

Interpreting the Architecture and Iconography of Jalandhara Devi Temple with other Earlier Medieval Temples of Manwal

JAI KARAN SINGH AND MUNMUN MONDAL

¹Ph.D Scholar, Reg. No. 42100349, School of Social Science and Languages, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab

²Assistant Professor, Reg. No. 26668, School of Social Science and Languages, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab

Abstract: The paper discusses the architecture and iconography of the temple of Jalandhara Devi, located in the Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory. It is among the temples belonging to the early medieval period in time frame of 12th to 14th century C.E. The temple in its architecture is not unique but the iconography of the temple makes a worth a case study. The region of Udhampur has several temples belonging to early medieval period in time bracket of 8th to 14th century C.E. The Jalandhara Devi Temple is a proper specimen of *Nagara* style of architecture. The paper discusses the temple architecture and the iconography and contrast it will other major temples of the district. It also tries to understand why the change in iconography occurred and what could be the reasons for such changes. It also tries to identify why the temple architecture remained similar but the iconography changed. The elements of changes are discussed and how these changes occurred and what could be the source of such changes. The paper analyses the fragments of sculptures found in Jammu and Kashmir and what could be the source that inspired such inclusion.

Keyword: *Nagara*, erotic, Manwal, iconography, Yoga, Anthal

Received : 15 July 2026

Revised : 20 August 2026

Accepted : 28 August 2026

Published : 01 September 2026

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Jai Karan Singh & Munmun Mondal (2026). Interpreting the Architecture and Iconography of Jalandhara Devi Temple with other Earlier Medieval Temples of Manwal. *Journal of History, Archaeology and Architecture*, 5: 1, pp. 155-170.

INTRODUCTION

A temple plays an important role in the history of a region. It is a manifestation of the idea, devotion and sometimes a mark of dominance. Along with a temple, a *murti* (idol), also plays an important part in the historical foundation of a region and its surroundings. The architecture of the temple is a testimony to the builder's dominance and the size of the temple to some extent highlights the economic strength of the King. We do witness in history that the monumental temples (Brahmanical) in Northern India begun during the Gupta period¹. This led to the emergence of *Nagara* style of temple architecture². The Kashmir *Phamsana*, an offshoot of the *Nagara* style emerged during the Karkota dynasty and continued till the Utpalas³. Similarly, the temple construction by the Chalukyas in the 6th and 7th century C.E. led to the emergence of Vesara style of temple architecture⁴. Between the idioms of Central India *Nagara* style and Kashmir *Phamsana Nagara* style, the region of Jammu developed a

temple architecture close to the central Indian *Nagara* style with certain attributes from the erstwhile Gandhara style which had got assimilated in the Kashmir style of temple architecture. These evidences may or may not be documented but were identifiable during the field work. The temples did show certain degree of changes in architecture and iconography, suggesting a transition from an early phase. Among the series of temples, one such temple was the temple of Jalandhara Devi.

The Jalandhara Devi Temple (32.9477 N; 75.16689 E) is situated in the laps of the Shivaliks mountain range in the village Ladden Kotli of Udhampur district of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The temple is on the left bank of the River Tawi, a major tributary of River Chenab, and faces the National highway (NH)-44. It is among the many temples found in the district of Udhampur belonging to different time span ranging from 8th century C.E. onwards. Most of the early medieval temples of the Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir are concentrated in Manwal region of this district. As per the *Rajatarangini*⁵, the region was known as Babbapora and was an independent principality. Most of these early medieval temples are either protected by Archaeological Survey of India or Department of Archives, Archaeology and Museums, J&K.

