

Govt. of India



Ancient Monument and
Archaeological sites and Remains
(Amendment and validation) Act 2010

JAISALMER FORT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA



*Please come forward to preserve
this glorious heritage.*

Technical Assistance in Text and Concept - Shiv Kumar Bhagat, Photo by : R.R. Mathur

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150th years celebration

of

Archaeological Survey of India (1861-2011)

Government of India



Nationally Protected Monument

Jaisalmer Fort including Ancient Temples

(Notified : Act No.LXXI of 1951, dated 28.11.1951)



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BY ORDER-
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BY ORDER
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



Cultural Notice Board



General Notice Board



Photo Gallery



Direction Board



Slogan Boards

PROTECTED MONUMENTS - JAISALMER



“The present generation has sacred duty to preserve, protect & pass on the monumental heritage intact to the posterity.”

-Alexander Cunningham

The Archaeological Survey of India, a premier organization established in 1861 with the principal objective of preservation, conservation and protection of the vast cultural heritage from pre-historic times to British period, is celebrating its 150th anniversary of glorious past. The vast area of our country has a variety of climatic conditions but the dominant feature is the tropical monsoon. There are 3676 nationally protected monuments and sites in the purview of the Archaeological Survey of India.

The responsibility of preservation of the monumental heritage rests with the Archaeological Survey of India and the respective State Archaeological Departments including some NGO's and Local



Development Committees. These monuments and archaeological sites are looked after by 24 circles of the Archaeological Survey of India located in different parts of the country.

The Science Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India came into existence in 1917 with the principal responsibility of chemical treatment and preservation of museum exhibits and other antiquities including paintings and monuments.

There is also a great demand for conserving the monuments which have been neglected as they are not protected by the State Archaeology or by the Archaeological Survey of India. People have love for these monuments but there are not enough resources and manpower to look after them.

Rajasthan (Lat.24°30' -30°12' N.; Long.69°15' -76°45' E.), erstwhile Rajputana, popularly known as the land of princes, forts and palaces, is the largest state of India. It is bounded on the north and north-east by Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh; south-west by Gujarat; south-east by Madhya Pradesh and north-west by Pakistan. The state of Rajasthan, as it stands today, comprises of thirty three districts covering an approximately 3,42,239 sq. km. area with part of the Thar Desert (Marusthal) and uneven topographical features.

The monuments and archaeological remains of diverse nature are located in the region since prehistoric times to late medieval period are scattered from Dholpur in the east to Jaisalmer in the west and Ganganagar in the north to Banswara in the south. There are 160 centrally protected monuments and sites in Rajasthan which could be



broadly classified as protohistoric and early historic sites, i.e. remains of Brahmanical and Jain temples, Buddhist caves and idols, mosques, tombs and *idgahs*, *chhatris*, forts, palaces, *havelis*, *sarais*, towers and *minars*, tanks, bunds, *ghats* and *baoris* (stepped-wells), gardens, pavilions and *toranas*, colossal images, monoliths, pillars, inscriptions, paintings and battle-fields.

The conservation challenges in the region are manifold owing to its diverse geographical and respective ecological conditions. The region experiences very low to scanty rainfall and Jaisalmer is the hottest place of the country which itself is a major factor for cause of decay and damage to the historical monuments and sites. Besides, sand bearing winds with high speed hitting the stone surface of the monuments, fluctuation in day and night temperature are also the factors responsible for damage to the monuments and sites.

The Fort of Jaisalmer stands majestically on the Trikuta hill and is a living testimony to the pride of the Bhati rulers. Due to its location and appearance it is one of the most magnificent forts that occupies a unique place in the annals of Rajasthan.

The Bhatīs originally hailing from the Sialkot area of Punjab established themselves around A.D. 623 at Tannot, 120 km. north-west of Jaisalmer. Kehar was the first Bhati ruler who built a fortress at Tannot in A.D. 731. In 10th Century A.D., Devaraj, a descent of Bhatīs, after defeating Lodra Rajput



Nripabharu established his capital at Lodruva and assumed the title of Maharawal. The town received severe damages twice in the hands of Mahmud of Ghazani in A.D. 1025 and Muhammad Ghori in A.D. 1178 enroute to Gujarat. Having found it not a safe place for the defence, Maharawal Jaisal laid the foundation of a new fort at Jaisalmer in A.D. 1178 by constructing gateway and part of the fort. The remaining portion of the fort was completed by Rawal Salivahan II, son and successor of Maharawal Jaisal in A.D. 1244.

