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A Case Study of Radha Krishna Temple Muzaffarabad: Art and Architecture



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Abstract: *The capital of Azad Jammu and Kashmir is Muzaffarabad, a city that has had a significant historical impact that continues now. Its rich cultural past reflects its unique heritage and historical influences because it is the capital of Azad Jammu Kashmir and is located on historic traveller routes. The district is home to many historical sites that provide proof of its prior civilizational history. Any civilization's living monuments and architectural remains represent the legacy and historic importance of the area. The buildings and construction techniques are passed down through the architectural monuments and ruins, but they also transmit the practices, traditions, and religious beliefs of the different cultures. With the current study, two important aspects of the Hindu legacy that exists in the city's core are covered in depth. The architectural components come first, followed by the interior paintings and frescoes painted inside the temple.*

Key Words: Radha Krishna Temple, Art and Architecture, Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir

Introduction

From the Stone Age through colonial times, Kashmir has a vast and rich cultural heritage. Numerous archaeological sites show that Paleolithic, Neolithic, early historic, and later historic cultures once lived in Kashmir's geography (Ali 2011). Instead of stone, Kashmiri artwork was exhibited throughout the Kushan era as terracotta tiles. The evidence suggests that Kashmiri artists had an indigenous school of painting and were utilizing terracotta tiles prior to the Kushan period. (Bandey, 1992). Many examples of Buddhist cave art and Mughal paintings can be considered evidence of how

Kashmir's geography and natural beauty served as an inspiration for various civilizations (Paray, 2021). Gilgit is home to the earliest known Kashmiri paintings, which show a highly developed style.

Azad Kashmir is divided into ten districts, with Neelum Valley being the biggest in terms of land and having the most significant Buddhist monastery as part of its cultural legacy. Azad Jammu and Kashmir's capital is Muzaffarabad. Geographically, Muzaffarabad is situated at an altitude of roughly 730 meters above sea level in the Pir Panjal range of the Himalayas. Its location along the banks of the Jehlum River, also known as the Neelum River locally because it originates

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in Azad Kashmir's Neelum Valley, contributes to the area's natural beauty. The region has a rough, mountainous topography. The nearby notable peaks are Pir Chinasi, Toil Pir, and Saran. A wide range of plants and animals can be found in the area because of its high biodiversity. It is a well-known tourist site that draws travellers from inside and outside of Pakistan due to its natural beauty and geographical features. Along with climate conditions and natural beauty After the Mughal monarch Sultan Muzaffar Khan, who dominated the region at the time, it has a long and illustrious history that dates back to the sixteenth century. Muzaffarabad was a very small town during British Raj and was developed on the bank of the Neelum River (Ali, 2011). In addition to many other historic buildings built during the reigns of different emperors, Muzaffarabad city is known for Red Fort which was also commissioned by Sultan Muzaffar Khan and completed in 1646 (Ali, 2011). For the remains of religious buildings, there are many important and beautiful temples in different areas of Muzaffarabad built with different materials including timber, stone, lime, mud and clay. But as a custom, most of the religious buildings are found decorated with frescos and paintings using natural colours and materials.

The Pyramidal Shikara style of Temple Architecture

Kashmiri temple architecture is characterized by the pyramidal Shikara style of construction. It is distinguished by the usage of the Shikara, a roof with a pyramidal or spire-like structure that is extensively included in the design of Kashmiri Hindu temples (DHANAWADE, 2018). The following are a few vital architectural elements of temple architecture in the pyramidal Shikara style:

Shikara

The tall pyramid-shaped spire or roof that encircles the temple's main shrine is referred to as the "Shikara" in this context. The Shikara is often carved with complex carvings and patterns out of stone or wood. It is a prominent visual component that frequently reaches remarkable heights.

Pyramid-like Structure

The Kashmiri temple's overall design is defined by a pyramidal shape. From a square or rectangular

base, the temple roof slopes up gradually until it reaches the Shikara at the top. The temple has a distinctive and unmistakable silhouette thanks to its pyramidal structure.

Intricate Carvings

Depicting numerous motifs and themes, the Shikara and other areas of the temple are decorated with beautiful carvings. These carvings frequently include elaborate patterns, floral motifs, fantastical beings, gods, and events from Hindu mythology. The carvings display the extraordinary artistry and workmanship of Kashmiri craftspeople.

