
SHIVA TEMPLE AT PAYAR — A ROMANCE IN STONE

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ABSTRACT

The Shiva temple of Payar located at the castle of Karewa tableland is a jewel in stone. The temple consists of ten stones, is well preserved and speaks volumes about our architectural and sculptural glory. The monument is open on all the four sides and loomed by steps from eastern side. The temple consists of a double pyramidal roof with triangular pediments on all the four sides enclosing a trefoil arch. The eastern trefoil niche contains the image of Lakulisa. The deity is seated cross-legged on a wicker seat. At western trefoil niche is dancing Shiva in high relief. Six armed Shiva carries trident and khatvanga and dances to the tune of male drummer and female flute player. The trefoil niche on the northern side contains an image of three-headed Shiva.

Key words: Shiva, Payar, Image, Temple, Stone, Sculpture.

INTRODUCTION

About 19 miles towards the south from Srinagar lay the village of Payar. On the south side of this village, situated in a small green space near the bank of a stream, is an ancient temple which, in intrinsic beauty and elegance of outline, is superior to all the existing remains in Kashmir of similar dimensions. [1]

The temple at Payar, though one of the smallest, is among the most elegant and also one of the most entire examples of the style. Its dimensions are only 8 ft. square for the superstructure, with a door on each side and 21 ft. high including the basement; but with even these dimensions it acquires certain dignity from being erected with only six stones-four for the walls and two for the roof. [2]

It stands by itself on a knoll, without any court, or any of the surroundings of the older temples, and is dedicated to Shiva. It would be interesting if its date could be ascertained, as it carries with it that of the cave of Bhaumajao or Bumazo and of several other temples. [3]

The name Payach, which has obtained currency through Vigne and Cunningham, is not known locally. The identification of the temple with the temple of Narendrasvami, built by Narendraditya circa A. D. 483-490, proposed by General Cunningham, is in keeping neither with the style of architecture according to which it could not be assigned to about the eleventh century A.D. nor with its dedication to Siva, as the name Narendrasvami would presuppose its dedication to Vishnu. [4]

During my site study I found an outer path which is 25×10 ft. in length & breadth. The main temple is square with five outer staircases. The length & breadth of the main temple is 9×9 ft. This temple is based on five stone layers, rectangular, cylinder shaped & 'L' shaped on corners, square and three edged.

This temple has three windows with 4.5×2.2 length & breadth. I found the images of Shiva on the outer-side of temple. I also found the image of Parvati on left corner. On front side motifs of birds and flowers are decorated (peacock and duck).

During my site study I found image of Lotus on the top of the temple and below lotus the sculpture of Cobra/Snake. Shivling is also present in the centre of the temple. The length & breadth of Shivling is 3×4 ft.

The super-structure of the temple has been made of 10 stones only. This temple is erected on the four pillars on four corners consists Base (square), Shaft (square) and Capital (square) with decorated Motifs, each pillar is 7 ft. 9 inch in height. The central image of Shiva is having Aghora on its right and Uma on its left side. The southern trefoil slot depicts Shiva as Gajasamhara. Shiva in the form of Bhairava kills the elephant demon Nila.

I also found a sculpture of Umbrella type Dome with four images of Shiva and Vishnu on four corners on the inner side of roof. The other sculpted reliefs on the exterior include, geese, bulls and decorative bands and on the forehead of the temple I found the cross-legged image of Shiva.

This little Temple, according to Fergusson, is made of only six pieces of stone, four for the walls and two for the roofs while R.C. Kak mentions the super-structure to have been made of ten stones only. This measured number of blocks has lent it a certain dignity and importance, small though its dimensions are-hardly 8 ft. square internally and 21 ft. high, including the moulded basement. [5]

The sanctum inside is open on all the four sides though approached by a single flight of steps on the east. The doorways are rectangular each surmounted by a trefoil arch over which rise the pediment. There pediments rest on the capitals of pilasters carved with pairs of geese, while the capitals of trefoil arches bear recumbent bull figures. Each trefoil itself bears carved relief of Shiva in one or other of his many aspects-in one seated cross-legged with devotees, in the other as Bhairava, in the third six-armed dancing Shiva, and in the last the three headed Shiva. [6]

The pyramidal roof is divided into two sections by a square-spaced band decorated by flowers and mouldings. Gabled niches with trefoil filled with floral carvings are on the sides of the upper pyramid. In the interior it is all plain on the walls, but the ceiling is hollowed out into the shape of a dome with a full-blown lotus flower at the apex. The lower edge of the dome is also decorated with fillets and beaded circle. Naked and winged yaksha figures fill the spandrels, appearing to support the roof with their outstretched hands and legs. The ceiling here is just a replica, on a small scale, of the temple at Pandrethan. [7]



Main Temple at Payar



Crossed legged Shiva carved on the forehead of Payar Temple



Image of Shivaling



sculpture of Umbrella type Dome

CONCLUSION

The ancient temple of Payar is simple, attractive and impressive but small in size. This temple is built of Devri stones without mud-mortar. These stones are extra-ordinary massive. The basement of the Payar temple consists of both single and double platforms. The core of these platforms is composed of stone rubble and the walls in dressed stone. The corner pilasters of this temple are crowned by bonny floral capitals.

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