

JAI HO BHARAT... The 5th Century Kartikeya Temple in Haryana



A unique place that pays homage to the martyrs of the *Mahabharata* war.

While Kartikeya is a popular deity in south India, there is a unique temple dedicated to this favourite son of Lord Siva at Pehowa near Kurukshetra in Haryana, the venue of the famous *Mahabharata* war. This ancient structure dates back to 5th century B.C.

According to legend, Lord Krishna asked Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandava brothers, to light two oil lamps flanking the Kartikeya temple as homage to the 18-lakh warriors who had perished during the 18-day war. It is believed that these lamps are continuously lit since then. The town is on the banks of river Yamuna.

The ancient town has a religious importance. It was named after the famous King Prithu, who, upon the death of his father, served water to all the people in great piety, praying for the soul to rest in peace. Since then, the place came to be known as *Prithudaka*, which over time became Pehowa. Many Hindus flock to the town to worship their dead ancestors and offer *Pind Daan*, praying for their release from the cycle of birth and re-birth.

The Kartikeya temple has two rock blocks and an image of Muruga in marble flanked by two oil lamps. Oil is offered to the stone blocks, the marble image and the lamps in reverence for the souls of ancestors. The devotees observe strict rules especially during the months of *Chaturmas* (the months from *Ashada* through *Kartik*).

Kartikeya is worshipped as the commander-in-chief of the army of *devas*, the celestial beings constantly at war with *asuras*. It is said that a true devotee of this shrine never loses any battle in his life 🕯️