

## Deogarh - An Unparallel Site of Jaina Art And Socio- Religious Harmony

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Deogarh (literally meaning the fort of Gods), situated in Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh, has been one of the most vibrant and prolific sites of Indian art heritage, which has yielded the material evidence almost in continuity from Pre-historic times to 18<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E.<sup>1</sup> Despite its unique importance so far Deogarh could not receive due attention of the scholars and lovers of Indian art and culture. Besides number of Jaina temples and enormous Jaina sculptures ranging from about 7<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E., Deogarh has also yielded the examples of temple architecture and sculptures of Gupta and Post-Gupta periods, Pre-historic rock paintings (in Rājghāṭī, Nāharghāṭī and Siddhaghāṭī) and tools, early medieval inscriptions and rock-cut sculptures. The temples and sculptures belonging both to the Brahmanical and Jaina cults testify to the harmonious coexistence of the two main religious-cultural streams at Deogarh in ancient past. The Brahmanical icons comprise the figures of Viṣṇu and his mythological forms like Gajendramokṣa, Nara-Nārāyaṇa and Śeṣaśāyī-Viṣṇu (Fig. 17.2) carved on two Viṣṇu temples of Gupta<sup>2</sup> (Daśāvātāra temple respectively- Fig. 17.1) and Post-Gupta (Varāha temple) period and, Sūrya, Śiva, Śivaliṅga worship, Mahisamardinī, Lakṣmī, Gaṅgā-Yamunā, Saptamātrkā figures of subsequent period. The Jaina figures on the other hand, include *Vītarāgī* Jinas (mostly Ṛṣabhanātha, Neminātha, Pārśvanātha and Mahāvīra), their Śāsanadevatās (*Yakṣa-Yakṣī*), and Bāhubalī (Fig. 17.6), Bharata Muni (Fig. 17.9), Jaina Ācāryas, Sādhus and Sādhvīs; the figures of Sarasvatī, Lakṣmī and Kṣetrapāla. Deogarh has the privilege of having two site museums also, one close to the Daśāvātāra temple (6<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E.) and the other one close to the group of Jaina temples at hilltop.

Due to the lack of material facilities including transport, accommodation, and adequate informations very few tourists and art-lovers visit Deogarh. Virtually most of the visitors are Jaina pilgrims. If proper attention of all the related State and Central Government agencies and NGOs is received, Deogarh shall soon become one of the most potential centres of the culture and tourism in the country. It is a wonderful place with sylvan



Fig.17.1: Daśavatāra temple, Deogarh (Lalitpur, U.P.), c. 600 C.E.



Fig.17.2: Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu, Daśavatāra temple, Deogarh, c. 600 C.E.

background and scenic beauty where people can feel peace and relax in the ambience of art and cultural heritage.

The images of the deities specially those of the Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras, Bāhubalī and Bharat Muni make the visitors feel about Indian values of austerity (*sādhanā*), non-violence (*ahimsā*), non-acquisition (*aparigraha*) and renunciation (*tyāga*). The mutuality and co-existence of Brahmanical and Jaina faiths reveal a state of harmony at Deogarh. Art was the visual expression of the religious thoughts, legends and Indian values and the figures of the deities are the crystallized forms of the same which is the most potent tool of self-realization and thereby self-elevation for all those who come to them with faith and devotion. Therefore we would like to use new term- *Kalā-Tīrtha* (place of pilgrimage through art) for Deogarh and all other such heritage sites.

Deogarh was singularly important prolific centre of Jaina art- *Kalā-Tīrtha*, yielding innovatory icon types which are usually not referred to in literary works yet these are well in tune with the Jaina spirit, and are the outcome of the needs and aspirations of contemporary society. The *Tritīrthī* Jina images from Deogarh showing the figures of Sarasvatī and Bāhubalī (temple nos. 1 and 2, Figs. 17.8 & 17.11), and the rendering of *Yakṣa* and *Yakṣī* with Bāhubalī (temple no. 11) are unique examples. In some examples of Jaina *Caumukhī* two or three Jina icons are carved on two or three sides, while the remaining side/sides are occupied by the figures of Jaina *Ācāryas* or *Upādhyāyas*. Equally interesting are the figures of Bāhubalī, the son of Ṛṣabhanātha, who owing to his rigorous austerity and deep renunciation was elevated to equal the Jinas, enjoying highest position in Jaina worship (Figs. 17.6-17.8).<sup>3</sup>

