

RIDE REPRESENTATION IN GORI JAIN TEMPLE OF THAR DESERT OF SINDH

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This paper focuses on the Jain comma a sacred place structured with limestone blocks laid in Cheroli mortar* and associated with Jainism containing marvelous cult paintings and pictures which demonstrate the life of two Tirthankara (spiritual leaders), these names are: Parsvanatha, the 23rd and Mahavira 24th Tirthankara, with additional motifs of devotional behavior of Jain monks and followers. The illustrations include faunal and floral images in a particular style. In faunal representation the lion, elephant, horse, goat, and deer are prominent. Some birds like peacock, crow, curlew, and duck, etc. are similarly prominent. In floral motifs, images like rose petals are depicted. All are painted on the dome roofs in 10 circular panels.

This research focuses on the description of the riding of Tirthankar and a monk on an elephant, horse, and men. In the pillared hall, there are portraits of Mahavira and Parsvanatha Jain Tirthankaras riding on a horse, victory elephant and palanquin etc. Most illustrations are colored in dark brown with beautiful fresco paintings. The objective of this research is to explain the nature of paintings, why were animals portrayed in the temple? Is there any significance of the paintings on the temple? Is there any mystical or theological angle to the paintings?

Keywords: Tirthankara, Ride Representation, Gori Jain Temple, Frescoes, Thar Desert.

*Cheroli is bonding material and a type of stone, it used in powder shape, like cement, it found from mines. The cheroli mortar has highly powerfull grip, strength and it dries very quickly, therefore fixed stone blocks cannot be lifted after applying this.

Introduction

The Gori temple was built in 1376 A.D during the time of the Sodha dynasty.¹ According to the Jain religion, there were twenty-four Tirthankaras. The first Tirthankara was Rishabha: he was born in 3000 BC. Thereafter the religious sequence began. Ansanath, the eleventh Tirthankara of the Jain religion was born in Sindh in 1500 B.C and he died in western Bengal.² He spread the Jain religion in Hind (India) and Sindh.³

During the 5th or 6th century BC Mahavira 24th and the last Tirthankara of this age, become one of the most significant teachers of Jainism. Mahavira was born in 588 BC in Bihar, India. Kharvela, King of Magadha, India was one of his ardent followers, he was very much impressed and spread Jainism within his kingdom.⁴

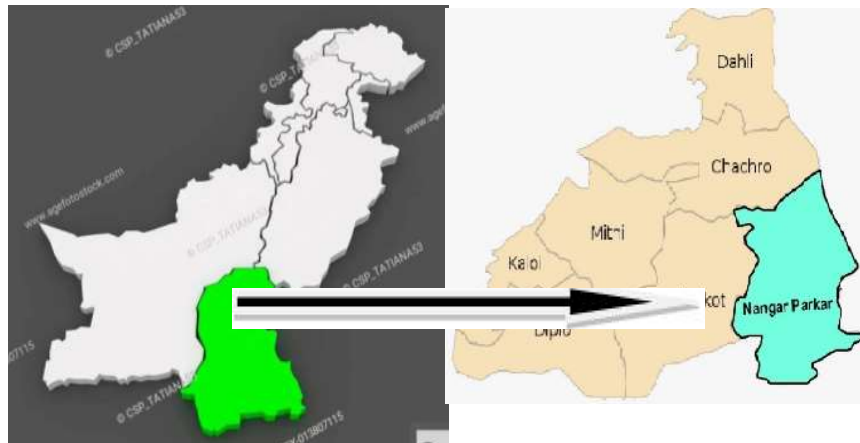


Fig: 1:
Geographical location of study area

In the Jain architectural setup; the common features are that Jain temples have numerous pillars and well-designed structures, forming squares. The squares thus formed create chambers used as small chapels and having the images of deities. From these pillars, there are richly carved brackets that emerge at about two-thirds of its heights. There are many niches in Jain temples for keeping the idols. Some of the niches were blackish which indicated that these were also used for keeping oil lamps for lighting the buildings. The roofs of these temples have pointed domes.. There is a four-faced design. In these designs of the temple the images of Tirthankara back to back and face to face, are placed in four cardinal directions. Entry into these temples is also from four sides, these

faces are cardinal directions so that if any devotee came from any direction he would view the statue of his lord (s)..One of the Jain temples famed as the Gori temple is situated at one kilometer to the north-east of Gori village in Deh Dabho, Tapo Belo, Taluka Nangarparkar and District Tharparker at latitude 24,38,17 North and longitude 70,37,04 East just three km to the north of the main road connecting Naukot and Nangarparkar, Sindh.

