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# Salvaging, Transplantation and Reconstruction of Heritage Sites, Techniques and Problems: A Study of the Submerged Temple of Bilaspur District in Himachal Pradesh

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**Seema Parihar**[1]

## Abstract

The work of safe removal of cultural heritage sites and ancient monuments of any region is known as 'salvage archaeology', and the work of relocating the sites and monuments is known as 'transplantation' of the sites and monuments. Before a monument is transplanted physically, it is primarily studied in detail for its constructional style and methods of bonding the different materials used, the type of foundation orientation and the setting of the monuments, that is, its environment.

## Keywords

Task, transplantation, submerged, power, utilisation, consumption

The continuous and prompt growth of industries and construction of dams over the rivers for irrigation and generation of power projects posed the greatest threats to our cultural heritage in the form of monuments associated with relics of importance. Monuments of historical importance and architectural merits, which are numerous, suffer a lot and are likely to go under water whenever schemes of constructing dams over rivers are either proposed or put into practice. It is therefore our primary duty to undertake rescue operations for retrieval of those antiquities that are buried and are threatened to be submerged under water with the passage of time. Without any bold and safe decision, or without any action plan or delaying the subject matter, these sites and cultural heritage would cease to exist. This work of removal or relocating

[1] Assistant Professor, School of Humanities and Physical Education, C. T. Universities, Ludhiana, Punjab 142024, India.

**Corresponding author:**
Seema Parihar, Assistant Professor, School of Humanities and Physical Education, C. T. Universities, Ludhiana, Punjab 142024, India.
E-mail: simiparihar@yahoo.co.in

the sites and monuments of archaeological importance is defined as 'transplantation of site'.[2]

The work of transplantation is as old as, the human started to think about step marching towards intensifying the civilization, urbanization, modernization, but to save, conserve and preserve their cultural heritage. On the one hand, Firoz Shah Tughlaq of Tughlaq dynasty is famous for his *Tuglaqui* proclamations; on the other hand, he is famous for his transplantation and transfer policies. He had transplanted two Mauryan pillar inscriptions of Asoka's period from their original sites, Topra and Meerut, to Delhi. He had transplanted one to his capital at Feroz Shah Kotla and the other to Pir Sahab.[3] Sometimes, the sites are being transferred and transplanted due to the effect of environment and ambiance or transforming atmosphere.

In Indian tradition, the dams were built for agriculture work from a very early period. In Mahabharata, Narada asked Yudhishthira whether the state has availability of dams for the whole population and are filled with water.[4]

The Sudarshan Lake Dam at Junagarh was constructed by Ashoka Maurya, and later it was renovated by Saka Kshatrapa, Rudradamana.[5] It is inscribed on the Junagarh rock inscription of Sakanda Gupta that he had also renovated the Dam. After independence, several dams were constructed in India. Among these, Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh, Tehri Dam located in Uttarakhand, Sardar Sarovar Dam in Gujarat and Bhakra Dam in Punjab are the most famous dams in India built after independence. In Andhra Pradesh, an area spread around 23 sq. km is the earliest site in world history where such a plan of transplantation was implemented and the Government of India succeeded in this project on a large scale.[6]

During formulating these dams, the most responsible and valuable mission was to conserve and protect the ancient heritage sites and monuments, which were the legacy of our precious historical period. Of these, the transplantation of Buddhist antiquities in Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh, was the first and foremost task for Archaeological Survey of India. The construction of the dam was started in 1952, and after 8 years of hard work and dedication of skilled labour, it was completed in 1960. In the history of Archaeological Survey of India, this project of heritage sites dismantle and transplantation was the biggest achievement which created history while building irrigation Dam across the river Krishna.[7] In this project, at the first stage, all the antiquities of selected area were examined and documented with drawing photo shoots. The proposal plan was made for finishing the work in 6 years. The work was started after 2 years, in 1954, and completed in 1960. In the explored sites, there were hundreds of archaeological sites of Stone Age and middle period which were under threat of disappearing. After focusing on the architectural characteristics of that period, only nine sites were selected for transplantation. In this process, the paintings and models of selected sites were prepared and installed safely on the hillside, and the antiquarian remains of the monuments were exhibited in a museum. Thus, after making a scientific plan,

