

Aesthetics of dakhineswar temple: An empirical study on the temple architecture through the lens of contemporary time

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Abstract

The term *temple* is an oblivious expression of Hinduism which is most often unheeded. The temple architecture generally exhibits the social condition, material culture as well as the ideological paradigms of a particular community. Dakhineswar Kali temple has more than hundred year's heritage records in West Bengal and India too. The present study is an attempt to understand how different cultural patterns and impact of various Indian historical time period embedded in an architectural style. For this paper, the data were collected through observation, interview methods. This research reveals the impact of Indo-Islamic style as a form of '*ratna*' or towered structure, European influence as a presence of flat roof temple pattern and '*aat-chala*' form expressing the Bengal Temple Terracotta style. Furthermore, the presence of skywalk, car parking area, specially designed security witnessing the touches of modernization through the shades of cultural heritage.

Keywords: architecture, Dakhineswar, modernization, temple

1. Introduction

Every stone is sacred and everyone is devotee in Hinduism. Indian antiquated messages believed, a sanctuary spot for *tirtha* is known as "pilgrimage" (Kramrisch, 1946) [18]. It is a consecrated site whose feel and configuration endeavours to emblematically consolidate the perfect fundamentals of Hindu lifestyle (Eaton, 2000) [11]. It is believed that, a Hindu Temple had been created to sustain all the cosmic elements of life such as, from fire to water, from images of nature to divinities, from the femininity to the masculinity, from the fleeting sounds and incense smells to the eternal oblivion - yet all the inclusiveness are being existence at the centre of the sanctuary (Kramrisch, 1946) [18]. A Hindu temple depicted a story of social, economic, artistic and intellectual activities in ancient and medieval period of India (Redfield and Singer, 1954) [33]. In the earlier days, "architecture" was described as a solid construction for the habitation of God and which was fashioned by the celestial mason. (Ramachandra Rao, 1993). A temple can bridge up between man, deities, and the Universal '*Purusha*' within a sacred space (Eaton, 2000) [11]. A Hindu sanctuary configuration pursues a geometrical plan called '*vastu-purusha-mandala*'. This term was derived from 'Sanskrit word' connected with three most important components of a plan of architecture. *Mandala* stands for circle, *Purusha* is '*widespread essence at the centre of Hindu convention*', while *Vastu* speaks about the dwelling structure (Kramrisch, 1958) [19]. Temple architecture displayed highly skilled, expertise aesthetic sense in every corners of ancient India. A wide variety of architectural style of temple construction could be understand in terms of geographical, climatic, ethnic, historical and linguistic diversities. Three main styles of temple architecture are observable i.e., the '*Nagara*' or the

Northern style, the '*Dravida*' or the Southern style and the '*Vesara*' or Mixed style as depicted in picture -1.

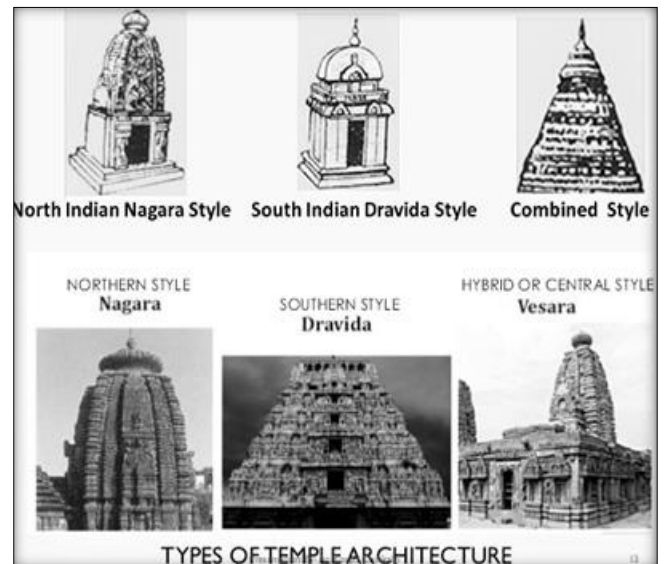


Fig 1: Indian variety of temple architecture

Another important component of Indian temple was the '*garbha-griha*' (womb chamber), housing pattern of the deity of the temple. However, there are also many subsidiary shrines within temple complex represents the South Indian temple. In case of North Indian temples, the '*sikhara*' remained the most prominent component while the gateway was generally unassuming. Thus, the temples of South India featuring with '*Gopuram*' i.e. a huge gateway, with an enclosure around the same (Jani, 2011) [14].

