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Manidhari Shri Jinchandra Suri and the legacy of Mehrauli Dadabari: A symbol of spiritual harmony and miraculous devotion

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Abstract

This research paper explored the historical and spiritual significance of Dadabaris, shrines dedicated to the revered Dada Gurus of the Kharatara Gaccha sect of the Svetambara Jains. Focus is placed on the notable shrines in Ajmer, Malpura, and Mehrauli, with a particular emphasis on the life and contributions of Manidhari Shri Jinchandra Suri.

Ajmer is home to the samadhi sthal of Jinadatta Suri, featuring idols of Parshva and Vimalnath, established as a pilgrimage center in the 12th century. Malpura's Dadabari, dedicated to Jinakusala Suri, is renowned for the footprint of the Guru, believed to have imparted wisdom posthumously to a follower. The Dadabari in Mehrauli, Delhi, marks the cremation site of Manidhari Jinchandra Suri, a revered figure known for his spiritual powers and selfless service.

Born in 1140 CE in Jaisalmer, Jinchandra Suri, a child prodigy, renounced the world at six and was initiated into Jain monkhood. He mastered various philosophical and religious texts and became an Acharya at eight. As a leader, he authored significant works, dispelled misconceptions, and fought for social and religious reforms, advocating non-violence, tolerance, and universal brotherhood. His miracles, such as creating an invisible barrier to protect his followers and transforming the fortunes of a devotee, highlight his spiritual prowess.

In 1166 CE, foreseeing his death, Jinchandra Suri traveled to Yojnipur (Mehrauli), where he instructed his followers on his funeral rites. Despite their grief causing them to forget his instructions, his last rites were performed at Manik Chowk, now Mehrauli Dadabari, where a miraculous gem emerged from his forehead. This event solidified the shrine's significance.

Mehrauli Dadabari remains a beacon of peace, religious harmony, and universal brotherhood, reflecting the enduring legacy of Manidhari Shri Jinchandra Suri's teachings and the profound impact of his life on diverse communities.

Keywords: Dada Gurudev, life, temple shrines, values

Introduction

A Dadabari is a type of shrine, typically located near a Jain temple, and dedicated to one of the four Dada Gurus revered by the Kharatara Gaccha sect of the Svetambara Jains. The most notable shrines are found in Ajmer, Malpura, and Mehrauli. The four Dada Gurus are Jinadatta Suri (1075-1154 CE), Jinchandra Suri Manidhari (1140-1166 CE), Jinakusala Suri (1280-1332 CE), and Jinchandra Suri II (1541-1613 CE).

Ajmer

Ajmer serves as the "samadhi sthal" (memorial resting place) of the first Dada Guru, Jinadatta Suri. The shrine houses two idols: one of Parshva, the 23rd Tirthankara, crafted from seven metals and including footprints believed to be his, and one of Vimalnath, the 13th Tirthankara. This shrine also features a "teerth kshetra" (pilgrimage center) that was established in the 12th century.

Malpura

The Dadabadi at Malpura is the most frequented by visitors. It is dedicated to Dada Guru Jinakusala Suri, who attained Samadhi (the heavenly abode) in Deraur (now in Pakistan), after spending time at Malpura gathering followers. It is believed that Jinakusala Suri appeared to one of his followers posthumously to impart his insight and wisdom while standing on a stone that still bears his footprint.

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Mehrauli

The Dadabadi in Mehrauli, Delhi, is the site where the second Dada Guru Manidhari Jinchandra Suri Ji was cremated. According to legend, Jinchandra Suri, on his deathbed, instructed his followers that the "Mani" (magic jewel) embedded in his forehead would fall out upon his death and should be placed in a bowl of milk. He also directed that his body should not be set down while preparations for his funeral were being made. However, overwhelmed by grief, his followers set his body on the ground, after which they were unable to move it again. Despite efforts involving elephants, all attempts failed, necessitating that the last rites be performed at the spot where the shrine now stands.



History of Manidhari Shri Jinchandra Suri Ji

The name Manidhari Shri Jinchandra Suri Ji inspires faith and reverence, representing a figure of remarkable accomplishment across various facets of life in a short span of time. Known for the gem (Mani) embedded in his forehead, he was called 'Manidhari'. A preacher of 'Sarva Dharma Sadbhava' (universal harmony of all religions), he is worshipped and respected by Jains, Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs alike.

