, however, includes a lot more auxiliary shrines because they are more common there.

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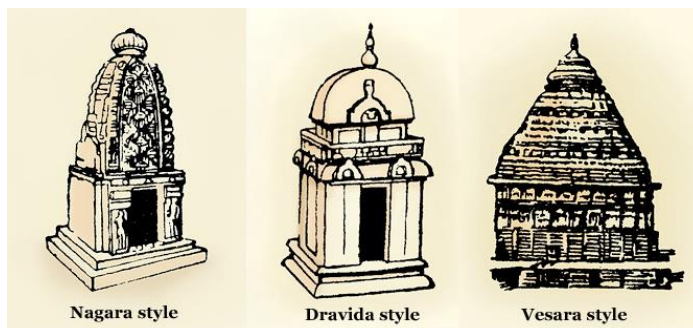


Plate 1 : Image showing three types of Indian Temple architecture.



Plate 2 : Image showing Vimana of the temple decorated with creeper like motifs.

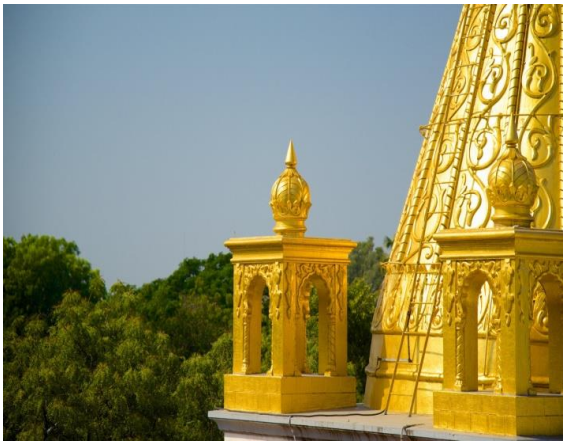


Plate 3: Image showing Vimana surrounded by four square boxes like pillars with small kalasha at the top of it.

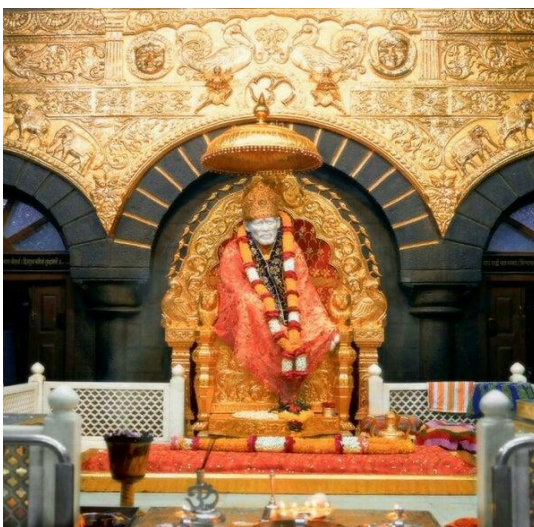


Plate 4: Image showing garba griha of Shirdi Sai Baba temple