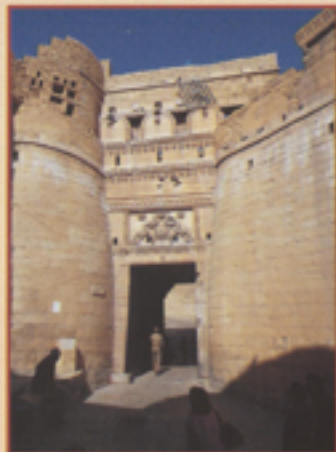


The fort of Jaisalmer also popularly now known as "Sonar Kila" due to the golden colour of the stone can be seen from miles away before reaching the town. The fort occupying an area of 11.28 hectare stands approximately 50 m high on the hill with its huge ramparts that varies from 10 to 25 m in height. There are two parallel

walls around it and a retaining wall which has served as a base or pitching wall to restrict the erosion of the slope on the top of which the fort stands. The main fort has two walls running parallel with a variable gap of 2-6 m in between, known as *Mori* and was purposefully built for the movement of the security guards around the fort. These walls made of solid stone blocks were erected without using any mortar or clay. The entire structure stands valiantly with its 81 bastions at present and each of which is 10 m in height. These bastions at regular intervals were provided not only with parapet wall on the top pierced by gun holes, but also embellished with projected arched window-balconies and peep-holes. The fort is approached from the north-east corner through four successive gateways viz. **Akhai pol, Ganesh pol, Suraj pol and Hawa pol.** The Akhai pol is considered a later addition as it was constructed by Maharawal Akshai Singh (A.D. 1722-62) when the base wall was further extended.

The rulers of Jaisalmer were great patrons of art and architecture. Several beautiful Brahmanical and Jain temples, magnificent palaces, havelis and gateways were built which clearly reflect the skill and dexterity of the stone masons and artistic excellence of the Bhati rulers and still attract the attention of the visitors to a large extent.

The first gateway known as Akhai Pole or Akshai pol was built by Maharawal Akshya Singh or Akhai Singh (A.D. 1722-1762) when he extended the base wall of the fort. After Akhai pol, one has to cross the stone



paved road to reach Suraj pol which was built by Maharawal Bhim. On its upper most part an arched *torawa*, embellished with a figure of Sun is engraved in the centre and to the right is a watch-tower capped with a vaulted octagonal kiosk. Passing through its nailed-doorway and ascending a steep-turn, one immediately beholds the Ganesh pol or Bhuta pol named on account of an image of Ganesh engraved on its main lintel. Further up along the pebbled pathway is the Hawa pol or Rang pol welcoming the tired visitors by its ever blowing cool breeze. Two smooth stone benches inside the gate on sides offer the visitors a short respite. These three gateways were built in between (A.D. 1577-1623) during the reigns of Bhim and Manohar Das.

Inside the fort there is a cluster of five palaces or *havelis* namely **Rang Mahal, Sarvottam Vilas, Gaj Mahal or Gaj Vilas, Zenana Mahal and Moti Mahal.** Rang Mahal, just above the Hawa-Pol, built by Maharawal Mulraj II (A.D. 1762-1820) is embellished with mural and arabesques, hence it is called Rang Mahal. Sarvottam Vilas, one of the best *havelis* built by Maharawal Akhai Singh (A.D. 1722-1762) is decorated with blue tiles and glass-mosaic work that looks like a Sheesh-Mahal. Adjacent to these *havelis* is the Gaj Mahal or Gajvilas. It was constructed by Maharawal Gaj Singh in A.D. 1884. It is a three-storeyed building with a row of carved balconies on each tier. The construction of its facade rests on the pillars and arches intercepted by the intermittent projecting balconies. Just behind the Sarvottamvilas and Rang Mahal is the Zenana Mahal which presents a shallow decoration in the blind spaces. Its arch-decoration on the facade is attractive. Moti Mahal, another three storeyed building was constructed by Mul Raj II in A.D. 1813, the front of which is decorated with heavy floral motifs, particularly in the stone-doors.



BRAHMANICAL TEMPLES



Lakshminarayan temple is one of the earliest brahmanical temples in the fort. Facing west and standing on a raised platform it consists of a square sanctum, a vestibule both enclosed by an ambulatory path and a *mandapa*

followed by a small porch. Being enclosed on all sides, the temple is accessible by a flight of steps from the south and west. The sanctum is topped by a curvilinear *sikhara*, adorned with *anga-sikharas*. It was built in A.D. 1440.