Multiple Storeys

The Shikara may have several storeys or levels in larger temples, with each one embellished with elaborate carvings and architectural features. As they approach the top of the Shikara, the storeys are layered on top of one another and gradually get smaller.

Center Dome

Kashmiri temple architecture may contain a centre dome or cupola in addition to the pyramidal Shikara. The dome, which contributes to the temple's magnificence, frequently rests above the main sanctum sanctorum (Garbhagriha). The pinnacle of the dome could have finial and ornate accents.

Use of Wood and Stone

The pyramidal Shikara style of building temples combines the use of wood and stone. The ornate carvings and the Shikara itself are often made of wood, while the main body of the temple is typically constructed out of stone. These materials together produce an eye-catching contrast (Yadav, 2020).

Radha Krishna Mandir or Raghu Nat Temple

The name of the current building under investigation is "Radha Krishana Mandir or Raghu Nat Temple," however most people just refer to it as "Mandir" (Pl.1). The Mandir is situated near Madina Market, a popular neighbourhood in Muzaffarabad, an ancient city in Azad Kashmir. Mahnat Seta Ram Das served as the temple's

foremost custodian (Affaqi 2009: 194). Currently, the building is under the control of the Municipal Committee Muzaffarabad and is not in a good presentable condition. The reasons behind its current state are Natural causes, human factors and inadequate maintenance. The construction materials used in the construction of the temple have started deteriorating due to the natural

aging process and exposure to the weather elements such as rain, sun and wind has started erosion and decay of structural components. Continued negligence is the most important factor considered for the decay and deterioration of the heritage asset located in the heart of the city. Other identified temples located in various districts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir are.

PL.1

Raghu Nat Temple, Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir



Table 1

S.No	District	Temple
1	Bhimber District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shiv Temple at Barnala
2	Kotli District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Banganga Temple at Khuiratta ▪ Hindu Temples at Kotli City ▪ Baba Balaji Temple at Ratta, Dadyal
3	Mirpur District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raghunath Temple at Mangla Dam Lake ▪ Shivala Temple, at Mangla Dam Lake
4	Neelum District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sharada Peeth at Sharda
5	Poonch District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mandhol Sun Temple at Mandhole

Measurements and Architectural Features

The temple as originally built and analyzed through a parti diagram is square in plan (3.5m X 3.5m) with a 1.4 m wide entrance on one side. All the walls are 1.15 m thick and made up of thin burnt bricks as used in other temples of this era. While looking at the entrance is 2.83 m high at the exterior but due to structural elements, the height is reduced in the interior to 2.3m. The

overall height of the building is 9.3m. The temple was built on a raised platform made of local stone but due to continued landfills, negligence and theft are not visible now.

On each exterior wall of the building three decorated multifoil arches are easily visible which adds value to its architectural esthetics and makes the structure attractive to the pilgrims. The dimensions of the surface arch are 1m wide and 3.2m high.

Other Dimensions

Border thickness: 0.09 to 0.15m
Inner dimensions of the temple: 3m X 3m
Length of each brick: 0.27m

Building Description

On the side street of the well-known Shaheen Cloth House in the historic bazaar, Madina Market is where you'll find this temple. Locals refer to this temple as "Mandir" and the street where it is located as "Mandir Wali Galli." Dr Sabir Affaqi claims that "Radha Krishnan/Raghu Nat Mandir" was once close to the Government Garden but is currently located inside the city and is surrounded by wealthy individuals. Although the temple is still visible from the street, it is starting to lose its initial form due to continued deterioration and will vanish soon if not preserved (Pl. 2). The city has expanded and all the open sites are now covered with constructed buildings and roads around. Mr Jan Ashraf, a local citizen, was designated as the site's keeper. There are numerous fresco paintings of "Lord Radha Krishnan" to be found in this temple, and a large area was spared in front of Alberta so that walnut trees could be planted (Affaqi 2009: 194). The temple is enclosed in and surrounded by a boundary wall.

