

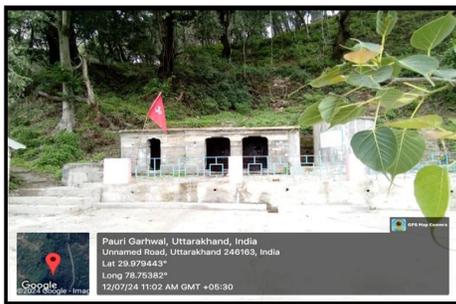
# The Artistic and Cultural Significance of the “Magra” Ekeshwar Mahadev Temple in Pauri Garhwal Uttarakhand

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**Abstract** - Garhwal, a region of Uttarakhand, has diverse water sources including Nola, Dhara, and Kund, called Magra in the local language. These sources are often located near temples made of Greystone. One such source, "Magara Dhara", located about 150 meters below the Magara Ekeshwar Temple, is a natural water source artfully constructed from stone blocks. Considered to be a boon of Mahadev, this cold water source is rare in Uttarakhand, which displays the skill of ancient local artisans (Pokhriyal 2017). An inscription suggests that it is 250–260 years old, with symbolic relief work that enhances the beauty of its architecture and displays the talent of the artist. However, due to a lack of conservation, both the temple and the Magara are unsafe. As a result, the temple has been modernized without compromising its mythological heritage. This artistic and mythological architecture will have to be kept simple for the next generation. This Magra and temple are unique from an artistic point of view. In particular, there has been minimal research on magra and temple symbols, necessitating further research to understand their origins, symbolism, and influence. It is the joint responsibility of both the regional people and the Uttarakhand government to protect and preserve these Magras as historical heritage.

**Keywords** - *Magra, heritage, architecture, temple, relief, Greystone*



Pic source primary data

## INTRODUCTION-

Pauri Garhwal is one of the 13 districts of the northern state of Uttarakhand, India. It is also one of the 7 districts and 9 tehsils of the Garhwal division of Uttarakhand. Its district headquarters are in the town of Pauri Garhwal. There are worshippers of both Shaiva and Shakti sects in Uttarakhand, due to which many

important Shaiva and Shakti Peethas are established here. There are five major Shaivapeeths in Kedarkshetra alone: Tadkeshwar Mahadev, Bindeshwar Mahadev, Ekeshwar Mahadev, Kyunkaleshwar Mahadev, and Kilkilleshwar Mahadev. Ekeshwar Mahadev, also known as "Igasar Mahadev" in the local language, is one of the five major Shaiva Peethas. This temple is located at Ekeshwar, about 20 kilometers from Satpuli. This place was named Ekeshwar after the name of Shaivapeeth.

- Influence of local art traditions

The art of the temple is deeply rooted in the local art traditions of Pauri Garhwal and surrounding areas. These traditions are a blend of indigenous Garhwali styles with influences from neighboring regions, resulting in a unique artistic identity. The design of the temple is in urban style and prominently features local motifs, patterns and religious symbols. The influence of nature, such as the representation of flora and fauna, also plays an important role, reflecting the region's deep connection with the natural environment. Local people say that this temple was established by Adiguru Shankaracharya, but no proof of this has been found. However, after talking to Ashok Pandey ji, who has been living in the village for the last 55 years, it came to light that this temple is made of brown stones in Nagara style, the proof of which is the remains of ancient statues kept nearby. The temple complex which testifies to its antiquity. Makes you feel. However due to lack of information about the artistic and architectural significance of the temple, perhaps due to renovations done by devotees from time to time, the mythological structure of the temple has been destroyed. The construction style of the temple has now been completely modernized. After the death of the old priest of the temple, it became almost impossible to get information about the temple. There is a Magra near this temple which is in its last days and there is no one to see it. Local people say that this Magra was used to offer water to the temple but with time its importance diminished and became respectable. There is no one to take care of it, but this temple near Ekeshwar Temple is also a victim of the apathy of the Archeology Department and the local people. Some efforts are made from time to time but there is lack of preservation to pass on this art and architectural heritage to the next generation.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE-**