Early Years

Born 849 years ago (Vikram Samvat 1197) in Vikrampur (Jaisalmer-Rajasthan) to Seth Rasal and Delhan Devi, Surya Kumar was a child prodigy. His brilliance and inquisitiveness were evident from a young age. By the age of six, he had already grasped the causes of eternal turmoil and grief of mankind. Recognizing the pain caused by these troubles, he sought solutions for eternal peace and bliss through logical reasoning and clarity of thought. At the age of six, in Samvat 1203 (1147 CE), he renounced the world after obtaining permission from his parents and was initiated into the life of a Jain Sadhu by Yugpradhan Acharya Jindutt Suri Ji, a notable propagator of Jainism and social reformer. After his initiation (Diksha), he was named Shri Jinchandra Suri. Under the guidance of Gurudev Jindutt Suri Ji, he studied Jain texts and scriptures, as well as works from other philosophical schools and religions, including astrology, Mantra Vidya, cosmology, metaphysics, and theology. Having mastered these subjects, he was appointed Acharya in Samvat 1205 (1149 CE) at the age of eight. By the age of 14, in Samvat 1211, he assumed the responsibility of managing the affairs and directing the destiny of the Jain Sangha, a role he fulfilled with distinction.

Contributions and Miracles

A great scholar, Jinchandra Suri Ji authored numerous books and, through his logic and pragmatism, dispelled many misconceptions and superstitions of his time. He fought tirelessly for social and religious reforms, advocating for the dignity and honor of the oppressed and underprivileged. He propagated the ideals of Ahimsa (non-violence), religious tolerance, equality, and universal brotherhood. His magnanimity and universal appeal earned him followers among Jains, Hindus, and Muslims alike, who affectionately referred to him as 'Dada Gurudev'. The respect he commanded from diverse religious communities during turbulent times speaks volumes about his influence.

A notable work by him, 'Vavystha Kulak,' remains extant. Under his influence, many Jain temples were constructed, and numerous followers were initiated into Jain monkhood. In Narpalpur, his discussions with learned astrologers impressed them greatly with his knowledge. In Rudrapalli, he engaged in a debate with Padamcharya in the King's court, which included many scholars. Padamcharya eventually conceded to Jinchandra Suri's wisdom, earning him widespread praise for his erudition and oratorical skills. The King awarded him a merit certificate, and a grand function was organized in his honor by the Shri Sangh.

Possessing formidable magical powers, Jinchandra Suri Ji, like Acharya Jindutt Suri, used these abilities for the benefit of Jains and Jainism. One of his most famous miracles occurred during a journey towards Delhi with his followers. While stopping near the village of Borsidan, they learned of approaching dacoits. Jinchandra Suri assured his followers, gathered them in one place, recited a mantra, and drew a line around them with a stick. The dacoits arrived but could not see anyone inside the line, as it had created an invisible barrier.

A devotee named Kulchandra, moved by Jinchandra Suri's sermons, became his follower despite his poverty and deteriorating health. When Jinchandra Suri learned of Kulchandra's condition, he wrote a mantra with 'kumkum' and 'kasturi' on a wooden plank and instructed Kulchandra to worship it daily with 'Vakshkshaip' (sacred powder). Kulchandra's fortunes soon changed, and he became a rich man. Such were the miracles and blessings bestowed by Gurudev on his followers and devotees.

Conclusion

In Samvat 1223, at the age of 26, Manidhari Shri Jinchandra Suri Ji arrived in Yojinipur (present-day Mehrauli, New Delhi), which was then ruled by Raja Madanpal. Known for his selfless nature, exceptional mantra shakti (spiritual power), and pure saintly life, Jinchandra Suri Ji was invited by Raja Madanpal to spend the chaturmasa (four months of the rainy season) in Yojinipur to provide spiritual guidance and solace to the people. Despite foreseeing his end, Jinchandra Suri Ji accepted the invitation, promoting the ideals of peace, harmony, religious tolerance, ahimsa (non-violence), brotherhood, and truthfulness.

Before his death, Jinchandra Suri Ji instructed his disciples to ensure that his funeral procession should not stop on the way to the funeral ghat and to have a bowl of milk ready to receive the Mani (gem) that would emerge from his forehead at the time of lighting the pyre. However, overwhelmed with grief by his untimely death, his followers forgot these instructions. The funeral procession halted at Manik Chowk for rest, but when they attempted to lift his

body to continue the journey, they could not move it. Even four elephants could not shift his body. Consequently, with Raja Madanpal's permission, the last rites were performed at Manik Chowk, now known as Mehrauli Dadabari.

At the moment the pyre was lit, a Mani (gem) emerged from Jinchandra Suri's forehead and was received in a bowl of milk by a Muslim fakir, who had overheard the earlier instructions. This miraculous event cemented the emotional and religious significance of Mehrauli Dadabari for his followers and disciples.

Mehrauli Dadabari stands as a testament to the profound impact of Manidhari Shri Jinchandra Suri's life and teachings. It continues to inspire reverence and devotion among Jains and other communities, embodying the principles of non-violence, religious harmony, and universal brotherhood that he fervently propagated. The shrine not only commemorates his spiritual legacy but also serves as a beacon of peace and tolerance in a diverse and ever-changing world.

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