PL. 2

Hexap of Dark Brown Colour, Temple, Muzaffarabad



Architecture

The Temple has a square plan and a pyramidal Shikara (Pl. 3), which is a well-liked Kashmiri

architectural style. The pyramidal Shikara architectural style, which embodies the regional aesthetic and architectural traditions, is an important component of Kashmir's cultural legacy. It is still lauded for its distinctive and spectacular style, which has impacted the construction of many temples in the Kashmir Valley. It has arches on all sides with two main arches on two opposite sides of the temple walls. It comprises three rectangular cusped arches that are separated by fluted pilasters with lotus designs (Pl. 4). The panel's red lime plaster ornamentation features six flowers with stalk and foliage designs. Three rectangular panels with Mughal-style horizontal ornamentation are positioned above these arches (Pl. 5). (TIAC 2016: 88). The Shikara's pinnacle is no longer present on the topmost point. Burnt brick masonry with lime mortar was used to construct the temple (Pl. 6). Parallel decorations are also used to embellish the roof's edge (Chajja) (Pl. 7). A fluted pilaster that was used to adorn the fourth corner is now also absent (Pl. 8). There are two fluted plastered vertical panels on either side of the entrance. The base has a lotus-shaped mould-like form (Pl. 9). The temple's roof is heavily burdened by unauthorized construction. (TIAC 2016: 89).

PL. 3

Shikara of Raghu Nat Temple, Muzaffarabad



PL. 4

Three Foiled Arches Raghu Nat Temple, Muzaffarabad



PL. 7

The Fourth Corner is decorated with Lotus Pattles, Raghu Nat Temple



PL. 5

Burnt Brick Masonry Temple, Muzaffarabad



PL. 8

Entrance, Raghu Nat



PL. 6.9

Lotus Pattles on Chajja Temple, Muzaffarabad



PL. 10

Fresco Paintings Radha Krishana, Cow and Dancing Radha, Raghu Nat Temple, Muzaffarabad



Interior Detailing and Design

It has two 1.3m-long arched ventilators on each side. In the temple, Radha Krishana's frescoes can be seen. The main fresco measures 0.5 meters wide. The other five Mural sides are 1.5 meters wide. There are other fresco paintings in this location of a cow and a dancing Radha. (Pl. 10).

Paintings

Painting 01 (Description)

Brahma, Lakshmi, and Vishnu (Pl. 11 On a bloom that is supported by the snake Ananta (a symbol of infinity), Vishnu reclines while floating on the ancient waters of the undifferentiated world-substance. Recreated from Coleman (Carus. P [1899](#): 78) after a local outline.

PL. 11

Vishnu, Lakshmi, and Brahma, Raghu Nat Temple, Muzaffarabad



Vishnu stands for the fully developed and realized human consciousness. Brahma stands for the search for the enlightened human mind. Adi, the mental state between being asleep and being awake, between Sesha, or zero, and Ananta, or infinity, is referred to as the serpent in this instance. Lakshmi stands for nature, which Vishnu views impartially while Barhm views it with bias.

Detail

Vishnu takes on the shape of a fish in his first incarnation, known as the MATSYA-AVATAR, as a means to retrieve the Vedas that were taken by wicked demons and concealed in the waters of an earth-covering deluge. The PISTIS SOPHIA, one of the most significant gnostic works, claims that Kalapatauroth saved the volumes of Ieou, which God dictated to Eonch in paradise, from being destroyed after the flood. This makes this incarnation interesting.

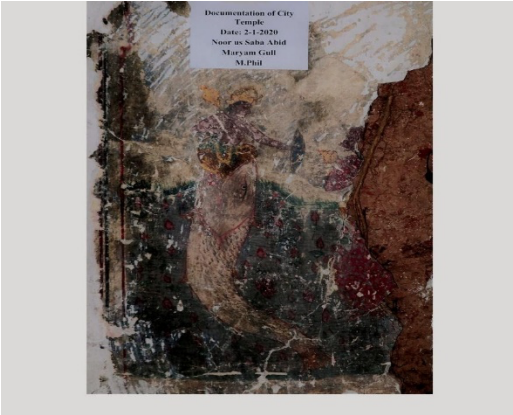
In the kurm-avata, Vishnu's second incarnation, he took the form of an enormous turtle to help the gods obtain the amrita drink, which grants immortality. The world pillar, the mountain Mandaras, was raised on his back, and Vasuki (or Anantas, the endless world snake), was wrapped around it like a rope. The gods grabbed the tail and the devils (daityas) grabbed the head as they churned the water to create Vishnu's diamond, Kaustubha. Varunani, the goddess of the sea, the Apsaras, lovely spirits that resemble Greek nymphs, Indra's Kamadhenu, the cow of plenty, Indra's elephant Airavata, the tree of abundance, Chandra, the god of the moon, Sura, the goddess of wine, and finally, Dhavantari, the Indian Aesculapius, who holds the water of life. As the god drank the Amrita, the serpent. (80)

Painting 02 (Description)

The Matsya Avatar, also known as the Fish Incarnation (Pl. 12 The figure of Matsya is said to have saved numerous earthly species and the fundamental man from an inconceivable flood. Matsya is frequently shown as an unusual fish or as a human heart attached to a fish's tail. According to legend, Matsya warned man about the impending flood and instructed him to put all of the food and living things on a boat. This tale is similar to many flood legends that can be found in many religions (Carus. P [1899](#): 81).

