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Echoes of Divinity: Temples of the Hadoti (Kota) Region



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Introduction

Rajasthan is the largest state in India, encompassing 11% of the nation's total geographical area, with approximately ~9% covered by forests. The southeastern region includes the Kota division (Hadoti region), which comprises the Kota, Baran, Bundi, and Jhalawar districts (Rathore, Yadav, and Mehra 2022). Human interaction with culture and religion represents a continuous and evolving journey. Over the centuries, sacred spaces have emerged as concrete manifestations of devotion, belief, and artistic excellence.

The Hadoti region, located in southeastern Rajasthan and encompassing the districts of Kota, Bundi, Baran, and Jhalawar, is characterised by its rich cultural heritage yet remains academically unexplored in the context of early temple architecture and sacred landscapes in northern India. Positioned along the fertile basin of the Chambal River and its tributaries, Hadoti historically served as a crucial corridor linking Malwa with the Gangetic plains, thus promoting artistic, religious, and political exchanges among various regions. Here, the Archaeological Survey of India, Jaipur Circle, focusing on the districts of Kota and Jhalawar, maintains a significant heritage of temple activity that spans from the Gupta period to the early medieval period, with key sites such as Bhim ki Chauri at Dara, the Charchauma Siva Temple, the Kansuan Temple, the Bijolia temple complex, and the Chandrabhaga group of temples at Jhalrapatan.

Within this broader cultural context, Chandrabhaga at Jhalrapatan holds significant importance. Located in the historic town of Jhalrapatan, within the current district of Jhalawar, the temple complex is one of the most significant post-Gupta sacred sites in southeastern Rajasthan. Numerous temples remain here, serving as evidence of a rich architectural and sculptural heritage. Due to its strategic position between Rajasthan and Malwa, this region has historically functioned as a cultural corridor, promoting artistic and religious exchanges.

Flourishing between the seventh and eleventh centuries CE, these monuments exemplify the artistic vibrancy and religious diversity that defined the early medieval era. Their architectural styles and sculptural programs not only demonstrate the evolution of the Nagara style in this area but also highlight the deeply ingrained devotional practices that contributed to the sacred identity of Jhalrapatan. Jhalrapatan, "City of Bells," the name is derived from two words: Jhalra, which signifies temple bells, and Patan, which denotes a town or market settlement. According to local tradition, the city earned the title of the "City of Bells" because the sound of temple bells from various temples could be heard throughout the town.

This location has emerged as a significant centre for Saiva, Sakta, Saura, Vaishnava, and Jaina worship. Among the remaining monuments, the Chandrabhaga Temple is recognised as one of the earliest structural temples in the region, distinguished by its elegant proportions and early sculptural style. The later and more intricate Sat Saheli Temple, Nava Durga Temple, Jhalrapatan (Shah Pipa), Keshorayapatan, and Baroli Complex, besides Atru, Kakoni, and Krishnavilas, also contribute to the area's historical significance.

Many temples in the Hadoti region are protected by the Archaeological Survey of India, Jaipur Circle. The Jhalrapatan temple group remains an important cultural and historical site. This work aims to provide a

concise yet comprehensive overview of the architectural characteristics, sculptural richness, and historical significance of these monuments.

Geographical Landscape

The Jhalawar district is situated in the southeastern corner of Rajasthan, positioned at the boundary of the Malwa plateau, spanning latitudes from 23°45'20" N to 24°52'17" N and longitudes from 75°27'35" E to 76°56'48" E (Rathore, Chauhan, and Yadav 2021). The term Jhalawar literally means "land of Jhalas," which refers to the ruling clan of the historical state. The region's topography is notably undulating, featuring continuous ridges and expansive valleys formed of Vindhyan sandstone and shale, alongside a vast plateau, flat-topped conical hills, isolated hills, and cultivated plains of Deccan Traps and alluvial plains.

The southern portion of the Jhalawar district exhibits characteristics typical of the Malwa Plateau, characterised by rounded, bare hills interspersed with plains. The Jhalawar district serves as an illustration of a fertile plain, enriched with black cotton soil. The Jhalawar plains extend in a broad belt from Bhawani Mandi in the west to Asnawar in the east, bordered to the north, east, and south by the Mukandara hills. This region is fertile and well-watered, traversed by the Ahu and Kalisindh rivers and several smaller streams. The rivers and streams within the district are part of the Chambal River system (Rathore, Yadav, and Mehra 2022).

Additionally, Jhalawar serves as a significant source of a variety of minerals. The absence of metamorphic rocks, which are typically associated with metallic minerals, means that the Jhalawar district does not contain any substantial metallic ores of economic significance. However, minerals such as copper, bentonite, and different forms of limestone are available, alongside occurrences of chert, agate, chalcedony, and related crypto-crystalline silica products found in multiple locations. Regarding natural resources and minerals, Kota also lacks metamorphic rocks, leading to a deficiency of important ore deposits in the district. Nonetheless, this limitation is compensated by the availability of economically valuable dimensional stones, which include limestone and sandstone, as well as both white and red sandstone.

Historical and Epigraphical Background

Archaeological and historical records suggest that the Hadoti region has been inhabited since prehistoric times and has undergone significant cultural evolution from the early historic period, approximately from the third century BCE onwards. During the Gupta and post-Gupta eras, spanning the fourth to seventh centuries CE, southeastern Rajasthan seems to have experienced a phase of development, marked by the emergence of local chiefdoms and the establishment of temple construction practices throughout the area. The local rulers, though, functioned as subsidiaries to the Imperial Guptas. By the early medieval period, which lasted from the eighth to the twelfth centuries CE, this region witnessed the growth of various Rajput dynasties and religious institutions. The contemporary princely state of Jhalawar was established later.

Bhim ki Chauri, the temple dating back to the Gupta period, is found in Dara. This temple is recognized as the oldest in Rajasthan and is dedicated to Bhagavana Siva. This era is regarded as pivotal for the

development of early temple architecture in Rajasthan. Dr. Mankodi (2015) mentions the Bhim ki Chauri Temple as an early temple site linked to the Aulikara rulers of Dasapura, located in the Mandasor region. This temple is believed to date back to the early Gupta period, approximately in the second quarter of the fifth century CE (around 425 CE), during the reign of Gupta emperor Kumaragupta I and his Aulikara vassals. The site is situated within the Aulikaras' sphere of influence, with Dasapura (modern Mandasor) serving as their political and cultural capital. Its advantageous position along an ancient trade route that connected Malwa to northern India indicates that the site possessed both religious and administrative significance. Although no direct inscriptions from Bhim ki Chauri have been preserved, the temple currently exists only in a state of ruin. Architecturally, it embodies early Gupta artistic traditions, featuring sculptural elements such as *makaras*, vegetal motifs, and *gana* figures. Furthermore, it has been suggested that this site may have served as a Tantric or Sakta-associated sacred space, drawing comparisons to shrines dedicated to the Matrikas or the worship of Visvarupa Vishnu within the Aulikara territory at Gangdhar.

Mishra (2006) discusses the Charchauma temple inscription, V. 557 (500 CE). This inscription comprises two parts: one located externally and the other situated within the Siva temple. The inscriptions are composed in Sanskrit and date back to the Gupta period. The first inscription elaborates on the flowering trees of the *puspa-vatika*. Although the second inscription has some unclear lines, the initial three lines provide a description of the Siva Linga and the temple dedicated to God Siva. Essentially, this represents another Gupta-period temple devoted to Siva. It is particularly distinguished by its *Panchamukha* (five-faced) Siva Linga, which holds considerable theological and symbolic significance.

Then the Kansuan Stone Inscription dated V.E. 795 (738 A.D.) indicates that Sivagana, the son of Sankula, held the position of ruler in that region (*Indian Antiquary* Vol. XIX: 55-58). This inscription is documented in the Malva Year and is carved on a stone slab that is integrated into the wall of the Siva temple located at Kansuan, Karnesvara (Kanvashrama) near Kota, positioned on the right bank of the Chambal River. The text is composed in the Sanskrit language and is structured in metrical verses, commencing with the invocation: "*Om namah Sivaya.*" The inscription highlights the Maurya lineage, particularly mentioning a king named Dhavala. It notes that Dhavala had a companion named Sankuka, a Brahmana prince, whose spouse Degini bore Sivagana. The principal patron of the inscription, Sivagana, is acknowledged for building a temple dedicated to Siva (Paramesvara/ Sambhu) at Karnesvara, providing the temple with the income from two villages: Sarvanka and Chonipadraka (Mishra, 2006). Additionally, the inscription documents administrative particulars, including the names of officials and agents involved. (Meister, 1981) also mentions this temple and the inscription.

The Sitalesvara Temple Inscription indicates the date when the Sitalesvara temple was built. The temple is situated in the southeastern part of Jhalrapatan, within a complex that houses several inscriptions dating back to the seventh and eighth centuries. As per the inscription, the temple was erected by Vopaka (also known as Votapaka), who was a prominent feudatory under Raja Durgagana. The inscription is composed in Sanskrit and exemplifies the early medieval epigraphic tradition (*Indian Antiquary* Vol. V: 180-182). In 1838, the British administration partitioned a portion of the Kota state to establish a new princely state under the Jhala Rajput dynasty, thereby giving rise to the name Jhalawar. The Chandrabhaga River has been instrumental in shaping the religious environment of Jhalrapatan.

According to local tradition, the river is revered as sacred, akin to the Ganga. An important religious festival, the Chandrabhaga Mela, is celebrated annually, during which pilgrims perform ritual baths in the river on Karttika Purnima. Jhalrapatan is renowned for its early medieval temples, particularly those dating from the seventh to the twelfth centuries CE.

Bijolia has been known by several names, including Vindhyavali, Vidyuvalli, Ahichchhapura, and Morakara. This region is recognized for its architectural significance and has a continuous history of prehistoric, protohistoric, and historical occupation extending into the medieval and modern periods (Saleem, 2014: 742). During the early medieval era, the area was governed by the Chahamanas of Sakambhari or the Chahamanas of Ajmer . The inhabitants of Bijolia take great pride in their lineage , particularly due to the connection with Maharaṇa Pratap's principal consort , Maharani Ajabde Punwar, who hailed from Bijolia. Additionally, Bijolia is renowned for its quarrying of a specific sandstone variety characterized by a golden beige hue. The region is also notable for two rock inscriptions dating back to 1170 CE. One inscription details the genealogy of the Chahamanas of Ajmer, while the other features a Jaina poem titled *Unnatasikhara Purana*. Bijolia served as a crucial political hub during the Chahamanas dynasty, with strong ties to the rulers of Ajmer and Delhi. Inscriptions found in Bijolia mention notable Chahamanas leaders such as Bisaladeo, Somesvara, and Prithviraja, suggesting that the area was likely under Ajmer's influence during their rule (Tod, 1920: 1797). The Bijolia temple group comprises a complex that includes the Hazaresvara Temple and the Mahakala Temple, in addition to the renowned Mandakini Kunda. Among these, the Undesvara Temple stands out as one of the early medieval structures situated in Bijolia, within the Bhilwara district of Rajasthan. This temple complex is recognised as a protected monument under the Jaipur circle of the Archaeological Survey of India.