The Gori temple building is constructed with limestone laid in Cheroli mortar. The covered area of the building is 42x20 meters. All the above-mentioned motifs cover the inner sides of the temple domes with beautiful fresco paintings. One more impressive feature in this temple are oval shaped domes associated with Hindu and Buddhist architecture..



Fig. 2:

Gori temple

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TEMPLE

There are two legends about its name as “Gori”; firstly, the temple was dedicated to Lord Parsvanatha, 23rd Tirthankar who was called Goricho.⁵ At the temple, there is a lion figurine which is a symbol of Mahavira suggesting that this temple was related to both, Mahavira and Parsvanatha. The style of the dome was adapted from Muslim architecture purely for its suitability to the climate of Thar area of Sindh and availability of architectural expertise.

Secondly, but according to *Express Tribune*; the Megasa were Jain followers who established the village and named it Gori and thereafter it was called the Gori temple. The construction of the temple was completed in his life whereas only the central tower was finished by his

son Mahio.⁶ There was no written history of the temple in detail; it was built with intricately dressed limestone slabs and crush which was mixed with lime mortar.

Lt. Colonel Tarwat of the British army destroyed some parts of this temple because they discovered that conspiracies against the British were being hatched here.⁷ The building contains 19 rooms and these are constructed with limestone laid in Cheroli mortar. There is a pillared verandah at the entrance, which opens from three sides i.e. east, north and west. The entrance of the temple is from the northern side of the verandah. The entire building of the temple was fortified. The temple has 52 domes; among these there are three major domes and 49 minor domes. The roof of the outside pillar hall is richly decorated with different pictures. Whereas no decoration was found on the other two dome roofs.

The purpose of the paper is to explore the outer look of the dome/canopy which is situated at the entrance of the Gori temple and it is full of paintings. There are 12 ornamented pillars in quadrangle shape constructed with limestone and plastered with lime plaster. The quadrangle pillars at one meter above the ground become octagonal and then these are in round shape. These pillars have also two bands / strips on which flowers are embossed in a rectangular shape. The arches are with bracket capitals, after this, it has a battlement parapet around the dome and then it has onion shape / Muslim style dome in plain and round shape from outside. Whereas from inside it is constructed as a corbelled roof and having ten circles, every circle was separated with dark brown color strip , every strip/ circle is painted with different pictures.



Fig: 3

View of Pillar hall of Gori temple

The canopy which also serves an entrance to the temple is decorated with paintings which are representing Jain mythologies. The paintings of Parsvanatha being welcomed by Yakshas and Yakshinis are found in the ceiling of the canopy. Within the area of temple, there are 12 ornamented pillars in quadrangle shape constructed with limestone and plastered with lime plaster. The quadrangle pillars at 1 meter above the ground become octagonal and then these acquire a round shape. These pillars have also two bands / strips on which flowers are embossed in rectangular shape. The arches have bracket capitals, after this it has battlement parapet around the dome and then it takes on an onion shape / Muslim style dome in plain and round shape from outside whereas from inside, it is constructed as a corbelled roof and having 10 circles, each circle painted in dark brown color, every strip / circle is painted with different pictures. The canopies which also serve as an entrance to the temple are decorated with paintings which represent Jain mythology. The paintings of Parsvanatha being welcomed by Yaks and Yakshinis are found in the ceiling of the canopy. The color of the ceiling of the pillared hall is light brown.

