

suddenly stop one and demand a turn to the right or left, or even prohibit one's further advance. In spite of all its sanctity, Nirmaṇḍ is poor in inscriptions and other written records. People showed me the copper plate grant of the 7th century by king Samudra-sēna which has been published by Dr. Fleet,¹ and a very obliterated inscription on a rock in front of the *Dharmaśālā*. We took an impression, but were not quite successful. The script seems to be a late type of Śāradā. As the names of Samudra-sēna's father, grandfather and great-grandfather, which occur on the copper plate, have not yet been discovered in the Bansaulis of Kuḷū or Bashahr, I hoped to find them among the ancestors of the present Thākur of Nirmaṇḍ. This man, however, did not possess a family record of any kind.

Proof of the great age of Nirmaṇḍ is the fact that all the principal temples are of the hill type. They are built of layers of rubble masonry, alternating with beams of cedar wood. The roofs are sloping and slightly concave on either side of the central beam and laid with slates or wooden shingles. None of these buildings seem to be of a very great age. But, as they were always repaired in the same style, the temples of Nirmaṇḍ of two or three thousand years ago probably did not look different from these extant.

This refers only to the chief temples. By the side of most of them, we find numerous stone temples of the *śikhara* type. (Plate III). They are, however, never in prominent positions. This style of architecture has been fully described by Fergusson.² It was introduced into Nirmaṇḍ probably between the 7th and 11th century and many specimens may go back to those times, although there are no written records. The many tablets with religious sculptures which are scattered all over the place in great numbers, may also date from those times. It appears that the original cult of Nirmaṇḍ was entirely Śivaist. Most of the temples are dedicated to Siva or Kālī, or to deities of a similar type. Perhaps about the same time when Vishnuism became powerful in Chambā (tenth or eleventh century), this form of worship was also introduced in Nirmaṇḍ, without, however, doing much harm to Śivaism.

Originally the town consisted, it is said, of five main streets with a great temple in each of them. Cholera and small-pox have decimated the population, and the town has become very much reduced in size. Its situation is sublime, on a high practically level plateau with a magnificent view of apparently endless mountain ridges.

I made the following notes on the principal buildings. The Ambikā temple (Plate II, a) is below the village, and a flight of 184 steps leads up towards it, and continues from the back of the temple towards the village. This temple is said to be the oldest in the place, and Ambikā (probably a form of Kālī) is the chief deity of Nirmaṇḍ. According to Pindi Lal, the Dēvī image is in a standing posture and about two feet high. Her face is black, and her clothes covered with gold. Whoever approaches her (only Brahmans are allowed to do so) has to take off his trousers. In this temple is kept the copper-plate grant of King Samudra-sēna of the 7th century mentioned above

¹ *Gupta Inscriptions*, p. 286.

² *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, Vol. I, p. 322.