

FAMOUS TOURIST SITES OF JAISALMER, RAJASTHAN

Chandu Ram Gadi, Shyam Sunder Meena and Tansukh Barupal

S.B.K. Government P.G.College

Jaisalmer Rajasthan India 345001.

Abstract: The Jaisalmer region had rich architectural activities in past as evident from a good number of antique surviving monuments. In Jaisalmer fort and other magnificent monuments were built by state kingdom and on the other hand both Hindus and the Jains have the shares in contribution to the field of sectarian monuments. Both, Hindus and Jains have contributed to the field of temple architecture. The Paliwal Brahmans who may be termed as “dhan-kubers” of the Bhati empires and controlled the economy and agriculture of the state for several centuries, built at least one temple in each of their settlements. The fort is another attraction to be placed in secular group. Jaisalmer is famous for beautifully carved dwelling houses locally called haveli. Patua’s havelis, the creation of early 19th century show splendid work of exquisite carvings on front façade.

Keywords: Monuments, fort, Paliwal Brahmans, economy, temple

MAIN TOURIST SITES OF JAISALMER CITY

Jaisalmer city has glorious monuments, havelies, fort rich in carved and decorative architecture. Some of important tourist excursion sites in Jaisalmer city are described below.

3.1.1 Jaisalmer Fort

The Jaisalmer Fort is not only magnificent monument from architectural point of view but also important from its strategic importance. The architect of this fort is different than those of forts of those periods following the Mughal style of fort construction having gardens, lawn carpets, fountains, sprinklers abound them. It has temples, palaces and buildings.

Jaisalmer fort is built on a low hillock, 250 feet high from ground level and it was choice of Maharawal Jaisal against the insecured capital of Lodrava. The Fort was founded in 1156 A.D. by Rao Jaisal. It is also known as trikutachal on account of its triangular shape. The total length from east to west is 1500 feet, approximately double of the maximum width was quite suitable to accommodate entire population of that time (Photo plate 3.1). After five years of commissioning the construction, Rawal Jaisal died and the work was completed by his successor Shalivahan Singh. According to the stone tableau attached to the Parshwanath Temple inside the fort, it had acquired its present form by 1203 A.D.

The mountain range has been checked from sliding by constructing a 15 to 20 ft. tall wall on the bottom ring. At places, the wall is double. At about 200 ft. altitude, there is a rampart of 10 to 15 ft. height. On the rampart, there are round balconies and turrets for firing cannons rifles. These are about 2 ft. wide. The round and cylindrical shaped stones of massive size used to be kept on the turrets which were slid downward from the rampart to flush away the unnoticed enemies from climbing the fort sides or the mountain. This local strategy proved very effective. After one use, the stones were picked up and stored on the turrets again. There was yet another rampart of about 25 to 30 ft. height inside after leaving a gallery of about 5 to 10 ft. from the external rampart. These two ramparts and 99 high watch-points or bastions were built by Maharawals Bheem (1577-1613) and Manohar (1627-1650). These 99 watch-points provide an umbrella look (‘ghagranuma’) which looks fantastic. Such an extra ordinary shape effect of the fort makes it unique too in the architecture.

Fort now with 99 positions raised along the periphery of the hillock has its entrance to the north-east corner through four massive gateways. The main entrance to the Fort is called as ‘Akkhai-pol’ recalling the name of its builder Maharawal Akkhai Singh (1722-1762). The second gate is known as ‘Sooraj Pol’. This has been built on such a narrow and meandering lane so that an enemy force in number could not pass through collectively, other gates by the names of ‘Ganesh’ and ‘Rang’ or ‘Hawa’ pols which provided a great war security.

Hawapol to which are attached the royal palaces inside by virtue of its situation on the highest point commands ever blowing cool breeze to soothe tired visitors, who could relax for sometime on two smooth stone benches on sides. In the third renovation carried out in the first half of the 17th century the total number of the bastions rose to 99 and also the height of the defence wall from thirty to sixty feet.

Maharawal Akhai Singh made further additions to the fort during his regime when the inner population of the fort began gradually shifting outside around the northern hill foot on plain. His successor Maharawal Mulraj-II raised as a security measure strong fortification wall 30 ft. high, round the newly formed township, pierced by four imposing gateways of which Garsisar pol

and Amarsagar pol in two opposite ends and connected by the main street of the town are important. Other streets, the winding passage quite narrow, connect the inner parts of the township, with old dwellings having ornamented front.

Among the palaces in the Fort, Malia of Har Raj, Akkhai Vilas, Sarvottam Vilas, Rang Mahal, Moti Mahal and Gaj Mahal are exquisite and grand. The walls of the palaces are studded with the blue ceramic tiles imported from the Asia Middle countries. The roofs have a colourful glass pearls. Because of such construction style, the Akkhai Vilas palace is also known as Sheesh Mahal (the Glass Palace). A palace above the 'Hawa Mahal' was built Maharawal Mool Raj II. Its walls and roof have been decorated by the murals and colourful wall paintings. Glass stones and gems were also studded in the patterns. A state Assembly Hall (Deewan-e-Khas or Vishishta Sabha Kaksh) was constructed on its first floor. Maharawal Gaj Singh's Gaj Vilas was decorated with the royal gifts (e.g. from the British Rulers). All the palaces are linked with secret link routes. Such beautiful buildings, palaces edifices, surrounded by the huge walls, all with the golden coloured polished stones, make the Jaisalmer hold the title of 'Golden Castle' with the traditional pride.

