

Architectural and Artistic Analysis of the Jain Temple, Multan

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Abstract:

This paper is an attempt to explore, investigate and analyze the Jain temple of Multan including its art and architecture. This study divided into three categories which include the Architectural Setting of the Complex, Architecture of the main temple, and artistic features of the Temple. The study covers each and every aspect related architectural elements such as ground plan of the temple itself and ground plan of the whole complex. In addition to these other features such as vertical and horizontal expansion of the temple and of the whole building are also analyzed in this paper. In addition to this, decorative art of the main temple, majority of which is in the form of paintings, is analyzed. Whole of the comparison would be made keeping in view structural and artistic tradition of Jain art and architecture of Sindh in general and of Panjab in particular.

Keywords: Temple, Multan, Architecture, Art, Punjab, Sindh, Jain

INTRODUCTION

Textual as well as archaeological evidences states that Jainism existed in the historic city of Multan. Remnants of the Jain community are preserved in historical, cultural, artistic and oral traditions. Studies in the field of Jain art and architecture have revealed that several temples, either for the purpose of communal or individual worshipping, were built in different parts of the old city (see Figure 1).

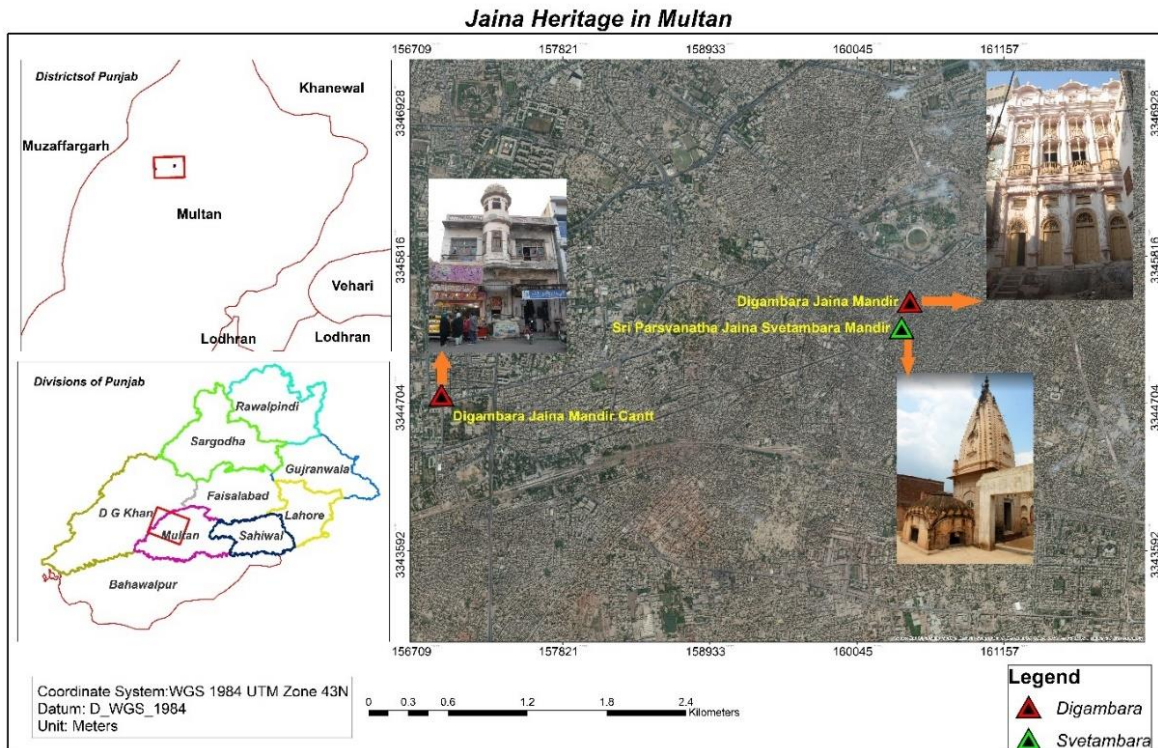


Figure 1: Map of The Jaina Heritage in Multan

Only very few of these temples have survived and the one on better state of preservation is the temple of *Sri Pārśvanātha Jain Mandir*. Name of the temple is inscribed in *Devanagari* characters, on the wooden arched entrance of the main complex of the building, (see Fig.2)

