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Revisiting the Unique Monumental Heritage of Uttarakhand through Swami Shradhdhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri (With special reference to the Stone-Inscriptions of 1908-09 A.D.)

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Abstract

Indian state of Uttarakhand is famous for its Unique Monumental Heritage. The aim of this paper is to revisit the unique monumental heritage of Uttarakhand through Swami Shradhdhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri with special reference to the Stone-Inscriptions of 1908-09 A.D. Gurukul Kangri, established in 1902 by Swami Shradhdhananda in Haridwar, is a significant institution that played a crucial role in the revival of ancient Indian education and values during the Indian freedom struggle. Blend of both primary and secondary data, it has been shown that Swami Shradhdhananda's Gurukul Kangri in Haridwar stands out as a pioneering institution in the revival of India's ancient education system. Its unique features during 1908-09 A.D. highlight its contribution to the socio-educational reform movement.

Keywords

Monumental heritage, Gurukul Kangri, Swami Shradhdhananda, Ancient Indian education, Vedic education, Indian culture.

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Revisiting the Unique Monumental Heritage of Uttarakhand through Swami Shraddhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri (With special reference to the Stone-Inscriptions of 1908-09 A.D.)

1. Introduction

Uttarakhand, known as the "Land of gods" (Devbhoomi), boasts a rich monumental heritage reflecting its historical, cultural, and religious significance. The state is renowned for its ancient temples, forts, and architectural marvels that blend spirituality with tradition. The main temples include Kedarnath Temple (Dedicated to Lord Shiva, this 8th-century stone structure is a prime example of North Indian temple architecture), Badrinath Temple (a significant part of the Char Dham pilgrimage, this temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu) and Jageshwar Temples (a cluster of over 100 ancient stone temples located in Almora, showcasing Nagara-style architecture).

The state is also famous for Forts like the Pithoragarh Fort (built by the Chand rulers, it offers a glimpse into the strategic military architecture of the region) and the Chandpur Garhi (an important historical fort of the Katyuri dynasty). Historical and Cultural Sites in Uttarakhand are Katarmal Sun Temple (an ancient temple dedicated to the Sun God, renowned for its intricate carvings) and Gurudwara Hemkund Sahib (a Sikh pilgrimage site surrounded by snow-capped peaks, showcasing spiritual and natural heritage). It is also famous for Colonial Heritage. Raj Bhawan, Nainital, the Governor's residence, reflects Gothic-style British architecture, while St. John in the Wilderness Church is a historical church in Nainital, symbolizing colonial-era craftsmanship. These monuments not only embody Uttarakhand's architectural brilliance but also its deep spiritual and historical legacy, attracting tourists, pilgrims, and history enthusiasts alike.

Thus, the region is home to ancient temples like Kedarnath, Badrinath, and Jageshwar, which are architectural marvels reflecting intricate craftsmanship and spiritual significance. The rock

inscriptions, forts, and colonial-era structures such as the Forest Research Institute in Dehradun add to its historical legacy. Unique features like the prehistoric rock paintings in Lakhu Udyar and the intricately carved wooden houses in the Kumaon and Garhwal regions exemplify the region's cultural diversity. These monuments not only attract pilgrims and tourists but also stand as a testament to Uttarakhand's vibrant historical and cultural narrative.

2. Swami Shraddhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri : An Introduction

Gurukul Kangri, established in 1902 by Swami Shraddhananda in Haridwar, is a significant institution that played a crucial role in the revival of ancient Indian education and values during the Indian freedom struggle. Situated on the banks of the Ganges in Haridwar, the serene environment reflected the ideal setting for spiritual and academic pursuits. Gurukul Kangri has grown into a university today (Gurukula Kangri Vishwavidyalaya), recognized for preserving and promoting Indian heritage.

Inspired by the Gurukul system of Vedic education, it aimed to provide a blend of traditional knowledge and modern disciplines while promoting Indian culture and spirituality. It was founded as part of the Arya Samaj movement, emphasizing Vedic teachings, character building, and self-reliance. The institution sought to revive the ancient Indian way of education, where students (shishyas) lived and learned under the guidance of their teacher (guru). The curriculum focused on the Vedas, Sanskrit, and Indian philosophy, alongside subjects like mathematics, science, and physical education. Special emphasis was placed on moral and ethical development.

As a reformer, Swami Shraddhananda envisioned education as a tool for empowering Indians and fostering a sense of pride in their cultural identity. His efforts at Gurukul Kangri inspired many nationalist leaders and reformers during the freedom struggle. Gurukul Kangri remains a testament to Swami Shraddhananda's commitment to reviving India's ancient wisdom and integrating it with the needs of modern society. It continues to attract students and scholars interested in Indian traditions and values.

