



Umbreen Akhtar *

Muhammad Shoaib Malik †

Katas Raj: A Road Towards Peace and Harmony



Abstract: *Katas Raj is momentous for many religions because of its more than a dozen sacred monuments. These monuments belong to Sikhism, Buddhism, Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Hinduism. It is compelling for Sikhs because of the historic Hari Singh Nalwa fort. It is cogent for Buddhists because of the ancient stupa of Asoka. Katas Raj is much more symbolic for the Hindus; every year several Hindus visit this place, perform holy baths and fill their pitchers with the holy water of Katas Raj; they assume the water; is the tears of Lord Shiva. As per the Hindu traditions, Katas Raj has the second holiest water; after the water of the River Ganges. With the government's efforts, this site can also be placed in the World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. The current study finds positive management policies for the protection and promotion of the Katas Raj group of temples.*

Key Words: Katas Raj, Archaeology, Temples, Religious Tourism

Introduction

There are many legends associated with Katas Raj and a lot of sanctity is given to the built and natural heritage components. This has been a continuous phenomenon since ancient times, making this site of great religious value for the Hindus today, it is considered as sacred as Pushkar (India) is. Therefore, the significance of this site lies in its unique natural heritage, historicity, unique architecture and sacredness. These are the components that hold a lot of importance for the present and future generations of India and Pakistan as being a common heritage that spans centuries as well as boundaries (Akram, 2015). Some of the important monuments of the Katas Raj temple complex are as under:-

Stupa of Katas Raj

It is situated in the East of the Katas Raj group of temples at a lower level and a distance of around 40 meters. This stupa was built by Asoka in the 3rd century BC (Cunningham, 1875). The present remains consist of a stone masonry set, in lime mortar roughly measuring 10-12 meters square rising; to a height of about 4 meters 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 1 meter from the present ground level sandstone slabs of moderate size are visible (Cunningham, 1875).

The stupa site is covered with thick vegetation growth and debris is lying all around the site. The excavated Earth is damped near the structure. The exposed structure is consolidated with lime mortar to obtain proper alignment of the structure. Cut and dressed courses of original kind of stones are provided at the corners to ensure the stability of the structure. Further excavations have been done by the Punjab Archaeology Department to work on the original working level. The sandstone flooring found in the South-Western corner of the trench is

preserved. The top of the structure exposed to the vagaries of nature is, water-tightened in a stepped order to define the contour. The information notice board is also provided alongside the Stupa now (Abbasi, 2014).

Alexander Cunningham, the then Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India,

* Lecturer Pakistan Studies, Department of Pakistan Studies, National University of Modern Languages Islamabad, Islamabad, Pakistan.

† Associate Professor, Department of Pakistan Studies, National University of Modern Languages Islamabad, Islamabad, Pakistan.

visited the site in 1872-73. He confirmed the finding stone of Asoka, about 200 feet in height, surrounded by ten springs as described by Hiuen Tsang (the Chinese Buddhist traveller of the 7th century AD). He also mentioned the existence of a ruined monastery on a mound and a broken embankment across the bed stream above the holy pond. Cunningham also identified Katas, the site of a large ruined temple as the site of the Jaina temple, whose partial basement measured

68.5 feet in length and 56.5 feet in breadth. It was ornamented with a row of pilasters supporting a dentilled frieze, similar to the basements of the Buddhist buildings at Manikyala. However, the Jaina temple could not be found by anyone after Cunningham (Abbasi, 2014).

Satghara Group of Temples

Alexander Cunningham during his visit to Katas Raj in 1872-73, identified six pairs of temples (12 temples), situated on the peak of a small hillock. Rows of retaining walls are visible. But only two pairs (4 temples) of Satghara temples are there on Katas Raj hill today (Gazetteer, 1904). The Satghara temples are approached through a series of flights of steps that have been re-laid with dressed Taxila limestone in the recent past. Near the temples, the original flights of steps are visible. The largest among the four main temples is flanked by two other shrines of Satghara. Remains of another shrine could be seen at a distance of six meters towards the southeast of the main shrine at a lower level. Another shrine is located at a distance of 8-10 meters from the main shrine towards the northeast (Gazetteer, 1904).

