

RELIEF WORK OF VISHNU TEMPLE GROUP AND VAPI OF DEVAL, PAURI GARHWAL (A CASE STUDY)

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ABSTRACT

The Indian state of Uttarakhand, known as the "land of the gods" in ancient texts, boasts the picturesque village of Deval in Pauri Garhwal, home to twelve beautiful temples. The temples can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of the main and Shiva temples, simple in design, and built in the 18th and 19th centuries. The second group comprises ten temples constructed from gray stone, believed to date back to the 12th and 13th centuries. Each temple features a sanctum sanctorum with idols of Vishnu, Brahma, Lakshmi-Narayan, and Mahishamardini. Also located nearby is the Vapi (It a stepwell), which has no record of its existence and is related to the temple idols. Dr. Katoch highlights in his book the need to protect this Vapi, which is currently unprotected. The relief work on the walls of the temple and Vapi is worth preserving. In conducting descriptive research, I've used my observations, and primary, and secondary data to uncover these hidden gems. To learn more about these sites' history and significance, comprehensive research and documentation are necessary to ensure their protection and preservation for future generations.

Keywords: Vapi, Relief, Gray Stone, Temple, Protection, Pauri Garhwal.

Introduction



Vishnu Temple (Deval) Pic by Author

Uttarakhand, a state in the northern region of India, is a magnificent tourist destination known for its beautiful hills and mountains. It encompasses parts of the Kumaon and Garhwal ranges of the Himalayas and served as the northern border of Uttar Pradesh until the year 2000. (prohit2019)

The Skanda Purana's Kedar and Manasa sections describe the region and are ancient works. The area is referred to as DevBhoomi, which means Land of the Gods and is considered one of the most sacred places in the Indian subcontinent, being the abode of the great Lord Shiva. (naithani2020)

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Deval village, located 14 km from the district headquarters, is close to the Kot development block and houses several historical temples. The village's twelve temples can be divided into two sections based on their architectural style. The first-class temples, including the main and Shiva temple, were built in the simple Jana style without shikhara, similar to the Punadu and Kyarak temples. Both temples have a single sanctum and a straight vertical layout, representing the sanctum sanctorum and mandapa. (katoch2003)

The temples' pinnacles are covered with gray stones and contain statues of Vishnu, Brahma, Lakshmi-Narayan, Lakshman, and Mahishamardini in their sanctums.

These first-class temples date back to the 18th and 19th centuries. The second category of Deval temples includes Mushroom temples as (ASI, pauri garhwal)

Additionally, there is a Naubatkhana in the village, on the door of which there are beautiful sculptures of Gods and Goddesses such as Shiva, Parvati, Lakshmi Narayan, and other reliefs. (ASI, pauri garhwal)

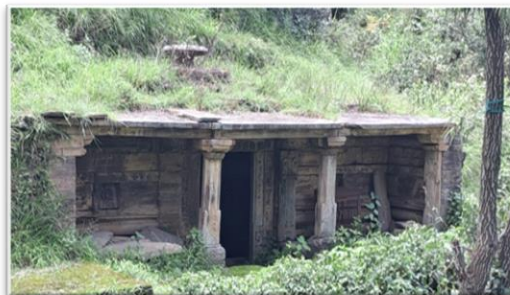
These ancient temples of Deval are built in the Nagara style and are thought to have been constructed in the 12th or 13th century. The temples consist of a sanctum and a half hall supported by two pillars. The vertical plan includes Nagara-style Jagati, Vediband, Jangha parts, and Triratha Rekha Shikhara. .(ASI, pauri garhwal)

The sanctum sanctorum of the temples has Purnapadma roofs, with shikhara tops of Chandrika and Amalsarika. The ardhmandapa has a plain shukanasika at the top, and the ground on the ear portion of the temples is adorned with amalakas. The shikhara of this square temple is of Pidhadeul type. (katoch2003)

A Vapi is located near the temple and is related to the temple in every way. It is on the banks of a small river, which is a place of art, architecture, literature, and art history. The Vapi is in the Jan Shadharan style and is an important feature from a historical perspective. (katoch2003)

An important factor in the popularity and growth of the Puranic pre-religion was the construction of water features and pleasure facilities such as gardens, in addition to temples. The gods are believed to reside near these features, and their attire and characteristics are described in texts such as Aparajita and Manasolas. Wells and Pushkarini are also significant features. (katoch2003)

There are no doors in the Vapi, but it is a strategically placed door. Central Himalayan cedar saplings were also planted in the reservoirs, and temples have played an important role in architecture throughout history.