[2] Batra, *Heritage Conservation*, p. 30.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[4] Tiwari, *Prachin Bharatiya Smarakon ka samrakshan*, p. 151.
[5] *Ibid*., pp. 151, 152.
[6] Batra, *Heritage Conservation*, p. 30.
[7] *Ibid*., p. 31.

the glorious and mythological challenge was taken as a corollary and the ancient heritages were saved from sinking. Otherwise, the rich relics of archaeological importance could have been submerged under water after construction of Nagarjun Dam.[8]

After the success of the project of Nagarjunakonda in the year 1959, the Egyptian government decided to build a dam in Nubia on the river Nile. Through the project, two large temples of Abu Simbel, dedicated to Sun, were in danger. Raja Ramses (in between 1227 CE and 1304) had built the temples. The temple dedicated to the Sun God consisted of three consecutive halls, and it extended 60 metres into the cliff, decorated with many figures of the king and painted relief showing his life and achievements. When the reservoir created by the construction of nearby Aswan High Dam threatened to submerge Abu Simbel in the early 1960s, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Egyptian government sponsored a project to save the site between 1964 and 1966 using a workforce and an international team of engineers and scientific personnel supported by funds from more than fifty countries, digging away the top of the cliff and completely dissembling both temples. These sites were transplanted after taking the financial, expertise help of the experienced teams of archaeologists, engineers and scientists of fifty other countries including India. The UNESCO again appealed for preservation and restoration of the damaged treasures of Florence and Venice due to floods. Similarly, in 1972, the UNESCO formulated a master plan for preserving Mohenjo-Daro remains and the Phoenicians capital city Carthage.[9]

After a thorough stocktaking of the entire antiquarian wealth situated near the rivers Tungabhadra, Krishna, Bhavansai and their minor feeders, twenty-six important sites were recommended for intensive exploration and excavation. Decision to build a Groyne wall in respect of Alampur group of temples, was taken to save the famous Nava Brahms temples. As many as twenty major temples of historical importance were physically transplanted at sites nearby at a higher level.

Thus because of building dams and power projects, there are many archaeological sites and monuments from where the antiquarian remains were removed and shifted to other places and conserved there. To save the archaeological sites of Karnool in Andhra Pradesh and Shrishailam in Mehaboob Nagar, a committee was assigned. After the direction of this committee, the antiquarian remains of these sites were documented for the first time. The state government was also entrusted with the work of excavation and transplantation of a few monuments.

To explain the technical aspects and quantum of work involved in transplantation, such examples are interesting and valuable for the team involved in the efforts of future transplantation projects. In addition to the preparation of detailed drawing and photographic documentation, the other step is to take measures for immediate recovery of all material during dismantling, which can be re-employed later at the time of transplantation of the sites and monuments.

Before dismantling the monuments, the accurate scientific study of the whole structure is a very essential part. Using proper methods and scientific techniques, a site can be re-built in the same manner resembling the original monument. No doubt, the

[8] *Ibid*., p. 31.
[9] Tiwari, *Prachin Bharatiya Smarakon ka samrakshan*, p. 152.

beauty and efficiency of the work lie in the accuracy of the work and the result reflecting the original.

Generally, the methods and techniques adopted for salvation and transplantation are as follows.