The actual inscription: श्रीपार्वनाथजैनश्वेतांबरमंदिर

English Translation: *Sri Pārśvanāth Jain Svetambar Mandir*



Figure 2: Inscription on the Main Arched Entrance of the Temple

From the inscriptional evidence, it is evident that the Temple was dedicating to *Pārśvanātha*, also spelled as *Parshvanatha*, the 23rd Tirthankara of Jainism. From this particular evidence and existence of the fabulous art wok produced in various parts of the temple, it can be suggested that in the city of Multan, *Pārśvanātha* was being worshipped by the Jain community living in the city. Another fact which we can also extract from the inscriptional evidences is that the temples was built and used by the followers of the Svetambara sect of Jainism. However, this does not mean that the other major sect of Jainism, known as Digambara, did not exist in Multan. From the

historical, archaeological and inscriptional evidences it is quite clear that followers of the both major sects of Jain religion were living simultaneously in the city and in close vicinities as well. In the following effort has been made to highlight main characteristic of the architectural setting of the temple. The Sri Svetambara Jaina Mandir Multan, as it is known, appears to follow separate style of building Jaina temples in Punjab. Its architectural and artistic features, at first instance, appear to be influenced by typical temple architecture of ancient India. Main component of a sacred enclosure can be seen even with a naked eye. However, certain religious and mythical requirements and obligations are there through which Jain identity of the building has been made possible. This is already mentioned above, covers following elements:

1. Architectural Setting of the Complex
2. Architecture of the Main Temple
3. Artistic Features

Architectural Setting of the Complex

From the architectural details, it is quite clear that the proper complex was constructed along with main area of the temple. From the available details and structural remains, we can identify several residential apartments and a properly laid out basement as seen in the ground plan of the complex. The structures mainly occupy Eastern and Southern side of the complex. Presently residential apartments are no more in use, however entire area of the ground story of the Southern side consists of small rooms, (or shops). These shops represent renovated interior, but traces of original masonry can still be found which point to the fact that these were originally there when actual building of the complex was constructed. As the site is located inside walled city of Multan, its commercial use and significance in past cannot be ignored. So, the shops were originally there and built intentionally as one of the sources to generate income. Such tradition was quite common even among the Mughal and best example we have in the form of Wazir Khan Mosque where similar structures were built on Southern side of the building. These shops were built as part of the Mosque and main purpose was to earn money which was spent to look after different affairs of the building (Khan M. , 2011)

The residential apartments as seen in the basement as well as of the ground and first storey of the building demonstrate utility of the complex as a living place. From number of rooms and quarters the complex appears to be under the use of one family. Another possibility can also be mentioned that the complex could be a community hall and might have multifunctional role, either religious, social or commercial.