Deogarh was important also because the earliest instance of the collective rendering of all the 24 *Yakṣīs* is found on the facade of the temple no. 12 (Śāntinātha temple, 862 C.E.) wherein the names of *Yakṣīs* and their respective Jinas are inscribed to make their identification doubtless.<sup>4</sup> The names of the *Yakṣīs* surprisingly concur with the eighth century Digambara text- the *Tiloyapaṇṇattī*<sup>5</sup>. As regards the iconography, the *Yakṣīs* reveal distinct bearing of the Jaina Mahāvīdyās of earlier Śvetāmbara tradition as enunciated in the *Caturvīṃśatika* (of Bappabhaṭṭi Sūri, c. 8<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E.) and as represented on the Mahāvīra temple at Osiāñ (c. 8<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E., Jodhpur, Rajasthan).

The Digambara Jaina site of Deogarh developed without any direct royal patronage, although some inscriptional information's and stylistic features of images are indicative of indirect association of Pratihara, Kalchuri and Chandella rulers with Deogarh during 9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E. Deogarh was also an important centre of *Sārasvata Sādhanā* (education and religious learning) as evidenced by the presence of profuse number of images of Sarasvatī (Figs. 17.10, 11), Jaina *Ācāryas*, *Upādhyāyas*, *Sādhus* and *Sādhvīs* who were living together



Fig.17.3: Śāntinātha temple (temple no. 12), Deogarh, 862 C. E.

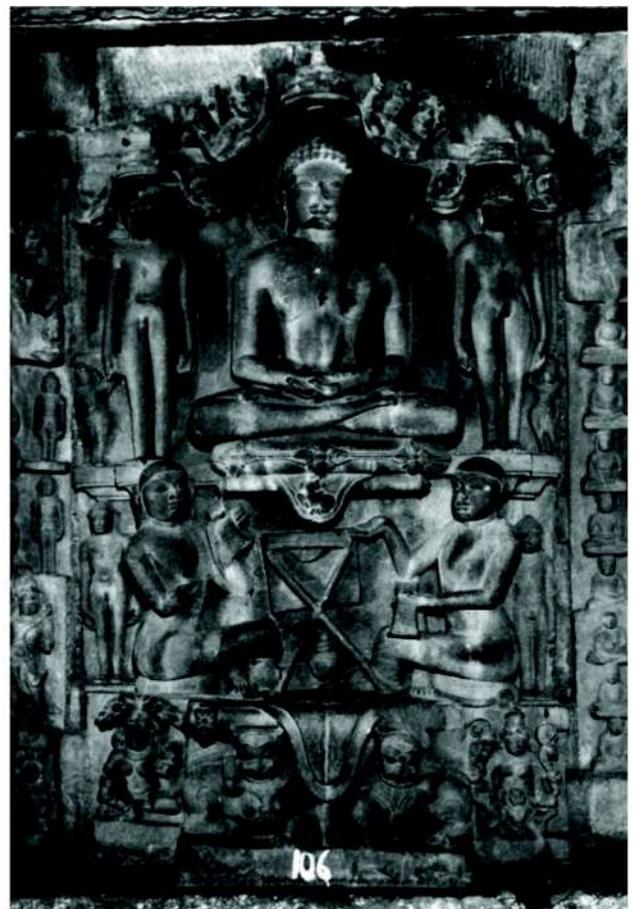


Fig.17.4: Ādinātha, (Upādhyāyas in disputation below), temple no. 4, Deogarh, 11th cent. C.E.