## Making the Survey Plan

The first step of 'salvage archaeology' is to prepare the survey plan, showing the current situation of existing monuments in the entire area under threat. In this process when removal and transplantation are required, the team of experienced surveyors prepares a draft after surveying whole sites and monuments, the current situation, soil typology, existing level on earth and under the earth. The record of total height, width, length and thickness is designed briefly and considerably in an appropriate manner. At this stage, the current structure of the sites and monuments with all its safe and damaged relics is investigated and pointed out, so that it can help during transplantation of the monuments to another place. Even the rotten and damaged part of the building is also recorded in pioneering exterior. The detail of this survey is kept in safe hands for the future plan.

## Documentation of the Monuments

Documentation of the sites and cultural object is a very important step. Documentation of the sites and monuments includes the description of region, describing its historical aspects, architectural value of the structure and its associated relics, the construction methods and material used and, above all, the setting, that is, the environment; the original form and alignment should be documented appropriately. Documentation of all the selected sites and monuments is a very significant work, because before transplantation of the monuments to another place, the exact position of the monuments should be confirmed. The documentation should be done from all the sides, and it should include still photography and video, ground plan map and elevation, both front and back. After making the front elevation map, the numbering of the stone should be completed accordingly. The precise numbering of the stone can help during transplantation on the place. The sites and monuments are first documented as a whole, and later all parts should be documented separately. Later, the sculptural part should be documented. Even during the dismantling of sites, the photography and video work should be continued, as later it would help to remind or re-counseling the position, how the parts were connected to each other and what methods or techniques were used for dismantling.[10] Similar techniques are being pursued during repair and renovation of the sites and monuments. After completion of the work of photography and video, the repair is carried out.

## Selection of the Site for Transplantation

The selection of the appropriate sites for transplantation is an important part before dismantling the monuments and heritage sites. All archaeological sites always belong to very ancient period, and selection of the sites was not a difficult job during that age

[10] Shrivastava and Mahapatra, *History and Heritage*, p. 443.

or period, when they were built. It was because the pressure of population was not as much as in the present scenario and the space for building of temples, forts and palaces could be found very easily. Besides this, most of the monuments were built near lakes, rivers and other water sources, making access to water for constructing the monument easy. Therefore, the structure of the new site should be similar to the old one, so that originality of the monument can be reclaimed. The selection of the higher place for site or on the prospective region would not only help in attracting the tourists but also make it striking and eye-catching from the surroundings. In addition, the site can remain safe and dry during rainy season and flood as water flows away towards the low valley. The selection of precise surface is also an important part. Variety of soil also helps in escalating the age of monument or historical site. The soil should neither be moist nor be rock-strewn or coarse. Wet and misty land should be avoided and forbidden strictly, because it is not safe for foundation.

In addition, the sites should neither exist in densely populated areas nor be in the interior, because in densely populated areas, the monuments will always be exposed to danger, and people should always be kept under the perimeter of law; on the other hand, if monuments are situated in the remote area, nobody would like to visit the place. From a tourism point of view, lacking in means of communication and transportation will make the sites and monuments less attractive.[11] No doubt, grounding is confirmed for placement of heavy stuffs and effects, so that it can prevent the foundation later.

## Process of Numbering the Stone

Before dismantling the monuments, all the stones should be documented according to their existing position from both the sides. During this work, the directions should be paid special attention. Stones removed from the northern side of the monuments should be numbered as N-1, N-2, N-3 and N-4 accordingly, from both inner and outer walls. The other architectural parts of monuments such as *amalaka*, *ghatta*, *beej purak*, *sikhara*, *jangha* and *jagati* and moulding should be marked step by step, so that during their re-establishment no changes occur in their present arrangement plan and monument remains similar to the past. In this regard, the colour of the stone should be kept in mind until transplantation of stone.

## Dismantling the Site

The work of dismantling the historical monument/temple is very challenging, and it should be completed according to the scientific methods. To do this work, a skilled team consisting of experts in architecture and engineering is necessary. They should have the knowledge of archaeology along with the architecture.[12] The work of dismantling should start from up to down, and work of transplantation should start from the down to up. In the dismantling process, stones should be dismantled one after another, one number after another, one line after another, so that the work of dismantling the monument is completed accurately.