Bhim ki Chauri

From the archival images, it is evident that this dilapidated edifice, which dates back to the fifth century and is known as Bhim ki Chauri – the marriage pavilion of Bhima, continues to stand in Dara. Due to a lack of additional remnants, this structure must symbolize the numerous shrines noted in inscribed records that extend over a century. However, archival images show only a loose framework on a platform that persists at the location, accompanied by disjointed fragments strewn about. The shrine's walls have completely disappeared, yet the platform, columns, lintels, and portions of the ceilings still exist. Additionally, several fragments can be viewed at the Central Museum of the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums of Rajasthan, located in Kota. Two pillars served as the entrance to the central shrine. A lintel adorned with leafy carvings extends along the length of the beam, above which lies a robust rope composed of numerous twisted strands. From the last archival image, it is evident that a porch area was present during that period; however, the current state of the porch is entirely dilapidated and in ruins. Only remnants remain, and through these remnants, along with other ruins, several fragmentary pieces can be identified. Among these is a broken doorkeeper sculpture, as well as a damaged standing Ganga sculpture, whose lower portion still survives alongside her *vahana*, the *makara*. This temple, in all probability, was dedicated to Bhagavana Siva.

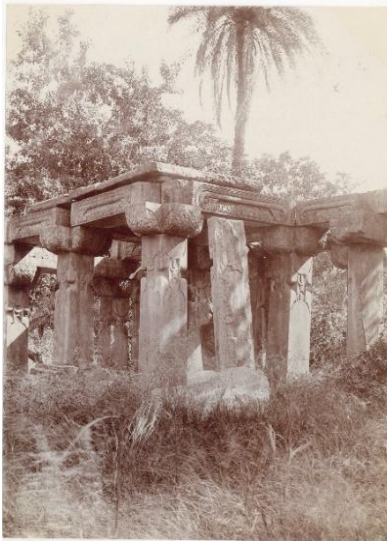


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Archival view of the standing pillars of Bhim ki Chauri

Charchauma Siva Temple

The Chandramaulisvara Mahadeva/Siva Temple is dedicated to Bhagavana Siva as Panchamukha Linga form (sometimes also described as Chaturmukha Linga, as the fifth face of Isana is not crafted). The existence of sculptural fragments and related remnants within and around the temple complex highlights its previous architectural opulence and ongoing ritual significance. Despite modifications over the years, the structure maintains its historical importance as a component of the early temple construction activities in Hadoti.



Figure 4 Nandi image



Figure 5

Yajnakunda and front view of temple entrance



Figure 6



Figure 7
Brahmi Inscriptions



Figure 8



Figure 9
Mandapa

The entrance of the Charchauma Temple starts with the stairs ascending to the temple, as it is located on a well raised platform or *jagati*. Upon reaching the top, the magnificently adorned sculpture of Nandi is positioned before the platform, facing the main temple. The front view of the main temple reveals a structure comprising a *mandapa*, *antarala*, and *garbhagriha*, characterised by a simple elevation with minimal decoration. Adjacent to the main temple, there exists a *yajnakunda* for performing *yajna/havan*.

The entrance to the temple, which faces east, features a plain and unadorned base and a single decorative band at the top. The front facade is unembellished, supported by a flanking *chhajja* that upholds the roof. The temple has two Brahmi inscriptions written in Gupta script. One of these inscriptions is positioned at the entrance, outside the main temple structure, and the other one, located on a pillar at the northern end of the *antarala*, is significant for establishing the date of the temple's foundation. The language used in this inscription is Sanskrit. The *mandapa* is a rectangular hall that includes a stone platform at its center. Four pillars are positioned at each corner of the platform, currently adorned with decorative cloth pieces.



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

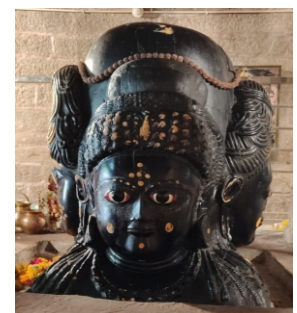


Figure 13

Panchamukha Sivalinga

The Panchamukha Linga is positioned on a stone platform within the *mandapa*, showcasing a distinctive form of mukhalinga that features one or more intricately carved human faces. The *Agamas* and *Tantras* provide comprehensive insights into the detailed attributes and significance of these Lingas. In this instance, the Panchamukha Linga is sculpted from black stone and is worshipped as the principal deity by the local community. Each face of this Linga emanates a profound sense of devotion, adorned with a *jatamukuta* and an exquisitely crafted necklace. The decorative elements, known as *sringara*, of the four faces are artistically depicted in various styles. The uppermost face of the Linga represents the Isana aspect of Siva, while the Tatpurusha face is directed towards the east, the Aghora face looks southward, the Sadyojata face faces west, and the Vamadeva face is oriented to the north.

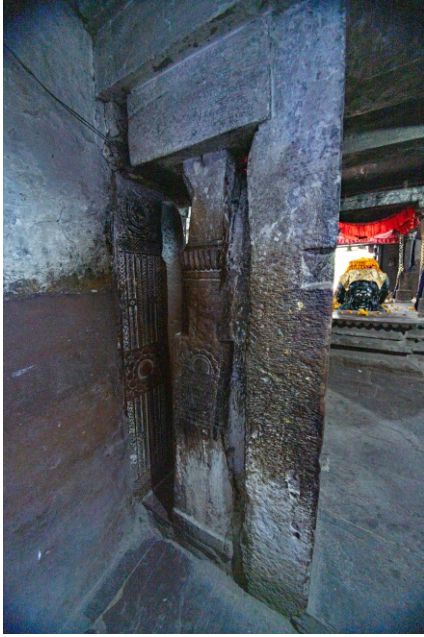


Figure 14



Figure 15

Antarala



Figure 16 Parvati image



Figure 17
Doorframe of the *Garbhagriha*



Figure 18



Figure 19 Lalatabimba of the Garbhagriha

Here inside the temple, the pillars of *antarala* feature a simple square base. The *stambha* part of a square shaft is intricately carved with a half lotus medallion. Above this medallion, the shaft transitions to a circular form, crowned with an *amalaka* and then a simple square shape. This type of pillar treatment is quite peculiar for this early period.

Now, one intriguing aspect of this temple is the presence of the chief idol of the temple in the *mandapa*, as devotees can first notice the presence of Siva in the form of the Panchamukha Linga. This type of Lingam is a rare sight. As such, directly situated within the *mandapa*, Lingams are not commonly observed in northern India. Aside from this temple in Rajasthan, there is only one other location where such a Lingam can be found in the *mandapa*: the Pashupatinatha Temple in Mandsaur. The Lingam of Chaumukhnath Temple in Nachna also reminds one of such unique Sivalingas. At the Charchauma Temple, one can observe that Siva is present first in the *mandapa*, while inside the *garbhagriha*, there is the presence of Parvati. She is adorned with *karnakundalas*, *graiveyaka*, *hara*, *keyura*, *kankana*, and *stanahara*. In this carving, she is shown as *chaturbhujja*, with her natural two hands holding an *akshamala* and a *kamandalu*. The upper two hands hold a Sivalinga in the right and Ganesa in the left hand. This form of Parvati is identifiable as Tapasvini Parvati, though the idol is late medieval in date. Despite its late dating, it indicates that the place was occupied by an earlier idol of Tapasvini Parvati before the iconoclasts damaged the temple.

The *antarala* of the temple is supported by four pillars. This rectangular, unadorned passage serves as a connection between the *mandapa* and the *garbhagriha*. This particular section of the temple architecture can be traced back to the Gupta period, as indicated by a Gupta Brahmi inscription found on one of the pillars located on the right side. The pillars of *antarala* feature a simple square base. The *stambha* part of a square shaft is intricately carved with a half lotus medallion. Above this medallion, the shaft transitions to a circular form, crowned with an *amalaka* and then a simple square shape. This type of pillar treatment is quite peculiar for this early period. The *antarala* provides access to the *garbhagriha*, which features a beautifully crafted door frame with musical *ganas*, a hallmark of temples from the Gupta era. The

doorframe of the *garbhagriha* is adorned with multiple *latasakhas*, each intricately carved with representations of *dvarapalas* at the base, each holding a weapon, accompanied by dwarf musician figures engaged in various activities such as dancing, singing, and playing musical instruments, and floral motifs above. Then the *lalatabimba* of the doorframe depicts a mukhalinga, which is flanked and venerated by devotees, flying *gandharvas*, and *maladharis* on either side. The devotees are depicted with their hands folded, symbolizing reverence and devotion. Adjacent to these devotees, *maladharis* are sculpted holding garlands intended for the deity.



Figure 20 Mandapa



Figure 21 Main view of the Temple



Figure 22



Figure 23

Side walls of the *Garbhagriha* with latticed windows after removal of lime coating

The temple's *mandapa* is a rectangular hall with unadorned, straightforward outer walls. It is topped by a flat roof. The walls lack any decorative features, save for the adjacent *chhajja* that supports the roof. In contrast to the *mandapa's* exterior, the *garbhagriha* exhibits some ornamental details on its facade. The *garbhagriha* is elevated on base mouldings. It is crowned with a simple Latina-type *sikhara*. At the top, an *amalaka* is situated, which is further topped by a *bijapuraka*. The lateral walls of the *garbhagriha* feature

windows embellished with *gavaksha* arches. In the lower section of one arch, an Ekamukhi Sivalinga is illustrated, he is adorned with *jatamukuta*, *karnakundala*, and *hara*, and topped by a plain Linga. He is accompanied by two *maladharis* who are offering *malas* to the divine entity. Conversely, the other arch is carved with a Karttikeya image in its lower part, portrayed seated on his *vahana*, the peacock, while holding a spear. Both these *gavaksha* arches are topped by another *gavaksha* arch containing *kirttimukhas*.