Ratneshwar Mahadeva temple, facing east, is approached through a slightly raised staircase from both south and north sides. It consists of a porch, vestibule, pillared *mandapa* with *kakshasana* having the provision of *pradakshina-patha* and a *garbhagriha*. There is also a space for *parva-devatas* on the north and south sides. In the pillared *mandapa*, a *Sivalinga* is installed though the main deity is in the *sanctum*. The interior of the temple is decorated with sculptures. The *mandapa* has a spiral ceiling while the *sanctum* ceiling is a simple corbelled one.

The *lalatabimba* is decked with Brahma, Mahesh & Vishnu. The porch has a flat square roof. The *sabhamandapa* and the shrines of *parva-devatas* are having domical ceiling, while the *sanctum* has a curvilinear *sikhara*,



surrounded by miniature *sikharas*. The *amaloka* is topped by *kalasa* of which the finial is missing. To the southern part another miniature *nagara* shrine is attached to the main temple. The temple was built in fifteenth century A.D.

Surya temple is facing east and has a raised *jagati*. It is approached through a flight of steps. On plan, it consists of a porch, a *mandapa* with *kakshasana* followed by a vestibule and *garbhagriha*. The sanctum of the temple has a curvilinear *sikhara*, which is further adorned with miniature *sikharas*. Another miniature shrine is on the southern side of the main temple.



Chamunda mata temple is also facing east and is dedicated to Chamunda. It consists of a *sanctum* and a *mandapa* with *pradakshina-patha*. In front of the *mandapa* there is a narrow balcony with arched openings. The interior is simple, but the exterior is intricately designed from *jagati* upto the parapet wall. The parapet on the eastern side presents the figures of five celestial musicians. The curvilinear *sikhara* of the *garbha-graha* is raised upon a square base. The main *sikhara* is adorned with *urusingas* having the figures of jumping lions on four corners. The *amaloka* is topped by a finial.





Ranchhodji temple is dedicated to Krishna and Rukmini. This early *sandhara* temple is on a raised platform and is approached through a flight of steps. Facing east, it consists of a *garbhagriha* and a rectangular *mandapa* with *kakhsasana* on the east and south. The marble images of Krishna and Rukmini are installed in the *garbhagriha*.

Besides, there are other shrines within the fort complex. Among them are **Yoginimata temple**, **Annapurna temple**, **Tikamrai** or **Adinarayan temple**, **Ghantiwali Mata temple**, etc.

JAIN TEMPLES

Parsavanath temple : Built by Maharawal Jai Singh in A.D. 1416, this is the oldest and one of the most beautiful temples of the fort. On plan, it shows a porch with carved torana that is supported on four pillars in front, followed by *mukha-mandapa*, *ranga-mandapa*, *antarala* and *garbhagriha*. The walls of the shrine are beautifully carved with animals and human figures. The shrine is crowned by *sikhara* which is further

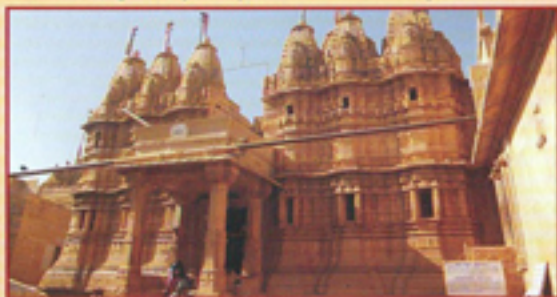


topped by an *amalaka*, holding a pot bearing lotus flower. The ceiling of the *mukha-mandapa* is profusely decorated. The courtyard is enclosed by a double colonnade finely carved small pillars and ornamented ceiling. Behind it, there stands a series of cells containing seated Tirthankaras. The temple is also called Navatoraniya after the nine towers in the *mandapa* pillar. The *jangha* of the temple is studded with *nithuva* figures.

Sambhavanath temple is situated to the left of the Parsvanatha temple and is approached through the *ranga-mandapa*. It is of the same plan as the Parsvanatha and the ceiling of the *ranga-mandapa* bears the circular ribs with a lotus pendant, divine musicians and dancers. The *sikhara* is dwarf in nature and the *mandapa* roof is bell shaped. Sculptural decoration of dancers and other secular figures is extremely rare. The construction of the temple was initiated by the Oswal brothers in A.D. 1494 and completed in three years. The importance of this temple lies in the two underground chambers below the shrine, where important Jain manuscripts and miniatures are kept.

Shitalanathaji temple was built in A.D. 1422 on the right of the Parsvanatha temple and is approached through the *ranga-mandapa*. The plan of the temple is like that of the former one. Here the *ranga-mandapa* does not have any open area and the whole setup seems to be squeezed and has a very thin sculptural adornment.