Havelis of Jaisalmer

Dwelling house is an index to prosperity. It is, thus, natural that the prosperous people would enjoy living in a more comfortable house where all the amenities are made available and are decorated tastefully. Jaisalmer people who had high artistic taste invariably decorated either on large or small scale their residential houses, locally known as "haveli", which followed more or less a set plan convenient for living in desert landscape where intense heat and dusty wind are the causes of great inconvenience.

To overcome these inconveniences the houses, invariably multi-storeyed, are clustered with each other opening into winding narrow lanes. Every house has a small open terrace in front and provided with a narrow entrance and carved balcony window, called "gokhada" in local term, to upper story. A central open courtyard is an essential feature enclosed on all the sides by pillared varandahs, or other chambers. The same plan is repeated for the subsequent upper storeys accessible through steps in one of the sides; sometime on both the sides in case of bigger houses.

Roofing is done either with dressed planks or rough pieces of wood arranged in rows and supported on heavy wooden beams. It is made water-proof by spreading and ramming of simple mud which, in normal course of scanty rain fall, remains unaffected although periodical treatment by spreading fresh earth is required. In old houses the wooden beam is invariably painted with mythological scenes, divine figures or other flora and fauna. Wealthy people or those holding high ranks in the state had their havelis lavished with ornamental carvings on front facade.

Besides ornamentations on frontage and wood (door and window shutters), perforated or deep cut stone jali is another specialty of Jaisalmer dwelling houses although their restricted use may be noticed even in the temples. Essentially a part of windows, balconies and baries, these jalis exhibiting geometric, floral and faunal patterns of immense variety merge completely with the energetically, intricately and tastefully carved frontage, producing a sequence of countless units of images. This tradition, in desert land, transformed from marble to sand stone as the former not available within the territory seems to have been adopted from Mughal art as well from Gujrat and Deccan¹ in 16th Century A.D. and developed further in the later centuries by the creative zeal of local genius,. This acquisition seems to have been made also by the other neighbouring states like Jodhpur and Bikaner where in the old palace building some fine specimens of jali work can be noticed.

Of the residential buildings the Patua's havelis, Diwan Nathmal's haveli and Salim Singh's haveli are marvelous work of stone carving (Photo plate 3.2).

(i) Patwas Haweli

Seth Ouman Chand Bafna, a leading business man of Oswal community was owner of this haveli. The title, "patua" attached to his family, was obviously on a particular class of business carried by them dealing in gold and silver threads used for tying ornaments. The Patua haveli is comprising of seven havelis, five in one row and two in other, were completed by the Seth in the first decade of the 19th century for his five sons, 'namely - 1) Bahadurmal, 2) Sawai Ram, 3) Mangi Ram, 4) Jorawarmal and, 5) Pratap Chand. The fourth son is said to have been bestowed with extra-ordinary business talent who, with his head-quarter at Indore, established his business centres at more than three hundred places in India and abroad, and had great hold on finances of the states of Western India. Genealogy of this Patua-family finds mention in the Rishabhath temple at Amarsagar² not far from Jaisalmer on Lodrava route.

They have been erected as a matter of rule on high terrace approximately 1.66 metres above the ground level and are at present five storeyed marked from out side by double projected cornices. Those five comprising the northern row cover on plan a rectangular area of 55.10x18.63 metres. The other two in the southern row covering 14.03x16.74 metres stands on other side of a 3.75 metre wide lane, provided with an elaborately carved doorway towards the western end on similar style with super structures forming part of the entire complex.

Names of the havelis reckoned from the gate side with their frontage are as follows.

(a) Northern Row (Name) Frontage

1. Budh Singh's haveli 17 mtrs.
2. Vijai Singh's haveli 8.70 mtrs.
3. Khem Karan's haveli 9.70 mtrs.
4. Babulal alias Aidan Singh's haveli 6.70 mtrs.
5. Pratap Singh Bapna's haveli 13.00 mtrs.

(b) Southern Row

6. Babulal's haveli 5.63 mtrs.
7. Budh Singh's haveli 8.40 mtrs.

Government of Rajasthan has declared them as protected and steps are being taken to purchase them from the concerned parties.

Each of the havelis, similar in plan, has an open terrace 0.95 metres broad followed by a 2.23 metre deep vestibule (varandah) all interconnected and pierced by entrance doorway through which one reaches a spacious chamber locally called "mol" opening internally on 'sides to a central courtyard called "chawak" in local term. This chawak is enclosed on all the sides by arched pillar corridors beyond which, on back side, are several more chambers. The havelis have underground chambers too but they have since been closed. Steps on either side to upper storey where in some cases (haveli No. 3) miniature paintings either of local or Bikaner or Jodhpur schools are fixed in arched niches-the wooden beams too bear luxurious paintings but they now stand faded and require careful chemical treatment. Front facade with intricate carving is the main attraction of those havelis enriched, mainly of the 1st three storeys, with gokhra (projected windows) of three varieties resting on double courses of decorative brackets showing flowers in suspension and foliate patterns. Thus the shapes include (a) half octagonal (b) rectangular covered on all the sides with delicately carved screen and provided with a front arched opening and (c) tiwari form with three front and two lateral arched opening on pillars. These screens and star shaped openings into wall at intervals, sufficiently illuminate the interiors. In few cases the windows are fully covered with perforated screen showing intricate geometric designs. Those in the upper storey take few more shapes having single arch and provided with decorative railing; the semi octagonal crowned by shikhar, on temple line, of inverted lotus design but some of them of domical shape treated with lime plaster. Carvings of intricate flower design do occur on every part of the elevation including the varandah pillars with recessed corners, cusped arches and on the space between the double corners. It is interesting to note that even the back facade of the northern row facing a narrow street is not left monotonous where similar' arched window relieve the elevation but with lesser ornamentation suiting the style of the structure.