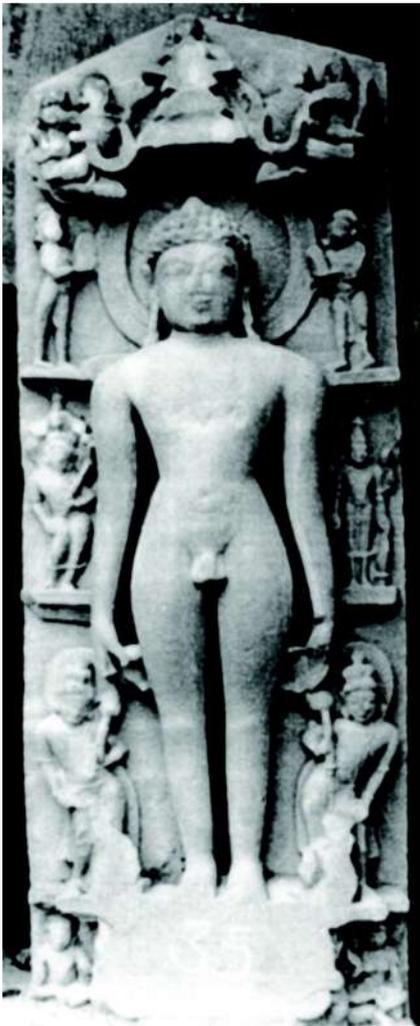


Fig.17.5: Neminātha joined by figures of Balarāma and Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, Sahu Shanti Prasad Jaina Museum, Deogarh, 10th cent. C.E.

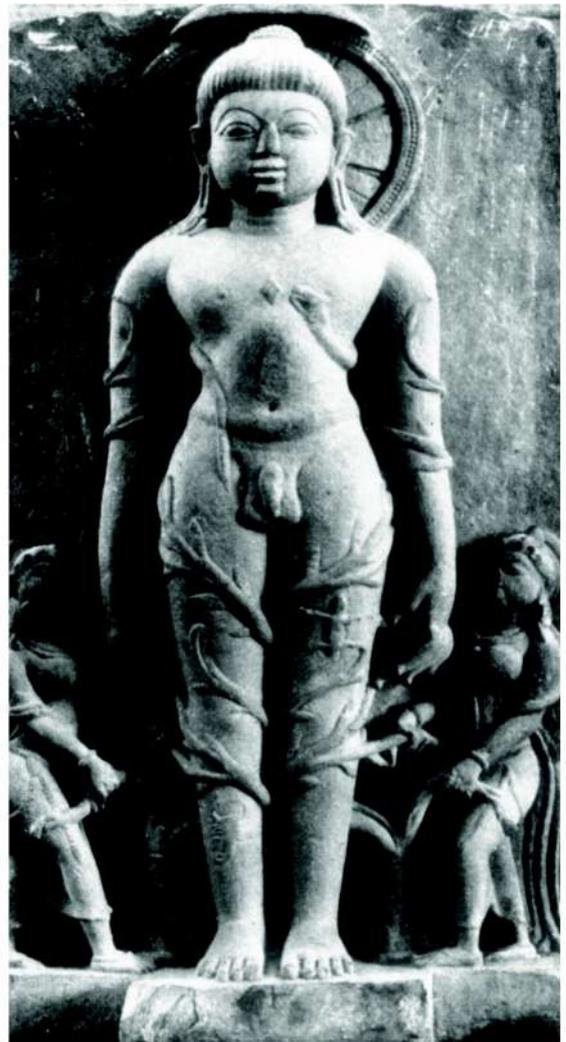


Fig.17.6: Bāhubali (with two flanking Vidyādhari figures), Jaina Dharmashala, Deogarh, 10th cent. C.E.

with *Śrāvaka-Śrāvikās* (lay male and female devotees) at the site for meditation, study and *Śastra-carcā* (disputation) (Fig. 17.4). The enormous presence and dynamic activities of Jaina Ācāryas and Munis must have attracted the masses, traders and all other affluent classes of Jaina community, who had contributed immensely to the art activity at the site from 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E.<sup>6</sup>

