

SHRI ASHTAPADJI MAHATIRTH (TEMPLE)



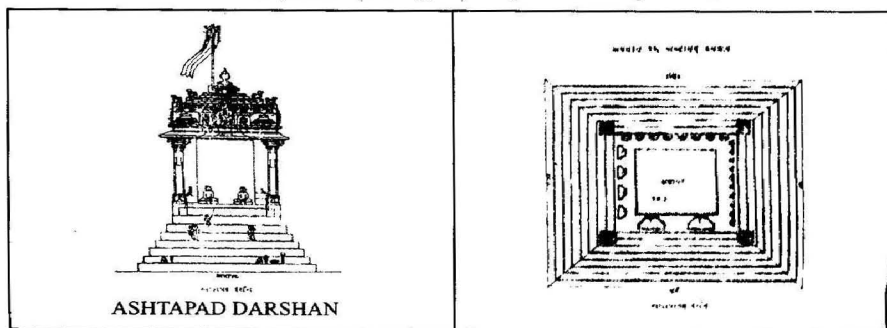
* Ashtapad Painting - Courtesy Late Nathmalji Chandalia, Jaipur

Location	- Ashtapad mountain near Kailash/Mansarovar in Himalayas.
Present Status	- Invisible
When Constructed-	Unknown
In Memory Of	- Shri Adinath Bhagwan (Nirvana-Bhoomi)
Who Constructed	- Bharat Chakravarti (Son of Sh. Adinath Bhagwan)
Name of Palace	- Sinh Nishadha
Name of Architect	- Varddhaki Ratna
Chouvishi Pratishta	- Shri Charan Muni
Material	- Ratnamay (Gem Stone) Palace
Design	- Samovsaran Style (Omni-Directional)
Synonym	- Haradri, Rajatadri, Sfatikachal (Crystal) Palace
Steps	- Eight- so the name - (Ashta-eight, Pad-Steps)
Related Stories	<div> - 1) Shri Adinath Bhagwan 2) Bharat Chakravarti 3) Shri Gautam Swami 4) Tapas Story - Kheer Parna 5) Naagkumar & Sagar's sons 6) Ravan Mandodari Bhakti </div>

History & References

- 1) Aacharang Niryoukti was first to mention about the Ashtapad Tirth.
- 2) Aavshyak Niryoukti also has a description about Ashtapad Tirth.
- 3) Ekadash Angadi Aagam, one of the oldest texts on Jainism also mentions Ashtapad as MahaTirth.
- 4) Uttarahyan Sutra Niryoukti says that anyone (Charam Shariri) who can scale Ashtapad Tirth will attain Salvation (Moksha) (Para 290 Chapter 10).
- 5) Nishith Churni Divine has a description about salvation (Moksha) of Adinath Bhagwan on Ashtapad mountain.
- 6) Vividh Tirth Kalp has a chapter dedicated to Ashtapad Giri Kalp.
- 7) Acharya Dharma Ghosh Suri's "Shri Ashtapad Maha Tirth Kalp" has a description of this Tirth.
- 8) Gyan Prakash Deeparnave discusses the construction of Ashtapad in detail.
- 9) Uttar Puran has a description of Jain Tirthanker Rishabdev and that, his son Bharat constructed a golden temple with 72 statues of all three Chouvishi's -Past, Present and Future.
- 10) Bhagwan Mahaveer once said during his sermon that any human being who can scale this mountain & offer prayers there, will attain salvation in his life time. Shri Gautam Swami scaled this Tirth with his special powers.
- 11) Vasudevahindi in 21st chapter says this mountain is related to Vaitadhyia mountain, is 8 miles in height & Niyadi river is flowing at the foothills.
- 12) Jambu Dweep Pragnati says that Ashtapad Mt. is situated north of Koshal Desh.
- 13) Siddhahnam Buddhahnam (Siddh Stav Sutra) describes sitting arrangement "Chattari Atha Das Doy Vandiya Jeenvara Chouvishi".
- 14) "Ashtapad Kalpa (old)", written by Shri Purvacharya describes in detail the importance of this place and all the events that took place there.
- 15) Acharya Hemchandracharya in "Trishashthi Shalaka Purush Charitra" describes Ashtapad in detail. Chapter 10 Para 9 - says one staying overnight there and offering prayers to all Jin idols, attains salvation.
- 16) Shahajanand Dhanji - in his letters, says 3 chouvishi consisting of 72 idols are buried under the snow & some of the Jin idols are under control of Buddhist monks.
- 17) According to M I T - human civilization started at Tibet. As per scriptures, Shri Adinath Bhagwan taught Ashi Mashi & Krishi (Arts, Commerce & Agriculture).
- 18) Shri Bharat Hansraj took many pictures of mountain and according to him those pictures match the description of Shri Ashtapad.
- 19) According to one Mongolian monk, Shri Adinath meditated and prayed on the Ashtapad mountain which is mentioned in Kanjur & Tanjur books.
- 20) Potala Palace (former residence of Dalai Lama) has some old books-written on Tal Patra which describe Nirvana of Rishabdev at Ashtapad-Kailash.