In the Sanskrit language 'Sat' means 'faithful' or 'truthful' and 'ghar' or 'ghara' means 'house', which means a 'truthful house' or a 'faithful house' but not seven houses (Babary, 2015). These temples are renovated and preserved with the use of plaster and limestone. The upper part of the enclosure measures these temples 1200' × 800'; while the lower fort measures 800' × 400'. There are only two pairs of these temples that exist today (in the 21st century). One pair is of small temples, while the other two temples are quite larger. The whole circuit is about 3500 feet, while the distance between the Katas Raj pond and Ganiya Nala is hardly two miles (Hasan, 2008).

The architectural style of these temples can

easily be compared to the Northern or Kashmiri temple architectural style of India. It is a kind of Nagara style of temple architecture. The main characteristics of these temples are dentils, trefoil arches, fluted pillars and pointed roofs. All these characteristics are found in the Kashmiri temples' architecture. (Hasan, 2008). It shows that Katas Raj was also a part of the realm of Kashmir in the Karkota and Varman dynasties (625-939 AD) of Hindu Shahis in the medieval period. So, the components and characteristics of all the Salt Range temples are the same from Jhelum to Kalabagh. Among these four temples, the largest temple is situated due east and it is 170 feet high from the surface of the Earth. All four temples have been plastered with limestone work by the preservation team of the Punjab Archaeology Department, Pakistan (Hasan, 2008).

Ramachandra Temple

Ramachandra temple is dedicated to Lord Rama, according to Hindu mythology Lord Rama was born on 10th January, 5114 BC and he (Rama) is the 7th avatar of Vishnu. The Hindu mythological book Ramayana describes the life and expeditions of Lord Rama. The

Ramachandra temple of Katas Raj is dedicated to Lord Rama. Alexander Cunningham mentioned in his survey book regarding his visit of 1872-73 of Salt Range's archaeological sites that Ramachandra temple is the latest architecture of Katas Raj, as it was built in the later Mughal or Sikh period (Cunningham, 1875).

It is situated to the East of the Katas Raj group of temples at a distance of around 40 meters. The present building of the Ramachandra temple, comprising stone masonry set in lime mortar roughly, measures 10-20 meters square rising to a height of about four meters 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 (Hasan, 2008). According to a legend 'when Hindus cannot approach the Shiva temple, they then go to the Rama temple'. It is a fact that Ramachandra temple was also a functional temple before the division of India. It has three stories. Its first floor was a living part for the pilgrims. On the second floor, the vacant place of an idol fixture and two Mughal Jharokas (windows) can be seen; while on the third floor, the view of the whole Katas Raj, along with

the temple's shikhara is worth watching (Abbasi, 2014).

An idol is found in the substructure of the Ramachandra temple. According to Cunningham, over the entrance of Ramachandra temple, there was a standing figure; that was three feet in height and made of red sandstone. The idol had four arms. Lotus flowers were in its three hands and the fourth hand was on its backside. It had three heads also, a man's head in the middle, a boar's head in the right and a lion's head to the left, which he assumed would be the idol of 'Tantrika's god Vajra-Varaha' (Gazetteer, 1904). According to Alexander Cunningham, the man's head was presenting the creator, 'Vishnu Narayana'. The boar's head was presented as the saviour of the world, 'Vishnu Varaha' and the lion's head was presented as the ravager 'Vishnu Narsingh' (Gazetteer, 1904).

The age of the Ramachandra temple is 300-400 years old because the red brick Mughal architecture on its front elevation tells the story of Mughal grandeur on its own. From the inside, it is vacant now. The pilgrims bring the sculptures with them on special occasions such as Maha Shivratri, Navratri and Deewali etc and after their worship and rituals; they bring back the sculptures with them. The fresco work on these Jharokhas is outstandingly sophisticated. It has 8 niches for candelabras and 2 jharokha for daylight (Abbasi, 2014).

The wooden door on the front elevation of the Ramachandra temple is 4 by 8 feet. Its ground floor has 3 métiers also to put the statues here. Its sanctuaries are 10 by 30 feet in measurement with a 30 by 30 feet quadrangle. In the trench, at a depth of 1 meter from the present, ground-level sandstone slabs of moderate size are visible. At the Southeast 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 a flight of steps provided from the East. However, to obtain a clear picture of this structure, the surrounding area needs to be cleared by scientific digging. Such excavations may also reveal other facets of the structure and its usage etc. (Abbasi, 2014).

