

A sculptural beauty site Deoparvat, Numaligarh of Golaghat District: An Archaeological Study

Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta and Lima Gogoi

Ex student, Department of History, Dibrugarh University
Research Scholar, Assam University

Abstract:

The deoparvat archaeological site is one of the most important archaeological sites of Assam. Deoparvat archaeological site is believed to be a part of the Doyang Dhansiri Civilization. The architectural plan and the temple plane at Deoparvat are different from the Indo-Aryan temple architecture. The unique style of temple architecture that developed at Deoparvat gave it a regional character. In this paper an attempt will be made to explore different iconic and non iconic structures of Deoparvat and also tries to critically analyze the structural remains of the Deoparvat,

Introduction:

Art in India, from early historical period, mostly served the religious need of the people. Artistic activities are often seen to be associated with religious structures. That's why; it is in religious places that we find the earliest evidences of sculptural activities. H.D. Sankalia observed, 'Indian sculpture is rarely found alone, it had to serve architecture chiefly as ornament of the latter.' The art of Assam is also of religious in nature. The Deoparvat archaeological site is also a religious site where situated a stone temple. The basement of the stone temple between the stone platform at bottom and the cella floor of the garbhagriha atop is endowed with several series of sculptures of human, animal and floral designs in the entire circumference, all symmetrically arranged in a horizontal manner in superb artistic finish.

Deoparvat is located at side of N.H 39 at a distance of 5.k.m from Numoligarh on N.H 37 in Golaghat district. Deoparvat is a small range of hill, where remains of a stone temple in from of a mound existed. Several scholars have studied the remains of the site and published their observation. Attention of scholars was drawn to the stone carvings of various figures of divine, semi divine, auspicious motifs and symbols, human and animal figures, scenes from contemporary life and epical scenes belonging to the CE1000. According to Archaeologist R. D Banerjee the remains of Deoparvat archaeological sites are from ninth and tenth century AD. It was in the year of 2004-05 archaeological exploration conducted at Deoparvat by the Directorate of Archaeology, Govt. of Assam under the direction of H.N. Dutta and Ranjana Sharma for the first time and confirm the existence of temple Architects and sculptures, who devised innovative temple plan on a regional model, the like of which is not to be found in any region of Assam.



It was believed that, the name ‘Deophar’ is given by the Karbi tribe as they believe in this ‘pahar’ or hill ‘deo’ or God resides. But historically this hill is known as ‘Deoparvat’. According to legends, there is a Siva temple in the Deoparvat which was destroyed during the 1897 earthquake. From the remains of the temple we can assume that the Siva temple was constructed over a stone sculpture of an Elephant. Today, the archaeological remains we found in Deoparvat site is of this temple.

Objective:

1. In this paper an attempt will be made to explore different iconic and non iconic remains of Deoparvat.
2. Also tries to critically examine and analysis the art, stone sculptures found in Deoparvat archaeological site.

Methodology:

Both primary and secondary sources have been used for this study. The primary source materials for this study have been collected from extensive field survey. Besides, various secondary sources in the form of books, catalogues were used from the concerned subject matters.

Result and Discussion:

The exposed ground plan of the temple at Deoparvat is unique and first of its kind in Assam. Besides, Kirttimukha, doorframes, flying vidyadhara, gajathara, scenes from the epics of Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Purana, sculpture of Lord Vishnu with Devi Lakshmi, Sun, Moon, Lord Ganesh, Lord Shiva’ Tripurari incarnation and many such other non-iconic art work such as lotus, head hunting scene, rhinoceros, and other floral geometrical carvings etc bear significant trace of the local art style developed at Deoparvat in Assam. All these surviving remains of the sculptures carries a history of well developed stone art heritage from

this place which is belong to the 'Deopani School of Art'.



The basement of the stone temple consists of two compartments, 'Garbhagriha' (Sanctum of a temple) and 'Mandapa' (A hall in front of the main shrine of a temple) laid upon a masonry plate from measuring 10.70m X 9.40m X 0.40m at Deoparvat. The only part of the plinth that was exposed earlier that is the monolithic cellar floor has now rests at a difference of 2.70m from the ground level.

