

Jain Architecture at a Glance

Atinderpal Singh

Assistant Professor S. Sobha Singh Department of Fine Arts Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab, India

Abstract

Jainism is one of the oldest religions of world with its roots in India. It contributed to cultural, spiritual and social development. The elements which are used in Jain Architecture are similar to other architecture but they are distinctively Jain. They are developed with the historical and religious importance of a place, with tangible intangible aspects associated with it. Jain religious architecture includes architecture from cave temple carved in stone. With the change of material and time, planning aspects are also changed. The paper focuses on understanding basic terminologies and elements used in Jain architecture along with various types of architecture developed. It tries to find out the religious ideas, ritual practices reflected in Jain architecture. Study also shows that the style used is changing from time to time along with the change in material and it is responding to the modern age.

KEYWORDS: Jain Tirtha Kshetra, Nirvana, Kalyanaka, Atishaya Kshetra, Chaitya, Jinalaya, Kaplavriksha.

INTRODUCTION:

Jain Art and architecture developed during different period are seen in various parts of the country. Different rulers rule in different period of time. With this, various types of architecture like cave architecture, various types of temple architecture were developed from the 5th century. These are developed as **Jain Tirtha Kshetras** with tangible and intangible aspects associated with it and also they have religious, historic, associational and cultural values attached to it. There are various types of Jain caves & temples. The paper focuses on understanding the basic terminologies used in Jain temple architecture. The study also focuses on the type of architecture developed in different periods along with the architectural features and material used for construction. An attempt is made to understand, changing character of Jain temple architecture as a religious structure. From the study it was found that, due to the change in social, economic and political conditions, the Jain architecture developed with new concept and new features.

Tirtha Kshetra: It is a sacred place and becomes a holy place in association with Jain values. Generally, they are located on hills or mountains, as those are the places from where the Jain monks achieved salvation. Hence, Jain temple, cluster of temples, statues are located on top of hills. (Hegewald, 2017) **Tirth Kshetra** are built by followers or devotees to keep the spiritual event of that place in continuous memory.

Three Types of Tirtha Kshetras: 1. **Nirvan Kshetra** or **Siddha Kshetra:** The place of salvation of any **Tirthankar** or an ascetic saint. Siddha Kshetra Drongiri is an ancient **Nirvan Kshetra** (Place of Salvation) which is proved by ancient literature, ancient cave, ancient Jain temples & art of sculpture. Drongiri is described as **Nirvan Kshetra** of Shri Gurudatta & others so many ascetic saints, by Shri Pujyapad Swamy in Nirvan Bhakti, by

Acharya Harishen in Brihat Katha Kosh and in Nirvan Kand. Gajpanth (In Maharashtra). The Siddha Kshetra has 15 temples together on both peaks and is climbed by 3500 steps. According to Jainism many Jain monks including Ram, Hanuman, Sugriv attained Nirvana from here. Both the peaks show carved caves.

2. Kalyanaka Kshetra: Kalyanaka are five major events in Tirthankar's life. *Kalyanaka Kshetra* are the places related to *Garbha* (Conception), *Janma* (Birth), *Tapa / Deeksha* (Accepting the penance), *Gyan* (Knowledge) *Kalyanakas* of *Tirthankars*. Champapur is quite ancient and historic *TirthaKshetra*. Champapur is the only '*PanchKalyanaka Kshetra*' in the world. It is related to *Panch Kalyanaka*: – (i) *Garbha*, (ii) *Janma*, (iii) *Tapa*, (iv) *Gyan* and (v) *Moksha* of 12th Teerthankar Bhagwan Vasupoojya (The first ascetic saint). The Champapur was the capital of 'Anga Janpada'.

