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## **Nilakantha Temple Rajorgarh (Alwar)**



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## **Nilakantha Temple, Rajorgarh (Alwar)**

India is resplendent with heritage edifices and its temples are one of the most exquisite treasures. One such site is tucked away in the Alwar district of Rajasthan at Nilakantha village, Rajorgarh. The ancient temple town is located in Sariska Tiger Sanctuary near Tehla in District Alwar. Nilakantha houses approximately 20 temples or temple ruins of which the Nilakantha Mahadeva is the most famous one. The area is believed to have been under the patronage of the Pratiharas during the tenth century CE when the majority of temples were constructed. The place had a vibrant religious landscape including Saiva, Vaishnava, Sakta and Jaina traditions.

Nilakantha was called Rajayapura in the tenth century CE. In medieval times, it was also known as Paranagara possibly because of the colossal statue of a Jaina *tirthankara*. Paranagara is situated 36 km west of Rajgarh *tehsil* of Alwar District. The route of Nilakantha passes through Talab which is 21 km distant from Rajgarh and Tehla which is 10 km from Nilakantha. The village of Nilakantha at present known as Rajorgarh is divided into two villages: Rajor and Garh.

### **Ecology and antiquity**

This site is situated amid Sariska Wildlife Tiger Reserve; therefore, habitation is not allowed there. However, old village has not been dismantled from there and people are still living there and nearby village but without electricity and with poor roads. This site was taken under the aegis of Archaeological survey of India and is declared as a monument of national importance. The site of Paranagar is rich in water resources with nearby dams like Mallana dam, Mangalsar dam and a number of wells, ponds and *baoris* inside the Garh village itself. The population is diverse at Rajorgarh. At Rajor and Garh, Meena and Gurjar tribes live and their subsistence activities include domestication of goats, buffaloes and agriculture. At Talab and Tehla, Brahmanas live in good numbers and for livelihood they sow corn, *bajra* and *jowar*. The antiquity of the broader area ranges from the Stone age to the Pratihara period. Stone age period remains were found at Bairat and Bhangarh. OCP and copper objects belonging to the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura culture have been found at Ganeshwar, Bewan (Sikar District), Jodhpura (Jaipur District) and other nearby sites possibly dating to early third millennium BCE.

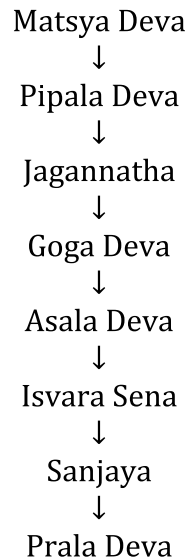
### **Political history**

The site of Paranagar was under the control of the Gurjara-Pratihara clan. The dynasty of Imperial Pratiharas was founded by Nagabhata I in the first half of the tenth century CE. He was succeeded later by his younger brother Devaraja. The site of Nilakantha was ruled by the Badagurjars who were feudatories of Imperial Gurjara-Pratiharas and acted as vassals of Kannauj. Their important rulers were King Savata and his son Mathanadeva who played a major role in development and maintenance of temples. They adopted the title of *Maharajadhiraja* which shows their power and prestige in the tenth century CE.

The Badagurjars are believed to have descended from Lava, the younger son of Bhagavana Sri Rama. Religious grants increased during their time. This led to development of temples and the temples enjoyed benefits like the exemption from taxes. The nature of Gurjara-Pratihara rulers was secular as they accepted every religion. Several images of Sanatana and Jaina pantheon were made.

These rulers gave donations for temples of both faiths, like Mathanadeva gave donations for Saiva as well as Jaina temples.

The Rajor inscription of Manthandeva of V.S. 1016 (959 CE) gives a record of granting of a village Vyaghrapataka to the temple of Lachchhukesvara Mahadeva on the occasion of the installation of image of the Lachchhukesvara Mahadeva. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century Badagurjars of Machari ruled Paranagara. The genealogical tree of Badagurjars is as follows:



Mughals occupied Paranagara after Badagurjars. They assigned Rajorgarh to Kachhavaha rulers of Amber.

### Temples at Nilakantha

There is only one surviving temple at Nilakantha out of approximately 20 temples and that is named as “Nilakantha” as being dedicated to Bhagavana Siva with that name. One of the temples is presently under worship for Radha-Krishna and is with the village *panchayat*. The ancient temple is partly surviving in its structure with modifications of past few centuries. All other temples at Nilakantha are mostly surviving only up to their plinth portion, thus confirming their actual ground plan. As one enters the ancient township from the side of Tehla, one comes across a medieval gateway surrounded by fortification wall of the medieval period. The fortification wall of *circa* sixteenth century is in ruins. As one enters the township, the first significant milestone is the temple of Ashawari Mata on the right. Though, the temple at present seems to be a modern construction, in all probability it is quite old in antiquity. The antiquity of temple must go in the tenth century CE or even prior to that. As one moves south-westerly towards the village, the first important landmarks are the Nilakantha Temple, a sacred ancient pond adjacent to it, and remains of foundation of various temple shrines, all exposed by ASI between 2022-2024. In the ASI museum compound, an ancient *baoli* was also exposed by ASI which lies to the south-east of the main temple. As one moves further westerly from Nilakantha Temple, a significant *baoli* can be located to the right of the pathway. This *baoli* gets filled till the topmost level when good monsoon rains are observed. Both these *baolis* are part of sacred landscape of the Nilakantha Temple. Further west of this *baoli*, the first temple remains are observed which form part of a Saivite temple presently named as Moondtor ki

Deori. Only a few sculptures (including one Agni image in its actual placement location) and a broken Sivalinga still survive there. After moving for about 500 m, the first big temple complex is reached which is known as Naugaja. This is the only Jaina temple-complex surviving at Garh village. A huge Santinatha image of about 15 feet height still survives there in the main sanctum sanctorum. Nearby remains of a number of smaller Jaina shrines have been exposed by ASI.

As one moves in the southern direction from Naugaja complex along the Kot-wall, another temple complex is approached. This complex is named as Kotan ki Deori Nos. 1-4 and across the village road, another *deori* is located which is named as Dakhna ki Deori which is a single unit. The names of *deoris* are derived from the location of their site. The temples which are following the inner fortification wall for temples (Kot-wall) are named after that as Kotan ki deori whereas the last one Dakhna ki deori is named so because of its location in the southernmost part of the temple town (*i.e.* southern direction). Most of these *deoris* seem to be dedicated to Bhagavana Siva and in the surviving sanctum sanctorum of one of them a Sivalinga still survives.

Moving slightly north-west from Dakhna ki deori, a huge temple situated on an elevated *jagati* is encountered which is known as Hanuman ki deori as an old idol (much broken but still identifiable) of Hanuman ji covered in vermillion is in worship at the base of temple near its entrance. In the ongoing debris clearance work in the surrounding of this temple, remains of a contemporary shrine have been found by ASI. The temple at Hanuman ki deori was in all probability dedicated to Bhagavana Vishnu as an image of Balarama *in situ* was observed there along with some other sculptures including Devi sculptures *in situ*. In front of Hanuman ki deori across the road is Radha-Krishna Temple which is a renovated ancient shrine still in worship and is under control of the village.

Slightly west of Hanuman ki deori along the Kot-wall is another lofty temple *jagati* which is known as Bagh ki deori. It is named so because tigers used to frequent it. This is a quite large temple complex and had many smaller shrines along with the main lofty temple. Moving few hundred meters northward from here, another lofty temple complex is approached which is known as Batak ki deori. The reason for its such nomenclature might be the presence of a banyan tree near it. After this temple complex four temple shrines are reached which are to the left of the pathway opposite a big pond. These shrines are termed Dabar ki deori 1-4. A *baoli* is also situated near the Temple no. 3. To the north of these shrines after crossing the Garh-Kakwadi road, another temple complex is approached and this complex is called Lachhura ki deori 1-4. The temples are situated on a low hill whereas the nomenclature is based on the *kunda* adjacent to them. The *kunda* is called as Lakshmanakunda and based on that Lakshmana, the temples are named as Lachhura ki deori. There is another big pond on the opposite end in the south-east which is known as Ramakunda. Except for one or two temples, most of these survive to their foundation levels or platform levels only.

### **Epigraphical Evidence as the Primary Historical Source**

The history of Garh is known mainly through archaeological exploration and the study of inscriptions, as there are no contemporary literary records describing the settlement. These epigraphical records provide the principal historical evidence for understanding the origin and development of the site. They reveal the religious character of the settlement, the construction of temples, the involvement of ruling

dynasties in patronage, and the establishment of *mathas* to sustain religious institutions. Most inscriptions discovered at Garh are engraved on stone slabs or on the pedestals of images and were found during the clearance of temple ruins. At least three major inscriptions have been published in detail, providing important information about the religious and architectural history of the region. These records date roughly from the early tenth century to the late twelfth century CE, while later pedestal inscriptions of Jaina *tirthankaras* belong mostly to the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.