Ashtapad design as per Scripture



SHRI ASHTAPADJI MAHATIRTH

Introduction

Shri Ashtapad Maha Tirth (place of worship) is one of the major Jain Tirths and is situated up in the tranquil heights of snow-covered Himalayas. It is 168 miles north of Badrinath and about 5 to 7 miles away from Mansarovar on the way to Mount Kailash. Thousands of years ago Shri Adinath Bhagwan, first of 24 Tirthankars, attained salvation at this place. After his salvation his son king Bharat made a palace (known as "Sinh-Nishadha") of real gemstones with 24 idols of Jain Tirthankars on Ashtapad mountain in his memory. Ashtapad derived its name from the fact that it has eight steps to go up the mountain (Ashta means eight and pad means steps in Sanskrit). Other names for the Tirth are Ratnamay (made of gemstones) Rajatadri and Sfatikachal (the crystal palace).



**Janma
Kalyanak**



Parna

In the recent history no one has witnessed the actual Tirth as described in the scriptures. Scholars and visitors travel to the mountain where this Tirth is believed to be buried under the snow. Many individuals & organizations are involved in research to unravel the mysteries of this legendary place. (Pages 2 and 7)

Following legend associated with Ashtapad describes the clairvoyance and absolute knowledge of Tirthankars. " After attaining absolute knowledge, Shri Adinath Bhagwan was delivering his sermon while seated in Samovsaran. Out of curiosity, king Bharat asked if anyone out of the audience would become Kevli and be a part of forth-coming Chouvishi? Shri Adinath Bhagwan replied affirmatively and clairvoyantly declared that the soul of Marichi, who was present in the audience, will become 24th Tirthankar after many life cycles and will be known as Mahavir."

Development of the concept

The Jain center of America in New York is constructing a new building for its temple and other religious activities. As a tribute to 24 Tirthankars and with a view to making a lasting contribution to the society, one of the devotee thought of creating 24 idols (Shri Chouvishi) out of gemstones and to house them in a "Ratna Mandir" (gemstone temple) around Gabhara wall on 2nd floor. It is customary to make idols of 24 Tirthankars in a temple and place them around Gabhara (Main-place of worship in a temple).

While details of Ratna Mandir were being worked out, a PAT (a picture engraved or carved) with religious artwork of Shri Ashtapad Tirth was seen in a temple at Jaipur (India). This provided an inspiration to integrate the Ratna Mandir with Ashtapad Tirth, which is supposed to be made of gemstones. Thus an idea was born to create a model of Shri Ashtapad Mountain along with 24 idols out of real gemstones that will fulfill the desire of constructing a Ratna Mandir as well as that of Shri Chouvishi.

Samovsaran



**Sh. Adinath
Bhagwan**



Design Development

Once the concept of Ashtapad was firmed up, next step was to develop an architectural design of the model on the drawing board. This required a lot of research for pertinent information. We got some leads from our religious leaders, scholars & friends including artisans at Jaipur. We collected a number of articles from old Jain Scriptures. This provided us with considerable knowledge and insight into the history of Shri Ashtapad (see history page 2).