The basement of the temple between the stone platforms at bottom and the cellar floor of the 'Garbhagrha' a top is endowed with five horizontal series of sculptures of animal, human, geometrical, brawl and auspicious symbols of motifs and figures. The expose series of sculptures from the upper part to the bottom are those of 'Gajathara' 0.37m in thickness, 'Kirttimukha' (the grinning lion face popularly used as decorative motif or auspicious symbol) 0.29m in thickness, flying 'Vidyadhara' 0.34m in thickness, lotus design 0.50m in besides, the ground plan of the temple has been found to be circular and attached with a short mandapa in its eastern part, which ends abruptly. The upper limit of the 'Mandapa' from the masonry platform is 2.70m. This leads one to belief that the masonry structures bedecked with sculptural decoration was up as a master piece of art and temple ritual was performed in circumbulation for which 'Pradakshina patha' was perhaps laid around of the other remains, the major architectural component is the ceiling slab (3.80mX4.35m X 50m) of the 'Vimana' bearing a carved 'Viswapandma' (2.40m) containing a graceful figure of 'Vidyadhara' of great artistic finish.

Numerous sculptures found during exposition of the temple plinth indicate that the exterior of the temple at Deoparvat was ornamented with sculptures, friezes, corner pieces, coping pieces from sikhara pillar capital, door jambs horizontally laid series of sculptures and ornamental arrangements, scenes from the epic Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagawata. This approach completely differs with the architectural plan and elevation of the temple plane at Deoparvat from the Indo-Aryan temple architecture. This difference in approach of stone temple architecture provided a regional character of temple architecture that developed at Deoparvat. This, the exposed ground plan of the stone temple at Deoparvat found to have been laid following a local architectural plan laid with the advantage of a natural out crop of rock at Deoparvat.

Other remains include a pair of ornamented door jambs (2.61m X 0.80m X 0.37m and 2.50m X 0.80m X 0.36m) found with a number of Sakhas, arranged vertically into decorative sections of drooping lotus petals and entwined creeper scrolls, with a human figure at the loop at the bottom. The carving of the door frame is remarkably done by employing decorative symbols and motifs both for beauty and auspicious appeal. Evidences of cruciform pillar capitals indicate that these were from the short Mandapa of the temple. Large pillar capitals with their cruciform ends were possibly fitted with Kritimukhas with protruding tongue to large socket eyes. These were possibly arranged to decorate the sikhara as face of glory. Representation of a Kritimukha

at Deoparvat assume more realistic form and with its grotesque feature, may be regarded as a rare example of art in the context of northern Indian temple structure. But the fact is that a regional architectural style and sculptural art from Deoparvat itself.

STONE ART AT DEOPARVAT:

Sculptured panels of divine, semi divine and animal figure, panels of epical episodes decorative art motifs, auspicious symbols and other reliefs are found to have been used as constituent parts of the temple architecture at Deoparvat. The flat treatment of eyes, nose, lips and tapering faces of the figures, at Deoparvat display a native ethnic texture. Depiction of large round 'Kundala' in ears and high tiaras found invariably with male and female figures. Panels depicting episodes from the 'Ramayana' (1.44m X 0.41m X 0.52m), the Mahabharata (1.50m X 0.48m X 0.55m), the Bhagawata Purana (0.87m X 0.43m X 0.73m) and those e.g., three women grinding corn (1.10m X 0.76m X 0.46m) and those E.g. playing of musical instruments and dancing (0.99m X 0.42m X 0.66m) appear to be ideal representations of this development. Animals represented are of two types viz. the natural and fabulous. The former includes elephant, bull, lion, deer, monkey, rhinoceros, snake, horse, all well visible in profile.

Among others sculptures, Siva (0.50m X 0.34m) holding a 'trisula' in left hand, and a 'Japmala' in the right hand which is drawn close to chest, and a bow legged "Varabhaka" (0.58m X 0.28m) are found from the "Pabhaga" of the temple. A figure of Siva standing on "Vahana-Nandi" is found to be a rare icon of Siva.