Karnesvara Mahadeva/Kansuan Temple

The Karnesvara Mahadeva Temple features entirely unadorned masonry walls, with a prominent inscription slab embedded on the southern side, which is already described above. The entire temple complex has undergone a major change during the late medieval period when the temple was restored. Because of it, most of the original features of the original temple are now lost. Though the *vedibandha* mouldings are clearly visible, characterised by their substantial design, embellished with *chandrasalas*, *kirttimukha* faces, and blocks of foliage. The original material of the temple extends up to the walls; however, the *kapotali* and *sikhara* are later restorations. A *kapili* wall connects the temple to a restored *gudhamandapa*, where some of the pillars are original. The *kalasa* moulding in the *vedibandha* has not been substituted by rafter ends on either the *pratirathas* or the *bhadra*. The interior pillars exhibit simple squared capitals adorned with *kirttimukha* faces. A door lintel constructed over the *mandapa* doorway, which still serves as an entrance to a second shrine above the *garbhagriha*, suggests that there may have been a separate small Vishnu shrine, or that an upper chamber of this Siva temple was dedicated to that deity. Although the *sikhara* above this shrine is modern, the temple originally featured a Nagara *sikhara*; a fragment of the *sukanasika's* fronting *chandrasala* is currently embedded in the eastern compound wall. A Panchamukha Linga, preserved at the front of the shrine, where the faces have not been recarved, illustrates the enduring classic canon that remained intact in the forests of Uparmala and Central India, even as early as the eighth century (Meister 1981).



Figure 24 The entrance of the Karnesvara Temple



Figure 25 *Garbhagriha*



Figure 26 Archival view of the Temple



Figure 27 Parvati image



Figure 28 Lakulisa image

Several sculptures are prominent within the restored *mandapa*. Inside the temple complex, there's a Parvati image; her attributes and ornamentation are only partially discernible due to their deteriorated condition. She is represented here in the *chaturbhuj*a form, and her natural two hands may symbolise a boon-giving posture. In the lower section, there are two devotees present. She is adorned with *jatamukuta*, *karnakundala*, *hara*, *katibandha*, and *nivi*. Then the presence of a large Lakulisa seated on a *padmapitha* in a meditative position with *urdhava-linga* is observed. He holds a *danda* in one hand, while the other hand, due to weathering and damage, is not clearly visible. He is adorned with a *jatamukuta* and has half-closed eyes. In the upper sections on both sides, flying *gandharvas* can be seen. There is a presence of Nandi as well in the temple premises.

Chandrabhaga Temple Complex

James Fergusson commended the pillared *mandapa* of the Sitalesvara Mahadeva temple, stating it is "undeniably one of the most stunning architectural works" in India (Fergusson, 1876). The plan he published in 1876, however, indicates that the *mulaprasada* of the temple was surrounded by debris (the walls possibly even then covered with plaster), suggesting that his focus was not on the oldest section of the temple, but rather on the *mandapa*, which is a subsequent addition. Except for the pillars of the *mukhalinda* (the single row in front of the doorway and *antarala*), this *mandapa* is an addition from the late ninth or tenth century, elegant indeed, but not as significant as the *prasada* itself. The layout of the Sitalesvara temple is, in most respects, unique among the surviving stone temples in North India (Meister, 1981).



Figure 29 Chandrabhaga River

The temple complex is located next to the Chandrabhaga River, which has been historically recognised as a sacred water source and a pilgrimage site linked to various early medieval temples in the area. The ancient temple of Chandrabhaga is part of a complex that includes five temples, a Ganesa *mandapa* (pillared porch), several *Chhatris* (memorials), a *Ghata* (river bank), and numerous scattered sculptures. In earlier periods, this location was also referred to as Chandravati. At the end of the temple complex, near the *chhatris*, one can observe a lot of loose sculptures that line the banks of the Chandrabhaga River. Devotees engage in immersion in the river, especially during the sacred month of *Karttika* (October–November).

Site Plan of Chandrabhaga Temple

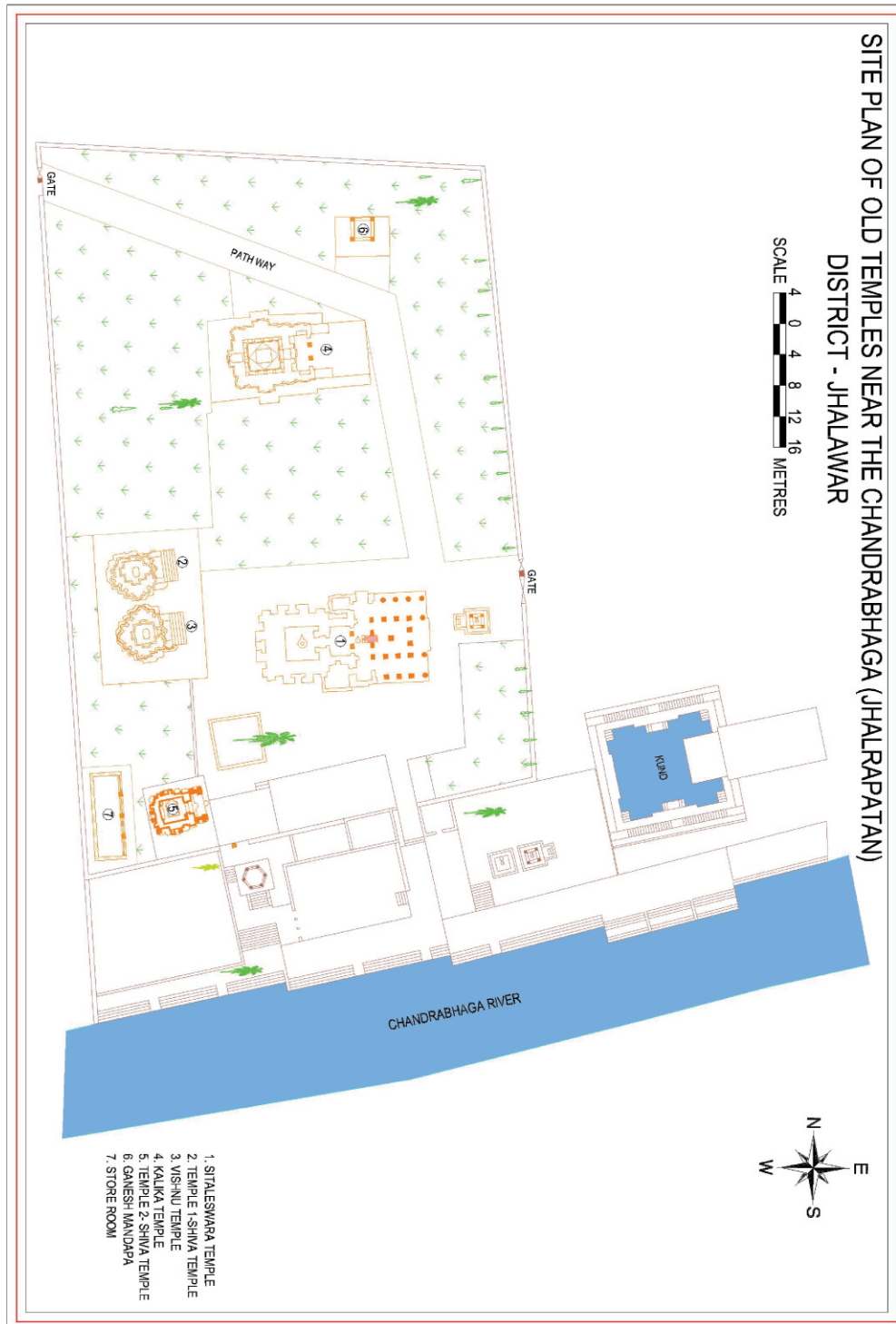


Figure 30

Sitalesvara Temple



Figure 31 An aerial view



Figure 32



Figure 33

Front and the back view of the Sitalesvara Temple

The entrance to the Sitalesvara temple complex provides a unique frontal perspective of the structure. It is oriented towards the east. Although it suffered damage during an invasion, restoration and repair efforts were undertaken for the temples. The remaining section of the Sitalesvara Temple is of great significance, featuring a square *garbhagriha*, *antarala*, and a *mandapa*. The plinth of the Sitalesvara Temple is adorned with basal mouldings and the *jangha* is intricately carved with *bhadra*. The *jangha* of the temple features *bhadra* on all three sides, which are notably larger than those found in other temples from that era. Although these projections once contained sculptures of deities, they are currently empty. The *sikhara* has fallen, and currently, it is topped by a flat roof and a small dome added later at the centre. Here, one can observe both the front and rear views of the Sitalesvara Temple. In contrast, the accompanying view offers an aerial perspective of the Chandrabhaga Temple complex.



Figure 34 Outside and inside of the Garbhagriha

The *antarala* of the temple grants entry to the *garbhagriha*. Before that, the intricately carved doorframe is prominently adorned with *panchasakha*. The lower portions of the doorframe illustrate the sculpture of Siva on either side. He is depicted here as *chaturbhuja*, adorned with *jatamukuta*, *kundala*, *hara*, *keyura*, *kankana*, *nivi*, and *nupura*. On the right side, Siva is depicted holding a *sarpa*, *trisula*, and *akshamala*, *kamandalu*, while on the left side, he holds a *khatvanga*, *damaru*, *akshamala*, and *kamandalu*, accompanied by representations of the River Goddesses Ganga and Yamuna. A notable depiction of Lakulisa is found within a niche on the *lalatabimba*, where he is seated in a *padmasana* posture, holding a *danda* in his left hand and a fruit in his right. Within the *garbhagriha*, a Lingam is placed on a golden plated *Yonipitha*, along with several fragmented sculptures situated inside.



Figure 35



Figure 36

Intricate Carvings of the Mandapa Pillars



Figure 37 Sivalinga and Nandi situated in the Mandapa

Upon entering the Temple, one is immediately greeted by the stunning *mandapa* of the Sitalasvara Temple, which boasts a square design supported by numerous pillars and it's supported by numerous intricately carved stone pillars, which are characteristic of early medieval temple architecture in the Hadoti–Malwa region. These pillars are intricately carved with *punraghatakalasa*, a symbol of auspiciousness. The *jalaka* of the pillars showcases elaborate geometric floral patterns and chain motifs. The *mandapa* is oriented eastward towards the entrance courtyard and at the rear of the *garbhagriha*. Within the *mandapa* of the Sitalasvara Temple, a Nandi is situated in a position that faces the *garbhagriha*. In front of the Nandi, before the *antarala*, a Sivalinga is positioned on a cemented *Yonipitha*.