Hanuman Temple

Hanuman or monkey god is also known as the lord of triumph. Hindus celebrate his birthday every

year on the 27th of April. Lord Hanuman was a humble personality and a huge admirer of Lord Rama. Lord Hanuman had a huge army of monkeys under his command. The Hanuman temple of Katas Raj is Prime for Hindus, as it is blessed with the Charans (feet) of Lord Hanuman. According to Hindu mythology, Lord Hanuman was here at Katas Raj at once. Both Ramachandra temple and Hanuman temple are situated parallel to one another. Hanuman

temple is closed to all sites because it is on the western extreme of a higher rectangular enclosure with entrances on the South and the North (Abbasi, 2014).

Close to the entrance arch door of the Hanuman temple, there is an open small area like a cave but it's a human-made cave. Pilgrims often come with their idols and after the worship; they bring back their idols so the cave temple is empty. The walls of the Hanuman temple from inside are decorated with the motifs of Lord Hanuman and his wife. A small niche was also there filled with incense sticks. The innards chamber of the Hanuman temple is 1.5 feet deep and 4.5 feet in height for the placement of Nandi, Ganesha and Hanuman's statues. It is situated 15 feet ahead of the entrance door inside the temple (Abbasi, 2014).

Among Hindus, tales of Hanuman's courage, strength, bravery, innocence, compassion and selflessness have been passed down to generations and it is believed among Hindus that Lord Hanuman is still alive. It is said that Lord Hanuman's first wife was Suryaputri Survachala and after that, he married Anangkusuma, the daughter of Lankapati Ravana. Hanuman was exceptionally strong (capable of lifting and carrying any kind of burden for a cause). He is often called 'Vira', 'Mahavira', 'Anjaneya', 'Bajrangbali', 'Deenabandhave', 'Kalanabha', 'Chiranjivi', 'Mahadyuta', 'Manojava', (and many other such types of names, which signify the attributes of Lord Hanuman as he has 108 names in the Hindu mythology) (Kishore, 2021).

In Hindu mythology, Lord Hanuman is often described as the son of "Pawan" (wind), the Hindu god of wind. Hanuman is known for his extraordinary daring feats and loyalty. The Ramayana describes him as an ideal devotee of Lord Rama (Kishore, 2021).

Caves/Sadhus' Houses

On the other side of the road parallel to the Katas Raj temple complex, there are 7 caves, one can see from Katas Raj temple complex. After entering one cave, there are many other caves inside one cave, which are interlinked to the other caves. In one cave, more than 20 pilgrims can stay. These caves were designed in such a way that their constant temperature is 20° and it never increases in June-July even. These caves are not natural but are human-made. The hill where these caves lie is named 'Kotera'. These caves are known as 'Sadhu's houses' or 'Sadhu ka makan' (Gazetteer, 1904). The caves are seven in number (Abbasi, 2014).

According to a legend, the Pandava brothers structured these caves when they built the Satghara temples to give tribute to their Lord Shiva. After them, these caves were used by pilgrims and Sadhus, who came here for "Tapasya" (penances), however nowadays a youth hostel has been built for the pilgrims since 2012 inside the Katas Raj temple Complex. Pieces of Kanjoor rocks, limestones, animal bones and sandstones are found inside these caves (Fayyaz, 2015).

Well of Pandava Brothers

This well is conserved by the Punjab Archaeology Department, during the restoration activities in 2012. It is on the Eastern side of the Katas Raj group of temples, very close to the seven caves or Sadhus' houses. It has been said that this well was excavated by the Pandava brothers, during their four years' strolling at Katas Raj, out of their fourteen years 'Bin-Bas' (Shakeel, 2021).

Mansion of Hari Singh Nalwa

Next to Ramachandra temple, the mansion of Hari Singh Nalwa lies. It is situated in the middle of the Ramachandra temple and the Satghara group of temples. Hari Singh Nalwa was a valorous military commander and a stern executive of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. His benefactions in the enlargement of the Sikh empire are extraordinary (Bansal, 2015). With his maneuvers, he vanquished even the faraway areas from Hazara to Kashmir and Khyber to Afghan areas; just for the sake of the Sikh empire. His achievements in the Lahore darbar (court) of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh are much more than his contemporaries. When he was only fourteen years of age, he settled a property matter

in Lahore and became an exceptional steward of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh (Bansal, 2015).

