



A Study Of Temple Architecture Development In Central And South Kashmir

Ausif Bashir Malik Research Scholar, Department of History Central University of Karnataka, India. Email: ausifmalik2017@gmail.com

Abstract:

Kashmir is full of archaeological interest right since ancient period. There are network of Hindu temples spread through the length and Breadth in the Valley. In this paper, I have highlighted important Temples of Central and South Kashmir like Sankaracarya temple, Loduv temple, Awantipora temple, Matand temple, Pandrethan temple, Narasthan temple. The unique features in terms of style, material, design and methods of construction have also been discussed. "The features of Kashmirian architecture are its lofty pyramidal roofs, its trefoiled doorways, covered by pyramidal pediments and the great width of its inter-columinations. The echinos, which is the leading feature of the Kashmirian capital, is also the chief member of the Doric capital. The Kashmiri architects borrowed the style from the Indo-Greeks.

Keywords: Kashmir, Architecture, Temples, Stone.

Introduction

The Jammu and Kashmir is situated at an average height of 6000 feet above the sea level north, east and west range after range of mountains guard the valley from the outer world. Kashmir for an artist presents natures loveliest and most sublime sceneries; to a geologist many abstruse and still undiscovered problems of strata and foliation; to a botanist a large field of still unclassified flora; to an ethnologist and philologist a puzzling inhabitant and language; last but not least, to the sportsman one of the best hunting grounds for large game in the whole world.¹ Kashmir is full of archaeological interest right since ancient times.² No structural monuments which can be said belong to the pre-Christian era have yet been discovered in Kashmir; the only monuments which can certainty be assigned to the Kushan period being the Buddhist structures at Harwan and Ushkar. The second and far most numerous group of buildings belonging to this style are Hindu temples. The temple architecture of Kashmir is unique in its form in comparison with temples in other parts of Subcontinent. The blocks of stone masonry in temples of Kashmir are more massive than

¹ CT. Malik Ausif. British Residency in Kashmir; A study of Socio-Economic and Political Impact, Shodh Ganga, p.1.

² Ganaie, N. A. (2015). Naya Kashmir, land reforms and colonialism in Jammu and Kashmir, a study of national conference and its implications on the identity of state. International Journal of Applied Research, 1(13), 565–569.

those used in rest of India.³According to Percy Brown, “Of all the arts practiced by the people of the Valley in the pre-islamic period, the building art was one in which they were notably proficient, as the remains of their large monuments in stone are a standing proof.” The Shankar Acharya temple,,Martand Temple, Avantipora temple are built of lime stone.⁴ These lime stones were brought from Zewan and Dachigam nala. Bricks and wood were not used. However, Mortar was used in less quantity. The figures or sculptures in all the ancient Hindu temples of Kashmir are always in an erect position, without any inscription.⁵ Mostly figures of Hindu Gods and Goddesses were engraved like: Shiva, Vishnu, Ganga, Yamana and Kamdev. While in two temples of Avantipora figures of King Avantivarman and his family members were engraved on some stones.⁶

The features of Kashmirian architecture are its lofty pyramidal roofs, its trefoiled doorways, covered by pyramidal pediments and the great width of its inter-columniations. The echinos, which is the leading feature of the Kashmirian capital, is also the chief member of the Doric capital. The Kashmiri architects borrowed the style from the Indo-Greeks. The superiority of architecture of Kashmir have been known all over India. One wonders how in those ancient days massive stones were lifted and laid in position with great precision on the heights of the temples. But Kashmiris appear to have known the science and laws of mechanics then, as they used yantras or machines, in lifting up enormously bulky and heavy stones.⁷ The earliest architecture temples of the Kashmir are as follows.