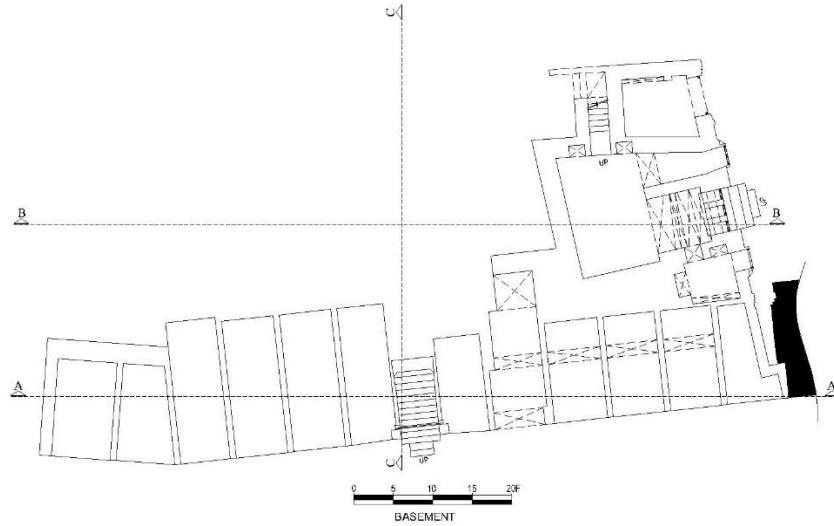


Figure 1: Basement Plan of the Complex

Key plan

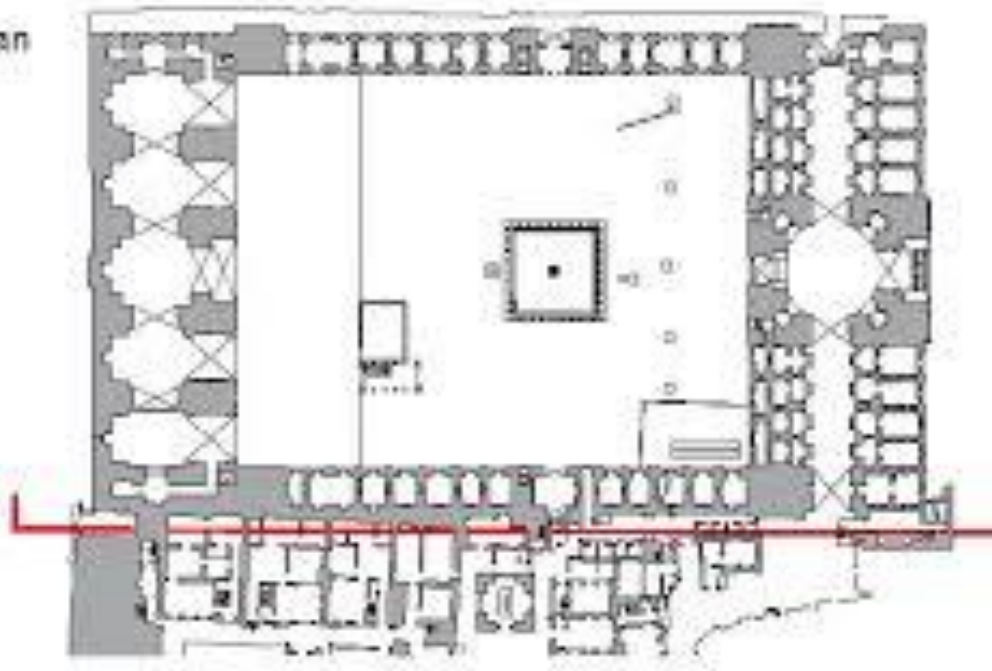


Figure 2: Plan of Wazir Khan Mosque

As far as architectural analysis of the complex is concerned, it can be compared with temple architecture of Sindh and of Punjab. Regarding Jaina temple architecture of Sindh, most of the shrines display traditional style of temple architecture, largely influenced by Indian Temple architecture. Jaina temples in Sindh are located in the district of Nagarparkar. Majority of the temples such as City Temple, Virawah Temple and Bhodisar Temple, have similar layout as we find in Hindu Temples. This is further evidenced by ground plans of these temples. Two of the ground plan and area around these is being included here for making comparative analysis. When we compare these temples with the Jaina Temple of Multan, there is clear cut difference and nothing in terms of a building complex can be seen in Jaina temples of Sindh.

