

Shiva worship in Jammu region

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 13 September 2021

Keywords

Sculpture, Representation, Plinth, Inscription and Script

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ABSTRACT

Shiva is prominently worshipped in entire Jammu region. This paper shows the forms of Shiva worshipping in Jammu region from ancient times. It gives the reference of different places and monuments where the worshipping of Shiva has been taken place. The manmade icons of Shiva are described in this paper.

Introduction

Shiva is also known as Mahadeva. Shaivism is the one of the major traditions of Hinduismⁱ. The pre-Vedic roots too mentioned about Shiva. The Sakta Pithas and the combination of various older non vedicⁱⁱ and vedic deities, including the Rigvedic storm god Rudra who may also have non-vedic origins into a single major deityⁱⁱⁱ.

Within the Trimurti the Hindu trinity which includes Brahma and Vishnu^{iv}, Shiva is known as “the Destroyer”. According to Shaivite tradition, Shiva is the ultimate who creates, protects and transforms the universe^v. According to Shakta tradition, the Goddess or Devi is described as one of the supreme although Shiva is worshipped along with Vishnu and Brahma. A goddess is stated to be the energy and creative power (Shakti) of each, with Parvati the equal complementary partner of Shiva. He is one of the five corresponding deities in Panchayatna puja of the Smarta tradition of Hinduism.

Shiva is the primeval atman of the universe. Both benevolent and fearsome depictions of Shiva are present. In his benevolent aspects he is an omniscient yogi who lives an ascetic life on Mount Kailash along with living a house holder life along with wife Parvati and his two children Ganesha and Kartikey. He is depicted as slaying demons in his fierce aspect. Shiva is also known as Adi-Yogi Shiva. He is also a patron god of yoga, meditation and arts.

There is no place in Jammu where there is no shrine or monument dedicated or associated with Shiva. It shows the popularity and devotion of people of Jammu region towards Shiva. Many fairs and festivals too celebrated in the name of Shiva and most prominent is Shivratri.

Kameshwar temple, Akhnoor, Jammu: During my field visit there I have seen a lot of sculptures at the entrance outside the temple. In front of Shiva *Lingam*, there is a Nandi, *vahan* of Shiva. Inside the temple there are three Shiva *Lingam* along with the sculpture of Ganesha. There are sculptures of Parvati and Shiva. The sculpture of Shiva in dancing posture, sculpture of Brahma, sculpture of Mata Kali which seems to be made during later time.etc. Akhnoor has also yielded some

interesting shell inscriptions on rough rubble stones found in the compound of the Kameshwar temple. These are pilgrim records, engraved in the southern ornamental characters and it appears that this script belongs to sixth and seventh century A.D. The inscription mentioned names like “*Bahuvijeya, Sukhigamti, Mahiso, Bhupamgama, Nahusha and Balasrayavirya.*”^{vi} The most interesting bearing of these south Indian inscriptions is that people from south used to arrive on pilgrimage to such distant place, a fact which proves the existence of this famous Shiva shrine in this area during the ancient times. It corroborates the tradition of the Ambarain Rajputs that Ambaran which was formerly their capital. It has been named after ‘*Amba*’, a name of Durga or Kali, the consort of Shiva. Probably there was a popular Shiva temple at the site which was demolished.

Icon of Shiva from Akhnoor, Jammu: In Akhnoor there is beautiful icon of Shiva was obtained when armed forces were trying to fix their camp. Akhnoor due to its favourable position for trade (located on the Chenab) must have been a prosperous centre in ancient times and one of the principal towns of Mirpur Khas (now under the illegal occupation of Pakistan). A number of sculptures carved in around, survive from this area and share several distinctive features which would suggest the existence of an important support to sculptural activities. Although associated in some respects to the earlier school of *Vijabror* and *Varahamula*, it is not only directly tied to the post-Gandharan tradition of the north-west but also shares the Gupta idiom of art. This is apparent both from the numerous images of stone sculpture and Buddhist terracotta heads found in the region. Akhnoor thus seems to have been a part of a widespread style which extended as far as Punjab and Sindh on the one hand and to *Varahmul* on the other hand which is located in the western extremity of the Kashmir valley in the other absorbing many features of late-Gupta art.^{vii}

