

= Deogarh , Uttar Pradesh =

Deogarh is a village in Lalitpur district of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh . It is located on the right bank of Betwa River and to the west of Lalitpur hills . It is known for Gupta monuments and for many ancient monuments of Hindu and Jain origins are in and outside the walls of the fort .

The Gupta temple dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu , popularly known as the Dashavatara Temple , is the earliest known Panchayatana temple in North India . The fort on the hill is dominated by a cluster of Jain temples on its eastern part , the oldest of these dating to the 8th or 9th century . Apart from Jain temples , the wall frescoes of Jain images of " iconographic and the stylistic variety " , are special features of the fort . The three ghats ( ghat means " flight of stone steps leading to the river " ) , which provide approach to the Betwa river edge from the fort ? the Nahar Ghat , the Rajghat and the ghat with the Siddh ki Ghufa ( saints cave ) ? are also of archeological significance .

The Deogarh monuments are protected by the Department of Archaeology of the Archaeological Survey of India ( ASI ) , and managed through its Northern Circle Office located in Agra . ASI maintain an archaeological museum at the Deogarh site , which is noted for its treasured archaeological sculptures .

= = Etymology = =

" Deogarh " derives from the Sanskrit Deo and garh , " God " and " fort " , compounded to mean " fort of the Gods " . This term , " House of God " , is also widely used as a place name for villages in the vicinity of temples within fort @-@ walls throughout India .

= = Geography = =

Deogarh village lies on the right bank of the Betwa River , at the point where it joins the reservoir formed by the Rajghat Dam . The village is at the western end of the Lalitpur hill range , situated 23 kilometres ( 14 mi ) south @-@ east from Lalitpur town in Lalitpur district and 123 kilometres ( 76 mi ) south of the divisional administrative centre at Jhansi . The village is spread over an area of 5 square kilometres ( 1 @.@ 9 sq mi ) with an average elevation of 211 metres ( 692 ft ) .

The fort of Deogarh is in a valley which generally has a gentle slope . The valley is formed by the Betwa River at the western end of the hills of the Vindhya Range . Known earlier as Vetravati ( Sanskrit , meaning " containing reeds " ) , the Betwa River is a tributary of the Yamuna River , and skirts the fort hill on its southern side . The river , flowing at a bend near the fort , has a rocky bed . It flows in a cascade of deep pools with steep rocky banks of sandstone formations . The fort is located on a precipice of the steep cliff , just above the river on its right bank .

= = Demographics = =

According to the 1991 Census , the population of the Deogarh village was 553 . Hindi and Bundeli are the languages spoken in the area . The Census figures of 2001 for the Deogarh village in Birdha block of Lalitpur district ( Rural ) , has recorded a population of 699 covering 125 households . The distribution of male and female population was 375 and 320 respectively . The village had presence of 314 Schedule Caste ( SC ) population ( Male @-@ 164 and Female @-@ 150 ) . The literacy rate recorded was 43 @.@ 77 % ( 306 persons out of total of 699 ) .

= = History = =

Deogarh 's strategic location on the ancient route to the Deccan Plateau made it a historically important place . Its antiquarian , archaeological and epigraphical importance are linked to the Gupta period , the Gurjara ? Pratiharas , the Gonds , the Muslim rulers of Delhi , the Marathas and the British eras .

The earliest religious influence in the Deogarh area can be traced to the Gupta period ( 320 @-@ 550 ) , known as the " golden period " of Indian history . This was followed by the Jain period between the 8th and 17th centuries , where innumerable temples have been traced .

The present village 's history has not been examined at depth , even though many inscriptions have been located in the fort and the valley , relating to various stylistic and palaeographical denominations . Although the dynasties who ruled over the territory are known , who built what is not clear , except for the Jain temples , which were built by the merchant Jain community . More archaeological explorations would therefore be essential , to establish the linkages of building activities with the dynasties who ruled over the territory , considering the enormous amount of Hindu and Jain temple remains and artifacts found here .

The earliest history of Deogarh is that of the architectural evolution traced to the ancient Gupta period , which flourished between the 4th and 6th centuries in Northern India . During this period , the arts , science and literature saw aesthetic evolution . It was the period when Brahminical , Buddhist and Jain activities flourished .

During this time , sculptural arts peaked and " India entered upon the classical phase of sculpture " . Even though Guptas were Hindu rulers , the cultures of Buddhism and Jainism also flourished during their reign . During this period , Buddhist sculptures were more puritanical with total elimination of nudity in its depictions . However , transparent tight fitting drapery were dictated by moral values and hence , were restrained . Indian temple architecture emerged with figurine sculptures in decorative settings , attaining excellence of form . This is inferred from the large panel of Sheshashayi Vishnu ( Hindu god Vishnu reclining on the serpent Shesha ) at the Deogarh temple . < jominhg to >

= = Monuments = =

The Deogarh monuments can be categorized based on their location at valley and fort temples , which are generally built with sand stones of brick @-@ red colour . The valley temples consist mainly of Hindu temples from the Gupta period near the Deogarh village .

= = = Shantinath Temple = = =

The fort temples are dominated by the Jain temples in the eastern part of the hill fort ; the jaina images here are mostly of the " iconographic and the stylistic variety " . The Jain temples have a large number of panels depicting scenes from Jain mythology , tirthankara images and votive tablets . The pillars are carved with a thousand Jain figures .

According to a survey conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India ( ASI ) , 31 Jain temples of different sizes , age and character have been deciphered . All these are dated later than the Hindu temples . They are categorized into two distinct periods : the early medieval period from 850 to 950 , and the medieval period between 950 and 1150 . During the Islamic iconoclastic depredations , the temples were devastated ; this was compounded by the growth of vegetation and neglect of maintenance .