In his military court in 1804, at Bhangi Fort Amritsar, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh gave him the title of Sardar and gave his 800 infantrymen under the supervision of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa. He annihilated Kasur (a city of Punjab Pakistan now) in 1807 and seized the renowned Attock Fort in 1813 from Fateh Khan. Later in 1817, he grabbed a little borough of Khushab, named Mitha Tiwana from the Nawab of Mitha Tiwana Ahmad Yar Khan. However, in 1821, he conquered Mankera with the help of Nawab Ahmad Yar Khan (Bansal, 2015).

Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa captured Kashmir also in 1820 by capturing Shopiyan with an army of 12000 soldiers. It was a great victory as Kashmir ruled under Hindu Shahi emperors, Afghan commanders and Mughals for many centuries. So Nalwa became the first Sikh Governor of Kashmir but stayed there for only one year and was expelled by the Lahore Darbar (court) because he was savage towards the people of Kashmir. However, he helped his Kashmiri

counterpart, Dewan Moti Ram, in the famine of Kashmir when he was appointed to the Afghan provinces (Bansal, 2015).

His last appointment was the area, which prevails from the West of Jhelum to Kashmir (Katas and the surroundings) and he stayed there till his death in 1837. So there in Katas Raj, he built a mansion, strategically on a hillocky and appropriate place. He built this mansion in such a mountainous place that the over-view from the Nalwa mansion is bewitching. This is a fort of oval shape, with four citadel-style domes sticking out from every corner. The exterior walls of the Nalwa fort are five meters high and its main wooden gate is situated on the Western side. It is built with huge thick stones. It is in the veranda style from all four sides and its yard is open and airy. Rooms and verandas are simple in their design but thick in their structure (Bansal, 2015).

Shiva Temple Katas Raj

Shiva temple Katas Raj is dedicated to Shiva; as Lord Shiva is the most ancient god of Hinduism. He has several other names such as 'Palan-haar', 'Naag-Abhushna', 'Pushkara', 'Shambhu', 'Shankar', 'Om-Kaar', 'Trishuli', 'Parmeshwara',

'Dev-Deva', 'Bholy-Nath', 'Chandar-Paal', 'Aji', 'Maheshwara' and 'Ashutosh', 'Shri Maleeka Arjun', 'Bheema Shankar', 'Shri Vediye Nath', 'Mumleeshor', 'Shri Maha kalishor', 'Shri Nageshor', 'Shri Vishva Nath', 'Shri Kedar Nath', 'Shri Trimbakeshwar', 'Shri Dhosheshore', 'Shri Swamishore', 'Shri Rameshwar'. He wears the lion's skin as his clothes. And the 'Nandi' bull is his means of transportation (Kishore, 2021).

Hinduism revolves around the two faith communities basically, named 'Shivaite' and 'Vaishnavite'. The temples of both of these faith communities sustain distinguished flecks, to metamorphose between a Shiva temple and a Vishnu temple. A small pointed turret of a Shiva

temple sustains a tripartite bayonet. Under the hidden inner part of the Shiva temple, there is a Linga and an external gateway on the Eastern side is a statuette of the holy bull. The Shiva temples are also known as Shivalas among the followers. However the steeple of a Vishnu temple sustains a ring or circle and under its shelter, a fetish of the Supreme Being is exhibited (Hasan, 2008).

According to mathematician and traveller Al-Beruni, Shiva temple Katas is the holiest temple in Punjab after the temple of Jwalamukhi (volcano temple) in Himachal Pradesh, India (Abbasi, 2014). The temple is 9.5 by 9.5 feet spaced from the inside and it is floored with white marble tiles. At the core of the worship room, a 2.5-foot height Shiva Linga is situated, its colour is grey and it is made of sandstone (most of the Shiva Lingas in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka are grey and made of sandstones) (Abbasi, 2014). The main wooden door of the Shiva temple is 2.5 feet spacious and 5 feet heightened.