Chandraprabhuji temple: Located on the right flank of the



Parsvanath temple it was built in A.D. 1453 and is approached through a staircase that leads one to the *ranga-mandapa* of the temple. It is a three storeyed structure having a shrine dedicated to Chandraprabhnath on each floor. On plan, it has a sanctum followed by a vestibule and domical *ranga-mandapa*. The entire structure is enclosed by a row of thirty one miniature shrines leaving a dark and narrow *pradakshina-path*. The parapet wall of the temple is formed by a row of miniature *sikhara*s.



Rishabhdevaji temple is on the right of Chandraprabhuji temple. Built around A.D.1480, this east facing temple consists of a *ranga-mandapa* preceded by an open courtyard, *mukha-mandapa* and *gudha-mandapa*. The entire unit is enclosed on the back by row of miniature shrines. The *ranga-mandapa* ceiling is devoid of sculptural addition, but *mandovara* is adorned with female figures. The embattled parapet wall around the *sikhara* is a unique feature of this temple.

Santinath and Kunthunathaji temples were probably constructed in A.D. 1480 and 1527 respectively. This double storeyed temple shows Kunthunathji below and Shantinathji above. The sanctum of Kunthunathji is on the ground floor while the *mandapa* is raised majestically on the floor above. *Jagati* covers a small area but both the lower and upper corridors run very close. The lower *ranga-mandapa* has four *torana* pillars while the upper one has

a decorated ceiling embellished with the dancers. The roof of the *mula-prasada* is designed in stepped pyramidal fashion with open balconies on all the four sides. The distinctive roof has been richly fabricated with rearing lions crowned by an *amalaku* and *kalasa*. On plan they are showing porch followed by *ardha-mandapa*, *mandapa*, *antarala*, and *garbhagriha*.

Conservation measures and problems

Prior to the formation of Jaipur circle (1985), the Jaisalmer fort and the temples were looked after by the then Western Circle, Vadodara of the Archaeological Survey of India. The measures taken are mainly structural conservation works at fortification walls (both inner and outer) along with pitching wall, bastions, gateways and temples (both Brahmanical and Jaina).

The bilingual notification boards, cultural notice boards, slogan boards and direction boards at convenient points for the tourists in matching sand stone have been provided recently. The marker-stones for prohibited area (100 meters) and regulated area (200 meters) have also been fixed all around the fort for general awareness of the local residents.



In the desert climate, the wide variations in diurnal and seasonal temperature, the building materials used in construction of the monument react differently. High speed wind blowing in the Jaisalmer desert area carrying sand and rubbing it against the monuments also causes damage to the building materials. The main causes of damage in the fort walls and bastions are erosion activity around the hill slopes, drainage congestion, unauthorized activities and absence of proper sewerage system.

Apart from that, the population and commercial activities are increasing day-by-day within the fort which adversely affects the ancient fabric of the fort. Besides, waste water is percolating into bed rock due to faulty drainage and sewerage system, which makes stone particles friable, loose and even soluble into water.

At present, the ASI is undertaking the conservation and restoration work of outer fortification wall, canon points and other structures of the fort under Pilot Project Scheme in collaboration with World Monument Fund and National Cultural Fund. It is being clarified here that ASI is doing conservation work by its own technical people like Deputy Superintending Archaeological Engineer, Asst. Superintending Archaeological Engineer, Conservation Assistants, Foremen etc. under the supervision of the senior most Archaeologist of the circle and not by the government or private contractors.

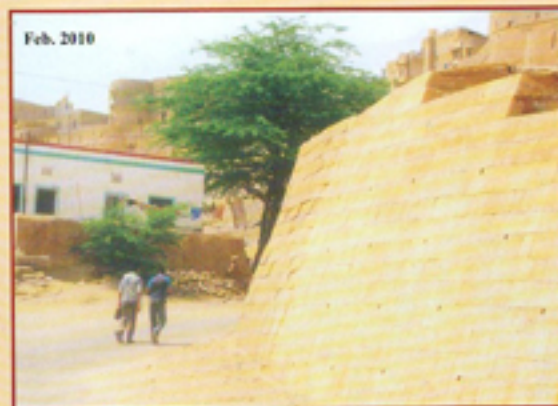


General Appeal

- It is our moral duty to hand-over this Golden Fort safely to our next generations.
- We should avoid to enter the Petrol/ Diesel driven vehicles in the fort.
- Please do not throw garbage/rubbish within the fort including mori and slope of the hill.
- Please do not write anything on the walls of the fort.
- Please do not make unauthorized construction in and around the fort.
- Please keep the drainage and outlets clean.

Pilot Project

Pitching Wall : Section-I



Platform near Surajpol



Conservation work of Second Fortification Wall (In progress)