Overall, the inscriptions clearly demonstrate that Garh developed as an important religious centre supported by royal patronage. They also indicate that temple construction and religious activities attracted participants from nearby regions as well as distant places such as Mathura.

### **Garh Inscription of Mahipala V.S. 979 (921 CE)**

One of the earliest inscriptions from Garh dates to the reign of Mahipala (V.S. 979 / 921 CE) and is now preserved in the National Museum. Although the stone slab is broken, the text remains well preserved. The inscription begins with an invocation to the Jina Santinatha and mentions Mahipala as a sovereign ruler along with a local chief named Savata. It records that Sarvadeva, a member of the Dharkkataka (Dhakada) family, hailing from Purnatallaka constructed a magnificent Jaina temple dedicated to Santinatha and installed a lofty image of the deity. Sarvadeva was highly respected as an architect and was compared to the divine craftsman Visvakarma.

The inscription further records that endowments were made for the maintenance and rituals of the temple, which were entrusted to the Acharya Surasena and members of a merchant guild. A supplementary portion of the inscription refers to a major upheaval (earthquake?) that damaged the temple town. It also mentions Varanga, the son of Sarvadeva and an accomplished architect, who likely repaired or rebuilt the temple after the disaster.

### **Garh Stone Inscription of Mathanadeva V.S. 1016 (960 CE)**

Another important record is the Garh stone inscription of Mathanadeva dated V.S. 1016 (960 CE), discovered near the Nilakantha temple. The inscription refers to the reign of Vijayapaladeva of the Gurjara-Pratihara lineage ruling from Kannauj. Mathanadeva, the son of Savata and a feudatory ruler, records the consecration of the temple of Lachchhukesvara Mahadeva and the installation of its deity. The temple was named after his mother Lachchhuka.

Mathanadeva also granted the village of Vyaghrapataka (some nearby village of Nilakantha) along with its fields to support the temple's rituals and maintenance. The administration of the grant was entrusted to the ascetic Omkarasivacharya and his monastic lineage. This inscription provides valuable information about Garh as a prominent religious centre supported by royal patronage.

### **Inscription of Queen Kelachhadevi (V.S. 1239 / 1182 CE)**

Another inscription from Garh, now in the National Museum, belongs to Queen Kelachhadevi and is dated V.S. 1239 (1182 CE). The Sanskrit verse inscription records that after the death of her husband King Prithvideva, the queen intended to commit *sati*. However, she was persuaded by her son, ministers,

and learned people to abandon this decision. Instead, she built a temple dedicated to Anangasudana (Siva) in memory of her husband. The inscription is engraved on a sculptural pedestal depicting a couple (identified as the king and queen by some scholars) and represents a rare epigraphical record describing a queen being dissuaded from performing *sati*.

### **Other Inscriptions**

Several other inscriptions have also been found in Garh and nearby areas such as Rajorgarh and Rajgarh. One record dated V.S. 1101 (1044 CE) mentions the installation of an image of Ganesa by merchants who had come from Varvaranagara. Another fragmentary inscription from Rajorgarh dated V.S. 1053 (997 CE) refers to members of a Kayastha family from Mathura who possibly built a temple of Siva.

In addition, many pedestal inscriptions of Jaina images have been discovered at Garh and surrounding towns such as Ajabgarh, Macheri, and Bhangarh. These inscriptions often mention donors, sculptors, and contemporary rulers, indicating a long tradition of religious patronage in the region.







*A view of the entrance gateway near Ashawari Mata Mandir of Nilakantha village*



*A ground view of the Nilakantha Temple*



*An aerial view of the Nilakantha Temple*

### **Nilakantha Mahadeva Temple:**

The Nilakantha Mahadeva Temple constitutes the principal and best-preserved shrine of the temple group at Rajorgarh. Situated at the western extremity of the complex, the temple is west-facing, conforming to the general orientation observed in most of the shrines within the enclosure. Although much of its original *jagati* has perished, restoration undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India (Jaipur Circle) indicates that the structure originally stood upon a relatively high platform. The ground plan suggests a monument representing a triple-shrine composition.

The temple is approached through a *mahachatushki* (pillared pavilion), which leads to a *rangamandapa* from which the three shrines are accessed. The lateral shrines flank the central one, while two subsidiary *devakulikas* occur to the rear of the principal sanctum. Of these components, the central

shrine remains substantially intact, preserving much of its original *mandovara* and the superstructure in the *Latina-Nagara* mode. The *sikhara* conforms to the standard style and does not show any marked regional deviation. Certain portions of the superstructure, however, show evidence of later repairs, the irregularity in the curvature on the eastern face indicating an imprecise restoration. The crowning members of the superstructure are comparatively plain, comprising a *skandha* surmounted by an *amalaka* and *kalasa*.

The lateral shrines have largely collapsed; nevertheless, scattered architectural fragments within the complex suggest that they once corresponded closely to the principal shrine. The basal mouldings of the temple display the scheme associated with the Maru-Gurjara architecture, though certain local elaborations appear to have been introduced to enhance the elevation. The moulding sequence commences with two tiers of *bhitti*, followed by a *karnika*, a *jadyakumbha*, another *karnika*, and a narrow *grasapattika*. Above this rises a *kumbha* course articulated with niches containing divine figures. Among the wall faces, the eastern wall of the central shrine retains the most complete original arrangement. Here the niches are systematically disposed, with the *Ashtadikpalas* occupying their respective directional positions upon the *karnas*, other deities appearing in the *pratirathas*, while the corner *salilanatara* contain *vyalas* and the central ones house *surasundaris*. Although the iconographic distribution is not strictly rigid, it nevertheless follows a broadly consistent scheme.

The ceilings (*vitana*) of the temple are comparatively simpler in treatment. In general they conform to the *samatala-padma-vitana* type, displaying only minor variations in detail. The pillars of the *rangamandapa* and those of the *mahachatushki* exhibit two distinct types. The pillars of the *rangamandapa* belong to the conventional *ghatapallava* variety, whereas the pillars of the pavilion represent a somewhat later phase. These latter examples are slender *misraka* pillars of octagonal section, the shaft bearing figures of *surasundaris* standing upon pedestals. Above the shaft occur three ornamental bands depicting *gandharvas*, *vidyadharas*, and *kirttimukhas*. The composition is surmounted by a fluted *bharani* together with conventional *bharavahakas*.

The decorative programme is further reflected in the treatment of the doorframes of the three sancta. These follow the *panchasakha* arrangement, though at present only the *vallisakha* remains clearly discernible. Much of the sculptural content on the lintels has been lost. From surviving indications, the central shrine is known to have been dedicated to Siva, while the lateral shrines would have housed images of Vishnu on the left, and Brahma on the right.

The principal sanctum still preserves the original Sivalinga installed upon a square *yonipitha*. The *linga* is fashioned from touchstone (*kasauti*), a material noted for its hardness and lustrous surface. Local tradition maintains that the *linga* occasionally appears to change colour, a phenomenon perhaps attributable to the chemical sensitivity of the stone to metallic elements.





*An astonishing Sivalinga enshrined on a Yonipitha inside the garbhagriha of Nilakantha Temple*

Stylistically, M. A. Dhaky places this temple in a transitional phase between the Maha-Maru and the Maru-Gurjara architecture phase. This attribution is based on its relatively grand ground plan combined with a restrained ornamental treatment. On stylistic grounds, the temple may therefore be assigned to the end of the tenth century.



*An aerial view of Moondtor ki Deori*



*A ground view of Moondtor Ki Deori*

### **Monondtor ki Deori:**

Moondtor ki Deori is another beautiful temple ruin found amidst the Nilakantha temple complexes. The ruin stands on a low-raised *jagati* unlike the other temples of the complex. The plan consists of a *mukhamandapa* followed by an *ardhamandapa*, a *rangamandapa*, and then the *antarala* leading to the *garbhagriha*. The *mulaprasada* displays a set of simple mouldings known as the *vedibandha*, which differs from the moulding seen at the *adhishthana*. A *bhadrakoshtha* survives on the southern side and houses an image of Agni. Although the temple is largely ruined and the surviving remains are heavily weathered, a few ornamental elements are still visible, suggesting that the temple must have been highly ornate in its original state. This is particularly evident in the *rangamandapa*, where the pillar bases or the *kumbhika*

feature *ardharatna* motifs. The original floor, where ritual performances or dances were likely conducted, was ornamented with a *rajasenaka*, essentially a projected fillet decorated with *bharavahakas* and *ratna* motifs. The surviving pillars indicate a development from plain square shafts that gradually transform into multifaceted forms through corner offsets. They belong to the *ghatapallava* type, though in this case the motif does not appear at the pillar capital but rather along the shaft, where it is surmounted by a band of *grasapattika* and further crowned with foliage motifs.