The stone inscriptions at Swami Shraddhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri hold significant historical and cultural value. They are etched with Sanskrit verses and teachings from ancient Vedic scriptures,

reflecting the Gurukul's commitment to preserving India's spiritual and educational heritage. These inscriptions often highlight the principles of Arya Samaj, emphasizing truth, discipline, and knowledge. Located on the banks of the Ganges near Haridwar, they serve as a timeless reminder of the institution's role in reviving traditional education during India's independence movement under Swami Shraddhananda's visionary leadership.

3. Objective of Study

The objective of this paper is to revisit the unique monumental heritage of Uttarakhand through Swami Shraddhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri with special reference to the Stone-Inscriptions of 1908-09 A.D.

4. Methodology

As this paper is limited to only the unique monumental heritage of Uttarakhand through Swami Shraddhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri with special reference to the Stone-Inscriptions of 1908-09 A.D., naturally the data used is primary in nature. Secondary data are used only to know details about Swami Shraddhananda's old Gurukul Kangri and the educational system advocated by it.

5. Presentation of Data

Data in the form of various photographs of unique monumental heritage of Shraddhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri with special reference to 1908-09 A.D. are presented as under:



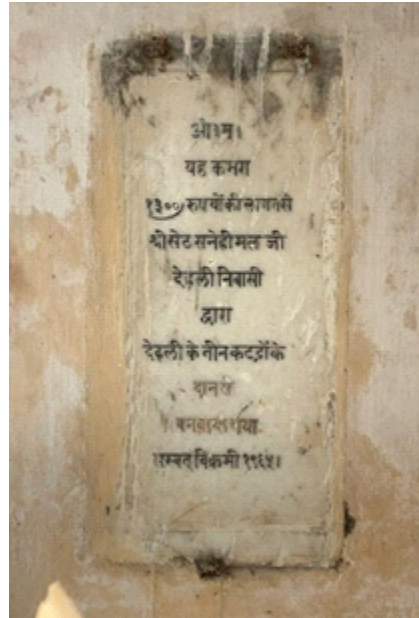
AUM

The Riyasatdars of Nahtor District Bijnor Chaudhary Hari Singh Ji and Chaudhary Chunni Singh Ji built this Gate and Gateway named 'Dyodhi' at a cost of rupees 800/ in Samvat Vikrami 1965 [corresponding to Christian era 1908-09 A.D.]



AUM

Mahashay Diwan Chandra Ji Ziledar resident of Balsadha District Jalandhar built this room along with staircase at a cost of Rs. 600/ in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



AUM

This room was built at a cost of Rupees 1300/ received in donation from three Katras of Dehliby Shri Sanehi Mal Ji resident of Dehli in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.)



AUM

This verandah was built by Shri Purna Chandra Ji Manager R.J. Wood Company Dehli at a cost of Rs. 1000/ out of the donation of the following gentlemen:

Shri Harsahaimal Sukhdevmal Ji Chandani Chowk Dehli.....250/

Shri GHanshyam Das Valavapt Ji Nawab Katra Dehli.....250/

Shri Prayagdas Buddhasen Ji Dehli....250/

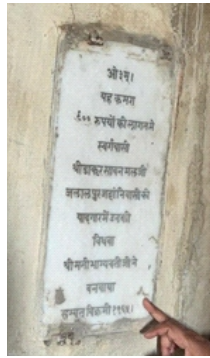
Shri Lekhraj Vishvambhar Dayal Ji Dehli250/

Samvat Vikrami 1965. [1908-09 A.D.]



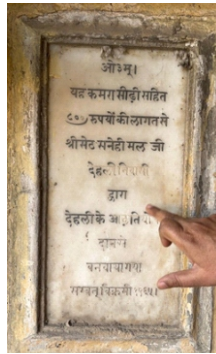
AUM

Lala Rangimal Ji M.A. resident of Ludhiana built this room at a cost of Rs. 500/ in memory of Rai Badridatt Ji District Judge Ludhiana in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



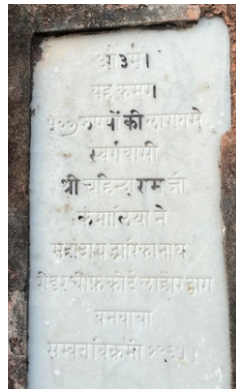
AUM

In memory of Late Shri Doctor Savan Mal Ji resident of Jalalpur Jahan, his widow Shrimati Bhagyawati Ji built this room at a cost of Rs. 900/ in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



AUM

This room along with staircase was built by Shri Seth Sanehi Mal Ji resident of Dehli at a cost of Rs. 800/ out of the donation from the arhatiyas [grain merchants] of Dehli in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



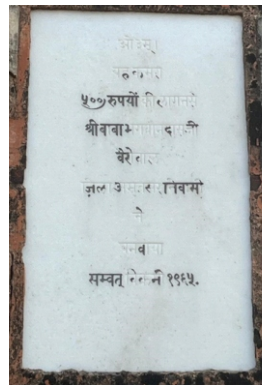
AUM

At a cost of Rs. 500/ late Shri Chahindaram Ji built this room through Mahashay Dwarikanath Reader Chief Court Lahor in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