Haveli of Patwas, built in the 18th centuries by the Jain Oswal traders of opium, present the finest synthesis of architectural skill and sense of artistic beauty. These havelis with a veil of sixty six peep-holes stand on pedestals of about 8-10 ft. height and are seven storeyed including a basement floor. The frontal of all the five havelis bear very intricate carving, wink-holes, long stylish windows, parapets and shaped balconies with designer railings. One climbed the pedestals through stairs and from there, entered the havelis passing through Deewankhana (a Pillared spacious varandah) which had artistically carved wooden portal, made of sandal wood and affixed in the frame through built in slings. Through the portal, one entered a porch locally known as 'moda' and then a 'chowk' (an inner court open to sky) which had varandahs on all the four sides leading to rooms further in. The first floor plan was followed for all other floors. All the rooms have beautifully set in stone almirahs and cut in niches with slinged wooden doors of set-in designs and bolting systems. The roofs are made of building woods. The Deewankhana and Moda on the first floor was used for official purposes. The other rooms on the first floor were used for storage, kitchen and water holding and such other utilities. The floors above were purely residential where the, Deewankhana and Moda were combined to make a big hall, called 'Mol'. Mol used to be the most beautiful and artistically decorated part of the building. It would have fine murals and wall paintings and designer chandeliers. The wink-holes and windows opened to the main road. This could be compared to the aristocratic drawing room of the modern time. The huge paintings hung and on the wall had a myriad of objects. The lamp holders and other glass-panes used to have coloured portraits and other designs. Niches also had paintings on the walls their back walls.

The lime and mortar was seldom used to enjoin stones used in constructing these havelies. A scaffold was made with stones and they were held in position by iron strips welded by lead. The external and inside walls not made affixing stone blocks but rectangular stone slabs of about 3 to 4 inch thickness were bracketed through male and female plugging system. This technique represented an architecture style of outstanding craftsmanship of that time.

(ii) Salim Singh Haveli

Mehta Salim Singh was the Dewan of Jaisalmer from 1784 to 1824 A.D. Salim Singh's Haveli was also a cluster of several havelis in an area measuring about 1000 ft. x 100 ft. Salim Singh constructed a giant sized special dwelling for himself on the fifth floor of the building and this is famous as Moti Mahal. This is about 60 ft. high from the ground level. Two more floors of wood were constructed over the fifth floor. These had very intricate and fine wooden carving and glass-gem studding work and they were known Sheesh Mahal and 'Rang Mahal' respectively. These two floors were demolished after Salim Singh's death for the sake of state treasury. Some parts are still kept by the owners of the frontal haveli. There are 48 wink-holes on the four sides of the residual

'Moti-Mahal'. These contain awe-inspiring carvings and transparent veil containing cut-outs of peacock and flowery lattices. Motimahal is an upper edifice of a minar shaped haveli and had sprinkling fountains on the 5th floor. The walls and roofs had paintings with gold and vibrant colours.

Situated on slope to the east of the fort Salim Singh's haveli displays altogether a different conception where panoramic height of the structure seems to be the primary objective. Lower facade upto fourth storey devoid of any speciality is relieved by simple window openings, carved gokhra, open terrace fenced by takiya (perforated jali), projected eaves and a pair of elephants on the front terrace. It is on the fifth storey that a tower like rectangular mass has been provided all around with arched corridors on thin ornamental pillars supported on series of brackets projecting much away from the outline of lower storey. These over-hanging chatris with semi-circular arch and domical top arranged in the rows of twelve, each along longer sides and seven on shorter sides, present a ship like view worthy of its name, Jahajmahal. Two more tiers of chatris surmounted the fifth storey but owing to their precarious condition, having been damaged, they have since been purposely dismantled leaving only an arched chamber. Ceilings and walls of upper apartments are reported to be filled with attractive glass-mosaic work. In between the drooping down pointed corners of arches, decorative motifs of dancing peacock fill the space and the edges provided with low perforated jali displaying various foliate patterns within frame-work of neatly executed linings. Fixing of miniature paintings in the *alās* (niches) and colourful wall paintings added additional charm to the interiors of the ornamental upper storeys when intact. Jahajmahal, a wonderful structure of 1815 on account of its elevation, altogether unique in conception, is aptly the symbol of creative architectural genius of Diwan Salim Singh, who is branded a wicked Prime Minister for his intriguing activities throughout his office tenure, detrimental to the interest of the state.