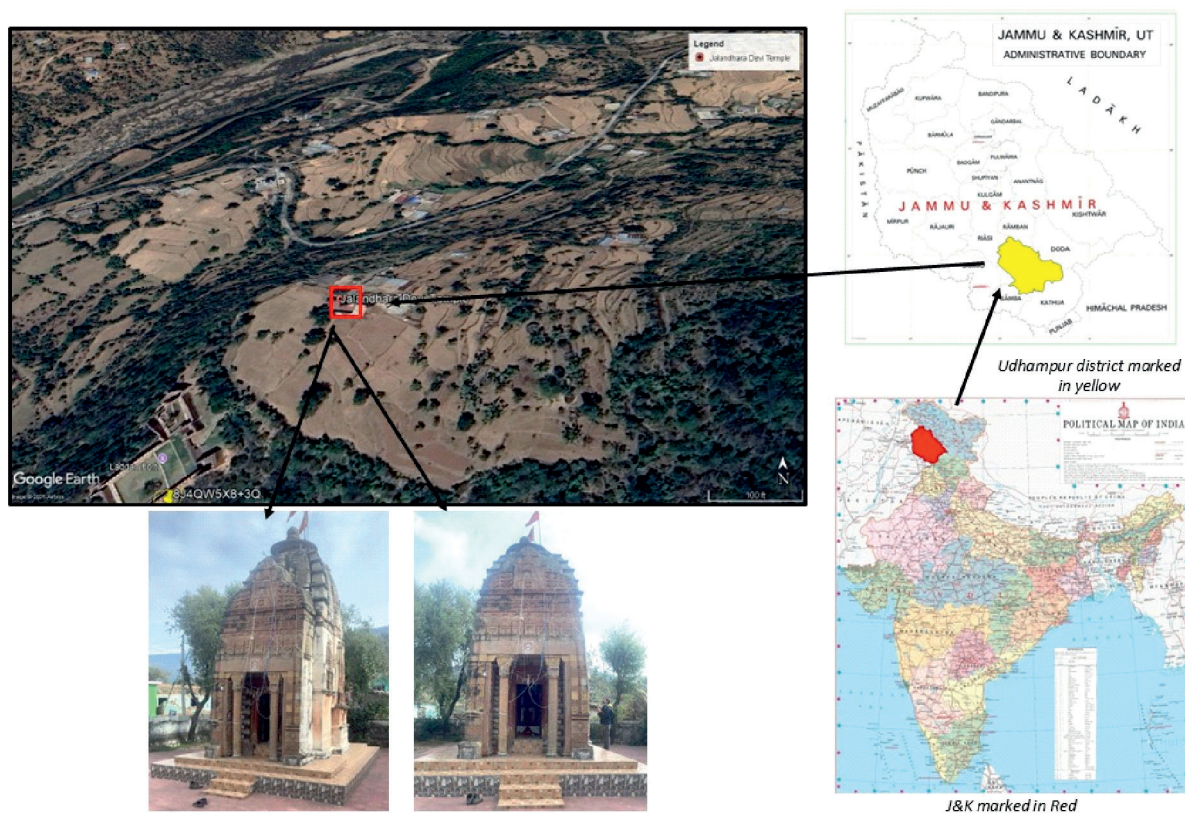


Fig. 1: Jalandhara Devi Temple on map

LITERATURE REVIEW

During the field work, it came to our knowledge that the monument at present is under the protection of the Department of Archives, Archaeology and Museums, J&K. But no history part or drawings were available during the visit to the department. Further, no major literature mentions about the temple existence. The temple did find mention in one of the books published by historian Shiv Dutt Nirmohi (Padma Shree). Some local author did publish their article in local newspaper⁶ as built by King Jalandhara of Trigarta during 10th century C.E. as per folklore. The lack of understanding the

iconography is clearly visible in the article. Anil Paba, another local historian, did a field work and ascribe the temple to period around 10th century C.E. Interviews were also conducted with the Anthal, Ambryian and Naranian Rajputs of the Jammu region. As per their genealogy, the Anthals trace their lineage from Bundelkhand region (Chanderi) are believed to have migrated during the 8th and 9th century C.E. period towards Himachal and Jammu. The Ambariyan Rajputs concentrated in Akhnor area of Jammu district also trace their lineage to Powars who had migrated in the Jammu region around 10th century C.E. these are also attested in Shiv Nirmohi's work⁷. The Naranian's a sub-branch of the Jamwal Rajputs traces their lineage to Rajasthan as per genealogy record in Haridwar. Thus, the region has a history of documented migration from Central India.

