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A Comprehensive study of some Historical Monuments in Kashmir

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Abstract: Kashmir, often referred to as *Paradise on Earth*, has been a melting pot of cultures, traditions, and architectural marvels. It has witnessed the rule of Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Mughal, Sikh, and Dogra rulers, each contributing to its rich heritage. The region is home to ancient temples, medieval mosques, grand Mughal gardens, and colonial-era structures, reflecting its historical and cultural evolution. This study delves into the historical landmarks of Kashmir, offering insights into their origins, architectural styles, and present condition. These buildings are built of stones that are crafted into some beautiful pieces of art, long before technology is really appreciable. The great planning in these monuments gives an idea about the art and architect of the past, even without the use of major software's that are used today for design. The historical monuments are true representation of art, craft, planning and vision that were used by the rulers. However, today these monuments are not in its original position due to the conditions prevailing in the valley and the negligence of concerned authority.

Key words: historical monuments, Mughal gardens, Dogra rulers etc

I. INTRODUCTION

The state of Jammu & Kashmir has many historical and archaeological legacy that represents its tradition and culture. There has been a very exclusive and glorious tradition of the people of the State of preaching and worshipping of each other's religions and pilgrimage centers [1]. There are well-renowned Muslim and Hindu shrines co-existing that are held in greatest regard by the people of every faith. Buddhism, mostly in Ladakh region of the State, has its origin in the valley and was preached and disseminated by the Kashmiri scholars in its earlier days [2]. These ancient monuments are the wonderful examples of this communal harmony in pilgrimage centres like the one at Hari Parbat where monuments of all three religions - a temple, mosque and gurudwara are standing side by side. Monuments are a vital part of any state of Jammu & Kashmir, and to conserve them is duty of each citizen of the state [3]. Some of the important shrines and monuments of Srinagar city are discussed in this paper.

Ancient Hindu and Buddhist Heritage

1.1 Martand Sun Temple

- **Location:** Anantnag district, Jammu and Kashmir
- **Built by:** King Lalitaditya Muktapida (Karkota Dynasty) in the 8th century CE
- **Architectural Style:** Gandhara, Gupta, and Dravidian influences

- **Significance:**
  - Dedicated to the Sun God (*Surya*), the temple was an architectural marvel of its time.
  - Built on a high plateau, it offers a panoramic view of the Kashmir Valley.
  - The temple was destroyed by Sultan Sikandar (*Butshikan*) in the 14th century, but its ruins still testify to its former grandeur.
- **Current Condition:** Classified as a historical ruin but remains a major tourist and archaeological site.

1.2 Avantipur Temple Complex

- **Location:** Avantipur, Pulwama district
- **Built by:** King Avantivarman (Utpala Dynasty) in the 9th century CE
- **Architectural Style:** Classic Kashmiri stone temple style
- **Significance:**
  - Comprises two major temples dedicated to Lord Vishnu (*Avantiswami Temple*) and Lord Shiva (*Avantisvara Temple*).
  - Features intricate carvings, stone reliefs, and fine craftsmanship.
- **Current Condition:** Mostly in ruins due to natural calamities and invasions, but restoration efforts continue.

1.3 Harwan Buddhist Monastery

- **Location:** Harwan, near Srinagar
- **Period:** Kushan era (2nd-5th century CE)
- **Significance:**
  - Associated with Buddhist scholar *Nagarjuna*, an important figure in Mahayana Buddhism.
  - Features unique terracotta tiles with human and animal motifs.
- **Current Condition:** Some remnants of structures and terracotta designs can still be seen.

1.4 Parihaspora Ruins

- **Location:** Near Pattan, Baramulla district
- **Built by:** King Lalitaditya (8th century CE)
- **Significance:**
  - Once a grand city with temples, Buddhist monasteries, and palaces.
  - Important center of learning and trade during its peak.
- **Current Condition:** Mostly in ruins, with remnants of ancient structures still visible.