SANKARACARYA TEMPLE

According to Rajtarangini, the temple was first built by Jaluka, the son of Mauryan Ashoka about 200 BC. The temple was rebuilt and dedicated to Jyesthesvara by Gopaditya who ruled from 253-328 AD.⁸ The body of the temple is surrounded by a terrace enclosed by a low wall. The terrace surrounding the temple is reached by three flights of steps. The interior is a chamber, circular in plan, with a basin containing a lingam. The whole of the building is of stone, which is laid in horizontal courses. The style of the temple represented in the accompanying photographs and plan, reproduces itself throughout in all the Hindu Kashmirian buildings.⁹

Temple at Loduv

³ Kak R.C; Ancient monuments of Kashmir, Sagar Pub; Delhi 1971, p.64

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Shafi, Zahoor Qazi, Farooqi; Europeans in Kashmir, Summit Pub;Srinagar,1998, P.238.

⁶ Koul Manohar; Kashmir Hindu, Budhist and Muslim architecture, Sagar Pub.Delhi,1971,p.27.

⁷ Imperial Gazetteer of India, Kashmir and Jammu,Calcutta,1909.P,29

⁸ Ganaie N. A. (2021). Social Movements that Led to Social Transformation in Jammu and Kashmir During the British Rule. Current Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 4(2), pp. 164-171.

⁹ Kalhana, Rajatarangini, A chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir, trans. Stein.M.A,VOL.II,Archibald Constable and Company, p.289.

The temple is located in the Loduv village of Pulwama District of Kashmir. The ground plan of the temple is 24 square feet. The interior of the temple is circular in arrangement whereas the external portion is square in shape. It is a shiva temple. The roof of the temple are sharp and straight. The basement of the temple stands 48 square, faced with stone walls forming a sort of lower basement. There is an ancient lingam of dark limestone. Loduv temple represents some Kashmiri features like trefoil niche, rounded projecting stone courses along the base and elevated platform.¹⁰

The temple is neither mentioned by Kalhana nor in any Chinese sources. Its first description has been given by Vinge and Courie in 1866.¹¹

Awantipora temples.

The architectural trends of Karkota reached a logical culmination in next generation under Utpalas. The two temples Avantisvara and Avantisvami built by Avantivarman are still extant, adorned the city of Awantipora. The Avantisvara temple is a Shiva temple. It is situated in a courtyard enclosed by massive stone wall, the western face which is adorned externally with row of fluted columns but without any recesses behind. The gateway is in the middle of this wall, and is divided into two chambers by a cross wall.

There is a larger assortment of architectural fragments strewn in the courtyard, the most interesting are:

- i. The spandrel of an arch in front of southern stair.
- ii. The flower and vase capital of a dodecagonal pilaster.
- iii. The spandrel of another arch by its side.
- iv. The base of a pilaster decorated with two seated rams and a dancing girl who plays upon a damaru (small hand drum), standing on a throne ornamented with two lions at the sides and an elephant, facing in the middle.¹²

Avantisvami Temple.

The edifice comprises a colonnaded peristyle and enclosing a paved courtyard in the Centre of which is the main shrine, built on a double base with four smaller shrines at four corners. The peristyle is comparatively plain externally except on the west side, which has a row of fluted columns. The only decoration on the other three sides is a rectangular string-course and pilasters enclosing rectangular spaces, corresponding respectively with the cyma

¹⁰ Kak R.C; Ancient monuments of Kashmir, Sagar Pub; Delhi 1971, p.117.

¹¹ Light up temples.com.

¹² Kak R.C; Ancient monuments of Kashmir, Sagar Pub; Delhi 1971, pp.120-121.

rectacornice of the plinth and the cells inside.¹³ The entrance, which is in the middle of the west wall, is divided by a cross wall into two chambers and is approached by a flight of steps bounded on either side by a plain rail and a side wall. The front pilasters of the side-walls bear figure of Vishnu and of his consorts carved in relief.¹⁴

The wall surface of the entrance is both externally and internally ornamented profusely with sculptured reliefs. According to Kalhana Avantivami temple was occasionally subjected to sacrilegious treatment even in Hindu times. Kalasa who ruled from (1081-1089 AD) confiscated the villages which formed its endowments. Bhasa, a commander of Jayasimha who ruled 1128 AD. Was besieged at Avantipura by Damaras of Vular District.¹⁵

Martand:

The temple of Martand or commonly called as Pandu-Koru or house of Pandus and Korus are situated on the highest part of a karewa about 3 miles east of Anantanag.

