

## **Inventive Elements on Mahishasurmardini Temple, Hatkoti**

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### **Abstract**

*Hatkoti is a small town situated 115 km from Shimla in Himachal Pradesh. It is famous for trout fishing at the Pabbar River and its surrounding beauty. Hatkoti Temple is part of the Jabbal tehsil and is located in a valley near Rohru. Tourists coming to Rohru make their way up to the stone temple of Hatkoti. Being the meeting point of three streams- Bishkulti, Raanvati with Pabbar River, it is a sacred site for the Hindus. The temple here also makes the valley an important pilgrimage destination.*

*Hatkoti is special for the Hindu pilgrims visiting Himachal Pradesh. The Hatkoti Temple is an abode of goddess Mahishasurmardini, an incarnation of goddess Durga or Parvati. The statue of the goddess is 1.2 meters in height and made of eight precious metals. In the dark Sanctorum, this idol emits a glow because of its bronze make. The complex also has a separate temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.*

*Several other idols inside these two temples stand as examples of great architectural skills. Other structures within the temple complex include a prayer room a Dharamshala and Yagya shala room for rituals and sacrifices.*

*The Hawan Kund. at the center of the main hall houses idols of Lord Ganesha and Vishnu. There is also another large hall within the temple premises called Satsang Bhawan. It has a seating capacity of around 350 devotees.*

### **Keywords**

*Tilgrims, Mahishasurmardini, Ashtadhatu, Patralata, sakha, Lalatabima, Bhadramukha, Chasakpatra, Khadga, Padmatatra design, Kumbanda.*

Hatkoti, a small hamlet on the junction of the roads leading to Kotkhai-Shimla, Rohru, and Tiuni, is a picturesque spot on the right bank of the river a bar. It is famous for its temple complex which houses two temples, one of Siva and the other of Durgâ, called Hâteúvarî. The temples have been known for a long time and were noted by J.B. Frazer as early as 1816-17. Ever since, almost every writer has remarked on the temple when dealing with the subject. The temple stands on an elevated platform and has been thoroughly renovated over the ages. Presently it is enclosed by a circumambulation path and a new roof in the pahârî style has been added to it. Inside the walls of the sanctum provide a view of the original shrine which houses a large ashtadhâtu image of Mahîshâsuramardinî with an elaborate parikara bearing a Úâradâ inscription that may be dated to the late 9th century A.D. on palaeographical grounds. The garbhagriha has a door measuring 34.5" by 68" with three jambs and lintels. The two inner úâkhâs have patralatâ design throughout with an outer band of padmapatra design. On the lalâtabimba, an image of four-armed seated Gaðeúa is made. He carries paraúu and data in his right hand and Padma and modaka in his left hands. Mûshaka is shown under his folded left leg. The outer-most band rounded in section is absolutely plain except for the bhadramukha on the lintel bearing an image of the face of the deity flanked by two seated worshippers. The temple may be assigned to the 8th century A.D. The earliest extant structural stone temples in Himachal Pradesh do not date anterior to the 7th century of the Christian era and these too are very few in number. Even for the next three hundred years or so, we get rare examples of stone temples in the region that covers the early phase of our study. The Úiva temple at Mangarh, Úiva temples at Sawara and Parashat, the HâmeúVarî and the Úiva temples at Hatkoti, Trilokanath temple at Udaipur, Gaurî-ÚaEkara Temple, Jagatsukh (Kullu) and the Viúveúvara (Bashar) Mahâdeva temple, Bajaura may be dated prior to 950 A.D. or in the early phase. By the middle of the tenth century, we find the temple building activity in Himachal Pradesh had developed considerably and the nâgara style of the north Indian temples had become popular along with the local wooden temples both of which continued to be constructed side by side. Quite a large number of temples belonging to this phase up to circa A.D. 1250 exist at Chamba, Bharmaur, Shimla, Udaipur, Kangra, etc. Still more numerous in number are temples belonging to post 13th century A.D. and they may form an interesting study but fall beyond the scope of the present work. The doorframes of some of these temples are exquisitely carved and have many bands of door-jambs and lintels, whereas those of the others are just plain or have simple foliage and scroll patterns. Some doorframes have classic art of the early period and the others have designs and styles of an advanced period of time. The number of elements in these door-frames, the style of carving, iconography, the images on the base of door-jambs or on lalâtabimba each have their own peculiarity and help us determine the date of the monument.

The architectural masterpieces at Hatkoti represent the Pahari school of art. The beautiful sculptures placed inside and outside these temples speak highly about the unknown artists of the region. The place retains some influence of the Buddhist period too. Most of the temples, which are in ruins now, are of the shikra style and belong to three different periods. The temples of Goddess Durga and Lord Shiva are quite big. It is believed that these temples were founded by Shankaracharya when he was on his way to Kashmir. These temples were re-roofed by Raja Padam Chandra of Jubbal in 1885 A.D. The Shiva temple, which was re-roofed later, has a pyramidal shape and is Pancha Ratha in plan and elevation. The image of the principal deity in the Durga temple is Made of ashtadhatu. It depicts Goddess Mahishasurmardini with one foot on her vaahan, the lion, And the other on the ground. She is shown in the act of Killing the demon Mahishasur with a trident. The goddess Has eight arms and holds in her right hands khaki, bell, Bow, and chasakpatra, and in the left hands a change, Chakra, shakti, and a trident. This is a rare image that Shows the chakra in prayogmudra (ready to dispatch). This Bronze image is almost life-size. The two-meter high Ornamental Torna is of immense iconographic interest. Goddesses Ganga and Yamuna are engraved on either side, and several geometrical and animal figures also appear on it. Among the animal figures, an imaginary.

The image of DancingAnimal, Sardual is engraved on both sides. The animal's Ganesha dates back to the long legs are like those of an elephant, the middle portion

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A.D. In the third phase, two more temples were dedicated to Siva and Durgawere built at HatKoti. Both of them, have been renovated frequently, the last times by Raja Padam Chand ofJubbal, as corroborated from the Nagari inscription on the bell at the entrance of the Durga temple. A sculpture of dancing Ganesha is placed in a niche on the temple wall. The rare sculpture has been artistically executed. He wears a small crown, necklace, bracelet, sarpayajnopavita, and a loincloth. He is shown, as usual, pot-bellied and has a single tusk with the proboscis turned to the left. This deity has eight arms and is shown holding a snake over his head. On the lower part, two attendants are engraved on either side while on the upper portion of the slab two female figures most probably the two consorts Riddhi and Siddhi, are shown in the relief.ThisSculpture may be assigned to 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.Another sculpture of a four-armed Ganesha is placed in the Raksha of this temple. The deity Wearing usual ornaments is seated on a double-Petalled lotus in an adbharyanka pose. In the hands-on the left side, Ganesha is shown holding a lotus bud and a parish. In his upper right hand, he holdsa radish, while the lower hand he rests on his Thigh. The sculpture seems to be of the 9<sup>th</sup> centuryA.D.The other interesting and beautiful sculpture ofSimhavahini Durga from this place is now exhibitedIn in State Museum Shimla. The goddess has an aKumbanda and bleduchur on her head. The deity holds a chasakpatra in her lower right hand, a trident in the upper right hand, a shield in the upper left hand, and a Bijapur i.e.the seed of the entire cosmos in the lower hand. The deity is seated on her mount of alion in lalitasna. The sculpture can be assigned to 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D

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