The present Sahu Shanti Prasad Jain Museum in the premises of Jaina temples preserves many valuable images. The exhibits give a brief panoramic view of the development of Jaina Art at the site. The huge images of the R̥ṣabhanātha and Pārśvanātha, mostly standing in *kāyotsarga-mudrā* (standing erect with both the hands hanging down), distinctly reveal the emphasis of Jainism on austerity and renunciation. The images of other Jina's are also preserved in the museum. One very interesting image even in the absence of the cognizance is identifiable with Neminātha, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Jina (Fig. 17.5), on account of the flanking figures of Balārāma and Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa.<sup>7</sup> According to the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, *Nāyādhammakahāo* and *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* (C.E. 783) Neminātha was the cousin brother of Balārāma and Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa. This kinship inspired Jainas to carve the figures of Balārāma and Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa with Neminātha from *Kushan* period at Mathura, the place of their association. In case of Deogarh example of 11<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Balārāma (on right) with five hooded snake canopy holds plough while Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa (on left) wearing *kirīṭa-mukuta* is provided with disc and mace in two hands. The figures of the *Yakṣas* and *Yakṣīs* are also exhibited in good number. Besides their representation on the thrones of the Jina images they are also carved in the form of independent images. The museum preserves good number of independent images of Cakreśvarī, Ambikā and Padmāvatī, the *Yakīs* respectively of R̥ṣabhanātha, Neminātha and Pārśvanātha. The figures of the parents of the Jinas are also in good number. In its treasure the museum also has few manuscripts and some of the later Jaina narrative paintings.

The Jaina temples of Deogarh, barring Śāntinātha temple (temple no. 12), are of *nirandhāra* type which do not have the inner circumambulation. The temples mostly comprise *garbhagr̥ha* (sanctum), *antarāla* (vestibule), *mahāmaṇḍapa* or *maṇḍapa* (hall) and *ardhamāṇḍapa* (entrance porch). Apparently Deogarh Jaina temples are not of big dimensions like those at Khajuraho and elsewhere. We shall now discuss in detail the architecture and iconography of Śāntinātha temple the most important of all the Jaina temples at Deogarh.

### Śāntinātha Temple (Temple no. 12, Fig. 17.3)

The Śāntinātha temple is the largest and also one of the earliest Jaina temples at Deogarh, which is important for its architecture and iconography both. The earliest rendering of 24 *Yakṣīs* with their names in label inscriptions are found on the facade of temple.<sup>8</sup> It



Fig.17.7: Bāhubali, temple no. 2, Deogarh, 11th cent. C.E.

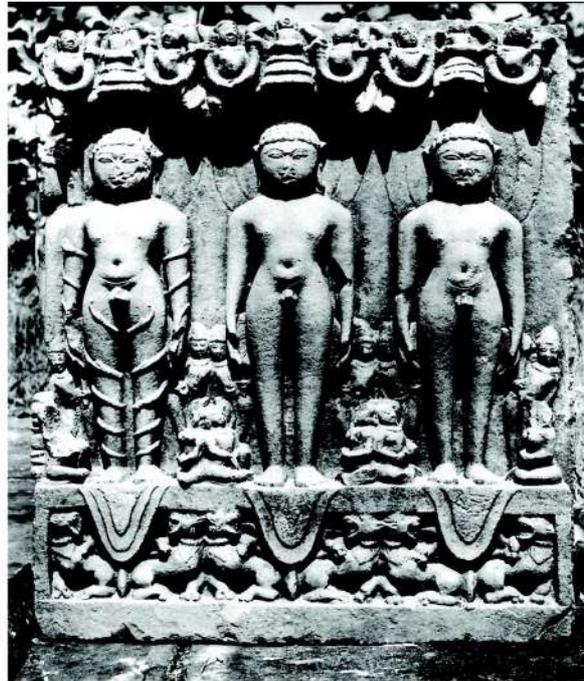


Fig.17.8: Bāhubali in Tritirthi image with two Jinas, temple no. 2, Deogarh, 11th cent. C.E.