(iii) Deewan Nathmal Haweli

The other haveli belonged to Dewan Nathmal who, held the post of Dewan during the regimes of Maharawals Bairishal (1864-1890) and Shalivahan (1890-1914). The haveli was constructed in 1884 -85. The frontal of the haveli was furnished with wink-holes, windows, canopied balconies and parapets according to the 'Tankshan' craft and the stone gauzes had floral, faunic and human shapes cut out in them which appear wonderful. Two craftsmen 'Hathi' and 'Laloo' designed and executed this building of beauty and they were engaged on the specific condition that they would not copy each other's design nor they would allow duplication of any of their designs. Both of them worked one half of the building. On joining the two parts, the design work looks same and similar but the two craftsmen worked very honestly bearing the condition in their minds only on a very close scrutiny, one would notice differences of very minute nature as one moves in two directions from the centre point. Such uniqueness is totally rare.

Dewan Nathmal has built on a high platform of 8 ft. There are stairs to reach the platform, flanked on both sides by Deewankhanas. In the front central part of the haveli, there are stone canopies and ornamented elephant statuettes. After crossing a massive gate, there comes a spacious 'chowk' surrounded by varandahs on all the sides. Living rooms are behind the varandahs. On the second floor, one enters the 'Mol' through the gate. The mol has an interior decoration with wall paintings and framed pictures hung up on a height showing personalities. Instead of the traditional wooden ceilings, the rooms in the haveli have ceilings built by shaped small stone squares that compose a lotus in the centre and petals all around pattern. No beams or ceiling holds are used. The building has a progressive outlook. The stone carving work represent a very special contemporary style.

Perched on high platform, it is another gem among the artistic residential buildings said to be constructed in the year 1885 by Maharawal Bairisal and gifted to the Diwan. An Urdu couplet¹ to this effect is fixed there in the haveli. Plan shows the usual layout with a pair of elephants on front terrace-the symbol Diwanship. Thus it constitutes a row of three chambers, in front preceded by a varandah, a central Courtyard surrounded by pillared varandah and other rooms. Four-storeyed front facade displays on the first floor, above the central entrance a prominent arched gokhra flanked by mini kamal jharokha, four rectangular and two semi-octagonal projected windows-all relieved by central or lateral arched openings and intricate jali-work. Panels overlying projected eaves bear carvings of some common motifs like horses, elephants, birds and warriors including rail-engine and bicycle, the last two being new introductions of the period. A further advancement over the brackets of Patua's havelis is apparent here as the semi-octagonal windows rest, instead of two, on four successive grades of bracket each displaying similar flower buds in suspension. Two miniature chatris on road level flank the steps leading to the front terrace are carved out of single monolithic pieces and are stated to have enshrined within the figures of some religious gurus of the Paliwal community.

Temples

In Jaisalmer, all religions received equal protection and promotion by the state, which results in great religious activity in the state, particularly by Jain Shwetamber faith-holders. The early patronage by the state rulers encouraged construction of temples, monasteries, prayer assemblies and other such centres right from the 10th century till the 19th century in a regular manner.

Jaisalmer on account of its almost isolated position was a secured place to perpetuate the religious faith and hence the architectural activities in this region went on un-interrupted. Of the important temples of this period, all within the fort, three are to Hindus and seven to Jains of Swetamber sect. The activity continued in later period and some temples ranging in date from 17th to 19th century at Pokaran and around the capital city. Such structures at Ramkunda, Moolsagar, Amarsagar, Oharsisar and Barabagh although late but quite interesting.

Both, Hindus and Jains have contributed in the field of temple architecture. Jains entered the field in eleventh century and erected the magnificent temple to Parswanath at Lodrava, the then capital seat of the Bhatias. Other important monuments of this period are located in and around Lodrava along river Kak. The restored Shiv-temple with chaturmukha lingam inside on the bank of river Kak is datable to twelfth century AD. A break in the continuity is noticeable for nearly two centuries after change of the capital from Lodrava to the present Jaisalmer Fort due to political instability and there after revival of the architectural activities on a vigorous scale when the groups of Jain and Hindu temples came into existence within a very short span of time of slightly over hundred years. That was the period when constructional activities in northern India, except at few places, had come to a total deadlock caused by changing political conditions.

Despite of the fact that all the rulers of the state were followers of Hinduism, Hindu temples are less in number and also in artistic richness than those of the Jains. In Jaisalmer, Jaina churches with most stable financial background directed whole heartedly towards promotion of religious cause while Hindu society was comparatively not so well organised in religious activities and possibly with meager financial resources failed to compete with Jain temples in the field of temple construction. Hence, Hindu temples in Jaisalmer are not only less in number as compared to those of the Jains but they also lack in architectural and iconographic efflorescence although belonging to the same age group.

From the angle of temple architecture art, the Jain temples set an unclaimed height. The 'jagati', 'prवेश द्वार', 'mandap', 'mahamandap', 'garbha griha', 'mukhya mandal', 'goodh mandal', 'rang mandal', 'stoop shikhar' (local names of various parts and sections of Hindu and Jain temples) carried the influence of architectural style of Solanki and Baghela regimes of Gujarat.

Hindu temples might have received state protection in pre-independence period but at present, except the Laxminath, all of them stand thoroughly neglected. On the other hand the Jain temples predominant in Jaisalmer, are well maintained, commanding huge number of Jain tourists and devotees round the year.