[11] Tiwari, *Prachin Bharatiya Smarakon ka samrakshan*, p. 153.
[12] Batra, *Heritage Conservation*, p. 30.

## The Collection of the Dismantled Parts

All the dismantled parts should be collected according to their directions in different groups and should be kept according to their building sequence. This will keep them separate from each other and save time while searching for the stone. In this regard, the stone of *mandapa* in one group, the stone of *garbha-griha* in one group and stone of all the directions should be kept and maintained in separate groups accordingly. These stones should be moved either in trolleys or by tractor or truck safely during their transfer to the selected site. Keeping cotton, mattress, soil, grass and tyre or wheel under the stone during transfer increases their safety.

## The Transplantation of the Foundation of Monument

The structure of the foundation of monuments during transplantation should be stiff and hard, and bearing capacity of the site should be of higher potential. So, before starting the work of transplantation, the soil under earth should be checked properly. If it is light weight, then the quality of the soil should be improved, through groundwork. The stone of the foundation work should be connected in the beds made for founding it, to connect them with the underground level. This will increase their protection level under the earth, during earthquakes, floods, rain and other disaster situations.

## Orientation

During selection of sites for the transplantation of monuments, the orientation work is required and completed carefully. For the transplantation of monuments, the site should be on the same orientation or direction as it was on original one. This makes the sites to be looked as original artefacts and structure of the reconstructed site will remain the same. Lack of proper orientation can change the structural position, as well as the structural plan too.

## Atmosphere and Environment

The selection of site is an essential concern for work of transplantation. The atmosphere and environment both have an important accountability in safe measuring of the sites and monuments transplanted. First and foremost thing is that the sites and monuments had remained the part of different locality and environment before transplantation.[13] Therefore, during selection of sites for transplantation of monuments, the similarity of sites should be considered on high priority and site recommended should not be much different as compared to the original sites. Deficiency of similar milieu, environment and impression can change the configuration of structure due to moisture, dryness and heat. In other words, it is well said that the past should be conserved after keeping in mind the future perspective of the monuments. It would help the monuments increase their age and become capable of conserving for future generations as it was in the past after bearing the squall of the centuries.

[13] Shrivastava and Mahapatra, *History and Heritage*, p. 607.

## Proposal of Temple Transplantation in Bilaspur District of Himachal Pradesh

In our country various sites have been transplanted successfully with the help of appropriate planning and scientific methods, and there are some other places of historical importance, waiting for their turn for extensive excavation and transplantation. In 1954, the town of Bilaspur along with several temples was submerged in the Gobind Sagar reservoir of the Bhakra Dam. Of these thirty temples submerged, a dozen of them, built in *nagara* style and dating back to the eighth and nineteenth centuries, were of great archaeological importance.

Historically, Bilaspur was a native state under British rule until 1948 CE, having an area of 450 sq. miles. It was classified as 'C' state keeping up its old state time boundary, which in 1954 became a district of the present Himachal Pradesh. Historically it was a state known as Kehloor, and was established around the eighth century CE, by Raja Bir Chand, whose ancestor ruled Chanderi in Madhya Pradesh.

Administratively, the district is divided into three tehsils, Ghumaravin, Bilaspur Sadar and Jhandutta. Jhandutta was created out of Ghumarwin in January 1998. Naina Devi is a sub-tehsil of Bilaspur Sadar and was created in January 1980. The district is known for its traditional culture, and Bhakhra Dam[14] along with the town of Bilaspur was known for its ancient temples.

Simply stated, Bilaspur had to be merged in 1948 when Himachal Pradesh was formed. However, Bilaspur claimed separate entity for its survival. There was a motive behind union government's move to complete the Bhakhra Dam Project in due time without any further administrative delay and that is why Bilaspur remained as 'C' state in its earlier shape and size.

