

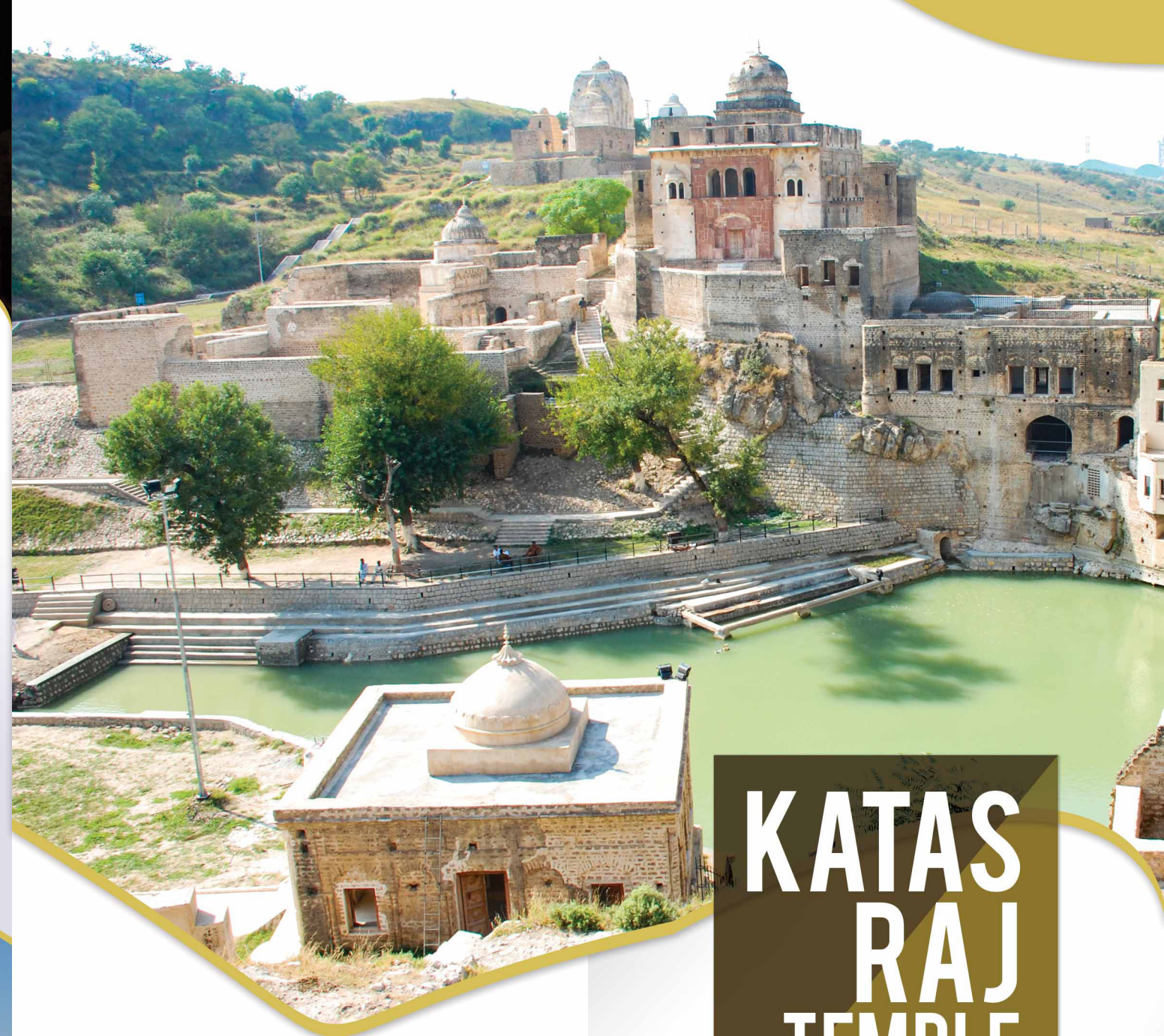
The Katas Raj temples are linked to the Hindu epic, the Mahābhārata, where they are believed to be the site where the Pandava brothers spent part of their exile. It is also said that they engaged in a riddle contest with the Yakshas here, as described in the Yaksha Prashna. Another tradition holds that the Hindu deity Krishna laid the foundation of the temple and established a hand-made shivling in it.



