

INDIAN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE: A CASE STUDY OF JAMMU TEMPLES

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1. ABSTRACT: The state of Jammu and Kashmir is known for its panoramic views i.e. tourism aspects as it is full of nature's bounties. The Architecture of the region is nevertheless not too far behind. Indeed, the Architecture of Jammu & Kashmir is as marvellous as the Indian Architecture has been over the years. Reason for this is obviously the time line of the state under so many rulers & dynasties. Indian architecture for its historical essence & importance has occupied a special place in world architecture which is a driving force in attracting so many tourists every year. Obviously, when we talk of Indian architecture or Jammu architecture it has to be the secular architecture i.e. Temple or Mosque architecture pre-dominantly. Here is a small attempt from our side to bring into limelight various architectural icons of the region; for the time being from Jammu province only.

Keywords: Temple, Architecture, Jammu, India, Tourism, Ruler.

2. INTRODUCTION: Jammu is the largest city in the Jammu Division and the winter capital of state of Jammu and Kashmir. It is situated on the banks of Tawi River.

2.1 Locational Aspects: Jammu is located at 32.73°N 74.87°E. It has an average elevation of 327 m (1,073 ft). Jammu city lies at uneven ridges of low heights at the Shivalik hills. It is surrounded by Shivalik range to the north, east and southeast while the Trikuta Range surrounds it in the north-west. It is approximately 600 kilometres (370 miles) from the National capital, New Delhi. The city spreads around the Tawi river with the old city overlooking it from the north (right bank) while the new neighbourhoods spread around the southern side (left bank) of river. There are four bridges on the river. The city is built on a series of ridges.



3. HISTORY of JAMMU: Many historians and locals believe that Jammu was founded by Raja Jambu Lochan in the 14th century BCE, during his hunting campaign when he saw a goat and a lion drinking water together at river Tawi. The Raja was amazed, abandoned the idea of hunting. The Raja commanded that a palace be built at this place and he exclaimed that this place, where a lion and a lamb could drink water side by side, was a place of peace and tranquillity. Pertinently, a city was founded around it. This city became known as Jambu-Nagar, which then later changed into Jammu.

Once a seat of the Dogra Rajput dynasty, Jammu came under the control of Maharaja Ranjit Singh Ji in the 19th century and became a part of the Sikh Empire. Maharaja Ranjit Singh soon appointed Gulab Singh Ji the ruler of Jammu.

In 1846, as a result of the First Anglo-Sikh War, the Sikh Empire was defeated by the British. Not having the resources to occupy the hills immediately after annexing parts of Punjab, the British recognised Maharaja Gulab Singh, the strongest ruler north of the Sutlej River, as ruler of Jammu and Kashmir. The Treat of Amrtisar, 1846 was signed after he had to pay a sum of Nanakshahi Rupees 75 Lacs, paid in cash—this payment being legal as the Maharaja was a former vassal of the Sikh Empire and was partly responsible for its treaty obligations. Maharaja Gulab Singh is thus credited as the founder of Jammu and Kashmir.

During the partition of India, the ruler was Maharaja Hari Singh and he along with all the other princes, was given the choice according to the instruments of partition of India in 1947, to freely accede to either India or Pakistan, or to remain independent. The princes were advised to accede to the contiguous dominion, taking into consideration the geographical and ethnic issues.

4. JAMMU TODAY: Jammu is one of the three administrative divisions within Jammu and

Kashmir, the northernmost state in India. It consists of the districts of Doda, Kathua, Jammu, Udhampur, Rajouri, Ramban, Reasi, Samba, Kishtwar and Poonch. Most of



the land is hilly or mountainous, including the Pir Panjal range which separates it from the Kashmir Valley and part of the Great Himalayas in the eastern districts of Doda and Kishtwar. Its principal river is the Chenab. Home to some of India's most popular Hindu shrines, such as Vaishno Devi, Jammu is a major pilgrimage centre for Hindus. The majority

of Jammu's population practices Hinduism while Islam and Sikhism enjoy a strong cultural heritage in the region. Due to relatively better infrastructure, Jammu has emerged as the main economic centre of the state

5. TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE OF JAMMU: The name of Jammu is associated with a cluster of magnificent temples. Jammu province has a variety of new and old sacred shrines. The ancient temples of Jammu speak of its ancient glorious past. The ancient temples of Jammu are broadly of two types viz Shikara and Pahari style. The Shikara style consists of a cella, a Mandapa and a porch. A spire surmounts the cella and the Mandapa is covered with a low pyramid shaped roof e.g. The temples at Kirmachi and Bhillarwar. are some of the shrines raised in the typical pahari style. The pahari style connotes the timber bonded stonewalls and the stanting roof covered by shingles. These temples are of vertical construction having Varandah (circumbulatory path around the cella). Common feature of all these temples is the exquisite woodcarvings. e.g. The temples at Daddu, Basant Garh and Gulabgarh. Among the ancient stone temples at Jammu are the historical temples at Kirmachi, Bhillarwar, Basohli, Sud Mahadev, Babor and Ladan Kotli.

6. EXPLANATION: The ancient temples of Jammu show the sangam of Kashmiri and Himachali Building style. It also reveals certain distinctive peculiarities of plan and elevations. Built of mammoth boulders with missionary works, these temples are indeed a marvel. Let me throw some light on few of these; as follows:

6.1 Raghunath Temple: Amongst the temples in Jammu, the Raghunath Temple takes pride of place being situated right in the heart of the city. Work on the temple was started by Maharaja Gulab Singh, founder of the Kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir, in 1835 AD and was completed by his son Maharaja Ranbir Singh in 1860 AD. The inner walls of the main temple are covered with gold sheet on three sides. This temple consists of seven shrines, each with a tower of its own. It is the largest temple complex in northern India. Though 130 years old, Its arches, surface and niches are undoubtedly influenced by Mughal architecture while the interiors of the temple are plated with gold.



6.2 Bahu temple - Bahu Fort, which also serves as a religious temple, is situated about 5 km from Jammu city on a rock face on the left bank of the river Tawi. This is perhaps the oldest

fort and edifice in Jammu city. Constructed originally by Raja Bahulochan over 300 years ago, the fort was improved and rebuilt by **Dogra rulers**. Inside the fort, there is a temple dedicated to the Goddess Kali, popularly known as **Bave Wali Mata**, the presiding deity of Jammu In Jammu the most famous

among the forts is Bahu fort. This fort is situated on the left bank of River Tawi. A famous Mahakali temple is situated in the premises of the fort. ***Built on a 4 ft high platform this temple is made up of white marble.*** As per some scholars it dates back to 8-9th



century but the construction above the plinth appears to be modern

6.3 Kirmachi - 64, Kms from Jammu and about 9 kms from Udhampur is located Kirmachi village. Though virtually unknown to the outside world, this village boasts of a unique Architectural treasure. Kirmachi held an important place in the past. The four elegant and imposing temples can ascertain this.

The interesting feature of the architecture of these temples is the culmination of Pagoda and Gandhara style of construction. The temples of Kirmachi show close resemblance with the Shikara temples of Himachal. The outer walls of the temples are embellished with profuse sculptured reliefs. The main entrance of the

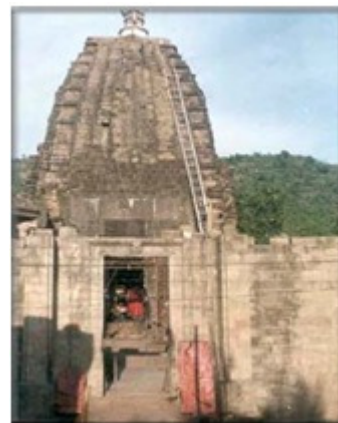


bigger temple has columns, decorated with flowers, leaves and miniature figures. e.g. the three headed Shiva and Varah Avtara. The sculptured stones show the excellence in the field of art. The temples of Kirmachi still stood letting time to move ahead gently.