The walls of the temple from the inside are painted in white colour. It has a 5-foot height *métier* behind the Shiva Linga and the picture of Lord Shiva along with his wife. This *métier* is 3feet deep also for the placement of the figure of Shiva (Abbasi, 2014). On 17th June 2021, the first figure of Lord Shiva was placed there at Shiva Temple Katas Raj. It was inaugurated by the president of the Hindu Council of Pakistan, MNA Dr Ramesh Kumar, vice president of the Hindu Council and MNA Naresh Chand and a senior member of the Evacuee Trust Property Board, Pakistan Raja Aasar Mul Munglai (Kishore, 2021).

There are 8 stairs, which are going toward the

rooftop of the Shiva temple, each stair is 20 inches long. Shiva temple Katas Raj is the only functional temple of Katas Raj, where a priest is also appointed after the completion of the restoration works. However many priests have quit

their job, as they are of the view that 18000/- PKR salary is not enough for them; moreover, they feel insecure in the hilly and densely Muslim-populated area of Katas.

Only one Hindu family has been living in the Katas Raj since 1991. This is the family of IT teacher Kishore Nand, who is originally from Khewra, district Jhelum and is serving in Punjab School of Mines Katas Raj, as an IT teacher on BPS-17. Mr Kishore Nand often performs the acting priest duties of the Shiva temple Katas Raj, when the appointed priest leaves his job. However, he does not receive the salary of the priest as authorities are of the view that; to give him another salary is wrong because he is already serving as a government teacher at Punjab School of Mines (Kishore, 2021). Pandit Naimat Chand is the newly appointed Pandit (priest) since October 2021 and he also considers this hilly and densely Muslim-populated area dangerous for him and his immediate family as he is also of the view that 18000/- PKR salary is not enough for him and his family in this dearness (Chand, 2021).

Because of the grey Linga, this temple is also known as the Kala Mandir (black temple). Shiva Linga is a symbol that represents Lord Shiva as the most powerful deity. This Lingam represents all the energies in the world and beyond. According to Hindus, 'humans need a symbol to worship, that's why the Linga was created', Shiva Linga symbolizes the creative and destructive powers of Lord Shiva (Rashid, 2005). Because of this temple, the Pandava brothers spent four years of their 'Bin- Bas' out of fourteen years there at Katas Raj and penanced as they were huge admirers and followers of Lord Shiva (Abbasi, 2014).

Havan Kund/Baradari

Havan Kund or Baradari is situated in the middle of the holy pool and the Shiva temple. Baradari on the pool's side is also a place of pilgrims' worship. It is used as a marriage hall also today. Baradari is also known as "Havan kund" as Havan is a ritual in which Hindus offer prayers and get

married in front of the fire. Hindus do Havan because Havan is for the removal of evil influences and it facilitates positive thinking. It lies on the left side of the Shiva temple as it is next to the Shiva temple. It is hardly 6 stairs away from the sacred pond. It has 9 open doorways, which make it airy, 3 doors from each side, however from its Eastern side; it has two wooden windows and one wooden door. Its total space is 50 feet but its core bower (which is often used for wedding Havans nowadays) is 15 by 15 feet (Abbasi, 2014).

Pond of Katas Raj

The holy pond of Katas Raj lies exactly at the core of the temple complex and all the buildings of the temple complex lie in its surroundings. In the past it had several names, firstly it was named 'Vis-Kund' because its water was lethal, then it was called 'Amar-Kund' and after that 'Chamar-Kund'. However in the second half of the 19th century, when Cunningham visited the place, it was called 'Kataksh-Kund', which means 'Raining Eyes'. It was spelt as 'Ketaksh' also by the Brahman Hindus many times, which means 'White Robes' or 'Swetavasa'. It was a sect of Jains; these people were also called 'Digambara' or 'unclothed people' (Cunningham, 2013).

Hiuen Tsiang narrated that this pond is full of snakes but these snakes never harm anyone as the pool is full of Bhagwan Shiva Shankar's tears (Shankar is the other name of Lord Shiva, Shankar means the lord of snakes). Today (in 2021) people can only observe fish and turtles in the holy pond. Cunningham measured that the pool is 23 feet deep but for Hindus, it is irrefutably incalculable. However the pool is 43 feet deep down in North-West and is 44 feet from the Eastern side but after the examination of Abu Rehan Al-Beruni, it was clear that the

pool is not natural but it is man-made. The rocks inside the pool had been cut down once just for the sake of the enlargement of the pool. It was floated in the shape of a waterhole by constructing a hard ashlar wall around it which is 2.5 feet sturdy and 19 feet elevated (Abbasi, 2014).

