

Mālā Devī Temple At Gyaraspur

KRISHNA DEVA

THIS temple, picturesquely perched on the slope of a hill, is a towering landmark at Gyaraspur which is a place of considerable archaeological interest, situated 24 miles north-east of the district town of Vidisha in Madhya Pradesh. Partly rock-cut and partly structural, this temple stands on a large terrace cut out of the hill-side and strengthened by a massive retaining wall. The temple faces east and is a *sāndhāra prāsāda* consisting of an *ardha-maṇḍapa* (entrance porch), *maṇḍapa*, *antarāla* and a sanctum with an ambulatory. The sanctum is crowned by a lofty *śikhara* of the curvilinear form, capped by an *āmalaka* and *kalaśa*.

EXTERIOR

The exterior of the temple is exquisitely carved with figures and designs in relief. The larger niches, crowned by elaborate *udgamas* or pediments of *caitya*-arches; the smaller niches, surmounted by tall pediments decorated with a mesh of *caitya-gavākṣas*; and the projecting balconies which are also crowned by a pediment of *caitya*-arches, form the most conspicuous ornamentation of the elevation. Added to this are the interesting panels of figure reliefs, scrolls and other decorative designs occurring on the basement mouldings. The basement shows the usual mouldings of *khura*, *khumbha*, *kalaśa*, occasionally relieved with interesting faces (usually carried on two

adjacent angles) and scrolls in relief, *antara-patra*, *kapotālī* carved with *caitya*-arches in relief, *chādyā* moulding containing repeat pattern of miniature shrines, and *jaṅghā*, containing occasional niches with figure sculptures. From the basement mouldings project six niches on the southern side and two on the front or eastern side. Each niche is crowned by a pediment of *caitya-gavākṣas*, those occurring below the *āsanapaṭṭa* of the balconies with the *kakṣāsanas* being more elaborate than others. The balconies have the usual components, but are mainly decorative. Their *jālaka*-windows admit extremely insufficient light and do not serve an effective functional purpose.

The figures carved on the niches of the façades comprise Dikpālas and Jaina Yakṣas and Yakṣīs, while the relief panels show human faces and scrolls. Most of the decoration of the elevation consists of architectural motifs like the *caitya-gavākṣa* and miniature shrine and this is one of the rare temples where such motifs have been used with great decorative effect. There are in all six projections in the southern façade, three larger and three smaller, all being embellished with niches.

The *śikhara* (Fig. 1) is of the *pañcaratha* type but it has neither the elegant proportions nor the soaring character of the Khajurāho temples and is rather squat with a marked triangular appearance. It is *navāṇḍaka*, i. e., clustered by eight minor *śikharas* and is somewhat similar in design to the *śikhara* of the Śiva temple at Kerakot in Kutch. It is marked by six *bhūmi-āmalakas* and is decorated with a mesh of *caitya-gavākṣas*.

The *śukanāsikā* is only partly preserved and has lost the crowning figure of lion. The pyramidal roofs of the *antarāla*, *maṇḍapa* and *ardha-maṇḍapa* together with a large portion of the internal ceilings are also badly damaged. But from what has survived there is no doubt that the roof of the *maṇḍapa* consisted of *pīḍhās* decorated with *caitya-gavākṣas*, alternating with recessed courses, carved with *ratna-paṭṭa*.

South façade

This is (Fig. 2) the best preserved and gives an idea of the original design. This had three balconies and each balcony had a niche on the basement. The niches on the two eastern balconies are more elaborate with ornate pediments, while the niche on the balcony of the sanctum is rather shallow. The buttresses flanking the balcony-projections have a vertical row of two niches, one on the *jaṅghā* and the

other on the basement at the same level with the niches below the balconies. The pilasters of these niches are decorated with scrolls, *kīrttimukhas* and vase-and-foilage designs. Some of the pediments of the niches were surmounted by lions seated on haunches.

Balconies

In the balcony-projections the *vedikā*-moulding shows two rows of miniature shrines alternating with chess-design. The *āsanapaṭṭa* is decorated with scrolls and is surmounted by a frieze of lotus petals. The *kakṣāsana* has slabs of lotus scrolls alternating with three vertical shafts relieved with bead-design. The lintel and the architrave of the balcony-projections are decorated with chess-pattern. The surmounting frieze which serves as *chāḍya* moulding is decorated with half-faces of *kīrttimukhas* showing ears and in some cases horns.