PL. 12

The Matsya Avatar or Fish Incarnation, Raghu Nat, Raghu Nat Temple

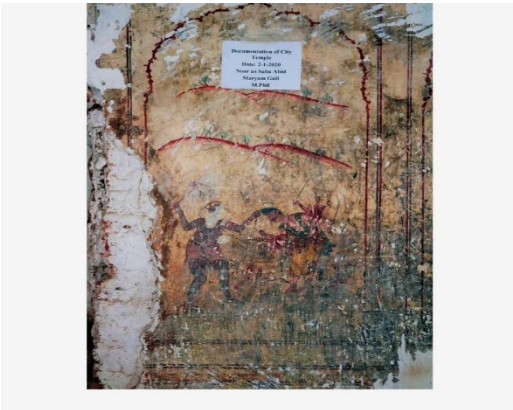


Painting 03 (Description)

The Parashura Avatar or Battle-axe Incarnation of Krishna (Pl. 13) (by P. Carus) moves over the oppressed Kliya and his spouses approaching Krishna for his kindness.

PL. 13

Parashura Avatar or Battle-Ax Incarnation, Raghu Nat Temple, Muzaffarabad



Lord Vishnu's sixth incarnation was Parasurama, sometimes referred to as the "axe-wielding Rama." He was born into a Brahmin family, which is a priestly class, but has the great physical strength and murderous instinct of a Kshatriya, which is a military class. The revered saint Jamadagni's son was Parasurama. He received an axe, his great weapon, from Lord Shiva as a reward for his dedication and penance.

As an immortal known as "Chiranjeevi," Parashurama is believed to govern till "Maha Pralaya," or the end of the world.

Sahasrabahu is one of India's greatest combatants in history. According to tradition, he lived at the same time as Ravana. He engaged in countless wars and prevailed in all of them, with the exception of one with Parshuram who killed all the (Rajas) Kshatriya Kings in retaliation for the deaths of his parents in order to protect Brahmin society from Kshatriya exploitation (Carus. P [1899](#): 83).

Painting 04 (Description)

For his kindness, Kliya's spouses approach Krishna as Krishna passes over the repressed Kliya (Pl. 14) (Sethi [1987](#):27).

Sri Krishna's heavenly dance on the head of the subjugated Kaliya represents the triumph of will over desire similar to how Lord Shiva's glorious form, which includes snakes around His neck, symbolizes the mastery of His ascetic mind over His senses and cravings. The several heads of Kaliya are thought to represent the complex human ego, and Sri Krishna's beautiful victory dance is said to depict the repeated blows to the ego that are given to bring one to his knees and closer to the Almighty.

PL. 14

Krishna Moving Over the Repressed Kāliya, Raghu Nat Temple, Muzaffarabad



Painting 05 (Description)

Krishna as a farmer (Pl. 15) (Sethi [1987](#): 45).

Agriculture is a spiritual activity in this Hare Krishna society. Taking care of their cattle and

land helps the devotees get more intimate with Krishna.

(Hindus, on the other hand, practice vegetarianism and view the cow as a holy emblem of life that has to be cherished and preserved. The cow is linked to Aditi, the mother of all the gods, in the oldest Hindu texts, the Vedas.)

PL. 15

Krishna as a Farmer, Raghu Nat Temple, Muzaffarabad



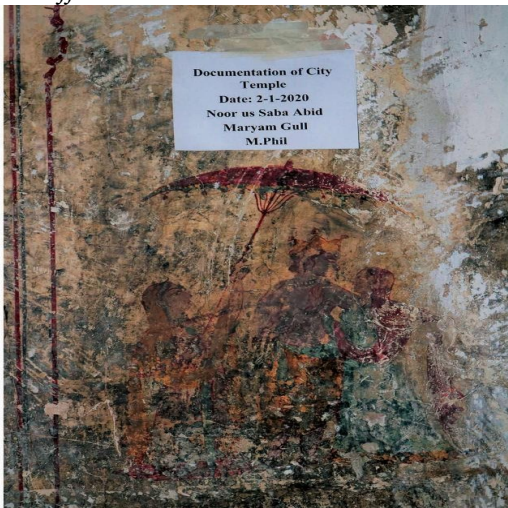
Painting 06 (Description)

Krishna with two Gopis (Pl. 16) (Sethi [1987](#): 45).

