



Status of Avantisvara and Avantisvami Temples of Pulwama District of Jammu & Kashmir

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ABSTRACT: The state of Jammu and Kashmir is a land of Mosques, Temples and Gurdawar's and most of them have been listed in Archeological Survey of India. The present study makes an attempt to study the historical monuments located at Pulwama District. Along with the present state, the study examined the structure's artwork and architecture as well. The investigation discovered that these historical sites are not presently in excellent condition and require prompt care by the relevant Department.

KEYWORDS: Monuments, ASI, Investigation, Art and Architecture, Jammu and Kashmir.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In order to preserve and restore cultural treasures, historical monuments are crucial. They educate people regarding past subjects and foster appreciation for people who endured earlier eras and various communities. These types of monuments help us to understand the art and architecture of people who lived before us and give us a clue about their intelligence, religion, caste, culture. Historical monuments are also studied by architecture to compare different designs and their importance to the modern world.

The historical monuments are also preserved for the economic purposes as they attract a number of tourists and are viewed as important buildings to restore the cultural heritage of previous dynasties. Locals' help tourists visit these locations and produce cash, which has both an immediate and subsequent effect on the territory's economy. A number of people sell the local and imported products to these tourists as well. These buildings thus become important attractions for the student community for education and awareness purposes. When vintage buildings are restored, foreign and local professionals can find work because it occasionally calls for a higher level of expertise than basic building, which leads to greater compensation and also helps the country's finances. Ultimately, compared to modern structures that are equipped with electronics and cutting-edge gadgets, the majority of these historical structures are environmentally safe. As a result, it is claimed that maintaining and restoring historic cultural structures is not only seen as economically wise but also as environmentally soundⁱ.

The Pulwama district, often known as the "Anand of Kashmir" is recognized for its many tourist attractions, some of which include ancient structures that both local and foreign tourists frequent frequently. These historical sites in the district are cared for by the Archaeological Survey of Indiaⁱⁱ. Due to numerous societal, political, and religious factors, these historical sites have suffered significant harm over time and have remained abandoned. An effort has been undertaken to examine the existing condition of these ancient structures in the area of Pulwama and to recommend the steps for their maintenance and repair.

II. METHODOLOGY

The field study was carried out between 2022 and 2023, during which time all of the ancient structures in the region were frequently visited. The researcher took pictures, which she examined against older pictures that were in the tourism directorate's collection or on various websites' databases. Throughout the course of the investigation, there were also personal conversations with the carers or employees.

III. OBSERVATIONS

Visits to the sites showed the majority of monuments are in poor condition, and they are not currently restricted under Archeological Survey of India. Because these landmarks have not undergone renovation over the years, people often perceive them as vacant locations and serve as homes for various types of pets. Only

gatekeepers were present at the landmarks throughout the field trips in place of any other employee. The majority of the employees are Kashmiri pundits who left the valley in the 990s and never returned to take care of these sites. This has caused significant harm to these ancient landmarks, not just in Pulwama but across all of Jammu and Kashmir. Recent floods and tremors in J&K have also harmed the structures. In addition, it is believed that a significant problem in administering large structures is the shortage of workforce.

Avantisvara Temple

Everyone in the Kashmir valley is familiar with the Avantisvara temple, which is adjacent to the hamlet of Avantipora and can be seen on the right side of National Highway 1 as one travels from Jammu-Kashmir. Avantivarman, is credited with founding these buildings. The grander sanctuary of Siva- Avantisvara has enormous walls that stand majestically in desolation. This temple is in an inner space completely encircled by a thick stone barrier. It is completely encircled by a thick stone barrier, and its western facade is outwardly embellished with an array of bent pilasters without any chambers behind them. The building's entrance is in the center of this wall, and an intersecting wall divides it into a pair of spaces. The partitions are not ornamented with exquisite art because the nooks and screens are basic, and the framework's entryway is in the center of this wall's surface. At every angle of the structure is an elevated surface that is roughly sixteen feet square and must have served as an obscure auxiliary shrine. As this temple has stairs on each of its four sides, with a width of 28.5 feet and flank walls that are 17.5 feet tall, along with a smaller sanctum, the art appears to be similar to the temples of Pandrethanⁱⁱⁱ. The raised areas appear to have been initially just slightly connected to the shrine base; however, later on, they became linked entirely to it with the help of a bridging wall constructed from building materials that collapsed from the temple. The only portion of the structure that now stands, the ground floor, has only one exterior adornment: a sequence of jutting facets, the biggest of which was initially topped by simple rectangular crowns. Two auxiliary shrines can be seen in the rotunda's two farthest ends. The courtyard is littered with architectural remnants, including the spandrel of an arch in front of the southern stair, the flower-and-vase capital of a dodecagonal pilaster, the spandrel of another arch by its side, and the base of a pilaster decorated with two seated rams and a dancing girl playing a damaru while seated on a throne with two lions at the sides and an elephant facing in the middle^v.