Roof-niches

Between the two eastern balcony-projections of the south façade the last course of the roof shows a niche containing an image of eight-armed Cakreśvarī seated on garuḍa. The goddess carries *pāśa*, indistinct object, indistinct object, and *vajra* in the right hands; and *vajra*, indistinct object, *cakra* and broken in the left hands.¹ This figure is flanked on each side by a female attendant. In the proper left niche occurs a seated Jina, while in the right niche occurs Ambikā Yakṣī, seated in *lalitāsana* and carrying a child.

On the corresponding north side the roof niches show Cakreśvarī Yakṣī, flanked by female attendants which are now defaced. On the proper right occurs a seated Jina, while on the left occurs Ambikā-Yakṣī seated in *lalitāsana*. This is an exact replica of what we have on the south face. A little above this niche we have a seated Tirthaṅkara in a niche flanked by attendants in the side niches.

Outer niches

The outer niches are now described from the south-east in the order of *pradakṣiṇā* :

East face :

Niche I on the south-east corner of the *jaṅghā* shows an eight-armed goddess seated in *lalitāsana* on a lotus, below is represented a bird mount with two heads, one regardant and the other looking down.

1 The attributes are reckoned clock-wise starting from the lower right hand.

The right hands of the goddess hold a tapering object which may be a *gadā*, broken, lotus flower and *caurī*, while the left hands carry *caurī*, flag, broken and bow. Is she Padmāvati Yakṣī riding *kukkuṭāhi* ?

South face :

Niche II on the *jaṅghā* shows a four-armed goddess seated in *lalitāsana* on a lotus, carrying sword, *cakra*, shield, and *śaṅkha*. Elephant mount is depicted below the lotus-seat. Is she Puruṣadattā, the *yakṣī* of the fifth Tirthaṅkara ?

All the six principal niches (Niches III–VIII) on the south façade are empty. But there were minor niches in the deep recesses, flanking the *bhadrās* (main projections) of the sanctum on each side. These invariably show representations of Dharaṇendra Yakṣa (Fig. 3) and Padmāvati Yakṣī. The niche on the eastern recess of the *bhadra* on the south side contains an image of standing Dharaṇendra Yakṣa which corresponds with the Padmāvati Yakṣī on the north face in an identical position. This *yakṣa* is two-armed and carries an indefinite object in the right hand and water-vessel in the left.

The adjoining lateral faces of the recess also show figures in miniature niches. The western miniature niche shows an image of a goddess seated in *lalitāsana* on a crocodile, carrying *varada*, *abhaya*, *nīlotpala* and water-vessel, while the niche on the eastern face shows an eight-armed goddess seated in *lalitāsana* on a lotus, carrying sword, garland, indistinct object and indistinct object in the right hands, and bell, shield, net-like object, and broken in the left hands. A horse is depicted below the lotus-seat. The latter goddess may represent Manovegā, the *yakṣī* of the sixth Tirthaṅkara.

The niche on the western recess of the same southern *bhadra* shows two-armed Padmāvati Yakṣī standing under a canopy of serpent-hoods. The miniature niches on the adjacent lateral faces also show each an image of a goddess seated in *lalitāsana*.

West face :

Niche IX on the west face is empty, while western niches X–XI like the northern niches XII–XIII, were never built, as the north-west corner of the temple consisted of the rocky ledge of the hill. Thus in the west face there is only one recess of the *bhadra* with a niche. It shows an image of two-armed Padmāvati Yakṣī standing under a canopy of serpent-hoods, carrying *nīlotpala* in the right hand, with the left hand resting over a staff. This figure appears to be painted, as red ochre paint is found sticking to the serpent hood.

In the adjoining miniature niche, which is really the lateral niche of the western *bhadra* we have an image of a four-armed goddess seated in *lalitāsana* on a lotus which rests over a crocodile. She holds flower in the lower right hand, upper right hand placed on the *śimanta*, the upper left carrying mirror and lower left kept over her lap.

North face :

The first two northern niches, viz. niches XII-XIII were never built.

The eastern recess of the northern *bhadra*, however, shows an image of two-armed Padmāvatī Yakṣī standing under a canopy of serpent-hoods.

Niche XIV on the north projection of the *antarāla* shows a standing image of two-armed Kubera, carrying skull-cup and purse, the latter placed on two jars, representing *nidhis*. The purse is decorated with floral pattern disposed in vertical registers. The god has an oval halo resembling a spoked wheel and wears crown, *kuṇḍalas*, torque, *upavīta*, *keyūras*, long *mālā*, wristlets and anklets. Ram mount is shown on the proper right. The god is flanked on the proper right by a standing couple and on the left by a male *caurī*-bearer.