The architecture of Hindu temple is purely symbolic. The whole structure interlaces the step by step life and its surroundings with the magnificent thoughts, through a structure that is open yet raised on a yard, advancing from the standard towards the consecrated, respecting the visitor inwards towards the Brahma pada and haven's central focus, similarly as lifting him upwards into a meaningful space set apart by its pinnacle (shikhara, vimana) (Michell, 1988) [23]. In Hinduism, this is disposed for an open and diffusive arrangement, where the standard world was not restricted, changed and spilt into the consecrated. Yet the layout was open on all sides, except for the core space which had just one opening for 'darshan' (Pradesh & Temple, 2019) [29]. The external area disperses extensions to the following inward layer that as 'human planetary', shadowed by another internal 'Devika padas' space and representative expressions joining the positive and happy sides of life about the great and the divine beings. This perfect space at that point concentrically spreads inwards and supports the visitant deeply of the sanctuary, where lives the primary symbol just as the space for the 'Purusha' and thoughts held to be most holy standards in Hindu convention (Dutta & Beynon, 2005).

A number of ancient Indian texts suggested that, the prevalence of idols, temples and shrines of the Indian subcontinent have a thick history of thousand years dated back (Lewandowski, 1980) [20]. As the religious sanctuaries of the Koshala kingdom is documented in the 'Valmiki Ramayana' (Singh, 2008) [39]. Astadhyayi, determines male god regions (pictures/symbols) of Agni, Indra, Varuna, Rudra, Madra, Pusa, Surya, and Soma being venerated, similarly as the adoration for zones of female goddesses, for instance, Indrani, Varunani, Usha, Bhavani, Prthivi and Vrsakapayi (Aussant, 2015 [4]; Akhilesh, 2016) [1]. The Second Century BC 'Mahabhasya' of Patanjali generally depicts asylums of Dhanapati (divine force of wealth and cash, Kubera), similarly as havens of Rama and Kesava, wherein the adoration included Dance, music and expansive services. These three havens have very comparable qualities like names, traditions and pictures. This is significantly reflected the historical back up from 4th century BC through the idols, temple architecture and shrines.

In the Malaprabha conductor bowl, South India, this period is credited with apparently the most reliable stone refuges of the district: the Badami Chalukya safe houses are dated to the fifth century by explicit researchers and the sixth by some others. Over sixth and seventh quite a long while, safe house plans were additionally refined during Maurya association, an affirmation of which endures today at Ellora and in the 'Elephanta Cave Temple'. It is the fifth through seventh century AD when outside plan and appearances of Hindu refugees in north India and south India started to widely wind. During early Hindu period, Bengali temples were based on Mauryan and Pre-Mauryan art of India (Kalia, 1994) [17]. In this beginning period, the earthenware comprises of stray religion bits of little sizes. In later stages, earthenware plaques exhibited with new plans which were unique in relation to the crude representation of a similar topic (Mangaonkar, 2012) [22]. In the next stage, the appearance of terracotta is recognised in a large number and size in respect to architectural structures, as decorations of the facades of the temples. The temples were having an elaborate portrayal of subjects obtained from the Puranas.

Most of the decorations are typically Gupta in style (Chakrabarti, 1996 [7]; Mangaonkar, 2011) [21].

The very epitome of a Hindu asylum is acknowledged to have made from the conviction framework that everything is one and everything is connected. An unfilled space without any embellishments organized at the point of convergence of the haven, generally underneath the god, may similarly be along the edge or over the godliness symbolizes the baffling thought of Purusha or 'Purusha' which means the Universal standard, Consciousness, the galactic man or self with no structure, in any case, omnipresent and relates all things. The 'Hindu Temple Architecture' was in its determinative phase and was thus far to reach the standardised situation of later centuries. In this period the main feature of Temple architecture of North India was received by 'Cella or Sanctum with the curvilinear Shikhara at its roofs' and 'Mandapa or porch shrouded by pyramidal roof' and Temples of South India featured by 'rock-cut' and 'Shikhara'. Well, in case of the Muslim period, temple architecture of Bengal developed a truly indigenous pattern, as the temples followed the style of the thatched huts of the villages. Due to numerous aesthetic impacts and reflection of a localized pattern the period of Brick made temples of Bengal demonstrated, which had had a wide scope to expose varieties of structure and system of development. Block sanctuaries of Bengal (worked somewhere in the range of 16th to 19th century) structures one of the most particular gatherings of hallowed landmarks in India. Art of Bengal, which was mainly religious in nature, as expressed through the medium of temples. The immense structure and a well-connected infrastructure of Dakshineswar Temple ascertain the daily life of local people. The main significance of Dakshineswar Kali Temple is that the scheduling of the Dakshineswar Kali Temple is such that it bids space for rooms of staffs and guests of the temple. The Dakshineswar Kali Temple's atmosphere is apathetic to praise or criticism, there have no such difference or discrimination between the pilgrims of the Temple. Here all live with an unusual congruence. It seems as if time has stopped here. The streets outside the Dakshineswar Kali Temple increase the expectancy of the devotees for "Maa Kali" who would soon shower her love and calm your mind (Darla, 2019) [9]. During the 19th century two significant streams, streaming around two remarkable characters, had their source in Bengal: one in the world-class urban focal point of Calcutta, the capital of British India, and the other in the tranquil town of Kamarpukur, at that point spick-and-span by British culture. Eventually these streams consolidated, shaping, compelling, conjunction, at a little town called 'Dakshineswar', only north of Calcutta. Maa Bhavatarini is nothing but the symbolic interpretation of unbound hope, stream of emotion, unconditional love and affection more over the blind faith of every living creatures. Furthermore, the individuals may vary from their cultural backgrounds, including some who were bound to help in a development that would carry the new plan to the world (Johnsen, 1999 [15]; Smith, 2008) [34].