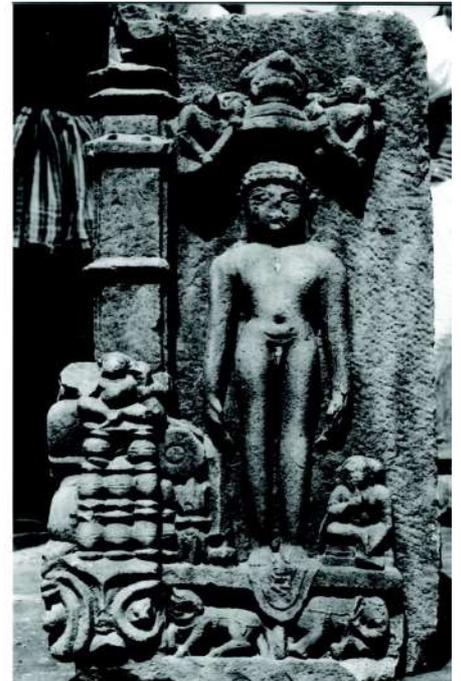


Fig.17.9: Bharata Muni, temple no. 11, Deogarh, 11th cent. C.E.

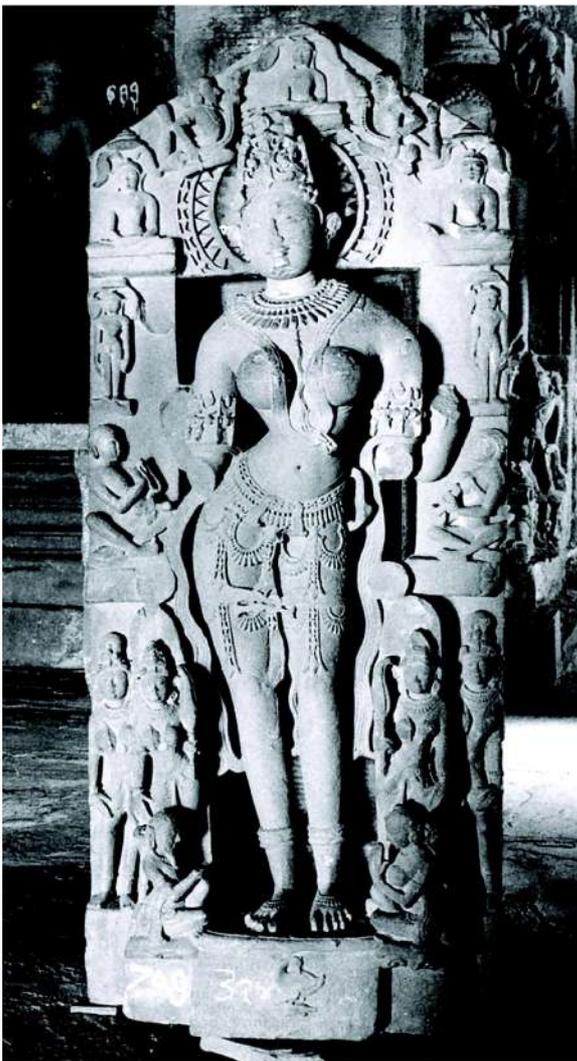


Fig.17.10: Sarasvati, temple no. 19, Deogarh, 11th cent. C.E.