In the niche below niche XIV occurs a four-armed standing goddess, carrying *abhaya*, lotus flower, *nīlotpala*, and probably mirror held upside down. She wears crown, *kuṇḍalas*, torque, *hāra*, wristlets, under-garment fastened by belt with jewelled loops and tassels and anklets.

Niche XV below the north balcony of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* shows an image of a twelve-armed goddess seated in *lalitāsana*. The right hands carry sword, mirror, indefinite object, flower, *cakra* and *vajra*; while of the left hands three are broken and two carry lotus flowers and one carries a fruit. The goddess wears a flattened head-dress with the *caṭulā-maṇi* ornament on the *śimanta*, two types of *kuṇḍalas*, torque, *hāra*, *keyūras*, wristlets, under-garment fastened by belt with jewelled loops and tassels and anklets. A defaced animal partly resembling a boar is depicted below the lotus seat of the goddess, which is well-preserved with a handsome face.

Niche XVI on the north projection of the *maṇḍapa* shows a two-armed image of Indra seated in *lalitāsana* over his elephant mount. He has an oval halo carved with lotus petals and wears a cylindrical crown (*kirīṭa-mukūṭa*), *kuṇḍalas*, torque, *upavīta*, *keyūras*, wristlets, and

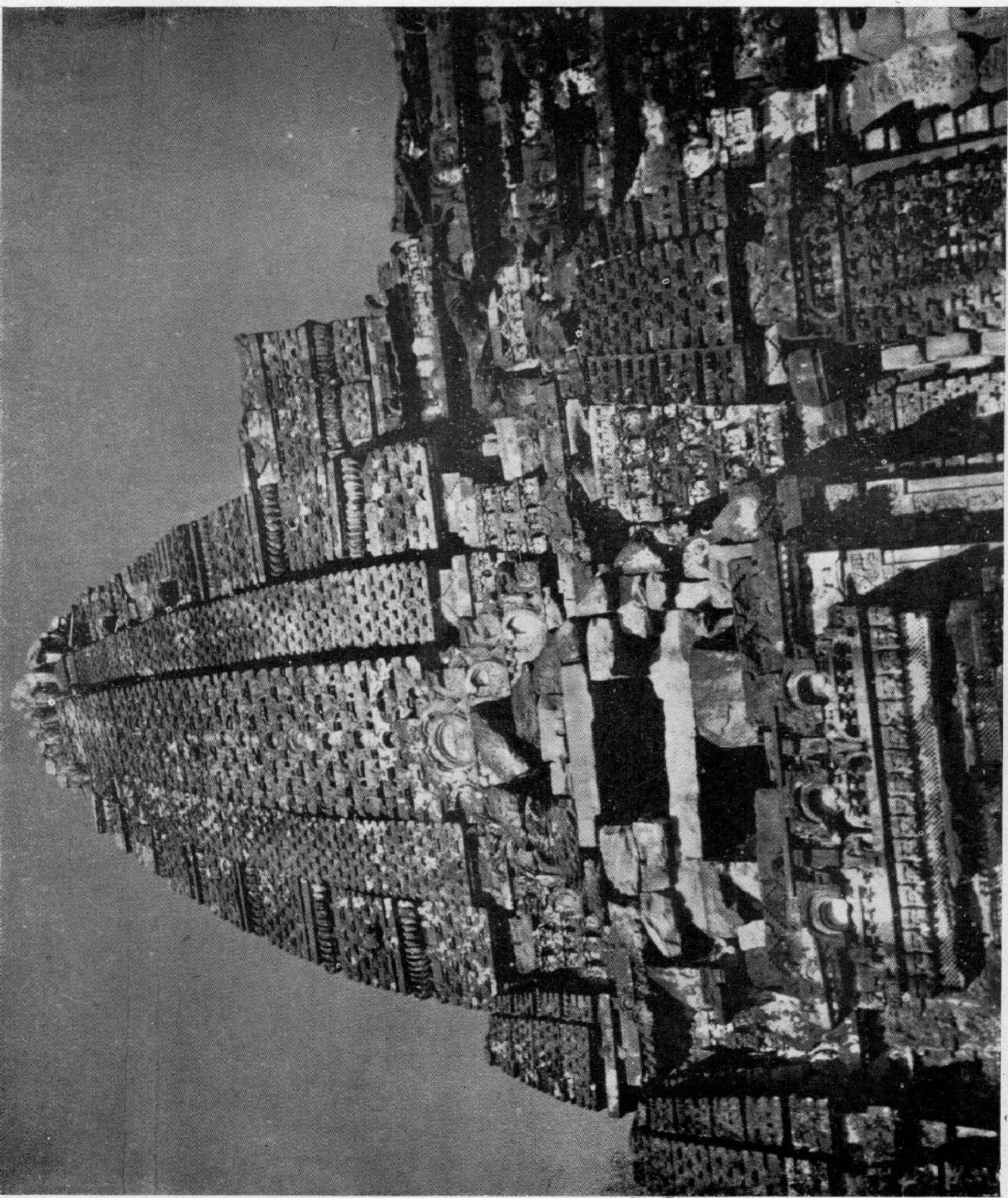


Fig. 1. South Facade of Śikhara, Mālādevī Temple, Gyāraspur

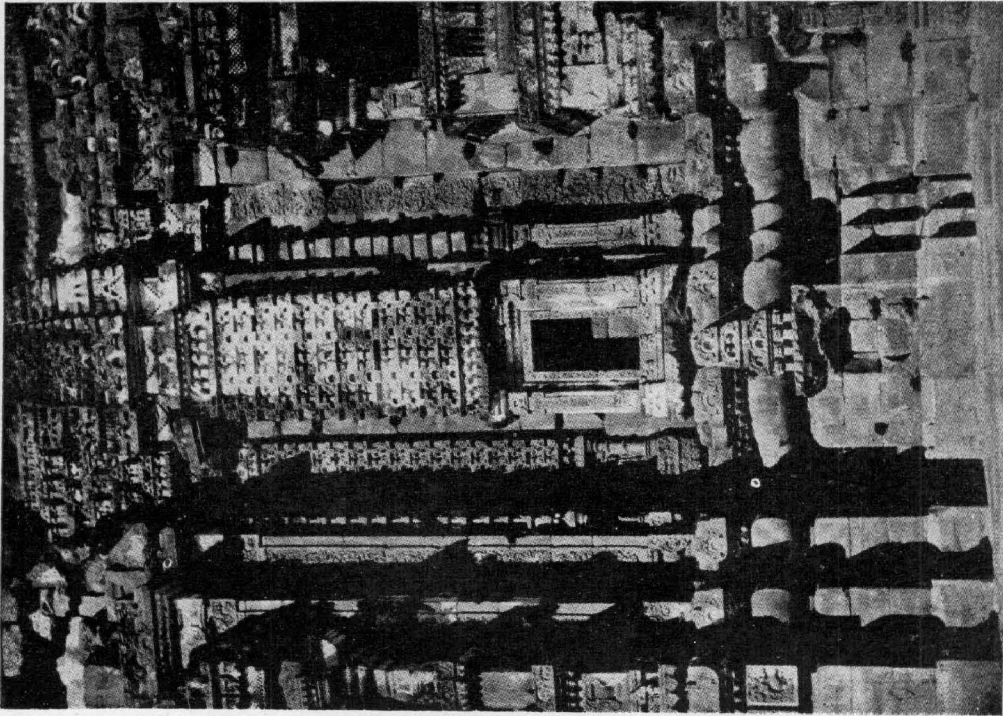


Fig. 2. Decoration of the South Facade, Mālādevī Temple,
Gyāraspur

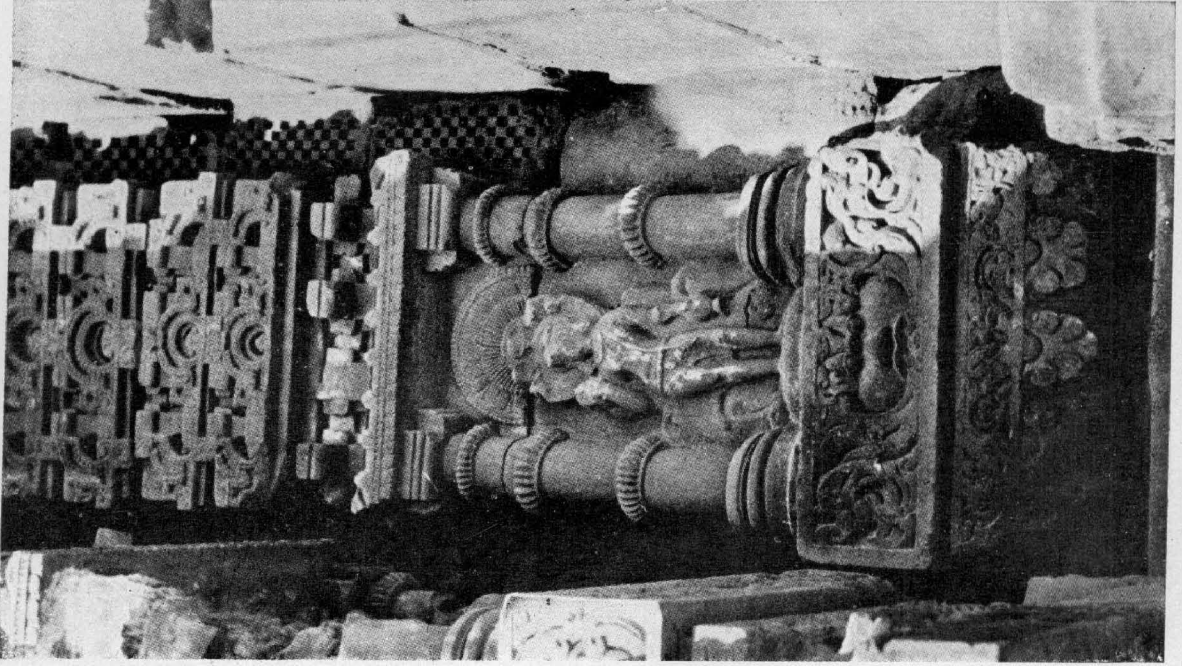
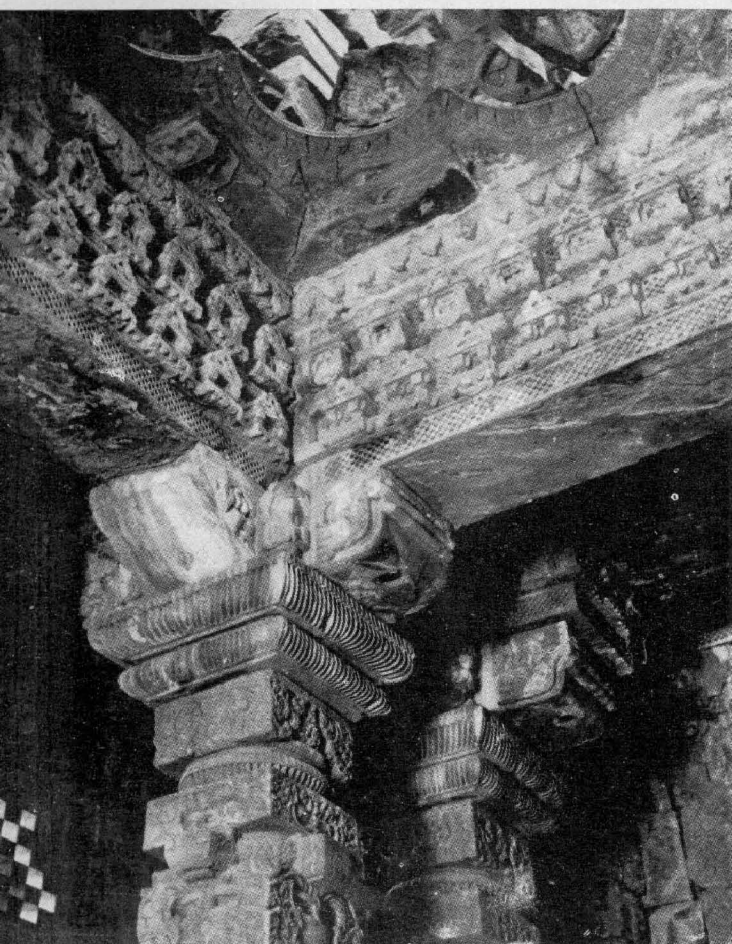