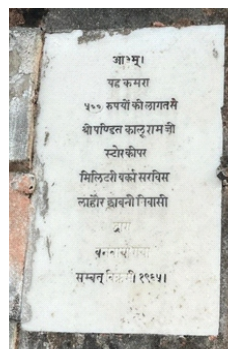
AUM

Shri Pandit Gandaram Ji Retired Dy. Inspector Police (uncle of Pt. Lekharam) built this room at a cost of Rs. 500/ in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



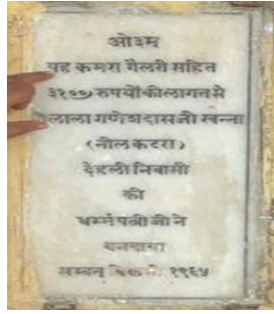
AUM

Shri Baba Bhagwan Das Ji Verowal District Amritsar built this room at a cost of Rs. 500/.



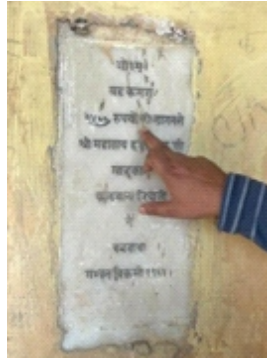
AUM

This room has been built by Shri Pandit Kaluram Ji Store Keeper Military Works Service Resident of Lahore Cantonment at a cost of Rs. 500 in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



AUM

The beloved wife of Lala Ganesh Das Ji Khanna resident of Neel Katra of Dehli built this room along with the gallery at a cost of Rs. 3100/ in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



AUM

Shri Mahashay Chhajju Ram Ji Sahukar [Banker] resident of Calcutta built this Hall at a cost of Rs. 2500/ in Samvat Vikrami 1965 (1908-09 A.D.).



AUM

As per her Will in the holy memory of ideal wife and ideal mother Late Shrimati Janki Bai Ji, Shri Krishna and Sons Watch Merchants Multan Cantonment donated an amount of Rs. 600/ to meet out the cost of this room in Samvat Vikrami 1970 (1913-14 A.D.).

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be said that Swami Shraddhananda's Gurukul Kangri in Haridwar stands out as a pioneering institution in the revival of India's ancient education system. Its unique features during 1908-09 A.D. highlight its contribution to the socio-educational reform movement through the Revival of the Vedic Gurukul System, Gurukul Kangri was modeled on the traditional Vedic system, where students lived in close proximity to their teachers (gurus), fostering a holistic educational environment. The focus was on spiritual growth, self-discipline, and the inculcation of moral values alongside academic learning.

Its contribution may also be seen in the promotion of swadeshi ideals. During 1908-09, the Gurukul became a stronghold of Swadeshi ideology, aligning with the larger Indian freedom struggle. Swami Shraddhananda emphasized the rejection of British-influenced education and sought to instill pride in Indian traditions. The institution promoted Vedic studies, including Sanskrit, Indian philosophy, and ancient sciences, at a time when Western education dominated Indian schools.

As regards the nationalist awakening and student participation, Gurukul Kangri became a hub for nationalist thought. Students were encouraged to actively participate in the freedom struggle by adhering to principles of self-reliance and service to the nation. Many of its students and teachers became torchbearers of socio-political change. Major event of 1908-09 was the visit of Mahatma Gandhi (1909). Gurukul Kangri gained national recognition when Mahatma Gandhi visited the institution in 1909. He appreciated its dedication to reviving Indian heritage and promoting self-reliance, which resonated with his own ideals of Swaraj. Gandhi's visit underscored the Gurukul's importance as a symbol of resistance against colonial influence. Alongside intellectual training, physical fitness and ethical living were integral parts of the curriculum, reflecting the holistic nature of ancient Indian education.

Thus, Swami Shraddhananda's Gurukul Kangri during 1908-09 was not just an educational institution but a beacon of India's cultural resurgence and a powerful statement against the dominance of colonial education. In conclusion, Swami Shraddhananda's Old Gurukul Kangri (1908-09 A.D.) stood as a unique institution that seamlessly blended the essence of ancient Indian education with the

emerging spirit of nationalism. It was more than just an educational center; it became a cradle for moral, spiritual, and patriotic awakening. With its emphasis on Vedic traditions, self-reliance, and Swadeshi ideals, the Gurukul not only revived India's rich cultural heritage but also contributed to the broader freedom struggle. The visit of Mahatma Gandhi in 1909 further cemented its place as a symbol of resistance against colonial influence and as a pioneer of holistic education, inspiring generations to uphold Indian values while striving for progress and independence. ★