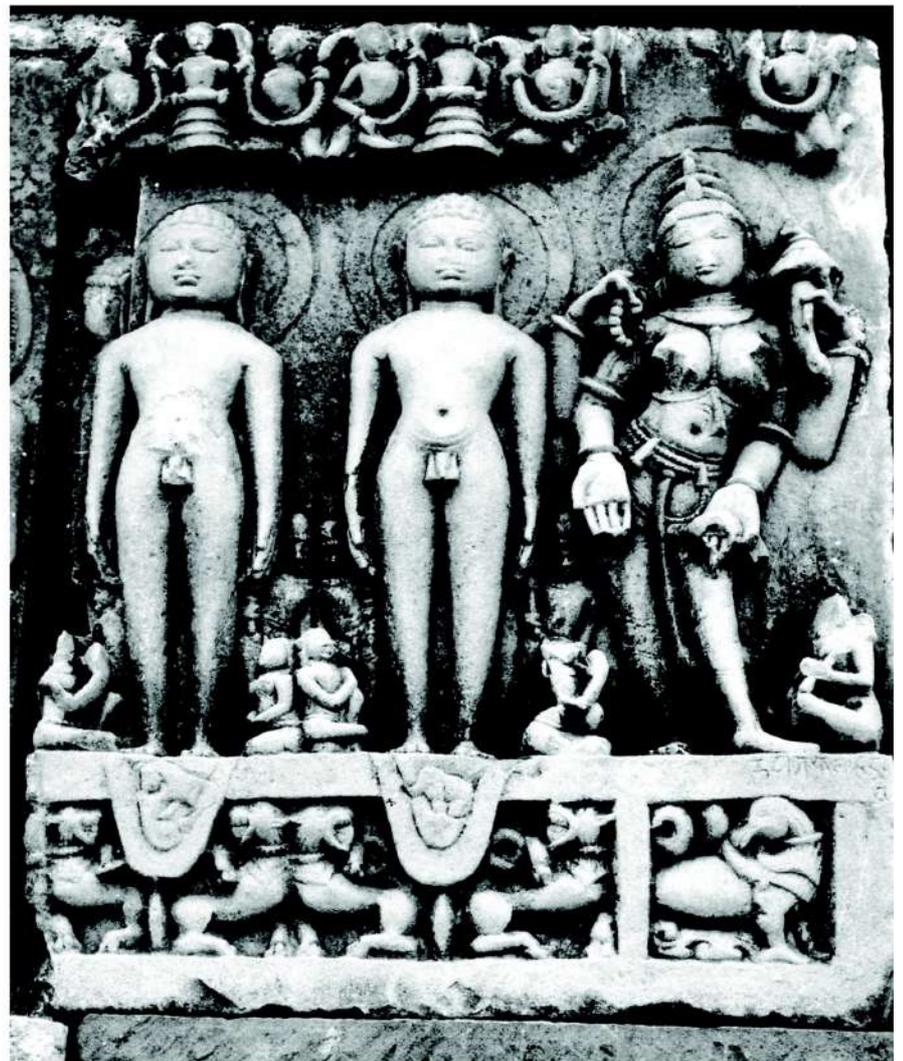


Fig.17.11: Tritirthi image showing two Jinas and Sarasvati, temple no. 2, Deogarh, 12th cent. C.E.

is a *sāndhāra* type of temple, which consists of *garbhagr̥ha* surrounded by inner *pradakṣiṇāpatha*, *antarāla*, *ardhamaṇḍapa* and long rectangular *maṇḍapa*. The temple facing west perhaps had four entrances, which remind us of the *sarvatobhadra* type of Jaina temples (based on the earlier concept and form of four-fold *Sarvatobhadra* Jina *mūrti*) which were considered to be auspicious from all the sides.

The western entrance (main entrance) of the temple is larger than the rest. It is approached through the porch, the roof of which is supported on its front side by four pillars. If there were any steps leading up to the main door these have now sunk in the platform between the *śikhara* and the hall. The entrances on the three sides are devoid of porch, and could be reached by two or three steps which are bordered by two walls. The level of the *garbhagr̥ha* is 70 cm. below the level of the *pradakṣiṇāpatha* and it is reached from there along a short flight of steps. The ceiling of the *garbhagr̥ha* is flat and unadorned. In the centre of its back-wall stands the main colossal image of Śāntinātha having typical glaze similar to Jina image of Śāntinātha temple at Khajuraho, datable to early 11<sup>th</sup> century C.E. The Śāntinātha image measures 517.5 cm. (including the *parikara*). On account of five inscriptions of *saṃvat* 919 (862 C.E.), 1051 (944 C.E.), 1493 (1436 C.E.), 1695 (1638 C.E.) and one image being undated temple can undoubtedly be identified as of Jina Śāntinātha. Further there was a tradition of carving colossal images of Śāntinātha in U.P. and M.P., the most exquisite examples of which are found at Chandpur, Deogarh and Khajuraho. The reason for the special veneration of gigantic idols of Śāntinātha in the region could have been the contemporary need for the Peace (*śānti*) due to the political and social conflicts and confrontations.