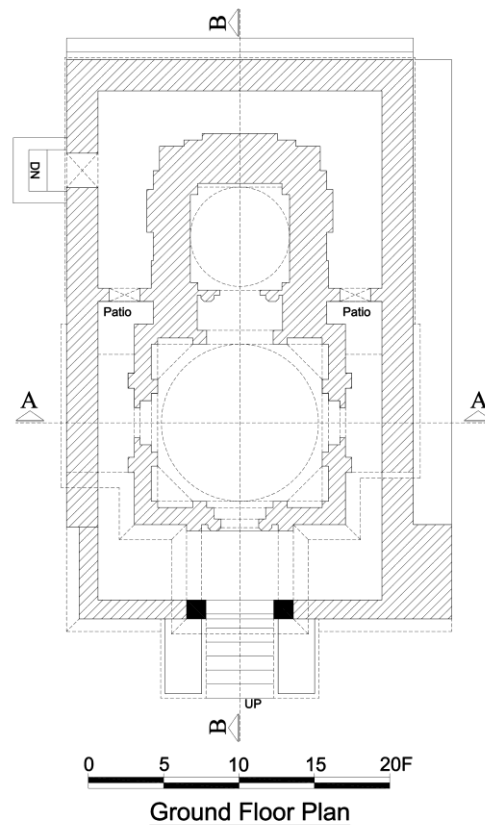


Figure 3: Ground Plan of Bazar temple

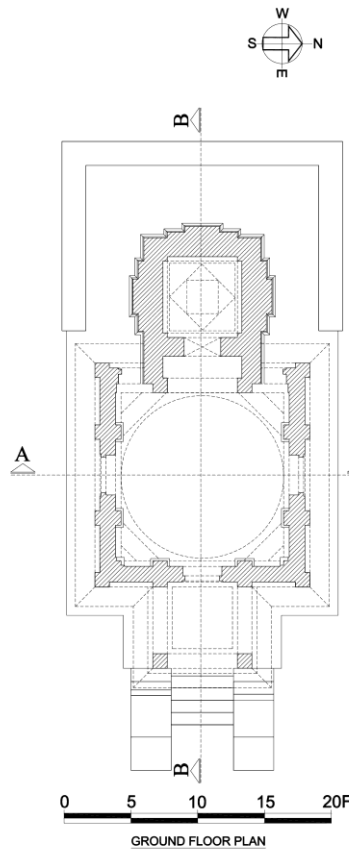


Figure 4: Ground Plan of Virawah Temple

Second area of making comparative study is Punjab. Jaina monuments in the form of temples, community halls and Samadhis have been reported from various cities of the province as reported by (Flugel & Ahmad, 2018) in a recent article. Architectural setting of the Jaina temples in Punjab show clear difference and structural setting. Majority of the temples are to be found with proper complex built around them. Critical analysis of these buildings shows that these structures are based upon the traditional Gurdwara style where a proper complex consisting of double or triple storey is found. Series of large small rooms at each storey level, including basement, is among notable features of such complexes. Main sanctum is usually built at first story of the temple. For example, Jaina temple in Rasool Nagar, in Gujranwala District shows similar setting. From this comparison we can say that Jaina temple architecture of Multan represent Punjab School of Jaina architecture.



Figure 5: Jain Temple, Rasool Nagar

Neither customary nor strictly, ancient Indian temples were built with as well as without specific complexes, circling main shrine. The temple complex may consist of square or a rectangular in ground plan, depending upon need and likeness of the authority or person who commissioned construction of temple.

Architecture of the Main Temple

Temple architecture and art of ancient India originate, developed and flourished in ancient India then expanded towards Central and East Asian territories (Brown, Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Periods), 1959) The temple building tradition is based upon strong religious roots linking with Buddhist, Brahmanical (Modern Hinduism) and Jainism. Instructions for building religious edifices and shrines are given in ancient and medieval canonical literature in the form of Scriptures, Agamas, Shastras etc. The guidelines mentioned in the religious texts are strictly followed. For instance, in Hindu traditions, specific book is there to be consulted before building a temple. The whole process of selecting a site where shrine intends to be built is also mentioned in literature. On the basis of prescribed information and specific guidelines, building of temple (Brown, Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Periods), 1959; Masih, 2015; Meister, 2010; Rao, 1997; Hassan, 2008) is built having following main architectural features:

1. *Ardha Mandapa*
2. *Mandapa*
3. *Antrala*

4. Garbagriha

Depending on requirement of community additional “*Maha Mandapa*” can also be added. With regard to vertical structure of a temple, the building comprises of following parts

1. *Jagati*
2. *Vedibanda*
3. *Jhanga*
4. *Varandika*
5. *Sikhara*
6. *Kalasa*

(Brown, Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Periods), 1959) is regarded as authority on Indian architecture. He mentioned comprehensive account of Indian Temple architecture. Furthermore, (Dhaky & Miester, 1996; Hardy, 2008) also contributed in the study. From these scholarly works we can get maximum information about temple architectural traditions which prevailed in ancient Indian and also reached in present day Pakistan where we have series of Hindu temple, popularly known as Salt Range temples. By looking at the structure of these temples, particularly drawing of their ground plans, we find striking resemblance in terms of vertical expansion of Jaina temple of Multan. The Jaina temple shows direct influence as main parts of temple such as *Jagati*, *Vedibanda*, *Jhanga*, *Varandika*, *Sikhara*, *Kalasa* and elaborated *Sikhara*. The architectural setting shows similar structural scheme as visible on Hindu temple of 6th to 11th century of Pakistan. The similarity can also be seen in the Jaina temples of Tharparkar. So, on the whole we can say that Jaina temple building tradition all over the country conventional style as far as vertical expansion is concerned. However, in the case of our temple, it shows modifications as well. The changes certainly are results of continues process of development in temple architecture of Pakistan. During the long process the temple building tradition continued from 11th century to 20th century. This long process in the end produced mixture of Hindi, Buddhist, Muslim and Sikh traditions.

Artistic Features

Jaina shrines across the country represent exclusive art work in the form of sculptures and paintings. Almost all of the Jaina temples are profusely decorated from exterior as well as from interior. Certainly, the subject matter of the art work is religious in majority of the cases. Numerous human and animal figures are depicted on wall and ceiling of the buildings. Depiction of Tirthankaras, their Yaksha and Yakshini are among the popular theme. Symbolic representation of the 24th Tirthankara of Jaina pantheon can also be seen. Religious narrative art further includes depiction of mythical events such as 14 auspicious dreams. Other religious themes include depiction of TirthPat, pilgrimage road map, location of temples, performing rituals, celestial beings, noble and Rajas, as is the case with Jaina temple, Multan. The color combination includes excessive use of golden, black, blue and orange colors in all paintings (See Figure.58,76,79).

When we compare the art work of Jaina temples of Punjab with temples of Nagarparkar, the later are more lavishly decorated and represents wide range of subject matter. For example, wall of the Jaina temple inside the city are profusely painted. Each and every part of the walls of main chamber, *Antrala*, *Ardhamanadapa* is covered with paintings. Various religious stories are depicted on these paintings.



Figure 6: Paintings of Bazar Temple

Similar is the case with Virawah temple; however, paintings are in very poor state of preservation. On the other hands temples in Punjab show less amount of art work. Although there is no significant difference in style, technique and theme of the art work but some parts of the Jaina temples are left untreated. Even then present researcher believes that art work of the Jaina shrines in Punjab is more expressive and understandable as is the case with Parshvanath Temple of Multan. Here main deity of the temple is depicted so often and so prominently that it is very easy to determine and identify association of the temple with respective Tirthankara.