According to Jain belief the universe was neither created nor will it cease to exist. The universe is circular and has no beginning and no end, it moves like the wheel of a cart. It had an infinite number of time cycles before the present era, after this age there will be an infinite number of time cycles also. So that in these temples there are mostly domes with numerous cycles. Every ring in the dome of the Gori temple shows the life cycle of human beings looking at the ceiling of the front pillar hall where there are ten panels / bars. Every panel is different from other circles and the decoration begins from nucleus spot of the total painted circles. Each circle is described in detail as under.



Fig: 4:
Ceiling of pillar hall of Gori temple

Analysis

There are twenty-four Tirthankaras in the Jain religion; every Tirthankara has his own symbol.

Panel 1, At the central panel of the dome, there is an engraved lotus flower in green color. The lotus flower in green color is the symbol of Naminath the 21st Tirthankara of the Jain religion.⁸ Panel .2. In the second panel of the dome, there are painted flowers for decoration.³ In the third panel of the dome painted rose flower as shown in figure 7.

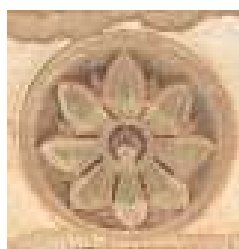


Fig: 5



Fig: 6



Fig: 7

In this circle are painted Yakshas and Yakshinis in a circle, Yakshas and Yakshinis are main followers and servants of Tirthankars, their every movement is according to Jain principles. According to Jain principles, every soul is in a walking position since the universe has no end and no beginning.



Fig: 8

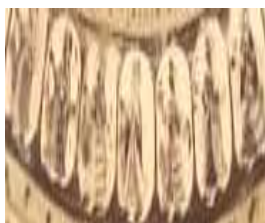


Fig: 9



Fig: 10

There are Yakshinis painted in a walking position. At the 6th panel there are Yakshinis walking towards Mahavira whereas at the center of this Panel Mahavira is painted in between two lions. The lion is symbol of Lord Mahavira,⁹ as other Tirthankaras have their own symbols 7, In this, the 7th panel there are octagonal columns. Yakshinis have necklaces of flowers to carry to Lord Mahavira sitting at the center of the panel and in the same picture Yakshinis are shown very happy, some of them beating the drum and others are dancing.

In two panels 8th and 9th before the end, there are painted Tirthankar Lords Mahavira and Parsvanatha shown in riding stature, horse, elephant, and victory procession etc. both panels are mostly same and in the panel picture shows them going forward and in the 9th shows them coming backwards. In the paintings, Jain Tirthankaras like Mahavira and Parsvanatha are shown as using many types of vehicles of the outside canopy at the Gori temple. Which type of vehicle they use depended upon the time, distance, and purpose of the visit. They use palanquins at a town in the small distance to reach the house of Jain followers where the streets of the town are narrower. In this picture (7th), two persons are carrying palanquins and Parsvanatha is sitting on the palanquin. In the other picture, Parsvanatha is sitting on a palanquin which is lifted by two persons and talking with one follower as shown in figure No. 12.



Fig: 11



Fig: 12

If Tirthankara has more time and he desires to visit the Jain follower's villages or towns which is situated far from his native place, then he goes on an elephant with his Jain followers. The elephant moves very slowly. Whereas according to the local people of this area Jain followers also drank the milk of elephants so they didn't need extra food during the journey. They also do not sleep during the night when they are with herds of elephants. In this picture Mahavira and his wife are shown riding on an elephant, whereas two Jain followers are walking in front of his elephant for showing the route to the concerned village where they want to visit.



Fig: 13

In figure 13 Mahavira and his wife are riding on an elephant and two persons are walking in front of the horse, one person beating the drum. Whereas in figure No, 14 a few persons have horses for riding with Tirthankara Parsvanatha. Figure No. 15 shows Mahavira riding on a horse, while the horse is running very fast, it indicated that he had a very short time to reach the concerned town or village of followers.