6.4 Landan Kotli - About 5kms from Udhampur is a small village of Landan Kotli. The only ancient monument standing at Landan Kotli is a temple. The Temple called Jalandharia Devi temple is in Shikara style. In front of the temple is a stone lined spring containing limpid

water. The temple is of great interest in view of the fact that it is the only temple in the Jammu province showing erotic scenes on the outer sculptured walls.

6.5 Bhillawar - 120 kms from Jammu is a small town of Bhillawar. This place held an important place in the past. From the past there had been political and cultural relations between Kashmir & Bhillawar. An ancient temple called Hari Hara temple, built in Shikara style on a three feet high platform is about 70 feet high. The temple has Garbgriha and mandapa, which has now fallen. The exterior spire of the temple is ornamented with lotus petals. Many sculptured stones are scattered around the temple, including a bull of stone.



6.6 Basohli - About 123 kms from Jammu is a famous town of Basohli. Basohli is famous world wide for Basohli painting. On the bank of River Ravi is a Shiva temple. Two rock cut caves are also seen on the bank of Ravi. In one of the caves is a life size image. A Shiva Linga and the idol of mother Goddess are seen in one of the caves.

6.7 Sud Mahadev - is a sacred Hindu site. According to the mythological belief, marriage of Shivji and Parvati was held here. The present temple at Sud Mahadev is a Dogra construction. In the courtyard of this temple is a trident of ancient date, on which is the inscription in Brahmi. According to some scholars, this trident dates back to 2-3 century A.D. In one of the niches of this temple are the images of "Shiva and Parvati.

6.8 Babor - About 45 kms from Jammu and about 5 kms from Mansar are two hamlets of Babor and Thalwara. Temple of Kali Devi at Babor is still standing the ravages of time; built on a high platform, the temple is square internal. Temple is sculpted from top to bottom. Base of the temple is decorated with leaf patterns. On the right side of the entrance is an image of goddess Ganga and on the left side is a disfigured image. Roof of the temple is made up of stone blocks. Another temple, Kaladhera, stands near the Kali Devi temple. The Garbgraha and mandapa of this temple was erected on pillars. Now the temple is in ruins. On the Southern side of this temple are the ruins of a Shiva temple. Among the sculptured stones scattered here are the images of Lord Shiva, dancers and musicians.

6.9 Peer Kho Cave - Alongside the same Tawi river are the Peer Kho Cave temple, the Panchbakhtar temple and the Ranbireshwar temple dedicated to Lord Shiva with their own legends and specific days of worship. Peer Kho cave is located on the bank of river Tawi and it is widely believed that Ramayan character Jamvant (the bear god) meditated in this cave.

The Ranbireshwar Temple has twelve Shiva lingams of crystal measuring 12" to 18" and galleries with thousands of saligrams fixed on stone slabs. built by Maharaja Ranbir Singh in 1883 AD.

7. CONCLUSION: This becomes clear to the mind that places of worship notably temple were the hub of educational and political activities in ancient times. The main point, which needs to be driven to the mind of everybody, is that it captivates everybody who happens to observe it. Though, I haven't touched the Kashmir part of temple & mosque architecture which is indeed even more glorifying, still My idea of emphasising the temple architecture of the region is to call on the administrators to rejuvenate & preserve these marvellous temple of Jammu region by making them the part of main tourist circuit like Raghunath Temple (due to its location). By doing this, this tourism gracious state can add another feather on its economy & additionally, it will add a great deal to enrich & spread the tones of ancient temple Architecture worldwide. The call of the time is that we must preserve our ancient monuments (ASI has taken over the Kirmachi group of temples) so that we could proclaim with the beat of drum that our past was great and illuminating.

8. REFERENCES

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