

NAINAGIRI THROUGH THE AGES:

Observations on a Professional and Scientific Study

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Abstract

This article presents observations on the doctoral thesis *Nainagiri Through the Ages: Archaeology and History of the Region* by Mr. Vikas Saxena.² The study provides a comprehensive account of Nainagiri Tīrtha Kshetra, an important Jain pilgrimage site, through detailed analysis of its archaeological, literary, sculptural, and epigraphic evidence. Emphasizing the site's religious significance, historical evolution, and iconographic development, the research documents rock art, sculptures, architecture, and inscriptions. Fieldwork at Nainagiri, complemented by comparative studies at other Jain Tīrtha Kshetras, enhances understanding of Jain art, culture, and traditions. The thesis fills a significant research gap concerning lesser-explored Tīrthas and serves as a foundational reference for future studies in Jain archaeology and history.

Keywords

Nainagiri, Jain Tīrtha Kshetra, archaeology, Jain art, iconography, epigraphy, religious history, fieldwork, cultural heritage

1. Introduction

Nainagiri, revered as the Nirvāṇabhūmī of five eminent Jain monks, Acharya Vardatta, Muni Indradatta, Gundatta, Munendradatta, and Sayardatt, holds a central place in Jain religious history. The site is also associated with Tīrthankara Pārśvanātha, the 23rd Tīrthankara, whose Samavasarana is believed to have occurred here. Despite its historical and religious significance, a comprehensive and scientific study of Nainagiri's archaeology, art, and architecture had been lacking. The doctoral research by Mr. Vikas Saxena aims to reconstruct

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Nainagiri's historical past through extensive fieldwork, detailed observation, and comparative analysis with other Jain Tīrthas. Through meticulous documentation and analysis, the research contributes substantially to the understanding of Nainagiri's religious and cultural heritage.

2. Observations on the Thesis

The thesis provides a thorough documentation of Nainagiri's archaeological remains and historical evolution. Key highlights include:



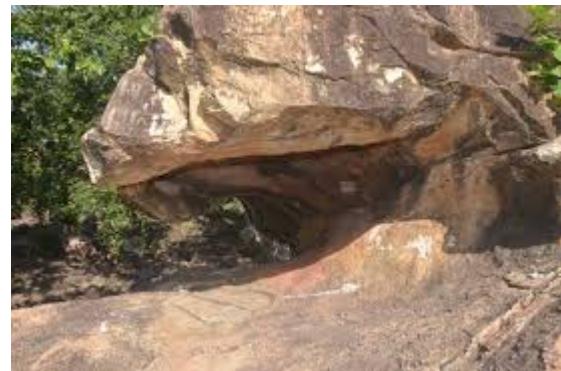
- 1. Archaeological and Art Historical Documentation:** The study offers detailed analyses of rock art, sculptures, and inscriptions, providing insights into the iconographic development of Jain art.
- 2. Comparative Field Studies:** Fieldwork was conducted at multiple Tīrthas, including Dronagiri, Aharji, Khajuraho, Deogarh, Budhi Chanderi, Khandargiri, Bajrangarh, Thubonji, Kumbhalgarh, and Ranakpur. Rock art and Jain antiquities were thoroughly documented during these field trips, allowing comparative analysis.
- 3. Literary and Epigraphic Analysis:** Examination of textual and inscriptional sources to contextualize the material evidence.
- 4. Research Gap Addressed:** Previous studies primarily focused on major Tīrthas such as Khajuraho, Chanderi, and Deogarh. In contrast, this thesis provides a systematic analysis of Nainagiri, a relatively less-studied site, filling a notable gap in the scholarship of Jain art and architecture.
- 5. Academic Contributions :** Mr. Vikas Saxena's prior publications, including *Study of Rock Art at Nainagiri, Madhya Pradesh*³ and *Images of Divine Jain Couple*:

³Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 2019, Vol. C pp 86-96.

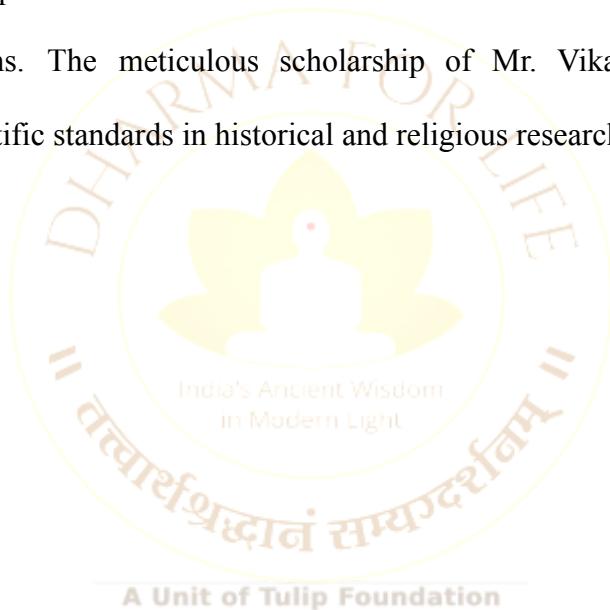
Interpretation and Variation,⁴ demonstrate his expertise and the scholarly value of his research.

3. Conclusion

Nainagiri Through the Ages represents a landmark study in Jain archaeology and history,



providing an integrated understanding of the site's religious, cultural, and artistic heritage. By combining fieldwork, comparative analysis, and literary research, the thesis reconstructs Nainagiri's historical past and establishes a foundation for future explorations in Jain art, culture, and traditions. The meticulous scholarship of Mr. Vikas Saxena exemplifies professional and scientific standards in historical and religious research.



⁴ Arnava Journal, Volume XII, No.2, 2023, Half Yearly, pp 120-140.