Next step was to identify & earmark a suitable place to house the whole unit in upcoming four storey Jain Center Building. In order to imitate the real environment of Ashtapad's location in Himalayas with its exposure to open sky, a decision was made to locate the unit on the 4th floor in the conservatory (a roof garden) as a mark of respect to our monks (also referred to as Dadawadi in the religious context). The 4th floor being the top floor has a skylight and front windows giving a semblance of openness to the sky. This turned out to be the best choice for Ashtapad location.

**Bharat
Chakravarti**



**Areesha
Mahal**



Now an architectural blueprint was developed to a scale based on the available space. Original Ashtapad is omni-directional (four-sided) but space constraint forced us to make a unidirectional unit viewable only from the front. Height & width of mountain was determined according to space available in the conservatory.

Based on a religious verse, idol positions were determined for a unidirectional unit in 4 horizontal rows, one above the other. Dimensions of the idols will vary as per available space in each row (See Page 8.)

Next was to carve suitable niches in the mountain for each row and position the idols inside the niches. Another alternative was to house all idols in their individual Gokhalas. A Gokhala is a four-pillared structure with a base, arches and a dome that resembles a small temple. In the final unit, front part of Gokhalas will be sculpted in the mountain itself.

Special consideration : (a) Structural & engineering-weight of the whole unit (10 to 12 Tons) (b) Laser effect for sun-rays (c) Light effect (d) Security and protection (e) Religious worship procedure (annually on Akhatrij) (f) Snow covered mountain (g) Art work for related stories (h) Collection of the material (i) Sky effect on back-wall.

Model Making

A series of progressive prototypes were developed to experiment with various materials, layouts, designs and dimensions. These prototypes also helped in visualizing the ultimate design of the model of Shri Ashtapad. What you are looking at is prototype # 5. The first two original prototypes were flat, made out of serpentine stone. In the initial models, idols were installed in the individual niches, carved in the mountain itself. Later on individual miniature temple units called "Gokhalas" were created to house the idols. This enhanced the appearance of the whole unit.

Initially, story carvings were created as two-dimensional objects and carved at the base in front of the mountain in the first two prototypes. As the concept matured, eight of these carvings depicting various stories related to Shri Ashtapad were developed into separate three-dimensional carved units, which you now see in front of the mountain.

Mountain

The mountain is the main body and is made of crystal quartz. Various pieces were assembled to provide a sloping pattern on front & sides in order to replicate the effect of a real mountain. Eight steps are constructed in the center leading to the first row of the Gokhala. Just above the topmost step, 24 Gokhalas are sculpted out of the mountain itself wherein the idols will be housed. This model is built to 1/5th scale compared to the proposed final unit. Under the current plans, it is intended to create an effect of snow-capped mountain by appropriate measures. The final model will also be adorned with a Kalash and a flag on the mountain-top. The wall at the back will be suitably decorated to depict the open sky.

**Tapas
Kheer - Parna**



**Sh. Gautam
Swami**



Gokhalas

There are 24 Gokhalas of varying sizes made out of crystal quartz, rose quartz, smoky quartz, agate, and aventurine stones etc. 2 are extra large, 4 are large 8 are medium and 10 are small. A Gokhala has four pillars and a dome. Two front pillars of each gokhala have carved images of devotees (chamardharis or whisk carriers) praying to the God. Dome is also carved with decorative art work.

Idols (Figurines)

24 Figurines have been carved to represent the 24 Tirthankars. Each figurine has its own symbol carved at the base that identifies the idol to a viewer. In addition, the name of the idol will appear at the base along with the name of the gemstone. Final model will consist of 24 idols made from different color stones. Due to limitations of the available gemstones, the color will not conform to original color associated with each Tirthankar. Idols are arranged according to the religious rules. Dimensions and positions vary according to the space available within the arrangement. (See Chart on the last page)

Additional Idols

A number of idols have already been carved out of following real gemstones: Aquamarine, Aventurine, Agate, Amethyst, Blue-Topaz, Chalcedony, Crystal, Emerald, Malachite, Ruby, Smoky Quartz, Tiger-Eye, Tourmaline etc. All these idols will form the part of final unit. A few of them have turned out to be true masterpieces. Some of the idols may be of special interest to the color stone enthusiasts for color, clarity and the size of single rough stone pieces from which they have been carved out. They also offer a rare glimpse into the talent of the artists in Jaipur.