3. Atishaya Kshetra: The places other than *Nirvan Kshetra* or *Kalyanaka Kshetra* are all called *Atishaya Kshetra*. In beginning, generally only the footprints or foot images were kept on *Tirth Kshetras* and one or two temples were built there. Later on the importance of temples felt more, so many temples were constructed at *Tirth Kshetras*. *Tirtha Kshetra* where a miracle or wonder is happened or seen about the temple, the idol or place is known as *Atishaya Kshetra*. *Atishaya Kshetras* are Kumbhoj-Bahubali, Bhatkuli (Maharashtra).

Three Types of Jain Architecture: 1. **Stupa(Chaitya):** There are six Jain Stupas in Mathura.

2. **Caves (Layana):** These are to rock Cut Architecture also called as caves. These are found from 6th century during Chalukya period and continued during Rashtrakuta period. Excellent Jain architecture and sculpture can also be seen in the rock-cut caves found in Mathura, Bundelkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. A number of rock-cut caves have been discovered in Udaigiri and Khandagiri, twin hills in Puri District of Orissa and in Ellora in Maharashtra. Cave no. 30-35 at Ellora are Jain caves carved in 10th century after Buddhist and Hindu caves and are considered as modern. These are named as Indra Sabha (Cave number 33), Jagannath Sabha (Cave number 33), Chota Kailasa (cave no. 30) which is the imitation of Kailasha Brahmanical cave. Indra Sabha shows Manastambha and colossal image of Parswanath, carved in AD 1235 also between Indra Sabha and Jagannath sabha. Footprints are also a specialty of Jain art to make one remember to follow the path led by the Victors. Marked and adored images were also made for sectional identification later. This idol making art is a highly creditable one in Gujarat and Rajasthan states of India.

Excavated mainly as retreats for Jain ascetics, they belong to the first century and second century BC. The eighteen Udaigiri and fifteen Khandagiri caves differ in plan from the rock-cut viharas of the Buddhists. The Jain viharas here do not have the assembly or prayer hall surrounded by cells nor a sanctuary like the Buddhist viharas. Excavated at different levels, the cells are narrow with low ceilings. There are no niches in the walls. The cells are small and plain, in keeping with the rigorous asceticism of Jain monks. The Udaigiri caves are double-storeyed and have a courtyard in front.

The largest and finest of the Udaigiri caves is Cave 1 called the Rani-Gumpha or Rani cave. (Gumpha the local word for cave). The Rani-Gumpha is important for its heavily sculptured friezes. The architecture of the cave is simple, having been excavated on three sides of a **quadrangle**. The roof of the verandah projects outwards like an overhanging **cornice** (Cave). Pillars have been cut to support the roof giving the caves an effect of

structural houses. The right wing of the lower storey has one cell with three small entrances and a pillared verandah. Two armed *dwarapalas* stand guard on either side of the verandah. Though the pillars have collapsed, the capitals with sculptured bulls and lions are to be seen intact. The entrances to the cells are arched with motifs of the lotus and creepers coming out of the mouths of animals. The back wall of the verandah is covered with a frieze of elaborately carved figures. The left wing has three cells and the main wing has four cells. The doorways of all the cells are decorated with sculptured pilasters and arches. Carved friezes depicting the reception of a king returning victorious from a battle adorn the rear walls of the verandahs. In the upper storey also, the plan is the same - with four cells in the main wing and one cell each on either side. Each cell has two doorways with curved arches and engraved pilasters. Symbols, auspicious for the Jains are carved in the space between the arches. The workmanship in the upper storey is superior to that of the lower. On the whole the figures are shown in easy natural poses with their faces in various profiles and moods. The designs on the pillars are similar to those used in Buddhist caves. The inscriptions on the cave walls give valuable information about the rulers and dynasties of that period. The cave is a good exhibit of the water supply system at the time. As there was no worship of images then, there is no Jain *thirthankara* in the original carving. Figures of *thirthankaras* carved on the walls of the cells are a later addition to the Khandagiri caves which were redone in about the 11th and 12th centuries A.D. to serve as **sanctuaries**.