The Hindu Brahmins are of the view that this waterhole was constructed by Raja Patak, under the supervision of some of the emperors of Delhi. There is a 122 feet long passage slit, which was helpful for the spraying of the nearby area, before

the establishment of the Cement factories in Katas village (Abbasi, 2014). These Cement factories were established in the Musharraf era. The heavy turbines of these factories pulled whole water inside the soil of Choa Saidan Shah and Kallar Kahar. As a result, many gardens of fruits and roses were demolished and the tears of Shiva also fell dry (Shakeel, 2021).

However, the closest factory to the holy pond is the Bestway Cement Factory of Sir Anwar Pervaiz (Queen of England Elizabeth honoured him with the title of 'Sir' as he is an established businessman in England and Pakistan). So, the Bestway Cement Factory has been providing water to the holy pond of Katas Raj through a pipeline since 2017 after a suo moto action of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. There are three Cement factories near the sacred pond of Katas Raj: -

- Bestway Cement factory Tatral
- D.G. Khan Cement factory Khair-Pur
- Pakcem factory Karuli

Hinduism is full of mythical stories, which have been approved wrong by science, so renowned mathematician, traveller and scientist Abu Rehan Al-Beruni (who is the author of the book 'Kitab-ul-Hind', which was originally published in 1030 AD) refused this myth that the

pond of Katas formed from the tears of Shiva because he observed the rocks near the Katas Raj Pond and when gouged under a rock, a sluice came out from the soil. That was proof that the pond of Katas was filled with the sluice's water and not with the tears of Shiva. Besides this, there is a difference of hundreds of miles between the Katas and the Pushkar (Ajmer, India), so it is unreal, unscientific and illogical that these two ponds are the two tears of Lord Shiva, which came out from his two eyes after the death of his adored wife (Janjua, 2012).

Arrivals of the Hindu pilgrims, under the administration of the Evacuee Trust Property Board, took place on the prescribed dates: -

- 22nd February to 28th February 2017
- 13th December to 19th December 2019
- 19th February to 25th February 2020
- 23rd December to 29th December 2020

After the custody of this site, the Evacuee Trust Property Board is now handling Katas Raj

monuments along with other 31 Hindu and Sikh sacred buildings (13 Hindu temples and 18 Gurdwaras) (Basharat, 2021).

Bairagi House

Bairagi house is situated 50 feet above sea level (Cunningham, 1875). It is often called the 'Hermit House' also. Its wooden windows and roofless rooms can be seen from very far away. It is roofless now except for a puja room, which has a roof. This house was built in the surroundings of the holy pool and it is in a quadrangle shape (Abbasi, 2014).

Mansion of Maharaja Sundernath/ Old Library Building

On the right side of the Bairagi's house, a double-story building lies. This is called the mansion of Maharaja Sundernath and sometimes an old library building because it was used as a library when renowned mathematician Al-Beruni came to learn Sanskrit from the Katas Linguistic University. The ruins of this university can also be seen, which are hardly one kilometre away from the mansion of Maharaja Sundernath. This mansion seems less like a house and more like a temple of Lord Vishnu, goddess Kali and Lord Ganesh. The huge shikhara of the temple of Lord Vishnu can be seen from the entrance of the Katas Raj temple complex (Abbasi, 2014).

Mahant Mansion Katas Raj

On the front area towards the yard of the Hanuman temple, the roofless dilapidations of the Mahant mansion lie. These dilapidations are at a distance of just 34 steps from the Hanuman temple. The walls of the Mahant mansion are made of cornerstones and its 65 by 31 feet area is levelled with white marble, however, its niche is decorated with fresco work, where a tree and a couple can also be seen (Abbasi, 2014).

Tunnel

On the Western side of the Katas Raj Temple Complex, a 40-foot lengthy and 12-foot heightened tunnel is situated in the middle of the buildings. This is a marvellous feat of tangible architectural work without the use of ferric in it. It has been said that four out of ten Rig Vedas (Rig Vedas are ancient Sanskrit religious books of

Hindus) had been written there (Abbasi, 2014).