ARCHITECTURE AND ICONOGRAPHY

The temple is built of sandstone which is found abundantly in nearby locality. The abundance of sandstone in the region is attested by studies conducted in the region by geologists⁸. The temple as per present condition, is built in *Nagara* style. It lacks the *mandapa* part. This temple holds importance from the point of view of understanding the temple architecture of Manwal region since this temple is almost an intact temple with its *shikhara* as well as *kalasa* (the top most portion of the temple found above *amalaka*) still in original shape. Some modern construction of certain part has occurred in course of time. Thus, it is speculated that some original features like the *verandah* (the outer porch) have been altered to a great extent. Prayers are offered on regular basis. From the field study, it came to light that the temple deity in the temple has been worshipped by many as *Kul Devi* especially by the Anthal Rajputs. The deity is worshipped in the form a *pindi* (natural stone formation worshipped in the mountains/hills regarded as form of Devi).

From the point of view of architecture, as already mentioned belongs to the *Nagara* style of architecture. The architectural features like curvilinear *shikhara*, the ground plan, *amalaka* and the *kalasa* suggest that the temple belongs to *Nagara* architecture school. On plan, the temple is built on *Triratha* style (a type of stellate plan). It also has a profound *suknasikha*. The *adhithana* have a little ornamentation but the quality is far crude than the second and third phase of Pratiharas and temples of Manwal.

Internally, the *garbhagriha* is square on plan and faces the west side. The *garbhagriha* was modified to a great extent. The *garbhagriha* from the eastern side has been modified and deviates from the original outlay as per available proof. There is an original niche present in the *garbhagriha* on the southern side. The ceiling has been hidden by way of covering it with religious clothes. Since, the temple was under worship, permission was taken from the temple pandit (priest) for inspection. A small square chamber was noticed above the entrance gateway. The temple had a double vault roof and the chamber has a standing space from which roof can be seen. The ceiling was square lantern and above it, the roof was circular (corbel type) giving the impression of construction dating around 11th-13th Century C.E. The *garbhagriha* is preceded by two pillars with capital of the pillars inscribed with deities. There is also complete absence of *ardhmandapa* and *mandapa*. This absence is likely caused by the modern constructions that have been made in the plinth portion of the temple.

The temple features the display of sculptures and depiction of temple in miniature form on its façade. Miniature depiction of the temple carved on all three cardinal directions of the temple is noteworthy. Such work has been made in the form of a miniature temple giving the temple an exquisite look. The façade of the temple on the northern side has a *makarmukh pranala* and depiction