The doorframe of the *garbhagriha* also survives and reveals a *panchasakha* composition. It features a *ganasakha* flanked by subsidiary figures that create two additional distinct *sakhas*, while the composition is completed by *vallari* motifs on the outermost sides. The *uttaranga* portion of the doorway remains intact, though it is in a heavily weathered state. The *lalatabimba* depicts Natesa with Nandi shown as the divine mount, while the rest of the panel includes figures of the *Saptamatrikas*. The *mandaraka* is also preserved, though it too is considerably weathered. Within the *garbhagriha* is a small Sivalinga placed on a circular *yonipatta*. M.A. Dhaky upon his closer analysis dates this temple between 950-959 CE.



An aerial view of Naugaja Temple Complex



A ground view of Naugaja Temple

### Naugaja Temple:

The Naugaja temple complex represents another important religious site situated in the vicinity of the Nilakantha Mahadeva Temple complex. The well-known Garh Stone Inscription of Mathanadeva dated V.S. 1016 (960 CE) records that the temple was dedicated to the Jina Santinatha. The image of this Jina is still preserved within the *garbhagriha* of the shrine.

The temple stands within a large compound laid out at ground level. Owing to several phases of reconstruction, the original ground plan of the complex is now largely obscured. The only component that appears to preserve its early fabric is the shrine housing the Jina image. The *vedibandha* of this shrine comprises a sequence of *bhitta*, *jadyakumbha*, *karnika*, *kumuda*, *grasapattika*, followed by *gajapitha* and *narapitha*. The principal shrine is flanked by smaller shrines placed at the corners, together with two additional shrines adjoining the *mulaprasada*. These appear to follow a triple-shrine arrangement similar to those observed in several temples of the Nilakantha complex.



Among the sculptural fragments recovered from the site is a broken portion of a *samatala vitana* depicting four nude *nirgrantha* monks. This fragment suggests that the temple may not have belonged to the Digambara tradition but perhaps to the Botika sect or the Kshapanaka sect. The focal element of the complex is the colossal image of Santinatha, approximately sixteen feet in height, depicted in *kayotsarga* posture. The Jina is flanked on either side by *maladharis* and stands beneath a triple *chhatravali* supported by two elephants. At the base of the image are two female attendant figures, now heavily mutilated.



An aerial view of Kotan ki Deori No.1



A ground view of Kotan ki Deori No.1

### Kotan ki Deoris:

The mound no. 1 at Kotan ki Deori represents the most intact and architecturally significant shrine among the four temple mounds at the site. The structure likely originally stood upon a *jagati*, which has now disappeared, with the present remains appearing to rise directly from the compound level that corresponds with the surrounding ground surface.

The ground plan comprises a *mahachatushki* (pillared pavilion) leading to a *rangamandapa*, which is flanked by *kakshasana* benches on either side, and finally the *garbhagriha* preceded by an *antarala*. The *mulaprasada* stands upon a comparatively simple *vedibandha*, in contrast to the more elaborate basal mouldings observed in other temples of the complex. The superstructure and roofing members of the temple have not survived. The pillars of the temple, however, remain largely preserved and stylistically correspond to the phase associated with the Maha-Maru style. The pavilion contains pillars of the *bhadraka* type, while the *rangamandapa* is supported by the more conventional dwarf *ghatapallava* pillars. The doorway of the sanctum is also preserved and follows the *panchasakha* arrangement. The sequence of mouldings consists of *valli-sakha*, *gandharva-sakha*, *rupa-sakha*, again *gandharva-sakha*, and finally *padma-sakha*. The lintel is now missing and the *mandaraka* above is considerably weathered.

The *garbhagriha* presently enshrines a circular Sivalinga set upon a square *yonipitha*. On stylistic grounds, particularly the ground plan and the character of the pillars, the shrine may be assigned to circa 930–949 CE.



*An aerial view of Kotan Ki Deori No. 2*



*A ground view of Kotan ki Deori No. 2*

Kotan ki Deori No. 2 represents a comparatively simple temple ruin within the Rajorgarh complex. The shrine stands upon a high *jagati*, which is approached by a *sopana*. This leads to another flight of steps and subsequently to the *mukhamandapa*, followed by a *sabhamandapa*, *antarala*, and *garbhagriha*. Most of the original architectural elements have now been lost, making a detailed reconstruction of the temple's elevation difficult. However, judging from the scale and the surviving ground plan, the temple may tentatively be assigned to the latter half of the tenth century.



*Kotan ki Deori No.3*



*A ground view of Kotan ki Deori No.3*

Kotan ki Deori No. 3 appears to be stylistically and architecturally comparable to Kotan ki Deori No. 2. The two shrines share a similar scale and general ground-plan arrangement. However, owing to the extensive loss of original architectural members, the precise composition of the structure can no longer be clearly determined. Consequently, assigning the temple to a definite stylistic phase on the basis of surviving evidence remains difficult.





*An aerial view of Kotan ki Deori No.4*



*A ground view of Kotan ki Deori No.4*

Kotan ki Deori No. 4 is the most intact structure among the shrines of this group, as several of its larger architectural members remain in situ. The overall architectural framework and ground plan appear broadly similar to the other temples of the complex. The shrine stands upon a high *jagati*, which is approached by a flight of steps. The plan begins with a *mukhamandapa*, indicated by the surviving remains of dwarf pillars, followed by a *sabhamandapa* leading to an *antarala* and *garbhagriha*. The sanctum appears to have been conceived in a *saptayatana* scheme, with four *devakulikas* once occupying the four corners, presumably intended for the *parivaradevatas*.

Very little of the original decorative programme survives. The principal fragment belonging to the original composition is the doorway of the shrine. Above the *mandaraka* occur two registers on the doorsill, carved with figures of musicians, *matrikas*, and other semi-divine beings. On the basis of the density of these figures and their iconographic style, the temple may tentatively be assigned to the latter half of the tenth century or the early eleventh century.



*An aerial view of Dakhna ki Deori*



*A ground view of Dakhna ki Deori*



### Dakhna ki Deori:

Dakhna/Rakhna ki Deori represents one of the comparatively rare examples of a south-facing shrine within the Rajorgarh temple group. The name “Dakhna” is likely derived from the word *dakshin*, meaning south, referring to the unusual orientation of the temple. The ruin stands upon a very high *jagati*. The ground plan comprises a *mahachatushki* (pillared pavilion) followed by a *rangamandapa*, *antarala*, and finally the *garbhagriha*, which is now entirely lost. The pillars of the pavilion survive and indicate that they belong to the *misraka* category. These pillars closely resemble those found at Kotan ki Deori No. 1 and the principal Nilakantha Mahadeva Temple. On stylistic grounds, the temple may therefore be placed within the same approximate period of construction.



*An aerial view of Hanuman ki Deori*



*A ground view of Hanuman ki Deori*

### Hanuman ki Deori:

The shrine known as Hanuman ki Deori, identified as Temple No. 6 by M. A. Dhaky, represents one of the few *sandhara* temples within the Nilakantha Mahadeva Temple complex. The ground plan shows a *sopana* leading to a forecourt, followed by a *rangamandapa*, and finally the *garbhagriha* preceded by an *antarala*. From the reduced remains of the plan, it appears likely that the temple either possessed *kakshasana* benches or another flight of *sopana* steps leading further toward the sanctum. The temple stands upon a moderately sized *jagati*, which is largely preserved. Among the surviving architectural members is a pillar in the *rangamandapa* belonging to the *misraka* category. On the basis of this pillar form and the simplified ground plan, the temple may be assigned to about the middle of the tenth century.



*An aerial view of Bagh ki Deori*



*A ground view of Bagh ki Deori*

### Bagh ki Deori:

Bagh ki Deori constitutes one of the more extensive temple complexes at Rajorgarh in terms of its overall plan, elevation, and decorative scheme. The complex is organized around a large courtyard preceding the principal shrine. Within this forecourt are two subsidiary shrines together with several smaller *devakulikas*. The courtyard itself is preceded by a smaller pavilion that marks the initial approach to the complex.

Along the corner offsets of the courtyard are placed three *devakulikas* on the left side, while only one survives on the right. This arrangement is preceded by a triple-shrine composition on either side. The approach begins with a *sopana* leading to a *rangamandapa*, which appears to have been shared by three sancta on either side.

Beyond this section, another *sopana* leads into a narrower courtyard containing *devakulikas* on both sides, though only the one on the left now remains. From here a further flight of steps ascends to the high *jagati* that supports the principal shrine of Bagh ki Deori.