Figure 38 Rishi



Figure 39 Saiva ascetics



Figure 40

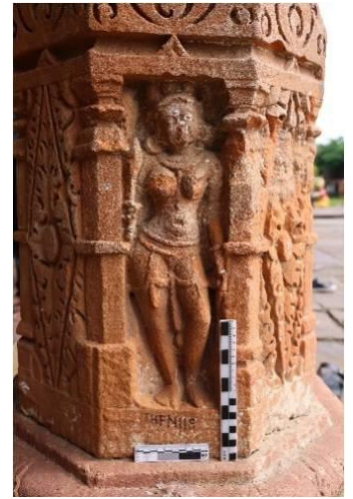


Figure 41 Female figure



Figure 42



**Figure 43
Attendants holding a sriphala**



Figure 44



Figure 45 Attendants

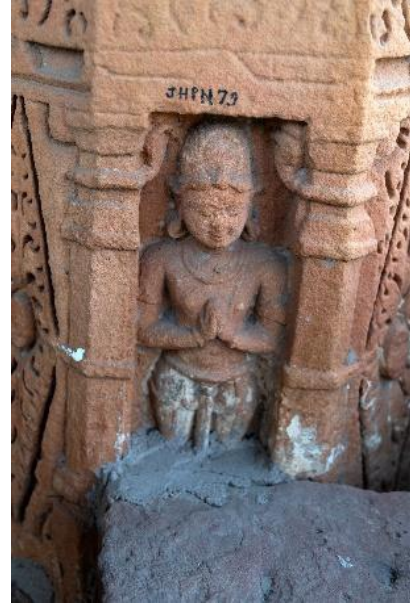


Figure 46 Devotee

There are columns noticeable within the *mandapa* of the temple, displaying Saiva ascetics, male and female attendants, and devotee figures. The figure of a *rishi* is holding a *darpana* in his left hand while his right hand is positioned in *abhayamudra*. He is shown with a pot belly, a uniquely long beard, and a smiling expression. He is adorned with a *yajnopavita* on his body. The figure seems to be dressed in a simple loin cloth and possesses elongated ears. This carving is situated within the lower part of the pillar and is embellished with intricate carvings on both adjacent sides, featuring large floral motifs.

The Saiva ascetics figures are depicted in a *dvibhanga* posture. One is adorned with significant traditional jewellery. It is observable that on the left hand of the figure, he holds a *sarpa* in his hand, and his right hand is resting on his thigh, and the decorative motif on the back of his head, *padma*, is visible. This male figure was carved within an architectural niche of a temple. On the adjacent face of the pillar (partially visible), another similar figure appears. The next one depicts him in a relaxed posture, standing in a *dvibhanga* posture with his right hand positioned in *karanamudra*, while his left hand holds an object which is not clearly defined due to its damaged state. He is adorned with *yajnopavita*, and his figure exhibits a slight pot belly. Decorative floral elements are visible on both sides.

Then, there is carved a female figure in an elegant *tribhanga* posture. She is holding a *utpala* with her right hand, while her left hand is positioned in a relaxed manner. Her adornments are minimal, featuring a heavy *kundala*. The expression on her face is calm and smiling. The figure is placed within a richly carved niche, framed by geometric patterns and elaborate floral motifs.

Then the artwork features a depiction of one female and two male attendants, all portrayed in *tribhanga* posture, intricately carved in deep relief within an ornate niche. Each figure is embellished with *kundala*, *hara*, *kankana*, *mekhala*, and *nivi*. In one hand, they each hold a *sriphala*, while their other hand is positioned comfortably on their thigh. Surrounding these figures is a complex design of elaborately carved decorative flowers.

In another image, one can see a figure positioned in *dvibhanga* stance, holding a *danda* in its right hand while its left hand rests at his side. In contrast, on the right side, another figure is portrayed in a *tribhanga* posture, holding a garland. Both figures display a pot belly. Additionally, a figure is sculpted in the lower section of the pillar, representing a devotee with hands folded together and a respectful expression, adorned with minimal ornamentation.



Figure 47 Dedicatory/ votive Sivalingas



Figure 48



Figure 49



Figure 50



Figure 51

Flying Gandharvas and decorated pillars



Figure 52 Inscriptions on pillars

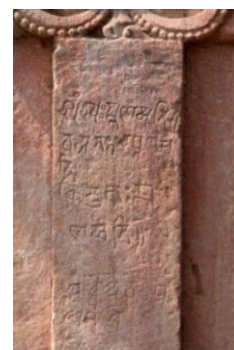


Figure 53

The dedicatory/ votive Sivalingas are also prominently displayed, and currently, the local communities worship them as the Bhairava form of Siva. Then the pillar from the *mandapa* showcases the exquisite intricacy of its carvings, embellished with chain motif decorations. Above the pillars, one can observe the presence of flying *gandharvas* in all four directions. Likewise, the pillars located in the *mandapa* and

antarala are embellished with *kirttimukha* and *vyala* motifs that radiate festoons. The depiction of *vyala* decoration on the pillars of the Sitalesvara Temple is truly remarkable. The columns of the *mandapa* at the Sitalesvara temple display several inscriptions. Among these, one notable inscription consists of two lines and also shows an inscription that has been discovered in the *antarala* of the Kalika Temple, illustrating an intricately carved pillar of the Kalika Temple, which is currently utilised as storage for the temple.



Figure 54 **Vishnu image**



Figure 55 **Siva image**

The outer walls of the *antarala* are embellished with exquisite sculptures of deities. Here in the niches, the depiction of Bhagavana Vishnu is prominent, who is illustrated seated on a pedestal in *lalitasana* posture. He is portrayed wearing a *kiritamukuta*, and he is adorned with *muktavali*, *hara*, *yajnopavita*, *kankana*, *katisutra*, *mekhala*, and *nivi*. His facial expression conveys a sense of calmness and peace. He is depicted with four arms. In his left hand, he holds a *sankha* and a *chakra*, while in his right hand, he holds a *gada*, and his other hand is positioned in *abhaymudra*. Then the figure of Siva is carved, he is seated on a *padmapitha* in *lalitasana* posture. He is adorned with a *jatamukuta*. Siva is represented here with four arms, holding a *trisula* in his upper right hand and a *sarpa* in his upper left hand. In his lower right hand, he holds a *pushpa*, while his left hand holds a *kamandalu*. He is shown here with his *vahana*, Nandi, to his bottom right.

Siva Temple-1 within the complex



Figure 56 **Entrance of the Siva Temple**



Figure 57 **Lalatabimba**



Figure 58 Lower section of the doorframe



Figure 59 Indrani

The front view of the Siva temple is characterised by its elevation on a platform. This temple features representations of various figures and deities linked to Saivism. Currently, the temple contains solely the *garbhagriha*, accessible via a staircase. It contains a square and simple *garbhagriha*, which currently enshrines a Sivalinga. The *lalatabimba* of the Siva temple prominently depicts a seated Lakulisa within a small niche. In this representation, Lakulisa is shown sitting in *padmasana* posture with two hands, the right one holding a *sriphala* and the left one holding a *danda*. Flanking him are a couples of flying *gandharvas* depicted with garlands. The upper section of the *lalatabimba* panel depicts Matrikas. In the middle part, there is the presence of dancing Siva. Then at the right corner Brahma and at the left corner Ganesa are depicted. There is an intricately carved doorframe that prominently depicts Kubera on both sides. Then the depiction of Siva is also visible on both sides. On the right side, he is depicted holding a *damaru*, a *sarpa*, a *trisula*, and possibly a *patra*. On the left side, he is seen holding a *patra* and a *sarpa*, while the other two hands are in a broken condition. The *jangha* wall of this temple shows a representation of Indrani with six arms. In her upper hands, she holds a broken weapon and a *vajra*, while her middle hands hold unidentified objects. In her lower hands, she holds a *kamandalu* and performs the boon-granting gesture with a rosary, and she's sitting in *lalitasana* posture. At the base of her pedestal, there is a depiction of her *vahana*, an elephant.

Vishnu Temple within the temple complex



Figure 60



Figure 61

Vishnu Temple front and back view



Figure 62 (a)



Figure 62 (b)

Lower section of the doorjamb



Figure 63

Lower section of the entrance

Then there is the Vishnu temple, which is found on a platform in the temple complex. Currently, the temple contains solely the *garbhagriha* accessible via a staircase. The front view of the Vishnu temple, located behind the Sitalasvara temple, reveals the structure positioned upon a platform. The doorframe of the *garbhagriha* is characterized by *panchasakha*. At the entrance, one can observe representations of river goddesses, *dvarapalas*, or door guardians, alongside Kubera. The upper sections of the *sakhas* are elaborately adorned with a diverse array of motifs and designs. Conversely, displays on the lateral walls of the *garbhagriha*, have suffered significant damage. Only two sculptures of the *dikpalas* remain intact. The lower section of the doorjamb at the Vishnu temple showcases the River Goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna, accompanied by a *chauri* bearer. Following this, the *dvarapalas* are depicted, with one holding a *sankha* and *chakra* in his upper two hands, while the other two are portrayed with one in *abhayamudra* and the other in a resting position. They are adorned with a *karandamukuta*, long garlands, and elaborate jewellery. Then, Kubera is illustrated at the bottom external *sakha* of the doorjamb. He is portrayed with two arms, standing upright, holding a bag of money, with a pot of *nidhi* positioned at the base. Additionally, Kubera is adorned with a *mukuta* and intricately carved *kundala*, *muktavali*, *katisutra*, and a designed *mekhala*. The intricacies are observable at the lower section of the entrance. On either side of the *chandrasila* at the entrance of the *garbhagriha*, both are sitting in a *lalitasana* posture. There exists a band depicting *vyalas* attacking and biting elephants from the back, while simultaneously dismembering them with their claws.

Navadurga/ Kali Temple within the temple complex



Figure 64



Figure 65

An archival view of Navadurga/ Kali Temple



Figure 66 Unique form of Chamunda



Figure 67 Siva image

Then, situated close to the northern entrance of the Chandrabhaga Temple complex, there exists a flat-roofed structure known as the Kalika Devi temple. From the archival image, it can be inferred that this temple was originally dedicated to Bhagavana Vishnu as he sits on the *lalatabimba* and then at some later date to the Goddess Kalika. Consequently, the temple was repurposed as a storage facility for the site. The current image of the temple reveals that the exterior walls of the *garbhagriha* of the Kalika Devi Temple are plain and devoid of any ornamental features or sculptures. The entrance to the *antarala* is distinguished by intricately carved pillars, with several loose sculptures placed at the entrance.