It is most impressive and grandest of all temples in Kashmir. According to Cunningham the temple was dedicated to the Sun, Mattan being but a corruption of the Sanskrit Martand or the Sun. The large temple dedicated to the Sun was erected by Arya Raja (360-383 AD). According to Rajatarangini the colonnades was built by Lalitaditya who ruled from 693-729 AD, the character of the fluted columns would lead to the supposition that the architects of Kashmir had been influenced by Greco Bacteriaus.¹⁶

The mass of buildings consist of one lofty central edifice with a small detached wing on each side of the entrance, the whole standing in a large quadrangle, surrounded by a colonnade of fluted pillars with intervening trefoil headed recesses. There are eighty-four columns. The central building is the most imposing structure and above all has in addition to the cella or sanctuary, a nave 18 feet square.

The temple is 60 feet long and 38 feet wide, its height, where complete must have been 75 feet. The courtyard that surrounds and encloses the temple, is more remarkable than the temple itself.¹⁷

Pandrethan

The name Pandrethan is derived from "Puranaadhisthana" which means old capital. Dr.Elmslie supposes the name derived from Pandu and Durendun, father of Pandus.

¹³ Ganaie, N. A. (2015). Hindu Socio-Religious Reform Movements in Jammu and Kashmir: Pre-independence phase. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 3(7), 94–99.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.125.

¹⁶ Illustrations of Ancient Buildings in Kashmir, London.p,20.

¹⁷ Ibid.

According to Rajatarangini a minister named Meru, erected a temple called Sri-Meru-Vardhana-Swami at Pandrethan and the building occurred between the years 913 and 921 AD.¹⁸ The temple is 18 feet square with projecting portico on each side and displays a confused exuberance of decoration, more especially the repetition of pediment within trefoil. The domed roof is well worth inspection, being covered with sculptures of classic design.¹⁹

Narasthan:

The temple is about 35 miles from Srinagar. The date of the temple is uncertain, but belongs to the group described earlier, with the addition of an enclosure wall and imposing gateways. The temple stands in a walled enclosure about 65 feet square. The main entrance is on the west through an imposing portico; the outer portal is arched, the pediment possessing the usual characteristics of the Aryan order of architecture.²⁰ The outer vestibule measures eight feet by four feet; in the middle is a square gateway opening into a second vestibule of rather larger dimensions. The inner entrance is a square gateway $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet high by $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide supported by pillars. Both this and the middle gateway of the north seem to have been fitted with stone doors. The inside chamber is $8\frac{1}{2}$ feet square; the walls are blank, with the exception of a small arched recess on the south side of the entrance. The flooring is of stone which has given way in the Centre, where probably the image of Vishnu stood. About 8 feet from the ground there is a cornice, from which the roof seems to have tapered to a point, the walls are now standing to a height of 24 feet and the pinnacle was probably built about ten feet higher.²¹

Conclusion

The conclusion that I reach on the basis of remarks made above is that the ancient Hindu temple architecture of Kashmir represented a tradition of its own. The Karokota and Utpala rulers erected many magnificent temples like the temples erected by Lalitaditya and Avantivarman are still present in ruined form. These temples possess some unique features as compared to other parts of India, because the ancient Kashmiri architects used many own styles, designs and techniques as well as local material from base to the top for the construction of their temples. The features of Kashmirian architecture are its lofty pyramidal roofs, its trefoiled doorways, covered by pyramidal pediments and the great width of its inter-columinations. The echinos, which is the leading feature of the Kashmirian capital, is also the chief member of the Doric capital. The Kashmiri architects borrowed the style from the Indo-Greek.

¹⁸ Ibid, p.29.

¹⁹ Bamzai, P.N.K. A history of Kashmir, p.349.

²⁰ Kak R.C; Ancient monuments of Kashmir, Sagar Pub; Delhi1971, p.128.

²¹ Bamzai, P.N.K. A history of Kashmir, p.344.