The ground plan of the main shrine consists of a *mukhamandapa*, followed by a *mahamandapa*, *antarala*, and *garbhagriha*. The *garbhagriha* itself is a simple square sanctum, though little of it now survives. The *vedibandha* of the central shrine comprises two *bhittis* followed by a *kapotapalika*, above which occurs a narrow *grasapattika* and a *narapitha*. Among the subsidiary structures, some of the smaller *devakulikas* still preserve portions of the *rajasenaka*, depicting rows of elephants accompanied by their *mahouts*, providing an important glimpse of the sculptural ornamentation that once characterised the complex.



*An aerial view of Batak ki Deori*



*A ground view of Batak ki Deori*

### Batak ki Deori:

Batak ki Deori is another of the larger temple mound within the Nilakantha Mahadeva Temple complex. At present the structure survives largely in ruins. The temple originally stood upon a high *jagati*, which has been partly reconstructed by the Archaeological Survey of India (Jaipur Circle). The surviving remains of the ground plan indicate that the shrine might have been one of the biggest temple shrines of medieval India.



The basal mouldings belong to the typical late 10<sup>th</sup> century scheme. The sequence consists of two *bhittis*, followed by *kumbha* and *kalasa*, surmounted by a broad *gajapitha* and further topped by *grasapattika*, *kapotapalika*, and *vasantapattika*. The temple is approached by a *sopana* leading to a *mukhamandapa*, which in turn opens onto a raised platform that may have served as an *ardhamandapa*, and finally to the shrine proper. The temple appears to have been conceived as a triple-shrine complex, the three *prasadas* sharing a common *sabhamandapa*. The *pitha* mouldings of the three shrines follow a similar scheme comprising two *bhittis*, *kumbha*, *kumuda*, *grasapattika*, and *narapitha*. A loose pillar recovered from the mound, on stylistic grounds, provides the principal basis for dating the structure. Its form and ornamentation suggest that the temple may be assigned to about 951–959 CE.



*An aerial view of Dabar ki Deori No.1*



*A ground view of Dabar ki Deori No. 1*

### **Dabar ki Deoris:**

Dabar ki Deori constitutes a large temple complex comprising four temple ruins built on a considerable scale. Temple No. 1 stands upon a high *jagati*, though its original basal mouldings are no longer preserved. A modern staircase has been constructed to provide access to the platform.

The temple represents an elaborate example of a triple-shrine composition with additional spatial elements. The ground plan begins with a *mukhamandapa* leading to a *mahamandapa*. On either side of this hall occur narrow passages that appear to function as subsidiary *mukhamandapas* for the lateral shrines. From these spaces, a short flight of steps leads to an *ardhamandapa*, which in turn opens into a *garbhagriha* preceded by an *antarala*. A notable feature of the plan is that the three sancta do not share a single common *mandapa*; instead, each shrine appears to possess its own approach and intermediate space. This arrangement suggests a development or modification of the earlier triple-shrine scheme and may indicate a slightly later architectural phase. Several smaller *devakulikas* occur within the lower courtyard of the complex, their presence likely pointing to subsequent additions or later reconstructions. On architectural grounds, the principal shrine may tentatively be placed in the early eleventh century.



*An aerial view of Dabar ki Deori No.2*



*A ground view of Dabar ki Deori No.2*

Dabar ki Deori No. 2 represents one of the simpler temple mounds within the Rajorgarh complex. The structure has been largely reconstructed, as a result of which much of its original architectural composition is no longer clearly discernible. The surviving remains indicate a simple square *garbhagriha*, approached through a *mukhamandapa*. The shrine stands upon a moderately raised *jagati*. From the available ground plan it may be inferred that the temple was originally of considerable size, though evidently smaller in scale than the shrines at Bagh ki Deori and the principal Nilakantha Mahadeva Temple.



*An aerial view of Dabar ki Deori No. 3 (Left) and 4 (Right)*



*A ground view of Dabar ki Deori No.3*



*A ground view of Dabar ki Deori No.4*



Dabar ki Deori Nos. 3 and 4 comprise two shrines constructed adjacent to one another. The two temples are nearly identical in plan and composition, although the structure designated as No. 4 is slightly smaller in scale. Both temples stand upon a relatively high *jagati*, approached by a flight of *sopana*. The ground plan consists of a *mukhamandapa* leading to a *rangamandapa*, followed by an *antarala* and a simple *garbhagriha*. The *garbhagriha* appears to have been conceived in a *panchayatana*-type scheme, though the offsets are not strongly articulated. Owing to extensive reconstruction, much of the original architectural fabric has been altered or lost. As a result, it is difficult to place these temples securely within a stylistic chronology.



*An aerial view of of Lachhura ki Deori No.1,2,3,4*



*A ground view of Lachhura ki Deori*

### **Lachhura ki Deori:**

The temple group known as Lachhura ki Deori comprises four ruined shrines situated within close proximity to one another. The temples appear to have stood on separate platforms placed adjacent to each other, though none of them seems to have possessed a distinct *jagati*. At present, the ground plans of these structures have almost entirely disappeared. Only a few architectural fragments survive, most notably portions of the *kumbhaka* section of pillars which likely once belonged to the *rangamandapa* of the temples. These remains constitute the principal surviving evidence of the original architectural composition of the group.



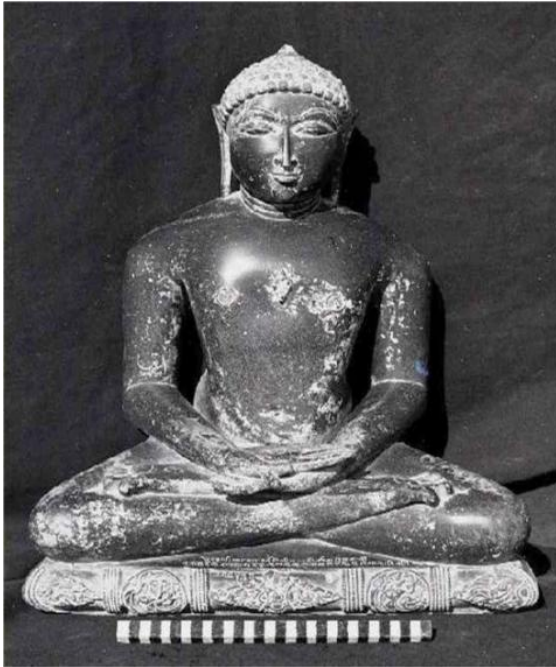
Baolis situated near Moondtor ke Deori and Dabar ki Deori No. 1



## Baolis:

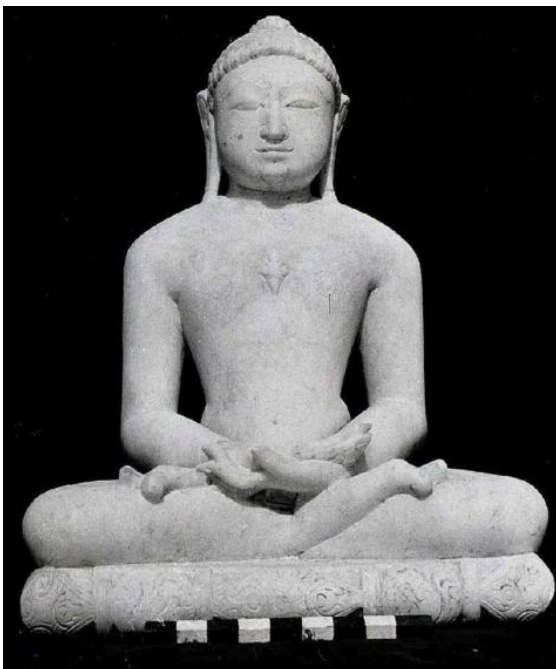
The Baolis situated near Moondtor ki Deori and Dabar ki Deori No.1 are simple structures that now have been largely reconstructed. This adds to the temple's value as an important centre since water reservoirs in any temple complex is generally associated with either royal patronage or adds to the temple's sanctity.

Below is provided the description of some representative sculptures from Nilakantha:



### 1. Accession No: 781, Jain *tirthankara*

**Description:** The sculpture depicts a male figure seated in *dhyana-mudra* on a pedestal decorated with a floral design. The figure is characterised by a snail-shell-like hairstyle, elongated earlobes, and a clearly marked *srivatsa* symbol on his chest. The neck shows prominent *trivalaya* (neck folds). Auspicious symbols are carved on the palms of the hands and the soles of his feet. An inscription of Samvat 1203 is engraved on the pedestal. Based on these iconographic features, the figure is identifiable as one of the twenty-four Jain *tirthankaras*.