Here, these female deities are located within the Kalika Temple. The female goddess depicted here is shown in *tribhanga* posture and may be nude. She is adorned with an elaborate *mukuta*, *karnakundalas*, *kankana*, *padajalaka*, and a long *mundamala*. She possesses four arms, with her natural two hands, the right hand holds a dagger, while the left hand appears to be damaged. The upper pair of arms holds what may be a *kapala* in the right hand and an elephant tusk in the left. In the upper corners, two female figures are present, seated on a pedestal in *ardhaparyankasana*, each holding a *sruka* in one hand and a *raktapatra* in the other. Additionally, at the bottom, there are two lady attendants, and behind the goddess stands her *vahana*, a donkey. Through these attributes, she is likely recognized as Chamunda, albeit in a distinctly unique form.

There exists a depiction of a deity positioned in *tribhanga* stance, however, some of the hands and legs appear damaged, yet the partial visibility of his attributes allows for recognition. He is adorned with a *jatamukuta* that features a circular skull design, a long *mundamala*, a *sarpa* necklace, *kankana*, *katisutra*, *mekhala*, and *nivi*. Among his attributes, the upper two hands prominently display a *sarpa*, while the right

hand holds a *damaru*, and he is seen carrying a child. The attributes on the left side of his hands are not clearly visible. At the bottom, on the left, there is a representation of Ganesa seated in an *ardhaparyanka asana*, and on the right, another male figure is depicted seated in *lalitasana* posture, holding a dagger in one hand and a *raktapatra* in the other. Based on the visible attributes, it is possible that he represents Siva in the form of Bhairava.

Siva Temple-2 within the complex



Figure 68 Siva Temple beside a banyan tree



Figure 69



Figure 70 Isana



Figure 71 Surasundari



Figure 72 Brahma



Figure 73 Panchamukha Sivalinga

Lastly, one more Siva temple is located adjacent to the sacred banyan tree. This temple is a modest edifice featuring an *antarala* (antechamber) and a *garbhagriha*. Unfortunately, the *sikhara* of the temple is in a state of disrepair. The rear view of this Siva temple reveals the *vedibandha*, which includes the *khura*, the *kumbha*, the *kalasa*, and the *kapotapalika*. The *kumbha* is adorned with intermittent niches that contain sculptures depicting females, couples, and dwarfs. At the back of this temple, illustrations of *surasundaris* embellish the walls of the *garbhagriha*.

On the wall of the *garbhagriha* of this Siva temple, a *dikpala*, Isana is portrayed on the corner projection. He is embellished with a *jatamukuta* and an array of ornate jewellery, which is currently in a state of deterioration. He has two arms that are depicted holding a *khadga* in the right hand, while the left hand rests on his thigh. Isana is accompanied by his *vahana*, a bull, which is illustrated at the bottom right. Subsequently, there is depiction of *Surasundari* on the same wall. It is intricately carved adjacent to the primary central niche. She is adorned with *kundala*, *hara*, *chhannavira*, *kankana*, *mekhala*, *nivi*, and *nupura*. The *Surasundari* is portrayed with elegance, her form radiating energy as she holds a *utpala* in one hand and the drapery in the other. Again, on the same wall of the temple, there might be a depiction of Brahma. He is portrayed with four hands. In his right hand, he holds a *sruva*, while the other hand partially displays a segment of *akshamala*. On the left side, one hand holds a *kamandalu*, and the other is in a damaged state. In the upper right corner, two *rishis* are depicted in a seated posture, although they are also in a damaged condition. It is possible that they are conversing with one another while holding an object. In the lower right corner, there is an illustration of an animal and a human figure that may be depicting a fight scene.

Here in this Siva temple, one can observe the Panchamukha Sivalinga inside the *garbhagriha*. This Linga, positioned on the *Yonipitha*, normally features the mukhalinga's depiction of Vamadeva, Tatpurusha, Aghora, Sadyojata, and Isana. However, this particular Linga is exquisitely carved with four distinct faces, each accompanied by two attendants at the lower corners. The central figure is depicted as a three-headed Siva, adorned with a *jatamukuta* and intricately designed jewellery. In his right hand, he holds a mace and a *sriphala*, while one hand on the left is damaged, with the other holding a *sankha*. The upper left side of the image prominently depicts Brahma, with a *jatamukuta*, featuring three faces and four arms. In his hands, he holds a *pustaka*, a *kamandalu*, an *akshamala*, and a *utpala*. The bottom left figure might represent Surya, who is adorned with elaborate jewellery, with a *srivatsa* visible on his chest. Here he is depicted barefoot, with one hand in *varadamudra*, while the other hand is partially visible, possibly holding a *padma*. The bottom right figure is intricately carved, illustrating a blend of Siva and Vishnu. On his left side, he holds a *gada* and a *sankha*, while his right hand holds a *khatvanga* with a knotted rope. Additionally, the presence of Nandi is prominent.

Ganesa Mandapa



Figure 74



Figure 75

Ganesa mandapa

A small *mandapa* that is located at the Chandrabhaga temple complex contains a representation of Ganesa. This *mandapa* has an open design supported by four pillars and is topped by a flat roof. The pillars of the Ganesa mandapa have a square base adorned with *puṇnaghata kalasa*. The central section of the shaft is faceted and intricately carved with female figures. The upper part of each shaft face displays a floral motif. This is an open *mandapa*, there is a figure of Ganesa accompanied by his consorts. Ganesa is portrayed standing within a pavilion featuring a curved roof. In this representation, Ganesa possesses four arms, with his back hands supporting his consorts on either side, while in his front hand, he holds an *akshamala*. His front right hand is extended, pointing downward. One of his consorts is shown holding a *modaka*, whereas the other is depicted holding Ganesa's hand.

Deities' representation within the temple complex



Figure 76 Surya image



Figure 77 Bhairava image



Figure 78 Siva image



Figure 79 Mahishasuramardini



Figure 80 Sahasralinga



Figure 81 Nandi image

The Surya sculpture is kept in the temple's storage area. The deity is represented in *sthanaka* posture, characterised as *dvibhuja*, with both hands holding a fully bloomed *padma*. He is adorned with a *kiritamukuta*, *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, a beaded *yajnopavita*, *katisutra*, *nivi*, *mala*, and boots. At the base, two male attendants stand beside the central figure. At the bottom right is Pingala, conventionally shown holding a pen and inkpot; however, these attributes are not discernible here due to damage to the sculpture. On the left side at the bottom, Dandi is depicted holding a *danda*; both figures act as guardians. From these characteristics, the principal deity can be recognised as Surya, accompanied by his attendants.

Within the temple complex, upon entering one of the temple's entrance doors, one can observe two sculptures positioned at the base. These sculptures, due to their deteriorated state, have been relocated to this area near the entrance at the rear of the Siva temple. Both of the sculptures depict the *chaturbhuja* deity, who is depicted in a *katyavalambita* posture. In his two right hands, he holds a *khatvanga* in one and a *sarpa* in the other, while his left hand is positioned in *abhayamudra*. Although the deity's ornamental details are not entirely discernible due to damage, certain surviving features indicate that he is adorned with an exquisite *munda* headdress, a *sarpa* around his neck, and is further embellished with

karnakundalas, yajnopavita, katakavalaya, and padajalaka, along with a garland. At the base to his right side, there is a devotee, whose hands are folded in a gesture of respect towards the deity, albeit in a damaged condition. Based on these characteristics, the deity can be identified as Bhairava, also referred to as *Kshetrapala*. The other sculpture is distinctly identifiable as Siva due to his specific attributes. In this representation, he is depicted with four arms (*chaturbhuj*), adorned with a *jatamukuta*. Additionally, he wears *karnakundalas*, although they are in a damaged state. Other features include a beaded *upagriva* and *hara, bhujavalaya, yajnopavita*, as well as a beaded *udarabandha, nivi, and katisutra*. His wrists are adorned with *katakavalaya*, and his feet are embellished with *padajalaka*. In his right hand, he holds a serpent (*sarpa*), while his left hand is engaged in holding a *trisula* with one and drapery with the other. To his bottom left, a devotee is present, folding his hands and seated with one leg bent, demonstrating respect towards the deity.

At the entrance of this temple, there exists a depiction of a female warrior, portrayed in a combat stance against the buffalo demon known as Mahishasura. It is clearly illustrated that the goddess, upon thrusting the *trisula* into Mahishasura's body, has one of her legs positioned within the buffalo's body, causing the buffalo's leg to bend due to the force. Additionally, from behind the goddess, her *vahana*, the lion, is also attacking the *asura*. She is adorned with various ornaments, including *achhudaka, karnapushpa, karnakundalas*, a beaded *muktavali, stanhara, kuchabandha, and chhannavira*, which appears somewhat broken and damaged, along with *kankana, katibandha, nivi, urudama, and nupura*. In this representation, she is depicted as *chaturbhuj*, and with her natural two hands, she holds a sword while using the other hand to pull out the *asura* from the buffalo's body. With her other two hands, she holds a *trisula* and *khetaka*. The combination of her attributes and the dynamic fighting scene clearly signifies that she is Durga in the form of Mahishasuramardini.

Within the *garbhagriha* of this Siva temple, one can find a Sahasralinga. This particular Linga is acquired in a manner akin to that of the Ashtottarasata Linga (108 Lingas). It represents one of the forms of Linga, characterised by the intricate carving of a thousand Lingas on the surface of the *pujabhaga* of an Adya Linga, and the presence of Siva's *vahana* Nandi, is observable.

Deities in Jhalawar Museum



Figure 82 Surya image



Figure 83 Chamunda image



Figure 84 Vayu image



Figure 85 Ardhanarisvara image



Figure 86 Bhu-Varaha image



Figure 87 Natesa image



Figure 88 Seshasayi Vishnu image

This sculpture, carved from red sandstone, depicts the male deity in *sthanaka* posture, characterised by six hands; he holds a fully bloomed *padma* in his left hand, and in his right hand a *trisula*, and the right bottom hand is in *abhyamudra*; the rest of his hands are in a broken condition. He is adorned with a *kiritamukuta* and various ornaments; however, it is currently in poor condition due to weathering, still surviving ornaments, *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *uttariya*, a beaded *yajnopavita*, *katisutra*, *nivi*, *mala*, and boots are discernible. At the base, two male attendants stand beside the central figure. At the bottom right is Pingala, conventionally shown holding a pen and inkpot; however, these attributes are not discernible here due to damage to the sculpture. On the left side at the bottom, Dandi is depicted holding a *danda*; both figures act as guardians. From these characteristics, the principal deity can be recognised as a syncretic form of Siva and Surya, accompanied by his attendants. The deity is standing within an elaborate arched frame, at his sides is a stylised *vyala* and *kirttimukha* motif, and flanked by two ornate pillars featuring gem motifs.