This picture honours the alluring power of spiritual love. It represents a scene from the Srimad-Bhagavatam, one of Hinduism's main Puranas (old sacred scriptures) that describes Krishna's biography.

PL. 16

Krishna with Two Gopis, Raghu Nat Temple, Muzaffarabad

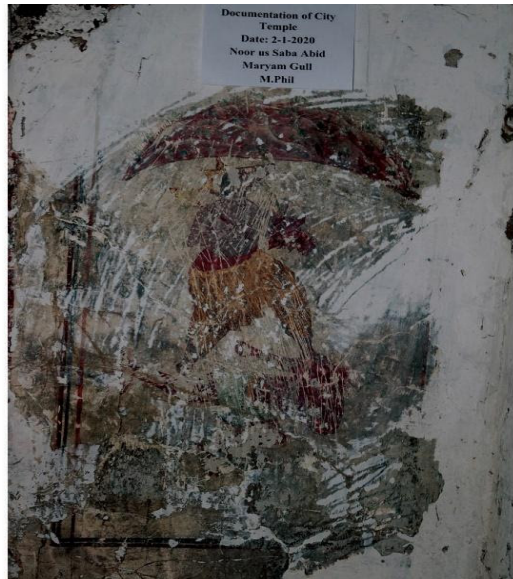


Painting 07 (Description)

The Monkey Kin Sugriva Fighting (Pl. 17), Rama Chandra lived in the wilderness of the south with Sita and his half-brother Lakshmana, whither he had retired to follow his father, who had unjustly banished him and designated Bharata, another of his sons, as successor to the kingdom. Rama Chandra resided in the southern desert with Sita and his half-brother Lakshmana, whither he had retired to follow his father, who had wrongfully banished him and appointed Bharata, another of his sons, as heir to the throne. Ravana, the demon-king, waged war against Rama and kidnapped Sita when he and his brother were hunting. It is hard to describe Rama, who kidnapped Sita when he and his brother were hunting. It is impossible to relate here Rama's adventures in detail on the island of Ceylon, how he fought either giants or demons, how the monkey kings, Luvgriva and Hanuman, became his allies, how Hanuman jumped over to Lanka, the island of Ceylon, to reconnoitre the enemy's country, how the monkeys built a bridge over the strait by throwing stones into the water, how Rama pursued Ravana to Lanks, and finally how he vanquished Ravana and recovered his faithful wife Sita ([Sethi 1987:62](#); Paul Carus [1899:471](#)).

PL. 17

The Monkey King Sugriva Fighting, Raghu Nat Temple, Muzaffarabad



Painting 08 (Description)

With the Gopis, Krishna performed the rasa lila dance (Pl. 18) (Sethi 1987:93).

This picture honours the alluring power of spiritual love. It represents a scene from the Srimad-Bhagavatam, one of Hinduism's main Puranas (old sacred scriptures) that describes Krishna's biography.

PL. 18

Krishna Performing Rase Lila Dance with the Gopis, Raghu Nat Temple, Muzaffarabad



Conclusion

The state of the temple is terrible due to the passage of time, carelessness, and the disastrous

earthquake of 2005. A blatant encroachment by locals is the abundance of dwellings constructed close to the temple. Even in the construction of their homes' boundary walls, they transgressed the rights of religious convictions. By destroying or whitewashing some of the depictions, the temple has significantly suffered damage. Due to the historical monuments' desolate state in this corridor, it would be prudent to engage society in general and academia, in particular, to think about these monuments, which urgently need to be preserved, conserved, and projected on a national and international level. The cracks in the inner walls damaged the paintings of Radha Krishna. For the Buddhist and Hindu communities, Kashmir is particularly rich in religious attractions. Preserving these resources for future generations is a major consideration of this study because, if not, these historical values will quickly disappear from view. Continued negligence will put the region's important cultural and heritage assets at risk; instead, they should be promoted and utilized for religious tourism in the area, which may boost the local economy and that of the entire nation.

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Appendix

Figure 1

Pencil Outline Raghu Nat Temple, Muzaffarabad