2. Medieval Islamic Heritage

2.1 Jama Masjid, Srinagar

- **Location:** Nowhatta, Srinagar
- **Built by:** Sultan Sikandar in 1394, later expanded by Zain-ul-Abidin
- **Architectural Style:** Indo-Saracenic, featuring 378 wooden pillars
- **Significance:**
  - One of the largest mosques in Kashmir, it has survived multiple fires and reconstructions.
  - Famous for its peaceful courtyard and traditional Kashmiri architecture.
- **Current Condition:** Well-preserved and actively used for prayers.

2.2 Khanqah-e-Moula

- **Location:** Srinagar
- **Built by:** Sultan Sikandar in 1395 in honor of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani
- **Architectural Style:** Traditional Kashmiri woodwork with Persian influence
- **Significance:**
  - Considered the first mosque in Kashmir.
  - Houses relics of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani, the Persian saint who brought Islam to Kashmir.
- **Current Condition:** Maintained as a significant religious and heritage site.

2.3 Pathar Masjid

- **Location:** Srinagar
- **Built by:** Empress Nur Jahan in 1623
- **Architectural Style:** Mughal, made of limestone with no minarets
- **Significance:**
  - Unusual in Kashmiri mosque architecture, as most local mosques are made of wood.
  - Historically used as a military garrison by Dogras and the British.
- **Current Condition:** Well-preserved, though not used as a primary place of worship.

2.4 Hari Parbat Fort & Sharika Devi Temple

- **Location:** Srinagar
- **Built by:** Fort was completed by Atta Mohammad Khan in the 18th century, though Akbar built the initial fortifications in the 16th century.
- **Significance:**
  - Houses a sacred temple dedicated to Goddess Sharika (associated with Hinduism).

  - Strategically important in Kashmir's military history.
- **Current Condition:** The fort is largely intact, though in need of conservation.

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3. Mughal Contributions

3.1 Shalimar Bagh

- **Built by:** Emperor Jahangir in 1619 for Nur Jahan
- **Architectural Style:** Persian-Mughal garden
- **Significance:**
  - Features terraced gardens, chinar trees, and flowing fountains.
  - Used as a retreat for Mughal emperors.
- **Current Condition:** Well-maintained and open to visitors.

3.2 Nishat Bagh

- **Built by:** Asif Khan (brother of Nur Jahan) in 1633
- **Significance:**
  - Known as the "Garden of Bliss," it has stunning views of Dal Lake.
- **Current Condition:** Well-preserved as a major tourist attraction.

3.3 Pari Mahal

- **Built by:** Dara Shikoh (son of Shah Jahan) in the 17th century
- **Significance:**
  - Served as a Buddhist monastery before being converted into a Mughal observatory and library.
- **Current Condition:** Maintained as a heritage site.

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4. Sikh and Dogra Contributions

4.1 Mubarak Mandi Palace

- **Location:** Jammu
- **Built by:** Dogra rulers (19th-20th century)
- **Significance:**
  - A mix of Rajasthani, Mughal, and European styles.
  - Served as the royal residence of the Dogra Maharajas.
- **Current Condition:** Some parts have been restored, but others are deteriorating.

4.2 Sher Garhi Palace

- **Built by:** Afghan governor Jawan Sher Khan in 1772, later modified by Dogras
- **Significance:**
  - Administrative seat of Dogra rulers.
- **Current Condition:** Largely in ruins.

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5. Colonial and Modern Heritage

5.1 St. Mary's Church, Gulmarg

- **Built in:** Early 20th century during British rule
- **Architectural Style:** Gothic
- **Significance:** A rare example of British colonial architecture in Kashmir.
- **Current Condition:** Well-maintained.

CONCLUSION

The Kashmir himalaya is a hub of different monuments that is true reflection of art and architecture. These monuments have been built by different rulers over the period of time in order to preserve the art and culture of the valley. However, currently they are not in their original form and most of them have been damaged to greater extent. Concerned authorities have taken measures to renew most of the monuments, but were not preserved as they should have been. Hence, there is an urgent need for the conservation and preservation of these monuments.

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