To complete this project, the people of Bilaspur as a whole and that of capital town had made a great sacrifice. Presently, there is the vast water reservoir of Gobind Sagar, and on its right bank the new Bilaspur Township was laid down in a planned manner, as the large reservoir created by the dam displaced a large population from the district of Bilaspur. About 371 villages were submerged. This large water site has taken the hearths and homes, the bazaars and temples, the *bavdis* and *nauns* of Bilaspur under its water. Even today that generation is alive which had profound emotional attachment with all that had constituted the town of old Bilaspur, which is nothing but a part of history now.[15] The project has created history as a part of its impacts, some old destruction and new creations like Govindsagar Lake and New Bilaspur town and as a ruin those of the submerged temples.

### *Gobind Sagar Lake*

Gobind Sagar Lake, on River Sutlej, has been created by the huge Hydel Dam at Bhakra. It is named in honour of Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Sikh Guru. It is one of the world's highest gravity dams, and it rises 225.5 m above its lowest foundations. To maintain the level of water, the flow of River Beas was also channelled to

[14] Sharma, *The Gods of Himachal Pradesh*, p. 37.
[15] Kapoor, *History, Archaeology and Culture of Himachal Pradesh*, p. 121.

Gobind Sagar by the Beas–Sutlej link, which was completed in 1976. At present, this dam provides electricity and water to a large area. Gobind Sagar reservoir is 90 km long and encompasses an area of approximately 170 $km^2$. There are provisions for water sports, speed boats and ferry rides in the lake. The highest man-made bridge of Asia, Kandaraur is built over Gobind Sagar Lake. In October and November, when the water level of the reservoir is at its peak, a series of regattas are also organizing and Civil Aviation. Water-skiing, sailing, kayaking and water scooter racing are popular water sports activities during this period can also be seen from faraway places.

### *New Bilaspur Town*

The other finding of Bhakhra Dam is New Bilaspur town. The old Bilaspur town, which has now been submerged in the Gobind Sagar, was founded in year 1663, when the capital of the state was shifted from Sunhani to this place; it was situated on the south-east side of the Sutlej. After shuffling, the new Bilaspur Township was built just above the old town of Bilaspur at a height of 670 m above the mean sea level. The New Township Bilaspur has been conceived, planned and built on modern lines and should be regarded as the first planned hill town of the country. The new planned township, 64 km from Kiratpur on the Manali National Highway No. 21, has emerged, which is the seat of district headquarters. The best months of visiting this place are from September to December. Besides, famous Nalwari or annual cattle fair is held at Bilaspur for four or five days in the month of March. The occasion is marked by wrestling and other amusements. A good trade is usually done. These cattle are brought from Nalagarh and neighbouring parts of Punjab to sell over here in the fair. It is easily approachable by the visitors, as regular bus and taxi services are maintained from and to Shimla, Mandi, Hamirpur and Chandigarh. The places of interest are the temples of Sri Naina Devi Ji, Raghu Nath Ji, Gopal Ji, Khan Mukheshwar and Deomati where fairs are held.

Along with the private houses and buildings, around two dozens of temples were also submerged. Of these, some of the temples are of the *nagara* style and belonged to seventh to eighth centuries CE. A special time-bound work plan and advanced technique, skilled hands and expert minds are required to save this national property. Every year during the rainy season, the monuments are submerged in the Gobind Sagar Lake, which again can be seen after 4 to 6 months.

The twelve submerged temples are declared as monuments of national importance and plan to relocate these temples has begun.