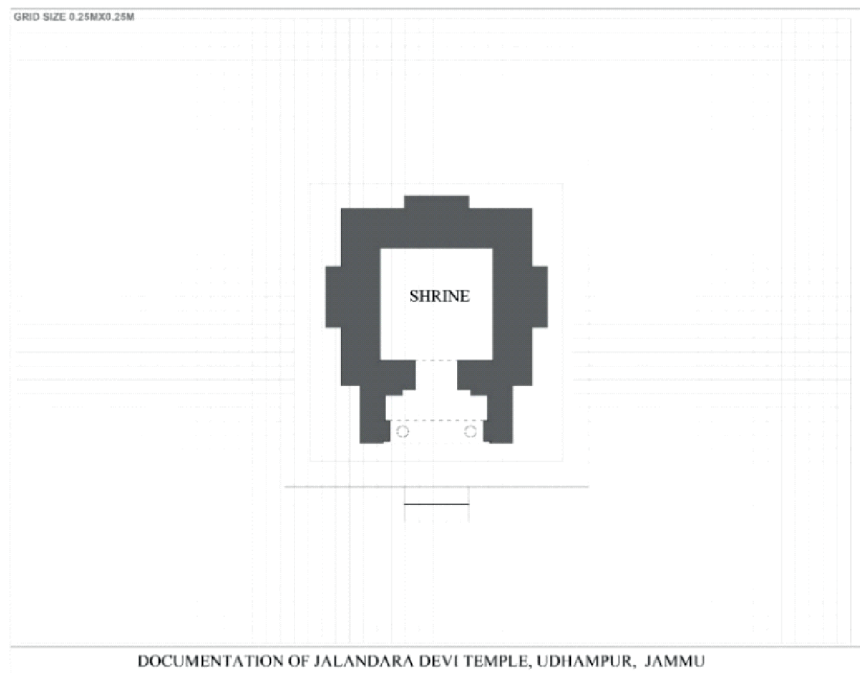


Fig. 2: Plan of Jalandhara Devi Temple (Studio Agama & Jai Karan Singh)



Fig. 3: Temple of Jalandhara Devi

of *Ramayana* scenes and other forms of Gods especially God Vishnu. The eastern façade also has depiction of form of God Vishnu, Brahma and other deities. The facade facing south has depiction of deities and Gods along with some display of exotic art which is absent in any other temple of the study area. The west facade is the front portion of the temple adorned with a form of chaitya window (a large window usually horse shaped above the main doorway used in ancient Indian temples and Buddhist shrines) with a deity inscribed in it.

The *shikhara* is curvilinear and the meets at the top near *amalaka* which holds the *kalasa*. The *kalasa* is not pointed but is oval shaped. The *amalaka* and *kalasa* together gives an impression of a lotus about to bloom.

Garbhagriha

This temple belongs to the category where the Devi is worshipped in the form of *Pindī*. Though, the *garbhagriha* houses three more images of devi, they are comparatively newer. Two are modern ones, and one belongs to later century of about 16th century or later. This temple holds importance from one aspect. Its iconography is a transition from the early iconography of the nearby region i.e., Krimachi and Manwal. Locals allocate the date to different time period. Thus, Jalandara Devi is a fine example of a transition of the iconography which is detailed further.



Fig. 4: Different Sculptures from Manwal temples, Udhampur

WEST FAÇADE (ENTRANCE): THE *SUKHNASIKA*

The temple is west facing. The pillars are fluted and are adorned with *ghatta-pallava* and further the capital ends with depiction of two standing *dwarapalas* on each side. The *ghata-pallava* is also present but some crudeness is visible. Both the *Dwarapalas* are seen standing around a *shivalingam*. The lintel stone is adorned with Ganesha in sitting position with trunk facing left side. Axe can be seen in left hand and the right hand can be seen holding book like thing.

Above the lintel, depiction of miniature temple in the form of niches with each niche depicting a deity inside it. A total of nine in number are present which probably depicts *Navagraha*. These are preceded by three rows of three different elements with the lowest row depicting of a square pattern with a dot inscribed in it and is quite similar to a flower. The row band above it is another floral pattern which is again preceded by a row of blossoming flower in the shape of a rhombus.

The top of the *sukhnasika* is adorned with *gavaksha* or chaitya window motif. The centre of the motif is adorned with three faces with the right face damaged and missing out completely. The depiction of three faces is seen a common feature in Shiva temples of both Himachal and Jammu after 12th century C.E. For reference, Bajinath temple in Himachal which was built in the 13th century C.E. and Trilochannath Temple of Basohli, Kathua, a 12th century C.E. temple have almost similar

depictions. It can be inferred that this particular element started to develop in this region. Again, the temple date is put in bracket of 12th to 14th century C.E. due to its iconography. The headgear appears to be of tribal in nature and the depiction of face and nose appears in hero stone of 13th century C.E.



Fig. 5a: Trilochannath Temple, Kathua



Fig. 5b: Temple No. 3, Purmandal, Samba

Beneath the central motif, symmetrical arrangements of four floral patterns flanking the central shrine representation featuring a figure seated in *dhyanamudra*. The entrance jambs (*shakhas*) are similarly embellished with diverse icons. Defying strict typological classification of the literature, as either *patra-shakha* or *roop-shakha*, both jambs present a hybrid combination celestial figures with floral elements. Specifically, the base of the left jamb displays a floral design, whereas the right jamb features a *triratha* temple plan framing a blossoming lotus.