Pandava Caves at Akhnoor, Jammu: During an interview with Pandit Surinder Sharma he informs me that Pandavas stayed there in this cave during their exile. They

established Shiva *Lingam* which is five thousand one thousand fifty-five hundred years old. They worshipped Shiva there due to result they became victorious in war against Kauravas. Krishna himself came here to meet with Pandavas in his disguise as a little child so nobody could recognise him. The cave way connected directly to Amarnath. Some ascetics who went through this way could not come back. So, the passage has been stopped there. On the both side of Shiva *Lingam* there are sculptures of Pandavas along with Draupadi.^{viii} They worked as servants under the King Virat. Virat Nagari was the ancient name of Akhnoor. Different sculptures like of Shiva Parvati, Radha Krishna, sculptures of Pandavs, representation of Lion, foot prints of Krishna at the entrance of Pandavas cave has been found at Akhnoor.

Mahadev temple, Basholi, Kathua: The temple was covered with the growth of plants, trees, moss, lichen, algae, etc. apart from other accretions comprising dust and flint and came into light after process of conservation began here under the supervision of Archaeological Survey of India. This temple is situated on the way down to the Ravi and the Visvesara cave. It is five feet eight inches square. It is built on a low platform seven feet six inches square. Its height internally is seven feet. It is consisting of a single chamber with a crude figure of Ganesha in low relief over the doorway. On the left side of Ganesha is what appears to be a Tantric formula; "*Om Hram Phat Om.*" Inside there is a *linga* and a crude figure of a bull. On the right side of the doorway is a crude shallow niche containing a Bhairava and a dog, on the left a figure, probably of Hanuman.^{ix} The different icons are discussed here as Ganesha, Parvati, Kali, Chamunda etc.

Visvesara Cave Temple, Basholi, Kathua: The cave of Visvesara is the largest one having few niches in the side walls and its ceiling is slightly domed.^x It is the largest excavation of the set and consists of two chambers, the outer one of which is eleven feet square and eight feet three inches in height. The walls possess a few small plain niches and a larger one which is somewhat ornamental. But the most interesting feature of the cave is that the northern wall bears carved on it a large image in relief of Raja Visva Raina, the reputed founder of Basholi (*Visvalaya*). The sculpture is six feet two inches in height.^{xi}

From the ceiling hangs a brass bell suspended from an iron hook fixed in the rock. The entry to the inner cave is gained by a low doorway in the northern wall. Its ceiling is highly domed. In the middle of it is a Shiva *Linga* on a circular pitha carved out of rock. There is a small marble image of *Annapurna*. The figure is eight armed. Below it are a couple of other crude figures, one of whom seems to be a *Rakshasa* and the other a lion. For a want of space, the head of lion has been placed just above its rump. Below this cave, there is a big mutilated figure of a caparisoned bull. A few ladder to the north of the bull is a rock in which has been excavated a little cave. This also contains a small *linga* on a pitha. On the wall facing the entrance are two figures, probably of Siva and his consort. On the left wall is the four-faced bearded figure of Brahma standing between two bulls. On the right wall are three figures. The central one is seated and probably represents Shiva and the side ones are Chauri-bearers, a male to the right and a female to the left.^{xii} On the face of the rock outside are carved

two figures, one of Hanumana holding mace, and the other of Nandi. A few paces to the north is the figure of a four armed Bhairava engraved on the face of a rock.

