

A Study of Pre Modern Monuments of Etawah: Historical Perspective

Prof.(Dr) Shailendra Kumar Sharma
Principal & Professor of History,
Chaudhary Charan Singh PG College,
Heonra, Etawah.
Affiliated to CSJM University, Kanpur

Abstract:

Etawah, a city nestled on the banks of the Yamuna River in the Uttar Pradesh, boasts a rich history, culture and heritage that spans centuries. The pre-modern monuments of Etawah bear testament to the architectural prowess of their time. These structures are not mere edifices but living testaments to the skills and creativity of craftsmen who meticulously carved stone, erected towering temples and designed elaborate step wells.. The urban planning of Etawah during different periods is evident in the layout of its forts, temples, gardens, showcasing a harmony between nature and human creation.

The study of Etawah's pre-modern monuments not only provides insight into the city's history but also underscores the importance of preservation and conservation. As urbanization and modernization continue to reshape Etawah's landscape. These monuments stand reminders of the city's roots and offer a bridge between the past and the present.

Key Words: architectural styles, temple, monuments, brickwork, monuments.

Introduction :

Etawah is situated between 26 47" north of latitude and 72 20" east of longitude in the central Uttar Pradesh forms a part of the Kanpur Division¹. It is existed on the ancient route from Agra to Allahabad. The district of Etawah is bounded by Farrukhabad on the north east, mainpuri on the north, Firozabad on the North West and Auraiya on the east side. The Nomenclature of Etawah has been derived from the word 'Intawa'. Where 'Int' means brick and awa means brick coming. As per the legends, the Etawah was founded by Chauhan Ruler Sumer Shah. It is said that Sumer Shah came to take bath in the river of Yamuna; he saw a goat and a wolf drinking water at the same place. He consulted this event with astrologers who advised him to lay the foundation of the fort at that place. When the digging took place on foundation, he got a brick of gold and silver. He was called out ' Int aaya ! Int aaya!', meaning brick has been found. This Int aaya has been corrupted to *Intawa or Itawa or Etawah* in course of time.² As per the tradition Etawah was attacked by Mahmud of Ghazni. Later on Shihab-ud-din Ghoris has occupied and plundered Etawah after defeating the Kannauj ruler Jaichand. The victorious army of Ghoris also plundered and garrisoned village

¹ www.etawah.nic.in

² Varun, Dangli Prasad : Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers, published by Government of Uttar Pradesh, 1986. P.1

‘Asai’, the treasure house of Jaichandra.³ In Etawah, a fort was built by the Chauhans and it means Etawah was remained under the occupation of Chauhan rulers. Then it was passed into the hands of Muslim rulers. During 15th century Etawah under the possession of Sharqui dynasty of Jaunpur. It was mentioned by the Mughal ruler Babur in his memoirs entitled Baburnama. With the fall of Sharqui dynasty it came under Lodis. During Mughal period, with the expansion and consolidation of Empire under Akbar, Etawah became the Mughal territory. Under the Mughals especially in the 17th century Etawah was a famous banking and commercial centre. In the administrative and territorial restructurization of 1580 under Akbar, the District of Etawah divided into four sarkars of the suba of Agra. The western part of district under the name of Etawah merged in the sarkar of Agra with a revenue of 1,07,59,365 dams.⁴ The north of Bharthana and Bidhoona and north eastern portion belonged to the mahel of Sakatpura in the sarkar of Kannauj with an area of 22,561 bighas and revenue of 6,23,441 dams. Phaphund and Bidhuna was the part of mahel of Sahar. In the fifth regional year of Akbar’s reign, Etawah was granted as jagir to Bahadur Khan, a mansabdar of Akbar. From that time onwards no reference of Etawah has been found in the contemporary sources. Later on when Rohilla Kingdom, was established in Farrukhabad, Etawah region came under the sway of Rohillas. For some time Marathas captured and occupied Etawah during the third battle of Panipat in 1761. As a result, Rohillas again captured the Etawah from Maratha in 1762. From 1774 to 1801, the district of Etawah remained under the Nawabs of Awadh. When then Nawab of Awadh Saadat Ali Khan in 1801 entered into the treaty with British, Etawah was surrendered to British. Therefore, Etawah was remained under the possession of British government and continued to remain till 1947.