### 2. Accession No: 775, Jain *tirthankara*

**Description:** The sculpture depicts a male figure seated in *dhyana mudra* on a pedestal decorated with a foliage design. The figure is adorned with a *srivatsa* symbol on the chest, has snail shell-like hairstyle, and elongated earlobes. The figure is identifiable as a Jain *tirthankara*.



### 3. Accession No: 47, Hari-hara

**Description:** The architectural member depicts a vertical panel featuring a two-tiered pilastered niche topped by a triangular pediment. It is flanked by two recessed niches on either side. The central niche houses a male figure standing in *samabhanga mudra* on a lotus pedestal. He is holding a *trisula* in his upper left hand and a *chakra* in his upper right hand, an *akshamala* in his natural left hand while a *sankha* in his natural right hand. He is adorned with a *mukuta*, *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *yajnopavita*, *bajubandhas*, *katisutra*, *mekhala*, *urudama*, *vaijayantimala*, and *nupuras*. Based on these attributes, the figure can be identified as that of Bhagavana Hari-Hara where the right half represents Vishnu and left half represents Siva. He is flanked by two *maladharis* on either side above his head and two attendants near his feet. Due to heavy mutilation of recessed niches, only the upper body of the *vyala* remains on the left side.



### 4. Accession No: 275, An interesting domestic act

**Description:** The fragment depicts a seated bearded male figure with long hair in the centre. A female figure stands behind him, adorned with *kundalas*, *haras*, and a lower garment. She is shown searching for lice in his hair, a very interesting act in fact. The male figure appears to be an ascetic. A standing male attendant faces the viewer. He is defaced and possibly holds a weapon in his hands. He is possibly wearing a lower garment, while his other features are unclear.



### 5. Accession No: 1056, Ganesa with his consort

**Description:** The architectural member features a horizontal panel divided by pilasters into two sections. The left section features a standing female figure. She is adorned with *kundalas*, *hara*, *katisutra*, *mekhala*, *bajubandha*, *kanganas*, and a lower garment. She is holding her drapery in her right hand while she holds a *mashal* in her left hand. The right section features Ganesa and his consort. She is seated on his lap as he embraces her with his natural right hand. She is adorned with *kundalas*, *hara*, *bajubandhas*, and *kanganas* and holding an unidentifiable object in her right hand. Ganesa is four-handed; holding a mace in his upper right hand while his upper left hand holds a *nilotpala*. He is holding a *mulaka* in his natural left hand whereas he embraces his consort with his natural right hand. The figures are quite elegantly carved and Ganesa is shown as *Ekadanta*. Two floral motifs decorate the top of the niche.





**6. Accession No: 25, Lalata-bimba with Navagrahas**

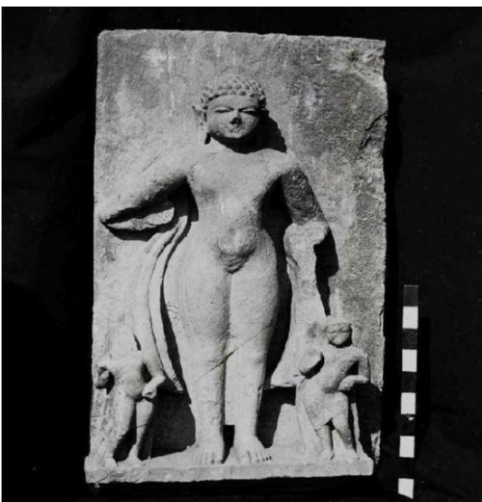
**Description:** The *lalatabimba* fragment depicts at the top, a horizontal band of creepers. The successive band features *navagrahas* housed within the pilastered niches; from left to right; Surya, Soma, Mangala, Budha and Guru. Descending further, band of *gandharvas* populate the scene. The subsequent band has foliage motifs. On the left is a decorated

pilastered niche with a triangular pediment; a couple is housed within the niche. The male figure is holding a *kamandalu* in his left hand while the right hand is in *abhayamudra*. He is adorned with a *jatamukuta*, *kundalas*, *kanganas*, *katisutra*, drapery and a long garland. On his left is a female figure standing close to the latter. She is wearing *kundalas*, *hara*, *katisutra*, *mekhala* and a lower garment. The couple is identifiable as Brahma-Brahmani. On the leftmost side of the panel stands an attendant holding a *khadga*-like object. On the lower side, the fragment is decorated with a band of *gandharva* couples.



**7. Accession No: 61, Mansa Devi or Jaina Padmavati**

**Description:** The architectural member depicts a four-armed female deity seated in *lalitasana* posture on a lotus throne. In her upper left hand, she is holding a lotus and her upper right hand holds a *pasa* (noose). Her natural right hand seems to hold a *patra* and her natural left hand possibly held a *kamandalu* which is now missing. She is adorned with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *moti-hara*, *keyuras*, *katisutra*, *lambanam* and a long garland. She is also having a serpent canopy. She is flanked by an attendant near her feet on her left side. The fragment is supported at the base by *bharavahakas*. The figure can be identified either as Goddess Mansa or Jaina Yakshi Padmavati.



**8. Accession No: 778, the Buddha**

**Description:** The architectural member depicts a male figure standing in *samabhanga* posture, flanked by two male attendants on either side. Both hands of the main figure are partially broken. His hair is tied in a snail-like hairstyle. He is wearing a diaphanous *ekansika samghati* covering his left shoulder only, representing the only known example of such a depiction recorded from the Nilakantha site. The attendant figures are shown in *tribhanga* posture, with their right hands in *abhayamudra* and their left hands resting on their waists, wearing garments similar to the main figure. Based on iconographic features, the figure can be identified

possibly as the Buddha, the ninth incarnation of Vishnu.





### 9. *Tirthankara Santinatha*

**Description:** The vertical slab depicts an unadorned male figure, shown standing in *kayotsarga* posture. A *chhatra* (parasol) is held above his head, with a lotus-shaped halo carved behind him. The *chhatra* is flanked by two elephants, one on each side. Above his shoulders, two intricately carved divine couples are shown on either side; the male deity on either side is holding a lotus in his hand. On either side of the parasol, flying *gandharvas* are carved. At the lower portion, female attendants stand near the feet of the main figure on both sides. Although defaced, they are adorned with *katisutras*, *mekhalas*, and draperies. On the base remnants of an animal, possibly a mriga (deer) survive as the *lanchhana* of the *tirthankara*. The figure on the basis of an inscription is identifiable as of Jaina *tirthankara* Santinatha. This sculpture (about 15 feet high) is the tallest at Nilakantha site and would have been a masterpiece of Indian art when intact.



### 10. Accession No: 225, Lakshmi-Narayana

**Description:** The sculpture depicts a male and female figure seated on a lotus pedestal. The male figure is four-armed; his upper right hand is broken, while his upper left hand is holding a *chakra*. His natural right hand is partially damaged, and his natural left hand is not visible. He is adorned with *kiritamukuta*, *kanthahara*, *katibandha*, *mekhala*, *vaijayantimala*, *nupuras*, and a lower garment. The figure is identified as Bhagavana Vishnu. Seated on his lap is the female deity, his consort Lakshmi. She is holding a *darpana* in her left hand, while her right arm is wrapped around Vishnu's **shoulder. She is adorned with *kundalas*, *hara*, *katisutra*, *mekhala*, and a lower garment.** On Vishnu's right, a male attendant is possibly holding a *sankha* and may be identified as Sankhapurusha, while on his left, a seated female attendant is visible, but her features and attributes are unclear due to mutilation.



**11. Accession No: 886, Apsara**

**Description:** The sculpture features a female figure in a graceful posture, lifting her right leg from behind and bending slightly backward to look toward it. Though her right hand is broken, the pose possibly depicts a *surasundari* either removing a thorn (*sula*) from her foot or apply *alta* on it. She is holding a string attached to her beaded necklace in her left hand, while her torso gently twists. Her right leg is broken below the ankle, but the beaded anklet is partly visible. She is richly adorned with pearl jewellery, including *kundalas*, *hara*, *stanahara*, *keyuras*, *katibandha*, a stylised *mekhala*, and *urudama*. Her hair is tied in a stylised bun decorated with pearls, and leaf motifs are carved behind her. This is one of the better examples of Nilakantha sculptural art.



**12. Accession No: 1578, Nritya scene**

**Description:** The architectural member features a horizontal panel depicting six figures in varied dancing postures. From left to right, the first figure is a male with his left hand placed near his mouth and his right hand resting on his thigh. The second figure is shown with his back turned towards the viewer, facing to the right; his right hand is raised

and appears to touch the pediment while dancing. The third figure depicts a bearded male with his right hand placed on his waist and his left hand touching the pediment. The fourth figure is a female bent towards her right, with her mouth wide open as she is the vocalist, looking towards the next figure. The fifth figure is a female with her right hand placed on her thigh while her left hand is raised. The sixth figure is bent towards her right, facing left.