Fig: 14



Fig: 15



Fig: 16

In the above picture of the 8th panel, Parsvanathais riding on a horse and is followed by a large number of animals including deer, goat, lion, etc. and birds; as duck crow, etc. and also one follower walking in front of the horse for showing the way, the follower is shown talking with Parsavantha. The deer is symbol of Santinatha the sixteenth Tirthanakara of Jain.¹⁰ Hence the picture indicated that Parsvanathais crossing the forest. In the Figure, No. 17 Parsvanathais riding on a horse while the horses are running very swiftly. Whereas at the top of this picture there are birds; including curlew and crow are flying and also show a crescent which is symbol of Chandra-Prabha the 8th Jain Tirthankara.¹¹ The figure No. 18 shows Lord Mahavira and his wife riding on an elephant whereas Parsvanathais riding on a horse for reaching the required place swiftly.



Fig: 17



Fig: 18

In the following figure No 19, Parsvanatha and Mahaviraare riding on swift horses as there might be some problem between their followers, to solve them at an early stage.



Fig: 19

At panel 9th in the following picture Parsvanatha is riding on a horse with one person on his back side and two persons are walking before him and one man has a branch of rose flowers. Whereas on the top of the picture crow and the curlew is flying, two ducks also painted and one crescent is on every person / follower. The curlew is a symbol of Sumatinath.¹² There are also two ducks on the top.



Fig: 20



Fig: 21

In the following picture of Parsvanatha riding on the horse, two women are on his back side beating the drum and one man is standing in front, talking with him. The picture shows they all are standing in the tent. In the following picture Lord Mahavira and Jain Monks riding on the victoria to visit villages and towns in which their followers are living and also spread their religion to other people. Lord Mahavira is teaching about Jain religion. He describes the principles of Jain religion one follower is driving the horse cart as shown in figure No. 22



Fig: 22



Fig: 23

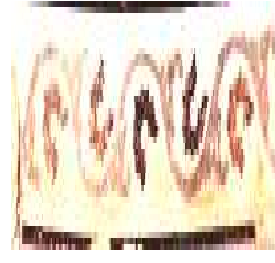


Fig: 24

At panel 9th in the following picture, there are six females in walking positions in the tent showspeaking to each other about their Jain beliefs As shown in figure No. 23

Panel No 10 or last one is decorated with flowers in a zigzag shape.

RESULT

All temples of this area have domes therefore these are shikarbandhi*. The temple is a place of gods and there is a symbol of the deity within the dark chamber. (Brown; 72) 6 There are niches in the darkroom in every temple-like Gori, Virawah, Bhodisor and Nangarparkar temples under research for the keeping of figurines of Tirthankara. Wherever traditionally there were domes, pillars were omitted so as to leave space in the form of octagons. By corbelling over the pendent in level courses, the domes were gradually formed. The exits of Jain temples lead from 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 style and method in it. The Gori temple is one of the largest temples among the others constructed in the Thararea of Sindh. This temple had two big canopies; one of them is at the main entrance and the other is at the center of the temple, both canopies are decorated with different paintings and idols. The outside canopy was decorated with paintings of human beings, animals, birds and flowers and Jain religious symbols and also vehicles which were used by Tirthankaras (Lord Mahavira and Parsvanatha).

There are painted different types of vehicles which were used by the Tirthankaras religion. It is dependent upon the situation, time, and distance which was at that time, in the city/ village where Lord Mahavira or Parsvanathawant to go. They use palanquins in the town in which streets are very narrow or in houses.

The elephant is a slow moving animal and comfortable for a journey. During the journey they use milk of elephant. So If Jain Tirthankara had leisure and in routine visits of villages then he rode elephants. Whereas the horse is a fast runner animal which reachesthe required place in a short time. If the Tirthankara is a short of time or there is an emergency, then he uses a horse. When he wants to visit the monks for converting new people he used a carriage which was pulled by a horse.

*The Shikar Bandhi Jain temple have domes, and many marble pillars which are carved beautifully with Demi god posture. There is always a main deity also known as Mulnayak in each temple.

Pictures that were painted in the Gori temples are with dresses that indicated that this temple was owned by the Sevtembra Jain sect. The Sevtembra sect followers and nuns wear full dresses, whereas another sect of Jainism Digambara do not wear any clothes and are nude.

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