Etawah was very meagerly referred in the pre-modern sources. Though these sources highlight the strategic and political significance of Etawah. In spite of all, no work has been done on the historical monuments of Etawah. Moreover, no attempt has been made to study the development of architecture and building technology used in the construction of various structures in and around Etawah.

Objectives of Study

³ Atkinson, E.T. : Statistical, Descriptive and Historical Account of the North-Western Provinces of India, Vol IV, Agra Division, Part I (Allahabad 1876), P 363

⁴ Varun, Dangli Prasad : Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers, published by Government of Uttar Pradesh, 1986

It is very imperative to study the architecture and building technology used in the historical structures scattered in different part of the district to fill the gaps in the history of science and technology during the pre-modern period by using the architectural tools.

Secondly, as Etawah has several water bodies of different nature, which are get to studied scientifically. So the study of hydraulic technology as represented by the water bodies is also targeted.

Scope of Research:

Since the region of Etawah was occupied by a number of ruling dynasties in the course of time, it witnessed the structural activities on a large scale. As Etawah was situated on the ancient road passing through Agra to Bengal, A large number of monuments were constructed by the rulers of different dynasties as per their own taste and architectural styles. Thus in and around Etawah, a large number of building such as fort, temples, palaces, sepulchral structures, gateways, waterworks, mosques etc were built which are still unparallel so far as their architectural styles, decorative pattern, spatial organization etc are concerned.

Limitations of Research:

Historical records about some monuments may be incomplete or lost over time, making it challenging to gather comprehensive information about their origins, construction etc. There are limited historical documentation, lack of resources, bias and cultural influences, changing landscape, reliability of sources are the basic limitations of the study.

Hypothesis:

The architectural diversity and cultural significance of the monuments in Etawah reflect a rich historical tapestry shaped by cross-cultural influences, artistic expressions and religious practices, contributing to a deeper understanding of the city's heritage.

Need and purpose of Research Study:

Many monuments in Etawah hold historical, architectural and cultural significance. Conducting research helps document and preserve the knowledge about these monuments, ensuring that their heritage is not lost over time. Researching these monuments provides insights into the city's past, construction techniques, cultural and historical values. This research can influence urban planning, policies related to heritage preservation, conservation at local levels.

Research Methodology:

I investigated historical documents, inscriptions, maps and the records from archives, libraries and museums to gather information about monuments' origins, construction and historical context.

Research Techniques: I used archival research, field surveys, photographic documentation, interviews and oral histories, literature review, architectural analysis etc.

Mythology and Legends:

Embedded in the temple's existence are tales of ancient legends and mythological narratives. The goddess Kali, often associated with power and protection, is believed to bestow blessings upon her devotees. Stories of her triumphs and benevolence echo through the corridors of the temple, adding layers of significance to its hallowed grounds.

Some Pre Modern Monuments in District Etawah :

1. Kali Bahan Temple :

In the heart of Etawah, where the currents of history, devotion, and culture converge, stands the enchanting **Kali Bahan Temple**. This sacred sanctuary, revered by locals and pilgrims alike, offers a glimpse into the profound spirituality and timeless traditions that define the city's heritage.

The Kali Bahan Temple, dedicated to the revered goddess Kali, holds a special place in the hearts of those who seek solace, blessings, and connection with the divine. Its origins are steeped in mythology and local folklore, casting an aura of mystique that draws visitors from far and wide.

Architectural Splendor:

As you approach the temple, you're immediately struck by the intricate architecture that adorns its façade. The temple's design is a symphony of intricate carvings, ornate spires, and vibrant colors. Elaborate stone sculptures depicting deities and mythical creatures serve as silent guardians, welcoming devotees into a realm of sacred beauty.