Two "Krittimukhas" in realistic form used as coping parts on three sides of two pillars capitals are found at Deoparvat. Their faces of this "Kritimukhas" were carved so as to face three direction which seems to be the symbolized mukhas conception of god. A few artistically ornate sculptures of kritimukhas possibly representing the concept of water as



Feminine and maternal, is found as well as at Deoparvat. These Kritimukhas depict lotus stalks issuing out from the mouth of an elephant shown in symbolic form. During 2004-05 four pieces of this category of Kritimukha exposed of these one depicts in the right of 'Saturbhuj Shiva' holding a trisula a danda a 'dambaru'

wearing a 'Mukuta' with a lotus at its top. In the left a figure with a garland in one panel 'Krishna' in 'Vamshivadana' posture is shown. In other kritimukha depict in the right a male figure and in the left a female figure both holding 'Japmala' by right hands close of their chest. Both the figures stand on animal motifs and invariably the stalk of lotus are linked up with the pedestals. This female figure seems to represent 'Iravati', holding her son 'Airavata' (Elephant) symbolizing the life giving force for nature or the fostering divinities as 'Airavata' is believed to be related in many ways to his mother.

The seed vessel of the 'Viswapadma' of massive artistic finishes in three curses of lotus of its ceiling slab therefore found with relief of 'Vidyadhara'. Another 'Caturbhuj' figure of Siva (0.24m X 0.21m X 0.81m) holding a 'Japmala' in the right lower arm, a sula depicting a square 'Younipith' in right upper arm was found 'Parvati' seated on 'Asana' on a lotus bearing natural appeal exposed. The right arm of the figure is broken which seems to have had the same 'Ayudha' of lotus as seen in the left arm of the figure. A 'Saturbhuj' figure of 'Visnu' upon tortoise has been recovered. Figure of a 'Narasimha' killing 'Hiranyakashipu' with minute expression of the details has been found. Many of temple figures are depicted in dancing posture, seated on a stool and reading manuscripts with help of light. The figures in high relief are provided with long garland, reaching up to the knee. A 'Kanthahara' that flows down to the breasts, bangles on her wrists, decorative waistband on her waist provided the figure a superb artistic finish.

Conclusion:

It is found that a high degree of perfection was attained in the decoration of the temple at Deoparvat coping piece from 'Torana', pillar base from mandapa pillar capital with gavaska design and other displaced architectural blocks are found elegantly carved. Carved friezes of 'Flying Vidyadharas' display such perfection that it looks as if the divinities are flying in air and offering ablations to the deity below in an endless sowing motion. A convincing effect of weightless of the figure depicted hovering in the air is achieved in treatment by means of the upward swirling lines of the chest, arms and hand. Bracket figures of flying 'Vidyadharas' are found at Hojai and Pingaleswara ruins at Nagaon and Kamrup districts respectively. But stylistically the Deoparvat ones surpassed them in facial expression and beauty. The sculptures are more narrative than iconic which were possibly meant for breaking the monotony of religious icons. The sculptors carefully utilized most of the architectural partition for filling them mostly with lotus like flowers, meandering creepers, auspicious trees (Srivrksha), amorous couples (matihunas), dwarfish figures (pramathas), figure of 'Iravati' which could also be identified as Maa Lakshmi and other secular and epical scenes from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and texts from the Bhagawad Purana. Some friezes show head hunting, rhinoceros and other subjects bearing local tradition to provide harmony to the total scheme of decoration, datable to CE1100.



It may be inferred that stone art at Deoparvat, basically developed as a form of regional art style, which was innovated in character. It manifests a remote influence has been invariably laid as a specimen of artistic creation by utilizing every inch of the structure as space for carving.

Art at Deoparvat represent the social and cultural taste of the people dwelling amidst nature and natural life. Besides, the artists at Deoparvat represent the inner pliability of elephant lotus human relationship in abstract form which is a unique achievement of the regional stone art flourished at Deoparvat during CE1100.

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