## Ranganath Temple

Originally, it was named as Ranhganath temple (Figure 1) and was situated in the middle of old Bilaspur town. It was a group of many big and small temples. Presently, it is situated in Daulra village in Sandhu Maidan. The images installed in the Ranganath temple were made of marble.[16] The temple is square, facing south,

[16] Chandel, *Bilaspur through the Centuries*, p. 14.
[16] *Ibid.*

**Figure 1.** The Ranganath Temple (year 2010)
**Source:** Photograph taken by the author.

oriented north-south, with *triratha* on plan and is built in *nagara* style of architecture. It comprises of a *grabhagriha* and an *antarala.* The elevation of the *grabhagriha* shows the *pitha* over which is the *jangha* topped by *shikhara* and a finial. The *pitha* and *jangha* are devoid of any decorations while the *shikhara* shows five *bhumi amalakas* on each *rathas* followed by finial marked by an *amalaka*. Some parts of *amalaka* are broken (Figure 2). On all the three sides of central *bhadraratha* are niches for subordinate deities. The façade shows a doorjamb of three tiers of different floral patterns with a figure of dancing Ganesha on the *lalatabimba*. Its flooring is plain, while the ceiling is in domical style.

The *antarala* is rectangular in plan oriented east-west with elevation showing the *pitha* and *jangha* topped by a *sukanasika*. Its façade shows a carved decoration

**Figure 2.** The Ranganath Temple (year 2015)
**Source:** Photograph taken by the author.

in very low relief depicting floral and geometrical patterns. Presently the images of Ranganath and other gods and goddesses are placed in Lakshmi Narayan temple in new Bilaspur town.

## Ravi Nath Temple

This is another temple next to the Ranganath temple. The image of Shitala was installed there. This is a big temple located second from north. It is square facing south, oriented north-south with *pancharatha* in plan. It is also built in *nagara* style and consisting of a *garbha-griha* and a pillared *antarala.* It is the most elaborated temple of the site.

The *garbha-griha* of this temple is rectangular, and facing south, oriented east-west with elevation showing the *pitha* followed by *jangha* and topped by *shikhara.* The *pitha* shows different mouldings carved exquisitely with friezes of floral designs, elephant and flying *gandharvas.* The *jangha* shows niches at northern and southern *bhadraratha* with its plan showing a smaller *garbha-griha* and an *antarala* with pillars in the form of a female figure probably representing goddess Ganga and Yamuna. Over them are, at a distance, figure of tigers, while flanking the niches, over each *ratha*, are deity figures in low relief.

The *shikhara* is however devoid of any decoration except for seven *bhumi amalakas* at intervals while the final is absent. The façade of the *garbha-griha* must have been well carved but is presently in a bad state with its lintel lying outside. The flooring is plain with a platform along the back wall while the ceiling is in a domical shape. The level of the ground wall changes every season, with the level of wetland and sandy earth.

The *antarala* is square, facing south with elevation showing *pitha* and *jangha* mouldings similar to that of the *garbha-griha* while the *shikhara* shows the *sukanasika*. The pillars inside show torus mouldings followed by a multi-fluted shaft over which the broken capital can be seen. The flooring is of stone slabs while the ceiling is in a semi-domical type. Its façade is intricately carved with different figures, but they are presently in an eroded form and hard to be identified except for Ganesha seated on the *lalatabimba*. Flanking on top of the façade are two tigers and figures of flying *gandharavas*.

## Small Temple of Batuka Bhairo

In the complex of Ranganath temple, the image of Batuka Bhairo was installed in a small temple.[17] This temple is located about 1.5 km east of temple no. 2 or of the Ravi Nath temple (Figure 3). It is facing south, oriented north-south, and with *triratha* plan built in Nagara style. The image of Batuka Bhairo is placed in Lakshmi Narayan temple, where god Ranganath is worshipped.

**Figure 3.** An Unidentified Temple
**Source:** Photograph taken by the author.

[17] *Ibid.*

## Dhuni Temple

This temple is located about 1.5 km east of temple no. 3. It is totally in a dilapidated form and must have been identical with temple no. 2 in shape, size and features (Figure 4). It is known as Dhuni temple as it was the place of bonfire, and according to the people fire was burning for centuries. Earlier, there was a secular circular hole for fire but now no symbol of this temple located about 500 m south temple no.4 and knows as Dhuni temple is small, square, half-buried temple, facing south, oriented north south with *triratha* plan built in *nagara* style and comprising of only a *garbhagriha*. Presently it can be seen up to the upper portion of the *jangha* with its superstructure above and its central *bhadraratha*. The *shikhara* has the veneering layer almost extinct with only its core remaining while the finial has been renovated in cement.