The name of the architect of the temple and other such details are not known for certain, but it is not difficult to identify the principal traditions which influenced the architectural design of Dakshineswar temple. "Rekha or Shikhar Deul", "Bhadra or Pidha Deul", "Stupashirsha Bhadra or Pida Deul", and "Shikharashirsha Bhadra or

Pida Deul are four major traditions that have been followed concerning temple architecture of Bengal (Prabhananda, 2003) [27]. In case of the Muslim period, the temple architecture in Bengal developed a truly *indigenous character*, as the temples were built in a style modelled through the lens of thatched huts of the villages (Brown, 2013) [6]. These temples can be broadly classified into three categories - *Bangla Mandir*, *Chala Mandir* and *Ratna or Chura Mandir*, which are differentiated by the design of the roofs. The design of the Ratna Mandir, with its graceful turrets on the roofs, was truly an indication of the genius of Bengali architects. Furthermore, probably one of the best executions of the Ratna Mandir configuration is the Navaratna sanctuary (a sanctuary with nine turrets) of Kali at Dakshineswar. The temple is built in the traditional Navaratna or nine spires style, very typical of Bengal architecture. The style developed in Bengal during the eighteenth century as an elaboration of the pancha ratna style that had five structures. The Navaratna style of sanctuary engineering consolidates two fundamental levels, each with four spired corner structures, and a focal structure above, for an aggregate of nine towers. These three storeyed temples measuring 46 feet square and 100 feet tall looks magnificent even from far. The three-storeyed South-Facing the nine spires are distributed in the upper two storeys and it stands on a high platform with a flight of stairs. It measures 46 sq. ft and rises to a height of over 100 ft (Chowdhury, 2018) [8]. The three-storey building is commanded by the shading beige with a differentiating maroon the conventional consumed block that adds to its excellence. The eight domed pillars on each corner of the floors surrounds the main high dome. With fine crafting on the exterior, the entrances are given the arched structure. The rooftop has two levels. On the main level, there are four turrets - one at every one of the four corners. At that point, four additional turrets beauty the edges of the littler second level, and a huge ninth turret crowns the middle. The Navaratna style is really magnificent and was an uncommon advancement in sanctuary engineering. Other than the Navaratna sculpture to the Divine Mother, there are likewise inside the complex a column of twelve '*aat-chala*' temples (that is every sanctuary has a two-layered rooftop, every level having four sides) to Shiva, in addition to a sanctuary of Radha-Govinda. The entire complex is organized in a wonderful and amicable way.

1.1 Location of the temple

Dakhineswar temple is one of the renowned temples in Kolkata and India too. This temple primarily expressing the glory of Hindu goddess Kali as a form of "Bhavatarini". This sacred place is situated on the eastern bank of Hooghly River under Kamarhati municipal area as well as Belghoria police station of North 24 Parganas of west Bengal, India. Dakshineswar Kali temple is surrounded by means of Alambazar and Ariadaha respectively from south and north whereas, Ganges River and Sabeda Bagan are positioned from west and eastern side (Chowdhury, 2018) [8]. Dakshineswar temple occupies the ninth position throughout

the world In respect of area with 101,171m².