NORTH FAÇADE

A modern plinth as mentioned has been constructed. Due to this, the *adhithana* portion is not completely thereby hiding a certain portion. It has a *pranala* which at present is not functional. It might have adorned with an animal probably *makara* (crocodile) but could be said with surety. Above it the *jangha* portion, a *devakoshta* having fluted columns on the inner side and pilaster on the outer side having floral design. The base of the column is simple which the capital of both columns and pilasters are adorned with *ghata-pallava* motif. Between the *devakoshta* and *pranala* are two separate depictions of a deity standing and a floral pattern.

EAST FAÇADE

The eastern façade stands out as the most elaborately ornamented façade of the temple. The *bhadra ratha* features an empty *devakoshta* framed by inner fluted pillars and decorative pilasters, surmounted by geometric ornamental motifs. Within this zone, a sculptural relief of *Chaturmukha Vishnu* flanked by figures representing *Gada Devi* and *Chakrapurusha* depicted within a miniature shrine carved onto the surface.

Furthermore, the adjacent outer *rathas* display unique miniature shrine carvings with one side exhibits the *Narasimha* avatar alongside *parshva devtas* (subsidiary deities) and an elephant motif,



Fig. 6: Front façade of Jalandhara Devi Temple (west side)



Fig. 7: Northern façade of the Jalandara Devi temple

while the opposite side features a series of seven panels depicting battle scenes, alongside a final panel portraying a seated deity with two attendants, one holding a royal parasol (*chhatra*). The fighting panel seems to be depicting the *Kamsa vadh*⁹.



Fig. 8: East façade of Jalandhara Devi Temple

SOUTH FAÇADE

The south façade is characterized by miniature temple motifs carved onto each *ratha*. The *Bhadra ratha* features a *devakostha* enclosing a fragmentary, replaced *murti*, as the original image is no longer extant. Architectural supports consist of fluted columns that tilt slightly outward, complemented by intricately sculpted pilasters. Directly above the *devakostha*, a relief portrays a ten-headed figure, identified as Ravana of Ramayana, armed with a sword in the left hand and a bow in the right while mounted on an animal. This central panel is flanked by standing attendants, a male figure holding a bow and *danda* on the left, and a female attendant on the right.

The adjacent *rathas* display complex iconographic features. The left *ratha* incorporates six panels, comprising four single-deity representations and two dual-deity compositions. The right *ratha* features four panels, a single standing deity, an intricate composition depicting one deity standing upon the hand of another with a foot resting on the head, a seated divine figure, and a panel showing a deity holding a *hala* (plow). One major depiction is the erotic scenes. No temple has reported such depiction in the whole region. A total of four panels has such depictions, and that too on the southern façade.