Spiritual Serenity:

The temple's interior is a haven of tranquility, providing a refuge from the bustling world outside. The scent of incense wafts through the air as devotees offer prayers and light lamps, their faces illuminated by the warm glow of flickering flames. The atmosphere is charged with

an energy that transcends the material world, inviting all who enter to partake in a spiritual journey.

Cultural Significance:

Kali Bahan Temple is not merely a place of worship; it's a cultural epicenter that weaves the fabric of Etawah's traditions. Festivals, rituals, and celebrations held within its sacred walls unite the community, fostering a sense of unity and camaraderie. Through its cultural activities, the temple serves as a living testament to the enduring spirit of the city's inhabitants.

Preservation Efforts:

As the sands of time continue to flow, the guardians of the Kali Bahan Temple remain committed to preserving its sanctity. Restoration projects, community initiatives, and the dedication of local volunteers ensure that the temple's sacred heritage remains intact for generations to come.

A Haven for Seekers:

For seekers of the spiritual and the curious alike, Kali Bahan Temple offers an invitation to embark on a unique journey. Whether you're drawn by a desire for blessings, a fascination with ancient lore, or a yearning for inner peace, the temple's doors are open, welcoming all who seek to experience its timeless magic.

In a world marked by constant change, the Kali Bahan Temple stands as an unwavering symbol of devotion, culture, and the enduring human quest for transcendence. As you step into its sacred precincts, you become part of a lineage of pilgrims who have found solace, inspiration, and a profound connection with the divine within its hallowed walls.

Some other monuments we can consider-

2. **Jama Masjid, Etawah city-** It is situated on Gwalior road. It possesses no minarates but has a lotty screen about 16 met high and somewhat less in width. There is a central domed hall. There are two small chambers, the roofs of which are supported by red sandstone pillars. The main portion of the building is of block *kankar* with fragments of blue stone in the walls and portions of at least ten granite columns of varying lengths. It is commonly supposed that the building is an old Hindu or Buddhist structure converted into a mosque, but the style of the screen and the architecture generally is the same as that of the Atala and Jama Masjid of Jaunpur and the present building is probably an erection of the Sharqi kings during their occupation of Etawah.⁵

⁵ Etahas ke Jharokhe me Etawah , Sanskriti Vibhag, UP

3. **Tiksi Mahadev Temple, Etawah City**- This temple is situated among the revines on the Gwalior road. It is built up on a high buttressed platform which raises it considerably above the roadway beneath it. It is said that the lingam was installed here by sage Bashistha, the guru of Sri Ramchandra.⁶
4. **Asthala Temple, Etawah City**- this hindu temple is situated within a walled enclosure in a grove to the west of the city Etawah and is entered by a fine gateway. In the innercourtyard of the temple is a curious pillar which goes by the name of “Guruji ka Khambha”. It is much smaller at the base than the top. Temple is surrounded by a stone cage containing an idol. the principal feature is the serpent. The temple was built by a Kannujia Brahmin of Etawah. Who was a favorite of the Avadh Amil. Interestingly the Idol worship is the Nrisingh (the man-lion incarnation of Lord Vishnu).
5. **Sumer Singh Fort and its fortification:** The Sumer Singh Fort lies on an irregular table-land possessing a somewhat higher elevation than the surrounding ravine uplands. The table-land is completely isolated on all sides and possesses a fine view over the Yamuna.The Dutan traveler de Leet, who wrote about 1631 A.D, describes the fort surrounded by a small wall⁷. On the gate, he writes, “a human face is sculptured which the Indians regard with a superstitions awe, and worship it by anointing profusely with oil.”⁸ Now remains of the gate are still to be seen but they are reconstructed by the government of UP and converted into a VVIP guest house with a helipad, yet some remains are still can be seen. There were the ruins of twelve towers at intervals on the circuit of the hill, showing that the fort must have been of great extent. Moreover this is very necessary to save this heritage from further renovation by any agency. This is very important to examine scientifically this structure.
6. **Baradari, inside the Fort :** Baradari is situated in the fort of Sumer singh. This is very important building situated inside the fort.
7. **Temple inside the Fort :** An pre modern temple is situated inside the Sumer Singh Fort. This will be interesting to survey of the temple because of its architecture.