Avantisvami Temple

This was regained by the clearance of a massive amount of sediment and trash that had built up to a peak of around 15 feet and hid the entire construction with the exception of the highest part of the masonry of the entry point and an amorphous pile of boulders in the middle. The temple and colonnaded peristyle of the building surround a concrete patio that measures 174 yards by 148 yards eight inches in size. Four lesser chapels are located at all four ends of the double-base principal shrine, which is located in the core of the sanctum. With the exception of a series of twisted pilasters on the west side, the facade is relatively basic from the outside. The sole decorations on the remaining three ends are an oblong thread-course and columns that enclose rectangular places, which correlate to the potthast's cyma recta roofline and the compartments inside, accordingly. A flight of stairs surrounded on both ends by an outside wall and an unpainted fence leads up to the access, which is in the center of the west barrier. The front door is split into two rooms by a cross-sectional wall, and it is reached by this staircase. The dividers' frontal pillars include relief-carved representations of Vishnu and his courtiers. Despite being in peril on either side.

The deities Ganga and Yamuna, who may be easily identified by their corresponding animals, the crocodile, and turtle, are shown as relief sculptures with female figures that are heavily inscribed on the right and left sides of the outer room. These carvings make the structure quite appealing. The images depicting a monarch and a pair of ladies lounging in a "sportive manner" on a simhasana (lion couch) may be seen in the rectangular mural on the facade's closest pilaster. The depictions are identical with minor differences on both outside faces of this stake. Two towering female lionesses take the spot of the beasts up upfront. The woman on the ruler's right peering at her personal beauty as it glows in the oval compact glass she is holding in the palm of her hand while the ruler has the opposite hand in the Abhayamudra (a posture that grants exemption from anxiety) in the southern quadrant. On the opposite side, there is simply one long padding, and the figurines are positioned on individual couches. The left facade of the entrance's base grade is made up of three rectangular sections that are sculpted on the enormous slab. The three figures, which are elaborately caparisoned elephants engaged in combat with enormous horned birds, are a male and two female chauri-bearers^v.

A series of tufts and a slightly taller array of round screens are used to cover the top of the series of kirtmukhas. A man as well as two female characters is depicted in the oblong artwork in the left traverse-wall, reclining on an ottoman with cushions and looking joyfully into the canopy of pines. The temple's ceilings are painted with various groupings of figures, but sadly, the majority of them have since become too damaged to discern them, much less identify them. The garden scene inside the entrance's innermost chamber is particularly lovely. The main draws of the sanctuary are the attractive remnants of a lovely array of chambers from the

peristyle's barren monotone with a fine series of twisted pilasters and a slab-proved courtyard, simple strain, stucco sculptures, sensual themes, and representations of Garhaadhvaja.

A sphere molding and a cyma recta soffit with an undamaged foundation and a vanished sanctuary are the only decorations on the heart of the chapel. The divine being was adored at a shrine and was depicted sitting comfortably amid his two female consorts, Lakshmi and Bhumi, who were identified by the plethora that was kept as the divinity's distinctive symbol. The Narayana in the northern frieze has six arms, a pair of which, in unbiased tenderness, embrace the bodies of each of his consorts, whereas the other four wield his characteristic symbols, such as the bow, the case of mace the flowering lotus, etc. Two pairs of parrots are used to symbolise the lower throne, and the same bird is used to crown the capitals of the square pillars that give rise to the cusped arch that covers it. The panel is topped with a dentil course with a border of square rosettes that alternates traditional lion heads (kirtimukhas) with geese and flowers^{vi}.

With hair nicely combed back and fashioned in strands with twists at the crown, both the deity and the feminine figure are ornately decorated in a reverse pilaster. A receptacle of the intensive version is the two flowers implanted in the plait close to the ears along with the choker and armlets. His right ear is adorned with a sizable circular decorative disc, and his left ear is draped with a tiny pendant studded with jewels. The goddesses, with their disproportionately large bosoms and narrow waists, are further lavishly decorated. Due to the heaviness of the hefty round ear accessories, which are also depicted in contour on the interior of the southern pilaster, their hearing lobes are abnormally extended. The male appears to exude a mood of deep allegiance to some unidentified thing while wearing a decorative chain over his breast. The two main characters are a male with a goatee and tiara, who is likely the donor, and a female, possibly the princess, who is dressed in Kashmiri tradition by covering her head with a headscarf that hangs lower on her torso. The quincunx-shaped arrangement of the five altars in the patio serves as a clue that the people in the party correspond to the pancharatna (five jewels) class. Given that the podium of the statue it held was ornamented with the form of a makara, or crocodile, which is the chariot of that goddess, this temple in the northeast corner appears to have been devoted to the water goddess Ganga. The sanctum, where the supreme being was sacredly washed, was a gap in the rear of the primary shrine, and the underground portico contained 69 cells. But the circular sphinx is where the temple's main beauty can be found. It has 69 cells, each measuring an average of 3 feet 8 inches by 4 feet 10 inches, with the central cell on both sides considerably bigger than the others and moving significantly ahead. This temple is quite beautiful.

IV. CONCLUSION

Due to their dedication to maintaining architectural and artistic achievements over the years, the Hindu shrines in Pulwama city are an accurate portrayal of bygone landmarks. Both temples are distinctive and have exquisitely carved pictures of Hindu gods and goddesses all over them. But as concerned authorities may have neglected to restore these buildings over time, these religious structures have lost their former splendour. The project has been started and discontinued numerous times for unclear reasons. These historical sites require ASI's immediate focus if they are to be preserved and restored; else, they will soon vanish. As a result, it is critical that these monuments be conserved and preserved.

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