HariHara temple, Billawar, Kathua: It is the shrine of *HariHara*. The Shiva temple according to tradition is said to build by Babruvahana, son of Arjuna. The ancient name of Billawar was *Belapur* or *Vallapur* which got corrupted to Billawar. Its present name (which means 'the great *bilva* God' is derived from the *bilva* trees which grow near the temple. These are believed to be dear Shiva. In addition to an idol of a five-headed Shiva, the temple also has idols of the *HariHara*, Brahma, Kartikeya, Vishnu, Ganesha, Bhairav.^{xiii} The shrine is remarkable for architectural planning, sculptural prosperity and ornamental plan. It is *Navratha* on plan and consists of a square sanctum inside crowned by curvilinear *Sikhara*, *Antrala* and a pillared *mandapa*. The wall portion has plain moulding at the base. It has niche shrines for *Parsadevatas* on its central *Nrathaa* and is studded with *dikpalar* figures rosettes in pedimented niches at the corners and flanking *rathas*. Many sculptured stones are scattered around the temple. Among them is a bull carved of a stone.^{xiv} The temple is assignable to the tenth century A.D.^{xv}

Sculptures found in Krimachi Temples, Udhampur: The Brahmanical temples of early medieval period usually display sculptures in abundance. Such sculptures represent life and condition of the period to which they belong. However at Krimachi neither there are sculptures on the walls or the *Shikharas* of the temple nor they are in interior. The easy ornamental patterns were preferred by the artists as the absence of sculptures for decorative patterns. According to Anita Billawaria in her book, *Ancient temples of Kirmachi* in which she gave reference of only sculpture which is broken into three pieces. The study of sculptural affluence of Krimachi holds a difficulty. In the initial situation above the reported number of sculptures are very inadequate and amounts in total to only three. Two earn consideration and study out of them. The third one is that of a lion belongs to a very late period.

The first sculpture is broken into three pieces. The first piece shows only feet on the plinth. The second one is the bust of the figure and third one is the head. The head portion shows a deity having four faces because of the destruction the beauty of the face is not available. The face on the back completely demonstrates face of Shiva in *Ugra* form. The more interesting is the bust which demonstrates the beautiful beaded necklace and armlet along with the traces of *Vanamala*. The sacred thread is prominent along with girdle with a small dagger (*Katar*).

It is through comparison and taking the reality that face on the back of head is that of Shiva. It can be taken as *Maheshmurti* of Shiva. If the proposed identification is accepted then it appears to be first standing *Maheshmurti* of Shiva. However few things generate doubt about the proposed identification. Generally in the region Shiva is recognized as wearing a sacred thread made of a serpent. But in the above sculpture the sacred thread appears to be a usual one. Further doubt is formed from the fact that demonstrates traces of four arms. Where as a *Maheshmurti* according to *Agamas* possessed ten arms. But again similar sculptures deposited in Dogra Art Gallery also display four arms.

Kaladhera temples Babor (Manwal), Udhampur: It is thirty kilometres north-east of Jammu and roughly fifteen kilometres from Udhampur town. It can also be approached from the Mansar lake. This is the group of six ruined stone temples. These are spread over an area of one kilometre. It is located on Dhar-Udhampur road, in a village called Manwal. The main temples are Dera, Devi Bhagvati, Kala Dhera I, Kala Dhera II and Nand Babor.^{xvi} Babor probably was the capital of the Jammu state around the tenth or eleventh century A.D. when it was attacked by invaders from the west. These temples could date to that era. The earliest might have been built during seventh century A.D. The best estimate is that the complex was built around the eighth century A.D.^{xvii} The interior of these shrines, where the idols were placed is now two feet lower than surrounding surface. It showed an immense accumulation of debris in past times. It is a sign of great antiquity. There is also a fort in the vicinity which is on a hillock, and is in ruins. Inside the fort are a large open complex and the ruins of the ancient palace, the residence of old Rajas of the principality.^{xviii}

Kaladhera temple I, Manwal, Udhampur: This temple is also dedicated to Shiva and is built on a high basement and is preceded by a *mandapa*. The superstructure is missing. The doorjambs of the sanctum are decorated with arched carved tops. Externally the *garbgriha* has both plain mouldings and geometrical designs. The four massive fluted columns have recently been fixed.^{xix}