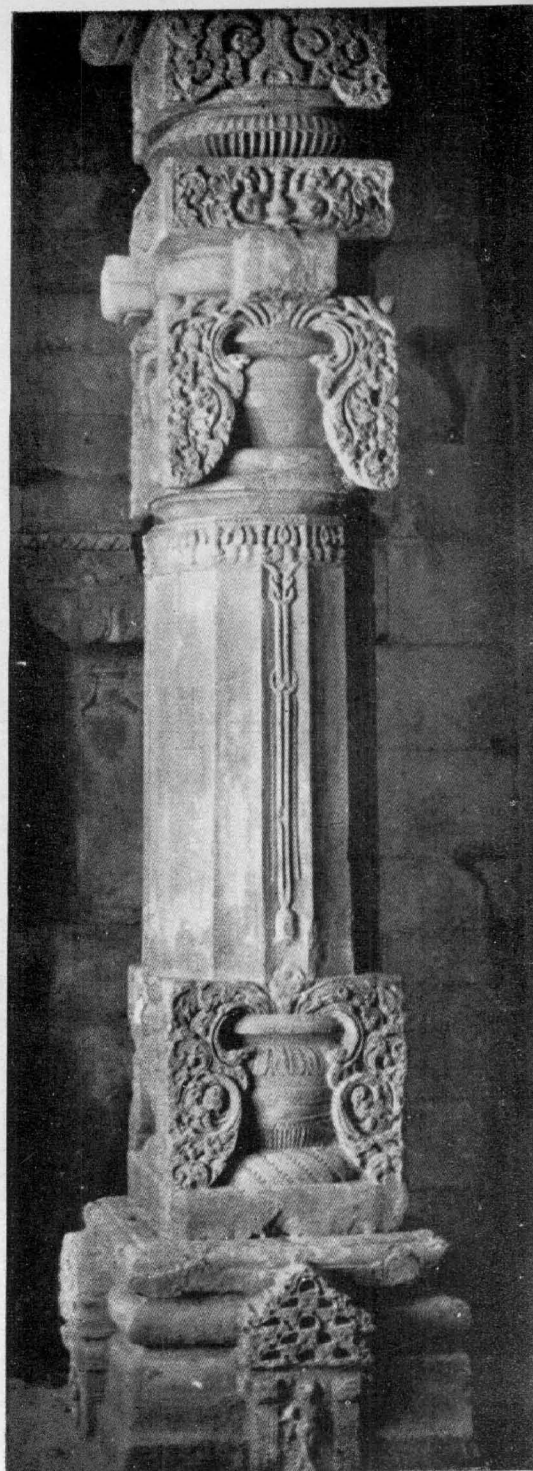
Fig. 3. Decoration of the South Facade, Mālādevī
Temple, Gyāraspur.



Fig. 4. Ardhamandapa (Entrance porch), Mālādevī Temple, Gyarpur



*Fig. 5. Ceiling and Architraves of the Mahāmaṇḍapa,
Mālādevī Temple, Gyāraspur*



*Fig. 6. A Pillar of the Mahāmaṇḍapa,
Mālādevī Temple, Gyāraspur*

anklets. The right foot of the god is placed on a lotus flower which rests on a jar. He carries *vajra* in the left hand of which faint traces have survived, while his right hand is broken with the attribute.

Below niche XVI on the basement occurs a niche containing an image of a *twelve-armed* goddess seated in *lalitāsana* on a wheeled iron-cart (*lohāsana*). Her right hands hold broken *abhaya*, *triśūla*, *cakra* and *padma* with a handle like stalk, while her left hands carry *paraśu*, *śaṅkha*, shield, bow, indistinct object which may be a toilet box, and fruit. The goddess wears a *dhammilla*-shaped head-dress with a *maṇi* on the *śimanta*, *kuṇḍalas*, torque, wristlets, undergarment fastened by belt with jewelled loops and anklets. A seated devotee carrying offerings is depicted below the seat. From the *lohāsana* the goddess may be identified as Ajitā or Rohiṇī, the *yakṣī* of the second Tirthaṅkara.

In niche XVII, occurring below the north-eastern balcony, is represented a four-armed goddess seated in *lalitāsana* on a lotus. The head and hands are broken.

Niche XVIII or the last niche on the eastern end of the north face contains a four-armed goddess seated in *lalitāsana* over a fish. She holds *varada*, *abhaya*, net and indistinct object. She may be identified with Kandarvā, the Śvetāmbara Yakṣī of the fifteenth Tirthaṅkara who is the only goddess represented in the Jaina pantheon with the fish mount.

East face :

Niche XIX on the north-east corner of each face of the *jaṅghā* shows consort of Revanta seated in *lalitāsana*. She is four-armed and carries *vajra*, standard surmounted by human being the head of which is broken, net-like object and umbrella. A horse is depicted below the seat. A flying *vidyādhara* is shown over the head of the figure.

INTERIOR

The entrance porch or the *ardha-maṇḍapa* (Fig. 4) is supported on four pillars. The ceiling is rectangular with a lenticular compartment of cusped and coffered design of the *sama-kṣipta* variety. There is a similar ceiling between the two inner or western pillars of the *ardha-maṇḍapa* and the door-way of the *maṇḍapa*.