⁶ Varun, Dangli Prasad : Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers, published by Government of Uttar Pradesh, 1986. P267

⁷ Varun, Dangli Prasad : Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers, published by Government of Uttar Pradesh, 1986. P.268

⁸ Ibid.,P268

Testing Hypothesis:

The architectural variety and cultural importance of the monuments in Etawah reflect a rich ancient tapestry shaped by using pass-cultural affects, creative expressions and religious practices, contributing to deeper information of the metropolis's historical past. therefore hypothesis.

Conclusion:

As we conclude our exploration, we stand at the crossroads of history and the future. The pre-modern monuments of Etawah beckon us to remember, to learn, and to envision a tomorrow where the splendor of the past is preserved and cherished. They are not mere relics frozen in time; they are living embodiments of a heritage that informs our identity and enriches our understanding of the world.

In our quest to decipher the enigma of pre-modern monuments in Etawah, we have embarked on a voyage of discovery – a voyage that transcends boundaries, connects generations, and immortalizes the spirit of a city through the ages. Let these monuments serve as beacons of inspiration, guiding us to treasure our past and navigate our future with the wisdom they bestow.

Suggestions and Future Research Scope:

The study of monuments in Etawah opens a myriad of avenues for future research, promising to deepen our understanding of the city's historical, architectural, and cultural heritage. Exploring the lesser-known monuments and their connections to broader regional and national historical narratives could uncover hidden gems and shed light on untold stories. Further investigations into the social and economic impact of these monuments on local communities, along with the exploration of their role in shaping urban planning and development, offer intriguing research prospects. Additionally, employing advanced technologies such as 3D scanning, digital reconstruction, and geospatial mapping could provide new insights into architectural details, restoration strategies, and preservation efforts. The exploration of intangible heritage, such as oral traditions, rituals, and folklore associated with these monuments, presents an opportunity to delve into the lived experiences of generations past. As we peer into the future, the study of Etawah's monuments holds the promise of unveiling even more layers of its captivating history and enriching our appreciation of its cultural legacy.

Bibliography:

1. Bajpai, K. D. (2012). Archaeological and architectural remains of pre-modern period in the Doab region. In K. D. Bajpai (Ed.), *Doab Archaeology* (pp. 13-28). Pragati Prakashan.
2. Chandra, P. (2003). *The history of ancient and medieval India: from the stone age to the 12th century*. Orient Longman.

3. Eaton, R. M. (2000). Temple desecration and Indo-Muslim states. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 11(3), 283-319.
4. Habib, I. (1981). *The agrarian system of Mughal India 1556-1707*. Oxford University Press.
5. Michell, G. (2005). *The Penguin guide to the monuments of India. Volume 1: Buddhist, Jain, Hindu*. Penguin Books India.
6. Nath, R. (2015). *Indian Architecture: Buddhist and Hindu Period*. DK Printworld
7. Pande, B. (2001). *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History*. Cambridge University Press.
8. Qureshi, D. (2006). *The monuments of Delhi*. Prakash Books.
9. Rizvi, S. A. (1983). *A history of Sufism in India. Volume 1*. Munshiram Manoharlal.
10. Sarkar, J. N. (1972). *The Temples of North India*. Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.
11. Saxena, R. K. (2007). *Monuments of Delhi: Lasting splendour of the Great Mughals and others*. Lancer Publishers.
12. Trivedi, P. (2003). *Mughal harem: Myth, realities, and contradictions*. Manohar Publishers.
13. Wagoner, P. B. (2001). *Vijayanagara and the Rajas of the Deccan: From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century*. University of Hawaii Press.