Another image with unique fierce feminine aspect of the goddess is illustrated as *ashtahasta*, standing in an upright stance, accompanied by a fearless laugh. She is intricately carved with a *mundamala* and a

munda headdress, exhibiting a skeletal appearance with a visible ribcage, bones protruding through the skin, sunken eyes, and a contracted abdomen. Mostly, her attributes include a knife or sword, elephant skin, a skull, *raktapatra*, fire, and a snake, however, this particular sculpture is unique. Here, she is shown lifting the Navagrahas with her two upper hands, while on either side of her shoulders, she holds two human figures. The right hand appears to be in a deteriorated state, yet a human presence is discernible, while on her left side, there is also a male figure standing in *tribhanga* posture, standing on a *padmapitha*, possibly representing Brahma. In her middle right hand, she is wielding a sword, and with her left, she seems to grab something that may be a human figure, seemingly in the act of killing. Both figures are in a broken condition. The lowermost hands are already broken and not visible; however, the right hand seems to suggest that she is holding a figure, who is in *namaskaramudra*, paying homage to the goddess. This figure may be positioned over the Nandi, which is plausible since the Nandi is situated on a *padmapitha*. Additionally, there is another figure seated on a *padmapitha* in *ardhaparyankasana*. Through the various attributes, she is identified as a distinctive representation of goddess Chamunda. It seems that the goddess is depicted in her cosmic form, which is a rather uncommon portrayal. Notably, on the left side of her feet, there is another Chamunda seated on a human figure, possibly an Adharadevata in a human form, a sight that is rarely observed in sculptures, which are normally found in a seated position on a corpse. This sculpture symbolises universal death and destruction, making it a remarkable, unique sculpture that can be viewed in the Jhalawar museum.

Another depiction illustrates a Vedic male deity who serves as the protector of the north-west direction. He is portrayed in *tribhanga* posture, adorned with a *kiritamukuta*, *karnakundalas*, *karnapushpa*, *upagriva*, *muktavali*, and *yajnopavita*. His arm is embellished with a *keyura* and his wrist with a *kankana*. The lower part of his body is decorated with a *nivi*, *mekhala*, and *urudama*, while his feet are adorned with *padajalaka*, beautifully draped in a garland. He is represented as *dvibhuja*, holding a flag in his right hand and a staff of that flag in his left hand. Behind him, his *vahana*, a stag, is visible. All these attributes and powerful features identify him as *Dikpala Vayu*.

Another sculpture mentioned here is a beautiful *chaturbhuja* deity, depicted with the right half as male and the left half of a female. His natural right hand is resting on a *padma* that Nandi is carrying on his head; here, Nandi is shown in a human form. The upper right hand holds a *trisula*, and there is the presence of a snake as well. The figure is adorned with a *jatamukuta*, *karnakundalas*, *kankana*, *kanthi*, and *hara*, beaded *yajnopavita*, and is standing with a *urdhvalinga*. On the left side, her hair is arranged in elegant side-knots, and she wears *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *kankana*, and *nupura*. On her lower left side, one can observe Karttikeya, who is positioned alongside his *vahana*, the peacock. Based on its composite form and attributes, this deity can be recognised as Ardhanarisvara, representing the divine amalgamation of the masculine (Siva) and feminine (Sakti) principles.

A representation features a male anthropomorphic deity characterised by a boar's head and a human body. This deity is depicted as *chaturbhuja*, with the right hand naturally grasping a serpent tail, while the serpent, in human form, is seated alongside his wife. In his other hand, he holds a *gada*, and with the left hand, he carries a Devi who stands upon a *padmapitha*, while the opposite hand wields a *chakra*. The deity is illustrated in an *alidha* posture, with his left leg positioned on a *padmapitha*. Adorning his form are a beaded *hara*, *kankana*, *uttariya*, *nivi*, *urudama*, *mala*, and *nupura*. These distinguishing features

allow for the identification of the figure as Bhu-Varaha, accompanied by Bhudevi on his hand, symbolising the narrative in which he rescues her from the Demon Hiranyaksha.

Siva is already recognised as a master in the art of dance. The Bharatamuni's *Natyasastra* describes a total of one hundred and eight distinct types of dances, while the *Saivagamas* assert that Siva performed in a hundred and eight different styles. In this depiction, the dancing male deity is adorned with *jatamukuta*, *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *yajnopavita*, *bahuvalaya*, *kankana*, *mekhala*, *katibandha*, *nivi*, *urudama*, and *padajalaka*. He is illustrated with eight arms: the natural right arm positioned in *vyakhyana mudra* and the left in *gajahasta mudra*. The upper two arms hold a *sarpa*, the middle right arm holds a *padma*, and the left middle arm holds a *tanpura*, while the lower two arms grasp drapery. He is depicted in an *ardhasama* posture. Below the deity, there are four figures; the one on the right is a devotee standing with folded hands to show reverence towards the deity, the second figure appears to be an attendant holding a *danda*, and the last two are musicians. The right musician is seated in *sukhasana* on a *padmapitha*, playing the flute, while the left musician plays the *mridanga*. With all these attributes, the deity is recognised as one of the dancing forms of Natesa.

A sculpture depicts a deity reclining on the Serpent Adishesha. The upper half of the body is somewhat elevated, while the lower half rests flat on the serpent's bed. The deity is portrayed in *Chaturbhuj* form, with one of the left hands supporting the head; one of the right hands is in *kataka mudra*, and the attributes of the three hands are not clearly discernible. The deity is adorned with an intricately designed *kiritamukuta*, featuring *karnapushpa* and *sikhamani*, along with *karnakundalas*, *hara*, *kankana*, *bahuvalaya*, *chhannavira*, *mekhala*, *nivi*, *urudama*, *mukutadama*, and *nupura*. Near the feet of the deity, there is a female figure recognized as Lakshmi, who, despite being in a damaged state, has some of her ornaments still partially visible. She is adorned with *hara*, *chhannavira*, and *keyura*, seated in *ardhaparyankasana*. The uppermost section of the sculpture features the Navagrahas, followed by a panel depicting dancing deities, with a *chauri* bearer standing in the lower left corner. In the final panel located at the bottom, one can observe the divine creature Uchchaisrava in the centre, accompanied by other divine beings, illustrating the celestial scene of the churning of the milk ocean. Based on these details, the figure is identified as Seshasayi Vishnu.

Bijolia Group of Temples



Figure 89 Hazaresvara and Mahakala Temple



Figure 90 Undesvara Temple



Figure 91 Mandakini Kunda

The Bijolia Temple complex is an intricate site that comprises three distinct temples: Hazaresvara, Undesvara, and the Mahakala Temple. Within this sacred complex, visitors can also find a water tank known as Mandakini Kunda, which adds to the spiritual ambience of the area. The Mahakala Temple itself is notable for its two main structures, known as the Mahakala and Baijanatha. This temple is oriented towards the west and features several architectural elements, including a *mukhamandapa*, a *mandapa*, an *antarala*, and a *garbhagriha* located to the south. Additionally, there is another *garbhagriha* situated in the eastern direction, enhancing the temple's spiritual significance and architectural complexity.

Mahakala Temple



Figure 92 Mukhamandapa



Figure 93 Mandapa



Figure 94 Antarala and Garbhagriha



Figure 95 Ganesa image



Figure 96 Siva image



Figure 97 Bhairava image

The *mukhamandapa* of the Mahakala Temple functions as a slender corridor, supported by four pillars that uphold its flat roof. These pillars feature square bases, intricately carved with divine figures on each of their four sides. The upper portion is adorned with miniature niches on all sides, which contain seated figures of goddesses. Above this, a decorative band showcases various figures along with a *kirttimukha* motif. In front of the *mukhamandapa*, two detached sculptures representing Sadasiva are positioned on either side of the entrance. Each sculpture depicts Sadasiva with three faces, elegantly adorned with *jatamukuta* and *karnakundalas*, which are clearly visible. Following this, the *mandapa* is characterised by simple stone walls, with pairs of pillars located at the cardinal points and pilasters at the corners. At the centre, there is a platform featuring a Nandi. To the east lies the main *garbhagriha*, preceded by the *antarala*. The entrance of the *garbhagriha* is framed by two simple *latasakhas*, while the *antarala* is embellished with a *chandrasila*. The bottom of the *garbhagriha*'s doorframe is adorned on both sides with sculptures of *dvarapalas* who are holding a *danda* in their hand and adorned with a *mukuta* as well, alongside the presence of a female figure holding a *kalasa*. However, the *lalatabimba* in the centre of the doorframe features a depiction of a seated figure, which is unfortunately not well preserved. Above the lintel, Natesa is prominently displayed at the centre, accompanied by dancers. The *garbhagriha* of the temple is situated to the east and presents itself as a humble and softly lit space. At the heart of this *garbhagriha* lies a Sivalinga, a sacred symbol of the deity. The Mahakala Temple serves as a lively centre of devotion, drawing numerous visitors who frequently arrive to offer their prayers and show their reverence.

To the left of the *mukhamandapa*, one can observe a standing sculpture with crossed legs. This figure is adorned with *hara*, *muktamala*, *yajnopavita*, *bahuvalaya*, *kankana*, *mekhala*, *nivi*, and *padavalaya*. The depiction illustrates him as *Chaturbhuj*; with the natural hands he is holding a *kamandalu* and *akshamala*, while the upper two hands grasp a bowl filled with *modaka* and a *padma*. These attributes collectively identify him as Ganesa. To the right of the *mukhamandapa*, another male deity is present. This deity is depicted in a standing *tribhanga* posture and also possesses *chaturbhuj*; however, currently in a damaged state, rendering none of his attributes clearly visible. He is elegantly adorned with a *jatamukuta*

featuring a circular skull pattern and sports a beard. His adornments include *karnapura*, *upagriva*, *hara*, *muktamala*, *katibandha*, *urudama*, *muktadama*, *mekhala*, and *nivi*. An attendant is depicted at the base, while flying *gandharvas* carrying garlands are intricately carved at the top corners. Various ornamentations and the *mukuta* indicate that he embodies Siva, albeit with certain characteristics reminiscent of Bhairava.