Maṇḍapa-doorway

The *maṇḍapa* is entered through a large and elaborate doorway. It is of the *pañcaśākhā* variety, the *śākhās* containing respectively

designs of scrolls, *nāgas* in *añjali-mudrā*, *mithunas* and two pilasters containing scrolls of different designs, the inner one being stencilled and the outer one in relief. The *mithunas* alternate with *bhūtas* or *pāśa*-like design. The *lalāṭa-bimba* shows an image of Cakreśvarī riding on Garuḍa. She is eight-armed and holds spiral lotus-stalk in the lower right hand, the objects in the other right hands being indistinct. In three of her left hands she holds lotus, *cakra* and ball-like object which may represent a fruit. The door-jambs show at the base figures of Gaṅgā on the left and Yamunā on the right, each river-goddess being flanked by attendants and two *dvārapālas* wearing *kirīṭamukuta*. While two of the *dvārapālas* face east, the remaining two are placed, juxtaposed to each other in the passage of the doorway. Gaṅgā is flanked by a female umbrella-bearer and a dwarf female carrying a net suspended from the right hand. Above the head of the umbrella-bearer on a lotus-stalk pedestal are seen miniature figures comprising a seated god flanked on each side by a seated attendant and a standing *caurī*-bearer. This group is flanked on each side by a *vidyādhara* seated on lotus leaves issuing from the same stalk. Yamunā is also flanked by a female figure carrying a large round ornamental *gadā* and a dwarf female carrying a net in her left hand. Above the head of the female *gadā*-bearer occurs on a lotus pedestal a similar group of five figures, the central figure being a sage seated in *padmāsana* with the right hand in the *vyākhyānā mudrā*. Above this group occurs a group of *vidyādhara* figures carrying flute, *vīṇā*, drums and garlands and seated on lotus leaves issuing from the same stalk. The door-sill is carved centrally with lotus-stalks entwining dwarf *gaṇas*, and is also embellished with crocodiles and elephants, symbolising *Dig-gajas*. On the extreme ends occur a couple of devotees flanked by lions.

Maṇḍapa

The *maṇḍapa* is centrally supported on four pillars. Its ceiling (Fig. 5) is octagonal and probably of the *sama-kṣipta* variety, consisting of four diminishing courses of *gaṇatālus* of which only the fringes have survived. The lintels and the architraves of the *maṇḍapa* ceiling are decorated with two rows of miniature shrines, which are repeated on the architraves of the *ardha-maṇḍapa* and *antarāla* where they alternate with chess-pattern. The inner walls of the *maṇḍapa* are bare, except for two purely decorative blind windows. Against the southern wall of the *maṇḍapa* has been placed centrally a colossal standing image of Jina flanked by two seated male devotees.

Pillars

All the pillars of the interior are alike in shape and design and show a heavy square pedestal, with a male or female (sometimes semi-divine) figure in a miniature niche on each side, represented as dancing or carrying umbrella or musical instruments. These miniature niches are framed by pilasters and crowned by a small pediment of *caitya-gavākṣas*. The shaft of the pillar (Fig. 6) is square at the lower and upper sections, decorated with boldly executed pot-and-foilage pattern, while the middle section is sixteen-sided fluted and is ornamented on all or some facets with chain-and-bell design suspended from a *grāsa-paṭṭi* or horizontal band of *kīrttimukhas*. The pillar capital has several based elements comprising (1) a flattened circular cushion with projections for keeping lamps, or supporting bracket figures, (2) a square abacus decorated with *kīrttimukha* and scrolls, (3) an *āmalaka*-shaped member, (4) an upper abacus, also square, decorated with foliage in relief, and (5-6) two square diminishing cushions of the ribbed pattern. The pillar capitals are surmounted by brackets of curved profile, decorated with *nāgas* and *nāgīs* in *añjali*, issuing from both outer and inner corners.

Antarāla

The roof of the *antarāla* is supported on two pillars of the same design as described above. The narrow ceiling between pillars of the *maṇḍapa* and the pillars of the *antarāla* is *samātala* and rectangular, decorated with small square panels in two rows showing flying *vidyādhara* couples. The ceiling of the *antarāla* is similar in design to that of the vestibule of the *maṇḍapa*.