Story Carvings

There are many legends associated with Shri Ashtapad Tirth out of which the following eight have been depicted in individual carved units. These stories are briefly narrated in a separate section of this handout.

1. Janma Kalyanak - Birth celebration of the 1st Tirthankar Shri Adinath Bhagwan, on Meru Parvat by Lord Indra.
2. Varshi Tap Parna - Breaking a year long fast with sugarcane juice poured directly in his palm by king Shreyans Kumar.
3. Adinath Bhagwan delivering his sermon in samovsaran at Ashtapad after attaining absolute knowledge and explaining to Bharat about forth coming chouvishi.
4. King Bharat, son of Shri Adinath Bhagwan - the creator of the Tirth who became Chakravarti following the famous Bharat - Bahubali fight.
5. King Bharat in the mirrored palace where he sees himself without any decoration and realizes the futility of material world.
6. Story of 1503 Tapas and Kheer parna after 3 days fasting by Shri Gautam Swami with his thumb in a bowl of kheer (rice-pudding).
7. Updesh (Sermon) by Shri Gautam Swami and beginning of Gandharwad.
8. Story of Nagkumar - with his flame he reduces King Sagar's all sons to ashes.

General carvings incorporated in the main mountain: Several carvings are planned to be depicted as levitating in space above the mountain. These carvings will include those of Indra, Dev Viman, "Yaksha and Yakshini carrying garlands", the Sun and the Moon.

Other carvings will be positioned on the steps leading to the mountain. These are of Shri Gautam Swami climbing the mountain on 4th step, with the help of sunrays, Ravana playing Veena on 5th step, Mandodari dancing on 6th step, a devotee praying on 8th step and 15 Tapas, each representing 100 Tapas, in various yogic postures on the 1st, 2nd and the 3rd step.

**Naag Kumar &
Sagar's Sons**



Conclusion

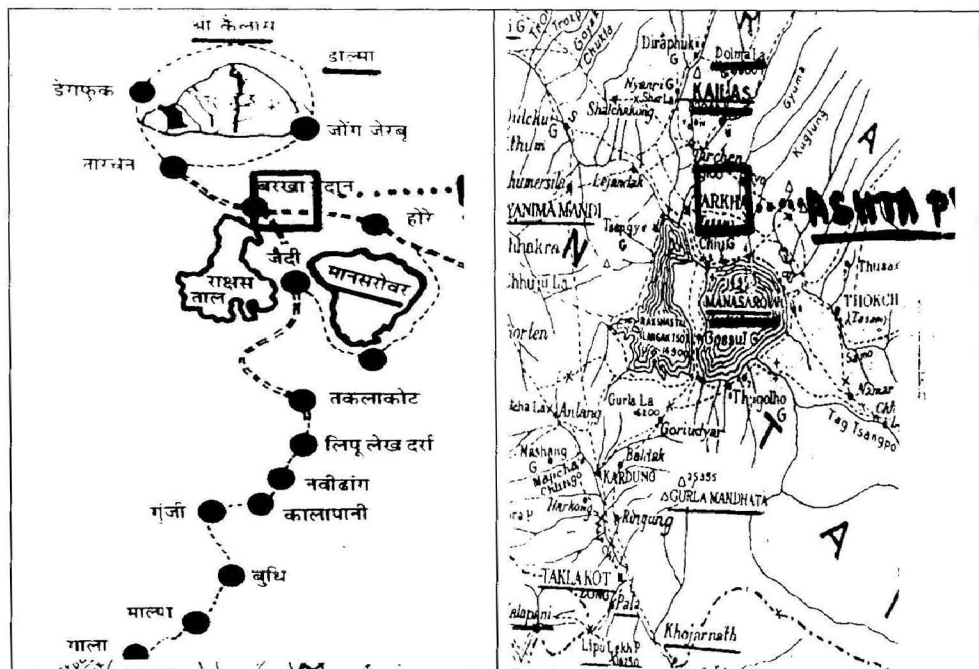
Plans are in place to develop another model (Sixth in the series)-having dimensions 7' X 6' 3" made out of serpentine and colored stone statues. This will help in constructing the final unit that will be twice as big as the sixth model.