The Jain temples have also been examined individually and reports prepared by ASI . The number of images and inscriptions for each temple have been recorded . These findings testify their political history and early medieval status . Out of the many sculptures in the Jaina compound , at least 400 carvings were worthy of recording for their " stylistic and iconographic variety " .

The extravagance of the intricacies of the Jain sculptures are similar to that of nearby Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh and adjoining areas of Bihar . Jain sculptures lie scattered on both sides of the path from the gate , on the walls of the fort . A notable pillar seen here is called the Manastambha . The complete image of each of the 24 tirthankaras depicting the emblem of a bird , flower or animal are seen here . Images of Yaksha and Yakshini are also part of such depictions . Thousands of sculptures are seen embedded in the walls surrounding the complex . The large number of idols lying scattered around the fort area is attributed to the fact that this was the sculptors ' workshop .

Worship at some of the Jain temples are still held regularly . The most famous of the Jain temples

in the fort is the Shantinath temple , which was built before 862 AD . It is testament that a prosperous Jain community lived in this region . In 1959 , robbers looted a number of Jain images or even cut off heads of many images . This resulted in the Jain community of the area taking precautionary action by setting up a temple committee . This temple committee oversees the protection of the monuments and work to improve the ambience of the entire place . It has been suggested however , that restoration works be carried out on more scientific terms , following guidelines set by " UNESCO 's World Heritage Sites " .

Within a 50 miles ( 80 km ) radius from Deogarh , the Parwar community of Jains have lived in 1 @ , @ 438 towns and villages ( as per 1924 records ) ; the largest number of them living in Lalitpur .

= = = Dashavatara temple = = =

The " Gupta Temple " , dedicated to god Vishnu , was first discovered by Captain Charles Strahan . It was given its name by the archaeologist , Cunningham . Archaeologists have inferred that it is the earliest known Panchayatana temple in North India . It was subsequently renamed by Cunningham as Dashavatara Mandir or Dashavatara Temple ( because the temple depicts ten incarnations of Vishnu ) , and also as Sagar Marh ( meaning : the temple by the well ) . It was the first North Indian temple with a shikhara or tower , although the shikhara is curtailed and part of it has disappeared . The temple has a high plinth and is set with a basement porch . The Dashavatara temple has a " compelling presence " in spite of its dilapidated condition . Sculpted panels are seen on the terraced basement , with carved figurines of river goddesses Ganga and Yamuna flanking the doorway to the sanctum sanctorum . In addition , on the side walls , three large carved panels of Vaishnava mythology related to Gajendra Moksha , the Nara Narayana Tapasya ( austerities ) , and the Sheshashayi Vishnu ( reclining on the serpent ) , are portrayed . A protective wall made of undressed stone was built around the temple after it was first discovered . However , the idol of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple is missing , believed to have been relocated elsewhere. The ancient treatise Vishnudharmottara Purana describes several temples including a " Sarvatobhadra temple " , which has been identified by archaeologists and Indologists with the Dashavatara Temple .

= = = Fort = = =

The fort on the hill is located a few hundred yards east of Deogarh village . The fort , when originally built , was known as ' Karnali ' . Subsequently , it was renamed " Kirtigiridurga " after it was built in 1057 ( samvat 1154 ) during the reign of Chandela King Kirtivarman . However , some believe that fort was built earlier by the Pratihara rulers of Kannauj in the 9th century , changed hands from the builders to the Chandelas and the Bundelas , before it came under the control of the Scindias of Gwalior .

The fort has an external wall for the most part , except in stretches where the steep hill slopes towards the Betwa river . It is also subdivided by many internal walls . A circular structure , the west gate and the east gate ( south @ - @ east of the Jain temples ) are notable monuments . Additionally , there are two gates of entry into the fort , the " Hathi Darvaja " meaning " Elephant gate " , and " Delhi Darvaja " which means " Delhi gate " .

There are three ghats which provide approach to the Betwa river edge , which have archaeological significance . These are the Nahar Ghat , the Rajghat and the Ghat , with the Siddi ki Ghufa ( Saints cave ) .

The Nahar Ghat ( " nahar " means boat ) at the east end of the fort , has steep steps that go down from the plateau of the fort to the Betwa river . The ghat is aligned parallel to the wall of the cliff and the river . The " Siddhi ki Ghufa " ( Cave of the Saint ) , is an archaeological find , located on the cliff wall to the left , along the descent from the Nahar Ghat . While descending via the Rajghat , the cliff wall is to the right . It is a plain cave . The cave depicts , on its right , an image of the goddess Mahishasuramardini .

The cliffs above the three ghats are embellished with Gupta sculptures and inscriptions dating from

various periods . The Nahar Ghat has about a dozen niches , which house lingas and various deities . From an archaeological perspective , this ghat is considered the richest of the three flights of steps . The Rajghat ( Kings steps ) also accommodate more than a dozen niches with lingas and statues , but the sculptures are small and in an unfinished state .

Matrika statues ( seated ) are also important archaeological finds at the Nahar Ghat and Rajghat sections , as they establish early sculptural activity in the 6th century . Both these matrika panels are flanked by images of Vinadhara Shiva ( Shiva as " bearer of the vina " ) and his son Ganesha , though with differences in detailing . The sculpted figurines show large breasts , tiny waists and broad hips .

The Varaha temple is also situated in the southeast corner of the fort . But it is in ruins except for a few architectural fragments .