# The Shankaracharya Temple

1. Standing on the summit of the ancient Gopadri Hill, the Shankaracahrya Temple commands a magnificent view of the whole city of Srinagar. Kalhana clearly states in the Rajatarangini thatKing Gopaditya constructed a temple of Shiva on the Gopadri hill in the name ofShiva Jyeshtheshvara. However, Gopaditya’s date cannot be ascertained with certainty, though it is assigned to about 369 – 309 B. C. General Cunningham and LT. Cole identify the temple with the shrine of Jyeshtharudra built by Ashoka’s son Jalauka. Built on a high octagonal plinth, the temple is of a simple structure and can be approached by a long flight of steps. The unadorned interior of the temple and the absence of some features of classical Kashmiri temple art on the three sides of the main shrine show that the basic structure is of a very early date.
2. There is a very strong tradition in Kashmir, as well as outside Kashmir, that Shankaracharya did pay a visit to Kashmir, though scholars hold different views about it. It is believed that it was here at the famous Sharada shrine that he ascended the *sarvajñapītha* or the‘Throne of Omniscience’. Madhvachārya very clearly mentions so in his *ShankaraDigvijaya*. Chidvillasmuni in hi*s Shankara-vijaya-vilāsa* too refers to Shankaracharya’s visit to Kashmir as does Nilakantha in his work *Shankaraabhyudaya.* Kashmiri Pandits widely believe that that during his visit, the great sage stayed in the capital city Srinagar also, probably in the vicinity of the Gopadri Hill. It is most probable that the ancient name of the hill was changed to Shankaracharya Hill as a tribute to him after his visit.
3. As Aurel Stein and several other scholars have said that the name Takht -e – Suleiman or ‘Solomons’s Throne’ “is undoubtedly of Muhammadan origin”. There is a Koh- i- Suleiman in Afghanistan also. Kashmiri Muslims have given an Islamic name to the other sacred hill of Hindus in Srinagar also – they call the SharikāParvat of Sanskrit texts, popularly called Hāri Parbat by the Kashmiri Pandits, by the name of Koh –i- Mārān or ‘The Hill of the Snakes’. In fact it is a habit with them not to call sacred places of Kashmiri Pandits by their original name – calling the Anantnag town as Islamabad being yet another example. Both Sheikh Abdullah and Farookh Abdullah officially changed the original names of hundreds of places in Kashmir to Islamic ones so as to erase vestiges of Kashmir’s Hindu past. PDP leader Mufti Sayed tried to officially change the name of Shankaracharya and Hāri Parbat hills to Takht-e- Suleiman and Koh-i-mārān respectively, but did not succeed because of stiff resistance by Kashmiri Pandits. The efforts have been renewed now with the Archaeological Survey of India officially choosing to call the Shankaracharya Hill by the name of Takht-i-Suleiman. The area around the temple where the famous Durga Nag temple is situated has already become Suleiman Complex.
4. Solomon, as everybody knows, was the Biblical king of Israel and son and successor of David. He built the first Jewish Temple and was noted for his wisdom. Muslims believe that he was a Muslim prophet even if he lived more hundreds of years before the birth of the Prophet of Islam. According to Kashmiri Muslims he ruled over Kashmir from the top of the Shankaracharya Hill. But how the Jewish king could, for all his wisdom, have ruled over Israel and Kashmir at one and the same time, is something that they do not tell. But ask the Kashmiri Muslims and they will say evenmore outlandish things. Once Farookh Abdullah even charged the Kashmiri Hindus to have appropriated an Islamic holy place by calling the hill after the name of Shankaracharya! The news came out in the Times of India several years back and the paper refused to publish our rejoinder.