Police Station of Katas Raj

On a mound above the Shiva temple, a building with a wooden front door and 18 by 17 feet marble party line, also lies within the premises of the Katas Raj group of temples. This building served as a police station of Katas Raj and was built by the Englishmen in 1907. This building is 11 steps high from the sanctuary of Shiva (Abbasi, 2014).

Swami's Residence

On the right side of the Baradari building, this three-roomed building lies. It was converted into a priest's residential building in the 1950s. The last resident of this building was a priest named 'Swami' in 1947, who was a lawyer also. These three attached rooms are 16 by 16 feet; however, the building is roofless now. These buildings were tarnished badly by the native community as a symbol of heterodox holiness as they demolished windows, doors, bricks and frescoes (Abbasi, 2014).

Al-Beruni's University

Merely one kilometre away from the old library building/mansion of Maharaja Sundernath, an alone standing building lies at the back side of the Government Primary School Katas Raj. Though this building also lies within the premises of the Katas Raj both of the institutions (Punjab Archaeology Department and Evacuee Trust Property Board) did not pay any kind of attention to it. However, the building is, in a satisfactory condition, made of limestone and solid bricks. This building is known as 'Al-Beruni's University, from where Al-Beruni learnt Sanskrit and wrote his distinguished book 'Kitab-ul-Hind' (Abbasi, 2014).

In his book he foregrounded the culture, language, civilization and religion of the Hindus; especially he wrote about the value of statistics in the lives of the Hindus in his book "Kitab-ul-Hind". This was exactly the place, from where Al-Beruni measured the circumference of the Earth, however many authors are of the view that he measured the circumference from Nandana (Jhelum) and not from the Katas. This building is surrounded by the trees of Tasmanian Blue Gum and the Eastern side of the building is dilapidated now (Abbasi, 2014).

Findings

It is the need of the hour that visa policy should be softened for Hindus and the Evacuee Trust Property Board should contrive at least more visits to the Pakistani Hindu community, who are living in Sindh, KPK and Balochistan. Secondly, many buildings such as the Mahant mansion, Swami's residence, Bairagi house and Maharaja Sundernath mansions are roofless and the red bricks on the front elevation of the Ramachandra temple were affixed again during the restoration works as they were stolen by some malevolent people as a sign of their iconoclastic nature.

Another sample of the iconoclasm is the Malot temples and Shiva Ganga Malkana temples, which are tarnished more than half, not by the extreme weather but by humans, even the bricks of the Malot temples are stolen by the foreigners many times. But including the Katas Raj temple complex, there is no policing or guard system exists there, as on weekends, hundreds of people visit this historic temple. So it is indispensable to deploy guards in uniform or police personnel by the government of Punjab with coordination of the administration of the Evacuee Trust Property Board, inside the Katas Raj group of temples.

Thirdly, it is observed that no priest can stay there at Shiva temple Katas Raj, for more than a few months, on a scarce salary of 18000/- PKR. The current priest 'Pandit Naimat Chand' is also of the view that in this dearth (2021), it is

impossible to make ends meet on this salary. Priest feels insecure in this hilly area (a densely Muslim populated area without the security guards). So the government of Punjab must provide them and their immediate families, security and increase the pay scales of the priests as the Shiva temple Katas Raj is the only operational temple of the district Chakwal.

Except for Kallar Kahar and Katas Raj group of temples, the Punjab Archaeology Department and Evacuee Trust Property Board did not occupy any other historical building, as there are several other chronicled points in district Chakwal, such as Shiva Ganga Malkana temple, Kallar temple and especially Malot as this place has a lot of potential. Moreover, district Chakwal is rich in its marvellous sceneries, watercourses, lakes, cuisines and historical buildings as Kahun Valley was the Center of the Hindu Shahi dynasty (850-1026 CE).

The Punjab Archaeology Department should inhabit more buildings and restore them, in this way, not only the religious tourism will flourish in Chakwal but the local tourism of the district will also thrive as these temples are rich in their heritage and architectural design, which is known as Kashmiri/Northern Indian temple architectural design. Moreover, if the government pays attention to this area, these points are best for paragliding, through such types of destinations; we can emerge a softened image of the country and boost our economy through religious tourism.

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