ARCHITECTURE

The Katas Raj temples showcase distinctive features of Kashmiri Hindu architecture. The site includes the Satgraha, a group of seven ancient temples, remnants of a Buddhist stupa, five other medieval temples, and havelis scattered around a pond considered sacred by Hindus.

The temples at Katas are predominantly constructed on square platforms. The elevations of the sub-shrines form a series of cornices with small rows of pillars, topped by ribbed domes. The architectural style of the seven temples is similar to that of Kashmiri temples, featuring dentils, fluted pillars, trefoil arches, and pointed rooflines. The Shiva temple is also built on a square platform, with a recessed round arch entrance adorned with faint cusps and a rectangular opening to the north.



KATAS RAJ TEMPLE *Complex*



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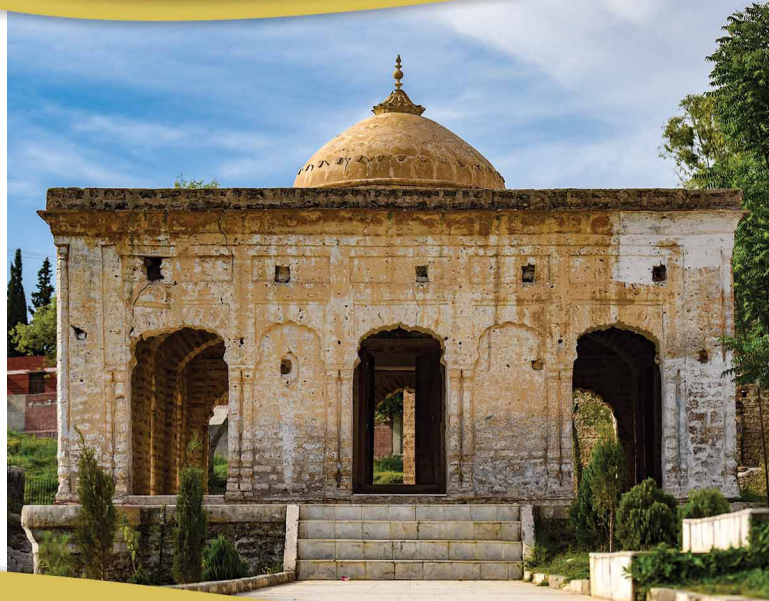
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Chakwal is a region steeped in centuries-old history, reflecting the influences of various dynasties and civilizations. It boasts numerous historical sites, including ancient forts, Hindu temples, Buddhist religious sites, and Muslim Sufi Shrines. These landmarks offer a glimpse into the diverse cultural and religious heritage of the area, showcasing a rich traditions and beliefs that have shaped its unique identity over the ages.

One of the renowned Hindu temples, the Katas Raj Temples, is situated in Chakwal, opposite Pind Dadan Khan, at an elevation of 2,000 feet above sea level. Nestled among low, stony hills at the head of a small ravine, these temples are built around a sacred pool associated with Lord Shiva. According to Hindu mythology, this pool was formed from a tear shed by Lord Shiva when his wife, Sita, was abducted. A similar mythological tear is said to have created a pond in Pushkar, near Ajmer, India. This pond is considered holy by Hindus, who perform ritual baths (Ashnan) there.



HISTORY

The Satghara, or seven temples, are linked to the Pandava Brothers, who are believed to have spent part of their 12-year exile at Katas. The temples display Kashmiri architectural features, such as dentils, trefoil arches, fluted pillars, and pointed roofs, indicative of the style that prevailed under the Karkota and Varmma dynasties from 605 to 939 A.D. During that period, the Salt Range was part of the Kingdom of Kashmir.

The temple complex is believed to derive its name from the Sanskrit word "kataksha," which means "tearful eyes." The pond within the complex was originally known as Viskund, meaning "poison spring." Over time, it was referred to by various names, including Amarkund and Chamaskund, before finally being called Katakshkund, which translates to "Spring of Tearful Eyes."