**13. Accession No: 252 Measurement:**

**Description:** The architectural member features a standing male figure housed within a pilastered niche. He is four-armed, holding a manuscript (*bahi-khata*) in his upper right hand and a *danda* in his upper left hand. Both of his natural hands are partially broken. He is adorned with *kundalas*, *haras*, *bajubandhas*, *kanganas*, and *nupuras*. His hair is arranged as *pingalorddhakesa*. There is an animal or his *vahana* (mount) *mahisha*, positioned at the bottom of the panel on his right side. On the basis of attributes, the deity is identifiable as *Dikpala Yama*, the guardian deity of south direction.





**14. Accession No:** 1036, A temple doorjamb

**Description:** The architectural member features a vertical slab divided into four vertical sections. The leftmost is a *vallari sakha*. The central portion of the slab is horizontally divided into three sections by the pilasters. It features a central projecting pilastered niche topped by a pediment resembling a *sikhara*. The central niche is identifiable as a *mithunasakha*. The niche in the middle houses a *mithuna* couple engaged in love making. They are adorned with *haras*, *bajubandhas*, *kanganas*, *katibandhas*, *mekhalas*, and lower garment. The central niche is flanked by two female figures on either side. The left side female figure is in a dancing posture while the figure on the right side is holding a garland. Both the figures are adorned with *kundalas*, *haras*, *bajubandhas*, *kanganas*, and *mekhalas*. The lower portion of the slab again features a *mithuna* couple adorned with similar ornaments as the previous figures. The figure on right side is holding a garland while the left figure is standing in *namaskara mudra*.



**15. Accession No:** 663, Varahavatara

The architectural member features a projecting pilastered niche. The four-armed Varaha incarnation of Vishnu is depicted in a therio-anthropomorphic form, with a boar's head and a human body, housed within the niche. He is shown standing in *alidha* posture, with one leg placed upon the serpent hood of Adishesha, whose wife is depicted near his feet. Bhudevi is depicted seated on Varaha's left arm. His upper right hand is holding a *gada*, while his upper left hand holds a *sankha*. His natural right-hand rests on his thigh, while the natural left hand holds a *chakra*. He is adorned with a *hara*, *kanganas*, *bajubandhas*, *katibandha*, *mekhala*, *vaijyantimala*, and a lower garment. Recessed niches housing *vyalas* flank the central niche on either side.

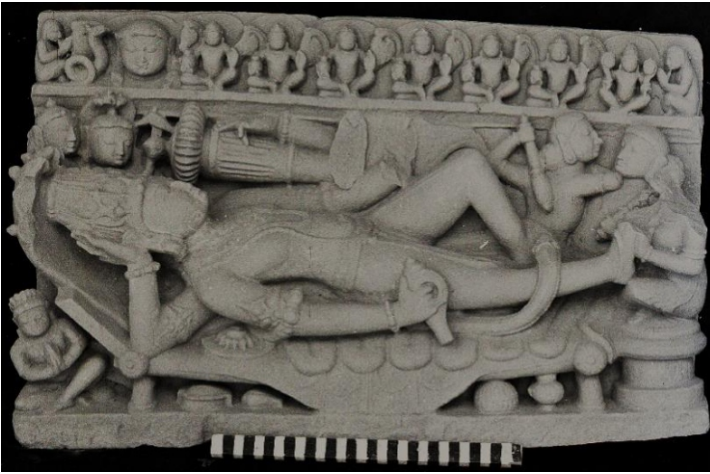
lower garment. Recessed niches housing *vyalas* flank the central niche on either side.



**16. Accession No:** 768, Mandapa pillar

**Description:** The architectural member features the highly ornate pillar, beautifully decorated with a series of bands arranged horizontally from top to bottom. The topmost band shows *kirttimukhas*, which are mythical lion-like creatures. Below that is a band of leaf patterns, followed by a row of beaded strings. Next comes a band with male figures wearing *kundalas*, and *bajubandhas*. Another leaf motif band follows. Then there is a band that alternates between male figures and *kirttimukhas*, with yet another leaf pattern below it. The lowermost band features female figures standing in different postures. From left to right, two of them face forward, one has her back turned towards the viewer, one is playing a flute, and the last figure is partially damaged but also facing forward. All the figures are wearing *kundalas*, *haras*, *bajubandhas*, *katisutras*, *urudamas*, *mekhalas*, *nupuras* and *nivi*. The female figure who is facing her back towards the onlooker is wearing additional clothing, like an upper garment and *antariya*, while her lower garment has peculiar, well-defined folds that make it stand out from the others.





**17. Accession No:** NA, Seshasayi Vishnu

**Description:** The Seshasayi Vishnu sculpture is a finely detailed representation of the deity Vishnu reclining on the Serpent Sesha atop a cot. At the top of the panel, a band of *Navagrahas* is prominently displayed, beginning with an attendant in *namaskara mudra*. Interestingly, the Navagraha panel is carved in an opposite sequence as it begins with snake-shaped Ketu and ends with Surya holding *padmas* in both his hands. Beneath this upper

panel, four attendants are visible from left to right: a bust of a figure behind Vishnu, figure with a serpent hood holding a *padma*, and two figures engaged in a fight. These attendants are adorned with *kundalas*, *kanganas*, and *hara*. The central figure of the sculpture, Vishnu, is depicted in a relaxed posture, reclining on the coils of Sesha. His upper right arm supports his head and his upper left arm holds a *gada*. The natural right hand holds a *sankha*, while the natural left arm is broken, which possibly held a lotus. Vishnu is richly adorned with *kiritamukuta*, *mala*, *mekhala*, drapery, *bajubandhas*, *nupuras*, *yajnopavita*, *hara*, *moti-kuntis*, *kanganas*, *kundalas* and *vaijayantimala*. Near his feet, his consort Goddess Lakshmi is depicted seated on a lotus pedestal, holding Vishnu's right foot with both hands. Though defaced, she is adorned with drapery, *moti-kuntis*, *kanganas*, and *kundalas*. At the base of the sculpture, a male attendant, possibly a devotee with his hands in *namaskara mudra*, is visible in the left corner. He is wearing *kundalas*, *hara*, and *bajubandhas*. To the right of this attendant, a series of sacred objects is depicted, including a *padma* pedestal, conch, fruit, and sacred vase, all *nidhis* which came out during the churning of the ocean.



**18. Accession No:** 888, An Apsara

The sculpture depicts a female figure standing in *tribhanga* posture on a lotus pedestal. She is adorned with *hara*, *katibandha*, *urudama*, *keyuras*, *mekhala*, *nupuras*, and beaded hoop earrings. Her right hand is shown in *kataka-hasta mudra*, while her left arm is partially broken. Her hair is tied in a stylised bun decorated with beaded ornaments. A visible crack runs through the waist of the figure, indicating damage. Floral motifs are carved behind her back, forming a decorative background. Near her feet on the right side, a male attendant is depicted. The figure is defaced and appears to be holding an indistinct object in his right hand, while his left hand seems to touch the Apsara. He is adorned with *moti-hara*, *bajubandhas*, and *kanganas*, and wears a loincloth. The main figure of the beautiful nymph of the damsel can be identified as an Apsara.



19. Accession No: 595, temple *vitana*

The architectural member features a ceiling slab of *vitana* decorated with floral and foliage design depicting various scenes within square or rectangular boxes. The uppermost part of the slab shows two male figures identified as *maladharis* on the right side. On the left side, there is a female dancer at the center, flanked by a musician and an attendant on either side. The middle portion of the slab shows a flute player surrounded by dancers behind him, arranged in a very intricate manner. The lower right section shows a male figure seated on a pedestal, with his right hand in *abhayamudra*. The left section features four seated male figures facing him, with their hands in *namaskara mudra*.



20. Accession No: 2466, temple *vitana*

The architectural member features a horizontal slab divided into three sections by bands of floral and foliage decoration. It would have formed part of a temple ceiling or *vitana*. The left section depicts a central male figure holding a *vina*, flanked by two female figures in dancing postures. The central section is occupied by a floral motif, while the right section mirrors the musical scene, showing similar iconographic details.



21. Accession No: 2642, *Dikpala Yama*

The architectural member features a projecting pilastered niche, topped by a pediment resembling a *sikhara* and surmounted by a pillar capital. The slab is broken on the left side, where a *maladhari* is visible on top. The right side depicts a *vyala* figure accompanied by a *gandharva* in *namaskara mudra*. A miniature niche is carved at the centre of the pediment. The projecting niche houses a standing male figure adorned with *kundalas*, *hara*, *bajubandhas*, *kanganas*, *mekhala*, *katibandha*, and a lower garment. He is holding a *khatvanga* in his left hand, while his right arm rests on his thigh. His hair is styled as *pingalorddhakesa*. The figure may be identified as *Dikpala Yama* in case it is a deity as per placement on temple wall.