3. Temples (*Jinalaya*): These are the religious buildings found after Stupa and Layana also called *Jinalaya*, *Jinabhavana*, *Basadi*, *Basti*, *vihara*, etc. Temple art has three styles: *Nagara*, *Vesara* and *Dravid*. In *Nagara* style, the *Garvagraha* is quadrangular and its summit (*Sikhara*) is circular with *Kalasa*. It is used in Punjab, Himalaya, Rajasthan, Madhyapradesa, Udisa and Bengal. The *Sikhara* becomes flat in *Vesara* style, which is found in Madhyabharat, and the temple gets the form of pillar in *Dravidian* style. The earliest Jain temple is found at Lohanipur (Patna) of Maurya period. Then the temple art is available from the seventh century onwards. Painting has also been one of the best methods for expressing the ideas. In the beginning it was both rock cut and structural, but then remained structural and existed in plains. *Manastambha*: It is part of temple, found in the front side of temple, having religious importance with an ornamental pillar structure carrying the image of *Tirthankar* on the top, on all four cardinal directions. *Manastambha* are constructed at the entrances of most of the temples.

The great Jain temples and sculptured monuments of Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan are world-renowned. The most spectacular of all Jain temples are found at Ranakpur and Mount Abu in Rajasthan. Deogarh (Lalitpur, U.P.), Ellora, Badami and Aihole also have some of the important specimens of Jain Art. Jain architecture cannot be accredited with a style of its own, for in the first place it was almost an offshoot of Hindu and Buddhist styles. In the initial years, many Jain temples were made adjoining the Buddhist temples following the Buddhist rock-cut style. Initially these temples were mainly carved out of rock faces and the use of bricks was almost negligible. However, in later years Jains started building temple-cities on hills based on the concept of mountains of immortality. While initially Jain architecture copied Buddhist and Hindu styles, they soon came to evolve a distinct identity of their own. The major difference is the construction of 'temple-cities' by the Jains as opposed to solitary Hindu temples which are the norm rather than the exception. A Jain place of worship is also noted for its rich

materials (often marble), as well as the profusion of ornamentation which decorates the structure. Structurally speaking, a Jain temple is constructed on a square plan with openings in four cardinal directions, each of which could lead to the image of a *Tirthanakara*. It is thus that it is not uncommon to find four of these images placed back to back, one for each cardinal direction. The interior of the temple has a singularly large number of columns, from which a false arch/bracket springs about 2/3rd of the way up. These pillars are richly carved, as is the roof towards which they spring. Indeed, roof forms, such as at the temples at Mount Abu, become quite elaborate with marble deities and concentric rings of carving. Domes or *Shikharas* are usually more acute than the ones found in Hindu temples, which gives to Jain temple cities a very distinct skyline of multiple dome points reaching toward the sky.

Compared to the number of Hindu temples in India, Jain temples are few and spaced out. The latter used to tear down their older, decaying temples and build new ones at the same site. On the other hand Jain temples had a certain militant aura around them, probably because of plunderers who may have carried away riches. Surrounded by embattled walls, the Jain temples are divided into wards in a manner similar to fortified cities with parapets and niches to repel armed aggression. Each ward in turn was guarded by massive bastions at its ends, with a fortified gateway as the main entrance. The reason being that Jain temples are the richest temples in the world, surpassing even Mughal buildings in terms of grandeur and material wealth.

The temple-cities were not built on a specific plan; instead they were the results of sporadic construction. Natural levels of the hill on which the 'city' was being built accommodated various levels so that as one goes higher so does the architecture and grandeur increase. Each temple, though, followed a set pattern, styles, designed on principles of architecture in use during the period. The only variation was in the form of frequent Chamukhs or four-faced temples. In these the image of a *Tirthankar* (fordmaker) would face four sides, or four *Tirthankar* s would be placed back to back to face four cardinal points. Entry into this temple would be from four doors. The Chamukh temple of Lord Adinath is a characteristic example of the four-door temple. Built in 1618 AD on the site of an older structure, it houses a 23 sq feet cell chamber. One doorway leads out to the assembly hall in front while the other three have porches leading into the main courtyard.