1.2. History and land usage of dakhineswar temple

In the early decades of the 1800s, there were only a few huts and the adjacent villages on the eastern bank of the Ganges witnessed the land of Dakshineswar. We can imagine the condition of that area when the temple was constructed. A description was given by J. Marshman in the January 1845 issue of Calcutta Review, he stated that: 'A little higher up we have the village of 'Dukhinsore', remarkable chiefly for the country seat, mapped down in the map of Hastie's Garden, but the papers were repeatedly transferred from one to another hand during the last thirty years (Joshep, 1845) [16]. According to an old legend, the eminent King Vana had his palace at 'Doulpota', which is presently the centre of the urban district of Dakshineswar. The primary name of the town was 'Sonitpur', in some extent it also known as 'Sambhalpur'. As the family heavenliness of King Vana was known as Dakshineswar Shiva, at last, the town came into existence by the name of "Dakshineswar". Someone expressed that, Dakshineswar Shiva can never again be pursued. On the other hand, the presence of Buro Shiva of Shivtala, near the bank of the Ganges, is the point of fact of this proportional Dakshineswar Shiva. The renowned palace of Goddess Kali, Dakshineswar, formerly Doulpota. As mentioned by Joshep, the area was covered by dense forest near about three hundred years ago (Joshep, 1845) [16]. Only a few families of fishermen and boatmen were dispersedly settled in that area. Then Durga Prasad Roy Choudhury and Bhavani Prasad Roy Choudhury, of the well-known Savanna Choudhury family came from Barisha and settled there (Prabhananda and Ashrama, 1993) [3]. They have been brought a number of people with themselves and the forest has been cleared and developed a village in their own way (Prabhananda, 2003) [27]. Swami Saradananda was mentioned some facts in the *Lilaprasanga*: 'It is recorded in the Endowment document that the land of the Kali temple complex is 60 bighas' (Saradananda, 1980) [31]. In this document, we find that the land measured 54 1/2 bighas, and it was described as being bounded by the Ganges on the west, by the land of Kashinath Roy Choudhury and others on the east, by the government's powder magazine on the north, and by the buildings previously owned by John Hastie on the south, where Jadulal Mallick's garden house was built (Partee, 1995 [38]; Sengupta, Chandra & Bose, 1998) [37]. Rani Rasmani has purchased the land at a cost of Rs 42,500 from John Hastie's executor, James Hastie, the attorney of the Supreme Court (Prabhananda and Ashrama, 1993) [3]. To increase the temple area, the Rani again purchased some additional land from few boatmen on the northern part, and some part of the Muslim cemetery ground on the east. The Englishman, John Hastie was the owner and had has the lion's share of the main land. This area was pronounced by the local Bengali people as '*Saheber Bagicha*' ('Saheb's garden'). On the other hand, an entombment of a Gazi (a Muslim saint) was situated on another portion of this famous place. A blue print of the temple land area has been expressed through the picture -2.

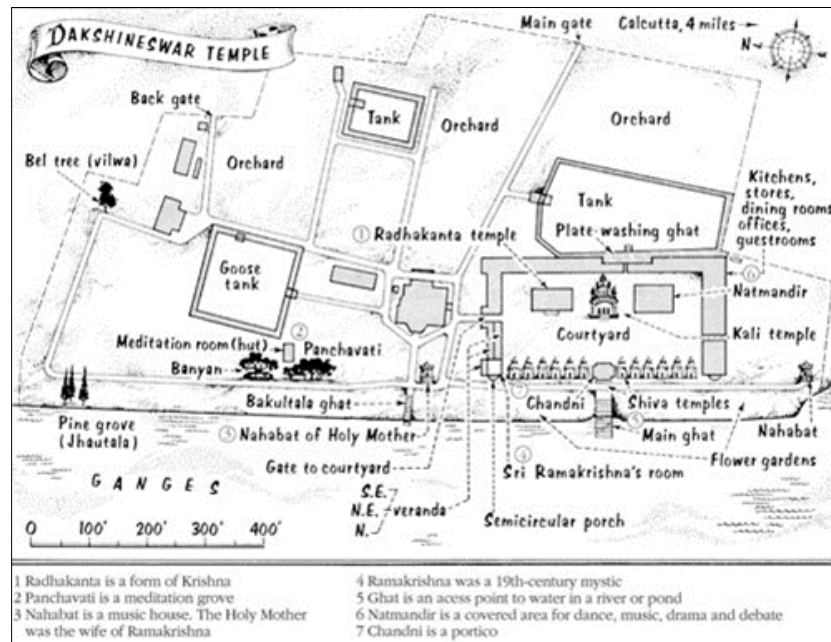


Fig 2: Ancient map of Dakshineswar temple (Source: Christopher Isherwood, *Ramakrishna and his Disciples*, 1965, Methuen, p. 216. Reproduced by permission of the Vedanta Society of Southern California)