Brief description of some architecturally important temples are as under :

Jain Temples

(i) Parshwanath Temple

This temple is maintained by the "Lodravapur Paraswanath Jain Swetamber Trust Jaisalmer", who started a large scale renovation a few years back and consequently the shrine is deprived of its originality. Conservation work carried on such unscientific line to such an extent that every worn-out member stands now replaced by freshly carved piece, so much so that even the old sculptures on 11th century mandap pillars were re-chiselled with the sole intention to give them a fresh look.

This Temple inside the Fort has a total of 1235 statues sculptured by 'Ghanna'. The temple was built in V.S. 1473 according to the available records. The first gate known as 'Toran' was built by the local golden stone and its columns depict gods, goddesses, musicians, elephants, lions, horses, birds and other figures with flowery borders. In the centre of the peak of 'Toran, Jin image has been carved. On the second gate, there are three 'torans of Mukh Mandap which has an artistic ceiling and side walls decorated with several beautiful figures. The idols of Jain Tirthankars adorn all the torans. In this temple built in the Gurjar style, the various sections like those mentioned in the preceding paragraph, contain various statues of 'dev kulikas (goddesses of heritage) in enchanting, moods and poses. Paints on them have added all the more charm.

In the sabha mandap (the Assembly Hall), have carved columns in the front and torans in the middle decorated with figures in the myriad patterns. The mandap has nine torans (the entry arch). Four yellow stone slabs are affixed in the temple on which various Jain religious stories, signs, instruments, Tirthankars and temples are depicted by carving. On the outside walls of the temple, several gods, goddesses and celestial damsels have been depicted. A few coupled statuettes have been carved on the inner columns. All these are very significant from the point of sculpture. Many peaks and steeples along with the highest peak grant a magnificent look to the temple. They also act as protection ring (like a fort) for the temple.

The temple is originally an 11th century structure to which, subsequently in 17th century A.D. several additions were made, besides restoration of the part above the wall including the entire shikhar. Early character may also be seen in the simple plan of the temple comprising sanctum preceded by vestibule and enclosed by an ambulatory and a ranga-mandap. The early character is further corroborated by a pair of toran pillars outside, which must have been erected when the main temple came into existence in the middle of 11th century A.D.

The mandap pillars forming an octagon rest on square base, are square at the bottom (maximum 47 cms.), and turn gradually to octagon, 16 sided, 32 sided faceted section, again square showing vase foliage, then thin circular band; overlain by round ribbed capital and bhuta-bracket showing Vidyadhar figures in various forms and attitudes-like fighting with swords, carrying weapons, playing on musical instruments etc. The present vitana (ceiling) of sabhamandarak order over the sabha-mandap resting on octagon of pillars is a modern restoration showing delicate chiselling of gajtal and lotus on inner corners of Padmashila. One of the two pilasters of vestibule with cut corner is square in section and embellished only on the upper part showing foliage within circle, vasefoliage, thin circular band, with foliage and finally circular on top showing bands of ribs; and diamond and foliage on corners.

Sanctum panch-sakha doorway shows (1) creeper on patrasakha, (2) kin divinities both male and female in four vertical niches on rupa-sakha flanked outside by devotees (3) Semi-Circular foliate design (4) row of kamaldal and (5) leographs on outer most offset besides Indra dwarfals flanked by females one on either side. Doorsill, besides the usual motifs of kalpataru on middle part, portrays on extreme ends Ganesh and Kubera with their spouse. Restored lintel in five prominent niches harbours the Jaina divinities, the middle occupied by Parswanath. Unfortunately, major part of the front facade of the garbha-griha is concealed under chunam plaster including that of the plasters flanking the doorway and a part of the doorway itself and hence study of their details could not be possible.

The free standing toran pillars facing the outer entrance of the temple very much retain their original form. The basal part of the pillars shows kirtimukha, elephant and human bands, the shaft of which the lower part is left bare shows again below the intermediary bracket a niche divine figure flanked outside by other human figures in dancing attitudes.

The four subsidiary shrines on corners, devoid of ornamentation are later additions of 17-18th century AD. One of them in N.E. corner records an inscription dated in V.S. 1693 to this effect. To the same period may be attributed the covering of the hypostyle mandap with perforated trellises and installation of the present figure of mulanayak Parswanath in black stone with an inscription dated in V.S. 1675 Margashirsh Sudi 12, Thursday.

Tri-sakha doorway, besides dwarfals on sides, shows on rupasakha row of four niches each accommodating within a seated Jain goddess. Other two are patra and kamal sakhās. The lintel in five niches harbours Jain divinities both male and female besides a central Tirthankar and the in-between space filled with other seated human couples in four panels. The sill with usual motifs in middle harbours on extreme ends in niches seated female divinities and attended on by chawribearers outside.

(ii) Sambhavnath Temple :

This temple also follows the pattern of the above temple. The Rang Mahal of this temple has a domelike roof which reminds one of the famous Dilwara Temple. In the central portion, there is a hanging lotus edifice which on the circumference has figures of twelve celestial damsels (apsaras). The lower portion has demigod musicians (gandharvas). In between the apsaras, there are human form statues in padmasan (a posture in Yoga for sitting in deep contemplation) on back of Swans. Altogether there are 604 figures of Tirthankars (holymen of pilgrimage status) in the temple. The smallest one is of the millet grain size. According to the stone inscription affixed in this temple,

According to the stone inscription affixed in the temple, it became ready in the V.S. 1536 when Rawal Dev Karan was on throne. Another speciality of the temple is that some Khetsi of Shankwal caste had put up idols of Ten Hindu incarnations and Lakshminath Bhagwan in this temple to promote harmony and synthesis between the two religions of Hindus and Jains. This encouraged people from both the faiths to visit the temple for offering their prayers.