The ceiling of the *pradakṣiṇāpatha* is supported by crossbeam, the inner ends of which rest on corbels projecting from the outer walls of the *garbhagr̥ha*. The roof of the *pradakṣiṇāpatha* is flat. Over the sanctum with the *pradakṣiṇāpatha* is the *śikhara*. As the temple is mentioned in the pillar-inscription of *saṃvat* 919 (862 C.E.) it must have been built prior to this date. It is difficult to establish the exact chronological relationship between temple no. 12 and the pillar of 862 C.E., as this type of pillar does not recur in the architecture of the temple. The inscriptions in temple range from *saṃvat* 919 (862 C.E.) to 1695 (C.E. 1638) in date. Hence one has to be very careful, while assigning precise date for this particular temple and should take into account all the evidences related to architecture, sculpture, iconography and inscriptions.

The two door-frames are lavishly decorated. They do not form part of the original temple. The inner one bears an inscription stating that it was put up in *saṃvat* 1051 (C.E. 994). The two doorjambs were erected in *saṃvat* 1133 (1076 C.E.) as is evident from an inscription appearing on one of them. The present lintel which was obviously inserted

in 1076 C.E. is a re-used piece of inferior quality. In *samvat* 1210 (C.E. 1153) two projecting niches were fixed on the left and right walls of the *garbhagr̥ha*.

The doorway of the *garbhagr̥ha* is highly ornate with figural and floral decorations, which resemble depictions found on contemporary Brahmanical temples of Khajuraho and Osiān. On the doorways (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century C.E.), the figures are stylized and embellished. The door-lintel is divided into three horizontal panels, in the centre of which is the figure of R̥ṣabhanātha provided with lateral strands and bull cognizance. The central position of this Jina (as *lalāṭa-bir̥mba*) leads one to think whether temple was originally dedicated to R̥ṣabhanātha. But as the doorway and door-lintel are not contemporaneous, it cannot be accepted as decisive evidence. The temple in actuality was dedicated to Śāntinātha. Close to the central figure of R̥ṣabhanātha on its both sides a few Jina figures in *kāyotsarga-mudrā* are also carved. In the remaining space the two-armed standing figures of *navagrahas* are depicted: Sūrya wearing *kirīṭa-mukūṭa* is holding long stalked lotuses in both the hands. The other six *grahas* from Soma to Śani, with identical features, are standing in *tribhaṅga*-posture with *jaṭā-mukūṭa*. They hold water-vessel in left hand, while right hand is in *abhaya-mudrā*. Rāhu (*ūrdhvakāya*) is in *tarpaṇa-mudrā*. Ketu with its lower half of the body being that of the snake is in *namaskāra-mudrā*.

The left extremity of door-lintel exhibits four-armed figure of Lakṣmī with lotuses along with figures of Cakreśvarī *Yakṣī* (above) provided with Garuḍa-*vāhana* and discs in hands. The corresponding right end of door-lintel is occupied by four-armed figure of Sarasvatī holding *pustaka* and *vīṇā*. Ambikā, the *yakṣī* of 22<sup>nd</sup> Jina Neminātha, holding *āmralumbi* (bunch of mangoes) and child is present above the figure of Sarasvatī. Thus the presence of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, goddesses of wealth and wisdom with the two most venerated *yakṣīs* - Cakreśvarī and Ambikā on the entrance door-lintel makes the rendering more meaningful.