Wall paintings are also found in many temples and caves representing religious stories, tenets and prominent incidents of Victors lives, mother's dreams, legendary scenes, miniature painting and palm leaf or paper decoration (manuscripts) which has also been an art of respect. The exquisite samples of this art are found in many Jain manuscript libraries. Wood carving has also been an art. It seems some of these arts have been declining considerably.

These used to be constructed in stone in Nagar style used to carve by depicting 24 *Tirthankaras* and attendants called *Yaksha-Yakshini*. (Shah) In later period use of brick also started. Chaumukh temple, where the shrine is located on all four sides and entrance to the temple is also provided from all sides. In *Shikhara* temple type, *Shikhara* of the temple is provided above Garbhagriha. Temples constructed without shikhar are called Chaityalay temples.

The architecture of Jainism, however, is less easy to define. While its temples are based originally on the Hindu temple plan, the difference lies in the deities placed inside,

Jainism preferring to situate images of the *Tirthankar as* within the precincts of the temple. The major sites for ancient and medieval Jain temple architecture are at Mount Abu in Rajasthan and at Sravanabelagola in the south of India. Apart from this, there are also temples in Ahmedabad and more modern ones in and around Delhi.

Dilwara Temples:

It is a moot point why so much Jain architecture was built on hilltops. One view has it that since mountains have been holy in Indian culture, the mountain top makes for an ideal site for temples. A more pragmatic view, of course, is that the temple cities also acted like fortresses, making for an impregnable site to ward off potential attackers. Of course, with the arrival of Qutb-ud-din Why did Jain temple architecture, in particular, develop the four sided form, as opposed to Hindu temples, which tend to be linear in direction? One answer must come from the metaphysical doctrines of Jainism, the concept of relativity in particular, or in other words, that there is no 'one truth'. This means that for a temple, an architectural promenade that showed only one face of the *Tirthankar a* was against the concept of Jainism, this means that a number of overlapping 'ways' to reach the image were developed. This multiplicity of viewpoints, this duplicity of temple forms and facades was well reflected in later examples as well.

Amongst the most distinctive of medieval Jain temples are the examples of the Dilwara temples at Mount Abu, Rajasthan. A complex of five temples is distributed asymmetrically around the hilltop with a central space orienting the whole composition. These temples are different from other temple cities as the structures themselves are unadorned with domes or spires, thus making them difficult to mark from the outside. The **Dilwara Temples** or **Delvada Temples** are located about 2½ kilometres from the Mount Abu settlement, Rajasthan's only hill station. These Jain temples were built by Vimal Shah and designed by Vastupala, Jain minister of Dholka, between the 11th and 16th centuries and are famous for their use of white marble and intricate marble carvings. They are a pilgrimage place of the Jains, and a popular general tourist attraction. Although Jains built many beautiful temples at other places in Rajasthan, the Dilwara temples are believed to be the most beautiful example of architectural perfection. The temples have an opulent entranceway, the simplicity in architecture reflecting Jain values like honesty and frugality. The ornamental detail spreading over the minutely carved ceilings, doorways, pillars, and panels is simply marvellous. However, the interiors more than make up for the drabness of the interior with rich, almost Baroque carvings on the interior surfaces and walls and columns. The temple complex is in the midst of a range of forested hills. There are five temples in all, each with its own unique identity. All the five temples are enclosed within a single high walled compound. The group is named after the small village of Dilwara or Delvara in which they are located. The five temples are:

- Vimal Vasahi, dedicated to the 1st Jain *Tirthankar a*, Shri Rishabhadev.
- Luna Vasahi, dedicated to the 22nd Jain *Tirthankar a*, Shri Neminatha.
- Pittalhar, dedicated to the 1st Jain *Tirthankar* , Shri Rishabhadev.
- Parshvanath, dedicated to the 23rd Jain *Tirthankar a*, Shri Parshvanatha.
- Mahavir Swami, dedicated to the 24th Jain *Tirthankar a*, Shri Mahaviraswami.