The *mukhamandapa* of the Mahakala Temple is supported by four pillars that uphold its flat roof. These pillars feature square bases that are intricately carved. In one of the pillar depictions shown here, one can appreciate the exquisite carvings of divine figures from top to bottom. The upper section is adorned with musical deities, some of whom are playing instruments while others are engaged in dance. Below this, there are seated deities, albeit in a damaged state, with the central figure identifiable as Chamunda, characterised by her body structure and seated upon her *savavahana*. The primary figure illustrated here is a male deity, depicted in *tribhanga* posture, adorned with a *munda mukuta*, *mala*, *sthanhara*, *hara*, *keyura*, *katisutra*, *muktamala*, *katibandha*, *urudama*, *muktadama*, *mekhala*, *nivi*, and *nupura*. He is represented with four arms, although only two of his hand attributes are visible: the left hand holds a *khatvanga*, while the right hand grasps a *rakta patra*, with the other two arms in a state of complete disrepair. With all these attributes, one can recognize him as a Bhairava.



Figure 98 Kubera



Figure 99 Isana



Figure 100 Mahakala Temple

The outer wall of the *mandapa* at the Mahakala Temple features the *dikpalas*. Two male deities are depicted, both in *tribhanga* posture and adorned with *mukuta*, *kundala*, *kankana*, *mekhala*, *katisutra*, *nivi*, *mala*, and *padavalaya*. They are illustrated with *chaturbhuj*. One of these deities is identified as Kubera, who holds a money bag in his upper hands, while in one of his natural hands, he carries a *kamandalu*, his lower right hand is in a damaged state. At the base of the niche, an elephant, is represented. The representation of an elephant as the *vahana* of Kubera is unique. Opposite Kubera, there is an image of Isana, who holds *akshamala* and *kamandalu* in his natural hands, while with his upper hands, he holds a *trisula*, which is currently damaged, and grasps a *sarpa* with the other. At the bottom, a bull is partially depicted, although it is now in a broken condition. The exterior of the *garbhagriha* at the Mahakala Temple features the *jagati*, *pitha*, and *vedibandha*. It showcases a beautifully carved *karnika*, *antarapatra*,

kapota, and *vasanta pattika*. Following this, the *sikhara*, *anuratha*, *bhadra*, *griva*, *amalaka*, *chandrika*, *kalasa*, and *bijapuruka* are all prominently shown here.

Hazaresvara Temple



Figure 101 Hazaresvara Temple



Figure 102 *Kumbha*



Figure 103 Dancing Siva



Figure 104 Vishnu image



Figure 105 Chamunda image



Figure 106 *Mandapa*



Figure 107 Inside the *Garbhagriha*



Figure 108 Mandakini Kunda



Figure 109 Inscription

The Hazaresvara Temple is relatively small within the Bijolia temple complex, which includes a *mandapa*, a shallow *antarala*, and a *garbhagriha*. It is constructed on a *jagati*, featuring *vedibandha*, *jangha*, *varandika*, and the exquisitely carved *tilaka*, *karna sringa*, *sikhara*, followed by the *kuta*, *bhumi amalaka*, *griva*, *bhadra*, *amalaka*, *chandrika*, *kalasa*, and *bijapuraka*. This temple, dedicated to Siva, is recognized for its architectural style that is reminiscent of Bhumija architecture. An inscription found in the temple's *mandapa* reveals its dedication to Pashupata Saivism. The exterior of the Hazaresvara Temple is adorned with representations of deities. The *vedibandha* showcases various decorative features, including *khura*, *kapotapalika*, and *kirttimukhas*. The *kumbha* section is particularly notable for its portrayal of semi-divine figures within the niches, which include gods and goddesses. The *jangha* of the *garbhagriha* is embellished with sculptures that depict the trinity within *bhadra* niches. Among these, there is a representation of dancing Siva, who is depicted in an *urdhvajanu* posture, adorned with *jatamukuta*, *kundala*, *hara*, *kankana*, *keyura*, *mala*, and *nupura*. He wields various weapons and attributes, some of which are in a damaged state but still exhibit visible characteristics, including the upper two hands holding a *sarpa*, a *damaru*, and a *trisula*. His right frontal hand is near his face, while in his left hand, he grasps a *khatvanga*, with the other left hand being damaged. His front left hand is in *gajahasta mudra*. In the lower corners, there are depictions of two musicians, both playing the *mridanga*.

On the *bhadra* of the temple's *garbhagriha*, there exists a representation of Vishnu in *lalitasana* posture. He is adorned with a *kiritamukuta*, *kundala*, *hara*, *kankana*, *mekhala*, *nivi*, and *nupura*. Vishnu is depicted with four arms, the natural right is in *varada mudra*, while the left holds a *sankha*. The upper two hands are holding a *gada*, and a *chakra*. Additionally, the Goddess Chamunda is illustrated on the outer wall of the *antarala*. She is adorned with a *jatamukuta* featuring a skull at the front, and she wears *kundala*, with a snake coiling around her neck and ankles. Chamunda is portrayed with twelve arms and stands upon a human's rear end. In her right hand, she holds a *trisula*, a *damaru*, an arrow, a broken weapon with a staff, and a skull. Her skeletal form is characterised by desiccated breasts and a sunken belly. In her left hand, she holds a snake and a broken weapon with a staff, while her left frontal hand carries a *raktapatra*, and her right frontal hand touches it. At the bottom left, a human figure is depicted seated, consuming blood that drips from a severed head into a bowl.

The temple's *mandapa* is small and supported by four pillars located at its corners. These pillars have square bases that are embellished with deities. The shafts of the pillars are elaborately carved, featuring male deities, musicians, dancers, and *surasundaris*. The ceiling of the *mandapa*, which is square, is beautifully carved. At the centre of the *mandapa*, there is a Nandi. Additionally, the doorframe of the *garbhagriha* is adorned with *latasakhas*, while the *lalatabimba* prominently showcases a seated Lakulisa within a small niche. In this depiction, Lakulisa is represented as *urdhvalinga*, seated in *padmasana* with the right hand holding a *sriphala*, and the left hand holding a *danda*. The upper section of the *lalatabimba* panel illustrates various divine and semi-divine deities, accompanied by musical deities playing different instruments. Inside the *garbhagriha*, there is presence of Sahasralinga. At the bottom, there is a depiction of attendants, two of whom are holding a *danda*.

The temple complex is home to a serene reservoir, known as the Mandakini Kunda, which is situated behind the Mahakala Temple and to the left front of the Undesvara Temple. In addition to the three temples located within the complex, the Mandakini Kunda is preserved as a protected monument under

the Jaipur Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India. This sacred water body within the Bijolia temple compound serves as a site which the devotees regularly use for ceremonial bathing rituals. On the fourth side of the *kunda*, there exists a flat-roofed structure that is supported by pillars. Within the enclosure walls, a variety of sculptures can be found, including representations of goddesses, deities such as Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, *dikpalas*, and *surasundaris*. The steps and platform of the *kunda* feature several inscriptions. These inscriptions are inscribed in the Sanskrit language utilising the Devanagari script. A comprehensive analysis of these inscriptions uncovers significant information, including the name of the temple, Mahakala, and the identification of the *kunda* as Mandakini. Furthermore, they offer details such as the date of the devotees' visit and their community affiliation. The inscriptions highlight the worshippers' tradition of visiting the Mahakala Temple and bathing in the Mandakini Kunda. Dating back to the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries CE, some of these inscriptions specifically refer to the members of Kayastha Mathur community.

Undesvara Temple



Figure 110



Figure 111

Main and the side view of Undesvara Temple

The Undesvara Temple is a prominent example of the Bhumija architectural style. According to the *Samarangana Sutradhara*, it is categorised as part of the *Sarvangasundara* group within the *Vritta* or stellate temple architecture. It is identified as a *navabhuma*, a nine-storeyed temple built on a *saptaratha*, which is a seven-projection design. The temple showcases a star-shaped foundation with nine projections, although only five of these *rathas* are visible. This is due to the *bhadra* or *lata* sections that conceal two projections each. The temple is dedicated to Siva.



Figure 112 Vishnu image



Figure 113 Brahma image



Figure 114 Mandapa



Figure 115 Outside of the Garbhagriha

The *jangha* encircling the *garbhagriha* of the Undesvara Temple is richly embellished with sculptures. The *bhadras* exhibit divine figures, whereas the *stambhas* are intricately carved with depictions of *ashtadikpalas*, *surasundaris*, and *apsaras*, including musicians and dancers. One of the *bhadras* within the *garbhagriha* showcases a seated Vishnu illustrated with four arms. He is positioned in *lalitasana* posture and, adorned with a *kiritamukuta*, he holds a *gada* and *chakra* in his upper hands. In his lower right hand, he grasps an *akshamala*, however, his lower left hand is unfortunately damaged. The *bhadra* located on the rear wall of the *garbhagriha* presents an image of Brahma. This deity, although considerably damaged, is depicted seated on a *padmapitha*. He is represented with three faces and four arms, though his upper arms are broken. In his lower left hand, he holds a *kamandalu*, while his lower right hand holds an *akshamala*. Brahma is embellished with a *jatamukuta*, a moustache, and a beard.

The *mandapa* is predominantly unadorned and constructed from finely dressed stone. On the inner walls, two bench like projections likely served as platforms for the placement of ritual offerings. The ceiling of the *mandapa* exemplifies the *karotaka* typology and features eight sculptural figures positioned in the traditional arrangement of the *ashtadikpalas*, which oversee the *mandapa*. In the corners of the ceiling, *bharani* of the *ardhastambhas*, which are built on dwarf walls, can be observed, each containing a miniature *rathika*. These elements are connected by elongated beams decorated with a *ratnapattika*, succeeded by a continuous frieze of *rathikas*, again followed by a *ratnapattika*. The beam is adorned with a central *kirttimukha* motif, which is also reflected on the outer face of the structure. The roof of the *mandapa* is obscured by a *chhadya* and a significantly elevated *varandika*, which emphasizes its verticality.

The *mandapa* leads into the *antarala*, a shallow corridor characterised by pillars on either side. From this point, one advances to the *garbhagriha*, which is adorned with a meticulously crafted doorframe.