## 22. Accession No: 2659, Siva-Gajasurasamharamurti

The architectural member features a projecting pilastered niche housing a sculpture of a male deity shown in *alidha* posture. He is an eight-armed deity, holding a *damaru* in his upper right hand, while his upper left hand is raised and holding the skin of Gajasura-the elephant demon. The middle right hand holds a *khadga*, and the middle-left hand holds a *khetaka*. In his lower right hand, he is holding a *kamandalu*, while the object in his lower left hand is unclear. The deity wields a *trisula* in his natural hands which is piercing through the body of the demon, Gajasura. He is adorned with a *jatamukuta*, *karnakundalas*, *kanthahara*, *katisutra*, *mekhala*, *nupuras*, and a lower garment.

He is specially adorned with a *mundamala*. Beneath his feet, a figure is depicted, with a standing female figure positioned beside it. The figure under his feet is difficult to identify but the standing female figure might be identified as Chandika or a form of similar energy. The sculpture represents Siva-Gajasurasamharamurti. This episode is seldom represented in north Indian temple art.



## 23. Accession No: NA, Brahma

The sculpture consists of a vertical slab depicting a standing four-armed male deity with three heads. He is adorned with a *jatamukuta*, *hara*, *yajnopavita*, *bajubandhas*, *katisutra*, *mekhala*, *urudama*, *nupuras*, and a long garland. His arms are partially broken; hence, the attributes are not clearly visible. A lotus halo is carved behind his head, enclosed within a *prabhamandala* with a *vyala* head atop it at the centre. On either side the heads of the principal deity, two deities are carved: seated Siva appears on the right side, while seated Vishnu is shown on his left side holding *sankha*, *chakra* and *gada*. Below these, on either side, are two four-armed bearded male figures holding *sruka* and *padma/vedas* in their upper hands whereas their left hand holds a *kamandalu* and the right hand is in *abhayamudra*. The deities are identifiable as the four *manasaputras* of Brahma: Sanaka, Sanatana, Sanandana and Sanatkumara. Further below are two main attendant figures. At the lower portion of the slab, near the feet of the main deity, at the corners female attendants are depicted on either side. The male attendants are adorned with *haras* and lower garments, while the female attendants wear *haras*, *stanahara*, *katisutra*, and *mekhala*. The main figure can be identified as Bhagavana Brahma. This sculpture might have been the main object of worship in the Brahma shrine of Nilakantha Temple. It was recently recovered from Ramkund which is situated in the village.





**24. Accession No:** 49 NLK, Brahma and Brhamani

**Description:** The decorated architectural member consists of a niche carved between two two-tiered piers depicting a standing four-armed tricephalic male deity with his consort standing to his right. He is adorned with a *jatamukuta*, *hara*, *yajnopavita*, *bajubandhas*, *katisutra*, *mekhala*, *urudama*, *nupuras*, and a long garland. In his upper left hand he holds a *sruka*, in his upper right hand a *sruva* whereas his natural left hand rests on his thigh and the natural right hand embraces his consort. The female deity holds a *padma* in her right hand whereas her left hand would be embracing the male deity. A broken figure of his vahana is carved at the pedestal which should have been a *hamsa*. The couple is identifiable as Brahma-Brahmani and interestingly Brahma is standing to the left of Brahmani, a quite unusual position.



**25. Accession No:** NLK 87, Saivacharyas

**Description:** The architectural member consists of a niche carved between two two-tiered piers depicting three male figures. All three are wearing a loin cloth whereas two to our right are wearing *yajnopavita* also. All three are *jatadhari* and two of them hold what seems to be a ladle whereas their right hand is raised up. The left most figure might be entering into his investiture rites.



**26. Accession No:** 88 NLK, a satire involving a Saivacharya

**Description:** The architectural member consists of a niche carved between two two-tiered piers depicting three human figures. The central figure is a bearded male whereas on his either side is a female. The episode carved here is very interesting. The lady to the left of male figure is pulling his beard with her left hand while her right hand is raised holding a slipper to beat him. The left and right hand of the male figure are in a pose of preventing himself. The lady figure to his right is holding a dagger in her left hand with which she is disrobing the lower garments of the male figure and in the process exposing his genitals. Female figures are well adorned with *kundalas*, *bajubandhas*, *kanganas*, *mekhala*, *kanthahara*, *katibandha*, and *nivi*. It is not clear whether it is just the depiction of a satire theme or it is a theme in which a *pakhandi acharya* is being taught a lesson for his pervert behaviour.



**27. Accession No:** 190 NLK, *Dikpala Agni*

**Description:** The architectural member consists of a niche carved between two two-tiered piers depicting a standing male deity. The deity is two-handed and in his left hand he is holding a *kamandalu* whereas his right hand is in *varadamudra*. Flames are shown coming out from behind his head and on the base of the niche a *chhaga* figure is carved. Due to erosion of stone surface, his ornaments are not clear but it seems that he was richly ornamented along with a long garland. The deity is easily identifiable as *Dikpala Agni*, the guardian deity of south-east direction.



**28. Accession No:** 232 NLK, *Karttikeya*

**Description:** The architectural member consists of two vertical sections, the one on right is a pilaster whereas the one on left consists a deity's carving. The deity is carved in somewhat dancing pose. He has four hands and in his upper right hand he holds a *padma*, in his upper left hand he seems to hold a manuscript whereas his natural right hand holds a *sula* and his natural left hand holds a rooster. He is adorned with a *jatamukuta*, a long garland, *karnakundalas*, *keyura*, *kankana*, and *kanthaharas*. His *vahana mayura* is carved on the base with his mouth uplifted in a stance of looking towards the deity. One attendant figure on the base is playing cymbal whereas the other is carved with folded hands. The deity is identifiable as *Karttikeya*.



**29. Accession No:** 237 NLK, *Jaina Ambika*

**Description:** The architectural member consists of two vertical sections, the one on right contains a damaged figure topped by a seated Jina whereas the one on left consists a deity's carving within a decorated pilastered niche topped by a *gavaksha*. The deity carved inside the niche sits on a lion and holds a child on her left lap with her left hand whereas in her right she holds a bunch of mangoes. An attendant figure stands on the base. The deity is adorned with *karnakundalas*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *kanthaharas* and a three-tiered *jatamukuta*. She is identifiable as *Ambika, Yakshi of Jina Arishtaneminatha*.





**30. Accession No: 254 NLK, Panel of musicians and dancers**

**Description:** The architectural member consists of a niche with five human figures involved in musical activities. The left most male figure is playing on a flute, followed by a male figure playing *khartal*. The central prominent position has been given to a female dancer possibly in some Katthaka pose. She is followed by a male figure playing cymbals and further by a male figure possibly playing *jhanjh*. All the figures are well adorned and wear *nivi*.



**31. Accession No: 510 NLK, Chakresvari**

**Description:** The architectural member consists of a decorated niche which houses a female deity seated in *lalitasana* on Garuda *vahana*. The eight-handed deity holds in her upper hands a *chakra* whereas the lower upper hands possibly hold a *padma*. In one of her right hands, she holds a *vajra* and her other hands are quite mutilated. She is adorned with a *kiritamukuta*, ornaments and a long garland. She is identifiable as Jain goddess Chakresvari, the Yakshini of the first Tirthankara Rishabhanatha.



**32. Accession No: 529 NLK, Trivikrama Vishnu**

**Description:** The architectural member is a former part of a temple pilaster and consists of two horizontal sections, the lower side contains a pilastered niche and the upper section consists of a *gavaksha* motif. The niche houses a figure of Trivikrama Vishnu related to his incarnation as Vamanavatara. In the relief, Bhagavana Vishnu is stretching his left leg upwards towards the nether world as his third step where his foot enters the open mouth of a demon, generally identified as Rahu. The demon king Bali is standing below his raised foot. For some reasons, this episode is not often represented in the temple art of eastern and northeastern Rajasthan.





### 33. Accession No: 672 NLK, Vinadhari Siva

**Description:** The architectural member consists of a pilastered niche topped by a *gavaksha* motif. The niche houses a figure of a ten-handed standing deity who adorns a *jatamukuta* and holds a *vina* in his natural hands and a *pannaga* in his uppermost hands. His other hands are quite mutilated but still it can be surmised that one of his right hands holds a *damaru*, one a sword, one of the left hands a trident. One attendant with folded hands and other one playing on cymbals are carved at the base. Such representations of Vinadharai Siva are quite uncommon.