Sanctum doorway

The sanctum is entered through a large and elaborate doorway which resembles in general appearance the doorway of the *maṇḍapa*. Its lintel, however, is defaced, save a portion in the right hand corner. The two crowning architraves are also worn-out, but the lower one shows a row of nine standing Jina figures in niches of which the middle one is completely mutilated. The doorway is of the *pañcaśākhā* variety and shows scrolls, *nāgas* in *añjali-mudrā*, *mithunas* alternating with *bhūtas* and *pāśa*-design, scrolls and lastly a meandering pattern of creepers, entwining various scenes. The meandering pattern is missing on the proper right jamb. On the proper left jamb it shows from below (1) an acrobat riding a lion, (2) *vidyādhara* couple, the males holding sword, (3) a group of three devotees, (4) *suparṇas* carrying lotus stalk,

(5) a bird couple, (6) an elephant, (7) a *nāga* couple, (8) acrobat riding a lion, (9) a human couple, and (10) indistinct. The right extremity of the lintel shows *mithunas* bearing garlands and standing four-armed Vidyādevī holding *varada*, book, book and water-vessel. On the corresponding left extremity we find a defaced image of four-armed standing Sarasvatī carrying *viṇā*. On the door-jambs occur Gaṅgā and Yamunā, each flanked by a pair of *dvārapālas*, as on the doorway of the *maṇḍapa*. The *dvārapālas*, facing east, carry *gadā* in one of their hands.

Sanctum

There are only three central pillars inside the sanctum, the fourth being not needed, as the low rock-ceiling is securely supported in the north-west on the walls of the sanctum. The pilasters are quite plain. More than three-fourth of the ceiling of the sanctum is rock-cut, which is further supported by pillars and lintels.

Inside the sanctum the main deity now enshrined is a seated mediaeval image of Jina placed on a high pedestal. Loose images of one seated and three standing mediaeval Jinas are also kept in the sanctum.

Inner ambulatory

The inner ambulatory is entered on each side by a doorway decorated on the lintels and architraves with miniature shrines and figures.

The southern doorway of the ambulatory shows on the *lalāṭa-bimba* of its lintel a flying figure of *vidyādhara* (can he represent Garuḍa, the *vāhana* of Cakreśvarī ?) with folded hands. The architrave surmounting the lintel is elaborate and shows three registers, the lower showing nine standing figures of which seven are Jinas and two female devotees. The middle register shows four Tirthaṅkaras and the uppermost seven Tirthaṅkaras. The door-jambs show river-goddesses flanked by *dvārapālas* and surmounted by kneeling *nāgas*.

The northern doorway of the ambulatory is similar to the southern one but has some differences. The lintel shows the Seven Mothers represented as dancing, flanked by Gaṇeśa on the proper left and Virabhadra on the right. Starting from the left end we have Gaṇeśa, Cāmuṇḍā, Indrāṇī, Vārāhī, Vaiṣṇavī, Kaumārī, Māheśvarī, Brahmāṇī and Virabhadra.

The inner ambulatory has three major niches on each side, there being an additional niche for the *antarāla* on the north and south. The central or main niche on each side is larger and is flanked by two

minor niches, there being thus a total of six niches on the north and south. Each major niche also has a niche on the basement mouldings. The main niche on the south shows a seated Tirthaṅkara. The main niche on the north is missing but one of the major niches shows Cakreśvari Yakṣī.

CONCLUSION

The mature decorative and architectectural motifs combined with the fairly developed iconography of this temple would indicate a late ninth century date for this building which marks the culmination of the Pratihāra architectural style of central India.

Like the Bajra Maṭh of Gyaraspur, this temple was hitherto supposed to have been originally a Brahmanical temple, later appropriated for Jaina worship. It was erroneously believed that the loose Jaina images, of which there is a plethora in this temple, were all planted here, as in the Bajra Maṭh. Even if the testimony of the loose Jaina images be discounted, the overwhelming evidence of the built-in images outlined below, leaves no doubt that it was a Jaina temple :

(1) Except for a frieze showing Gaṇeśa, Virabhadra, and the Seven Mothers occurring in the interior, there is a complete absence of purely Brahmanical deities. There are reasons to believe that Gaṇeśa and the Seven Mothers had lost their exclusive sectarian character in the mediaeval period.

(2) Jinas are prominently represented on the architraves of the doorways of the sanctum and the inner ambulatory.

(3) Yakṣī Cakreśvari occurs conspicuously on the *lalāṭa-bimba* of the *maṇḍapa* doorway. This is extremely significant.

(4) Cakreśvari-and-Ambikā Yakṣīs and seated Jina figures occur in niches on the roof-pediments of the *maṇḍapa* in the north as well as in the south faces.

(5) The built-in niches in the deep recesses flanking the *bhadrās* of the sanctum façade invariably show representations of Dharaṇendra Yakṣa and Padmāvati Yakṣī.