The doorjamb serves as a key diagnostic element in temple architecture, facilitating its chronological classification and dynastic association. It holds both structural integrity and symbolic meaning. The *dvarasakhas* represent the most elaborately designed sections of the temple, encompassing both architectural and iconographic elements. This particular doorjamb consists of five distinct *sakhas*. The initial *sakha* of the Undesvara Temple is the *pratisakha*, characterised as the *patra* type, which forms the immediate boundary surrounding the entrance. Following this, the sequence includes the *nagasakha*, *padmasakha*, and *stambhasakha*, which is flanked on both sides by the *pushpasakha*. Above the doorjamb,

embedded along the upper central axis, is the *lalatabimba*, which features the image of Lakulisa seated in a *padmasana* position. The *udumbara* enhances the aesthetic appeal of the doorjamb, particularly due to the presence of a *dvarapala* situated within a more structured niche. The lower section of the *stambhasakha* is accompanied by a Saiva *dvarapala*, crafted in high relief. To the right, a niche accommodates Kubera, accompanied by a procession of four smaller attendants. Among these, two can be recognised as *sankhadharini*, while the other two are likely river goddesses, possibly Ganga and Yamuna, depicted with water pots, a traditional iconographic motif. The left jamb of the door reflects this configuration, replacing the *sankhadharini* with the *padmadharini*.

Ashtadikpalas

In Hindu mythology, the eight cardinal and inter-cardinal directions are safeguarded by the *ashtadikpalas*, the directional guardians who occupy a prominent position within the cosmological framework of *Vastusastra*. Their presence is not merely symbolic but architecturally codified, finding systematic placement within temple plans and sculptural programmes.



Figure 116 Varuna image



Figure 117 Vayu image



Figure 118 Kubera image



Figure 119 Isana image



Figure 120 Agni image



Figure 121 Yama image



Figure 122 Nairitta image

The temple wall features a representation of the *dikpalas*. Within the directional schema of the *ashtadikpalas*, Varuna is established as the *dikpala* of the western direction. Varuna is illustrated here with his primary attribute, the *pasa*, symbolising his power to bind those who transgress moral law. In his upper right hand, he wields a *pasa*, while a *pushpa* is held in his upper left hand. His lower left hand carries a *kamandalu*, and in his lower right hand, he holds *akshamala*. His *vahana* is the *makara*. Iconographically, he is personified as the god of water and the cosmic ocean.

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On the opposite side of the niche, Vayu is depicted. The deity Vayu is prominently mentioned in the *Rigveda* as the divine personification of wind. In early Vedic hymns, he is closely associated with Indra and is often invoked alongside him. Within the directional schema of the *ashtadikpalas*, Vayu is designated as the *dikpala* of the north-west direction. He is represented as a tall, smiling figure with four arms. In his upper hands, he holds a staff, while a *kamandalu* and *akshamala* are shown in his lower right hands. At the base of the niche, his divine *vahana* is prominent, the stag.

Following this, the deity Kubera is prominent; he emerges prominently within the Hindu mythological landscape during the Puranic period. Therein, he is described as the king of the celestial beings known as *Yakshas* and subsequently attains elevated status as the God of Wealth and guardian of earthly treasures. Within the directional schema of the *ashtadikpalas*, Kubera is traditionally designated as the *dikpala* of the northern direction. Here, he is depicted with four arms. He holds a money bag in his upper hands. Although his lower arms are damaged, it seems he originally held a mace and a *kamandalu* in his lower right and left hands, respectively. He is accompanied by his elephant vehicle.

Isana is considered a form of Siva. He is counted among the *Ekadasa Rudras* and the *ashtabhairavas*. Very little information is known about his early origin, but he is regarded as the *dikpala* of the north-east direction. His iconographic attributes are similar to those associated with Siva and Bhairava. Here he is depicted with four arms, holding a *trisula* and a *sarpa* in his upper hands. In his lower hands, he carries a *kamandalu*, and the other one is in broken condition. He is adorned with a *jatamukuta*, and his *vahana*, the bull, is illustrated at the bottom right.

Agni holds a prominent place within the Vedic texts, as evidenced by the multitude of hymns in the *Rigveda* that are dedicated to him. As the divine representation of fire, Agni serves as the sacred link between humanity and the divine, facilitating the transmission of ritual offerings to the heavenly sphere. Nonetheless, during the subsequent Puranic period, his individual prominence gradually waned as

devotional movements increasingly shifted their focus towards other principal deities. Despite this decline, Agni maintained his theological significance and was occasionally conceptually associated with Rudra, especially concerning the destructive aspect of fire. In the established framework of the *ashtadikpalas*, Agni is recognised as the protector of the south-east direction. In this context, he is portrayed here with four arms, with his upper right hand holding an *agni* and a *pushpa* in his left. His lower hands are depicted as damaged, and the face of his *vahana* is also shown as broken. Typically, his *vahana* is represented as a ram.

In Hindu cosmology, Yama is the deity presiding over death and the moral adjudication of souls in the afterlife. Within the directional schema of the *ashtadikpalas*, he is established as the *dikpala* of the southern direction. He is shown here holding a staff and a *kamandalu*, while the other hand holds an *akshamala*. A buffalo is depicted at the bottom left.

Nairrita is a Hindu deity who personifies death, decay, and sorrow. In early Hindu scriptures, Nairriti is described as a goddess associated with inauspiciousness and the realm of the dead. In later Hindu tradition, Nairrita is conceived as a male deity and is regarded as the *dikpala* of the south-west. Here, Nairitta is also found on the wall. He is shown holding a *damaru*, a *khetaka*, and a *musala* (pestle) in his hands. One of his hands is damaged. A broken animal can be seen at the bottom left.

Charchoma Siva Temple and two unpublished Gupta Inscriptions Development of the outer area of the Temple complex and tourist facility at Shiv Temple at Charchoma, Distt. Kota



Before



After

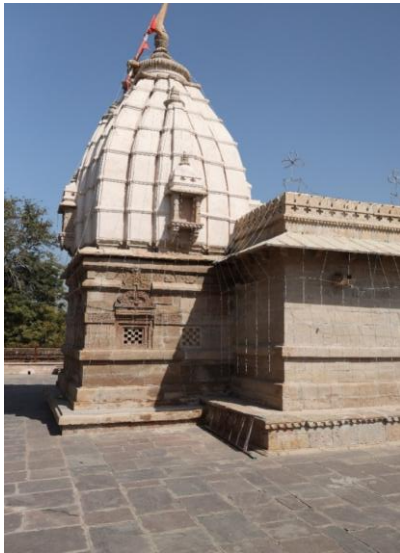
Conservation & Restoration of the Dome inner & outer portion of Shiva Temple at Charchoma, Distt. Kota



Before



After



Before



After



Before



After



Before



After



Before



After



Before



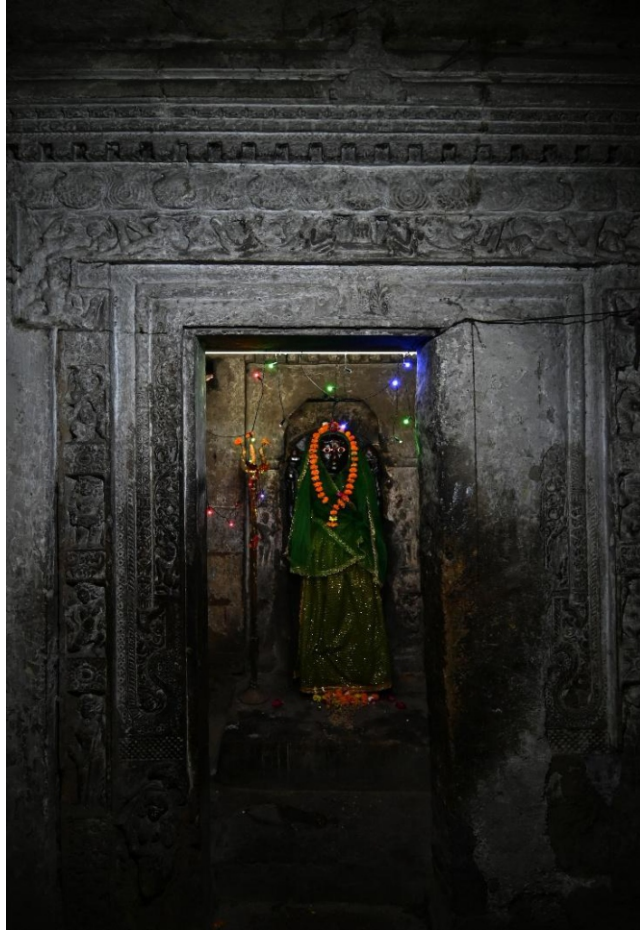
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Before



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Before



After

Temple Fortwall and Statues, Dara, Distt. Kota

Restoration & Conservation at Dara Mahal (Phase-IV) at Dara Distt. Kota



Before



During



After



Before



After



Before



After



Before



After

Temple with Inscription, Kansuan, Distt. Kota

Conservation and Restoration of the *Varandah* portion at Kansuan, Distt. Kota



Before



After



Before



After



Before



After



Before



After



Before



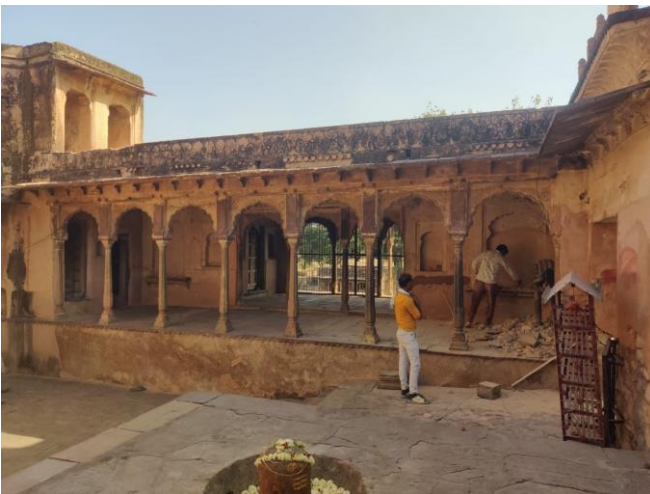
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Before



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Conservation and Restoration of Samadhi, inner portion of the temple complex at Kansuan, Distt. Kota



Before



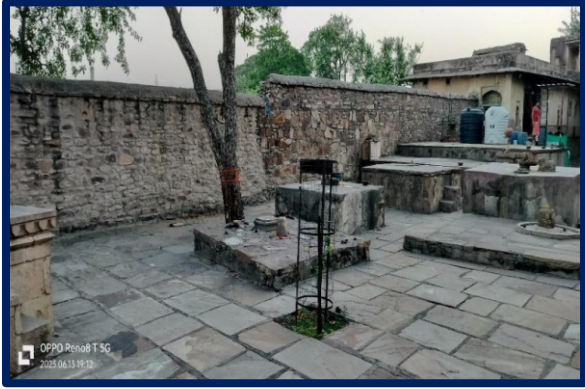
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Before



After



Before



After



Before



After



Before



After



Before



After



Before



After



Before



After

Providing illumination at Kansuan Temple, Distt. Kota



Further Readings

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