(iii) Chandraprabhu Temple :

This large three floored temple is dedicated to Tirthankar Chandraprabhu. This was built in the 12th century and compares with the Ranakpur Temple in the temple architecture. During the invasion of Alauddin Khilji in 1308 -1314 A.D. the temple was destroyed. The Jain followers rebuilt it later and it stands today in its new form since then. According to the historian like R.V. Somani, it was a Hindu Temple which was subsequently changed into a Jain temple by the followers. This view does not appear to be logical. Somani has not given any evidence in support of his opinion. He has possibly gathered such an impression because of many idols of Hindu gods and goddesses are found in this temple. In fact, this was basically a Jain temple. According to descriptions in the Jain scripture Khartar-gaccha, when the fort was under the Mughal occupation, some Jain acharyas under the leadership of Jin Padam Sun visited Jaisalmer in the v.s. 1390 while on their travelling route and they had requested the Fort-in-charge (who was a Muslim) to open the gates of the Fort to allow them to see the temple. The Muslim administrator accepted their request. This fact proves that the Chandraprabhu Temple was a Jain temple since the beginning and it was there before and after the Muslim attack. The presence of the idols of Hindu gods and goddesses was a result of religious tolerance practised by the rulers and people alike. Under such circumstances, conversion of a temple of one faith into the temple of another faith does not appear to be either feasible or sensible. In the architectural beauty, this temple compares high and well to other temples. In addition to idols of Jain Tirthankars, the temple has idols of Brahmi, Maheshwari, Vaishnavi, Indra, Brahma, Maheshwar, Skand, Kartikeya, Bhairav, Ganesh, Mithun and others. Their beautiful statues and a perfect sense of religious harmony makes the temple not only a place of prayer but also an inspiring cultural centre.

(iv) Rishabh Dev Temple :

This grand and artistic temple has been dedicated to the First Tirthankar Rishabh Dev. According to the stone inscription affixed in the temple, it was built in the V.S. 1536 it was constructed in V.S. 1497 by the Jain Shwetamber family of Shivraj, Mahiraj and Lakhan during the regime of Rawal Vair Singh.

There is an underground archive of ancient and rare scriptures in this temple. 2697 manuscripts on palmyra, parchment, silk and handmade paper leaves as also on wooden plies are preserved here. While most of the writing relates to the, Jain Dharma, they offer a wide variety on subjects of art, music, astrology, chemistry, medicine, sex and economy. The most ancient volume is

of V.S. 1060. Many volumes contain the details of the Jain Acharyas in retreat here, the contemporary rulers and other important events. They have been instrumental in compiling a wholesome history of Jaisalmer.

(v) Sheetalnath Temple :

This temple is adjacent to the Parshwanath Temple. The architectural style and artistic specialties of this temple are worth admiring. The statues of Naukhara Parshwanath and Twenty Four Idols are outstanding examples of temple architecture.

(vi) Joint Temple of Shantinath and Kunthunath

The first floor of the temple is dedicated to Kunthunath and the second floor is dedicated to Shantinath. This may be called as the finest temple of Jaisalmer without being charged of exaggeration. The peak of the temple has been designed in the fantasy of the mountain of Maha Meru. The 'Shikhar' of Maha Mandap' has been decorated with the statues of 'apsaras' playing musical instruments while just below them 'Gandharvas' are shown in accompaniment. In the 'Goodn Mandap', two main images in the posture of 'Kayotsarga' (renunciating the body) in black and white stone are depicts. On either side of these, statues of 11 Tirthankars have been placed and that is why this is known as 'chaubisi' (the twenty four).

There is hardly any stone which has not been chiselled by the sculptor to create a master-piece. Figures of an endless variety cover every nook and corner of the temple. On the outer walls of the 'Garbh Griha' (the womb-pit where the worshipable idol is placed and out of the reach of worshippers), enchanting female figures in varying postures and three feet high are depicted. Various gods and goddesses and divine couples in multi moods and poses attract the visitor and devotee. These statues weave love, romance, and poetry in the stone and represent the value of devotion in the diversions of living in this modern world. The corpulent beauty of the female figures here compare well in the artistry of Khajuraho, Konark and Dilwara sculpture.

During the period of Rawal Karna Dev. Idols of Ganesh in various postures have been depicted on the 12 pillars of the Rang Mandap which indicate the adoration of this deity by the Jain followers. In addition, goddesses like Ambika and Shalbhanjini and god like Yaksha have also been added further beautify the temple.

(vi) Mahaveer Temple :

Located adjacent to palaces, this temple is known for its simplicity. The reigning deity is Mahaveer Swami. It was completed in 1581 according to the stone inscription.

Jain Temple in the City

Far the believers of the 'Tapgaccha' (devoting to penance) route of the Jain faith, this praying place-was built in 1812 A.D. during the period of Maharawal Mool Raj. For those who followed the 'Khartargaccha' (the harder dedication) route, rich Jain merchants constructed a Dadabadi in 1593 A. D. The feet of those holy Jain acharyas who were given their last rites after their receiving the salvation here, were installed and the last installation was in 1815 A.D. The architecture and the wall painting of this Dadabadi are worth admiring.