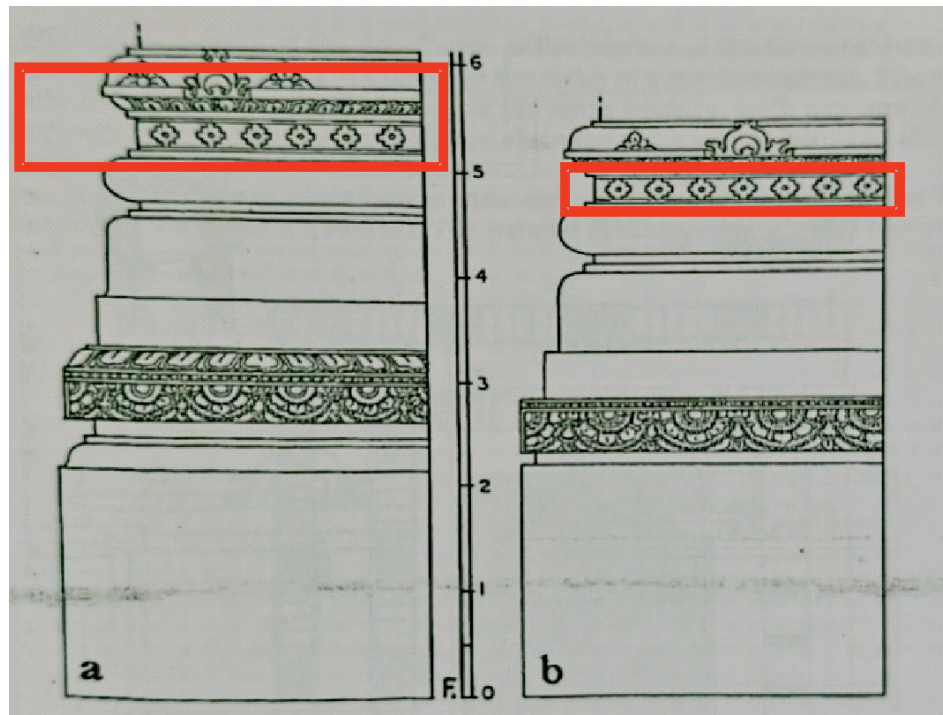


Fig. 9: Decorative elements in *adhithana* of Dedadara and Kundavapi shrines Gujarat (Maha-Gujara last phase temple (Source: Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture Part III, M.A. Dhaky).

These elements are present in the Jalandhara Devi Temple.

THE ARCHITECTURAL INFERENCES

The temple architecture of the region is heavily influenced by the *Nagara* typology. The region did experience the Gupta temple architecture wave in the past. The same was attested by the archaeological excavations conducted by the Srinagar Circle of Archaeological Survey of India in early 2000's. The excavations conducted in Manwal region in 2004-05 gave ample proof of Gupta Brick foundation¹⁰. Another excavation was conducted in 2002-03 in Sudhmahadev area by Archaeological Survey of India which also yielded Gupta ware and pottery but no structural foundation¹¹. It becomes equally



Fig. 10: South Façade of Jalandhara Devi Temple



Fig. 11: Erotic scenes on southern façade

important to highlight the fact that the temple of Jalandhara Devi lies somewhere between both the sites as depicted in map. Again, a broken iron trident in Sudhmahadev temple with inscription of Brahmi script of Gupta period concretes out stance.

These structural remains and antiquities stresses that the influence of the Gupta in the 5th century C.E. was undeniable high. We do find mention of the king subjugated by King Samundra Gupta in Allāhābād Praśasti¹².

When we see and try to understand the temple of Jalandhara Devi, the temple displays typical *Nagara* features with some portion missing. But when we see the iconography, it seems to have drifted away from the typical depiction as per *agamas* and *shilpashastras*. The question arises, why these changes occurred?

THE CHANGE IN ICONOGRAPHY

Art activity is a social process in which the artist, the work of art and the art public are interacting elements¹³. Art either on canvas, wall or stone explores the relationship between the ruling dynasty and social setup in a particular time frame. This is supplemented by economic as well as prevailing conditions of a region and its surroundings. Having said that, when we see the social setup of the North India especially Jammu and Kashmir in focus, a lot of changes occurred starting from 12th Century C.E. onwards. The region was hit was numerous waves of invasion. The Hindu shahis kingdom had fallen to the invasions and wars from Ghaznavid¹⁴. Kashmir, on the other hand, saw the departure of Hindu dynasties and replaced by the local Muslim dynasty of Shah Mir. thus, the north and eastern frontiers on the regions were occupied by Muslims rulers. The beginning of the 13th century C.E. saw the rise of Mamluk dynasty in Delhi and the beginning of Delhi Sultanate adding another cardinal direction, in this case, south falling under the rule of Muslim ruler. Thus, the period saw three major cardinal areas ruled by the Muslim rulers. The impact was:

- (i) The restricted movement of artisans towards the Jammu region;
- (ii) Reduced opportunity for sculptural artisans, guilds in the north;
- (iii) Rise on small principalities in the Himalayan region;
- (iv) Migrations.