As per Prabhananda, “This land was shaped like the back of a tortoise, and according to the Tantras, such a graveyard is ideal for establishing a temple to Shakti” (Prabhananda, 2003) [27]. In this manner, the all-out territory of the land at long last become 60 bighas, and by and large it has cost Rs 55,000. Later a part of the land on the south must be surrendered for a railroad line and for the development of Vivekananda Bridge (Prabhananda and Ashrama, 1993) [3]. Thus, the present amount of land held by the temple authorities is approximately 58 bighas (Saradananda, 1980) [31]. After a short interval of some obstacles, the whole plot was acquired, boundary walls were build up with two gates - the main gate for people coming from Calcutta, and a second gate meant to facilitate access to the Ganges for bathers from the *Vachaspati Para*, *Mukherji Para*, *Bhattacharya Para* and *Choudhury Para* (“para” means neighbourhood of a small locality) areas (Prabhananda, 2003 [27]; Saradananda, 1980) [31]. From the later phase, brick embankment, retaining wall and a cement *bathing ghat* on the Ganges were also constructed. Regardless, the strong back and forth movement from the flood-tides in the stream which begin from the southwest - from the bend in the conduit at Ghusuri hit the property with such power that the barrier and holding divider were a little while later washed away. Rani Rasmani then assigned the project of constructing a new embankment, retaining wall and ghat to M/s MacIntosh & Burn Co. The work was completed at a cost of 1,60,000 rupees. After the embankment and retaining wall were built, the construction of the temple complex as well as the digging of the pond, planting of trees and saplings, and laying out of flower gardens could begin (Nirvedananda, 1952). Through the memory of Swami Saradananda, a vivid picture of the northern part of the compound may be drawn in mind: “In those days the land surrounding the ‘Panchayati’ was not as even as it is now. It was full of pits, ditches, lowlands, jungles, etc. There grew an Amalaki tree among the wild trees and plants. It was a burial ground besides being a jungle. We have heard from Hriday that the [amalaki] tree grew on a low piece of land. So, anyone sitting under that tree could not be seen from the

high land outside the jungle” (Nirvedananda, 1952). Swami Saradananda also informed us that when the small pond called the *goose pond* (Hanspukur) was re-excavated, the ground around the old Panchayati was filled with mud from the pond, and in the process, and the *amalaki tree* was destroyed. Sri Ramakrishna then set up a *new Panchayati*. He planted some auspicious trees to the west of the small hut, and Hriday planted some saplings of a *banyan tree*, an *ashoka tree*, a *vilva tree*, and an *amalaki tree*. Nirvedananda also mentioned that “...around this Sri Ramakrishna included saplings of the blessed basil and the *aparajita creeper* and after that had the entire spot fenced in with the assistance of a sanctuary plant specialist named ‘Bhartrihari’. The basil plants and *aparajita creepers* developed rapidly, so in a brief span the spot was tranquil and confined and appropriate for reflection” (Nirvedananda, 1952; Saradananda, 1980) [31].

1.3. Objectives

The present study mainly focused on the art and architectural form of Dakshineswar Kali Temple through the lens of contemporary time period. The paper is also relying on the historic background and cultural legacy of Dakshineswar Kali Temple.

2. Material and Methods

This is a purely qualitative investigative research work reflects an amalgamation of primary and secondary data set. The secondary data have been congregated from various books, journals, research papers and newspapers as well. The primary data were collected through observation, cartographic, method to obtain the detail knowledge of architecture of Dakshineswar Kali temple and some in depth-interviews of pilgrims were collected to enrich the religious understandings regarding Kali temple.

3. Results and Discussion

In some religious thoughts, temple does not show any dividing line between the secular and the lonely sacred (Lewandowski, 1980) [20]. The gigantic temples of India

have been crossed the spiritual level rather its relevance is more social and ritualistic. Dakhineswar Kali temple plays a symbolic role of religious harmonization. There are no racial or religious discriminations take place. Thousands of pilgrims are visited this temple in a day with their different religious identities. The empirical data revealed that, 11 respondents hold Christianity, 6 of Jainism, 28 of Islam and rests are of Hinduism out of 170 data set of pilgrims. Apart from the religious varieties, there are domestic or local, national and international tourists or pilgrims are recognized within the courtyard of the temple. The devotees predominantly prefer to visit different inner sections of the temple, whichever may include some small temples, garden area and so on. The glimpse of the detailed architecture has given below –

3.1. Radha Krishna mandir

Radha-Krishna Mandir (temple) is situated within the temple grounds. This temple is positioned at the north eastern side of the Dakhineswar mandir. It comes left first from the first doorway of the main temple or “mula-mandir”. This beautiful temple has three separate worship rooms. A 21.5 inch of Lord Krishna and 16 inches of goddess Radha idol is positioned at the “garva griha” (sacred compartment within a large room) (Sen, 2010) [32]. The right side of that “garva griha”, idol of Lord Jagannath and Lord Shiva including the photo of Ramakrishna are well placed. On the other hand, again the photo of Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi (wife of Ramakrishna) and an *idol of Krishna* (former idol of garva griha) were placed. To reach the “dalan” (main lobby) of this temple, we need to flight of twelve stairs. Three big artistic brick made pillars are covered from the both sides of the entering way. These pillars are constituted by six small perpendicular sections which are again build up with twelve pieces of posts. In this temple, the flat roofed pattern is predominant. In the 19th century, mainly the Bengal temple architecture introduced this style. Outwardly, this type of temple occupies rectangular in shape, picture -3