Another way of making artistic comparison of the Jaina temples is with the temple built by Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan. Remains of Hindu temples show exclusive decoration on their exterior surface, however, interior surface on the whole is devoid of any sort of art work (Masih, 2015; Meister, 2010)

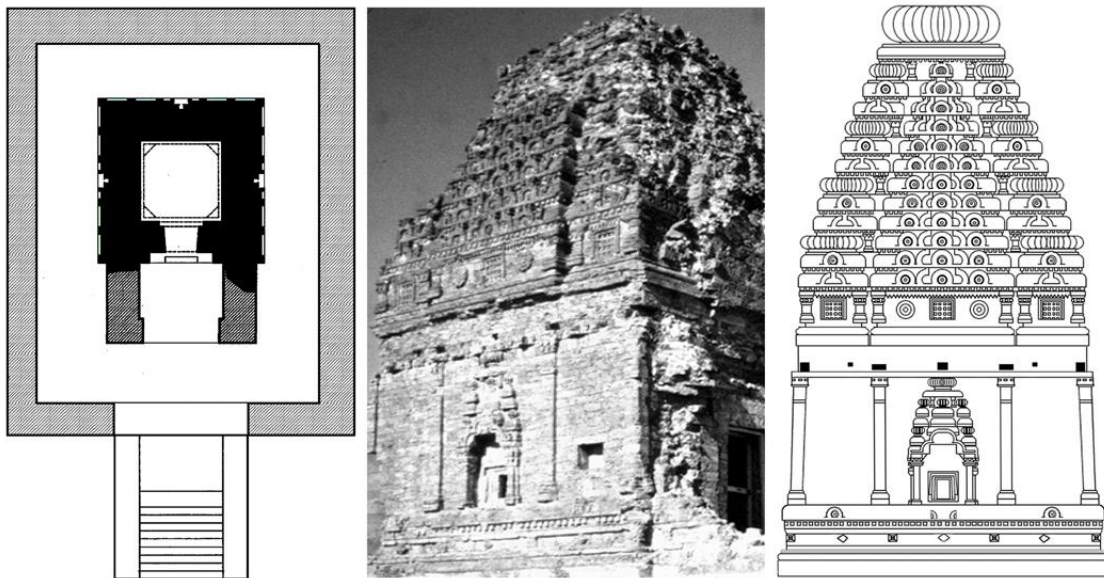


Figure 7: Salt Range Temple

The Sikhs adopted architectural scheme of Hindu but made certain modifications. Most important in this regard is the treatment of interior. In most of the Sikh religious as well as secular building, inner parts of the buildings show tremendous amount of paint work. Walls and roofs of the shrines

are lavishly decorated with certain religious themes. The subject matter extends further and covers other aspects of daily life. (Singh, Lost Heritage The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan, 2018; Singh, The Quest Continues Lost Heritage The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan, 2018; Khan K. M., 2000). When in Punjab Jaina community began to build temples, they seem to be influenced by the architectural and artistic traditions of Sikhs and decorated these shrines from outer and as well as from inner sides.

Detail Examination of the Art and Architecture of the Temple

Sri Pārśvanātha Jain Svetambara Mandir of Multan which is associated lord Parsvanatha, the 23th Tirthankara of Jaina religion is very unique monument regarding its historical, architectural and artistic significance. The shrine is living example of Jaina community who were inhabitant of the city. As per information mentioned in archival record of the city, Jainism and followers of the religion consisted 1% percent of the whole population. Although they migrated after partition but buildings and shrines they left behind are visible proof of cultural, social and architectural and artistic contribution of Jainas in the history of Pakistan.

It has been recorded that at least five Jaina temples were built in Multan. These were built by Svetambara and by Digambara. Inscriptional evidences are there to testify religious association of these temples with respective sects and their followers. During present investigation at least three of the temples, one belonging to Svetambara and remaining two belonging to Digambara were visited. Sri Pārśvanātha Jain Svetambara Mandir as seen written on the inscription on Southern entrance is the only one in better state of preservation. This is the reason why the temple was selected for research purpose. Main components of the building are still intact and show original structure at most of the places. Moreover, art work in the form of paintings and carvings has survived in spite of human vandalism and natural factors.

Sri Pārśvanātha Jain Svetambara Mandir in Multan consists of a complete complex, details of which have already mentioned above. With regards to main area of the temple, the art work applied on its façade, walls of the side chamber on the right side and on Northwestern section of the cloister is visible and the same has been explained in previous works (Qaiser, 2017; Qureshi, 2014). In these books, only basic information is provided. Sometimes subject matter of a painting is also missing. The present work for the first time has provided detailed account of the figural representation is given. Identification of the subject matter of the Tirthankaras depicted over main entrance of the temple and of the wall paintings of the cloister is significant in this regard. The identification is made possible after exhaustive reading of literature on Jaina art (Bhattacharya, 1971; Gupte, 1972; Shah U. P., 1998). It is pertinent to mention that all across Pakistan; very limited scholarship is available regarding Jaina art. The present work provides base knowledge for understanding Jaina art and cosmology in Pakistan.

In Jaina traditions, buildings and temples are also decorated from interior. Keeping in view this factor in mind, present researcher searched for art work done inside the main temple. But doorways of sanctum area, its flanking chamber on Northern side and of the processional paths were locked for more than 35 years, as told by the people under whom the building is being looked after or occupied. After a great deal of hard work and convincing, finally permission was given to unlock and open the door. Once the doors were opened, interior of the main chamber was visited and photographed. The fabulous art work, fully preserved in form, is the first example of this kind to be recorded anywhere in the country. The paintings, from the height of 6/7 feet, are fully intact as shown in previous chapter. However, the part western wall of the chamber below that level was

badly damaged intentionally. Neither the seat nor the platform is visible. These were broken by the use of chisel and hammer. There is heap of large and small broken pieces of marble, bricks and plaster. This resulted in the destruction of any paint work or sculpture that could have been placed inside.

In terms of architectural features the temple of Multan has very significant character. Its architectural setting and over all look, resembles more to tradition Sikh and Colonial rather than Hindu tradition. Absence of Antrala, Ardha Mandapa and Mandapa are no doubt missing but these elements like profusely decorated façade, flanking chambers, cloister, open courtyard, series of small and large chambers, shops, multistoried façade of the whole complex and a proper basement are there. All these features are clear evidence of individuality of the monument. Sri Pārśvanātha Jaina Svetambara Mandir in Multan as compared to other two surviving Jaina temples belonging to Digambara sects is very fine piece of art and architecture.

Presently the building is deteriorating gradually, and several cracks have appeared at different places. Sanctum and cloister in front of the temple, Northern cloister wall are among most damaged sections of the temple. Serious efforts are required by the concerned authorities to preserve the building from further decay. At first stage, depressions on the roof must be leveled to block penetration of rain water into the walls. At second stage cracks of the damaged walls must be filled. Moreover, suggestion was given to present custodians of the building to build pillars underneath the walls for giving it additional support. In order to save art work, it was also suggested to cover whole façade of the temple by fixing flex paper. The custodian assures to do their best as they have been doing since many years, to protect the building and its art work.

Conclusion

The research can be used as first detailed account of the art and architecture of the temple. Results produced after thorough investigation of the building can play a very significant role, for understanding building traditions of Jainas in Punjab and in Pakistan. Style of rest of the Jaina temples in other cities of the province can not only be comprehended but also reconstructed on the basis of similarity in architecture and resemblance in art. There is no inscriptional evidence to determine date of the construction or completion of the building. So, on the base of architectural and stylistic study based upon the visit of other Jaina structure in Punjab, it can be stated that the Sri Pārśvanātha Jain Svetambara Mandir in Multan belongs to Pre-Independence period of Pakistan. More precisely the temple can be dated early half of the 20th century. The dating is further based upon the presence of Sikh and colonial architectural and artists elements used in the whole complex. Furthermore, similar dating can be given to majority of the Jaina shrines in Punjab. This aspect certainly needs to be explored in later studies. Moreover, exclusive study what may be called or termed as “Punjab School of Jaina Art and Architecture”, need to be made for thorough comprehension of the field as this is the most neglected aspect of Pakistan archaeology and history. This paper is the first manuscript exclusively covering single Jaina monument of the country.

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