These four aspects directly impacted the temple architecture in the region. The changes were not comprehensive but diverted from typical *Nagara* typology like change in spire, the proportionate of elements. We will not go in to its details but will focus on iconography development. The iconography development lacked the artisan skill. This is not an assumption but a conclusion derived from the field visits of other temples in the region. When we see the iconography of the temples of Manwal like Devi Bhagwati temple, Kala Dera temple, Naund Babour and Dera Babour, we see a typical depiction of icons and temple elements heavily derived from the Central Indian temple architecture and iconography especially Pratiharas. They follow the *shilpshastra*, Puranas style.



Fig. 12a: Symetrically carved figures in Manwal temples

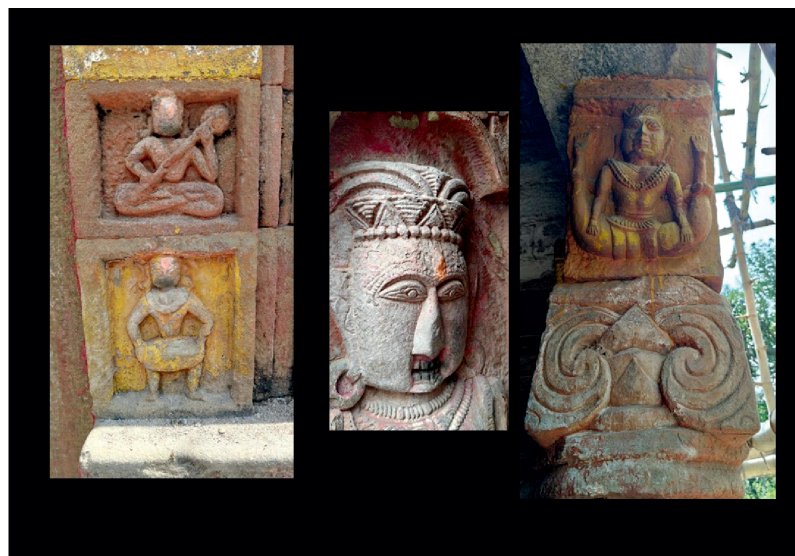


Fig. 12b: Carved figures in Jalandhara Devi temple



Fig. 12b: Yamuna carved in Devi Bhagwati Temple, manwal



Fig. 12c: Yamuna carved in Devi Jalandhara Temple

Here, we see the development of indigenous traditions of art in course of time. The temple did display a fine depiction of iconography on its facades as discussed earlier. But that depiction saw a dramatic change. The region was already patronaging Brahmanical temples and the art activity had attained its maturity symbolising the cosmic entity.

When we compare Northern *Nagara* styles with Dravidian traditions, it does reveal a shift in how guardian deities (*dikpalas*), cosmic motifs (*kirthimukha*) and celestial attendants (*surasundaris*) are positioned around the womb chamber (*garbhagriha*). This was also depicted in temples of Manwal with their affinity towards the Pratihara and Maru-Gujara style. It seems from 12th Century onwards the Tantric and Agamic canonical traditions in the evolution of the temple and its iconography had become the driving force. The region started development of worship of Devi cult especially in the form of *Pīndi* form.

This process led to enculturation of tribal and folk religious traditions. This interaction and lack of skilled artisans led to a huge change in certain elements of the iconography without departing from genres of literature but set in motion a slight drift in depicting stylistic art from the norms of its classicism. We know that the decline of major kingdoms in the north led to cropping of some small principalities¹⁵. The temples of the region from 12th century C.E., onwards reflects the political power structure, especially in its iconography. This is by the way in which images and icons and their position on the temple façade are displayed. The iconography and art do changes over a span of time¹⁶.

Another interpretation was the depiction of deity on the pillar. As per shastras, a *Bhāravāhaka*, is generally depicted on a pillar with hands upwards resembling holding the structure and kind of

supporting it¹⁷. But here the depiction is totally different. Here, the deity or yaksha is seen holding his legs upward with two hands on legs and two more hands holding the calf portion of the leg. Here, the deity has four hands, which is unusual for a *Bhāravāhaka*. It seems that the local influence as well as outside influence on the character of the deity has taken place. It seems to be depicting some form of yoga posture like the *Pada Sirasana* or *kukkutasana*. But again, the extra hands do not fit in the category and these yogic postures are not in truest form.