Kaladhera Temple II, Manwal, Udhampur: This is also a Shiva temple and the shrine stands on a rectangular pedestal approached by a flight of steps on the east and consists of *garbgriha*, *antarala* and *mandapa*. The *mandapa* has three entrances. The doorjambs of the sanctum are decorated with sculptured reliefs. The top of *mandapa* was supported on fluted columns surmounted by capitals decorated with elephant heads. Its northern wall bears a defaced *Sharda* inscription.^{xx}

Nand Babor temple, Udhampur: This temple stands on a rectangular base and is a Shiva temple consists of three *garbhagrihas*, each preceded by an *antrala* attached to a common *mandapa*. The *Shikhara* is curvilinear. The ceiling of the *mandapa* rested on fluted columns decorated with pot and foliage. Externally, the temple is decorated with mouldings ornate pediments, niches and triangles.^{xxi}

Image of Nandi at Leondi Paddar, Kishtwar: In front of the *Lingam*, a seated bull is nearly always to be seen. This is called *Rishabha*, but more usually *Nandi*. It is often confused with *Nandikesvara*, the door keeper at *Kailasa* with a bull's head on a human body, of whom mention may be made later. Shiva's riding animal is also called Nandi, otherwise called *Dharamdeva*, god of virtue. Rishabha is always seated never standing before the *Lingam*. It belongs to the kind of oxen which have humps on their backs. It is always a young bull with budding horns. Its presence in front of the *Lingam* is explained as the representation of generic force. Rishabha's head is bowed towards *Lingam* and its feet except one of its fore feet are gathered under the body. It always has a collar ornamented with bells, round its neck.^{xxii}

At Leondi Paddar, an image of Nandi-Shiva's bull is standing in front of a Shiva temple. Nandi has been sculptured

from a hard sand-stone with all bodily facial appearance, contours and impressed in appearance indigenously liable of by local bodily sculptors. The statue is about four feet in length and three feet in height. A saddle sculpture over the hump and fringed with designs is clearly observable on the back of the Nandi. A Gana, Shiva's common helper is also seen sculptured in the rear of the bust. The complete attempt, however lacks finish and smoothness. It is an excellent piece of indigenous stone art of ancient or medieval Kishtwar.

In Marwa and Warwan Shiv *Lingas*, Jalharies and other sculptural pieces are bountiful spread. It is evidential of the reality that in ancient times this place might have remained an important centre of Shaivism.

Gupt Ganga, Bhaderwah: This antique shrine is built of enormous and big stone tiles. It is located on the right bank of Neeru stream which go down at a distance of one kilometre from the market towards east of Bhaderwah. This place is devoted to Shiva. It has huge size of a Shiv *Linga* of a black stone within the temple. The *Linga* is held in a splendid "*Jalehri*" is thought to be erected by Pandavas. They erected it through their second exile when they were living in the area after being burnt in *Laksha Griha*. According to a legend and local belief, the *Laksha Griha* was built by Kaurvas in neighbouring Kashmir somewhere under the city Nishat. When the building was place on fire. The Pandavas had been digging an underground passageway through which they escaped from Kashmir to Bhaderwah. This channel still exists and a small stretch is visible till now during which the water pours down which is revered as holiest water.

It shows that Bhaderwah was not a political identity up to eleventh or twelfth century. Kashmirian rulers while passing through this captivating valley on their way for the suppression of other tiny mountain principalities, particularly those of *Vallapur*, Chamba etc. stayed here and gave it the name of Bhadravakash. It is quite probable that King Ananta (1028-63 A.D.), Kalsha (1063-87A.D.), Sussala (1112-1128A.D.) or Jaya Simha (1128-1155 A.D.) during one or more of their campaigns and donated the famous cave shrine, statues of Budha, twenty-four petalled Jullehry and Shiva *lingam* any time between 1028-1154A.D. where an inscription of *Brahmi* is already existed.^{xxiii}

Vasuki Naga temple, Nagar, Bhaderwah: The snake which Shiva wears round his neck like a floral necklace is called Vasak. Vasak Naga has been called the head of Nagas in *Vishnu Purana*. Snakes (*Nagas*) are worshipped at various places in India. Some springs (*Nagas*) are worshipped at several places in India. Some springs (*Nagas*) still worshipped in Kashmir. The snake worship is very popular in Bhaderwah region of district Doda. The snake King (*Nagraj*) terrified of Garuda runaway to Bhaderwah, the abode of Bhadrakali. The goddess took mercy on him and handed over her kingdom to him. She herself went to Kailash mountain and took over her abode in Kailash Kund there. Vasak Nag or Vasak is considered the patron God of Bhaderwah. There are numerous temples in his name in Bhaderwah among which the twin temples of Nagar and Gatha are more important.^{xxiv} It seems to be a Shiva Shakti and Vaishnav Shrine. It has been shown by the small statues of the deities of this temple, now lodged in the smaller temple at the lower porch of the temple construction.

The small Shiva *Linga* with is eight *Jalehri* is a typical Kashmiri style of ninth-tenth century A.D. It is mainly found in the valley and somewhere else in the adjoining mountain regions. It has been influenced by Kashmiri religious, political and cultural trends up to thirteenth century A.D. These statues and *Jullehry* on which the deities are seated have been carved out from the stones locally obtainable.^{xxv}

Just by the side of Shiva *Linga* there stands a little figurine of Goddess *Mahisasur Mardini*. These two statues represent the oldest characters of this shrine. It must around this very time of inception of these statues in the locality. The other shrines dedicated to the Goddess were also established in the valley of Bhadravaksha viz. *Bhadrakali*, *Sheetala*, *Chandika*, *Sharika* and *Durga* all in style of Kashmiri iconography by eleventh or twelfth century A.D. This shrine seems to have undergone addition of Vaisnavite cult. One find Vishnu, the principal deity of the modern period, with his consort Lakshmi, seated on Garuda established in the shrine. It is approximately this time that Kashmiri rulers like Ananta, Kalsha, Sussala and Jayasimha had undertaken a variety of campaigns against hill principalities of Jammu area. They conquered them and thus formed a buffer zone between the Sultanate of Punjab and Kashmir. It made it safe from outside attacks at least for hundred years. The four faced really beautiful statue in black granite seems to have been installed in the shrine either by some Kashmiri ruler or by Chamba nobility.^{xxvi}

It was most probably installed in the shrine by Baron Nagpal of *Debi-ri-kothi* in Churah. He is credited with the setting up of a similar statue at *Debi-ri-Kothi*. This construction of a cistern is in a memory of his late father in 1160 A.D. He for the first time seems to have occupied the upper *Neru* valley of Bhadarwah. In 1184 A.D he bestowed whole of the cultivable land of Akhtar region of Bhaderwah to one Padha Agni Valakya in charity, as indicated by a copper plate. He was prominent baron not only of Tisa valley in Churah Pargana of Chamba district, but also of Bhales, upper Bhaderwah valley and Balor also. He has been praised by the Chamba King Lalit Verman as indicated by *Debi-ri-Kohi* slab inscription. It must have been this Baron Nag Pal to whom P.K. Koul thinks that this fine statue at Bhaderwah was installed at the temple of Vasak Dehra any time between 1134 and 1186 A.D.^{xxvii} A large numbers of Vishnu statues having close similarity belonging to ninth and eleventh century A.D have been found from various places in Himachal valleys adjoining to Bhaderwah. Few of them can be traced from Kashmir valley excluding that of Verinag.^{xxviii}

Budha Amarnath, Poonch: Budha is pronounced *Budda* (old man). This is an old Shiva temple. The *Lingam* is made of 'white stone' (flint or quartz). It is most popular pilgrimage in the Poonch-Rajouri belt. The temple is twenty-five north-east of Poonch town, on the left bank of the Loran stream. This is the point where the Gagri Nallah and Pulast Nandi streams meet. It is two hundred forty-four kilometres from Jammu. The shrine is two kilometres above Mandi village in a region known as Rajpura Mandi. In the nineteenth and twentieth century's Rajpura would temporarily be the summer seat of Poonch royalty and nobility. During that period the place would really come alive.

