



Naya Jain Mandir (Jains in Mughal Administration)

The Jain trading community came to Delhi on the invitation of Shah Jahan (1628 AD-1658 AD) when the city of Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi) was being built, and became an integral part of the walled city. They were big traders, merchants and, most importantly, bankers and moneylenders. The later Mughals were found to be often in their debt.

- The Jains also enjoyed high positions in the court. One such high-ranking official was Raja Harsukh Rai. His father, Lala Hukumat Rai, had been invited to shift from Hisar to Delhi by Emperor Shah Alam II. Harsukh Rai was appointed the imperial treasurer by Shah Alam II and given the title of Raja.
- Harsukh Rai built many places of worship for the Digambar Jain sect, many in Shahjahanabad itself. One of the beautiful temple among these is known simply as Naya Jain Mandir in Dharampura. This temple is the first Jain temple in Shahjahanabad to have a shikhar.
- Entrance is a marvellous adaptation of the wooden toranas (free-standing ornamental or arched gateway) that were used extensively in stone as decorative pieces. These not only added a decorative element but also strengthened the structure.
- The whole effect is of a delicate and airy structure, despite the medium being stone. In shadows the stonework gives the effect of a crochet embroidered hanging.
- The sanctum is breathtaking in its richly decorated walls, arches and ceiling. The tiered and raised marble platform with inlay work is a beautiful piece of art. On it, under a marble canopy, sits Lord Adinatha (the first of the 24 Tirthankaras in Jainism) on a flower. His image is made of Makrana marble.
- There are four pairs of lions in inlay work on the base under the image, which face the four cardinal directions. The ceiling is profusely painted in blue and gold bands, with floral designs that descend from a gold rectangle from in the centre.
- The arches and the walls are similarly painted in gold, blue and black, with flowers and Jain iconography.
- The Jain temples give an idea into how beautifully and profusely the medieval buildings, be they secular or religious, must have been painted and decorated.
- The temple does not open in the evenings because the light attract mosquitoes and other flying insects. To prevent them from dying because of the light, the temple is only open in the morning, when there is natural light.