Fig. 13: Deity carved on capital of the Pillar

Thus, it seems that the depiction is a form of yoga posture of *kukkutasana*. The extra hands seem to be helping hands in the figure to help attain the posture. The position on the pillar is unusual but clearly it is not *Bhāravāhaka*. Another thing was noteworthy apart from the figure, was the dress. Such dresses are not common in the central Indian region. The depiction is simply adaption of local dress code in the iconography. Thus, we witness the blend of yoga, erotic and local dress code in the iconography of this temple and the depiction of hero stone follow such features in the western Himalayas. Thus, this temple, becomes even more important from the iconographic point of view since, it provides an access to the transition of iconography in early medieval period towards the later medieval period which could help to understand evolution of iconography of hero stone and temples in western Himalayas.

CONCLUSION

The temple architecture of the temple is a *Nagara* style with no major changes. The iconography of the temple is a changed one. We observed from the above observations that the change did occur in the way it is depicted. The facial changes happened with faces being elongated and squarish in this

temple. the art form changed from clear depiction to inclusion of local features. The erotic depiction of the *mithuna* is a direct derivative of the central Indian temple. This was supported by the genealogy of the Rajput family migrated to the region. Thus, the iconography of the temple is a blend of central Indian temples like the erotic display which is mostly found in Central Indian temples and is absent in the temples of this region. The temple architecture showed a huge resemblance with the central Indian art as well local tradition display. The architecture was more inclined to 10th century C.E. which was prevalent in the region. The yoga posture adds charm to the temple. thus, the heavily carved temple with iconography is probably a temple that is dateable to 11th to 13th century C.E. since such faces become common in this period only and the clear depiction had receded owing to fall of empire which had constrained highly skilled artisans movement in the region. The art form was also carried forward but it seems that the local artisans employed localized the depiction of the art form. It is safe to conclude that the temple was having features of 10th century C.E. and blended the local art and customs with the central Indian art form and carved the fusion on the façade of the temple.

NOTES

1. Vats, M.S., (1952). The Gupta Temple at Deogarh, Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India, No. 70, New Delhi
2. ibid
3. Hardy, A. (2013). Indian temple typologies. Retrieved from <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/37341/>
4. Soundara Rajan, K.V., (1981). Cave temples of the Decca, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi
5. Ray, H.C. (1931). Dynastic History of Northern India Vol. 1, Munshirram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd, Delhi
6. <https://www.dailyexcelsior.com/news/archive/jalandara-devi-temple-2>
7. Nirmohi. Shiv, (1998). Duggar Ka Itihas. Shivalik Publication, Pathal, Udhampur
8. Bhat et al, (2008). Depositional origin of tuffaceous units in the Pliocene Upper Siwalik, Subgroup, Jammu (India). NW Himalaya, Geological Magazine, Cambridge University Press
9. Rao, T. G. (1914). Elements of Hindu iconography, Vol. I., The Law Printing House, Madras
10. Indian Archaeological 2004-05- A Review, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi
11. Indian Archaeological 2002-03- A Review, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi
12. Fleet, John F., (1888). *Inscriptions of the Early Guptas* (Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, vol. 3), Government of India, Central Publications Branch, Calcutta
13. James H. Barrett, 'The Sociology of Art', in *The Sociology of Art and Literature: A Reader*, ed. Milton C. Albrecht, James H. Barnett and Mason Griff, London, 1970, p. 629.
14. Wink, André, (2021), *Al-Hind, Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest, 11th-13th Centuries*, Vol.II, Brill Publications, New York
15. Ray, H.C., (1931). Dynastic History of Northern India Vol. 1., Munshirram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi
16. Rowland, Benjamin, (1953). *The Art and Architecture of India*, Penguin Books, London.
17. Misra, Ram Nath, (1981). *Yaksha cult and iconography*, Munshirram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi