

Hut type temple architecture, with reference to the Temple of Shri Krishna, Imphal, Manipur.

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Abstract: There are different types of architecture. Among them religious architecture is considered as one of the most important. The important example of religious architecture is temple, which is regarded as place of worship, shelter for the image and holy area of the cult. Generally, a temple was built on a raised platform with flight of steps in front. Its plan is square, sometime rectangular. Among the Hindu temples of Manipur built in the early period is hut type temple. Some of them are still worshipped. Among them the temple of Shri Krishna, Imphal East, Manipur is one of the best example of hut type temple of Manipur. The historical development of the temple and its architectural style offer an almost uninvestigated and unexplored field of study. This temple threw significant light on the development of the art and architecture and religious life of the people of Manipur.

Keywords: Art, Architecture, Arch, Curvilinear, Cornice, Curve, Deity, Hut type, Kalasa, Pedestal, Porch, Religion, Roof, Sikhara, Sanctum, Stupi, Temple, Tower, Wall.

I. Introduction

The temple of Shri Krishna is located at Imphal East, Manipur. The temple is attributed to Maharaja Garibniwaz (1709-1748 A.D.), son of Maharaja Charairongba (1697-1709 A.D.) and is believed to have been built in 1722 A.D. The temple is dedicated to Lord Krishna and his consort Radha. The temple is still worshipped by the Guru Aribam family (a Brahmin family). Maharaja Garibniwaz (1709-1748 A.D.) was a great conqueror and also a great administrator. He invaded Burma seven times and defeated Burmese rulers and captured many important towns. Garibaniwaz also defeated the Tripurees invaders. He made many social and religious reforms. He himself initiated to Ramandi Vaishnavism through a Brahmin priest and declared Hinduism as state religion. During his reign many Hindu Brahmins were visited and settled in Manipur. The immigrants not only practice their own culture, tradition, religious belief but also helped the original inhabited people for the conversion to their belief and practice which helped to enrich culture and literature of Manipur. Many architects and masons were also visited from Burma and Bengal in the early part of the 18th century A.D. They contributed for the growth of new styles of art and architecture in Manipur. Maharaja Garibaniwaz made many image of Hindu gods and goddess including Rama, Krishna, Kalika and Hanuman etc. He also constructed temples of these deities in different parts of Manipur. Among them, the temple of Shri Krishna is well designed and the architecture is an improved version of the hut type architecture of Bengal.

II. Objective & Methods

The aim of the paper is to study the architectural style, historical development and its contribution in the society. The paper is also to interpret literary sources in the light of the information gathered from field investigation and to compare and bring them together. The present paper is based on the field investigation. The site of the temple was explored and studied the materials to finalise the facts. Emphasis has also been laid on the study of the general layout, ground plan and vertical feature of the temple structure.

III. Discussion

The temple is built of well-burnt bricks and mortar. The size of the brick is 33cm. long, 24cm. broad and 5cm. thick. The structure of the temple can be divided into five distinct sections; (i) *Adhishthana*, the pedestal on which the temple stands, (ii) *Garbhagriha*, sanctum cube or shrine, (iii) *Antarala*, porch hall, (iv) hut-type roof, and (v) the crowning cape with *Kalasha*. The sanctum hall of the temple was built on a square ground plan and a rectangular ground plan of the porch hall (*antarala*) with flight of steps in front as *sopana*, entrance terraces. The ground plan of the sanctum is 6.20X6.20square meters. The pedestal in which the temple stands is 1.45m height which is formed by moulding a series of bricks laid one upon another. The pedestal is formed by seven course of moulding. The temple is facing south. The walls of the sanctum hall raised vertically from the basement and meet the semicircular cornices. There are four moulding semicircular bold cornices projected in the four sides of the upper part of the sanctum wall just below the semicircular eaves of the roof. The *bhitti* is 2.95m height and 1.06m thick. Four pilasters are provided at the corners of the walls which supported roof of

the sanctum hall. The internal structure of the temple or *Garbhagriha*, in which deity is kept, is rectangular consist of 2.50m breadth and 2.90m length. On the eastern and western *bhitti* of the sanctum hall provided two arch windows measuring 80 cm. height and 50 cm. breadth. Two small arch cells provided in the internal portion of the southern wall of the sanctum. The largest one is 40cm. height and 30cm. breadth.

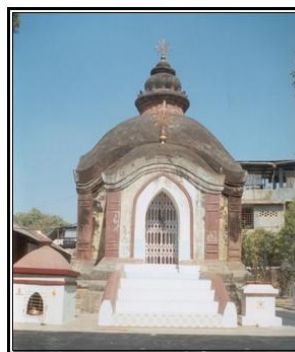
The hut type roof of the sanctum hall is slightly hemispherical in shape. The four sides of the eaves are designed as semicircular arch. The four corners of the arches meet at the angle of 45 degree. The topmost part of this temple structure is decorated with floral motifs and a circular crown is place above it. The circular crowning cape has two *Kalashas* (pot form) placed one upon another. The most important distinct feature of this structure is *Nilachakra* (wheel) which is fixed on the top vase of the *kalasha*. This *Nilachakra* identified as weapon of Lord Krishna. The sanctum hall is interconnected with the porch hall. The porch hall is 4.10m. height from the ground level. The plan of the porch hall is rectangular which is 4.13m length and 1.70m breadth. The wall of the porch hall is 1.80m height. The wall is raised street without any decoration and meets the curved cornice. The inner space of the porch hall is 1m breadth and 1.5m length. The porch hall has a lancet type of arch opening as doorway to the south and forming main entrance of the temple. The arch doorway is 1.90m height and 90cm. breadth. An Equal type of pointed arch projected on the wall of the porch hall as decoration of the entrance door. Another interesting feature is that the finial of the porch is an exact replica of the sanctum roof but smaller in size. However, there is no decoration of floral motifs and circular crowning cape above the surface of the roof of the porch. Flight of steps lead to the entrance door of the porch is another feature of the temple. The flight of steps is 2.48m breadth and 2.60m length. Near the south eastern corner of the temple there is a small shrine of *Garuda* which is square in plan with a domed roof. A bell post and *mandapa* of the temple made of bricks and cement are later construction of modern designed. Originally, the *mandapa* of the temple was built of wood and thatch.

IV. Stylistic Affiliation

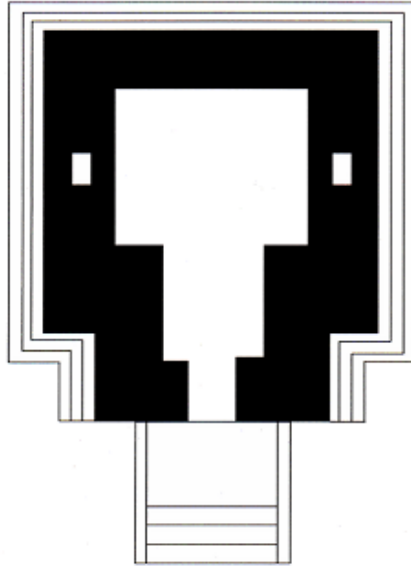
There are four types of architectural designed found in Manipur i.e., (i) Indigenous style, (ii) South-East Asian style, (iii) Northern Indian style and (iv) Indo-Islamic style. From the investigation of the architectural style, it is cleared that the temples of Manipur are more akin to Northern Indian temple type. However, the temple of Shri Krishna is stylistically affiliated to the Twin *Char-Chala* hut type temple of late medieval Bengal.

V. Conclusion

The Bengali hut type temple style dominated till the beginning of the 19th century A.D. in the construction of Hindu temple. The hut style based on imitations of the common village house of mud or bamboo with thatch roof built in Bengal. Some of this type of temple dedicated to Lord Radha-Krishna and Lord Hanuman are still became the most popular worshipping centre in Manipur, such as Hanuman temple at Mongba Hanba, temple of Shri Krishna at Imphal east, Manipur etc. From the second half of the 19th century A.D., the architectural trends of temple appear to have much changed in comparison to the predecessors. This period marked the best synthesis of the Muslim ideas and Hindu method in the temple construction. From this period, experimented with numerous geometric forms and adopted different style in the construction of temple. The Indo-Islamic style was popular in this period both secular and religious buildings. The temple of Shri Krishna is still worshipped and run by the Guru Aribam family with the support of the locality and community. The temple is remain busy throughout the year with socio-religious activities such as scripture reading, devotional singing sessions, ritual, feasting, weddings, funeral ceremonies. Ritual connected with the various stages of life such as initiation into the Vaisnavism, marriage and death rites and connected ceremonies were also performed in the mandapa of the temple. During the time of religious festival and ceremonies people not only of the locality but also of the neighbouring region got together under the auspices of the temple. People often assembled there to discuss local affairs and sometimes to hear the exposition of sacred literature such as the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Gita.



a. Front View



**b. Plan-Over-Plinth
Temple of Shri Krishna**

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