

STUPA

It is situated to the west of Satghara temples at a lower level and at a distance of around 40 meter. The present remains comprising stone masonry set in lime mortar roughly measures 12 meter square rising to a height of about 4 meter from the trench level dug recently and in the exposed section of the structure facing east as many as sixteen layers of stone masonry could be counted. In the trench, at a depth of 2 meter from the present ground level sandstone slabs of moderate size are visible. At the south east corner, some portions of the dressed surface indicate the exterior limit of the structure which appears to have been built on a raised platform with flight of steps provided from the east. Due to ravages of time whatever decorative elements noticed on the exterior of this edifice by Cunningham during his visit have vanished.

Alexander Cunningham confirmed the finding of stone of Ashoka, about 200 ft in height, surrounded by ten springs as described by Huen-Tsang and also described the pool as irregular in shape. He further mentions the existence of a ruined monastery on a mound and a broken embankment across the bed of stream above the holy pond.

OTHER TEMPLES

i) Ramachandra Temple:

This huge temple complex situated to the west of water pond has only one opening from the east. The eastern escarp is made up of natural bed rock. The double storied structure has eight rooms of various dimensions at the ground floor and a staircase provided at the south near the main entrance leads to first floor. The sandstone veneered main entrance having cusped arch decorating the façade which is further topped by three arched openings and flanked by two damaged Jharokas are some of the interesting components of the layout. Over the main sanctum is provided a circular dome resting on an elongated base divided by a projected band.

ii) Hanuman Temple:

The main shrine is at the western extreme of a high rectangular enclosure with entrances provided from south and north sides respectively. The sanctum sanctorum is square on plan. The ceiling inside is devoid of any decoration except that it is lime plastered. There is a stepped pedestal at the centre with a niche with paintings depicting floral designs.

iii) Shiva Temple:

This is a small structure built on a square platform. The walls are simple. Entrance is made up of recessed round arch with faint cusps and is provided with rectangular opening from North. The Shiva linga is installed at the centre and is devoid of Yoni Piitha.



i) Hari Sing's Haveli:

Situated to the west of Ramachandra Temple, Hari Singh Palace faces east and has an imposing entrance decorated with cusped arches. The building properly rests on a high platform which is more prominent on the northern side and is raised to attain required level for constructing the palace. Four octagonal bastions with provision of staircase to reach the top are provided at the four corners not only to strengthen the structure but also acts as security measure. The interior layout is defined by two successive rectangular halls flanked by rooms demarcated by three cusped arches on either side of the halls. The Haveli has recently been conserved and small museum is being established in it

ii) Structures adjacent to Ramachandra Temple (towards north):

There are series of secular structures built of stone masonry and like plaster all overlooking the pond below. Lime plaster walls had been developed cracks which have been properly stitched and missing doors have been provided with shutters.

iii) Structures to the south east of Holy Pond:

There are half a dozen structures of various sizes in this stretch of the complex. Most of these structures are independent and are in a good state of preservation. Missing floor has recently been restored.

iv) Structures on the slopes of the hillock overlooking the Holy Pond: There are numerous isolated structures with typical circular dome and façade covering the caves into the rocks escarp. As these structures were not used since long therefore these were in the advanced stage of decay. However, their preservation and restoration work has brought these structures in a presentable condition.

v) Old Library Building:

Most of the rooms of this building were without roof. The doors were missing at some places which have been provided. Some openings are covered with thick layer of white wash which have been removed very carefully without damaging the original work and cleaned. Necessary repair has been done where required. The decayed and salt affected lime plaster will be removed and redone with the same kind of material. The floor will be re-laid.

vi) Old Police Station Building:

The building on the top of a hill is an old structure where for some times back a Police Station was housed which has been shifted elsewhere. This building has also been conserved and brought in a presentable condition.



PUNJAB HERITAGE



KATAS RAJ

KATAS RAJ

Katas, famous for the temple complex dedicated to Lord Shiva, is an important Hindu pilgrimage site in Pakistan. The Kataraj shrine is constructed on a site that is believed to be visited by the Pandava brother of the great Indian epic Mahabharata. Apart from the temples, there is a sacred pool having mythical association with Lord Shiva. Kataraj group of temples is attributed to Hindu Shahiya period (650-950 AD) and is frequently visited by Hindu pilgrims.

The ancient Kataraj group of temples is one of the most significant group of Hindu temples in the Salt Range. Archaeologically, the area is best known for the massive numbers of Buddhist sculptural and structural remains associated with the region of Gandhara from the 1st century BC to the 5th century AD. No documented history of Katas is available except a reference in Mahabharata about a "Chashma-e-Alam" that has been identified as the water pond of Katas, 30 Km south from Chakwal, 27 Km north from Pind Dadan Khan and 2200 ft above sea level. This water pond in old records is mentioned as Katas but now Katas is the name of a village. Katas is situated at a place which is sacred for the Hindus for two reasons:

(i) The site is believed to have been a temporary abode of the Pandava brothers of the great Indian Epic Mahabharata during their exile period.

(ii) There is a sacred water pond having mythical association with Lord Shiva. According to traditions, Lord Shiva on the death of his wife Sati wept so bitterly that out of the strings of his tears two water ponds came into existence; one known as Pushkar near Ajmer in Rajasthan and other called Kataksha or Katak Shall at Katas in district Chakwal.