(vii) Lodrava Jain Temple:

Lodrava was held by Parmars in the 10th century. The rulers of Jaisalmer became its successive owners by winning it. The Jain scriptures describe "the place to be- a seat of Jain temples since the very beginning. The ancient temples were destroyed during the invasion of Mohammed Gouri in 1178 A.D. The temples now in presence were built during the Bhati Rule. According to a stone inscription the present Lodrava Jain temple was built by a rich merchant 'Tharushah' in the V.S. 1675. It is very significant from the view of architecture. The layout and the construction of the temple and its 'Kalpadrum' (wish-granting tree) reflect, the imaginativeness of the builders. There is a fort like boundary wall on all the sides. There is a grand arch gate (toran), about 20 ft. high, for entering the temple. Very intricate and delicate design work is carved on its pillars and mast. Beyond the Toran, the roof of the Rang Mandap is designed in eight armed stupa (semi-dome or cupola) shape which again has beautiful carvings. In the Garbhagriha of the temple is the black stone statue of Parshwanath on the thousand-lick hood. The diamond set on the visage of the- idol reflects the idol from different angles. There is a temple in each of the four corners and that reminds of the Hindu style of 5 temples in one campus. The circling gallery around the temple have stone nets fixed at 45° angle demonstrate an extremely advanced technique of architecture. The 'Kalpadrum' in the centre of the open yard is the outcome of stunning artistry yellow stones have been assembled to give a landscape of the Sumeru Mountain on which the Kalpadrum, composed by eight metals has been planted. Thus reflects the knowledge and technique of alloying and metallurgy that builders of that time had.

Lodrava is in ruins today. Yet it was a very prosperous town in the 10th century. Being located on the route for Sindh, Multan and Punjab, it had its locational importance as well as its strategic significance. There are several Vaishnav and Shiv temples ruins in witness. At some distance from Jaisatmer Maharwal Amarsingh (1650-1700) built a number of palaces, temples, 'bawaries', gardens etc. on the side of an artificial lake at Amarsagar. Himmat Singh Bapna built a magnificent temple by the lake side. This temple has Garbhagriha, Goodh Mandap, Teertha and Rang Mandap like the other temples. Carvings and sculpture work is very artistic and outstanding geometrical shapes. There is no stone in the temple which does not have any art work. The temple gives a semblance of all exquisite filigree work by an expert goldsmith.

Hindu Temples

(i) Laxminath temple:

Laxminath an important Hindu temple, was originally planned on the Panchayatan style, one of the side temples is still existing. This temple was originally built with the fort by Jaissal himself as its pillars of Sabha Mandap are coeval to other structures of the 12th century A.D. During the course of invasion of Alauddin Khilji when good number of temples of the area were demolished, a major part of this temple was also damaged. During the 15th century A.D. when Sewag Sonapal brought the present icon from Medata, this temple was renovated under the orders of Maharawal Laxman. It could not be completed during his life time and its consecration ceremony was arranged in VE 1494 (1438 AD) by his son Maharawal Bairisingh. A long inscription of the above date now incised in the Sabha. Mandap reveals the above fact. The names of Bairisingh's minister Pancholi Shala's son Shivdas and his Selahath (a Revenue officer) Deepa's son Bhoja Bhati have been recorded therein. The Bhatti vamsha-Prashasti states that Laxman was a great worshipper of Laxminath and paid his obeisance to the said deity by constructing a temple. Its Pujari is still of "Sewag" caste, the descendant of Sonapal.

A careful study of architectural pieces of the temple proves that there are several earlier pieces. The pillars of Sabha-Mandap Mukh-Chatuski outer porch etc. contain deeply engraved Ghatta-Pallava motifs, coeval to Lodrava Jain temple. These pillars seem to be the original part of this temple. The Laxminath temple's Garbha-griha, Gudha-Mandap, side gates Bhramantika and other parts of the temple have been repeatedly renovated. In the two side gates there are figures of Jain deity carved during the 15th century A.D. These may belong to some other temple.

In a ceiling of the side temple of Ganesh there is a beautiful figure of Vishnu entwined by a group of snakes. Such motifs remained popular in Jaisalmer and one more icon of this type has been noticed from the ceiling of Hanuman temple. The Laxminath temple is now managed by Goshtikas of the 12 families of Maheshwaris. All valuable objects, ornaments of deity etc. are in their possession.

(ii) Satimata Temple.

This, hitherto unknown but one of the early temples in this region and is three kilometres to the south-west of Lodrava. The temple locally known as "Satimata-ka-than" is situated quite off the road to Lodrava in barren land and hence has ever since escaped the eyes of visitors. Its great archaeological value is further enhanced by the fact that no other 11th century temple in original form stands now in Jaisalmer region.