Near the temple, about 150 meters below, there is a natural source of water called "Mangara Dhara", which has been constructed very artistically from stone blocks. This natural source of cool water is like a blessing from Mahadev for the nearby residents. Water sources made of such stones are now very few in Garhwal Uttarakhand, which is due to the efficiency and artistry of the ancient local artisans. (Pokhriyal2017) The trade routes that facilitated the exchange of goods also had an impact on architecture. The ancient civilizations of Uttarakhand built structures that displayed a mix of cultural influences. The diversity of the region is evident in the combination of architectural styles, ranging from fortified hilltop citadels to intricately designed temples (singh2023) The traditional sources of drinking water for the inhabitants of the Himalayan region are mainly natural water sources. In the English dictionary, these water sources are mentioned as waterfalls, natural springs or mountain springs. A study of the morphology of villages in the Himalayan region shows that in the process of village settlement, residential buildings first developed around these water sources. Natural water sources in Uttarakhand are known as Naula and Dhara or Mangra. In Jammu and Kashmir, they are called Nag or Chashma and in Himachal Pradesh, they are called Bawdi or Bauli. In Sikkim, such water sources are called streams. Based on an estimate, there are more than five lakh water sources in sixty thousand villages of the entire Indian Himalayan region. (Chander2019)In Uttarakhand, these Nauls, Dhars, and Magras have great importance from a historical, cultural, and artistic point of view. Naule and Magra include many other Naule, which are still famous for their architecture. Uttarakhand has a rich cultural tradition of water worship in Nalon, Dhar, and Magra on marriages and other special occasions, which in a way indicates the importance of water in human life. (Chander2019)

In Garhwal also, canals, streams, and ponds were built by Tehri kings. Among the famous wells, streams, and ponds of Garhwal, 'Ganga-Yamuna Dhara' located in Guptkashi in Rudraprayag district, and 'Navgrah Mandir Dhara' and 'Bahkund' (Brahmakund) located in Narayankoti are unique examples of architecture. But the irony is that most of these canals, which are the traditional cultural and historical heritage of Uttarakhand, have become waterless due to lack of proper maintenance and the archaeological and cultural splendor manifested through these canals is also on the verge of destruction due to our carelessness. Due to the apathy of the Archeology Department, the ancient water culture of Nauls is in a state of disrepair today. It is the joint responsibility of both the regional people and the Uttarakhand government to protect and preserve these Nauls as historical heritage. (Mohan) Descriptions on their investment and characteristics are found in texts like Aparajitaprichha, Manasollasa etc. According to Manasollasa (12th century), wells and Pushkarinis were gateless, while Vapis were gated. (katoch2003) The ardhmandapiya entrance, and the sanctum sanctorum with the famous motifs of Gajasimha, dancing human figures, auspicious vegetation, and side walls decorated with auspicious vegetation, many of them also had installed or slabbed icons of Sheshashayi Vishnu and Ganesha. Resting on two entrance pillars, this structure was covered with flat roofs (sharma2009) Deep cultural sources of folk culture and folk literature of our Uttarakhand are also associated with the water sources of Nauls and Gadharis. In the present situation, the drying up of streams and rivers means the disappearance of a vibrant mountain water culture and the destruction of thousands of years of priceless heritage. Therefore, the water problem is not just a consumerist problem but also an environmental problem related to the conservation of water, land, and forests. This is also a problem of preservation of folk culture. If we want to connect our Devbhoomi with the Green Revolution, then we will have to revive the water harvesting resources of our old canals, streams, skins, ponds, etc. (Mohan)

## **RESEARCH GAP**

According to literary study, Magra which is near Ekeshwar Mahadev Temple is an artistic and cultural heritage on which limited study has been found.

## **OBJECTIVE**

- To study the historical presence of “Magra” Ekeshwar Mahadev temple
- To study the important role of the Magra & temple & in preserving artifacts.
- Uncovering The Unseen Magra Attractions & Temple
- To Suggest Solutions To Overcome Such Problems

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study is descriptive of the Magra in which an attempt has been made to cover the importance of the Magra and Temple and its location in the Pauri district. The present study is based on the information collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data collection are my study, interviews, the internet, newspapers, books, etc.

## RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Magra Ekeshwar Mahadev Temple in Pauri Garhwal is an example of the Sharda and cultural vibrancy of the region. The rich Sambhu Valinga of the temple highlights the central importance of Lord Shiva and serves as a repository of religious and cultural significance. It contains a diverse range of Hindu symbols, mythological deities and sacred motifs, narrating stories from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and local Garhwa legends. Techniques such as bas-relief and high-relief in the sculptures create dynamic light and shadow effects, which enhance the viewer's experience. Rooted in vernacular architecture with extensive North Indian influence, this temple and magara exemplify the archaic architectural style of the region. The integration of natural elements with botanical depictions deepens the connection with the local environment and underlines the divinity of the temple and magara, linking the spiritual and natural realms. Magra Ekeshwar Mahadev Temple, situated on a hill in Magra, Garhwal, is an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the region. It serves as both a place of worship and a repository of the artistic and cultural traditions of Garhwal. The intricate mythological carvings on its walls depicting Hinduism highlight the artistic inclinations and cultural exchanges of the region. The architecture and art of the temple reflect traditional techniques and styles passed down through generations, making it an important cultural artefact. However, the rich heritage of the temple poses conservation challenges, as the intricate carvings and ancient structures require careful preservation against time and environmental influences. Despite these challenges, the Magra and Ekeshwar Mahadev Temple is a symbol of the cultural heritage of the region, demonstrating the interweaving of religious and artistic expressions in Garhwali society. Its sculptures and the symbolism of the walls inspire awe, devotion and a deep understanding of the cultural and spiritual life of the Preserving the spiritual life of the region and the heritage of Uttarakhand is also an important task.

## PLATES -

Pic source primary data



Plate 1:

Here it has been used as a decorative relief. The relief, leaf-like shapes carved into it enhance the beauty of the This is almost similar to bandhan Patti. As it is, there is a space above this strip which is called Khala in the local language, which is mainly used to keep some items.  
A lamp was placed in it to provide light at night.



Plate 2:

The mouth for drainage of water made of stone, which looks somewhat similar to Gajmukh but looks different from the front. The architecture is very beautiful and decorated with geometric shapes which are taken from nature.



Plate3:

According to this stone inscription, it is confirmed that this Magra is from samvad 1848 which is about 250-260 years old and according to this inscription, Magra was made by the local people who were the art artisans of that time and their Shows artistic and architectural

understanding and  
experience, although it  
has become difficult to  
read due to the  
deterioration of the  
article.

### **FUTCHER SCOOP-**

The future scope of study of the artistic and cultural significance of Magara Ekeshwar Mahadev Temple is vast and multidimensional. As the Garhwal region is attracting more attention for its rich cultural heritage, there is significant scope for in-depth exploration of the temple's art, architecture, and its role in the socio-religious fabric of the community. Future studies could focus on comparative analysis with other temples in the region to understand regional variations in temple art and architecture and to trace the evolution of artistic techniques over time. Additionally, there is scope for research on the conservation challenges facing the temple, especially in the context of climate change and increasing human activity, which could threaten its delicate carvings and structures. Another important area for future research is to examine how the Magara and temple stones influence and reflect the beliefs and traditions of the local population. The potential to integrate technology such as 3D scanning and digital archives to preserve the temple's artistic elements for future generations and make them accessible to a global audience can also be explored. Ultimately, future studies may contribute to a broader understanding of the temple's cultural and artistic significance, ensuring that its heritage will be preserved and appreciated for years to come.

### **CONCLUSION**

The construction of Magara started with local deities and temples. There has been no mention of any new pond or drain being built in the last hundred years. After carving the local stones, they were ground with a mixture of sifted ash, sand, some special plants, gudhrita or pulses, and white lime and filled in the joints of the decorated stones, first kept for drying slightly and then they were joined together by hammering. The magra made for water are mainly natural in shape, a roof and pillars are seen in the shape and later the upper structures were built. Arrangements were also made for drainage of excess collected water. After the completion of the Magara, the Water God was consecrated and prayers were also made to the Gods to secure this water for the village community. Certainly, these Megara's are not only the result of the artistic thinking of our ancestors, they are also a strong basis for putting into practice the great need for the conservation of art and are priceless heritage which we are taking towards degradation due to our carelessness. While there is a lot of emphasis on heritage and old architecture and water conservation all over the world, we still have this artistry of our ancestors which just needs to be preserved with a little effort.

The archaeological and cultural splendor manifested through these temples and shrines is also on the verge of destruction because of us. Negligence. , Due to the apathy of the Archeology Department, the ancient water culture of Dara Magara is in a bad state today. It is the joint responsibility of both the regional people and the Uttarakhand government to protect and preserve these Magaras as historical heritage.

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