Katas is a Sanskrit word which stands for "String of tears" or "Weeping eye". Thus the water pond here is rightly called Katas. This pond is a natural spring with a hidden source of water somewhere deep under the waters.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Katas Raj constitutes a major group of Hindu temples most of which were constructed during the reign of Hindu Shahiyas. Most important is a group of seven temples called Satghara, the earliest one of which dates back to later half of 6th century A.D. Besides Satghara there are remains of a Buddhist stupa, a few later medieval temples, Havelis and temples of recent origin, all scattered around the holy pond. Many myths are associated with the site of Katas Raj. According to a Brahmanical story the Shiva was so inconsolable for the death of his wife Sati, the daughter of Daksha, that the tears rained from his eyes, formed two sacred pools of Kataksha at Katas and Pushkara at Ajmer.

Alexander Cunningham was the first scholar to identify Katas as Sanghapura or Sinhapura described by Hsueh Tsang, a Chinese pilgrim who came to this part of the world in early half of 7th century A.D. According to Hsueh Tsang, Sanghapura or Sinhapura was the capital of the empire of Sung Hu Bu which covered an area of almost 14 square kilometers. However, Dr. Aurel Stein did not agree with General Cunningham because in his opinion, Sinhapura was situated in the planes further north to present Katas.

ARCHITECTURE OF KATAS RAJ

The architectural style of Katas is in fact the architectural styled of the Hindu Shahis which developed here as a result of synthesis of Indian and Gandharan traditions. The corbelled method of constructions employed in the Buddhist monasteries of Gandhara was followed and used by the Hindu Shahi rulers in their temples. The ceiling of the square sanctum in the case of temples at Kafirkot, Bilot, Kallara, Malot, Katas and Nanadana is raised on several overlapping courses of corbelled stones/bricks. There are two main categories of temples, one is the tradition of temples with pyramidal roofs like Kashmiri temples before the reign of Lalitaditya in the 8th Century A.D. and the other is an indigenous tradition of Gandhara itself. The normal five-part temples have an adha mandapa or their entrance porch, followed by mandapa or the hall that leads to the maha mandapa or the main hall i.e. the main hall. Antarala or the vestibule then leads to the garbhagriha. The inner sanctum (sanctum sanctorum), where the image of the god to which the temple is dedicated, is displayed. Around the sanctum runs pradakshina or circumambulatory corridor. The simple three-part temples don't have a mandapa or pradakshina but otherwise follows the same plan. The temples at Katas also follow the three-part temples design. These have been constructed according to the formula of simple square plan, plain masonry walls, and contracted corner pilasters. All the temples have been aligned east to west with the entrance facing east. Two temples on the north-west and south west consist of successive waves of higher and higher towers culminating in the soaring sikhara (spire) which top the sanctum.

SATGHARA COMPLEX

i) Sat-Ghara Main Shrine:

It occupies the central location of the temples complex comprises of a sanctum preceded by a short portico with a doorway, which is provided with a broad cusped arch and surmounted by rectangular paneled façade crowned by a high relief ribbed dome.

ii) Shrine to the south of Main Temple:

This shrine is situated at a distance of 5m to the south of the main shrine. The interior face depicts cusped motifs. Sanctum sanctorum is square in plan and the ceiling is devoid of any decoration. Over the sanctum, another chamber appears to have been built as evident from a small opening towards east. Stylistically, it appears to be one of the early temples of the group.

iii) Shrine to the North-East corner of Main Temple:

This shrine consisting of a sanctum preceded by a portico. The entrance to the sanctum has two rows of door jamb and is devoid of lintel. In this shrine only square sanctum sanctorum with its superstructure exists. The cusped arched roof and roof detail of the superstructure are missing.

iv) Shrine to the North of Main Temple:

Built with stone masonry and lime plaster, this shrine is situated at a distance of 5 meter towards north of the main shrine. It has a sanctum sanctorum and is devoid of any portico.

v) Entrance Gate and Subsidiary Shrines:

The main complex is enclosed by a U-shaped wall with main entrance from the west. The entrance point which is slightly projected has moulded base covered with lime plaster and the opening is blocked due to rubble packing.

HOLY POND

Alexander Cunningham mentions a stream, called Ghata Nala, most probably from the Ghat, through which it flowed from the holy Pool of Katas. This pool is said to have been called by various names, at first it was Vis-Kund, or "Poison spring" because its water was unwholesome. It was next called Amar-Kund, then Chamar-Kund, and lastly Kataksh-Kund. According to Cunningham these other names could have belonged to different pools, and that in them could have the name of some of the ten pools mentioned by Hsueh Tsang. A mythical story associates the site with magical pool of the Mahabharata epic. The site is believed to be in Dvaitavana where Pandavas lived during the period of exile and the questioning session between the Pandavas and Yakshah had taken place at this site. The Sat-Ghara or "Seven Temples" are also believed to be a place where Pandavas lived during a portion of their 12 years wanderings. The pool is irregular in shape, measuring 200 feet in length, with an extreme breadth of 150 feet at the upper end, and about 90 feet at the lower end.