Fig 4: Radha Krishna mandir (A temple of Lord Vishnu)

has the ability to prove it. Internally dome structure with a shallow vault and flat ceilings are the key feature of this style. The outer pillars and arched are designed with numerous terracotta design as well as motifs. The flat roofed

Temple style primarily expressed the European influence in Bengal temple architecture (Mangaonkar, 2012 [22]; McCutchen, 1972).

3.2. Shiv mandir

If we entered into the courtyard of the temple or “mula mandir” from the gate of western side, the twelve well distributed Shiva Temples can be viewed from both (six left sided and six from the right) side. To touch the floor of the temple, we need to go beyond twelve stairs from the courtyard. After crossing a high lintel of the entrance, pilgrims could perceive an interior of temple house with square shaped black and white stones at floor and walls and ceiling are white in colour. Lord Shiva is positioned here as a form of beautiful.



Fig 5: Array of the temple of Lord Shiva

‘black Shiva Lingas’ (Flaherty, 1981) [12]. These temples contain well decorated two arched doors, in front for entrance towards the *Bhavatarini temple* and from the opposite side to exit, towards the Ganga River. If we noticed the array of temples, we could divide it in terms of the left side of the ‘*Bhavatarini temple*’ and the right sided temples. Peoples believed that, these two sides ironically represent the two facing banks of the river. Usually four religious symbols are placed on the top of the entrance door of the twelve temples, like *Lotus* (Padma), *Trident* (trisula) and *Disc* (chakra) and *Snake* (sharpa). Generally, four feet gap have been observed between two temples. These spaces are witnessed the perambulation of the pilgrims. Lord Shiva is venerated inside the Dakhineswar temple with his twelve different forms. These twelve forms usually adored through the lens of “*dadasa jyotirlingas*”. From the left side, the “*shiv mandir*” are denoted as their distinctive designations namely – “*joggeswar*”, “*jaleswar*”, “*jagadishwar*”, “*nageswar*”, “*nandiswar*” and “*nareswar*”. Right sided temples are famous as – “*jogeswar*”, “*ratneswar*”, “*jotileswar*”, “*nokuleswar*”, “*adarsha*” and “*nirjone*”. ‘*Jyotirlingam*’, is a devotional representation of the Supreme God Shiva. The twelve jyotirlinga are:- Somnath in Gir Somnath, Gujarat; Mallikarjuna in Srisailam, Andhra Pradesh; Mahakaleswar in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh; Omkareshwar in Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh; Kedarnath in Rudraprayag, Uttarakhand; Bhimashankar in Maharashtra; Vishwanath in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh; Trimbakeswar in Nashik, Maharashtra; Baidyanath in Deogarh, Jharkhand;

Nageshvara in Dwarka, Gujarat; Ramanathaswamy in Rameshwaram, Tamil Nadu; Grishneshwar in Ellora, Maharashtra. (Bansal, 2012) ^[5]. Dakhineswar temple exhibits mainly “*aat-chala*” pattern on the architecture for different Shiv temples with unique names and symbols. Aat-Chala or aat-Chala (“eight eaves”), is a style of temple architecture that arose in Bengal (McCutchen, 1972). The base structure is similar to the four-sided char-Chala temple style, but with a small replica of the base temple on top. If the roof of a char-Chala temple is truncated and a miniature duplicate char-Chala temple is added on it, then it becomes an at-Chala temple as depicted in picture - 4. As the architecture of the at-Chala temple became common, the decorative arrangements of terracotta panels on the facade also became standardized, allowing artisans to build hundreds of fairly similar at-Chala temples in this region. Although both architecture and decoration of the temples became similar, it was sufficiently complex to allow both patrons and artisans to experiment and innovate. (Guha, 2012) ^[13].

3.1. Nat Mandir

Nat mandir is situated at the northern part of the “mula mandir”. The nostalgic stout rafters and beams are always ready to welcoming the visitors. These are magnificently hold the entire infrastructure of that area. Nat mandir has have an especial sacred prominence in the temple architecture. Devotees can unswervingly perceive the idol of the temple from that part. Six hanging tube lights and ceiling fans are always giving pleasure to the pilgrims. 50ft length and 75ft width, these 16 pillared structures with a roof is an open hall which serves the purpose for many religious discourses and spiritual songs as well (Sen, 2010) ^[32]. In terms of the structure, the ‘nat mandir’ and the ‘radha-krishna mandir’ are identical to each other but the size and decorations may vary (Mangaonkar, 2012) ^[22]. A place for sacred sacrifice to the south of this nat mandir enhance the beauty of the temple. Various religious songs like kali katha, bhajan kirtan, kali gaan and many more things are performed over here.