Shiva is believed to have started telling his consort Goddess Parvati, the *Amar Katha* (immortal story) at this sacred spot. (He completed the story at the other Amarnath, the one in Kashmir). The devotees believe that this day Shiva come down to this temple on Raksha Bandhan day every year. As a result, the prayer of everyone who visits the temple on that day is answered. K.D. Maini writes, 'the temple is considered older than the Swami Amarnath of Kashmir. That is why this shrine is known as Swami Budha Amarnath. It is believed that one must visit the sacred place before performing the yatra of Amarnath, Kashmir.'^{xxix}

It is believed that *Pulast* Rishi mediated here. He was great saint and sculptor. He is better known as grandfather of the demon King Ravan. Pulast performed meditation here which is a prayer that goes on for months or even years. During the course of meditation the devotee deprives his body of all comfort often even food. Such was Pulast's devotion that Shiva appeared before him at the spot where the temple now is. To show how grateful he was to the Shiva for the visitation, he carved a lingam out of quartz. After he died the local people built a temple around it. According to K.D. Maini, even today a number of ancient idols are available in this area. It is possible that these idols may have been chiselled by *Pulast* Rishi.

The present temple is about twenty metre high. It was built in the late 1990's. The older temple that has stood here had been carved out of a single large rock. The temple has four doors each pointing to one of the four cardinal points (directions). This signifies that the temple welcome devotees from all four *varnas* (castes). It was repaired and extended during the eras of Raja Moti Singh (1850-1892) and Raja Baldev Singh (1892-1918). It seems that the temple was a summer retreat of sorts for the nineteenth century Poonch royalty.^{xxx}

At Budha Amarnath, the devotees take a dip in a spring which flows under the temple for purification. They have a darshan of an immortal Shiva and makes offerings. It is said that pilgrimage to Amar Nath remains incomplete without a visit of this shrine. According to a legend when Kashmir was in turmoil, the Queen of Loran, Chandrika could not undertake her annual pilgrimage to Shri Amarnath at Srinagar. She got disheartened and would remain depressed. The Queen was a devotee of Shiva. She left her food, water and worshipped Shiva for the whole day. Shiva was delighted with her devotion and appeared in the form of a *Sadhu* with mace in his hand. The *Sadhu* disclosed to the queen that she could have a darshan of Amarnath near Mandi by the side of a stream. So, on the day of Raksha Bandhan day she arrived at Mandi Rajpura in a march led by *Sadhu*. It is said that the old *Sadhu* vanished at the said spot. It was their belief that old *Sadhu* was no one other than Shiva himself who had shown to the devotees another replace of his dwellings. Since then the place is known as Budha Amarnath and is considered extremely holy.^{xxxi}

The main icon is a natural Shiva *Linga* made of quartz. Ancient idols found in neighbouring villages have been gathered and established here. Number of remnants and idols of Pandavas period are still available in Poonch region. The devastated of Pandav Mahal Sakhi Maidan Mendhar is one example. Around all the village of Poonch are having a system of *boalis* (water springs) constructed with large lengthy stones with inscriptions and idols. These are engraving on the stones.

The natives also believe that the Pandavas had constructed these *Bowalies* during their exile period. This indicates that Poonch has five thousand years old civilization. The stone inscription with the mantra 'Om, Mani Padame Om' recovered from Rajpura Mandi.^{xxxii}

Shiva Shrines are found in length and breadth of Jammu region. It shows people of this region are spiritual minded. As the shrines of Shiva have been found here from ancient times. The art regarding the icons of Shiva was mainly having similarity everywhere.

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