We are in the process of forming an "Ashtapad Society" to create awareness about this Jain Mahatirth and to promote further research into the history and location of Shri Ashtapad.

All the material collected from scripture and research work which is being done currently will be published in near future in form of a reference book for the benefit of readers, scholars and religious leaders.

Provisionally we are planning for Shri Ashtapad Pratishtha on Akhatrij in the month of May 2005 at New York (J.C.A. New Temple Bldg.)

Research



- References to the Nirvana Bhoomi of all the 24 Tirthankars are found in various Jain religious texts & are called "Panch Mahatirth". Locations of 4 of them can be determined & correlated to places by their present day names as below:
 - (i) Shri Vasupujya Swami-Champapuri
 - (ii) Shri Neminath Swami-Girnar
 - (iii) Shri Mahaveer Swami-Pavapuri
 - (iv) Other 20 Tirthankars-Sammet Sikhar
- Ashtapad Tirth for Shri Adinathji (Nirvana-Bhoomi) has not been located as yet precisely.
- Above maps show the probable position of the Ashtapad mountain up in the Himalayas. It is about 168 miles north of Badrinath. Kailash mountain, also called as Kagrimpo, which is 25 miles north of Mansarovar. Between Mansarovar (Padma Had) & Kailash, about 5-7 miles away from Mansarovar, there is another mountain called Ashtapad. This mountain is 8 miles in height & is covered with white rocks hence also known as Dhawalgiri. One can walk through from "DARECHIN" after crossing about 15-20 mountain hills one will reach there in 4 to 6 hours of time.
- At the foothills, a plateau offers a suitable place to stay & meditate. In early morning, one can see Kailash & Mansarovar. At this place there are two hot water springs. Climate is moderate. One can find some firewood for cooking. It is possible that Adinath Bhagwan with his disciples stayed & meditated here. Possibly this is the Nirvana Bhoomi of Shri Adinath Bhagwan on Ashtapad Mountain.
- Buddhist pilgrims call this mountain as "Kang Siche." About 40 km away there is another mountain peak called as "Gurla Mandhata". Mandhata is a name derived from King Sagar's ancestors. Between Kailash & Gurla Mandhata, there is a beautiful lake called Rakshash Tal.
- 20th Tirthankar Munisuvrat Swami came here to meditate.
- This area is in the territory of present day "Tibet" & some Jain idols are in possession of local Buddhist Monks.
- It is believed that 72 Jeenalaya temples are buried under the snow here.

Proposed Ashtapad Model



* Our concept of Ashtapad

4th Flr.-Dadawadi-Dimension		Ashtapad Mountain Dimension	
Length	25'	Height at Centre	12'.7"
Width	14'.9"	Height on Sides	9'
Height at Centre	15'.6"	Width	14'
Height on Sides	10'.9"	Depth	5'.1"
Skylight Width	6'	Depth from Glass	7'.5"
Front Glass Windows	25'	Size of the Steps	5' X1'8" X2'6"

Gokhala & Statue Dimensions:

Level	Size	Total#	H	W	Tirthankars	Statues	H	W	D
1-Lowest	Ex.Large	2	24"	22"	(1to2)	2	9"-11"	9"	5"
2-Lower	Small	10	14"	12"	(15to24)	10	3"-5"	4"	2"
3-Middle	Medium	8	18"	15"	(7to14)	8	5"-7"	6"	3"
4-Upper	Large	4	22"	18"	(3to6)	4	7"-9"	7.5"	4"

Story Carvings:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Shri Adinathji-Birth | 2. Parna | 3. Samovsaran |
| 4. King Bharat | 5. Areesha Mahal Story | 6. Tapas-Kheer Parna |
| 7. Shri Gautam Swami Sermon | | 8. Naagkumar Story |

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