The upper panel of the door-lintel contains the figures of 24 Jinas both in standing and seated postures. Further above on the door-lintel are carved (in a row) 16 auspicious dreams (*maṅgala svapna*) seen by the mothers of each of the 24 Jinas on the night of their conception (*garbhadhāraṇa*). As usual the dreams include bull, elephant, horse, Śrī (or Gaja- Lakṣmī) and other subjects as prescribed in the Digambara Jaina texts, namely *Tiloyapaṇṇatti*, *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* and *Ādi Purāṇa*.<sup>9</sup> On the lower doorjambes are carved the beautiful figures of Gaṅgā and Yamunā on their respective *vāhanas makara* and *kūrma*. The rendering of Gaṅgā and Yamunā on lower doorjambes was the common feature of Brahmanical and Jaina temples at Deogarh and Khajuraho. The figures of Gaṅgā and Yamunā respectively symbolize purity and devotion which are pre-requisites for entering the sanctum for worship. On both the doorjambes are carved the creepers along with the figures of leogryphs (*śārdūla*), snakes and couples engrossed in different activities, including playing on musical instruments.

The figures of *Upādhyāyas* holding books also appear. These figures reveal wonderful fusion of worldly, spiritual and divine aspects.

At a date unknown to us the roof of the *pradakṣiṇāpatha* was provided with a crenellated parapet. This marks the end of the construction of the temple. Later on the *śikhara* underwent several repairs. The presence of protecting wall in the *garbhagr̥ha* explains why the main idol of Śāntinātha, flanked by two Ambikā figures, have come down to us intact.

The connecting platform (superimposed on the original floor of the porch) links the outer doorsill (which is old) and plinths of the four porch-pillars, which are partially sunk in it. It is not possible to say whether the connecting platform is later, earlier or contemporary as the two shrines are embedded in it. The area of the connecting platform is carved by three intermediate roofs. It is difficult to decide whether these were built before or after the discovery of the temples. The link of the roof of the *pradakṣiṇāpatha* with that of the hall is also clear. Square, flat roofed hall has 36 pillars, which adjoins the porch of temple no. 12 on its west side.

On account of the above we can conclude that the construction of Śāntinātha temple started in early 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E. and its facade and 24 *Yakṣī* figures thereon belong to that period. But the *śikhara*, the *sāndhāra* type, present sanctum and entrance doorways and their decoration and sculptures were constructed / carved in 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century C.E. The rectangular *maṇḍapa* and the foremost porch subsequent in date belong to the period from 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Thus the entire temple complex of Śāntinātha temple may be dated to a time bracket from 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century C.E.

Although the Jaina temples at Deogarh present interesting architectural aspects, the images are far more important for different reasons such as their forms and iconographic variety therein and several innovatory icon types, some of which are not found anywhere else and even in the Jaina texts. The site virtually is the treasure house of early medieval and medieval Jaina sculptures. The Jaina sculptures of Deogarh are of great significance because they present a vast amount of research material and artistic quality. In fact, several images of Deogarh should be counted among the best examples of Indian sculpture. The beauty of the marvellous Jina figure (*mūlanāyaka*) from temple nos.12 and 15 with unforgettable serene expression is equal to that of the world famous Buddha image of Sarnath in *Dharmacakrapravartana-mudrā* and which is in the spirit of the textual references of *Bṛhatsamhitā* and *Mānasara* which conceive Jina images as *rūpavāna*, *manohara* and *surūpa* (beautiful)<sup>10</sup>.

The size of buildings varies from the high temple (No. 12) to the smaller ones. Only temple no. 12 (9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E.) and 28 (10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E.) represent different types of buildings, showing architectural embellishments. The small but beautiful temple no. 15 (7<sup>th</sup>

- 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) contains one big Jina image on each of its three inner walls and appear to be subsequent replica of 6<sup>th</sup> century Daśavatāra temple of Deogarh itself.<sup>11</sup> The remaining temples are quite plain barring their doorframes and subsequently added pavilions. There are only two temples (Nos. 12 and 28), which conform to the normal features of the *nāgara* style of North Indian temples.

The large number of Jaina images and lack of stylistic conformity therein present problems, which are otherwise not met with in Indian art. However we are reminded of the Chalukyan temple site of Aihole. This was due to the fact that Jaina art activity at Deogarh thrived without any direct royal patronage. Rather it was fostered by Jaina *muni-saṅgha*, common men and small business groups as we find in case of Kumbhāriyā Jaina temples of Gujarat. Deogarh was perhaps the workshop and supply centre of Jaina images to the neighbouring centers of Jaina art.

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