The present plan of the temple standing on 86 cms. high platform and facing east comprises a sanctum, a vestibule and a covered mandap, the last being a hap-hazard restoration with fallen materials not in conformity with original style. The square mandap has fiat roof supported on walls and two intermediary pairs of pillars 23 cms. square and 1.80 mtrs. high including the base. These pillars standing on similar type of base are initially square in section with faceted corners in upper half whereby taking octagonal shape; overlain by roll type bracket. The plain lintel and flat ceiling call for no comment. Tri-sakha sanctum doorway lavished with carvings is particularly interesting as this part is original and helps us in determining the correct age of this shrine. The doorway having comparatively a short entrance opening (86 cms. high and 43 cms. broad) depicts on sides dwarf-pala and ganga-yamuna motifs at bottom while on the upper part of rupa-sakha (middle offset) in row of three vertical niches on either side appear human figures (single) in various postures-some in dancing, a highly graceful representation and high standard of plastic art while on two, the patra-sakha and kamal-sakha run creepers and row of lotus petals respectively. Lintel, in three prominent niches, harbours the figures of Trinity with Lord Vishnu on crest mounted on garuda; the space inbetween filled by the row of Navagrahas. Sill as usual bears the Kalpatree and kirtimukha motifs. Above the doorway occurs a pediment shape of geometric decoration and two plains and square pillars on sides, similar to those in mandap surmounted by bracket. The main deity which must have been that of Vishnu is missing in the sanctum.

The outer walls show pitha and Vedhibandh mouldings quite plain. Monotony of plainness of panch-rath wall is relieved by a kirtimukha band on upper part above which occurs a thin recess between two kapota like mouldings filled with the design, a ccnstitute of squares; wall further on bhadra is pierced by niches-each harbouring a figure of (1) four armed Vishnu with ayudha-purush (west), (2) four armed Brahma (north), and (3) Varah incarnation in anthropomorphic form (south). Panchratha curvilinear shikhar, a rekhadeul, is a mesh of chaitya dormers marked on corners with five bhumi-amalaks.

Some detached sculptures, of the same period, possibly from this Vishnu temple are deposited in a shed attached to south among which fragmentary lintels, doorjambs and pediment stones, all sculptured are noteworthy.

(iii) Chaturmukh Shiv lings (Lodrava)

About half a mile to the N.E. of the Jain temple stands at the edge of the cutting of Kak river, a temple of irregular structure enshrining within an old Chaturmukha Shiv linga possibly of 12th century A.D. fixed on a square base. Each of the four sides (face facing west chipped off) shows a bust of Shiv with a separate pair of hands, fiat face, wears in elongated earlobes earring & jata-jute on head. Specialty of the faces lies in their different forms and countenances. Thus, that facing south represents Bhairav with a bowl in left hand and some unidentifiable object like snake or skull, held in the left. Eastern face is marked with serenity, carrying lotus in hands while the northern side partly preserved carries a rosary in the right hand. No other specimen of such Chaturmukh

Shivling has come to light from this region although some fine specimens of Maheshmurti (bust) are reported from Garsisar tank and Chundi. The structure is raised by piling up of old materials of some 12th century temple done recently and hence calls for no comment.

(iv) The Sun Temple:

This may be taken the third interesting Hindu monument within the fort located close to the north of the Jain temple group facing east. This shrine, too, was caused to be constructed by the same Maharawal Bairi Singh in the memory of his wife as recorded on an inscribed slab dated in V.S. 1494 fixed there. Thus the recordings available in all the Hindu temples regarding their dates-the conclusive proof beyond doubt - are sufficient to conclude that all the three important Hindu temples within the Jaisalmer Fort were erected during the reign of Maharawal Bairi Singh alone between the years 1494 and 1498 of the Vikram Era. The temple raised as rule on a considerably high terrace has the plan similar to that of the Ratneshwar Shiv temple so much so that both, the mandap and the sanctum, have been provided with separate doorways, although in the case of mandap here doorway is left conspicuously plain except the usual motifs on the sill. The structure lacks in over-all decoration and presents a monotonous look. The lateral cells opening into the mandap (now empty), provided with plain doorway and independent pancharath shikhar seem to be later additions, the fact evident by intruding outer mandap chadya (projection) deep into the shikhar of these cells.

Mandap pillars forming octagon and standing on high base are identical in section with those in the Shiv temple but devoid of embellishment except the crude representation of bell and chain motif on top overlain by similarly crude bracket and heavy architrave over which rises circular ceiling showing after plain basal mouldings kola and gajtal courses with a decorative central lotus pendant in suspension.

Sanctum doorway, besides usual motifs in middle, portrays on extreme ends Ganesh and a four armed female divinity the latter carrying manuscript, lotus, pot and beaded rosary with a bird resembling swan. On sides, stand four armed Indra dwarpals holding club, hook, thunder-bolt and a round object like ball, and ganga-yamuna flanked by females. Rupasakha depicts in four niches on either side two armed seated figures of Surya holding lotus in both the hands and flanked by dancers and musicians, while on inner most offset appears row of lotus within spiral covering also the lintel part. Ganesh on lalabimba is flanked by twelve juxtaposed vidyadhara figures, six on either side, carrying long garlands. Similar Surya figures, seated cross legged, find repetition on upper part of architrave in five niches. The shrine, as is evident from the carvings on doorway, was essentially dedicated to Surya, which stands now replaced by a 17th century four armed colossal figure of Ganesh. However, a fragmentary lower part of a Surya figure fully agreeing with 15th century craftsmanship, now lying loosely in the mandap may possibly be of the originally enshrined image which, on being damaged, fell in disuse.

The outer facade constitutes simple plain mouldings, and plain wall marked with a continuous diamond band. Curvilinear shikhar with lateral and corner miniature turrets attached to the main spire and pierced at base by prominent niches follows utmost simplicity and is surmounted by ribbed amalaka and lalasha (potfinial). The niches are now empty

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