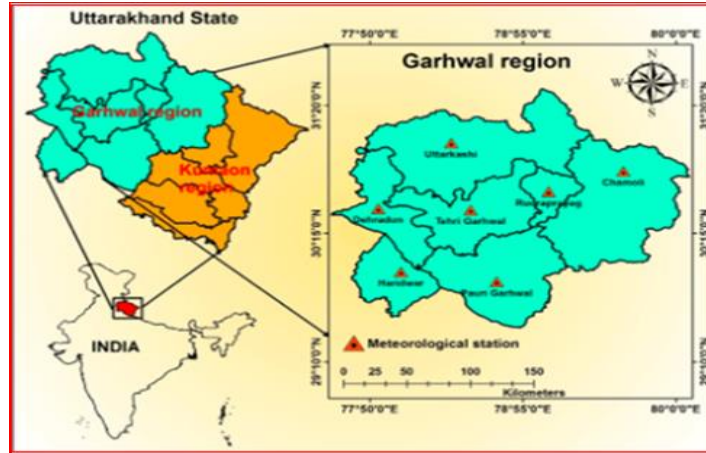
Vapi (Davel) Pic by Author

The local language uses the words "Kund," "Bola," and "Pokhar" (Pushkarini) to refer to them. The ponds near Gopeshwar and Kumath are also called "Vaitarani" due to their sanctity, and Abhishekam is performed with their water for both worshipers and the deity. The rectangular, domed, double-pillared pavilion of the Lakshmana temple, Dhool Ki Vapi, is highly preserved but unsafe. (Katoch2003)

This Vapi has not yet been preserved by the Archaeological Department, and many carvings, reliefs, and sculptures of this temple provide evidence that it was once part of this Vapi. It may have disappeared for some reason or due to the mistakes of the local people, but its importance has continued to be recognized. One of the main reasons is that it lacks old history and literature, which has led to the extinction of this beautiful Vapi outpost. It is on the verge of happening.

Geographical Approach

Pauri Garhwal is one of the 13 districts of the northern state of Uttarakhand, India. It is also one of the 7 districts of the Garhwal division of Uttarakhand. Another division is Kumaon, which includes the remaining 6 districts of the state. Its district headquarters are in the town of Pauri Garhwal map consists of its 9 tehsils, which are namely,



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Laxman Temple and Vapi



Vishnu Temple (Deval) Pic by Author



(Vapi) Pic by Author

Objectives

- To study the historical presence of Vishnu temple and vapi
- To study the important role of the temple & vapi in the preservation of artifacts.
- Uncovering The Unseen Temple Attractions & Vapi
- To Suggest Solutions to Overcome Such Problems

Research Methodology

The present study is descriptive of the Vishnu Temple group in which an attempt has been made to cover the importance of the Vishnu Temple group and vapi and its location in the Pauri district. The present study is based on the information collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data collection are my observations, interviews, the internet, newspapers, books, etc.

Vapi (Davel)



Vapi Inside view Pic by Author

Relief and Idols



Pic by Author

The relief work found in Vapi and the temple is not only historically significant but also incredibly impressive in terms of art. The reliefs and idols created in the 12th and 13th centuries - or possibly even earlier - are great examples of artistic talent. There are numerous door reliefs, statue reliefs, pillar reliefs, and more, all of which are categorized as either high relief or low relief. All the reliefs and statues are made of gray stone. The relief's subjects are mainly Vishnu, Lakshmi Narayan, Shiva Parvati, and Door. However, Ganesh ji has been given a prominent place above the gatekeeper while eleven incarnations of Vishnu have been created with stone carving at the gate of Vapi. A stunning relief has been made, which is still in excellent condition, though it is unknown how long it will remain that way. Nature has been carefully represented in the relief and idol works with birds, flowers, leaves, and bells adorning the main

areas of the temple. The reliefs have been designed keeping geometric shapes in mind to ensure they are placed in the right spot and serve their purpose. The circles on the roofs of Vapi and the temple are almost the same, but the design has been altered based on their location. The work has been divided proportionately into positive and negative spaces, with small places marked small and large places marked big. From an artistic standpoint, the reliefs and idols illustrate movement beautifully.

The carving of idols is a perfect example of beautiful finishing, drawing, proportion, harmony, aesthetics, and architectural art. These idols and relief works may have historical significance, but they are also incredibly impressive from an art perspective.

Conclusion

Studying the architecture and engineering of temples reveals important information about their artistic, cultural, social and religious significance.

Information can be obtained. It is important to promote undiscovered temple attractions like Vapi as archaeological sites and cultural heritage to ensure their safety and conservation and to keep abreast of their rich cultural history.

One temple that stands out is the Vishnu Temple Group, also known as Lakshmana Temple Deval. This temple is important from aesthetic, architectural, artistic, and religious points of view. The Archeology Department has done extensive research on the main sculptures of the temple, architecture, period, stones, and temple style. However, some parts of the temple complex require more in-depth study. The temple has a Naubatkhana, which has beautiful reliefs of deities like Shiva, Parvati, and Lakshmi Narayan. Naubatkhana is made of gray stone and is present in some temples of Uttarakhand. Whereas, there is no mention of Naubatkhana in the Vishnu temple. Additionally, the Vapi located fifty meters near the Lakshman Temple requires more work from the artistic point of view. It is an excellent example of Vapi architecture, but due to no records of it, not much attention has been paid to the architecture and relief works. A study of the relief work and architecture at Vapi suggests that it may have been a part of the Vapi Vishnu temple, but due to tampering by some local people and lack of information, it may have been separated from the temple.

Studying this temple and Vapi can provide important information about their cultural, artistic, social, and religious importance. Therefore, it is important to promote and preserve archaeological sites like Vapi for future generations.

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