Among all the five legendary marble temples of Dilwara, the most famous of those are the Vimal Vasahi and the Luna Vasahi temples. The ceiling in both these temples is richly carved with figures of 16 *Devis* or *Apsaras* acting as a 'false-support' for the domical roof.

Vimal Vasahi Temple: Vimal Vasahi Jain temple 1031 A.D. Detail of Pillars, Cornices,



Domed Roof Carving, 16 *Devis* and Carved Lotus Flowers in white Marble, Rajasthan, Mount Abu.

The Adinatha or Vimala Vasahi Temple is carved entirely out of white marble and was built in 1031 A.D. by Vimal Shah, a minister of Bhima I, the Chaulukya king of Gujarat. The temple is dedicated to Lord Rishabha. The temple stands in an open courtyard surrounded by a corridor, which has numerous cells containing smaller idols of the *Tirthankar* as. The richly carved corridors, pillars, arches, and '*mandaps*' or porticoes of the temple are simply amazing. The ceilings feature engraved designs of lotus-buds, petals, flowers and scenes from Jain mythology.

The *Navchowki* is a collection of nine rectangular ceilings, each containing beautiful carvings of different designs supported on ornate pillars. The *Gudh mandap* is a simple hall once you step inside its heavily decorated doorway. Installed here is the idol of Adi Nath or Lord Rishabdev, as he is also known. The *mandap* is meant for Aarti to the deity. The ceiling has carvings of horses, elephants, musician, dancers and soldier.

The *Hastishala* (Elephant courtyard) was constructed by Prithvipal, a descendant of Vimalsha in 1147-49 and features a row of elephants in sculpture with the members of the family riding them.

The Luna Vasahi or Neminatha temple: The Luna Vasahi or Neminatha temple is



dedicated to Lord Neminath. This magnificent temple was built in 1230 by two Porwad brothers - Vastupal and Tejpal - both ministers of a Virdhaval, the Vaghela ruler of Gujarat. The temple built in memory of Vastupal & Tejpal's late brother Lunig was designed after the Vimal Vashi temple. The temple has a similar structure as Vimala Vasahi but rich with extraordinary sculptural decoration. The main hall or *Rang mandap* features a

central dome from which hangs a big ornamental pendant featuring elaborate carving. Arranged in a circular band are 72 figures of *Tirthankar* s in sitting posture and just below this band are 360 small figures of Jain monks in another circular band. The *Hathishala* or elephant cell features 10 beautiful marble elephants neatly polished and realistically modelled.

The *Navchowki* features some of the most magnificent and delicate marble stone cutting work of the temple. Each of the nine ceilings here seems to exceed the others in beauty and grace. The ceilings of the temple depicts scenes of the life of Neminatha with image of *Rajmathi*(who was to marry Neminatha) and Krishna. The *Gudh mandap* features a black marble idol of the 22nd *Tirthankara Neminatha*. The Kirthi Stambha is a big black

stone pillar that stands on the left side of the temple. The carvings of *Devkulikas* and *Chakreshvari* in the ceiling of temple is also noteworthy. The pillar was constructed by Maharana Kumbha of Mewar. The remaining three temples of Dilwara are smaller but just as elegant as the other two.

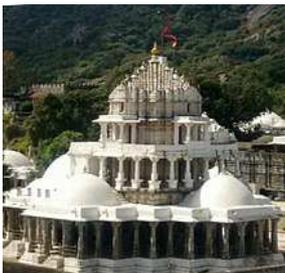
Pittalhar Temple: This Temple was built by Bhima Shah, a minister of Sultan Begada of



Ahmedabad. A massive metal statue of the first *Tirthankar a, Rishabha Dev (Adinath)*, cast in five metals, is installed in the temple. The main metal used in this statue is 'Pital' (brass), hence the name 'Pittalhar'. The Shrine consists of a main *Garbhagriha, Gudh mandap* and *Navchowki* with idol of *YakshiChakreshvari* and *YakshaGomukha* on both sides. It seems that the construction of *Rangmandap* and the corridor was left unfinished. The old mutilated idol was replaced and installed in 1468-69 AD weighing 108 maunds (four metric