### 34. Accession No: 747 NLK, Head of Brahma with Trimurti

**Description:** The sculptural fragment seems to be one of the presiding deities of a shrine. Only the top portion of the idol survives which helps in confirming the identity of the deity. The head of the deity is tricephalic with matted hair. He is adorned with *karnakundalas* and a *kanthahara*. A lotus halo adorns his head from behind. Fragment of the *sruka* held in one of his right hands survives. On either side of the halo are carved four-armed seated deities who are identifiable as Siva to his right holding a trident and snake in his upper hands and to his proper left Vishnu holding a mace and discus in his upper hands. Presence of such Brahma idol informs that the worship of Brahma was quite popular at Nilakantha unlike other temple sites.



### 35. Accession No: 765 NLK, Brahma sculpture

**Description:** The sculpture is a rare example of standing life size sculpture of Bhagavana Brahma. In this sculpture in spite of lot of damage the standing body part of the deity survives from the head to feet. The tricephalic deity bears a long beard and he is adorned with *jatamukuta*, *kanthahara*, *stanahara*, *yajnopavita*, *katisutra*, *urudama*, *nupura*, *keyura* and *nivi*. At the base two bearded male attendants are carved and in between them a lady attendant is carved.



**36. Accession No:** 920 NLK, *Navagraha* panel with Brahma

**Description:** The sculptural panel consists of *Navagrahas* starting with Surya from leftmost niche, followed by Soma, Mangala, Budha, then a seated figure of four-handed Brahma in the centre, followed by Guru, Sukra, Sani and Rahu-Ketu. Rahu and Ketu both are carved inside one niche only. All the *grahas* are human-shaped with two hands whereas Rahu has his bust only and Ketu is in the form of a serpent. The most unique aspect of this relief is the presence of Brahma at the centre of the panel emphasising his importance in this representation.



**37. Accession No:** 1122 NLK, *Kichaka* panel

**Description:** The architectural fragment has projecting and recessed niches in alternate order. The recessed niches have a diamond-shaped floral motif whereas the projecting niches have a four-handed *bharavahaka* or *kichaka* figure. Interestingly, the *kichaka* on the left has a bovine face. The projecting niches are topped by a *sala* motif.



**38. Accession No:** 1421 NLK, Surya

**Description:** The architectural member consists of a highly niche situated between two three-tiered pilasters. The principal deity stands in *samastahanka* mudra and holds *padmas* in his hands. He is adorned with a *kiritamukuta*, *yajnopavita*, *katisutra*, *kanthahara*, *urudama*, long garland and *nivi*. Danda and Pingala are standing on the base on either side of Surya. Two of his wives are also carved standing on the pedestal who may be identified as Samjna and Chhaya. The architectural member is decorated with *vyalas* on either side of the pilaster and the niche is topped by a beautifully carved *gavaksha* having three small niches housing deity figures.





**39. Accession No:** 1432 NLK, Sada Siva

**Description:** The architectural member consists of an ornamental niche topped by a miniature *sikhara*. The niche houses a figure of a standing deity in *samasthanaka* mudra whose three faces are carved on the front. The mutilated figure seems to have had ten or twelve hands. In some of his hands *khatvanga*, *damaru* and *pannaga* are identifiable. In one of his left hands, he seems to hold a discus and in one of the right hands possibly a deer. His *vahana* Nandi is carved at the base. The deity is possibly ornate with a *mundamala* along with usual ornaments which are defaced now. The deity is identifiable as a rare representation of Sada Siva, with a possibility of it being a syncretic icon, but it cannot be confirmed due to lack of identifying attributes.



**40. Accession No:** 1724 NLK, Vyala

**Description:** Of many architectural fragments at Nilakantha site, Vyalas form a very common theme. They are used to embellish the temple walls. The present piece demonstrates a *sardula-vyala* with the head and body of a lion with its mouth open agape. Two human figures are carved possibly in a battle with him, one riding on it and the other seated near its feet.



**41. Accession No:** 2154 NLK, Nrisimha

**Description:** The niche situated within pilasters of an architectural fragment demonstrates the figure of Nrisimhavatara. The six-handed deity is tearing apart the stomach of Hiranyakasipu held on his lap. The god has the body of a human and the head of a lion. In his upper hands he holds the entangled intestines of the demon. Below his right foot is another human figure which might be of a demon.



**42. Accession No: 2422 NLK, Maa Durga**

**Description:** The architectural member consists of a projection carved between two pilasters. The projection is decorated with a figure of eight-handed Maa Durga who sits on a lion throne on a lotus in *lalitasana*. In her hands she is holding a *trisula*, *padma*, *akshamala*, *asi*, *khetaka*, *sakti* and possibly a *pannaga*. She is adorned with a *jatamukuta*, *kanthaharas*, *vakshasutra*, *katibandha*, *urudama* and a long *mala*.



**43. Accession No: 2675 NLK, Maa Parvati**

**Description:** The architectural member consists of a niche carved between two two-tiered pilasters which is in turn topped by two-tiered *gavaksha* decoration. Within the niche stands a four-armed female deity who is holding a *trisula* in her upper right hand, a *pannaga* in her upper left hand, a *kamandalu* in her natural left hand whereas her natural right hand is in *varadamudra*. She is adorned with a *jatamukuta*, *graiveyaka*, *kanthahara*, *stanahara*, *katisutra*, *urudama*, *kankana*, *nupura*, *keyura*, long *mala* and *nivi*. Two attendant figures are carved at the base with folded hands. The deity is identifiable as Mata Parvati. On either side of the pilasters beautiful *vyala* figures are carved.

**Conservation Works at Nilakantha Temple complex**

Nilakantha is a vast site with scattered temple remains that it requires a lot of conservation and restoration efforts. The Jaipur Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India has carried out a number of conservation and restoration works at various temple groups of the complex, particularly between 2022 and 2026. The majority of works include exposing the remains, taking out and shifting of fallen architectural members of temple, Earth work, Lime concrete, red sand stone flooring, R.R. stone masonry, Recess pointing & other minor repair work etc. and providing pathways, fencing and *kot*-wall restoration along with jungle clearance.

**Desilting and restoration of step-well, Nilakantha**



**Before**



**After**



**Bagh ki Devri and adjoining structure at Nilakantha**



**Before**



**After**

**Providing approach pathway at Hanuman Ki Deori and from Hanuman Ki Deori to Bagh Ki Deori**



**Before**



**After**

**Providing approach pathway to Hanuman Ki Deori and from Hanuman Ki Deori to Bagh Ki Deori**



**Before**



**After**

### **Conservation of Bagh ki Deori and adjoining structure**



**Before**



**After**

### **Conservation of ancient water tank adjacent to Nilakantha Temple**



**Before**



**After**

### **Conservation of ancient water tank adjacent to Nilakantha Temple**



**Before**



**After**



### Work of exposing ancient temple remains adjacent to Nilakantha Temple



**Before**



**After**

### Conservation and restoration work at Nilakantha Temple



**Before**



**After**

### Conservation and restoration work at Nilakantha Temple



**Before**



**After**



**Construction of boundary wall with M.S. grill fencing from Kotan Ki Deori No. 1 to 4**



**Before**



**During**



**After**



## Construction of boundary wall with M.S. grill fencing from Kotan Ki Deori No. 1 to 4



**Before**



**During**



**After**



**Conservation of Baori situated inside Office Campus, behind Nilakantha Temple**



**Before**



**After**

**Conservation of Baori situated inside Office Campus, behind Nilakantha Temple**



**Before**



**After**



## Restoration of *Kot*-wall near Naugaja Temple to Bagh Ki Deori side



**Before**



**During**



**After**

## **Construction of Sculpture Shed & shifting and fixing of sculptures on pedestal at Camp Office**



**Before**



**During**



**After**



## Construction of Sculpture Shed & shifting and fixing of sculptures on pedestal at Camp Office



**Before**



**After**

## Providing apron to the Sculpture shed



**Before**



**After**



**Before**



**After**

## Conservation and restoration work at Naugaja Temple



**Before**



**During**



**After**



## Conservation and restoration work at Naugaja Temple



**Before**



**During**



**After**



## Providing Sun-Shed and flooring around Naugaja Temple



**Before**



**After**



**Conservation and restoration of *Kot*-wall near Kotan Ki Deori No. 4**



**Before**



**During**



**After**



**Work of bringing back the Nilakantha Temple to its original look**



**Before**



**After**

**Work of bringing back the Nilakantha Temple to its original look**



**Before**



**After**

**Work of bringing back the Nilakantha Temple to its original look**



**Before**



**After**



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*Conceptualised, designed and authored by:*

**Dr Vinay Kumar Gupta  
(Superintending Archaeologist)**

With assistance of Vishakha Gupta, Prachi Goswami  
and Jaipur Circle team

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