

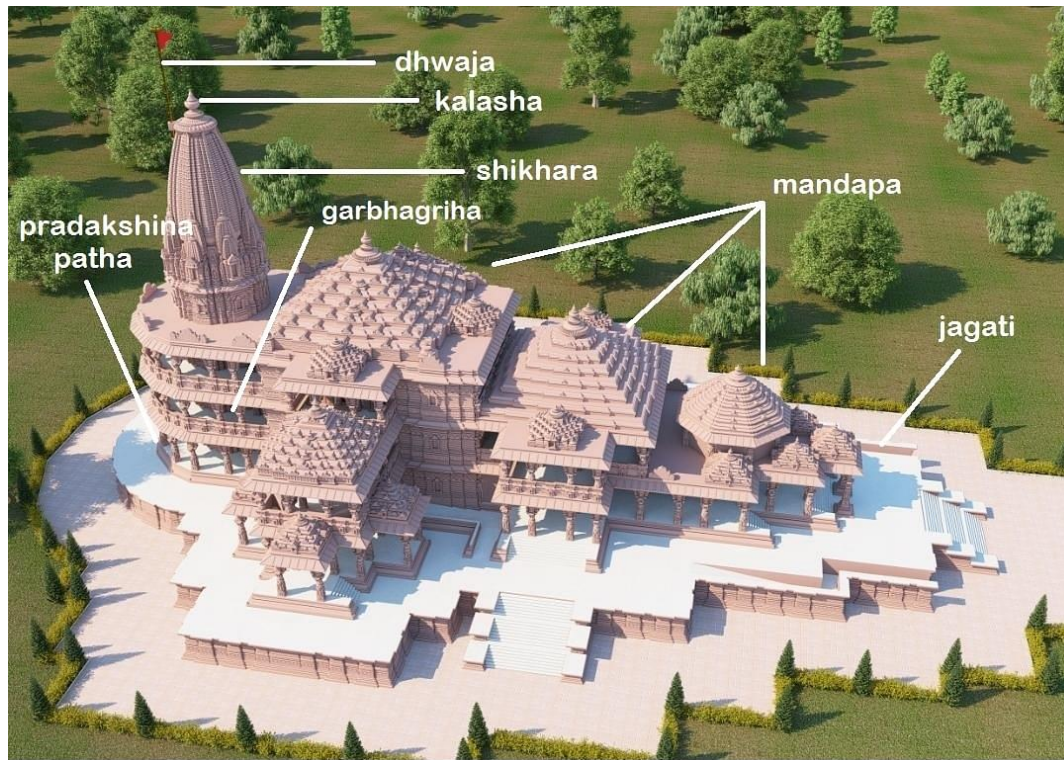
## Nagara Temple Architecture

By IAS Toppers | 2024-01-23 15:15:00



### Nagara Temple Architecture

The recently inaugurated Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya is designed in the Nagara style of temple architecture.



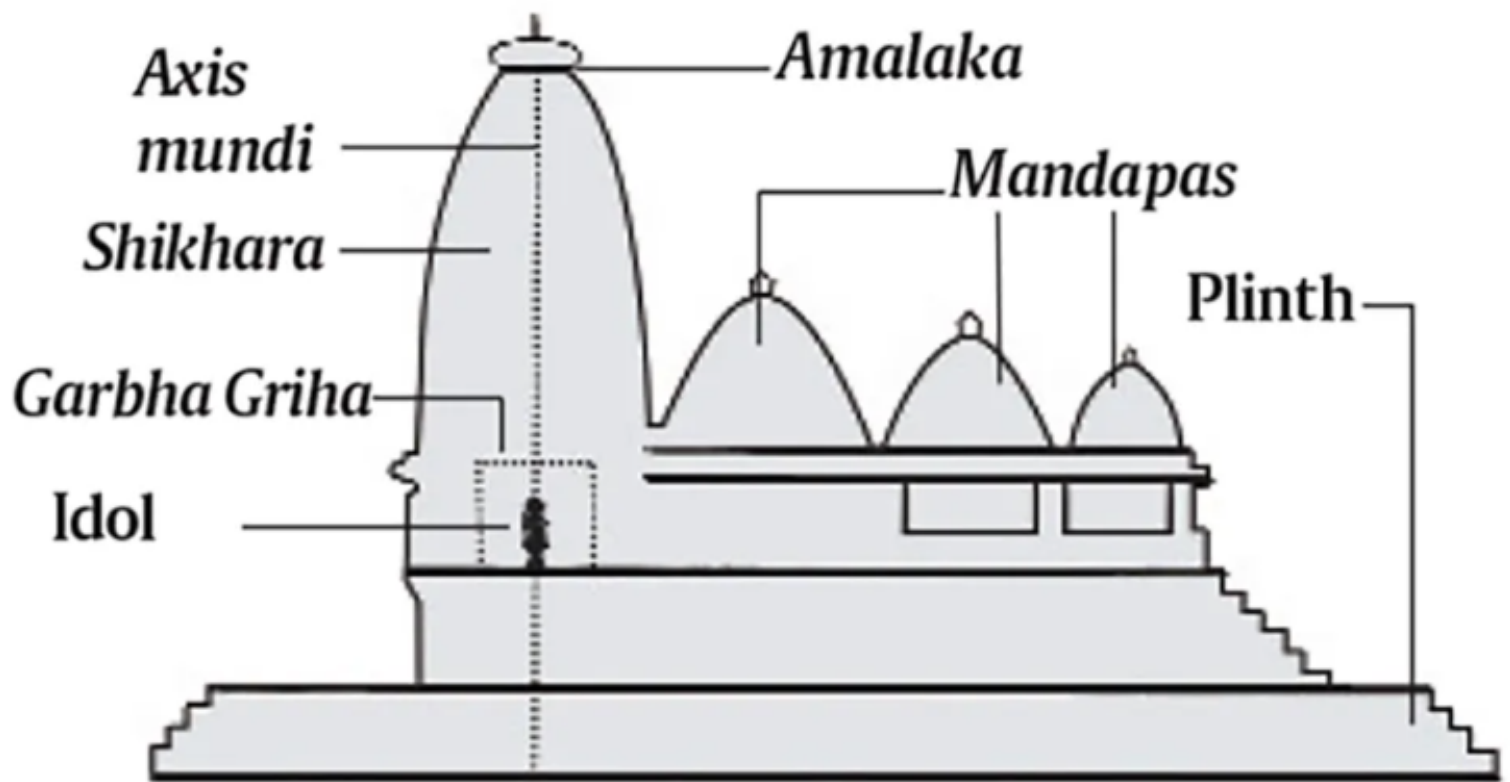
[Ref: Swarajya]