Fig 6: The flat roofed ‘nat mandir’ is situated in the temple courtyard

3.4. Mula mandir

The ‘Kali Temple’ of Dakhineswar, is an example of “Navaratna style”. It is reflected the ‘ratna’ style of Bengal architecture and follows the basic guidelines of Hindu “vastu sastra”. Due to the scarcity of appropriate stones at

the nearest alluvial sites, the masonry group had had to accumulate other possible materials instead of stone. Their mind set gave rise to using terracotta as a medium for temple construction. Terracotta exteriors with rich carvings are one of the unique features of Bengali temples (Kramrisch, 1946) ^[18]. It is a structure designed to bring human beings and gods together, using various symbols to express the faith and ideas of architecture in Hinduism. A courtyard of Hindu temple displays the synchronization of the beauty of architecture, religious faith, the auspicious actions and cultural values of devotees towards God. A person explicitly touches the sacred place to perceive the blessings of deities by means of theological truth.

The temple is three-storeyed south faced and the nine spires of the temple are distributed with two upper divisions. The three-storey building is dominated by the colour beige with a contrasting maroon as the traditional burned brick, to enhance beauty. The main temple or “Mula Mandir” has three parts i.e. the base, chala and the ratna. The base is 8 feet in height and decorated with design of closed-door pattern (Mitra, 2011) ^[24]. This colour combinations make the temple gorgeous. These numerous stairs are denoted as a pathway to reach the almighty altar stair for entering inside the temple. There are three stairs are welcoming the devotees at the middle part of the temple. A narrow-covered balcony has been situated, which serves as an audience-chamber and it is attached with the sanctum. The eight domed pillars on each corner of the floor surrounding the main dome. With fine crafting on the exterior, the arched structure is exhibited at the entrance. An assortment of stairs prompts the essential haven where sits the ideal Bhavatarini (Balakrishnan, 2018).

The middle part of the temple consists with the “garva griha” where the idol of ‘Bhavatarini’ is centrally positioned. Bhavatarini is one of the forenames of *Devi Kalika*, as mentioned in different Hindu scriptures. Inside the temple, devotees could perceive the glory figurine of “*Dakhsina Kali*” as Bhavatarini. In this form Devi helps her devotees to overcome the web of patristic of grief and propel them towards a bank of happiness and liberation.

The middle part is chala consisting with identical decorations. There have five semi-circular open gates in each side with total 20 in number that represent the open accesses to her for redemption from the life. First four ratna installed on the high dome or lower chala and next four installed on the upper chala and the last one of those ratna placed on the top of the temple as well. Some male and female figurines, some animal and flower motifs as well as symbols are engraved to decorate the exterior walls of the temple. The roof of the temple spires has been grooved artistically with a striking resemblance with the “Pida”. The main temple premise is around 46 sq. ft. The nine spires are distributed in the upper two storeys and it stands on a high platform with a flight of stairs (Balakrishnan, 2018).

In general temple architecture may be classified into four groups: chala type- char chala, at chala and baro chala. In the late medieval period, a combination of the Hindu and Muslim architectural features has been developed which was known as ‘*Indo-Islamic style*’. The pancha-ratna and naba-ratna types of superstructures are found only on the flat roofed temples as reflected in picture - 6. There is also another type of temples with the porch (Trivedi, 1989) ^[35]. In case of Bengal temple architecture, ‘the ratna style’ was first introduced in 16th century at the time of Malla dynasty,

moreover this style was predominantly exhibited in Bishnupur, West Bengal (Mangaonkar, 2012^[22]; McCutchen, 1972).