## Khanamukheshwer Temple

In front of the plains of Vyasa cave in Luhanu Maidan, there was a large temple dedicated to Khanamukheshwer, which is now in a very dilapidated condition. There were two temples, out of which one was dedicated to Kartikeya and in another temple Shivalinga named 'Shanamukheshwer' was placed. Both these temples were built on platforms, which now are submerged and are visible only some time.

**Figure 4.** The Dhuni Temple

**Source:** Photograph taken by the author.

## Gopala Temple

In the submerged temples, this was the sixth temple and was dedicated to Gopala. This temple located about 200 m west of temple no. 5 is a big rectangular half-buried structure, facing south, oriented northeast-southwest with *triratha* plan built in Nagara style and comprising of only a *garbha-griha*, and an *antarala*. Presently it can be seen unto the upper portion of the *jangha* and the superstructure above in its elevation.

The *garbha-griha* of this temple seems to be a square structure facing southwest with its elevation showing nine *bhumi amalakas* topped by a finial of a base and *amalaka.* The *bhadraratha* carries a niche on all three sides and shows a geometrical frieze of design (Figure 5).

The *antarala* is similar to *garbha-griha* up to its *jangha* level over which is then a dilapidated *sukanasika.* The *mandapa* again seems to be square, facing southwest, with four pillars on each side as assumed from the *ghata* style capital over the upper *jangha* portion.

The *shikhara* is in a pyramidal shape topped by a finial of circular base. There seems to be window balconies towards its lateral sides.

## Hanuman Temple

This temple is located about 250 m south of temple no. 6 and known as Hanuman temple. It is a big, rectangular, half-buried temple facing southwest, oriented northeast-southwest with *pancharatha* plan built in *nagara* style and comprising of

**Figure 5.** The Gopala Temple

**Source:** Photograph taken by the author.

a *garbhagirha*, an *antarala* and a *mandapa.* Presently, it too can be seen up to the upper portion of its elevation.

The *garbha-griha* seems to be a square structure facing southwest with its elevation showing *bhumi-amalaka*. The *bhadraratha* carries niche on all three sides and is decorated by floral pattern on top, flanked by figures of a tiger and monkey on both sides. The *antarala* is similar to *garbha-griha* up to its *jangha* portion over which then is a *sukanasika* in dilapidated form.

The *mandapa* also seems to be square, facing southwest. The *shikhara* was in a pyramidal form but presently only the core is visible. Window balconies can be partially seen towards east and west.

## Dhuni Temple No. 2

This temple is located 500 m south to the Ranganath group of temple. It was also known as Dhuni temple. This temple is located about 200 m west of temple no. 7. It is a half-buried temple facing probably south with *triratha* plan, built in *nagara* style and comprising of only a *garbha-griha.* It is half submerged in the silt to the part of door and *mandapa* (Figure 6). Presently it is buried half to the *shikhara* portion and is the nearest of all towards the riverside.

**Figure 6.** Dhuni Temple Number Two

**Source:** Photograph taken by the author.

## An Unidentified Temple

It was located 200 m left of the Dhooni temple. Presently, it is half submerged. It is built in *nagara* style and *triratha* in plan. It is facing to the south. This large temple located to the extreme south and about 500 m south-east of temple no. 7 was a massive structure facing northeast, oriented southwest-northeast, comprising of a *garbha-griha* with *pradakshinapatha*, an *antarala* and a buried *mandapa* (Figure 7). The whole temple is in a renovated form built with modern bricks and plastered with cement and housed by a local resident.