### **About Nagara Architecture:**

- Nagara architecture originated in the **5th century CE**, during the late Gupta period in Northern India.
- It is often considered alongside the **Dravida style from Southern India**, with both styles emerging around the same period.
- Nagara architecture is described as a "**language**" of architecture, comprising a comprehensive vocabulary and grammar for design.
- It is notable for its distinct **shikhara** (mountain peak-like structure) over the **sanctum sanctorum**.
- A typical Nagara temple includes a circumambulatory passage and **one or more mandapas** (halls).

### **Features of Nagara Style:**

# BASICS OF THE NAGARA STYLE



Based on sketches from E B Havell's *The Ancient and Medieval Architecture of India*, 1915. Not a visual representation of Ayodhya's Ram temple.

[Ref: Indian Express]

## Foundation and Structure

- The **plan** of Nagara temples is typically **four-sided**, featuring a **square garbhagriha** (sanctum sanctorum).
- These structures are elevated on a **high platform (jagati)** and supported by a smaller base (**adhithana**).
- The overall **temple plan** can be **oblong**, with the addition of **mandapas** and **circumambulatory paths** in later developments.
- **Notable elements** include **bhadra**, **sirsa**, **amalaka**, **bijapuraka**, and **rathika**.

## Evolution of Temple Roof

- Initially, Nagara temples featured **flat roofs**.



- Over time, the roofs evolved into a **pyramidal shape**, forming the distinctive **shikhara**.
- The **shikhara** is a **tall, tapering spire**, a hallmark of Nagara temple architecture.

### Interior and Exterior Design

- The **garbhagriha** houses the **deity's image or idol**.
- **Mandapa**: This is the **pathway leading to the garbhagriha**, where worshippers gather.
- **Pradakshinapatha**: A **circumambulatory path** surrounding the garbhagriha.
- **Gavaksha**: Windows added for **cross ventilation and light**.

### Decoration and Carvings

- The temples are **intricately ornamented** with **carvings and sculptures**.
- The **temple entrance** is adorned with **images of gods, goddesses**, and **geometric designs**.
- Depictions of **dvarapalas, Ganga, and Yamuna** are often found at the **door frame's base**.
- The **walls and pillars** feature sculptures of **devakanyas, apsaras, yaksas, yaksis**, and **floral garlands**.

### ***Difference between Nagara Style and Dravida Style:***

|                                   | <b>Nagara Style</b>   | <b>Dravida Style</b>  |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Origin and Time Period</b>     | Emerged around the 5th century CE in northern India.  | Simultaneously emerged in southern India during the same period.  |
| <b>Basic Structure</b>            | Built on a raised plinth with the <b>garbha griha</b> (sanctum sanctorum) as the sacred center.           | Typically includes a <b>vimana</b> (tower over the sanctum), smaller than the <b>gopurams</b> (gatehouses). |
| <b>Key Architectural Feature</b>  | Distinguished by a towering <b>shikhara</b> (mountain peak-like structure) over the <b>garbha griha</b> . | Vimanas are key features, with <b>gopurams</b> being more striking; vimanas are smaller than gopurams.      |
| <b>Sub-Styles</b>                 | Includes <b>Valabhi, Phamsana, Latina, Shekhari</b> , and <b>Bhumija</b> .                                | A variety of sub-styles with distinctive features, but less categorically divided than Nagara.              |
| <b>Boundary Walls</b>             | Few temples have distinctive boundary walls as part of the design.  | Often have elaborate boundary walls as part of the temple complex.  |
| <b>Temple Complex Features</b>    | Often includes a <b>circumambulatory passage</b> and one or more <b>mandapas</b> (halls).                 | Features like water tanks, step tanks (like the suryakund), and often more expansive complexes.             |
| <b>Iconography and Decoration</b> | Elaborate murals and reliefs often adorn the walls, with a focus on narrative sculptures.                 | Both interior and exterior walls lavishly decorated, with a focus on sculptures and intricate carvings.     |

## Shikharas/Vimanas

Shikharas represent mountains and cosmic order; various types like Latina, Phamsana, etc.

Vimanas are smaller than gopurams; the **dome-shaped crowning cap** atop the vimana is distinct.