Fig 7: The 'mula mandir' reflecting the 'naba ratna style' or nine pinnacled pattern

4. Security measures

Every religious institution needs a particular and tight security system to maintain their work schedule and control the pilgrim traffic in a proper way. Fire control, water supply and general security are observable as a pillar in this temple. In terms of fire control, Kamarhati municipality provided six fire engines to Dakshineswar temple for entire year. Dakshineswar Kali Temple autonomously appointed the security guards for temple protection and control as well as manage the chaos of pilgrims. Eighty security guards are meticulously performed their regular duty. Total fifty-six CCTV cameras are pointed in several areas of the temple. The Ganga River has an important function in the lens of water logistics. Hindu devotees believed river Ganga has an auspicious impact in terms of rituals and ritualistic activities too. Usually, the Gangetic water have been filtered for cooking and drinking purpose and for rest activities this water is first hand used. The drinking water have been provided at the four corners of the courtyard of the temple and apart from this, ten units of drinking water have been observed in the entire temple plot. Dakshineswar Kali temple spread its own impact beyond a religious entity. Now, it becomes a flow of fresh air to thousands of people, whose daily life are purely depended on this temple. If we looked back a decade ago, there were only a few stalls and shops in front of the main gate of the temple. In 2018, we have confronted the consolidation of modernization and technology, that is 400 meters long and 10.05 meters wide Sky Walk Bridge. The main purpose of this Sky Walk is to connect the rail station or the road side area to the entrance of the temple. The Sky walk have 12 gates along with escalator services to provide the maximum pleasure to visitors and avoid the heavy traffics at the temple area. (KDMA, 2018) Total 126 stalls are situated in a parallel manner at the long Sky walk, out of them only 92 have been inaugurated and rest ones are still under construction. Apart from the Sky walk area, there are 58 shops are located

within the arched area and 4 shops are positioned nearly at the entrance. The stalls which are situated at Sky Walk and Orchard are far from the "Mula Mandir" respectively 250 meters to 300 meters and 70 meters to 100 meters. Different kind of shops are observable at the temple surroundings such as 'sankha- polar dokan' (conch and coral bangles which are specially used by married Bengali Hindu women as an auspicious symbol of marriage), pickle shop, numerous shops of 'puja samagri' (worship materials), hat shop, food stalls, sweet shop along with some stores of various showpieces and some people also sell the religious photographs. Beside all these stores and shops, numerous hawkers could be recognized with their selling products. Recently 4 counters are open for garnering leather elements like wallet, belt and many more. All these counters are inaugurated at the opening time of the Sky Walk.



Fig 8: The newly inaugurated skywalk

Home is meaningless without the presence of homemaker as every temple is pointless in short of the splendour of their deity. Dakshineswar temple mainly famous as "Kali Temple" whereas, the magnificent presence of Lord Shiva, Lord Krishna and Radha with their soul saint Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi are boldly observable. It is really hard to understand the typical form of architecture of this temple. At present scenario, the luxurious Sky Walk is ready to welcoming us and the 'Shingha Duar' is the main gate to enter the sacred temple area. We should get various facilities to make ourselves comfortable like car parking zone, waiting room, washrooms and numerous shops etc. In West Bengal, there are mainly hut style, ratna style and dome shaped temples are prevalent. In case of this temple, the 'mula mandir' or 'the Bhavatarini mandir' displayed the dominant naba-ratna style, Shiva mandirs are expressed At-Chala style, Krishna temple and Nat mandir both of them represented the style of flat roof temple. As per David McCutcheon (1972), Ratna or towered structure mainly influenced by Indo-Islamic architectural form as followed after late medieval period. Therefore, the flat roof architecture primarily inspired by the European style of architecture which was monitored specially in Bengal temples after 18th century. Last but not the least, the 12 Shiva temple are exhibited the typical hut style as At-Chala form (Akhter, 2015). In a concise way, we can easily say that, this temple is still witnessing the Islamic impact,

European culture and local masonry work of Bengal (Akther, 2015) ^[2].

A Hindu temple is an otherworldly goal for some Hindus, just as tourist spots around which old expressions, network festivities and economy have prospered. A sanctuary consolidates all components of Hindu universe—showing the great, the malice and the human, just as the components of Hindu feeling of cyclic time and the pith of life—emblematically exhibiting *dharma*, *Kama*, *artha*, *moksha*, and *karma*. The otherworldly standards emblematically spoke to in Hindu sanctuaries are given in the antiquated Sanskrit writings of India (for instance, Vedas and Upanishads), while their basic principles are portrayed in different old Sanskrit treatises on engineering (Brihat Samhita, Vastu Sastras). The format, the themes, the arrangement and the structure procedure present antiquated ceremonies, geometric imageries, and reflect convictions and qualities intrinsic inside different schools of Hinduism (Kramrisch, 1946) ^[18].

5. Conclusion

Dakhineswar Kali temple, a single temple architecture exhibited the various cultural admixture and also the reflection of time. This is an attempt to understand the aesthetics of temple architecture. An architecture expressed the different pages of history and Indian historic times. In this temple, various pillars exposed numerous cultural assimilations. As India is famous for “unity in diversity”, there is no exception on Dakhineswar temple. Millions of people visited regularly just to seeking the mental peace. As per different religious approaches, the ritualistic behaviour of the devotees may vary but at the end of the day their destiny is remain same – emancipation from life.

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