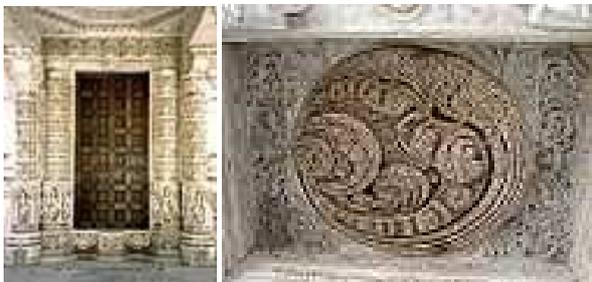
tons) according to the inscription on it. The image was cast by an artist 'Deta' which is 8 ft (2.4 m). high, 5.5 ft (1.7 m). broad and the figure is 41 inches (1,000 mm) in height. In *Gudh Mandap* on one side, a big marble Panch-Tirthi sculpture of Adinath is installed. Some shrines (*devakulika*) were constructed in 1474 and 1490, before construction was abandoned.

Parshvanatha Chaumukha Temple: This Temple is dedicated to Lord Parshvanath,



was built by Mandlik and his family in 1458-59. It consists of a three-story building, the tallest of all the shrines at Dilwara. On all the four faces of the sanctum on the ground floor are four big mandaps. The outer walls of the sanctum comprise beautiful sculptures in gray sandstone, depicting *Dikpals, Vidhyadevis, Yakshinis, Shalabhanjikas* and other decorative sculptures comparable to the ones in Khajuraho and Konark.

Shri Mahavir Swami Temple: This is a small structure constructed in 1582 and dedicated to Lord Mahavira. Being small it is a marvelous temple with carvings on its walls. On the upper walls of the porch there are pictures painted in 1764 by the artists of Sirohi.



Some of the cells have shelves cut across the walls. The doorways are small and one has to bend or crawl to enter a cell. In some of the **cells** the floor is raised at the rear end to serve as a pillow. Some cells have low raised platforms for beds. The lay-out of the cells is such that they get sufficient light - the cells opening on to a

verandah. The doorways are heavily decorated with Carving Flora and Fauna and *Kalpavrikshas*.

Usually the exits lead into a series of **columned chambers** into the central halls of the temple. These columns, standing around for no apparent purpose, might make the place

seem like a mindless **labyrinth**, but on closer **scrutiny** it becomes evident that there is a style and method in it. Simply put, these are temples within a temple, divided into **sanctums** and surrounded by a range of **chapels and shrines**, and the maze of columns act as a defense against **plunderers**. The principle impression gathered from these temples is the variety of their sections but in harmony with each other. The **pointed spires** above each dome is different, yet it signifies the position of a chapel, hall or any other chamber inside. The contribution of Jains towards art and architecture was specially important in view of the magnificent artistic creations, particularly in the forms of images, temples and paintings, spread all over the country and covering a time span in continuity from the earliest through the modern times. The Jain art with profuse variety changes innovations and embellishments (barring *Jina* images) has never been **monotonous** also.

Conclusion: Jain architecture developed from 5th century and from then the architecture type, its planning, and material is also changed into Marble. This change is clearly noticed in all above examples from Ellora caves development of Jain architecture from ancient times, development of all types of architecture except cave architecture. But with the change in time, new temples are getting built in all regions. And they are constructed by using modern material, techniques and planning concept. Aibak and later rulers, it was not uncommon for many Jain and Hindu temples 'losing' their columns as building material for mosques, the new religious typology that emerged in India after the 12th century AD. But still Jain Architecture was retained at its best.

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Prof. Shanti Swaroop Sinha, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Age 52, 17th Nov, 2019.