The original structure must have been buried fully, as can be assumed by the deposit nearby.

## Hanuman Temple

The temple was dedicated to Lord Hanuman. This small temple located about 1 km south-east of temple no. 6. *Sikhara* of this temple seems to be built in *pyramidical* style, which is now in ruins. It is facing south-east, oriented northeast-southwest, and it is rectangular in plan, built in pyramidal form and comprising of a *garbha-griha* and a *mandapa.* The *garbha-griha* is square facing southwest with the elevation showing straight, plain walls with tapering *shikhara* from all four sides. The corner of the wall

**Figure 7.** An Other Unidentified Temple

**Source:** Photograph taken by the author.

is carved with pillars in low relief showing *ghata* base. Internally it shows carved alcoves on the eastern and western walls. Its ceiling is in a domical shape.

The *mandapa* is again square facing southwest with elevation showing straight plain walls topped by eight projecting brackets placed at equidistance. Over this is the pyramidal type typical *mandapa shikhara*. A small niche kike window opening can be seen on the eastern sidewall. The entrance gate is broken. It is half submerged in silt.

## Thakurdwara

As mentioned earlier, this temple is also facing the south. It is half submerged and *pancharatha* in plan. It is famous as Thakurdwara, and it can be dated to nineteenth century CE. This small temple located about 500 m east of temple no. 10 is almost fully dilapidated with only its northern half of *garbha-griha* wall standing erect. All around, the collapsed parts of the structure are spread.

## Temple Next to the Thakurdwara

This temple is located in the very south to all. This big temple is located about 1 km east of temple no. 10 and known as Thakurdwara. The temple is rectangular, facing south, oriented north-south, with *pancharatha* plan built in *nagara* style and comprising of a *garbha-griha* and an open *mandapa.* It is next to the Ravi Natha temple in its architectural wealth.

The *garbha-griha* is square facing south, with the elevation showing a *jangha* and *shikhara.* The *shikhara* shows seven *bhumi amalakas* over each *ratha* and carries *bhadramukha* figure at the centre. At corners are carved panels of Narasimha, two seated female figures and a human figure fighting with a six-handed figure with bull/buffalo on top. The façade is fully broken. Internally, the *garbha-griha* shows a huge rectangular niche on all three *bhadraratha* with remains of a decorated, painted panel. Its flooring is of stone, while the ceiling is in a concentric circle type.

There is dire need to restore this lost glory of the ancient town of Bilaspur. Experts in archaeology and architectural science have suggested conducting a technical feasibility study about the condition of ancient temples that are proposed to be relocated. A special time-bound work plan and improved technique, skilled hands and expert minds are required to save this national property. Every year during the rainy season, the monuments are submerged in the Gobind Sagar Lake, which again can be seen after 4 to 6 months. This submerging is devastating the actual structure day by day. The work of salvaging, though challenging, is not unfeasible. An accurate planning structure, selection of precise and pertinent site for transplant, and skilled labour can create a success.

In India, the Archaeological Survey of India is responsible for the conservation and protection of sites and monuments of national importance and the local divisions and circle of states take care of the heritage sites, which come under their jurisdiction.[18] These bodies are responsible for the work of transplantation and protection of these temples too. Many temples have been submerged in water for years and a few of them

[18] *Ibid*., p. 443.

may have been damaged by being covered under silt for months. These are of national importance and form a part of our rich history.

The town is gone—shattered by the swelling waters, buried under the silt of decades, no doubt relocated to another site—but its beautiful temples have managed to hold out thanks to their stone construction and still are waiting for blessed hands and minds to recover that glory of their past. The images that are kept in the various temples inside and outside the temples in New Bilaspur town are waiting like homeless refugees for those steps which will help them to manage their dwelling and once again to make them listen to those religious bells. Similar to the first group of four temples built in the *shikhara* style, it becomes clear that water has not entirely spared them.

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